

African-American Oakland in World War II



On Sunday, December 7, 1941, a Japanese naval force attacked the US fleet at Pearl Harbor. The next day Congress declared war on Japan, and America entered World War II. Because of its strategic location as a rail and shipping center, Oakland soon became deeply involved in the war effort. Moore Shipbuilding Co. resumed its World War I role of constructing, converting, and repairing warships. Military installations were established in the Bay Area, including the Oakland Naval Supply Center and the Oakland Army Base. The airport and

This downtown scene in the '40s shows the bustling economy of the war era, and the changing complexion of Oakland's people. The site is 12th and Washington, now the City Center mall. (Oakland History Room)

harbor relinquished their facilities to military use. Oakland's food packing plants proved vital to the Allied forces.

In 1942 industrialist Henry J. Kaiser built several shipyards on San Francisco Bay. The Kaiser shipyards mass produced hundreds of Liberty and Victory ships to supply the Allies with war materiel. As production increased, an acute labor



Paul Robeson leads Moore shipyard workers in the National Anthem, September 20, 1942. (Oakland History Room, from National Maritime Museum, San Francisco)

shortage developed in the Bay Area. Kaiser and other California industrialists sent labor recruiters outside the state, especially to the South, where workers and their families, both black and white, boarded trains and buses for California.

For all races, promise of higher wages and a better standard of living had an irresistible appeal. African-Americans, in addition, found that the relative freedom of the western states compared favorably to the South, and their letters home encouraged others to make the journey. Almost a half million African-Americans, mostly from the southern states, came west to work in the defense industries. Between 1940 and 1945 Oakland's black population increased from 8,462 to 37,327.

Several wartime breakthroughs enabled black Oaklanders to work in occupations previously closed to minorities. President Roosevelt's Executive Order No. 8802 made racial discrimination illegal in the national defense program, on grounds that it was a waste of manpower. The Boilermakers' Union set up black auxiliary units, whose members could learn the trade and work in the shipyards as welders, drillers, riggers, chippers, caulkers, and helpers. Boilermakers Union A-26, organized in 1942, met at 1315 7th Street in West Oakland.

In 1943, the *California Journal of Secondary Education* reported: "in Oakland, at present, Negroes are being accepted in

trade unions and for training in schools on a broader basis than ever before. The need for workers in wartime has resulted in the acceptance of Negroes into unions that heretofore did not permit membership. This is especially true of unions representing crafts used in shipbuilding, welding in particular. Many training classes in trade schools now contain Negroes, and in some of them nearly one-half of those enrolled are Negroes."

In 1944 a local publication on the African-American contribution to the war effort, *We Also Serve*, commented: "Their contributions to the war effort have done much to destroy the myth that the Negro is lazy and incompetent, and has no place in the industrial life of the country except that of a common laborer and a 'flunky.' Although it is discouraging to be aware of the fact that it took a World War and dire necessity to show that Negroes could work as skilled craftsmen."

We Also Serve adds: "Many hundreds of the Moore colored workers are women. They have trooped from the kitchen, the factory and the field, like their white sisters, to add the weight of their efforts to build the great Moore ships that ply the seven seas on behalf of the United Nations." The railroads also hired women. Elnor Payne worked for Southern Pacific as a "fireman" on a steam locomotive. Luella R. Primm operated a 110' turntable that shunted freight engines.

Oakland's African-American women contributed to the home front war effort in other ways. They served on the Hospitality Recreation Committee, a local chapter of the Defense Council. Club women attended defense classes, joined sewing units, taught first aid for the Red Cross, and visited and entertained troops as volunteers for the USO. Linden Branch YWCA members entertained the troops at the all-black DeFremery USO club house.



The DeFremery House in West Oakland, built as a suburban estate in the 1860s, has been part of the city park system since 1906. This wartime photo shows it as the USO club. (Oakland History Room)



War workers poured into Oakland's 16th Street Station "like a parade." This important historic site is now sadly neglected and deteriorating: with the murals peeling, chandeliers taken down and crated, and water standing on the floor, it is hard to picture the excitement of 50 years ago. (Betty Marvin)

Less than a year after the U.S. entered the war, a report estimated that 10,000 black troops were quartered in the East Bay. To provide recreation for these men, the DeFremery House, then used as a West Oakland recreation center, was converted into a USO club. As a USO club it had a canteen, lounge, and ballroom on the first floor, plus offices, a library, a game room, and a dormitory for 35 to 40 men. The USO provided staff to operate the club, and the Linden Branch YWCA and local women's clubs provided entertainment.

The vast wartime immigration created serious housing problems. According to one reminiscence, "Then the war started, and the big migration of people coming in, and this is when West Oakland began to overflow because there were too many people. I can remember we'd go down to the 16th Street station after school to watch the people get off the trains, and it was like a parade... They would come with boxes, with three or four children and no place to stay, ... and they'd ask everyone if they had any place to stay or could they make some space into rooms."

Often they were picked up by trucks, driven to black neighborhoods, and dropped off at rooming houses. Several men might occupy a single room, and as many as 40 or 50 workers were crammed into some of the larger houses. White property owners in other parts of the city refused to rent or sell to minorities. Black leaders charged that the housing shortage encouraged landlords and agents to exploit tenants.

Depression-era low rent housing projects built by the Oakland Housing Authority were converted to war worker housing. C.L. Dellums described the struggle to integrate the projects, both before and after

the U.S. entered the war. Campbell Village in West Oakland opened in 1941 as an integrated project, "checkerboarded every unit." Nearby Peralta Villa opened in January 1942, with alternate floors designated black and white. When the third permanent project, Lockwood Gardens in East Oakland, opened in May 1942, it was restricted to white tenants.

