

Historic Mortuaries around Pill Hill in Oakland, California



Historic Providence Hospital, constructed on Pill Hill in 1902. Demolished.

Pill Hill

The neighborhood known as “Pill Hill” gets its name from the hospitals located on top of a ridge along Summit between 29th and 32nd Streets. Originally the area was called “Academy Hill” for the schools that operated here from the 1860s to the 1920s. By 1928, the schools had either closed or moved away, and Peralta Hospital, Providence Hospital, and Merritt Hospital had all opened (Beth Bagwell, *Oakland: The Story of a City*, 1982). This area is still a complex of medical facilities, although many of the historic medical buildings have been replaced.

The area also includes historic churches, flower shops, and mortuaries, many of which were developed around the same time as the early hospitals. Many of the addresses in the neighborhood have served as a medical facility or supplier, a church, a florist, or a mortuary. This brochure focuses on the area’s mortuaries and the funerary industry.

Funeral Homes and Morticians in the United States

Funeral homes emerged as a business and architectural type in the United States during the late 1800s. Prior to this the family of the deceased prepared the body for burial, with undertakers acting as assistants.

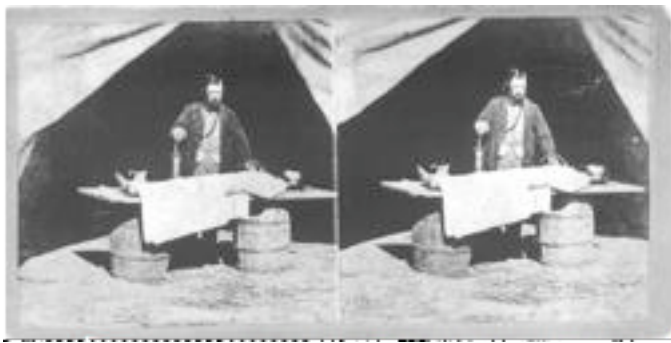
The modern practice of arterial embalming with chemicals was invented in Europe in the 1830s in order to preserve bodies for medical use, but it wasn’t until the Civil War in America that this technique was used for large numbers of people. It has never found widespread use outside of America. During the Civil War, a handful of embalmers stayed busy preserving the bodies of soldiers so that they could be returned to their families for burial. Abraham Lincoln publicly praised the procedure (Gary Laderman, *Rest in Peace*, 2003).

After the end of the Civil War, the embalmers stayed employed by finding customers amongst the general population. Embalming was popular with undertakers because it gave them more time to prepare for elaborate funerals. Abraham Lincoln’s funeral prominently included embalming (Laderman, *Rest in Peace*, 2003). The public embraced it as well, seeing embalming as a hygienic measure and a way to preserve the deceased for eternity. The rise of the hospital system also contributed to a growing reliance on the funeral industry by causing an “environmental shift from death in the home to death in the hospital.... Funeral men... took the dead out of the hands of living relations and performed all of the necessary, increasingly complicated, and for many Americans, deeply unpleasant tasks associated with the death of a loved one” (Laderman, *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America*, 2003).

Schools and courses to train embalmers were opened around the country beginning in around 1880 or 1890, with professional organizations forming shortly thereafter.

Mortuary Architecture

The new profession required buildings in which to conduct business. At first, these were residences converted to convey the sense of a funeral “parlor” or “home”, a substitute for the spaces



Civil war embalming of a deceased American soldier. Dr. Robert Burr is the embalmer.



After Lincoln’s assassination, his body was embalmed and his casket sent on a funeral procession that traveled 1700 miles and lasted nearly 3 weeks, drawing enormous crowds throughout.



Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, founded in 1831, was the first landscaped garden cemetery in the United States. City cemeteries had become increasingly overcrowded, unsightly, and smelly, with little or no plant life due to constant digging; this cemetery offered an alternative.



F. W. Woolworth Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery in Bronx, NY, designed by James Renwick. Egyptian Revival.



Charles Crocker Mausoleum, designed by A. Page Brown, at Millionaires' Row in Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland. Classical Revival.

that had been used in well-appointed private residences. Later, chapels were added, original residential buildings were remodeled or expanded to convey a grander image, and new buildings were constructed specifically as mortuaries. Like cemetery architecture for individual and family tombs, mausoleums, and gravestones, mortuary architecture frequently adopts revivalist styles.

There are a number of possible reasons for funerary revivalism. According to Douglas Keister in *Going out in Style*, funerary architecture and the funerary business proliferated precisely during the years when revivalism was most popular for all kinds of architecture in America, from 1893 – 1920. He writes that “Mausoleum architects based most of their designs on styles that were popular at the time.” Mortuaries built since the decline of revivalism in mainstream architecture are still often but not always revivalist.

Revivalism in mortuary architecture may also honor the history that the deceased represents, or the tastes typical of an older generation. “The revival styles [forged] a critical link in this chain of taste and dignity binding past and present.... The revival architectural philosophy thus offered reassurance because time had tested and sanctioned its use. What had lasted until now would surely last well into the future.” (McDowell and Meyer, *The Revival Styles in American Memorial Art*). Revivalist architecture resonates with the theme that the deceased will not be forgotten, and the hope for eternal survival in the afterlife that is so important to the philosophy behind strong coffins and embalming techniques. The business names of the mortuaries featured in this brochure, with their inclusion of past mortuary owners, also seem to honor history.

