

Richmond Boulevard Gift of the "City Beautiful"

OHA is offering a walking tour of Richmond Boulevard on Aug. 20 at 1:30 pm. See Calendar for details & tour series.

Richmond Boulevard is a legacy of a visionary era in American urban planning. From its pastoral roots to the hodgepodge of contemporary and early twentieth century dwellings it encompasses today, this small, self-contained urban neighborhood reflects its colorful history of dreamers and developers and the conflicting results of this uneasy alliance.

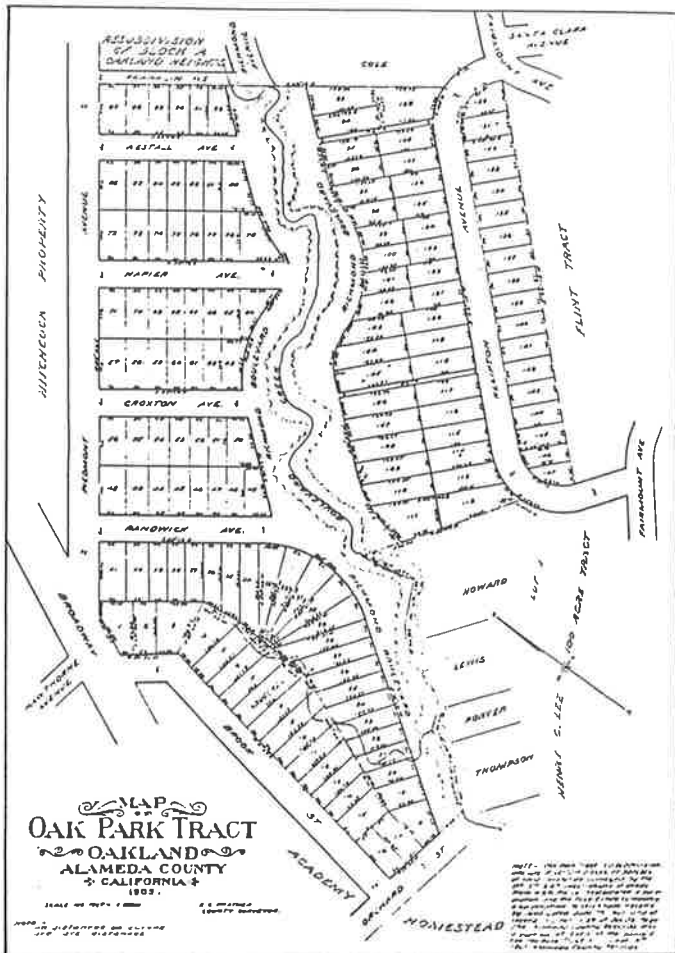
Early records indicate that in 1878 the neighborhood was part of a tract of land owned by A.J. Pope, a landowner with large holdings in the west. Unconfirmed tradition states that Pope, whose family had interests in thoroughbred horse racing, trained

racehorses on an oval track that paralleled Richmond Boulevard and Piedmont Avenue. Giving credence to this is the existence of Cemetery Creek, as it was called in those days, and its ready supply of fresh water so essential for Pope's endeavor.

By 1883 the property was owned by Emily Pope, A.J.'s widow. In 1905, Wickham Havens bought the land where Richmond Boulevard exists today. Wickham Havens, with his father Frank and uncle Harold, was one of the biggest developers in Oakland at the turn of the century. They developed the majority of the homesites sold in the East Bay hills from 1890 to 1930, and planted



Early photo of Oak Glen Park; west branch of Richmond Boulevard beyond the bridge and pergola. (Oakland History Room)



1905 map of Oak Park Tract shows the divided boulevard along the creek, paths to Kempton Av., and undulating lot lines. Broadway and future Pill Hill are at lower left. Large properties at lower right are now apartment sites.

eucalyptus trees on the bare hills. From Richmond to San Leandro, they planned residential communities for "people of means" as in Piedmont, and more modest developments like Havenscourt.

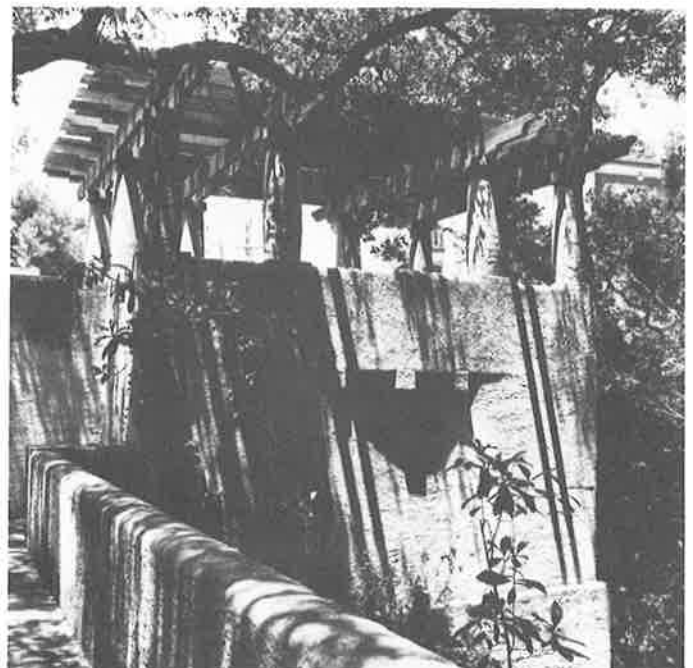
Wickham Havens subdivided the Richmond Boulevard property into what he called "Oak Park Tract," and promoted it stressing the "handsome boulevard" through the tract and the small park adorning the banks of the creek. Lots were platted to follow the meandering course of what was now called Boulevard Creek--at least on their front exposures. Behind they were uniform urban lots, 40 x 110 or 50 x 120 feet. What made Oak Park Tract particularly appealing was the splendid oaks and abundant vegetation along the creek, and the close proximity to transit lines on Broadway.

