

German pioneers of Oakland

By Amelia Sue Marshall

From the beer gardens of the Dimond District to the fragrant hiking trails of Butters Canyon, German-Americans have long made significant contributions to Oakland.

In 1848, before the Gold Rush, liberals were forced into exile from German-speaking provinces of Northern Europe. Some of these “Forty-Eighters” came to Oakland.

The 1877 city directory shows dozens of German-owned businesses. Some notable examples include:

- Spice merchant August Schilling, whose home and gardens was by Lake Merritt, near 14th and Harrison streets;
- George Crist operated a tannery in the town of Brooklyn, at 12th Street and 23rd Avenue;
- George V. Arth and Jacob Frederick were proprietors of the Oakland Carriage Manufactory, at the southeast corner of 10th Street and Webster;
- Frederick Delger started as a shoemaker. Though hard work and shrewd Oakland real estate investments, he died a millionaire;
- Members of the Hampel family were bakers, blacksmiths, and manufacturers of safes.

Frederick Rhoda arrived in the rural Fruit Vale district in 1849. He purchased 400 acres of land and planted them in Royal Ann cher-



THE RHODA HOUSE today, in the Fruitvale neighborhood.

See **PIONEERS** on page 2



THE ORIGINAL ALTENHEIM, lost to fire in 1908.

By Erika Mailman

As you drive up MacArthur Boulevard from the small, bustling Dimond District, you first see the massive, spear-shaped gardens of the Althenheim, described by its brochure as a place for “European-style retirement living.” A few minutes motoring up the hills and you see the gorgeous edifice itself, surrounded by manicured grounds and a splashing fountain.

The structure now standing is the second Althenheim. The first was built over a three-year period, 1893–96, and represented a grand venture for German-Americans who were thinking about their futures and having a comfortable home for retirement.

The first Althenheim was the brainchild of Charles Meinecke, president of the German Benevolent Society of San Francisco. The society kept a German hospital on Brannan Street in San Francisco, which burned to the ground in the 1870s, delaying Meinecke’s plans. But by 1890, a bazaar at the Mechanic’s Pavilion, at Larkin and Market streets, was organized. Taking place over five evenings, it netted nearly \$40,000 in construction funds, an amazing fundraising feat for the era.

Adolph Sutro offered the members of the group a free plot of land out by his estate on

Ocean Beach, but they decided instead to purchase six acres in Oakland for \$6,000, on what was then Hopkins Street (later renamed to honor General Douglas MacArthur).

Why spurn the free offer? A 1998 Althenheim pamphlet produced to mark its 105 years explained that Sutro Heights offered fog and cold winds, while the Dimond site was warm and sunny. It was also near orchards and biergartens, both compelling and unignorable.

A picnic was held on the new grounds to raise even more funds. And in February 1893, construction began. Doors opened three years later with the only a few dozen residents living in the four-story structure with a six-story tower.

After the dramatic 1906 earthquake, the Althenheim took in homeless San Franciscans, only to make its own residents homeless two years later when it burned to the ground. No one was injured, and the German community took in the residents. A year later, the new Althenheim, built in 1909 for \$150,000, was ready to receive back its people.

According to an undated pamphlet in the Oakland History Room, labeled “Deutsches

See **ALTENHEIM** on page 3



Pioneers

Continued from page 1

ries. His was the first California fruit to be exported by rail to New York, in 1860. The Rhoda house can be seen on Whittle Street.

The Brendemuhl family also farmed cherries. Their house stands at the top of the hill, in the 4200 block of Fruitvale Avenue.

At the time the Altenheim was first constructed, in 1893, German beer gardens were thriving nearby on Hopkins Street—today’s MacArthur Boulevard. Near the northeast corner of Dimond Street was Tepper’s beer garden. Next door, on the south bank of Sausal Creek, stood the Neckhaus.

Tourists from San Francisco came on the horse-drawn trolley, and later the “Fruit Vale and Highland Park electric road.”

By the turn of the twentieth century, Oakland had at least a dozen organizations celebrating German, Bavarian, and Swiss culture.

After the estate of Francis M. (“Borax”) Smith was liquidated, the Smith Trust “Home Club” above Park Boulevard was purchased by the German Pioneer Club in 1926. Its art gallery was transformed into a gymnasium, and the grounds were landscaped to resemble a German garden. Concerts and folk dancing were popular.

In the early 1930s, with economic suffering felt in Europe, many Oakland German Pioneer Club members joined the German-American Bund. This was a fraternal organization with a paramilitary bent. Its national office soon became a target for the new Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In October 1938, the *San Francisco Call* reported that Bund members had been expelled from the German Pioneer House for



COURTESY: CHARLES CHAPMAN

ARTH & FREDERICK Carriage Manufactory at 10th and Webster streets, at left. At right is the Brendemuhl House today on Fruitvale Avenue, once home to cherry orchards.



