

## We are all community archivists

By Dorothy Lazard

The history of Oakland is being written every day. There are those “official” stories, narratives captured by the mass media, scholars, historians, and government agencies. There are hidden histories that get uncovered by journalists, researchers, and students. In this archaeology, there is yet another layer of historical information that can inform us of our city’s history: the everyday items that tell the story of our lives.

During my years working at the Oakland History Center, I learned firsthand how often ordinary people contributed to the story of our city. They regularly donated old photographs, high school yearbooks, social club rosters, city directories, personal correspondences, scrapbooks, and news clippings to our collections—all things archivists rely on to create a multifaceted portrait of a place. Given how generous our patrons were with their donations, I came to realize how we are all, intentionally and unwittingly, building our collective history, with the potential of becoming community archivists.

So much of what we received as donations were things people found in basements, at swap meets, under stairs, and in attics, walls,



## It wasn't that long ago . . . .

**YOU WON'T BELIEVE** these incredible images of Oaklanders celebrating a 1977 Raiders win at Jack London Square, a beautiful snapshot in time! John Duncan shared his images with us and we're thrilled to showcase them starting on page 6.

dumpsters, and shuttered businesses. These donors, who seemed to be working as a part of some voluntary salvage operation, saw the historic value in the items they offered. They gathered Oakland history like magpies, one object at a time.

I found it endearing, civic-minded, and validating to perform this work along with my colleagues. These offerings are what make the History Center such a unique community

resource. There is this human impulse to collect and preserve our histories not only to inform future generations, but to declare our own presence in and contributions to our times. Personal documents and ephemera declare that we were here, we participated in this human drama, and we mattered.

I gratefully received these gifts, realizing that people were offering a part of them-

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## Detective work reveals bespoke artisan woodwork on Tudors

**Throw in an Indiana Jones reference and we're deeply involved**

By Paul Bostwick

Oakland's Tudor-style homes have a secret “whodunit” of sorts, written all over their faces. I was clued into this mystery a few years ago. The rust stains dripping down from the Tudor-style half-timber planks in the facade of my home in the Dimond demanded attention. Fearing the worst, I

climbed the ladder and poked about. Yup. 90 years or so had taken its toll. Rot had loosened the boards and admitted a good bit of water into the planks over those years. While prodding and poking around, I'd also noticed a very distinct surface feature, one that simulated the marks of a hewing axe used to true up beams. The chalky paint obscured this detail but with some water to see past that chalkiness, the shallow scalloped pattern was

clear and deliberate. It suited the face of the house. In the way that some eyeglasses just work. It was clear from the dimensions of the lumber (a true inch thick) and the age of the wood that this was an original feature, one I felt I should maintain or restore if possible.

Since research seldom gives you splinters or smashed thumbs, I started there. First

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## Woodwork

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question: What to call these wooden ornaments in a Normandy style facade. I settled on half-timbers, Tudor and “decorative planks” and dove into the search results. Does any lumber yard stock such large boards at a full inch thick and decoratively surfaced like the old ones? Could some web searching land me at a supplier’s door? Spoiler alert: no, they do not (and they do not much care for discussing it either.) My project stretched into the pandemic and I’d taken up a new practice of the “meandering walk” to get my step count up. I took that opportunity to look for other Tudors that might have the same surface treatment as mine, partly from pure curiosity and partly to suss out how they were supplied back then. We know there were many (now consolidated) millwork shops with bin after bin of moldings and “off the shelf” windows and doors to spare the contractor the trouble of building them. Perhaps there were pre-surfaced “rustic look” planks? If so, I reasoned that there was a machine that probably did the work at scale and maybe knowing what that was could lead somewhere? You don’t know what you don’t know... so I dug further.

In keeping with this detective theme, walking about gawking at houses for clues yielded precisely zero matches to my home. I found many homes that had replaced the boards with smooth, planed boards with varying effect, mostly with some level of detriment: a “botoxing” of the façade. I did find a good few with fairly obviously original half-timbers with surface treatments, all unlike mine. But at some point it hit me that they were not only unlike mine (my quest at the moment) but seemingly mostly unlike

each other as well. They were all different, it seemed. The original items still in place had clearly been given, like mine, an aesthetic surface treatment, deliberately and evenly across the whole array of decorative woodwork (or the original bits at least.) Some looked to have been band-sawed. Others maybe by a pitsaw? Most exaggerated a bit for an even and decorative effect, and all with character in nice agreement with the building. But not like one another. With this development, I had a proper mystery! This is almost certainly not the sort of product you could offer at a millwork shop if everybody requires something different. Not enough commonality to tool up for. Curious.

It is possible that I came too late to the investigation. There might have been too many heavy-handed paint scrapers, rot replacements and such for me to properly hunt amongst the survivors for twins... but it became clear that I was not going to find any old stock at a millwork company that matched mine. Or even somebody still producing small batches of the stuff, even if they once had done so. I resolved to figure out a way to record the pattern from my rotten boards and apply it to new wood. Splinters and smashed thumbs, here I come!