Mortuaries in Oakland and Pill Hill

Pill Hill is just over a mile from Mountain View Cemetery. The cemetery, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, was established in 1863. It replaced two previous cemeteries that existed between 1852 and 1863. In time the cemetery developed its own chapel, and at its outskirts were the Chapel of the Chimes, the Oakland Cremation Association complex (Chapel of Memories), and a short-lived Jewish mortuary.

In the earliest days of Mountain View Cemetery’s existence, if there was a delay between death and burial the body was sometimes kept in a neighboring mausoleum or the cemetery’s receiving tomb. In 1903 the cemetery trustees hired architect Walter J. Mathews to design a new receiving tomb, but the emergence of the funeral industry and funerary buildings soon provided an alternative for the time between death and burial. The 1903 Mountain View receiving tomb did not serve that purpose for long and was converted to an indoor burial place shortly after its construction.

The first five undertakers moved into the Pill Hill area between 1906 and 1916. Between 1916 and 1943 these businesses increased, with a peak of ten funerary establishments in 1943. Four of these had closed by 1957. In the early 1950s, construction of a new freeway (I-580) bisected the Pill Hill neighborhood.

Legislation enacted between 1929 and 1939 established California Business and Professions Code Chapter 12, 7600-7680 to regulate licensure and practices for cemeteries, mortuaries, funeral directors and other professionals in the industry.



Yellow pages ads for funeral homes in 1950. The sketches showcase the buildings as a way to attract business.

Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home opened on Telegraph Avenue in 1966, the only new mortuary to open around Pill Hill after 1932, and one of only four that remain open in 2009. Originally established in West Oakland in 1915, it was the second African-American-owned mortuary established in California. The other mortuaries in the area were originally primarily or exclusively for Caucasians, but all of the mortuaries that are still in operation now welcome clients of all races and ethnicities.

Between 1971 and 1983, three Pill Hill mortuaries closed, bringing the total down from seven to four. As of 2009, these remaining mortuaries continue to operate under the same or slightly modified names and ownership. According to Richard Fisher, Inspector for the California Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, the decline in the late 70s and early 80s was probably related to the publication of Jessica Mitford's book, *The American Way of Death*, in 1963. Mitford, who lived in Oakland and whose husband organized the Bay Area Funeral Society, brought national attention to funeral consumer rights and pricing, and started a nationwide movement to regulate the industry and choose less expensive funerals, forego the embalming process, and favor cremation, which is relatively inexpensive, over burial.

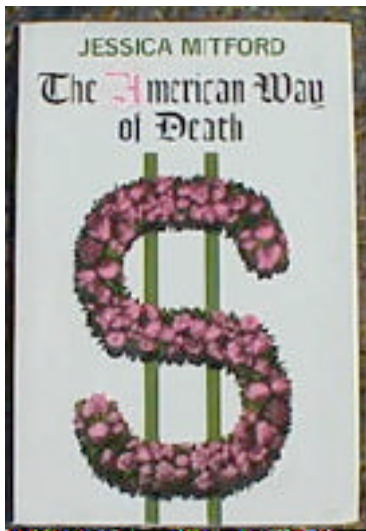
California Business and Professions Code 7685 was added in 1971, requiring transparent pricing information and sales techniques for funeral directors. The Federal Trade Commission Funeral Rule, which is similar in content to the California regulation, first went into effect thirteen years later in 1984.



J. E. Henderson Undertaker at 2307 Telegraph, in a residential style building that has since been demolished. This is just one of a number of funerary businesses have come and gone in the area.