CHARLES CHAPMAN

“anti-American activities and propaganda”. Between two and three hundred Bund members had been drilling with rifles on the premises.

“They have been making trouble for some time. Since Hitler went into Czechoslovakia they have been particularly cocky,” House manager George Englehart told the *Call*.

In the post-war years, music and dancing prevailed at the German Pioneer House. Still, neighbors complained, and the city instituted a midnight curfew. Finally, the House was sold in 1958 and razed to provide space for the Oakland High School campus.

Meanwhile, quieter forms of entertainment were sought by the Oakland Nature Friends (Naturfreunde). In 1920, local members of the international hiking and cultural club

pooled their money to purchase three acres in Butters Canyon, at the headwaters of Peralta Creek. Craftsmen and their families hiked up

See **PIONEERS** on page 4



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

GATES leading to Lake Merritt at the Schilling home.



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

THE SCHILLING HOME, home to spice merchant Augustus Schilling, once situated near 14th and Harrison streets. This postcard shows part of the expansive grounds.

In this issue

Volunteers	4
History Room Anniversary	5
PIP Awards	6
McNally’s Mystery	7
Preservation Action	8
New Members	10
President’s Message	11
Mutual Stores	12



Altenheim

Continued from page 1

Altenheim” and carrying information in both English and German, “The building is constructed so all are outside rooms with windows looking down upon beautiful green tree-shaded lawns” and the small tables in the dining room make “one feel much more at home and among close friends than one could possibly feel in even the best hotel.” The library contained books in both languages, the verandas held easy chairs, and a physician and nurse were stationed at the home. Each room had a service bell to reach the main office. Moreover, residents were offered a three-month period to live at the Altenheim and decide whether to stay.

The Altenheim was designed by San Francisco architect Oscar Haupt, who won a design contest to earn the commission. Originally, the structure was H-shaped. But a 1915 three-story annex, a new building and hospital built in 1923, and the addition of 10 new rooms with private baths in 1938, altered the building. It is rated “A”—the highest rating by the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey.

Inside, a lovely dome graced the entrance, and an enormous grandfather clock kept time in the lobby. The furnishings included sideboards and tables made in Germany, donated by the building’s founders.

Although the Altenheim was built to house those of Germanic descent, it later became



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

A CARRIAGE passes the Altenheim.

available to people of all nationalities. In fact, by 1968, according to the *Oakland Tribune*, only half the residents were of German ancestry. When I visited in 2001, I heard many German accents, but the receptionist of ten years estimated that only 25 percent of the population was German-American.

The May Festival was traditionally a huge event for the Altenheim. In 1910, the year after the new building opened, 12,000 visitors attended. The *Oakland Enquirer* reported that management was “aiming to afford the comforts of a home rather than the mechanical attention of an eleemosynary institution.” Vocab word of the day: Webster’s says eleemosynary means, “of, relating to, or supported by charity.” Perhaps the *Enquirer*’s high level of diction explains why it is no longer around today.

Space had been left in the building’s foundation for contributors to buy a brick at \$5. Mayor Frank K. Mott bought a brick that day and made a speech that earned him three cheers.

“Oakland is proud to have within her limits such a noble institution,” he said, and the *Enquirer* reported, “The cheers were given with a volume, the echo of which traveled for miles over hills and vales of the surrounding country.” Mott also spoke about how the German “emperor” was trying to establish a pension for old age, and remarked, “That is something which every nation in the world should and could do.”

It was in fact German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck whose Prussian Plan was adopted in 1889, making Germany, “the first nation to adopt a modern social insurance program,” according to the Social Security website www.ssa.gov/history. Although individual states established programs, it wasn’t until 1935 that Americans passed the Social Security Act, under the leadership of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

This article initially appeared in the Montclair newspaper on Sept. 25, 2001.



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

EARLY BROCHURE

Rehabilitation resounds at the Altenheim

By Betsy Yost

The Altenheim (German for “Elders’ Home”) is a ninety-year old complex of Classical Revival residential buildings on a six-acre park-like site in Oakland’s Dimond District.

It provided dormitory-style housing and geriatric care for seniors from 1909 to 2002. The 78,000-square-foot facility then sat vacant for three years, its historic gardens and vast buildings being maintained by dedicated vol-

unteers, while the owners determined how to bring this aging complex up to modern conditions. At the end of 2005, construction finally began on an extensive rehabilitation which would result in 93 affordable, independent living apartments for seniors, with sitting rooms, a library, computer room and activity rooms. The rehabilitation was the first phase of a masterplan which also included three new buildings, for 81 additional units of affordable senior housing on the site.

Citizens Housing Corporation (CHC), a non-profit housing developer, had the vision and perseverance to carry out the reuse of this historic resource on a budget not normally associated with historic preservation. In 2009, the East Bay affordable housing non-

PHOTOS: PYATOK ARCHITECTS



ALTENHEIM INTERIORS today. At left is the entrance lobby, and at right is the dining hall with exposed wooden ceiling beams.

