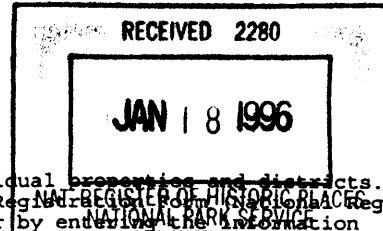


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Park Service Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Oakland Free Library 23rd Avenue Branch

other names/site number Miller Avenue Library, Ina Coolbrith Branch,
Latin American Library, Volunteers of America

2. Location

street & number 1449 Miller Avenue/2347 East 15th Street not for publication

city or town Oakland vicinity

state California code CA county Alameda code 001 zip code 94601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination / request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets / does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 12/27/95
Signature of certifying official Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets / does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of commenting or other official Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register Mr. Rapsberg 2/16/96 Entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) Carnegie Library Development in California and the Architecture it Produced, 1899-1922

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
<u>EDUCATION</u>	<u>library</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>civic</u>
<u>EDUCATION</u>	<u>school</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete (brick clad)</u>
walls	<u>Stucco</u>
	<u>Brick</u>
roof	<u>Ceramic tile</u>
other	<u>Wood</u>
	<u>Metal</u>

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Social History
Architecture

Period of Significance 1918-1946

Significant Dates 1918

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Donovan, John J. (architect)
Dickey, Charles W. (associate architect)
Nielsen & Bertelsen (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library;
Oakland City Planning Department

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing		Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>10</u>	<u>567520</u>	<u>4181870</u>	3	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty Marvin

organization North Oakland Voters Alliance (NOVA), Friends of Golden Gate Library, Friends of Melrose Library, Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC), Temescal Neighbors Together date August 10, 1995

street & number 2646 Claremont Avenue telephone (510) 849-1959

city or town Berkeley state CA zip code 94705-1451

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for districts and properties with large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Oakland

street & number 1 City Hall Plaza telephone (510) 238-3301 (City Mgr.)

city or town Oakland state CA zip code 94612

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

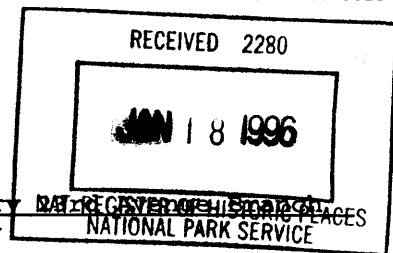
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Oakland Free Library
name of property
Alameda County CA
county and state



Carnegie Library Development in California and the Architecture it Produced, 1899-1921
name of multiple property listing

7. Narrative Description

The Oakland Free Library 23rd Avenue Branch is a Spanish Colonial Revival style library building. It is high one story and basement, rectangular plan with front and rear projections, on a corner lot. It has a low hip roof, bands of windows high up on the main floor, deep-set arched basement windows, a small centered entry vestibule wing with hip roof and arched doorway facing Miller Avenue, and a massive wooden balcony with ornate columns and balustrade on the East 15th Street (north) end of the building. At the rear is a small flat-roofed office and utility wing. Exterior walls are stucco over brick, with dark woodwork. Roof is clad with red clay tile. Foundation is concrete clad with brick. Sanborn maps describe the building as having 12" brick walls, standing 22' high and about 100' by 35' with the long frontage facing Miller Avenue. The building has elaborate turned and carved woodwork on the frieze and windows and in the interior, wide concrete front steps with low sloping brick sidewalls, a crest inscribed "OFL" over the door, and wrought iron lamps and stair railings. Windows are pivoted, with small-paned sash, placed high under the eaves, grouped in fives on either side of the long front and rear elevations, and in three over the north end balcony, the middle one being a tall door. The building is separated from the sidewalk by about 15' of lawn, and there is a large back lawn.

