

Broadway Auto Row drove Oakland into great times

Before the car dealers, upper Broadway was home to pastures, livery stables, wagon construction businesses, and St. Mary's College (1889 to 1928). Amid the construction racket as Broadway Auto Row is transformed again, we interviewed former car sales executive Steve Lindsey about its heyday.

My dad came to California during WWII. He worked for the Army Corps of Engineers, with a crew, building bunkers up and down the coast. When that ended, he went to work in a foundry in Emeryville, Bacon-American Brass and Iron Foundry. They moved to Indiana and wanted my dad to go with them. But all six of us and my mom dug in our heels and said we weren't gonna move to Indiana.

We lived at Hawthorne Ave. near Knapp's Market [30th and Telegraph]. My Dad used to hang out at the Golden Saloon across the street. I remember my mom, when I was three years old, saying "Go get your dad out of the bar." Officer Kelly, a foot patrolman, would be standing around there because the call boxes were right in front of the market. He would make sure I got across the street, dodging Key System trains. Then I'd go over to the bar door, pull myself up, and put my eyes over, and say "Hey, is my dad in here?"



STEVE LINDSEY was a child living near Auto Row, and later became a sales manager there.



NAOMI SCHIFF



NAOMI SCHIFF

AT 30TH AND BROADWAY, facade of a former dealership will be incorporated into a new commercial space with residential units above it.

As kids, we'd cut over the hill [behind the used car lots, once St. Mary's College]. We'd take big cardboard boxes and go sliding down the hill. The house we lived in was from the Civil War period: 489 Hawthorne Avenue, Twin Oaks 3-8935. Knapp's Market sat in the front yard. The front door opened onto the roof of the market. We used the side entrance, once the servant's entrance, over the carriage entrance. We went to the Mormon Church in the Mosswood Chapel, now Evergreen Baptist Church.

I went to Westlake Junior High for a year. Then we moved up to the Rockridge district, and went to Claremont; then I went to Skyline High. One of my younger brothers was in the same class as Tom Hanks.

I was used to thinking that Broadway Auto Row was just it: it was exciting, and my dad would go over there. All the new car showings were in the fall. It was an extravaganza. My dad would have a newspaper announcing

what models were being shown—the *Oakland Tribune*. We'd walk over after dinner. "You always know when you are on Broadway because you can read the newspaper at night"—because of all the lights. Some of the car dealers had searchlights out. On Broadway you'd have to go into the buildings, except Connell Oldsmobile had room to park them outside.

I used to go into the Studebaker dealership when I was in high school because I bought a 1950 Studebaker Champion from my uncle for \$50 and I went in there for parts. My uncle Jerry Ryan was the bookkeeper at Val Strough for 30 years. The sales manager there was a friend of my dad's. They all had fancy cars and they all lived in nice houses. Uncle Jerry always had a new Chevrolet.

I came to work here in December 1981. I'd been on the highway patrol eight years. I had

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Auto Row

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an interview with Craig Cokeley and told him about an episode in my highway patrol career. I had written a guy a ticket for speeding, out in the desert. He then wrote to Governor Ronald Reagan to thank the CHP—me particularly—for giving him a ticket. Because he didn't go another twenty miles after I pulled him over, when his right front wheel fell off. And he had seven or eight kids in the car with him. So they had slowed down from 80 to 60, and he was able to hear the noise. But if he had continued at 80 or 85 miles an hour he might not have heard it.

Craig said "Anybody who can write a ticket to someone and get them to write a thank you letter, might be a hell of a salesman. Why don't you try selling cars for us?" We were just talking—I wasn't even applying. I got tired of being a cop and decided to become a robber, and become a car dealer.

One day my mother pulled up with my aunt. She'd not ever seen where I worked. She said "So you work here? Providence Hospital is just right up there!"—where I was born—"Yup," I said, "It's just a short ways, Mom, and it's all downhill!"—from there to being a car dealer.

Craig was about my age, a little bit older. He was kind of a hippie, long hair, beard, not at all interested in the car business. His mother still owned it but he was running it. His father had died; his mother married and went to London. When I started at Oakland Datsun Volvo I thought, well, we're not open the right hours. They closed at 6 o'clock every night, closed on Sundays, as was everybody.

I was selling 8 or 9 cars a month, and the whole store was selling 25. I told Craig,

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OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

ONCE HOME TO LIVERY STABLES, carriage builders, and St. Mary's College, looking south from Piedmont and Broadway.

"Stay open at night! Every customer that buys a Volvo lives in Montclair. And they're all in San Francisco at 5 and by the time they get here we're turning the locks."

The fellow that did the finance and insurance, the one that signs all the contracts—Lee Dodson, and I—we had keys. We would act like we were leaving. We would go to the Blue Book Bar and have a drink. Jeff, the sales manager, would go home to Walnut Creek, and then we would go back and open up and sell cars without him. We would batch all those deals, so Jeff wouldn't know, and book them on his day off. We were in there one Friday night, and we'd just sold a couple of cars. We heard the front door rattling, and Craig coming in from the King's X bar on Piedmont Avenue. He was half plowed, and immediately he asked, "What the hell are you guys doing?" "We're selling cars!" "Where's Jeff?" "He's not here." So finally we just laid it out to him. People would call and we'd say, "We close at 6, but if you come at 6:45, we'll come back." About a month later, Craig asked me to be the sales manager and Mike White to be the used car manager. The first thing we did was stay open until 9 o'clock, and open on Sunday. Val Strough, Whitey Negherbon were livid. We were not a union store. We were going to stay open.

There was a dark side to this story. A former sales manager at Cokeley was Elwood, the typical plaid jacket, yellow trousers salesman. There were two or three salesmen who had worked for him, who would not wait on

a black person. If a black person came in and wanted a car, they'd say, "Go get your money." They wouldn't arrange financing.