Richmond Boulevard's first decade of residential development, 1905-1915, corresponded exactly with the mayoral term of

Frank K. Mott, a staunch advocate of the "City Beautiful" concept of urban park and greenbelt planning. An idea born out of nineteenth century European models, actively pursued in this country by landscape architects and planners such as Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham, it found support in Oakland from Mayor Mott, Park Commission architect Oscar Prager, and city planners Charles Mulford Robinson and Werner Hegemann. Robinson in 1906, Prager in 1910, and Hegemann in 1915 all proposed in official city reports a series of creekside parks intended to link Lakeside Park and expansive projected parks in the Oakland hills and waterfront.

That none of these proposals came to fruition is a sad testimony to subsequent administrations. It also makes Richmond Boulevard a historical anomaly, the only living example of that grand plan.

Appointed city landscape architect in November 1908, Oscar Prager was directed by Mayor Mott to survey locales best suited for park development. One of these was Richmond Boulevard and its creek, thenceforth referred to as Glen Echo Creek. In his report, Prager saw Glen Echo Creek as a "picturesque connection" between the proposed Mosswood Park and Lakeside Park. "The open creek can here be treated with lawn and flower patches with occasional fountains and large basins of water with fre-



Oscar Prager's pergola today.

(Phil Bellman)



1908 Mission-style house resembles one in a Southern California bungalow book.



Original lampposts adorn paths linking Oak Glen with hill streets above.



Creek, bridge, and pergola with tile-trimmed columns. (photos, Phil Bellman)

quent seats and simple shelters." The Park Commission appropriated funds for "a concrete bridge, pergola and pavilion across Glen Echo Creek in Oak Glen Park." The bridge, pergola, and fountain were completed by contractor J.R. Sorensen in January 1911, with water connections and mosaics furnished later that year.

While there had been small wood bridges over the creek before, the permanent rough-cast concrete footbridge helped to consolidate this rural wilderness within the confines of dense urban reality. Oak Glen Park remains today a rugged thicket of oaks and brush, with the bridge providing a pleasant means to idle across Glen Echo Creek. On the west end of the bridge is a concrete pergola with redwood trellis. Colorful mosaic tiles in block patterns decorate the interior of the pergola and its bench, and the same tiles adorn one of Prager's marvels, a splendid fountain with a lion's head made of terra cotta to spout water five feet to the basin waiting below. The fountain and basin appear in the woods like a totem of some lost civilization. They are no longer connected to carry water and the mosaics are dulled and sullied through years of neglect, but would require no great outlay to restore.

Up the hill opposite the footbridge is another distinctive feature unique to this

neighborhood. A flight of concrete steps called Richmond Way links Richmond Boulevard to Kempton Way through mature trees and vegetation, and another pedestrian stairway, Frisbie Way, climbs from Richmond Boulevard to Fairmount. Constructed during the area's original development, these paths preserve several cast-iron light standards made by United Iron Works of Oakland. Fluted posts with glass globes were common throughout Oakland's business districts at the time. These two sites are among the few left in Oakland where they can be found in their original locations.

Homes constructed along Richmond Boulevard during its nascent period are significant as examples of architecture sensitive to the environment, superior in design but not in cost. They were built for people attracted to the region by its rustic allure. They form a body of work both unique to an area and representative of period models. As such they contribute to Richmond Boulevard's possible designation as a historic district.

Many are Craftsman bungalows or incorporate elements of that style. The best of this form make use of materials as close to natural as possible. Featuring large fireplaces, indoor-outdoor porches, built-in benches, they don't intrude upon the environment and are designed to exploit bucolic



abundance. Houses at 3070, 3066-68, and 3060 Richmond Boulevard, from 1907-08, are excellent models of bungalow architecture. Also built in 1907 and 1908, at 3027 and 3059 Richmond, are classic examples of the Eastern Shingle and Mission Revival styles popular at the turn of the century. Both are distinguished by imaginative design and composition, and porch, gable, and dormer details that lend a romantic feeling.

The first residents of Richmond Boulevard spent between \$1500 and \$3500 to build their homes, and typically saw the value of their property double within five years. Such was the story of 3070 Richmond, built at a cost of \$1650 for Charles Penfield, manager of the Pioneer Auto Company on Broadway. The auto businesses on Broadway, incidentally, have always had their impact on the boulevard: photographer Peter Stackpole, a resident of Richmond Boulevard, recalled cars racing down the street from Broadway, and that "Stutz and Auburn motor cars used to wheel up Richmond Boulevard, while daring mechanics lounged on the front fenders, fine-tuning the motors."

Penfield sold his house by 1912 to Catherine Wells, who married C. Percy Murdock in 1913. Later an important figure in Oakland real estate, Murdock was working as secretary to F.M. "Borax" Smith of twenty mule team fame. Smith was a visionary who in the nineteenth century foresaw the day when the East Bay would be covered with houses and the need would arise for an integrated system of roads and public transit. By 1911, his Realty Syndicate had developed over one hundred tracts of property in the East Bay, and his Key System provided the transit. Murdock worked for Smith in his real estate operations at the

Realty Syndicate.

In 1917 C.P. Murdock hired his architect brother Hamilton to design additions worth \$2000 to the house at 3070 Richmond Boulevard. The house changed hands again after the Murdocks divorced in 1924. C.P. Murdock went on to form his own realty firm, but was hit hard by the market crash of 1929. In spite of optimistic predictions attributed to Murdock in the 1930 Tribune Yearbook, he fell into a prolonged depression. In January 1931, Murdock was found dead of carbon monoxide poisoning on a tract of land high in the Oakland hills. This was the last land he owned exclusive of partners, and he would often go there to dream of the mansion he hoped to build on it one day and to brood about the vagaries of the real estate business.

In 1926 noted Oakland architect Frederick Reimers designed a French Provincial fourplex at 3034-40 Richmond Boulevard. Reimers is best known for his Art Deco Income Securities Building (Bank of Oakland, 360 14th Street, 1928-29) and a house in Monterey that incorporated living trees into its structure. Contrasting with the craftsman bungalow architecture of its older neighbors, the picturesque fourplex nonetheless complements the romantic naturalism of Richmond Boulevard. It features gabled roofs with dormers, and a round tower with conical roof at the angle of its L-plan, with an arched doorway at the base. It is positioned far back from the street on a steep slope and brings to mind a French hillside villa with its stepped pathway and terraced entrances to the units.