Inside, as in all the Oakland Carnegie Libraries of 1915-18, there is a split-level entry with a paneled stair hall, lit by the window over the door. There is a central flight of steps up to the main floor and side flights to the basement. The basement contains work rooms, restrooms, utilities, and an auditorium with a small stage; it is now used mainly for storage. On the main floor are two large reading rooms to either side of the central lobby and circulation desk. Behind the central desk is the office in the small rear wing. A full-height glazed partition with oak mullions, frieze, and pediment separates the stairwell from the desk area. Openings between the rooms are marked by pilasters. Walls are white plaster with elaborate plaster friezes and ceiling moldings. Windows have distinctive scalloped upper corners. The south reading room has a fireplace with an elaborate plaster surround and overmantel centered at the far end, balanced at the far end of the north reading room by the tall glazed door to the balcony, flanked by window seats. Original oak shelving is still in place, and plaster and woodwork are generally intact.

Ornate glass and metalwork partitions between the circulation hall and the reading rooms were removed at an unknown date, original bowl-shaped hanging light fixtures have been replaced with fluorescents, original dark linoleum has been replaced with lighter colored floor covering, and some features are obscured by partitions, signs, and furnishings. When seen in late July 1995, a full-height stud wall was being installed at the entrance to the south reading room.

On the exterior, one of the wrought iron stair railings is missing (apparently broken off), new handrails have been added, and the original oak and glass front door with "Oakland Free Library 23rd Avenue Branch" in metal letters around the fanlight has been replaced with a modern glass and aluminum door, sometime between 1979 and 1992. There has been some fire damage to the balcony (painted over), the balcony door appears closed off, and the entire property is surrounded by a chain link fence. Overall the building appears in good to fair condition and its integrity is good.

Present use of the building is a job training center and meeting space for Volunteers of America, who operate an extensive social service and rehabilitation program in several buildings around this corner. Surroundings are densely built up, commercial along East 14th Street and 23rd Avenue to the south and west, and residential and institutional to the north and east.

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Oakland Free Library 23rd Avenue Branch
name of property
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county and state

Carnegie Library Development in California and the Architecture it Produced, 1899-1921
name of multiple property listing

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Oakland Free Library 23rd Avenue Branch (later Ina Coolbrith Branch, now commonly called Miller Avenue Library), a Carnegie Library, meets the requirements for National Register nomination as set forth in the Multiple Property nomination entitled "Carnegie Library Development in California and the Architecture it Produced, 1899-1921." It was one of four architecturally similar but varied branches built under a 1914 grant to the city of Oakland, in four different North and East Oakland neighborhoods, designed by Oakland architects of statewide prominence. It served as a library from its construction to the late 1970s. Physically it is slightly but not greatly changed inside and out.

Oakland pioneered branch libraries in California, opening branch reading rooms as early as 1878 and continuing to emphasize neighborhood branches as the city expanded. The 23rd Avenue branch traces its history to a reading room established in 1890 in what was then the easternmost part of Oakland, under the auspices of the Library Board with assistance from the 23rd Avenue Improvement Club. It occupied a succession of rented locations on the busy 23rd Avenue commercial strip (back to back with the present location). The present building was the second of the four libraries constructed with the 1914 Carnegie grant obtained by City Librarian Charles Greene for new branch library buildings. Greene's project was suited to the Carnegie philosophy at the time; since 1899 when Oakland's downtown Main Library had been funded, Carnegie's focus had shifted to small towns and, in metropolitan areas, branches, to bring books closer to the people.

Oakland applied for and received a grant of \$140,000 for four new libraries. The \$35,000 per branch was apparently a typical amount for a medium-large city. The four new libraries were to replace four of Oakland's ten existing branches. The sites ultimately selected were Golden Gate and Alden in North Oakland, and Melrose and 23rd Avenue in East Oakland. Oakland's match was to provide sites for the buildings, and 10% of the grant amount per year to maintain the buildings and their operations.

Site selection for the 23rd Avenue branch seems to have been the most problematic of the four. The library board originally looked for a site to replace the existing East Oakland branch at 9th Avenue and East 14th Street in the old, fully built up Clinton neighborhood. This stirred protests against a location in the East 14th Street commercial area, and demands that the branch be located in one of the newer lakeshore residential areas farther north. After almost two years, the board gave up on finding an acceptable site in the service area of the old East Oakland branch, and accepted the donation of a site to replace the next branch south, 23rd Avenue, in what is now called the San Antonio neighborhood.

