

## William Elmer Keeton & the Oakland Colored Chorus

### Musical Pioneers of the WPA Era



Keeton's WPA chorus in 1935, with the Alameda-built organ at First A.M.E. Church (East Bay Negro Historical Society)

Just over fifty years ago W. Elmer Keeton and the Oakland Colored Chorus marked a first for black Oakland at the Alcazar Theater in San Francisco. In a special report dated August 16, 1937, Harle Jervis, State Director, Federal Music Project, wrote:

"The presentation of this group marked an innovation in the Alcazar series which usually features the San Francisco Federal Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Keeton, besides directing the chorus, accompanied the baritone soloist, Marcus Hall, who sang two groups of songs. Some 550 followers of the Federal Music Project (FMP) series at the Alcazar Theater attended this concert. The usual admission of 40c and 25c was charged."

What this new audience learned--and Oak-

landers already knew--was that out of the black churches and music studios of Oakland had arisen a professional chorus of classical musicians, part of the WPA-sponsored renaissance of American arts during the Great Depression.

The Oakland Colored Chorus, under the WPA Federal Arts Project, was unusual in that it was locally initiated, and recruited mainly from members of the East Bay black community who were professional and amateur singers. It continued in existence after the demise of the WPA, as a leading presenter of choral music to Northern California audiences, illuminating both the achievements of black



Coloured Choral of the  
Federal Music Project of Oakland  
Elmer Keeton, Accompanist and Arranger  
Marcus Hall, Baritone Soloist

Monday, August 16th, 8:20 P. M.  
ALCAZAR THEATRE

## PROGRAM

- I. Theme--  
a. Couldn't hear nobody Pray  
b. Rain Massa Jesus  
c. Ride, O King
- CHORAL
- II.  
a. Gia il sole dal Gange . . . . . Scarlelli  
b. Du bist die Ruh . . . . . Schubert  
c. Vision Fugitive (Herodiade) . . . . . Massenet  
MARCUS HALL  
ELMER KEETON at the Piano
- III.  
a. Crucifixion  
b. Deep River  
c. Peter, Go tinga dem bells  
d. Look away in de Heav'n  
CHORAL
- Intermission
- IV.  
a. I attempt from Love's sickness to fly . . . . . Purcell  
b. I will go with my Father a ploughin' . . . . . Zutter  
c. An old Carol . . . . . Zutter  
d. I Love Life . . . . . Manna-Zucca  
MARCUS HALL
- V.  
a. Little David play on your Harp  
b. Old Man River . . . . . Jerome Kern  
c. Hallelu  
CHORAL

Note--The spirituals are sung a capella - arranged by Elmer Keeton

Presented by the Federal Music Project of the Works Progress Administration  
Dr. Nicolai Sabotchi, National Director     Miss Harle Jerni, State director  
Dr. Alfred Hart, Bay Region director



William Elmer Keeton (1882-1947) raised musical standards for Oakland's black community, founded professional chorus under the WPA (Oakland History Room)



Marcus Hall (1904-1977), above, was chorus's classical baritone soloist. Center, program for 1937 WPA concert in San Francisco (EBNHS, OHR)

performers in the European-American classical tradition, and the riches of the African-American tradition in Keeton's own a capella arrangements of spirituals.

Today Oakland's historic role as a jazz and blues center is well known. The Keeton Chorus, growing out of the same improvement-minded culture as the Beulah and Fannie Wall Homes (OHA News, Spring 1985, Summer 1986), also deserves to be remembered for putting black Oakland on the wider musical map.

William Elmer Keeton was born February 14, 1882, in Rolla, Missouri. His father, Rev. Calvin M. Keeton, was a District Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His mother, Elizabeth, was a member of a prominent central Missouri family.

Young Keeton's father planned for him to study medicine but instead he studied music at Northwestern University, earning a Doctorate with honors. From the start he had an unusual determination spurred by an advanced outlook on the musical profession.

From college Elmer enlisted in the 9th Cavalry at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, and became band master. On his return to St. Louis he became organist for the Berea Presbyterian Church and Saint's Protestant Episcopal Church. He achieved tremendous popularity during his brief career there, and began to dream of wider horizons.

In 1921, he left for California. It was said at the time that there were many beautiful cities in the United States, but none more beautiful than Oakland, and only a few which responded so wholly to the inspiration of the artist. So the patronage of music brought Keeton and a goodly number of performers to Oakland. Once there, like most young musicians in 1921, he was convinced that the road to success lay through a music studio and other performances.

Accordingly, in October of that year he opened his first Studio of Music at 1364 9th Street. He advertised in the Western Outlook, offering piano, organ, theory, harmony, counterpoint, form, analysis, history, composition, and instrumentation.

Later Keeton's Music Academy was located at at 887 33rd Street, and at 1058 63rd. In July 1928 he joined with like-minded S.E. Boucree to establish the Keeton-Boucree Art Studio at 8th and West Streets. Within a short time these two visionaries were recognized throughout the Bay Area for training in choral music, piano, organ, aesthetic dancing, and concert performances of opera. As Mrs. Elsie Rumford recalls, "Just about everybody was a student of Keeton."

Nationally, this was the period of the Harlem Renaissance, with blacks making great strides in all the arts. In music, Roland



Hayes was breaking the color bar as a classical concert singer. This inspiration was felt throughout the country.

Black music students eagerly sought opportunities for study and performing experience. They participated in competitions, sang in church choirs and local choral organizations and gave recitals in churches and schools. Professor Keeton, or "Fess" as he was called by his students, held recitals three nights a week, wrote music for the programs, and so that his students might compete at the highest levels, bestowed awards upon them. In 1924, Julia Laurence received a Gold Medal, Irene Sears a Silver Medal, Thelma Turban a Scholarship Card, and a Special Scholarship for pipe organ was given to Maxine Blackburn.

Delilah Beasley's columns provide a record of some of the events where Keeton displayed his and his students' musical talents. In 1923 he directed the Etude Musical Club in a concert of spirituals from Hale's broadcasting station in San Francisco, the first radio concert of its kind on the Pacific Coast. His Muse Art Club rendered a light opera in the parish house of St. Augustine's Church. He worked earnestly through public recitals to raise the musical standard of both pupils and public. He favored unaccompanied vocal ensembles, unusual at the time and an excellent vehicle for displaying the singers' skill and the exciting harmonies.

While Keeton was finding his place in Oakland's society, he accepted the position of organist and choir director for the First African Methodist Episcopal Church (First AME), at that time on 15th Street, and St. Augustine Protestant Episcopal Church. He directed a Girls Choir of 40 young people from First AME, Oakland Baptist, Beth Eden Baptist, Cooper AME Zion, St. Augustine's, Taylor Memorial ME, Parks Chapel AME, and other prominent churches. He was also organist at the Lincoln Theater on Seventh Street.

When he arrived there was no pipe organ at First AME. Under his leadership an organ committee and a finance committee held musical teas and dinners and worked to have the organ in place in time for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs convention in Oakland in the summer of 1926. On Sunday, July 11, 1926, at the 10:45 service, the \$8000 pipe organ built by F.W. Smith and Son of Alameda was unveiled, and a triumphant week of musical celebrations ensued.

The following year, Keeton presented singers from his choirs in Friedrich Von Flotow's 1847 Vienna court opera Martha. Keeton's all-black production at First AME starred Oaklanders Jerome Swanigan, Taylor Davis, Florida Mouro, Edna Lancaster, and Wilbert Baranco--artists whose "day jobs" ranged from chauffeur to minister. Lillian Jeter assisted Keeton as dramatic director. Delilah Beasley's Tribune column noted the production. Many enthusiasts saw the three-night grand opera presentation as a singular opportunity to project musical competence and achievement before the public, both black and white. This idea was important to the outspoken Keeton and his associates.

Indeed there were those who believed that in this rich and achieving city they were capable of anything. In 1930 Keeton's student Mary R. Miller organized a spiritual quartet said to be the first ensemble of its kind, which performed on radio station KFWM. The Oakland Independent added that the group was heard every Thursday evening from 10 to 11 on "Keeton's Brown Variety Hour."

