

Central Oak Park Walking Tour

Sacramento, California

by

Robin Datel and Scott Beckner

Geography Department

California State University Sacramento

August 2007

You can reach the starting point of this tour, the corner of Broadway, 3rd Avenue, and 35th Street, via RT bus routes 51 and 68. The walking tour route is wheelchair accessible.

This walking tour of central Oak Park highlights the following eras and themes in the neighborhood's history:

- In the first half of the 20th century, Oak Park prospered as Sacramento's first streetcar suburb. It developed its own small downtown, which successfully met many of the day-to-day needs of its residents. In form and function, it exemplified many of today's "smart growth" principles.
- In the middle of the century, Oak Park became more African American, and with that change came racial tension and struggle. Oak Park also became poorer, experienced capital flight, and lost some of its physical assets.
- In the past few years, Oak Park's central commercial area has shown signs of new investment. As has been the case on and off in Oak Park since the 1960s, arts enterprises have sought out interesting, affordable spaces. Now, in contrast to previous decades, these businesses are likely signaling the arrival of more prosperous residents. The neighborhood is being called upon to meet the needs of, and find common ground among, a socially and racially diverse population.
- Planning and development decisions being made now should keep in mind local history, which is personally meaningful to many residents and of interest to many visitors.

This walking tour was created using historical documents and professional surveys of historical properties. It also incorporates place-specific memories of longtime Oak Parkers, collected by

students in California State University Sacramento urban geography field classes in 2003 and 2005. These are included, because the meaning of the place for us today comes not only from the distant past, but also from the experiences and recollections of those still living.

A Short History of Oak Park

In 1887, Edwin Alsip subdivided the 230-acre William Doyle ranch into 56 whole or partial blocks and gave his subdivision the name "Oak Park." Lots were sold to individual buyers, who arranged for the construction of their own homes, although this process was slowed by the purchase of many lots by speculators. Several electric streetcar lines connected Oak Park to downtown Sacramento by the mid-1890s, facilitating development. The first three decades of the 20th century witnessed Oak Park's peak growth, and by the middle of this period, its thriving business district was converting fire-prone wood-frame buildings to solid brick.

In 1911, Oak Park, along with neighborhoods to the west and north, was annexed to the City of Sacramento, largely because residents and merchants wanted city services, particularly a sewer system. Jobs for the largely blue-collar occupants of Oak Park were provided by the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific railroads, canneries (including nearby Libby, McNeil & Libby on Alhambra Blvd.), the California State Fair (on Stockton Blvd.), the California State Highway Commission's equipment yard (at 34th and R), and businesses serving travelers on old Highway 99 (Stockton Blvd.). Before World War II, most people in Oak Park were of European ethnicity, although there were scattered African Americans and Mexican Americans.

After the war, the neighborhood added many more African Americans. This reflected their increased number in Sacramento generally (many worked at the city's military bases), but also Oak Park's availability to them when many other neighborhoods were "restricted." As whites moved from Oak Park to more modern and spacious homes in the suburbs, often Blacks replaced them. And renters often replaced homeowners. This process was intensified by the displacement of many African Americans from the old West End of the

downtown by urban renewal. The incomes of the new arrivals were low. The old blue-collar jobs that sustained neighborhood residents began to disappear. Problems that accompany poverty, including crimes such as prostitution, drug dealing, and theft, began to increase in Oak Park. Racial tensions, including issues of police-community relations, ran high at times. Many businesses in Oak Park closed or relocated. Still, there were successful Black businesses and institutions in Oak Park, and Black leaders emerged from the neighborhood.

In 1973, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency established the Oak Park Redevelopment Area and began buying up “physically blighted” property in the neighborhood. Eventually, the agency tore down much of Oak Park’s business district on 35th Street and replaced it with public housing. Neighborhood public services, such as the library and fire station, were relocated. More recent projects by the SHRA emphasize rehabilitation and scattered infill housing. The increase in house prices in Sacramento generally and the growth of white-collar jobs near Oak Park, especially at the U.C. Davis Medical Center, have increased middle-income households’ interest in Oak Park and triggered talk of gentrification.

The Tour

Note: In some cases you will see only the sites of buildings long gone. These are just a selection of what once existed, especially along 35th Street.

