



## A labor of love: establishing the Temescal History Archive

KATHY GERITZ



JEFF NORMAN IN 2009.

By Pamela Magnuson-Peddle

In 1997, local artist and historian Jeff Norman found himself standing on a sidewalk in Temescal wondering what the neighborhood looked like before there were any buildings. Two decades later, he's making it possible for all of us to answer that question with a gift to the Temescal branch library in honor of its 100th anniversary: an archive of the neighborhood's history.

The library, one of Oakland's five Carnegie libraries, celebrated its centennial with a party on Dec. 8, 2018. The party included speeches from past librarians, a proclamation, a piñata for kids from Temescal's Tool Lending Library, and a letter of congratulations from the original Carnegie Library in Scotland. A highlight of the celebration was the announcement of Norman's gift.

Accepting the Temescal History Archive collection for the library, Steve Lavoie—himself a historian and researcher—described Norman as a community artist and graphic designer known for his historical accuracy and the integrity of his content. In particular, he described Norman's book *Temescal Legacies* as a "monumental piece of work that set a new standard for what local history can be."

Norman has received a number of awards for his work, including three Partners in

Preservation awards from OHA, a 2007 award from the East Bay Express as Best Neighborhood Activist, and a 2014 award from the Sui Generis Foundation for his "one of a kind" contribution to the arts and the East Bay community.

Norman moved to Temescal in 1984 and, as a visual artist and writer, was interested in how words can change the meaning of an image. The question of what his neighborhood might have looked like inspired him to both see Temescal, and approach his work, differently. His first project, the Temescal History Project (1997), an exhibit in several contiguous storefront windows on Telegraph Avenue, explored the neighborhood's development. Working closely with neighborhood artists and historians, he created a video documentary of longtime residents and a walking tour guide published by OHA. The exhibit's opening day included performances, neighborhood events, and tables representing Oakland-based nonprofits. Individuals and neighborhood organizations were part of the conception and result, with funding from local organizations and individuals.

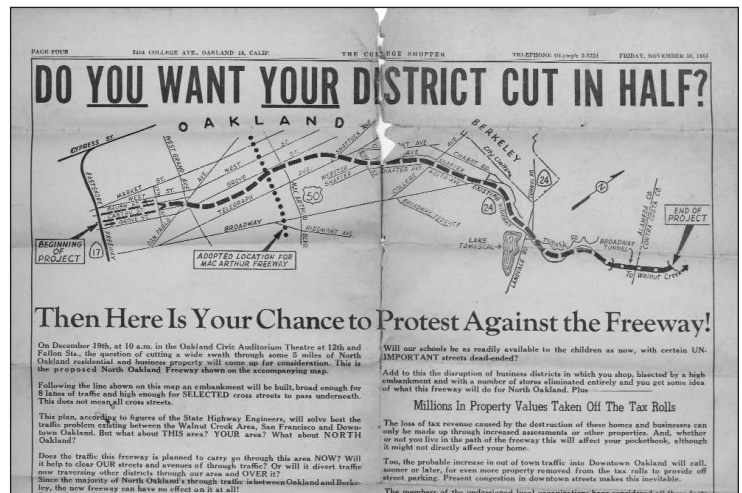
With this first project, he created Shared Ground, an arts initiative committed to working collaboratively, under which name he continues to work.

Believing it is important to celebrate community and strengthen local identity, he has been focusing on Temescal in his work ever since.

Some of Norman's projects with Shared Ground were temporary: the Temescal History Project (1997), "Beyond the Pussy-cat: Nine Lives of a Neighborhood Landmark" (2000),

"Follow the Creek" (2002); and "Faces of Temescal" (2005). Some are published works, such as his two books: *Temescal Album* (1997) and *Temescal Legacies: Narratives of Change from a North Oakland Neighborhood* (2006). Others are permanent: "Firestation 8 History Walk" (2003), a tiled walkway of images and text that tells the interweaving histories of Temescal's development and Station 8; "Postmark Temescal" (2004), a seating area on the Shattuck Avenue side of the Post Office in Temescal that incorporates interpretive elements about the neighborhood's social and natural history; and "You Are Here" (2004), a lobby map installation, window graphic, and interpretive marker revealing the history of 4811 Telegraph Ave. "Reading History," at the Temescal Branch Library, is an exhibit of photographs, maps, documents, and timeline that shows the history of the library and the role it has played in the community. Originally created by Norman and librarian Martha Bergmann (branch manager from 1991 to 2001) to celebrate the library's 90th birthday, an additional panel created in 2018 now brings the story up to date.

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**THE COLLEGE SHOPPER** of Nov. 30, 1956, urged residents to come out to protest the freeway coming through Temescal.



# Temescal

Continued from page 1

Early on, Temescal was defined as a place by Temescal Creek, by whose banks the Huichin Ohlones lived. “Temescal” is a Nahuatl name for sweat lodge, a nod to both the early Native presence and to the Spanish settlers, including Vicente Peralta who later built his adobe near the creek.

Temescal was incorporated into Oakland in 1897. An Italian American community grew up around jobs at the Bilger quarry. This community, reflected in many local names—Genova Delicatessen, Bertola’s restaurant, and the Colombo Club—gave the neighborhood much of its flavor from the 1910s through the ‘60s. The late 1950s to 1960s construction of the Grove-Shafter Freeway divided the Temescal neighborhood, contributing to the loss of many businesses. Today, economic recovery brings its own challenges with changes to older institutions, gentrification, and development pressures.

For the past 10 years, Norman has been working on another Shared Ground project: The Temescal History Archive. It has three components: a paper collection, a database of over 1,250 digital documents with descriptive text, and a website that, when completed, will provide access to these digital documents. Materials for the archive have been variously donated by individuals and institutions, or result from his own research.

