

Glenview's shoe man retires after serving Oakland for 64 years

By Arthur Levy

Joe Cervantes, shoemaker extraordinaire, retired at the end of May after shoeing thousands of Oaklanders for 64 years from his Glenview shoe repair shop. Joe began working in the little shop at 4193 Park Boulevard in 1957, took over the business in 1959, and became Glenview's longest running proprietor. Joe served his customers for over six decades, as he watched the Glenview shopping village change from a block of neighborhood service businesses—multiple grocery stores, drug stores, gift shops, and a variety of other small shops and service businesses—into a destination commercial district anchored by restaurants and beauty and nail shops.

Joe came to his calling from a long line of shoemakers. His father and grandfather were shoemakers in Guanajuato, Mexico. In the late 1920s, Joe's father immigrated to Austin, Texas, to work in a shoe repair shop there. In the early 1940s, his father moved Joe's family from Austin to nearby Bastrop, Texas, to open a new shoe shop. After serving in the Vietnam War, Joe's brother took over the shop in Bastrop and is still in business there.

Joe, born in 1930, grew up watching his father repair shoes; the polish rubbed off. During World War II, the enterprising teenager would go to the nearby army base to shine



ARTHUR LEVY

GOING OUT OF BUSINESS SIGNS were placed at the Glenview Shoe Repair store on Park Boulevard, a business that has operated there for over 60 years.

soldier's shoes, as well as sell them the morning and evening newspapers.

But Joe had other plans before returning to the shoemaking fold. At age 16, he enlisted in the Air Force (enthusiasm may have caused him to overstate his age a bit). In the late 1940s, he did a 3-1/2 year stint in the Air Force, first based at Lakeland Air Force Base in San Antonio, then in Colorado, and then two years in Okinawa. Joe served as military police during the U.S. occupation of Okinawa and was discharged after his return to Hamilton Air Force Base in Marin County.

After serving in the Air Force, Joe re-enlisted—this time in the Navy. He was based at the Alameda Naval Air Station for

18 months in the early 1950s. While there, he met his wife to be, Alice, but was transferred to Pensacola, Florida. Joe liked his duty in Florida, where he trained pilots to land and take off from aircraft carriers in the Gulf of Mexico. When he left the Navy after four years of service, he asked Alice to move back to Texas with him, but she was having none of it; she was an Oaklander through and through. No go, Joe.

So we have Alice to thank that Joe stayed in the East Bay. They were married in Oakland's St. Mary's church at 8th and Jefferson in 1955, settled in San Leandro, and raised four children.

Joe enrolled in the shoemaking school at Laney College on the GI. Bill.

His instructor, Eddie Abood, could spot a talented shoemaker and told Joe not to take a job with anyone else after he graduated. So in 1957, Joe started working for Mr. Abood in his Glenview shoe repair shop—the same spot that had been a shoe repair shop since

See **SHOES** on page 2

ARTHUR LEVY



JOE CERVANTES at his front counter earlier this year.



Shoes

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1939, and remained one until Joe’s retirement this year.

Joe took over the shop in 1959, and the rest is history. Thousands of Oaklanders owe their soles to Joe. A’s star Ricky Henderson brought a pair of shoes in to Joe once; he never picked them up, and they remained in the shop until Joe cleared it out this May. Al Attles, Warrior star and coach, used to bring his shoes in on his way down from his home in Montclair, but Al always picked up his shoes—which were large.

Change was tough on the shoe repair business. Back in the day, everyone wore leather shoes that needed repair. Men and women used to bring their leather shoes in for professional treatment at Joe’s place. That changed with the rise of synthetic “throw away” shoes. Business dropped off, and the pandemic dealt the coup de grace.



FAUX TUDOR detailing and mullioned windows make the Glenview Shoe Repair and others in its retail strip charming places to visit.

Joe remembers when Glenview had two grocery stores, the Save-more (originally a Safeway, and still thriving under the ownership of the Korin family) and the Glenview Market, which was across the street in the Glenview Building. There were dental offices upstairs



ALL PHOTOS: ARTHUR LEVY

in the Glenview Market building; the dentist built a new dental building at 4174 Park Boulevard and moved out.

There were two drugstores, where the Diggery Inn and the Blackberry Cafe are now. John Gallagher’s liquor store was where the lock shop is now. There used to be two gift shops, two beauty shops and a barbershop, a cleaners, a dress shop, an insurance agency, and a hardware store that started out where the laundromat is now and then moved across the street to larger space, where Park Burger and the Marzano dining room are



TOOLS OF THE TRADE: machinery required for shoe repair in the shop of Joe Cervantes, at top and above.

See **SHOES** on page 3



SHELVES OF SHOES: The Glenview Shoe Repair shop dates from an era when people would fix shoes and keep them going longer, rather than discarding them and purchasing a new pair so quickly.

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Shoes

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now. A five and dime store and then a music store used to occupy where Oak Hillside Cleaners is now.

