

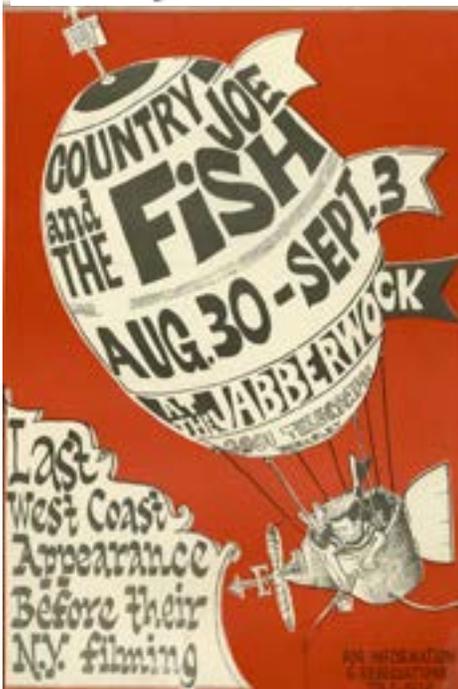
# EXACTLY OPPOSITE

The Newsletter of the Berkeley Historical Society

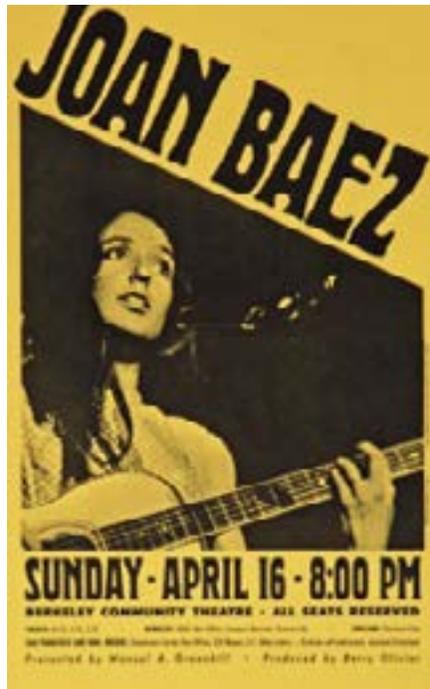
Volume 35 Number 4

FALL 2017

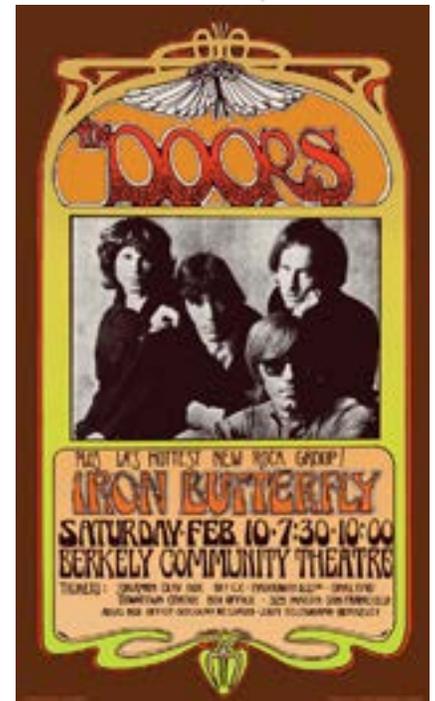
# SPECIAL EDITION



1966



1967



1968

**Solano Stroll September 10th**

**Vollmer Exhibit closes September 23rd**

**Soundtrack to the 60s Exhibit**

**Opens October 8th**



# President's Message

Dear Berkeley Historical Society members and friends,

There are a lot of people out there who are fascinated by the history of Berkeley! We met some who stopped by our booth at the Bay Area Book Festival in June, and we look forward to meeting more at the Solano Stroll on September 10th. (Our booth will be on the north side, close to Ensenada Ave.)

We now have more than 1000 email addresses on our list for emailed announcements, and hundreds of paid members. Please help spread the word to others that they can learn a lot about Berkeley history by visiting our History Center, or even our website or our Facebook page!

We are very pleased to have a new volunteer, Emily Busse, contributing items to keep our Facebook page fresh. If you are on Facebook, please check it out and sign up to follow it: [www.facebook.com/BerkeleyHistoricalSociety/](http://www.facebook.com/BerkeleyHistoricalSociety/). On it we not only promote our own exhibits and events and present images from our collections; we also link to a variety of stories and sites related to Berkeley history.

We realize our website could use updating, too. We've added the index of newsletter articles and a page of Other Online Resources on Berkeley History. (Look under History Notes for a link to it.) Would anyone like to volunteer to be our next webmaster and convert the site from CMS Made Simple to WordPress or Squarespace, or help another volunteer with this process?

