



# EXACTLY OPPOSITE

... the Golden Gate

The Newsletter of the Berkeley Historical Society & Museum

Volume 43 Number 2

Spring 2025

## Urban Care, Part I: A Different Approach to Berkeley Activism

By Mitch Fleischer



Histories of Berkeley activism usually begin in the streets, with such well-known events as the Free Speech Movement and People's Park. But there's another side to Berkeley activism, one that mobilized the local citizenry and the neighborhoods to improve the city for everyone and made Berkeley what it is today, for better or worse. Founded in 1966, for about twenty years the Urban Care organization focused on preserving and improving Berkeley's physical environment so that it functioned better for its population. After its dissolution in the 1980s, Urban Care seems to have been quickly forgotten; neither it nor its most creative leader, Rosalind (Roz) Lepawsky, typically figure in histories of Berkeley or Berkeley activism. This series of articles will attempt to revive the memory of both Urban Care and Roz Lepawsky and explore why that memory was lost.

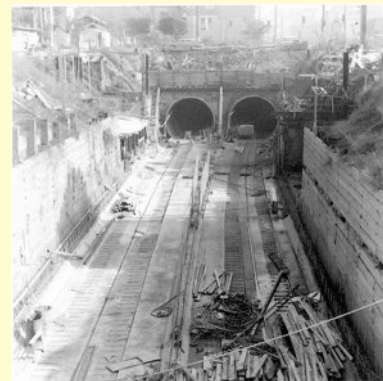
In the beginning, or 1965 for our purposes, was an effort by the City of Berkeley Planning Department to widen some fifty streets to improve the flow of traffic through the city. Believing this would make life more difficult and unpleasant for the actual residents of the city, a group of neighborhood leaders got together to figure out how to fight what they perceived as a bureaucracy that was out of touch with the people. They quickly gathered 1,218 signatures on a petition opposing the plan and got several University of California faculty to write articles in the *Berkeley Gazette* arguing that any such planning must be done in consultation with the citizens of the city, rather than just by a committee of experts. In response, the Planning Commission held a hearing that drew more than 500 people. The result was a revival of the city's Transit and Trafficways Committee, bolstered by increased citizen participation. The street widening effort was stopped and the city's Master Plan revised to reflect that.

The citizens' success in the street widening controversy led directly to the creation of Urban Care as a 501(c)(3)

nonprofit corporation in December 1966. The purpose of the organization was:

*... to enhance the quality of the physical environment in the City of Berkeley . . . and thereby improve the quality of urban life; to study various problems thereto; to assist in the development of plans and programs designed to promote these objectives in ways that will benefit the entire population of Berkeley; and to protect and preserve historical landmarks and the natural environment of the community.*

Urban Care was a membership-based organization, with membership fluctuating between about 100 and 500 in the



BART goes underground, Hearst and Grove (now MLK Jr. Way), ca. 1966-68 (BHSM photo # 323-196-2270).

1960s and '70s. From its start, Urban Care attempted to represent all parts of the city, from the prosperous Hills area to the less well-off South and West sides. Urban Care's boards of directors were multiracial and included both men and women in powerful positions.

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# President's Message

Life is clicking along at BHSM, keeping us volunteers quite busy. Every week we have new potential volunteers contacting us, walk-in and emailed research questions to respond to, new people to add to the email list, signups for walking tours, and now an increasing number of interview requests.

I greatly appreciate all the work the people listed at left are pouring into supporting our mission, and I hope they find it a welcome distraction from some of the depressing developments in the wider world. At the same time, I appreciate all who are making time in their busy lives for activism to help shape a better future. We can act locally *and* think globally, and learning about history can help us avoid repeating mistakes of the past. We knew when we planned the current exhibit (*Roots, Removal and Resistance: Japanese Americans in Berkeley*), with its emphasis on the incarceration of innocent people, that it would be relevant to the 2024 election and beyond. But we didn't know how much of a chord it would strike with the public. Visitation to the exhibit and related events continues to be high, and we have decided to extend the exhibit through August 30.