See **REHABILITATION** on page 4



Rehabilitation

Continued from page 3

profit Eden Housing took over managing the Altheim. CHC and Eden worked closely with The Altheim Inc. (the German cultural organization which continues to own the land), as well as with neighborhood groups and the city of Oakland to develop a program for the complex. The resulting plan retains the three-acre gardens, part of the cultural legacy of the home and the neighborhood, while providing modern apartments for low-income seniors. Activity rooms continued to be shared with The Altheim for events such as Oktoberfest. The complex is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the rehabilitation was carried out according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The first Altheim was built in 1893. Following its destruction by fire in 1908, Oscar Haupt was retained to design the new buildings; construction began the same year on

Pioneers

Continued from page 2

the hill on weekends to construct a clubhouse, kitchen, and lodge in the rustic Bavarian style. The Nature Friends conduct festivals throughout the year. See <http://www.thenaturefriendscorporation.org/festivals.html>.

Another contemporary German cultural group is the Oakland Turnverein, founded in 1867. Visitors are welcome to enjoy their folk singing and dancing at Bjornson Hall, 2258 MacArthur Boulevard. See <http://www.ugas-eb.org/turnverein/>.

Thanks to Dennis Evanosky and Phil Bellman for their contributions.



GERMAN PIONEER HOME once hosted the German-American Bund.

JOIN US!

OHA invites you to a celebratory 35th year event at the Altheim on Sunday afternoon, January 29. Meet us there at 1720 MacArthur Boulevard, where we will install a landmark plaque. Enjoy music, refreshments, and the chance to see a wonderful National Register restored facility that is not generally open to the public. For details, watch your mail.

two residential buildings, the administration building and the dining building with its kitchen wing. Hoping to avoid another catastrophic fire, the architect separated the wood-framed residential buildings with the non-combustible brick administration building, also incorporating metal fire doors between them. The third residential building, constructed in 1914, is non-combustible, with a steel and concrete structure and brick exterior walls.

The Altheim buildings were constructed over a relatively short span of time and designed by the same architect. The buildings have a raised brick basement and full-height Doric pilasters surmounted by a continuous cornice. Porches with free-standing Doric columns are a prominent feature of the main entrances and ends of the buildings.

On the interior, the common spaces contain the most elaborate features. Exposed heavy timber trusses with stenciled decorations make the 40-foot by 120-foot Craftsman-style dining room of special interest. The spatial organization of the complex is also significant, with rotundas punctuating intersecting corridors.

The rehabilitation retained the spatial organization of the complex and the generous and light-filled common areas and corridors. Dormitory rooms were replaced with independent senior apartments, each with its own wheelchair-accessible bathroom and full kitchenette. Heating, plumbing and electrical systems were replaced entirely. Plywood shear walls were added to the wood-framed buildings and shotcrete shear walls to the steel and masonry buildings.

The common spaces on the interior were carefully retained in their existing configurations, and restored following extensive demolition of corridor walls for structural work.

On the exterior, non-original additions and modifications were removed. Projecting stair bays and porches required major structural work, and were restored. Non-original rail-

ings were removed and replaced with compatible ones. Almost 400 windows were surveyed and repaired. New photovoltaic panels, invisible from the street, occupy one of the long flat roofs.

Because the Altheim is a very special place, it has attracted an unusual group of tenants. The main pedestrian access to the project is up a steep driveway, which can be difficult for seniors. The units are generally small, and the site did not allow for many parking spaces. The tenants are an artistic group, and prefer to live in a beautiful setting rather than in a more modern complex. They practice Tai Chi in the gardens in the mornings. The compact units have attracted seniors who like having little space to take care of but enjoy grand sitting rooms and gardens.

Phase II added three buildings for a total of 174 units. Pyatok Architects' challenge was to site the buildings in a comfortable way in relation to existing buildings and courtyards, although it was not possible to replicate the generous proportions of the original complex's 80-foot-wide courtyards.

The new 4-story buildings stepping down the hill are slightly shorter than the adjacent 3½ story building. Where a new building sits next to an original 2½ story building, it steps down to 3 stories to maintain a similar scale from the street. Careful attention was paid to maintaining light and views for the adjacent single family homes. ■

Thanks to our volunteers

Charles Bucher, Claire Castell, Alison Finlay, Lisa Hire, Daniel Levy, Ruby Long, Claudia Reet, Steve Rynerson, Sandra Tillin

WALKING TOUR LEADERS: Andrew Alden, Annalee Allen, Gene Anderson, Phil Bellman, Chelsea, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Riley Doty, Dennis Evanosky, Gary Knecht, Ruby Long, Amelia Marshall, Betty Marvin, Woody Minor, Greg Novak, Pamela Magnuson-Peddie, Stuart Swiedler