The paper collection consists of ephemera, maps, newspapers, photographs, and oral history transcripts that have been collected over the past 20 years. Some Norman collected as research for projects, others are records of neighborhood activities, while others document community efforts in which Norman



**READING** the panels of the installation *Beyond the Pussycat: Nine Lives of a Neighborhood Landmark*.

was directly involved. Included are maps of sanitary and storm sewers, Rancho San Antonio, and the Temescal Creek watershed. Newspapers include local advertisers: *Claremont Press* (1960s) and *Oakland Telegraph* (1950s). These papers were published when the Temescal Merchants Association, at its height, promoted their businesses. They ran ads for local businesses, but also included articles about the neighborhood’s past. The paper collection contains documents from sources both private and institutional, all relating to Temescal’s past and such institutions/landmarks as G&G Hardware, the Pussycat Theater, Idora Park, and the Lusk Cannery. Norman has also collected Temescal-related articles from the *Oakland Tribune* and other publications. Documentation of community efforts with Norman’s involvement include materials about two groups: Temescal Neighbors Together (TNT), formed around the controversial reopening of the Pussycat theater in 1989, and Standing Together for Accountable Neighborhood Development (STAND), created over neighbors’ concerns about large mixed-use developments between 2005 and 2008. Documents relating to the history of Studio One include the community effort to prevent the demolition or sale of the building by the city, the establishment of a City Council task force to address its future, and the role of Friends of Studio One.

All of these materials have been collected with an instinct for what is significant and who would use the materials. Norman has indexed much of this material, but more needs to be done to make it accessible to the public.

With support from library administration, a space at the Temescal branch has been allocated for the paper collection. Finding aids need to be created; details will be worked out. The current plan is for the paper collec-

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**THE OAKLAND TELEGRAPH** celebrated Temescal’s centennial, Oct. 23, 1952.

JEFF NORMAN





tion to serve as a non-circulating reference resource for patrons to use while at the library.

Another key component of the Temescal History Archive is the planned Temescal Over Time website, for which Norman has designed a prototype. (The actual website needs fundraising for a professional website developer.) It will allow for the user to learn about the history, geography and evolution of Temescal. There will be three main ways to search the website: maps, topic, or search terms. A map search will bring up a current map of Temescal with location “pins,” connecting to an item in the database. Clicking on a pin will bring up a thumbnail photo of the location, that when clicked on will link the user to a larger picture and a wealth of information including dates, location, and a context statement making clear the site’s importance. Selecting from several historical maps—e.g., 1857 Julius Kellersberger’s survey maps, 1878 Thompson & West maps, a 1960 census tract map, or a 2003 seismic hazard map—will reveal how the neighborhood developed over the years.

Topic searches will bring up nine themes: Businesses, Events, Institutions, Nature, People, Residences, Schools, Streetscapes, and Transportation. Each will be color-coded on the map to make visualization easier. Selecting any of the themes will lead to a wide range of documents related to that subject. The Collection search option allows the user to go directly to a document in the collection based on the search terms used.



JOHN HARDER COLLECTION

**LOOKING NORTH** up the tracks at 55th Street and Telegraph Avenue, around 1945. This photo of now-demolished buildings appears in Norman’s book, below.

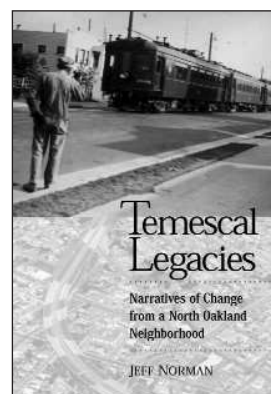
The website will also offer “Extras,” such as the ThenNow feature, which provides 150 side-by-side photos of locations historic and current. Also offered will be a downloadable walking tour guide of Temescal; a “how to” guide to explore the history of your own home; and a comprehensive timeline. Like Norman’s other work, his prototype website is accessible, thorough, well documented, and elegantly designed.

The library administration sees the Temescal Over Time website as a model for other neighborhoods and branch libraries. It is exploring how it can support the website, but in any case, the next step is raising funds for a web developer to take Norman’s prototype design and integrate it with the database.

This archive is a rare gift. The combination of the paper collection, soon to be housed at the Temescal Branch Library, the digital database, and the website, is a special resource

for historians and residents alike who are interested in this neighborhood and how it has developed, and in Oakland history in general. ■

*A past OHA president, Pamela Magnuson-Peddle continues to lead our summer walking tours in East Oakland.*



*Just before we went to press, we learned that Jeff Norman died Aug. 24. It is a deep loss for our community.*

BOTH: JEFF NORMAN



**TWO PAST EXHIBITS** focused attention on Temescal history: the tiles, on site, of “Fire Station 8 History Walk,” above left, and the standing panels of the “Reading History” exhibit in the Temescal Library, above right.



## Charles Johnson Woodbury: an underappreciated writer of Old Oakland

By Dorothy Lazard

A fellow librarian recently dropped off a book here at the Oakland History Room: *Talks with Emerson*, written by Charles Johnson Woodbury. Under his name were the words “Oakland, California.” My colleague Stella wanted to know if I wanted the book for OHR’s collection, figuring this author must have some connection to the city.

Who was this person? I wanted to know. And what, more importantly, was his connection to Oakland? It wasn’t hard to find out.

Born in September 1844 in Beverly, Massachusetts, Woodbury was a writer, journalist, editor, professor of literature, and poet.

Before coming to California, he published the book in question (originally published as *Talks with Ralph Waldo Emerson*) in 1890. In the book, Emerson and Woodbury discuss transcendentalism, literary criticism, and manhood. Emerson tutored Woodbury at Amherst College from 1862 to 1864. Woodbury’s book was so popular that it was adopted by public schools as a required text.

During his journalism career, Woodbury interviewed Confederate President Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the Confederacy. He also covered the building of the Union Pacific railroad. For many years he served as the California correspondent for the *New York Post*. Challenged as most writers are by the need to make a living, Woodbury also worked outside of the arts. According to the 1887 San Francisco Business Directory, he worked as an oil company executive, a position he held before coming to California. His success in business made it possible for him to support local writers.

In Oakland, Woodbury lived at 1428 Brush St. He was quite the literary host, holding salons in his home for the likes of

NYPL DIGITAL COLLECTIONS



**WOODBURY** made the front page of the *Tribune* May 12, 1927, at right, for his friendship with Emerson, above.



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

Helen Hunt Jackson, Joaquin Miller, and literary celebrities who visited the area. Before his move to California, he counted among his cohort Henry Ward Beecher, Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott, and Mark Twain.

