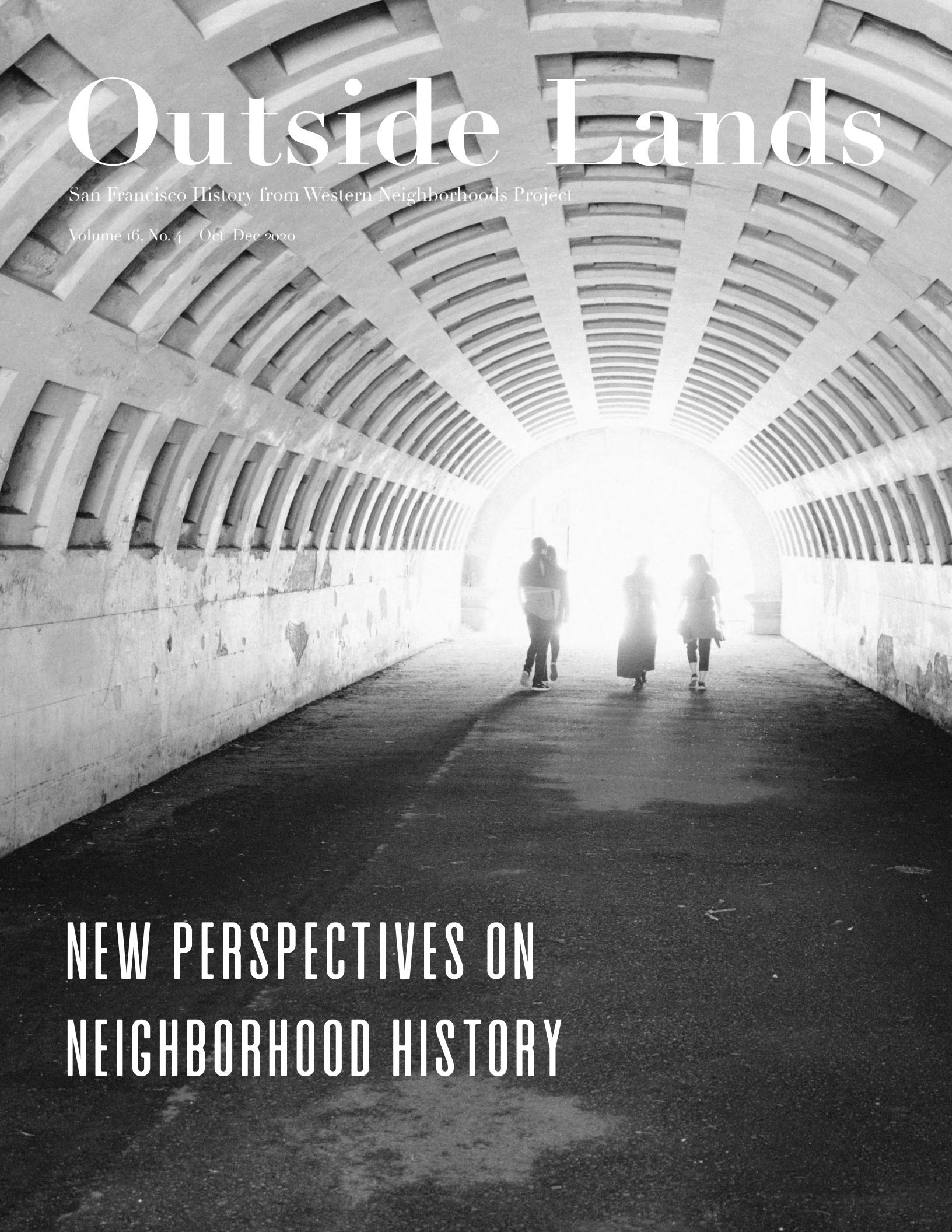
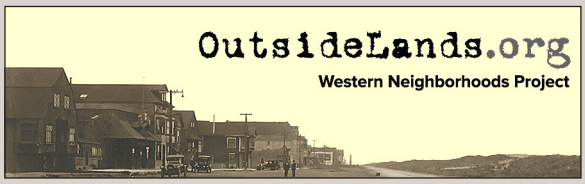
Outside Lands

San Francisco History from Western Neighborhoods Project

Volume 16, No. 4 Oct Dec 2020



NEW PERSPECTIVES ON NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY



Outside Lands

History from Western Neighborhoods Project
(Previously issued as SF West History)

Oct-December 2020: Volume 16, Number 4

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Inside the Outside Lands



In this last quarter of 2020, I've been thinking a lot about privilege, and not simply because this year has asked us to look harder at what we've, perhaps, never questioned.

It's a privilege to have a past. Every memory we keep without pain, every memento we store without financial strain, all these things add up to become our personal histories. Not everyone is lucky enough to hold these so close. I look around as I write and I see untold numbers of family treasures that I'm so grateful to have, even if I've acquired them through loss. I think about everyone who can't look around themselves and see the same. This is the definition of inequality—when one group has what another cannot have—and you'll hear more about what we're doing to correct this imbalance within our organization in our ***History Matters, You Matter*** update.

It's also a privilege to make the past a profession, to work with and get to know all of you. We're so grateful for everyone who puts the "we" in Western Neighborhoods Project. Community history is a community project and we're proud to give you space, in print, with our ***Volunteer Spotlight***, which also introduces you to our remote fall interns from **Johns Hopkins University** and the **University of San Francisco**. This is a small way to say thank you, everyone, for keeping us connected and vibrant in a year that otherwise feels untethered and dreary.

You are the reason we've had the energy to keep calm and carry on this year, hosting History Happy Hours, Virtual History Walks, and WNP Story Time for kids via Zoom, but also providing the critical context for historic moments that are still unfolding. We're exiting this year with a call to rename many west side schools, so, with the help of our summer intern **Gabrielle Silva**, we took a look at how the Columbus School in the Sunset District became ***Alice Fong Yu Alternative School*** at the end of the last century. Stay tuned for what we're learning about currently contested school names, which I'm researching as I write this message.

Ultimately, the past pivots on people. In ***Karl Young Remembers***, you'll hear how this son of an impressive single mother harnessed a lifelong love of music to become a physicist, all from the comfort of his Richmond District home(s). And, of course, there is our famed Private Collector. The impulse he had as a photographer and photography collector to capture San Francisco as it changes has been shared by local photographers for over a century. This legacy continues with contemporary photographers who live in "The Districts". In our OpenSFHistory feature, ***It's About Time***, we're introducing you to a photographer named **Yameen** who is able to elevate everyday neighborhood scenes to the realm of fine art. We situate his work within a legacy of west side photography while highlighting the timelessness of the medium.

