



Making historic reuse 'reel' in Oakland

■ Film incubator companies reinhabit vacant Oakland Army Base warehouse

By Joyce Roy

In May, OHA co-sponsored a special meeting with the Landmarks Board on adaptive reuse of historic buildings. The reuse of the warehouses on the Oakland Army Base is a great example. All of them are occupied, and particularly exciting is the nurturing of incubator film companies at the Oakland Film Center in the S-804 warehouse.

After Tim Ranahan of Ranahan Production Services moved in last April, 21 other independent film service and equipment providers joined him. They occupy two out of the five sections of the warehouse, the only ones available. Dozens of others have been knocking on the door begging for space because it is so perfect for their needs.

Their warehouse is one of seven huge impressive, nearly identical warehouses located along the east side of Maritime Drive. They were built in 1941-42 at the beginning of World War II. Each is almost a quarter-mile long and provides 5.3 acres of enclosed space lit by continuous clerestory windows. They are divided by masonry firewalls into five structurally independent transverse sections. Their structure of select structural grade Douglas fir heavy timber creates a Craftsman-like interior on steroids.

All of these warehouse buildings and the four structures east of Maritime Street on Grand Avenue are in the Northeast Historic District deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by the Army and the California Office of Historic Preservation. An Engineering Report dated Dec. 1, 1941, described them as "single-story permanent warehouses for the storage of Quartermaster, Engineer, Medical, Signal, Ordnance Corps, C.W.S. and other supplies." Some have served as temporary mortuaries for World War II soldiers and, in the case of Warehouse S-804, for Vietnam soldiers. To wipe out all the historic



Erika Mailman



Joyce Roy

WAREHOUSE S-804 IS SO SPACIOUS Nick Ranahan needs a scooter to get from one end to another, top. He is the nephew and employee of Tim Ranahan of Ranahan Production Services. At bottom is the exterior of the warehouse located on the Oakland Army Base.

resources would remove most of the physical evidence of Oakland's important role in World War II.

The final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Oakland Army Base Area Redevelopment Plan included the condition that EIRs will be needed

to ascertain actual environmental impacts of real projects as they come forward. Demolition of historic resources should only be considered if specific development plans make their reuse infeasible. And certainly no

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Film

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demolition can occur before there are approved, permitted projects.

The demising line between the City and the Port runs through these warehouses. It puts three of the warehouses entirely in the Port's area. Of the other four, nine sections remain on the City's side of the line. In other words, the city will have 9/35ths of the warehouses. At least these portions can be reused because the sections are structurally independent.

The Port plans to locate a new Joint Intermodal Terminal on its land to replace one that was only built in 2002, but it could be some time before it gets the funding. And no particular project has been planned for the City portion.

The film companies have leases until August '06 when the Base is scheduled to be conveyed to the City and the Port. But it will be some time before either the Port's project or a project on the City portion will be ready to go, so rather than let the buildings sit vacant, they should continue to be used.

Both the buildings themselves and their location make this the ideal site for the film industry. The site is readably accessible to San Francisco and the entire Bay Area and offers plenty of space for large trucks. Because most vehicles can go inside, it streamlines logistics. It is easy to load up gear and spread out. The space is flexible so businesses can expand or contract to meet their needs. Great synergy is created with related businesses sharing the same space. For instance, Sean House, after sculpting a set for a children's puppet show, just had to



Joyce Roy

CLERESTORY WINDOWS and Douglas fir timbers make this warehouse attractive and well-lit. This is part of a tour of the Oakland Army Base for Oakland High School students, led by their history instructor Don Tyler, a former OHA board member.

go down a few bays to the space of a scenic artist, Karen Sorum, to get it painted.

Certainly, if the Wayans Brothers develop the land west of Maritime Street, the proximity of these companies would be a real asset. Film production offices now located on the Port's portion of the base would also benefit. With the addition of a sound stage that could be provided by a company like the Wayans Brothers, Oakland would have full production capacity.

Between 1998 and 2000, San Francisco lost 70 percent of its film industry. Space was too small and too expensive, and mobility was a problem. Production costs are much less in L.A. and Canada. The freebie that we are getting from the Army puts Oakland in a good position to offer cheaper space and be competitive with L.A. and Canada. If Oakland had to build anew the space these free warehouses offer, it could not compete. The warehouses are in good condition and need little more than good maintenance. Their retention is key to development of a viable film industry in Oakland. A venture is most apt to thrive if it self-generates like these film-related businesses. The city could further encourage these

ventures by granting them long-term leases. It would then be viable to install solar panels on those acres of roof. And the exterior's blank slate would offer the opportunity for some lively graphics that could be viewed from the freeway.

Beyond the employment provided and goods purchased by the industry itself, it would be difficult to find a better jobs generator. During the production of a film, the influx of hundreds of people who must be fed, clothed, housed and transported creates the need for caterers, dry cleaners, taxicabs, restaurants and hotels. And hotels preferred by this cosmopolitan crowd are not isolated hotels but rather hotels in an urban setting like downtown Oakland—like that hotel that was going to reuse the Key System's building!

Reusing most, if not all, of the historic resources on the Base, would (in the words of the redevelopment objectives) "alleviate economic and social degradation due to closure of OARB, strengthen the economic base, and allow for sustainable job creation." These resources are a heritage that belongs to the community. The federal government recognizes this by conditioning its conveyance upon the benefit to the public. ■

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Oakland, your books oughta be in pictures!

By Erika Mailman

Three movies which recently shot in Oakland were based on books.

