

Old Folks' Home

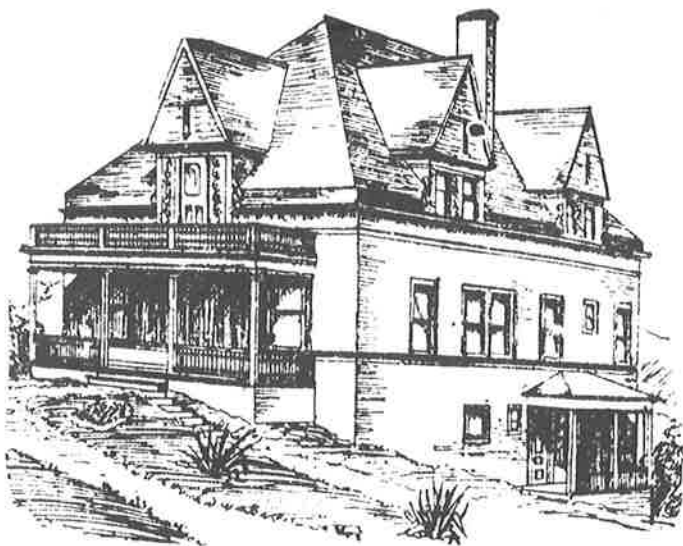
Black Oaklanders seem always to have had a flourishing civic culture of their own, largely separate from white society, and between 1890 and 1900 in particular they founded many churches, societies, lodges, clubs, and political organizations. Perhaps the most important non-religious institution to be established by blacks during this period was the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People.

Before World War II most white retirement homes in Oakland (as elsewhere) refused to admit black residents. Consequently, the burden of caring for black senior citizens fell upon friends and relatives. Those without friends or family often had no place to stay. Early in the 1890s, a group of black women became concerned about this plight of the aged, homeless members of their community, and in September 1892 they filed Articles of Incorporation for the purpose of establishing a black retirement home. The Old People's Home Association devoted considerable time and energy toward



Hettie B. Tilghman, an East Bay civic leader, was at one time treasurer of the Home.

(photo: East Bay Negro Historical Society)



Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People.

The Home in an early newspaper sketch, before it was built (Oakland History Room)

this ambitious goal, and within 5 years the Home had become a reality.

The Association elected officers and started a building fund. To raise money they sponsored bazaars, benefits, and social entertainments. The project had the solid support of the black community, and by 1895 the Association had \$1,000 in the treasury.

In 1897 George Montgomery, a successful white businessman, became interested in the retirement home plan. He and his wife Carrie had moved to California in 1890 and bought several acres of land in an unincorporated area near Mills College--now East Oakland--which Carrie had named "Beulah Heights."

Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People OF CALIFORNIA



BUELAH, CALIFORNIA
Established September 16, 1892

A business card pictures the Home with its 1905 Annex (Oakland History Room)

Devout Christians, the Montgomerys sponsored numerous humanitarian ventures. They built several buildings for charitable purposes in the Beulah Heights District. One still stands on the hillside, a huge Victorian structure called the "Home of Peace," a home for Pentecostal missionaries.

In 1897 George Montgomery donated a handsome plot of land to the Old Folks' Association, in the Beulah Heights District one block from Mills College. Located on Harrison Avenue (now Underwood), the site offered a picturesque view of the then rural countryside. This generous gift, with the \$4,000 they had already raised, enabled the Association to complete the project.

On August 22, 1897, the cornerstone for the Home was laid and 300 people gathered on the hill for the ceremony. G. W. Wilson, an officer of the black Odd Fellows Lodge, addressed the audience:

This day is a great and momentous one for the honor and glory of our

race. It marks the beginning of an institution which is the first of its kind in our State, and, indeed, west of the Rocky Mountains. When completed it will be a haven of peace and contentment for those of us whose lives are drawing toward an end. (Oakland Enquirer, 23 August, 1897, p.8)

Two months later the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored People was completed.

