

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS
ESSAYS IN CELEBRATION OF WEST OAKLAND

The Results of a Focused Research Program to Augment Cultural Resources
Investigations for the I-880 Cypress Replacement Project, Alameda County

(ALA-880 P.M. 31.9/34.8; ALA-80 P.M. 2.3/4.0 in the Cities of Oakland and
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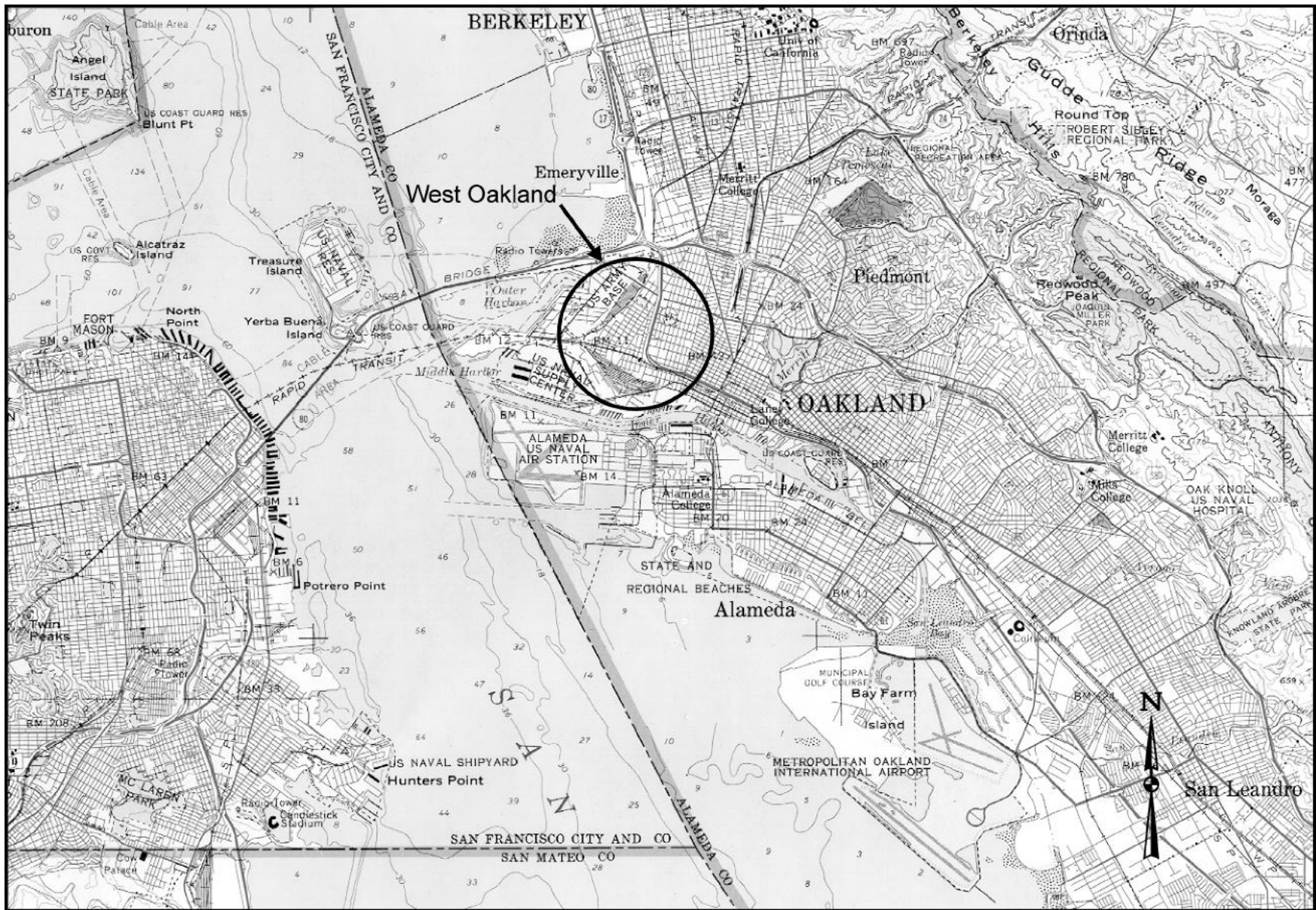


FIGURE 2. WEST OAKLAND IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY. USGS San Francisco Bay Region Map (1970).

FOREWORD

On 17 October 1989, just as the Giants and A's baseball teams took the field to play the fourth game of the World Series, the great Loma Prieta earthquake struck, destroying a section of the I-880 Cypress Freeway structure in West Oakland. The quake also severely damaged the surrounding West Oakland neighborhood. When the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) announced that the freeway would be rebuilt, the local community voiced strong opposition and proposed that an alternative freeway route be selected to go around their neighborhood. Ultimately, CALTRANS developed a new route that bypasses most of the residential district. Creating the new route was a planning labyrinth, with a multitude of construction constraints and scheduling conflicts.

The Cypress Replacement Project is very complex politically, environmentally, seismically, and even archaeologically. Tackling these issues, CALTRANS in partnership with the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University implemented a novel approach to complying with historic preservation regulations that has proven to be extremely productive and exciting. The archaeological research has generated some impressive endeavors, such as oral-history interviews, mobile exhibits, an educational video on historical archaeology, and an enormous amount of public interest in the archaeology and history of West Oakland. Out of one terrible event in the history of the Bay Area, CALTRANS and its partners—along with many, many others—were able to revive forgotten memories and retrieve a part of Oakland history that would have been lost forever.

The freeway collapse has presented many interesting challenges to the Department of Transportation. Some of the first challenges after the cleanup were the redesign and the decision of where to rebuild. After many public hearings, it was decided to rebuild along a new alignment, called the railroad corridor, since the majority of the alignment is within railroad yards.

The project is an immense undertaking for the Department of Transportation. Due to political and community pressures, a project that would normally take more than 20 years from start to finish is being designed and built in less than half that time. All new right-of-way land had to be purchased. Then railroad tracks were relocated and businesses moved, while a few houses, a church, and a fire station were also relocated. Lengthy negotiations were made with a number of large entities, such as the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (as the freeway will now go over BART near Fifth and Union streets and under BART at Seventh and Cedar streets); five different railroad companies, including Southern Pacific, Amtrak, and Union Pacific (since tracks need to be moved and hazardous materials cleanup is a major factor in the railroad yards); the U.S. Army (as a portion of the Army Supply Station is within the project area); and the Oakland Main Post Office (since the alignment is going through the post-office parking lots).

It is difficult for most people to grasp the magnitude and complexities of building several miles of freeway through an urban area. Over 200 engineers were involved in the design and construction of the Cypress rebuild. Time constraints, the presence of toxic substances in much of the soil, construction logistics, and many other factors totally altered what would be considered a normal sequence of project events. Tasks that would usually follow one another in a prescribed order have been compressed into simultaneous or overlapping time frames. The archaeological investigations are one such task that has overlapped with construction and presented many challenges.

Initial archaeological studies began in the summer of 1992. After quickly realizing the magnitude of possible historical cultural resources within the project area, the first challenge was to figure out how to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires that a project's effects on historic properties be taken into consideration. Normally, such consideration involves the long, sequential process of identification of cultural resources, followed by evaluation to determine which properties are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, followed in turn by a data-recovery program for eligible resources. Another approach was necessary in the Cypress Project area, as parking lots, buildings, and other features of the urbanized landscape masked all evidence of archaeological features. In consultation with archaeologist Dr. Adrian Praetzelis, Sonoma State University, a new approach to complying with Section 106 was proposed that collapses the normal three-phase process into a single phase and necessitates determination of National Register eligibility of archaeological discoveries in the field.

Not only did this unique approach to Section 106 compliance require the support of CALTRANS management, it also needed the approval of the Federal Highway Administration, the State Office of Historic Preservation, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This was achieved through much deliberation, resulting in a Memorandum of Agreement signed by all parties. The agreement provides for a research design and treatment plan for historical and prehistoric archaeology. CALTRANS contracted with the Sonoma State University Academic Foundation to have the Anthropological Studies Center (ASC) create this treatment plan and initiate studies for historical archaeology.

More than 40 city blocks were researched for their potential to contain National Register-eligible properties by ASC researchers under the supervision of Roger Olmsted and Nancy Olmsted, who



PLATE 1. PLANNING THE CYPRESS HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY FIELDWORK. CALTRANS Archaeology Project Manager, Janet Pape, and ASC field director, Jack Mc Ilroy, look over plans in the Cypress Project field office. (Photo Courtesy of CALTRANS)

developed detailed block histories based on Sanborn insurance maps, census data, city directories, and an array of other documentary resources. After this portion of the identification process was completed and project impacts were evaluated, the number of blocks to be investigated in the field was reduced to 22. Under the guidance of ASC field director Jack Mc Ilroy, archaeological field studies began in April 1994 and were concluded by May 1996.

Who would have believed that out of the enormous destruction of an earthquake, a wealth of historical riches and public involvement would emerge. Three mobile exhibits have developed from the historical archaeology of the Cypress Replacement Project. One exhibit entitled “Holding the Fort,” a tribute to the African American labor movement in West Oakland, was created and developed by the association of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, the Anthropological Studies Center, and the California Department of Transportation. Among the many venues at which this exhibit has been displayed—such as Oakland Public Library branches—CALTRANS was very honored to have the exhibit displayed at Oakland City Hall, at the new Dellums Amtrak station in Oakland, and at the National Civil Rights Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona (sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and the American Association of State Transportation Officials), all in 1996. A smaller exhibit on the project itself and the process of the archaeological investigations is making an appearance at many county fairs and celebrations, such as Earth Day in Alameda County. A third photo exhibit showing historical archaeologists at work and displaying some of the tools they use has recently debuted at CALTRANS headquarters in Sacramento and complements the other two exhibits.

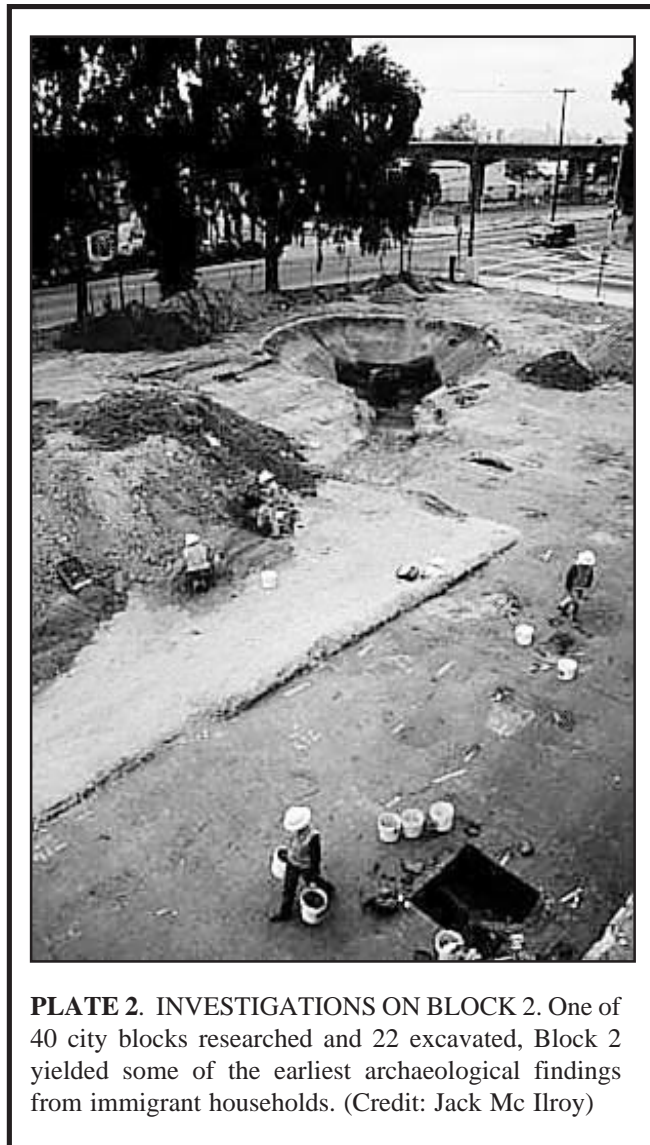


PLATE 2. INVESTIGATIONS ON BLOCK 2. One of 40 city blocks researched and 22 excavated, Block 2 yielded some of the earliest archaeological findings from immigrant households. (Credit: Jack Mc Ilroy)

The archaeological field work itself has attracted wide attention. In addition to the many tours of the excavations by historical societies, college archaeology classes, and the local community, CALTRANS contracted with Bill Levinson, a local film maker, to produce an educational video on historical archaeology to be distributed to Bay Area colleges and universities and made available to institutions and agencies that manage cultural resources.

Valuable studies in vernacular architecture were conducted by Dr. Paul Groth and Marta Gutman, both with the University of California, Berkeley, on several buildings within the project area that were scheduled to be moved. Their study builds upon the four-volume historic architectural survey report (HASR) on West Oakland, which was completed for the Cypress Project by CALTRANS staff and the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey in 1990. Although the HASR had found that these buildings did not meet the criteria for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places, the houses were being moved away from the construction zone at the request of the City of Oakland and some concerned citizens. Arrangements were therefore made for a team of architectural researchers to further record these houses first built in the mid- to late 1800s—typical homes of the West Oakland working-class labor force—through measured drawings and photography.

An outcome of the historical archaeology component in which CALTRANS takes special pride is the series of oral-history interviews of a diverse group of people who lived and worked in West Oakland in the early to mid-1900s. These interviews, conducted by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, folklorist for the ASC, and Willie R. Collins, cultural specialist and ethnomusicologist, form a rich source of information for this volume. Occupational histories were collected by Dr. Collins, who focused on two African American groups—Redcap porters and jazz musicians. (These groups are also highlighted in the CALTRANS educational film *Crossroads: A Story of West Oakland*. This film was a mitigation effort for effects by the Cypress Project on the Southern Pacific Railroad West Oakland Shops Historic District.) The Department of Transportation appreciates the efforts of all who contributed to the oral-history project and to the study of the built environment; we are pleased to play a part in the renewal of memories of West Oakland’s history and of the spirit of this hard-working, diverse community.

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PART ONE

CONNECTING THE SOURCES

CONNECTING THE SOURCES: ARCHAEOLOGY, MATERIAL CULTURE, MEMORY, AND ARCHIVES

Suzanne Stewart and Mary Praetzellis

A GRADUAL REFINEMENT

This volume of essays is a connecting link in a process. It takes up an interim position between our first efforts at examining West Oakland's history (the widely distributed research design and treatment plan, *West Oakland: A Place to Start From*) and the final reports that will detail the study's findings and interpretations. During 1993 and early 1994, when the first volume was written and produced, there were no archaeological finds, only well-informed guesses about the kinds of discoveries that might be made in the Cypress Project area and just where—beneath the buildings, fill, and asphalt—they would be found. The field investigations, now completed, have borne out the effectiveness of this approach.

Accurate predictions could be made because so much block-specific research had been done, using maps and archival documents, while the in-depth history of the greater neighborhood provided context for these details. An unusually rich visual record of West Oakland was also available—a collection impressive in its size given the neighborhood's fairly unphotogenic working-class trappings. People brought their cameras to West Oakland, in large part, because of the area's role as the primary hub for land and sea travel and transport on the West Coast. They took photographs of ordinary street scenes (because that was where the train passed by or where new tracks were being laid), resulting in honest unposed glimpses of everyday activities. Thus West Oakland's thoroughfares, both literal and figurative, were well documented.

What the record often lacked, however, was a view of the side streets of the neighborhood's history. Still needed was the ability to look historical residents directly in the eye, meeting, if possible, the very people who laid down the materials that the archaeologists would unearth. Some first-person accounts of life in West Oakland were available in 1994, but most were narratives structured for an audience. Also not available for the first volume was information that would help reconstruct the look and feel of the spaces in which these lives were lived—the insides of kitchens and saloons; the layout of backyards; and the nature of both the incremental and abrupt changes in the urban landscape.

This volume of essays helps fill out this picture by drawing on two important new sources: studies of the neighborhood's built environment and a preliminary assessment of the archaeological finds. At the same time, the portrait has become more concrete and personalized through the ongoing program of project-specific oral-history interviews and focused archival research. Articulating these sources sets in motion a feedback system, in which information from any one source may be enriched and transformed as each research theme or specific archaeological feature is looked at from a new perspective.



PLATE 3. EXCAVATIONS AT CYPRESS. Working adjacent to the elevated BART tracks, ASC archaeologists explore trenches, wells, and privies. The archaeologists excavated 22 city blocks in 78 weeks. (Credit: Jack Mc Ilroy)

This characteristic of archaeological research—particularly as it is done within an avowedly interdisciplinary setting such as the Cypress Project—is described by archaeologist James Deetz as follows:

In the nonexperimental sciences (if archaeology is indeed a science), precise certainty is rarely achieved. Rather, research takes the form of a gradual refinement of explanation, as more and more factors are incorporated into the construction of the past that one is attempting to create. In historical archaeology, this refinement is best accomplished by maintaining a balance between the documentary and the material evidence, being always mindful that, to be a productive exercise, the results should provide a more satisfactory explanation than would be forthcoming from either set of data alone [1988:367].

In this view, archaeological analysis is complex, and explanations are constructed through a variety of approaches. The object is not to make exclusively archaeological discoveries, but rather to weave data from a variety of sources into a multifaceted explanation. Ultimately, we will have a portrait of West Oakland that can stand as the end product of this multi-year, multidisciplinary work. We hope it will be the best use of the available data at this time, but also that other attempts to understand the universal and unique aspects of West Oakland will carry the refinement forward.

THE RESEARCH TOPICS

After archaeological field work began in April 1994, a program of oral history and more focused archival research was proposed. Six key topics identified in the project research design were developed further in the new proposal (Praetzellis 1994b). The topics were chosen for their representativeness within the project area as well as their applicability to the overarching project research framework, which looks at how late-19th- and early-20th-century working-class people dealt with the challenges of modern, urban life (Praetzellis, ed. 1994:226-232).

This new round of Cypress Project research was to draw on a variety of sources and be integrated with the archaeological findings, focusing first on project-area blocks and next on West Oakland in general. And work would tie issues explored in the project area to national trends and movements: how was West Oakland innovative, how conservative, and how unique? The six research topics were ones that had aroused interest among local community members while attracting scholarly researchers from a range of disciplines: (1) Pullman porters and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; (2) oral histories of West Oakland's various ethnic communities; (3) Sunshine Corner and the domestic-reform movement; (4) lodging houses and hotels; (5) occupational lore; and (6) the built environment. These topics provided the framework for the current volume, which also introduces some unexpected topics of significance. To trace these changes in approach, as well as to provide a review of some of the major trends in West Oakland history, the topics—and a suggestion of how they have been reconfigured, where appropriate—are briefly summarized below. A preliminary discussion of the findings follows. Finally, a brief description of each essay and how they articulate with one another gives a solid introduction to this volume and to this intermediate stage of the Cypress Project's cultural resources investigations.

PULLMAN PORTERS AND THE BSCP

As the western terminus of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and a major transportation hub for the West Coast thereafter, the history of West Oakland is inextricably bound up with the history of the railroad. One of the railroad's most significant influences was the recruitment of workers to maintain the trains and yards and service customers. Especially targeted for some positions were African Americans dissatisfied with employment opportunities elsewhere in the United States and ready to relocate to a more favorable setting. Initially arriving in small numbers, Black railroad workers became an increasingly larger segment of the neighborhood's population over time. It was the Pullman porters traveling across the country who got the word out that California offered economic opportunities and a good new life for those willing to make the change. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, working for the Pullman Company as a porter was among the most lucrative and respected positions available to African Americans, despite the long hours in a blatantly racist environment. Pullman porters in West Oakland were the West Coast leaders in a long and militant struggle for labor rights that led to the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) and improved working conditions. The West Coast headquarters for the BSCP was located within the project area, while many African American porters lived on properties investigated in this study. The characters and events of this struggle constitute one of the important themes of West Oakland history.

Original tasks included contacting and interviewing a long roster of individuals and visiting a number of archives. While additional personal contacts were made and archival research avenues followed, some unexpected finds resulted in important new directions. These include the occasion of the formal dedication of a headstone for the grave of “Dad” Moore, which took place on the 70th anniversary of the BSCP. A mimeographed songbook of the Oakland BSCP, found among the personal files of noted Oakland activist C.L. Dellums, formed the topic for another special study.

ORAL HISTORIES OF VARIOUS ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Like working-class districts in cities throughout the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, West Oakland was a neighborhood of immigrants. On the 1880 census, only 229 (48%) of the 480 heads of household counted within the project area were born in the United States. The neighborhood was noted for its unusually broad ethnic diversity, along with a reputation for fairly easygoing inter-ethnic relations, at least in the early years before World War II. While different nations might contribute more or fewer immigrants over time depending on home conditions and perceived opportunities, no one or two groups were ever to dominate the neighborhood. Irish, Greeks, Slavs, Portuguese, Chinese, Italians, Germans, and many others all contributed to the ethnic fabric. African Americans were to become the dominant racial group in West Oakland almost overnight in the early 1940s with their recruitment from the South and other states to form the labor force for munitions factories, shipyards, and other military facilities; the Black population was a significant force in the neighborhood, however, from the late 19th century. Thus West Oakland—with its rich mixture of races, nationalities, and lifestyles—was early recognized as an excellent spot in which to study interaction and change within a multi-ethnic urban community.

To realize the goal of a more comprehensive social history, the research design proposed a program of oral-history interviews focusing on the lifeways of several ethnic populations. Because of their expense, the targeted number of oral-history interviews was kept low—to just 15 individuals. This data base was to be enhanced with on-going consultations with project staff, local historians, and community leaders. The primary goal was to be the development of histories of various ethnic groups residing in the neighborhood during what had been identified as the “Golden Age of West Oakland”—from 1911 through the decade of the 1920s. The success of the first round of oral-history research warranted additional interviews. While the diversity of ethnic groups’ experiences was a primary focus of the oral-history research, interviews were also used to elicit opinions and facts on a virtually limitless range of topics relating to home, work, family, and community. As work continued it became clear that West Oakland’s “Golden Age” began in the earliest years and continued up through the 1950s.

Archaeology and other material culture studies are also primary tools for examining ethnicity and the process of modernization. Archaeological finds were to be examined with these concerns in mind, while study of material culture on a far larger scale—the built environment and landscape in general—would also illuminate questions of ethnic behavior and community values.

THE DOMESTIC-REFORM MOVEMENT

The New Century Club Recreation Center, affectionately dubbed “Sunshine Corner,” was located at Campbell and Atlantic streets, just outside the project area. Its effect, however, would have been felt on every block in the neighborhood. Acknowledged as one of West Oakland’s “most revered landmarks,” the center was demolished in 1960 to make way for the huge federal postal complex. The New Century Club was founded in 1896 by Mrs. Elizabeth D. Watts, a wealthy Oaklander who reportedly discovered the suffering among the neighborhood’s residents on a visit to her sick laundress. With the help of a group of prominent local women, she transformed a saloon at the foot of Peralta Street (also adjacent to the project corridor) into Oakland’s first private kindergarten. They later acquired the clubhouse and developed a program that at one time served more than 12,000 neighborhood children and adults. In her study of the domestic-reform movement, Aicha Woods (1994a) identified major themes and recognized the wealth of information remaining untapped.

Through Aicha’s research, it was recognized that the material culture of the domestic-reform movement, particularly the accouterments of “scientific housekeeping,” had been well studied, and further work with secondary sources on the topic was not warranted. Local archival work was seen as more potentially fruitful, with research to focus on the New Century Club, whose more than 60 years’ work in the neighborhood was expected to have left an ample record in the written media. The memories of local residents were also expected to contain information on the club’s effects on the neighborhood. Archaeology—specifically investigations of well-dated collections of domestic artifacts securely linked to immigrant families—was seen as the more pertinent and accurate data source on immigrant material culture and the domestic-reform agenda. For this reason, the research design recommended a program of newspaper research, analysis of census data, and other study to guide and augment the archaeological data.

The project’s researchers recognized that there were other significant reform institutions in the West Oakland neighborhood: the long-lived Fannie Wall Day Home and Nursery, organized and still operated (now in East Oakland) by a group of African American women; and St. Vincent’s Day Home, a Catholic institution that has survived in the midst of a vastly changing landscape. Fortunately some information was collected and has been presented here, but more study of these influential institutions is warranted.

LODGING HOUSES AND HOTELS

Small hotels and rooming houses lined the western end of Seventh Street from the 1870s through the 1950s. Along with numerous restaurants, saloons, barbershops, laundries, and grocery stores, the lodging houses formed the commercial center of the Oakland Point neighborhood, at the western end of the project area. The lodging houses accommodated the army of single, skilled workers and laborers who flocked to the Point after it became the terminus of the transcontinental railroad. In the focused research design, 15 rooming houses and hotels were identified along the project route, many of which would be the targets of archaeological investigations. These enterprises played a vital role

in the local economy and the social life of the neighborhood. They became a source of convenient and affordable housing for workers, as well as income for the owners and proprietors. The fate of rooming houses hinged on the high concentration of diverse job opportunities just a stone's throw away. The Southern Pacific Railroad yards lay just two blocks south of Seventh Street at the Point; the Oakland Mole and the Long Wharf were an extension of Seventh Street to the west; while a myriad of factories were found in all directions. The rooming houses in West Oakland were neither luxury hotels nor skid-row flop houses. Even within this small sample, the size and nature of the establishments varied considerably, but most were modest, respectable, and housed a motley range of occupants, reflecting the heterogeneous West Oakland population. Recovering material culture associated with the hotels and lodging houses along Seventh Street was a primary goal of the archaeological investigations.

The articulation of archaeology with documentary information is fairly easy for hotels and boarding houses, since these establishments are highly visible in city directories and often show up with both owners and residents on the census rolls. Thus the more formal rooming houses and small hotels on the western end of the project area have high potential for providing insights into rooming life. Also researched were the more informal rooming and lodging settings, with focus both on social contexts and the built environment. A special part of the study focused on work in West Oakland as an integral factor in determining how and where people lived.

OCCUPATIONAL LORE

The economics of transportation defined the growth of West Oakland from its beginnings. It was the working combination of water and rail transportation that attracted a number of specialized industries. West Oakland became a foothold community for many immigrant groups. The economics of their survival, both in terms of their income and how they spent their money, reflected West Oakland's role as a transportation nexus: the entrance to the East Bay, the link to San Francisco, and a crucial node of a rail and water network that extended far beyond California.

The project right-of-way crosses Southern Pacific Railroad property and through iron works, canneries, and industries conveniently sited near the railway. Due to the presence of toxic soils and other constraints, few industrial sites were proposed for archaeological excavation. It was decided that information on these sites, which were directly connected to domestic sites that have been investigated, could best be gathered through documentary and oral-history research.

During the hazardous waste studies and other preliminary research, data were gathered to identify the industries present within the project area, but little information had been collected on the conditions of the work places, relations of production, and technological processes. Thus an occupational lore study was proposed to examine these questions through a series of interviews with former and current employees of the various rail systems that made West Oakland a hub of transportation. Cannery workers, laundry workers, and foundry workers were also considered as potential interview subjects. Like the interviews for ethnic community information, the number was to be kept relatively low due to the high cost involved in this kind of research.

Research on this topic veered from the original path in several interesting ways. First, as the initial occupational lore interviews got underway, it was quickly apparent that one specific railroad-related occupation, Redcap porters, had received virtually no serious study, while their importance to the West Oakland community was considerable. Like the far better-studied Pullman porter, Redcaps had become a symbol of both the heyday of the railroads and the final days of corporately condoned racism. When researcher Willie Collins learned that only a handful of these men were still available to tell this story, plans were shifted to accommodate this important topic. Another important new focus for occupational research was the project-area's role in the history of West Coast jazz, and the importance of jazz to the West Oakland community—both personally and economically. Although the jazz clubs on Seventh Street had been recognized as important features of the community, it was originally believed that the topic was outside the Cypress Project's historic focus. A broader definition of what constitutes the project area's period of historical significance, along with evidence that jazz music was already prominent here by the late 1910s, supports the recognition of this chapter in project-area history. Other occupations were also researched, and the study is ongoing (see Appendix A for the inventory of oral-history interviews.)

Interestingly, much information was gleaned about the facts of work in this urban neighborhood in the course of interviewing former residents for more generalized information about growing up and living in various communities of West Oakland. The good quality of the data gathered suggests that a general interview may be, in fact, a more amenable setting for extracting information on the work



PLATE 4. EXCAVATIONS ON BLOCK 19, bounded by Pine, Fifth (Atlantic), Wood, and the Southern Pacific main line. Archaeologists are shown investigating Privy 8417, the largest such feature found on the Cypress Project blocks. (Credit: CALTRANS)

environment than would a more formal program—particularly for workers who find talking about work to be laborious in itself.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

To interpret archaeological finds, it is essential to understand the built environment. West Oakland has inspired some unflattering descriptions: In a 1900 *Overland Monthly* article, Eva Carlin wrote flatly, “It is an ugly locality, lined with small unattractive crowded dwellings.” In another article from the same magazine, she began, “It is a district of great ugliness.” Carlin accurately observed the paucity of municipal services in West Oakland; repairs of broken water mains and dilapidated sidewalks were among the first projects taken on by settlement workers. Local residents still recall the sooty atmosphere, or “West Oakland dinge,” that hung over the railroad yards and rendered homes a trademark dirty grey. Two famous authors lived in West Oakland: Jack London gave the neighborhood little favorable press, while Maya Angelou recalled crowded living conditions and the noise of the nearby railyard.

But living in West Oakland was by no means without reward. It was a typical working-class cottage district, where small houses on small lots coexisted in mixed-use neighborhoods with commercial and industrial uses. To people presented with their first opportunity to buy a home or rent a cottage, the buildings may have looked fine indeed. And West Oakland was a neighborhood of many conveniences. Despite the availability and importance of transportation, West Oaklanders resided in a walking neighborhood; they could walk to work and recreation. Throughout much of the area’s history, there was an abundance of both.

More than 450 pre-1945 structures had been recorded by CALTRANS and Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey (OCHS) researchers in advance of choosing one of three alternative routes for the Cypress reconstruction. Just north of the project right-of-way, the researchers defined the Oakland Point Historic District, which they found to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. (Historically, Oakland Point continued west to the bay; the project area right-of-way was apparently excluded from the National Register district because of extreme changes in land use since the 1950s.) To the south, surrounded on three sides by the project area, the researchers identified the Bay View Homestead Tract/South Prescott Neighborhood District—considered to be an Area of Secondary Importance that is not currently considered National Register-eligible because of extensive alterations. It is a district of 147 buildings occupying parts of eight city blocks between Seventh, Third, Peralta, and Cypress streets. This was an area of mostly 19th-century cottages on narrow parcels—the workers’ cottages that are featured in one of the essays in this volume. Despite the many alterations made since the cottages were first built in the 1870s and 1880s, an OCHS researcher noted on the Historic Resources Inventory form that “the district conveys a strong sense of time and place, as a highly coherent neighborhood whose unique character is established by the large number of very small and very early houses” (OCHS 1990). As can be seen from Sanborn insurance maps and other historical documents, these cottages were also found throughout West Oakland, especially on the small lots south of Seventh Street. Cottage districts are widespread across the continent—in both urban settings and company towns—but they had been virtually untapped for their research potential until the present study.

While these cottages and small houses had been recorded and evaluated for their architectural importance in terms of National Register criteria, they were analyzed for a different purpose after the nearby archaeological work got underway. As only a dozen residences and a number of industrial buildings were standing within the right-of-way at the inception of this project, the built environment was to be “(re)constructed” backward in time through the use of maps, photographs, oral interviews, and documentary research, as well as through comparisons with neighboring blocks such as the Bay View Homestead/South Prescott district. Much information for the reconstruction had already been gathered. Using these data, the typical project-area building types and street blocks were to be reconstructed and interpreted in terms of their population profiles, family life, street life, mixture of uses, and cultural meaning.

The Oakland Point section of the project area was to be looked at as an artifact itself, as material culture, in order to construct an image of the urban cultural landscape in which the subjects of our archaeological studies lived. Since, as Dell Upton (1992:52) has pointed out, people live with the experiences of all five senses; the studies were to focus not only on West Oakland’s buildings and structures, but also on the “shadow” landscape, including the smells and sounds of everyday life. The goal was to construct the environment that West Oaklanders lived in.

Reconstructing some of the sounds and smells of everyday life is made easier by drawing on oral-history information; by looking in directories and newspapers; and by closely examining photographs and maps. Deciphering cultural meaning need not be restricted to the written or spoken word, but can be seen in how people use and react to buildings and objects. The built environment connects strongly with archaeology itself, which works with the literal foundations of the above-ground world we know as urban landscape.

TESTIMONY FROM THE GROUND

It has often been stated that archaeological data are democratic, in that poorer people and cultural minorities—who are seldom represented in the written record—are as likely as the rich to have left archaeological remains. The remains themselves, however, are of limited value unless the archaeologist can associate them with historically documented households of known ethnic, national, and economic characteristics. When such matches are possible, then scholars can use the archaeological data to make both synchronic and diachronic comparisons within and between groups.

Democracy, however, can work both ways, and the archaeological features left by the poor may be just as vulnerable to postdepositional damage as those of the rich. Some argument can be made, of course, that deposits containing goods derived from wealthy households will be scavenged for souvenirs before those containing artifacts of the poor. One might also expect differential dating ability according to class, since the names and addresses of the rich will usually be found cross-referenced in several directories and tax assessments over a decade; the poor, in contrast, often appear in the census alone—showing up 10 years later in another location, or not at all. Other things being equal, who moves more frequently: the rich or the poor? In some cases, the rich, because they can seize new opportunities. While some poor may be stuck where circumstances have left them, others might move

regularly to out-distance creditors. This simplistic exercise suggests that the archaeological record *is* democratic—or at least that various potential inequalities may balance themselves out.

That fact raises the expectation that the archaeological record will be a reasonable approximation of social reality. As the discussion below demonstrates, however, the actual ground-proofing indicates that some aspects of the neighborhood’s history are not represented archaeologically in the same proportions as they appear in reminiscences, insurance maps, or census records, nor have archaeological deposits reflecting these various aspects necessarily experienced equal survival rates in the ground. That these data gaps and incongruities exist is not necessarily lamentable but rather instructional. It reminds us that the archaeological deposits can no more stand alone as representations of life in West Oakland than the photographs or anecdotes or assessments can. It underscores the importance of Deetz’s call for maintaining a balance between the documentary and material evidence; it also overwhelmingly validates taking a broad but layered multidisciplinary approach to avoid skewing the portrait of this community. It is of value to keep these caveats in mind while reviewing the preliminary assessments of the archaeological finds presented below.

THE CYPRESS FINDINGS

There were skeptics above ground who questioned how anything could survive a century or more of filling, constructing, demolishing, and rebuilding. But ASC archaeologists—who had studied the land-use history and survival potential of all affected lots on each block—had good reason to anticipate numerous finds. Several locations were not investigated for historic archaeological deposits. Some of these were not dug because they had been underwater during much of the area’s history, then summarily capped with fill and used as surfaces only; others were not studied because early deposits would likely have been destroyed through known subsequent land use; and others were in areas that simply would not have yielded useful information (front yards or the centers of basement-less houses are good examples). Thus the excavations were, from the beginning, focused on the most archaeologically productive areas.

The actual figures summarizing the archaeological effort and its results are impressive, as a recent in-house report by the field director, Jack Mc Ilroy, demonstrates:



PLATE 5. TWO WAYS TO DIG A WELL. The well half-sectioned above is being excavated in the traditional manner, which means cramped and even dangerous conditions. A new technique, below, was developed by the Cypress team. Working from the outside was quicker, safer, and more effective. (Credit: Jack Mc Ilroy)



We spent 78 weeks in the field with an average crew of 10 people. The primary resource types we found were hollow/filled features. Deposits of sheet refuse were rare. We exposed 227 house lots in which were 2248 pits, 25 wells, and 190 wood-lined privies. We excavated 521 pits, 23 wells, and 183 privies. Of these, 65 pits, 12 wells, and 78 privies appear initially to be capable of answering our research questions and to possess National Register of Historic Places eligibility in that they have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history [1996a].

The overall picture is that 29.5 percent of all hollow/filled features found were investigated, and 21 percent of all hollow/filled features excavated appear eligible and are being analyzed and interpreted.

The process by which important remains were distinguished from unimportant ones was informally described by Mc Ilroy using a mnemonic device called AIMS:

All cut features [i.e., wells, pits, privies] were half-sectioned and then characterized in terms of four AIMS: A is Association, I is Integrity, M is Material, S is Stratigraphy. Pits that have all four of these are totally cool. *Association* is the tightly dated historical information we have or are likely to be able to obtain about the lot residents. *Integrity* is simply that. Is the feature trashed by bioturbation, later intrusive pits, or modern disturbance such as pothunting? *Material* means we have enough artifacts, ecofacts, or bone present to be able to do something useful with them, and this is the most subjective category. Finally *stratigraphy*. While one undisturbed artifact-rich fill can be fine, we are also happy to see a well-defined sequence of strata representing re-use of the feature over a period of time. . . . If it is judged that a pit is lacking in these AIMS and will not be useful in terms of the research design, excavation stops at half section [1996b:46].

Through this process, the field and laboratory crews arrived at the 155 important collections of artifacts that provide the data from which the archaeological story of West Oakland's history is unfolding.

Archaeologists were greeted by much good news during the investigations. First, there was the good correlation between documents and "dirt." Mc Ilroy notes that "the CALTRANS survey crew who laid out our 1889 Sanborn maps on the ground did this with sufficient accuracy that, when we laid our trench out on one block along what we calculated to be the 1889 backyard fence line, we found on excavation that the edge of the trench split the surviving fence posts in half" (1996b:46). There was also a better survival rate than expected on some blocks, and exceptional visibility in some areas, where dark cultural features stood out sharply against the yellow sandy matrix of the native soil. A few important potential finds, however, were disappointments once exposed because of the severe damage they had suffered, all too frequently at the hands of souvenir hunters, who had reached the recently exposed properties before they could be protected. In some cases they mechanically drilled through asphalt armed with the same historical maps that guided the archaeologists. A few of those losses are truly regrettable.



PLATE 6. RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST. Once in the laboratory, artifact items from the same cluster are sorted, matched, and taped together. (Credit: Caerleon Safford)

LINKING ARTIFACTS AND PEOPLE

Artifacts and other materials from important features, such as wells and refuse pits, were brought to the laboratory, where they were washed, sorted, measured, weighed, reconstructed where feasible, photographed, sketched, and cataloged. In numerous cases, dating is clear and associations are certain, and the next order of analysis has begun: further archival and other research to fill out the record and refine the interpretation of the particular features and their interrelationships. In many other cases, the dates of the deposition (for example, the time of abandonment and backfilling of a privy) are unclear. At an address that was used by numerous residents over time, the date of the deposition must be narrowed down precisely before the individuals responsible for the deposit can be identified—a level of accuracy that is often out of reach. In other cases, the event that is represented is so clear in its structure and content that the individual responsible need not be identified for the information to be of use. Thus, at this preliminary point in the archaeological analysis and interpretation, some generalizations can be made about investigated finds. They are offered below.

TIME SPANS REPRESENTED

Cypress Project archaeological deposits cover a wide time range, beginning in the late 1860s or early 1870s. One particularly fine early example is Privy 4714, which was located on Block 29 behind

the residence at 1868/1870 Seventh Street. Among the privy's contents was an abundance of 1860s-period ceramics and many whole soda-water bottles. There was also a wealth of faunal remains, including bones of fish and song birds—the latter being a fairly common delicacy during this early period, when independent hunters often supplied neighborhood markets.

This residence was two doors down from the Railroad Exchange Hotel, built in 1863, the year in which the San Francisco and Oakland Railroad was completed down Seventh Street. The hotel catered to skilled working men who built the Long Wharf and later the Oakland Mole, where the trains and ferries met for the Oakland-San Francisco bay crossing. Dating to the middle 1860s, the residence is one of the earliest built within the project area. The privy was filled with the goods from the Charles Goshen household, who occupied the property until 1892 but created the archaeological feature some decades earlier. Goshen was a house and sign painter, who left ample evidence of his occupation behind. Analysis of the material from this privy will provide one of our earliest “pictures” of life in West Oakland, at a time prior to and overlapping with completion of the Central Pacific Railroad, a time when residents could walk one block to the San Francisco Bay to fish or trap wild fowl. Surely one important research question is, When did industrial pollutants render this form of subsistence no longer safe or possible?

There are a number of other privies on this parcel that presumably date to a later period. This fact will allow us to compare the contents of these features through time, from the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad to the transformation of West Oakland to an industrial/transportation center with a general decline in living conditions (railway lines eventually surrounded this block with noise and pollutants). The use of the parcel itself changed—from a single-family residence, possibly to flats, and then to a rooming house by 1902, possibly taking the overflow from the Railroad Hotel. The hotel itself is represented by the rich, stratified deposits in Well 4600, dating to the turn of the 19th century, when a large household of single male railroad workers were in residence; discarded uniforms, a wooden box once containing mackerel, and memorabilia from Southern Pacific are among the remains. In 1939 the Railroad Hotel and 1868/1870 Seventh Street residence were razed for electric train tracks connecting to the Bay Bridge. The deposits were sealed for more than half a century.

Another early date is found for Privy 3830 on Block 5, toward the eastern end of the project area; deposited some time after 1874, the privy is associated with John Quinn—an Irish hackman turned undertaker—who lived there for 26 years and left a substantial number of ale bottles behind. Also early was the backfilled privy of an Irish gardener on Block 1; at 14 feet deep, the privy is nearly three times the depth of the average West Oakland privy.

Best-represented among the soundly dated features is the last decade of the 19th century. This is most likely the time that water and sewer lines were replaced in much of the project area, particularly on the blocks just west of Market Street. City records that could date the exact timing of these services are not available for some locations and are only partial for others. Instead researchers look for other clues: Sanborn maps have been used to date the removal of outbuildings (presumably representing privies), while researchers studying the West Oakland built environment identified a number of architectural indicators of these milestones. In the old Oakland Point area, along the final blocks of Seventh Street and down around the railyards, the more recent deposits dating to ca. 1915 were encountered, suggesting that some of these areas may have received municipal services later. Thus the cutoff date for the archaeological data (around the second decade of the 20th century) happily

coincides with the earliest available oral-history data, while a study of building and landscape evolution can bring us up to the present day.

A WEALTH OF DATA

Several clusters of archaeological features represent households of similar sociocultural characteristics; thus some questions can be examined using relatively large samples, a requisite for meaningful research. Many of the features have yet to be securely linked to individual households, but enough is known to demonstrate the excellent potential of the Cypress data base—for both scholarly research and public interpretation.

Ethnic Associations

A variety of ethnicities/nationalities are represented by the excavated materials, but not in the proportions represented in documentary sources. Irish immigrants, for example, are disproportionately represented. Researchers have estimated that Irish made up some 11 percent of Oakland's population in 1870 but dropped to 5 percent by 1900 (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey 1990 [2]:47). At the same time, the census rolls do not show an especially high number of Irish residents for the Cypress project blocks. Although many links between people and artifacts have yet to be substantiated, more than one-quarter of the reasonably identified features appear to have been the product of Irish residents, the majority dating from 1880-1900.

Germans are also well-represented in the deposits, with most of the known associations clustered at the eastern end of the project blocks. On Block 1 a German brewer's privy and pit dating to the late 1860s were investigated, while later 19th-century archaeological features associated with German residents on Block 2 include a gunsmith; a gardener; and a barber. In about 1880, a Prussian musician filled a pit on Block 3. The geographic proximity of features related to these five households suggests they might be useful in tracking continuity and change in West Oakland's German community over the last decades of the 19th century.

Italian residents are, to date, poorly represented among the dated features, although several of the deposits may ultimately be linked to them, including the pits entirely filled with grape seeds—the remnants of wine-making. An Italian grocer and his family around 1900 may have created some of the features on Block 4, while next door, the construction trench for a French bakery built between 1900 and 1910 contained a diverse artifact fill. One or two features each are associated with Scandinavian, Canadian, Portuguese, Russian, and Chinese residents or proprietors; more such ethnic associations will be identified as privies and pits and artifact assemblages become linked to names and dates.

The Chinese feature represents the Chinese laundry at 1813 Seventh Street, probably operated from the early 1880s until shortly after the turn of the 20th century. Single working men living in the boarding hotels lining both sides of Seventh Street would have constituted a large and steady clientele. Although the laundry workers lived elsewhere, they usually ate and probably often slept at the laundry, putting in long days to keep up with the demand. A 1939 reminiscence tells about this very laundry, near the corner of Pine and Seventh:

Why is the front of that Chinese laundry so battered and the doors and windows barricaded? A favorite after school diversion of the boys is to board the steam train at Pine Street . . . previously providing themselves with a supply of stones. When the train passes the laundry they let fly a barrage of rocks at the front of the Chinese laundry, throwing the stones through the baggage car door [*West of Market Boys' Journal*, November 1939].

Behind the laundry, archaeologists excavated a trench—possibly the remains of a drying rack—filled sometime after 1905 with artifacts and burned wood. The trench contained broken Chinese ceramics, an abacus, laundry bluing, food bone, and other items connected to these beleaguered Chinese launderers, who gave up working at this address by 1912.

Many of the eligible archaeological deposits are associated with African Americans, who are well represented in both early and later contexts. At the same time, the people who created these features represented a variety of occupations, nativities, and lifestyles. One set of features with especially high research potential was created by an African American family who resided on Block 2 from at least 1880 to at least 1900. William and Emily Stewart, who had arrived in California 18 years earlier, owned the house that they shared with their two adult children; father and son worked as barbers and mother and daughter worked as hairdressers. Elsewhere on the block, several other African American households left deposits dating to the same time period. This good concordance of several deposits bearing similar ethnic and temporal assignments in close geographic proximity bodes well for their interpretive potential. African American porters, living in single groups or as heads of households, are linked to deposits dated from the late 19th century up to 1915. While some large-scale excavations in eastern and southern states have included significant studies of African American history and material culture, the Cypress Project is the first California investigation to recover data of this magnitude.

Collections of artifacts associated with White American-born households are in the minority. They reflect a fairly wide range of nativities (with eastern states dominating), occupations, social classes, and time periods. Most native-born Whites represented in the record seemed to have fared little better than their immigrant neighbors. Exceptions are the brothers Benjamin and Frederick Mann, originally from New Hampshire, who lived at the corner of Fifth and Grove streets in 1869. At the peak of their careers in 1880, Frederick was a miner and a speculator—now with a wife and three children—and Benjamin a capitalist and vice-president of the First National Gold Bank. But Frederick died soon thereafter, and his wife, Eunice, stayed on as a paid housekeeper for Benjamin. Benjamin died at home on New Year's Eve 1884, and Eunice remarried and moved away with her children. The residence was rented out to a string of tenants. Archaeology tells us that those final years were poor ones for the former capitalist, as indicated by the cheap cuts of meat he and his housekeeper now ate off of their expensive china, while archival documents show that he had few assets at death.

Occupations Represented

There are numerous investigated archaeological features that are clearly associated with railroad employees. Of the approximately 80 households represented by the investigated features, 15 included one or more railroad workers. Many of the carpenters, laborers, and other workers shown on the census were also employed by the railroad. A few of the households linked to archaeological remains



PLATE 7. THE CAPITALIST'S DINING TABLE. More than a century later, the fine place setting of banker and self-described capitalist Benjamin Mann is reconstructed, right down to the golden marigolds and the hard-boiled egg. (Credit: Adrian Praetzelis)

consisted of literally dozens of railroad workers; these were the rooming houses and hotels that lined the western end of Seventh Street. The census figures, however, reveal a much higher ratio of railroad workers to other skilled laborers, especially at the western end of the project area, near the yards themselves. In 1880 railroad employees outnumbered other skilled workers 3 to 1; in 1910 the ratio dropped to 1.5 to 1, reflecting the wide range of other industries (canneries, ironworks, glove factory, and others) that had emerged after the turn of the century. Thus despite their prevalence, they are underrepresented in the archaeological record.

Gender Relations

Gender is treated as a central issue in the “Domesticating Institutions” essay and is fundamental to understanding prostitution. From our preliminary research, it seems clear that the archaeological data base also holds some strong potential for addressing the issue of gender relations in urban turn-of-the-century California. A large number of female heads of household are linked to investigated features, some raising young families and others pursuing careers or retired, living alone or with female companions. Irish widows in West Oakland seem to have had a propensity to share homes with others of their kind, as can be seen at the eastern end of the project area. There, on Block 2, collections of artifacts are linked to two households that each contained a pair of Irish widows, while another feature is linked to a fifth Irish widow who lived alone nearby. If additional research verifies these associations, this is an intriguing data base for comparing various social and economic strategies

employed by older Irish women in late-19th- and early-20th-century urban America. Probably dating somewhat earlier (ca. 1880) was an artifact-rich privy deposit on Block 1 with relatively abundant faunal remains associated with an African American widow/head of household. Further west on Block 4, materials from a well-dated privy may be associated with a widowed music teacher who lived in her rented home with her older children from at least 1884 through 1890. Also on Block 4 was a ca. 1880 refuse pit that is likely associated with a 73-year-old White spinster from Massachusetts who owned her residence here for at least eight years during the 1880s. Thus on these three nearby blocks, there are five or six separate households headed by women, some represented by more than one archaeological feature; it is quite possible that all the features were backfilled in response to the same municipal edict or event. Finally for this eastern end of the project, a privy studied on Block 1 is likely associated with a 70-year-old widow who ran a lodging house catering to elderly residents in 1900 and 1910, while further west in the Oakland Point area, women often served as managers and housekeepers for boarding houses, and some of the deposits there may turn out to be so-linked.

West Oakland's history provides many examples of all-male households—an apparently common residential strategy used by immigrant men who were getting a foothold in a new community. These arrangements were often set up by people in the same workgroup, sometimes organized by the company. To date no apparent associations have been found between such small-scale residential groups and investigated archaeological features, although it is notable that once Mrs. Frederick Mann threw out her once-fine china and moved on to a new life, the house was rented out to a large group of working men. Some hotel and boarding-house artifact collections, however, might be fully attributed to single males, although sorting out the contributions of tenants and managers is challenging. Activities of married males that consciously exclude females would be difficult to discern in the archaeological record, but recognition of them may be useful. It is interesting to observe, for example, that no adult females appear in any of the Greek family photos presented (see “Melting Pot or Not”); cooking the Easter barbecue, for example, seems to be clearly a male activity. Whether meaningful questions can be posed for these issues must await further research.

THESE ESSAYS

The 11 contributions to this diverse collection of essays are presented here under three broad themes—The Built Environment, Work, and Community. As this summary will quickly demonstrate, the arrangement is somewhat arbitrary. Just like the neighborhood that these essays portray, there is much overlap and flux between play, work, personalities, setting, and community.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The first essay is Paul Groth and Marta Gutman's “Workers' Houses in West Oakland,” an important urban architectural history. The authors define two types of residences for low-income households that were built in the United States from the 1860s to the 1930s—the “informal worker's cottage” and the “almost-polite house”—and then examine the wide range of key issues about the social construction of space that the two house styles reflect. While variations on these styles are found in all American cities, virtually no academic literature exists on these types of dwellings for any location; and no study has looked at houses in the broader context of the house lot and the

neighborhood, as has been done here for West Oakland. By providing a rich context for the houses and detailed explanations of the original and evolving functions of the interiors, the authors have contributed to the archaeologist's and the historian's understanding of the data they collect. By recording images and collecting information from vanishing resources, the study is a genuine gift that the city and community can use in evaluating other neighborhoods and preserving the memory of this one.

In his essay "Rooming and Boarding in West Oakland," Paul Groth looks at a housing option that was commonly chosen throughout the 19th century and up to the 1950s: renting a room either in an informal, noncommercial setting or in a formally run rooming or boarding house. The availability of rooms for rent and of support facilities for roomers—such as restaurants, pool halls, and public baths—was directly related to the availability of work, a fairly abundant commodity in West Oakland during the time period dealt with here. Groth shows the results of the waxing and waning of the working population on the built environment: the changing patterns of use in commercial rooming houses and the subdivision of houses and even backyards to provide rooms for renters and income for owners. The essay makes intensive use of Sanborn insurance maps as sources of information on the rooming houses themselves and also on the changing spatial configuration and land-use mixtures that were a part of this work/housing scenario. Groth's essay presents a valuable perspective by viewing rooming-house life as a dynamic choice among housing options and emphasizing the total landscape that is affected by and influences that experience.

Marta Gutman's essay "Five Buildings on One Corner and Their Change Over Time" details the story of a remarkable group of buildings at Peralta and Fifth streets—relatively intact survivors within a setting of massive change. The buildings represent the gradual amassing of property and construction of buildings, over three decades in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, by a Scottish immigrant, and their use by him and his family. There followed a period of some decades in which ownership was dispersed among several families. Then, beginning in the 1940s, an African American family—newly arrived from the Deep South—gradually reconstructed the estate, owning all five buildings by the 1970s. Today the buildings survive with few external changes and most functions intact. The strong message that is conveyed by this simple story demonstrates the power of the built environment to invoke personal and community history.

COMMUNITY

Marta Gutman's essay "Domesticating Institutions: Progressive Women and Environmental Activism in West Oakland" takes a national phenomenon—the reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries—and examines how it affected the lives and streets of West Oakland. Three neighborhood institutions are explored: St. Vincent's Day Home; the Fannie Wall Children's Home and Day Nursery; and the Oakland New Century Club, an outgrowth of the Sunshine Corner of the 1890s. The three groups were organized for somewhat different purposes and focused on different clientele; they shared, however, what Gutman calls a position of determined environmental activism. These woman activists were convinced that successful reform would not be possible without improved physical conditions within the home and the neighborhood as a whole. Using the Oakland New Century Club as a case study, Gutman combines in-depth analysis of Sanborn maps and historical photographs with magazine and newspaper research to examine the reformers' concerted

crafting of the neighborhood's environment. Her essay raises a variety of questions and themes that contribute to scholarly debates on how power relations are manifested on the landscape as well in the actions of various social groups.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton's essay, "Melting Pot or Not? Ethnicity and Community in Pre-World War II West Oakland," looks at the complex issue of ethnicity—how people respond to the immigrant experience and the challenges of modern urban life; what they resist changing and what they are willing to give up. The topic of ethnicity is one that has become central to recent debates about culture change, and Hattersley-Drayton summarizes these issues here. The voices that speak of this experience, as transcribed from the oral-history interviews with current and former West Oakland residents, are too few in number to contribute clarity to today's academic debate, but they do much to recreate some of the sights and sounds of the neighborhood and to breathe life and feelings into the names on the census lists and in the city directories and meaning to the artifacts they left behind.

WORK

West Oakland's location at a transportation hub for the United States and the Pacific Rim was the primary factor for most work opportunities in the neighborhood and defined some of the most numerous or visible occupations. (The railroad yards themselves made a significant imprint on the urban landscape. As a part of the Cypress Replacement Project, researchers identified and recorded shops, offices, and other facilities that made up the National Register-eligible Southern Pacific West Oakland Shops Historic District [CALTRANS 1990].) The essays here touch on some of the highlights of working for the railroad and related industries in West Oakland.

The first essay, "A Profile of Work in West Oakland" by Paul Groth, is a brief overview of the nature and distribution of work in the greater neighborhood—an area that workers living on the Cypress Project blocks could reach by foot. Using Sanborn maps and city employment reports, supplemented by oral histories and the archival research conducted by other Cypress researchers, Groth paints a picture of tremendous occupational diversity—in factories, offices, and stores; on the docks and in the yards; and along the city streets.

Will Spires presents two essays on the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). The first is "The Quest for 'Dad' Moore: Theme, Place, and the Individual in Historical Archaeology," which is a brief and moving tribute to the life and work of Morris "Dad" Moore—African American worker and labor leader. Inspirational in his devotion to the cause and his sincerity, Moore ran the BSCP office in the Cypress Project area from 1919 to 1930, during the decade that the Brotherhood was founded. On 25 August 1995, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the BSCP, trustees of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland gathered for a headstone dedication ceremony for Dad Moore's grave in Oakland. The statement read at this ceremony is presented as an epilogue to the essay.

The second BSCP essay by Will Spires is "*Brotherhood Songs: The West Oakland Songbook of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.*" The songbook is a small mimeographed pamphlet presenting the verses for six songs—most of them religious hymns reworded to suit union themes. Singing together from this book would have served to mark BSCP gatherings with a strong



PLATE 8. THE RAILROAD EXCHANGE HOTEL AND OTHER BOARDING HOUSES WEST OF CEDAR STREET IN 1925. The peaked roof of the Railroad Exchange Hotel, built in 1864, is almost obscured by the double-bay windows of an additional rooming house added to the complex in 1890. The Railroad Exchange Hotel, which was the earliest and most enduring boarding house within the project area, yielded significant archaeological deposits representing the hotel's railroad employee tenants. (From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers.)

sense of communion. Used for this study was the only known copy of the songbook, found among the personal papers and belongings of C.L. Dellums. While the songbook contained no musical notation, Spires was able to reconstruct the score in nearly all cases. He has investigated this repertoire of songs by identifying their origins, which in turn help to explain why BSCP members in West Oakland chose them for their book. The songbook greatly personalizes the local chapter's struggle.

Willie R. Collins writes about another railroad-company occupation that was held exclusively by African Americans in "Putting on the Big Hat": Labor and Lore Among Oakland's Recaps." Redcap porters were well known to any traveler in the first half of the 20th century, but unlike sleeping car porters, their occupation has not been documented in academic studies and is rarely featured in popular literature. The essay is based on Collins's interviews with four of the six known surviving Oakland Redcap porters, whose mean age was 77 years in 1995, and with the daughter of a Redcap porter who worked at Oakland for many decades beginning in 1902. This essay potently depicts the range of Redcapping experiences—from the bitter discrimination that placed often well-educated and talented

men in positions of near servitude, to the stories of economic and personal successes and camaraderie and pride in a job well done.

Elaine-Maryse Solari's essay "Prostitution in West Oakland" explores an occupation that was, in some small enclaves of the neighborhood, as common as working for the railroad. The numbers of people engaged in prostitution and related entertainment jobs rose and fell with the changing economy and the need to shrink or swell the labor force, while the official attitude toward "the profession" shifted with changing views of morality, social responsibility, and even land-use values. Solari uses a variety of resources—literature and archival research and oral-history documentation—to provide a context for understanding prostitution in West Oakland, followed by specifics of how prostitution affected the West Oakland neighborhood. Although no important archaeological materials were linked to the neighborhood's early-20th-century red-light district on Block 18, it is likely that prostitution occurred on other blocks as well and might be discernible in material ways. It was also a fact of life—accepted, even condoned, by some and ignored or deplored by others—that affected the neighborhood as a whole.

Willie R. Collins's second essay, "Jazzing Up Seventh Street: Musicians, Venues, and their Social Implications," illuminates West Oakland's role as a central place for jazz musicians and their followers and as an important center for the development of West Coast Jazz. The essay is based on Collins's interviews with retired African American jazz musicians who had played on Seventh Street in the 1930s through the 1950s, as well as with community members who made up their audiences; some oral histories collected 15 years ago, relating an earlier period; and intensive newspaper research that takes the local story back to the first years of the 20th century. Although both Blacks and Whites played jazz on Seventh Street, Collins focuses on the African American musicians who, until after World War II, were restricted through various union tactics to play only there. Understanding the jazz scene in West Oakland—recognizing its contribution to the sights and sounds on the street, its importance to local Black culture, and its role as a lure for bringing outsiders into the neighborhood—adds to the growing documentation of the neighborhood's urban landscape.

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS

In their essays, the authors have expressed their appreciation of the tremendous support they have received from community members, research organizations, scholars, and countless others. This volume and the studies it represents have been a genuine team effort, in which all parties can take great pride. We would also like to thank the authors—consultants Willie Collins, Paul Groth, and Marta Gutman, and ASC researchers Karana Hattersley-Drayton, Elaine-Maryse Solari, and Will Spires—for being both aggressive researchers and accommodating coworkers. The essays in this volume are real scholastic treasures that will be read for a long time to come. ASC employees who have contributed to the volume include Holly Hoods, with her astute editorial assistance, and computer specialist Rosemary White, with her formatting skills and magical abilities to turn torn and faded photos into glowing portraits. We also wish to acknowledge the contributions of Nancy L. Olmsted and Roger W. Olmsted, whose excellent historical overview produced for *West Oakland—A Place to Start From* provided context and inspiration for the essays in this volume.

The authors join us in sending a big THANK YOU to CALTRANS. We are especially grateful to Janet L. Pape, Archaeology Project Manager, for identifying the need for cultural resources studies on the Cypress Replacement Project in the first place, and then persevering through the daily challenges of this complex project. It is also a pleasure to thank Senior Environmental Planner Robert Gross for his valuable guidance during his two years at the helm, and Associate Environmental Planner/Historical Archaeologist Judith Tordoff for her collegial advice and support. CALTRANS can be proud of the job they have done on behalf of the West Oakland neighborhood, the academic community, and the public at large.

PART TWO

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

WORKERS' HOUSES IN WEST OAKLAND

Paul Groth
Marta Gutman

BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT SMALL HOUSES

West Oakland—especially the area most impacted by the re-routing of the Cypress Freeway—is a neighborhood of small, wooden houses built and rebuilt by their renters and owners over a span of 130 years. From the street, these houses reflect only a small part of their history. Exterior details tell something of their first dates of construction, but not much more. Outside observers remain puzzled by the interiors of the houses, how the rooms connect, or the true size of the house and yard—and what these facts reveal about the daily lives of the residents.

This situation is very different from the exterior analysis that can be done for more expensive houses, those built over the past 100 years in middle- and upper-income districts at the edge of the typical American city. Dozens of detailed books and articles have chronicled these house types and their social and cultural meaning. From the outside, one can quite easily deduce the likely floor plan, room arrangements, and often the number of rooms, and hence, the relative social and economic positions of the residents.

As part of the Cypress Project, three particular West Oakland homes have presented important questions and opportunities for understanding the neighborhood. One of these three dwellings is 714



PLATE 9. SMALL HOUSE AND YARD AT 323 HENRY STREET. Many of the present two-story houses in West Oakland started out as one-story cottages like this one. The picket fence and street trees may date from about 1900. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui)

Pine Street, here called the Jackson/Netherland cottage. It is a tiny one-story structure, raised on a very high basement. In the spring of 1995, when it was surveyed in its original location, it was prominently visible from BART and Seventh Street, as well as from Pine Street (Plate 10). The other two houses, only a block and a half away, were on a side street that was rarely traveled, a street that for more than 50 years was dwarfed by the imposing south facade of the Phoenix Iron Works. Also in the spring of 1995 (before it burned), the house at 1825 Shorey Street was very small, very plain, and set quite far back from the sidewalk. It appeared to be old, but it could have been built at any time in a 50-year period between 1860 and 1910. Compared to the Jackson/Netherland House, it was very long; from the street, one could not be sure just how far back the house actually stretched. A backyard structure was visible but it could not have been a garage, for there was no obvious way for a car to have been driven to the back of the lot. Two doors down was a much larger and more decorated Victorian-style house, at 1817 Shorey Street and subsequently moved. On the imposing front stairs, front bay windows, and gables are architectural details in the Eastlake and Queen Anne styles. Next door was a near duplicate. All of these houses were lived in until 1993.

In 1995 these three houses were slated to be moved or demolished, since the new Cypress Freeway would be built through their sites, and through the site of the huge Phoenix Iron Works. As experts gathered to study these three houses, they also had to ask questions about understanding the rest of West Oakland's small wooden houses:

1. How can one accurately describe and classify small houses like the Jackson/Netherland House and 1825 Shorey Street? The available academic literature is of very little help—even the literature about ordinary, vernacular houses, which is mostly about rural, rather than urban homes. Is the larger Shorey Street house the social equivalent of its fancier look-alikes elsewhere?
2. How can we interpret the differences these three houses display in their size, shape, architectural detail, and placement on the lot—and the sharp divergence of social and cultural meaning that they suggest? Why would people build such a seemingly elegant house as the Victorian at 1817 Shorey, just down the street from the mysterious little building at 1825?
3. Two of these houses have obvious and frequent additions. What was original? What was added—when and why? Why was the Victorian at 1817 Shorey *not* expanded significantly over these same years? Most architectural history celebrates a highlight of one particular stylistic moment: a good example of a particular style, or the residence of a particular person. How can we interpret the importance and meaning of houses that have been so greatly altered over time?

These are not questions that pertain only to West Oakland. For a very long time, the majority of low-income residents in North American cities have lived in small wooden houses of one or two units each, very much like those in West Oakland. From about 1860 onward, the number and prominence of these houses jumped significantly in cities with rapidly expanding industrial economies.

Local variations of West Oakland's houses can be found throughout most of the industrial United States and Canada: in the Back of the Yards district in Chicago, for instance; in mining towns like Georgetown, Colorado; near the huge grain elevators of Buffalo, New York; near the factories of Hull,



PLATE 10. VIEW OF THE JACKSON/NETHERLAND COTTAGE, 714 PINE STREET. This 1995 photograph shows the cottage just a few months before it was moved from its original location. Note the BART train to the right. (Credit: Paul Groth)

Quebec; and in the small North Carolina city of Edenton, near the tobacco warehouses. Urban historians have begun to interpret the social and cultural meaning of neighborhoods like West Oakland, but usually in quite general terms (Barrows 1983; Borchert 1990; Harris 1991).

Based on field work done in West Oakland in the first half of 1995, this study proposes definitions for two types of small residences for low-income households found very frequently in urban North America—the *informal workers' cottage* and the *almost-polite house*. There is nothing particularly precise or magical about these terms. They are simply two points on a continuum, with homelessness and shacks near one end, and house and mansion on the way to the other end. In West Oakland, as in the rest of the urban United States and Canada, the cottage and almost-polite house were commonly built from the 1860s to the 1930s. Informal cottages and almost-polite houses also have many rural counterparts, and owners of company towns used both house types extensively. The connection of these house types to the labor force needed for American industrialization is an important key to their interpretation.

In the 19th century, outside observers from the middle and upper class referred to structures like those found in West Oakland as cottages, to distinguish them from true houses.¹ This study qualifies the term *cottage* with the modifiers *informal* and *workers'* because the single term cottage

¹ Note that in this study, the term *middle and upper class* is used in the singular, since polite people of middle to high income have shared very similar residential and social values about the use of homes and yards. *Working class* refers, then, to an oppositional stance of people whose culture differs significantly from middle and upper class (Katz 1981; Wright 1985). Note that gender or ethnicity may cut across or reinforce these oppositions of class.

has had several different architectural and social definitions in North America. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, a cottage was the temporary dwelling of a *cotter*, an unskilled worker, hired on a temporary basis. The cotter's house—pieced together of found parts—today would be called a shack; it was assumed that the cotter (and the cottage) were temporary (J.B. Jackson 1984). The urban historian Kenneth T. Jackson (1985:63-64) notes Andrew Jackson Downing's softer, alternative definition of a cottage (in Downing's 1841 *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*) merely as a "servantless small dwelling." Americans have also used the term cottage to refer to their vacation dwellings, especially when these are simple, small structures. Indeed, the simplest type of vacation homes built along the California coast, or before 1900 in the Berkeley Hills, often exhibited forms—but not the full-time use or fully packed densities—very similar to informal workers' cottages in West Oakland. These structures might have used some of the same lumberyard kits of parts. (See, for instance, the oldest vacation cottages at Dillons Beach.) At the extreme, the robber barons of Newport, Rhode Island, used the term *cottage* to refer to their gigantic summer mansions.

Informal denotes a type of house design that is casual and utilitarian, without strong attention to polite and fixed styles. We also use the term informal in the sense that Oliver Zunz has used it to define a typically American style of funding and development. According to Zunz and others, before the banking reforms of the 1930s, the small wooden houses of neighborhoods of industrial workers were often funded in an informal real-estate economy, as opposed to the more formal and financial-institution-driven development of middle-income districts of the city (Thernstrom 1964; Zunz 1982:129-177). For some homeowners in Oakland, this is still true (Marvin 1995).

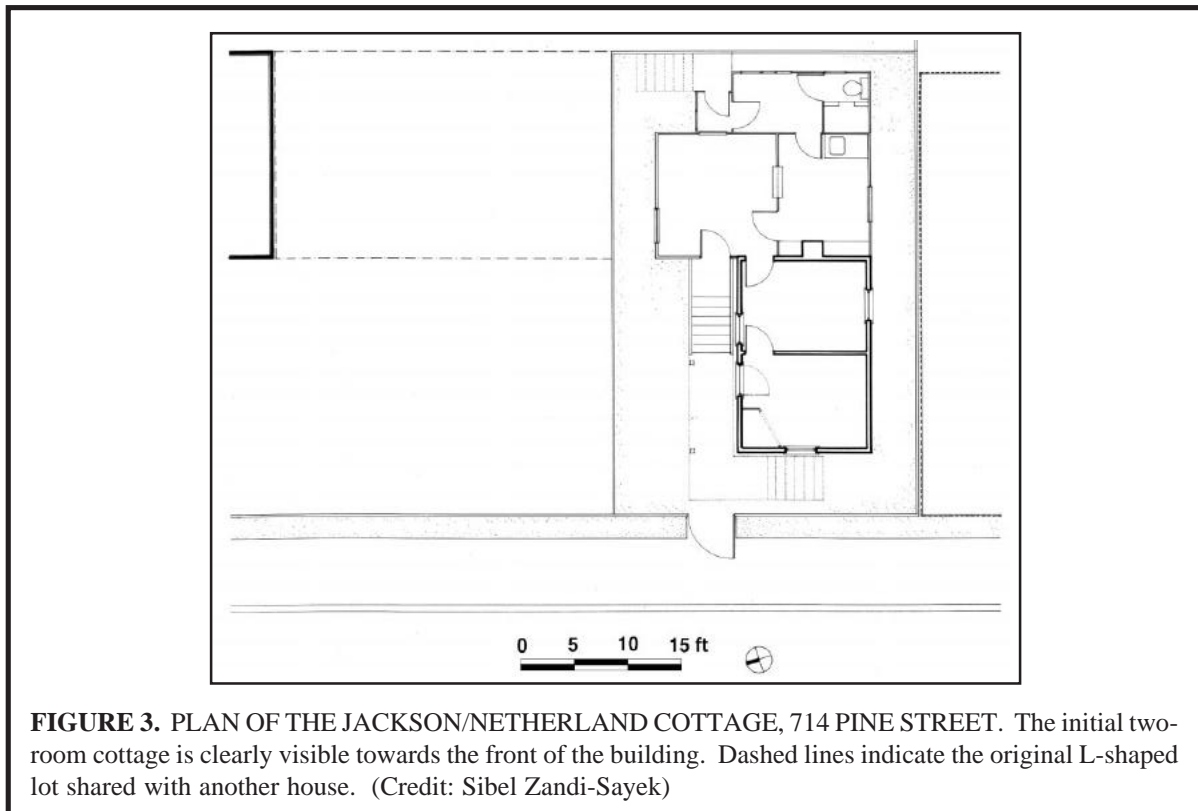
The term *almost-polite house* indicates small houses whose builders and occupants seem to have worked consciously to match the basic rules followed by house builders in the polite middle and upper class. In the 19th century, many of these rules governing politeness and household refinement were relatively new. The rules focused on ideals of greater separation and specialization in all phases of urban life; people of polite society viewed houses built according to the new rules as hygienic, progressive, scientific, or simply proper. At the heart of the new rules were assumptions about how rooms were used, how they should be connected or separated from other rooms, how their uses might be better specialized, and what kinds of urban land uses should be allowed next to home life. In places like West Oakland, builders and renters of informal workers' cottages did not embrace the new polite assumptions; cottage residents ignored, opposed, or simply could not afford to emulate these middle- and upper-class norms. Yet, some West Oakland houses show that their builders obviously did know the new rules and adopted many of them; they could not, however, satisfy them all.

The differences between the informal workers' cottage and the almost-polite house, and their surrounding neighborhoods, illustrate several key issues about the social construction of space—issues that North American builders and home buyers are still debating: mixed uses versus single uses; the overlapping or isolation of production and consumption; jerry-built diversity versus "designerly" homogeneity; use value versus market value; changing roles of women in the household and in the city; working-class values versus middle- and upper-class values; and, especially at the neighborhood scale, racial mixture versus racial segregation.

INFORMAL WORKERS' COTTAGES: AN INTRODUCTION

714 PINE STREET AS A CLASSIC WORKERS' COTTAGE

The small Jackson/Netherland cottage at 714 Pine Street (between Goss and Seventh, on Project Block 25) is a classic example of an informal workers' cottage. The original cottage was built by 1868, at least a year before the transcontinental railroad reached Oakland. The first known residents of the dwelling were Oscar T. Jackson, his wife Mary Ellen Scott, and their family, who were listed in the city directory as residents at 714 Pine (then 860 Pine)² between 1874 and 1878. Jackson was a Seventh Street barber and professional tenor who toured internationally with a minstrel troupe. Mary Scott was the daughter of John Scott, a well-known African American pioneer in California; he may have been the same John Scott who owned the land surrounding the site of the cottage in the years before its construction. In 1876 Jackson and Scott had a daughter, Mary Cornelia Jackson. Later known as Mayme Netherland, she became an influential leader in Oakland's African American community and lived to be 96 (Knight 1995:2). As Mary Praetzellis reports in a recent document, Mrs. Netherland "was the subject of numerous newspaper articles. In each, she begins her story with, 'I was born at 714 Pine. The house is still standing. You can see it if you want to'" (1994:2). A full study of all of the known residents at the house is being prepared.



² Modern addresses are used in this study. See Table 1 for a concordance of modern and historical (pre-1910) addresses.

TABLE 1
ADDRESS CONCORDANCE FOR WEST OAKLAND COTTAGES

1995 Address	Address Before 1910	Associated Name(s)
323 Center Street	715 Center Street	Deguzee/Phillips Rental House
316 Chester	714 Chester	Bibber/Rosas House
360 Chester	736 Chester	Sugrue/Crossman Cottage
714 Pine	860 Pine	Jackson/Netherland Cottage
1817 Shorey	1817 Short	Stephens/Wood House
1825 Shorey	1825 Short	Crowley Cottage
1529 Third	1517 Third	Porter/Jost Rental Cottage

The ownership history of the Jackson/Netherland lot and cottage is not entirely clear. Block books show, that, even until 1994, the cottage lot was legally combined with the lot of the house at 1789 Goss Street. Sanborn maps suggest that the rear lot of the cottage may also have stretched further east than it did in 1995. The lot may have been owned by one person, the cottage by another, although records of such arrangements are rare in Oakland (Marvin 1995). The original lot owner, who retained the property through the 1880s, was a carpenter and wheelwright named John Bachman (Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey [OCHS] 1980-1995, 1988-1990). For virtually all of its history, the Jackson/Netherland cottage was a rental property.

The Jackson/Netherland cottage was probably begun, in 1868, as two rooms under the front-facing gable roof (Figure 3). The section was built very well, using balloon-frame construction for the exterior walls. Today, we can only guess at the uses of these original rooms. One of the two rooms had the stove; the other room seems to have had the original front door. There may have been only one exterior door; more likely, there was a front door opening on the front room, and a back door leading to the outhouse. We have no record of the original 1868 porches and stairs at front and back. Sanborn maps do not indicate any rear shed or outhouse location for 714 Pine, although it is safe to assume that a rear staircase originally led to a backyard and outhouse.

By 1889 the initial two rooms of the Jackson/Netherland cottage had been doubled with a two-room extension (Sanborn 1889). The added



PLATE 11. DETAIL OF SINGLE-WALL CONSTRUCTION IN THE KITCHEN OF 714 PINE STREET. The wide vertical boards are the exterior structural wall; the horizontal lath and its covering of plaster help to seal the wall. Note the corner of a window sill at the upper right. (Credit: Marta Gutman)

two rooms at 714 Pine—as with the early additions of many other West Oakland cottages—use a wall-construction system known as *single-wall construction*. In the West, this construction system is also called “box construction” or “board-and-batten construction.” Only one board thick, the walls are formed by vertical boards nailed to a plate at the top and a sill at the bottom. Smaller vertical strips of wood (battens), nailed on the outside over the spaces between boards, help to seal the cracks from rain and wind. Interior surfaces of single-wall construction can be left plain, papered, or plastered. The floor plan of 714 Pine (Figure 3) shows the contrast in wall thickness between the original section of the cottage, the second set of two rooms, and later additions. The roof over the two-room addition was a simple shed roof; the interior ceiling reflects the angle of the roof, which slopes below 8 feet at the back of the addition. It is possible that the single-wall portion was the first section, and that the front two rooms were added as the second unit. However, the position of the chimney flue (logically built *outside* the first unit’s back wall) and the relation of the single-wall section’s roof with the initial starter cottage strongly support the order presented here.

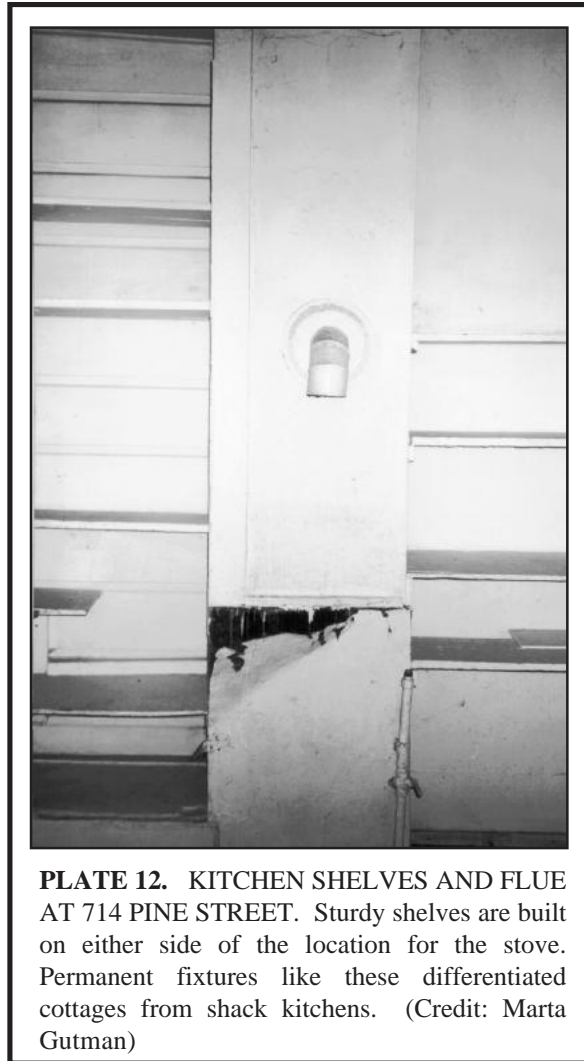


PLATE 12. KITCHEN SHELVES AND FLUE AT 714 PINE STREET. Sturdy shelves are built on either side of the location for the stove. Permanent fixtures like these differentiated cottages from shack kitchens. (Credit: Marta Gutman)

One of the rear rooms added to 714 Pine by 1889 was clearly specialized as a kitchen. The modern sink and drain board seem to be located where an original sink had been. This room also has kitchen storage shelves built in on both sides of the stove flue. The room was small (about 11 by 8 feet), but large enough to have a kitchen table for preparing food and eating some meals. The other rear room, with what probably was the new front door to the dwelling, may have served many of the resident households as a combination sitting room and dining room, and may have also served as a sleeping space. At some point, probably in the 1950s, residents opened a window-sized hole in the wall between the kitchen and the sitting room, better connecting the two spaces visually and probably making them more like the kitchen-and-family-room spaces of contemporary suburban houses.

Photographs taken of Mayme Netherland at the front of the cottage in the 1920s show a long side porch, which stretched the full length of the original section of the cottage, to front stairs that ran parallel to the street; this porch and stairs are shown by dotted lines on the plan. The architectural details of this nicely ornamented porch suggest that it might have been added or improved before 1889, at the same time that the rear two rooms were added.

By 1889 the cottage at 714 Pine was surrounded by stables (Sanborn 1889). Against the north fence of the Jackson/Netherland lot was the stable of a small corner house. Two commercial buildings along Seventh Street also had stables that abutted the Pine Street dwelling's south fence. It was not unusual to live close to animals in the 19th-century city, but being between two sets of stables strongly suggests that this was an inexpensive rental property. By 1912 the house had much altered surroundings: a vacant lot to the north, and a two-story commercial building to the south (Sanborn 1912; Plate 13).

The Jackson/Netherland cottage seems to have gained an enclosed rear utility porch (probably a wash porch with a set of wash tubs), with an adjacent toilet room and a shower after 1952, since this addition is not indicated on the Sanborn map of that year. The porch sink probably served as a basin for the toilet room; earlier residents might have used the kitchen sink. The roof over this addition was another shed roof, built at a slightly less steep angle than the earlier addition, clearly showing the sequence of the construction. The wall construction of this last lean-to used studs, but no interior siding or plastering; the individual parts of the generously sized band of windows, facing east from the rear porch, seem to have been scavenged from other, older structures and pieced together. The most recent addition to the Jackson/Netherland cottage was a flimsy enclosure of the rear stair landing, made with thin plywood sheets tacked onto older structural elements. Note that the rear stairs of 714 Pine had been removed before the cottage was measured, and those shown in dotted lines on the plan are conjectural.

The high number of people per room in the Jackson/Netherland cottage at 714 Pine was probably fairly typical of other West Oakland cottages. After the Jackson family—one of its first tenants in the mid-1870s and perhaps the owners of the cottage itself—we know that the tenants in 1900 were a Swedish-born ship's carpenter and his family of five. The 1910 census indicates a lodging group of seven unrelated Portuguese-born laborers (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

PRINCIPAL TRAITS OF INFORMAL COTTAGES

The Jackson/Netherland cottage introduces several of the principal characteristics of informal workers' cottages as a general house type, in terms of ownership, architectural elements, nature of occupancy, and physical and social setting. Some of these characteristics are discussed below.

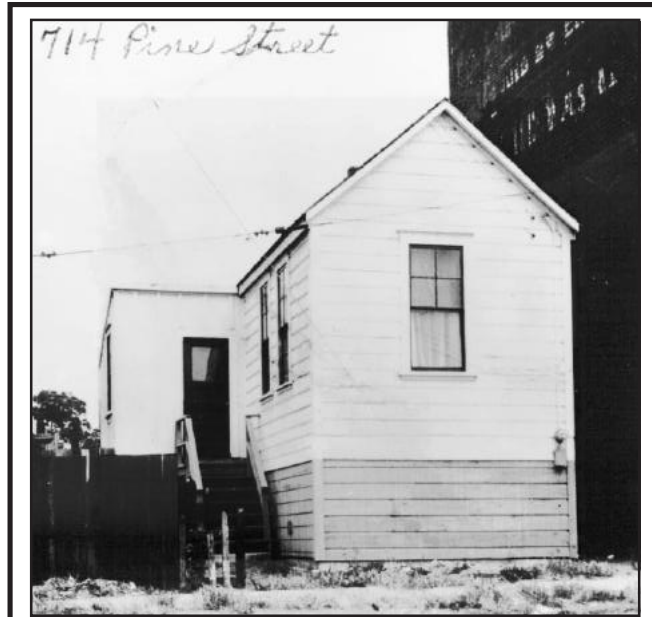


PLATE 13. HISTORIC FRONT VIEW OF THE JACKSON/NETHERLAND COTTAGE, 714 PINE STREET. This photograph probably dates from the 1930s. Looming to the right of the cottage is the rear wing of an inexpensive workers' hotel, which remained open into the 1950s as the Murphy Hotel. (Courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)

Ownership

Ownership of an informal workers' cottage was often, but not always, local. Cottages in West Oakland, as those in comparable American urban neighborhoods, typically had one of three types of owners:

- a. *Owner-occupiers* were individuals or families who owned a single lot and house on that lot for their own use (see 360 Chester Street, the Sugrue/Crossman house, in the case studies below).
- b. *Neighbor-owners* were people who lived and worked in the neighborhood (for instance, they may have run a corner store nearby) and bought one or more lots near their work or next to their personal home to augment their income. They typically managed and maintained the properties themselves and collected the rent personally. On occasion the owners built two identical houses: one to live in themselves, and the other to rent out (see 316 Chester Street, the Bibber/Rosas house).
- c. *Across-town owners* were absentee landlords, but not from very far away, as the term “absentee” suggests today. They lived outside the neighborhood, although only a few miles away elsewhere in the East Bay or in San Francisco. These people were typically from the middle and upper class; doctors, optometrists, and realtors are common examples. They owned one or more cottages (usually a row of three to five dwellings, often all alike) strictly as investments, which they may or may not have personally managed. An example is 1529 Third Street, the Potter/Jost house, which was one of four identical cottages in a row owned by a doctor who lived at a fashionable middle-income district about 4 miles away).

At least as early as the 19th century, some real-estate offices specialized in management and collection of rents on behalf of across-town owners. Other realtors and investment groups put together groups of owners for profitable low-income properties (Valva 1995a).

This study's sample of dwellings is too small to predict the proportion of owner-occupied cottages in West Oakland at any given decade. Although most immigrant groups put a high value on home ownership, we must remember that this so-called “ownership” was tenuous. New owners often took out five- to eight-year mortgages to buy the initial cottage; the mortgage might have been from an individual they knew, or from a savings and loan association. Refinancing of these short-term mortgages was not necessarily automatic; it had to be renegotiated at the end of each short term. To make the rent installments and end-of-term balloon payments, families routinely would forego food or children's education, take in boarders or lodgers, or during some periods, subdivide their house and live in the least desirable unit. Edith Abbott's *The Tenements of Chicago* reports that in 1894, 81 percent of the house owner-occupiers in Chicago's cottage districts lived in a cottage with at least one rental unit (Abbott 1936).

Open Lots and Varied Setbacks

The open-lot house—a house that has open space and access to the outdoors on all four sides—is a house form that derives from rural Anglo-American experience; row-house forms, which are buildings whose side walls abut, have historical roots that are more urban (Groth 1990). In informal workers' cottages, builders created a minimal version of open-lot-house form by leaving very narrow

side yards or passages between houses, and placing the front facades of the houses at uneven setbacks from the street. West Oakland cottages south of Seventh Street usually sit on lots that are 25 feet wide and 100 to 125 feet deep; north of Seventh, 30-foot-wide lots are also fairly common. These are standard survey lots of the 19th-century American city (Groth 1981). A wealthier owner could combine two or three lots, or buy a whole block (as in the case of the McDermott estate on Seventh Street) to make room for a more imposing, open-lot home with wide side yards.

In the South of Market district of San Francisco and in many other workers' cottage districts, owners constructed true row buildings whose side walls directly abutted each other. This was also the case for the commercial properties along Seventh Street in West Oakland. On most West Oakland residential properties, however, builders left at least very small side passages to separate one building from another. For instance, the front section of the Jackson/Netherland cottage is very narrow, but it has always had side yards of 4 and 11 feet from the walls of the house.

These side-yard passages, most typically 3 or 4 feet wide in West Oakland, do several practical things. They allow light and ventilation from the side wall, provide a minimal fire break between houses, allow for maintenance of siding and fixing water-drainage problems, and are often used for an access path to the backyard for deliveries and trash and ash hauling. In coastal California's mild climate, these side passages have also proven to be perfect places to insert plumbing pipes, electrical boxes and wiring, and heating or ventilation ducts. They do all this, in addition to their less tangible



PLATE 14. VARIED SETBACKS ALONG FIFTH STREET, NEAR CHESTER STREET. The variety of different front-yard sizes seemed “strangely varying” to visitors from more expensive neighborhoods. Former front yards convert well to parking spaces. (Credit: Paul Groth)

asset of approximating the appearance of an open-lot house even though the houses are very nearly row houses. Over time, and often informally, some neighbors come to share use of these small breaks between houses. In many lots today, the exact legal line between two properties is not always visually clear. While doing surveys, we heard several stories about property-line disputes and side-lot encroachment—for instance, people who had reputedly moved their fence several feet into the adjacent lot.

The uneven front setbacks of informal workers' cottage streets are important. Setbacks from the street varied according to the individual logic of each builder. Before the 1880s such variance was fairly common, but afterward most polite neighborhoods had more uniform setbacks. Social workers in Chicago, after 1900, described cottage-district streetscapes as “strangely varying” from house to house and block to block—strangely varying, that is, in comparison to the setbacks of more proper houses of the middle and upper class (Abbott 1936:127).

Distinction from Shanties

Cottages were different from shanties and shacks, but over time the distinction could become tenuous. At least the initial portions of cottages—those closest to the street—were very distinct from shacks. Before the clean-ups and the stringent enforcement of building codes, which in West Oakland seem to have begun after 1952, shacks and shanties were fairly common elements of some urban districts. Shacks and shanties were truly temporary or makeshift dwellings, indicating only a temporary commitment. In a shanty's cooking area, if there was one, the shelves and cupboards were pieced together out of found objects. This minimal investment was often due to the fact that the builder-occupiers were building on land that they did not own. Alternatively, it could be because they intended to live in the shanty or shack only a short time, while the family saved to build a better, larger dwelling on the lot. This pattern became fairly common in suburban shantytowns, but the Sanborn maps show it in West Oakland as well. Such shanties were often built at the back of the lot, or moved to the back of the lot when the better dwelling was built (Harris 1991). In the 19th and early 20th centuries, no plumbing or wiring hindered the process.

The uniform, visually balanced and finished facades and investment in architectural ornament of the initial sections of informal workers' cottages did a great deal to make clear the distinction between cottage and shack. In adding later rear additions to cottages, however, residents often reverted to shanty-style construction techniques. Thus, if viewed from the rear yard, some cottages appear to be no more than an assemblage of shacks, while from the front that same dwelling is clearly a more permanently built cottage.

Starter Cottages as Initial Investments

From the mid-19th century and onward, workers with a steady job and a good loan began their home with an initial investment in a “starter cottage” of two, three, or four rooms. By the 1860s the minimum starter cottage had two rooms, and the Jackson/Netherland cottage and 1825 Shorey are excellent examples. In the early 1800s in the United States, the smallest initial unit had been only one room, often with an additional loft space, a minimum that had been common in the colonial era. Such small homes were commonly lived in for long periods of time. The one multipurpose room, however,



PLATE 15. SHACK EXTERIOR AND RESIDENT, 1919. Temporary construction and scavenged parts were hallmarks of the shack or shanty. Housing reformers took this photograph (probably in the North Beach area of San Francisco) to warn their readers about cultural schisms and health dangers in California. (Credit: California Commission on Immigration and Housing 1919:39)

could be fairly large (often 16 x 16 feet) compared to the very small size of the initial rooms at 714 Pine (9 x 11 feet) and at 1825 Shorey (10 x 13 feet).

In Oakland, initial cottage construction was always wood frame. Unlike shacks, with their tarpaper or makeshift coverings, at least the first phase of a cottage had real wooden or shingle siding. This initial phase of construction, the starter cottage, often had reasonably good, permanent foundations and exterior walls of reasonably sound construction. Sound initial construction might have been part of the terms of the loan or mortgage on the structure. The 1995 fire at 1825 Shorey exposed the original stud-wall, balloon-frame construction of the initial two rooms: the studs were on 24-inch centers, a cheaper and weaker standard than the period's middle-income construction standard of 16 inches.

Similar floor plans and ornamental details of starter cottages are found throughout the urban Bay Area and in cities served by northern California railroads. Similar house types can be seen in the Potrero Hill section of San Francisco, in San Jose, and in the oldest sections of Tracy, California, also a town with very substantial Southern Pacific railroad influence. Thus, we can assume that some local carpenters were acquiring catalog plans or pre-cut kits of lumber, doors, windows, and trim from lumber yards. Self-building by the owner or self-finished buildings were probably common in West Oakland as they were in other cottage districts. Harris (1991) reports that many cottage owners had construction skills (or friends who had such skills), and that helping each other with houses was common. Some families learned enough plastering or woodworking to finish the interiors of their houses themselves, or finished them later when they could afford to.

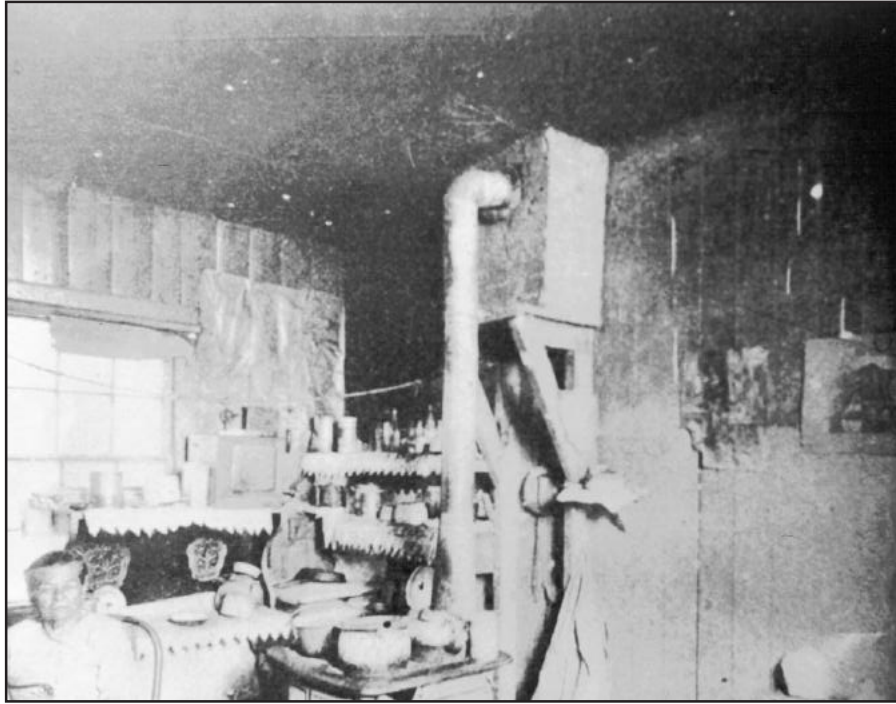


PLATE 16. SHACK KITCHEN AND RESIDENT, 1919. Compare the shelving in this shack kitchen to the more permanent shelves installed in the cottage at 714 Pine Street. (Source: California Commission on Immigration and Housing 1919:38)

Three rooms is another common minimum for West Oakland starter cottages. A set of three rooms was also the common minimum in San Francisco flats— each unit just 12 feet wide—built in the early 1900s and especially after the 1906 earthquake and fire. Indeed, in 1916, three-room dwellings were so common that California’s State Commission on Immigration and Housing sent this short reading lesson to social workers and settlement houses as part of a reading program for the state’s immigrants:

This house has three rooms.
 This room has two windows and one door.
 The rent is too high.
 The landlord must mend the roof [1916:41].

Clearly, reformers felt immigrants needed to be better housing consumers. Other lessons in the program emphasized language needed for maids, for health lessons, and for making dresses.

Ostensibly, the three-room plan allows a parlor/bedroom in front, a sitting room/bedroom in the middle, and a kitchen and porch at the rear. Yet, the rooms are barely specialized in their form. Frequent changes and mixtures were likely. Rarely does a formal parlor seem important or possible in a cottage, although a combination dining room-sitting room is common (Cohen 1980; Grier 1992).

Concurrent with the two- and three-room starter cottages, we find the higher-priced four-room plan. Upton Sinclair’s immigrant heroes in *The Jungle* (1906) buy a four-room cottage in the Back

of the Yards district of Chicago. Sinclair’s carefully researched portrait includes descriptions of how the extended family uses the space, buys furnishings for their new home, and ends up regretting the expenses of repairing the cottage. Four-room starter cottages in the case studies below include 1529 Third Street (the Porter/Jost cottage) and 323 Center Street (the Deguzee/Phillips rental house).

Additions That Multiply Cottage Size

Additions of widely varying structural quality often doubled or tripled the size of informal workers’ cottages. These additions usually stretched out from the back of the original starter cottage, but additions could also be made to the side (if side yards allowed it), and new stories could be added by lifting the roof and adding a floor, or by lifting the entire original starter cottage and building another floor below it. Because of the frequency and importance of expansions, this essay states that cottages are “begun” in a particular year, rather than “built” in any one year. For more than one hundred years,

people who have owned their own cottage have demonstrated a clear understanding that they will be adding on.

Rear sheds, rooms, and cottages formed an important category of additions. By 1952 most rear “rooms” and detached rear automobile garages had gained street numbers—either a separate house number or a half or third number—indicating they were occupied by separate households or businesses.

Cottage additions often show practical solutions to immediate problems, rather than the sort of elegant, visually matching additions favored by middle- and upper-income remodelers. The Crowley cottage at 1825 Shorey, discussed at more length below, is an excellent example of such expedient expansion. The side dining/sitting room, probably added by a new owner in 1915, was professionally built with stud-wall construction and three handsome windows across the east-facing wall. Later, storage clearly became an issue; the residents added a cabinet with screened openings for ventilation, and then, another shelf below the cabinet and one above the windows. The boards used in these additions, and in a later bench under the windows, did not match the interior wall boards, suggesting their



PLATE 17. CABINET IN DINING ROOM ADDITION, 1825 SHOREY STREET. This screened cabinet, probably used to store perishable foods, and the later shelf additions show continued adjustments to need. (Credit: Marta Gutman)

later date. The 1915 dining room cut off the east window of the earlier added bedroom; that window was simply left in the wall, to borrow light from the dining room, and the exterior siding of that addition was also left as one wall of the dining room. In 1915 there probably was a small rear-porch toilet room, and perhaps a rear-porch laundry area as well. The bathroom found in 1995 appeared to have been a later re-thinking of the rear of the house, perhaps from the World War II era. Its wall intruded into the sitting room (making the three windows off-center), and its ceiling pattern left an odd ceiling soffit where the 1915 addition formerly met the back laundry porch. The paneling of the rebuilt toilet room did not match that on any other dining-room wall, and a newer built-in cabinet was of very different materials and reflected different building skills than the earlier built-in. Complicated sequences of exterior roof angles confirmed that each of these additions was thought about separately, and never combined into a single, unified plan. This sort of patient adjustment to circumstance (rather than concern for a grand overall scheme) is a hallmark of vernacular building.

Another type of rebuilding was shown by the Bibber/Rosas house at 316 Chester Street. Mrs. Rosas reports that the family tore off the old additions and rebuilt the rear half of the house—adding a large bedroom, a new bathroom (for the entire house), a laundry room, and a porch (Rosas 1995a). Judging from the materials, this probably occurred about 1980. These new rooms had much better standards than the old flimsy additions, and (and at least in terms of plumbing and insulation) in some ways surpassed the standards of the original five rooms.

The dates of additions can suggest changes in household size, a windfall of family earnings (as during wartime or business booms), changes in privacy standards, access to new technology that requires more space, and more. Most often, cottage additions show a sharp drop in the amount of money spent per square foot compared to the starter cottage, and more often represent amateur occupant building rather than professional carpentry and finishing. This suggests different meanings given to additions—not only less capital available for

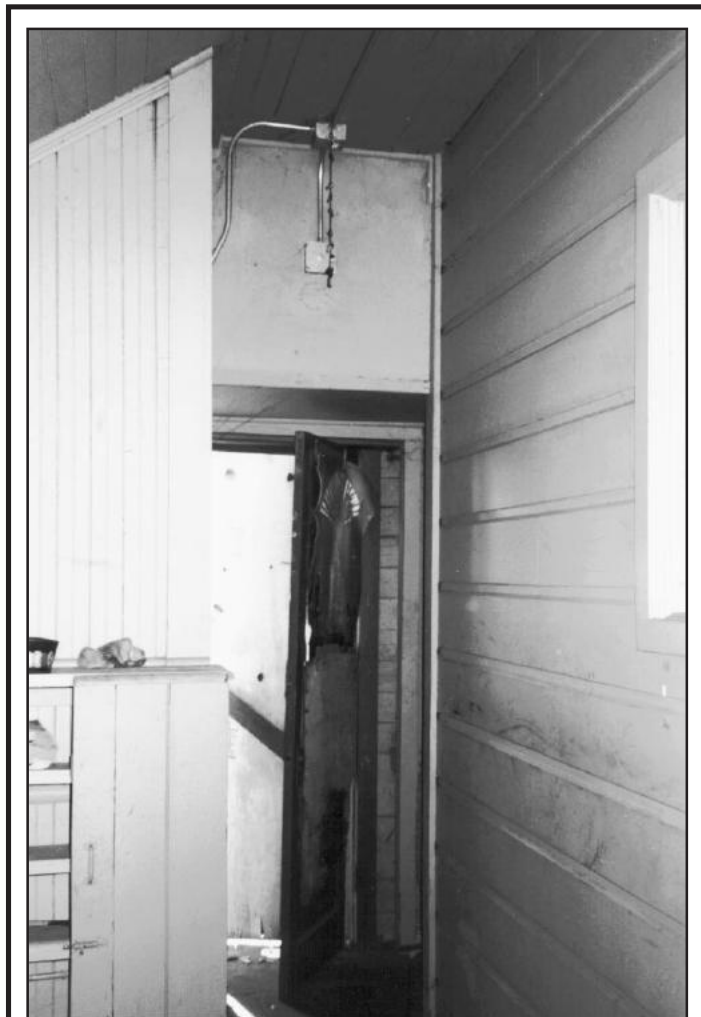


PLATE 18. ADDITIONS SHOWN IN CEILINGS AND WALL MATERIALS, DINING ROOM OF 1825 SHOREY STREET. To the right is the former exterior wall of an earlier addition. The new wall to the left shows expansion of the toilet room; the lowered ceiling at the back, a former rear porch. (Credit: Marta Gutman)

shelter, but also shifts in availability of loans for additions. It is likely that additions, wherever possible, were bought with cash rather than with mortgages or loans. More additions (and better-quality additions) can be expected (a) during periods when the structure is owner-occupied, since most tenants would be unlikely to invest heavily in a property they didn't own, or (b) during periods when city codes or inspections suddenly change, and upgrades are officially required for legal occupancy. Cottages that do *not* exhibit additions clearly suggest that the size of the household remained small or declined (as in old age), or that the structure has been a rental property for long periods of time.

Importance of Porches

In the informal workers' cottage, neither the front nor back porch is ornamental; the porches are important living and working spaces. Either porch could be a social place for adults to talk and escape the crowded interior. Portable household work, such as shelling peas or darning socks, might easily have been carried to either the front or back porch. The rear porch of most cottages, however, was often more of an outdoor work room, with laundry probably being one of its most important activities, along with kitchen chores.

The back porch was also a place for children and young people to socialize apart from the rest of the household. Interviews with six people who lived in small flats in San Francisco's Mission District between 1915 and 1950 have indicated that only adults and adult visitors entered by the front door; all children (family members and visiting children alike) entered only by the back stairs and porch (Winans 1989). The back porch and back stairs of a cottage also provided the all-important, but out-of-public-view, route to the outhouse, and later, as noted above, a place for the flush toilet.

High Densities of People per Room

Cottage life often included very high densities of people per room. From the 1860s to the early 1950s, workers' households could include not only parents and their children, but also members of the extended family or—quite common in West Oakland—boarders or lodgers. Boarders rented a sleeping space and also ate their morning and evening meals with the household; lodgers merely rented sleeping space. In the years before 1930, as many as half the urban population of the United States may either have taken in a boarder or lodger, or had been one themselves for some part of their life (Model and Hareven 1975; Peel 1986). See the chapter on rooming and boarding houses, this volume, for details on this important aspect of West Oakland history.

As many West Oakland houses were developed, they became buildings with two or more official, separate units, while some families informally subdivided their houses. An example is the house at 316 Market, where Angela Albanese Cosy lived as a young girl in the early 1900s. Her parents, who owned the property, rented out the upstairs as a separate unit and, for their own family, creatively adapted the three main-floor rooms. The upstairs family had a full bath on their floor, and there was a back-porch toilet. Mrs. Cosy remembers that her parents used the front room as a bedroom, and (apparently in the dining room) they put a small bed for the two daughters in the corner, with a curtain around it. When their baby sister arrived, the baby slept in the front room with the parents (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:10, 11).

As the case studies show, most four-room cottages in West Oakland had households of five to seven people living in them. These data come from the manuscript U.S. census, which is not yet available for years after 1920. The highest densities of all might well have come in the years of World War II, when workers of all races and ethnicities streamed to Oakland to work, and needed to stay close to their industrial and military employment.

Back-Porch Toilets and Other Utilities

As made clear by the examples already given, the back-porch toilet is another important marker of cottage life, especially in cottages begun before 1900. Back-porch toilets can also be found on large houses and hotels, where plumbing was added after their construction. Indoor bathrooms in most 19th-century cottages were, of course, initially unknown, but plan books from the middle of the 19th century occasionally show back-porch toilets for middle-income houses (Thomas 1848). As a place for the first flush toilet, the back porch might have seemed both natural and highly convenient, compared to walking through the yard to an outhouse. In light of the initial fears that consumers had of sewer gases and plumbing disasters, installing the first toilet on the back porch rather than inside might have seemed a reasonable precaution. Also, the porch location meant owners did not have to tear up the main part of the house. The back-porch toilet, as a workers' cottage pattern in Oakland, is the focus of a report done by Benjamin Chuaqui about the Jingtowntown district of East Oakland. He notes that in many cottages the complete set of fixtures for a "bathroom"—sink, toilet, and bathtub—may be found in three separate spaces, and may have been added at three separate dates (Chuaqui 1993; Tumlin 1993).

A middle stage, of "flushable" outhouses, seems to have occurred between the use of backyard outhouses and the back-porch toilet. In Project Block 2 of the Cypress Project, archaeologists found brick-lined outhouse pits connected to a clay-tile sewer system leading across the backyards of several lots (there is no alley) to the street. From there, a street sewer presumably emptied directly into nearby San Francisco Bay. Some of these connected outhouses were served by pipes of water coming from the house, perhaps from cisterns. The city has no record of this experimental phase of the sewer system, although historians write that residents of many cities experimented with flushing their toilets into older outhouses until the higher quantities of water overwhelmed the old systems, which had previously been renewed by either hauling away nightsoil from outhouse pits periodically, or moving the outhouse to a new pit. Also, early back-porch flush toilets might have been connected back to the older outhouse, or some kind of septic tank system, before being connected forwards to a sanitary sewer built under the street. In 1875 the city reported installing sewers for parts of 10 streets. Although it was not specified if they were for storm water, sanitary use, or combined use, four of these projects that year were in West Oakland: along Eighth from Willow to Wood; Filbert from Seventh to First; Myrtle from Third to Tenth; and Chester from Seventh to Third (Langley's Directory 1875:55). Private septic tanks were another experimental system in outlying areas, although no excavation in West Oakland has found any trace of a septic tank (Tarr and McMichael 1977; Tarr et al. 1984; Konvitz, Rose, and Tarr 1990). Dell Upton (1995b) speculates that patent "earth closets" (Schlereth 1992) might have been used in some households as late as the 1890s.

Even without the long tradition of outhouse use, the back-porch locations of toilets in informal cottages made a great deal of sense. Renters of backyard rooms, lower-floor units, or back porches

could enter rear toilet rooms without traipsing through the rest of the cottage. We must keep in mind, too, that especially before 1950, many of these residents would have been familiar (from earlier residences) with precursors to indoor plumbing: chamber pots and the bowl-and-pitcher on a washstand or wooden box in the bedroom for individual washing and grooming.

The cultural historian Ruth Schwartz Cohen notes that as late as 1926, a study of workers' houses in Zanesville, Ohio, found virtually every dwelling with gas service and a gas range, and 90 percent with running water. Yet a full 40 percent of the dwellings did *not* have both an indoor toilet and tub (Cohen 1992:220; Eastman 1927:52). The proportions in West Oakland were likely similar. As the cost of installing water service was much lower than the cost of modern sewers, running water often came long before sewers.

In West Oakland, many cottages likely had public water service—at least to their kitchens—from their first year. In 1875 the homes of half the population of Oakland were tapped into Anthony Chabot's Contra Costa Water Company mains, and the average monthly charge was from \$5.00 to \$7.00. In the years before household water meters were available, the base price for Oakland service was keyed to the footprint size of the dwelling, with 25 cents more for each additional story, along with extra charges for fixtures other than sinks and washtubs. A 600-square-foot house was charged \$1.75 per month; a 1,200-square-foot house was charged \$3.00. For each person more than five, the charge was 25 cents; each toilet added 50 cents a month, and a bathtub added one dollar to the monthly fee. There were also fees for watering the front garden, and for each horse and carriage (Noble 1970).

Wells supplied some households with water, or at least provided water for their gardens. Sanborn maps of 1889 show water tankhouses with windmills or pumps in the backyards of at least one house per block in West Oakland. This very regular pattern—rarely more than one or two tankhouses per block—suggests that neighbors might have had some sort of system for sharing well water, at least for gardening. Archaeological excavations have also found relatively few wells per block, again suggesting that each individual house did not have its own well but shared water access. If so, there would likely have been gates in the rear board fences for carrying water.

A preliminary study of the tap records in the Oakland City Engineer's Office was largely inconclusive. Usually, for any single address, the water records establish a clear date of occupancy; it is possible, however, that whenever water-service pipes have been refitted in West Oakland, the old tap records have been discarded. Demolished buildings seem to have extant tap records, giving some random dates of water service along some streets. The earliest dates of service found for Seventh Street and Lewis Street include a good number of taps from 1875-1878. Henry Street has one address recorded in 1871, a few from 1876, and more from the 1880s and 1890s (Tap Records, Oakland City Engineer's Office).