The Mistress of Spices is based on Chitra Divakaruni's magical-realism novel set in Oakland about a spice purveyor who assists immigrants. *Bee Season* arises out of Myla Goldberg's novel about a young girl who begins to win spelling bees because of her connection with ancient Jewish mysticism. And *The Darwin Awards* is based on the nonfiction books by Wendy Northcutt detailing how foolishly some people die, allowing the survival of the fittest (smartest).

The Oakland Film Office, housed in the Lionel Wilson building downtown (the rehabbed Broadway Building), works to promote filmmaking in Oakland. Its goal, according to its mission statement, is to "advance economic development and civic pride and increase regional, national and international awareness of Oakland as a vibrant, beautiful and culturally diverse city."

The office works with production companies to secure locations and permits.



A BACK-LIT CREW MEMBER at the *Bee Season* shoot at Our Lady of Lourdes church.

According to Oakland Film Coordinator Ami Zins, "Oakland is fortunate to feature a surprising array of environments and terrain ranging from redwood forests and rural rolling hills to a bayside estuary and one of America's largest operating seaports, as well as the assortment of areas typical of most urban cities."

Perhaps one of the best byproducts of filmmaking in Oakland is that we get a preserved record of our city in 2005: visual history in the making. Many thanks to Assistant Film Coordinator Janet Austin, who graciously provided *OHA News* with these images of movies in production. ■



A CREW MEMBER holds the boom microphone over a light-sheltered scene for *Mistress of Spices*, left. Below, it takes many behind-the-scenes people to make *Bee Season* happen at Lake Merritt.



COVERED WITH "BLOOD," an actor relaxes between scenes on the *Darwin Awards* set, right.



A newsletter retrospective: *OHA News* through the years

By Annalee Allen

This issue of the *OHA News* marks the 81st issue since production began back in the Spring of 1981 with a front page commentary by Beth Bagwell, OHA's first president and author of *Oakland, Story of a City*.

"The environment we live in today has been given to us from the past," wrote Bagwell, "the buildings that remain, the layout of the streets, the ethnic character of our neighborhoods, the nearly forgotten creeks, the lake that still forms the centerpiece of our city. The Oakland of today is the result of what Oaklanders yesterday built or demolished, fostered or neglected. This is our inheritance. What we do with it is our choice."

With that simple statement, Bagwell laid out the guiding philosophy that has been driving OHA members and volunteers for the past 25 years, and for those of us who have been participating since close to the beginning, it has been a fascinating journey. A look back at the *OHA News* provides a glimpse of preservation skirmishes won and lost, walks and house tours attended, revitalization issues debated, and neighborhoods and landmarks described and praised.

Interestingly, on the front page of the premier issue, from that long-ago Spring of '81, is a briefing about the municipal auditorium (now known as the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center) and its uncertain future. There was mention of the high costs of operation, the need for \$12 million in rehabilitation, and an outline of possible future options — including closure and even demolition.

As is evident elsewhere in this issue, as the City's 2005-06 budget year commences, the landmark auditorium's fate is once again in question, therefore making OHA's involvement and advocacy an ongoing necessity.

Over the years there have been a number of dedicated volunteers who have worked on the production of the *News*. The first editor was William Sturm, former long-time head librarian of the Oakland History Room. Access to the OHR's archives and photograph collection has been an enduring hallmark of the various issues. Plentiful illustrations and captions, along with original research for the various articles, have made each edition a "keeper" for many an Oakland history lover.

Complete sets of the *OHA News* can be found at the History Room, the OHA office, and the City Planning Department's Cultural Heritage Survey, located in the Dalziel Building, 250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, next to City Hall.

Betty Marvin, who heads up the ongoing work of the Survey, was newsletter editor from 1985 until 1999. She recalls the early days when content was typed up on a manual typewriter and the paste up and corrections were all done by hand. "When we graduated to an IBM PC (donated by founding board member and early president Leslie Flint's company), we thought we were really in business," Marvin recalls.

After signing up to learn WordStar, the PC's then state-of-the-art software program, at Vista Community College, Marvin settled in to spearhead the newsletter's production during the ensuing years when some of OHA's most memorable battles took place, including saving the Floral Depot Building, Old Merritt College, and downtown's signature flatiron Broadway Building. There were casualties along the way too, such as the two earthquake-damaged churches—St. Francis de

Sales Cathedral and Sacred Heart—and Montgomery Ward.

I am certain current editor Erika Mailman would agree we have come a long way since the early days, in terms of the technical aspects of production. "It's amazing to see the labor of love each of the older issues involved," says Mailman. "Today's software makes yesterday's workload light."

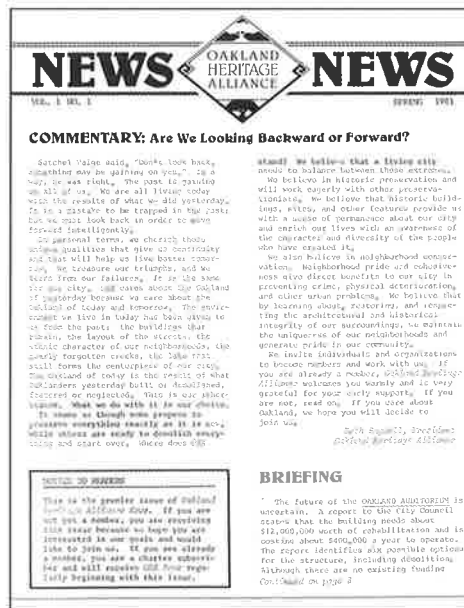
The format for each issue has remained essentially the same, with a local history topic as the lead article, updates on ongoing "hot button" issues by the Preservation Action Committee, info on upcoming programs, walks, and house tours, a calendar of events, and—on the back page—a capsule history of a particular landmark (often no longer extant) traditionally written by a member of the Oakland History Room staff, Bill Sturm initially and now Kathleen DiGiovanni. Also included have been summaries of the monthly city landmarks board meetings, providing an unbroken record of 25 years of board decisions and actions.

