

Rose Garden Renaissance



The replanting and refurbishing of Oakland's municipal rose garden, officially known as the Morcom Amphitheater of Roses, has been substantially complete now for over a year. It is a blaze of color and the aroma of thousands of roses perfumes the air. Instrumental in this renovation was Ed Wilkinson of the East Bay Rose Society, who also works in the garden as a part-time parks employee.

As I searched for Ed recently for this interview, head gardener Renee Batoon

Oakland's fifth annual Rose Sunday, the annual formal opening of the Rose Garden, in 1938. Hills are still somewhat bare in this view south across the "Florentine" section. (Oakland Tribune photo)

directed me to the area where Ed was working. It took me a complete circuit of the garden and another inquiry to find Ed who was on his hands and knees budding a rose. He explained that budding is done at this time of the year while the rose canes are still soft. With a pocket knife he inserted a bud into the cut stem at the base of

Rose Garden Tour August 24 - see page 5



an understock, delicately placing the bud under the outside layer and into the nourishing area under the cambium layer. Finally, he took a rubber budding tie and wrapped the operation so it could bond together. Budding is common with roses, to speed growth of varieties that would otherwise be slow to establish themselves.

Ed is a rosarian who has a statewide reputation in his field, because of his encyclopedic knowledge of roses, rose history and cultivation techniques for the California climate. At the Morcom garden, Ed's relationship started through the East Bay Rose Society (initiated by Oakland's rose garden founders), a chapter of the American Rose Association. The society suggested rose varieties and layout for the replanting of the garden.

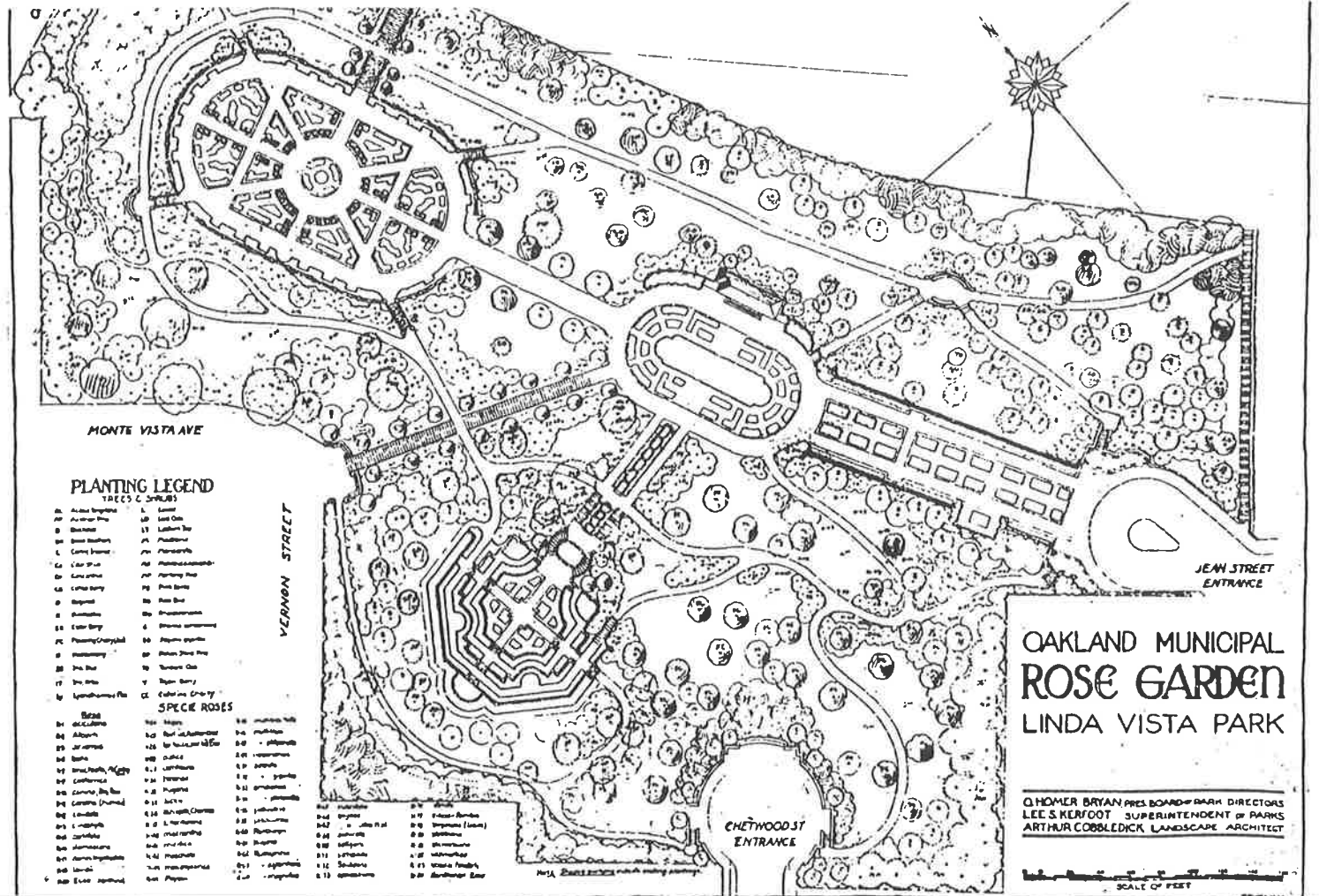
Rose cultivation at the turn of the century was noted by one author as a truly democratic tradition where a modest garden of a few small plants could produce exhibition quality blooms equal to those from large estate gardens. This led turn-of-the-century author Walter Wright to call rose growing "a public institution." These ideas, linked to the American City Beautiful movement with its emphasis on parks to invigorate the body and spirit by bringing

nature into the urban setting, set the conceptual stage for Oakland's and other municipal rose gardens around the country.

The original suggestion for Oakland's garden came in 1930-31 Dr. C.V. Covell and the Businessmen's Garden Club. Its site had been a natural open bowl shaped parcel of 7.5 acres, undeveloped by 1911. City officials then entered into a purchase agreement for \$32,000 which was consummated in 1915 and the land became Linda Vista Park. At this early stage there was an archery range in the park. In 1930, when a rose garden site was sought, this land was recognized as providing desirable features for growing roses. Its bowl shape offered protection from wind which often shatters rose blooms, and it would afford views from above of the roses, which in this type of garden are meant to be seen as a pattern of color on the ground. The upper perimeter was also seen as a good spot for the wilder roses grown as ground-cover and for a screen of trees to frame the symmetrical arrangement of the beds.

The layout is a design heritage from

Original plan by Arthur Cobble Dick, landscape architect, 1933. The oval planting areas and promenades were placed according to Italian garden principles, modified as required by the site contours. (OHR)





Florentine area looking toward Jean Street and beyond, 1935. Monterey pines on the hillsides had been planted, yet their modest size still afforded the openness indigenous to the site. (Tribune)

Edwardian gardens which featured formal arrangements of flower panels or beds. Because of Oakland's Mediterranean climate and stylistic preferences of the day, Italian gardens were used as a model. This formal type of arrangement suited the popular roses of the day, which unlike their Victorian predecessors grew low to the ground and needed to be looked at closely, because the flowers and their fragrance were the specific features of interest. The plant itself was considered of no artistic merit except as a vessel for producing exquisite blooms. To make up for this "deficiency" of the plants, they were formally arranged into a framework for the blooms, which were appreciated as if they were cut flowers struck in the ground. All of this changed at the close of World War II with the introduction of the popular Peace rose, which introduced a tall growing gene into the pool of what we now know as modern roses.