Preliminary directory research shows that the neighborhood periodically had a few commercial bathhouses along Seventh Street that might have supplemented bathing at home. Stultz and Schnell advertised in 1880; D. Stuart's baths and G. Mikami's Japanese bathhouse in 1900; and another bathhouse is noted on the 1912 Sanborn maps. City directories and maps, however, give no evidence *after* 1912 of commercial or public bathhouses, although at that time they were fairly common in rooming-house districts for higher-paid workers. Personal hygiene that met middle-class and

middle-income standards apparently continued to be a neighborhood issue in the 1920s. Children in the nearby Tompkins School had access to school facilities for bathing, as Mrs. Cosy remembered: “. . . the ones who didn’t have bath tubs in their homes, we’d take a bath at school. They had a room there for the girls. . . . I know, because I went” (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:53).

Judging from surviving fixtures and other evidence, owners in significant numbers seem to have added electricity in the 1920s. The electrical permit in the service box at the almost-polite Stephens/Wood house at 1817 Shorey, for example, was dated 29 April 1922. Other houses (or some parts of some buildings) got modern wiring very late. In the 1940s, the Pattersons used kerosene lanterns in their makeshift unit at the back of their corner store and rooming house (Patterson 1995a). In 1936 the resident in the Stephens/Wood house, and many of his neighbors, did not have a telephone (Marvin 1995; OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

Informal Circulation and Unspecialized Rooms

Workers’ cottages typically have very informal interior circulation patterns, and room specialization is often minimal. By the mid-19th century, rooms in polite middle- and upper-class houses had single uses that were usually made very clear not only by their temporary furnishings but also by their permanent size, shape, type of windows and doors, position in relation to each other, and their connection to halls and other zones of the dwelling. The entry hall, parlor, sitting room, and dining room (if it was separate from the sitting room) had a degree of public access. The kitchen, servants’ rooms, and rear service rooms were more private. The bedroom hall and bedrooms were set apart and kept private from guests.

Informal workers’ cottages, in contrast, have much less specialization of spaces. The location of doors along one wall may suggest a circulation route, but in such a case there is no separate, dedicated circulation space providing privacy for people moving from one room to another. The uses of rooms, as the plan of 714 Pine shows (Figure 3), are not made clear by their form or detail. Sleeping rooms are not in their own separate zone, and are rarely buffered from more public rooms by hallways or banks of closets. In order to reach some rooms, one must walk through other rooms of the house. Margaretta Lovell (1995) has called this informal connection “hall-lessness,” and the term is apt.

When visiting workers’ dwellings, middle- and upper-class people of the early 1900s were often astonished and deeply concerned about the mixture of uses, people, and spaces. Adolescent brothers and sisters were occupying the same sleeping room; adult boarders and lodgers sometimes slept in the same room with family children. Hull House social workers complained about small rented dwellings that combined in one room activities that, they said, should have been separated and sorted out in “parlor, bedroom, clothes closet, dining room, kitchen, pantry, and even coal shed” (Abbott 1936:316-318, 331-337; Groth 1994:213-214).

Yards, Front and Back

Cottage yards, front and back, were often spaces for practical uses, just like the adjacent porches. Plantings in front yards seem to have often included ornamental flowers and shrubs, and trees where space allowed. In the 1920s, however, front yards were sufficiently utilitarian that at

least one Italian family used their front yard to store crates of grapes for making homemade wine and vinegar (Valva 1995a). The actual winemaking might have taken place in the back or the front, or as Mrs. Cosy put it, “wherever your basement was, close by there.” Her Italian American family used to make “three barrels a year. One ton [of grapes] would make three barrels. . . about 50, 55 gallons each” (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:24-25). The basement was an important storage area for such commodities. Mrs. Cosy also remembers Italian men playing bocce ball in the gutter. Children, too, played on the front sidewalk or in the street; the games included jacks, hopscotch, kick-the-can, run sheep run, and hide-and-go-seek (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:29). After about 1960, a space for parked cars was carved out of part of the front of many cottages, if at all possible.

The backyards seem to have been as mixed and informal as the interior space organization; laundry-drying is still a common sight. Fruit trees, vegetable gardens, and sheds of various sizes and types were also important in the backyard, as they are today. Chickens, cows, pigeons, or fighting hens could be found in the back; the appellation “coops” is found fairly often on Sanborn maps of 1912 and 1951, and backyard animals can be heard and observed in the neighborhood today. Multiple pits found by the archaeological investigations suggest that, in many yards, burning and burying refuse in the backyard—instead of paying to have it hauled away—was common up to about 1960. If the yards of West Oakland were typical of other Bay Area residential areas, most backyards would have had a relatively high board fence; front yards would also have been fenced, but with lower pickets or ornamental metal fences. Some of the board-and-picket fences visible in the neighborhood today could be the original fence in that location.

In street directories and other publications, the city reported periodic investments that would have enhanced use of the front yards and streets. An 1875 report gives a glimpse of one year’s spending in



PLATE 19. BACKYARD OF THE SUGRUE/CROSSMAN COTTAGE, 360 CHESTER STREET. Shade trees as well as fruit trees, laundry yards, and gardens are still common backyard features in the 1990s. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui)

the neighborhood in a relatively early year (Langley 1875:53-55). The City Council's Board of Engineers had supervised several scattered improvement projects throughout the city in that year, including the following:

Grading and macadamizing Fifth Street from Market to Linden	\$ 4,293
Grading, curbing, and macadamizing Myrtle from Eighth to Fifth	2,573
Sidewalks along Eighth Street from Wood to Market	2,208
Sidewalks along Myrtle from Third to Fourteenth streets	1,310
Sidewalks along Willow from Taylor to Seventh Street	487
Sidewalks along Seventh Street from Willow to Bay	218

The report does not specify the material of the sidewalks. The street paving known as macadamizing, if done according to best standards, was an all-weather surface of a well-graded 12- to 14-inch layer of crushed rock. Horses' hooves and wagon wheels packed the rock. In a climate like Oakland's, it was a dusty surface in the summer, but passable all winter long. Curbs at this period would likely have been blocks of stone.

Mixture of Industrial and Residential Land Uses

Districts of informal workers' cottages were always built within walking distance of diverse industrial and commercial employment—jobs that attracted continuing waves of new immigrant workers. In West Oakland, immediately adjacent employment for men included the Southern Pacific railroad yards, several area machine shops, breweries, warehouses, and eventually the Western Pacific railroad yards, as well. There were also jobs for almost any member of the family for at least part of the year. Girls and young women before marriage (or women who were widowed or had a temporary economic shortfall) might work out of the neighborhood—either downtown or as maids or laundresses in residential districts. West Oakland itself offered women jobs at canneries, steam laundries, a Fuller Brush factory, a General Electric light-bulb factory, and at home or in small workshops as seamstresses. Children worked part time and full-time in box factories, canneries, and the retail stores of Seventh Street. Although along Seventh Street the district had a lively residential hotel and commercial rooming house spine for single people (see *Rooming and Boarding Houses*, this volume), most of West Oakland's migrant and immigrant residents lived with their own families or, if single, boarded and lodged with families.

The mixture of retail stores and residences was hardly unique to West Oakland in 1900. Most center-city neighborhoods (as opposed to urban additions and suburbs served by streetcars) would have had many corner groceries and other stores for meats and vegetables; on average, there was a grocery store for every 300 residents of an American city at the turn of the century. The Seventh Street retail spine provided all sorts of neighborhood-level services, such as hardware, candy, and restaurants, as well more than 2,000 jobs.

Before 1900 most industrial employment locations were at the edges of the West Oakland neighborhood; the neighborhood itself had mostly residential and retail uses. After 1900 district landowners developed a far greater mix of residential and industrial land uses, and this set West Oakland apart from other parts of the city. The delayed expansion and development of the port, the

availability of cheap land and cheap labor in West Oakland, the new railroad lines of the Western Pacific and later the Santa Fe, plus the expansion of the Southern Pacific—all, of course, related to the ever-increasing size of California's population—encouraged West Oakland landowners to introduce more and ever-larger commercial and industrial enterprises. The Sanborn map of 1912 demonstrates this emerging new degree of land-use mixture in West Oakland.

The differing types of cottage-district landownership contributed to West Oakland's mixed industrial and residential land-use development. The owner of any single lot could convert its use to a small foundry or machine shop. A neighbor-owner might develop a lot adjacent to his or her home for a business; or a distant owner might sell lots to a business friend and be less concerned about the implications for residents on adjoining properties. For instance, the Southeastern Manufacturing Company's broom factory appears on the Sanborn map of 1912, filling two former house lots adjacent to two of the study houses (323 Center and 316 Chester). The broom factory was later rebuilt as a small foundry. Three or four contiguous house lots owned by one person handily converted to a good-sized workshop or warehouse lot. Many across-town owners (and later city planners) in the American city assumed that districts such as West Oakland would sooner or later convert entirely to industrial or warehouse uses. In the waterfront blocks now known as Jack London Square, just such a transformation was well underway in 1912, and largely complete by the 1920s.

Mixed industrial uses created more jobs for the local residents and increased the potential tax base; thus, some local residents may have welcomed these new uses. But industrial uses also affected



PLATE 20. FOUNDRY NEXT TO THE DEGUZEE/PHILLIPS COTTAGE AT 323 CENTER STREET. This foundry, and an earlier broom factory on this site, replaced two small houses in the economic expansion of Oakland that occurred between 1902 and 1912. To professional planners of the 1950s, this sort of mixed use was a sign of blight rather than economic opportunity. (Credit: Paul Groth)

the residences of West Oakland negatively. Manufacturing uses increased traffic, noise, fire danger, and noxious fumes. The sizable fertilizer factory on two blocks along Third Street, several wineries, breweries, and a vinegar works may have made some days in West Oakland more odoriferous than residents would have preferred. On a more abstract level, by the 1880s the adjacency of a home next to industry was also a negative social indicator. Sites so close to industry were generally shunned by middle- and upper-class home buyers, unless their breadwinners owned or managed some part of the nearby workplace.

THE “ALMOST-POLITE HOUSE”: A COMPARISON

While Oaklanders were building cottages in West Oakland, American middle- and upper-class builders, buyers, and housing reformers were establishing very different rules for the houses in middle-income urban additions and suburbs. These houses were not simply larger or more expensive; they also used the new set of polite cultural rules that called for single activities in each permanently specialized space, hierarchical organization of rooms, and specialized circulation. Highly detailed drawings of a small professional-income family living this more genteel life in 1894, in a small northcentral Oakland house, have been found in *Souvenir Views of Number 1462 Castro Street* (Oakland Public Library 1982).

In small numbers by 1870, and in significantly greater numbers after 1910, people of modest income adopted—or were coerced to adopt—these rules as best they could as they built new homes. The people most likely to build such a home, at least in this sample, were the families of skilled craftsmen (such as carpenters and machinists) rather than general laborers.

The resulting structures can be called “almost-polite houses” because they minimally, but clearly, reflect the spatial and social orders of much larger middle-income homes. That they were *houses* and not mere *cottages* is very significant. Through the 1920s in West Oakland, as elsewhere, residents who were doing well economically built almost-polite houses directly next door to informal workers’ cottages. When built in existing cottage districts, these houses usually shared some characteristics with cottages. Ownership could be by owner-occupiers, neighbor-owners, or across-town owners. They built on the same 25-foot-wide lots, within walking distance of industrial jobs. The initial sections were permanently built of sound construction. Porches continued to be important living and working spaces. The resident households could also be large, and could include boarders or lodgers, so density per room might still be quite high in some cases. Front- and backyard use might remain much the same, and industrial and residential land-use mixtures were similar.

1817 SHOREY STREET AS AN ALMOST-POLITE HOUSE

Built in 1889 and lived in until the 1990s, the Stephens/Wood house at 1817 Shorey Street (on Project Block 28) is a good example of an almost-polite house in a cottage district. It was originally one of three very similar houses built in a row (the others were at 1813 and 1815 Shorey); in 1995, the house at 1815 still remained. Although the front facades were almost identical, 1813 and 1815 were

a few feet wider and had minor variations in their interior plans. The original residence floor of each house was built more than 6 feet above ground level, leaving a high basement in each house.

The house at 1817 Shorey—and probably the two next door as well—were built between 1885 and 1889 by Southern Pacific carpenter Thomas Stephens as a residence for himself and his family. Stephens was an immigrant from England and 33 years old when he built the house; he became a naturalized citizen in 1896, and died before 1910. A Catherine Stephens, also from England, was living in the house in 1910; she listed herself as a widow, 78 years old, and was likely the mother of Thomas Stephens. In 1910 another son, James (then 47), lived with her; only five of her eight children were still alive. In 1915 the Stephenses sold the house to Thomas and Stella Wood, who also bought 1815 Shorey. They held the property in Stella’s name, perhaps because Thomas Wood held the dangerous job of a police detective; in case of his untimely death, a smooth property transfer would be desired. For other families, too, the practice was not at all unusual (Marvin 1995). The Wood family bought the house the year their first child was born, and seem to have moved before either of their two children (both boys) was 8 years old. They had electricity installed in 1922, and sold the house in 1923 when Wood was 52 years old (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

Stella and Thomas Wood sold both houses (1815 and 1817 Shorey) to Richard Williams, a City Hall janitor. Williams was an owner-resident at 1817 for three years and then sold the house, although he continued to live there until about 1933, when he moved to a nearby address on Union



PLATE 21. FRONT VIEW OF THE STEPHENS/WOOD HOUSE, 1817 SHOREY STREET. The facade of the house matches polite styles that could be found in much more expensive neighborhoods. In this view, windows are covered in preparation for moving the house. (Credit: Paul Groth)

Street. The house remained a rental property. The new owners seem to have been neighbor-owners: Peter Ross, owner until the 1950s, lived next door at 1823 Shorey Street; by 1995, 1823 had been replaced by an auto-wrecking and tire storage yard. At the time of the 1936 WPA Real Property Survey, the only resident at the Stephens/Wood house was a single White man who worked for Southern Pacific as a switchman and reported paying rent of \$12 a month. He had hot water but no refrigerator. In the 1980s the Stephens/Wood house was owned by a couple whose listed address was an alley residence near the Hall of Justice in San Francisco's South of Market district (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

Even though the house at 1817 Shorey Street was located in a cottage district, the original upstairs level shows how an almost-polite house was very different from its cottage neighbors. The differences stem primarily from its specialization of interior space and its being built, all at once, as a single and finished composition.

PRINCIPAL TRAITS OF ALMOST-POLITE HOUSES

Specialized Rooms and Hallways

The interior circulation and specialization of rooms are well developed in an almost-polite house. After the domestic cultural revolutions of the mid-19th century, the minimal requirements for a truly proper home were (1) clearly separating the family unit from its neighbors, best assured by having an open-lot house; (2) protecting the privacy of family spaces—especially sleeping areas—from the prying eyes of visitors; (3) having at least two bedrooms (three or four was actually the truly polite minimum), so that children slept away from parents, children of different genders slept in separate rooms, and no one slept in the sitting room, dining room, or parlor; (4) having a formal dining room; and (5) if possible, maintaining a separate, formal parlor for entertaining guests (usually in the day) and for ceremonial family togetherness (usually in the evening). The minimum number of rooms was thus five or six.

The original Stephens house had a comparatively luxurious five rooms on its upper floor, and their arrangement showed a moderate degree of specialization of form for particular uses (Figure 4). The entry hall was small, but it allowed visitors to go either to the parlor or the dining room without entering the rest of the house. It showed formal attention paid to the idea of polite entertaining (treating visitors in a different way than family) and the potential for screening family life from visitors. The two front rooms were clearly built like a Victorian-style double parlor (a parlor and more casual sitting room), with sliding doors between them that allowed the two rooms to be used together on occasion. In a fully polite house of this period, the first room would have had its own fireplace and the most expensive and highly ornamented mantel in the house. The family would have spent much of its relaxation time elsewhere, in the sitting room, and the dining room would have been a third social space. Instead, in this almost-polite house, there was no fireplace or any visible arrangement for a stove in the first room. The room might never have been reserved only for guests, but used instead as a combined parlor and sitting room. Under extreme circumstances, the circulation plan of the Stephens/Wood house might have handily allowed residents to rent out the front room as a bedroom; a roomer could enter and leave without disturbing the family.

The second room of the Stephens/Wood house may have been intended primarily for use as a dining room, since to the side of the fireplace, a pass-through was built allowing dishes to be passed to and from the kitchen. On the kitchen side, a built-in closet was actually a miniature or vestigial butler's pantry, where food from the stove could be transferred to serving dishes, and placed on the shelf to be served in the dining room. Since the door between the kitchen and the dining room was on the same wall as the pass-through, this device was not planned to save steps, but to keep up appearances. On occasion, the family might have dined quite formally and for those moments hired someone to help in the kitchen. On a day-to-day basis, the family could avoid opening the kitchen door to get items for the next course of the meal. Even if the pass-through was not used, it was a clear allusion to the dining habits of the middle and upper class.

The bedrooms of the Stephens/Wood house have deep, built-in closets, reflecting a more generous wardrobe than most cottage closets suggest. The arrangement of the floor plan, however, did not allow circulation that would have been considered polite in 1889 for members of the middle and upper class. There was no bedroom hall, so these sleeping spaces opened directly from the sitting room and the kitchen. To use the bathroom, one had to walk through one of the bedrooms to reach it. A partial reason for this related to heating. At no time did the house have a central furnace; heat would have come only from the sitting-room fireplace or the kitchen stove. The informal adjacency of bedrooms and social rooms allowed the bedrooms to borrow heat.

The kitchen of the Stephens/Wood house at 1817 Shorey was the largest room in the house. In addition to the pass-through and its china and linen cabinet, the house had a fairly large and ventilated pantry closet. Originally, a 4- by 8-foot work porch was recessed into the rear wall of the house, next

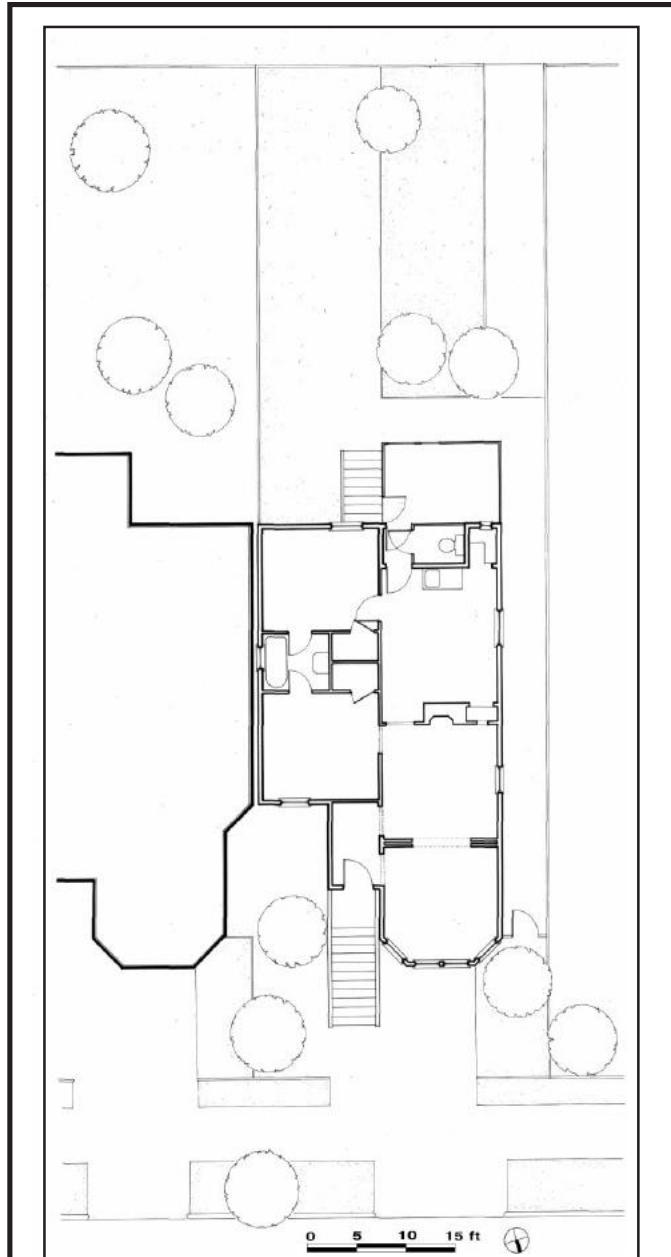


FIGURE 4 UPPER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE STEPHENS/WOOD HOUSE, 1817 SHOREY STREET. The rear-porch toilet room was carved out of the original recessed porch. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

to the kitchen door, and thus was sheltered by the same hipped roof that covered the rest of the house. Since it faced south, it would have been a sunny and warm work space and laundry area.

Almost-polite houses might have either a back-porch toilet or an interior bathroom, depending upon their date of construction. Apparently, the Stephens/Wood house had a backyard privy for its first generation of use. The original bathroom was just that: a room for a bathtub and sink, with running water. The bathroom never had a toilet installed, unless it was an earth closet, which is unlikely from the arrangement of the fixtures in the room. Judging from the construction details of the added walls and door, the back-porch toilet room was not added until at least 30 years after construction, and it occupied 5 feet of the original kitchen porch.

A Single, Finished, Composition of Rooms

Almost-polite houses were not starter cottages. They were essentially built all at once as a finished, whole, composition of spaces. Sound, complete initial construction usually stamps the house with its permanent character. Owners may make additions to almost-polite houses, but they are minor in proportion in relation to the original bulk of the house. This was the case with 1817 Shorey. The plan of its upper level, and the view of the house from the street, both represented a finished residence. The 5-foot-wide side yard to the west, and the deep recess of the bedroom



PLATE 22. NORTH WALL OF KITCHEN AT 1817 SHOREY STREET. Left, the butler's pantry reduced to storage shelves and drawers with a pass-through. Right, the door to the dining room, with pipes indicating former location of the hot-water heater. The range would have stood at the center. (Credit: Marta Gutman)

window from the front of the house, also gave the sense of an open-lot house and insured the front bedroom a degree of privacy from the street and front yard. The house's high raised basement seems to have initially had only a few small windows to light its use as a storage space.

Later owners added an enclosed porch behind the kitchen and pantry. This room had laundry tubs installed along the wall, near the toilet wall. This addition was quite late, and of very flimsy construction quality; it may have dated from the World War II period, discussed below. The backyard of the Stephens house had a water tankhouse and windmill-driven pump; the tank appears in the city's tax assessor's books in 1915 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1912).

Converting from House to Cottage: Downstairs at 1817 Shorey Street

The cultural status of an almost-polite house was not based merely on architecture, but also on use over time. The history of the Stephens/Wood house after the 1930s—when its owner Peter Ross remodeled the lower floor using the rules of an informal workers' cottage—underscores the potential for change in the distinction between cottage and house. Ross probably did the remodeling during World War II, when everywhere in West Oakland families were doubling up and taking in even more lodgers than before; this was done in part to house the burgeoning African American population, which could buy or rent property easily only in West Oakland and Richmond (Johnson 1993). In all likelihood, the tenants in the lower-floor units were migrants from the South, who had come to California seeking war-related jobs.

To convert the lower level into two units, Ross split the basement along an existing structural wall (Figure 5). The larger half, to the west, became a three-room unit, with essentially a shotgun-house plan. This three-room unit had its principal door at the front, and a rear door leading into

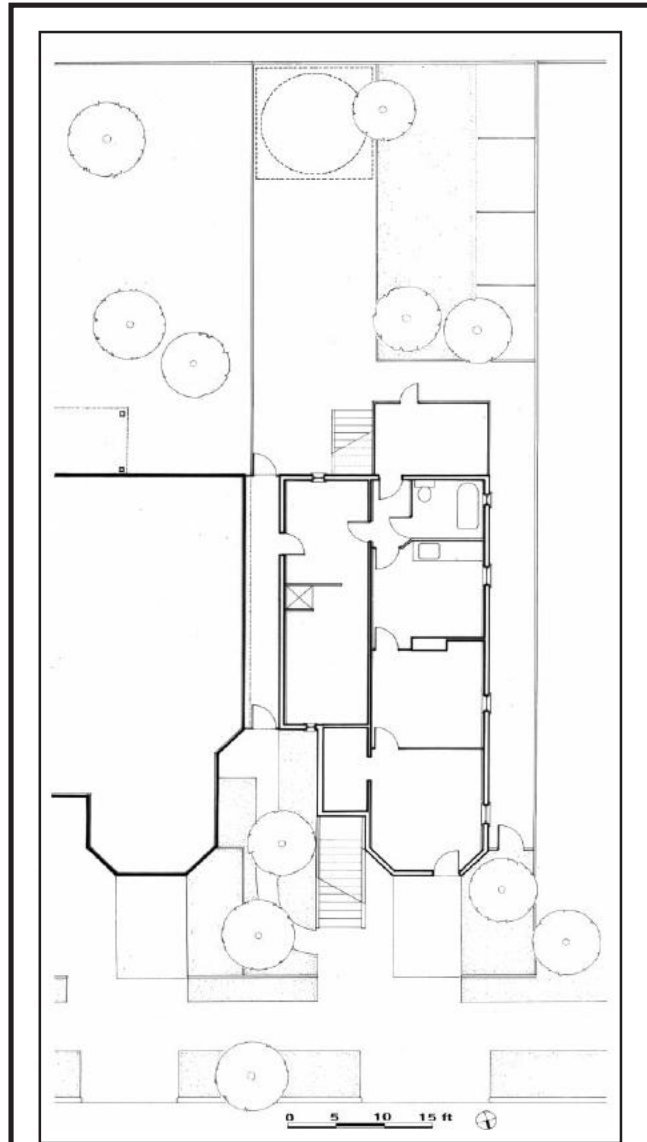


FIGURE 5. LOWER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE STEPHENS/WOOD HOUSE, 1817 SHOREY STREET. These two units were likely created during World War II. Each apartment has a separate entry, although the bathroom was shared. The water tank in the rear yard remained until after the 1950s. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

a shed room underneath the upstairs porch, and then to the backyard. There was a large closet in the larger unit's first room, but no other clothes closets. On the other side of the plan was a much rougher two-room unit. The bedroom had one tiny window, and a rudimentary shower built underneath the upstairs bathroom. The kitchen of the two-room unit also had a very tiny window, a stove, and a sink (not shown on the plan). Entry to the second unit was through the dark tradesman's access passage underneath the main floor. The two units both shared a single toilet and bathtub, off an ad-hoc rear vestibule; in order to accommodate one of the doors, the remodelers made an oddly angled jog in the vestibule wall. In both units, kitchen shelves and cabinets were rudimentary and probably scavenged. To create adequate ceiling height, the floor of the original cellar was lowered, to a position below the top of the footings. Too little light, and too much moisture and mold, were probably constant problems. If Ross had been interested (or encouraged by local wartime employers) to make maximum rental use of 1817 Shorey, the upstairs porch addition would have been ideal to rent out as another independent unit, as it had a separate rear entry and easy access to the upstairs toilet and kitchen.

Essentially, Ross's remodeling of the lower floor of 1817 Shorey converted the interior of the house into an informal workers' cottage, although the structure's appearance from the street remained very much the same. It is probable that Ross added the rear upstairs porch and its downstairs equivalent before he remodeled the rest of the lower floor, but he used the same cottage rules. The porches were rough and made of minimal materials and scavenged parts. The remodeled back stairs definitely underscored this house's new cottage status. Ross, or his handyman, seems to have merely removed the original stairs (whose landing had been the recessed kitchen porch). He then moved the old stairs (or parts of them) to their new position at the side of the new porch, without adding a new landing. Thus, when people stepped out from the upstairs porch, they had to step carefully and choose one of the first three treads. This is a detail that no polite-house builder or skilled carpenter would tolerate, and the kind of stairs that any official building inspector would have tagged as unsafe for fire egress, requiring immediate rebuilding.

Given the ease with which an almost-polite house could be converted to something

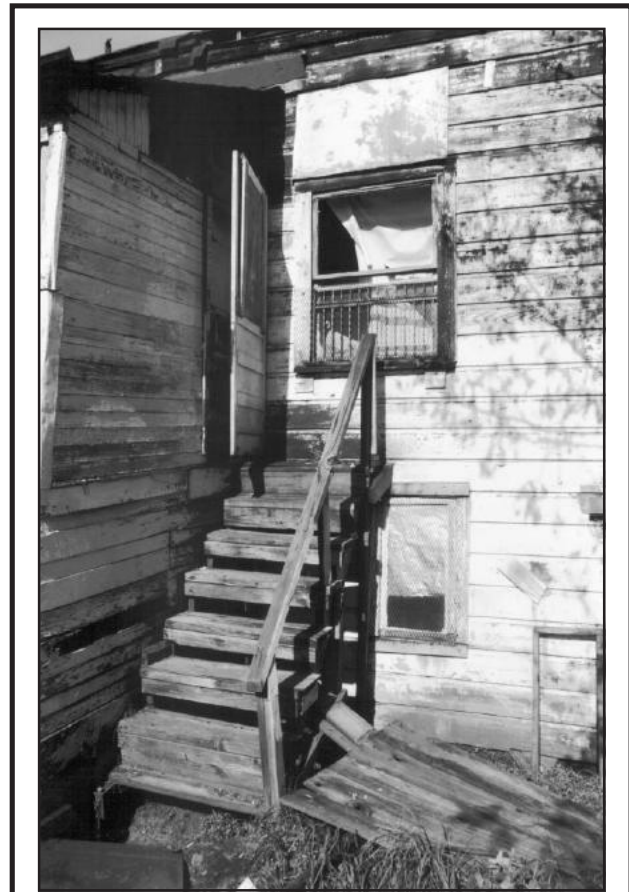


PLATE 23. REAR PORCH STAIRS AT 1817 SHOREY STREET. The lack of a landing at the top of the stairs mark these as amateur, make-shift construction more typical of informal cottages than almost-polite houses. They were constructed some time after the 1930s (probably during World War II) when converting the basement to a second residence. (Credit: Paul Groth)

more like an informal workers' cottage, many real-estate developers and homebuyers looked for ways to insure a safer investment with a better chance of long-term stability of use, status, and re-sale value. One of the best ways to do that was not to build an almost-polite house in an existing street block of other house types, but to make a solid island of the same kind of houses, tied together with legal rules for their future uses and additions.

Alternative Street and Lot Rules for Almost-Polite Houses

Although almost-polite houses, like 1817 Shorey, were often found mixed into earlier cottage district streets, greater numbers of them were built along urban streets that were quite different. These differences highlight ways in which some workers and investors may have come to view West Oakland as old-fashioned and inappropriate, even for working-class housing, after 1920. A very typical case of such a neighborhood can be found about 5 miles north of The Point, in West Berkeley. There, after World War I, developers could still buy fairly large tracts of open land and build at the scale of whole city blocks rather than rows of three or four houses. Near the corner of Cedar Street and San Pablo Avenue, close to several factories, the Alameda Investment Company (AIC) built 41 exact duplicate



PLATE 24. UNIFORM SETBACKS AND HOUSE SIZES ALONG TENTH STREET IN BERKELEY. Following restrictive covenants written into their deeds, these houses are all 15 feet from the street line. (Credit: Paul Groth)

houses, all built between 1925 and 1927. The company built hundreds of houses during this time in Oakland and Alameda as well as in Berkeley.

The plan of the AIC houses in this area shows that the company preferred to develop rows of four identical houses on both sides of the street. The lots are the usual 100 to 125 feet deep. Yet, because the final lots were drawn in the 1920s, they are not the 19th-century standard of 25 feet wide, but instead are 35 to 50 feet wide. These wider lots reflect the greater insistence on a real (not virtual) open-lot form—with its greater privacy, ventilation, and daylight—and, more practically, the need to leave room for a driveway and garage for a car. The garages were not built before the houses were sold, but the similarity of garages in the neighborhood suggests that it was an upgrade that most home buyers chose when they bought or very soon thereafter.

Because they were built all at once, by one builder, these West Berkeley streets appear consistent and unified—nothing like the “strangely varying” cottage district streets of West Oakland. The AIC included restrictive covenants with each property. They forbade selling homes to anyone other than Whites. These covenants, which were very similar to those used in higher-income areas, forbade mixed use and any work uses of yards. Production was to be clearly separate from consumption. The covenants also established one uniform setback, and a minimum house price. In 1925 the minimum cost of a dwelling in this development was set at \$2,000. The setback was fixed at 15 feet from the property or street line. Thus, these are blocks that share identical houses, facades, and siting, and that share identical limitations on the possible social and racial mixture of the street. These limitations were set up to create a homogeneous neighborhood distinct from mixed neighborhoods like West Oakland; the racial discriminations of the deed covenants were not struck down by the courts until the 1950s.

These blocks of West Berkeley were also a finished place—a complete permanent composition of specialized parts, just as the plan of the almost-polite house was a single composition. In that sense, these blocks were very much unlike those in West Oakland, where individual owners like Peter Ross could engage, almost at will, in redefinition, refinement, and rebuilding. With the exception of added garages and altered facades, additions to a great number of these West Berkeley houses have been minimal, mostly adding small rear porches.

Despite its wide lots, open-lot houses, and restrictive covenants, the AIC development in West Berkeley was not a polite middle-income suburb, although it mimicked such areas. It was much too close to industrial land, and in a part of Berkeley already unfashionable for people of the middle and upper class. Yet, the company was clearly creating a neighborhood that mirrored the rules being used in California’s much larger middle-income housing developments of the same period, being built in Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco by developers who were influential in fashioning the first city-wide zoning rules in the United States (Weiss 1987).

1004 Jones Street: A Small, Almost-Polite House of the 1920s

The house at 1004 Jones Street in Berkeley, one of the 41 identical houses built by the Alameda Investment Company near Cedar Street and San Pablo Avenue, provides a glimpse of what



PLATE 25. FRONT VIEW OF HOUSE AT 1004 JONES STREET, BERKELEY. The wide lot provides for a truly open-lot house, built between 1925-27, and also for a driveway leading to the backyard garage, built soon after the house. (Credit: Paul Groth)

financially successful workers' families might have looked for if they were able to leave West Oakland during the 1920s. The house at 1004 Jones is the absolute minimum bungalow of the 1920s. Although the number of rooms for an almost-polite house is usually five, a mere four rooms could be made to work if the plan had sufficient order and spatial organization. Indeed, the specialization and hierarchy of space in 1004 Jones is much greater than that found upstairs at 1817 Shorey.

Inside the house at 1004 Jones, the connections and shapes of the four rooms, at first glance, appear to be simple and similar, but in fact they are highly particularized (Figure 6). In her study of this house type, Carma Gorman writes that “what the plan lacks in size, it makes up for in subtlety” (1993:4). The entry porch is small, but set at a 90-degree angle from the approach to emphasize the shift that visitors make from the semi-public front yard to the private realm of the house. (The entrance to the kitchen from the back door is more direct.) At the front, visitors enter directly into the living room, without any entry hall—never a very polite detail—but beyond the living room, a tiny hallway separates the bedrooms from the living room. The bedroom hall also gives access to the bathroom without requiring one to cross any other room. The bathroom is complete, with a sink, tub, and toilet all in one room. By the 1920s, a new house built with a rear-porch toilet room would have been archaic, even for buyers of such a small home. There is no dining room, but the dining nook, laundry room, and rear porch keep everyday activities separate in the kitchen, and separate from the living room. The larger closet in the rear bedroom identifies it as the master bedroom, thus creating a sense of hierarchy of bedrooms. The master bedroom is also in the quietest and most private position in the plan.

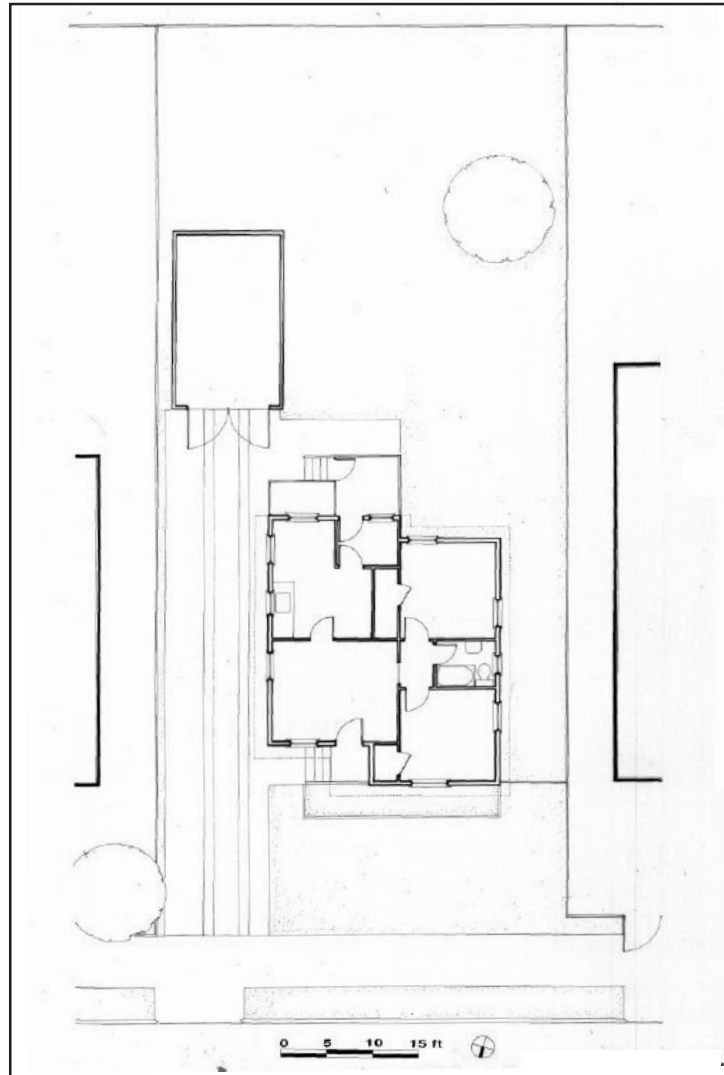


FIGURE 6. PLAN OF 1004 JONES STREET, BERKELEY. This was one of 41 identical houses in a 1920s subdivision. The closets and hallways help to establish a hierarchy of small, but specialized rooms. Note the uniform setbacks for identical houses on both sides. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

Compared to earlier almost-polite houses built in West Oakland (and nearby in West Berkeley), the house at 1004 Jones is smaller, much closer to the ground, and has lower ceiling heights. In terms of floor space and room size, typical workers' houses in West Oakland were often larger. The upper floor of 1817 Shorey (without its porch) is 870 square feet; the plan at 1004 Jones provides only 635 square feet (Table 2). Nor does the Jones Street house have a large raised basement to serve as storage or potential expansion. Its electricity service and electric lighting were probably more modern and efficient than even those West Oakland houses that were re-wired in the 1920s. The layout of the kitchen, and the lack of an initial enclosed rear porch, suggest that owners bought refrigerators rather than ice boxes when they moved in. The easy parking for a number of cars—the family car in the garage and those of the guests in the long driveway or on the street—also contrasted sharply with earlier workers' cottages in West Oakland, whose most typical parking spaces were only along the street.

TABLE 2
SIZE OF INTIAL STRUCTURES AND THEIR ADDITIONS

Listed below in order of initial size.
Sizes given are all approximate gross area.

1995 Address	Building Type	Year Begun	Initial Size (sq. ft.)	Addition (sq. ft.)	Total Size (sq. ft.)
714 Pine Street	Cottage	1868	215	310	525
1825 Shorey Street	Cottage	1874-1875	300	415	715
360 Chester Street	Cottage ^a	1874-1875	400 per flat	390 per flat	790
1611-1617 Fifth Street ^b	Fourplex	1877-1878	510 per unit	125 per unit	635
1529 Third Street	Cottage ^a	1877-1878	555 upper flat	320 upper flat	875
362-364 Peralta Street ^b	Cottage ^a	1876-1877	565 per flat	140 per flat	705
366 Peralta Street ^b	Rear cottage; former stable	1889	600 both floors	135 both floors	735
1004 Jones House	House	1925-1927	635	45	680
323 Center Street	House	1887-1888	680	235	915
316 Chester Street	House	1874-1875	735	275	1,010
1817 Shorey Street	House	1889	870	90	960
370-372 Peralta Street ^b 1619 Fifth Street	Corner store & rooming house	1887-1888	995 top floor	270 top floor	1,265

^a Area given is for original cottage. Second level later added to create two flats.

^b See "Five Buildings on One Corner and Their Change Over Time"

INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

COMMON THREADS

Many buildings in West Oakland could stand as examples of the points discussed above. An astonishing variety of personal histories is associated with each of the dwellings selected for detailed study. Yet, in addition to their place in a range of building types, some important common threads tie these histories together.

Buying an affordable house—and holding on to it—played a central role in the daily lives of West Oakland’s working people. Certainly working people took advantage of the many opportunities to rent rooms and flats that existed in the West Oakland community. But one persistent theme in the following stories is the interest that West Oaklanders took in owning a home and the success with which they did so, at however modest a scale. All sorts of folks—men and women, common laborers and skilled workers, working-class immigrants and African Americans—managed to buy small amounts of property and build modest houses in Oakland. The pattern began in the late 1860s, with the opening of the railroad, and continued—with each wave of migration—into the late 20th century.

West Oaklanders made personally significant and deeply meaningful choices about the kind of housing they wanted to live in, whether they rented or owned a dwelling. They made their choices, however, in an environment that was profoundly shaped by industrial capitalism—and attendant social inequalities, inequities in gender relations, and ethnic and racial difference. Our sample is small but it seems to show, perhaps unsurprisingly, that either social or economic advantage (or both) helped individuals gain a more lucrative, if not more powerful, position in the local real-estate market. Starting in the 1870s, skilled male workers (carpenters, machinists, engineers) of English-speaking or northern European ancestry usually built more elaborate houses and appear to have made considerably more money in the real-estate market than common laborers, recent immigrants, or African Americans. Single, married, and widowed women frequently owned property, both unimproved and improved lots. It is unclear at this point, however, to what degree they held it in name only for a male relative, or, in fact, actively made independent choices about use, upkeep, and development.

It is likely that many West Oaklanders financed their construction projects through informal business arrangements, such as mortgages obtained from private individuals instead of savings and loan institutions or banks. The presence of large industries in the city and the large-scale swings in the nation’s economy, however, affected a West Oaklander’s investment decisions: when he or she chose to build a house, make major improvements and additions, and purchase property in the first place. Again the sample is small, but it seems that there were three main building periods in West Oakland, at least for the construction of initial houses: the mid-1870s, the mid-1880s, and during the first decade of the 20th century. These years are not surprising. Although the railroad arrived in West Oakland in 1869, it took a few years for working people to accrue enough savings (capital) to build houses. In addition, the massive depressions that swept the country in the early 1870s and 1890s had an impact on the local housing market. After the turn of the century, California experienced a period of tremendous economic expansion due to the state’s continuing population growth, increasingly national markets, and participation in international markets made more available by the opening of the Panama Canal and expansion of Pacific Rim industries headquartered in San Francisco. Oakland, in particular, benefited from the opening of the city’s port to municipal development and the arrival of two railroads competing with the Southern Pacific. San Franciscans displaced by the 1906 earthquake and fire also contributed to the city’s expansion (Bagwell 1982).

Finally, West Oaklanders lived in a startlingly varied range of houses that they altered and added onto, sometimes in major ways. Owners often more than doubled the square footage of the initial starter buildings as they lifted houses, added back porches and bathrooms, built sheds, and resheathed front facades. The resulting house designs may appear to be ad hoc, even unplanned. But the forms of these buildings are the result of rational decision-making processes that were influenced

by longstanding and, in some cases, conflicting understandings about the appropriate way to build houses in the United States. In their lack of specialization, many of the initial cottage plans hearken back to the designs of traditional 18th-century American houses. The layouts of other fancier houses, usually those owned by wealthier people, show the influence of newer middle-class Victorian approaches to residential design (as discussed above).

In addition, the availability of industrialized building materials, as well as house designs published in pattern books and lumber-yard catalogs, appears to have had some impact on the design of even ordinary cottages. In the 1870s and 1880s, for example, real-estate speculators in West Oakland liked to build one-story, four-room, “hall-less” cottages of about 550 square feet, with the gable end facing the street. In the United States, such a plan was probably already common during the mid-19th century and was depicted in *The Working-Man’s Cottage Architecture*, a pattern book published before the Civil War (Thomas 1848; Upton 1995a). Thus, from first-hand experience of older examples as well as from published models, this plan idea made its way to Oakland: three buildings in our sample are based on some version of this design. All were built as rental cottages, and two of the buildings were lifted, after the turn of the century, and turned into flats.

WEST OAKLAND CASE STUDIES

The buildings discussed below were surveyed, measured, drawn, and photographed in the spring and summer of 1995.



PLATE 26. FRONT VIEW OF THE CROWLEY COTTAGE, 1825 SHOREY STREET. The small scale of the original cottage, constructed in 1874-1875, is apparent, as are the generous front and side yards. Modest brackets decorate the front facade. (Credit: Paul Groth)

1825 Shorey Street: Beginning with Two Rooms

In 1869, the year the Central Pacific Railroad arrived in West Oakland, a young woman named Annie Crowley purchased an empty lot on Shorey (then Short) Street, presumably with the intention of building a house. Several of the men in her family worked for the new railroad, and in a few years Annie and her relatives accrued enough capital to construct a small one-story house on this piece of land. The initial cottage was finished in 1875, and in that year Cornelius Crowley, a track man for the railroad—either Annie’s brother or first husband—moved into the 300-square-foot house (or another small dwelling) near the corner of Cedar and Short Street (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

This starter cottage, located at the front end of the building that now stands on the lot, consisted of two rooms (Figure 7). These rooms were a bit more specialized than those of 714 Pine Street; the front room had an original closet for clothes, indicating that the Crowleys intended it for use both as a common room and bedroom. The rear room, clearly a kitchen (although it may have served for sleeping as well), had the one flue for the one stove in the cottage and also a built-in pantry closet, which dovetailed with the closet in the front room. Because the house was less than 20 feet wide, and had one side wall built next to the west lot line, there was a very generous 11-foot-wide side yard to the east. In 1876 tax assessors valued the Crowley’s small house between \$100 and \$150 and the lot at \$400-\$500 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

A stone’s throw from the tidelands of San Francisco Bay, the Crowley’s new house sat on a block that contained almost as many empty lots and many more trees as it did dwellings and outbuildings. The generous

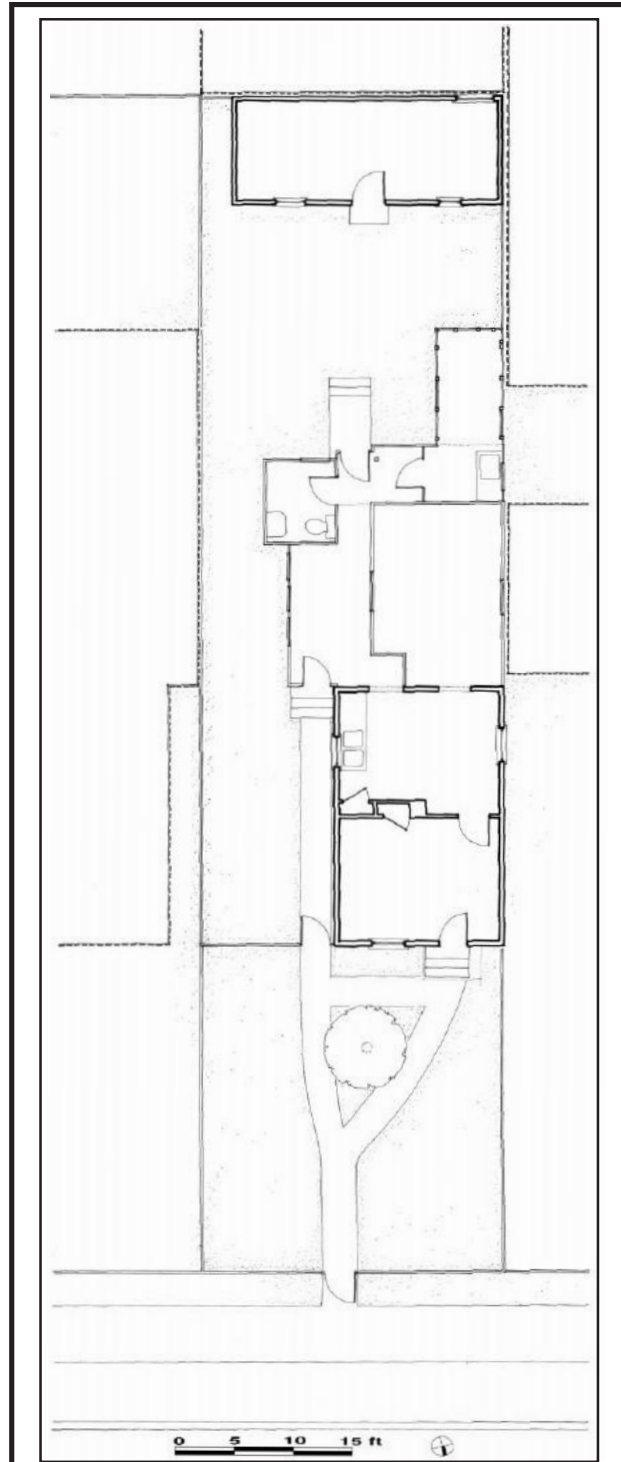


FIGURE 7. PLAN OF THE CROWLEY COTTAGE, 1825 SHOREY STREET. The initial cottage, set back from the Shorey Street, had generous front and side yards. Additions more than doubled the size of the original house. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

setback from Short Street permitted an ample front yard, and a contemporary drawing gives a bucolic, almost rural, air to the setting of the Crowley house. Yet spatial and social ties firmly anchored the Crowleys and their two-room dwelling to a mixed-use urban environment and the processes of industrialization. Taking a short walk south would bring the Crowleys first to the Central Pacific's new tracks on Seventh Street and then to the train yards, the source of their family's livelihood. Living just two blocks from an almost block-long factory (facing Bay Street), the family could have seen the factory's yard and smokestack from the house. Across Bay Street, either the owners of the new factory or another group of entrepreneurs had started to add landfill to the San Francisco Bay, yet another hint of the kinds of change that would transform West Oakland's built environment during subsequent decades (Snow & Roos 1870-71).

Similar to other small-scale property owners in the 19th century, the Crowleys and the subsequent owners of the cottage at 1825 Shorey Street understood their house to be an important financial investment—whether or not they owned the building for the long or short term, and whether or not they used the building as a home or as a rental property. Annie Crowley held onto her Shorey Street property after she married (for the second time?), but by the early 1880s she and her new husband, George Madson, had decided to sell their home. In 1884 the Madsons received \$900 for their property from the next owner, Francis H. Page, although the assessed value of improvements on the lot only ranged between \$50 and \$100 and remained so through 1925. The Madsons probably invested their profit in another home somewhere in Oakland. Page, who worked as a bookkeeper and may have



PLATE 27. SIDE VIEW OF THE CROWLEY COTTAGE, 1825 SHOREY STREET. The original two-room house probably ended just beyond the small window on the side elevation, near the vertical trim piece. The chimney roughly indicates the center of the initial building. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui)

also owned a grocery store, lived in a wealthier section of West Oakland; he turned the modest dwelling on Shorey Street into a rental property. He added a third room (clearly a bedroom), rear porches and, perhaps, an outbuilding by 1889 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889; Plate 27).

Future owners A.W. Johnson (1905), the owner of a fuel and feed store, and J.W. Linville (1915) maintained the dwelling as a rental property until after World War I. Probably it was Johnson who added a rear cottage or shed to the property, and added a rear porch toilet if the structure did not already have one. Still, the building would have been a tight fit for the four people who lived at the address in 1910—and the one boarder may have been assigned a spot in the back cottage. As this building abutted the rear property line, the boarder could have reached the dwelling by walking past the main house and front garden, and through the side yard, which was wider than most in West Oakland. In all likelihood, all of the people living on the property shared the rear-porch toilet of the main house (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1902, 1912).

Most likely it was Linville who converted the side porch to a sitting room/dining room, and he may have rebuilt the porch toilet. Soon thereafter, when the screened cabinet was added to the dining room (Plate 17), a built-in wardrobe closet by the same builder was added to the rear bedroom. After Johnson and Linville's additions, the size of the initial cottage had been doubled, and it was now a four-room structure. As noted above, the initial toilet room, just large enough for a toilet, was perhaps part of a small back porch. A wash sink elsewhere on the porch may have served as a basin.

The cottage reverted to owner-occupancy when Mattie Swanson bought it around 1925. She and her husband, Carl, who first worked as a seaman and then as a tailor, lived in the house through the late 1930s. Judging from the age of the tree and vaguely 1920s-style walkways, it may well have been Mrs. Swanson who gave the front yard its final form, with a board-and-wire front fence, a somewhat English-style pair of curved walks that framed a small fruit tree, and flower beds that in 1995 still sent up perennials at either side of the front yard. A high, solid board fence at the line of the front facade of the cottage—and also lining up with the former house to the east—clearly separated a utilitarian side yard, off the dining room, from the decorated front yard. Nonetheless, the side entrance to the cottage, leading to the dining room, may well have been the door most actively used by both residents and visitors.

At some time—and probably more than once—owners rebuilt or re-enclosed the back laundry porch, leaving a stranded, leftover column from an older version of the room, and a double set of exterior door jambs. Even later, the toilet room was expanded so that it had both a toilet and a basin, and new rear exterior stairs were built. At no point did anyone add a bathtub or shower to this cottage. Finally, at some point after World War II—probably as late as the 1980s, when the house also seems to have been professionally rewired—new owners remodeled the back building and roughly added another sleeping room off the laundry area (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1951). This third bedroom had two small, makeshift, scavenged windows.

As seen from the street, the Crowley cottage was a long, narrow, one-story building, whose gable end fronted the street. These features gave the building some resemblance to a shotgun house, especially when taken in conjunction with certain features of the interior plan—the chain of added-on rooms and lack of interior hallways. Yet, the similarity is superficial and misleading. The plan form of the building's original two-room core departs in subtle but significant ways from the shotgun



PLATE 28. REAR VIEW OF ADDITIONS AT THE CROWLEY COTTAGE, 1825 SHOREY STREET. This view shows the very informal final addition made to the back of the cottage after World War II. Phoenix Iron Works is visible in the rear of the picture. (Credit: Paul Groth)

prototypes of the American South (Vlach 1976). The main rooms of the Shorey Street house are rectangular in proportion and wider than the mostly square rooms found in shotgun houses. Although the shotgun house type is often associated with African American building traditions, no known archival evidence links African Americans to the cottage's construction during the 19th century. In addition, the doorways are not placed in either a straight line or a clear staggered (zig-zag) pattern, as usually occurs in the building type (Hattersley-Drayton 1980; Upton 1995;). The house that stood at 1825 Shorey Street, however, was an important historic structure in its own right. The house was largely destroyed by fire during the spring of 1995 and demolished in June of that year. Like the surviving buildings at 714 Pine, 360 Chester, and 362 Lewis, it was an excellent example of early informal workers' cottages based on initial two-room dwellings.

360 Chester Street: A Two-Room (or Three-Room) Starter Cottage

Many immigrant groups built cottages as affordable starter homes—and used their new homes as a way to enter the real-estate market, albeit at a very modest scale. One example is the cottage at 360 Chester, thought to have been built in 1874 or 1875, architect and builder unknown. This property was one of many on the block owned by Mary Durant; she and her husband Henry, appear to have subdivided several larger parcels of this block into standard, house-size lots. Within a year or so of the cottage's construction, title records show ownership shifting from Mary Durant to Mary Sugrue, an Irish immigrant, who purchased the lot and house for \$550. Mary's husband, Patrick (also

an Irish immigrant), was a laborer on the Central Pacific Railroad. The Sugrues lived at 360 Chester for a time, but seem to have also held the property primarily as neighbor-owners; they lived next door at 354 Chester Street (to the north of 360 Chester) during the 1870s and early 1880s.

The Sugrues rented out their property at 360 Chester to people of similar status as themselves. In 1880, for example, Eugene and Bridget Sullivan and their two young children lived in the Sugrue rental house. Like their landlords, the elder Sullivans were Irish immigrants, and Eugene worked for the railroad (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

The rear portions of this home have been remodeled so often that the size of the original cottage cannot be clearly determined; it could have been either two or three rooms. Given its later phases, it is possible that the four people in the Sullivan family in 1880 crowded into a two-room dwelling—the two front rooms under the gable roof parallel with Chester Street (Figure 8). Like the Crowley Cottage at 1825 Shorey, the original rooms at 360 Chester were differentiated only by very modest architectural devices and patterns of use; the Sugrue’s house, at 400 square feet, was slightly larger. In the Sugrues’ house, the front door opened onto an all-purpose kitchen-sitting room-dining room. In such a modest dwelling, this room would probably have had a stove and flue rather than the present fireplace. The adjacent space provided the family with one bedroom. Most likely they used the lower level for storage.



PLATE 29. FRONT VIEW OF SUGRUE/CROSSMAN COTTAGE, 360 CHESTER STREET. The front porch, stairs, and possibly the raised basement are later additions to the 1874-1875 cottage. The side yard to the left informally encroaches on adjacent property, left empty after the neighboring house burned a few years ago. (Credit: Paul Groth)

With the two rooms placed in this relation to the street, and with the front door in this position, the plan of these two original rooms recalls the arrangement of a hall and parlor house, an English house type common in colonial America and still widely used in the mid-19th century (Hattersley-Drayton 1980; Upton 1982). It is also possible that the original cottage had three rooms, with a small kitchen ell off the back of the front two rooms. If that were the case, then the fireplace could have been part of the original starter cottage. This T-shaped plan would be a one-story version of yet another common American house type, called the I-house because it was found so commonly in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa.

About 1885 the Sugrues sold the house to George Crossman, a fireman on one of the ferry boats to San Francisco. A year or two later, Crossman must have made substantial alterations, since his property tax assessment increased substantially in 1887 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990). Sanborn maps certify that by 1889, the outline of the cottage at 360 Chester resembled a lopsided letter T, and that by then it had at least three rooms, and probably four (Sanborn 1889). Crossman presumably made the original all-purpose room into a more proper parlor by building the fireplace (if it was not there already), adding a rear kitchen with a work porch, and adding a small sleeping room off the kitchen.

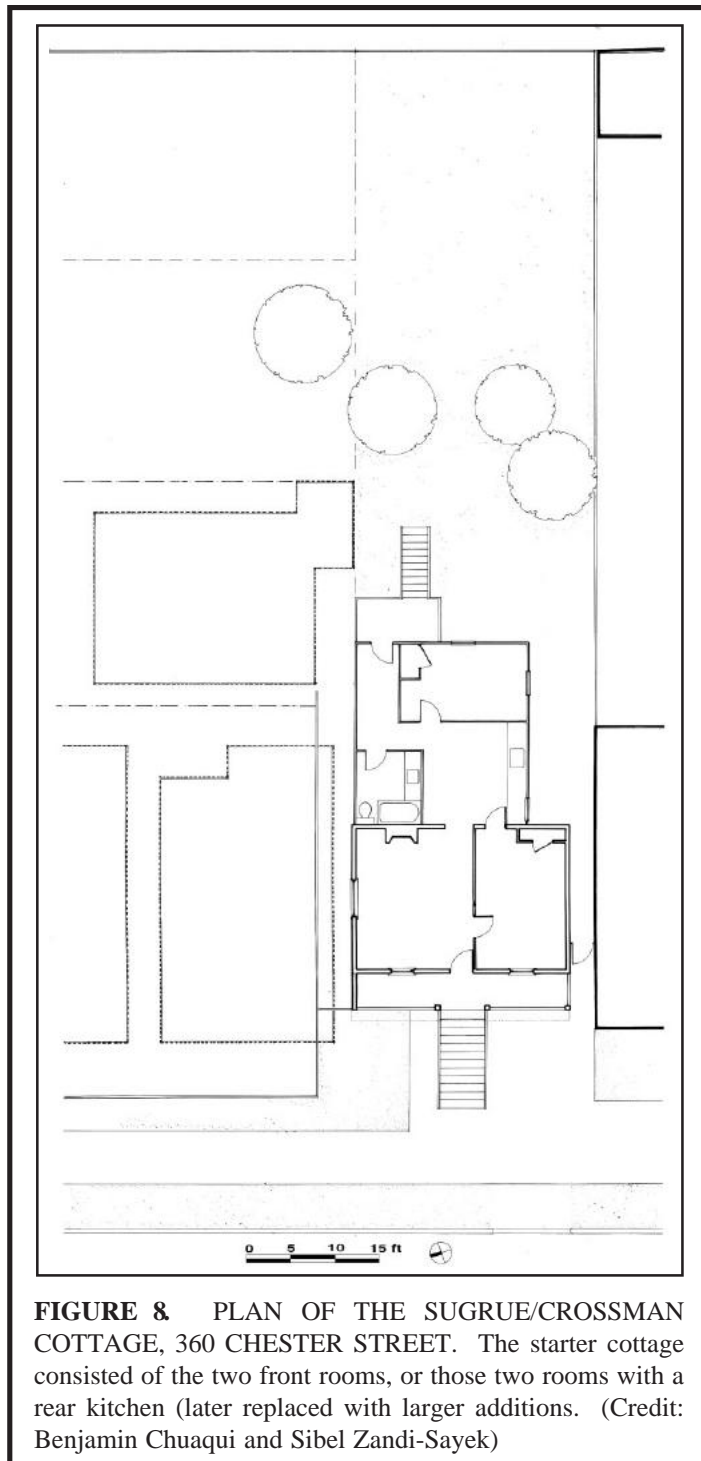


FIGURE 8 PLAN OF THE SUGRUE/CROSSMAN COTTAGE, 360 CHESTER STREET. The starter cottage consisted of the two front rooms, or those two rooms with a rear kitchen (later replaced with larger additions. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

Crossman owned the property for about 15 years, living in it for some, if not all, of that period. The process of making informal additions persisted with the next owners, Herman and Anna Cook, who turned the building into a rental property and maintained it as such until at least 1925. At some point during this period, the Cooks enclosed the side kitchen porch (Sanborn 1902, 1912). The basement was remodeled into a second flat, probably during World War II, and later a new front porch



PLATE 30. SIDE ELEVATION OF SUGRUE/CROSSMAN COTTAGE, 360 CHESTER STREET. The three phases of addition to the back of the building clearly show. The chimney and the higher roof indicate the end of the original two-room house. The lower gable roof (towards the back of the picture) shows a later addition. The parts of the building clad in vertical siding indicate the newest additions. (Credit: Paul Groth)

and driveway were added. Sometime after 1970, the back of the building was substantially rebuilt to incorporate a new bathroom, kitchen, and bedroom.

While the rear of 360 Chester retains the informal external appearance characteristic of most additions in West Oakland (see Plate 19), the interior layouts of the new rooms—the bathroom and bedroom especially—look like their counterparts in post-war suburban houses. The present-day residents have also informally incorporated into the front half of their lot some of the side yard of the property to the north after the adjacent house burned down.

1529 Third Street: A Basic Four-Room Starter Cottage

Rows of cottages were often built as rental housing by real-estate speculators from outside the neighborhood. In 1877-1878 Stephen Porter, a doctor in then-middle-class East Oakland, developed four adjacent rental units on Third Street (Project Block 38), including the cottage at 1529. Originally valued at about \$300 each, the cottages' rear yards directly abutted the railroad's property, and the doctor quickly rented the houses to people associated with the railroad and related industrial work. In 1880 the McBride and Jones families lived at 1529 Third Street, with one of the households perhaps occupying a small, one-story shed at the back of the lot. James McBride was a woodcarver; William



PLATE 31. THREE OF DR. PORTER'S RENTAL COTTAGES ON THIRD STREET. The similarity of the original buildings (from 1877-1878) is apparent, despite later changes to the fronts of the houses, made principally to accommodate cars. (Credit: Paul Groth)

Jones, a laborer and sometime groom; their wives kept house, taking care of the young children in each family (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889).

Porter's boxy hipped-roof houses were either built on a raised basement or lifted later. Each building of 555 square feet contained four rooms and a small back porch, which subsequent rear additions have altered (Figure 9). At 1529 Third Street and in Porter's other properties along the street, the room uses were somewhat more differentiated than in the smaller, and slightly older, cottages on Chester, Pine, and Shorey streets. The present-day plan of the original core still closely resembles its 19th-century layout, and the old scenario for room use is still in place. Now, as then, a visitor enters the building through a small (remodeled) exterior porch and moves into a parlor/living room. The kitchen is directly behind the front room. Two bedrooms are located to the side of the main living spaces, and each has a deep closet much larger than those found at 1825 Shorey. No interior hallway creates a formal zone of privacy between public and private rooms; yet the arrangement of front door and the door out of the kitchen (to the former back porch) marks a circulation space that separates the bedrooms from more public rooms—another long-lasting use of a common 18th-century house plan (Upton 1982). Although the design of this building appears to be a bit more polite than other earlier examples, the actual uses of the spaces may have varied dramatically from those intended by the plan's delineators. Certainly the McBrides or the Joneses were likely to have used the parlor as a sleeping room if both families—seven people in all—occupied the main house. Neither family lived long in the small cottage. The Joneses moved out by 1882 and the McBrides had rented another house on Willow Street by 1886.

Dr. Porter's wife, Lucy, who may have inherited the Third Street cottages at her husband's death, owned the buildings around 1900. At that time, an Italian immigrant, Frank Jost (or Guisto) purchased at least one of the houses. Formerly employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad, Jost had lived in the neighborhood since the late 1880s. He described himself as a fish peddler at the time he purchased his new property, and later he called himself a merchant. Jost, his wife, and some of their children lived in the house, and during their first decade of residence, houses and stores filled in nearby empty lots in their mixed-use neighborhood. By 1912 the Josts would have found two corner stores, a saloon (right next door in a former house), several back cottages, rear sheds containing animals, a small apartment house, and the Southern Pacific's railroad lines all within 75 feet of their house (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1902, 1912).

The Josts do not seem to have taken in lodgers or boarders; rather their two teenaged daughters contributed to the family's income by working as fruit and vegetable sorters in a local cannery. Somehow, the family accumulated enough capital to make some additions to their house. They seem to have added a new toilet, enlarged the rear porch, and at the rear of the lot built a substantial two-story, L-shaped shed (probably for animals), which later burned (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1902, 1912).

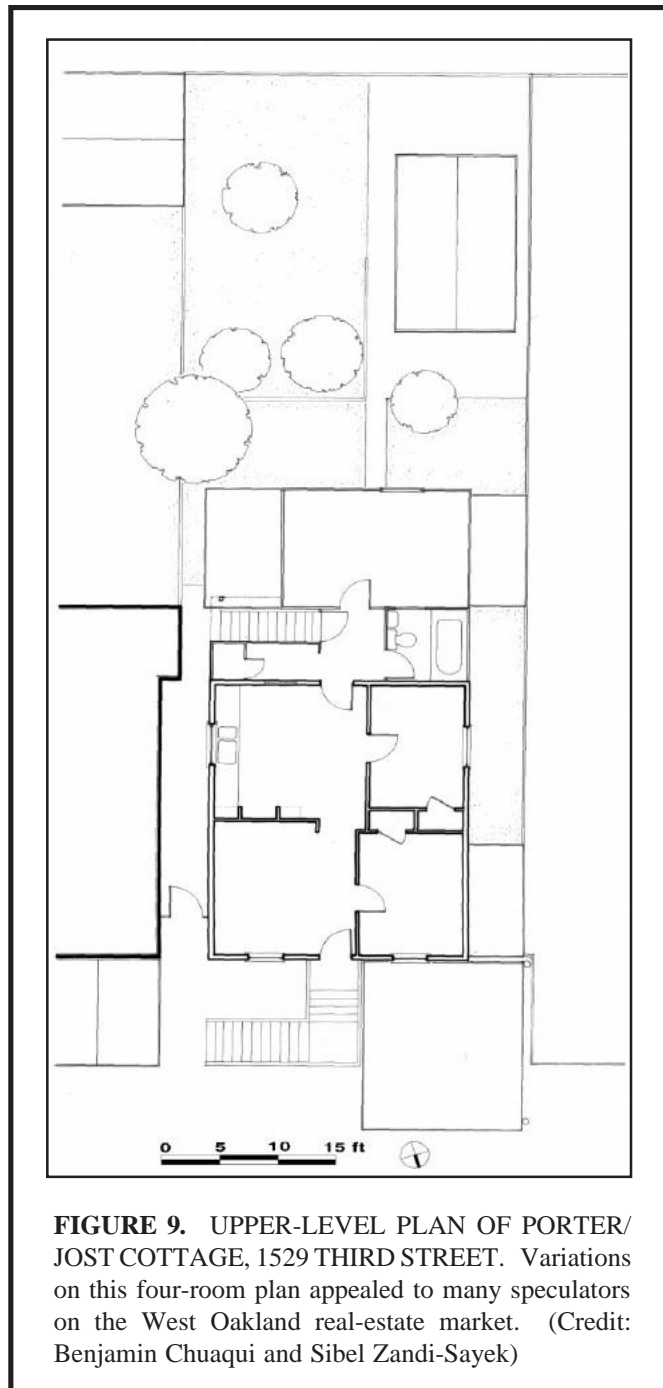
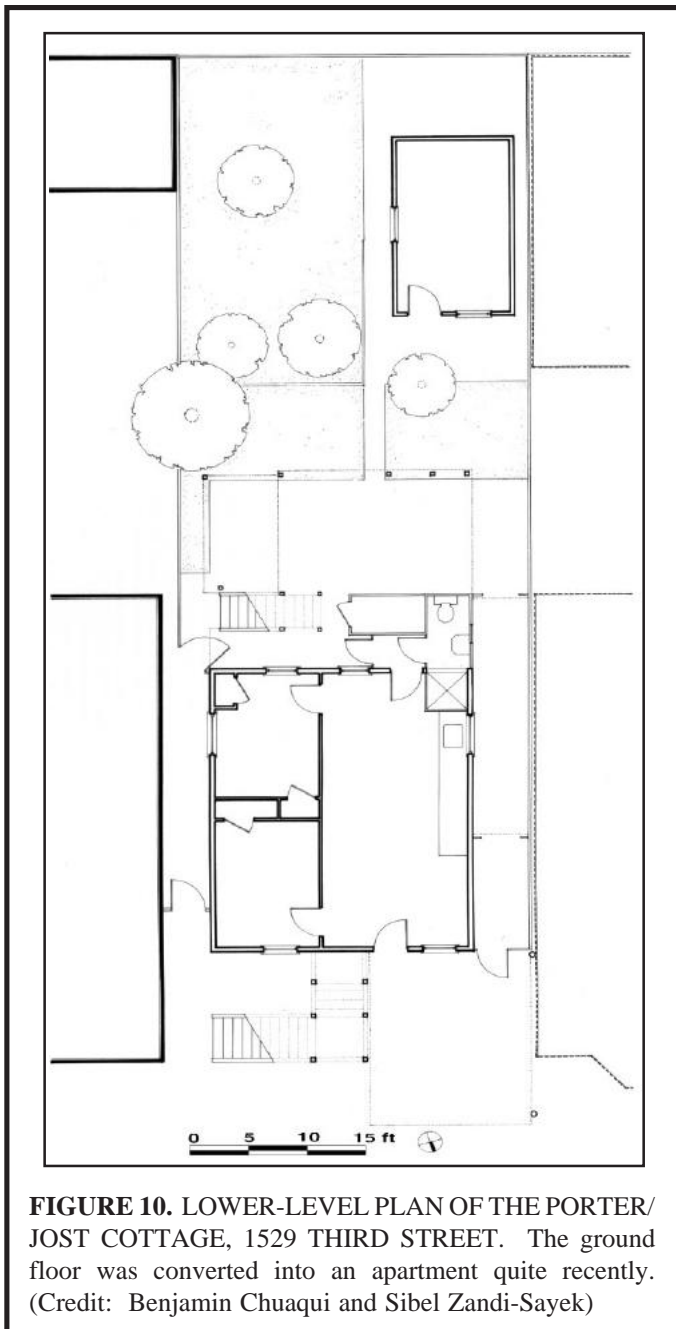


FIGURE 9. UPPER-LEVEL PLAN OF PORTER/JOST COTTAGE, 1529 THIRD STREET. Variations on this four-room plan appealed to many speculators on the West Oakland real-estate market. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

The Josts owned the house on Third Street until the mid-1920s, when Ellen Camera purchased the building and returned it to use as a rental property. She or another owner enlarged the front porch and stair, rebuilt the rear shed, added a driveway in the front of the building, and made half of the basement into a garage—dividing the space into two long rooms along what appears to be an original load-bearing partition (Figure 10). There were no other major alterations until the 1990s. The side yard (at the west side of the building) has been turned into storage space; the present owner and his family, who live in the building, use the other adjacent (eastern) side yard to gain access to their rear yard—



fitted out with a terrace, flowers, fruit trees, and a vegetable garden. The owner has also extended the house into the rear yard, adding on a third bedroom and modern bath, and, since 1990, remodeled the lower-level garage and adjacent storage space into an apartment for a relative. As with the Sugrue/Crossman house at 360 Chester Street, the exterior informalities of the newest additions belie their interior design; the standards of post-war suburban houses directly influence the layouts of the new rooms. The new lower apartment at 1529 Third Street is elegantly designed, with very clean lines (in plan), a large combination living-dining-kitchen room, and a full bath (that cleverly borrows a small corner of the kitchen space to accommodate a large shower).

323 Center Street: The Hallway as a Route toward Politeness

African Americans, too, built rental houses for West Oakland's real-estate market; one such rental house at 323 Center Street is an apt example of a minimal almost-polite house. In 1877 Cora (also known as Caroline) Deguzee purchased two adjacent lots on Center Street. At the time of her purchase, the half of the lot at 327 had been improved with a large one-story house with a water tank house and windmill in the backyard (Sanborn 1889). The house, worth about \$500 in 1877, is now demolished. This

African American couple, Cora and Carl, lived at 327 Center with their married daughter, Lucretia, and her husband, John Smith. Lucretia gave music lessons, and both of the men worked as sailors. Sometime in the mid-1880s, Carl Deguzee left his job and opened a restaurant on the large Central Pacific ferry boat, which ran along the "Creek Route" between Oakland and San Francisco (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

In 1887-1888, 10 years after they had bought their property on Center Street, the family developed the garden half of their piece of land using the savings from Carl Deguzee's better job and perhaps contributions from his daughter's and son-in-law's earnings. At 323 Center Street they built



PLATE 32. SIDE VIEW OF THE PORTER/JOST COTTAGE AT 1529 THIRD STREET. The original building is under the hipped roof (and outlined in dark trim boards). Two subsequent rear additions are visible along the side, indicated by the different kinds of siding. The car port, the stair to upper unit, and the sheds in side and rear yard are other recent changes to the building. (Credit: Paul Groth)

a plain, but up-to-date, T-shaped house with five rooms (Figure 11), valued at \$400 the year it was built. The rental house was only about half as large as the house the Deguzees lived in next door, but at 680 square feet in plan it was relatively large for the neighborhood at that time. The rental house stretched the full width of its half of the lot. It is almost certain that a tall board fence divided the yards of the two houses, and also almost certain that the Deguzees allowed their tenants to share their side of the narrow passage between the two houses, at least as far as the tenant house's back door (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889, 1902, 1912).

From the street, the Deguzee rental house looks a great deal like Dr. Porter's row of four rental properties on Third Street. Like the Porter cottages, the main part of the new rental house was boxy and topped with a hipped roof; the building was also originally one-story and lifted onto a higher basement sometime before 1902. Nonetheless, the interior layout of 323 Center Street differs in important ways from the Third Street houses. In its initial form, the Deguzee rental house has five rooms, not four. More importantly, the house has a hallway—a specialized circulation space, distinct from other interior rooms, used only as a passageway—separating the first two rooms. The part of the hallway nearest the front is turned into a small recessed entry on the exterior of the house. Looked at practically, this recessed entry spatially frames the front door and forms a tiny but efficient front porch. More subtly, the recessed entry is also a bit of conspicuous consumption: It announces to the outside world that this house is so generously laid out that its builders have interior space to devote to something that is essentially decoration.

Inside the house, visitors might have noted that the front two rooms were not exactly alike. On one side of the hall was a bedroom with a built-in closet. The front room on the other side of the hall had no closet, suggesting it was to be reserved as a parlor (although it was probably always used as a bedroom, perhaps with a wardrobe closet). The hallway leads directly to the rear of the house, emptying into what was once the combination dining room and sitting room. The kitchen was located in the rear ell, with a flue and chimney for the stove, and most likely in exactly the same size and location as the present kitchen (Sanborn 1889). Later remodelings have obscured the original shape of the back porch, but the space most likely accommodated a back-porch toilet and work porch. The current bathroom and rear porch have doubled the size of the original porch.

In 1889 a year or so after building the new rental property, the Deguzees sold both of their houses and moved to 120 Fifth Street, a neighborhood in central Oakland. From there, Carl Deguzee could more easily walk to the pier at the end of Broadway. A real-estate speculator, Benjamin Phillips, bought 323 Center Street from the Deguzees and used it as a rental property late into the 1920s (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990). Phillips made few, if any, changes to the building itself, apparently adding only a small shed, perhaps an outhouse, to the rear of the lot. The neighborhood, however, changed considerably. By 1912 the owners of the two lots immediately to the south had covered the entire area with a broom factory, which later was rebuilt as a small foundry building. Just down the street, an even larger factory occupied the corner of Center and Third streets (Sanborn 1902, 1912, 1951).

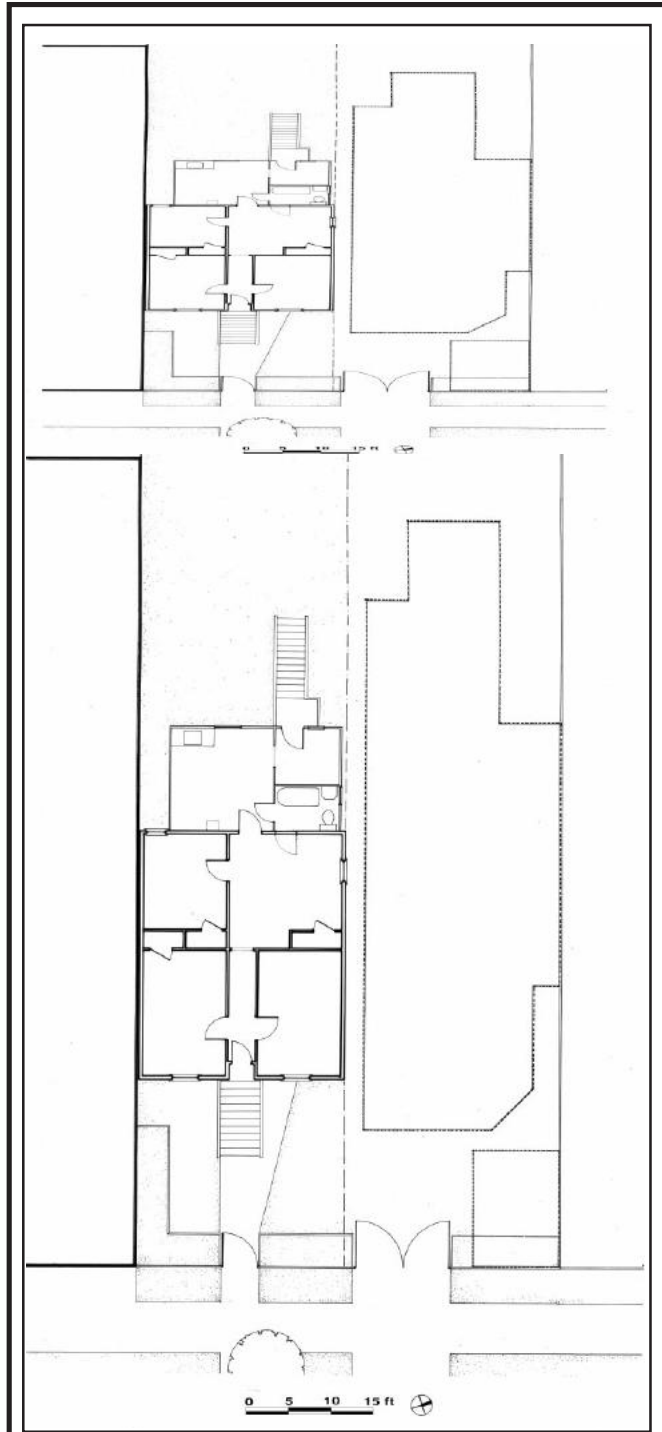


FIGURE 11. PLAN OF THE DEGUZEE/PHILLIPS HOUSE, 323 CENTER STREET. The four rooms in this plan are articulated by the addition of a central hall. The cottage was built by the African American couple who lived next door, in the now-demolished building. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek)



PLATE 33. FRONT VIEW OF THE DEGUZEE/PHILLIPS RENTAL HOUSE, 323 CENTER STREET. The Deguzee family built this house in 1887-1888; the lot next door (now enclosed in a single fence and providing enclosed parking) marks the location of the Deguzee residence. (Credit: Paul Groth)

Industrial uses have transformed the physical setting of Center Street, as elsewhere in West Oakland. Yet, even in the immediate vicinity of the Deguzee house, housing continues to provide some financial opportunities for small-scale investors. The cottage at 323 remains a rental property; the basement of the house was also converted into a rental unit, probably during World War II. After the Deguzees' first house was abandoned and then demolished, the owners of 323, the remaining cottage, purchased the empty lot next door, which they or their tenants have turned into a parking lot and garden. In effect, the original Deguzee parcel has been reconstituted, although it is only their rental house that remains standing.

316 Chester Street: A Classic Five-Room Plan

When skilled workers invested in West Oakland property, it appears that many were interested in building—and could afford—more elaborate houses than their poorer neighbors. One example is the house at 316 Chester Street. The original owner was Charles L. Bibber, who worked in Oakland during the 1870s, first as a carpenter and later a ship joiner. In 1873 he bought a double lot on Chester Street from L.P. Fisher, who had subdivided a larger parcel of land a few years earlier. Soon after the purchase, Bibber moved from downtown to Oakland Point, renting a house on Fifth Street (near the corner of Lewis) while he, more than likely, personally built the pair of originally identical houses at 316 and 320 Chester Street. By 1874-1875 the construction was complete, and Bibber and his wife, Ann, moved into one of the large new buildings, probably renting out the other house. In the mid-1870s



PLATE 34. FRONT VIEW OF THE HOUSES AT 316 AND 320 CHESTER STREET. These two houses, originally mirror images, were owned by Charles Bibber. The Rosas house (Number 316) is to the right. The small garage, adjacent to the Rosas property, also saw use as a dwelling in the 1940s and 1950s. (Credit: Paul Groth)

the assessed value of one of Bibber properties was \$1,000, almost twice that of the Sugrue/Crossman property just up the street (OCHS1980-1995,1988-1990;Sanborn 1889).

It makes sense that each of Bibber's houses was assessed at a higher value than the Sugrue property, even though both the Bibber and Sugrue homes were wood-framed, gable-roofed buildings, probably constructed on raised basements, and built in the same neighborhood. Bibber built much larger five-room houses (735 square feet), not two-room cottages, and his buildings were decorated with more elaborate ornament and based on a more specialized plan (Figure 12). Bibber also built an outhouse at the back of the lot (Sanborn 1889). The rear portion of the original five-room section of the Bibber house at 316 Chester (320 is presumably a duplicate) consists of a typical four-room cottage plan—with kitchen and a dining-sitting room to one side, bedrooms to the other, separated from each other by a clear circulation route, although not a formal hallway. One must walk through the dining room to reach most of the house, and the room also has a large closet, suggesting the storage of clothing more than the storage of table linens. The room arrangement is very similar to Dr. Porter's cottages on Third Street. Bibber, however, wanted a more refined dwelling than an ordinary cottage. He added polite elements to the front of his building, including a room very clearly a parlor (articulated by a gracious bay window), a fairly long entry hall, and a recessed entry which receives the exterior front stairs. We know from interviews that during the second half of the 20th century, the front parlor was pressed into use as another family bedroom for long periods of time (Rosas 1995a).

Either Bibber or his wife, Ann, took out a mortgage on both of the houses on Chester Street in 1880. Perhaps Ann needed additional money after her husband's death. In any event, sometime during the next year Mary Gorman, another widow, purchased 316 Chester from the Oakland Bank of Savings. She used the building as a rental property until Andrew O'Connor, a flagman and yard man with the Southern Pacific Railroad, bought it in 1891. O'Connor continued to rent out the property, making some improvements during the first decade of the 20th century. The Dolans, a working-class family of six who lived in the house in 1910, probably welcomed the new back porch and adjacent toilet room (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1902, 1912, 1951). In 1917 O'Connor and his wife, Anna, moved into the building where they lived until the late 1930s (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

The next generation of immigrants moved into the house in 1942, when the Gallardo family purchased the building. The elder Gallardos had emigrated as children from Mexico to the United States during the late 19th century, living in Texas and Arizona. Mr. Gallardo, a railroad worker, decided to bring his family north just before World War II, hoping to find better economic and social opportunities. His daughter, Bertha Rosas, and her husband now live in the house, which they also own. They tore down the old dilapidated rear additions, which Bertha Rosas said were not very well built in the first place, and have made additions of their own: another bigger bedroom, a new laundry, more storage space, new back stairs and porch, and a modern bathroom, kept in its original spot for the convenience and economy of the plumbing hook-up. It

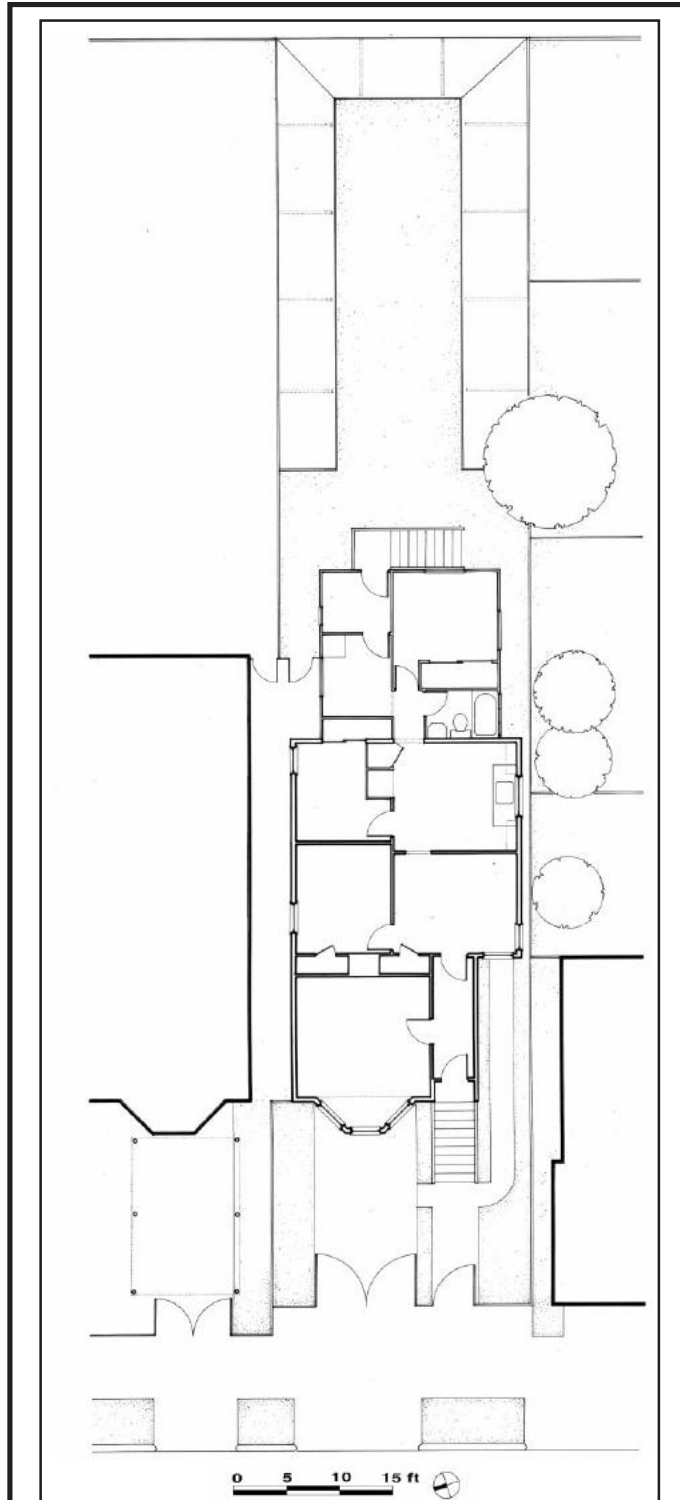


FIGURE 12. PLAN OF THE BIBBER/ROSAS HOUSE, 316 CHESTER STREET. This house shows the influence of “almost-polite” ideas on the design of working-class houses. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

was also most likely the Rosas family who converted part of the basement into a garage, added a driveway to the front yard, and replaced the rear shed with a very large, U-shaped chicken coop that fills three sides of the rear yard (Rosas 1995a, 1995b).

The present-day uses of the front and rear yards reinforce the polite front of the house and the informality of the back. Mrs. Rosas maintains a formal flower garden in the front of her house; her son raises carrier pigeons in the rear coops (Rosas 1995b). Yet aspects of the neighborhood's mixed-uses remain. Over the lot line, to the south side of the Rosas' front yard, is a very informal back house, dating from the turn of the 19th century, and now used as a garage and storage shed. And the two-lot-wide iron foundry, which was constructed next to the Deguzees' home during the first decade of the 20th century, looms over the Rosas' back yard.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: COTTAGES AS PERCEIVED THREATS AND VIABLE HOMES

The contrasts between informal workers' cottages and almost-polite houses represent important and continuing debates about home life in the urban United States. In the 1700s, cottage-style mixtures and adjacencies were respected spatial traditions for both rich and poor. By the early 1900s, however, such mixtures and adjacencies were being built and used mostly by people in the working class; people from the more "polite" ranks had come to consider informal mixture and adjacency as both markers and causes of poverty, crime, degeneracy, and disease (Veiller 1912). Such middle- and upper-class critics had rejected the old household patterns and adopted new, modern rules for housing based on the principles of specialization, hierarchy, separation, and permanence. As the examples in this study have shown, almost-polite houses—especially when found in developments of a whole block or more—also displayed the newer spatial rules.

By 1890 middle- and upper-class leaders had begun to work actively and earnestly to create a more uniform culture—not surprisingly, one which would use rules set by the middle and upper class. For well-meaning Progressive-era reformers, encouraging and enforcing ideas such as the almost-polite house and the better-sorted neighborhood were not intended merely as guides for the working class, but also as tools of the middle and upper class for achieving a more uniform and nonthreatening society (Breckinridge and Abbott 1911; California Commission on Immigration and Housing 1916; Marcuse 1980).

Between 1890 and the early 1920s, reformers throughout the United States successfully enforced uniform rules in several phases: passing more stringent building and plumbing codes; getting better code inspection and enforcement; providing better urban infrastructure of all kinds; inventing zoning ordinances; and finally, establishing city-engineering and city-planning bureaucracies. Leaders in Oakland and throughout California kept up well with the national reform trends, and led the nation in some of them. Thus, for the goal of cultural unity, the almost-polite house came to be clearly imposed from the top, down, as much as it may have been chosen from the bottom, up (Lubove 1962:245-256; Veiller 1914).

Less official agents also helped to enforce the new rules of politeness. The new standards were stressed by department stores, movies, newspapers, carpenters, lumber yards, realtors, and—perhaps

most effectively—by mortgage lenders. People who worked as laundresses, maids, and gardeners also had direct observation of the new middle- and upper-class ways of living. Finally, the national standards of the Federal Housing Administration, set in the late 1930s, largely halted construction of any new cottages or almost-polite houses. The new order set the minimum standards for post-World War II aircraft-factory suburbs in the expanding working-class neighborhoods of Los Angeles and the Levittown developments.

The well-meaning housing reforms of the Progressive era, renewed and brought to new levels of power and efficiency in the New Deal, were often mixed blessings for low-income people and working-class culture. When the New Deal's NRA tried to close sweat shops, for instance, some workers saw the attempts as an attack on an important—and sometimes the only available—entryway into American work and life. So too, attacks on the informal cottage were also a mixed blessing. The informal cottage was for many immigrants and urban migrants an important and valued entry into homeownership, both as a route to American home life and as an anchor in the American economy (Levine 1995). Better plumbing, safe electrical work, improved ventilation, and safe stairs not only brought tangible benefits but also raised the cost of dwellings, brought experts telling workers how they must design their homes, and thereby challenged some of the values of working-class culture that set it apart from middle- and upper-class culture.

From the 1940s through the 1960s, West Oakland became a particular and frequent target of official municipal clearance and rebuilding efforts aimed at eradicating the old spatial rules of the city and substituting the new order. Although the official encouragement of building extra ad-hoc units and rooming houses during World War II may have keyed directly into working-class culture, the simultaneous construction of the many large war-workers' housing projects did not. Nor, later, did the clearance of more than 10 blocks of informal cottages for the new U.S. Bulk Mail Handling facility. The construction of the original Cypress Freeway, BART, and the later construction of the I-980 connector freeway cleared huge tracts of West Oakland and also separated the district from the rest of the city, a process furthered by several large urban-renewal housing projects.

In spite of all these well-orchestrated cultural and physical onslaughts, the forms and culture of informal workers' cottages and almost-polite houses—and the working-class culture they represent—still survive in West Oakland and in hundreds of other North American cities. Some official programs, especially in the 1980s, have helped to keep these alternative forms viable. Recent fix-up programs (as opposed to clearance programs) have introduced better wiring, plumbing, insulation, and painting without insisting that the rooms or yards be used in particular ways and without raising prices so high that people of ordinary means cannot afford the cost of owning a house. The 1995 measured drawings of West Oakland included in this chapter show the persistence of informality and additions and mixtures, with much creative admixture of individual expression along with the inclusion of modern technology and comforts. Workers' cottage traditions, so common in the 19th century, are still alive and well in the 20th century, and West Oakland homeowners are clearly preparing to continue them into the 21st century.

At a more academic level, West Oakland's cottages and almost-polite houses also suggest—as is so often the case with ordinary architecture—that to understand the cultural and social implications of urban buildings we need to ask not so much about their style or form, but about rules of connection, addition, and adjacency, both inside the buildings themselves and within their

surroundings. Also, as we think about the history of the American house, we must be careful not to harbor the erroneous idea that in 1870, 1910, or 1995 there was any uniform agreement about or experience of the rules of the so-called “proper” or polite house. People do not follow fashions like sheep, or adopt sweeping ideas of domesticity in a single decade or generation. The history of American houses is much more complicated than the currently available textbook surveys and professional articles would suggest. This study of West Oakland is a step toward broadening those available histories of home life in the urban United States.

Acknowledgments

This study was made possible by the many West Oakland residents who graciously invited us into their homes and allowed us to measure their houses and yards. Field measurements and initial drawings for many of the case studies were prepared by Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek; the final drawings included here are by Sibel Zandi-Sayek. Student research assistants have included Rebecca Ginsburg, Will Glover, Elaine Jackson, Bill Littmann, Ken Rich, Jill Slater, and Kaori Tokunaga. Our most frequent reference in this chapter is to the OCHS—the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey—an exemplary and on-going architectural survey project of the Oakland City Planning Department. Betty Marvin, the staff person of the OCHS, has generously given her time and talents to the entire team. Additional site information, archival data, and research assistance to the team were graciously made available by Robert Haynes and Michael Knight at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, and by William Sturm at the Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library.

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ROOMING AND BOARDING IN WEST OAKLAND

Paul Groth

THE DUAL LANDSCAPES OF FAMILIES AND SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

Since its earliest settlement, West Oakland has been a neighborhood of family homes. The vast majority of West Oakland's residents have lived as part of traditional households: that is, parents living together with their young children, perhaps with the addition of cousins, aunts, uncles, or grandparents. These households, extended or not, lived in single-family cottages, flats, or apartments. In terms of housing definitions, the most important element of their household life, in addition to sleeping in the same building, was the fact that they also typically ate at home—they shared a common kitchen and a private dining table.

For much of its history, however, West Oakland has also been a neighborhood of single, nonfamily workers who rented rooms. At least for some part of their life in the district, West Oakland residents who were not members of a family typically were boarders or lodgers. They rented rooms and took their meals with other people, as opposed to renting an apartment or house and setting up their own kitchen. By definition, *boarders* are people who take meals, and who might also rent a room. *Roomers* (or *lodgers*) are people who rent only a room; there is no meal plan attached to their room rent. People became boarders and lodgers for any number of reasons. They were new to town and just getting settled; their pay was too low to rent a dwelling unit with a kitchen; their jobs were unreliable (and thus they might have to move away for periods of time, perhaps on a seasonal basis); they were single or newly married (usually without children); or they were socially marginal and no other landlords would rent to them (as with some mildly mentally ill or elderly people).

In West Oakland, and neighborhoods like it across the country, boarding and lodging arrangements could be private, commercial, or in a gray zone somewhere in between. Throughout the 19th century and up to the 1950s, the informal, noncommercial experience of boarding or rooming with a family was common at most income levels. The historians John Modell and Tamara Hareven report that, before 1930, at least half of the urban population of the United States had been boarders or lodgers at some time in their lives, or they took in boarders or lodgers at some time (Modell and Hareven 1975). Boarding and rooming with a family was almost always an informal business run by the woman of the house. When the family needed extra money, or if their children had left and they had extra room, the wife would take in relatives, friends of friends, or simply place in the window of the house a card reading "ROOM FOR RENT." When women advertised to the public and took in strangers, they often preferred people of the same nationality or race (Peel 1986; Wolfe 1906). A private family could pick and choose from among those who needed rooms, and could flatly turn down anyone or evict anyone at any time.

Commercial versions of boarding or lodging—typically called boarding houses, lodging houses, rooming houses, or hotels—were more publicly regulated. The laws of the state of California have,

since at least 1917, defined any establishment that rents six or more rooms by the day, week, or month a “hotel.” In most cities, such establishments are supposed to pay commercial taxes and often are required to have licenses (California State Legislature 1917; Groth 1994:2-7). Hotels, according to law, are required to accept any reasonable prospective tenant, at least for the night. The more difficult single tenant, therefore, often went to commercial lodgings rather than seek a room with a family. Single people were often willing to pay more to live in commercial lodgings; they did so because they preferred the privacy and quiet available there, and they could more easily entertain friends.

In West Oakland, Seventh Street clearly had the highest concentration of commercial lodgings. It was also the center of services and entertainment for residents of more informal rooming houses in the rest of the West Oakland neighborhood. Many private, informal boarding and rooming houses took in enough tenants to technically qualify as commercial hotels. Thus, their proprietors should have acquired City licenses and, after about 1920, been subject to periodic health and safety inspections. They rarely did so, however, and informal rooming and boarding houses became a gray area of Oakland’s housing market.

ISSUES UNDERLYING ROOMING AND BOARDING

The historical architectural patterns of rooming and boarding in West Oakland raise several research issues. First is the employment and housing linkage. Employment and personal incomes were the most important keys to housing demands and to changes in the shape of housing in West Oakland. Thus, as background to this study and the chapter on workers’ housing (Groth and Gutman, this volume), some research was conducted on West Oakland’s local employment in 1952—a pivotal point in the area’s employment history (see “A Profile of West Oakland Work,” this volume).

A second research issue is the degree to which West Oakland’s rooming and boarding life was different from that in better-researched, white-collar rooming districts. In many ways—although more social-history research would be required to state this unequivocally—from the 1880s through the 1950s, West Oakland appears to have been a classic example of a “blue-collar” boarding district: one for people holding semiskilled and skilled industrial jobs rather than downtown secretarial and clerk positions. Although many West Oaklanders did walk to downtown jobs, most white-collar rooming areas were much closer to the central business district. In Oakland, such areas were directly north of downtown, and later in the Lake Merritt area.

Another issue is the debate over the social value of rooming and boarding life. Both blue-collar and white-collar rooming-house lifeways have received generally bad reviews from their expert middle- and upper-class observers (Groth 1994:201-232). Notable cases are the famous condemnations by the Chicago social workers Edith Abbott and Sophonisiba Breckinridge (1910) and Evelyn Wilson (1929), who wrote about parents and children living in rooming houses. Even better known (and more widely quoted) has been the work of the Chicago sociologist Harvey Zorbaugh (1929), who quickly included rooming houses under “slum” in his book, *Gold Coast and Slum*. At the local level, middle- and upper-class reformers in almost every city worried about young women’s virtue in such reports as “Where is Home?” written by the well-meaning matrons of San Francisco’s Girls Housing Council (1927). These condemnations by experts continued in studies such as Mel

Scott's (1947) scathing and negative evaluation of life in the Western Addition of San Francisco and Lillian Cohen's (1951) concerns about Los Angeles roomers. Both studies were written to help support the urban-renewal demolition of these neighborhoods to make way for a brave new future of very different kinds of urban buildings and different ideas about urban life.

Not all studies of rooming-house life in the United States have been negative. Some of the more sympathetic accounts have related to cases more like that of West Oakland, involving neighborhoods of immigrants and industrial workers. The settlement-house worker Eleanor Woods (1907) wrote about the importance of rooming-house districts as areas of women's employment—the job of rooming-house keeper being one that allowed women to bring in a cash income and still work at home. On the eve of national prohibition, the sociologist and reformer Franklin Fretz (1912) wrote positively on the role of Philadelphia's center-city saloons in working peoples' lives, especially single people who lived in rooming houses. The Community Service Society's *Life in One Room* (1940), although not necessarily sympathetic, is the most detailed study of rooming to date, and still sheds a good deal of light on cases like West Oakland. In 1947 the University of Minnesota sociology professor Arnold Rose wrote that concern for families and family life was eclipsing the important needs of single people in rooming-house districts, made much more vivid by the experience of World War II dislocation. Perhaps the best work on rooming-house life in places like West Oakland is Margaret Chandler's (1948) controversial dissertation written about an area not far from the University of Chicago. Chandler lived in a rooming house for several years, and wrote—against the prevailing experts—that she found positive social organization, rather than social disorganization, among rooming-house residents. So too, the historian Joanne Meyerowitz (1983) has written about white-collar, downtown rooming-house districts as important arenas for women's liberation from traditional family restraints.

Also underlying the story of rooming and boarding in West Oakland are two common issues found in the study of urban history: the debate over land-use mixture, and the reality of change in function without change in architecture. Before 1850 the majority of urban Americans felt that land-use and social mixtures—that is, mixing houses with workplaces, offices with manufacturing areas; having barns next to frontyards, poor or middle-income people next to mansions—were both natural and inevitable. After 1850 and in increasingly greater numbers after 1900, urban Americans began to feel that each social group and each urban activity should be in its own place, in a permanent arrangement essentially fixed for all time. These ideas encouraged people of different economic strata and races to build and live in very different, separate areas. These ideas also contributed to the development of zoning, experimented with in the 1910s (Los Angeles and Berkeley being two early test cities), and widely adopted throughout the United States in the 1920s. In particular, people in the professions of large-scale real-estate development, mortgage lending, architecture, city planning, sociology, and social welfare wholeheartedly adopted the ideas of separation and specialization rather than mixture, and for more than 100 years worked to prohibit mixture. People operating and living in rooming houses and boarding houses, however, are dependent on land-use and social mixture. Thus, land-use patterns, and ideas about them, are important in West Oakland's rooming and boarding history.

In this essay, buildings and building records have been used as important clues to urban history; their study serves as a prologue to social history that may be done by later researchers. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that human groups can radically transform the use and meaning of

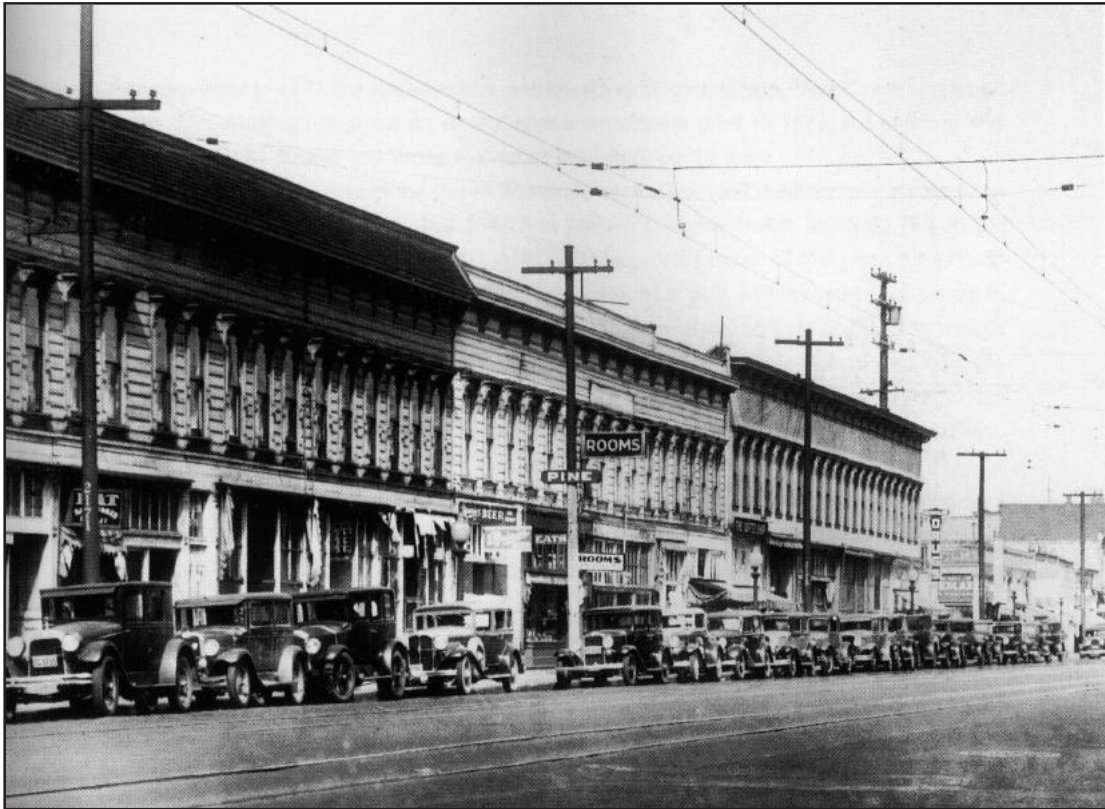


PLATE 35. BOARDING-HOUSE ROW ON SEVENTH STREET, EAST OF PINE STREET, 1940. Three of the oldest hotels on Seventh Street make up boarding-house row on Block 25. The center white building was the West Oakland Hotel in 1869, and still rented rooms as late as 1951. At the far corner of Wood and Seventh is the James Block, built in 1873, while the rooming house at the far left was built in 1892. In the 1880s, lodgers could eat downstairs at Pete Casovia’s restaurant, which advertised “21 meals for \$4.00—all you can eat.” (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library)

buildings without necessarily changing their form. A backyard cottage that is built to be a last home for an aging mother might be seen as a positive and entirely good backyard use. That same cottage—without improvements to ventilation and sanitary facilities but rented to eight immigrant casual laborers or used for prostitution—might be viewed as very negative backyard use. Such changes in use can occur in a single month (for instance, with the onset of a war) and can also be reversed in a month’s time. But when densities, poor management, lack of investment, and insufficient utilities and urban services dominate in a building or city block for very long, buildings can indeed become individually and socially dangerous—that is, buildings can become slum buildings. Once a building is a slum building, quickly and easily converting it back to a more positive use cannot be done on a month’s notice.

In this essay, I have taken the position that land-use and social mixture can be good in many cases, even though previous generations of developers and design professionals have rarely agreed. I have also assumed that in all cases the buildings had good management, and that tenants were well treated. Further intensive, multidisciplinary research would be required to discern closely between the good and bad sides of rooming and boarding in West Oakland.

SEVENTH STREET AS A COMMERCIAL ROOMING-HOUSE SPINE

METHODS AND CHANGES IN CATEGORIES

To identify the range of building types and locations of rooming and boarding in West Oakland, this architectural study relied on three different surveys: a city directory survey for approximately every 10 years from 1880 to 1952; a survey of the Sanborn maps of 1889, 1912, and 1952 linked to the directory listings for those years; and a survey of the Sanborn maps only, without consulting the city directories. (Note that for 1952, a phone book was used in addition to a city directory.) Because of the limitations of time, the second and third surveys used the same east-west boundaries as the first (from Market to Bay streets) but a smaller survey area from north to south, only from Tenth Street (rather than West Grand) south to First.¹ All addresses given here are the modern street numbers—that is, the new numbers given in the 1910 reorganization of West Oakland addresses.

Data from the key dates of this survey (1889, 1912, and 1952) provide distinctly different and important snapshots of West Oakland's history. In 1889 West Oakland was still a rather new neighborhood, with most structures less than 20 years old. Additional Sanborn maps available for 1902 show West Oakland as a mature neighborhood with many gaps, some residences marked "tenements," "shanties," "vacant," and "dilapidated," and some stores along Seventh Street marked as vacant. By 1912, the 1907-1911 expansions of the waterfront and industrial economy of Oakland had prompted landowners to fill in these gaps, and new construction was booming. Also in 1912, small churches are much more in evidence, showing that the neighborhood population was rising and becoming more settled and ethnically diverse.