Additional temporary housing projects were built on the undeveloped outskirts of West Oakland. Bayview Villa, opened in June 1943, housed mostly black tenants. Cypress Village, Willow Manor, and Magnolia Manor were all black. Other projects were built by the Maritime Commission on Moore Dry Dock property. In her recent book *The Second Gold Rush*, Marilyn Johnson notes that the "permanent" projects throughout the Bay Area were reserved for the elite - skilled white workers.

By the end of the war the housing shortage had become the most serious problem facing the black community. Out of state immigrants did not return east after the war as some had expected, and housing projects remained overoccupied. People continued to live in dormitories and basements. Temporary housing, built to last only for the duration of the war, had to be maintained indefinitely. West Oakland houses showed the effects of years of overuse and shortages of materials, labor, and funds for repairs.

Oakland's 1940 black population of 8,462 was less than 3% of the total population of 302,162. By 1950 the black population had more than quintupled to 47,562. In Oakland and other West Coast cities with large numbers of new black residents - Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco, and Seattle - contemporaries noted an increase in racial prejudice during and after the war. White backlash in Oakland manifested



Bay View Villa, on filled land near the 16th Street Station, was one of the temporary housing projects. The site is now industrial. (Oakland History Room)



Some highly creative apartment conversions housed Oakland's war workers. This West Oakland house is a Queen Anne cottage, greatly enlarged in 1944, with wood trim, porch, and other parts recycled. (Survey)

itself in various ways. Many white residents of West Oakland moved out to all-white neighborhoods or suburbs. By the end of the war, in contrast to the pre-war boast that "West Oakland was everybody," Oakland had become a segregated city.

In 1944 a "race riot" occurred in downtown Oakland after a fight started on a Key System train at 12th and Broadway. The free-for-all fight, which involved white and black servicemen and civilians, spread out into the street, attracting a mob of 2000. Windows on the train were broken, and five participants received knife wounds. The Oakland Police, Military Police, and Shore Police were called out to stop the riot. The Observer, a local establishment weekly, said the riot occurred "because we now have (a) a

semi-mining camp civilization and (b) a new race problem, brought about by the influx of what might be called socially-liberated or uninhibited Negroes who are not bound by the old and peaceful understanding between the Negro and the white in Oakland, which has lasted so many decades, but who insist upon barging into the white man and becoming an integral part of the white man's society."

World War II challenged many real or imagined "old and peaceful understandings" and the war's end brought other problems. By the end of 1945 most of the shipyard jobs had vanished. Black workers soon found that industrial and union practices left few peacetime jobs available for minorities. In 1947 the mayor of Oakland organized community leaders into an interracial Committee on Civic Unity. In 1948 the Committee drafted an ordinance making it illegal for the City of Oakland as an employer to discriminate "because of race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry." After heated debate the City Council, dominated by a conservative majority, refused to pass the ordinance.

Still, most of the wartime immigrants had come to stay. Oakland's African American population was 47,562 in 1950, 83,600 in 1960, and 124,710 in 1970. The newcomers were largely responsible for the proliferation of black churches, clubs and businesses after the war. Their contributions expanded the horizons of the small pre-war black community, and of Oakland as a whole. --Donald Hausler

"It was maybe not baby Harlem, but if one existed it probably was." West 7th Street was a flourishing business and entertainment center, enhanced by wartime immigrants. Its music clubs were world famous. Today only this fragment survives, in the shadow of BART tracks and the new main Post Office. (OHR, c.1974)



Executive Order 9066 in Oakland

The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 had terrible repercussions for Japanese-Americans in Oakland. Bowing to virulent anti-Japanese sentiment, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, empowering the army to remove "dangerous persons" from designated areas. In Washington, Oregon, and California 108 exclusion areas were identified for evacuation of all residents of Japanese ancestry, U.S. citizens or not.

At the end of April, 1942, Exclusion Orders 27 and 28 were issued by the Army, requiring Oakland and San Leandro residents to report to Civil Control Stations for evacuation by May 7. With scarcely a week to put their affairs in order, they assembled at the stations, bringing only those personal possessions that could be carried. Some 800 Oakland residents living northwest of Broadway and College reported to a station at 530 18th Street. Another 662 people from Chinatown, East Oakland, and San Leandro assembled at 1117 Oak St., formerly the Merguire-Ritchie Chevrolet showroom (see Briefing). They were then bused to Tanforan Racetrack in San Bruno where they lived, some in converted horse stalls, for nearly five months until the Topaz relocation center in central Utah, one of ten such camps, was ready.

The accompanying photographs, taken May 6, 1942, at the Oak Street center, were part of documentation commissioned by the War Relocation Authority and carried out in the Bay Area by noted photographer Dorothea Lange. Dean Yabuki, researching the Japanese in Oakland History Project, unearthed them in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. --Carolyn Douthat

The African American Museum and Library at Oakland and the Berkeley Historical Society both have current exhibits on World War II and East Bay minorities.

AAMLO, at the Golden Gate Library at 5606 San Pablo Avenue, offers "Bittersweet Memories: the African American Experience in World War II," through May 1996, plus a traveling exhibit "African American Women in World War II" at the Temescal branch library through October and at Melrose in November and December. The summer 1995 AAMLO newsletter has several related articles. AAMLO is open Tues.-Sat.; for hours and other information, call 597-5053.

Berkeley Historical Society's exhibit, "The Japanese-American Experience 1895-1995," runs through fall at the Society's museum in the Veterans Memorial Building, 1931 Center Street, Berkeley (Thurs.-Sat. 12-5; 848-0181). An accompanying booklet, "The Berkeley Legacy," is available at the exhibit.



