



EXACTLY OPPOSITE

... the Golden Gate

The Newsletter of the Berkeley Historical Society & Museum

Volume 41 Number 4

Fall 2023

The 1923 Fire: Berkeley's First Wildfire Disaster

By Steven Finacom



Survivors — most likely members of a family that lost its home—search through the ruins after Berkeley's 1923 wildfire. In the background are surviving buildings at the Hearst Avenue edge of the UC Berkeley campus. Berkeley Public Library collection.

The early fall is “fire weather” season in Berkeley. Anyone who has lived in the town for a few years or more knows what this means. The weather turns warm, the typical pattern of cool breezes off San Francisco Bay slows and stalls, and hot, dry, winds blow down over the Berkeley Hills from inland.

Under these conditions, if a blaze starts in the wild lands above Berkeley or in a settled neighborhood, the wind can quickly spread it into a downwind conflagration that defies conventional firefighting efforts.

We invite you to join us for these events:

Sun. Sept. 24, 3-4:30 pm

A Talk by Joe Lurie on the Historic Role of International House in Desegregating Berkeley

Free, but space is limited—sign up at <https://bhsm-lurie.eventbrite.com>

Sun. Oct. 15, 3-5 pm

Opening event for The 1923 Fire exhibit

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President's Message

Our exhibit on Chinese in Berkeley has brought in larger numbers of visitors than usual, and many stay for long periods taking it all in. I never thought I would see people read so many words in an exhibit! We experimented with a few different ways of presenting images and text, and the Program Committee will be discussing how it went. We would welcome your feedback at info@berkhistory.org.

Tonya Staros is developing an online version of the exhibit that will launch just after the museum exhibit comes down. Along with our other online exhibits, started during the pandemic, it will be a lasting resource on a subject that has never before been explored in depth. Tonya has also been editing lots of videos and uploading them to our website; we hope you will take some time to watch them during the current strikes that are limiting TV content!

The Berkeley Historical Plaque Project has been keeping George Petty and other volunteers, including me, busy. We have completed an inventory of the physical plaques and will soon be adding photos to the berkeleyplaques.org website to show where exactly the plaques can be found. A reprint of a downtown plaques walking tour map is also in the works.

We were pleased to see that the Berkeley City Council voted enthusiastically in July to endorse the Civic Center design concepts that had been developed over the past three years, in which the Veterans Building will become a center for the arts and the Maudelle Shirek Building (Old City Hall) will house an enlarged version of the Berkeley Historical Society and Museum, as well as a new wing providing more space for council and commission meetings and Berkeley Community Media. We hope the citizens of Berkeley will rally around preserving and giving new life to these beautiful, historic buildings! The park will also be improved and may even include a daylighted portion of Strawberry Creek.

We have benefited in the past couple of years from a number of student volunteers, including Rose Cook, who worked 18 hours a week this summer and accomplished a lot. But students come and go. We could use some more retirees who could become longer-term volunteers. On our website at berkhistory.org/volunteering-internship is a form for indicating your interest in a variety of volunteer activities and how many hours per week or month you might be available. Join the team!

After the fire exhibit, we are tentatively planning one on the history of cinema in Berkeley. So if any aspect of Berkeley and the movies is a special interest of yours and you'd like to get involved, please let us know.

Be sure to check out our fall series of walking tours at berkhistory.org/bhs-walks.

Ann Harlow

(Fire - continued from page 1)

A lone surviving house stands high on a Berkeley Northside hillside, above the ruins of other homes. From “The Story of the Berkeley Fire,” 1923, privately published.



A century ago, Berkeley had this experience. Our next exhibit (opening on Sunday, October 15, 2023) tells the story of Berkeley’s 1923 Fire that took place on September 17, 1923.

Blowing from its ignition point in Wildcat Canyon (then private water company land, not regional park), the fire swept down through the neighborhoods north of the UC campus, incinerating some 600 buildings and burning to the edges of both the UC campus and downtown Berkeley before a late afternoon shift in the winds saved the rest of the town.

Thousands lost their homes, including an estimated one quarter of all UC faculty and staff at the time, most of whom lived in Berkeley. In an era when many academics not only lived close to campus but often “worked from home,” the Fire also destroyed private libraries, research collections, and scholarly work. About ten percent of UC students also lost their homes to the Fire.