How to recreate that surface design? Source the wide redwood planks? I had to make and replace them all because recreating the surface well enough to blend in with original work was too much to ask (and the rot really was well distributed). What I did is beyond the scope of this article, but in short: I had a mill slice 2x10s (and larger) into my boards and I made spacers to project the thin boards forward. After a long hunt, I found a draw-knife with the appropriate radius to replicate the hewn look of the originals. Then I created a flashing profile, sealed the ends of



**LOOKING CLOSELY** at this handsome woodwork reveals hand scalloping on the wooden accent beams



**EVEN FROM AFAR**, the careful handwork can be discerned.

the planks with epoxy, filled in errors and sanded using a 3D-printed saucer. Then lots of paint (and yes, some splinters.) Finally, I eased the new boards into the old cavities.

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PAUL BOSTWICK



**THIS HOME'S WOODWORK**, alas, has lost its texturing.

But to come back to the “whodunit” of this tale: I have one more clue, also brought to us by rotting wood, as it happens. While replacing some siding in my garage, I happened to be there at the correct moment to see light come through a removed bit of rotten siding and graze across a wood post . . . one that had not seen direct sunlight in almost a century.

And like a movie archeologist, tracing a light shaft through some ancient monument at the solstice, I noticed that the light revealed a familiar shadow pattern! One I’d been hunting all over Oakland for. One I’d spent hours and hours recreating. But instead of the pattern being cut into a (relatively) thin decorative plank like the ones on the front of the house, it was carved into a heavy post!

Now I know: this post was used as an experiment—just as I had experimented a few months before with scraps to get a sense of how to get the look. I even had a few of my own test efforts in a bin right next to that post. Of course one would experiment on other boards, paint it, see how the light catches it etc. before committing to a design for the whole facade! That’s what I did too. And there is good sense in using the test board in the garage where no one would care or notice. Waste not, want not, after all.

So, after all that, my current best guess is that this work was done on site by the contractor, custom to the house, probably in consultation with the architect. Like the stucco pattern, these are the finishing touches that define the look of the house. This explains the diversity of treatments around the city and the sample bit in my garage. It also may explain the difficulty in extending the textures into repairs. It is very hard to match the hand of a prior artisan’s work, and it’s expensive to replace more than just a few rotten boards. Add to that how few people even notice the textures and you get the current state of affairs.

But maybe, now that we know how special and unique these textures are, when we see surviving examples of this vanishing work, we can take some extra care. If you have it, keep it well painted and caulked to keep water from getting in behind it. When you do paint, take care not to sand down/off this texture. Chemical strippers and an extra light touch can preserve the surface features. An enthusiastic paint prep with a belt sander could quickly erase a carefully composed artwork. And, now that you are on the lookout for examples, consider helping your neighbors who have these textures still intact to understand and preserve these grace notes that were individually carved into the façades of Oakland’s buildings. ■

*Paul Bostwick is a resident of the Dimond District. When he is not zig-zagging through the neighborhoods of Oakland gawking at architecture, he is a semi-pro hallucinator (aka an inventor).*

PAUL BOSTWICK



**WAVY EDGES** and a bandsawn face



EMILY FOSTER

**ITEMS DONATED** to the History Center

## Archivists

*Continued from page 1*

selves to our research collections. I began to imagine every home as an archive, every citizen as a potential archivist. But, I have to admit, I was often surprised by the personal nature of these items: family portraits, school diplomas, and awards of merit. I was even offered a Super Bowl ring to add to the collection! Why, I’d ask, would they be willing to part with such personal effects when they had younger generations they could pass them on to. Too often, sadly, I was told no one in the family is “interested in these old things,” or “my kids don’t know these people.” “Clearing out,” is what some people called this surrender.

Our possessions give us identity. Right now, Oakland has a massive housing problem that is far from being solved. In the tumult of housing insecurity that implicates banks, corporations, landlords, and employers, the city’s poor, the unemployed, and the underemployed live precariously. Evicted tenants often scramble to hold onto what possessions they can: Grandmother’s silver, Grandfather’s WWII portrait, a kid’s athletic trophy, personal letters, a family’s vital records. But, as homelessness and housing insecurity persist, people lose the things that help formulate their identities and anchor them to place. Like everyone else, the dispossessed have a role to play in the city’s historical narrative.

How many stories are out there that will never be told, never end up preserved in an archive like ours? How many records will just be discarded? So much is lost every day. And that loss, on a mass scale, feels tragic and injurious not only to us individually but to our community’s history and culture. ■



# The History Fair at Camron-Stanford House was a historic blast!

by Linda Taylor

Who knew that there's a Genealogical Society in Oakland with librarians to help you explore your family's past? Or that the Black Panther Party had an alumni network giving educational tours of our city? These things and more were made perfectly clear this year at the Camron-Stanford History Fair on Sept. 10. Over 20 local history museums, historical societies, archivists, and history buffs set up booths in the garden of the Victorian mansion—some in costume!