Oakland and San Leandro residents report to the Control Station at 1117 Oak, and wait inside the bare cement garage building and on front steps and yards across the street. Footprints of neighboring buildings helped identify the Control Station site on Sanborn maps. (Dorothea Lange, National Archives, courtesy of Dean Yabuki)

Oakland Briefing

■ SHOWROOM, CONTROL STATION, LAW LIBRARY

In May, the Alameda County Law Library opened its new quarters at 12th and Oak Streets. Previously located in the county courthouse, the new library occupies what was originally a showroom for Merguire-Ritchie Chevrolet Company. The reinforced concrete building, constructed in 1923-24, features elaborate Gothic ornamentation in a Beaux Arts derivative style very similar to the better-known Asian Resource Center/Hebern Electric Code building at 8th and Harrison. It was designed by Schirmer and Bugbee, an Oakland firm. William Schirmer designed Period Revival homes, a number of which were located in the Oakland fire area, as well as Sweet's Ballroom in the former Newberry's building on Broadway. He was also one of the architects of the County Courthouse at 12th and Fallon.

Over the years, the building housed a variety of tenants. From its construction until at least 1936 it was an auto showroom, with a ballroom on the third floor. For a brief period in 1942, the Army used part of the building as a Civil Control Station for the evacuation of Oakland and San Leandro residents of Japanese descent (see related article). Other occupants have been Western Union Telegraph Company, the state employment office, a bank, and a title insurance company. By the time the county acquired the building about 1990, the ground floor had been divided into a warren of offices on two levels.

The \$7.5 million rehabilitation involved gutting and reconfiguring the ground floor, seismic work, new interiors and mechanical systems, exterior painting, and a new roof. The former showroom has been opened to its full height and houses the library's collection, administrative offices, and a new computer center for online legal research. The second floor will be rented as private offices. The ballroom on the third floor, where until recently Western Union maintained transfer equipment, is now a computer training and conference center for both county and private use, complete with kitchen facilities. One of the conference rooms will be used to televise meetings of the Board of Supervisors for overflow crowds from the Supervisors' Chambers in the County Administration Building across 12th Street.

Given Alameda County's current budget crisis, this project may be its last building expansion for some time. Planning for this project began nearly five years ago, and construction has taken about 18 months to complete. The law library, an

arm of the state court system, provided funding for its portion of the renovation. Purchase of the building, and construction of the training and conference center, was funded by the county. --Carolyn Douthat

■ WILL THE 16TH STREET STATION BE SAVED?

As reported in the last *OHA News*, the City has solicited bids for repair work on Southern Pacific's 16th Street Station which suffered considerable water damage over the past winter from a poorly maintained roof and clogged gutters. After a tour of the building by several contractors, two firms responded to the request which included three groups of work items. The first involved removing and relocating the two remaining benches, chandeliers, and other interior items. The second was clearing roof gutters, repairing the roof, repairing cracks in the exterior walls, and installing a waterproof membrane. The third was protecting the murals at either end of the waiting room, the Fountain and Souvenir sign, and a service counter.

Of the bids received, one covered the full scope of work while the second only included repair of the cracks in the exterior walls. The bids have been forwarded to Southern Pacific with a request for timely action to prevent further deterioration. This is part of the City's effort to bring Southern Pacific into compliance with the local ordinance that protects earthquake damaged landmarks from damage caused by vandalism or the elements. --Carolyn Douthat



Ornate interior of the S.P. Station has been heavily damaged by five years of water from clogged gutters. Contractors show scant interest in bidding for work to protect remaining interior features. (Betty Marvin)

■ OLD MERRITT COLLEGE: HOPE & FRUSTRATION

Frustrating delays have characterized recent phases of the attempt by the City and the developers of record, IDG/Baner, to bring the long-vacant University High campus to life. On the positive side, behind-the-scenes interest by potential tenants continues. Preliminary steps such as completion of construction documents are virtually complete.

In mid-July the Disposition and Development Agreement (spelling out terms of transfer of the property, including time lines) was signed by IDG/Baner and the City, after lengthy negotiations. A dispute among the developers over control and financing of the project then intervened. These delays have not yet jeopardized the \$11 million in HUD Section 108 financing (for correction of "blight"), nor is this particular program currently threatened by the GOP. A relatively minor piece of the project--new low-density housing at the rear of the site--lags behind, and a new RFP may be issued by the City. Other non-profit and for-profit housing firms than IDG/Baner's initial pick of Miller/Simmons Co. are reportedly under consideration.

The best hope for work beginning on the bedraggled facilities during the current dry season depends upon Council approval of city funds in the \$400,000 range for asbestos and lead paint removal, cleanup of toxics being the first step in renovation. Since \$390,000 is currently budgeted toward the project from capital improvements, and since this project continues to enjoy support of the Mayor and Council, approval is expected.

Keen interest by two potential tenants for approximately 80,000 square feet, or half the interior of the main academic building, is encouraging and, if realized, may convince skeptical City officials that landmark designation (in the case of Old Merritt, every square inch of the nine-acre site, including the interiors and "contributing structures") and business uses are compatible. But even without major users committed, City officials indicate renovation will proceed, albeit more slowly in stages.

The approaching Council race in District 1 could speed matters along. The blighted campus, for years a bottomless pit for developers, consultant studies, and staff while the buildings deteriorated, was a significant issue in the last race. Sheila Jordan made renovation of the campus a key plank in her successful challenge to Marge Gibson-Haskell, proponent of the demolition-for-shopping-mall scheme. Jordan will now be judged on how close she has come in the last four years to reaching that goal.



