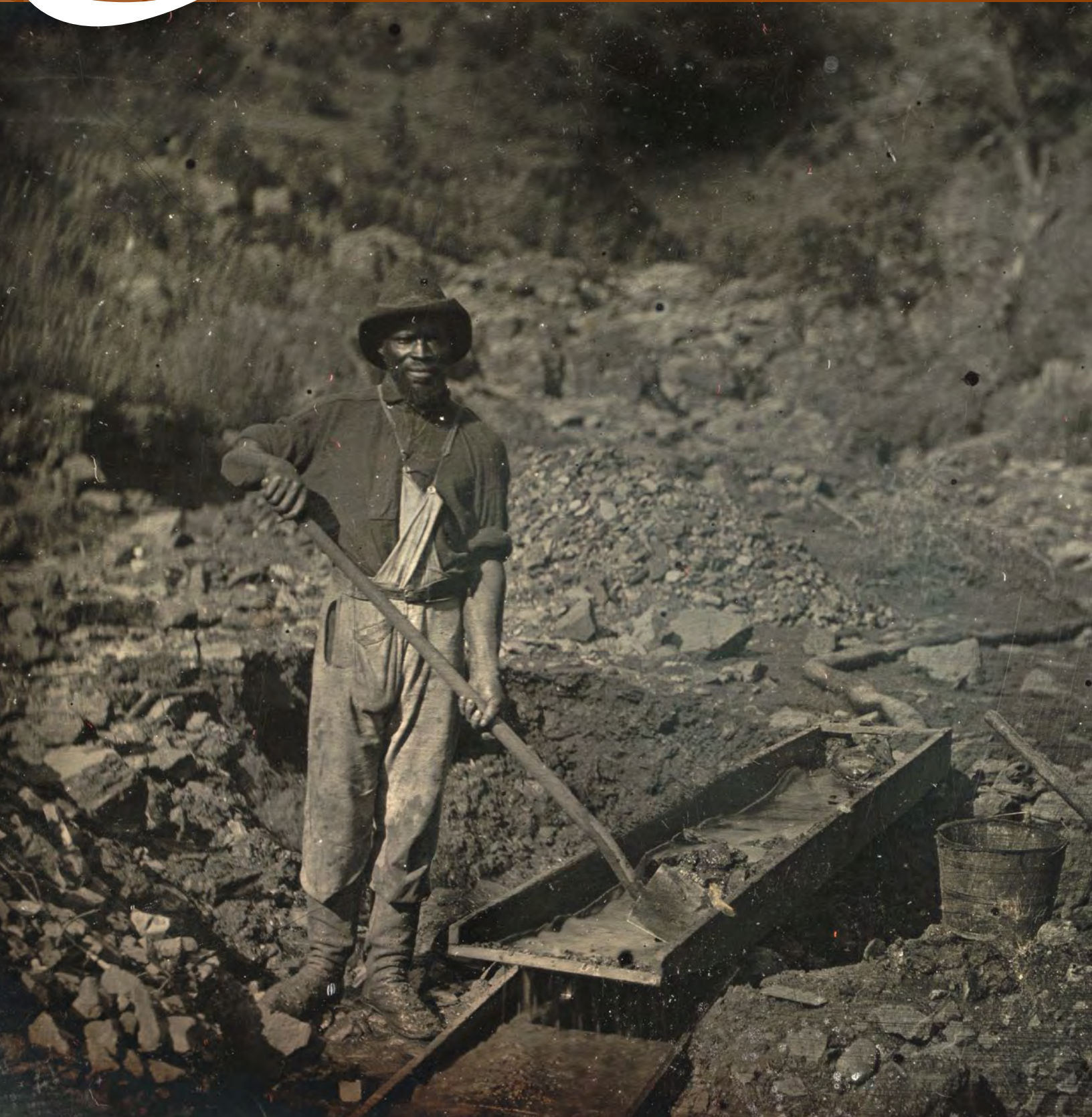
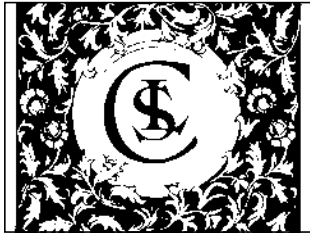