At any one time, the published names of commercial rooming houses overlap and conflict a great deal, as do the various directory and Sanborn map terms for them. The fashions of using these terms also changed over time. The West Oakland House, long located on the north side of Seventh Street between Wood and Pine streets (Project Block 25), serves as a typical example. In 1880 its manager had listed it under "hotels" in the city directory. In 1900 the same address was listed under "lodging houses" by the name of a new manager, Mrs. M.M.J. Clecak. In 1910 it was listed under "furnished rooms" by yet another manager. In 1930 it was again listed under "lodging houses," but was called the American House. In 1952 the phone book listed it, under "hotels," as the Pack Train Hotel. Meanwhile, almost nothing significant had changed in the architectural size or form of the building. This report employs the terms that an establishment's managers and owners used for them—hotel, lodgings, furnished rooming house, and so forth. It is important to remember, however, that in social position, all of West Oakland's commercial lodgings were essentially part of one large category: rooming houses—not fancy hotels, but also not flophouses for transients (Groth 1994:90-130). Certainly the quality of food available in boarding houses, the cleanliness of rooms and halls, and the types of residents would have varied from one rooming house to another, and would also have changed over time.

¹A report entitled "Sanborn Map Study: Potentials and Pitfalls" was produced as a part of this study. The report is on file at the Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University, and is available to interested researchers.

The transition from boarding to rooming (sometimes called “lodging”) is important to understand. The Scott House was a boarding house that stood on Project Block 4 at 535 Market Street, a few doors south of Seventh Street at the eastern edge of the district. Its history serves to review the national transition from boarding to rooming. The Scott House was a large Victorian-style building, two-and-a-half stories tall and filling over half of its lot. It seems to have been purposely built as a boarding house. In the 1880s a boarding house of this size would have been very much like a large single-family house. It would have had a parlor and a dining room (in addition to a few bedrooms) on the ground floor. In the rear kitchen, one or two servants would have helped the landlady prepare two meals a day for the tenants—breakfast and dinner, at set times. While this situation appealed to renters in the 19th century, over time boarding-house residents became dissatisfied with the plan. The meal provisions were expensive and tenants routinely complained about the poor choice of food, the size of the servings, and the rigid schedule. Work and recreation schedules often meant that tenants missed meals they had paid for. Rather than rent at a boarding house, more and more people chose to rent a room, taking their meals at restaurants and lunch counters, which were cheaper and offered more variety and personal control for the renter. By 1910 the manager, Edward Haley, was advertising the former Scott House merely as a rooming house. The kitchen may have been made available to tenants for snacks, but the parlor and dining room were very likely rented out as bedrooms.

This conversion of true commercial boarding houses into rooming houses was a national phenomenon. In 1875 boarding houses made up almost 40 percent of the commercial housing listings in San Francisco’s city directories. By 1900 they had dwindled to fewer than 10 percent, and by 1910 they constituted only 1 percent of those listings. Boston and Chicago saw similar declines (Groth 1994:93). In the 1950s the former Scott House was still a rooming house. It had originally been surrounded by cottages and “almost-polite” workers’ houses. By the 1950s there were still several adjacent houses to the north; to the south, however, there was the Mingleton Temple, Church of God in Christ, and then a large metal fabrication shop and yard. After more than 60 years, the Scott House stood quite isolated as a commercial rooming house, refuting professional planners’ notions that if one house went to rooming uses, the neighborhood would automatically devolve to a similar state.

The most surprising results shown in the preliminary surveys of this study are (1) the importance of the entire length of Seventh Street in West Oakland as a commercial rooming street—not just the last few blocks between Wood and Bay streets; and (2) the degree to which the general architectural outlines of rooming houses in the 1912 neighborhood persisted into 1952, and still seemed to be in very active use.

THE UPSTAIRS ROOMING HOUSES OF SEVENTH STREET

In the early 1950s, visitors to West Oakland who walked along Seventh Street—going east to west, from Market to Bay Street—would have observed a fairly intact architectural history of the street’s commercial rooming-house past. The most common types were buildings that some tenants called “upstairs rooming houses” or “upstairs hotels.” Of the 39 commercial lodgings identified as having operated along Seventh Street, 35 were variations of upstairs hotels, and four were converted single-family houses. On the street level, there would be stores, offices, or a saloon. The only

indication of the rooming house would be a door with an address and perhaps a small sign that said ROOMS, identifying the door as the entrance to a hotel or rooming house. For a small upstairs rooming house (10 to 20 rooms), the sign might only be painted on the window of the door; for a larger rooming house, the sign might be hung above the sidewalk and electrically lit. By the 1930s, many of these were 2-foot long neon signs that said, simply, ROOMS; the name of the establishment and the manager changed too often to include on a sign. Tenants would climb the stairs to the second floor, where a wide spot in the hallway or a room with a dutch door indicated the manager's room and office. There would be no lobby, but a hallway with from 10 to 100 very small, simple hotel rooms. In buildings built after 1900, each room probably had a sink and a wardrobe-style closet, rather than a closet built into the wall; the toilet room and bath room would be down the hall. During the day, transom windows over the room doors provided borrowed light to the hallway. One could rent a room for only one night at some upstairs rooming houses; respectable establishments, however, discouraged transient trade (a hallmark of prostitution hotels) and usually rented rooms by the week (Groth 1994:97-101).

In the first West Oakland stretch of Seventh Street—on the north side on the two blocks bounded by Market, Myrtle, and Filbert streets—were the two handsome commercial blocks, Sather and Gregory. The Sather Block had multiple gable roofs above its second floor. The Sather Block was built between 1902 and 1911; the Gregory Block was an older structure, later remodeled (Sanborn 1902, 1912; see Plate 36). On the ground floor of both blocks were a variety of businesses in leased



PLATE 36. LOOKING EAST FROM FILBERT TOWARDS MARKET IN 1911. On the north side of the tracks, eight steep-roofed gables on a single large building, simulate Tudor-England architecture, with small hotels, offices, and shops above the street-level stores. (From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

spaces. An early location of the Valva real-estate office was in one of the structures (Valva 1995a). In both of these structures there were rooming houses, one called the Sather Hotel in 1941, and the other identified in 1930 only by the name of its landlady, Mrs. V.A. Archambeault. Both advertised “furnished rooms.” During periods of high housing demand, the Sather Hotel and Mrs. Archambeault’s rooming house might have occupied the entire second floor of their respective commercial blocks. At other times, offices (for dentists, brokers, or business associations) might also have occupied part of the second floor.

On the next several blocks of Seventh Street west of the Sather and Gregory blocks, the visitor would have found one or more upstairs rooming houses at almost every street corner, and often another one or two in the middle of the block. For instance, on the northwest corner of Seventh and Filbert was the Mars Hotel (1002 Seventh Street), advertised in the city directories of both 1930 and 1941, but probably built (and used as a rooming house) in the 1890s. It had bay windows on both street façades, as well as a 10-foot light well along its west side. Such elaborate windows would indicate that it was built to attract a slightly better, and higher-paying, clientele than Mrs. A.A. Carter’s simply built rooming house nearby, at 1072-1074 Seventh Street. A.C. Silva’s establishment at 1061 Seventh Street, which was also very simple, advertised as a boarding house in 1910—fairly unusual at that late date. It might have catered to an elderly and thus less mobile clientele.

Just a few steps away, at 1095 Seventh Street (the southeast corner of Seventh and Chestnut, on Project Block 7) was a special-purpose rooming house that, like the Scott House, probably began its life as a true commercial boarding house. The building at 1095 Seventh Street did not have any commercial space on its ground floor. The 1912 Sanborn map labels it as a “sanitarium,” indicating that it offered a recuperative regimen of rest and, surely, meals. A side tradesman’s entrance in the half-basement suggests that the kitchen (and probably the dining room, as well) were in the basement; while California building codes forbade sleeping rooms to be below grade, kitchens and dining rooms were acceptable. Oakland, like so many other California towns, had a reputation as a place for cures, although most other sanitariums and private hospitals were in better neighborhoods. In 1919 a photograph of the “sanitarium” building at Seventh and Chestnut shows a ROOMS sign hanging in the front of the structure (Praetzellis, ed. 1994:Plate 51). So too, in 1921 the building’s manager, Mrs. Mary Valvo, advertised only furnished rooms. The recuperative aspects of the operation had not lasted long. Stuart’s Salt Water Baths, out on Seventh Street west of Cedar, seems to have been more of a social and recreational bathing place—and a substitute for a Saturday bath at home—than a health facility (*Oakland Tribune* 7 November 1954).

As one walked further west, commercial rooming houses continued to be found above retail stores, with an average of one or two per block. The rooming house at 1693 Seventh, at the southeast corner of Seventh and Willow streets, was architecturally similar to many other sites—a 75-foot-wide, two-story commercial block at a corner location, so that light and ventilation would have been good in a large number of the rooms. In 1889 the Sanborn map shows an undertaker leasing one of the store spaces. In 1900 that same store at the eastern end of the commercial block, 1689 Seventh Street, was listed as G. Mikami, Japanese baths. By 1912 the baths were gone, but the ground floor had been expanded to the rear and to one side (onto a vacant lot) as a Japanese laundry. The building, but not the laundry business, was still there in the 1950s, its upper level advertised as the Hotel Willow.

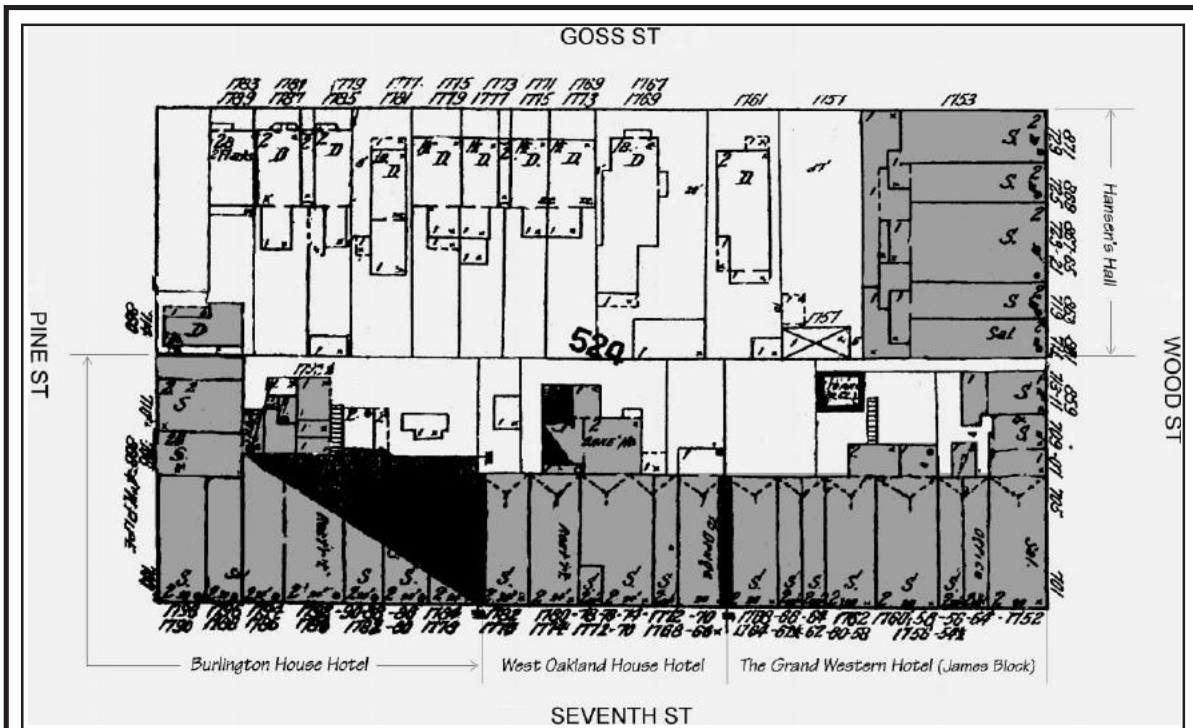


FIGURE 13. A SOLID BAND OF ROOMING HOUSES ON SEVENTH STREET BETWEEN WOOD AND PINE, 1912. The three blocks of rooming houses shown in the photograph (Plate 35) can be seen, in plan view here, to be overlying more than a score of small shops, restaurants, and saloons. Around the corner on Wood, Hansen's Hall provided rooms as well as a neighborhood meeting place. The plan also shows tiny 714 Pine Street, the Jackson/Netherland cottage discussed in the Worker's Houses essay; the back of the Burlington House Hotel dwarfs that little cottage in Plate 13 in that chapter. (Adapted from Sanborn 1912)

At Wood Street, the nature and intensity of rooming-house life changed dramatically. The 17 blocks to the east had a total of 25 commercial lodgings, most in fairly small two-story buildings. In contrast, the last 3 blocks on Seventh Street between Wood and Bay had 14 hotels; all were large examples of the upstairs rooming-house type, dominating the commercial scene in those three blocks. Because Aicha Woods has so thoroughly researched the early history of the hotels on these blocks (Project Blocks 22, 23, 24, 25, and 29), all that needs to be done here is to provide some additional notes.

The 20-room Charter Oak Hotel, opened in 1875 at the midblock location of 1765 Seventh Street, appears to have been a plain and fairly rough place, socially, even in the 1880s (see Praetzellis, ed. 1994:Plate 46). In 1889 there seems to have been a ground-floor saloon and restaurant associated with the upstairs rooms; by 1912 the dining room is gone, and the hotel has gained a tankhouse in the backyard. The entire first floor is labeled “saloon and pool room.” Pool rooms in those years connoted hang-outs—where gambling on games and too much smoking occurred—suggesting that the social status of the Charter Oak rooms was low (Sanborn 1889, 1912, 1952). The WPA Real Property Survey of 1935 reported the building in need of major repairs; three separate couples lived in seven rooms (that is, in two- and three-room suites), and nine roomers lived in separate one-room units

(Woods 1993:19). This mixture of couples and single people, suites and single rooms, all sharing baths down the hall (three flush toilets, in this case) is typical of rooming-house life.

Woods gives a full and accurate report on the former Pelouze Hall/Grieves Lodging House, at the corner of Pine and Seventh, with the exception of one detail. She writes that its last record of use in the directory was in 1943. In the phone book of 1952, however, the building is very much in use, as the Paradise Hotel. It was the only West Oakland hotel to add an advertising line to its listing in the phone book, and the line read, “We cater to Pullman Porters.” The paucity of public listing and advertising in the late 1940s and 1950s—of even long-time, still active commercial West Oakland rooming houses—may have resulted from one or more of the following factors: (a) the in-migration of a largely African American clientele who relied on word of mouth or advertised in bulletin boards, African American papers, and local directories; (b) longer-term and more elderly tenants, which meant less turnover and less need for advertising; (c) less knowledgeable managers, unaware of the value of advertising; or (d) managers who were avoiding city taxes on commercial lodgings.

For the West Oakland House at 1778 Seventh Street (Project Block 25), Woods uses the 1910 U.S. Census to report a highly diverse management and tenant group—including a native-born Californian, immigrants from southeastern Europe, France, and India, and an African American—all living there at one time with French-born managers (Woods 1993:15). The building continued in rooming house use in 1952. Architecturally, the hotel is notable because so many of its 1912 outbuildings survived in 1952, with even more added; the trend on most adjacent properties was for the elimination of outbuildings as utilities and kitchens were modernized. It may be that the West Oakland house saw less owner-investment over the years, making do with outmoded facilities.

In terms of social standing, perhaps the most “polite” rooming house at this end of Seventh Street was the Centennial House, later known as the Ridley Hotel and the Astoria Hotel, at 1844 Seventh at Cedar. The architectural indicators of its slightly higher social standing begin to appear in the 1889 Sanborn map depiction of the hotel, which shows a water tankhouse with windmill at the rear, along with a bake house for the adjacent restaurant, probably associated with the hotel. The architectural indicators are even clearer on the 1912 Sanborn map; a large new ell of rooms has been added along Cedar Street. The label “hotel sitting room” is indicated in the middle position of the three store slots along the street façade. A saloon continues to hold the corner position, and the hotel dining room now is in the third slot. The spaces are shown as being linked. A lobby or sitting room and a dining room are both quite rare for a rooming house after 1900; this establishment might have actually been as close to a mid-priced hotel (for middle-income, middle-class clientele) as West Oakland ever saw, at least in its early years. The sitting room would also have been a location for the hotel desk, instead of the more usual location behind the saloon’s bar (the bartender serving as desk clerk) or simply the manager’s room upstairs.

RESIDENTS IN ONE BLOCK OF UPSTAIRS ROOMING HOUSES

U.S. Census manuscripts for 1900 through 1920 show important traits that probably characterized most of the upstairs rooming houses along Seventh Street: the male dominance of the street’s hotel population, the constant turnover in rooming-house managers, and the direct influence that a manager’s personal policies had over who lived in a hotel. The Pullman Hotel was located at

1806 Seventh Street, on the northwest corner of Seventh and Pine streets—the opposite end of the block from the Centennial House. It was three stories tall and had a corner saloon, two smaller store spaces along Seventh Street, and a large restaurant (and probably hotel office) along the ground floor of the Pine Street frontage. In 1900 the hotel had German-born managers, four servants, and 30 reported guests, largely American-born or of Irish or English extraction. In 1910 the hotel was managed by Melanie Savy, a French-born widow who, over time, had operated several Seventh Street properties with her husband. Mrs. Savy's 25 guests were much more ethnically and racially diverse; according to the census taker, the residents were 12 mulatto men and women, 3 Black men, and 10 White men, both American-born and Euroamerican (Woods 1994b:149-150). In January of 1920, the census reports 65 people living at the hotel, including its new French American managers, Justin and Louise Blanc, their son (who worked as an apprentice machinist), and their one French maid. A few other hotel employees must have been hired from the surrounding neighborhood. There were only three women living in the hotel at that time: Louise Blanc; the live-in hotel maid; and hotel guest Mrs. May Matorio, a 26-year-old California-born woman who, like her 31-year-old Portuguese husband, Frank, listed her occupation as a car cleaner for the railroad. The racial tenancy of the hotel had shifted sharply: there were no Black employees or tenants. Over half of the tenants (37 out of 65) were American-born. Half of the foreign-born tenants (14 out of 28), including the hotel keepers, were from northwestern Europe; 5 were from Portugal; 6 others from southern and eastern Europe; 2 were from Mexico and 1 from Peru.

Employment of the Pullman Hotel's tenants in 1920 was a classic West Oakland mix, heavily dominated by railroad and shipyard employment, and also showing the strong correlation of certain types of work (and pay scales) with nativity. More than half of the residents (39 out of 65) worked for one of the railroads: 18 of them, all U.S. born, worked as engineers and firemen; another 8 of the railroad employees (including the Matorios), mostly immigrants, were car cleaners; another 13 people worked in various other railroad-related jobs. About 20 percent of the hotel's residents (14 of the 65) relied on the area's shipyards for their paychecks. Eight men, all immigrants, reported working as general laborers—most for the shipyards. Most of the 6 machinists and boilermakers were also working for shipyards.

In 1920 half of a two-story duplex house at 1840 Seventh Street (also on Project Block 24), was an all-Black rooming house run by Mary Williams, a single 21-year-old woman. The census lists three other residents at 1840, and five African American residents at "1848"; this is probably a transcription error made by the census taker, since 1848 was the corner saloon of the Centennial Hotel. Residence at one of the hotel's address numbers would have made sense if any of the five people were hotel employees, but none were. Thus, it appears that Mary Williams had a total of eight tenants at her house, most in their late 20s and 30s, and all male. Half were employed with the railroads (occupations included dining car porter, waiter, and cook); others were employed as barber, garage mechanic, hotel cook (listed at 1840), while one was unemployed.

OWNERSHIP PATTERNS OF TYPICAL UPSTAIRS ROOMING HOUSES

Owners of the western Seventh Street hotels, as shown in the assessor's records up to 1925, held on to their property for fairly long periods of time but left the management to others—even when their names were attached to the structures. An example is the Burlington House at 1790 Seventh Street,

on the northeast corner of Seventh and Pine, with its associated Bartlett's Hall. The property stayed largely in the hands of Pliny Bartlett, its builder, and then his heirs. Bartlett built the structure in 1892, but Assessor's rolls show that he had owned the site since 1870. Bartlett had several business partners involved in the early land ownership, but none seems to have had a controlling or long-term interest; these transient co-owners may have been lenders who had assisted Bartlett in his various business deals about town. Bartlett was superintendent of the Contra Costa Laundry, Oakland's oldest and largest steam laundry; he had moved out of the neighborhood by the 1880s but, as Woods notes, "had left his name on the meeting hall" (1994b:156).

By the 1890s, the Burlington House was the westernmost of three fairly imposing hotels on the north side of Seventh Street between Pine and Wood streets (Project Block 25; see Plate 35). The middle structure (at street number 1778) was known for a time as the West Oakland House. Established in 1869 (Woods 1994b:148), the hotel had only one owner between 1878 and 1925—Wells and Russell, apparently an investment company. Wells was a partner in the company that had built the building, so in effect it had continuous absentee ownership from its construction in the 1860s to at least 1925. This long tenure suggests that the property was a money-maker for its owners. Over the years, a series of different managers leased the rooming-house business: when it opened, Amelia Truesdell, recently widowed; in 1876-77, Mrs. S.J. Murray; then C.W. Duffie; in 1880, Mrs. Precilla Wilson; in 1900, Mrs. M.M.J. Clecak; in 1910, Mrs. M.L. Alaux, related to the Savy family, who leased a number of different rooming houses on Seventh Street (Woods 1994b:148-149; city directories). Such a turnover of lessees was fairly typical; it suggests that running a rooming house was far less profitable than being an absentee owner of a commercial block. If Wells and Russell followed the unscrupulous but common practices of the times, they probably sold the furniture and linens to each new manager on a time-payment plan; when the new landlady went broke, the owners could sell the hotel furnishings again to another optimistic businesswoman.

The Grand Western Hotel, the third in this block's row of hotels, stood at 1760 Seventh Street, in the James Block at the northwest corner of Seventh and Wood. It was built by Captain Samuel James in 1873, four years after the West Oakland House opened next door. James had bought the land from Pliny Bartlett, who had owned it for about three years. The hotel remained in James's ownership until 1890; then a Dora Espejo owned it for three years. J.P. Rohrbach owned the property from 1902 until at least 1925. Although Samuel James lived at his hotel for its first 10 years, neither he nor any of its other owners seem to have been directly associated with management of the hotel.

Directly behind the James Block was Hansen's Hall, at 711-729 Wood Street. Like its neighbors on this block, it was a two-story commercial building with stores on the first floor, and a rooming house on the second floor; like Bartlett's, this establishment also had an associated hall. Hansen's Hall seems to have been an exceptional rooming house, in that its original owning family also directly managed the rooming-house business. Asmus Hansen is listed as sole owner of the land from 1870 to 1878; he may have built the two-story commercial block in 1878, because for 5 years ownership was held by Mrs. C.M. Freitag, and for another 5 years by Mr. C.M. Freitag. This pattern suggests that the Freitags gave Hansen his mortgage: he refinanced it after 5 years and finished paying it back in a total of 10 years. In 1889 Hansen's wife, Wilhelmina, is listed as the sole owner; from the construction of the hall and rooming house, she was probably the rooming-house keeper and was so listed in the city directory (Woods 1994b:152). In 1899 ownership shifted to two women who may

have been the Hansens' daughters. Assessor's rolls show that they and their direct heirs held the property until at least 1925.

Ownership research for this study was only completed to 1925, but it is important to remember that commercial rooming-house life continued along Seventh Street into the 1950s. If the owners of Seventh Street properties were typical of owners elsewhere, the years of World War II probably were their most profitable. Of the 39 commercial rooming houses in this survey, only 5 were gone from the 1952 Sanborn map, and several showed post-1912 extensions and additions (most probably dating from World War II).

NOTES ON STOREFRONTS AND COMMERCIAL BATHS

Not all residences along Seventh Street would have been in upstairs rooming establishments or family dwellings. It was fairly common for employees in retail stores, laundries, or bakeries to live on the premises in back rooms, sometimes with their families. For a time at 1769 Seventh Street, next to the Charter Oak Hotel, nine Chinese men both lived and worked in their tiny laundry house (Woods 1993:19). In working-class districts, it was also fairly common for excess or unleased storefronts to be temporarily (or permanently) converted to some kind of residential use. This occurred both in the 1930s and again in the 1950s. In 1952, for instance, two of the storefronts of the Gregory Block were labeled as dwellings, indicating ad-hoc family residences. In that same year, at 712-716 Chester Street (on the northeast corner of Seventh and Chester), Sanborn surveyors marked two storefronts as "Rm."

In residential areas where people may not have had set bathtubs or piped hot water in their homes, commercial or municipal bathhouses were often important alternatives for personal hygiene (Glassberg 1979). No municipal bathhouse seems to have been built in West Oakland, however, and no commercial bathhouse seems to have lasted for very long, although directory listings and Sanborn maps do show occasional bathhouse businesses. In 1880 Stultz and Schnell advertised baths at (old address) 1762 Seventh Street. In 1889 Mrs. H.L. Bigelow advertised "hot air baths" at her small cottage at the northwest corner of Poplar and Eighth streets. In 1900 G. Mikami's Japanese-style baths at 1689 Seventh Street were in operation, as were D. Stuart's baths listed in the 1900 block of Seventh Street. Stuart's operation may have been the last use of a sanitarium built in the 1880s. The last documented commercial bathhouse in West Oakland appears on the 1912 Sanborn map: at 1690-1692 Seventh Street, near Willow, a typical commercial-street bath operation is shown next to the corner saloon/rooming house that later became the celebrated Slim Jenkins's nightclub.

CORNER-SALOON ROOMING HOUSES AND "LIVING UP AND DOWN THE STREET"

Corner saloons and upstairs rooming houses often served closely related functions and were often managed in tandem. Woods (1994b) notes cases of men tending bar or managing a bar and dining room, while their wives are listed as the rooming-house managers. Of the 39 commercial rooming houses along Seventh Street, almost half (17) were located above saloons. Of the upstairs hotels in the last three blocks of the street, the ratio was much higher: 10 out of the 14 were associated with saloons. Morris "Dad" Moore's rooming house and union organization headquarters were above an old saloon on Seventh Street in the mid-1920s (Spires 1994:209-210).

The proximity of saloons and rooming houses was a particular target for critics of commercial blue-collar rooming-house districts like Seventh Street. Even for those people for whom drinking itself was not seen as an inherent evil, the potentially promiscuous mixture of people in a public saloon was often seen as a danger, especially for children or young men and women. Saloons were also the center of gambling and betting on boxing matches. Former West Oakland resident Thomas Roberts remembers the “Bunker Boarding House” on Seventh Street between Pine and Cedar—address not yet identified—as a place “noted for the poker games for high stakes played there” (Roberts 1937:8). Notably, in the Cypress Project’s interviews with family residents of West Oakland, Seventh Street figured as a place for retail shopping or for going to the movies, but not for going to a bar or saloon. Indeed, the proximity to bars and saloons—and by extension, to prostitution, or associations with casual sex, or people with unsavory social and cultural values—was at the base of the middle- and upper-class condemnation of commercial blue-collar rooming-house life.

Saloons were important for male (and some female) tenants, as well, because they often served as the living room or parlor for rooming-house tenants. Rooming-house life was not centered in one building, as home life was in a single-family house. Instead, hotel life was scattered up and down the street. Residents of upstairs hotels slept in one building and ate in another. The surrounding sidewalks



PLATE 37. CENTENNIAL HOUSE, 1880 - A SOMEWHAT POLITE HOTEL IN WEST OAKLAND. This handsome two-story frame hotel had several amenities that set it apart from other West Oakland hostleries. It had a ground-floor sitting room that would have housed the hotel desk and also served as a polite location to entertain guests, while a dining room was adjacent. The corner saloon, while diminishing the pretensions to high class, would have been a comfortable resource for some guests. Nonetheless the mixed use of the neighborhood is clearly apparent in this photo, which shows a metal works on one corner, a store on another, and the steam train running only a few yards from the bedroom windows. (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library)

and stores functioned as parts of each resident's home: the dining room was in an inexpensive cafe near the corner of the block; the laundry room was a Chinese or Japanese laundry service nearby; the parlor or sitting room might be a bar, a luncheonette, a billiard hall, or (in good weather) a favorite street corner (Groth 1994:126-128). People who lived in apartments and houses—that is, those who had private kitchens or other lounging areas—often misunderstood this public and commercial side of rooming-house life; people on the streets or in bars were seen as merely “wasting time and money” rather than seen as being at home.

Rooming-house life was also viewed as a social limbo merely because the residents were single. Working-class culture was overwhelmingly a family culture, and to live outside the family was to suggest that one was socially marginal. Single people, living on their own, were widely seen as a social danger—a population without roots, people who were pushing personal privacy and autonomy to new limits. In their home life, rooming-house residents (even if they lived at one place for a long time) owned few possessions. They may have had strong family values, but lived nonetheless outside the family; they were capable of being well-dressed but only in one or two outfits; they aimed for economic security but lived with uncertain incomes and often unstable jobs. Thus, because of its concentrations of upstairs hotels—in addition to its many other types of retail uses—Seventh Street could be seen by family-based neighbors as a realm socially and culturally apart from the surrounding blocks. In fact, the surrounding blocks had corner saloons with both commercial and informal rooming houses above them, but these were located in very different types of buildings and settings.

SIDE-STREET COMMERCIAL ROOMING HOUSES

ROOMING HOUSES SOUTH OF SEVENTH STREET

Boarding or rooming in a flat or family house was different north of Seventh Street than it was south of Seventh, basically because of the size of the dwellings. Since family homes south of Seventh rarely had six rooms total, renting rooms did not subject the owners to inspection or licensing. Very few residents south of Seventh listed their homes in the directories as rooming or boarding houses, and the Sanborn map surveyors in both 1912 and 1952 also noted few group lodgings. In particular, the area currently under the site of the Regional Post Office had houses too small to convert to commercial boarding and lodging houses.

The few exceptions to this south-of-Seventh pattern were corner saloons and the few larger houses. For example, in 1910, Mrs. M.J. Beals listed the rooms above the saloon at the northeast corner of Union and Fifth streets as “furnished rooms”; in that same year, William Concannon listed rooms at 1815 Fifth Street (between Cedar and Pine), in an unusual double-lot house with backyard structures. In 1941 Gertrude Jones advertised furnished rooms at 1701 Pacific, at the southwest corner of Pacific and Willow, the easternmost building (a corner saloon) of the row of houses made notorious by its prostitution activity about 1910 (Solari, this volume); that entire block was cleared by 1952 (Sanborn 1912, 1952). The purposely built rooming house above the Davidson/Patterson store at Fifth and Peralta (“Five Buildings on One Corner,” this volume) obviously saw a long period of active use as a rooming house, but this use appeared in neither the city directories nor the Sanborn maps.

A true boarding house with food service appears at 405 Wood (formerly 803 Wood, the northwest corner of Atlantic and Wood, on Project Block 21), revealed in records of the 1890s and early 1900s (Woods 1994b:158-159). At least one of the boarding-house managers hired two servants (a sure indication that food service was offered), and in 1900 there were nine boarders living with the German couple who ran the house. Two of the people living at the house had young children. This house, on a double corner lot, was an early and larger house than its neighbors and was probably a tenant house from its inception. The house seems to have been built by a J. Niswander in 1878; at that time, he owned 20 of the 32 lots on the block. Not long afterwards, two other absentee real-estate investors bought the house along with several adjacent lots—one buyer in 1884, another in 1886. Such rapid turnover is typical of surges in real-estate speculation. In 1887, however, the house may have been bought by a neighbor owner, Judah Boas, rather than a speculator. Woods (1994b:158-159) does not indicate that Boas ever lived at his Wood Street house, but he was actively changing the property; in 1892 he bought adjacent land to expand the rear property line 20 feet. Elsewhere in the block, other houses seem to have been bought up by resident or neighbor owners—or at least, individual owners for individual properties—rather than being held in large multi-lot clumps. Boas owned the house at 405 Wood until 1919. In 1924 the house was definitely bought by a neighbor owner, Krist Oreb, who had also bought a tiny duplex across the street.

SINGLE LABORERS' LODGING GROUPS

Around 1900 it was not at all unusual for groups of bachelor immigrants to band together to solve their housing needs by renting a house or flat, or a backyard dwelling. Chicago social-workers described this type of living as “single laborers’ lodging groups” (Hunt 1910). The groups usually were of the same ethnicity; often the men had met at work or the groups were arranged by work bosses. The men in each group could cook for themselves (fairly unusual), eat out in restaurants (fairly expensive), hire a neighborhood woman to cook and wash for them, or arrange to eat with a nearby family. In backyard cottages, it may have been pre-arranged that the rental fee included partial meals, along with basic cleaning and laundry services.

Gregg Kosmos, who grew up in West Oakland, reports that when his father, Tom Kosmos, first arrived in town he rented a group of upstairs rooms at Seventh and Adeline with 16 other bachelors (Kosmos 1995:3). Later, the Kosmos family owned a good-sized, two-flat house in West Oakland, leasing the downstairs to the head chef and maitre’d on the *City of San Francisco* train, who in turn sublet the flat to “about fifteen blacks there, porters.” Because they were gone so much of the time, and apparently did not socialize at home, Gregg Kosmos describes his African American neighbors as having been the perfect tenants: “Never heard them, never saw them” (Kosmos 1995:9). No doubt the elder Kosmos was sympathetic to groups of bachelors, and thus willing to rent to them in his own home, because of his own experience. In 1910 the Jackson/Netherland cottage at 714 Pine Street was rented out to a single laborers’ group made up of seven Portuguese laborers (see Plate A-5 in the Workers’ Houses chapter).

Three small dwellings in a row on Wood Street, across the street from the “true” boarding house at 405 Wood, were all rented in this way in 1910. Woods summarizes the residential group:

Risto Yukojevich is the head of a household of seven Serbian laborers ranging in age from 23 to 46. All of them, including Risto, worked for the railroad, probably as a track gang.

The neighbors to the right are a similar household of five Slovenian men, while the neighbors on the left are five Portuguese laborers working for the lumberyard [Woods 1994b:159].

In the case of these three laborers' groups, "the railroad" may not have been Southern Pacific, but Western Pacific, whose lawyers had broken the S.P. monopoly in Oakland in 1907, and whose work teams were rapidly building facilities for the new line. This also seems fairly likely because in 1910 Western Pacific owned two of the three houses described by Woods. The railroad was probably holding the properties with the intention of developing them as some sort of leased warehouse: the size of the combined lots would have been ideal for such a use, and further to the east there were several such buildings associated with access to the Southern Pacific freight depot.

In the early 20th century, it was not unusual for large manufacturers and railroad corporations to rent minimal shelter directly to their temporary laborers, especially in rural workplaces and in or near large industrial sites (California Commission on Immigration and Housing 1916:50-51; Irvine 1908; U.S. Bureau of Labor 1904:1191-1243). These were not sunny company towns but rather "company shacks," which came under repeated scrutiny by the California Commission on Immigration and Housing. Nancy Olmsted and Roger Olmsted (1994:114) note that the 1910 census reported 100 Greek immigrants living in railroad "outfitter cars"—boxcars crammed with rough bunk beds, moved to work sites; when in Oakland, they were parked on the tracks at the end of Seventh Street.

BACKYARD DWELLINGS

After about 1900, a great many West Oaklanders solved some of their household's space problems by building backyard rooms and dwellings. A first wave of construction, judging from visible construction details, occurred from 1900 through the great national housing crunch of the early 1920s. A second wave of backyard construction occurred in West Oakland during World War II and probably continued with the local neighborhood housing crisis of the early 1950s, caused by continued in-migration and segregation of African Americans.

We know relatively little about the rental and use of backyard rooms. Certainly, some families used their backyard structures for members of a large family, for young married couples, or for elderly relatives. Some used them exclusively for rental families who cooked for themselves; as such, the rear cottages would constitute apartments and, technically speaking, be outside the scope of this study. Still others were used for roomers or boarders; in some cases we know that owners or renters packed their one- or two-room back structure with five or seven roomers (Woods 1994b:159). Even more people might be squeezed into one or two backyard rooms if the space were rented to people who worked on different shifts, an arrangement known as the "hot bed" (Abbott 1936:164). In many cases the same backyard structure might have served, at different times, as family-house extension, apartment-style dwelling, or rooming house.

A backyard structure in West Oakland might be no more than a 10-foot by 10-foot room with its own little door and entry porch; the residents of such a room relied on the main house for all services. The structure might be lined up with a wood shed or other backyard building. Judging from outlines on the Sanborn map for 1912, the most common backyard dwelling was one or two rooms. Other

backyard dwellings were two- to four-room “back houses,” with their own kitchen and eventually with their own toilet rooms. Sanborn map surveyors commonly used one of two labels for a backyard structure: “D” for dwelling, and “Rms” for rooms. We do not know how the surveyors made their judgments, which were probably based only on external evidence. A great number of sheds and outbuildings have no Sanborn label, yet many of these structures have street numbers. Curtains and other life-signs might have signaled the difference between a lived-in rear structure and a storage shed. Evidence that surveyors might have used to separate dwellings (implying a kitchen) from rooms (implying no cooking, and hence, not a true residence according to building codes) would have been the presence or absence of a stove pipe or chimney, showing the potential for cooking, and a bathroom plumbing vent in the roof. By the late 1920s, owners might have begun to replace wood and coal stoves with gas or even electric hot plates, which would have eliminated exterior clues. Also by the 1920s, when many older area homes were receiving electrical service, the presence of electrical wires going to a rear structure might have been a clue of occupancy. Very typical cottages from 1900 to World War I can be seen on the Sanborn 1912 map for the block bounded by Seventh, Linden, Filbert, and Fifth streets (Project Block 6), which has eight rear dwellings identified—two of which are labeled as rooming use (Figure 14).

WORLD WAR II EMERGENCY ADDITIONS FOR ROOMING

The 1952 Sanborn maps show a great number of rear cottages built between 1912 and 1952. Future comparisons with available 1930s Sanborn maps might show more precisely the extent to which the rear cottages visible in the 1950s were responses to housing pressures of the Depression era, and which were responses to World War II production demands. Clearly, World War II and the early 1950s brought an important explosion in the construction of backyard units. (Here again, the line between rooming units and apartment units is difficult to draw.) Within a block of the New Century Club at Peralta and Fifth streets, there were eight backyard cottages in 1952, some of them labeled as dwellings, some simply labeled as rooms. On Chester Street between Third and Fifth streets in 1952, five of the houses had backyard dwellings, two of them labeled “room.” Project Block 3, a small block bounded by Market, Sixth, Brush, and Fifth streets, is shown with five backyard cottages; one of them, the smallest, is labeled merely “room.” The present-day garage next to 316 Chester, the Rosas house, is labeled as a dwelling and numbered as 1492-1/2 Third Street.

The 1952 Sanborn map of the block bounded by Chester, Seventh, Center, and Fifth streets (currently the western half of the BART parking lot) shows backyard cottages in 12 of the lots—4 of them, the smallest structures of the group, specifically labeled as “rooms.” As early as 1900, city planners and real-estate experts considered backyard dwellings to be signs of blight. Thus, the backyard cottages of this block—along with adjacency to the breweries and yeast plant to the east—might have been one of the reasons for planners to think of the block as especially blighted and hence a “natural” place to demolish to make room for a BART station. By the 1950s automobile garages and repair facilities were clearly competing with rooms and cottages for space in the backyard much more often than they had done in the 1920s.

The neighborhood search for wartime rooming space is well demonstrated in the conversion of one side-street warehouse into a wartime rooming house. In 1912 a structure at 829 Wood Street (between Eighth and Chase streets) was a two-story warehouse 22 feet high, and filling most of its lot; it had no sideyards, and no structures in the rear yard. In 1952 the same structure was labeled as “lodgings,” and it also had two rear buildings. On or near Project Block 32 near the end of Shorey



FIGURE 14. ROOMS ON PROJECT BLOCK 6, 1912. Two of the eight rear structures in the middle of the block are labeled as “rooms”; the others are marked “D” for dwelling. Such residences were not unusual during this early period; by World War I and on through World War II, however, many backyards became filled to capacity with this kind of emergency housing. (Source: Sanborn 1912)

Street was the Magnolia Manor War Dormitories, labeled by Sanborn surveyors as an “F.P.H.A.” project and ringed by factories and railroad tracks. The dormitories consisted of two long wings of rooms linked by hallways to a two-room center structure with rooms and a one-story porch facing east.

NORTH OF SEVENTH STREET: LARGE FORMER-HOUSE ROOMING HOUSES

Although commercial rooming houses were fairly rare in the blocks south of Seventh Street, the blocks north of Seventh had larger houses on wider lots, and directories and maps paint a very different picture of rooming-house life here. In these blocks after 1900, visitors would have been able to discern many examples of the large house turned into a boarding house—both formally, with advertisements and directory listings, and more often informally, advertised only by word of mouth and window signs. These rooming houses were often large houses on a major street. Having outlived the use of their initial

residents and too large for small or low-income households, the houses were often owned by aging widows, who had only their homes to rely on as a means for their livelihood. Other large houses had absentee owners who had long since moved away; they leased the house to a woman who rented out the rooms as best she could.

Running a rooming house was a precarious business, especially if the proprietor did not own the building herself. In many cities, a few property managers specialized in rooming houses and hotels. They would also sell, on steep time payments, the furniture in the house to a new lessee; when the woman lost roomers in a business downturn, she often lost all the money she had put into the furnishings. To date, the best study of the owners, residents, landladies, and houses involved in this kind of life is a settlement-house-based study on Boston (Wolfe 1906). Wolfe does not look at the Main Street type, mentioned below and common in cities smaller and newer than Boston, but his insights are valuable for anyone interested in immigrant neighborhoods.

In 1889, 1912, and continuing into the 1950s, the imposing house at 1474 (formerly 1460) Seventh Street, in the middle of the block bounded by Center and Chester streets, was a textbook example of what might be called the “Main Street” rooming house (Figure 15). Such houses were so visually recognizable, even to outsiders from other neighborhoods, that they were often the kind of rooming houses that new residents might stop at first. The house at 1460 had probably been built in the early 1870s as a fine family home, but John J. Stachler advertised it as a rooming house in the city directory of 1880. A reminiscence in the *West of Market Boys’ Journal* gives the local story about the mysterious house:

[With its gardens and grounds] covering the entire block between 7th and 8th, Center and Chester street, a wealthy business man of San Francisco built a wonderful mansion for his intended bride, but just as the home was finished, the bride-to-be passed away and the home was never occupied, but stood vacant for many, many years and was finally cut into several pieces and moved to different parts of the block. The main part of the building still stands in the very center of the block, facing 7th street [Roberts 1937:10].

In the 1880s the house at 1460 Seventh was indeed an imposing Italianate-style rural-estate house, with a verandah across its entire front façade and an impressive four-story tower above its entrance porch. In 1889 the remaining grounds had a tankhouse, and the front lots along Seventh Street had mostly been sold off for stores, leaving only a 22-foot access way for an entrance drive into the house, set back nearly 80 feet from the street. In 1952 the house and its 10-foot wide access to the street were still there; the entry tower and verandahs had been removed, however, and the Sanborn

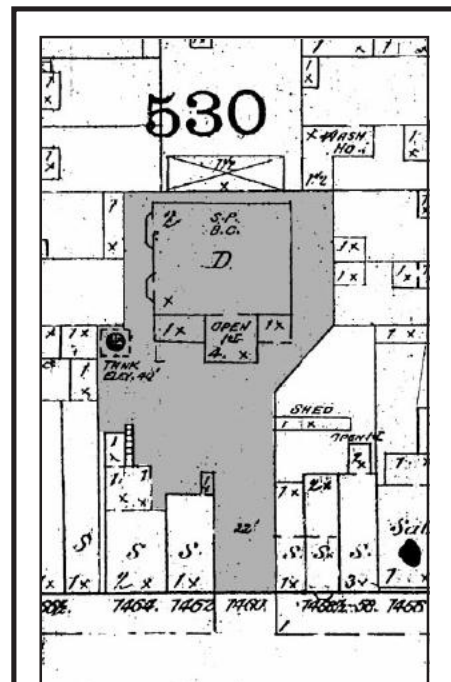


FIGURE 15. HOUSE AT 1474 SEVENTH STREET, 1889. Owners of the former mansion have sold off the original gardens and yards for building lots. The remaining Main Street type of rooming house was advertised as early as 1880. (Source: Sanborn 1889)

surveyor labeled it merely as “lodgings”—a low caste of rooming house.

Two large houses fairly close to each other, on Peralta Street near Fourteenth, were more typical of the large-house or “Main Street” type of rooming house in that they retained larger lots around them (Figure 16). In 1910 an A.L. Scott listed furnished rooms at 1321 Peralta. The house was built in the style of the 1870s—three stories tall with a one-story porch across the front, on a fairly large lot. A few doors north at 1409, on the northwest corner of Peralta and Fourteenth, a Mrs. Adeline Scott listed a boarding house in 1910. The house was only two stories tall, but sat in the middle of an imposing 100- by 100-foot lot. A.L. Scott and Adeline Scott may have been the same person, since it was common for an enterprising and successful rooming- or boarding-house entrepreneur to lease or eventually own and personally manage two or three different houses. By 1952 the midblock house at 1321 Peralta had been expanded with a two-story addition in the frontyard, giving it a much more urbane profile with its front façade flush with the sidewalk. The corner house and its lot, however, were both gone in 1952. The lot had been cut in half—one part used for a drayage firm, the other for a small store, perhaps a store with a parking lot.

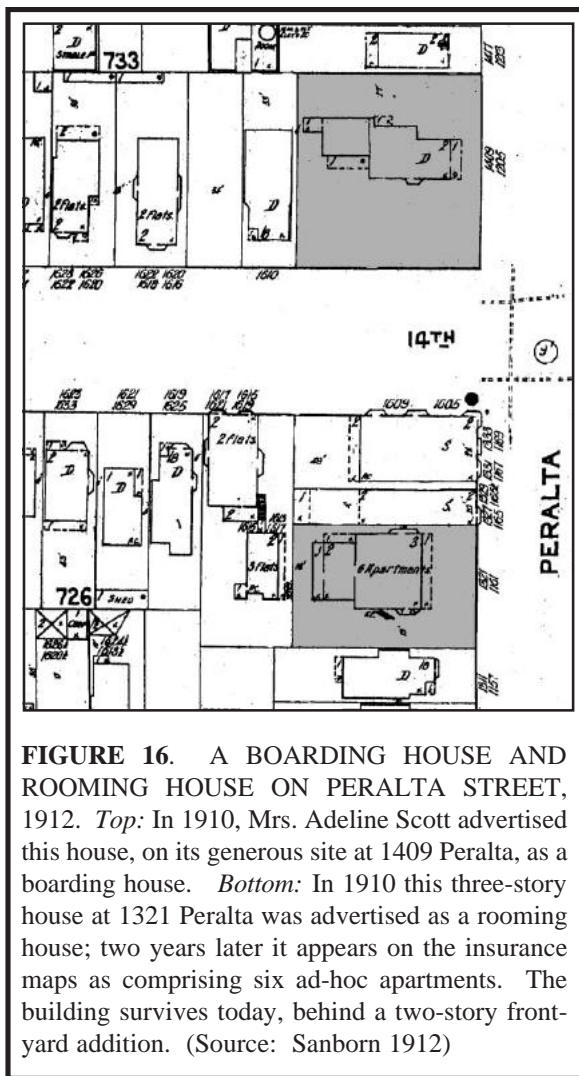


FIGURE 16. A BOARDING HOUSE AND ROOMING HOUSE ON PERALTA STREET, 1912. *Top:* In 1910, Mrs. Adeline Scott advertised this house, on its generous site at 1409 Peralta, as a boarding house. *Bottom:* In 1910 this three-story house at 1321 Peralta was advertised as a rooming house; two years later it appears on the insurance maps as comprising six ad-hoc apartments. The building survives today, behind a two-story front-yard addition. (Source: Sanborn 1912)

On Sanborn maps in 1912, the label “furnished rooms” was frequently applied to whole large houses in the blocks of West Oakland north of Seventh Street—much more often than the city directories would suggest—indicating that relatively few landladies formally advertised these businesses. These conversions no doubt reflect the rapid number of new workers lured to Oakland by the business expansions of that time. During the nationwide urban housing crunch of the early 1920s and the hard times of the 1930s, conversions of this type were also common in other immigrant neighborhoods with large houses (Groth 1994:110, 191-192). In the 1940s and 1950s, there seems to have been another surge in the conversion of single-family houses into furnished room houses for the African American population and other wartime workers. With this long history of conversions of large houses to rooming houses, some parts of West Oakland had very many of them by 1952.

Eighth Street, with its good local rail service to downtown and to East Oakland (as opposed to the more interurban service on Seventh Street), seems to have been an important axis for large-house rooming houses. For roomers, the social life and commercial services of Seventh Street also would have been an important locational asset. See, for instance, the blocks of Linden, Filbert, and Myrtle

streets from Seventh to Tenth streets (Figure 17). In 1952 these blocks show at least 15 large houses labeled as “rooms,” “furnished rooms,” or “housekeeping rooms”; in addition, there was the “Colored YMCA” on Linden Street and the commercial lodging house on Filbert near Seventh Street. (The area near Eighth and Peralta streets had a similar concentration the same year.) In 1912 many of the families in these houses may have been taking in roomers or boarders, but only one of the structures (926-928 Eighth Street) was then identified as a rooming house.

The label “housekeeping rooms,” which becomes prominent in West Oakland by 1952, deserves some attention, for it denotes an important variation on rooming-house life and often suggests overcrowding by local managers and poor maintenance by absentee landlords. Light-housekeeping rooms were the cheap apartment-style alternative to rooming-house life (Groth 1994:124-125). They were typically single rooms or two-room suites in flimsily adapted former houses or apartments. By the 1920s the hallmark of a housekeeping room was what social workers referred to as “the ubiquitous gas plate” on an old crate in the corner, with a rubber hose leading from it up to a wall gaslight fixture. A pail of water might serve as a sink. Tenants or landlords might have improvised a pantry out of a large soap box, with cheap curtains on the front. Managers of light-housekeeping units typically supplied a bed, table, two chairs, a bureau, a few dishes, and a few cooking utensils. All of the tenants in the house shared a bath or two, always down the hall. Legally, housekeeping rooms were not rooming houses or hotels, because the tenants cooked; some housing surveys, however, quite rightly included them among the ranks of single-room occupancy. The weekly rents for light-housekeeping rooms were often higher than for rooming houses, but tenants could cook for themselves and save the money otherwise spent in luncheonettes and cafes. Absentee property owners liked housekeeping rooms because they made more money per month than the same rooms would as a rooming house.

Housekeeping rooms, however, had a bad reputation with urban reformers and city planners. From the 1920s to the 1950s in Chicago and San Francisco—and probably in West Oakland, too—housekeeping rooms were often crowded with families who had fallen on hard times. Social workers called these households “dejected families.” In Chicago immigrant Euroamerican families rarely lived in housekeeping rooms; these structures were associated with poor American-born Whites who had lost their furniture by getting behind in their payments (often due to some kind of addiction or mental illness) and African American families who were kept out of other housing options because of racial discrimination. For housing reformers and planners, as well as for tenants, housekeeping rooms typically represented sanitary and social problems. The lineage of these operations led directly back to the worst 19th-century slum traditions. In 1939 two-fifths of San Francisco’s substandard housing units were housekeeping rooms (Groth 1994:124-125).

PACKING THE LOT WITH SMALL BUILDINGS

The map of Linden, Filbert, and Myrtle streets (Figure 17) showing housekeeping rooms and rooming houses depicts another way that West Oakland landowners informally maximized the housing potential of a large urban lot: they turned the large old house into a rooming house, and then packed the side, front, or back of a large lot with several small cottage structures and often a store or two as well. A cumbersome but formally correct term for this phenomenon might be “small-scale entrepreneurial maximization of the lot”; urban morphologists would call it “lot repletion.” The simplest way to refer to this, however, is “making the most of the yard with no large mortgage,” or “packing the lot with small buildings.”

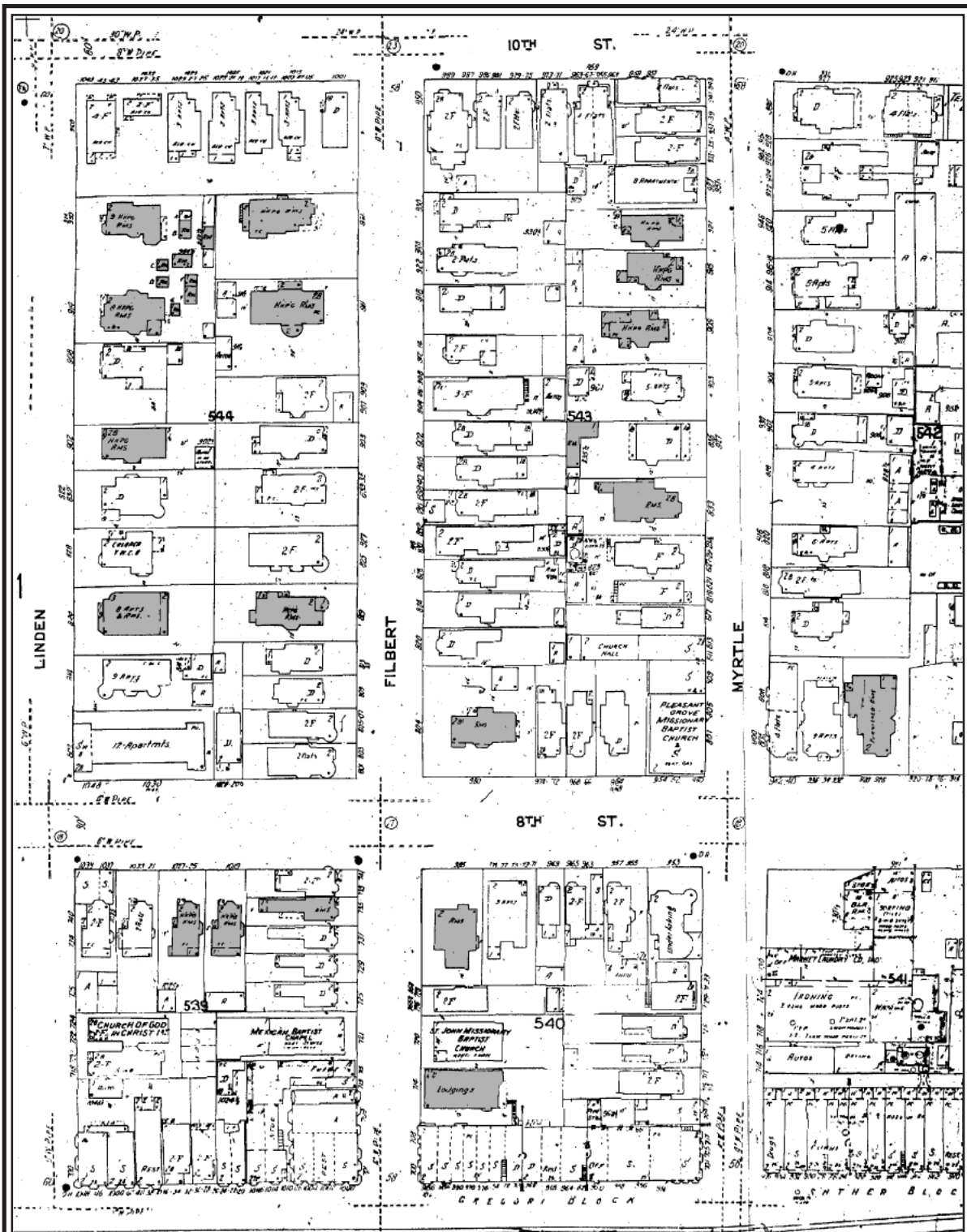


FIGURE 17. LINDEN, FILBERT, AND MYRTLE STREETS NORTH OF SEVENTH STREET, 1952. Sanborn surveyors labeled the shaded structures to indicate that entire buildings had been converted into rooming houses or housekeeping units. Also, many of the neighboring households might have informally taken in roomers or boarders. (Source: Sanborn 1952)

Packing the lot with small buildings is distinctly a cottage or vernacular way of developing urban property. In areas like West Oakland, already zoned for multifamily use, large-lot owners with good access to capital would have torn down the old house and rebuilt a full-scale apartment house on the lot, something at least two or three stories tall. Packing the lot with small buildings, in contrast, seems to have been a gradual accretion of one-story or story-and-a-half rooms of various sizes.

The packed lot at 914-950 Linden, near the southeast corner of Linden and Tenth streets, is essentially a backyard full of cottages (Figure 18). In 1912 both of the two large houses were still labeled by surveyors as single-family dwellings, and each was on its own lot. Clearly, in the years between 1912 and 1952, an enterprising landowner had bought both houses, combined the lots, and constructed a loosely organized but densely packed series of backyard rooms. The Sanborn surveyor in 1952 noted that the two old houses had a total of 17 housekeeping units in them, and eight of the rear structures are lettered A-H, making a total of 25 units on the site, not counting a few backyard sheds. One can imagine the frontyard of the site being full of parked cars, pickups, and small trailers—a scene well documented elsewhere by photographers of the Farm Security Administration.

In the sideyard of the large old house at 915-929 Chestnut, between Eighth and Tenth streets, the owners essentially built a minimal bungalow court (Figure 19). The site was just around the corner from the Fannie Wall Day Nursery, and down the street from the Children’s Day Home. The two-story Victorian house, on a very deep lot, had been converted to housekeeping rooms. The 16 units in the sideyard were arranged in two neat motel-style rows, essentially a residential motel without the cars or car parking, with a storage building at the back of the two rows. On the 1952 Sanborn map, each unit was labeled as a dwelling, suggesting that each might have had a hot plate for cooking and a toilet room.

These two examples of lot-packing are the most extreme in the neighborhood, but smaller examples are common. The large midblock house at 1523 Eighth (between Chester and Henry streets) was originally built to

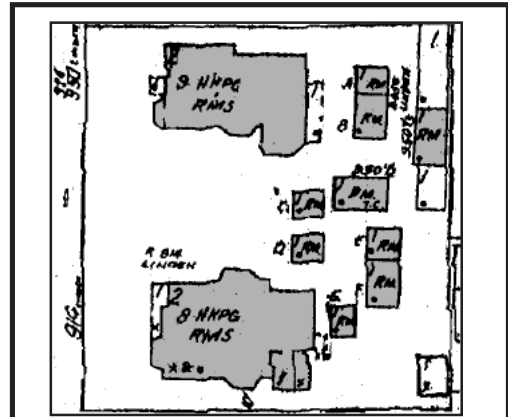


FIGURE 18. BACKYARD FULL OF COTTAGES AT 914-950 LINDEN, 1952. The lots of the large, original, two-story houses have been combined, and several different types of cottages added, probably at different times. Additional structures are likely storage and perhaps bath or laundry facilities for the backyard rooms. (Source: Sanborn 1952)

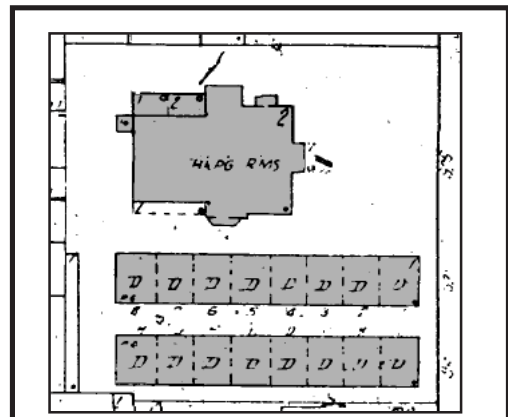


FIGURE 19. MINIMAL BUNGALOW COURT AT 915-929 CHESTNUT, 1952. The 16 tiny dwelling units in the sideyard were clearly added all at one time, essentially creating a residential motel but without the parking spaces. The structure at the back of the units was likely used for storage. (Source: Sanborn 1952)

one side of its 75-foot-wide lot, leaving a 52-foot sideyard (Figure 20). In 1900 Mrs. W.H. Hancock advertised the house as a rooming house; by 1952, the old house was relatively intact; at the back of the lot, however, at 1523-1/2 Eighth Street was a 15-foot by 35-foot structure also labeled as a rooming house. In the sideyard, with the same setback from the street as the original house, was a phonograph-record factory. Again, one can imagine the front and the interior court of the lot crowded with cars or trucks. On a very similar lot at 1521 Ninth Street, the owners by 1952 had converted the main house to housekeeping rooms; at the rear of the lot, there were four apartments in a two-story house and a one-story structure labeled “room,” while a fairly large store was built on the side of the lot, abutting the sidewalk.

On smaller lots, especially corner lots, filling out the front- and sideyards was as common as packing the backyard. A prime corner example was on the lot at the northwest corner of Center and Eighth in 1952. The old two-story house had been converted into housekeeping rooms; a tight cluster of small sheds and cottages surrounded the house, including a two-story backyard dwelling, and one-story cottage, a room addition in the backyard, and a small restaurant. A less-packed example, one that survives into the 1990s, stands at the northwest corner of Shorey and Wood (Figure 21). It appears that the first structure on the lot was a reasonably large two-story house with porches, probably dating from the 1880s. By 1912 a corner store or corner saloon structure, with a rooming house on the second floor, filled out the portion of the lot nearest the street corner. By 1952 the owners had added a small backyard cottage on Shorey Street (in plan, just 15 by 22 feet). A storage shed marked the rear corner of the lot. In 1952 the store was still in use, as were the upstairs rooms of that structure; the original house was labeled as “two flats,” and the rear house as a single dwelling.

An “almost-polite” example of lot-packing—an urban building type constructed especially from about 1910 to 1930 and usually by people with access to larger loans—is what might be called the “low-end bungalow court.” This building type was fairly common in Alameda, East Oakland, and West Berkeley neighborhoods, but only a few examples seem to have been built in West Oakland. A good example, however, is found on Project Block 8, at 549 Chestnut Street, directly behind the glove factory: four tiny bungalows lined up on one long standard-sized house lot (Figure 22). The Sanborn surveyors of both 1912 and 1952 left fairly detailed site-plan information. The four bungalows were built directly adjacent to the lot line on one side. Along the other side of the 23-foot-wide lot was the access path to the houses. The tiny bungalows were about 16 by 20 feet in plan, and placed 5 to 6 feet apart; each had a tiny entry porch, leaving about 7 feet for the access path. Another four-bungalow development stood at 820-834 Peralta, between Eighth and Ninth. Two of the houses fronted on the stub-street end of Henry Street, making clever use of what is essentially an alley. Judging from the size

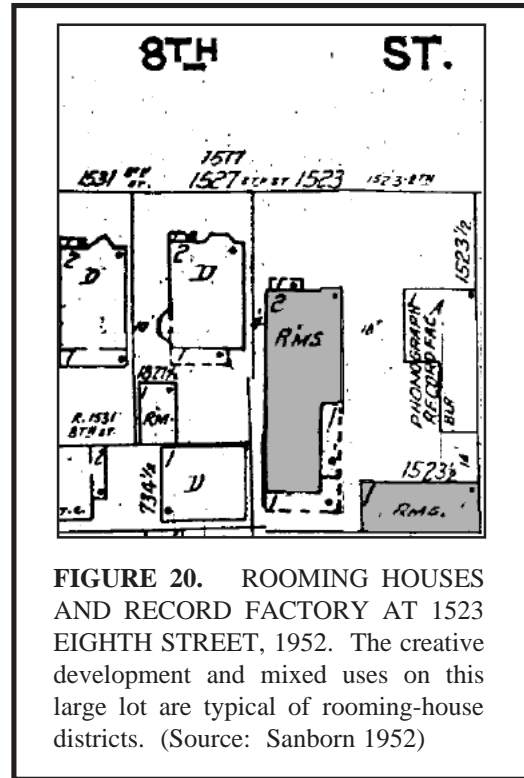


FIGURE 20. ROOMING HOUSES AND RECORD FACTORY AT 1523 EIGHTH STREET, 1952. The creative development and mixed uses on this large lot are typical of rooming-house districts. (Source: Sanborn 1952)

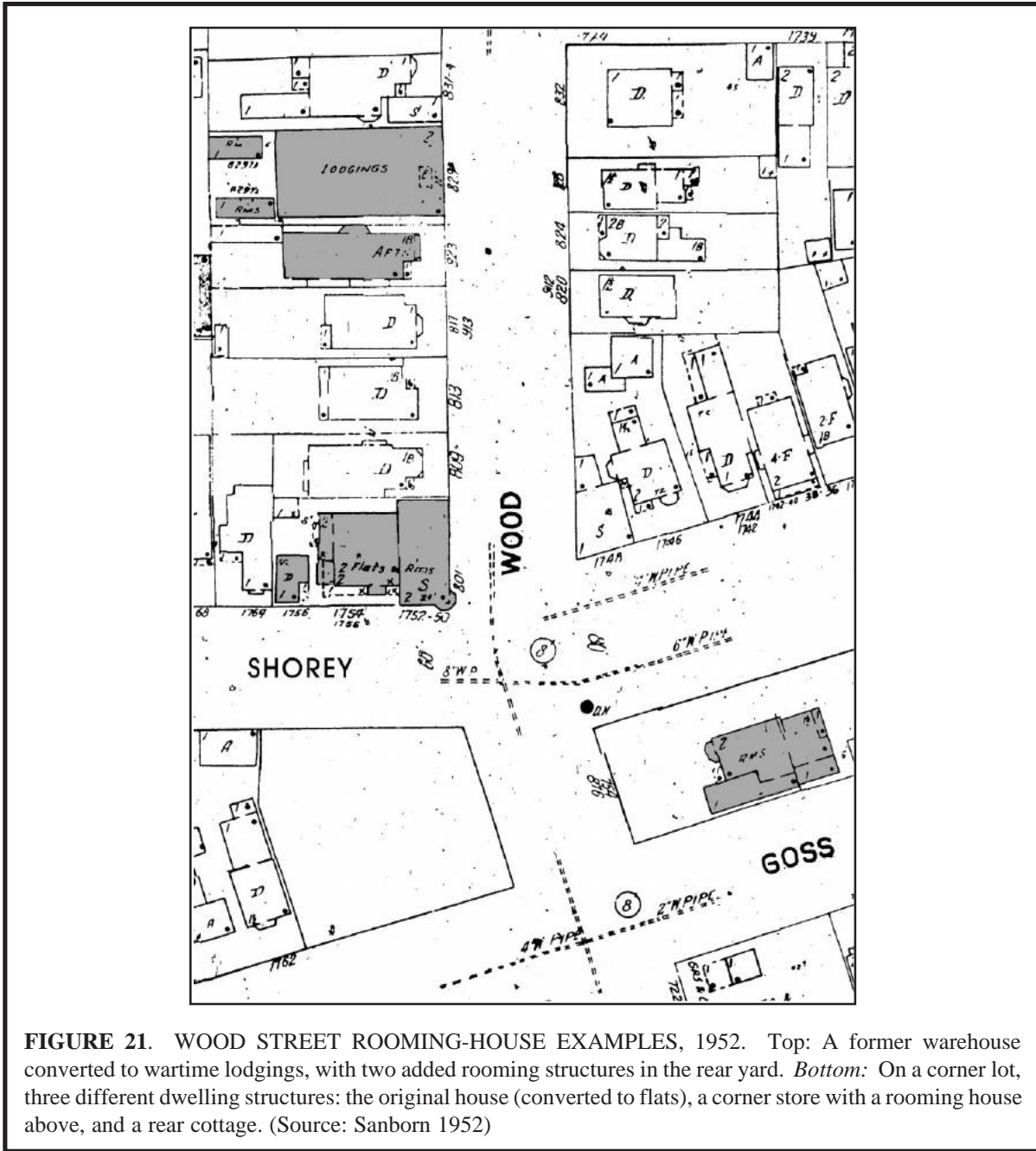


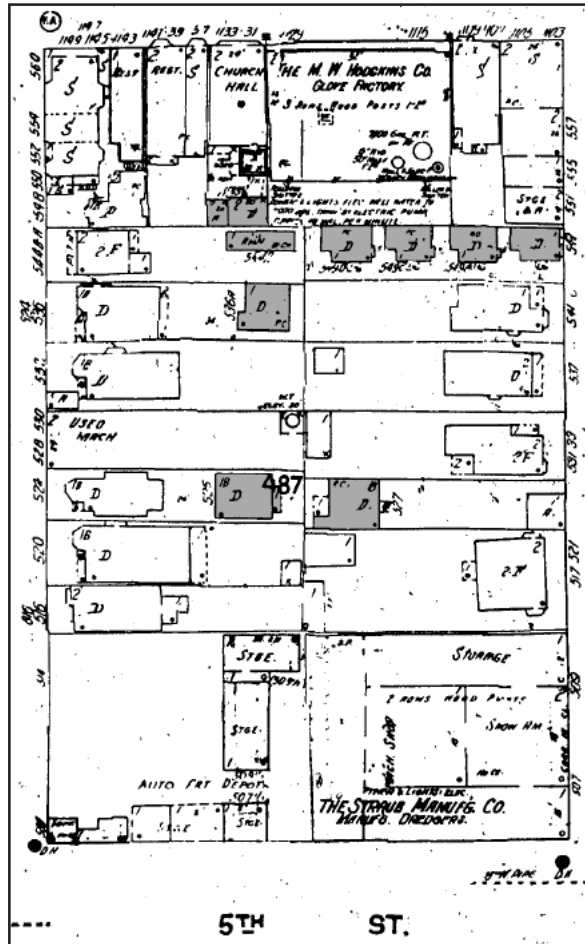
FIGURE 21. WOOD STREET ROOMING-HOUSE EXAMPLES, 1952. Top: A former warehouse converted to wartime lodgings, with two added rooming structures in the rear yard. Bottom: On a corner lot, three different dwelling structures: the original house (converted to flats), a corner store with a rooming house above, and a rear cottage. (Source: Sanborn 1952)

and plan outline, the Peralta bungalow court dwellings were all very plain, much plainer than the ones behind the glove factory.

LAND-USE MIXTURES OF FRONTYARD AND BASEMENT BUSINESSES

As with upstairs rooming houses and some of the lot-packing examples, mixed land use—that is, having commercial or even manufacturing enterprises mixed on the same lot or in the same

FIGURE 22. MIXED LAND USE ON PROJECT BLOCK 8, 1952. This block exemplifies the urban land-use and building-type mixtures of West Oakland. Stores (S), a church hall (H), and manufacturing (the W.W. Hodgkins Glove Factory) are mixed on Seventh Street; manufacturing and warehousing of automobiles dominate the lower Fifth Street end of the block. The landowners of the block have also mixed single-family houses (D), flats (F), five typical backyard dwellings, a backyard rooming house (*Rms*) that was extant in 1912, and a minimal bungalow court directly to the rear of the glove factory. (Source: Sanborn 1952)



buildings with residences—was common in West Oakland, as it was in similar working-class cottage districts across the country. Many landowners tried to increase their income by opening small stores, little restaurants and hot-dog stands, and sometimes an office in a structure in the frontyard or in part of the tall storage space under their house. By 1952 tiny frontyard and ground-floor restaurants were particularly notable and scattered around in the neighborhood. At 777 Pine Street, near the southwest corner of Shorey and Pine streets (Project Block 28) was a small frontyard restaurant. Its proprietor(s) perhaps provided morning coffee and lunch to the workers of the large Independent Iron Works (later the Phoenix Iron Works) nearby, or perhaps set up their shop during World War II to sell pie, coffee, or sandwiches to the workers housed in the large federal dormitory to the west. There were two frontyard restaurants near Peralta Villa, at 1317 Eighth Street near Kirkham, and at 737-739 Kirkham, between Seventh and Eighth. Others could be found in 1952 at 1816 Atlantic near Pine and 350 Willow at the corner of Pacific and Willow.

The West Oakland neighborhood also had a surprising number of basement stores scattered throughout the district. It is unclear what these stores sold. Most likely they were grocery or meat markets, competing with the larger and more typical corner grocery stores located throughout the district, or second-hand furniture and clothing stores.

A RESILIENT HOUSING STOCK

The rooming- and boarding-house landscapes of West Oakland (like the district's more family-tied houses and flats) were remarkably resilient in response to dramatic changes in workplaces, population density, ethnicity, land use, and transportation. From the inception of development along Seventh Street, the neighborhood's commercial rooming and retail structures have allowed rapid and fairly easy modifications. Along the side streets, people could also quickly convert former single-family houses (large or small) to rooming houses with little or no architectural change. The addition of a single backyard structure, or packing the lot with a number of such structures, required more architectural adjustments, but these changes could be funded informally—that is, by self-finance or by small personal loans, usually not involving a bank or savings-and-loan organization.

This informality and flexibility was directly related to the needs of the district's industrial and commercial employers and to new waves of immigration. Employment demands changed from week to week and season to season. With these shifts, proprietors in both commercial and informal rooming houses could supply rooms for the new workers and, when necessary, pack already rented spaces with additional tenants until the work boom was over. In lean seasons, landlords might survive with only partial tenancy; the unrented rooms were always ready for the next boom. During and after World War II, the flexibility of rooming and boarding was also important for the neighborhood's response to the high densities caused by discrimination elsewhere against Oakland's new African American residents. Indeed, many new waves of immigrants have relied, often in their earliest years of residence, on rooming or boarding as a means of gaining a living, and eventually a foothold, in West Oakland.

Acknowledgments

This study was greatly assisted by a number of people. In the research-design phase of the Cypress Project, Aicha Woods (1994b:139-160) completed a fine study on the hotel life along the last three blocks of Seventh Street. The thoroughness of Woods's work allowed this study to move outside the strict confines of the Cypress Project's study blocks to build a broader context for West Oakland's historical rooming and boarding life. Karana Hattersley-Drayton conducted and transcribed the oral histories that were essential in understanding the architectural patterns of the district. At the beginning of the project, long-term local resident and real-estate broker Robert Valva volunteered to expand on his oral history and give the Cypress architectural research team an automobile tour of West Oakland. Student research assistants have included Rebecca Ginsburg, who mastered the microfilm files of Sanborn maps in the Berkeley map room, and Elaine Jackson, who compiled excellent histories of real-estate ownership. William Sturm at the Oakland History Room of the Oakland Public Library provided patient guidance to sources. Throughout the project, Marta Gutman was an important source of ideas and encouragement.

FIVE BUILDINGS ON ONE CORNER AND THEIR CHANGE OVER TIME

Marta Gutman

THE SETTING

A remarkable group of buildings stands on the southeast corner of Peralta and Fifth streets, just across from the rear parking lot of the post-office sorting facility in West Oakland. Seemingly little touched by the enormity of the urban-renewal effort, the compact group of buildings is a compelling demonstration of the historic diversity of the West Oakland neighborhood. The pair of flats, back house, modest apartment building, and rooming house with commercial space on the ground floor were initially constructed during the 1870s and 1880s. They attest to the range of domestic environments that “small operators” built in West Oakland even as larger organizations of “heavy builders” started to make inroads into West Oakland’s construction industry (Marvin 1995, pers. comm.; OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990). The proximity of residential, commercial, and other kinds of uses—just a few blocks east of the Southern Pacific’s railroad yard—encapsulates the multiple uses of urban space in the heterogeneous industrial neighborhood, both historically and in the contemporary setting.

The buildings have been altered, some substantially, yet the physical consequences of the initial investment decisions are visible. Indeed, the story of the buildings and their change over time gives a good indication of the connections between physical, social, and economic history in West Oakland’s domestic architecture. Owning a piece of West Oakland’s diverse residential fabric continued to appeal to men and women in the working-class community, despite the area’s gradual impoverishment during the 20th century. The properties of James Davidson, the original builder/owner, were dispersed after his death. Then, in an uncanny iteration of late-19th-century patterns of ownership, Annie Patterson and her family—African Americans who emigrated to Oakland from the Deep South during the late 1930s—eventually reconstituted almost all of the original Davidson parcels. Like Davidson, the Pattersons needed to secure a place to live; they also wanted to reap financial benefits from investing in urban real estate.

JAMES DAVIDSON, CAPITALIST

Some small-scale investors seized the real-estate opportunities created by West Oakland’s economic expansion in the late 1870s and 1880s by developing different kinds of speculative housing and commercial property. A very typical example is the work of James Davidson, a Scottish immigrant. Between 1877 and 1881, Davidson purchased four adjacent empty lots at the corner of Fifth and Peralta streets from Bernard Campbell, a San Francisco clerk who appears to have amassed a fair amount of property in West Oakland.

By 1889 Davidson owned—and probably helped to construct—three distinct kinds of rental properties on the four contiguous lots: a pair of one-story cottages on Peralta Street in 1877-1878; a saloon with a rooming house above on the corner of Fifth and Peralta in 1887-1888; and at the same time,

an apartment house on Fifth Street, initially either a one- or two-story structure. In 1889 Davidson also built a stable behind the rooming house; in 1912 the stable was converted to a small residence (Figure 23). Finally, he may have been involved with the construction of two other buildings (now demolished) on Fifth Street, located between his apartment building and the corner at Lewis Street. A building at the corner of Fifth and Lewis later became the second rooming house and saloon on the block, perhaps at Davidson’s instigation (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Patterson 1995b; Sanborn 1889, 1902, 1912). The proximity of such a variety of housing types—all owned by the same individual—is notable even in West Oakland, and reflects a diversified investment strategy.

Described as an engineer in the 1896 Great Register of Voters for Alameda County, Davidson was then 59 years old, 5’9" tall, and of fair complexion, with blue eyes and graying hair. He had

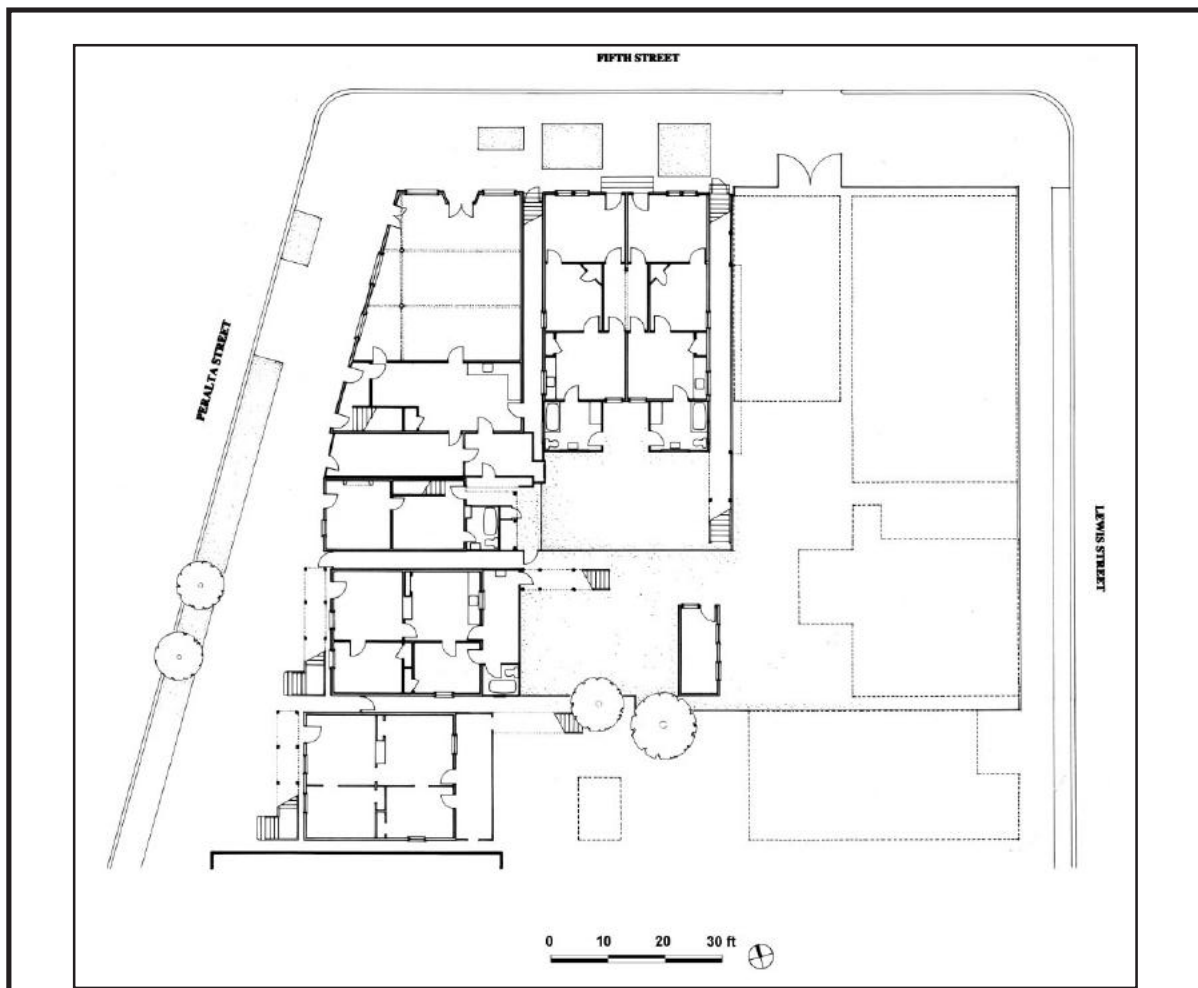


FIGURE 23. LOWER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON PROPERTIES, CORNER OF LEWIS AND PERALTA STREETS. These five buildings—a pair of flats, back house, modest apartment building, and rooming house with commercial space on the ground floor—were initially constructed during the 1870s and 1880s by Scottish immigrant James Davidson. While the buildings passed into other hands for several decades, the same set of properties was gradually acquired by another immigrant family beginning in the 1930s, the African American Pattersons, who had migrated from the Deep South. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

immigrated to the United States from Scotland as a teenager and had become a naturalized citizen in Ashland, Oregon, in 1866 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990). A skilled and versatile worker, he identified himself variously as an engineer, a carpenter, and a locksmith in the early 1880s alone. At some point he had lost the four fingers of his left hand—a good indication of labor involving dangerous machinery. The date he moved to Oakland is not certain; by 1877 he was in the Bay Area, and had purchased his first two lots, both unimproved, on Fifth and Peralta. Within the next year or two he had completed a pair of small, one-story rental cottages at 362 and 358 Peralta Street (see Table 3; OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889). As for many other Americans, both immigrant and native-born, owning and improving urban real estate gave Davidson a chance to enhance both his economic position (class) and his social standing (status) (Weber 1946). In other words, property ownership offered Davidson upward social mobility—in his case, from life as a wage worker to that of an independent entrepreneur.

TABLE 3
ADDRESS CONCORDANCE FOR DAVIDSON/PATTERSON PROPERTIES

1995 Address	Address Before 1910	Associated Name(s)
1611-1617 Fifth	1605-1607½ Fifth	Davidson/Pattterson Fourplex
362-364 Peralta	742 Peralta	Davidson/Pattterson Flats
366 Peralta	743 Peralta	Davidson/Pattterson Cottage
370-372 Peralta / 1619 Fifth	744-746 Peralta / 1609 Fifth	Davidson/Pattterson Corner Store and Rooming House

Davidson did not move to West Oakland until 1881, the year he purchased the balance of his lots from Campbell. After his arrival there, he did not live in the kind of almost-polite residence normally chosen by the families of skilled workers. Instead, he rented a small, one-story, wood-framed cottage at 353 Lewis, located directly behind one of his buildings on Peralta Street—the type of four-room dwelling more typically used by common laborers’ families. Davidson had young children by this point in his life and likely was married. Unlike so many other West Oakland land investors, Davidson never seems to have put his properties into his wife’s name, and thus we are not sure of her name. We can be fairly sure he was married at some time, however, since his daughter later lived with him, and he bequeathed properties to his children. With a young family to support, Davidson needed to live simply and cheaply in order to accumulate more resources and improve his new holdings. He moved and changed jobs frequently in the intervening years (between the purchase of the lots and the completion of construction) in order to do so (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889).

By 1888 James Davidson felt he had achieved enough financial stability—and social prominence—to describe himself proudly as a “capitalist” in the city directory. In that year, the apartment house on Fifth Street was nearly complete, and Davidson took up residence in his new building, living there until 1890 or 1891, when he moved into the saloon and rooming house at Fifth and Peralta. For some reason, Davidson reverted to calling himself a machinist in 1891, soon after he moved into his new rooming house; he was again an engineer a few years later in the Great Register.

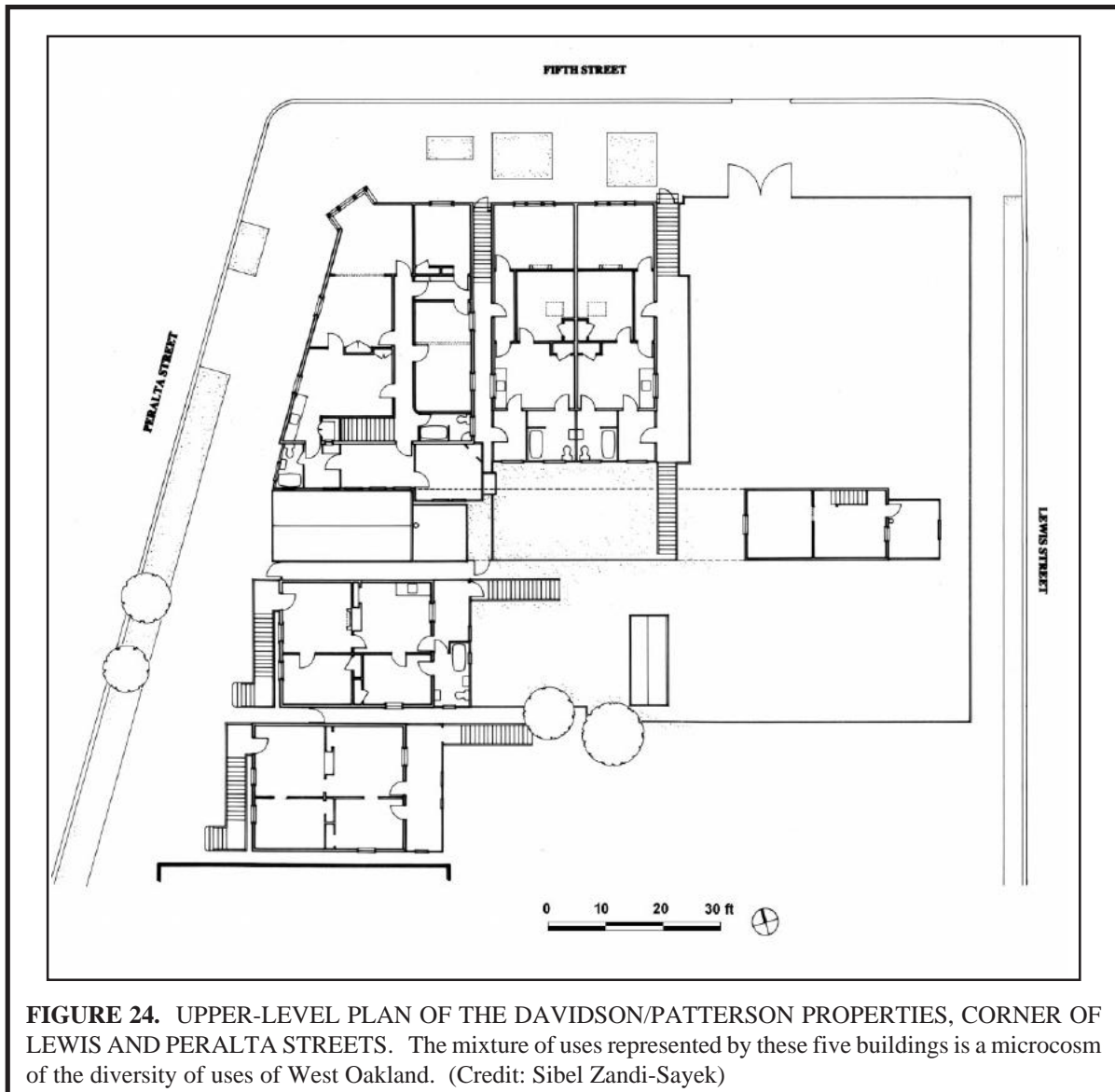
Perhaps the earnings from his properties were insufficient to live on, a real possibility during the depression that swept the United States in the early 1890s, and Davidson may once again have needed to seek wage work in order to survive. In 1910 he still lived in the corner building—a retired man by then at the age of 73—with his daughter and son-in-law. He may have died there a few years later (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

After 1889 Davidson would never again describe himself as a capitalist. Perhaps he had not achieved the social status to which he aspired; perhaps the term was a bit old-fashioned. Still, during the 1890s, he accrued enough money from his various entrepreneurial activities to make significant improvements to his properties. The expansion of the local economy during the first decade of the 20th century was also likely to have contributed to Davidson's prosperity. By 1902 the stable on Peralta Street had either been replaced or moved and remodeled to its present position on the front of the lot, where Sanborn surveyors called it a shed. By the same year, the apartment house was a two-story building containing four units: two on the ground floor and two above (reached by separate exterior stairs). Within the next 10 years, by 1912, Davidson would also raise the cottages, turning each building into two-story flats, and make other improvements to these buildings (Figure 24). Lifting the cottages doubled his return on the two rental properties, producing, no doubt, a handsome profit on the investment he had made some 30 years earlier. The small shed had also been changed to a dwelling (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889, 1902, 1912).

Davidson continued to own all five buildings until 1911 when, at age 74, he decided to sell the apartment building to a local widow. By 1915 two of Davidson's children owned the four other buildings, presumably having inherited them after their father's death. These children held onto their West Oakland property until the mid-1920s. Other family members continued to live in the area, although they did not inherit property. A James Davidson, presumably the elder Davidson's son, lived on Eighth Street and also at 350 Peralta; he worked as an engineer for Southern Pacific during World War I. After 1925 the children sold their father's buildings; ownership was dispersed among several families, eventually coming into the hands of the Patterson family (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Patterson 1995b).

THE PATTERSON FAMILY

In 1938 an African American couple, James and Annie Patterson, and their young children moved to California from a small town in Arkansas, eventually making their way to West Oakland and the building James Davidson had constructed on the corner of Fifth and Peralta streets in 1887. Like so many other newcomers, the Pattersons came to Oakland seeking greater social and economic opportunities than they could find in the Deep South. Mrs. Patterson had been a school teacher in Mississippi before marrying a sharecropper, and she, especially, did not want her children to grow up in an "environment as hopeless as Arkansas" was for Black people in the 1930s (Patterson 1995a, pers. comm.). She found employment, immediately, running the former Davidson rooming house for its owner: washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning, and, one suspects, interviewing prospective residents, who were at that time all single African American men employed on the railroad or in war-related work. Mr. Patterson worked at various jobs, as did their children after school and during summers. Similar to Davidson half a century earlier, the family put as much of their income as possible towards the purchase of property. Thus during the 1940s and 1950s, the entire Patterson family (seven people)



lived in one large room in the rear of the corner building, occupying a former storeroom behind the commercial space (Patterson 1995a, 1995b).

The family continued to experience racial discrimination in Oakland; indeed they found parts of the city to be as segregated as the towns they had left in Arkansas. But in the 1940s and early 1950s, West Oakland, at least, remained an integrated community. The Pattersons, taking advantage of relatively depressed property values, started to accumulate a fair amount of residential real estate. By 1945 they had purchased the store/rooming house for \$5,000 from its owner, an elderly White man who had operated a store in the former saloon. The informal financing methods used to arrange property purchases in 19th-century working-class communities persisted in mid-20th-century Oakland: the building's owner granted the Pattersons a personal mortgage, at a 6 percent rate of interest, writing the deed out on a paper bag. The family then went on to buy the apartment house next door from the older man's sisters, who later gave them the small building behind the rooming house.

The former stable had been renovated in the 1930s, and Mrs. Patterson's father lived there when he moved north in 1945 or 1946. By the 1970s the Pattersons owned the five Davidson buildings and four other adjacent, now vacant, lots on Fifth and Lewis streets. In effect, the family had reassembled the original Davidson parcel with the exception of one building, the two-story flats at 358-360 Peralta Street (Patterson 1995a, 1995b).

THE BUILDINGS

362-364 PERALTA STREET: EARLY CONVERSION OF COTTAGES TO FLATS

This building and its twin next door, constructed in 1877 or 1878, represent Davidson's inaugural investment in the West Oakland real-estate market. There was scarcely any developed property on Peralta Street when Davidson decided to purchase two lots on the street and build two, initially one-story, cottages with large false fronts. In plan, the four-room cottages, each just over 550 square feet in size, were virtually identical to other four-room West Oakland rental properties. (See "Workers' Houses," this volume, for examples: the Porter/Jost cottages built just a year later on Third Street and the back half of the initial Bibber-Rosas house on Chester Street.) Perhaps each owner purchased a similar set of building components at a local lumber yard.



PLATE 38. FRONT VIEW OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON FLATS, 362-364 PERALTA STREET. These two small speculative houses, constructed by James Davidson in the late 1870s, were built as identical one-story, wood-framed buildings. Between 1902 and 1912, they were raised and converted into two-story flats. (Credit: Paul Groth)

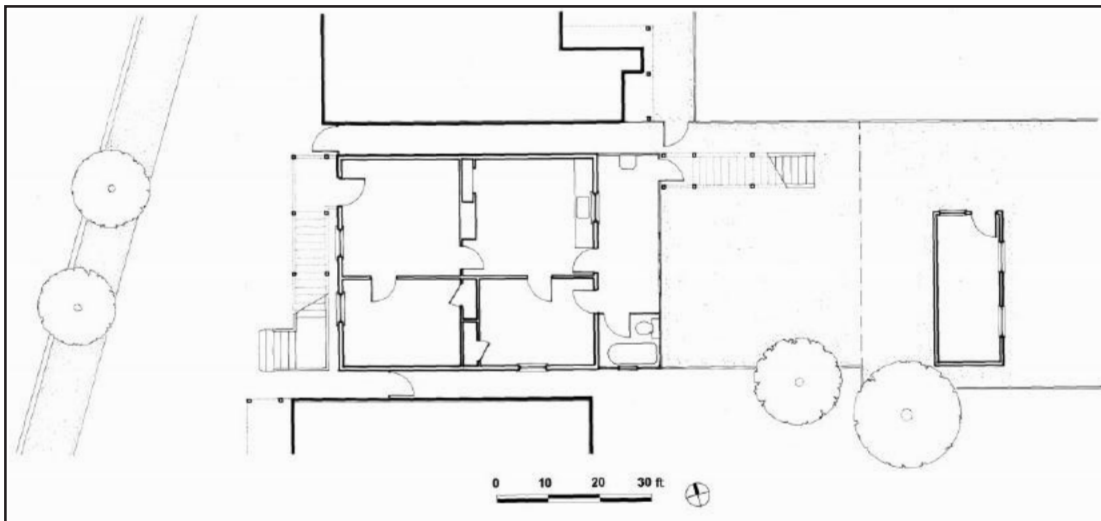


FIGURE 25. LOWER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON FLATS, 362-364 PERALTA STREET. The lower-level apartment—added between 1902 and 1912, when the building was lifted—is an exact replica of the upper-story plan. The present owners’ property extends beyond the initial property line all the way to the corner of Lewis and Fifth streets. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

In the Peralta Street cottages, as in the Third Street buildings, the parlor and the kitchen—the more public rooms—are located on one side of the building; the bedrooms line the other (Figure 25). Yet here, without a formal hallway, circulation is less clearly differentiated than in the other four-room buildings: the entry door does not line up with the door leading to the kitchen or the back door out of the small house. Despite a somewhat less formalized plan, Davidson’s cottages were valued at \$500 a piece, a considerably higher value than assigned to Dr. Porter’s properties on Third Street (\$300 each). The difference was probably due to the more elaborate facades and the better location of Davidson’s buildings; the Third Street cottages directly abut the railroad yards.

Davidson had the building at 362-364 Peralta (and its twin) raised between 1902 and 1912. During the same period, two-story porches were added to the rear of both structures; they likely incorporated bathrooms, as the outdoor privy on this property was also removed (Sanborn 1902, 1912; see Figure 26). Apparently the exterior structural walls were replaced when this (or a later) alteration took place; the present studs in 362-364 Peralta are continuous pieces of wood, and there is no sign of the new members overlapping over the old (Patterson 1995a). The design of the new flat below followed exactly the plan of the original unit, while the addition of a front stair, parallel to Peralta Street, permitted direct access to the upper unit. At some point, another back stair allowed the residents to reach the backyard directly from their upper-story flat (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889, 1902, 1912).

Davidson’s tenants must have welcomed the new sanitary improvements and the extra space even if they had trouble affording the increased rent. In 1910 Eliza Wallace, a 48-year-old African American widow born in North Carolina, lived in the building with her three children (one grown) and one of her granddaughters. Mrs. Wallace’s daughter was a cook, her son a porter for a clothing company. Mrs. Wallace also took in boarders in 1910; two single men, also African American, lived

at the same address. One boarder worked as a laborer, the other was temporarily unemployed. All in all, seven people lived in just over 550 square feet of space in 1910 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

In 1915 Jeanie Jameson, James Davidson's daughter, took possession of this building and the eastern, Lewis Street, end of the lots on which Davidson's apartment house and rooming house were located. She kept the properties until the late 1920s, continuing to rent out the flats but making no major changes. However, one of the subsequent owners, Eugene Tredert, decided to modernize the building's facade in 1947 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990). He employed a builder by the name of McGriffen to remove the false front (called a storefront on the building permit), replace it with painted wood siding, and enlarge the windows and the front door (Marvin 1995, pers. comm.). On the exterior, little hint of the original building remained, but the interior layout was more or less untouched.

The property made its way into the hands of Southern Pacific after World War II, and Annie Patterson bought it from the railroad in the 1970s. The construction of the new post-office sorting facility in the late 1960s had caused property values to plummet in the area; Mrs. Patterson took advantage of lowered values to buy this house and several others on the block, now demolished (Patterson 1995b). Her eldest son, Arthur Patterson, inherited the flats in 1992 after her death; he and his wife live in a lower unit and rent out the upper floor. Nineteenth-century patterns of room use persist on both floors: the front room is a living room, with the kitchen behind it, and the bathroom is still located on the back porch. The Pattersons use one of the bedrooms, the room adjacent to the living room, as an office. The rear room, the one the most removed from the front door, serves as their bedroom (Patterson 1995b).

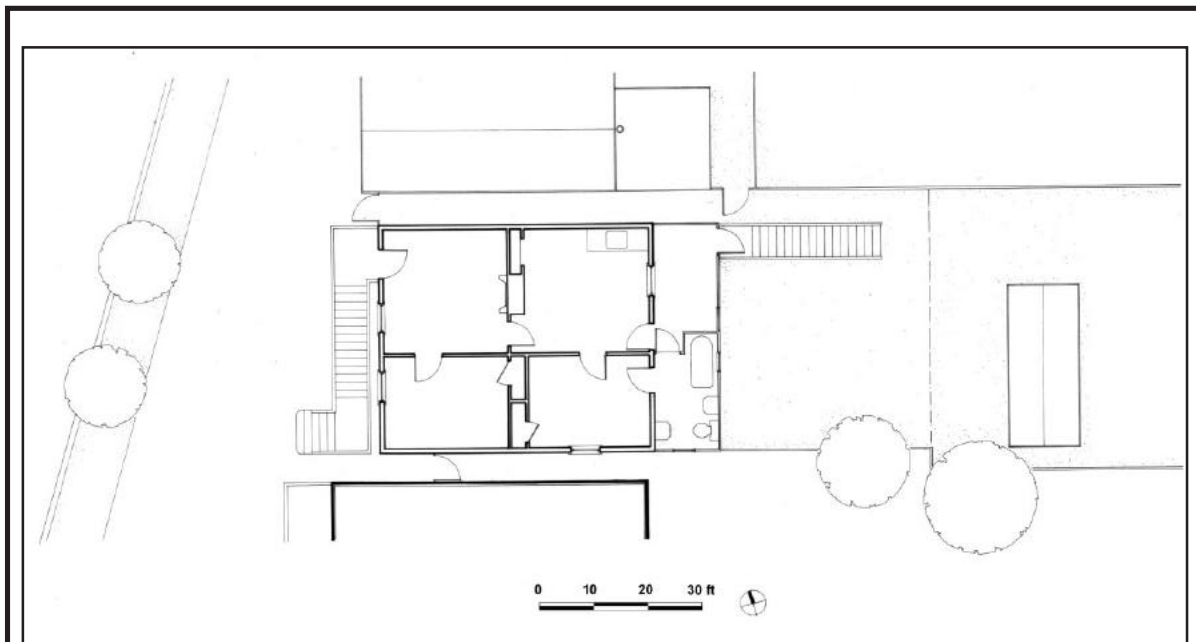


FIGURE 26. UPPER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON FLATS, 362-364 PERALTA STREET. The upper floor, the initial plan of the cottage, is another example of the four-room house popular among West Oakland builders in the 1870s and 1880s. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek)



PLATE 39. NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL JUMPING ROPE IN FRONT OF THE OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB, ca. 1912. This girl may have lived on Peralta Street, across from the Oakland New Century Club, about the time the picture was taken. The girl is playing on a concrete sidewalk; the sidewalk was bordered by a new planting strip, and the street (Atlantic Street) remains in rough crushed stone. (Credit: *Annual Greeting of the Oakland New Century Club* [1912])

370-372 PERALTA STREET/1615 FIFTH STREET: CORNER STORE AND ROOMING HOUSE

In 1889 the construction of James Davidson's most valuable property—the impressive two-story building at the corner of Fifth and Peralta streets—was nearly complete. Valued at \$1,500, the large building (with a footprint of almost 1,000 square feet) filled out all but the rear 12 feet of the corner lot. Inside, the commercial property contained a saloon/store on the ground floor, a purpose-built rooming house upstairs, and a two-story back porch that overlooked the small rear yard, later filled in with a shed. Peralta Street was an important street in West Oakland in the 1890s and 1900s; a conspicuous canopy, which projected over the entire street corner until 1912, announced the building's commercial use to passers-by even a few blocks away. The prominent bay window, still in place on the corner of the upper floor, also added to the building's substantial presence within the neighborhood (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889, 1902, 1912).

Davidson was the first to open a combined saloon/rooming house on the block and, according to the Sanborn maps, the first in the immediate neighborhood. Without doubt, his investment in this kind of commercial property paid off, given the appeal of both kinds of establishments to the working



PLATE 40. CORNER VIEW OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON STORE AND ROOMING HOUSE AT FIFTH AND PERALTA STREETS. The front door, at 1619 Fifth, leads into the former saloon and store. The two side doors with small hood roofs, at 370-372 Peralta, are the entry to the back of the store and to the upstairs rooming house. Davidson's shed and flats are visible on Peralta Street, behind the main building. (Credit: Paul Groth)

population. By 1902 other business people had opened more saloons: three within a one-block radius of Davidson's original establishment. In 1912 five saloons operated in the immediate neighborhood. At least one of these buildings, on the corner of Fifth and Lewis, had a rooming house above (Patterson 1995a; Sanborn 1889, 1902, 1912).

The proliferation of saloons in the neighborhood did not go unnoticed by reformers intent on limiting the construction of public drinking places in West Oakland. The Oakland New Century Club opened its settlement house directly across the street from Davidson's saloon, proudly publicizing its efforts to combat public drunkenness, especially among teenage boys (Oakland New Century Club 1902). By 1912 the West Oakland Free Kindergarten had moved into a former saloon down the block from Davidson's building, on the corner of Campbell and Pacific streets. The kindergarten teachers met with only limited success; it appears that the saloon simply moved up the street to another building. Ironically, this building had been used formerly as a church hall (Sanborn 1902, 1912).

With the coming of Prohibition in 1919, the saloon in Davidson's corner building was converted to a grocery store, as were the others in the neighborhood. None of the initial interior fixtures remains in the existing commercial space (Figure 27). It appears, however, that patrons entered the establishment through a pair of doors, located on the Fifth Street side of the building. Large windows, later covered up, gave potential customers a good view of the large interior room, about 12 feet high;

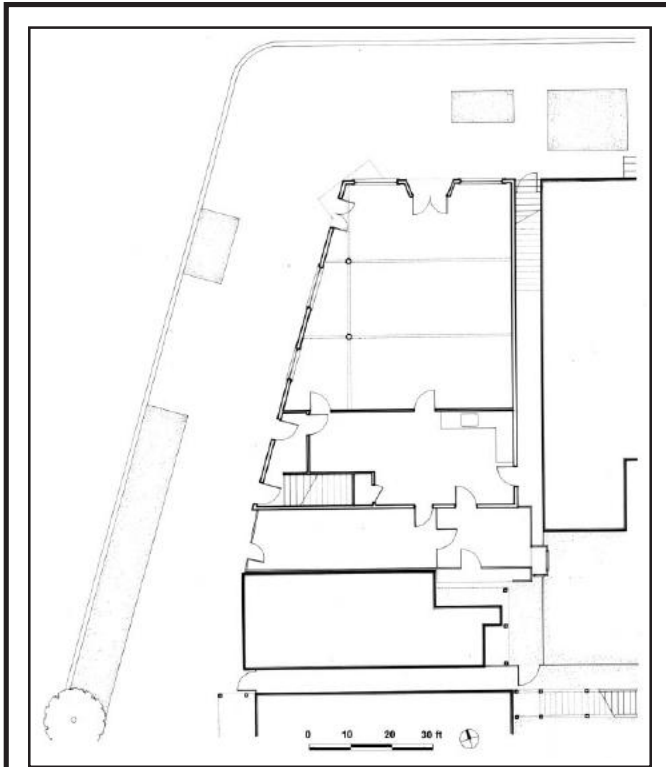


FIGURE 27. LOWER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON CORNER STORE AND ROOMING HOUSE, 370-372 PERALTA AND 1619 FIFTH STREETS. The floor contains the former saloon-grocery store (now used as storage), a kitchen/living room (formerly a storeroom), the only entry to the rooming house upstairs, and a narrow garage. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

the windows also gave patrons a view of the passing street scene. The use of interior columns freed up as much space as possible for commercial use. A storeroom, later converted to an apartment, was located behind the main space.

Upstairs, the original layout of Davidson's rooming house remains more intact, although it, too, has been changed, mostly by the Patterson family (Figure 28). Today, as initially, residents enter the building through a separate door on Peralta Street, taking the back stair to the upper level. In Davidson's day there were five bedrooms, a kitchen, and probably a shared bathroom, all connected by a central corridor (Figure 29). Transom lights above the door to the kitchen and the front bedroom brought natural light into the otherwise dark hallway. At some point the rear porch was enclosed and turned into two more rentable rooms. Another bathroom was also added, for family use (Patterson 1995a, pers. comm.).

In keeping with the informality of other housing arrangements in the neighborhood, Davidson and the building's

subsequent owners did not advertise the rooming house. Rather, they expected that knowledge of available rooms would circulate locally among potential customers and turn up enough clients to keep their business afloat. Living in a rooming house was especially attractive to single men (and, in more expensive neighborhoods, single women), who found the rental of temporary housing suitable for the seasonal and uncertain employment that typified urban economies until the 1950s (Groth 1994:90-130). Certainly, many such men lived in this building (Patterson 1995b). This building, however, has also been used for family housing, virtually since its construction. Davidson lived in the rooming house starting in 1891, probably with his family; certainly in 1910, his daughter and son-in-law (a clerk) lived with him. They were joined by an elderly Swedish woman, a boarder, who may have been their housekeeper (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

Mori Davidson inherited the building in 1915; it changed hands twice in the 1920s, during which time a garage was inserted under the back porch. The front facade of the building was remodeled by Annie and James Patterson in 1945, soon after they purchased the building. They have made many subsequent interior alterations to the building, including the addition of heating stoves in each of the upstairs rooms. Most recently, the front end of the building was converted into an apartment for Arthur

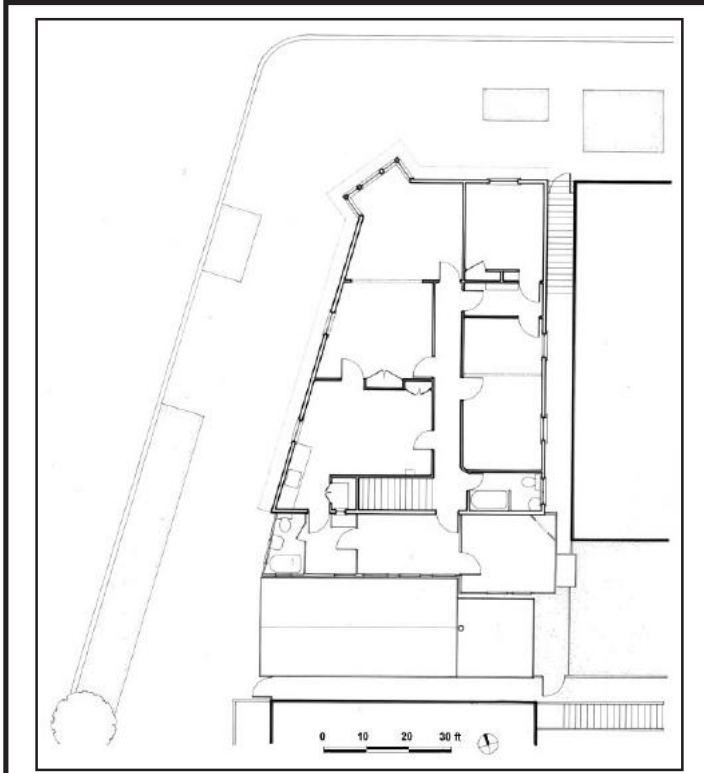


FIGURE 28. UPPER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON STORE AND ROOMING HOUSE, 370-372 PERALTA AND 1619 FIFTH STREETS. The rooming house originally contained five bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a back porch. (Credit: Benjamin Chuaqui and Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

Patterson’s daughter and her family (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Patterson 1995a, pers. comm.).