But the 1930s ushered in a period of gloom for the majority of black artists. As the Great Depression worsened, artists found themselves competing with unskilled laborers for manual jobs. After Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1933 the national government launched the New Deal to achieve relief, recovery, and reform. In September 1935, \$5 billion was allocated to the WPA. Of this a minute but significant portion--less than 1%--was devoted to the arts.

Within three months the Federal Theater, Music, Art, and Writers' Projects emerged as part of a white-collar division of the WPA. In California some 23,000 men and women were certified in the professional project. These projects broke new ground in public policy and represented the first major effort to deal with unemployment among creative artists and performers, and to bring theater and music to the culturally neglected.

The music unit had as one of its special aims the employing of trained musicians in assignments that would allow them to preserve their skills. Instrumentalists were organized into bands and orchestras, singers were placed in choruses and opera groups, music teachers were given classes of children and adults to train.

In late 1935 Keeton approached the local



Members of Keeton's Oakland Colored Chorus in Run, Little Chillun, Federal Theater/Music Project production at the Alcazar Theater, 1939.

(East Bay Negro Historical Society)

WPA center about becoming part of the Music Project, and was accepted because he could prove that he had trained musicians able to pass the tests to get into the project.

In the WPA projects artistic employment suddenly became available on a large scale to other than whites. According to Marion Davis Hall, a member of Keeton's Colored Chorus, "the project was an experience few colored people could have had at that time." Blacks for the first time could learn stage management, lighting, and other backstage skills, closed to them in the commercial theater because of white union objections. Even black-owned theaters had to use white stagehands. In colored movie or vaudeville houses, only white operators could run projectors and spotlights. But blacks used all these skills in the federal projects.

So Keeton and his secretary Mary Small gathered together musicians who studied, rehearsed, and made music their life's work. In one short year he fashioned a choral group of five into a full-bloom group of sixty of the area's best singers, including Ada Larkin, Marcus Hall, Arnold Baranco, Genetta Yates, Margaret Swanigan, Joseph James, Viola Hansen Lee, Shirley Williams, Mary Miller, Lois Small, Pearl Garrett, Mary R. Caldwell, Mary E. Dunçan, Justitia Davis, Marion Davis Hall, Roy Blackburn, and pianist Maxine Blackburn.

The group made a name early on for explor-

ing old and new American works. Keeton said later, "Our speciality is spirituals, which we present in a new view. I write the tunes and dress them in a little different clothing using modern harmonies and modern rhythms without destroying the sentiment. We organized in 1936, and have presented 150 concerts. We have received fan mail from all over the country in regard to our work."

Chorus members assembled 5 days a week at the Masonic Temple. They were paid \$89.70 to \$94 a month, then an adequate wage for 130 hours. They were not "relief" clients in any sense of the word. They pitched in without the least feeling that in accepting WPA money they were demeaning themselves. The arts projects won wide acceptance because they insisted on professional competence, and represented the first community use of artists on a large scale for the enjoyment and cultural benefit of the people. Participants had a sense of shared history and shared values and aspirations. They were glad to work for the WPA.

The Webster Little Theater at 1608 Webster Street in Oakland was the scene of the first public concert of the Oakland Colored Chorus on August 10, 1936. The program was Keeton's trademark format of a capella spirituals by the chorus, alternating with lieder sung by Marcus Hall and classical piano solos by Eugene Gash, concluding with the chorus in the Quartet from Rigoletto. They were

equally comfortable singing Negro spirituals and opera. This was Keeton's musical credo.

Ten days later, the Federal Music Project presented its Oakland choral groups at the Oakland Auditorium Theater (now Calvin Simmons Theater). The program was one of many Keeton shared with conductor John Fuerbringer's Choral Ensemble, a white group. Other milestones were an Oakland Auditorium concert on Washington's Birthday 1938, when the Chorus appeared with noted black composer William Grant Still in his ballet suite "Lenox Avenue," and the "Midsummer Musical" at Stern Grove that year, bringing new sonorities to that shrine of classical music.

With wider exposure came a new development in the career of the Chorus, the diversionary appeal of spectacular stage production. The vehicle was Hall Johnson's black folk opera Run, Little Chillun. Johnson's play was first staged on Broadway in 1933 and revived in 1935 in Los Angeles with notable success. In 1938 Hall Johnson brought Run, Little Chillun to the Bay Area for the WPA. According to Marion Davis Hall, Keeton was in poor health at the time and Johnson "came to bring new life into a failing group." A group of physically attractive singers evolved to meet the demands of the director, and critical attention began to be diverted from voices toward staging and acting. This transformation happened almost overnight.

On January 29, 1939, the show opened at the Alcazar Theater in San Francisco and was

an instant hit. It displayed astonishing artistry by blacks who had never taken part in a professional stage production before. Most of them were singers. In fact, 68 came from Elmer Keeton's chorus. Under director Jester Hairston, they worked hard to master the acting profession. As the Chronicle said, "Sweat and blood plus an excellent score and some fine upstanding choral work made Run, Little Chillun a success."

Justitia Davis, a soprano soloist in the chorus, portrayed the primitive terrors and passions of the temptress Sulamai with all the authority of a veteran. Everett Boucre, another chorus member, as Jim, the preacher's son and Sulamai's victim, was one of the few cast members who had experience in a show: as a member of the Federal Vaudeville Project, he had played a Chinaman and sung a Chinese song in Swing Parade. Ruth Acty, later the first black teacher in the Berkeley schools, played Jim's patient wife Ella, and Hall Johnson himself, as Brother Moses, carried the strong melodrama and the clash between voodooism and revival meeting that gave Run, Little Chillun its dramatic structure. The show ran for 28 weeks. Reviews ranged from cautious appreciation of the play with outright delight in the singing, to unreserved praise for the whole.

As its fame spread the Chorus had frequent interactions with other groups. In April 1939, members participated in "Musical Echoes of Negro Composers" presented by the



Left, Maxine Blackburn conducts the Keeton Memorial Chorus and piano students at the Oakland Auditorium Theater.  
Right, Arnold Baranco with Memorial Chorus, probably at Stern Grove. (East Bay Negro Hist. Soc.)

## Black Studies News

California State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs at Parks Chapel AME Church in Oakland. That November they appeared in the Ninth Universal Thanksgiving Exercises at the Oakland Auditorium, sponsored by the East Bay Religious Fellowship at a time when religious prejudice was widespread and intolerance seemed to be gaining ground.

For the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939, Keeton presented the group in the Swing Mikado, a hit from the Federal Theater Project repertory. In July 1940 the Business Boosters Club, a black organization sponsored a three-day "Festival of Negro Music" at the Fair, with entertainers from several Hollywood studios along with Keeton's singers. The chorus was "to sing the music reflected in the life of the Negro" in a series of five programs on the Plantation Age, Age of Minstrels, Ragtime, Jazz, and Age of Swing. Affirming Keeton's lifelong musical outlook, they closed the Jazz Age program with the Quartet from Rigoletto.

Over the years 1936-40 Keeton and the Chorus appeared at many colleges, schools, churches, and concert halls around northern California. As wartime succeeded the WPA, chorus members scattered, in and out of the musical field. Keeton himself worked for the Community Music Division of the City of Richmond Housing Authority.

After Keeton's death on January 1, 1947, the chorus reorganized as the Keeton Memorial Chorus, to perpetuate his memory and the standards of choral performance which he exemplified. Maxine Blackburn, Arnold Baranco, and Justitia Davis Scott shared the duties of director. In September 1952, the Chorus appeared in the San Francisco Opera production of Aida. Performances took place into the 1960s, still in Keeton's name. In 1962, through the Berkeley Co-Op, the Chorus admitted Arthur Schroeder as its first non-black member, and marked the occasion by giving him a formal letter of acceptance.