For those who wandered onto the terrace above, there was a big treat waiting, literally: a huge photo from a century ago with a view of the house from downtown. It must have been a wonderful neighborhood then, full of stately Victorian houses and an abundance of trees. ■



ALL IMAGES: CAMRON-STANFORD HOUSE

**WEST OAKLAND MURAL PROJECT/WOMEN OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY**



**THE PERALTA HACIENDA** Park display nestled under a huge eucalyptus tree.



**ABOVE CENTER**, new boardmember Linda Taylor (at left) passes an Angel Island display, while visitors browse books at the Camron-Stanford table. At right, the West Oakland Cultural Action Network neighbored the Berkeley Historical Society and Museum booth.

## Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members through August 2022:

Dan A, Madeline Adkins, Ariel Asken, Berkeley Signs (Steve Vigeant), Dena Belinkoff, Julia Brady, Peter Heller, Douglas Jacobson, Brenda Montano, Ginger Ogle, Susan Popovic, Maureen Powers, Melba Yee, Dave Zuckermann

## GIFT MEMBERSHIP/DONOR

Welcome new member Jake Schaffer with warm thanks to Neil Heyden for his gift.

## We thank our recent donors

Jeffrey Angell, Paula Baessler, Stephanie Casenza, Civic Arts League of Diablo Valley, Andrea Dapper, Thomas Job, Ray Kidd, Linda Lewin, Ann McClain, Betsy Merck, Richard Orlando, Penelope Rink, Karen Marie Schroeder, Kevin Tam, Michael Udkow, Emily Wilson

KEVIN TAM PG&E 100% MATCHING DONATION FUND: Jeffrey Angell, Catherine Burns, Kathryn Carroll, Alison Finlay, Robert & Kathryn Gustafson, Jinhee Ha, Mary Harper, Laura Ingram, Robert Kidd, Daniel Levy, Rick Marcus, Chris Pattillo, Naomi Schiff, Maureen Steiner, Kevin Tam, Anonymous (7)



## Learn about one of our lifetime achievement winners, Annalee Allen

MEGAN NAKAHARA



**ANNALEE** and her husband Jim at the Mother of the Year ceremony, 2013.

*By Kitty Hughes*

When we have our Partners in Preservation Awards later this month (you must attend! See details below), we'll be honoring three amazing women who have gone above and beyond to help Oakland: Annalee Allen, Kathleen DioGiovanni, and Dorothy Lazard. We promise more details on them and all the winners in the different categories in the future, but for this issue we're focusing on the phenomenon that is Annalee.

I go back with Annalee to the early 1980s, to the early days of OHA at the Camron-Stanford House when we were both new mothers. and she was OHA president. We later worked as colleagues at the city of Oakland. I watched her progress over the years, as she pursued one interest after another, excelling in everything she does, an impressive model of multi-tasking.

As a writer, Annalee is one of the primary documenters of our city's history. Her research is impeccable and thorough. She always stresses the upbeat, positive side of Oakland and the rich cultural heritage of our city, countering the often negative images in the press. She authored several books on Oakland history, including *Oakland* (Postcard History), *Selections from the Oakland Tribune Archives* and *Oakland Landmarks: An Artistic Portrayal of History*, which was co-created with artist Heidi Wyckoff. In addition, she wrote an Oakland history column for the *Montclarion* and a landmarks column for the *Oakland Tribune*. When the *Tribune*

stopped carrying her column, the paper lost some of its sparkle.

In 1996, she found a new outlet for her interest in history and love of our city, as director of the city's downtown walking tours program. She led tours for schools and other groups, recruited and trained volunteers, and coordinated the work of volunteer guides who led walking tours of Oakland's downtown. She added new walks to the tour offerings, including a Black History Walk and a Women's History Walk. She retired in January of 2021. As of 2022, the tours program is now on pause. Somehow, she also found time to initiate and organize the annual celebration of the city's birthday, including creating the commemorative City Hall exhibit.

She's been a generous volunteer for more than 20 community organizations, serving in leadership positions at many of them, including OHA, the Pardee Home Museum, the Camron-Stanford House, and the Alameda County Historical Society. She was honored as 2013's Oakland Mother of the Year (see her name engraved on the sidewalk at the Morcom Rose Garden) for rearing three sons while pursuing a busy career and sharing her nurturing influence around our city. She served for several years on the city's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, as well as the Alameda County Parks, Recreation and Historical Commission.



**ANNALEE** with then-mayor Jean Quan, left, and then-parks and recreation director Audree Jones-Taylor, 2013.

In recent years, she advocated tirelessly for a historic marker near the Jack London tree in front of City Hall, which was installed in 2017 by OHA. She was a leading organizer of the 2011 Centennial Women's Suffrage Parade and one of the original founders of POWER (Progressive Oakland Women Empowering Reform).

It is our pleasure to recognize her for the many indelible marks she makes on our city's identity and sense of community. ■

### A brief interview

*By Erika Mailman*

Recently, Annalee and I chatted so I could ask her about her lifelong love of history. She says that she remembers her grandmother taking her to the Berkeley City Club when she was a girl (yes, she got to swim in that incredible Julia Morgan pool!). "I thought she lived there in that fairytale castle," says Annalee. Perhaps that first sparked her interest in preservation?

