



Celebrating 25 years spent strengthening Oakland

Compiled by Allyson Quibell, Annalee Allen and Erika Mailman

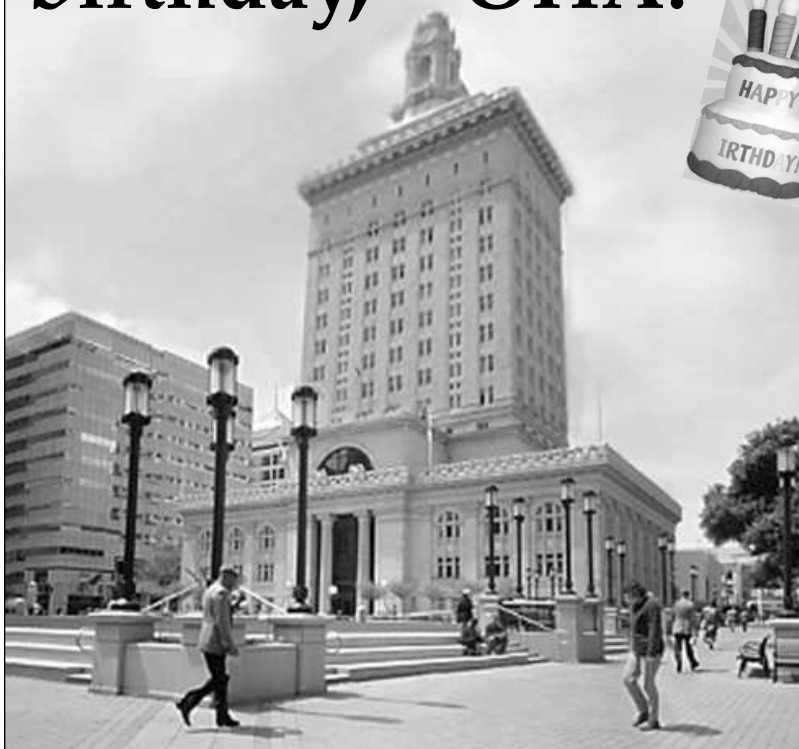
After 25 years, it's nice to take a look back and consider the progress made by OHA's decades of volunteers. The organization has grown steadily, has experienced some rough patches, achieved exhilarating successes and helped support Oakland retain its rich cultural and historic fabric.

Here are some reflections back from members who were with OHA since its early days, and who played enormous roles in the organization's accomplishments. We asked them three questions and allowed them to choose one to answer.

■ What was a standout success for OHA that you remember?

Winning the 2005 California Governor's Historic Preservation Award for OHA's Summer Walking Tour program comes under the category of both an amazing moment and standout success. To be recognized for the excellence of our walks in our wonderful city and to be recognized with a dozen other preservation programs from all over the state filled me with an enormous sense of pride. The award program was established in 1986; the event took place last November in the newly-restored Leland Stanford Governor's Mansion in Sacramento. The surroundings were elegant, and we were in excellent company: from multi-million dollar restorations to a bilingual his-

Happy twenty-fifth birthday, OHA!



OAKLAND'S CITY HALL, once known as "Mayor Mott's Wedding Cake," would not be standing today if not for OHA activists who fought to advocate its seismic repairs. So let's call that wedding cake birthday cake!

toric coloring book. OHA's walking tour program was cited for its excellence and breadth and was extolled for being a model for how communities may highlight and celebrate the diverse range of historic properties and neighborhoods.

—Pamela Magnuson-Peddle, former president

For me, the immediate period following the 1989 earthquake was the time that OHA really stepped up and showed leadership, to



prevent the precipitous demolition of a number of threatened landmarks, including City Hall, the Broadway Building, and the Rotunda Building. These structures, as well as a number of others, did in fact suffer earthquake damage; however OHA insisted that city leaders take a "go slow" approach, get expert opinions from structural engineers who were experienced with seismic issues, and seek to incorporate the damaged (yet repairable) buildings into a rebuilt downtown. As board president during that time, I remember well all of the meetings, letters, etc. we spent time on, to insure that as many landmarks as possible could be saved. Now when I walk through the plaza surrounding City Hall, I feel great pride that we accomplished so much in the way of preserving some of Oakland's most important structures.

—Annalee Allen, former president

The greatest accomplishment was getting Historic Preservation for Oak Center. OHA has done beautiful work over the years, but the Oak Center project was the most important for me.

—Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson, community activist

If I absolutely had to choose one, it would be our co-sponsorship of the city's 150th birthday. The reason I think it was so fantastic is because we worked so well and so closely with the city. There was mutual respect and appreciation. It was a long planning process and OHA was instrumen-

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tal in initiating the planning and implementation of the celebration. The OHA volunteers did a fabulous job. We had over 40, many of whom volunteered way more time than just the day of the event and put a tremendous amount of effort into the numerous and diverse events at Preservation Park and the Unitarian Church.

Another fabulous thing was OHA's starting of the spin-off organization CALM, the group that really galvanized people's interest in preserving the special qualities of Lake Merritt. One hundred fifty people came to that first meeting.

—Mary MacDonald, former president

The greatest success I can remember is working diligently with Carolyn Douthat (and many others) to get the downtown historic district approved and a historic mitigation package approved as a follow-up to the 1989 Loma Prieta quake.

