



Alameda Museum

Quarterly



Left: Dedicated on Easter in 1905, First Congregational Church restated Gothic precedent in the architectural idiom of a new century.

Below: Built in 1890, Immanuel Lutheran is our only intact church from the 19th century. It exemplifies Gothic Revival, the most popular of Victorian church styles.

Postcard images: Chuck Millar Collection.

HISTORIC HOUSES OF WORSHIP

by Woody Minor

THE JUNE MUSEUM LECTURE TOLD THE STORY of a church in both senses of the word—as a faith-based community and as a house of worship. First Congregational Church is the city’s sixth oldest by either measure. Organized in 1879, the congregation came into being a quarter-century after the pioneer Methodists, who were followed by Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Catholics, and Baptists. The new church set out on a familiar path, renting space until it had the funds to erect a sanctuary that was later replaced by a larger and more elaborate structure. The landmark building at Central and Chestnut, dedicated in 1905, is predated by five other early survivors.

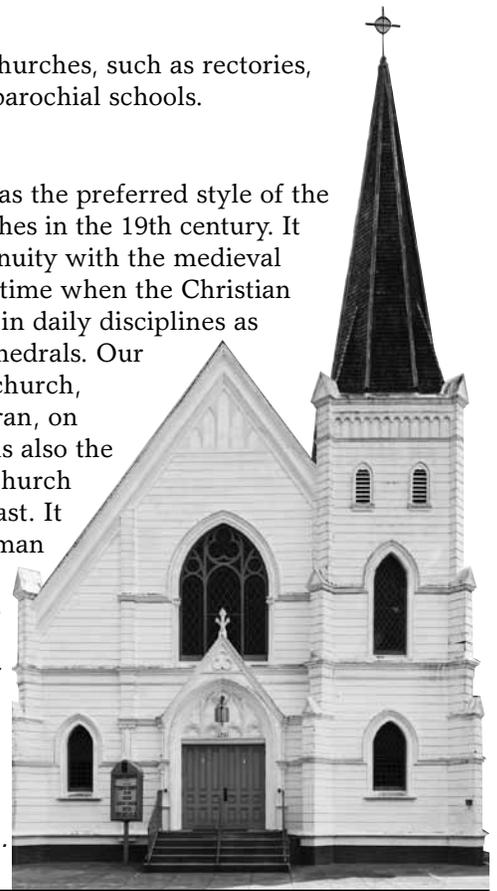
At least twenty houses of worship went up in Alameda between 1854 and 1896, followed by fifteen more between 1900 and 1929. Depression and war produced a hiatus, and the next didn’t appear until 1949. This gives a grand total of thirty-five pre-World War II churches (excluding house churches and other hybrids). Seventeen still stand, including four from the 19th century. The seven intact examples make up a notable roster of local landmarks: Immanuel Lutheran (1891), First Presbyterian (1904), First Congregational (1905), Home of Truth (1905), First Methodist (1909), St. Joseph (1921), First Church of Christ, Scientist (1922), and St. Barnabas (1926). The list does not include a number of historic structures

associated with churches, such as rectories, social halls, and parochial schools.

BEGINNINGS

Gothic Revival was the preferred style of the majority of churches in the 19th century. It represented continuity with the medieval world, evoking a time when the Christian faith was exalted in daily disciplines as well as grand cathedrals. Our oldest surviving church, Immanuel Lutheran, on Lafayette Street, is also the oldest Lutheran church on the Pacific Coast. It was built by German immigrants who conducted services in their native language, and their San Francisco architect, Julius Krafft, was born in Stuttgart.

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Historic Houses of Worship . . .Continued from page 1

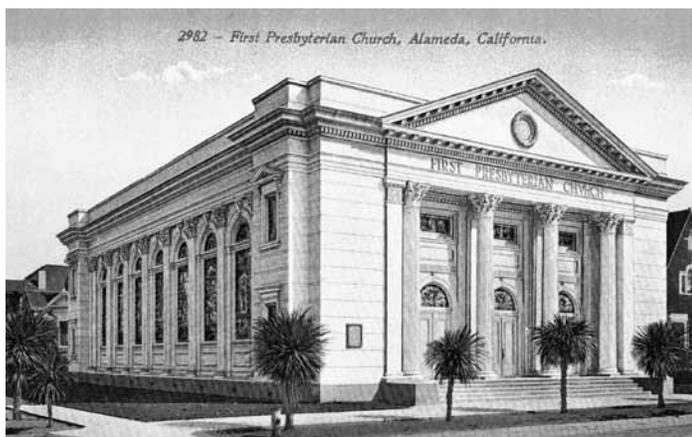
Dedicated on January 4, 1891, the building feels like a model of a Gothic cathedral, replete with pointed arches, buttresses, and a corner spire.

Alameda's pioneer congregation, First Methodist, was organized on September 11, 1853, with twelve charter members. On April 30, 1854, the church dedicated a Gothic Revival chapel at Mound and Jackson Streets. The building lent its iconic steeple to the skyline, imparting a sense of established tradition to the gold rush settlement. Methodists also built the Oak Grove Institute, a private academy in the Greek style. Church and school were the town's principal monuments.

