

Rancho San Antonio: hilltop hacienda was home for horses

By Amelia Sue Marshall

Hidden behind a locked gate on one of Oakland's prettiest hilltops is historic Rancho San Antonio, now known as City Stables. Following years of tumultuous political controversy, the stucco California mission-style hacienda sits boarded-up and largely neglected.

But on quiet, foggy nights along the ridge above Skyline Boulevard, cheering crowds and yodeling cowboy songs might still echo from six decades ago. For Rancho San Antonio was once the headquarters of the Aahmes Temple of the Shrine Rangers Mounted Patrol and the home of their captain, Fred Bemis.

The hacienda's arched oak door opens to the living room, with its rustic beamed ceiling and massive stone fireplace. An outdated kitchen is in the rear. The hardwood staircase ascends to the second floor, where arched windows gaze out at tree-studded hills, horse arenas, and San Francisco Bay beyond. With white stucco walls and a red mission tile roof, the exterior features a sweeping veranda with rustic posts, in classic Western fashion.

South of the ranch house, two dozen black-and-white pinto horses were once stabled in an arc of stalls gazing over the Oakland flatlands. The splendid steeds were trotted out to perform at Wild West shows and march in parades nationwide.

The names of the Aahmes Shrine membership overlapped with those of the Chamber of Commerce of the 1930s and '40s: Dreyer, as in ice cream; Hooper, as in chocolates; Bemis, as in construction. One distinguished honorary member was Oakland resident Earl Warren, first Alameda County district attorney, and later to become governor of California, and chief justice of the United States Supreme Court.

Kenneth E. Bemis, brother of Captain Fred, had a sprawling rancho of his own,



FRED BEMIS, CAPTAIN of the Aahmes Temple of the Shrine Rangers mounted patrol, poses outside Rancho San Antonio, circa 1946.

extending from the Lake Chabot Golf Course to the top of Grass Valley Boulevard. Could it have been he who planted the parallel rows of stately eucalyptus trees there? K.E. Bemis was legendary for his restored antique hardwood stagecoach, named the "Grass Valley Stage". It was a regular feature of the Shriners' Wild West events, usually transporting local dignitaries.

After purchasing the hilltop site from Syndicate Idora Company Ltd. in 1939, the Bemis brothers secured a building permit for the ranch house. Archival documents from the Aahmes Shriners report that the site had used since the 1820 Spanish land grant to the Peralta family. An earlier building at the site was apparently built in 1926, but city records date the present hacienda building at 1939.

The architect was fellow Shriner Howard Schroder, a self-taught architect affiliated with the San Francisco firm of Bakewell and Brown. Schroder also designed the dome of San Francisco City Hall, a registered city landmark. But his major contribution to Oakland architecture was the many public school buildings that he designed, including Elmhurst Middle School and E. Morris Cox Elementary. The Schroder family, including 94-year-old Jack Schroder, son of Howard, still lives in the neighborhood.

During World War II, the Shriners patrolled unpaved Skyline Boulevard, together with advanced equestrians from Mills College. These mounted civil defense

See **HORSES** on page 2



Horses

Continued from page 1

wardens watched for enemy paratroopers invading from over the Golden Gate.

After the war years, western riding continued to be a popular pastime in the Oakland hills, with hundreds of local participants.

The Aahmes Shrine Rangers continued to use the hilltop site as their clubhouse until the late 1950s. It was then leased to a number of different ranch operators in succession, and it was known by several different names. Some of the Shriners continued to stable their horses there, and to use the arena for drill practice, as late as 1967.

In 1973, the Shriners sold the property to the Dunn family, who named it Vista Madera Stables. For 11 years, it was a busy equestrian center with 70 boarded horses, a Pony Club, and a vaulting program. It was a popular venue for school field trips.

After the passing of Harry Dunn in 1984, his widow Mary and daughter Kathy began to phase out their stable operations. The family negotiated with the city of Oakland to sell the 7.2-acre property for a below-market price, with the proviso that it would remain dedicated to equestrian use.

Soon thereafter, Citizens for Open Space drafted, and in November 1990 passed, the Measure K park bond issue that provided funds for the city to purchase the Rancho San Antonio / Vista Madera property.

From 1995 to 2004, City Stables was operated by the Wildcat Canyon Ranch Youth Program, in partnership with the Oakland Unified School District. Hundreds of young people learned to ride there. Some of these youth were classified "at risk" to become



CITY OF OAKLAND

THE AAHMES SHRINE RANGERS Wild West events were immensely popular in Oakland during the post-World War II era.

delinquent. Others were just kids who loved riding horses.

By 2004, trouble was brewing. Neighbors in the upscale Parkridge subdivision complained of unsanitary conditions. They filed a lawsuit against the city.

The Wildcat Canyon operators contended that their budget from the city was too low to allow for proper upkeep. In the summer of 2004, their contract was terminated. A few dozen horses remained, privately boarded by local trainers and individual riders until they were abruptly evicted on September 1, 2004. The site was fenced and locked down. City staff issued a report recommending that the stables be permanently closed.

Between 2005 and 2007, a series of noisy meetings at city hall brought standing-room-only crowds of citizens, eager to see the stables reopened. Children took the public microphone to announce that they wanted to ride horses. On one occasion, Figaro, a miniature horse, appeared in the city hall lobby, to the amusement of TV news reporters. City councilmembers decided to keep the stables open, rejecting the staff recommendations.

In Nov. 2005, the city issued a Request for Proposals for a concessionaire. None of the applications was deemed suitable. Rumors persisted that city insiders were scheming to turn the property into a corporate retreat center.

Councilmember Desley Brooks suggested that the city bypass the RFP process and accept an offer from Calaveras County ranchers Tami and Bill MacKerracher. They were to trailer horses to Oakland for children's day programs, at no cost to the city. After a six-month trial period, the city could decide whether to grant them the concession, releasing \$535,000 in bond money to improve the stables.