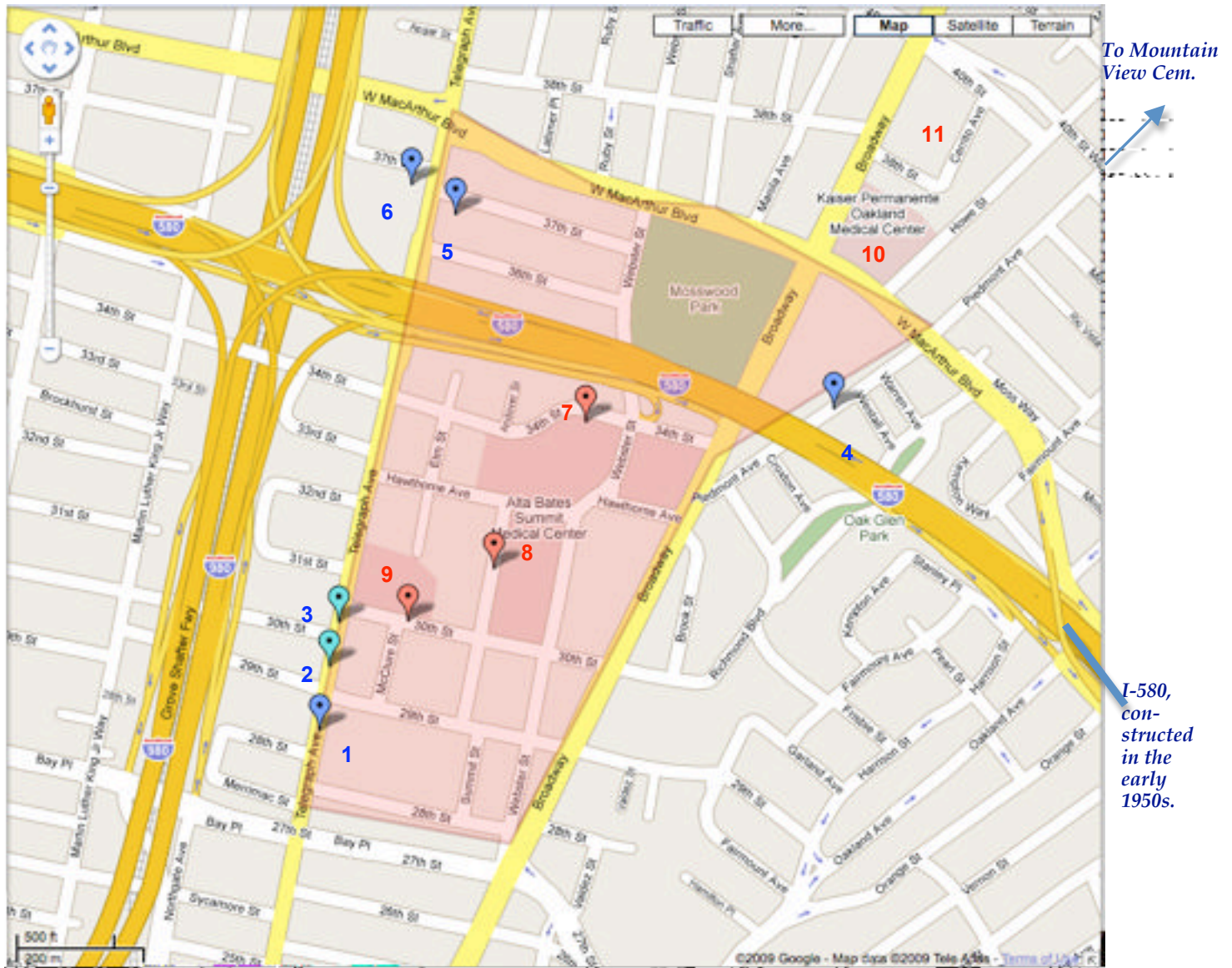


Millionaire's Row at Mountain View Cemetery.



In 1963 the publication of Oakland resident Jessica Mitford's exposé brought national attention to funeral industry practices.

Pill Hill Area Map



Mortuaries:

1. Grant Miller Mortuary, 2850 Telegraph Avenue. Constructed 1896 with major expansion/ remodel in 1931. Tudor Revival.
2. Truman Mortuary, 2935 Telegraph Avenue. Constructed c. 1899 with major expansion/ remodel in 1946. Colonial Revival.
3. Oaks Chapel, 3003-27 Telegraph Avenue. Constructed 1920, 1925, and 1932. Swiss Chalet and Tudor Revival.
4. Albert Brown Mortuary, 3476 Piedmont Avenue. Constructed 1927. Exotic "Byzantine" Revival.
5. Mosswood Chapel/ Albert Engel Funeral Home, 3630 Telegraph Avenue. Constructed 1932. Spanish Revival.
6. Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home, 3665 Telegraph Avenue. Constructed 1966. A-Frame Architecture.

Hospitals:

7. Merritt Pavilion – Alta Bates Summit Medical Center
8. Providence Pavilion – Alta Bates Summit Medical Center
9. Peralta Pavilion – Alta Bates Summit Medical Center
10. Kaiser Permanente Oakland Medical Center – Main Hospital
11. Kaiser Permanente – Historic King's Daughters Home



Alameda County Illustrated, 1898 p. 59. Originally a residence.

Grant D. Miller Mortuary

- 2850 Telegraph Avenue
- Built 1896 with a major remodel in 1931.
- Chester Miller and Carl I. Warnecke, architects (1931). These architects did a similar transformation for the former Truman Mortuary building at 2935 Telegraph.

The original Colonial Revival building (top) is barely recognizable from the front of the remodeled Tudor Revival building. The most salient clue to the building's identity is the configuration of the windows: the four lower windows in the 1898 photo are the same as the four leftmost windows (northern half of the west façade) on the 1931 remodel.

Brick and stone have been applied to the outside of the wood structure. The roof has been made steeper, with the two original dormer windows removed. A balcony above the original bay window has been replaced with a steep roof. The strong horizontal lines created by the original cornice and the lintels above the two lower windows have been removed. Pilasters and decorative capital medallions have been removed, and irregular stone quoins have been added in their place at building corners, underneath the edge of the sloped roof, and outlining the windows and doors. A large chapel with a tall arched entrance has been added, nearly doubling the size of the building.



The same building in 2009. Four windows to the left of the entrance are the original residential windows.

Dr. Frank L. Adams lived in the original house from 1897 until 1920. After he sold it to Bessie Wood Gustason in 1920, she converted the building to a mortuary.