With the arrival of the railroad in 1864, Park Street became the new center of population. In 1871 the Methodists moved their building to the corner of Park and Central where a larger edifice went up five years later. By then three other churches had Gothic Revival sanctuaries. First Presbyterian emerged in the old town, and its 1868 sanctuary at the corner of Central and Versailles was the East End's final church of the century. Other new churches went up around Park Street and in the neighborhoods to the west. Christ Episcopal, which began in a rented hall downtown, dedicated its sanctuary in 1873 on the site later occupied by City Hall.

A Catholic church, christened St. Joseph, went up that same year at Santa Clara and Chestnut. Originally a mission overseen by Oakland prelates, St. Joseph became a parish in 1885 with jurisdiction over the entire city. The chapel was moved several blocks south to the vicinity of Chestnut and San Antonio, adjoining the newly opened Notre Dame Academy, a girls' school run by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Soon a rectory, parish hall, and boys' school were added. So began the church/school complex still flourishing at this location.

Designed by Alameda architect Henry H. Meyers, the 1904 First Presbyterian Church was the first with neoclassical styling.



Meyers also produced an innovative design for the pioneer First Methodist Church. Built in 1908-09, the structure looks back to the Italian Renaissance with a glance at the Mission Revival.

Other Gothic Revival churches of the era included First Baptist (1879), Santa Clara Avenue Methodist (1886), United Presbyterian (1893), and the extant Christ Lutheran (1895). As with Immanuel Lutheran, the small Lutheran church on Haight Avenue was designed by a German immigrant (A.R. Denke) for a German congregation; the exterior is altered but the interior's intact. Gothic Revival reached its apogee in Alameda with the new St. Joseph Church dedicated in 1895. Capped by the tallest spire in town, the soaring structure was the work of the noted Irish-born architect Bryan J. Clinch, who had also designed the convent.

Cultural prerogatives and theological bias produced the few stylish churches that weren't Gothic. Episcopalian commissioned a remarkable structure from the master Ernest Coxhead. Dedicated in 1891, the new Christ Church at Grand and Santa Clara may have been Gothic in spirit but its radical shingled form was *sui generis*. Unitarians opted for elegant pastiche in an 1894 church built nearby. Designed by Oakland architect Walter J. Mathews, the structure had a belfry with Ionic columns and a rose-window façade with pilasters. The mix of classical and medieval spoke to the church's inclusivity, its wide embrace of faith and reason. Christ Church was destroyed by fire two days after Christmas in 1960 and First Unitarian burned several months later, in both cases the act of an arsonist. The latter still stands on Grand Street, altered since its fire.

A NEW CENTURY

After 1900, Alameda churches exhibited a wider variety of styles borne by the new architectural currents. Henry H. Meyers broke new ground in a pair of buildings designed for the city's oldest congregations. The beautifully preserved First Presbyterian, dedicated on Easter Sunday in 1904, rose from a new midtown site at Chestnut and



Santa Clara. The columned temple with ranks of arched windows was one of the city's first neoclassical monuments. First Methodist (1909), on a new site a block west of Park Street, referenced the architecture of Renaissance Italy with twin campanile and classical detailing. The brick veneer was also unprecedented.

Two other pristine churches from the first decade provide a contrast with Meyers's formal revivalism. They owed more to the ascendant Arts & Crafts aesthetic, enshrining nature in rustic materials and organic forms. First Congregational, dedicated a year after First Presbyterian, was a transitional design by Oakland architect D.F. Oliver. Deftly blended forms have a revivalist flavor with strong Gothic overtones; walls are clad in brown shingle over a base of rusticated red sandstone. The shingled and half-timbered Home of Truth, also from 1905, is a relaxed design with residential feel by Gold Coast architect B.E. Remmel. Established in the 1880s by two sisters who became luminaries in the New Thought movement, the Homes were significant as early exponents of non-Western spirituality. The Alameda congregation began as a house church, moving to Grand Street from a rented mansion at Broadway and Central. The other notable Arts & Crafts church, First Christian (1907), had a low-slung sanctuary and tower clad in natural shingle. Remodeled in the 1950s, it still sits across from Jackson Park.



Dedicated on November 11, 1905, six months after First Congregational, the half-timbered Home of Truth at Grand Street and Alameda Avenue is our other fine Arts & Crafts church.

Arts & Crafts, or Craftsman, persisted into the 1910s, and the decade's two churches were bungalow designs intended for informal worship and study of the kind associated with house churches. The Plymouth Brethren bungalow, built on Lincoln Avenue in 1918, is much altered. Methodist Church South (which began on Chestnut Street in the 1890s) was issued its permit on December 12, 1919, and they took all of five weeks to finish the \$2,000 bungalow at Court and Van Buren. Known as

Court Street Methodist, it was the East End's first church in fifty years, and the neighbors weren't happy about the noisy revival meetings. Enhanced with a tiny tower in 1924 and given a new wing in the 1950s, the building retains considerable charm.

The city's Japanese community enters the story here, less as builders than as believers. There were over 600 residents by 1920, immigrants and their children, most living in the vicinity of upper Park Street. Buddhists began worshipping in a storefront temple in 1912, soon moving around the corner to a Pacific Avenue mansion they acquired in 1919 and later enlarged. Organized in 1916, the Alameda Buddhist Temple marked its centennial last year at the same location—making it the city's house church par excellence. Japanese Christians were taken under wing by the Methodists, who opened a house mission near Park Street in 1907, adding an education building in 1911. Buena Vista United Methodist also remains at its original site; a modern sanctuary has replaced the house but the historic Sunday school is still in use.

