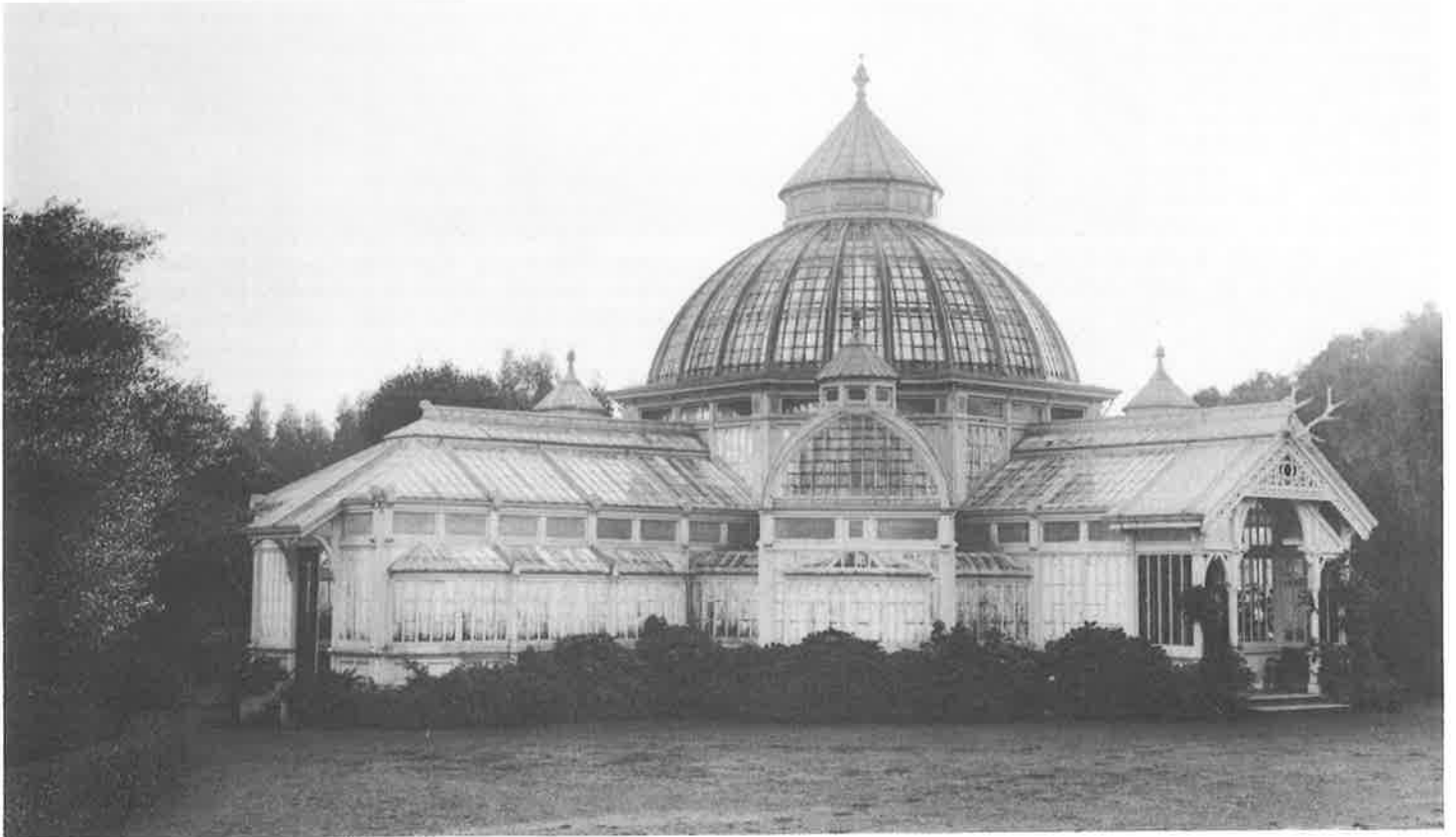


## Roselawn: "Princely Palace" in Rockridge



In 1870, one isolated homesite looked out over the district of North Oakland now known as Rockridge. It was Pagoda Hill, the estate and exotic gardens at Chabot Road and Ross Street belonging to J. Ross Browne. Shortly after Pagoda Hill was built, other wealthy families bought nearby land for their villa homes. They too planted lush gardens with palms, eucalyptus, and other non-native plants admired by Victorians.

In 1910 the Laymance Real Estate Company used the villa homes of Rockridge in its advertising for middle class homesites, and the district quickly filled in with more modest dwellings. By 1913 Rockridge had streetcars, a school, churches, and a firehouse, and during the 1910s and 20s a commercial district developed along College Avenue. The strong demand for real estate led to the demise of the estates. Estate properties along Chabot Road were sold to subdividers, and the mansions disappeared.

The conservatory at Roselawn c.1910. Built for J.C. Ainsworth in 1882 by J.C. Mathews and Son, cost \$10,000. It stood where Ivanhoe now intersects Miles Avenue. (photo by Edgar A. Cohen, courtesy of The Bancroft Library)

Today in Rockridge there are approximately 4400 dwelling units and the view from Pagoda Hill is one of solid urban development, extending to the tall buildings of downtown Oakland four miles distant. Yet mature trees - like red flags on a map - mark former homesites. The "palm tree method" is especially useful in identifying vanished villas. Chances are good that a palm tree in an unusual location - in a backyard or squeezed between the sidewalk and street - was part of the landscaping of an earlier building.

One such palm tree marks the site of the Roselawn estate that stood on Chabot Road from about 1880 to 1928. The main house was about 300 feet south of Chabot along what is now Ivanhoe Road, two blocks east of the Rockridge BART station. Roselawn was home in

succession to two wealthy men and their families: a railroad builder of the Pacific Northwest, and a mining engineer with holdings from Africa to South America. Both were men of unusual accomplishments, and Roselawn was a symbol of their successes.

At its peak, the 14.5 acre estate had more than a dozen structures, including a two-story residence, a spectacular conservatory, several greenhouses, a hay barn, a mammoth carriage house, a billiard hall, several factory buildings, and an office. The exotic gardens featured statuary, a stone grotto, and a shell-shaped "summer house." A 127,000 gallon tank situated on the heights south of Broadway delivered a private supply of spring water to the estate.

In 1880 Captain John Commigers Ainsworth (1822-93), a steamboat pilot and railroad builder, had Roselawn built for his retirement years. Construction details are not known, though a contract notice identifies Clinton Day as architect of the detached billiard room building. The Oakland Enquirer noted the "floral grandeur" of Roselawn, calling it "one of Oakland's finest show places" and "a princely palace." At one time the Ainsworth family also owned Pagoda Hill itself (across Chabot from Roselawn) and the Italianate house at 6125 Chabot. Only 6125 Chabot still stands.

A lifelong friend wrote that Captain Ainsworth's fortune and position were "not the result of accident or chance, but have been secured by industry, integrity, ability, hard work and prudence." Orphaned by the age of eleven, Ainsworth worked in an uncle's store in Ohio, sleeping on a pallet under the counter. He had only six months of school, but the "discipline of poverty was a splendid teacher," according to his son George. For five years he was a Mississippi steamboat pilot between St. Louis and Galena.

The Gold Rush drew him to California in 1850. He arrived with \$9 in his pocket, and clerked briefly at a court in Sacramento before moving to Oregon where he resumed steamboating. Among his ventures in the Northwest was the transportation of troops and munitions to the Cascades during the Indian war of 1855. He also delivered supplies to miners along the rivers, and took his river craft on a dangerous three-day ocean voyage to British Columbia. Soon he and his partner Robert Thompson began building railroads to connect river routes. In 1860, Ainsworth co-founded and was first president of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. Six years later, he founded the Oregon Central Railroad. He was a board member from 1873 to 1878 of Portland's free school system. He continued his business interests in Oregon after moving to Oakland. The Ainsworth National Bank was organized in the 1880s in Portland, where the Captain also built several commercial blocks. George Ainsworth wrote that his father "had found Portland made of mud and left it marble."

