



OFF THE SHELF

MAY EDITION - 2010

THERE'S STILL TIME TO HELP STOCK THE SHELVES OF THE NEW EAST OAKLAND/81ST AVENUE BRANCH LIBRARY!

Your pledge or donation for the East Oakland/81st Avenue branch will help the Oakland Public Library secure challenge grants from the Kresge Foundation and an anonymous foundation. But time is running short: the deadline for these two extraordinary challenge grants is June 30th.

Your gift will help purchase books, spoken word and music CDs and DVDs for Oakland's newest branch library, an innovative public/school library. The Grand Opening is scheduled for Fall 2010.

All gifts will be recognized on the Honor Roll of Donors. Contributors who make a pledge or donation of \$1,000 or more will be listed on a plaque in the new library.

Visit www.fopl.org for a printable form or call (510) 238-6932.

Thanks to hundreds who have already made a pledge or donation, success is within reach!

Please make your gift today!



PIEDMONT BRANCH RECEIVES LOIS FOSTER AWARD



Photo by Phil Laing

Archway School presented the Piedmont Avenue Branch Library with the Lois Foster Leadership Award in grateful recognition for thirty years of dedicated service to the Archway School Community.

Students from Archway School made the presentation to Andrew Demcak, acting Piedmont Avenue branch manager and Helen Bloch, former Piedmont Avenue children's librarian.

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A HISTORY OF THE HISTORY ROOM

Author: Martha Bergmann

"The building is on fire! What do you do?" This question was posed at an Oakland Public Library staff meeting in about 1970 by then City Librarian, Dr. Peter Conmy. His answer: "You save the local history file and the books in the Oakland History Room. Let the rest burn."

We hope never to have to evacuate the Main Library with all this in hand and now hope that the newly chartered Friends of the Oakland History Room will help to secure a vibrant future for the only research facility dedicated entirely to our unique city.

Officially opened as the California Room in the new building at Fourteenth and Oak streets in 1952, the core collection of the Oakland History Room was initiated more than 30 years earlier when librarian Mabel Thomas began clipping, indexing and purchasing materials pertaining to California for patrons of the former main library, in the building now housing the African American Museum and Library of Oakland. Updating her index continues as librarians continue to update the great treasure Dr. Conmy mentioned in that staff meeting ca.1970.

Renamed the Oakland History Room in 1979, its mission was revised to its current focus on Oakland and its neighbors, Piedmont and Emeryville, whose residents are served by the Oakland Public Library, and to the metropolitan East Bay.

This gives staff here plenty to do. Today the room serves a very wide range of users: students from grammar school to postgraduate programs, city

staff members, lawyers, neighborhood activists and developers doing land-use and environmental impact studies, families exploring lives of ancestors, artists and writers requesting photographs [and other images] or citations to reports on historical events and past residents.

Library staff can direct visitors to information found in 19th-century African-American newspapers, business profiles published by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce and other local publications over many decades. Of general interest is the yearbook published by the Oakland Tribune from 1911 until 1949, which highlighted economic, political, and cultural events and a complete run of city directories beginning in 1869.

Thanks to donations, many historic Oakland high school yearbooks are available, along with a vital archive of other materials relative to the public schools, transferred from the district's administrative offices.

Files gathering information on the city's neighborhoods, collections of local newsletters, old restaurant menus and postcards, programs for musical, theatrical and sporting events, and historic local documents serve as primary sources for research on this fascinating city. Transportation, from ports to roads to rails and flyways, a topic of central importance to Oakland history, is represented by the logs of the legendary Cutter Bear, a large collection of published material on the local railroads and time tables, photographs and other treasures documenting local transit and the construction of



Papers of John L. Davie, a colorful organizer of the Populist movement and Oakland's longest serving mayor, are among the treasures now held in the Oakland History Room. The collection, a gift of Davie's estate, includes this photograph of the mayor posing with the cast of the "Our Gang" comedy series outside of Oakland's Pantages Theater building which later housed the presses of the Oakland Tribune. Davie won the election of 1894, only to be defeated for mayor two years later. He was elected again 20 years later, to serve eight consecutive two-year terms, from 1915-1931.

the Bay Bridge. Real estate, the partner to transportation in the city's development, is explored in the collection of Sanborn fire-insurance maps, property assessment books, biographies, scrapbooks, and manuscripts such as those donated by the estate of Mary and Frances Marion "Borax" Smith of the far-reaching Realty Syndicate. East Bay sports have not been ignored, either, in the Oakland History Room. Donations from local sports legend Proverb Jacobs have greatly enriched collections of memorabilia of the local professional sports teams. In mid-May, an exhibit tracing the history of the East Bay's baseball venues since 1866, and the beloved Oakland Oaks of the Pacific Coast League will open on the second floor of the Main Library.