CALIFORNIA
STATE
LIBRARY
FOUNDATION

Number 128
2020

Bulletin





Bulletin

EDITOR
Gary F. Kurutz

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
Brittneydawn Cook Gene Kennedy

COPY EDITOR
M. Patricia Morris

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Kenneth B. Noack, Jr.
President

Marilyn Snider
Vice-President

Mike Ueltzen
Treasurer

Jeff Volberg
Secretary

Greg Lucas
State Librarian of California

Phillip L. Isenberg Thomas W. Stallard
Phyllis Smith Susan Glass
Katherine Weedman-Cox

Brittneydawn Cook Gene Kennedy
Executive Director *Foundation
Administrator*

Shelley Ford
Bookkeeper

The *California State Library Foundation Bulletin* is published when we are able. © 2004-2020.

Opinions of the authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of their institutions, the California State Library or the Foundation.

The *Bulletin* is included as a membership benefit to Foundation members and those individuals contributing \$40.00 or more annually to Foundation Programs. Membership rates are:

Associate: \$40-\$99
Contributor: \$100-249
Sponsor: \$250-\$499
Patron: \$500-\$999
Institutional: \$500
Corporate: \$750
Lifetime Member: \$1,000
Pioneer: \$5,000
Subscription to Libraries: \$30/year

2 Anonymous Black Gold Seeker at Auburn Ravine, 1852

By Shirley Ann Wilson Moore

4 Discoveries in the Library's Archives: Louis J. Stellman's Photographs of the Women Who Fought Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown

By Julia Siler

10 Meet Designer and Artist Angela Tannehill-Caldwell

By M. Patricia Morris

14 From Pollywog to Shellback: The Story of the SS *Adolph Sutro*

By Carolina Basave and Mattie Taormina

20 Tale of a City: Community Resistance to Redevelopment in Sacramento's Japantown

By Moriah Ulinskas

26 Foundation Notes
The Trail Turtles Archive

By Gary F. Kurutz

28 Recent Contributors

Front Cover: Daguerreotype of Black Miner Working a Sluice Box in Auburn Ravine, circa 1852. Quarter-plate daguerreotype by Joseph Blaney Starkweather.

Back Cover: *How Does Your Garden Grow*, mixed media piece by Angela Tannehill.

Illustrations and Photo Credits: Pages 2-3, California History Section, California State Library; pp. 4-9, Cameron House, San Francisco and California History Section; pp. 10-13, Angela Tannehill-Caldwell; pp. 14-19, Sutro Library, California State Library and Naval Historical Foundation; pp. 20-25, Center for Sacramento History and Sacramento Bee; p. 27, Oregon-California Trails Association.