Volunteers at the Survey office are in the process of compiling an index of the landmarks board meeting summaries in *OHA News*, so that anyone interested in finding out when various topics were covered can access that info. OHA has also recently compiled its own index of general newsletter topics.

Although unfortunately space does not permit listing every individual who contributed to the *News* over the years, a few people should definitely be acknowledged: Blair Prentice for the distinctive logo and masthead used for every issue, Phil Bellman for original photographs, Donald Hausler for the series on Black history that appears from time to time, Robert Brokl for his tireless recountings of the Old Merritt College saga, as well as updates on the landmark Carnegie libraries and Studio One, and especially Carolyn Douthat for the many detailed and articulate summaries of preservation action items.

I would personally like to take the opportunity to comment that involvement with the *OHA News* has deepened my own interest in writing and helping to tell the story of Oakland. I look forward to more issues to

See *NEWS* on page 5



THE FIRST ISSUE! The masthead is the same, but this eight-page Spring 1981 edition was printed in green ink and typed manually on a typewriter.



Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board notes

Compiled by Joyce Roy

Meeting of Jan. 10, 2005: Following the meeting, at its annual goal setting dinner the LPAB noted that its two top priorities were establishing a Mills Act Program and modifying the Demolition Ordinance. **St. Augustine's** and **Sheffield Village** were added to the list of Landmark nominations to be completed. The **County Court House** was suggested as a possible nomination. The Board also suggested that a checklist of criteria for review be explored as a way to catch commercial A and B buildings. The Board requested that it begin to review other city's Rehabilitation Ordinances.

Feb. 7, 2005: Phil Tagami of California Capital Group presented the **Fox Theater Proposed Rehabilitation and Addition**. The project is a rehabilitation of the theater and its wraparound structures, with additions. The grants, as well as the City, require that the project comply with the Secretary of Interior's Standards. The greatest focus will be on the two additions to the sides and rear of the building. Massing, materials, rhythm, separation and view shed will be reviewed. Board members have had a walk-through with the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service. The Board formed a Fox Theater subcommittee, consisting of board members Kahn, Kershaw and Muller.

Three properties were approved to initiate Landmark Designation and forward to the Planning Commission. They were **Alice Arts Center**, 1426 Alice St.; **Municipal Boathouse**, 1520 Lakeshore Dr.; and **Broadway Building**, 150 Frank Ogawa Plaza. For all three the owner/applicant was the City of Oakland. Status of **Oakland Technical High School** proposed rehabilitation: staff to forward a letter to the School Board regarding CEQA review. Status of **Arbor Villa Palm Trees**: The subcommittee to meet with the City tree specialist to determine if it is possible to plant additional trees to maintain the visual effect of the landmark designation.

March 14, 2005: Informational Presentation on "Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes" by Kimball Koch, Oakland Regional Office of the National Park Service. Status of **Oakland Technical**

High School (LM 85-212) proposed rehabilitation: The City sent letter to School Board regarding compliance with CEQA process. School Board has begun Initial Study to comply. They plan to repair, rather than replace, the windows.

Status of **Arbor Villa Palm Trees** (LM 77-573): The subcommittee met with the City arborist to look at possibilities for placement of additional trees at locations other than the two originally suggested. Other possibilities were determined. The surrounding neighborhood was invited to tonight's Informational Presentation on Cultural Landscapes

April 11, 2005: Informational Report: The legal representative for **Holy Redeemer Center**, 8945 Golf Links Road, requested a six-month extension. They are working with a potential buyer, a developer who is interested in rehabilitating the historic buildings on the site. The board granted a three-month extension with a right to extend an additional three months. At that three-month extension the Board will receive as much detail as can be provided, including the name of the developer and his intent for the site.

Design Review of proposed conversion of the **Pacific Coast Canning Company** warehouse, 1111-1199 Pine St., West Oakland, to residential lofts. Ms. Jean Liu Moon, the granddaughter of original owner Lew Hing, expressed pleasure about the transformation. The board recommended approval of the project.

Request for comment on the draft nomination of Ladies' Relief Society Children's Home/Studio National Register of Historic Places Nomination from the State of California, Office of Historic Preservation. The property is also known as **Studio One**. Board stated that the depth of research by Mr. English is astonishing. It voted unanimously to recommend that state historic preservation office send this nomination with a recommendation for approval to the Resources Commission.

Oakland Technical High School: Staff was directed to prepare comments on a Mitigated Negative Declaration/Initial Study.

May 9, 2005: The board commented on design changes to the **Cox Cadillac**

site, 230 Bay Place, involving rooftop parking, redesign of entry and modifications to the showroom.

Review of design of second- and third-story addition to the **Fox Oakland Theater and Building**. Phil Tagami and the architects gave presentations. The approval was contingent upon some design recommendations.

June 13, 2005: Design review of **2355 Broadway**, rehabilitation of a building that previously housed a car dealership, to consist of 24 condominiums above retail and a parking podium. Developer John Protopappas agreed to a couple of changes, including continued use of the existing doors on Broadway and modification to the side elevation.

Notice of Intent to Submit Landmark Application for **1966-68 and 1972 San Pablo Avenue** by owner. These Victorian structures are Potential Designated Historic Properties in an Area of Secondary Importance but slated for removal by Forest City. Archaeologists Anna Naruta and Kelly Fong pointed out their importance as part of an early Chinese settlement. Naomi Schiff suggested that they be relocated to the vacant corner at the ice rink parcel. The board recommended that Landmark Designation not proceed.

