

Home, sweet, filled-with-anecdotes home

Compiled by Erika Mailman

A committed member of our board of directors provided the catalyst for this collection of fun anecdotes and personal musings about people's homes. Kitty Hughes wrote an article about some fascinating things she'd learned over years of owning her house, and that stirred the idea of gathering more stories of Oaklanders' connections to their homes. We sent out email blasts to members asking people to write in with tales, and the rest is (cough) history.

■ Oakland's Own Chopper Chick

Upper Harrison Street in the historic Linda Vista Terrace neighborhood—Kitty Hughes

As I closed my front door one sunny October afternoon, I saw a curious sight as I looked down from the front porch. At the foot of our stairs, a slightly round woman with dark hair had trained her camera on our upstairs window and was peering intently. A peeping Tom? A burglar in disguise scoping out the premises? I marched decidedly into her line of vision and confronted her: "Pardon me?"

"Oh, my gosh, you probably wonder what this crazy woman is doing here!" she blurted out. "I lived here with my grandparents until I was about three."

By late afternoon the next day, the woman and her husband, Nancy and Dick Lowther, were having a glass of wine with us on the back porch, talking about Nancy's grandmother, Clara Wagner Jacke. One of the first things Nancy had asked me as she entered the house was, "Are there still flour and sugar bins in a cabinet in a little room off the kitchen?" And indeed they were there, as I showed her—two metal lined pullouts in the pantry that I insisted on keeping when a contractor wanted to demolish the entire room. "I will never forget," said Nancy, "when I was baking with my grandmother Clara—she loved to bake—and she scooped flour out of the bin and threw it in my face. How taken aback I was. And I grabbed some more flour and dashed it at her, and there ensued a big flour fight. That was my grandmother!"

During World War II, Clara cooked for servicemen whom her daughter brought back to the house after attending local USO dances. Clara would find out what the men liked and



CLARA WAGNER JACKE, an early motorcycle enthusiast and racer.

make their favorite dishes, before they were sent off to war, "many never to be heard from again." Nancy casually mentioned that her grandmother was the first woman in the United States to have a motorcycle license and that she participated in long-distance endurance rides and races.

After Nancy and Dick left, I googled her grandmother and found her on Wikipedia. Clara was the daughter of Ernst "August" Wagner, owner of the Wagner Motorcycle Company in St. Paul and inventor of the Wagner motorcycle which featured a unique "diamond frame."

In 1907, at age 15, Clara became a member of the American Federation of Motorcyclists. She put the Wagner company on the map in 1910, when she won a FAM-sponsored 360-mile endurance race from Chicago to Indianapolis. She was only 18 and achieved a perfect score, but she was denied the trophy because she was a female. She won other events, and her image was celebrated on postcards as "the most successful and experienced lady motorcyclist." Also of note, Clara rode the first motorcycle designed especially for a woman. After all these discoveries, I walk from room to room with different eyes. A wild, flour-splashing, proto-feminist biker chick lived in our house!

■ A Tiki Room delight

110 Duncan Way in Montclair

—Charles Chapman and Annette Smith

Since "historical" is a pretty subjective term you might not think my own house is historical since it was built in 1938, but we do have a good relationship with

it. When I look at photos of when it was brand new, I imagine the house would have seemed very modern at the time. The builder was a contractor called Mr. Heater, who sold the house to Lillian Beyrle. Her gentleman friend owned the car shown in the picture. Lillian's son and daughter-in-law, Roland and Helen, lived in the house from the 1940s until they died in 1991 and 2000 respectively, with their daughter Joelle till she married in the 1950s; we bought the house from Joelle in 2001, and it was she who sent me the pictures.

It's terrific having an older home and being connected with its history. While we never met, before she died Joelle and I wrote many letters back and forth about details and memories of the house. Details like how the basement tiki room, which we fell in love with and have preserved with its original silk-screen tropical bird wallpaper, was created by her parents in 1951 at the height of the tiki craze. The house remains delightfully origi-

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TIKI ROOM at top: paneling, knotty pine, mirrors and original tropical-themed wallpaper. Above: Duncan Way exterior with then-modern car.



Anecdotes

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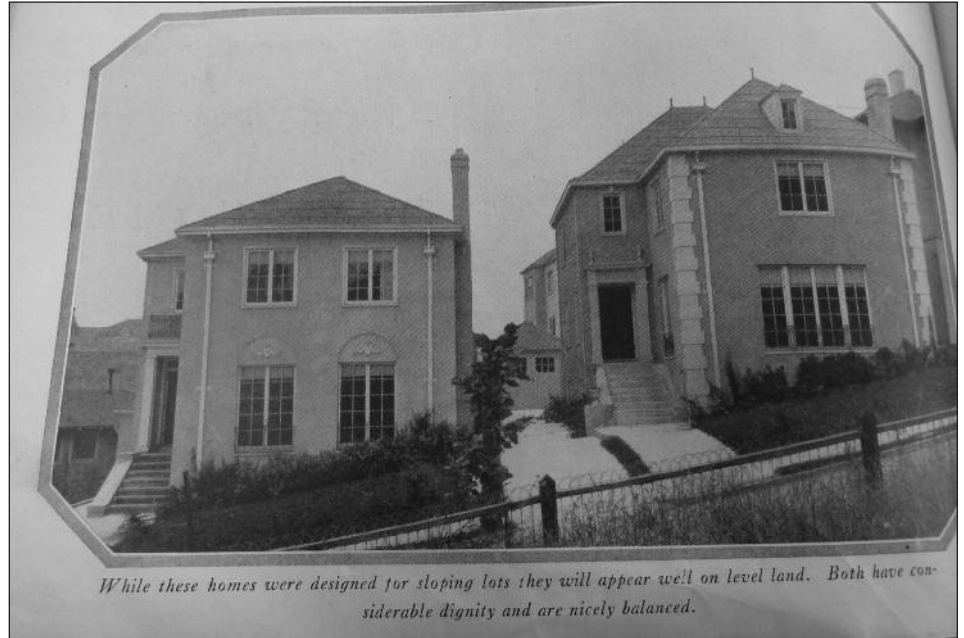
nal with its metal 1930s windows, wooden kitchen counters and two-tone tile. The Beyrles didn't change anything and the only thing we've done is to re-roof it. All the eucalyptus trees in the photos have long since gone, by the way.