Professor Keeton hoped to foster understanding of the role of black Americans in the history of music and to raise public awareness of the black artist, soloist, and instrumentalist at all educational levels. His is a notable place among the "firsts" of black Oakland. --Lorraine J. Crouchett

Two major Black Studies research projects have recently been funded, and one will be presenting an exhibit soon. "Visions Toward Tomorrow" will result in a multi-media presentation on Blacks in the East Bay, while "Black History and Culture: Finding What You Need" is sponsored by the Oakland Public Library for the purpose of training staff and patrons to research topics in Black studies. A preliminary exhibit based on "Visions Toward Tomorrow," titled "Oakland Firsts," will be on display at City Hall during this February, Black History Month.

"Visions Toward Tomorrow" promises to revolutionize the study of local Black history. This coordinated effort to uncover the history of Blacks in the East Bay is sponsored by the East Bay Negro Historical Society and the California Afro-American Museum in collaboration with the Oakland Museum, with funding from the Oakland Arts Council, City of Richmond, and California Council for the Humanities. Historians James Rawls, Charles Wollenberg and Lawrence Crouchett advise the project; Dr. Crouchett, a retired professor, is the project director.

When completed in 1989 "Visions" will be a permanent museum exhibit, two traveling exhibits, a video documentary, curriculum materials for public schools, a lecture series, and a booklet on East Bay Black history. A preview exhibit "Oakland Firsts" will depict the first Black schools, churches, professionals, and institutions from the founding of the city in 1852 to the present, stressing the theme of self-determination and community building.

After opening receptions hosted by Assem-



Keeton Memorial Chorus in the 1952 San Francisco Opera production of Aida. (East Bay Negro Historical Society)

Lorraine J. Crouchett holds an MA in history from Holy Names College in Oakland, and is author of Filipinos in California--From the Days of the Galleons to the Present.

blyman Elihu Harris and the East Bay Negro Historical Society on February 11 and 14, "Oakland Firsts" will move to the rotunda of City Hall (third floor) where it will be open free to the public February 15 to 29.

For "Visions Toward Tomorrow," Shirley Ann Moore, a teacher of Afro-American Studies, is researching the history of Black Richmond. Gretchen Lemke, a graduate student at San Francisco State, is writing about Berkeley, and Donald Hausler, a librarian for the Oakland Public Library, is researching Blacks in Oakland. William Sturm of the Oakland History Room is also assisting. The researchers have already submitted bibliographies and narrative histories that will form the basis of a book on the history of the East Bay Afro-American community.

The success of the project depends on the cooperation of the community. Historical societies and public libraries are opening their archives and providing staff support. Private individuals have donated photos, letters, manuscripts, memorabilia, and artifacts. Prominent Black residents are being interviewed on tape so that their experiences can be recorded and included in the history. To contribute materials or information, please call Dr. Crouchett at 529-1012.

The Oakland Public Library's "Black History and Culture" project will use written guides and workshops to teach research skills in Black Studies to both library staff and public, improving access to the library's extensive Black Studies collection. Goals are to improve the reference skills of 20 librarians, train 100 patrons in advanced research techniques, instruct 750 patrons on elementary research in Black Studies, and develop 12 study guides.

The Oakland Public Library has been collecting materials relating to Black Studies for several decades. At the Main Library the History and Literature section has books and vertical file materials, both reference and circulating, covering many subjects. The Art and Music and Business/Science/Sociology sections also have books on the Black experience. The Magazine and Newspaper Room has local Black newspapers dating back to the 19th century on microfilm. The Oakland History Room has books, magazines, clippings, programs, photographs, ephemera, and indexes for both state and local Black history.

Many of the branches, including West Oakland and Martin Luther King, have special



First Negro Business Forum, 1933; photo by E.F. Joseph includes C.L. Dellums front row L, Walter Gordon second row third from left. (East Bay Negro Historical Society)

Black Studies collections. Elmhurst has a special collection covering Black religion.

Because material is scattered in many places, specific items are often difficult to find. Incomplete indexing and changing catalog headings also complicate research. Black genealogy requires a specialized approach and the use of sophisticated research tools. The many forms of material--pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, photographs, microfilm, tapes, etc.--mean that the source for a particular topic may not be obvious.

Funded by the federal Library Services and Construction Act, a project coordinator will conduct workshops for staff and patrons, and study guides will be prepared for genealogy, local history, science, literature, civil rights, etc. The guides will be updated annually and revised by a committee of community representatives and library staff.

When did Blacks first settle in the East Bay? What is their history? How do you study Black genealogy? There will soon be answers to these questions. --Donald Hausler

## The Black Y's of Oakland

During the 1890s and early decades of the 20th century, Oakland's Black community established several institutions like the Old Folks' Home, the Fannie Wall Children's Home, Watts Sanitarium, and the Linden Branch YWCA and Black YMCA. The reason for these segregated institutions is explained by a 1930 East Bay Colored Directory:

"The race, in attempting to adapt itself to its environment, developed certain institutions. Restricted by segregation and discrimination from the full enjoyment of the existing order of things, it was compelled to erect an order of its own."

The Linden Branch YWCA and the Black YMCA are of particular interest because they developed programs during the 1930s that helped the Black community survive the Depression years. They emerged at a time when the national Y's both encouraged separate branches for Black members.

In 1920 a small group of local Black women, Mrs. Willie Henry, Melba Stafford, and Hettie B. Tilghman, organized the Linden Center YWCA, with support and approval from the central organization. Linden Center got its name from its location at 828 Linden Street in West Oakland. With increased membership, it achieved the status of a "branch" in 1923. With annual drives, by 1938 Linden Y had a membership of over 600.

The Linden branch operated as a community center, offering members religious training,



The Linden Branch YWCA c.1940 (YWCA/Oakland History Room)

recreational activities, counseling, vocational training, and literary, music, and art programs. Funds came from many sources, primarily members and the Community Chest.

The Linden Y functioned as a job placement and welfare agency during the Depression years of the 1930s. The Room Registry and Employment Committee sponsored vocational classes and found housing for the homeless. In 1931 the vocational program offered classes in cooking, scientific cleaning, and dining room service. The Business and Professional Department provided education for "girls and women in the business field." The



A group of YWCA workers at the Linden Branch on a formal occasion in 1940.

(East Bay Negro Historical Society)



Linden Y also collected clothes which were distributed to needy men, women, and children. Thus the Linden Y developed into a major Black institution, providing essential services in an era of hardship and despair.

The Linden Branch existed as a segregated facility for almost a quarter of a century. In 1944 in accordance with a change in national policy the board of the Oakland YWCA integrated the Linden Y. The name was changed to the West Oakland Center.

A description of the old Linden Branch has survived: "This is a two-story frame building with four club rooms, a reception hall, office for the business and industrial secretary, and two rooms rented to accommodate working girls. The building is used as a meeting place for small clubs and social groups." This facility was razed in the early 1960s along with the entire neighborhood to make room for the Acorn project.

Oakland's Black YMCA, organized by Rev. L.A. Brown of the First AME Church, opened on June 6, 1927. It was originally located at 3431 Market Street in West Oakland, and attorney W.E. Watkins was its first director.

The Market Street YMCA, a Community Chest agency affiliated with the Central YMCA, provided the following services: "Promotes activities planned to develop character of boys and young men (colored) as well as health and physical efficiency. Develops the intellectual, moral and spiritual values. Free employment bureau. Emergency aid and readjustment for stranded boys under 21 years." In 1927 the organization had a membership of 160, 134 seniors and 26 boys.

The Black YMCA had a Director, a Committee of Management of 21 men, and an Auxiliary Committee of women. The Committee of Management, composed of church leaders, served as a board of directors. The Auxiliary Committee served as hostesses and prepared dinners and refreshments on special occasions, and entertained the members with musical productions and raised money to decorate the Y.

The Black YMCA promoted a competitive sports program. Its annual track meet and annual athletic contest attracted competitors from all over the Bay Area. The Y also organized a basketball team that played against other teams in a basketball league.

Oakland's Black YMCA sponsored a variety of classes and activities. Members could



Another converted residence, 836 36th Street housed the Black YMCA in the late '30s. (Phil Bellman)

attend classes in Bible and woodworking. A boys' orchestra, organized by C.E. Brown, performed for the public. Boys of good character were invited to a summer camp.