The primary activist for Oakland's rose garden was Dr. Charles Vernon Covell, a local dentist, who was also one of the inspirations behind the slightly later Berkeley Rose Garden. Both Dr. Covell and Arthur Cobble-dick, landscape architect of the garden, were Businessmen's Garden Club members. Cobble-dick's father Colonel James Cobble-dick had preceded him as a member of the garden club and his maternal grandmother was a sister to the Newsom brothers of architectural fame. Covell and Cobble-dick won the support of Park Commissioner Homer Bryan and within weeks of promoting

the garden at a booster program, installation was started. (Covell commented in his report on the Oakland garden in the 1934 **American Rose Annual**, "This leads to the observation that municipal rose-garden projects are probably successful in direct proportion to the civic importance of their backers.") Oakland's mayor Frank Morcom planted the first rose in January 1933. In 1954 the garden was named Morcom Amphitheater of Roses in his honor.

Cobble-dick's plan consists of three main geometric areas, the large oval Florentine area, the central reflecting pool area, and the cascade and octagonal wedding terrace above. They are connected with axial promenades somewhat adjusted to the natural terrain. The axial symmetry is most strongly expressed at the ceremonial main entry to the garden at Jean Street. Other entries come from the upper streets by meandering walks or stairs.

Architectural features are included, as both garden enhancements and practical work rooms and storage. The structures are loosely Mediterranean in style with stucco and tiled roofs. The main storage office serves as a loggia for viewing the reflecting pool and cascade and also provides an architectural vista from the wedding terrace and upper levels of the garden. As a measure of society in the early 1930s, in an economic depression, the structures and overall garden plan serve as a background for the roses without ostentation and without challenging emerging modernist ideas in landscape design.

Much of the garden labor was from public work programs. Initially a local program started the bed preparation and walls at the Florentine area, and later federal WPA



Mortared wall and single roses in the upper terrace, 1939. (Oakland Tribune)

labor built further park infrastructure. There are two different types of stone wall construction. On either side of what is now the Mother's Walk is a loose laid stone retaining wall of what appears to be dressed sandstone. Elsewhere are mortared walls of undressed stone.

Most of the original geometries of the garden are visible today; however, when parks director William Penn Mott reworked the garden in 1948, small awkwardly shaped lawn areas between the rose beds in the Florentine area were eliminated to streamline maintenance. An overlook and a formal garden labeled "Unit 5" on the 1948 garden plan were two areas never implemented. A surrounding wrought iron fence is now substantially removed.

One of the special features of the replanting authored by Ed Wilkinson and a team of skilled enthusiasts and nursery people was the decision to maintain many of the specific historic rose cultivars that have been in this garden for generations. Many were known by name from the 1948 remodeling and survivors in the garden provided budding stock for the new plants we see today. Rose fashions come and go like hemlines and period colors. (The reasons are probably related.) It



Simplified Mediterranean utility building provides vistas in the garden. (William Coburn)

seemed worthwhile to maintain the best of these mid-twentieth century cultivars as one of the guiding principles for rose selection. Visitors to the garden can see roses which have long since been abandoned by the commercial nursery trade, yet have unique beauty and meaning, especially to the generations of Oakland people who have visited this garden. Of approximately 5000 roses in the garden, about 50% are roses known or estimated to have historically been in the garden.

The Mother's Walk was created in 1954 by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Each year an Oakland mother is recognized as Mother of the Year with a nameplate set into the walkway paving. This ceremony combined the traditional Mother's Day and Oakland Rose Sunday celebrations held at the garden. Also in 1954 was established another memorial walk, now apparently paved over, in the encircling pathway above the Florentine area. Commemorating the 100 year anniversary of Oakland, this Pioneer Walk recognized 125 city founders, business people, politicians, benefactors, city workers, authors, artists, teachers, an astronomer, and others. Stocking Nursery donated 125 Peace roses and these were linked in sequence to the pioneer names.

Because of the age of many of the historic plants, in the recent refurbishing old cultivars were grafted onto new root stock by several rosarians and nurseries. Tom Liggett, who has a nursery in Willow Glen and was also involved in making the Heritage Rose Garden in San Jose, voluntarily budded 1,000 of Oakland's roses. The Huntington Garden in Pasadena provided budding material. Other providers were Vintage Rose Garden, Jackson & Perkins, and Bear Creek, Weeks, Fred Edmunds, and Cand L Nurseries.

The general scheme for selection of roses was to start at the back of the Florentine area with older hybrid teas (1867 on). Generally toward the front of the garden the plants become newer and newer. At the garden entrance are featured the newest hybrid teas and related roses available today from commercial sources. With the exception of the wedding terrace the colors are mixed with a general eye for harmonious relationships. The colors of the plants at the Florentine area and the reflecting pool are "fanned" rainbow fashion, with gradual transitions of one color to the next. In the original garden plan each bed had multiple plants of the same rose. Modern planting has modified this in order to include more different types of roses. The original concept, however, is respected in that each bed is kept within the same color tones.

At the wedding terrace white and pink roses predominate. The highlight of the cascade area is the planting of "Pride of Oakland," a gloriously profuse medium



The cascade, 1952 (above) and 1996 (below). The 1952 caption describes "the cascade bordered by Cecile Bruner roses, with plantings of standard roses on either side of the paths to the upper terrace." Today the cascade is lined with Pride of Oakland, and lower growing French Lace and Queen Elizabeth replace the tree roses on the paths. A ramp to the upper terrace has been added. (Oakland Tribune; William Coburn)

sized bright pink rose. This rose was introduced to the garden as a commercial test plant and was originally known only by a code number. It was especially liked by Oakland's head gardener in the 1950s, George Shiraki, and its name is in part a tribute to him and his support of this plant. This rose will be available commercially in a few years when its 17 year patent cycle lapses.

The soil at the garden is described as "heavy and clayey." In the refurbishing, soil amendment has been provided for the drainage roses require, on a plant by plant basis. The garden has a new mostly spray irrigation system and the hydraulic system for the park waterworks was overhauled. It is intended that the beds will receive a layer of mulch to minimize water needs. "Integrated pest management" is the term that describes the garden philosophy about insects and other plant diseases. It

has a higher tolerance of insects on the plants, thus encouraging healthy bird and butterfly life in the garden. For some fungal problems the "least toxic" sprays are used, as minimally as possible. Ed comments that the fragrance of the roses can now be appreciated uncompromised by Malathion and other insecticide smells.

Much of the outlying areas in the rose garden remain unplanted, still overtaken by ivy and blackberries. These areas are slowly being brought back to active rose cultivation by Ed, other Parks and Rec staff, and a small group of volunteers. The garden welcomes volunteers such as the Russian woman who loves to work in the garden because her apartment has no garden access and in the rose garden she can continue her love of plants which dawned years ago, thousands of miles away. A summer work program has also brought some young people into the garden. The work tradition initiated in its earliest days continues at the garden.