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SPEAKERS for lecture presentations & building tours: Barbara Davis, Lou Leal, Rick Moss, Jana Olsen, Panache Lighting Studio; Thomas Snyder



The History Room celebrates 65 years of preserving the past

By Dorothy Lazard

From the city's earliest days, Oaklanders have sought to preserve documents that reflect the city's civic, artistic, political and social history. In the "Library and Reading Rooms" section of the 1894 Oakland City Directory, the following text appeared: "Provision has been made for filing and indexing for reference all pamphlets, leaflets and printed papers of local interest, and such programs of public occasions and other documents and contributions to current history of the city of Oakland as may be of use in forming the basis of a local historical collection, and citizens having such papers, programs and documents, are requested to donate the same to the library."

Since that date, generations of librarians have worked diligently to abide by this edict. In 1921, librarian Mabel Thomas established a special California Collection which included local and state historical books and pamphlets at the Main Library, then located at 14th and Grove streets (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Way).

Miss Thomas, who was hired by the library in 1905 and was the head of Reference service here from 1918 until her retirement in 1948, recalled the creation of the California Collection by "rescuing rare and out of print volumes from general circulation and purchasing other special books." At that library the California Collection was housed in a special, locked shelving area. When plans were made for a new Main Library—our current one at 14th and Oak—it was the Friends of the Library who suggested and

provided the impetus for a separate California Room, stocked with the contents of California Collection.

The move to the new building was overseen by librarian Josephine DeWitt Rhodehamel. When the Main Library moved to its current location on 14th and Oak streets in 1951, this collection formed the new California Room. Under the direction of librarian Frances Buxton, who managed the Room for over twenty years from 1953 to 1977, the collection grew by leaps and bounds.

Books, photographs, newspaper clippings, maps, monographs, vintage postcards, business directories, county histories, restaurant and hotel dining room menus, and theater programs were among the important items acquired. In 1965, the California Room was moved from its original home on the second floor of the library, where the Second Start adult literacy program is now, to its current home, formerly the Music Department.

TRANSITION YEARS: The California Room changed its focus to Oakland and the East Bay in 1978 and was renamed the Oakland History Room (OHR). Librarian Bill Sturm, who took over direction of OHR in 1978, provided patrons with quality reference service, engaging history talks, and interesting exhibits. He, along with librarians Kathleen DiGiovanni, Lynne Cutler and others, made the collection more accessible by



OAKLAND HISTORY ROOM

LONGTIME LIBRARIAN now retired, Bill Sturm in the OHR in the 1980s.

extensively and regularly indexing periodical literature, collecting books by local authors, and encouraging community members to donate their Oakland-related mementos (such as yearbooks, photographs and scrapbooks). Often profiled in local papers for his dedication to the rare and important resources at his disposal, Sturm retired in 2001 after 25 years of service.

MOVING INTO THE 21st CENTURY: As the OHR passed its 50th anniversary, plans were afoot to make its resources more accessible to the growing number of local, national and international users. E-Answers, an e-mail based reference service, began at the Oakland Public Library in 2002. The OHR received questions from people all over the world seeking information about an endless array of topics including family members, historic buildings, and prominent Oakland citizens. Four years later, librarian Steve Lavoie shepherded the room's first venture into digitization. Through a Library Services and Technology Act grant, sponsored by the California State Library, 200 images from our collection were digitized and uploaded onto the Online Archive of California, a University of California online repository.

Today librarian Dorothy Lazard and the OHR staff continue this work, digitizing photographs and documents of Oakland neighborhoods, stores, churches, downtown businesses, and much more. Through its partnership with the California Audiovisual Preservation Project, a California State Library ini-

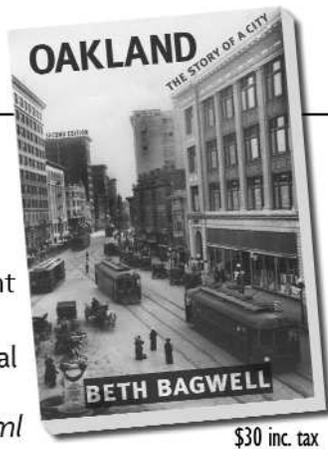
See **HISTORY ROOM** on page 10

THE PERFECT GIFT

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PIP awards reward excellence in historic community

The Partners in Preservation awards honor a wide range of successful preservation efforts. As our city faces incredible and exciting change, we celebrate those who work hard to preserve what makes us strong and unique. Below we present last year's inspiring winners. Send in your nominations for this year's awards by the end of December (see box at lower right).

■ **412 Monte Vista Avenue:** OHA has presented a Partners in Preservation Award to Oakland company BuildZig for its work on 412 Monte Vista, one of the few remaining mansions built on what was once known as "Millionaire Hill."