A branch of the Oakland Public Library, which later was elegant retail space for an organ dealer, was where the fitness studio is now. The only restaurant in the neighborhood at the time Joe started was the Glenview Restaurant, where Pastino's is today.

There was a gas station on the corner of Wellington, where Paulista restaurant is now. Long after the gas station closed, La Cantina Mexican restaurant moved into a new building there. Joe remembers the Cantina days as party time; everyone went up to the bar there for margaritas after work. Kids may remember La Cantina's deep fried ice cream.

Joe views the changes in Glenview philosophically: "Things change, life goes on." True enough—but Glenview will miss Joe and, even though he won't admit it, Joe will miss Glenview. ■



JOE CERVANTES during one of his last days at the Glenview Shoe Repair shop before closing down, after many decades of working in the heart of Glenview.

The marsh at Brooklyn Basin

By Naomi Schiff

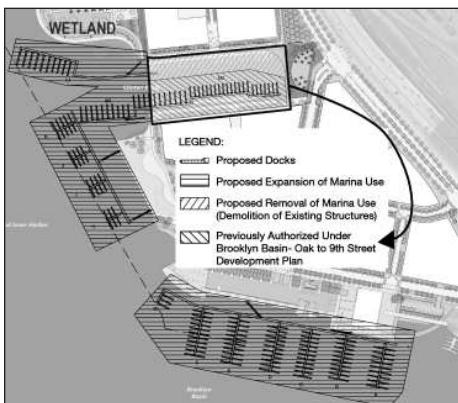
A proposal to expand a planned boat marina at Brooklyn Basin (historically, Ninth Avenue Terminal and the area around it) would wrap boat slips around the shore at a reclaimed wetland and at a newly popular park. OHA and other advocates are working to keep marina facilities away from the wetland, and to ensure that views from the shoreline

Township Commons park are not blocked by boats, ramps, gates, hulls, and masts.

Twenty years ago, the Port of Oakland demolished the *Moby Dick*, a derelict boat, on the bank at Clinton Basin, exacerbating toxic contamination of the shore. A nonprofit (then Waterkeeper, now San Francisco Baykeeper) filed complaints. A settlement agreement led to the Port establishing a marsh restoration project.

Today, despite concrete debris and minimal access, the area is a habitat for aquatic species and migratory birds. OHA joins Sierra Club, SF Baykeeper, Golden Gate Audubon Society, and the Measure DD Coalition to preserve it, one of few soft-edged shoreline areas in the vicinity.

There are 10 other marina facilities in the general area, with no overwhelming need for additional boatslips. A Supplementary EIR is under review. At September Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development Commission and Planning Commission Design Review Committee meetings, appointees asked whether enlarging the marina would tend to



LIGHT GREY SQUARE shows original approval; newly requested slips are in dark grey.



NAOMI SCHIFF



ARTHUR LEVY

AN EGRET feeds at the marsh (top). Above, Township Commons, with a view of San Francisco.

privatize what was planned as public waterfront with wide open views, and threaten the wetland. ■



Changes and new discoveries in the Cohen Bray House

By Patty Donald

Many changes have taken place in the Cohen Bray House in the last few years. And the biggest occurred on May 6, when Kenneth Christopher Gilliland, who had lived in the house for the last 30 years, passed away. This is the very first time that the house has not had blood relatives living in it.

The Gillilands moved in in the early 1980s to care for Emelita Cohen, who died in 1989, the last of the four children born to the original owners, my great grandparents, Emma Bray Cohen and Alfred A Cohen.

The Board of Directors has also changed; three members have resigned after many years, and we have two new members. We need many talented people to help look for the millions of dollars that are needed to replace the foundation and paint the exterior. With the help of our membership, the Victorian Alliance, the Artistic License Guild, various grantors, and many volunteers, we want to show we mean business and need support! This amazing house will have a grand renewal. Now is the perfect time as we prepare the house for a new caretaker. Please let us know if you can refer someone suitable. The job description and application are on our website www.cohenbrayhouse.org.

■ **Kitchen discoveries:** We started with the kitchen; it could finally get the deep cleaning



LIFTING THE TOP revealed an even older stove top, hidden since 1925.



COHEN BRAY FOLKS knew about the Spark Stove, which dates to the 1920s and needed a good cleaning, but the other discoveries were a surprise.

and repair that it needed. We were able to move everything out and use the plaster grant that we had gotten from the Victorian Alliance and the Carter Construction Company to repair the damage that had occurred to the kitchen ceiling.

■ **Spark Stove:** The money we have made through our membership has allowed us to strip out the old vinyl flooring which happened to have asbestos in it. Knowing that the flooring was on its way out, it was time to get down and dirty, cleaning out the Spark

stove completely. There were still ashes in the section of the stove that was used for burning garbage.

This seemed like a perfect time for us to uncover the stove on top of the bricks next to the refrigerator.

