



Central Oak Park Walking Tour

➤ SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA ◀



By Robin Dattel

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SACRAMENTO



➤ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ◀

Thank you to the students in Geography 193A, the urban geography field course at California State University Sacramento, in 2003 and 2005 and to all the current and former Oak Parkers who talked with them. Thank you also to the Oak Park Neighborhood Association for allowing us to share information about this project at their meetings.

➤ SPONSORS ◀

This project was made possible by financial support from:



SACRAMENTO
COUNTY
Historical
Society



Burnett & Sons Mill and Lumber Company

Capital Graphics, Inc.

Lauren Hammond,
First African American woman
elected to City Council
Sacramento City Council District 5

Kynship Development Company

Dylan & Karen McDonald

Oak Park Business Association

Sacramento History Foundation

Jay Schenirer, Candidate
Sacramento City Council District 5

University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law

Vrilakas Architects

In memory of Jack F. Woo





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 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. Economic problems and social issues intensified. Oak Park emerged as an important locus of Sacramento's racial tensions and struggles during the Civil Rights era. Public policy responses to neighborhood challenges were typical of those across the country at the time.
- In the twenty-first century, Oak Park's central commercial area has shown signs of new investment. The neighborhood is being called upon to meet the needs of, and find common ground among, a socially and ethnically diverse population.

This walking tour was created using historical documents and professional surveys of historical properties.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 businesses were 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, bringing residents and merchants a sewer system and other city services. 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 (then 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 off-limits due to restrictive racial covenants. 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. In the 1960s, black businesses opened, black religious, social, and activist organizations multiplied, and black leaders emerged in Oak Park.

In 1973, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency established the Oak Park Redevelopment Area and began buying up property in the neighborhood. Much of Oak Park's business district on 35th Street was torn down and replaced with affordable housing. Neighborhood public services, such as the library and fire station, were relocated. National and local ideas about redevelopment evolved, and more recent projects by the SHRA emphasize historic preservation and infill development. Demographic changes, including new patterns of immigration, brought more Latinos and Asians to Oak Park. Rising house prices in Sacramento generally and the growth of white-collar jobs near Oak Park, especially at the U.C. Davis Medical Center, increased middle-income interest in Oak Park in the first decade of the 21st Century. Today Oak Park has a socially and ethnically diverse population.



The Tour

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. See map on pages 14 & 15.



1. LEWIS BUILDING/40 ACRES. CORNER OF BROADWAY, 3RD AVENUE, AND 35TH STREET.

In 1915, businessman Joseph L. Lewis built this structure with space for shops and offices downstairs and apartments upstairs. Prominently located, the building has housed various 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 (later 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. In 2003, St. HOPE Development Corporation, with financial assistance from the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, completed rehabilitation of the building. Underground Books (2814 35th Street) and the 40 Acres Art Gallery (3428 3rd Avenue) serve local residents and students as well as patrons from beyond the neighborhood.



2. VICTOR THEATRE/GUILD THEATRE. 2828 35TH STREET.

Also built for Joseph Lewis in 1915, the theater, 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 (later Theater). Some neighborhood elders remember the Oak Park Theatre when it charged a dime and showed mostly cowboy movies. By the late 1950s, the Guild Theatre specialized in foreign and art house films. The building has also seen use by church groups. The St. HOPE Development Corporation restored the theater, and it reopened in 2003 for films and live performances. The building's round-arched windows are neo-Romanesque, while the geometric patterning of its façade is neo-Moorish.