The Patterson family lived in the same building as their upstairs roomers during the 1940s and 1950s, but the rooming business was distinct from family life. However meager its own residential quarters in the former store room, the family lived in a different part of the building from their tenants, even using a separate street entrance and bathroom. The single shared space was the upstairs kitchen, the only cooking/dining space in the building in the 1950s. Even then, the family used this room at different times of day than its tenants, who only ate one meal a day there—an early morning breakfast prepared by Mrs. Patterson. Only adults were permitted to cross the spatial and social divide that separated the two realms of the house; the children were not allowed to associate with (or bother) the family’s tenants. The children were expected to contribute to the family’s income by

working after school and during summer in the grocery store, run by their maternal grandfather, and at other jobs (Patterson 1995b).

The 1940s and 1950s were difficult times for the Patterson family as they struggled to establish themselves in a new community and conserve their resources. The family could not even afford the cost of electric fixtures, using instead more affordable “coal oil” (kerosene) lamps. Mrs. Patterson put up much of the family’s food, canning the fallen fruit and damaged vegetables her children collected for free when they went to work at local orchards (Patterson 1995b).

Without doubt, first owning the corner rooming house and store and, later, the apartment house next door gave the Pattersons a much-needed emotional and financial anchor in West Oakland. Annie Patterson assumed the brunt of keeping the properties going, especially the management of the rooming house. Her son recalls that she consistently worked 12-hour days, rising at four to make breakfast for the roomers (the meal was included in the price of the room) and then moving on to take care of her own family. Mrs. Patterson also cleaned the building and washed her tenants’ clothes, even ironing them for an extra fee. Despite the strict divide between family and business life, her roomers helped out, sometimes cleaning their bedrooms and the shared bathroom (Patterson 1995b).

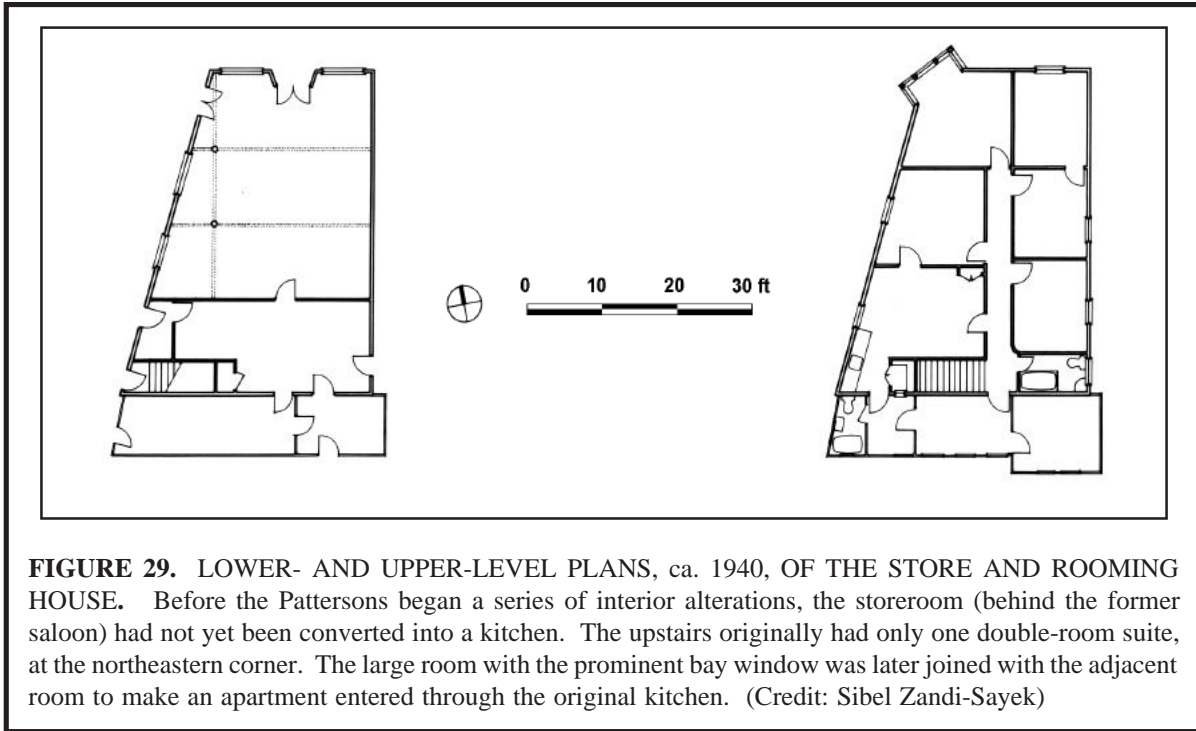


FIGURE 29. LOWER- AND UPPER-LEVEL PLANS, ca. 1940, OF THE STORE AND ROOMING HOUSE. Before the Pattersons began a series of interior alterations, the storeroom (behind the former saloon) had not yet been converted into a kitchen. The upstairs originally had only one double-room suite, at the northeastern corner. The large room with the prominent bay window was later joined with the adjacent room to make an apartment entered through the original kitchen. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

1611-1617 FIFTH STREET: A LATE VICTORIAN FOURPLEX

Davidson’s investment scheme for his West Oakland properties included a third type of housing, the small apartment building. Technically, the four units are flats, since each has its own front entrance opening onto the street. Built in 1887 or 1888, the same time as Davidson’s corner saloon and rooming house, the group of flats was initially valued at \$950 (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990).

The sequence of the construction of this building is somewhat of a mystery. In plan and elevation, the present building appears to have been built initially as a two-story apartment house, with similar units on each floor. In design and detail, the commercial-style, false-front cornice matches that of the corner building (Figure 30). As importantly, the plans of the upper and lower floors are virtually identical, except for small, but significant, differences in the location of the doors to each unit (Figure 31). The initial entry doors to the upper apartments appear to have been located on the side elevations, where they remain today. Such a position, near the landings on the flights of exterior stairs, makes sense for the upper units; a side entry is, however, a highly unusual spot for the front door to a ground-floor apartment. Thus the downstairs doors open directly onto a small stoop on Fifth Street.

In spite of the fourplex’s unified design, the 1889 Sanborn map shows a one-story building on the lot, with one address indicated. There is a flight of side stairs, only on the eastern side. By 1902 a four-unit building appears on the insurance map, with four separate addresses and a set of stairs located on each side of the building. Perhaps the building was, in fact, a one-story structure in 1889 and Davidson completed the upper story sometime during the next decade, or the building may have been in the process of being constructed at the time of the first map (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Sanborn 1889, 1902).



PLATE 41. FRONT VIEW OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON FOURPLEX AT 1611-1617 FIFTH STREET. This structure was built in 1887-1888, like the corner store and rooming house next door. Despite many alterations, the initial similarity between the two structures remains visible. The flight of stairs on the side of the apartment house leads to one of the upstairs flats. (Credit: Paul Groth)

Davidson lived in this building for two or three years, probably while it was under construction. It was during this time, between 1888 and 1890, that he described himself as a “capitalist” in the local directory. After he moved next door in the early 1890s, the fourplex served him as another rental property. In 1910 an extended family of five people and their two lodgers, both stable workers, lived in the eastern section of the building. The family may have lived in the upper unit; the lodgers below. Next door was only one family, a cook, employed by the Pullman Company, and his wife. This African American couple, originally from Texas, had been married for three years and had no children. Perhaps the second apartment was empty at the time of the census enumerator’s visit.

Davidson’s tenants lived in apartments whose size, each around 525 square feet, was similar to the cottages the entrepreneur owned on Peralta Street. The distribution of uses within both kinds of buildings was similar: parlor in the front; kitchen in the rear; toilets and laundry on the back porch. But, the interior layout of the Fifth Street flats differed in important ways from the design of the older cottages. The plan of the flats bears some resemblance to a 19th-century three-room row house in that it incorporates a middle inner room used as a bedroom. Nominally, the middle rooms in the Fifth Street flats did receive light and air: on the ground floor, from a window located under the exterior stair; upstairs, from a skylight. But in actuality, the interior rooms would have had poor light and little ventilation, especially on the lower floor. Nonetheless, in other aspects, the fourplex was on its way to becoming “almost polite,” particularly the upper units. The units also had discrete spaces for circulation: an entry hall on the top floor and, initially, an inner hallway on the bottom. The

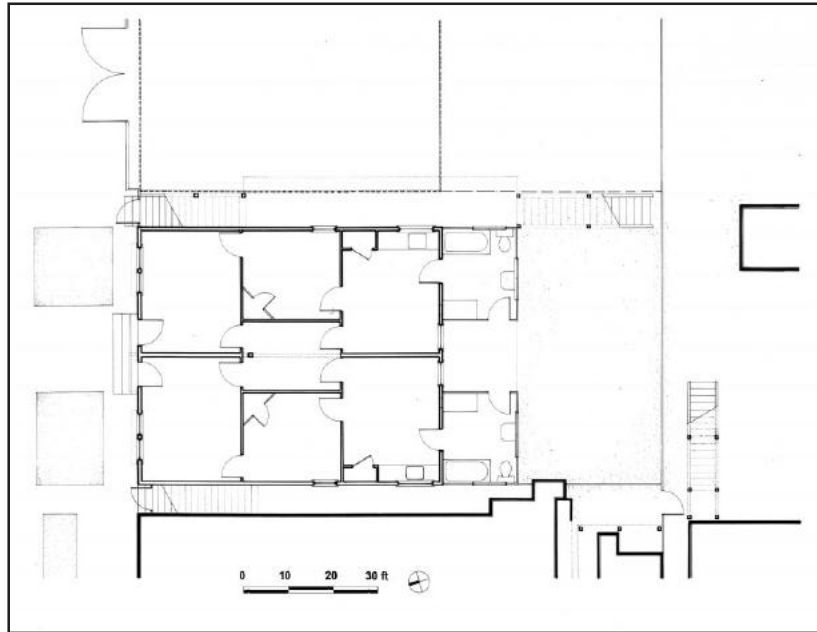


FIGURE 30. LOWER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON FOURPLEX, 1611-1617 FIFTH STREET. Although now combined into one unit, originally the center wall divided the plan into two equal halves. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

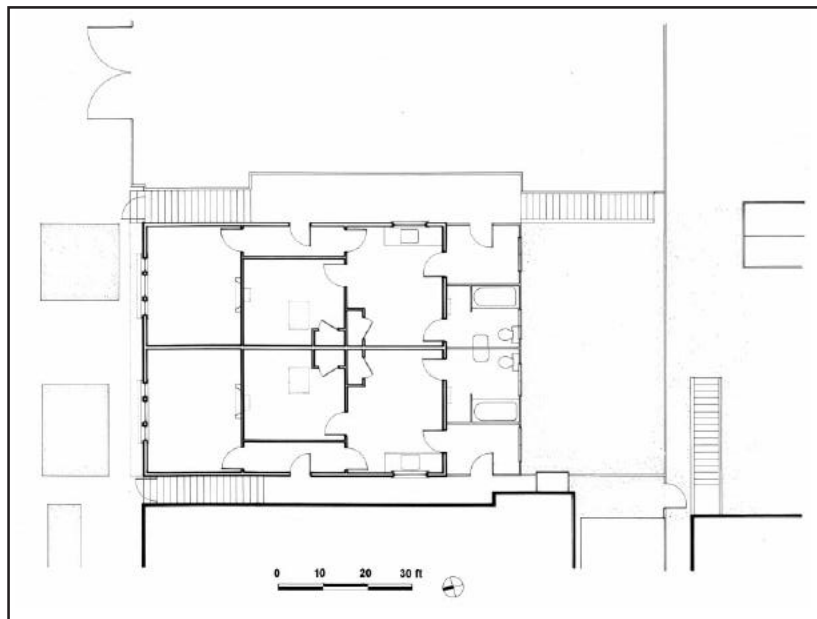


FIGURE 31. UPPER-LEVEL PLAN OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON APARTMENT HOUSE, 1611-1617 FIFTH STREET. The plan of the flats on this floor is virtually identical with that of the floor below, although visitors entered from doors at the side of the building, rather than from the front. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

specialization of each space is notable; the closets in the bedrooms and the kitchen pantries are original. The upper-unit parlors had elegant marble fireplaces and ornamental windows in a Queen Anne style.

In 1911 Johanna Martin, a widowed weaver, bought the building from Davidson and, presumably, continued to use it as a rental property. Later the building came to be owned by the sisters of the one of the subsequent owners of the corner building, probably Frank Miller. It was they who sold the structure to Annie Patterson, who also continued to use it as a rental property. On the ground floor, the family broke through the demising wall (the shared wall between the two halves of the building) to create a wider common corridor, now shared by the two apartments. Jerry Patterson, another of Mrs. Patterson's sons, owns the building and is restoring it. On the upper level, the back porches have been rebuilt to incorporate modern laundries and bathrooms.

366 PERALTA STREET: FROM STABLE TO REAR COTTAGE

The smallest, and most altered, of the original Davidson structures is slipped between the flats on Peralta Street and the back porch of the corner store and rooming house. Around 1889 Davidson had constructed on the narrow plot between his multiple dwellings and the Peralta Street cottages a fairly substantial one and one-half story stable with an upper hay loft, originally valued at \$450 (as much as many of the cottages in the neighborhood). The wooden building sat at the back of the lot, in fact just behind Davidson's new apartment house. The long front yard connected the stable with Peralta Street and also removed the utilitarian building from the street and the fronts of the store and



PLATE 42. FRONT VIEW OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON COTTAGE, 366 PERALTA STREET. The small white building in this view may have been the stable built in the back of the lot by 1889. (Credit: Paul Groth)

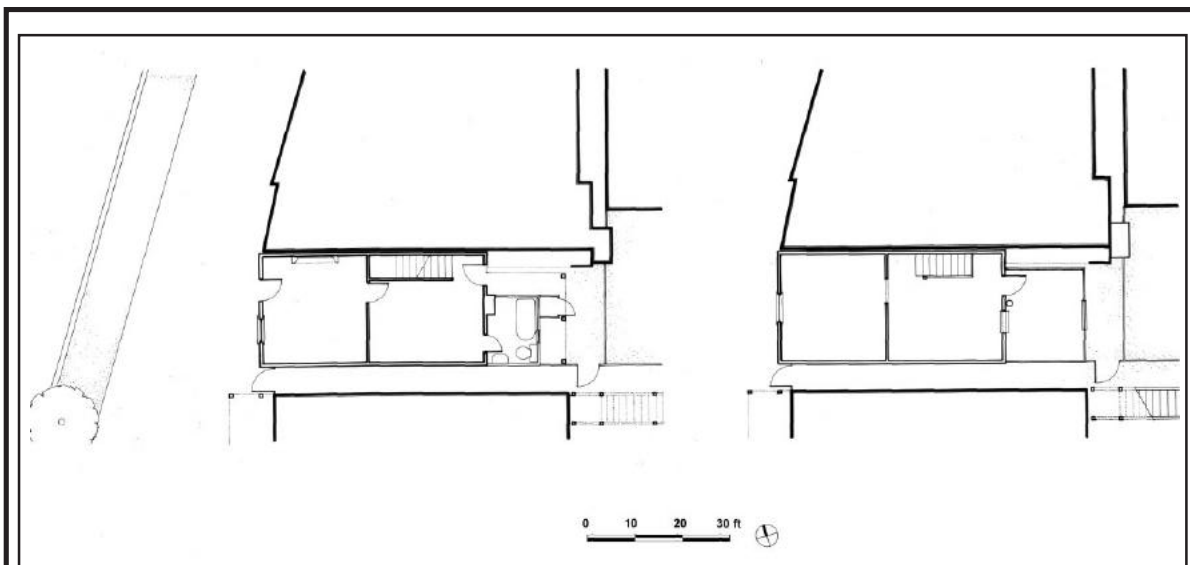


FIGURE 32. LOWER AND UPPER PLANS OF THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON COTTAGE, 366 PERALTA STREET. This building may have been a stable initially. It was converted first to a shed, then to a house, and substantially renovated in the 1930s. (Credit: Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

the flats. By 1902 the stable had been moved forward on the lot and was labeled as a two-story shed (Sanborn 1902). Some time after 1912, the building was converted to a dwelling. Mori Davidson inherited the small building, along with the rooming house, sometime before 1915.

It is very hard to determine what remains, if anything, of the initial structure. The present building, squeezed into a narrow urban lot, resembles an urban rowhouse more than it does a free-standing house, although there is a 3-foot wide passageway along one side of the building (Figure 32). What may be the initial core of the building, as renovated between 1902 and 1912, contains two rooms on each floor, a typical interior arrangement in urban rowhouses. Living room and kitchen are on the first floor; a steep stair reaches the bedrooms above. None of the side walls contains windows; the northern wall also directly abuts the side of the rooming-house porch and would have blocked light into the space but for the steep pitch of the shed's gable roof. It lets light in to what must have been existing porch windows on the upper floor of the adjacent building). In 1935 the front of the building was substantially remodeled, probably by Frank Miller, who then owned it along with the rooming house next door. The interior of the original building was little changed in the 1930s, but a new bathroom and back porch were added onto the first floor, a third bedroom above. Later renovations have modernized the bathroom and kitchen.

The building was given to the Patterson family in the early 1940s by the Fretas family, the owners of the Fifth Street fourplex. Mrs. Patterson's father moved into the building, and, after his death, other relatives resided there. It is now used for storage. The Patterson family added a mantel to the living room that they had salvaged from one of the houses across Peralta Street, demolished to make way for the new post office (Patterson 1995a, b).

CONSISTENT PATTERNS IN THE DAVIDSON/PATTERSON PROPERTIES

The range of building types in the Davidson/Patterson holdings may be more diverse than exists on other corners in West Oakland. But the material history of the properties, the social history of their occupants, and the ways in which they are intertwined resemble the story of other people and places in West Oakland. Here, as elsewhere in the community, buildings have changed hands; facades have been altered; rear porches and additions have been made to the buildings and then rebuilt; interior alterations have occurred; and modern mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems have been added. Indeed, the plan of the Davidson/Patterson properties, in particular, shows the many informal connections made over the years by different owners between the houses, in the back rooms of the buildings, and in the rear yards.

Yet the various houses on the Davidson/Patterson property appear to have been used in remarkably consistent ways throughout their histories—despite specific alterations to the buildings and the enormity of other social and environmental changes that have occurred in the community, especially during the second half of the 20th century. In these houses, as in many other surviving 19th-century buildings in West Oakland, the condition of the structures just after the turn of the century can be read easily in their present layout. Most of the 19th-century room uses—indeed most of the 19th-century rooms—are intact. This situation is surely due, in part, to the high cost of altering buildings. But it may also result from the persistent appeal that cottage architecture and rooming-house life seem to have held for working-class people, despite the activities of reformers and all sorts of other modernizing tendencies and homogenizing influences wrought by 20th-century mass culture.

Perhaps most striking is the fact that these buildings have continued to provide starter homes for immigrants and for migrants to Oakland from other areas of the country, even during the second half of the 20th century. For complex reasons, property has remained affordable in West Oakland. The affordability of land—and the community’s reputation for (at least some) tolerance of ethnic and racial differences—allowed people like those in the Gallardo, Rosas, and Patterson families to invest in real estate. The degree to which their investment strategies have actually paid off remains unknown. These people live, after all, in a landscape laced with the material consequences of social inequalities. But, much like their 19th-century forebears, they have chosen to become homeowners in order to gain a modicum of economic security and social advantage.

Acknowledgments

The buildings discussed in this essay were researched, measured, and drawn in conjunction with the buildings discussed in the essay “Workers’ Housing in West Oakland.” Ben Chuaqui, Betty Marvin, and, especially Sibel Zandi-Sayek were most helpful in documenting the five structures. Sibel’s patience—and fine hand—made it possible to record the houses in exacting detail. Thanks, too, to the Patterson family for letting us measure their homes and to Arthur Patterson, in particular, for sharing his recollections of West Oakland. I am also most indebted to Paul Groth for editorial comments and for pointing out during our initial survey of West Oakland several of the examples discussed in this essay. Little did I imagine at that time that the buildings on the corner of Fifth and Peralta streets would turn out to have such rich—and interconnected—histories.

PART THREE

COMMUNITY

DOMESTICATING INSTITUTIONS: PROGRESSIVE WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN WEST OAKLAND

Marta Gutman

INTRODUCTION

From the 1880s to the present day, the study area associated with the Cypress Freeway Replacement Project in West Oakland has claimed the attention of men and women interested in environmental and social reform. This essay focuses on reform activities at the turn of the 19th century, when a number of small-scale charitable institutions dotted the neighborhood's landscape. Progressive organizations—directed principally by middle-class women from different ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds—opened settlement houses, orphanages, and day homes (nurseries) to provide a variety of social services and educational programs to the working poor. The reformers were most concerned with assisting immigrant and African American women and children.

The course of charitable work regularly brought many of the women associated with these institutions to West Oakland; their spatial and social experiences in the densely populated, mixed-use neighborhood prompted the women to assume positions of determined environmental activism. Like most of their contemporaries, the women did not see the material world as a neutral background against which social practices freely occurred. Rather, the West Oakland reformers argued that the condition of the built environment, especially in the heart of a rapidly industrializing city, profoundly shaped the daily lives and long-range opportunities of the working poor. Through a variety of reform proposals, they set about to create what they understood to be better social prospects and improved physical surroundings for the neighborhood. Indeed, the state of the neighborhood as a whole—its streets and public spaces, the condition of working people's houses, the types of furnishings, even the kinds of clothes, cooking equipment, and tableware—preoccupied many of the women active in the various organizations. The reformers' activist approach to the environment, when coupled with contemporary understandings of gender roles and the value of home life, led to a mindful crafting of the settings and programs of several West Oakland institutions.

THE SETTING

Questions and themes that underlie the domestic reform movement are developed in this introduction to provide a context for viewing West Oakland's domesticating institutions. Three neighborhood institutions—each representing different approaches to reform—are contrasted as the themes are explored. The Oakland New Century Club, an organization of socially prominent women formed in 1900, operated a settlement house providing a variety of programs to the West Oakland community. St. Vincent's Day Home was founded in 1911 by the Sisters of the Holy Family, a local order of Roman Catholic nuns; the day home provided child care, principally although not exclusively for the children of West Oakland's working-class Catholic immigrants (Kavanagh 1922; Mohrmann 1995; O'Connor 1995a, 1995b). Starting in 1918, the Fannie Wall Children's Home and Day Nursery took care of orphans and also provided day care, in this case mostly to African American children

(although, again, not exclusively). The Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, a local organization of middle-class African American women, sponsored the establishment (Crouchett, Bunch, and Winnacker 1989; Davis 1933; Hausler 1986; Knight 1995). The Fannie Wall Home and St. Vincent's continue in operation today, some eight decades after their inception; the New Century Club was demolished in the 1960s. A summary of the history of Oakland reform movements is provided in the paragraphs that follow; then the New Century Club serves as a case study that details the design and social programs of the settlement house, whose former site is now beneath the U.S. Post Office parking lot. An overview of women's activism in Oakland, including some detail on domestic reform and the New Century Club, was presented by Aicha Woods (1994a) in the Cypress Project research design. Her work provides a context for the present study, which takes a more focused approach. While material culture was one of several themes in Woods's essay, it is of primary interest here as we explore the environment of social activism with special attention on the role that buildings and architectural details play in expressing and molding social values.

In the buildings used by these three institutions, the women's groups sought material expression of their social and environmental aspirations, drawing on longstanding approaches in the liberal tradition to environmental reform and the relief of urban poverty. The discussion in this essay concentrates on showing how female reformers worked within a common charitable tradition to create a distinct architectural alternative to the usual locus of charitable activity: the isolated, monumental, purpose-built institution. All three groups elected, instead, to place their establishments, at least initially, in renovated houses located in mixed-use urban settings. A variety of reasons—some economic and pragmatic, others ideological and programmatic—affected the selection of specific sites and buildings. Most importantly, the women wanted the institutional surroundings to demonstrate the many advantages of living in an improved, orderly domestic environment and, by inference, the many disadvantages affiliated with occupying an unruly one.

Despite broad similarities in building type, siting, and purpose, the resulting buildings looked quite different from one another. The groups held distinct, and at times conflicting, social aspirations; and their perceptions of what constituted a model home diverged. In addition, class position, racial and ethnic prejudice, and gender relations circumscribed the manner in which different groups were able to achieve their environmental (and social) goals—and colored the reception of each charity's project by general public, other reformers, and their working-class subjects. Across the spectrum of efforts, the wealthier organizations certainly could afford more elaborate establishments. Yet all these groups managed to make a strong case for domesticating institutions in West Oakland, even as urban rationalization transformed other parts of the district into more rigidly specialized environments. Part institution and part house, the buildings proclaimed the public value of the domestic realm and, by association, the virtues of the women or institutions who initiated, directed, and managed them.

IMPORTANT THEMES

The buildings discussed in this study are examples of important trends in the movement for Progressive reform in Oakland and, by extension, other American cities. Oakland certainly had its share of philanthropic institutions housed in isolated, purpose-built and imperious buildings, whose substantial presence announced civic virtue and/or religious purpose. A great number of the city's private voluntary organizations, however, offered social services in a variety of smaller-scale, wood-



PLATE 43. NORTHERN FEDERATION OF COLORED WOMEN'S CLUBS, ca. 1915. In 1913 or 1914 Elizabeth Brown, President and organizer of the Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, suggested that the organization open a new establishment in Oakland, one concerned with the care of needy African American children. Other Oakland charities had demonstrated little interest in meeting the needs of Oakland's African American children, and Brown argued that the Northern Federation needed to provide a home for orphaned children and a place where working families could find child care. The (Women's) Art and Industrial Club, founded in 1906, was one of the first organizations within the Northern Federation to offer financial support for the Children's Home and Day Nursery. The club, under the leadership of Mrs. Fannie Wall, donated 50 dollars to the building fund, helping to build support for the new home in the African American community. Mrs. Wall presided over the Northern Federation during this fund-raising period, and became the first matron when the home finally opened in 1918. Although the idea for the home originated with Elizabeth Brown, the Northern Federation named the building after Mrs. Wall to honor her "motivating spirit." The Northern Federation ran the home until 1941 (Beasley in Davis 1933:107-108; Davis 1933:286; Knight 1995:8, 11; Hausler 1986:1, 2). (Photo courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)



PLATE 44. St. VINCENT'S DAY HOME, 1086 EIGHTH STREET, ca. 1922. In 1911 the Sisters of the Holy Family opened a new day home in West Oakland, selecting for the purpose a large, very well-appointed house and yard formerly owned by the Haven family. The sisters chose the building because they wanted, for didactic purposes, to house their establishment in a gracious, family-like setting, not a monumental purpose-built institution. The building, just around the corner from St. Joseph's Church, contained a nursery school, kindergarten, after-school programs, and the order's Oakland mother house until the sisters moved their residence to Piedmont in the 1920s. This picture, taken at the height of spring, neatly displays the children on the front lawn of the establishment. The ample front porch of the Havens' former home was later enclosed. (Credit: D.J. Kavanagh, *The Holy Family Sisters of San Francisco, 1872-1922*)

frame buildings around the turn of the 19th century. Most of these groups were headed by women who, for symbolic and practical reasons, chose to establish their operations in modest and often house-like structures in West Oakland and other poor districts in the city.

Historians have pointed out the importance of small organizations and structures in the female-headed antebellum movement for moral reform (Ryan 1990; Smith-Rosenberg 1971). But similarly sized buildings and groups in the Progressive era have been little analyzed by scholars, in spite of their significance to the reformers' programs (Lasch-Quinn 1993). Larger establishments have garnered the most notice—settlement houses associated with women and men of national prominence, other large private institutions (such as orphanages), and public institutions serving multiple purposes (Davis 1984; Muncy 1991; Zmora 1994). When historians raise environmental issues in these surroundings, they rarely mention the design of the institutional settings but focus instead on institutional support for housing programs or other urban reforms (Davis 1984). Thus while architectural and urban historians have paid a great deal of attention to the impact of reform ideologies on many parts of the urban environment during the Progressive era, the design of charitable buildings of whatever size has received short shrift (Hayden 1981; Lubove 1962; Wright 1980).

Most historians of Progressive reform analyze one kind of organization or compare activities of similar groups in different locations. This study takes another tack in that it focuses on the range of activities in one heterogeneous urban district. An urban situation, such as West Oakland's, begs an analysis that recognizes the rich complexity of private organizations providing social services in the area, the kinds of buildings the societies occupied, and the varying role of activist environmental reforms at differing scales of intervention.

In this study, the design of buildings used by smaller establishments is examined in relation to the goals of sponsoring organizations and the community's responses to the programs. This method gives a clear picture of how different groups perceived the purpose of charitable activity, understood the connection of charity to reform intent, and demonstrated materially the effects of reform on urban buildings and spaces. The approach also raises themes and questions that contribute to on-going scholarly debate about the impact of power relations and culture on the formation of urban space and on different social groups' understandings of the effects of such processes.

A Diversity of Reformers

West Oakland was an integrated community at the turn of the 19th century, and it attracted a wide array of people interested in social betterment and environmental improvement. The typical image of a Progressive reformer is of a White, upper-middle-class, Protestant woman; in West Oakland, however, African American and Catholic women—as well as some Jewish women—also formed private charitable organizations and managed to find resources to secure and maintain buildings. Each group publicly affiliated its social objectives with secular and/or religious purpose and understood the religious/secular distinction to be a crucial factor in establishing identity and setting goals—no matter how much all of the organizations' programs, in fact, resulted from a mixture of religious and social ideals (Higginbotham 1993; Lasch-Quinn 1993). As was the case with most Progressive organizations, specific needs and ethnic and racial traditions also helped shape institutional objectives and attitudes towards the environment and its reform.

PLATE 45. MARY C. NETHERLAND, ca. 1935. Mrs. Netherland, member and officer of many clubs and charities run by African American women in Oakland, was deeply involved with the Fannie Wall Home, most especially in raising funds. She also took it upon herself to record the histories of the varied organizations with which she was involved, including the Fannie Wall Home (Netherland papers, African American Museum and Library at Oakland; Knight 1995). The West Oakland house in which Mrs. Netherland was born is discussed in “Workers’ Houses,” this volume; see Plates 10 and 13. (Photo courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)



Liberal Politics, Settlement Work, and Urban Reform

Some women in Oakland—Charlotte Perkins Gilman among them—argued that only radical social transformation could combat the many crises caused by rapid immigration, industrialization, and urban expansion. But the women discussed in this essay, like many of their mainstream Progressive contemporaries, opposed radical social transformation. They maintained, instead, that a set of social-service programs based on principles of liberal political reform provided the most appropriate route to urban improvement.

Principally, the Oakland reformers wanted to provide what they believed to be suitable and necessary social services and educational programs to support working families in West Oakland, particularly women and children. The liberal political goals and Progressive social aims of national reform movements helped the Oakland women to define the local scope of settlement work and set the intellectual parameters of programs for child care and early childhood education in the kindergartens, day nurseries, and orphanages (Davis 1984). National organizations also provided information about municipal housekeeping, health and hygiene, and domestic science (Hayden 1981; Wright 1980). Thus the range of local programs included care for orphans, half-orphans (a child with one living parent), and abandoned children, as well as kindergartens, after-school programs, vacation schools, and recreational programs. Some groups also arranged “friendly” home visits to poor families and organized mothers’ clubs, social clubs for boys and girls, and athletic programs—much needed in a neighborhood that had few parks or public playgrounds.

In addition to sponsoring the social-service institutions, some women’s organizations entered the local political arena and pressed for increased government intervention to make concrete environmental improvements in West Oakland. Women’s organizations were particularly successful in

PLATE 46. FROEBEL KIT. The Sisters of the Holy Family used progressive instructional materials in their educational programs, starting in the early 1880s. The use of a Froebel-based curriculum in preschool and kindergarten curricula lasted through the early 1960s. (Credit: Marta Gutman)



convincing the municipality to improve public education and recreation facilities (parks, playgrounds, and vacation schools). Indeed, after the City assumed the management of the private facility in the 1920s, the Oakland New Century Club became one of the City's first public community centers. The organizations also forged direct links with national movements for racial and social justice. Unlike many other Progressive institutions, the three establishments in this study were open to most, if not all, of the different ethnic, religious, and racial groups represented in Oakland; pictures of interracial classes and clubs appear repeatedly in the publications of the Oakland New Century Club. The New Century Club also actively supported the campaign for women's suffrage. From the outset, St. Vincent's Day Home welcomed Protestant and Jewish children, even though the great majority of the clientele was Catholic. The Fannie Wall Home primarily served African Americans, but the women who ran the organization were committed to creating an integrated establishment. The alliance of the Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs with the National Association of Colored Women added support to the latter organization's campaign against racial prejudice, segregation, and restricted voting rights for African Americans.

Environmental Activism, Didactic Buildings, and Maternalist Thinking

Wealthier Oaklanders effortlessly associated philanthropic action with moral improvement and environmental reform—no group more so than the middle- and upper-class women who dispensed charity in West Oakland and other poor districts in the city. The nature of that environmental reform was shaped by a longstanding tradition in Anglo-American charitable practice: the dominance of female-run organizations. Indeed, from the onset of philanthropic activity in Oakland, organizations founded and led by women directed their efforts at the city's poor women and children, infusing their programs with a high regard for the value of one kind of spatial and social setting—the middle-class home (Baker 1914; Clark 1939). Their high estimation of the value of the middle-class home, and the life within it, encouraged them to seek domesticated, rather than monumental, institutional surroundings (Clark 1986).

Whether associated with a secular club, a religious organization, or a particular ethnic or racial group, the women understood the physical and social worlds as an integrated construct. Although this kind



PLATE 47. “WAITING FOR THE SCHOOL TO OPEN,” WEST OAKLAND SETTLEMENT, 1900. In 1894 Elizabeth Watt took over the directorship of the sewing school, initially sponsored by the West Oakland Free Kindergarten Association, then by the West Oakland Settlement, and, finally, by the Oakland New Century Club. The settlement prided itself on running an integrated establishment and, accordingly, the photograph shows two young African American girls in the front of the room. Watt may be the woman in the middle, behind the desk. The sewing school depended on paid and volunteer instructors who taught young girls how to sew, using a graded curriculum based on the St. Paul system. The girls in this picture—probably at an intermediate level—are carrying cards used for instructional purposes. Sitting in an orderly fashion in a sunny upstairs room, they are waiting for their class to begin in the Peralta Street building. The space, decorated with Arts and Crafts inspired wallpaper and running from the front to the back of the building, looks as if it had been made out of two smaller rooms. This area was also used for the Mothers’ Meeting. (Source: *Domestic Science Monthly* October 1900:185)



PLATE 48. INTEGRATED PLAYGROUND AT FANNIE WALL CHILDREN'S HOME AND DAY NURSERY, ca. 1949. Fannie Wall served a principally African American clientele although the home's administrators wanted to run an integrated establishment. Sometimes, they succeeded in attracting White children to the program. This picture shows a group of White and African American boys gathered for a snack on the playground, probably after school. In all likelihood, the woman assisting the children is a teacher. (Photo courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)

of world view historically has been associated with Protestant religious thought, all of the women shared this understanding and coupled it with a faith in the value of environmental activism (Taylor 1989). The approach led the women's groups to advocate using specific physical forms for institutional environments. In their view an improved building was also a didactic one. They anticipated that external appearance and the arrangement of interior spaces and furnishings would simultaneously present the advantages of correctly constituted surroundings and mold the behavior of the institution's clientele. For similar reasons, many other Progressive reformers advocated the construction of purpose-built institutions. The aspirations of these West Oakland reformers, however, led them towards another environmental strategy, one based on the adaptation of existing houses.

The reformers' imprint on the urban landscape clearly shows the effect of a maternalist feminism on the ideology of reform organizations. In Oakland, as elsewhere in the United States, middle-class women believed that motherhood and leading a virtuous domestic life lent moral superiority to their activities and, hence, deserved public and political expression (Koven and Michel 1993; Skocpol

1992). As much as a grounding in maternalism led to softened institutional settings, other philosophies and attitudes towards urban space strongly colored the reformers' then-fashionable environmentally determinist strategies. Most important were an interest in scientific rationality and a faith in environmental discipline (Gordon 1990).

Urban Rationalization and the Tenacity of Customary Urban Patterns

The buildings under study are surely affiliated with significant modernizing tendencies in American cities, most particularly the specialization of institutions and their urban settings. But longstanding approaches to arranging the American urban landscape persisted in West Oakland and conditioned the appearance and location of new institutional structures, even as it and the rest of the city changed into a modern, rationalized industrial metropolis. Drawing on reform traditions rooted in early-19th-century urban practices, the charitable establishments were not isolated in parklike settings, at the outskirts of the city; instead, they were located in everyday urban settings (Smith-Rosenberg 1971). The location of the three buildings discussed here—on one of West Oakland's main thoroughfares (either Peralta Street, running north/south, or Eighth Street, running east/west)—added urban prominence to each building.

Putting older, often originally domestic, buildings to new charitable uses has a long history in American cities, especially in urban centers. Indeed the African American women's organization seems to have self-consciously tapped into the tradition, in part to forge closer social ties with its clientele (Boris in Koven and Michel 1993). The first Fannie Wall Home was located in a relatively large private house on Peralta Street, between Twelfth and Thirteenth streets. When the organization decided to move to another location, it selected another private home, on Linden Street near Eighth Street and around the corner from St. Vincent's Day Home. The Catholic establishment was located

PLATE 49. FANNIE WALL CHILDREN'S HOME AND DAY NURSERY, 1215 PERALTA STREET, ca. 1970. In 1918 the Northern California State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs opened the organization's new home and day nursery in an ordinary, two-story, wood-frame building on Peralta Street. The Federation purchased the building—valued for tax purposes at \$1,200—from a private owner, Anna E. Suhl, and maintained the establishment in this location until 1928. In selecting the building, the African American women's organization publicly expressed its affirmation of mainstream domestic values (Block Books; Hausler 1986:2). (Photo courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)





PLATE 50. FANNIE WALL CHILDREN'S HOME AND DAY NURSERY, 815 LINDEN STREET, n.d. (before 1962). In 1928 the Northern Federation sold the Peralta Street building and moved the Fannie Wall Home to a bigger, more up-scale establishment on Linden Street (just around the corner from the St. Vincent's). The group, which had affiliated with the Community Chest, needed more space than the Peralta Street building could provide. The Fannie Wall Home remained in the second location until 1962 when a major slum clearance program directed by the Oakland Redevelopment Agency demolished the building to make way for the Acorn housing project. The organization moved, soon after, to its present location on West 55th Street (Hausler 1986:4). Despite the genteel appearance of the Linden Street building, the organization had a difficult time maintaining the home during the 1940s and 1950s due to an ongoing lack of operating funds. (Photo courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)

in a very large house, formerly the home of the prominent Haven family, and a much bigger structure than the (second) Fannie Wall Home. But, whatever the differences in size, both the African American women's club and the Catholic organization operated more homelike establishments than the socially prominent Protestant women did.

Of all three buildings, the Oakland New Century Club's settlement house came the closest to looking like a purpose-built institution. It was conspicuously placed at the intersection of Atlantic and Peralta, directly across the street from James Davidson's saloon and rooming house (see "Five Buildings"). The club's gymnasium and other specialized programmatic elements distinguished it from adjacent residential structures, although the complex included at least two renovated houses. Overall, the massing recalled the scale, but not the design, of nearby halls and assembly rooms in which fraternal and other



PLATE 51. St. VINCENT'S DAY HOME, 1086 EIGHTH STREET, 1995. The Haven family house remains the core of the St. Vincent's complex, as it did in 1911 when the Sisters of the Holy Family opened the day home in the elegant private home. Charles Haven, a wealthy San Francisco insurance broker, built a new residence in Oakland on a double lot in the mid-1860s. Since his home, fronting Eighth Street, stood in the path of the Chestnut Street right-of-way, the building was moved about 50 feet to the present-day site when the street was completed between 1892 and 1893. At the time, the Havens updated their house--adding a new corner tower, bay windows, and other decorative details designed by a local architect, Howard Burns. During the 20th century, the Sisters of the Holy Family have made several additions to the building in order to accommodate an increasing student population. (OCHS 1980-1995, 1988-1990; Credit: Marta Gutman)

social organizations held meetings and social events in West Oakland. Even if unintentional, the material relationships between the building types subtly reinforced an important reform goal: The settlement house was intended to provide an alternative social space to the many saloons, bordellos, and other sites of unregulated leisure activity present in the working-class district.

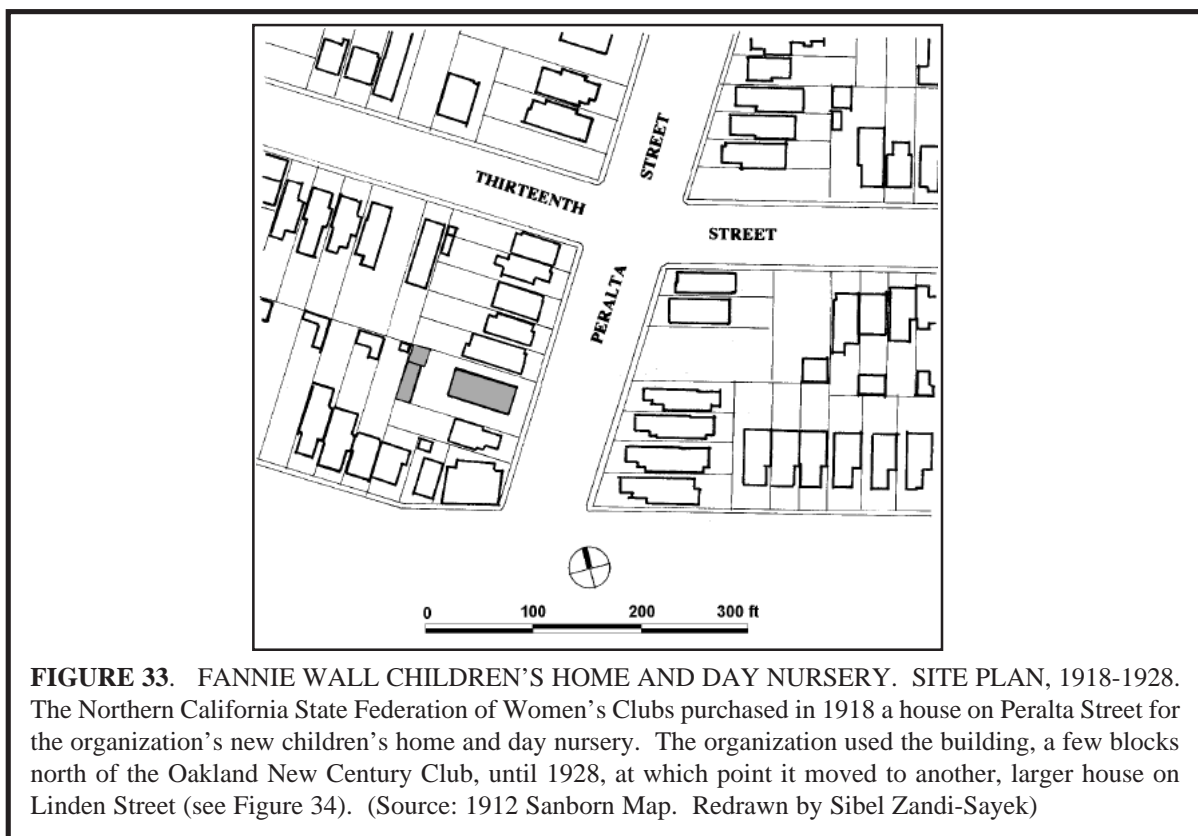
Women, Real Estate, and City Building

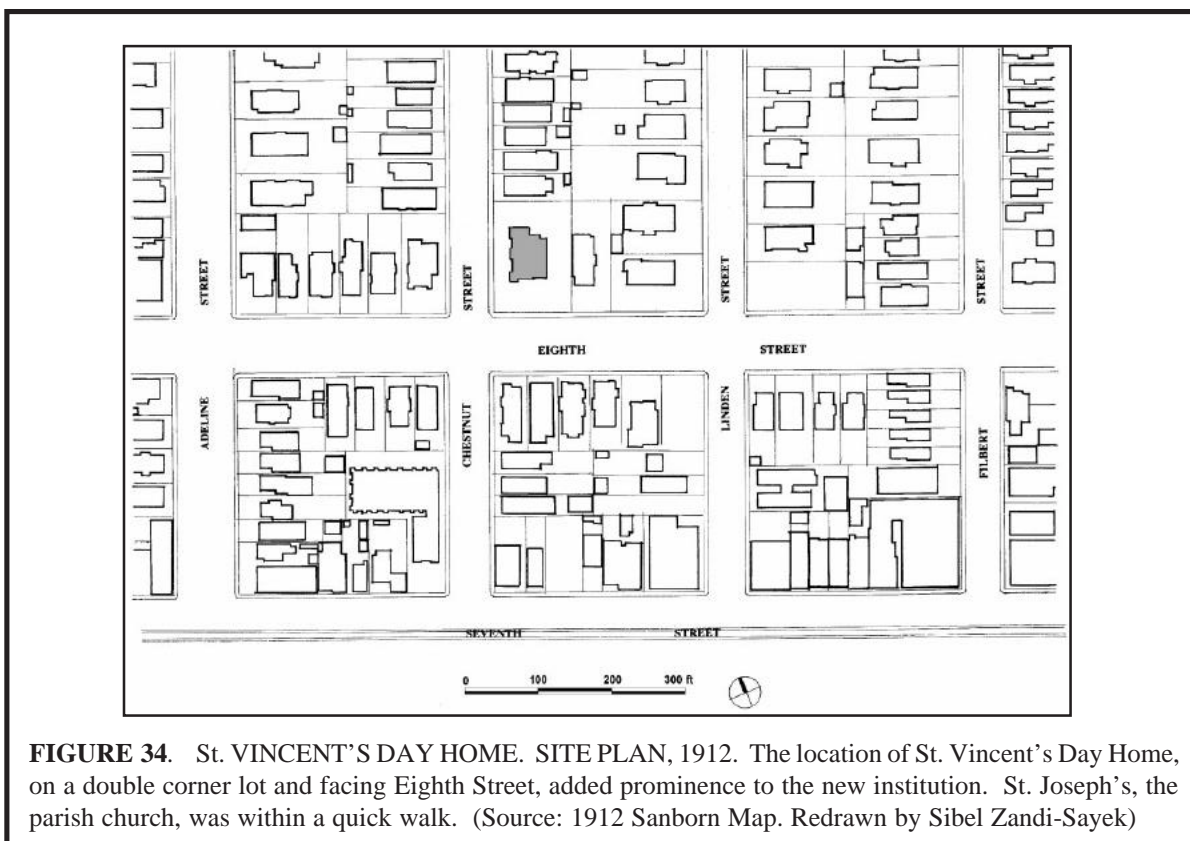
While each group sought to distinguish its institution from ordinary buildings—to indicate symbolic purpose and reform aspirations—all faced similar pragmatic concerns. The processes of site accrual, securing funding, dealing with fluctuations of the real-estate market and building practices, organizing everyday maintenance and planning expansions, meeting building-code requirements, and addressing all sorts of other practical exigencies bound the institutions and their directors into the everyday life of the city. Indeed, the women who ran the organizations encountered many of the problems faced by most other owners of West Oakland real estate, solving them in similar ways.

It took time for many of the organizations to establish a suitable institutional environment. Some charitable organizations moved from site to site, owning different houses or even renting them until they could accrue enough money to take out a mortgage on a permanent home (Figure 33). The wealthier groups chose one site and settled in, usually making substantial and formalized alterations to the original structure. Whether or not an architect or a builder designed the initial additions, the groups adopted building processes similar to those used in the modification of ordinary buildings. They added on to the sides and backs of the buildings, improved plumbing, and even reclad facades. Certainly the malleability of wood-framed buildings eased the process of transforming them through addition. Although many of the buildings ended up looking quite different from their domestic neighbors, the construction process paralleled that used to alter adjacent houses and cottages (see “Workers’ Houses,” this volume).

The practicalities of running an institution encouraged taking a flexible approach to the design of institutional surroundings. In the cases of the Oakland New Century Club and St. Vincent’s Home, the size of each initial lot more than doubled to accommodate expansion of institutional setting and programs (Figures 34-36).

The amount of available funding directly conditioned the degree to which groups could extend their operations. The appearance of the buildings clearly mapped the amount of resources available to each group and underscored the fact that the playing field was not a level one for different social groups, either initially or in later years. Originally all three groups relied on private funding: a wealthy patron, Elizabeth Dewey Watt, supported most of the Oakland New Century Club’s operations; private





donors and the Catholic Church sustained St. Vincent's; and a number of better-off African American families raised funds for Fannie Wall. Eventually the organizations tied into additional institutional sources of funding, either the city's emerging municipal social-service bureaucracy or the Community Chest. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no group had more trouble securing enough money to operate its facility than the African American women who ran the Fannie Wall Home. The day home and orphanage was the smallest of the facilities, and the women repeatedly, and unsuccessfully, tried to raise enough money to bring the building up to code.

The Social Contradictions of Domesticating Institutions

These institutions hovered in a contradictory social space, much as they stood in an ambivalent position in regard to the physical modernization of the urban fabric. Reforming women used these buildings to escape the gender restrictions of their class, to carve out a space for meaningful social service in West Oakland, and, in some cases, to launch political action. They did so, however, in a context that sustained traditional gender roles—in some degree for themselves, and in large measure for their employees and their clientele. Especially in the case of the Oakland New Century Club, the reformers' prescriptions for poor people's needs ran against many of the reforming women's personal ideals and political ambitions (Muncy 1991).

In many instances, programs cast the facilities' clientele into conventional gender roles. Although boys, for example, were allowed to enroll in cooking and sewing classes at the Oakland New Century Club, the institution directed lessons in domestic skills, for the most part, at girls and young

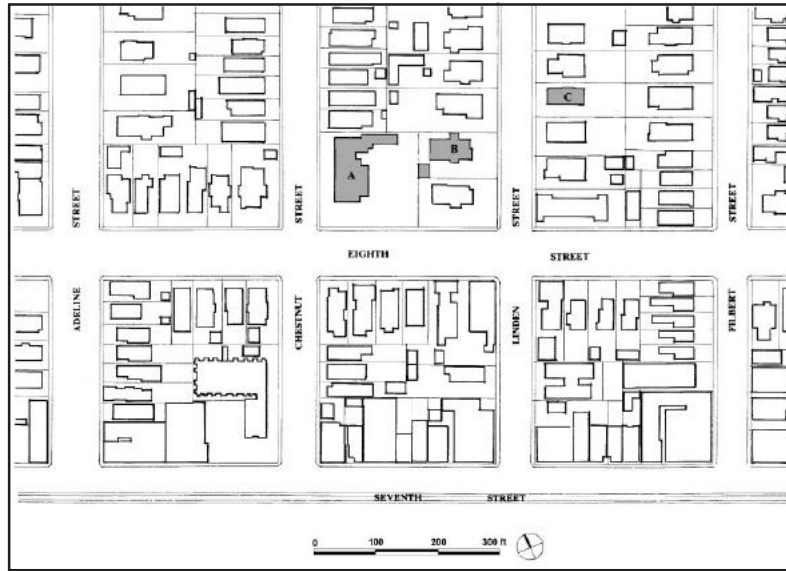


FIGURE 35. St. VINCENT'S DAY HOME/FANNIE WALL CHILDREN'S HOME AND DAY NURSERY. SITE PLAN, 1951. The Sisters of the Holy Family made several additions to St. Vincent's (A), starting in the mid-1920s. They added on a large two-story dining room/classroom addition at the back of the Havens' house, and more toilet facilities and classrooms in the yard. The latter addition required the purchase of the adjacent easterly lot. In the 1920s two organizations run by African American women opened small-scale institutions nearby: the Fannie Wall Home (B), on the same block facing Linden Street; and the Linden Street YWCA (C), also known as the "Colored Y." (Source: 1951 Sanborn Map. Redrawn by Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

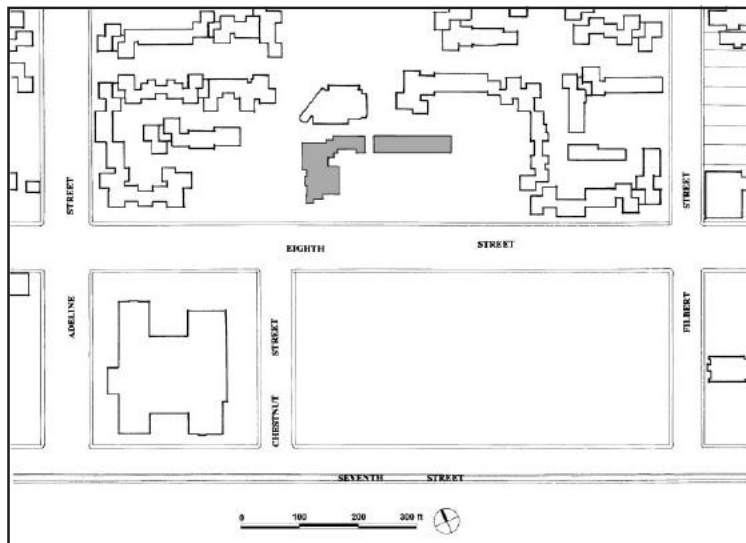
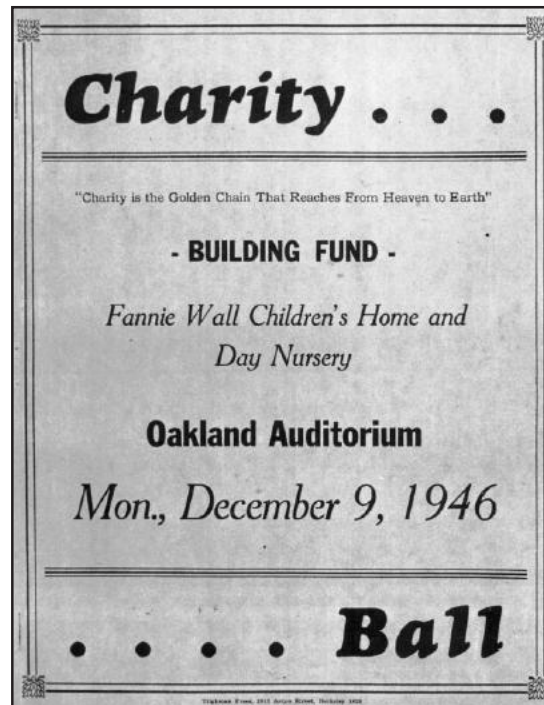


FIGURE 36. St. VINCENT'S DAY HOME. SITE PLAN, 1972. By the early 1970s, new public-housing projects—absorbing Chestnut and Linden streets—surrounded St. Vincent's Day Home. The organization managed to accrue some more property, however, and expanded its facilities to the east, adding on several new classroom wings. The last addition was in 1983. (Source: 1972 Sanborn Map. Redrawn by Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

PLATE 52. “CHARITY . . . BUILDING FUND. . . BALL,” 1946. In the mid-1940s the Fannie Wall Home, under the direction of Chlora Sledge, held a number of charity balls to raise money for its building fund. Growing demands for services, physical problems caused by insufficient maintenance, and difficulties with code compliance pressed the organization during the 1940s, and it decided to open a new building. Local unions and figures prominent in West Oakland’s business community, including Slim Jenkins and Charles “Raincoat” Jones, supported the organization’s building campaign, but the group never managed to come up with enough funds to construct (or purchase) another building. (Photo courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)



women. They taught them how to be better mothers and housekeepers, and, just as importantly, better servants. The groups were not interested in preparing young women for factory jobs, although many would find positions in just such areas. Boys, in turn, learned handicrafts and manual skills to ready them for expected employment in the industrial work force.

Liberal goals notwithstanding, racial bias and ethnic prejudices also informed the programs of some of the institutions. Americanization classes, common in West Oakland’s settlement houses and vacation schools, sought to eradicate immigrant values among young children: the classes stressed the value of American political culture and middle-class domestic habits. In addition, common, and condescending, racial and ethnic stereotypes pepper the local reform literature, which many of Oakland’s elite White women read—indeed, even wrote. These women, at least, disliked no group more than immigrants from Asia, whom they categorized as uncivilized “heathen” in both local magazine articles and private writings.

PLATE 53. SAMPLE APRON, St. MARY'S SCHOOL OF SEWING, after 1908. Teaching young girls to sew was an important part of the curricula at all of the day homes run by the Sisters of the Holy Family. At St. Mary's Day Home in San Francisco, the sisters collected examples of model craftsmanship and stitched them into a bound notebook, presumably used for instruction. The kinds of projects on which girls learned to sew also served didactic purposes—thus the incorporation into the book of a miniaturized apron, sewn by hand and not by machine. The sisters also used paper-folding, weaving, and cutting exercises to teach principles of pattern-making, color, and form. Examples were also collected in scrapbooks. (Credit: School of Sewing, St. Mary's Day Home; photo by Karana Hattersley-Drayton)

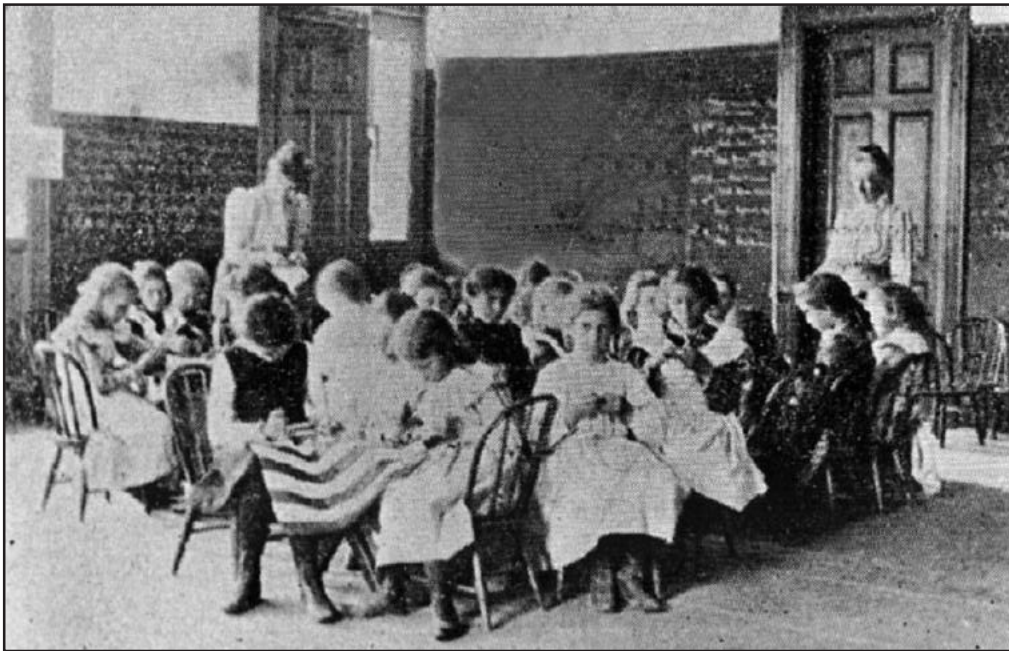


PLATE 54. “‘MAKING THE FLAG’—SEWING CLASS, GARFIELD VACATION SCHOOL,” 1900. The Oakland Club initiated vacation schools at two public schools in Oakland, first at Tompkins in 1899 and then at Garfield the following summer. The schools provided organized care for school-age children during the summer months, using a combination of summer-camp and educational programs. One reason the Oakland Club supported the vacation schools was to help Americanize immigrant children. This picture, in which young girls are improving their sewing skills by stitching together an American flag, shows the important role of material culture in the educational process. (Source: *Domestic Science Monthly* August 1900:118)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

CHARITY IN AN INDUSTRIAL CITY

Neighborhood. Manufacturing and railroad district of small crowded dwellings. There are no parks or playgrounds, and the neighborhood contains thirty-five saloons. The people are Italian, Spanish, Mexican, French, English, Portuguese, Negro, Irish, German, Scandinavian, etc. Much child labor with long hours and hard work tend to bring about distressing moral conditions [Woods and Kennedy 1911:14].

This portrait of West Oakland appeared in Robert Woods and Albert Kennedy's influential and well-known text, *Handbook of Settlements*. Woods and Kennedy, prominent liberal reformers and settlement workers, published their book in 1911—at the height of the Progressive era—to make the case that small-scale social-service institutions were instrumental in relieving urban poverty, procuring social change, and effecting environmental improvement in cities across the United States. Hence, the description of West Oakland, included as part of their discussion of the settlement run by the Oakland New Century Club, described the district's landscape selectively to communicate a timely reform message. In emphasizing the quantity of small crowded houses built in very close proximity to industries and factories, the presence of many saloons, the lack of recreational facilities, and the substandard working conditions, the text tried to build support for a range of reforms popular in the period: zoning, temperance, urban playgrounds, domestic reform, and protective labor legislation.

However timely Woods and Kennedy's message and however "progressive" its intent, the authors' presentation of the West Oakland landscape draws on longstanding approaches in the liberal tradition to social welfare and urban reform (Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991). Historically in British and American cities, first charity workers and then social reformers had stressed the connection of environmental improvement with the relief of urban poverty. Following in this tradition, the description of West Oakland brings to the foreground the central place the environment takes in working people's lives. It does so, however, by directing attention not to the setting as a whole but to physical attributes and social qualities that reformers found troublesome. It strongly hints that practical, material solutions to environmental and social problems are desirable, and possible. It suggests that an improved urban landscape would help manage the district's diverse working-class community—in effect producing a more moral, responsible, and socially unified American citizenry. In addition, the text implies, by virtue of its inclusion in a book about settlements, the importance of charitable and philanthropic institutions in effecting reform.

Since the middle of the 19th century, such understandings of charitable purpose, environmental improvement, and the value of philanthropic institutions had conditioned the response of Oaklanders, especially well-to-do residents, to the newly industrializing landscapes in the western part of the city. In the 1850s and 1860s, West Oakland was a thinly settled suburb that was catapulted into intensive development after the Central Pacific Railroad selected the area as the western terminus of the company's transcontinental route (Bagwell 1982). The company's decision to locate in West Oakland spurred urban expansion and growth, drawing to the mixed-use district other industrial employers and a racially and ethnically diverse working-class community. Eva Carlin, in an article in the *Overland*

Monthly, described the West Oakland community as “hardworking foreigners, with a fair sprinkling of Americans attracted thither by the exigencies of their occupation or the cheapness of the rents” (1900a:425).

West Oakland was not a “slum” during the second half of the 19th century; indeed, as Carlin wrote, “no part of the locality [was] given over to great hives of helplessness or wretchedness.” But, starting in the mid-1880s and lasting well into the 20th century, the neighborhood attracted the attention of reformers and philanthropists by the diversity and poverty of its residents, the ad hoc form of the physical surroundings, and fears of disease in such crowded settings. Observers cast as problematic the poorer district’s heterogeneous landscape, perceiving it to be “a district of great ugliness,” poorly formed, improperly inhabited, and somewhat dangerous (Carlin 1900a:425).

It is an unsavory spot, in moral and material aspects, and gives weight to the statement that the modern city is constant confession of social failure. Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine the city sitting in the center and judging all the inhabitants, placing the fortunate, the powerful and prosperous on its right hand among all things desirable, and saying to all others, “Sit thou on my left” [Carlin 1900b:247].

Labor unrest, crime, prostitution, and a high consumption of alcohol also troubled many of the city’s better-off citizens, although West Oakland, “on the whole,” was “a law-abiding workingman’s district” (Carlin 1900a:425).

The Oakland Benevolent Society and the Ladies Relief Society

Initially, charity workers expressed most directly their material and moral concerns in the nonsectarian societies founded in the late 1860s and 1870s to assist the indigent. The charitable groups, headed by the city’s affluent citizens, chose a customary manner in which to do so. They tried to remove beggars and vagrants from the city’s streets in an attempt to distinguish the deserving from the undeserving poor.

In 1869, the year the railroad arrived in West Oakland, the Bigelows and other prosperous families organized the Oakland Benevolent Society, a secular citywide philanthropic association formed “to suppress street begging by relieving [only] those really worthy of charity.” The society appealed for funds in the city’s first directory, suggesting that “if the people of Oakland contribute to [this] fund, they will be free from any moral obligation to give alms to paupers” asking for assistance in the city’s public spaces (Oakland city directory 1870:53). The results of the Benevolent Society’s effort were not researched. They must have met with some success, as the Bigelows went on to support other philanthropic endeavors in Oakland, principally the Ladies Relief Society.

In 1871 a group of women “from all religious denominations and of varying social rank” had organized the Ladies Relief Society to aid Chicagoans after the Great Fire—sewing and sending clothes to the “thousands made homeless and destitute.” In 1872 Elijah Bigelow gave the group a valuable piece of property, at the corner of Fourteenth and Franklin streets. The society had “resolved to organize permanently for the alleviation of suffering and of want” and used the Bigelows’ gift to open Oakland’s first home for orphaned children and elderly women. Selling the Bigelow lot gave the

group enough capital to purchase a large house and 10 acres of land on the outskirts of the city. In later decades, separate buildings for women and children would be constructed on the site (Clark 1939:42; Elliott 1885:n.p.; Oakland city directory 1880:70).

Despite the initial support from wealthy patrons, the society struggled to establish a sound financial footing in the years following the 1873 depression. Although the group had managed to pay off the mortgage, it lacked operating funds. House-to-house solicitations turned up mostly small cash donations and in-kind contributions: “Three unknown donors gave the home three cows, neighbors sent them an occasional pig, some chickens, much fruit, bundles of clothes and old furniture” (Clark 1939:42). The First Congregational Church and Anthony Chabot also helped out; the latter, the director of the newly formed Contra Costa Water Company, provided a “year’s supply of water free.” In addition, the police department decided to donate all fines collected from vagrants and drunks, some 50 dollars a month. “What is more fitting than the fines collected from drunkenness and vagabondry should help support the children of drunkards and vagabonds,” the department’s annual report noted. The Ladies Relief Society accepted the money but “sorrowfully deplore[d] the source” (65th and 66th *Annual Reports* of the Ladies’ Relief Society in Clark 1939:42-43).

The manner in which another group supported the Ladies Relief Society in the mid-1880s demonstrates the extent to which Oakland’s women used material culture to coordinate charitable purpose and moral instruction. The Women’s Christian Association ran a free Saturday sewing school at the Market Street Kindergarten, located in a chapel adjacent to the First Congregational Church. The ladies required their young charges to spend four consecutive Saturday afternoons sewing patchwork as an introduction to the school’s program of instruction. The young children—mostly girls but also some boys, put in a separate corner of the room—worked on their sewing “over-’n-over” and, upon successful completion, were rewarded with a prize.

After four Saturdays of patchwork, the children may chose whatever garments they want, and a ticket having on it a Bible verse is given to each little one to be learned and recited before receiving the garment on the next Saturday [Bamford 1884:58].

The garments had been made by more skilled children in the classes, using donated fabric and thread. Older women quilted the younger children’s patches together, contributing the blankets to the Old Ladies’ Home and the Home for Little Children.

The Associated Charities

In 1884 another organization, the Associated Charities, undertook to coordinate distribution of relief in the city, also with the intention of suppressing the public expression of poverty. Eventually the group absorbed the work of its predecessor, the Oakland Benevolent Society. Although led by John McLean, the minister of the First Congregational Church, the new group modeled itself after nonsectarian British and American organizations in declaring its object to be “the improvement of the condition of the poor through the concurrent and harmonious action of the different charities of Oakland, both official and private.” Like its colleagues in other cities, the group did not itself dispense aid. Rather, it evaluated applicants’ needs and directed worthy candidates to the appropriate neighborhood or citywide society. The group anticipated that such a coordinated effort would “protect the community from imposture and fraudulent begging” and “encourage thrift, self-dependence, and industry, and better and more sanitary

ways of living among the poor, through friendly intercourse, advice, and sympathy” (Associated Charities 1884:1).

EARLY INSTITUTIONS IN WEST OAKLAND

In the 1880s and 1890s, the nonsectarian charities active in West Oakland seem to have operated independently of the Associated Charities’ press to organize into a unified body the city’s philanthropic groups. The local groups, however, shared the citywide organization’s vision of the purposes of benevolence. Although the specific content of programs varied between organizations and over time, most groups active in West Oakland expected charity’s purpose to be ameliorative: that is, they expected to assist needy people worthy of aid and, in so doing, to lead the poor towards an improved life—morally, socially, and materially.

West Oakland certainly had its share of monumental, purpose-built charitable institutions. Starting in the 1880s, however, several organizations headed by women began to dot the district with another kind of institutional form—small-scale, social-service establishments. They expected to temper more successfully the worst effects of industrial capitalism, at least for the deserving poor, through institutional settings that were less pretentious and more homelike in appearance. Although not monumental in character, at least initially, the settings challenged the domestic habits of West Oakland’s poor and presented in a direct manner alternative spatial and social ideologies. Indeed, the design of the institutions demonstrated potent attitudes towards the urban landscape that women would continue to hold into the next century in articulating a broad movement for social and environmental reform.

The West Oakland Home

Thus, when Rebecca McWade decided in 1887 to found the West Oakland Home—the first orphanage in the neighborhood—she located the institution in a rented house on Campbell Street, near the corner of Ninth (then Taylor) Street. Mrs. McWade’s sewing circle had informally helped out children in the area, and the group turned to an institutional setting as requests for assistance increased. Although the members of the sewing circle were well-off, they selected—apparently without qualms—an everyday domestic setting. The dwelling, located on the lot since before 1877, had been improved during the intervening years and accommodated, at first without major alteration, the institution’s clientele: 12 foundlings, orphans, and abandoned children (Alameda County Block Books v.d.; Clark 1939:58; Oakland city directories v.d.; Woods 1994a:189-190).

A year or two later Mrs. McWade turned to other wealthy acquaintances, Mrs. Charles Crocker and Mrs. William H. Crocker, for funds to help pay for the institution’s expansion. In 1890 the West Oakland Home, presided over by Mrs. William H. Crocker since the preceding year, purchased the original site and the lot next door and expanded the operation. By 1891 an addition costing \$8,500 permitted the orphanage to accommodate more than 80 residents, making it one of the most substantial charitable establishments in the city (Alameda County Block Books v.d.; Oakland city directories v.d.; Clark 1939:58; Woods 1994:189-190). An institutional character had come to distance the building from its domestic origins; yet middle-class domestic values had also shaped the building’s appearance and infused the establishment’s operations. Indeed, the daily routine stressed the value of housekeeping and

sanitation, as Woods (1994a:190) notes, to emphasize the importance of order and personal discipline. A commentator wrote in the *Oakland Enquirer*:

Most interesting are the dormitories with their trim iron bedsteads, pretty coverlets and walls decorated with children's fancies and the bathrooms, where each boy and girl is scrubbed to shining purity of scalp and skin every Saturday. The plumbing is the best and severe rules of sanitation are closely followed. . . . From the rising bell at 6:30, when the larger children assist the dressing, washing and brushing the hair and teeth of the younger ones, to the hour of going to bed, discipline prevails. All who can, assist by turns in the household work tasks and in the sewing and mending [21 February 1894, quoted in Woods 1994a:190].

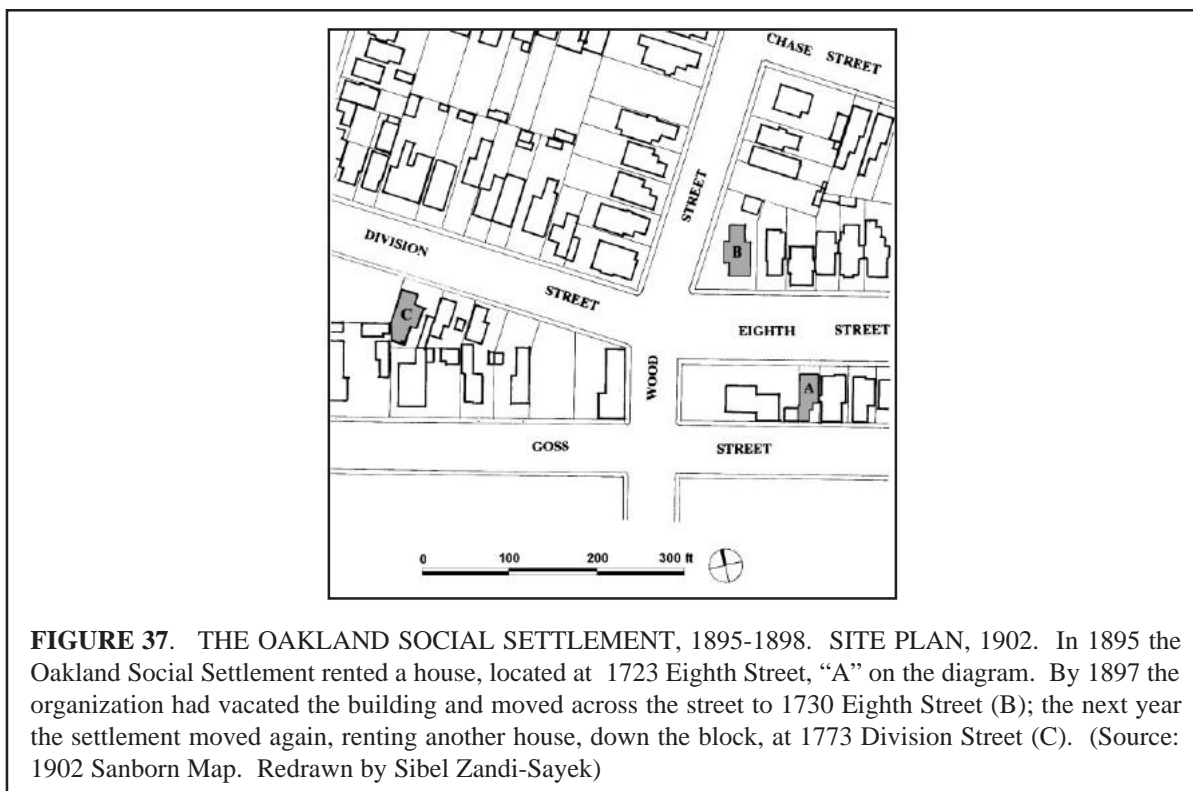
The Atheneum

In 1888 the Women's Industrial and Education Union, a local group supported by the Crocker and Hearst families, opened another kind of philanthropic endeavor, the West Oakland Atheneum. In this case, site-selection strategies demonstrated aptly the Union's didactic purpose. The group wanted to put the area's boys and young men in "a better social standing" by offering them instructional recreation. Thus the organization renovated the top floor of Hansen's Hall, at the corner of Goss and Wood—one of the area's more popular meeting places—and located their establishment in the newly refurbished space. The establishment contained a "gymnasium, reading room and an educational school," but only the gymnasium appears to have flourished. The Atheneum shut down a few years later and the gym passed into commercial ownership soon after, much to the ladies' chagrin (*Oakland Enquirer* 5 January 1889; Woods 1994a:188-189).

THE FIRST SOCIAL SETTLEMENT IN WEST OAKLAND

It was just around the corner from Hansen's Hall that the Reverend Frank E. Hinckley decided in 1895 to open the Manse Polytechnic, West Oakland's first settlement house. The neighborhood had experienced the effects of a nationwide depression and a bruising strike by railroad workers the year before and, apparently, Hinckley thought it made sense to locate the new philanthropic facility near a prominent site for union meeting and activity. Initially located in a rented house on Eighth Street, the organization was commonly known as "the Manse"; a few years later, it would change its name to the Oakland Social Settlement (Figure 37).

Reverend Hinckley ran the organization for just under a year—"practically single-handed," the *Chicago Commons* noted—after which he turned it over to an "association of ladies" headed by Sarah Horton, a director of the Horton School (a prominent girl's school at Perkins and Palm streets), a member of several women's clubs, and active in prominent philanthropic organizations. Horton presided over the Manse [Settlement] Association, the auxiliary women's group that managed the institution's finances. She also lived for a period of years at the settlement, working with the head residents—among them Mary Norton and Alice Coburn, a social worker from Chicago—and other nonresident workers to develop the settlement's programs and manage day-to-day operations (*Chicago Commons* 1896:13; Davis 1914:389; Lee 1897; Woods 1994a:191-192; Woods and Kennedy 1911:14-15).



“It Is Not a Charity; It Is Not an Institution; It Is a Home”

In modeling the Manse after Toynbee Hall in London and Hull House in Chicago, Hinckley and Horton introduced a new and influential kind of social-service establishment to the West Oakland community. Independent of any institutional or religious affiliation, the settlement “endeavor[ed] to promote civil, industrial, and individual justice and peace,” as the *Chicago Commons* quoted from the organization’s first annual report. Justice and peace were certainly appropriate goals in 1895, just after a great depression and the railroad strike had racked the community. But, despite such a charged political atmosphere, the interest in promoting industrial democracy did not lead the group, at this time, to mount political campaigns or demand comprehensive programs of social and environmental reform. Rather, as the association’s secretary Elsie Lee eloquently described it in 1897, the settlement stressed the importance of exposing working people to middle-class values and morals, especially an enriched family life and cultural improvement.

A settlement is a home in one of those more crowded parts of the city where those who have had the advantages of education, moral training, travel and all uplifting influences, may keep “open house” every day in the week for those who have had fewer or none of these advantages. It is not a charity; it is not an institution; it is a home. And its inmates have for their friends the people of the neighborhood who have need of them—men, women, and children [Lee 1897].

Lee explained that the settlement tried to ease the daily lives of working people by arranging home visits and offering a variety of clubs and classes for boys and girls, a kindergarten, a library, a stamp

club, a housekeeper's cooking class, and lectures for adults. Initially the settlement also offered drawing and music classes and sponsored an afternoon literary hour, but it is not clear how long these latter programs lasted (*Chicago Commons* 1896:13; Lee 1897).

The settlement welcomed as “friends” all who came to visit; the public programs were situated in an unassuming homelike setting, as Lee noted, to reinforce this aspect of its message. Yet disciplinary intentions and conventional views of gender relations shaped the content and character of programs and classes for young people, especially in regard to spatial and material issues. For example, Lee pointed out that a special concern for young boys led the settlement to organize a “citizens club of boys,” whose primary activity was keeping clean the areas around the settlement and the boys' own homes. Not surprisingly, this was a relatively unpopular activity; Lee hoped that other classes in woodworking, based on the new sloyd curriculum, would “attract and help many more of the neighborhood boys than [had] yet been reached.” It was expected that girls would attend classes in cooking, sewing, and housekeeping, preparing them to be good servants and mothers (*Chicago Commons* 1896:13; Lee 1897).

The Manse Association

The organization appears to have been chronically short of funds in its early years, moving between three different rental houses on Eighth Street between 1895 and 1899. The Manse Association tried to raise money for the settlement through the sale of memberships, which cost 25 cents a month. Indeed Elsie Lee's article on the Manse appeared in a special edition of the *Enquirer*, issued on Christmas Eve 1897. The author closed her article with a revealing appeal for financial assistance: “The Manse must have more money at once,” she wrote. “[A]n additional resident is sorely needed. . . . Then, too, more workers are needed so that the present classes may be handled more effectively and new ones formed.” Lee went on to “cordially” invite all readers to visit the social settlement. In so doing, she stressed the personal commitment demanded by settlement life:

All interested in this settlement work are cordially invited to visit the Manse, 1773 Eighth Street, at any time. This home should be looked upon as a center from which may emanate the best influences possible; and these influences can be exerted only through men and women who care personally for their brother man—care, that is to say, not only to toss him “the piece of gold,” but “to share with another's need” [Lee 1897].

Lee's article was one of several included under the heading, “Work of Women in Oakland. Some of the Many Clubs, Societies, and Charitable Institutions Conducted by Them—a Very Creditable Showing.”

The Oakland Social Settlement

The group managed to raise enough funds to move in 1899 into a larger building, at the corner of Third and Linden streets. With the move, the organization also changed its name to the Oakland Social Settlement. The change of location put the organization on the same block as Tompkins School and almost adjacent to the railroad (Figure 38).

Although the large-scale building shown on the Sanborn map suggests that the Oakland Social Settlement constructed a new purpose-built structure, an article in the *Oakland Enquirer* describing



FIGURE 38. THE OAKLAND SOCIAL SETTLEMENT. SITE PLAN, 1912. The Oakland Social Settlement moved in 1898 or 1899 to a new location, around the corner from Tompkins School and scarcely a block north of the railroad tracks. The group first rented, then purchased, a house at the northwest corner of Third and Linden streets and made substantial renovations and additions to the property, including the construction of a new gymnasium. The outline of the resulting building gives little indication of its origins in domestic architecture. Tompkins School is the large building located at the north end of the block on Fifth. By 1912 the expansion of the railroad yard brought the tracks into the direct view of the settlement. (Source: 1902 and 1912 Sanborn maps. Redrawn by Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

the settlement's new location indicates otherwise. Instead, it moved into a "large two story building, formerly occupied as a residence," and made extensive alterations and additions to the dwelling (Walsh 1899). Although the *Enquirer's* reporter, J.W. Walsh, stated that the settlement intended to rent the house on the Linden Street site for five years, the city block books show that the Oakland Social Settlement owned the building as early as 1900. Indeed, it would have been difficult to substantially remodel the interior of a rental property or add on the extensive new facilities Walsh outlined without ownership of the property.

Walsh's portrayal of the new establishment in the *Enquirer* acknowledged the continued importance of a homelike setting to the settlement's work. His report does not describe a regimen of personal discipline as did, for example, the description of the West Oakland Home appearing in the newspaper a few years earlier (cited above). Still Walsh, like earlier reformers, anticipated that the design of the settlement would have a positive instructional effect. The description of the building emphasized the differences between the institution and other houses in the everyday landscape in West Oakland, pointing out especially the division of the renovated building into specialized spaces, organized discretely by function. In addition Walsh stressed that the new design suited, especially, the tastes of the middle-class women and men who resided and/or worked there.

The upper floor, containing seven rooms, was transformed into a comfortable and tastefully furnished habitation for those in charge of the [settlement] work. The lower floor

was fitted up as a general audience room, music room, library and dancing hall, while an annex was provided with the various equipments of gymnastic work [Walsh 1899].

The move to the new site permitted the settlement to expand its programs and join forces with other organizations, including the Neighborhood Club, the Friendly Hour Mothers' Club, the Good Will Boys' Club, and the Good Will Kindergarten (Walsh 1899; Woods and Kennedy 1911:14). A Mrs. Richardson had organized, and financially supported for nine years, the latter three organizations, aided in her efforts by the Reverend McLean, president of the Associated Charities. Apparently, Mrs. Richardson decided to move only the Boys' Club to the settlement's new location, believing it would be more successful at that site. Although affiliated with the settlement, the other two clubs remained in their original location at Third and Brush streets (Walsh 1899).

Despite Mrs. Richardson's optimism about the site's appeal, workers at the Oakland Social Settlement remained concerned about the apparent lack of community interest in its programs. Eva Carlin noted that the settlement developed "its first hold among the adult portion of the neighborhood" only after the resident workers protested the condition of sidewalks in the neighborhood and managed to get them fixed (Carlin 1900a:428). But forging connections with teenagers and young adults continued to be difficult. The settlement hoped that in the new location "the younger element" would "attend regularly, both day and evening, the various exercises present." Thus the group welcomed especially the addition of a bigger library, expanded to some 300 volumes, and the gymnasium. The latter space allowed the settlement to sponsor a new organization in the neighborhood, the Eureka Athletic Club, composed of young men between the ages of 17 and 30. The settlement was particularly proud of the group's accomplishments, claiming, according to Walsh, that its members were gaining "proficiency" in athletics. The young men also organized weekly dances, undoubtedly alcohol free, and took "cheerfully" upon themselves "the burden of caring for the rooms and property of the Settlement, thus becoming a very useful adjunct" to the organization's work (Walsh 1899).

Philanthropy and Activism

The description of the Oakland Social Settlement included in Woods and Kennedy's *Handbook of Settlements* indicates that the group had expanded its original purpose by 1911. Like many other reform organizations, the Oakland Social Settlement still focused on improving personal ethics and family life, but it couched reform arguments in broader social and environmental terms. Thus the organization stressed the importance of replacing "the music of isolated voices" with "the volume and strength of the chorus," of fashioning "better the civic conditions of our city," and of helping "solve the industrial problems of the day" (Woods and Kennedy 1911:14).

In subsequent years settlement workers and other reformers would translate such idealistic terms into pragmatic programs, carried out not only in private institutions, but also in Oakland's civic arena. It is important to remember, however, that earlier in the city's history other kinds of women's organizations had stressed the importance of political action and pressed for reform. In the 1880s and early 1890s, the Working Women's Club and local chapters of the Women's Christian Temperance Union may have conceptualized reform goals in middle-class terms, but their activities demonstrated to many Oakland women the worthiness of a broad social critique and the importance of political pressure in effecting reform goals. So too did the WCTU's national convention, held in Oakland in 1891; the Pacific Women's Congress of 1894, organized, in part, through the efforts of Oakland's

Charlotte Perkins Stetson (later Gilman); and the railroad strike of 1894, which occasioned the formation of the Ladies Cooperative Aid Society (Woods 1994a:177-183).

Twentieth-century female reformers would build on these traditions, marrying an interest in politics and charitable good works with a high estimation of middle-class domestic values in order to produce a determined environmental and social activism (Crane 1912). Indeed, after the onset of the 20th century, most of West Oakland's female reformers continued to form new institutions in the expectation of aiding the poor and effecting personal improvement. Many also expected to support—if not launch themselves—campaigns for civic reform, municipal housekeeping, racial equality, women's suffrage, and larger-scale environmental improvement—most especially, better sanitation, playgrounds, and schools.

THE OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB: A CASE STUDY

The formation of the Oakland New Century Club made explicit in ideological and practical terms the connection between 20th-century reformers and 19th-century charities. The institution was rooted in another organization active in West Oakland: the West Oakland Free Kindergarten Association, founded in 1888 to support the kindergarten Elizabeth Betts had opened in the neighborhood two years earlier. Betts's action demonstrated a determined environmental activism to the group of women who formed the Oakland New Century Club; they lauded Betts's choice of site—a building purported to be a former “liquor-saloon,” a move that took on almost apocalyptic proportions for the New Century Club women. The women also found instructional—indeed, inspirational—Betts's personal commitment to charitable work in a neighborhood that Eva Carlin had called “this miserable and neglected region of Oakland” (Carlin 1900b:148).

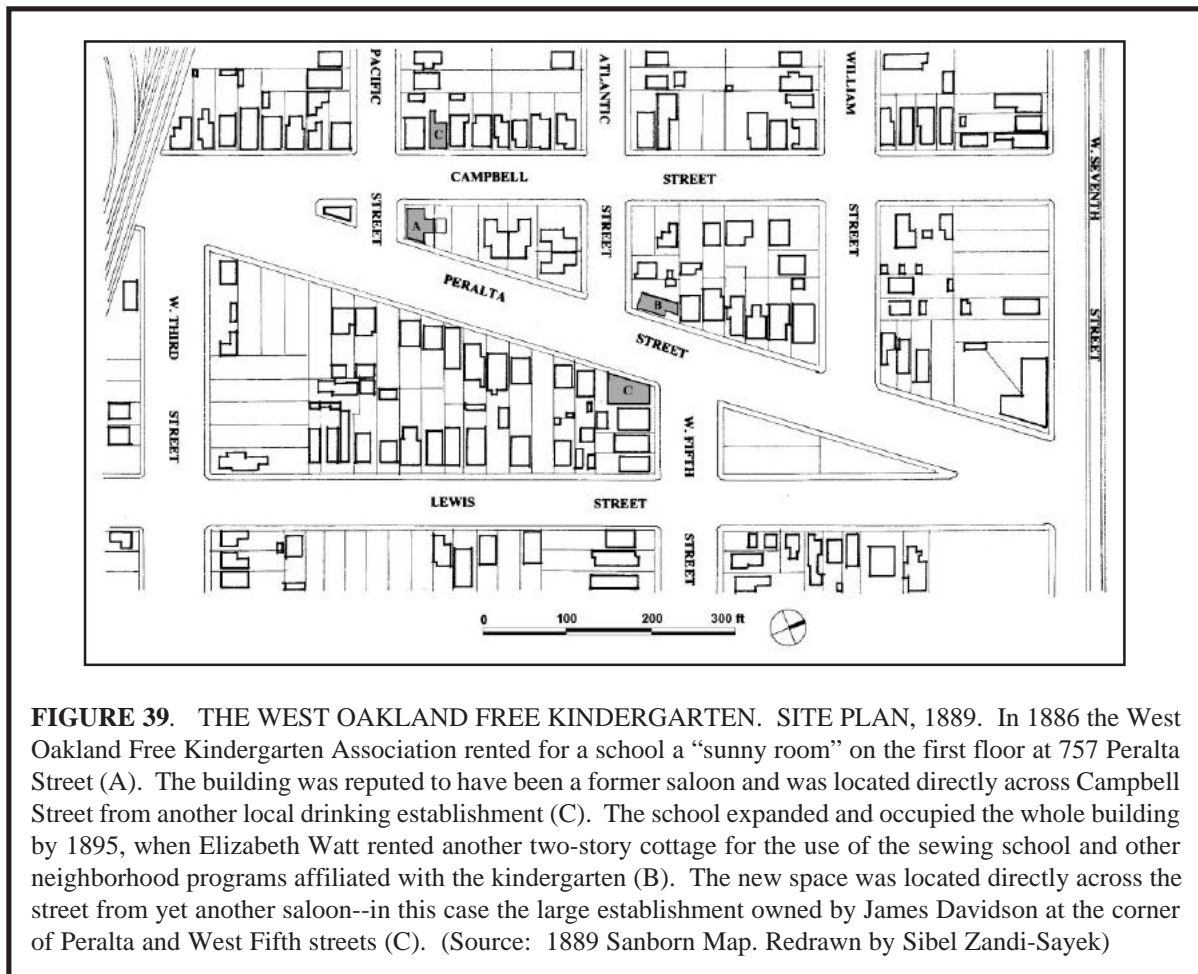
THE WEST OAKLAND FREE KINDERGARTEN

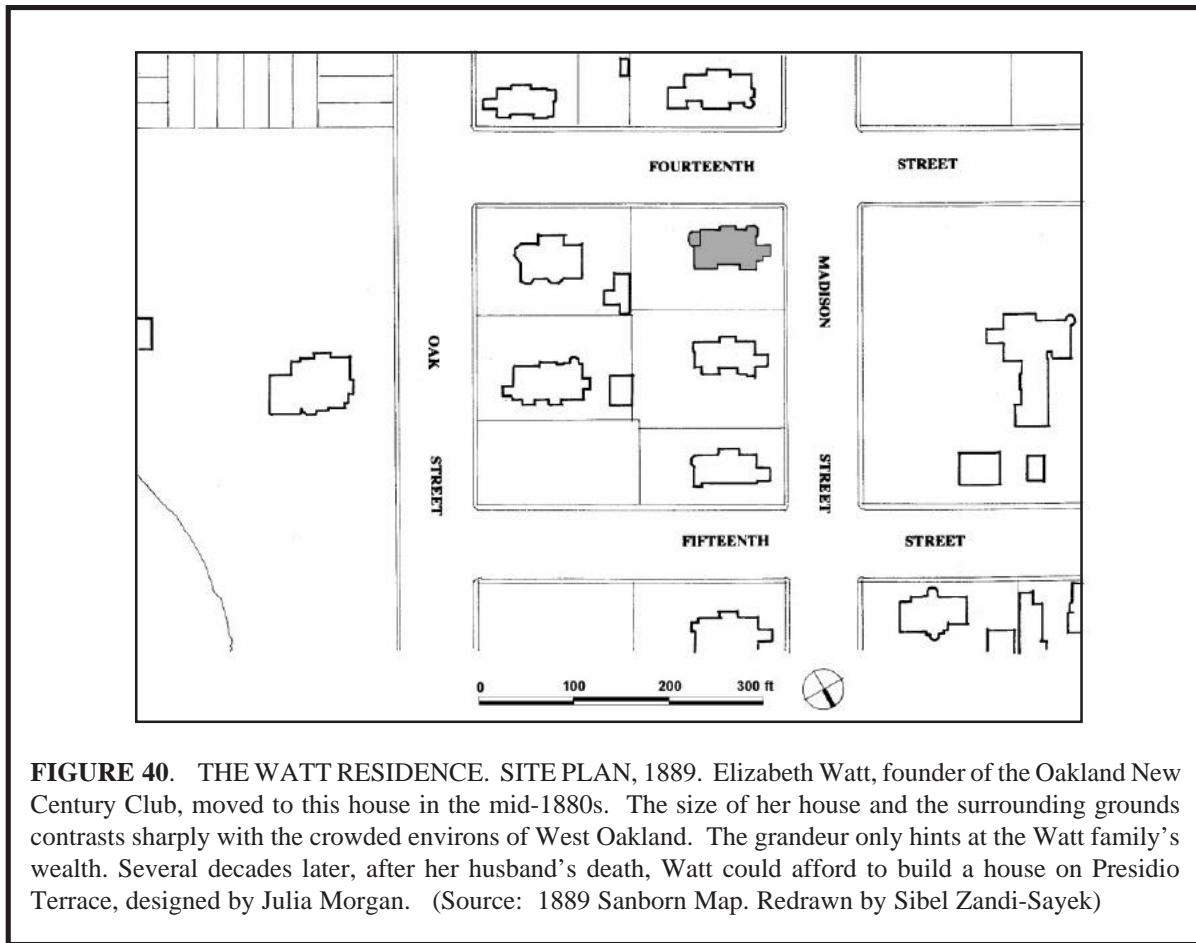
Elizabeth Betts left no personal description of her reasons for coming to West Oakland and opening the free kindergarten, by then one of several in Oakland. Probably volunteer work as a “friendly visitor” introduced the young woman to the neighborhood and inspired her to “fearlessly” set up the kindergarten program, which would “beckon . . . children before it should be too late to influence their lives” (Carlin 1900b:148). For the purpose Betts rented the first floor of a two-story wood-framed building, located scarcely a full block north of the railroad yards. A “sunny room” in the south-facing building was used for the kindergarten (*Oakland Enquirer* 13 April 1891; Figure 39).

The claim of later accounts that Betts had turned a “liquor-saloon” into the neighborhood's new school for young children appears to be accurate (Carlin 1900b:248; Oakland New Century Club [ONCC] 1901; Watt 1925:112). The building's prominent location (at the intersection of Pacific, Campbell, and Peralta streets), and the fact that it occupied the full lot, had a large canopy, and two corner entries give credence to the story. Betts and the ladies who followed in her footsteps hoped the siting of the kindergarten would serve a didactic purpose: to help to eradicate working peoples' consumption of alcohol. But two saloons remained in clear view of the new school and many others were within walking distance of the educational establishment. The numbers would only increase in subsequent years (Sanborn 1889, 1902, 1912).

Betts ran the school on her own for a year or two, raising enough funds to pay the rent through individual donations. Initially about 30 children attended the school. In 1888 a group of Oakland women, headed by Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Rice (the latter married to the pastor at the Second Congregational Church) became interested in Betts's project. They engaged the interest of a number of other local women, including Elizabeth Dewey Leighton Watt, and formed the West Oakland Free Kindergarten Association, with a Board of Managers dedicated to running the school (Carlin 1900b:248-249; Watt 1925:111-113). Born in New England, mother of four children, and married to a wealthy businessman and former state politician, Watt brought to the organization financial resources, a very forceful personality, and a passionate commitment to charitable work (Figure 40). The Board of Managers helped to put the school on a more secure financial footing: Fund raisers at the First Congregational Church and successful solicitation of regular monthly subscriptions from wealthy donors enabled the kindergarten to hire first one, then two assistant teachers. The *Oakland Enquirer* reported that 75 children were enrolled in 1892, "with an average attendance of 56" (19 March 1892:2). But the school remained in chronic need of funds and additional space, in large measure because the numbers of children attending the program kept increasing.

The structure of more conventional philanthropic institutions may have dictated some aspects of the kindergarten's organization, but in other regards the school remained quite informal, its ad hoc





growth prompted by increasing class size and changes in curriculum. In the early 1890s, both the school's purpose and its programs started to broaden, as individual board members initiated classes and clubs for older children and adults. In all likelihood, the labor turmoil in the neighborhood, although rarely discussed in the reform texts, demonstrated to the organization the need for an expansion of purpose. By the time Watt became president of the Association in 1894, Elizabeth Betts had left the organization to get married and the school had hired a new teacher, Winnie McFarland. Watt and McFarland opened, with volunteer labor, a Sewing School (for young girls) and a Mothers' Meeting. The organization contemplated the addition of a Boys' Club and sewing classes for older girls, the latter using paid instruction. Watt strongly supported the shift towards settlement work, the move to offer a broader range of classes, and efforts to keep the organization nonsectarian: she knew about Hull House; had met, and admired, Jane Addams; and repeatedly visited in 1893 the Woman's Pavilion at World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where the Kitchen Garden Class exhibit especially interested her (Watt 1900, 1925:111-112).

SUNSHINE CORNER AND THE WEST OAKLAND SETTLEMENT

By 1895 the association had rented both floors of the kindergarten's building and established, at Watt's expense, a small settlement upstairs (Carlin 1900b:249; Watt 1925:111-113). Watt even hired

a young woman, Miss Emery, who “carried on ‘settlement work’ for six months,” after which “she returned east” (ONCC 1901). Distinct from the West Oakland Free Kindergarten Association, no constitution or articles of incorporation initially bound the settlement into a formal philanthropic institution or women’s club. Watt and the group of women who worked with her simply called the informal association of clubs and classes “a settlement” or, on occasion, “the West Oakland Settlement.” In the community the group had an altogether different name—it was known as Sunshine Corner.

Sometime in 1895, probably just after Emery’s departure, the group elected to physically separate the kindergarten from the settlement for what seem to be pragmatic, not ideological, reasons. The kindergarten needed more room, and Mrs. Watt decided to move the sewing school into an altogether different building, having assumed directorship of this specific program in addition to presiding over the association. In effect, the decision turned over the entire building at the corner of Pacific and Peralta, still a rental property, to the school for young children; the Mothers’ Meeting and the Boys’ Club followed the Sewing School to the new location, just one block north on Peralta Street. Eventually, institutional distinction would accompany spatial separation, when the West Oakland Free Kindergarten affiliated at the century’s turn with another group, the Federated Kindergartens. The organization of the settlement and the kindergarten continued to overlap, however, McFarland especially expressing a strong loyalty to Watt (ONCC 1912). The kindergarten shared the settlement’s space, when needed, and Mrs. Watt continued to serve on the kindergarten’s board.



PLATE 55. THE WEST OAKLAND FREE KINDERGARTEN, after 1901. The West Oakland Free Kindergarten and West Oakland Settlement continued their close association after 1900, when the latter group formed a separate organization, the Oakland New Century Club. Sometime after 1901, the kindergarten held a Christmas party in the club’s library. (Source: The Oakland New Century Club, *Annual Greeting*, 1912:9)

In selecting a location for the settlement, Watt paralleled Betts's didactic site-selection strategies of about a decade before. She rented for the organization the first floor of a cottage dwelling, just one block up Peralta Street from the kindergarten, that faced the large saloon owned by James Davidson (see "Five Buildings on One Corner," this volume). "The Settlement is a barrier to the establishment of any more saloons in the neighborhood," Carlin wrote in an optimistic tone. "There are instances of fathers sobered and led to provide for their little ones, and mothers reclaimed from lives of idleness and hopelessness" (Carlin 1900b:257). The small wooden house, initially a one-story building, appears to have been constructed with a four-room plan; a subsequent addition extended the house into the side yard, and the house was also raised to two stories.

In the new location Watt maintained her position as leader of the group. She initiated new programs, found spaces for them to occupy, and seems to have absorbed many of the capital costs associated with building renovation and expansion. Indeed, within a year of the move up the street, Watt took on additional space in the Peralta Street building to make room upstairs for a new club, the Working Girls' [Recreation] Club. The formation of a salvage bureau took care of the institution's operating costs: local women purchased, at the Mothers' Meeting, wealthier people's cast-off clothes and shoes, and the proceeds were donated to running the settlement. "Every article," Carlin commented, "is neatly wrapped up and tied, so that the transactions assume the dignity of store purchases" (Carlin 1900b:256). As informal as the organization was and as casual and ad hoc its manner of physical expansion, the design of curriculum and interior space in the Peralta Street building endorsed strict social discipline and reinforced, for the most part, conventional views of gender roles. The classes met at regular hours, in specific rooms, and children were separated, for the most part, by age and sex. Young boys were permitted to take cooking and sewing classes, but girls of any age rarely entered male domains in the building.

Even though the group did not yet own the structure, it made major alterations to the building to express a distinct set of spatial values. Renovations were modeled on fashionable Arts and Crafts domestic interiors that stressed harmony and simplicity, with coordinated and artistic wallpaper, decorative objects, furnishings and tableware (Clark 1986; Wright 1980). In addition, the design of each space taught explicit spatial and social lessons. For instance, the Working Girls' Recreation Club met in a "neat room" on the building's upper floor, expressly "fitted out" to teach new habits to older girls who lived in the neighborhood. Many of the young women worked outside the home and their values dismayed the settlement's workers and, presumably, their employers.

They are clerks or cash-girls in candy-stores and printing offices; they work in cotton-mills and shoddy-mills. There are girls who make things, girls who sew things, and girls who sell things. . . . They dress in "the style," following its extreme vagaries, and generally boast of a "steady" to escort them to the cheap theaters and the frequent dances held in town [Carlin 1900a:426].

Although not expressly stated, part of the intent in forming this particular club was to challenge the growing appeal to working girls of the neighborhood's dancehalls and saloons (Peiss 1986). In the eyes of the reformers, the club's artistic and comfortable room, filled with educationally sound entertainment, offered a substantive alternative to popular entertainment.



PLATE 56. THE WORKING GIRLS' RECREATION ROOM, 1900. The Working Girls' Club met once a week in the West Oakland Settlement's Peralta Street building, usually gathering in an upper-story room during the early evening after having finished a day's work. The design of the club room, its furnishings and decoration, mimicked the appearance of middle-class sitting rooms, and the space contained various kinds of quiet entertainment—reading, sewing, music—that were intended to replace the allure of nearby saloons and dancehalls. Note the emphasis on decorum—in the display of furnishings and of people. In 1902 the New Century Club started to use the room as a lounge and meeting room, without making any alterations to the space. (Source: *Domestic Science Monthly* May 1900:30)

The club has at its disposal a large, artistically furnished room where the girls are welcome every evening they chose to come. Here they find a teacher of fancy sewing, books and magazines, rest and comfort. . . . they are making scrap-books, and enjoy “personally conducted travel” evenings as well as those devoted to music and social enjoyment [Carlin 1900b:250; ONCC 1901].

Without doubt, the “personally conducted travel evenings” avoided popular local entertainment spots such as Hansen’s Hall.

No record of working peoples’ response to the settlement in the 1890s has turned up, independent of reform chronicles. Reformers certainly believed that the establishment’s programs were needed and that they were popular among the ethnic and racial mix that made up West Oakland: ethnic groups served by the settlement in 1902, according to their newsletter, included “Russian, Italian, German, Irish, Swedish, American, Scotch, Polish, Colored, English, Welch, Norwegian, Danish, Portuguese, French, and Spanish” (ONCC 1902:8). Repeatedly, the accounts indicate that the programs were well-attended, seeming to grow at unprecedented rates, and effected conversions to the reformers’ social standards. The Boys’ Club was described as an organization that “had its origin in the wide-awake boy-instinct to find out what is going on, the instinct that leads to exploration of new

territory and a share therein, by conquest, if necessary” (Carlin 1900b:250-251). A description of the club offers an especially telling account of one way reformers measured success.

The first requirement, growing in time to be a privilege, was that of washing up, and the appliances for a thorough course in “Scrubology” and “Soapology,” to use General Booth’s terms, were stationed in the yard in the rear of the house. How they scrub! Soon below the collar, beyond the wrist-band, and at length they wash for the sake of being clean. One sees the instinctive recognition that courtesy and refinement have a charm excellent to aspire to, exhibited in the furnishings of their club room, all delicate blue and white—”because they look real clean,” said the boys in expressing their preference; the mirror, with a white frame, the pretty blue and white china arranged on the mantel shelf, all intact, are mute witnesses that the utmost carefulness is observed in the rooms [Carlin 1900b:250-251].

Mrs. Watt’s (1925) brief discussion of vandalism to some of the settlement’s play equipment, wrought by a Portuguese immigrant’s son, hints at a more complex story of need and acceptance. According to Watt the 12-year-old boy explained he had cut down the swing because he was drunk. She discovered him to be a child of the streets, having left home to escape an abusive father; he chose,

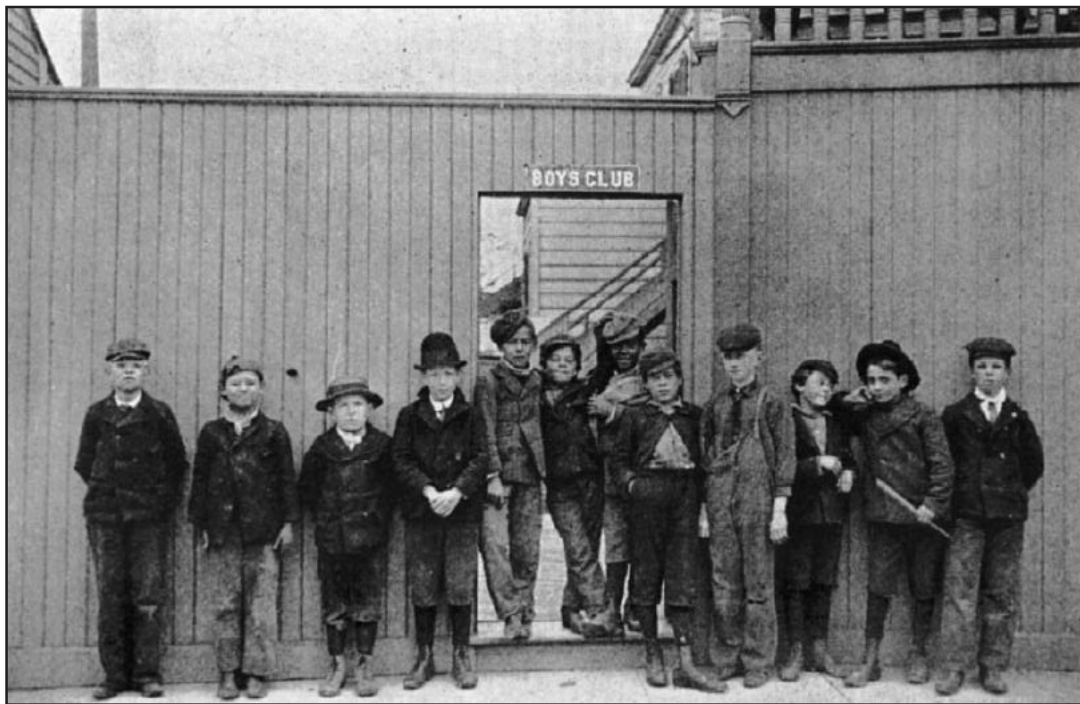


PLATE 57. THE BOYS’ CLUB, 1900. In 1898 the West Oakland Settlement, in affiliation with the West Oakland Free Kindergarten Association, started to sponsor a Boys’ Club in West Oakland, directed by Jeannie Wheaton. This pictures shows the boys, an integrated group, gathered in front of the Atlantic Street entry to the settlement house. The boys entered the complex from the street, moving through the backyard into their club’s ground-floor meeting room. A piece of the shed roof that covered the Little Housekeeper’s Cottage appears at the extreme upper left of the picture. (Source: *Domestic Science Monthly* August 1900:119)

instead, to sleep in railroad cars and sneak at night into his former home to look for food (Watt 1925:145). Watt's recollection of the young man's repentance, with her as a guide, and his subsequent transformation into a productive worker and upstanding family man bears all the trappings of 19th-century melodramatic conventions that embellished so many reform narratives (Walkowitz 1992). Yet her story also seems to indicate that at times the settlement played a valuable role in rescuing endangered children. Working families recognized that the settlement offered useful programs and selectively took advantage of the ones that proved personally helpful and instructive (Watt 1925:145).

By 1900 the programs at Sunshine Corner also included classes in laundry, housekeeping, and cooking. Such an extended agenda had led the organization—really Mrs. Watt—to rent yet more space. At this time, the settlement occupied three adjacent buildings: the cottage, facing Peralta Street; a tiny, two-room house on Atlantic Street, adjacent to the backyard of the settlement's original cottage; and a new structure on the corner of Atlantic and Peralta that contained the cooking school (Plate 58, Figure 41).

