

Walking tours are baaaack and perfect for summer!

Compiled by Alison Finlay

After a pandemic-hampered lull, and a tentative restart last year, the walking tours are back! Join OHA as we look at widely varied aspects of Oakland. For tour times, meeting location information, and to sign up, go to www.oaklandheritage.org/events. Things may shift around and some tours have limited registration, so please do check! We look forward to a rich season of companionable exploration.

Saturday, July 8

MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMETERY

Walk into the past in California's most historic cemetery to meet some of our state's early movers and shakers along with the monuments that preserve their memories. Charles Crocker, Domingo Ghirardelli and Samuel Merritt are among those you will encounter. A hilly walk with Dennis Evanosky.

Sunday, July 9

HISTORIC SITES IN JOAQUIN MILLER PARK

Poet/author Joaquin Miller spent his last days on his 75-acre estate, The Hights, planting

See **WALKING TOURS** on page 2



ROBERT GILES

LEARN THE SECRETS OF THE DEAD on Dennis Evanosky's always-popular tour of Mountain View Cemetery, July 8.



DAVE WEINSTEIN

THIS EICHLER HOME, a beautiful example of mid-century Modern design, will be on the July 30 walking tour with Dave Weinstein. Below is poet Joaquin Miller at The Hights, featured on the July 9 tour of Joaquin Miller Park with Dale Risden.



PUBLIC DOMAIN



Walking tours

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about 75,000 trees, farming, entertaining and writing, with his wife Abigail and daughter Juanita. Visit the Abbey, the Follies, and monuments that survive more than 100 years later. The WPA Cascades and Woodminster Theatre were Juanita's idea, a tribute to the poets and writers of California. Hear about current restoration projects and issues at the park. A hilly walk with Dale Risdén.

Saturday, July 15

F.M. "BORAX" SMITH ESTATE

Visit the site of Arbor Villa, Francis Marion "Borax" Smith's palatial estate. Smith founded an international industry ("20-Mule Team Borax"), established the Key Route System, and became one of Oakland's most famous, colorful entrepreneurs. The tour visits the site of Oak Hall, the 9th Avenue palm trees, the Mary R. Smith cottages, and other historic houses, including ones designed by Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan. A 2-mile, hilly walk with Phil Bellman.

Sunday, July 16

PRESERVATION PARK

Explore in and around Preservation Park, with its intriguing collection of historic buildings dating from the 1870s. Most of these structures were relocated a hundred years later to make way for freeway 980, an ambitious 1970s-80s Oakland preservation effort. Visit Preservation Park, Pardee Home Museum, the First Unitarian Church and AAMLO, on a level walk with Don Tyler.

Saturday, July 22

SHEFFIELD VILLAGE

Sheffield Village was touted in contemporary descriptions as a place "where color schemes



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

F. M. "BORAX" SMITH and his son Francis M. Smith, Jr., with a mule at Arbor Villa, Oakland, 1916. Learn about this vanished estate on Phil Bellman's July 15 tour.

and nature blend in perfect harmony." Designated an Oakland City Historic District, Sheffield Village, one of the first homeowners' associations on the west coast, is a 100-acre enclave of single family houses begun in 1939. The tour will explore the community plan, house styles, preservation uses, and whether it lives up to the pre-WWII hype. Stroll mostly flat terrain with Greg Novak.



CITY OF OAKLAND

SHEFFIELD VILLAGE is featured on Greg Novak's July 22 tour.

Sunday, July 23,

TILES AND TERRA COTTA IN UPTOWN OAKLAND

We will examine upwards of 29 buildings



PHILIP/OAKLAND LOCALWIKI

PRESERVATION PARK downtown will be part of Don Tyler's July 16 tour.

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Walking tours

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dating from the year 1908 to 1931, when architectural ceramics were widely used on the facings of large and important buildings. Classically inspired Beaux Arts façades gave way over time to Moderne and Deco styles that included brightly colored glazes.

Uptown offers a fine collection of specimens. The beauty of the medium will be explored, and its special needs for maintenance and restoration pointed out. A level walk with Riley Doty.

Saturday, July 29

THE BUSHROD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD'S AMAZING SPORTS LEGACY

Oakland has a legendary sports past and the center of that legacy surrounds Bushrod Park in North Oakland. Beginning at the historic former University High School, we will walk this interesting neighborhood and discuss the great athletes and institutions that helped produce the city's reputation for changing the face of sports in America. A level walk with Paul Brekke-Miesner.