■ **Loan default in the height of the '20s**
35 Ross Circle — Carole Jones

I have researched my 1925 home built by John Albert Marshall II, as well as the other homes on Ross Circle. I've learned all the owners of this home which I have owned since 1970, as well as the names for all of Ross Circle, and have maps of owners of the property from 1911 through current. My home and 19 Ross Circle were built at the same time by the same developer although they do have different features. They were both featured in *The Home Designer and Garden Beautiful* magazine in 1926.

In researching the deeds, the most unusual one was in 1927 when the title to the property went back to the previous owner. The reason? The 1927 buyer defaulted on the loan.

An item of interest on an earlier deed was that only white people were allowed to own the property prior to January 1940, or the conveyance would become void and the entire estate, title and interest revert to the parties of the first part, the previous owner. The April 21, 1924, deed states that there are seven conditions under which the conveyance can be voided—the seventh is, "If, prior to the first day of January, 1940, any persons other than white persons, or any persons of Chinese, Japanese, or other Asiatic descent, or of African descent, shall be



While these homes were designed for sloping lots they will appear well on level land. Both have considerable dignity and are nicely balanced.

35 ROSS CIRCLE is the home on the right, featured in *The Home Designer and Garden Beautiful* magazine in 1926.

allowed to purchase, own or lease said property, or any part thereof."

Interestingly, the third condition is if, "any saloon or other place for the sale or manufacture of any spirituous or intoxicating liquors shall be maintained or conducted upon said premises."

Editorial note: It's important to note that the 1927 default was financial, rather than racial. Restrictive covenants were typical for tracts filed in the first half of the 1900s. It is certainly an unpleasant surprise for people when they get around to reading their CC&Rs!

■ **A bit of France in Oakland**
1814 Clemens Road in the Oakmore district — Laine Farley

In researching my house with the help of Betty Marvin and the Oakland History Room, I found interesting facts about both the builder and the original owner. The owner was Swen Carlsen, a Danish immigrant who commissioned it in 1931. He and his brothers owned the Hopkins Street Market, a meat market in the Dimond district that was next to one of the early locations for the Dimond branch of the public library. The builder was Noel Gaubert of the French company Gaubert Bros.

He was quite prolific, building one of the model homes for the Fernside neighbor-

hood in Alameda, and in Oakland the Albert Engel and Co. Funeral Home on Telegraph, the small commercial building that is now the home of Marcus Books, and a group of 73 homes near 143rd Avenue and East 14th known as Noel Gardens which were "Defense Homes" reserved for war workers in 1942. He also built two very charming apartment buildings around the corner on Oakmore Road that are quite chateau-like, reflecting his French heritage. One of his brothers, Rene, lived in the largest unit of the triplex at 4600 Oakmore for many years. Noel's wife, Rose, was quite active in garden clubs, often in the news for her lectures and tours of her own garden, and they eventually moved to Danville.

On a whim, I went to see the Fernside house because it was described in such detail in *Oakland Tribune* articles about the opening of that neighborhood. I met the daughter of the second owner of the house who was preparing to rent it after her mother had died. I showed her the research, and she was thrilled to know more about the house that has been preserved almost intact from when it was built in 1926. I am still finding more examples of his work throughout Oakland and Berkeley, including quotes from Noel about his design philosophy. I find it interest-

OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

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ing that my house is in the Tudor revival style, built by a Frenchman for a Danish family and yet it has Spanish or Mediterranean elements inside.

One article said, “Originality and sturdiness are characteristics of these homes. Artistic decorations and finishes are introduced in all Gaubert homes. Interior arrangements are given a great amount of thought and every modern convenience is carefully placed so as to give the most efficiency.” His motto was “Built to Last” and I’m so glad his work is still here to appreciate.

I like history and the story of each neighborhood. I had researched a previous home so I wanted to see what stories this house might yield, especially since it seemed to be a unique design. I am a librarian by training and I simply enjoy doing research as well.

I have made contact with some of the descendants of the Carlsen brothers although so far, I haven’t learned too much more than what I found on my own. I also learned about some tragedies that befell both families. Apparently, Noel Gaubert tried to commit suicide by drowning in the estuary in 1918. I really would like to find a photograph of the Hopkins Street Market. Since it was a popular market in the Dimond commercial district, I feel there must be a photo somewhere! The building is no longer there, probably replaced by a now-closed video store.



LAINE FARLEY

A RUSTIC FRENCH CHATEAU at 1814 Clemens Road.

■ The door to the past

2400 38th Avenue in East Oakland—Paul & Katrina Brekke-Miesner

When we hosted a neighborhood Christmas party in 1984 to celebrate the purchase of our circa 1907 Craftsman home, we were surprised when one of our neighbors brought along a woman friend in her 90s that turned out to be the daughter of the man who had built our home. Her name was Marge Noyes and she was able to tell us all the history of the house in which she was born and raised and later lived as an adult.

Another story was when we bought this magnificent house, there was a very unattractive plain hollow core front door. Weeks after purchasing the house, while rummaging around in a dark, cluttered upstairs closet, we discovered the damaged original front door. We had the broken glass repaired and today it is a beautiful entrance to our Craftsman home.

■ This story is probably over your head

Ross Street in Rockridge—Kevin Faughnan

All of the late 1920s homes on our street originally had cedar shingles on the roofs, but all had been replaced with asphalt shingles by the time we moved in. It was 1975, and we had more important issues to deal with than a new roof, so we waited. Looking up through the attic, we saw original shingles under four other asphalt layers. 10 years later, we did several sections with a wonderful craftsman named Ezra Wynn. Fast forward to 2015: we realized that our redwood gutters were not functioning correctly any more, and too much water was getting behind the stucco facing and causing wood rot in several areas. It made sense to reroof at the same time to make the roof and gutter areas function properly again.

I couldn’t find Ezra, and had heard he left the area. I began exploring, even considering bringing in a roofer from New England where cedar-shingled homes are common. As I was driving through Piedmont, I stopped at one house to admire the new roof in progress. Well, you guessed it, Ezra and his crew were doing it. We made the appointment for the following year as he was totally booked, but I was happy to wait.