The laundry and housekeeping classes moved into the small house on Atlantic Street, where a new interior design assisted the instructional process. Like the initial building next door, the house's interior presented a set of spatial values that clearly contrasted with the manner in which most working



PLATE 58. VIEW OF THE WEST OAKLAND SETTLEMENT'S COMPLEX, 1902. The Oakland New Century Club occupied three different buildings in 1900: a two-story clubhouse on the corner of Peralta and Atlantic streets (at right); a small one-story building on Atlantic Street, used for kitchen-garden classes (center); and the large purpose-built wing on the corner of Atlantic and Campbell streets (left). At the time of the photograph, the latter building housed the Oakland Cooking School, which the settlement operated in conjunction with the Domestic Science Department of the Oakland Club. After the two organizations dissolved their association, the New Century Club replaced the cooking school with a library. The settlement renovated the clubhouse and the Little Housekeepers' Cottage. The most obvious additions are the new windows, roofs, and stairs. (Source: The Oakland New Century Club, *Annual Greeting*, 1902:frontispiece)

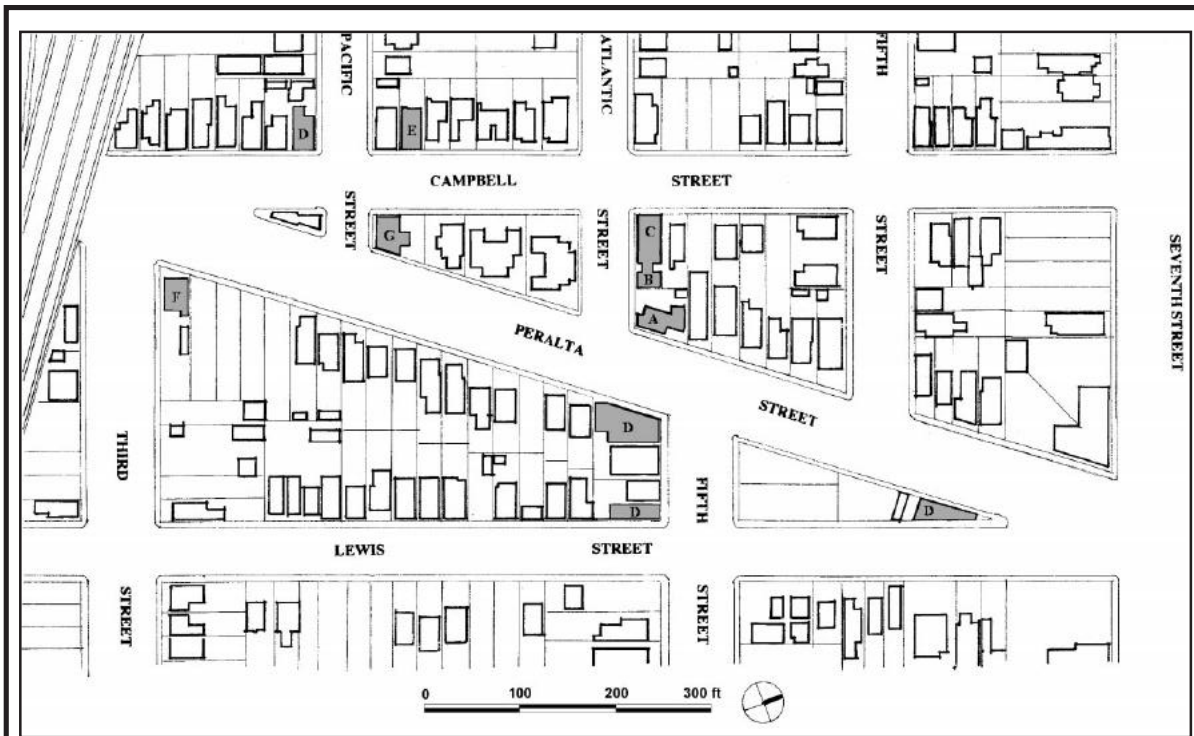


FIGURE 41. THE OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB. SITE PLAN, 1902. The Oakland New Century Club’s complex included a Club House (A), the Little Housekeepers’ Cottage (B), and a cooking school/library (C). A new church hall (E) appeared in the neighborhood, located in the former saloon across Campbell Street from the West Oakland Free Kindergarten (G). New saloons also continued to open in the neighborhood (D), and some buildings suffered from dilapidation, especially near the railroad tracks (F) according to the Sanborn Map notes. (Source: 1902 Sanborn Map. Redrawn by Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

people elected to organize their homes. One of the facility’s two rooms was “charmingly fitted up” to teach housekeeping. Its green and white color scheme appeared “in the curtains, cushions, and dishes”; the wallpaper’s “design of medallions” illustrated the “various phases of a child’s life.” The other room was turned into an educational laundry, “complete as to appliances—washing-machine, baskets, tubs, even to the smallest accessories” (Carlin 1900b:255). In these rooms a program of instruction based on the kitchen-garden method used songs, exercises, and plays to teach domestic skills to girls as young as five years of age—preparing them to be good mothers and, just as importantly, servants.

THE OAKLAND COOKING SCHOOL

In the cooking school the settlement hoped to teach similar skills to young women, not children. The school occupied a separate building, whose interior presented an altogether different kind of spatial and social sensibility, one based on a new approach to housekeeping—domestic science (Hayden 1981; Wright 1980). In 1899 Mrs. Watt financed the construction of the brand-new building for the school, located on a former vacant lot at the corner of Atlantic and Campbell streets (*Domestic Science Monthly* [DSM] November 1900:219). Watt hired Mary Voorhees, a graduate of Drexel

CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT.



CHILDREN OF THE FREE CLASS IN TABLE-SETTING LESSON.

THE LITTLE WAITRESS' SONG.

Tune—Little Buttercup.

I'm called a good waitress, a very good waitress, I'm sure you can always tell why; I've been taught to step lightly, to have all things sightly, And watch every want to supply.	I try to be able to watch all at table, And this you will readily see, Makes every one pleasant, restful and comfortable; And so they depend upon me.
--	--

I've learned at Kitchen School, where they all
work by rule,
Which side to pass with a tray,
In regular order take tea-cup and saucer,
And quietly go on my way.

PLATE 59. THE LITTLE HOUSEKEEPERS' ROOM, 1900. In this room, young children were taught various kinds of housekeeping skills through the kitchen-garden method of instruction. This photograph shows girls learning to serve food—practicing with elegant china, silverware, and linens. To make their tasks more interesting, the girls sang educational songs to the tune of popular songs. The design of this room, covered with green and white wallpaper, was intended to resemble a dining room in a middle-class home. (Source: *Domestic Science Monthly* May 1900:50)

Institute, to run the school and teach the “art and science” of cooking in an austere model kitchen that looked more like a laboratory than a room in a home. Sixteen girls and young women could practice cooking skills at one time on individual gas-jet burners donated by the Oakland Gas, Light and Heating Company. The company also contributed a large range for demonstration purposes (*DSM* April 1900:2).

At the time of the school’s inception, Watt affiliated the educational establishment with the Domestic Science Department of the Oakland Club. She chaired this department of the women’s group, which had organized into a formal society in 1899 after having run successfully one the city’s first vacation schools at Tompkins School, near the Oakland Social Settlement (*DSM* May 1900:37). The group anticipated that teaching cooking and other housekeeping skills according to the scientific method would benefit “all classes,” but its main interest was in using the school to increase the appeal of domestic work among Oakland’s young working women. “The girls of the neighborhood are not ‘in service,’” Carlin noted. “They all seem to have a feeling of self-satisfaction at escaping from the monotonous drudgery of the home” (1900a:426). Teaching “household science . . . in the most practical and scientific way,” argued the first editorial of *Domestic Science Monthly*, the Oakland



PLATE 60. “PRACTICE CLASS IN THE OAKLAND COOKING SCHOOL,” 1900. The Oakland Cooking School was first set up in the large, one-story building at the corner of Atlantic and Campbell that Elizabeth Watt commissioned. This image depicts the cool, rationalized kitchen interior in the building, a setting originally favored by many advocates of domestic science. The instructor, Mary Voorhees, clothed in white and standing towards the rear center of the photograph, gave demonstration lessons on the large range near the front of the image. Students practiced on gas-jet burners arranged in an “L” around the bigger stove. Both women wanting education in domestic skills and girls aspiring to be better servants studied at the school. An emphasis on sanitation, cleanliness, and austerity was common in kitchen layouts, influenced by the domestic-science approach. (Source: *Domestic Science Monthly* April 1900:2)

Club's new publication, would counter this alarming trend. It would prepare "all girls for what will be the life work of the great majority of them, the making and keeping of a home." Such instruction would also, the editorial stressed, "go far toward solving the domestic service problem." It would give servant work the cachet—and the pay—of factory labor (*DSM* April 1900:1).

As much as the school's founders wanted to make the instruction in domestic science accessible to young working women, the group also intended the school to be a self-sustaining effort, not a charity. In the eyes of the Oakland Club, the city was "overburdened" with the latter kind of organization and did not need another one. Thus the school charged for classes, expecting that employers would pay for their servants to attend. The school promised, however, to offer one or two free classes should an adequate endowment be formed to pay for them (*DSM* April 1900:3).

The Oakland New Century Club vs. the Oakland Club

The diverse constellation of people, programs, and buildings at Sunshine Corner formed a spatial and social nucleus for the Oakland New Century Club, but not without some reorganization. In her memoir Watt explains that she turned, with ever more fervor and intensity, to settlement work following the unexpected death of her eldest son at the century's turn. She incorporated the new club soon after this personally devastating event because the group needed to buy real estate in order to carry out their program of improving physical and social settings in the community (Watt 1925:140,153).

Without denying the poignancy of her story, Watt and her good friend Mrs. Goodcell had another incentive to form the New Century Club. The two women had had major disagreements with other members of the Oakland Club about the purpose of the women's club, its location, internal organization, and even, perhaps, its spatial expression. The



PLATE 61. "A COMFORTING DUTY," 1900. Pictures of well-mannered and well-dressed servants illustrated both the *Domestic Science Monthly* and the Oakland New Century Club's *Annual Greeting*. Most of the pictures were photographed using the same model in a studio setting; this particular image shows her graciously serving tea. The picture tries to convey the sense that a woman, trained according to the rational methods of domestic science, can still be a nurturing figure. (Source: *Domestic Science Monthly* June 1900:64)

dispute erupted over differences of opinion about the goals of the cooking school and Watt's management role in the establishment.

In the first issue of *Domestic Science Monthly*, appearing in April 1900, the Oakland Club went to great lengths to identify Watt's cooking school as a school of domestic science. The club acknowledged that the educational endeavor was linked with the group that formed around the West Oakland Free Kindergarten but insisted that the school in West Oakland was the Oakland Club's own project, distinct from the work of the older organization. The club also indicated an interest in moving the school to a more prestigious location "up town" (*DSM* April 1900:3-4). By November the Oakland Club had done exactly that. It had gathered enough money to put the Domestic Science Department on an independent footing—at least independent from Watt's financial support. Phoebe Hearst, among others, had made a handsome donation to the club (\$300), and the new magazine was selling well, making enough profit to support the school. Since the school had "lost its characteristic as an individual enterprise," the club withdrew the educational endeavor from Watt's establishment in West Oakland and opened it up in a building on Franklin Street. The Oakland Club also took the model kitchen equipment to the school's new location (A.B. 1900:219).

Early the next month Watt and Goodcell signed the Oakland New Century Club's incorporation papers and issued, just after the first of the new year, the group's first *Annual Greeting*. Perhaps the haste with which the group issued the document explains why so much of the text and so many of the photographs were drawn directly from Eva Carlin's (1900b) discussion of the settlement at Sunshine Corner in the *Overland Monthly*. The outline of the new group's purpose mentioned the teaching of "domestic science," but the *Annual Greeting* made no overt reference to the Oakland Club or the earlier shared efforts at running the cooking school. The document stressed instead the friendly relations between the new organization and its progenitor, the West Oakland Free Kindergarten Association. One passage in the "New Century Greeting" made an emotional appeal for financial support—an appeal that indicated the group's basis in Protestant religious traditions, despite repeated insistence on the secular character of the organization and its programs.

Now when the belfries of all Christendom are ringing out the old and ringing in the new century, we pray, of your abundance, to give us some small sum to equip [a] small reading room for the men, women, and children of the West Oakland Settlement. . . . You, who do not, in the brightness of your happy hours, know what want or sorrow is, help to brighten the sordid weary lives of these, your less fortunate brothers and sisters. If you give us one dollar it is all that we ask from you, though more will be thankfully received. . . . We mean to do much, to teach much. Our aims are high, they reach to the heart of the dear Christ Child, whose birth we have just celebrated and whom we pray that each one of these little ones may grow to know and love [ONCC 1901].

To cast Watt's altercation with the Oakland Club only as a battle over turf or a dispute about differences in management style misses important dimensions of the disagreement. Watt does not discuss the matter directly in her memoir; tellingly, she does not even mention her membership in the Oakland Club or her directorship of the group's Domestic Science Department. Articles in *Domestic Science Monthly* and several statements in the New Century Club's first *Annual Greeting*, however, suggest that Watt parted ways with the larger organization because she took exception to the club's

approach to philanthropy. In the November issue of *Domestic Science Monthly*, the Oakland Club announced its decision to work with the Associated Charities. The club went so far as to say that its philanthropic department, headed by Dr. Susan Fenton, was in “close sympathy” with the larger organization’s purpose. Indeed, the “relations” between that department and the Associated Charities stood as “a fair example of the impersonal character of the highest philanthropic work” (A.B. 1900:219).

Elizabeth Watt shared with the Oakland Club and the Associated Charities an interest in making poor people “self-supporting and useful members of society” (ONCC 1901). And she recognized the value of institutional affiliations, associating the New Century Club first with the California Federation of Women’s Clubs and then with the General Federation (Watt 1925:154). But Watt had little faith in the efficacy of dispensing charity either impersonally or in a location at any distance from people in need of help. Her writings and those of the people closely associated with her argued forcefully that effective charities should be placed in working people’s communities, in settlementlike environments, and must be run by women who were committed to setting a personal example and demonstrating the value of proper domestic habits to the poor. “We, of this Club, believe that teaching by precept or proverb is not sufficient, there must be illustration—the power of example,” the New Century Club’s mission statement read. “There is little in heredity that can not be overcome by training and example. To this end, the home life becomes the most important of all influences. Those who have given their time and means for the betterment of humanity are led to this one conclusion: we must reach the home life of those we would help upward” (ONCC 1901).

As president of the new club—and probable author of the mission statement—Watt applied the group’s activist mandate in several ways. The organization did not use an uptown location for monthly meetings. Rather, it selected a familiar structure for a clubhouse, the house at the corner of Peralta and Atlantic that Watt had rented for the sewing school some five years earlier. In subsequent building campaigns, Watt would never again adopt an abstract or scientific approach to interior design or exterior remodeling. Instead, as chair of the House and Home Committee, she stressed the creation of an aesthetic domesticity, taking up the approach that had been used previously in remodeling the Working Girls’ Club, the Boys’ Club, and the classroom for the Little Housekeepers.

Instructors were hired to teach cooking and sewing; in addition the club’s principal members—wealthy and some not so wealthy women—directed classes and clubs on a volunteer basis. “The Oakland New Century Club has no attractive social features to offer its members, neither does it at its monthly meetings tax their time with long papers,” Watt wrote in the second *Annual Greeting*.

It invites them to come in and help in doing good to others, by developing and making most effective: Cooking Classes for young women, Sewing Schools for beginners, and Garment Makers, Boys’ Clubs, Mothers’ Meetings, and Working Girls’ Clubs. It is work worth doing and absorbingly interesting [ONCC 1902:8].

The club also prided itself on running a multi-ethnic and integrated establishment, in a neighborhood where economic and cultural antagonism often colored social relations between different ethnic and racial groups. “There are to be found in this district the odds and ends of industrial life; but these exceptions are the product, in general, of racial conditions,” Carlin wrote. She went on to comment that

the Italians are scavengers and fruit and fish vendors; the genial Irish are employees of the railroad company—yard men, machinists, etc.; the thrifty Germans are clerks, accountants, drivers, bakers and grocers. Here and there are to be found the good-natured, pleasure-loving [N]egroes, clannish by reason of past oppressions. The Irish, who perhaps predominate in numbers, are opposed to both [N]egros and Italians, the latter of whom they call “Dagos.” The Jews, with their unswerving purpose to rise in the world, have pushed nearer the business center of town and are found in the province of independent dealers in all kinds of goods [Carlin 1900b:426].

Despite such indulgences in ethnic and racial stereotyping, the club members maintained they operated a bias-free establishment. “This Club has ever tried to keep free from a spirit of prejudice,” Watt wrote. “Children of all races and religions are received into the classes, while the colored woman and her children are received and made welcome as those of fairer skin” (ONCC 1902:8). The *Annual Greeting* frequently published photographs showing the participation of African Americans in the organization’s classes and programs (see Plates 47, 57).

The Art and Craft of Settlement Work

Over the next decade Watt’s work in the House and Home Committee transformed the physical appearance of Sunshine Corner, in effect making the initially variegated complex seem to have been constructed as a purpose-built institution. However unified in appearance the final complex, the process of its construction remained ad hoc, constrained by the exigencies of fund-raising and practicalities of site acquisition. In fact, during the first few years of the new century, the organization continued to alter the club’s buildings, without owning all of the sites. Many of the new components resembled, in function, if not design, the facilities contained in the district’s other settlement house: the Oakland Social Settlement, located a few blocks east on Third and Linden streets.

Soon after the New Century Club was formed, Watt’s committee decided to remodel the cooking school and the Peralta Street building, continuing in these efforts to endorse the didactic use of interior spaces and settings. The continued use of Arts and Crafts aesthetic values expressed, to some degree, the persistence of a gulf between the different groups who populated the complex, wealthy women and their working-class subjects. Yet the presence of mixed uses—particularly in the club house—belied a strict separation, as the paths of the groups of women and children seem to have crossed inside the building.

Watt’s committee set out, first, to redress the problems caused by the removal of the Oakland Club’s cooking school to its new location. She moved the cooking classes into the Peralta Street building, first to a small kitchen on the upper floor, then to a bigger room on the lower level. The club converted the large barnlike building on the corner of Atlantic and Campbell into a free library that also doubled as a space for the sewing school, formerly housed in the Peralta Street cottage. In what must have been perceived as a stinging rebuke to the Oakland Club, the new decor eradicated any reference to the cooking school or the abstract aesthetic that had informed the prior design.

A klinker-brick fire-place was built . . . and box seats extending all around the room were finally made satisfactory as well as attractive. The interior of the building was painted throughout a soft green shade. The box-seats were left a natural red-wood finish.

Linoleum of a cheerful design was then laid down upon floors . . . pictures were hung . . . plate racks fastened up, and a perfect treasure of an old clock (which Miss Wheaton had found in a second-hand store) set in place on the Klinker fire-place [ONCC 1902:14].

In 1902 the library held about 400 volumes, up from 30 in the year prior, and the club employed “a regular librarian” to make the collection available to boys and girls in the neighborhood (ONCC 1902:10,16).

The club also needed to establish in the house on Peralta Street a suitable meeting place for its membership, which had grown from the core of six women (who had initially run the settlement) to more than 30 women. Watt turned over to the club’s use three rooms in the building: downstairs, the front room held the group’s monthly luncheons; another was used for committee meetings; and a third served as the club’s “room.” The last space had been used as a lounge by the Working Girls’ Recreation Club, and the interiors seem to have been scarcely altered with the subsequent change of use. A caretaker, referred to as the “janitress,” also moved into the Peralta Street building, living in two upper-story rooms in the rear of the building—probably in the part of the building that had been added on to the cottage long before Mrs. Watt purchased the site (ONCC 1902:14). By 1914 a full-time housemother and resident worker, Pauline Bird, lived in the house (ONCC 1915:7).



PLATE 62. “LUNCH ROOM—OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB,” 1902. The Oakland New Century Club held a monthly meeting in the Peralta Street clubhouse. Approximately 30 women lunched in the room, located on the first floor in the front of the building. The emphasis on creating an artful setting in the dining room gives some indication of the club members’ concern with propriety. (Source: The Oakland New Century Club, *Annual Greeting*, 1902:13)



FIGURE 42. THE OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB. SITE PLAN, 1912. After 1910 the construction of a new gymnasium for the Oakland New Century Club expanded the institution’s physical presence in the neighborhood (A). The West Oakland Free Kindergarten Association moved to another rental property on the corner of Pacific and Peralta streets (B), a former saloon. Many saloons still operated in the neighborhood, despite reform hopes to the contrary (C). (Source: 1912 Sanborn Map. Redrawn by Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

After the renovation of the clubhouse and library, the House and Home Committee turned to even larger tasks: raising funds to buy the clubhouse and developing plans for a new gymnasium and playground. “Our chief ambition for the coming year is the purchase of the lot on which our commodious building is located,” Anna Sangster, the club’s recording secretary, wrote in the second *Annual Greeting*. “The owner is willing to sell at a reasonable figure, and it is of the greatest importance that we should own the property. We are not what would be termed a rich corporation, so it will be necessary to appeal to our friends for aid” (ONCC 1902:10). Between 1904 and 1911, the group purchased, on a piecemeal basis, the three lots on which stood the clubhouse, the Little Housekeepers’ building, and the house on the lot just to the north of the library that was later knocked down. Watt already owned the library parcel (Figure 42). Fully clearing the backyard of the clubhouse and all three of the other sites would be necessary to make way for the new gymnasium (Sanborn 1912).

Eva Carlin had pointed to the community’s need for a gymnasium in her description of Sunshine Corner published in the *Overland Monthly* at the beginning of the decade (Carlin 1900b:252). By 1910 the club had followed through on Carlin’s suggestion and had taken out a loan for just over \$3,000 to construct a “big shingled building . . . fitted with everything dear to the heart of a boy—acting bars, dumb bells, and hot and cold shower baths” (Adams 1910:12; ONCC 1912:8, 10-11). A new smaller one-story structure, attached to the gym’s western end, contained additional rooms for girls’ classes and meetings (Patterson 1995a).

The new gymnasium opened in early 1911, and the organization pointed with pride to the success of its grand accomplishment in the following year's Annual Greeting. Although both boys and girls would use the new structure, the text stressed the facility's importance in the educational and emotional development of the community's young men.

And this year we find the new bed planted last year growing, in a bed not of frail blossoms, but sturdy oaks, growing upward, their branches spreading in many directions. One cannot help but feel when they realize the change a year of proper direction and training has made in these boys, that were being blown and tossed by every wave that came . . . We look with pride at the new gymnasium, which means so much to the boys. What if it is not all paid for? We have faith, we have trust, and are all not afraid to work so that in due time it will all be ours [ONCC 1912:8].

Watt took responsibility for paying off the \$3,000 loan by the fall of 1911, although the club remained responsible for interest payments (ONCC 1912:11). With that action, she stopped contributing \$100 each month to help defray the club's operating expenses. The club looked to other sources to meet an impending deficit, apparently contemplating as a solution regular rental of the new gymnasium space to the YMCA (*Oakland Observer* 30 September 1911:8-9). The kindergarten already rented the structure on occasion.

By the time the gym opened, the exterior of the clubhouse had also been totally remodeled: the front facade sheathed in shingles; new windows and a roof put on; a new fireplace and upper-story porch (adjacent to the housemother's residence) added; and a large flagpole placed prominently over the front door. Even the oddly bent corner on the front of the building was fully integrated into the massing of the seemingly new building—no exterior indication remained of the structure's origins in cottage architecture. In fact the resulting building looked very much like the meeting places of other clubs in Oakland and Berkeley, and users of the complex in later generations would understand it to have been constructed all at one time and as a purpose-built institution (Patterson 1995a). Several of the rooms earlier remodeled according to Arts and Craft principles remained inside the clubhouse (Patterson 1995b:35-38). The interior spaces were now sheathed by a facade that matched the spirit of their design.

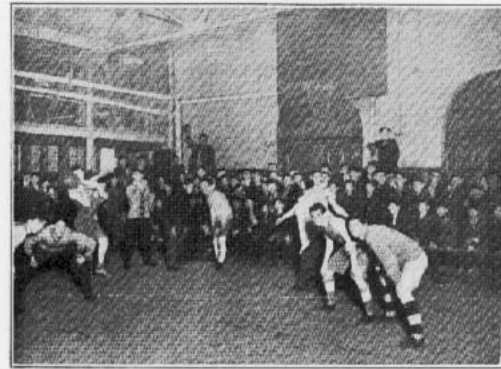
Some curricular shifts accompanied the physical changes to the club's structure. For instance, the club no longer offered classes in domestic science, since the subject was taught in the public schools. But other longstanding programs continued to take center stage in the organization: the Mothers' Meeting, the salvage bureau—called the Clothing Bureau; the Boys' Club, with access to a shop and the gym; and the sewing and garment classes. The kindergarten also maintained its close association with the New Century Club, with Winnie McFarland, the teacher hired in 1894, continuing to direct the school and work as a "cottage visitor" in the homes of her young charges (ONCC 1912:18-19).

The organization also expressed a growing interest in women's suffrage, urban politics, and municipal reform. Although not formally allied with the temperance movement, the group continued to campaign against alcohol consumption and saloons, positing its facilities as the preferred alternative. The club also stressed the important role of recreation in "the physical, moral and social development of our young people" by advocating the construction of new playgrounds in West Oakland.



The Social Center vs. The Saloon

The Negative



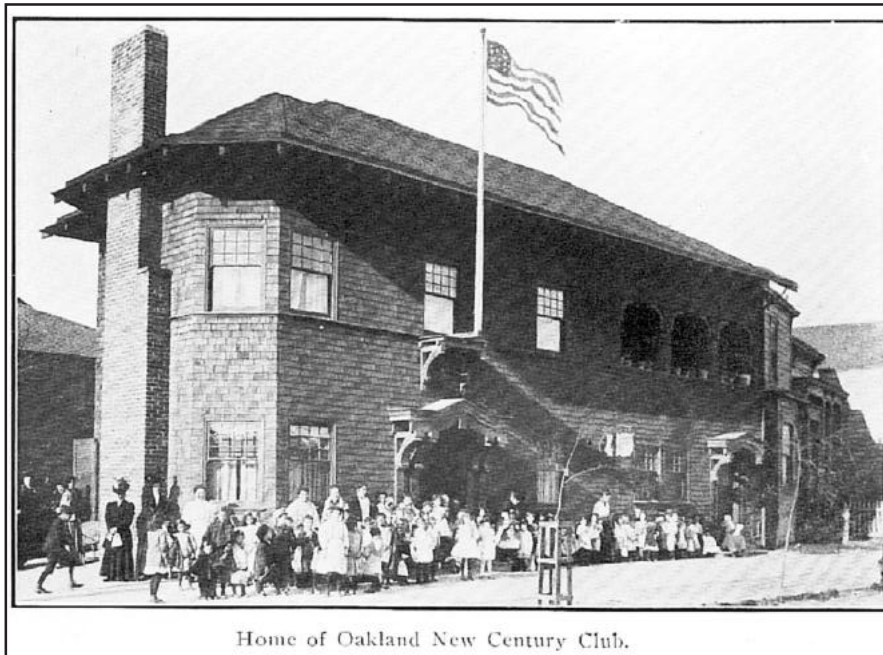
The Social Center vs. The Saloon

The Positive



PLATE 63. THE SOCIAL CENTER VS. THE SALOON: THE NEGATIVE (left), 1915. The Oakland New Century Club was located in a neighborhood filled with the saloons; in fact there was one such establishment just across the street from the settlement. Here photographs—from a movie called *Charlie's Reform* produced by the Russell Sage Foundation—show the deleterious effects of alcohol consumption on young men and women. **THE SOCIAL CENTER VS. THE SALOON: THE POSITIVE** (right), 1915. In these images, the club presents some of the ways it hoped to counter the pull of saloon life, emphasizing that the organization provided an interesting social, and environmental, alternative to the drinking establishments. The images stress the value of recreation by showing a gym interior with an ongoing basketball game and folk-dancing. (Source: The Oakland New Century Club, *Annual Greeting*, 1915:26-27. Use courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

Quite as vital a result of organized play is the moral value of “fair play,” the practice of the virtues we preach, honesty, justice, loyalty. Another valuable result is the social, the doing of things together under wholesome, joyous circumstances. But the most important result is the psychological, the satisfaction of three paramount needs of the soul[:] work, love and recreation [ONCC 1912:30].



Home of Oakland New Century Club.

PLATE 64. “HOME OF OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB,” between 1910 and 1915. Sometime during the first decade of the 20th century, Elizabeth Watt commissioned an entirely new facade for the Oakland New Century Club’s clubhouse. The work was probably undertaken in conjunction with the construction of the new gymnasium. New shingles, roof, windows, and fireplace removed from the building any remaining references to cottage architecture. Watt gave the flag as a present to the club. (Source: The Oakland New Century Club, *Annual Greeting*, 1915:6. Use courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

In her memoir, Watt recalled that the club had proposed to open a playground in the immediate vicinity of the settlement and went so far as to commission an elaborate design that included a public bath, bandstand, pools, walkways, and gardens. But control of the desired lot, a triangular block south of the building, eluded the group. In 1912 the club indicated that the city was about to purchase a site for a playground near the clubhouse, but no such facility appeared in the neighborhood until the early 1920s, despite Watt’s personal campaigns for municipal sponsorship of an outdoor play area (Crane 1912:362-363; ONCC 1912:5; Watt 1925:153-154).

The Department of Recreation

On 16 March 1923 Mayor Davie dedicated a new city-run playground in West Oakland on the triangular block south of the New Century Club. The playground was “equipped with all of the latest play apparatus, a small baseball diamond, sand boxes and other features” (*Oakland Tribune* 16 March 1923; Figure 43). Elizabeth Watt, then almost 80 years old, was present at the public ceremony. In January she and other members of the New Century Club had turned the clubhouse over to the Oakland Department of Recreation, giving the complex—then valued at about \$25,000—free of charge (*Oakland Tribune* 15 January 1923). It was time, Watt said, “to retire” (1925:156). The club reserved a right to meet in the building; it also expected the city’s Department of Recreation to operate the building as a fieldhouse for the playground (*Oakland Tribune* 15 January 1923). Two years later the Board of Education opened a new school behind the community center that shared the center’s recreational facilities.

The housemother and resident worker, Mrs. Bird, continued to work in the center, becoming, by 1927, the director of the Oakland New Century Club community center. Under Bird's direction, the center continued to sponsor various clubs and classes; the programming also incorporated more recreation and social-service work. And the organization still expected its programs to have social effects similar to those anticipated by the organization's founding members. Indeed, the didacticism of the physical setting remained important.

Re-creation through recreation—recreation through unselfish service are the two most important and comprehensive phases of the work accomplished in the capacious and home-like building, which is the center of community activities in West Oakland [*San Francisco Chronicle* 27 December 1927].

Bird acted as an intermediary between local residents and the city's new social-welfare agencies, organizing Christmas parties and other activities. The center also sponsored social events for adults, anticipating, as in earlier years, that "wholesome pleasures and a pleasant atmosphere" would "supplant the poolroom and the bar" (*San Francisco Chronicle* 27 December 1927).

Neither Bird nor later directors appear to have initiated any major changes to the complex after the new playground opened. In fact the physical setting that Watt had developed with her friends, served very well as a community center until the building was demolished in the late 1960s (Kosmos 1995:14; Patterson 1995a, 1995b:14,16,35,38; Rydman 1981:11). The destruction of the club was just one consequence of the large-scale urban renewal programs that radically transformed much of West Oakland's physical fabric (*Oakland Tribune* 30 November 1960:1; Figure 44). As a prescient, if ultimately ineffective, action, the club had stipulated in the 1923 deed that the property would revert to the original owners should any change of use occur (*Oakland Tribune* 15 January 1923). But even if city authorities had wanted to honor the restrictions of the deed, the club had long since disbanded (*Oakland Tribune* 3 February 1954). The site of the New Century Club was buried under a parking lot.

CONCLUSION

In the absence of any systematic public provision of social welfare in West Oakland, the community's immigrants and African Americans recognized that private institutions provided important services, especially for working women and children. In West Oakland, most family members worked outside the home, including teenaged girls, young unmarried women, and many mothers of infants and young children. Indeed, the expansion in the area of commercial laundries, canneries, and other factories related to the food-processing industry drew into their employ an increasing number of female workers, starting in the first decade of the 20th century.

Working women certainly took advantage of the institutions' child-care programs, which held center stage in the facilities discussed in this essay, as they did in other institutions in the West Oakland neighborhood. In the simplest sense, the organizations provided some stability and security in a volatile social and economic environment. It was easy to lose a job in such a setting as West Oakland's; the swings of economic cycles, frequent industrial accidents, disease, and a myriad of other factors could quickly bring on unemployment, severe illness, and other devastating problems, even death. Each institution offered a place where a parent, whether married or widowed, employed or out-of-work, could count on finding reliable, and affordable, day care for infants and young children, after-

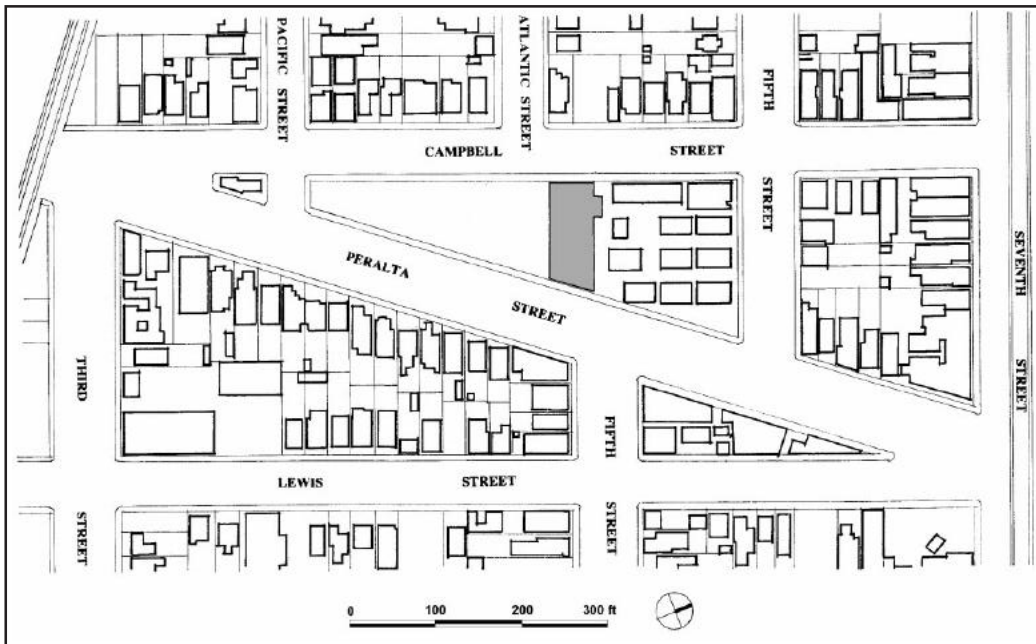


FIGURE 43. THE OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB. SITE PLAN, 1951. In the 1920s, the city opened a playground in front of the Oakland New Century Club (encompassing the end of Atlantic Street) and added a public school at the back (northern side). The immediate neighborhood remained residential, but industrial buildings appear near the railroad. During the late 1940s, the initial school building was demolished and replaced by the numerous small bungalow classrooms depicted in this drawing. (Source: 1951 Sanborn Map. Redrawn by Sibel Zandi-Sayek)



FIGURE 44. FORMER SITE OF OAKLAND NEW CENTURY CLUB. SITE PLAN, 1972. Site clearance for the General Post Office's new sorting facility (A) and parking lot (B) required the demolition of a large number of houses—and the Oakland New Century Club. (Source: 1972 Sanborn Map. Redrawn by Sibel Zandi-Sayek)

school programs, a book, salvaged clothing, even a free cup of tea. In addition, hard-pressed working families could socialize in the buildings—at alcohol-free events, of course, but in spaces bigger than those typically found in small flats and cottages.

Clearly these institutions did not instantaneously fabricate middle-class citizens, despite the reformers' great faith in the didactic power of their institutions. In fact it would take until after World War II for many of the reformers' material arguments—about the value of middle-class domesticity, domestic science, interior decor, correct deportment, even dress—to start to make some material, social, and economic sense to working people in West Oakland. The reforming women's environmental activism produced little immediate change in the shape of West Oakland's domestic settings (see "Worker's Housing," this volume). Rather, the reformers were much more effective as institution builders and political activists—in providing child care, in running and expanding their establishments, in activating larger-scale environmental and social reform, and in securing women's right to vote.

Well into the 20th century, the interest in using the environment to mold human behavior continued to influence the policies of institutions in West Oakland, as it did in virtually all other social-service institutions in the United States. Although aware of the institutions' intent to alter their lifestyles, the neighborhood's residents continued to welcome them, managing to find meaning and craft personal development through the programs (Kosmos 1995:14; Patterson 1995b; Rydman



PLATE 65. BIRTHDAY PARTY AT THE FANNIE WALL HOME, mid-1940s. During the 1940s the social services offered at Fannie Wall remained in strong demand in West Oakland's African American community, despite concerns about the building's condition. Here young children enjoy one of the group birthday parties that were held every three months. The demeanor of these children belies later rumors of "juvenile delinquency" that plagued the organization in the late 1950s after it ceased to offer day care and the Community Chest withdrew its support. (Photo courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland)



PLATE 66. St. VINCENT'S DAY HOME, 1086 EIGHTH STREET, mid-1960s. In the early 1960s the Oakland Redevelopment Agency accrued a great deal of property adjacent to St. Vincent's in preparation for a very large slum-clearance project. St. Vincent's managed to survive and stands in this picture as the lone survivor of a once-vibrant urban landscape. The Acorn Public Housing Project now surrounds the establishment. (Photo courtesy of the St. Vincent's Day Home)

1981:11). West Oakland's working people may have ignored most of the reformers' arguments about how to correctly shape their personal domestic settings, but the landscape of the domesticating institution appealed to them, especially when they were confronted with the alternative—increasingly remote social services in a city growing ever more abstract, large-scale, and rationalized.

Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this report. Aicha Woods did the first research on domestic reform for the Cypress Project, and I have drawn on her excellent and thorough work. Rebecca Ginsburg and Sibel Zandi-Sayek spent much time pouring over microfilms of Sanborn maps and photocopying them. The value of their efforts is best displayed in the detailed and informative drawings Sibel prepared for this essay. Kenneth Rich and Kaori Tokunaga also collected information for me. Karana Hattersley-Drayton shared references with me and helped out with oral-history interviews.

I am indebted to Robert Haynes and Michael B. Knight of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland for making available AAMLO's extensive collection of documents and photographs and passing on to me personal information about the history of the African American community in West Oakland. Michael Knight graciously shared with me his chapter, "Deeds Not Words: The Story of Mary C. Netherland and the NFCWC, 1876-1973," while still preparing the text for inclusion in his master's thesis. Bill Sturm, Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library, patiently directed me to important resources. Betty Marvin generously opened to me the research files of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey. Sister Michaela O'Connor, Order of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and Sister Corinne Marie Mohrmann, Executive Director of St. Vincent's Day Home, spent many hours discussing with me the history of their order and St. Vincent's and kindly made available their organization's archival holdings. Susan Snyder, at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, helped me to find important illustrations. And finally, I am most indebted to Paul Groth, Dell Upton, Mary Ryan, and Eugene Sparling for critical and editorial commentary.

Marta Gutman, Ph.Cand.

MELTING POT OR NOT? ETHNICITY AND COMMUNITY IN PRE-WORLD WAR II WEST OAKLAND

Karana Hattersley-Drayton

INTRODUCTION

In 1911 the Sisters of the Holy Family opened the St. Vincent's Day Home in West Oakland. The ethnic affiliations of the families who placed their children in the facility that first year reflected the diversity of the local immigrant work force: Portuguese, Italian, Slovenian, Spanish, French, Swedish, Scotch, Irish, German, Jewish, and Chinese (O'Connor 1995a:27). There was also a sizable African American community in West Oakland at this time, with 180 heads of household and adult wage earners identified as Black or mulatto in the 1910 census. The census that year also recorded 100 newly arrived Greek immigrants who lived in box cars at the end of Seventh Street (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:114). In short, West Oakland during this era was a thriving, multi-ethnic community largely comprised of working-class families and individuals.

But how did these groups interact? What part of the cultural heritage of each was retained and expressed, or jettisoned in favor of a new American ethos? And was indeed West Oakland a "melting pot" as articulated time and time again in local and oral history?

The purpose of the ethnic-history component of the Cypress Freeway Replacement Oral History Project was to produce primary source materials that address these and other questions using the tool of oral history. Individuals representing a sampling of ethnic groups prevalent in pre-World War II West Oakland were identified and interviewed for this study. Questions posed during the sessions reflected not only the particular interests of the ethnic-history research design (Hattersley-Drayton 1994), but also the overlapping interests of other Cypress researchers, such as the built environment, the domestic-reform movement in West Oakland, and occupational lore (Praetzellis 1994b). For example, although an individual might be of Italian or Mexican heritage, he or she was also a worker and a parent. As a consequence, information on Del Monte Cannery No. 6 and Southern Pacific and the importance of children's day homes was also recorded.

What follows is a brief discussion of process and project mechanics, a review of the literature on ethnicity and immigration, and a consideration of the questions and themes that the oral-history data potentially address. Then some of the oral histories gathered on this project as well as some from an earlier study are sampled to attain a glimpse of the various faces of ethnicity in West Oakland.

METHODS AND PRODUCTS

During the first phase of this work (October 1994 through November 1995), eight taped interviews were conducted by the author with individuals representing the Italian, Greek, Croatian, Mexican, and African American experience in West Oakland. It should be noted that these ethnic

affiliations are etic, or externally imposed, categories. How these individuals—or in fact how *any* individuals—define themselves in terms of ethnic identity is a question that is addressed further on in this chapter.

Individuals interviewed for the Cypress ethnic-history project included four women and four men ranging in age from 66 to 90 years. Their first-hand experiences with West Oakland begin in 1914—when Italian-born Angela (Volpe) Cosy arrived here with her family—and continue to the present, with an emphasis on the pre-World War II years. Two particularly long sessions were recorded with three members of Mrs. Cosy’s family, who lived throughout the project area. Although it is unusual, even ill-advised, to attempt to interview two much less three individuals at one time, the contrast in experiences between the first and second generations was illuminating. In all of the oral histories recorded, both for the Cypress Project and for the 1981 Oakland Neighborhood History Project, there was a noticeable shift not only in the experiences of the emigrant and second generations but also between the periods of 1900-1920 and 1921-1941.

In addition to these new interviews, some taped sessions conducted for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project in 1981 were transcribed and indexed during this study. West Oakland was one of two neighborhoods that were extensively covered by that project, a citywide documentation in 1980-1981. The subjects of these transcriptions include an Italian American male, born in 1919; a German American female, born in 1894; and an Irish American female born ca. 1890. Although this work was uneven (some interviews lack context, dates, and even full family names), the material is of great value to this topic, as a wide assortment of ethnic groups is represented. Several of those interviewed in 1981 were born at the end of the 19th century, and their memories thus cover a time that we can no longer access through oral history. Together, the two separate projects provide 28 interviews with a variety of former and present residents of West Oakland and cover a period from 1900-1995.¹

Per the norm of oral-history research, an elite nonstandardized style was used for the Cypress interviews: that is, although both a research design and outline of questions were drawn up, the oral historian followed (to the extent deemed reasonable) the lead of the individual(s) interviewed (Dexter 1970; Hattersley-Drayton 1995b). Verbatim transcriptions in vernacular English, along with subject indexes, were produced for six of these sessions, for a total of 251 transcribed pages. Two other conversations were summarized only. Face sheets were produced for all interviews. Copies of the interviews have been deposited along with the tapes in the Oral-History Archives at the Anthropological Studies Center, Sonoma State University. Copies of seven of these Cypress interviews have also been placed in the local history collection of the Oakland History Room. An inventory of all West Oakland oral-history materials produced or located to date is presented as Appendix A; it will be updated as appropriate.

¹In February 1996 an additional phase of site-specific interviews was approved and this research is currently in progress. To date, one additional interview from the 1981 Oakland Neighborhood History Project has been transcribed and indexed. Information from the sessions with African American Royal Towns (born 1899 in West Oakland) has been melded into this essay. New interviews with former West Oakland residents of Chinese, Croatian, Italian, Greek and Lebanese descent have also been recorded and are currently being transcribed and analyzed.

THE GIFT OF ORAL HISTORY

Oral history, “the voice of the past,” can serve multiple functions when associated with archaeological field work. An initial pragmatic use of the oral interview is that “old timers” can help define and map a site, providing answers to nitty-gritty questions regarding trash disposal, water and sanitation systems, gardens, and site plans. In fact, several of those interviewed as part of the ethnic-history project had lived on blocks ultimately excavated by Cypress Project archaeologists, and these and similar questions were addressed during taped interviews and in the field. Former and current residents who lived for an extended period of time at one address (many families moved frequently throughout the area) helped us to augment and update the archival block histories and, as a consequence, to reach a better understanding of ethnic relations and neighborhood.

Over the past 40 years oral history has, of course, come to be valued as a way to write a more humanized history, to add flesh to the bones of dry statistics—to “fill in the gaps” left in the historical record. Rather than merely serving as a supplement to other more privileged kinds of information, however, oral history can also serve as a more profound resource for the student of late-19th- and early-20th-century social history. The oral interview may be, for example, the only resource available to reconstruct a particular community, as marginalized ethnic settlements often leave little or no documentary grist for the mill. If indeed the “present creates the past” (Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:7; see also Schellenbaum 1993:156), then it is essential that we do not selectively “forget” the history of these kinds of places.

The “necessity” for oral-history work is also underscored by the fact that culture is often expressed ephemerally and thus can leave little or no material trace, whether above ground or below (Hattersley-Drayton 1995a:38; Praetzellis, Praetzellis, and Brown 1987:43). In the Cypress Project, for example, we have looked archaeologically at foodways as a marker of ethnic behavior and boundary maintenance. But as we ask what Irish railroad families ate at countless meals and identify the ceramic assemblages that they used, we need to also ask whether they continued to step dance and attend *ceilidhes*. Did local Azorean-Portuguese celebrate the Holy Ghost *feita*? Did Italians continue a pattern of gender segregation when they settled in West Oakland. In fact, did they think of themselves as “Italians” at all? Ultimately, questions regarding ethnic identity and boundaries, gender, the social use of space, and world view are often easily addressed through conversation and the taped interview.

ETHNICITY: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND DEFINITIONS

Over the past 30 years there has been a veritable explosion in publications that address ethnicity and the immigrant experience. As historian Rudolph J. Vecoli has noted, “A library of American immigration/ethnic history which in 1965 would have occupied a few shelves now includes thousands of monographs and tens of thousands of articles” (1993:16). So rich and yet congested is the field that some scholars have tired of wrestling with hard-and-fast definitions (Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:1). Others have impatiently urged their colleagues to move beyond “the tired debate over assimilation versus pluralism” (Vecoli 1993:21; *cf.* Conzen 1993:29).

PLATE 67. SOTIRIOS MOUSALIMAS IN TRADITIONAL DRESS, ca. 1910. Sam (Sotirios) Mousalimas arrived in West Oakland in 1901, after working his way across country on the railroads. Photos such as this one, taken in a Fresno studio, were sent back to relatives in Greece as a way of signaling that ethnic pride and heritage were not forgotten. There were, however, apparently few occasions to wear ethnic dress in West Oakland. (Photo courtesy of Andrew and Mary Mousalimas)



Many scholars have regarded ethnicity “as a relatively fixed or, at least, a known and self-evident category” (Sollors 1989:xiii). Studies thus have tended toward a group-by-group approach, with an emphasis on “authenticity” and cultural heritage within the somewhat idealized group (Sollors 1989:xiv). In actuality, it was only during the “White ethnic renaissance” of the 1960s and 1970s that the concept of ethnicity was redefined and, some claim, “invented” (di Leonardo 1984:19, 21; cf. Sollors 1986, 1989). As Werner Sollors has observed, “Ethnicity truly was in vogue in the 1970s,” yet the word was so new that it “sent scholars to their dictionaries” (1986:21).

The word *ethnicity* is said to have first appeared in print in 1941, in W. Lloyd Warner’s five-volume community study entitled *Yankee City Series* (Sollors 1986:23), while the OED of 1972 traces the first use to 1953 (Sollors 1986:22; Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:15). The Greek word *ethnos* < *ethnikos*, from which “ethnicity” is ultimately derived, is, however, at least as old as Homer (Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:12). Aristotle used *ethnos* to refer to foreign or

barbarous nations. This sense of outsiders or “otherness” was passed on when the term “ethnic,” to mean “gentile” or pagan, entered the English language (Eriksen 1993:3; Sollors 1986:25; Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:12-15). Questions of etymology aside, this notion of ethnic as “other”—that ethnicity *excludes* the dominant group—is still pervasive in the contemporary literature although many scholars prefer to see ethnicity as inclusive of all groups (Eriksen 1993:4; Sollors 1986:24-25; Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:15; *cf.* Fischer 1986:201)

THEORIES OF ETHNICITY

Theories regarding ethnicity and immigration put forth during the past 30 years can be summarized as a series of polar terms, of delight to any structuralist: modern/traditional, assimilation/cultural resistance, the “melting pot”/unmeltable ethnics (*cf.* Schellenbaum 1993:154). A recent contrast is Werner Sollors’s (1986) argument for the terms “descent” versus “consent,” a dichotomy he favors for its neutrality.

The phrase “melting pot” became popularized, and the concept literally dramatized, in 1908 with the play *The Melting-Pot*. The work appeared as a “revelation” one night to the immigrant playwright Israel Zangwill, an English Jew who married the gentile writer Edith Ayrton. The theme of the play—a twist on the common motif that “love conquers all”—is that one can rise above the constraints of ethnicity. Descent (heritage) gives way to consent (self-identity), to use Sollors’s terminology. Appropriately enough, at the close of the play the two lovers, David and Vera, are reunited on the rooftop of a settlement house (Sollors 1986:66-69).

While the play popularized the term “melting pot,” Zangwill did not invent it. *Schmelztiegel* (‘melting pot,’ or ‘crucible’) was in use among middle-class German immigrants in the 19th century (Conzen et al. 1992:10-11). This concept of America as a melting pot of ethnic groups was not, however, uniformly well received. In 1915 philosopher Horace Kallen wrote an influential essay, “Democracy versus the Melting Pot,” that specifically attacked Zangwill’s play (Sollors 1986:91).

The notion that immigrants should assimilate and shed their respective cultural differences was also the overriding message of the 1916 Ford Motor Company English School graduation rituals, in which newly arrived immigrant employees entered a giant replica of a melting pot and emerged as flag-waving Americans before an audience of 2,000. The school taught that hyphenated ethnicities were a detriment to American society. Resistance to this idea, coupled with Ford’s well-publicized anti-Semitism, is one reason why the term “melting pot” became offensive to both immigrants and social critics; it has, however, survived to this day, partly as a straw man in the debate about ethnicity (Sollors 1986:91, 99).

Of local interest is the fact that the phrase “melting pot,” albeit with a different connotation, can be found over and over again in West Oakland historiography and oral history to refer to the notion of the ideal multi-ethnic community (Jimenez 1981:3; Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:97-99, 165; Valva 1995a:13). Whereas in Zangwill’s play and in discussions of ethnicity “melting pot” refers to assimilation and the concomitant demise of ethnicity and plurality, among West Oaklanders the term referred to ethnic diversity. Prescott School, as an example, was called “the Melting Pot School” due

to the extraordinary mix of nationalities (Jackson 1971:13-16; *cf.* Lewis n.d.). For West Oaklanders, the definition of melting pot also included the notion of class. Families were united by a shared immigrant experience and a culture of poverty: “. . . nobody had any more or less than the other one, no more or less education than the other one. So we were . . . equal, see?” (Valva 1995a:2; *cf.* Towns 1981:5).

In the literature on ethnicity, the melting pot ideal was carried on with the 1951 publication of Oscar Handlin’s *The Uprooted*. Handlin discussed the European immigrant experience and stressed the “painful” yet “inevitable” process of absorption into American society. His ideas were ultimately extended to include both native-born Blacks and Latinos (Sanchez 1993:4-5).

Beyond the Melting Pot, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s 1963 study, “marked the end of an era” (Sollors 1986:20). The authors argued that ethnicity not only survived among third-generation descent groups in New York City but was also transformed and recreated (Eriksen 1993:8; Glazer and Moynihan 1963:17). Their work paved the way for the revival of American ethnic identification in the 1960s and 1970s and an era of “unmeltable ethnics” (Novak 1972; Sollors 1986:20).

A “new ethnicity” paradigm came to dominate historical writing about immigration in the 1970s and 1980s. Revisionist historians, influenced by Amílcar Cabral and Antonio Gramsci, stressed models of cultural resistance as a “negation of assimilation” (Sanchez 1993:6). One problem, as identified by anthropologist Renato Rosaldo, is that both models—resistance versus assimilation (the “Old World” versus America)—set up cultural poles that contrast traditional and modern, with “little space to the mundane disturbances that so often erupt during border crossings” (Sanchez 1993:8). As an example, Chicano culture has been viewed as either a “way-station” toward assimilation or a “U-turn” back to Mexican nationalism and Mexico—a country that some claim was in fact “invented” in the early 20th century (Sanchez 1993:7-12).

New perspectives on ethnicity now stress the “betwixt and between.” Chicano scholars have adopted the notion of “transcreation” to label this position, which allows for the possibility of multiple identities (Sanchez 1993:8-9). Ethnicity is no longer necessarily imperative (Barth 1969:17) but potentially voluntary and individual (Alba 1985:153; di Leonardo 1984:156-157; Fischer 1986:195; Tonkin, McDonald and Chapman 1989:17); sociologist Herbert Gans (1992:43), however, is quick to note the problem of “involuntary ethnicity,” which is a consequence of discrimination and cultural stereotyping. The ethnic group, to some extent, is thus left behind. Free from the constraints and restrictions of group affiliation, ethnicity is often largely symbolic for third and later generations and is dominated by the consumption of symbols, such as ethnic foods and travel to the “Old Country” (Gans 1992:44; *cf.* Alba 1985:153). Immigrant groups are also no longer viewed as isolates, historically, but rather as a part of an interactive web: not only are they affected by contact with other groups, but each group has in turn persuasively affected the evolution of modern American culture (Conzen et al. 1992).

Whether scholars accept models of acculturation and assimilation on a straight course (Alba 1985:153) or a “bumpy line” (Gans 1992:44), hold fast to ideas of cultural resistance, or settle somewhere in between (*cf.* Praetzellis, Praetzellis, and Brown 1987:39), two ideas remain fairly

constant in the debate on ethnicity. One is that an ethnic group exists only in contrast to something else, whether other ethnic groups or the dominant “ethno-culture” (Eriksen 1993:10; Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:17). The second constant is that ethnicity is primarily negotiated and signaled at boundaries, an idea first presented by the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth in 1969. Indeed, in an oft-quoted passage, Barth states that “the critical focus of investigation from this point of view, becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses” (1969:9).

THE INVENTION OF ETHNICITY

A recent idea—and one particularly useful for the study of ethnicity in West Oakland—is the notion that ethnicity, like nationalism and patriotic traditions, is a modern “invention” (Conzen 1993:28; Conzen et al. 1992:5; Eriksen 1993:9; Hobshawm and Ranger 1983; Sanchez 1993:19). The anthropologist Michael Fischer (1986:195) first explored this concept in his provocative essay “Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory,” while Werner Sollors’s (1991) edited collection of essays, *The Invention of Ethnicity*, made the argument central to the field. The choice of the word “invention” is two-pronged. For one, it signals a postmodern recognition of the “cultural constructedness of the modern world . . . [and the] importance of language in a social construction of reality” (Sollors 1991:x). (In this same vein, postmodernists view biography and historiography as “forms of fiction-making” [Sollors 1991:x]). The second application of the term “invention” reflects the fact that most immigrants had little concept of nationhood but rather identified themselves according to their prior village or region. To Americans, these village identities were meaningless, and thus ethnonational categories were created (Conzen et al. 1992:12). Building on differences as well as points in common, and always in reaction to the dominant culture and neighboring ethnic groups, a brand new version—essentially a caricature—of Italy, Greece, Japan, or Poland came into being. New traditions were invented and old traditions were reworked in order to provide effective symbols to unify the competing factions within the new “ethnic group” (Conzen et al. 1992:5). St. Patrick’s Day, as one example, was a holy day in Ireland but it was not celebrated as a holiday. In America, it became a “vast largely secular celebration of ethnicity” (Conzen et al. 1992:21).

Turning now to data drawn from West Oakland oral histories, we can see how the concept of ethnicity as invention helps to illustrate a variety of research questions. As an example, “Italians” are often discussed as a monolithic ethnic group, separate and definable. But in fact, early Italian immigrants to West Oakland apparently did not think of themselves as Italian at all but rather as *Calabresi* or *Barese*. Italy was a collection of disparate principalities prior to unification in 1861; as a consequence, 5 miles in any direction in rural Italy could mark a dialect shift and the boundaries of one’s world. Following a pattern of chain migration, emigrants to the United States settled by households of *paesan*, or “countrymen,” from the same village or town (*cf.* Glazer and Moynihan 1963:186; Mathias 1974:114). In West Oakland, as in “Italian” pockets throughout America, social networks and accessibility to jobs were also tied to this affiliation. One gathered to make wine with *paesan*. One worked in the cannery with *paesan*. One helped a fellow *paesan* to find a job. Ideally, one married a *paesan*.

Over time, and as a response to expectations imposed from without, these *paesan* gradually became Italians and then Italian Americans (*cf.* Mathias 1974:81, 137; Schellenbaum 1993:164). Between the first and second generations, there is thus a shift in the meaning of the term. For Angela

Albanese Cosy, who arrived in West Oakland in 1914, *paesan* still means ‘fellow villager.’ For her son, 72-year-old Ben Albanese, the word appropriately signifies a member of the new group, Italians. To some extent then, ethnicity was invented here.

The issue of ethnic identity is also relevant to other early immigrant West Oakland communities. Although looking back we may count the census figures for “Mexican” or “German” households, we need to ask how these groups thought of themselves (*cf.* Gans 1992:50). An excellent case in point is that of Eva Lycurgus Garrett, who was born at Fourth and Brush in 1889. In coloring and parentage Mrs. Garrett appeared to be Black, and she would undoubtedly be labeled “African American” today. However, she was also Native American. Her mother and family had come west from Maryland via Georgia and Oklahoma on a “trail of tears.” Of interest in this discussion is that Eva identified herself as “Spanish.” Following the death of her mother and the disappearance of her father, Eva Lycurgus was raised by a California-Spanish *dueña* (or nanny). She attended school at Mission Dolores and was raised to be a lady in the early Californio tradition. Her Castilian Spanish was impeccable and she worked temporarily as a bilingual translator. Eva’s granddaughter, born in 1939, identifies her race as “Black and American Indian” but identifies herself culturally as “Italian, Mexican, and Black,” both in recognition of her grandmother’s heritage and her own childhood immersion in a San Jose Italian neighborhood (Blake 1995).

Another factor that can skew our understanding of ethnic categories is that people occasionally choose a public identity that is quite different from their blood descent. People attempt to “pass” for a variety of reasons. Although in the 1990s this kind of ethnic code-switching may seem “politically incorrect,” in fact it was an essential survival skill for many groups in West Oakland through the 1940s. African American Royal Towns (b. 1899) recalled how he landed a job with the Marchant Calculating Machine Company by passing as Portuguese (Towns 1981:9). The fact that Towns was of mixed heritage, was facile with several languages, and played on the streets of West Oakland in a polyglot, multi-ethnic setting was a boon to him as he slipped through the discriminating hiring practices of local businesses. Yet he also paid a personal price for his chameleonlike skills. The passing of lighter-complexioned African Americans did not go unnoticed by other Blacks, and Towns was among those who found themselves rebuked and ostracized by some factions of the local African American community.

For many Native Americans in 19th- and early-20th-century California, it was advantageous to mask one’s Indian heritage, and “pass” as Mexican Americans. So, too, it was common for Mexican Americans in West Oakland in the 1940s to “pass” as either Italian or Portuguese. Greeks and Slavs living and working in West Oakland also tell of having difficulty getting jobs or promotions until they Americanized their names. It was not until the civil-rights and ethnic-pride movements of the 1960s that some individuals became comfortable with openly declaring their heritage (Mousalimas and Mousalimas 1996a; Rosas 1995b:4).

One final issue regarding ethnicity and change illustrated by West Oakland oral history is the question of class. Eva (Lycurgus) Garrett used to tell her grandchildren that, in earlier days, “it didn’t make any difference what your ethnic background was. There was only two things: rich and poor. There were only two. And the poor kind of stuck together because that was how they survived” (Blake 1995:24). Mrs. Blake (1996) recalls, however, that the Lycurgus family—like other working-class families—did their best to teach their children to emulate the manners and mores of the upper class.



PLATE 68. THE WEDDING OF MIKE VALVA AND MADELINE MAZZA, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1918. The elegant attire of this wedding party would seem to indicate that these first- and second-generation Italians were financially secure. The Mazzas and the Valvas were *paesan* from northern Italy—thus their families came from neighboring villages. Mike Valva ran a hardware store and then a real-estate business on Seventh Street. Valva Realty is still a family-run enterprise today. (Photo courtesy of Bernice [Valva] Linford)

Other former residents of West Oakland perceived the issue of class as more complex. According to Royal Towns, each ethnic group was divided, usually into an established merchant class versus the poorer new immigrants. Thus there were “shanty Irish” and “lace curtain Irish,” “Dagos” versus “Italians,” “Portugees” and “Portuguese,” and so on (Towns 1981:6-7, 45). The late social historian Paul Thompson also suggested that class, rather than ethnicity, is “the defining framework of life” (Conzen 1993:26); for some scholars, however, class is perceived as interchangeable with ethnicity (di Leonardo 1984:24-25; Gans 1992:45).

For the purposes of this research, ethnicity and ethnic groups are defined as follows: Ethnicity is understood to be both a process of descent and consent (Sollors 1991), malleable and ever-changing. Imperative for some (Barth 1969:17), ethnicity is voluntary and symbolic for others. Ethnicity intersects with kinship and gender, and all three categories are inextricably tied to the political

economy (di Leonardo 1984:22-23). Ethnic groups are usually categories of ascription and identification chosen by the actors themselves (Barth 1969:9). Groups may share common features of heritage, experience, and language (De Vos 1975:9) and a similar orientation to basic values (Barth 1969:14). Ethnic groups maintain and identify themselves, vis-à-vis other groups, through the maintenance of social boundaries that persist despite a flow of personnel across them (Barth 1969:9). Boundaries are communicated through overt signs and signals, such as dress, language, and house form. The ethnic group—a modern equivalent of “tribe” (Eriksen 1993:15; Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989:12)—is an “invention” of the post-Industrial Revolution.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As with historical archaeology, oral history recovers information that helps us write a more “democratic” kind of history. Through the tape-recorded interview, people from a variety of backgrounds and situations are given the opportunity to speak for themselves. To quote social historian Paul Thompson, oral history “gives back to the people who made and experienced history . . . a central place” (1978:2). Oral interviews also provide important information regarding gender, ethnic identity, and behavior that may not be accessible through other forms of historical inquiry (Hattersley-Drayton 1995a). Oral histories from both the Cypress Project research and the earlier Oakland Neighborhood History Project can be used to help answer several of the questions posed in the project’s Research Design and Treatment Plan (Praetzellis, ed. 1994).

One of the broadest questions that the Cypress Project asks is, What is the process by which immigrants from traditional communities adapt to life in an industrial society? Did cultural traditions persist in the face of a dominant American culture? What about models for change (acculturation, resistance, or other)? In addition, How are foodways linked to cultural and ethnic identity? Additional questions that can be inserted now are: To what degree were early immigrant groups in West Oakland “ethnic” at all? And, How do ethnic boundaries and class boundaries intersect?

First, the concept of “traditional culture” can be considered from the perspective of folkloristics. It is important to dispel any notion that traditional culture is something that only exists “out there” among marginal, “ethnic,” and/or rural groups, and that as cultures evolve, traditional culture (and its folklore) devolves and fades away. This devolutionary notion has been exposed as an implicit and romantic bias prevalent in both popular culture and academic research. Within American immigrant communities, for example, cultural traditions not only survived, but were also “invented.”

Traditional expressive forms of culture (folklore) are also not limited to certain groups. Everyone is a member of any number of folk groups—whether ethnic, occupational, religious, regional—that share at least one common linking factor (Dundes 1965:2). Every day, each of us responds and behaves “traditionally.” That is, some aspect however small of our daily routine is conditioned by belief systems and practices that are outside the realm of popular or elite (progressive) culture (Glassie 1972:258). We tell jokes, repeat proverbs or charms, and hum folk tunes that have been handed down over time and transmitted through an oral process. We celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah, sing Happy Birthday ditties, and place our children’s teeth under the pillow for the “Tooth Fairy.” The examples of folklore and folklife are endless. In short, all groups constantly mediate

between the cultural processes of traditional versus popular and elite values and aesthetics. Traditional culture is thus not just a thing of the past, a skin that is sloughed off by groups as they “metamorphose” from one stage to another.

Immigrant groups do, of course, change and adapt at a rate that differs by individual, family, or group. For West Oakland we can ask, How indeed were these changes effected? Were ideas from the American dominant culture absorbed whole in a trickle-down *Gesunkenes Kulturgut* (“sunken cultural goods”) effect, or was there more of a syncretic dialogue between and among immigrant groups and the greater society?

A model for change that seems helpful in looking at West Oakland ethnic communities is that of *bricolage*, an idea explored by the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1969) and used since with success by both folklorists and historians (Ardener 1989:29; Bronner 1986:70-71; Glassie 1972:260, 1973:331, 343, 1975). As applicable to design and change in form, for example, “the incipient maker” the *bricoleur*, when presented with a stream of images, “isolates a small number of inherently useless, perfect geometric forms . . . and he develops unconscious rules of composition that allow him to design from the abstract to the concrete, from a finite number of simple, deep organizations of geometric ideas to a vast (if not infinite) number of complex, usable artifacts” (Glassie 1973:331). More simply put, “the new idea is broken down and compared with old ones and a composite idea is developed” that is appropriate to the individual’s particular physical and sociocultural milieu. The American “I” house, as Glassie demonstrated in his classic work *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (1975), is a folk recasting of an elite Georgian ideal.

So too, it is suggested, immigrant groups neither “slavishly ape” new styles and traditions nor hold fast to their own, but rethink and reformulate ideas through this process of *bricolage*. For example, David Gerber’s study of mid-19th-century Buffalo potentially demonstrates this idea:

It was not a simple case of immigrants assimilating to or resisting an established mainstream All groups within the city, native born included, redefined themselves not only in terms of their own cultures, economic resources, and urban position, but in relationship to one another, and in the process they reshaped the boundaries of what constituted the urban “mainstream” as well [Conzen 1993:28].

WEST OAKLAND NEIGHBORHOODS

Both the Cypress Project interviews and those collected during the earlier Oakland Neighborhood History Project indicate that the first generation of settlers in West Oakland were largely semiskilled laborers from rural areas or small towns, most of whom arrived here through a direct chain migration. “They left the Old Country because there was nothing for them . . . whether Greek, Italian, Croatian, German, or Mexican. Like my Dad used to tell everybody [who] used to brag about Italy, ‘Well if it was so great, why did you leave?’” (Valva 1995a:5). Although they brought few personal possessions, these Greek, Italian, German, and Mexican immigrants did bring a rich cultural heritage to these shores.

Although precise dates are difficult to assess and experiences differed according to family and group, a general pattern of ethnicity and neighborhood emerges from the oral history. That is, through the 1920s and into the 1930s, ethnic groups in West Oakland did tend to cluster together—first by regional association and then by country of origin. The “Italian Quarter” was the area between Castro and Adeline, Market and Third (Albanese and Cosy 1995; Schwerin 1981:9; *cf.* Praetzellis, ed. 1994:265). Also, circa 1910, so many Italians lived at Thirteenth and Kirkham that the street was nicknamed “Tin Can Alley” because most of the men worked for local scavenger companies (Towns 1981:10). The Black section was “way way down past Pine Street” (Albanese and Cosy 1995:30; *cf.* Bargiacchi 1981:20; Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:112-114). Greeks lived along the railroad tracks and ran businesses on Seventh Street. The Portuguese once lived near St. Joseph’s Church at Seventh and Chestnut, with its Portuguese-speaking clergy, although this community had largely dispersed to Twenty-third Avenue by the 1930s. Dominga Velasco remarked on the lack of a Mexican



PLATE 69. INTERIOR OF THE OLYMPIC CAFE, SOUTHWEST CORNER OF WOOD AND SEVENTH STREETS, WEST OAKLAND, 1917. Bachelors often gathered in local restaurants and bakeries to celebrate the holidays. The hand-lettered sign in this picture identifies this occasion as Greek Orthodox Easter, 1917, and proclaims “Christ is Risen.” Traditional hand-dyed red eggs form the centerpiece. Many Greek men in West Oakland returned to Greece in 1912 to fight the Turks in the Balkan Wars. Thus, seen in the background are the medals and discharge papers for Sotirio Mousalimas, who ran the Olympic Cafe with his brothers Exarhos and Aristotelis. Both the Greek flag and American flag are proudly displayed. (Photo courtesy of Andrew and Mary Mousalimas)

neighborhood when her family came to town in 1920: “There was no Mexican stores, no Mexican theatres, there was nothing, nothing. This was really a strange country” (Velasco 1981:1). But by the 1940s West Oakland’s Seventh Street included several Mexican bars and restaurants and a sizeable *Mexicano* population. Approximately 40 Serbian and Croatian families also lived in West Oakland although no pattern for their early residency could be clearly established through the oral record.

As with Italians, Greek immigrants to West Oakland also initially settled and socialized according to regional affiliation. During the 1920s as many as 15 separate cafes, which functioned like social clubs, catered to men from the various regions of Greece. “And one Greek would help out another. We had a lot of cafes, so he [my dad] would go down and peel onions, at one place for six hours and go to another place for four hours, go to the butcher shop. And the bachelors would all get together in one home, sixteen of them. Sleep on the floor and that’s how they made ends meet. And they were [a] . . . very very fiercely proud people” (Kosmos 1995:3). Greek restaurants and coffee houses lined Seventh Street and served as a focal point for this community. Bachelors and families alike clustered in cottages and boarding houses close to the railroad tracks, a typical location for any newly arrived group. Gregg Kosmos recalls that when the railroad went by their home on Atlantic (on Project Block 19), the “house did the Mexican rumba!” (Kosmos 1995:1). Eventually many Greeks, including the Kosmos family, moved up the economic ladder and into more comfortable homes away from the tracks.

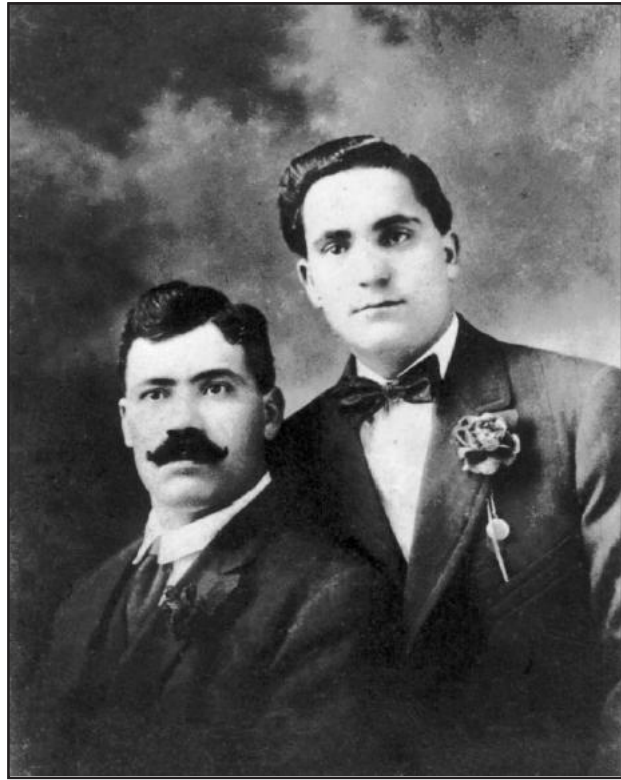
In the 1930s these earlier ethnic neighborhoods broke up and became more diverse, although properties often continued to be definably “ethnic.” Thus Robert Valva remembers that his Castro Street neighborhood (Project Block 1) was a mix of people. While the Valvas (Italians) rented an upstairs flat from an older Italian family, they recalled that a “Jewish clan” lived around one corner and a “Mexican clan” lived around another. Families would often pool resources so that they could buy a house together, perhaps splitting it into flats. A single family might also purchase a property and rent out the upstairs or downstairs to help make the payment. Usually the individual or family to whom the owners rented came from the same background or ethnic group.

Parts of West Oakland did indeed become an extraordinary mix of nationalities. As a woman of Mexican and Italian descent recalls of the neighborhood she grew up in during the 1920s and 1930s:

We had people from different countries. There were . . . Italians, Greeks, Czechoslovakians, Yugoslavians. There were Portuguese people, a few Spanish . . . but the others were all from Mexico. And there were a few Black families, beautiful people. There were Chinese people too. . . . They had Arabian families who had property on Seventh Street . . . people from Iran. There were just people from all over the world! We never thought of them as any other person than just West Oaklanders, good neighbors. When they had a social function, the whole neighborhood would come. When my mother made tamales or whatever, everyone would come [Jimenez 1981:3].

Whether or not this portrait of community life was typical, real or ideal, will be explored later.

PLATE 70. THE KOSMOS BROTHERS IN WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1920; THEOFANIS (TOM) ON LEFT AND DIMITRIOS (JIM) ON RIGHT. Although gangs of Greeks worked for the Southern Pacific in West Oakland ca. 1900-1910, by 1920 Greeks seeking employment were passed over by the Irish and Anglo-American foremen. Several Greek men (including Tom Kosmos) were fed up with this discrimination and finally banded together, got hold of the foreman, and “beat the living hell out of him.” They told him, “All we want is a chance.” The next day Kosmos was hired. He retired as Foreman of the Wrecking Crew decades later. (Photo courtesy of Gregg Kosmos)



SYMBOLS IN DEFINING AND MAINTAINING ETHNIC BOUNDARIES

A variety of public institutions in West Oakland helped to sustain and create ethnic values and identity. Numerous fraternal lodges, serving primarily the immigrant or first generations, lined Seventh Street and the neighboring area. There was a Croation Hall, a Jewish Center, Japanese and Chinese centers, and a Portuguese-Azorean IDES (*Irmandade do Divino Espirito Santo*) (Valva 1995b:3). A German Turnverine Club lay just outside the boundaries of West Oakland, at Third and Jackson (Schwerin 1981:13).

Saturday Schools and after-school programs also ensured that language and heritage were inculcated in youth. There was a Greek School, Jewish School, and a Chinese School. Two Serbian youth organizations on Seventh between Chester and Center streets offered gymnastics and military training. The tension between retaining one’s heritage and becoming American could be severe for this second generation. Greek American Gregg Kosmos recalls that his father struck a deal with him when the young Kosmos wanted to pursue after-school sports:

So I wanted to play baseball and basketball and I was a fair athlete. So my mother said, “No.” My dad said, “Wait a minute.” He says, “We’ll work out a deal. You get all A’s and B’s and I’ll bring a teacher here at night for Greek School.” So I went to Greek School on Tuesdays and Saturdays, Tuesday afternoons and Saturdays. And then on Monday, Wednesday, Thursdays and Fridays I used to practice baseball, football or basketball. So

my Dad made sure I learned the language because [for] the Greek people, I mean, education is foremost. It's number one [Kosmos 1995:6].

And yet Kosmos candidly noted that his transition to public school was difficult because he couldn't speak English well. Poor language skills could earn not only the derision of school bullies but also chastisement from the classroom teacher. One Croatian family stopped using their native language at home after the teacher at Cole School told the parents, "If you have any more children, don't speak . . . Croatian to them. Speak English," as their children spoke a "manufactured English"—half Croatian and half English. One Mexican-born woman recalls that her teachers prohibited students from speaking Spanish at school (Velasco 1981:4).

Central to the maintenance of traditional culture and values were the numerous neighborhood stores that catered to an ethnic clientele. West Oakland's Italian quarter supported at least five grocers and dry-goods emporiums, three of which were in a one-block radius of one another: Clarizio's, Sacco's, Splendorio's, and Giantini's (Valva 1995) and, at the edge of the community, Volpe and Sons. There was also a Guido's Fish Market, Genoa Bakery, and Dante's Bakery (Albanese and Cosy 1995; Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995). Both Guido's and Dante's buildings were torn down years ago for the Cypress Freeway. Greeks shopped at the Athens Meat Market, the Athens Grocery, and the Athens Bakery (Kosmos 1995); Croatians, at Apopolich's grocery store. There was a Jewish delicatessen and a Chinese Market and undoubtedly many other specialty shops. Many youths earned pocket money or helped to support their families by working as delivery boys for their local markets.

Stores and bakeries not only provided ready-made goods and ingredients to maintain traditional foodways, but also served as a social nexus for the community. Clarizio's, at Sixth and Castro (on Project Block 2), was owned by two brothers who emigrated from the Calabria area of southern Italy. The bachelors lived in a flat above the store. Clarizio's carried everything "Italian": "Beans, rice in the sacks, you know, you scooped them up. And he [sic] had all the stuff on the shelf. He had the big retriever, you clamp down and grab the cans. . . . Salami and chipped ham and mortedelli, the cheese and everything." The brothers carried "a bunch of the people out there on credit . . . during the Depression. . . . when they hit hard times." The store also served as a post office and mailing address for Italian itinerant laborers who worked on California ranches and in the powder works at Hercules. Dante's Bakery (Project Block 4) also figured prominently as a gathering place for *paesan*: "Every once in a while, we'd get together and go down to the bakery. And one of the men used to have the squeeze box . . . small accordion and we used to go there and that's where we used to dance . . . the *tarantella*, the waltz, and the two-step, I guess that's what you called it." In clear warm weather, the party was held on the roof. "And in the wintertime, when it rained, well we went down in the bakery . . . and celebrate in there" (Albanese and Cosy 1995:38, 39, 61; Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:19, 21).

Ethnic bakeries and cafes also provided a clearinghouse for immigration. Policemen in West Oakland would bring newly arrived immigrants who appeared lost or distraught to the appropriate shop. As Mary Mousalimas recalls,

Well, Uncle Tom talks about the day he arrived [in 1907]. He got off the train, he had a piece of paper. He didn't know where to go. Showed it to a policeman And it was night. And the policeman took him to a bakery . . . where a Greek owned the bakery. And

they gave him coffee and a warm bun that was just coming out of the oven. And then they took him to his brother, to Sam. And [they] were very emotional about seeing their brother. . . . all the men came and they partied all night. And they bought a lamb and took it to the bakery and the baker roasted it . . . and cheese, and wine, and they had music. And they had a party for—what did he say? Two days? I forget [1996:18].

Foodways represent a safe and tenacious expression of ethnic and cultural values (*cf.* Bronner 1986; Praetzellis, Praetzellis, and Brown 1987:39). People will continue to prepare traditional dishes in the privacy of their own home long after they have apparently assimilated, although ethnic dishes are also created or at least altered in America (*cf.* Mathias 1974). There is little doubt from the oral-history research that West Oakland families continued to eat traditional fare well into the second and even third generations. It would seem, in fact, that everyone interviewed had a mother who was the “best cook in West Oakland.” Thus Italian families made *gnocchi*, lasagne with homemade noodles, *catalata* (deep-fried pastry), Easter breads, and sausages. Croatian women rolled out the paper-thin dough for *rushteles* and prepared cabbage rolls. Greeks kept goats for milk and cheese, gathered wild greens that they cooked in olive oil, and barbecued lamb: “Every January 6th was my father’s name day. We would cook



PLATE 71. EMPLOYEES OF FRENCH & ITALIAN BAKERY, 917 FIFTH STREET, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1910. Ethnic bakeries, shops, and restaurants provided a variety of services for the many immigrant communities in West Oakland. Cultural ties were maintained through traditional foods and supplies. Many immigrants received their mail through a local grocery store. In addition, people often met at the bakery or store for informal socializing, dancing, and music. (Photo courtesy of Oakland History Room, Oakland)

PLATE 72. IN FRONT OF CLARIZIO'S GROCERY STORE, SIXTH AND CASTRO STREETS, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1942 (left to right, Mike Valva, Madeline (Mazza) Valva, Bernice (Valva) Linford, and Frank Martino). In the late 1930s, there were three separate Italian grocery stores on Castro Street between Fifth and Sixth streets. These were all family-run business, with the owners usually living above the store. Clarizio's apparently had a larger inventory than either Sacco's or Splendorio's. Italian workers as far away as Hercules used Clarizio's as a mailing address. The Valva family lived across the street from Clarizio's, and Bernice (Valva) Linford recalls that they "were all cute stores," with wooden floors, dry goods, and produce in boxes by the windows. (Photo courtesy of Bob Valva)



lambs out in the yard and have over two hundred people come through here. Dance Greek just till the house fell down [laughter]" (Kosmos 1995:6).

Ethnic cooks swapped recipes—one favorite dish in a Croatian household was spaghetti and meatballs—and began to adopt the American preference for steaks, chops, and roasts. Women baked their own bread or in earlier days purchased loaves from local peddlers. During the 1920s and 1930s the Genoa Bakery at Third and Linden streets "used to go around with the bakery wagon, with *pani* on the side of the truck there. And he had the baskets in there or troughs, whatever, made out of wood. He used to have the bread in there. They had a big loaf, bout like this, was about five pounds, a big family you know. That was only 25, 50 cents, like that. And the others was only a dime" (Albanese and Cosy 1995:18). At an earlier time, in the 1870s, Chinese peddlers brought fresh fruits and vegetables over from San Francisco on the morning ferries (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994).

Although goods, canned or otherwise, were purchased from specialty markets and from the larger collectives such as Swan's, most families relied on their own extensive gardens for fruits and vegetables. Most house lots were narrow but deep, and the backyard became a world unto itself. Many residents also raised poultry (chickens and turkeys) and rabbits. Children and adults fished and gathered wild plants. Italians throughout the East Bay were so adept at foraging for wild mushrooms, medicinal plants, and edible greens that the following joke—clearly updated to fit today's road system—is still told among their more affluent descendants: "A Sicilian question and answer. How do you kill the Italian people? Grow *coluzzi* [mustard] on the freeway dividers!" (di Leonardo



PLATE 73. THE MOUSALIMAS BROTHERS, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1908. *From left to right, Exarhos, Sotirios, and Aristotelis Mousalimas. The Mousalimas brothers immigrated to West Oakland from Davia, Greece, between the years 1901 and 1907. They ran a series of Greek coffeehouses and restaurants along Seventh Street. Exarhos (Frank) returned to Greece several years later. Aristotelis (Tom) remained a bachelor all his life. Sotirios (Sam) married Suzie Caredis in 1924 and lived in West Oakland through the 1930s. (Photo courtesy of Andrew and Mary Mousalimas)*

1984:123-124). Italians also went crabbing and caught sardines and preserved them in huge crocks of rock salt. “And they’d last a whole year” (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:39).

Some cooks became entrepreneurs and ran early equivalents of an ethnic take-out. One Mexican family at Fourth and Castro sold homemade tortillas. Mexican-style food was also sold by a peddler and local character named Hump-didddy:

Hump-didddy was a man who used to sell tamales, a colored fella who used to make tamales. And it’d be nobody in sight and he’d be coming down the street. He’d say [in a deep voice] “This is Hump-didddy, don’t crowd me folks! [laughs hard] Get your tamales here” [Towns 1981:50].

Another African American, on days off from his job as a cook with Southern Pacific, sold southern-style dinners to his neighbors, which included rabbit, biscuits and gravy, and sweet potato pie (Rosas 1995b).

Ethnic foodways could dictate the use and adaptive reuse of architectural space. As an example, many Greek families in West Oakland borrowed from the traditional pattern of using the home differently according to the season, resulting in the “Winter House” and “Summer House.” During winter in rural Greece, livestock was housed on the ground floor—a practice that protected the animals and kept the upstairs warm for the human residents. In summer, livestock slept outside, and the family used the downstairs space as a cooler kitchen and sleeping quarters. In West Oakland, the Summer House pattern was followed year round, with the raised basements of the homes converted to include a large kitchen and work area. Heavy cooking, such as frying, occurred here, as did most of the socializing. The parlor was reserved for special occasions and was rarely used (Kosmos 1995:15; Mousalimas and Mousalimas 1996b:12-13).

An irony perhaps is that these traditional meals might be served on commercial ceramics that were collected at weekly giveaways at the local theaters. “They used to have plates, you got plates. So they say, ‘Florence you get the saucer, Gregg you get the cup! So we’d all walk down, ten of us. Not too far. We’d all go to the Arabian Theater and the Star or the Peralta Theater, whichever it was. They were giving dishes out. So pretty soon, over a period of five years, we had a new set” (Kosmos 1995:26). The Star on Seventh and Market included a “country store” as part of its promotion. Ticket stubs functioned as raffle tickets for household goods: lamps, meat roasters, and so forth. By the 1940s the Star Theater ran Spanish language films for the growing Mexican community.



PLATE 74. THE SAM MOUSALIMAS FAMILY BARBECUING LAMB ON GREEK ORTHODOX EASTER; BACKYARD OF 717 WILLOW STREET, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1929. Although immigrants usually dressed alike and lived in houses that looked alike, they continued to celebrate their particular cultural heritage. As an example, Greeks in West Oakland gathered to barbecue lamb and dance and drink wine together on Easter following church. (Photo courtesy of Andrew and Mary Mousalimas)

In addition to live vaudeville and movies, West Oakland families in the 1920s through the 1940s enjoyed outings to Bay Area parks. Few today can still remember Shellmound Park in Emeryville with its race track, dance pavilion, and children’s amusement zone. Visitors could apparently get a little rough, and the Emeryville Police kept an ambulance and police patrol wagon backed up to the front gate “waiting for customers” (Elmer Schwartz 1981). Alameda’s Neptune Beach, the “Coney Island of the West,” was a favorite holiday and summertime destination from 1917-1939. Boys played baseball in vacant lots with such nicknames as “Oak Ball” and “Long’s Lot” (Towns 1981:39). To play on a regulation field, they had to walk to Bayview Park, now Raimondi, which lay outside the boundaries of West Oakland. Everyone in fact walked—although children might “nip” a ride on the back of a Red Car—and the distances that young immigrant families covered by foot is impressive. Even with mass transportation, West Oakland remained very much a “walking city” (cf. Conzen 1993:25).

Winemaking served an important social function to help define familial ties and community. During Prohibition Italians, Greeks, and Jews gathered within regional or extended family groups to crush grapes and process three barrels of wine for each family. Greek immigrants made zinfandel and cabernet sauvignon and the residue from the wine press was baked into a pudding. Although in an earlier era Italians stomped grapes with their feet, by Robert Valva’s childhood, in the 1920s-1930s, the neighborhood rented commercial crushers and graders from the local barber. Like most other amateur vintners, the Valvas made red wine. They allowed one barrel to sour for what became an excellent vinegar (Valva 1995a:9). By the 1930s most trash was taken out of the area to commercial

PLATE 75. CHIN MON WAH IN FIRST CAR (BUICK) IN FRONT OF FAMILY HOME, 1618 EIGHTH STREET, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1935. There were few opportunities for Chinese in the United States, particularly following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In Oakland, as unemployment rose, Chinese worked almost exclusively as houseboys and in laundries. The backbone of the local underground Chinese economy was *pak kop piu*, Chinese lottery or keno. Although gambling was illegal according to state and city ordinances, local police were easily bought off. Chinese lottery was run out of the basements of several West Oakland homes and catered, in this neighborhood, to a non-Chinese clientele. (Photo courtesy of Florence [Chin] Wong)



dumps and thus one can assume that the numerous pits of seeds unearthed during archaeological excavations are a legacy of an earlier generation.

Prohibition apparently had little effect on wine production or consumption. Former West Oakland residents are candid, in fact gleeful, in reporting the bootlegging activities of family and neighbors. The police were on the take; one family interviewed claims to have personally supplied the Chief of Police. Bootlegged wine or gin could also help grease the political wheels and pay back favors. The mafia, so prevalent in Prohibition-era Chicago, apparently never took hold in West Oakland. When, as an example, a West Oakland widow was threatened if she didn't keep quiet about possible mafia activity, her 11-year-old son took a baseball bat and smashed out all of the windows of the men's car. They never returned and the mother went on to testify at a state hearing (Bargiacchi 1981:11). For Chinese, who had few legal employment opportunities, involvement with the underground lottery or keno was profitable for some West Oakland residents.

COMMUNITY AND CHANGE

It is clear that pre-World War II groups in West Oakland retained and expressed cultural traditions, many of which can be safely labeled "ethnic." In addition to the private sphere for foodways and intragroup social events, some aspects of expressive culture (or "folklife") were public. Thus Portuguese-Azoreans took to the streets at Pentecost for the profoundly religious Holy Ghost *festa*; Calabresi men used rounds of cheese to play a cognate of *bocce* (*palla di formaggio*) in the gutters along Market Street; Greeks solemnly processioned by candlelight around Tenth and Brush following Good Friday services; and Mexican immigrants went door-to-door at Christmas with the *posada*.

The oral history provides little evidence of assimilation among first- and second-generation immigrants. Contrary to the local myth-making, this was no melting pot but rather a cauldron of mostly "unmeltable ethnics" (*cf.* Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Thus within the second generation—of this sample at least—people learned their family language and preferred to marry within the group (*cf.* Alba 1985:149; di Leonardo 1984:93). Individuals did, of course, acculturate at varying rates: although first-generation Mike Valva died "without an accent," others of the second generation still speak with a marked accent to this day.

For many West Oaklanders, becoming American was not an entirely easy process. Groups arrived not only with their language, holiday customs, and traditional recipes in hand, but also with a pronounced social ethic. "Old World" values regarding gender roles often conflicted with the new, more relaxed, American ethos. Whether German, Italian, or Greek, families were often ruled by a stern and uncompromising patriarchy: "He was one mean son-of-a gun," one West Oaklander said of his father; "he was strict, very strict. I mean if there was something you had to do, you *did* it!" Or as a German-American woman recalled with a laugh: "With the old European custom the man is the boss. I used to tell Mama, 'It's not going to be that way in my life!'" (Kennedy 1981:11-12).

Girls probably had a more difficult time adjusting to this tension between cultural values than did their brothers. For many groups, the woman's place was absolutely in the home and many women could not leave the house without their husband's permission. Several of those interviewed commented, "My mother never went anywhere." Men within the Greek community, however,

recognized and respected the women's sphere, whether spatial or ideological. Women maintained religious values. They were also the keepers of their family's moral integrity and their daughters' sexual purity, and as a consequence their daughters were kept on a very short leash. "Well they couldn't go out, like here they finish school and then their mother would get out in the street, 3 o'clock, school's finished. Ten minutes they had to be home. And if they [sic] were walking with some boy they'd get [the girl] inside and beat the hell out of them!" (Kosmos 1995:23; cf. Mousalimas and Mousalimas 1996a). It has been suggested that some Greek American women to this day are psychologically scarred because of this strict upbringing. Greek boys looked for wives outside of the community, as they thought of the local girls "as sisters."

Italian mothers could be equally vigilant and fierce. One Italian American girl was frankly "a knockout." But, as Gregg Kosmos recalls, "Mama used to watch her like a hawk. Couldn't wear anything tight. Oh yeah, all those girls had to wear loose clothing. Dresses down to their ankles. The only time we saw them though was in gym class, we'd take a look. . . . [but] after they put on their clothes, well, that was the style" (Kosmos 1995:31-32). A linguistic conundrum is that only loose women wore tight clothing.

By extension, women also safeguarded community purity and values. In a fitting metaphor, in some West Oakland neighborhoods, women carried buckets of hot water and soap outside and scrubbed down the sidewalks each week: "Man, those gutters on Saturday, you could eat off of them!"

Children in the United States in the 1920s were still a significant factor in the work force (di Leonardo 1984:92). The prevailing Protestant work ethic was reinforced by traditional ethnic values and, as a consequence, children of West Oakland immigrant families were expected to work early and work hard (e.g., Alba 1985:138, 140). Ruth Schwerin remembers having to spend Saturdays scrubbing the soot off the windows of her father's foundry, the Phoenix Iron Works. Angela Cosy recalls drily that she was the family's "laundry." She also performed more rigorous tasks, like helping her father saw up discarded creosote rail ties to use as firewood. Other children helped their families, or at least themselves, by petty thievery. And it was apparently common, and morally acceptable, to nip fruit out of the boxcars that were parked along Seventh Street.



PLATE 76. MADELINE (MAZZA) VALVA AND GEORGE GALLAGHER, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1908. Madeline Mazza and George Galllagher were raised as brother and sister, although Gallagher was actually Mazza's uncle. (Photo courtesy of Bernice [Valva] Linford)

Adjusting to American customs could also be difficult. Children were quickly socialized to expect that their families should have a Christmas tree and that they should hang their stockings behind the stove—few houses had standard fireplaces. When Santa failed to appear, the disappointment was crushing. Immigrant families not only failed to understand this Americanized Christmas custom, they also did not have the economic wherewithal to adopt it. Thankfully the many children's day homes in West Oakland helped immigrant kids over this hump:

The first year we were there, all the kids said, "Hang your stockin' up, Santa Claus is coming." We hung our stockings up behind the stove and we got nothing. And my girlfriend, the sister of the one that lived downstairs, she got a doll and a buggy. And I didn't get anything. Then I went, they had a Christmas tree at the Day [Home] over there, Mrs. Smith. And I said, "Everybody got something, we hung our [stockings] and we never got anything. Santa Claus didn't come." So she went and got me a little doll, some rag doll or something to give to me. And I was cryin', I was the only one who didn't get any gifts [Albanese and Cosy 1995:56].

Although West Oakland was *not* a melting pot of ethnicity, it *was* a community with a strong self-identity and definable borders. It was, in short, "a world apart." Everything you needed could be found in West Oakland, and some individuals found little need to leave.

As often occurs in traditional insular communities, boundaries were partially drawn through a wild lexicon of nicknames. Most nicknames were descriptive rather than referential (*cf.* McDowell 1981) and were intended as terms of endearment rather than hostility. Royal Towns, as an example, had the moniker "George Washington Sugar Doughnuts" because he was *first* each morning at the local store to buy his favorite delicacy (Towns 1981:48). Towns recalled some of these nicknames decades after they were in use:

"Portugee Beans," this guy was always talking about Portugee beans. "Gime-that" [who Towns then impersonates]: Gime-that! Gime-that! Gime-that! And Crumb, Youz Guys . . . And Honey, Dynamite, Bisquits. When Bisquits died, they never did know what his last name was. Everyone called him "Bisquits." And Stump, Reptile, Dippity-Dags, Memphis-Sah, Fleas, Ray-Ray. . . . Leatherhead, Meow-face: I think he had a face like a cat [1981:48-49].

Although children of various hues and accents mixed freely in the streets, their parents were more detached. Neighbors helped one another, particularly in a crisis, but rarely socialized other than to visit "over the fence" (Kennedy 1981:9; Mousalimas and Mousalimas 1996a; Rosas 1995b:5; Rydman 1981:8; Wong 1996). Groups treated one another with respect: "As kids we never thought about color. The schools were just like an international settlement" (Kennedy 1981:n.p.). Children did, however, also learn slang terms for one another's ethnic groups, including "square heads," "Mics," "Dagos," "Paisanos," and "Portugees" (Denahy 1981:11). By the 1920s and 1930s African Americans lived mostly in one area, but when they intermixed, relations with neighbors were amiable. Several former West Oaklanders felt they could honestly comment that "there were no race problems in those days." As one African American woman observed: "You see, people don't realize that we didn't get a lot of separation until the '40s when the people came from the South and brought their



PLATE 77. THE CHIN MON WAH FAMILY, WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1926. (Left to right, Nancy, Ng Shee [mother] holding Edward, Laura, and Mon Wah [father] aka Young ah Fook). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 forced enterprising Chinese to buy “paper names” in order to immigrate to the United States. These papers could cost an individual thousands of dollars. After the Act was repealed, individuals and families were able to reclaim their original surnames. Chin Mon Wah (Young Ah Fook) settled in New York City and established himself. He then sent back to China for his wife and daughter. The Chins had five other children after they moved to West Oakland. (Photo courtesy of Florence [Chin] Wong)

nonsense with them. . . . Californians lived very mixed, very ethnically mixed” (Blake 1995:27). West Oakland children in fact often became polyglots by picking up a language or two from their neighbors.

Ethnic boundaries were quickly drawn, however, as children grew up. Contrary to “Golden Age” and “melting pot” myths that prevail to this day, these boundaries were both internally as well as externally imposed. Thus as one Greek American remembers: “I had great friends there. But not one of my non-Greek friends was allowed to come to my home” (Mousalimas and Mousalimas 1996a:20). And the stakes were definitely raised as West Oakland children passed puberty. The local sentiment was, “You can come to our parties and dance, but don’t take out my daughter” (Valva 1995a:3).

External factors also helped to define the unique character of West Oakland as a community vis-a-vis the outside world. It was as if these immigrant families were pioneers, circling the wagons

against the common foe of bigotry. Several people interviewed remember that their first taste of prejudice occurred outside the boundaries of their community. Andrew Mousalimas, as an example, recalls the difficult transition going from the multi-ethnic environment of Prescott School to the more homogeneous student body at Oakland High: “We couldn’t date the so-called ‘right girls,’ we couldn’t join the right clubs. I was a pretty good basketball player. . . . I made [the] Junior College team. [But I] could not even make *Junior Varsity* out of Oakland High. They cut me immediately.” Even “my teachers used to make fun of my name” (Mousalimas and Mousalimas 1996a:41). And, as discussed above, racial discrimination existed in job-hiring both inside and outside the community.

It is poignant and perhaps a little surprising, then, that the multi-ethnic fellowship of childhood was often forgotten as groups moved up and out. As people look back there is a tendency to soften the edge and reconstruct a community history that corresponds to a Golden Age, “an enchanted space as remote as the ‘once upon a time’ of the fables. The past here functions as a kind of reverse image of the present, a time when ‘everyone was neighbors’ and life was more secure” (Samuel and Thompson 1990:8). Thus, beginning in the 1930s, a group of former West Oakland residents—the “West of Market Street Boys”—began to publish a series of reminiscences about the “good old days” of West Oakland and its role as a melting pot. Yet, ironically, as a social group they excluded Blacks as well as first-generation immigrants (and, of course, women). Royal Towns recalled attending one of their themed events, a Firemen’s Night: “They couldn’t kick me out, being a fireman.”

So I went there and I had a speech all ready for them. But they just said, “Take a bow.” And I took a bow. So Jose Casin was County Clerk . . . well Joe carried me around when I was a baby. And I was telling him about it. Joe said, “What was you going to tell them, Royal?” “Well, I was going to tell them about the day I was born [slight laugh]” I says, “You know those days, we never went to hospitals. We were [born] there at home. And I heard them calling all these different names, like Mrs. Silva and Mrs. Morerro and oh, German names, everything else.” I says, “Geez, where is this place?” [Someone] says, “This is West Oakland.” “Well Geez, West Oakland must be heaven! And yes,” I says, “West Oakland *was* heaven. But you guys missed the boat when you put on your applications, ‘For Whites only.’ Because there was so much mixing down there . . .” [Towns 1981:54].

Despite these fractures, there is no doubt that West Oaklanders *did* enjoy a strong sense of camaraderie, a *communitas* due partly to the leveling factor of poverty. “Nobody had more than anybody else” is a common assessment. Most people shared a similar immigrant experience and children served as cultural brokers and interpreters for their parents. Neighborhoods were safe and doors were rarely locked. “People looked out for one another down there.” And “when you made friends down there, they were friends for life” Evelyn Albanese recalls (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:36). As Gregg Kosmos summarized, “Yeah but those are good days. And if I came back to this world, I would like to do it one more time, same way” (1995:27).

All those interviewed agree that this special sense of community quickly evaporated with the onslaught of World War II and the influx of defense workers, many of whom came from the Deep South. Italians and Slavs followed the earlier lead of the Portuguese and Irish and moved out and on; for them, West Oakland became a fond memory—a “place to start from.” For others, however, West Oakland was not only a place to start from but a place to stay.

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PART FOUR

WORK

A PROFILE OF WEST OAKLAND WORK IN 1952

Paul Groth

West Oakland has not only been a vibrant place to be at home; it has also been a vibrant place to work. For many women and girls, work meant tasks done at home. Shopping, looking after children, cooking, cleaning, caring for sick family members, doing laundry, and gardening made possible the paid jobs in the area. Women also contributed to the cash income of the household by taking in other people's laundry, sewing, or babysitting. For men and boys (and some women, as noted below), work meant paid employment in a workshop, factory, or commercial setting. For West Oakland as a whole, the presence or absence of paid jobs spurred population gains and losses and set the limits on how much workers were paid, and thus on what they could afford for housing, food, recreation, donations to their church, and other life outside of work. The relative dependability of jobs affected when people changed jobs and moved in or out of the area, and how well they lived when they retired.

Walking through West Oakland at almost any time after 1910, one could not help but have a sense of how the urban world was made, and by whom. All sorts of products—from light bulbs, clothing, and food to metal bolts, windows, and entire ships—were being made in West Oakland by one's neighbors and friends. The work was often visible through open doors; other products were visible on trucks rumbling along the streets, or in the services that kept trains and automobiles running.

The early years of the 1950s are a compelling point from which to review the range and locations of employment in West Oakland, and a good set of 1952 Sanborn insurance maps makes that year particularly accessible. In 1952 railroad employment and the neighborhood population were still at high levels. The exigencies of World War II were over, but West Oakland did not have a peacetime economy. The smaller Korean War (1950-1953) kept the area bases, port, and industries busy with military activity (Lotchin 1992). The massive suburban highway, industrial, and shopping-center developments—so much a part of urban change in the later 1950s—were largely still in the planning and construction stages. Their effects would not be felt fully until the 1960s. In 1952 suburban residential developments were only beginning to entice middle-income Oakland residents to move away from their neighborhoods, thereby leaving inexpensive homes in East Oakland for West Oaklanders to buy.

In the early 1950s, the historical architectural fabric of West Oakland was probably more intact, with every lot more fully developed, than it had ever been. The major exceptions were government housing projects, most built at the edges of the district to meet the housing demands of World War II. Right in the middle of West Oakland was Peralta Villa Federal Housing Project, a public housing project begun in the late New Deal years, and then used as war-workers' housing. The large megablocks of Peralta Villa were sited on about six former blocks, and on a one-block Annex on the site of the former McDermott mansion. The buildings of this project were indeed large in relation to the other residences in the neighborhood, but small in comparison to the projects that would come in the later phases of urban rebuilding. In 1952 the original two-deck Cypress Freeway had not yet been built, but the old Cypress Street had been widened as a major link to the Bay Bridge. Because of the excellent truck access, property owners on the land adjacent to Cypress had begun to insert more industrial and warehousing uses. The towering original double-deck freeway itself was not yet sharply

dividing parts of West Oakland from each other, and The Point from the rest of the city (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:170-173).

THE STUDY OF WORK IN WEST OAKLAND

We can supplement verbal descriptions of work and create a telling snapshot of the employment available in the area through the use of selected documents: first, by closely studying the 1952 Sanborn maps to see the sites and types of employment in West Oakland, and then by tying those sites to mimeographed employment reports prepared by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce (1952a, 1952b). For this employment overview, West Oakland has been defined broadly as west of Market Street and south of West Grand Avenue, formerly Twenty-second Street. While the Cypress Project area, focused on the area historically known as Oakland Point, comprises only one portion of the broader area, the larger boundaries constitute the area known as West Oakland to the city's residents, and also circumscribe the jobs within a short walk away from home for the Point's residents.

Large workplaces generally show up very clearly on Sanborn maps (Figure 45). All boilers, chemical vats, or other flammable or explosive items are easy to spot; fire walls and overhead structures are usually well coded. Very large sites, such as the Southern Pacific Railroad yards, often get their own sheet, with paragraphs of information about night watchmen, chemicals in use, equipment that might catch on fire, and so on. Sanborn cartographers give medium-sized work sites, those on 50 or 75-foot wide lots, a large label in the street space above the lot, such as "Hansen Manufacturing Co., metalworks." Small sites are harder to detect, and may be coded simply as "steam laundry" or "machine works." By 1912 the power source was also given; the choices in West Oakland were then electric motors or a steam boiler with steam engine. The most serious gap in Sanborn workplace information is the lack of notation about open spaces. Storage yards, animal yards (say, mule yards for shipbuilding, horse corrals for drayage and express companies), and later parking lots are usually left completely without notation unless material stored there is considered flammable or otherwise dangerous (e.g., gasoline tank trucks). Lots drawn as being vacant indeed may have been vacant, or might have been hubs of activity.

Information from Sanborn maps for 1952 can be matched to a series of very useful mimeographed directories created by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, apparently to be used by manufacturing office staffs, executives, and sales representatives. The reports list the address, owner or director of the industry, products made, and the general number of employees.

THE NATURE OF WORK IN WEST OAKLAND

For many West Oaklanders, as was true for residents in most working-class neighborhoods in the United States, employment was transitory. Even precise figures about jobs can be hard to find or are conflicting. Especially before the labor reorganizations of the 1930s, most urban employment was episodic, with seasonal or annual cycles, and even daily or weekly fluctuations. A sudden large contract could call for hundreds of temporary extra laborers. Employers over-reported and under-reported the sizes of their work force to impress customers, win influence with city hall, avoid taxes, or confuse competitors. Some companies would have destroyed their records, sealed their files, or refused to be interviewed or studied. Some significant sites are overlooked in historical records.

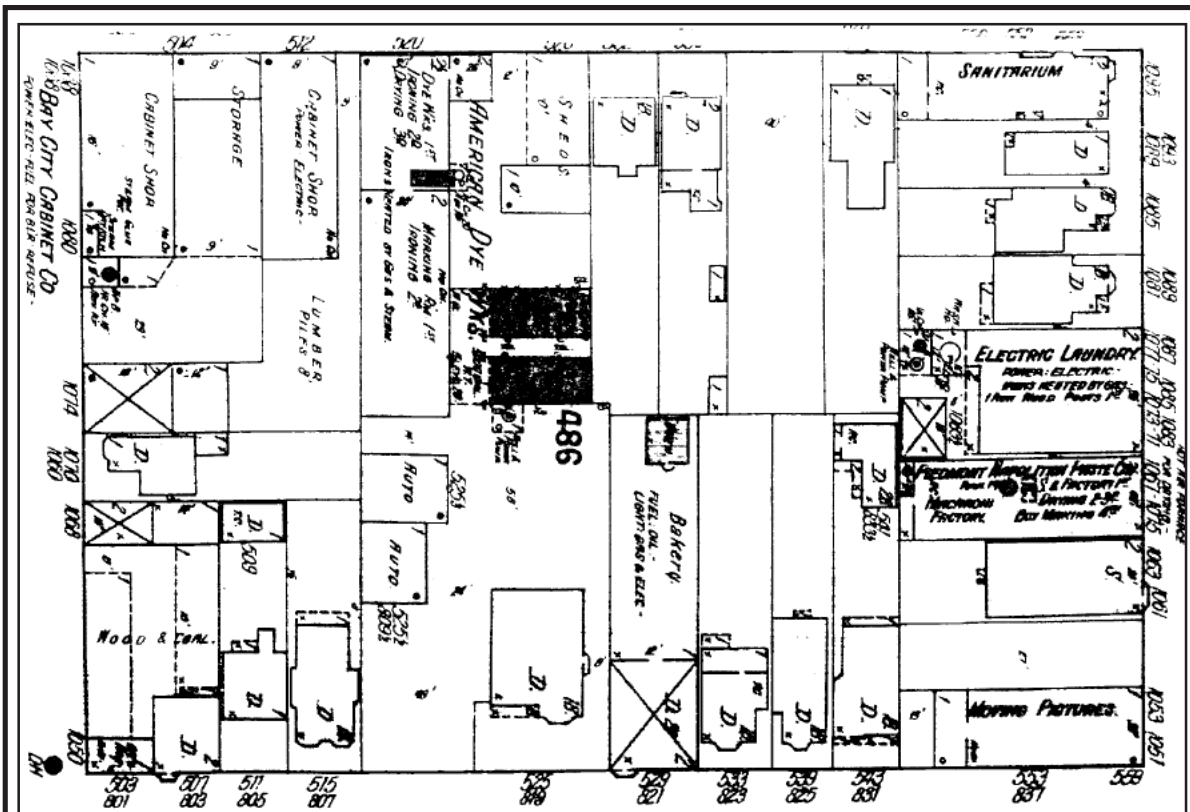


FIGURE 45. A TYPICAL WEST OAKLAND BLOCK IN 1952, SHOWING MIXED RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL USES. Sanborn Insurance surveyors clearly identified all major commercial enterprises—along with pertinent details such as the kind of fuel used—and also recorded hints of other employment opportunities in the neighborhood. (Source: Sanborn 1952)

Consider the case of the Southern Pacific Railroad yards in West Oakland. The available literature about Oakland’s railroad history is dominated by good accounts of the rolling stock and bridges, track lines, labor battles, route wars, and rate wars—all important issues. Nonetheless, the literature leaves a significant vacuum about the actual work environments in the huge S.P. yards: the roundhouses, commissaries, sheds, machine shops, and sorting yards that shaped the daily lives of thousands of employees.