City attorney Barbara Parker rejected this deal on the grounds that public notice had not been given to community stakeholders. After the 10-day notice was officially given, the city council Life Enrichment Committee voted unanimously to work with the MacKerrachers. Two weeks later, city staff announced that the negotiations with the ranchers had fallen apart over alleged failure to provide documentation.

In this issue

Pip Awards	4
New members	4
Donors	4
Walking Tours	8
House Tour Volunteers	8
Preservation news	9
President's message	11
Boy Scout history	12



“I’m a cowboy; I don’t sit in front of a computer all day,” Tami MacKerracher was quoted as saying.

In July 2007, Councilmember Pat Kernighan initiated a change of designation, so that City Stables would be considered a citywide resource, like the Morcom Rose Garden and Dunsmuir Estate, rather than remaining under the jurisdiction of its individual council district.

This administrative move unlocked bond money to allow much-needed repairs to begin. In addition to residual funds from the original purchase money, a second bond issue, Measure DD, approved in 2002, paid for the upgrades to the horse facilities.

Contractors demolished dilapidated temporary paddocks and built a new covered steel pipe structure (a “mare motel”), where horses could be kept in mild weather.

Using capital improvement funds, the city performed repairs on the Rancho San Antonio clubhouse roof, thereby preventing further water intrusion. Little has yet been done, however, to address the extensive dry rot and structural pest infestations that riddle much of the clubhouse framework behind its charming architectural façade.

According to Oakland recreation supervisor Mark Zinns, the clubhouse has been given a grade “B” designation—indicating that it is of state or local importance—by the cultural heritage survey office of the city planning department.

“In practical terms, this designation means that the exterior of the Rancho San Antonio clubhouse must be maintained so that its appearance is period-correct,” Zinns explains.

“For example, when the windows are replaced, they will look the same, but we will be able to use more energy-efficient dual panes. The roof, the stairs, and the stucco will all retain their classic look, but we are able to use modern materials where appropriate.”

The clubhouse will be augmented with ADA-compliant ramps to improve accessibility, for the time when the building is restored and can be used for public meetings.

Zinns is quick to counter persistent rumors that the city would consider turning the site into a corporate retreat center, a condo development, or any other non-equestrian use.

“The city acquired City Stables in order to use it for its intended purpose: a horse stable



DILAPIDATED STABLES, top left, need a lot of work. The clubhouse living room features a massive stone fireplace, bottom left, while the main entrance is topped with a tower room overlooking San Francisco Bay, right.

for public use,” he notes. He credits local horsewoman and activist Judi Bank with playing a key role in drafting the original bond proposal that made the site purchase possible. And he credits local businesswoman Kathy Dunn, daughter of the previous owners, for closing the sale to the city.

“Kathy Dunn worked patiently with the city for several years until the purchase was finally completed in 1994,” he explains.

Zinns looks forward to possibly developing a history room at Rancho San Antonio in the future. A fine collection of photographs and memorabilia is available to celebrate the equestrian history of the Rancho and its surrounding area.

In the current atmosphere of budget shortfall, the city of Oakland has moved slowly to restore the hacienda and the stables. Horse-oriented day camp programs for children were provided during the summers of 2011 and 2012; none are planned for 2013.

After a lengthy procedural process, another request for concessionaire proposals was issued in 2012; negotiations continue between the city and the finalists. Zinns says the city hopes to have a contract in place by the end of this summer.

“We feel that the city is offering the concessionaire a sweet deal in sharing revenues,” Zinns explains. “But in return, the concessionaire will be responsible for some of the capital improvements to the site, including labor, materials, and permits.”

Private donors can contribute to the restoration of the Rancho San Antonio clubhouse by writing a check to the nonprofit Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation, and noting that the money is designated for “City Stables Restoration.”

Once responsibility for repairs has been established and funding identified, Rancho San Antonio can be restored to its rightful role as a community meeting place in an inspiring setting, with a rich and unique history.

Amelia Sue Marshall is a local history writer and real estate broker who lives with her family by Peralta Creek. She wishes to thank Betty Marvin and Gail Lombardi of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey office, as well as Mark Zinns, Judi Bank, Kathy Dunn, and Jack Schroder, for their contributions to this history. ■



Another year brings new awards for preservation work

By Alison Finlay

May's 2013 Partners In Preservation Awards ceremony, held at Chapel of the Chimes, celebrated some notable successes. We particularly enjoy this annual event because it gives us a chance to recognize and honor those who support historic preservation throughout the city. This year, OHA presented eight awards.

Rehabilitation of the **Walter A. Genesy House** began in summer 2001 and was completed in summer 2008. The Mediterranean-style residence home was built in 1926 for San Francisco businessman Walter A. Genesy and his family. Genesy, a native of Virginia City, Nevada, arrived in San Francisco as a young man and entered business. The baby goods business made him prosperous enough to buy a half-acre parcel on Manchester Drive (called Allston Drive until 1932) in the developing Rockridge district and to hire architect William Schirmer to design a house for him and his family. The current owners purchased the house in spring 2001 from the daughters of the original owner. It exhibited signs of decades of neglect, including foundation settling, extensively cracked stucco, widespread water damage, collapsing retaining walls, and other general infrastructure problems.

Exterior improvements included: installation of concrete piers on the downslope foundation to prevent further settling, installation of a new French drain system to prevent subsurface water from entering the basement and to direct surface runoff to the garden, construction of a 40-foot-long concrete retaining wall to extend and stabilize the driveway area, replacement of concrete driveway with

pavers, rebuilding of loggia between the house and garage, rebuilding of concrete balustrade, replacement of water-damaged sheathing and stucco, replacement and expansion of the main deck, reconstruction of a fish pond and re-landscaped garden.