The Bessie J. Wood Co. sold the business to Grant Miller Mortuaries in 1930. Wood and Miller were partners in a mortuary at 2372 East 14th Street for around 10 years before Wood moved to a new location downtown in 1908. Grant Miller was County Coroner from 1914 until 1938 and an EBMUD director from its organization in 1923 until 1943. He died in January 1945. The Grant Miller Mortuary on East 14th Street remained open until 1978.



From the back, the shape of the original 1896 building is apparent on the right. Windows on the third floor testify that the third floor still exists; it is an apartment.

A plaque at the entrance describes the Grant Miller Mortuary as successor to the Truman Mortuary (formerly located at 2935 Telegraph Ave), the Chapel of the Oaks (formerly located at 3007 Telegraph Avenue), and the John Cox Mortuary, (which operated at 4016 Howe Street from 1948 to 1984). Carriage Services, a Texas-based national corporation, purchased the Grant Miller Mortuary in 1994.

As of 2009, this building is still in operation as a funeral chapel. Embalming and cremation are performed in other East Bay branches of the Carriage Services Company. The clientele is racially diverse and includes the traditionally



Sketch for grand opening announcement after major remodel, Oakland Tribune, May 29, 1931.

Caucasian clientele of Grant Miller and John Cox, a large representation of Asians, Ethiopians, and a diverse balance of other racial groups.

Mrs. Bessie J. Wood Gustason and Women in Undertaking

Bessie Wood Gustason, who owned and directed the Bessie J. Wood Co. at 2850 Telegraph from 1920 to 1931, was “the best known woman undertaker in America” (San Francisco Bulletin, 1/10/42) as well as one of the first. She was Secretary of the State Board of Embalmers for seven years and authored the original bill that regulates the licensure of embalmers (*History of Alameda County California, Biographical vol. 2, 1928*). She was for a number of years the only female member of the National Selected Morticians Association.

In the pre-Civil War tradition it was usually the duty of a woman in the family to prepare the deceased for burial, sometimes with the help of an undertaker. With the rise of the new technique of arterial embalming during and after the Civil War, this work shifted to be almost entirely a profession for men.

Bessie Wood first arrived in Oakland at a young age, bearing a business card with the title, “Assistant Undertaker.” According to the San Francisco Bulletin (1/10/42), undertakers in Oakland were not accustomed to females in their profession. Contemporaries described her as warm, tactful, friendly, spirited, smiling, and of course, intelligent; perhaps it her winsome personality that allowed her to succeed.

In February 1897, just before her 20th birthday, she purchased a half interest in undertaking business of J. L. Maynard, operating at East 14th Street and 23rd Avenue. She bought Maynard’s interest and operated solo for a time before partnering with Grant Miller at 1128 23rd Avenue to form Wood & Miller. In 1908, the two split, with Bessie J. Wood moving to 20th and Broadway and then to larger quarters at 1955 Telegraph Avenue (as the Wood-Hill Co.).

In 1920, at the age of 43, Bessie J. Wood married Arthur E. Gustason. The two purchased the residential building at 2850 Telegraph and converted it into a mortuary, which Bessie directed. In 1930, she retired and sold the business to Grant Miller, who promptly commissioned a remodel.

According to Mike Stevens in “Death becomes her: female morticians on the rise” (Columbia News Service, May 2, 2006), morticians’ schools were typically 95% or more male until the late 1970s. Since then, there has been a major shift. By 2005, more than half of new mortuary science students nationally were women. Although some establishments still resist hiring women, the hiring bias is also shifting. Perhaps, as some female students suggest, clients value a sympathetic and creative female presence, and the mortuaries are beginning to recognize this.

Of the five Pill Hill area funeral directors I spoke with in 2009, four are women. It is tempting to imagine that Mrs. Bessie J. Wood Gustason’s legacy is at least partially responsible for Oakland’s accelerated gender integration of the professional morticians.



Bessie J. Wood Gustason was called “the best known woman undertaker in America.”

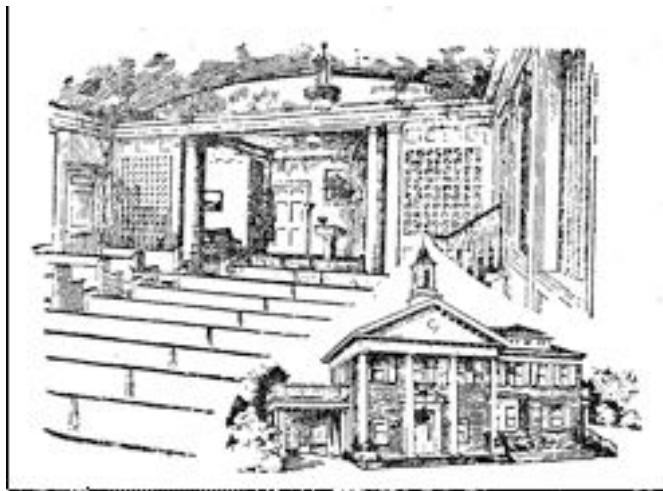


Established in 1882, the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science was the first professional morticians’ school. Until recently morticians’ schools catered almost exclusively to men. Photograph of the graduating class of 1921.



Above: Prominent, full-page ad inside the front cover of the 1930 Oakland Directory.