1. Lewis Building/40 Acres. *Corner of Broadway, 3rd Avenue, and 35th Street.* Built in 1915 by businessman Joseph L. Lewis, this structure has space for shops and offices downstairs and apartments upstairs. Prominently located, the building has housed a wide variety of neighborhood-serving businesses through the years. Among these was Azevedo’s Women’s Apparel, whose proprietor, Clarence Azevedo, was mayor of Sacramento from 1956 to 1959 (in later years his shop was called California Apparel and was located further south on 35th Street). For many years, the upstairs residential space was operated as the Hotel Woodruff. In the past as in the present, Oak Park residents could buy a cup of coffee and get a haircut in this building. There was an intervening period of decline and vacancy, left behind when St. HOPE

Development Corporation, with financial assistance from the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, completed restoration of and reopened the building in 2003. Underground Books (2814 35th Street) and the 40 Acres Art Gallery (3428 3rd Avenue) serve existing neighborhood residents and students at nearby Sacramento High School, and simultaneously increase the appeal of the area to outsiders who value these cultural services.

2. Victor Theatre/Guild Theatre. *2828 35th Street.* Also built for Joseph Lewis in 1915, the theatre, according to *The Sacramento Bee* of the day, was “fitted with all the latest appliances for vaudeville and motion pictures.” The Victor Theatre became the Oak Park Theatre and then the Guild Theatre. In between its theater phases, the building saw use by church groups. Some Oak Park elders remember the Oak Park Theatre when it charged a dime and showed mostly cowboy movies. Larry Lydon (interviewed in 2003) raised his ticket money by collecting Fehr mayonnaise jars and milk bottles for their two-cent deposits. Elaine King Crump (interviewed in 2003) recalls the Charlie Chaplin and Three Stooges movies she saw there. By the late 1950s, the Guild Theatre specialized in foreign and art house films. Restoration of the theater was completed by the St. HOPE Development Corporation and reopened in 2003 for both films and live performances. The building has Romanesque elements (windows with rounded arches) and Moorish elements (the geometric patterning of the facade).

3. Former Piggly Wiggly Grocery. *2845 35th Street.* This modest 1-story brick commercial structure, opened in 1922, initially housed a Piggly Wiggly Grocery Store and Park Meat Market. Piggly Wiggly, “America’s first true self-service grocery store,” had only been founded a few years before (1916) in Memphis. Through the years, a variety of shops occupied these premises, many of them food businesses. In the 1970s and 1980s, the local African-American economy was reflected in business names such as the Afro Travel Agency and the Joy of Gospel Record Center.

4. Citizens Bank of Oak Park. *2863 35th Street.* This bank was established by Harry C. Muddox in 1909; the building dates from 1917. Muddox and his bank were important Oak Park investors and

boosters in its early decades (and in fact it was Muddox's sewer pipe company that provided the pipe for Oak Park's new post-annexation sewer system). A bank, under various names, remained at this location until 1973. When asked in 2003 about whether Oak Park suffered from a lack of banking services, a problem for some low-income neighborhoods, former resident (and former Sacramento city council member) Callie Carney replied that "Oak Park always had banks." It would be interesting to know the extent to which they made loans in Oak Park after World War II. The building looks like a bank in small-town America, with its boxy shape, high windows, neoclassical detailing, and prominent corner location. Subsequent occupants have included the Sacramento Urban League—a nonprofit African-American advocacy and educational organization—and churches.

5. Lyon Darwin Hardware Store (site). *2901 35th Street.* New loft-style housing is under construction at this location, which has been a vacant lot for decades. However, in 1908, it had on it the new two-story Mission Revival style W. T. Foster Building, providing space for shops and offices, with living quarters upstairs. Current Oak Park elders can remember when the ground floor of this building was occupied by the Lyon Darwin Hardware Store. Carolyn Lydon (interviewed in 2003) recalled being greeted upon entry by, "what can I help you with today?" Her husband Larry also recollected the owner's friendliness, as well as his extension of credit to the Lydon family, and the cancellation of this debt after the store burned.

6. Oak Park Post Office. *2929 35th Street.* While many civic and commercial functions have been lost from Oak Park's old downtown focused on 35th Street (police, fire, library, and many private enterprises), the U. S. Post Office remains. The current building dates only from 1968, occupying the site of the burned California Theater. Earlier Oak Park post offices had been located nearby. The first was opened in 1911, following the area's annexation to the City of Sacramento. A post office can be an important symbol of community, but beyond symbolism, it can contribute to the creation of community by generating the foot traffic and chance encounters that nurture neighborliness. This new post office on 35th Street was supported by the

street's merchants who hoped it would help revive adjacent businesses.