We have been experimenting with changes in our software systems and running into occasional glitches, so if you have written to us and not received an answer, please try again! (I receive and process all emails to info@berkhistory.org and sometimes have my own computer problems and distractions.) We are shopping for a better integrated membership and payment management system.

The first two spring walking tours (April 5 and 19) have sold out. Email info@berkhistory.org if you would like to be on a waiting list or notified if they are repeated.

Behind the scenes, volunteers are making great progress on the online Japanese American exhibit, a "Here Lived" booklet, our Temple of Wings collection, and organizing files that document the history of BHSM, among other projects.

A few reminders:

- Join us at the Hillside Club on Sunday, April 13, 3 pm, for a talk about the history of the Hillside Club, preceded by our annual members' meeting, which will include special recognition of our Archives volunteers.
- Check out our YouTube channel, including a video of the exhibit's opening program and interviews with Berkeley Japanese Americans, as well as the *Inside the Free Speech Movement* documentary and others: youtube.com/@berkeleyhistoricalsociety8421.
- Consider including BHSM in your estate planning and joining our Legacy Society (email us for pledge form).
- You can arrange to make a monthly donation to BHSM at tinyurl.com/BHSM-monthly.
- Sign up for our email announcements of events if you are not getting them yet: berkhistory.org/sign-up-for-email/.

Thank you, everyone!

Ann Harlow

(Urban Care, continued from page 1)

The organization implemented its broad purpose through a committee structure of volunteers, with each group focused on a specific problem. Thus, at various times, there were committees on architectural heritage, land use, transportation, BART, uses of the waterfront, street signs, solid waste, and many others. Urban Care held a series of citywide conferences to inform both city leaders and citizens about a wide range of topics. The group published reports and a newsletter—*Urban Care Concerns*—and lobbied city leaders. For issues that Urban Care focused on, city leaders often came to the group seeking information and advice. In some ways Urban Care could be seen as a local version of the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), a membership-based policy group dating back to 1910.

Urban Care was very much concerned about density and overpopulation. It supported efforts to restrict the population of Berkeley, and it generally opposed dense housing and supported efforts to “downzone” residential neighborhoods from R3 and R2 (multifamily housing) to R1 (single-family housing only). Today it would certainly be classified as a NIMBY group. Note, though, that Urban Care supported low density in all the city’s residential neighborhoods, not just in the Hills area. For example, the group opposed and partially helped defeat the West Berkeley Industrial Park that the city wanted to impose on low-income Ocean View, helping to preserve part of that neighborhood.

While Urban Care worked on a wide range of issues, this article focuses on two of the most successful efforts as examples. A later BHSM newsletter article will discuss how Urban Care helped preserve Berkeley’s waterfront.

### **BART Transition to Underground**

In 1966 Berkeley citizens passed a \$20.4 million bond to pay the new BART system to underground its rail lines through Berkeley, making Berkeley the only city in the system (outside of the downtowns of San Francisco and Oakland) to have its stations completely underground. The only problem was that there had to be a transition somewhere from the above-ground tracks in North Oakland to the underground station at Ashby Street. BART engineers presented the heavily minority Southside Berkeley community with three choices for doing this, all of which the community believed would be too noisy and dangerous, and which would destroy local businesses along Grove Street (now MLK Jr. Way). In 1967, local activist Mable Howard successfully filed a lawsuit stopping BART from building an above-ground station at Ashby. Working with neighborhood groups and the NAACP, Urban Care helped develop a new plan that met the community’s demands at relatively little additional cost. Urban Care then led the effort to push this solution through the city council and ultimately with BART.



St. John’s Presbyterian Church (now the Julia Morgan Theater), 2640 College Avenue, 1910 (BHSM photo # 266-190-3116).

### **Architectural Heritage**

The Architectural Heritage Committee of Urban Care was founded in January 1968 by *Ultimate Victorians* author Elinor Richey, with a focus on preserving Rose Walk and Codornices Park nearby. The committee had spent two years studying preservation ordinances in other cities when they were confronted by the imminent destruction of the Julia Morgan–designed St. John’s Presbyterian Church in South Berkeley. The committee conducted a survey of preservation-worthy structures in the city and proposed a Landmark Preservation Ordinance, which ultimately was adopted by the city in 1974. In that same year, the Architectural Heritage Committee was spun off from Urban Care into its own nonprofit organization, the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association (BAHA), which last year celebrated its 50th anniversary of helping to preserve Berkeley’s beautiful buildings. The St. Johns Church building was ultimately preserved and is today the Julia Morgan Theater on College Avenue.

