

Intertribal Friendship House wins Partners in Preservation award

By Kathryn Hughes

As always, this year's Partners in Preservation Awards honored projects we are proud to recognize. The awards ceremony is a feel-good evening of celebrating what is great about Oakland and who has worked hard to preserve and reuse that greatness for years to come. Here are some of the projects that won this year:

■ **The Intertribal Friendship House**, 523 International Boulevard. Category: Stewardship and Education

It was fitting that we acknowledged this important Native American cultural resource so soon after Oct. 14, a date now celebrated in many quarters as Indigenous Peoples Day. The Native American experience forms the bedrock of our local history, the origins of our city's story as far back as we can trace it.

The Intertribal Friendship House (IFH) was established in 1955 as one of the first urban American Indian community centers in the nation, and in response to the Federal Government's Relocation Program that removed Native Americans from reservations to relocate in urban areas. Billed as a means of providing more employment opportunities, this program resulted in unforeseen consequences, including extreme poverty and stressed families mourning the loss of traditional, supportive communities. Many Native people and their descendants never returned to their home reservations, and their sense of specific tribal identity was significantly diminished or lost.

From the outset, the IFH provided significant social support and assistance to the new arrivals as they adjusted to Bay Area living. Today, IFH continues to serve as a significant and viable community anchor for Bay Area Native American families. It is a cultural oasis, a place in the



DANCERS from the Intertribal Friendship House perform at the PIP awards ceremony, including Anavey Smith, Kyona Dodson Young, and Tank Dodson Young.

urban homeland where they can express their diverse cultures and sustain their families through their cultural expression.

At the IFH, cultural keepers teach the native traditions through ongoing workshops, performances, and other activities. In many cases, it is one of the few places that keeps the connection to culture and traditions through pow wow dance, drumming, beading classes, language classes, native gardening, and the many social gatherings, cultural events, and ceremonies that are held there.

Many activities at the IFH, including pow wows, are open to the public and help expose local citizens to the rich indigenous traditions, arts, and crafts here in Oakland.

By keeping American Indian culture alive, the IFH promotes the growing awareness that we in the Bay Area are living on indigenous land. Histories of Oakland, like our own *Oakland, Story of a City*, most often begin with a description of the Ohlone Indians, their lifestyles and environment. This history has often been overlooked by the general public.

Recently, news stories are drawing attention to new initiatives, including the Sogorea Te land Trust, to repatriate native lands.

Tommy Orange, author of the recent novel *There There*, grew up within the warm and supportive community of the Intertribal Friendship House, as did the owner/chefs of East Bay's Café Ohlone: Vincent Medina, a member of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, and Louis Trevino, a member of the Rumsen



DANCERS, drummers and leaders from the Intertribal Friendship House.



LISA YOUNG, IFH's board vice chair

JOE JOHNSTON

JOE JOHNSTON

JOE JOHNSTON

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Awards

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Ohlone tribe. Orange's novel illustrates the ongoing challenges faced by Native Americans in East Oakland, underscoring the important role played by the IFH. The Café Ohlone features traditional native foods and has collaborated with IFH to offer gardening, cooking of native foods, and cultural awareness classes at the center.

The IFH was arguably the first resource in the Bay Area for fostering this cultural mind-shift toward recognition and appreciation of Native American history and culture; it has maintained and built on this role since its initiation in 1955.

The Bay Area American Indian community is multiracial, made of Native people and their descendants—those who originate here and those who have come from all over the United States and other parts of this hemisphere. According to the 2000 Census, 45,382 people of solely Native American and Alaska Native descent live in the Bay Area. The region has the fourth largest population of Native peoples anywhere in the country, after Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Tulsa. The ever-evolving needs and interests have presented challenges, as the IFH has worked to preserve family cohesion, as well as native culture and traditions, in Oakland's urban environment. The overarching challenge is lack of awareness of the Native American presence as well as continuing racism.

The IFH serves as a model for preserving the diverse cultural traditions to be found in our city. It provides a safe haven from the dominant society where Native Americans can feel safe, nourished, and supported, and share their traditional values. It provides the

opportunity for Native families and youth to heal from the original stressors of relocation, historical trauma, racism, and oppression, and to foster resiliency to elevate their voices and power at the policy table to ensure survival in our urban environment.

The IFH also models interagency coordination to best serve the needs of its community. Among the various organizations and individuals that are affiliated with IFH are: the Native American Health Center, United Indian Nations, and the American Indian Film Institute.

The PIP award draws special attention to the garden that is carefully tended to the side of the building, as well as the colorful murals that cover the building. The murals celebrate Native American artistry along with an incisive social critique. The murals also help create a sense of place, enlivening the streetscape for all passersby.