The projects we can take on are only limited by the imagination, skills and available time of our volunteers (and the mission and scope of our organization, of course). So if you see a need in the arena of preserving and presenting Berkeley history, bring it to our attention, especially if you are willing to work on it! Any and all suggestions and offers of help can be emailed to [info@berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@berkeleyhistoricalsociety.org) and will be forwarded from there to one or more appropriate people.

We are very grateful to the team of volunteers who have been working for more than a year on our next exhibit, "Soundtrack to the 60s: The Berkeley Music Scene": Kitty Crowe, Ed Herny, Joe McDonald, Phyllis Gale, Alec Palao and Shelley Rideout, exhibit coordinator. Come meet and thank them at what should be a fun opening celebration on Sunday, October 8th, from 2 to 5 pm. Watch your email and Facebook for announcements of other events as they develop.

Ann Harlow, President

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# Singing and Dancing and Beer — “Oh My!” The Battle Against Berkeley’s Anti-Cabaret Ordinance

By Shelley Rideout



Downstairs at Larry Blake’s, circa 1949.

In the city of Berkeley, until late in the year 1963, it was illegal to dance or to listen to live music with a vocalist in any establishment where beer, wine or hard liquor was sold. Nowhere in the whole city, even in a hotel ballroom, could patrons sip a glass of wine at a table and then get up and dance, even to the most sedate of orchestras. Nowhere could anybody listen to a folksinging trio or a rock band with a vocalist while drinking a beer, not legally, that is. While instrumental music was allowed, proprietors of establishments selling alcohol who offered any sort of live singing, declaiming, poetry readings, or who allowed dancing, ran the risk of being charged with a misdemeanor by the Berkeley police, paying a \$500 fine and serving up to six months in jail.

This peculiar set of circumstances in Berkeley dated back to the early part of the 20th century. From its founding in 1878 until 1915, Berkeley had a fair share of bars, taverns and restaurants that served alcohol, especially in the western part of the city. In 1915, heavily influenced by the University of California, the many churches that populated the town and the growing Temperance movement, the City Council voted to ban all sales of alcoholic beverages within the city limits.

In 1920, the 18th Amendment banned liquor sales everywhere in the United States. When the grand experiment failed and Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Berkeleyans feared the reintroduction of alcohol into their tidy, quiet and moral city. They reacted by changing the City Charter to prohibit alcohol sales anywhere in Berkeley, though it was now legal elsewhere.

When, in 1935, the California State Constitution was amended to say that only the state, not municipalities, could regulate the sale of alcohol, something was needed to keep Berkeley from succumbing to the ills that plagued Oakland and San Francisco. Crime, loose morals, disturbance of the peace, unseemly public behavior; these were the inevitable result of allowing clubs and cabarets to gain a foothold, the city leaders thought.

The solution was the passage, on August 11, 1936, of City Ordinance 2025 – N.S. “Regulating Public Dances, Dance Halls, Cabarets and Skating Rinks in the City of Berkeley.” This ordinance, in addition to spelling out the stringent

(continued on page 4)

(Singing and Dancing - continued from page 3)

requirements necessary for operating such premises, specifically stated: “No spirituous, malt, vinous or alcoholic beverages shall be permitted on the premises where such dancing is being conducted, or on any premises directly connected therewith.”

The ordinance also said that, “It shall be unlawful for any person to operate or conduct or permit to be operated or conducted, any cabaret or any other place where the general public is admitted and where entertainment such as music, singing, dancing or vaudeville is furnished by the management or is permitted by the management with or without charge to the patrons, and where spirituous, malt, vinous or alcoholic liquors or other alcoholic beverages are sold, served or permitted, with or without food.”

During the next decade, as thousands of military personnel and shipyard workers poured into the East Bay, Berkeley’s nightlife remained sedate. If people wanted to have a drink and listen to jazz or dance to a swing band, they could go to Oakland. Sweet’s Ballroom, at 1933 Broadway, hosted well-known big bands and Seventh Street in West Oakland had over a dozen jazz clubs by the mid-1940s.

The first challenge to the anti-cabaret ordinance came in 1962. James E. Brown, the proprietor of the Shalimar Club at 3076 Sacramento Street, and H. W. Gunderson, who operated The Topper, at 3101 Shattuck, petitioned the City Council to amend the portion of the ordinance that prohibited singing and declaiming in taverns. At the City Council meeting of July 17, 1962, a motion was put forth to amend the ordinance, but Chief of Police Fording spoke against it, saying, “... there is some singing which is good, clean entertainment, some of which is not only vulgar, but lewd; that the Police Department is not trying to set up any moral standards for the community, but that it must be pointed out that entertainment of this type tends to attract people, particularly young people, and the result is the problem of enforcement of liquor controls.” The motion was voted down, and that was the last that was heard of the matter until Larry Blake entered the fray.