It is hoped that in years to come the banks can be gradually planted with large shrub and climbing roses, that the overlook can be developed and that the wrought iron fence can be re-established. Oakland is fortunate to have Ed Wilkinson and other rose and garden enthusiasts to step forward on behalf of this major Oakland garden with knowledgeable eyes on the past as well as a clear vision for the future.

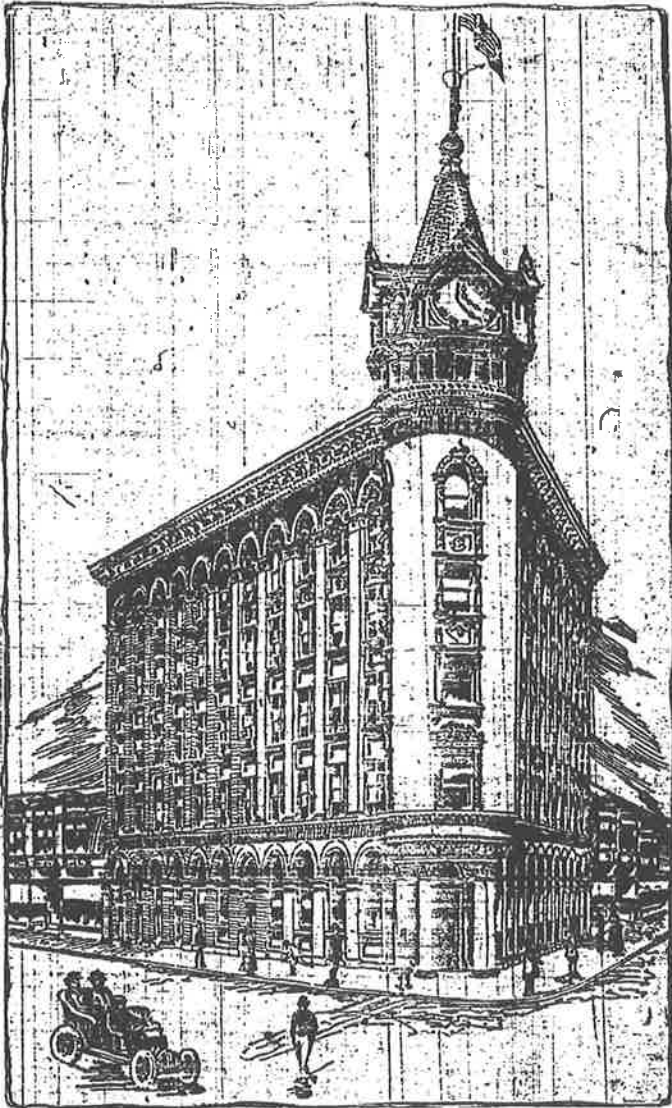
The Morcom Amphitheater of Roses is by far Oakland's primary rose display, but there are others: Merritt College grounds and special rose display; U.C. Botanic Garden's rose display along with species of native California roses; a planting by the Girl Scouts in Montclair; and some deer fenced roses at Dunsmuir House. Lake-side Garden Center's horticultural library has a number of publications related to roses. The library has limited available hours, but offers many items which illuminate Oakland's rose garden history and development. --William P. Coburn

Rose Garden Tour August 24

On Saturday, August 24, from 10 am to noon, OHA presents a walking tour of the Oakland Rose Garden. This extravaganza of horticulture and history will be conducted by rosarian Ed Wilkinson, who graciously provided much of the information in this article, and Marlene Wilson, historian, neighborhood activist, and OHA board member. Ed will provide an intimate look at the garden and the roses themselves, and Marlene will interpret the neighborhood and its distinguished architecture.

Meet at the Jean Street entrance to the Rose Garden; donation \$4 OHA/\$6 general. For other walking tours in this summer's series, see page 11 and OHA Calendar.

A Salute to the Broadway Building



The 1905 preliminary design for the "brick, steel and stone" First National Bank at 14th, San Pablo, and Broadway, as published in the Tribune.

"Among the architects whose work is attracting more than common attention in the rebuilding of San Francisco is L.B. Dutton, who has designed a half dozen bank and office buildings of recognized merit." **Architect & Engineer of California, 1907.**

Somewhere between landing the client and breaking ground, a structure may undergo numerous changes in size or style. One such story is Llewellyn B. Dutton's First National Bank of Oakland building of 1907-08, better known as the Broadway Building. First planned in an era of Victorian style among wood frame and small masonry buildings, its first design scheme appeared in the Oakland Tribune in December 1905, very much more Victorian in concept and somewhat smaller than the building we know. As constructed after the great earthquake and fire of 1906, the design changed to a

Beaux Arts style and a taller building.

The Broadway Building was called "the pioneer in concrete construction" in downtown Oakland. Even City Hall at this time was a wooden structure. The **A&E** remarked on Dutton's use of crushed brick as aggregate in the floors and walls as a way of economizing and fireproofing. A very modern 20th century building, the concept was to "surpass any of the latest efforts on the Eastern seaboard." No modern convenience was left out: special drains and compressed air, both 110 and 220 volt outlets, state of the art elevators, and "the most approved air cleaning device." The mat glazed terra cotta, completed off-site and "shipped ready to erect," was "as fire-proof as anything" and easily maintained: "washing can be done by janitors who clean windows, and involves but a slight expense." A basement restaurant extending out under the sidewalk lights was also planned.

Llewellyn B. Dutton studied architecture in Chicago and came west in 1903 to open a branch office for Daniel Burnham Company. The First National Bank as built is an unmistakable miniature of the Burnham firm's famous 1902 Flatiron Building in New York. Dutton also designed the Westlake Building (1540 San Pablo, 1913) and a residence for the bank's president P.E.

The Broadway Building under construction in 1907, surrounded by smaller wooden Victorian buildings. The cupola at left was City Hall. (Oakland History Room)



Oakland Briefing

■ CULTURAL HERITAGE SURVEY UPDATE

The annual Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey funding drama had a happy outcome in June when the City Council approved a Program Change to appropriate \$30,400 for the Survey, recognizing its essential role in implementing the Historic Preservation Element. The Office of Planning and Building requested the addition to the 1996-97 City budget after learning that grant funds from the State Office of Historic Preservation had been cut in half. Friends and clients of the Survey, both individuals and organizations, communicated their support, and the testimonials were most gratifying: "exemplary union of historic preservation and historical scholarship," "ground zero for property information," "remarkable creativity at doing more with less." This process has made City officials and departments more aware of the Survey's resources and services, and should help mainstream the Survey into environmental review, economic development, and similar City processes.

The Survey is still awaiting results of its 1996-97 state grant application, for \$15,000 to complete the citywide windshield survey and prepare an inventory of City-owned historic properties.