PAUL BREKKE-MIESNER COLLECTION



BANCROFT LIBRARY



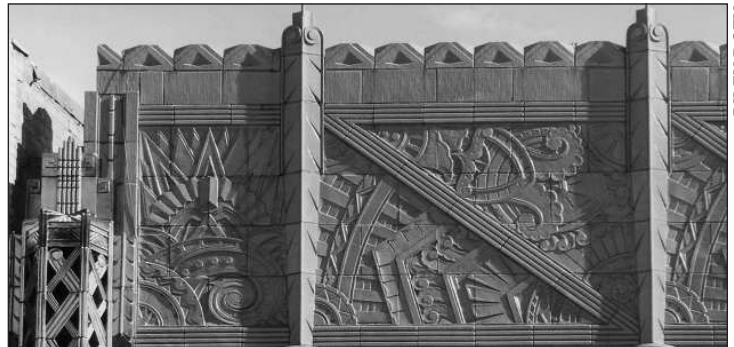
BUSHROD PARK'S amazing sports legacy will be discussed at Paul Brekke-Miesner's July 29 tour, top. At left is Curt Flood, one of the sports heroes who played there.

Sunday, July 30

THE EICHLERS OF OAKLAND

Joe Eichler's 54 mid-century modern homes in Sequoyah Hills are a well-preserved slice of history and Oakland's only Eichler tract. Tour the neighborhood while learning the untold tales of Eichler with Dave Weinstein, who has been writing about Eichlers for 20 years for the Eichler Network's *CA-Modern* magazine.

ART DECO frieze on the Mary B. Bowles Building, right, with intricate patterns in green glazed tile. Learn more about terra cotta and tiles on Riley Doty's July 23 tour.



RILEY DOTY



DAVE WEINSTEIN



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

A HANSOM DRIVE EICHLER from the July 30 tour, along with an image of Joe Eichler himself, left. A typical Eichler interior, above.



Walking tours

Continued from page 3

Saturday, August 5

ELECTRIC TRAINS BATTLE at the Border, Part 2: The Oakland-Berkeley Border and the Market Street Solution

Join us for a walk that will explore the competition between the Key System interurbans and streetcars and the Southern Pacific “Red Trains” along the Oakland–Berkeley border in the first half of the 20th century. The tour will focus on the eight electric lines packed between the 1 mile separating Telegraph Avenue and Sacramento Street. The location of the towers at rail crossings, wide avenues, and private right-of-ways used to disperse the lines in Oakland will be retraced to understand their impact on the present day street grid. Emphasis will also be placed on the origins of the jagged border between the cities, preservation of late 19th century Victorian structures, the Lowell Street industrial corridor, and the solution reached to increase the flow of auto traffic once the electric rail era ended in the 1950s. A level 4.25 mile walk with Ron Hook and Stuart Swiedler. Tour limited to 40 attendees.

Sunday, August 6

COHEN BRAY HOUSE

This beautiful 29th Avenue house and study center will take you back in time from 1884



OAKLAND HERITAGE ALLIANCE

HADDON HILL boasts interesting Mediterranean architecture (and innovation with its undergrounded utilities); view it on Page Yarwood’s Aug. 12 tour.

to 2021 when the Cohen family lived here. Our tour guide, Nancy Donald, is a family member and will share many stories and details about the extensive collection. Your time spent here will be unique and rewarding. Bring your lunch and enjoy it in the garden. Drinks and cookies will be provided. Tour limited to 12 attendees.



COHEN BRAY HOUSE

BRING YOUR LUNCH to the Cohen Bray House tour on Aug. 6 and picnic afterwards with other OHA friends. We’ll supply the drinks and cookies! Tour will be led by family member Nancy Donald.

See **WALKING TOURS** on page 5



BAERA, WESTERN RAILWAY MUSEUM ARCHIVES

LEARN ABOUT ELECTRIC TRAINS with Stuart Swiedler on Aug. 5.