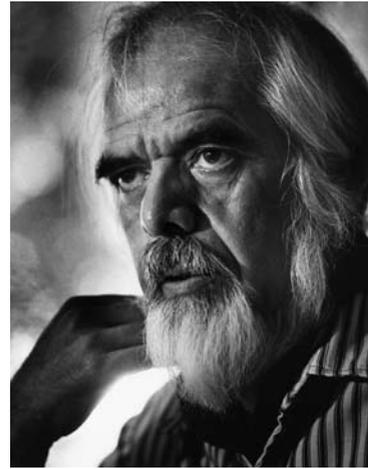
7. BEN FRANKLIN STORE (SITE). 2958 35TH STREET. Among the many vanished businesses on the west side of 35th Street was the Ben Franklin variety store, opened in the 1950s by Al Swanson. Shoplifting, vandalism, and strained police-neighborhood relations in Oak Park, combined with the opening up of new shopping centers, such as Southgate and Florin, in Sacramento's growing suburbs,

ultimately led to the departure of the Ben Franklin. Several businesses, including Mr. Swanson's, moved to the Fruitridge Manor Shopping Center. Also indicative of the suburbanizing trend of the times was Oak Park's loss of Sacramento'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. The BPP, a militant Oakland-based civil rights organization, had their Sacramento office here from 1968 to 1971. They ran their free breakfast program for school children at the nearby United Church of Christ (3308 4th Avenue). A confrontation between police and citizens,

including Panthers, occurred on Father's Day (June 16), 1969. There were injuries, property damage, and arrests in the neighborhood. Shortly after this incident, half a dozen businesses on 35th Street announced they were closing. The following year brought the killing of a white policeman in Oak Park, for which four BPP members or supporters were charged. Eight months later, they were set free, the key witness's credibility totally destroyed. 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/coffee house was opened by Salvadore Yniguez in 1962. Among those showing work in the gallery was a number of UC Davis ceramicists with bright futures. Sal supported the civil rights movement and liberal political causes and encouraged the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and

the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to meet here. He rented space to the Eugene McCarthy for President campaign. This was a typical locational choice for an avant-garde enterprise—a low-rent district of mixed ethnicity, 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. Only in the 1940s did real estate sales jobs open up to African Americans in Sacramento. By the 1960s George Seabron was selling property from this location, as well as participating in groups working for fair housing, including the NAACP and the Urban League. He was active in Democratic politics, running the Gov. Pat Brown gubernatorial and the Humphrey-Muskie presidential campaigns in Oak Park. 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. Another investor in the market was Robert Tyler, who headed CORE in Sacramento in the 1960s and served as Executive Director of the Sacramento City and County Human Rights Commission. He was a founder of the National Association of Black Social Workers.



11. SACRAMENTO POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE--PAL (SITE). 3520 5TH AVENUE. A large brick structure was built circa 1930 to house a Capital Ice storage plant. Subsequently 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. The building was demolished in 2009.



12. MCCLATCHY PARK. 5TH AVENUE AND 35TH STREET. Four streetcar lines linked Oak Park to downtown Sacramento by 1894. In order to attract riders, who were also potential real estate buyers, streetcar line operators opened the eight-acre Oak Park pleasure ground. Over the years, various attractions were added, and by 1913 the property was a full-fledged amusement park called Joyland and an important recreation destination for the region. Joyland never fully recovered from a 1920 fire, and by the end of the decade the property had been purchased and donated to the city in honor of James McClatchy, the founding editor of The Sacramento Bee. In its role as a neighborhood facility, McClatchy Park came to provide recreational and employment opportunities for youth and adults. The ball diamonds are named for two local African American softball and baseball leaders. The park has seen its share of conflict, including some of the events of Father's Day 1969 (see above), during which activists tried to defend a sign displaying a new name for the park—"Brotherhood." Many years of Jazz in the Park concerts exemplified more peaceful gatherings in this important public space.



13. MUDDOX BUILDING. 2980 35TH STREET. George L. Muddox and H. C. Muddox, president of the Oak Park Citizens Bank, had this two-story brick commercial building erected in 1915. The 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 an assembly room, upstairs. The most infamous event to take place here 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, recalled that the Masonic dance hall occupied the annex into the 1940s. A few longtime residents of Oak Park can still remember this facility, including its springy floor.