■ **City Slicker Farms:** A Partners in Preservation Award also goes to City Slicker Farms, an organization at the forefront of the sustainable urban farms and food justice movement, combining skills training, community building, direct service, and a commitment to social, economic, and racial justice in one of the most blighted communities in Oakland.

■ **De Lauer's Super News Stand:** Meet Partners in Preservation Award recipient De Lauer's Super News Stand, a landmark business in downtown Oakland for more than a century, which recently received a facelift.

■ **Harriet Schlader:** Harriet Schlader, a founder and Managing Director for Woodminster Summer Musicals, has received a Lifetime Achievement Award for her 50 years of work at the historic Woodminster Amphitheater.

■ **Lulu at the 16th Street Station:** West Edge Opera has been awarded for its

presentation of Lulu at the 16th Street Station, a Beaux-Arts marvel built by preeminent train station architect Jarvis Hunt in 1912.

■ **Kingfish Pub & Cafe:** A PIP Award has been presented to the Kingfish Pub and Cafe, one of the few remaining old bars in the East Bay and a mainstay of the Temescal District,



CITY SLICKER FARMS

ELENA ZHUKOVA



JOHN KLEIN

A FUN CROWD gathers at the Rockridge Masonic Lodge in February for 2015's Partners in Preservation Awards presentation.

as well as the subject of a recent relocation, rehabilitation, and additions.

■ **MHA Clubhouse & Sequoia Horse Arena:** The Metropolitan Horsemen's Association has received a PIP Award for its role in preserving the MHA Clubhouse and Sequoia Horse Arena, and thereby keeping Oakland's equestrian history alive for the public to enjoy.

■ **Author Summer Brenner, *Oakland Tales*:** Local author Summer Brenner won a PIP Award for her book *Oakland Tales, Lost Secrets of the Town*, which takes a unique approach to making place and history come alive for young people. The book connects youth to the place they live, inspires them to identify themselves in the continuum of history, envisions a blueprint of the future, and catalyzes discussions about cultural diversity, social hierarchy, and historical legacies. It has been a theatrical presentations co-directed by SF's Word for Word theater company.

■ **The Rabbi Steven and Leona Chester Campus at the Temple Sinai:** OHA presented a PIP Award to Temple Sinai, the oldest continuously operating Jewish congregation in the East Bay, whose newly expanded facility incorporates modern style in a manner that is complementary to the historic fabric of its original structures.

■ **Tower of Power:** The Oakland-born musical group Tower of Power won for its contribution to the promotion and preservation of Oakland and the Bay Area's rich musical heritage for the past 48 years, as well as its continuing efforts to help bridge Oakland's past and future. ■

SEND IN THOSE NOMINATIONS!

OHA is delighted to announce that we are now accepting nominations and applications for the 2016 Partners in Preservation Awards honoring work that demonstrates excellence in historic preservation. We're hoping for another wide-ranging group this year, so please fill out the application at <http://oaklandheritage.org/files/118913083.pdf> and submit with all supporting materials by Jan. 1, 2017. For more info, go to <http://oaklandheritage.org/partners-in-preservation.html>

Award Categories: Adaptive Use/ Rehabilitation, New Construction, Restoration, Stewardship, Education, Advocacy & Leadership, and Lifetime Achievement

Eligibility: Projects must have been completed within the geographical boundaries of Oakland and finished within the last five years. Nominations not selected in previous years may be resubmitted.



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For further information please contact Joan Dark at Jdark@pacunion.com

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Mystery marker mystifies at McNally's



PHOTOS: CHARLES BUCHER

Pubs don't usually have patrons buried under the premises. But this headstone certainly marks *someone's* final resting place, predating the construction of McNally's Irish Pub on College Avenue. Any of our readers know who the mysterious grave is for? Contact us at info@oaklandheritage.org or call us at 763-9218—but maybe have a pint first.

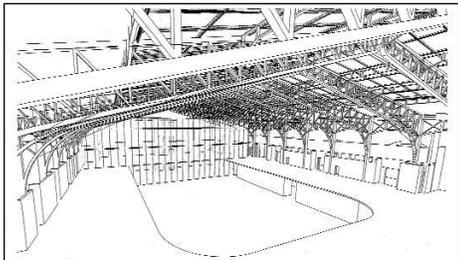


OHA is working hard to preserve what's great about Oakland's past

By Naomi Schiff

Here are some of the ongoing projects being monitored by OHA. Let us know if you'd like to become involved.