Design: Angela Tannehill-Caldwell | www.angelacaldwell.art

California State Library Foundation

1225 8th Street, Suite 345, Sacramento, CA 95814

tel: 916.447.6331 | web: www.cslibdn.org | email: info@cslibdn.org

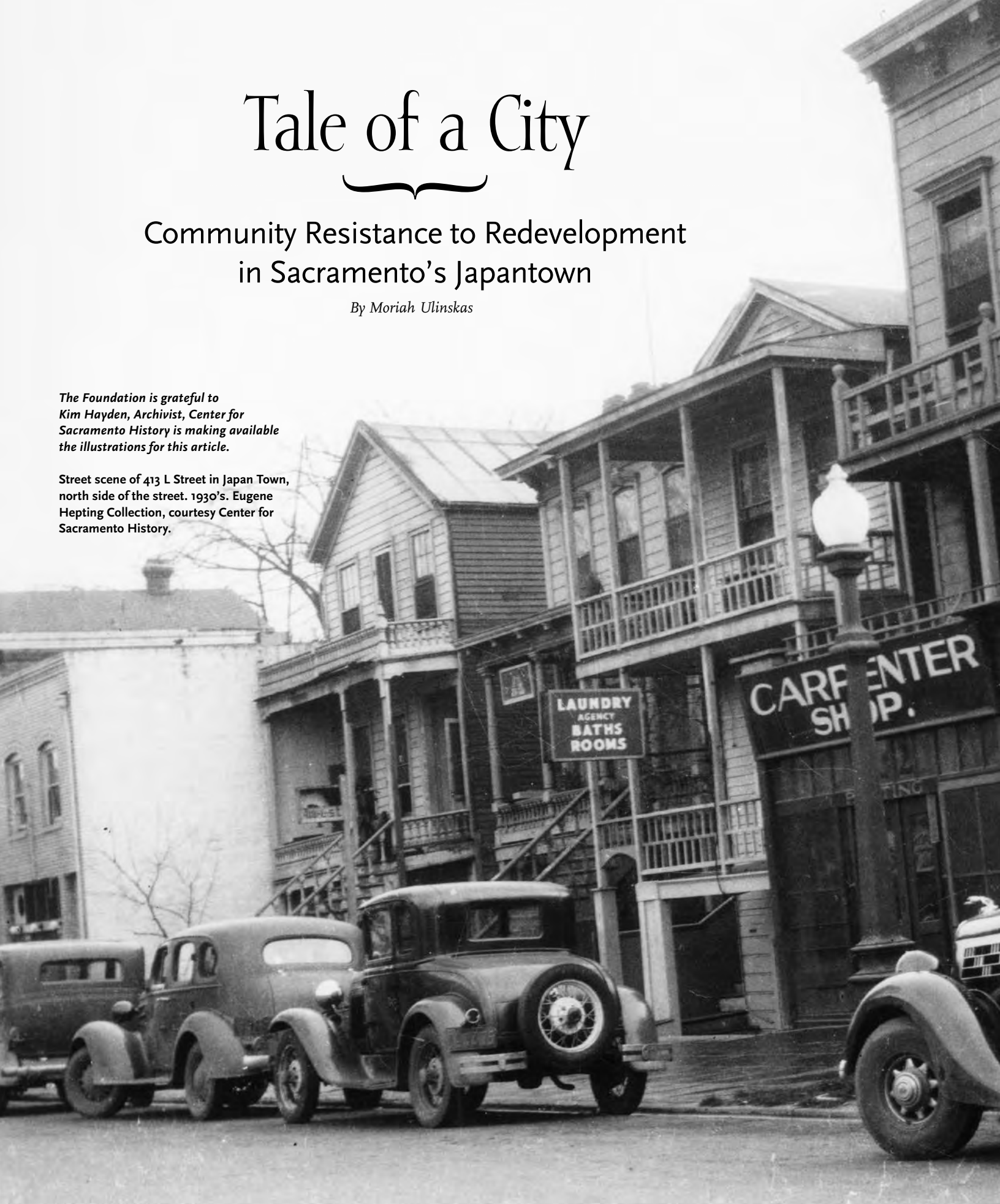
Tale of a City

Community Resistance to Redevelopment in Sacramento's Japantown

By Moriah Ulinskas

The Foundation is grateful to Kim Hayden, Archivist, Center for Sacramento History is making available the illustrations for this article.

Street scene of 413 L Street in Japan Town, north side of the street. 1930's. Eugene Hepting Collection, courtesy Center for Sacramento History.





Urban renewal programs, bluntly referred to as “slum clearance” in their day, reshaped American cities and formed new urban identities. In California, the fight between redevelopment agencies and minority communities still resonates. While preservationists worked to enact legislation addressing the threat to historical structures and neighborhoods,¹ what became of their inhabitants? This essay sets out to revisit the history of California’s earliest redevelopment project through the perspective of the community that fought it.