Interior work included: seismic retrofit throughout the entire house and garage, replacement of much of the electrical system and nearly all of the plumbing, replacement of heating system and other mechanicals, installation of insulation in all attic areas, remodeled kitchen utilizing original kitchen, butler's pantry and maid's bedroom, construction of master suite utilizing two bedrooms and original bathroom, and upgraded fixtures in all bathrooms.

The project sought to rehabilitate a historic residence without changing its exterior characteristics, particularly on the side facing the street. This entailed restoring original surfaces, windows, and hardware with modern materials that mimicked the originals. With its first-ever coat of exterior paint, the house now appears historic, but fresh. The long-range impact of the project has been to restore a structure that was beginning to exhibit severe degradation. Had the project not been implemented, additional settling and water infiltration eventually would have rendered the structure irreparable. The award went to homeowners Catherine Burns and Michael Monroe, architect Jason Kaldis and contractor Dennis Bader.

The latest incarnation of the **Kwik Way Drive-In** is the result of a two-year effort by local restaurateur Gary Rizzo to rescue the iconic Googie monument to the car and fast food culture of the 1950s. Rizzo, who until recently had operated nearby Somerset Restaurant, appreciated the architectural character of the iconic drive-in and thought it would make an ideal setting for an



THE KWIK WAY'S new lease on life.

STEVE RYNERSON

Thanks to our
generous donors!



KAISER
PERMANENTE®



Growing naturally in Oakland
5885 BROADWAY TERRACE
OAKLAND, CA 94618
TEL: (510) 547-3200

TERRACE
GIFTS & COFFEE

Welcome to our new members!

OHA is pleased to welcome these newest members to our roster:

Noel W Kirshenbaum, T. M. Scruggs,
Paul T. Roberts, Edie Dykstra,
Sue & Lawrence Duckles, Jim Wyman &
Charis Moore, Christopher Marshall,
Philip Banta, Greg & Mary Tarczynski,
Joseph & Julie Liss, John Armstrong,
Ben & June Schiff-Goodwin,
Richard Jackson



updated fast food restaurant in homage to the original.

Originally the Grand Lake Drive-In, the site was part of the Kwik Way chain until it closed and lay neglected. In 2004, the Grand Lake neighborhood was successful in preventing the conversion of the vacant structure to a McDonald's franchise.

Rizzo's approach was to restore and maintain the character-defining elements of the exterior that were largely intact, including the Googie "wings" that span the vehicle entrances from the central structure to outer pylons, and also serve as a unified sign face. Along with the fluorescent strips and angular soffits, these roof elements float above the simple glass cube of the central structure. Original aluminum mullions and stainless steel counters were maintained where possible, glass replaced and three new service windows (including one accessible window), were carefully grafted into the storefront.

These exterior improvements were accomplished before reopening Kwik Way in 2011, in conjunction with interior renovation that included replacing an ineffective downdraft ventilation system with a more efficient overhead version. Rizzo continues to restore the drive-in's original appearance. Inappropriately massive brick walls surrounding the v-shaped pylons supporting the central roof have been removed, and he plans to remove the brick surrounding the outer pylons as budget permits.

He faced numerous challenges, beginning with restrictions to the drive-through fast food concept the structure had originally been built to serve. While these restrictions were effectively used to prevent Kwik Way's conversion to a McDonald franchise, they

also proved to be problematic for Rizzo's plans. The first restriction required indoor seating, which forced Rizzo and his architect to expend valuable time and resources exploring options that proved to be impractical and expensive. In desperation, he turned to local council member Pat Kernighan to intervene, and the City agreed to a small outdoor seating area. The second restriction was no drive-through service. Kwik Way occupies the center of four parcels owned by Rizzo's landlord. While vestiges of the original U-shaped parking layout and drive-through remain, a cut-through to Cheney Avenue confuses circulation, and parking is shared with two adjacent tenants. The result is a chaotic free-for-all parking lot that Rizzo cannot control but is responsible for maintaining. A well-defined drive-through would actually be more orderly than the present arrangement. Rizzo is doing his best to adapt to a less than ideal situation. We award him for his perseverance to preserve this historic resource, along with the team of professionals who worked on the project: architect Italo Calpestri, contractor Ken Leung, and neon signage specialist Jim Rizzo.

The **Gryphon Building** at 1633 Broadway/1636 Telegraph is a three-story building constructed circa 1877, with two street facades redesigned around the 1920s. Over time, architectural details were removed

from the façade, vinyl windows were installed, and some windows were covered in plywood. Renovation began in July 2012 with the aid of Oakland's Façade Improvement Grant, and the project was completed in January 2013.

The purpose of this project was threefold: to contribute to the revitalization of downtown, to create desirable retail and office space for small businesses, and to make the building more energy efficient.

The space above the 3rd floor windows had been completely stripped of historic detail, leaving uninspired, flat, modern stucco. The building had two remaining gryphon motifs and ionic columns used as inspiration for the building's new design. Owners Sam and Katy Cohen worked with RPR Architects, Prentice & Prentice Design, and KEC Construction. They also employed Michael Casey Designs, Inc., an architectural sculptor, to design and place additional gryphons and egg and dart moldings on the façade to highlight the existing details.

The building had inappropriate white vinyl windows that overpowered the historic elements. Vertical grain fir wood windows were installed to be durable and let in natural light in. Street level windows on the Telegraph side and window bases on both sides of the

See PIP on page 6



GENESYS HOUSE, undergoing reconstruction, above, and at peace, right.



BOTH: COURTESY, CATHERINE BURNS & MICHAEL MONROE



PIP

Continued from page 5

building were plywood. An out of commission pay phone was attached to the plywood window on the Telegraph side of the building. New storefront windows and green marble wainscoting was installed below the windows, replacing the plywood.