Blake, a colorful and well-known figure, had operated his establishment at 2367 Telegraph since 1942. It consisted of an upstairs restaurant and a basement venue known as the Rathskeller. Larry Blake’s obtained a license to serve beer in 1947 and his place became a haven for Cal students and townspeople alike. It was known for good food at reasonable prices and a congenial atmosphere. Blake also owned the Anchor Cafe, a restaurant at 1013 University.

In November of 1962, two police inspectors entered the Rathskeller. They listened for half an hour to the Dick Oxtrot Trio, the folksinging group that was performing, and observed the crowd of 100 people listening while drinking beer. The inspectors applauded the performance, then informed Larry Blake that he was in violation of the law, by allowing a live performance with singing in the same place where alcohol was served. They also told him that he was liable for prosecution if he allowed the situation to continue.

Incensed by these restrictions, and mindful that folksinging was growing in popularity and going on in a number of coffeeshouses around the city, Blake wrote a spirited and satirical essay, which he posted in the front window of his establishment. He also started a petition to amend the 1936 ordinance. After gathering more than 5,000 signatures in support, he petitioned the City Council.

On July 23, 1963, the City Council took up the matter. Larry Blake addressed the session, saying, “Here in Berkeley, we have attempted to repress the natural joyousness of people in friendly assemblies by a puritanically ludicrous form of prohibition against fun. In my opinion this prohibition is silly, unnecessary and ineffective.”

His argument was backed up by William Haigwood, executive director of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, who pointed out that Berkeley residents spent about \$3,000,000 a year in other cities for nightclub entertainment.



After much discussion the council voted 7-2 to grant Blake's petition to amend the ordinance. However, this was not something that would be accomplished without controversy. The next several months saw significant opposition, which included a series of counter motions, requests for public hearings, postponements and delays. There was even a petition for a referendum to put the question up to the voters in the next election. Local newspapers followed the story throughout the summer and fall, some with amusement and tongue-in-cheek articles.

Jim Dempsey, in his August 14, 1963 column, "Berkeley Is My Beat," for the Berkeley Daily Gazette, noted, "Following the lengthy Berkeley City Council hearing on the proposal to allow cabarets (that's a sophisticated word for night club) an interested listener in the audience mumbled to a friend: 'Well, screaming, scratching and protesting loudly, Berkeley has been dragged into the twentieth century.'"

Finally, on November 5, 1963, the City Council approved the amended ordinance, 7-1. While some restrictions still applied, most notably for skating rinks and public dances, cabarets and clubs featuring live performances and dancing, both by patrons and performers, were allowed. It was stipulated that the alcohol could only be served in conjunction with food.

Larry Blake had won his battle, though in an interesting twist, his establishment did not become a major music venue during the 1960s. Country Joe McDonald does not recall playing there. Ross Hannan, author of the Chicken on a Unicycle website, which chronicles musicians, bands and music venues of the 60s, says he has not come across flyers or listings for Larry Blake's. In the 1970s and 1980s, Blake's did become an important showcase for blues, jazz and rhythm and blues, featuring such artists as Etta James, Charlie Musselwhite, Otis Rush and Robert Cray.

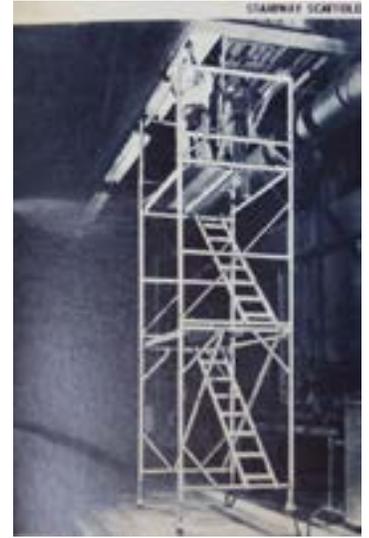
Larry Blake sold his restaurant in 1978. It closed, amid much mourning, in 2011. Larry Blake had died in 1992. His obituary in the Oakland Tribune remembered him as a popular restaurateur, a shrewd businessman, and the one who took on the Berkeley city council and the anti-cabaret ordinance. Certainly the current vibrant downtown Berkeley Arts and Entertainment District owes much to his vision and efforts.



Music at Blake's

# ***How the Mayor of Berkeley Led the Campaign to “Bury” Berkeley’s BART Tracks***

By Fred Etzel



Wallace J.S. Johnson

Berkeley of 2017 would be profoundly different, but for the efforts of its two-term Mayor Wally Johnson, who from 1964 to 1966 led the “most fast moving, well-organized, citizen-committee managed election campaign in the history of the city.” (Johnson, *Responsible Individualism*, 1967, p. 119.) The campaign used the motto “BURY THE TRACKS” and on October 4, 1966, 83% of Berkeley voters, uniformly and throughout the city, voted to tax themselves so BART would be constructed underground, border to border, within their city. This is a prime example that voters will tax themselves for something they understand and support.