*This is the first of three planned articles on Urban Care. The next article will focus on Urban Care’s efforts to preserve the Berkeley waterfront from development, resulting in the string of parks and the Bayfront Trail that we have today. The third article will address Roz Lepawsky’s role in the organization and attempt to understand why Urban Care has all but dropped from the memory of Berkeleyans.*

*This series of articles is based mostly on the Urban Care Papers in the BHSM Archive Collection. The Urban Care Papers have only recently been cataloged and are now available for public access to researchers.*

# Sponsoring a Berkeley Historical Plaque

By George O. Petty

They are everywhere in Berkeley: at homes, businesses, and institutions; in parks and on parking strips; on the internet. They are Berkeley's historical plaques, commemorating people, places, and events.

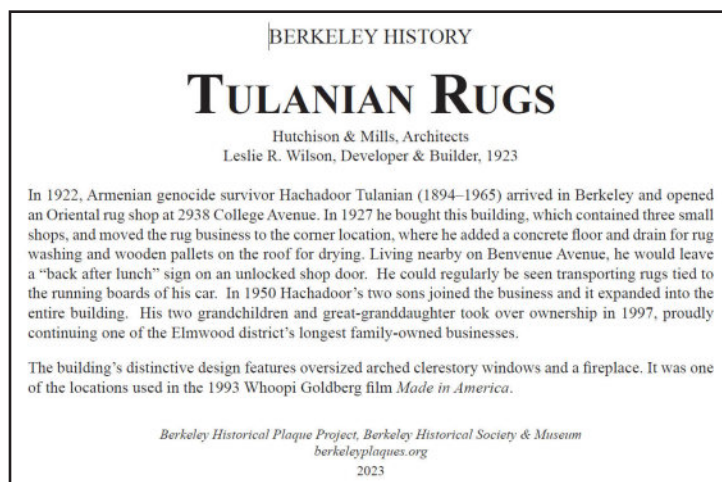
The Berkeley Historical Plaque Project was founded in 1997 with sponsorship from the City of Berkeley, its Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, and the Berkeley Historical Society. The project has installed more than a hundred physical plaques around the city and added 170 "e-Plaques" to its website. Over the years, the project has been contacted by researchers, museums, and individuals from around the world. After a quarter century, the Berkeley Historical Plaque Project has become a project of the Berkeley Historical Society & Museum (BHSM).

Anyone, or a group, can sponsor a plaque. The Tulanian Rugs plaque, for example—a physical plaque mounted on a non-landmarked building—was sponsored by a Berkeley citizen dedicated to the preservation of Elmwood District history. The sponsor's donation covered the \$1,112 cost of the plaque, including shipping. (This cost is typical; a post for mounting in the ground will add about \$200.) The plaque was installed by the building owner; BHSM does not install the plaques.

Each physical plaque is manufactured for permanence: porcelain enamel on 16-gauge steel with powder-coated backing plate and, if required, a post. There are two styles: dark-green oval plaques exclusively for sites landmarked by Berkeley's Landmarks Commission, and off-white rectangular plaques for all other sites. (In some cases, a rectangular plaque may be appropriate for a Berkeley Landmark site: for example, on the Marin Circle and Fountain Walk balustrades.)

E-Plaques are as permanent as the internet, but involve no costs to the sponsor and enjoy greater freedom for text than physical plaques. The e-Plaque for architect Julia Morgan, for example, contains 307 words of text plus a list of resources for additional information and multiple images showing the architect and her work; the physical Landmark Site plaque for the Fred Turner Building at 2546 Bancroft Way, which Morgan designed, contains only 112 words on the plaque itself (the Berkeley Historical Plaques website also includes additional images). Also, unlike physical plaques, e-Plaques are easily updated and, if necessary, corrected. E-Plaques require a simple approval by the Berkeley Historical Plaque Project Committee.