Capt. Ainsworth "lost" two wives before he married Fanny Babbitt, daughter of General Edwin Burr Babbitt, chief of the Quartermaster Department of the Army. Their six children — Laura, Fanny, John Churchill, Harry Babbitt, Maud, and Belle — were born in Portland. So was George, his son from a previous marriage, an 1872 U.C. Berkeley graduate, the captain's business partner in later years. During his "retirement" in Oakland between 1880 and 1893, Ainsworth helped organize the Central Bank and was its president. At the time of his death, he and George were developing the \$3 million Redondo Beach resort and hotel designed by

"Residence and grounds of Capt. J.C. Ainsworth, Claremont." This 1887 photo by Rodolph appeared in promotions including the 1893 Columbian Exposition Alameda County Souvenir. (OHR)





Roselawn from the north about 1910. After the original dwelling burned in 1890, Walter J. Mathews designed this two-story house, which was built by contractor William Winnie at a cost of \$14,089.

Photo is by Edgar A. Cohen of Alameda, whose work was recently exhibited at the Cohen House. (Courtesy of The Bancroft Library)

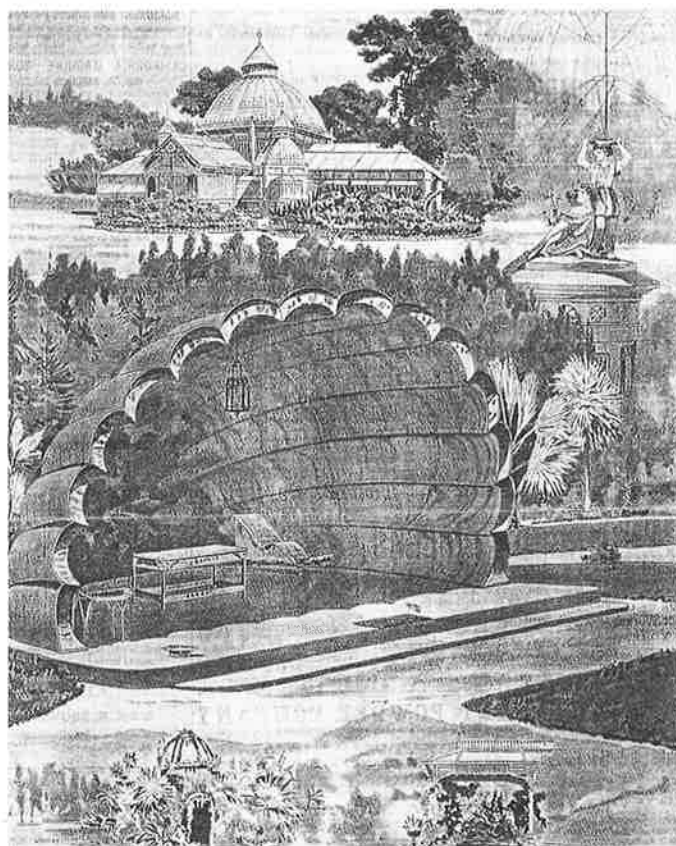
W.J. Mathews. In its day, it was the largest hotel project in Southern California and included a 10,000 square foot chautauqua.

Mathews also rebuilt Roselawn in 1890 after fire devastated the estate. The Oakland Enquirer said, "The mansion burned like tinder, there being a stiff breeze, and it was only by the greatest efforts of twenty-five men from neighboring places that the conservatory and other buildings were saved... The residence was probably the most beautiful one on this side of the bay," and contained elegant furniture, paintings, and curiosities gathered from all portions of the world. The greatest losses were marble statuary and the prized billiard table that had traveled across the United States. The loss, estimated at \$60,000, was insured for only \$25,000. The disaster must have stirred thoughts of mortality, for Capt. Ainsworth made his will the same month he contracted to rebuild Roselawn.

Like many wealthy Victorians, Ainsworth valued flowers. Visitors called the grounds a tropical paradise. According to Elinor Richey's Ultimate Victorians, conservatories were a must for those who could afford them. Flowers were only part of Roselawn's grandeur. It also had a gazebo shaped like an upright half shell, with an exterior of beaten copper plates and an interior covered with cement finished in gold bronze and sea green. The floor was polished black cement blocks. There were fountains, urns, and outdoor statuary, stately oaks and palms, and a terraced rockery and caverns. Along the south edge of the property that skirted Temescal Creek, a stand of willow trees and a wooden bridge created a quiet retreat.

Ainsworth died in December 1893. A simple service — without "ostentation of wreaths" — was held at Roselawn. Among the pallbearers were Professor LeConte of Berkeley and A.J. Ralston. The heirs formed the Ainsworth

Company in San Francisco to manage the \$860,000 estate. After George Ainsworth's death only two years later, several members of the family returned to Portland, where they had extensive real estate holdings. Fanny died there in 1905. However, she is buried with the Captain and other family at Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland. In 1905, H.E. Huntington bought the remainder of Ainsworth's business interests.



"Scenes on the grounds of Capt. J.C. Ainsworth, Claremont, Alameda County, Cal.," published in Mining and Scientific Press, 1891, showing the copper-clad, shell-shaped summerhouse. (Oakland History Room/Charles Marinovich)

In September 1903, the Ainsworth Co. sold Roselawn to Charles Butters (1854-1933), a "colorful and forceful" metallurgist, who at various times owned mines in South Africa, Utah, Idaho, Canada, Colorado, Nevada, California, Mexico, Honduras, San Salvador, and Nicaragua. Butters was born in Massachusetts, but came to Oakland as a boy. He got his first job with Wells Fargo at age twelve because he "demanded" it. As a joke, he was given the task of delivering dead letters. To everyone's surprise, he located 75% of the addressees and was promptly given a better job. Later he attended Oakland High School, and completed his education in 1879 at the University of California at Berkeley. During his school years, he worked as an electrician and telegraph operator. In 1883 he married Jessie Hertz of Savannah, Georgia. They had no children.

During eight years in South Africa, Butters established an international reputation as a metallurgist. He perfected a method of extracting gold and silver from ore using a chlorination process, which allowed him to bring near-defunct mines back into profitable operation. Jessie Butters dubbed him the "savior of the Rand." In 1896, during the Boer War, Butters, his associates Henry Garthwaite and John Hays

Hammond, and sixty others were arrested by President Krueger of the Transvaal Republic and charged with treason. Butters was sentenced to two years in prison. Through the efforts of American diplomats he was released upon payment of a \$10,000 fine.

The elegance of Roselawn stood in sharp contrast to the Butters's previous mining-town homes. At Roselawn, Butters, who was a British subject, surrounded himself with amenities befitting a gentleman. He moved in polo circles, was an excellent horseman, and once had forty polo ponies at Roselawn. In 1906, he had the only Arabian steed in California. Despite chronic pain attributed to a mining accident, he rode every day. He maintained membership in the Johannesburg Turf Club throughout the 1920s. Although he owned an automobile, Butters also kept a coach. A resident of Rockridge still remembers the uniformed coachmen who whipped the horses as Butters's coach sped along Chabot Road.