Wallace J. S. Johnson was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, on January 29, 1913, to Edward H. and Ruth C. S. Johnson. In 1935 he graduated with honors from the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena with a B. S. Degree in Mechanical Engineering. While at Caltech, Johnson quarterbacked the school’s football team.

In 1946 Johnson and his wife Marion were living in the hills above Berkeley. One day Johnson was preparing to paint his house, and he could not find scaffolding that accommodated the uneven ground surrounding his home. So he constructed his own aluminum scaffold tower with adjustable legs. He immediately recognized the commercial potential for his new invention. In 1947, he founded Up-Right, Inc., a scaffolding company, with main offices and factory located at 1013 Pardee St. in the flatlands of west Berkeley.

Johnson was very active in Berkeley civic life, including membership in the Berkeley Rotary Club, and in 1967 he received an award for being Berkeley’s Most Useful Citizen. He ran for the office of Mayor and he served two terms from 1963 to 1971. His 1967 recommendations to the Berkeley City Council on how to increase the hiring of African-American police and fire suppression officers were unanimously adopted the City Council. The photograph of Wallace Johnson above is from the flyleaf of his second book, entitled *Responsible Individualism*.

In November 1962, the voters of San Francisco, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties approved the creation of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BARTD). This new regional government entity was authorized to construct and operate a 75-mile urban rapid transit system, one of the largest in world history. The voter-approved bond issue represented a billion-dollar investment. By the terms of the bond issue, Berkeley was entitled to a downtown subway station and about ¾ of a mile underground in the central business district. Additionally, BARTD had planned for 2½ miles of

elevated transit through Berkeley, including an elevated station in the south of the city and another in the northern part of the city.

BARTD was adamant that its budget would not permit the undergrounding of BARTD tracks from one border of the city to the other. As reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Mayor Wallace Johnson and others feared Berkeley's African American population would be placed in a walled ghetto by the elevated tracks. They also feared the values of properties adjacent to the tracks would be substantially depressed.

Mayor Johnson studied the state law which created BARTD, looking for a way to require the BARTD Board of Directors to consider Berkeley's position to underground the BARTD tracks for the entire city of Berkeley, provided its voters paid the additional cost. He found a way, and the City Council decided to go to the voters of Berkeley with a proposed bond issue. Large signs with the slogan "BURY THE BART TRACKS" appeared throughout Berkeley. So voters could visually appreciate the impacts of above-ground tracks, Johnson had this company, Up-Right, Inc., construct scaffolds 30 feet in height, approximating the height of the planned BART tracks, along the proposed route of BART at both ends of the city.

The voters overwhelmingly approved the bond issue to underground BART within the city.

After he left Berkeley city government, Wally Johnson was appointed a member of the BART Board of Directors, where he waged a tireless campaign to convince his fellow directors to install elevators in all BART stations so they were accessible to all. Today, Berkeley's three BART stations—North Berkeley, Downtown Berkeley and Ashby—are below ground and have elevators.

Wallace Johnson died on August 12, 1979, at his home in Berkeley at age 66. To this day, nowhere in Berkeley's three BART stations are the contributions of Mayor Johnson to his city recognized. In the words of Martin Snapp, longtime Bay Area newspaperman and columnist, "Wally Johnson was a true original. And he deserves to be remembered."



BART construction at Ashby Ave, circa 1967. Courtesy of BART Director Robert Rayburn.

# Where the Action Was: Berkeley's Music City Records

By Alec Palao



Ray Dobard inside Music City Record Shop, late 1960s.



Johnny Heartsman and his House Rockers, 1956.

From the early 50s on, the intersection of Alcatraz and Adeline Streets in Berkeley's Lorin District was the locale for one of the most notable black-owned and operated record operations in the United States. Ray Dobard's Music City Records was a small but potent force in the 1950s and early 1960s, a monumental period in African-American music history when jazz and blues begat R&B, soul and rock'n'roll. As a label responsible for several nationally-recognized R&B discs, Music City was for many local musicians one of the few conduits with which to enshrine themselves on tape or vinyl. Despite Ray Dobard's difficult reputation, Music City remains a significant constituent within the Bay Area music scene of that magic era, when blues and R&B begat rock and soul.

Dobard was a New Orleans native who moved to the East Bay some time in the 1940s, settling in South Berkeley with his wife Jeanne. It is possible that the Dobards were part of the great African-American migration to the Bay Area during wartime, in search of work in the Richmond shipyards, but Ray's intelligence and aptitude as a carpenter saw him quickly establish his own construction business. A light-skinned, green-eyed Creole, Dobard moved easily into the emergent black middle class, but the evidence suggests that he worked hard, and by 1948 the Dobards already owned their home. Over the years, this tireless individual was to acquire several properties throughout the East Bay, including all those from which he would operate his various businesses.