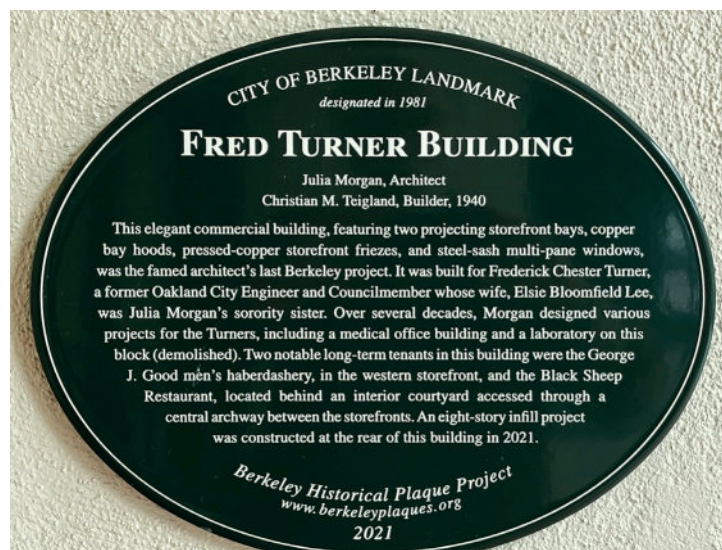
A prospective plaque sponsor should first determine whether the proposed site has been landmarked by Berkeley's Landmarks Commission or other authorities.



Historic site (not landmarked): rectangular plaque, dark-green lettering on an off-white background.

A list of City of Berkeley and other landmarks can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Berkeley\\_landmarks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Berkeley_landmarks).

Sites with designations other than Berkeley Landmarks include California Historical Landmarks, the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, and Berkeley Structures of Merit. Landmark designations other than Berkeley Landmarks won't earn an oval plaque but will help justify an Historic Site plaque. In addition, there is an important catch-all criterion that can qualify a site: one that is "representative of unique aspects of Berkeley history." In all cases, site approval will come from the BHSM Board of Directors, upon recommendations of the Berkeley Historical Plaque Project Committee.



Landmarked site: oval plaque, off-white lettering on a dark green background.

To initiate the process, a prospective sponsor should email BHSM at [info@berkhistory.org](mailto:info@berkhistory.org), including “Plaque proposal” or “e-Plaque proposal” in the subject line. Sponsors should have a rough idea of suggested text: less than 200 words for Berkeley Landmark sites and 250 to 400 words for Berkeley Historic sites and e-Plaques, depending on inclusion of images. Experience shows that text will receive vigorous review and revision by the Project Committee, working with the sponsor or contributor, before it is finalized.

The first physical plaque to be realized from request through completion since BHSM assumed responsibility for the Plaque Project is a Berkeley Landmark site at 1325 Arch Street, the Schneider-Kroeber house. This homeowner-sponsor began the process with a request in April 2024. Following site visits, review and revisions of the text (127 words), approval by the BHSM Board of Directors, and coordination with the plaque manufacturer, the plaque was installed in December 2024 in front of the house.

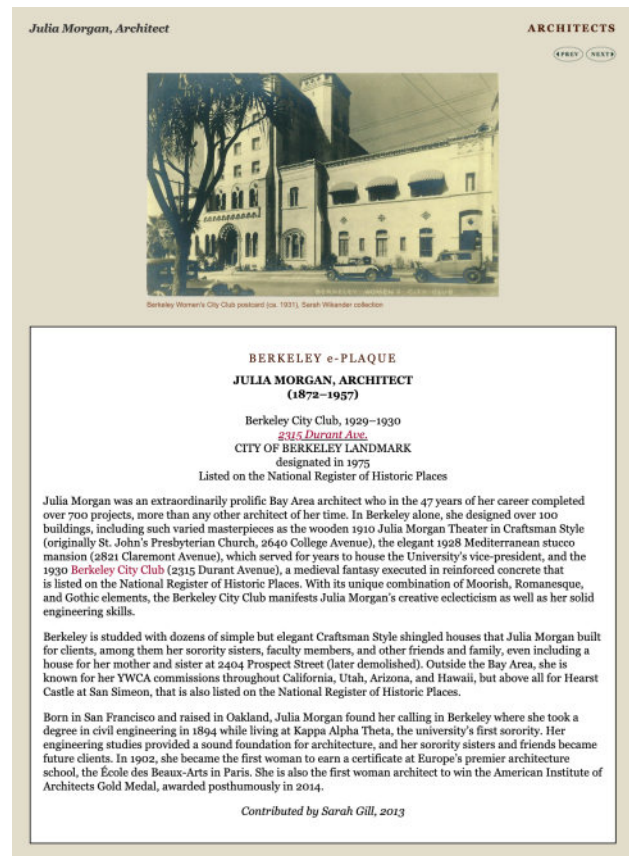
That’s all there is to it—you could become the next Berkeley Historical Plaque sponsor!