The Gryphon building is a great example of how design based on remaining historic details can be extrapolated to an entire building. This restoration has grabbed the attention of the community and will help bring positive changes to downtown by inspiring neighboring buildings to restore their facades and also by bringing in small businesses. Once the façade restoration was complete, the office spaces rented in one day to creative design and art related companies. The award went to the Cohens, project manager Michelle van Tijen, architect Michael Perkocha, contractor Ed Hemmat, designer Blair Prentice, and sculptor Michael Casey.

Mint Condition Homes acquired severely-distressed residential properties and thoughtfully renovated them. Using green design methods and then selling the renovated home in an affordable price range, their body of work helped to create much-needed stability for neighborhood property values during a tumultuous time in the real estate market. OHA has honored Mint Condition Homes for several of its past projects, but now that the economy has improved and foreclosure filings are down, Mint Condition Homes has completed its mission-based design work and will be moving on to other types of projects. The award recognizes the vision that motivated their mission.

5425 Brookdale Avenue was completed in November 2011. This home's previous owner had constructed a large illegal addition to the house in the back yard as well as made living quarters out of the partial basement to generate more rental income. The construction was so poor that all the moisture from the outdoors was absorbed through the exterior siding and caused significant mold and rot. MCH acquired this home as a short sale and promptly set out to dismantle these sub-standard living areas and restore the home to a habitable bungalow. MCH installed a new electrical service, installed new plumbing and sewer line, new on demand.

4433 Fleming Avenue was completed in June 2011. Just two houses away from the park that gives the Maxwell Park neighborhood its name, this home was acquired as a bank-owned purchase and was in poor condition with extensive un-permitted living quarters built in the basement and on the property. MCH peeled back aluminum siding and over 70 years of history to re-create the home's front porch and original entrance using neighboring homes as inspiration for the stucco design. Extensive foundation work was done, including the replacement of a retaining wall along the slope of the hillside, electrical updates, all new plumbing, new dual pane wood windows, and new high efficiency central heating system.

2421 Kingsland Avenue was completed in August 2011. This 1918 home was legally converted into a duplex in the 1950s after the creation of an addition in the back, and then recent owners removed all interior, non-load bearing walls and installed a commercial bathroom in the late 1990s to use the structure as a day care center, never finalizing their renovation permit. The home was foreclosed upon and MCH acquired a structure that was lost in limbo—legally a duplex, no interior walls, and overall in very poor condition. MCH legally converted the property back to a single family residence with three bedrooms and 1.5 baths.

2036 E. 29th Street was completed in September 2011. This home is located just one block from Highland Hospital and upon acquisition, MCH discovered the prior owners had converted the basement into living

quarters, splicing into the electrical panel to install an illegal sub-meter, had built two additional unpermitted bathrooms and various interior partitions inside the main living areas, and constructed a gas fueled wash-room in the back yard. MCH removed all of the un-permitted living quarters, installed a new electrical service, created a dedicated laundry area inside the main living area, and did extensive reconstruction of the front entrance staircase, dry rot and stucco repair, and a foundation cap along the south side of the property. In addition to the new electrical service, MCH installed a high efficiency central heating system, an on demand water heater and new plumbing.

The award went to principal Mila Zelhka.



OAKLAND VOLUNTEER TREE PLANTING PROJECT digs in to green up a street.

Our next award went to Tom Wallace and, posthumously, his wife Concetta for stewardship of the historic **DeFremery House** on Country Club Drive. The home was designed in 1936 by architect F. Eugene Barton, known for his revival style residential work throughout the Bay Area. From the steeply-

COURTESY, ARTHUR BOONE

pitched slate roof to the S-curve medallions to the twin leaded-glass windows above and to the right of the door, the house style is eclectic with Gothic and Tudor influences.

The interior features beautiful woodwork. Each arched doorway in the hall is wreathed with carved oak leaves and roses. The hallway ceiling is beamed. The floors are made of black walnut. The stairwell to the second floor features even more glowing wood, lit by sunlight coming through gothic tracery windows. Throughout the house, the overhead light fixtures are all original. The dining room retains its original molded plaster ceiling. In the kitchen the original wooden drainboard is still in place. Concetta kept it in perfect condition by stripping and refinishing it every few years. At the south end, the same oak leaves and roses that decorate the hall are here painted in the living room. The same detail appears in the fireplace surround. Dental moldings around the ceiling echo exterior details. French doors communicate with the back terrace and a mature and meticulously cared for front garden.

The original owner, Leon DeFremery, lived in the home with his wife until retirement in 1954. It was purchased by Concetta and her first husband in 1967. Concetta served as its tireless custodian until her death.

Our next award recognized the efforts of three groups—the **Coalition of Advocates for Lake Merritt**, the **Measure DD Community Coalition** and **City of Oakland Public Works Department**—for their advocacy and leadership in projects that restore and improve Oakland's jewel, Lake Merritt.

In 2000 Mayor Jerry Brown proposed a Catholic Cathedral be built on a site in front of the Kaiser Convention Center. This action re-awakened the people of Lake Merritt to the importance of each parcel surrounding it. Hence, the Coalition of Advocates for Lake Merritt was activated. They put together a design package for reworking of the south end of Lake Merritt, as a counter-proposal to the Cathedral. They were successful.

In November 2002, the Measure DD Bond issue passed overwhelmingly by 78%. This bond for \$198 million gave a necessary addition to Lake Merritt—the funds to improve and restore it. They came available at the start of the current economic downturn and have served as a source of employment for many during the recession.