The Black YMCA also functioned as a social agency during the 1930s. Having moved to Filbert Street, the Y was equipped with a dormitory that had free beds for men seeking shelter. The Y collected and distributed clothing "for the families of many suffering Negroes." The Auxiliary Committee prepared holiday meals for the unemployed in the dining hall. In 1933 the Filbert Street Y fed 103 men on Thanksgiving, one fourth of whom were white. The Y also operated a job information service for the unemployed.

The Black YMCA moved several times during its existence but was always located in the West Oakland-North Oakland area. By 1935 it had left Filbert for 805 Linden Street with W.E. Watkins still serving as director. The 1937 directory lists the Black YMCA at 836 36th Street and Richard Smith as director.

After the Black Y moved to 36th Street it became known as the North Oakland Branch. "This is a large frame dwelling with eight rooms. One room is used for office purposes, one as an all-purpose room accommodating social groups, meetings, lectures, etc. Four rooms accommodate young employed men as a residence. There is no gymnasium or playground." It probably integrated about the same time as the Linden Branch.

Two of the Black YMCA buildings no longer exist. The facilities on Filbert and Linden were razed for the Acorn Project. The Black Y buildings at 3431 Market and 836 36th Street still stand, reminders of Oakland's age of segregation. --Donald Hausler

## Christian Science Church: Design is Now the Issue



Former Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, 1330 Lakeshore Avenue: demolition controversy began in June 1986, may be coming to a close. (Randolph Langenbach)

### I: EVENTS TO DATE

The slow and sometimes tortuous process of design review for the proposed Lake Merritt United Methodist Church on the site of the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist at 1330 Lakeshore may soon be completed.

In September the Planning Commission certified the final EIR on the project and began evaluation of the new design. At the public hearing OHA presented an alternative design retaining the facade of the existing building. The staff report which followed stated that the church's design did not meet design review criteria: it was uninviting, did not relate well to the lake, and presented a visual barrier to the public. That same report concluded that the existing church facade was well designed and related well to the setting, and proposed a compromise of retaining the colonnade and front stairway, with new construction behind.

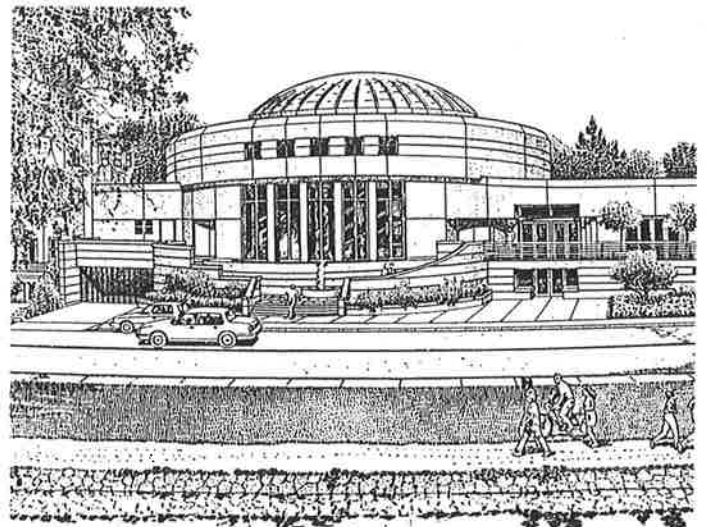
This staff recommendation was rejected by the Commission. The Commission did, however, return the proposal to the church for redesign, specifically to improve its relation to the lake and passersby.

The modified design, presented to the Commission in November, added a stairway at the center of the main facade and brought the entrance, located on the side, closer to the street. Most of the design remained

unchanged. OHA in company with Oakland Design Advocates and the Brooklyn Neighborhood Preservation Association again appeared to urge consideration of the staff compromise, and to criticize the new design for not addressing the major flaws in the original.

In early December the Commission took a preliminary vote recertifying the EIR for the new design. Before a vote on the design itself, Commissioner Ed Sue spoke at some length on the quality of the existing building, and on his reluctance to approve any design of less quality than that building. The Commission then voted 3-2 to reject the new design, with Commissioners Black and Lazar in the minority. Two weeks later, after meetings between church representatives and Commissioners Sue and Ortiz, the Commission voted to reconsider this vote. In late December the church presented further changes to the design, the most notable being elimination of the "planetarium" ring around the main facade.

A final vote on the twice modified design will be taken in mid-January. Regardless of the outcome, the matter is expected to be taken to City Council on appeal. OHA urges its members to write to Council members in support of the staff compromise design, which OHA considers a workable solution that serves both the interests of the church and those of the community. --Carolyn Douthat



Design for new church, as presented in November. Newest design has wider steps, opens the top ring.

(Gillis Judson Wade Architects, as published in EIR)

## II: COMMENTARY

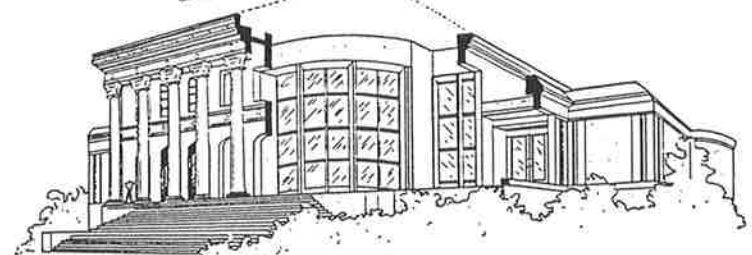
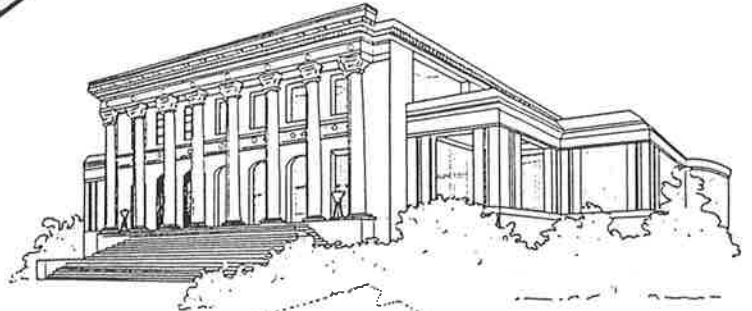
"Works of art are the property of mankind and ownership carries with it the obligation to preserve them. He who neglects this duty and directly or indirectly contributes to their damage or ruin invites the reproach of barbarism and will be punished with the contempt of all educated people, now and in future ages." Goethe, 1799

As this issue goes to press, the OHA-initiated effort to save the Fourth Christian Science Church on Lake Merritt is headed for a final showdown before the City Council. On December 2, in a 3-2 decision which surprised everyone, the City Planning Commission voted to deny approval of the Lake Merritt United Methodist Church's design for the site. However, this victory may be short-lived. Despite OHA's efforts and planning staff's recommendation that the church preserve the 1921 facade, the Planning Commission has not been willing to require that under its design review jurisdiction, and the church remains steadfast in its refusal to consider this compromise. Review of a slightly revised version of the church's design is now pending.

A design showing the classical facade attached to a new church was submitted to the Planning Commission by OHA. We proposed a feasible compromise between demolition and total preservation. While facadism has not always resulted in satisfactory designs, we believe that this could be a very exciting new building with elements of the the old facade incorporated into the new church.

The preservation effort has grown into a major public debate over issues which extend beyond this one building. A recent editorial in the Oakland Tribune supported the Methodist Church's position with a strong statement on the rights of property owners. This follows on the heels of threats to sue the city if the church does not get its way.