California led the nation by becoming the first state to pass its community redevelopment act in 1945. In 1951, the state codified the Community Redevelopment Law (CRL), which became a part of the California Constitution, granting local governments the ability to fund redevelopment projects by using projected increases in property taxes. “Tax Increment Financing” relieved taxpayers of financial responsibility and eliminated most public opposition to redevelopment projects.

In 1949, the City of Sacramento commissioned a survey of 244 blocks in the downtown area, of which 65 were identified as “blighted.” In December 1950, the city established its first redevelopment agency, and agency Director Joseph T. Bill proposed an ordinance to establish 62 blocks in the West End of Sacramento as “Redevelopment

Cartoon from the front page of *The Sacramento Bee*, July 2, 1954.



Area 1.” At the time, the West End of Sacramento was home to a largely mixed minority community. According to the project area survey, the West End comprised of 21% African Americans, 30% Asian Americans, and 13% Latin Americans—demographics which reflected a long history of segregationist practices. Since the 1920s, racial housing covenants defined Sacramento neighborhoods and were written by developers into contracts for new subdivisions, prohibiting occupancy by “Negro, Japanese or Chinese, or persons of African or Mongolian descent.”⁷² Ultimately, they restricted non-whites to the West End and limited them from owning or living in new subdivisions that were being developed.

Sacramento’s Japantown, which dated back to 1891, had just found its feet again as a community after the forced relocation to internment camps during World War II. In 1941, an estimated 7,000 Sacramento residents of Japanese descent had been forcibly relocated, first to the Walerga Assembly Center, then to remote camps, the last of which did not close until 1946.³ Upon their return, Sacramento’s Japanese Americans found



Henry Taketa addresses city council in a public meeting, June 16, 1954, *Sacramento Bee*, Sacramento.

Moriah Ulinskas is an independent archivist and PhD candidate in Public History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She received one of the first Mead B. Kibbey California State Library Foundation Fellowships. This scholar is the former director of the Preservation Program at the Bay Area Video Coalition, has been a member of the Community Archiving Workshop (CAW) since 2012, and manages CAW’s IMLS funded “Training of Trainers” project and NEH funded “Audiovisual Collections Care in Tribal Archives” project. Moriah has worked as a consultant for the Smithsonian Institution, SFMOMA, San Francisco Arts Commission, and is the manager of the Diversity & Inclusion Fellowship Program for the Association of Moving Image Archivists. She has published articles in KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies and Places Journal.

their businesses lost to foreclosure and their homes occupied by other migrant minority groups, specifically African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Filipinos. Since they could not move elsewhere, returning internees crowded their way back into the West End. Families doubled and tripled up into single family homes, slowly initiating the process of rebuilding. As these residents resettled, Sacramento city officials set their sights on a project to connect the Capitol Building to the riverfront, and Japantown stood squarely in their way.⁴

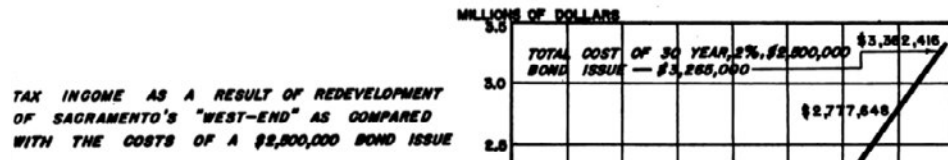
When the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency announced its plans in 1951, many residents of Japantown—which was, in its entirety, located in Redevelopment Area 1—felt unfairly targeted. Anti-Japanese sentiment following World War II still prevailed, and the Japanese American community had little political power or public support in Sacramento. Property owners challenged the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency, stating that officials provided no evidence for their claim that there was blight in the area. The *Sacramento Bee's* publisher Valentine McClatchy had been a vehement and well-known anti-Japanese activist. McClatchy utilized the paper as a mouthpiece for redevelopment and had no interest in humanizing the community of Japantown.