The older Chinese community had a low profile. Due to harsh exclusionary laws, their numbers plummeted from nearly ten percent of the population in 1870 to fewer than a hundred individuals by 1940. A traditional temple, or joss house, opened at an early date in a storefront on Lincoln Avenue near Park Street. In 1891, First Presbyterian built a mission several blocks to the west, next door to a Chinese laundry, but no church ever came into being. The little mission and Sam Wo laundry lingered into the 1950s, razed for a Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall.

THE TWENTIES

The major monuments after World War I embraced revivalist styles and masonry construction. An early exemplar was Carl Werner's refined First Church of Christ, Scientist, in the classical mode. Built between November 1920 and January 1922, the costly structure had a concrete shell, cladding of carved granite (now painted over), inlaid marble, and an impressive array of columns. The architect reprised the scheme in Alameda High School (1926), bringing a close to the neoclassical phase ushered in by the Carnegie Library and Presbyterian Church.

The period's other landmark, St. Joseph Church, brought the Spanish Colonial Revival to town. This building cost more (around \$150,000) and took longer to build than any other church in prewar Alameda. Ground was broken for the concrete structure in April 1920, six months after the old church burned. The dedication was celebrated at a Christmas mass in 1921, though two years would pass before the interior was finished. Designed by the San Francisco architects William D. Shea and Henry A.

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Historic Houses of Worship . . . Continued from page 3



The new St. Joseph Church (1921) rose from the ashes of the old—an idealized California mission displaying the rich ornament of the emerging Spanish Colonial Revival.

Minton, an Alameda resident, it was the city's first full vision of the Catholic iconography of Spanish California, its domed bell tower and parapet recalling the Franciscan missions. Over the years the architects added other buildings in the style, including a parish hall and high school, all immaculately maintained today.

Alameda's burgeoning Catholic population, including many Italian immigrants, strained the resources of St. Joseph, and in 1925 the archdiocese created two new parishes to serve the island's East End and West End—St. Philip Neri and St. Barnabas. The well-preserved St. Barnabas Church, on Sixth Street, a 1926 design by Oakland architect John J. Donovan, is our other fine specimen of the Spanish style. St. Philip Neri's 1928 sanctuary is altered.

During this period Alameda's Jewish residents also established the city's first synagogue. The founding of Temple Israel, in 1920, was the culmination of years of effort (a fine color rendering in the museum shows a proposed synagogue from the 1890s). In 1924, a wood-frame structure with mild revivalist styling went up at Oak Street and Alameda Avenue. Hemmed in by the high school, Temple Israel was razed in 1980 for campus expansion and replaced by the modern synagogue at Harbor Bay Landing—our youngest house of worship.

The new sanctuary of Santa Clara Avenue Methodist, dedicated May 19, 1929, was the final church of the prewar era. Like the town's pioneer Methodist chapel, it was Gothic Revival—designed by an ordained Methodist minister, Rollin S. Tuttle. When the wood structure burned, in 1972, the members voted to merge with First Methodist. A new name, Twin Towers, alluded to the provenance of the congregation as well as the architecture of the building. So it was that the first and last of our prewar churches, divided by 75 years of history, became one.

A FEW GOOD PEOPLE . . .

The Museum needs new volunteer directors, an important task because the board sets policies and oversees activities at the Museum and the Meyers House.

Only members who are paid through the current year or are Lifetime Members are eligible. The board meets the third Wednesday each month at the museum for about an hour. Please consider joining us and bringing new ideas to the table.

**Contact Dennis at
510-772-5209 or email
info@alamedamuseum.org**



Is your Museum Membership

Check above the address on the *Quarterly* envelope. You can renew your membership by mailing the form on page 15 or online at AlamedaMuseum.org

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DUE



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Alameda Museum Quarterly is published four times a year and is available in electronic form on the museum website.

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THANKS TO OUR
HERITAGE PARTNER

 Alameda Sun



From the President's Podium

by Dennis Evanosky

*B*y the time you read this the museum will have reopened. I invite all of you to stop by and see the new items on display. These include many that have not seen the light of day since the museum moved to Alameda Avenue in 1991. Our curator George Gunn reports seeing some of the objects wrapped in twenty-six-year-old newspaper.

Visitors might also notice the newly painted floor in the history gallery. However, they won't notice the progress being made in the warehouse. Not only has George been able to unwrap and display many objects long under wraps in the warehouse, he has been able to rearrange some things and rid the museum of others to make space for an office.

Last year he gave up his office space next to the history gallery to create the Perkins Gallery. The museum dedicated this gallery to Frank Perkins who left a generous gift to the museum in his will. The displays there feature Alameda's experiences in World War I, as well as a look at some of the school buildings and implements of the past. Stop by and have a look.

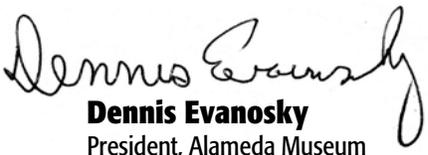
A special package is on its way from New Zealand. A couple of months back I heard from Laraine Sole in Waverley South Taranaki in that far-off country.