"I grew up in Berkeley but became an Oaklander," she says. She met her husband in SoCal while attending UCLA; he attended law school down there. After they married, they lived in Moraga for a year, then a friend of a friend alerted her to a duplex in Rockridge where they moved in 1978. A few years later, in 1981, they moved to a nearby home in Rockridge, where they still live in a 1915 Craftsman. They've raised three sons and have two grandchildren.

**Q:** Of all your historic preservation based achievements, what are you most proud of?

**A:** I'm most proud of Cox Cadillac, which was going to be demolished. I was just one of the ones involved, but I was always really proud of that one.

**Q:** Do you ever go to the Whole Foods that's there now and think "Hey, I was part of saving this?"

**A:** We used to go there with my middle son; he and his family lived not far. Now he's in

See **ANNALEE** on page 8

**JOIN US!** in celebrating all honorees at the Partners in Preservation Awards, 4-6:30 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 23, at the Pardee Home Museum, 672 11th St. Doors open at 4 p.m. with light refreshments. Please register in advance so we have enough chairs and food! Tickets \$20-25: <https://bit.ly/OHAPIP2022> or call (510) 743-9218.



# Raiders celebrate victory in 1977!

*Perhaps it's bittersweet to see these images, given that in 2019 the Raiders departed Oakland. But on this fabulous day in 1977, John Duncan says, "I was driving a cab in the city back when these were taken in Jack London Square. I feel they have some sort of historical significance and thought you might enjoy having them." Major understatement, John! Thank you. Here's more from him:*

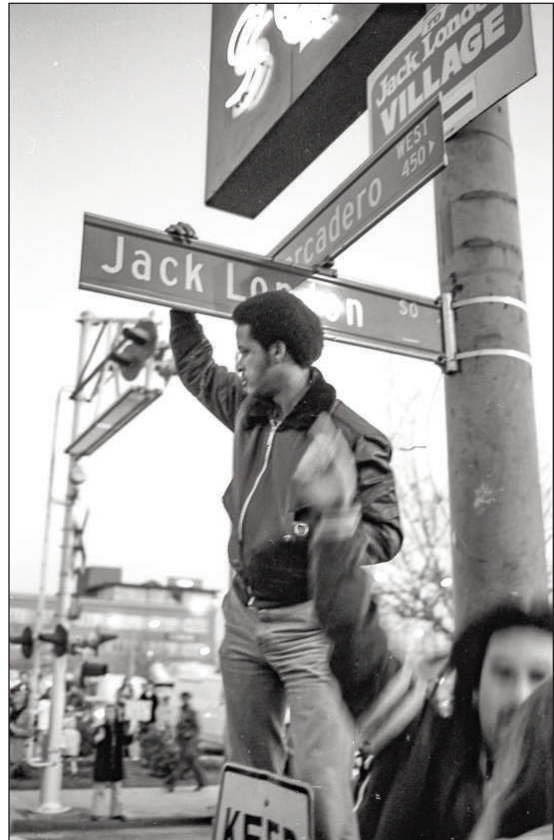
I lived in Oakland for a couple of years when I was in my 20s, 44th & Telegraph, to be exact. I drove a cab awhile, for a man who had just a couple taxis. I also worked at a gas station called Top Gas on Telegraph near the Berkeley line. Got robbed a couple of times, and later heard that the fellow who was managing a bunch of the stations, who came around every evening to collect the cash, decided to make his collections and then skipped town!

I also had a kid one time in the back seat of my cab who said he had a gun, and we drove about East Oakland, where he took me into some apartment, where I gave them what little I had, and then got outa there! They caught the young kid and it went to court, but after the first hearing I left town, so I assume nothing came of it. Oakland was a rough city back then.

As pertains these photos, I don't remember if I was driving that day, but I would hang a lot in Jack London Square, as it was where many nightspots were, and thus customers. I wasn't a big fan, as such, but as a street photographer I realized it was history, being their first win. Needless to say, the vibe was one of jubilation! I would love to find some of the people, particularly the man with his daughter riding atop the car, and the couple riding on the roof. I can't say I watch much sports, although I ran track my last two years of high school, '68-'69, and had the state record in the mile. Team sports were never anything that really attracted me, for whatever reason. ■

*John now lives in Portland, Maine. His photo book Take it Easy: Portland in the 1970s can be bought here:*  
<https://www.islandportpress.com/john-duncan>







## Annalee

*Continued from page 5*

Grass Valley. We'd meet there and get a sandwich and eat outside.

**Q:** How did you start to write newspaper columns on historic topics?

**A:** Chris Treadway of the *Montclarion* asked me if I would do a column. The first one I wrote was on the Macky mansion at CCAC. [Some background: she is referring to Macky Hall on the campus of what was then the California College of Arts and Crafts and is now the California College of the Arts.