Reimers liked the rusticity of Richmond Boulevard so much that he later built his own home here, at 3052-54. This house is an Early American gabled cottage, consistent with Reimers' habit of working in "revival" styles during that stage of his career.

Since Reimers' day, Richmond Boulevard has managed to maintain the essence mandated to it by the Mott administration, albeit with some losses. Where there were once only moderately priced houses and fourplexes sensitively placed in the pastoral setting, there have encroached a few large apartment buildings squeezed into spaces unsuited for them. Where the park once boasted an artistic and subtly beautiful fountain, one can now see unnecessary



Typical Craftsman cottage where C. Percy Murdock of the Realty Syndicate lived from 1913 to 1924. (Survey photo)



decay from neglect. Still, Richmond Boulevard remains a unique reminder of that time before all the creeks were paved over, before the city's namesake groves of oaks were leveled, before unrestrained development was given trampling rights over nature.

Richmond Boulevard deserves a chance to stay that way. In 1913, residents asked the city for improved maintenance of their park. (In 1955, it is now shocking to read, they petitioned to have the creek filled in as a public nuisance.) Today, the neighborhood has strong potential for designation as a historic district. Then perhaps no more giant apartment buildings could be built. The park and pergola might be restored to what they were. Historic homes could remain intact. Presently governments --federal, state, and city--do not favor or encourage those who undertake such projects. But it seems only right that this legacy of the City Beautiful generation be passed on to future ones so that people can always gaze upon nature and ask, "What if?"

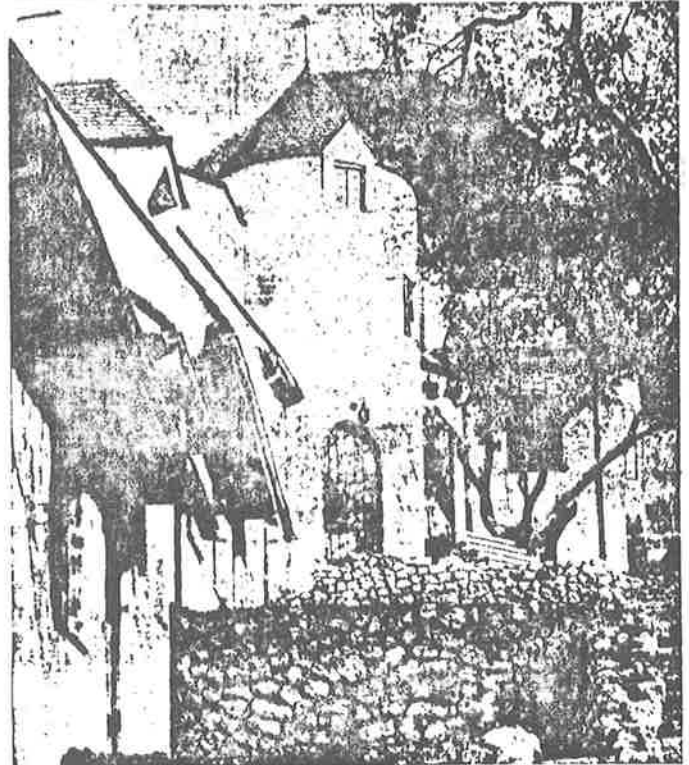
--John Murry

Acknowledgments: Earl Barron, Julie Barron, Marlene Wilson, Frederick Monteagle, Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey.

From Tribune real estate section, October 31, 1926.

New Apartment--French Village Type

Frederick H. Reimers, local architect, is the originator and owner of this picturesque departure from the usual architectural type of apartment house design. The structure is located at Frisbie and Richmond Boulevard.



NEIGHBORHOOD ALERT

An important Richmond Boulevard neighborhood issue will be coming before the City Council soon. For 8 years the Richmond Boulevard neighborhood has been battling Dinesh Sawney's Unibuilt, Inc., over a proposal to develop the 30th Street end of Richmond Boulevard. The original proposal was for 48 condominium units, later cut down to 38. The site is a eucalyptus grove along steep creek banks, reached by a bridge and footpath.

Because Glen Echo Creek provides major drainage from the Oakland Hills, the Alameda County Flood Control District looked at the project at the neighborhood's request, and recommended that the project be moved 30' up the bank and not touch the creek. This would leave room for perhaps 10 to 12 units. The developer sought a second opinion from the State Department of Water Resources--which recommended staying even farther from the creek. Letters are on file from both these agencies advising against the current plan.

On April 18 the neighborhood petitioned the Planning Commission for downzoning to R-50. Downzoning was approved, but the developer was able to insist on having the Unibuilt project grandfathered in. In the near future the downzoning will go to City Council for final approval, and the neighborhood will be contesting the exemption for Unibuilt. Watch City Council agendas or call the City Clerk's office to find out when this is scheduled.

A project of the size proposed could be disastrous for parking in the already densely populated neighborhood. Encouraged by Adams Point's success, Richmond Boulevard may pursue higher off-street parking requirements for new development.