Building Permit submittal design development modifications for **Studio One** were reviewed. Various exterior materials and finishes were selected. ■

News

Continued from page 4

come. To review past issues of the *News* at the Oakland History Room (open seven days a week, hours vary), call 238-3222. Visitors can make an appointment to visit the Survey office by calling Betty Marvin at 238-6879.

Annalee Allen is a former OHA president and one of its early members. She writes a column on Oakland history for the Oakland Tribune, coordinates the city's Oakland Tours Program and is the author of Oakland from Arcadia Publishing's Postcard History Series. This book features postcards from the collection of Ed Clausen, retired Oakland-firefighter and current president of the Alameda County Historical Society, and will be in stores in September 2005. ■

Robbin' Hood: Takes from the poor, gives to the rich

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.

■ *Mein Gott! Ach du lieber Augustine!* As I presciently mentioned in the last issue, the legal case that came before the Supreme Court, *Kelo v. the City of New London* (04-0108), was finally decided. However, the resulting 5-4 decision (Stevens, Breyer, Souter, Ginsburg and Kennedy for the majority) caused apoplexy in conservatives and liberals alike. Who would have thought that Maxine Waters and Tom DeLay would agree on something? What was the case and how does it affect me, you ask? Well, here it is in an acorn: the city of New London, Connecticut, decided to use the power of eminent domain to take private property (Victorian homes and small businesses) and condemn the property for the public good. The NAACP, AARP and Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference sided with homeowner Susette Kelo, for the reason that minorities and the elderly are usually the adverse recipients of this urban renewal.

Now, personally, I don't have a problem with a local or state government condemning property if the resulting "public good" would be a highway, park, hospital, school,

or the like. But in New London, the city condemned the property to turn it over to a private development company. This company in turn would develop the property and thus generate higher taxes than those collected from the current owners, thus meeting the "public good" guidelines. So what kind of good is to come out of all of this? A hotel and an office for the pharmaceutical company Pfizer. This reverse Robin Hood scenario has generated a lot of talk, not only on the radio shows, but in the Washington, D.C. beltway where various bills are wending their ways through different committees. Writing for the minority, Justice O'Connor said, "The beneficiaries are likely to be those citizens with disproportionate influence and power in the political process, including large corporations and development firms." The soft-spoken Tom Delay said on the floor of the House of Representatives, "There is no reason your city council cannot kick you out of your house and give it to a wealthier family who will add on to the home and, therefore, pay



higher property taxes down the road." Was DeLay overstating his case? Could this happen to you?

Well, guess what? John Revelli learned that, yup, it's true all right, right here in Oakland. John's family had owned a tire shop in the 400 block of 20th Street since 1949. The City summarily evicted him (within a week of the ruling) for the Uptown project of private development company Forest City, to build market rate housing (usually 10%), which is funded by \$61 million in redevelopment funds. Where's my nitro? I'm comin' soon, 'Lizabeth!

■ On a more genteel note, a 1.5 acre Piedmont estate by the renowned architect Willis Polk has come on the market. Only three owners have occupied the home since it was built in 1912 and it consists of 8,328 square feet of living space with five bedrooms, five baths and two half baths. Polk was a favorite architect for the wealthy and also designed Filoli in Woodside and the Carolands in Hillsborough. Did I mention that it has one of the finest private gardens in the Bay Area with a swimming pool, terraced patios, lawns, marble benches, statues, boxwood hedges, a fountain, sundial and multiple flower gardens? Oh, I digress... The asking price: \$8,185,000. Presented by: The Grubb Company. ■

Calendar

UPCOMING EVENTS

1-6 p.m., Sept. 11: 21st annual Gatsby Picnic at Oakland's Dunsmuir House, presented by the Art Deco Society. View over 60 classic automobiles, dance to the vintage strains of the Royal Society Jazz Orchestra, and be charmed by the DecoBelles dance group. Costumes are required. Tickets are \$45-60 with box lunch available for \$20. For more information, call 415-982-3326 or email gatsbyinfo@artdecosociety.org.
9:30 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 17: Oakland League of Women Voters sponsors "Oakland's Waterfront: Where are we now, and where are we going?" with presentations on development, panel discussion on the future possibilities, and a brief walking tour. Meet at Jack

London Aquatic Center, Estuary Park, between Oak Street & 5th Avenue. Visit www.lwvoakland.org or call 834-7640.

9 a.m.-5 p.m., Oct. 8: Phil Bellman leads a driving and walking tour of Borax Smith sites in Western Nevada, a continuation of a previous tour. See page 10 for more information.

1-5 p.m., Oct. 23: Oakland Heritage Alliance presents its annual house tour, this year featuring Oakland's Haddon Hill neighborhood (see page six for more information). Come see 10 beautiful homes in short walking distance from each other and visit the Cleveland Cascade. Refreshments. Call 763-9218 for ticket info.

5:30-9 p.m., Friday, Oct. 28: Halloween at the Mansion. Flashlight tours of the haunted Pardee Home, an "autopsy room" in the cellar, a ghastly cupola crone, seasonal refreshments and more. For information and ticket prices, call 444-2187 or visit www.pardeehome.org.

This museum was once home to two mayors and one governor and is at 672 11th St.

TOURS AND EXHIBITS:

Wednesdays and Saturdays through October: Free downtown Oakland walking tours sponsored by the Oakland Tours Program and the City of Oakland's Marketing and Special Events Department. All tours begin at 10 a.m. and last approximately 90 minutes. For information, go to www.oaklandnet.com/walkingtours or call the 24-hour hotline, 238-3234.
Paramount Theatre, an art deco movie palace, offers \$1 tours at 10 a.m. on the first and third Saturday, 2025 Broadway. 893-2300.
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.