The post-war period in the San Francisco Bay Area was, like the urban areas of southern California, a time of accelerated social ascent for the black community, where finances and social status had, on the surface at least, begun to improve. No more evident was this than in the field of entertainment, where the local music scene mushroomed in order to cope with the demands of a swollen population with cash to spend. The East Bay was particularly fertile, with a raging live scene in Oakland and Richmond that crested in the early 1950s; in general, the region had already become a major stop on the post-war "chitlin" circuit. Several enterprising individuals surfaced to cater to the specific demands of the black audience, either as venue managers, promoters, radio station jocks or, increasingly, record label proprietors. Los Angeles remained the necessary destination for most Bay Area artists that hoped to hear themselves on disc, but by 1950 the Bay Area boasted a handful of local black-owned labels, as well as stores where people could buy the R&B and jazz records popular in the community. It was the lucrative possibilities of the latter that first attracted Ray Dobard to the music business.

Dobard appears to have established himself as a record vendor at the dawn of the 1950s, opening an emporium that was known at first as “Berkeley’s Music City, Inc.” The first address attributed to the operation was 3362 Adeline Street, judging by the early discs he is known to have issued. Quite why Dobard decided to move into record production from record sales is uncertain, given that to an outsider the essentially speculative nature of the record industry didn’t guarantee a regular income. But Dobard clearly had an ear as to what was, or might become, popular, particularly in the black community. His early output, on the “Delcro” imprint, was mostly jazz, jump tunes or pop R&B in the lugubrious style associated with Charles Brown and others. Some time in 1953, Dobard opened new premises around the corner at 1815 Alcatraz Avenue, just east of Adeline. Whether by necessity or design, Dobard decided to build his own recording studio in the back of the store, and learned by trial and error how to make records.

Even from the outset, crude as they were, the results were consistent with the independent recording standards of that time, at least in the R&B field, and there was a lot of activity, as Dobard invited local musicians and singers to record. These not only included the expected aspiring pop vocalists, but a significant quotient of blues and jazz musicians working in local black clubs, including well-known names like Roy Hawkins and K.C. Douglas. There were even some white hillbilly sessions, but from the opening of his studio on, the principal style heard on a daily basis in the studio was the vocal group. These were acapella quartets or quintets in the mode of popular acts like the Spaniels, Clovers and Midnighters: a style later tagged doo-wop, which enjoyed tremendous street-level popularity amongst black teens. This was the genre that the Music City label would become forever associated with, thanks to the national visibility of discs like “Ichi Bon Tami Dachi” by the Rovers and the 4 Deuces’ perennial “W-P-L-J,” the latter tune later covered by Frank Zappa. These and dozens of Music City releases, along with a copious amount of unreleased sessions, were all taped by Dobard at 1815 Alcatraz. The biggest selling item he produced in the 1950s was the instrumental “Johnny’s House Party” by Johnny Heartsman, a talented blues guitarist who was essentially Dobard’s studio bandleader for the best part of a decade. The record made #13 on Billboard’s R&B chart in June 1957.

A growing network of distributors, promo men and radio station pluggers across the US courted Dobard because, via the store, Music City had a major foothold in the Bay Area R&B market. He successfully serviced the demands of the black community, but was happy to also cater to an increasing white clientele. With his retail operation, the commercially-savvy Dobard could gauge tastes, and in fact the Music City Record shop had gotten so popular that, in 1963, it moved across the street to bigger premises at 1866 Alcatraz. Local radio stations like KSOL would broadcast live from the store itself, and on one memorable occasion in December 1964, James Brown paid a visit, gathering such a crowd that Alcatraz Avenue had to be temporarily sealed off. A young Berkeley High student that worked behind the counter on Saturdays was Wanda Burt, lead singer of The Crescendos, whose brace of sweet-voiced singles for Music City in 1961 and 1962 were Dobard’s last serious stab at potential record success. He gradually wound down the label and had essentially mothballed the studio at 1815 Alcatraz by 1966 (the original building was later razed as part of the Ashby BART development).

Despite his renown for a distinctly cavalier attitude to the payment of royalties, Dobard was in fact little different to most other independent label owners of his generation. He seems to have had no musical training or intuition, yet saw himself as someone on the level of Motown’s Berry Gordy. It might not be such an outlandish comparison, if one only considers both men required absolute power and control. Dobard’s infamous parsimony and possessiveness ultimately drove artists away from him, but the amount of local talent that passed through the portals of Music City is impressive. In addition to the Music City label roster, virtually every R&B artist of significance from the Bay Area poked their head in at Alcatraz Avenue at one time or another, including Sly Stone, Joe Simon, Bobby Freeman, and Berkeley’s own storied bandleader Johnny Talbot. Several from further afield paid visits too, like Larry Williams and Lou Rawls, and rock groups that recorded at Ray Dobard’s funky little studio count the pre-Creedence Tommy Fogerty & The Blue Velvets, and Big Brother & The Holding Company with Janis Joplin among their number.

