

Pipe Dreams: makeshift living in Oakland is nothing new

By Kat Ferreira

A journey through local history is a tour of boom-and-bust economic cycles, with a perpetual housing crisis as constant as the North Star. In the last decade, rapid gentrification has affected Oakland's trajectory and forever altered its character. One of the most visible outcomes of the region's growing housing costs and economic disparities can be seen in homeless encampments throughout the city. Local media outlets have documented the thousands of people living outside in makeshift shacks, vehicles, and tents across our city. In a relatively compressed time frame of less than five years, Oakland's median home price skyrocketed to \$744,000 while rents soared and our homeless population grew by 47 percent. This acute displacement compounded a longer trend of Oakland's Black community being priced out of neighborhoods pivotal to historical African American movements since the Great Migration. The majority of Oakland's current homeless population is Black. In 2017, a study by Alameda County found that 82% of the homeless population had been housed within the previous year, meaning that eight out of 10 people living on the street had a traditional roof over their heads in the East Bay the year before.

Today, history repeats itself. The news images of people camped under Oakland freeway overpasses are not unlike the famous gelatin silver photographs by Dorothea Lange featuring displaced Dust Bowl migrants and Japanese American citizens unlawfully relocated to internment camps. Oakland has long been a home to outdoor campers living in makeshift dwellings due to disasters, both natural and manmade. Homelessness is a complex, intractable social challenge, but most modern American narratives flatten and obscure the truth about houseless members of a community. Since the Great Recession of 2009, research found 44 percent of homeless people are employed. Moreover, the term houseless is more appropriate than homeless. Our neighbors living outdoors



GOODALL FAMILY

PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED VIEW of Pipe City, near the shoreline at about 23rd Avenue, sometime in 1932 or 1933. The photograph was taken by Harry Goodall who lived on Arbor Avenue near Temescal Creek.

may not have a house, but Oakland is their home. One cannot be a lover of Oakland history without also being a lover of Oakland's houseless community.

■ **Land acknowledgment and the first displacement:** Prior to colonization, the region known today as Oakland was home to thousands of Indigenous Chochenyo Ohlone who lived in a collection of villages that stretched from the bay shoreline to the hills. These communities were established and maintained in balance with nature. Villagers lived in tule houses thatched to a framework of tree branches. Each village participated in trading natural stock and supplies. In 1769, Spanish colonizers and missionaries arrived and decimated the Indigenous population through disease and genocidal practices. One component that hastened their genocide was the region's first modern urban planning law—the relocation of the Ohlone from their villages into newly-constructed Missions.

■ **The Gold Rush of Real Estate:** By 1852, American settler colonizers founded Oakland. The region's economic prosperity boomed due to a confluence of land speculation and Gold Rush miners flocking to the

area. San Francisco had become one of the fastest growing cities in the world, creating a housing crisis of epic proportions. But tens of thousands of homeless encampments were not commonplace in Oakland until the 1906 earthquake and related fire.

*Where did all the people go when 'Frisco burned?
They all went to Oakland and never returned*

—Verse from 1963 "Oakland" song by the Goodtime Washboard 3

In the three days following the earthquake, more than 150,000 people fled to Oakland, doubling its population in 72 hours. The eyewitness accounts recorded from that period describe a humanitarian response on a scale the region has not experienced since. The following account by F.H. Pratt, secretary of the Alameda Building Trades Council, describes a compassion towards the incoming homeless refugees that by today's standards seems hard to comprehend:

As each train arrived at the Broadway station or a creek route boat landed thousands

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Pipe City

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of hungry and homeless people, they were met by committees who first directed them to places where they were given hot coffee and something to stay their hunger; and then took them to other places where they were given a shakedown and a place to sleep.

With further time other shelter camps were established and greater comfort assured. Hospital camps were established for the injured and they were given all the aid possible, and now, two weeks after the disaster, every one of the homeless has been cared for.

■ **Misery(ville) loves company:** Less than 30 years after the natural disaster of the 1906 earthquake created a housing crisis in Oakland, an economic disaster created another crisis. The Great Depression spawned “Hoovervilles” all over the United States. Named after Herbert Hoover, U.S. president during the onset of the Depression and widely blamed for it, Hoovervilles were makeshift shanty towns populated by poverty-stricken masses. During this era, Oakland had a unique settlement of 200 men who repurposed surplus sewer pipes as their homes. Known as Pipe City or Miseryville, destitute men created a community using the American Concrete and Steel Pipe Company property. The Oakland Museum of California has a replica of one such pipe and the online exhibit *Picture This: California Perspectives on American History* states, “To qualify for a pipe, a man had to be jobless, homeless, hungry, and scruffy, but not helpless.”

Pipe City was located at the foot of 19th Avenue and stretched along the estuary shoreline to 23rd Avenue. Founded by



GOODALL FAMILY

PIPE CITY on the edge of the railroad tracks, another Harry Goodall image.

“Mayor” Dutch Jansen, the short-lived shanty town existed from January to April of 1933. An article in the March 15 *Oakland Tribune* described Pipe City as “a curious and striking combination of extreme individualism and effective organization.” Jansen selected 18 captains to oversee an assigned residential area of about 10 pipes. Captains were responsible for keeping their assigned sections in order and residents well-behaved. The pipes were 8 feet long by 4 feet wide. Residents usually placed a mattress and blankets inside, then covered the pipe openings with found materials such as tarred paper for weatherproofing. The American Concrete and Steel Pipe Company allowed men to take shelter and even provided running water irrigation through the grounds for occupants’ nourishment and sanitation, as reported in the Feb. 24 *Dunsmuir News* that year.