—Bill Coburn, president 1994-98.

Memories have faded some as I have moved from my interest in Oakland architecture to the natural world—still working on preservation but now it's habitat, not buildings.

My memories include that first get together on my deck in the backyard one summer evening in 1980. If I remember correctly, the group consisted of Beth Bagwell, Tom and Melinda Frye, Marlene Wilson, Chris Buckley, Bruce Judd, Brad and Laura Niebling and me. We were discussing what we could do to save historically/architecturally significant buildings in Oakland, which was at the time getting a lot of pressure to "redevelop."

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THE BROADWAY BUILDING, left, has a new life thanks to efforts of OHA members. Although it was damaged by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, OHA urged city leaders to rebuild. The blue and silver Art Deco Floral Depot, below, was once described as "awful and gawdy" by a planning commissioner who hoped to tear it down.



Both photos: Erika Mailman

How we got it all organized escapes me, but I remember Marlene did the by-laws and Beth became the first president.

My personal biggest success was the Floral Depot. The Planning Commission had denied it landmark status, and plans for a mall on that block would have destroyed it. The most frustrating thing was that members of the planning commission were so uninformed about historic buildings. One commissioner described the Floral Depot as "awful and gaudy." I had to make a presentation to the planning commission on why art deco buildings were important and why this particular building was unique and special and deserved to be saved. Amazingly, they heard us and it stands today. That commissioner admitted later that his artistic friends had given him a hard time about that comment.

The reality is that what it took was education and a city staff committed to doing that architectural/historic survey work that Betty still does. Having that data on all of those buildings I am sure made a huge difference.

I remember as president I felt this enormous responsibility, not only to the organization but to preservation, but I was very fortunate to have so many talented people in Oakland at the time who were really into buildings. Gary Knecht and the Prentisses,

Chris Patillo, Bruce Judd all gave an enormous amount of help pulling together the facts to present to the planning commission.

—Leslie Flint, former president

■ What was an impossible challenge (not to say, defeat?)

In the early years, nothing seemed impossible. There must have been a few defeats, but somehow I can't recall them.

—Gary Knecht, former president.

The lawsuit over the Rubino building—I still think it was the right thing to do, but the organization was traumatized by it and I don't think we're over it even now.

—Jane Powell, president 1998-2000

Before OHA's existence, the defeat I recall most was the loss of the Packard Showroom on Lakeshore Avenue, where the Ordway Building is now. It was a spectacular structure, but we couldn't convince Kaiser to keep it. It was one of my favorite buildings. The good news is, it couldn't happen today.

I remember the creation of OHA. I even remember an initial meeting in my office about it with Gary Knecht. Marie Con-

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verse, on the Planning Commission, stands out in my mind as being a very enthusiastic about landmarks legislation. The City Council wasn't so enthusiastic. We created the Landmarks Board, provided that landmark status could only be given by Planning Commission. City Hall was afraid of the landmarks people.

—Norman Lind,
Oakland Planning Director 1961-1985

■ What was an amazing moment in your OHA experience?

I was president of OHA during the mid-1980s and remember the extended discussion the board had about whether or not to open an office and hire a part time staff person. I recall that there were those who did not think the organization was ready to take such a big step, but I felt very strongly that we could not go on the next level, as far as being a viable voice to affect change in the city towards protecting our historic resources, unless we had a central base of operations. I also felt that by hiring an administrative staff, it would free the board members to devote more of their (volunteer) time to advocacy. Having the first office at the Camron-Stanford House turned out to be a good decision, and OHA's first staff person, Helen Lore, served the organization very well during the dozen years or so that she held the position.

I also recall that the fight over saving the Christian Science Church on Lake Merritt, in the late 1980s, gave the organization a new sense of purpose and exposed the elected leaders to how committed and knowledgeable OHA members were about these issues. Although the church could not be saved, the controversy about it led to city council authorizing the creation of clearer preservation guidelines.

—Les Hausrath, former president

The most amazing moment in my OHA experience was seeing how eager elected officials in this city were to paint historic preservation as an impediment to progress. Many people in the community actively



FRIENDS OF THE OAKLAND FOX, an OHA subgroup, worked with the city to develop ideas to restore the grand old movie palace. The Oakland School for the Arts currently operates out of portables in the parking lot behind the Fox, top. The school will move into the Fox when renovations are completed. In 2001, the time-worn marquee and blade were beautifully restored, right, beaming a neon promise to the city of future performances. This year, FOOF launched a \$1,000,000 Capital Campaign to assist the renovation. Donors will receive special gifts related to their level of giving, including personalized pavers embedded in the sidewalk in front of the Fox Theater and tickets to the opening night gala, to be held prior to the theater opening to the general public. For more information, visit the website on the marquee at right!

denigrated those of us working towards preserving what's great about this city as NIMBYs and were intent upon allowing real estate interests to completely determine the planning decisions in this town. It was amazing because I thought they were more enlightened than that.

—Steve Lavoie, former president

I served on the board from 1984 until 1999 as editor of the OHA News. Before that, as an early dues-paying subscriber, I had assumed the newsletter was produced by



some big factory because it looked so high-tech and professional. So when Les Hausrath asked me what I wanted to work on when I joined the board, I said "Oh, the newsletter," and then I was surprised when Phil Bellman arrived at my door with a file box & said "Here: here's the newsletter."