The Fire changed the built character of Berkeley, obliterating hundreds of the classic “Berkeley brown shingle” homes that had lined north Berkeley streets for decades, embodying the ideals of Berkeley’s Hillside Club and “building with nature” advocates. The lost homes were often replaced with houses in newer Period Revival styles that featured fire-resistant construction such as stucco exteriors and tile roofs.

A centerpiece of the exhibit will be an enlarged photo panorama of the fire ruins spread across the main wall of the History Center. In addition to the story of what happened on September 17, the exhibit will also discuss what Berkeley was like in 1923 before the Fire, and also how the aftermath was handled.

Berkeley had other brushes with fire disasters prior to September 1923, and there had even been some efforts to plan for fire prevention measures. But they came too little, too late. And after September 1923, fearful of permanent damage to the favorable reputation of Berkeley as a place to learn and live, civic leaders, from UC administrators to local government officials to Berkeley realtors, sought to minimize long-term impacts and characterize the fire as an incident from which Berkeley quickly recovered.

Ultimately, however, the story of the 1923 Fire is not simply dry history and a story of the past. It’s also the story of natural conditions—today being intensified by climate change—that permanently affect Berkeley and that may well lead to similar events in the future.

Part of the exhibit will also profile what Berkeley was like in 1923, a hundred years ago. It was a year that, even without the Fire, would have figured significantly in local history. The rapidly growing town saw upheavals in local politics, the adoption of the City Manager form of government, and first steps taken toward establishing public utility districts.

On the UC campus it was a year of a new president of the University, a new—and controversial—football stadium, and considerable expansion of academic facilities including several new buildings.

The exhibit is curated by Steven Finacom, whose first activity after joining the BHSM Board twenty-five years ago was co-curating an exhibit on the 75th anniversary of the same fire.

The Tak Ping Huen Family in Berkeley, 1952 to 1997

By Jim Huen



The Huen family reunited in Macao, November 1945: Tommy (12), Tak Ping (35) with Jim (4), on his lap, Tony (10), Lai Keen Tong (33), and Susan (8). The effects of war deprivation are evident.

Our father, Tak Ping Huen, was born in 1910 in Gak Hong village, Enping County, Guangdong Province, China, part of the Pearl River Delta area from which the majority of Chinese immigrants to California came during the 1849 Gold Rush or to work on the transcontinental railroad from 1863-69. Tak Ping Huen's father died when he was a young boy, and he was raised by his mother in the village.

After a few years of schooling, Tak went to Hong Kong, one-hundred and twenty miles east. There, in 1932 at age twenty-two, my father joined the US Navy as a mess cook for the officers on the gunboats and cruisers in the South China Sea. The Navy allowed Chinese nationals to join as mess cooks as white sailors did not like this low-status position, even though the pay was the same. There was no guarantee of a career or pension for Chinese nationals, and they could only serve in China. Between 1925 and 1941, about 120 Chinese mess cooks were in the Navy in China. In the Philippines, the Navy also allowed Filipinos to

serve, and again only as mess cooks—later called stewards.

My father's pay was only \$21 US a month. However, the power of the American dollar in China was such that this was sufficient to support a family. With this high salary, his mother found a wife for him, twenty-year-old Lai Keen Tong, whom he married in 1932. Arranged marriages were customary. Tak served on the USS Mindanao and USS Isabel, gunboats, and the USS Houston and USS Augusta, cruisers. By November 1941, four children had been born: Tommy age eight, Tony age six, Susan age four, and Jim just seven months. In those years, the family lived in Canton and then Hong Kong.

In anticipation of war, Father left China early in November 1941 for the Philippines; the rest of the family remained in Hong Kong.

After the war between the US and the Japanese started, the Navy left the Philippines for Australia to fight the Japanese. The family also left Hong Kong for the safety of the village to live with Tak's mother. Unfortunately, his salary, now about \$48 a month, was immediately cut off from his family, as the Japanese controlled China. For the next four years, the family faced starvation and hardship without money, and not knowing where their father was or whether he was alive or dead. Food was so scarce that Grandmother died of starvation in 1943, as she gave her food to her grandchildren. Susan was six years old and shared a bed with Grandmother. She woke to find her dead one morning. To this day, Susan still recalls this painful memory. The family had to eat insects, field mice, and tree bark to survive.