Pipe City received international media attention while individuals and charitable organizations offered to help. “But Jansen says they want jobs first, food second, and clothing third,” reported the *Dunsmuir News*. Such a stance reflects the era’s sentimentality with flattering depictions of these houseless men as hard-working and industrious.

Reports in 1933 did not acknowledge that Pipe City was most likely located on or near an Ohlone shellmound, a sacred Indigenous burial and ceremonial ground. But one of the following excerpts from the *Dunsmuir News* mentions abalone shells for sale:

Not all of them live in pipes as some have built little shacks out of whatever material they may be able to find. One man has his “quarters” made of an old boat turned on its side, and then an addition built on out of



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

A TENT CITY set up in Adam’s Point on the edge of Lake Merritt to house San Francisco refugees after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

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scraps. The walls were papered with newspapers and he had some linoleum on the floor. He was scrubbing the day we were there, and it was as clean as could be. He had a cot in his place and it was made up nice and neat.

One man took a piece of flexible metal tubing and put an end through the top of a large can, filled the can with water, set it on his “stove” at the front of his “pipe.” When it got hot the steam filled the pipe and he had steam heat.

One man has a little store where he had ash trays made out of abalone shells and different things of wire. They were all marked “Souvenir of Pipe City.” His cabin was an old shack and clean as could be.

■ **Pipe City today:** Almost 100 years later, large encampments of houseless East Oaklanders exist very near the earlier location of Pipe City. Across town, at the shared borders of North and West Oakland—the most gentrified portions of our city—one can’t unsee the stark contrast of white gentrifiers living in newly rehabbed homes juxtaposed to the predominantly African-American houseless

communities clustered along traffic corridors near Mosswood Park. The majority of Oakland residents are renters, making them vulnerable to a predatory economic crisis, teetering on the edge of losing their housing. And houseless Oaklanders contribute to our economy, cultural fabric, and political history.

We are witnessing history in how this shapes local political movements such as Moms 4 Housing, led by community organizer and recently-elected Oakland Councilmember Carroll Fife. Garnering international media attention, the strategic act of civil disobedience of Moms 4 Housing highlighted the injustice of the region’s latest housing crisis. Working mothers and their children peacefully occupied a vacant house purchased by one of the largest real estate speculators in the country, Wedgewood Properties. The campaign for a more just and fair housing alternative was a success. Wedgewood agreed to sell the home to the Oakland Community Land Trust and provide the Trust with the first right of purchase for the 200 other properties Wedgewood owns in Oakland. Plus, new local and state laws have been enacted to protect tenants in the future. With slogans like “housing is a human right”



KAT FERREIRA

RAINBOW over houseless community located at 16th Avenue and East 12th Street in January 2017.

and “the rent is too damn high,” Oakland’s houseless activists demonstrated that once again this city is home to pivotal flashpoints in American history. ■

Former administrative director of OHA, Kat Ferreira also contributes to Oakland Voices, a community journalism program funded by the Maynard Institute.

Researchers look to home movies for positivity

By Sean Dickerson

As with other museums, archives, and heritage organizations where historians go to practice their craft, we at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO) have had to adapt to the unique challenges of life under COVID-19. This involved stretching our creativity to move programming, exhibitions, and tours to a vir-



FRIENDS OF THE BEAN FAMILY in Oakland enjoy leisure time in a backyard garden party in the 1950s, a still from the Sandra Bean Home Movie Collection.

tual world, and imagining how best to serve the needs of our stressed community.

It’s early still to say what the primary subjects of interest are for researchers during the pandemic, although certain topic trends have stood out. Like never before, AAMLO has seen a renewed interest in its home movie collections. In a year full of urgency around systemic inequity, positive images of Black life can act against erasure, especially when they depict a neighborhood over time. As moving image archivist Jasmyn R. Castro has noted about these home movies: “Their rare and scattered existence [in the archive] is a true testament to the importance of everyday depictions of minority communities. These home movies are historically significant and should be seen as a preservation priority, because they are a moving-image record of African American home and social life at different points in time.”

Without a doubt, the most requested items in 2020 were from the Henry Williams, Jr.

Film Collection, a collection of 98 films documenting the Black Panther Party and student and union protest movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. Digitized courtesy of a Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Recordings at Risk grant, these films can be seen for free on the Internet Archive. They’re being used by today’s documentary filmmakers to tell the story of contemporary social justice movements.

For many researchers, digitized documents augment an in-person archive visit, but nothing replaces first-hand encounters with primary sources. Thankfully, AAMLO staff is working in office and is here to assist. Browsing the finding aids for our collections on the Online Archive of California (OAC) can help you pinpoint documents or collections you may want to know more about. If online items are available, you’ll see a link to the digitized item. But even if online items aren’t available, don’t fret. You can direct your AAMLO questions to answers@oaklandlibrary.org, and we’ll happily investigate further on your behalf. ■



Oakland History Center reports new images to be seen on Calisphere

By Dorothy Lazard

If someone were to ask me to name the most popular collection in the Oakland History Center's extensive and multifaceted holdings, I'd say the photographs. Historical images are like catnip for most of our patrons. They spur curiosity. They inspire. They solve mysteries (and bets!). And, of course, they provide important portals to the past.

Over the past few years, we've increased our digital footprint by making more photographs available to the wider public. After a two-year struggle to get materials uploaded to our preferred portal on Calisphere, I'm happy to announce that several collections will soon be viewable there, including images of a variety of Oakland neighborhoods, clubs, theaters, and industries, as well as the local damage resulting from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. You should know that these online collections are merely a sampling of what we maintain.