The early linkage between the Cultural Heritage Survey and OHA has been key to the organization's long time credibility and success. The Survey goes a long way toward

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keeping Oakland from “hysterical preservation.” Today the Survey is an ongoing unit in the City Planning Department and the envy of other cities, but for many years it was a year-to-year grant-funded project, and every year OHA had to bring out the troops to support the grant application and city matching funds. The Survey’s information has given a uniquely solid factual grounding to OHA’s tours and advocacy through the years.

—Betty Marvin, former board member

From April 29 to May 2, 1982, OHA co-sponsored the 7th annual California Historic Preservation Conference. With 500 attendees, it was the largest attendance so far! Seeing all those people in Oakland, touring, appreciating, and loving our city, was really amazing.

—Gary Knecht, former president

Reprinting Beth Bagwell’s Oakland: Story of a City around 1989 was amazing because it had been needed for so long. The book had been out of print for several years and everyone wanted it. It was a win-win situation. The publisher and bookstores were selling it and making money, and Beth and OHA were the same. I was the point person on this; we had to reprint from scratch. Presidio Press [who did the original print run] was only doing military books then, and they couldn’t find the plates. No one was equipped around here to do the job. But Harlan Kessel helped: books were his thing. He helped us along with the publishing representatives. That’s how I got to know Beth, working with her on this. The books sold like crazy at Diesel, Pendragon, Walden Pond, places like that. It was excellent to be in OHA at the beginning to establish the office and watch the group grow to be a viable organization.

—Helen Lore, former staff member

I don’t know if it was an amazing moment; it was a process. I was on the original board. Because the planning committee on that board was basically people who were on the planning committee for the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, there was a diverse group

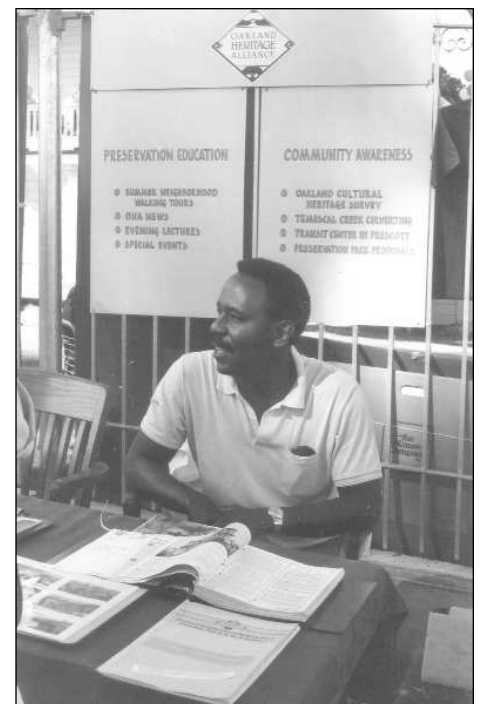


ONE OF OHA’S ACHIEVEMENTS was the Preservation Fair that took place September 20, 1981. Hundreds attended. Above, a band plays in front of the festive crowd at the Camron-Stanford House. At right, a member mans the OHA booth at the fair.

of professional people. They brought concern with serious research and planning from the Survey to OHA. Because they were used to working together from the Survey, lots of activities ended up being like a “committee of the whole.” Even though there were sub-committees, all decisions went before the entire board. All board members were privy to virtually everything the committees were doing. I was on the Survey and then the newsletter and walking tour committees.

This group’s ego was vested in the newsletter because it was so well-received, not only in Oakland but other cities and out of state as well. All elements of the newsletter were by group consensus. Each piece of it was approved by everyone. When nonprofits get started, you have real enthusiasm and as time goes on, the newer people may not be as vested in every piece of it, all the activities of the organization. I miss that there were people to pick up loose ends and make sure everything was done. They don’t get such diehard people later on.

—Dean Yabuki, former board member



I recall my years as president on the board of the Oakland Heritage Alliance with great fondness and a sense of pride of what we set out to accomplish. I believe my term as president was marked by the board’s commitment to assure OHA’s long-term vitality with new strategies for fundraising, a renewed vigor to draw volunteers into all areas of the

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Tour the Philbrick Boat Works on the estuary, where craftsmen have built boats since 1934

By Russ Donovan and Deborah Cooper

Philbrick Boat Works was founded in Oakland in 1934 by Don Philbrick. Don was born in Oakland. His parents and grandparents owned and ran Philbrick Dairy, Philbrick Creameries and Glenwood Creamery in Oakland. In high school, Don built his first boat as a class project and decided it was much easier to build boats than run a dairy. At the age of 17, he started his business.

In 1946, he moved his workshop to 603 Embarcadero on the Oakland Estuary. The building had been built in 1935 as a small transit shed for produce coming in from the Delta and South America. It is a timber-frame utilitarian building with a corrugated sheet metal roof and sides resting on pier-blocks. Designed to handle break-bulk cargo, the shed's 12-foot rolling doors gave easy access to ships unloading at the dock. They also permitted produce to be moved through the shed to trucks for delivery by land. By 1946, the shed stood empty and ready for Don to lease from the Port. Those large rolling doors turned out to also be convenient for launching handcrafted wooden boats. Philbrick Boat Works still operates at this site today, run by master boat builder Russ Donovan.