The church and Tribune claim that landmark preservation should only be promoted "by fully compensating owners of historically or aesthetically valuable sites." This ignores over 30 years of constitutional law establishing the right of communities to require owners to conserve important parts of the environment for the public good. As long as owners can reasonably use the landmarked structures, the Supreme Court has affirmed that the Constitution allows protection of historic buildings. As stated in the Penn



Proposal by Randolph Langenbach of OHA showing existing facade attached to new church, after removal of upper entablature; cut-away view below. (Randolph Langenbach)

Central decision which saved Grand Central Station in New York in 1978, "Historic conservation is but one aspect of a much larger problem, basically an environmental one of enhancing--or perhaps developing for the first time--the quality of life for people."

(All the Court said in the widely reported 1987 Coastal Commission case was that the requirement in question was invalid because it did not "substantially advance a legitimate state interest." The Court did not hold that any regulation is invalid unless the owner is compensated. If it had, virtually no zoning or land use controls could exist.)

The irony behind all these protestations about the burdens on owners of landmarked buildings is that this fight is not about landmark designation but about design review. The city long ago declared Lake Merritt a design review zone. The church has failed to get its way so far because the proposed new structure has failed to meet even the minimal standards of aesthetic quality required under design review. One of the major reasons the church gives for wanting to destroy the classical facade is to have a "modern" building without any remnants of "old fashioned" styles. The City Planning staff report itself makes the point that the new design's barren 1950s style is actually more "out of date" than its neoclassical predecessor. One look at recent architectural journals should make that point clear.

Another issue is that of seismic safety. When the campaign entered the public arena



last summer, this was the primary argument given for demolition, but was substantially set aside after it was shown that the testimony by the engineer for the church was both contradictory and erroneous. The church refused a \$4000 grant OHA raised on their behalf for another study. Seismic safety is an easy screen behind which to obscure true issues in a preservation battle, and the church has not been willing to allow access to the building for an objective study.

It might be asked why the church should not be allowed to build what they wish. They are willing to make the investment in a major new structure in Oakland. They are not selling property for a profit: they wish to build a new church. However, a significant part of the funds for this project come from sale of the site of their former historic church, destroyed by fire, for the new YMCA, and their present church has been sold to a developer. Churches deal in real estate, and it seems reasonable to require that they meet publicly held standards when they do. Churches should be expected to set an example of excellence in care for the environment for all the community, just as in ministry to their congregations. As Paul Goldberger states, "Every building has a public function as well as a private one. What a great church is symbolic of is not only religion, but also the idea of the public realm--the idea of a place of common ground, where people of common interests gather."

The refusal by the Lake Merritt United Methodist Church to consider retention of the classical colonnade, while being unable or unwilling to produce a design which does not simply make a mockery of the prominent site, is symbolic of a failure on the part of the church to meet its basic civic responsibility. Quoting a 1954 decision of the United States Supreme Court, "The concept of the public welfare is broad and inclusive. The values it represents are spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary. It is within the power of the Legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy..."

**LATE BULLETIN:** On Jan. 13 the Planning Commission reaffirmed its rejection of the design for the new church. The next step will be before the City Council. We hope you will attend that meeting. We need your support.

--Randolph Langenbach

## 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 Carolyn Douthat, 763-5370.

### ■ PRESERVATION PARK MOVING AGAIN?

According to the Office of Economic Development and Employment, work may soon resume on Preservation Park, which has been shut down for months. The project developer, Preservation Ventures, blames the stoppage on denial of preservation tax credits for the buildings which were moved to the site.

OEDE is now working with Bramalea, the developer of City Center, in hopes of restructuring and completing the project. Under Preservation Ventures, the project was to have been high class office space relating to City Center. The new concept, modeled on San Francisco's Fort Mason, would have most of the buildings leased to non-profits. Under the proposed agreement, Bramalea would manage restoration and leasing, and lend \$4 million toward completion. Non-profits' rentals would service that debt. PV would continue as owner for five years, until the tax credits on the completed portion are exhausted; at that point ownership would revert to the city.

Restoration costs will be high, in part because the buildings have been poorly secured and open to the weather for years. Critics have maintained that the master developer approach has slowed the project and a more successful approach would have been to offer individual buildings for development. In January the buildings were the site of a demonstration by the Oakland Homeless Union aimed at convincing the city to make the vacant buildings available for rehabilitation as housing.

OEDE is also working on an agreement for additional financing for the Herrick and Merriam houses on the block adjacent to Preservation Park. That project, which has also run into financial difficulties, is being developed by the Gestalt Group, an offshoot of Transbay Engineering, contractors and partners in Preservation Park. OEDE expects both projects to be moving again by early spring. --Carolyn Douthat



#### ■ WETMORE BUILDINGS LANDMARKED

On Jan. 12 the City Council approved landmark designation of the Fricke Medical Building and Wetmore House Group (see Landmarks Board report), largely at the urging of the Oakland Homeless Union that they be protected as housing resources and as a memorial to James Lee who died there Christmas eve. Council voted for a 120 day stay of demolition (vs. the normal 240 days for landmarks) and directed staff to report back on rehab costs, sweat equity programs, and feasibility of moving the buildings, including identification of sites. (Housing Conservation earlier estimated \$50,000 to \$70,000 per building for basic housing rehab, vs. over \$200,000 cited by owners of 571 11th to convert it to offices.) Complex issues include the concept of short-term landmarking, and a potentially very exciting alliance between preservation and housing interests. Developments will be reported.

#### ■ OLD FIREHOUSE TO BE DEMOLISHED

The former firehouse at 14th Street and Martin Luther King, until recently used by the Oakland Museum as workshops and for the Oakland Public Library Association book sale, is slated for demolition in February to make way for a temporary parking lot.

Built in 1928 as the Twentieth Century Market, and later converted into an ice skating rink, the building originally had tall concrete obelisks at each corner.

The site is owned by the Redevelopment Agency and has long been proposed for new use. The most recent (1984) master plan for the area shows a mixture of housing, offices, and parking on the block. Over the years the building has deteriorated. The decision to demolish now was based partly on the anticipated need for new parking once construction begins on the Federal Building at 14th and Clay, and was finally made possible by location of a new site for the museum and library uses, a leased warehouse at 1900 14th Street in West Oakland.

The city is currently working out the demolition agreement with City Center developer Bramalea. OHA is considering a proposal that it include salvage of the exterior ornament of the building. --Carolyn Douthat

#### ■ NEW HISTORIC DISTRICT PROPOSED

The Landmarks Board is considering a petition for designation of the first residential S-7 district in the city. Located on 10th Avenue between East 19th and East 22nd Streets, the area was part of one of OHA's walking tours this past summer.

The 10th Avenue district, identified as an area of primary importance by the City-wide Preliminary Survey in 1985-86, was proposed for designation by residents and the Brooklyn Neighborhood Preservation Association. Subdivided in 1853 as Clinton Park, and later part of the town of Brooklyn, the area was developed between 1882 and 1910 as a middle class suburb for Oakland and San Francisco businessmen and professionals, and is significant for its intact collection of houses dating from the 1870s to 1920. Among the buildings are a 1913 Julia Morgan, an 1880s J.J. and T.D. Newsom, and fine Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival homes.

Impetus for the proposal came in part from concern over the future of two adjoining vacant lots in the heart of the area, one the site of a 2-story Craftsman which was declared substandard by the city and demolished in 1985. Seventeen out of 20 owners signed the petition for designation, and the Landmarks Board will consider the application in February. Designation would subject exterior changes and new construction to design review, and any application for demolition could be stayed for 240 days.

If the Board recommends designation, the matter will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and then to City Council for approval of the zoning change. For more information, contact Marina Carlson, 532-1405, or Carolyn Douthat, 763-5370.



20th Century Market was designed in 1928 by flamboyant Oakland architect Maury I. Diggs. (Phil Bellman)



## City Landmarks Board Actions

The Oakland Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board meets on the second Monday of each month at 4 pm in Room 211 City Hall. Meetings are open to the public. Designation of landmarks is recommended by the Board to Planning Commission and City Council. Landmarks are subject to a 240-day delay in issuance of demolition permits. Exterior alterations require approval by City Planning staff, at the recommendation of the Board. 108 landmarks have been designated in the 14 years since the Board was created.