Frustrated with his fortunes in the literary circles of the East Bay, he and his family left Oakland. The Oakland office of the *San Francisco Examiner* published a lengthy profile of him, mourning his departure. The article, entitled “No Grass for Pegasus” (referencing the mythic horse on Mt. Olympus), was published July 23, 1895, and declared:

“He says there is no field in California for literary work . . . Oakland does not know Mr. Woodbury very well. He has lived here fifteen years and has been identified with the

Berkeley Club, the Emerson Club, of which he is the founder; the Starr King Fraternity, the Ebel [sic] Society and other literary organizations, but he has not sought personal recognition and Oakland passes him by on the street without knowing him. . . .”

According to the article, Woodbury’s literary works were much more favorably received in the East. He left Oakland to manage a mercantile business in Milwaukee but at some point returned to the city, where he died at age 82 in May 1927.

Former Governor George C. Pardee was one of his pallbearers. His obituary in the *Oakland Tribune* called him “one of the pioneer oil men of the country” and an “intimate of literary lights of a generation ago.” At the time of his death, he was believed to be Ralph Waldo Emerson’s oldest surviving student. Despite his frustrations with his literary impact on Oakland, he certainly left a legacy. A dive into the newspaper database reveals that his daughter Delight Woodbury married Edward De Laveaga who helped establish the town of Orinda in the 1920s. She was a prominent leader in the world of social, civic and charitable works.

Like leaves on a stream, questions float unexpectedly into the Oakland History Room and enrich our understanding of our city and the collections here. The elegiac *Examiner* article is now a part of the Oakland History Room’s vertical files collection. Woodbury’s book on Emerson remains a part of the Oakland Main Library’s collection. ■

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### Sharp-eyed readers write in

We very much enjoyed the latest issue of the *OHA News* and great subject for an article (“African Americans and the Transcontinental Railroad”). Just a minor note: someone probably already brought this to your attention, but the reference to Tennessee as a border state that had not seceded is incorrect. Tennessee seceded and joined the Confederacy after the start of the Civil War, whereas Delaware and Maryland, along with Missouri and Kentucky—all slave states—remained uncommitted.

—Joe and Doris Brown

### TO THE YOUTH OF THE LAND WHO ASPIRE.

I BELIEVE you will find herein the person of him whom you have never seen, but who may have been to you already a good genius, and taken an unshared place.

Take his words to me as what he would have said to you.

CHARLES J. WOODBURY.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

**THE DEDICATION** inside the front cover of *Talks with Emerson*.

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM





## OHA tour's narrow escape with an unsafe wall!

By Naomi Schiff

OHA welcomes your participation in discussions and advocacy about preservation in Oakland. Here are some recent updates.

■ **CCA moving to San Francisco, hopes to leave 589 units and an altered campus in its wake:** An Environmental Impact Report is being prepared for a proposal by California College of the Arts, Emerald Fund and Community Equity Builders. CCA is abandoning Oakland for a new nest in San Francisco, to inhabit a tech paradise and to partake of the ambient wealth. The project proposes to support CCA's endowment with a real estate deal creating 589 units in two 5-8-story buildings and a 19-story tower on the historic 1907 campus, while providing about 35 "affordable" units in a studio building across the street.

While the National Register-listed Treadwell Mansion (Macky Hall) and its carriage house would survive, the overall Area of Primary Importance would change drastically. The proposal would relocate the carriage house, demolish much of the wall along Broadway, and rework the familiar landscape. However, a group of neighbors is suggesting alternative schemes for development (<https://ubaoakland.org/>). A rescheduled Planning Commission hearing on the Notice of Preparation of EIR is Oct. 16, and the new comment deadline is Oct. 18.

■ **Downtown Plan reappears:** Community Benefits? Or just more upzoning? The long-running Plan Downtown effort continues, with a revised draft expected August 30. A number of commenting groups have been advocating for robust community benefits should the plan indicate upzoning or intensi-

fied density. OHA is requesting a system for Transfer of Development Rights, in which historic properties can be preserved in exchange for providing additional density on less-sensitive sites, an approach used to great effect in San Francisco. We have also been advocating to preserve the Produce Market, some of Oakland's oldest commercial buildings on lower Broadway, the Arts and Garage District around 23rd–25th Streets between Broadway and Telegraph, and a general approach that respects the historic built environment as design review guidelines are drawn up.

■ **Old Parkway future hazy:**

After considerable community back-and-forth about plans to install a cannabis business in the historic Parkway Theater on Park Boulevard, project sponsor Bill Koziol withdrew his application for a conditional use permit to allow gatherings and perhaps reuse the theater, and is apparently pursuing a lesser renovation program requiring fewer approvals and not much public discussion. His final plan remains unclear. Kat Ferreira has been monitoring progress. Can the interior space be maintained? Where will the cannabis operations be carried out? Will the public be able to enter, whether they are cannabis customers or not?

It is possible that the developer may be renovating the theater space even though he withdrew his request for a public assembly use. The dispensary permit was already approved so anyone over 21 can go to an inside, upstairs area to purchase various weed products. It appears that the lobby would remain an entry area, perhaps a location for security services.



JOE JOHNSTON



NAOMI SCHIFF

**THE SHOCKING** "before and after" shots of the 23rd Street wall that OHA tour-goers saw in its last upright moments.

■ **Auditorium Plan moves forward:** After last-minute negotiations with a coalition of arts groups, an appeal to the Orton Company's plan to rehab and reuse the landmark Oakland Auditorium as the "Oakland Civic" was withdrawn. The plan was approved by the City Council, with a 99-year lease and a development agreement. Orton will provide some reduced rents and subsidies for local arts groups and provide access to performance spaces, as part of the deal. Work is expected to begin in 2020, and everyone on all sides of the negotiations hopes the building will finally come back to life. The reuse plan had to pass reviews and address comments by the California State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.