And finally, I must say, it's an absolute privilege to be Executive Director here, opening up the past to include the present and having conversations with people like you. It's kept me sane despite the insanity swirling around us, and I hope we, the little history nonprofit that could, have provided the same salve to you. I look forward to seeing you all in 2021 but, in the meantime, be safe, be well, and remember that WNP Loves You.



"Totally Normal", Sunset District, April 2020. (Courtesy of Yameen)



Karl Young playing flute at the Trident in Sausalito circa 1989 with fellow George Washington High 1969 graduate Steve Parks on bass, and North Beacher Mark Zannini on guitar. (Courtesy of Karl Young)

WHERE IN WEST S.F.?

By now it should come as no surprise that Charlie, our fluffiest Junior Historian, and his companion, Margaret Ostermann, are on it! This is the PCC Streetcar 1122 navigating a turnaround at the end of Judah and La Playa in the Outer Sunset.



Judah and La Playa captured by William J. Madden on August 1, 1977. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp25.6852)

Margaret admits this was an easy one but also said, "The simplicity in locating this quarter's 'Where in West S.F.?' was made up for with the difficulty of photographing a small dog from the same angle! Thanks for another great WNP-themed adventure!" Thank you, Margaret, for the joy of having an official WNP mascot.

Alan Thomas added a bit more context. "The streetcar… has been running since 1928 when the Sunset Tunnel opened at Carl and Cole Streets. I grew up on 27th Avenue and Moraga and often took the "N" downtown to work. It meant a little longer walk…but a seat was pretty well guaranteed on the streetcar." Still a valid strategy, Alan! He also mentions Celia's Mexican Restaurant, which is still going strong and serves one of the strongest margaritas in the west side (highly recommend).

Speaking of local businesses, longtime member **Pat Cunneen** followed up with a few memories that "seem like yesterday" to him. He mentions the Red Mill Tavern and "too many hours in Dick's." There are probably many folks who remember Dick's at the Beach, which started as a coffee shop, then became a biker bar, and is now known as Java Beach Café—a beloved neighborhood hangout where you can get a coffee and a beer. Sometimes things come full circle, just like PCC Streetcar 1122.

The Mar Motel at 4340 Judah Street replaced the quaint shingled cottage seen in 1955; however, Gen Xers will know this location better as the Oceanview Motel. This is where Bradley Nowell, lead singer for the band Sublime, sadly overdosed and died on May 25, 1996. The last thing he did was take Lou Dog for a walk on Ocean Beach to catch the sunrise. Fans looking to pay their respects can still stay the night here, in the heavily remodeled SeaScape Inn.



Charlie at the N Judah turnaround. (Courtesy of Margaret Ostermann)

Transit fans will appreciate **Angelo Figone's** background on the PCC streetcar, which was one of 70 acquired by Muni in 1957 to replace the old "Iron Monsters". The cars were initially leased from St. Louis, Missouri, when they ended streetcar service in that city. Angelo also points out that you can just make out the passenger shelter on the right. This shelter still exists and now features a fantastic "Last Stop / First Stop" mural by artist **Jeff Canham**—the result of a beautification request from local residents that was installed alongside recent pedestrian improvements to the area. **Danny Hollander** adds that the PCC cars on the N Judah line were replaced by the Muni Metro Boeing LRV cars by 1980. And **Grant Ute** tells us that PCC Streetcar 1122 was restored for operation by the San Diego Metropolitan Transit Agency as Car 529, where it works on the historic trolley "Silver Line" in non-pandemic times.



Streetcars queued up for the end of a game at Kezar Stadium with Dick's at the Beach seen on the left, 1955. (Photo by John Harder, Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp14.1379)

Danny also surmises that people gathered in the lower left corner were using a tunnel under Great Highway. This was one of several pedestrian tunnels installed under Great Highway in the 1920s, with others located near Taraval and Wawona Streets, Sloat Boulevard, and in Golden Gate Park close to the Beach Chalet. According to our old pal, **Frank Dunnigan**, the tunnels were closed and sealed when Great Highway was rebuilt as part of a city-wide sewer project in the late 1970s or early 1980s—not long after our "Where in West SF?" photo was taken.

Other guessers include Mike Dadoas, Neil Mischalov, Roger Goldberg, Donna Payne, Mary-Ann Orr, Joy Walsh, Harry Henderson, and, last but certainly not least, Bob Cherny. Thank you, all, for wonderful responses that made writing this column a breeze.



Looking northwest on Lower Great Highway with the Taraval pedestrian tunnel visible to the left, circa 1930. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp4.0844)

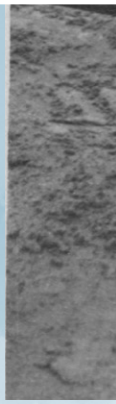
Now let's see what you have to say about this round.

We'll pander a bit to our transit-loving audience with this festive shot to get you in the holiday spirit. Can you guess where the K is and where it's going? Email us, nicole@outsidelands.org.





Karl Young Remembers



We often talk about how ordinary San Franciscans live extraordinary lives, and Karl Young is the living embodiment of that statement. Although an intermittent member of Western Neighborhoods Project over the years, we first connected with Karl by email just as he was leaving San Francisco forever. We asked if he would consent to an interview with us on his way out of town, and he agreed, becoming the second oral history we completed in 2020. The article you're about to read was adapted from that interview and features incredible photos from the Young family archive.