Mother then learned that the Swiss consulate in Macao, a war-neutral Portuguese colony, was lending money to American military dependents. Mother made her way on foot the 80 miles and borrowed \$160 over several months in order to survive. And later our family moved to Macao with the help of friends. Life was slightly better there with money and food.

During the war, Father served on the USS Estes, USS Rocky Mount, and USS Eldorado in the Pacific theater and earned the China Service Medal, Asiatic Pacific Service ribbon, Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one Bronze star, WWII Victory Medal, and later the Korean Service Medal and United Nations Service Medal.

Returning from the war, Father found us in Macao, and it was a very emotional reunion. Better still, Father received his American citizenship in November 1945 on a warship in Shanghai. His address on his Naturalization Certificate was the standard for Navy personnel: Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California. He still had never been to America even with 13 years of Navy service. In 1946 he was promoted to the highest Navy enlisted rank: Chief Petty Officer Steward (E-7).

(continued on page 5)

(Huen - continued from page 4)

With his family, he was transferred to Tsingtao, China, a large naval port, as the American government was transferring military war surplus to the Chinese government to fight the Communists. A fifth child, Floyd, was born in 1947. In 1949, the Communists won China. Father was given the opportunity to move his family to America for a better life, and he accepted it. In December 1948, the family, along with thousands of other passengers, boarded the USS General H. Butner, a Navy troop ship, for San Francisco and arrived under the Golden Gate Bridge. Except for Father, we six did not know any English. As it was Christmas, the whole city was decorated in colorful holiday lights and decorations. Being children, we thought this was what "America the Beautiful" meant!

But immediately after arrival in San Francisco, my mother and we five children were imprisoned in the US Federal Immigration Building at 630 Sansome Street near Chinatown, as the 1882 Anti-Chinese Immigration law was still enforced. Over the next few days, my mother and four of us children (Floyd was too young) were questioned to ensure that we were the legal dependents, as we had no marriage certificate or Chinese birth records. Even I, at age seven, was questioned. Eventually we were released.

Father's first duty station in America was the US Naval Air Station, Coronado, California, and we took the train there. We lived in Navy housing on Coronado and the four children started school, quickly learning English and adapting to American life. Mother found learning English difficult, and never spoke it, but understood most of it.

In 1952, my two older brothers were in high school and our parents wanted college for us. We heard that UC Berkeley was the best university in America and cost little. My father asked for a transfer to Naval Base San Francisco and got it. Our family of seven drove in a 1949 Pontiac the 550 miles from Coronado to Berkeley in 1952, stopping overnight in a motel (our first time) in tiny King City, as highway travel then was slow and long. My parents bought our first house on California Street and Dwight Way, a mostly Black neighborhood, as Berkeley was still redlined. Tommy and Tony went to Berkeley High School, Susan to Burbank Junior High, and I went to Longfellow School. Eventually housing in Berkeley was easier to buy, and we moved to a much larger house on Francisco Street near Grant. Floyd then went to nearby Whittier Elementary School, then Garfield Junior High.

Father was eligible to retire after 20 years with a full pension in 1952, but the Korean War forced him to serve two more years, and he retired in 1954. Both Father and Mother had lifetime benefits shopping at the Navy commissary and Navy Exchange, saving money for the family. After a year of being a civilian cook and butcher, Father found employment was unstable. So he returned to the Navy as a civilian cook at the Navy Chief Petty Officers Club on Treasure Island. During this time, he completed his GED at the Berkeley High School Adult School. Subsequently, all five children graduated from Berkeley High School, and all graduated from college, three from UC Berkeley. Father retired at age 65 in 1975, after 44 years with the Navy. Mother was a seamstress at the Chinese garment factories in San Francisco and Oakland Chinatowns. It was a time for her to socialize and enjoy the company of fellow Chinese workers.

Between 1946 and the mid 1950s, about thirteen other Navy Chinese families (a total of 65 family members) came to America and settled in Berkeley, with the same goal: the opportunity for their children to attend UC Berkeley. Some owned Chinese restaurants and shops. Many settled also in the surrounding cities of Oakland, Albany, El Cerrito, and Richmond.