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members through May 2023:

Kera Binns, Andrew Danish, Oakland Scottish Rite Historical Foundation (Adam Kendall), Mary McCosker, T.M. Scruggs

We thank our recent donors

Sally Beck, Elizabeth Byrne, Georganne Ferrier and Steven Weinberg, Pam Garcia & Peter Griesmaier, Wendy & Peter Jung, Kathryn Kasch, Linda Lewin, Chris Pattillo, Penelope Rink, Melinda & Roy Samuelson

KEVIN TAM PG&E 100% MATCHING FUND
Elaine Yamaguchi

ANNUAL APPEAL
Stephanie Casenza, Rory Darrah, Mary Harper, Laura Thomas, Carolyn Yale & Rock Bush



Walking Tours

Continued from page 4

Sunday, Aug 13

RICHMOND BOULEVARD

Walk along Glen Echo Creek, one of Oakland's living creeks, where a charming residential neighborhood was developed between 1895 and the 1920s and has structures by Frederick Riemers, Julia Morgan, A. W. Smith, and C. M. MacGregor with surviving elements from the "City Beautiful" movement. Although scarred by freeway incursion, it remains a unique, tranquil setting in our city and boasts fine examples of California bungalows, Mission, and Mediterranean style homes. A mostly level walk, with an optional pedestrian staircase at the end of the tour, with Valerie Winemiller.

NAOMI SCHIFF



A PERGOLA and stairway mark the west end of the Glen Echo Creek footbridge.

and boasts fine examples of California bungalows, Mission, and Mediterranean style homes. A mostly level walk, with an optional pedestrian staircase at the end of the tour, with Valerie Winemiller.

Saturday, August 19

OAKLAND'S RIDGETOP REDWOODS

Hike a 1.5-mile loop through the redwood forest of Joaquin Miller Park and Roberts Regional Recreation Area. Learn how sea captains in the mid-1800s used the tallest trees to navigate away from treacherous



THE REDWOOD FORESTS MET THE MILL in the mid- to late 1800s. Learn about it on John Nicoles's Aug. 19 tour.



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

THE DIMOND DISTRICT'S history is revealed on Dennis Evanosky's tour.

Blossom Rock. Find out about the sleuthing that resulted in a state landmark designation. A hilly walk with John Nicoles.

Sunday, August 20

STORIED LAKESIDE PARK: BONSAI, BOWLING AND BUTTERFLIES

Tour Lakeside Park with us and learn about the history of this unique local treasure. Explore today's uses that keep the park vibrant, from Children's Fairyland to the Wildlife Sanctuary, from the bandstand to the McElroy Fountain. We'll tour the Lakeside Garden Center, home to garden wonders from century-old bonsai to butterflies. We'll also visit the nearby Lawn Bowling Club, founded here in 1903. A level walk with Kathleen DiGiovanni.

Saturday, August 26

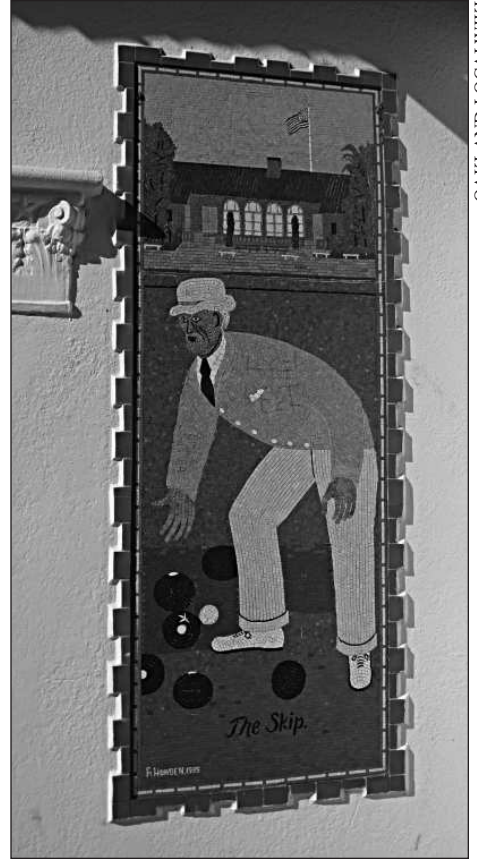
DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN

Oakland's American origins date from the 1840s when redwoods logged in the Oakland hills were shipped from the foot of 13th Avenue. We'll begin at the 1856 shoreline and explore commercial and government buildings, homes and churches in this historic part of Oakland. A long, but level walk with Kathleen DiGiovanni.

Sunday, August 27

THE DIMOND SHINES

This walk introduces the characters who shaped the district's early history. We'll meet, among others, the Dimond, Hopkins, and Rhoda families. We'll also learn about the German community with their Altenheim on the heights, and beer gardens below.



OAKLAND LOCALWIKI

TWO HOWDEN TILE mosaics decorate the Lawn Bowling Club's façade and can be seen on Kathleen DiGiovanni's Aug. 20 tour.