“It was one of the worst slums in the country,” Sacramento’s chief land agent Jerome Lipp went on record saying: “The filth was something you can’t even conceive. . . . This was a full-blown, three-dimensional, horrible, filthy slum.”⁵ In a City Council hearing, white realtor W. C. Wright—whose office was located in the redevelopment area—challenged that notion: “I don’t think the Redevelopment law was meant for a city like Sacramento. We don’t have slums here, there are homes in that section, proposed for redevelopment, as nice as in any other part of the city.”⁶ Debate over the “slum” designation went back and forth like this with the redevelopment agency opinion broadcast through the local paper, while opponents to redevelopment struggled to be heard.

Redevelopment Pays for Itself

It is estimated that the redevelopment area would have an assessed valuation of \$19,947,000, and at the same tax rate of \$2.04 would return \$406,918 in annual taxes to the city.

If it takes ten years to redevelop Sacramento’s West-End, new taxes collected as a result of redevelopment would be enough to pay off the \$2,500,000 bond issue by 1966—six years after redevelopment is completed. “New taxes” means taxes collected above the \$114,534 now collected from the area by the city.



Excerpt from *The People of Sacramento plan for 1960 Through Redevelopment*. A report prepared by Richard Neutra for the Sacramento City Council. 1950.

After two years of public debate, the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency emerged with a new plan comprised now of only fifteen blocks,⁷ but still including all of Japantown. The community responded immediately, and the Japanese American Redevelopment Study Association (JARSA) formed to do its own redevelopment research and to legally represent the community in negotiations. The Nisei Veterans of Foreign Wars, represented by Japanese American soldiers who had served while their families were interned, joined in the fray. African American attorney Nathaniel Colley teamed up with Japanese American lawyer Mamoru Sakuma to represent West End residents.⁸

West End residents recognized the need to make improvements in the area, but the clearly biased manner in which redevelopment was poised to play out in Sacramento set off alarm bells. “We are aware that this is a relatively new concept and is fraught with many problems,” said local NAACP representative Douglas Greer. “We do not expect miracles but we go on record savoring progress. We ask assurance that this Council will take every step possible to make sure that adequate housing and business opportunity be made available to those who must be relocated.”⁹

Non-white residents of the West End faced the difficult task of trying to integrate themselves into all-white neighborhoods if they were to try to remain in Sacramento and implored the city for support. T. D. Itano

stated to the City Council, “The agency should fully apprise the people of the city of Sacramento of the need for their cooperation and to urge them to accept as their good neighbors those who may be required to relocate from the project area.”¹⁰ However, an article in *The Sacramento Bee* reported, “The agency could not guarantee minority groups would not be subjected to some pressure and prejudices if they attempted to move into certain residential areas.”¹¹ Dislocated residents faced an uncertain future as their community faced demolition and other neighborhoods showed no intention of welcoming them in.

In a public editorial in *The Sacramento Bee* on June 21, 1954, Henry Taketa explained, “We are not adverse to the principles of redevelopment and would support wholeheartedly a program which is equitable and just, by which every person in the city would be a beneficiary and none would be penalized.” He continued, “We sincerely feel it is reasonable and just for us to ask that appropriate safeguards be made by the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency to protect the economy and livelihood of those who may be dislocated or required to relocate or even give up their business interests.”¹² Taketa’s pleas fell on deaf ears, though, and the city offered no provisions or support for homeowners and business owners alike.

On June 29, 1954, the City Council called a second public meeting and residents of Japantown showed up in droves. Mamoru

Stops Dam Operations

A multimillion dollar proposal to lift the face of the entire business district of the city and build a \$10,000,000 shopping center in the west end was presented to the people of Sacramento today. The proposal was made by Ben Swig, fabulous San Francisco investor and businessman, who has made a practice of making real estate dreams come true.