Throughout its history, Philbrick Boat Works has been dedicated to building, repairing and restoring wooden boats. Don built eight-foot to sixteen-foot "El Toro" and "Melody" sailboats for public sale as well as for the sailing classes given by the Oakland Boat and Recreation Department at Lake Merritt. He also built sleek race boats, some for well-known boat racers such as Howard Arnason and Lon Gradetti. Gradetti owned the *California Kid*, a Philbrick boat that held the record for the hydro division in boat racing. When asked about building outboard boats, Don said, "Oh, I built a few thousand of them. That's how I cut my teeth in the boat-building world."

The boats that Don most loved to build were also the most difficult: the beautiful



LIFE WAS GOOD on a Philbrick boat.

mahogany runabout speedboats. He built them in all sizes, from 14 to 27 feet long. And he built them in all styles, from the sleek, single cockpit "gentleman racer" to double and triple cockpit models. He also built multi-cockpit utility models. Philbrick Boat Works has gained national fame for its beautifully-designed wooden power boats.

Don built boats until the workshop was full, and then he would take them to a boat show and sell them all. A boat for sale might be complete and ready to launch, or it could be a rough hull for the customer to stain and varnish. It could be a beautifully finished hull for sale to customers who wanted to put in their own engine, upholstery and hardware. By far, most boats Don built were sold by word of mouth. Friends and family of customers "would just have to have one of their own."

Don took great pride in saying that he never built two boats exactly the same

way. Initially, he had purchased one set of boat building plans from the famous naval architect John Hacker. Over time, Don developed his own boat designs, but he always sent them to Hacker for his ideas, suggestions and naval architect's approval. Don was proud that Hacker told him several times how much he liked Don's designs. As Don said, "If you build 'em all the same, you get stale. There's no more creativity or fun in your work. It's just work!" For instance, when Don's 1957 Chrysler Imperial convertible was totaled, he made it into a 21-foot double cockpit custom boat. The door panels from the car became the side panels of the boat. He built an identical wood dash and seats, electrical system and gauges. He used the hemi-engine as the power, and even used the windshield and convertible top. This unique piece is now in the collection and on exhibit at the Tahoe Maritime Museum.

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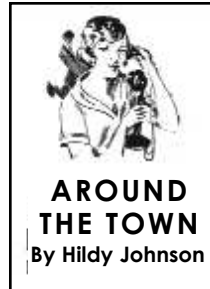
Sleuth discovers devious plans afoot at the wharf

Here's the place to get the latest gossip on Oakland's historic front. *Around the Town* is compiled by our crack newswoman Hildy Johnson.

■ I got a call the other night from my pal, Nancy Drew, to meet her down at the wharf at midnight. She had a tip that terrorists were smuggling a bomb in an intermodal container that had just docked in a ship. It was a dark and stormy night as she cut the lights and engine and rolled up to the docks in her silent roadster. Jumping from the car with her boltcutters in hand, Nancy snapped the container seals before you could say "Why is Homeland Security only inspecting 5 percent of the shipments coming to the Port of Oakland?" As we searched without success for a bomb, Nancy stumbled across some blueprints on the floor. "Look, it's the drawings for a weapon of mass destruction!" she cried happily. But, no, even stranger, it was the drawings for a massive building project called Oak to 9th Avenue, including some 24-story buildings blocking out the sun, sky

and views of the bay. "It looks like a giveaway of 64 acres of prime real estate on the waterfront that will violate Oakland's Estuary Plan! And what happened to the Ninth Avenue Terminal?" I asked breathlessly. "Quick, Nancy, we've got to get these to the Landmarks Preservation Board, before it's too late!"

■ Meanwhile, it's rained for 40 days and 40 nights, breaking all previous records that were lost in the archives. From my office, I've been watching lots of strange looking animals going two by two down Broadway towards the bay. Perhaps visiting the *USS Potomac*? Or maybe something more Biblical? But with the rain comes spring and with spring I see mushroomiums sprouting up all over: on Broadway and Grand, 15th and Jefferson, and of course, the gigantic



Forest City project behind Sears. Everywhere I see building, building, building. Who's buying all of these units? I get a sense that this spring, we will hear the hissing, not of lawns, but of the air out of the over-heated real estate market. O Overlord Bernanke, master of the Federal Reserve Board, have pity on us paupers and let us down easy from these unsustainable heights of real estate valuations!

■ And speaking of real estate: Jack London's house at 1914 Foothill Boulevard, a city of Oakland landmark, is for sale. Jack moved into this house in 1898 upon his return from the Klondike gold rush. He hadn't found gold, but on his return discovered a much more lucrative career by writing. The house is located in Oakland's San Antonio area, a block away from San Antonio Park. It is a 1 1/2 story Victorian with two bedrooms and 1 1/2 baths. Maybe inspiration can be yours if you believe in a "genius loci" or spirit of place. ■

Calendar

UPCOMING EVENTS AND EXHIBITS

Sunday, May 7, 2-4 p.m.: Shocking Stories! An afternoon of "living history" performances highlighting voices from the 1906 earthquake and fire. Featuring Charlie Chin, Diane Ferlatte, and Brenda Wong. With the California Council for the Humanities, the National Japanese American Historical Society, the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, and the Chinese Historical Society of America. Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak St. 238-2200

Friday, May 19: OHA at 25. Celebration from 6 to 8 p.m., Lake Merritt Hotel.