We went with our random pattern, and a short exposure of 3 inches which wears longer, but uses more shingles and takes longer to apply. I was happy knowing that when they were done, I would have a roof that would make me smile every time I looked at it, the same feeling I had when I

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PAUL & KATRINA BREKKE-MIESNER

BEAUTIFUL CRAFTSMAN interior at 2400 38th Avenue, above. At right is the door found in an upstairs closet, damaged. After the glass was repaired, it holds pride of place at the entrance to the home.



Anecdotes

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first saw it in 1985. It's a Class A roof, per code requirements, which uses treated shingles and an underlayment. The cost was similar to adding a nice new kitchen, so this roof is certainly not for most people, but that's what these older homes do to us—they make us ignore logic and commonsense, but we say it's all worth it.

KEVIN FAUGHNAN



A ROCKRIDGE ROOF involves a contractor coincidence and makes the homeowner smile every time he sees it.

■ A shed serves as filing cabinet

384 63rd St.—*Marcy Whitebook*

In 1977 I moved into our house, which was built in 1908. At the time, the neighborhood was called North Oakland, not Rockridge. There was a free standing shed in the backyard, without a foundation and crumbling sides. When we took it down in 1990, we found a packet of papers lodged in the interior wall. The packet included receipts for the building materials for our house and one other house on the street.

Thanks to our volunteers

Volunteer speakers: Gray Brechin, Kirby Brown, Marta Gutman, Inge Horton, Lucia Howard, Sandhya Jha, Lou Kerns, Margaret Mujua, Maryly Snow, David Winegarten

Volunteers: Charles Bucher, Claire Castell, Tom Debley, Alison Finlay, Tom Haw, Joyce Hendy, Wally Holmen, Kathryn Hughes, Bill Imler, Daniel Levy, Ruby Long, Amelia Marshall, Tamara Nicoloff, Denise Parker, Steve & Juanita Rynerson, Naomi Schiff

■ Early run-in with silent automobile

238 Oakland Ave.—*Naomi Schiff*

The wonderful staffers at the Oakland History Room helped me look for my house in the Sanborn map books. But it seemed to have disappeared! Sleuthing revealed that house numbers had changed shortly after it was built. Traces of the original residents lingered in our basement, including Willie Knopf's application for membership in the Industrial

Workers of the World, a radical labor union founded in 1905.

Willie, one of four sons of the first owners, worked as a carpenter or handyman, judging from the log-book he left behind. Internet searches turned up two news accounts of Willie's mildly exciting youth. In a harbinger of today's concerns about speeding traffic, a 1913 *Tribune* headline reported that an automobile sneaked up on the 8-year-old and broke his leg, on Harrison Street—then known as Walsworth. Willie appeared again in the *Tribune* in 1922, aged 17, when he pursued a man who had rifled the cash register in a drug-store at 22nd and Broadway. He and an errand boy gave chase and cornered the culprit, who drew a knife. Luckily, police took the man into custody after a struggle.

...

We'll return to Kitty Hughes for a final word. She writes, "We hear much these days about 'preserving sense of place.' Preserving interior spaces, not just facades and rooflines, is just as, if not more, important. Yes, we cannot save everything, but let's be more careful in considering what to remove. I guess I am one of those people who will give a lot for a good story." ■



STILL A DANGEROUS INTERSECTION, now known as Harrison Street.

We Thank Recent Donors to Oakland Heritage Alliance

Community Donors: Piedmont Grocery Catering; David Forsyth/Rockridge Masonic Lodge

Donors: Andrew Aldrich, Annalee Allen, Ralph Anderson, Patricia Angell, Suzanne Baker, Vicki Bandel, Edward Bell, Carroll Brentano, Carol Brookman, Joe and Doris Brown, Charles Chapman and Annette Smith, Kay Cheatham, Mrs. Arthur W. Childs, Stephanie Christmas, Bennett Christopherson, Stephanie Cimino, John Citron, Abby Cohen, Sam Cohen, Caryn Combis and Jerry Barclay, Construction Specifications Institute, Rissa Coplan, Renate Coombs, Brenda Cooper, Lynne Costain, Joan Dark and Cliff Falloon, Adrienne DeBisschop, Arvi Dorsey, Riley Doty, George Duncan, Jeanne Dunn, Kevin Dwyer, Howard Egerman, Jane Erwin, Alison Finlay, Puanani Forbes, Cathy Garrett, Alan Glube, Trisha Gorman, Timothy Gray and Mary Ann Donegan, Gretchen and Thomas Griswold, Paul Grunland, Kathryn and Robert Gustafson, Bonnie and Earl Hamlin, Les and Linda Hausrath, Pieter J. Hazewindus, Lorraine Heinemann, C.J. Hirschfield, Jerri Holan, James and Sandra Holst, Dana Hughes, Raleigh E. Hughes, Jr., Judy Jackovics, Judith Johnson, Lesley Johnson-Gelb, Anita Joseph, Jerome Joseph Family, Marcia and Sheldon Kabaker, Helena Katz, Bruce Kerns and Candis Cousins, Komorous-Towey Architects, Marcia Larsson, Gaye Lenahan, Kent Lewandowski, Nancy Lindsay and Tim Vendlinski, Ruby Long, Helen Lore, Stephen Lowe, Michael Lydon, Bonnie and Herbert Mager, Pamela Magnuson Peddle, Peggy Martin, Daniel Marvin, Henry Massie and Bridget Connelly, Suzanne Masuret, Stephen and Emily Mendel, Jon C. Merkle, Helene Miller, Katherine Miller, Joel Miroglio, Adrienne Lee Morgan, Barbara Newcombe, James Novasel, Roberta O'Grady, Carol Olmert, Jane P. Perry, Aida Peterson, PGA Design, Margaret Pillsbury, Pat and Robert Raburn, Ann Rankin, Sandra Rauch, Diane Resek, Paul Roberts, Roy and Melinda Samuelson, Laura Schlichtman, Christine Shields, Dale Smith, Howard Stein, Lise Thogersen, Dolores Thom, Sandy Threlfall, Esther Umezawa, Heather and Steve Walker, Ilene Weinreb, Rachel Weinreb, Susan Wester, Thomas and Monica White, Gloria Will, Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson, Suzanne Ziegler

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Walking tours to get you out into the fascinating streets

COURTESY JOHN BOSKO

It's our 36th year of offering these popular summer walking tours. Each year, we run a great roster of old tried-and-true standards, and add in a few brand-new routes to keep everyone interested. Our tours are always led by passionate volunteers who love researching the neighborhoods to share what they learn.