Swig says he and his associates have the money and are ready to go ahead with the proposal. But before they can act, he cautioned, the people of Sacramento must accept the idea of redevelopment and commit themselves to moving ahead with the project.

Offers Ideas

The investor first aired his proposal to representatives of the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency and the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce at a meeting in San Francisco Tuesday and later explained to The Bee by telephone. Specifically, he proposes:

1. To redevelop the nine blocks bounded by 2nd, 5th, J Street and the alley between L Street and Capitol Avenue into a modern retail shopping center.
2. To close K Street from 2nd to 12th at all vehicular traffic except at designated cross streets, and develop the entire area as a shoppers' mall.
3. To construct a canopy covered esplanade down the center of K Street which would contain moving sidewalks to carry the pedestrians from one end of the district to the other.

Land Transaction

Swig is ready to build the shopping center immediately, he said, but as an individual he cannot acquire the land it needs. His proposal is for the city, through the redevelopment agency, to acquire the land under its right of eminent domain. He, in turn, is willing to buy

Redevelopment Of Whole Capital Business District Is Offered By SF Investor

By Tom Goff

Swig and his associates cannot estimate at this stage the total cost of the project but he believes the type of buildings he would erect for his shopping center would cost about \$10,000,000. The balance of the cost would depend upon the land values set in condemnation proceedings and the cost of the proposed K Street mall.

He has asked representatives of the Goodrich Rubber Company to visit Sacramento and prepare an estimate as to how much the moving sidewalks would cost.

Swig told the Sacramentans who met with him Tuesday he and his associates would finance the shopping center phase of the project but would expect pro rata financial help from other K Street merchants in financing the mall proposal.

Day Enthusiastic

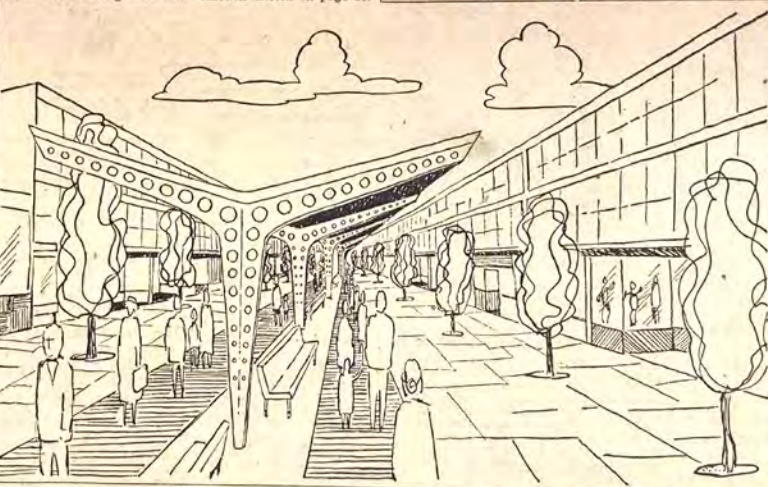
Lewis H. Day, general manager of the chamber of commerce, was one of those who met with Swig and is more than enthusiastic about the proposal. The others who were there are Fred Grumm, chairman of the redevelopment agency, and Joseph T. Bill, redevelopment director.

Day emphasized it is not necessary for outside capital to do the job.

"The opportunity is here for our own Sacramento capital to take this over and go ahead with it," Day declared.

He pointed out most of the area Swig proposes to use for a

SHOPPERS' MALL Here is a Bee artist's conception of the way K Street would look from 2nd to 12th Streets if the plan proposed by Ben Swig, San Francisco real estate investor, is carried out. There would be no vehicular traffic allowed on the street, except for cross traffic at designated intervals. The canopy covered esplanade in the center of the street would provide shelter for moving sidewalks. Another sketch on page 10.



Redevelopment Project Must Be Approved By The City Council

By July 20th the city council must decide whether Sacramento will seize an unparalleled opportunity and stride toward a promising future or reject it and limp along toward crippling burdens imposed by spreading blight.