**Q:** Had you been writing before that?

**A:** I had occasionally written stories for the *OHA News*.

**Q:** Weren't you a big part of saving City Hall, too?

**A:** They were going to tear that down, but we stopped that from happening.

**Q:** And then you wound up having an office there from which you ran the tours program. Did you start the tours program?

**A:** No, it already existed.

**Q:** But you grew it and expanded it?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** There were so many things the city wanted to tear down.

**A:** I know!

We talked of other things she is proud of, like being part of preservation efforts for the bandstand by Lake Merritt, the Veterans' Hall, and her leadership role in POWER.

I told her, only half joking, that there could be an Annalee Allen Tour that would focus on all the buildings she'd had a part in saving from demolition. I asked why she's been such a dedicated volunteer all these decades, and she said, "I feel like it's important to do. That sums it up."

On a personal note, I owe so much to Annalee. When I was first getting started as a freelance writer, she talked me into proposing to the *Montclarion* that I take on the gap left by her being stolen away by the *Tribune*. That led to the Oakland history column that I wrote for 12 years, and opened many doors for my career.

Annalee's been known to do that; she's a connector. Her husband Jim says, "She's always been willing to connect people together and realize when talking with someone that they would be interested to talk to another person." She's quick to credit others

## Time to get lectured (nicely!)

Join us for online tours in November and December! Register for either lecture at <https://www.oaklandheritage.org/events>.

■ 7 p.m., Nov. 17: **The Lost Urban Tank Houses of Oakland, Berkeley, and Alameda.** During an era of rapid population growth and the advent of indoor plumbing, East Bay residents devised low-tech yet ingenious structures to bring water into their homes. Today, a handful of redwood "tank houses" are all that remain of the thousands of windmill-topped structures which stood 120 years ago. Join Aaron Goldstein on a virtual tour to unearth a lost urban water-scape and unpack a largely-forgotten piece of local vernacular architecture. We'll look at numerous examples, from the everyday to the exuberant, and learn the stories of the people who lived beside—and occasionally inside—them. Goldstein, RA is a licensed architect in California and an architectural historian. He is from San Francisco and currently lives in Berkeley. His current passion is tank house exploration. For nearly two years, he has been tirelessly mapping and documenting dozens of East Bay tank houses, interviewing owners and tenants, and learning their stories. He is writing a book on the subject and in the meantime

as well. Of the historic preservation cohort she's been part of for so long, she says of Naomi Schiff, "She's the best. I have a lot of respect for her," and of Betty Marvin's Oakland knowledge, "Betty is like the library." She praises Dorothy Lazard (now retired from the Oakland History Center) for her

leads walking tours in Oakland and Berkeley. Learn more at <https://aarongoldstein.us/tank-tours>.

■ 7 p.m., Dec. 8: **Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, The Story of the Cohen Bray House.** Patty Donald, president of the Victorian Preservation Center of Oakland at the Cohen Bray House, will take us on a journey from the Gold Rush times to the future of one of the unique historical houses in the Bay Area. She is the greatgranddaughter of the original owners. She retired in 2017 from the city of Berkeley where she developed and built the Shorebird Nature Center and strawbale classroom. For 38 years she ran the environmental education programs, the teacher and docent training program, shoreline cleanups, kite festival, bay festival and Adventure Playground at the Berkeley Marina. She is now a grandmother, on the board of the Rotary Nature Center Friends and Things that Creep. By Zoom, she'll show the beautiful interiors of the public rooms of this home with once a month tours for the public, as well as school presentations. The house needs a lot of TLC to be preserved for future generations. For more, <https://www.cohenbrayhouse.org/> ■

great work and writing, and Kathleen DiGiovanni for her well-written back page article that always runs here—and both for their commitment to historic preservation. And in turn, everyone thanks *you*, Annalee. Oakland wouldn't be the city it is today without your leadership, commitment and energy. ■

### Thank you to our volunteers

**ZOOM LECTURE PRESENTER/SPEAKER:** Paul Brekke-Meisner—Oakland's Diamond History: A Homegrown Baseball Legacy. Thanks to Neil Heyden for introducing the speaker, conducting the Q&A, and fielding audience questions.

**WALKING TOUR LEADERS:** Woody Minor—Amelia's Airport: Oakland's Historic North Field, Dennis Evanosky—Frederick Law Olmsted and Mountain View Cemetery, Phil Bellman—F.M. "Borax" Smith Estate, Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni—Montclair's Creekside Neighborhood, Gary Knecht and Dennis Evanosky—Wholesale Produce Market and Waterfront Warehouse District, Kathryn (Kitty) Hughes—Tracing Terraces: The Linda Vista Tract, Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni—Storied Lakeside Park: Bonsai, Bowling and Butterflies, Stuart Swiedler—Electric Trains Battle at the Border, Part 1: The Oakland-Emeryville Sphere Dennis Evanosky—Scaling Leona Heights