Laraine had inherited some china from her sister, Jacqueline. "This china belonged to my great aunt Edith Cohen who married into the Cohen family of Alameda," Laraine explained. "As I have no descendants, I believe it is appropriate the china should go back to Alameda."

After much back and forth I learned on June 22 that the twenty-five plates and dishes are on their way to the museum. The china is embossed with the initials "AAC" for Alfred A. Cohen, the builder of the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad. 1868 Cohen received a fortune when the Central Pacific Railroad purchased the SF&A. He spent a great deal of that money on his Fernside mega-mansion. He decorated his dinner table with these plates and dishes.

When the mansion burned, the plates were given to the four children—one of them was Donald Cohen. Donald and Edith married. After Donald's death, Edith moved back home to New Zealand, taking the plates and dishes with her. Now her great niece is returning them to Alameda.

George already has a special spot picked out for them at the museum.


Dennis Evanosky
President, Alameda Museum



They Didn't Forget Us

by Ron Ucovich

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE OF 1906 wreaked havoc and caused a great need for lumber to rebuild San Francisco. Numerous logging camps in Marin County exploded with the ruckus of loggers logging and buzz saws buzzing. A local land developer named William Kent scraped together \$45,000 (a sizable fortune in those days) and purchased 611 acres of virgin redwoods to protect them from the relentless loggers. Mr. Kent had considerable wealth in the form of landholdings, but he did not have much in the way of liquid assets, so he needed to secure a loan from the bank to purchase this land. His wife, Elizabeth, questioned Bill's wisdom in buying property which he had no intentions of developing.

Bill replied, "If we lost all the money we have and saved these trees, it would be worthwhile, wouldn't it?"

With the Marin County population explosion caused by the logging industry, there arose a huge demand for drinking water. The Tamalpais Water Company searched desperately for a narrow canyon suitable for a large dam. Their attention soon turned to Mr. Kent and his 611 acres in Sequoia Canyon. They offered to purchase his land at market value, but Mr. Kent firmly rejected their offers. In desperation, the Water Company threatened to sue Mr. Kent and confiscate his land by eminent domain.

President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Kent's land a national monument under the 1906 Antiquities Act.



William Kent spearheaded the movement to create the Muir Woods National Monument by donating land to the Federal Government for the Monument. He also served as a United States Congressman representing the State of California.

It seemed, by all appearances, that Mr. Kent was defenseless and would have to give up his treasured forest. Suddenly, Mr. Kent remembered a new law that was just enacted, the 1906 Antiquities Act, which declared that the President had the power to proclaim land a national monument. He picked up his deed of ownership, and he headed to Washington D.C. to offer it to the President of the United States. President Theodore Roosevelt gladly accepted the deed and suggested that the new park be named Kent Woods National Monument. Mr. Kent, being a modest man, said that he preferred that the new park be named after his close friend and renowned conservationist, John Muir. And since that day in 1908, Muir Woods has been preserved and enjoyed by millions of visitors from all parts of the world.

A little closer to home, we find a whole family of conservationists who deserve recognition. When Mexico won its independence from Spain, Mexican nationals could acquire California land by filing a petition of land grant from the Mexican government. Such a petition was filed in 1842 by don Jose de Jesus Vallejo. He was granted 17,700 acres of land. He named his ranch "El Arroyo de la Alameda" (The Creek lined with Poplar Trees). The southern boundary of the land was Alameda Wet Creek, which runs through Niles (now Fremont), and the northern boundary was Alameda Dry Creek, which runs through Decoto (now Union City). The northern creek was called Dry Creek because it dried out during summer months.

Elizabeth Thacher Kent was an environmentalist and women's rights activist. She was the president of her local chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.





When California became a state in 1850, the Dry Creek portion of this land grant was bought by a Californian named Jonas Clark. He converted the old ranch into a picnic ground called Pioneer Park.

On all major holidays the early settlers would come from miles around to partake in a huge barbecue and play pioneer games like tug of war, wheelbarrow racing, or catching the greased pig. Pioneer Park was the favorite resort until 1884, when one of these pioneers bought the 1255-acre resort and converted it back into a cattle ranch. His name was August May (...yes, that was his real name). Mr. May was the father of Bertha May, a lovely young lady who, in 1897, would marry Mr. Henry Meyers, a celebrated architect and community leader from Alameda.

The May family never bred cattle on their ranch. Instead, the property was used as a way station where distant ranchers could rent land to fatten their herd while driving them to market. Henry and Bertha Meyers eventually inherited the property. They had three daughters: Mildred, Edith and Jeanette Meyers. The Family continued to lease out most of the land for ranching, but a few acres were set aside where Henry built a country estate which his family would often use as a vacation getaway.

Their country home was finished with meticulous attention given to every detail, for example carved balusters on the veranda, and a whimsical finial atop the porch gable. Two acres surrounding the house contained a guest house, a carriage house, a greenhouse and potting shed, and a swimming pool. The garden was adorned with benches, statues, fountains, ponds and footbridges. The garden had over 200 varieties of exotic flowers, shrubs and trees. And just uphill from the house and garden you would find the Meyers apple orchard which contained dozens of generic apple trees and rare varieties. For many years, the Meyers sisters used their beautiful house and garden to spend their vacation days and also to hold numerous charity and fund-raising events.