Calisphere is a University of California-administered repository that allows users to search digital collections at UC campuses and hundreds of statewide partner institutions such as the California Historical Society, the Huntington Library, and Los Angeles Public Library. You can search by topic, decade, name (of person, organization, or institution), type of material, or by contributing institution.

You can also find curated special collections and topical exhibitions on Calisphere which are great resources for researchers and teachers. The link for OHC's collections is <https://calisphere.org/institution/95/items/> and the link for AAMLO's collections is <https://calisphere.org/institution/147/items/>.

We here at the Oakland History Center are fortunate to participate in this statewide initiative to bring California history to a broader audience. In the future, we plan to keep preserving important historical documents and recordings on Calisphere. ■

Dorothy Lazard is head librarian at the Oakland History Center.



BREAKING GROUND for the new Chevrolet plant in East Oakland, 1915.

BOTH: OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER



THE ESQUIRE THEATER on San Pablo Avenue near 17th Street, 1943.

Watch for our free online Oakland Heritage Alliance events this spring!

Continuing our terrific online series, we are hosting free Thursday evening presentations via Zoom this spring. We are still confirming dates and times, so please check your email or our website for details, but here's what we are planning:

- **APRIL** [date TBD]: Nzilani Glass Conservation on preserving stained glass legacies
- **MAY 6** [tentative date]: Paul Brekke-Miesner on basketball and legendary Oaklanders.
- **MAY 20** [tentative date]: Phil Bellman on F. M. "Borax" Smith, Oakland business leader and entrepreneur.
- **JUNE 17**: Kathleen DiGiovanni sweetens the evening with the history of Oakland's confectionary industry.

Go to www.oaklandheritage.org and make sure you are on our email list to receive news and updates. ■

Oakland once hosted bloody, illegal affairs of honor

By Dennis Evanosky

On a day in March 1852, more than 200 men stood along the shore, talking excitedly about what was to come. When the carriages arrived, they followed them up the town's main street. The two horse-drawn vehicles carried somber opponents, their "seconds," and surgeons clad in black. They stopped at a clearing among the oaks.

The seconds—men who had been chosen to make sure the duel was conducted honorably—each marked ten paces for their man. The duelists selected their weapons and stood at the ready. "Gentlemen, pace to your marks, turn, and fire at will," one of the seconds shouted from a spot just north of today's 14th and Broadway in downtown Oakland.

The seconds had arranged this contest to unfold not in San Francisco, where the insults had hit their mark, but in Contra Costa, "The Opposite Shore," the county across San Francisco Bay from the thriving city that lent that bay its name. Contra Costa sounded remote, but it was close enough for San Franciscans to settle their differences on fields of honor in the woods, not far from the little town there.

When the founders of the state of California had met in Monterey in 1849, they had made certain to outlaw dueling. There were no fields of honor in the new state, at least not legal ones. Insulting someone was not against the law but it violated a code of honor that some men took more seriously than the law.

Both parties could board a ferry in San Francisco to travel across the bay and into San Antonio Slough. If the tides were right and sand bars did not interfere, they could

UNITED STATES SENATE



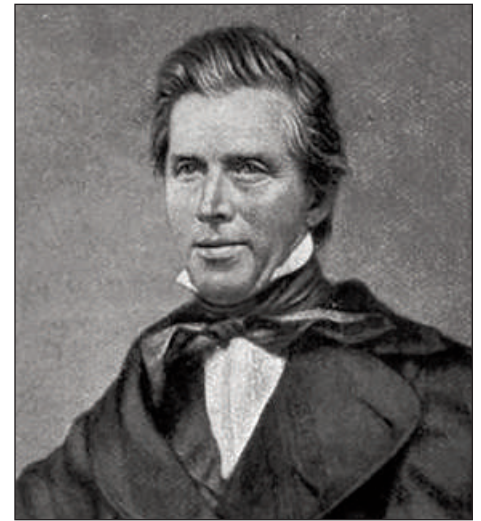
DAVID BRODERICK, left, was a hothead who was involved in several duels over his lifetime. In 1852, he insulted William "Extra Billy" Smith, right, whose son J. Caleb Smith stood in for him in the fight. Unfortunately, we do not have any photographs of the son.

disembark at a landing. There they could face off at 10 or 20 paces: sometimes with rifles, more often with pistols.

The seconds would produce the weapons for inspection and mark off the field of honor while surgeons stood by for the inevitable. Someone stood watch in case the sheriff should arrive. Witnesses crowded around the field, often wagering on the outcome.

On this day, March 17, 1852, David C. Broderick and James Caleb Smith were the opponents. The fact that it was St. Patrick's Day was not lost on Broderick, an Irishman. Smith had challenged him to a duel after he felt that Broderick's remarks had insulted his father, William Smith.

The sordid story? William Smith had earned the nickname "Extra Billy" in the 1830s when he was in charge of a postal route in the East. He would charge his customers extra money and pocket the difference. Despite being acting governor of Virginia from 1846 to 1849, the call of the gold fields was alluring and he arrived in California in April 1849, where he was president of the first Democratic state convention in 1850. Apparently that distinction rankled and became the source of the insults leveled at him by Brockerick, who had political ambitions of his own and said that Extra Billy wasn't qualified to govern. For reasons unknown, his son stood in for him in this



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duel, which he attended as a bystander.

Within the grove of oak trees, Broderick and the younger Smith faced off with Navy revolvers. Smith missed Broderick with his first shot, while Broderick's pistol misfired. Smith fired again. "Unfair!" Broderick's second would have called out. Broderick was freeing the cylinder of his pistol from an exploded cap which caught in it. To his extraordinary luck, Smith's second shot struck the watch in his pocket. His only injury was that fragments of the watch slightly cut his stomach.