■ **OHA tour evades danger!** As Valerie Winemiller described the retention of an old wall on 23rd Street as part of a new hotel development, rapt tourgoers had no idea that it would be the last time they'd see the arched openings intact. Shortly after the Broadway-Valdez walking tour, subsequent foundation excavations caused the wall to become unstable; city building inspectors found it a collapse hazard, and by the end of the day, it was no more! Luckily, stalwart Oakland photographer Joe Johnston had captured the OHA visit to the site. A follow-up visit showed a heap of rubble. ■

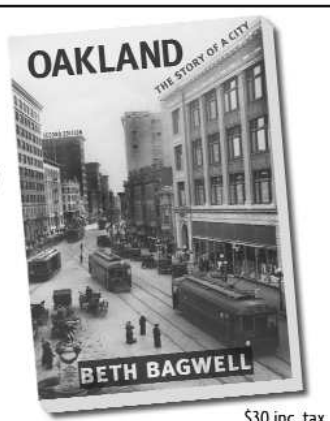
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## Murder and bovine plummeting: the Overland comes to Oakland

By Dennis Evanosky

Oakland is approaching the 150th anniversary of an event that changed its standing from a small city to a bustling capital of commerce. At 8 a.m. sharp on November 8, 1869, a Central Pacific Railroad train—Oakland's first-ever transcontinental railroad train, or Overland, as the system became known—departed for points east. Later that same evening Oakland's first westbound train arrived.

Passengers on that second train passed celebratory bonfires along the way. They reached Seventh Street to see a flower-bedecked arch—nineteen feet high, the height of all those snow tunnels in the Sierra Nevada. The sound of a 37-gun salute startled them. The number matched the states in the Union that war had divided just four years earlier. "The emigrant train," someone called it. "Once drawn by oxen, now pulled by a locomotive."

While Oakland had much to celebrate that November day, the city could not lay claim to the prize as the Overland's first West Coast terminus. That privilege belonged to the town of Woodstock on the west end of the peninsula that would become part of the City of Alameda in 1872. An abbreviated version of the first transcontinental train arrived at Woodstock's pier on September 6, 1869.

This train carried Leland Stanford, one of the Central Pacific Railroad's "associates." We remember these men—Stanford, Charles Crocker, Collis Huntington and Mark Hopkins—as the "Big Four." Alfred A. Cohen rode along with Stanford. The state

fair was in full swing in Sacramento that day. Cohen and Stanford hoped to entice fairgoers from San Francisco and Oakland to ride the train, instead of the ferry, to the state capital. They paid for advertisements in San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento's newspapers advertising their idea.

Cohen had built the railroad—the San Francisco & Alameda—that carried the September 6 train to its destination, a pier at the foot of today's Pacific Avenue. The train rolled out over the waters of San Francisco Bay to meet the ferryboat Alameda, which carried Stanford, Cohen and their fellow passengers to San Francisco.

Just as would happen in Oakland two months later, people waited with great anticipation for the train to arrive at its first stop in Alameda, the station at today's Lincoln Avenue and Park Street. They waited. They drank the beer and ate the food. They waited some more. Finally at 10 p.m., the train rolled in, some four hours late, on the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad's tracks to the waiting ferryboat.

Cohen had also owned the San Francisco & Oakland Railroad, acquired from his uncle Rodman Gibbons. Gibbons had overextended himself trying to stretch his railroad from Seventh Street and Broadway in Oakland to today's 14th Avenue near the towns of Clinton and San Antonio. He hoped to cash in on the ferries that carried passengers to San Francisco from two wharves: one at the town of San Antonio, the other at the foot of Leviathan Street in the town of Encinal (today's Grand Street in Alameda.)



GOOGLE MAPS

**AT DEAD COW CURVE**, carved by Alameda Creek, a sordid history unfolded for the transcontinental railroad.

By Sept. 6, both the San Francisco & Alameda and San Francisco and Oakland railroads belonged to the Big Four. Cohen had sold them, along with their ferries and wharves, to the Central Pacific Railroad. He received almost \$300,000 in return, some \$9 million translated to today's spending power.

Both railroads carried their passengers to the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay. The question arises: Why didn't the Central

See **OVERLAND** on page 7

### Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members through mid-August 2019:

Darby Brandli, Lony Castro & Marvin Johnson, Amy Cheifetz, Sandra Costa, Steve Costa, Lauren Debo, Alma & Bill Delucchi, Weylin Eng, Lewis & Debbie Epstein, Mitch Huitema, Garth Kimball, James Yuanxin Li, Allegro Lundy, Grey Lyons, Maria Magallon, Anne McSilver, Gary & Cathie Milliken, Claire Mischeaux, Kara Nielsen, Janet Noble, Stacy Owens, Tara Parker-Essig, Sanford Weitzner, John Winters, Bruce Wolfe, Page Yarwood, Heidi Yoder

### We thank our recent donors

George Duncan, Karen Graf & Wes Wagnon, Kathryn & Robert Gustafson, Jacci Harris, Thomas & Barbara Job, Piedmont Gardens Resident Council, Ann Steppan, Ilene Weinreb

### WE THANK OUR RECENT VOLUNTEERS

#### SPEAKERS/TOUR LEADERS

Lecture, "Jack London, Then & Now": Speaker Steve Vigeant & Host Warren Dewey  
Walking Tour Leaders: Phil Bellman, Ernest Chann, Paul Brekke-Miesner, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Dennis Evanosky, Pamela Magnuson-Peddle, Betty Marvin, Liam O'Donoghue, Richard Orlando, Jon Rusch, Naomi Schiff, Stu Swiedler & Ron Hook, Valerie Winemiller, Page Yarwood

#### VOLUNTEERS

Lectures: Lisa Hire, Wally Holmen, Gary Knecht  
Walking Tours: Charles Buckner, Tom Debley, Alison Finlay, Joyce Hendy, Neil Heyden, Lisa Hire, Kitty Hughes, Arthur Levy, Daniel Levy, Malory Lynch, Amelia Marshall, Lisa McLaughlin, Katherine Purev, Kathy Rogers, Naomi Schiff, Rebecca Wee, Janice Yager

**Special thanks** to Oakland Police Department officers Telisha Anderson, Brandon Beal, Ricardo Gomez, Ernesto Hernandez, Wesley Huynh, Donald Perrier, Ruben Reyes & Julie Yu, who volunteered to attend tours as part of the department's efforts to build community ties with the city & its nonprofit organizations.