For additional information about the Berkeley Historical Plaque Project and maps showing the locations of physical plaques and e-Plaques, see the Berkeley Historical Plaques website ([berkeleyplaques.org](http://berkeleyplaques.org)) or use the QR code here.

## Locating the Plaques

On the Berkeley Historical Society and Museum website ([berkhistory.org](http://berkhistory.org)) on your **computer**, select Explore Berkeley History and click Berkeley Historical Plaques, or go to [berkeleyplaques.org/](http://berkeleyplaques.org/). There you can review physical plaques under Plaques and online plaques under e-Plaques, and you will find each plaque’s text plus photos and other related information. A third option under Berkeley Historical Plaques is All Plaques Map, showing markers for each physical plaque on a map of Berkeley. On your computer, click any plaque marker to view the online information for the plaque. On your **smartphone**, select the Berkeley Historical Plaques site and find these three options under Menu or at the bottom of the site. To see a map of all the plaques at once, select both plaque options and click all the subcategories: Architects, Artists & Writers, and so on. You now have a guide to every Berkeley historical site marked by a plaque or e-Plaque. Zoom in and take a virtual tour, or click the links as you walk or drive to the actual sites and learn their history on the spot.



Julia Morgan e-Plaque from the [berkeleyplaques.org](http://berkeleyplaques.org) website.



Schneider-Kroeber house (1325 Arch St.) and Landmark plaque, 2024. Photo by George Petty.

# Margaret Matthew d'Ille Gleason: Berkeley Resident and Head of Community Welfare at Manzanar

By Susanne Norton LaFaver

*In 1942, longtime Berkeley resident Margaret Matthew d'Ille (later Gleason) became the chief of community welfare and head counselor at the Manzanar War Relocation Center in the Mojave Desert east of Los Angeles, where more than 10,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. Margaret's great-niece Susanne LaFaver continues the family's connection to the Japanese American community by recounting the history as her great-aunt experienced it and advocating for restorative treatment for Japanese Americans incarcerated in the camps.*

My great-aunt Margaret Matthew d'Ille Gleason (1879–1954) arrived in Berkeley in 1894 with her parents and, eventually, eleven younger siblings. By 1900, the family was living at 2009 Lincoln Avenue, later moving to 1880 San Pedro Avenue, where Margaret lived until 1935. Margaret's parents, Rev. Dr. Winfield Matthew and Marion Pomroy, were both graduates of Northwestern University. Her father, a Methodist minister and publisher of the *California Christian Advocate*, held high expectations of his children. Education, faith, and service were assumed.

Margaret graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1899, and in 1903 she joined the national YWCA staff, organizing groups of girls mainly in New England. In 1908 she was sent to Japan as secretary of the YWCA there. She remained ten years, developing a love of Japanese culture, and became fluent in Japanese—qualities she would put to use many years later in a setting she wouldn't have imagined.

Margaret left Japan during the Russian Revolution, from 1918 to 1920, to serve the Red Cross in Siberia, where she was in charge of civilian relief. When she returned to the United States, she again joined the national YWCA staff. In 1927, she became General Secretary of the Oakland YWCA.

In 1935, at age fifty-five, Margaret married Arthur D'Ille, a member of the U.S. diplomatic services she had met in Siberia, making a home on an avocado ranch in Southern California. When Arthur died in 1937, Margaret returned to the Bay Area, joining the California State Relief Administration as a social worker.