The Huen family in Tsingtao, China, 1948: Tommy (15), Susan (11), Lai Keen Tong (36), Chief Steward Tak Ping (38), Jim (7), Floyd (10 months) and Tony (13).

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On weekends, the Navy Chinese families would take turns hosting get-togethers, the wives playing mah jong while the men sipped whiskey and played poker in the garage, trading war stories. Some of the men had been POWs in the Philippines. The many children played late into the evenings. It was a just reward for everyone, after escaping the brutal war in China.

The five children all married and produced eleven grandchildren, all of whom graduated from college, as education was very important to the family.

Twenty years after WWII, another war began, the Vietnam War. I graduated from San Jose State with a BA in chemistry in 1965. To avoid being drafted by the Army, with my college degree, I was able to enlist in the Navy and become a commissioned officer in the Supply Corps, serving three years as Ensign and Lieutenant Junior Grade.

In 2018, Congress finally recognized the almost 20,000 Chinese American veterans of WWII (40% of these were non-citizens) and awarded them the Congressional Gold Medal. The Chinese faced many instances of racial discrimination, but served with honor defending their adopted country. Father posthumously received this coveted Gold Medal.

Looking back, I believe our parents' decision was the right one. America truly is the land of opportunity.



The wives and families of the Navy officers did not know whether their husbands/fathers were alive or dead for four years during the War. Once in Berkeley, the wives gathered often for tea, mah jong, and to recount their hardships.



Jim Huen as a supply officer in the US Navy during his service in the Vietnam War, 1965-68.

Chinese Families in US Navy in Berkeley, 1948 to 1960

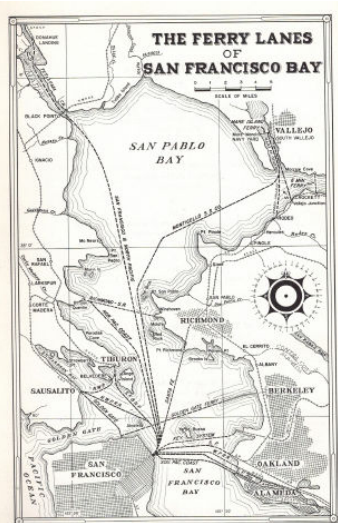
Name of Family	Number in Family	Berkeley Street of Home
W. Chan	4	University Ave.
Z. K. Dong	7	Virginia St.
G. P. Fung	4	Blake St.
T. P. Huen	7	California St., Francisco St.
M. S. Leung	4	Roosevelt St.
Tin Wan Lok	6	California St.
G. K. Ting	7	Monterey Ave.
G. H. Wong	3	Acton St.
M. G. Wong	3	Blake St.
Y. L. Wong	3	Parker St.
K. C. Yee	5	Jefferson St.
W. H. Yee	8	Blake St.
J. Y. Yee	4	Bancroft Way

13 Families 65

When Automobile Ferries Sailed Between Berkeley and San Francisco, 1927-1937: Ashby Oliver Stewart, Harry Edwin Speas, and the Golden Gate Ferry Company

By Fred Etzel

From 1850 to the early 1940s, ferryboats were the most important form of transportation in the Bay Area. They were also uniquely beloved—thanks to their leisurely pace, the on-deck friendships they fostered and, above all, the fact that they gave countless people an intimate daily connection with the San Francisco Bay —Gary Kamiya in SFGATE, November 28, 2014.



Ferry route map from *Of Walking Beams and Paddle Wheels: A Chronicle of San Francisco Bay Ferryboats*, 1951.

Two men from Missouri, Ashby Oliver Stewart and Harry Edwin Speas, created the Golden Gate Ferry Company (GGFC). Together they played prominent roles in the ferry industry in the San Francisco Bay Area. Although they were born in the same state and they both served in the U. S. Army during the Spanish-American War, further research would be needed to determine where and how they met.

Ashby Oliver Stewart, a native of Huntsville, Missouri, was born in 1881. He served as a sergeant in the Army during the Spanish-American War and came to San Francisco after the earthquake and fire of 1906. For 50 years, Stewart was one of California's most prominent investment brokers. Stewart's obituary states he was the founder and president of the GGFC, incorporated in November 1920.