I was visiting Tony Caruso, the sales manager at Downtown Toyota, right next to the Datsun store. Tony wanted to know what we were doing to sell so many cars. In a couple of months we went from selling 25 or 30 to selling 100 new, plus whatever we sold used. He said, "You're not selling that many more cars just being open three hours a day more!" "Well, I'll come over and look at your traffic logs." You write down every customer's name, their phone number, to follow up with them. I go through his logs, and about half or more, they had a little column, and it had a bunch of Ns in it. "What is this for, New cars?" "No, those are black people." Well, that's not the word he used. And I saw "No credit, no credit, no sale, no sale." "So you're not selling cars to blacks?" "No, I'm not selling to blacks." Well, I had one or two salesmen who didn't want to sell to black customers either. We put them over on the used car lot. And then anytime we had a black customer who wanted a used car, we had them come to the new car salesroom, and we'd get a new car salesman to go with them and sell them the car. Really, we just stayed open, and we sold to the half of Oakland that the others weren't selling to.

We weren't selling to Asian-Americans either, and I figured that out right away. So I hired a Chinese-American salesman, Larry Lee, who had been in sales for Japan Airlines. He was perfect. I used to walk China-



town with him. He knew everyone from 30 years of working for JAL.

I found it hard to believe then but still, that is the way it was and had been. I said to Tony Caruso, “I don’t care what color they are, because money is all green.”

So I hired a sales group that matched the demographics of Oakland—Chinese, Hispanic, African-American, and one guy held on from the previous regime, an Italian-American guy from Piedmont. I made him start coming to sales meetings. He hated it. We eventually moved him up the street. We had a separate truck center there for awhile, starting about ’83. He was happy to sell 3, 4, 5 cars a month, to his own clients.

John Strough, when he took over from his dad, he hired a black salesman, very smooth, very polished, dressed well, and they hired him specifically to deal with the black clientele. San Francisco was no different. In San Francisco people were a little more prone to demonstrate. Sometime in the 1970s, black employees marched up and down in front of the dealers on Van Ness.

As a kid growing up in Oakland, I really was colorblind even though my parents were from Texas. My father was the baby of 16 kids. He remembered his father getting his three older sons and going to prevent lynchings in Texas. My father, Hubert Hefman Lindsey, was named after a sharecropper who worked for my great-grandparents in Mississippi during the Civil War. This sharecropper saved my grandmother’s life. Their farm was attacked by the Yankees and drove off their livestock and these Yankee soldiers nearly beat him to death. He put up enough of a fight to prevent them from attacking my great-grandmother. My grandfather was hiding in a stump with a washtub over his head.

My aunt Mamie is named after Mamie who was a wet nurse and cook with my grandmother. When I was growing up and going to Grant School, if you look at the pictures, it was a pretty diverse group of kids

In 1985, we still had a new 1983 Datsun King Cab diesel pickup truck and those things just didn’t sell. And it was the wrong color. So we decided to have a big sales extravaganza, and have a contest to win that truck. We’d fill it up with pingpong balls. The ad agency came in under cloak of night. They had large cardboard cases filled with little boxes, four pingpong balls in each. People were in there all night opening little boxes and throwing pingpong balls in the windows of the truck. I came in the next morning: “Have you kept count of how many there are?” The agent said, “Well, we didn’t actually count them.” “How are we gonna know what the total is?” We had hired Lloyd’s of London to insure the contest. I think we paid a thousand dollars to the insurance policy against somebody guessing. But we wanted that truck to go away. “You need to certify to Lloyd’s what the count is.” “Well, I know. . . . There were five of these big cartons, and it had the number printed on them.” “Well someone might be able to figure that out if they knew how these things were shipped.” But he said, “I know,” and he reached in his pocket and pulled out one of the little boxes. He had taken one ball out, so that left three. “It’s minus these three.”

I did the math. I called my friend Barbara: “You’re coming to fill out the contest. Make your guess 9635.” Then I told a couple of people, “well, guess 9634, 9633. . . .” —in case the agent had kept another ball in another pocket. Well, Barbara won that contest, put an ad in the *Montclairion*, and sold it. We couldn’t sell that truck for the life of us! We went down to \$3,000, and then Barbara sold it for \$3,500! Stale inventory: if you have one of something, they don’t want to buy it.

From ’82 until ’87 I was at Oakland Datsun Volvo. Craig Cokeley was

hardly ever there. He was building a big home in Wyoming and starving us for cash. He also was one of the founders of Summit Bank. And he ended up developing a cocaine problem. Craig basically lost the dealership. Volvo looked at us as a pain in the side anyway. They liked me because we were selling cars, but they wouldn’t supply us with cars. So I was literally buying new cars from all over the western states. Volvo would give us about 12 or 15 a month and I would buy 50 from other dealers—SLC, Portland, Seattle, even Calgary.

Volvo wouldn’t supply us because of their feud with Craig, which I think was over money. He wrote a computer program to do these dealer trades just to trade checks with other dealerships to make our payroll. I was not happy about that. Shirley, the president of the bank, caught Craig kiting checks. You can’t be on the board of directors of a bank and do that kind of thing. So they ousted him.

Craig got mad at me because we had halfway agreed that I would put \$100,000 into the business for half the stock. The night I was to do the wire transfer, the vice president of Volvo called: “If you put that in, you are only going to buy about 30 days. We’re going to pull his franchise no matter what.”

The next day I had the unfortunate experience of telling Craig I wasn’t going to put money in. He basically fired me. So I walked up to the VW store. I talked to Al Sanchez, and he said, “Why don’t you just come to work over here?” He sent a few of his porters up to the Volvo store, and they moved my desk and bookshelves down the street. The Cokeleys decided to sell the dealership to Dick Cochran.

Reynolds C. Johnson was the first distributor of Volkswagen in the U.S. Every Volkswagen—well, at least the paperwork for every VW—came through Broadway Volkswagen. That’s why it has such a large service department upstairs. It was for doing the predelivery inspections for the VWs that came from the Oakland Port. They would inspect them, and then distribute them up and down the coast from Burlingame.