Richmond Boulevard also has to contend with fallout from Auto Row, currently in the form of an illegal parking lot around one of the houses on 30th Street. Its use permit application, denied by the Planning Department, may be making the rounds of Commission and Council. --Julie Barron

Christian Science Church: A Letter to our Members

Dear OHA Members:

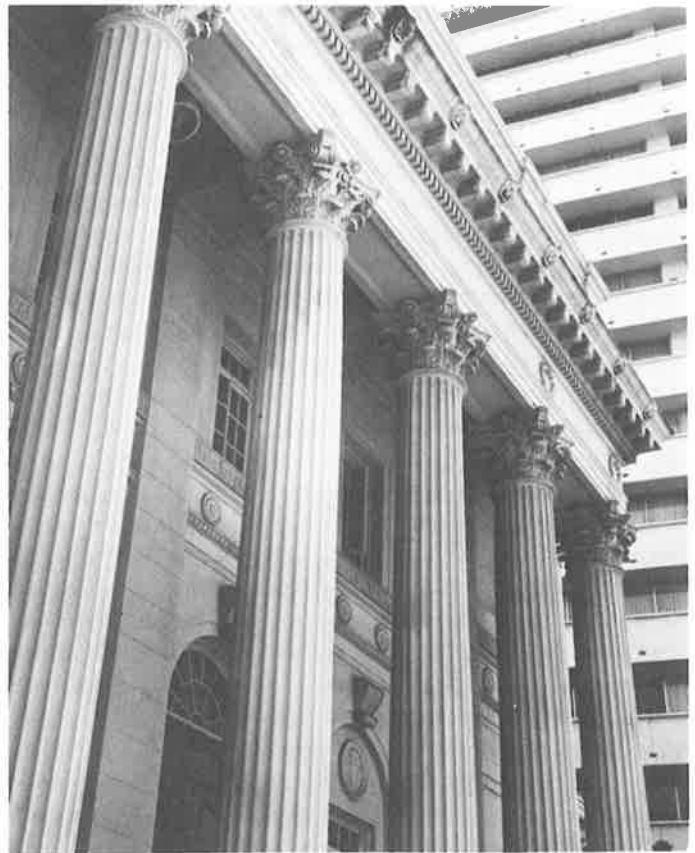
The purpose of this letter is twofold - to thank all of you who supported OHA and its Board of Directors in the effort to preserve the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, on Lake Merritt; and to bring you up to date on the situation.

As you all know by now, OHA's efforts to save the structure, or at least the colonnaded facade, failed before the City Council, on a 5-3 vote. This was certainly disappointing to all of those who worked so hard in this effort.

However, we were very heartened by the strong support provided by members of OHA. The many phone calls, letters, and bodies at the Council hearing sent a very strong message to Oakland's elected officials that there is strong support for preservation in Oakland. The credibility and visibility of the organization also increased substantially throughout the long process, and we received not only good press, but high marks from many within the City structure. The Board is very grateful for the efforts by OHA members which contributed to these positive results.

Some members have inquired whether OHA intends to file suit to attempt to prevent demolition of the church. The Board has investigated this possibility, and has been advised that several potential legal arguments exist that might prevent, or at least delay, demolition. For a variety of reasons, the Board has determined not to sue. However, we want to let our members know what these reasons were and are.

While we are extremely disappointed at the Methodist Church's absolutely intransigent attitude concerning any possible compromise for the site, we nevertheless feel that getting involved in litigation with a religious organization is not in the best interests of OHA. Our intent was never to interfere with the church's efforts to expand its social service programs in the city of Oakland, or to otherwise thwart its religious endeavors. Since the Methodist Church has refused to consider any compromise on the site, we are reluctant to attempt to achieve one through legal action.



No compromise on colonnaded facade. (Phil Bellman)

Further, in light of our new-found visibility and credibility within City circles, we do not want to be perceived as obstructionists, and therefore feel that litigation over this particular issue is not appropriate. This is not to say that court action might not be appropriate under other circumstances. Finally, there is the cost to consider. Although we might recover our attorneys' fees in a successful battle, the Board is reluctant to commit the substantial resources that would be necessary to prosecute a legal action at this time. Accordingly, the Board has concluded--with some reluctance--not to press the matter of the Christian Science Church any further.

Once again, thanks to all of you who helped in this struggle, and we hope we can count on you again next time. Responsible preservation does have a voice in Oakland, and let's continue to make it heard.

Les A. Hausrath, President
Carolyn Douthat, Chair, Preservation
Action Committee

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.

■ HISTORIC DISTRICT IN CLINTON PARK

Tenth Avenue now has the first residential historic district in the city. In May the City Council unanimously approved designation of the district, which includes about 2 blocks on Tenth Avenue between East 19th Street and East 22nd Street. Marina Carlson, a neighborhood force who initiated the designation, says she is delighted with the Council action. Carlson, who is active in numerous neighborhood land use issues, hopes that district status will result in "a standard for building that will protect the neighborhood from insensitive development."

District designation carries with it design review requirements for alterations, new construction, and public improvements, as well as qualifying property owners to use the Historical Building Code and the Mills Act, which can limit property taxes.

The location of the district in a low/moderate income neighborhood will present the city with new issues in administering design review. Already Carlson has requested that fees for review of projects in the district be either eliminated or put on a sliding scale based on the cost of the project.

--Carolyn Douthat

■ WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO THE RAMS? CITY CENTER FORGES A-HEAD

The Free Market building at 14th and Martin Luther King was demolished in early June as part of the City Center project (see Winter OHA News). According to OEDE, its terra cotta scrolls and rams' heads were removed to the Oakland Museum's warehouse in West Oakland. Museum conservator John Burke says two of the rams' heads will be retained by the Museum--one for the History collection and one for the Conservation Department which for many years was located in the building. The rest of the heads, and the scrolls, will eventually be used on a new building, probably in connection with OEDE's downtown redevelopment.

The market site will become parking while federal offices are constructed on the adjoining block (Jefferson to Clay), now parking. Next move in this game of musical blocks may involve the present George P. Miller Federal Building at 15th and Clay. The City is reportedly seeking to acquire this "surplus" site from the GSA for a "mixed use parking and retail project." Designed by Walter J. Mathews in 1916 for the John Breuner Furniture Company, the classical brick loft building is considered eligible for the National Register by the City's Cultural Heritage Survey.

Changes in the City Center redevelopment area behind Cit Hall: George P. Miller Federal Building becoming "surplus" (Survey photo); 20th Century Market is gone but its terra cotta ornament lives on (Phil Bellman).