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(Music City - continued from page 9)

Dobard opened a second Music City shop on East 14th (now International Boulevard) in Oakland in 1966. In 1970 he established a new recording facility at the same location, and reactivated the Music City label for a few releases, including some with the celebrated soul singer Darondo. But the object of his ardor was no longer the music industry. The changes within the business had rendered his small, one-man operation increasingly unviable. The new studio and both Music City Record Shops were shuttered in the late 1970s.

After working for the City of Oakland as a construction supervisor, Dobard's simmering propensity for irrational activism went into overdrive. He ran unsuccessfully for Berkeley City Council, and then decided to forego hard politics to engage in a relentless series of suits, counter-suits, complaints and appeals on any manner of briefs, largely directed at institutions that he felt had aggrieved him. For example, Dobard's gradual loss of hearing gave him excellent cause to protest discrimination on the half of civic authorities against the disabled. However, his legal arguments were invariably unconstructive and went beyond any reasonable use of the justice system to achieve a fair result. Indeed, the endless filings saw Ray thrown out of most courts in the Bay Area on the grounds of "vexatious litigation."

Ray Dobard passed away on June 23rd, 2004, a victim of throat cancer. In his later years a recluse and, by all accounts, something of a sociopath, Dobard and Music City had become an enigmatic legend amongst aficionados of R&B and the collectors of the "dusty records" that had originated from Alcatraz Avenue. Thankfully his archive of 1500-odd reels of audio tape has survived, and is now in the capable hands of UK reissue label Ace Records, who have embarked upon a celebrated series of reissues dedicated to Music City—and by default, the East Bay music scene it was at the heart of.



Ray and Jeanne Dobard,  
late 1960s



Music City Records, 1866 Alcatraz Ave.,  
1966



Jeanne Dobard outside 1815 Alcatraz,  
mid 1950s

**Recommended listening: 3-CD box set  
*The Music City Story* (Ace)**



August Vollmer's Marshal and Chief of Police Badges  
(Photos by Lieutenant Kevin M. Schofield, Berkeley Police Department)

## A Tale of Two Badges

By Will Oliver

In an earlier issue of *Exactly Opposite*, I told the history of Berkeley Police Chief August Vollmer's revolver (See Volume 35, Issue 1). What I did not detail was the interesting history of August Vollmer's two badges, his Marshal's Badge, which he wore from 1905 to 1909, and his Police Chief's Badge, which he wore from 1909 to 1932. It is those two stories this article will recount.

When I first began researching Police Chief August Vollmer's life ten years ago, I was interested in the location of his badge, gun, and gravesite. I discovered no knowledge existed of any at the time. The BPD did not have the badge, BPD Historical Unit Director Michael Holland only had a suspicion about the gun's location, and there was no gravesite, for Vollmer had dedicated his body to science and no headstone, cenotaph, or memorial was ever erected after his death. On my first visit to Berkeley, I began my research by going through the August Vollmer Papers at the Bancroft Library on the University of California's campus. In my very first request, Carton 1, I was pleased to discover the whereabouts of the missing Marshal's Badge. Vollmer had kept the Marshal's Badge and, as he neared his eventual suicide, had donated his papers and effects to the Bancroft Library, which included the Marshal's Badge. It proved to be in excellent condition, as the picture above attests.

August Vollmer's Chief of Police badge has a far more interesting history for it was not found in the Bancroft Library's collection, meaning that Vollmer had not given it to the library. I had assumed it would have gone to the next BPD Police Chief, but pictures revealed that was not the case—they wore a different badge. So, where did the badge go? No one knew until Susan and Mark Lyons contacted the Berkeley Police Department last year.

The Lyons live in my own state of Texas, and had gone to an estate sale in August of 2015. The estate was that of a University of Texas anthropology professor, Brian Stoss, who had died the year before. There, the Lyons purchased 200 boxes of books with the intent of selling them on Amazon to fund their four children's college education. While going through the boxes, Mark Lyons came across an old leather case.

When he opened it up, he discovered a badge dated 1909 with the words "Chief of Police" and "Berkeley, California" inscribed on it. The badge features a five pointed star over which sits an eagle, and at the center is what looked to be a diamond. On the back-side of the badge it was inscribed to August Vollmer and read, "Presented by the Police Dept. of the City of Berkeley."