Tour historic Haddon Hill

By Allyson Quibell

The finest location in Oakland! Elevated yet warm and sheltered. Streets are 60 feet wide, made of superior quality oiled macadam, and follow the natural contour of the land. Many rare and beautiful trees have been planted. All the wires have been placed underground (the first neighborhood in the Bay Area to do so). Beautiful urns are placed at the intersection of the streets. Panoramic views of Lake Merritt and San Francisco.

—From *Oakland Tribune* advertisements (Aug. 27, 1920 and Sept. 3, 1920)

With accolades such as these, who wouldn't have been enticed to buy property in Lakemont (Haddon Hill) in 1920? The area was first subdivided as Boulevard Heights in 1893 and was later known as Peralta Heights early in the 20th century. The present streets and lots were laid out sometime before 1914, but most of the hillside lay bare until after World War I, when, in 1920, local real estate broker Fred T. Wood rechristened the tract Lakemont. Although about 70 percent of the neighborhood was developed between 1923 and 1928, there are, in fact, examples of houses constructed over the four decades following Wood's promotional efforts.

Today, Haddon Hill retains the desirable characteristics that drew would-be



Naomi Schiff

HENRY J. KAISER'S home is on the tour, above, as is the rehabbed Cleveland Cascade, right. The Cascade photograph appeared in the March 1931 issue of *American Landscape Architect*.

homeowners in the '20s and is still defined by the historic boundaries of underground utilities: from Cleveland to Hillgirt, and between the east side of Wesley and the west side of Athol. Houses range from bungalows on lower Kenwyn Road to the more spacious two-story homes of Radnor Road and on up to the grand houses and gardens of the 600 block of Haddon Road.

This year's OHA Fall House Tour is a unique opportunity to visit nearly a dozen Haddon Hill homes and learn more about their history and architecture. Tour co-chair Alison Finlay provided some pre-tour highlights: "a great Mediterranean-style house with a cactus garden; a cool in-fill Ranch home [a late 1950s addition to the neighborhood] with a flamingo theme; and a special sneak peak at the Henry J. Kaiser home, which is in the early stages of renovation and remodeling."

Also not to be missed is the Cleveland Cascade, which descends from Haddon Hill to the lake level. The Italian-inspired fountain was designed in 1923 by prominent landscape architect Howard Gilkey. A *San*



Courtesy Jim Ratliff

Francisco Chronicle article from March of that year described how water flowed "down over 20 concrete bowls, illuminated at night with various colored lights" The cascade fell into disrepair and was completely covered by vegetation during the later part of the 20th century, but it was excavated by members of the community in 2004.

Jim Ratliff, chair of the Friends of the Cleveland Cascade, explained that the City of Oakland allocated \$300,000 of Measure DD money for the cascade's restoration. That money is being saved for construction, while the community group is fundraising in the private sector to pay for the design phase.

"It's an exciting grassroots, neighborhood project," remarked Finlay. And she hopes the Haddon Hill tour will help raise awareness of the community's efforts. For more information on the project, and to find out how you can help, please visit www.clevelandcascade.org.

Tickets for the house tour, which happens 1–5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 23, are \$25 for OHA members, \$30 advance and \$35 on the day of the tour. Call 763-9218 to make reservations. ■

We still need volunteers!

Help us out with the Haddon Hill house tour for a two-hour shift and receive a free ticket to view all the homes! We need volunteers stationed at the various homes to protect property and direct guests, and people to staff the registration table and refreshments area. Please call Stacey Stern at 763-9218 to let her know you are available to help!

See a great rehab project? Let us know about it!

By Valerie Garry

It's that "PiP" time of year again, and we need your help in assessing what Oakland projects and people have made a difference for our city. More officially put, OHA seeks nominations for its 2005 Partners in Preservation Awards, which recognize outstanding achievements in historic preservation in Oakland. The awards honor Oakland citizens, organizations, projects, and programs whose works demonstrate a commitment to excellence in historic preservation.

Begun ten years ago, Partners in Preservation acknowledges the outstanding efforts of residents, property owners, architects, developers and organizations to enhance Oakland for all. It celebrates preservation projects that make us aware and proud of Oakland's culture and history. It rewards projects downtown and in the neighborhoods, architectural preservation and rehabilitation projects and ongoing cultural events.

PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION

- Increases public awareness of historic preservation
- Recognizes the efforts and contributions of homeowners, property owners, volunteers, organizations, and/or agencies to preserve Oakland's historic resources
- Honors civic, cultural and organizational projects and programs that contribute to the quality of life in Oakland
- Recognizes preservation projects of excellent quality
- Encourages organizations and individuals to restore and revitalize Oakland's historic homes, buildings, structures and neighborhoods, and to support sensitive adaptive reuse
- Serves to promote awareness of Oakland's historical heritage.

CATEGORIES OF ELIGIBILITY

- Architectural projects: These include restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive use projects that respect the original character of an historic structure. Also, appropriate new construction or infill projects in a historically sensitive site or designated district. Nominations may include residential, commercial, and industrial build-



Courtesy Jerri Holan

Award winner wins again! The architectural firm of Jerri Holan & Associates, AIA, won a California Preservation Foundation Award for its restoration of the 1926 Rock-ridge Masonic Lodge at 5440 College Ave. Jerri's project won a Partners in Preservation award from OHA last year.

ings, multiple-dwelling properties, cultural landscapes and maritime properties.

- Individuals: Those whose efforts, whether professional or volunteer, contribute to the preservation of Oakland's historic resources.
- Cultural projects or programs: Civic, cultural, neighborhood and environmental efforts that help preserve Oakland's cultural heritage and natural environment.
- Other: This category includes media campaigns, newsletters and publications, and websites that successfully promote historic preservation and/or serve as a catalyst for community and neighborhood action that preserves Oakland's historic and cultural resources.

