

## COMMENTARY: Are We Looking Backward or Forward?

Satchel Paige said, "Don't look back. Something may be gaining on you." In a way, he was right. The past is gaining on all of us. We are all living today with the results of what we did yesterday. It is a mistake to be trapped in the past; but we must look back in order to move forward intelligently.

In personal terms, we cherish those unique qualities that give us continuity and that will help us live better tomorrow. We treasure our triumphs, and we learn from our failures. It is the same for our city. OHA cares about the Oakland of yesterday because we care about the Oakland of today and tomorrow. The environment we live in today has been given to us from the past: the buildings that remain, the layout of the streets, the ethnic character of our neighborhoods, the nearly forgotten creeks, the lake that still forms the centerpiece of our city. The Oakland of today is the result of what Oaklanders yesterday built or demolished, fostered or neglected. This is our inheritance. What we do with it is our choice.

It seems as though some propose to preserve everything exactly as it is now, while others are ready to demolish everything and start over. Where does OHA

stand? We believe that a living city needs to balance between these extremes.

We believe in historic preservation and will work eagerly with other preservationists. We believe that historic buildings, sites, and other features provide us with a sense of permanence about our city and enrich our lives with an awareness of the character and diversity of the people who have created it.

We also believe in neighborhood conservation. Neighborhood pride and cohesiveness give direct benefits to our city in preventing crime, physical deterioration, and other urban problems. We believe that by learning about, restoring, and respecting the architectural and historical integrity of our surroundings, we maintain the uniqueness of our neighborhoods and generate pride in our community.

We invite individuals and organizations to become members and work with us. If you are already a member, *Oakland Heritage Alliance* welcomes you warmly and is very grateful for your early support. If you are not, read on. If you care about Oakland, we hope you will decide to join us.

*Beth Bagwell, President  
Oakland Heritage Alliance*

### NOTICE TO READERS

This is the premier issue of *Oakland Heritage Alliance News*. If you are not yet a member, you are receiving this issue because we hope you are interested in our goals and would like to join us. If you are already a member, you are a charter subscriber and will receive *OHA News* regularly beginning with this issue.

## BRIEFING

The future of the OAKLAND AUDITORIUM is uncertain. A report to the City Council states that the building needs about \$12,000,000 worth of rehabilitation and is costing about \$400,000 a year to operate. The report identifies six possible options for the structure, including demolition. Although there are no existing funding

*Continued on page 3*



## OHA CALENDAR

The *OHA* Calendar lists events related to history and preservation that may be of interest to *OHA* members. To submit events for listing, contact Dean M. Yabuki, 842 Grosvenor Pl., Oakland, CA 94610, (415) 893-1278.

21 March through 31 May

Festas Acoreanas: Portuguese Celebrations in California and the Azores. Exhibit at Oakland Museum. (415) 273-3401

22 March 9 am to 5 pm

Berkeley Historical Society Photo Contest Exhibit. Berkeley Art Center, 1275 Walnut St., Berkeley. BHS, Box 1190, Berkeley 94701. (415) 524-3892

29 March through 4 April

Berkeley History Week

29 March through 1 April

6th Annual California Historic Preservation Conference, at U.C. Riverside. Contact State Office of Historic Preservation (916) 445-8006 or U.C. Riverside History Department (714) 787-4493

Now through April 1

American Quilts: A Handmade Legacy. Exhibit at Oakland Museum. (415) 273-3401

16 April 7:30 pm

23 April 7:30 pm

30 April 7:30 pm

Series of three slide lectures on the architecture of Greene & Greene with proceeds to help restore the Wm. R. Thorsen House, Berkeley. All to be held at 155 Dwinelle Hall, U.C. Berkeley. For brochure, call Jerry Barclay, (415) 644-0347 7-9pm

18 April

75th Anniversary of 1906 Earthquake

21 April

Oakland Election Day. Election of mayor and key officials. City Clerk, 273-3611. Elections also in Alameda and Berkeley.