Margaret Gleason's family home on San Pedro Avenue in Berkeley (J. Zajka photo).



Margaret Gleason's family in Berkeley. She is the young woman seated at the right. Photo courtesy of Susanne LaFaver.

In 1942, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan and the entry of the United States into World War II, Japanese Americans on the West Coast were rounded up and sent to camps in remote locations for most of the duration of the war. Margaret, then sixty-five, was asked to become the chief of community welfare and head counselor at the Manzanar War Relocation Center, putting her experiences in Japan decades earlier and her fluency in the Japanese language to work supporting Japanese culture and Japanese Americans in the camp. She later reported that the project director of the camp, Ralph Merritt, also a UC Berkeley alum, called her the “right person in the right place at the right moment to minister to the needs of the 10,000 evacuees living behind barbed-wire fences.”

Margaret later described her time at Manzanar. She noted that the small central office of the Community Welfare Section had little furniture. A corner behind two screens provided space for private interviews, and there were no desks, chairs, files, or telephone and only one typewriter for the entire staff. Among that staff were Japanese Americans, including another Cal graduate, Lillian Matsumoto.



Lillian Matsumoto's home on Parker Street in Berkeley (J. Ziajka photo).

Lillian, working with her husband Harry, was superintendent of the Children's Village, the only orphanage in a war relocation center. During the war, it housed up to 101 children, newborns to teenagers, from the entire West Coast.

Staff meetings and training programs were often hampered by language. Many older Japanese Americans spoke and read only Japanese, while most young people spoke and read English. Since not everyone spoke both languages, staff included a combination of older and younger Japanese American employees.

Language and cultural questions were constant considerations. The question of how far Japanese language, culture, ideals, and manners should be encouraged in the community came up repeatedly. The staff attempted to unite both cultural patterns but worked constantly toward a future return to mainstream American culture.

Margaret's community welfare staff encountered great difficulty in family conflicts between old Japanese cultural ideas and those of modern young Japanese Americans. The close life under crowded housing conditions aggravated this clash of ideas. Grandparents wished to control their grandchildren in discipline, manners, food, and sleeping habits. Parents' control of selection of their children's mates was accentuated in the camp. Young people's lives were constantly under the eyes of their parents and others. Children also had difficulty finding space, time, and quiet for homework. There were often strong differences of opinion between the older and younger Japanese Americans, and the staff stood between the extremes, attempting to unite family life and development.

Manzanar closed in 1945, and the next year Margaret married George Gleason, formerly a YMCA secretary in Japan, whom she had met when he visited Manzanar. She and George moved to Los Angeles, where Margaret lived until her death in 1954.



Lillian Matsumoto, former superintendent of the Manzanar Children's Village, on her 100th birthday, with Susanne LaFaver. Photo courtesy of Susanne LaFaver.

In researching my great-aunt's time at Manzanar, I contacted Lillian Matsumoto (1913–2024), the former head of the Children's Village, at her South San Francisco home. Her daughter, Karyl, answered the phone and said to her mother, "Mother, someone wants to know if you knew a Margaret in camp."

"Of course I did," said Lillian. "You're named after her, Karyl Margaret Matsumoto." Upon further visits, Lillian told me that she and Margaret were "fast friends and socialized after work." I asked how they socialized. She said Margaret told them about Japan, since none of them had ever been there.

Like Margaret, Lillian grew up in Berkeley. Lillian's parents, Shiro and Isa Iida, and her four siblings all appear in the Here Lived database at the Berkeley Historical Society and Museum. They were living at 1547 Parker Street when they were removed to Topaz, in Utah. Lillian at that time was living in Los Angeles, where she ran a home for orphaned children. It was at her instigation that the Children's Village was created at Manzanar.



Former Children's Village orphans, from left, Kazuye Suyematsu, Clara Yakushi, and Karyl Margaret Matsumoto. Karyl was adopted as an infant by Lillian and Harry Matsumoto. She was named after Margaret Gleason. Photo courtesy of Susanne LaFaver.