ERIK NIEMANN

LAKE MERRITT PRESERVATION MEASURE DD PROJECTS

Critical to this Bond Measure were the people who came together to become the Measure DD Community Coalition—37 different groups and organizations. Since their first meeting in January 2003, this coalition has met regularly to review proposals and question designers, architects, and landscape architects about the expenditure of these tax monies. There has been a core group over these 10 years that have stayed consistently involved. They are working together to make each project the best that it can be.

The project started in 2002 with passage of Measure DD, and the Lake Merritt projects will be completed by 2014, including the channel to the Oakland Alameda Estuary. The coordinated effort by these partners, including the City of Oakland Department of Public Works, has changed the face of the lake. Circling the lake are both walking and running trails, with significantly improved retaining walls. The discovery and restoration of the Cleveland Cascade on the southeast side of the Lake has revealed a part of history that had literally been buried. The historic basins have been fabricated, new illuminated hand rails have been installed and the cascade is primed for a full rehabilitation. The removal of 11 lanes of roadway at 12th Street and replacing them with an architecturally beautiful Lake Merritt Boulevard Bridge has created a pedestrian bicycle route that is both safe and beautiful. Now there are only six lanes of traffic, with crosswalks and signals to assist people in crossing the Boulevard. Accepting the awards for the Coalition for

Lake Merritt and for the Measure DD Community Coalition was Chris Pattillo; accepting for the City of Oakland Public Works department was Joel Peter.

The **Lake Merritt Breakfast Club**, celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, was organized in 1933 among local businessmen to promote fellowship and to foster and create interest in preserving, protecting and enhancing Lake Merritt and its surrounding park. Today, the organization is a diverse group of men and women dedicated to the same objectives.

LMBC is well known for its weekly breakfast meetings where participants enjoy fellowship and hear informative guest speakers in the Garden Center in Lakeside Park. In 1948, LMBC first launched fund-raising efforts to sponsor the creation of Children's Fairyland in Lakeside Park. Since Fairyland opened in 1950, LMBC has continued to provide financial support and volunteer labor for what has become a world-famous children's attraction.

In 1973, LMBC established the LMBC Charitable Foundation to raise, manage, and disperse funds in support of projects around Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park. Beneficiaries besides Fairyland have included the Oakland Municipal Band concerts at the Bandstand, landscaping at Lakeview Elementary School, youth rowing programs and restoration of docks on Lake Merritt.

In the 1980s, LMBC raised over \$1.6 million to restore the "Necklace of Lights" that

See **PIP** on page 8



PIP

Continued from page 7

had fallen into disrepair when “blacked-out” during World War II. Since its restoration, the “Necklace of Lights” provides a highly visible, beautiful ring of lights surrounding Lake Merritt, providing safety at night while creating a picturesque scene that has become an iconic image for Oakland. LMBC later embraced Measure DD as a member of the Coalition. LMBC’s president Steve Hanson and vice president Lise Pearlman accepted the award.

Started in 2012, the Sierra Club’s **Oakland Volunteer Tree Planting Project** plants trees in the public right of way in approved locations throughout Oakland. Many residential and commercial corridors historically had trees, which were removed over time. This exemplary preservation project restores the historic tree-lined corridors, adding new greenery to soften building impacts, improving air quality, and raising property values.

The volunteer project improves overall quality of life for pedestrians, bicyclists, and residents in our city, which is daily impacted by vehicular emissions, noise and visual impacts from our freeways, arterials and local roads. For leadership on this project, Arthur Boone and Derek Schubert from the Sierra Club were recognized. This project is a low-cost, innovative solution to the city’s lack of funding to continue its tree planting program. It will have a long range impact as trees grow and provide visual and environmental benefits for 20 years or longer.

OHA bestowed its final award upon those who made publication of **Oakland, The Story of a City**’s second edition possible. Erika Mailman added a new chapter, while Seventeenth Street Studios prepared the book for print. Naomi Schiff was publication coordinator, Savannah Bundy provided cover design and photo handling, and Barbara Naiditch managed typesetting and page layout. Thanks also go to the Bagwell family for providing copyright permission: Gillian Bagwell, Rachel Hope Crossman and Jennifer Walker. And without the generous donation of Witt DeLong and the DeLong Sweet Foundation to fund this project, our goal could not have been achieved. ■

Walk your heart out, Oaklanders!

By Alison Finlay

Summer means OHA Walking Tours! Jump in and join some wonderful tours. Trace Oakland’s history as we walk the streets and parks and understand how Oakland grew to be the diverse city it is today. Visit www.oaklandheritage.org for profiles of tour leaders. Their expertise makes these tours possible.

Sat., Aug. 3, 10 am–1 pm: **BUTTERS CANYON**. Explore the headwaters of Peralta Creek. We’ll learn the history of the creek, which the Peraltas, the East Bay’s first European settlers, called home. This moderately difficult hike will take a look at the geology of the surrounding hills and nearby watersheds. We’ll also get a close-up view of the Butters Canyon Conservancy. A hilly walk. Meet: Butters Drive and Joaquin Miller Road. *Leader: Dennis Evanosky*

Sun., Aug. 4, 10 am–1 pm: **FRUITVALE, THE SECOND DOWNTOWN**. Named for its orchards, Fruitvale began as a garden suburb with mansions and an industrial district. Street railways in the 1890s, the 1906 earthquake, and annexation in 1909 made it Oakland’s “second downtown.” Explore the cultural mix that defines Fruitvale today through its buildings, people, and food. Meet: Fruitvale BART, north side of parking garage, E. 12th Street at 33rd Avenue. *Leaders: Pamela Magnuson-Peddle & Betty Marvin*



JOYCE BENNA

FERNWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD is near the freeway and Montclair, but its charming, eccentric houses are secluded among the trees. See Aug. 10 tour description.