Through May 27: Jack London and the Great Earthquake and Firestorm of 1906. Exhibit featuring photographs taken by London for *Collier's* magazine. California Historical Society, 678 Mission Street, San Francisco. (415) 357-1848.

Through May 27: American ABC: Childhood in 19th Century America. Cantor Arts Center of Stanford University, 328 Lomita Drive, Palo Alto. (650) 723-4177

Through May 28: Baseball by the Bay. Exhibition highlighting 10 famous moments

in Bay Area baseball history. Oakland Museum of California, Oak and 10th, Oakland (888) 625-6873.

Through May 30: A Disaster Documented. An exhibit marking the centennial of the S.F. earthquake of 1906. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 151 Third Street, San Francisco. (510) 773-0303 or visit www.sfmoma.org.

Through June 4: After the Ruins, 1906 and 2006: Rephotographing the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire. Legion of Honor, Lincoln Park 34th and Clement, San Francisco. (415) 750-3504

Through June 11: Edward Weston: Masterworks from the Collection. Oakland Museum of California, Oak and 10th, Oakland (888) 625-6873.

Beginning July 9: OHA's Summer Walking Tours, each weekend through the end of August. Visit www.oaklandheritage.org or call 763-9218.

Through Aug. 13: Aftershock—Voices from the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak St. 238-2200

Ongoing: Amusing America. Exhibition traces the evolution of American popular entertainment, including world's fairs,

amusement parks and technologies that spawned the Ferris wheel, carousels and more. S.F. Museum & Historical Society, Pier 45, San Francisco. www.sfhistory.org
Thursday, May 4: A pre-tour lecture connected with the May 7 BAHA House Tour will be given by Woodruff Minor, author of the book *Ratcliff Architecture*, to be published in the fall by Heyday Books. Admission \$10. Details will be posted at Berkeleyheritage.com.

1-5 p.m., Sunday, May 7: Spring House Tour and Garden Reception. The Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association presents this year's tour, showcasing the residential work of Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr., Berkeley's only official City Architect, Mills College Campus Architect, and founder of the architectural firm currently celebrating a hundred years of continuous practice. The House Tour features 11 homes in the Claremont Park neighborhood. Tour map of the illustrated guidebook, and refreshments will be provided. General admission \$35; BAHA members and guests \$25. See above for pre-tour lecture. For more information and reservations, visit the website berkeleyheritage.com, e-mail baha@berkeleyheritage.com or call (510) 841-2242.



Welcome, new board members

by Joyce Roy

Steven Vigeant has been active with the walking tours. And the signs donated from his firm, Berkeley Signs, helped people navigate our house tour last year. Because of his varied experiences with preservation and cultural activities, he is bringing many good workable ideas for new programs to our table. He lives and works in the Highland neighborhood.

Dea Bacchetti comes to us with a background in archaeology and is marketing manager for Carey & Co. Architecture. She

Cogswell

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ment ever made at one time. Shipping costs alone were estimated at \$10,000. Once the pieces arrived in the Oakland freight yard, it was discovered that a team of 24 horses was insufficient to haul the largest piece of the obelisk out to the cemetery. A house mover's capstan was put to work on the heavy load but that succeeded only in mov-

has served on the board of Historic Preservation of Glen Alpine Springs, South Lake Tahoe (Maybeck property). She reads EIRs for pleasure! She lives in West Oakland and is particularly interested in advocating for preservation. ■

ing it as far as Broadway and Webster Street (now Piedmont Avenue). A big traction engine was brought over from San Francisco to finish the job. The pieces were assembled at the cemetery by means of mortice-and-tenon joinery, with big pins of Rocklin granite holding the sections together. The owner of the New Hampshire stone quarry and builder of the monument asserted at the time that this method of doweling the pieces together would make the monument impervious to earthquake. He reported to the *Enquirer* that the monument's shaft "would sway six feet before it would fall." Tested by two major earthquakes since then, this monument has stood the test of time.

A longer article by Gaye Lenahan about the cemetery appeared in Vol.7 No. 2 in 1987. ■

Landmarks Board denies Philbrick Boat Works landmarking

Compiled by Joyce Roy

■ **Nov. 14, 2005:** The meeting began with an informational presentation on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Historical Resources by Mark Wald, City Attorney's Office.

Landscape alternatives to the Measure DD Lake Merritt 12th Street project were reviewed. The board had requested modifications at its October board meeting to facilitate views of the **Kaiser Convention Center**. It unanimously approved the option that gave a nice view of the center of the building and so created the building as the focal point.

It was decided unanimously that both **The Altheim**, 1720 MacArthur Blvd., and **Studio One Art Center**, 365 45th St., were Eligible for City Landmark Designation.

■ **Dec. 12, 2005:** The effect of a mixed-use project at 2946 International Boulevard on the adjacent **Cohen-Bray House** was evaluated. This project consisting of affordable housing and a Health Clinic was reviewed in 2003, but due to some changes on the rear of the building facing the garden behind the Cohen-Bray House it was brought back to the board. The board concurred with the staff finding that there was no adverse effect.