■ JULIA MORGAN THREATENED IN ADAMS POINT

A Julia Morgan designed brown shingle at 401 Lee Street in Adams Point was the subject of a meeting between the Adams Point Neighborhood Preservation Association and developer Gilbert Chan in June. The house, built in 1907, was rated as eligible for the National Register by the Cultural Heritage Survey. It was the home of City Attorney John E. McElroy, commemorated by the McElroy Fountain in nearby Lakeside Park. Located at the corner of Lee and Van Buren, it shares a large lot with a smaller house dating from the same year.

The two houses have been neglected for a number of years, and are located in a high density (R-80) zone. Chan, who has an 11 month option to purchase the two houses, is considering developing 55 units on the site. The neighborhood organization, which recently won a long battle for increased parking requirements in the area, hopes to preserve the building, possibly incorporated into new development.

According to Ron Morra, president of the Adams Point group, so many significant buildings have already been lost to high density development that the neighborhood is trying to save as many as possible of those that remain. --Carolyn Douthat

■ NEGLECT AND DEMOLITION: CITY PRESERVATION POLICIES REVIEWED

The threat to the Julia Morgan on Lee Street illustrates one of the reasons significant buildings are disappearing in Oakland--demolition by neglect. This is an increasingly serious problem for older, oftentimes important buildings in the city.

In the last two years, fire has damaged or destroyed two of the Wetmore houses on 11th Street, which were city landmarks, the Simpson house on 23rd Street, the Hall house at 1445 5th Avenue, Fidelity Hall at 7th and Peralta, and a pair of Victorians on Fruitvale near Pleasant Street. Other buildings have been lost to demolition when deterioration destroyed their value.

These buildings become threatened long before demolition is proposed. According to Chris Buckley of the Oakland City Planning Department, there are several scenarios which may lead to the loss of a building. Low density buildings in commercial or high density areas are often purchased for the value of the land, and maintenance deferred or eliminated. Eventually the toll of neglect raises rehabilitation costs above economic limits, or the buildings are left vacant and subject to vandalism and fire. In some cases property is held by estates



A gallery of Oakland neglect: Julia Morgan's McElroy house in Adams Point--compare photo in Fall 1985 News;



Simpson House, 524 23rd St., illustrates typical sequence of events--vacated, then stripped of ornament, then burned;

with absent or uninformed heirs--the buildings are vacant and again vulnerable to damage. A third, and unfortunately common, situation is a building vacated because of housing code violations which the owner is unwilling or unable to correct. And finally there are buildings which are purchased by well intentioned but underfinanced entrepreneurs whose rehab efforts halt once ready capital disappears.

Hopefully, the newest review of Oakland's preservation policies will address this problem, at least as it affects significant buildings.

In part because of OHA's fight to save the Fourth Church of Christ Scientist building, the Planning Commission has established a task force to consider citywide preservation policies and the long dormant draft Preservation Element. The review may take up to 18 months, with a task force composed of Landmarks Board members and representatives interested in Oakland's built environment from both the aesthetic and financial points of view.

Policy changes to be considered include:

1. Putting teeth in the requirement that owners of city landmarks maintain their property. As now written, the owner has the obligation, but the city has no enforcement power.

2. Enabling Housing Conservation, the city agency responsible for enforcing housing code violations, to make repairs and bill the owner, rather than ordering demolition when an owner will not bring the building up to code. Other possibilities include development of a program for acquiring residential property and offering it for sale for rehabilitation. A city ordinance already allows this kind of acquisition, but the ordinance, enacted in about 1979, has never been implemented.

3. Recommending that the city enter into Mills Act contracts with landmark owners, effectively freezing property taxes for ten years, even if the property is sold.

4. Establishing a special rehabilitation assistance program for landmark buildings and S-7 districts using available Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and Economic Development moneys.

5. Amending the demolition ordinance to allow the city to levy heavy fines or refuse demolition permits where an owner has refused to repair property in violation of city codes.

6. Basing design review fees for landmark and historic district properties on the cost of the project, rather than charging a flat fee.

--Carolyn Douthat



Wetmore houses on 11th Street downtown--burned amid controversy over landmarking, demolition, and housing; and



Boarded-up Fruitvale mansion, described by Mark Wilson as "Tara after the Civil War." (photos, Phil Bellman)



City Landmarks Board Actions

■ DONATIONS TO THE OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

The Oakland History Room, like all local history libraries, depends very largely upon donations for the enhancement of its collection. Recently, the Room received three very important gifts. The Lincoln Child Center, which began life as the West Oakland Home for Foundlings in 1883, donated all its early records, including board meeting minutes and registers of children admitted to the Center from 1883 to 1920. The registers, which have a complete index by name of child, list the full name, date and place of birth, date of admission, date and place of death of parents, and nativity of parents. Invaluable for genealogists, the registers constitute a vital record of the city's oldest extant child care center. The board minutes provide a detailed inside look at the manner in which the Center functioned in its early years.

Another important recent donation is a collection of various programs and newspapers related to Oakland High School in the 1890s. Included among the items in this gift is the school magazine the Aegis which contains a story entitled "A Night's Swim in Yeddo Bay" by a young student named Jack London, one of the first publications of a story by this Oakland writer who was to become world famous. A dedication program dated Dec. 20, 1894, for the new Oakland High School at 12th and Jefferson Streets is another prized item in this donation.

The third recent gift is a photograph of one of the cable cars of the Oakland Cable Railway which, from 1886 to 1899, ran cable cars along San Pablo Avenue to Park Avenue. The donor's father worked for the Oakland Cable Railway, and she was happy to find a good home for a family picture.

The Oakland History Room welcomes donations of any printed matter--streetcar transfers, theater programs, real estate promotional literature, protest leaflets, old grocery ads, political campaign items, business cards, photographs, postcards--all tell us something about the way Oaklanders lived and saw their city. Perhaps you have something in your basement, attic, or trunk?

--William Sturm, Librarian,
Oakland History Room

The Oakland History Room at the Main Library, 125 14th Street, is open Tuesday through Saturday, phone 273-3222.

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.

APRIL

Board approved designs for storefronts on three buildings in the Old Oakland/Victorian Row district. Following National Park Service guidelines, infill is to be a "contemporary compatible" design rather than pseudo-historical, as no documentation of the original appearance exists.