Years of leaking roofs nearly destroyed the library at Old Merritt, adding to costs for developers who now seek to restore the building. (Ken Rice/NOVA)

For more information: Robert Brokl and Alfred Crofts, NOVA, P.O. Box 20486, Oakland 94620, 655-3841; Project Manager Jens Hillmer, Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development, City of Oakland, 238-3317. --Robert Brokl

■ GOOD NEWS FOR LIBRARIES

The unified front presented by several neighborhood and library groups in North Oakland appears to have convinced City officials to embark on another course for two threatened branches. Both libraries, Temescal (formerly Alden) and Golden Gate, were built with Carnegie grants and designed by prominent architects Charles W. Dickey and John J. Donovan in 1918.

City Manager Craig Kocian and Library Director Martin Gomez had originally recommended closure of the facilities, rather than undertaking seismic and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) upgrades and other improvements. Construction of the new Rockridge library appeared to doom these branches which for years had struggled under restricted hours and annual closure threats.

However, citizen outcry, strong support by officials such as Sheila Jordan who described Temescal as "the most beautiful building in Oakland," lobbying by Friends of the Library who successfully promoted Measure O for library support (and were back in the news fighting "excessive" administrative costs for implementing the measure), and persistent support before the City Council by such groups as NOVA, Temescal Neighbors Together, Rockridge Community Planning Council, and Friends of Golden Gate Library turned the tide.

During budget deliberations, \$500,000 was appropriated for construction documents for upgrades to the two structures. Library officials, while stating they are



Dickey & Donovan's Temescal branch is the only Tudor Revival Carnegie Library in California. (Survey)

"neutral" on the issue of landmarking the interiors, have pledged to plan the work in a manner sensitive to the National Register-eligible interiors and exteriors. It remains to convince City officials to commit to the next step: an estimated \$2 million per building for the actual work.

It is illuminating to place the ongoing struggle for the local Carnegie branches in a broader context. A multiple property National Register listing for California Carnegie Libraries already includes twenty such buildings, with a simplified process for nominating others still in existence. Nominations for four Oakland Carnegie libraries were submitted in August, sponsored by NOVA, TNT, RCPC, and Friends of Golden Gate and Melrose Libraries.

The State Office of Historic Preservation notes, "In California, 142 public library buildings and two academic libraries were constructed between 1901 and 1921 with Carnegie funding. As communities grew and library needs changed, some buildings were demolished, seldom without opposition from a library constituency... Today 85 of the public library buildings and the two academic library buildings are still standing. Thirty-eight Carnegies continue to serve as public libraries, while others now house museums, civic offices, community centers, professional buildings, and offices. The commitment to preserve those that remain has intensified."

For more information: NOVA, Robert Brokl/Alfred Crofts, 655-3841; Temescal Neighbors Together, Jeannette Sherwin, 655-5119; Friends of Golden Gate Library, Lottie Rose, 658-6509. --Robert Brokl

■ WHITHER STUDIO ONE?

Unfortunately for Studio One and its constituency, the North Oakland libraries are getting the lion's share of City and public support. It doesn't take a seer to

predict a gloomy outcome for Studio One, if matters proceed along their current course. As noted above, funds have been appropriated to begin upgrading the two libraries, and public meetings have been held at both libraries.

In contrast, \$300,000 was included for Studio One during last minute budget negotiations, but the money is explicitly not committed to upgrading the existing facility. Further, Council had already approved an expenditure of \$14,500 for study by architectural and engineering consultants Noll and Tam of "life safety issues at Studio One." The same May 23 report recommending the additional study mentions "the start of temporary closure, where appropriate."

No public hearings concerning Studio One have been held or are currently scheduled, although called for in that report. Cleve Williams, Director of Parks and Recreation which manages Studio One, has not been available to callers and was not in view when Martin Gomez, Library Director, made the report to City Council. Councilmember Jordan, while pledging her support to the arts program and its ideal location next to four schools, has hinted that the \$4.8 million price tag for seismic upgrade, code compliance improvements, and ADA access is too steep, even with the availability of Measure K bond money.

Given this lack of public process and input, rumors abound about the future of Studio One. One scenario has the program being moved to Lake Merritt, to a Parks and Recreation building soon to be available. (Questions about potential users downtown are unasked and unanswered.) Some components of the program have already been relocated to the Alice Arts Center. The Studio One advisory group has had difficulty so far in mounting a coordinated, sustained effort. The ad hoc library group and OHA members have helped, but the bureaucracy, including the Mayor's and Council offices and Parks and Recreation, has not embraced this fledgling group.

Soothing suggestions that the Studio One "program" can be separated from the 1894 building have also lulled the proponents--that and the conviction that this established (40 years), popular (mailing list of 6,000), and successfully self-sustaining program would never be abandoned. A bond measure for upgrade of City facilities, including the libraries, has been discussed. Alternatively, neighboring Park Day School may want the site, or--like Old Merritt College--the abandoned building may just sit, "land-banked" and blighted, while the program--like new Merritt College--never quite survives the transplanting. --Robert Brokl



■ MUNICIPAL MOVES

The seat of city government has returned to City Hall. The Mayor, City Clerk, City Attorney, City Manager, and Council have moved into their new quarters which occupy most of the restored Beaux Arts building. Once the project is complete, public debate will once again take place in the dignified Council Chambers, and political strategists will confer around the grand staircase. An official reopening ceremony is planned for September 15. Meanwhile, public entry is limited to those having official business with staff and Council.

In July the Council approved selection of a design/build team for the new administration complex adjacent to City Hall. The winning team, Fentress/Bradburn and Rosemary Muller & Associates, architects, and Hensel Phelps Construction Company, was recommended by a jury of architects and planners including OHA board member Alan Dreyfuss, and had the endorsement of the Landmarks Board and Planning Commission. The jury rated the winning proposal highly in meeting both technical and design requirements.