The two story Victorian building originally had 16 rooms. With the addition of an 8 room annex in 1905, the Home could accommodate 19 residents. All tenants were expected to adhere to the rules of the Home. Women were assigned tasks such as sewing and knitting, while the men were required to "cultivate the grounds and keep them in good order."

Although the Home charged \$500 for a lifetime membership, the institution had no difficulty finding tenants. During its 40 year history many well known black pioneers resided in the Home. Alvin A.

Coffey, an ex-slave who had made a fortune during the Gold Rush era, donated a large sum of money toward the completion of the Home and, according to the black historian Delilah Beasley, became the first resident. Dr. C. H. Duvalle, the founder of a nearby school for domestics, lived at the Home. Perhaps the most famous resident was Virginia ("Jenny") Prentiss, nursemaid to Oakland's renowned author, Jack London.

In 1905 a vivid description of the Home appeared in a black San Francisco newspaper. This article provides information about the interior of the home and the daily life of the tenants.

Facing a pretty boulevard in a beautiful part of the city, far removed from the noise and bustle of business and disturbed only by an occasional blast from the whistle of the fast-speeding locomotive or the dull clanging of the gong on the trolley-car in the distance, stands the Old Folks' Home, a monument to a race of people and a place of refuge for its children of the long ago who, having



Alvin A. Coffey, an early California pioneer and first resident of the Home. (photo: Society of California Pioneers)

advanced beyond the age of activity, patiently await the passing of time....

The Home, indeed, is the place for them to spend their remaining days. It is a comfortable house, large, spacious, inviting. In one corner of the parlor is a piano at which the artists of music and song may sit and render sweet melody to cheer the souls of those who once were young. The next is the sitting room and there they gather and tell again and again the experiences of their younger days....

Opening from the sitting room are several chambers wherein can be seen from a distance the snowy white coverings of the beds of the women....

Then there is the winding stairway to the floor above, where you will find the old men of the Home. Old men they are, shrunken of form and bent of figure and one does not now enjoy the blessing of sight....

(S. F. Pacific Appeal, 5 April 1902) ▶



Dr. William Whipple Purnell, one of Oakland's first black doctors, was the Home Physician. (photo: East Bay Negro Historical Society)

The operation of the Old Folks Home was regulated by a constitution which established a Board of Advisors and a Board of Directors. Only women were elected to the Board of Directors, whereas the Advisory Board consisted of men. Many prominent black Oaklanders served on these boards, including Elizabeth Brown, Hettie Tilghman, Mary Grasses, Armanda Stanford, and Captain William Shorey and his wife Julia. Dr. William W. Purnell, one of the first black doctors to practice in Oakland, held the position of "Home Physician."

The Old Folks' Home did not operate on a self-sustaining basis, and the Board of Directors sought funds and gifts from outside sources. Black clubs and churches held benefits and contributed to the Home. Individuals who wished to support the Home were asked to donate small items, such as linen, bedspreads, pillow cases, and towels. The Board sponsored fundraising events which became an additional source of income. White-owned businesses, including Capwell's and Kahn's, also provided financial assistance.

Three "auxiliary homes", actually private

residences, served as support facilities. The auxiliary homes periodically sponsored dinners, dances, and other fundraising affairs. A large staff of volunteers worked to make these activities a financial success.

The Home continued to prosper through the early 1930s. Many improvements were made to the building during this period, including the installation of a new roof, heating plant, and fire escape. In 1933 the rooms were redecorated and the Director, Elizabeth Brown, announced that "the Home is very comfortable now, and all seem to be happy." But the days of the Home were numbered.

The Old Folks' Home suffered a fatal decline during the late 1930s due to reduced revenues and an exodus of tenants. The Depression made it difficult for the Board to raise funds because most people had no money to donate to charity. In an attempt to fill the rooms the institution sometimes admitted tenants who could not pay the entrance fee, which resulted in a loss of revenue.