■ **570 El Dorado Ave.** Category: Restoration and Adaptive reuse/Rehabilitation Owners: Irina and Alexander Itsekson

In the late 1800s, Oakland's Linda Vista Terrace neighborhood was known for its innovative architecture and lush landscaping. Many of its homes were designed and built by Leo L. Nichols, one of the most prolific designer/builders in the area. The first was his own home at 570 El Dorado Avenue.

A 1900 newspaper advertisement captures its site advantages and a now-vanished lifestyle: "The slope of the lot affords a handsome billiard room across the front of the house . . . The sweep of the street at this point, and the elevation of the lot above it, give fine opportunity for rustic stone bulkheads and garden steps." The article also mentions "the first floor reception, dining rooms, den, kitchen and pantries all finished in curly redwood."

In 1904, Nichols sold the home to Maude Edith Pope, who hosted piano receptions and social events there over the next 48 years.



AMELIA MARSHALL

570 EL DORADO AVE., a stop on our summer tour led by Betty Marvin and Pamela Magnuson-Pedde.

When she passed away in 1952, the home was acquired by a group of designers for a very special project.

These designers chose the home to model innovative design trends of the 1950s. They went for a sleek, modern look, removing what they considered to be old-fashioned Victorian elements, such as arches, bay windows, and corbels. In 1952, public tours were held in the home, known as "The El Dorado House," to showcase this remodel. The public also saw designs demonstrating how to downsize this home to four apartments when a large home was no longer needed.

The current owners spent considerable time researching the home's history. They discovered that the architect of the 1950s project was Hans U. Gerson, who restored the Palace of Fine Arts. What they learned inspired them to seek a balance between preserving the distinctive 1896 design and the sleek mid-century remodel, while making appropriate updates.

The home reflects several historic eras, and in 122 years has only had five owners. Photos taken in the 1950s of kids playing in the yard and family gatherings in the dining room look almost identical to ones from this year.

The new owners removed rampant ivy and a chain link fence to make the house visible from the street. They replaced shingles, painted, and restored turn-of-the-century features that were removed in 1952, including a bay window and the corbels below it.

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They preserved the remaining mid-century features, such as wood paneling in the dining room and a bathroom that had remained untouched since 1952 with yellow tile and chrome finishes. They also repaired the mid-century lighting above the dining room windows.

In 2014, a large tree in the front yard fell, leaving a large crater when the stump was removed. The owners converted the crater to a cascading waterfall and used the tree trunk to make backyard furniture, a creative example of adaptive reuse.

When building a garage in 2014, they blended it with the house design as much as possible. A dwelling unit added above the garage also mimicked the design of the main house, prompting many neighbors to compliment the owners on how well the unit suits the original property and the neighborhood.

The result is a home that beautifies the historical fabric of the neighborhood and enhances the streetscape and landscaping. The home continues to live up to its description from 1900: “one of the handsomest features of the Terrace and a particular ornament to El Dorado.”

■ **Piedmont Grocery Company**, 4038 Piedmont Ave. Category: Stewardship. Awardees: David Larson, President, and Amy Pence, Vice President

In 2002, Piedmont Grocery celebrated 100 years of operation on Piedmont Avenue. Now the company approaches another quar-



FRIENDLY FACES welcomed attendees to the PIP Awards. From left, OHA board member Daniel Levy and summer tour leader Kathleen DiGiovanni volunteered at the check-in table, while volunteer Tamara Nicoloff Haw took care of drink tickets.

ter century. Originally owned by Herman and Eugenia Sack, the store moved to its present location in 1904 after a fire destroyed the first store. Although the building has been remodeled several times, its footprint remains essentially the same.

In the beginning, clerks would pull down items from the shelves at customer request. Soon Piedmont Grocery Co. became one of the first self-service grocery stores in town. The company offered daily delivery service until 1965, originally in horse-drawn wagons and in later years by a fleet of green trucks.

At the young age of 16, an ambitious young Charles Larson began his career at Piedmont Grocery. He worked his way up from delivery driver to buyer and store manager and eventually to general manager and owner. His son David Larson has been president of the store for many years, and he still comes into work every day. His daughter Amy Pence is the vice president.

Besides stewardship of the current building, the award also acknowledges the murals local artist Caroline Stern painted on the outside wall in 2017. One depicts the historic Piedmont Cable Car, with an image of the Key System building in the background. The other shows a grocery delivery truck and driver from the store’s earliest days. The murals enliven the back side of the store with a colorful history lesson.

Pence says, “We wanted the mural to represent the shared history of both the store and Piedmont Avenue. The Key System was a big part of the history of Piedmont Avenue, so we wanted it represented in the mural.”

There is a funny family story about Charles Larson riding the Key train with a live turkey in the 1930s. Pence says, “That was when my grandparents were living down on High



BOTH: JOE JOHNSTON

Street and my grandfather had to commute. He needed a new suit so he got on the Key System to head downtown to get fitted. This was at the height of the Depression, and money was tight. He found a tailor that could make him a suit at a price he could afford, with the added bonus that the suit came with a Thanksgiving turkey. When it was completed, my grandfather went back to pick it up and was handed the new suit along with a live turkey on a string. Not sure what to do, he got on the train, with the gobbling turkey in tow, and headed to work at the store. Upon arrival, the turkey was left with the meat department where it was dispatched and eventually became Thanksgiving dinner.”