Sat., Aug. 10, 1:30–3:30 pm: **FERNWOOD**. Texas Ranger Jack Hays settled along the banks of Temescal Creek in 1852 and called his home “Fernwood.” Oaklanders have been attracted to this park-like enclave of hills and ravines ever since. Explore Fernwood from its earliest settlement to development in the 1920s as a forested suburb. If you enjoyed OHA’s Fernwood House Tour a few years ago and want to know more, this walk is for you. No sidewalks; wear comfortable shoes. Meet: in front of the Montclair Library, 1687 Mountain Blvd. (near Thornhill). *Leader: Kathleen DiGiovanni*

Sun., Aug. 11, 1:30–4:00 pm: **FROM LAKE MERRITT TO THE ESTUARY**. Explore

See TOURS on page 10

Thanks to our house tour volunteers!

We owe a houseful of thanks to our wonderful volunteers, who made our 2013 House Tour so successful.

Gene Anderson, Melanie Archer, Dea Bacchetti, Melodie Barclay, Shirley Beese, Suzanne Brennan, Suzy Bohling, Kevis Brownson, Ann Buchbinder, Charles Bucher, Bonnie Burt, Laurie Chait, Laurie Craise, Myrna Dean, Ann Del Simone, Riley Doty, Doug Dove, Cliff Falloon, Alison Finlay, Margitta Gardner, Tom Haw, William Hellendale, Marieann Hill, Wally Holmen, Kathryn Hughes,

Judy Jacobs, Dan Jepson, Ann Killebrew, Terry Kulka, Ronile Lahti, Yorkman Lowe, Amelia Marshall, Debbie Martin, Tao Matthews, Helene Miller, Tamara Nicoloff, Richard Orlando, Martha Peck, Jenny Peck, Jean Quirk, Rebecca Romans, January Ruck, Steve Rynerson, Ester Sabin, Christine Saed, Naomi Schiff, Barbara Skelly, Sam Skelly, Peggy Stackable, Mary Stevens, Linda Taylor, Uma Thomas, Sandra Tillin, Paula Trehearne, Don Tyler, Beth Wadell, Tom Waters, Hugh West, Alison Yarus. ■



Preservation committee: lake gets love

By Naomi Schiff

■ **“LOVE OUR LAKE DAY”:** **OAKLAVIA AND LAKE MERRITT BOULEVARD OPENING:** On June 9, thousands celebrated Lake Merritt Boulevard and its new park. Governor Jerry Brown, Mayor Jean Quan, Congressmember Barbara Lee, Councilmembers Pat Kernighan and Lynette McElhaney, and former Councilmember Danny Wan were among the celebrants at the 12th Street shore. Lanes were blocked so that cyclists, pedestrians, dancers, acrobats, food vendors, artists, and musicians could take over, while watercraft cruised by.

OHA was a major instigator of the improvements, begun as a response to a 2001 plan to sell land near the Kaiser Convention Center to the Diocese of Oakland for a new cathedral. Strong opposition to the sale of public land inspired an alternate plan by a visionary group of volunteer architects: James Vann, Chris Pattillo, Cathy Garrett, Mike Pyatok, and Alan Dreyfuss. Their realization—that there was room for a redesigned boulevard and a new park, and that a pedestrian bridge would create a complete circuit around the lake—came to fruition after Danny Wan wrote and voters passed Measure DD in 2002 with 78% of the vote. Many of the improvements addressed historic resources. The first project restored Studio One on 45th Street. At Lake Merritt, projects improved the old boathouse, pergola, 18th Street Pier, Cleveland Cascade, the Sailboat house and the surrounding landscapes. Other Measure DD projects included the new East Oakland Sports Center, creek acquisition, and funding for Union Point Park. Soon, Snow Park will be enlarged and the roadways in that area realigned, and the Tenth Street channel crossing widened to improve water flow and pedestrian access.

■ **DEMO BY NEGLECT, AGAIN:** A second fire further damaged the Victorian residential building at 621 Harrison St., and has probably sealed its fate. The owners, who plan to construct a sizable apartment building, claimed they couldn't secure the old house from intruders. They had been required to look for someone to move it to another site, but now that seems highly unlikely due to the damage. This inability to protect the building was troubling consider-

ing that the owner, Balco Properties, is a subsidiary of Bay Alarm Company.

■ **A NEW PARCEL ON 12TH STREET:** City Council is expected to enter into an Exclusive Right to Negotiate (ENA) with UrbanCore-Integral, LLC for a residential apartment building on land vacated by the reconfiguration of 12th Street. The site is between 1200 Lakeshore and the OUSD administration buildings. This parcel was formerly under roadway, and will have to be given a new zoning classification. The city would sell the land to the developer if a negotiation is successfully completed.

■ **COULD WE IMPLEMENT STATE HISTORIC TAX CREDITS FOR CALIFORNIA?** Working with California Preservation Foundation, SF Heritage, the Oakland Chamber of Commerce Land Use Commit-

tee, and new Oakland Planning Director Rachel Flynn, OHA has been exploring the possibility of instituting state historic tax credits. About 33 states already have tax credit programs. Such programs provide tax credits based on the cost of restoration projects; they can be handled in a manner similar to federal tax credits so that they don't require enormous amounts of extra documentation. States already implementing tax credits range from Mississippi to New York. A summary and links to individual state programs can be found at www.novoco.com/historic/htc/state_programs.php. With the ending of redevelopment programs in California, other forms of incentives for developers and owners might help cities such as Oakland, with its large number of historic buildings, to encourage adaptive reuse projects.

See **PRESERVATION** on page 10



ALL: ERIK NIEMANN



CROWDS assembled for Love Our Lake Day at the first gathering at the amphitheater in the new park at Lake Merritt Boulevard, left. Horace Carpentier, as impersonated by Dennis Evanosky, would have been amazed to see all the food trucks on his former toll bridge during Love Our Lake Day, top.