# Overland

*Continued from page 6*

Pacific Railroad simply run trains into San Francisco? The answer lies deep in today's Niles Canyon at place called "Dead Cow Curve," and has all the markings of best-selling fiction, with failure and murder stemming from the "Curse of Dead Cow Curve."

Alameda Creek shaped this curve—infamous to railroad buffs like myself—in today's Niles Canyon east of the railroad bridge at Farwell. The curve has steep hills, and often cows grazing above the Creek would lose their balance, fall into the ravine below, and die: a very *moo-ving* plight.

The men who built the successful San Francisco & San Jose Railroad in 1863—Timothy Dame, Peter Donahue and Charles McLaughlin—decided to form the Western Pacific Railroad. They planned to use this company to build another iron road, to Sacramento.

The project was a disaster. They and their crews worked to lay the first 20 miles of track, knowing they wouldn't see any money from the federal government until they did. Unfortunately, they ran out of money while

working. They reached Mile 20 at Dead Cow Curve. The government inspectors arrived in early October 1866 to certify the railroad's work. They told McLaughlin that he would get his money but not until the following January; there was paperwork, they explained. The Western Pacific was working on land that formerly (and may have still) belonged to the Spanish who had first laid claim to it.

An angry McLaughlin walked off the job, leaving rails, ties, equipment, locomotives, and—most disturbing—his workers behind. One of the contractors, Jerome Cox, was expecting to receive \$50,000, about \$1.5 million in today's money. McLaughlin could not pay Cox, and for the next 17 years, Cox took McLaughlin to court time and again. He always lost and accused his rival of paying off the judges.

Finally, he had had enough.

On Dec. 14, 1883, Cox walked into McLaughlin's office at 16 Montgomery St. in San Francisco, armed with a pistol. McLaughlin rose to greet him. Cox drew his weapon and shot him dead.

"He asked me for \$40,000. When I refused, he shot me," McLaughlin said with his dying breath. "It's a lie," Cox insisted. Many people

knew of McLaughlin's chicanery and sided with Cox.

Cox never faced a jury. He was found not guilty at the coroner's inquest.

In the meantime, the Central Pacific Railroad had built its wharves and had been running trains into Oakland on two lines: passengers down Seventh Street and freight on First Street. The railroad got the rights to run its goods along the Oakland Estuary thanks to the flimflam of Horace and Edward Carpentier and their Oakland Waterfront Company.

The Big Four had more twaddle to lay on the table. They wanted to build wharves on today's Yerba Buena Island in a scheme rivals dubbed "The Goat Island Grab," after the popular name for the pesky landmass the lay between Oakland and the railroad's real goal: San Francisco.

The transcontinental railroad never reached San Francisco, despite what all its advertising promised. Did Jerome Cox place "The Curse of Dead Curve" on the Big Four? Or did Theodore Judah jinx the railroad when the stagecoach and express company owners drove him to Sacramento with his crazy plans for a railroad across the Sierra? Some even blame Confederate President Jefferson Davis. He wanted the transcontinental railroad to run though the South.

More likely? There was no curse. It was simply a matter of who could talk the Big Four into the best way to reach the Pacific, and Oakland won. For better or worse, we have Alfred Cohen, his uncle Rodman, and Horace and Edward Carpentier to thank for this. And we have much to celebrate. ■

*Dennis Evanosky is a noted history writer and a wonderful OHA summer tour guide.*



COHEN-BRAY HOUSE

**ALFRED A. COHEN** built the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad in 1864. Four years later, he acquired the San Francisco & Oakland Railroad from his uncle. He sold both to the Central Pacific Railroad in 1868 for a tidy sum, \$9 million by today's reckoning. This painting hangs in the Cohen-Bray House in Oakland.

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM



**THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD** replaced the San Francisco & Oakland Railroad's station with this building, seen in 1938, to serve passengers on its Big Red trains. Note the CPRR monogram that recalls the Central Pacific Railroad. In 1939, the Mexican grocery store Mi Rancho took over the building. Trains continued to run on these tracks until March 21, 1941. The building stands today as Oakland Landmark No. 65.



## West Oakland's unexpected connection to Abraham Lincoln

By Erika Mailman

Our newsletter has been full of train news recently, both because it is such a fascinating topic, but also because this year marks the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the transcontinental railroad in Oakland. On a family visit to the east coast this summer, I found a wholly unexpected connection between Lincoln and our city. In Manchester, Vermont, the elegant manor home Hildene was once the residence of Robert Todd Lincoln, Abraham and Mary's only child to live to adulthood. He and his mother had vacationed in Vermont when he was a child, and he always vowed to return to build a home there. Today, Hildene is a house museum with extensive grounds . . . and a little surprise parked at the end of a brief walkway through the woods.

A Pullman car lies at the "terminus" (forgive me) of that line, painted a glossy green and with eyepopping velvet interiors. For a time, Robert Lincoln was president of the Pullman Company of sleeping cars, after the death of founder George Pullman in 1897. A small exhibit at the site looks at the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the powerful African American labor union.

The Hildene docent told us that the porters—by dictate, African American

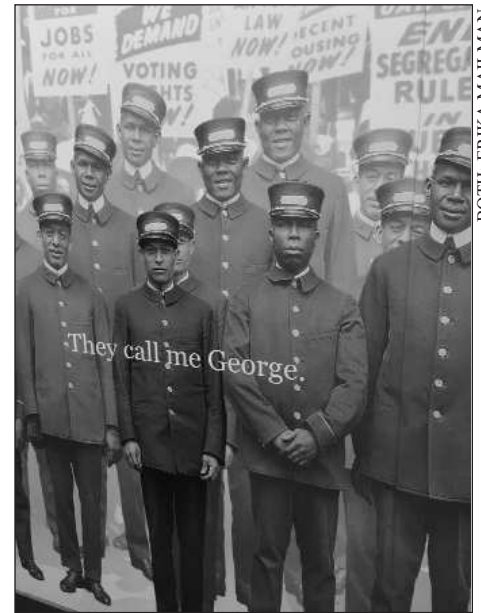
men—were obliged to stay up all night in case a patron wanted a glass of water at 3 a.m. Porters had to buy their own food and pay for their uniforms and shoeshine kits. In a racist policy, all porters were called George: their boss's name.