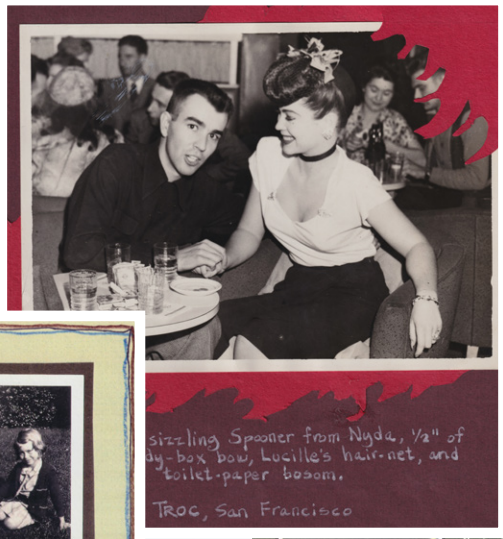
Karl Young spent almost his entire life in the Richmond District. He grew up in 1960s San Francisco and has memories that will probably be familiar to many of you: childhood shenanigans in Golden Gate Park; buying sandwiches on Clement Street that also came with a morality lecture from the proprietor; trips to the Surf Theater for foreign films. His late teen years and early 20s, however, were all about music. Learning to love jazz at an early age from his independent single mother, Karl was inspired by a band teacher at George Washington High School and has played in various jazz, rock, and R&B outfits ever since. Incredibly, these musical origins led him to a career in physics by way of San Francisco State University—one that has taken him to UC Berkeley, NASA, Stanford, and UCSF, where he worked with Nobel Prize winners and other exceptional scientists. And—except for a brief period living in Santa Cruz while attending UCSC for graduate work—he did it all while living in the west side.

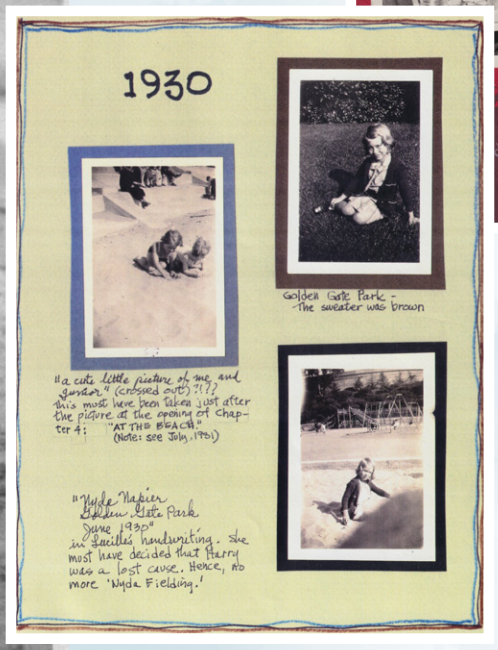
Nyda Young

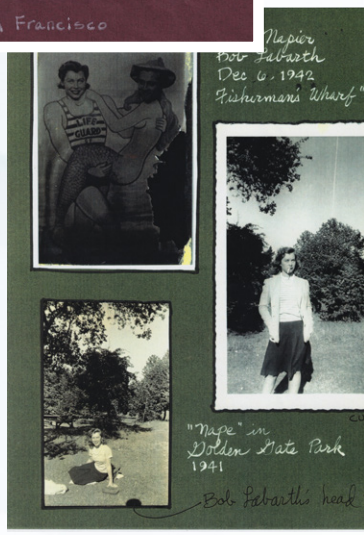
"Our family has a very checkered past. [My mother] was apparently not treated very well as a kid; she spent time with a lot of relatives and her mother kind of passed her off. I didn't really even meet my grandmother on that side until I was in my late 20s."

Nyda Napier eventually landed in San Francisco where she spent time with her grandmother, Maud. Described as strong, intelligent, and independent-minded in "Demanding Child Care: Women's Activism and the Politics of Welfare, 1940-1971" by Natalie M. Fousekis, Nyda opted not to go to college after graduating from high school in









(Left-to-Right) Karl Young feeding ducks possibly at Mallard Lake in Golden Gate Park, 1955. Karl Young at Nursey School at the top of Ashbury Street, 1955. Scrapbook page compiled by Nyda Napier of her childhood in San Francisco, 1930, showing Golden Gate Park (including the same sandbox she later took Karl to play in). Scrapbook pages compiled by Nyda Napier, 1941-1945. (Courtesy of Karl Young)

1941. Instead, she married a man named Dick Vrooman who left for the Pacific Theater of World War II shortly thereafter. Nyda stayed in San Francisco and supported herself by working for IBM and as a nightclub photographer.

The pair separated in 1946 and Nyda left San Francisco, eventually remarrying to a veteran named David Young, with whom she had a son. But, that too, would not last. Karl remembers, "My mom came to San Francisco as a single mother when I was 2, which was, well I'm 68 now. And we lived in the Haight until I was about nine."

"At the time it was tough for professional women. It's still bad but it was even tougher getting acknowledged for your intellectual contributions back then. But she kind of worked her way up in this company called Flambert and Flambert that designed industrial kitchens for restaurants, schools, things like that. She was sort of the drafts person but worked up to doing architectural type work; she was a good artist. And she would actually go all around the country for design meetings. But I remember her being very upset that her male colleagues would often get the plum gigs, she felt sometimes unfairly."

Growing Up in the Richmond District

Karl and Nyda spent a year in Hawaii when Karl was nine years old. When they returned, they moved into an apartment on the southeast corner of 12th and Cabrillo around 1960-1961. Karl remembers, "I've been in the Richmond District ever since then, on and off."

Karl attended Frank McCoppin School until he was bussed





Left, Tom Bryant and Karl Young in a sandbox at Koret Playground, 1956—the same one in which his mother also played as a child. Right, Karl Young at hockey practice at the San Francisco Ice Arena on 48th Avenue, circa 1961. (Courtesy of Karl Young)

to Sherman Elementary School in the Marina District, then Roosevelt Middle School. By this time, he and Nyda were living in a Victorian apartment building at 715 5th Avenue at Cabrillo. He remembers, "That building was really interesting because in addition to spending a lot of time growing up there and spending time up the block in the park, I ended up later renting the lower flat with my first wife. Then later one of my best friends, Bart Schneider, a great writer and publisher, and old Richmond district buddy who grew up out on Shoreview, rented that flat."

At Roosevelt Middle School, Karl remembers "there was a significant component of Black culture that I hadn't really been exposed to before then, you know? I'd had individual friends when I was younger but being exposed to the culture was sort of an awakening, including getting beat up occasionally just for being white. In retrospect I think that was probably a good experience to have, you know, see things from that side, but it wasn't much fun at the time. It was sort of similar to when I went to Washington [High School], which was, as I recall, almost equally balanced between White, Asian, and African American. I think people mostly got along but still there was racial tension."

"In retrospect I think that was probably a good experience to have, you know, see things from that side, but it wasn't much fun at the time."

