

Neon: The Living Flame



From the moment neon was first introduced into the United States in the early twenties, it was a hit. People often drove for miles to observe the new phenomenon on Main Street. By the thirties virtually every city and town could boast at least one neon sign - more often than not, on the community movie theater. Oakland is no exception, and has many notable signs.

Luminous tube lighting, as neon is more accurately called, is simply a glass vacuum tube, fitted at each end with a metal terminal or electrode. Inside the tube is a small amount of rare gas. Connected to the electrodes is a source of high-voltage electrical power. This is a neon sign reduced to its elements.

D. McFarland Moore was one of the first to successfully experiment with luminous tube lighting. In the late nineteenth century, he conceived the idea of using an electromagnetic valve for mixing carbon dioxide or nitrogen with a current to provide a form of light. These Moore tubes, which were large diameter nitrogen filled tubes, were in use in England from 1893 to 1910. The first Moore tube sign in the US was erected in 1904 in Newark, New Jersey. However, these tubes were

More than 5000 people thronged to the Paramount on opening night, December 16, 1931. This was one of the first Oakland buildings to use neon as an integral part of the architecture. (photo by Gabriel Moulin Studios, San Francisco, courtesy of Paramount Theatre of the Arts)

very short lived both in practicality and popularity.

Rare gases, of which neon is one, were discovered in the nineteenth century. In 1868, helium was discovered by spectroscopic analysis of the sun and discovered on earth in 1885. Lord Rayleigh and Sir William Ramsey discovered argon in 1893. Sir William went on to discover krypton, xenon, and - in 1898 - neon. Rare gases are inert and do not combine with any other substance. Thus they are ideal for luminous tubes because they can take an electrical charge and continue to maintain their integrity. Neon is ideal for signage because its natural red color shows up even in the poorest weather and is especially suited for beacons for aviation and marine service.

Georges Claude, a Frenchman, and Karl von Linde, a German, independently discovered the process for making pure oxygen. They were responding to the need for oxygen in



hospitals and for oxyacetylene welding. A side effect of the process is the production of rare gases. Claude developed a cheap extraction process but had no use for the leftover rare gases. He then came across a Moore tube. He discovered that by filling a tube with neon and bombarding it with electricity he was able to produce a clear intense red; with argon he produced a grayish blue. In this process Claude had taken the first steps in the formation of the luminous tube industry.

Claude showed the first commercial luminous tube sign at the Grande Palais in Paris in 1910. His associate Jacques Fonseque saw the advertising potential and sold the world's first neon sign to a barber shop, Palais Coiffeur, on Boulevard Montmartre in 1912. The following year the first rooftop sign, a 3½ foot white-letter Cinzano sign, was erected also in Paris. By 1914 there was a single neon plant in operation. Claude received a patent on January 19, 1915, for the electrode attachment process. In 1919 the Paris Opéra main entrance was lit with a Claude Neon construction in orange and blue to create an effect which became known as "les couleurs Opéra."

The first Claude Neon sign in the United States was erected in Los Angeles. In 1923 Earle C. Anthony imported two signs from Paris made of Claude Neon. At a cost of \$1,250, they were simple signs of orange letters spelling "Packard" surrounded by a blue border. Thus the popularity of the "couleurs Opéra" was established with the first sign.

Claude began franchising the method of making his long-life electrode in 1924. Franchises were sold in New York,

Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Boston, Casablanca, and Shanghai. In 1929, the Electrical Products Corporation, Oakland's premier firm, opened its offices in an Art Deco building at 950 30th Street. Franchisees agreed to pay \$100,000 plus royalties. However Americans were quite enterprising once they learned the technology and quickly set up their own schools, ignoring Claude's patent rights. National companies would have their standardized signs erected in towns from coast to coast.

The two leading American designers were O.J. Gude and Douglas Leigh. Leigh is mostly responsible for the look of Times Square in New York, the most spectacular display of neon in the 1930s. (Large scale neon did not come to Las Vegas, currently the most inspired display of neon, until 1944 when mobster Bugsy Siegal constructed the Flamingo Hotel which featured designs eight stories high.) In addition, movie set designers were often innovative in using this new medium. One of the most unusual uses is Busby Berkeley's "Shadow Waltz" sequence from **Gold Diggers of 1933** which features a hundred platinum blondes playing violins outlined in neon!

Initially, signs were added to existing buildings. By the early thirties neon signage and tubing became an integral part of new building designs. Movie theater marquees and vertical

Electrical Products Corporation put "6000 labor hours" into the Paramount sign and developed "a new and improved illumination tube to be known as Zeon." The West Oakland plant is now occupied as art studios. (Oakland Tribune Year Book, 1930, Oakland History Room)

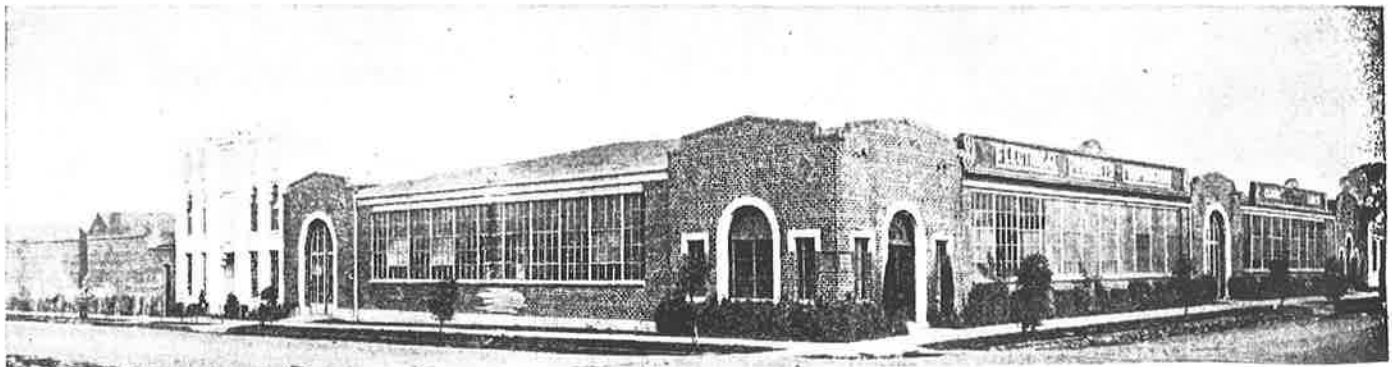
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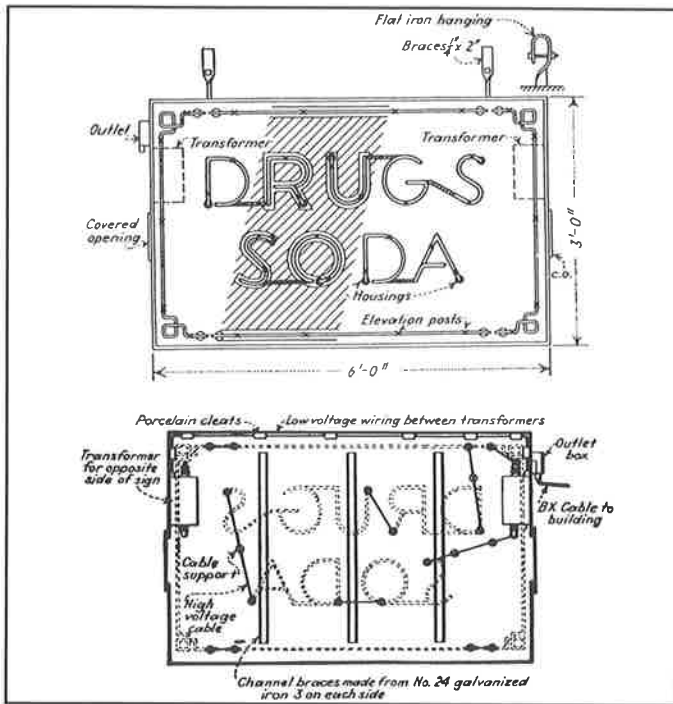
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Upper: Complete sign layout, showing position of tubing, transformers, mounting, etc. Lower: Wiring diagram for sign above, seen from inside. From *Neon Techniques and Handling*, 1952.

signs were often integrated with the facade in many creative ways. The Paramount Theater was one of the first of this kind in Oakland. In contrast, the sign and marquee on the older Fox Oakland Theater were designed by A.A. Cantin, the designer of the Orinda Theater, and installed in a later update.

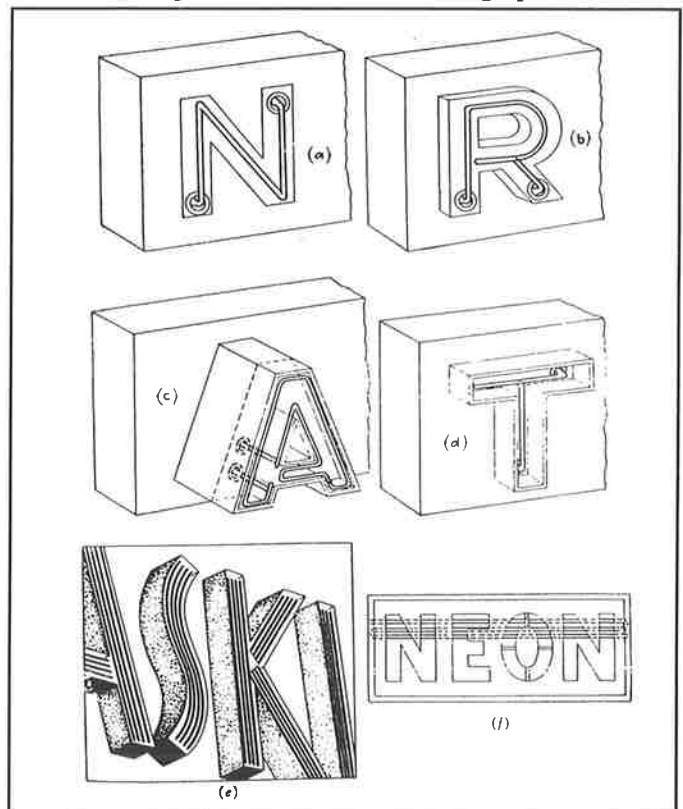
There are several kinds of exterior signs: swing or projecting, vertical, fascia, outline skeleton, rooftop, pole, and marquee. A swing sign is hung from a bracket so that it can swing freely. If it has tubing on both sides it is called a double-face sign. Due probably to building codes these signs are extremely rare, or have been modified to prevent the swing. A projecting sign has guy wire bracing and so does not swing. Vertical signs have several brackets attached to one edge of the box so that they can be mounted at the corner or along the facade of a building. Fascia signs are designed to lie flat against a building. Outline skeleton signs are long lengths of tubing used to outline buildings, canopies, faces of buildings or other permanent installations. Rooftop signs can be either freestanding letters, each with its own transformer, or billboard type. A pole sign is supported on one or more vertical poles in the ground or attached to a building. A marquee sign is a structure that projects over a sidewalk and is most often found over theater or hotel entrances.