This 2 1/2-hour walk includes a stroll along Sausal Creek as well as stories about the district's horse-drawn streetcars and the resort that the neighbors sent packing. An undulating walk with Dennis Evanosky. ■



NAOMI SCHIFF

OAKLAND'S OLDEST, Fire Station #4 is one of the stops on the Downtown Brooklyn tour, led by Kathleen DiGiovanni on Aug. 26.



The Posey Tube was once a groundbreaking innovation

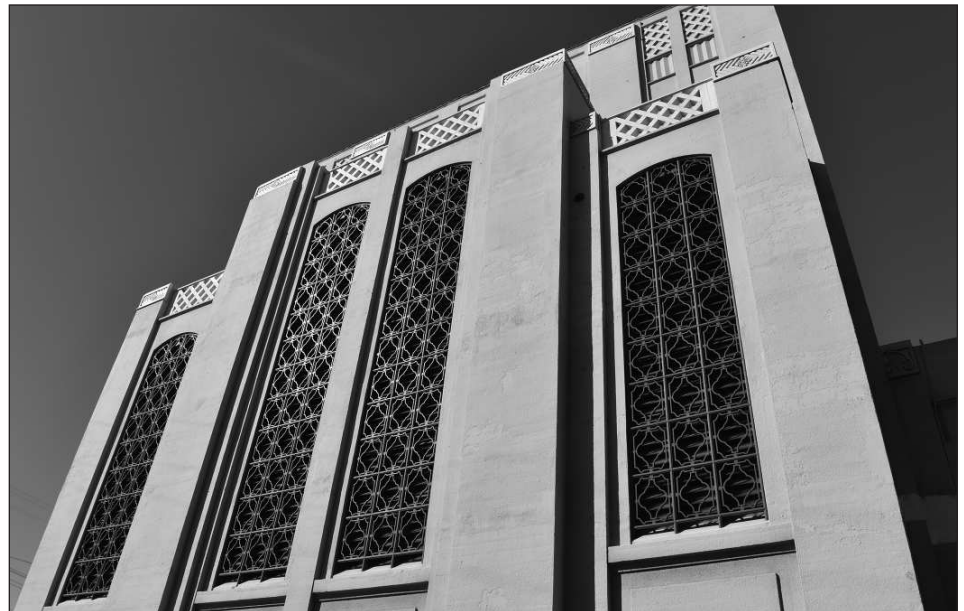
By Naomi Schiff

Over the last couple of years, OHA has been meeting with a team from CalTrans, which is planning circulation improvements at the Oakland exit from the Posey Tube. The Tube's historic Art Deco portal is a well-known landmark in the Waterfront Warehouse District, but its original grandeur was marred long ago when I-880 was built across the exit road.

A few years ago, CalTrans restored the exterior of the Portal building, repairing its long-observed windowpanes and ornamentation. Now, with roadway alterations planned, CalTrans has undertaken a review of its history, construction, and architecture to do the least possible damage to the historic design.

In the process, despite OHA's hopes for at least partial restoration or preservation, it appears that two historic but much-truncated pillars that originally flanked the roadway may not survive. (You can see their mates on the Alameda side of the tunnel, which have been preserved.) Their shortened bases still lurk under the freeway, but they may be in the way of the renovations.

As part of an agreement to mitigate the alterations, CalTrans will host several tours of the head house facility and has worked with the California Preservation Foundation to produce an online webinar tour featuring Gary Knecht of the Waterfront Warehouse District, OHA, and Byron Lim, program manager at CalTrans (viewable at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiY0HnDnOdI>). Behind its Art Deco exterior, the structure is an impressive example of



ALL PHOTOS FOR THIS ARTICLE: NAOMI SCHIFF

GRILLWORK adorns the face of the Posey Tube's portal building.

functional design, housing huge fans and equipment to ventilate the tube. It was recognized at the time of construction for its practicality and innovation. The Tube opened on October 28, 1928.

In the early 20th century, traffic bottlenecks frustrated people trying to go between Alameda and Oakland. The swing-bridges and drawbridges were often impassable due to ship traffic. This coincided with the rising popularity of automobiles and the insatiable desire to drive around. As a 1993 report by Frank Lortie says, "By the early 1920s, the Webster Street bridge was almost incapable of handling peak hour and holiday traffic.

Long delays, often as much as 20 minutes or more, were required for the passage of ships in the estuary channel. These generated numerous complaints from motorists,



THE GROUP heads up a spiral staircase inside the portal, top left, while OHA treasurer Daniel Levy talks about the Posey Tube's history, top center. At top right is one of the enormous fans, with a human hand at the bottom of the frame to understand scale.