Although paid work affected virtually all parts of one’s life in West Oakland, it had a particularly obvious influence on the type of dwelling one could live in, and the income available for those who worked full time in the home. To be sure, some breadwinners, especially skilled workers, had very steady employment. Their households were typically the ones who would afford to rent a whole house or flat, or to buy a cottage of their own, often with the help of income from others in the family. Many more workers, especially younger workers and those who had just arrived in the neighborhood, depended on the lower-paying, rapidly changing jobs. At this end of the employment spectrum were those who could barely afford to rent an apartment, let alone make loan payments to buy their own cottage. If they were single, unskilled workers were the most likely to room or board with a family, or live in some kind of rooming house. It is harder to find the stories of roomers and boarders than it is for those who bought a house, although part of temporary laborers’ history remains in the rooms and streetscapes where they spent their time away from work, and in their workplaces.

EARLY WORKPLACE PATTERNS

Sanborn maps in 1889 record relatively few large workplaces in West Oakland. Southern Pacific's yards were by far the largest work element. At the southeastern corner of the district, where Myrtle and Filbert streets ended at the waterfront, was another fairly large set of manufacturing buildings for Pacific Iron and Nail Company, near the site that would eventually become the Moore shipyards. The Contra Costa Laundry, at Fourteenth and Kirkham streets, employed 300 people (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:115). Between the iron works and S.P. yards were a handful of small employment sites, including a pickle factory and Sigottes Waterworks, probably a bottling plant.

The Sanborn maps for 1912 present West Oakland as a far more fully developed district, both for living and for working. There were far fewer vacant lots, and many older structures had been replaced with larger buildings. Workplaces of some size were beginning to appear to the north, in the vicinity of West Grand Avenue (formerly Twenty-second Street). The Southern Pacific still loomed large. New clusters of workplaces south of Seventh Street are also very notable. Some of these scattered shops relied on skills related to railroad work, such as a gas engine works. A firm doing general blacksmithing as well as working both on carriages and autos showed that the transition to the use of automobiles and trucks was underway. Small workplaces dotted many of the older blocks between Peralta and Bay streets, south of Seventh. A few of these smaller workplaces were railroad owned, such as the one-story S.P. storage and office building at Cedar. Others were the types of



PLATE 78. OAKLAND LONG WHARF ABOUT 1905. By 1871 Oakland Long Wharf extended more than 2 miles into the bay; there ships met the transcontinental trains of the Central Pacific bringing passengers and freight to the Bay Area. By 1882 Long Wharf was used for freight traffic only—passengers now used the more capacious Oakland Mole. The big business of ocean-going freight was efficiently handled by the combination of rail freight cars rolling right alongside deep-water and coastwise vessels coming in to discharge or take on cargo. The two four-masted British steel ships in the center are loading cargo, probably for the Cape Horn trade. Thousands of board feet of lumber stacked on the pier have been left by steam schooners, in from the northwest. Seven men fill the waiting rail car by hand—a slow process. (Photo Courtesy of San Francisco Maritime Historic Park)

businesses that could have been found along any workers' street convenient to downtown and freight offices, for instance a broom factory, several breweries, and a winery.

Because both the S.P. and Western Pacific railroads ran along the south end of West Oakland, workplaces were strongly concentrated in the area south of Seventh Street in 1912. On Fifth Street, between Cypress and Kirkham, the S.P. freight depot was located at the end of a series of spur tracks. Within a block of the freight depot were the area's most closely clustered and largest workplaces, several almost a quarter of a block in size. Even these city blocks, however, still showed mixtures of residences and workshops, including—directly across the street from warehouses and a brewing company—the full block of gardens surrounding the imposing McDermott house (on the block bounded by Seventh, Cypress, Eighth, and Center streets). About four blocks to the east of the S.P. freight warehouse, and across the street from the Tompkins School at Chestnut and Fifth, was another very loosely clustered group of nine workplaces, the northern end of the cluster being the Glove Building, which survives to the present day and which was then one of the smaller of the nearby factories.

THE GROWING WORK SCENE

Many of the buildings visible in 1912 were still standing in 1952, but the maps show a very different neighborhood. Vacant lots were much more rare. The workplaces of the successful pre-war firms (for instance Independent Iron Works, whose buildings were later bought by Phoenix Iron Works) could be very large, and the World War II-era expansions were also large. To the west of the Southern Pacific yards, on filled land that was originally intended to be additional industrial land, the U.S. Navy had built an enormous supply center, with a grid of multistory warehouses serving several piers. On filled land west of the older part of West Oakland was the Oakland Army Base, another large tract of land that influenced West Oakland but was not really part of it (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:171-173). These two additions transformed West Oakland into an inland part of the city, rather than a point close to the tidewater. The new workplaces—civilian and military—visually and socially challenged the old dominance of the S.P. yards.

In 1952 the growing use of automobiles and trucks was heavily impacting the neighborhood and its workplaces. Most notably, the completion of the Bay Bridge in 1936, with its interurban train service beginning in 1939, and the bridge access roads along West MacArthur Boulevard (formerly Thirty-eighth Street) ended Seventh Street's near monopoly in rail and automobile access to San Francisco. Most of the automobile ferries at the end of Seventh Street ceased to operate in 1936; the last trains ran on Seventh Street in 1941. Cypress Street was widened to become a major access to the bridge (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:170-173). By 1952 in West Oakland itself were a number of truck warehouses, gas stations, and small auto-repair facilities. On the blocks near the S.P. Freight Depot, the Haslett Warehouse Company had several buildings for storing newly shipped autos.

Other successful companies had grown too large for their initial sites and had leapfrogged to nearby buildings. Between Third and Fifth streets, in the blocks west of Tompkins School, Grandma's Cookies and the Western Paper Box Company had buildings on both sides of Adeline Street. These additions, and new companies, resulted in workplace blocks that, in comparison to 1912, were far more dominated by industrial and warehouses uses. In addition to the groups of large workplaces around the Freight Depot and west of Tompkins School, there was a large cluster at the very tip of the Point, along Bay and Cedar streets, adding to the shops of the S.P. In the northern part of West

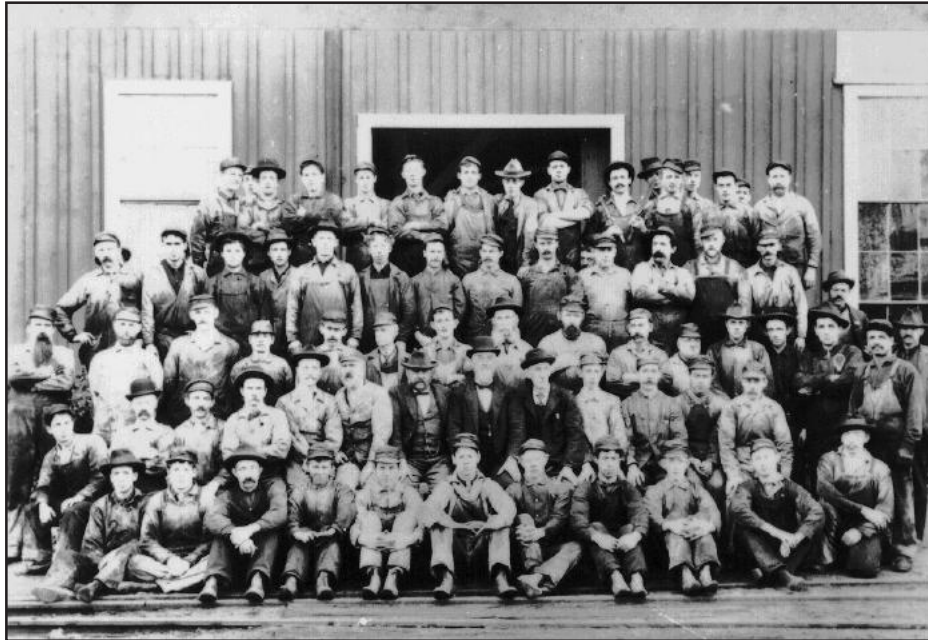


PLATE 79. SOUTHERN PACIFIC CAR SHOP WORKERS IN 1898. The largest employer through most of West Oakland's history, Southern Pacific was at its peak around the time of this photograph, just four years after the massive and bloody A.R.U. strike. Master Mechanic McKenzie and his lieutenants held the position of honor in this group of shop workers, many of whom are still in their teens. (From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

Oakland by 1952, especially between Fourteenth and Eighteenth streets, clusters of large workplaces occupied several blocks. This area was dominated by firms such as the Carnation Creamery, the General Electric lamp factory, and the Herrick Iron Works. To get a more detailed sense of West Oakland's diversity of firms and their influences in the other facets of district life in 1952, perhaps it is best to look at the paid workplaces by type of industry.

Railroads and Shipyards

As had been true since the beginnings of Oakland's life as a true city, in 1952 railroad employment dominated both the entire city and the West Oakland neighborhood. With more than 4,200 workers in 1952, the Southern Pacific Railroad Company's yards were Oakland's largest single employer; the company's annual Oakland payroll was more than 25 million dollars (*The Oakland Outlook* 1950:3). West Oakland resident Ben Albanese remembered that "if you had a job with the S.P., you could get credit anyplace. [Your] credit was good, if you had that job" (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:55). In 1952 steam locomotives were still dominant in the S.P. system, but they were clearly in their last years of use; S.P. had added diesel shops to their yards in 1949 (*Southern Pacific Bulletin* 1949). By 1956 the S.P. would replace most of its steam locomotives, and by the late 1950s the roundhouse would be demolished and the shops virtually closed. Railroad passenger service was also declining rapidly due to automobile use and highway construction. By the late 1960s, instead of the 40 trains a day leaving West Oakland, only 3 left each day, marking drastic employment shifts as well as transportation changes (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:172).

Southern Pacific was not the only railroad employer in West Oakland. Between 1907 and 1911, Western Pacific broke S.P.'s waterfront monopoly in Oakland and expanded their operations (Bagwell 1982:186-190). In 1952 the Western Pacific Railroad had locomotive maintenance shops and a roundhouse in West Oakland, reached by going south on Adeline Street. There they employed about 500 people, making Western Pacific the neighborhood's third largest employer.

Nancy Olmsted and Roger Olmsted (1994:62-86) and Will Spires (1994:205-224) have surveyed railroad employment in West Oakland, and further contributions to this theme are found in the present volume. Of particular note is the wide range of year-round employees in a railroad yard. At one end of the scale were highly skilled metal workers, mechanics, and carpenters—paid reasonably well and hired year round. Operating employees for the trains—including firemen, brakemen, Pullman porters, waiters, and cooks—enjoyed fairly steady work, while Redcaps and clerks held regular positions at the terminals. Although some skilled workers found steady railroad work, other railroad work was notoriously seasonal, which particularly affected the number of boarders and lodgers in West Oakland. Every railroad operation hired large numbers of both skilled and unskilled laborers by the day or week for peak periods and special projects. Single workers like these, or workers living away from their families, were prime candidates for rooming-house life.

The case of Manuel Gallardo shows how railroad work varied and intertwined with migration and housing. In the 1930s Gallardo worked for Southern Pacific in Arizona, and his wife and six children lived there in a small town. He came to West Oakland alone in 1937, and after securing steady work with S.P., he moved his family to California. When S.P. laid him off after a year, the entire family moved back to Arizona. In 1941 Gallardo again found work with S.P. in West Oakland, and the family returned; by 1942 they had bought a handsome cottage on Chester Street. Gallardo survived a later S.P. layoff by working for a scrap and metal yard. He eventually returned to S.P. and retired from the firm. In the 1990s his daughter still lived in the family house (Rosas 1995:1-2).

Another important industrial employer in 1952 was the Moore Dry Dock Company, a major Bay Area shipyard, located near the site of several 19th-century yards used for the construction of wooden ships (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:119). The Moore shipyards had moved to the Oakland waterfront from San Francisco after the earthquake of 1906. Their work force burgeoned to 20,000 employees during World War I. At the beginning of World War II, Moore significantly expanded by adding two new dry docks in West Oakland and developing two additional Bay Area shipbuilding sites (Bagwell 1982:190-192; Johnson 1993:32). Bertha Rosas, a teenager when her family settled permanently in West Oakland in 1941, recalls the Moore shipyards as a particular hub of activity in a very busy neighborhood. "You couldn't tell if it was day or night," she remembers. "There was just a flow of people all the time" because people worked shifts round the clock (Rosas 1995:3). After World War II, the work force at Moore was much smaller, and by 1947 the family had sold the firm. Nonetheless, in 1952 the company still employed up to 2,000 people along the First Street waterfront between Filbert and Adeline streets. Shipyard work fluctuated significantly, in response to each contract for the repair or construction of a ship, so that in official surveys, the Moore company directors estimated their range of employment within blocks of 500 people rather than the more common units of 25 or 50 (Archibald 1947; Oakland Chamber of Commerce 1952a; Russell 1953).

Smaller West Oakland Industries

As substantial as the railroad and shipyard employment figures were, smaller industrial and commercial employers accounted for an additional 4,300 officially tallied employees for 1952, or about 42 percent of the total in West Oakland. Food-processing industries were especially important, and often employed more women than men. The Carnation Creamery Company employed more than 300 people at its two plants on Fourteenth and Sixteenth streets, between Poplar and Kirkham. The Goebel Brewing Company was a five-story, block-long collection of buildings that filled most of the block between Seventh, Kirkham, Fifth, and Cypress streets (directly east of the present-day BART station and parking lot). While the brewery employed more than 200 people in the early 1950s (Bagwell 1982:68-69), it was demolished in 1964. Still remaining on the rest of the same block is the Consumer's Yeast plant (in the 1990s, Red Star Yeast), which reported only 50 employees in 1952 but 100 employees the year before. Grandma Baking Company (near Third and Adeline) and the El Dorado Oil Works, processing coconut and vegetable oils (located at the waterfront), each relied on more than one hundred people. The Cardinet Candy Company (makers of Nob Hill candy bars), the H.J. Heinz Company, and the Nabisco shredded-wheat factory (opened in 1917) each had payrolls of 50 to 75 people.



PLATE 80. SHIPBUILDERS AT MOORE AND SCOTT'S YARD AT THE FOOT OF ADELINE STREET IN 1918. These were the West Oakland builders of steel ships for World War I. At high noon, they gathered together to have their photograph taken with the two uniformed soldiers who were promoting the sale of Victory Liberty Bonds. Assembled are the machinists and metal workers, riveters and welders, draftsmen and office workers, and the foreman who kept up the heavy schedule required to put together warships and transport vessels. Moore and Scott's Shipyard employed thousands of workers in 85 acres of machine shops, dry docks, and marine ways that sprawled over the mudflats just south of the Southern Pacific yard. (Photo courtesy of Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room)

Food-packing companies also provided canning and packing employment in the area, their widely fluctuating payrolls epitomizing the constantly expanding and contracting workplace. The California Packing Corporation, which had six locations in Alameda County, reported its work force in 1952 as “70 to 5,000” workers (Oakland Chamber of Commerce 1952c). When West Oakland resident Angela Albanese Cosy started working at Del Monte’s Plant No. 6 she was actually only 13 years old, but she claimed she was 14 (the legal working age). She canned peaches, apricots, and plums. At first, she worked a four-hour shift after a four-hour school day. Later on, she worked at a cannery in East Oakland (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:15-16).

Various mid-sized manufacturing plants were also important employers in the neighborhood. The ready supply of West Oakland women workers within walking distance may have been as important a reason for manufacturing owners to locate as were West Oakland’s good transportation connections and the adjacency of nearby firms doing related work. General Electric’s Oakland Lamp Works, begun in 1922, occupied a full block bounded by Campbell, Seventeenth, Peralta, and Sixteenth streets. Almost 200 people, mostly women, assembled incandescent bulbs. G.E. owned two main buildings—both imposing, multistory brick structures—and two warehouses (*The Oakland Outlook* 1922:4). Western Door and Sash employed almost as many people at their shop buildings near the corner of Fifth and Cypress streets, and at another nearby site. At the three different sites of Western Paper Box—a large factory at Nineteenth and Kirkham and two smaller sites in the vicinity of Fifth, Adeline, and Chestnut streets—about 150 employees, mostly women, made containers for bakery goods, candy, clothing, and laundry. Bertha Rosas’s mother did not work outside the home. Bertha had a brief stint at working in a neighborhood’s factory; for six months as a young woman (before she began a permanent job as an office worker), Bertha wrapped cupcakes on the conveyor belt at Grandma’s Cookies, at Adeline and Fifth streets. The factory was just six blocks from her family’s house (Rosas 1995:4). In the 1880s and 1890s, box factories had employed both women and children (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:117), and although the products were light, the hours and work conditions could be grueling (Richardson 1905). The Fuller Brush Company had operated a good-sized plant along Seventh Street (Valva 1995a), but had moved by 1952.

In 1952 a distinct subset of the manufacturing plants in West Oakland, again relying heavily on women laborers, consisted of garment-industry workplaces. At the Co-Op Garment Manufacturing Company (at the corner of Seventh and Peralta streets), almost 100 employees made men’s and women’s denim clothing. At the eastern end of the neighborhood, on Market Street, the California Manufacturing Company employed between 25 and 50 people to make overalls, work pants, and leather jackets. The M.W. Hodkins Glove Company, in the building still standing at 1125 Seventh Street (Project Block 8), employed up to 50 people. The large Market Laundry at Eighth and Myrtle employed 50 to 75 people; earlier in the century most of its work force had been Japanese Americans. At least a dozen smaller laundries and dry cleaners also operated smaller plants in the neighborhood.

Another major subset of manufacturing plants were both large and small steel works. They shared the pool of skilled, overwhelmingly male, laborers lured to West Oakland by the railroads and shipyards, and these plants gave machinists alternatives when yard work declined. Ben Albanese, for instance, worked for the DeSano Foundry and Machine Shop on Peralta and Eighteenth streets, and later worked at the Moore shipyard (Albanese, Cosy, and Albanese 1995:55). Herrick Iron Works, on two blocks near Eighteenth and Campbell, kept 270 employees busy fabricating structural steel. The

Independent Iron Works (the building later bought by Phoenix Iron Works), which encompassed the entire block northwest of Pine and Shorey streets, paid about 200 employees in 1952; the business's most important products were prefabricated metal gas stations and truck tanks. Although the looming Independent Iron Works building (demolished in 1995) looked like a World War II industrial expansion, the company's first big business had come in the late 1920s and 1930s with the rise of the retail gasoline industry (Sparke 1954). By 1952 Noble Iron Works, on the northwest corner of Seventh and Cedar (Project Block 29), had given up war materiel for building cement silos and conveyor systems for ore and gravel. The variety and practical importance of this inner-city manufacturing neighborhood is further shown by other area metal-work employers, listed here with their highest number of employees in 1952:

<i>Company</i>	<i>Principal Product</i>	<i>Empl't.</i>
Irving Subway Grating	architectural gratings	124
Jorgensen Steel	steel wholesale and distribution	99
Pacific Pipe	pipes, valves, irrigation systems	99
De Sanno Foundry	hose couplings and valves; winery equip.	74
Empire Foundry	gray iron castings; gears	74
Allwork Manufacturing	auto parts, toys, stampings	49
Cole Tank Works	pressure tanks, smokestacks	49
Gilmore/Monarch Steel	bolts, washers, threaded rods	49
Acme Galvanizing Works	galvanizing	25
Bruehl's Metal	fireplace grates, laundry baskets	25
Doran Company	bronze marine propellers	25
Spears-Wells	machinery	25
Straub Manufacturing	equipment for mills and mines	25

In each of these shops, a new contract or an emergency call for parts from a larger factory meant temporary work for many skilled workers. There were also dozens of permanent and intermittent positions as secretaries, sales people, truck drivers, and unskilled helpers to support the machinists and assembly workers and to distribute their products.

The vitality and variety of West Oakland industrial life, which was mixed into its residential areas, caused real problems of noise, pollution, traffic, and competition for space. As noted above, however, walking through West Oakland in 1952 one could not help but impart a sense of how the urban world was made, and by whom. When Robert Valva drove around his former neighborhood with project researchers in 1995, the sites of factories were still vivid in his mind. As a young man he had watched people come and go from the factories, and had bought some of the products—most particularly, ice cream at the Carnation plant (Valva 1995b). So, too, as a young man in the 1940s, Arthur Patterson would walk around the corner from his family's home on Peralta Street to look into the street doors of the small tool and die works at 322 Lewis Street (near Third) to watch the machinists at work. From this experience he decided to pursue his own career as a machinist (Patterson 1995b). Today's largely empty industrial sites in the district are mute evidence of the reality of industrial owners' decisions to move work away from mixed-use neighborhoods like West Oakland to large "greenfield" sites at the edges of cities. The empty workplaces are also evidence of the even greater shift of American unskilled and semiskilled manufacturing to foreign countries.

Retailing, Construction, and Cleaning

The 20 blocks of businesses that lined Seventh Street between Market and Cedar, although not run as a single company, had a combined payroll as large as or even larger than the Moore shipyards. Using very conservative estimates, and remembering that 1950s visitors saw many vacated stores along Seventh Street (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:171), we can estimate at least 200 shops in 1952. If these had an average of 5 to 10 employees each, including part-time waitresses and stock boys as well as full-time managers and cashiers, then at least 1,500 people worked in retail. Other service jobs, such as auto-repair work, were also located near the Seventh Street retail spine of West Oakland. Many of these jobs would have been as temporary or part-time as were those in the factories and workshops.

Another employment sector of West Oakland, hidden in most statistics because its workers were split into so many different teams and trades, would have been the industry of building and repairing the neighborhood itself. Carpenters, contractors, roofers, and painters worked in large numbers, and employed a good number of unskilled laborers as well. The neighborhood always had more than a dozen plumbing firms that served not only expensive neighborhoods elsewhere, but also West Oakland stores and residences. City and utility-company crews built and updated curbs, paving, sewer and water lines, and telephone systems. All of these projects employed hundreds of people in West Oakland, and perhaps up to a thousand workers during seasonal or business-cycle peaks.

Obviously, many of the neighborhood's jobs were held by people from elsewhere, just as a great number of West Oaklanders worked outside the district. The inner port, near what is now called Jack London Square, and the area along the waterfront and rail lines in East Oakland were important for West Oaklanders, and would have been key employment destinations, especially after 1911. From the early days of the railroad in the city, Oakland and Southern Pacific had fought various battles to control the inner waterfront. Western Pacific broke open the issue in 1907, and by 1911 a working agreement had finally made possible modern, competitive development of both rail and port facilities in the stretch of navigable water between East Oakland and the Point. This development brought about a great expansion in jobs to match the expansion of population and trade in the North American West and the Pacific Rim (Bagwell 1982:186-190).

Also important were service jobs in downtown office and retail firms. In 1952 Kahn's Department Store alone employed more than one thousand people, mostly women—younger women as clerks, older women as seamstresses—with men holding the stockroom and warehousing positions. While jobs for maids and yard workers were in higher income residential areas away from West Oakland, janitorial jobs downtown were important for both men and women. Bernyce Rydman remembers that her mother worked at the S.P. Laundry and later cleaned offices in a downtown building (Rydman 1995:3).

PAID WORK AND HOUSING

The peaks and valleys of employment available for West Oaklanders affected single rooming-house residents and families in workers' cottages in different ways. For inexpensive rooming and boarding options, the general rule was as follows: the better the pay, the better the quality of the nearby



PLATE 81. LAYING TRACK ALONG SEVENTH STREET FOR THE NEW RED TRAIN SERVICE IN 1938. There appear to be plenty of workers and onlookers as the new tracks were laid for the passenger service over the Bay Bridge. While this was a one-time event, maintenance and repair of streets and railroad tracks kept some individuals employed year-round. The Well Pipe Works occupies a building that advertised metal works in the 1880s; both would have kept a small contingent of workers employed. Across the street on the corner was the former Centennial Hotel (the Astoria Hotel at the time of this photo), whose corner bar provided solace and entertainment for off-duty workers in the neighborhood. (From the collection of Vernon J. Sappers)

rooms for rent. Throughout the United States, private landowners near the small to mid-sized businesses that employed *skilled* people developed reasonably comfortable rooming houses. Near the rougher, poorer-paying, and often less dependable unskilled and casual-labor jobs, one might expect to find much cheaper and rougher rooming houses—hotels whose accommodations seemed (and were) perilously similar to those at the cheap lodging houses of Skid Rows, and rooms or whole flats crammed with single workers who saved money by living in small spaces shared with very many people. Thus, the varied types of rooming-house developments of West Oakland were always directly related to employment.

A similar relationship existed between jobs and workers' cottages and flats. Those well-paid workers—or more commonly in West Oakland, those heads of households with several other family members also earning wages—could buy or rent a house with five or six rooms. They might live with only family and relatives in the house, and not have to take in unrelated boarders. Those who owned their houses might have money in good years to add new porches and rooms. They might have installed plumbing as early as it was available, to increase comfort and save chores for those working at home. Those workers with lower-paying jobs or those working in harder times might hold onto their houses, but they would have taken in more, unrelated, roomers. If they added structures to their property, a backyard rental cottage might be the choice. Thus, West Oakland's life at the workplace was very much a determinant of the neighborhood's housing conditions, and its life outside of work.

THE QUEST FOR “DAD” MOORE: THEME, PLACE, AND THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

William A. Spires

This essay introduces the life and work of Morris “Dad” Moore, an African American worker and labor leader who lived in West Oakland from 1919 to 1930. Moore was born to Lewis Moore and Mildred Turner on 15 March 1854 somewhere in Virginia. At some point before the turn of the century, he moved to Chicago and found work as a sleeping car porter for the Pullman Palace Car Company. By the time that his life ended (in poverty, on 20 January 1930), Moore was a symbol to thousands of African American workers in the most influential minority labor movement in the United States. Cultural resources are often evaluated in terms of typicality and uniqueness. If these criteria may be brought to bear upon an individual, I hope to show that Dad Moore was, in a very important sense, both typical and unique.

Other essays in this volume have made clear that the contexts of historical archaeology in West Oakland include both the centrality of labor and transportation to the project area and the local expression of far-reaching reform movements. One of these movements, a transportation workers’ campaign, led to the first contract awarded by management to a minority-led trade union. This issue, the national and historic confrontation between African American sleeping car porters and the Chicago-based Pullman Palace Car Company, was strongly contested in Oakland. From the initial stages of research, the struggle of the Oakland Division of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) has been recognized as one of the core themes of the Cypress Replacement Project.

The history of the Oakland Division’s role in the BSCP struggle had not received the treatment that it seemed to merit until CALTRANS’ sponsorship of research for the Cypress Project made this study possible. Fortunately, much of Oakland’s role in the BSCP’s fight for economic and social justice is recorded in a rich array of primary and secondary documents. Among the sources being consulted are the BSCP files at the Chicago Historical Society, the records of the Pullman Corporation held by the Newberry Library, the papers of Cottrell Lawrence Dellums at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, the files of *The Messenger* and *The Black Worker*, along with city directories, cemetery records, county recorder’s statistics, and newspaper files (including the Black Newspaper Index at the Oakland Public Library’s Oakland History Room).

Before turning to Dad Moore, it is necessary to mention two men—George Pullman and Asa Philip Randolph—who shaped the course of Moore’s life. From the turn of the century until the onset of World War II, no American economic figure cast a longer shadow over West Oakland than George M. Pullman (1831-1897), who founded the Pullman Palace Car Company in 1867. By the turn of the century, his initial investment of \$1,000,000 was worth \$37,000,000, and his Palace Cars ran on three-quarters of the American railroad system. Andrew Carnegie said of him:

Pullman monopolized everything. It was well that it should be so. The man had arisen who could manage, and the tools belonged to him [Carnegie in Buder 1967:15].

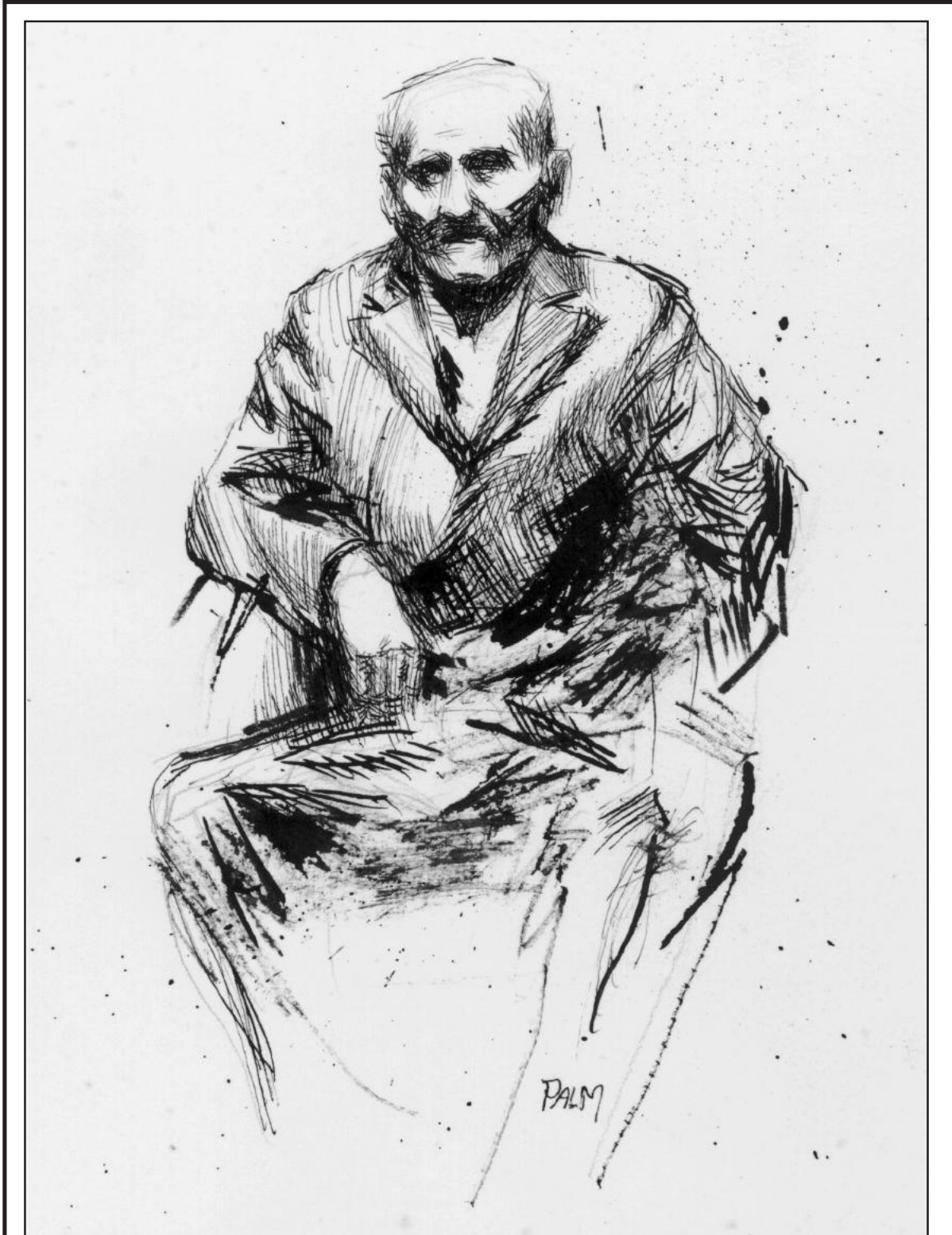


FIGURE 46. MORRIS "DAD"MOORE, September 1929. Dad Moore attended the first BSCP convention, in Chicago, Illinois, and sat in a position of honor for the delegates' portrait. This drawing, made from that portrait, captures Moore's simplicity and strength. (Pen-and-ink drawing by Olaf Palm)

Pullman's influence went well beyond mere financial success:

[His] name entered several languages as a synonym for luxury and comfort. Both here and abroad it became a byword for American business genius. His work was successfully identified with science and social progress. The beauty and elegance of the sleeping car became a visible symbol of the material promise of American industry and ingenuity [Buder 1967:xi].

After Pullman's death, the company interests were looked after by a board that included R.K. Mellon, Harold S. Vanderbilt, and J.P. Morgan.

Pullman's opposite number was Asa Philip Randolph, the Florida-born son of a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1911 at the age of 22, Randolph arrived in Harlem and attended New York City College. During his student years, he heard William D. "Big Bill" Haywood, Elizabeth "Rebel Girl" Gurley Flynn of the IWW, and Eugene Debs, who had served a prison term for his opposition to the Pullman Company. Under their influence, and under the teaching of City College professors Morris R. Cohen and J. Salwyn Shapiro, Randolph became a Socialist, supporting candidates for office and speaking on street corners in Harlem (Anderson 1972:61). In 1917, with colleague Chandler Owen, Randolph became the editor and publisher of *The Messenger*, "The Only Magazine of Scientific Radicalism in the World Published by Negroes."

While *The Messenger* featured theater reviews, poetry, critiques of the educational system, and articles on international (especially African) events, Randolph used his editorials to develop and express his own concept of scientific radicalism. He was an atheist, a Socialist, and made enemies easily. He called the NAACP "the national association for the advancement of *certain* people," was careful to distance himself from the American Communist Party and its African American affiliate, the American Negro Labor Conference, and excoriated Samuel Gompers and "the American Federation for the Perpetuation of Race Prejudice," as he called the AF of L. For a time, Randolph made common cause with the Industrial Workers of the World, stating that "Negroes and the IWW have interests not only in common, but interests that are identical" (*Messenger* October 1919:3). There were no takers on either side. Searching for a winning cause, Randolph looked into the cases of court-martialed African American soldiers, and wrote an article called "Negroes, Leave the South," in which he exhorted southern readers to "Come into the land of at least incipient civilization!" (*Messenger* March 1920:2).

In May 1924 the Pullman Palace Car Company's official organ, the *Pullman News*, carried the following announcement:

After 23 years of prompt and efficient service, Morris Moore, commonly known as "Dad" was pensioned and placed on the retired list on March 16. He was employed in the Chicago Western district on Dec. 23, 1901 and operated out of that district until April 3, 1919, when he was transferred to San Francisco to take charge of the porters' quarters in Oakland, where he remained until his retirement. He should be an example to his fellow porters, as he prides himself on his service record and also that he "laid some aside" for the future and is now able to enjoy his retirement [May 1924:28].

This may be the first published mention of Dad Moore, who indeed planned to be an example to his fellow porters—though scarcely in a way that the Pullman corporation could have foreseen or wished. We do not know when Moore became aware of Randolph or *The Messenger*, but by 1925 sleeping car porters were becoming increasingly militant. Sensing this, Randolph published a manifesto, “The Case of The Pullman Porter,” in July of that year and was approached by a group of porters including Ashley Totten and Milton Webster. The immediate result was a meeting in Harlem on 25 August in an auditorium hired from the Imperial Lodge of Elks. Hundreds of porters attended: the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was born that night in Harlem, and 200 porters joined at *The Messenger* offices the next day.

Along Oakland’s Seventh Street, at the end of the transcontinental lines, it was the policy of the Pullman corporation to provide sleeping quarters for porters who were required to remain on call. Dad Moore was in charge of these arrangements, housing the porters in two converted sleeping cars in the Southern Pacific yards. A porter described the scene to Randolph’s biographer, Jervis Anderson:

Dad Moore didn’t have nothing but a pint of moonshine. He was in retirement. They gave him the job of taking care of two old sleeping cars where the porters stayed. He took care of those cars, woke the men up, and saw that they got on the job. . . . He preached Brotherhood to every man he saw coming in and out of the railroad yard in Oakland. He and the boys would share a bottle of moonshine and he would preach Brotherhood. If you wasn’t a Brotherhood man you had a hard time getting in and out of his quarters. He worshipped Randolph [1972:176].

While Dad Moore worshiped Randolph, and it seems no exaggeration to say that he did, the Pullman Company viewed the BSCP as a radical menace. Within a few months of the Harlem meeting, Moore had been put out of his sleeping cars. He responded by opening up his own operation, to provide housing for porters and secure a base of operations for the BSCP. He was able to rely on the porters who had already identified themselves with the Brotherhood, and especially on his friendship with the BSCP Vice President Milton Webster in Chicago. It has been asserted that the Pullman corporation revoked Moore’s \$15 monthly pension, although the company records indicate that it was paid until his death. In any case, Moore’s independent rooming house and office on Wood Street became the Oakland base for the BSCP. On 15 February 1926, the 72-year-old African American labor organizer wrote a letter from his office in West Oakland to his headquarters in Chicago:

Mr M P Webster

Sir I am glad to here what a big jumb the Brother Hood is making. I am Doing all I can for the cause. I would like you to send me some Aplacion Blanks as I has only one left be Shure to Send them soon as you get this leter.

Hoping to here from you as Soon as you get this and let me no When mr Randolf will be here.

from your true friend an Brother Dad Moore

519 Wood Street

Oakland, Cal

[BSCP Papers, Part One, Reel One. *Note:* Moore’s original spelling and capitalization are used throughout this paper.]

This letter is the beginning of Moore's correspondence with Vice President Webster, a series of reports and replies written between February 1926 and June 1928 (Figure 47). This exchange of letters forms the most complete picture we have of Moore's work for the BSCP. Although these letters, 28 from Moore in all, cannot be quoted extensively here, they are being transcribed and annotated as a part of the project work. They present a unique picture of early labor history in the western United States. Time and again, Moore writes of his efforts to keep the signed membership active and up to date with their dues. At times his tone is full of battle rhetoric, at times he complains of being deserted by the porters. There are frequent and desperate appeals for funds. When the Brotherhood was on the point of being evicted from its offices, Webster took Moore's case directly to Randolph, who supplied funds and wrote to reassure Moore personally.

Moore's most important work during the years 1926-1928 was to dissuade the Oakland porters—BSCP members or not—from voting for the proposals put forward by the Pullman corporation for an Employee Representation Plan, under the auspices of a Pullman Porters Benevolent Association. Rejection of this plan was a crucial first step in the BSCP's efforts to be recognized as the legitimate bargaining agent for all porters. Moore argued against the plan tirelessly. The issue had national importance, and adherents of the Pullman plan were branded as "yellow dogs." Moore's letters to Webster, and the reports that he sent to be published in *The Messenger*, stress his opposition and his pride in the Oakland men's solidarity. Moore knew well that the issues could become violent. The Pullman corporation knew it also. Company files of "BSCP Propaganda" include this from 1926:

Read this paper. We are no longer slaves. Our union is backed up by the U.S. Gov. Board and we will make you pay us no money. We will throw inspector Rorrison off the train some night. Also Pig Bacon. I write as all powters feel. A Powter NY Dist.

Other letters of intimidation threatened death to "yellow dog" porters and were signed "The Black Klan."

In 1926 Randolph arrived in Oakland during a national organizing tour and met Moore, probably for the first time. He described the meeting 25 years later:

[We] were met by that Grand Old Man, Old Dad Moore, a tall, raw-bony, plain, blunt, hulk of a man, far past three-score years and ten, with his stern eyes flashing the fires of revenge, much in the mold of the old prophet Elijah, whose high mission was to direct the Israelites to the path of Yaweh. . . . and to revenge their oppressors. In his rough and homely fashion he hurled curses upon the heads of the Pullman oppressors and literally embraced the Brotherhood leaders who came preaching a strange doctrine of the unity of the porters and equality of black men [BSCP 25th anniversary pamphlet].

By the time of this meeting, Moore signed up a young porter named C.L. Dellums. Dellums, who was to succeed Moore in Oakland, met Randolph privately and became very active nationally with BSCP affairs. Dellums became Moore's "Field Agent" and was soon fired along with 45 other porters. Together, Moore and Dellums ran the Oakland office. They were constantly watched and sometimes infiltrated by "stool pigeons." For example, one of Randolph's confidential telegrams to Moore found its way promptly into Pullman Company files, where it still remains.

Telephone: EDGecombe (2323)
2324



BROTHERHOOD OF
Sleeping Car Porters

Headquarters:

2311 SEVENTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Official Publication: THE MESSENGER



August 7, 1928

Bancroft Library

General Organizer
A. PHILIP RANDOLPH
Assistant General Organizer
W. H. DES VERNEY
Assistant General Organizer
A. L. TOTTEN

Secretary-Treasurer
ROY LANCASTER
Special Organizer
FRANK R. CROSSWAITH
Field Representative
S. E. GRAIN

Mr. Dad Moore
519 Wood Street
Oakland, Calif.

Dear Brother Moore:

I understand that there is some plan to circulate "yellow-dog" contracts among the men on the Pacific Coast for them to sign, which is intended to get them committed against the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and bind and enslave them to the Company Union, or Employee Representation Plan.

May I herewith advise that it is the policy of the Brotherhood as settled upon in the Policy Committee Conference which recently met in New York, that Brotherhood men should refuse to sign any "yellow-dog" contracts or vote for the Plan, but that a vigorous fight be made against "yellow-dog" contracts and the Employee Plan with a view to destroying them completely.

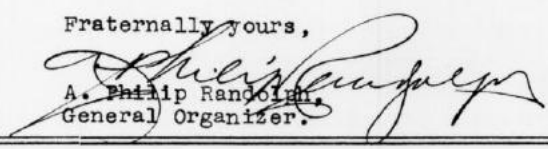
Efforts should be made to keep men who are not members of the Brotherhood from signing "yellow-dog" contracts or voting for the Plan. Our strategy is unqualifiedly definite and positive opposition to "yellow-dog" contracts and the Plan. We must fight them with every ounce of blood and power we possess with a view to killing them entirely, for the Plan means slavery to the porters and the Brotherhood alone means freedom.

Therefore, I wish you would proceed immediately to spreading the message among the men to kill the Plan and the "yellow-dog" contracts by refusing to sign or vote for them. It is a new trick of the Pullman Company which is intended to delay our victory, but it will not succeed. I know you will fight it to the death. I know you will not relent or give the Company the slightest opportunity to strangle the Brotherhood by "yellow-dog" contracts or the Plan.

Congratulations upon your splendid work, noble character, fine spirit, indomitable courage, flaming zeal and great enthusiasm.

Keep up the good work.

Fraternally yours,


A. Philip Randolph,
General Organizer.

APR/LIM

OUR GOAL:

More wages; better hours; better working conditions; pay for overtime; pay for "preparation" time; abolition of "doubling out," conductor's pay for conductor's work when in charge and manhood rights.

FIGURE 47. LETTER FROM A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO DAD MOORE. Given Moore's devotion to Randolph, this letter praising "Brother Moore's" work and character and exhorting him to carry on must have been one of his prized possessions. (From the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters papers [BANC MSS C-A 393], the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

Dad Moore relocated the BSCP office to 1716-1718 Seventh Street, with sleeping quarters above a saloon and an office downstairs. While a Pullman official, O.W. Snoddy, kept tabs on the BSCP, Dellums took over more and more responsibility. Moore wrote increasingly urgent, sometimes desperate, letters to Webster. The BSCP was under attack from the Pullman Company, from many less radical Black leaders, and especially from the American Negro Labor Conference. This group (since Randolph had made his peace with Gompers's successor, Samuel Green) missed no chance to characterize Randolph as a pawn of the AF of L.

One of Moore's final letters to Webster expresses the situation well:

oakland 6-22 1928

Mr Webster old pal I only an old man but I will Die before I will go against the Brother Hood an the [17 June?] I was in A meeting of the Cominist. the Speaker said that it was a clare Sell out to Mr Green. I listen to his talk then I got up and said that I was an old man 75 years old and I Daird eny one in the Sity of Oakland or the State of California to say my hands was tainted with a half peny and it went for Mr Randolf for I would stand by my leader if it cost my life I told them I would Die in the Streets before I would go against my leader not that I would wade in blood up to my nees and . . . [illegible] I told them I did not give a Dam . . . [illegible] this was a late Day for Mr Randolf to Sell out for he could not get nothing now. I told Smith to tell you what my . . . [illegible] said in the Barber Shop. I am working under hard [strides?] you all Dont know the State I am in I am in Hard sucionstants but I will Die before I would go back on the Brother Hood. I will tell you mor in my nex leter this man that is with me I told him to write to mr Randolf and I would [sine?] for both of us but he told me I will rite later for you he is fiting for him Self but I am fiting for all I want you to tell him that he is under me and to understand that he is not to run this ofice by his Self for it will do him a lot of good . . . [illegible] your old pal organizer Dad Moore.

There is no way to be certain, but it is probable that the reference is to Dellums. Moore and Dellums, very different men, may have clashed. Moore's health fell rapidly, but he was able to travel to Chicago for the first national BSCP convention in 1929. When the delegates sat for their group portrait, they gave Moore the obvious place of honor. Four months later he was dead of cancer.

It was for Dellums to finish things up in Oakland, and it was Dellums who saw the BSCP through a campaign in which they were intimidated by innuendo, beatings, and lynching. Dellums was present on the historic day when the Brotherhood sat down with the Pullman corporation to sign the labor settlement.

Moore lived to see none of it. His old office on Wood Street is now a Postal Service parking lot, and the BSCP Seventh Street office is a liquor store. Moore, after a battle with cancer, died on 20 January 1930 and was buried by the Brotherhood in Evergreen Cemetery. Until recently, there was no headstone to mark his grave.

Randolph wrote Moore's obituary in *The Black Worker*:

All Pullman Porters . . . will mourn the passing of Dad Moore. . . . He was relentless and determined in his advocacy of the rights of porters to organize a bonafide union. . . .

Despite the fact that he received a pension from the Pullman Company he was fearless in his denunciation of the injustices and wrongs practiced by the company on the men. . . . When we first visited Oakland he exclaimed, "I will go down with the ship if necessary, I will fight on regardless of the cost and as long as life lasts, will hold the banner of the Brotherhood high in the breeze." . . . [He] was the noblest Roman of them all. . . . He has fought a good fight. He has kept the faith. He has never bowed to Baal . . . [February 1930].

Thus, we have seen various pictures of Dad Moore. He spurned the role of model Pullman Company retiree, one in which he could have been comfortable. Randolph cast him as a working-class hero, and even though some of his remarks about Moore seem to make him what we would today call a "poster boy," Randolph was aware and respectful of Moore's genuine standing. The American Negro Labor Conference saw him as a dupe of the American Federation of Labor. Some of his fellow porters probably saw him as a drunk, or as an anachronism. The dust having settled, Moore takes his place as a visionary and courageous American worker, whose life spanned the Civil War and World War I, and who emerges as a patriarch of African American labor.

AFTERWORD

Dad Moore's grave in Oakland's Evergreen Cemetery now has an appropriate headstone commemorating his life and work. The trustees of the Northern California Center for African American History and Life (an affiliate of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland) dedicated this memorial on 25 August 1995, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Bill Thurston, as president of the Board of Trustees, made the following remarks:

Good Morning! It is a privilege to be asked to say a few words on behalf of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland as President of the Board of Trustees.

Amid the freshness of a new day and the approach of autumn it is fitting to remember one of our forebears and rededicate his resting place with a proper marker and to thank him for his work on behalf of Black working men and women who benefit from his dedication and efforts to make America a better place for all of us.

Dad Moore was born during slavery when millions of our forefathers suffered the indignities and misery of being chained to the oppressors and their cruelty. Slaves had no rights as human beings; in fact, by law slaves could be treated worse than animals because there were animal protection laws but no slavery protection laws.

Dad Moore lived during the dreaded era of the *Plessey vs. Ferguson* decision which said in 1896 that Blacks could legally be separated from White Americans. That so-called separate but equal decision legalized and constitutionalized segregation for some 58 years.

Although it is obvious that Dad Moore was not a man of letters he was certainly a man of intelligence and common sense. As a former college history professor I



PLATE 82. HEADSTONE DEDICATION CEREMONY FOR DAD MOORE’S GRAVE, EVERGREEN CEMETERY, OAKLAND. The trustees of the Northern California Center for African American History and Life gathered on 25 August 1995, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, to honor Dad Moore. *From left to right*, Mrs. James Carter; James Carter, Member, Retired Railroad Men’s Club; Samuel Lewis, Recording Secretary, Retired Railroad Men’s Club; Bill Thurston, President, Board of Trustees, African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO); Herman Simmons, Member, Retired Railroad Men’s Club; Reverend Fred Silkett, Member, Board of Trustees, AAMLO; Charles Turner, representing Dad Moore’s descendants in Oakland; Robert L. Haynes, Senior Curator, AAMLO; and E. Hope Hayes, Administrative Director, AAMLO. (Credit: Gene Prince)

personally can see by Mr. Moore’s efforts that even though he did not have degrees also personally would readily pick him to represent my interests as opposed to turncoats like Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Dad Moore never gained a lot of fortune or fame but again, the fact that he was recognized by such giants as A. Philip Randolph and C.L. Dellums makes Mr. Moore a hero and a giant in the nascent African American Labor Movement. Moreover, he is finally getting a modicum of recognition for his efforts and I am indeed privileged to be a part of this long delayed recognition of his good works.

Even today, 65 years after his death we should all pause and thank giants such as Dad Moore and many others who steadfastly fought to make a better America for African Americans who had just recently broken the yoke of chattel slavery and were attempting to fight off the yoke of wage slavery. Once again, it is fitting and proper that we give this long overdue recognition to Mr. Moore. Perhaps with this headstone dedication he can rest just a little bit better knowing that we honor and salute his life and his efforts today.

As Dr. Martin Luther King said so many times, we as a people have not yet reached the Promised Land and we must still contend with racism, bigotry, and chauvinism, but if each of us continues to do our part we as a people will get to the Promised Land.

Thank you.

**BROTHERHOOD SONGS:
THE WEST OAKLAND SONGBOOK OF THE INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS**

William A. Spires

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was founded in Harlem on 25 August 1925 with the primary object of securing higher wages and improved working conditions for thousands of African American workers. The principal thrust of their struggle was directed at the owners and operating staff of the Pullman Palace Car Company. The porters, represented nationally by A. Philip Randolph and in Oakland by Morris “Dad” Moore and C. L. Dellums, devoted heroic efforts to organization, publishing, and boycotts before they secured recognition and concessions from the Pullman Company in 1937, 12 years to the day from their first meeting.

THE BROTHERHOOD SONGBOOK

This contribution to *Essays Celebrating West Oakland* discusses a mimeographed pamphlet bearing the title, *Brotherhood Songs*. The six-page, blue-bound volume that I have worked with is the only known copy of the official songbook of the West Oakland members of the BSCP, and was the personal property of C.L. Dellums. It is now housed at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, as part of an important collection of Dellums’s papers and personal belongings. Since no editor or compiler took credit for selecting the contents, we have no way of knowing who chose them, but C.L. Dellums is certain to have been involved. The lyrics to six songs are included: “Hold the Fort,” “We Will Not Be Moved,” “Before I’ll Be a Slave,” “The Rational Prayer,” “John Brown’s Body,” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” Some are folk songs, others are works by known composers. The songs were published without musical notation, indicating that they were familiar enough to be sung by ear at meetings, rallies, and social occasions. Therefore, the pieces in *Brotherhood Songs* are part of the oral literature of the Oakland porters, and the songbook is the Oakland porters’ own achievement.

Music has always had a vital role in American labor and civil-rights movements. The repertoire presented in *Brotherhood Songs* gives substantial insights into the history of the porters: Readers and listeners are drawn beyond the labor movement to the struggle for emancipation and to the years after the Civil War. Each piece in *Brotherhood Songs* tells a story that is in part the story of the porters who sang these songs. The underlying ideology of these texts brings together the aspirations and efforts of anonymous Christians, abolitionists, and Wobblies, as well as those of public educators, composers, poets, and an African American diplomat.

It is evident that many of the items in *Brotherhood Songs* are related to religious hymns and anthems. This connection, as it relates to African American labor issues, is clearly explained by Brenda McCallum in her work on Birmingham metal workers:

By drawing on and reinterpreting traditional religious speech and song, black miners and industrial workers in Birmingham helped give unionism “an extraordinary cultural and ideological vitality” . . . Performed in a quasi-sacred style and empowered by the unifying ideologies of evangelical Protestantism and democratic unionism, these pro-labor songs provided an active mode in which black workers could articulate an emerging consciousness and a new collective identity [1993:108].

In fairness, this statement needs to be extended to white workers as well. African Americans were not unique in unifying the ideologies McCallum speaks of: Although the resonance between religious feeling and social and economic justice has, perhaps, faded from contemporary White struggles, a look at Philip S. Foner’s (1975) comprehensive work *American Labor Songs of the Nineteenth Century* shows that religion and social issues were widely equated earlier in our history, especially among immigrants. A.W. Wright’s 1892 introduction to the Knights of Labor’s *Labor Reform Songster* makes this connection clear:

All movements which have had for their object the uplifting of humanity have been greatly helped by their poets. If it be true that the heart of a nation is dead when its songs are stilled, it is equally true that the vigor, the fervency of any great movement may be accurately measured by the earnestness of its poets and by the enthusiasm with which their songs are welcomed.

It would not be easy to exaggerate the help such a book of songs as this may be to the industrial reform movement. . . . Armed with such songs, we can sing the new gospel of human brotherhood into the hearts of the people [quoted in Foner 1975:161].

To demonstrate only that the *Brotherhood Songs* were sung in Oakland leaves aside the more important question of how the songs came to be there. Although the investigation of this repertoire necessarily carries us a considerable distance from West Oakland, each item in *Brotherhood Songs* was chosen for a reason. This kind of context is as appropriate to the contents of a labor songbook as it is to the understanding of any artifact. Part of my task has been to identify and restore the tunes to the *Brotherhood Songs*. Some of these songs are by no means well known today: They deserve a new hearing, and a wider audience. Another task is to restore partial texts to a complete state, and to give them an additional dimension by tracing some important offshoots and variant texts. A song of the Oakland porters may have come from another struggle, seemingly distant in time and place, but nonetheless tied by empathy. To understand how the porters’ songs are related to those of abolitionists or miners or northern social activists is to understand something of the pragmatic relationships between these movements. Toward that end, my own comments discuss the circumstances under which these songs found their way to West Oakland. These circumstances indicate a great deal about the way in which the *Brotherhood Songs* were composed and adopted into the labor and civil-rights movement of which the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was such an important part.

THE TUNES OF *BROTHERHOOD SONGS*

The six-page booklet, now housed at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, is a simple typewritten, mimeographed work. The musical design on the front cover is ornamental (Figure 1); the back cover bears the handwritten words, “Berkeley Mimeographing Service.” *Brotherhood Songs* was printed in a union shop, as indicated by the notation on page six: oeiu:29/afl:12053. Regrettably, the date of publication is not indicated, and it is not known whether there were earlier or later editions. As noted, the songbook contains the words only, not the musical notation. On these pages we present the text—with only minimal editing for consistency—along with the appropriate musical scores.

NOTES ON THE SONG TEXTS

“HOLD THE FORT”

The Brotherhood’s anthem is a widely known labor song with roots in the Civil War and in post-War gospel music. A. Philip Randolph sang this song at the first public meeting of the BSCP, asking that no one in the audience join him lest they be observed and reported to Pullman. The incident that inspired “Hold the Fort” is recounted by musicologist Irwin Silber:

During the Georgia campaign of October, 1864, shortly before Sherman’s historic march to the sea, a battle took place at Altoona Pass, not many miles from Atlanta, which served as the inspiration for this song. . . . At the peak of the battle, when the Union position seemed completely hopeless, a Northern officer caught sight of a white signal flag some fifteen miles distant. The signal was acknowledged and soon the following message was relayed across the mountains:

HOLD THE FORT I AM COMING W T SHERMAN

Their sinking morale buoyed by Sherman’s message, the Union soldiers returned to the task of defending their position with renewed vigor. . . . Finally, the Confederates were forced to abandon their attack before Sherman’s reinforcements arrived [1960:351].

This event was recounted by a Union soldier, known only as Major Whittle, at a Sunday School meeting in Rockford, Illinois, in May 1870. A teacher and songwriter, Philip Paul Bliss, was present at the meeting; that same evening, he composed “Hold the Fort.” All subsequent versions were derived from his original, Christian text:

Ho, my comrades, see the signal
Waving in the sky.
Reinforcements now appearing,
Victory is nigh.

Chorus:
Hold the fort, for I am coming,
Jesus signals still.
Wave the answer back to Heaven,
By Thy Grace we will.

See the mighty host advancing,
Satan leading on,
Mighty men around us falling,
Courage almost gone. (Chorus)

See the glorious banner waving,
Hear the bugle blow,
In our Leader's name we'll triumph
Over every foe. (Chorus)

Fierce and long the battle rages,
But our Help is near,
Onward comes our great Commander,
Cheer, my comrades, cheer (Chorus) [Silber 1960:358-359].

Bliss's hymn became an immediate and international success. Silber notes that it "has remained to this day one of the most popular gospel songs ever written" (1960:351). When Bliss died (in a train wreck, in 1876), a Chicago newspaper, the *Inter-Ocean*, noted that "Hold the Fort" had been translated into "not only nearly all the major European languages, but into Chinese and the native languages of India" (Silber 1960:351). The hymn's popularity also produced many versions and offshoots. The Knights of Labor—700,000 strong in the 1880s—sang:

Storm the fort, ye Knights of Labor
Battle for the cause;
Equal rights for every neighbor
Down with tyrant laws [Fowke and Glazer 1973:37].

Populists, suffragettes, socialists, and prohibitionists all had their own versions. Philip S. Foner (1975) provides many examples of the variant texts of this song. Although they cannot be quoted extensively here, some representative verses will serve to recall the struggles where these versions were sung. During the "Long Depression" of 1873-1879, Alfred Green wrote the "Workman's Hymn":

See the Oppressor's host advancing
Money leading on—
Workingmen around us falling
Courage almost gone [Original in *Labor Standard* 26 August 1877,
quoted in Foner 1975:130].

Hold the Fort

The musical score is written on four staves in a single system. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The melody is simple and consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are printed below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The first two staves contain the main body of the song, and the last two staves are labeled 'CHORUS:'.

We meet to-day in Free - dom's cause and raise our voi-ces high; We'll
join our hands in U - nion strong to bat - tle or to die.

CHORUS:
Hold the fort for we are com - ing U - nion men be strong.
Side by side we bat - tle on - ward. vic - to - ry will come.

Look my comrades, see the union
Banners waving high,
Reinforcements now appearing,
Victory is nigh. [chorus]

See our numbers still increasing
Hear the bugles blow
By our union we shall triumph
Over every foe. [chorus]

Fierce and long the battle rages,
But we will not fear
Help will come when'er it's need needed,
Cheer, my comrades, cheer. [chorus]

Other words, written for the May Day celebration in 1886, are associated with the “Eight Hour” movement and with the ill-fated demonstration on May 4th of that year in Chicago’s Haymarket Square:

Ho! My brothers! See the danger
Gath’ring fast and dread
Mammon’s legions are preparing
Stealthily they tread.

Hold your ground, for they are coming
Up our breast-work throw.
Rally for EIGHT HOURS, Oh Brothers;
Hurl we back the foe! [original in *Carpenter March* 1886,
quoted in Foner 1975:225].

The Knights of Labor invoked supernatural metaphors in their “Spread the Light”:

Wolves and Vampires in the darkness
Prey on flesh and blood,
From the radiance of the sunlight
Flee the hellish brood.

Spread the light! The word is waiting
For the cheering ray
Fraught with promise of the glories
Of the coming day [*The Labor Reform Songster* 1892;
quoted in Foner 1975:167]

In Britain, where American evangelist and gospel singer Ira D. Sankey had introduced Bliss’s original hymn during a 1873 revival tour, “Hold the Fort” was recast in about 1900 as a labor anthem by members of the British Transport Workers Union.

The Wobblies made the union words to “Hold the Fort” famous in the United States, publishing them as the “English Transport Workers’ Strike Song” in 1919 in the eighth edition of their popular *Songs of the Workers to Fan the Flames of Discontent*. Before that publication, the song had been identified in Wobbly circles with the Everett Massacre, which occurred during a lumber strike in the Pacific Northwest. Wobbly songwriter, organizer, and historian Ralph Chaplin (whom we shall meet again as the author of “Solidarity Forever”) shows that the song that was to become the porters’ anthem had already had a baptism of fire:

On Sunday, November 5, 1916, the steamers *Verona* and *Calista* shoved off from the Seattle waterfront with some 280 loggers and lumberworkers determined to re-establish their constitutional right of free speech in the city of Everett.

The *Verona* docked first, with everyone on board singing “Hold the Fort for we are coming, Union men be strong. . . !” The song, however, was interrupted with a burst

of gunfire from the Everett dock and shore. There was a moment of panic on board the *Verona* as bodies slumped to the deck or fell overboard to drift out to sea. Then the fight was resumed. When the tumult finally subsided, it was discovered that five IWW members had been killed outright and that some thirty-one were wounded [Chaplin 1948:203].

“Hold the Fort” became well known after events like the Everett Massacre, and the words appear time after time in I.W.W. histories and songbooks.¹ Its tune and theme proved adaptable. The expression “hold the fort” appears throughout Randolph’s letters to “Dad” Moore and C.L. Dellums, making it evident that the anthem of the I.W.W. and the British Transport Workers had become a watchword for the Brotherhood. The text in the Oakland Division’s *Brotherhood Songs* is identical to the original Wobbly version, and the inclusion of “Hold the Fort” is no coincidence. The ideological and historical connection between Randolph, the porters, and the Wobblies is made clear in early issues of Randolph’s publication *The Messenger*. An editorial in the October 1919 issue stated that, “The Negroes and the Industrial Workers of the World have interests not only in common, but interests that are identical.” In March 1920 an article called “Organized Labor and Negro Politics” developed the issue:

¹ Chaplin wrote yet another version in the Federal Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas, while serving out a sentence for war resistance in 1919 (with other I.W.W. members):

“All Hell Can’t Stop Us”

Now the final battle rages,
Tyrants quake with fear
Rulers of the New Dark Ages
Know their end is near.

Chorus:
Scorn to take the crumbs they drop us,
All is ours by right!
Come on folks! All hell can’t stop us!
Crush the parasite!

With a world-wide revolution
Bring them to their feet!
They of crime and persecution—
They must work to eat! (Chorus)

Tear the mask of lies asunder,
Let the truth be known
With a voice like angry thunder
Rise and claim your own.

Down with greed and exploitation!
Tyranny must fall!
Hail to Toil’s emancipation!
Labor shall be all [I.W.W. Songs 15th edition circa 1919].

This is the day of the workers, the organized worker. In Russia, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and America those who produce the wealth of the world are demanding and getting more than ever before. . . . Of course, in the South, Negroes are still sweated 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 hours a day. The lumberjacks in the West (white) are no less mercilessly exploited. It is these indescribable conditions that gave birth to the Industrial Workers of the World. Peonage pens and industrial hells of the South will eventually force Negro workers, too, into industrial unions. . . . And ere long, black and white workers will stop fighting each other over race prejudice and combine against their common enemy—the white capitalist [*The Messenger* March 1920:6].

Randolph, then, was keenly aware of the I.W.W. and doubtless of its music. “Hold the Fort” was a most appropriate choice as an anthem for the Brotherhood.

“WE WILL NOT BE MOVED”

The second item in *Brotherhood Songs* is the porter’s version of one of the most popular American songs of protest. The original version was a well-known gospel hymn, “I Shall Not Be Moved,” inspired by an Old Testament text from Jeremiah 17:

7 Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

The customary Gospel words are:

I shall not, I shall not be moved,
I shall not, I shall not be moved,
Just like a tree that’s standing by the water,
I shall not be moved.

“I Shall Not Be Moved” was adapted to the cause of labor in 1931. This transformation from hymn to labor song was in part the work of militant students and teachers who fanned out from the Brookwood Labor College at Katonah, New York, to organize coal miners in West Virginia. In his *Only a Miner*, folklorist and labor historian Archie Green provides essential background for the activities of these early “outside agitators” who worked for better conditions in the mining towns of Appalachia:

This Westchester County campus [Brookwood] was the major American residence-school committed to workers’ education in the 1920s. It did much to create and perpetuate labor tradition. . . . [Brookwood’s] founder, Reverend A.J. Muste, inspired his students to act as if trade unionism itself were a primitive religious sect in a folk society. . . . he was a liberal theologian as well as an ecumenicist in action [1972:253; emphasis added].

We Will Not Be Moved

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: "Ran-dolph is our lead - er, We will not be moved, Ran - dolf is our lead - er, We will not be moved, Just like a tree plant - ed by the wa - ters We will not be moved."

CHORUS:

We will not, we will not be moved
We will not, we will not be moved
Just like a tree planted by the waters,
We will not be moved.

The Union is our protection
We will not be moved
The Union is our protection
We will not be moved
Just like a tree planted by the waters
We will not be moved.

Because we are united
We will not be moved
Because we are united
We will not be moved
Just like a tree planted by the waters
We will not be moved.

Northern students from Brookwood, along with socialist groups such as the League for Industrial Democracy and the Pioneer Youth, saw starvation and malnutrition in West Virginia's Kanawha Valley, and saw a breakaway group, the West Virginia Mine Workers Union, organize under the leadership of "Captain" Frank Keeney in 1931. Helen Norton Starr was a faculty secretary at Brookwood who went to the Kanawha Valley. She was present at what may have been the occasion when "I Shall Not Be Moved" was transformed into the popular labor anthem that it remains today:

I remember the first time I heard “We Shall Not Be Moved.” The only place that could be secured for the meeting in that particular valley was the front of a dilapidated Negro schoolhouse that stood in a depression among the hills—hills so green that only a sharp eye could see the scars of coal tipples. On the steps of the schoolhouse stood a mixed group of white and Negro miners and their wives, singing out their story and their hopes. The summer sun blazed down on them and on the miners’ families seated on the slope in front. On the road above a group of state “*po-lice*” and mine guards watched, their guns conspicuously displayed.

That strike was lost and the Kanawha Valley was not unionized until 1933 under the NRA, but “We Shall Not Be Moved” was sung all over the country and adapted to local conditions. I even saw one version put out by the Communists which ran: “Lenin is our leader, we shall not be moved!” [quoted in Fowke and Glazer 1973:39].

Helen Norton Starr notes an important point about “We Shall Not Be Moved.” It is a flexible, formulaic song, and the leader’s name is the most flexible part of it. In the Kanawha Valley the leader was Frank Keeney: the first verse as sung there was “Frank Keeney is our captain, we shall not be moved.” For the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, as the Oakland songbook had it, their leader was A. Philip Randolph.

“BEFORE I’LL BE A SLAVE”

This song, often known as “Oh, Freedom,” is the only item in *Brotherhood Songs* that can be shown to have its origins in that group of folk songs described as “spirituals.” A virtually identical version appeared in 1874 in *Religious Folk-Songs of the Negro as Sung at the Hampton Institute* (Dett 1927:110); 25 years later William E. Barton printed the same song, as transcribed from the singing of an ex-slave named Joe Williams, in his *Hymns of the Slave and the Freedman* (Katz 1969:90). The use of religious song in the African American civil-rights movement is well-known to all Americans: John Lovell, in *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame*, makes a comment on spirituals that is helpful in understanding their appearance in a booklet of labor songs:

The Afro-American spiritual was worldly, otherworldly, traditional, and contemporary. It was a true folk song in that it blended the experiences and imaginations of one folk group and created songs for the universal human heart. The fact that it has been sung and cherished around the world, and is still being sung after hundreds of years is testimony to the extent to which it has dug deep into the human heart.

To summarize, the purposes of the Afro-American spiritual can be simply stated:

1. To give the community a true and useful song
2. To keep the community invigorated
3. To inspire the uninspired individual
4. To enable the group to face its problems
5. To comment on the slave situation.

Before I'll Be a Slave

Bleed - ing Zi - on, Bleed - ing Zi - on,

Bleed - ing Zi - on Bleed no more, Bleed no more Be - fore I'll be a slave, I'll be

bur - ied in my grave And go home to my Father and be saved.

Doubting Thomas, Doubting Thomas, Doubting Thomas
 Doubt no more, Doubt no more
 Before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
 And go home to my Father and be saved.

Poor Back-Slider, Poor Back-Slider, Poor Back-Slider
 Come and Go, Come and Go
 Before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
 And go home to my Father and be saved.

Weeping Mary, Weeping Mary, Weeping Mary,
 Weep no more, Weep no more,
 Before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
 And go home to my Father and be saved.

Lord revive us, Lord revive us, Lord revive us,
 All again, All again
 Before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave
 And go home to my Father and be saved.

6. To stir each member to personal solutions and to a sense of belonging in the midst of a confusing and terrifying world
7. To provide a code language for emergency use [1972:198].

With the qualified exception of the fifth of these purposes, all of the above roles are served by the labor songs of African Americans as well. "Before I'll Be a Slave" has been associated with the

Emancipation Proclamation (Southern 1983:238) on one hand and with covert references to the more than one hundred slave revolts in 18th- and 19th-century America (Fowke and Glazer 1973:165). The porters who compiled *Brotherhood Songs* needed to include a powerful anti-slavery lyric, one that evoked the days of slavery unambiguously. Thus, “Before I’ll Be a Slave” was readily called into service by the newly organized porters. It is important to recognize that after the Civil War, it was a work force of ex-slaves who made up the initial retinue for George Pullman’s “Palace Cars.” For one example, Oakland’s Morris “Dad” Moore, the figurehead and patriarch of the Brotherhood, was born into slavery. Many thousands of African American railroad workers, including sleeping-car maids, porters, dining-car attendants, and their families—even C.L. Dellums himself—were the children of former slaves.

All of the verses to “Before I’ll Be a Slave” in *Brotherhood Songs* are found in earlier published versions, except for “Poor Back-Slider, Come and Go.” *Back-sliders*, in union folk speech, were members who joined in momentary fervor but who later failed to pay dues or participate in meetings and union activities.

“THE RATIONAL PRAYER”

This item is the least well-known of the *Brotherhood Songs*; it appears without ascribed authorship. A shorter text appears in *Prayer Poems*, an anthology of religious verse; called simply “A Prayer,” it is credited to one Florence Holbrook (Armstrong and Armstrong 1969:169). Florence Holbrook was born in Peru, Illinois, around the time of the Civil War, although the date of her birth is not recorded. Other biographical facts presented in *Who Was Who in America 1897-1942* summarize a substantial career:

A.B., U. of Chicago, 1879, A.M. 1885; unmarried, Prin. Oakland High Sch., Chicago, 1886-89, Forestville High Sch., Chicago, 1889-1924, Philips Jr. High Sch. 1924—. Author: Elementary Geography, 1896; Round the Year in Myth and Song, 1897; The Hiawatha Primer, 1898; The Hawthorne Reader (No 3) 1900; Dramatization of Hiawatha, 1902; The Book of Nature Myths, 1902; Northland Heroes, 1906; . . . Cave, Lake and Mound Dwellers, 1911; (etc). . . Home: Chicago, Ill. Died 1932.

Brief as this information is, there are at least two points here that may account for the appearance of a version of Florence Holbrook’s poem in *Brotherhood Songs*. First, Chicago was the home of the Brotherhood’s national headquarters. Moreover, the time span during which Holbrook taught and wrote corresponds to the period when many of the leaders of the Brotherhood would have still been in high school. It is possible that her teaching and writing touched the life of a future porter, and that the inclusion of her religious verse in *Brotherhood Songs* results from a young African American’s public-school days in Chicago.

“The Rational Prayer” is not a well-known hymn today, and I have been unable to find a tune for it.

The Rational Prayer

Not more of Light we ask, O God,
But eyes to see what is;
Not sweeter songs, but ears to hear
The present melodies;
Not greater strength, but how to use
The power that we possess;
Not more of love, but skill to turn
A frown to a caress;
Not more of joy, but how to feel
Its kindling presence near,
To give to others all we have
Of courage and of cheer.
No other gift, dear God, we ask,
But only sense to see
How best the precious gifts to use
We have received from Thee.
Give us all fear to dominate,
All holy joys to know,
To be the friends we wish to be,
To speak the truth we know;
To love the pure, to seek the good,
To lift with all our might,
All souls to dwell in harmony
In Freedom's perfect light.

“JOHN BROWN’S BODY”

The song that appears in *Brotherhood Songs* as “John Brown’s Body” is a composite that joins a verse from one of the best-known songs of the Civil War to Ralph Chaplin’s famous American labor anthem, “Solidarity Forever.” Two verses of Chaplin’s piece are included, although without the usual chorus. The West Oakland version in *Brotherhood Songs* has a complicated lineage. Briefly, “John Brown’s Body” had its origin in the following Methodist hymn:

Say, brothers will you meet us,
Say, brothers will you meet us,
Say, brothers will you meet us,
On Canaan’s happy shore?

The labor anthem “Solidarity Forever” of course borrows from both “John Brown’s Body” and Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”² The tune is as well-known as any in America.

Chaplin’s “Solidarity Forever” was far from the first labor version of “John Brown’s Body.” The examples below, chosen from among many, demonstrate continuity:

James Brown’s children go a-shivering in the cold,
James Brown’s children young with work are growing old
James Brown’s lambs are torn by wolves outside the fold,
O, save, O, save, the lambs!

Come, O bearer of Glad Tidings
Bringing joy from out her hidings
Come, O, bearer of glad tidings
O come, O come, Eight Hours [*Labor Standard* 16 June 1878;
Quoted in Foner 1975:221].

The inclusion of the labor words draws us again to the connection between the porters and the I.W.W. Ralph Chaplin began to write “Solidarity Forever” in the coal fields of West Virginia, where “We Shall Not Be Moved” was first sung by striking workers, including Blacks. Thus, whether or not the porters knew it, two of the *Brotherhood Songs* are associated with the Kanewha Valley. Chaplin did not complete “Solidarity” until he had returned to Chicago for an I.W.W. “Hunger Demonstration” on Sunday, 17 January 1915.

I was lying on the rug in the living room that day scribbling stanza after stanza of “Solidarity Forever.” . . . I wanted the song to be full of revolutionary fervor and to have a chorus that was ringing and defiant. Walking down Seventy-Second Street, we tried it out:

Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
Solidarity forever,
For the Union keeps us strong [Chaplin 1948:167-169].

The workers who first sang “Solidarity Forever” met a particularly brutal reception; the song has remained very popular. Chaplin’s original text had six verses, of which *Brotherhood Songs* gave space to only three. These are the remaining verses:

² The original John Brown, whose body lay “a-mouldering in the grave,” was a Scottish sergeant serving in the Boston Light Infantry; after his death, comrades in his glee club improvised verses in his memory. After the execution of Abolitionist John Brown in 1859, the glee-club version gained currency in the North, and “everyone in the company got a big kick out of the fact that most listeners assumed that the song was inspired by the martyr of Harpers Ferry” (Silber 1960:11). Julia Ward Howe, who had met Brown the Abolitionist in person, used the tune associated with him for her own “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

John Brown's Body (Solidarity Forever)

John Brown's bod - y lies a-mouldering in the grave, John Brown's bod - y lies a -
 mouldering in the grave, John Brown's bod - y lies a mould-ering in the grave But his
CHORUS
 soul goes march - ing on. Glo - ry, glo - ry Hal - le -
 lu - jah, Glo - ry, glo - ry, Hal - le lu - jah,
 Glo - ry, glo - ry, Hal - le - lu - jah His soul goes march-ing on.

When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
 There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun,
 Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?
 But the Union makes us strong

It is we who plowed the prairies, built the cities where they trade,
 Dug the mines and built the workshops, endless miles of railroad laid.
 Now we stand outcast and starving midst the wonders we have made,
 But the Union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold,
 Greater than the might of armies magnified a thousand fold,
 We can bring to birth the new world from the ashes of old,
 For the Union makes us strong.

Is there aught we hold in common with the greedy parasite
Who would lash us into serfdom and would crush us with his might?
Is there anything left to us but to organize and fight?
For the union makes us strong.

All the world that's owned by idle drones is ours and ours alone,
We have laid the wide foundations, built it skyward stone by stone.
It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own,
While the Union makes us strong. [Chorus]

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.
We can break their haughty power; gain our freedom when we learn
That the Union makes us strong [Chorus] [I.W.W. 1916:4-5].

Before leaving the I.W.W. and Chaplin, it is noteworthy that Chaplin's connection to Oakland is strengthened through the influence of Jack London. Chaplin heard London speak in Chicago and was inspired by his novels and essays. While London was writing and speaking in Oakland, Chaplin was traveling as a migrant farm worker through the Midwest and West. The two met in 1909.

In an Oakland saloon I met Jack London. Some said he was working on plans for a ship in which he expected to sail around the world. I also heard that London still hoped to be elected mayor of Oakland on the Socialist ticket. I didn't ask which rumor was correct. Either way was all right with me [Chaplin 1948:90-91].

“LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING”

The final item in *Brotherhood Songs* is subtitled the “National Negro Hymn.” It is also known as the “Negro National Anthem.” Well-known among African Americans for generations, it is the most complex work in the porters' songbook and the only one composed by professional musicians. Lyricist James Weldon Johnson and his brother, John Rosamond Johnson who set the piece to music, wrote “Lift Every Voice” for a Lincoln's Birthday celebration. It was first performed by a children's chorus of 500 voices on 1 February 1900 in the Johnson brothers' native Jacksonville, Florida. In his autobiography, *Along this Way*, James Weldon Johnson tells—in greater detail than can be quoted here—the moving story of how he and his brother composed “Lift Every Voice” (Johnson 1933:153-156). He includes some important remarks that explain how a formal, composed song can enter oral tradition and, specifically, how the song found its way to the songbook of the BSCP in Oakland.

The song was taught to the schoolchildren and sung very effectively at the celebration; and my brother and I went on with other work. After we had permanently moved away from Jacksonville, both the song and the occasion passed out of our minds. But the schoolchildren of Jacksonville kept singing it; some of them became schoolteachers and taught it to their pupils. Within twenty years the song was being sung in schools and churches and on special occasions throughout the South and some other parts of the country. Within that time the publishers had recopyrighted it and issued it in several

arrangements. Later it was adopted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and is now quite generally used throughout the country as the “Negro National Hymn.” The publishers consider it a valuable piece of property; however, in travelling round I have commonly found printed or typewritten copies of the words pasted in the backs of hymnals and the songbooks used in Sunday schools, Y.M.C.A.’s and similar institutions; and I think that is the method by which it gets its widest circulation [1933:155].

The Johnson brothers, in many senses, stand apart from the people who produced the other *Brotherhood Songs*. Their own careers diverged markedly. Rosamond made his life in music and theatre, appearing in the original *Porgy and Bess* and founding a music school for African Americans in Harlem. James was appointed United States Consul in Nicaragua by Theodore Roosevelt, and later reported to the American press on the brutality of U.S. troops toward persons of color in Haiti. He became Secretary of the NAACP and represented African Americans internationally. Biographer Rayford Logan makes this comment about James Johnson and the BSCP:

Reversing his anti-labor stance of 1916, he supported the efforts of A. Philip Randolph and others in the mid-1920s to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, and favored using Negroes as strikebreakers against exclusionary white trade unions [1982:356].

This support for Randolph notwithstanding, both brothers were erudite, conservative Republicans, standing poles apart from many of the radical Socialist and Democratic porters.³

“Lift Every Voice” continues to be sung. A personal example: While preparing the program for a headstone ceremony honoring Morris “Dad” Moore, I was told that all official functions of the sponsoring organization, the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, were to include the Johnson brothers’ anthem. The text for the program was transcribed verbatim from C.L. Dellums’s own copy of *Brotherhood Songs*, and those present had the pleasure of hearing retired members of the BSCP sing “Lift Every Voice” at Moore’s graveside on the 70th anniversary of the founding of their union.

³ Both Rosamond and James, incidentally, visited northern California on a concert tour in 1905. West Oakland has been described as having been both diverse and tolerant in those, and later, days. James made a telling comment about racial affairs in San Francisco at that time. In the light of what we are learning from the Cypress Project research, his words would have applied to Oakland as well:

Here was a civilized center, metropolitan and urbane. With respect to the Negro race I found it a freer city than New York. I encountered no bar against me in hotels, restaurants, theatres, or other places of public accommodation and entertainment. We hired a furnished apartment in the business district, and took our meals wherever it was most convenient. I moved about with a sense of confidence and security, and entirely from under that cloud of doubt and apprehension that constantly hangs over an intelligent Negro in every Southern city and in a great many cities of the North [Johnson 1933:206-207].

Lift Every Voice and Sing

Musical score for the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing". The score is written on a single treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The melody is simple and rhythmic, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The lyrics are: "Lift ever - y voice and sing, Till earth and heav - en ring, Ring with the har - mo - nies of Lib - er - ty; Let our re - joi - cing rise, High as the lis - ten - ing skies, Let it re - sound loud as the roll - ing sea Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us Sing a song full of the hope that the pre - sent has brought us; Fac - ing the ns - ing sun Of our new day be - gun, Let us march on 'til vic - to - ry is won."

Lyrics: James Weldon Johnson

Music: Rosamond Johnson

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn and died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might, led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our Native Land.

Another testament to this song is provided by the poet Maya Angelou, who has a strong connection to West Oakland. (Her family moved here from rural Arkansas during World War II; she describes her home as “near enough to the Southern Pacific Mole to shake at the arrival and departure of every train” [Johnson 1993:93].) In her *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou recalls how “Lift Every Voice” came to have special meaning for her at her 1940 elementary school graduation in Stamps, Arkansas. It would be discourteous to chop up her personal story of this song’s transformation, which forms the whole of Chapter 23 of the book (Angelou 1970:142-156), but her concluding paragraphs make a fine counterpoint to the BSCP’s *Brotherhood Songs* and are quoted here in full:

While the echoes of the song shivered in the air, [valedictorian] Henry Reed bowed his head, said “Thank you,” and returned to his place in the line. The tears that slipped down many faces were not wiped away in shame.

We were on top again. As always, again. We survived. The depths had been icy and dark, but now a bright sun spoke to our souls. I was no longer simply a member of the proud graduating class of 1940; I was a proud member of the wonderful, beautiful Negro race.

Oh, Black known and unknown poets, how often have your auctioned pains sustained us. Who will compute the lonely nights made less lonely by your songs, or by the empty pots made less tragic by your tales?

If we were a people much given to revealing secrets, we might raise monuments and sacrifice to the memories of our poets, but slavery cured us of that weakness. It may be enough, however, to have it said that we survive in exact relationship to the dedication of our poets (include preachers, musicians and blues singers).

Acknowledgments

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APPENDIX: TWO OTHER PORTERS' SONGS

“The Brotherhood Marching Song”

Rosina Tucker

This is the official song of the women who fought alongside the porters from 1925 to 1957. The story of its composition and publication, along with important material about its composer, Rosina Tucker, is found in M. Melinda Chateauvert's recent and extensive study of the BSCP Ladies Auxiliary:⁴

We're the Ladies' Auxiliary;
The Ladies' Auxiliary of the BSCP.
Together we're marching proudly;
Proudly marching as one pow'rful band;
Singing our union songs so loudly
That they vibrate throughout the land.
We are determined and won't turn away,
But will steadfastly face the new day;
And courage and unity lead us to victory [1992:296].

“The Marching Song of the Fighting Brotherhood (We Will Sing One Song)”

Air: (My Old Kentucky Home)

This is the porters' freely reworded version of one of “Joe Hill's” (Joseph Hillstrom) most extended compositions, “We Will Sing One Song.” In that song the Wobbly poet, composer, and martyr brought forward the case of migrant agricultural workers, prostitutes, and children employed in the textile industry. The stretch from Stephen Foster's original may be confounding at first. But if readers will remember that “My Old Kentucky Home” dealt with dispossession (“By 'n by hard times comes a-knocking at the door, then my old Kentucky home, good night” as the song has it), then it can

⁴ Chateauvert's work effectively challenges previous male-oriented interpretations of the BSCP's history and provides “the first full-length study of a trade union auxiliary” (1992:5). A paragraph from her dissertation is worth quoting in full:

The women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters remembered how they helped to organize the union. In later years, they constructed their own stories about the courageous few who fought to keep the Brotherhood going through the dark days of the Depression. These historians were porter's wives, sisters and daughters, Pullman maids, clubwomen and union women. Wives took in laundry when Pullman furloughed their husbands, daughters put aside dreams of college, and other women volunteered their time and resources. They cooked meals and entertained visiting officers. Sometimes they refused to wear aprons for their husband's union, insisting instead on organizer's kits to knock on doors. Wives and maids collected dues, organized secret gatherings and public meetings, lectured crowds, and buttonholed porters and maids into joining the union. As Rosina Corrothers Tucker, one of those who preserved the women's story recalled, “it was the women who made the union” [Chateauvert 1992:2-3].

be seen that the theme and the tune are well-suited to be updated and recast—first by Joe Hill, and later by the anonymous poet who redirected the song toward the porters. Hill spoke for a number of classes and walks of life. His song makes that intrinsic point that the struggle for labor rights was a struggle for human rights—a broadly based one that sought to benefit not only workers but a wide range of oppressed groups. It is amply clear that the BSCP knew that their campaign had such far-reaching implications as well. Their version, published in *The Messenger*, follows:

We will sing one song of the meek and humble slave
The horn-handed son of toil
He's toiling hard from the cradle to the grave
But his masters reap the profit of his toil.
Then we'll sing one song of our one big Brotherhood
The hope of the porters and maids
It's coming fast, it is sweeping sea and wood
To the terror of the grafters and the slaves.

CHORUS

Organize! Oh Porters come organize your might
Then we'll sing one song of our one big Brotherhood
Full of beauty, full of love and light [*The Messenger* June 1926:223]

The porters cobbled together their one verse from Hill's original four. Hill's parody dropped in and out of the various editions of *I.W.W. Songs*; below is the text as it appears in the 30th edition (1962:34):

We Will Sing One Song

by Joe Hill

We will sing one song of the meek and humble slave,
The horny-handed son of the soil,
He's toiling hard from the cradle to the grave
But his master reaps the profits of his toil.

Then we'll sing one song of the greedy master class,
They're vagrants in broadcloth, indeed.
They live by robbing the ever toiling mass,
Human blood they spill to satisfy their greed.

CHORUS

Organize! O, toilers, come organize your might;
Then we'll sing one song of the Workers Commonwealth
Full of beauty, full of love and health.

We will sing one song of the politician sly,
He's talking of changing the laws;
Election day all the drinks and smokes he'll buy
While he's living from the sweat on your brows.

Then we'll sing one song of the girl beneath the line,
 She's scorned and despised everywhere
While in their mansions the "keepers" wine and dine
 From the profits that immoral traffic bear.

We will sing one song of the preacher fat and sleek,
 He'll tell you of homes in the sky.
He says, "Be generous, be lowly and be meek
 If you don't you'll sure get roasted when you die.
Then we'll sing one song of the poor and ragged tramp,
 He carries his home on his back;
Too old to work, he's not wanted round the camp,
 So he wanders without aim along the track.

We will sing one song of the children in the mills,
 They're taken from playgrounds and schools.
In tender years made to go the pace that kills,
 In sweatshops, 'mong the looms and the spools.
Then we'll sing one song of the One Big Union Grand,
 The hope of the toiler and slave,
It's coming fast; it is sweeping sea and land
 To the terror of the grafter and the knave.

“PUTTING ON THE BIG HAT”: LABOR AND LORE AMONG OAKLAND’S REDCAPS

Willie R. Collins

A PRELUDE TO THE STUDY OF REDCAPPING

In the 19th century and well into the 20th, railroads in the United States provided considerable opportunities for African Americans. The arrival of the Central Pacific Railroad in Oakland in 1869 dictated and defined a working community based largely on transportation. Oakland quickly prided itself as a city where the rails and the waters meet. “West Oakland hasn’t got a boom, but it is at present one of the most prosperous portions of the city. The railroad company is employing a large force of men in its yards and shops at the Point, and the families of many of those elsewhere reside in West Oakland” (*Oakland Enquirer* 11 November 1887).

The story of Oakland’s Black railroad workers is indeed also the story of the early development of West Oakland’s Black community, a community created around the railroad yards and sustained by the work provided there. Black railroad employees, most of them Pullman porters, were among the first to settle in the section known as West Oakland; the Black community that grew up around this railroad terminus—like others along the West Coast—was in fact known as a “Pullman car colony” (Charles Johnson 1993:16). The railroad impacted members of the African American community in two important ways: it gave them mobility, taking many from the rural farms to urban areas of the North and the West; and it provided employment.

This study draws from historical documents and interviews to provide insights into an important occupational class of the African American railroad community—the Redcap porters. Both *Red Cap* and *Redcap* are found in the literature; the author has chosen the latter spelling to focus on the occupation, rather than the article of clothing that inspired the name. Bay Area Redcaps were not tied solely to West Oakland although the majority of them were employed by the Southern Pacific for a number of years at the Oakland Mole. Redcaps worked elsewhere in the East Bay, at the San Francisco Ferry Building, on the Peninsula, and as far away as Martinez. The author has tapped both the conventional and unconventional sources for information on the Redcaps and has attempted to write from these men’s perspective. Much information has been utilized from the oral interviews, which are incorporated into the text as often as possible.

While Redcapping is only one of a number of working traditions that existed in West Oakland’s working community, it has an important distinction. Railroad companies did not create a job called Redcapping as the Pullman Company did for the Pullman porters. Instead, Redcapping represented an occupational class of Black men who literally created a niche for themselves; they began by providing an independent service in the late 19th century and ultimately became employees with status and with pride and dignity in the service that they performed in the 20th century.

To the author’s knowledge, no studies exist on the Redcap porter that seek to describe and analyze not only the canons of work technique, but also the lore and human dimension of this



PLATE 83. THE INTERIOR OF SOUTHERN PACIFIC'S OAKLAND MOLE TERMINAL—THE REDCAPS' WORKPLACE—ca. 1931. At the height of ferryboat activity on the San Francisco Bay, thousands of transcontinental passengers and literally millions of commuters used this route daily. In the 1930s, some 40 Redcaps were employed at the Oakland Mole alone (note the big-wheeled luggage carts in the photo). The great wooden shed, built in 1880, was at the end of a 2-mile causeway extending over shallow water to allow railroad passengers to board ferries for the city. (Photo courtesy of the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park)

occupational class. There are, nonetheless, excellent sources on social, cultural, and occupational history that have influenced this study (Daniels 1990; Santino 1989). The work that has been most influential on this study is Green's (1993) *Wobblies, Piles, Butts and Other Heroes: Laborlore Explorations*. This probing and provocative study guided me to think of Redcapping in terms of "laborlore." "*Laborlore*, broadly conceived, covers expressivity by workers themselves and their allies: utterance, representation, symbol, code, artifact, belief, ritual. . . . The word *labore* equates with work; *lore* with play. How do these join? When do they clash?" (Green 1993:7, 22). In the current study, the author attempts to look at Redcapping broadly, bringing into the study the magnitude of these men's humanity and their work in a job where passengers frequently addressed them as "boy," and where the railroad companies failed at times to appreciate them and their contributions as frontline spokesmen for the company. Although much has been written on the sleeping car porters (Brazeal

1946; Santino 1989), no studies exist on the Redcap porters as a discrete group—their labor and lore. Thus, this study of Redcap porters sheds new light on their significance to the railroads, on their status as members of the Black middle class, and on the intersection where their labor and lore met. The occupational history of the Redcaps is in some ways similar to the struggles of the Pullman porters—both groups, through their respective unions, fought for a decent wage and status. One of the goals of this study is to bolster and honor the pride of the Redcaps as a working class and to dispel misconceptions and stereotypes. “One important reason to [record] the skills, stories, and customs which both reflect and participate in work culture is to exchange these vague stereotypes and misconceptions about how others make their living with concrete examples of what people really do and what meaning they derive from work activities” (McCarl 1986:87).

Of the four Redcaps interviewed, all were African Americans. Their average age was 77 years. Each had worked more than 25 years as a Redcap. Two of those interviewed held demanding jobs on the side while working at Redcapping: one had been a sports editor for 25 years; the other is a real-estate broker. Two of the Redcaps had completed two years of college. Only one of the Redcaps interviewed did not have a high-school education. Three of the Redcaps were avid golf players. Out of the 50 or so Redcaps working at the peak of the railroads in the Bay Area, only 6 have been identified that are still living and in sufficiently good health to be interviewed. The author learned of 2 Redcaps too late to include them in this study.

HISTORY OF THE REDCAP PORTERS

African American porters and waiters were hired in Oakland from the beginnings of the Central Pacific Railroad’s arrival. In 1869 there were 11 Black breadwinners listed in the Oakland city directory, with 2 living in West Oakland. In 1880 there were 593 African American Oaklanders on the census, but only 6 Black or mulatto heads of household were living within the project area; 4 were Pullman porters, 1 worked as a waiter, and 1 as a whitewasher. By 1900, 1,026 Blacks lived in Oakland; within the project area, there were 53 Black or mulatto heads of household, and of those, 30 men worked as Pullman porters or railroad cooks and waiters (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:112-113). These Black families lived alongside native- and foreign-born Whites. West Oakland was diverse, and there was no such thing as a Black ghetto prior to 1940.

Retired Redcap Bill Hinds recalls that when he came to work as a Redcap for Southern Pacific in 1929, William Tabb was number one on the seniority list; this meant that, at that time, Tabb had worked longer than any of the other Redcaps at Southern Pacific (Bill Hinds 1995, pers. comm.). It was common for Redcaps to work 30 to 40 years, which could have put Tabb’s beginning date some time in the 1890s. It is probable that Redcaps were hired in the Bay Area during this time, around the same time that they first appeared on the East Coast. At New York’s Grand Central Station, James Williams—a resourceful man who needed work—offered his services to passengers who needed help with their baggage. On Labor Day in 1890, Williams fastened a bit of red flannel around his black cap to be more readily recognized. From that time on, the term “Redcap” entered American speech (Drake and Cayton 1993:237). “A porter who assists with hand luggage at a railroad station” is a simple definition given in 1919 (Mathews 1951:1372). Bill Hinds recalls the etymology of the term that circulated orally, and which incidentally validates the written account provided above, as follows:



PLATE 84. BILL HINDS, REDCAP PORTER, IN UNIFORM ca. 1935. When Hinds began work for Southern Pacific in 1929, Redcaps wore the cast-off blue uniforms of Sleeping Car Porters. This photo shows the first official Redcap uniform, which was forest green and had to be purchased new at a much higher cost. In addition to his decades-long career as a Redcap, Hinds worked as a sports editor for a local newspaper and honed his golfing skills into a remunerative hobby. Mr. Hinds is a wealth of Redcapping laborlore. (Photo courtesy of Bill Hinds)

It [“Redcap”] originated in Grand Central Station, where people just voluntarily—they were hustling, trying to make money. But they voluntarily would help people with their baggage. And finally, in order to designate these people, they put a red ribbon on their caps. And then finally when they got official status, then they put a red cap on, and they did away with just the plain red ribbon. . . . And then subsequent to that, they became employees [Hinds 1994:8].

In addition to Tabb, other Redcaps, not documented at this time, were employed by Southern Pacific at the Oakland Mole. Only slightly further down the list of seniority was Charles Gibson, another early Redcap at the Oakland Mole. Gibson initially worked as a valet on Southern Pacific President Sproul’s private car on a narrow-gauge line; he became a Redcap in 1902, when he and his wife moved to Third and Market streets in West Oakland. Gibson’s father, William Harry Gibson, was a well-known waiter on the *Overland Limited*, serving from 1898-1932 (Southern Pacific 1951).

Southern Pacific had far more trains and therefore more Redcap porters than any of the other companies. Out of approximately 50 Redcaps in Oakland in the 1930s, most were employed by Southern Pacific. Table 4 lists Bill Hinds’s (1995, pers. comm.) recollections of the distribution of Redcaps by company at that time.

TABLE 4
DISTRIBUTION AND NUMBER OF REDCAP PORTERS
IN OAKLAND, 1930s

Number of Redcap porters	Company
40	Southern Pacific
8	Santa Fe
1	Western Pacific
1	Northwestern Pacific
50 total	

Source: Bill Hinds, Retired Redcap porter, Southern Pacific

Oakland had managed a public harbor since the city was incorporated in 1851, and these harbor functions served the needs of the transcontinental railroads after Oakland became the terminus in 1869. As early as 1876, Central Pacific conducted a ferry-boat service from the foot of Broadway across the bay to the Ferry Building in San Francisco. Southern Pacific at one time had 42 boats operating to serve the company’s passengers. When speaking of her father, Charles Gibson’s, work as a Redcap, Audrey Robinson described the process of loading the boats: “You see, those men had these large carts . . . with the big wheels, they had the stacks up the sides and they would pile them full of luggage; and then they would . . . push and pull those carts onto the ferry boat. And if the water was at low tide, they had an uphill trip down that lip; otherwise . . . the water was high, then it wasn’t so bad. But that was manual labor” (Robinson 1995:5).

Redcaps worked in San Francisco as well as in Oakland and provided a number of services on the ferries, as the following description shows:

Baggage carts and their tenders [Redcaps] stand at the bow of the ferry boat approaching its landing after a trip with passengers from the main line trains at Oakland Pier, so that the carts may be rushed ashore at the very moment the apron is lowered. The baggage then will be ready for the passengers to pick up on their arrival ashore. Passengers in wheelchairs were taken ashore ahead of the passengers afoot. . . . Since many of the ferries were incidental to the operation of a mainline railroad business, mail, baggage and express were handled on all of their regular runs. The one exception to this mad, snap-of-the-whip operation was the movement of the remains of a deceased, in the standard-appearing four handled redwood shipping cases, one to an express cart [Harlan 1967:45].

REDCAPS AT WORK

“PUTTING ON THE BIG HAT”: THE QUINTESSENTIAL REDCAP

Folklorist/Anthropologist Robert McCarl provides useful terms for describing the workplace, as well as ways of perceiving it. “There are traditional ways of doing things in the workplace which workers themselves create, evaluate, and protect. The canon of work technique refers to this body of informal knowledge used to get the job done” (McCarl 1986:71). According to retired Redcap Harmon Payne, “You don’t have to have a college degree to be a Redcap. But you do need to know how to meet the public. That’s one of the most important things, is knowing how to read and write and be courteous to the public” (1995:7). The proper attitude was essential. The Redcap had to be a public-relations specialist. “I was always told from management that the Redcap was the most important part of the passenger’s travel. Because you meet the passenger first and you meet him last—when he comes and goes,” commented Clarence Iles (1994: 7). Bill Hinds concurred: “I have told people all my life time as a Redcap, for eight hours a day, I had to be the essence of politeness—that is, when I was on Southern Pacific’s property—and treat everybody in a polite manner” (1995, pers. comm.).



PLATE 85. REDCAPS AT CHRISTMAS PARTY, 1930s. (Left to right: Tom Irvine, Andrew Smith, Captain Meyer King, Claude Ledford, and August Hill.) The impeccable public persona of the ideal Redcap is well displayed in this group photo. The photograph may have been taken at the Sixteenth Street Station in Oakland, considered a high-status assignment among Redcaps. (Photo courtesy of Audrey Robinson)

The term “putting on the big hat” is a perfect example of a modern expression unique to Redcapping in the Bay Area and a part of the jargon, at least in Oakland. To be sure, the custom of service people—such as waitresses, bell hops, and bartenders—flattering their potential tippers is common. “Putting on the big hat,” however, is linguistically specific and unique to Redcapping. Certain Redcaps excelled in flattery and defined the standard of politeness. John R. Hoskins, one of the regular senior Redcaps at Sixteenth Street Station in Oakland, was by all accounts superb at “putting on the big hat” for his customers. His greeting to a lady boarding would be, “Oh, Miss Jones, we’re so happy to see you,” remembers Bill Hinds, who worked with Hoskins. “He was an artist. He would make them feel good.” Pullman porters had more opportunity to put this flattery to good use. “Every porter soon realizes that above all he must cater to the vanity of many of these people. . . . He [the passenger] gives a substantial tip to the porter who senses this and makes a fuss over him. . . . The porters have learned that it is often a good policy to compliment the passenger upon his choice of a tailor, or to admire the cloth of which his suit is made, while brushing him off” (Swift and Boyd 1928:395). Certainly all Redcaps did not subscribe to “putting on the big hat.” Retired Redcap Clarence Oldwine, for example, defined the practice as, “acting a part, like Mr. Tom. . . . If that’s what they want to do, that’s alright with me—but I didn’t do it” (1995:11).

DEFINITION OF A REDCAP AND TYPES OF REDCAPS

In the Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area from the viewpoint of employee status, there were regular and irregular Redcaps. There were two kinds of irregular Redcaps: Extra Redcaps (“on-call” employees) and Voluntary Redcaps (non-employees who worked independently).

Regular Redcaps were paid a small salary, could expect a set number of hours, and accrued seniority. In addition to greeting the passengers in a friendly manner, the Redcap had to tag and route their baggage correctly. “There wasn’t very much other things that you’d have to do other than check the baggage, unless you had a wheelchair passenger that may want newspapers or something, you’d go to the newsstand” (Iles 1994:6). Some Redcaps had a combination of Janitor-Redcap duties, but none of the men the author interviewed fell into this category. A federal agency listed the following as a Redcap’s primary duties and responsibilities:

- be courteous and polite
- be familiar with all train schedules
- perform other work essential to the smooth operation of the station

Other duties might include the following:

- run errands for railroad officials
- mark train boards
- stock timetables racks
- deliver magazines
- line up carts and other equipment
- meet wheel chair passengers

[U.S. Department of Labor 1941:18].

The occupational class was gender- and race-specific. As far as the author has been able to determine, Redcaps in the Bay Area were all African American men up until the Amtrak takeover in 1971; thereafter, Redcapping continued to be a Black male position, although White clerks occasionally did the work when there was a shortage of personnel. In Salt Lake City and in Portland, Oregon, White Redcaps have been reported, while Japanese Redcaps worked in Seattle, Washington (U.S. Department of Labor 1941).

Selected by the Station Manager, the Captain was usually the oldest Redcap who had seniority. He would organize job assignments, hire, defend or demote Redcaps according to their performance, and complete time sheets. Meyer King, who was the Southern Pacific Captain for more than 30 years (circa 1925-1959), garnered the respect of a number of Redcaps. King was not the eldest Redcap when he was hired as Captain. Other criteria used to select a Captain were “class,” intelligence, ability to meet people, ability to communicate, and attitude. Clarence Iles, who later served as an Assistant Captain, recalled the situation in the mid-1940s: “We had one Captain that worked in the morning, his name was Noah Johnson. He came on at 5:30 in the morning. Meyer King was the boss—he was the head man. And . . . “Pop” Jones was the head man in San Francisco” (1994:20).

The Captain of the Redcaps usually stood up for his men and protected them if they were mistreated by management, as Clarence Oldwine recalls in this incident:

Well Captain King was a very outspoken person when it comes to the Redcaps. He did protect us and he was very well thought of by the President of the Company, and so they didn't have too much problem when he spoke. They didn't mess with him too much. What happened with me was a small thing. I didn't have a badge on, which I didn't have one at that time, and this particular person [station manager] told me to get off the front because I didn't have a badge. I told the captain about it, so he took me right back out there and told him: “Don't bother him, leave him alone. If you want to say anything to my men, you come to me and tell me about.” I felt very good about that [1995:1].

Redcaps were a rather autonomous group in relation to station employees. Table 5 illustrates the chain of authority from the highest-ranking Superintendent to the lowest Voluntary Redcap, who had no employee status.

The Extra Redcap did not have regularly assigned hours but did have employee status. In many cases, when a Redcap was hired he was placed on the extra list. The extra would take the place of a regular employee in case of illness. “Prior to the crash and when the depression and crash came, I started as the third extra man. They had an extra list with as many as 12 to 15 people. You wouldn't have regular assignments. The 13th extra man meant little or no work at all during the depression” (Hinds 1995, pers. comm.).

The institution of the extra board was a necessity. When a regular Redcap was absent for illness or other reasons, the management would look at the extra list and call the first extra man. Since Extra Redcaps were not limited to 40 hours a week, the first four extra men could work more hours than a regular Redcap, as Bill Hinds did as third extra man in 1929. “The *extra board* meant that you didn't have a regular assignment. You're on call, and could work [be on call at the station] 24 hours a day if the trains were late,” noted Clarence Iles. “The *Exposition Flyer* and *Train 39* was inbound from

TABLE 5
HIERARCHICAL CLASSIFICATION OF REDCAPS
IN RELATIONSHIP TO MANAGEMENT

Railroad Management	Redcap Internal Management
Superintendent Station Master	Captain/Head Redcap Assistant Captain Regular Redcap Extra Redcap Voluntary Redcap

Source: Bill Hinds (1994)

Chicago due in at 8:30 in the morning, but it may be 8:30 the next day before it got in, particularly in the winter time” (Iles 1994:13). The Captain would hold the Extra Redcap over the regular Redcap’s head to keep the regulars in line. Redcap Captain “Pop” Jones, who worked at the San Francisco Ferry Building, “used to tell a regular man if he was doing something wrong, he’d tell him, I’ll call the ‘grasshopper’ to replace you. And the ‘grasshopper’ meant the men on the extra board. That was the term he used. Redcap who didn’t have much seniority, he was called a ‘grasshopper’” (Iles 1994:19).

The Voluntary Redcap position—also called a “privileged trespasser,” “independent concessionaire,” and “free Redcap”—developed within the Southern Pacific system but had no employee status. He was governed by the rules and regulations of the station and wore a regular uniform. If he did not have work assisting passengers with baggage, he was allowed to pick up any other work that was available. There is no documentation on Voluntary Redcaps in Oakland, but it was likely that Redcaps in the 19th and early 20th century were voluntary. This thought was expressed by Bill Hinds:

In the early days of Redcap porters, the majority of them didn’t have any salary. They worked for free. They worked just for tips that they could make. . . . Now when I started to work in 1929, they had Redcaps at Third and Townsend Street in San Francisco. At the station there, they were free Redcaps. We—just across town at the Ferry Building—we were paid. . . . And I never have been able to figure out why or how they could have people doing the same work, just a couple miles apart, some were being paid and some were not being paid [Hinds 1994:8-9].

ENTRY INTO A REDCAP JOB

How did one get a Redcap job? In the 1920s and 1930s, it wasn’t easy unless you had an inside track. “A Redcap’s job at that time was similar to what the Irish boys and the Italian boys experienced

when they wanted jobs as butchers or carpenters. In order to get in, you had to have family connections . . . and unless you had a blood relationship with somebody, you were not acceptable. And this was true of the Redcaps: unless you had a connection, you couldn't get a Redcap job" (Hinds 1994:9). This was especially the case in Oakland in the 1920s and 1930s. When Hinds got his job as a Redcap in 1929, people wondered how he did it. "They didn't realize that my father-in-law was from New Orleans," explained Hinds. If one didn't have family connections, then being from New Orleans carried great weight. Meyer King, Captain of the Redcaps for more than 30 years, was from New Orleans and he tended to hire Redcaps from his hometown. The importance of workers who came from New Orleans—whether porters, waiters, or cooks—cannot be overstated. Royal E. Towns, local historian and photographer, described West Oakland during the 1920s as diverse, mentioning the Irish, Portuguese, German, Swedish, and Norwegians who attended Prescott School in West Oakland. He also mentioned "the blacks who came from New Orleans to work as porters for the Pullman Company and in the shipyards during World War I" (Lewis n.d.). Louisiana people hired and looked out for fellow Louisianans.

The stages that a Redcap employee would go through, from being on the outside up to retirement, are as follows:

- know somebody (sponsor) and be recommended for hire
- go down to the station and apply accompanied by sponsor
- get introduction to the Captain of the Redcaps
- Captain obtains approval to hire from the Station Master
- fill out necessary papers and forms
- be placed on the extra list (seniority began at this time)
- pass probationary period of 90 days
- become a regular Redcap
- get better assignments as seniority increases
- work until retirement

REDCAPS AND UNIONIZATION

Labor unions, unlike many other institutions, extolled the ideals of equality and opportunity but could not dispel the fears and racism prevalent in 19th-century America when it came to including African Americans in all-White unions. Instead, Jim Crow unions were established, such as the Colored National Labor Union after the Civil War, while Wobblies (members of the I.W.W.) endeavored to organize and empower African American lumber-mill workers in Louisiana (Ploski 1976:409). Redcaps, like other African American workers, struggled from the turn of the century for employee status and pay. Their struggle culminated in 1937 in the formation of the International Brotherhood of the Redcaps in Chicago. At the Redcaps' first national convention held in Chicago, Willard S. Townsend, an African American, was elected President; a White man, treasurer; an African American, secretary; and another White man, general organizer. The idealism and hope were evident in the following statement from the opening address:

This is a mixed union. There is no discernible difference between the white and the Negro Red Caps. There is no advantage in separate locals. Lack of association between racial



PLATE 86. REDCAPS IN OAKLAND LEAVING TO ATTEND THE FIRST CONVENTION HELD IN CHICAGO, 1 JUNE 1937. (From left to right: John R. Hoskins; Harvey Calhoun; Jacob Wagner; Meyer King, Captain; Mr. Crenshaw; and William L. Daniels, General Chair of the National Union.) The men in this entourage, consisting of local Redcaps, were among the 1,100 Redcaps nationwide to attend the convention at the Chicago's Harrison Hotel. Unionization established Redcap porters as employees of the railroad companies. Hoskins and Wagner were among the veteran Redcaps who had considerable political pull with the Oakland mayor and other city officials. (Photo courtesy of Bill Hinds)

groups isn't conducive to solving the race problem. This ticklish question will best be solved by association and the resultant understanding of their common problems. They will discover that prejudice is based on ignorance. Together they will find that prejudice is absolutely unfounded [Drake and Cayton 1993:238].