Interior signs include skeleton, box, window outline, interior outline, and display. The skeleton is a continuous tube without a solid metal background. These are now often backed with plexiglass for protection and usually displayed in windows. Display signs, now rare, are often a border around a logo or trademark or clock. The clocks were almost exclusively manufactured in Lima, Ohio by the Artkraft Sign Company.

There are several kinds of letters or mountings: flat, raised, channel, cutout, recessed, back-lit, and overlay. A flat letter is the simplest, and consists of letters painted on the metal box with the tube in front. The raised mounting stands above the surface of the box and has the same outline as the tube. It is sometimes painted a contrasting color to the box. The channel letter is similar to the raised letter except that instead of a flat surface the attached metal letter has a channel in which the tube is placed. Cutout letters are cut into the box with the tube mounted behind so that it is not visible. Recessed differs from cutout in that the neon is visible and located in the same plane as the sign base. Back-lit letters have the neon mounted on the back side of the letter. Overlay letters consist of one set of letters spelling a word overlaying another set of letters spelling a different word, lighting in an alternating sequence. Letters can be script, block, outline, double outline, or infilled.

Initially, rare gases were used alone or in combination to produce the desired colors: neon for orange-red; mercury and argon for blue; argon for lavender; krypton for silver-white; xenon for pale blue/purple; helium for pink. Color can also be produced - and now usually is - by using tubes that are coated or tinted, or both. The juxtaposition of the gas color with the color of the glass and the color of the tube coating produces some forty known combinations.

The glass tubing is bent by a craftsman without gloves, who must determine the pliability by instinct. No corrections can be made once a tube is bent. There are three kinds of burners used in bending: ribbon burners for heating up to 24 inches



Types of mountings: a. flat painted letter, b. raised letter, c. raised letter with shallow channel, e. channel letter with multirow tubing, f. cutout letter. From *Neon Techniques and Handling*, 1952.



Ideal Cleaners, 322 14th Street: The multicolored neon complements the multiple colors of the Vitrolux glass facade. The clean line and rounded form of the canopy indicate a 1940s date. (Michael Crowe; Betty Marvin)

of glass at a time; cross fire for sharp-angle bends; and a hand torch for attaching electrodes to finished units. The craft is still being passed on by the first generation of benders. Some art schools have initiated courses in neon bending.

After the tube is formed in the desired shape it is attached to a vacuum pump, cleared of impurities, and filled with a small amount of rare gas. In this state it should last thirty years or more before disintegration of the electrodes requires that new ones be spliced on.

There can be preservation problems. Sputtering occurs when the electrode, under the action of the heat to which it is subjected and the electrical forces which act upon it, begins to disintegrate. This causes the electrode ends to blacken and the tube to appear to wiggle. Eventually, the entire electrode will be destroyed. The remedy is to take the tube down, open it up, clean it, re-pump it and refill it. The connecting wires must be copper or copper-coated to bind to the glass. The glass and wire must also have the same coefficient of expansion to maintain the integrity of the connection. This is crucial for outdoor signs, which are exposed to the elements.



Water, of course, is the chief culprit in most deterioration, so a sign should be visually inspected on a regular cycle for evidence of problems. Signs should be professionally inspected for integrity of the electrode connections and transformer performance. The bracing, guy wires, and electrical connections should also be checked. Other building treatments should be carefully considered for their impact on the sign. This is especially true for coatings such as pigeon deterrents.

Restoration of signs does occur. Often repairs can be sequenced so that the cost can be spread over time. Historic photographs and the physical evidence of the electrode outlets can provide important clues about the shape of the neon tubing but not necessarily the color scheme if all the tubing is lost. However, clues can be found in the color scheme of the box which often reflected the color of the neon tubing. Sometimes the neon was part of the overall color scheme found in other areas of the building such as the terrazzo entry flooring or the interior, especially in theaters.

The length of the replacement tubing must match the spacing of the electrode openings exactly. There is little room for error. Exact measurements from center point to center point of the electrode opening are essential. Patching of the sheet metal box should be made with in-kind metal with expansion joints if necessary. It is difficult to repair nicked porcelain coating; careful matching with glossy enamel can be an acceptable repair. Any replacement materials should match the original in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.

The cost of repairing a sign will vary with size, location, cause of deterioration, length of tubing to be replaced, complexity of design, and rarity of colors. However, it is possible to gauge the cost roughly by the length of tubing to be replaced, with the other costs factored in. On the West Coast the cost is between \$6 and \$10 per foot.

Historic neon signs form an important part of our visual heritage. They often contribute significantly to the quality of a street. They can be a significant character defining feature on a building, be it a theater, hotel, or commercial building. For these reasons, it is important to identify and include them in surveys of historic resources. The National Park Service has



By adding a halo above the coffee pot, the label "Good Coffee" takes on a heavenly aspect. Shaped signs have a long history dating back centuries when non-readers needed to identify a shop location. (Michael Crowe)

funded a survey of neon signage in the State of Nevada. The Park Service has also encouraged the rehabilitation of historic signs in tax act projects. In Oakland, the newly refurbished Hotel Harrison unfortunately did not restore the neon sign because of budget constraints. A stated concern of the car dealers along upper Broadway is lack of visibility. Indeed, this might be attributed to the neglect or removal of the neon signs that once lit the street. New or refurbished signs could add a new night light enhancing the view from the adjacent freeway.

There is still mixed acceptance of neon. The City of Pasadena has protected its historic neon through the historic designation process. The City of Los Angeles has funded the restoration of neon signs atop the historic apartment buildings along Wilshire Boulevard. However, the City of San Diego requires neon signs to be removed unless they are designated historic. The City of San Jose allows repairs to made in situ only. If a sign is taken down it cannot be put back. One of the midwest cities that recently legalized gambling on the Mississippi riverboats at its port expressly forbids neon signs advertising this new local attraction, explaining that the city wants to establish a clean, wholesome image.

Along with identification of any historic resource comes education. Owners must be made aware of the treasure they possess and assistance should be provided in the form of restoration or resource information to ensure that the sign is properly cared for. As a part of this educational movement, Lili Lakich founded the Museum of Neon Art in Los Angeles in 1982. The Neon Museum of Philadelphia was founded by Len Davidson in 1985. I have been conducting night time bus tours of neon signage in San Francisco since 1988.

Recognition should be given for individual preservation efforts. The Art Deco Society of California has given preservation awards for the retention and refurbishing of



Connell Motors: The two Connell signs date to the construction of the building in the 1947. Their lettering style and placement is an integral part of the overall facade design. The other signage was added as car brands came and went, and differs in lettering style. (Survey)

historic neon signs in San Francisco, Glendale, Fresno, and San Carlos. Walking tours can point out significant signs, as OHA's Downtown and Uptown Oakland tours do. As a final recourse, if signs become redundant they should be retained as a recyclable resource that can continue to delight and inform. Once it's gone, it's gone. And remember: neon - it's not just a filament of your imagination! --Michael F. Crowe

The shape of the Harrison Hotel sign with its zig zag edges suggests a late 1920s date or approximately 10 years after completion of the hotel. The sign would have given the hotel a more updated image. G&G Hardware shows an example of a national company providing a consistent image with the Dutch Boy logo figuring prominently as part of the sign. The rounded edges and letter shapes mark it as a mid-1930s design. At Val Strough, most of the tubing is missing from a 1960s sign that could be a wonderful attraction in the upper Broadway automobile row. (Michael Crowe)



The Gernhardt-Strohmaier Stove Company: A Memoir

This account of an old Oakland business, by member Erwin Strohmaier, vividly illustrates the history of illuminated signs.

Next to the old PG&E building at 17th and Clay Streets is the Gernhardt-Strohmaier building. It still stands but the huge plate glass windows have been removed. When it was built in 1923 the population of the East Bay was increasing and there were large tracts laid out where new homes were being built. The only way to get to the East Bay was by ferry and this slowed delivery time for San Francisco businesses. Gernhardt-Strohmaier's business was increasing in Oakland and other East Bay cities so the new store was opened in 1923.

By 1923 Clay Street was one of the main business streets with two of the largest furniture stores, Jackson's and Breuner's, Sherman-Clay Music Company, H.C. Capwell's department store, Taft and Pennoyer's dry goods company, and many smaller businesses. At 17th, Clay, and San Pablo was the American Theater that drew large crowds of people day and night. At the corner of 17th and Clay Streets the Pacific Gas and Electric Company had just finished a new building as headquarters for its East Bay Division.