1 May

Tour of Wm. R. Thorsen House, Berkeley, for holders of series ticket for lectures 16-30 April (above)

*Continued on page 3*

**Oakland Heritage Alliance was formed to bring together community groups and individuals sharing an interest in the history of Oakland, and in the preservation and conservation of the city's archaeological, architectural, cultural, environmental, and historical resources.**

### OFFICERS 1980-81

President . . . . . Beth Bagwell  
 V.P. Programs and Education . . . . . Leslie Flint  
 V.P. Fund Raising . . . . . Marlene Wilson  
 V.P. Public Relations . . . . . Beth Bagwell  
 Financial Officer . . . . . Brad Niebling  
 Recording/Corresponding Secretary Marlene Wilson  
 Membership Secretary . . . . . Jon Good

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1980-81

Beth Bagwell . . . . . 653-5968  
 Leslie Flint . . . . . 658-4915  
 Melinda Young Frye . . . . . 763-1642  
 Jon Good . . . . . 655-7477  
 Bruce Judd . . . . . 421-1680  
 Gary Knecht . . . . . 865-6382  
 Brad Niebling . . . . . 839-1600  
 Laura Pan . . . . . 254-6819  
 William Sturm . . . . . 465-1321  
 Michael Swernoff . . . . . 654-1865  
 Marlene Wilson . . . . . 832-8700  
 Dean Yabuki . . . . . 893-1278

OHA was incorporated in 1980 as a California non-profit corporation. Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible. (Fed. pending.)

© 1981 Oakland Heritage Alliance



*CREDITS* Editor: William Sturm; Design: Blair Prentice; Production: Gary Knecht; Contributors: Beth Bagwell, Jon Good, Charles B. Oakland, Marlene Wilson, Dean Yabuki



*Continued from page 2*

2 May - All Day

Explore Oakland Day. Free historic tours of many Oakland neighborhoods. Oakland Tours Program, City Hall, (415) 273-3234

3 May

BAHA House Tour. Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association. Self-guided eccentric house tour and reception. BAHA, Box 1137, Berkeley 94701, (415) 845-6591

10 May through 16 May

National Preservation Week 1981. Theme: Conserving America's Neighborhoods

#### REGULARLY SCHEDULED PUBLIC MEETINGS

##### Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory

Board: Meets 3rd Wednesday of each month, 3:30 pm City Hall Room 221, 273-3941

Oakland City Planning Commission: Meets 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month, 1:30 pm City Hall Room 115, 273-3941

Oakland City Council: Meets every Tuesday 7:30 pm City Hall Council Chambers, 273-3266

Oakland Heritage Alliance Board: Meets 1st Monday of each month, 7:30 pm For location, call Marlene Wilson, 832-8700

Brooklyn Neighborhood Preservation Association: Meets last Sunday of each month, 7:30 pm For location, contact BNPA, PO Box 187, Oakland 94604

#### REGULARLY SCHEDULED TOURS AND ACTIVITIES

Camron-Stanford House: Tours every Wednesday 11 am to 4 pm, every Sunday 1 pm to 4 pm 1418 Lakeside Drive at 14th St. 836-1976. Free.

Paramount Theatre Tours: Tours 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month, 10 am 2025 Broadway 465-6400 \$1

##### Oakland Tours Program:

Various free tours include City Center, Chinatown, Lake Merritt, Preservation Park, Old Downtown. For schedule call (415) 273-3234

*Continued from page 1*

sources for rehabilitation, new sources, such as a special tax or bond issue, could be sought. The City Council, clearly wanting to avoid closing the Auditorium, postponed its decision, requesting the City Planning staff to provide a more detailed explanation of which rehabilitation expenses are truly essential, and a complete analysis of possible funding sources.

Controversy has enveloped the former ST. JOSEPH'S HOME at 2647 East 14th Street, originally a nursing home for the elderly until closed in 1979. The California State Department of Corrections and the Volunteers of America would like to convert the building into a training facility for prison inmates, a proposal which has provoked great opposition from neighborhood residents and the City Council. Final decision on the matter rests with the state. The building, though now vacant, is offered some protection by being on the City's Interim Study List, which allows delay of any demolition proposal for up to 60 days.

Commercial space on the ground floor of the HOTEL OAKLAND is beginning to be leased. The City Planning Commission recently approved a proposal to establish a convenience market in the former Oak Tavern, an English Renaissance style bar with quartered oak paneled walls. Renovation of the hotel's upper floors for 315 apartments for the elderly and handicapped was completed last year. The hotel, opened in 1912, occupies the entire block bounded by 13th, 14th, Alice, and Harrison Streets.

Rehabilitation work has been underway for several months on OAKLAND TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL at 4351 Broadway in order for the school to conform with the state's Field Act earthquake safety standards. Built in 1914 and designed by John J. Donovan (architect of the Oakland Auditorium) the school is distinguished by sweeping colonnades and the parklike setting of its grounds. Exterior changes to the main buildings will be fairly minor; new colors will be three shades of beige and light

*Continued on page 4*



*Continued from page 3*

brown with reddish window trim. The high school is one of the few of Oakland's architecturally distinctive schools to survive the School District's earthquake safety program. Major losses from the program include Oakland High and Fremont High.