In 1956 the three sisters drafted a will stating that their country estate be bequeathed to the East Bay Regional Park District, but five years later, the sisters learned, to their horror, that the California Highway Commission planned an eight-lane freeway that would carve a two-mile swath through the most beautiful part of their land. The proposal called for leveling two hills and filling the surrounding canyons, uprooting oak trees, routing creeks into culverts, and decimating all natural plants and animals native to this area. The Meyers ladies had resisted, on several occasions, generous offers by aggressive land developers to sell their beloved land, but they remained resolute in their conviction to preserve the land for future generations.

The Meyers sisters rallied so much community support and public controversy that the Highway Commission was forced to find an alternative route. They suggested that the proposed freeway could be cut through already developed properties, which would mean displacing hundreds of homes, schools, churches, industries, and commercial businesses. This proposal, of course, fanned the flames of the already enraged community.

The Highway Commission concluded that they would be forced to resort to the original plan. They said that the "Spinster Ladies" would be offered market value for their "unimproved land." The new freeway would be named the "Meyers Memorial Freeway," and in another location the "Meyers Memorial Center" would be erected. It would contain a picnic ground, a children's playground, a home for unwed mothers, a seniors' retirement home, an orphanage, and a health clinic. Each building would bear the first name of a member of the Meyers Family. The Meyers name could be enshrined in perpetuity.

The Highway Commission thought that the case was closed, but the Meyers Sisters had just begun to fight. They were highly respected socialites who had worked feverishly for decades for all types of social and philanthropic charities. They rallied support from hundreds of their colleagues, and they inundated the Highway Commission with a barrage of angry letters of protest and indignation. Among the throngs of protesters were: State legislators, Governor Pat Brown, Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Department of Public Utilities, Citizens Committee on Natural Resources, California Roadside Council, Department of Public Works, Oakland Park Department, San Francisco Bay Area Citizens for Regional Parks, Boy Scouts of America, Council of Camp Fire Girls, State Department of Education, Family Circle Magazine, City Council of Union City, City Council of Hayward, East Bay Regional Park District, US Department of the Interior, US Senate, US Department of Geology and Hydrology, Commonwealth Club of California, Mills College, National Parks Association, California State University of Hayward, Washington Township Historical Society, and many, many more. The Alameda County Highway Commission had no choice but to cede to the will of the community. They abandoned all plans to build the Meyers Memorial Freeway.

In 1993, after the last sister's death, the 1,200-acre ranch, including their vacation home and surrounding gardens, were bequeathed to the East Bay Regional Park District, and to this day it remains the single largest land donation in the history of the Park Department. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr. William Kent and to the Henry Meyers Family. They didn't forget us... Let's not forget them.

The May Family and the Dry Creek Ranch

August May + Sophia Platt
1831 – 1887 1843 – 1930

George B. May
&
Clara Nancy Black
•
no children

August May Jr.
&
Jenny Decoto
•
no children

Bertha Sophia May
&
Henry Haight Meyers
•
Mildred
Jeanette
Edith

Henry May
&
Clara Whipple
•
Gertrude
Marjorie
Henry



Sophia Platt was born in Darmstadt, Hesse, Germany, arriving in New York in 1858. The couple wed in 1862.



August's daughter Bertha, her husband Henry Meyers, and three daughters traveled to Germany in 1927 to find the family home of her father. The home still stood across from the Rathaus in the Treysa town square.

August May, a native of Treysa, Germany came to the United States in 1849. He journeyed on to California and eventually purchased land in the Alvarado-Decoto district. He died in 1887 at the age of 56, leaving his land holdings to his wife and four children. Images: ancestry.com.

Henry Meyers Diary of trip to Germany

Monday, June 27, 1927: Well we have had a very pleasant and successful trip today to Treysa, the birthplace of Bertha's father and Bertha is quite thrilled and happy over it, though so tired from the long day's trip that she went right to bed when we got back to the hotel... We left here this morning at 9 o'clock and it was between 1:15 and 1:30 when we pulled up in front of the "Bahnhof Hotel" in Treysa to get luncheon... We found it to be a town of about 5,000 inhabitants and consisting of an old medieval town and a new and modern section...

(Having lunch in Treysa) Only one other person was in the dining room and Bertha immediately struck up a conversation with him and the proprietor so as to get a line on the information she was looking for but with little success. She learned however that there were several "Mays" in the town and while our fellow diners took Edith and myself to the old part of town after dinner, she had the chauffeur take her to one of these "Mays" and there we found her a little later. This Mr. Heinrich

May—was no doubt a connection of the family but could not remember Bertha's father or grandfather. They thought however that some record might be found at the church or at the church parsonage. So Bertha and Jeanette went there—it was just a stone's throw away and there they found what they were looking for—a record of the birth and christening of her father and the location of the home of her grandfather and mother. The latter was again only a stone's throw distant, facing on the public square in the heart of the old town and just across the street from the Rathaus. It stills stands and they interviewed the present owner who took them inside and showed us around. Said his father had bought the house from Bertha's grandfather sixty years ago.