**WALKING TOUR VOLUNTEERS:** Lara Amin, Phil Bellman, Bill Blakely, Lane Farley, Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni, Alison Finlay, Mary Harper, Joyce Hendy, Neil Heyden, Irina Iteksion, Ann Killebrew, Daniel Levy, Amelia Marshall, Pat McGowan, Linda Taylor, Betsy Yost





# History Center goes ‘back to school’ and has new events lineup

By Emily Foster, Oakland History Center

It’s back to school time, and here in the Oakland History Center we’ve been working on our Oakland School Archive. We have recently added some newly donated yearbooks and class portraits to this large, but still incomplete, collection. Yearbooks and class portraits are cute, but they’re also a great source of information about regular people and can serve as a visual representation of a school’s offerings and a neighborhood’s demographics. They’re a frequently used resource here in all sorts of biographical and genealogical searches, so we’re always excited to fill gaps in our collection.

We are also collecting as much current news about Oakland schools as we can find, as it will quickly become the history of tomorrow. Parker School, in particular, will likely be a topic of interest for future historians because of its recent closure followed by a summer-long occupation by parents and community members. Whatever happens with the school, its story fits into so many narratives about Oakland – changing neighborhood demographics, racial inequalities in education, and protest and occupation of public space to name a few. So, we’re doing our best to represent its story in our collection.

We’ve also been hosting class visits to introduce students to our many resources. If you’re a teacher, you can get in touch to request a class visit. We’re happy to talk to students from elementary to post-graduate levels. There’s something for everyone in the Oakland History Center!

There will also be something for everyone in our Fall History Series held both online and in-person. Here are upcoming events:

• **“Done into Dance!” The Spirit of Isadora Duncan** (Oct. 15, 2 p.m., in person): Lois Ann Flood will perform stunning historical dances created by Isadora Duncan and present a talk about her Oakland childhood.

• **BART at 50** (Oct. 19, 6 p.m., on Zoom): BART General Manager Robert Powers and former BART Director of Public Affairs Michael C. Healy (author of *BART: The Dramatic History of the Bay Area Rapid Transit System*) look back at BART’s illustrious past and discuss what lies ahead for the Bay Area’s mass transit system as it celebrates its 50th year of service.

OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER



**HAPPY THIRD GRADERS** at Parker School in 1929.

• **On Visions of Black Futurity** (Oct. 26, 6 p.m., on Zoom): Babette Thomas (creator of the *Visions of Black Futurity* series on SF MOMA’s *Raw Material* podcast) explores how Black history, fantasy, and utopia fuels their work. They’ll discuss how radio and archival research allow them to commune

with their artistic predecessors and collapses the space between past, present, and future.

• **Haunted History Bike Ride** (Oct. 30, 2 p.m.): A 7 mile bike ride to some of Oakland’s most haunted spots, starting at the Main Library and led by Erin Sanders of the Oakland History Center and Outreach Librarian Sadie McClendon. Costumes are encouraged!

All in-person events will be held at Main Library’s Bradley C. Walters Auditorium. For more info and to register, visit [oaklandlibrary.org/ohc/oakland-history-events/](http://oaklandlibrary.org/ohc/oakland-history-events/) ■

*Emily Foster is a librarian in the Oakland History Center.*

## Rescuing Moss House: Public Works Staff Takes a Look



NAOMI SCHIFF

**NEIGHBORS, OHA, PARK STAFF** invited Oakland Public Works to walk through the 1864 Carpenter Gothic Landmark in July. From left, Hank Phan, OPRYD CIP Coordinator Assistant; Neil Valle, OPRYD Budget and Fiscal Administrator Manager; Donte Watson, OPRYD Assistant Acting Director; architect Kirk Peterson; historic preservation advocates Al Crofts and Bob Brokl; OPW Construction & Maintenance Supervisor Martin Tovar; OPW Director Harold Duffy; OPW Assistant Director Richard Battersby; Derin Minor, Manager, OPW Building Services; OHA member and advisor Christopher Buckley; and in front row, District 3 Councilmember Carroll Fife; OHA Board Member Linda Taylor; Anna DeAnguera of the Mosswood Recreational Advisory Council; Mosswood Rec Center Director Terri Westbrook.



## Preservation Committee briefs

By Naomi Schiff

Here are a few of the items our committee has been monitoring.

■ **CCA Campus:** In a Sept. 10 Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board meeting, the board expressed great concern about the destruction of an API about design guidelines for a rebuilt campus, presented by the developers, Emerald Fund. OHA commenters joined with neighbors, the Upper Broadway Advocates group, and other members of the public in commenting on the draft guidelines. These mostly-advisory guidelines would shape a Planned Unit Development, should the 500+ unit residential project move forward. Members of the LPAB expressed dismay that the proposed destruction of an Area of Primary Importance would be accepted under the guidelines. Of twelve buildings analyzed in a Historic Resource Evaluation prepared by Page & Turnbull, ten would be demolished. A summary of the HRE states:

Page & Turnbull (2019 HRE) finds that all twelve buildings on the CCA Oakland campus are historic resources for the purposes of CEQA. Six buildings on the CCA Oakland campus qualify as individual historic resources for the purposes of CEQA—Macky Hall, Carriage House, Martinez Hall, Founders Hall, Noni Eccles Treadwell Ceramic Arts Center, and Barclay Simpson Sculpture Studio. The campus as a whole, including the twelve extant buildings and associated landscape features, was found to be a California Register-eligible historic district and an Oakland Area of Primary Importance (API), and is, therefore a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA.