No one still alive had never seen what was under this. We removed the cabinet (under the clock) and unscrewed the plywood that was covering the top. Underneath we found cast iron concentric circles next to a large, cracked cast iron plate on the other side. We



PERHAPS LUCKILY, the old stove hadn't been cleaned before sealing it up, so it provided intriguing clues. At top right, the pipe is evidence that this kitchen stove at some point furnished heated water upstairs.





Cohen Bray

Continued from page 3

read that different size pots fitted into each ring size, depending on what you needed.

When we lifted up the rings, we realized that no one had cleaned the stove before sealing it up. It was filled with paper, ash, and all sorts of treasures. We pulled out the crumpled newspapers and discovered that the last time this stove had been used was around June 14, 1925. The wadded-up *Illustrated Daily Herald* newspaper and *Oakland Tribune* newspapers were full of advertisements for ‘modern’ stoves which were in better condition than this one we were looking at.

Further discovery showed a multitude of findings! Who would have realized digging in a filthy old stove could be so fun? I found eggshells, three stacked inside each other, three small chicken or bird bones, seven wire hairpins, one whole round brown bottle without a lid, and two small broken bottles. I found an unburned cap off a milk bottle; the label read, “Golden State brand Ltd., 5307 Telegraph Ave, Oakland.” There were chunks of various sizes of coal, a couple of large nails, and the handle of a plastic toothbrush. And lo and behold, deep in the coal dust, I found a tiny abalone button.

Next, we pried off the wood that was screwed onto the front of the stove and discovered the doors were missing but we could easily see the name on the front of the stove. It was a #4 Locke & Montague Range.

We discovered that the Montague Company still sells ranges and is still located in Hayward. We further learned that the “new” Spark Stove was manufactured by The Hammer and Bray Company, which was once located in Oakland on 26th Avenue. It was co-owned by Mr. Hammer and Howard Bray, Emma Bray’s brother, my great-great uncle. He used to work for the Montague Company before he went into his own business. Small world!

■ **Other discoveries and mysteries:** When you look inside this range, you’ll notice that there is a 12-inch bar of metal in the back and a broken piece of an iron on the left and a tin from Ghirardelli’s chocolates in the front. I think maybe the heat in the oven wasn’t warm enough in the back, so the extra metal helped regulate the temperature. Who knows?



WATER DAMAGE on the ceiling got tackled in a recent effort to shore up infrastructure, above. At right is an ad from the 1930 *Sacramento Bee*.

We do know that this range was used for heating water for the upstairs sinks in each bedroom and for the two upstairs bathrooms. If you look at the picture with the clock before the reveal, you’ll notice that on the right side of the range box there’s a circle on the floor where the water heater used to be located and pipes that go up the wall. You’ll notice inside the coal box it’s encircled with pipes which were attached to the hot water heater. I think they stopped using this to cook with when they got the Spark stove but continued to use it to heat the sink and restroom water.

We are now in the process of carefully cleaning out the oven, taking the paint off the outside of the oven, and putting stove polish on the cast iron. There are no pictures of the finished stove here, because you are invited to come see this stove, the newly painted kitchen, and the new linoleum and replicated (original pattern) flooring in the butlers’ pantry. We would love to host a private tour for OHA members, or

GAS RANGE DAYS
Now In Progress

SPARK Stove
Constructed for Natural Gas

GAS RANGE DAYS
Suggest That You See

SPARK Stove

Illustrated At Left
This model, with griddle top, and...
\$166.80

Illustrated Below
This model, with griddle top, and...
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This model, with griddle top, and...
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For more on Spark stoves:
https://localwiki.org/oakland/Hammer-Bray_Company
<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2008/06/22/oaklands-spark-stove-sales-caught-fire-in-the-1920s/>

you can come to the Oct. 17 Harvest Festival with live music, beer, and food from 1 to 4 p.m. You can RSVP at cohenbrayhouse@gmail.com. ■

Patty Donald is president of the Victorian Preservation Center of Oakland.



THE COUNTER next to the fridge hid the old coal range.



'Fall' into the Oakland History Center with autumn events

By Dorothy Lazard

We're fully open again!

The Oakland History Center staff took full advantage of the library's fifteen-month closure. Emily Foster and I have tightened up our book collection, reorganized our Oakland and East Bay photo collections for easier retrieval, and planned our next exhibit and annual Fall History Series. Young and full of initiative, Emily has brought a lot of good energy and fresh perspectives to the work at OHC, and it shows in how much we've accomplished over the past year. With volunteer Jean Langmuir, Emily has updated scores of records of our historic map collection (which has been moved to a more accessible location) and uploaded new images to our newly redesigned website.