An affordable housing project at 160 14th St. was also reviewed for its effect

on an adjacent historic resource, the **Islamic Cultural Center**. The proposed eight-story building is a contemporary design in contrast to the Center but refers to it in its light color. This review was requested by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The board agreed that there was no adverse effect.

The lot behind the **Fox Theater** between 18th and 19th Streets is the site for 80 units of affordable housing, so it was also reviewed for "Criteria of Adverse Effects Assessment" (National Historic Preservation Act). The design presented was conceptual and subject to change. Although the board had questions about the design, it agreed that it would have no adverse effects on the Fox Theater. But it asked that a more developed design come back to the body before it goes to the Planning Commission.

■ **Jan. 9, 2006:** A notice of Intent to Landmark the **Philbrick Boat Works**, 603 Embarcadero in the Oak to Ninth area, was presented by the tenant, Russ Donovan. This building that has housed a 60-year ongoing business is slated for demolition by the **Oak to Ninth project**. Many members of the public testified in favor of landmarking. But the board, although valuing the historic business, voted against both landmarking the build-

ing and designating it a Heritage Property. But it asked that the business be relocated in a place on the estuary, and that this recommendation be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

A discussion on the **Oak to Ninth project** began with a presentation by the developer. He proposes to demolish the **Ninth Avenue Terminal** in the first phase preserving only a token 7 percent. None of the public speakers spoke in favor of the 7% solution. This item was for discussion only and generated many exchanges between the developer and the board. The desirability of using the concrete platform for open space after the demolition of the Terminal was questioned. It is 5 feet above the street level and only grass can possibly grow on it. Uses for the Terminal are being studied by UC Berkeley students and the developer said those and other recommended uses will be included in a report.

The board reviewed the changes to the proposed design for the housing project behind the **Fox Theater** first presented at their December meeting. The Friends of the Fox said they were fine with the design but it still got mixed reviews from the board. Nevertheless, the board did not change its original opinion of no adverse effect on the Fox Theater. ■



Successful Annual Fund Drive

By Stacey Stern, Administrative Director
We are deeply grateful for gifts to the Annual Fund, which support all programs of the Oakland Heritage Alliance. Gifts to the Annual Fund listed below were donated between November 1, 2005 and March 31, 2006. We have received over \$4,000 to date!

All contributions made to the Annual Fund are entirely tax-deductible. To make a contribution or pledge, please contact me at 510-763-9218 or info@oaklandheritage.org. Thank you.

The following are our generous donors, who we thank for supporting the Annual Fund:

William & Marilyn Mitchell
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John & Barbara Pichotto
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Mary Harper
Laura Ingram
Mary Davis
Lora Lee Baker
James Spaulding
Mary MacDonald
Dolores & Jim Thom
Susan Wilder & Natalie Robb
Aubrey & Brendy Rose
Alfred Damianakes

Thanks to a special volunteer

By Stacey Stern

As an assistant archivist at the Environmental Design Archives at UC Berkeley, preservation issues are really part of Betsy Frederick-Rothwell's daily life. Betsy has been tirelessly volunteering her time and expertise organizing and archiving OHA's extensive collection of administrative and preservation records, newsletter archives and resources.

Betsy is creating a valuable cross-referencing index for the many files associated with a long history of preservation efforts. This would allow for searches by Oakland Heritage Cultural Survey district codes, as well as the many alternative names and addresses of building and projects. This will be an extremely valuable resource to the public and our members. ■

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organization, and a desire to reach into new communities. We built relationships with neighborhood groups throughout Oakland by co-facilitating new walking tours, and through the dedicated work of the members of the Preservation Action Committee who championed the importance of neighborhood integrity before the City Council.

—Lynn Fonfa, president 1991-92

When BART wanted to build a 20-story office building within the current one-story Floral Depot, we invited the BART real estate director over for a chat. The (now-departed!) city staffer he was working with had failed to explain the historic importance of the building to him (they were proposing to keep the facade and build just inside it). No problem! I could easily whip out a copy of the OHA News from 20 years earlier, to show that OHA had had its eye on the building, had tried to landmark it, and expressed grave concern about it, all along. BART hesitated. In the end, Phil Tagami and the Reverend Matthew Fox teamed up to make an offer on the property, saving it from a dire fate.

—Naomi Schiff, past & current president

Philbrick

Continued from page 5

Don died January 27, 1994, a few years after Russ Donovan purchased the business in 1991. Russ came to the Bay Area in 1976, having trained in shipbuilding at the Marine Construction and Design Co. (MARCO) in Seattle. While there, he worked in the wooden boat division, including working on John Wayne's famous wooden boat *Wild Geese*. After coming to the Bay Area as a member of the ship fitters union, he worked on larger ships such as the *USS California* and installed the "stub mast" with the radar and satellite antenna on the *USS Enterprise*. Good work: but his real love was wooden boat building.

Now owner of Philbrick Boat Works, Russ continues to build, repair and perform award-winning restorations of antique and classic wooden boats. His work honors Don's boat designs and preserves the workshop much as it has always been, exhibiting our rich heritage of fine wooden boat building.

Russ's efforts to preserve the knowledge and skill of wooden boat building include helping owners work on their own wooden boats. He also provides training to Oakland Unified School District high school youth in "Schools to Work" summer job programs, hoping to find special people with the patience and love of hard work and history to learn the trade and prevent this special craft from being lost. Essential skills in completing a wooden boat include wood cutting, sanding, metal working, and upholstery. Expertise is required in using equipment such as power saws, hand tools like drills and clamps, and precision tools such as squares and the "ducks" essential to creating a precise curve in cut wood.