Always bring water and wear comfortable walking shoes, and don't forget a strong sunscreen. Only a few of the tours require reservations; otherwise, check the meeting place and just show up at the proper date and time. See end of this article for pricing. See you on the streets!



THE 20-MULE TEAM on the lawn at Arbor Villa, Borax Smith's legendary estate.

Saturday, July 9, 10 a.m.–12:45 p.m.
F. M. "BORAX" SMITH ESTATE
 • Redwood tree, near 1105 McKinley Ave. at Home Place East (1 block off Park Boulevard)

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 Ninth Avenue palm trees, the Mary R. Smith Cottages and other his-

toric houses, including ones designed by Bernard Maybeck and Julia Morgan. A two-mile, hilly walk.—Phil Bellman & Amelia Marshall

Sunday, July 10, 10 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMETERY

• In front of Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Ave.
 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 memory. Charles Crocker, Domingo Ghirardelli and Samuel Merritt are among those you will encounter. A hilly walk.—Dennis Evanosky

Saturday, July 16, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
STORIED LAKESIDE PARK: BONSAI, BOWLING AND BUTTERFLIES
 • Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Road, across from Children's Fairyland

Tour Lakeside Park with us and learn about the history of this unique local treasure and 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.

—Kathleen DiGiovanni

Sunday July 17, 1:30–4:00 p.m.
INTRODUCING THE BUILDING STONES OF DOWNTOWN OAKLAND
 • Parking lot by the Uptown Transit Center, at Thomas L. Berkley Way (20th Street) between Broadway and Telegraph Avenue (19th Street BART station)

Oakland is very rich in geology. Our city's buildings have taken advantage of structural and ornamental stone from California and from all over the world. Starting at the 19th Street BART station and ending at City Hall, this walk visits some of the stones on display in building walls, floors, facades and entryways. We'll learn what geology tells us about these rocks, and how they represent Oakland's historic changes in commerce, architecture and civic style. A level walk.

—Andrew Alden

Saturday, July 23, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
Fernwood: Montclair's Creekside Neighborhood • In front of the Montclair Branch Library, 1687 Mountain Blvd.

Texas Ranger Jack Hays settled along the banks of Temescal Creek in 1852 and called his home "Fernwood." Oaklanders have been attracted to this park-like enclave of hills and

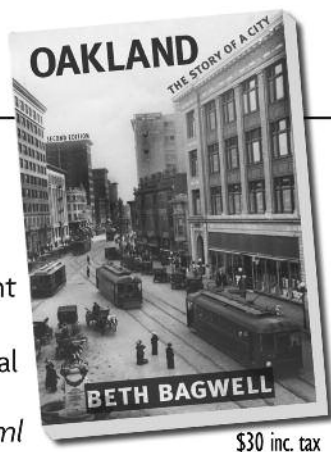
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Consider bringing a friend along on an OHA walking tour, then give them a gift subscription! You'll be BFFs into perpetuity.

THE PERFECT GIFT

For all the Oaklanders and local history readers in your life

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- Bring it as the perfect housewarming present
- Or get it for yourself, even!
- Patronize Oakland's wise and wonderful local bookstores and selected retailers, or go to <http://www.oaklandheritage.org/Store.html>





Walking

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ravines ever since. This walk explores Fernwood from its earliest settlement to development in the 1920s as Oakland's forested suburb. No sidewalks; wear comfortable shoes.— Kathleen DiGiovanni

Sunday, July 24, 10:00–12:30 p.m.
TILES AND TERRA COTTA IN UPTOWN OAKLAND • Howden Building, 337 17th St. (near corner of Webster)

We will examine more than 20 buildings dating from 1908 to 1931, when architectural ceramics were widely used on the facings of large and important buildings. Classically-inspired Beaux Arts facades gave way over time to Moderne and Deco styles that included brightly colorful glazes. Uptown offers a fine collection of specimens. The beauty of this medium will be explored, and its special needs for maintenance and restoration pointed out. A level walk. —Riley Doty

Saturday, July 30, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
SHEFFIELD VILLAGE • Near the traffic island at the southeast corner of Revere Avenue and Marlowe Drive

Sheffield Village was touted in contemporary descriptions as a place “where color schemes and nature blend in perfect harmony.” Designated an Oakland City Historic District in 2004, Sheffield

Village is a 100-acre enclave of single family homes begun in 1939. The tour will explore the site plan, house styles, preservation issues, and whether it lives up to the pre-WW II hype. A slightly hilly walk. —Greg Novak



ART DECO tilework on the Floral Depot

Sunday, July 31, 10 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
REDWOODS OF OAKLAND •
By reservation only!

Enjoy breathtaking views in the hills above Leona Heights, glimpse at an old sulfur mine and see the workings of the tramway that



MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS church in Jingletown.

carried stone from the nearby quarry. Learn about the birth, growth and harvesting of the redwood trees and see the oldest tree in Oakland. This moderately difficult 3½ hour hike has its ups and downs, but will be worth the effort! Wear hiking shoes; bring binoculars, cameras and extra water. Tour limited to 30 experienced hikers. Call OHA at 763-9218 for reservations or reserve online at www.oaklandheritage.org. —Dennis Evanosky

Saturday, August 6, 10 a.m. –noon
WHOLESALE PRODUCE MARKET & WATERFRONT WAREHOUSE DISTRICTS • Intersection of 3rd and Franklin streets

Explore two of Oakland's most fragile and endangered historic districts, where early 20th century wholesale, industrial, shipping and warehousing activities are being replaced by office, commercial, residential, and lifestyle lofts. Since the year 2000, 850 new condos and 700 new apartments have been constructed. The city has approved an additional 1,217 residential units in six new buildings that will be constructed in the near future. The Waterfront Warehouse District boasts the country's finest collection of sidewalk trash receptacles. A level walk. —Gary Knecht

Sunday, August 7, 10 a.m. –12:30 p.m.
JINGLETOWN • Mary Help of Christians Church, 2605 E. 9th St.