An extensive collection of works by Oakland authors, such as Jack London, Joaquin Miller, George Sterling and Gertrude Stein, are available for examination alongside those of currently published Oakland-

based novelists, poets and playwrights. The depth of the collections may intimidate first-time visitors to the Oakland History Room but experienced professionals are always available to get a researcher off on the right path.

A new chapter began for the library in May when the Friends of the Oakland History Room was launched to help strengthen and expand programs and collections. With their help, we can continue to take advantage of current technologies to conserve and to expand access to many of the materials in the collection – and extend the impact of this unique resource beyond its perch on the second floor of the main library. We are looking to our loyal community of users for ideas that come from their experiences with the collection – and for more direct support. Potential friends are invited to join the efforts by contacting the Oakland History Room during regular library hours at 510-238-3222.

FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS

Author: Gen Katz

FOPL has formed a Branch Friends Task Force consisting of board members Ronile Lahti, Evan Zubritsky and Gen Katz, who have been out visiting and talking to the different library Friends groups. The purpose of the task force is to get to know the branch Friends a little better while sharing experiences and furthering the common goal of supporting the Oakland Public Library system in every neighborhood.

Bob Shurtleff and Maggie Kost-off of the Lakeview Friends have also organized two meetings that have brought together the various friends groups to share their experiences. It is inspiring how rich in ideas and passion these groups are and how each is dealing with its library community in unique ways. Interesting suggestions have come out of these meeting, including the idea of pairing established Friends groups with starting groups, and a desire for some groups to learn how to organize email and web accounts. The latter is being looked into by task force members.

The group's interest in FOPL's work was addressed - FOPL raises funds through memberships (around 800), donations and Bookmark Bookstore profits to benefit the Oakland Public Library system as a whole, wherever the needs are greatest and unfunded. In future newsletter issues, some items funded by FOPL will be highlighted.

If you are interested in joining the Branch Friends group of your favorite library, please check out the contact information available via the FOPL website (www.fopl.org) - a link is provided on the home page.

FOPL IS GRATEFUL FOR DONATIONS RECOGNIZING SPECIAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS. IT IS OUR PRIVILEGE TO RECOGNIZE THE FOLLOWING GIFTS FOR GENERAL SUPPORT (RECEIVED DECEMBER 2009 THROUGH APRIL 2010):

In memory of ...

Miriam Bamberger from Edina Nelson and The Book Club

Jane B. Foster from:

Elizabeth Hook
Victoria Larson
John and Anna Synhorst

Ita Klebanova from Sophie and Ruth Souroujon

Ja-Lih Lee, former Oakland Public Library Children's Librarian, from Leslie Rodd

Marie Moss, Oakland Public Library Main branch

Jacob Schwartz from Lillian Schwartz

Bookmark Bookstore Monday volunteer Phyllis Tesoro

Bradley C. Walters, Oakland Public Library Main branch, from:

Marsha Askins
Anonymous

Lelia White, Oakland Public Library Director from 1976 to 1990, from:

Carl Alexander
John Amend
Georgia V. Becker
Rod Becker
Christie J. Coffin
Patrick Haggarty
Dana Heidrick
Pauline Mingram
William and Judith Norton
Kathleen G. Ouye
John Papadakis
Margaret Peterson
Roberto Valdez, Jr.
Sumika Yamashita

In honor of ...

Abbie Bennett and Richard Raeke from Friends and Family

Robert and Joan Hughes on the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary from

Winton and Margaret McKibben

Gen Katz on her birthday from Carmen Martinez

Kiyome Okikawa

Bill & Pat Tilley's 50th wedding anniversary from Sophie and Ruth Souroujon

Vivian Yee



Visit us online @
www.FOPL.ORG

MULTIPLY YOUR DONATIONS WITH A PLEDGE FOR THE 81ST AVE BRANCH

Your pledge can be paid over 3 years, in annual or quarterly installments, or some other payment schedule that is convenient for you.

The full amount of your pledge will count toward two challenge grants.



JOIN OPL ON FACEBOOK

OPL's new Facebook page offers Oakland residents an additional opportunity to learn more about all the great events and services offered at the library.

You can view the page at:

www.facebook.com/Oaklibrary



MEMBER BENEFITS

Members who join at the BookFriend (\$50) level or above also receive discounts at the participating local bookstores. Please show your BookFriend membership card to qualify for the discount.

Bibliomania, 1816 Telegraph Ave
Book Zoo, 6395 Telegraph Ave
Laurel Book Store, 4100 MacArthur Blvd
Marcus Books, 3900 M.L.K., Jr. Way
Montclair Book Tree, 6123 LaSalle St
Pendragon, 5560 College Ave
The Spectator, 4163 Piedmont Ave
Walden Pond, 3316 Grand Ave