And then there is the boat design that Russ most enjoys. The vision of the perfect boat must be expressed mathematically in the table of offsets and the blueprints that will guide cutting of patterns and eventually wood. Those patterns produce the sleek shape capable of moving elegantly through wind, water and gravity. That's the rewarding challenge that Russ loves.



PHILBRICK BOAT WORKS: The workshop in the 1950s, top, and in the 1990s.

Once there were as many as 20 wooden boat builders practicing their trade along the Oakland Estuary. It's part of Oakland's heritage as a waterfront city. But the rising cost of exotic

hardwood combined with the low cost of plastic and fiberglass has all but put Philbrick Boat Works out of business. As Russ says, "We believe that our

See PHILBRICK on page 10



Preservation Action Committee Roundup

Good news: Mills Act on the table

Here are some of the projects OHA's Preservation Action Committee has been monitoring recently.

Oak to Ninth: OHA has been actively participating in public hearings and meetings about this 62+-acre, 3,100-unit residential and commercial development proposed for Oakland's waterfront. Working with other community advocates, major discussions have centered around open space and affordable housing, as well as historic preservation of the last publicly-financed breakbulk facility in Oakland, the Ninth Avenue Terminal. A city council hearing is now set for 7 p.m. on June 20 (but check the city's website to verify this). OHA members can help save the terminal, now slated for a 93% demolition, by contacting city councilmembers and requesting that it be preserved. We are asking that more serious consideration be given to a creative reuse of this historic building, likely eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. As a remnant of Oakland's rich maritime heritage and industrial development, the building could be a real asset to the development. Two years ago, former board member Cynthia Shartzer submitted an excellent landmark application on behalf of OHA, which has been a major source for the environmental review.

Key System Building: Developers East End Oakland LLC are pursuing plans to stabilize and reuse the historic Key System Building at 11th and Broadway. It has long been vacant and is earthquake damaged and the subject of several earlier unsuccessful development efforts. At the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on April 17, architects discussed the challenges of structural repair and showed the plans for a large adjoining new building. While all interior floors of the old building would be replaced, a partial restoration of the banking hall on the ground floor is in the plans. The exterior will be rehabilitated and retained, using as much of the

original material as possible and attempting to match the rest.

16th Street Station: Discussion and planning continues, as BUILD holds community meetings with the objective of presenting a report to the City Council on how the station can be reused, and what mechanisms for governance and development have been planned. Plans are being made to put a request for proposals out, to find an appropriate, competent and responsible entity to put together the reuse of the station.

St. Joseph's: Bridge Housing visited an OHA board meeting to explain a plan to reuse the old Fruitvale landmark for senior housing, retaining a prominent building behind it, and replacing some open spaces, parking lots, and possibly-less-significant outbuildings with new family housing.

Auto Center at Army Base EIR: OHA has just received an addendum to the Army Base EIR, describing impacts for an auto sales area on the former base. In a complex land exchange, the Port will use part of the old base for a rail yard and related facilities, while the city will end up with some usable land. A number of interesting warehouses and industrial buildings stand in the area, and OHA is investigating whether some of them could be reused.

Mills Act: Through the diligent efforts of JoAnn Pavlinec, city planner and secretary to the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, and with the support of Planning Director Claudia Cappio, proposed legislation instituting a Mills Act program for historic preservation won Planning Commission approval and is now headed for the city council.

If it passes, it will for the first time provide a tax incentive for owners who do historically sensitive restoration of their properties.

We need your participation: Please contact the OHA office if you would like to be on the email list of the Preservation Action Committee: info@oaklandheritage.org or 763-9218. Thank you! ■

Philbrick

Continued from page 9



Philbrick Boat Works Archives

A PHILBRICK BOAT powers through the water.

heritage should be the strongest and best part of our future."

You will have a chance to visit this remarkable facility on one of this summer's OHA Walking Tours on August 26. Check www.oaklandheritage.org for reservation information. The Summer Walking Tours begin July 9. ■

OHA receives grant

By Stacey Stern

Oakland Heritage Alliance is deeply grateful to the corporations and foundations whose support enables us to offer a broad range of educational programs. A \$10,000 grant was recently received from the DeLong Sweet Foundation. Many thanks to Wycliffe DeLong, a member of OHA, who helped make this gift possible. ■

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An organization with a history: looking back, but mostly forward!

By Naomi Schiff, President

An optimistic board of directors looks forward to the next 25 years! We invite you to come celebrate with us May 19, and to join us on our upcoming summer walking tours. Active committees are working on some wonderful plans, including another great house tour and a terrific lecture series. Now is a great time to give a gift subscription or contribute to our Anniversary Fund.

Spearheading the celebration, board member James Corless has been delving into OHA's long history to pick out a few highlights. It's a real challenge: OHA has been part of so many successes, helped engineer partial successes, suffered some notorious and much-regretted losses, and settled for a few only-partially-satisfying practical compromises. All of these collective experiences form a community experience that binds us together as neighbors.