Recently, a patron donated an early 1960s aerial photo of the Crestmont neighborhood, showing the new Skyline High School, the Lincoln Square Shopping Center, and Redwood Road. As OHC is the beneficiary of wonderful gifts from the community that help tell the story of Oakland, we also like to pass along items to historical societies, libraries, and museums that are outside of the scope of our collections. This year we have donated photos to several agencies, including the Humboldt County Historical Society, the McHenry Museum and Historical Society (Stanislaus County), the Santa Barbara Historical Museum, Sacramento Public Library, Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, and the Los Angeles Public Library.

Our next exhibit will be a commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Oakland-Berkeley firestorm. It's hard to believe that so many years have passed since that fateful day in October 1991. Now that fires have become a regular part of our lives, it seems only fitting that we should use our display space to not only feature the important historical documents and photographs we've collected about the fire over the years, but also to reflect on what our community can do to mitigate occurrences of urban fires.

This year's Fall History Series in October will be our most ambitious, all online. You can register for each program on the event's listing on the Oakland Public Library's Events webpage. All programs begin at 6 p.m. Here's the lineup:

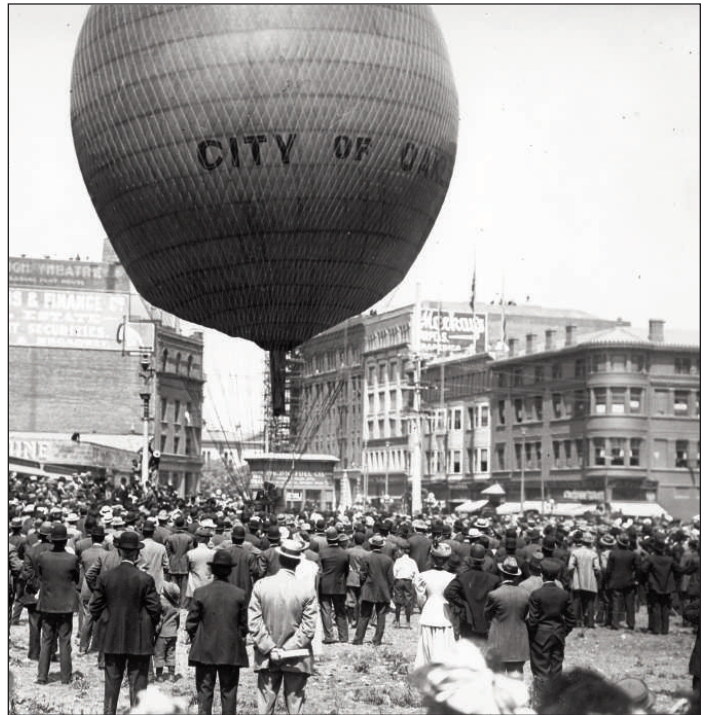
■ **Wed., Oct. 6:** Author Noel Siver will discuss her new book, *Harold French: a Press Agent for the Hills*. French, for whom the French Trail in Redwood Regional Park is named, championed public access to open recreational space in the East Bay hills from the 1920s through the 1960s. Learn about his establishment of the Contra Costa Hills Club and the club's advocacy for the creation of the East Bay Regional Parks District.

■ **Wed., Oct. 13:** "East Meets West: Fong Wan's Chinese Niteries." Calvin Fong shares stories of his father Fong Wan

(1883–1968), the Oakland herbalist and entrepreneur. Mr. Fong not only owned a famous herb shop on 10th Street, but a series of restaurants, a shrimping fleet, and, most notably, nightclubs in Oakland and San Francisco. Fong Wan's career as an entertainment impresario spanned the 1930s to the 1950s.

■ **Thurs., Oct. 14:** Professor Mitchell Schwarzer will introduce his latest book, *Hella Town: Oakland's History of Development and Disruption* (University of California Press, 2021) that traces Oakland's early days as major transportation hub, its manufacturing heyday during the 20th century, and the decisions that have led to its current struggles between new residents and those living in entrenched poverty. Mr. Schwarzer teaches courses on the history of the arts from antiquity to modernity as well as seminars on architecture and urbanism at the California College of the Arts.

■ **Thurs., Oct. 21:** "The Oakland-Berkeley Firestorm: a 30th anniversary retrospective" To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the devastating Oakland-Berkeley Hills Fire, the Oakland History Center will host a panel of speakers who played important roles during



VAN TASSEL'S 1909 launch of the "City of Oakland" balloon, at 14th and Franklin streets.

and after the firestorm including former Oakland city manager Henry Gardner, North Hills community advocate Sue Piper, former city councilwoman Marge Gibson, and retired Oakland Fire Department captain Mark Hoffman.

■ **Wed., Oct. 27:** "The History and Legacy of Mills College." Mills College is one of Oakland's oldest educational institutions and has announced it will merge with Northeastern University of Boston. Historian and professor emeritus Bertram Gordon will speak on the storied heritage and architecture of Mills College, from its beginnings as a ladies' seminary to its development as a fertile incubator of ideas and culture, to its present administrative challenges.