Meanwhile, work is moving on toward the September 30 deadline for 1995-96's grant project, reconnaissance and intensive surveys in San Antonio and on a citywide sample of major buildings and districts. Survey staff members Betty Marvin, Gail Lombardi, and Gary Knecht are grateful to a group of outstanding volunteers for help with photography, building descriptions, research, and map work for this ambitious project: Beth Armstrong, Annette Hoffmann, Herbert Hoffmann, Jennifer Katz, Michael Knight, Gaye Lenahan, Cecile Litherland, Yorkman Lowe, Pamela Magnuson-Peddle, Fred Reichman, and Jane Spangler. If you would like to help, or if we can help you with a question, give us a call at City Planning, 238-3941 weekday afternoons.--Betty Marvin

■ NO "THERE" IN THE FEDERAL BUILDING?

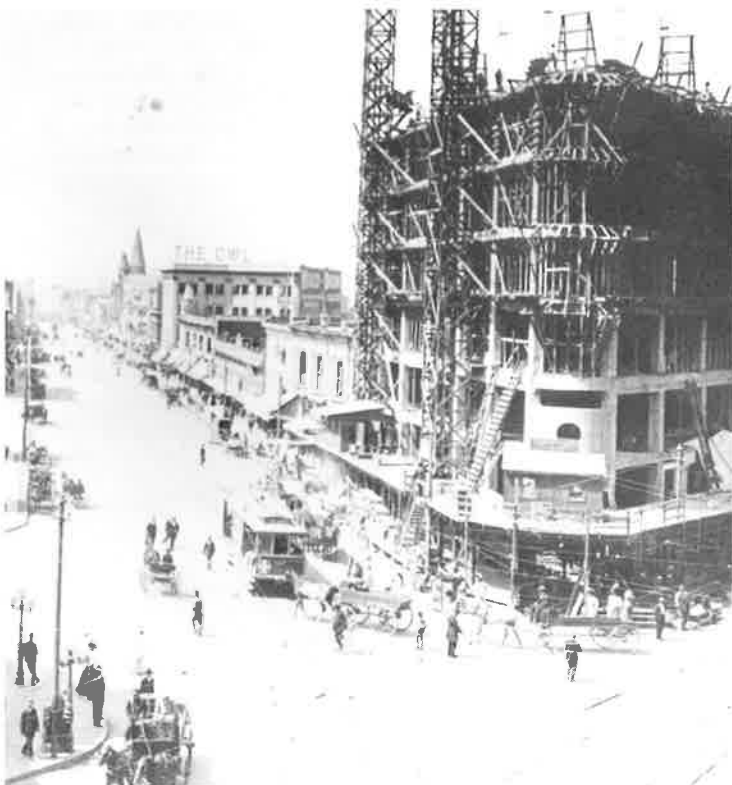
As reported in the **Express** and in **510 News**, Oakland artist Anthony Holdsworth--recorder of Oakland's current history and friend of OHA--is challenging the GSA to allow him to hang his mural "Market on 9th Street--July" in the Federal Building rotunda as originally planned. A Portraits of Oakland Committee has a petition asking that the painting be hung for six months so the community can judge it. Petitions are available at Caffe 817, 817 Washington Street; information and updates also at www.designvillage.com/holdsworthportraits.



By 1913 other modern downtown buildings clustered around the Broadway Building, and another concrete and terra cotta flatiron - B.G. McDougall's Federal Realty Building, now the Cathedral Building - was going up a block away. (Oakland History Room)

Bowles that still exists in Rockridge.

Restoration work on the Broadway Building is to be carried out by two Bay Area architectural firms, Carey & Company restoring the badly damaged exterior of terra cotta while Muller & Caulfield work on the interior, making it again a state-of-the-art building. --Fred Reichman



■ HISTORIC FAST FOOD VS. NEW FAST FOOD: JJ'S VS. MCCHEVRON ON AUTO ROW

A recent application by the Chevron Corporation, owner of the triangle of land at Broadway and 27th Street at the bottom of Oakland's auto row, indicates that Chevron in conjunction with McDonald's Corporation is planning to demolish its existing gas station and JJ's restaurant (ex Biff's) and replace them with a combination gas station, convenience market, and McDonald's restaurant known as a "McChevron."

So why should OHA have any interest in this project? Can fast food restaurants be historic? Are they rare, or capable of having architectural or cultural merit? Why not a McDonald's on auto row--isn't it the same as JJ's? The McChevron proposal is currently being evaluated by the Zoning Division and will likely go to Planning Commission in September. Early protests have come from JJ's clientele, one of whom brought this to OHA's attention. It seems a substantial body of JJ's patrons want the restaurant to remain, as do the operators who lease the building from Chevron. JJ's is clearly a flourishing Oakland business, and a well-loved institution.

There is a documented history and literature of modern diners, coffee shops, and fast food restaurants. These structures have unique design characteristics and a distinctive period aura. In addition, they embody foodways associated with twentieth century lifestyle changes: think of the movie **American Graffiti**. In recognition of this cultural significance, the first McDonald's, in Downey, California, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Restaurants such as Biff's were designed by respected design professionals and a great deal of sophistication and artistry was used to accentuate comfort, cleanliness, and modernity. The structures were open to view to the automobile traffic on which they were dependent. A journalistic term from the 1950s called this style "Googie" architecture, which is the title of a recent book on the style by architect Alan Hess. The basic aesthetic derives from modernist high architecture. John Lautner of Southern California designed the 1949 Googie's restaurant in Los Angeles. Other practitioners of the genre included Douglas Honnold, Kem Weber, and Richard Neutra. These architects were inspired by a mixture of modernist forms from Europe, a dollop of Frank Lloyd Wright and a heavy spoonful of Bruce Goff.

The resulting recipe was mastered by the L.A. firm of Armet and Davis. This design team, as Hess relates, "established Coffee Shop Modern as a popular modern style. Their work for several chains, including Bob's Big Boy and Denny's, colonized the style and its image throughout the United States and Canada."

So, here we are in Oakland at 27th and Broadway with a 1962 Biff's restaurant designed by the leading practitioners of the day, slated for demolition. Boldly circular in plan, it retains most of its original configuration, which features at its center a circular kitchen labeled on its architectural drawings "exhibition cooking." This is perhaps the finest of its type in Oakland, though there are others including Dave's farther up Broadway, a former Mel's at 17th and San Pablo, the two Kwik-Ways, various Casper's and Kasper's, and a little round building at 8th Avenue and East 12th Street. Biff's was designed for maximum comfort for the patron, including telephones at every table. In 1975 the roof was shingled and some spaceship light fixtures removed. Otherwise it is mostly unaltered on the outside, with its period freeform sign posts and queen palm. Unlike most "Googie" diners, this Biff's rather discreetly nestles into its site which is dominated by the Chevron station.

This car-culture triangle sits in sharp contrast to the stately 1913 Gothic First Presbyterian Church across Broadway. Although the proposed McChevron may be consistent with the recent planning study for Broadway Auto Row, the proposed McDonald's seems far less satisfactory than what is there. From an architectural standpoint, in other cities McDonald's has proven able to adapt to historic structures. If the McChevron goes forward, Oakland Heritage Alliance's Board of Directors would like to see this approach studied here. A letter suggesting this has been sent to Chevron and we are watching to see whether site-specific early corporate modernism or generic late corporate modernism will win out on this central Oakland parcel. --William P. Coburn



Circular design by L.A.'s Armet and Davis is related to other early '60s icons like the Space Needle and the Oakland Coliseum. Does anyone have photos showing the original roof color or the neon Biff's sign?