OAKLAND AUDITORIUM: Orton Development presented an update to the City Council's Community and Economic Development Committee on Oct. 25. Structural plans include a four-story, glass-walled building-within-a-building to help provide seismic strength. Located to the east of the stage area of the Calvin Simmons Theater, and occupying part of the Arena, it would house arts groups. Its ground floor would create a passage from Tenth Street through the building to the Lake Merritt Boulevard side of the



ORTON DEVELOPMENT

RENDERING from Heller Manus Architects shows open commercial space and mezzanine in former Oakland Auditorium Arena, looking toward Arts Building.

building. Plans include slightly reducing the amount of seating in the Calvin Simmons Theater to provide a venue of optimal size for local performing groups. The former mezzanine seating of the Arena would be converted to a level floor area for tenant use—perhaps office spaces. The ground floor might also see such uses, although that remains unclear. The big expanse of skylights, last visible in the 1940s, would be uncovered and illuminate the Arena floor. The developers show a restaurant space along the arches on the western end of the building's ground floor, and a deck or open area just outside the niches, facing Lake Merritt Boulevard. The Gold Room and the Ballroom would be retained as usable spaces for gatherings and events. The basement area could house a mix of Laney College-related science labs and maker space or art studios, in addition to upgraded storage for the Oakland Museum. The Arena hosted myriad

events of all kinds for decades, but the report included two economic analyses showing it infeasible to restore it for large assembly use. The project, which is likely to make use of federal historic tax credits, will come back for further action and environmental review in 2017.

OAK KNOLL KEEPS MOVING:

OHA commented on a supplement to the Environmental Impact Report, requesting it describe alternatives that might keep the historic clubhouse in place, rather than moving it. OHA did support relocation rather than demolition, however. The project comes back for Design Review and Final EIR, as well as planning approvals, toward the end of this year.

HIGH RISE PROPOSALS DOWNTOWN:

Developers propose several tall structures in Oakland's downtown. An 18-story hotel proposal for Jefferson at 15th could block views of City Hall as one comes into town travelling eastward on 14th Street. Can it be designed to maintain this familiar gateway view? A forty-story tower would occupy part of the Merchants' Garage site, a full block from 13th to 14th Streets, Webster to Franklin. The rest of the mixed-use commercial and residential site would be lower, and the view of the Tribune tower from East 18th remain visible.

Still in the early stages, a proposal for a tall building on the King Block at 13th and Harrison might create a "facadectomy" effect on



JOHN KLEIN

ICONIC VIEW: Lakeshore at 18th Street Pier, looking toward City Hall and the Tribune tower.

a historically important block. Currently, a number of small business occupy a 1920s sanitary market building with white ceramic-tiled arches. The developers hope to build a mixed-use tower with five floors of underground parking.

Just across from the Julia Morgan YWCA building at 15th and Webster, a 350-foot residential tower is proposed. While this project would not demolish highly important historic resources, the impact on its neighborhood led OHA to request a better design and more attention to its context, in an Area of Secondary Importance in city surveys.



NAOMI SCHIFF

BRICKS + graffiti + grinder = trouble.



JOHN KLEIN

DRIVING TOWARD DOWNTOWN on 14th Street, relevant to Jefferson project.

YWCA GRAFFITI RESCUE: When OHA boardmember Charles Bucher, who works across the street, saw a brutal attempt to go after major graffiti damage on the historic landmark and National Register-listed Julia Morgan YWCA building at 15th and Webster, he enlisted help. Heroic terra cotta expert Riley Doty jumped into action. OHA contacted the owners, Citrine Advisors, and the City of Oakland. Prompted by a threatening letter from the Blight Department of the



NAOMI SCHIFF



SANDING MASONRY surfaces causes damage. Riley Doty comparison-tests paint removal methods at the YWCA.

City, the owners had sent out a crew to use grinders to sand graffiti off the light-colored brick of the historic building.

Unfortunately, sanding fired masonry removes the hardened exterior layer, mars the surface, and only makes the brick more susceptible to damage. Once the owners were alerted that this was a bad practice, work was halted before the front of the building was damaged. Riley Doty volunteered to test some graffiti-removal products, contacted manufacturers for advice, and studied the least-damaging solutions. Ultimately, the owners contracted with Evergreen Waterproofing, who undertook to remove the graffiti with chemical removers and power-washing, and then sealed the surfaces. The results were excellent.

Pass the word: porous historic building materials such as stone and brick are particularly vulnerable and should not be handled with abrasives! Working with the city, we hope to be able to provide information to owners who are dealing with tagging and unwanted graffiti on their buildings.

SHORELINE PARK AT NINTH AVENUE:

A revised park design for the waterfront public park at Brooklyn Basin will retain some of the trusses from the Ninth Avenue Terminal and reuse them as elements of the park. New renderings show several of

the steel trusses defining the west end of the terminal, reused to provide support for a performance area awning. A few more are retained at the center of the soon-to-be-partially-demolished structure, and one further bay is being retained near the front. The



STEEL TRUSSES are visible in Ninth Avenue Terminal, summer 2016.