The site was donated by Henry Root, also co-donor with County Supervisor J.R. Talcott of the Melrose Branch site. Root was a railroad man and large local landowner with an interest in enhancing the amenities of the district. The donation was conditioned on the city's extending a street in front of the library, thereby assisting Root in subdividing a very large block. The new street was originally called Foothill Boulevard, an extension of the scenic boulevard developed by Talcott through his Fruitvale neighborhood holdings parallel to East 14th Street. In August 1925 the street name was changed to Miller Avenue: reportedly "for a veteran of World War I," notwithstanding the coincidence with the name of Grant Miller, county coroner whose mortuary business also fronted on the new street.

Building permit #46090 was issued for the 23rd Avenue branch on July 20, 1917, for a brick and concrete library building, with an estimated construction cost of \$31,000. The plans credit John J. Donovan, architect for the City of Oakland, and C.W. Dickey, associate architect. Contractor was Nielsen & Bertelsen. Reportedly escalating construction costs resulted in some of the funds for the Alden and Golden Gate branches, not yet begun, being diverted to the elaborate Spanish Colonial 23rd Avenue branch.

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Oakland Free Library 23rd Avenue Branch
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The 23rd Avenue, Golden Gate, and Alden branches were all designed by Charles W. Dickey and John J. Donovan; the first branch constructed, Melrose, was by reinforced concrete expert William Weeks. The three Dickey and Donovan libraries had virtually identical plans and programs, and different period costumes: Spanish Colonial for 23rd Avenue, and a more austere Tudor for Alden and Georgian for Golden Gate. The Oakland Examiner of July 1, 1917, gave an excellent collective description of the three:

C.W. Dickey and John J. Donovan are the architects for three libraries which remain to be built. The branch to be next constructed [23rd Avenue] will be of Spanish architecture with warm colored stucco walls over brick and a variegated Cordova roof. The Alden branch library... will be of modern English design with walls of dark red brick. The Golden Gate branch library... will be of Colonial design with red brick walls with white trimmings. While the external appearance of the three buildings will be totally different, they will have the same interior requirements and fittings.

Each library will be two stories in height, the main entrance being halfway between the two stories, with broad stairs leading up into the central delivery room, and other stairs leading to the ground floor. The delivery desk is to be so placed that the librarian in charge will have complete command of the two reading rooms flanking the delivery room and of the main entrance.

The reading rooms will each be about thirty-two by forty-one feet, lined with book shelves capable of accommodating 15,000 volumes, besides magazines and newspapers. The rooms will be lighted from three sides in the daytime and by semi-direct electric fixtures at night. The openings from the reading rooms to the delivery room will be so large that the three rooms will architecturally count as one. Back of the delivery room will be the librarian's private office and the book bindery with a private staircase leading to the lower floor.

On the ground floor will be located an assembly room about thirty by forty feet, capable of seating about 250 persons and fitted with a stage and electric connections for a moving picture machine. On this floor there will also be a study room sixteen by thirty-one feet, a staff room with a kitchenette, a furnace room, men's and women's toilets and a large shipping and receiving room with a fumigating closet and book lift to take books to the second floor.

Each of the buildings will cost \$35,000: the construction, finish, heating and ventilation will be modern and first class in every respect.

Architects Charles Dickey and John Donovan were associated on three Oakland Carnegie libraries in 1917, and designed Oakland schools in the 1910s and 20s. Charles Dickey (1871-1942) was born in Alameda and studied architecture at MIT. He practiced in Oakland from about 1903 to 1924 and thereafter in Honolulu, where he is considered to have created a distinctive Hawaiian style of architecture. His numerous major Oakland works include the Claremont Hotel (1907), the 15-story Oakland Bank of Savings at 1200 Broadway (1907; one of Oakland's first skyscrapers), Kahn's Department Store (1913), and University High School (1922). MIT-trained John Donovan (1877-1949) came west in 1911 as supervising architect for Oakland City Hall, representing the New York firm of Palmer & Hornbostel. He stayed to become Oakland City Architect, supervising architect for the Oakland Auditorium and Oakland's \$2.6 million school construction program of 1911-19, an authority on school design, and an architectural consultant for the Bay Bridge.