ANOTHER VIEW of the Portal building shows its overall structure with "Oakland Portal" inscribed at its roofline.



trucking firms, and the local interurban transit company.” County surveyor George Posey started to study a tunnel project in 1922. A bond issue passed in 1923, and Posey’s pioneering design got a lot of attention. According to Lortie, it included three innovations: “The tube was the widest in diameter of any vehicular tunnel yet constructed. . . . it used a new method of mechanical ventilation . . . ventilated by only two installations, one at each end, or portal, of the tunnel. . . . It was the most efficient ventilation system on this scale yet devised. The third achievement was an engineering breakthrough. Posey was first to use precast reinforced concrete in the construction of an underwater tunnel.”

The Tube was composed of 12 segments, constructed in a dry dock on the other side of the bay and floated to the site. Well-known local architect Henry Meyers was responsible for the exterior of the Portal buildings. He was the Alameda County Architect and lived in Alameda. Lortie comments on the design: “The Posey Tube was under construction at the time the Modernistic movement in America was getting underway. From its inception it met strong resistance from established architects in America who clung to Beaux Arts traditions or to esthetic concepts focusing on historic reference Those who were still producing public buildings that evoked images of Greek temples and dwellings that resembled medieval English cottages resented those mostly younger architects who were pursuing an architectural style that reflected contemporary times and celebrated the virtues of scientific, industrial, and

technological progress.” By the middle of the century, traffic was clogged even with the Posey Tube, and plans were made for the second Tube aligned with Webster Street. It opened in 1963.

Over the next couple of years, CalTrans will work with OHA to host a few tours of the Portal building and its interior for limited-size groups (due to the tight spaces inside). Enjoy the Art Deco façade that clothes the sturdiness and functionality of 1920s design!

On June 6, the first intrepid OHA tour of the tube took 10 brave souls on a tour of the exterior and interior of the Oakland Portal building. Daniel Levy and Gary Knecht provided historic and engineering context, and Byron Lim explained how everything works. Nowadays, program manager Lim controls much of the equipment remotely from his headquarters at the Caldecott Tunnel. And don’t worry, more tours are planned! ■

Want to learn about the bridge that the Tube replaced? See our article on page 12.



GARY KNECHT walks across the immense expanse of the building. Behind him is one of the vents that keeps air flowing through the Posey Tube.



OHA PRESIDENT MARY HARPER, Gary Knecht of the Waterfront Warehouse District, and CalTrans senior environmental planner and architectural historian Helen Blackmore seem to express exhilaration about touring this iconic building, at top left. Caltrans program manager Byron Lim, top center, smiles, while at right Helen Blackmore points at an element of the building.





Historic preservation in a time of intensifying development

By Naomi Schiff

These are a few of the issues our Preservation Action committee has been tracking.

■ **Recognizing a landmark!** For years, OHA has pointed to the Asian Resource Center as a great example of preserving a historic building and providing services to Oakland's Chinatown community at the same time. Now, at a celebration on July 22, new historic plaques will be unveiled! Oakland Landmark 85, built as the Hebern Electric Code Company, later Lyons Moving and Storage, and restored by East Bay Asian Development Corporation, provides office space for nonprofits and for retail businesses.

■ **J. Mora Moss House and Mosswood Park:** OHA members and neighbors are looking forward to a new recreation center to be built over the next year or two to replace the center that burned down in 2016. Now, as construction is to begin, the plans for the 1864 Moss House, Oakland Landmark #6, remain in question. This extremely valuable example of carpenter Gothic style sits in its original site, at the heart of the 27-acre estate, part of which became the park. Advocates are trying to ensure that additional security measures are taken to protect it and are looking for ways to work with the city's Parks and Public Works departments to make a plan to reactivate it. Possibilities could include leasing the building to a nonprofit organization or locating appropriate public activities that could operate out of the house.

■ **General Plan Revision:** Working with city staff, OHA is urging the city to consider setbacks, design standards, and contextual sensitivity in historic Areas of Primary and



OAKLAND LOCALWIKI

THE ASIAN RESOURCE CENTER will get a historic plaque this summer!

Secondary Importance all over town as zoning regulations are updated. The opportunity to provide more housing under new state laws presents interesting challenges in established neighborhoods with older buildings. We are pushing to promote both enhanced density and intelligent historic preservation. This can occur by making strategic reuse of existing buildings and by requiring good design that respects neighboring structures when new ones are planned. At the same time, the state has mandated "objective design standards" be drawn up to replace subjective guidelines subject to many judgment calls. Many actions formerly sent to the Planning Commission may now only be reviewed by city staff. An overview of this large revision is at: www.oaklandca.gov/topics/general-plan-update.