Uncle Jerry told me that Val Strough really wasn’t that interested in the day to day operations. Upstairs—and I remember seeing this

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NAOMI SCHIFF



CVS OCCUPIES THE 1930 art deco Firestone Tire & Rubber.



Auto Row

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when I was a kid—Val Strough had miles and miles of railroad tracks, model railroads. He would come to work and play with railroads all day. Jerry told me that at the end of the '40s or early '50s, he and Strough were outside, across from Mosswood Park. (At that time, ice cream wagons would line up on the street, and scoop ice cream for you.) It was a summer day. They were outside, in white shirts, wearing straw hats, having an ice cream cone, and all of a sudden they heard backfiring, sounded like a .22 being shot several times. They saw this goofy little car pulled up behind the ice cream trucks. Val Strough saw Reynolds C. Johnson getting out of this little car. And he said "Reynolds, what in the hell is that?" Reynolds said, "I'm not quite sure, Val, but if it sells I'm a rich man because I own everything west of the Mississippi." That was the VW bug.

Another sad aspect of the car business here: when Reynolds started there, the factory reps were still Germans. And not all of them were happy that Germany lost the war. VW was designed by Ferdinand Porsche, and Hitler named it the "car of the people"—Volkswagen. And even when I was working there in the '80s, in the parts manager's office, in the belly of the dealership—not out on public display—they had portraits of Adolf Hitler and they actually had a large portrait, signed by Adolf Hitler and Ferdinand Porsche, of Hitler dancing a little jig when they unveiled the first Volkswagen in Berlin.

The Johnson estate sold the dealership to Al Sanchez of Gilroy, and Stan Antonio of Sunnyvale. It was the largest Volkswagen dealership in the U.S., much of the time, until Ron Greenspan opened in San Francisco. And then it was like the Battle of the Bay, in the '80s. The Jetta came out, the Golf, Volkswagen Westphalia, the camper, the Scirocco. Those cars sold pretty well. Eventually Al Sanchez died, and Stan Antonio was under federal indictment for money laundering for the mob. Al was a Mazda/VW dealer in Gilroy, and a pillar of the community. Stan Antonio looked like a mobster, dressed like a mobster, traveled with bodyguards. If there was an attractive woman in there, he would go introduce himself and the next thing you know they would



VOLKSWAGENS sold in the 1929 Pacific Nash Building.

go to lunch. He was kind of a playboy, a likeable guy, charismatic. . .

Starting the next block down, where King Covers was, all the way down to Val Strough, were once carriage houses. And you can actually see remnants of it now. At the end where Oakland Datsun/Ray Cokeley Motors was, there was a flight of steps that went down about six or seven steps below. If you look at the floor, you can see large circular areas that have been filled in with cement. That was a foundry. That was where they poured steel rims for carriage wheels, back in the day. Ray Cokeley converted that to a place to sell cars.

There was a motorcycle shop up there, Broadway Honda. A woman owned that store, Verna; I bought a couple of motorcycles from her. At one time they fitted car-

riages with leather seats in there. The street level was the showroom, and the lower level was where they built the carriages. And the carriages went from building to building, and across the streets. They were connected enterprises. When carriages began to be replaced by horseless carriages, they naturally got into that business, and then cars.

Going down 27th Street, not too far down there was a drive-in, where the girls would come out on roller skates. Where the Kaiser Center is now, was Herrera Buick, an extraordinary building. They actually would pull cars up onto pedestals, with searchlights going on, over by the lake. And Pat Patterson Cadillac [now Whole Foods].

There's so much history here. I spent 30 years in the car business, 10 or 12 of it here on Broadway. Where my son dropped me off, I used to meet in there with our service manager and parts manager. Across the street was where all the used cars were. I guess Connell is getting torn down now, too. And across the street, back when I was a kid, was Ceremeli Ford. My dad bought a '56 Ford Wagon in there. The car dealers back then, especially if they recognized you as a neighborhood kid, they'd buy you a soda pop, let you get in a car, sit behind the wheel.

I think it was during Jerry Brown's tenure that they tried to get the auto dealers out of Broadway Auto Row. Al Sanchez and I looked at property out near the Coliseum. We thought about it because it was right on the freeway, would be easier to steal sales from Ron Greenspan. Who would go to Van Ness Avenue to buy an automobile? But then, who would go to Auto Row in Oakland?

*See **AUTO ROW** on page 5*



AT 2735 WEBSTER, cars are still displayed in the 1924 former Smith-Dahl Chevrolet showroom, where Webster Street was cut off in the 1980s.

John M. Heinold's saloon revisited

By Elliott Myles

In today's political climate, many people have become familiar with facts, alternative facts, and fake news. This is nothing new for the customers of Heinold's First and Last Chance Saloon down at Jack London Square.

The story of John Michael Heinold and his saloon has been told and retold in numerous books and articles, as well as on the plaques affixed to the front of the building. However, the articles and plaques rarely agree, and are often contradictory even within their text. This is an attempt to set some of the matter straight.

Discovering the early history of the saloon is not easy. Original source documents, such as the Oakland city directories and the Oakland tax assessment maps, are often missing or incomplete. People's recollections may also be biased, colored by the passage of time, or just made up. For example, in 1926,

OHA's lively annual meeting on Jan. 18, at Chapel of the Chimes, featured Amelia Marshall, board member and author, presenting highlights of her fine new book, *East Bay Hills: A Brief History*.

Auto Row

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The Volvo showroom—I was in there when the earthquake hit. It looked like the cars were on a sea. The brick walls were shaking, and pea-sized bits of brick began shooting out. Mike White, he goes back to our public school drills, gets under a desk, and says “Get under here!” I said, “How can I get in there when you're under there? We need to get out of here!” We looked down Broadway, and the light poles were whipping back and forth.