Piedmont Grocery has donated the holiday decorations for the avenue in years when the merchants association was not able to do it and has supported many community organizations, including the neighborhood schools and youth athletic teams. OHA has been a beneficiary of the store’s generosity, with platters of food donated for various events.

Last but not least, it has modeled good employee practices for other Oakland retailers. Numerous employees have retired after 30 plus years of service, a testament to how well they were treated. The store also provides a kind of rite of passage for local teens, who bag groceries at the store.

Staying open for 100 years has been challenging. Food fads, large grocery chain stores, and convenience foods have all raised the bar for staying in business. Throughout earthquakes, the Great Depression, and other economic ups and downs, the grocery store has consistently served its customers.

The store’s colorful logo recalls the labels on fruit crates and reflects California’s agri-

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JOE JOHNSTON



OHA BOARD MEMBERS Amelia Marshall, left, and Kathryn Hughes with award winner Amy Pence of Piedmont Grocery.



Awards

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cultural heritage. The name of the store is conveyed in an ornate typeface that calls us back to the store's beginnings at the turn of the last century.

■ **Friends of the Oakland Municipal Band.** Category: Stewardship and Education. Awardees: Bruce De Benedictis, Chair; Lisa Hire, Vice-chair; Evan Mathews, Secretary; Lisa Ruhland, Treasurer

For the past 39 seasons, the Friends of the Oakland Municipal Band has produced the free summer music concerts of the Oakland Municipal Band. The band has performed at the Edoff Memorial Bandstand next to Children's Fairyland every summer since 1912. Today Maestro R. Anderson (Andy) Collinsworth leads the 35-member ensemble in a variety of music, from classical, jazz, old and new standards, and marches, especially by John Phillip Sousa, as well as favorites from Hollywood and Broadway. Concerts from 1 to 3 p.m. conclude with a children's march at the bandstand to Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever."

Municipal bands were common in 1912 when Paul Steindorff organized Oakland's at the request of city park commissioners. He led the band until 1927, when his assistant Herman Trutner, Jr. took up the baton for the



NEIL HEYDEN, board member, offers newsletter copies to attendees, while volunteer sommelier Bill Imler, at right, keeps the wine flowing.

next 35 years. Trutner was director of music for OUSD and a nationally-recognized pioneer in music education. In 1962, Fred Rose became the third director. During his tenure, the band performed in all three A's World Series celebrations and for the Warriors' victory celebration.

Yet, even with powerhouse music directors and popular performances through the decades, even during wartime, funding was uneven. In 1978, Prop 13 cuts threatened the band, but state surplus funds and the Music Performance Trust Funds (MPTF) funded a complete 17-concert season. All city funding for the band was eliminated in 1979, but the community and the MPTF raised the \$36,000 needed for 17 concerts that year.

Anne Woodell founded the Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation in 1980 and formed a band committee to ensure the con-



BOTH: JOE JOHNSTON

tinuation of a musical tradition that many other California cities had lost. The Loma Prieta earthquake damaged the historic bandstand, but the band continued.

In 2012, the Friends of the Oakland Municipal Band became an independent 501c(3) organization, working in partnership with Oakland Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development. A volunteer organization, it solicits and collects donations to finance the performances. It hires the musicians, reserves the bandstand, prepares the printed programs, coordinates the publicity, sets the stage for the performers, and does everything else to make it possible for residents and visitors to relax and enjoy free live music in the natural beauty of historic Lakeside Park.

This award acknowledges the hard work and persistence of the Friends of the Oakland Municipal Band for keeping a living part of Oakland's history accessible and relevant.

Other Partners in Preservation winners for 2019 included Lampwork Lofts, Mutual Lofts, Jeff Norman, and Alan Michaan. Please see more photos of winners and celebrants on the next page. ■



JOE JOHNSTON

THOROUGHLY ENJOYING the evening, the Oakland Municipal Band's Lisa Ruhland, Lisa Hire, and Bruce De Benedictis celebrate their Partners in Preservation award.

Annual Meeting and Scenes from the Life of Julia Morgan

Please join us on Thursday, Jan. 16, at 6:30 p.m. at OK Stereo in the landmark American Bag Company building, 299 Third St. third floor (at Harrison Street). After an easy half-hour annual meeting gathering with OHA announcements and an election for our board of directors, enjoy light refreshments and a dramatic play-reading with Oakland poet and playwright Judith Offer. There's no charge for the annual meeting, but we do request a \$10 donation for the evening's highly entertaining presentation.