The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, ironically, probably sealed the fate of the Home. Since retired people now received a small income from the government, many tenants opted to leave the Home and live in a rented room. By 1938 only a few residents remained.

In response to this crisis the Board decided to sell the Underwood Avenue property and relocate to West Oakland in the hopes that the institution would be more likely to survive in a black neighborhood. On June 15, 1938, Mills College purchased the 40 year old building for \$13,000. When the Home closed in December 1938, a few tenants had to be evicted. Efforts to relocate the Home to West Oakland failed, and in 1940 the Old People's Home Association, having been in existence for almost 50 years, finally liquidated.

Mills College razed the building in 1939. No sign marks the vacant hillside lot where the Old Folks' Home once stood. Nevertheless, the institution should be remembered as a "powerful addition to the community," as well as a fine example of institution building in early black Oakland.

-- Don Hausler

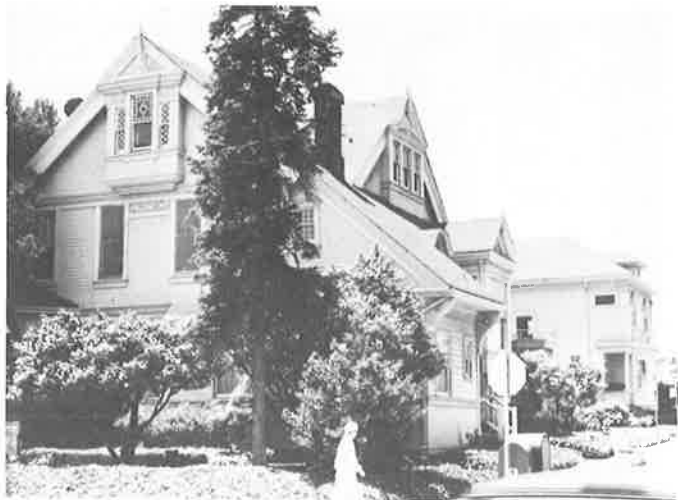


MRS. ELIZABETH BROWN
1920 **PRESIDENT** **1924**

Mrs. Elizabeth Brown, President of the Home from 1920 to the mid-1930s (Oakland History Room)

Oakland Briefing . . .

The "Oakland Briefing" column is prepared by the OHA Preservation Action Committee. If you would like to help monitor preservation issues in Oakland, please call Les Hausrath, 428-2820, or Carolyn Douthat, 763-5370.



Herrick House, 359 Hawthorne Avenue, threatened by medical office project (photo: Sergei Rej)

■ HERRICK HOUSE -- PILL HILL

An eight story medical office building has been approved by the Planning Commission for the southwest corner of Hawthorne Avenue and Webster Street on Pill Hill, the present site of the Herrick House, a Queen Anne/Eastern Shingle style house designed by architect Clinton Day. The project was approved with a negative declaration as to possible impact on architectural or historical resources after staff determined an EIR was not required. The negative declaration was challenged by the owners of a neighboring building, but the Planning Commission hearing has been postponed indefinitely. Oakland Heritage Alliance has written the Commission in support of the request for an EIR.

The office building project would involve demolition or removal of two structures: a post-earthquake Colonial Revival duplex and the Herrick House at 359 Hawthorne. The house was built in 1885 for Edward E. Herrick, a shipping merchant in San Francisco, for the substantial sum of

\$16,000, by Clinton Day, architect of the ill-fated City of Paris building in San Francisco. Day also designed Treadwell Hall on the CCAC campus, much of the pre-Hearst UC Berkeley campus, Stanford's Memorial Church, and San Francisco buildings including Gump's and the Wells Fargo bank on Market Street. His extensive commissions during the early 1900s have prompted one writer to label his office the Skidmore Owings & Merrill of its time.