■ MONTGOMERY WARD UPDATE

The Montgomery Ward Building at 29th Avenue and East 14th Street is still standing. A group of concerned residents of San Antonio and Fruitvale led by Xandra Grube and Maria Vermiglio formed a new organization, the League for Preservation of Oakland's Architectural and Historic Resources, to challenge the City's failure to prepare an Environmental Impact Report prior to allowing the demolition of the handsome but battered Arts and Crafts/ utilitarian Ward building. Members of the League are convinced that preservation is still an option and are talking with developers who would like to purchase and restore the building for new uses.

The League, represented by environmental law attorney Susan Brandt-Hawley, filed a petition for writ of mandamus based in part on the City's failure to fully study the alternatives to demolition as required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), immediately after the Planning Commission denied **Oakland Heritage Alliance's** appeal (see Spring 1996 **OHA News**). The City ignored the lawsuit, purchased the building and proceeded to demolish the three-story parking garage. The League's request for a temporary restraining order was denied and the entire garage was destroyed. Several days later, on May 10, the hearing on mandamus was held and the petition was denied with no reason given.

The League then filed an appeal and writ of supersedeas in the California Court of Appeals and requested an immediate stay of further demolition until the appeal is heard. The stay was granted and the appeal is expected to be heard in October at the earliest. In the interim, the League is looking at plans for the restoration which could include housing, live-work, lofts, movie theaters, retail, and office uses.

The League has attracted members from all over the city and intends to work to save other wonders of the beautiful city of Oakland from the wrecker's ball. The League's statement of purposes (below) grew from the need for case-by-case tracking of demolitions and in opposition to the secrecy encountered and difficulty experienced in finding out what was going on between the City and Montgomery Ward. **OHA** memberships are compatible with League memberships and donations for legal fees are welcome. For more information contact Xandra Grube at 532-3010. --Xandra Grube

LEAGUE FOR PRESERVATION OF OAKLAND'S ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

PURPOSES: To preserve the Montgomery Ward building, an historic resource eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and promote full consideration of its adaptive reuse.

To oppose overt demolition or demolition by neglect of the Montgomery Ward building until a new use is developed.



"Montgomery Ward & Company's Bldg., Oakland, Calif." was featured as a scenic attraction on this 1920s Western Notion and Novelty Co. postcard. (League for Preservation)

To oppose wasteful spending of city resources for destruction of sound buildings, especially those that are historically significant or architecturally meritorious.

To promote wisdom among elected officials and city staff based on experience, education and a willingness to pursue an alternate course of action when a better result would be achieved.

To guarantee due process for citizens and speak out against secrecy, violation of rules, intimidation and retaliation by government officials, staff and others.

To promote local government's adherence to CEQA regulations concerning architectural and historic resources.

To engender respect and admiration for old buildings.

To teach our children, by example, to be creative as when we renovate and restore buildings rather than destructive as when we demolish sound restorable buildings.

To encourage construction of new buildings of innovative and traditional architectural designs that can stand alone or blend in with old buildings, but that do not detract from them.

To meld preservation with planning so that the fruits of preservation contribute to revitalization of the beautiful City of Oakland.

--League for Preservation of Oakland's Architectural & Historic Resources

■ NORTH OAKLAND LIBRARIES MAKE BOND LIST

The Golden Gate and Temescal branch libraries appear headed for inclusion on a laundry list of projects on a general obligation bond measure to appear on the November ballot. The libraries appear to be the only preservation component aside from funds for Dunsmuir House and Gardens. The presence of other revenue measures on the ballot at the same time (a possible repeat of Measure I to raise money for senior centers and a schools parcel tax) may hinder passage of all three without concerted campaigns on their behalf.

Presentations regarding seismic, ADA and code improvements were made at meetings this spring at the two branches. Ed Cheng, Library engineer overseeing the projects, and the architectural firm of Noll & Tam

unveiled their proposals, which appear to respect the historic character of the interiors and exteriors while providing elevator access from ground level rear. An interior ramp connects the lower level meeting room to the middle level bathroom and other rooms. This work will not mar the front and side views of the libraries. Further good news is the determination that sufficient strengthening can be had by reinforcing the ceiling and floor of the main story, along with some interior walls, without intruding into the space.

Library administration, with prodding by the Library Advisory Commission, appears flexible regarding other upgrades at the same time as the seismic work. Speakers at the hearings cited the need for improved electrical capacity as well as aesthetic issues such as replacing the inappropriate fluorescent light fixtures and worn flooring. Current projections are for \$2 million to be spent per library; it may be more in the final bond measure.

The recently-formed Friends of the Temescal Library held an open house on July 20, with a book and bake sale and tours of the library which was recently placed on the National Register. For information contact Martha Bergmann or Don Waters at the library, 597-5049, or Friends of the Temescal Library, 655-3841.--Robert Brokl

■ MOVEMENT ON MERRITT

The nearly two decade struggle by the City to develop the Old Merritt-University High School site may be entering a hopeful phase. Those attending the May 30 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting expressed guarded optimism. Mayor Harris, fielding most of the questions about the state of the project, made the following points:

- The City is committed to going ahead with core-and-shell work on the main



National Park Service representatives recently toured Old Merritt. Historic interiors like the lecture hall (with metal lath hanging from the ceiling) still appear threatened by intent to offer tenants "white boxes," minus blackboards and moldings. (NOVA)

historic building (including the manual arts wing), along with construction of the senior center, even if Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI) opts not to be the project's anchor tenant.

- The City currently has available \$2.6 million for the senior center and \$11 million in HUD Section 108 funds, but Harris emphasized that "money would be found" for the likely \$20 million project.
- Jens Hillmer, project manager, indicated the City's intention to continue in the historic tax credit program. This seems to reflect the City's growing understanding of the alternative: lengthy delays if "adverse effects" on the historic building trigger Section 106 review.

Hillmer also said the process of hiring a leasing agent to fill up the remaining spaces is underway. VBN Architects (who worked on the City Hall renovation) has been chosen to replace IDG Architects.

IDG/Baner Urban Ventures, the developers before the project was taken over by the City, are close to a financial settlement with the City and the construction drawings have been turned over. IDG Architects will compete for the job of designing the tenant improvements for the CHORI portion.

As of this writing, the City and Hensel Phelps Construction are about to sign a design-build contract, concluding lengthy negotiations that produced a document over 140 pages. The contract is in the range of \$15.5 million, and includes basic core-and-shell work, roof replacement (reusing existing tiles), seismic upgrades, window repair or replacement, and improvements for the senior center in the auditorium.

There are also signs that CHORI will decide to locate at Merritt, and the prospect of an anchor tenant - even one that will undoubtedly receive financial assistance from the City - is fueling optimism. (We have learned, however, that CHO has asked to delay the decision until September 15.) At the May meeting, Tom Schwieger of Hensel Phelps spelled out a rosy scenario for work beginning in July, with the roof done by December and the senior center complete by July 1997.