■ **Downtown Oakland Specific Plan:** The long-running DOSP is moving forward but has been in part eclipsed by the General Plan revision. OHA concerns include the upzoning of some parcels, the lack of concern about the fate of the Uptown Historic Garage District, and a "zoning incentive program" which OHA feels is not structured in a way that it will be helpful. On the other hand, city staff is at last constructing a TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) program,

as we have advocated for years, and which is included in Oakland's Historic Preservation Element but has never been implemented. Such programs allow unused development potential from an historic preservation property to be transferred to another property in order to increase the allowable floor area of development above what would otherwise be granted. In this way, historic structures can be preserved at the same time that more intense development can go forward. For info on the DOSP: www.oaklandca.gov/topics/downtown-oakland-specific-plan. ■

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY



OHA ADVOCATES for contextual design, to mitigate awkward scale shifts.



NAOMI SCHIFF

THE MOSS HOUSE library ceiling, in great need of protection, is decorated with fanciful panels depicting artistic endeavors including writing, painting, and pottery.



Who's really an Oaklander? A new donation purports to answer

By Emily Foster

Oakland History Center Librarian

Our current exhibit in the Oakland History Center, "What's New in OHC," is more like three mini-exhibits. In the second floor hallway, you'll see items relating to OHC's most recent blog posts (oaklandlibrary.org/bikecraze and oaklandlibrary.org/epicgardens). Inside the history center itself, you can see as a display of LGBTQ+ Oakland poets' books for Pride Month, as well as a selection of recent donations to our collection.

I want to highlight a few of those recently donated items from the exhibit here.

Frank B. Rodolph's photographs of the Merry Tramps, a group of camping enthusiasts from East Oakland, show the group gallivanting all over the state by rail, by horse, and by foot in the 1880s–1890s.

When I first paged through the donated album of Rodolph's photos, which has no title or other identifying information, I was amazed by the beautiful photos. There are waterfalls, mountains, and other scenic vistas as well as the club members relaxing in very rustic tents and seemingly having the time of their lives just lying in a pile on the ground.

However, I also had a sinking feeling that we wouldn't be able to keep the album, since these photos did not seem to have any relevance to Oakland or the East Bay. But then I saw it: one of the last pages in the album had an image with the group's banner reading "Merry Tramps Oakland" far in the background. I was relieved that I had found a reason for OHC to keep this amazing collection of photos!

Upon further research, I found that one of the members of the group was Helen Penniman, who went on to marry George Pardee. Some Merry Tramps memorabilia is stored at the Pardee Home Museum, and more albums (including what appears to be a duplicate of ours) and Rodolph's diary are at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library.

Another interesting item is the membership ledger for The Society of Oakland Pioneers. The society was formed in 1920, with membership comprised of people who had been born in or moved to Oakland before 1878. Each member's page includes information about when they came to Oakland, where they were born, and when



OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER

MEMBERS OF THE MERRY TRAMPS OF OAKLAND, taking a break during one of their excursions. Photo by Frank B. Rodolph, c.1880s, from a recently donated album.

they paid their dues. Obituaries are pasted in on many of the members' pages. This is perhaps a rare example of a club record that could also be an excellent genealogical resource. It's also interesting as evidence that Oaklanders have been gatekeeping who is a "real" Oaklander for over 100 years.

Other recent donations on display include photos of Chinatown Redevelopment in progress, photos of the construction and 1965 opening of the MacArthur-Broadway Center (aka the Mayfair Mall), soda labels from Oakland-based bottlers, and five new-to-us mini Sanborn Maps from the late 1950s.

Thanks to the Alameda Museum, C. Baxter, and Ed Clausen for these donations, and to everyone who has donated materials over the years. Most of our non-book collections (and some of our book collection, too!) have come to us through donations, so we would truly not be the resource we are without our donors.

Stop by before the end of July to see the recent donations and exhibits. ■

And the band played on . . .



HIMSYVED OAKLAND LOCALWIKI

The historic Oakland Municipal Band will perform July 4, 9, 16, 23, and 30 at the Edoff Memorial Bandstand near Lake Merritt in Lakeside Park. The bandstand is near Fairyland; you can reach it from the 19th Street BART Station or AC Transit lines 12, 33, or NL. Find more info on performances at <https://oaklandmunicipalband.org/> ■

Thank you to our volunteers who make all our events possible!