Karl was at Washington when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968. "I remember, I was actually wearing a black armband, at that point I was kind of, I was a hippie, sort of a ne'er-do-well musician…so anyway I had this black armband on and I was kind of looking down, I just figured it was just too tense at school I was just gonna cut… so I was walking down 30th Avenue with my head down and all of a sudden I was surrounded and I was kind of sort of getting pummeled by this group of Black kids and I was actually saved by a Black Panther guy, he came up and said, 'Hey, no, no…this is what they want you to react like' and he brought me back into school…I think they were trying to monitor things, to kind of keep things calm. I don't remember seeing Panthers out there very often."

This was a radical time to be a teen in San Francisco. "I guess it was the 60s in San Francisco and you couldn't avoid sort of absorbing a lot of that. I was your basic sort of hippie kid at Washington and I remember there was this one incident, there was a really cool cop that used to kind of patrol. The people I hung out with hung out at the back gate on 30th and Anza, right? And so one time we were parked in a van and we were smoking pot and then the cop came up, stuck his head in the window and, my friend Randy (it was his van)…and said, 'Randy how many times have I told you not to do that here? Drive down the block please.'"

Playing Music

One thing that has resonated with Karl Young throughout his life is music. "I remember my mom, who was very liberal, dating the jazz drummer Chico Hamilton. I had a little group at the time with my friends the Ackridge brothers from up the block on 12th Avenue. My mom and their parents decided we should play for Chico when he was over for dinner one time. He was very gracious and even played a song with us (we had learned one of the songs off of one of his records)." Karl went on, "My mom was always interested in jazz and…I was kind of exposed to it but I for some reason never thought really about playing. When we went to Roosevelt…they forced you, your first semester, to either sing in the choir or play an instrument for a semester. I'm all, 'This is stupid.' I was really angry that they were forcing me to do this and so the most innocuous thing I

could pick was clarinet. We had a great band teacher, a guy named Richard Giambruno, who was really inspiring. So, I played the clarinet and the rest was history."

"As soon as I could I switched to sax because it was obviously a much hipper jazz instrument to be playing. I played a little piano just so I could write and when I sort of got into R&B that was always handy cuz I could get gigs on keyboard even though I wasn't a virtuoso by any means." While at Washington High School, Karl began playing gigs at local clubs. "There was one on Clement Street that was kind of this like, hipster coffee shop beatnik place. We played there quite a bit because the owner appreciated our efforts." He also began playing music with another student named Bill Fiege, who "had a band for a while called The Morticians and they drove around in a hearse. He left The Morticians and we formed a band called Flower Road. He said, 'Well, I got this hearse we can use as a band mobile' and we couldn't think of how to portray it right, so…bunch of hippie kids, we had this sign on the side of the hearse that said, 'When you're dead it's forever on Flower Road.' Nobody knows what that meant but it just, we thought it was very hip."

Life after High School

After graduating from George Washington High School in 1969, Karl got a job working in Golden Gate Park as a gardener through a friend's father. "That was a lot of fun because it was a really interesting crew, there was a couple of junkies on the crew, and a guy who had been a James Joyce scholar at the University of Chicago. And our foreman was a jazz singer, a guy named Charles Denman I think. We planted a bunch of plants right across from the Jefferson Airplane Mansion on Fulton and this one guy, one of the junkies, would always yell, 'Hey Grace! Come on out Grace! Come on Grace!' I think some of those plants are actually still there so we did a couple of productive things."

This was around 1970 and, soon after, Karl was recruited by a friend to play for a band that eventually became known as Moon Smoke. "That was actually another great band, really good musicians but we were a little self-indulgent, we wanted to be kind of… the new version of Bitches Brew so we played all these weird time signatures and played 35 minute pieces. Some people got it but it wasn't anything that anybody really wanted to hear. I think we had the distinction of being the only band to ever have the plug pulled on us at the Sleeping Lady in Fairfax."

Karl started playing in an R&B club band with a bunch of North Beach guys and a Richmond District buddy named Bob Bareillis. "We used to play the places out in the Richmond on Clement, The Jolly Friars and Woodstock, but the one we had for a really long time was out on Fillmore, the Cock's Inn, across from The Matrix." Then he was recruited to play with Butch Whacks and Glass Packs, a "kind of a comedy troupe. They were Saint Mary's College folks, just a 50s kind of show band, you know, dressing up." They played throughout the Bay Area at venues like Bimbo's, Great American Music Hall, and the Boathouse in Sausalito.

Physics for Poets

Living in the Richmond District this whole time, Karl had also been giving music lessons to Mark Linenthal, head of the English Department at San Francisco State University (and the father of Potrero Hill historian, Peter Linenthal). Mark was inspired to learn music after hearing Lester Young. They'd discuss music, literature, and science, and Linenthal encouraged Karl to get a degree. He enrolled at San Francisco State University in 1975 and initially majored in music. "I took this physics for poets class as one of my electives and it turns out I just loved it so much, the rest was history, I went off and became a physicist." Karl continued his music studies while pursuing dual degrees in Mathematics and Physics,



Karl Young on his way to graduation from George Washington High School, June 1969. Behind him is a portrait of Karl done by his mother, Nyda Young. (Courtesy of Karl Young)

taking the scenic route to graduate in 1984. Thereafter, he went to UC Santa Cruz and began working with a postdoctoral researcher named Jim Crutchfield, whose focus at Berkeley was chaos. "I liked what he was doing, so I moved back to the Richmond District a couple years after I'd been in Santa Cruz and basically worked with him at Berkeley and just had a guy down in Santa Cruz signing off on the work that I was doing."

Back in San Francisco, Karl lived at 15th Avenue and Fulton. He received his PhD in Physics from UC Santa Cruz in 1990 and continued to reside in the Richmond District as he moved up through his career. "I felt kind of provincial. People would always tease me, right? Because as a scientist you're supposed to go all over the world and take positions everywhere and I would

“People would always tease me, right? Because as a scientist you’re supposed to go all over the world and take positions everywhere and I would always say, well you know, the world comes through San Francisco.”

always say, well you know, the world comes through San Francisco.”
Karl commuted from the Richmond to Mountain View as a postdoc at NASA from 1991 to 1993. One “fun project” he worked on was a “model called the ‘Dripping Handrail’ which is like fog accumulating on the handrail and all of a sudden you get enough mass where it just bloop! some drips off.” This simulated the interaction of binary stars rotating around each other in which matter from one star transfers to the other star, creating x-rays. “So we came up with a simple model like that for this ring around one of the stars and it just predicted everything beautifully.” When asked if the foggy Richmond District inspired this model, Karl laughed and said that it certainly helped him “visualize” it.