Both parties then emptied the barrels of the weapons into the ground, signaling satisfaction. The seconds established peace. So many people had come to watch that they could not all get back the same way without great delay. "Many secured horses and got home by way of San José," a witness recalled.

What became of these men? The younger Smith was admitted to the bar in California and served as a Supreme Court justice in San Francisco. He was also an Assemblyman. He became president of a land company in Nicaragua where he died of fever in 1856, just four years after the duel. As for his father, Extra Billy would return to Virginia to serve as a major general of the Confederate Army, and to be elected as governor again.

See **DUELING** on page 6

MICHAEL E. CUMPTON



REPLICA OF AN 1841 Mississippi Yager rifle with a Colt .44 "dragoon."

Dueling

Continued from page 5

Broderick, who we'll hear more about later, was the son of a stonemason who helped build the United States Capitol Building. He moved with his family to New York where he became involved in Tammany Hall politics. He made a fortune striking gold coins in San Francisco before the arrival of the U. S. Mint put a stop to his operations. He was arguably the most powerful man in San Francisco and likely in the capital city of Sacramento, where he had made a friend in Horace W. Carpentier.

Carpentier used this friendship to gain the job of enrolling clerk for the state government. More importantly, he also depended on Broderick's support to have the state approve the creation of a town on the southern end of the property that he and his friends Andrew Moon and Edson Adams had successfully finagled from Vicente Peralta. Peralta had been given the land by his father, Luis Maria Peralta. On May 4, 1852—just two months after this duel—Carpentier successfully filed papers with the state to establish the town of "Contra Costa," a name he would later change to Oakland.

Another duel took place in the height of summer. The July 16, 1852, issue of *The Daily Alta California* reported a duel between John Nugent, founder of the *San Francisco Herald* newspaper, and San Francisco Alderman Edward F. Cotter. The pair faced off on July 14 at a place the *Daily Alta* described as "three miles back of Oakland"—perhaps in the hills near today's Rockridge. They aimed Colt Navy revolvers at each other from 10 paces. Both men fired two shots.

Cotter's second bullet struck Nugent in his left leg just below the thigh, producing a compound fracture of the bone. The surgeon present at the duel pronounced the wound dangerous, but not mortal. Nugent's party conveyed him in a carriage to the landing and back to San Francisco aboard the packet *Erastus Corning*.

"He is in the hands of the most skillful and attentive surgeons, and at the last accounts the symptoms were favorable," *The Daily Alta* informed its readers.

Nugent survived his wounds to fight another day. The following year, he faced off with

another San Francisco alderman. This time the combatants faced off in San Francisco. They chose rifles at 20 paces instead of pistols at 10. Just as Alderman Cotter had, Alderman Thomas Hayes—for whom Hayes Valley is named—wounded Nugent with his second shot. Nugent survived and lived for another 30 years. He passed away in 1880, with no mention of any more duels clouding his life.

On March 25, 1853, the state of California carved Alameda County from a large part of Contra Costa County and a small piece of northern Santa Clara County. Exactly a year later, on March 25, 1854, the state legislature approved An Act to Incorporate the City of Oakland, changing Oakland from a town to a city. This allowed the residents to elect a mayor and city council to represent them.

Sometime in fall 1854, Achilles Kewen and former San Joaquin County Judge Colonel Deveraux Jerome Woodlief got into a passionate argument at the Blue Wing saloon in San Francisco.

During the heated back-and-forth, Kewen reminded Woodlief that his father fought at the Battle of New Orleans. Kewen was an Irishman, and Woodlief insulted him by asking him which side his father fought on. Kewen then challenged Woodlief to a duel to take place in Oakland.

They arrived on the morning of November 8, 1854. *The Daily Alta California* reported that they "proceeded to a place a short distance outside the city limits" (which, at the time, stood at today's 14th Street.) They planned to face each other at 40 paces with rifles called Mississippi yagers. The seconds were marking off the grounds when Alameda County Deputy Sheriff Simmons appeared and stopped the duel.

This did nothing to dampen Kewen's need for redress. After Simmons shooed them away, the parties traveled to a spot *the Daily Alta* called, "ten miles back of Oakland." A witness later described the location as "a place called Alvarado," today's Union City.



LEONIDAS HASKELL'S HOME, with Alcatraz and Angel islands as backdrops, where dueler Broderick perished. It still stands at today's Fort Mason.

At the word "fire" from his second, Kewen shot Woodlief in the head, killing him instantly.

Woodlief had instructed his wife, Harriet, to bury him in the same clothes he was wearing at the duel. She granted his wish and laid him to rest in San Francisco's Lone Tree Cemetery. His body was later removed to Oakland's second cemetery on property bounded by modern-day 17th, 20th, Harrison and Webster streets. When that cemetery closed, his body was moved to an unmarked grave in Mountain View Cemetery.

No doubt other men chose Oakland and environs as their fields of honor which didn't make their way into the permanent record. Nugent published a newspaper, which gave him his own platform. His duels involved San Francisco politicians. Broderick, Smith and Woodlief were already famous enough to gain the attention of the press.

Broderick was later killed in a duel with David Terry. This September 13, 1859, affair of honor played out near Lake Merced in San Francisco. Broderick was a United States Senator at the time. This duel—coupled with John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, just a month later, on October 16, 1859—sparked the tinder that would soon burst into the flames of civil war. ■

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members through February 2021:

Sarah Hahn, Christie McCarthy,
Gerry & Ortrun Niesar

We are pleased to welcome new member Brooke Levin, with thanks to Annalee Allen for the gift membership.