(continued on page 12)

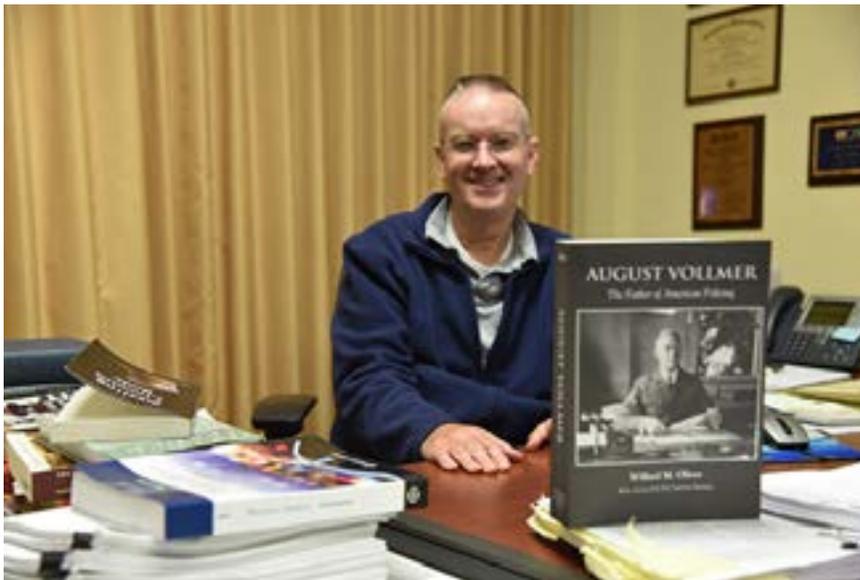
Mark showed the badge to his wife and she recognized the diamond as being genuine and probably valuable. They then looked up August Vollmer on the Internet and were amazed to learn all the many things he had done for American policing. They then contacted the Berkeley Police Department and spoke with Sgt. (Ret.) Michael Holland, who runs the BPD's Historical Unit. Holland was excited about the possibility of bringing the badge home, so he asked the Lyons if they would be willing to part with it. They said, "Yes." Then Michael Holland had to ask how much it would cost, and the Lyons agreed—nothing. They felt that it did not belong to them and that it should be returned to the BPD. They mailed it out certified mail.

Michael Holland, upon receipt, brought the badge to then Police Chief Michael Meehan who well understood the significance of the badge. The badge was then appraised and because of the diamond, it was estimated to be worth approximately \$5,000. The badge, reunited with Vollmer's revolver, was first displayed at the swearing-in ceremony of incoming Police Chief Andrew Greenwood. All three of these men—Holland, Meehan, and Greenwood—were then present when the badge and gun were displayed at the Berkeley Historical Society's opening of the August Vollmer Exhibit.

So, how did the badge end up in Texas? I have a theory. One of Vollmer's disciples was V.A. Leonard who was from Texas. He had left the BPD to join the Fort Worth PD, but remained friends with Vollmer. When Washington State University needed a professor for a new police science program, Vollmer recommended Leonard for the job. V.A., after serving there as chair and professor from 1940 to 1963, retired to Denton, Texas. He died at his home on October 28, 1984. A collector of books and memorabilia, and only having one child, my guess is Leonard's estate was sold to the public. Professor Brian Stoss was also a collector, and as Denton is not far from Austin, he most likely bought the badge and other items at Leonard's estate sale, which the Lyons, in turn, bought from Stoss's estate sale.

Regardless of how the badge made its way to Texas, for those interested in preserving Berkeley's history, we assuredly all owe a kind thank you to Susan and Mark Lyons for both their sense of history and their kind generosity.

**Willard Oliver** is a professor of criminal justice at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas. He is the author of *August Vollmer: The Father of American Policing* (Carolina Academic Press, 2017).



Copies of Dr. Oliver's 800-page biography of August Vollmer will be available at the History Center for a brief time longer.

The discounted price is \$ 70.00.

# Allen Stross Memorial

By Jeanine Castello-Lin



Allen Stross, circa 1965. Photographer unknown.



Photo of Captain Ken Kerr at Catalina Island, circa 1946, by Allen Stross.

Around eighty people gathered on August 8th at the North Berkeley Senior Center to commemorate the colorful life of photographer, BHS Board Member and member of Berkeley's Commission on Aging, Allen Stross. Often one works beside colleagues unaware of the full scope of their lives and talents. At Allen's memorial that day, many of us were moved as we discovered the quality of his early photographic portraiture and the number of people whose lives he had touched. We are grateful to BHS's Tom Edwards and John Aronovici for organizing this memorial, which brought together Allen's extended community. Even more, we are deeply indebted to Tom and John for taking care of Allen and his surviving wife Hyshka, as well as for devoting an entire year to the herculean task of sorting through and saving meaningful mementos of Allen's life and sharing them at the memorial.