ZOOM LECTURE PRESENTERS/SPEAKERS

Kathryn Hughes: "Excavating There; Gertrude Stein's Forgotten Oakland," Host Charles Bucher and technical support Lara Amin

IN-PERSON LECTURE PRESENTERS/SPEAKERS

Andrew Alden: "Oakland Geology & Oakland History;" Host Amelia Marshall, technical support Lara Amin & Tara Parker-Essig, volunteers Charles Bucher, Alison Finlay, Mary Harper, Milton Lockhart, Shanice Rogers, Naomi Schiff, and Linda Taylor.

Special thanks to the Chapel of the Chimes for providing the event venue.



PIP Award winners honored by the California Preservation Foundation

By Erika Mailman

TEF Design and VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting, which received one of OHA's PIP Awards, also received a California Preservation Foundation award for the restoration of the 1923 Tapscott Building at 19th and Broadway. It's exciting to see important OHA has honored go on to receive statewide recognition!

At the Tapscott Building, its exterior brick and terra cotta elements were restored, incongruous later "improvements" removed, and the beloved shoe ad on the northern exterior wall was preserved. In the "before" picture at right, you'll see the old nasty panels, as well as earthquake damage visible at top left. Hooray for efforts to beautifully restore this building!

Want to be a part of the PIP Awards for this year? See the article directly below this one for how to nominate folks doing good work. . . . maybe that's even you! ■



FOUR PHOTOS OF BUILDING: NAOMI SCHIFF

THE TAPSCOTT BUILDING, top left, damaged in the 1989 earthquake, had been vacant ever since. Top right: a test panel for new spandrel panels gave viewers hope. Far left: a CPF award certificate. Near left: a closeup of the installed panels. Above, the restored facade.

Call for nominations for our beloved Partners in Preservation program!

By Amelia Marshall

Do you know of an outstanding project or individual who should be recognized for their contribution to preserving Oakland's heritage?

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2023 Partners In Preservation (PIP) award program. The deadline will be Sept. 5, 2023. The awards ceremony will take place in October, with the exact date and location to be announced.

Who is eligible? Projects must be located within the city of Oakland, and ideally have been completed within the past five years. Individuals should either live in Oakland or have contributed substantially to our city.

Awards are given in these categories: Restoration of historic structures, Adaptive reuse, Education, Stewardship, Legacy businesses, and Lifetime Achievement.

Application requirements include: at least three digital photographs, with permission for OHA to use them; a one-page application form, which can be found at <https://www.oaklandheritage.org/events/partners-in-preservation-awards-2023>; a one-page description of the project or individual's achievements; identifying one person representing the awardee who will work closely with our committee to prepare for the awards ceremony; and an application fee. For a residential project or individual recognition award, the fee is \$35, and for a commercial project or organization recognition award, the fee is \$50. In cases of



2022 PIP WINNERS for the Woodminster Cascades included volunteers, city staff, and Mayor Thao.

need, fee waivers are negotiable.

For further information, please email PIP committee chair Amelia Marshall at amelia.marshall33@gmail.com or call the OHA office at (510) 763-9218. ■

NAOMI SCHIFF



Whatever happened to . . . ?

By Mary Harper, President

Summer and its walking tour season are almost here. Autumn and Partners in Preservation (fondly known as PIP) are not far behind. Although OHA has been actively advocating for the protection, preservation and revitalization of Oakland’s architectural, historic, cultural and natural resources since the 1980s, it wasn’t until 1995 that OHA began its Partners in Preservation awards program. The awards are given to recognize both small and large efforts that add value to Oakland. I wondered what happened to some of the buildings connected with PIP awards. I found a *News* article (Winter 1996–97) about the second awards ceremony and decided to follow the Fruitvale Masonic Hall.

In 1996, Cessaly Hutchison received an award for her advocacy of the hall at 34th Avenue and East 14th Street (now International Boulevard). Designed and built between 1905 and 1909 (the year Fruitvale was annexed to Oakland), it is one of the few remaining buildings designed by Hugo Storch. Built for the Masons, the ground floor was intended for storefronts and the second floor for meeting rooms. The building is tied to the German history of Fruitvale as well as fraternal organizations such as the

Ah Wah Nee tribe, Woodmen of the World, and the Fruitvale Circle. Because we can’t resist research, I learned that the Ah Wah Nee tribe is listed under the Improved Order of Redmen and appears in several city directories as meeting at the Masonic Hall, and that the Fruitvale Circle was a local unit of the Neighbors of Woodcraft also meeting there. The Neighbors of Woodcraft was the woman’s auxiliary of the Woodmen of the World.