The design guidelines, developed in consultation with **Oakland Heritage Alliance** and the Landmarks Board, emphasized compatibility with the downtown historic district and respect for City Hall as centerpiece of the civic space.

The entire project includes construction of two new administration buildings, one adjacent to the Broadway Building and the other on the site of the Dalziel and Pardee Buildings, redesign of Frank Ogawa (City Hall) Plaza, and restoration of the Broadway Building as part of the complex.

The Plaza Building at 15th and Washington, also city-owned, is to be rehabilitated separately as gallery and live/work space, and the Rotunda also brought back into use in a separate project.

Although the Council was unanimous in selecting the team, questions about the Clay Street Garage were raised. On a motion by John Russo, whose new offices face its blank concrete wall, staff was asked to come back with a timetable for demolition of the garage. With construction of the new state office building across Clay Street, the garage site is being eyed for a plaza that would connect the city, state, and federal buildings and help bring workers outside to patronize businesses in and around the complex.

The \$121 million dollar project, to be financed through redevelopment funds and revenue bonds, is scheduled to open in the spring of 1998. Demolition is currently underway on both the Dalziel and Broadway Building sites. --Carolyn Douthat

■ HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT DELAYS

Staff changes, resignations, and reassignments in the city's Office of Planning and Building may be having an unfortunate impact on implementation of the Historic Preservation Element. The Element, unanimously adopted by Council over a year ago as part of Oakland's General Plan, is an ambitious document with 66 actions slated to be implemented over a five year period.

A working group of Planning Commission and Landmarks Board members has been charged with monitoring the progress of implementation. At a July meeting with staff, commissioners and board members expressed concern over perceived delays.

Staff changes include resignation of OPB head Kay Winer who has accepted a position with the city of Tallahassee, Florida. Comprehensive Planning Manager Willie Yee has been moved to the Zoning Division. Reportedly Element author Christopher Buckley has been reassigned to Zoning as well. This leaves no high ranking planning staff with preservation expertise dedicated to overseeing Element implementation. New to the department as of late August are Andrew Altman, from the Los Angeles Redevelopment Agency, who replaces Yee as Planning Manager, and Shirley Stubblefield, from the City Manager's Office, who replaces Winer on an interim basis as OPB Director. It will be Altman's responsibility to assign staff to replace Buckley.

As reported in the last issue, mitigations approved in connection with the city administration building complex would seem to create an opportunity to fast track some of the Element's actions, specifi-



City administration building project--linking the Broadway and Rotunda buildings, right center--is hoped to revitalize downtown Oakland; Preservation Element actions have the same aim. This c.1940 postcard is captioned "Skyscrapers make a canyon of commerce of Telegraph Avenue."

cally a revolving loan fund for downtown historic properties and publication of marketing materials to highlight the downtown district. To date the main progress on this front has been scheduling of interdepartmental meetings, called by the City Manager's Office, to discuss the steps needed to begin these programs. As the months go by, discussion meetings take place, yet property owners seem no closer to receiving the assistance they need to revive their buildings.

As Council returns from its August recess, it is the Landmarks Board's intention to call for a hearing of the Public Works Committee, chaired by Natalie Bayton (District 3), on strategies for getting the Element back on track. --Annalee Allen

■ WEST OAKLAND COTTAGES

Three houses from the path of the new Cypress freeway have been removed from their sites and stored "temporarily" on the site of the demolished Phoenix Iron Works building at Shorey and Pine Streets in West Oakland. This effort has been brought about by the collaboration of several local groups who have lobbied to make these structures the centerpiece of a proposed interpretive center telling the story of early immigrant life in Oakland.

The groups central to this effort are the West Oakland Commerce Association (Bob Tuck), Cypress Advisory Committee (George Burt, Roger Schmidt), Oak Center Neighborhood Association (Ellen Wyrick Parkinson), **Oakland Heritage Alliance** (Bill Coburn), and the Pardee Home Museum (Melissa Rosengard). The complexity and politics of negotiating a contract with Caltrans required substantial help from Councilmember Natalie Bayton and her staff and Alex Greenwood of the City Manager's office. Many others in City Hall, and particularly Dennis Power of the Oakland

Museum, have made important contributions.

Driving this effort is the recognition that the family and personal history embedded in these structures is an as yet untold story in Oakland. This project is meant to be parallel and complementary to the other house museums in Oakland which have greater emphasis on the lives of the rich and powerful rather than common folk.

A nonprofit group, Oakland Point Preservation Coalition, is now being formed. Its aim is to site these three houses, and other equally representative house types and outbuildings, into a compound which reproduces the feel of immigrant life in Oakland in the 19th century. It is hoped that the buildings, interiors, and gardens will dramatize the interpretive exhibits. An important emphasis of the project is to convey the cultural transformation that immigrant groups have witnessed as they collectively became Oakland citizens.

Sites are being looked at, including the 16th Street station area and a downtown site near Preservation Park. Following site selection, fundraising and educational efforts will begin.

The houses are the Oscar Jackson-Mary Netherland house (1868; formerly at 714 Pine), and two 1888-89 Queen Anne cottages from 1815 and 1817 Shorey Street. Regrettably a fourth house that was to be included, 1825 Shorey (1875, with many revealing layers of additions) was burned in April and last minute efforts to save the oldest portion of the house failed.

Interested persons may contact Melissa Rosengard, 444-2187. --Bill Coburn

"For two rooms without modern conveniences, he will count upon spending about \$750, or even less..." (Tribune, 1888). Both 714 Pine (L) and 1825 Shorey (R) began as tiny two-room cottages, whose residents expanded them with a series of rear additions as they were able. Pine Street house has been saved for interpretive project; Shorey Street house burned before it could be moved. (Jane Spangler, 1991)





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. Five districts and 120 landmarks have been designated since the Board was created in 1973. Meetings are at Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue, second Mondays, 4 pm.