The FIRST METHODIST CHURCH is for sale and may be threatened. The building is listed with Ritchie and Ritchie for \$2,000,000. Although attempts are being made to find a buyer who would reuse the building, the property may end up being sold for its land value, in which case the building would probably be demolished. The building is reported to need considerable rehabilitation work. The congregation applied for landmark designation in 1979, but recently withdrew the application. The Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board accepted the withdrawal, but kept the building on the Interim Study List, which would allow demolition to be delayed



*First Methodist Church, 2352 Broadway, built 1912*

for up to 60 days. OHA is meeting with the congregation to present alternatives and will work as closely as possible with it to see if demolition can be avoided.

\* ST. AUGUSTINE'S (formerly Trinity) EPISCOPAL CHURCH at 29th Street and Telegraph Avenue has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The church was constructed in 1892-93.

\* Amendments to the NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT were signed into law December 19, 1980. The most significant change prevents property from being listed on the National Register of Historic Places if the owner objects, or, in the case of a district, if a majority of owners object. However, in such cases, the property would still be classed as eligible for the National Register, which will help protect the property from any adverse impacts of federal projects.

\* State Senator Milton Marks (San Francisco) has introduced a resolution creating a STATEWIDE HISTORIC PRESERVATION TASK FORCE which would recommend state policies to preserve and enhance California's architectural, cultural, and historic resources. OHA has sent letters to the California legislators for the Oakland districts urging the establishment of the task force.

\* Progress is continuing on the City's VICTORIAN ROW project, which will rehabilitate a number of the elaborate Victorian commercial buildings in the original downtown commercial area of Oakland. The Row occupies the two blocks bounded by Broadway, 10th Street, Washington, and 8th Street, including Ratto's Delicatessen at the southwest corner of 9th and Washington. Developers and architects Storek and Storek of San Francisco have removed the paint from the Nicholl Block and the Second Snyder Block buildings on 9th and Washington, exposing the original patterned brick facades. Rehabilitation plans call for restoring the much-altered storefronts to a late nineteenth century appearance. A public improvement plan for street and sidewalk surface treatments, street trees, lighting, and other street furniture is expected to be released soon.

The city purchased the land and buildings for the project and will furnish the public improvements, but the rehabilitation costs are being financed through private sources. Victorian commercial buildings immediately outside the Victorian Row area are also being rehabilitated, most notably the Dunns Block at  
*Continued on page 5*

*Continued from page 4*

721 Washington Street. This work does not involve any public funds.

For further information, call Dale O'Dell at the City's Office of Economic Development and Employment, 273-3692.

The City's PRESERVATION PARK is coming closer to development. Located on the three blocks bounded by 14th, 11th, Grove, and Castro Streets, the Park contains the Pardee Mansion, the First Unitarian Church, the Charles S. Greene Library, and several early houses. The project will rehabilitate these buildings, as needed, and will move in buildings threatened with demolition from other locations. Five buildings have already been relocated and are presently set on blocks on the south side of 13th Street, awaiting selection of their final sites. A report presenting possible design and development options for the Park is expected to be released by the City before April 1. The report will address such topics as site configuration, public improvements, rehabilitation standards, landscaping, and development mechanisms. Three of the houses on the north side of 13th Street are expected to be offered to private developers for rehabilitation in April or May. For further information, call Patrick Cashman at the City's Office of Economic Development and Employment, 273-3692.

A large portion of the ROSE GARDEN NEIGHBORHOOD has been recommended by the City Planning Commission for downzoning from high density (R-70) to one-family (R-35). The portion is bounded by Grand, Oakland, and Santa Clara Avenues and the Piedmont city limits, but does not include properties bordering the boundary streets. The neighborhood contains many shingle, craftsman, colonial revival, and other turn of the century houses which are threatened by new condominium construction but which would be protected by the downzoning. The downzoning still requires action by the City Council, which has postponed its decision pending receipt of a report from a Housing Task Force appointed by Mayor Wilson. The task force is

*Continued on page 6*

#### LATE NEWS: PRESERVATION CRISIS

The national historic preservation program has become a victim of President Reagan's budget cutting. Funding for state offices of historic preservation, including all grant programs, will be reduced to \$0.00 for FY 1982 if the President's budget is adopted as proposed.

*OHA urges that you contact your Congressional representative immediately to state why the preservation program is important to you and to request its continuation at an appropriate level of funding.*

For more information, call the National Trust for Historic Preservation at (415) 556-2707, or Preservation Action's "Legislative Update" recording (weekends only) at (202) 659-0915.