Voted to delay action on the application of C-Rock Corporation to demolish the Fricke Building and Wetmore house on 11th Street, especially as no owner was present to state what steps had been taken to save the buildings. At least one person had expressed interest in moving 571 11th to a Victorian neighborhood on 22nd Street.

Reviewing the March 25 California Preservation Foundation workshop at the Oakland Museum, secretary Chris Buckley described the Mills Act which may exempt locally designated historic properties from reassessment when they are sold, and chair Gordon Henderson reported encouragement from Frank Gilbert of the National Trust for the Board to seek full commission status.

Office of Community Development representatives reported on plans to move the Simpson House from 524 23rd Street, where the Sisters of Providence are developing low income housing, to 14th and Myrtle.

Board continued monitoring the Victorian houses at 3148 and 3154 Fruitvale, deteriorating while tied up in probate.

Bert Bertolero, Frederick Hertz, and Marji Shaw agreed to represent the Board on the historic preservation task force, as requested by the City Planning Commission.

At the request of the State Office of Historic Preservation, the Board commented (favorably) on the nomination of the California Hotel, 3501 San Pablo Avenue, to the National Register. Henderson contributed additional history on the black entertainers who stayed and performed there.



MAY

Board discussed an application for exterior alterations to Macky Hall at CCAC (the Hale-Treadwell House; see Fall 1987 OHA News), a city landmark. The College, with architect Tim Andersen, wanted to restore the building to its 1880s appearance by removing additions and reconstructing missing details. Several Board members argued that additions dating from the 1920s and 30s, the early years of the College's occupancy, had historical importance of their own, and the original appearance was not known. Plans were approved, but the Board discussed the need for a policy on buildings with historical alterations.

Board received a request from the Director of City Planning to initiate de-landmarking of the 11th Street buildings as their 120-day temporary designation had expired; Board continued the matter till the June meeting, seeking time to consider memorializing the site, and/or moving the buildings that remained after the fire.

Buckley reported on another fire at 3148 Fruitvale, noting that Housing Conservation had since cleared the grounds and boarded up the buildings. Board moved to request that the attorney handling the estate inform all prospective buyers that the houses are on the preservation study list.

After two fires at the Simpson House, OCD was no longer interested in moving it, although a private developer might be.

Nine of the most important properties on the study list since 1977 were selected for possible consideration as landmarks, and members were to visit them and read about them for discussion at a future meeting.

Annalee Allen of OHA reported on two Jack London matters. A large private collection of London materials is being offered to the City of Oakland if a location can be found. Meanwhile 519 31st Street, a house apparently built by London for his first wife in 1904 as part of a divorce settlement, is proposed for demolition for parking. Board voted to ask OCD to consider moving the house to an appropriate site.

Buckley reported that the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, would probably be demolished in late summer, after completion of a salvage plan.

Tim Weldon has resigned from the Board, leaving a second vacant seat.

JUNE

Board was again requested to initiate deletion of the Fricke-Wetmore buildings, 565 to 583 11th Street. Unhappy with the course of recent events, Board voted not to recommend de-designation but to recommend that design review be maintained over the site and that the city conduct an investigation into the fire which resulted in loss of life and property. They also proposed placement of a plaque on the site.

Board reviewed application for a used car lot at 1102-18 E. 14th Street, site of the landmark Central Block, demolished in 1986 after being damaged by fire. The site is still within an S-7 district. Board requested a redesign with wrought iron or wooden fence, unobtrusive lighting, and plaza-like plantings. The car lot also requires a major variance from the Planning Commission.

Fruitvale houses had been sold; details were not available. Private proposal to move the Simpson House had run into objections from the Oak Center neighborhood, which did not want a fourplex; developer could not afford it with fewer units. OCD had inspected the Jack London house at 519 31st but made no commitment to move it.

Buckley reported that St. Augustine's Church at 29th and Telegraph would be having the exterior siding removed for structural work. He had approved the plans, as there would be no permanent change to the appearance of the building. --Kathy Olson



Cottage built for Jack London's ex-wife and daughters to be removed from Telegraph commercial site. (Phil Bellman)



OHA Update

■ SPRING HOUSE TOUR

The sun shone on OHA's spring house tour of Crocker Highlands on April 24. The easy walking tour of 10 unique homes found several hundred enthusiastic participants treated to the interiors of Mediterranean, Sicilian, English, and other exotic revival residences. Bread, cheese, strawberries, lemonade, and wine were amply provided, to the accompanying sounds of a string quartet from the Oakland Youth Symphony.

Congratulations are extended to the house tour committee: Annalee Allen, Julie Barron, Les Hausrath, Helen Lore, Betty Marvin, Mary Jane McConville, Bill McLetchie, Sally Nielsen, Ed Phillips, Deborah Shefler. Special thanks to Naomi Schiff and Julie Barron for graphics and art work, and Ed Phillips and Betty Marvin for brochure text. Many thanks to house docents and refreshment and clean-up volunteers too numerous to mention. Grateful acknowledgment to the following donors who helped to underwrite the cost of the event: Grubb and Ellis Real Estate, Fast Print on Lakeshore, Lakeshore Deli, Leaven and Earth, P. Marasco Selections, Lucky Food Store.

Last but not least, our gratitude to all the homeowners who graciously opened their doors for this major OHA fundraising event.

--Mary Jane McConville

■ PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITY!

The OHA News needs authors! For future issues, we need pieces on local history and architecture, focused on Oakland, and with research behind them. Contact Betty Marvin, Dean Yabuki, or the OHA office if you have a topic or would like to work on one.

Suggestions from the Editorial Board:

- Jack London/Gertrude Stein in Oakland
- History of the Kennedy Tract
- History of the Sacramento Northern line through Oakland and Montclair
- Logging in the San Antonio redwoods
- Architecture: the work of Henry Meyer, Walter Mathews, or other Oakland architects
- Remnants of the Key Route in the East Bay.