Partners in Preservation: a night of celebrations, some poignant in nature



ALL THREE: JOE JOHNSTON

PAMELA MAGNUSON-PEDDLE AND KATHY GERITZ, top left, come together to honor Jeff Norman, who was given a posthumous award for his ardent work to gather Temescal history (see our last issue's cover story). At top center, Tom Haw, Hale Zukas, and Alison Finlay chat, while at top right Ed Clausen and Riley Doty take a moment outside. A festive parade transpires while the municipal band plays, at right. Below left, award winners Bob Huff of Lampwork Lofts and Allen Michaan of Grand Lake Theatre and Michaan's Auctions shake hands. Below right, Amelia Marshall emcees the presentations.



JOHN KIRKMIRE

BOTH: JOE JOHNSTON



At bottom left, Joe Johnston photographs Tom Debley at the event (see the result on page 11), while at bottom right Alexander and Irina Itsekson, owners of 570 El Dorado Avenue, enjoy their win alongside architect Mark J. Woodburn.

NAOMI SCHIFF



JOE JOHNSTON

Know of a project or organization that seems worthy of recognition? Applications for the Partners in Preservation awards will open up again in 2020; stay in touch with our office regarding the timelines!



A new day at the Oakland History Room (or is it a room?)

By Dorothy Lazard

The Oakland History Room has seen a pretty busy year in 2019.

I recently celebrated my 10th anniversary working in the Oakland History Room. It's been a challenge, an education, and a real honor to manage this room over the past decade. I came to the job on a three-month, temporary assignment, doubting that I could ever live up to people's expectations and need for Oakland history. But in my time here, I'm proud to report that, with the help of a dedicated staff of part-time librarians, I have grown the collections, improved reference service, and made important contacts in the history community to provide support for our mission. The Oakland History Room is growing both in popularity and collections.

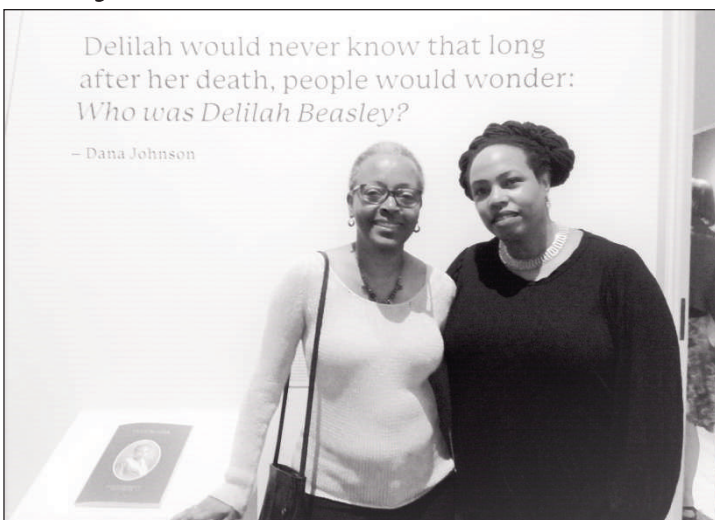
To make sure it continues to grow, we are looking to the future. This fall the library hired a new full-time librarian Emily Foster to work with me. Emily started in OHR as an intern while studying at San Jose State's Library Science program. She joined the Main Library staff in 2011, working in Adult Reference. After a four-year stint at Berkeley Public, she wisely returned to us in Oakland! We're very pleased to have her back. Stop by when you can to meet her and introduce yourself.

The Friends of the Oakland History Room group continues to provide steady support in the form of funds, program ideas and facilitation, and, occasionally, manual labor. At a recent work party in November, the Friends pitched in to sort a large backlog of Oakland Public Library reports, program publicity, and ephemera. They made quick work of a daunting amount of materials. Hardworking

volunteers have also helped streamline and improve access to some of our more interesting collections. Moriah Ulin-skas, who single-handedly managed the transfer of the vast Oakland Redevelopment Agency photo archive to the Oakland History Room two years ago, is continuing to organize that collection. Soon she will make a finding aid available on the Online Archive of California. Former OPL employee Doug Smith has returned as a volunteer and has inventoried the very large Oakland Parks negatives collection. We hope to have some of the gems in that collection digitized.

This year's Fall History Series was one of our most ambitious and well attended, with nearly 200 people coming to programs covering the history of the Laurel District and of BART, a case study of the 1960s Oakland Redevelopment Agency photos, the 1909 Oakland Annexation campaign that doubled the size of the city, and the impact of the MacArthur Maze on the California Industries and Orientation Center for the Blind. Judging from the program evaluations, people loved them and are hungry for Oakland history!

And speaking of people craving history, the producers of the Netflix series *Last*



DOROTHY LAZARD

DOROTHY LAZARD with Dana Johnson, author of *Trailblazer: Delilah Beasley's California*, at the Huntington Library.