City proposes to pave over part of San Antonio Park for a new fire station

By Naomi Schiff

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

■ **Parks and their structures:** While a number of Oakland parks are the sites of historic buildings (DeFremery, Dunsmuir Hellman, Camron-Stanford, Mosswood, “the Hights” of Joaquin Miller, for example), these structures were generally in place before the sites were designated as parks or were conceived to enhance park amenities (Woodminster, Lakeside Park Garden Center, sports facilities). The city has built structures for recreational buildings, for swimming pools, or for things such as boathouses and meeting facilities.

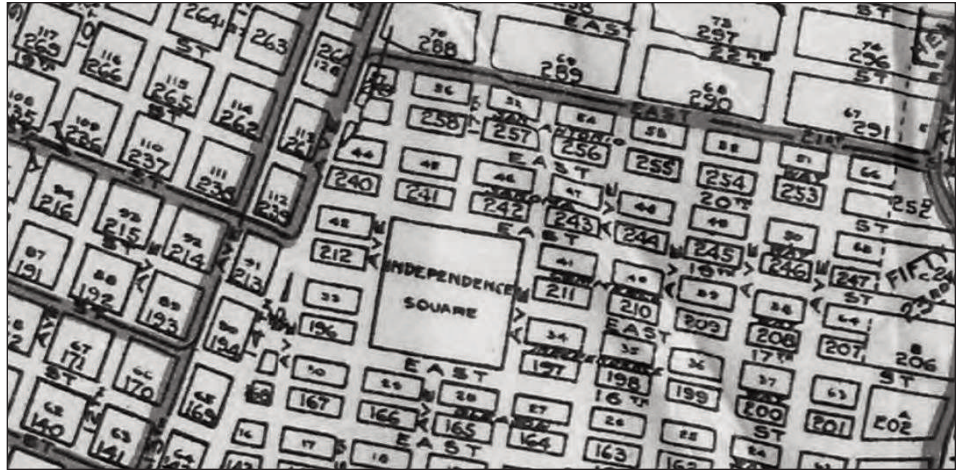
However, there have also been numerous attempts to put unrelated structures in parks because the land is seen as free, although it is valuable and irreplaceable taxpayer-owned open space parkland.

Examples include the 2001 controversy over putting a cathedral between the Henry J. Kaiser Oakland Auditorium and Lake Merritt, a 1960s proposal to put a hotel on Snow Park, and the recent sudden installation of electronic equipment creating an unusable area in Lafayette Square.

Luckily, Oakland citizens have repeatedly come to the defense of their park system.

Now a new incursion is proposed; some city departments want to locate an entire fire station in historic San Antonio Park, which would involve paving over a portion of the park. Neighbors have been requesting that the city find an alternative site. Its neighborhood is under-supplied with open space, with one of the lowest percentages of open space in the city. It is densely populated, and has used the park intensively since even before Brooklyn was annexed to Oakland.

In the 1912 map shown here, the park still has its original name, “Independence Square.” OHA will advocate for preserving all the park as parkland in perpetuity. For info: visit stopsanantoniolandgrab.com or contact Wendy Jung, San Antonio Park Steward and member of the San Antonio Hills Neighborhood Association, at jungw@pacbell.net or (510) 261-4564. Sign the petition: change.org/p/the-city-of-oakland-stop-the-land-grab-in-san-antonio-park. ■



MORCOM MAP DETAIL showing how necessary the greenspace at San Antonio Park, once called Independence Square, is for the neighborhood.

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DONATION ON GIVING TUESDAY: Kathryn Hughes



Tracing the mystery of Alice Pardee

By Erika Mailman

Governor George Pardee was a big deal. His father Enoch H. Pardee was a Gold Rusher who served as Oakland mayor just as George did, and George is known as the “earthquake governor” who got funds quickly routed to the badly-damaged San Francisco of 1906. As an EBMUD director, his name is memorialized in the Pardee dam and Pardee Reservoir, and his house in Oakland is preserved as a museum. At Mountain View Cemetery, an obelisk in a stately oval plot marks his final resting place along with his kin.

All of his kin, that is, except for Alice. Alice Pardee lies in the unendowed area of the cemetery, far off into the bushes, in an unmarked grave. Who was she?

Dennis Evanosky, Mountain View docent and local historian/author (see his article on page 5), thinks she was either George’s child born outside of his marriage, or was born to

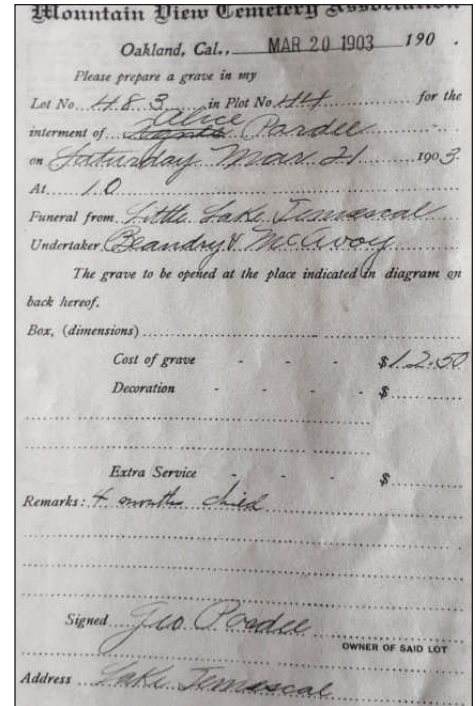
one of his unmarried teen daughters. Either way, scandal may have caused this four-month-old infant who died in 1903 to languish far from her family’s plot.

Evanosky first learned of Alice Pardee while helping out at the Pardee Home Museum, which is currently closed. In moving a box of files, his eye fell on a document called “Order for Grave” for Alice—and right away he started puzzling over its oddities. For one thing, her name was first rendered as “Agnes” and then crossed out. And why would George Pardee give his address as “Lake Temescal” when he lived downtown?