After NASA, Karl spent five years at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC), where he discovered he wanted to “do more science than programming and be in a smaller project that was kind of, you know, of my own determining.” At the time, the radiology department at UCSF was conducting some interesting physics projects and Karl was hired based on the strength of his work at SLAC, despite having no background in medical physics, MRI, or NMR, under the condition that he write his own grants. He was with UCSF for the next seven or eight years, working at the VA Hospital in the Richmond District.

Karl remembers, “The VA was a crazy place. Our lab was kind of isolated in this old warehouse and we kind of had things guy-wired together. At the time the lab that I was working in was really interested in seeing if they could come up with ways of detecting neurodegeneration (like Alzheimer’s) early. We were developing protocols for MRIs.” He worked at UCSF until around 2000 when, sick of writing grants (the majority of which got rejected) and not being



Karl Young singing with Butch Whacks and the Glass Packs at the Boathouse in Sausalito, 1984. Pictured with west side “luminaries”: John Buick (Sunset District) to the left, wearing his high school sweater; Bob Sarlatte (Sunset District) in the gold lamé jacket; Rob Birsinger (Richmond District) playing bass; and token North Beacher, Bill Lazaretti, in the white suit on the right. (Courtesy of Karl Young)



Karl Young practicing flute in his flat on 18th Avenue between Cabrillo and Fulton, circa 1992. (Courtesy of Karl Young)

able to do the actual work, he briefly returned to SLAC where he worked on a project now known as the Fermi Satellite. But Karl returned to UCSF in 2005. “At the time the Defense Department was really interested in what they called mild traumatic brain injury. It happens when you don’t suffer a direct hit to the head but if, e.g., you’re in a tank in Iraq or something and an IED goes off close to you, your brain shakes; that’s considered mild traumatic brain injury. And I had this idea from my nonlinear dynamics days about how to actually characterize it in a way that might be useful for diagnosis. I got funded to do that. That was mainly my workload.” Around the time he retired in 2012, the dialog around CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy) and football was just gaining traction with the NFL.

Retirement

Karl retired because he was “sick of writing grants” and wanted to play music. “I had heard this record by a guy who’s a living national treasure in Japan, a guy named Gorō Yamaguchi, and it was called A Bell Ringing in the Empty Sky. This album just blew me away, you know? There’s certain sounds you hear, like the first time I heard Coltrane’s horn, first time I heard Hendrix’s guitar, well I had one of those when I heard this shakuhachi [a Japanese bamboo flute]. When I finally retired I wanted to have more time just to work on the traditional repertoire.”

On Leaving the Richmond

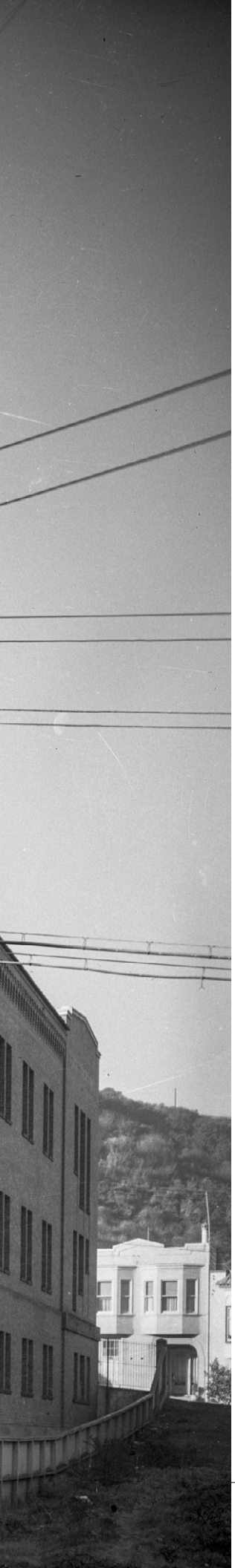
Since retiring, Karl Young has traveled to Japan and continues to explore ways to combine shakuhachi with his first love, jazz (much to the chagrin of some friends). He’s also entertained the idea of writing a book on philosophy.

This year (2020), Karl Young and his wife chose to leave the Richmond District for Joshua Tree. He spoke of the accelerated pace of the city and changing demographics and how his friends, some of whom have left already, were sad to see him go too. But, in a way, he’s leaving the city he’s loved for so long in order to find it again. He said, “I fell in love with Joshua Tree, kind of this quirky weird little town, [because] it’s got some of the qualities I remember in San Francisco as a kid. Obviously it’s not a big city and it’s not as cosmopolitan but it’s got these weird people, artists and writers, so it seems like a good place to go hang out for a while.”

We’re so grateful that Karl took this trip down memory lane with us, not easy when you’re about to leave the place you’ve always called home. And we hope you’ll do the same from the comfort of your living room. Contact us (nicole@outsidelands.org) for more information on how you can become a part of history by sharing your story with Western Neighborhoods Project.



Columbus School at 12th near Lawton in January 1934.
(Photo courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp14.10503)



ALICE FONG YU *Alternative* SCHOOL

BY GABRIELLE SILVA

This unprecedented year of pandemic and protest has seen the public questioning many things we have always trusted as permanent features in the western neighborhoods. The reexamination of WPA murals by Victor Arnautoff at George Washington High School transitioned into a reexamination of monuments in Golden Gate Park. Now the ongoing debate takes us back to school, as some ask us to rethink the naming of educational institutions for former Presidents Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Theodore Roosevelt—men without direct connections to the city beyond inspired patriotism, and with records that are being scrutinized against 21st century moral values.

It's easy to chalk all of this up to a revolutionary 2020, but change has been a constant in our city's history. More importantly, and with politics aside, school names have been repurposed to reflect the changing demographics and priorities in our western neighborhoods since long before this year. Our summer intern from the University of San Francisco, ***Gabrielle Silva****, took a closer look at one example: how the Columbus School at 12th Avenue and Lawton in the Sunset District came to be named for pioneering Chinese American educator, Alice Fong Yu.*

"IN THIS UNIQUE IT ISN'T EXACTLY



San Francisco State Teacher's College at Hermann and Laguna in 1921. (Photo by F. Ray from the Marilyn Blaisdell Collection courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp37.02715.)