7. Ben Franklin Store (site). *2958 35th Street.* Among the many vanished businesses on the west side of 35th Street (now occupied by suburban-style public housing) was the Ben Franklin variety store, opened in the 1950s by Al Swanson. Interviewed in 2005, Mr. Swanson remembered the 35th Street business district when its abundance of shops made it attractive and lively. He also recalled problems with shop lifting and vandalism, and being told by the police chief that full enforcement of the laws against those crimes in Oak Park would cause too much conflict, given the level of racial tension in Sacramento and beyond. Mr. Swanson attributed the departure of businesses from 35th Street in the 1960s both to the state of race relations at the time and to the opening up of new shopping centers, such as Southgate and Florin, in Sacramento's growing suburbs. Symbolic of the spatial trends of the time was Oak Park's loss of the region's main Fourth of July parade to Carmichael. All this did not mean that the merchants gave up easily—they formed the Oak Park Merchants Association, organized the first neighborhood clean-up in 1963, lobbied for the post office as noted above, and started a tree-planting project for 35th Street.

8. Black Panther Party, Sacramento Chapter (site). *2941 35th Street.* In 1968, the Black Panther Party, a radical civil rights group headquartered in Oakland, established a chapter in Sacramento with its office here. Members took required military training and political education classes. They ran their signature free breakfast program for school children at the nearby United Church of Christ (3308 4th Avenue). They had a tutoring program and helped people with legal aid. They sold *The Black Panther* newspaper door to door and on local college campuses. The Sacramento chapter's Lieutenant of Culture, Mark Teemer (now Akinsanya Kambon), drew the *Black Panther Coloring Book*, infamous for its depiction of violence against cops. A confrontation between police and citizens, including Panthers, occurred on Father's Day (June 16), 1969. It resulted in various injuries to 20 civilians and police (including gunshot wounds), 38 arrests, and damage to property. Shortly after this incident, half a dozen businesses on 35th Street announced they were

closing. The following year brought the killing of a policeman in Oak Park, for which four Black Panther members or supporters were charged. Eight months later, they were set free, the key witness's credibility totally destroyed. The Panthers closed their Sacramento office by 1971. Suburban-style housing, described at the time of its 1982 dedication as "what public housing can and should be," now occupies the site.

9. Belmonte Gallery (site). 2975 35th Street. This art gallery and coffee house was opened by Salvatore Yniguez in 1962. Numerous artists who went on to major success in the art world showed their art here, including a clutch of eventually quite famous U.C. Davis ceramicists whose "First Annual Group Mess" was held here in 1966. According to Masako Yniguez (Sal's widow, interviewed in 2005), Sal supported the civil rights movement and liberal political causes and encouraged groups such as the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to meet at the gallery/coffee house. He rented space to the Eugene McCarthy for President campaign. In general, the spot attracted artists and students (especially from Sacramento City College), revealing a typical locational choice for a beatnik enterprise—a low-rent district of mixed ethnicity, but not too far from the area's colleges or other scenes dedicated to the arts, such as the Artists Contemporary Gallery and the Guild Theatre just up the street.

10. Seabron Realty (site). 2979 35th Street. George Seabron, who graduated from the University of San Francisco with a degree in marketing, started selling real estate in Sacramento in 1958, a job only held by African Americans in Sacramento since the previous decade. He opened his own agency at Stockton Blvd. and Broadway in 1961, later moving to 35th Street. He was active in professional real estate organizations and in groups working for fair housing, including the NAACP and the Urban League. He also was active in Democratic politics, running the Oak Park headquarters of the re-election campaign of Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown and the Humphrey-Muskie campaign for president. In 1969, Seabron, together with several others, bought the grocery store at 2949 35th Street, with the hope of providing not only foodstuffs, but also training

and jobs for local people. Contemporary ads for the Oak Park Market from *The Sacramento Observer* feature a lot of Southern foods, such as okra, black-eyed peas, yams, pigs' feet, and chitterlings. These reflect the regional origins of many Sacramento African Americans of the period. Another investor in the market was Robert Tyler, who headed CORE in Sacramento in the 1960s, served as Executive Director of the Sacramento City and County Human Rights Commission, and who was a founder of the National Association of Black Social Workers.

11. Sacramento Police Athletic League (PAL). 3520 5th Avenue. Formerly a Capital Ice storage plant (built circa 1930), an American Legion Post, and city offices, this building became a Sacramento City parks and PAL facility in the 1970s. Police-sponsored youth sports—the PAL is best known for boxing and basketball—are designed to keep kids away from drugs and gangs and to enhance police-community relations.