In the 1920 census, Roselawn's residents included an office manager, a cook, a parlor maid, a stable manager and his family, and two gardeners. Jessie Butters called the mining library at Roselawn the most complete private library of its kind in the world. Charles and Jessie continued to receive invitations to London social events, including the 1911 coronation of King George V to which they were invited by U.S. Special Representative and Mrs. John Hays Hammond. Reportedly the first California boy to die abroad during World War I was Butters's nephew Henry, in the Royal Field Artillery. Jessie Butters belonged to the Ladies Relief Society of Oakland and was socially active. In May 1908 the San Francisco Call announced that she would entertain "prominent and exclusive matrons" at an elaborate affair for Mrs. Victor H. Metcalf.

Butters was a controversial figure in Rockridge. In 1910, he and his neighbor to the west, Raymond Perry (whose property is now St. Albert's College) opposed extension of the rail line along Shafter Avenue that backed their properties. A Tribune editorial titled "The Civic Pride of Rich Men" said the two had a hostile attitude. Despite their opposition, the rail line went ahead.

More disturbing were the thirteen recorded fires and explosions that rocked the neighborhood. Butters operated a laboratory at Roselawn where twenty employees manufactured aluminum and zinc dust. The worst explosion, on February 15, 1916, destroyed the plant and injured five workmen. After promising no more explosions, Butters was allowed to rebuild five factory buildings. But later the Vernon-Rockridge Bulletin reported an incident in which pieces of buildings flew blocks away, a blinding sheet of flame shot up several hundred feet, and aluminum burned brightly for nearly an hour. Eventually the



Charles Butters (left) with colleagues Arthur Abbott and Charley Dull at Devisadero about 1905, two years after Butters purchased Roselawn. (Courtesy of The Bancroft Library)



"Residence of Charles Butters... one of the characteristic homes in the vicinity of Rock Ridge Park," from Laymance Real Estate Co. advertisement in *Duffy's Magazine & Pacific Coast Guide*, 1911. (Oakland History Room)



The Roselawn site in Oaklawn Manor today, with the telltale palm tree. Pottery, horseshoes, nails, and an old well were uncovered when an addition was recently built at the shingled house at center right. (Jennifer Katz)

neighbors forced the plant to move to Peyton near Martinez. In a civic gesture, in 1918, Butters donated property for completion of the roadbed at the top of Broadway.

In 1927 Butters suffered a tremendous financial loss when his Nicaraguan mine, San Albino, was seized by the rebel leader, General Augusto Sandino. Sandino had been a clerk in the Butters mine. "Not a very good clerk, either," Butters once said. The rebels were apparently after the dynamite stored at the mine. Jessie Butters wrote that the "bandit... sent a man to kill him [Butters] but he escaped by sliding down an ore chute and being hidden and furnished with a mule by a faithful employee. He rode at night until he reached a U.S. Marine camp - minus clothes, mine, and fortune."

The financial reverses at the mine led directly to the demise of Roselawn. To settle his debts, Butters turned the estate over to his bankers and he and Jessie moved to 3160 Lewiston Avenue, Berkeley, where he died in 1933. The *New York Times* obituary reported that ex-governor Pardee was a

pallbearer at Butters's funeral. Jessie Butters died in 1955. Their remains are in the columbarium at Mountain View Cemetery.

Harvey and Maud Sorensen bought Roselawn. In August 1928 they filed a subdivision map for Oaklawn Manor, fifty-five lots along Ivanhoe and Ross. They might have named the tract Roselawn, but that name was already claimed in 1904 for a subdivision to the west. The Sorensens reserved the west side of Ivanhoe to build their Schirmer-designed Mediterranean villa which still stands, but Roselawn was demolished. Oaklawn Manor, with its distinctive cement streets, underground utilities, and smooth curbs, was engineered by Hussey & Belcher and constructed by Fredrickson and Watson. Today a little village of period revival homes lines Ross Street. Ivanhoe has a mix of architectural styles built up over two decades, giving no clue to its previous history. But in front of 5818 Ivanhoe stands a reminder: the palm tree that once graced the curving drive at Roselawn's carriage entrance.

--Jennifer Katz

## OHA Update

### ■ WALKING TOURS CONTINUE

The story of Roselawn is included in Jennifer Katz's Chabot Road walking tour, "Historic Pagoda Hill in Rockridge," presented on August 6 at 1:30. Other tours remaining in this summer's series are: Aug. 7, Chinatown, a new tour of this vital and culturally diverse neighborhood led by Ernest Chann; Aug. 13, the Produce Market and SONI (South of the Nimitz), a waterfront industrial and loft district displayed by

Survey coordinator and neighborhood resident Gary Knecht; August 14, Abandoned Bars of Golden Gate, exploring San Pablo Avenue in North Oakland with Don Hausler, author of the *OHA News* article of the same name; Aug. 20, Joaquin Miller Park, new tour led by Berenice Stoner and Jean Horowitz, featuring The Abbey, Woodminster Theater, the Cascades, and more; and Aug. 21, Richmond Boulevard, the hidden rustic neighborhood along Glen Echo Creek interpreted by *OHA* president and creek advocate Marlene Wilson.

See *OHA Calendar*, page 14, for starting times and locations. For more information call the *OHA* office, 763-9218.

#### ■ NEW BOARD MEMBER: HOLLY BABE FAUST

OHA welcomes Holly Babe Faust to its Board of Directors. Holly is project manager for the First Unitarian Church of Oakland/Center for Urban Family Life, where she is overseeing the \$4.5 million rehabilitation project and has coordinated the Oakland Diversifest street festival. She has degrees in art and architecture from U.C. Berkeley and is a licensed real estate broker and general contractor. As a contractor she specializes in restoring older residences. She is serving on the OHA preservation action committee, where she is monitoring the Nabisco and Greene Library projects.

#### ■ SURVEY SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, a project of the City Planning Department co-sponsored by the Landmarks Board and OHA, is currently conducting a reconnaissance survey of the San Antonio district and preparing inventory forms on unreinforced masonry buildings citywide. Volunteers are invited to help in preparing building descriptions, assembling survey forms (which will be available for reference at the Oakland History Room and OHA), and taking photos to update the Central District survey done in the early 1980s. If you helped with the original Central District survey, this is a good opportunity to revisit the study area a decade later. If not, this is a good time to join this exciting Oakland project. Call Betty Marvin or Gary Knecht at the Survey, 238-3941 afternoons. --Betty Marvin

#### ■ SAVE THE TREASURE ISLAND MUSEUM

The Treasure Island Museum is asking your help to avoid closing its doors October 1, when Navy funding ends due to closure of the Treasure Island base. According to museum director and former OHA board member Doug Brookes, the Navy will continue to provide utilities, security, and rent-free exhibit space if the museum can become self-supporting. The alternative is shipment of the collections back to Washington D.C.

OHA members can help save this part of Bay Area history by sending donations to the museum at 410 Palm Avenue, Treasure Island, San Francisco 94130, or by joining the Treasure Island Museum Association (\$25 individual, \$100 contributing). Open hours are from 10 to 3:30 every day.

The museum exhibits the history of the Treasure Island World's Fair of 1939-40, the China Clipper seaplanes of the 1930s, the Bay Bridge, Yerba Buena Island, and the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard in the Pacific. For more information, call the museum at 415-395-5067. --Douglas Brookes

#### ■ ARCHAEOLOGY IN WEST OAKLAND

In recent months there has been a proliferation of hardhats, orange vests and heavy machinery in West Oakland. Most of the activity is demolition for the new Cypress freeway, but one crew is carefully scraping at modest holes in the ground with hand trowels. This team of archaeologists from the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University, assisted by Caltrans archaeologists, are studying archaeological resources on the 30-plus blocks in the path of the new freeway, and determining if any of the resources are eligible for the National Register. The project, designed and coordinated by Mary and Adrian Praetzelis, began with an in depth historical study of the neighborhood, as a basis for the field work supervised by Jack McIlroy.