Visit Fruitvale's “below the tracks” neighborhood of mills, factories and working people's houses. The early economy centered on the California Cotton Mills and canneries. By the 1910s the neighborhood had a strong Portuguese community, anchored by Mary Help of Christians Church. The Nimitz Freeway cut the neighborhood (and the cotton mills) in half in the 1950s. Industrial zoning eroded the neighborhood, but gave birth to neighborhood activism in the 1970s. A level walk.— Pamela Magnuson Peddle & Betty Marvin

Saturday, August 13, 10 a.m. –12:30 p.m.
THE EVOLUTION OF CHABOT CANYON IN THE 20TH CENTURY • 6686 Chabot Road, near Patton Street

Join a walk starting at Chabot Elementary School and heading east on Chabot Road to learn about the secrets of this picturesque section of Oakland. This will include, among other items, how the Sacramento Northern berm was created, the origins of Reata, the Quarry, the Rockridge Syphon, the Chick House and ending with a walk up Roble Road to review the Heimbold Legacy. A hilly walk.— Stuart Swiedler



Sunday, August 14, 1- 3 p.m.
OAKLAND ARTSCAPES: WHAT IS PUBLIC ART? • Joyce Gordon Gallery, 406 14th St.

What is public art, and where do you find it? Whether you're looking for a towering sculpture or a hidden graffiti tag, this tour through Oakland's outdoor art-scape will surprise and engage you. We'll encounter diverse examples of art along Oakland's historic Downtown/Uptown corridor, and discuss the role of art in shaping urban identity. A level walk. Special Infill Pricing for this tour only; \$5 per person for both OHA members and non-members! —Chelsea

Saturday, August 20, 1 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
JACK LONDON'S OAKLAND • In front of Jack's Alaska cabin, near Heinold's Saloon, Jack London Square

This year marks the 140th anniversary of Jack London's birth and the 100th anniversary of his death. Learn about the Oakland that famed author Jack London would have known. From studies at Cole Grammar School to long, dangerous work shifts at Hickmott Cannery, to studying and character observations at Heinold's, we'll explore what Oakland looked like in Jack London's day and how it shaped him and his writing. A level walk.—Annalee Allen & Gene Anderson

Sunday, August 21, 10 a.m.–noon
PIEDMONT AVENUE •

Piedmont Avenue Elementary School, 4314 Piedmont Ave. at John Street

This area, now densely residential, with a mix of single-family houses and condos, with its well-known dining district, was once rolling hills with creeks running through small farms and the large holdings of wealthy landowners. This tour begins in the 1860's, at Piedmont Avenue School. From there, we'll take a steep uphill route to the Piedmont/Oakland border, with estate-like homes on one side and apartment multi-plexes on the other. We'll discover an Art Deco beauty with a secret, and a tiny park as we cross Glen Echo Creek. On Piedmont Avenue, we'll pass establishments, such as Long's Drugs and Piedmont Market, which anchored the district in the early 20th century and our route will follow that of the horse car and streetcar lines, past the old Key Route depot, to Mountain View Cemetery. Some steep uphill climbing.—Ruby Long

Saturday, August 27, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
OAKLAND'S AIRPORT/NORTH FIELD • Meet at Business Jet Center, 9351 Earhart Road (west on Hegenberger Road from 880, cross Doolittle. Immediately turn right on Earhart). Park in lot across from the building; assemble under the trees.

Old Oakland Airport (North Field) was dedicated by Charles Lindbergh and often visited by Amelia Earhart. One of the nation's most historic aviation sites, its original facilities—five hangers, an administration building, and a hotel, built between 1927 and 1929—are largely intact. A level walk. Afterwards, you may wish to visit the nearby Oakland Aerospace Museum (separate admission: Adults \$10, Seniors \$9, Children 6–12 \$5). —Woody Minor



OAKLAND AIRPORT'S NORTH FIELD.

NAOMI SCHIFF

Sunday, August 28, 10 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
WOOD STREET, STATION TO STATION • Point Station (7th and Wood streets, under the BART tracks)

Put the west in West Oakland, the point in Oakland Point! Along Wood and Pine streets is a 150-year panorama, from Lew Hing's cannery to Bea's Hotel, from the Death Curve to the death marsh, from Maiden Lane to the house with no walls, from railroad-era tract houses and mansions to twenty shades of neo-Victorians, from Esther's Orbit Room to the grand new opera house, the industrial edge, the lagoon, the piano graveyard, the big dig, the restorations and desecrations—you will see it all. Optional post-tour return along 8th Street to BART. A level walk.

—Betty Marvin

For more information, go to www.oaklandheritage.org.

Donation, day of tour: \$10 OHA members, \$15 general; children 12 and under, free. Members may purchase a five-tour pass for \$40. Sign up for membership or renewal the day of the tour and receive a \$10 credit toward that day's tour.

Please make a reservation for the Redwoods of Oakland tour, limited to 30 hikers, \$20 members, \$25 for non-members. No reservations are required for any of the other tours.

NAOMI SCHIFF



GLEN ECHO CREEK off Piedmont Ave.



Battles won, lost and underway for Oakland's historical buildings

By Naomi Schiff

When real estate heats up, so do our preservation efforts! Here is a necessarily incomplete roundup of some current projects OHA is tracking.

OAK KNOLL: Five OHA board members attended a May 23 community meeting held by SunCal. In response to concerns about its plan to demolish the historic Oak Knoll Officers' Club (originally a country club), SunCal now proposes to move the building and use it as a community center. While it would be better yet to keep it in place, this is a substantial change in plans. It remains unclear how much of the building would actually be relocated, and how much reconstructed. An environmental impact report is due this summer. Neighborhood residents seem somewhat divided on their opinions about what should happen to the historic building, depending upon where they live. Some are worried about excessive traffic; others are focused on views. The 935-unit residential development would occupy the entire 182-acre site of the former Naval Hospital and its grounds. Revised development plans avoid placing structures on the highest ridge, and plan to use the stream through the property as part of an open space and pathway system.

A NEW PROJECT IN THE OLD CATHEDRAL DISTRICT:

A proposed five-story 76-unit residential building would occupy a surface parking lot



HISTORIC HOME in the Cathedral District Area of Primary Importance.

that goes through from 21st Street to 22nd Street, between San Pablo and Telegraph, and relocate two old houses westward on 21st Street to make way for it. While agreeing that an infill project is appropriate here, OHA has been commenting on the design aspects of the project, particularly with an eye to lessening its impact in the Area of Primary Importance on the 22nd Street side, a mostly intact neighborhood of historic homes.