Still, numerous other pieces must be in place before substantial work can begin. Among other items, construction drawings and design work must be finished, approval secured from the National Park Service (for the tax credit program) and from the State Historic Preservation Office, and a for-profit entity created by the City to take the tax credits. --Robert Brokl

Late-breaking updates on Old Merritt, the Carnegie libraries, Studio One, and other North Oakland issues appear monthly in the NOVA newsletter. Subscriptions are \$10-\$25, or what you can afford: NOVA, Box 20486, Oakland CA 94620; Robert Brokl or Alfred Crofts, 655-3841.

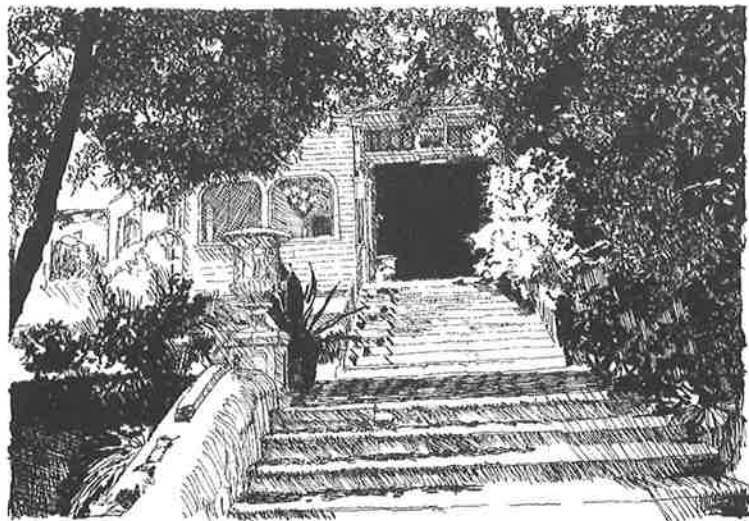
O.H.A. Update

■ BROOKLYN HOUSE TOUR

On May 19, hundreds of people visited the 10th Avenue Historic District on the **Oakland Heritage Alliance** tenth annual house tour in the Brooklyn neighborhood. Guests came to enjoy the mix of houses in Oakland's only designated residential historic district. There was every style of house from 1880s Stick-Eastlake to 1994 reproduced Victorian. In between were Queen Annes, Colonial Revivals, an A.W. Smith Craftsman, and even a 1912 Julia Morgan Prairie-influenced house.

The street scene was enlivened by members of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area Costumers Guild who came in period dress. Inside were special exhibits of period cookbooks and kitchen utensils, photo essays on retrofit projects, and restoration information. The reception was held in a world class garden setting where rooms were created by the imaginative use of hedges, walls, and walkways.

OHA thanks the tour committee chaired by Don Tyler, as well as the many volunteers who acted as docents in the houses. The committee included Marina Carlson, Bill Coburn, Helen Lore, Betty Marvin, David Nicolai, Jane Spangler, and Marlene Wilson, with special assistance from Beth Armstrong, Phil Bellman, Darby Brandli, Bruno Brandli, Carolyn Douthat, Creighton Fong, Herbert Kennedy, Linda Watanabe McFerrin, Lowry McFerrin, Eugene Peck, and Kirk Peterson. The beautiful renderings in the tour booklet were contributed by Donald Wardlaw and other members of the East Bay AIA: Alexander Bergtraun, Italo Calpestri III, Dolores Fazio, Harry Jacobs Jr., Jason Kaldis, Deborah Lane, and Pamela Seifert. Thanks to Naomi Schiff and Valerie Winemiller of 17th Street Studios for design and production of the flyer,



Portraits of the Valentine mansion at 2015 13th Avenue (below left) and the A.W. Smith house at 1946 10th Avenue (above). These drawings, as well as 2020 10th Avenue, were mislabeled in the tour brochure and should be credited to Donald Wardlaw. A few copies of the brochure are still available from the OHA office.

tickets, and booklet. Flowers were by Sharon Kidder, Sunshine and Flowers.

If you have suggestions for a neighborhood for next year's tour or ideas to enhance the experience, please contact OHA at 763-9218. --Don Tyler and Helen Lore

■ SUMMER WALKING TOURS CONTINUE

The 1996 walking tour season continues through August, with a record number of new tours arranged by the tour committee, Steve Lavoie, Helen Lore and Betty Marvin. Remaining tours are: August 3, Architectural Ceramics, led by Riley Doty; August 4, Picardy Drive and Foothill-Seminary, led by Andrew Carpentier; August 10, Embarcadero Cove, Stana Hearne and Betty Marvin; August 11, South Oak Center, with Bill Coburn, Betty Marvin, and Ellen Wyrick-Parkinson; August 17, Haddon Hill with Ed Phillips; August 18, Produce Market and South of the Nimitz, with Gary Knecht; August 24, Rose Garden, Ed Wilkinson and Marlene Wilson; and August 25, Broadway Auto Row, Betty Thomas and Betty Marvin.

See **OHA Calendar**, p.14, for times and places, or call the office, 763-9218, for a brochure with full descriptions.

■ OAKLAND TOURS PROGRAM: SUMMER & BEYOND

The City of Oakland's free walking tours continue on a rotating basis, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and first Tuesdays through October. Experienced volunteer guides point out fascinating aspects of Oakland. Call the 24-hour hot line, 238-3234, for a complete schedule. All tours start promptly at 10 a.m. No reservations are required,



City Landmarks Board Actions

but do call if you are bringing a group.

Stately **City Hall** is open once more! On first Tuesdays (8/6, 9/3, 10/1) learn about its state-of-the-art restoration and retrofit. Meet at the front entrance. Meet at Ratto's at 9th and Washington to tour the 1870s commercial heart of **Old Oakland** (8/3, 8/28, 9/28, 10/16). Tour Chinatown, the bustling Asian center of the East Bay: meet at the Pacific Renaissance Plaza fountain, 9th and Webster (8/7, 8/31, 9/21, 10/9). The **Uptown** tour's focus is Art Deco: meet at the Paramount Theater, 2025 Broadway (8/10, 9/11, 10/12). **City Center**: turn-of-the-century landmarks alongside modern highrises. Meet on the steps of City Hall (8/14, 9/7, 9/25, 10/23). Meet at the Overland Bar and Grill, 101 Broadway, to tour **Jack London's waterfront** (8/17, 9/14, 10/5, 10/30). Meet at First Presbyterian, 2601 Broadway, to tour historic **churches and temples** (8/21, 9/18, 10/19). To tour elegant restored Victorians in **Preservation Park**, meet at the fountain, M.L. King Way between 12th and 14th (8/24, 9/4, 10/2, 10/26).

Special tours can be arranged by request for a modest charge. Coordinator Annalee Allen can customize any of the tours. And would you like to become a guide? Showing off your city is one of the most satisfying volunteer activities there is. Call and we'll tell you how. --Annalee Allen

■ IN MEMORIAM: DAVID GEBHARD (1927-1996)

In March the architectural world lost one of its best known advocates of California and Southwest architecture, David Gebhard. He is remembered as an active and generous member of the academic, museum, and local planning communities as well.