Board members are Annalee Allen, Andrew Carpentier, Renee Dymond, Les Hausrath, George Lythcott, Mark Sennette, and Phil Tagami. Secretary is Helaine Kaplan Prentice.

MAY

Helaine Prentice announced a National Historic Preservation Week ceremony at the May 16 City Council meeting, presenting certificates to these recently designated landmarks: Posey Tube Portal, Lake Merritt Hotel, Safeway Office and Warehouse, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Temple Sinai, Ellen Kenna House, Palace Apartments, Chinese Presbyterian Church, University High School, and the Oakland Museum.

Board voted a resolution commending four retiring Board members: Jean Spees, 15 years; Estelle Mannis, 6 years; Creighton Fong, 3 years; Diana Becton-Brown, 2 years.

Board discussed reviving the landmark nomination for the Oakland Floral Depot (1900-32 Telegraph Avenue; 1931, Albert Evers), initiated over ten years ago and tabled by the Planning Commission due to owner opposition. Concern arose because of BART's proposal for an office building on Broadway. Board decided to seek a meeting with owners Carter Hawley Hale.

Though it has never been designated a landmark, the Oakland Floral Depot (1931, Albert Evers) is widely admired as the ultimate in Art Deco. This replica--executed in plaster--is on "Sunset Boulevard" at Disney World on Orlando, Florida. It was included in the Deco streetscape after Disney's "imagineers" found it repeatedly cited by Art Deco experts. (Dean Yabuki)

Board voted to recommend landmark status for the Bates House, 399 Bellevue (C.W. Dickey, 1907), nominated by its owners.

Board members provided updates on Swan's Market (see Spring OHA News) and three Victorian houses on 15th Street that may be moved for a Catholic Charities project. George Lythcott and Mark Sennette reported on a visit to the 16th Street S.P. Station in April. The building has deteriorated badly, mostly from failure to maintain the gutters. Board discussed ways of pressing Southern Pacific to repair the building.



Inspectors climbed from the weed-grown Interurban platform behind the 16th Street Station and found the major source of damage to be clogged gutters. City is trying to bring about repairs. (Betty Marvin)



Intact period storefronts of this unique Julia Morgan commercial building will survive, thanks to vigilance and expertise of PANIL, Board, and staff. (Survey)

In design review, Board reviewed application by Sue Yoshiwara of Architectural Services to modify approved plans for Peralta Hacienda Park, a city landmark, at 2465-2511 34th Avenue. Plans concern the perimeter of the park, which has gradually increased in size as the city has acquired land. Paxton Street is to be closed, and Hyde Street extended to 34th Avenue. The project is reported to have strong community support. Board approved plans with the understanding that the applicant work with staff on fence design.

Board approved the application by Sue Yoshiwara of Architectural Services to modify the southeast entrance and first floor restrooms of the Oakland Museum, a city landmark, for handicapped access.

Prentice reported on revisions to seismic upgrade plans for Fire Station #10, 172 Santa Clara, to better protect the historic interior; agreement to add a lift rather than a ramp to the bandstand in Lakeside Park; discussion of a sign at the Pardee Home Museum; and exemption from design review for in-kind repairs to the Broadway Building and Rotunda.

JUNE

Application to alter windows, awnings, and roofing of 4001-29 Piedmont Avenue (Julia Morgan, 1916; a historic structure under the URM ordinance) was withdrawn following a successful meeting of Board secretary Prentice, the architect, and neighborhood representatives: wood windows and original awning mechanisms to remain.

Friends of Oak Knoll requested a determination of landmark eligibility for Club Knoll, the Spanish Colonial Revival former country club building at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital. Board voted to adopt the "A" eligibility rating and place the building on the Study

List, recognizing that it is currently federal property and said by the City Attorney to be exempt from local land use regulations.

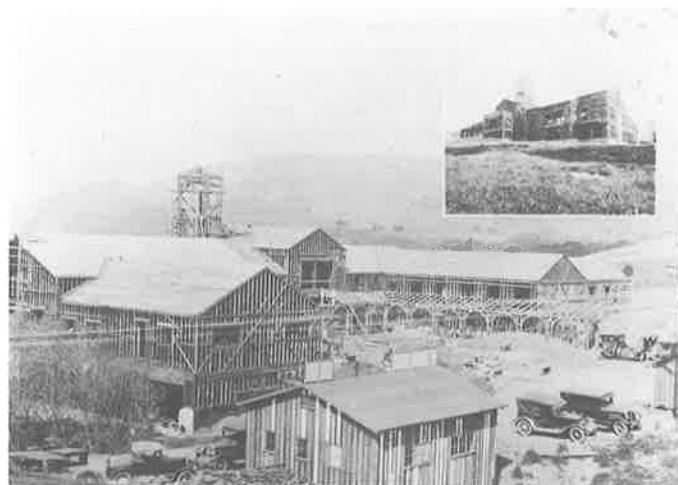
Board discussed replacement planting for the recently deceased large eucalyptus at the Camron-Stanford House. Tony Acosta of Parks and Recreation, with Prentice's support, recommended replacing it in kind with a manna gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*). At the request of Camron-Stanford representatives, currently working on a garden plan, the item was continued to September.

Ed Cheng reported on city plans for seismic retrofit of the landmark Golden Gate and Temescal libraries (see Briefing) and neighborhood representatives stated their concerns about these buildings and Studio One. Board members Allen, Tagami, and Carpentier formed a subcommittee to work with the neighborhood groups.