12. McClatchy Park. 5th Avenue and 35th Street. In 1889, the Central Street Railway Company was created by the Oak Park Association, the group of investors who backed the subdivision. By 1894, this company was operating eight electric streetcar lines, including four that connected Oak Park with central Sacramento. As was common in many American cities, the purpose of the streetcar line was to enable property sales. In order to sell property, potential buyers had to be lured to the site. To lure them, promoters often built some kind of entertainment at the end of the line. In the case of Oak Park, it was an eight-acre pleasure ground amidst an old oak grove (thus, "Oak Park"), with a pavilion for refreshments, concerts, and dances, all illuminated with electric lights. Alcohol was banned, in order to foster a family atmosphere. By 1895, a carousel, zoo, and ballpark had been added. In 1903, the streetcar company was reorganized and the park was turned over to a franchise operator who added an outdoor theater, a roller skating rink, a miniature scenic railway, and a roller coaster. Ten years later, a new franchisee renovated the amusement park (adding a "plunge" or swimming pool), renamed it Joyland, fenced it, and started charging admission. For the first two decades of the 20th century, the park was an important recreation destination for Sacramento, and it helped build up Oak Park's adjacent business district. Much of the

complex burned in 1920, never fully recovering from the fire nor from the development of alternative recreational and entertainment venues in the region. In 1927, the park was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Valentine McClatchy and donated to the city. It was renamed for Valentine's father, James McClatchy, founding editor of *The Sacramento Bee*, and its future role became the more modest one of a neighborhood park. Longtime Oak Park residents Elaine King Crump and Norman Blackwell (interviewed in 2003) can tell lots of good stories about the park. Elaine remembers her mother, Vivian Slaughter, mentioning her visits to the park as a teenager, when it was still Joyland. Elaine and Norm (and Norm's wife Mildred) remember wading in the park pond. Elaine recalls that her brother, Ernest King, Jr., was the first African American lifeguard at the McClatchy Park pool in the 1940s. At that time, African Americans were excluded from the Riverside Swimming Baths on Riverside Blvd., although according to Elaine, light colored African Americans, including some of her cousins, successfully "passed." Baseball and softball have long histories in the park. Elaine remembers watching games played there by the Sons of Italy, lubricated by the local brew, Buffalo Beer. Norm and Elaine's husband, Harrison Crump, provided so much leadership of adult and Little League ball in McClatchy Park, that the diamonds there are now named for them. The park has had its share of aggressive and illegal behavior. Among the triggering events of the 1969 Father's Day confrontation may have been the covering up of the "McClatchy Park" sign with one reading "Brotherhood," its removal by the police, the burning of the official sign, the throwing of rocks and bottles when fire and police responded, and the ordering of additional police into Oak Park. Elaine Crump ordered her teenage sons to stay out of the park (circa 1970) to keep them away from drug dealers and tough guys. If she learned that they had gone there, she would grab her megaphone (used for cheering during ball games), run down to the park, and yell through it, "all you Crumps come out of the park, all you Crumps come out of the park"—a scene any teenager would want to avoid. Callie Carney remembered challenging the guys who habitually damaged the park's grass by parking on it and also having to walk to school with neighborhood kids in order to protect them from harassment by park toughs. On the other hand, she

recalled fifteen years of generally problem-free Jazz in the Park events, which she helped organize.

13. Muddox Building. 2980 35th Street. George L. and H. C. Muddox had this two-story brick commercial building erected in 1915. Perhaps H. C. Muddox, who was also president of the Oak Park Citizens Bank, was using his depositors' funds to invest locally. The July 17, 1915 *Sacramento Bee* noted that the building was fireproof (a noteworthy fact, given the two serious fires that the growing business district had suffered in 1911 and 1912) and had three shops on the ground floor and three lodge halls, along with a large assembly room with a marble floor for dancing, upstairs. Perhaps the most infamous event to take place in the Muddox Building (or Annex; see below) was the Ku Klux Klan's first public initiation in Sacramento. Grand Kleagle Edgar I. Fuller recorded 144 paid members following the April 25, 1922 event. City employees whose names appeared on the list of Klan members published by *The Sacramento Bee* were in trouble with anti-Klan city manager Clyde L. Seavey who earlier had vowed to keep the Klan from taking root locally.