Gernhardt-Strohmaier's new building was next door. This was a good location as gas ranges were replacing coal stoves. The gas company was promoting gas ranges so it could sell more gas. It was also a time when very few people had checking accounts and many people paid their gas and electric bills at the gas company. Most people called the PG&E the "gas company," even though it also sold electricity. With the people paying their gas and electric bills in the day and going to the American Theater day and night there was a large street traffic past the store. This was very good for business.

The Oakland store was two stories with a high basement that was the full size of the store. The second floor was a mezzanine on all four sides. The mezzanine construction allowed daylight to enter through six large skylights for illuminating the store. Gas and electric outlets were every six feet along the walls and in the posts under the mezzanine so ranges could be hooked up for demonstration.

The plate glass windows at the front of the store were very large. They reached from about 20 inches above the sidewalk to the height of the ceiling of the first floor. The front of the mezzanine floor also had windows from floor to ceiling. These large windows though beautiful were very expensive and many times during wind storms were broken. The front of the building was of Gladding McBean glazed tile. The framework was steel and the outer walls were terra cotta hollow tile. The foundations and steel framework were heavy enough to add three or four more stories if needed. The architect was Edward T. Foulkes and the contractor was F.A. Muller.

On the front of the building there was a row of outline lights on the sides and top, connected to a flasher that made the lights look like they were moving around the building. A large swing out electric sign advertised the store at night. The wording was "Universal Stoves." An Oakland ordinance required swing out signs to be moved in and face the building during the day time. A night watchman moved the sign in and out and turned on the sign and window lights. He turned them off at midnight and moved the sign back against the building. This type of sign had many problems. If the night was stormy the wind would break the ropes that held the sign in place and it would smash into the building. It had to be moved in and out and the lights were always burning out. When neon tube lights came out a large vertical neon sign that extended above the front of the building replaced the swing out sign. It just had the word "STOVES." In addition a Gernhardt-Strohmaier

Co. sign was installed across the front of the building. When this sign was installed electric timer clocks for the signs and the front show windows were installed at the same time. The store had a contract with the sign company for maintaining the signs. The sign company had a patrol that checked the signs every few hours and if a tube burned out it would be replaced. Large banks of lights illuminated the show windows at night or on dark winter days. Many electric lights illuminated the sales floor. The main floor, mezzanine and half the basement was used as a sales floor. Electric ranges, gasoline stoves and oil stoves were on the mezzanine floor. On the sidewalk a large hydraulic elevator took merchandise to the basement.

I am the last of Strohmaiers. Photos of the business are at the Bancroft Library, though not yet available for use. --Erwin Strohmaier



1611-19 Clay Street today. The neighboring PG&E building also had a notable sign: see page 17.

Oakland Briefing

■ SWAN'S MARKET PROJECT

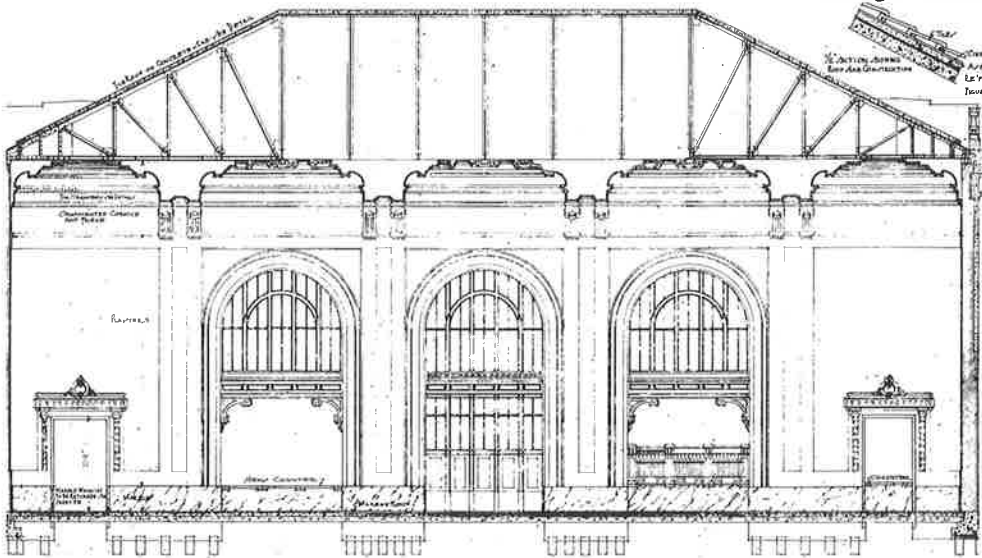
■ 16TH STREET STATION DEVELOPMENTS

The ISTE A project to study reuse and rehabilitation options for the 16th Street Station is finally underway. In January Southern Pacific (now Union Pacific) signed a memorandum of understanding with the city providing for concurrent reuse studies for the station and the larger 22-plus acre site that the railroad owns. As of this writing, the city is negotiating for preliminary architectural and engineering work to evaluate the condition of the station. Under the terms of the ISTE A grant the city work will also include a community input process on the reuse planning. Meanwhile, Union Pacific is identifying consultants for market studies and master planning. The results of this work are expected to be available early this summer.

Initial work on the city project, being handled by planner Andrew Thomas, ran into a snag when building permit records showed that the original permit for the station was taken out long after the building was started and the city had no original plans for the station. By lucky coincidence, however, OHA was contacted by a member who had, among his Oakland memorabilia, partial blueprints of a set of plans dating from 1911. Due to his generosity, copies of the plans have been made available to the city, and will greatly assist in the preliminary architectural and engineering studies.

In January OHA nominated the station for the National Trust's annual America's Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places list. If listed, the station and the reuse project could benefit from considerable publicity. In addition to coverage in National Trust publications, in recent years the listed buildings have been covered by PBS's MacNeil Lehrer Report and featured on a History Channel television special. Announcement of the list is scheduled for June. --Carolyn Douthat

Longitudinal section of 16th Street Station, from plans by Southern Pacific architect Jarvis Hunt of Chicago. Neither the city nor S.P. had copies of these plans, but an OHA member located a set and made them available.



The future is looking bright for the former Swan's Market in Old Oakland as plans firm up for its transformation to a downtown mixed use development. Plans include affordable rental housing, specialty food markets, a restaurant, and long awaited downtown owner occupied housing. Restoration of the terra cotta and white glazed brick and tile exterior walls and seismic retrofitting are integral parts of this ambitious project.

Most of the Swan's block was developed between 1917 and 1940. Although a number of architects worked on additions and remodeling, the characteristic white glazed tile and terra cotta ornament are true to the original 1917 "Free Market" located along the 10th Street side. The majority of the additions and remodels took place in the 1920s and in 1940 when the market was extended from mid-block on Washington to 9th Street, taking out three Victorian commercial blocks in the style of Victorian Row. Through a gradual assemblage of parcels, the market eventually occupied the entire block from 9th to 10th Streets and Washington to Clay. Swan's closed as a food market and department store in 1984.

Current plans for Swan's include 21 owner-occupied condominiums, part of a planned residential community known as "co-housing." While the individual units will be complete family sized homes with kitchens and private entrances, all residents will have access to common facilities including a garden area, children's playroom, workshop, large kitchen, and entertainment areas. Residents can interact as much or as little as they like. The market rate rental units will be loft style, fitting between the building's existing steel roof trusses along 10th Street. The original roofline, including the large clerestory windows, will be retained. Most of the units will be two-level, and range in size from studios to two plus bedrooms. The project will include on-site resident parking.

Swan's is being developed by the non-profit East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) whose other preservation projects include the Madison Park Apartments at Oak and 9th and the EBALDC offices in a former van and storage building in Chinatown. The City of Oakland will

provide the land and the unrepaired building, which was acquired by the city using downtown redevelopment funds. The project is being designed by Peter Waller of Pyatok and Associates. Former OHA board member Alan Dreyfuss is the preservation architect. EBALDC is pursuing use of the federal rehabilitation tax credits for Swan's, which is eligible for the National Register, and the State Office of Historic Preservation is currently reviewing the preliminary plans for the project.

For information on the co-housing units, contact Jeanne Dunn (649-7559) or Joani Blank (655-7399). Contact Joshua Simon, project manager at EBALDC (287-5353), for leasing information. --Chris Roberts



White tile-clad Swan's Market was built in several stages from 1917 on. This gradual assemblage is obvious on the 9th Street side, and creates some challenges for the reuse project. (Survey)

■ EIR REQUIRED FOR WARD'S PROJECT

In early February the First District Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled in favor of the League for Protection of Oakland's Architectural and Historic Resources in their CEQA challenge to the city's adoption of a mitigated negative declaration for demolition of the Montgomery Ward building at 29th Avenue and East 14th Street. To recap, under an agreement between the city and Ward's the city acquired the property for \$3.6 million which was to be used by Ward's for demolition. The Redevelopment Agency and Ward's would then enter into a joint venture to redevelop the site. In January of last year the city issued a mitigated negative declaration for a proposed commercial center on the site.

Montgomery Ward's was rated by the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey as a B+, a rating that indicates probable eligibility for the National Register. Under the city's Preservation Element, a project that impacts a property with a B+ rating, unless adequately mitigated, is considered to have a significant impact under CEQA and an EIR is required.

Oakland Heritage Alliance challenged the negative declaration before the Planning Commission on the basis that demolition was a significant impact that could not be adequately mitigated by erecting a plaque, documenting the building, and including design elements in the new project to recall the architecture of Ward's, the mitigations offered in the negative declaration. The Planning Commission rejected the appeal. In March the League, a new organization, filed suit in Superior Court and asked for a stay of demolition. This was denied, and the city demolished the parking garage. The League then sought a hearing before the Court of Appeals, which issued a temporary stay of demolition until the appeal could be heard.