Mary Elizabeth Stewart (center), who christened the Golden Bear on February 2, 1927, as she stood between her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. A. O. Stewart. Stewart was president of the Golden Gate Ferry Company.

At right is A.O. Stewart at a 1927 ferry launch with his daughter Mary Elizabeth and his wife Mary (Woods). Stewart died at his home in Atherton in 1965.



Harry Edwin Speas was born in 1882 in Middletown, Missouri. As shown on his headstone at the Golden Gate National Cemetery, Speas served in the Signal Corps in the Spanish-American War. He married Gertrude Gould in Sacramento in 1904. Their daughter Marileah was born in 1911 and is shown here with her father (second from right) and others at another ferry launch. Speas died in 1950 in San Francisco.

Speas was the general manager of the GGFC. In 1926, GGFC constructed a pier at the foot of University Avenue extending more than three miles into the Bay. The pier was built with wooden trestles on concrete pilings, and nearly the entire length of the pier was paved for

a two-lane road. Ferry service commenced in 1927 with three almost identical new vessels, the Golden Bear, Golden Poppy, and Golden Shore. In 1927, Speas withdrew from active participation in GGFC, and the boat named for him became the Golden Coast.

Automobiles drove to the end of the pier, where they would drive onto a diesel-electric powered ferryboat that sailed to San Francisco. A ferry was typically 226 feet long,



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(Ferries - continued from page 7)

40 feet wide, displaced 780 tons, and carried 100 automobiles. It had a single propeller driven by a turbo electric diesel engine.

At the end of the Berkeley pier, GGFC built a small terminal “which appeared to exist virtually in the middle of the harbor waters” (Harlan, p. 21). At the end the pier widened to accommodate vehicles waiting for the ferry, and GGFC constructed two ferry docks. The Roaring 20s witnessed tremendous growth in

the number of Americans driving personal automobiles, and Berkeleyans relied on the automobile ferries to transport them and their automobiles to and from San Francisco. The Berkeley Pier served as part of the Lincoln Highway, the first road across America.

The photograph below, taken on June 14, 1930 at the Hyde Street terminal of GGFC in San Francisco, shows automobiles embarking and disembarking a Berkeley ferry.

The inauguration of ferry service was a momentous event in Berkeley’s civic history and was celebrated accordingly. On June 17, 1927, the front page of the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* reported: “Officially opening its 24-hour schedule of direct ferry service between Berkeley and San Francisco at 4:30 o’clock, yesterday morning, the new Golden Gate Ferry line, operating four boats, experienced an excellent



amount of business on its opening day, according to A. O. Stewart, president of the company. A total of 1,851 vehicles and 3,621 passengers were carried between 4:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., according to figures made public by Stewart. Of the total of 1,852 vehicles, 1,578 were pleasure cars and 273 were trucks. . . . Actual running time of the ferries is 17 minutes.” GGFC ferries sailed 24 hours a day. When demand was high, boats left the pier as soon as they were loaded (Gale, p. 4).

The GGFC operated automobile ferry service from June 1927 to October 1937. Two BHSM members remember sailing on the ferries with their parents. John Underhill was born in 1931. His parents, upon learning the GGFC would suspend automobile ferry service with the opening of the Bay Bridge, decided the family should ride the ferry from Berkeley to San Francisco “one last time.” In October 1937, John recalls the family took their last trip aboard a ferry from Berkeley to San Francisco. He recalls the fare was 5 cents per person. (Adjusted for inflation, \$0.05 in 1937 is equal to \$1.06 in 2023. The BART Clipper fare from downtown Berkeley to Embarcadero in downtown San Francisco is \$4.50.)

BHSM member John Aronovici was born in 1933. He recalls riding the GGFC automobile ferry from Berkeley to San Francisco with his parents when he was very young, about three years old. John’s only memory is the “very bumpy road” from the entrance of the Berkeley Pier out to the automobile ferry vessel.