With the proposed design and guidelines, the features to survive of the arts campus period would be several sculptures and outdoor artwork, the wall around the campus with its gate, and a collection of antique bricks. The Macky Hall/Treadwell Mansion and its carriage house predated the college. Many trees would be removed to make way for residential buildings but some would survive, and the open area in front of Macky Hall would be retained and re-landscaped. An EIR has not yet been released.

■ **DOWNTOWN OAKLAND SPECIFIC PLAN:** This is one for the wonks! The DOSP has been poking along for six years now, interrupted by changes of direction, equity priorities, a pandemic, and a city staff shortage. It has lurched back to life, and OHA is working with other community groups to advocate for improvements to its draft re-zoning of the downtown area, a Zoning Incentive Plan (ZIP) intended to produce community benefits, and a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program contemplated 28 years ago in the Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan, but never established. Christopher Buckley has been assisting OHA in analyzing the draft materials, sometimes rewriting letters we sent years ago. It does look like Oakland might finally achieve that TDR program. Such programs preserve landowners' property value by moving the right to build a taller or denser building from a location where development isn't



JOHN KLEIN

**THE FIRE ALARM BUILDING** is just north of the Alameda County Courthouse, and across from the Main Library.

wanted (for example, a historic site) to another location where development is encouraged. There is an active and highly successful TDR program in San Francisco.

The ZIP plan appears to be more problematic, and it is unclear whether it would likely generate any substantial community benefits, and whether those benefits would be worthwhile in exchange for the enormous increases in built density that could result. Affordable housing advocates such as East Bay Housing Organizations are also trying to understand how it would interact with new state legislation that encourages greater density and the production of more housing units.

The DOSP comes with a zoning map which, among other things, worried advocates who hope to preserve the Fire Alarm Building, 1310 Oak St. This 1911 building, designed by Walter Mathews, was the hub of a long-lived city-wide alarm network, designed after the 1906 earthquake. It sits on a triangular lot near Lake Merritt, between Camron-Stanford House, County Courthouse, and the Main Library. The draft zoning map proposes increased height on the site, but OHA and the Coalition of Advocates for Lake Merritt object to the change, saying that not only is it a historic building, it is surrounded by other historic buildings and is in an Area of Primary Importance.

We may be reaching out to our members and asking you to weigh in with the Planning Commission and City Council on some of these items as the DOSP returns for public review.

The timetable is uncertain, and we don't venture to predict what the schedule will be! For info: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/downtown-oakland-specific-plan> ■

## MacArthur

*Continued from page 12*

Until the completion in 1966 of Interstate 580, MacArthur Boulevard was also a segment of U.S. Highway 50, which then extended all the way west to the Bay Bridge. If you've ever wondered why MacArthur used to have so many motels on it, this is the reason. With the opening of I-580, the parallel MacArthur freeway, through Oakland, the big boulevard lost much of its luster. Today, the southern end of the street merges with Foothill Boulevard at the San Leandro border but the north end trickles away, sans signage, behind the Emeryville Home Depot.

When the city council voted its final approval of the ordinance on April 9, 1942, they "expressed the hope that the same highway will be extended southward to the Mexican border and northward...to the Canadian boundary."

It wasn't until the completion of Interstate 5 in 1979 that that dream of a border-to-border highway was finally realized, but it was not named for General MacArthur, whose star had cooled by then, or for anyone else. "Thus passes the glory of the world." ■



# San Antonio Park gets a major preservation win

By Mary Harper, President

You can make a difference. Communities can make changes. Take for instance the recent San Antonio Park win. Not only did the communities stop a fire station from being built on park ground, their recommendations for improvements were included in the Master Plan, which can be read online at <https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/sanantonio-park>.

In 1854 San Antonio Park was established on what had been part of Luis Peralta's land grant. It was one of the seven public squares. In 1856 the city of Brooklyn, where the park was located, named it Independence Square. It is one of the oldest parks in Oakland. In its Fall 1991 newsletter, OHA described the park as a gathering place for entertainment, recreation, law enforcement and commerce throughout the years. Now, in addition to entertainment and recreation, it is a central location for rallies, marches and festivals.

Last January OHA learned that the City of Oakland was planning to build a fire station there. The proposed station would take away at least 20,000 square feet of this intensively used park, in a neighborhood which is short of open space. OHA objected to this attempt to construct non park serving facilities in a

park. Oakland is already short on parks. Parks are irreplaceable. As we know from the COVID years, outdoor space is important both to our health and well-being. What available park space there is must not be used for other purposes.