Below: 1948 Yellow Pages ad for the "New Truman Colonial Chapel emphasizes the building's monumental architecture, as do many mortuary ads from the 1940s-1950s.



Muller & Caulfield Architects photograph, 2006. Building was in use as the "Courthouse Athletic Club."



Funeral home advertisement, Oakland Tribune, December 13, 1942.

Truman Mortuary

- 2935 Telegraph Avenue
- Built 1899 with a major expansion and remodel in 1946.
- Chester Miller and Carl I. Warnecke, architects (1946). These architects designed a similar transformation for the Grant Miller Mortuary across the street at 2950 Telegraph Avenue.

This building was originally constructed in 1899. The 1900 census shows it as the residence of a physician's widow named Katherine Hall along with eight grown children, all professionals, a servant, two people listed as "friends," and the wife of one of the friends. Around 1913, Charles Truman, who had been working as an undertaker in San Francisco for about ten years, purchased the building for use as a funeral home. His business apparently flourished. In 1930, he had a full-page advertisement just inside the cover of the Oakland directory. He made additions to the building towards the back of the lot in 1921, 1922, and 1932, more than doubling the building footprint. He died in 1940, and his son, Lloyd H. Truman, took over the business. Lloyd commissioned Miller and Warnecke to design a major addition and remodel in 1946.

The original building was in the Colonial style, with the 1946 remodel transforming its appearance to Georgian Classical Revival, a style that was popular for monumental buildings in America especially in the South and East. The addition doubled the building's frontage onto Telegraph Avenue, with a formal set of four tall columns, portico, and cupola on the roof. A brick veneer was applied to the entire building. The original entrance porch and balcony were removed. The original building (above) can be identified as the right half of the remodeled building (below).

The remodel probably reflected a competitive funeral market. The advertising emphasis for Oakland mortuaries in the 1940s and 1950s was increasingly on grand mortuary architecture.

The Truman Mortuary remained open until the mid-1970s. In 1978, the building was converted for use as the Courthouse Athletic Club with some minor exterior remodeling and extensive additions. The club operated in this location until 2006. The building is scheduled for demolition in 2009 to allow construction of 110 affordable family residential units.



The 1931 opening announcement for Oaks Chapel claims the architecture is “in the manner of Haddon Hall,” above (photograph from the official Haddon Hall website). Haddon Hall in Derbyshire was constructed between the late 12th century and c. 1620, primarily of local stone. The banquet hall at the center, with the structure’s only sloped, slate roof, was built in the early 14th century.



Opening announcement, *Oakland Tribune*, November 27, 1931.

Chapel of the Oaks

- 3007 Telegraph Avenue
- Built c. 1920, 1925, and 1931
- Raymond F. DeSanno, architect (1931); Schirmer-Bugbee Co. architect (1925).
- Wood frame structure with stone and stucco walls and a multi gabled slate roof

The style for this structure is eclectic. The corner portion is loosely Swiss Chalet style with exposed beams, gabled slate roof, regular window spacing, and decorative features such as the small balcony at the fourth floor and the clock panel with molded decoration.

The section to the right (north) is Tudor Revival. Distinguishing Tudor Revival features include the half-timber verticals and diagonals, steep sloped slate roof, and steeper gable.

The Oaks Chapel opening announcement advertises the architecture as being “in the manner of Haddon Hall,” a famous medieval structure in England. The wall and turreted entrance mimic the medieval style of Haddon Hall and were probably added in the 1931 construction, which included Yosemite stone as a material.

Frank Youell opened the Oakland Undertaking Company at 3479 Piedmont Avenue in 1921. He moved to this location in 1925. The expansion in 1931 coincided with an expansion in business to include weddings as well as funerals. The opening announcement for the Oaks Chapel (above) does not even mention funerals, only weddings, but in 1943 Frank Youell was still listed as an undertaker at this location.

This building operated as a mortuary from 1921 to 1977, with the Grant Miller Mortuary at 2850 Telegraph incorporating the “Chapel of the Oaks” name shortly after it closed. This building served as the Telegraph Medical Plaza from 1978 until around 2007. It is unoccupied as of spring 2009.



Clock detail, Chapel of the Oaks.



2009 Photograph by Muller & Caulfield Architects



Advertisement for Cannon's Face Brick in Pacific Coast Architect, November 1927.

Albert Brown Mortuary

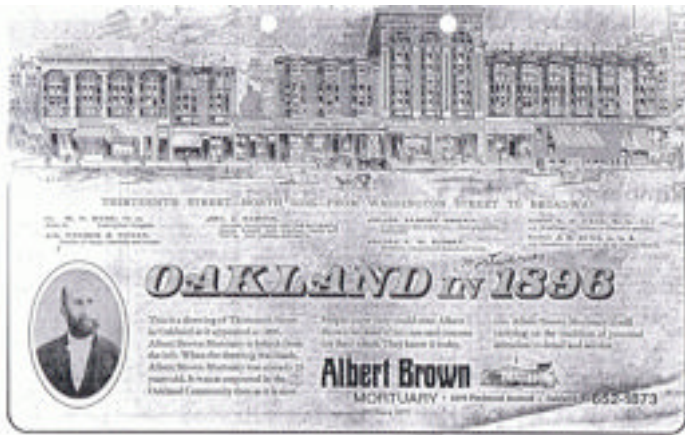
- 3476 Piedmont Avenue
- Built 1927
- Charles W. McCall, architect
- Welsh & Welsh, general contractor

Exotic "Byzantine" revival style. Characteristics of this style include a mixture of materials (in this case, red brick and white plaster) to create a design; the colonnade at the entrance; the keystone lintels and large decorated frieze above the windows. The level plinth at the bottom of the building creates the impression that the building is resting on stone, like a temple. Byzantine architecture also typically includes a complex mixture of domes and flat or low-sloped planes at the roof.