The house is not pretentious but is in good preservation. There is an inscription in the stone foundation indicating it was built in 1801. We found post cards of the Rathaus and town square one with the May Home in it...

From ancestry.com



Descendants of August May and Sophia Platt on Thanksgiving Day, November 30, 1917, Alvarado, California

Back: Henry Meyers, Mildred Meyers, Henry May, Jr., Gertrude May, Henry May, Sr., Marjorie May, Clara Whipple May (Henry's wife), George May, and Dr. Edith Meyers

Seated: Bertha May Meyers, Sophia Platt May, August May, Jr., Clara Nancy Black May (George's wife)

Front: Jeanette Meyers and Jenny Decoto May (August's wife)



After a nine month trip to Europe, Meyers and his architect daughter, Mildred, took on an ambitious redesign of the grounds in 1928, that resulted in a property with a rambling creekside garden, winding drive, and rustic bridges. Other additions were made over the years. After Henry and Bertha Meyers death the final change to the property was in 1950 when a pool and cabana were completed. The Meyers sisters continued to live together and spent their time between Alameda, summers at Dry Creek and trips abroad for the remainder of their lives.



For most of their married life Bertha and Henry Meyers cared for her widowed mother who lived with them in Alameda from 1894 until her death in 1930, at the age of 86. In 1900 Sophia commissioned a rustic cottage at the mouth of Dry Creek canyon for herself and her daughter's family. The four room cottage served as a summer retreat for the family. Her architect son-in-law Henry H. Meyers produced the design. Images from "Cottage and Gardens at Dry Creek Ranch," a 2002 study coauthored by Bruce Anderson and Woody Minor (whose captions are reproduced here).



FROM THE COLLECTION

A Place for Surgery, Shaving, and Singing

by Valerie Turpen

THE CONTENTS OF FRANK'S BARBERSHOP which was located at 2055 Lincoln Avenue now resides in the Alameda Museum. The owner, Frank Corica was the uncle of former Alameda mayor, Chuck Corica. The items on display are the wares of a 1930s barber including cabinets filled with hair applications, a sink, the barber chair, and the pole from the front of the shop.

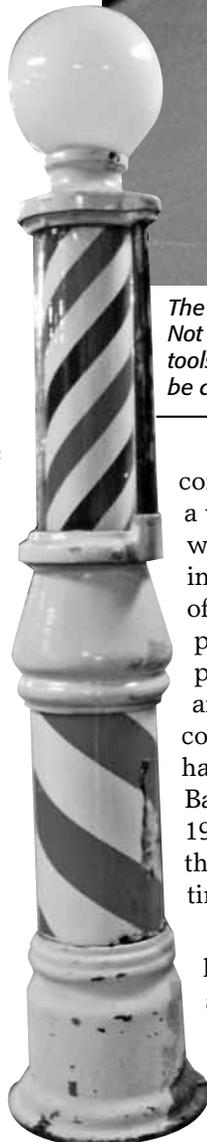
The barber pole is a longtime symbol of the profession dating back to Medieval times when people went to barbers for more than a haircut or a shave, but also for bloodletting, tooth extractions, and surgical procedures. Bloodletting, which involves cutting open a vein and allowing blood to drain, was a common treatment for a range of maladies, from sore throat to plague. Monks, who often cared for the sick, performed the procedure, and barbers, given their skill with sharp instruments, sometimes provided assistance. By the mid-1500s, English barbers were banned from providing surgical treatments, although they could continue extracting teeth. Both barbers and surgeons, however, remained part of the same trade guild until 1745.

In Europe, barber poles traditionally are red and white. Red represents blood and white represents the bandages used to stem the bleeding. The pole itself is said to symbolize the stick that a patient squeezed to make the veins in his arm stand out more prominently for the procedure. One theory holds that blue is symbolic of the veins cut during bloodletting, while another interpretation suggests blue was added to the pole in the United States as a show of patriotism and a nod to the nation's flag.

Prior to 1950, there were four manufacturers of barber poles in the United States. In 1950, William Marvy of St. Paul, Minnesota, started manufacturing barber poles. The company is now the sole manufacturer of barber poles in North America, and sells only 500 per year (compared to 5,100 in the 1960s). In recent years, the sale of spinning barber poles has dropped considerably, since few barber shops are opening, and many jurisdictions prohibit moving signs. Koken of St. Louis, Missouri, manufactured barber equipment such as chairs and assorted poles in the 19th century.



The barber chair from Frank's Barbershop on Lincoln Avenue. Not only does the display contain a variety of hair and shaving tools and potions, the hat rack has two boater hats ready to be donned by members of a Barbershop Quartet.



Barbershops have a long history of serving as community centers, where men would gather for a variety of activities. English "barber's music", was described in the 17th century as amateur instrumental music. In the United States, the role of the barbershop continued as a gathering place, particularly for African American men, who passed time there singing spirituals, folk songs and popular songs. This generated a new style, consisting of unaccompanied, four-part, close-harmony singing by a Barbershop Quartet. Barbershop music was very popular between 1900 and 1919, and the quartets often costume themselves in gaudy versions of the dress of this time, with boaters and vertically striped vests.