Born in Detroit in 1923 to a Russian Jewish immigrant family, Allen attended the competitive Cass Technical School in Detroit, where he developed an early interest in photography. Allen joined the Navy during WWII as a sign painter, and then attended the Art Center School of Photography in Los Angeles on the GI Bill. At the Art Center, Ansel Adams was one of his instructors. Allen went on to pursue professional photography in the Newport Beach area before returning to Detroit in 1951. There he worked as a photographer in several studios and at the Detroit Free Press, where he met his future wife, Dorian Lydia Hyshka, in 1960. Hyshka and Allen married in 1970 and in 1979 the two moved to Berkeley, where Allen taught at SF State, UCSF Extension and Brooks Camera. Allen also produced marketing brochures and numerous photographs.

Since most of us are familiar with Allen's photographs of the Bay Area, the memorial provided an eye-opening look at the many quality portraits Allen produced from the late 1940s through the '70s. Both as a studio photographer and as a photojournalist, Allen's commitment to capturing character shone through. While many of the portraits expressed the gravitas of the subject, others were quirky, expressing Allen's wonderful sense of humor. A prize-winning example of Allen's humor is a 1953 photo of a proud llama with a fly on its nose.

At the memorial, many recalled Allen's unflinching spirit and a sense of humor which did not wane even when his health did. One friend recalled meetings comprised mostly of shared Jewish jokes. Others embraced the moniker "photo philanthropist" to describe Allen, recalling Stross' generosity in tutoring aspiring photographers, and his habit of gifting snapshot portraits to friends and acquaintances. To the end, Allen was an avid historian, reminding each of us of the importance of recording the small moments which make up our history.

# Committee Reports

## Archives

BHS has received some interesting items recently, all illustrative of the variety of materials that can be found in our collections. We have a new book by a Berkeley author, John Byrne Barry, *Wasted: Murder in the Recycle Berkeley Yard*. We received from Michael Holland (Berkeley Police Department) a Junior Traffic Police sweater, red and gold, in great shape. Janet Larkin donated a couple of Berkeley businesses' calendars from the 1940s. From Leslie Tsukamoto we received copies of two 1943 letters by August Vollmer commenting on the incarceration of Japanese Americans, one to Harry Kingman and one to Frank Tsukamoto. Don Morris gave us motion picture film showing some Berkeley scenes in the 1930s and the YMCA Camp Gualala; this has been transferred to DVD.

## Oral History

We are pleased to announce the near-completion of a new video interview—this time of the Historical Society's own John Ginno Aronovici. As a fourth-generation Berkeleyan, John has many stories to tell that illuminate the early days of Berkeley, including of the 1923 Fire, the WPA in Berkeley, and the city's participation in the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939-40. The interview was conducted by another long-time Berkeleyan and BHS member, Jacque Ensign, videotaped by Tonya Staros and Jeanine Castello-Lin, and edited by Tonya Staros.

The first members of John Ginno Aronovici's family arrived in the Bay Area before the turn of the 19th century. John's paternal grandfather, Carol Aronovici, was the city planner in Berkeley in the 1920s. His father was Carol P. Aronovici who founded Stagecraft Studios. His cousin, John Noyes, played the Campanile bells for 39 years. John's maternal grandmother, Leonore Ginno, was Berkeley's first female dentist, who practiced at Vine and Walnut above today's Peet's Coffee. Interestingly, the building still houses a dentist office, and Dr. Ginno's old foot-pumped drill has been kept on as a historical artifact.



Early picture of Country Joe McDonald in a Berkeley appearance. Harold Adler photo

## Time to Join or Renew?

If you received this newsletter by mail, please check your mailing label, and if your membership has expired, we hope to hear from you soon! If you are not yet a member or your membership has lapsed, please consider joining the Berkeley Historical Society! Membership dues are the primary support for our many activities. Members receive the quarterly newsletter and discounts on our walking tours. We are always looking for new members, so we invite you to share your newsletter with friends who might be interested in Berkeley history.

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## Berkeley Historical Society Membership

Membership in the Berkeley Historical Society (BHS) helps maintain the quality of all our activities, including archives, exhibits, programs, events, walks, newsletter and operations.

NEW

RENEWAL

Individual \$25

Family \$30

Contributor \$50

Sponsor \$100

Life Member \$500

Student/Low Income \$15

Business \$100

You can also give a gift of a BHS membership or donate to our general or endowment fund(s):

Donate to General Operating Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_  Donate to Louis Stein Endowment Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

Gift membership (enclose name, address, etc. on separate paper)

BHS membership dues and financial donations are tax deductible as charitable contributions to the extent allowed by law.

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

**Payment information:** Total amount \$\_\_\_\_\_  Cash  Check (payable to BHS)  Credit card

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