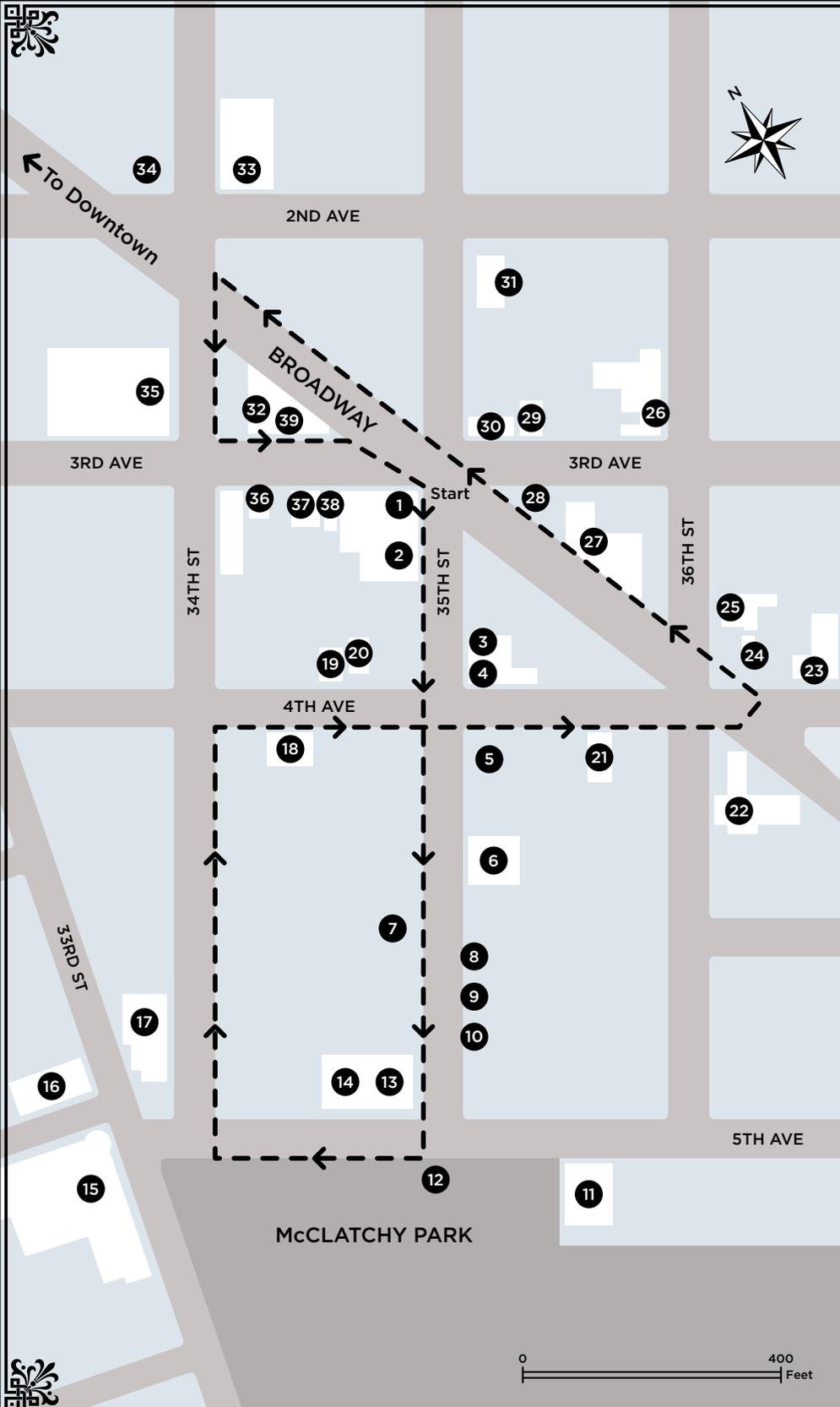
Central Oak Park Walking Tour

➤ SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA ◀

1. LEWIS BUILDING/40 ACRES
2. VICTOR THEATRE/GUILD THEATER
3. COMMERICAL BUILDING
4. CITIZENS BANK OF OAK PARK
5. LYON DARWIN HARDWARE STORE (SITE)
6. OAK PARK POST OFFICE
7. BEN FRANKLIN STORE (SITE)
8. BLACK PANTHER PARTY, SACRAMENTO CHAPTER (SITE)
9. BELMONTE GALLERY (SITE)
10. SEABRON REALTY (SITE)
11. SACRAMENTO POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE--PAL (SITE)
12. MCCLATCHY PARK
13. MUDDOX BUILDING
14. MUDDOX ANNEX
15. MCGEORGE SCHOOL OF LAW
16. 3030 CLUB (SITE)
17. FORMER OAK PARK BRANCH LIBRARY
18. FORMER OAK PARK FIRE STATION
19. FORMER HOME OF JUDGE JIMMY LONG
20. FORMER STEEN HOUSE
21. FORMER SACRAMENTO OBSERVER BUILDING
22. UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
23. FORMER OAK PARK SCHOOL OF AFRO-AMERICAN THOUGHT
24. FORMER SACRAMENTO BICYCLE KITCHEN
25. BRICKHOUSE ART STUDIOS
26. WOMEN'S CIVIC IMPROVEMENT CLUB (WCIC)
27. STILSON BROTHERS CLEANERS
28. FORMER GAS STATION
29. FORMER GOSTICK HOUSE
30. FORMER GOSTICK BROTHERS/WULFF AND SONS MEAT MARKET
31. OAK PARK PRE-SCHOOL
32. FORMER ARATA BROTHERS GROCERY/ SWISS CLUB TAVERN
33. FORMER THOM'S CYCLERY
34. MADE RITE SAUSAGE COMPANY (SITE)
35. ARATA BROTHERS GROCERY/ SACRAMENTO FOOD BANK
36. FORMER OAK PARK BAKERY/ ESTHER'S PASTRY SHOPPE
37. FORMER FURTADO AND SACRAMENTO PHILHARMONIC HOME
38. FORMER LEWIS HOME
39. US BANK



0 400 Feet





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 a vacant city health clinic in Oak Park in 1956. 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 STREET. At least one neighborhood elder 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 and her cousin peeked into the 3030, they were sighted and promptly reported to their grandma!



17. FORMER OAK PARK BRANCH LIBRARY. 3301 5TH AVENUE. This lovely little neoclassical brick library dates from 1930. By the late 1960s, patronage was down and the Oak Park Library Advisory Group was looking for ways to attract young people. They tried "a rap room, live and taped radio programs, and films," according to a history of the library. Circulation had declined markedly by 1972, and by the next decade the decision was made to close the branch and build a new larger 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. 3414 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.



