

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Lake Merritt Wild Duck Refuge

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
In the heart of downtown Oakland

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN  
Oakland

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
California

CODE  
06

COUNTY  
Alameda

CODE  
001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- \_\_\_ BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- \_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- \_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
City of Oakland

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Oakland

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
California

**3 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Alameda County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Oakland

STATE  
California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Expansive gardens, both public and private, surround Lake Merritt, a natural water park in the midst of the city. Three miles around, the lagoon is 160 acres in extent, and across its placid surface ply fleets of pleasure craft: sailboats, rowboats, and canoes. Lake Merritt's waters are salt; in fact, this is an arm of the bay, though cut off from it by a broad causeway and moveable dam. On the shores of Lake Merritt like Lakeside Park and Peralta Park. The lake is encircled by parkways and paved boulevards, which are flanked by attractive homes and public buildings; and around it reaches a "necklace of lights" giving a striking effect at night with the cirlet of amber globes reflected in the shimmering waters.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The bill that created America's first official wildlife refuge was introduced into the 1869-1870 California legislature by Senator Edward Thompkins and became law March 18, 1870. Quinn's History of California stated that in 1852 Dr. Samuel Merritt of Oakland bought the land which was then a slough and helped form the body of water now known as Lake Merritt.

This wildfowl sanctuary, now in the heart of the business section of Oakland, is an outstanding example of attraction of migratory birds under somewhat adverse conditions. Thousands of waterfowl spend the winter here, attracted by the sanctuary, the food and the resting grounds provided for them. We have no present means of probing the events that prompted this pioneer conservation effort. It is interesting to note, however, that an examination of naturalists' magazines of that day failed to disclose a line devoted to this or any other refuge.

Lake Merritt, the oldest legally established wildlife refuge in the country, is now supported and maintained by the city of Oakland. It has attained fame as a wintering ground for wild ducks. The principal visitors are pintails and canvas backs, but many others drop in to partake of its bounteous fare and avail themselves of its protection. Baldpates and shovellers rank third and fourth in numbers but numerous other species occur, at least occasionally. To stand on the shore of this small body of water, entirely surrounded by the city, and watch the waterfowl come over the office and apartment buildings and tumble out of the sky, sometimes in ludicrous haste to reach the banquet spread for them, is certainly a novel experience.

Lake Merritt has become one of the most popular attractions in the bay district, it being not uncommon for hundreds of persons to gather and watch the behavior of the flocks of waterfowl that move in and out.

On January 17, 1929, E. W. Ehman caught a European widegeon in a banding trap operated on Lake Merritt. Probably it was the same bird noted in several previous years but it had never before entered the trap. Who among bird students would not like to know something of the journeying of the Old World straggler in the intervals between its appearances in its California winter home?

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ira Gabrielson, Wildlife Refuges  
 Edward Graham - Land and Wildlife  
 Charles Quinn - History of California  
 Ruth Tesser - Historic Spots in California

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 160 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	56,49,6,0	4,18,49,0,0	B	1,0	56,62,2,0	4,18,46,3,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,6	56,55,4,0	4,18,35,2,0	D	1,0	56,49,0,0	4,18,35,4,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lake Merritt Wild Duck Refuge is encircled by a paved sidewalk. Beginning at the intersection of Lake Shore Avenue and 12th Street, proceed northwest approximately 800', thence, in a curving northerly fashion along the sidewalk for approximately 4000'; thence, continuing on the sidewalk in a southerly direction approximately 2200'; thence, northeasterly for approximately 3000-; thence, southwesterly along the sidewalk 4500' to the point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE  
 Cecil McKithan, Historian

ORGANIZATION  
 Historic Sites Survey Division

DATE  
 10/18/77

STREET & NUMBER  
 1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE  
 523-5295

CITY OR TOWN  
 Washington

STATE  
 D. C.

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL      STATE      LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9/8/83

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

((NATIONAL HISTORIC  
 LANDMARKS))

((NATIONAL HISTORIC  
 LANDMARKS))

((NATIONAL HISTORIC  
 LANDMARKS))

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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**CONTINUATION SHEET**

**ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE**

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Landmark consists of the lake only. The paved sidewalk is the most appropriate and pronounced boundary for this landmark.