14. Muddox Annex. 3451 5th Avenue. The exact date of the construction of this structure is unknown. It was connected by interior doorways to the Muddox Building, and the two were utilized together. Ralph Scurfield, one of the partners in Janek and Scurfield, a canvas goods company that occupied the building for many years, stated that the Masonic dance hall occupied the annex into the 1940s. A few longtime residents of Oak Park can remember this facility; Larry Lydon, for example, recalls his grandmother taking him dancing there. A crowd could really get the wooden dance floor—built on springs—going.

15. McGeorge School of Law. 5th Avenue and 33rd Street. This institution of higher education was founded in 1924 and remained in downtown Sacramento until it moved to Oak Park in 1956, taking advantage of an opportunity to use a vacant city health clinic. Low property values in Oak Park during the era of mass suburbanization helped the law school, which became part of University of the Pacific in 1966, acquire and build what the school's web site says is the world's largest law school

campus. It is also Oak Park's largest property owner.

16. 3030 Club (site). *3030 33rd Avenue.* Elaine Crump remembers that when she was a teenager in Oak Park in the 1940s, "everybody looked out for everybody's kids." She was, of course, not allowed into bars; the one time she and her sister Marvel and her cousin Delmar Slaughter, Jr., peeked into the 3030, they were sighted and promptly reported to their Grandma Bertha.

17. Former Oak Park Branch Library. *3301 5th Avenue.* This little brick building with a simple tiled gable roof has lovely neoclassical and baroque details. The library dates from 1930 and served as such until the 1980s. Mother Rose (Mrs. Georgia West), interviewed in 2005, remembered the dance lessons she took in the back room. By the late 1960s, the Oak Park Library Advisory Group was looking for ways to attract young people to the library. They tried "a rap room, live and taped radio programs, and films," according to a history of the library. Declining circulation was marked by 1972 and in the next decade, the decision was made to close the branch and build a new one at Stockton Blvd. and 21st Avenue in Colonial Heights. This building was sold to McGeorge School of Law, which continues its use as a library.

18. Former Oak Park Fire Station. *3114 4th Avenue.* This is one of two Oak Park structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At the time it was built in 1915, Sacramento Engine Company No. 6 was the largest fire station in Sacramento and the second largest on the West Coast. It was designed by city engineer Albert Givens in the Prairie Style, perhaps chosen as more appropriate for a suburb than the rather grandiose Beaux Arts style common to many civic buildings of the period, including Sacramento City Hall. Whether Givens was aware of it or not, the Chicago suburb of Oak Park, Illinois, was home to many Prairie style buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The two-story concrete building with a four-story hose and bell tower remained a fire house for sixty years. The tale that many longtime Oak Parkers remember about the station is that its tower was identified as the place from which a sniper killed police officer Bernard Bennett in 1970. A new Oak Park Fire Station was built in the 1970s on

Martin Luther King Blvd. as part of the community center complex. Today, the old firehouse is owned and occupied by Wellspring Women's Center, a drop-in center for low-income women and their children, offering breakfast and counseling.

19. Former home of Judge Jimmy Long. *3439 4th Avenue.* This house is a vernacular (non-architect-designed) combination of Colonial Revival and Craftsman bungalow elements, typical of Oak Park housing of its time (c. 1913). In the 1920s, T. L. Fassett, who owned Fassett's Emporium on 35th Street, lived here. It was not unusual for a businessman to both live and work in Oak Park during that era. This pattern was replicated by a much later resident of the house, James L. "Jimmy" Long, who graduated from Christian Brothers High School, San Jose State University, and Howard University Law School. He lived in this house and had his law office just around the corner at 2954 35th Street in the 1970s. Mr. Long was appointed a Superior Court judge in 1982. Many African American Oak Parkers know of the judge's success.

20. Former Steen House. *3445 4th Avenue.* This cottage, built c. 1905, belonged to Fred Steen, who operated Steen's Corner saloon next door at 4th Avenue and 35th Street. Steen's Corner, established in 1892 by Fred's father John, was the first business located in Oak Park. And no wonder, given that Oak Park—the amusement park—was "dry." Eventually, third and fourth generation Steens operated the business, which closed in June 1969.

21. Former Sacramento Observer building. *3540 4th Avenue.* This building was the Oak Park Post Office from 1940 until 1968. It is more well known among today's Oak Parkers as the former home of *The Sacramento Observer*. Founded in 1962, the region's weekly African American newspaper later moved from this building into larger purpose-built premises on Alhambra Blvd. Dr. William H. Lee was a successful real estate agent before he helped found the *Observer*. Interviewed in 2005, Dr. Lee, recalled that he became familiar with Oak Park by working in the 1950s with W. F. Gulley, owner of a real estate agency that handled property in the neighborhood. In reflecting on the Black Panthers in Oak Park, Dr. Lee described how they challenged his paper's lack of militancy. He agreed to hire one

of their own, Mel Assagi, who became one of the *Observer's* best writers and the first African American writer for *The Sacramento Bee*. He also described how the Panthers protested to White Front, a large discount store, about their treatment of black patrons. Shortly afterward, White Front became one of the *Observer's* major advertisers and started "giving back to the Black community."