19. FORMER HOME OF JUDGE JIMMY LONG. 3439 4TH AVENUE.

This house combines 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 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.



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 pleasure ground/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 today as a former home of The Sacramento Observer. Founded in 1962, the region's weekly African American newspaper later moved into this building and then out into larger purpose-built premises on Alhambra Blvd. Dr. William H. Lee was a successful real estate agent before he helped found the Observer. Dr. Lee has 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 has 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 nine 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 due to his race.



23. FORMER OAK PARK SCHOOL OF AFRO-AMERICAN 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 lasted only 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.



24. FORMER SACRAMENTO BICYCLE KITCHEN. 2837 36TH STREET (FACING BROADWAY). In a small building on the Brickhouse Art Gallery property the Sacramento Bicycle Kitchen was founded in 2006. This community-based bike shop's goals are "providing low-cost transportation, self-sufficiency through bicycle maintenance, and safety through education." Now located elsewhere, the Bicycle Kitchen is a recent example of grassroots activism working to serve Oak Park and other neighborhoods needing affordable services.



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 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 American economy generally.



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, and often hired local residents. 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. Renovation is planned.



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 in the region. 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 Alpha Kappa Alpha, an African-American sorority, purchased the building and reopened the child-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. FORMER 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, occupying it for approximately 60 years (c. 1955-2005). 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! Some neighborhood old-timers remember getting bikes from Thom's, while others recall that new Schwinns were beyond their families' financial means.



