

PUTTING THE "THERE" THERE: HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGIES OF WEST OAKLAND

I-880 CYPRESS FREEWAY REPLACEMENT PROJECT

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The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the State of California or the Federal Highway Administration. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

CITY OF OAKLAND

City Council Proclamation

COMMENDING

WEST OAKLAND/CYPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

Whereas, the West Oakland/Cypress Archaeology Project has helped to preserve the history of 19th and 20th century West Oakland through archaeological investigations, an oral history program, vernacular architecture studies, and historical research; and

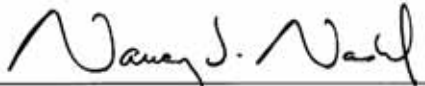
Whereas, the multi-cultural heritage of West Oakland has been brought to life through the West Oakland/Cypress Archaeology Project research into often ignored populations, including Chinese-Americans, African-Americans, and immigrant and working class populations; and

Whereas, the results of this important work have been made available to West Oakland residents in video, CD, print, on the World Wide Web and in public displays through partnerships with the University of California, Berkeley and the African American Museum and Library at Oakland; and

Whereas, "Putting the 'There' There: Historical Archaeologies of West Oakland", the West Oakland/Cypress Archaeology Project interpretive report and World Wide Web site, has received international recognition; now

Therefore, be it proclaimed on the 10th Day of July 2004, Councilmember Nancy J. Nadel on behalf of the City of Oakland commends Sonoma State University and the California Department of Transportation for their outstanding achievements in the preservation of West Oakland archaeology and the dissemination of its history.




Nancy J. Nadel
Oakland City Councilmember
District 3



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The I-880 Cypress Freeway Replacement, a project of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 4, involved the reconstruction of a 3.1-mile section of freeway in Oakland and Emeryville, California. As part of its plan to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Caltrans contracted with the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University (ASC) to examine the area of potential effects (APE). An archaeological sensitivity study reduced the portion of the APE that was likely to contain important remains from 48 to a relatively manageable 22 blocks, while the project research design worked to define the characteristics of potential historic properties.

Between 1994 and 1996, archaeologists tested the 22 archaeologically sensitive city blocks that would be affected by construction. Nearly 2,600 archaeological features were discovered, including 121 significant ones containing more than 400,000 artifacts and ecofacts dating between the 1850s and 1910. Because of the enormous quantity of data, two separate reports were planned on the investigations: the Block Technical Report (BTR) series—included on a compact disc at the back of this volume—and this, the interpretive report. The goal of the BTRs is to allow archaeologists easy access to all the Cypress data on features determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, while this report interprets these data.

The Cypress Archaeology Project database is unprecedented in the West. Over 120 discrete artifact assemblages were recovered and associated with specific households. A wide variety of groups is represented, from unskilled working-class households to upper-middle-class families, immigrants from numerous countries, and native-born whites and African Americans. Each BTR is organized by project block and archaeological feature. Complete historical associations are provided for every discrete archaeological assemblage, as are narrative and tabular descriptions of the remains, presented in a standardized format.

The purpose of this volume—the interpretive report—is to use some of the data contained in the BTRs to address themes identified in the project research design. Table 1.4 connects research questions posed in the research design (Praetzellis 1994) with resulting discussions included in this volume. The method has been collaborative, involving professionals in archaeology, history, folklore, oral history, and vernacular architecture. The use of a plain-English style and frequent illustrative sidebars and graphics is intended to make the volume appeal to a variety of readers, from professionals to interested community members. Each main essay, short essay, and sidebar is a stand-alone piece; while certain themes run through this report, it can be read in any order. An easily viewed portable document format (popularly known as PDF) version is posted at www.sonoma.edu/asc.

Part I presents the how, why, where, and who of the Cypress Archaeology Project, along with a brief narrative history of West Oakland. Part II contains chapters on the material conditions of life in West Oakland, the politics of the Victorian parlor, and household adaptive strategies. Part III focuses on the people of the neighborhood, with essays on the archaeology of gender; the material culture of the “aristocracy of labor”; the Overseas Chinese and laundry work; the archaeology and landscape of lodging; and a chapter devoted to the archaeology and near 150-year history of African Americans in West Oakland.

The final chapter contrasts the largely negative presentation of West Oakland by historical commentators with a view based on historical archaeology and makes some recommendations

for future work on archaeology projects. Appendixes include a project timeline; a list of other scholarly and interpretive products that have been created from Cypress Project data; a record of the historical associations of each archaeological feature; summaries and artifact layout photographs of 69 of the features studied; a much-edited version of the Field Director's diary; and statistical studies of faunal and glass remains. An attached compact disk contains the artifact catalog, revised faunal tables and faunal analysis methods, and the Block Technical Reports, of which the Cypress Archaeology Project team is particularly proud.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At the end of such a mammoth undertaking, there are simply too many people to thank and we would be bound to forget someone if we made the attempt. Consequently, we will mention only three people.

JANET PAPE was the Caltrans archaeology manager for the Cypress Archaeology Project. It was she who initially identified the potential for historical archaeology in the project area, secured the funding, and contracted with ASC to conduct the studies. She consulted with SHPO and the ACHP, and worked with the press and various interested parties shepherding the public outreach. She worked in concert with the field director and coordinated daily with project engineers and construction contractors in scheduling, safety issues, and efficiency. Janet saw clearly the cultural value of the project research objectives and labored tirelessly to help us achieve success in attaining those goals.

THAD VAN BUEREN took over responsibility for the project during the report writing process and steadfastly worked to help us finish the job. His thoughtful review and helpful comments made this a better piece of work.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge longtime ASC staff archaeologist GRACE ZIESING who, despite having moved back East to be with family and taking a new job (with a prestigious CRM firm) stayed with the project to design the report and edit many of the chapters in this volume. For these and many, other kindness, we thank her and wish her happiness in her new life.

Mary and Adrian Praetzellis
Summer 2004

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- G. Statistical Analysis of Bottle Data, by General Categories (*see CD*)

BTRs AND CATALOGS, Historical Archaeology, I-880 Cypress Replacement Project (*on CD attached to back cover*)

- Cypress Block Technical Reports (7 volumes)
- Faunal Methods Revised
- Faunal Data and Artifact Catalogs by Block

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