Having been a highway patrolman, I volunteered to help. I went out, and climbed up on ladders, and went between levels of the freeway that had pancaked down. There were several Volvos that were crushed, but the occupants survived. Continental Volvo, on East 14th Street, got several of those crushed Volvos, and put them on display. They held up a lot of the weight. Those things used to be built like a tank.

— Steve Lindsey, interviewed by Valerie Winemiller and Naomi Schiff ■

Johnny told a reporter that his wife, whom he divorced in 1898, was dead, when she was alive and living with her second husband. In the same year, the *San Bernardino News* wrote that a “strange pact between the thieves and night prowlers of this community, that Johnnie Heinold's saloon is to be immune from burglary, has been broken after having been maintained in an ironclad state for 42 years.” However, the saloon was burgled in June 1889, September 1901, November 1904, and November 1905, all within 42 years of 1926.

The first fact to pin down is the date Johnny opened the saloon. Everyone agrees on the First of June as the day, but not on the year. The centenary was held in 1983 and the 125th in 2008, relying on an 1883 opening, possibly based on a 1944 cartoon, which read in part “61 years ago, John Heinold built this bar out of an old whaling ship. Part of the ship is 20 ft underground.” Moving back in time, in 1936, George Heinold wrote that his father opened the saloon on June 1, 1884, not 1883. A short biography published in 1926, and apparently based on statements made by Johnny himself, states that since June 1, 1884, Johnny had “been continuously at First and Webster.” The year 1884 is also supported by a letter from the Comstock silver magnate John MacKay dated July 29, 1883, and addressed to Johnny at his first Oakland saloon located at 1425 San Pablo.

It seems more probable than not that Johnny Heinold opened the saloon on June 1, 1884.

What about the building the saloon inhabits? In 1936, George Heinold wrote that his father “purchased an old bunk house for



HEINOLD stands in front of his saloon.

\$100.00, which had formerly been used as sleeping quarters for men working the oyster beds nearby.” The bunk house story has been repeated ever since. . . . but may be bunk.

In July 1923, a *San Francisco Chronicle* journalist interviewed Johnny Heinold, and wrote that when Johnny took over the business 40 years ago, there “were three other previous owners, and the place has been in operation as a saloon some ten years before Heinold came on the scene and bought the whole plant for \$100.” The same article states that the “building was built from the sturdy timbers of the old steamer *Yumatilla*, which was once a figure in local shipping.”

The *Umatilla* (the correct name) was a two deck, stern-wheel paddle steamer, built as the *Venture* or *Adventure* in early 1858 on the middle Columbia River in the Oregon Territory. On her maiden voyage, she left the bank under a low pressure of steam, and was swept over the Columbia Cascades, grounding on a rock in the middle of the river. After being salvaged, she was sold to new owners,

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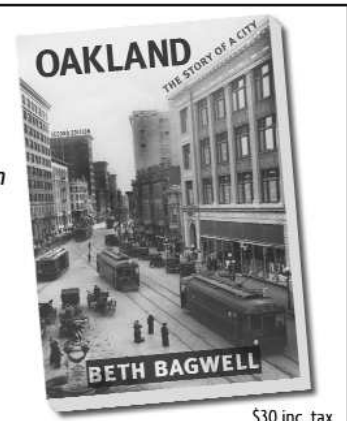
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Saloon

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who repaired her hull, renamed her the *Umatilla* and, in June 1858, sent her north to British Columbia to serve in the Fraser River gold rush. She steamed on the Fraser until October, when she was sent to San Francisco. An 1895 history of the Pacific Northwest states that the *Umatilla* had “the distinction of having been the first sternwheel steamer on the middle Columbia, the first steamer to go over the Cascades, the first to the Sound from the Columbia, and the first sternwheeler from the Sound to San Francisco.”

In California, the *Umatilla* was first an independent steamer on the Sacramento River and the San Francisco Bay, before later becoming associated with the California Steam Navigation Company. Between 1862 and 1867, she was abandoned at the foot of Webster Street in Oakland. In September 1867, her owners owed the City and County of San Francisco \$126.25 in back taxes, and in December, the machinery was removed from her hull, probably to pay the back taxes.

Between November 1870 and April 1871, construction of the first bridge from Oakland to Alameda across San Antonio Creek (also called San Antonio Estuary) was held up by the “hulk of an old steamer, lying at the foot of Webster street.” This hulk was undoubtedly the remains of the *Umatilla*.

It is more probable than not that the saloon was built between November 1870 and 1874, from the remains of the abandoned *Umatilla*.

Was the saloon ever a bunk house for oyster men? Apparently not. However, it was used as a residence at least once. The 1887 city directory lists Conrad Heinold, Johnny’s brother, as a bookkeeper residing at 542 Webster, the saloon’s original address.

The city block the saloon is located on, block 212, is bounded on the north by Embarcadero, formerly First Street, on the south by Water Street, on the west by Webster, and on the east by Harrison. Unfortunately, block 212 cannot be traced in the early Oakland tax assessment map books. Most of the volumes labeled 1, which would include the block, are missing from the collection at the Oakland Public Library. An educated guess is that they were used in the city’s lawsuits against Southern Pacific and the Waterfront Company to recover access to the port, and not returned. The volumes that are available begin at First Street and go north, and do not include the southeast corner of First and Webster.

In the map included in the 1872 city directory, block 212 is partially a water lot on San Antonio Creek. The map shows both the drawbridge to Alameda, completed by April 1871, and the City Wharf constructed at the foot of Webster and Franklin Streets in 1872. Unfortunately, it does not show any buildings.

In 1869, George H. Naegle owned a wood and coal yard between Broadway and Washington and resided at the south-east corner of First and Webster streets. His residence probably became the Washington Lumber yard, or its predecessor, which by 1889 was on the north side of the saloon. In 1871–2, Edward Orax was a laborer residing at the corner (no direction given) of First and Webster.