OHA called on its members to oppose the proposal to build the fire station on park ground. The letters poured in. We were heartened not only by our members' responses, but also those of the community. Because of the advocacy of The Friends of San Antonio Park (FOSAP) and other community organizations, the fire station will be located elsewhere.

During the course of the community engagement process FOSAP recommended expansion of park programming, a communi-



FRIENDS OF SAN ANTONIO PARK

**SAN ANTONIO PARK** is one of the oldest parks in the city.

ty center with a library and a sports deck, repair to park infra structure and strengthen park stewardship. All four recommendations were incorporated into the Master Plan Implementation of these recommendations will ensure that San Antonio Park remain an important gathering space for community activities. Congratulations to the San Antonio Park communities and communities everywhere. You can make changes. ■

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**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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## What's in a name? A lot, it turns out

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

What's in a name? If it's MacArthur Boulevard we're talking about: plenty. Plenty of names. Assembled from all or part of eleven separate streets, twelve if you count Foothill Boulevard twice, MacArthur turned 80 this spring.

Well before the completion of the Bay Bridge in 1936, city engineers in Oakland anticipated the need for feeder arteries to the new bridge. A *Post-Enquirer* article from September 8, 1933 cited the urgency to widen 38th Street, Moss Avenue, and Foothill Boulevards, identifying them as the most important approach routes. Though originally conceived as the joining of 38th Street, Moss Avenue, and Perry Street, those nearest the approach to the bridge, the list of connecting streets got longer: Hopkins, Foothill, and others joined a growing list of streets that would stretch from the bridge approach to the San Leandro border. In 1934, both the *Post-Enquirer* and the *Tribune* reported extensively on street improvement efforts that would facilitate traffic flow to the bridge. That summer, the city lopped 50 feet off the north side of Mosswood Park to widen Moss Avenue to 110 feet.

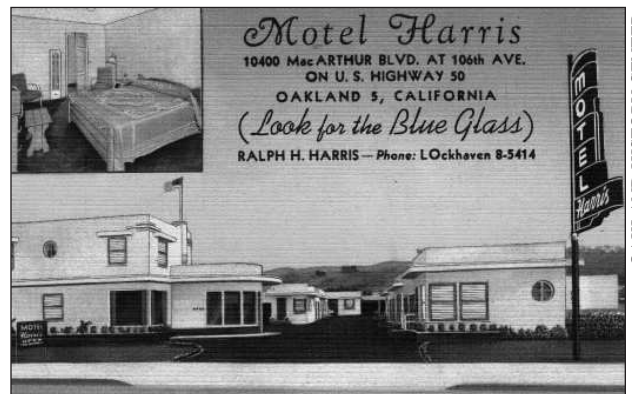
If you've ever wondered why MacArthur has so many turns and angles, it's this stitched-together Frankenstein's Monster of eleven streets that accounts for it.

It was a city employee, George Lynch, head of the city's street sign division, who proposed taking the 10 miles of individual streets that were being linked together and

unifying them under the name of General Douglas MacArthur. In February 1942, city engineer Walter Frickstad delivered Lynch's proposal to the city council, who took it up with enthusiasm. An ordinance was drafted and published, public hearings took place mid-March, with final approval on April 9. Days later, city workers were installing new street signs; on the 12th, the *Tribune* ran a photo of a street department worker transforming Hopkins Street into MacArthur.

Why Douglas MacArthur? With the entry of the U.S. into war following the attack on Pearl Harbor, General MacArthur commanded Allied forces in the southwest Pacific, and in spite of losses in the Philippines that winter was held in high esteem on the homefront. He would achieve great success as the war went on, but early 1942 saw a nationwide zeal for assigning his name to things: a West Virginia post office, MacArthur Mothers' Clubs, a MacArthur Boulevard in Washington, DC that beat Oakland to the punch by a couple of weeks.

By mid-April, less than a month after the first reading of the ordinance and within days of the city council's final adoption of it, Oaklanders advertising in the *Tribune* had fallen into line with the new street name, locating their businesses, churches, tent revivals, and want ads of all sorts on MacArthur Boulevard, even if sometimes adding a point of



VINTAGE POSTCARD for the Motel Harris

OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

reference like "formerly Hopkins." Businesses anticipated the change, too. In a March 24 advertisement in the *Tribune*, The Gift House placed itself at "38th (MacArthur) & Grove."

Which were the streets that became MacArthur Boulevard? From north to south, part or all of: 38th Street, Moss Avenue, Perry Street, Excelsior Avenue, Hopkins Street, 55th Avenue, Camden Street, Seminary Avenue, Trenor Street, Foothill Boulevard, Hollywood Boulevard, and Foothill Boulevard again. West of Fairmount the new thoroughfare would be designated West MacArthur. Most of these streets exist today, with a few exceptions. Trenor Street, which used to run southeast of Mills College, and Hollywood Avenue, near Durant, were completely absorbed.

There's a tiny dab left of Hopkins Street, off Coolidge, and a few remaining blocks of Moss Avenue between MacArthur and Vernon.

See **MACARTHUR** on page 10