PLAN DOWNTOWN: Initial plan alternatives were presented this spring. OHA is advocating to treat historic areas of the larger downtown with sensitivity: these include Produce Market, lower Broadway historic buildings around Third Street, Old Oakland, the Downtown National Register District,



OAKLAND'S OLDEST commercial structure, near the Western Pacific Depot.

uptown Arts area (in the auto-garage and Art Murrur areas between Telegraph and Broadway, 23rd to 26th streets, the Lake Area apartment district, and around the Lake in general). Further public meetings are anticipated over the summer.

FREMONT HIGH: In a previous round of upgrades to this campus at 4610 Foothill Blvd., a lovely and loved beamed-ceiling library was spared and incorporated into a renovated building. The old entry arch was also preserved. Now, OUSD is planning a new round of reconstruction on the campus. OHA representative Paul Brekke-Miesner is attending meetings in hopes that these evocative remnants of



THE OLD LIBRARY is visible from within the high school campus.

the elegant high school structures of Oakland's past will survive. Liz Sullivan is OUSD contact: liz.sullivan@ousd.org

GOOGIE LOSES: Biff's/J.J.'s suffered an irrevocable defeat at the City Council. Hanover Properties will build a large residential project on the site, with retail on the ground floor. After 20 years of intermittent crises, advocates for mid-century architecture—in particular, Joyce Roy and Leal Charonnat, assisted by a star-studded cast of Googie experts—could not secure reconsideration of the lackluster architectural design for the new structure, and mourned the absence of any serious preservation effort. Oakland's mid-century retail buildings are disappearing, and the era they represent is undervalued, although the period is highly popular in style-aware circles outside of Oakland City Hall.

HJKC/OAKLAND AUDITORIUM:

Orton Development is presented a roundup of its public meetings and interactions with community groups on June 17, at the Oakland Museum. They have also been doing structural research. Among other things, they found that adding great amounts of weight to the building would be infeasible, due to its location on old fill in what was once part of the slough, before Lake Merritt was constructed. Plans are to restore the proscenium theater, the Calvin Simmons Theater, and find new uses for the arena area. For information and to comment: <http://www.theoaklandcivic.com/>



TERRA COTTA ornamentation, Oakland Auditorium, detail.

30th AND BROADWAY: Development plans are under way to adaptively reuse and build five to six stories of residential units atop two former auto showrooms at 30th and Broadway. The project would go through to Brook Street, necessitating the removal of an



BOTHS: NAOMI SCHIFF



BROOK STREET: auto shop, top, and two homes, bottom, to be removed.

auto repair shop and two old houses. OHA is interested in seeing whether these houses could be relocated nearby, rather than demolished. Neighbors in the Richmond Boulevard/Oak Glen Park area are reviewing the design for its potential impact on the adjoining area and Glen Echo Creek, and suggesting some revisions.

24TH AND HARRISON:

The Broadway-Valdez area is seeing its first high-rise proposal, for a 448-unit, 22-story tower on the west end of what is today an Acura dealership. The showroom would be replaced with about 66,000 square feet of retail. As we commented on preliminary design ideas, we suggested perhaps incorporating the 24th Street Mystery Gateway, an Art Deco remnant of the days when getting your car fixed entailed a gracious arrival. Can such unique remnants be included in some of the upcoming projects?



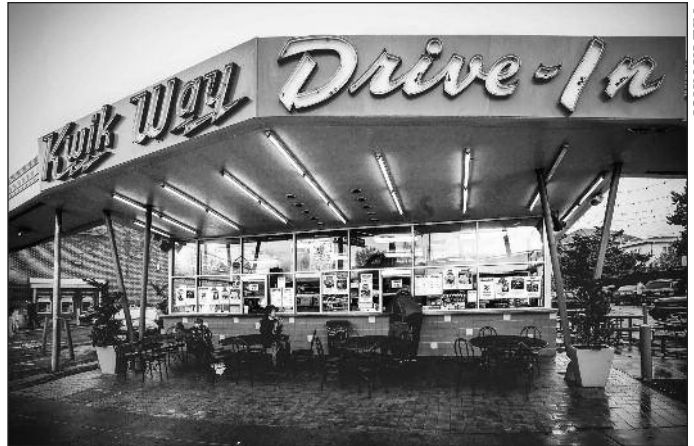
ART DECO GATE greets car repair customers.

FRUITVALE HOTEL: The historic but decrepit Fruitvale Hotel is in danger, whether from demolition by its owner, demolition by

general neglect, sudden accident, or by blight code enforcement. The owner applied for but then did not pursue a demolition permit, hoping to build a driveway in place of one of the oldest structures standing in Oakland, but then withdrew. It's an old railroad hotel on San Leandro Street near Fruitvale, and visible from the neighborhood as a sagging wooden landmark. If you have a practical idea for a reuse or suggestion for a way to save it, contact us with your suggestions.

KWIK WAY REDUX: The property owner of the former Kwik Way on Lake Park (now Merritt Bakery) is contemplating residential development. Can some of the Googie elements be incorporated into new construction?

CLAREMONT HOTEL: A proposal to build 45 upscale condos on the Claremont Hotel's upper parking lot will require an EIR, and neighbors are nervous. A Notice of Preparation has been released, and the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board and

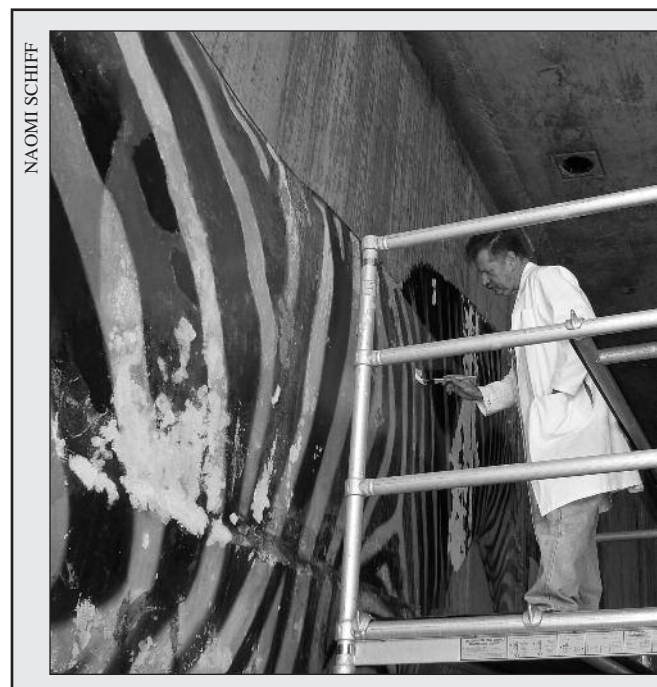


JOHN KLEIN

THIS FAMILIAR MIDCENTURY drive-in, shown here a few years ago, has been through several name changes.