In 1874, Robert Calhoun owned an oyster depot at the southeast corner of First and Webster. He was listed under “Additional Names, Removals, etc.,” indicating that he had recently opened the business. This may be the fact that gave rise to the alternative fact of the saloon being built as a bunk house for oystermen. By the next year,

Robert Calhoun was the owner of the Overland Oyster House on the northwest corner of First and Webster, kitty-corner from his location the year before.

The 1875 directory lists three names at the northwest corner of First and Webster, one at the southwest corner of First and Webster, and one, Edward Aroux, living at the corner (no direction given) of First and Webster. Edward was the Edward Orax living there in 1871–2.

The 1876–7 directory complicates matters somewhat. Robert Calhoun was still the proprietor of the Overland Oyster House on the northwest corner of First and Webster. The southeast corner was the site of a laundry owned by Wah Chung, a saloon and residence of A. F. Johnson who dealt in retail wines and liquors, and the residence of master mariner Charles Johnson. A. F. Johnson was again listed in the 1877–8 directory as “wines and liquors, saloon and residence, southeast corner First and Webster.” A. F. Johnson may have been the first of three owners of the business previous to John Heinold. The fact that he resided in his saloon may also have contributed to the bunk house alternative fact.

John Heinold moved from San Francisco to Oakland by May 31, 1878, when he registered to vote in Oakland’s second ward. The 1878–9 directory lists John M. Heinold as a barkeep for John M. Ludwig, living at the southwest corner of Telegraph Avenue and Brown. It also lists Augustus Johnson as an oysterman in San Francisco, living at the corner of Webster and First. This is no doubt the same person as A. F. Johnson of 1877–8. In July 1879, A. F. Johnson sold a 25 x 100 lot on the southeast corner of First and Webster to F. Cunningham for \$350.

In 1880–1, John M. Heinold owned a saloon on San Pablo Avenue, and Charles E. Nommensen was a retail liquor dealer at the foot of Webster. There is no entry for F. Cunningham or A. F. Johnson. If A. F. Johnson were the first owner of the business, Charles Nommensen may have been the second. Edward Shaw was a laborer residing at the corner of First and Webster.

In 1884–5, John M. Heinold was listed at his saloon on the corner of Nineteenth and San Pablo Avenue, A. E. Bean was a ship carpenter residing on the south side of the



MILKMAN getting a different kind of drink at the bar with others.

COURTESY HEINOLD'S

foot of Webster, and Jacob Johnson was a saloon owner on the south side at the foot of Webster. A. E. Bean may have been the ship carpenter who helped Johnny set up the saloon. Jacob Johnson may have been the third of the three owners of the business previous to Johnny.

The local papers are not of much help. Although the full archive of the *Tribune* has not been searched, it appears that, with few exceptions, Johnny did not make the papers until 1898, when he divorced his wife, Christine Marie née Gunderson, in a somewhat nasty lawsuit. Following Jack London's death in November 1916, he appeared in a number of articles as Jack's friend. The 1923 *Chronicle* article, however, gives the most information regarding the saloon.

John L. Davie, in his autobiography, wrote that he leased two acres of tidelands at the foot of Webster Street owned by the Morgan Oyster Company under the Oyster Act of 1874: "Johnny Heinold's First and Last Chance Saloon was on the property. Also Jack London's shack." Both the saloon and a "shanty" are shown on the 1889–1901 Sanborn Insurance Map. Davie filled in the land and built a wharf. While Davie was careless with his dates in his autobiography, he was listed at the foot of Webster by 1891.

Summing up, there is evidence from the city directories of a saloon and residence at the foot of Webster Street or on the south-



JOHNNY HEINOLD pours from a soda bottle during Prohibition, about 1929. He died in Spring 1933; the law was repealed in December.

east corner of Webster and First Streets. Title to the land on which the saloon sat was claimed under the state oyster bed acts (1851 and 1874). The building may have once been an oyster depot or may have been owned by an oysterman, from as early as 1873 or 1874, which is some 10 years before John Heinold bought the business. The year before Johnny bought the business, a ship carpenter was living near the saloon. There is no evidence the building was used as a bunk house, but at least once and possibly twice, it was used as a residence.

Has the saloon ever been moved? Somewhat surprisingly, the answer appears to be yes. According to Johnny in 1923, John L. Davie who operated the wood and coal yard to the north of the saloon moved the building 17 feet to the south. This move is reflected in the overlays of the Sanborn Insurance map for Oakland for the period 1889 to 1901. The map shows two Chinese lodging houses, a wood and coal yard with two sheds and three offices, and the saloon, all on the south-east corner of Webster and First. It is not clear, however, when Davie moved the building.

In May 1890, the Oakland train crossed the drawbridge while it was open. The locomo-

tive and some passenger cars fell into the estuary. The *San Francisco Call* reported that "the saloon of J. M. Heinold, just at the north end of the bridge, was thrown open to the dead and dying, and four women were taken from the water." On the Sanborn map, there are other buildings between the saloon and the bridge. In the directory for 1891, John L. Davie was a coal dealer with a wharf and bunkers at the foot of Webster. It seems probable that John L. Davie moved the Saloon between 1884 and 1890, probably ahead of building his wharf.

See **SALOON** on page 8

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A WEALTH OF WOOD for enjoying your glass, circa 1940s.



Saloon

Continued from page 7

At the new site, 17 feet south of the old one, the tide apparently lapped against the building, and Johnny had to bulkhead the south side of the saloon. Clearly, the saloon was built on infilled tidelands or swamp-lands, explaining why it sank during the 1906 Earthquake.

What about the moniker, “First and Last Chance”? The earliest discovered use of the name is in the 1892 city directory, indicating Johnny used the name in 1891. Prior to 1891, the only evidence of the name of the saloon are a few old photographs, showing the name “J. M. Heinold’s Saloon” on the front of the building. Most of the early directories just give “saloon” after his name.