If you've spent any time walking around and exploring Sunset Heights, chances are you may have seen Alice Fong Yu Alternative School on 12th Avenue between Kirkham and Lawton Streets. This is a K-8 Chinese immersion school that initially operated out of West Portal Elementary School until September 1995, when it took over the Columbus School campus. It is the first school of its kind in the country, and was named for the first Chinese American teacher in San Francisco shortly after its move to the Sunset. But first, a bit of background on the building.

SUNSET PRIMARY TO COLUMBUS SCHOOL

The first school constructed on this block was a temporary building erected as an emergency measure in September 1906, after the earthquake and fire. This "shack school" that was interchangeably called "Sunset Primary" or "Sunset School" was almost immediately insufficient for the expanding neighborhood, and local parents lobbied for its closure in January 1911. The Board of Education opted to keep it open but admitted the facilities needed an upgrade. It was renamed at the end of the year, along with seven other schools, through a resolution put forth by newly-elected SF Supervisor Henry Payot, who preferred that school names reflect "honored names associated with the history of the country" instead of the streets or neighborhoods in which they resided.[1] From this time on, it was known as Columbus School.

The name change did nothing to assuage residents' calls for better facilities. Members of the Sunset Improvement Club and the Mothers' Club complained about overcrowding and the "leaky old shack, in which the health of their children would be in constant peril."[2] A delegation of 40 of these concerned citizens brought the issue to Mayor James Rolph at one of his Monday Night "Kickers Meetings" (seemingly a sort of town hall) in October 1912; they left with his promise to see what he could do. Supported by a series of bonds, the Columbus School facilities were consistently improved for decades. Houghton Saywer was appointed as architect in May 1913 and steel framing for the large brick building was up by the end of the year. The building wasn't in use for three years when the School Board announced plans to add another six rooms to Columbus in August 1917—courtesy of another bond measure. This addition was completed in 1923 and celebrated with a historical pageant written and staged by the school's principal, Dorothy Vogelsang, on March 23.

From the 1930s through the 1960s there was no news of note beyond robust P.T.A. activities and the usual neighborhood complaints about the poor utilization of Board of Education resources. City-wide integration efforts brought bussing in the early 1970s that ruffled some parental feathers, but Columbus School continued on mostly unscathed; it even survived the Field Act, which required earthquake safety renovations that proved to be a death knell for other school buildings from the same era. In the 1990s, school enrollment began to decline as the number of school-age children in San Francisco took a steep dive. Schools began closing or transforming, and this opened up space for the Chinese immersion school in West Portal to expand to Sunset Heights.

ALICE FONG YU

The incredibly popular program that taught English-speaking children Cantonese and Mandarin while also emphasizing broader multiculturalism moved onto the Columbus campus in September 1995. But the name change in honor of Alice Fong Yu didn't occur until January of the following year, making the school one of only two in the country to be named for a living person (the other being Rosa Parks). The reason can be found in the strength of Alice's biography.

Alice Fong was born in 1905 in the Nevada County gold mining town of Washington, California. A third-generation Chinese American, she was named for then-President Theodore Roosevelt's first daughter, Alice Longworth. She

COUNTRY WE ARE GIVEN THE LADDER OF OPPORTUNITY. EQUAL BUT IT IS UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL TO CLIMB IT.'"

was the eldest of 11 children and, dissimilar to other girls of her time, was encouraged to pursue an education. In 1916, the Fong family moved to Vallejo, California, where her father ran a small grocery store. Alice attended a one-room schoolhouse defined neither by its diversity nor its tolerance. She remembered her father saying, "Don't let them make you cry. They're barbarians."[3]

Perhaps this hardened Alice's resolve. Initially discouraged from applying to the San Francisco State Teacher's College (now San Francisco State University) by the school's president, she persisted and received her degree in 1926. Alice became the first Chinese American teacher hired by the San Francisco Unified School District when the principal of Chinatown's Commodore Stockton Elementary School lobbied the school board on her behalf and brought her on to connect with a predominantly Chinese-speaking student body. The only bilingual person at the school, Alice became not only a teacher but also a translator, social worker, and mediator for school, student, and parent interactions. She worked at Commodore Stockton for 34 years, teaching students English, but also how to hold on to and understand their Chinese heritage.

Alice married journalist and businessman Jon Yong Chang Yu, with whom she had two sons, Alon and Joal. After returning to school to study special education and speech therapy to help her second son, who was born with cerebral palsy, she spent the last 10 years of her career assisting students with speech disabilities. She traveled from school to school, doing this until her retirement in 1970.

Throughout her life, Alice Fong Yu was well-known and well-loved because of her ongoing involvement with her San Francisco and East Bay communities. She founded the Square and Circle Chinese Women's Community Service Club, the first of its kind in the country, in 1924. She also helped to found the Chinese Historical Society of America and was a member of the YWCA board, involved in education and improvement projects in Chinatown. In 1976, Alice was named one of The Most Distinguished Ten of the Bay Area by the San Francisco Examiner for her work as an "education pioneer".



Ceremony dedicating the Alice Fong Yu Alternative School to Alice Fong Yu, seated, with her son Alon behind her. Emerald Yee from KRON makes the announcement on January 27, 1996. (Photo by J. Michael Straub from the Richmond Review Newspaper Collection courtesy of Paul Kozakiewicz of the Richmond Review / wnp07.00347)

The day the Chinese immersion school was renamed in her honor, the School Board unanimously voted to declare January 27, 1996 a holiday named for Alice Fong Yu and her incredible accomplishments in the education field. She was 90 years old and only a few years away from her death in 2000, but, as you can see from the photo, she was beaming with pride. Rightfully so. In a speech she gave decades before at the Weaverville Joss House, she said: "It was wonderful to see that in 100 years the Chinese immigrants have gone from being the victims of atrocities to be treated with respect. Despite a lot of ugliness in the past—and my family experienced some—the Chinese-Americans have done wonders. In this unique country we are given the ladder of opportunity. It isn't exactly equal but it is up to the individual to climb it."[4]

The quintessential sentiment from the namesake of one of the most popular, competitive, and groundbreaking schools in San Francisco today.

1. "Education Board Renames Schools," San Francisco Chronicle, November 8, 1911

2. "Education Board Reverses Order," San Francisco Chronicle, October 10, 1912

3. "The long memory of first Chinese teacher in S.F. public schools," San Francisco Examiner, January 27, 1981

4. "A practical and proud idealist," San Francisco Examiner, March 21, 1976



Clock in Conservatory Valley, September 1966. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp25.5714)

OpenSFHistory:

It's About Time

The third and final deferred exhibition of 2020 was supposed to showcase contemporary photography in dialogue with our OpenSFHistory archive. If all goes according to plan (so hard to say anymore!), this will be the overarching theme to our end-of-year exhibition from now on.

