

ROOFTOP REVERIE

LOOKING AT THE ALUMINUM AND GLASS façade of Oakland's Henry J. Kaiser Building, one would never suspect that it hides the little woodland retreat pictured here. The three-acre rooftop garden, one of the largest in the world at the time of construction in 1960, contains mature trees, rolling lawns, a pond, and a footbridge. Roof gardens were not a new idea, but one on this scale certainly was, the first of its kind in an urban environment. **THE RETREAT HAD AN ADDED CACHE:** it was privately owned. Industrial tycoon Henry Kaiser, who lived in a penthouse on the 28th floor, reportedly did not like looking down at the roof of the parking garage—an appendage to the main building many floors below—so he commissioned a garden atop it. Celebrated as novel, it inspired similar gardens around the world, most of them public. **MIDCENTURY MODERN WAS IN FULL SWING** when the building was constructed at the edge of Lake Merritt. Its stark face and sweeping, curved shape raised eyebrows. Architectural writer Pierluigi Serraino wrote that it "looked like it had been dropped from the moon." Ansel Adams was so taken he photographed the structure reflected in the lake surface. The garden, designed by Osmundson & Staley, seemed the perfect accessory for such a brash building. **TODAY, IT IS A POPULAR PLACE TO RELAX** among the flowering cherry trees and magnolias. In 2007, it was recorded by the Historic American Landscapes Survey of the National Park Service, whose collection at the Library of Congress can be viewed online at www.nps.gov/hdp/hals/index.htm.



BRIAN GROGAN/NPS/SHALS

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
Dirk Kempthorne
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Mary A. Bomar
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES
Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D.
EDITORIAL ADVISORS
Kirk Cordell, Executive Director,
National Center for
Preservation Technology and Training
Ann Hitchcock, Special Assistant
Antoinette J. Lee, Ph.D.,
Assistant Associate Director,
Historical Documentation Programs
J. Paul Loether, Chief,
National Register of Historic Places
and National Historic Landmarks Program
Francis P. McManamon, Ph.D., Chief Archeologist,
National Park Service; Departmental Consulting
Archeologist, U.S. Department of the Interior
H. Bryan Mitchell, Manager,
Heritage Preservation Services
Darwina L. Neal, FASLA, Chief,
Cultural Resource Preservation Services,
National Capital Region
Daniel Odess, Ph.D.,
Assistant Associate Director,
Park Cultural Resources
Carol D. Shull, Chief,
Heritage Education Services
Jon C. Smith,
Assistant Associate Director,
Heritage Preservation Assistance Programs
Robert K. Sutton, Ph.D., Chief Historian

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Common Ground: Preserving Our Nation's Heritage summer 2008 / volume 13, number 2
Published by the National Park Service for the Heritage Community
Formerly Common Ground: Archeology and Ethnography in the Public Interest

Produced under a cooperative agreement with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers. Statements of fact and views should not be interpreted as an opinion or an endorsement by the editors or the National Park Service. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Common Ground is published quarterly. To read online, subscribe, or update your subscription, visit www.cr.nps.gov/CommonGround. To contact the editorial staff, write to Editor, Common Ground, 1849 C Street NW (2286), Washington, DC 20240, or call (202) 354-2277, fax (202) 371-5102, or email NPS_CommonGround@nps.gov.

Also from the National Park Service—

CRM: THE JOURNAL OF HERITAGE STEWARDSHIP

Peer-reviewed biannual periodical with articles, research reports, book reviews, and more. To subscribe or read the journal online, go to www.cr.nps.gov/CRMJournal.

HERITAGE NEWS

Monthly e-newsletter with information on grants, laws, policies, and activities of interest to the heritage community. Go to www.cr.nps.gov/HeritageNews to subscribe or read online.

PUBLISHER

Sue Waldron

EDITOR AND DESIGNER

David Andrews

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Joseph Flanagan

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Meghan Hogan

WEBSITE COORDINATOR

James Laray

ISSN 1087-9889