Chance U, which focuses on community college athletes, recently visited the Oakland History Room. During their fifth season, they are focusing on our own Laney College. The production crew came to OHR to interview me to gather some historical perspective on Oakland, the biggest city the series has profiled thus far.

In June, a researcher came to OHR looking for an Oakland subject to investigate, and I enthusiastically suggested Delilah Beasley, Oakland's first African American newspaper columnist (1871-1934). Four months later,

See **HISTORY ROOM** on page 7

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members through November 2019:

Holly Alonso, Joseph Boyle, Karolina Bufka, Steve Costa, Alma & Bill Delucchi, Weylin Eng, Feleciai Favroth, Pam Garcia & Peter Griesmaier, Greg Lyons, Janet Noble, Tara Parker-Essig, Page Yarwood

Many thanks to our presenters

For their wonderful presentations, we are enormously grateful to Dr. Richard M. Rocco (*William S. Porter, MD: Jack London's Personal Physician and Friend*) and Michael C. Healy (*BART: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*)

We thank our recent donors

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ANNUAL APPEAL

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History Room

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OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM



DELILAH BEASLEY is the subject of a book based on History Room research. that researcher contacted me to tell me that the Clockshop arts organization of Los Angeles had produced a book based on the research I provided, and that the publisher had decided to dedicate the book to me for my work here at the Oakland History Room.

Wow, what an honor! The book, *Trailblazer: Delilah Beasley's California*, written by USC English professor Dana Johnson, is part of the Clockshop exhibit *Beside the Edge of the World*, now at the Huntington Library and Museum.

Sean Dickerson, acting archivist of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, and I were happy to represent the Oakland Public Library at the recent launch of the exhibit on Nov. 9. He had contributed a photo to the book project.

Finally, following a long-standing suggestion made by the late, great local historian Jeff Norman, I submitted a proposal to library director Jamie Turbak to request that the Oakland History Room change its name to reflect the level of public services, the variety of programs and exhibits, and depth of research that takes place here. This modest proposal has been officially approved by our director.

Our new name will be the Oakland History Center. New brochures and branding will be forthcoming. ■

Consider a gift subscription to OHA for a friend for their birthday! See our membership form on page 11.

A book club about Oakland? Check it out, literally!

By Erika Mailman

Like the idea of joining a book club that will be focusing on books about or set in Oakland? The Friends of Montclair Library is planning just that for 2020.

The first selection is Beth Bagwell's *Oakland: The Story of a City*, something OHA members will be interested in reading (or rereading!) and discussing. That meeting happens 6:30-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 7.

The author Beth Bagwell was instrumental in OHA's founding and served as our first president. In 2012, OHA published a new edition with information updating the 1982 first edition. I wrote the update chapter, and the book got a beautiful new cover designed by another past president, Naomi Schiff.

Bagwell died in 2006, but her book continues to be the definitive word on Oakland history. See the information below to purchase a copy.

"Earlier this year, we polled patrons about what sort of programs they'd like to see at the library, and 'history presentations' and 'book club' both came out high on the list," says Jeni Paltiel, president of Friends



GILLIAN BAGWELL

BETH BAGWELL enjoying a Renaissance Faire in the 1970s.

of Montclair Library. "We brainstormed selections and put it up to our patrons for a vote, and the Bagwell book was one of the top vote-getters. It seemed like a good place to start our exploration, learning about our city's history to give us a base before we dive into contemporary fiction and other genres."

The other book selections will include fiction and nonfiction from different eras and genres, and will be announced on the Friends website and Facebook page. Currently, the Friends website invites you to vote on the choices by selecting six out of 11 selections. The list includes older books like Jack London's *Martin Eden*, or very fresh fiction like Dashka Slater's *The 57 Bus* and Tommy Orange's *There There*.

Seeing Oakland through the lens of literature is always exciting. And our own Dorothy Lazard, who writes the History Room column (see page 6), wrote a short story in *Oakland Noir*; an anthology that is one of the potential picks.

Can people check out the books featured at the club? "We're kind of waiting to see how much interest there is. Ideally, we'd be able to provide for everyone," says Paltiel.

Meetings happen every other month at the library branch, 1687 Mountain Boulevard, and readers are welcome to attend a single meeting or all, with no need to register.

And just in case you're not familiar with the Montclair branch, which is celebrating its 90th anniversary, check out our back page article about its history!

For more information about the book club, contact the library at 510-482-7810 or visit the Friends of Montclair Library website at www.montclairfriends.org. ■

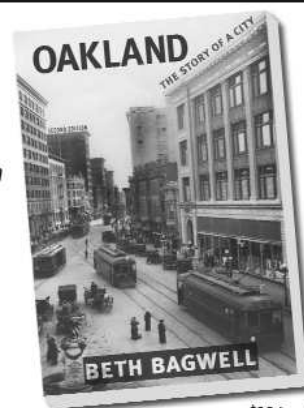
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Much to consider as the Downtown Specific Plan envisions the future

By Naomi Schiff

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

■ **Club Knoll waits for dry weather:** The former Officers' Club at Oak Knoll is prepared for moving and secured for the winter, its tower removed for safekeeping after contractors found it structurally dangerous. Planner Dara O'Byrne reports, "The Club House move will not happen until next dry season; I've heard a tentative date in May, but I have not confirmed. The tower was removed because it was leaning and there was concern about it falling. City staff and city monitors were onsite during the removal. For the remainder of the wet season, interior work will take place preparing for the deconstruction and move." Moving the historic structure and reassembling it at its new site further north in the development area requires a level roadway and heavy equipment.