Board discussed the City Administration Complex design competition (see Briefing), and heard presentations by the various firms; Board comments would be forwarded to the City Planning Commission.

Prentice reported that the City Council had approved designation of Borax Smith's Red House (817 East 24th Street) and the Alameda County Title Insurance Building (380-98 14th Street), both nominated by their owners. The Planning Commission had recommended designation of the Bates, Shoong, and McElroy houses in Adams Point. A Broadway entrance had been created at Smart & Final in the Delger Block, 901-33 Broadway; awning design still needed work.

Board endorsed a Certified Local Government grant application to the State Office of Historic Preservation to continue the work of the Cultural Heritage Survey.



The earliest building at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital is Club Knoll, a Spanish Colonial Revival showpiece built in 1927 for the Oak Knoll Golf and Country Club. In 1942 the country club was taken over for a military hospital; use after base closure remains to be seen. (Friends of Oak Knoll/Landmarks Board)



Survey's 1995-96 grant projects are a San Antonio neighborhood survey, including the Bella Vista district (above), and preliminary recording of 600 most important previously unsurveyed resources. Call Betty or Gary at City Planning to volunteer for photography, field work, or research! (Survey)

JULY

Steve Costa, executive director of Oakland Sharing the Vision, reported on progress of the Strategic Plan, adopted about two and a half years ago, including a number of preservation-related items. Annalee Allen mentioned the Main Street proposal for Fruitvale; Costa mentioned other possibilities for Broadway and Telegraph, such as public art and historical interpretation. He also discussed the need to improve communication among boards and commissions and City Council committees.

Board discussed proposed sale of the landmark 23rd Avenue Branch Library (1449 Miller Avenue) to Volunteers of America, who now operate social service programs there and would like to stay. If the building goes into private ownership, landmark designation of the interior would no longer be possible. Board agreed to provide a list of significant interior features for further discussion.

Board discussed a draft Memorandum of Agreement among the City, State Office of Historic Preservation, Oakland Community Housing Inc., et al., regarding proposed demolition of the Mission Motel, 9001 MacArthur Boulevard, which appears eligible for the National Register. The MOA recommended recycling the tile and the sign, preparing photo documentation, and preserving landscaping wherever possible. Discussion was complicated by Board turnover since last discussion of the Mission Motel, and City's and developer's initial failure to recognize its importance.

Board discussed Chabot Observatory, 4917 Mountain Boulevard, which appears eligible for the National Register but is directly on the Hayward Fault, making reuse by the school district unlikely.

Rockridge resident Annette Floystrup requested support for repair of the brick pillars at the entrance to Birch Court off College Avenue. Private fundraising might supplement what Public Works can do. Board member Carpentier noted that the pillars in Maxwell Park also need attention.

Allen reported on the June 12 meeting of the Historic Preservation Element Working Group, and suggested that the City Council Public Works Committee should receive updates. Board discussed the idea that the Floral Depot nomination should be based upon saving the facade, not the entire building. Board discussed seismic work for the Golden Gate and Temescal libraries; community meetings and discussions of cost estimates continued (see Briefing).

Prentice noted proposals for the Tribune property: one complication was that new users would want to replace the Tribune sign on the tower with their own names.

Allen noted the 80th anniversary of the Claremont Hotel; apparently the owners remain opposed to landmark designation, but are still celebrating their history.

Les Hausrath was reelected chair for 1995-96, Andrew Carpentier vice chair.

AUGUST

July meeting was held July 31; there was no August meeting. --Kathy Olson



The Tribune sign predates the tower! Electric sign and clock floated over the corner building before the tower was added in 1922. (Oakland History Room)

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

through fall (Th.-Sat. 12-5), "The Berkeley Legacy: The Japanese American Experience 1895-1995," exhibit curated by T. Robert Yamada, Berkeley Historical Society, 1931 Center Street, Berkeley, 848-0181, admission free.

through September 24 (W-Sat. 10-5, Sun. 12-7), "Guy Rose: American Impressionist," celebrated painter of landscapes and figurative subjects during first two decades of 20th century, The Oakland Museum, Oak & 10th Streets, \$5/\$3 (members free).

through January 28 (W-Sat. 10-5, Sun. 12-7), "Silver & Gold: California Cased Images," preview exhibition, daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and tintypes from the California Gold Rush era, 1849-1860, mining scenes to San Francisco street scenes, The Oakland Museum, Oak & 10th Streets, \$5/\$3 (members free).

through January 28 (W-Sat. 10-5, Sun. 12-7), "Dorothea Lange: Archive of an Artist," renowned American documentary photographer, 100 little known images, some not previously exhibited, from Museum's collection of 30,000 Lange prints, The Oakland Museum, Oak & 10th Streets, \$5/\$3 (members free).

through May 1996, (12-5, Th.-Sat.), "Bittersweet Triumph: The African American Experience in World War II", new exhibit commemorating the contributions of African Americans in WWII, The African American Museum and Library at Oakland, 5606 San Pablo Ave., 597-5053.

through October 31, "African American Women in World War II," exhibit, Temescal Branch, Oakland Public Library, 5205 Telegraph, 597-5049.

September 16, Sat. 10-12, "The 1923 North Berkeley Fire," commemoration of fire of Sept. 18, 1923, walking tour across fire lines, led by Phil Gale, front of 2289 Vine Street, between Arch & Spruce Streets, Berkeley Historical Society, \$7/\$5 (BHS members), reservations recommended, 848-0181.

September 17, Sun. 1-4, "14th Annual Vallejo Architectural Heritage Foundation House Tour," old homes & historic buildings, garden reception, starts @ old Empress Theatre, Vallejo Architectural Heritage Foundation, call for ticket prices, 707-644-7649.