### NEW MEMBERS

Since Board members' resumes appeared here last winter, there have been two appointments (one vacancy remains). Joining chair Gordon Henderson, Jean Spees, Tim Weldon, and Bert Bertolero, are:

Marji Shaw, architect, joined the Board in July. She was born in New York, and has a Master's degree in Architecture from UC Berkeley. She credits her interest in architecture to living in Europe during her father's military service. After graduation she worked for the Oakland Housing Authority, and now works with Project Management at Stanford, where her concerns include design relationship of new and existing buildings.

Frederick Hertz, appointed in December, is a land-use attorney with the office of Timothy Tosta in San Francisco. Born in St. Paul and educated at the University of Minnesota, he came to Berkeley to attend Boalt Hall. He has worked on cases involving the Historical Building Code, and is well informed on local preservation issues.

### SEPTEMBER

Regular September meeting was canceled for lack of a quorum. At a special meeting on Sept. 28, Board reviewed and approved alterations to the Gulf Coast Oyster Bar, 736 Washington Street, in the S-7 Preservation Combining Zone, to move the entry to provide waiting area and wheelchair access.

Representatives of the Brooklyn Neighborhood Preservation Association announced their intention to apply for S-7 ("historic district") designation for 20 properties located in the 1900-2100 blocks of 10th Avenue. 17 out of 20 owners had signed a petition requesting the designation. Board made a preliminary determination that the proposal meets S-7 criteria, and directed staff to solicit comments from the remaining

owners and provide a Vietnamese translation of the notification.

Gary Knecht, coordinator of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, reviewed the work of the Survey for new members, and reported on the survey of the Clawson and Prescott neighborhoods of West Oakland now being done under a state grant. He noted that the Landmarks Board and Oakland Heritage Alliance have traditionally cosponsored the Survey, by lending their name, moral support, and volunteer labor: Board agreed to continue.

### OCTOBER

Regular meeting was canceled for lack of a quorum. Special meeting reviewed signs and awnings on 1100 Broadway (Key System Bldg., F.H. Meyer, 1911-12), a landmark. Window sign already installed by a tenant was ordered removed, as too large and unsuited to the building in style and material (styro-foam). Board discussed ways to inform owners and tenants of design review requirements.

### NOVEMBER

Reviewed and approved rear stairway addition to the landmark Locke House, 3911 Harrison Street (John Hudson Thomas, 1911). Voted to draft a resolution designating the 1900-2100 blocks of 10th Avenue, with public hearing in December. Heard an update on the Simpson House, 524 23rd Street: developer expressed interest in moving it if a site could be found. Asked to be kept informed of zoning permit applications for expansion of the Dreyer's Ice Cream plant on College Avenue, as it will impact on the College Avenue Presbyterian Church (Julia Morgan, 1918) which is on the Board's Study List.

Voted to ask Planning Commission and City Council for authorization to raise funds for preservation purposes such as plaques, publications, and special events. Discussed the new practice of charging admission to the Preservation Fair, which Marji Shaw believed had kept some people away.

### DECEMBER

Board reviewed and approved rear decks for the Oakland Iron Works building at 2nd and Jefferson, a city landmark. The brick buildings that made up the rest of the complex were demolished in July 1986 (see Fall 1986 OHA News), and the owner informed the Board that he plans to request removal of this remaining building from landmark status.

Reviewed and approved Bob Bennett's rehabilitation of the landmark Herbert Hoover House (1079 23rd Street), a job long considered impossible. Board required that solid panel front doors be replaced with doors with a glass or plastic pane, more appropriate to the period of the house: "The cost is worth it both to you and to the city."

Pursuant to demolition permit applications for two Study List buildings, 565-67 and 571 11th Street, Board discussed whether to initiate them for landmark status and heard from the owners. Owners argued that they had recently bought the buildings in order to create a parking lot, that rehabilitation was not economically feasible, and that they had not known they were on the Study List or had any significance. Board acknowledged that there is a problem insuring that owners and zoning staff are aware of what is on the Study List, but noted the age and unaltered condition of the buildings, their place in the developmental history of downtown Oakland, and nearby preservation activity at Victorian Row and Preservation Park, and decided to hold a special meeting to initiate landmark designation. Board decided to add the two neighboring houses, 573-77 and 583 11th, in the Wetmore House Group (built 1876-85) to the nomination for 571.

Board endorsed 1988-89 Certified Local Government grant application, to provide funding for Survey and Board activities.

Frederick Hertz and Jean Spees formed a committee to look into the state of Preservation Park and see how the Board can help.

Special meeting on Dec. 18 initiated the 11th Street buildings as an emergency item, to forward designation to Planning Commission and City Council before the 60 day protection of Study List buildings expires. On Dec. 30 the Planning Commission approved both nominations, Wetmore House/Fricke Medical Building and Wetmore House Group, which went to City Council Jan. 12 (see Briefing).

#### JANUARY

Frederick Hertz reported on the Dec. 30 Planning Commission hearing on the Wetmore buildings. He noted that his testimony for the Board had been counted as one of the three pro-landmark speakers in the hearing, thereby preempting one public speaker, when actually the Board is an arm of the Planning Commission itself. Commissioners had asked

why landmark nominations always came at the last minute, and Hertz suggested reviewing the Study List to initiate some non-emergency landmarks, and consider weeding out properties that have been on the Study List for many years with no action. Jean Spees recommended amending the landmarks ordinance to extend the 60 day demolition delay for Study List buildings to 90 days, in view of the number of special meetings the 60 day schedule had required in this case.

Hertz reported on Preservation Park (see Briefing). He was told that the Wetmore buildings were not considered candidates for moving there. Secretary Buckley informed the Board that the Wetmore buildings on 11th Street are part of a block which includes other significant structures--the Fong Wan Co. (576 10th Street), the Clay Building (NW corner of 10th and Clay), and the Carles Apartments (SE corner of 10th and Jefferson)--and is currently zoned for intense development. Board agreed to look at the buildings, and review evaluations in February.

Members were asked to go see the Queen Anne at 4300 Fruitvale, which will be discussed as a possible landmark in February.

Board agreed to host a workshop for other landmarks boards, organized by California Preservation Foundation, to meet the "continuing education" requirement of the Certified Local Government program. Accepted invitation from the Planning and Construction Committee of the Chamber of Commerce to discuss proposed Preservation Element of Oakland Comprehensive Plan. Discussed possibility of plaques for city landmarks, and reprinting or expanding the brochure listing landmarks and districts. --Kathy Olson



Fricke Medical Building (L) and Wetmore House Group, on 11th St.: first landmarks in over a year (Phil Bellman)

## OHA Update

### ■ VOLUNTEER JOBS AVAILABLE

Welcome to the 1988 OHA Volunteer Program! There are lots of projects underway this year--winter lecture, spring house tour, Broadway Book, holiday party, and ongoing Preservation Action and Landmarks Assistance. We need your help! To get volunteers started each "OHA Update" will have a "help wanted" section. When you see something you would like to work on, give me a call and I will get you on your way. If you have a full schedule now but would like to be called on later, please call now and I'll keep your name on file for a time that is convenient.

Jobs will be first-come first-served, so sign up early for the best choices! Phone Julie Barron at 655-8147 from 7 to 9 pm, or leave your name and number at the OHA office, 763-9218, and I will get back to you.

January-February volunteer openings are listed below. Call for fuller descriptions.

Writers and Editors, Broadway Book: Publication scheduled for early 1989. Evening meetings; research and writing with deadlines determined by Publications chair. Apply now!  
Preservation Fair Representative: Monthly 4:30 pm planning meetings at Camron-Stanford House, report back to OHA. Starts now.

Researchers, Spring House Tour: Research and write short histories and descriptions for tour brochure. Evening meetings; starts now.  
Publicity/Brochure, Spring House Tour: Contact merchants for ads; layout and printing; misc. Evening meetings, daytime errands.

Docents, Spring House Tour: Monitor and answer questions in the houses. One or two training meetings plus tour (late April).

Mailings: Label and assemble bulk mailings. Approx. monthly, day or evening, on call.