Berkeley-San Francisco
DIRECT AUTO FERRY
IN SERVICE
JUNE 16, 1927

EXPERIENCE the thrill of driving your automobile more than half way across San Francisco Bay over the Golden Gate concrete causeway and then reaching San Francisco in seventeen minutes! A diagram on the other side will show you how to avoid San Pablo Avenue and San Francisco traffic jams and reach your destination by the quickest, safest, and shortest route. The Foot of Hyde Street Pier of the Berkeley-San Francisco Direct Auto Ferry is the entrance to the Heart of San Francisco, and contiguous to shopping and business centers.

The Golden Gate Ferry Company cordially invites you to attend the opening celebration to be held in Berkeley June 15th, and participate in a colorful spectacle and display in which more than \$10,000 in prizes will be given away.

(continued on page 9)

(Ferries - continued from page 8)

The *Berkeley Daily Gazette* reported 500 people attended a banquet at the Whitecotton [Shattuck] Hotel celebrating the formal opening of ferry service from Berkeley to San Francisco. “The banquet was followed by a night parade [as] approximately 35,000 people paraded from the ferry slip at the foot of University Avenue to Shattuck Avenue. A fireworks display at Center and Milvia Streets was followed by a dance at the National Guard Armory.”

However, automobile ferry service from Berkeley to San Francisco was doomed virtually from inception. In 1929, the federal government allocated funding for the construction of the Oakland–San Francisco Bay Bridge, which opened on November 12, 1936. GGFC ceased automobile ferry service between Berkeley and San Francisco on October 16, 1937, and donated the Berkeley Pier to the City of Berkeley for use as a recreation facility.



This arch on San Pablo at University directed drivers to the San Francisco ferry.
BHSM photo # 121-193-4048

Postscript:

In May 2023, the Alameda County Transportation Commission approved funding awarding \$5.1 million to the City of Berkeley for design, environmental review, and engineering work for renovating the closed Berkeley Pier. The stated long-range goal is to provide a pier for passenger-only ferry service from the Berkeley Pier to the Hyde Street Pier in San Francisco.

Sources:

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Linda Rosen, photographer

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New Video Interviews on Our Website

By Jeanine Castello-Lin

(See berkhistory.org/videos/)



Jiang Lin interviewing Jim Huen. “There were thirteen Chinese families who settled in Berkeley—all World War II Navy Veterans.”

Jim Huen was a young boy in 1948 when he, his mother, and five siblings left war-torn China to join their father in San Diego, California. A few years later, his family was one of thirteen Chinese families who settled in Berkeley after World War II—all having received citizenship for their father’s wartime service. Like other Chinese youths looking for a better life, Jim’s father had joined the US Navy (in 1932), and then gone on to serve during WWII. Once in Berkeley, the Chinese veteran families formed a tight community, bound by the privations of WWII and gratitude for their survival. They gathered weekly for late night mah jong or poker and whiskey.



Jeanine Castello-Lin with Jim and Floyd Huen. “When we entered the meeting, we were Chinese Americans; when we left, we were Asian American.”

In this second video, brothers Jim and Floyd Huen compare their youth as Chinese in Berkeley in the 1950s and ‘60s. Jim recalls how excited he and his Chinese friends were when any Chinese actor showed up on TV—only to resent the fact that the main characters were always white during the days of “Father Knows Best.”

By 1964, younger brother Floyd was on the UC Berkeley campus for the Free Speech Movement. After that, Floyd became active in the Chinese Student Association and in the formation of its successor, the Asian American Political Alliance. They walked into the initial meeting as Chinese Americans, and walked out as Asian Americans, Floyd recalls.

Floyd was involved in the Third World Liberation Front strike at UCB in 1969, and, as a graduate student, was seminal in organizing Asian American Studies on campus.

Devoted to serving the Asian community, Floyd settled in Oakland with his wife (Jean Quan, mayor of Oakland 2011–2015) and served not only as a doctor, but as director of Highland Hospital. In the end of the interview, Jim and Floyd remember the strong ties that continue to bind the family together. Despite political differences, the family, including the next generations, still gather to celebrate holidays together.

You can find four additional videos made in conjunction with the Chinese in Berkeley exhibit at berkhistory.org/videos/.



The Mameloshn Mamas read and schmooze in Yiddish.