There are two generations of Albert Brown associated with this mortuary. Albert Brown Sr., born in 1842, opened his first undertaking business in Denver, Colorado in 1874. He stayed in the profession after moving to Los Angeles in 1881 and then to Oakland in 1886. His first location in Oakland was downtown on 13th Street.

Albert Brown Jr. worked with his father as an undertaker after he graduated from high school in 1894. He took over as president of the Albert Brown Undertaking Company after his father's death in 1909. He moved to 3476 Piedmont Avenue in 1927.

As of 2009, the building is still in operation as a mortuary under the same name. It is owned by the East Lawn Memorial Parks and Mortuaries, a Sacramento-based company with six locations in California. According to Angela Caulboy, secretary, the mortuary is involved in a number of social clubs and has business relationships with St. Teresa's Catholic Church, Summit Hospital, the Mountain View Cemetery and businesses in Chinatown, where some families have been working with Albert Brown Mortuary for generations. Clients are diverse and include all racial, ethnic, and religious groups.

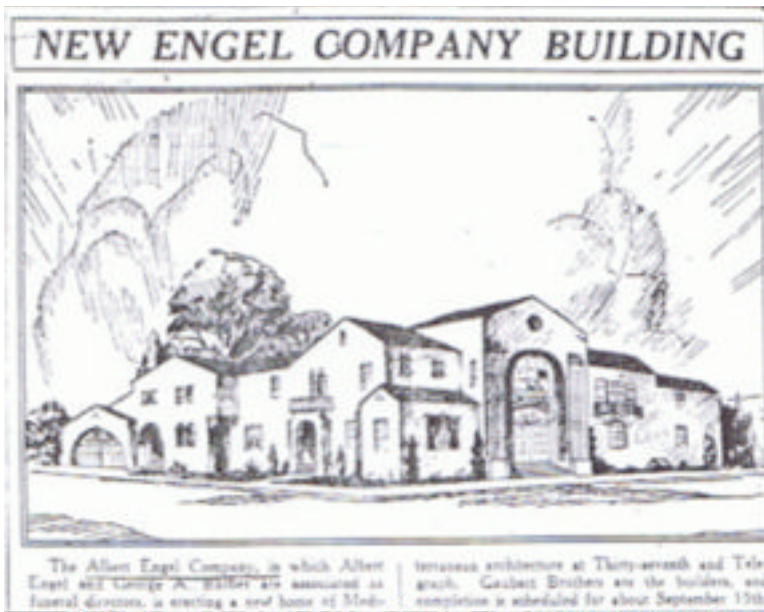


Buildings along Thirteenth Street in 1896, including Albert Brown Sr.'s original Oakland undertaking office.



Muller & Caulfield Architects photograph, 2009.





Construction Announcement, Oakland Tribune, July 10 1932.

Albert Engel’s Mosswood Chapel and Funeral Home

- 3630 Telegraph Avenue
- Built 1932.
- Gaubert Brothers, contractor. No architect is listed in the construction announcement (left) or building permit. The Gaubert Brothers often designed their own projects, and may have designed this one.

Design is Mediterranean/ Spanish Mission Revival Style, with characteristic white stucco exterior, low slope ceramic tile roofs, and exposed gables. The walls appear thick and massive, with small punched windows to keep the inside of the building naturally cool when the weather is hot. The front of the building is fairly plain except for pilasters on either side of the entry and a medallion above. There is a wrought iron balcony at the right side of the front façade.

The building is broken up into many different roof planes and masses, as if it had been added onto over time, even though it was built all at once. This is typical of the 1930s interpretation of Spanish Mission style. The building contains two chapels, a sales office, administrative offices, and an embalming studio.

This mortuary, known as the Mosswood Chapel, was originally owned by the Albert Engel Company, which also operated the Laurel Chapel on High Street. After Albert Engel died, Rosalee Engel operated the business before selling it to Robert McNary and Hugh Morgan, who also operated two mortuaries in Berkeley. Hugh Morgan continued to work here until 2006 before retiring in his 90s.

Mrs. Lottie Jackson, née Greene, purchased the business from McNary and Morgan in 1991, moving from the Jackson Funeral Home in East Oakland that she and her husband operated before his death. Mrs.

Jackson is the first African American owner for this mortuary.

As of 2009, the Mosswood Chapel is operating as a mortuary called McNary, Morgan, Greene, and Jackson Mortuary. “Engel” was removed from the name to make room for “Greene” in 2005. The clientele includes a diverse representation of all racial, ethnic, and religious groups, including African Americans, Asians, and Indians, in addition to the original Caucasian client base.



Muller & Caulfield Architects photograph, 2009



Tile fountain inside the main entrance.



