In May 1889, the Lot at 24 Clark Street was purchased by Norman J. Pryde and that same year the assessment Block Book first indicates a building on the property. Pryde also owned the adjacent Lot 30 facing Commerce Street. Norman Pryde was listed in the 1889 Oakland City directory as an employee at the Melrose Smelting works.

The improvements on this lot remained constant in value at $300 during the period that the Pryde family resided on the lot. By 1897 Antonio J. de Silveira was listed as the owner in the assessment Block Books and the value had doubled to $600, suggesting additional improvements. However, no deed transfer was recorded. Given the lag time between title transactions and changes in the annotation of the Block Books, the transfer from Pryde to Silveira likely took place ca. 1895 or 1896. When the property was destroyed by the June 1898 explosion, the ownership reverted back to Norman J. Pryde, possibly indicating that he held a mortgage and the property was repossessed from Silveira for non-payment. Pryde is again listed in assessment Block Books as the owner in the 1899 and 1901 Block Books.

Norman J. Pryde and his wife Margaret had three children by the time they moved to 4411 Clement in 1889. At that time Margaret E. was 8, Donald E. was 6, and Georgina A. was just 4 years old. Norman worked as a smelter and later a chemist. Although the family moved to San Francisco in 1900, they returned to a nearby neighborhood of Oakland just a few years later, taking up residence on Bellevue in 1903 according to city directories.
The Sanborn map above shows the Pryde family lot (highlighted in blue) and two refuse pits, Features 1 and 2 (highlighted in pink) that contained artifacts discarded by the Pryde family.
Features 1 and 2: Pryde Family Refuse Pits

Both features are probably associated with the Norman J. Pryde family. Pryde worked at the Melrose Smelting works and owned the property from 1889 to 1897. He sold the property, but regained ownership after the explosion in 1898 until 1909 during which time he was apparently living in San Francisco. The Pryde family may have moved a year or so prior to selling in 1897. Both features were likely filled during clearing out of the house for sale between 1893 and 1897. One or both may have previously served another purpose or the first pit may have proved insufficient for the volume of material.

Artifacts found in the pits included tablewares such as ceramic cups, mugs, bowls, plates, saucers, glass vessels including two alcoholic beverage bottles, grooming and health toiletry items such as three chamber pots. Personal items included a piece of a fan and toys including two dolls, a marble, and cup and two saucers from a tea set. Both doll parts and the teacup were broken. The saucers may have been the surviving pieces of a set not worthy for Rebecca or Georgina, two years older, to keep. The writing slate, also broken, was likely used by the Pryde children. The ceramic assayer’s cup probably is likely from Norman Pryde’s work at the Melrose Smelting Works. Due to Mr. Pryde’s later employment as a chemist, it is likely that his work at the smelte involved processing control samples for determining the value of ore or similar skilled work.
Nearly Neighbors
The Pryde Family
4411 Clement Street (24 Clark Street)
Period of Residence: 1889–1897

Refuse Pit (Feature 1)
from Field to Lab

Archaeologists from the ASC and Caltrans excavate a refuse pit

Artifacts from the refuse pit, including plates and bottles

Plates and cups