In her column for this newsletter, have you ever noticed that Kathleen DiGiovanni often writes about buildings no longer

standing? People and buildings remembered are an important inheritance. On some of our walking tours the leaders can point to traces of these bygone landmarks and link them to the people who lived here before us. A visit to the Oakland Library's History Room is an intriguing way to rediscover and deepen our understanding of this unusual town.

In a sign of growing awareness that historic preservation can contribute to Oakland's sustainable economic and aesthetic future, the Planning Commission has approved a recommendation for a Mills Act program! This program provides some local tax incentives for rehabilitating heritage or historic properties. Cities such as San Diego have used this program to kick-start overall neighborhood revitalization. We are hoping it will be a useful tool here in Oakland, where we have so many older structures.

Congratulations to all, with best wishes for the next twenty-five! ■



CELEBRATE WITH OHA!

OHA's board of directors invites you to celebrate OHA at 25, and help us start off the next quarter century!

Join us May 19th, Friday evening from 6 to 8 at the landmark Lake Merritt Hotel, overlooking the lake, and in the excellent company of people who really care about Oakland's history, architecture, unique green spaces and cherished neighborhoods.

We'll hear a few of Joyce Whitelaw's Oakland songs, performed live, and enjoy refreshments and conviviality. And don't forget the birthday cake!

Members are receiving invitations, but it is not too late to RSVP at our website, oaklandheritage.org, or by calling the office at 763-9218.

We are grateful to our generous sponsors, in particular Madison's at the Lake Merritt Hotel, and painter Anthony Holdsworth. A complete list of these great supporters appears in our next issue.

CONTRIBUTORS: Annalee Allen, Deborah Cooper, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Russ Donovan, Kevin Flynn, Allyson Quibell, Joyce Roy, Naomi Schiff, Stacey Stern

PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

OHA News welcomes contributions: research projects large or small, historic photos and reports on preservation issues or events. Submissions may be sent to news@oaklandheritage.org.

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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- \$20 Keystone** (limited income/senior/student): quarterly newsletter, advance notice and discounted pricing on programs, events and tours
 - \$40 Cornerstone** (individual): quarterly newsletter, advance notice and discounted pricing on programs, events and tours plus 50% off two house tour tickets
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 - \$500-\$999 Ionic**: same as above plus two additional tickets (total of 4) to walking tour, two additional tickets (total of 4) tickets to a house tour.
 - \$1,000-\$2,500 Corinthian**: all access pass for two (transferable).
- I'd like to contribute _____ to the OHA Anniversary Fund, and help assure the future of historic preservation in Oakland.

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Send to: Oakland Heritage Alliance,
446 17th St., Suite 301,
Oakland, CA 94612 or go to
www.oaklandheritage.org.
For info: 510-763-9218.



Gold Rush dentist erects Mausoleum to the Worthy Dead

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

In Mountain View Cemetery atop a knoll with a commanding view, a narrow granite obelisk rises 70 feet into the sky. At the very top is a star, below that a globe, and a dome shaped like the United States Capitol. Four female figures representing Faith, Hope, Charity, and Temperance stand at the corners of the monument's base. This is the Mausoleum to the Worthy Dead, otherwise known as the Cogswell Monument. It is the final resting place of Dr. Henry Daniel Cogswell, pioneer California dentist, temperance advocate, and noteworthy eccentric.

Cogswell, a Connecticut Yankee, was born in 1820. After a poverty-stricken childhood, he apprenticed himself to a dentist in Providence, Rhode Island, later setting up his own practices there and in Pawtucket. He followed the Gold Rush West but instead of mining for his fortune practiced dentistry in the camps and peddled supplies to the miners. The \$3,000 nest egg that he made in the mountains allowed him to return to San Francisco and establish a dental practice on Washington Street at an office he called "the Sign of the Golden Tooth." Cogswell invested the money he made in dentistry in real estate and mining stocks. By 1856, he was rich enough to retire, but not before he had distinguished himself by becoming the first dentist in

California to use chloroform as an anesthetic in a dental operation.

After retiring from dental practice, Dr. Cogswell dedicated the remainder of his life to enlarging his fortune through investments and disbursing the same through philanthropy. Cogswell Polytechnical College, formerly in San Francisco but now located in Cupertino, remains the most successful of his charitable endeavors. Less permanent, but more numerous in their day, were the temperance fountains that Cogswell donated to cities across the United States. He believed that if provided a source of safe, cool drinking water, people would not turn to drink. In all, 16 temperance fountains were donated and constructed, of which very few remain today. Designed by Dr. Cogswell himself and notoriously ugly, many of them featured a larger-than-life-sized statue of the frock-coated dentist holding a scroll in one outstretched hand and a glass of water in the other.

Cogswell bought his lot at Mountain View around 1880 for \$1,000. He promised the cemetery board at the time that he would put up a monument that "would be an ornament to the cemetery," according to the *Oakland Enquirer*. By 1887, Cogswell's irascible disposition had led the board to wish they'd never sold him the plot, but come the summer all of Oakland awaited the great obelisk's arrival and assembly. Again of



Erika Maiman

THE 329-TON COGSWELL MONUMENT has withstood two major earthquakes.

Cogswell's own design, the monument was built of New Hampshire granite, cut at the quarry and shipped across the continent on 38 freight cars. At 329 tons, it was said to have been the heaviest cross-country ship-

See COGSWELL on page 7



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