

(Note: The following is compiled by the Browncroft Neighborhood Association's History Committee with some "cut and paste" and information drawn from several public internet bios including: Wikipedia; "Frankie Gershwin, Remembering a Friend" by Spider Saloff, jazz vocalist; Boston University's "Leopold Godowsky, Jr., Color Photography Awards" bio; The National Inventors Hall of Fame / Inventor Profile; and also reminiscences of Browncroft neighbors and is solely presented as background information to the Browncroft neighborhood's history of its people connections.)

Godowsky, Kodachrome, Gershwin and Browncroft

Leopold Godowsky, Jr. and Frances Gershwin Godowsky lived and rented as newlyweds at 184 Corwin from 1930 to 1933 and then at 132 Windemere from 1934 into 1936 before moving to 1025 East Avenue.

Frances (Frankie) was the younger sister of Ira, George and Arthur Gershwin. Frances was born in 1906 and died in 1999. She was the first of the Gershwin family to perform as a child, and she brought home a good sum of money for the time. At the age of 11, she was dancing in a children's musical called Daintyland and bringing home \$40 a week. Big brothers George and Ira, still humble song pluggers in Tin Pan Alley only brought home \$15 each. Frances traveled to Europe and toured with her brother George and also performed at parties with him, a fine vocalist in her own right. She became the singer who performed his songs for the first time, so that he could hear them in something other than his own, admittedly terrible, voice. She also performed briefly on Broadway. She met Leopold, son of a famous Russian pianist and a friend of George, on board a ship while returning from Europe with her brother George in 1928. They were married in 1930. After she married, she continued her artistic activities. Frances became a recognized painter and sculptor; at one point winning a French painting award. Ira and George often visited the Windemere home and unknowingly entertained by their music, the neighbor's young daughter who had been shooed out of the house by her mother to sit under the windows to listen because it would be something she would never forget – and she never did. In her later years, Frances returned to singing again and recorded the album "For George and Ira" in 1975.

Leopold, Jr. was born in 1900 and died in 1983. He was an American violinist and chemist, who together with Leopold Mannes, (a concert pianist) created the first practical transparency film, Kodachrome. Mannes and Godowsky's experimentation with color photography began in 1917. They had discovered common interest in both music and photography while in high school. As teenagers, they set out to "make perfect motion pictures in natural colors," probably unaware that many well-known scientists had been searching unsuccessfully for a practical color photography process for more than half a century. While continuing their musical pursuits, the two collaborated on color film experiments throughout college.

Godowsky, Jr. studied violin at UCLA and became a soloist and first violinist with the Los Angeles and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestras. He also enrolled at UCLA to study physics and chemistry. He performed jointly with his father, Leopold Godowsky, Sr., one of the greatest pianists of the early twentieth century. His son, Leopold Godowsky III, is also a concert pianist. By 1922, Godowsky had given up his orchestral jobs in California and moved back to New York City where he and Mannes worked as musicians. They experimented with color photography during their spare time, much to the discomfort of their parents whose kitchens and bathrooms were converted into laboratories and darkrooms.

While on his way to perform in Europe in late 1922, Mannes made the chance acquaintance of a senior partner in the investment firm of Kuhn, Loeb, and Co. and described their progress with color photography. Some months later the firm sent one of their junior associates, Lewis J. Strauss to the Mannes apartment to view the color process. The final results were impressive enough for Kuhn Loeb to invest in the process.

With financial backing, Godowsky and Mannes built a dedicated laboratory and in 1924 took out additional patents on their work. In 1929 Lewis Strauss (later to become the chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission) helped finance the two researchers. In 1930, Dr. C.E. Kenneth Mees, founder of the Kodak Research Laboratories, was so impressed with the results that he brought them to Rochester to take advantage of Kodak's research facilities. He placed experimental scientists at their disposal in order to accelerate their research. By 1935, Godowsky and Mannes and the Kodak research staff had developed a marketable subtractive color film for 16mm home movies called Kodachrome. One year later Kodachrome 35mm still and 8mm movie film were introduced.

As a final side note, once in the total darkness of the research lab needed during the intricate sequencing of the film's development process, the critical process's timing was done by Leopold's synchronize whistling, two beats a second, to the final movement of Brahms's C-Minor symphony - the perfect marriage of music and photography.

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