Events/Programs: Greeting and reception at events and booths throughout the year. Evenings and weekends, 2-hour shifts, on call.

Preservation Action: Represent OHA at Planning Commission (day), Landmarks Board (day), City Council (eve.), by presence and taking notes; not necessary to speak.

Membership/Development: Fundraising, letter writing, grant writing, etc. Day or evening.

News: Compile quarterly calendar of events: telephone other groups, typing/WP optional.

Carpenter: Build bookshelves for OHA office!

Assignments will be coming in as needed, so I suggest you call and check with me from time to time to see what the latest jobs are! We hope to have a big response and look forward to hearing from you! --Julie Barron

### ■ HOLIDAY PARTY: FUN AND PROFIT!

OHA's "Holiday Event on Pagoda Hill" on December 17 was a great success. Proceeds from the raffle and silent auction amounted to \$3100. Ron Gamba coordinated dazzling hors d'oeuvres, and authors Helaine and Blair Prentice were on hand to sign copies of Rehab Right. The party was held in the restored gardener's cottage of the J. Ross Browne estate, graciously opened by owners Don Rice and Dick Peters. J. Ross Browne was a flamboyant early citizen of Oakland whose writings tell much of California's early development. Committee members Leslie Flint, Helen Lore, and Annalee Allen wish to thank Julie Barron and Naomi Schiff for producing the invitation, and the following donors:

Paramount Theater, Poppy Fabric, Zia, Outback, Leaven and Earth Bakery, Gramma's Inn, John Brown Kitchens, Mama's Royal Cafe, Lois Over, Gulf Coast Oyster Bar, Ratto's, Aperio, Something Special, Doug Brookes, Eric Klatt, Paul Marcus Wines, Star Grocery, Pearson Hardware, Builder's Booksource, Echo Wilderness Co., Washington Inn, Chimes Market, Finishing Touch, Fit To Be Framed, Fred Mitchell, Zephyr Press, Make My Day, Anthony Holdsworth, New Orleans Bar and Grill, Something to Sell About, Bill McLetchie, Ten Speed Press, Hyatt Regency



1880s gardener's cottage, only survivor of J. Ross Browne's fabulous North Oakland estate, was site of a memorable OHA holiday event. (Phil Bellman)



Oakland, Sonoma Mission Inn, Broadway Terrace Cafe, Claremont Antiques and Interiors, Dunsmuir House and Gardens, Camron-Stanford House Preservation Association, Marks, The Paint Mart, Grand Lake Theater, Oakland Grill, Peerless Coffee, Chronicle Books, Cal-Cutta Haircutters, Nesbit's, Holmes Books, Pasta Shop, Berkeley Architectural Salvage, Oakland City Planning Department, CD World, Les and Linda Hausrath, Dean Yabuki, Ronald Gamba, Daryl Halverson, Mary Jane McConville, Rapallo's, Sarocha and Conover, Mr. & Mrs. Masao Yabuki.

#### ■ BOARD CHANGES FOR 1987-88

OHA's board for 1987-88 was elected at the Annual Meeting at the Fratellanza Club on October 15. Returning for new two-year terms are Julie Barron, Bill McLetchie, Deborah Shefler, and Les Hausrath. New directors are Sally Nielsen and Mary Jane McConville. Leslie Flint and Naomi Schiff have retired.

A native of Alameda County, Mary Jane is a real estate agent specializing in Oakland and Berkeley residential properties. She and her husband, photographer Eric Klatt, have been OHA members for 3 years and are renovating their 96 year old Victorian in the Brooklyn neighborhood. Mary Jane heads the Spring House Tour Committee.

Sally has a MA in City and Regional Planning from Harvard. She is an urban economist with Recht, Hausrath & Associates. She has worked for the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento and Greater Portland Landmarks, Maine. She will be working on Membership and Publications Committees.

OHA has been fortunate to have such dedicated preservationists as Leslie Flint and Naomi Schiff on the Board. Leslie was one of the founders of OHA and has served continuously on the Board since. She served two terms as president, chaired the Membership and Development Committee, and spearheaded the raising of funds to preserve the Alfred H. Cohen House. She served on the original Steering Committee of the Cultural Heritage Survey, and while working at the Camron-Stanford House wrote The Heart of Oakland, a guide to Lake Merritt. She has led OHA walking tours of Lakeside and the Produce District. Though Leslie is going off the Board, she intends to work with the Preservation Action Committee which monitors preservation and development issues in Oakland. "As a founding member of OHA, I feel great pride in the organization and how far it has come to fill the need for an active voice for preserving Oakland's built environment."

Naomi Schiff also plans to remain active

with Preservation Action. As a graphic designer in an older building downtown, she has strong views on urban rejuvenation. She is a member of the Chinatown-Central Community Development Advisory Board and has been active in Adams Point Preservation. Her knowledge of Oakland politics has been of great benefit to the Board. Naomi says it is exciting to watch OHA achieve its potential to influence the course of Oakland's future. "I've come to realize how interconnected are the aspects of civic issues--jobs, housing, creating a livable environment. Our voice can have impact on these concerns."

Officers are Les Hausrath, president; Annalee Allen, vice president; Bill McLetchie, treasurer (all continuing), and Julie Barron, secretary. --Annalee Allen

#### ■ FUNDRAISING AND FRIENDRAISING

We are launching our first major membership campaign this February! We would like you to invite friends, family and colleagues to join with you as members of OHA. Please send us their names and addresses, and we'll mail them a special invitation to join OHA.

The L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation has awarded OHA a grant for \$5000 toward membership and organizational development. The Skaggs Foundation is one of the few Bay Area foundations that regularly supports historic preservation and related projects.

When you receive your 1988 fundraising request from us, please give as generously as you can. Your support will allow OHA to mount the kind of broad-ranging, effective programs we all want. You can help assure our leadership in the preservation movement for many years to come. --Lynn Fonfa

## Correspondence

Donald Forman writes:

"I was deeply disturbed to read the phrase in the fall issue (p.2) describing Col. John C. Hays as a "veteran of various vigilante escapades." The Vigilantes were well-known as a violent racist and xenophobic movement. I do not know what particular incidents Hays was involved in, but the good-humored word 'escapades' trivializes the history of the Vigilantes. I trust you would not refer to 'Ku Klux Klan escapades.' I urge you to print a correction, and to use more care in the future."

# 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 Oakland Heritage Alliance.

## Upcoming Activities

### CLASSES

**OAKLAND HISTORY**, sponsored by the Oakland Tours Program (City of Oakland) and Vista College (Peralta Colleges, 841-8431). Nine-session, one-unit course taught by historian TOM WOLF. 1st, 3rd, and 4th Tuesdays of February, March, and April, 6-8 pm, Lakeview Branch Library, El Embarcadero and Grand Avenue. Fee \$5; register at first class meeting. At least 25 students must register for class to be given. For more information, contact Tom Wolf at 547-2919, evenings.

**CAMRON-STANFORD HOUSE DOCENT TRAINING**, 10-week course beginning in March. This restored Italianate, built in 1876, housed five families and later the Oakland Public Museum. Students will learn about Oakland history, preservation, restoration, Victorian architecture, 19th century decorative arts and cultural life, and interpretive skills to relay that information to the public. Information and interview, call 836-1976.

Jan. 29, Fri., 8:30-4, "Nuts & Bolts," workshop for planners and preservationists, Calif. History Center, De Anza College, Cupertino, \$45, (408) 996-4712.

Feb. 2, Tues., 6-8 pm, first session of "Oakland History," Vista College course by Tom Wolf, Lakeview Branch Library, 550 El Embarcadero at Grand Avenue. 9 sessions for \$5, register at first class; info. 547-2919 evenings.

through Feb. 21, "The Meeting," Jeff Stetson's play about Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, Oakland Ensemble Theatre, 1428 Alice St., Thurs.-Sat. 8 pm, Sun. 2:30; \$10-14, sr/jr \$5-\$7; 839-5510.