■ DESIGN PROJECT AT THE LAKE

At this year's Festival at the Lake, OHA shared a booth with the Lake Merritt Community Design Project, a newly formed organization of landscape architects interested in enhancing the Lake Merritt-Lakeside Park area. They will be conducting public workshops and surveys in the coming year, as a basis for a final report and design guidelines submitted to the City Council.

Quoting from the group's statement of purpose: "Lake Merritt is Oakland's central open space amenity and is widely symbolic of all the positive aspects of Oakland's image. Sandwiched between downtown, the Hills and the flatland neighborhoods, the Lake literally and symbolically ties together all the disparate worlds of Oakland... Yet Lake Merritt is sadly unequipped to fulfill its de facto role as a major public park. Surrounded on the south by important institutions such as the Oakland Museum, Kaiser Auditorium and Laney College, the Lake is cut off from them by existing traffic patterns. Moreover, the greenbelt connection long ago proposed between Lake Merritt and the estuary has never been realized. Painfully narrow park borders separating the Lake from city streets... cause conflicts among joggers, bicyclists, pedestrians and people who wish to sit.... The goal of the Lake Merritt Community Assistance Team Project is to...improve the effectiveness of Lake Merritt as a major central public park for Oakland."

For the Festival, the Community Design group displayed photos illustrating their points, and solicited public feedback on potential solutions. Chair is Brooks Kolb, 377 Santa Clara #106, Oakland 94610.

Thanks to OHA members helping with the booth: Julie Barron, Earl Barron, Sally Neilson, Annalee Allen, Eric Klatt, Dean Yabuki, Bill McLetchie, Helen Lore, Ed Phillips, Fred Mitchell. --Annalee Allen

■ HELP WANTED, TECHNICAL

Needed: Someone with knowledge of Xerox copiers to get our office copier working. Central Bank generously donated a Xerox 3100 to OHA and now it refuses to do what it is supposed to do--COPY. If you can help, call Helen Lore at 763-9218.

■ CULTURAL ARTS PLAN

The goals and first year objectives for Oakland's Strategic Plan for Cultural Development were unveiled June 24 at a "Cultural Plan Summit" symposium at the Kaiser Convention Center. Attending were the 400 participants who have contributed to the city task force and its subcommittees over the past eight months. Eight major goals are contained in the Cultural Plan and several deal directly with the space needs of Oakland's arts community.

The number one goal of the plan is to develop the west end of Lake Merritt as an integrated plaza for the arts. The report describes the siting of the Museum, Laney College, and Convention Center and their relationship to Lake Merritt as a "missed opportunity in Oakland's planning." It calls for relocating the parking lot and undergrounding 12th Street, creating a promenade from the Convention Center through Laney and the Museum to the lake.

Another goal of the plan is evaluating the facility and space needs of Oakland's arts organizations, and identifying available spaces. The Cultural Heritage Survey (cosponsored by OHA) will be one of the resources used for information on potential arts-use buildings. The report calls for the city to develop support programs such as low-interest renovation loans to arts groups, and to explore turning surplus property into arts spaces. OHA representatives on the task forces recommended that the Fox Theater be included in these plans.

The plan calls for the City Council to adopt supportive policy statements which encourage artists to work and live in Oakland, and to recognize the arts as legitimate business activities eligible for loans and services. Zoning regulations and building codes will be examined to determine ways to support rather than undermine the efforts of artists and arts organizations. As the Open Studios tour demonstrates, hundreds of East Bay artists will benefit.

The Cultural Plan with its emphasis on housing the arts is a step in the right direction. It is unfortunate that its recognition of the opportunities for cultural expansion around Lake Merritt comes too late for the Christian Science Church building.

--Annalee Allen

■ ARTS TOUR SPOTLIGHTS RECYCLED BUILDINGS

OHA member Daphne Anderson organized a bus tour of selected artist live-work studios during the first of the two recent Pro Arts Open Studios weekends. Michele Ellis, executive director of Pro Arts Gallery, gave background information on the artists, and Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey coordinator Gary Knecht related interesting facts about the buildings which have been converted to studios. These included the Dutch Boy Studios in the Melrose district of East Oakland, Bruce Beasley's compound in South Prescott near the Oakland West BART station, the Blue Print Studios in Adams Point, and studios in what Gary has christened the SONI (South of Nimitz) area. The tour showed how such diverse structures as a lead paint factory, a 1910 grist mill, a 1937 furniture factory, a 1921 tile showroom, and a 1923 retail warehouse can all become artists' live-work space. The group enjoyed a picnic lunch in the courtyard garden of Bruce Beasley's studio. The tour was partially underwritten by First Interstate Bank and proceeds benefited Pro Arts.

440 artists took part in this year's Open Studio, an event sponsored by Pro Arts Gallery for the past five years. The Open Studio weekends vividly illustrate how Oakland and the East Bay have become a center for hundreds of artists to live and work.

--Annalee Allen



Arts Plaza proposal would improve connections between Auditorium (L) and other lakeside resources. (Phil Bellman)

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

through August 7, "Oakland Cityscapes and Other Paintings," Anthony Holdsworth, at Victor Fischer Galleries, 1333 Broadway suite 100 Plaza Level; Tu-Fri 11-5:30.

through August 7, "The Howards: First Family of Bay Area Modernism," Art Special Gallery, Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak St., W-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-7.

through Sept. 17, "Mayor Davie's Oakland, 1915-31," exhibit at Oakland History Room, Main Library, 125 14th St.; Tu & Th 12-8:30, W & F 10-5:30, Sat 1-5:30; 273-3222.

July 20, Wed., 7:30 pm, "WPA Murals & Graphics," Masha Zakheim Jewett & Michael Crowe, Art Deco Society, at San Francisco JCC, 3200 California St. at Presidio. \$2 ADSC/\$3 general; 552-DECO.

July 22, Fri., 7:30 pm, "An Evening at the Silver Slipper Club," Art Deco Society & Lake Merritt Breakfast Club benefit for Necklace of Lights. Dancing to Peter Mintun Orchestra. Lakeview Club atop Kaiser Bldg., 300 Lakeshore \$25. Reservations 834-4022.