Evanosky also found “Return of a Death,” a form which predates the county’s death certificate. It deepened the mystery. On this form, the deceased’s name was initially “Charles,” which had been crossed out with “Alice” written above, and the gender originally checked off as male, then corrected.

Her birth date was not included, but we can conjecture that as she was 4 months old at the time of her March 20, 1903 death, she was born sometime in November 1902 (and if she was carried full term, her mother’s pregnancy began in February 1902).

Other puzzling details: the parents’ names were not asked for on the form, but their birthplaces were. The father’s birthplace



ORDER FOR GRAVE, with “Agnes” crossed out, signed by George Pardee.

was listed as Vermont (George Pardee was a Californian). The mother’s was Canada (Mrs. Pardee was from Massachusetts, and her four daughters were all Californians).

Alice’s place of death was Lake Temescal. But lest we jump to a conclusion of drowning, Evanosky relates that the area was once a place where bohemians set up tents and enjoyed nature. Conjecture may lead to the idea of a woman concealing her pregnancy and childbirth while living in such a manner.

Dr. Duke wrote on the form, “I attended decedent from 12/31/02 – 3/20/03.” Baby Alice was one month old when Dr. Duke began caring for her—starting on New Year’s

PARDEE HOME MUSEUM



FLORENCE, at top with the large hair ribbon, was 15 in this 1902 portrait of the Pardee family, while Madeline at left was 14. Moving across the portrait from Madeline is Mrs. Pardee who was 45, Helen, Gov. George Pardee, and Carol.

SURNAME	CHRISTIAN NAME	PAGES
Papworth	Alonzo	7 33 44
Parcells	Charles Benner	5 102 20
Pardee	Alice	5 148 44
Par "	Florence M.	7 50 82
Par "	Louise Adams	5 39 27
Paris	Eugene	5 184 37
Parish	Charles Lewis	5 113 117
Par "	Frank E.	6 121 22

BEAUTIFUL HANDWRITING in the *Index of the Dead* shows Alice Pardee as the third entry on the page, top left, while more of the index books are seen above. Fragile, antique plot maps seem as if they will fall apart when unrolled, at top right.



ALL: ERIKA MAILMAN



Eve. Such strange timing. Evanosky notes that Dr. Duke was a graduate of San Francisco's Cooper Medical College, as was George; were they cronies who kept each other's secrets?

The doctor identifies inanition as the cause of death, with a contributing cause of "a tubercular diathesis." Inanition is an old-fashioned term meaning death from starvation, which could mean that the infant had a digestive system disorder. A little research reveals it may also refer to a childhood fever caused by dehydration in breast-fed babies.

The *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* of Nov. 25, 1897, states that a fatty liver may contribute to the morbid condition of pulmonary consumption, or tubercular diathesis. Further, the Jan. 1, 1898 *Journal of the American Medical Association* states that, "There are diverse views concerning the so-called inherited tubercular diathesis...children born of parents affected with this disease develop it when exposed to bad hygienic surroundings." Like camping at a lake?

Adding to the mystery, Alice was buried immediately after death. "The very next day," stresses Evanosky. "It's unheard of."

We turn to newspapers to understand what was going on at the same time that this malnourished baby was coming to the end of her life. We see a certain number of "business as usual" moments, but also some perhaps-significant cancellations. For instance, two days before Alice died, Mrs. Pardee played whist in the afternoon with other ladies, and two days after the child's burial, George was a speaker at UC Berkeley for the school's Charter Day observances. But perhaps not all was well. He begged off a March 19 meeting

of the United Republican League in San Francisco (this was the day before Alice's death when perhaps things were very grim), stating as the *San Francisco Call* reported, that "it is impossible for me at the present time to leave the Capitol."

Yet the governor was in Oakland the next day to sign Alice's "Order for Grave" form.

It is always seductive to read too much into history, but the *San Francisco Examiner's* report of that March 23 Charter Day event contains an interesting moment of emotion from Pardee, for whom the gathered crowd applauded wildly: "The governor was deeply affected by the warmth of it, and compressed his lips that they might not show by a tremor what he really felt." Mrs. Pardee attended festivities with him.

That same day, they checked in to the Touraine Hotel, as reported by the *Oakland Tribune*. Situated at 16th and Clay, this hotel wasn't far from their house at 12th and Castro. Why not sleep at home?

And this brings us to another facet to consider in this puzzle: the couple's four daughters Florence, Madeline, Carol, and Helen. In 1903, the girls were 15, 14, 12, and 8, respectively. Certainly old enough to be left at home alone while the parents spent the night at a hotel. And perhaps each of the two eldest was old enough to become a mother herself. Did George attempt to keep quiet an illegitimate child of one of his children?

Mrs. Pardee was 45 in 1902, certainly not out of childbearing years. But if *she* was Alice's mother, why would it be a secret?

We may never know. I asked David Nicolai, once the director and live-in caretaker of the Pardee Home Museum (the family's Cas-



ERIKA MAILMAN

AN OBELISK marks the Pardee family plot where George, his parents, his wife, and four daughters are buried. Alas, Alice lies far away in the unendowed area.

tro Street home). He wrote, "When I first read your email and saw the name Alice Pardee, it did not ring a bell. But that day I kept thinking about it, and I do remember, only vaguely, the speculation about who this unfortunate child was." I asked the museum's former registrar Vicki Wiese, who said, "I don't recognize the name Alice Pardee; how is she related to the family?" Two longtime Pardee Home trustees who actually knew the Pardees, Stan Stidham and Ron Pardee Nielson, died in recent years. "Everyone involved in this has passed away," says Evanosky. "I got it in my craw to find her."