Artifacts found in century-old yards and privies have included a pile of shoes in a cobbler's yard, a Pullman dining car teacup, a feral pig's tooth and a deer's shoulder bone, and a pit full of spareribs and broken whiskey bottles on the site of a brothel in the Pacific Street red-light district.

West Oakland was a lively part of town in its heyday as a railroad center. The dig is uncovering intimate details about the daily lives of railroad workers and their families, and giving us a fuller understanding of local history. For information on tours of the sites call Elyn Walker, outreach coordinator, 707-664-2381. --Aicha Woods



Excavation in the parking lot of the West Oakland post office, on the site of a "female boarding house" on Pacific Avenue opposite the Southern Pacific yards. (Betty Marvin)

## Oakland Briefing

The "Oakland Briefing..." Column is prepared by the OHA Preservation Action Committee. If you would like to help monitor preservation issues in Oakland, please call Carolyn Douthat 763-5370.

### ■ CAPTAIN SHOREY AND MARY NETHERLAND HOUSES

In the Oakland Point neighborhood of West Oakland, within a block of each other at Goss, 8th, and Pine Streets, stand two houses significant because of their role in early Oakland African-American history.

The edge of Oakland Point stands in the path of the rerouted Cypress freeway and its associated frontage road. Thus far about ten structures have been demolished for the project, with at least five more houses scheduled for demolition. One of these is the Bachman-Jackson-Netherland house at 714 Pine. This 19th century vernacular cottage, which dates from 1868, is distinguished by its age and diminutive size. It sits on a tiny lot measuring 25 by 40 feet.

Oscar Jackson, a barber and professional minstrel singer, lived in this house in the early 1870s. His daughter Mary Netherland was born there, and became a prominent member of Oakland's black community. Because this is one of the earliest documented homes of African-Americans in Oakland, it has significance beyond its humble architecture. Efforts are underway to move the house from the site and store it for relocation nearby for possible reuse as a museum of early Oakland life. Interest has been expressed by some members of the West Oakland Commerce Association. Currently arrangements are being made to examine the feasibility of the move and to find a site to store the house.

Another significant structure nearby, dilapidated, partly burned and vandalized, is the Captain Shorey house at 1782 8th Street. William T. Shorey was a whaling captain hailing from the West Indies. He had a worldwide reputation for his endeavors at sea, and was a distinguished and articulate member of the Oakland black community from the mid-1880s until his death in 1918.

His two-story gable-ended Italianate could also be as an excellent candidate for a house museum project. Some of Shorey's records, currently in the collection of the Oakland Museum, could be displayed, along with artifacts of the period. The house is in private ownership and has been vacant since it was damaged in the 1989 earthquake. Its importance is gradually being recognized as people learn about this important early Oakland family. A landmark application, sponsored by interested West Oakland groups, is currently being prepared.

These buildings could become the nucleus of a West Oakland preservation park, with



Capt. William Shorey and family. Museum proposal for Shorey and Netherland houses could display early West Oakland artifacts like this formal portrait. (Oakland History Room)

historic houses, artifacts, and gardens celebrating the ethnic diversity and way of life in the beginning decades of the city. These ideas are in the formative stages and anyone interested should contact the OHA office. --Bill Coburn

### ■ OAKLAND NAVAL SUPPLY CENTER

Early in June it was announced that the Port of Oakland had entered into a license agreement with the Navy to use 80 acres at the Oakland Naval Supply Center for expanded storage space for Union Pacific Railroad operations. This agreement is the first step in a proposed lease of up to 220 acres of the center for Port operations.

Little known, though close at hand, the Naval Supply Center (known as the Naval Supply Depot until 1947) occupies 541 acres of waterfront real estate between Middle Harbor Road, 7th Street and the bay in far West Oakland. While it is not on the base closure list, the lease agreement with the Port, at \$1 per year, would mark a permanent change to what was the largest naval supply facility in the world during World War II.

According to the historic resources survey prepared by Gregory King of Caltrans, the facility is eligible for National Register historic district designation at the local, state, and national levels of significance. Since the Port's plans involve extensive

demolition to provide container storage and transfer space, the agreement cannot be signed until environmental review and the Section 106 process are completed.

Most of the public sees the Center only from BART or the Bay Bridge. That view gives little sense of the enormity of the place and its critical role in supplying the Pacific theatre during World War II.

Plans for a naval supply depot began as early as 1910 when a commission recommended a base in the Bay Area for future defense purposes. After World War I, when most of the American fleet was transferred to the Pacific, supply depots in San Diego and Mare Island proved inadequate. Oakland, with its excellent rail and sea connections, was the preferred location for a new base and in 1936 Oakland voters approved a proposition deeding the site to the Navy. Dredging and fill began in January of 1940. With the outbreak of war, construction accelerated and by March of 1942, when the first ship was loaded with supplies, the supply depot was two-thirds complete. Approximately 87% of the pre-1946 buildings remain.

According to King, "it was not until the war in the Pacific was well underway that the Navy had ever been forced to furnish support to the fleet outside of the continental limits of the United States for a continued period of time.... The Oakland facility, the Navy's largest supply center, received, assembled, stored, inspected and shipped hundreds of thousands of tons of supplies, provisions, and materiel to the Pacific Fleet... Peak employment was reached in March, 1945, when approximately 16,000 Naval and civilian personnel worked at the installation.... These supplies not only furnished the distant American fighting forces with critical military hardware, but also, in many cases, the common goods

represented symbols of home, important for maintaining the serviceman's morale."

Reactivated during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the center still serves its original function as a supply base for the Navy fleet operations in the Pacific, and is the home of the hospital ship Mercy.

The demolitions proposed by the Port would seriously compromise the integrity of the base as a National Register eligible district. To mitigate the loss of this powerful symbol of the role of Oakland and the Bay Area in the war effort, measures are being discussed by the Navy, the Port of Oakland, the Landmarks Board, and **Oakland Heritage Alliance**. Suggestions include moving one of the barracks buildings to a new site for use as an interpretive center, commissioning a history publication or a documentary video along the lines of the PBS "American Experience" series, installing interpretive displays at Port View Park and the Oakland Airport, assembling a collection of artifacts representative of the goods that moved through the depot, public tours prior to demolition, and seeking out former employees of the depot for oral histories.

Environmental review is projected for completion in December of this year. Because the current license agreement prohibits any demolition, the facility will remain intact until the reviews are completed and the first phase of the lease is in effect.

OHA members who have information, photos, or oral history contacts or who would be interested in touring the facility should contact Helen Lore at the OHA office (763-9218).  
--Carolyn Douthat

#### ■ NABISCO FACTORY REUSE PROJECT

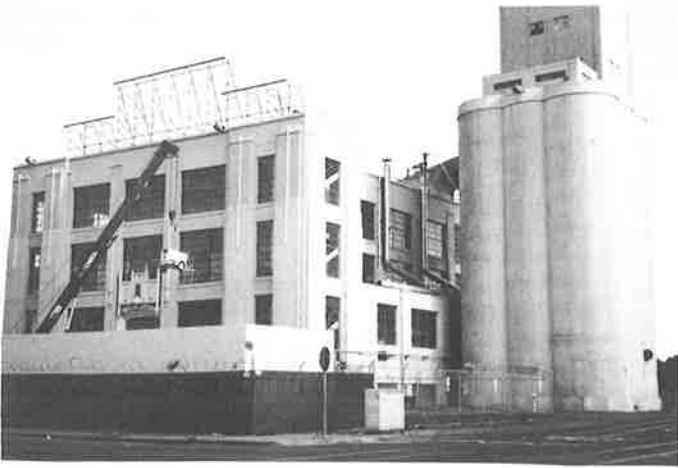
The former Nabisco plant in West Oakland was built in 1915 as Pacific Coast Shredded Wheat Company, a major investment heralding a shift from residential to manufacturing land use in West Oakland. Now an adaptive reuse project putting 50 affordable housing units in the building has been approved by the City Planning Commission.