■ **Thurs., Oct. 28:** "Sky Rider: Park Van Tassel and the Rise of Ballooning in the West." Gary Fogel, adjunct professor of aerospace engineering at San Diego State University, will discuss his new book which tells the amazing tale of the intrepid turn-of-the-century balloonist and Oakland resident Park Van Tassel and his cohort of "aeronauts." ■

Dorothy Lazard is head librarian at the Oakland History Center.



2021 Mills Act Projects come forward

Betty Marvin of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, in the Bureau of Planning, has been presenting the proposed 2021 Mills Act projects, for the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission, and City Council. Here is a synopsis, based on her official reports:

The Mills Act is a 1972 California state law that allows property owners a potential property tax reduction for participating historic properties, using an alternate tax assessment formula. The state law establishes a ten-year perpetually renewing contract term.

Oakland requires that the property have local historic designation and commits the owner to spending the amount of the tax savings on a pre-approved, recorded program of eligible improvements that restore or maintain the historic exterior character of the building and/or its structural integrity. The relatively small tax benefit gives owners the means and motivation for high quality historically appropriate improvements, and can be especially beneficial for underutilized or undermaintained properties.

Such projects further City goals including creation and preservation of housing, reduction of blight, and enhancement of neighborhoods. Oakland has approved 92 Mills Act contracts since the first contracts in 2008. Here are the 2021 proposed contracts:

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members through September 9, 2021:

Todd & Miguel Atkins-Whitley,
John Baumgardner, Helen Bell,
Paul Brekke-Miesner, Mary Ray Brophy,
Jennifer Cherniss, Anna & Peter Chin,
Sandra Costa, Christine Gouig,
Janice Grau, Claire Jeannette,
Leslie Hilford, Randolph Langenbach,
Scott Law, Martin Levy, Linda Lewin,
Dorothy Londagin, Annemarie Meike,
Susan Miller, Woody Minor,
Virginia Murphey, Nancy Rodd,
Sarah Rosales-Hunt, Kevin Tam,
Sonia Tamez & Kenneth Whistler,
Judy Velardi, Jim Willows

GIFT MEMBERSHIP/DONOR

Welcome to new member Lisa Lau, with thanks to Phil Bellman for the gift.

■ 1420 Magnolia Street

Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson house, Stick-Italianate cottage, 1886–87. OCHS Rating: C2+, secondary importance or superior example. Designated Historic Property as contributor to Oak Center S-20 Preservation Combining Zone. This would be the 20th Mills Act project in West Oakland, 8th in Oak Center. It has City Landmark potential as the 40-year home of community activist Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson.

■ 1120 Chester St.

Carter (George & Mollie) house, Stick-Eastlake house, 1887. OCHS Rating: C1+, individual secondary importance, Oakland Point API contributor. Determined eligible for National Register. This would be a highly



CITY OF OAKLAND

ELLEN WYRICK-PARKINSON HOUSE will benefit from Mills Act tax reductions for renovations of historic homes.

See **MILLS ACT** on page 8

We thank our recent donors

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Thank you, volunteers

ZOOM LECTURE PRESENTERS/SPEAKERS

Kathleen DiGiovanni: “Candymakers of Oakland”
Brenda Montano and Dave Zuckermann: “The Austin Dunn Story”
Brad and Kelly Agnew: “John and Sara Lemmon; Early California Botanists, Civil War Survivors and Influential Oakland Citizens”

Thanks to Charles Bucher, Neil Heyden, and Daniel Levy for introducing speakers and fielding audience questions. Special thanks to administrative director Amelia Cass for facilitating Zoom connections, editing lectures, and uploading the presentations to our website.

WALKING TOUR LEADERS

Woody Minor and Major Jordan M. Hayes, Senior Squadron 188, Civil Air Patrol: “Amelia’s Airport, Oakland’s Historic North Field”
Amelia Sue Marshall and John Nicoles, Ranger: “Oakland’s Ridgetop Redwoods”
Stu Swiedler: “Shepherd Canyon & Tales of the Tunnel”
Laine Farley: “Leimert’s Legacy, Lower Oakmore’s Secret Stairways & Storybook Homes”
Karen Fiene: “Mills College Campus”

WALKING TOUR VOLUNTEERS

Charles Bucher, Alison Finlay, Tom Haw, Joyce Hendy, Neil Heyden, Kitty Hughes, Bill Imler, Irina Itsekson, Daniel Levy, Ann Killebrew, Michael Knowles, Judy Weiss

Special thanks to Barry Bennett, Wells & Bennett Realty, for providing access to their archives



Mills Act

Continued from page 7
visible project with catalyst potential for Prescott neighborhood, and the 21st Mills Act project in West Oakland

■ **1020–22 Bella Vista Ave.**

Myers (J. S.)–Taylor (Fred & Elizabeth) house,



1120 CHESTER ST.

Colonial–Craftsman, 1900–01, Leo Nichols arch., C. M. MacGregor bldr. OCHS Rating: Dc2+, secondary importance, altered, district contributor. The report calls it a transformative restoration of a distinguished and prominently located house, an example for other owners of asbestos-clad buildings. It is the first application in the historic Bella Vista Area of Secondary Importance

■ **671 Longridge Road**

Dowell–Chambliss house, Beaux Arts eclectic house, 1919–20, Albert Farr architect OCHS Rating: C2+: secondary importance, ASI contributor. This is the first Mills application representing major California architect Albert Farr, and the 13th application in Lakeshore Homes neighborhood.