JUDGING CRITERIA

- Projects and efforts that help preserve, restore, revitalize and celebrate Oakland's rich cultural history and its historic properties.
- Quality and degree of difficulty of the projects.
- Degree to which the projects or individuals serve as an example of excellence in historic preservation and influence others.
- Projects that successfully apply The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties shall be judged favorably.

- Applications for awards will be accepted only for activities completed within the last three years.

ENTRY GUIDELINES

Partners in Preservation is a great way to honor people who make Oakland a great place to live. We encourage you to contribute ideas and suggestions. If you have any questions about which category best describes a nominee, call us at 763-9218.

Nominations must be received on the official form (contact OHA for a copy) along with a packet that includes the following information:

- A brief typed statement, no longer than 500 words, that describes the project, program or individual being nominated and why the individual, project or program deserves recognition. Describe how an individual's efforts have contributed to preservation in Oakland. Please provide a photograph of the individual or group being nominated, if possible.
- The beginning and ending date of the project.
- Provide visual materials documenting the project (photographs, drawings):
- Project photos and slides should relate to the narrative, demonstrating "before" and "after" results.
- Architectural drawings or renderings must be reduced to 8.5" x 11" or 8.5" x 14", clearly labeled.
- Include a list of all principals or individuals responsible for projects and programs.

NOMINATION DEADLINE

Completed nomination packets for the 2005 Oakland Heritage Alliance Partners in Preservation Awards must be received no later than Friday, September 23, 2005.

Winners will be notified no later than October 21, 2005. November's Partners In Preservation Awards Ceremony honors awardees' contributions and provides us with a great occasion for a big celebration.

INQUIRIES

Questions? Please contact Oakland Heritage Alliance at (510) 763-9218 or email OHA@oaklandheritage.org. ■



Preservation Action Committee: it's our waterfront

By Naomi Schiff

An environmental impact report (EIR) for the Oak to Ninth project is imminent, and OHA will comment. This complex project presents many important questions; OHA members may want to attend work sessions and hearings. Good information sources will be www.waterfrontaction.org, www.oaklandnet.com and www.oakland-heritage.org. To obtain the EIR and to learn of related meetings, email Margaret Stanzone at mstanzone@oaklandnet.com.

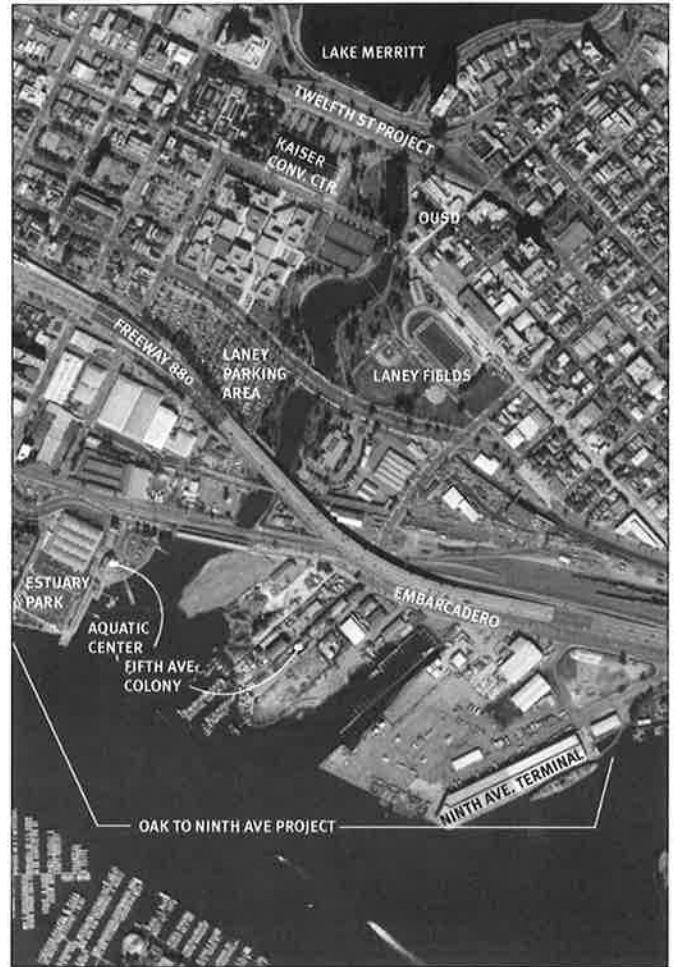
OHA believes that the Ninth Avenue Terminal, a historic break-bulk marine wharf and shed, should be preserved as a link to Oakland's colorful marine past and to highlight its architectural uniqueness. We have submitted a formal landmark application. With other groups, we are advocating an improved planning process; the public has not had a meaningful opportunity to discuss the best use of the 62 acres of public property. Along with questions about preservation, transit and affordable housing issues, the proposed acreage for public use is much reduced from the Estuary Policy Plan.

Many cities are taking advantage of large old industrial and marine structures. Examples include our neighbor Richmond, now rehabilitating its old Ford plant, and Arlington, Virginia's Torpedo Factory, a successful nonprofit-administered tourist attraction and beehive of activity, with working art studios, galleries, businesses and event spaces in a former munitions factory on the waterfront.