July 20th is the date set when the council must approve or disapprove the long planned, oft delayed project to clear and

French Retreat, Defeat In Indo-China Is Near

Reds Seize Prizes With No Struggle

By Larry Allen

SINGAPORE—AP—Muc the Red River delta, key prize in the bitter Indo-China war, falling into the hands of Communist led Viet Minh night without a fight.

French Union forces evacuating swiftly from the hard to hold centers in delta area. The end to the age eight year old struggle seems to be not far off.

Last Life Line

The French Union forces are withdrawing to the last life line, the railway highway linking the war cap of Hanoi with the seaport Haiphong, 64 miles to the east.

An Indo-China Dunkirk is come soon at the end of road. "The most dangerous in the world," Haiphong France's last beachhead northern Viet Nam. It is there that they will have make the attempt to evacuate tens of thousands of troops whether as a result of a fire or after fighting their way through from Hanoi.

The French command announced they are pulling of such important and heavily populated centers as Phat Di, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh and Binh, all within 55 to 75 miles south and southeast of Hanoi.

That automatically means area embracing thousands of villages peopled by about 4,000,000 Viet Namese are drop into the hands of the troops.

Phone Workers In City Walk Out; Picketing Pends

Picture on page 13

Senate Scuttles Plan To Ease Dividend Taxes

WASHINGTON—AP—By

The front page of *The Sacramento Bee*, July 1, 1954.

Sakuma explained to council members that the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency had made no effort to engage residents of the project area. He also accused the agency of having no clear plan, beyond demolition. "The agency has been so evasive," he said. "We can't put our finger on a thing. We are not interested in what the agency might do, can do or will possibly do. We want to know what actually is proposed to be done." Sakuma went on to admonish the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency for turning down offers to meet with JARSA for several years. "I believe it is to the credit of the people of this area," finished Sakuma, "that they have, until now, sat back with the sincere belief the agency would get together with them and attempt to work out the problems."¹³ Opposition to the project was framed publicly as detrimental to progress with *The Sacramento Bee* printing political propaganda against minority opposition, going so far as to run front page editorials and political cartoons clowning those in opposition.

The final blow to Sacramento's Japantown community came on July 1, 1954 when San Francisco mega-developer Ben Swig put forward a proposal to fund the development of a pedestrian shopping mall across much of the contested area. Swig and his associates offered an investment of \$10 million (\$94.5 million in today's dollars) to erect a shopping center between 2nd and 5th Streets, and L Street and Capitol Avenue. Swig wowed city officials with a promise of modern architecture and moving sidewalks. Picked up and promoted by the *Architectural Forum* magazine, Swig's shopping mall proposal developed an unstoppable momentum of its own.

A special meeting of the city council was called on July 20, 1954, to decide on Swig's offer and the redevelopment agency's plan. T. D. Itano, secretary of JARSA, proposed that "the agency set reasonable standards for altering, improvement, reconstructing, modernizing, and rehabilitating existing structures and allow us an opportunity to try

to meet those standards and by this method achieve the objective of redevelopment."¹⁴ Representing the Sacramento chapter of the JACL, Toko Fuji read a statement in opposition to the plan.¹⁵ "Japanese Americans, as a particular minority group, are just barely recovering from the tragedy of the recent mass evacuation of World War II," Fuji stated: "We hope that safeguards will be insured for every resident of Sacramento regardless of his economic status and that the City Council will defend the needs and right of every person regardless of race or color." In a last-ditch effort, JARSA representatives proposed to retain a one block section of the redevelopment area, where Japanese American merchants could consolidate their businesses. The Sacramento Redevelopment Agency immediately shot down the idea, arguing that it was an obstacle to large-scale construction projects.