22. United Methodist Church. 3600 Broadway. This church was organized in 1895, making it one of the first in Oak Park. The building, dedicated in 1927, replaced one at 34th Street and 3rd Avenue. The congregation has served a variety of ethnic groups through the years, reflecting the changing demographics of the area. Currently, a Tongan service is offered. Nearby at 3598 4th Avenue was the Episcopal Church, sold to Kyle's Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church circa 1918 (and later moved to 2940 42nd Street). The founding minister of Kyle's Temple, the Rev. Thomas Allen Harvey, was an organizer and the first president of the Sacramento Branch of the NAACP (founded in 1918, just 9 years after the organization's start on the east coast). Rev. Harvey won a lawsuit (awarding him \$50) in 1918 against the restaurant of W. L. Bigelons (on 35th Street), who had refused to serve him and had ordered him to leave. This may have been the first racial discrimination lawsuit in Sacramento.

23. Oak Park School of Afro-African Thought (site). 3639 4th Avenue. Black Student Unions emerged on many American college campuses in the 1960s. Sacramento City College was no exception. Its BSU successfully proposed an outreach education center in Oak Park. The center was eventually opened at this address, following an initial effort to have it placed on 35th Street, a counterproposal by the administration to place it at American Legion Adult High School, and a protest that briefly shut down the SCC administration building. The center only lasted a couple of years. Just prior to this, the building was occupied by Bennie's Beauty Bar, owned by Mrs. Bennie Johnson, whose business had been displaced twice from the West End by urban renewal. This tale of double displacement was shared by other African American businesses. Bouey Pest Control currently occupies the site.

24. Sacramento Bicycle Kitchen. 2837 36th Street (facing Broadway). In a small building on the Brickhouse Art Gallery property is the Sacramento Bicycle Kitchen, founded in 2006. This community-based bike shop's goals are "providing low-cost transportation, self-sufficiency through bicycle maintenance, and safety through education." Volunteers help customers with bike maintenance and repairs on weekend afternoons and a couple of evenings each week. By locating in Oak Park, the Bike Kitchen hopes to make affordable transportation more accessible to people with limited budgets.

25. Brickhouse Art Studios. 2837 36th Street. In the 1930s, Charles D. Soracco acquired property at the corner of 36th Street, 4th Avenue, and Broadway. It had a number of existing commercial structures on it, which were incorporated into Soracco Sheet Metal. There, Mr. Soracco fabricated gutters, downspouts, sinks, and HVAC ductwork. He built the brick house and shop building, and lived with his family adjacent to his work. His family continued the business until 2002. Today, Brickhouse Art Studios provides gallery and work space to artists, as well as opportunities for neighborhood youth to become involved in the arts.

26. Women's Civic Improvement Club (WCIC). 3555 3rd Avenue. The roots of this organization are in a variety of Black women's groups that were organized across the U.S. in the 1890s to address civic inequalities and improve living conditions. In Sacramento, several such groups merged in 1936 to become the Negro Women's Civic and Improvement Club (which became the WCIC in 1948). By 1942 the women raised enough money to buy a home, despite their extremely limited incomes. That property (1830 T Street) was used as a boarding house for young single Black women who had great difficulty finding decent places to live. Just six years later, the club bought a bigger and more beautiful house at 1219 X Street, which hosted countless social and political functions. It was torn down in 1958 for the Capital City Freeway, after which the club built this facility. Here, the WCIC has run a variety of health, social, and educational programs, including Head Start and senior citizen programs. An 18-by-6-foot mural of local African American women's history and a

collection of works by local African American authors are other endeavors sponsored by WCIC.

27. Stilson Brothers Cleaners. *3519 Broadway.* Stilson Brothers Cleaners moved from 2710 U Street to this location in 1923. This two-story vernacular brick building, with its stepped gable, was constructed for the company in 1927, and has changed little since that time. Even more notable has been the firm's longevity and rootedness, contrasting with the fates of most businesses in the neighborhood (and in the larger economy).