■ **Finding her:** Evanosky was kind enough to bring me into the mystery, knowing I would be intrigued. We met up at the

See **ALICE** on page 10



BOTH: ERIKA MAILMAN

HOW IT STARTED— HOW IT'S GOING

Dennis Evanosky tries to locate Alice Pardee in the handwritten logs in Mountain View Cemetery's back office in October 2020, at far left. Months later, he stands with respect at her unendowed grave, which he marked with palm fronds after struggling to find it, photographed in February 2021.



Dr. Robert Akeley, paired with his house

By Robert Brokl

Dr. Robert Akeley, proud Temescal owner of the robin's egg blue Queen Anne Victorian at 449 49th St., died at 90 on Nov. 25, 2020. He had lived there for some 50 years. He had been active in Temescal Neighbors Together and graciously lent out his house, garden, and barn for concerts and many preservation and political events. These included fundraisers for Obama by Artists for Change, political/change candidates like Nate Miley and Sheila Jordan, Old Merritt College (University High School), and Montgomery Ward's legal funds, etc., under the auspices of North Oakland Voters Alliance, Standing together for Accountable Neighborhood Development, and other groups.

His house at the corner of 49th and Clarke, a block from the Telegraph Avenue commercial hub, is a character-defining asset in Temescal, virtually intact interior and exterior. The residence with detached carriage house was built in 1892 by Dr. Benjamin and

Isabel Mouser, and designed by architect Charles Wedgewood. Late OHA board member Jane Spengler consulted with Akeley on a foundation upgrade.



DR. ROBERT AKELEY hovers over his home in this memorial photograph.

Dr. Mouser is identified variously as a physician, druggist, and surgeon in the records. Akeley believed he practiced medicine at his home, and continued in that tradition seeing patients there as a psychiatrist. He

also was a talented, basically self-taught, artist, who painted in the barn. The hayloft had been converted into rustic sleeping quarters and was the location for our Artists for Change 2008 Obama art sale, which raised the grand sum of \$8,000!

Akeley was famously opinionated, sometimes even crusty, and fiercely independent in life and politics. He was a co-founder of the LGBT Physicians for Human Rights. As a young man, he'd been a champion runner, and as a senior he was a familiar sight walking everywhere.

Akeley was akin to other noted Oakland preservationists like Marina Carlson and author Jane Powell, with their respective Eastlake and Craftsman ("Bungamansion") homes, their very identities fused with their residences. You couldn't ever imagine them living anywhere else, nor could they. ■

Thanks to Betty Marvin of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey for Mouser House information. Robert Brokl is a former OHA board member.

Alice

Continued from page 9

Pardee Home in October 2020, masked and socially distant, to comb through the files and see what we could learn. We didn't have much success and then drove to Mountain View Cemetery, where as a docent he has access to the office's files and maps. We were able to find Alice Pardee listed in *The Index of the Dead*, with information on how to find her grave plot on a cemetery map.

The maps date to the earliest days of the cemetery (George Pardee's grave is in Plot No. 1), and unfurling these fragile artifacts is a fraught exercise. We were able to find Alice on the map, out in the unendowed area which rings the cemetery, where people can be buried if their families can't pay for maintenance. "If you want to bury someone way, way back, it's the perfect spot to put her away and forget about her," said Evanosky. He believes Pardee was on the board of Mountain View at this time, which may have made it easy for him to fudge the paperwork.

But finding her actual location proved challenging. We ran out of time before we found her, but Evanosky returned on his own later. On Nov. 28, he texted me, "I found little

Frankie Rhodes Saved Camron-Stanford House

By Annalee Allen

Frances "Frankie" Hayden Rhodes passed away Jan. 15, 2021. Frankie's vision to make historic landmarks accessible to all helped Oaklanders to appreciate our legacy, preserving the last Victorian house on the lake. The predecessor to the current Oakland Museum, the old house gained new life when Frankie and some other followers rehabilitated it in the 1970s and restored the rooms to replicate a middle-class home typical of the 1880s. The house became known as the Camron-Stanford House, named for two families who once lived there. Frankie used her skills in the 19th century decorative arts to show visitors what the house could have looked like. A National Endowment for the Humanities-funded slide show created by her and Beth Bagwell helped visitors learn about the Vic-

Alice. There's no marker. It was probably cleared away when they planted the trees."

Evanosky included Alice on his weekly cemetery rounds, creating a trail of palm tree fronds to assist him since he'd struggle afresh to find her each time. In February 2021, I returned to Oakland and paid my respects to Alice. Evanosky hopes that cemetery man-

torian era in Oakland.

A newly-awakened interest in older buildings emerged, and out of that came the creation of a new organization in the early 1980s: Oakland Heritage Alliance. We have Frankie to thank for being one of the forerunners of OHA.

To learn about her legacy and donate to a fund in her name, to further the causes she was a part of, visit the Camron-Stanford House website, cshouse.org. ■

Annalee Allen is a former OHA president.

agement might be willing to repurpose a gravestone—either incorrectly marked, or one that a family never returned to pay for—and write a simple message for Alice on its other side. Placed face down, no one will ever know it was not intended for her.

After 118 years, Alice Pardee may finally have the acknowledgement she deserves. ■



FRANKIE RHODES

CAMRON-STANFORD HOUSE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION



Meet Mary Harper, our new president!

By Mary Harper, President

Greetings, members and friends. Allow me to introduce myself; I'm Mary Harper, the new president of OHA. I am honored to be a part of such a great community.