September 17, Sun. 2-4, "Photographs Forever: Photo Conservation Workshop with Ann Marks, art conservator," Berkeley Historical Society Museum, 1931 Center Street, Berkeley Historical Society, \$5 includes materials, 848-0181.

September 30, Sat. 10-12, "Literary Berkeley with Jim Cara," walking tour starts at North Gate to UC, Euclid & Hearst Av., Berkeley; Berkeley Historical Society, \$7/\$5 (members), reservations recommended, 848-0181.

October 7, Sat. 10-12, "Berkeley in the Sixties with Country Joe McDonald," walking tour of Telegraph Ave., People's Park, Sproul Plaza with emphasis on music of 60's and reminiscences by Country Joe, parking lot at Russell & Telegraph, Berkeley Historical Society, \$7/\$5 (BHS members), reservations recommended, 848-0181.

October 28, Sat. 10-12, "Nut Hill with Carl Wilson," walking tour of "Nut Hill", 10 Maybeck designed homes, Rose Walk, John Galen Howard House, Greenwood Terrace, Maybeck Twin Drive, Hume Cloister, Temple of the Wings, Kennedy Nixon house, end at Rose Garden for optional BYO picnic, foot of Rose Walk (Euclid Ave. just north of Buena Vista Way, Berkeley Historical Society, \$7/\$5 (BHS members), reservations recommended, 848-0181.

November 7,-December 29, "African American Women in World War II," exhibit, Melrose Branch, Oakland Public Library, 4805 Foothill Blvd., 535-5623.

Regularly Scheduled Exhibits & Tours

The African American Museum & Library at Oakland, museum, archives & programs, 5606 San Pablo Ave., 658-0191.

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.

Berkeley Historical Society, museum, archives, walking tours, Th.-Sat 1-4, 1931 Center Street (Veteran's Memorial Bldg.), 848-0181.

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.

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

McConaghy House, 104 year old farmhouse, Th-Sun., 1-4, 18701 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, \$2/\$1.50 (Sr.)/\$0.50 (children), 581-0223.

Oakland Tours Program, seven free walking tours of central Oakland (City Center, Preservation Park, Chinatown, Old Oakland, Uptown, Waterfront, Churches & Temples), W. & Sat., 10am, May through October, schedule & reservations, 238-3234.

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-Lillienthal 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 (April through July) are:

Sam & Maria Angus, Martha Becker, John Bell, Bonnie Berch, Stafford Buckley, Eric Cooper, Paul Cummings Jr., Lloyd Dangle/Hae Yuon Kim, James Day, Jane Duveneck, Lee Eisman, Brian Fodiman, Nancy Friedman, Helen Gaeckle, Robert Geering, Adrian Goldstein/Brian Dunstan, Cindy & Bill Hicks, Judith Jacobsen, Susan Jaeger, Alan Keenan, Jan Klein, Sheryl Linquist/Michael Snyder, Sue Majewski, Shirley Mannette, Patrick McGowan/Daniel Bain, Michael Melnick, W.L. Montague, C.J. Mosley, Robert Pilc, John & Emily Ransom, John Ravitch, Nancey & Henry Schiff, Carol Summer, Sherry Willhite, Beverly Wu.

Donors

Special thanks to those joining/renewing as:

SPONSOR (\$100): Steve & Terry Beck, Eugene Peck, Bette Postag.

ORGANIZATION/BENEFACTOR (\$50): Reeve Gould, Bruce/Candis/Matthew Kerns, Elizabeth Krase/CALTRANS, Patricia Muscatelli, Nancey & Henry Schiff.

DONATIONS: Bank of America matching grant for Yvonne Barsballe & Matthew Gabel.

Oakland Heritage Alliance News

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EDITORIAL BOARD

Annalee Allen & Carolyn Douthat.

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. Back issues \$2. © 1995 Oakland Heritage Alliance.

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 Heritage Alliance. • P.O.Box 12425, Oakland, CA 94604 • 1418 Lakeside Drive, Oakland, CA



Oakland History Notes

The Adobe Hut

United States entry into World War II was less than a month away when Oakland dedicated its Information Headquarters for Service Men on November 11, 1941. Situated in City Hall Plaza at the juncture of 14th Street and San Pablo Avenue, the building was constructed with labor donated by various unions affiliated with the Building and Construction Trades Council of Alameda County, with materials donated by the City of Oakland. Though intended to last only for the "national emergency," the brick, timber, and tile-roofed structure was built to comply with city building codes and harmonize with surrounding buildings.

Fondly referred to as the "Adobe Hut," it stood upon the site of the World War I "Liberty Hut," a prior purveyor of information to the armed services. Staffed by volunteers from local women's clubs, the Hut helped inform marines, sailors, and soldiers about housing, transportation, entertainment, and activities of local USO centers, including the Hospitality House at 660 13th Street (now Nile Hall in Preservation Park) and the African-American USO at the DeFremery House.

A Victory Garden was planted close to the Hut to demonstrate food conservation. It was also a place to stop and drop a note home. In its first year of service, the center assisted 312,000 people, helping Oakland earn the title "Best Liberty City" for its outstanding hospitality to the armed services.

At the end of the war, the building continued as an information center for the armed services. During the Korean War it functioned as a USO and Travelers Aid Society, staffed by members of the Oakland Junior League. An extensive remodeling of City Hall Plaza in 1954 left the Adobe Hut extant, but declining use foredoomed the building. In April 1955 the little hut was demolished, its place immediately taken by 500 blooming rhododendrons.

--William W. Sturm

Information Headquarters for Service Men, City Hall Plaza, Oakland, Calif.

O-215



(Oakland History Room)

Oakland Heritage Alliance
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