34. MADE RITE SAUSAGE COMPANY (SITE). 3353 2ND AVENUE.

Many Oak Parkers remember this factory, which processed and packaged sausages and smoked meats. One longtime resident has 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. One neighborhood elder has 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. One resident who was a child in Oak Park in the 1930s remembers stopping off at the bakery on her way home and buying chocolate éclairs and crème puffs for 5¢ apiece, after picking up groceries at Arata Bros. for her mother. Fading hand-painted signs for the Oak Park Bakery and Esther's Pastry Shoppe can be seen on the west- and east-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. FORMER FURTADO AND 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. After renovation, the home briefly served as the offices of 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 triangular building 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 (until it moved to 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. Some lucky locals remember watching the Fourth of July parade from the second-story windows of the building.





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," prepared for the City of Sacramento, February 2007.

Student interviews with past and present Oak Parkers.

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.

Photograph Captions and Credits

All images courtesy of the Center for Sacramento History, unless otherwise noted.

Cover: 35th Street, between 4th and 5th Avenue, c.1964. [City of Sacramento - Department of Parks and Recreation Collection, 1980/034/009]

p. 1: Oak Park Library mural painted by John B. Matthew's art students at Sacramento Junior College in 1939. Photograph taken in 1961, on ladder, from top to bottom, are Connie Elkus, Bill Gambling, Guy Vinnachio, and John B. Matthew, standing. [Mrs. John B. Matthew Collection, 1985/044/012]

p. 3: Black Panthers, May, 1969. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPM00861]

p. 4: Oak Park, 1969. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPM00870]

p. 6: Oak Park sign, 1999. [Sacramento Bee Collection, A. Williams 09/30/1999]

p. 28: Oak Park, 1969. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPM00869]

p. 32: Cowgirl riders at 4th of July parade in Oak Park, 1964. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Dick Schmidt 07/04/1964]

THE TOUR

1. Parade-goers watching the 4th of July Parade in front of the **Lewis Building**/Hotel Woodruff; 1940. [Frank Christy Collection, 1998/722/1692]
2. Matias Bombal, VP of the Guild Arts Complex, stands on top of the marquee showing old letters uncovered at the former **Victor/Oak Park/Guild Theater** during rehabilitation of theater; July 14, 1991. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Michael Williamson 07/14/1991]