Photography obliterates the barrier of time and connects us with people from bygone eras through the continuity of shared history around a sense of place. It's also incredibly intimate, even if done commercially. Photographers hold cameras close to their bodies, eyeing their subjects intently as they try to stage the shot just right—trying to present what they see truthfully while also laying bare their own purposes. Every photograph shows what used to be, but it also shows us what the photographer sees.

Besides allowing us to explore locations in San Francisco over time, OpenSFHistory introduces us to photographers who have lived, worked, collected, and practiced in the city for as long as the technology has been available. Landscapes change, technologies improve, intent and vision vary frame-by-frame, but the motivation to capture is consistent.

It's our goal to introduce you to contemporary photographers who continue this legacy with our year-end exhibitions. Last year, Darcie Westerlund began this series with an incredible installation of her interior photos of the San Francisco Ice Arena in the Sunset District. This year, we're highlighting the work of local photographer Yameen. Largely self-taught, his current fascination with medium-format film cameras gives his work an aura of timelessness—especially when paired beside historic images from OpenSFHistory. His lens captures the same subjects as his predecessors: neighborhood streets lined with cotton candy homes, the urban suburban landscapes unique to the western neighborhoods, backyards, businesses, and more that are San Franciscan to the core.

While experimentation is at the heart of all his work, he maintains a consistent focus on documentation and preservation. He takes photographs not just for their artistic merit (although, there's always artistry) but to record how things looked at a particular moment, in order to remember them for all time. No matter what visual style he works in, the goal remains the same: the artistic preservation of history. This could also be the tagline of OpenSFHistory.

It's exciting to see the things we see every day shaped by Yameen's vision, and it's about time that we open up OpenSFHistory to this new perspective.



Yameen, self portrait, Fairmont Hotel, March 2020. (Courtesy of Yameen)



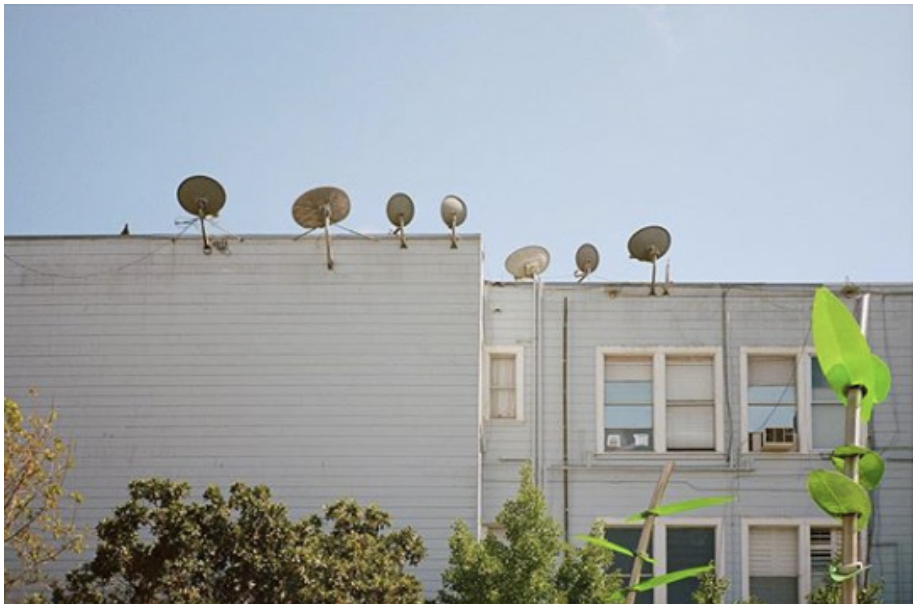
View south from Forest View and Sloat of Lakeshore homes, November 1965. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp25.4848)



Sunset District Homes, August 2020. (Courtesy of Yameen)



Sunset District backyard, circa 1973.
(Courtesy of David Gallagher / wnp12.00711)



Mission District backyard from Mission Playground, 19th & Linda, May 2019.
(Courtesy of Yameen)



Cherry Blossom Bakery at 1573 Haight Street circa 1935.
(Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp26.1375)



Bazaar Café at 5927 California Street, June 2020.
(Courtesy of Yameen)



"Lasers in the Night", Mel's Diner, Geary Street, September 2020. (Courtesy of Yameen)



Lucky Penny Diner / Public Storage at sunrise on a cloudy San Francisco morning, September 2020. (Courtesy of Yameen)



Sunset Boulevard seen from the Sloat Boulevard overpass shortly after completion, circa 1934. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp14.0258)



"The Great (Empty) Highway - Pandemic 2020 Edition", August 2020. (Courtesy of Yameen)



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Putting the "We" in Western Neighborhoods

WNP is a one-employee outfit that runs on the labor of dozens of dedicated volunteers. We could not survive without them, so we thought it was time to give them more visible space in our magazine with this new section. This is the season of giving thanks, after all, so three cheers to these essential members of the WNP family:

- Barbara Cannella
- Emiliano Echeverria
- John Freeman
- Greg Gaar
- David Gallagher (2017 Volunteer of the Year)
- David Goodyear
- Judy Hitzeman
- Inge Horton
- Andrea Jesse
- Paul Judge
- Judi Leff
- Laura Macias
- John A. Martini
- Angus MacFarlane
- Tim McIntosh
- Harvey Newman
- Margaret Ostermann and
- Charlie (our fluffiest Junior Historian)
- Steven Pitsenbarger
- Christopher Pollock
- Linda Pomerantz
- Jackie Rosas
- Thorsten Sideboard
- Art Siegel
- Gabrielle Silva
- Lorri Ungaretti
- Darcie Westerlund
- Joey Yee
- The WNP Board of Directors & Advisory Board

One of the things we're most committed to at WNP is working with students.

In fact, one reason we signed a lease on our first physical space on Taraval Street was specifically to support an intern. We asked our Fall 2020 interns to share photos and brief descriptions of themselves—whatever they wanted, and they did not disappoint. So, without further ado, allow us to introduce our current cohort:



FINNICK LYON (THEY/THEM):

"I'm a senior at USF. I study history, particularly in the Islamic World, and I hope to find myself working in a museum someday!" (Good news, Finn: you already are!)