■ **Downtown Specific Plan raises questions about Oakland's vision of itself:** The downtown area (from the Estuary to about 26th Street, from Lake Merritt to 980, and tangentially including Chinatown, although that was included in the Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan) is undergoing a planning process which is supposed to result in a vision for its future, a lot of environmental review to make it easier for future develop-



NAOMI SCHIFF

REMOVED FOR SAFETY, the leaning Oak Knoll tower will be restored after the building is moved.

ers, zoning revisions, general plan amendments, and preparing design and planning documents to shape how the area will be used, inhabited, visited, and how it will house economic activity.

After participating in community dialogue over several years, OHA has put together a working group with other community organizations representing affordable housing, parks, the library system, labor, advocates for the homeless, Black Arts Movement District, Arts + Garage District, small businesses, industrial and artists' groups. A big question is whether future development will generate proceeds beyond contributions to the city's general fund, business, and property taxes. In raising density and intensity of development on downtown parcels, the city would effectively increase the

land values of developable parcels. Can the additional value be captured and used for specific "community benefits" in an orderly way? If so, what would those benefits be, when would they realistically occur, and how much difference would they make? Ideas include increased affordable housing percentages, subsidies for ground-floor arts spaces, assistance for parks and libraries, and work training programs.

The current situation is haphazard: when large projects are proposed in the downtown area, sometimes groups speak up and work to negotiate deals for things that are needed or have the bandwidth or resources to make demands. Developers may or may not be willing to enter into such discussions, in part dependent upon their political clout in City Hall. The present situation is inequitable both for developers and for community groups. Some other cities have organized this discussion, with examples in San Diego, Emeryville, and Los Angeles.

For example, Emeryville uses a point system to rate development projects and requires them to provide community benefits from an established menu rather than relying on an inconsistently-applied policy

NAOMI SCHIFF



GEOFFREY'S at 14th and Franklin, the former 1902 Athenian-Nile Club in the Downtown Oakland Historic District, is part of the recently-designated Black Arts Movement District. To its west, the 1925 Central Bank Building was Oakland's first office skyscraper.



that Oakland currently uses. San Francisco has pursued a vigorous program of TDRs (Transfer of Development Rights), preserving historic downtown areas in exchange for development south of Market Street. OHA has long advocated for such a program; is this the moment to finally institute one? This would establish a marketplace in which property owners could receive payment in exchange for electing not to develop their historic properties, transferring their rights to additional intensity and to other sites instead.

Although the plan was required to incorporate standards regarding equity and economic fairness; inclusion of historically non-wealthy groups such as longtime Black and Asian neighborhood communities, artists, immigrants; and varied household configurations, incomes, and sizes, there are few concrete recommendations for how such goals will be met in real life. All along, public comments have highlighted concerns about historic preservation, cultural preservation, displacement of longtime residents and arts communities, and the growing number of unsheltered people in the downtown area.

Simultaneously, a debate is going on about the “impact fees” Oakland assesses to new developments to build up a fund for affordable housing construction. Apparently, many projects now under construction were either permitted before the fees were instituted, or haven’t paid what was expected, or were exempted for various reasons. Whatever the cause, the city has not kept good track and the funds available are substantially lower than people had hoped. An audit is due in the spring. This has increased the urgency among affordable housing advocates to make sure the downtown plan doesn’t discourage construction of lower-cost units.

The urgent issue of homelessness must be better addressed. The city must decide how



NAOMI SCHIFF

ELEGANT TERRA COTTA, such as on this recently restored facade at 15th and Franklin, are characteristic of Oakland’s rich vocabulary of architectural detail.

to change its course to provide stable solutions rather than allowing under-the-freeway to be the housing supply of last resort. By ignoring extremely low-income housing, the city could threaten its own downtown’s viability as an attractive place for new business and residential activity.

The emergence of the Oakland Athletics as a potential user of Howard Terminal and many blocks around it adds to the complexity of the issues, such as how it might affect the economic viability of the remaining industrially-zoned areas near the shoreline, with port-related jobs currently providing income for many families. Moreover, the age-old quandary of the relationship of our shoreline to the railroad lines has emerged once again as a big planning factor. (As of 1847, only the U.S. Congress can tell railroads what to do; Union Pacific does not generally defer to the City of Oakland’s planners.) What will happen when rush hour trucks are leaving the Port of Oakland, and Union Pacific is assembling freight trains, all at game time?