■ **901 Trestle Glen Road**

Tucker–Garden house, Normandy Revival–Moderne house, 1941, William E. Schirmer, architect. OCHS Rating: C2+: secondary importance, contributor to Lakeshore–Trestle Glen ASI. This is an unusual 1940s Period Revival house by major Oakland architect W.E. Schirmer.

To find out more about Oakland’s Mills Act program, visit: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/historic-preservation> ■



671 LONGRIDGE ROAD



NAOMI SCHIFF

MOVED SEGMENTS of the Club await foundation and reassembly at the new site.

Oak Knoll Officers’ Club update

By Naomi Schiff

The big move is finally underway! Mothballed in pieces for almost three years, the former Officers’ Club at Oak Knoll, built in 1926 as the clubhouse for the Oak Knoll Country Club golf course, is being reassembled on its new site. The last big chunk to move will be the tower, which will require a crane for installation. The restored structure will become part of a community center for a 940-unit residential development to be constructed over the next few years.

The Oak Knoll Country Club failed during the Great Depression. In 1942, the US Navy acquired the land for the big naval medical facility many Oaklanders remember, and the vacant clubhouse became the Officers’ Club. It was a busy site during World War II, treat-

ing injuries from the Pacific war, and remained active for five decades until 1996, through the Korean and Vietnam eras, up to the Gulf War. The federal government’s base reuse program led to the demolition of the hospital and its ancillary structures, and deacquisition resulted in a 2005 purchase by the SunCal company of the 165 acres. However, that effort fell apart during the 2008 financial debacle, as Lehman Brothers, a major investor, went bankrupt. SunCal tried again, and purchased the property for a second time in 2014.

With the revival of the project, initial plans showed total demolition of the old Club Knoll while City planners and OHA advocated for preserving it. After numerous meetings and environmental reports, the plan was revised to relocate the building. The move does include historic outdoor features.

Challenges included securing the building, which had suffered major intrusions, graffiti, and deterioration. Recently, the developers have been resculpting the acreage with earthmoving, grading, building-site preparation, and a big stream restoration at Rifle Creek. To move the club, a roadway had to be constructed and foundations prepared. Many companies have been involved, including Evergreen Company, Garden City Construction, Scott Heavy Movers, with monitoring by historic preservation architects Carey & Company/TreanorHL. ■



901 TRESTLE GLEN ROAD



1020-22 BELLA VISTA AVE.

Lectures start next month!

Planning for OHA’s lecture series is underway; please watch your email for details in the coming weeks.

ALL: CITY OF OAKLAND



Oakland Monster wins award!

Among the California Preservation Awards for this year are two wonderful Oakland projects: the “Oakland Monster” and the Mills College Lisser Hall Rehabilitation:

■ **The Oakland Monster:** The Monster was designed by local artist Robert Winston in 1952. Commissioned by Oakland Parks Superintendent William Penn Mott, the sculpture was inspired by Swedish abstract playground design; it was the first of its kind in the United States. By 2015, this children’s play sculpture, located in Oakland’s Lakeside Park, had deteriorated to the point of being unsafe and was fenced off. While not an officially designated landmark, the Monster is beloved by the community and is featured on the cover of Sly and the Family Stone’s 1968 album, *Dance to the Music*. The Monster’s restoration—like its original commission—is the result of collaborative efforts by local fundraising groups, pro-bono designers and contractors, and the City of Oakland. The project has restored the Monster to its original visual condition, enables its continued use as a children’s play sculpture, and proves that community passion for cherished resources remain a preservation fundamental.

Not mentioned in the award description, but well-known to attentive readers, OHA spurred Monster-saving efforts with articles by Kathleen DiGiovanni. The project was promoted with a Facebook campaign initiated by Kathy Ferreira and the steadfast, determined promotional and fundraising efforts of

CPF



OUR LOVEABLE MONSTER never hurt anybody

Making tracks towards preservation



NAOMI SCHIFF

AT MARTIN LUTHER KING WAY, the Embarcadero façade of the power plant fronts on active rail track.

By Naomi Schiff

Our Preservation Action Committee has been busy despite the pandemic. Here are some projects we have been monitoring.