Barbershop music faded in popularity in the late 1920s. However, the revival of a *cappella* singing took place around 1938 when a tax lawyer named Owen C. Cash sought to save the art form from a threat by radio. He garnered

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Surgery, Shaving, and Singing... . . .Continued from page 10

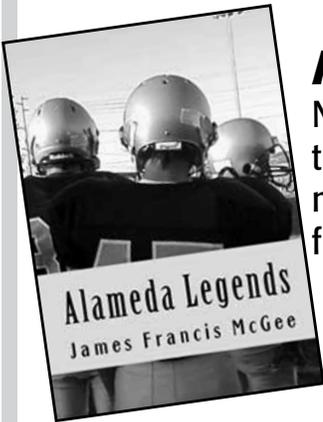
support from an investment banker named Rupert I. Hall. Cash was a true partisan of quartet singing who advertised the fact that he did not want a *cappella* to fall by the wayside.

Cash had struck a chord, albeit unwittingly, and soon, across North America, men responded in their thousands and later in the same year what became known as the "Barbershop Harmony Society" was formed. Eventually women joined the genre and Sweet Adelines International and Harmony, Inc. two women's barbershop singing organizations hit the performing circuit.

Information from: Wikipedia.com

SUMMER BOOK SALE !

New books and old standards available online at AlamedaMuseum.org

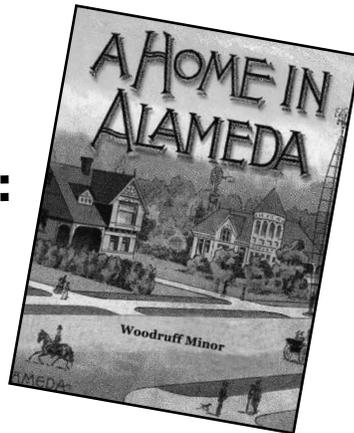


Alameda Legends: \$20.00

New! James Francis McGee pays tribute to some of the famous, and not so famous, intriguing individuals from Alameda.

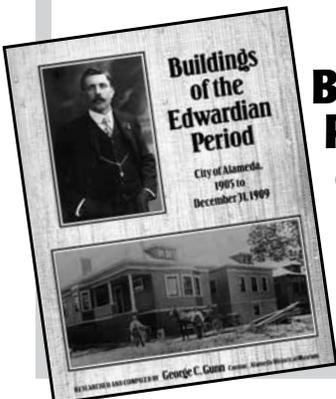
A Home in Alameda: \$15.00

By Woody Minor. New! Fifth Edition, printed in 2017. Updated with new information and photos.



Buildings of the Edwardian Period: \$10.00

City of Alameda 1905 to Dec. 31, 1909. Researched and compiled by George C. Gunn, Curator, Alameda Museum.



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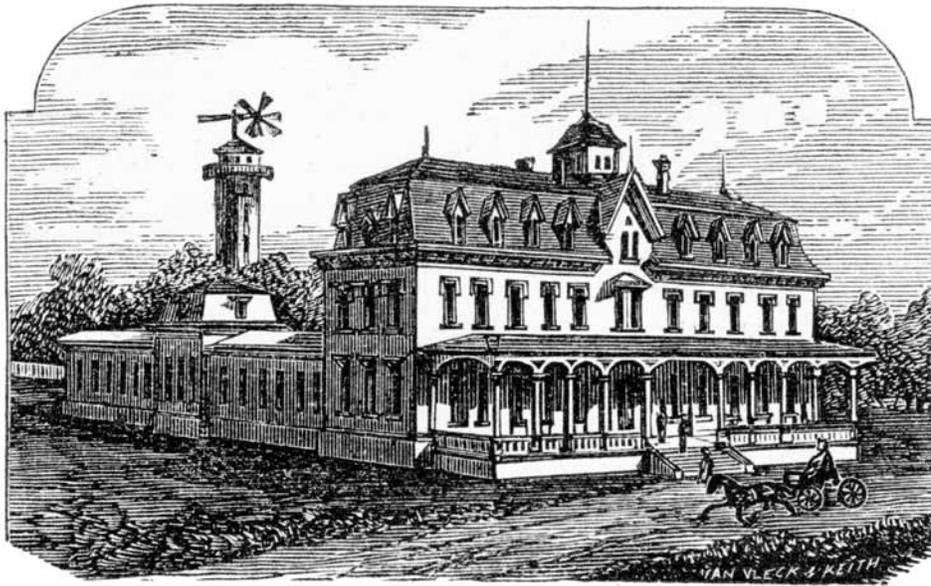
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Built in 1864-65, the Alameda Park Hotel was our first large commercial establishment—the centerpiece of a railroad resort running down Park Street to the bay. The hybrid design mixed Gothic dormers with a fashionable mansard in the French style. The view is from a circular for the Alameda Park Asylum, which took over the property in 1867. The building burned in 1871. Image: Chuck Millar Collection.

A Lost Landmark Brought to Light

by Woody Minor

IMAGES OF ALAMEDA from the gold rush and early years of rail service are rare—photographs virtually nonexistent, lithographs few. My own wish list includes the 1854 chapel of the First Methodist Church and the 1864 station of the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad. I've also held out hope of one day seeing a picture of the 1865 Alameda Park Hotel. Lo, it has come to pass. Through the good graces of the intrepid collector and museum stalwart Chuck Millar, a lithograph view is reproduced here. It's a remarkable find—our only image of a fabled establishment from the dawn of the railroad era, a landmark that rose as war raged in the east.