A long-standing tradition of fake news is that Alameda was a “dry” town and the saloon was the first chance to have a drink after leaving and the last chance before entering the town. However, before Prohibition, Alameda was never dry. The closest it got to prohibition was in 1874, when the issue of local licensing was put to the vote. The statute allowing local licensing was held unconstitutional the same year.

In 1913, Jack London in his autobiographical memoir *John Barleycorn* called the saloon the “Last Chance.” He knew Johnny from at least age 15, when he purchased the

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM



OAKLAND WATERFRONT in the 1800s.

Razzle Dazzle from French Frank and sealed the deal with shots at the saloon. In 1921, Jack’s widow, Charmian London, was perhaps closest to the origin of the name when, in *The Book of Jack London*, she wrote “‘Mayn’t I meet Johnny Heinold some time?’ I once asked Jack, learning that he had been into the ‘First and Last Chance’ Saloon on Webster Street, to see his old friend. The stamping-ground of the water-front habitués, where the boy’s intrepid foot had rested upon the brass rail, bore this two-faced pseudonym by reason of its accommodating relation to comers as well as goers across the draw-bridge.”

Perhaps of passing interest, in 1890, John L. Davie began his long battle against the Southern Pacific by building a wharf from his coal and wood lot at the foot of Webster. In addition to landing coal and other dry goods at the wharf, in 1892 or 1893, Davie began the “nickel ferry” to San Francisco as direct competition to the Southern Pacific’s ferry at the end of Broadway. In his autobiography, Davie describes the physical battles he had with the Southern Pacific on his wood and coal yard next to the saloon. It is not too far a stretch of the imagination that Johnny named the saloon with reference to Davie’s ferry service.

The fact seems that the name was related to transportation by bridge and ferry, an alternative fact is that Johnny adopted the name in anticipation of John L. Davie’s ferry scheme, and the fake news is that Alameda was dry.

Revisiting the saloon, then, it’s astonishing the stern-wheel paddle steamer *Umatilla* has had such a long and fortunate life. Who knows how many more centuries she may continue on? ■

Elliott Myles is an amateur historian.

COURTESY HEINOLD’S



JACK LONDON with Johnny Heinold in the 1890s. The deer head, named Spot, is still on the wall today.

Miller Library

Continued from page 12

American Library. In 1975, the branch closed permanently when Latin American moved to a new site on Fruitvale Avenue. After that, the Miller Avenue site was leased to the school district to house the Emiliano Zapata Street Academy. By the summer of 1989, the school had moved out. Meanwhile, the branch building became a City of Oakland landmark in 1980, along with our other Carnegie branch libraries, and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1996. An August 1989 letter from Lelia White, then library director, implored the city to return this “most beautiful” of Carnegie libraries to the library’s control for book storage. Just two months later, the Loma Prieta earthquake hit, heavily damaging the foundation. A few years later, in 1993, library director Martin Gomez wrote to the city’s real estate division, washing his hands of any further oversight for the building. Since then, the building had been mostly vacant except for squatters and a brief stint as a community library and garden organized by Occupy Oakland protesters in 2012.

Although landmark designations and the love of the community couldn’t save this graceful old beauty, I hope that the spirit of its service will live on. ■



BOTH: OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM



MILLER LIBRARY interior with its delivery desk, top, and a view of the exterior.



What to preserve? How to design hybrid projects? What works and doesn't?

By Naomi Schiff

OHA welcomes your participation in discussions and advocacy about preservation in Oakland. We are grappling with issues of demolition, of partial preservation—some of which might be called “façadism”—and of compatibility, as development roars ahead. While we hope for reawakened use of some too-sleepy, underutilized stretches of thoroughfares, we hope that the specific plans the city has prepared, and zoning and design requirements in place, keep Oakland from turning into Anywheresville. Without succumbing to complete nostalgia, here are some questions for OHA members: 1) How is Oakland doing in encouraging compatible new construction? 2) Are we preserving creative uses, unique neighborhoods, and historic areas? and 3) Are we successful in preserving key façades, characteristic building types, and Oakland charm? What do you think? Below, some projects that exemplify these questions:

■ **Chapel of the Oaks:** The BuildZig company has moved its offices into the one-time Chapel of the Oaks on Telegraph at 30th St., and now proposes to develop a residential building to its west. The plan presents a quandary about compatibility versus differentiation: can it appear contemporary and exciting, and still fit into the historic context?

After discussions, changes have calmed the design somewhat, and it relates better to a next door condo building. BuildZig has spruced up the former mortuary building and is planning to treat it gently, keeping historic features intact.

■ **Uptown Garage and Arts District:** Several projects are being constructed or planned in and around the historic garage district between 24th and 27th Streets, Telegraph and Broadway, also the site of recent years’ Art Murrmur. Can new construction come in and some of the feeling of the old district be preserved? Can arts and maker uses continue, when new buildings generally mean that commercial rents go up? Is there a way to preserve arts spaces through zoning measures or other means? An effort to create a cultural district in the area seems to have stalled, despite promises by some city officials to support it. In the meantime, the pressure to develop and rising land prices cause owners to sell.

■ **Auto Row:** The Broadway-Valdez Specific Plan is being put to the test. Its design guidelines do require the reuse of some historic facades in the area; does incorporation of old storefronts and building facades succeed in preserving a sense of place? Some examples are complete, such as the Whole Foods at Bay Place, and the CVS on Broad-



2005 90th Ave Oakland, Ca. 94603 Asking \$649,000

Step back in time in this restored 1911 Arts+Crafts near-mansion, on a gated corner double lot surrounded by vintage rose, camellia, nut, and fruit trees plus a huge garage/accessory building & curving driveway. Built for Dredging co. owner Geo. Peabody with many period details, clinker brick carport and large porch, coved roof, leaded glass, beamed ceiling, gracious rooms, solarium, moldings & upgrades to K, Baths+systems, for today’s family, with design help from Jane Powell. 4 BR +2 extra on 3rd floor plus bonus rooms. A huge country hideaway yet close to Dunsmuir, O’Dowd, Zoo, Fwys.