First, I'd like to give past president Tom Debley a big thank you for his hard work, dedication, and commitment, from which Oakland will benefit greatly for years to come. He makes a hard act to follow.

Second, a bit of my background. I've been a history buff for as long as I can remember and have a degree in American History. I grew up on the east coast, first in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then in Montclair, New Jersey. And I've returned to Montclair, in a fashion, as a resident of that district in Oakland for over 30 years. I've been an off and on OHA member since my first time taking an OHA walking tour.

As mentioned in my introduction at this year's annual meeting, I took that walk, Ethnic History of Old Oakland, in 1992. I was impressed by the blend of cultural and architectural history. I took other walks that summer and became a devoted walking tour attendee. Each spring, I eagerly awaited the tour brochure so I could make my summer plans. I helped on a couple of house tours and served on the walking tour committee for

many years. A few years ago, I met former president Alison Finlay, and she encouraged me to join the board. I thought: how cool to meet with like-minded people and discuss such important issues as gentrification, rampant development, and preservation! And so here I am now, president.

Third, a bit about OHA's challenge-how to fulfill its mission in advocating the "protection, preservation and revitalization of Oakland's architectural, historic, cultural and natural resources" in these unprecedented times where social distancing is the new norm. Thanks to Zoom, OHA can attend planning and landmark meetings without the hassle of driving, parking, and dressing professionally.

Planning in-person activities, however, is challenging. We hope to bring back the walking tours in some form or another, with some classics and some new tours. We are working hard on putting together a robust and varied lecture season. We plan to bring back our Partners in Preservation program. And we are pondering how to run a house tour with the current restrictions.

I invite our members and friends to share their ideas and thoughts with us and even to consider joining the board. There is lots of work ahead for the board, but it will be ful-



MARY HARPER

MARY HARPER walks with Elsa.

filling to be a part of the new era of leadership for Oakland.

And finally, I'd like to give a big shout-out to Alison Finlay. I first worked with her on a house tour committee and then on the walking tours committee. I was impressed with her dedication to the tours and ability to juggle the leaders' and volunteers' schedules and needs. She is warm, thoughtful, and remembers everybody's names—and even their pets'. As mentioned, it was she who brought me to the board. Thank you, Alison! ■

CONTRIBUTORS:

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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 G.E. Building: electricity isn't buzzing but it will be reused

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

As of this writing, construction is underway to repurpose the site of the old General Electric plant at 5441 International Boulevard, closed since 1975 and so badly contaminated with PCBs and other contaminants that it has taken 45 years for a developer to present a viable plan for the 24-acre site. As recently as 2017, G.E.'s proposed remediation was to do nothing more than demolish the remaining structures, cap the site with concrete, and walk away.

Once a buzzing complex of 20 buildings making transformers, motors, and switchboards, the remaining eight structures on the site will be demolished, with one notable, if partial, exception: the facade of the International Boulevard-facing Building 1. The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey has assigned it a rating of A1+, indicating highest importance and contribution to the 57th Avenue Industrial District Area of Primary Importance. OHA's ongoing advocacy was critical to ensuring that even that part of the original complex will be preserved.

Back in 1922, at the same time that the G.E. factory was taking shape, the California Subdivision Company saw an opportunity to bank on the connection to Edison's great enterprise headquartered in upstate New York. Schenectady Park was born. On Sept. 23, 1922, a four-line classified ad ran in the *Oakland Tribune*: "General Electric made Schenectady, N.Y. General Electric are building their Western unit at Schenectady Park, Oakland." The new tract, from East 14th to Tevis and from 58th Avenue roughly to 63rd,

promoted its adjacency to the G.E. plant, promising prosperity to buyers savvy enough to seize the main chance. Lots sold quickly and bungalows went up. Sanborn fire insurance maps from the mid-1920s show extensive residential development in the new neighborhood straddling Seminary Avenue. The Schenectady Park name didn't last, though. By the time the Lockwood Gardens housing project opened in 1942 on neighboring land, the neighborhood had resumed its earlier identity, Lockwood.

G.E.'s factory complex continued to grow through the 1920s. Meanwhile, another big thing was happening on the site. In the 1920s, G.E. was in the radio business, too, taking up broadcasting in addition to manufacturing receivers for the booming new medium. Its flagship station WGY in Schenectady, N.Y. was the first of a planned three-station network. WGY was to cover the east coast and midwest. A station planned for Denver, KOA, would cover the western range country. On the west coast it would be KGO, the "Sunset Station."

Have you ever wondered why the station's call letters are KGO? It's not random: **K** - General Electric - **O**akland.

Now you know.

G.E. put up a studio on the East 14th Street frontage and a transmission building toward the rear of the property that was bookended by a pair of 150-foot transmission towers. Although the KGO studio was demolished, it was nearly identical to the present building that will be preserved in the property's redevelopment. According to the *Oakland Trib-*



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

THE GENERAL ELECTRIC BUILDING

une, KGO was "christened" on Jan. 8, 1924, "with a program participated in by county officials and musical artists."

In March 1924, the station's engineer R.C. Koernig published an illustrated article in *Radio*, detailing its Oakland operations. G.E. provided its new station with a pair of studios (large and small), green room, offices, reception area, control room, and a room equipped with storage batteries and generators. The transmission building was connected to the control room by a pair of cables contained in a conduit. At a whopping 1,000 watts, KGO was then touted as the most powerful radio station west of Schenectady.

KGO's operations moved to San Francisco in 1929 when G.E. leased the station to NBC, of which it was a partial owner. G.E. then absorbed the studio building into the factory complex. KGO continued to employ the Oakland transmitter towers until 1947 when they were replaced by the trio of iconic transmitters that we see when we drive over the Dumbarton Bridge. ■