As Dorothy Lazard wrote in her excellent article in the last newsletter, George Pullman initially employed African Americans without paying wages; tips from travelers provided the only income. Porters were forced to live west of Adeline Street in West Oakland to be readily available for work at the Wood Street Station trains. In 1925, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters formed: the nation's first Black labor union chartered with the American Federation of Labor. Despite the "brother" in the name, the union was for male porters and female maids.

Brotherhood founder and first president A. Philip Randolph hailed from Chicago, while Texas-born Oakland resident C.L. Dellums was vice president and second president. The two worked to bargain for fair treatment for the porters—and went on to do much more for Civil Rights, more than can be tackled in this quick summary. In 1927, the Brotherhood filed a case with the Interstate Commerce Commission to investigate the poor treatment of porters, but the ICC said this

was out of its jurisdiction. The next year, the Brotherhood prepared to strike, but called it off just hours before it was to begin, fearing that the fledgling union was not yet strong enough to go toe to toe with the behemoth company. Membership dropped dramatically after the canceled strike.

After 12 years of back and forth attempts to negotiate with the Pullman Company, retaliatory firings



BOTH: ERIKA MAILMAN

**PULLMAN PORTERS** photograph on display at Hildene near the Pullman car.

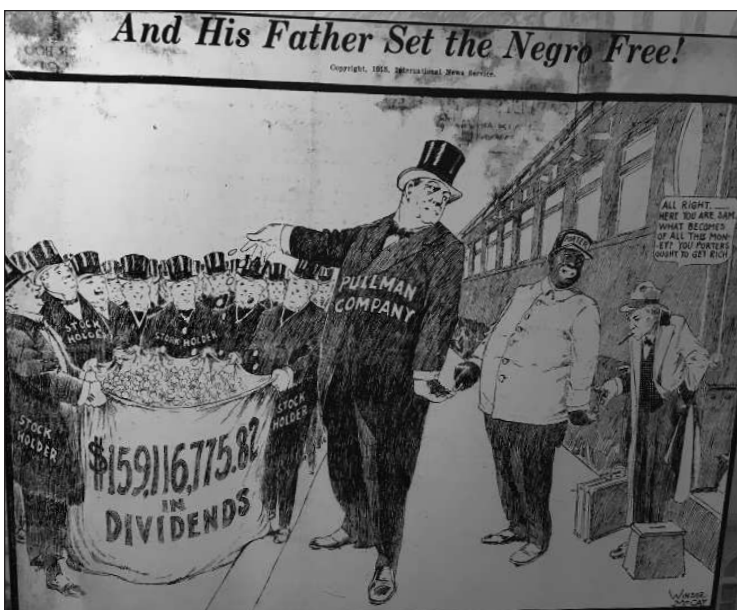
of Dellums and others, corporate spying, and unflagging devotion from Brotherhood leadership, the Pullman Company finally relented. The 1937 contract raised wages for porters and maids, created a more fair work week in terms of hours worked, established overtime pay, and guaranteed free uniforms for workers (but not until after ten years of employment).

Hildene's display on the porters is thought-provoking and provides an interesting counterpoint to Robert Lincoln's role as son of the man who led our nation out of slavery.

And to close, here's a possibly surprising look at another way the Pullman Company's aggressive power shaped our lives . . . well, at least our Septembers.

The company had never been kind to its workers, white or black; a famous Pullman Strike took place in 1894, starting in Chicago. Four thousand factory workers were enraged at the cut to their wages while their company rental housing stayed at the same price. In the resulting riots, 30 workers were killed and \$80 million in property damage was sustained. Eugene Debs had worked to organize employees and was imprisoned for six months. Cities across the U.S. saw violence as a result of the boycott. In the Presidio across the bay, you can still see an

See **BROTHERHOOD** on page 9



A 1915 NEWSPAPER editorial cartoon shows the Pullman Company's poor treatment of porters while stockholders benefited, a display at Hildene.





## Brotherhood

*Continued from page 8*

obelisk memorializing four soldiers killed in a train wreck in Sacramento caused by, some allege, the dynamiting of a trestle bridge by strikers.

As a direct result of this strike, President Grover Cleveland set aside a day to placate laborers—and this is why we have Labor Day. ■

**THE INTERIOR** of the car parked at Hildene, at right, shows the slanted cupboards that fold down to provide upper berths. Below right is the exterior, and below left is Hildene in Vermont.

ALL: ERIKA MAILMAN



## Look for three great fall evenings!

■ 7 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 19, at OK STEREO, 299 3rd St, 3rd floor: **William S. Porter, MD—Jack London’s Personal Physician and Friend**, Richard M. Rocco, Ph.D. Dr. Rocco explores Dr. Porter’s eclectic life and contributions. Porter performed the first Caesarean section in the East Bay and founded Merritt Hospital (now Alta



**WILLIAM S. PORTER:** by Richard Langtry Partington (1868–1929) Oakland Museum of California, OMCA A53.404

Bates Summit Medical Center). A trained sculptor and art patron, he opened Oakland’s first public art gallery in the Municipal Auditorium. His donations helped start the Oakland Museum of California. Members of the Bohemian crowd, he and Jack London became friends. London became Porter’s patient as well. “Life

is an idiot that such a man should be gone,” a fellow physician said at Porter’s funeral. \$10 members/\$15 nonmembers

■ Thursday, Oct. 17, doors 6 p.m., event at 7, First Unitarian Church, 14th St. /Castro: **Partners in Preservation Awards + Celebration.** Marvel at the splendid restoration of historic buildings and celebrate the lifetime achievement of Temescal’s most prominent historian! And watch for a surprise from a revered cultural organization. Early bird pricing in advance through Eventbrite: \$10 members, \$15 non-members. Tickets at the door: \$15 members, \$20 non-members. Refreshments/wine with \$5 donation.