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way at 30th. Projects at two locations on the east side of Broadway will preserve the front walls of older structures, building taller residential buildings behind them, and another on the west side of Broadway preserves a rounded corner section, highly recognizable from its years as a car dealership.

■ **King Block:** This spring, the Bureau of Planning, Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, and Planning Commission agreed that a high-rise on the King Block, at Harrison and 13th streets, should not be approved. On the site of a 1920s “sanitary market” occupied by small businesses, developers propose a 450-foot tall mixed commercial and residential tower. The historic block is built around an old brick-walled alley. OHA has firmly objected that the project doesn’t belong on this block, because it would damage the historic resources and use up one of only two remaining special height exemptions in the Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan’s western half. The project will return to the Planning Commission; if they vote to deny the project, the developer may appeal it to the City Council. ■

NAOMI SCHIFF



HISTORIC KING BLOCK. 1920S Market Building proposed for demolition, with a tower replacing it.



LOWNEY ARCHITECTS/CITY OF OAKLAND



Top Three Items of Pride for Oakland in 2018

By Tom Debley

This year is the 150th anniversary of the University of California's founding in Oakland. The Oaklander who led that was Henry Durant, first president of UC and later a mayor of Oakland. With UC headquartered in Oakland, this is a point of pride—and a worry, too, because one of our most treasured city-owned historic properties, the J. Mora Moss Cottage in Mosswood Park, is at risk. Moss was a member of the first UC Board of Regents. We need to rescue his landmarked house, one of the finest surviving examples of Victorian Gothic architecture in California.

This year, too, is the 150th anniversary of the historic Pardee Home Museum. Enoch Pardee and his son, George, had distinguished public service careers, both serving as mayors of Oakland. George Pardee also was elected governor. Among his accomplishments as a noted conservationist, he worked, at the behest of John Muir, with President Theodore Roosevelt, to align state and federal laws to pave the way for creation of Yosemite National Park.

Next year will mark the 150th anniversary of Mayor Samuel Merritt's declaration of his namesake Lake Merritt on the Pacific Flyway as a wild bird sanctuary, which was codified in state law the following year. This makes Lake Merritt the first wildlife sanctuary in United States history.

In short, we have much history to be proud of, and we have a lot of work ahead of us. I have great hopes for continued achievements in the years ahead. Let's continue to work toward impressive achievements we can celebrate when we turn 40 in 2020. ■

PARDEE HOME MUSEUM



THE PARDEE HOME turns 150 this year.

You know it's summer when we hit the streets!

■ Summer walking tours are back!

By Daniel Levy

Come explore a new part of Oakland with us by attending our annual summer walking tours! We have some great new tours lined up as well as some classics. From exploring the Borax Smith Estate, looking at mid-century buildings in downtown Oakland, to learning about the geology under our feet, we have you covered this year. We would like to thank each of our tour leaders for the effort they put in to share their insights with us and to thank you all for your attendance each year. Last year we had more than 700 people go on our tours!

Watch for our mailer to land in your mailbox. Before your tour, please check our website, www.oaklandheritage.org, in case any details change. If you are interested in volunteering, please call our office at 510.763.9218 or email us at info@oaklandheritage.org. You will get to attend the tour for free. Don't forget good walking shoes, plenty of sunscreen, and a water bottle.

F.M. "Borax" Smith Estate
Saturday, July 7, 2018 10:00 AM

Mountain View Cemetery
Sunday, July 8, 2018 10:00 AM

Fernwood
Saturday, July 14, 2018 1:00 PM

Terrain and Treasures, Reservoir Hill to San Antonio Park
Sunday, July 15, 2:00 PM

Terrace and the Forgotten Trestle
Saturday, July 21, 10:00 AM

Tracing Terraces, The Linda Vista Tract
Sunday, July 22, 10:00 AM

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members through mid-May 2018:

Lisa Aliferis & John Storella,
Kevis Brownson, Elizabeth Byrne,
Brenda Cooper, Ron Heckman,
Neil S. Kaplan, Judy Curtis Sokoloff,
Eric Sorensen



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

SALES BROCHURE shows Linda Vista Terrace, around 1900.

Sheffield Village
Saturday, July 28, 2018 10:00 AM

Tiles and Terra Cotta in Uptown Oakland
Sunday, July 29, 2018 10:00 AM

Wholesale Produce Market and Waterfront Warehouse District
Saturday, August 4, 10:00 AM

West Oakland/Clawson
Sunday, August 5, Time TBA

Temescal's Broadway Historic Landmarks
Saturday, August 11, 10:00 AM

Mid-Century Downtown Oakland
Sunday, August 12, 10:00 AM

Weeds in the Urban Landscape
Saturday, August 18, 10:00 AM

Glenview
Sunday, August 19, 1:30 PM

African American Museum & Library at Oakland: Visions Toward Tomorrow
Saturday, August 25, 12:30 PM (building tour!)

Steinway Terrace
Sunday, August 26, 12:30 PM



COURTESY STUART SWIEDLER

FORGOTTEN trestle? Find it on our tour.



Meet new OHA president Tom Debley

By Tom Debley, President

Greetings, OHA members and friends! Let me introduce myself. I'm Tom Debley, the new president of OHA. Before anything else, let me say a hearty thank-you to Alison Finlay, our immediate past president, for all her hard work on behalf of OHA over the years. You will be happy to hear that she will continue to serve as our vice president.

A little background about myself: I've been a resident of the Temescal neighborhood since 1980 and spent virtually my entire career in the East Bay.