WHAT BECAME THE LAKE MERRITT CHANNEL is clearly shown as a wide opening, on this map from about 1840. See Aug. 11 tour description.

Tours

Continued from page 8

Lake Merritt's connection to the sea: the soon-to-be-rebuilt 10th Street channel crossing, floodgates that keep Lakeshore Avenue dry, and the channel's mouth at the estuary. Visit an eclectic arts and crafts colony at Fifth Avenue. We may detour around some construction, but it's not hilly. No sidewalks in parts; comfortable shoes advised. Meet: Western end of the green pedestrian bridge, 12th Street/Lake Merritt Boulevard. *Leaders: Joel Peter & John Rogers*

Sat., Aug. 17, 10 am–12:30 pm:
FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED'S TREES OF MOUNTAIN VIEW. Join landscape

architect Chris Pattillo to explore more than 80 species of trees at Mountain View Cemetery, designed in 1865 by "the father of landscape architecture," Frederick Law Olmsted. Learn about the original Cypress, Pine, Cedar and Oaks intended for the site, as well as exotic Monkey Puzzle, Weeping Willow, Copper Beech and Flowering Cherry trees we see today. Meet: Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Ave. *Leader: Chris Pattillo*

Sun., Aug. 18, 10 am–12:30 pm:
REDEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN. Projects such as Old Oakland, Pacific Renaissance, City Center, City Hall Plaza, Rotunda, and Fox Oakland Theater helped eliminate blight and create new investment and energy downtown. See how these projects and others transformed Oakland and envision what might be accomplished in the future. Meet: Fountain of Pacific Renaissance Plaza, 388 9th St., between Webster and Franklin streets. Fee parking under Pacific Renaissance Plaza. *Leader: Jeff Chew*

Sat., Aug. 24, 10 am–12:30 pm:
OAKLAND'S AIRPORT/NORTH FIELD. Old Oakland Airport (North Field) was dedicated by Charles Lindbergh and often visited by Amelia Earhart. One of the nation's most historic aviation sites, its original facilities (five hangars, an administration building, and a hotel, built between 1927 and 1929) are largely intact. Afterwards you may visit the Oakland Aviation Museum (Adults \$10, Seniors \$9, Children 6-12 \$5). Meet: Business Jet Center, 9351 Earhart Rd. (west on Hegenberger Rd. from 880, cross Doolittle. Immediately turn right on Earhart). Park in lot across from the building; assemble under the trees. *Leader: Woody Minor*



THE FOX TICKET BOOTH, circa 1975. See Aug. 18 tour description.

Sun., Aug. 25, 2–4:30 pm: **HISTORIC DOWNTOWN CHURCHES.** Between 1910 and 1925, major religious congregations located at the growing northwest edge of downtown Oakland. Discover seven surviving religious buildings, their history, and neighborhoods. Some interiors will be included. Discussion will include the adaptation of these institutions as the city has changed around them. The tour route is long but flat. Meet: First Presbyterian Church, 27th and Broadway, at the 27th Street entry to the church complex. Free parking available at the church off street parking area on 27th Street. *Leaders: Bill Coburn & Don Tyler.* ■

Preservation

Continued from page 9

ects. It would require state legislation to accomplish such a tax credit.

■ BILLBOARDS? IN OAKLAND?

The OHA Board has voted to oppose the installation of five billboards along the new Bay Bridge touchdown area, four more proposed for Port properties, and 11 that seem to be in the pipeline for other areas of Freeway 880. Together with East Bay Bicycle Coalition, the Sierra Club, and a new group, Scenic East Bay, we have been objecting to the locating of two digital billboards in close proximity to the planned new gateway park. This is the area from which bicyclists and pedestrians will access the new bridge, and is meant to be a spectacular landscaped amenity; Caltrans also plans a transit museum in the old sawtooth-roofed Key System building, just south of the toll lanes. The City Council agreed to these billboards, but opponents are continuing to work on the issue, and hope to influence state agencies as well as asking the councilmembers to rethink. Although the billboards would generate a limited amount of income, they would bring driver distraction (with messages changing every few seconds), bright lights along the bay's edge (visible from all around town), unnecessary energy use, and a lease duration of 66 years. Oakland has long had billboard regulations, but it seems that in yearning for more revenue, the council is willing to back away from its formerly tough policies. For more information, go to www.scenicestbay.org. ■



Our fiscal and physical fitness: make strides with us!

By Alison Finlay, President

We extend heartfelt thanks to the DeLong Sweet Foundation, the Kaiser Foundation and longtime member Alan Dreyfuss for generous grants and donations. Our organization is kept together by one part-time staffer and an active board, so donations go a long way. If you have friends that would appreciate OHA's mission and enjoy its activities, consider giving a gift membership or bringing them to a Walking Tour!

We have two new board members, Steve Rynerson and Claire Castell. Steve is a principal at Rynerson O'Brien Architecture, and a member of Artistic License. Claire is tech savvy, with experience in banking, risk management, and data infrastructure, as well as planning conferences and festivals, and has danced for decades. We are grateful and glad to welcome them as members of the OHA Board!

Now that redevelopment money is history, we are working with the Oakland Chamber of Commerce and the California Preservation Foundation to push for legislation to establish state historic tax credits as a preservation incentive. Quite

a few states use this type of program to aid preservation, but California has no such program. Stay tuned!

At 94, Erma DeLucchi passed away mid-June. She and her husband Mario, who cherished the Fox Oakland Theater for its role in their early courtship, bought the shuttered theater in 1978 at auction and prevented its demolition. Thank you, Erma.

The Highland Hospital and Scottish Rite Center Building Tours were richly rewarding for those who attended. Thank you to board members Martha Peck and Melissa Pauna for coordinating the tours.