Bounded on the east and west by Union and Poplar Streets and on the north by 14th Street, the building is a three story reinforced concrete structure with a full basement and two sets of grain storage silos. It is utilitarian/industrial, with regular structural bays pierced by panels of steel industrial sash windows at each level. Yet the entry on 14th Street has molded Gothic tracery at the entry door and decorative pylons between the fenestration. The overall impression of architect Lewis P. Hobart's design is one of substance and boldness. Rising above the buildings around it, the plant is visible from both freeways and many points in downtown Oakland. The



The Oakland Naval Supply Center, in the Y between the two long wharves, contains dozens of gigantic warehouses, plus barracks and administration buildings. Port project will affect the part closest to the Estuary, at left. (Pacific Aerial Surveys photo, 1974, Oakland History Room)





Planning Commission has approved plans to convert the 1915 "City Beautiful" Nabisco factory building to 50 apartments, using housing tax credits. (Survey photo)

building itself offers 360 degree views of downtown Oakland, the hills, the West Oakland neighborhoods, and the waterfront.

The project is being developed by Samuelson, Hornaday and Schaffer in conjunction with Taylor Memorial Service Center, operating from Taylor Memorial United Methodist Church a block from the site. A committee of interested OHA board members toured the site recently and OHA sent a letter to the developers supporting reuse of the building.

Key historic elements of the structure will be preserved and the units, which will have 18' ceilings with lofts at the upper level, will maintain some of the flavor of the industrial interior. The basement will be parking, with additional parking on the east portion of the site. Landscaping at the building entry will maintain and enhance a dignified presence on 14th Street. **Oakland Heritage Alliance** strongly recommended maintaining the industrial sash windows and suggested that the developers retain a preservation architect on the project.

The rental units are partially subsidized by federal housing tax credits and the developers propose to establish a structured rebate program for tenants to purchase homes the West Oakland neighborhood after a minimum five year tenancy. After fifteen years the project may become a cooperative, with tenant ownership. --Bill Coburn

#### ■ POWERHOUSE, SHOWROOM, WHAT NEXT?

The distinctive period revival auto showroom at the corner of Harrison Street and Bay Place, most recently Bill Cox Buick, stands empty, its future uncertain. Developer Dan Christopoulos proposes to convert it to a small shopping complex with off-street parking. Plans include demolishing the rear repair shop portion of the building along Harrison to create the parking lot. The main showroom, with its tile floors,

soaring ceilings, and carved moldings would remain. Since the entire complex appears eligible for the National Register, even partial demolition is cause for concern.

In two different incarnations, this complex has been a prominent anchor and gateway to the Adams Point neighborhood for over a century. Originally the site was developed as a powerhouse and carbarn for the Consolidated Piedmont Cable Company. Bankrolled by Piedmont capitalists Walter Blair and Mark Regua, the line ran up Oakland Avenue to Highland Avenue. Next door was the famed Piedmont Baths, its swimming pools heated by the coal-fired cable car power plant. The cable cars only ran for three years (1890-93); then the company went bankrupt in the process of electrifying the line. In 1897 Borax Smith's Realty Syndicate acquired the line and brought it into consolidation with other East Bay transit lines creating the Key System.

In 1908 there were fewer than 5000 motor vehicles in all of northern California. In 1920 there were 210,000 in Alameda County alone. In 1925 the obsolete powerhouse was bought by an enterprising automobile dealer from Michigan, Donald Musgrave Lee. Lee had dealerships in Los Angeles, Pasadena, San Francisco, Fresno, and Sacramento as well as Oakland. He specialized in Cadillacs, high end cars attractive to the affluent customers in Adams Point and Piedmont.

Prominent Oakland architect Clay Burrell, grandson of Oakland pioneer Alfred Burrell, was hired to completely reconstruct the old powerhouse into an elegant showroom for prestige automobiles. Among the many well known Oakland buildings designed by Burrell are the Greek Orthodox Church at 10th and Castro, and the California and Ebony Plaza Hotels. A \$28,000 makeover resulted in a showcase with expansive windows and elegant quasi-Gothic ornament, retaining only the shape and skeleton of the old utilitarian building. Lee's agency sold Cadillacs at this location through the mid-1940s, and it was a Cadillac dealership until recently.

In addition to being considered eligible for the National Register the complex is on the Landmarks Board's Study List. It is also on the city's URM (unreinforced masonry building) list, and could benefit from ability to use the State Historical Building Code. Preservation tax credits could also be available, but as the case of Old Merritt College showed, eligibility is tied closely to maintaining the integrity of the entire building. Landmarks Board members and neighborhood residents appear to agree that a new use for the building will be welcome, but issues need to be thoroughly studied. The Planning Department's Environmental Review unit is currently determining whether an EIR would be required. --Annalee Allen



Wreckage of Miss Bisbee's School at 7th Avenue and Foothill exemplifies dangers to vacant buildings: can Preservation Element help? (Bruno Brandli)

#### ■ MORE HISTORY UP IN SMOKE

A four alarm fire which started early on June 24 destroyed a boarded up apartment house on the corner of 7th Avenue and Foothill Boulevard. The building was originally a private girls school, listed as Miss Bisbee's Boarding and Day School in the 1894 City Directory. Converted to fourteen units, the three story structure has suffered in recent years from poor management which periodically left it vacant and boarded up. The building had been through foreclosure two years ago and is currently controlled by Sumitomo Bank. Beat Health had closed the building for health and safety violations and at the time of the fire only two units were legally occupied, though eleven people were evacuated. According to the Oakland Tribune, authorities speculate that the fire may have been caused by a candle or cocaine users who had broken in a vacant unit.

Unfortunately this situation is not uncommon. The savings and loan crisis and the depression of the real estate market have left many older buildings in the flatlands in a vulnerable state. Not far from Miss Bisbee's School, a large Georgian Revival house at 1819 7th Avenue, featured in the October 1898 California Architect and Building News, was damaged by fire after gas was cut off and the tenants overloaded the electrical circuits. The owner declared bankruptcy in 1992 and the building is now boarded up and in the hands of the lender.

Many of these buildings qualify as "potential designated historic properties" under the Historic Preservation Element. The Element contains specific policies and actions calling for early intervention by the city when historic properties are

declared substandard. These include amending the Housing Code to favor rehabilitation over demolition, and allowing the city to correct violations and lien the property. The Element recommends increasing reinspection fees as a disincentive for delaying compliance, and establishing a program for city acquisition of buildings before they reach the public nuisance state.

Implementation of these policies and actions, along with a focused effort to involve lenders as well as owners in bringing these buildings back into use, would be a first step in preventing the further loss of housing in historic buildings and, not incidentally, protecting the neighborhoods of which they are a part. --Carolyn Douthat

#### ■ ADMINISTRATION BUILDING PROJECT

The draft EIR for the proposed City Hall Administration Building Project has been released for public comment. The preferred alternative for location and configuration of the project includes two sites and two new buildings, one between the Rotunda and the Broadway Building and another on the block currently occupied by the Dalziel Building, Pardee Building, MacLafferty Building, and Plaza Building at 15th and San Pablo. The proposal includes retention of the Broadway Building and Plaza Building, and demolition of six other buildings, all of which are contributors to the National Register eligible Downtown District.

Over the past few months, City Council committees have considered reports on various aspects of the project, with full Council work sessions scheduled for July. A vote on the project will not be taken until Council reviews the results of the final EIR which will probably occur late this year.