■ DRAFT HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

A draft of the Historic Preservation Element for the city Comprehensive Plan will soon be presented for public review and comment, according to the City Planning Department. A proposed schedule and list of issues to be addressed in the element was provided to city departments and Oakland Heritage Alliance for review in late February, and a draft is now being prepared by City Planning in consultation with other city departments.

Initial consideration of preparation of the element came out of a recommendation by a joint meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board and the City Planning Commission in the spring of 1983. The recommendation stemmed in part from shared frustration over the difficulty of administering the existing landmarks law in the absence of policy guidelines, and the resulting polarization between private developers and the preservation community.

OHA feels that the major thrust of the element should be the development of clear preservation policies, and implementation through a combination of integrated controls and strong incentives. A comprehensive statement on preservation in Oakland will be of great assistance, not only to preservationists, but also to the city staff and commissions charged with implementing regulations, and to the owners and developers of significant properties.

OHA will be following the progress of the draft preservation element, and urges interested members to contact Christopher Buckley at City Planning (273-3941) to obtain a copy of the draft.



Central District Survey Complete: on to Adams Point

On July 1 the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey shipped off a large box to the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento, containing the latest and final instalment of the five-year-long Central District Survey.

During that time, every building on 280 blocks in the Central District (to 27th Street) was given at least a preliminary evaluation by survey staff. More than 1100 properties were researched, evaluated, reviewed, and given a final ranking. Buildings, groups, and districts which appeared eligible for the National Register were recorded on State Historic Resources Inventory Forms. For the Central District, 165 State Forms were prepared with a written description, statement of



25th Street Garage District, included in the Central District Survey (Survey photo)

significance, several photographs, and a map: 135 for individual properties, 15 for building groups, and 15 for historic districts. Included in the groups and districts were another 547 properties receiving detailed briefer coverage.

Copies of the completed forms, including the 15 near-book-length districts, can now be consulted at the Oakland History Room and at the Survey office in the City Planning Department (6th floor, City Hall). The Survey office also has permanent research files on buildings surveyed but not written up on State Forms.

Also submitted were a list of architects so far identified as active in Oakland, with preliminary rankings of their work; the research and evaluation forms which the survey has refined over the years; and the recent CDDP consultant's working paper "Historical and Architectural Resources," the first outside report to make systematic use of the survey's findings as a planning tool. The survey has been, and continues to be, partially funded under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 through the California State Office of Historic Preservation.

Work completed during this grant period also included the preliminary field survey of all three study areas of Adams



Financial Center Building, 14th & Franklin Streets (Reed & Corlett, 1928) in the Downtown District (1940s postcard)



Point, and research on Area 1. Area 1 files will now undergo evaluation to identify National Register-eligible buildings and districts, while research begins on Area 2. Area 2, from Van Buren to the lake, contains the Grand Avenue commercial strip, the astonishing Bellevue-Statens and other luxury lakeside apartments, as well as the substantial early-20th century homes characteristic of the neighborhood as a whole.

This is a good time to get involved in the survey--Area 1 has done the exploratory work in the Adams Point sources, and the survey has developed a systematic, quasi-programmed set of research forms to guide you through the detective work of finding the date, early owners, and significance of a building. Most of this work is done at the Oakland History Room, which is open Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons as well as Tues.-Fri. afternoons; for people with time available during the day, there is also work to be done in the building permits at City Hall. Volunteers are also needed to take photographs and building descriptions in the field. Survey staff and experienced volunteers can meet you at the Oakland History Room and show you the ropes, or if there is enough (simultaneous) interest a formal training session could be scheduled.

Call the Survey office to turn yourself in--273-3941. Coordinator Gary Knecht is usually there Tuesday mornings and Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday afternoons.



Bellevue-Statens Apartments (H.C. Baumann, 1929) in Adams Point (Survey photo)

City Landmarks Board Actions

The **Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board** meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 3:30pm in Room 211, City Hall. Meetings are open to the public. Designation of city landmarks is recommended by the Board to the City Planning Commission and City Council. Landmarks are subject to a 240-day delay in issuance of demolition permits and require design review by City Planning staff for exterior alterations. Final approval or denial of alterations is determined by the Board. Over one hundred landmarks have been designated in the ten years since the Board was created.