28. Former Gas Station. *3503 Broadway.* A Shell Oil Company service station was built here in 1922 and revamped in 1939. Its small rectangular building with horizontal canopy and large automobile service door can still be seen. The appearance in Oak Park of gas stations in the early 1920s already presaged a trend toward automobility that would not be particularly kind to the neighborhood in the long run. Among the features of new suburban houses that made them more attractive to many buyers than older homes in Oak Park were their attached garages.

29. Former Gostick House. *3519 3rd Avenue.* This Craftsman bungalow with its distinctive cupola was built for the George A. Gostick family in 1912. The house to the east (3535—now gone) belonged to his brother Jesse D. Gostick. Their meat market was right next door (see below). The Gostick family lived in this house into the 1950s.

30. Former Gostick Brothers/Wulff and Sons Meat Market. *3501 Broadway.* This building was built in 1912 for the Gostick Brothers, who had opened their store in Oak Park seven years earlier. A meat market under various names operated at this location until 1951. Long-time resident Larry Lydon remembers that his uncle delivered meat for the shop. Limited commercial demand for this building after that is suggested by its subsequent tenants: thrift stores, the non-profit Northern California Law Center, and the Sacramento Urban League (now in Del Paso Heights), as well as long stretches of vacancy.

31. Oak Park Pre-School. *3500 2nd Avenue.* This large Craftsman bungalow was built in 1901 for prominent Oak Park physician Dr. John T. Culver,

who lived here for 52 years. In 1953, the house became a privately run child-care facility, Oak Park Day Nursery. This was an early child-care endeavor, "old as dirt" as Callie Carney put it. The house had a brief run (1973-75) as a private school emphasizing African American culture and history. After that, the Eta Gamma Omega chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, an African-American sorority, purchased the building and reopened the day care center. The sorority continues to operate the center and also holds meetings in the house, as does the Sacramento chapter of the NAACP.

32. Arata Brothers Grocery/Swiss Club Tavern. *3402-3406 Broadway.* The ground floor of this two-story Mission Revival style commercial building was occupied by Arata Brothers Grocery from 1910 until 1927. This Italian grocery store reflected one of the major European ethnic groups in Oak Park at that time. The Swiss Club was the longest-lasting tenant in the building, lasting approximately 60 years (c. 1955-2005). It is remembered by Callie Carney as the place she went to shoot pool. Other goods and services sold from the building have included groceries, shoe repair, and auto parts.

33. Former Thom's Cyclery. *3401 2nd Avenue.* This wood-frame building dates from 1896. It has been modified in various ways, but comparisons between current and old photographs of the location show that it is the same structure. Grocery, furniture, and other stores occupied the ground floor at 3401 until Thom's Cyclery's moved in from next door in 1938 and stayed until 2007! (A bike shop is still there, but under a new name.) Steve Ballew recalled, "all my bikes came from Thom's, even the ones from Santa." Norm Blackwell, in contrast, observed that "Black kids couldn't afford those wonderful Schwinn's."

34. Made Rite Sausage Company (site). *3353 2nd Avenue.* Quite a few longtime Oak Park residents remember this factory, which processed and packaged sausages and smoked meats. Mother Rose (interviewed 2005) recalled that it "gave off meat odors you could smell for blocks and employed a lot of people in the area." It closed in 1986. While the Sara Lee bakery on 6th Avenue still provides food processing jobs, many others in

the Oak Park vicinity—and Sacramento generally—have vanished.

35. Arata Brothers Grocery/Sacramento Food Bank. 3333 3rd Avenue. This large brick building was built for Arata Brothers Grocery retail and warehouse functions in 1926, when they outgrew their location on Broadway. They continued to operate their business here, providing Oak Park with groceries, including Italian specialty and other ethnic foods, until about 1971. Veronica Pereyra (interviewed in 2003) recalled their excellent produce, while Elaine Crump identified the store as the source of the garlic and horehound that her grandmother used in medicinal packs to drive out chest colds. In 1976, Father Daniel Madigan founded the Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services in the basement of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church (2549 32nd Street). Later, the diocese purchased the former Arata Brothers property and moved the Food Bank there. Included is a room for community meetings.