O.H.A. SUMMER WALKING TOURS

Beginning July 23, each Saturday and Sunday through Aug. 28. These 12 walks through historic Oakland neighborhoods are:

July 23, Sat. MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMETERY Led by Barbara Smith & Michael Crowe. Meet at Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Ave.

July 24, Sun. FERNWOOD DRIVE Led by Ed Phillips. Meet at south end of Fernwood Dr. at Mountain Blvd.

July 30, Sat. TEMESCAL NEIGHBORHOOD Led by Sharon Moore. Meet at Genova Delicatessen, 50th & Telegraph.

July 31, Sun. DOWNTOWN ART DECO Led by Michael Crowe. Meet under Camera Corner sign, 13th & Broadway.

Aug. 6, Sat. GOLDEN GATE NEIGHBORHOOD Led by Ed Phillips. Meet at Golden Gate Branch Library, 5605 San Pablo.

Aug. 7, Sun. LAKESHORE/TRESTLE GLEN Led by Dean Yabuki. Meet at Lakeview Branch Library, 550 El Embarcadero.

Aug. 13, Sat. PRODUCE MARKET AND THE "SONI" (SOUTH OF NIMITZ) DISTRICT Led by Gary Knecht. Meet at the Oakland Grill, 3rd & Franklin.

Aug. 14, Sun. ROSE GARDEN NEIGHBORHOOD Led by Marlene Wilson. Meet at Monte Vista & Vernon.

Aug. 20, Sat. RICHMOND BOULEVARD Led by Julie Barron. Meet at MacArthur end of Glen Echo Park on Richmond Blvd.

Aug. 21, Sun. BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD Led by Carolyn Douthat. Meet at corner 8th Ave. & E.24th St.

Aug. 27, Sat. FRUITVALE & KENNEDY TRACT Led by Fran Matarrese. Meet at 2647 E. 14th St., St. Joseph's Professional Center.

Aug. 28, Sun. F.M."BORAX" SMITH ESTATE Led by Gail Solomon. Meet at corner 8th Ave. & E.24th St.

All tours are 1:30-3:30 p.m. Donation is \$3 for OHA members, \$5 for non-members. No reservations are required. Call 763-9218 for more information.

Sept. 17, Sat., time TBA, Hartford/Castro St. walking tour, Dean Yabuki & Sharon Moore, S.F. Heritage. Meet at Hartford & 17th St. \$4 members/\$5 general. 441-3000.

Oct., TBA, OHA Annual Meeting and elections.

Oct., TBA, Liberty Hill Historic District House Tour, San Francisco Victorian Alliance, info. 824-2666.

Oct. 2, Sun., 2 pm, traditional Pomo dancers, Coyote Hills Regional Park Visitor Center, W end of Patterson Ranch Rd./Commerce Dr., Fremont. Free. 795-9385.

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. 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 News

CONTRIBUTORS

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Carolyn Douthat, Dean Yabuki

EDITOR/PRODUCTION

Betty Marvin

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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OHA appreciates the gifts from the following members:
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Thanks to the following who have renewed their Sponsor memberships for 1988:

Mrs. LeRoy Krusi, Home Savings/Robert Benson, Pacific Bell/Doug Jones, and Eugene Peck.

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 (April through June 14) are as follows:

Ruth Anderson, John F. Bell, Daryl & Ron Bergman, Robert Bernhardt, Mrs. Samuel G. Broude, June Buck, Nellie Burk, Catherine Burns, Bonnie Burt & Mark Liss, Conchita D. Cainia, Susan Chamberlin, C. C. Christ, H. T. Clemm, Timothy & Claire Caldwell, Wilbur B. Cooper, Wm. Corsaro, Steve Costa, Cherrie Cox, Madeline Conness Crosson, Dennis & Marla Daugherty, Helen Devlin, Dorothy Dickey, Hank Dunlop, Laurel L. Egenberger, Jeanine Fetterly, Marilyn Wright Ford, Irene Frew.

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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.

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Oakland History Notes: The Home of Mr. Dietz

Traveling through memory, an elderly Oakland resident once fondly recalled a cable car ride along San Pablo Avenue in the 1890s. "When one saw these homes," he reminisced, "well, with their soft-shaded lamps lighting the picture, to my mind came cherished pictures I had of Christmas cards. No home in Oakland has had the history of family tenure and meticulous care as had the Dietz home. Its lawns so beautifully kept, the statues so awe-inspiring and those giant poplar trees that bordered their street frontage."

Located on the west side of San Pablo Avenue near 54th Street, the house was built by Alfred C. Dietz soon after his arrival in Oakland in 1867, and was one of the first houses built in the area later known as Golden Gate. A man of many parts, Mr. Dietz was a member of San Francisco's early vigilance committees, a real estate entrepreneur, a collector of fine horses, and the founder of Oakland's first theater, the Dietz Opera House.

His house, built in the Gothic style also favored by Mr. J. Mora Moss (whose home still stands in Mosswood Park), reflected his prosperity. Surrounded by spacious, well-manicured grounds, the 14-room abode was filled with the finest of furnishings and rarest of objets d'art. Crystal chandeliers dripped from the ceilings, elegant clocks chimed the hours, marble and alabaster statues graced the hallways, and cut



glass and silver glinted atop the marble topped tables. When San Francisco's famed Woodward's Gardens closed in 1892, Mr. Dietz purchased three cast iron statues from the amusement park for his garden--an incongruous trio of a dog, a gowned woman, and a half-reclining nude.

Mr. Dietz died in 1904 and his house was inherited by his son-in-law Robert Boyer, a tobacco merchant, who resided in the home until his death in 1943. When the contents of the old mansion were auctioned off in 1944, a well-stocked cellar of liquor was discovered, boasting 16 cases of bonded bourbon and 50 quarts of champagne and vintage wines. Soon after the auction the house was demolished; its site is now the Emery Unified School District offices.

Yet, traveling through imagination, we can still ride down San Pablo Avenue on the cable car and see the old homes "with their soft-shaded lamps lighting the picture..."

--William Sturm

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