OHA, with other preservation representatives, has been meeting with staff from the City Manager's office to discuss issues related to the historic district, including procedures for federal Section 106 review.

While the project is going through the environmental review stage, progress is being made on repair of the Broadway Building and the Rotunda. Council has approved funds for strengthening of the Broadway Building, and will be considering funding for mapping damage to the exterior terra cotta, and repair of the facade. Signs on the Broadway Building have been removed and new fencing installed along Broadway and San Pablo. Work has been authorized to repair the earthquake damage to the Rotunda on the upper floor facing Kahn's Alley.

Copies of the draft EIR will be available from the city's Environmental Review Coordinator, Anu Raud (238-3941) and a copy will also be available at the OHA office.

--Carolyn Douthat

# City Landmarks Board Actions

The Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board meets on the second Monday of each month. Meetings are open to the public. Landmark designation is recommended by the Board to the Planning Commission and City Council. Landmarks are subject to a 240-day delay in issuance of demolition permits. Exterior alterations require approval by City Planning staff, at the recommendation of the Board. 113 landmarks and five districts have been designated since the Board was created in 1974. Meetings are at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue, second Mondays, 4 pm.

Board members are: Annalee Allen, Diana Becton-Brown, Andrew Carpentier, Creighton Fong, Les Hausrath, Estelle Mannis, & Jean Spees. Staff: Helaine Kaplan Prentice, Secretary

## APRIL

Board resumed discussion of the proposal to move the plaque commemorating the Van Der Naillen School of Engineering outside the landmark Temescal Branch Library. Board and family members agreed it was appropriate to display the plaque in the library with other historical materials about the school.

Impending demolition of the house at 1471 34th Avenue was discussed (see May).

Board voted to approve an application for landmark designation of Temple Sinai at 28th and Summit Streets, presented by Courtney Seepel of the Temple's board of directors. The sanctuary was designed in 1913 by well known theater architect Albert Lansburgh and has stained glass by H. Dombrink of Oakland. The congregation, which dates back to the 1860s, is the oldest in Oakland, with members prominent in early downtown commerce.

Board members reported on a tour of the Naval Supply Center and Port representatives described their project which would remove buildings to create container yards (see Briefing). Board discussed mitigations and decided to send a letter of concern.

Architect Tom Saxby reported concern for the upstairs interior of the Delger Block (901-33 Broadway, a city landmark), being leased by Kaiser. It is the only remaining intact interior in the Old Oakland project. Board has no authority over privately owned interiors, but would investigate.

Secretary Prentice reported on a meeting with First Baptist Church (2201 Telegraph) about seismic upgrade and possible landmark application, and plans by St. Paul's School to demolish the Oakland Club/Casa Romana building at 124 Montecito, on the Study List and rated B+ by the Survey.

An updated Study List was distributed.

## MAY

Board adopted the resolution recommending landmark designation for Temple Sinai at 356-58 28th Street. The nomination will be forwarded to the City Planning Commission.



Lansburgh's 1913 Temple Sinai on 28th Street, nominated for landmark status by its congregation. (Survey photo)

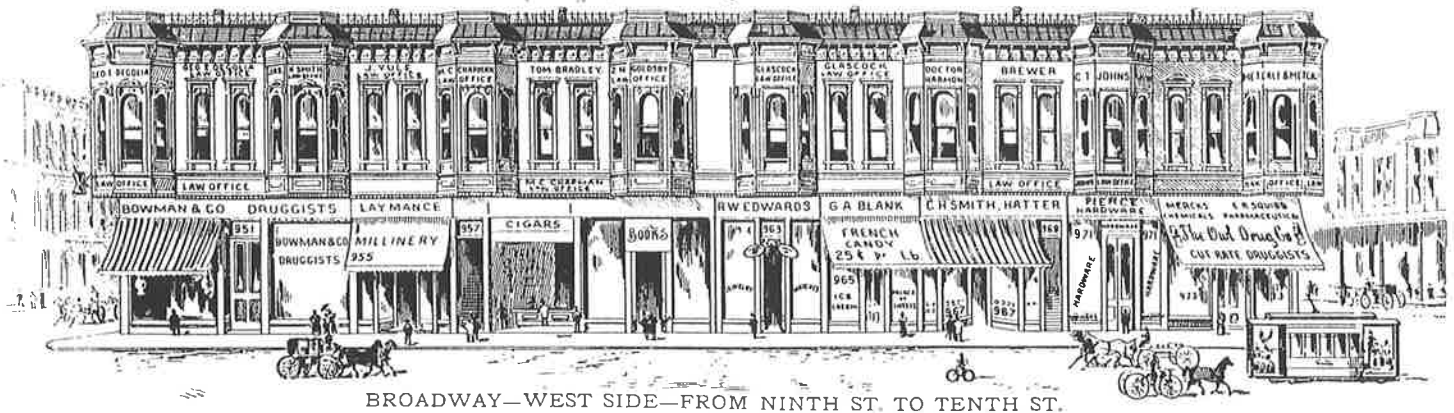
Phil Tagami, of California Capital Group, presented plans to replicate damaged terra cotta on the top stories of the Financial Center Building (405 14th Street, a city landmark). Plans are to use a concrete-resin composite to replace nearly 300 pieces (for both cost and weight considerations). As replacement does not change the appearance of the building, this phase of the project is exempt from design review. Phase 2, resurfacing the sand-blasted terra cotta on the ground floor, will be brought to the Board in the future. Tagami has applied to put the building on the National Register in order to use the preservation tax credits.

Aliza Gallo of the Office of Economic Development and Employment (OEDE) discussed the future of the Montgomery Ward building at 2825 East 14th Street. It has been vacant for 11 years. Its size - close to a million square feet - makes reuse difficult. The community wants it used or demolished. Allen called attention to its B+ Survey rating and the possibility of federal tax credits.

Board heard a report from Peter Milano, representing his family as owners of the house at 1471 34th Avenue, on the Study List and facing demolition for code violations. Board had requested and obtained a 60-day delay of demolition. Helaine Prentice was facilitating negotiations between the owner, Code Compliance, and the Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development.

Annalee Allen reported on the Historic Preservation Element Working Group meeting. Planning Department staff drew up 66 action steps for implementing the Element. Allen noted a need for better interdepartment cooperation, especially with OEDE. Adequacy of staffing was a major concern.

Board noted and commended the report on Economic Incentives for Preservation prepared by Carolyn Douthat for OHA (see Winter-Spring 1994 OHA News). City Council had also received and commended it.



BROADWAY—WEST SIDE—FROM NINTH ST. TO TENTH ST.

Delger Block in Old Oakland retained its original office interiors, with ornamental plaster, high ceilings, and transoms, for over a century. Board used advice and persuasion to achieve a partial compromise on proposed modernization. Board is also concerned about ground floor signs and entries. (Illustrated Directory, 1896, Oakland History Room)

Board discussed the signs and lack of pedestrian entries at Smart and Final, in the ground floor of the landmark Delger Block (901-33 Broadway), in violation of the Board's design review recommendations. Regarding the Delger Block's second floor interiors, Prentice reported on a meeting with representatives of Kaiser and Citicorp. They plan complete removal of plaster walls, ceilings, and decorative moldings, and lowering the ceilings. Frank Kliever of the Building Department urged them to consider using the State Historical Building Code.

Prentice reported that the City Council had formally designated the Chinese Presbyterian Church as a landmark. Council hearing on designation of the Oakland Museum was postponed at the request of the new museum director. Prentice offered to address the Museum board's concerns.