■ **Tuning into the channel:** Lake Merritt was once a slough with a wide opening to the estuary. This opening was intentionally narrowed to create "Lake" Merritt, and is now the site of Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center and parts of Laney College. Today the channel provides wildlife habitat, tidal access for the lake, and a connection with Oakland's early days. This map shows why Oaklanders may want to look at the channel afresh. At one end, rebuilding Twelfth Street as one of the biggest Measure DD projects will create new parkland, a bird marsh, a new bridge, a pedestrian overcrossing, and bike and pedestrian paths. The ambitious vision is to reduce

the obstacles in the channel by improving dams and hydrological design, providing excellent paths and views as one transits between estuary and Lake. However, there are some unpredictable forces in play: The Oakland Unified School District plans to sell the land where its administrative buildings (some historic) stand, perhaps to be replaced by large residential projects. Peralta Colleges are rumored to be investigating sale or lease of Laney's athletic fields. As noted above, the huge Oak to Ninth project is in the works. Because the access is rather chopped up, it is hard to think of this as a single area. The map shows how short the distance is from Lake to Estuary. Some farsighted planning could carry forward the Lake Merritt Master Plan and bring its vision toward the estuary. The Preservation Action Committee needs assistance in coming to grips with the historic and cultural aspects of the area. PAC meets the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, at noon, in the OHA office. Call 763-9218 for more information or send an email to info@oakland-heritage.org to request notification of upcoming agendas.

Discuss the Oakland waterfront on Saturday, Sept. 17, at 9:30 a.m., when Oakland League of Women Voters sponsors "Oakland's Waterfront: Where are we now, and where are we going?" with presentations on development, panel discussion on the future possibilities, and a brief walking tour. Meet at Jack London Aquatic Center, Estuary Park, between Oak Street & 5th Avenue. Visit www.lwvoakland.org or call 834-7640.



Adapted from USGS aerial photo

OUR FAVORITE CHANNEL: from the lake to the bay.

■ **Adaptive Reuse in L.A.: can it happen here?** Hamid Behdad, Los Angeles' adaptive reuse program director, intrigued an audience of OHA members, landmarks board members, city staff, architects, and citizens with a great slide show and discussion. In exchange for agreeing to do historically sensitive rehabilitation, L.A. owners can get streamlined approvals and assistance from a special team of representatives from various city departments. The building department, life safety, and public works staff expedite projects that preserve L.A.'s heritage and help bring blighted buildings back to economic life. The program has generated several thousand housing units

See **ACTION** on page 11



There's borax in that thar desert!

■ Join the "Borax" Smith Tour Part II, exploring links to Oakland history in Western Nevada

By Phil Bellman

This adventurous driving & walking tour is designed for those individuals who have participated in OHA's "Borax" Smith summer walking tour and want to know more. I'll be leading this tour, which will visit the original sites in Western Nevada where F.M. "Borax" Smith first found borax and developed his fledgling industry. The group will visit Teel's Marsh (site of Smith's original 1870's mill), Benton Hot Springs, and the ghost towns of Marietta and Candelaria. The tour sites include the borax mill operated by Smith 1873–1880, the Smith Brothers' store building, early narrow gauge railbeds, and many other significant historical structures from the period.

These sites curiously are very important to Oakland's early development. The Teel's Marsh mill fueled not only Borax Smith's initial wealth, but also the formation of an international borax industry. Smith's wealth and vision later influenced the development of many features of early

20th century Oakland and the Bay Area including a consolidated transportation system (the Key Route), the Realty Syndicate (which developed Montclair and Rockridge), philanthropic works at Mills College, the Home Club, and the Smith Trust for Orphan Girls. As a young man, Smith launched his remarkable career and fortune when he established a small borax mill at Teel's Marsh located in the rugged, mountainous desert east of Mono Lake—more than 160 miles from the nearest railroad. At these sites, Smith first used the now famous "20-mule-team" wagons, many years before they were associated with his later borax works in Death Valley.

The one-day tour will include 260 miles of driving (about 40 miles on dirt roads). The tour will start at Lee Vining, California (near Mono Lake) at 9 a.m., Saturday, Oct. 8 and finish at 5 p.m.

Excellent lodging and food are available in both Lee Vining and Bridgeport; camping is available in nearby Toiyabe National Forest. Tourgoers must arrange their own accommodations and transportation. Lee Vining and Bridgeport are



Phil Bellman

IT MAY NOT LOOK LIKE OAKLAND, but there is an historical connection. Visit Nevada with Phil Bellman and learn more about this shack which once belonged to Oakland's borax entrepreneur.

approximately 4½–5 hours driving time from the East Bay.

To sign up and/or get more information, contact me at 510-532-5788 or email philbellman@yahoo.com. Deadline for registration is September 30. Please include your name, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number. A list of directions and lodging options will be sent to you. A donation to OHA is requested. ■

Twenty-five years and looking forward

by Naomi Schiff, President

Our 25th year finds us full of plans and excitement. But in many ways we are still the organization that issued its first newsletter in Spring 1981 (see page 4).

OHA is reaching out in all directions to strengthen its programs. We are having a wonderful Walking Tours season, planning a great Haddon Hill house tour, and looking forward to Partners in Preservation—and our annual meeting—with high excitement.

You have probably noticed that the *News* appears more regularly, that more people join our tours, and that our views are being heard. Oakland is having some big preservation successes. The Altheim project is going forward in the Dimond district and the Oak Center Historic District is an amazing reality—yet

there is much more to be done. You can help by spreading the word, by giving a gift subscription, by volunteering, or by inviting a friend to an OHA event. People are discovering Oakland; help them to discover the group that is responsible for preserving our uniqueness.

OHA membership is still a bargain. The Board of Directors has approved a modest increase in membership rates, after holding the line for many years. We know our members will understand that in order to keep our organization strong, to attract new members, to provide excellent programs and to advocate effectively, we must pay the bills. Please consider renewing at a higher level this year; OHA's benefits will amply repay you for your generosity, and together we will help keep Oakland wonderful. ■

Welcome to our newest members!

The strength of any organization is in its membership. We welcome these most recent members with open arms.