The court's decision came down squarely in favor of the League's position that Ward's is a historic resource for CEQA purposes. The city had argued that nothing less than official designation in a recognized register would trigger CEQA requirements. The court disagreed, noting that "if historical resources were limited to properties actually listed, owner resistance to inclusion or mere government inaction might

forestall preparation of an EIR for a worthy structure." The court instead made its determination based on the city's own documentation and the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer. Noting that under the Element a B rating is defined as "major importance" and therefore historic for CEQA purposes, the court found that the Ward building must be presumed to be historic under the provisions of CEQA.

The court also determined that demolition of the building was a significant adverse effect that would not be lessened to "a level of insignificance" by the mitigations proposed. "A large historical structure once demolished, normally cannot be adequately replaced by reports and commemorative markers. Nor... are the effects reduced to a level of insignificance by a proposed new building with unspecified design elements which may incorporate features of the original architecture into an entirely different shopping center."

Beyond the direct impact on Ward's, the court's opinion is important locally because it validates the Survey as an ongoing, comprehensive effort authorized by the city for purposes of environmental review and classification of significant properties. Further, the holding makes clear that the policies contained in the Preservation Element, as part of the General Plan, govern city procedures affecting Oakland's historic fabric. At the state level the decision provides much needed case law interpreting the 1992 legislation that created the California State Register of Historic Resources.

According to a press release from the League, a San Francisco developer has announced its willingness, following careful analysis of the market and the building, to rehabilitate the building into live-work and mixed use, noting that a twin building in Portland has been restored into a stunning community asset. The League's attorney Susan Brandt-Hawley states that the scholarly and well-reasoned decision will provide important guidance regarding preservation processes statewide.

The day the decision was announced, the City Council voted in closed session to ask the court to reconsider. If the decision stands, the city must rescind its approval of the negative declaration and must prepare an EIR for any project on the site that adversely affects the Ward building. --Carolyn Douthat



This 1967 City Planning photo shows the Ward's building as the largest of a cluster of furniture and department stores in the "second downtown" in Fruitvale. (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey collection)

■ OLD MERRITT: WORK UNDERWAY

Construction activity at Old Merritt College appears to be proceeding at a fast clip. At long last, winter rains have been, for the most part, kept out of the building. A plywood sheathing and waterproof membrane now cover the pitched roofs where the terra cotta tiles will be put back, and Hensel Phelps Construction Company announced that the flat roofs were finished by the end of January. The last meeting of the departing City Council approved the final \$3,497,000 for Phase II of the project. The money will initially come out of CDBG or Redevelopment Agency funds - the ultimate source is yet to be found. Children's Hospital Oakland (CHO) is edging closer to signing a lease, having announced plans for a research center at Merritt in their December newsletter.

CHO has hired a firm of architects and engineers to coordinate their plans for the facility. They have requested seismic strengthening of the floors to support 100 lbs./sq. ft. - strengthening beyond normal or historic building code requirements that may add another quarter million dollars to the project.

Community input in design issues has increased from minimal to more substantive, with official status as a design subcommittee of the ongoing Citizens Advisory Committee. The National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office (which are sharing responsibility for reviewing plans for the project and determining its eligibility for historic tax credits) suggested the city seek community reaction before they would sign off on plans for a new main (rear) entrance. After much discussion, this new feature (by VBN Architects, lead architectural firm on the project) is now slated to have a terra cotta tile roof and tile or cement floors.

One unfortunate design decision calls for interior trim to be primed, ready for painting by tenants. The trim is a high quality fir, with a characteristic gray wash of stain, and experience in other buildings suggests that painting may only accentuate the signs of wear. Steve Stark, VBN's preservation architect, has agreed to staining of the wood trim in the hallways and public areas. He also plans to consolidate what remains of the casework scattered throughout the complex in a couple of "model" classrooms. Window and door moldings and chair rails are to remain in the former classrooms, as well as all intact slate blackboards. (The blackboards are disappearing or being damaged at an alarming rate.)

Other contentious design issues have centered around the landscaping and the multi-purpose senior center. Consensus appears to have been reached between landscape architect Chris Pattillo and the design committee on plans for the existing plantings in the interior courtyards and on the grounds facing Martin Luther King Jr. Way. A few major trees will be removed, but the city has made a commitment to fill in the area around the site with street trees. The signature yews that line the front facade will be returned to their appropriate tapered shapes. No money is yet identified for planting of the dramatic inner courtyards, except for cleanup of volunteer plums and blackberries. The south courtyard is expected to be reserved for CHO, but the community, after some vociferous

protests, has been promised access to the north courtyards.

Another vexing design issue has been the tall clerestory windows on the south wall of the auditorium - the senior center to be. These windows allow dramatic views of sycamores in the courtyard from the auditorium, as well as enabling passers-by in the hallways to look in. Michael Willis & Associates, the firm handling the senior center design, recommended translucent glass for these windows, for privacy and to hide the roof of the single story room-within-a-room being built inside the auditorium. The senior advisory group called for transparent glass throughout on these windows; the architects have come back with a "compromise" of bands of translucent and transparent. The design committee has learned that an additional door-way is to be cut into the south wall of the auditorium. Since the raked theater-type floor is being leveled in the auditorium and adjoining hallway, one set of clerestory windows was already slated for modification to accommodate a new door near the stage at the higher level. The third door is mandated by code as a result of floor-to-ceiling drapery in the senior center - another unappealing "surprise" as the design develops. --Robert Brokl



The south wall of Old Merritt's auditorium adjoins hallways in the classroom building on two levels. Transforming the auditorium to a senior center creates many design issues. The theater seats have been removed, the floor will be leveled, a kitchen area will be partitioned off inside, and door and window modifications follow. (Alfred Crofts)



Cleveland Cascade soon after its completion in the early 1920s, showing both the ornamental water features and the practical stairs linking hillside homes with Lakeshore Avenue. (Oakland History Room)

■ NEW LIFE FOR CLEVELAND CASCADE

A neighborhood group of volunteers plans to restore Cleveland Cascade to at least a measure of its former glory. Beginning in May 1996, Friends of the Cascade has sponsored semi-monthly Sunday gardening days. With help from the Parks Department, which supplies gardening tools and collects bagged debris, up to twenty Friends pick up trash, prune, and sweep. This maintenance has made the Cleveland Stairs a far more inviting place than it has been for many years.

Dedicated in 1923, Cleveland Cascade is located at the west end of Cleveland Street between Lakeshore and Merritt Avenues, on a block deemed too steep for vehicular traffic. Designed by Oakland architect Howard Gilkey, opened with great civic pride as "one of the few things of this kind in the West," the Cascade was reportedly modeled after features in the hill towns of Italy. Water flowed down over twenty concrete bowls, illuminated at night by vari-colored lights. A pump returned the water to the top so it could fall again over the bowls past the colored lights, a truly magnificent sight.

The Cascade was adequately maintained into the early 1940s, but then began to suffer from neglect and resulting disrepair. The lights and water were shut off sometime in the 1950s. As "Cleveland Stairs," the Cascade never lost its popularity, however. Today neighbors estimate pedestrian traffic at 200 persons per day. Joggers, stair climbers, Tai Chi enthusiasts are some of the constituents Friends of the Cascade hope to enlist in the drive to bring back the Cascades.

Restoration plans are both immediate and long range. The spring 1997 project aims to rebuild the pool, renovate the

fountain, and replace the shrubbery around the pool at the top of the stairs. Costs will be borne by community fundraising and Parks Department matching funds. In the long run the Friends envision relandscaping and relighting the entire block-long area. Centerpiece of the restoration will be a rebuilt, reaquified cascade from upper pool to lower level.

Anyone wanting to know more about these plans or how to join in any of the volunteer activities should contact Tony Anthony at 834-4404. Stair walkers can pick up a copy of the occasional "Friends of the Cascade Newsletter" at the distribution box on the second level from the bottom. --Bill Moore

■ MEASURE I: A NEW DAWN

A look back on Oakland's past reveals key junctures when citizens approved bond measures enabling the city to leap ahead. Last fall's Measure I will surely be seen as one of those, guaranteeing that Oakland's city-owned historic assets will last well into the next century. The challenge will be to portion the new funds in ways that best benefit the most assets and address critical needs in a strategic manner. Some needs will go unmet unless creative minds look to leverage additional resources. Still we can congratulate ourselves for taking on a new financial burden (estimated at \$26 per year per household) to preserve our best known landmarks. Properties listed to benefit from Measure I are: the Carnegie libraries (Greene, Melrose, Temescal, and Golden Gate), two town squares dating from 1852 (Lafayette and Harrison), the Edoff Bandstand and Children's Fairyland in Lakeside Park, three city owned historic houses (Dunsmuir, Camron-Stanford, and Peralta Hacienda), the Oakland Museum (designated a city landmark in 1995), and several Parks and Recreation structures throughout the city, many from the 1930s and 40s. Apparently overlooked is the Gothic Revival Moss House in Mosswood Park. Those interested in the progress of Measure I projects should contact their City Council member's office (238-3266). --Annalee Allen

■ MEASURE I AND THE LIBRARIES: THE MORNING AFTER

Oakland voters again displayed their generosity in the recent election with overwhelming support for bond Measure I. The City Landmark, National Register Temescal branch library will be the first of the Carnegie libraries to close for construction, theoretically by the end of the school year, and may remain closed for a year or more. Two other Carnegie branches, Golden Gate and Melrose, are next in line. (Greene Library repairs will be funded from a variety of sources besides Measure I, including FEMA money, and oversight by the State Office of Historic Preservation is required.)

What we are now learning about what is proposed for Temescal and what may be left undone, is causing concern and suggesting problems ahead for the work on other buildings. Unfortunately, when various unfunded projects from the Capital Improvement Program were combined in the Measure

I proposal, the original estimates of \$2.2 million per branch for Unreinforced Masonry (URM) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements were never increased. Thus 70 some years of hard use and deferred maintenance may not be addressed during the closure, unless they fall under the URM/ADA umbrella. If work proceeds as currently funded, walls will be painted, but linoleum (already at the end of its useful life) is not slated for replacement. A termite report was never commissioned, so areas of dry rot or other deterioration may not be treated. Broken panes in the leaded glass windows are not scheduled to be repaired. Intrusive fluorescent light fixtures will not be replaced, even though one blocks a skylight at the reception desk. The fir floor that has held up under years of wear in the downstairs meeting room will be ripped out for the seismic work, only to be replaced with less durable carpeted plywood.

To correct problems caused by storm drains that empty into sewer lines, the project manager expanded the scope of work to include a drainage system around the entire perimeter. To facilitate this work, current plans anticipate removing the mature perimeter landscaping. Attempts will be made to save the large yews flanking the main entrance. Only after protests was a landscape architect brought in to consult.

Though deferred maintenance could be addressed more efficiently while the buildings are under construction, Measure I states that funds for the libraries are to be spent primarily on seismic and ADA improvements. So the city is spending taxpayer dollars to comply with some laws (URM, ADA) but ignoring other mandates (the Preservation Element) that would enable threatened significant structures to remain in service, fulfilling their original and important functions. Whatever is done, or not done, at Temescal will surely foreshadow the scope of work at the other branches and the Greene.

Most recently, library administration indicated at a February 20 meeting with representatives from the affected branches, the Library Commission, and Friends of the Oakland Public Library that they will attempt to secure additional funding to cover deferred maintenance, wiring for computers, etc., from the Capital Improvements Program Fund. Friends of the Temescal Library would appreciate calls to library director Billie Dancy, 238-6715 or 238-6608, and Council member Jane Brunner in whose district the Temescal and Golden Gate branches are located, 238-7001. --Robert Brokl

■ WHERE WILL THE ORPHANED CUPOLA GO?

A remnant from Oakland's past needs a new home, and soon. A Victorian-era cupola previously orphaned 30 years ago is about to lose its second roost, on the yacht club building near Jack London Square. The Port-owned marina is undergoing an \$8.8 million renovation funded in part by a California Department of Boating and Waterways loan (to be repaid with revenue from the refurbished boat slips). The project calls for removal of the 1960s era yacht club building designed by architect Harry Bruno (who was responsible for much of Jack London Square's original layout), as well as a 1930s utilitarian

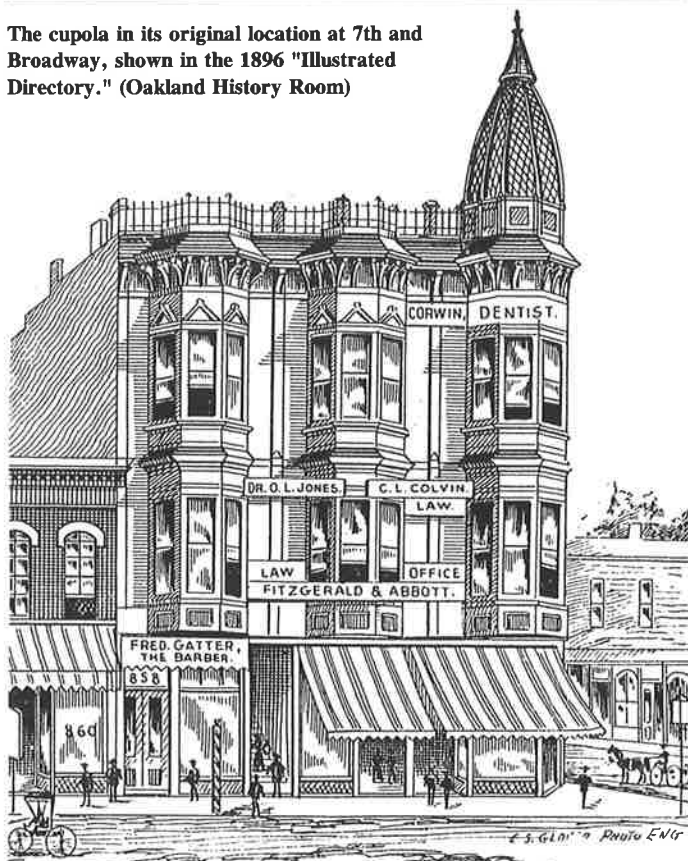
garage building next door. Greater public access to the water is the reason for taking down the two structures.

Harry Bruno, an avid yachtsman now in his eighties, masterminded the cupola's first transfer back in 1966. The cast iron relic originally topped an 1880s commercial building at Broadway and 7th Street. Oakland History Room files reveal that the building was constructed by the prominent firm J.C. Mathews and Son and housed professional offices and lodging rooms. The son in that firm - Walter J. Mathews - would go on to be one of Oakland's leading architects, designing First Unitarian Church, Oakland's first skyscraper at 1300 Broadway, and many other major landmarks.

The corner building presided over bustling 7th Street when it was Railroad Avenue and the tracks and commercial strip stretched west to Oakland Point. The building vanished in the 1960s, making way for a new mode of transportation, when BART was put under Broadway. Bruno and his fellow yacht club members stepped in and rescued the cupola, transporting it by truck to their nearby clubhouse then under construction.

Before starting the current marina renovation project, the Port performed the required environmental analysis which acknowledged the cupola's significance as a symbol of Oakland's past. Preserving it was identified as a mitigation to moving forward with the project. Soon the yacht club building will pass from the scene but hopefully a new use can be found for the cupola. Crews will carefully set it aside on pallets until that use is identified. More information is available from Richard Sinkoff, Port of Oakland Environmental Affairs Department, 272-1182. --Annalee Allen

The cupola in its original location at 7th and Broadway, shown in the 1896 "Illustrated Directory." (Oakland History Room)



O.H.A. Update

■ OHA ANNUAL PRESERVATION AWARDS

For the second year OHA recognized local preservation efforts at the December holiday party, held this year at the home of Eugene Peck and Herbert Kennedy in the Brooklyn neighborhood, where 150 people assembled to celebrate the season, meet others involved in preservation in Oakland, and honor individuals and organizations for their contributions to our physical environment, culture, and history.

OHA's awards recognize small and large efforts that add value to Oakland, efforts of people who volunteer and people who do their jobs and in the process enrich our community. All over geographical Oakland contributions are being made. Bringing these individuals together at the end of a calendar year offers a pause for reflection. Other award programs recognize design merit in the Oakland built environment; our intention is to recognize personal efforts that may lead to distinctive products, but not to focus on the products as design critic. Awards to individuals for 1996 were:

Cessaly Hutchinson, who has been a singular advocate for the preservation and reuse of the Fruitvale Masonic Hall at 34th Avenue and East 14th Street, one of the few buildings remaining by East Bay architect Hugo Storch, built in 1909, the same year Fruitvale was annexed to Oakland. Cessaly's advocacy for this building is a work in progress. The structure, with a history tied to the development of the German community, early fraternal organizations, and more recent sports history, has been vulnerable as a "white elephant" and as standing "in the way" of an enhanced visual connection between East 14th Street and the Fruitvale BART station.

Bill Sturm, librarian of the Oakland History Room at the Main Library, was cited for his central role as an advocate for preserving the past. His continued enthusiasm, professionalism and commitment to Oakland have also been seen quarterly in the OHA News ever since its inception, in his regular Oakland History Notes and in his generous sharing of photographs.



Anthony Holdsworth's painting "In the Shadow of the Middle Kingdom" (1991) features the Pekin Low building at 7th and Franklin Streets (W.K. Owen, 1924). It is included in a set of 12 postcards of Holdsworth paintings recently published by OHA: available in local stores, or call the OHA office (courtesy of Anthony Holdsworth).

Anthony Holdsworth was recognized for his inspired paintings of Oakland street scenes over many years. His personal vision has instilled in viewers of his paintings a new poetry about the cityscape around us.

Peggy Stinnett as the editorial page editor of the *Oakland Tribune* continues to write critically about Oakland's historic resources and the people involved in decision-making. Her reportage supports a preservation perspective and effectively communicates this to the wider community.

Arthur Pritchard was the first advocate for the retention of J.J.'s Restaurant. His strong commitment and his early role in generating substantial community support represents an essential element in preservation activism.

Frederick Hertz's efforts as part of the team that advocated preservation mitigations for the City Administration Complex and his continuing activism with downtown issues were acknowledged, demonstrating the kind of contribution concerned citizens can make to successful preservation solutions to complex urban development projects.

Jane Spangler has been well known for many years as a fearless neighborhood, at-large, and design advocate on numerous issues. Jane's determination, community spirit, and commitment to Oakland are special and unique, a continuing valuable component of dialogue within our city.

Carolyn Douthat has spent many years intelligently and professionally and with complete dedication advocating for enlightened preservation policies in Oakland. This advocacy, informed and guided by legal analysis, has been an essential part of the Oakland preservation scene.

Mike Murakami and **Curtis Proctor** have been active volunteers at Arroyo Viejo Park in East Oakland, providing professional design skills to community volunteer efforts in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department.

Natalie Bayton, outgoing City Council member for West Oakland, was honored for her commitment to preservation



The Fruitvale Masonic Temple (Hugo Storch, 1909; addition by Howard Schroeder, 1926) has a dedicated advocate in Cessaly Hutchinson. According to old-timers, George Foreman used to box at Babe's Gym in the space later occupied by the Oakland Fencing Club. (Betty Marvin)

both in her district and citywide, on issues ranging from J.J.'s to the Oakland Point Historic Interpretive Center to funding for the Preservation Element and the Survey.

For organizations:

Terry Preston and **Stephanie Shakofsky** were cited for their successful work on the Measure I campaign, which benefits capital improvement projects for historic Oakland properties such as Dunsmuir House and the Carnegie libraries.

Susanne Hirshen-Monson, as administrator of Preservation Park, has enhanced the park and contributed to its historical presence in Oakland with the publication of **Through These Doors: Discovering Oakland at Preservation Park**.

Ellen Owens of the East Bay Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was recognized for the excellent exhibition and program series "Pulling Downtown Oakland Together," which celebrated downtown development, change, and opportunities, and educated a wide audience.

Voncille Hall of the Blues Is Truth Foundation was honored for the landmarking of the home of Brownie McGhee, blues composer and musician of national repute, who lived on 43rd Street in North Oakland.

Fr. Charles Burns and **Dr. Washington Burns** are the visionaries behind the nonprofit Prescott/Joseph Center for Community Enhancement at St. Patrick's Convent on Peralta St. in West Oakland. Their effort to preserve this remarkable historic structure and provide needed community services links preservation with present and future economic development.

Patricia Doyle of Jubilee West was cited for the far-sighted scattered-site housing project in which seven abandoned and dilapidated West Oakland Victorians have been renovated. This



Two awards recognized the effort to preserve J.J.'s. This 1964 photo shows the space-age lighting and visual connection of interior and exterior. (Armet & Davis, architects, via Joyce Roy and Leal Charonnat)

nonprofit's commitment to maintaining the historic housing stock of its neighborhood is a progressive and difficult task.

Honorees in the category of People and Projects were:

Bernie Stein of **Stein Architects** for the inclusion of rediscovered original design features in the renovation of the commercial storefront on Lakeshore Avenue for Noah's Bagels and Starbuck's Coffee (see Fall 1996 OHA News).

John Protopappas and **Ronald and Marianne Dreisbach**, owners of the American Bag Co. building, were honored for a renovation that maintains the exterior ephemeral and industrial elements of the building, recognizing that these items give the brick warehouse a special character now fast disappearing in our industrial/manufacturing neighborhoods.

Jim Diamantine of **Brigantine Sales** was recognized for the seismic rebuilding of the 1922 polychrome brick store building at 4094-98 Piedmont Avenue, which was achieved with the original A.W. Smith facade intact and restored, after earlier expectations that it would have to be demolished and replaced.

Jackue Warren, acting executive director of the YWCA, and **Jackie Campbell**, president of the YWCA Board, were recognized for the complete seismic retrofit of the downtown YWCA, one of Julia Morgan's finest buildings in Oakland.

Tom Wolf was recognized for the second floor addition to his property at 715 Washington. His historic reconstruction is of high quality and significantly contributes to the collection of commercial Italianate structures in Old Oakland.

Martin Durante of **Ratto's Grocery** in Old Oakland was enthusiastically recognized as part of a family that has continued operation and stewardship of its historic business and building in the face of many obstacles for more than 70 years.

One of the rewarding aspects of this program was to witness the satisfaction award recipients feel at being recognized within their community. Contact our office with nominations any time during the year and your suggestions will be considered for our 1997 holiday event. --Bill Coburn



This house on 8th Street, eligible for the National Register as a contributor to the Oakland Point District, was restored by Jubilee West. (Bill Coburn)



■ CPF AWARD TO "THROUGH THESE DOORS"

Among the projects honored in California Preservation Foundation's 14th Annual Preservation Design Awards on February 22 was **Through These Doors: Discovering Oakland at Preservation Park**, commissioned by Preservation Park's Susanne Hirshen and the Oakland Redevelopment Agency, and produced by the artistic-literary-historical team of Andrew Brubaker, Helaine Kaplan Prentice, Betty Marvin, Terry Lim, and Sharon Fukutome. The book was honored in the category of "Cultural Resource Studies, Reports and Software." The citation reads in part "The book integrates the history of each house and its residents with the larger story of Oakland... and creates a context to replace that lost when the buildings were moved. The sophisticated and meticulous graphic design and the engaging writing make this book a wonderful teaching tool about the importance of Oakland's cultural heritage for both students and local politicians."

Through These Doors is available at local bookstores. Last year's awards included the restorations of Oakland City Hall and the Madison Park Apartments.

■ MAYBECK BOOK IS BACK!

The paperback edition of Kenneth Cardwell's **Bernard Maybeck, Artisan, Architect, Artist**, which has been out of print and in great demand for several years, has been republished by Hennessey + Ingalls of Santa Monica. This reprint of the edition originally produced by Peregrine Smith is available in local bookstores for \$29.95 plus tax.

A man of high ideals and the determination and vision to effect them, Maybeck was an artisan, an architect, and artist of excellence. He ranged freely over the styles and periods, interpreting elements of Gothic forms with modern steel and concrete. One of the architects stemming the tide of architectural superficiality in the first decades of this century, he wrote: "The artist suspects that it is not the object nor the likeness of the object that he is working for, but a particle of life behind the visible.... He strives to find the spiritual meaning of things and to transmit the secret to the layman." This splendidly illustrated book combining biography with descriptive analysis is a tribute to the man and the artist.

Kenneth Cardwell knew Maybeck and studied his work for over twenty years. An emeritus professor of architecture of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley, he is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, as well as the principal author of the 1976 historic resources survey that led to the creation of Preservation Park.

■ OAKLAND TOURS START 20TH SEASON

Seven downtown walking tours are offered by the Oakland Tours Program, sponsored by the City of Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency. Volunteer guides lead walks through Old Oakland, Preservation Park, Chinatown, Jack London's Waterfront, and City Center. Discover

Oakland's changing skyline, landmarks, churches and industry. The regularly scheduled free walks will resume on Wednesdays and Saturdays beginning in May and running through October. There is a small fee for special group tours.

First Tuesday Tours (first Tuesday of the month year round) provide an inside look at magnificent City Hall, Oakland's most important landmark. On view are items from the 1910 time capsule unearthed during the recent renovation, mementos placed in the new time capsule sealed last fall in the cornerstone vault, and a high-tech three-dimensional model that demonstrates the unique base isolator system used to seismically strengthen the building. Another must-see is the architectural model of the Administration Complex including the reconfigured City Hall Plaza and a fully restored Broadway Building, scheduled for completion in 1998 making Oakland's Civic Center one of the most dynamic of any in the country.

New volunteers are always welcome to help with the Oakland Tours Program. Start out by helping chaperone school group tours (the program offers free tours to all Oakland third graders; other grades and districts are welcome to schedule a special tour) or sign up for a spring workshop and learn to lead tours. It's fun to show off Oakland's downtown assets - call and we'll show you how. Leave messages on the 24-hour tours hotline, 238-3234. --Annalee Allen

■ LINCOLN SCHOOL EXHIBIT AT O.H.R.

Founded in 1865, Lincoln School is one of the city's oldest elementary schools. Located in Oakland's Chinatown, the school's past is intertwined with the history of the local Chinese community. The Oakland Public Library's Oakland History Room celebrates the saga of Lincoln School with a special exhibit featuring historical photographs, class pictures, and memorabilia loaned by former students of the school. The display tells the long and colorful story of Lincoln School, its famous students, and its neighborhood.

"Lincoln School and Chinatown - A Story of a Unique Oakland School" can be seen in the Oakland History Room, 125 14th Street, second floor, through April 7. Hours are Monday and Tuesday 10-5:30, Wednesday and Thursday 12-8, Friday 12-5:30, Saturday 10-5:30, and Sunday 1-5. For information call 238-3222. --William Sturm

■ TEMESCAL HISTORY EXHIBIT

Have you ever wondered what Telegraph Avenue was like fifty years ago, or what the place we now call the Temescal District looked like when the Ohlone Indians called it home? Local residents are organizing an exhibit that will explore these questions and more, with a special focus on the history of Temescal's Telegraph Avenue. Scheduled to open this spring in storefront windows on the 4900 block of Telegraph, the exhibit will cover both the natural and cultural history of the Temescal area. Organizers of the exhibit would like to hear from those who have historical documents or photographs of the neighborhood. Please call Jeff Norman, 653-7190.

■ THANKS TO 1996 OHA VOLUNTEERS

The OHA Board wishes to thank the following members and friends who volunteered their assistance to the organization in 1996. Without their participation **Oakland Heritage Alliance** could not have provided its educational programs and leadership in preservation advocacy.

TOURS/EVENTS: Tim Aaronson, Larissa Adam, Tom and Carolyn Armour, Beth Armstrong, Yvonne Barsballe, Phil Bellman, Alexander Bergtraun, Clinton & Shirin Bond, Hal Bornstein and Phil Tecau, Robert Brokl, Bruno and Darby Brandli, Julia Brown, Italo Calpestri, Andrew Carpentier, Ernest Chann, Yanie Chaumette, Bill and Subhashini Coburn, Rissa Coplan, Al Crofts, Michael Crowe, James Day, George and Pat Dedekian, Carol Doty, Riley Doty, Carolyn Douthat, Alan Dreyfuss, Fred Easter, Gary Encinas, Dolores Fazio, Leslie Finta, Creighton Fong and Judy Shimizu, Lynn Fountain, Paul Garrison, Elinor Gibson, Judith Goldsmith, Greater Bay Area Costumers Guild, Xandra Grube, Jacci Harris, Sharon Hayden, Stana Hearne, Kurt Herrenbruck, Jim & Helen Hill, Roy Holman, Ellen Innis, Harry Jacobs Jr., Mary Jenevein, Betty Johnson, Jason Kaldis, Richard Kane, Ann Katz, Jennifer Katz, Herbert Kennedy, Harlan & Esther Kessel, Ann Killebrew, Carla Koop, Deborah Lane, Gordon Laverty, Christina Lavin, Steven Lavoie, Helen Lore, Yorkman Lowe, Shirley Mannede, Nancy Marr, Michael Martinez, Betty Marvin, Gwen McCormick, Linda Watanabe McFerrin & Lowry McFerrin, Evelyn McGill, James McGrath (Port of Oakland), Jack and Bunny Moeller, Larry Moerke, Dawn Muller, David Nesmith/Mary Duryee/Olga Paredes, David Nicolai, Oakland High Kiwins, Eugene Peck, Anita Pender, Aida Peterson, Kirk Peterson, Ed Phillips, Kris Raupach, Maria Rieger, Judy Robertson, Lisa Ruhland, Bilal & Taqiyyah Shabazz, Sam and Barbara Skelly, Barbara Smith, Jane Spangler, Susan Stryker, Carol and Bob Swartz, Betty Thomas, Don Tyler, Don & Bettie Violich, Donald Wardlaw, Joe Ware, Valerie Winemiller, Nelia White, Diane Wilson, Marlene Wilson, Ellen Wyrick, Betsy Yost, Janet Zampieri.

PRESERVATION ACTION: Annalee Allen, Bill Coburn, Carolyn Douthat, Alan Dreyfuss, Xandra Grube, Frederick Hertz, David Nicolai, Naomi Schiff, Jane Spangler.

OHA NEWS: Annalee Allen, Phil Bellman, Robert Brokl, Marina Carlson, Bill Coburn, Michael Corbett, Al Crofts, Carolyn Douthat, Harlan Kessel, Michael Knight, Helen Lore, Betty Marvin, Phil McArdle, David Nicolai, Kathy Olson, Fred Reichman, Naomi Schiff, Bill Sturm, Don Tyler, Donald Wardlaw, Marlene Wilson, Ted Wurm, Dean Yabuki.

CULTURAL HERITAGE SURVEY: Beth Armstrong, Lindy Armstrong, Marina Carlson, Carolyn Douthat, Xandra Grube, Annette Hoffmann, Herbert Hoffmann, Linda Kastner, Jennifer Katz, Gary Knecht, Michael Knight, Gaye Lenahan, Cecile Litherland, Gail Lombardi, Yorkman Lowe, Pamela Magnuson-Peddle, Betty Marvin, David Nicolai, Gene Peck, Fred Reichman, Jane Spangler, Bill Sturm, Dean Yabuki.

MAILINGS: Jerry Bowling, Maureen Clarke, Betty Johnson, Dawn Muller, Sue Wong. --Helen Lore

City Landmarks Board Actions

The Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board meets on the second Monday of each month, 4 pm, in City Hall Hearing Room 1. 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. Six districts and 128 landmarks have been designated since the Board was created in 1973. Members are Andrew Carpentier (chair), Annalee Allen, Janet Benson, Carolyn Douthat, Renee Dymond, Norman Hooks, and George Lythcott. Secretary is Helaine Kaplan Prentice.

Three new members have joined the Board since the last issue, succeeding Phil Tagami, Mark Sennette, and Les Hausrath. Tagami and Hausrath have both been appointed to the City Planning Commission.

Janet Benson has lived in Oakland for ten years. She grew up in Cincinnati where her parents worked on a historic building associated with the Underground Railway. She lived in Ohio, Michigan, and Idaho before moving to California. She has a fine arts degree from Ohio University and works in sales. She has a son who has a degree in architecture.

Norman Hooks was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, attended schools in Houston, Texas, received an architectural degree from Hampton University in Virginia, and then moved to Berkeley. Except for two years in the army, he has lived in the area ever since. He has maintained his own Oakland office since 1991. He joined the Board after working on several local restorations, most recently St. Patrick's in West Oakland.

Carolyn Douthat was born in downtown Burbank and raised in Santa Monica. She received a BA in social science from UC Irvine, moved to Northern California to attend law



The YMCA building at 21st and Telegraph (B.G. McDougall, 1909-15) is being rehabbed by CREDO Housing; design issues have been a recurring topic in Landmarks Board's Open Forum. Note illuminated roof sign in this 1931 photo. (Oakland History Room)

school, and received a JD from Hastings in 1977. In addition to practice as a land use and preservation attorney, she is a longtime member of Brooklyn Neighborhood Preservation Association, served on the original Cultural Heritage Survey steering committee, and was a member of the OHA board from 1981 to 1986. An Oakland resident since 1975, she has worked on rehabilitation of Victorian houses including her own 1879 Italianate near Lake Merritt.

NOVEMBER

Board discussed and approved Design Review application by Prentiss Properties to install banners on 8th, 9th, 10th, and Washington Streets in the Victorian Row Preservation District.

Board considered and decided against a proposal to add 463 Ellita Street to the proposed Bellevue-Staton Apartment District S-7 Preservation Zone. The house, built in 1912, is rated C individually; its owner opposed adding it to the district.

John Moran addressed the Board regarding changes to the former YMCA at 2101 Telegraph Avenue, including a rooftop equipment box and new interior walls that block windows. Russell Moran asked that the Board request Section 106 review of the project, since federal tax credits are being used.

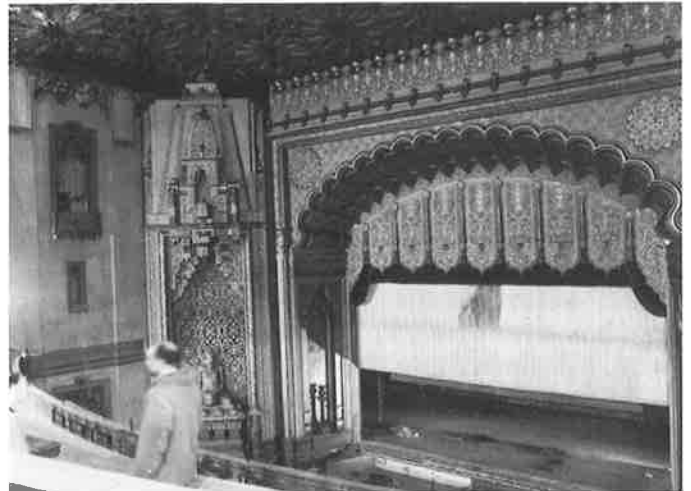
George Lythcott represented the Board on a Mixed Use Committee convened by Planning Commissioner Joe De Luca.

Board members Annalee Allen and Les Hausrath reported on a meeting with Andrew Altman, Chief of Strategic Planning. They discussed waiving Design Review fees for S-7 properties (fees are currently waived for landmarks) and the need to publish the Preservation Element.

Board secretary Helaine Prentice reported on a meeting with Port representatives on a Memorandum of Understanding on demolitions at FISCO (Fleet Industrial Supply Center Oakland: the Naval Supply Center). The Port is unlikely to save any of the huge warehouses, but is planning a documentary video; a display at the airport was also suggested as a mitigation. Prentice reported on the proposed plaque for the site of the Oakland Point firehouse (earthquake damaged, burned, and demolished): the owner had resisted and the property has since



Naval Supply Center (FISCO) is being converted to Port use. Much of the site will be cleared for containers. At bottom right is Quinn's Lighthouse, moved to Embarcadero Cove in 1970. (1940s Sunderland photo, OCHS)



Board toured the dazzling Fox interior (Weeks & Day, 1927-28) and heard a presentation on uptown redevelopment. (Fred Reichman)

been sold; the issue might arise again when a new building is proposed. Negotiations continued over the Don Lee Cadillac building, Casa Romana, and Chapel of the Chimes addition.

DECEMBER

Before the meeting, Board attended a tour conducted by Lois Butler at the Fox Oakland Theater, 1807-29 Telegraph Avenue, a city landmark and listed on the National Register.

A certificate of appreciation was presented to retiring Board member Mark Sennette.

Board voted to approve a Memorandum of Agreement with the Port establishing a mitigation program for demolitions at FISCO, a National Register eligible historic district.

A Notice of Intent was submitted by Ron Mora/Adams Point Preservation Society to nominate the Don Lee Cadillac showroom (historic name Consolidated Piedmont Cable Company, 2500-42 Harrison Street/216-20 Bay Place) as a landmark. A demolition application had been filed. An attorney from Wells Fargo explained that the property is owned by a trust and they are anxious to market it and consider seismic upgrade costs prohibitive. Board voted to accept the Notice.

A Notice of Intent was submitted by Joyce Roy and Leal Charonnat, Friends of J.J.'s, to nominate J.J.'s Diner (Biff's Coffee Shop, 315 27th Street) as a landmark, and Board heard speakers on both sides, including architecture critic Alan Hess who gave a scholarly slide presentation on the "Googie" style. Although the building is only 33 years old, it was described as a unique and disappearing type. For the first time at a Board meeting, there was detailed discussion of the eligibility rating system, and Board members and speakers proposed specific revisions of the staff rating, to be voted on in January.

Chair Andrew Carpentier reported that the City Planning Commission had required redesign of the Chapel of the Chimes addition due to neighborhood concerns.

Carpentier reported on the ceremony honoring Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey volunteers on November 24 at the Pardee Home Museum. The volunteers do important work and the Board benefits from their professional contribution.

Prentice reported that three generations of the Brownie McGhee family were present at the City Council meeting on November 19 when the house was designated a city landmark.

JANUARY

Board approved application by Joe Wyman, NEXTEL, to install three four-panel antennas on the roof of the landmark California Cotton Mills (1091 Calcot Place). A proposal to conceal the antennas in a replicated water tower was rejected.

After hearing speakers on all sides, Board voted to upgrade the ratings for exterior design, patterns of history, and familiarity on J.J.'s Diner, finding it eligible for consideration as a landmark. The question of whether or not to recommend designation was left for a vote at the February meeting.

Norman Hooks agreed to represent the Board on the advisory committee for Lafayette Square, a landmark in the S-7 zone. George Lythcott reported on City Council action on the Memorandum of Agreement on the landmark Southern Pacific 16th Street Station (see page 7). The city will conduct toxic and structural studies; S.P. will conduct a marketing review.

Board Secretary Helaine Prentice reported on the Don Lee Cadillac building: the owners do not want to demolish if they can get an extension of the URM upgrade deadline. She reported that an application to demolish the Casa Romana had been filed, though the school's expansion plan was reported to be on hold: the matter would be placed on the next agenda. She reported that the Board of Port Commissioners approved the FISCO MOA, and that the Islamic Cultural Center appeared interested in landmark designation of the Madison Street Temple (see Fall 1996 and Fall 1995 OHA News).

In Open Forum John Moran and Russell Moran discussed their concern about the procedures followed by the city, HUD, and the State Office of Historic Preservation regarding design review of the work on the YMCA building at 2101 Telegraph.

FEBRUARY

Board heard a special presentation by Calvin Wong, Chief Building Official, on compliance with the Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Building Ordinance, adopted in July 1993: 329 buildings are considered historic under the ordinance; of these 158 have complied. To encourage compliance the city allows changes of occupancy after seismic upgrades. Wong's office refers owners to qualified contractors and banks and helps them find the least costly retrofit. Deadlines can be extended for certain hardships. Costs have been lower than expected; owners are showing strong commitment to Oakland.

Board was told that St. Paul's School would allow demolition permits for Casa Romana and the neighboring apartments (124 and 130 Montecito) to expire on February 20.

After many speakers and much discussion, Board voted to accept an upgraded eligibility rating for J.J.'s Diner but not to recommend it to the Planning Commission for landmark status.

Andrew Carpentier and Annalee Allen reported on a meeting with the board of the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1701 Franklin) regarding possible landmark designation; the building is rated A and is on the Board's Study List.

Norman Hooks reported on a meeting on the redesign of Lafayette Square Park, a landmark located in the S-7 Preservation Zone; the design has evolved with community input, including lowering the proposed 8' knoll.

Helaine Prentice reported that City Council action on landmark designation of interior features at the Glenview Branch Library (4211 Park Boulevard) was expected.

Prentice gave a status report on the YMCA/Hamilton Hotel. John and Russell Moran have spoken frequently before the Board regarding the renovation and what they see as flawed design review and violations of agreements with HUD and SHPO. Prentice said the city was working on a response; she noted Oakland's inadequate funding for design review staff.

Prentice reported that the new owners of the PG&E building (1625 Clay Street) planned to restore the National Register building, including the historic roof sign.

Prentice announced the 1997 California Preservation Foundation award to the book **Through These Doors: Discovering Oakland at Preservation Park** (see page 14).

In Open Forum, Bob Brokl commented on seismic work at the Temescal and Golden Gate Libraries. He requested that they be placed on the March agenda: he anticipated problems from wording in ballot Measure I, which covers seismic work but not other repairs to the historic structures. --Kathy Olson



This 1963 photo of the PG&E building (C.W. Dickey, 1922) shows the prominent bare-bulb roof sign: new owner is contemplating restoring it. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey collection)

OHA Calendar

The **OHA** Calendar lists events, activities, and meetings related to history and preservation that may be of interest to **OHA** members. Practical deadlines for entries occur at each solstice and equinox. To submit items for listings, contact **Oakland Heritage Alliance** or Donald Wardlaw, 2214 13th Avenue, Oakland 94606, 268-9524, or Wardlaw@aol.com.

Current Exhibits

- "A Walk Along the Water: Oakland's Dynamic Waterfront," and "Memory and Imagination: The Legacy of Maidu Indian Artist Frank Day" (paintings, historical photographs, artifacts)
Oakland Museum, 10th and Oak Streets, 238-2200.
- "Quilts in the 'Hood: East Bay African American Improvisational Quilts," African American Museum and Library at Oakland, 5606 San Pablo Avenue, 597-5053.
- "The Esplanade," photos by Fred Reichman (photographer, OHA News contributor, and Survey volunteer), Just Desserts, 2925 College Avenue, Berkeley, through April 13.
- "Berkeley Leads: 35 Years of Disability Rights," Berkeley Historical Society, 1931 Center Street, Berkeley, 848-0181, opens April 6.

Upcoming Activities

- March 22, Sat. 11-2, "Peralta Hacienda Parque Historico," grand opening, Tlataoni mariachi, comidas, juegos, musica, 2465 34th Avenue, 238-2219.
- March 30, Sun. 11-3, "Dunsmuir Opening Day Easter Event," Easter Bunny, egg hunts for toddlers/children, family entertainment, Mansion tours, 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, \$5/\$4 Sr./\$1 Jr., 615-5555.
- April 1, T. 10 am., "Oakland City Hall" monthly first Tuesday tour resumes, meet in front of City Hall, 238-3234.
- April 5, Sat. 12-2, "Historic Marinship Walking Tour," led by former ship yard worker Jonn Pullin, The Bay Model Visitor Center, 2100 Bridgeway, Sausalito, (415) 332-3871.
- April 17, Sun. 12-5, "Thousand Oaks House Tour," Berkeley Architectural Heritage, 841-2242.
- April 19, Sat. 12-2, "Historic Marinship Walking Tour," see above.
- April 25-26, Fri./Sat. 9-5 "Family History Fair," California Genealogical Society, (415) 777-9936.
- May 4, Sun., "Happy 145th Birthday Oakland" many tours & events, 238-3234.
- May 11-17, National Historic Preservation Week.
- May 18, Sun., "Rose Garden Neighborhood," **OHA Spring House Tour**, details TBA, 763-9218.
- May 18, Sun. 2pm, The Ina Coolbrith Circle, staged reading from play, "The Golden Era," by Gary Graves, Colbrith a contemporary of Twain, Harte & Bierce, Oakland Museum Lecture Hall, The Oakland Museum, Oak & 10th Streets, free (donations welcome), 238-2200.

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, original furnishings & wall papers, 1440 29th Ave., 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 & Gardens**, Colonial Revival mansion tours April thru Sept., 1st & 3rd Sun., noon/ 1pm /2pm, Wed., 11am/noon, \$5/\$4 Sr. & Jr., 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, 615-5555.
- 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**, 1886 farmhouse, Sun.-Th. 1-4, 18701 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward, \$3/\$2 Senior/\$.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. Free, Full tour schedule resumes in May, group tours welcome, 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, Sat. 11am, meet at main parade grounds, 10am, free, (415) 556-0865.
- San Francisco Heritage**, Victorian & Edwardian Pacific Heights walks, Sun. 12:30-2:30, Haas-Lilienthal Tours, Sun. 1-4:30, W. 12-3::30, 2007 Franklin, SOMA-Yerba Buena Gardens tour, 1st Sat., 10-11am, 678 Mission, \$5/\$3; Srs./Jrs., (415) 441-3004.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

- OHA Board of Directors**, first Monday of the month, 7:30pm; for agenda and location, 763-9218.
- OHA Preservation Action Committee**: contact OHA, 763-9218, for time, place and agenda.
- Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board**, 2nd Mon., 4pm.
- 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 (November through January) are:

Joseph Burke, Rev. Charles Burns, Eric/Cornelia/Sophie Davis, Daniel Falla, Grace Ferguson, Stephanie Garrabrant-Sierra, Gerald Gavzy/Katherine Hashmall, Anthony Holdsworth, Ray & Joan Holman, Doug Huntze, Bill Kanemoto/Marion Falk, Craig & Karen Brown Kepler, Irene Linden, Eileen Nichols, Beverley & John Polt, Nina Pinto, Ning Rich, Pam Rich, Inez White, Chip Yamaguchi/Mary Kanemoto.

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Special thanks to those joining/renewing as:

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Oakland Heritage Alliance News

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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. © 1997 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

Mr. Walsh's Flatiron

Oakland's oldest flatiron building resides at the juncture of Peralta, Center, and 17th Streets in West Oakland. Built in 1879 for William Walsh, with later modifications by noted architect Charles Mau, the two-story redwood structure originally housed a saloon, with apartments above.

A native of Ireland, Mr. Walsh was esteemed as a pioneer among the businessmen of West Oakland. Coming to California in the late 1860s, he first dabbled in the shoe and boot business in Marysville. After sundry trips to Europe and the East Coast, he settled in Oakland and purchased the Peralta Street lot in 1877. His timing was propitious. On December 28, 1878, the **Oakland Times** observed, "The improvements

at the foot of Chester and Peralta streets, now being made by the Central Pacific Railroad company, have raised the price of property in that portion of West Oakland. As soon as Peralta street is finished, one of the most important avenues to Berkeley will have been completed, and the price of property will be greatly advanced." Mr. Walsh's enterprise shared in the prosperity. By 1887, the Center Junction Exchange Saloon had evolved into the Center Junction Cash Grocery and Liquor store. The name signified its location as well as its centrality in the growing West Oakland area. In 1894 Mr. Walsh partnered with Austin O'Brien and business continued to flourish. By 1903, the firm of Walsh and O'Brien was described as "importers selling direct to families, groceries, wines, cigars, home furnishing goods, hay, feed and grain."

Mr. Walsh also became a developer and civic activist. In 1901, the **Tribune** noted that he had "worked hard to fill the

marsh in West Oakland and has accomplished the filling of about seventy-five acres between Adeline street and the bay, together with bonding and selling to the City of Oakland for a park something like eleven acres or four blocks of tideland."

Long-lived buildings enjoy many lives. Mr. Walsh's structure has, by turns, hosted a barbershop (once located to the rear of the saloon), a paint store, a church hall, and, possibly, a brothel. Today, the ship's prow of the edifice still houses a grocery store, and the second story has been restored for apartments.

--William W. Sturm

(Oakland History Room)



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