Door to the Main Chapel and stair leading up to the organ balcony.



Exterior photograph, 2009.



Probably a design rendering, this image was used on promotional material through at least the late 1970s.



Interior courtyard and fountain brings daylight and scenic views into many of the interior spaces.



Large windows bring in daylight on the south (left) from the driveway, and on the north (right) from the courtyard.

Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home

- 3665 Telegraph Avenue
- Built 1966
- Architects: Bushnell, Jessup, Murphy & Van DeWeghe
- Builder: R. Sharp & Sons

The A-Frame architecture is typical of churches from the 1950s-1960s, with a steep sloped chapel roof that goes almost to the ground above a horizontal plinth. A 2008 renovation transformed the interior, but the structure remains unchanged since its construction.

The building plan is roughly square, organized around a large interior courtyard. An L-shaped hallway through the north and west sides of the building provides access to all of the rooms, including the western wing of the chapel.

Built in 1966, Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home is the only new funerary construction in the Pill Hill area since about 1935, and the only one that uses modern rather than revivalist architecture. It is also the only mortuary in the neighborhood to claim African American ownership since its establishment. According to Fouché's obituary (Oakland Tribune 12/7-9/2001), "When established in 1915 by Hudson and Butler, Hudson's was the second oldest Black funeral home in California. Now in 2001, it is the oldest"

Mr. Fouché was born in Louisiana in 1904 and lived in Pasadena with his parents (US Census, 1920) before moving to Oakland and buying Hudson Funeral Home in 1944. He moved to this location in 1966. As of 2009, it is still in operation as a mortuary and is owned and managed by Fouché's widow, Mrs. Aloysia Fouché, the third owner in 94 years. Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home welcomes a diverse array of all racial, ethnic, and religious groups in addition to the original African-American client base.

Mortuary architecture and the African American community

Development and architecture for African American-owned mortuaries in Oakland are quite different than for Caucasian-owned businesses nationally and in Oakland. New construction for African-American owned businesses spiked from the late 1950s through the 1970s, decades after the peak for Caucasian-owned



Hudson Funeral Home at 953 8th Street, in a Victorian-style house modified to look modern. Sketch made shortly after Mr. Fouché bought the business in 1943.



Baker Mortuary, constructed in 1958.

Palmer D. Whitted Mortuary, constructed in 1972.



Mr. Aramis Fouché owned and directed Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home from 1943 until his death, at the age of 97, in 2001.

Prince Greer was the first documented African American embalmer. He worked during the Civil War, guaranteeing inclusion for African Americans at the inception of the profession at a time when many other professional and educational opportunities were closed.



establishments. Architecture is modern with clean and simplified lines and materials, rather than revivalist.

Other examples of new African American-owned mortuary construction in Oakland include the Baker Mortuary and the Palmer D. Whitted Mortuary. The original Baker Mortuary, founded in 1922, was razed to make room for the ACORN housing project in 1958. The business opened in a new building with modern architecture in the same neighborhood shortly afterwards. In 1972, Oakland's Redevelopment Agency funded relocation of the Palmer D. Whitted Mortuary into a new, modern building in East Oakland.

The difference in timing for African-American-owned mortuary development is consistent with the historic pattern of racial discrimination by lending and financial institutions, realtors, and racially restrictive land deeds. While discrimination still exists, it has become more possible for African Americans to develop new buildings over the past 75 years. Aramis Fouché was instrumental in promoting the legal and financial changes in California and nationally that made it possible for African Americans to develop property, making him an important figure in American history.

Restrictive covenants in land deeds to prohibit non-whites from owning property had enormous impact before the U. S. Supreme Court's 1948 Shelley v. Kraemer ruling prohibited their judicial enforcement (although not the covenants themselves). California's Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963 prohibited racial discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. Fouché was a pivotal figure in the campaigns that produced both changes (Tribune Obituary, 12/7-9/2001).

A lack of access to capital has also been a major barrier to African American-owned property development, since many banks have systematically refused mortgages to African Americans. In 1948, the American Savings and Loan League (ASLL) formed to encourage African Americans to form thrift clubs, and existing small financial organizations to reach out to African Americans. California was home to many of the largest members of the ASLL, including the largest such institution in the country, the San Francisco-based Trans-Bay Federal Savings and Loan Association (*Encyclopedia of African American Business*, 2006, ed. Jessie Carney Smith). Aramis Fouché was Chairman of the Board of Directors of this bank (C. 1963 newspaper ad, African American Museum and Library of Oakland) as well as one of the founders (Mrs. Fouché, 6/2/2009).

Funeral homes and funeral directors have historically held an important place in the African American economy. In 1969 the Oakland Tribune stated, "As is the case in many communities, the funeral business is the biggest black industry in the area. Led by the impressive Hudson Funeral Home of Aramis Fouché here... black mortuaries [in the East Bay]... do hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of business a year" (9/7/1969). One reason for the importance of funerals is undoubtedly the lack of alternatives historically available for African-Americans with professional and entrepreneurial aspirations. Also, death could represent "faith in going to the Promised Land, where things would be much better than in this life, which was so often not very good" (Mrs. Fouché, 6/2/2009). Death and freedom from slavery have been symbolically intertwined since before the Civil War, and the vocabulary to describe the two is often indistinguishable. Crossing or following the Jordan River could mean dying or going north. Death could require "traveling shoes." "Heaven" and the "Promised Land" could refer to the afterlife or the free states. Mr. Fouché, as funeral director and social activist, addressed both meanings. According to Mrs. Fouché, "The funeral home became a vehicle for Mr. Fouché to improve the quality of life for people in this town."