FEBRUARY

Approved plans to resume work on the Victorian Row (Old Oakland) project, including scaffolding the facades of the North Delger Block, the South Delger Block, the Ross House and Gladstone (Californian) for removal of paint from all masonry, wood, sheet metal, and cast iron or carved ornamentation; removal of ornamentation requiring replacement or needed for duplication; examination of walls and bays for structural deterioration; removal of stucco from the Leimert Building to reveal its multi-color brick masonry; recleaning of the Wilcox, Studio and Sanford (Pearl Oyster House) and removal of commercial signals and fire escapes from the upper floors and non-original storefront material from the ground floor of the Wilcox (items previously approved by the Board). Approved repainting of the Asa White House (604 East 17th Street). Heard arguments opposing Landmark designation of the Claremont Resort Hotel, presented by owner Harold Schnitzer and his attorney Charles Seaman. Approved Landmark designation resolutions for the U.S.S. Potomac and the "Necklace of Lights" around Lake Merritt. Were informed by Richard Lloyd, Board Secretary, that Mitch Hardin, an Oakland Community Development Corporation consultant had been appointed by the Mayor to fill the vacant seat on the Board. Arranged to tour the area of a possible Oak Center Victorian Historic District between 16th and 21st Streets, between Filbert and Myrtle. ▶

MARCH

Tabled indefinitely the landmark resolution designating the Claremont Resort Hotel (see February) because of owner's opposition. Discussed possible boundaries for proposed Oak Center Historic District; voted to send letters of inquiry pertaining to the proposed designation to property owners and residents within the area. Discussed feasibility of a joint meeting of the Board and the Planning Commission at a later date.

APRIL

Approved a draft for a letter to property owners in the proposed Oak Center Historic District (boundaries yet to be determined), explaining the intent of the designation, the process of design review and other pertinent factors. Discussed the possibility of a Board meeting in that neighborhood. Upon request of the owner, agreed to an additional six-month maximum delay before taking action on the landmark designation of the Broadway Building, 1401-1419 Broadway. Agreed to delay action on the Leamington Hotel Building until owner's interest has been determined.

MAY

Approved designation of the Oakland Title Insurance Guaranty Co. Building (1447-59 Franklin St.; Maury I. Diggs, 1921-2), including approval in principle of drawings by Patrick McGrew for three additional stories, which might surmount the building at a later date. Owner John Ritchie explained that the building was



14th and Broadway, Broadway Building (Llewellyn B. Dutton, 1907-08) at center (1930s postcard)

originally designed to support additional stories, and that this would keep the building viable and visible in today's highrise downtown.

Discussed request from Brooklyn Neighborhood Association to consider 1317-45 Fruitvale Avenue for landmark status (see Winter 1985 OHA News). No Association representative appeared; Board members themselves did not feel the architecture of the buildings justified designation.

Heard presentation by Students' Historical Landmark Committee of Oakland Technical High School (4351 Broadway; John J. Donovan, 1913-14), seeking landmark status for their school. They were also applying for National Register and State Historic Landmark, and had already obtained consent of the School Board. Board voted unanimously to support designation of Oakland Tech, and to make all possible efforts to expedite the matter before graduation in June.

Were informed that Highland Hospital has been officially determined eligible for the National Register.

JUNE

Reviewed and approved removal of various rear outbuildings in the Old Oakland project block bounded by 8th, 9th, Washington and Broadway.

Heard initial neighborhood responses to the possible Oak Center Historic District, a fine concentration of 19th century homes from the railroad boom era bounded roughly by 16th, 21st, Filbert, and Myrtle. Board explained that designation would encourage but not require restoration; exterior alterations would be subject to design review which would take time but not cost money; rehab grants or loans did not currently exist, but they would become eligible to use the Historic Building Code. Discussed district boundaries--what to do about non-contributing buildings inside and worthy buildings with interested owners outside the boundaries presently proposed. Scheduled neighborhood meeting for July 27.