# From Farmer Stanley to Farmer Sophie: History of Berkeley's Little Farm in Tilden Park

By Fred Etzel



The Little Farm occupies two acres within the Tilden Park Nature Area. Photo by Joanne Furio.

The Little Farm in Berkeley's Tilden Park was constructed in 1955 to educate urban children about food production. The farm's first building, the quaint red barn that now houses the birds and goats overnight, was funded by members of the Berkeley Kiwanis Club and was built by students in the vocational carpentry class at Berkeley High School. The Little Farm is part of the Tilden Nature Area, a 740-acre preserve within the sprawling East Bay Regional Park District and is one of the East Bay's most popular family attractions.



From 1999 until his retirement in December 2024, Stanley Ward, a.k.a. "Farmer Stanley," was the Little Farm's caretaker and manager. Stanley was born and raised in Brixton, in South London, where he worked mostly as a carpenter. In 1976, he started farming in northwest Wales. He went to agricultural college one day a week and farmed six days a week, learning to milk cows and shear sheep

and gaining many other animal husbandry skills. For the next eighteen years, he farmed in Wales and England.

In the late 1990s, Stanley arrived in the Bay Area, where he landed a job as a carpenter with the EBRPD. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to take over the Little Farm. In his words, he served as the official farmer for twenty-five years, responsible for the "routine care and maintenance of the place," giv-

ing tours of those mellow and well-behaved animals at the two-acre farm. During his time with the Little Farm, he introduced many heritage breeds. His proudest achievement was building a small herd of Milking Shorthorn cattle, which he milked on the farm for fifteen years. He also introduced a flock of Black Welsh Mountain sheep, another great addition to the farm.

Farmer Stanley will now be succeeded by Farmer Sophie, who volunteered at the Little Farm for six years while being trained by Farmer Stanley. Sophie Worthington graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 2014 with a B.S. in animal science and a minor in biology. She has worked at two small-scale dairies, the first goats and sheep and the second just goats, and for the past eight years she has been with Stepladder Creamery, which raises American Dairy Goat Association-registered Lamancha goats. She is looking forward to returning to the EBRPD.



Farmer Sophie in the kidding barn at Stepladder Creamery holding a newborn Lamancha kid.

In her words, "EBRPD has given so much to me, from my first Covey Conservationist patch from Dr. Quack in Coyote Hills, to the Little Farm volunteer program feeding my budding interest in livestock, to the opportunity to connect with children in my community during my positions as an interpretive student aide in the Tilden Nature Area. I am so grateful for the opportunity to give back to and collaborate with my community in this way. I couldn't say where I would be without the opportunities Stanley created or his guidance and belief in me, even as a young volunteer." (Personal communication, January 23, 2025.)

## Sources

Joanne Furio, "Meet Farmer Stanley, The Man Behind Tilden's Little Farm," *Berkeleyside*, May 15, 2023, and January 15, 2025.

Stanley Ward, emails and telephone interview, January 20, 2025.

# “Roots, Removal and Resistance” and Japanese American Artists in Berkeley: Excerpts from Our New Videos

*In conjunction with our Japanese American exhibit, we have four new videos created by Jaxon Chester, videographer/editor, with grant support from the Japanese American Citizens League of Berkeley. The first video is a recording of the opening, in which survivors of the camps and descendants spoke. The other three are interviews with Berkeley artists. Find them on our website under “Videos.”*

## Opening event for *Roots, Removal and Resistance: Japanese Americans in Berkeley*

### Toru Saito:

“Growing up in San Francisco, going to Topaz when I was four, I grew up looking at the world through barbed-wire fences, looking at empty desert places. And, you know, your formative years are so important, they form your self-esteem, your self-worth. So you can imagine what a four-year-old kid felt like in a prison camp. And I remember hearing about Santa Claus, you know Santa Claus comes down your chimney and brings good kids presents? Well, Santa Claus never came to Block 4 . . . . So I used to always wonder: Did we do something bad? Were we bad kids so we don’t deserve any presents? So, I grew up with that question.”