Les Hausrath and Helaine Prentice had made a presentation to the vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church (114 Montecito Avenue), and explained the effects of landmark status. St. Paul's is already in a design review zone and defined as "historic" under the URM and Earthquake Repair ordinances; therefore designation would impose no additional regulations but would provide access to the State Historical Building Code and waiver of design review fees (\$900 to \$1800).

Prentice reported on a call from Cheryl Gabriel, real estate agent listing the Julia Morgan-designed McElroy house at 401 Lee. Prentice explained to Gabriel the history of the project, rehabilitation opportunities, and the significance of Julia Morgan.

## JUNE

Board reviewed an application for an aeration fountain in the Embarcadero arm of Lake Merritt. Storm drains deposit organic materials that use up the lake's oxygen, and aeration counteracts this. Three designs

were shown - a "sunburst," a "rocket," and a combination. Board, like the public at Festival at the Lake, preferred the combination.

Board approved alterations associated with seismic upgrade at 1401 Harrison Street, the Harrison Hotel (on the Study List). Steel will be added to tie walls and floors, the front door will be changed to meet disabled access requirements, and a new recessed door for trash removal will be created. Board member Andrew Carpentier, an architect, suggested that a variance for the service door might be explored.

Board voted to accept a Notice of Intent to nominate Fire Station #10 at 172 Santa Clara Avenue as a landmark. The notice was submitted by Greg Rose, a firefighter at the station, with support from Assistant Chief Neil Honeycutt. The building's domestic-scale 1904 exterior has been considerably altered, but the interior, including early fire apparatus, is intact and specified for protection in the nomination. Rose Garden Neighborhood supports the nomination.

Board discussed a request from the City Manager's office for comment on design guidelines for the new city administration building on City Hall Plaza (see Briefing). In view of recent experience with the design for the new state office building - a large International style structure - Prentice suggested guidelines that are specific to the Beaux Arts character of the surrounding Downtown district, even though it might limit the design teams' options.

Mayor Harris had asked for Board comment on the proposed state office building at 15th and Clay Streets. He was concerned about the effect on the downtown district. Prentice prepared a letter from the Board to the state analyzing the design in context, with strong recommendations regarding size, materials, and facade treatment. Alan Dreyfuss, architect and subconsultant on the design competition, explained that the state did not have the same concern the city has to make the building fit into the district; the architects were not selected for their ability with historic buildings.

Dan Christopoulos presented a preliminary proposal to develop the Don Lee Cadillac property (2500 Harrison Street, on the Study List and rated B+ by the Survey) into a shopping complex. The project would demolish the rear of the building, and add a parking lot and two new buildings. Board suggested giving more thought to retaining the existing buildings (see Briefing).

Discussion of Delger Block interiors continued. Prentice and Carpentier had met with Kaiser and Citicorp and urged at least retaining the original ornament and ceiling height in the perimeter bay-windowed rooms. Concern was over lead paint on the plaster. The State Historical Building Code might allow a variance from OSHA standards.

Jean Spees reported on a meeting at First Unitarian Church (689 14th Street, a city landmark and on the National Register). She thought the Board should look at the plans for an inside balcony in the Wendte Room.

Annalee Allen noted that the city is submitting an application for a federal empowerment zone; six cities will be selected. Some preservation concerns have been added to the application.

JULY

Board approved plans by Carey and Company, Architects, for work at Dunsmuir House and Gardens, a city landmark: exterior painting and restoration, removal of a glass wind-break, and installation of a metal emergency exit stair at the rear of the house.

Prentice reported issuance by the Port of Oakland of the Draft Environmental Impact Report on demolition of the Grove Street Pier (1 M.L. King Way, on the Study List and rated A by the Survey). She reported further discussions with the Port on mitigations for the Naval Supply Center. Board will monitor the project, which will take several years.

Board voted to ratify Planning Director's placement of the Mary Netherland house (714 Pine Street) on the Study List. The house was purchased by Caltrans for the Cypress



Landmarks Board and community groups are looking for a way to save the Mary Netherland house, predating the transcontinental railroad and associated with early black history. (Survey)



The Gothic revival Don Lee Cadillac building, redesigned by Clay Burrell in 1925 from cable car powerhouse. (Survey photo)

replacement. The site must be cleared but the house can be moved; it is quite small and in good structural condition. It was built about 1868 and was home to one of the first African-American families in Oakland. Councilmember Natalie Bayton had asked about buildings threatened by the freeway project.

Prentice reported that University High School (Old Merritt College) was designated a landmark by City Council on July 5. The city designation is for the main building only, in contrast to the National Register listing which covers the entire complex including the gym and manual arts wing.

Board heard a request from Stephen Lowe, Urbanspace Development, for endorsement of a grant application toward creation of a regional wholesale produce market, and reuse of the historic produce market at 3rd and Franklin as a retail farmers' market. Board said the proposal was outside their jurisdiction, but suggested working with property owners in the area to explore S-7 or National Register district designation.

Representatives of St. Paul's School presented their plans to demolish the Oakland Club/Casa Romana at 124 Montecito to expand the school. They did not consider moving the building feasible. Board asked if new construction would immediately follow demolition and were told fundraising would take 2 to 5 years. An EIR may be required.

Board continued to comment on the Don Lee Cadillac project; noted that casts of the moldings in the Delger Block had been made, for possible future replication, and high ceilings would be retained; noted progress of Assembly bill prohibiting local landmark designation of religious structures against owners' wishes; and heard that Allen and Prentice had met with the Oakland Museum board about landmark status.

Les Hausrath was reelected chair and Jean Spees vice chair for 1994-95. Prentice said applicants for a board vacancy were being interviewed. --Kathy Olson

# OHA Calendar

The OHA Calendar lists events, activities, and meetings related to history and preservation that may be of interest to OHA members. Practical deadline for entries occurs at each solstice and equinox. To submit items for listings, contact Oakland Heritage Alliance or Donald Wardlaw, 2214 Thirteenth Ave., Oakland, 94606. (268-9524)

## Upcoming Activities

ongoing, Sun.-Th., 10-4, Jewish ceremonial and fine arts, historical artifacts, Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2911 Russell St., Berkeley, 849-2710.

ongoing, "Threads of Strength: People, Groups and Organizations of the Afro-American Community," Center for Afro-American History & Life, 5606 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, 658-3158.

through August 21, (W-Sat. 10-5, Sun. 12-7), "Raymond Saunders," mixed media, paintings & wall pieces by internationally known, Oakland African American artist, The Oakland Museum, Oak & 10th Streets, \$4/\$2 (members free).

through September, (T. 10-5:30, W-Th. 12-8, F. 12-5:30, Sat. 1-5:30), Oakland History Room, current exhibit: "Oakland: Detroit of the West," history of the automobile industry in Oakland, Main Library, 125 14th. St., 238-3222.

through October 2, (W-Sat. 10-5, Sun. 12-7), "Jewels And Gems: Collecting California Jewelry," evolving museum collection on display including precious and semi-precious stones and other materials including plastic and found objects, The Oakland Museum, Oak & 10th Streets, \$4/\$2 (members free).

August 5-7, Fri.-Sun., "South Bay Summer Weekend," Historic De Anza Hotel is headquarters for weekend, events include visits to San Jose Jazz Festival, S. J. Museum of Art & Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, Art Deco Society, 415-982-3326.

August 6, Sat. 1:30-3:30, "Historic Pagoda Hill in Rockridge," Chabot Road & College Ave., **OHA Walk**, \$6/\$4, 763-9218.

August 7, Sun. 1:30-3:30, "Chinatown," fountain of Renaissance Plaza, 9th St. between Franklin & Webster, **OHA Walk**, \$6/\$4, 763-9218.