The new 23rd Avenue Branch building was dedicated on March 14, 1918, with the Garfield Civic Association arranging the program. (They also sponsored a "Book Drive Entertainment" a month later to benefit the new library.) Speakers at the dedication included Charles

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Greene on "The Library as a Municipal Asset," and John Miller, superintendent of the California Cotton Mills, on "The Relation of the Library to Industrial Life." The California Cotton Mills had been a major local employer since 1884, especially in the largely Portuguese Jingtletown neighborhood "below the tracks." In the years after World War I the Oakland schools and libraries were very conscious of their mission of "Americanization" to Oakland's large foreign-born population of many nationalities. The June 30th 1929, annual report of the 23rd Avenue Branch gives a vivid picture of the neighborhood:

The development of the Twenty-third Avenue district this year has been along the line of more apartment houses, stores, restaurants, and factories... This has always been a factory district, and across the S.P. tracks lies the Estuary with its many facilities of rail and water, giving rise to many industrial plants and other institutions. The California Cotton Mills, employing many Portuguese and other foreigners, ranges in its demand upon us from Portuguese fiction and Americanization literature to technical philosophy for the Vice-president's son...

The ten largest industrial plants now in our section are: International Harvester Co. of America; Bent Concrete Pipe Co.; Atlas Imperial Engine Co.; John Wood Mfg. Co.; California Cotton Mills; Ventura Oil Co.; Montgomery Ward; Contra Costa Laundry (splendid new plant); Barrow Corporation; and Union Diesel Engine Co. ...

These, with the Coast Guard on Government Island, send in some call for our scientific books. The wives of the officers of this prohibition Guard live in apartments here and read the usual apartment-house fiction. ...

Our surrounding population may now have become over one half American, though the many foreign races are most evident: Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Czecho-Slovakian, Polish, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, and Negro...

To make them happy, so that they will love America, long to become Americans, and read American books, is our task.... Mrs. Eleanor Smith, Americanization teacher of the Garfield School has been a great help to us in bringing about a larger purchase of foreign books and their deposit in the branches, where our timid patrons can see and choose their own books.... This also helps the second generation to respect and obey their parents, and to become richer by the possession of two languages and literatures.

In 1966, near the end of the building's service as a library, the city acknowledged the confusion of the 23rd Avenue Branch not being on 23rd Avenue, and renamed it Ina Coolbrith Branch, for Oakland's first City Librarian. By 1973 it had become the Latin American Branch, and last appears in directories as a library in 1976, though building permits from 1980 (for electrical work and fire repairs) still refer to it as Miller Library. It has been used as a nursery school and for other school district uses, as city council district offices, and by Volunteers of America - the current occupants - for social services and job training. It is an Oakland City Landmark, designated November 4, 1980, in a group designation of the city's four Carnegie branch libraries.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Significance statement, lists, and brief forms on Oakland libraries from National Register Multiple Property Nomination, "Carnegie Library Development in California and the Architecture it Produced, 1899-1921"; Oakland brief forms based on reports by William Sturm, Librarian, Oakland History Room.

City of Oakland Office of Planning and Building records: building and alteration permits, Sanborn maps, City Landmarks case file # LM 80-326.

Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, City Planning Department: architect files, Citywide Unreinforced Masonry Building Survey files, Primary Record on 23rd Avenue Branch submitted September 30, 1994.

Oakland Public Library history files (by branch), at Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library: correspondence, clippings, financial records, photographs, ephemera, etc.

Brokl, Robert, et al., National Register of Historic Places nomination for University High School, Oakland, Alameda County, CA, April 22, 1992 (C.W. Dickey)

Jay, Robert, The Architecture of Charles W. Dickey: Hawaii and California, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1992.

McArthur, Tay, et al., National Register of Historic Places nomination for Oakland Technical High School, Oakland, Alameda County, CA, June 25, 1985 (John Donovan)

Van Slyck, Abigail, "Helping Those Who Help Themselves: Carnegie Libraries and Rational Philanthropy in Oakland, California," U.C. Berkeley student paper, MS copy at Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Oakland City Planning Department.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description: Assessor's parcel number 020 0153 006 00

Boundary Justification: This is the lot historically associated with the property.