### Oakland Landmarks Board Actions

Following is a summary of actions taken by the board at its meetings of November and December, 1980, and January, 1981.

#### Landmark status recommended:

- . Parks Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 476 13th St.
- . James White House, 13th and Castro
- . Charles S. Greene Library, 14th and Grove

#### Landmark status discussed:

- . Southern Pacific Mole site at the end of 7th St.
- . Jenny Lind Hall, 2267 Telegraph Ave.

#### Historic district discussed:

- . Interest in historic district status was expressed by residents of Picardy Drive, a 1920's development of Norman style cottages south of Mills College. Action being considered.

#### Merit Award List:

- . The board discussed the establishment of a Merit Award List which would include properties deserving of recognition, but without the special protection given to designated landmarks. A possible list was presented.

*Continued from page 5*

expected to submit recommendations on the overall residential zoning pattern of the City, but it is unclear when the recommendations will be received.

The Brooklyn Neighborhood Preservation Association requested that the OLD BROOKLYN COMMERCIAL CENTER (roughly bounded by East 8th Street, 11th Avenue, Foothill Boulevard, and 14th Avenue) be included in the City's S-7 Preservation Zone.



*China Building, downtown Brooklyn*

Brooklyn was once a separate town, extending from Lake Merritt to just beyond 23rd Avenue, before being annexed to Oakland in 1872. The old commercial center is highlighted by a number of Victorian structures, some of which are threatened with demolition or alteration.

## PLANS TO BURY TEMESCAL CREEK IN CULVERT

The Alameda Flood Control and Water Conservation District is proposing to bury a half-mile stretch of Temescal Creek in an underground culvert between Grove and Adeline Streets. This section of the tree-lined creek presently runs in a natural channel whose depth ranges between ten and twenty feet.

The Flood Control District wants to bury the creek in order to eliminate the possibility of a hundred-year flood (that is, a flood with a one percent chance of occurring any given year) and to protect abutting properties from bank erosion, which in some cases has undermined buildings. Once the culvert is in place, the earth on top would be backfilled and graded, leaving a shallow bare earth channel (swale) where the creek now runs. (The buried section of Temescal Creek running south of Adeline Street in Emeryville provides an approximate example of what the creek channel will look like when the project is completed.)

The project is one of many similar projects developed by the Flood Control District throughout Oakland and the rest of Alameda County. Most of the other sections of Temescal Creek below Lake Temescal have already been culverted by the District, as have sections of other creeks. Similar projects are planned in the future for portions of other creeks in Oakland.

OHA believes that the creek should be retained in as natural a condition as

*Continued on page 7*

## OHA Committees Need You

Oakland Heritage Alliance committees are the real action of our organization. To be effective, they need your active participation. Any member is welcome. Community Awareness monitors developments on selected issues related to OHA concerns. Recommends OHA actions and policy on these issues. Chair: Leslie Flint, 658-4915. Programs and Education plans and executes lectures, tours, or other activities sponsored by OHA. Chair: Leslie Flint, 658-4915.

Public Information/OHA NEWS plans and manages OHA News, press releases, and contacts with other organizations. Chair: Beth Bagwell, 653-5968. News Editor: William Sturm, 465-1321.

Membership Development seeks ways to broaden membership; also maintains records of current members. Chair: Jon Good, 655-7477. Fundraising plans and implements methods of raising funds, such as contacts with potential donors, grant applications, etc. Chair: Marlene Wilson, 832-8700.



*Continued from page 6*

possible and questions whether the project's benefits as presently proposed justify its \$3.2 million cost. OHA also believes that several alternatives capable of achieving the project's objectives while still preserving the creek's character have not been adequately explored. OHA believes Temescal Creek and the other creeks in Oakland represent important amenities which have not been used to their full potential and which have too frequently been abused or ignored. The Open Space Conservation and Preservation Element of the Oakland Comprehensive Plan (prepared by the City Planning Department), for example, proposes that the creeks be used as routes for pedestrian or bicycle paths or as setting for parks. The Flood Control District's project, if implemented as presently proposed, would essentially eliminate the use of the creek for scenic or recreational purposes.