Feb. 14, Sun., 4-6 pm, East Bay Negro Historical Society, 5606 San Pablo Avenue, open house and reception for "Oakland Firsts." Free. 658-3158.

Feb. 18, Thurs., 4:30-7 pm, Preservation Park, Rehab Right book party and tours of buildings, sponsored by City Planning Dept. All OHA members invited. 273-3941.

Feb. 21, Sun., 3 pm, James Moore Theater, Oakland Museum, OMA Council on Architecture Filmfest, Playtime with Jacques Tati. \$2 OMA members/\$3 general.

March 18, Fri., Dwinelle Hall, UC campus, 8th annual festival of Berkeley history on film; Berkeley Historical Society. Date and place tentative, call to confirm, 524-9880.

March 20, Sun., 3 pm, James Moore Theater, Oakland Museum, OMA Council on Architecture Filmfest, Towering Inferno, filmed in SF. \$2 OMA members/\$3 general.

April, exhibit on Oakland Oaks baseball team, Oakland History Room, Main Library, 125 14th St. Exhibit and reception dates TBA, 273-3222.

April 24, Sun. (tentative), afternoon, OHA spring house tour, Lakeshore-Trestle Glen neighborhood. For info. or to VOLUNTEER, call OHA, 763-9218.



## Regularly Scheduled Tours

Dunsmuir House. Tours of Colonial Revival mansion every Sunday, spring through fall; 2960 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland; \$3; 562-7588.

Camron-Stanford House. 1876 Italianate on Lake Merritt. Tours every Wed. 11-4 & Sun. 1-5 pm., free; 1418 Lakeside Dr., 836-1976.

Paramount Theatre. Art Deco movie palace, 2025 Broadway. Tours 1st & 3rd Sat., 10 am, \$1, 893-2300.

Oakland Tours Program. Old Oakland, City Center, Uptown, Chinatown, Pres. Park, Port; April-Oct., 273-3234.

Black Diamond Mines. Somersville Rd., Antioch; Sat. & Sun. 10, 11, 1:30, 2:30; reservations required for mine tour, 757-2620; \$2 + \$2 parking.

Ardenwood Historic Farm. Park open April-Nov., Thurs.-Sun. 10-4; house tours hourly Sat. & Sun./variable Thurs.-Fri., \$4-\$1.50 dep. on age & day, tour extra; Ardenwood Blvd. or Lake Blvd., Newark; 796-0663.

McConaghy House. 102 year old farmhouse at 18701 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward. Tours Thurs.-Sun., 1-4, \$2/adult. Closed January. Info. 581-0223.

San Francisco Heritage weekly tours; \$3, info.441-3004. Historic North Waterfront, Sundays 10:30-12, meet at kiosk near cable car turntable in Aquatic Park; Victorian & Edwardian Pacific Heights, Sundays 12:30-2, Haas-Lilienthal House, 2007 Franklin; Haas-Lilienthal house tours, Sun. 11-4:30, Wed. 12-4

## Regularly Scheduled Meetings

Oakland Heritage Alliance. OHA Board of Directors meets on the first Monday of the month, 7:30 pm; for agenda and location, contact Les Hausrath, 834-5652.

Preservation Action Committee: contact Carolyn Douthat, 763-5370, for time, place, and agenda. Publications Committee, working on guidebook/history The Broadway Book: Fred Mitchell, 655-4920.

Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board. 2nd Monday, 4 pm, Room 221, City Hall. Contact City Planning, 273-3941.

City Planning Commission. Every other Wednesday, 3:30 pm, Room 115, City Hall. Agenda & dates, 273-3941.

City Council. Every Tuesday evening, 7:30, Council Chambers, City Hall. City Clerk, 273-3611.



# Oakland Heritage Alliance

P.O.Box 12425, Oakland, CA 94604 763-9218

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

### OFFICERS 1987-88

President.....Les Hausrath  
Vice President.....Annalee Allen  
Financial Officer.....William McLetchie  
Secretary.....Julie Barron

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Frederick Mitchell.....655-4920  
Sally Nielsen.....474-7184  
Edward Phillips.....465-9829  
Deborah Shefler.....465-2660

## Donors

OHA wishes to thank the following members for their contributions (through December 1987) to OHA's general fund, in support of our preservation efforts.

Willard Spencer, Phil Bellman/Betsy Yost, Chris Buckley, Colin Busby, G. Pete Encina, Earl Hamlin, Edward Lorenz, Cyanne McElhinney, Norma Smith, George/Helene Strauss

# Oakland Heritage Alliance News

## CONTRIBUTORS

Annalee Allen, Julie Barron, Phil Bellman, Lorraine J. Crouchett, Carolyn Douthat, Leslie Flint, Lynn Fonfa, Donald Hausler, Gary Knecht, Randolph Langenbach, Helen Lore, Kathy Olson, William Sturm

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Carolyn Douthat, Dean Yabuki

## EDITOR/PRODUCTION

Betty Marvin

## 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 (September through December) are as follows:

Carol Alexander, Frank/Daphne Anderson, David Beery/Jack Radford, Ruth Bittman, Gary Booher, Gray Brechin, Andrew Brown, James Cara, Paul/Gay Cobb, Patrick J. Duffy, Sarah Duncan, David Duvall, Lee Dwyer, Rina Elson, Helen Faber, Peter/Karla Fittipaldi, Edidt Ge, Glenview Properties, Inc., Floyd Hibbitts, Historical Preservation Trust, Lynne Horiuchi, Jacqueline Ikeda, Sue Ingraham, Barbara Jane Jacobs, Mark Jacobson/Ilona Frieden, Gail Janofsky, Jason Kaldis, Bruce/Candis/Matthew Kerns, Dorothy Kimmel, Susan King, Dennis Leary, Steven Lind, Mark Liolios, John Logan, Roger Mastrude, Marian McDonald, Susan McGlynn, Marilyn/Gene Michalak, Cindy Mosher, Oakland Grill, Thomas Priestley, Ann Rankin, Mrs. Arthur C. Ray, Return to Splendor, Audrey Penn Rogers, Tauny/Brian Ruymaker-Viani, Greta Schubert/John Sanford, Nicholas Setka, Howard Shryock, Mark Slafkes/Karen Graf, Donna Small, Anne Smith, Dan/Diane Solo, Laura Thomas, James/Suzanne Van Bommel, William von Weiland, John Wallace, Dorothy Weber, Anida Weyl, and Dennis Yabuki.

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## Oakland History Notes

### Pioneer Soda Co.

Opening in 1879 on the northeast corner of 13th and Franklin Streets, the Pioneer Soda Manufacturing Company, true to its name, became Oakland's first producer of soda water, a favored beverage of the Victorians since the first bottle appeared in 1806. Beloved for reasons medicinal and pleasurable, soda water became one of the city's minor industries, supporting three companies by the century's turn.

The Pioneer Soda Company, here depicted in its first incarnation, evolved into the East Bay's major producer and purveyor of the bubbly liquid. In 1880 its proprietors, Taylor and Lohse, boasted themselves as agents for "Eastern Cider, Pacific Congress Water, Litten Springs Seltzer Water," as well as manufacturers of soda and seltzer water. By 1884 the enterprise had moved to the northeast corner of 13th and Webster, its former location having been rendered noisy and sooty by the new 14th and Franklin Central Pacific railroad depot.

In 1896 the company changed its name to the Oakland Pioneer Soda Water Company, as it was thereafter known. 1903 saw the firm installed in new, commodious facilities on the southeast corner of 10th and Webster. A newspaper article of the time provided this



(Oakland History Room)

description of the city's concocters of watery effervescence:

"About twenty men are constantly employed here, and five large delivery wagons are busy dispersing the products. Deep wells on the company's own premises are the source of supply for the distilled water. This concern turns out 800 dozen cases a day. In addition to this it supplies immense quantities of distilled water to the residences, hotels and cafes of this city and throughout the entire country."

After fifty years of business, the enterprise closed its doors in 1930, probably a victim of the Depression. A link with the city's industrial beginnings was thereby severed.

--William Sturm

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