

PREFACE *BLACKS IN OAKLAND*

Researcher and author Don Hausler—Oakland-born and raised—is one of the city’s most dedicated local historians. A retired librarian, Hausler unearths the unknown history of Oakland and Emeryville. He is one of the co-founders of the Emeryville Historical Society, a small group that publishes information-rich quarterly journals and curates photo exhibits for the Oakland Public Library’s Oakland History Room. Have a nagging question about this area’s early history? More than likely, an Emeryville Historical Society journal will solve the mystery. Intriguing titles like *Murder at the Emeryville Race Track*, *Uncensored Recollections: The Reminiscences of Don Rodoni*, *Blood Sports at the Stock Yard Exchange Salon* and *The Origin of Women’s Sports in the Bay Area*, are a fascinating read. None are digitized: you can find the complete print collection at the Oakland Public Library’s History Room.

Hausler first visited the East Bay Negro Historical Society’s storefront museum on 45th and Grove Streets (now Martin Luther King Jr. Way) in the 1980s, while working for the history department at Oakland’s Main Library. The East Bay Negro Historical Society, founded by Eugene and Ruth Lasartemay along with several other families from their Beth Eden Baptist Church community, had been collecting artifacts since the 1940s about Oakland’s African American history.

Hausler was impressed by the Lasartemay museum’s collection, which included photos of African Americans in Oakland from as early as 1860. Feeling inspired, Hausler began looking for anything he could find at the library about Oakland’s black history; publications were rare. *Negro Trailblazers of California*, by pioneering African American journalist Deliah Beasley, was one of his primary resources. First published in 1919, this groundbreaking volume is still in print. Hausler returned many times to the storefront museum to share his research and further explore the materials in the East Bay Negro Historical Society’s vast collection. Hausler’s curiosity sparked a decade-long research effort and the growth of a deep bond with Mr. Lasartemay. Hausler was later invited to join the East Bay Negro Historical Society’s board where he was the only Caucasian member.

Under the direction of Dr. Lawrence Crouchett, an educator and scholar of African American history, the East Bay Negro Society transformed into the Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life. This entity commissioned Hausler to compile his extensive research into the pages you now hold. A tenacious researcher, Hausler has scoured many primary sources, including African American newspapers, dissertations, papers, government documents and reports to develop this detailed account of the many legacies of African Americans in Oakland. Hausler’s research contributed to the publication of Crouchett’s *Visions Towards Tomorrow* in 1989, one of the first books documenting the East Bay’s African American community.

Don Hausler has supported Commons Archive over the years by answering myriad questions and sharing his research troves; I’m indebted to his on-going generosity. I deeply appreciate the African American Museum & Library at Oakland’s permission to re-print this incredible research for the Commons Archive Local Collection.

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