This marriage ended in divorce as the White minority in the union eventually withdrew and returned to the American Federation of Labor.

The story of A. Philip Randolph and C.L. Dellums founding of the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) in 1925 is well documented. The BSCP was the first prosperous Black labor union. As early as 1920, the following resolution was signed by delegates from various unions, including the Freight Handlers and Baggage Handlers, at the American Federation of Labor meeting in Montreal, 7-19 June 1920:

Since the World War was ended, and since the American Negro had fought for the freedom due to all, he himself should not be barred from participation in the freedom for which he had fought, and that therefore American Labor should recognize him [Westley 1927:269].

Following the above resolution, Redcaps in the East began to show signs of organization. *The Black Worker*, the official newspaper of the BSCP, carried an article entitled “Redcaps Building Unions” that reported and encouraged the organization of Redcaps. As most Redcaps in the late 1920s were Voluntary porters, achieving employee status with the terminals was the primary goal:

Probably some of the most interesting and encouraging signs of the times in the field of labor are the movements among the red caps to organize a union of their own. In Washington, Philadelphia and in the Pennsylvania and New York Central terminals of New York City, these workers who perform the useful and indispensable service of carrying the luggage and giving directions to passengers, are recognizing the necessity and value of self-organization and the designation and selection of representatives of their own choosing to negotiate agreements with the terminal managements concerning wages, hours and rules governing working conditions. Prospects are splendid, if these workers fight on and keep the faith, work and not grow weary, that they will secure a definite wage such as all other railroad workers and not be entirely dependent upon the mercy of the public. It is almost unthinkable that in the twentieth century in rich America, working men could be secured to perform any service for powerful railroad companies without pay. Of course they will never get any wages unless they organize the fight for them. Happily, the red caps are beginning to see this point. The Black Worker wishes them well and extends congratulations [*The Black Worker* 15 June 1935:4].

By 1932 a group of San Francisco Redcaps were triumphant in negotiating an agreement with the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks. They obtained a Federal charter for Local 13329 on 29 October 1936 from the American Federation of Labor. One year later, the first endeavor to establish a national organization of Redcaps took place in Chicago’s Northwestern Station in 1937. Willard Saxby Townsend, elected President, was to Redcaps what A. Philip Randolph was to the sleeping car porters of the BSCP. John R. Hoskins, Harvey Calhoun, Jacob Wagner, Meyer King (Captain), Mr. Crenshaw, and William L. Daniel—all Oakland Redcaps—were among the more than 1,100 Redcaps who attended the first convention held in Chicago at the Harrison Hotel on 1 June 1937. The name International Brotherhood of the Redcaps was selected for the newly formed organization. The International Brotherhood of the Redcaps organized outside the framework of the AF of L, since the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks claimed jurisdiction and also because of the AF of L’s refusal to admit African Americans. The Brotherhood of Railway Clerks also blocked the United Transport Service Employees from an equitable membership in the AF of L and upset the BSCP’s original plans for assuming jurisdiction over the Redcaps. The first order of business was to send a petition to the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), requesting it to determine the status of Redcaps under the definition of the term “employee” as used in the Railway Labor Act. In September of 1938, the ICC issued a ruling that the Redcaps’ status as employees entitled them to provisions of the Act.

In 1940 the International Brotherhood of the Redcaps union joined forces with the United Transport Service Employees of America (UTSEA) and assumed that name. This move was to accommodate the jurisdiction over service employees in allied fields of passenger transportation. The union pledged to “unite Negro, white and Japanese red caps in its day-to-day struggle for improved working conditions, job security and greater democracy in employer-employee relations” (Calloway 1940:174). By 1941 the UTSEA had more than 3,000 members, the majority of them African Americans although a few Japanese and Whites belonged. UTSEA succeeded in establishing the

status of Redcaps as employees, thereby obtaining minimum wages governed by the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Clarence Iles, who at the time lived in West Oakland, began work as a Redcap at the Oakland Mole in 1944 and was Secretary-Treasurer of Local 904 of UTSEA from 1954 until 1974, when the union merged with the clerks. There were four trade unions among African Americans in Oakland: the Boiler Makers; Dining Car, Cooks, and Waiters; the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; and the UTSEA. “The Dining Car, Cooks and Waiters Union, and Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters have demonstrated the value of informed and intelligent leadership in the labor field. Negroes of Oakland and the Bay Area are becoming Union conscious,” noted one observer in 1942 (Kerns 1942:21).

While the Pullman Company devised rules such as “Running in Charge,” “Doubling Out,” and “P.M. Time” (Santino 1989) that served effectively as institutionalized discrimination against the Pullman porters, terminals devised rules governing the Voluntary Redcap and payment of a minimum wage to regular Redcaps. **Rule 1:** “Privileged trespasser” and “independent concessionaire” were terms used to refer to the Voluntary Redcap, who had no employee status, although he was subject to the rules of the station. The Voluntary Redcap was compelled to wear a uniform and was permitted to pick up whatever work he could for gratuities. Voluntary Redcaps were at the Third & Townsend Station in San Francisco, the Los Angeles Union Station, and at the Southern Pacific Stations. **Rule 2:** A number of railroad companies also advised Redcaps that an “accounting and guarantee” system would be instituted by the company in order that the new minimum-wage requirements of 25 cents an hour could be satisfied (Murray 1942:136). Historically before 1938, many but not all Redcaps were compelled to accept an inferior employee status depending solely on gratuities and tips. The “tip-wage dispute,” which was a fight for the basic wage, prompted some terminals to require their Redcaps to report daily the amount of tips earned so that those sums could be used to meet the minimum wage of 25 cents an hour.

“YOU WILL NOT SEE ME ANYMORE”: TIPS FOR BREAD AND BUTTER AND SOME McDONALD’S FRANCHISES

Obtaining an accurate picture of the tips that Redcaps received is difficult. When the author asked, “Did you ever talk about your earnings?” the reply from Harmon Payne was “No, we never did discuss earnings cause we didn’t want that to get to Uncle Sam [laughs] how much money we were making, because many days we made 100 dollars a day.” This was during a period when the average full-time service worker made less than \$5,000 per year in wages or salaries (USBC 1976:305). Other factors such as seniority would affect how much a Redcap received. The “number one” Redcap—that is, the Redcap with the most seniority—would take the first cab as the Redcaps lined up at the Ferry Building, the second Redcap in seniority would take the second cab, and so on.

Every Redcap has a story of receiving an especially large tip, often from a celebrity. Bill Hinds told his favorite story with pleasure:

I had a fellow at Sixteenth Street Station. The strangest thing that ever happened—the man just took a liking to me for some reason or other. He was around the station waiting

for his train to leave for perhaps an hour. And during that hour, he gave me 125 dollars. At one time, he gave me a 50. . . . He says, “You’re a nice guy,” he said, “I just want you to have 50 dollars.” And he gave me a 50-dollar bill. And then as his train pulled out of the station, he was still handing me money. And I never have figured out what his problem—it was a nice problem for him to have as far as I was concerned. But that’s the biggest tip I ever got [1994:13].

Redcaps even had to keep their earnings secret from other Redcaps, as Clarence Oldwine learned bitterly in his early years on the job at Western Pacific. Working alone on a new assignment, he devised a way to make good tips with little effort using a large wagon called a Mary Anne.

So I was doing pretty good up there. So I was in Meyer King’s office one day and after being there maybe for about three weeks, a fellow named Frank Brown, he was an old seasoned Redcap. Meyer said, “how you doing on that job?” I said, “I’m doing fine.” I said, “I’m making pretty good money up there now.” I made such and such thing, I told him how much money I made you know [laughs]. Frank said, “You’re bumped.” See he had seniority, so he could bump me. He said, “You’re bumped right now.” That was it [Oldwine 1995:9].

From then on, Oldwine recalled that he would go around “crying” about how he couldn’t make any money, even though he was doing well in gratuities.

Redcaps also kept silent about their gratuities with friends outside the occupation, as Bill Hinds, an experienced Redcap, knew well. Mentioning that a banker friend marveled that he could play golf every day on a Redcap’s salary, Hinds said:

Well, I couldn’t tell him, well my living is such and my economic standard is such that I can do it. But I can’t tell him that. It’s bad policy, just like it’s bad policy in anything to reveal the amount of money that you make. People are envious, people are envious, and it doesn’t pay to let people. . . . You know the old saying: “you can’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” [1994:14].

Peak times of train travel and also the season would affect the amount of tips. During the summer months—the time of peak travel—or if a Redcap had a scenic train, his tips would be higher. In the early days at the Ferry Building in San Francisco, Redcaps adopted the procedure of tip pooling to balance individual tip receipts. Bill Hinds described how the system worked: “We had what was known as the ‘Big Pool.’ That was 10 Redcaps, 10 Redcaps involved. And at the end of the day, we would all submit the amount of money that we had picked up during the day and they would total it and they divide it 10 ways.” But there were “some bad eggs in the group that would never make more than 3 or 4 dollars—no time! And at the end of the day sometimes, the split would be as much as 10 dollars apiece. Well in order to bring them up, that had to pull some of the honest ones down. And eventually they did away with the ‘Big Pool’” (Hinds 1994:15).

Redcaps when on the job were not unlike actors on a stage. They performed for the public, and the public often rewarded them with good tips. After checking the passenger’s luggage, the standard

expression among some of the Redcap porters—particularly those at Southern Pacific—was: “You will not see me anymore.” This expression suggested to the passenger that if he or she was to tip, then now was the time. One well-known regular Redcap became so financially successful that he was able to purchase several McDonald’s franchises. Tips were good from the middle 1930s to the late 1940s, but when the ridership on the trains declined, so did the amount Redcaps collected in tips.

REDCAPS AND THE COMMUNITY

Redcaps worked together for many years—often for decades—and therefore got to know each other quite well. To be sure, the Redcaps constituted a close-knit group. Off the job, they got together in service clubs and for sports or entertainment; they also socialized together, forming the basis for Black middle- and upper-middle class society in Oakland.

REDCAP VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

The Redcap Benevolent Association

The first Redcap voluntary association formed in Oakland was the Redcap Benevolent Association (RBA). The RBA was started in 1916 and may have operated continuously up to its dissolution in the 1930s. At its inception, the RBA had approximately 40 members, who met at various members’ houses once a month and paid a monthly dues of 25 cents. There was a death benefit of approximately \$25.00 for the death of an immediate family member. Officers included a President, Treasurer, Sergeant-at-Arms, Secretary, and Historian. In 1926 George Yebby was President and J.R. Hoskins was Historian.

The association planned big social events that were an important part of Oakland’s Black society, as the following description of the 10th anniversary banquet in 1926 illustrates:

The long expected has happened and it was one of the most spectacular events of the season. The Red Cap Porters’ Benefit [*sic*] Association held their banquet in the auditorium of St. Augustine’s Church on Thursday, Nov. 18, 1926. The occasion was the 10th anniversary of the Red Caps and it was well attended by the members, their wives and the widow and daughters of the deceased members. The auditorium was beautifully decorated, and with the members highly attired for the evening, made one great scene. Covers were laid for 75, and the preparation of that which was served, would have been quite palatable for Queen Marie. Chicken was served in grand style with all the trimmings. While the pleasant things were being enjoyed, there was the strains of beautiful music rendered by Prof. Le Protti and Pierson. As historian, Bro. J. R. Hoskins sketched the history of the association from its infancy to the present time. He told of the many good things that the Red Caps have done and are still doing and showed that the Red Cap Porters’ Assn. is well represented financially in the Bay region. One of the most surprising events of the evening was a very worthy one, and made all feel proud. It was the presentation of a check from the Red Cap Porters for \$31.00 in favor of one of our worthy

deceased brother's daughter, Miss Anderson. This contribution was for the purpose of assisting her as an attendant at the University of California. When all had been said and done there was but one thing to do and that was to get your partner and dance to the chimes of the sweet music until 12 P. M. . . . Cap. George Yebby, president of the Caps, was very unfortunate by being sick during the week of the grand occasion, but sent a telegram while the banquet was in progress, and stated how he regretted not being present [*Western American* 26 November 1926:4].

This column was signed with the initials A.D.S., which stood for Andrew Dumont Smith, Bill Hinds's father-in-law. Although, Smith refers to the organization as the Benefit Association, it was indeed the Benevolent Association.

An RBA handbook was reportedly printed, probably by Tighlman Press, but the author has not been able to find a copy. This missing handbook, along with a number of other items that could not be relocated, point to the reality that there is so much that researchers and scholars will never know about laborlore and its history. Much of the ephemera, artifacts, and history have been lost. At the time much of the history was not necessarily viewed as significant.

Retired Railroad Men's Club

While the Redcap Benevolent Association was exclusively for Redcaps, membership in the Retired Railroad Men's Club (RRMC) is open to former railroad employees in general, whether sleeping car porters, dining-car waiters, Redcaps, and so on; all railroad companies, including Southern Pacific, Western Pacific, Union Pacific, and Santa Fe, have been represented. Charles W. Johnson of Berkeley organized the club in 1925. The primary mission of RRMC was to keep members in touch with one another. At its heyday in 1947, RRMC boasted a membership of more than 150 members. The club is still in operation and currently has approximately 60 members.

The Southern Pacific Redcaps

The Southern Pacific Redcaps, an Oakland-based softball team organized by Redcap Bill Hinds in about 1939, was composed of all working Redcaps. Until 1942 the team played all over northern California and traveled as far south as Los Angeles to play the Los Angeles Redcaps. The team practiced between split shifts at what was then known as Raimondi Park near the Sixteenth Street Station. Hinds, who played outfield and short field, noted that "We were good and the team was a testimony to the athletic prowess of the 'Caps.' We recalled few, if any, defeats" (1995, pers. comm.).

The Singing Redcaps

Another voluntary group was the Singing Redcaps, an endeavor that involved the well-respected Redcap Captain, Meyer King. The quartet consisted of four Redcaps, all based at the Oakland Pier, and Captain King. "Captain King wanted to sing so bad, he didn't know what to do. And they [the quartet] had to accept him, he couldn't sing worth a quarter; but he used to go with them everywhere they went and join in . . . he was the boss and they had to accept him," explained Bill Hinds (1994:2). The Singing Redcaps performed gospels and popular songs à la Mills Brothers' harmonies, such as

their theme song, “You’ll Always Hurt the One You Love,” and the perennially popular “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad.”

The Singing Redcaps were omnipresent, performing at union meetings, Christmas parties, conventions, Oakland Oaks’ baseball games, and at other social functions in the Black community. “They would sing at the drop of a hat; they would sing for anybody that would ask them, or should I say, anybody that would permit them to sing” (Hinds 1994:3).

Women’s Groups

Audrey Robinson, daughter of early Redcap Charles Gibson, recalls a number of community groups that involved the wives and children of Redcaps in Oakland. The Linden Street YWCA, at



PLATE 87. THE SINGING REDCAPS, 1930s. (Left to right: William Lancaster, Andrew Smith, Meyer King, unknown [not a Redcap], Claude Ledford, and August Hill.) A voluntary group, the Singing Redcaps performed “at the drop of a hat” at parties, conventions, union meetings, and Oakland Oaks’ baseball games (possibly the setting of this photo). Four of the men in this photo are also shown in the Christmas party photo, above, suggesting that they may have entertained for that function. Captain Meyer King reportedly joined them because of his position, not his singing skills. (Photo courtesy of Audrey Robinson)

Linden and Eighth streets, was a center point for a lot of social activities and community affairs. Across the street from there was the Fannie Wall Children's Home and Day Nursery, which also had an ongoing committee. The Fannie Coppin and the Art and Industrial Club were both sustaining women's groups in the Bay Area. The Phyllis Wheatley group, important in the early days, is still going. According to Ms. Robinson, "they are several very elderly ladies, but they are still organized" (1995:3).

COMMUNITY VALUES

Many of the Redcaps embraced the Protestant ethic and were very grateful to have worked for the railroad, for their employment with the railroad fulfilled their California dream. Redcap Harmon Payne reflects on his ambitions in migrating to California from Texas:

When I left home and came to California, it was my idea to just be a good fellow and to have a family, which I had, and see that they got a college education, take their place in society as worthwhile citizens. And that I was able to do. That was one of the appreciations I had for the railroad as I look back. The railroad gave me everything that I wanted so far as a home, a college education for the kids, a couple cars to drive—one for my wife and one for myself, and a few nickels in the bank. . . . We, as Redcaps, have never had to go to the jailhouse to get a kid of ours. We never had to deal with the law. And yet they look at the Redcap as a person that's down at the bottom of the totem pole [1995:8, 10].

Church membership has been an important part of this way of life. Two of the Redcaps interviewed are still active in Taylor Memorial and Beth Eden, churches in West Oakland.

Several individuals who worked as Redcaps later went on to other careers, making important contributions to their communities. Oakland's first African American mayor, Lionel Wilson, worked as a Redcap before entering politics. Kenneth Johnson subsequently became a medical doctor. His brother George Johnson is reported to have become a governor of the Virgin Islands, but the information is unsubstantiated. Former Redcap Clinton White went on to serve 17 years as a State Court of Appeals Judge and now operates a private law practice in Oakland. Prestley Winfield, a Redcap at First & Broadway, accumulated a great deal of wealth and gained prominence through real-estate investments. Redcaps and the community are all justifiably proud of these men.

By the late 1930s, Redcaps and other railroad employees began to move out of West Oakland to Berkeley, North Oakland, and outlying areas. It was considered to be high status to be "Out in Berkeley." Oakland was seen as a bad place, particularly West Oakland because of gambling and prostitution. This migrating out of West Oakland meant upward mobility for the Redcaps and their families, but because of their status in the community, it spelled a downward trend for West Oakland.

STATUS OF THE REDCAPS

Redcaps and their families formed the basis of the Black middle- or upper-middle-class society in the 1920s and 1930s. Audrey Robinson, whose father was a second-generation railroad employee, sheds some interesting light on Oakland during this period as a child of a railroad family:

One thing about Oakland at that time: anywhere you went out socially or in any of the community activities, you knew everybody there. Because our population was that small, and people of the middle-upper class—that's what we were—we all participated in the same kind of functions. Churches and things. . . . My impression was that we were a middle-class family; most of the people that we knew that worked for the Southern Pacific railroad were middle-class people. We had comfortable homes, we had food, and there was no need for any real acute living situations. Our particular neighborhood was all White; we lived in a house that was built by—I think he was Italian. But our neighborhood was mixed: Italian, French, Italian-French combination, and just White people. . . . The SANOBAR Club was here and was organized in those days and that was interesting because that was a combination of San Francisco, Oakland, [Berkeley], Alameda, Richmond—it was like an enlarged acronym. When you went to those affairs, you mingled with . . . the men and women that you worked with. And I have a very vague memory of any of the Pullman porter families mingling with us, because I think a lot of the men that my dad knew came up from New Orleans on the train. . . . We maintained a good middle-class—upper middle-class—environment and I think that as a product of the railroad, I don't have anything to be sorry for [1995:5-6, 9].

All of the Redcaps felt that their jobs were desirable because they enjoyed high economic and social status in their communities. When asked whether the Redcap's status was comparable to that of the Pullman porter, Clarence Iles remarked that some sleeping car porters “thought that they exceeded us in that category. . . . meant more to the railway than the Redcap, we'll put it that way. But I was always told from management that the Redcap was the most important part of the passenger's travel. Because you meet the passenger first and you meet him last—when he comes and goes” (1994:6-7). In contrast, Bill Hinds felt that management did not appreciate the Redcaps' public-relations role.

A Redcap's job was a desirable one in the Black community up to the 1940s. Clarence Iles recalls that other African Americans wished that they had the job because of the gratuities. On the other hand, some Whites looked at the job differently: Bill Hinds noted that “White fellows would consider a Redcap's job beneath him” (1995, pers. comm.). Although the International Brotherhood of Redcaps was initially integrated, with White Redcaps from the Salt Lake City Terminal as members and some Whites on the Executive Board, Whites eventually left the Union. One observer commented on the differences between Black and White Redcaps as follows:

Personally, I think the condition of the white Red Cap is worse than that of the Negro. The Negro takes pride in his job and feels no “let-down” because he is performing what is considered menial labor, whereas the white considers himself above such “menial labor;” and thus when they are forced into this occupation, they feel they are working under pressure. They make little effort to *dignify their jobs* [quoted in Drake and Cayton 1993:242].

Some educated African Americans and Whites looked at Redcaps with disdain, yet they took notice of their comfortable life style. Bill Hinds recalls,

I went to a party at the Jack Tower Hotel about two months ago and I met this fellow that I used to work with, a fellow named Charles Foster. And he was telling me that, while we

were working at the Ferry Building, this White fellow asked him: “Isn’t that Bill Hinds out there in that uniform?” And Foster told him, yeah. And he said: “Well what is he doing with a job like that, say he’s been to school too much, he’s too well educated to have a job of that nature.” . . . And I have run into many people that I went to school with—high school, college, junior college—that asked me the same question. What was I doing with this type of job? [1994:14].

Hinds noted, however, that these critics were the same people who were surprised at his comfortable circumstances, including his ability to make frequent trips to the golf course.

Even among regular Redcaps with high seniority, there were certain assignments that had higher status than others. It was a privilege, for example, to work at Sixteenth Street Station in the 1940s; one had to be “in” even to work there. Redcaps J.R. Hoskins, A.D. Smith, and Jack Wagner—all regulars at Sixteenth Street Station—had considerable pull with the mayor and other people of influence in Oakland. The Redcaps’ status in the community is underscored by the fact, noted above, that former Mayor Lionel Wilson had worked as a Redcap porter before entering politics.

REDCAP LABORLORE

If we are to probe for the deep meanings underlying the occupation of Redcapping, we must engage in “putting laborlore to work.” Green urges students of laborlore to “decode verbal messages, to stand common sense speech on its head, to sense both utility and irony in wordplay” (1993:22). Laborlore functions in the greetings and salutations among Redcaps. “The Caps at Oakland Pier will miss Cap Eugene Hurt . . .” begins an article in *Western American* (26 November 1926:4), indicating that “Cap” was a common greeting among Redcaps, as well as the common term referring to Redcaps as a group.

Examining the use of the title *Captain* as a part of African American vernacular speech, one notes a shift from a pejorative meaning in the 19th century to a positive meaning in the 20th. The word “captain,” used in nautical circles, may have been adopted by slaves in constructing canals. To be sure, by the 19th century, the term appeared in railroad worksongs as African Americans put laborlore to work, singing to make arduous work easier and to coordinate the physical activity of lining track and other tasks.

Captain, Captain, you must be cross
It’s six o’clock an’ you won’t knock off! [Work 1940:36]

The captain in the worksong cited above was White and was clearly not held in reverence by the workers. He was a “slave driver,” who showed no concern for the Black workers he was overseeing. The author can recall excerpts from a recording of a track-lining song where the caller or song leader sings: “Captain can’t read, Captain can’t write, Captain can’t tell if the tracks lined right.” In this excerpt, the worksong becomes a song of derision, where the White “captain” is ridiculed in song. In the 20th century, Redcaps called their leader, also an African American, “Captain.” But the meaning of the term had changed from one of disdain to respect.

The etymology of *Redcap*, as well as the origin of the occupation itself, are rooted in and explained through oral tradition. No one has a written record of when Redcapping began. Thus we must look to informal narratives and proverbial speech. “Tradition has it that on Labor Day in 1890 a Negro porter at the Grand Central Station in New York tied a bit of red flannel around his Black uniform cap so that he could be more easily identified in the crowd” (Drake and Cayton 1993:237).

The physical context for much of Redcap lore was the train station’s locker room. During dead time, or when the Redcaps were waiting for trains, they catnapped, read, or engaged in throwing dice, playing cards such as poker or bid whist, or playing checkers. It was also during these times that stories about Redcapping were exchanged.

The hallmark of a Redcap was his tact and courtesy, but there were Redcaps who in desperation for a tip would resort to aggressive behavior. Other Redcaps would call an aggressive Redcap a “Bag Snatcher.” According to Bill Hinds, “We had some people that wouldn’t take ‘No’ for an answer. You’d come up with a bag in your hands, they would almost wrestle with you to get your bag from you” (1995:16).

Why was a wagon called Mary Anne, and why were new men called “grasshoppers”? And what other jargon did the men interviewed not bother to mention because it seemed so commonplace? The current study was able to only scratch the surface of the rich body of laborlore that underlies Redcap history.

CONCLUSION

For more than 90 years, Oakland and other Bay Area Redcaps were the first and the last to politely greet and bid farewell to passengers on the trains of the Southern Pacific, Northwestern Pacific, Western Pacific, and Santa Fe railroad companies. From their beginnings as what some terminals called “privileged trespassers,” the Redcaps mounted a successful struggle to become employees and to raise the status of this menial job of helping people with baggage to a responsible position, serving with pride and dignity. Of the four Redcaps interviewed, three bought homes and sent their children to college. They became an embodiment of the Protestant ethic and took the higher road when called derogatory names like “boy” and sometimes even “nigger.” Not only did the company’s rules and their own fear of losing their jobs prevent them from being rude, but as a whole, this occupational class of Black men were some of the best that any race could offer. On the yards of Southern Pacific and other company yards, they were the embodiment of poise and masters of tact, dedicated to making a passenger’s trip pleasant. Many of them were intelligent and well educated, and could have excelled at more highly skilled jobs. Yet racism held them back and they resigned themselves to Redcapping as a career.

Oakland’s Black community began as a Pullman car colony but, by the 1890s, members of this small community were not only Pullman porters but Redcap porters, cooks, waiters, and other various service workers in occupations largely restricted to African Americans at the time. The contributions of the Redcaps to the railroad have been overlooked and underappreciated by the companies as well as the general public. The Redcaps’ position as pillars of Oakland’s Black society, from the turn of

the century through the 1940s, needs further exploration. To be sure, labor historians and other writers have examined the struggles of the Redcaps in the unions and in industrial relations, but to the author's knowledge, no study to date has examined this occupational group from the perspective of laborlore. As the author pauses to reflect on Redcapping, it is clear that the comparable jobs of Skycaps at airports and baggage handlers at the bus stations also warrant future study. Redcapping from the perspective of the White and Japanese Redcaps in Salt Lake City, Portland, and Seattle also requires investigation. Many questions and concerns still warrant examination.

The flattery of "Putting on the Big Hat" and the final and symbolic "You will not see me anymore" marked the Redcaps' greeting and goodbye to thousands of local, national, and international passengers. And how many must have smiled when "putting on the big hat" profited his pockets in handsome gratuities from \$20 to \$150 dollars. Not only did he "laugh all the way to the bank" but he didn't let the right hand know what the left hand was doing. Neither Uncle Sam nor fellow peers knew the Redcaps' earnings. From the likes of the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie to Joe Louis, Presidents Harry Truman to John F. Kennedy, Dean Martin to Rita Hayworth, Redcaps' stories of their encounters with celebrated individuals and the common everyday "Joe" are rich and informative. The three regulars at the Sixteenth Street Station were in with Senator Knowland and elites within the White power structure in Oakland. The lore and style that evolved from this simple job at the San Francisco Ferry Building, the Oakland Mole, and the Sixteenth Street Station, among others, as well as the camaraderie on the job in the locker room and off the job in the community, is nothing short of remarkable. We don't see Redcaps anymore, but their legacy, pride in their work, and their accomplishments should invariably be remembered.

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Willie R. Collins, Ph.D.

A WAY OF LIFE: PROSTITUTION IN WEST OAKLAND

Elaine-Maryse Solari

THE BUSINESS OF PROSTITUTION

Like most American cities, Oakland has been faced with the problem of prostitution since its inception. The city has met the problem with a historically characteristic sequence of “solutions”: first toleration, then regulation, and finally repression. Around the turn of the 19th century, Oakland was one of 72 cities in the United States known to have a “segregated district,” where brothels were tolerated as long as they followed certain rules (Woolston 1921:120). These districts were generally located in the poorest neighborhoods, where most residents were renters with little political clout (Rosen 1982:79). Reforms initiated in the Progressive era closed most segregated districts by 1918.

Oakland’s “segregated” (or “red-light”) district developed sometime in the 1890s and was officially closed on 31 December 1913. Although the district lacked sharply defined boundaries, it appears to have been concentrated in south-central Oakland, in the area bounded by Fourth, Washington, Seventh, and Webster streets. Toward the end of the segregation period, West Oakland had a small red-light district of its own located on Pacific Street, between Wood and Willow, a predominantly African American block in 1910. For at least two decades after the official closing of the city’s segregated districts, prostitution continued as an important economic activity in the local community.

While prostitution had been an independent, opportunistic occupation in the early years, by the mid-19th century, prostitution had become commercialized and hierarchical. At the apex were the parlor houses that catered to the well-to-do and operated under a facade of “refined respectability”; these establishments were not segregated but could be scattered about the city. Brothels were usually simple boarding houses, where the prostitutes both lived and worked; although they were generally located in the red-light district, they were often found next door to private residences. Crips, built exclusively for prostitution, consisted of numerous small rooms rented out on a nightly basis. Usually each room opened onto a street or alley, so that prostitutes could solicit customers as they passed by. In San Francisco, cribs contained from 15 to 120 rooms (Barnhart 1986:25-31; Woolston 1921:136-137). Dancehall prostitutes provided their own rooms, but they often received a salary for their presence in the club where they found customers. Streetwalkers, the worst paid and most frequently arrested, did most of their soliciting in barrooms that did not hire their own prostitutes (Barnhart 1986:33).

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, prostitution had become a highly profitable business for various segments of the local community. Money could be made by selling girls to houses of prostitution; by acting as private managers (as madam or pimp); by selling clothing and other supplies to prostitutes at inflated prices; and by selling liquor to prostitutes and their customers (Rosen 1982:77-78; Woolston 1921:67, 99). It was the landowners, real-estate agents, and investors, however, who stood to reap the greatest profits. Since prostitution was “legally ambiguous” even during the tolerant period of segregation, landlords could rent their property “for immoral purposes”

at two to three times the normal rate. In some cases, several businessmen or municipal officials would join together to own and operate a group of “houses” (Barnhart 1986:31; Rosen 1982:76-77; Woolston 1921:118-119).

“Big money” was definitely involved in San Francisco: at the turn of the 19th century, a French restaurant assignation house represented an investment of \$400,000, and a San Francisco trust company was reported to have invested trust funds in a five-story assignation house (Alameda county 1914:51; Hichborn n.d.a:5). Enormous profits could be made on little capital investment: the Empire House in San Francisco, which cost no more than \$8,000 to build, had 70 cribs that rented out at \$5.00 each per night. If operated at full capacity, the landlord would garner \$127,750 per year (Hichborn n.d.a:6). A study published in 1908 estimated that the real-estate investors who had purchased lots in San Francisco in the late 1840s, and then charged high rents to brothel keepers, made an annual profit of 3 million dollars in the last decade of the century (Barnhart 1986:78).

The managers of the prostitutes also stood to reap good profits. In most brothels, prostitutes split half of all their earnings with the madam. The madam would also receive “kickbacks” from peddlers and dealers for sales to her girls (Rosen 1982:76-77). The madam, however, would often have to pay a substantial part of her income to her landlord. After the closing of the brothels in 1913, streetwalking increased and pimps became much more central to the prostitution business. Although the madam’s cut had been generally 50 percent, a pimp might take most of a streetwalker’s earnings and return only a pittance to her (Rosen 1982:76).

Some prostitutes made very good money—particularly in the early years when women were scarce in the West—and seized the opportunity for upward mobility. Many prostitutes, however, died destitute. In the first two decades of this century, “the average brothel inmate or streetwalker received from one to five dollars a ‘trick,’ earning in one evening what other women made in a week” (Rosen 1982:148). At the low end were the women who worked at the cribs, serving from 13 to 30 customers often at 50 cents each or less. A prostitute’s income was often quickly spent. As noted above, those in brothels paid half their earnings to the madam, and many inmates were required to buy their clothing and furniture from peddlers and dealers at exorbitant prices. Those who worked in cribs had to pay a nightly rental fee that represented one-third to two-thirds of their total income (Rosen 1982:75-77). A review of police records confirms the prostitute’s low economic status: in Oakland’s red-light districts, the majority of the women arrested for “vagrancy” (most likely streetwalkers) from July through December 1905 had less than a \$1.00 in their possession at the time of their arrest (Oakland Police Department 1905:1, 12, 19, 21, 24, 42, 50-51).

Although many prostitutes considered their work easier than the alternatives available, the life was often grim. Prostitutes usually faced social and community ostracism because they were viewed as a social evil. In a profession that valued youth and beauty, the prostitute faced certain downward mobility as she aged, while her health was always at risk from venereal disease, unwanted pregnancy, and the brutality of customers. As a result, prostitutes had a high rate of alcoholism, drug addiction, and suicide (Butler 1985:15; Rosen 1982:98-100).

Prostitutes were usually young. A comprehensive study of prostitutes at the turn of the 19th century showed that the median age was the early 20s, with more than half under 25 years of age. Over 25, the numbers fall off rapidly: the average length of their professional career was six years (Woolston 1921:41). Because prostitutes usually began working at an early age, they often had little

education and few skills. Thus, their job opportunities after leaving prostitution were quite limited (Butler 1985:150-151).

Most prostitutes in western cities in the early 20th century were Caucasian. Because they had even fewer economic opportunities than White working-class women, however, African American, Japanese, Chinese, and Mexican women were overrepresented in the prostitution population (Butler 1985:4; Rosen 1982:80-81). Managers of brothels of all kinds attempted to recruit women of different races and nationalities in order to provide customers with “exotics” and variety; in general, however, prostitutes working in the red-light district were from the poorest racial or ethnic group in the local community (Rosen 1982:81). Whether the different ethnic groups were segregated varied from locale to locale (Butler 1985:4, 7).

In San Francisco, some “cribs”—large buildings in which prostitutes were virtually caged in small cubicles four by six feet—dealt with the issues of race and ethnicity in a unique way. The top floors of the building was [sic] allocated to French, English, and American women, whereas the lower floors were relegated to Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican women. Prices varied according to the race and nationality of the prostitute. Not surprisingly, the top floors cost customers more than the lower floors, which housed women of stigmatized races [Rosen 1982:80-81].

Nell Kimball, a madam in San Francisco at the turn of the 19th century, advertised her girls as “Two bits for Mexican, Nigrah, Chinese or Japanese asked 50 cents. French asked 75 cents, and the American Yankee was \$1.00” (Bullough and Bullough 1987:227).

Although prostitution in the Barbary Coast and in San Francisco generally has been extensively studied (Barnhart 1986), little has been written about the less notorious segregated districts across the bay in Oakland. Because West Oakland’s red-light district was located within the Cypress Project area (Block 18), an attempt has been made to learn about the prostitutes who lived and worked on Pacific Street and the landowners who rented their property here for “immoral purposes.” Although the data are sparse and reports are often tangled with euphemisms or laden with bias, the study reveals the economic importance of prostitution in West Oakland, particularly to the African American community. Prostitution provided jobs not just to the professional women, but to the musicians who worked in sporting houses and clubs, and to those who owned, operated, and worked in cafes.

PROSTITUTION IN OAKLAND

PRESEGREGATION PERIOD (ca. 1860-1890)

Prostitution would have appeared in Oakland as soon as the population size warranted, but it was not documented here until the mid-1860s (McArdle n.d.:39). On the police docket, it was a common—not particularly noteworthy—offense. Oakland does not appear to have had a well-publicized district like the Barbary Coast in San Francisco, which had its beginnings in 1865. Enforcement of the early state laws prohibiting prostitution was sporadic, due in part to the Oakland Police Department’s limited manpower (McArdle n.d.:39). The prosecution of prostitutes was also likely to have been of low priority. A study of prostitution in San Francisco concluded that when women had been scarce, the few that were there—usually prostitutes—were appreciated and

admired. It was only after more women and families arrived, and a “modified Victorian culture” began to exert its influence, that prostitutes were ostracized (Barnhart 1986:7).

Since 1872 the California Penal Code prohibited a wide range of activities related to prostitution, including enticing chaste, unmarried, minor females into houses of ill-fame (Sec. 266); taking a minor female from parent or guardian, without their consent, for purposes of prostitution (Sec. 267); admittance of a minor into a house of prostitution (Sec. 309); keeping or residing in a house of ill fame (Sec. 315); keeping a disorderly house for assignation or prostitution, or “any house of public resort which habitually disturbs the peace, comfort, and decency of neighborhood” (Sec. 316); and enticing or otherwise prevailing upon another person to visit places of prostitution (Sec. 318). The offenses were all misdemeanors and punishable by fines ranging from \$100 to \$1,000, up to a year’s imprisonment, or both (State of California 1881:120-137). Also since 1872, Oakland had a local ordinance suppressing “houses of ill fame” (City of Oakland 1892:157).

Although prostitution was illegal under both state and local law, few arrests were made in Oakland between 1872-1910. Those arrested were usually charged with vagrancy, a public-order offense, rather than a morals charge (Percival n.d.:31, note 143). Penal Code Section 647, the vagrancy statute enacted in 1872, was broad, allowing the arrest of the unemployed and homeless. This statute as it pertained to prostitution stated:

[E]very lewd and dissolute person, who lives in and about houses of ill-fame, and every common prostitute and common drunkard, is a vagrant, and punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding ninety days [State of California 1881:266-267].

Throughout the 19th century in Alameda county, vice in general was tolerated as long as it was discreet, kept within certain bounds, and did not openly attack official morality. As a practical matter, the police aimed to control rather than suppress vice. Enforcement was inconsistent and some graft undoubtedly occurred. Streetwalkers were more likely to be arrested than those who worked in parlor houses, brothels, or cribs (Friedman and Percival 1981:94), but prostitution was rarely cited as the offense. For example, Friedman and Percival’s analysis of the Rough Minutes of the Oakland Police Court showed that out of 1,676 cases prosecuted between 1 June 1880 and 31 May 1881, only 3 offenses were explicitly connected with prostitution. Two of the charges were for keeping a house of ill fame and one was for being in a house of ill fame (Friedman and Percival 1981:94, note 59).

Occasionally the police would crack down on prostitution. In 1887 the police raided “bawdy houses in the vicinity of lower Franklin street” and arrested about 30 “questionable characters” who were fined heavily for vagrancy. The next year, numerous houses in the 700 block of Franklin Street were again raided. Eleven inmates were charged with vagrancy. After posting bail at \$20 each, they were released. They all subsequently forfeited their bail (*Oakland Enquirer* 30 November 1888 3:3).

Despite the sporadic raids, the police and prostitutes seem to have had an understanding of sorts. When two constables raided a “bagnio” while looking for opium users, the madam, Jennie Turner, apparently felt sufficiently secure—as well as aggrieved—to call the police and complain about the raid (Friedman and Percival 1981:94).

From newspaper accounts of arrests on Franklin Street, it is apparent that houses of prostitution existed in the area that was to become the segregated district in central Oakland in the 1890s. There

is no indication, however, that Pacific Street in West Oakland had become an area of concentrated prostitution during this presegregation period.

SEGREGATION PERIOD (ca. 1890-1914)

During the 1890s many California cities attempted to control prostitution by tolerating brothels if they stayed within a “segregated district” and abided by rules dictated by the police department. Notwithstanding Ordinance No. 1144, approved in May of 1890—which prohibited the keeping, visiting, becoming an inmate of, or in any way contributing to the support of, a house of ill fame or prostitution (City of Oakland 1892:157)—the City of Oakland followed the statewide trend and had a segregated district (or districts) for about 20 years. Sometime in the 1890s, the Oakland Police Department began restricting brothels to specific areas, required “landladies” to be registered, and accepted an annual revenue of \$100 to \$150 per each house in the form of fines (McArdle n.d.:36, 39; *Oakland Tribune* 17 February 1913). The police clearly tolerated the prostitutes’ presence during this period; for example, a review of the Oakland Police Department Arrest Books shows that none of the 2,335 arrests made in a six-month period (July-December, 1905) were specifically for prostitution. The nine women arrested for “vagrancy” during this period, mostly in the red-light district area, were probably streetwalkers (Oakland Police Department 1905).

Ironically, Oakland’s main red-light district seems to have always been located near the old county courthouse at Fifth and Broadway. According to a 1906 account, “undesirables” had moved from San Francisco to Oakland after the earthquake; the district, or “tenderloin,” was said to be clustered around the courthouse, which was “already flanked on its north side [Fifth Street] by a row of cottages which have a shameful history” (*Oakland Herald* 24 May 1906). Two years later, the District Attorney complained about “dens of vice” on Fifth Street, partly because the tenderloin was “in the wrong place”—too near the county courthouse (Friedman and Percival 1981:94).

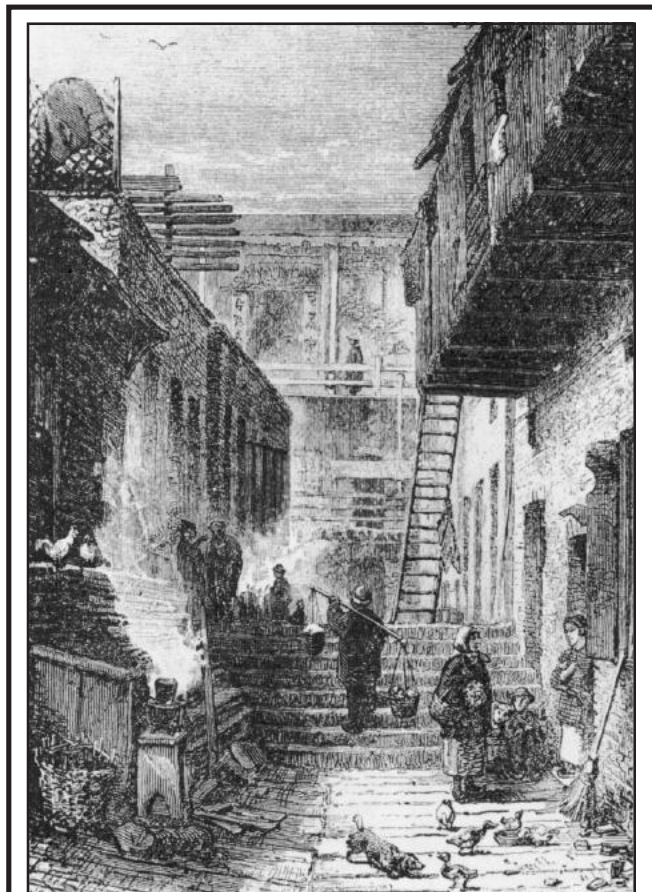


PLATE 88. SAN FRANCISCO'S BARBARY COAST. In the 1870s, when this drawing of the Barbary Coast was created, red-light districts were depicted as having an aura of mystery about them—suggesting foreign adventure and vice of all kinds. By the 1900s in working-class districts like West Oakland, red-light districts were likely much more mundane neighborhoods, little distinguishable from clusters of workers’ cottages surrounding them. (Source: Rose 1974)

The results of the 1912 Welfare Commission investigations provide some of the first details on Oakland's central red-light district, as well as the first published statement found on West Oakland's district. The red-light district(s) were reported to consist of 29 houses, 2 of which were vacant, on Sixth Street between Washington and Franklin streets; a house on Eighth Street between Washington and Broadway; a house on Ninth Street between Broadway and Franklin in the Chinese District; and 3 houses on Pacific Street in West Oakland, which were operated by "colored women." The commission's investigation also showed that prostitutes were allowed to occupy rooms away from the segregated district, for example, in rooming houses on Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth streets, between Clay and Grove (*Oakland Tribune* 17 August 1913:8:1-6).

According to the Welfare Commission report there were 193 women in houses of prostitution within the "district." Of the 112 prostitutes interviewed, 84 were American born. Overall, the prostitutes were poorly educated. Less than 5 percent had a high-school education or higher. Approximately 28 percent had an eighth-grade education, while 40 percent had no more than a fourth-grade education. Of those who had been raised in a religion, 59 were Catholic, 39 were Protestant, and 1 was Quaker. According to the commission, over 70 percent of those interviewed expressed no desire to leave the profession (*Oakland Tribune* 17 August 1913, 8:6).

The Red-Light District on Pacific Street

While the 1912 commission credited West Oakland with only three "houses," the Sanborn Map of the same year indicates that there were nine "female boarding houses" (brothels) on Pacific Street between Wood and Willow streets (Figure 48). Three were located on the north side of the street on Block 18, at 1722-1726 (1732-1740)¹ Pacific, while a saloon was at the corner of Pacific and Willow. The entire south side of the street, numbers 1701-1715 (1701-1723), was dedicated to entertainment: a combination saloon and female boarding house at the corner, a clubhouse, and five other female boarding houses. All of the structures, except for a saloon and a restaurant, had been labeled as domestic dwellings on the 1902 map, while the U.S. Census data for 1880 and 1900 document families living in those houses. Thus it appears that Pacific Street did not become "red light" until sometime between 1902 and 1910, when the census reflects this shift.

Of the structures located on the south side in 1912, only the saloon/brothel at 1701 and a "sporting house" at 1715 Pacific were enumerated on the 1910 census. At 1701 lived the saloon's proprietor, a 67-year-old African American from Virginia and his wife, Hattie, a 28-year-old African American from Missouri; no other residents are noted. The "sporting house" at 1715, a very small structure, was occupied by the 44-year-old landlady—Bertha Kriegler (Criegler), listed on the census as a mulatto widow from Mississippi—and six "inmates." The Block Books list Kriegler as the owner of the entire "mini block," containing seven structures, from 1910-1913; the census enumerator might have included the women who worked in the adjacent brothels as living at 1715.

The Women of Pacific Street

Like their landlady, all six inmates at 1715 Pacific in 1910 were listed as mulattos. Two had migrated from southern states: Essie Harvey, age 21 from Alabama, who was divorced and had had

¹Oakland street numbers were changed ca. 1910. In this chapter, modern numbers appear in parentheses.

one child (deceased); and Lillie Jones, single, age 28 from Mississippi. The other four inmates were from California: Helen Gould, age 38, who was divorced; and Lucy Brown, age 29; Marian Robinson, age 40; and Belle Alvarado, age 29, who were all single. All were listed as being able to read and write. (Although not enumerated here on the 1910 Census, David Fetzer, a 29-year-old porter, was listed as living at 1715 Pacific on the 1910 Great Register.)

Two years later, the 1912 Great Register indicated a new group of women living at 1715 Pacific: Olive A. Anderson; Birdie and Rosa Patillo, and Ruby Smith. Anderson and the Patillos were listed as houseworkers; Smith, as a waitress. All were Republican. In 1909 Olive Anderson had worked as a masseur for C.J. Haglund (“Haglund’s Swedish Massage Institute”) and resided at 1238 Filbert. In the 1913 city directory, Kriegler listed 1723 (1715) Pacific as having furnished rooms to rent. No mention is made of the other addresses. Whether this advertisement marked her exit from the prostitution business, or was simply a discreet way of attracting “working women” to her establishment, is not known. She no longer owned the property the following year.

Meanwhile, another house of prostitution had developed on Pacific. Belle Alvarado, who had been an inmate at 1715 Pacific in 1910, lived across the street at 1722 Pacific in 1912. Her profession is listed on the Great Register of that year as “houseworker.” Also listed at that address in 1912 as a

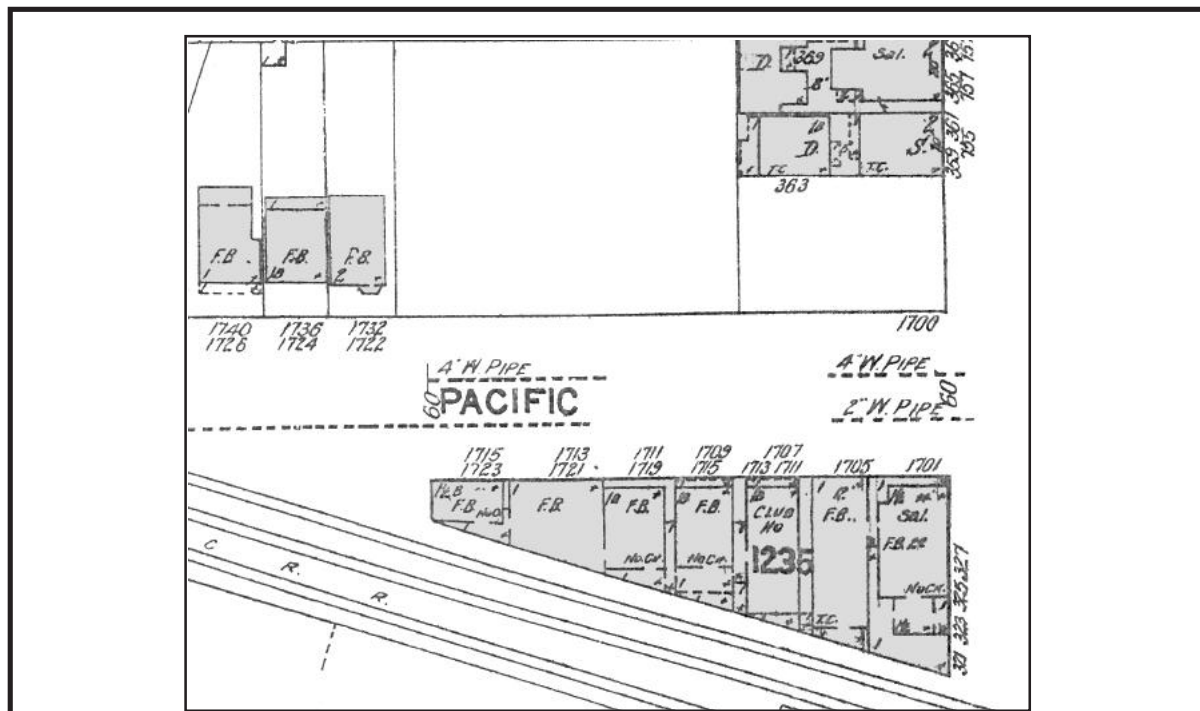


FIGURE 48. WEST OAKLAND’S RED-LIGHT DISTRICT, 1912. Immediately adjacent to the Southern Pacific railroad tracks, West Oakland’s Pacific Street red-light district developed sometime between 1902 and 1912. Nine buildings are labeled *F.B.* (female boarding house), while the Club House shown here probably had a similar function. A saloon, and another two up the block, added to the neighborhood’s entertainment. This map dates to the end of the segregated period, when prostitution was geographically restricted but tolerated. The following year brought the passage of the Red-Light Abatement Act. (Sanborn: 1912)

houseworker is Ida Lewis (Louis). Two years earlier Ida had been a lodger at 761 Willow on the same block. She was listed as a 20-year-old mulatto, born in Mexico. Her father was an African American from Kentucky, and her mother, “Mexican Spanish.” Ida had been married two years—though her husband was not listed—and her profession was “proprietor of a sporting house.” By 1920 Ida was widowed and living with her father, Henderson Davis, at 536 Magnolia. Another woman living at 1722 Pacific in 1912, Martin A. (Martha?) Triggs, is listed as a housewife. In 1905 a Mrs. Martha Triggs had been listed as residing at 765 Willow. This mixture of euphemism (“houseworker”) and open identification (“sporting house”) is characteristic of the times.

While Olive A. Anderson, who had worked in a “Swedish Massage Institute,” may have been of Scandinavian descent, the limited census data suggest that prostitutes of partial African American descent predominated on Pacific Street. Since the Welfare Commission in 1912 singled out the three houses on Pacific as being run by “colored women,” and did not mention race for the other proprietors, this fact may have set the West Oakland brothels apart from others in the city. The women at 1715 Pacific Street differed from the norm reported by the commission in other ways as well: With one exception, they were all relatively old for prostitutes (from 28 to 40 years old); and the 100 percent literacy of this small group appears to exceed the city statistics.

There is no information on the clientele that frequented the red-light district on Pacific Street, but one may assume that the houses catered to the working class. While these structures, adjacent to the Southern Pacific Main Line, would not have been pleasant places to live, their close proximity to the railroad shops would have made their services convenient for railway workers. The block’s clubhouse and saloon—an “oasis” three blocks closer to the railyards than the string of saloons on Seventh Street—would have provided other entertainment for off-duty workers. The brothels might very well have had a booming business, but the prostitutes were unlikely to have been the ones to profit greatly.

The Houses on Pacific Street

According to the Welfare Commission, the rents in the segregated district(s) ranged from \$60 to \$152 per month, with those on Sixth Street near the courthouse falling into the higher end of the range. The condition of the brothels on Pacific Street is unknown. Given the Welfare Commission’s description of the high-rent-district brothels on Sixth Street, however, one can imagine that West Oakland houses were at least as dismal:

Those on Sixth street, ranging from \$70 to \$152 per month, are closely crowded flats which fall far short of the requirements of housing laws, being old, with inadequate ventilation. In all of them the bedrooms are very small, and some have no outside window, the only means of ventilation being a small transom over the door which leads from a narrow dark corridor. Except for purposes of prostitution, these flats could not command more than \$15 per month in this locality, and no self respecting family would live in many of them [*Oakland Tribune* 17 August 1913, 8:5].

The property on the south side of Pacific Street appears to have been an investment in “commercial vice,” a common practice during this period. Although Bertha Kriegler is listed as the owner for the entire parcel from 1910-1913—when the parcel was clearly used for purposes of prostitution—the property was quickly “sold” when the red-light district was closed. Henry Z. Jones, one of the largest real-estate owners in Oakland, owned it before and after Kriegler’s tenure. Jones,

described in the press as a “man of high character and ability” (*Oakland Enquirer* 1 January 1910, 13:5), owned the property from 1905-1909 and then again in 1914 (listed as Henry “W.”). The Block Books indicate that Henry Z. Jones sold the property sometime between 1918 and 1925. Jones was well into his career by the time of his Pacific Street investment. He had come to San Francisco in 1874 and was successful in the coal business (*Oakland Tribune* 1914:78). Establishing his real-estate practice in 1877, he moved to Oakland in 1893. By 1914 he had owned, subdivided, and sold 16 tracts located in Oakland and San Francisco, totaling 307 acres (*Oakland Tribune Yearbook*, January 1914:78). He was still active in the real-estate business at the time of the 1925 city directory.

The north side of Pacific Street does not fit the pattern of having been purchased specifically for investing in “commercial vice.” The three properties in question, 1722-1724 (1732-1740), were owned by individual families for many years. None of these buildings, however, was owner-occupied in 1910, when the area was a red-light district.

The Reynolds family owned 1726 (1740) Pacific Street from at least 1894-1915, according to the census records, block books, and city directories. Miss Minnie J. Reynolds, who owned the property from about 1908 to at least 1915, was a single, second-generation Irish immigrant who worked as a stenographer and lived—first with Daniel Reynolds, presumably her brother, and later with her niece and nephew—at various West Oakland addresses to the east and north of Pacific Street. She had sold the rental property by 1918, and by 1920 lived in a house of her own.

City directories indicate that the Good family lived next door at 1724 (1736) Pacific from 1878-1891. In 1880 Michael Good, a laborer, lived there with his wife, Honora (Nora), and their three daughters. While the Good family owned the parcel from at least 1880 to 1925, they used it as a rental property after 1891; for their family residence, the Goods rented various properties in West Oakland, having one more daughter while Michael continued work as a day laborer. In 1900 all their daughters, ranging in age from 17 to 24, worked: one as a bookkeeper, two as tailors, and one as a saleswoman in a dry-goods store. Ten years later Nora was a widow and lived with two of her daughters—both saleswomen in a dry-goods store—in rented premises, shared with another family of four. By 1913 Nora was a boarder on Telegraph Avenue.

Manuel F. Gomes owned the adjacent property, 1722 (1732) Pacific Street, from at least 1905 to about 1925. There is no indication that he ever lived at 1722—he is shown living on Sixteenth Avenue in 1913 and Douglas Avenue in 1915—although a member of the family lived on Pacific Street after the red-light district was closed down. By 1916 Joseph Gomes (possibly Manuel’s son) lived at 1732 Pacific with his wife, Mary, and son Raymond. Both Joseph and Raymond were millmen. Joseph had been born in the Hawaiian Islands of Portuguese parents (USBC 1920; Voter Registration 1916).

Unlike Henry Z. Jones, these landowners do not appear to have specifically invested in commercial vice. These owners had purchased their properties well before the area had become a red-light district and held on to them for decades, not selling when the segregated district was closed. It is likely that they profited, however, by raising the rent when the opportunity arose. Pacific Street appears to have had a short tenure as a segregated district, probably less than 10 years. The area remained a focus of prostitution for years after the official closing of the district, however, despite repeated calls for reform.

Reform and the Red-Light Abatement Act

Although various “purity crusades” fought against the toleration of vice during the 19th century, prostitution did not become a major national issue until the Progressive era of the first two decades of the 20th century. Numerous reform groups joined together in the fight against prostitution for a multitude of reasons: as part of a moralistic campaign against “vice” in general; as part of an ancillary movement against alcohol because of the close ties between prostitution and alcohol; as part of the feminist movement and the fight to eliminate the double standard; as part of an effort to stem the spread of the Red Plague (venereal disease); and due to the hysteria surrounding the expose of the White-slave trade (Decker 1979:67-69). In response, numerous local and state commissions studied the problem and issued “Vice Commission Reports”; the federal government enacted the White Slave Traffic Act (commonly known as the Mann Act of 1910); and numerous states, including California, enacted red-light abatement acts (Connelly 1980:5; Decker 1979:67-69). Over a several-year period, the Commonwealth Club of California investigated the problem of venereal disease in society and reviewed various red-light abatement laws before recommending that such a law be enacted in California (Commonwealth Club of California 1911:1-83, 1913:331-430, 1914:469-503).

Although there had been complaints about vice for years, it was not until 1912 that an organized campaign against alcohol and prostitution reached Oakland. J.C. Westenberg, the leader of the “California Federation for the Suppression of Vice” and superintendent of the Whosoever-Will Rescue Mission, led attempts to disrupt saloons in Oakland and held meetings illustrating the evils of prostitution. In one of his circulars, Westenberg accused Oakland’s W.J. Petersen, Chief Wilson, Mayor Mott, and several members of the City Council of corruption and of being guilty of “white slavery” because they aided and abetted crime (Westenberg [1910]:2-3; see 45). Mayor Mott acted quickly to quell these stories; on 17 August 1912, following the example of numerous cities around the United States, he appointed a Public Welfare Commission (soon tagged as the “Vice Commission”) to investigate the “general conditions” of Oakland. Westenberg was soon convicted of criminal libel, having admitted on the witness stand that he had knowingly made false statements in his articles; some reform groups, however, looked upon him as a martyr (McArdle n.d.:38; *Oakland Tribune* 17 February 1913). While the commission performed its one-year investigation, reformers escalated their crusade against vice. One group called for a ban against “rag dancing”; the Child’s Welfare League voted unanimously against the continuance of a segregated vice district in Oakland; and other reformers called for a reduction in the number of saloons (McArdle n.d.:37-38; *Oakland Bulletin* 10 December 1912).

Walter J. Petersen, who in 1912 had the misfortune of becoming Chief of the Oakland Police Department amid this turmoil, supported the city’s existing segregation policy. He was harshly criticized for his stance, in and out of the press, by local churches and reformers. Responding to attacks on “fallen women” as a source of corruption, Petersen questioned why good Christians would want to punish only the women when men held the greater part of the responsibility. The perception that he favored prostitution, and the ensuing controversy, haunted him throughout his career (*Oakland Tribune* 17 February 1913; *Bulletin* 3 March 1913; *Oakland Enquirer* 15 July 1914; McArdle n.d.:41).

On 17 August 1913, the Welfare Commission released its findings. Of particular concern to the commission was the widespread problem of prostitution in lodging houses, both in and out of the segregated district, and the close association between dancehalls and prostitution. Shortly thereafter,

OAKLAND ADMINISTRATION
AND THE
WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC EXPOSE

BARBARY
COAST
OF
SAN
FRANCISCO
MOVED
TO
OAKLAND



ADMINISTRATION
RESPONSIBLE
ALAMEDA CO
AROUSED
GRAFT
IS
THE CAUSE OF
CRIME

This is not a political circular, but is issued by J. C. Westenberg, whose picture appears on the back page, and is in pursuance of the work of the CALIFORNIA FEDERATION FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE, which is making a State wide crusade against the

WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC, RED LIGHT DISTRICTS AND VICE IN GENERAL

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ORGANIZER: J. C. WESTENBERG,

Supt. Whosoever-Will Rescue Mission

MRS. J. C. WESTENBERG, 1011 1-2 Green St.
San Francisco, Supt. Rescue Work

FIGURE 49. "THE WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC, RED LIGHT DISTRICTS AND VICE IN GENERAL." J.C. Westenberg, the leader of the "California Federation for the Suppression of Vice" and superintendent of the Whosoever-Will Rescue Mission, championed the crusade against the "White Slave Traffic" in Oakland with pamphlets such as these and lectures at their San Francisco mission. Westenberg was soon convicted of criminal libel. (Courtesy of Bancroft Library)

the City of Oakland enacted two ordinances: one regulating dancehalls and the other lodging houses. Ordinance No. 553 N.S. imposed various restrictions on public dances, including permit requirements, age and time limits, and the prohibition of alcohol on the premises (City of Oakland 1914:123-125). In an attempt to prevent “clandestine prostitution,” the Lodging House Ordinance (No. 412 N.S.) required those renting a room or building for less than a week to register in their real name, and prohibited managers of hotels, lodging houses, and apartments from knowingly allowing any room or building to be used for prostitution or any other immoral purpose (City of Oakland 1914:130-131).

While the battle over vice in Oakland raged, reformers successfully pushed for antiprostitution legislation at the state level. Following a national trend, in April 1913 the California Legislature enacted the Red-Light Abatement Act, which attacked the problem of prostitution from an economic angle by targeting the landowners who profited from prostitution by renting property for “immoral purposes.” The Red-Light Abatement Act declared that every building or place used for lewdness, assignation, or prostitution was a nuisance and should be enjoined and abated. It required the District Attorney to bring an action and allowed any citizen to maintain such an action in his/her own name. Any violation or disobedience of either injunction or order provided by the act would be punished as contempt of court by a fine of not less than \$200 or more than \$1,000, or by imprisonment from one month to six months, or both (1913 Stats., Chapter 17). The true teeth of the act, however, was Section 7, which provided that if the existence of the nuisance were established, an abatement order would be entered as part of the judgment. This order was required to:

[D]irect the removal from the building or place of all fixtures, musical instruments and movable property used in conducting, maintaining, aiding or abetting the nuisance, and shall direct the sale thereof in the manner provided for the sale of chattels under execution, and the *effectual closing of the building or place against its use for any purpose, and so keeping it closed for a period of one year*, unless sooner released, as hereinafter provided. While such order *remains in effect as to closing, such building or place shall be and remain in the custody of the court* [1913 Stats, Chapter 17; emphasis added].

Moreover, the officer of the court would be entitled to costs for selling the movable property, for closing the premises, and keeping them closed (1913 Stats., Chapter 17).

The Red-Light Abatement Act was scheduled to go into effect on 10 August 1913; its implementation and the closing of the red-light district, however, met with fierce resistance because powerful interest groups—including landlords, real-estate agents, owners of saloons and breweries, politicians, and police—stood to lose their profits from prostitution. Opponents of the act contended that it was unprecedented and impractical; it would be used for blackmail; if enforced, crime against women would increase; prostitutes would be scattered throughout the community; landlords could have their property abated even if, unknown to them, one act of prostitution occurred; and it would impair the value of property (Alameda county 1913; Hichborn n.d.b:2).

The Property Owners’ Protective Association of California initiated a referendum against the Red-Light Abatement Act and filed it with the Secretary of State. Although there were allegations and protests that many of the signatures on the petition for a referendum were forgeries (*Oakland Tribune* 30 December 1913, 1:4, 2:7), the referendum was submitted for approval or rejection in the general

election on 4 November 1914 (Alameda County 1914). The voters rejected the referendum, and the act became effective 19 December 1914.

Closing of the Segregated District

Per order of Commissioner Turner, the red-light district in Oakland had been officially closed on 31 December 1913, almost a year before the Red-Light Abatement Act went into effect. A reporter described the event:

[A] small army of women emerged for the last time from the row of one and two-story shacks, shorn of their paint and their finery and carrying their belongings past the night sticks of the police. Few of them possessed as much as an umbrella. Many of them were not even properly clad to face the rains of the night. Many of them were worn and hopeless looking. Few of them were gay, away from their lighted parlors and the warmth of the wine that men bought for them. . . . Of the several hundred inmates of the red-light district few of the many who had spent years in the life in Oakland had saved as much as a dollar [*Oakland Enquirer* 1 January 1914, 9:2].

Apparently the closing of the district was quite civil: the madams of various establishments had been “advised” in advance to leave and were given time to make their arrangements to relocate in San Francisco or elsewhere (McArdle n.d.:40).

POST RED-LIGHT DISTRICT PERIOD (ca. 1915-1930)

After the closure of the segregated district, some brothel operators attempted to relocate in other areas of the city but they were promptly closed down by the police (McArdle n.d.:40). In the first six months of 1914, the police made eight arrests under the Lodging House Ordinance, which had been enacted in November of the previous year. In the same six-month period, the police made 39 arrests for “vagrancy by prostitution,” a sharp increase over the 10 arrests made from 1910 through 1913. The police had a 100-percent conviction rate for these arrests (Oakland Police Department 1914:folio 5). Although Chief Petersen seemed to view the closing of the district as an experiment that he would evaluate after a fair trial period (Oakland Police Department 1914:folio 4), its closure was permanent. The Oakland Police never again extended official tolerance to prostitution (McArdle n.d.:41).

The Failure of Red-Light Abatement

The closure of the segregated district and subsequent arrests did not eliminate prostitution. Instead, as opponents of the Red-Light Abatement Act had predicted, prostitution became more geographically dispersed throughout the city, and streetwalking increased. The reform movement was somewhat counterproductive: by driving prostitution “underground,” it became more closely linked to organized crime; the number of pimps increased; venereal disease became less controllable; and the business became more dangerous for both prostitutes and clients in terms of assault, battery, and robbery (Decker 1979:73). An editorial in 1916 lamented “the present system of permitting immorality to be practiced in Oakland indiscriminately,” rather than having it regulated and handled in a safe, practical manner (12 April 1916, 10:1-2).

Try as it might, the government's fight to crack down on prostitution proved futile. As a port city, Oakland had a continual influx of servicemen during World War I. These men, generally young and separated from their wives and girlfriends for long periods, formed a ready clientele for prostitutes. The traditionally high demand for prostitutes during war time undoubtedly aided in the failure of the red-light abatement (Benjamin and Masters 1964:132, 197). By 1918 Oakland was allegedly so vice ridden and "overrun with women of the underworld who [had] left San Francisco," that the federal government threatened to have Oakland barred to soldiers and sailors unless the vice conditions were "cleaned up" (*Oakland Tribune* 21 August 1918). Oakland Police Chief Nedderman contended that the city was actively fighting the problem: scores of women had been arrested for vagrancy, turned over to the medical authorities, and held in detention at the county infirmary (*Oakland Tribune* 21 August 1918).

In response to the federal government's threat and allegations that soldiers and sailors had been illegally supplied with liquor, many cafes had their dancing licenses revoked. Within several months, a number of cafes had their dancing privileges restored to three evenings a week, provided that no entertainers be employed in any capacity. Entertainers were prohibited because they had been found to be the principal cause of "the evil surrounding the cafes." Cafes that were reissued licenses included the Rex Cafe at Eighth and Broadway and the Tuxedo on Ninth Street (*Oakland Tribune* 22 July 1918).

Although the federal government withdrew the threat of declaring Oakland off limits to soldiers and sailors (*Oakland Enquirer* 14 September 1918), the war against vice continued. Mayor Davie charged "that soldiers are being debauched and 'thousands of dollars' are being thrown to 'lottery and prostitution kings'" (*Oakland Tribune* 18 November 1918). A new "Moral Squad" consisting of two or three patrolmen and two policewomen was initiated, replacing "the police neutrality squad" (*Oakland Tribune* 17 December 1918).

The Cabarets and Cafes of Oakland

Perhaps the most notorious place during this period was the Tavern Cafe and Saloon; known as "Thayer's," it was located at 811 Broadway, not far from the former segregated district near the courthouse. This cafe was operated by Tim Mulldowney, infamous for having attacked Jack London in a fight at an establishment Mulldowney had previously run on Seventh Street. The police had arrested many women at Mulldowney's place on Broadway, described as the "seat of the red light evil in the city" (*Oakland Tribune* 18 December 1918; *San Francisco Chronicle* 18 December 1918). In 1919 the police raided the McElroy Place, partly owned by an Oakland real-estate broker, where "a number of men prominent in business and professional life in Oakland and San Francisco have been visitors." Among those arrested included three women of "the Oakland underworld," who all pled guilty. One of these women, Mary Bernard of 379 Willow Street, was given a three-month jail sentence (*Oakland Tribune* 19 February 1919). None of the prominent male clients was arrested.

Despite these periodic crackdowns, the vice situation in Oakland and San Francisco had become sufficiently problematic that the federal government's newly organized Army Morals Squad allocated \$10,000 to clean up the two cities. In its first haul in San Francisco, 76 individuals were arrested. Scandalously, five of those who spent the night in jail were rumored to be "wealthy New York women out on a slumming party" (*Oakland Tribune* 24 February 1919).

During this period, prostitutes commonly worked out of cafes and dancehalls. Cafes alleged to be used for this purpose included the Oaks Cafe on Ninth and Broadway; Henry's Cafe at 408

Fifteenth Street; the Rex Cafe at 442 Eighth Street; the Tavern on Eighth and Broadway (most likely the one run by Mulldowney); the Tuxedo on Tenth Street, between Broadway and Franklin; the Bay Cities Social Club; the Hoffman at 428 Seventh Street; the Clay Ten Bar and Restaurant; and three cabarets in West Oakland, one of which was the Creole Cafe, at 1740 Seventh Street (*Oakland Enquirer* 20 December 1920; *Oakland Tribune* 22 April 1920, 29 May 1920).

In the Willow Street area, the cafes were generally run by African Americans, but were frequented by both Whites and Blacks. At 401 Willow Street, located at the corner of Atlantic on Project Block 36,

[C]olored men and white girls dance together. Solicitation here is done openly, both by white and colored girls. . . . A colored orchestra furnishes music, a colored girl brings the drinks, and the rest of the entertainment consists of the shimmy, and other dances which are barred in other cafes and dance halls. At another cafe at the foot of Willow soliciting is not carried on as openly as at 401 Willow street. Both cafes are the hangouts of two score of girls who live in West Oakland and “play” the cafes as a means of livelihood [*Oakland Tribune* 22 April 1920].

The cafe located at the foot of Willow was probably at 1701 Pacific Street. The neighborhood contained other cafes of questionable character, including the Hastings Cafe at Willow and Seventh streets; the Shasta Club, not far from the school on Seventh Street; the nearby Creole Cafe; and the Three Oaks. The *Oakland Tribune* described the Hastings Cafe, thusly:

On the side of the building is a sign “De Lux Cabaret, entertainment every evening,” and to the rear is a little shack also bearing the name “Hastings Cafe” and a sign “entertainment every evening.” Inside, it is declared, two colored women are employed to serve drinks to customers, a troupe of entertainers grind out the jazz music and a steady stream of patrons leave the larger hall in front to visit the shack behind. . . . In Hastings place, according to Gray and others, mixed dances are given, many white men dancing with colored women and some white women with colored men. An order was given at one time to stop the dancing [*Oakland Tribune* 5 October 1920].

“Slummers” from both sides of the Bay frequented Sid Deering’s Creole Cafe, which sold ginger ale for 40 cents a small glass and provided a place for White and Black patrons to dine and watch the entertainment (*Oakland Tribune* 5 October 1920).

During this period the houses on Pacific Street could very well have been used for “immoral purposes.” Vice resorts and houses of prostitution were alleged to have flourished near the Prescott Annex School, located at Fifth and Willow streets, with eight “disorderly houses” said to have been within a short distance of the school (*Oakland Tribune* 5 October 1920).

Because of the association between prostitution and the cafes, the Oakland Center, California City League requested that the city council adopt an ordinance curbing the activities of commercialized amusements in Oakland, especially the cafes and cabarets (*Oakland Tribune* 29 May 1920). Initially it was contended that sufficient ordinances already existed and that 19 places in the city were already under constant supervision by the Moral Squad; in December 1920, however, a variety of ordinances were adopted (*Oakland Tribune* 11 June 1920; *Oakland Enquirer* 3 December

1920). The new measures included a resolution denying all licenses for cabarets; an ordinance requiring all public dances to close at midnight except on legitimate holidays; and an ordinance compelling all poolrooms, cabarets, dancehalls, and bowling alleys to close at midnight (*Oakland Enquirer* 3 December 1920).

Earl Warren's War Against Vice

Apparently these ordinances, along with the Red-Light Abatement Act itself, met with little success in curbing vice in the old red-light areas of Oakland. According to Chief Justice Earl Warren, who had become the District Attorney for Alameda county in 1925, Oakland was wide open for prostitution when he took office:

Within three blocks of the courthouse, there was an entire block occupied by houses of ill repute, and there was a notorious one directly across the street from us. I could have thrown a rock from my office through its windows. It was widely known as Caddy Wells' Parlor House [1977:140].

According to Warren, before he took office the Red-Light Abatement Act had been "little-used," with the police making no attempt to interfere with business as long as it was carried on in houses that were in their "favor." In other parts of town, prostitutes were arrested and processed through the Police Court, but the procurers and the male patrons were not arrested (Warren 1977:140). Warren claimed to have closed down houses of prostitution "right and left" during his tenure, even though he met with "surprising" resistance:

I know it will appear strange, but the first people to complain and to urge me to desist were some of the local bankers and real estate men. They told me that I was closing up Oakland in the nighttime; that the ferryboats carried hundreds of men to San Francisco every evening who spent all of their money for recreation across the Bay, thus depressing the value of downtown property in Oakland [1977:140].

In 1927 Warren went before the county Board of Supervisors to appeal for passage of a regulatory ordinance. At the hearing he told of "shocking vice conditions involving boys and girls from 14 and 15 years up, existing at many Alameda county dance halls." The supervisors stated that they would adopt an ordinance barring girls under the age of 18 from dancehalls, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, and prohibiting dancing after midnight and the dispensing of liquor of any kind, in any way, on the premises (*Post Enquirer* 17 February 1927). By May 1927 Warren asserted that the conditions in Alameda county had shown improvement; it was still necessary, however, to name a standing committee of 14 men to cooperate with the District Attorney and the Sheriff to "aid in halting 'the flood of vice' that is sweeping the county" (*San Francisco Chronicle* 2 May 1927). During this period, graft and corruption by officials in Oakland seemingly continued. Oakland Police Chief Marshall claimed that "he had collected a mass of evidence of alleged sales of protection to gambling establishments and houses of ill repute"; since most of the evidence was allegedly hearsay, however, he "did not feel justified in acting upon it." The evidence was nonetheless sufficient to prove "conclusively [that] there was a well defined movement on foot to open up Oakland" (*San Francisco Chronicle* 24 October 1927). Marshall vowed to continue his raids and would not tolerate any attempt to influence his office (*Oakland Tribune* 31 October 1927). The next week, six houses of prostitution

were raided. Two dozen women inmates were taken to the station, but were released on their promise to leave Oakland within 24 hours (*San Francisco Chronicle* 7 November 1927).

During prohibition, Warren had two targets for his war on vice: prostitution and alcohol. He used the Liquor Abatement Act, similar to the Red-Light Abatement Act, to close down bootlegging establishments. He found it more effective than repeatedly raiding speakeasies (Warren 1977:141). Prostitution and alcohol consumption have always been closely connected; prostitutes worked out of brothels, dancehalls, and saloons, all of which served alcohol to their customers. Prohibition made little difference—the prostitutes went to the speakeasies to recruit their clients (Sinclair 1962:78, 408).

WEST OAKLAND PROSTITUTION SINCE THE 1920s

Despite the efforts throughout the 1920s, the “social evil” was not eliminated. A former West Oakland resident interviewed for the Cypress Project recalls that, in the 1920s and 1930s, White prostitutes used the upstairs of a Tudor revival building on Seventh Street near Market for business purposes. He remembers that there were four or five of them, and that there were no difficulties except when the women had too much to drink (Valva 1995a:16-17, 1995b, 1995, pers. comm.).

In 1938 “aroused by the sensational stories of white slavery in California,” churches and organizations in both San Francisco and the East Bay mobilized to plan an intensive drive against vice (*Oakland Enquirer* 31 January 1938). They appear to have been unsuccessful. According to Arthur Patterson, who grew up in West Oakland in the 1940s, prostitution continued throughout that decade. Seventh Street was considered “red light,” with its many rooming houses and hotels as well as “bar after bar.” “Deals” for prostitution were made at the bar, most of which had back rooms, so everything took place at the same location. Patterson recalls that prostitution was “just a way of life and it went along with everything else.” The prostitutes were not ostracized by the rest of the community, and one could not tell that a woman was a prostitute just by looking at her. Business was done, he recalls, “on a level of respectability”: “She did her thing and she made her money and all like that but she had some finesse about it” (Patterson 1995b:39, 40). Patterson’s childhood recollections date to the World War II period, when Oakland was swamped with factory workers and sailors and soldiers in training or on leave. Like the early days of San Francisco Bay settlement, women were scarce, which may account for this reported greater respect paid to prostitutes during this period.

Although one wouldn’t find a prostitute within a mile on Seventh Street during the day, Patterson recalls that at night the area “lit up like a Christmas tree and the joints would start jumping. And if it was on a weekend they’d jump the whole weekend.” Business appears to have been particularly busy “when soldiers were coming in and shipping out” (Patterson 1995b:38, 41).

According to another long-term West Oakland resident, Robert Valva, prostitutes remained in the neighborhood and were still centered only a few blocks away from the Pacific Street red-light district until around 1970. Goss Street, between Willow and Wood, had about seven or eight houses used by prostitutes and was known locally as “Whore House Row”; Goss Street had been associated with prostitution as early as the 1940s (Patterson 1995b:39). The Goss Street area prostitutes were primarily African American, although White prostitutes may have worked there earlier. White prostitutes, instead, worked on San Pablo and MacArthur (Valva 1995a:16, 1995b, 1995, pers.

comm.). Valva, whose family has had a real-estate business in West Oakland for more than 50 years, has sold houses that were used for business purposes by prostitutes. Many of the prostitutes also bought other houses “down the street, nearby” from Goss Street, which they kept as private residences with their husbands and children (Valva 1995, pers. comm.). Similar to Arthur Patterson’s account, Robert Valva described prostitution during that period as “a way of life” and recalled that the women were left alone. It was through prostitution that women could earn money and were able to buy their houses. The prostitutes ranged in age from 15 to 50 and worked as independents. The house they used might have a madam, but they did not have pimps. Streetwalkers were uncommon in this area (Valva 1995a:17-18).

Although prostitution was considered “a way of life” by some segments of the community and tolerated, streetwalking had become a major problem in some areas of the city by the 1970s. When crackdowns occurred, it was the women who were targeted: the police continued the 19th-century policy of arresting and punishing only the female prostitutes and not the male customers. These arrests had little impact (*Oakland Tribune* 27 February 1975, 23 August 1975, 1 October 1975, 26 March 1976). Frustrated and outraged, West Oakland residents marched down San Pablo Avenue in 1979 in an attempt to rid the neighborhood of prostitutes (*San Francisco Chronicle* 12 June 1979, 3:1-6). Given the history of prostitution in Oakland—and the tenacity of the occupation worldwide—it is not surprising that this event had little good effect.

CONCLUSION

Although dangerous, degrading, and rarely, if ever, the romanticized lifestyle so often portrayed in stories of the West, prostitution was the conscious choice of many women. Considering the limited and frequently unattractive alternatives available to them, their choice was not unreasonable. Dr. Ruth Rosen, after years of research on prostitution in late-19th- and early-20th-century America, described the alternatives:

When I look closely at the life stories of poor women during the early years of this century, I am struck again and again by most prostitutes’ view of their work as “easier” and less oppressive than other survival strategies they might have chosen. Denied access to social and economic power because of their gender and class status, poor women make their choices from a position of socially structured powerlessness. All too often a woman had to choose from an array of dehumanizing alternatives: to sell her body in a loveless marriage contracted solely for economic protection; to sell her body for starvation wages as an unskilled worker; or to sell her body as a “sporting woman.” Whatever the choice, some form of prostitution was likely to be involved [Rosen 1982:xvii].

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JAZZING UP SEVENTH STREET: MUSICIANS, VENUES, AND THEIR SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Willie R. Collins

INTRODUCTION

The '20s roared on West Oakland's Seventh Street. King Oliver's cornet wailed; Kid Ory's trombone slid; and Wade Whaley, a young New Orleans' disciple, followed with his clarinet, playing sinewy counter strains around tunes like "Tiger Rag." Crescent City jazz flowed from the Creole Cafe onto Seventh Street. At night, Seventh Street came alive with many sights and many sounds. A night out on the town might begin with attending a social club's annual dance, with Tin Can Henry Alley and His Snappy Cotton Club Band furnishing the music at Magnolia Hall; or a few blocks down to Peralta, listening to Professor Elmer Keeton, organist and musical director at the Lincoln Theater, with the Keeton's Brown Favorites entertaining before seeing the Negro screen drama, "The Sport of the Gods"; or dining at the Overland Cafe on mustard greens and chicken dumplings with cornbread, just like mother used to fix it; or right off Seventh on Pine, listening to Ivy Anderson scat on a jazz chorus at the Bluebird Cabaret's grand opening. Such was the setting of what some called "Hell's Half Acre" but others called heaven.

These were prosperous times for West Oakland. Work was plentiful, with the Phoenix Iron Works to the north and the railroad and Moore shipyards to the west and south. Traffic was heavy, with the modern electric Red Trains running every 20 minutes, and auto traffic to the ferries routed along Seventh (Olmsted and Olmsted 1994:166). Commute passengers punctuated their trips home by patronizing Seventh Street coffeehouses and bars, and boardinghouse residents dined at the restaurants and lounged on the street. While the street traffic swelled in the evenings and weekends, on-foot locals and visitors shared the sidewalks. Seventh Street was bustling, and one could walk the street at night without worry and have a good time.

In the first decades of the 20th century, West Oakland was a multi-ethnic neighborhood. African Americans worked and lived alongside European immigrants and American-born Whites, but maintained, by and large, a separate and rich social life—one in which music played a vital role. Conventional church music, such as religious folk songs, as well as special performances by African American concert artists could be heard in the Black churches of West Oakland. As a giver of pleasure, jazz accompanied all types of affairs, from nightclubs such as the Creole Cafe to associations' banquets. You could hear all types of music in West Oakland, but it was the "hot," energetic jazz à la New Orleans, the "slow drags" guided by the blues, and the undergirding pulse to which couples danced the "Texas Tommy" that gave West Oakland its soul and distinct identity. West Oakland's Seventh Street, shaped by external forces such as racism, became a Mecca for jazz lovers and one of the hubs of Black culture in the San Francisco Bay Area.

THE LEGACY OF JAZZ: A BRIEF CAPSULE

Jazz evolved from African and European American folk musical forms, such as the 19th-century religious folk song, minstrel tunes, and—by the early 20th century—blues. Musicians incorporated ragtime, popular songs, and began ragging tunes, imbuing them with blues inflections to create New Orleans jazz, a Black music with down beats and back beats that would make you swing and sway. New Orleans had more than its share of musicians and was a musical center for all types of music—from the Brass Band tradition to the French Opera. After the 1880s, the mixing of “Black” African Americans with the “Tan” Creoles (persons of mixed African and French or other European descent) produced acculturative forces that gave jazz, America’s original music, its flavor. As early as 1908 Bill Johnson, a double bass player, traveled with the Original Creole Band—one of several names for the band—through the southwest, bringing the music to the West Coast. Others were soon to follow to Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and West Oakland.

Almost concurrent with its development in New Orleans, jazz was quickly disseminated to the burgeoning African American communities in West Oakland and Los Angeles. New Orleans Blacks heard the Southern Pacific’s train whistle and boarded the *Sunset Limited* for California. In West Oakland, Southern Pacific offered jobs as waiters, cooks, car cleaners, sleeping-car porters, and Redcaps. Louisiana folks responding to this new job market brought their culture and their music with them and maintained it here, and West Oakland’s attraction increased: not only were there jobs available, but there was a familiar and desirable culture in place. Musicians from New Orleans came with bands, trading the Crescent City for the Golden State before the closing of Storyville, New Orleans’s red-light district, in November 1917. Oakland, the largest African American community in the Bay Area and the second largest in the state, was receptive to the new changes.

During the same period that jazz emerged as a new music form, another innovation was taking place:

Jazz performances (beginning in 1920) appeared at the height of the phonograph boom. Records quickly became the chief educational tool for young jazz musicians across the country, as youth in California, Montana, Texas, and Massachusetts alike mimicked and transcribed the new music [Peretti 1992:152].

The record industry also served to create jazz fans throughout the country, paving the way for the success of future tours.

THE IMPACT OF THE RAILROAD ON AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC

While there were a variety of railroad jobs available, the African American community in Oakland grew from the roots of the small Pullman Car colony made up of the “newly created class of Pullman porters who by Pullman company policy, were black” (Bagwell 1982:82). African American railroad men listened to and distributed what were then known as “Race Records”—commercial recordings aimed specifically at the Black market. They patronized African American clubs, hired musicians to play for their social functions, and in some cases, opened clubs of their own. Across the Bay at San Francisco’s Barbary Coast, for example, two ex-porters founded Purcell, which



PLATE 89. SIDNEY LePROTTI'S "SO DIFFERENT JAZZ BAND," SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, IN 1915. (Left to right: Clarence Williams, string bass; Reb Spikes, baritone saxophone; Adam "Slocum" Mitchell, clarinet; LePrototi, piano and leader; Gerald Wells, flute; unidentified, drums.) Born in Oakland in 1886, LePrototi was the earliest local jazz musician identified in this study. In the same year as this photograph, LePrototi also led the Crescent Orchestra, featuring 14 musicians, which played banquets and society affairs in Oakland. (Photo courtesy of Gladys LePrototi)

was to become "one of the most famous Negro dance halls in the country" (Stoddard 1982:10). While Whites were quick to embrace Black dance music, its patronage was largely African American. West Oakland could not have sustained the degree of musical activity and other entertainment or the diversity of African American businesses without the railroad's economic base. Black railroad men, in large part, sustained African American music and musicians in the Bay Area.

Unions and railroad associations—such as Local 456 of the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union at 1767 Seventh Street, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters at 517 Wood Street, and the Pullman Porters Benefit Association at 404 Willow—were all headquartered in West Oakland (Thompson and Williams 1930). These groups needed music for their special dances and provided a source of employment for local musicians. Mrs. Lenear's Orchestra, one exception to the male-dominated orchestra leaders, played for Western Pacific's Dining Car Waiters and Cooks Christmas Eve dance (*Oakland Sunshine* 6 November 1915, XIII no. 20). Wade Whaley's orchestra played for

the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters grand informal ball at the Native Sons' Hall at Eleventh and Clay streets (*Western American* 26 June 1926:2). "Dad" Moore—an almost legendary West Oakland union leader (see essay, this volume)—organized the first Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters ball and dance, which took place on Monday, 8 November 1926, at the Paradise Gardens at Twelfth and Oak streets. Pianist/bandleader Eddie Liggins and his Knights of Syncopation Orchestra furnished the music (*Western American* 29 October 1926:2).

On both sides of the Bay, the railroad also provided the much-needed "day job" for some musicians. San Francisco drummer and bandleader Eddie Alley, for example, played "casuals" in West Oakland in the '20s and '30s while working split shifts as a Redcap porter at the Third and Townsend station in San Francisco. He played in West Oakland because "Oakland had lots of Blacks relative to San Francisco. It was a railroad hangout. Railroad men had the money. More people [musicians] found work in Oakland than they did in San Francisco" (Eddie Alley 1995, pers. comm.).

RESEARCHING WEST OAKLAND JAZZ MUSICIANS AND VENUES

From the late teens to the late '40s, jazz and jazz-style blues flourished in West Oakland—giving the neighborhood recognition throughout the country. The story of this development is therefore a fitting topic for a volume celebrating West Oakland's history. This essay examines the background, circumstances, and issues that structured the environment of the jazz-music scene on West Oakland's Seventh Street. Black nightlife on Seventh Street and the rest of Oakland presented jazz music for both African American and White audiences. To be sure, there were native Oakland White jazz musicians who played significant roles in the local jazz scene, such as arranger, composer, pianist, and bandleader Marty Paich, who played and wrote arrangements in Oakland in 1941, and Bob Ahern, guitarist for Stan Kenton's Metronome's Band (Simon 1971). This study, however, focuses on African American musicians, who were forced by racism to play in prescribed areas.

This essay also treats Oakland as an independent urban district, not as an appendage or adjunct of San Francisco, as Daniels (1990:xviii) defines it. Although musicians and patrons sometimes moved back and forth across the Bay, West Oakland maintained a distinctive character that deserves its own recognition. The study of jazz in West Oakland is important in that it has been overshadowed by other developments on the West Coast: most of the recording activity took place in Los Angeles, while the Barbary Coast with its Las Vegas-style attractions appealed more to tourists. The history of jazz on West Oakland's Seventh Street, in contrast, reflects the evolution of jazz music within a Black community. Jazz musicians here were less likely to cater to the desires and dictates of the paying public, as occurred on the Barbary Coast. While Oakland musicians had to play what their clientele wanted, in Oakland it was largely a Black clientele with Black sensibilities.

Reconstructing a history of jazz music and venues in Oakland presents challenges. While Oakland was second only to Los Angeles as a center of jazz activity in California, most studies have focused on developments in that southern California city (Eckland 1986; Gioia 1992; Tercinet 1986). Only fragments of West Oakland's early music history appear in scattered places. *Jazz on the Barbary Coast* (Stoddard 1982) includes comments on jazz musicians and bands in Oakland, while an article entitled "New Orleans-Area Musicians on the West Coast, 1908-1925" (Gushee 1989) provides some

information on Oakland jazz musicians but is mostly centered in Los Angeles. Later developments are better known: the California blues and Rhythm and Blues that developed in West Oakland in the 1940s has been documented by author and critic Lee Hildebrand (1982), among others.

Contemporary sources are also scarce. Few jazz events were covered by the *Oakland Tribune*, the city's major daily paper; even Delilah L. Beasley, an African American columnist who wrote for the *Tribune* in the late 1920s and early '30s, rarely mentioned jazz music in her column, "Activities Among Negroes," although it provides useful information on other topics. *Oakland Tribune* yearbooks and publications, such as *The Town Informer 1938-1939*, paid scant attention to jazz and blues music. When African American musicians were covered at all, the emphasis was on traveling concert artists, such as classical singer Marian Anderson, or on more traditional Black music fare, such as the Wings Over Jordan Choir or the local Keeton's Colored Chorus (Gessler 1945:115). Black newspapers active in Oakland—such as the *Oakland Sunshine*, *Oakland Independent*, *Oakland Times*, *Pacific Times*, *Western American*, *Western Outlook*, and *California Voice*—printed advertisements for bands, social-club functions, and nightclubs that were active in the area. Whether the events advertised actually happened cannot be verified. These advertisements, however, serve as primary sources for confirming the period of a band's existence, identifying band personnel, and documenting the kinds of venues available. City directories also corroborate whether a club or musician was actively functioning for a particular decade.

When one turns to recordings, the situation is bleaker. Although West Oakland had its own recording studios in the 1950s, there were few records made in the Bay Area during earlier decades; most local musicians recorded in Los Angeles (see Discography, Appendix B). Henry Halstead, a bandleader who was active in the Bay Area between 1920 and 1924, recorded "Bull Frog Serenade" and "Panama" for Victor in Oakland—the earliest recording identified in this study. Most of the recordings took place beginning in the late '30s.

Of inestimable importance are the living musicians who were born in Oakland or spent their formative years here. (The author interviewed several Bay Area jazz musicians for this essay. The interviews were taped but were not transcribed due to time limitations; tapes were listened to while writing this article.) Many of these musicians remember not only the details of their own careers, but the early clubs and the musicians who played there when they were growing up. While most of the local bands used stock arrangements (i.e., published transcriptions from recordings for various instruments), original scores or arrangements would allow us to recreate the sound of the music in the absence of recordings. Some of the musicians interviewed have scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings and photographs that proved valuable, but none of these men kept copies of the early arrangements. Jazz oral history, with the sometimes failing or inaccurate memories of the musicians, must be validated and verified through other documentation. To every extent possible, I have checked pertinent interview information included here for accuracy.

Further research would likely uncover many more sources on the history of jazz in West Oakland. Transcripts of interviews with early musicians at jazz archives are a potential source of information, as would be more in-depth interviews with living musicians. Now that this initial research has identified the players and venues—and sketched the environment in which the jazz scene operated—researchers can pursue more focused studies.

THE SETTING

JAZZ MUSIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

By the 1920s Oakland, not unlike other cities in the United States, was addicted to social dancing. Much of the social activity in Oakland's African American community was organized around voluntary associations or social clubs that seemed to prefer jazz for dancing (*Western Outlook* 22 April 1922:2). Numerous halls and social clubs sponsored dances—annual affairs as well as weekly events—and they needed jazz music to dance to. Some hired resident bands, while others offered “casuals”: employment for a single event. Eddie Alley recalls playing in West Oakland in the '20s and '30s, underscoring the variety of employment opportunities those social clubs provided the musicians:

I didn't play steady, but I played casuals most of my life. I played for a lot of club affairs. Wherever a club would have a function, I might be called to play. They'd have a dance and a hall that I had never heard of. We'd play for this affair. The audiences were primarily Blacks in those days. Later, I played for mostly White people [1995, pers. comm.].



PLATE 90. EDDIE ALLEY'S GENTLEMEN OF RHYTHM. (Left to right: Eddie Alley, drums and leader; George Fleming, trumpet; Eddie Walker, trumpet; and Ike Bell, trombone.) Alley played casuals in West Oakland in the late 1920s and 1930s while working split shifts as a Redcap porter in San Francisco. He formed The Gentlemen of Rhythm in the early 1940s; according to Alley, his was the first Black band to play large hotels in San Francisco, such as the Mark Hopkins and the Fairmont. (Photo courtesy of George Fleming)

As early as 1907, the Industrial Club—later called the Art and Industrial Club—presented Grand Balls (*Oakland Sunshine* 21 December 1907:4). The Cosmos Social Club, established in 1918, also gave annual dances over a number of years (*California Voice* 27 January 1939:1). Less formal were the weekly dances sponsored by the Marion Social Club on Eleventh Street near Broadway, where the ladies were charged 10 cents admission and the men 25 cents, allowing them to dance to a full orchestra until midnight (*Oakland Sunshine* 19 June 1915:4).

RACISM AND ITS IMPACT ON WEST OAKLAND’S MUSIC SCENE

The San Francisco Union, Local 6 of the American Federation of Musicians, chartered in 1897, stated in its constitution that it would “enforce Good Faith and Fair Dealing and adherence to Union principles among all members”; this did not, however, apply to African American musicians, who were denied membership in the union. In 1924 Black musicians in the Bay Area applied to the American Federation of Musicians and were granted a charter to do business as Local 648, headquartered in Oakland, with the same jurisdictional boundaries as the all-White Local 6. “The two locals cohabited this area . . . until 1934” (Lowe 1985:1).

While Local 648—also called the Musicians Protection Association—may have aided its members on some fronts, one Oakland musician recalled that “it was very difficult for a coloured band to get a steady job, even though we had a coloured local. . . . They didn’t give a damn whether we had a second or a third class rating” (Stoddard 1982:96). Eddie Alley confirmed the situation: “Musicians and where they played were segregated. Black bands couldn’t play in downtown Oakland. It was a segregated union—didn’t allow us to play in certain places, they were very prejudiced” (1995, pers. comm.). In 1934 the White Local 6 filed a complaint against Local 648 and obtained a judgment against it. Local 648 was then placed in receivership, with its charter revoked, and the members placed under the stewardship of Local 6. The Local 6 subsidiary (the Jim Crow Union) was later chartered to do business as Local 669, after James C. Petrillo abolished subsidiary locals. Following World War II, between 1946 and 1948, a general strike as well as economic pressures forced businesses “Uptown” (east of Broadway) to slowly and begrudgingly open their doors to African American musicians and patrons. It was not until 1 April 1960 that the White Local 6 and the Black Local 669 reached an agreement to merge.

The Black musician’s place to play music in Oakland prior to the late 1940s was restricted to Seventh Street and elsewhere in West Oakland. It was an unwritten law not found in the bylaws of the union’s constitution that all of downtown Oakland was “off-limits” for African American musicians. Al Morris, the White union’s business agent for Oakland, defended his territory jealously, and the Oakland Police Department was said to be sympathetic to his position.

Members of Local 648 played for civic events—as long as they took place on the west side of town. Delilah L. Beasley’s column, “Activities Among Negroes,” reported that one such event was held at the Parks Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, at the corner of Chester and Ninth streets, to honor the recently appointed city manager, mayor, and other officials.

One of the principal features will be an overture played by a group of Negro musicians, . . . This aggregation of musicians will render an overture under the direction of the

committee's chairman of music, Harry Perison. The band is under the direction of Justine Sexias [*Oakland Tribune* 23 August 1931].

While the police may have looked the other way on some of the activities in and around Seventh Street, Blacks knew their place and had to walk a tightrope or deal with a heavy-handed policeman. Earl Watkins, who delivered newspapers to businesses on Seventh Street before playing music there, recalls: "Oakland Police patrolled Seventh Street and were pretty cold blooded. They'd beat your butt if you were a Black man within an inch of your life back in the late '30s and all through the '40s" (1995, pers. comm.). Certain policeman became particularly known for their viciousness against Blacks. Bill Hinds, a retired Redcap porter who worked on Seventh Street and frequented many of its establishments, recalled that there were many rough cops in the Oakland police force at that time:

They were known. They had one called "Ass Kicking" Slim. It was a known fact, that if they arrested a Black on Seventh Street, and he got, what they construed to be, out of hand, they would take him around to the Fire House on Eighth Street and beat the hell out of him. That was where Slim got his reputation from. Blacks had a place and knew their place [1995, pers. comm.].

SEVENTH STREET

As long as you knew your place, Seventh Street could be the place where all the action was. In addition to the music, there were pool halls, gambling halls, and places to eat southern-style foods like Sylvester Sims's Overland Cafe at 1719 Seventh Street. "No fancy French names for our dishes," an advertisement assured. "We serve well-cooked home dishes from mustard greens to chicken dumplings, with corn bread and hot biscuits. Just like mother used to fix it," was the enticement for patrons who liked "down-home" food—now known as soul food (*Oakland Independent* 19 October 1929:8).

Shooting pool was a favorite pastime, along with playing cards and shooting dice. The Main Event at 1704 Seventh Street was a favorite hall. The Turf Recreation Hall and Billiard Room at 1736 Seventh Street promised a cosmopolitan atmosphere:

Here you meet the visitor from New York, the breezy Chicagoan, the Cosmopolitan from all points South, East, and West. . . . A home for the visiting railroad man; a recreation place for the home patron. . . . A friendly place where you meet visitors from all over the world [*Oakland Independent* 19 October 1929:7].

Just next door, Charles E. "Raincoat" Jones, operated a business in 1942 selling clothes, jewelry, radios, trunks, and suitcases at 1734 Seventh Street (New Age Publishing Company 1942-43). On the backside of Jenkins's Corner (Slim Jenkins's club), Jones operated another business. A barker would holler to passersby: "Action in the back, action in the alley; big craps game"; there "Suitcase" Brown might be presiding over a crap game. The police were allegedly paid to look the other way at these activities. Jones's operations may have been on the illegitimate side, but he is remembered as a good businessman who kept his enterprises going for years.

While West Oakland was indeed a multi-ethnic neighborhood, Seventh Street and its surrounding area were a haven for Black folks. After the demise of the bohemian Barbary Coast jazz scene in San Francisco in 1921, a number of dancehalls, theaters, and cafes sprang up in West Oakland. The non-Black community in West Oakland in the '20s and '30s—before the “White flight” of the '40s—stayed to themselves and had little to do with African American social life. Some Whites patronized Black and Tan clubs—nightclubs that catered to a mixed clientele—although many perceived themselves as “slumming.” Among West Oakland’s most popular Black and Tan clubs were Slim Jenkins’s club (1933-1962) and The Creole Cafe (ca. 1918-1921), both on Seventh Street, but even here the majority of the patrons were African Americans. The phrase had a cosmopolitan tone, and many bands incorporated it into their names, such as Clem Raymond’s Black and Tans. “‘Black and Tan’ in a band’s title was a selling point—a positive,” as Oakland musician Earl Watkins (1995, pers. comm.) pointed out.

In addition to live music, recorded jazz could be heard in the homes and businesses of West Oakland. Several accounts confirm the reported Pullman porters’ role in distributing records from Chicago before they were available in West Coast stores. In 1926, just six years after Mamie Smith’s historic recordings on the Okeh label, jazz records were advertised for sale at the Center Pharmacy, located on Seventh and Peralta streets. Here, West Oakland residents could purchase records by the latest female blues singers of the '20s: “Latest Blues,” the pharmacy advertised, “Blues to soothe the aching heart.” The listing of available titles (along with the record’s matrix numbers) included such artists as Bessie Smith, Clara Smith and her Jazz Band, Ethel Waters, Maggie Jones, the Charleston Dixie Washboard Band, Rosa Henderson, and the Harmony Hounds (*Western American* 30 July 1926:3). By 1930 the West Oakland Music Company, at 1506-A Seventh Street near Chester, sold radios, phonographs, records, and “quality merchandise” (Thompson and Williams 1930:17). The Okeh Phonograph Company advertised in local Black newspapers. One such advertisement, for Louis Armstrong’s “St. James Infirmary” and “Save it Pretty Mamma” at a price of 75 cents, pictured a cartoon of a dapper man in black face with a cane next to Okeh’s logo (*Oakland Independent* 15 March 1930:4).

While Seventh Street saw the emergence of a bustling night life in the '20s, it was not viewed favorably by all. The *Western American* featured a column called “Dixie Club Notes” based on activities at the Dixie Club, a hall that could be rented by social groups at 708 Pine Street. Although the column was largely self-serving, one entry does reveal something about West Oakland’s image:

Our state [California] is unique though some people have a dislike for our location of the cabaret it is in a part of the city that some people don’t like . . . if you visit San Francisco after the show, you want to go to Chinatown. If you go to Paris you want to get in the Latin quarters. I just want to show you that West Oakland is not the worst place on the globe. So let us get together and make Oakland a real city by putting the Dixie Club over [*Western American* 17 September 1926:2].

Although the fate of the Dixie Club was not learned, clearly West Oakland’s reputation grew to meet the writer’s expectations. The jazz meccas of the East Coast and Midwest—such as Harlem and Chicago—soon had their counterparts in the West. Central Avenue in Los Angeles, the Barbary Coast and later Filmore Street in San Francisco, and—of course—Seventh Street in Oakland were known centers for jazz entertainment and nightlife.

THE LOUISIANA CONNECTION

According to the U.S. population census, a total of 20,771 Negroes inhabited California in 1910; of this total, 73 percent (or 15,200) had been born in other states, with Texas ranking number one and Louisiana (with 1,004 emigrants living in California) ranking fourth. In that same year, there were 3,055 Negroes listed as living in Oakland (Department of Commerce 1918). By 1930 Louisiana ranked second to Texas with 8,599, or 11 percent, of California African Americans having migrated from that state. There were 5,439 Blacks in Oakland in 1920, and 7,503 in 1930. In both those years, Oakland's African American population was second only to Los Angeles (Department of Commerce 1935).

New Orleans culture and New Orleans music impacted and influenced jazz musicians and the music played in West Oakland. Charlie "Duke" Turner recalled his family's story, which was a typical one: "The family came out to California in 1900 or 1901. They were having it pretty tough in New Orleans and the railroad was moving people out here pretty fast to work as cooks and waiters, so my dad came out here to work for the Southern Pacific" (Stoddard 1982:92). *The Argonaut*, "the slowest train out of Louisiana to the Bay Area," brought the Baranco family to the Bay Area in 1921 from Baton Rouge, recalls Lester Baranco, brother of pianist, composer, and bandleader Wilbert Baranco. Beverly Victor Baranco, their father, came ahead of the family after securing a waiter's job with Southern Pacific. After working for a year, he became eligible for a pass that provided transportation for the family to California (Baranco 1996, pers. comm.).

Louisiana Creole, French, and southern influences could not be missed when walking down Seventh Street and West Oakland in the teens and '20s. Some placenames of businesses and bands had parallels in New Orleans, such as the Dew Drop Inn and the Crescent Orchestra. According to George Fleming, the prominent Cosmos social clubs established in San Francisco and Oakland boasted a number of New Orleans natives as members. West Oakland businesses such as the Creole Cleaners, the Bon Ton Tailoring Company at 1722 Seventh, and the Dixie Club reminded one of Louisiana and the South (*Oakland Times* 29 September 1923). The local Black newspapers ran stories on southern progressions, such as the enrollment and appointments at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. Stories also related southern regressions—of lynchings and the "lily-white" politics that were the status quo. The society column of the African American newspapers often reported visits of southern Black college presidents, concert artists, and other Black professionals to the homes of West Oakland residents. Social clubs regularly used the French word, *dansant* (similar to *soiree*), to refer to their dances. The Phyllis Wheatley Club's advertisement for one of their dances read as follows: "Are we going? I'll say so! To the Christmas Matinee Dansant, December 25, 1920 Jazz Music" (*Oakland Sunshine* 18 December 1920).

New Orleans social clubs, consisting of members from New Orleans, were formed in Oakland. New Orleans native Julia Duplessis, who is now 82 years old, recalls the Uniques, a women's club that began in 1933 with 15 members from New Orleans. Her husband, who is now 85 years old and also a New Orleans native, was a member of the men's club Omega de Porres, which had about 20 members, all from New Orleans (Duplessis 1996, pers. comm.). An advertisement for the first Grand Picnic and Outing of the Idle Hour Social Club, to be held on 10 May 1930, promised music by Wade Whaley's Black and Tan Orchestra; the ad carried the motto, "Remember New Orleans" (*California Voice* 18 April 1930:5).



PLATE 91. SID LePROTTI'S ORCHESTRA AT THE PERSIAN GARDENS, OAKLAND, IN THE 1930S. (Left to right: LeProtti, piano and leader; Marcellus Levy, drums; Bob White, reeds; Sax Sexius, reeds; Londrus Roy, banjo; Danny Webster, trumpet; Roy Keyes, guitar; and Elliott Worth (?), trumpet.) LeProtti continued playing at a wide range of venues during the 1930s, while he was also a union activist. The Persian Gardens, located at Grand and Webster in Oakland, was the third ballroom run by the Sweets brothers; it operated between 1931 and 1936. (Photo courtesy of Gladys LeProtti)

New Orleans Creoles and African Americans continued the celebration of Mardi Gras in Oakland, retaining many of the elements of the event as it was celebrated in New Orleans and along the central Gulf Coast, but with some important changes. The Louisiana Commercial Association-sponsored Carnival—consisting of a Pageant, Queen's Contest, and Grand Ball—was held annually from 1920 to 1929 at the Oakland Auditorium and Paradise Gardens. The association's chairman, Franklin Burrill, was a Louisiana native who served as the head janitor at the Oakland Municipal Auditorium. The announcement of the 1927 Queen's Contest, published in December, stated that the winner would receive a diamond ring (*Western American* 17 December 1926). The 1922 event was advertised as follows:

HAIL! ALL HAIL! REX, King of the Carnival and his court will appear on the shores of Lake Merritt, Municipal Auditorum [sic] Arena 12th and Fallen [sic] Streets, Oakland, California Grand Pageant and Mardi Gras Ball Tuesday, February 28th under the auspices

of Louisiana [sic] Commercial Association orchestra music by King Oliver's and Ory's celebrated Creole Orchestra [*Oakland Sunshine* 25 February 1922].

In New Orleans, Creoles and African Americans would not have been a part of the Rex Parade on Mardi Gras day, which was reserved for Whites. Instead, they would have been a part of the Zulu Parade, which was founded in 1909 as a response to White's typecasting Blacks as uncivilized. In Oakland's Mardi Gras, however, Rex and his court were represented by the native New Orleans African American and Creole committee members of the Louisiana Commercial Association. Beasley, in her *Oakland Tribune* column, described the pageant as follows:

There were 1400 persons who witnessed the Louisiana Commercial Association seventh annual Mardi Gras pageant March 1, Shrove Tuesday evening in Paradise Gardens . . . This is one of the outstanding social events among the colored citizens of California. Many attending from different sections of the state . . . The members of this association are former citizens of that quaint southern city. They have kept the memory of this custom by holding annually a Marda [sic] Gras pageant in Oakland . . . The pageant marched slowly into the main arena of the hall to the soft strains of Clem Raymond's orchestra . . . Upon the pageant reaching the throne, the keys of the city were delivered to King Rex, by Harvey Calhoun, representing the mayor . . . There have been few pageants staged by colored citizens in this city that were as beautiful as the one on this occasion. First, because nearly if not all of the girl participants were children of real Creole efamilies [sic] [Beasley 1927].