On a sunny summer’s day in the Berkeley Hills, the *Mameloshn Mamas* gather in person—after years of Covid Zoom meetings—to swap stories in Yiddish about their families. Switching between English and Yiddish for our benefit, the *Mamas* offer a connection to the worlds of their parents and grandparents, and offer hope that Yiddish will resonate with their children and grandchildren. Then they get to work translating a Yiddish tale, “The Clever Little Tailor,” by Solomon Simon. Check out this video—if you’ve had a smattering of Yiddish, or know some German, you may be surprised at how much Yiddish you can understand.

There are also six individual oral histories with the *Mameloshn Mamas* at berkhistory.org/oral-histories/.

Support the Berkeley Historical Society

If you received this newsletter by mail, please check your mailing label, and if your membership has expired, we hope to hear from you soon! If you are not yet a member or your membership has lapsed, please consider joining the Berkeley Historical Society! Membership dues are the primary support for our many activities. Members receive the quarterly newsletter and discounts on our walking tours and book purchases. All dues and donations are tax deductible as provided by law. BHS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, federal tax ID # 94-2619129. We are always looking for new members, so we invite you to share your newsletter with friends who might be interested in Berkeley history, or bring a friend to visit the History Center.

For all questions or comments regarding membership, please contact membership@berkhistory.org.

Name(s) _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

MEMBERSHIP I would like to support BHS through a one-year membership: **NEW** **RENEWAL**

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Benefactor \$250 Life Member \$750 Student/Low Income \$20

I would like to give a Gift of Membership to _____ (Please include separate form or piece of paper with recipient name(s), address, phone number, and email.)

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To the General Operating Fund \$ _____ To the Louis Stein Endowment Fund \$ _____

I have historic materials I may be interested in donating (or lending for scanning); please contact me.

Notes:

VOLUNTEER I am interested in volunteering at the Berkeley Historical Society. Please contact me.

Notes:

PAYMENT INFORMATION: Total amount \$ _____ Cash Check (payable to BHS) Credit card

I agree to the one time only charge of \$ _____ to my credit card payable to the Berkeley Historical Society for membership dues and/or other donations. *A receipt will be emailed. Credit card information will be destroyed once payment is validated. More information on the BHS credit card authorization policy and privacy policy is at www.berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org/privacy_policy.html.*

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Mastercard			Expiration date	Security code	Cardholder zipcode
Visa					
Discover					
Amex					
Name on card					

MAIL PAYMENT TO: Berkeley Historical Society, P.O. Box 1190, Berkeley, CA 94701



The Underhill home, 1350 Tamalpais Road, before the 1923 fire.



After the fire.

January 21, 1924.

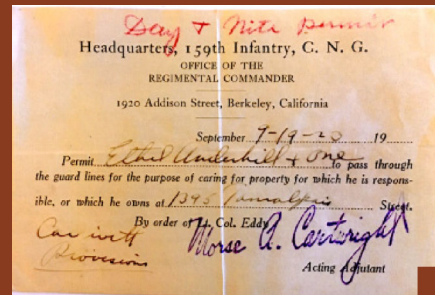
STATE OF CALIFORNIA } ss.
County of Alameda }

Arthur G. Brodeur, being duly sworn, deposes and says that his home at 125 Shasta Road, Berkeley, was the first house to be destroyed in the Berkeley conflagration of September 17, 1923; and that his home caught on side walls from burning grass and adjacent pine trees, and that the shingled roof caught from the side-walls and was last to burn.

(Signed) ARTHUR G. BRODEUR.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 21st day of January, 1924.

HORACE A. JOHNSON,
Notary Public in and for the County of Alameda, Sate of California.



Berkeley Policemen and Army Infantry checked for IDs to enter the fire area in order to deter looters.

Two Historical Society volunteers recall their family experiences

John Aronovici's grandparents, father and uncle lived at 1616 La Vereda. The house was stucco and Spanish tile, and the fire moved on without damage. That night they housed 30 neighbors, their kids and pets, fed them, and stored their salvaged possessions piled high on the living room floor. Grandma sought water by draining the hot water heater.

John Underhill's grandmother's home at 1350 Tamalpais Road (above) was the second house to be completely destroyed. See affidavit and emergency pass above. His grandmother Ethel, his father (age 23), and his aunt Mary survived safely, but they were only able to salvage a table and their piano, which was slightly scorched.