And what about our multiple historic districts, landmarks, and unique urban fabric? How can we make sure that the western

edge of Lake Merritt, also an API, is not so encumbered by intense development that it becomes overcrowded, is shaded for more of the day, feels more hemmed in, and is more difficult to access?

In zoning for increased density, will our Areas of Primary Importance and Secondary Importance and our individually significant historic properties survive development pressure? How can we make use of the lofty goals of the plan to secure preservation of important resources such as Old Oakland, the Produce Market, Oakland’s oldest building (on Broadway), the much-threatened uptown Arts + Garage district, and the Lakeside Apartment District?

Review the draft plan and related information at: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/downtown-oakland-specific-plan>.

While the deadline for commenting on the draft EIR has passed, meetings and discussion continue regarding the plan itself.

■ **Key System buildings:** After decades of abandonment, 1100 Broadway is under restoration as part of Ellis Partners’ project, an adjoining 18-story office tower that will in part be tenanted by the UC Office of the President and by a financial tech firm. Severely damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, what was originally the 1911 Security Bank & Trust building had already stood forlorn and endangered. The adjoining tower provided an opportunity to seismically strengthen the fragile historic Beaux Arts landmark. Called “The Key at 12th” in real estate listings, developers hope for an elegant eatery to move into the old banking hall: <https://www.thekeyoakland.com/>

■ **The plaque is back:** Once home to St. Mary’s College, 423 apartments in “The Broadway” at Broadway and Hawthorne

See **PRESERVATION** on page 10



SINCE THE 19TH CENTURY, Oaklanders have been cut off from the waterfront by rail and later, freeway.



ALL THREE: NAOMI SCHIFF

NEAR HOWARD TERMINAL, a historic brick warehouse building at Martin Luther King and Second Street, left. Above, shore access could be more pleasant.



Preservation

Continued from page 9

occupy the site long prominent for its rounded corner with stacked neon GM auto dealer signs. During construction, a commemorative plaque disappeared, but its replacement can now be seen from the sidewalk on Broadway.

■ **Oakland Auditorium project moving forward:** Orton Development, Inc. and city staff are working to complete a lease and a development agreement by the end of 2019. The 60% construction drawings were due Dec. 17. Orton and the Community Coalition for Equitable Development are working on a Community Benefits Agreement, and the Calvin Simmons Theatre nonprofit has incorporated.

■ **Church becomes a church:** Resurrection Church of Oakland has purchased and moved in at 17th and Franklin. After First Christian Science Church sold its 1902 Henry A. Schulze building to a retailer, an anticipated dress shop failed to materialize. Now services are being held in this building with its impressive stained glass windows once again. ■



BETTY MARVIN joined members of the Jack London Improvement District to review prototypes for new historical signs in the Waterfront Warehouse District, where zoning will be reviewed as part of the Downtown Plan.

ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE: NAOMI SCHIFF



THE TAPSCOTT BUILDING at Broadway and 19th is being restored, with its ornamental parapet and old advertising on its north wall.



LOOKING SOUTH from 17th Street, Carmel Partners' new 40-story residential tower, under construction, rises on the former site of the Merchants' Garage between 13th and 14th streets.



INTERSPERSED older, lower-scale apartment buildings along Lake Merritt preserve a sense of openness for park users, but the plan contemplates greater heights along the western edge of the lake.



LOWER BROADWAY includes a cluster of historic commercial buildings and the former Central Pacific station. Souley Vegan occupies the oldest building in Oakland, built in 1857 as a wine shop.

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A family connection fuels interest in history

By Tom Debley, *President*

There are a variety of reasons for people's interests in historic preservation. They may love history. They may love architecture. They may have personal connections to the history of a community. When I look at why I am personally interested in preservation, it goes back to my childhood and I'd like to share that story with you.

Earlier this year, I visited Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. It was not my first visit since the park opened in 1968 and it won't be my last. My fascination with this place grew from my mother's pride, which she shared with me as I grew up, as a descendant of Spanish and Mexican pioneers in California.

She knew few details of that history, though. Thus, to satisfy my curiosity as a student in high school in the early 1960s, I set out to learn more. I dug around in libraries, archives and old newspaper clippings. Six decades later, I am still at it. But, because of dedicated preservationists, within and without the California State Parks system, critical information has been developed about my ancestral story.

Ultimately, I've learned I was descended from a soldier on the Gaspar de Portola land and sea expedition that established San

Diego and Monterey in the expansion of New Spain's territory in Alta California. Juan Ishmerio Osuna, a sixth great-grandfather, was in San Diego at its founding in 1769 and helped establish the historic Presidio.