■ **Howard Terminal:** While major discussions continue, OHA remains focused on the preservation of the old power plant adjoining the stadium site. While an alternative that retains it was presented in the EIR, current plans show it still standing, adaptively reused as part of the complex. However, some scenarios show a partial demolition of one wing. OHA will continue to advocate for this

remaining historic evidence of the old waterfront industrial area. Retention of three 20th century container cranes also accompanies plans for the proposed stadium area.

■ **General Plan Revision:** A state-required General Plan revision will commence this coming winter, with OHA watching for historic preservation opportunities and compatible zoning, as the city accommodates new legislation about zoning and housing density. Many public meetings and comments will ensue. If you are interested in following this effort, please contact OHA to participate! ■

Susan Casentini and Kyle Milligan. The Lake Merritt Breakfast Club, Page & Turnbull architects, Western Specialty Contractors, Phil Tagami, and the City of Oakland all pitched in to fund and carry out the restoration, along with many others.

■ **Mills College Lisser Hall:** The Lisser Hall rehabilitation provided a state-of-the-art performing arts center, reactivating the academic core of the campus and boosting the college’s fine arts programs. The building’s seismic strengthening approach located new shear walls and foundations concealed from view, preserving significant character-defining features within the interior and on the exterior. A new elevator, renovated restrooms, interior ramps, and new stage lift created a fully accessible facility for all students

and visitors. The project restored the 1901 main auditorium’s wood and plaster ornamentation and flat-floor configuration.

To see all the award winners around the state, go to: <https://californiapreservation.org/programs/awards/> ■



CPF

LISSER HALL was beautifully updated.



Summer tours brought Oaklanders out in full force !

AMELIA MARSHALL



TOUR LEADERS Dale Ridsen, Dennis Evanosky, and Gene Anderson at Joaquin Miller's Tower for Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. During his years in England, Joaquin developed a friendship with the Brownings and was their houseguest.

KITTY HUGHES



THE OAKMORE TOUR was led by Laine Farley, pointing at top, with many Oaklanders joining her to learn neighborhood lore. At bottom, Oakmore's interesting architecture was highlighted on the tour.

KITTY HUGHES



Pandemic or not, we hosted socially distanced outdoor walking tours that let residents learn more about Oakland's rich history. Missed them? Mark your calendar for next summer to jump in and be part of this incredible annual series.

ROBIN HEYDEN



What's going on at Mills?

The Mills College Board of Trustees Sept. 14 approved the College's merger with Northeastern University. The merger is expected to take effect on or about July 1, 2022. When the merger is completed, Mills will be a campus of Northeastern University and will be called Mills College at Northeastern University. The campus will be gender inclusive.

"This is a big leap for Mills and an exceptional opportunity for our entire community," said Mills President Elizabeth L. Hillman. "An alliance with Northeastern empowers Mills to continue doing what it has done since its founding in 1852—offer exceptional educational opportunities to students who want to make a difference. It also means that the Mills campus will remain a vibrant center of learning with deep and meaningful connections with the broader Oakland community. As we embark on a new path, we will honor our roots as a historic women's college."

A next step is for Mills and Northeastern faculty and staff to work jointly to develop the undergraduate and graduate degree programs that will be offered through Mills College at Northeastern University, leveraging the strengths of both Mills and Northeastern. Degree programs will be relevant to students and the employer community.

Also, faculty and staff from both Mills and Northeastern will collaborate to further develop a Mills Institute to carry on the Mills legacy of advancing women's leadership and empowering BIPOC and first-generation students. Northeastern has committed seed money to launch and fund the Institute.

Until the merger occurs, Mills will continue to operate as an accredited degree-granting institution and will be led by its current administration. ■

—Adapted from a Mills press release.

GENE ANDERSON



THE MILLS COLLEGE TOUR (top right photo) was led by Karen Fiene, here at left with OHA boardmembers Alison Finlay, center, and Amelia Marshall. Above, OHA members visit the Mills bell tower.



Musing on Oakland's freeways

By Mary Harper, President

Wherever you are in Oakland, you're near a freeway. There's the Nimitz (I-880) running along the bay shoreline and through West Oakland, there's the MacArthur (I-580) running along what was MacArthur Boulevard, Hopkins Street, and Moss Avenue, there's the Grove-Shafter (SR24), running from the Caldecott Tunnel to meet up with the MacArthur, and there's the Warren (SR13) running from the Grove-Shafter southward to meet with the MacArthur. And, finally there's I-980 connecting SR24 with I-580 at the Maze. Two of these freeways severely affected West Oakland residents.

The portion of the Nimitz that ran through West Oakland was known as the Cypress Viaduct, a double decker monstrosity, thought to be an engineering feat, casting a large, dark shadow on West Oakland. It was built in the 1950s, the golden age of cars and freeway building. Although it ripped apart the neighborhood, there was little objection. Not so with the Grove-Shafter, the MacArthur, and the Warren, but those objections are another story.