■ 7 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 21, at OK STEREO, 299 3rd St, 3rd floor: **BART, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow**, Michael C. Healy, former BART Media & Public Affairs head. At BART for 32 years, Healy once lived on a Sausalito houseboat and was managing editor of *Marin Guide Publications*. He worked for CBS in Hollywood, and as a contract writer for radio in New York. In the 1970s, he wrote a raucous motorcycle movie at Paramount Studios called *The Dirt Gang*. He has written a book about BART, numer-

## Harvesting a bumper crop of Mills Act applications

*By Naomi Schiff*

Wending through city approvals, a dozen Mills Act tax abatement applications received the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board go-ahead in July. To quote the staff report, “The Mills Act is a California state law passed in 1972 that allows property owners and local jurisdictions to contract for a potential property tax reduction for historic properties, using an alternate appraisal formula. The state law also establishes a ten-year perpetually renewing contract term and penalties for non-fulfillment of the contract. Local governments (city or county) that elect to participate design other aspects of their own programs, such as eligibility criteria and work program requirements. Oakland requires that the property have local historic designation (Landmark, Heritage Property, S-7, or S-20) and commits the owner to spending the amount of tax savings on . . . improvements that restore or maintain the historic exterior character of the building or its structural integrity. The relatively small tax benefit gives owners the means and motivation for high quality historically appropriate improvements, and can be especially beneficial for underutilized or under-maintained properties. . . . Oakland has approved 70 Mills Act contracts since the first contracts in 2008.”

Ranging across neighborhoods, the applications include homes such as 418 Jefferson St., built in 1869 by William Read—a modest Victorian in West Oakland; 2600 Best Ave., the 1922 Charles and Coral Quayle house in Maxwell Park; a commercial structure, the former Chapel of the Oaks, at 3007 Telegraph Ave.; and the Bellevue-Staten, 492 Staten Ave, a well-known landmark consisting of 36 apartments near Lake Merritt.

The program runs on a yearly cycle. Visit <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/historic-preservation> or email Betty Marvin at the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, [bmarvin@oaklandca.gov](mailto:bmarvin@oaklandca.gov). ■

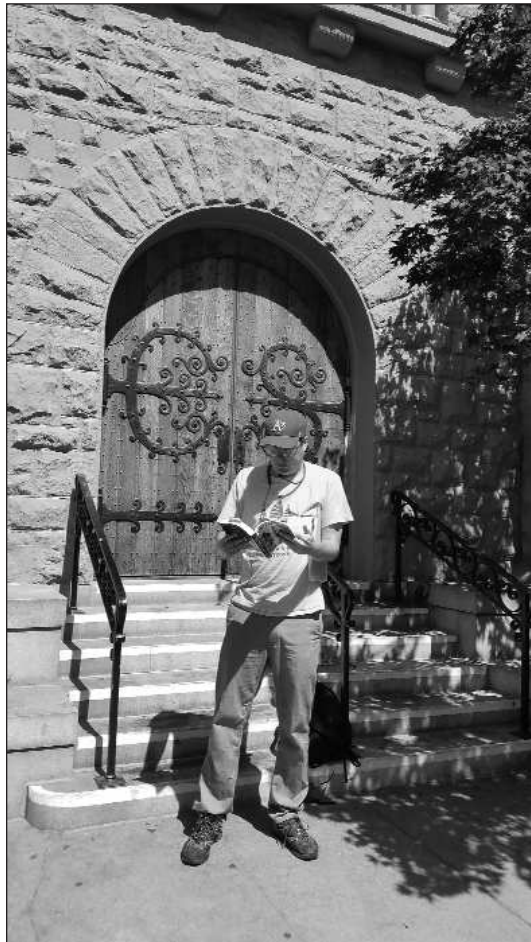
ous articles on transportation, and is now a contributor to *Oakland* and *Alameda* magazines. \$10 members/\$15 nonmembers. **Event details:** [www.oaklandheritage.org](http://www.oaklandheritage.org) or <http://tinyurl.com/oha-events>. ■





# Summer walking tours: as always, a blast and informative!

ANNE MCSILVER



DANIEL LEVY



AMELIA MARSHALL

ANNE MCSILVER



DANIEL LEVY

**ON TOUR**, clockwise from top left, Liam O'Donoghue, creator of the East Bay Yesterday podcast, consults *Oakland, Story of a City*, as he leads the Long Lost Oakland tour. Page Yarwood at 645 Haddon Road, a large home on the Haddon Hill tour. Tourgoers were invited into two homes, and to a party afterwards, graciously hosted by the neighborhood. Betty Marvin, city preservation planner, points out a restoration project during the Old West Waterfront and Lower Broadway tour. Chris Porto, whose company Smart Growth is restoring the antique commercial building at Broadway and Third, is to her left. Ernest Chan shows walkers unique goods on the Chinatown tour, as well as buildings and cultural institutions. Tourgoers embark on the High Road Along Trestle Glen's Key System B Line, at the Lakeshore Highlands Portal on Longridge at Trestle Glen, led by Ron Hook and Stu Swiedler.





## Change in cities is inevitable, so let's do it right

By Tom Debley, President

In 1931, the *Oakland Tribune* ran an article about a family that lived on a 17-acre farm in the heart of today's downtown Oakland. The parents had come to Oakland from Brooklyn, New York, in 1855—just three years after Oakland was incorporated.

In a story that has repeated itself time and time again, the 14-room, two-story home the family built for its nine children was torn down in 1921. The farm fell to the development of downtown. Demolition of the house, on 17th Street between Broadway and Franklin Street, made way for the now-historic Wakefield Building.

Steps away from the Wakefield was the 1903 Civic Center Post Office, on the corner of 17th and Broadway, which moved to 13th Street in 1932. Today, the site is home to a sleek, new 34-story luxury apartment high-rise called "17th & Broadway."

All of this is to say that cities change. What is different in Oakland today is that for almost four decades OHA has worked to preserve essential elements of our historic fabric across the city.

Our work is carried out from our current headquarters, located in the same block as the changes I outlined above. And for that

work we have you – our members and volunteers – to thank for being at our side financially, with support through dues and gifts, as well as with your time as volunteers. We are most grateful for that, for you are the citizens who—as we say in our annual Partners in Preservation awards—are “enhancing Oakland for all its citizens.”

The work is not always easy. There are setbacks, of course. A couple years ago, we lost the classic Space Age, Googie-style Biff's Coffee Shop on 27th Street to “demolition by neglect,” whereby it became too dilapidated to save. It has been replaced by a modern high-rise apartment building across Broadway from the 1914 First Presbyterian Church, itself an eclectic blend of Neo-Gothic and Beaux Arts styles.