3. A Sacramento Brick Company advertisement in the Sacramento Bee of the new brick building housing **Piggly-Wiggly** and Park Meat Market; February 11, 1922. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 2005/054]
4. Oak Park branch of the Crocker Citizens Bank, formerly the **Citizens Bank of Oak Park**, 1965. [City of Sacramento - Department of Parks and Recreation Collection, 1980/034/009]
5. Intersection of 35th Street and 4th Avenue, **Lyon Darwin Hardware** on the left; August 1953. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Harlin Smith August 1953]
6. The 1949 4th of July Parade passes the California Theatre; the theater site is now occupied by the **Oak Park Post Office**. [Ernest W. Myers Collection, 1989/041/4112]
7. The 4th of July Parade passing by the **Ben Franklin Store** on 35th Street; 1964. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Dick Schmidt 07/04/1964]
8. A **Black Panther's** meeting in Sacramento, November 4, 1973. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPM00857]
9. **Belmonte Gallery** founder, Salvadore Yniguez; June 3, 1979. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPMP Sal Yniguez, 06/03/1979]
10. George Seabron, of **Seabron Realty**, in the middle on the right, with the Sacramento Committee for Fair Housing, June 1963. [Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey Collection, 1983/146/3025]
11. The **Sacramento Police Athletic League** (center) in 1968. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPMO Oak Park Aerials 1968]
12. Swimming at **McClatchy Park** Pool, 1972. [City of Sacramento - Department of Parks and Recreation Collection, 1980/126/039]
13. **Muddox Building**, 35th and 5th Street, Avenue, in February 1940. [Eugene Hepting Collection, 1985/024/3481]
14. Janek and Scurfield (left), a canvas products store, a **Muddox Annex** tenant, in November 1959. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Harlin Smith 11/07/1959]
15. The Sacramento Urban League's Derrell Roberts and McGeorge's Hall Silliman and Harold Kambak on steps of **McGeorge School of Law**, 1989. [Suttertown News Collection, 1995/026/0403]
16. **3030 Club** (site) at left side of photograph, with Oak Park Street Car, 1929. [Bob McCabe Collection, 2001/057/094]
17. **Oak Park Library**, c.1985. [Suttertown News, 1995/026/205]
18. **Oak Park Fire Station**, c.1942. [City of Sacramento - Engineering Department Collection, 1979/046/017]
19. **Judge James "Jimmy" Long**, and June Long, a brother and sister legal team, at work in February 1978. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPMP James Long 02/09/1978]
20. **Fred Steen's Corner** saloon, corner of 4th Avenue and 35th Street, next door to his cottage at 3445 4th Avenue in December 1939. [Eugene Hepting Collection, 1985/024/3546]
21. **Sacramento Observer** masthead from January 31, 1963. [Sacramento Observer Collection, 1985/074/001]
22. **Oak Park Methodist Church**, 1954. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/7898]
23. **Oak Park School of Afro-American Thought**, September 1971. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Ward Sharrer 09/16/1971]
24. **Sacramento Bicycle Kitchen**, 2007. [Courtesy Scott Beardsley, Sacramento Bicycle Kitchen]
25. **Brickhouse Art Studios**, and former site of Soracco Sheet Metal Works, in 2003. [Courtesy Robin Datel.]
26. Two women performing at the **Women's Civic Improvement Club**, October 1960. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/12858]
27. Reverend Daniel Thompson walking down Broadway on February 22, 1984; **Stilson Brothers Cleaners** is seen in the background. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Dick Schmidt 02/22/1984]
28. **Former Gas Station** (left) at the intersection of Broadway, 35th Street, and 3rd Avenue, 1968. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPMO Oak Park Aerials 1968]
29. **Former Gostick House**, in 2004. [Courtesy Gabe Aeschliman.]
30. Former **Gostick Brothers/Wulff and Sons Meat Market**, c. 1950. [McCurry Foto Company Collection, 1973/003/0185]
31. Bay area members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (the sorority's Eta Gamma Omega Chapter operates the **Oak Park Pre-School**), 1930. [Clarissa Hundley Wildy Collection, 2000/061/036]
32. **Arata Brothers** Brand coffee, c. 1940. [Jim Lee Collection, 2008/020/179]
33. The Oak Park Grocery and Pharmacy in c.1900; later the location of **Thom's Cyclery**. [Janet Reynolds Stephens Collection, 1985/062/006]
34. **Made-Rite Sausage Company** advertisement, 1956. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Ads & Logos-Made Rite 03/15/1956]
35. Ed Owen, a volunteer tutor working with a client at the Sacramento Area Literacy Coalition in Sacramento, housed in the **Arata Brothers Grocery/Sacramento Food Bank**, in December 1999. [Sacramento Bee Collection, Jose M. Osorio 12/17/1999]
36. Site of **Former Oak Park Bakery/Esther's Pastry Shoppe** in 2010. [Courtesy Rebecca Crowther]
37. & 38. Former **Furtado/Sacramento Philharmonic Home** and former Lewis Home in 1968 (the Philharmonic has since been moved to the west of the larger, former Lewis home). [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPMO Oak Park Aerials 1968]
- 39a. **US Bank** building, formerly the Oak Park branch of Sacramento Bank, 1965. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPMO0877]
39. Dedication of the Negro Museum and Library in the old **US Bank** building on November 15, 1965; from left, Msgr. Raymond Renwald, attorney Douglas R. Greer, former Sacramento Mayor, Clarence L. Azevedo, and Joseph Lawson, business manager of the museum. [Sacramento Bee Collection, 1983/001/SBPMO0878]



The Center for Sacramento, a joint Sacramento city/county agency, is the historical research center for the Sacramento region.

www.centerforsacramentohistory.org

The *Central Oak Park Walking Tour* brochure is available at locations throughout the Central Oak Park area. For copies of the brochure or to serve as a public distribution site, please call (916) 808-7072.

Additional information and photographs about Oak Park, including more images of the locations found on the walking tour, can be found at the Center's website.