Agreed to write the Department of the Interior supporting appeal by owners of United Iron Works, who were being denied rehab tax credits after the brick facade

of the building was accidentally sand-blasted. Owners explained that they were working with a materials conservator to treat the brick, which was intended to be painted anyway.

Discussed proposals to move the Hoover House, Bamford House, and houses on Pill Hill to Preservation Park: would Preservation Park want them, and should they leave their historic neighborhoods?

Noted that owner of the White Building (327-49 15th St.; Clay Burrell, 1924-25) was interested in landmarking it, and that the recently purchased Safeway Office and Warehouse (5701-59 E. 14th St.) was timely.

Heard that Oakland Tech nomination had been approved by Planning Commission and City Council--good publicity for the landmarks program.

Elected officers for 1985-86: David Hoard chair, Jean Spees vice-chair.



Oakland Technical High School, new city landmark (photo: Lawrence Ballard)



Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, 2333 Harrison (Wm. Arthur Newman, 1915), in the North Central survey district (Survey photo)

The following Landmark designations have recently been given final approval by the City Council: 23-27 Home Place West (Josephine), 1101-05 McKinley (Grace), 3001 Park Blvd. (Evelyn), 2901 Park Blvd. (Lodge) (all part of the Mary R. Smith Trust Cottages, see Winter 1985 OHA News); the U.S.S. Potomac and the U.S. Post Office --Main (201 13th Street).

New OHA Members

The Officers and Board of Directors of **Oakland Heritage Alliance** wish to welcome and thank all those concerned citizens who have shown their interest in Oakland's history and preservation by joining **OHA**. **OHA's** new members (February through June 1985) are as follows:

Frances Adler, Maret/Hugh Bartlett, Steve/Terry Beck, Carolyn Boggs, Sara Holmes Boutelle, Andrew Bowen, Arthur Breed, Jr., Paul/Katrina Brekke-Miesner, Burns Cadwalader, Yvonne Cam, Donna Carvalho, John Tamor Citron, Miriam Cooper, Marianne Daft, Mary Darrow, Mary E. DeNike, Florence Dennis, Nancy Dolphin, William Donnelly, Fillmore Eisenmayer, Jane Felt, Doris Flanigon, Robert Galitzen/Lenore Weiss, Elwood Gerrits, Patricia Ana Gordon, Elana Hall, Daryl Halverson, Jonathan L. Harris, William Hinkamp, Cindy Hoch, Home Savings of America (Sponsor), Brian Hourican/Erik Martin, Capt. George O. Howson, Sandra Jaeger, Glen Wm. Jarvis, Ann/Deibert Johnson, Robert Kahn, Robert Kaplan, Darlene Okamoto Kelly, Beatrice G. Kempf, Ruth Kleinman, Jennifer Landess, Lena T. Lewis, Theodore Lyman, Xandra Malandra, Dolly Marshall, Michael Marston, Ann Middleton, Masaye Nakamura, H.M. Newman, Betty Jane Reiss, Diane Resek, Glenn Rice, Charles/Verna Roberts, Paul Roberts, Beatrice Rosenthal, Carol Serkes, Margery Joy Service, Maura Smith, Jonn Spradlin, Dr. Catherine Stous, Dalegor Wladyslaw Suchecki, Susan Thompson, Betty Toth, Orlene Tschantz, Jeff Wetmore, Judith Williams, Mabel McCamman Winkelman, John/Renate Woodbury, Lawrence Yee, Edna Zeiser.



OHA Calendar

The OHA Calendar lists events, activities, and meetings related to history and preservation that may be of interest to OHA members. To submit items for listings, contact Dean Yabuki, 644 Longridge Road, Oakland, CA 94610, 832-5355.