### Mary Ann Wight:

#### “The Sunday Before”

“For the 75th anniversary of the Executive Order, I asked my bookmaking group if they would help me make a book of the excerpts of the sermons from “The Sunday Before,” a pamphlet of what their [pastors’] last words were before they all had to leave their homes. . . . After we worked on these pages, I did tracings from photographs from the camp and the evacuation. I infused the paper with beeswax, so it would be translucent. They were flat, but they were joined in a Japanese technique to make lanterns, and were illuminated from within. Each person in the group chose a different quote to write on one or more pages, which became the lanterns.

#### “Japanese Farmers in Western Oregon”

“My book group and I also made a book about my father. . . . For my part, I concentrated on the hearings in February and March of 1942 by Senator Toland. My father’s account [at the hearings] was about Japanese farmers. How much the Japanese farmers in his area of Western Oregon, outside of Portland, could produce, and how many were American born and how many were aliens. And what were the crops that they grew. The hearings started two days after the Executive Order, and



Judy Fujimoto and Nancy Ukai speaking at the opening.



Toru Saito talking about Topaz at the opening.



Artist Mary Ann Wight being interviewed by Aimee Baldwin.

the committee did not issue its final report until May 1942. So all this testimony from mayors and pastors and chambers of commerce played no official role in the decision to remove or incarcerate the Japanese Americans.”

## Betty Nobue Kano: “Broken Promise”

“This [mixed media art work] is called “Broken Promise Fixed.” Initially, when I painted it in 1990, it was called “Promise.” I wanted it to represent the birth of civilization as a promise. The cowrie shell represents the promise of civilization in many cultures. But when the first Gulf War happened in ‘91, I took a hatchet to the painting, and I hammered away. So it was torn, broken. So then it became “Broken Promise.” Then, five years or so later, I was invited to an exhibit on peace. So I wanted to fix it, in a sense. I used these gold-colored *tsuru* [cranes], which are a symbol of peace in Japan. My mother folded thousands of them, so some of these are hers. All the places where a gold *tsuru* is, there was a crack. So it became “Broken Promise Fixed” . . . I really felt how painful it was to try to destroy a painting. That is what I wanted to experience—what it was like to destroy civilization.”



Betty Nobue Kano's *Broken Promise Fixed*.

## Artists Keiki Fujita and Kay Sekimachi in Conversation

Kay: “How did Berkeley influence my choice to be an artist? We were living on Berkeley Way [before the War], and it just happened that [the artist] Mine Okubo was living across the street from us. Of course, she was in the camps. . . . How did I get into weaving? I was over at the California College of Arts and Crafts, and I went upstairs to the weaving room, and I was just fascinated, absolutely captivated—throw, beat, beat, change. So, with the last \$150 I had, I went out and I bought a loom.”



Betty Nobue Kano speaking about art and activism.

Keiki: “What influenced me to become an artist? In the camps [with my parents] was Chiura Obata and Ruth Asawa. They were very famous artists. [Afterward], my dad commissioned Chiura Obata to make a painting for our house, so I’ve always been exposed to art.

When I was studying [at Davis], there were women who were going to Japan to study other techniques of textile design, *shibori* and *katazome*, coming back and creating one-of-a-kind wearable art here in Berkeley. There were all these shops with wearable art—the best, Obiko boutique in San Francisco—and I thought: that’s what I want to do, because I believe in all of us being unique. So, with my dad’s support, I went to Japan and learned a very intricate technique of hand-painted kimono, called *musen yuzen*. My teacher was actually an oil painter, and he created his own technique in which he painted a kimono like a canvas. Which is what gave me the desire to do the best caliber of work in this field, the caliber of Obiko. So I started to paint my own one-of-a-kind art silks and design my own clothing, and that’s what I did for over thirty years.”



Kay Sekimachi, Keiki Fujita, and Aimee Baldwin discuss Japanese American artists in Berkeley.

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Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

# Some Berkeley Historical Plaque Locations

From left to right by row: Rose Garden, Indian Rock, Moe's Books, Schneider-Kroeber House, Northbrae Public Improvements, Spenger's Fish Grotto, Berkeley Horticultural Nursery, Berkeley City Club Pool, Virginia Bakery, Obata Memorial, Golden Sheaf Bakery Annex, Elmwood Theater.