David Gebhard was born in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, where he acquired an early appreciation of Prairie School and regional architecture. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a Ph.D. in art and architectural history in 1958. From 1953 to 1960 he taught in New Mexico, and in 1961 became professor and director of the University Art Museum at U.C. Santa Barbara. He founded UCSB's Architectural Drawing Collection, an internationally known collection that contains exceptional Spanish Colonial Revival material.

A prolific author of over 50 books, he may be best known to **OHA** members for his architectural guides, written with Robert Winter, Sally Woodbridge, and others. He wrote on a wide range of subjects: Prairie School architects and Fred Harvey hotels, Los Angeles Deco and Bay Area dollhouses, World's Fairs and malls, Schindler and Voysey, Spanish Colonial and contemporary architecture, California gardens and rock paintings, and more.

In Santa Barbara he was a tremendous moral force, conscientious and witty, in his efforts to preserve and improve the aesthetic character of the city. He served on many boards and commissions. Memorial contributions may be made to the Society of Architectural Historians, University Art Museum (Santa Barbara), or Architectural Drawings Collection. --Lynne Horiuchi

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 127 landmarks have been designated since the Board was created in 1973. Meetings are held at City Hall, in Hearing Room #1, 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.

Two vacancies are expected on the Board in the near future. Interested citizens are invited to apply to Helaine Prentice, 238-2978. Members should be able to attend occasional site visits as well as monthly meetings, and must be Oakland residents. For the upcoming vacancies, applicants with expertise in real estate and in architecture are especially encouraged.

MAY

Helaine Prentice announced a City Council Preservation Week ceremony May 14 awarding certificates to owners of the eight landmarks designated in the past two years. The press was notified.

Board voted to accept application for landmark status for the Walter "Brownie" McGhee house at 688 43rd Street, where the musician lived for the last thirty years of his life and where the Blues Is Truth Foundation will carry on his work. His guitars and memorabilia will be there, and papers will be available for study. Board voted to add the Fruitvale Hotel, 3221 San Leandro Street, rated B+ by the Survey, to the Study List, following a condemnation referral by Code Compliance.

Ted Ramirez, OEDE, reported on plans for Broadway Auto Row (Grand Avenue to the 580 freeway) by Robert LaRocca Associates. The draft plan called for increased pedestrian activity, business recruitment, a strong lighting plan, gateways and street furniture, and a theme. Board commented on tree selection, and urged facade improvement to take advantage of historic resources and a theme specific to Oakland's historic role as the "Detroit of the West."

In Open Forum, John and Russell Moran, nearby property owners, disputed the City's findings allowing demolition of additions to the old YMCA (Hamilton Hotel, 2101 Telegraph), being converted to 93 apartments by CREDO Housing (Catholic Charities). Board was unable to discuss the matter because of pending litigation.

Annalee Allen reported on a meeting on 1996-97 funding for the Oakland Cultural



Broadway's busy Auto Row in 1968, from a Planning Department series that also shows the original Biff's farther down the Row. Auto Row has many fine Beaux Arts and Art Deco buildings, some obscured by signs and facings, that establish a theme for the district.

Heritage Survey. Phil Tagami agreed to speak at the City Council budget hearing.

Renee Dymond agreed to attend the City Council Public Works Committee hearing on preservation policies in the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Element.

Oakland's Annual Report to the State Office of Historic Preservation under the Certified Local Government program, prepared by Betty Marvin of the Survey and Helaine Prentice, was submitted April 1; it incorporates the Board's Annual Report for 1995. Chair Les Hausrath suggested that the reports be sent to the Mayor, Council, and departments where a possible connection with preservation exists.

Hausrath reported on Planning Commission discussion on designation of interior features of the Glenview Library building; the vote for designation was unanimous. Tagami suggested that a letter of support from the City's real estate department accompany the paperwork when the Council hearing on the designation is scheduled.

Tagami reported on "Managing Pandora's Box," a panel discussion in which he participated in connection with the AIA's "Pulling Downtown Oakland Together" exhibit. A panel of architects, developers, and lenders shared their experiences with rehabbing, financing, marketing, and using the historic buildings in Old Oakland.

Helaine Prentice reported on signage for Oakland's S-7 historic districts. Urban designer Blair Prentice had drafted a sign that could be mounted on existing street signs. The prototype was for the Tenth Avenue District, with the hope that signs would be up in time for the house tour.

Secretary Prentice reported on plans for seismic upgrade of the Temescal and Golden Gate Branch Libraries (landmarks and on

the National Register). The design team, which includes preservation specialists Dan and Gerry Peterson, offered a plan with limited visual impact on the exterior and an elevator tower at the rear.

Annalee Allen noted that the fence around the construction site on City Hall Plaza had been changed so that the oak tree and lawn were no longer concealed.

Board briefly discussed the block of 11th, 12th, Franklin, and Broadway, where BART and the University of California might both be building offices.

JUNE

Board heard a presentation by architect Franz Steiner on plans for 98 housing units and 6800 square foot retail on the block bounded by Clay, Jefferson, 9th, and 10th Streets that links the Old Oakland and Preservation Park Districts.

Board discussed the City purchase of the landmark Fox Theater, and noted that as a publicly owned building the interior could be designated. Board commented that the purchase created an opportunity for the City to demonstrate excellence in managing historic properties.

Board discussed upcoming City Council action on the budget, which included the funding request for the Survey. Various members noted the Survey's importance to the Board, to the whole implementation of the Preservation Element, and to such efforts as the new Virtual Permit Center.

Secretary Prentice reported on proposed additions at the Chapel of the Chimes, and on removal of the historic bar from the long-closed Dahlke's saloon, 701 Broadway.

A combined July-August meeting was scheduled for July 29. --Kathy Olson



Like an urban geode, the decapitated and modernized Victorian at 701 Broadway contained this miraculously well preserved 19th century saloon interior. If Dahlke's reopens, it may be without the bar fixture, which reportedly has been sold. (Survey photo, 1985)

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) or Wardlaw@aol.com

Upcoming Activities

through August, (M-T. 10-5:30, W-Th. 12-8, F. 12-5:30, Sat. 10-5:30), "Early Lake Merritt," photographs & postcards from 1869-1930's, Oakland History Room, Main Library, 125 14th. St., 238-3222.

through October 15, (1-5, Th.-Sat.), "The Berkeley Literary Scene", sketches, notebooks, books & working places of and by Berkeley writers such as Charles & Louise Keeler, Frank Norris, Allen Ginsberg and others, The Berkeley Historical Society Museum, 1931 Center Street, 848-0181.

August 10, Sat. 10-noon, "Embarcadero Cove," **OHA Tour**, 1970's "recreated" historic district features relocated homes and historic manufacturing facilities, Quinn's Lighthouse, 51 Embarcadero Cove, \$4/\$6, 763-9218.



August 11, Sun. 10am-12:30 pm, "South Oak Center," **OHA Tour**, south of Lowell Park Victorians, Nabisco plant & Beth Eden Baptist Church, deFremercy House, 1651 Adeline St., \$4/\$6, 763-9218.



August 17, Sat. 10-noon, "Haddon Hill," **OHA Tour**, Pre WWII neighborhood of Mediterranean style, Kenwyn Rd. & McKinley Ave., \$4/\$6, 763-9218.