As the article indicated, the building was considered “vulnerable as a ‘white elephant’ and as standing ‘in the way’ of an enhanced visual connection between East 14th Street and the Fruitvale BART station.” In 1998, the Unity Council purchased the building and it is now a cornerstone connecting International Boulevard and the Transit Village.

The ground floor was altered as part of the Façade Improvement Program. As originally



GOOGLE STREET VIEW

MILAGROS DE MEXICO now occupies the ground floor of the Fruitvale Masonic Hall, rescued by efforts of PIP winner Cessaly Hutchison and by the nonprofit Unity Council.

intended, the ground floor is occupied by a store front: Milagros de México, a health and wellness retail chain.

The Ionic pilasters with capitals remain on the second floor. The Ventanas murals between the pilasters were created by students of Eduardo Pineda’s ENGAGE: Mural Arts class, spring 2015, California College of the Arts.

Although it’s not a guarantee that a PIP nomination will save a building, I encourage everyone to nominate a person or building this year.

A special thanks to Betty Marvin and Pamela Magnuson-Peddle with whose research I was able to write this report. ■

CONTRIBUTORS:

Paul Brekke-Miesner, Christopher Buckley, City of Oakland, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Riley Doty, Alison Finlay, Robert Giles, Emily Foster, Mary Harper, Oakland LocalWiki, Naomi Schiff, Linda Taylor

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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 Explore Oakland’s cultural and historic treasures, and receive discounts on OHA events.
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Alameda has a bridge to sell you

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni

On Jan. 7, 1926, as the Posey Tube was under construction but still more than two and a half years from completion, disaster struck. The Webster Street Bridge, which the Tube was to replace, was struck by a fully-laden steamer and wrecked. By the following day, local newspapers were reporting that the bridge would be rebuilt as quickly as possible. In terms of volume and management, diverting traffic from the already overused Webster Street crossing to the Park and High Street bridges until the tube could be completed was out of the question. This was bad news for Alameda's Webster Street merchants who depended on the bridge to deliver customers from Oakland.

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors sought, and quickly received, permission from the War Department to rebuild. A hefty \$134,000 was allocated, contracts were let, and the bridge was reopened to traffic on Aug. 21, only to be made redundant when the Posey Tube opened on Oct. 27, 1928.

All this led to a dilemma for the county: what do you do with a virtually new bridge that you don't need anymore, and which is an impediment to maritime traffic?

Planning began early in 1928. An early proposal emerged to float the bridge down the estuary and Tidal Canal, out San Leandro Bay, and use it to replace the old bridge connecting Alameda to Bay Farm Island. That plan died when the Board of Supervisors learned that to do so would cost

a quarter of a million dollars, "more than the whole thing's worth," according to Supervisor John F. Mullins. Another proposal had the bridge dismantled and sold for scrap. In the end, the bridge would be put up for auction.

At the same time, Sacramento County was looking for a way to bridge the American River north of the city, to create a more direct connection to the Garden Highway, the levee road north to Yuba City.

The Webster Street bridge looked like a solution: a new bridge at less expense than starting from scratch. By law, Sacramento County could not participate in a public auction. Instead, a San Francisco contractor, the Duncanson-Harrelson company, bought the bridge for \$3,100 on Nov. 30, intending to sell it to Sacramento County, which they did, for \$21,620, delivery included. Alameda County required that a bond of \$50,000 be put up against damage to shipping during the removal process and to guarantee that the bridge be removed within 60 days. Duncanson-Harrelson immediately put plans into place. Preliminary work began on Dec. 11 with the driving of temporary piles to secure the barges that would take the bridge sections away. The center swing section of the bridge was floated off its piers on Dec. 27 and tugged through the Carquinez Straits to Suisun Bay east of Antioch. The two ends made the trip Jan. 2. The bridge sections would remain there until Sacramento County could complete arrangements on its end.



NEWSPAPER REPORT on the bridge's removal in pieces.

In Sacramento, the county acquired land for the bridge approaches and approval from the War Department to span the river. It allocated \$231,000 for the project, encompassing construction of a pair of new approaches and the installation of the Webster Street sections. On the city side, drivers would approach the bridge from the end of Jibboom Street and north of the river from a new Garden Highway connector. Construction began in April of 1930 with the delivery of the goods from Suisun Bay. The "new old" bridge opened the following April, and today, 93 years later, it remains in place. ■