VISUALIZATION from landscape architect Einwiller-Kuehl shows how some of the trusses would be reused in Shoreline Park.

amazing 1,000-foot length of this break-bulk warehouse will be evident from these remnants, so that people can imagine what once occupied the site. ■



PHOTOS: DAVID BOYSEL

Diana is still hunting

By David Boyse

This large oval plaster relief depicting Diana the Huntress was donated to the Paramount Theatre in 2006, along with some very damaged mirror panels which once fitted around it. This was reputedly salvaged from a movie theatre in the area, but I have been unable to discover which one. It was very broken, the result of being removed from a wall. She had been coated with aluminum paint at some point in her history but she was originally gilded.

Diana languished in storage for several years, simply taking up space, when I decided to use her backstage in a dressing room for decoration. She has the right decorative motifs to be Paramount-like; one day I might discover where she came from. By mounting her for framing, she takes on a new role as artwork rather than architectural ornament.

Reinvented and rejuvenated, Diana has a new life. ■



A chance to visit the remote Mare Island

PHOTOS: NAOMI SCHIFF



OFFICER'S HOME

By Naomi Schiff

On September 17, OHA's special tour visited some of the highlights at Mare Island, once an isolated Pacific outpost when most naval activity was focused on the Atlantic Ocean. Meeting at the memorabilia-stuffed museum in the one-time pipefitting shop, the OHA group got a fine presentation about the Tiffany glass of St. Peter's Chapel—an amazing collection of windows donated by families and individuals connected with Mare Island. A visit to the docks revealed the huge scale of ship repair operations. A guided tour of one of the officer's houses revealed a domestic combination of elegance with naval practicality.

At the former hospital, Captain Thomas Snyder described the medical history of the island from its earliest days through its closure. Ultimately the activities were transferred to Oakland's naval medical facility at Oak Knoll. Captain Snyder explained how the nurses, doctors, and orderlies lived alongside the patients, and discussed some of

PHOTOS: DANIEL LEVY



US NAVY SHIP repair and maintenance required heavy equipment; workshops and warehouses from many periods line the historic waterfront.

the remarkable innovations and local advancements in treatment at Mare Island. A lunch break provided welcome relief on a hot day. Once off limits to the average visitor, now the island is home to a growing collection of new uses, including residential, manufacturing, recreational, outdoor, and educational enterprises. ■

History Room

Continued from page 5

tiative, OHR has begun digitizing materials on obsolete media (such as 16mm home movies and oral histories on audiotape) that might otherwise be lost to history. These can be viewed at www.archive.org. Early Oakland maps are now cataloged and searchable on the Library's online catalog.

OHR staff works tirelessly to keep Oakland's history in the public consciousness. They contribute stories to the Oakland Public Library's blog, "From the Main Library;" develop and present exhibits; and host popular local history programs. Staff also contributes articles to OHA's newsletter and supports the organization's tour program with research assistance. As an important city department, the OHR supports other departments like the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, the Cultural Arts & Marketing Department, and the Oakland Tours Program.

As we celebrate this 65th anniversary, we honor the citizens, historians, students, writers, volunteers, and librarians who built and continue to sustain the OHR. ■



WES COWAN, host of *History Detectives*, filmed in OHR in 2010.

Welcome to our new members!

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

- Marie & Ray Alberti, Jeremy Allen, JoAnn Ayres, Margaret Barbee, Laurel Cain & Nate Boxer, James Carl, Erica Chambre, DC & John Chesney, Robin Dean, Nancy Friedman, Jeffrey Gaddy, Julius Gaines, Michelle Williams Jackson, Karen Johnson, Tracy Johnston, Carole Jones, Karen Kopp, Lynn & Bill Lazarus, Joseph & Julie Liss, Barbara Ludlum, Elaina Munzar, Gin Murphey, Nancy Rielle, Jay & Michele Rosen-Theberge, Ben Schiff & June Goodwin, Fred Setterberg, Thomas Snyder, Riaz Taplin/Riaz Inc., Anita Tenley, Linda Thurston, Gladys Walker, Burlington Willes, Elaine Yamaguchi

PHOTOS: DANIEL LEVY



THE SUMMER JINGLETOWN walking tour visited the Cotton Mill, workers' houses, and a huge refrigerator at the Dreisbach company.



End of year reflections and appreciation

By Alison Finlay, President

As 2016 winds down, let's all thank OHA's office staff, Amelia Cass, Nghi Lam, and bookkeeper Casey Baastians, for their work keeping the office operating smoothly. Thank you to dedicated volunteer Joyce Hendy for the generous gift of her help throughout the year. I also appreciate OHA's board: Charles Bucher, Tom Debley, Tom Haw, Kitty Hughes, Daniel Levy, Amelia Marshall, Denise Parker, Steve Rynerson, and Naomi Schiff. Each board member has given of talent and time. Thank you!

On January 29, we'll be celebrating our 35 years of preservation advocacy in the lovely Community Room of the Altenheim, at 1720 MacArthur Boulevard, near Fruitvale Avenue. The generously-sized room is handsomely lined with windows on three sides, features a beamed and stenciled ceiling, and venerable antiques that attest to the past.