Acknowledgements

Text by Emily Thurston of Muller & Caulfield Architects in consultation with Betty Marvin, Historic Preservation Planner for the City of Oakland. Images compiled by Muller & Caulfield Architects

Preparation of this brochure was funded by Courthouse Associates, LLC, dba Trammell Crowe Residential, as a mitigation measure for the demolition of the Truman Mortuary and Courthouse Athletic Club building under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Acknowledgements go to the people who have contributed to the historic materials: Betty Marvin, Gail Lombardi, and Gaye Lenahan from the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey; Steve Lavoie, Oakland History Room at the Main Branch of the Oakland Public Library; Richard M. Fisher, Field Representative for California's Cemetery and Funeral Bureau; Paul Singh the African-American Museum and Library of Oakland archivists; and all of the funeral directors and representatives

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Page 1, image 1: Edward H. Mitchell Postcard "3122 – Providence Hospital, Oakland, California." C. 1919. Oakland Heritage Alliance online archive.

Page 1, image 2: "A Brief History of Modern Embalming," <http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion2/acwundertaker/history1.html>

Page 1, image 3: <http://mredlincolnalbum.blogspot.com/>

Page 2, image 1: Robert Cheek photograph, published on Mt. Auburn Cemetery Website, <http://www.mountauburn.org/gallery/#>

Page 2, image 2: Robert Caplin for The New York Times

Page 2, image 3 – Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum website, 2004 http://cpr.org/Museum/Mt_View_Tombs.html.

Page 3, image 1: 1950 Oakland Directory p. 209, Oakland Main Library – periodicals room.

Page 3, image 2: Photograph from Oakland History Room, Mortuaries file.

Page 3, image 3: Front cover of first edition of The American Way of Death. From <http://images.ola.com/auctions/20/233069/233069-1.jpg>

Page 3, image 4 (right): MountainViewCemetery.org photo gallery

Page 4: Map from Google:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=106105250351503665652.0004678cde899ca0e75a0&ll=37.821277,-122.262211&spn=0.017662,0.038624&z=15>

Page 5, image 1: Alameda County Illustrated, 1898, p. 59. From Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey File.

Page 5, images 2 and 3: Muller & Caulfield Architects, 2009

Page 6, image 1: Oakland Tribune, May 29, 1931.

Page 6, image 2: San Francisco Bulletin 1/10/42.

Page 6, image 3: Mike Stevens, "Death becomes her: female morticians on the rise" Columbia News Service, May 2, 2006

Page 7 left, image 1: Oakland Directory 1930, from Oakland Main Library periodicals room.

Page 7 left, image 2: "New Truman Colonial Chapel," Oakland Directory, 1948.

Page 7 left, image 3: Muller & Caulfield Architects photograph, 2006

Page 7 right, image 1: Oakland Tribune, December 13, 1942.

Page 8 left, image 1: Haddon Hall website, <http://www.haddonhall.co.uk/home.htm>

Page 8 left, image 2: Muller & Caulfield Architects photograph, 2009
Page 8 left, image 3: Muller & Caulfield Architects photograph, 2009
Page 8 right: Oakland Tribune, November 27, 1931
Page 9 left, image 1: Pacific Coast Architecture, November 1927.
Page 9 left, image 2: Advertisement circulated by Albert Brown Mortuary, circa 1985. Oakland History Room
Page 9 left, image 3: Muller & Caulfield Architects photograph, 2009
Page 9 right: Muller & Caulfield Architects, 2009
Page 10, image 1: Oakland Tribune, July 10, 1932
Page 10, images 2, 3, 4: Muller & Caulfield Architects, 2009
Page 11, image 1 (right): Promotional postcard from Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home, c. 1965. Color by Mike Roberts.
Page 11, image 2 (left): Muller & Caulfield Architects, 2009.
Page 11, image 3: Fouché's courtyard photograph, circa 2009.
Page 11, image 4: Fouché's Hudson Calendar, 1986. African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Aramis Fouché archive.
Page 12, image 1: circa 1946 sketch of Hudson Funeral Home at 953 8th Street courtesy of Fouché's Hudson Funeral Home.
Page 12, image 2: *The Whip-o-Will: A Panorama of Black History, vol.1 no.1 July 1993*. Madison Harvey, Jr., Ed. Courtesy of the Oakland History Room, Mortuaries file.
Page 12, image 3: Palmer D. Whitted Mortuary promotional material. From African American Museum & Library at Oakland, African American-owned mortuaries archive.
Page 12, image 4: Newspaper advertisement for Hudson Funeral Home, 1965. African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Aramis Fouché archive.
Page 12, image 5: <http://www.thebostongothicbook.com/PrinceGreerPage.html>, from the Johnson Family and *Embalming History, Theory, and Practice* by Robert G. Mayer