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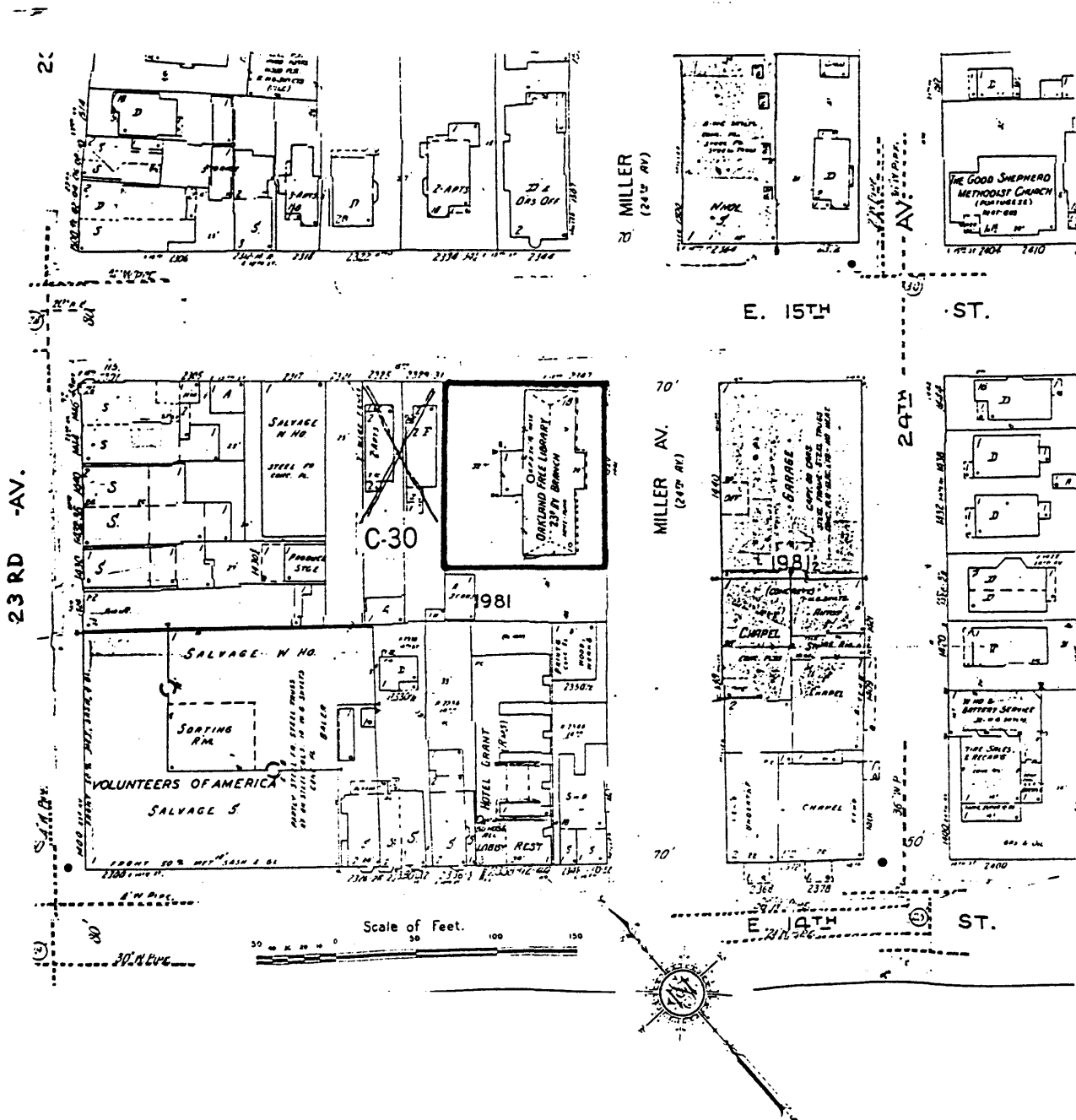
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Sketch Map showing boundaries and footprints

Adapted and reduced from Sanborn insurance map, 1951 update, page 194,
Oakland City Planning Department



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Alameda County Assessor's Parcel Map showing location

Parcel 020 0153 006 00

As reproduced, about 1" to 80'