Planning Commission are taking comments on what aspects should be studied. Neighbor groups have raised issues of access, views, natural disaster preparation, and traffic in addition to historic preservation concerns. OHA is submitting comments and invites members to weigh in by the deadline, July 6 (<http://bit.ly/25RQi7m>).

CCA CONSOLIDATING: We are trying to find out more about future plans for the historic Oakland campus of the California College of the Arts, as administration announced plans to concentrate the campus in the city to the west. ■



NAOMI SCHIFF

30-year-old zebras get new lease on life

DAN FONTES has been spotted (striped?) repairing the zebras along Broadway under the freeway overpass. Concerned zebra lovers are raising funds to assist the cause: <https://www.gofundme.com/27swjnh>



Oscar Wilde's sedate time in Oakland

By Oleksandr Zbarsky

"Like the helianthus, I shall wend my willing way toward the Occidental uttermost of American civilization": with these words a languid, elegant young Englishman announced his incipient descent upon California. Oscar Wilde was only 28 years old when he arrived in America in 1882. He visited before writing his main prose works *A House of Pomegranates*, *The Happy Prince*, *The Selfish Giant*, *The Canterville Ghost*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

His visit was also before he won recognition as a playwright for his English plays *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *Lady Windermere's Fan*. At the time of his visit he was known mainly as a poet, a chief proponent of aestheticism, and, along with painter Dante Rossetti and poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, a follower of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Wilde's American tour was organized by New York impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte, purportedly to advertise his production of the Gilbert and Sullivan light operetta *Patience*. Wilde was designated to play the fleshly poet Bunthorne. "But the reason that induced him to accept D'Oyly Carte's offer was to try to arrange for the production of his first drama *Vera*, in which he still placed great hopes," wrote Wilde's son Vyvyan Holland.

Wilde arrived in California at the end of March 1882. He was greeted by a group of San Francisco reporters eager to interview the newcomer. They saw a "tall lubberly young man, with a sallow, melancholy face, light-brown hair that reached his shoulders, keen appraising eyes, and a friendly smile," wrote authors Oscar Lewis and Carroll D. Hall. Wilde settled in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco.

The primary purpose of his visit was to lecture. He was scheduled to lecture twice in Oakland. Personal columns of the local newspapers contained notices to the effect that he would present a diamond ring to the most aesthetically-dressed lady at his next lecture in Oakland and would hold an infor-

mal reception after each lecture, granting personal interviews. On March 28, 1882, he appeared in the Light Cavalry Armory Hall at the corner of Twelfth and Washington streets, delivering a lecture on the "English Renaissance." The next day's *Oakland Tribune* gave a picturesque description of this event: "Nearly three hundred of the cream of the artistic and the literati of the Athens of the



Pacific assembled at Armory Hall last evening to consider the lily of Dublin. The poem in knee breeches appeared on time, being introduced by Captain Bromwell of the Oakland Light Cavalry, and proceeded to evolve words and sentences regarding the beautiful in art, the artistic in the beautiful and the reason why we should not eat bean soup out of a moonlight-tinted tureen."

San Francisco newspapers, in particular *The Wasp*, were hostile to the author: "Of Mr Wilde as a poet I did not write, and only do so now to assure those who think him a poet that I think him a joke."

His visit generated innumerable amount of caricatures both in verse and in graphics. The *Oakland Tribune* editor defended the "poem in knee breeches" against criticism, announcing rather self-confidently, "In all that Wilde says, we coincide. We have no sympathy with that flippant folly that laughs at what it cannot understand, and ridicules the realm it cannot enter."

The *Oakland Daily Times* also rose to protect Wilde: "In England this new aesthetic movement has brought the craftsman and the artist closer together. All real artistic movements spring not from the idle or the rich, but from the people who use their hands."

During his visit, the poet was entertained by the Bohemian Club, an organization devoted to art, literature, music and drama. Oscar was regaled and acquired an ample respect both for his vivacity and his bibacity (alcoholism). An interesting story connected with this visit was soon being told about town. A group of the younger club members decided to outdrink the Englishman. However, we're told by authors Lloyd Lewis and

**ARMORY HALL,
OAKLAND LIGHT CAVALRY.**
Cor. Twelfth and Washington.

This Company has the honor to announce that having completed arrangements with his manager, Mr. R. D'Oyly Carte,

OSCAR WILDE

Will deliver two addresses at the above hall as follows:

Tuesday Evening.....March 28th
At 8 P. M. Subject:
"THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE."

Thursday Evening....., March 30th
At 8 P. M. Subject:
"ART DECORATION."

Tickets for Both Lectures.\$2
To be obtained from members of the O. L. C. and at Messrs. Kelsey & Flint's, corner 12th and Broadway.

Tickets for Single Lecture.\$1
To be obtained at the door on each evening and at Kelsey & Flint's during the day.
(Times copy.)

OAKLAND TRIBUNE ad for Wilde's visit. Henry Justin Smith, "The aesthete had matched glass for glass with the club's most accomplished drinkers, had seen them safely under the table, put on his great cloak and strode blithely back to the Palace Hotel. Word of the feat passed over the city during the day. Westerners who had covertly despised anyone who would wear knee pants and talk woman-talk, suddenly realized that here was a three-bottle man indeed."

Wilde's hyper-aestheticism applied to American reality was exposed by his "expressions of disgust at the sad lack of taste evinced by Americans," wrote Lewis and Smith. The *Oakland Daily Times* reported that Wilde said, "When I first came to America I found myself in an ill-proportioned, ill-made room, in an ill-proportioned house, with bare, white walls."