August 13, Sat. 1:30-3:30, "Produce Market & SONI (South of Nimitz)," front of Oakland Grill, 3rd & Franklin, **OHA Walk**, \$6/\$4, 763-9218.

August 14, Sun. 1:30-4, "Abandoned Bars of Golden Gate," front of Golden Gate Branch Library, **OHA Walk**, \$6/\$4, 763-9218.

August 20, Sat. 1:30-3:30, "Joaquin Miller Park," Woodminster Theatre parking lot, **OHA Walk**, \$6/\$4, 763-9218.

August 21, Sun. 1:30-4, "Richmond Boulevard," 3252 Kempton Way (near Fairmount Ave. below MacArthur), **OHA Walk**, \$6/\$4, 763-9218.

August 21, Sun. 10am, "Bike Trippers Tour," 5.5 miles of historic downtown Oakland, Oakland Museum, reservations, 238-3514.

September 11, Sun., "Wilson House Tour," classic Queen Anne Victorian with neoclassical details, San Francisco Heritage, 415-441-3000.

September 11, Sun., "Annual Gatsby Summer Afternoon," Dunsmuir House & Gardens, Art Deco Society, 415-982-3326.

September 16 Fri. 5pm, Sun., deadline for entries, San Francisco Heritage Awards Program, honoring excellence in conservation and new construction in historical settings, 415-441-3000.

September 18, Sun. 10am, Bike Trippers Tour, see August 21.

September 24-January 8, (W-Sat. 10-5, Sun. 12-7), "25 Years of California Collecting," installations by four California artists--Rupert Garcia, Mildred Howard, Reagan Louie & Michael C. McMillen--combining objects aquired by museum in first 25 years of collecting, The Oakland Museum, Oak & 10th Streets, \$4/\$2 (members free).

October 16, Sun. 10am, Bike Trippers Tour, see August 21.

November 18, Fri., "Architectural Awards Luncheon," Mark Hopkins Hotel, San Francisco Heritage, 415-441-3000.

December 4, Sun., "Holiday Open House," Haas-Lilienthal House, San Francisco Heritage, 2007 Franklin, 415-441-3000.

## Regularly Scheduled Tours

Alameda Historical Museum, walking tours of historic Alameda, 1st & 3rd Sat., 1pm, 2324 Alameda Ave., \$5/\$3.50 members, 521-1233.

Ardenwood Regional Preserve, April-Nov., Th-Sun. 10-4; tour Patterson House hourly Sat. & Sun./variable Th-F., Ardenwood Blvd., Fremont, \$5/\$3 (Sr.)/\$2.50 (Jr.); 796-0663.

Camron-Stanford House, 1876 Italianate house museum at Lake Merritt, (W. 11-4 & Sun. 1-5), 1418 Lakeside Dr., \$2/\$1, free first Sun., 836-1976.

Dunsmuir House, Colonial Revival mansion, 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, 562-0328.

Hayward Area Historical Society Museum, (M-F 11-4, Sat. 12-4), 22701 Main Street, Hayward, \$1/\$0.50 (children), 581-0223.

McConaghy House, 104 year old farmhouse, Th-Sun., 1-4, 18701 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, \$3/\$2 (Sr.)/\$0.50 (children), 276-3010.

Paramount Theatre, Art Deco movie palace, Tours 1st & 3rd Sat 10am, 2025 Broadway, \$1, 893-2300.

Pardee Home Museum, 1868 Italianate Villa, Pardee family residence 1868-1981, tours by reservation (Th.-Sat. 11, 1 & 2:30), 672 11th St., \$4/\$3 (Sr.), accompanied children free, 444-2187.

Presidio, National Park Service walks, every Sat. 11am, meet at main parade grounds, 10am, free, (415) 556-0865.

San Francisco Heritage, Victorian & Edwardian Pacific Heights, Sun. 12:30-2, Haas-Lilienthal House Tours, Sun. 11-4, W. 12-3:15, Chinese New Year Architectural Walking Tour (Jan.)--call for date & time, 2007 Franklin, \$4/\$2\*; \*Srs./Jrs., (415) 441-3004.



## Regularly Scheduled Meetings

**Oakland Heritage Alliance.** OHA Board of Directors meets on the first Monday of the month, 7:30pm; for agenda and location, contact OHA, 763-9218.  
**Preservation Action Committee:** contact OHA, 763-9218, for time, place and agenda.

**Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board,** 2nd Mon., 4 pm.  
**City Planning Commission,** alternate Weds., 1:30 pm.

**City Council,** every Tuesday evening, 7:30pm.  
 All city meetings at Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Contact City Planning Dept., 238-3941, for Landmarks Board and Planning Commission agendas.

## New OHA Members

The Officers and Directors of Oakland Heritage Alliance welcome and thank all those concerned citizens who have shown their interest in Oakland's history and preservation by joining OHA. OHA's new members are:

Celia Baker, Sharon/Tom/Jim Bray, Mary & Kenneth Cardwell, Richard Carter, Rissa Coplan, Peggy Geary, Alan Gur-Arye, Neila Hallenbeck, Ed & Barbara Horst, Kirsten Houglet, Ken & Ann Katz, Ed Krueger, Miriam Laska, George McCord, Sam Moreno, Ruby Ng, Paul Nolan, Bob Rogers, Melissa & John Rosengard, Kay Hedgwick, Margaret Sheehan, Michael Skerik, Mary Triest/Charles Ross, Lenore Fogt, Robert Warnock, Patt Widin Wexler, Phillip & Kelly Woods, Gary Kee.

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## Oakland Heritage Alliance News

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### EDITORIAL BOARD

Annalee Allen, Carolyn Douthat & Dean Yabuki.

### EDITOR/PRODUCTION

Betty Marvin

OHA NEWS welcomes contributions--research projects large or small, historic photos, reports on preservation issues or events. Contact Betty Marvin, 849-1959, or OHA, 763-9218.

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## Oakland Heritage Alliance

P.O.Box 12425, Oakland CA 94604 763-9218

Oakland Heritage Alliance, a California nonprofit corporation since 1980, 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. Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible.

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## Oakland History Notes

### Mr. Maynard's Texaco Station

When Mr. Russell J. Maynard opened his gasoline service station and automobile repair shop on the northwest corner of 36th and Grove Street (now Martin Luther King Jr. Way) in 1931, Oakland boasted more than 200 service stations. They abounded on the city's main thoroughfares. In the days before I-580 and I-880, San Pablo Avenue, Grove, East 14th Street, Telegraph Avenue, and Foothill Boulevard were main traffic arteries for entering and leaving Oakland.

In 1931 Grove Street had 17 service stations, East 14th Street 29, Telegraph Avenue 22, San Pablo Avenue 22, and Foothill Boulevard 17. Loose zoning regulations, available land space, and ever growing auto use combined to nurture the expansion of service stations in the city in the 1940s. Nationwide, the number of gas stations nearly doubled between 1929 and 1941.

Architecturally, these early stations reflected a strange and variant whimsy. Many sported columns from the Federalist period; others resembled (faintly) Spanish haciendas. Still others bore vague traces of Italian villas. Mr. Maynard's station shows distinct traces of the Southwestern pueblo. Local residents often considered these stations eyesores. Retrospection now casts an amber glow upon the idiosyncratic look of these pre-standardized stations.

Gas stations, visible symbol of the arrival of the car, would later shrink in number with rising urban land costs, oil company consolidations, and freeway construction. Mr. Maynard's station, under numerous subsequent owners, functioned until 1951. As a resounding irony, a freeway pillar now impales the ground upon which once stood this little pueblo station. A current glance around the neighborhood reveals other tattered remnants of these eccentric stations from the city's early auto days. --William W. Sturm

(Oakland History Room)



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