JENNIFER BROWN (SHE/HER):

"Loves Gustave Caillebotte, Jane Austen, British mysteries. I speak 5 languages. I received my BA in Art History from Hunter College in NYC. I currently live in Baltimore with my cat, Austen."



TAL KARSTEN (THEY/THEM):

"I am a senior at USF majoring in Art History and Museum Studies. I have been living, working, and studying in San Francisco for 4 years now, and over this time I grew very attached to this city and the Richmond district in particular. Right now, my main area of study is Japanese art and culture, and in the future, I am hoping to work in the museum field."



KAT FOSTER-MOORLAG (SHE/HER):

"My name is Kathryn Foster-Moorlag. I have purple/green hair and a strong desire to rob stagecoaches."



JOELLE ROSSO (SHE/HER):

"Joelle is a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University. When she's not hard at work transcribing podcasts, she enjoys fact-checking historical dramas and hanging out with her dogs."

Undergraduate interns from the **University of San Francisco** are increasing our accessibility by transcribing podcast episodes and oral history interviews. Tal is writing alt text photo descriptions for the sight-impaired, and also translating Richmond District resources into Russian, connecting our history with one of the neighborhood's historic demographics. Finn's secondary project, "WNP in the News", is a little bit meta: compiling a database of media references so we can track how our resources are used by the public and add to our administrative history.

Since 2020 went remote, we're also able to host three Museum Studies graduate interns from **Johns Hopkins University.**

In addition to helping us manage San Francisco History Days 2020, Joelle is also transcribing podcasts and brainstorming 2021 programs and events. Jennifer is researching and drafting grant applications and working on a secret development project that will deepen our connection with local businesses. Last but not least, Kat is shaping our Education Initiative to align with common core curriculum standards, situating us to be a free resource for the San Francisco Unified School District, and also crafting fun activities for families learning from home. This takes our Story Time series in which "Miss Nicole" reads history-themed books virtually, funded by the **Sunset Heights Association of Responsible People (SHARP)**, to the next level and is also assisted by longtime member **Norm Stahl.**

Internships with WNP are unique: all interns work directly with our Executive Director, **Nicole Meldahl**, and co-founder, **David Gallagher**, and see firsthand what it takes to run a community history nonprofit. Contact us if you'd like to support that work or learn more by emailing nicole@outsidelands.org.



History Matters, You Matter

An Ongoing

We're excited to announce two initiatives that have emerged from our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI), which will allow you to be an even *more* vital part of the Western Neighborhoods Project (WNP) family in 2021.

As members, you're the first to hear about our open call for applicants to the WNP Board of Directors. Our current board includes residents of the Richmond and West of Twin Peaks districts, but we want to include more voices from the Sunset, OMI (Ocean View, Merced Heights, Ingleside, Ingleside Terraces), Lake Merced (Lakeside, Parkmerced, Stonestown, Lakeshore) areas and beyond. This is an active board that does the work of public history: staffing events, writing articles, leading walking tours, and cultivating partnerships for WNP, among other tasks. This means you will have a direct impact on preserving, interpreting, and sharing the history of our community. We encourage everyone with an interest in doing this work or those who want to bring new and exciting opportunities to the table to apply, but we particularly want to include









L-R Clockwise: Three generations of family packed into car at Playland at the Beach, circa 1945. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp27.4879); Boys posing on a train at the San Francisco Zoo, 1969. (Courtesy of David Gallagher / wnp12.00381); Couple embraces on Twin Peaks, circa 1950. (Photo from the Dapper Man Family Collection, courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp28.3079); Family posing in front of a home on 29th Avenue and Lincoln Boulevard, December 25, 1927. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp27.2785).

Commitment

more perspectives from community members who identify as Black, Indigenous, PWWeople of Color (BIPOC). If you or someone you know is interested in joining our board, please email Arnold Woods at arnold@outsidelands.org for details on how to apply, and stay tuned for our formal campaign, which will launch in January 2021.

Acknowledging that equity and inclusion is also an economic initiative, we're on a mission to provide one paid student internship for summer 2021. We've received foundational support from an extremely generous Sunset District family, who has pledged $1,500 towards this initiative as part of the Annual Winter Appeal you'll be receiving shortly. We're over halfway there, but we need your support to provide the remaining $1,000. If we're able to fundraise that additional money, applications may be submitted through April 2021 and will be selected in May for a June-August internship with a $2,500 stipend. Candidates must be registered in a graduate program that will put this experience toward credits eligible for graduation. For more information on how to apply, email Executive Director Nicole Meldahl at nicole@outsidelands.org.

Community history is a community project and we wouldn't be who we are without you. We're so glad you're members, but we encourage you to take the leap and do more. Both board members and students working with WNP are critical to helping us write history in which we recognize ourselves. We hope you'll join the team and look forward to seeing your applications soon.

THE LAST WORD

In this year of pandemic and protest, we've covered many medical facilities and monuments on the west side. What strikes me with each of them is the incredible care, the attention to detail, and the personal investment that goes into hospitals and statues. With this in mind, we're leaving this year behind by highlighting Children's Hospital, which was built by women, for women and children.





The original Tudor buildings of Children's Hospital on Sacramento between Cherry and Maple Streets (top). Back side of the campus at California and Commonwealth, circa 1920s. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp27.7693 & wnp27.7692)





Nursing staff, including Viola Neill (top) who is straightening the pillow on a therapy table in a Children's Hospital ward at California Street and Commonwealth Avenue, circa 1920s. (Courtesy of a Private Collector / wnp27.7694 & wnp27.7696)

Founded in 1875 by Dr. Charlotte Blake Brown (her family also built the first residence in Sea Cliff), Children's Hospital opened the first Training School for Nurses west of the Mississippi River in 1880. Treating patients in the Outside Lands from its Presidio Heights campus since 1887, it eventually became the California Pacific Medical Center, which recently relocated. But a portal to the past still remains, for now: you can see the original columns used in the brick building arranged in an artful circle on the corner of Cherry and Sacramento Streets.

Not a WNP Member?

Outside Lands magazine is just one of the benefits of giving to Western Neighborhoods Project. Members receive special publications as well as exclusive invitations to history walks, talks, and other events. If you like what you've read, please join hundreds of other west side fans as a member. Visit our website at **outsidelands.org,** and click on the "Become a Member" link at the top of any page.