See WILDE on page 11

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members to our roster:

Mary Allen, Trisha Gorman, Ron Heckart, Karen Long, Jami Matanky & Vandi Linstrot, Margaret & Dennis McGuirk, James Puskar & Eleanor Rush, Lauren Richey, Dustin Roberts, Jim Schubert, Ira Serkes, Shirley J. Smith, Melinda Stuart, Alta Moore/Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods, Leah Vass, Maria Vermiglio & Suo Fong, Jean Wieler, Janice Yager



New tours, new staff, and plans for a party

By Alison Finlay, *President*

Here come the summer Walking Tours! We hope you'll join us for another exciting season as favorite tours return, including Lakeside Park, the Redwoods of Oakland, Fernwood, Borax Smith and North Field, Oakland's original Airport. New tours highlight Chabot Canyon, diverse public art downtown, Jack London's familiar Oakland haunts, and stones used in local landmarks.

We'll walk West Oakland and hear the stories of canneries and the Cotton Mills in Jingtown. We'll visit Sheffield Village with a new guide, and trace tiles and terra cotta Uptown. Bring your floppy hat and water, wear comfortable shoes and sunscreen, and come walk with us as we support OHA and share Oakland's history. As always, we need volunteers to help with registration; please call the office if you're interested.

We have two new faces in the office. Newly-hired administrative associate Nghi Lam (Nghi is pronounced "knee") hails from Viet Nam. Once a refugee, he came by boat with his mother when he was 8 years old, arriving in 1988. Now a naturalized citizen, he has been a law student and is studying for the California Bar. Nghi and his fiancée live

in Alameda. We'd also like to introduce bookkeeper Casey Baastians. Casey lives in Oakland, and has long managed business matters for local companies, including Berkeley Sound Artists and Seventeenth Street Studios. Welcome, Casey and Nghi!

As I walk around Oakland, I think about the effect that OHA has had on this city. In my mind's eye, I attach captions to special buildings that have been saved by OHA members past and present: OHA was here. And *here*. And *here*. I am grateful for our efforts, because we leave behind a richer city. To our steady volunteers, our new and loyally-renewing members, to our kind donors, to our amazing speakers and community partners: thank you. We are planning a party in the fall to celebrate 35 accomplished years. If you'd like to help put on our celebration, we'd love to hear from you.

Additionally, we have a couple of openings on the board. Would you be interested in finding out about board membership, or recommending someone? Please let us know!

Finally, if this newsletter is addressed irregularly, or if we need to make corrections to your information in the database, please call the office (510 763-9218). ■

Wilde

Continued from page 10

On March 30, Wilde made his second presentation in Oakland, lecturing on "Art Decoration." It was dedicated to then-nascent trend of Art Deco, which can be described as the first attempt to bring beauty in the usual homely environment. An *Oakland Tribune* editorial reported: "He impressed upon his hearers that ornament, and, indeed, work of all kinds, is only beautiful when made by the heart and hands of the handicraftsman. He declared to the Oakland public that he was a great admirer of embroidery, but he notified the ladies, and here the first ripple of laughter broke over the audience, that the sole end of embroidery was not to produce anti-macassars and hang every chair in the room with them, so that it really looked like washing day."

The attendance of this lecture was better than the first one, perhaps because the topic wasn't solely linked to Britain and was therefore more accessible to the audience. Wilde left the Bay Area on April 8 to continue his American tour through 1882. He returned to London early in 1883 and continued obtaining his unique and lasting status in English literature.

And he never visited California again. ■

CONTRIBUTORS:

Kathleen DiGiovanni, Alison Finlay, Kathryn Hughes, Erika Mailman, Naomi Schiff, Oleksandr Zbarsky

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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Oakland’s kindest landmark

By *Kathleen DiGiovanni*

“Come thirsty ones,
 to the fountain set out in
 the open for you. Let the
 joyous multitude come.”

This is the English translation of a Latin verse wreathing the Easterbrook Wellhead, a marble fountain tucked into the rear of the Gardens at Lake Merritt. The Wellhead is the centerpiece of the Mediterranean Garden, sited at the back of the Garden Center, next to the Palmetum. It’s a sweet monument to one Oakland woman’s love of birds.

In the ‘teens of the last century, a devoted bird-lover named Nettie Stone Easterbrook observed that the water in Lakeside Park’s McElroy fountain, installed in 1911, splashed too vigorously for the songbirds in the park to bathe. To no avail, she pleaded with park gardeners to turn down the flow of water for the sake of the little birds.

Her pleas having fallen on deaf ears, Mrs. Easterbrook in 1914 presented to the birds of the city the gift of a gentle marble fountain. The Carrara marble fountain, decorated with cherubs all around, was attributed to a Florentine sculptor named Petrelli. It was placed in the park to burble, rather than spray.

A 1927 *Tribune* article about Mrs. Easterbrook and her gentle fountain pointed out that a key word in the Latin text had been misspelled (or shall we say mischiseled?),

turning the verse into nonsense. That typo has since been corrected, probably not long after that *Tribune* article appeared. Look closely at the inscription and you’ll see that an “N” has been chiseled over the incorrect “U” in the word SITIENTES.

Who was Mrs. Easterbrook? The former Nettie Stone was a San Francisco native, daughter of a San Francisco police captain. She was the wife of a San Francisco financier, Daniel E. Easterbrook. Easterbrook was one of the “argonauts” of 1849, travelling overland with the Boston-Newton Company to strike it rich in the gold fields. The Easterbrooks were world travellers and were active in Oakland social and philanthropic circles. Mrs. Easterbrook served on the board of Fabiola Hospital and was president of the Home Club.

After the Lakeside Park Garden Center was enclosed by fencing in the late 1950s, the fountain and the area around it fell into neglect. More recently, the wellhead and its surrounding land have become the project of the Northern California chapter of the Mediterranean Garden Society.



KATHLEEN DIGIOVANNI

THE MILD EASTERBROOK WELLHEAD

As early as 1999, members of the local chapter of the Mediterranean Garden Society began developing plans for a display garden here. An initial garden plan by Sean O’Hara was later refined by Tricia Christopher. Funds were raised, paths laid, drainage installed, irrigation installed. This is a formal garden, with ring walks and radiating pathways that outline beds planted in inspiring color combinations of plants agreeable to Oakland’s Mediterranean climate.

In June 2012, the society dedicated the garden with the fountain as its centerpiece, the culmination of years of planning and hundreds of hours of volunteer labor. Come rest on one of its benches and watch the birds at play. Mrs. Easterbrook would be proud. ■