His son, Juan María Osuna, a fifth great-grandfather, was born in 1785 and grew up within the walls of the Presidio. He, too, became a soldier, but when he retired, as a corporal, is said to have built the first home—a three-room adobe—in 1835 in the Pueblo, which he and four other men convinced the Mexican governor to establish. He was elected the first alcalde, or mayor, of San Diego—defeating by 13 votes Pio Pico, who later became the last Mexican governor of Alta California.

Today, because of preservationists' diligent work, I can visit the graves of both my fifth and sixth great-grandparents that have been identified and marked in El Campo Santo Catholic Cemetery in Old Town.

This is just a brief recap of what I have learned—history that I treasure and can now pass on to my children and grandchildren.

And I am sharing it here because it is why I feel so privileged to serve on the board of OHA. I am very grateful to those preservationists whose work saved and published sto-

ries, and restored structures, of early history of California—including that of indigenous peoples—because it is my story.



TOM DEBLEY at the PIP awards night.

JOE JOHNSTON

Now, it is our generation's task to carry on that work for others here in Oakland, which is why OHA's mission is to advocate for the protection, preservation, and revitalization of our architectural, historic, cultural and natural resources through publications, education and direct action.

And I am so very grateful to you members, donors, volunteers, and friends of OHA, who participate so vitally in our mission as, with the New Year, we enter our fifth decade of preservation work in Oakland.

You are one important reason why our city can truthfully say, as it does on its website, that "Oakland's wealth of historic buildings and neighborhoods is matched by few other California cities," reflecting "the city's rich multicultural history, from earliest times to the present."

I hope that you have seen communication about our Annual Appeal. Thank you to all who have contributed. If you have not, there is still time to respond with a tax-deductible gift to help continue our mission. ■

CONTRIBUTORS:

Tom Debley, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Kathryn Hughes, Joe Johnston, John Kirkmire, Dorothy Lazard, Daniel Levy, Erika Mailman, Amelia Marshall, 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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The cutest little library in town

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

By the second half of the 1920s, Montclair’s residential and commercial boom was underway. Montclair Elementary School had opened in 1926, the Women’s Club the year before. A permanent commercial core was on the rise, and houses were sprouting up all over the hills. And the new residents had begun to clamor for a library in the neighborhood.

By 1928, the Oakland Free Library’s board of trustees had, in principle, approved a new branch, but a site and funding had to be found. A bid to place the new library in a portable building on the elementary school grounds was nixed by the library’s head of branches, Lucie Nye. She felt that such a location would deter adults from using the library on evenings and weekends. Instead, she favored a location closer to the Women’s Club building near the bus stop. In a Nov. 15, 1928, memo to the city librarian, she wrote that a spot closer to the corner of Thornhill would be “what seems to be at present as near the center of population as could be obtained.” Even at that, Nye worried about the neighborhood’s remoteness, custodial help, and the expense of courier service into the hills.

With such a site in mind, a donor stepped forward named Chauncey W. Gibson. Worth a longer story in his own right, Gibson was a serial entrepreneur, making money in candy, soap, and groceries, pioneering cash-and-carry with his American Cash Store. He came to San Francisco in the 1880s and

made an even bigger fortune selling carbonic acid—that’s carbonated water. Late in life, widowed and without surviving children, Gibson formed the Homes and Children’s Alliance to distribute his wealth. Through the alliance, Gibson became a major donor to the Oakland Free Library, making significant gifts to the Melrose and Rockridge branches and to the defunct Gibson Branch in East Oakland. He provided the \$1,600 to buy the lot at 1687 Mountain Boulevard and a further \$5,000 for the building’s construction.

The new branch library was completed at the start of 1930 and was dedicated on Feb. 28 with great festivity. The Firemen’s Band turned out to play, and the Montclair School choir sang. Speakers included City Librarian John B. Kaiser and representatives from the Montclair PTA, Montclair Masonic Lodge, Montclair Improvement Club, Women’s Club, and the Boy Scouts.

In the early 1960s, a community-led effort resulted in funding to add a Children’s Room and patio at the rear of the original building. Contributions were solicited and received from residents and from every area business and organization. This effort raised \$15,000 by 1965, and the city council matched funds



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

THE MONTCLAIR LIBRARY was built to look already aged.

for this addition. Again the Homes and Children’s Alliance played an important role by donating \$1,000. The *Montclarion* newspaper, then locally owned by the Brown family, provided weekly updates to the fundraising campaign.

The library’s Candyland-style building is such a fine exemplar of Storybook architecture that it is often taken for the work of name-brand architects working in that style, like the locally-renowned W.R. Yelland. In fact, the library was designed by its builder C.C. Rosenberry, an Oakland contractor. Its cottage style was proposed by Mrs. Charles Fisher, wife of the head of the Homes and Children’s Alliance board. Reportedly, she thought that this sort of cozy little building would be just perfect for a library.

Montclair Branch celebrates its 90th birthday in 2020. Library staff and the Friends of Montclair Library plan to host a party on March 28 for the cutest little library in town. Save the date! ■