August 14, Wed. 10am, "City Center," Oakland Tours Program, City Hall, free, 238-3234.

August 18, Sun. 10-noon, "Produce Market & the 'SONI' (South of Nimitz) District," **OHA Tour**, early 20c market and warehouse district Oakland Grill, 3rd & Franklin, \$4/\$6, 763-9218.



August 21, Wed. 10am, "Churches & Temples," Oakland Tours Program, 27th & Broadway, free, 238-3234.

August 24, Sat. 10-noon, "Oakland Rose Garden," **OHA Tour**, its roses, history, recent restoration with Oakland's official rosarian, entrance on Jean St. (off Grand Ave.), \$4/\$6, 763-9218.



August 25, Sun. 10-noon, "Broadway Auto Row," **OHA Tour**, legacy of heydeys from 1910-1940 when Oakland was "Detroit of the West, 28th St. & Broadway, \$4/\$6, 763-9218.



August 28, Wed. 10am, "Old Oakland Historic District," Oakland Tours, 821 Washington, free, 238-3234.

September-October, Berkeley Historical Society Walking Tours, Victorian North Berkeley, Craftsman North Berkeley, Berkeley Public Library, details TBA, 848-0181.

September 11, Wed. 10am, "Uptown to the Lake," Oakland Tours, Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway, free, 238-3234.

September 18, Wed. 10am, "Churches & Temples," Oakland Tours, 27th & Broadway, free, 238-3234.

September 25, Wed. 10am, "City Center," Oakland Tours, meet @ City Hall, free, 238-3234.

September 26, Thurs., 7:30pm, "The Arts & Crafts Movement in the East Bay," lecture by Bruce Smith, co-sponsored by OHA & BAHA, call for details, 763-9218/841-2242.



September 29, Sun. 12-5, "Arts & Crafts Houses in Berkeley and Oakland," Fall House Tour, co-sponsored by OHA & BAHA, call for details, 763-9218/841-2242.



Regularly Scheduled Exhibits & Tours

The African American Museum & Library at Oakland, museum, archives & programs, 5606 San Pablo Ave., 597-5053.

Alameda Historical Museum, Wed.-Sat. 1:30-4, Sat. 11-4, 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, \$6/\$3.50 (Sr.)/\$2.50 (Jr.), 796-0663.

Berkeley Historical Society, museum, archives, walking tours, Th.-Sat 1-5, 1931 Center Street (Veteran's Memorial Bldg.), 848-0181.

Cohen Bray House, 1884 Eastlake Stick Style, owned continuously by descendant of first occupants, original furnishings & wall papers, 1440 29th Ave., Oakland, open 4th Sunday, 2pm tours by appt., for info Victorian Preservation Center of Oakland, \$5, 532-0704.

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

Mountain View Cemetery Tours, second Saturday every month, 10am, docent led tours sponsored by Mountain View Cemetery, free, 658-2588.

Oakland Tours Program, guided tours of restored City Hall, first Tuesday of the month, meet on front steps. Through Oct., free tours of central Oakland, every Wed. & Sat. 10am, free, rsvp please, 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-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 City Hall. 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 to July) are:

Lorissa Adam, John Barbey, Melvin Bobier, Clinton & Shirin Bond, Bruno & Darby Brandli, Katrina & Paul Brekke-Miesner, Tony Celaya/Karla Sagramoso, Sara Caldwell, Edward Carville, Clifford Cline, Michael Davis, Fred Easter, Jane Erwin, Leslie Finta, Marilyn Ford, Robin Freeman, Abigail Givens, Carole Glanzer, Timothy Gray, Austene Hall, Bill Henrickson, Alicia Jones-Martin, Christina Kinavey, Eldien Kistner, William Kramer, Ronald Krause, Christina Lavin, Mark Lazerson, Jessie Lee, Linda & Lowry McFerrin, Karen McGuinn, Ann Middleton, Cherie Morrison, Dawn Muller, Charles Norcross Jr., Brian Oliver, Zetta Lynne Poli, Jane Powell, Mr./Mrs. Romero, Milada Rudenko, Angela Salem, Don Schmidt, Bilal & Taqiyyah Shabazz, Jane Sokolow/Bill Branca, Tom Tabakin, Reynaldo & Jody Terrazas, Lonna Troselair, Tim Vendlinski, Paul Walker, Madeline Wells, Bill & Nan West, Arnette Whitehouse.

Donors

Special thanks to those joining/renewing as:

- PATRON (\$250): Eldien Kistner.
- SPONSOR (\$100): Steve & Terry Beck, Clifford Cline, Sally Freedman, Robert & Joan Hughes, Eugene Peck, Betty Postag.
- ORGANIZATION/BENEFACTOR (\$50): Foxfire Properties/Stoner Lichty, Paramount Theatre, Arnette Whitehouse
- DONATIONS: BankAmerica Foundation Matching Gift for Matthew Gabel, Steve & Terry Beck, Robert & Joan Hughes.

Oakland Heritage Alliance News

CONTRIBUTORS

Annalee Allen, Robert Brokl, William Coburn, Xandra Grube, Lynne Horiuchi, Helen Lore, Betty Marvin, Kathy Olson, Fred Reichman, William Sturm, Don Tyler & Donald Wardlaw.

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 BetMarv@aol.com, or OHA, 763-9218. Back issues \$2. © 1996 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 History Notes

The Athens Hotel

Opening in 1905 on the east side of Broadway near 17th Street, the Athens Hotel proudly proclaimed itself "new and modern in every detail." "The main entrance and stairway are of white marble," intoned the publicity, "Every suite is furnished with a bath room of which there are forty-three in the building... All of the interior rooms have bay windows facing on large interior areas or courts." Rooms were opulently furnished with Axminster and Wilton Velvet carpets, and guests enjoyed the amenities of an electric elevator and private telephones in each room.

Designed by architect Edgar A. Mathews,

later known for his houses and apartment blocks in San Francisco's fashionable Pacific Heights, the very French-looking Athens Hotel was unusual in Oakland. It represented a shift in commercial and retail activity along Broadway, a move north from the traditional nexus at 9th Street. Adjacent to the handsome new post office which opened in 1903, and close to the juncture of Broadway and Telegraph, the Athens was, its proprietors roundly stated, "in the center of everything."

"The Athens has gained great popularity under its present management; it is headquarters for Army and Navy officers and a general and popular resort for the leading citizens of Oakland, San Francisco and adjacent cities in this vicinity." Behind the impeccable facade, however, lurked a

vagrant Eros. An elderly gentleman with a wicked sense of humor once confided to me that as an employee of the 17th Street post office in the '20s he frequently saw evidence of the night's amorous activity on the streets in the morning.

In 1924 the Athens changed its name to the Federal Hotel, possibly in deference to the adjacent post office. In 1927 the management announced a "thorough renovation," a free garage, and weekly rates of \$7 to \$10 for rooms. In 1938 it became the Rosebrook Residential Hotel. In 1950 the hotel was replaced by the streamlined Moore's clothing store (with Raymond Loewy interiors), a building which, in modified state, now houses Irene Sargent's. The Athens Hotel, with all its varied tales, vanished without a trace. --William W. Sturm



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