Conversely, with OHA as the one organization tracking historic issues and advocating month-in and month-out for decades, two of our city's most important historic structures are being restored and will soon be open again after being shuttered for years.

Just five years after it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and declared an Oakland Historic Landmark, the Key System Building at 11th and Broadway was heavily damaged by the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. Now, after being shuttered

for 30 years, this seven-story, steel frame and brick Beaux Arts building built in 1911 is being restored.

And City Council recently gave final approval to renovation, restoration and reopening of the Oakland Civic Auditorium, a major center of civic life in Oakland since that Beaux Arts structure opened in 1915. Work on this historic landmark should begin in 2020, bringing an end to the shuttered vacancy that began with its closure in 2006.

In our last newsletter, I said, “Civic leaders must do more to protect historic assets that still are threatened.” One way that OHA gives them incentive to do that is through an active membership that supports our work.

May I ask you to consider three ways to continue to foster that? First, each year, when your membership expires, please renew at whatever level best fits your budget. Second, if you can, consider a higher membership level. Lastly, soon you will receive our annual appeal letter. Please consider a gift to help sustain our organization. Thank you for your gifts in the past, and if you can afford to give more this year, we will be grateful.

Our founding president Beth Bagwell said, “This is our inheritance. What we do with it is our choice.” If we want civic leaders to support historic preservation, they will be better motivated by knowing that hundreds of OHA members support our mission. ■

### CONTRIBUTORS:

Tom Debley, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Dennis Evanosky, Kathy Geritz, Joyce Hendy, Joe Johnston, Dorothy Lazard, Daniel Levy, Anne McSilver, Erika Mailman, Amelia Marshall, Pamela Magnuson-Peddle, Jeff Norman, Naomi Schiff

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
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## Delivered by a horse named Vanilla!

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

What's your favorite kind of Mother's Cookie? Me, I love Circus Animals the best. Did you know that Mother's Cookies is an Oakland original? That's right. Here's the story.

According to company lore, in 1914 a newspaper vendor named Noah M. Wheatley struggled to make a living at Market and Kearny. An elderly couple would walk by daily, carrying a covered basket. One day, Wheatley struck up a conversation and learned that the couple was selling home-baked vanilla cookies door-to-door. Wheatley bought a cookie, tasted it, and bought the recipe from the couple on the spot. His newspaper hawking days were over.

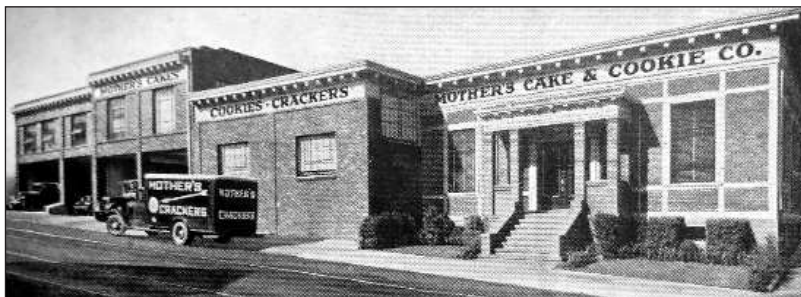
He set up shop in Oakland in those post-earthquake days, in a makeshift bakery at 1115-13th Ave. behind Olander's Saloon. A one-man enterprise, he baked his vanilla cookies in batches, about 2,000 cookies a night, in a three-foot-square oven, and delivered them to stores on a wagon drawn by a horse named Vanilla. In due course, Wheatley hired an assistant Leopoldine, who became Mrs. Wheatley.

Why the name Mother's? Again according to company lore, it was inspired by President Woodrow Wilson's 1914 proclamation of the first national Mother's Day.

Mother's advertised heavily in the *Tribune* during World War I, urging shoppers to eat Mother's "on a hike," "on a motor trip," or "with berries." In other war-era advertising,

the bakery identified its products as a good buy because it hadn't raised prices despite wartime increases in the cost of raw materials. Around this time, the product line expanded to include fruitcake and fig bars.

If you bought Mother's cookies in the early 1920s you'd get a Pacific Coast League baseball card in the package. If you worked for Mother's, you might even have played on the company baseball team. By that time, too,



**MOTHER'S** housed in the East 18th Street bakery designed by Walter J. Mathews, as seen in the 1945 *Tribune Yearbook*.

Mother's Cookies had outgrown its little bakery. In 1922, Wheatley bought a building at 1148 East 18th St., selling his house and even the family piano to finance the purchase.

Mother's ovens would now be housed in a Walter J. Mathews-designed building that had been put up in 1906 for Home Telephone, an early Oakland exchange later absorbed into Pacific Telephone. The next decades brought more success, leading Wheatley to add on to the complex in 1926, 1928, and 1935.

On Aug. 1, 1944, the *Tribune* announced "Bakery Firm Buys Land for Expansion."

Wheatley had purchased a 12-acre site on 81st Avenue at San Leandro Street where the new bakery, opened in 1949, could turn out a million cookies in 90 minutes. Eventually, Mother's workforce expanded to 750, working three shifts a day.

After Wheatley's death in 1955, Leopoldine and their son Floyd ran the business until it was sold in 1983 to Generale Biscuit of France. After that, Mother's cookies went through a number of corporate hands until it went bankrupt in 2008. Production in Oak-

land had already come to an end two years earlier, in 2006.

At the end of 2008, Kellogg's bought the Mother's name and recipes and resumed production, though not returning to Mother's hometown. Just this year, Kellogg's sold the Mother's cookie business to Ferrero SpA, maker

of Nutella and those little nut-coated chocolate candies.

What happened to the Mother's plant on East 18th after the cookies moved out? Oakland directories tell us that until the early 1970s the site was home to Gilson Electric Supply, then occupied from 1974 to 1994 by National Import Co. And today? A development project begun in 1997 by GMB Realty Partners transformed the complex into Mother's Cookies Lofts, 21 live/work rental units, some of which retain elements of the old bakery, like oven doors and roll-up doors. ■

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM