

It takes green to keep it green

■ The nation's oldest regional park district comes up for a Nov. 2 funding vote

By Jordan Harrison

Over 70 years ago, naturalists and outdoor enthusiasts capitalized on an opportunity to defend the Oakland and Berkeley hills from inevitable development creeping up the slopes. Amid the Great Depression, they convinced residents of seven cities to tax themselves to protect their recreational opportunities and establish the first regional park district in the nation. As the East Bay Regional Park District celebrates seven decades of preserving priceless cultural resources and areas of natural beauty, it faces continued budgetary difficulties, exacerbated by the state's fiscal crisis. On Nov. 2, the original district cities nestled along the East Bay shoreline will again vote on funding for their parks.

In 1929, construction of a pipeline system from the Pardee Dam on the Mokelumne River by the newly formed EBMUD replaced the water catchments and storage areas that had been consolidated by the East Bay Water Company. No longer needed for water supply, the utility district looked to sell some of the 10,000 surplus acres to developers, but hikers and outdoor enthusiasts fought to protect access to the watershed lands extending from the 1870 Chabot reservoir to the 1919 San Pablo reservoir.

East Bay naturalists had long wanted to enjoy the rolling oak savannah, redwood



AGAINST THE BACKDROP of a verdant hillside at Roberts Regional Park, it's "all aboard." Parks volunteer Victor Shattuck with grandsons Kenneth and James "conducts" the Golden Gate Live Steamers, 1953.

forests, and salmon-filled creeks in their backyard. They lobbied the utility district to administer the surplus lands as public parkland, but it refused to take on the added expense. One of the first park advocates was Robert Sibley, executive manager of the UC Alumni Association, who immediately recognized the importance of preserving the land for future generations. Through his UC connections and enthusiasm, Sibley organized influential park advocates and brought in

organizations like the Contra Costa Hills Club, the Sierra Club, and the Oakland Recreation Commission.

To build their case, park advocates commissioned a 1930 study written by the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm and Ansel Hall of the National Park Service. The Olmsted-Hall report propelled the parkland-cause into the public eye by pointing out that less than one percent of the land in the nine

see **EBRPD** on page 3

Collecting memories for the record

By Kathleen DiGiovanni

The East Bay Regional Parks District doesn't have the only active oral history project focusing on Oakland. For three years, a small but thriving project housed at Mills College has been documenting Oakland's voices. The Oakland Living History Project got its start with a James Irvine Foundation grant to forge closer ties between Mills and its community.

OHLP has trained interviewers through

classes in Mills' history department and workshops open to the Oakland community. As of Fall 2004, OLHP has undertaken oral history projects that looked at communal use of public space at Lake Merritt and the evolving MacArthur Corridor, as well as external projects developed by individual interviewers.

Interview tapes, digital recordings, and transcripts of this project are archived in the Mills College Library and at the Oakland

History Room of the Oakland Public Library.

Interviewees have included Lewis Mahlmann, E. Burton Weber, Toni Locke, Ken Gilliland, and Dr. Richard Bailey.

OHLP has two other oral history projects. One is the Grace Shibata project. Supported by a Mills alumna, this project's mission is to record and disseminate the recent history of the East Bay's Asian American communities. The other is the Fires of Wisdom project documenting Mills alumnae. For more info, visit <http://www.mills.edu/OLHP/>.



Working on local issues provides comfort in troubled times

Against an overwhelming backdrop of divisive politics and urgent world affairs, I find it reassuring to work in some small way on local issues and to feel that we can have some effect. Participating in the history and future of our community is a way to stay anchored in turbulent times.

It is absolutely thrilling to follow the progress on the plans for historic preservation and reuse of the old boathouse at Lake Merritt near 14th Street. We played an important role in developing the Lake Merritt Master Plan, and with the voters' passage of Measure DD Oaklanders and their guests will once again be able to use and enjoy this great building.

Oakland's waterfronts are a key part of our history and our inheritance. Now, we are working with other community groups to help shape the future of the Oak to Ninth Avenue development, and on

preservation of the Ninth Avenue Terminal.

Our summer walking tour series was a terrific success, with guides who had really researched varied neighborhoods and with walkers eager not only to learn about the city but to share their own knowledge and anecdotes. On one tour I joined, we were delighted to discover that a fellow walker had herself grown up in one of the houses along our way. And it wasn't just Oaklanders who came on the tours: we drew participants from all over the Bay Area. Our outstanding walking tours committee is always interested in developing new ideas and soon begins work for next summer, so do drop a note or an email to the OHA office if you have suggestions.

Another hardworking committee is busy preparing a great house tour for October 10. Look in this issue for the details, and

let us know if you would like to help. And by all means, come on the tour and see some extraordinary homes.

The call is out for nominations for the annual OHA Partners in Preservation awards, and we encourage you to phone, to look at our website, or to email a request for a nomination form. On November 18, we hope you will join us in celebrating the great preservation work going on in our city!

Can you think of someone who should be a member of Oakland Heritage Alliance? Let us send them a brochure. Or better yet, consider giving a membership to commemorate a birthday, an anniversary, or a holiday.

Our organization is growing, and it will be more effective and more fun if your friends become members.

See you soon!

—Naomi Schiff, *President*

LANDMARKS BOARD ACTIVITY SUMMARIES

by Jordan Harrison

MAY '04: Director's Report: Three new members were appointed to the Board: Kelley Kahn, Pamela Kershaw and Neal Parish. The Uptown Mixed Use Project EIR was certified in April 2004. The Council held a workshop on the Jack London Square Redevelopment project on March 30. Marcia Nowak, graphic design specialist, described 15 new destination signs in the area around Old Oakland and a new brochure of attractions.

Actions Taken: Board moved to direct staff to forward the landmark nomination of the Ninth

Avenue Terminal to the Planning Commission. Board moved to recommend approval of the Cox Cadillac design review with the following condition: Staff shall review the exterior elevator/stair core design prior to final approval and consult with the board sub-committee if necessary. Rosemary Muller, historic architect for the project, recommended that the elevator stair core be placed outside the east end of the showroom interior so the showroom space would be uninterrupted. Proposed restoration/rehab of Camron-Stanford house was reviewed. The Board moved to direct staff to work with the City Architect to develop criteria for replacement of deteriorated elements on the building and more complete technical specifications as to how the work shall be completed. The applicant stated the direction is basically to match what is existing. Based on the current submittal, it would be up to the contractors to decide what to repair and what to replace. The Board felt that this should not be a variable, but described in the drawings and in the specs.

Secretary Reports: Four LPAB items were on the April 7, 2004 Planning Commission meeting. Two, 1450 & 1454 8th Street, Cooper Brothers House and Grocery Store, and 653

11th Street, Victorian Legal Center, were recommended for Landmark Designation and approved by City Council on May 4, 2004. Landmark Designation was also recommended for 406-412 12th Street, Tribune Press Building. But the property at 1600-1642 7th Street, 7th Street Commercial was continued by Planning Commission for additional information to the May 19, 2004 meeting.

JUNE '04: Director's Report: The New Board Members were introduced: Parish is an attorney with Wendel Rosen Black & Dean, with experience in land use law and real estate development, a master's degree in city planning, and a "strong interest in historic buildings." Kahn is a planner with Design Community and Environment in Berkeley and as a former Oakland City Planning staff member worked on Cox Cadillac for over a year. Kershaw has been a planner for 16 years, for the last four in commercial real estate at the Port of Oakland and before that at Oakland City Planning for six years.

Actions Taken: Board moved to approve the extension for the Holy Redeemer Center owners' comments on provisional designation as a Heritage Property to the September Board meeting. In February the demolition permit

See **LPAB** on page 5

In this issue

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Walking Tour Photos | 4 |
| October House Tour | 5 |
| Preservation Action Committee | 6 |
| Around the Town | 7 |
| Artist Paints 1800s Oakland | 8 |
| Rejuvenated Walkways | 9 |
| The Circumvented Greenbelt | 12 |

EBRPD

Continued from page 1

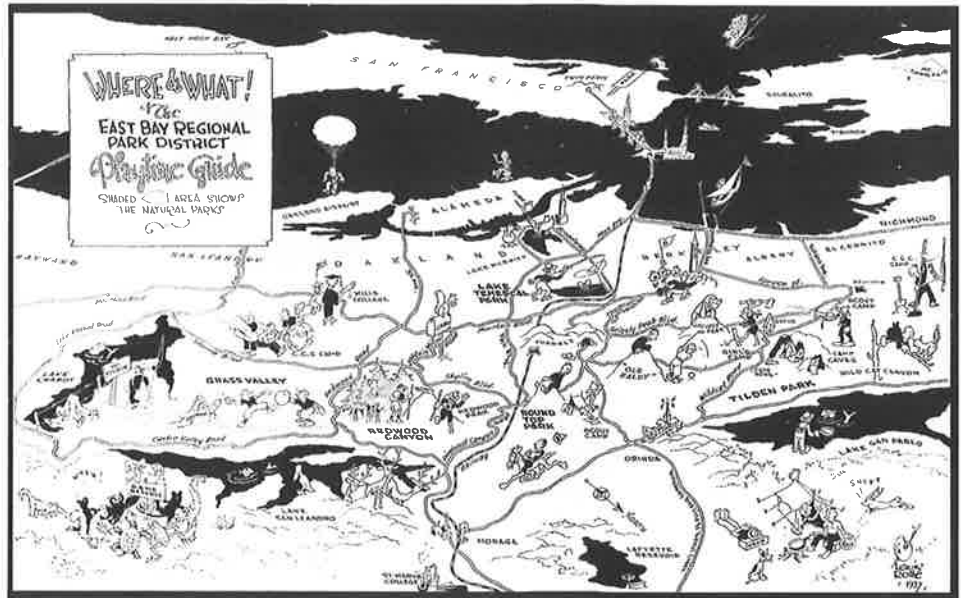
East Bay cities was dedicated to parkland, considerably less than the five to 10 percent considered necessary by most cities in the country. The Olmsteds and Hall foresaw the battle between economic interests and recreation advocates that would ensue along the Oakland shoreline and argued that the hills were not suitable for residential development, which could become “a burden on the public for development and for maintenance far greater than the proportionate share of public revenue for [the areas] would seem to justify.”

The Olmsted-Hall report ultimately recommended that all the surplus watershed lands, extending 22 miles from Richmond to San Leandro, be set aside as parkland and argued that the value of the lands to the public outweighed the commercial value. The report stated, “The lands now publicly owned, if sold, would necessarily bring prices far below any possible replacement value, because it is a well known fact that when any organization and especially a municipal corporation ... undertakes to unload large areas of property ... the prices received tend to be decidedly low for the time and place, while on the other hand when such an organization attempts to acquire large areas ... the prices paid tend to be decidedly high for the time and place.”

Galvanized by the Olmsted-Hall findings, over 1,000 park advocates from nine shoreline cities met at Hotel Oakland on Jan. 29, 1931. They unsuccessfully petitioned EBMUD to administer the surplus land as parklands. For the next few years, supporters of the parkland idea organized civic leaders, women’s clubs, schools, PTAs, churches, and scout troops to help in the battle.

Concerns about public popularity as well as advocacy by the mayors of the East Bay cities convinced Assemblyman and former Oakland mayor Frank K. Mott to write the 1933 bill enabling formation of the new district. One year later, citizens of seven Alameda County shoreline cities were asked to tax themselves five cents on every \$100 worth of property to fund the new district. At that time, a home in Oakland cost \$3,500, yielding a tax of \$1.75 a year.

The Great Depression was in full sway and unemployment in the Bay Area was



AN ENTHUSIASTIC MAP from 1937 shows the parklands and the things you could do on them, top. At right, archers enjoy the Redwood Bowman site at Redwood Regional Park, circa 1950.

approaching 30 percent. The idea of taxing themselves to devote funds for a park district may not have seemed like the most immediate concern for most residents.

Yet after a “get out the vote” parade the Saturday before the election with 12 floats depicting outdoor activities, the bill passed at a five to two margin in Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville, Piedmont and San Leandro. However, mostly rural Contra Costa County opted out of the vote because the need for parks and recreation was less apparent there, a decision which kept El Cerrito and Richmond out of the original district boundaries.

History is repeating itself today; the District is leaving out the more suburban eastern Contra Costa County cities and instead going straight to the shoreline communities that most support the parks, from Richmond to Alameda, with Measure CC. The measure proposes that homeowners be taxed \$12 and owners of apartment units \$8.28 per unit per year for 15 years, providing an estimated \$3 million a year for maintenance costs incurred by parks in the tax zone. Currently, residents are taxed approximately three cents on every \$100 of property value.



Recently, Contra Costa County residents failed to pass a separate measure to fund open space preservation through a \$25 annual property tax. The state’s budget crisis caused great concern early this summer when \$36 million in property tax revenues were to be redirected to the state, which would have caused some park closures. Now that amount has been reduced to \$12 million.

EARLY ACQUISITION

After success at the 1934 ballot, the new District needed parklands. EBMUD Director George Pardee asked the new district for over

See EBRPD on page 5

Images this page, courtesy of EBRPD



Oaklanders stretch their legs and learn about history



Eric Klocko



Mario DiGiovanni

OUR 2004 WALKING TOUR SEASON was a great success. This infill housing is one of the many examples of the "new" on the "New and old in McClymonds/Clawson" tour, above. The tour was the final one of this summer and was led by Michael Willis and Betty Marvin.

THE GLENVIEW TOUR, above, drew a crowd of over 100. Here, some of the group emerge from Dimond Park. The tour was led by Kathleen DiGiovanni and Betty Marvin.

OHA 2004 Partners in Preservation Awards

OHA seeks nominations to honor Oakland citizens, organizations, projects, and programs whose works demonstrate a commitment to excellence in historic preservation and who make Oakland a great place to live.

CATEGORIES OF ELIGIBILITY

- **Rehabilitation:** Outstanding restoration, rehabilitation, or adaptive use projects that respect the original character of the historic structure, sites, cultural landscapes or maritime properties.
- **Cultural projects or programs:** Civic, cultural, neighborhood and environmental efforts to preserve our cultural heritage and natural environment.
- **New Construction:** Appropriate new construction or infill projects in a historically sensitive site or designated district.
- **Advocacy:** Volunteers, professionals and/or agencies whose efforts contribute to the preservation of Oakland's historic resources.
- **Lifetime Commitment:** Professionals or volunteers who have demonstrated a life-long commitment to preservation in Oakland.

ENTRY GUIDELINES

Nominations must be received on the the entry form (see www.oaklandheritage.org for full version of this form) along with a packet that includes:

- A brief typed statement, no longer than 500 words, that describes why the individual, project or program deserves recognition
- The beginning and ending date of the project
- For individuals, submit a brief biography (one page). Describe how the individual has contributed to preservation in Oakland. Please provide a photograph of the nominee, if possible.
- Visual materials documenting the project (photographs, drawings):
 - Project photos and slides demonstrating "before" and "after" results.
 - Architectural drawings or renderings reduced to 8.5" X 11", labeled.
 - A list of all principals or individuals responsible for the project.

NOMINATION DEADLINE

Completed packets must be received by Friday, October 11, 2004. Winners will be honored at a special ceremony held in November 2004.

2004 PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION AWARDS APPLICATION

NOMINEE (name of person, place, organization, program, etc.):

NOMINATION CATEGORY (please check at least one category):

- Rehabilitation Cultural projects or programs
 New Construction Advocacy Lifetime commitment

PROJECT ADDRESS:

NOMINATED BY:

Name: _____
 Street Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone : () _____ Email: _____

PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING WITH YOUR APPLICATION:

- Completed program application form (see above)
 - Brief narrative description (500 word maximum)
 - Project cost (if applicable)
 - Names, addresses, phone numbers of project team/property owners.
 - Time required to complete project (if applicable)
 - Photographs and/or slides
 - Architectural drawings/renderings (if applicable)
 - Supplemental attachments that support nomination are encouraged
- Questions? Call OHA at (510) 763-9218 or email OHA@oaklandheritage.org
 The full form is on our website at: www.oaklandheritage.org

SUBMIT NOMINATIONS TO:

OHA PIP Awards, 446 17th Street, # 301, Oakland, CA 94612

NOTE: Nominations are due no later than Friday, October 11, 2004.



Catch a glimpse inside Crocker Highlands' beautiful homes

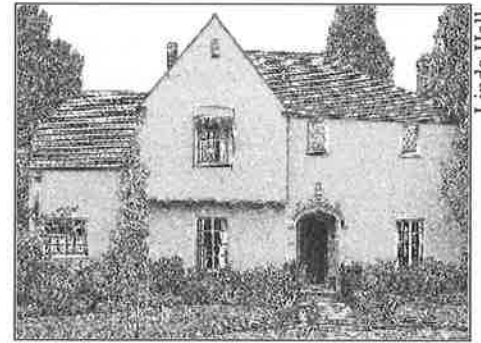
The upper reaches of beautiful Crocker Highlands will be the location of our Fall House Tour, when nine homes will be open to tour-goers. Some are in the boundaries of the Lakeshore Homes Association, while others lie beyond. Mark your calendars for Sunday, October 10, from 1 to 5 p.m., and encourage your friends and family to join you in this fun activity.

House aficionados will love the variety of architect-designed Period Revival 1920s homes, and everyone will enjoy the painstaking preservation efforts made by the homeowners, whether in retaining original

kitchen cabinetry during an upgrade, having forged-iron curtain rods made to replicate missing originals in a Mediterranean home, or retaining period style in a new kitchen.

One of the homeowners, a former San Franciscan, reports being "surprised" to discover such nice homes in Oakland. We know you won't be surprised, and we think you will be very pleased with our selections.

If you wish to volunteer as a docent or other helper (and thereby receive a free ticket), call the office at 763-9218. Tickets for OHA members are \$25; non-members pay \$30 in advance or \$35 on the day of the event.



Linda Hall

VISIT THIS FANTASTIC Tudor-style home on our Oct. 10 house tour.

EBRPD

Continued from page 3

\$2 million for 6,000 acres of surplus land, while the district offered less than \$1 million. Negotiations to buy parkland deadlocked until Major Charles Tilden advanced funds to buy 60 acres in Redwood Canyon for only \$35 an acre. In 1936, the district acquired an additional 2,166 acres in three parks, Tilden, Sibley, and Temescal, for \$300 an acre. Redwood Regional Park followed in 1939.

Proponents of the East Bay Regional Park District had argued the parks would provide much needed jobs to unemployed residents, and they did. Extension of Skyline Boulevard was one of the first Works Progress

Administration projects. The 1938 Temescal Boathouse was built by the WPA while the Public Works Administration provided half the funds to dam Wildcat Creek and create Lake Anza, providing water for the Tilden golf course. Overall, the federal programs funded 60 percent of the costs for park projects, mostly in the salaries of workers.

BEFORE THE DISTRICT

Despite the serenity and majesty of the century-old redwood stands currently found in Redwood Regional Park, one can't help but mourn the loss of the 20- and 30-foot diameter trees that once grew there. They were all logged by the 1850s, and then, in the 1870s and 1880s, their stumps and roots supplied half of the firewood for the East Bay. Fuel to

heat homes and run industry was also supplied by another natural resource: coal. "Black Diamond" was discovered in the Mount Diablo foothills in 1852 by gold prospectors; the former mines are now located in the district's Black Diamond Mines Regional Park.

Although the mines once made the foothills the population center of Contra Costa County, by 1902 they had all been closed. The miners relocated to Antioch and Pittsburg, taking their houses, churches, hotels, and school buildings with them. (The mining companies retained ownership of the land, so the boards, windows, and hardware were the residents' only equity.)

See EBRPD on page 7

LPAB

Continued from page 2

was denied, the Planning Director applied provisional Heritage Property status, and the Board confirmed the provisional designation and is awaiting owner comments before making it permanent. Board moved to adopt the landmark eligibility rating and to direct staff to prepare resolution recommending landmark status for St. Augustine's Mission - St. Andrew Missionary Baptist Church (2624 West St.). Board commented on the scope for an EIR on a residential, commercial and open space mixed use development at the Ninth Street Terminal. The site would be redeveloped with up to 3,100 residential units, up to 200,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, a 3,500 space parking structure, approximately

27 acres of public open space, two renovated marinas, and a wetlands restoration area. Board commented there should be analysis of how the project complies with the Estuary Plan, BCDC and the Army Corps of Engineers' policies, and asserted that the State Office of Historic Preservation Section 106 process also needs to be considered.

Secretary Reports: Planning Commission recommended the landmark nomination of the Seventh Street Commercial District.

July '04: *Directors Report:* A proposal for a large multi-phased housing project at Central Station (Southern Pacific Railroad Station) has been submitted and the City is currently conducting environmental review. This is a 26 acre proposal bounded by Wood and 16th Streets, and contains the historic SP Railroad Station. A sub-committee was formed with board members Lee, Armstrong and Kahn.

Actions Taken: Board conducted design review on proposed demolition, renovation, and new construction at 1720 MacArthur Blvd. (the Altheim). During the public discussion, the issues of parking and traffic and the height and setback of a proposed building were addressed. Board moved to recommend design review approval with the following conditions: the architect and developer shall work with staff to create a window recess that is keeping with the existing buildings; wrought iron shall be used in place of tubular metal railings; a Notice of Intent to Submit a Landmark Application shall be placed on the next Landmark Board Agenda following Planning Commission Review of the Altheim project application; a street tree shall be selected that would be more amenable to landscape maintenance; and the applicant shall follow the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.



Preservation Action Committee hosts workshop

By Joyce Roy

On June 19, over 50 people participated in a design workshop for Uptown Oakland sponsored by Oakland Heritage Alliance and the Northern Alameda County Group of the Sierra Club. Local stakeholders as well as local and regional design and construction professionals began the day with a tour to acquaint themselves with the context. Historic buildings like the Fox Theater and the Floral Depot are major resources.

After a presentation of Oakland's vision for Uptown by Claudia Cappio, development director, Greg Tung, urban designer of Freedman, Tung & Bottomley, gave a presentation on urban public spaces. Armed with information, participants eagerly gathered around site plans at seven tables and went to work. It was a very lively workshop.

A report on the workshop is being prepared. Many ideas were generated. For example, many felt that moving the buildings back from Telegraph Avenue

would create a lively focus for the theater district. The Fox Theater and the Floral Depot could easily be viewed from this "piazza." Cafes, restaurants, galleries, book and record stores, and market-hall-type retail, which would spill out onto it, would make it a safe, lively public space.

All the groups also wanted some green park space adjacent to the housing. There were many ideas about how it should be configured and where it should be located, but there wasn't much support for the proposed location at Thomas Berkley Way (20th Street).

A major concern is that when a project designed on a suburban model is inserted into an urban setting, it will become a self-contained community that perceives itself as surrounded by a hostile environment. The site plan must therefore be designed to consciously and vigorously connect to and enhance the surrounding area—to create lively public spaces and be a cata-

lyst for revitalization of the whole neighborhood.

Many participants thought that the 1870–1890 false-front commercial buildings on San Pablo Avenue at Thomas Berkley Way should be retained and reused to preserve a sense of history and connect the new project with its context.

A month later, on July 20, the Oakland City Council approved the Development and Disposition Agreement (DDA) and \$61 million in subsidies for the developer, Forest City. In the six years the developer has been working on this project, it has not engaged the public in a community design workshop. It now says it will hold some workshops, probably in early fall. This should give people a chance to refine their ideas and, hopefully, reach a consensus.

For more information and to get on our e-mail list for future workshops, contact Joyce Roy at: joyceroy@earthlink.net (preferred) or 510-655-7508.

Biff's/ JJ's neighborhood update

By Joyce Roy

A lot of traffic has flowed by Biff's/JJ's along Broadway Auto Row since it was forced to close in 1996. There have been changes in the neighborhood. The once derelict flatiron building across the street at 27th and Broadway has been transformed by Steve Simi, owner of Connell Auto Center, into a bright, see-through building that will soon display new cars. South of Biff's/JJ's, the two blocks on the west side of Broadway between 24th and Grand are slated for a mixed-use project of 475 for-sale residential units and 40,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space by Signature Properties.

All these positive changes mean that Biff's/JJ's, which was popular and profitable before its closure, could be even more profitable now. With some good landscaping, it could share a portion of its property along Broadway with an auto lot, and with some spiffing-up, this icon of the '50s/'60s Googie space-age style could take off. Its exterior only needs the brown shingles removed to reveal the sparkling flying saucer roof edge. Inside, like any restaurant over 40 years old, it will need its equipment and mechanical systems updated. But Friends of JJ's purchased the custom-made seating and most of it has been stored awaiting rejuvenation of the restaurant. (See appeal for storage space at right.)

BIFF's SEATS NEED A NEW HOME

BIFF's green Naugahyde (and very comfortable) seats were saved once (see article at left.) Now Friends of Biff's/JJ's need help again. Thanks to an 'angel' in 1997 these seats were saved for the reuse in the restaurant. All the main dining room seating — which has been kept safely in storage since then, needs a new (temporary) home until the restaurant reopens.

HELP WANTED — If you have or know of a safe, dry place for these seats (about 400 sf) please call Friends of Biff's/JJ's at (510) 436-3466 for more information.

Walking tours were absolutely heroic, Hildy finds

Here's the place to get the latest gossip on Oakland's historic front. Around the Town is compiled by our crack newswoman Hildy Johnson.

■ “Golly Andy Hardy! That sure was some kind of show we put on!” said Betsy Booth. Yes, we are talking about those magnificent Walking Tours, lifeblood of the OHA organization. Our army of members, guides, and volunteers marched to the mountains, marched to the sea, and marched through fields and streets, braving the elements, thirst and blisters to walk this land called Oak. Yes, it was a heroic series of weekend days, and Betsy and I both want to commend you all for your services! Salute dear chums! On with the show . . .

■ The flatiron building at the intersection of 27th, Webster and Broadway has been rehabilitated as part of Auto Row's rejuvenation. With new glass and white paint, it looks terribly terrific, and if I didn't spill it, you probably never would have guessed that almost 12 feet of the building was lopped off, right where its two sides should meet. But, you nose what? I think it turned out just fine . . .

■ Mr. Weldon Russell, third generation operator of Phoenix Iron Works, died recently at age 77. Mr. Russell was a life-time resident of Piedmont and had operated the works in Oakland since 1956.

Many examples of the company's products, including manhole covers, fire hydrants, grates and pipe fittings, can be seen downtown and in the older residential areas of Oakland. Just walk around with your head down. Mr. Russell's grandfather, William Lewis Russell, the founder of the foundry, built his home in the Rockridge district in 1907. That house was showcased on the OHA Arts and Crafts House Tour a couple of years ago. Thanks to Marilyn Citron for the reminder.

■ And speaking of really, really grand: the Henry J. Kaiser house is on the market for the first time in 20 years. Built in the Italian Baroque style, it's located in the Haddon Hill area and OHA is hoping that it may be open to the public for a 2005 Walking Tour. The house



includes a stained glass door made from the bottoms of champagne bottles used to christen the Kaiser ships that were launched at the Richmond shipyards during World War II.

■ Obscure question: What does Haddon Hill have in common with the Idora Park neighborhood? Obscure answer: Both are early examples of neighborhoods where utilities were placed underground. It's a lovely, lovely day when you're not looking at a blue sky full of black wires.

■ Is it just me or have you noticed that the Shorenstein 555 City Center building, which will soon house the Internet search firm Ask Jeeves, and the Watergate Tower IV building in Emeryville, which houses the software firm Siebel Systems, look rather similar? Or are they just familiar? Or am I just going soft? Well, with some digging, I found out that both are by the San Francisco firm of Korth Sunseri Hagey. So why do they show only the Watergate on their website but not 555 City Center, which is 128,000 square feet bigger?

Come on, Toto, let's you, me and Betsy leave; I don't think we're in Oakland anymore.

EBRPD

Continued from page 5

White silica sandstone used to make clear glass jars for pickles and jams brought miners back in 1922. The sand was sold to the Hazel-Atlas manufacturing plant at 89th Avenue and G Street in Oakland. This time, instead of men lying on their backs to pick-ax the narrow seams of low grade coal and young boys, called knobbers, pushing the coal pieces down to carts, machines and dynamite did much of the sand mining work, leaving the belly of the hills full of caverns and tunnels.

The district has been gathering oral histories for various parks since the 1970s, including the Black Diamond Mines. Project administrator Tracy Parent considers it essential to chronicle the experience of past residents of the park lands, saying, “Oral histories give us the only history of the parks because generally you can't read about it in a history book.”

DISTRICT EXPANSION

After WWII, the district resumed acquisition of parkland and development of recreational facilities like swim areas, merry-go-rounds, pony rides, and ball fields to serve an East Bay population that had grown 48 percent

between 1940 and 1950. Starting in the late '60s, the district became more conservation oriented and acquired land in the rural eastern parts of Contra Costa and Alameda Counties and along the shoreline.

Advocates of public parkland around San Leandro Bay in Oakland faced challenges similar to those faced by early EBRPD supporters. After wresting waterfront control away from private ownership during a 75-year battle in the courts, Oakland turned control of the shoreline over to the Port in 1927. Since then, the Port has pursued bay fill projects to

See EBRPD on page 10

Calendar

The OHA calendar lists events, activities and meetings related to history and preservation that may be of interest to our members.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 10, 1-5 p.m.: Oakland Heritage Alliance presents its annual House Tour, this year

focusing on Crocker Highlands. Nine homes will be featured on the tour. Invite your friends to join you for a fascinating look at homes at this terrific fundraiser. For more info, call 763-9218 or see article on page 5. \$25 members; \$30 non-members advance or \$35 day of tour. **Oct. 17, 7:30:** Dimond Improvement Association's "Dimond History Night" will be held at the Sons of Norway Hall (Bjornsterne Bjornson), 2258 MacArthur Blvd., at May

Court. If you have old photographs of the district or a Dimond story to share, send an email to webmaster@dimondnews.org.

TOURS AND EXHIBITS:

African-American Museum and Library is open in its renovated home, the historic Charles Greene Library at 659 14th St. Hours are Tues. through Sat., noon to 5:30 p.m. 637-0200 or www.oaklandlibrary.org.



Danish painter captured Oakland's early days



FERDINAND RICHARDT and daughter Johanna in the parlor of their home at 1220 Ninth Avenue, 1888.

■ Ferdinand Richardt lived in Oakland in the late 1800s, painting landscapes and portraits.

By Melinda Young Stuart

"In a quiet brown house in East Oakland, which has nothing of the peculiar nor of the artistic in its exterior, there is contained a perfect museum of the history and romance of old Denmark. [It] is the home and workshop of F. Richardt, who was born in Denmark over seventy years ago."

—San Francisco Examiner, 1893.

Ferdinand Richardt, "landscape artist," was entering his last years when a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter visited and wrote a story about him and his life in Oakland. Unfortunately, the writer chose to tell more about Richardt's European connections than about his importance as an observer of the Oakland scene. In fact, Richardt offers Oaklanders a sometimes surprising view of their city through his accurate and sensitive observations in pencil and paint. His never-before-published East Bay drawings, some seen here, contain a wealth of valuable detail.

The Richardts arrived in the Bay Area in 1875 and settled in Oakland a year later. Until 1888, they lived at three different addresses in

the 800 block of Madison Street, but after his wife died, the artist and his piano teacher daughter moved to a house east of Lake Merritt. For a time they lived at 1220 Ninth Ave., and then after 1892, at 617 East 18th St.

A GREAT DANE

Ferdinand Richardt was born near Copenhagen in 1819. He received a classical education in drawing and painting at the Royal Academy of Art. He excelled at architectural drawing and landscape painting, and in the 1840s, with the help of a royal grant, he sold a number of oils and lithographs of Denmark's castles and great country houses. But, as he himself claimed later, he had "long cherished a desire to see and paint America."

In 1855, he journeyed to New York and spent the next four years sketching and painting a variety of eastern scenery. But, due partly to an economic crisis and the threat of civil war, his paintings sold poorly. Planning to turn the images into a series of engravings, he sailed home in 1859.

Richardt enjoyed a healthy career in Europe during the next decade, with private showings to Queen Victoria. Nevertheless, his fascination with America remained, and in 1873, at age 54, he departed again for New York. This time he was accompanied by his family, and they planned to stay.



RICHARDT'S HOME AND STUDIO, 837 Madison Street, 1885.

We give special thanks to Richardt's descendants for permission to publish these drawings.

Niagara Falls was their home for the next two years, and then in 1875, they journeyed to California by train. They started out in San Francisco, where Richardt opened a studio on Ellis Street. He maintained a professional foothold there over the coming years, exhibiting regularly with the Mechanics Institute and the San Francisco Art Association, and selling large scenic canvases through art dealers in the city. Within months of their arrival, however, the Richardt family had settled in Oakland's Lake Merritt district.

AT HOME IN OAKLAND

Richardt's rendering of the doorway to his own home and studio at 837 Madison Street offers us an intimate peek at his domestic setting. Seated just inside the open door we see a woman—in all likelihood Richardt's daughter, Johanna. Behind her head we can make out a half-curtained window and the suggestion of a nearby outbuilding. In front, the short, simple wooden stairway is framed by two huge antlers, and they in turn are flanked by lush vegetation of the type so characteristic of 19th-century California gardens.

See **RICHARDT** on page 10

Keeping in step: Oakland's revived love affair with its community walkways

By Jason Patton

Many Oaklanders have the good fortune of having walkways in their neighborhood—pedestrian rights-of-way that look like sidewalks except that they don't follow streets. These walkways provide quaint and sometimes hidden cut-throughs, linking otherwise distant parts of neighborhoods. Until recently, few people recognized that walkways are not just the occasional anomaly but a city-wide resource.

Growing interest in the walkways has led to reconstruction efforts in Oakland neighborhoods as well as the publication of the *Walk Oakland! Map & Guide*. Their history, as part of Oakland's streetcar suburbs, speaks to historic preservation and the growing contemporary interest in walkable neighborhoods. Oakland has over 200 walkways, the majority of which were built during the first decades of the twentieth century when the city's population and land area were expanding rapidly. The vast majority of this development occurred in newly-constructed suburbs with convenient streetcar service.

These suburbs combined the best of the countryside and city life by being close to both: at the edge of the city in the lower areas of the yet-to-be-developed Oakland hills. The steep terrain resulted in neighborhoods with meandering streets: long blocks, "T" intersections, and dead ends. In these areas, the shortest distance between two points was often too steep for automobiles and streets. To make these connections, developers built pedestrian walkways and

staircases to shorten the distances between homes, streetcar lines, shops, and schools.

These first decades of the twentieth century were the golden age for walkways. In earlier decades, development occurred primarily in the flatlands and, given the regular street grid, there was no need for shortcuts. (For example, there are no walkways in West Oakland.) In later decades, the automobile-oriented suburbs of the mid-20th century gave little to no thought to pedestrians. With the notable exception of Montclair, there are very few walkways above Route 13. Additionally, the automobile orientation of the post-World War II era meant little investment in these public rights-of-way: numerous walkways now have broken steps or missing handrails, and some are simply impassable.

Today, the walkways are undergoing a renaissance as more residents come to value their history and utility. In addition to pro-

viding pleasant connections and hidden spots, they are increasingly a source of neighborhood pride. In 2002, neighborhood advocates in the Montclair District, along with Councilmember Dick Spees and Oakland's Public Works Agency, celebrated the reopening of the Upper and Lower Merriewood Stairs. Located on steep hillsides, these dramatic wooden staircases complement the entrances of adjoining homes through their architectural detail. Earlier this summer, the Oakmore Homes Association had reason to celebrate with Councilmember Jean Quan and the Public Works Agency: two walkways were repaired and another two walkways, including Bridgeview Path, were completely rebuilt.

New walkways are also being built in a kind of niche revival: to provide cut-throughs along property lines for access-

See **WALKWAYS** on page 11



THE BRIDGEVIEW PATH, above, shot looking towards Leimert Boulevard in the Oakmore District, has been completely rebuilt. At right is the original Cleveland Cascades at Lake Merritt, currently being rehabbed by volunteers. This photograph originally appeared in the March 1931 issue of *American Landscape Architect*.



Kurt Lavenson

Courtesy, Jim Ratliff

Additional Resources

Friends of the Cleveland Cascade:
<http://clevelandcascade.org/>
 Let's Fix the Merriewood Stairs!:
<http://www.lansharks.net/stairs/>
 Berkeley Path Wanderers
 Association:
<http://www.internettime.com/bpwa/>

Richardt

Continued from page 8

This neighborhood inspired a number of Richardt's Oakland works, notably the small oil, "Oaks at Madison and 8th Streets," owned by the Oakland Museum of California. That image is on the dust-jacket of the 2000 book, *The Spirit of Oakland*, and was featured—along with three other Richardt paintings—in the museum's 2002 anniversary exhibition, "Scene in Oakland."

One of Richardt's Lake Merritt drawings (at right) appears to be sketched from the western shore, in the general vicinity of the present-day municipal boathouse. Grazing animals at the shore show the rustic character of the neighborhood through the 1870s.

And finally, one of the most interesting of Richardt's drawings is a double portrait of two young Oakland boys, dated 1875. Nothing is known about them but their names, for Richardt apparently asked each boy to record his own identity by printing his name.

Richardt died in 1895, at age 76, and is buried in Mountain View Cemetery. Most of



LAKE MERRITT BOAT DOCK, looking towards Adams Point, 1885, left. At right, Alcido Para and Walter Reeves, 1875.



the paintings remaining in his possession at the time of death were sold at public auction. A Richardt oil hangs in the Sacramento capitol, two early paintings of eastern American landscapes hang in the White House, and one is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. However, he is yet to truly be discovered and appreciated.

Author's Note: I have studied Richardt for a decade and am grateful to his family for permitting me access to their drawings. In 2003, Danish museum historian Niels Peter Stilling

and I produced an exhibition and illustrated book, *Danish Manor Houses and America: Landscape Art of Ferdinand Richardt, 1819–1895*.

As a longtime friend of OHA (and member of its founding board), I'm glad to present this brief study of Richardt's Oakland work. I welcome inquiries from any with information on him or interest in buying the book. Reach me at P.O. Box 220, Barnardsville, NC 28709 or by email at mystuart@buncombe.main.nc.us.

EBRPD

Continued from page 7

improve maritime commerce and airport operations. Sometimes the fill was done speculatively to avoid future regulation by the state, explains John Sutter, an early campaigner for shoreline access. In his paper outlining the MLK shoreline park history, he writes "The Port was encouraging contractors to bring in their construction debris, much of it old concrete with rusting reinforcing bars, and dump it helter-skelter along the shoreline."

The alarming fill rate during the 1960s reduced the wetlands around the San Leandro Bay from a historical high of 2,000 acres to 100 acres at low tide in 1970, and moved Oaklanders to push for a public park and wetlands preserve. The Port's commercial interests were expressed by Mayor John Reading, who saw migratory birds as a hazard to airplanes and thought expanded maritime facilities would keep jobs in Oakland during the recession.

"We can talk all day about pretty parks but parks don't mean a thing except that they are a place to go and sit all day," he said at a

1970 community panel discussion, as reported in the *Montclarion*.

Park proponents included, among others, the Fruitvale East Oakland Planning Council, People for Open Space (precursor to Greenbelt Alliance), and the Black Caucus, and were often represented by Sutter, who at the same panel discussion argued that "Oakland is park-poor." Like the hills parks in 1930, the shoreline park was necessary for a population cut off from the waterfront.

Sutter, as City Councilman from 1971 to 1982, continued the fight for a public park on San Leandro Bay. He is now EBRPD's Ward 2 Director. He helped defeat a 1975 Assembly bill rider allowing a bridge from the Nimitz freeway to Bay Farm Island that would have cut through Arrowhead Marsh. After over a decade of lobbying, in 1978 the Port and District made a lease agreement for 565 acres, which has grown to 1,220 acres today.

The struggle for public waterfront access continues today with condos and shopping proposed along waterfront areas. "After a historic struggle to win back this public land, we're turning it over to private developers," Sutter says, in a recent interview with *OHA*

News. There have also been some recent successes, including the Eastshore State Park, a joint venture with the state, and Middle Harbor Shoreline Park, built by the Port on part of the former Oakland Naval Supply Depot. Middle Harbor is located in the fourth busiest container port in the U.S., so visitors can watch the giant cranes move cargo while enjoying the frolicking waterfowl in the restored habitat area.

District land now includes most of what the Olmsted-Hall report recommended in 1930. With a little money and a lot of determination, district founders were able to preserve invaluable cultural and natural resources and extensive open space, and their successors have admirably managed the same feat. A 2000 economic study of the district demonstrates their success. The District manages over 96,000 acres of public land. Since 1934, it has spent \$365 million in year-2000 dollars to acquire this land. A very conservative estimate of the replacement value of district land is \$960 million. Speaking of the current opportunities to expand park holdings, Sutter says, "What the founders did in the 1930s, we've just got to continue doing today."



Walkways

Continued from page 9

ing the Bay Trail and Oakland's waterfront. In the next step of the walkway renaissance, the Friends of the Cleveland Cascade formed earlier this year to restore Oakland's grandest walkway. Linking Lake Merritt to the neighborhoods of Haddon Hill and Peralta Heights, the Cleveland Cascade features two sets of stairways flanking the remnants of a fountain where water once fell down the hillside in a series of basins.

Now that you've read, get a Walk Oakland! map and explore Montclair, Oakmore, Trestle Glen, Glenview, Upper Rockridge, and the neighborhoods along Glen Echo Creek. Then join the Friends of the Cleveland Cascade for Oakland's next steps in reviving its pedestrian walkways.

Walk Oakland! Map & Guide—now in its second edition! In 2001-2, the Oakland Pedestrian Safety Project (OPSP) completed a survey of Oakland's walkways in the process of writing the City of Oakland's Pedestrian Master Plan. The walkways had not been surveyed since 1960, and, while residents often knew of a handful in their own neighborhoods, few people recognized the walkways as a citywide resource. As a companion document to the Pedestrian Master Plan, OPSP completed the Walk Oakland! Map & Guide to get the plan's message out to Oakland's residents.

Now in its second edition, the map features Oakland's neighborhoods through walkways, bikeways, neighborhood names, and historical landmarks. The Walk Oakland! Map & Guide is available at bookstores and bike shops throughout Oakland.



Jim Dexter

The Upper Merriewood stairs in the Montclair District are safe again for use, providing a shortcut through steep neighborhoods.

WE HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN YOU!

Oakland Heritage Alliance looks forward, as always, to listing our new members, donors and volunteers. We have an especially long list of new members, thanks to the walking tours' policy of granting a free tour to new members or renewals on the day of the tour! However, we must hold off on our lists until the next issue. Our delay in no way dims our gratitude! Thanks to all for a wonderfully successful summer. Donors, volunteers for the walking tours and new members who joined us this summer will be included and thanked in the next issue of *OHA News*.

Join OHA today!

One of the benefits of membership is the quarterly *OHA News*, an informative journal about Oakland's preservation activities.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, Zip _____
 Phone (h) _____ (w) _____
 Fax _____ e-mail _____

- I would like to help with:
- Programs/Tours
 - OHA News*
 - Development/Fundraising
 - Membership
 - Preservation Action
 - Mailing/Office
 - Other _____

Membership new renewal

- \$35 Individual
- \$50 Family (two or more)
- \$75 Organization/Benefactor
- \$125 Sponsor
- \$250 Patron
- \$15 Limited Income
- \$ _____ Publications
- \$ _____ Add'l contribution

Oakland Heritage Alliance
 446 17th St., Ste. 301
 Oakland, CA 94612
 510-763-9218
www.oaklandheritage.org;
info@oaklandheritage.org

OAKLAND HERITAGE ALLIANCE has been a 501(c)(3) organization since 1980. Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible, under IRS regulations.

MISSION STATEMENT: OHA is a nonprofit membership organization which advocates the protection, preservation and revitalization of Oakland's architectural, historic, cultural and natural resources through publications, education, and direct action.

CONTRIBUTORS: Jim Dexter, Kathleen and Mario DiGiovanni, Kevin Flynn, Linda Hall, Jordan Harrison, Esther Hill, Eric Klocko, Mary MacDonald, Jason Patton, Allyson Quibell, Jim Ratliff, Joyce Roy, Naomi Schiff, Melinda Young Stuart

PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Naomi Schiff, *President*
- Pat Dedekian, *Vice President*
- Renie Bartolini, *Treasurer*
- Sally Kemmerer, *Secretary*
- Michael Crowe
- Valerie Garry
- Mary MacDonald
- Kirk Peterson
- Joyce Roy
- Cynthia Shartzter
- Joseph Taylor

How Trestle Glen nearly became a park—but didn't

By Kathleen Leles DiGiovanni
"Regrets? Yes—but for the City of
Oakland—not for you."

So began a gloating real estate advertisement from 1922 promoting house lots in Oakland's Trestle Glen district. The year before, the city had rejected an opportunity to buy the last remaining undeveloped tract in the glen, thus putting to an end a civic dream of an uninterrupted "necklace of parks" stretching from Lake Merritt to the crest of the hills.

When you go on the OHA house tour of Crocker Highlands in October, consider that the entire district was once a vast, informal park and still could have been one today.

The principal late 19th century landowner in this district was banker Peder Sather. Sather's immortality resides in the memorial gate his wife, Jane Krom Sather, donated to the UC Berkeley campus. Sather made the land available to the public as a pleasure park, known locally as Sather Park. After his death in 1886, his widow continued to allow informal public access to the land.

The 1893 construction of a trolley line over Indian Gulch by means of an elaborate wooden trestle brought more people to the park, which by now was being bought up piece by piece by Frank Havens' Realty Syndicate. The park, now called Trestle Glen, attracted merry-makers to dances, revivals, lodge conventions and veterans' encampments, even

the Salvation Army's annual camp meeting.

By about 1905, Realty Syndicate had purchased all of Trestle Glen, including the Sather Estate. In 1911, the first subdivision map for the district had been filed, taking in the present streets of Ashmount, Ardmore, Clarendon Crescent, and the top-most section of Mandana.

The threat of development to this asset was clear. No less an authority than Charles Mulford Robinson in his 1906 *Plan of Civic Improvement* for Oakland noted Oakland's dearth of parkland for a city its size and recommended that the city buy as much of the tract as it still could. In its first annual report, Oakland's new Park Commission noted, "No city possesses greater possibilities in the development of an enchanting driving park through Indian Gulch and Dimond Canyon." In 1914, the Park Commission purchased an option to buy Trestle Glen and other land in the Sather Tract, giving rise to a proposed system of parks reaching from the lake to Redwood Peak. Financing for the "Wildwood Chain of Parks" could not be worked out



AN EARLY VIEW of the pastoral Trestle Glen. Not dated.

Courtesy, Oakland History Room

immediately, though. The next year, John Davie succeeded park supporter Frank Mott as mayor. Davie opposed the use of public money to buy the land and in 1916 put a stop to a City Council plan to buy it on an installment basis.

The city argued with the Wickham Havens Realty Company for years, with Wickham Havens offering to sell the land to the city and the city, in turn, offering to receive it as a gift. In the meantime, subdivisions encroached on the bottom of the glen until, in early 1921, only a 25-acre portion remained. A vigorous civic campaign was mounted to save this last bit of forest for the people by means of a bond measure, but in April the mayor and the city council determined that it was too late to place such a measure on the ballot and the last of the old oaks gave way to houses.



Oakland Heritage Alliance
446 17th St., Suite 301
Oakland, CA 94612

Forwarding Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Oakland, California
Permit No. 31