In 1929 the Carnival moved back to the Oakland Auditorium with the theme the Pageant of Jewels. "It was beautiful, colorful and artistic, and gracefully executed. The jewels represented were sapphire, emerald, topaz, amethyst, jade and diamonds. Other characters were Spanish dancers, Scotch lassies and varsity drags" (Beasley 1929). This annual event may have ceased after the passing of Franklin Burrill on 9 January 1930 (*Oakland Tribune* 20 January 1930).

Louisiana natives in Oakland, especially those that were Catholic, celebrated St. Joseph's Night by participating in costume competitions. Franklin Burrill also served as chairman of this event; his position as chief janitor, no doubt facilitated his securing the Oakland Auditorium for this celebration as well as for the Mardi Gras. The celebrated Clem Raymond's Jazz Orchestra was to furnish the music in 1927.

Oakland's citizens were treated to outstanding music at these events. Two of the most prominent exemplars of Black New Orleans jazz were selected to headline the Mardi Gras in 1922. King Oliver, cornetist and bandleader and one of the leading exponents of the Black New Orleans style, and his band were playing in San Francisco and Oakland at the time, just prior to the formation of his Creole Jazz Band in June of 1922, which served a long residency at Lincoln Gardens in Chicago (Gushee 1994:935). Kid Ory, trombonist and bandleader, presumably led his Original Creole Jazz Band for this event. Unfortunately no personnel is known for either of the two bands featured on this occasion. Local African American and Creole musicians were exposed to authentic Black New Orleans jazz by visiting musicians who would later become world famous, at a time when the music was still insular within urban Black communities.

THE MUSICIANS

Three categories of musicians played jazz in West Oakland: (1) native musicians—musicians born in Oakland or who spent their formative years playing in West Oakland and the Bay Area; (2) musicians who migrated here from other places; and (3) musicians who were members of famous touring bands and orchestras. While the groups are treated separately below, it will be clear from this brief discussion that the paths of natives, immigrants, and visitors often overlapped and intertwined.

NATIVE MUSICIANS

This study has identified at least seven West Oakland musicians who were native born or arrived in the neighborhood in early childhood. Sidney LeProtti, one of Oakland's earliest jazz musicians, was born 25 November 1886 in the Watts Tract, then considered to be North Oakland. LeProtti was a pianist and bandleader who regularly played at the Barbary Coast in San Francisco and—in the late teens and '20s—played for a number of social-club functions in Oakland, such as the Gingham Apron dance. One review noted that “LaProtte's [sic] orchestra . . . had a tendency to bring the dancers out” (*Western Outlook* 22 April 1922:3). According to Stoddard, LeProtti also was a union activist: “Sid started the Negro local for the boys in Oakland” (1982:50). He was on hand at St. Augustine's Church in November 1926 to play for the Red Cap Porters' Benevolent Association annual banquet, where “while the pleasant things were being enjoyed, there were strains of beautiful music rendered by Prof. Le Protti” (*Western American* 1926:4). In 1915 LeProtti served as president of the Crescent Orchestra, with the following personnel: LeProtti, piano; Charles W. Black, Jack Ross, Attrus Hughes, J.H. Long, C.L. Banks, violins; G.L. Taborn, cello; Clarence Williams, bass; Gerald D. Wells, flute; Adam “Slocum” Mitchell, clarinet; H.B. Moore, George Bryant, cornets; B.F. Spikes, saxophone; and Peter Stanley, drums (*Oakland Sunshine* 27 March 1915:1). The Crescent Orchestra played in Oakland and in San Francisco; it is pictured in an advertisement for a ball and banquet given by the Colored Assembly Club at the Eagles' Hall in San Francisco in honor of Mr. Burt Williams, comedian (*Oakland Sunshine* 20 March 1915:1). From its instrumentation—and the description of the musical fare at the Redcaps' banquet 11 years later—it seems probable that the Crescent Orchestra was a society-type group. It is noteworthy that a Crescent Band and Crescent Orchestra, although with different instrumentation, were active in New Orleans. In the 1920s LeProtti formed “LeProtti's Paramount 10,” a band that played in West Oakland and elsewhere in the East Bay for many occasions, including dances, picnics, and club affairs (*Western American* 1926:3). George Fleming, who played with LeProtti, remembers that “Sidney LeProtti played jazz piano with a New Orleans style, using his left hand as a bass instrument” (1996, pers. comm.).

Another early musician—though 18 years LeProtti's junior—was banjo/guitarist Alfred Levy, born 9 May 1904 at 2426 Market Street in Oakland. He led the Peacock Melody Strutters, a band that was active from 1921 to 1926. His brother Marcells Levy played drums (Stoddard 1982:82).

Henry Starr, a pianist/bandleader and Oakland native, was one of the first Blacks on Bay Area radio. Starr's program, called the “Hot Spot of Radio,” was broadcast on KAKA and KFRC (Atkinson 1993:7). Starr played piano and sang the popular songs of the day, such as “Sweet Little Joe” and “Old Man River” (Stoddard 1982:84). Despite the name of his radio show, Starr did not play piano in a “hot” style. He may have recorded “Maybe Some Day,” a selection for Reb Spikes, on the

Vocalion label. Besides touring Europe for an extended stay, Henry Starr and His Cafe Richards Syncopators played for local social-club functions, such as those of the Meadow Brook Social Club (*Western Outlook* 22 October 1921:2). Starr recorded with Curtis Mosby's Blue Blowers on the Columbia label. He befriended Jack Coakley, a White pianist, bandleader, and composer. According to liner notes on a 1930s record, Coakley remembered "occasions when Henry hosted such stars as King Oliver at his house for late night jam sessions. Starr was host to many traveling black musicians apparently, and Coakley was often asked to come over and meet and sit in with them on piano" (Zwigoff n.d.).

Vernon "Jake" Porter, born in California in 1910, was a cornetist who was raised in Oakland. He played first with the Melvin Parks Band in 1931 and with Wesley Peoples's Band in 1934, followed by stints with Ben Watkins, Clem Raymond, Saunders King, and Lionel Hampton. Porter moved to Los Angeles in 1940, where he was active as a record-company owner, a union official, and a freelancer in film-studio work until his death.

Robert K. Smith, who played clarinet and alto and soprano saxophone, was born in Houma, Louisiana, within 75 miles of New Orleans. His family moved to West Oakland when he was four years old. Smith attended Prescott Elementary, where he began studying music. At Oakland Technical High School, Smith studied harmony and theory. After serving in the 369th Infantry Band, he played in various pre-World War II bands and combos, working in various cities in northern California. After the war, he played as a sideman with Earl Hines's West Coast Big Band and with Eddie Alley among others. According to Smith (1995, pers. comm.), he recorded with Jimmy McCracklin.

Jerome Richardson, born 15 November 1920 in Sealy, Texas, grew up in Oakland. He played alto sax, making his debut in 1934 as a young teenager. Richardson played with local dance bands until 1941 (Kernfeld 1994:1044), when Ben Watkins and Wilbert Baranco helped him launch his professional career.

Perhaps the most-celebrated musician to come from West Oakland is guitarist/singer Saunders King. King was born in 1909 in Staples, Louisiana, and moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1915. Ten years later, they moved to West Oakland. His father, Reverend Judge King, built the Christ Sanctified Holy Church at 1735 Seventh Street, where young Saunders sang, played piano, and later guitar. The church's calendar of activities was a full one, including Sunday school; saints meeting; praise service; and Saturday service. King attended Prescott Elementary School, where he studied piano and voice from a Ms. Forsyte, who provided him with a solid background in musicianship. He sang for school assemblies at Prescott Elementary. King recalled his professional debut in Oakland: "Les Hite gave me my first break; the first solo I sang with the band was 'Stardust' at Sweets's Ballroom [Fourteenth and Franklin]. They didn't think that I could sing that kind of music and I did very well with it" (1995, pers. comm.). In the early 1930s, he met Dr. Cross, who had a morning radio program called "Crosscuts from the Log of the Day." Dr. Cross offered him a job singing tenor with the Southern Harmony Four. King became a staff artist for NBC radio, serving as featured vocalist for the Crosscuts show and also was the "Waterboy" and "Muleskinner" on the program for four years. King's first group, organized in San Francisco, was a modest trio consisting of Vernon Alley, bass; Bob Barfield, tenor sax; and King on guitar and vocals. King and his group played in West Oakland for social-club dances and at nightclubs. They played at the North Pole and Sweets's Ballroom

[Fourteenth and Franklin], where he also was a soloist with the Ben Watkins Band. In 1938 Saunders King moved to San Francisco, because “more blues were in Oakland and in San Francisco they were more into jazz.” While King played jazz and popular tunes, his recording of “S.K. Blues” in 1945 became the first Bay Area blues hit: “‘S.K. Blues’ was a hit before I realized it,” he said, noting that David Rosenbaum at Rhythm Records named the tune after him (1995, pers. comm.).

OTHER BAY AREA MUSICIANS

The two most celebrated jazz orchestras in Oakland were led by Wade Whaley and Clem Raymond, two clarinetists and bandleaders who worked in the late teens, '20s, and '30s in West Oakland. As early as 1926, these two bands were recognized in a short article in *Western American*. It is offered here in its entirety:

A Tribute to Our Orchestra the “Jazz Hounds” Clem Raymond, Manager. The “Oakland Syncopaters” W. Whaley, Manager. These two young men have for sometime afforded



PLATE 92. SAUNDERS KING'S BAND, BACKSTAGE IN THE LATE 1940s AT THE SAVOY SUPPERCLUB, SAN FRANCISCO. (Left to right: Eddie Alley, drums; Eddie Taylor, tenor sax; Eddie Walker, trumpet; Saunders King, guitar; Bob Barfield, tenor sax; John Cooper, piano; and Douglas Kinnard, bass.) Probably the best-known musician to come from West Oakland, King's first musical venue was the church his father built at 1735 Seventh Street; as a teenager, he sang and played piano, and later guitar, for the church services. King's groups played at Slim Jenkins's, the North Pole, and Sweet's Ballroom at Fourteenth and Franklin in Oakland before 1938, when he moved to San Francisco. (Photo courtesy of Eddie Alley)

Oakland with the best to be received in the line of syncopation. Continually they are being recognized by all cities along the Pacific Coast, and especially the inhabitants of the Bay district, as being possessed of every quality necessary to produce a well balanced Orchestra. The Western American greets you [*Western American* 28 May 1927:7].

Wade Whaley was born in 1895 in New Orleans. After playing with New Orleans bands and leading his own band for a brief period, he joined Jelly Roll Morton in Los Angeles around 1917. Whaley's first job in West Oakland was at the Creole Cafe in 1920. His Black and Tan Jazz Hounds achieved much success in the late 1920s (Chilton 1978:349), playing regularly on Thursday nights at the Savoy Hall at Thirty-sixth and San Pablo (*California Voice* 18 April 1930:5) and at the Elk's Lodge at 1219 Eighth Street (*California Voice* 4 July 1930:5). In addition to Oakland, Whaley played in San Francisco for the 1930s Elks' dance, being billed as "the Famous Wade Whaley and His Syncopators" (*San Francisco Independent* 17 May 1930:1). Whaley left full-time music for awhile, working in San Jose in 1934, but later returned to music and participated in several recording sessions. Clem Raymond came to California around 1918 with the Tennessee Ten and worked in the Bay Area, including West Oakland, for most of his career. Clem Raymond and His Jazz Hounds played regularly at the Golden West Hall at Forty-sixth and Telegraph (*Western American* 4 March 1927:2). As Beasley's description of Raymond's performance at the 1927 Mardi Gras suggests, he and his Jazz Hounds could produce a stately sound.

Elmer Keeton was an organist, composer, and music teacher. He operated a studio of music and served as musical director of West Oakland's Lincoln Theater, presenting plays he wrote that spotlighted local talent (*Oakland Independent* 14 December 1929:5). He also organized a group, called the Keeton's Brown Favorites, that may have played jazz. The group consisted of an orchestra backed by the Treble Clef Quartet, a group of women singers. They appeared on KFWM radio in "Keeton's Brown Variety Hour" in 1930 (*Oakland Independent* 15 March 1930:1).

Many other local musicians were active in West Oakland, some of whom went on to national recognition playing with well-known bands. Drummer Earl (Thomas, Jr.) Watkins, born in San Francisco on 29 January 1920, led his own band at the Bandbox in Redwood City and recorded with Wilbert Baranco. He played casuals with a number of local groups, including Don Anderson at the North Pole Club, Jimmy Simpson, and Aaron "T-Bone" Walker. Watkins worked as a sideman with groups such as Flip Phillips, Muggsy Spanier, Vernon Alley, Wilbert Baranco, and Bob Scobey. He was a member of the Earl Hines's group and recorded "A Monday Date" (Kernfeld 1994:1268; see Discography).

Wilbert Baranco—Louisiana-born pianist, leader, singer, and arranger—worked with Curtis Mosby and recorded with singer Ernie Andrews, Charles Mingus, and Dinah Washington. He also was a member of Lucky Thompson's All Stars. Baranco was a pianist and arranger for Curtis Mosby's Dixieland Blue Blowers, and also worked at NBC as arranger for Meredith Wilson, Lionel Hampton, and Les Hite. Baranco recorded with a number of well-known musicians, including Dizzy Gillespie. He also made records of his own, including "Everytime I Think of You"/"Baranco's Boogie" in 1946 on the Black & White label (Kernfeld 1994:67; see Discography). Baranco played in Oakland after World War II despite the pressures from Al Morris and the Local 6 union. Baranco also led and arranged music for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Music Project in San Francisco during the Depression and taught at San Francisco City College and Sherman Day.

Eddie Alley—drummer, singer, and bandleader—was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He moved to San Francisco about 1920 and played a few casuals in West Oakland. Prior to becoming leader of Eddie Alley's Gentlemen of Rhythm, he played with various local groups, including Allen's Hot Chocolates and bands led by Wesley Peoples, Wade Whaley, Saunders King, and Eddie Liggins. In the early '40s, Alley formed his own group—usually a quintet, but occasionally a 10-piece group—playing for political events, at hotels, and for social affairs. His band, according to Alley (1995, pers. comm.), was the first Black band to play in large hotels in San Francisco, such as the Mark Hopkins and the Fairmont. Alley never recorded. His brother Vernon (Creede) Alley was a bassist affectionately known as “Mr. Music.” Vernon Alley played with Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, and Saunders King, among others, and also hosted radio and television programs. He can be heard with Lionel Hampton on Attitude Victor (Kernfeld 1994:16; see Discography).

Curtis Mosby, drummer and bandleader, was born in Kansas City. In 1921 he ran a music store in Oakland. Some time in the late '20s, Mosby formed his band, Curtis Mosby and His Dixieland Blue Blowers; local musicians playing and recording with him included Wilbert Baranco, Henry Starr, and Country Allen (see Discography). Mosby later moved to Los Angeles, where he operated nightclubs such as the Oasis in the '30s and '40s. His Oakland music store is listed as Mosby and Catley at 1721 Seventh Street in the 1921 city directory; in 1922 it was listed as Mosby and Company, with Curtis Mosby, Sr., listed as manager, and in 1923 as Mosby's Melodie Shop at 1654 Seventh Street, with Curtis, Jr., as manager. In 1924 Mosby is listed as a musician and as selling phonographs; the last listing is in the 1925 directory, under Phonographs, with Curtis B. Mosby, Jr., as manager (*Western American* 15 April 1927:4). A George Mosby also advertised the formation of a band for hire for social occasions during the same period (*Western American* 13 August 1926:7)

Pianist Eddie Liggins started playing when young and became very accomplished, being able to read anything (Stoddard 1982:94). It was Liggins's Knights of Syncopation Orchestra that played for the first Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters' ball in 1926. Winnow Allen and his band, the Hot Chocolates, were active in the late '20s and early '30s; the group consisted of Winnow Allen on trumpet, Country Allen on trombone, and Buster Wysinger on drums. Newspapers also note that Henry Allen—possibly Winnow Allen's formal name—led the Snappy Cotton Club Band, which played regularly Sunday nights at Magnolia Hall on West Seventh and Magnolia streets as well as for a dance at the Oakland Auditorium ballroom; they also could be heard on radio station KFI in Los Angeles (*Western American* 2 October 1928).

Ben Watkins, trumpet player and bandleader, was active in the '30s playing social dances in West Oakland. Watkins played trombone in the Fresno High School Band and played his first professional engagement in 1921 with the Percy Bost's orchestra in Fresno. He received trumpet lessons from Sax Sexias in 1925 after organizing his band in Fresno. Watkins came to Oakland in 1929 and organized a band that played for many social occasions around the Bay Area for over a decade, featuring well-known sidemen such as Sax Sexias, saxophone, and George Fleming, trumpet player. Sexias had received his musical training in Fresno and played with Wade Whaley until he organized his own band in 1927. In the spring of 1939 he joined Ben Watkins's band. Pianist Wesley Peoples led a band and played for a number of social occasions until he died in 1939 of tuberculosis. His group was the nucleus for the Saunders King band formed later. Jimmy (“K.O.”) Simpson, pianist, played for social clubs in the 1920s. Simpson was the Oakland business agent for the Black subsidiary musicians union; appropriate to that task, he was also a quasi-prizefighter and ran a gym at



PLATE 93. AN EVENING AT SLIM JENKINS’S NIGHTCLUB AT 1748 SEVENTH STREET IN WEST OAKLAND, ca. 1952. (Left to right: Dr. Robert Joyner; Gladys LeProtti; Mazell Anderson; Sidney Emil LeProtti, son of West Oakland pianist and bandleader Sidney LeProtti; Mrs. Joyner; Dr. William Anderson; Betty, last name not known; and E.F. Joseph, well-known photographer. Slim Jenkins’s place—known as Jenkins’s Corner or Slim Jenkins’s Supperclub—was the most celebrated nightclub in West Oakland. It was opened in 1933, one day after Prohibition ended, and operated into the 1960s. (Photo courtesy of Gladys LeProtti)

Fifth and Union streets. In 1927 Simpson played for the “Hard Time Dance”—at which attendees were encouraged to “dress hard”—sponsored by the United Spanish War Veterans at the Busch-Orviss Hall (*Western American* 18 March 1927:4). Pianist Duo Don Anderson and “Cookie,” a singer, were regulars at the North Pole in the late ’30s and early ’40s. Red Cayou, a pianist from New Orleans, was very active. Ernie Lewis, pianist, used to promote jam sessions at the Clef Club in West Oakland, which was owned by Wesley Smith. The Peter Rabbit Trio played at the Clef Club for years. Bob Hill and His Jazz Hounds, which featured Wade Whaley on the clarinet, was probably an ad-hoc or pick-up group; they played for the Red Cross at Fourteenth and Washington in the late ’20s (*Western American* 6 May 1927:2). George Fleming, New Orleans trumpet player born in 1913, migrated to Berkeley in 1938 and joined Ben Watkins’s band the same year. He also played with a number of other local musicians and bands, including Eddie Alley and Sidney LeProtti. Fleming never recorded. In 1942 he went to work for Caterpillar Tractor Company but continued playing casuals around the Bay Area. Isaacs “Ike” Bell, trumpeter and trombonist born in 1910 in Fayette, Missouri,

came to the Bay Area in the early '40s. After playing in the Navy Band and also with Lionel Hampton in Los Angeles, he continued working locally with several bands, including those of Ben Watkins and Saunders King. Bell never recorded.

Local African American musicians in the Bay Area—whether native born or more recent arrivals—were like a large family. San Francisco-born Earl Watkins, drummer for Earl Hines and a union activist, commented:

Everyone knew everybody—musicians were a family. Band leaders would compete by bidding for jobs and selling their bands. Musicians would show you things—”Here’s a beat,” etc. We also knew the Los Angeles musicians by reputation [1995, pers. comm.].

Oakland alto-saxophone player Robert K. Smith agreed, recalling that “Black bandleaders would take younger musicians into their bands to teach them the ropes and train them” (1995, pers. comm).

VISITING BANDS AND MUSICIANS

In addition to New Orleans-based musicians, such as Wade Whaley, settling in the Bay Area, several renowned New Orleans jazz musicians and bandleaders toured California and played in West Oakland in the teens and early '20s. Jazz critic Phil Elwood describes the attraction of Oakland to traveling jazz musicians in the 1920s:

The Bay Area’s small Negro community was primarily in Oakland, the western railhead for the transcontinental passenger and freight lines. It was in Oakland that the Kid Ory Band from New Orleans (via Los Angeles) played in the early 1920s and it was in Oakland that black railroad employees brought 1920s jazz and blues recordings back from Chicago [1994:6].

Among the earliest well-known musicians to play West Oakland was New Orleans-born Jelly Roll Morton—composer, pianist, and self-proclaimed inventor of jazz—who came to Los Angeles in 1917 and stayed five years. During this time he traveled to the Bay Area, playing at a club on Columbus Avenue in San Francisco and at the Creole Cafe at 1740 Seventh Street in West Oakland. Kid Ory, trombonist and multi-instrumentalist, formed a band on the West Coast in November 1919 and played residences in Oakland. Although his band had a six-month residency at San Francisco’s Pergola Ballroom, King Oliver and his group played in Oakland in 1921 (Jones and Chilton 1971:66). In 1922 both Oliver’s and Ory’s groups headlined Oakland’s lavish Mardi Gras event (see above). The New Orleans Louisiana High Brown Orchestra played at the Bluebird Cabaret at 708 Pine Street managed by Leroy Williams; the cabaret featured a midnight review of the “five best colored singers and dancers” (*Western American* 27 August 1927:3).

In the late 1930s and '40s, when jazz music began taking over the country and Oakland’s youthful population had skyrocketed due to the war effort, the roster of visiting jazz musicians included most of the major artists in the country. Many played only one or two shows downtown, but West Oakland continued to host exceptional bands.

MUSICAL VENUES IN WEST OAKLAND AND OAKLAND

The history of jazz and its venues in West Oakland is not well documented. The contexts for the music in Oakland were diverse, including the Oakland Auditorium, four Sweets's ballrooms, nightclubs, cabarets, bars, speakeasies, theaters, and dancehalls. Over time, venues appeared or closed down, and the amount of work available for musicians was constantly changing. There was never enough work to employ most musicians full time, and many worked during the day at other jobs and played music at night or on the weekend. Ad hoc groups were formed and there were many musicians who would organize a group for a one-night engagement. According to Johnny Otis, who was a drummer for blues-and-boogie pianist Count Otis Matthews's West Oakland Houserockers, house-rent parties were places to play:

Too young to play in clubs, they [the West Oakland Houserockers] performed for little or no money at a gym in West Oakland and at house-rent parties at which people would charge their friends and neighbors admission in exchange for food and entertainment [Hildebrand 1995:9].

There were jam sessions held at the Elks Lodge, where Local 648 met, and at an amusement park in West Oakland. Many of the venues provided extended residencies for musicians, while others featured artists for only one night. Most of the musicians interviewed informed the author that, in general, Oakland booked jazz artists for "one nighters," while San Francisco booked artists for periods of a few nights to more extended stays.

THE BIG VENUES

West Oakland did not have a venue that could accommodate the thousands who were eager to dance to the music of famous traveling jazz bands. One had to go "Uptown," to the Oakland Auditorium, which opened on 15 April 1915. A massive building in the Beaux Arts civic architectural style, the arena and theater could accommodate up to 13,000 people. The auditorium was the scene of a number of events featuring the best of touring jazz bands and, until the 1960s, was Oakland's principal auditorium open to Blacks and mixed audiences. Among the large-scale events to take place that first year was a charity entertainment and dance for the United West Indians, advertised for Thursday, 18 November 1915. Although no specific band is mentioned, military music was to be played for a grand march of 1,000 couples (*Western Outlook* 6 November 1915:2). The manager of the Oakland Auditorium shared the following reservations about renting the hall to Negroes:

He [the Manager] did not know whether the Auditorium would be let for a colored dance, as he very well knew that colored people liked to shoot and cut one another at their dances and that the dancers often carried bottles of whisky and beer with them, and thus by keeping a continual war they might disgrace the building [*Oakland Sunshine* 14 August 1915:n.p.].

Beginning in the 1920s, there was a virtually continuous stream of jazz bands playing at the Oakland Auditorium.

Dr. Herb Wong—Oakland native, jazz producer, and critic—vividly remembers attending jazz shows as a kid at the Oakland Auditorium in the 1940s:

The Oakland Auditorium was a major venue for Blacks. My brother and I went to the Oakland Auditorium in the early '40s. The band was Louis Jordan and his Typanny Five and we were into him. The doorman asked: Do you know what you're getting into here? I replied: "It's a Low Down Dirty Shame," "I'm Going to Move to the Outskirts of Town." I went on and on and he said all right, all right, all right, and we went in, and it was 100 percent Black and everybody was jitterbugging and I said, this is hip. The whole auditorium floor was open to dancing. This was a jitterbug contest. They would have a lot of couples dancing their steps, some people who would tag them and put a number on their backs and then weed them out, and that's how they did it. What was exciting for us was that we saw the band with zoot-suit clothing. Louis and his band had chartreuse sport jackets with great big shoulder pads, orange pants, purple shirts, and multicolored ties that went all the way down to the floor. Not only was the music colorful, but look at the band! [1995, pers. comm.].

Oakland became one of the greatest dance towns in the country. Drummer Earl Watkins remembers the Oakland Auditorium well:

Practically anybody could draw seven to ten thousand people at the auditorium. Lionel Hampton would come here and would draw more than seven thousand people for the Fourth of July. He usually made two appearances. I remember one of the greatest dances that I attended in Oakland was of Cab Calloway at Oakland Auditorium. There were so many people, more than ten thousand, until the Fire Marshals had to close the dance. Since Oakland was one of the greatest dance towns in the country, and if a band did a picture in Hollywood, they'd come right up the coast. During the war, bands came doing USO shows and would play dances up and down the coast. Everybody was looking for entertainment. Entertainment was something to take the tension off. Since one had to get rations, and you couldn't buy clothes, shoes, cars, there was surplus money and the price of admission to a dance didn't mean a thing when the bands came to town. I got into the music business by winning a jitterbug contest in 1940. I took the money and bought a set of drums—and was never caught on the dance floor since [1995, pers. comm.].

Well-known local bands, such as Wade Whaley's and Clem Raymond's, also played the Oakland Auditorium. The Sphinx Club advertised "Wade Whaley's a la Jazz" for its Autumn Ball held at the auditorium (*Oakland Times* 29 September 1923:3). Clem Raymond's Orchestra played for the Berkeley-based Sunset Athletic Club's first social dance and for the Pride of the West Third Annual Dansant at the Oakland Auditorium (*Western American* 25 June 1926:6, 17 December 1926). Eddie Liggins's Syncopators played for the Phyllis Wheatley Club's annual Christmas Dance at the Oakland Auditorium (*Western American* 17 December 1926).

Dancers could jitterbug, do the black bottom, and swing "West Coast style" at Sweets's Ballroom, a principal venue in "Uptown" Oakland. The Sweets brothers, William and Eugene, were the principal White promoters of ballroom dancing in Oakland. Four Sweets's ballrooms were opened

over the course of 45 years. The second ballroom, operating from 1924 through 1931, featured the following artists: “Benny Goodman, Fletcher Henderson, Lionel Hampton, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Gene Krupa, Harry James, Les Brown, Jimmy Dorsey and a host of others” (Harmon 1995:9). The fourth ballroom at 1414 Franklin Street, operating from 1937 through 1965, remained one of the area’s main dancehalls for traveling swing bands.

With few exceptions, Sundays were reserved for Whites and Mondays for Blacks at Sweets (Fourteenth and Franklin). This unwritten policy, reported by musicians interviewed for this study, is supported by newspaper advertisements for dances. “Count Basie would play for Whites on Sunday. If you were Black, showed up, and old man Sweets knew you, he might let you in, but would warn you to stay up in the balcony,” recalls Earl Watkins (1995, pers. comm.).

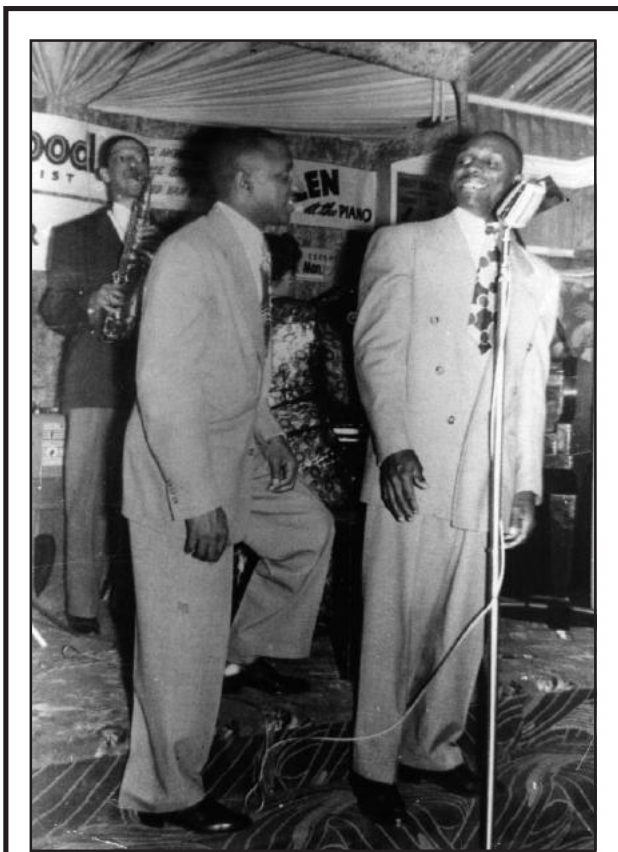


PLATE 94. HOMER “CHUCK” WALKER, VOCALIST WITH A BAND AT SLIM JENKINS’S NIGHTCLUB, ca. 1952. (Left to right: Tommy Thompson, saxophone; Freddie McWilliam and Chuck Walker at microphone.) McWilliam served as Master of Ceremonies, while Walker sang on occasion. He also played drums in Slim Slaughter’s Quartet. (Photo courtesy of Homer “Chuck” Walker)

Oakland’s principal Black promoter, Johnny A. Burton (later spelled “Bur-ton”), presented a number of shows at Sweets on Franklin Street. He got his reputation for promoting dances during World War II, when the African American population exploded in the Bay Area. Bur-ton produced many shows independently and was also a front man for others, as Earl Watkins recalls: “The Musician’s Union rule was that you couldn’t promote your own dance. People would use Bur-ton as a front man, give him cash. Bur-ton would in turn put out all the publicity and rent the hall. He became pretty well-off doing that. The booking agent would get in touch with Bur-ton and work a deal with him” (1995, pers. comm.). Former Redcap porter Bill Hinds, who used to shoot pool with Bur-ton, remembers him as “the main organizer of the music, . . . he was a character and I knew him very well. He lived in Oakland and he used to walk around with five, six, or seven thousand dollars in his pocket and everybody in town knew it. And he was lucky. As far as I know, he never got mugged” (1995, pers. comm.).

A list of the shows Bur-ton produced at Sweets’s on Franklin can be extrapolated from advertisements in African American newspapers; all but one of the dates fall on Mondays, and no Sunday shows are advertised. The exception is Les Hite and His

Orchestra, who played on Tuesday, 13 September 1938 (*California Voice* 2 September 1938:5). A few weeks later, on Monday, 17 October 1938, Burton produced a powerhouse band led by Saunders King and the Aristocrats of Swing, with the following personnel: Wesley Peoples, piano; Jake Porter, trumpet; Vernon Alley, bass; Bob Barfield, tenor sax; Norvil Maxey, drums; George Nealy, tenor sax; Charlie Jacobs, trumpet; Melvin Parks, alto sax; Ike Bell, trumpet; and Jerome Richardson, alto sax (*California Voice* 14 October 1938:5). Ella Fitzgerald and her 14-piece orchestra were featured on Monday, 11 August 1941 (*California Voice* 1 August 1941:5); and Earl Hines and His Orchestra appeared on Labor Day—Monday, 1 September 1941 (*California Voice* 22 August 1941:5).

Oakland at one time had an abundance of theaters. African Americans may not have been able to attend some of the uptown theaters, such as the Paramount, but Dr. Herb Wong recalls seeing the Count Basie Orchestra at the Orpheum, with Black patrons in attendance:

It was the 1937 Count Basie Orchestra, the one with Lester Young, Jimmy Rushing, Buck Clayton, and all those cats. I'm sitting there, I was 11 years old. I went out of my gourd. The first time I saw Jimmy Rushing, he had a dance thing—he'd always go like this in front of his crotch and I didn't understand the sexual implication of the blues that he was singing. I just knew that I was into the spirit and feeling of it. I knew that it swung. The blues by way of Kansas City was in Oakland in 1937. That was my inoculation [1995, pers. comm.]

WEST OAKLAND VENUES

The smaller venues provided more intimacy and gave West Oakland its character. A number of cafes sprang up along Seventh Street but one of the most significant for New Orleans style jazz music was Sid Deering's Creole Cafe, at 1740 Seventh Street. This Black and Tan club had a short existence from circa 1918 to 1921; there is no telephone or business listing for the Creole Cafe in 1922 or afterward. The club featured "jazz band, jazz orchestra and jazz entertainers as well as dancing from 3:00pm to 1:00am" (Ye Liberty Play House 1920). Musician Reb Spikes recalled that King Oliver "played for Lucius Lomax up there in Oakland at the Creole Cafe," while Charlie "Duke" Turner remembered trombonist Kid Ory playing at the Creole Cafe (Stoddard 1982:78, 91). Wade Whaley, clarinetist from New Orleans, got his first job at the Creole Cafe. "Slummers" from both sides of the Bay frequented the Creole Cafe, which sold ginger ale for 40 cents a small glass and provided a place for White and Black patrons to dine and watch the entertainment (*Oakland Tribune* 5 October 1920). The club also sponsored dances at halls that could accommodate larger crowds than the cafe. While the band name is not given, the music for the Creole Cafe's New Year's Eve all-night ball at Foresters Hall was advertised as "Jazz! Jazz! Oh Boy!" (*Oakland Sunshine* 18 December 1920). Although it was advertised as "strictly high class," the Creole Cafe was one of three cabarets in West Oakland said to be associated with prostitution (*Oakland Enquirer* 20 December 1920; *Oakland Tribune* 22 April 1920, 29 May 1920; see Solari, this volume). Whether the Creole Cafe closed because of alleged prostitution activities, the challenges of Prohibition, or other factors, was not learned. Hildebrand (1979) cites an article in the *California Voice* that blamed the demise of the Creole Cafe and other Black businesses on a lack of Black patronage.

The Bluebird Cabaret located at 708 Pine opened in 1927 to more than 300 guests. From the newspaper's description of opening night, it is clear that the club was another Black and Tan. The Louisiana High Browns furnished the dance music while an array of entertainers pleased the mixed audience:

Mrs. Mary Richards-Farmer featured among the entertainers [*sic*], especially with her dancing act. Miss Thelma Porter was also pleasing, as well as Miss Alberta Jones, the blues singer. Mr. Prince brought much applause with his soft [*sic*] shoe dancing, while Mr. Roach excelled on the "vest pocket" piano. It looked as tho' the entire group of City Hall politicians were present, as there was as many white parties present as there was of our own race [*Western American* 2 July 1927:8].

Despite its auspicious opening, the Bluebird Cabaret closed down the following year.

The Athens Elks Lodge #70 (Elks Club), at 1217 Eighth Street in West Oakland, was an important spot for jazz lovers in West Oakland. Upstairs was the social hall, where special affairs were hosted, and downstairs were the bar and nightclub. Commonly known as the Elks Lodge, it was built in 1927 and operated until 1959. A get-acquainted dance for the club featured a host of entertainers and the advertisement showed that West Oakland drew African Americans from surrounding cities and communities in the Bay Area.

Come and meet some of our local talent and renew acquaintance with Ivy Anderson, Lawrence (Flying) Ford, Angeles babe, Ernestine Porter, Strut Marshall, Dorothy Yoles, and a bevy of brownskin dancing beauties. Also meet friends from Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, San Mateo, San Jose and other points around the Bay (— 2 June 1927).

Dances with dinner and music by the Athens Home Orchestra, apparently the Elks' resident band, were featured (*Western American* 1927). Some of the musicians performing there included Clem Raymond's Syncopators; Wade Whaley (*California Voice* 29 February 1929); and the Sexias and Hawaiian Radio Artists, 1929 to 1930 (*California Voice* 30 May 1930:3). Parties were given for traveling celebrity jazz musicians. Earl Watkins recalls that when both Billie Holiday and Jimmy Lunceford were in town in 1942, a party was given for them at the Elks Club; among that night's activities was a jam session, with local musicians participating. The Elks Lodge had political meaning to local musicians as well, as it served as the meeting hall for the Black Local 648 of the musicians' union.

West Oakland's landmark establishment for jazz and blues, beginning in the early 1930s, was Jenkins's Corner, later known as Slim Jenkins's. Harold "Slim" Jenkins, an African American from Monroe, Louisiana, came to Oakland following a stint in the service during World War I. After working as a waiter and saving his money, he opened the cafe in 1933—one day after Prohibition ended—at 1748 Seventh Street. Over the years, Slim Jenkins's place became the most celebrated club around, featuring well-known traveling jazz and blues bands and harlemesque reviews. During the 1930s, it was also a major source of employment for the local musicians: "All the musicians worked there at one time or another," Eddie Alley stated, remembering it as "a first-class club in those days" (1995, pers. comm.). Guitarist Ed Young recalls playing at Slim Jenkins's, where he led his own band with Eddie Alley on drums and Vernon Alley on bass; they played mostly blues, depending on the

audience (Young 1995, pers. comm.). Saunders King and Blues pianist Count Otis Matthews were also among the locals who played at Jenkins's.

Slim Jenkins offered a good deal more than music. The 1942-1943 California Negro business directory featured the following advertisement: "Jenkins' Corner, brightest nite spot in Northern California, Liquor store, restaurants, cocktail lounge" (New Age Publishing Company 1942-1943). In *We Also Serve*, a booklet published for Black military personnel in 1945, the club is advertised as "Slim Jenkins', bar, coffee shop, better entertainment, good food, best drinks, featuring: baked ham, fried chicken, steaks." According to Eddie Alley, "Slim was one of the best businessmen around in those days. He did better than anybody else" (1995, pers. comm.).

After becoming established, Jenkins began to book name entertainers, such as the Ink Spots, Dinah Washington, Earl "Fatha" Hines, and Lou Rawls, among many others. Jenkins' Corner was a first-class club that afforded Whites a taste of Black social life. When William J. Denahy—whose Irish father ran the Snug Harbor Bar at Seventh and Adeline—was asked if Whites frequented Slim Jenkins's place in the '40s, he responded:

Oh, yes. That was the Harlem of Oakland. You went down there when you were slumming. You took the society girl. They generally had some type of Negro musician. That was kind of the big thing. In New York you went out to Harlem [Denahy 1981:24].

Slim Jenkins's club remained a West Oakland landmark until 1962, while Jenkins himself was known as the unofficial "Mayor of West Oakland" because of his many civic activities in the neighborhood. Dewey Bargiacchi, whose Italian family owned and operated another popular West Oakland night spot, the North Pole, recalled: "He ran a real good place. A real fine place. A real gentleman" (Bargiacchi 1981). Today, on the north side of Seventh Street between Willow and Campbell, West Oakland's new senior housing project is named for Slim Jenkins, which should bring back vivid memories to some of its residents.

A few doors down from Jenkins's Corner, at 1720 Seventh, John Singer began operating his nightclub and restaurant in 1942. Singer later gained a reputation for booking first-rate traveling jazz performers. Other West Oakland nightspots were geared more to the local community. One regular neighborhood venue for musicians was Webb's Hall on Eighth Street, which Charlie "Duke" Turner described:

We played Sunday night dances there and any other dances they might have. We usually played a Saturday night dance somewhere else. Webb's Hall was a big barn of a place and they used it for a roller-skating rink too. Sometimes they had skating and dancing at the same time [in Stoddard 1982:93].

The Lincoln Theater at Seventh and Peralta streets, owned by the Golden State Theater and Realty Company, opened in April 1920. It became a well-known venue for vaudeville, movies, other types of family amusement, and—beginning at some point over the next decade—jazz. Most advertisements for the theater appeared in Black newspapers, and it is likely that the clientele was primarily African American. When Mr. J.H. Hart was appointed manager of the theater, he pledged "to secure the best attractions obtainable for the amusement and entertainment of his patrons" (*Western Ameri-*

can6 May 1927:2). As enticement to remain loyal, drawings were held on at least two occasions, with silk pillows and Blackfoot Indian shawls as prizes (*Western American* 25 March 1927, 15 April 1927). The Lincoln showed movies after they were screened at the larger uptown theaters, and also brought in special showings of Black films. Oakland musician Elmer Keeton served as musical director for the Lincoln Theatre in 1930, and performances by Keeton's Brown Favorites were among the musical fare offered. By the early 1940s well-known artists also performed at the theater. Earl Watkins recalls that Billie Holiday did an engagement at the Lincoln early in 1942: "I was working at the North Pole with Don Anderson, Portland, Oregon, pianist, and he was hired to play for Ms. Holiday. I saw all of Ms. Holiday's performances" (Watkins 1995, pers. comm.).

THE MUSIC

What did the local musicians sound like? Unfortunately, because of the lack of recordings, scores, or arrangements, the answer is left open to conjecture. New Orleans jazz was surely a part of the local jazz scene, given the number of New Orleans people who migrated to West Oakland, both before and after World War I. Oakland native Alfred Levy, who led the Peacock Melody Strutters in the early 1920s, readily acknowledged that influence: "We tried to copy all them pieces off the records: all them old pieces I call Dixieland pieces, like 'Darktown Strutters Ball,' 'St. Louis Blues,' 'Tin Roof Blues,' and 'Margie.' We got some of the stuff from the old-timers around here who played the Dixieland beat" (Stoddard 1982:83). These old timers would have certainly been African American musicians. It is also likely that Levy and other Black musicians in West Oakland were listening to the recordings of Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong, and King Oliver, as well as the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, a group of all-White musicians who played New Orleans Black music with minimal musical success but great popularity. Because Oakland was a Pullman porter's town and their taste was cosmopolitan, it likely that New Orleans style jazz was played even before those recordings were commercially available here.

The visiting traveling musicians, the recordings, and the stock arrangements all provided models for local and other Bay Area musicians and influenced the jazz played in West Oakland. King Oliver's and Kid Ory's personal appearances in Oakland would have had a profound impact on the local musicians. Louis Armstrong's Hot Fives made 26 recordings from 1925 through 1927, all of which were in the New Orleans style; some or all of these records would have been available locally. Drummer Eddie Alley remembers that Winnow Allen's Hot Chocolates "swung like Louis Armstrong—they took solos and improvised." Alley recalled that Allen's Hot Chocolates also played swing music of titles such as "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Honeysuckle Rose." "We made up a lot of blues, blues you can improvise on" (Alley 1995, pers. comm.). Clem Raymond, from Louisiana, was one of the most popular bandleaders in the '20s. "Raymond played out of a 1919-1920 New Orleans style," remembered George Fleming, a New Orleans trumpet player who was familiar with Raymond's work in the late 1930s; "He had a unique style, and his ideas were New Orleans based" (1996, pers. comm.). The early repertoire most likely consisted of a number of popular and ragtime tunes that were played with jazz phrasings and a jazz feeling.

Later, in the 1940s, Jimmy Lunceford toured Oakland, and Alley saw him at the Oakland Auditorium. Shortly afterwards, Alley formed his own band. "We played more Jimmy Lunceford and all the popular tunes. This area moved with the trend. Playing in hotels, one must play what people

want to hear” (1995, pers. comm.). Saunders King and tenor saxophonist Robert Barfield both made arrangements for the Saunders King band and were influenced by John Kirby’s band, King recalls being influenced by the new styles in the 1940s: “I was playing a style of music which was like John Kirby. I saw Kirby in San Francisco. I saw him at an after hour spot. Kirby came in and I met him. I listened to Kirby, and Charlie Christian—that’s the way I got the style. The style we played was built on Baltimore-born John Kirby” (King 1995, pers. comm.). Kirby, a bass player and bandleader, formed his band in 1937, and from 1938 to 1942, his sextet was probably the most popular small jazz ensemble playing in the swing style (Kernfeld 1994:653).

From this brief review, it appears that West Oakland and other Bay Area jazz musicians in the 1930s and ’40s—influenced by records and by visiting musicians and their bands—played in a variety of styles, including New Orleans, swing, and no doubt in the style of Kansas City musicians. Alto-sax player Robert K. Smith, who was active from the mid-1930s, sums it up this way: “With each musician introduced into the area, with each musical score or recording, with each radio or personal appearance, the music in West Oakland was transformed, refined” (1995, pers. comm.). Although Smith and other musicians interviewed emphasize the continually changing nature of the West Oakland music scene, some generalizations can be made. Minstrelsy—consisting of a variety of



PLATE 95. SIMS AND KELLER, SONG-AND-DANCE STYLISTS, PUBLICITY PHOTO FOR SLIM JENKINS, ca. 1956. Once his nightclub became established, Slim Jenkins booked major artists and groups, such as the Ink Spots and Dinah Washington. The nightclub also remained an important venue for lesser-known bands and specialty acts such as this one. (Photo courtesy of Homer “Chuck” Walker)

upbeat, popular styles—was played from 1900 to the mid-teens; early jazz, probably New Orleans style as represented by King Oliver’s band, was played from 1918 to 1930; and the swing style may have dominated from 1930 to 1945. Bebop—a major movement in the East and in southern California beginning in the early ’40s—seems to have had little appeal to West Oakland musicians. Bay Area music can also be categorized geographically: Musicians interviewed recall that—by the 1940s—San Francisco was strictly a jazz town and Richmond was strictly a blues town, while Oakland was known for both jazz and blues.

THE CHANGING SCENE AND THE URBAN BLUES

West Oakland changed abruptly in the 1940s, impacted from the arrival of thousands of African Americans who came from the South to work in war-related industries. While the population of West Oakland was 16.2 percent Black in 1940, by 1950 61.5 percent of West Oakland’s residents were Black (Johnson 1993:95). Most local African Americans considered the new immigrants “invaders,” but the war-workers’ paychecks and penchant for recreation fostered a temporary boom in the entertainment business and other enterprises along Seventh Street. When the wartime boom ended, many of the workers found themselves unemployed and far from home. The crowding of the neighborhood had been an accepted wartime necessity; it became an economic necessity after the war as many of the unemployed found they had nowhere else to go. Under these conditions, violence and crime increased. Blue-collar immigrants who had settled West Oakland and had lived there for decades began to move out, as did the middle-class African Americans who had become affluent through railroad work or local business ventures. West Oakland was, for the first time, becoming a Black ghetto. When the ready money that had sustained so many successful Black businesses left West Oakland, most nightclubs closed their doors or reverted to neighborhood bars.

Changes were occurring musically as well. The end of World War II is customarily used to date the decline of the big jazz bands, such as those that had played to audiences of 7,000 or more at the Oakland Auditorium. West Oakland would remain a center for music after the war, but styles were changing.

Oakland had always been a blues town. When California Rhythm and Blues began to flower from the guitars and voices of Lowell Fulson, Aaron “T-Bone” Walker, and Saunders King, Oakland was receptive. The piano styles and voices of Ivory Joe Hunter’s “Seventh Street Boogie” and Charles Brown’s “Driftin’ Blues” became the urban blues of California cities. While Los Angeles was the acknowledged center of this innovation, Oakland also played a role, as a recent history of the blues remarks:

A highly developed urban blues was being played in California well in advance of other regions, and it was also West Coast entrepreneurs who pioneered the trend toward small independent labels that played such a crucial role in the development and dissemination of postwar blues. (Oakland’s Gilt-Edge Recording Company was the first in 1945, with Cecil Gant’s “I Wonder”) [Cohn 1993:179].

Other record companies soon followed. Bob Geddings, called the “Father of Oakland Blues,” began pressing records at his West Oakland plant at Eighth and Center streets. Fulson’s country rendition



PLATE 96. SLIM SLAUGHTER’S QUARTET AT SLIM JENKINS’S NIGHTCLUB, ca. 1952. (Left to right: Pat Patterson, tenor sax; Slim Slaughter, piano/vibraphone; Homer “Chuck” Walker, drums; Walter Oakes, bass.) Slim Jenkins’s club was a major venue for local jazz musicians, and it was said that “all the musicians worked there at one time or another.” (Photo courtesy of Homer “Chuck” Walker)

of “Three O’Clock Blues” on Geddins’s Down Town label ascended to no. 6 on the billboard’s Black music charts. By 1953 Geddins had recorded “Tin Pan Alley,” sung by Jimmy Wilson—a slow, mournful “in-your-face” blues whose lyrics tell of killings and knifings at clubs that were worlds away from the Creole Cafe or Slim Jenkins’s place.

CONCLUSION

While West Oakland was not responsible for a distinctive style of jazz, its venues, musicians, and nightlife were significant aspects of Black culture in the Bay Area. It was the neighborhood where, if you stayed in your place, African Americans could feel the freedom that jazz music represents and transcend the drudgery of work and other woes. It was also a place where the ingenuity and vitality of Black business could be seen all around. West Oakland and Seventh Street were more than jazz, but it was the jazz music and the nightlife that made the locale known across the Bay and across the country. Not only were West Oakland clubs open to Blacks, but those Whites who ventured there—whether music lovers or, in their minds, “slumming”—found a colorful and vibrant night life whose humanity and vitality showed the rest of the Bay Area how to have a good time.

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APPENDIX A

INVENTORY OF WEST OAKLAND ORAL-HISTORY INTERVIEWS AND RESOURCES (through 1996)

Prepared by
Karana Hattersley-Drayton
Anthropological Studies Center
Sonoma State University Academic Foundation, Inc.

Sources

African American Museum and Library at Oakland
Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley
Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library
Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center (ASC)

ALBANESE, BEN, AND ANGELA [VOLPE]
ALBANESE COSY
Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 31 January 1995, in San Leandro, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tapes, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Angela [Volpe] Cosy was born near Bari in southern Italy in 1904. She immigrated to West Oakland in 1914, along with her mother and younger sister, to join her father, Luca Volpe. Mr. Volpe by this time worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a window washer. The Volpes bought or leased several homes within the "Italian Quarter" of West Oakland (i.e., between Castro and Adeline, Market to Third.) Mrs. Cosy attended Tompkins School and, at the age of 13, went to work at the Del Monte Cannery No. 6.

Ben Albanese, the oldest of Mrs. Cosy's three children, was born at home in West Oakland in 1923. He attended Tompkins, Lowell Junior High, and McClymonds High School. Mr. Albanese worked for the Southern Pacific as a machinist from 1949-1956. This interview includes memories of two generations of this Italian-American family and covers topics such as social networks, Italian traditions and foods, local markets, and occupational anecdotes.

ALBANESE, BEN, ANGELA [VOLPE] ALBANESE
COSY, AND EVELYN [ROBERTS] ALBANESE
Follow-up interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 7 February 1995, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tapes, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

BARGIACCHI, DEWEY, AND GLENN KING
Interview by Pamela Morton, 10 October 1981, in Oakland, California, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Verbatim transcription and summary by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, November 1994, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, tape index, and signed release; verbatim transcription and face sheet. [Oakland History Room. Transcription only: ASC.]

Dewey Bargiacchi was born in 1919 in West Oakland. His parents, Italian emigrants, ran several businesses in the neighborhood, including the North Pole Club and a boarding house for railroad workers. Mr. Bargiacchi and his mother, Josephine, opened the Villa de la Paix, an elegant Italian restaurant at Sixth and Alice, in 1948. The interview includes memories of shopping on Seventh Street, the importance of baseball to neighborhood boys, and a brief discussion of the African American community. Of interest is the fact that Mr. Bargiacchi spoke not only Italian as a child, but also Portuguese and Slovenian, which he learned by growing up in a multi-ethnic neighborhood.

BARGIACCHI, DEWEY
Interview by Willie R. Collins, 30 May 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Dewey Bargiacchi has been in the restaurant and bar business all his life. His parents opened the North Pole bar in 1932 on the corner of Eighth and Kirkham in West Oakland. His mother, affectionately known locally as "Lady Bargiac," continued to run the business after her husband died in 1936. The 1939 Oakland city directory advertised the bar (and now

restaurant) as “A genuine Italian restaurant serving the finest food, good music and drinks.” Musicians such as Ivory Joe Hunter, pianist Addie Mae, Wesley Smith, and local drummer Earl Watkins all played at the club. The Bargiacchis sold the North Pole in 1942 to local Portuguese Americans, Joe and Pete Pitta, who placed an even greater emphasis on blues and jazz music. He speaks here about the North Pole, the local blues and jazz music scene, and his memories of West Oakland in the 1920s and 1930s.

BLAKE, GERTRUDE [YOUNG]

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 7 November 1995, in Oakland, California, for the Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Mrs. Blake is a descendent of early West Oakland families. Her great-grandmother, Lucy [Johnson] Lycurgus, came to California with her family during the Gold Rush. The Johnsons, who were of Native American and African American descent, had been removed from their homes in Maryland and forced to resettle in Oklahoma. The conditions on the Indian Reservation were so appalling that their group elected to disband as a tribe and push on to California. Lucy Johnson married a Thomas Lycurgus by 1864 and the young family lived at Eighth and West streets in West Oakland in 1871. Upon her husband’s death, Lucy remarried. One of three children from this union was Eva [Lycurgus] Garrett, who was born at Fourth and Brush in 1889. Her mother died when Eva was quite young and the girl was ultimately raised by a Spanish (*Californio*) nanny, who educated her in the tradition of a well-bred young Spanish girl. Mrs. Blake is also connected to West Oakland history through other relatives and she recalls fond memories of visiting kin and walking along Seventh Street in the 1940s. Mrs. Blake also worked at the Prescott School as a layperson in the nurse’s office in 1967-1969.

BLUMERT, WILLY G.P.

Interview by Eleanor Swent, 11 December 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Willy Blumert was born in Dresden, Germany, in 1891 and came to West Oakland in 1908. He was affiliated with the German Lutheran Church and various other German fraternal organizations in Oakland. His memories include both West Oakland and the Fruitvale area.

BRADLEY, NORMAN JOSEPH

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 12 June 1996, in Hayward, California, for the Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription [in progress], face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Joseph Bradley worked 39 years for the Southern Pacific Railroad out of West Oakland. He served as a waiter for 18 years and as a steward for 21 years. Bradley was, in fact, one of the first African Americans to be promoted to this prestigious post. The steward sat customers, completed the accounting, ordered food, and was responsible for the overall management of the dining car. Bradley moved to California in 1942 after he was recruited by S.P. from his job as a waiter in the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans.

CAVA, ROSE [ARPELLI], AND ANNA [ARPELLI] MROCZKO

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 1 June 1996 in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, signed release, and historic photographs. [ASC.]

Rose Cava and Anna Mroczo are two of four children born to Lebanese immigrants Mansour and Hind Armelli. The Armellis immigrated to West Oakland in 1905 and 1906 and worked as itinerant peddlers, going door-to-door with a satchel of linens and lace. By Mrs. Cava’s birth (1907), the family ran a dry goods store at 1586 Seventh. A few years later they moved down the street a few blocks to 1724 Seventh, perhaps to be better integrated into the Greek and Arabic (Syrian and Lebanese) business community that thrived along this part of Seventh Street. The Armellis bought a house (flats) ca. 1915 at Eighth and Campbell. Mrs. Cava later owned a home on Chestnut Street as well as business property on Seventh at Pine Street. This session includes remembrances of their multi-ethnic neighborhood, Lebanese customs and foodways, and the family store(s).

CHESTNUT, DOROTHY NELL

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 25 November 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Dorothy Nell Chestnut was born in 1915 in Paris, Texas. She moved to West Oakland in the early 1940s, where her sister was working as a Car Cleaner

for Southern Pacific. Chestnut applied for the job and began work in September 1942, completing 38 years of service when she retired in 1980. During the war years, the job involved maintenance of the trains due to the labor shortage. Later, the job involved both washing down the car exteriors and cleaning the insides, which was similar to domestic housecleaning. She recalls that while Car Cleaning was performed by men and women of all races and nationalities, the workers acted like a family and looked out for one another. Chestnut was chairwoman of the retirement committee for many years, and as such coordinated many parties for retiring cleaners. For her last 18 years of work, she cleaned the president of the railroad's private car (No. 150)—a job that required special security clearance. Chestnut enjoyed her job with Southern Pacific, which paid well and gave her a great deal of satisfaction.

CHIN, WALTER

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 24 May 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Walter Chin's paternal grandfather emigrated from China in the late 1890s and ran several successful businesses in San Francisco's Chinatown. After the 1906 earthquake, Chin's grandmother (a widow by this time) moved to Oakland, where she was a partner in a Chinese lottery with her brother-in-law, Mow Lee. Lee owned property on Seventh and Wood. The Chins first lived on Wood Street and then around 1929 they purchased a two-story home at Eighth and Peralta. About 1937 they opened their own lottery business and ran it from their dining room. Walter Chin attended Prescott School and Oakland Technical High School. He had a successful career with Payless Drugs and served as an administrative assistant to the Vice Mayor of Oakland. This interview includes information about the importance of the lottery business to the Chinese community, inter-ethnic relations in West Oakland, and the impact of World War II.

CHRISTIE, PAUL

Interview by Elaine Hammill, 4 September 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

This interview includes a wide assortment of reminiscences about West Oakland. The interviewee was born in Tripolis, Greece, in 1907. His family lived at 403 Pine Street [Project Block #20]. He apparently worked for the S.P. and eventually became a wholesale grocer. Christie recalls how early Greek immigrants

lived in boxcars. He also discusses shopping along Seventh Street and the City Day Language School, at Seventh and Peralta.

CONNOLLY, JOHN (MONSIGNOR)

Interview by Sally Thomas and Padraigan McGilliguddy, 4 September 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room]

Monsignor Connolly was born in San Francisco in 1911 of Irish parents. His family moved to West Oakland about 1922, where they lived on Sixth Street, between Castro and Brush. The tape covers his memories of the Irish community in both San Francisco and West Oakland, outings to Shellmound Park, and shopping at Clarizio's store, which eventually relocated to Foothill, around Thirty-fourth Avenue.

COSY, ANGELA [VOLPE], ALBANESE [see Ben Albanese]

CUMBELICH, JOSEPH, AND SOPHIA [PSIHOS] CUMBELICH

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 10 June 1996, in Concord, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Mr. and Mrs. Cumbelich both have roots in West Oakland. Joseph Cumbelich was born in 1923 at 514 Center Street to Croatian/Dalmatian immigrants Vicko and Anna [Srsen] Cumbelich. His father worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad, his mother worked seasonally at the Pacific Coast Cannery. In the late 1930s and 1940s, Joseph Cumbelich worked for his brother who owned Reliable Drugstore, on the northeast corner of Chester at Seventh. Sophia "Penny" Cumbelich's parents were Greek immigrants. Her mother's family owned the wholesale Lekas Candy Company on Seventh and Linden. The interview includes information about Greek American and Croatian American traditions, inter-ethnic relations, and memories of the boarding house and restaurant run by Mr. Cumbelich's maternal aunt.

DELLUMS, C.L. (COTTRELL LAWRENCE)

Interview. President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Civil Rights Leader: Oral History Transcription. Tapes, edited manuscript with index, face sheet, and signed release. [Bancroft Library.] Dellums, Cottrell Lawrence Papers [ca. 1920-1972]. Six oversize folders and three oversize packages. Collection partially stored off campus. [Bancroft Library.]

DENAHY, WILLIAM

Interview by Kathryn Hughes, Padraigin McGillicuddy, Pamela Morton, and Sally Thomas, 9 September 1981, at the Kerry House, Oakland, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, partial handwritten transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

William J. Denahy is a third-generation Irish American with family roots in County Kerry. His paternal grandparents moved to West Oakland ca. 1876 and lived at 120 Adeline. Prior to World War I, they moved up the street to around Seventh and Adeline, where his father opened the Snug Harbor Bar. The Denahy family had a strong oral tradition and thus this interview includes numerous anecdotes about local characters who lived prior to the speaker's birth. Although his stories are particularly rich for Irish American history—including good passages about local political broker Mike Kelley—the interview also includes valuable information about other ethnic groups, particularly African Americans. Jack London is also recalled although not fondly; according to Denahy, local West Oaklanders considered London “a real jerk.” A good description of “boomer” railroad workers is to be found on page 14.

DRISDALE, ROSCOE, JR.

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 4 October 1996, in South San Francisco, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Roscoe Drisdale, Jr., worked for 42 years for the railroad, as a car cleaner, touch-up man, sleeping car porter, and as an inspector for the Pullman Company. He was born in Plum, Texas, in December 1912. Four years later, his father, Roscoe Drisdale, began his tenure as a Pullman porter in West Oakland; the family joined him in 1919, living first on Chester Street in West Oakland and later moving to Berkeley. Drisdale, Jr., completed two years of junior college before beginning work as a car cleaner. In 1932, he got his first experience as a sleeping-car porter because of the demand for transporting Boy Scouts via train to camps in Nevada and Montana; during the war years, this mass transport shifted to moving soldiers. In this interview, Drisdale, Jr., talks about the various tasks involved in the railroad jobs, and the interaction between workers and supervisors; he also recalls the social life among porters during the 1930s, both on the road and in West Oakland. He served as treasurer of the Retired Railroad Men's Club for a number of years, and is familiar with all its members.

DURANTE, MARTIN

Interview by Sally Thomas, 25 August 1981, in Oakland, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, verbatim transcription, tape summary, face sheet, and signed release with additional newspaper articles attached. [Oakland History Room.]

Martin Durante owns Ratto's International Grocers on Washington Street. The market was started by the interviewee's maternal grandfather as an “American” grocery, servicing primarily West Oakland. Martin Durante's father changed the ambience by adding Italian specialty items. Martin Durante added the international flavor in the early 1960s. The Rattos lived in West Oakland at Third and Myrtle. The interview includes nice descriptions of Washington Street in the 1930s and information about the ethnic clientele who shopped, and continue to shop, at the store.

EDWARDS, ROBERT, SR.

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 1 May 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Robert Edwards, Sr., began work as a dining-car waiter for the Southern Pacific in 1945 at the age of 19. In 1957 he transferred to the Western Pacific, where he worked as a waiter on the famed *California Zephyr*, the *Cascade*, and the *City of San Francisco* until 1970. When Western Pacific ceased its passenger service, Edwards did a brief stint as a relief worker for Western Pacific's commissary. He then worked as a freight-claims investigator and union representative. This interview includes anecdotes and information on folk speech from his years as a dining-car waiter. Mr. Edwards also candidly recalls the blatant racism that was rampant within the railroads at the time.

ERICSSON, MARY KENTRA

Interview by Pamela Morton, 11 August 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tapes, tape summary, signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Mrs. Ericsson's parents were both born in Dubrovnik (Croatia), in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They first lived in San Francisco but resettled in West Oakland following the 1906 earthquake. As with many other immigrant families, they took in boarders to help make ends meet. The interview includes, in fact, an anecdote about a widow who killed one of her boarders after he molested her children. Mrs. Ericsson attended St. Joseph's Institute, which was attached to St. Patrick's Church. Included

are memories about Seventh Street, wine-making, ethnic groups, women's work in the canneries, and the living conditions of early Mexican families to the area. [This tape has been checked out from the Oakland History Room and is in the process of being transcribed at ASC.]

ETO, AMY

Interview by Pamela Morton, 30 October 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room]

Mrs. Eto's family ran a grocery store at Seventh and Center streets from ca. 1924 to World War II, when they were relocated due to their Japanese heritage. Mrs. Eto attended Prescott School and she recalls that the teachers taught respect for various cultures because of the school's multi-ethnic constituency. One of her best friends was Black and the family ran a boarding house, while the father worked as a porter. She remembers discrimination (Japanese weren't allowed to swim at public pools). West Oakland evoked happy memories for her and it taught her "survival skills."

FARINA, FATHER CHARLES

Interview by Margaret West, 12 October 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Father Farina was the pastor at St. Joseph's in West Oakland. He recaps the history of Portuguese immigration to the area and St. Joseph's Church, which ultimately served Italians and Mexicans as well as the Portuguese.

GASKINS, WALTER COLEMAN

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 29 April 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Walter Coleman Gaskins was born 29 July 1921 in Omaha, Nebraska, into a railroad family. Both his father and brothers also "railroaded." Mr. Gaskins worked for the Union Pacific in West Oakland as a waiter from 1936-1941. He then joined the Western Pacific and worked on the *California Zephyr* until 1970. He belonged to the Brotherhood of Dining Car Cooks and Waiters' Union in West Oakland and still attends their annual banquet. This session includes Gaskins's work experiences and his reflections on the stratification within the African American work force.

GRONDONA, EDWARD, AND EVA ZUNINO

Interview by Sally Thomas, 14 August 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary (difficult to read!), and signed releases.

Both Grondona and Zunino (siblings perhaps?) were born in Alameda; Grondona in 1908, Zunino in 1898. The Grondonas owned large gardens in the West Oakland area, including one at the foot of Thirteenth and Wood (perhaps this is Third?). The S.P. took much of their land and the family contested the railroad in court. Eva's father owned the land later purchased for Shellmound Park. Mr. Grondona worked for the Southern Pacific.

GUERY, ROOSEVELT

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 29 June, 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Roosevelt Guery practices the dying craft of bootblacking. He began to learn how to shine shoes after he moved to Oakland to live with his sister in the late 1930s. In his early teens, Guery received an opportunity to work at a new shoe stand next to Oakland's Rex Theater on Broadway between Tenth and Eleventh streets. His clientele was mostly African American and included musicians, baseball players, fighters, and pimps. In his profession Mr. Guery observed street life close up. This interview includes information about the skills and language of his trade.

HALEY, ARTHUR

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 24 May 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Arthur Haley came to West Oakland in 1942 after working for several years as a freight handler for Southern Pacific in his home state of Louisiana. He lived on Twelfth Street between Peralta and Center. He worked initially as a fourth cook and made \$90 a month. Over the years he worked his way up to the position of Chef, which he held until he retired in 1975. Haley worked on the *Cascade* run (from Oakland to Portland), the *City of San Francisco*, the *San Joaquin*, and the *Gold Coast*. This interview includes information about the daily routine, food preparation, folk speech, and social relations that existed among Black workers on the Southern Pacific dining cars of the 1940s-1970s.

HILL, LOUIS

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 30 April 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Louis Hill was born in 1904 in Arcadia, California, of Flathead Indian, Caucasian, and African American heritage. He worked briefly as a waiter on the Southern Pacific's *San Joaquin Flyer*, as well as for numerous steamships and hotels. From about 1940 until 1969, Hill served as the Waiter in Charge on Southern Pacific's competitor, the Western Pacific *California's Zephyr*. He also worked as a recruiter for the railroad, often hiring as temporary help men who had lost their savings at crap games run on Seventh Street by "Raincoat" Jones. In 1938 Hill purchased a West Oakland club/restaurant, the Forty Niner Club, with his friend Frank Bolter. The club catered to the waiters and cooks who worked on local railroads.

HINDS, BILL

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 17 December 1994, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, partial verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Bill Hinds was born in 1909 in Stockton, California, of African American heritage. He graduated from high school, attended junior college, and attended the University of San Francisco (then known as St. Ignatius College) in 1932-1933. He was employed as a Redcap Porter by Southern Pacific, starting 21 May 1929 and retiring on 1 February 1975. He worked the last five years as a clerk for Southern Pacific in order to qualify for retirement, as the position of Redcap had been terminated by the railroad. He was also Sports Editor for the *California Voice* for 25 years. Highly articulate and with a fine sense of humor, Hinds has a wealth of knowledge regarding the Redcap occupation and the *canon of work* technique, including details on the strategies some Redcaps used to increase gratuities and the status of Redcaps in the community. He has an interest in the history of the occupation and was the only Redcap interviewed who knew the folk etymology of the term "Redcap"; he still has his cap and jacket and has a collection of photographs showing Redcaps on the job.

HOLMES, EDDIE (Ms.)

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 2 July 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

The Holmes' Neighborhood Barbershop at Twelfth and Center is the only barbershop that still serves West Oakland. Eddie Holmes moved to 914 Henry Street in West Oakland following her graduation from high school in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. She attended Merritt College for one year. The Holmes family discovered that local Black barbers were none too keen to give these "southerners" a helping hand. Nevertheless her father, Martin Holmes, prevailed and acquired a California license to practice in the early 1950s. Eddie Holmes joined her father's business after a brief career in nursing. The interview includes valuable information about African American hair styles and the importance of the local barbershop as a community resource for social networking.

ILES, CLARENCE P.

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 2 December 1994, in Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Clarence Iles was born in 1929 in Alexandria, Louisiana. He was a Redcap porter starting in 1944; he worked for Southern Pacific and then for Amtrak, for a total of 31 years. He also worked as a Skycap, a comparable position at the San Francisco International Airport, when there was not enough work with the railroad. He was affiliated with the United Transport Service Employees Association and served from 1954 to 1974 as Secretary-Treasurer for Local 904. Iles is active in community organizations such as the Men's Renaissance Social Club and is a member of the historical Beth Eden Baptist Church in West Oakland. Iles is articulate about the *canon of work* technique; his story reflects the vagaries of the work scene and what it took to survive in good and bad times.

JACKSON, IDA LOUISE

Interview by Vera Griffin, 14 December 1971, for the Oakland Museum Cultural and Ethnic Affairs Guild Oral History Project. Tape and indexed transcribed interview. [African American Museum and Library at Oakland.]

Ida Jackson was the first Black schoolteacher in Oakland. She taught at Prescott School in West

Oakland from ca. 1925-1938. Memories of this controversial appointment and her experiences at "The Melting Pot School" (Prescott) are found on pages 13-16 of the manuscript. Jackson was among the first African American students at U.C. Berkeley, receiving an A.B. in Education in 1922 and a Master's degree by 1923. She ultimately did doctorate work at Columbia University, and served as the Dean of Women at Tuskegee University, where she became friends with George Washington Carver. Jackson is one of the 39 biographies included in Irving Stone's salute to U.C. Berkeley alumni, *There Was Light*.

JACKSON, WILLIE B. (Ms.)

Interview with Dr. Willie Collins, 8 November 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Willie B. Jackson, a car cleaner for Southern Pacific for 37 years, was born in Mansfield, Louisiana, in July 1915. She moved to Berkeley in 1939 and was hired by the railroad in 1942, when jobs were suddenly plentiful. Although women worked a variety of railroad jobs while men were away in the service, coach-car cleaning was one of the few railroad jobs open to women during peacetime. Like other car cleaners interviewed, she describes the benefits of the work and recalls that the men and women—of all races and nationalities—got along as a family. Jackson was one of the pioneer organizers of the Retired Railroad Ladies Auxiliary, which was founded in 1976, and served as chairperson for that organization.

JIMENEZ, JOSEPHINE

Interview by Eleanor Swent, 13 August 1981 in Oakland for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, transcribed interview, tape summary, face sheet, and signed release. Also included as a separate packet is an unsigned commentary on the tapes, a resume for Jimenez, and a xerox of a photo of the interviewee. [Oakland History Room.]

Josephine Jimenez was born in West Oakland in 1921. Her parents were post-Revolutionary emigrants from Mexico. Her father was Italian and Native American, her mother a descendent of a wealthy Spanish hacienda family. Her maiden name is not listed. Jimenez's family lived at Eighth and Market streets over the Star Theatre in an Italian and Mexican neighborhood. She attended St. Patrick's Catholic School and then moved to Prescott Elementary. Her

parents helped to start the first Hispanic heritage clubs in the area. The groups met at Prescott School and later at the New Century Club on Fifth at Campbell Street. Mrs. Jimenez worked as a welder at the Moore Shipyards during World War II and is a founding member of both MAPA (Mexican American Political Association) and LULAC. The taped interview includes good descriptions of West Oakland as a "melting-pot" community, and Mrs. Jimenez's experiences and beliefs regarding political activism.

JONES, NORWARREN TIPPIE ALEXANDER

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 31 May 1996, in Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Tippie Jones was one of the many outstanding female jazz and blues musicians who performed in clubs along Seventh Street during the 1940s-1960s. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1921, she moved west to Oakland during World War II, where she found work in a Richmond shipyard. Starting in 1947 she began to work for nightclubs as a drummer, dancer, and singer. Venues included Slim Jenkins, the Clef Club, and late shows at the Lincoln Theatre. Ms. Jones was also one of the first female disc jockeys in the Bay Area, working out of Walker's Louisiana Playhouse in the 1950s. Her memories include descriptions of the jumping nightlife along Seventh Street, interracial relations, and prostitution in the area.

KARNEGIS, TRULA [GEORGAKOPOULOS]

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 4 September 1996 in Yuba City, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape summary, signed release, and historic photos. [ASC.]

Trula Karnegis was born in West Oakland in 1915 to Greek emigrants Harry Georgakopoulos and Ourania [Arapothanasis]. Mr. Georgakopoulos arrived in Oakland prior to the 1906 earthquake and worked for the Southern Pacific. The family lived at 392 Wood Street (Project Block 18) for about 10 years before buying a home at 1102 Campbell Street. Mrs. Karnegis recalls that one of her tasks was to care for the goats that were pastured across the street (Block 19). The "circus," actually a carnival, also set up in this location for several years. This interview includes information about Greek American folklife, foodways, gender roles and memories about bootlegging during prohibition.

KENNEDY, FANNIE [NASSAU]

Interview by Sally Thomas, 17 September 1981, in Alameda, California, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, notes, partial handwritten transcription, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Fannie Kennedy's parents were Jewish emigrants from Austria and Germany who moved to West Oakland in 1912 after a sojourn in New York. Residences included Center Street, Cole Street, Tenth and Chestnut, and (by 1920) Eighth and Linden streets. Mrs. Kennedy's father ran a bakery and notions shop in the Tenth Street Market (later Swan's). All of the children helped out after school and on the weekends. Mrs. Kennedy was hired right out of high school to be the secretary for the newly organized Market Street Junior High, later Lowell Junior High. She retired in 1974. This interview contains valuable information about ethnicity in West Oakland, particularly Jewish families. Also included is a good description of the Tenth Street Market and the changes wrought from Black in-migration to the area during World War II. One early neighbor at Eighth and Linden was the family of a sleeping-car porter, the Whites, who were very helpful to the Nassaus during times of crisis. Mrs. Kennedy's husband was Scotch Irish and grew up at Twelfth and Myrtle in West Oakland.

KOSMOS, GREGG

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 6 March 1995, in Piedmont, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Gregg Kosmos, born in 1922, was the first of two sons born to Greek immigrants Tom and Dimitra Kosmos. The Kosmos family rented a small cottage on Atlantic Street next to the tracks. Most of the immediate neighbors were Greeks who, like Tom Kosmos, worked for the Southern Pacific. Eventually the family bought a two-story home further away on Eighth Street. This interview includes information about Greek immigration and cultural traditions (particularly food), and the ethics and values of the Greek community in West Oakland.

LAVAGETTO, ED

Interview by Sally Thomas, 27 August 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, transcription, and signed release. [Oakland History Room. Transcription only: ASC.]

Ed Lavagetto was a Genovese who grew up on the edge of West Oakland, on Eighteenth Street near Peralta. He attended Prescott School, which would have been a decent walk from his house. The Fourteenth to Eighteenth Street area of West Oakland was mostly settled by Italians from the Genoa area, and Lavagetto's memories include specific information about regional affiliations and intragroup tensions. When his family moved out to the Temescal District in 1919, West Oakland streets were still dirt; he remembers workers spraying Peralta Street with water to keep down the dust. Other memories include the influenza epidemic of 1918, the annual Circus parade, Italian foodways and holidays, and advice from his Prescott School teachers about diet and nutrition. He identifies the orphanage across from Prescott as the "West Oakland Boys Home."

LEKAS, CONSTANTINE

Interview by Elaine Hammill, 21 October 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

The Lekas family, Greek Americans, ran a series of candy shops and factories in Oakland and West Oakland. Mrs. Lekas was born in 1914. She discusses local Greek American history and talks at length about the various city and federally sponsored rehabilitation projects in West Oakland.

LEWIS, MARY

Interview by Alison Hooson, 2 October 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

African American Mary Lewis was born in 1909 in Nebraska. She came west to California in 1936 and lived at Eighth and Market streets and also at 930 Union Street. Her husband was a dining-car waiter. During World War II, Mrs. Lewis worked at the Moore Shipyard. She raised a family in West Oakland and her children attended Cole School.

LINFORD, BERNICE [VALVA]

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 2 April 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, tape summary, signed release, and historic photographs. [ASC. Photos only: Oakland History Room.]

Bernice Linford was born in 1926 and grew up at 520 Castro Street in West Oakland. Her father, Mike Valva, an Italian immigrant, ran a hardware store and then the successful Valva Realty, with an office on Seventh Street. Her mother, Madeline [Mazza] Valva was born in 1902 in West Oakland, the only daughter of immigrants from northern Italy. In this informal interview, Mrs. Linford provided additional information about a series of family photographs that she and brother Bob loaned to the Cypress Freeway Replacement Project. The Valvas lived across the street from three Italian grocery stores (Clarizio's, Sacco's and Splendorio's) and she describes and compares them. [See also interviews with Robert Valva.]

LIU, JEAN MOON

Interview by Eleanor Swent, 23 September 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Liu is the granddaughter of Lew Hing, who owned the Pacific Coast Canning Co. This session includes memories of the cannery and of the Chinese community in West Oakland. [The tape is currently being transcribed by the ASC.]

LIVINGS, OSCAR HOLMES, JR.

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 29 June 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Oscar Homer Livings, Jr., was born in Houston, Texas, in 1921. He came west to Oakland in 1939 and attended Moler Barber College at Ninth and Franklin. In 1942 he went to work as an apprentice for the master barber at Colfield's Barbershop at 711 Chester Street in West Oakland. The shop served workers from the Southern Pacific and functioned as a social nexus for the Black community. Mr. Livings started his own barbershop after he left Colfield's and ultimately spent his working life in the trade. He discusses African American hairstyles, Seventh Street in West Oakland, and race relations in the 1940s.

LOVETTE, BERTHA HAMILTON

Interview with Dr. Willie Collins, 16 September 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Bertha Hamilton Lovette was born in Mississippi in about 1925 and was reared in Monroe, Louisiana. She never lived in West Oakland, but she worked as a master barber there for more than 30 years. She received her at the New Orleans Barber College, and set up practice in Monroe, where she rented her shop from the brother of Slim Jenkins, owner of Oakland's premiere nightclub. She came out to West Oakland in 1947, where she was first looked after by Jenkins and his wife. Lovette became manager of Chase's Barber Shop, the largest and best-known shop on Seventh Street, and later managed the Streamline Barbershop at Seventh and Wood streets, which was known as a "hangout" for virtually all Black railroad men. Eventually she opened her own shop. Bertha's Barbershop, which was a combined barbershop, beauty shop, and pool room. She discusses hairstyles, Seventh Street businesses and lifeways, and her pride in succeeding in a largely male world.

MANDISH, GERALD

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 6 June 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim indexed transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Gerald Mandish was born at Twelfth and Kirkham streets in West Oakland in 1916. His Austrian-born father worked as a washerman for both the Contra Costa Laundry and Crystal Laundry. His mother, Lolita [Aldecoa] Mandish, was of Spanish descent and grew up in Stockton, California. Mr. Mandish was an accomplished baseball player and played briefly in the Northwest Coast League but had to forego his career in order to help support his family. This interview includes Mandish's memories of Tommy Simpson's Gym (Project Block 25) and the Yosemite Club (Project Block 9). He also recalls the variety of street peddlers with their horse-drawn wagons and the social harmony that existed among the ethnic groups in West Oakland.

MOCKEL, DONALD

Interview by Sally Thomas and Padraigin McGillicuddy, 3 September 1981, in Oakland for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, notes, partial handwritten transcription, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Donald Mockel was born in 1921 in West Oakland, the son of Irish immigrants. His mother's family, the Murphys, worked for the Southern Pacific. One uncle was apparently instrumental in getting African Americans hired by S.P. in the 1930s. Mockel's father worked for the Oakland fire depart-

ment and was killed on the job. The Mockels lived at Eighth and Willow streets. One Murphy uncle ran a hotel at Sixteenth and Market for shipyard workers. The partial transcription includes memories of "Father Mac" at St. Patrick's, narratives and folk speech from the railroad, and apparently a description of Holy Ghost festas at St. Andrew's Catholic Church. The interview jumps around and it is difficult to establish a chronology for this family. Donald Mockel, like his father, worked for the Oakland Fire Department.

**MOUSALIMAS, ANDREW, AND MARY
[KUMARELAS] MOUSALIMAS**

(1) Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 18 April 1996, in Oakland, California, for the Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tapes, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, signed release, and historic photographs. [ASC.]

The Mousalimas family is among the earliest of the many Greek immigrants who settled West Oakland at the turn of the century. Andrew Mousalimas's father, Sotirios (Sam) Mousalimas, came to America in 1901 and worked his way across the continent as a laborer for the railroads. He was joined in West Oakland by his brothers, Exarhos (Frank) and Aristotelis (Tom). By 1907 the Mousalimas family ran a coffeehouse at Seventh and Campbell. By 1912 they owned the Olympic Cafe—a bar, restaurant, and pool hall—at 1751 Seventh Street (southwest corner of Pine and Seventh). Sam Mousalimas purchased six houses on Willow and Goss streets as well as an antique store and warehouse in Berkeley. He married Susie Caredis, one of the few Greek-born women in the area, in 1924. The couple had two sons, including Andrew, who was born in December of 1924. Andrew attended both "Little Prescott" and "Big Prescott" schools and, following his family's move from West Oakland, Oakland High. He served in the Greek Battalion during World War II and owned and managed the popular "King's X" on Piedmont Avenue.

(2) Follow-up interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 30 April 1996, in Oakland, California, for the Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tapes, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, signed release, and historic photographs. [ASC]

This interview occurred prior to a tour of West Oakland, led by Andrew Mousalimas. Both Mrs. Mousalimas (born in the Greek community of Salt Lake City) and Andrew talk about Greek customs, including those that attend Greek Orthodox Easter.

They also identify several family photographs that they loaned to the Cypress Freeway Replacement Project.

MOUSALIMAS, SUSIE

Interview by Elaine R. Hammill and George Daskarolis, 18 September 1981, in Oakland, California, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary. [Oakland History Room.]

Susie [Caredis] Mousalimas was born in Greece in 1899. Her father had left three months earlier to come to the United States to find work. He settled first in Chicago, where he opened a bar and a shoeshine stand. He then moved on to Utah, where he worked briefly in mining. By 1901 he had settled in San Francisco, where he worked at the ferry building and also delivered peanuts by wagon. The Caredis family were reunited and moved to a ranch in Sebastopol, because Mr. Caredis was concerned about the fact that girls and boys talked together in San Francisco. Susie Caredis married Greek immigrant Sam Mousalimas in an arranged marriage at the family ranch in 1924 and went to live in West Oakland. These tapes include a description of San Francisco's Greek town, and memories of West Oakland in the 1920s and 1930s. [See also interviews with Andrew and Mary Mousalimas.]

MROCZKO, ANNA [ARPELLI]. (See Rose [Armelli] Cava.)

NETHERLAND, MARY [MAYME] CORNELIA

Interview and file on Mrs. Netherland includes newspaper clippings, sundry correspondence, and a copy of her four-page history/tribute to her parents. Also of interest is information on the Mothers' Club and the Fannie Wall Children's Home. Additional information is filed in a two-box set of papers, "California Federation of Colored Women's Clubs." Photos of Mrs. Netherland, her father's "shaving parlor," and so on, are also available. [African American Museum and Library at Oakland.]

Mayme Netherland's family were early African American residents of West Oakland. She was born in a tiny cottage on Project Block 25, at 714 (historically 860) Pine Street. She became an important figure in local community work, particularly fund-raising for children's homes and other reform activities.

NODDIN, HELENE

Interview by Sally Thomas, 11 September 1981, in Oakland for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Handwritten notes, partial transcription, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Helene Noddin was born in West Oakland in 1894. Her mother's family [Robertsons] came to Oakland ca. 1886 after a sojourn in Sacramento. The Robertsons lived on Eighth Street; several family members worked in the cotton mills. Noddin's father [name unknown] emigrated from Dundee, Scotland. He worked as a confectioner in local bakeries, including the Cape Anne Bakery between Clay and Jefferson. Her father was the first president of the Oakland Rotary Club and a prominent member of the Scottish community. The interview includes information about the gradual decline of West Oakland, ca. 1910-1920, as commercial industry transformed the area. The Rotary Club eventually forced Southern Pacific to pave Seventh Street. Mrs. Noddin moved to Fruitvale in 1922 when her husband changed jobs.

O'CONNOR, SISTER MICHAELA

(1) Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton with Marta Gutman, 5 May 1995, in San Francisco, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Sister O'Connor was born in San Francisco in 1940. After high school she joined the Sisters of the Holy Family and worked at many of her Order's day homes throughout the Bay Area, including St. Vincent's in West Oakland. This interview includes a history and overview of the Sisters of the Holy Family, including the important role that they played in early-childhood and kindergarten education in California. Sister Michaela also vividly recalls her one-year experience as a teacher at St. Vincent's in the early 1960s.

(2) Informal re-interview (and site visit) by Karana Hattersley-Drayton and Marta Gutman, 18 May 1995 in Mission San Jose, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed partial transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Re-interview covers founding and early years of St. Vincent's Day Home. Also included is a quick sketch of the site, "Palmdale," in Mission San Jose, which was purchased by the Sisters of the Holy Family from Oscar and Hazel Starr in 1949. Coincidentally,

Mrs. Starr was a patron of St. Vincent's Day Home, and brought the children out to the site for country picnics.

OLDWINE, CLARENCE

(1) Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 6 January 1995, in Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, partial transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Clarence Oldwine has the unique experience of having worked as both a Redcap porter and sleeping car porter. He was born in 1909 in Columbus, Ohio, and is primarily of African American heritage. Oldwine completed two years of college at Wilberforce University in Ohio. He initially came west to California as a baseball player but stayed on when his team returned to Ohio. He worked as a Redcap porter for the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific from ca. 1946-1970 and as a sleeping car porter for Amtrak from 1970-1975. He was affiliated with the Brotherhood of Clerk's and Sleeping Car Porter's Unions.

(2) Re-interview by Willie Collins, 25 June 1995 in Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, partial transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

OTIS, JOHNNY

Taped response on 1 July 1996 to written questions submitted by Dr. Willie Collins for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Transcription by Karana Hattersley-Drayton. Tape, transcription, index, and signed release [ASC.]

Johnny Otis is a well-known jazz musician who got his start as a teenager in an East Bay band. Born around 1923 in Vallejo, he was raised in Berkeley. His memories of West Oakland and Seventh Street are mostly from the late 1930s, when he and his friends tried to sneak into Slim Jenkins's club to hear jazz; they were always kicked out but were accepted at smaller "raggedy" clubs in the neighborhood. They eventually played at house-rent parties in West Oakland as well as at the gymnasium at Fifth and Union. Otis left the East Bay in 1941, but returned with his band on occasion to play at Sweets's Ballroom. He mentions numerous jazz musicians playing West Oakland during the '30s and '40s, but claims to know far less about his "hometown" than he does about Omaha, Nebraska, where he lived for some 30 years.

PATTERSON, ARTHUR

Interview by Marta Gutman, 8 June 1995, in West Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tapes, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and release. [ASC.]

Arthur Patterson was born in Arkansas in 1934 and migrated with his family to West Oakland in 1939. His father, James, worked as a janitor for Swan's Tenth Street Market. Mrs. Patterson ran a boarding house at Fifth and Peralta streets that included a small grocery store on the downstairs floor. Arthur Patterson was the first African American to attend Laney College, then a technical school, although he had to do it "unofficially." This interview includes family history, Patterson's views on race relations, and his memories of the community center Sunshine Corners.

PAYNE, HARMON

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 14 February 1995, in Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Harmon Payne came to California from Texas in 1936. He worked for the Santa Fe Railroad Company from 1940-1970, both as a Redcap and as a clerk. This interview includes descriptions of West Oakland as a working community and the work ethic and status of Redcaps vis-a-vis other workers and the public. Payne relocated to Berkeley in the mid-1930s and he discusses the decline of both communities, Berkeley and West Oakland.

PETRIS, NICHOLAS

Interview by Kathryn Hughes, 6 August 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Senator Petris was raised in West Oakland and attended Prescott School. In this interview he describes the various Greek-owned businesses along Seventh Street and his memories of his childhood years.

PHILLIPS, FLOYD

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 24 May 1996, in Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Floyd Phillips comes from a railroad family; both his father and uncle worked as chefs for the Southern Pacific. Phillips attended University of California at Los Angeles briefly after graduation from high school,

with an interest in architecture. But once he started to work for the railroads he got hooked on the paycheck and never returned to school. Phillips worked his way up to the position of Chef, working a total of 30 years for the Southern Pacific.

PITTMAN, TAREA HALL

"Tarea Hall Pittman: NAACP Official and Civil Rights Worker." Interview by Joyce Henderson for the Regional Oral History Project, University of California at Berkeley, 1974. Tapes, edited manuscript with index. [Bancroft Library.]

Ms. Pittman was a major figure within the African American community in California. She served as the West Coast Regional Director of the NAACP and was a well-known radio personality on local station KDIA. In 1936 she was the State President of the California State Association of Colored Women's Clubs. One of the Association's projects and "monuments" during her tenure was the Fannie Wall Children's Home, in West Oakland. On pages 48-49 of the manuscript, she speaks briefly about this facility and her concerns that it be brought up to code. She also alludes to Ida Jackson, first Black schoolteacher in Oakland, who taught at Prescott, and mentions C.L. Dellums several times throughout the interview.

RISH, CARRIE M.

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 6 August 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Carrie Booker Mayfield Rish, recognized as the first woman barber to set up business in West Oakland, was born in February 1913 in Galveston, Texas. She graduated from highschool in Houston, then married and came out to West Oakland with her husband, where they lived at 1025 Center Street. Rish got her training at Moler Barber College during the day while working in the shipyard at night. After serving apprenticeship and getting her license between 1945 and 1947, she opened her own barbershop constructed on her property at 1223 Peralta Street. Over the course of 41 years, she employed a number of barbers, both men and women. In this interview, she shares her wealth of knowledge regarding barbering, building and running a business, and lifeways along Seventh Street. Rish has original documents and photos related to her business.

ROBINSON, AUDREY [GIBSON]

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 21 March 1995, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Audrey Robinson was born into a railroad family: both her father and grandfather worked for the Southern Pacific in West Oakland. Mrs. Robinson was born in Oakland in 1915 and grew up with a strong sense of family history and heritage. She is well educated, articulate, and cognizant of the importance of local history; she has served as a docent in the History Department of the Oakland Museum for the past 17 years. This interview includes her recollections of community and family life through 1936.

ROSAS, BERTHA [GALLARDO]

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 13 March 1995, in West Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, tape summary, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Tape summary only: Oakland History Room.]

Bertha [Gallardo] Rosas has lived in West Oakland from 1941 to the time of this interview. The Gallardo family came first to West Oakland in the 1930s from Williams, Arizona, and permanently settled in the area in 1941. Mr. Gallardo worked for the Southern Pacific on the maintenance crew and then as a Car Inspector. Mrs. Rosas attended McClymonds High School and Merritt Business College and raised her family in the home that her parents purchased on Chester Street in 1942. Mexican American traditions and memories of the immediate community are included in this interview.

RYDMAN, BERNYCE [BURKE]

Interview by Pamela Morton, 7 September 1981, in Concord, California, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Verbatim transcription and face sheet by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, November 1994, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, signed release, and correspondence from Mrs. Rydman. [Oakland History Room. Transcription only: ASC.]

Mrs. Rydman's first family home was at 534 Magnolia in West Oakland. Her maternal grandparents were one of the first couples to be married at St. Patrick's, ca. 1880. Both her father, Bill Burke, and mother [O'Keefe] were Irish American. Her father worked for the Southern Pacific and retired as a stationary engineer. Her mother (with six children) also

worked outside the home, including a stint with the S.P. Laundry. Mrs. Rydman's younger sister attended St. Vincent's Day Home, an early day-care facility for working families. The interview and letters contain information about ethnic groups in West Oakland, neighborhood boundaries, shopping along Seventh Street, churches in the area, etc. The Burkes moved to 1038 Magnolia in 1921. Mrs. Rydman notes that they were fortunate to have an indoor bathroom.

SANTEE, THELMA

Interview by Sally Thomas, 5 August 1981, in Oakland, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Signed release, notes and partial transcription, and photos of interviewee. [Oakland History Room.]

The interview lacks a chronology and thus it is difficult to establish a time frame and context. Santee's ethnicity is also not discussed; her surname would suggest that her family was Portuguese. She has lived in West Oakland at 1324 Magnolia since 1923. The brief interview includes information about the mixed character of her early West Oakland neighborhood, which included Jewish, Irish, Scotch, Russian, and Italian Americans. Few were true emigrants; most were at least second generation. She discusses the Market Street shopping district and the boarding house that her mother ran at Seventeenth and Castro streets.

SCHWARTZ, ELMER

Interview by Pamela Morton and Kathryn Hughes, 3 September 1981, in Oakland, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Partial transcription, no release. [Oakland History Room.]

Mr. Schwartz was interviewed at the Cameron-Stanford House in Oakland. The tape is clear; the partial transcription is not verbatim and represents a very rough summary. Schwartz was born in 1896 in West Oakland at Fifth and Chester, in the same house where his mother was born in 1874. The family had built the home ca. 1870. The interview includes information about ethnic groups in West Oakland, Shellmound Park outings, churches in the area, etc.

SCHWERIN, RUTH

Interview by Elaine Hammill, 30 October 1981, in Lafayette, California, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Verbatim transcription by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, November 1994, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim transcription, face sheet, signed release, and brief tape summary. [Oakland History Room. Transcription only: ASC.]

The interviewee was born in West Oakland, in a house on Fifth and Center streets, in 1894. Her father owned and operated the Phoenix Iron Works. Her mother was German American. The interview contains information about the Tompkins School, ethnicity of area, Shellmound Park excursions, Chinese peddlers, and the Phoenix Iron Works. Mrs. Schwerin worked as a Cash Girl at Christmas for the Schluter Department Store, ca. 1905.

SESTANOVICH, STEPHEN

Interview by Pamela Morton, 16 November 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room]

Mr. Sestanovich was born in 1912 in Yugoslavia. He attended St. Joseph's Institute and Prescott Junior High. His family lived on Willow Street, between Peralta and Kirkham, from 1920-1937. This interview includes a discussion of the various ethnic groups that made up West Oakland.

SIMMONS, HERMAN

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 31 August 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Herman Simmons was born in September 1916 in Violet, Louisiana, and spent his formative years in New Orleans. He held a variety of jobs there until the early 1940s, when the need for mass movement of troops opened up opportunities for Pullman Porter work. He worked for the railroad for 37 years, from 1943 to 1980. Simmons brought his wife and three children to West Oakland in 1947, first living in a room on Twelfth Street; he notes that such crowding was the rule rather than the exception during the housing shortage of the war years. Simmons worked as a Pullman Porter instructor, organizing and teaching young recruits; the training sessions lasted up to five days, and he would then accompany the porters on their first run. As one of the most articulate porters interviewed and with a wide range experience, he has much to share.

SMITH, JUANITA [ROBERTS]

Interview by Alison Hooson, 25 September 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, tape summary, and signed release. [Oakland History Room]

Juanita Smith was born in Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1914 and grew up in West Oakland, where she attended Cole School. She was one of three Black reporters who covered the historic U.N. convention in

San Francisco in 1945. In this interview she recalls the Halloween parades along Seventh Street and the impact of the various redevelopment projects.

STOKES, VITTERINA [RUSSELO]

Interview by Kathryn Hughes and Sally Thomas, 17 August 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Notes. [Oakland History Room]

Vitterina Stokes was born ca. 1910 in Genova, Italy, and moved with her family to West Oakland in 1915. Her mother worked at the Contra Costa Laundry. The family lived at 14th and Kirkham until 1942. Mrs. Stokes discusses Italian foodways and gardens. She remembers that the Columbo Bakery and Grocers had a bocce ball court in back.

TOWNS, ROYAL

Interview by Pamela Morton, 23 October 1981, in Oakland, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Verbatim transcription, April 1996, by Karana Hattersley-Drayton for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tapes, indexed verbatim transcription, and biographical essay. [Oakland History Room. Transcription and essay only: ASC.]

Royal Edward Towns easily qualifies as one of the most extraordinary of many colorful West Oakland natives. He was born in the Oakland Point District in 1899 of African American and (probably) Hispanic descent. His father, William Towns (aka Torres) was born in northern Mexico in 1843 of Jamaican immigrants. When this part of Mexico became the Republic of Texas the family changed their surname to "Towns." They came west with Fremont's army and eventually settled in San Jose. By the 1880s William Towns had moved to West Oakland, where he worked for the Pullman Company, probably as a cook. He married Elizabeth Ann [Scott] Clark in 1898, the second marriage for both. Royal Towns grew up on the multi-ethnic, polyglot streets of West Oakland. Due partly to his childhood experiences, Towns developed an uncanny skill for language. He worked for the Oakland Fire Department for 35 years, reaching the rank of Lieutenant. He was the first African American to break the color barrier as a Black officer for an all-White engine company. Mr. Towns was also a respected amateur historian. These interviews include marvelous anecdotes about life in West Oakland pre-1912, a formidable list of West Oakland nicknames, and his often candid observations about ethnicity, identity, and ethnic relations.

TURNER, MORRIE

Interview by Pamela Morton, 5 December 1981, in Oakland, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Signed release, biographical questionnaire, and index to taped interview. [Oakland History Room.]

Morris Turner was born in West Oakland in 1923. Both his father and uncle were Pullman porters. Like many families, the Turners moved often, renting a variety of homes within the area. Addresses included the 1200 block of Wood Street, 1100 block of Fifth, 700 block of Center, 1200 block of Eighth, 1200 block of Eleventh, 1000 block of Kirkham, and the 1300 block of Tenth. The interviewee discusses his childhood memories of West Oakland, ethnic groups in the area, and information about the porters and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Mr. Turner is a successful artist who draws "Wee Pals," a cartoon strip that has been referred to as a "Black Peanuts." Many of his ideas are drawn from his experiences in West Oakland.

VALVA, ROBERT

(1) Interview by Sally Thomas, 17 August 1981, in Oakland, California, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Partial handwritten transcription and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Robert Valva is an Italian American, born and raised in West Oakland. The family home was at 520 Castro Street. Italian-owned grocery stores were around them, neighbors were a "melting-pot" mix of Blacks, Italians, Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, Jews, and Greeks. His father owned gas stations in the area, and later a hardware store on Seventh Street between Market and Myrtle. He ultimately settled into the real-estate business. This interview includes family history, memories of his Italian heritage, and good descriptions of businesses in the area, including the Housewife's Market, with its individually owned stalls. Robert Valva attended Tompkins School after Cole School was torn down. His parents met at night classes at Tompkins School that were specially held for immigrants.

(2) Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 2 March 1995, in West Oakland, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, indexed verbatim interview, face sheet, signed release, and historic photos. [ASC. Transcription and historic photos: Oakland History Room.]

In this 1995 interview, Mr. Valva answers site-specific questions generated by the archaeological work for the Cypress Freeway Replacement Project. Valva grew up at 520 Castro, which is one of the blocks included in the archaeological field work. He talks about the plan and layout of the family home, gardens, neighbors, wine pressings, and the development of Valva Realty.

(3) Follow-up interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 17 March 1995, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, tape summary, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Tape summary only: Oakland History Room.]

In this interview, Mr. Valva provides further information regarding topics as discussed in the March 2nd session. He also discusses changes to the community that were brought about during World War II, his Italian heritage, and prostitution in the area.

VELASCO, DOMINGA

Interview by Eleanor Swent, 28 July 1981, in Oakland, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Partial typed transcription with unsigned three-page commentary. No signed release. Most of side 1, tape 1, has been erased. [Oakland History Room.]

Dominga Velasco [maiden name unknown] came with her family to West Oakland in 1920 from Juarez, Mexico, via El Paso, Texas. They settled at Second and Henry streets and were the first Mexican family on that side of West Oakland. Oakland was a "strange country," for unlike El Paso, there were no Mexican stores or theatres. Mrs. Velasco attended night school at Prescott and then began to work at the Pacific Coast Canning Company. Eventually she and her husband, one of the first radio announcers for the "Mi Rancho" program, opened an enchilada shop that helped to anchor what became the "Mexican Neighborhood" on Seventh Street. The interview includes some excellent information about Mexican customs and holidays, including a brief mention of the Banda de Guerra—the first Mexican band to play in West Oakland.

WALKER, HOMER JOHN ("CHUCK")

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 1996, in Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Drummer and vocalist Homer John ("Chuck") Walker was born in 1914 in Houston, Texas. He received his first drum set at the age of 14 from Illinois Jacquet. Walker began to back pianist/vocalist Ivory

Joe Hunter at local beer joints in and around Houston. When Hunter moved out to work in West Oakland, Walker followed. Hunter bought a house and built a basement apartment, in which Walker lived with his wife and son. The two men formed a band that played local clubs, such as Slim Jenkins's. Walker recorded on two songs written by Ivory Joe Hunter that memorialized the scene in West Oakland: the "7th Street Boogie" and "Boogin' in the Basement." In addition to information about local music, Walker candidly recalls his surprise at the racial intolerance that he experienced when he first arrived in Oakland.

WATKINS, EARL THOMAS, JR.,

(1) Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 24 November 1995, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Earl Thomas Watkins, Jr., played drums for local legends Muggsby Spanier (mid-1950s) and the Earl Hines band (1955 to 1961). He was born in San Francisco in 1920. Although initially trained on piano he became hooked on percussion after hearing John Randolph, the leader of Randy's Rhythm Ramblers, play at local teen dances. Randolph agreed to give Watkins lessons between his shifts as a doorman at a local hotel. Watkins played in the Navy Band from 1942 to 1945 and then left to lead several Bay Area bands. The interview includes information about the early history of Local 6 Union, West Oakland clubs, and general information about the Bay Area music scene.

(2) Follow-up interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 25 April 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center., Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

WILLIAMS, CLEOPHUS (BILL)

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 29 February 1995, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC. Transcription only: Oakland History Room.]

Cleophus (Bill) Williams was born on 12 June 1923 in Camden, Arkansas. He worked as a longshoreman locally from 1944 to 1981 and served as President of Local 10 four times. Prior to 1944 he also was employed at the Moore Shipyard in Oakland. The interview contains Williams's insights regarding the relationship of African Americans and the "left," the

effects of discrimination, inter-ethnic tensions in the Union, and the influence and leadership that the Gulf Shore longshoremen exerted on local Black union members. Williams is both eloquent and outspoken, and the interview is an important contribution to local labor history.

WIMBERLY, WILBERT

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 11 October 1996, in Richmond, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, verbatim transcription, face sheet, and signed release. [ASC.]

Wilbert Wimberly, who was born in January 1906 in Lindale, Texas, is the oldest Pullman porter interviewed for this study. He did not become a porter until 1943, at the age of 38, when the demand for transporting soldiers opened up new positions; he kept that job for 29 years, until his retirement in 1972. For the first 20 years, Wimberly worked on the "extra board," an on-call position that he enjoyed. Because of the housing crisis of the early 1940s, Wimberly and his family had to live in the Projects in Richmond while he worked on the trains out of West Oakland. He became a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and his wife, Artis, was active in the local chapter of the Ladies Auxiliary of the BSCP. In the early 1950s, Wimberly became interested in movie-making and began documenting his work and travels on the train, including shooting footage of Pullman porters at work. He also has several old work-related photographs.

WITHERSPOON, RUTH

Interview by Dr. Willie Collins, 6 August 1996, at the West Berkeley Senior Center, Berkeley, California, for Sonoma State University Anthropological Studies Center. Tape, tape summary, face sheet, signed release. [ASC.]

Ruth Witherspoon, who worked as a manicurist on Seventh Street for 15 years, was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1924. She came to the Bay Area and attended Merritt College while working in the shipyards during the war years. She got her training as a manicurist and went to work at the Chase Barbershop, an important African American institution across the street from Slim Jenkins's supper club, from 1944 to 1959. She describes the trade and working conditions, and provides details about some of the more clandestine operations along Seventh Street, including the regular drinking and gambling in the back room at Chase's and other barbershops and the more organized gambling that was the primary function of most smoke shops along the thoroughfare.

WONG, FLORENCE [CHIN]

Interview by Karana Hattersley-Drayton, 23 April 1996, in Oakland, California, for Sonoma State University

Florence [Chin] Wong was born in 1933 in the family home at 1618 Eighth Street, between Peralta and Campbell. She lived in West Oakland through the 1960s, when the State of California removed their home in order to expand the playground for Prescott School. Both of Mrs. Wong's parents were born in the Kwangtung Province of China. Her father, Chin Mon Wah (aka Young Ah Fook), settled first in New York City. After establishing himself he sent for his wife, Ng Shee, and his first-born daughter. The Chins settled in West Oakland ca. 1921, where they ran one of the Chinese lotteries (keno) from their home. Following World War II, Mr. Chin invested in property in San Francisco's Chinatown. This interview includes family history, information about Chinese keno and Chinese traditional foods, and Mrs. Wong's memories of the dramatic changes to West Oakland following the war.

YOKOMIZO, MUTOMI

Interview by Sally Thomas, 14 September 1981, for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project. Tape, partial transcription, and signed release. [Oakland History Room.]

Mutomi Yokomizo's family ran the Union Laundry in West Oakland. They lived at 2423 Myrtle and then at 2430 Filbert Street. In this interview, he recalls Seventh Street, West Oakland's Japanese community (about 30 or so families), and describes the differences between Chinese- and Japanese-run laundries and cleaners.

In addition to the individual interviews, the Oakland History Room also maintains the following files: "West Oakland Jews, Blacks, Chinese, Portuguese." Notes by and for the Oakland Neighborhood History Project, n.d. [Copy also at ASC.]

APPENDIX B

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY: EARLY JAZZ MUSICIANS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BAY AREA

Compiled by Willie R. Collins

This discography is based on information from musicians interviewed for the “Jazzing Up Seventh Street” article in this volume and from the following sources:

Bruyninckx, Walter

1987 *Jazz: Traditional Jazz 1897-1987: Origins, New Orleans Dixieland, Chicago Styles*. Vol. 3. Cadence Jazz Magazine, Redwood, New York.

Lord, Tom

1992 *The Jazz Discography*. Volumes 1-13. Lord Music Reference, West Vancouver, British Columbia.

Rust, Brian A. L. (compiler)

1982 *Jazz Records, 1897-1942*. Fifth edition. Storyville Publications, Chigwell, Essex, England.

Alley, Vernon. *Vernon Alley Quartet*. Hollywood, California. Standard Q276. Early 1950s.

Baranco, Wilbert. *Wilbert Baranco and His Rhythm Bombardiers*. Los Angeles. Black & White BW183-2R thru BW186-2L. 1946.

_____. *Wilbert Baranco and His Trio*. Los Angeles. Black & White BW602-3 thru BW605-2. 1947.

_____. *Wilbert Baranco and His Trio*. Los Angeles. Black & White BW623-4 thru BW626-2. 1947.

King, Saunders. *What's Your Story Morning Glory*. Saunders King and His Rhythm and Blues Band. Los Angeles. Blues Boy BB303. 1942.¹

_____. *Saunders King and His Rhythm and Blues Band*. Los Angeles. Swinghouse (E) SW30 & 43. 1943.

_____. *Saunders King and His Rhythm and Blues Band*. San Francisco. Blues Boy BB303. 1946.

_____. *Saunders King and His Rhythm and Blues Band*. San Francisco. Blues Boy 202, 203 204, & 206. 1946.

_____. *Saunders King and His Rhythm and Blues Band*. San Francisco. Rhythm 301 & 302. 1947.

Mosby, Curtis. *Curtis Mosby and His Dixieland Blue Blowers*. Los Angeles. Columbia 1191 & 1192. 1927.

Raymond, Clem, and Dick Oxtot. *The Lost Clarinet of Clem Raymond and Dick Oxtot of the Golden Age (?)*. Dick Oxtot Band. San Francisco. Delmark 1958

Spikes, Reb. *Reb's Legion Club Forty Fives*. Los Angeles. Columbia 1193. 1924.

Starr, Henry. *Mr. Froggie*. Los Angeles. Flexo 148 (7"). 1928.

Watkins, Earl. *Original Yellow Jackets*. Hot Springs, Arkansas. Vocalion. HS-22 through HS-28. 1937.

Watkins, Earl, with Earl Hines. *A Monday Date*. Chicago. Riverside RLP9398. 1961.

¹ Early California Blues recordings have mostly been reissued by European labels, as in the case of Blues Boy. For example, the title *Saunders King and His Rhythm and Blues Band* was probably a title that the European label gave to the reissue 20 years later and probably did not appear originally, in the early 1940s. There are many inconsistencies in the numbering of the reissues, as well as the numbering on the original labels. The only solution is to actually look at the original recording.