The story with I-980 is different. It was planned in the late 1940s and construction began in the '60s, and this time there were

objections, a lawsuit, and finally an injunction. The residents weren't against the freeway; they were against having their homes razed; they wanted them moved to empty lots. The city of Oakland, hungry for tax revenues, drew up plans for a downtown shopping center, and I-980, with its fast and direct route to downtown, was a key factor. The residents, the city, and Cal Trans reached a compromise and construction restarted and was completed in 1985.

Among other things, freeways are said to maintain segregation. According to an FHA underwriting manual used in the 1930s and '40s, highways were "effective in protecting a neighborhood and the locations within it from...inharmonious racial groups." Freeway thinking now is removal, not building. As early as 2014, there were rumblings of removing I-980. It had the lowest amount of traffic and was atop very valuable land. Removing it would reunite West Oakland and downtown Oakland. In 2017, I-980 was listed on the Congress for New Urbanism's report as one of the top 10 urban freeways that blighted the communities they bisect.

Now it appears that there may be money to remove I-980, and plans for this space (equivalent to 13 city blocks) abound. There



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

AERIAL VIEW, looking south from around 16th Avenue, of the Nimitz Freeway being constructed through the Jingtowntown and Kennedy Tract districts, circa 1948.

could be parks, boulevards, and affordable housing. There could be another BART tunnel. There could be a transit center or a skate park. There are so many possibilities.

But the question remains, how does the removal of 50-year-old freeways and the new use of the land help the communities the freeways harmed? ■

With thanks to Grist.org ("A highway runs through it") April 17, 2019 and Entropy-mag.org ("Dislocation or Destruction - On Freeways in Oakland") August 17, 2016 for their excellent articles.

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Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church was mover and shaker

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

If you happened to be on Market Street in West Oakland on September 12, 1958, you'd have been treated to quite a parade. The final third of the old St. Andrew's Catholic Church was on the move, travelling twenty blocks to join its other two thirds already relocated at 1909 Market Street, there to be reassembled as the new home of the Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church.

One building, two congregations, two locations. How did it happen? Hint: a freeway was involved. Let's begin at the beginning.

Like the rest of Oakland, the Clawson neighborhood boomed after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, leading to the formation of a new Roman Catholic parish. Starting in 1907, the nascent St. Andrew's church held masses in a chapel on Helen Street while planning for a proper church on the west side of Adeline between 35th and 36th Streets. The *Oakland Tribune* reported regularly on the community's fundraising campaign: dances, concerts, whist parties, picnics at Shellmound Park.

Etienne Garin designed St. Andrew's in the Mission Revival style, unique among churches in the archdiocese, according to a 1928 *Oakland Tribune* article. In addition to St. Andrew's, Garin also designed the former homes of Oakland's Sacred Heart and St. Columba churches. The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey's 1991 assessment of the building described St. Andrew's, along with the Madison Street Temple, as the city's two best examples of the Mission Revival style.

Archbishop Riordan dedicated St. Andrew's on September 19, 1909. The community prospered on Adeline Street until the mid-1950s when plans for the Macarthur freeway sited the roadway directly over the church. The diocese sold the church to the State and made plans to move. They broke ground on a new church on San Pablo at 32nd in mid-1957 and its first Mass was celebrated there on Christmas Day.

At the other end of West Oakland, the Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church began to take shape in July 1947 when the Rev. Carl Anderson gathered a congregation of eight in a revival tent on Magnolia Street at 14th. Within months, his flock had grown to more than two dozen and began worshipping at the Seventh Day Adventist church at 34th and Market, invited by its pastor to share the facility. Early in 1948, Rev. Anderson moved his congregation again, this time to the Watson Building at 8th and Myrtle. In 1950, Greater St. John was back on the move, this time to nearby 720 Filbert.

According to the church's detailed history, "The Beginning of an Era," Rev. Anderson "became captivated" with the St. Andrew's building even before the move to Filbert Street and began praying for a path to acquiring it for his ever-growing community. Mrs. Anderson reportedly advised her husband, "The Lord is not going to give you the building those people are worshipping in," but Anderson was not a man to be discouraged. He made a point of driving past St. Andrew's daily. After nine years, he saw a "for sale"



ST. ANDREW'S

sign on the empty St. Andrew's building, setting into motion Greater St. John's purchase of it. Anderson, a prodigious fundraiser, bought the building for his congregation and a lot on Market Street at 19th to put it on. It didn't take Rev. Anderson long to put together the money to move St. Andrew's 18 blocks. According to an *Oakland Tribune* article, August 24, 1958, "Protestants Take Over, Move Church," the old church was cut into three pieces, back to front, with the rear sanctuary section moving first. Ayen House Movers of San Leandro did the heavy work. The front third, with its twin bell towers, went last, on September 12.

Greater St. John Missionary Baptist Church continues to thrive on Market Street, but the St. Andrew's community is no more, absorbed in 2006 into the Cathedral of Christ the Light. ■