Currently affordable senior apartments, the Altenheim is not usually open to non-residents, but Eden Housing extended an invitation and we are enthusiastically accepting the opportunity. Join us for jazz

music, festive food, beer, wine and a great time! If you'd like to help, there's lots to do. We'd love help recruiting sponsors, planning, prepping, or pitching in on the day of the event. Call the office (510 763-9218), and leave a message, and the celebration committee will get back to you. Don't forget to save the date; we look forward to seeing you there!

A big thank you to everyone who helped make this year's Walking Tours a success. Tour leaders did a wonderful job! We are also grateful to neighbors who welcomed our group and contributed anecdotes and oral histories of Oakland along the way. In Jingtletown, West Oakland, Sheffield Village, and Chabot Canyon, among others, the neighbors enriched our tours.

We are starting to plan next summer's Walking Tours. If you'd like to join the committee, if you have an idea for a tour, or might like to lead a tour, please let us know by calling the office.

Coming to your mailbox in the very near future will be OHA's Annual Appeal. We are grateful to our loyal supporters whose kindness allows us to continue to advocate for the adaptive reuse of historic buildings,



OUR NORTH FIELD walking tour this summer focused on Oakland's rich aviation history.

to keep Oakland's history alive through presentations, lectures, building and walking tours and to cheer for the diverse city it has become through our Partners in Preservation awards program. Please consider our appeal and be generous if you are able.

Giving a gift membership to a friend or neighbor, or a copy of *Oakland: Story of a City* to someone who enjoys local history are other ways to support Oakland Heritage Alliance. We are frugal but effective, and your contribution will make Oakland a better city!

We hope to see you at the Altenheim on January 29th! ■

CONTRIBUTORS:

David Boysel, Kathleen DiGiovanni, Alison Finlay, Dorothy Lazard, Daniel Levy, Erika Mailman, Amelia Sue Marshall, Naomi Schiff, Betsy Yost

PRODUCTION: Erika Mailman

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

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Stay informed, enjoy Oakland's secrets, and get discounts on OHA events. It's a great gift, too!

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Some limited income memberships are available. Call /63-9218 for information

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'City Beautiful' grocery store headquarters

By Kathleen DiGiovanni

The next time you find yourself headed down International Boulevard, stop for a few minutes in front of the old Mutual Stores building in the 5700 block. Get out of your car. Spend some time taking in the details of this exemplary Oakland commercial/industrial building. Its genius is in its details, from the basket weave brick pattern on the tower, to the blue and yellow tiles on the roof of the tower's decorative lantern, to the ox heads decorating the entry and tower.

This complex of office building, creamery, and warehouse was built in 1928 to house the headquarters of Mutual Stores, a pioneering chain of supermarkets. We first looked into the history of this complex in 2005. We're returning to it now because at the time of this writing a proposal is before the city to permit the development of the entire complex into live-work housing.

Mutual Stores was established in Oakland in 1917 as the Danish Creamery Company by Danish immigrant Emil Hagstrom. Hagstrom was an early champion of the "cash and carry" grocery concept, guessing that shoppers would rather save money by buying dairy products at a store than by having them delivered to their homes. Hagstrom added bakery and grocery products to his line and changed the business's name to Mutual Stores, the new name representing the "mutual benefit" of this self-serve pattern of

grocery shopping to customer and proprietor alike.

Mutual Stores experienced rapid growth during the 1920s, ultimately expanding to more than 100 stores in the Bay Area. The stunning success of his business enabled Hagstrom to hire Oakland architects Walter D. Reed and William G. Corlett to design a plant and office building for him. The warehouse and creamery buildings at the rear of the complex are of ordinary brick-clad industrial construction, but the office building facing International Boulevard with its imposing tower and rich detail show an unusual generosity toward the street and the community. According to the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, the City Beautiful movement of the early 20th century began the "trend to beautify utilitarian structures," driven by a "sense of responsibility to the city." The building opened on May 26, 1928, with a public open house that attracted 20,000 visitors.

Reed and Corlett, partners from 1912 to 1933, designed some of Oakland's most important commercial structures, including the Oakland Bank of Savings building at 12th and Broadway and the Hebern Electric Code building at 8th and Harrison. The Mutual Stores complex won its architects an Honor Award in the commercial buildings classification by the Northern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1929. In 1929, Mutual Stores was



ANNA DIGIOVANNI

THE SPLENDID TOWER atop the Mutual Stores complex on International Boulevard.

sold to MacMarr Stores, and in 1931 M. B. Skaggs's Safeway in turn bought out MacMarr.

The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey gives this building its highest rating. It was declared a city landmark in 1993 as a "primary contributor to the National Register quality 57th Avenue industrial district." ■