Upcoming Activities

Sat 10 August, 1:30-3 pm

OHA's next program, a Port of Oakland boat tour and floating book-signing party with Charles Wollenberg, author and maritime historian. Harbor Tour Dock, Jack London Square, foot of Broadway: \$5 OHA members, \$7 non-members. Contact Doug Brookes, 530-3638.



This will be followed, on land, by the annual late-summer walking tour series--reserve your week-ends in late August and September, and watch for details.



Art Deco Society of California announces an active summer schedule of events: highlights are

Sun.28 July, Marina District Walking Tour with Sharon Moore, 1:30, Chestnut & Fillmore, \$2/\$3.50

Sat. 3 August, 4-9 pm, Dunsmuir House

A Gatsby Summer Affair--dance, car show, picnic, entertainment; period costume; \$25

Wed.21 August, 7:30, Maritime Museum tour & slide lecture by Michael Crowe; \$1 ADSC/\$2 gen.

Sun.25 August, 1:30-3:30, Downtown Oakland Walking Tour with Michael Crowe, cosponsored by OHA. 13th & Broadway; \$2/\$3.50

Sun. 8 September, 1:30-3:30, Uptown Oakland Art Deco Terra Cotta Walking Tour, Sharon Moore & Dean Yabuki; 1718 Telegraph; \$2/\$3.50

Wed.11 September, 7:30 pm, SF JCC, 3200 California, Third Annual Art Deco Fashion Show; \$5/\$10

For information on all ADSC events, call (415) 552-DECO.

Th-Sat, Sep. 5-7

Association for Preservation Technology annual conference, Palace Hotel, San Francisco: "Technology of Systems & the Conservation of Materials," sessions on concrete, terra cotta, etc.

Preceded by---

Mon-Wed, Sep. 2-4, APT Professional Training Courses: Concrete, Paint Analysis, Seismic Retrofit, Maritime Preservation.

Info.: APT '85 Conference, & Bruce Judd, Pier 9, The Embarcadero, SF 94111, (415)421-1680.

Sun.29 September, Preservation Fair, Camron-Stanford House, 1418 Lakeside Drive at 14th Street, 836-1976.

Sept., 16-day tour: architects/urban designers Ignacio San Martin and Teresa Sevilla offer a tour of Spain, its architecture, and professionals active in its preservation and future development. For information contact Eugenio Ovalle of Alta Travel, 870 Market St., Suite 784, SF; 777-1307.

Sun 6 October, 10-4

Organization of Women Architects, first annual tour of residences by women architects: Marin County, Napa Valley reception at home of Beverly Willis, AIA. Admission approx. \$25, benefits scholarship fund. Info., reservations, or to volunteer as docent, 548-5009/845-2345 (Cindy Bustamante) or OWA, Box 26570, SF 94126, (415)550-6051.

Regularly Scheduled Tours

Oakland Tours Program. These regularly scheduled free walking tours include Old Oakland, City Center, Uptown to the Lake, Preservation Park, Chinatown, and Port of Oakland, and are offered from April through October. For further information, contact Tricia Freitas, Oakland Tours, 273-3234.

Camron-Stanford House. Free tours are offered Wednesdays 11am-4pm and Sundays 1-4pm. 1418 Lakeside Drive at 14th Street, Oakland, 836-1976.

Paramount Theatre. Tours are offered the 1st & 3rd Saturday of the month, 10am-Noon. 2025 Broadway at 21st Street, Oakland. \$1.00. Meet promptly at the box office entrance on 21st St, 893-2300.

Dunsmuir House. Regularly scheduled Sunday house tours \$3. 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland. 562-7588.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

Oakland Heritage Alliance. OHA Board of Directors meets on the 1st Monday of the month, 7:30pm. For agenda and location, please contact Ed Phillips, President, 465-9829. OHA Preservation Action Committee meets on the 3rd Monday of the month, 7:30pm. For location and agenda, please contact Carolyn Douthat, 763-5370. Meetings are open to all interested persons.