On July 22, 1954 Sacramento's City Council unanimously approved the agency's plan for Project 2-A. Councilman Leslie E. Wood, who

made the motion to adopt the plan, stated, “We have answered to the best of our ability all of the questions that can be answered at this time. I believe our statement of policy the other night went a long way toward assuring the people of the west end they will be treated fairly.”¹⁶ What became known as the “Capitol Mall” project cleared the way for bulldozers to enter the area. Demolition of Japantown began in January 1957, and by March 1961, all 310 parcels in the area had been flattened. Many of Sacramento’s Japantown residents relocated to Oak Center, a neighborhood that would become a redevelopment target area in 1973.

Sacramento’s Japantown is more than a story of decline and destruction. It is a testament to community organizing and resistance, and the enduring legacy of responsive political engagement by communities of color during the postwar rush to redevelopment. When the Japanese American Redevelopment Study Association in Sacramento dissolved many of its former members remained politically active despite losing their fight against the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency.

Sakuma Mamoru continued with his law practice in Sacramento and was appointed to the Superior Court of California in 1963. He returned to his own private practice in 1985 and did not retire until 2005. Henry Taketa also continued his own law practice in Sacramento, was a leader in the JAACL, and continued to champion the history of Sacramento’s Japanese American community, including the dedication of a historical plaque at the Walerga Detention Facility in 1987 and the identification and reburial of eleven internees at Tule Lake in 1989.¹⁷ Nathaniel Colley went on to become one of Sacramento’s most prominent civil rights advocates. He served as chairman of the legal committee of the NAACP. Colley was one of the lawyers who successfully argued in the California Supreme Court to reverse Proposition 14, which had allowed property owners the right to refuse to sell property to anyone based on their race.¹⁸



Street scene along 4th and L Streets showing the Ginza Sukiyaki Restaurant on the left at 1326 4th Street. Frank Christy Collection, courtesy Center for Sacramento History.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was a direct response to “rampant federal development” established by architectural historians and preservationists. This act created a federal policy for establishing and protecting national landmarks, such as historic homes, neighborhoods, and other structures. However, to this day the majority of sites and structures identified by the National Register of Historic Places are significant only to the nation’s European–American heritage.
- 2 Brooks, Charlotte. *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 69.
- 3 Wildie, Kevin. *Sacramento’s Historic Japantown: Legacy of a Lost Neighborhood*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2013.
- 4 “Study of West End Rebuilding Plan Continues.” *Sacramento Bee*, November 29, 1951.
- 5 Wildie, *Sacramento’s Historic Japantown*. 137. Lipp went on to become SRA director.
- 6 “Redeveloping Plan Hearing is Put Over.” *Sacramento Bee*, June 16, 1954.
- 7 The newly proposed area boundaries were between 4th and 7th Streets, and K and P Streets.
- 8 “City Promises Fair Deal in Mall Project.” *Sacramento Bee*, July 16, 1954.
- 9 Meeting notes, Special Meeting Sacramento City Council, June 15, 1954.
- 10 “Redeveloping Plan Hearing is Put Over.” *Sacramento Bee*, June 16, 1954.
- 11 “West End Gains Reassurance on New Locations.” *Sacramento Bee*, May 22, 1954.
- 12 “Letters from the People.” *Sacramento Bee*, June 21, 1954.
- 13 “West End Group Accuses Redevelopment Agency of Ignoring Residents of District.” *Sacramento Bee*, June 30, 1954.
- 14 Meeting notes, Special Meeting Sacramento City Council, July 20, 1954.
- 15 Sacramento City Council Minutes, Supplemental Statements, June 15, 1964.
- 16 “Tentative West End Slum Plan is Approved by City Council.” *Sacramento Bee*, July 23, 1954.
- 17 Charles Hillinger, “Survivors of Internment Honor 11 for Whom War Was Forever,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 11, 1989.
- 18 Caesar, Clarence. *Oral Interview of Nathaniel Sextus Colley*. Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey, Black Oral Histories 1983/146, Center for Sacramento History.