The first third of my career was as a newspaper reporter, photographer and editor with daily newspapers in the East Bay. Next, I worked as a public affairs leader at the University of California: assistant director of the news office at UC Berkeley, public affairs director at Hastings College of the Law and chief of news services for the Office of the President. The last third of my career was as a public affairs leader at Kaiser Permanente. I retired in 2010 as founding director of its Heritage Resources Department.

History was an important part of my entire career, having been taught by one of my journalism professors at California State University, Los Angeles, to learn the history of

any community or institution I'd serve. That important context, he maintained, would always serve me well. It did.

Looking forward, I'm impressed with the knowledge base, skills and successes of OHA and its many partnerships over nearly 40 years of service to the community. It is a small but mighty nonprofit fulfilling a mission of advocating for the protection, preservation and revitalization of Oakland's architectural, historic, cultural and natural resources through publications, education and direct action.

We must persevere and redouble our efforts as we go forward. Everyone involved with OHA, from charter members from our inception in 1980 to members joining today, looks at challenging and exciting times in our beloved city.

Development pressures are stronger than in many years with about 10 high-rises on the drawing boards or under construction, along with dozens of other projects across the city. And, as a city, we have desperate needs for new housing and commercial space. Each day brings new challenges to our doorstep.

Although sometimes feeling stretched thin, we can be proud of the board members, volunteers and staff. Month in and month out,



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

OAKLAND was the first site of the University of California. See page 10 for more on this year's anniversary.

we spend hours developing and conducting our programs in addition to studying proposals, developing ideas and advocating before city boards and commissions or with developers, architects, planning staff and others in support of our mission.

And a special thank you goes to you for your tax-deductible donations, which were most generous in response to our recent annual appeal letter. Your gifts are critically important to our work.

Finally, I'll ask that we redouble our efforts to build pride in Oakland and its history—and encourage our friends, colleagues and neighbors to join OHA and support our efforts.

The next few years offer us an especially good window for pride-building. Please see my Top Three Items of Pride on the preceding page for some striking examples. ■

CONTRIBUTORS:

Tom Debley, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Daniel Levy, Steve Lindsey, Erika Mailman, Elliott Myles, Naomi Schiff, Valerie Winemiller
PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

MISSION STATEMENT: OHA is a nonprofit membership organization which advocates the protection, preservation and revitalization of Oakland's architectural, historic, cultural and natural resources through publications, education, and direct action.

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Become a member! Explore Oakland's cultural and historic treasures, and receive discounts on OHA events. Membership is a great gift, too!

- \$45 Cornerstone (individual) membership
- \$75 Pilaster (household) membership
- \$110 Pediment (Organization/Corporate) membership
- \$250-\$499 Doric membership
- \$500-\$999 Ionic membership
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Some limited income memberships are available. Call 763-9218 for information.

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Miller Library burns to the ground

By Kathleen DiGiovanni

In this issue we mourn the former library branch building at 1449 Miller Avenue. Lost to fire on February 23 and demolished on April 24, the landmarked building made it almost, but not quite, to its 100th birthday.

Library services began at 23rd Avenue in 1890 with the opening of the 23rd Avenue Reading Room. It was the fourth reading room opened by the library, after West Oakland, East Oakland, and North Oakland, expanding the library's reach beyond the downtown Main Library. The reading rooms did not lend books but were a venue for reading magazines and newspapers. 23rd Avenue was redesignated a branch library around 1911. For the first 28 years, it occupied a series of rented quarters on 23rd and around the corners on E.14th and E.15th Streets.

The reading room was so popular that it was chosen as one of the four permanent branches to be built with a Carnegie grant of \$140,000. Articles in the *Fruitvale Progress* in 1916 and 1917 trace the efforts of East Oakland area improvement clubs in making sure a Carnegie library would be built. Acquiring a site for the new library was not without its own drama. As late as November 1916, the city council favored a site at E. 14th and 8th Avenue while the library board of trustees favored E. 15th and 24th Avenue. In the end, local businessman Henry Root donated the lots at the corner of E.15th and 24th Avenue, land valued at \$10,000.

An *Oakland Examiner* article from July 1, 1917 describes the building to be put up as having the basic Carnegie plan with a delivery room flanked by two reading rooms. These would be sunlit during the day, with windows on three sides, and by "semi-direct electric fixtures at night." The delivery desk would be positioned "that the librarian in charge will have complete command of the two reading rooms and of the main entrance." It was to be able to hold 15,000 books, in addition to magazines and newspapers. The library's lower level would contain another study room and a public meeting room with a capacity of about 250, fitted out with a stage and "electric connections for a moving picture machine." Photos of the branch's interior demonstrate the architects' (Charles Dickey and John J. Donovan) attention to detail. Though no longer located on 23rd Avenue, the new branch building held onto that name for another four and a half decades. It was dedicated March 14, 1918.

In the Oakland History Room's Library Archive, a 1965 letter from the branch manager, Mrs. de Timofeev, asks for a name change: "People tell us they go up and down 23rd Avenue looking for us." The following year, the branch was renamed to honor Ina D. Coolbrith. Monthly reports over the decades paint a picture of a lively neighborhood hub, home to Boy and Girl Scout troops, school visits, plays, English-language classes, parent education classes, public



MILLER LIBRARY, on Miller Avenue side.

meetings, and war bond fundraisers during both world wars. Reports documented the close relationship between librarians and teachers at the nearby Garfield and Lazear schools and featured frequent pleas for more staff. A report dated August 1945 tells the story of an outing the branch librarian took with her Girl Scout troop. They were out at 14th and Broadway when V-J Day was declared. Miss Sterns described the jubilation and chaos on the street and the way she calmed the girls by getting them to sing all the songs they knew on the train home.

A series of letters from William Brett, library director in 1970, assured Garfield teachers and other library patrons that the branch was in no danger of closing. That's exactly what did happen only two years later. The branch library closed in August 1972 and re-opened two months later as the Latin

See **MILLER LIBRARY** on page 8