NEW! OHA Publications Committee, brainstorming on a project currently thought of as The Broadway Book!, meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday evenings--researchers, the publications-wise, and other interested participants call Laura Niebling, 658-1933, for time, place, and sales talk.



Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. The board usually meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, 3:30pm, City Hall, Room 221, Washington & 14th Sts, Oakland. For agenda and dates, contact Oakland City Planning Department, 273-3941.

Oakland City Planning Commission. The commission usually meets every other Wednesday, 3:30pm, City Hall, Room 115, Washington & 14th Sts, Oakland. For agenda and dates, contact Oakland City Planning Dept, 273-3941.

Oakland City Council. The council meets every Tuesday evening, 7:30pm, City Hall, Council Chambers, Washington & 14th Sts, Oakland. For agenda and dates, contact Oakland City Clerk, 273-3611.

Oakland Design Advocates. ODA meets on the 2nd Wednesday morning of the month, 7:30am, Lake Merritt Coffee Shop (formerly Tom Lovely's Restaurant), 336 Grand Avenue, Oakland. For agenda and dates, contact ODA, 893-6834.



Oakland Heritage Alliance News

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Betty Marvin, Leslie Flint



OHA News welcomes contributions--large or small research projects, historic photos, reports on preservation-related events, announcements, opinion, what have you. Contact Betty Marvin (845-6591, 273-3941, 849-1959) or Dean Yabuki (832-5355).

Oakland Heritage Alliance

5569 Lawton Avenue, Oakland, CA 94618

Oakland Heritage Alliance, a California nonprofit corporation since 1980, was formed to bring together community groups and individuals sharing an interest in the history of Oakland, and in the preservation and conservation of the city's archaeological, architectural, cultural, environmental, and historical resources. Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible.

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Oakland Heritage Alliance, 5569 Lawton Avenue, Oakland, California 94618

JOIN OHA TODAY! Your annual tax-deductible membership dues include the OHA News and announcements of all OHA activities. Additional contributions and your active participation will make OHA a more effective organization.

Name _____ New Renewal

Address _____ Change of Address only

City, Zip _____ \$5 Senior/student/limited income (1 vote)

Phone Numbers (H) _____ (W) _____ \$10 Individual (1 vote)

I would like to serve on the following committee(s): Membership Programs \$15 Family (2 votes)

OHA News Publicity Landmark Nominations Landmark Assistance \$25 Organization (1 vote)

Preservation Action Summer Tours Development Fund Raising other \$100 Sponsor (1 vote)

\$ _____ Additional contribution

Oakland History Notes

Whitthorne & Swan's

In the era of trollies, flappers and bathtub gin, the Whitthorne and Swan department store was the bargain shopper's nirvana. Located on the west side of Washington Street between 10th and 11th Streets, the facility offered "dependable dry goods for less", "staple standard merchandise under-priced," and assured one and all that it was "Oakland's store that undersells."

Beginning life as Hale Bros. dry goods in 1906, the store prospered and was acquired by Mr. William Whitthorne in 1916, who crowned his entrepreneurial success with a new, three-story concrete building in 1926. Upon his death in 1940, the Oakland Tribune lamented him as "an anomaly" among modern, remote executives. "With him the customer was not only right, but in most instances he knew him personally." He was a familiar figure in his store and was not above selling his own wares during rush hours.

After his demise, the building reverted to Hale Bros. When, in January of 1963, the store rang its last sale, many were saddened by the passing of a familiar and



Whitthorne and Swan, c. 1928
(Photo: Oakland History Room)

friendly landmark. "It's going to seem strange," remarked one dedicated shopper upon its closing, "but I guess things have to change. I've been stopping in here all my life and I moved here in 1897."

Today the site of Whitthorne and Swan is occupied by the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

--William Sturm

Oakland Heritage Alliance
5569 Lawton Avenue
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