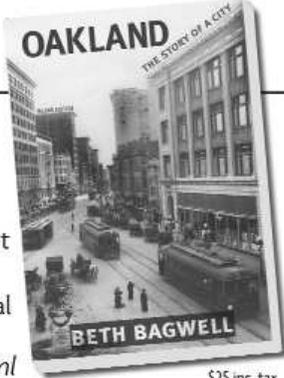
Our thanks too, to Highland Hospital and the Scottish Rite Center for opening their doors to our tourgoers.

Walking Tour season is here again with OHA tour leaders, members and friends pounding pavement and path, discovering Oakland's history all over the city. If you spy a group armed with floppy hats and water bottles, it just might be us! The tours are great fun, and the dividend is physical fitness and knowing more about Oakland than you knew before! So grab a pate protector and water bottle, and join us before the summer walks run out! ■

THE PERFECT GIFT

For all the Oaklanders and local history readers in your life

- Give it as a birthday remembrance
- Bring it as the perfect housewarming present
- Or get it for yourself, even!
- Patronize Oakland's wise and wonderful local bookstores and selected retailers, or go to <http://www.oaklandheritage.org/Store.html>





OHA membership keeps you informed, helps make our city more livable, and puts you in touch with our many events. It makes a wonderful gift, too!

- \$45 Cornerstone** (individual): newsletter, advance notice and discounted pricing on programs, events and tours.
- \$65 Pilaster** (household): same as above, for two.
- \$110 Pediment** (organization/corporate): same as above for four (for corporate or organization, transferable).
- \$250-\$499 Doric** same as above plus two tickets to a walking tour
- \$500-\$999 Ionic**: same as above plus four tickets to a walking tour.
- \$1,000-\$2,500 Corinthian**: all access pass for two (transferable).

Some limited income memberships are available. Call for information

- I'd like to contribute _____ to the OHA Leadership Fund, and help assure the future of historic preservation in Oakland.**

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, Zip _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____

Email _____

Send your check to:
 Oakland Heritage Alliance,
 446 17th St., Suite 301
 Oakland, CA 94612
 or go to www.oaklandheritage.org
 For info: 510-763-9218.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Joyce Benna, Arthur Boone, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Alison Finlay, Amelia Sue Marshall, Erik Niemann, January Ruck, Steve Rynerson, Naomi Schiff
 PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

OHA News welcomes article submissions. Send to news@oaklandheritage.org.

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alison Finlay, *President*
 Tom Haw, *Vice President*
 Doug Dove, *Treasurer*
 Melissa Pauna, *Secretary*
 Dea Bacchetti, Charles Bucher, Claire Castell, Kathryn Hughes, Martha Peck, Steve Rynerson, Naomi Schiff
 Executive Director: January Ruck



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

Address Correction Requested

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

Fun times for campers at Camp Dimond

In this season of barbecues and sunscreen, our thoughts turn to summer camp and to Camp Dimond. Thousands of Boy Scouts stayed in Dimond Canyon during the 29 years of the camp's existence before its purchase by the school district. It became the site for Joaquin Miller Elementary School and Montera Middle School. Scout Road, formerly just an extension of Park Boulevard, takes its name from the camp.

As early as 1911, years before Camp Dimond opened its gates in 1919, local Boy Scouts were camping in the privately-held Smith Reserve. In 1918 a series of "weekend training camps" were held across the canyon from Camp Dimond at a site in Oakmore Highlands near the current intersection of Leimert and Bywood on land belonging to the San Francisco-Oakland Terminal Railway. One of the highlights of that camp was a visit from silent film idol Douglas Fairbanks as he toured the area promoting the purchase of War Bonds. The scouts were cultivating war gardens and camp's theme was "Every Scout to Feed a Soldier."

In Jan. 1919, the Oakland Boy Scout Council bought land to establish a permanent camp. They spent \$20,000 for 28 acres in the Smith Reserve, moved equipment and temporary structures from the old "weekend training camp," and welcomed the first 65 campers that June. The first summer's camp was a rudimentary affair, with few permanent facilities. The following years brought a

surge of construction to the camp, supported by many Oakland businesses and service organizations. In 1920 a mess hall and commissary were provided by the Oakland Building Trades Council. The next year a flagpole was donated by the National Pole Company, with installation donated by Pacific Telephone and Telegraph. Standing 115 feet tall, it was reputed to be the tallest in the Bay Area and flew a 20 by 30 foot American flag that could be seen from downtown. In the mid-1920s, local clubs including Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions (and the Alameda County Laundry Owners Association) replaced tents with eight-boy cabins. In 1924, the Scout Council bought additional land for the camp, including a concrete reservoir that became a swimming pool for the campers. 1925 saw construction of a 1,500-seat amphitheater funded by the Oakland Exchange Club.

A local Eagle Scout, Ed Totman, wrote about being a camper in the 1940s. He tells of summer journalism sessions taught by *Tribune* owner Joe Knowland, photography classes taught by camp naturalist BC "Bugs" Cain, civics and leadership classes, obstacle courses, and lessons on saddling a pack horse, in addition to nature study, swimming, and camp crafts.

The rapid growth of the Oakland hills in the 1930s and '40s spelled the end for Camp Dimond. A 1945 school bond measure provided for the construction of new schools in



CAMP DIMOND entrance, 1921.

the hill neighborhoods. The Board of Education quickly identified Camp Dimond as the perfect site: big, mostly flat, convenient. In 1947, the Board advised the Scout Council that it wanted the site. Though the Council did not want to sell, the city's threat of substantial assessments and fees for sewer lines and street improvements forced their hand. The city and the Board began condemnation proceedings to acquire the property and in 1948 the Council sold the beloved camp. At the end of the season in August 1948 Camp Dimond closed for good. Joaquin Miller Elementary School opened in 1950.

The author tips her hat to Steve Kline, volunteer historian of the SF Bay Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, for his wonderfully informative camp history. ■