Mary Bacchetti ♦ Susan Ciriclio ♦ Andrea & Geoff Galitz ♦ William & Kathleen Garcia Michael Gemmill ♦ Morton Jensen ♦ Darlene Johnson Carroll & Richard Steven Vigeant Kathleen Livermore ♦ Stephen & Elaine Markowitz ♦ Barbara McLaughlin ♦ Lee & Virginia Nelson ♦ Michael Owen & Libbie Hodas ♦ Diana Painter ♦ Peter Shelton & Javier Valencia ♦ Becky Urbano ♦ Ilene Weinreb ♦ Crab Cove Visitor Center—East Bay Regional Park District ♦ Carey & Co. Inc. Architecture ♦ HKIT Architects ♦ Omega Too, Inc. ♦ Oakland Convention & Visitors Bureau

A membership always makes a great gift for a friend—see the next page's membership coupon for a deal with Bay Nature magazine that makes the gift even sweeter!



Action

Continued from page 9

and has restored wonderful buildings. Projects vary in scale, age, and style. Could Oakland undertake something similar?

Some developers are already moving in that direction. Preservation Action Committee members saw a preview of plans for the former Saturn dealership on Broadway, soon to become mixed use with residential above commercial. Developer John Protopappas plans to retain the historic features of the 1913 Willis Polk building. And at its last meeting of the summer, the City Council approved plans to move forward with Phil Tagami's team to revive the Fox Oakland Theater.

■ **Council's been workin' on the railroad:** The Sixteenth and Wood Street Southern Pacific station development has won approval by the City Council. The hearing began with former Congressman Ron Dellums supporting the preservation of the entire train station and entreating the community to work together. The current version of the project requires the developer and community to come up with a plan that preserves the station, the baggage claim, and some of the interurban

platform, using city funds to pay for the baggage claim site. BUILD president Carol Galante has assembled consultants and promises a series of meetings soon. The same night, Lucy Lequin persuaded the council to approve historic status for buildings on Seventh Street; her presentation included film footage showing the rail history of the area and the Sixteenth Street Station.

■ **Oakland Tech:** The upheaval over the Oakland Technical High School modernization plan seems to have reached resolution. OUSD staff have agreed to restore the wooden double-hung windows of the landmark, all 550 of them. Persistent PTSA representative Daniel Brekke-Miesner, alumni, OHA members, and people from neighborhood groups will meet regularly with staff as work proceeds. Project manager Don Chew is a Tech graduate himself, and hopes are that efforts to complete the modernization efficiently will dovetail with treating the landmark building respectfully. ■

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PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

OHA News welcomes contributions: research projects large or small, historic photos and reports on preservation issues or events. Submissions may be sent to news@oakland-heritage.org.

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.

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A division at First Hebrew Congregation—intentionally

By Kathleen DiGiovanni

If you found yourself in downtown Oakland in 1896, you would have marveled at the sight of a synagogue on the move. The home of Oakland's First Hebrew Congregation journeyed from 13th and Clay to 12th and Castro that spring. This is the way the *Oakland Enquirer* described it: "Owing to its size it was found necessary to cut it in two and the rear portion was first moved and after it was placed in position on the present site the front half took up its journey, the motive power being a couple of undersized horses attached to capstans, thus illustrating the immense power secured by the proper adjustment of lever and pulley. As on both Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets are electric railway tracks it was found necessary to take the buildings down to Tenth and thence westward to Castro. While the work was going on throngs of people stopped daily in passing to watch its progress."

This was the congregation's second synagogue building. The first, built and dedicated in 1878, had stood at 14th and Franklin Streets until it was destroyed by fire in 1885. First Hebrew rebuilt after the fire on Clay Street between 12th and 13th. In 1886, Clay Street was leafy and residential, providing a pleasant locale for the new house of worship. The officers of the congregation commissioned a design by the prolific and locally prominent Charles F. Mau, who had also designed the earlier building. The new synagogue was of wood-frame construction in what contempo-

rary newspaper accounts described as "combining Byzantine and Gothic styles of architecture modified in accordance with modern requirements."

The structure measured 52 by 86 feet on the ground floor, with 110-foot corner towers rising to rounded domes. The sanctuary was on the second floor, seating 500, with a gallery for the choir and a new pipe organ from Sherman Clay. Over the doors and facing the altar was an imposing stained glass window. The ground floor was given over to classrooms, a kitchen, and assembly rooms. The cost of the project, including furnishings, was estimated at \$15,000. Dedication services on September 25, 1886, were described as "a notable gathering of eminent divines and prominent people from both sides of the bay." Rabbi M.S. Levy officiated at the dedication and at the end of his dedicatory prayer, lit the flame above the altar.

Seven years later, the panic of 1893 put the growing congregation into financial crisis and threatened ruin. A plan was conceived to sell the synagogue property as a way of averting disaster, and two years later congregation president Jules Abrahamson carried it through. As the decade had progressed, Oakland's growing business district overtook the synagogue, pro-



AN 1889 VIEW of the First Hebrew Congregation on Clay Street.

Courtesy Oakland History Room

viding a very valuable asset. The lot, which had been purchased for \$5,000 in 1885, was sold for \$27,500 in 1895. The congregation was thereby able to retire its debt, buy a larger lot on 12th Street, move the building and make some improvements to it, and have a nest egg of several thousand dollars left over. Re-dedication services took place on September 6, 1896, led by Rabbi Friedlander. Festivities were dampened by news of the sudden death of Jacob Letter, one of the founders of the congregation and its first president, who collapsed and died in one of the lower rooms of the synagogue only minutes before he was to have re-lit the altar flame.

The congregation remained in this building until 1914, when its present synagogue, Temple Sinai, was dedicated on 28th and Webster Streets. ■



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