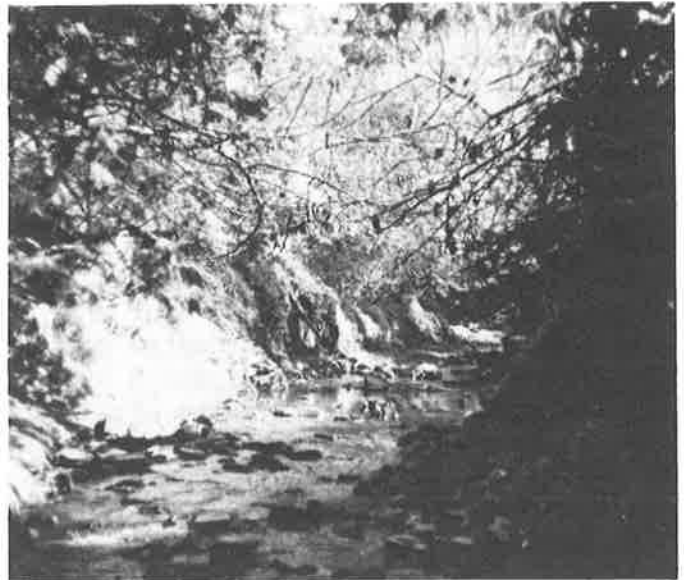
Other organizations concerned over the project include the Sierra Club, the California State Department of Fish and Game, and the North Oakland Community Council, one of the important neighborhood groups in the area.

The project still requires approval by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, which is not expected to act before early April.

Detailed information on the Temescal Creek project, as proposed, can be found in the Flood Control District's Final Environmental Impact Report. Copies can be obtained by writing or calling Rick Baker at the District's office, 399 Elmhurst

Street, Hayward, CA 94544, 881-6470.

Persons wanting to know more about the alternatives being explored and OHA's role in the project should call Marlene Wilson, 832-8700.



*Temescal Creek, Genoa St. near 52nd*

**TEMESCAL CREEK - A HISTORY VIGNETTE**

Flowing down from four distinct branches in the hills of Oakland north of Piedmont, Temescal Creek is rich in the history and folklore of the City's past. Nearly 1500 years ago, a peaceful group of Indians, known now as the Costanoans, settled in the East Bay area. A tribelet of these people formed a village near the present junction of Telegraph and Claremont Avenues. There, they built sweathouses, or

*Continued on page 8*

Oakland Heritage Alliance, 5569 Lawton Avenue, Oakland, California 94618

**JOIN OHA TODAY! Your annual tax-deductible membership dues include the OHA News and announcements of all OHA activities. Additional contributions and your active participation will make OHA a more effective organization.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Numbers (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

- \$ 5 Senior/student/limited income (1 vote)
- \$10 Individual (1 vote)
- \$15 Family (2 votes)
- \$25 Organization (1 vote)
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional contribution

I am willing to participate in the following ways:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*Continued from page 7*

temescals, as the Spanish later called them--solid structures of sturdy poles, made air-tight by thick slabs of mud. Around a roaring blaze within these huts some fifty people would dance in a great frenzy, their bodies becoming living furnaces of heat and sweat. When near collapse from their exhausting ritual, the dancers would flee from the huts and dive into the cold stream. From these sweathouses, Temescal Creek derived its name.

In 1770, Spanish explorers arrived in the Bay Area, and in 1820, much of the area now called Alameda and Contra Costa counties was deeded by the Spanish officials to Don Luis Maria Peralta as a reward for military services to the government. One of Peralta's sons, Vicente, built an adobe at the present site of 5521 Vicente Street. Temescal Creek became a source of water for his horses and fish for his table.

Americans, drawn by the lure of redwood

timber in the Oakland hills, soon ended the bucolic life of the Peraltas. In the 1850's, the creek which slaked the thirst of the Don's horses became a source of water to the neighborhood growing up near the stream. Water flowing down from the creek percolated into the ground to feed the many wells dotting the countryside. During the 1860's, abandoned wells were turned into cesspools, causing contamination of active wells nearby. The need for clean drinking water soon became urgent for the citizens of Oakland.

In 1866, the Oakland and Alameda Water Company began damming Temescal Creek to "conduct the water of Temescal Creek to the City of Oakland" for human consumption and fire-fighting purposes. The Lake Temescal Reservoir held one of Oakland's principal water supplies for well over fifty years, until Mokelumne River water from the Sierras began flowing through Oakland's water mains.

Temescal Creek is a natural--and vital--link with Oakland's past.

## OAKLAND HISTORY NOTES

The Key Route Inn, built in 1907, stood astride Grand Ave. at Broadway. A railway station for Key Route interurban trains, the Inn was also a hotel of 130 rooms, a congregation of varied shops and restaurants, and a social center for community activities. Damaged by fire in 1930, then remodeled, the Inn was demolished in 1932.

*Courtesy Oakland History Room, Oakland Pub. Library*



Oakland Heritage Alliance  
5569 Lawton Avenue  
Oakland, California 94618

Non-profit organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Oakland, California  
Permit No. 31