36. Former Oak Park Bakery/Esther's Pastry Shoppe. 3412 3rd Avenue. 3408 and 3412 are commercial ground-floor spaces in a two-story brick structure, with residential units above. The structure was built in 1915 to house the Oak Park Bakery, and a bakery occupied 3412 for most of the next sixty years. In the same period, a restaurant most often filled 3408. Elaine King Crump recalled walking nine blocks from her home to Arata Brothers market in the 1930s to buy fresh coffee and minced meat for her mother. She would stop off at the bakery on her way home and buy chocolate éclairs and crème puffs for 5¢ apiece. These were her payment for picking up the groceries. Fading hand-painted signs for the Oak Park Bakery and Esther's Pastry Shoppe can be seen on the east- and west-facing walls of the building. St. HOPE Development Corporation owns this and most of the other parcels on both sides of 3rd Avenue between 34th and 35th, including their offices at 3400 3rd Avenue.

37. Sacramento Philharmonic Home. 3418 3rd Avenue. This house was formerly located to the east of the Lewis house and next to the Lewis Building (now 40 Acres). Little is known about its early history; its construction date is estimated to be 1910. Its Victorian style is known as Stick-

Eastlake, few examples of which exist in Sacramento. The house was acquired by Joseph L. Lewis who used it as a rental; later, from the 1920s to the 1980s, it belonged to the Ignacia and Antonio Furtado family. It was renovated recently for office use by the Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra.

38. Former Lewis Home. 3424 3rd Avenue. Although the round towers with conical roofs mark this house as Queen Anne, it also has many Classical Revival details, in keeping with the eclecticism of Victorian domestic design. The house was built in 1912, and Joseph Lewis lived in it until his death in a car accident in 1920. The Furtado family owned it for nearly 50 years. Daniel Thompson, one of the first African-American city councilmen in Sacramento (1978-80), was a later owner. The house suffered a major fire in 2004, but has been restored.

39. US Bank. 3418 Broadway. This building's triangular shape fits its site. It was built in 1914-15 in grand neoclassical style with large Corinthian columns and a copper dome to house the Oak Park branch of the Sacramento Bank. When it opened, an ad in the local newspaper, *The Oak Park Ledger*, announced that "all money deposited in our Oak Park branch will be loaned only to the people of Oak Park for the improvement of this vicinity." Bank names came and went over the next 15 years; then the Bank of America arrived in 1930 and stayed 30 years (when they built a new building further east on Broadway). In 1947 the building was remodeled and the copper dome removed. In the 1970s, the building housed an Afro-American history museum, and in the 1980s, a church. In the 1990s, the St. HOPE Development Corporation rehabilitated the building, which once again houses a bank. Somewhat like the first occupant of the building, US Bank in 1995 pledged to invest money (\$1 million) locally, in this case in the form of loans to first-time home buyers in Oak Park. This building is one of two in Oak Park listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At least one local family remembers watching the 4th of July Parade from the second-story windows of the building (Steve Ballew, interviewed 2005).

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following current and former Oak Parkers who agreed to be interviewed: Bud Aungst, Norman and Peaches Blackwell, Mary and Marichal Brown, Callie Carney, Elaine King Crump, Louise Buford Darden, Carolyn and Larry Lydon, Veronica Pereyra, and Tom Sumpter (2003); Steve Ballew, Joan Barden, Dr. William H. Lee, Mother Rose (Georgia West), Linda Roberts, Al Swanson, and Masako Yniguez (2005).

Thank you to the Oak Park Neighborhood Association for allowing us to share information about this project at their meetings.

Thank you to the following students in Geography 193A, the urban geography field course at California State University Sacramento: Veronique Borges, Randy Brownell, Chris Burton, Dan Cooper, Chris Dougherty, Raun Olson, Melinda Rogers, Cynthia Salvera, Troy Thomas, Barry Trute, Trevor Weiland (2003); Scott Beckner, Nikolajs Berzins, Louis Carrari, Katie Henson, Micah Nisito, Sean Walsh, Lisa Peterson, Rhiannon Ritchie, Crystal Schmidt, Chris Todd, and Lauren Watkins (2005).

Sources

Clarence Caesar, "An Historical Overview of the Development of Sacramento's Black Community 1850-1983," master's thesis, California State University Sacramento, 1985.

Historic Environments Consultants [Paula Boghosian and Donald Cox], "Oak Park Survey" (CD), prepared for the City of Sacramento, February 2007.

Interviews as noted above.

Pamela McGuire et al., "Historic Overview for the Oak Park Redevelopment Area and Determination of Eligibility for Inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for the Oak Park Land Development Areas (1) and (2)," prepared for the City of Sacramento, April 1980.

Sacramento city directories, various dates.

Please contact Professor Robin Datel with comments, corrections, or questions at 916-278-5320 or datel@csus.edu.