Alameda Park and its eponymous hotel were planned and developed by the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad as a draw for San Franciscans riding the trains and ferries. The subsidiary Alameda Park Company, whose directors included hoteliers, oversaw the ambitious project. The resort ranked as our first great enterprise of the commuter era, and the hotel as our first great commercial landmark. Its heyday was brief but its legacy endured, providing Park Street with a name as well as an illustrious start.

The *Alta California* ran a piece about the resort in the summer of 1864, shortly before the SF&A trains went into service. The scheme envisioned a 100-suite hotel adjoined by parkland stretching to the bay. The hotel grounds were to cover "ten acres of excellent land, beautifully situated and well shaded with magnificent oak trees, through which will be laid elegant promenades. Summer houses are to be erected, and fountains built... To merchants and others

doing business in this city the hotel will afford them all the accommodations and comforts of a private residence in the country, and families living in the city will find great physical benefit from a few weeks of healthy recreation in the pleasant grounds of the Park and sea-bathing."

The hotel that opened in February 1865 was not the granddame of the plan but a somewhat smaller affair, sited closer to the street and originally intended as the resort's "clubhouse." A notice published later in the year described the building as measuring eighty feet across with a full porch and a mansard roof sporting a belvedere—a description matching our image. The hotel's finely furnished rooms and suites, thirteen in all, were linked to the dining room and bar by speaking tubes and bell mechanisms. Enclosed corridors led to kitchen and bathroom pavilions. Bowling lanes occupied a separate building with upper-story parlors. The gaslights (with gas made on site) were among the first on the peninsula.

"This new and elegant house will be opened for the reception of guests, on Saturday, the 18th instant," stated a February notice in the *Alta*. "The proprietor would call especial attention of families to the attractiveness of this locality, so accessible, and yet retired, and free from the turmoil of the city. Bowling Alleys, Billiard Rooms, and all of the leading journals of the day will be at the disposal of visitors, while the sportsman can find an abundance of wild game in the vicinity of the hotel." Separating the grounds

Continued on page 13. . .



A Lost Landmark . . .Continued from page 12

from the park was newly opened Central Avenue, providing patrons and proprietors with a carriage route to the old town.

The outstanding event that first season was a May Day festival benefitting the United States Sanitary Commission, a Civil War relief agency for sick and wounded soldiers. Held in the aftermath of Lee's surrender and Lincoln's assassination, the event drew enormous crowds—around 10,000 visitors, if the *Alta* is to be believed. Yet the resort did not fare well on a day-to-day basis, going through three managers in its first six months. Whether this was the fault of the prices, the food, or the service is unclear, but the Alameda Park Company divested itself of the property at the close of the first season. Under new management the hotel struggled through a final season with carnival acts added and rates reduced, closing for good in the fall of 1866.

The new owners, Drs. Trenor and Tucker, provided hospitality of a different sort. The Alameda Park Asylum opened March 1, 1867, "for the reception of patients suffering from Dementia, and all other Cerebral and Nervous Disorders," stated a notice in the *Alta*. The facility strove to retain a hotel-like ambience for its well-heeled patrons, despite a 14-ft. fence surrounding the property. Men and women inmates paid "\$1.50 per day, upwards," depending on level of care; topping the list were "suites of apartments, with special servants, if required." A ward for "the violent and unmanageable of the insane" occupied another building on the grounds. There were occasional escapes, but for the most part the asylum carried on quietly. In 1869 it made news by triaging victims of a terrible train wreck at Simpson's Switch, near High Street. A westbound SF&A local collided with an eastbound transcontinental train in heavy fog, killing 15 and injuring 21.

The Alameda Park Asylum closed in 1870. Early the following year the landmark succumbed to fire while being refurbished as a private school; the townsfolk suspected arson, since a derelict hotel in the old town burned that same week. The doctors later subdivided the property for development, and today the site is indistinguishable from the rest of the downtown area.

The borders of the historic grounds are marked by Park Street, Central Avenue, Everett Street, and to the north, the property line between Santa Clara and Webb Avenues. The ghost of the vanished hotel faces west from a parking lot on Park Avenue, the other street that preserves its name.

Note: More information can be learned about the hotel and asylum in the Alameda Museum Quarterly, Spring 2015. "Alameda Park Hotel Morphed into Insane Asylum" by Dennis Evanosky.

What's New at the Meyers House



City Proclamation

by Dennis Evanosky

The museum's Board of Directors gave Curator George Gunn quite a surprise on his birthday. On June 10, George thought that he was simply attending an affair at the Meyers House to thank historian Marshall Davis from Petaluma's History Connection for his role in the April 1 B-25 flyover at Alameda Point. That is until Mayor Trish Spencer arrived with an envelope under her arm.

I was able to get everyone's attention and get George and the Mayor together. Trish opened the envelope and read the enclosed document that not only fulfilled one of George's dreams, but that made the day special for him.

Trish fulfilled George's dream by declaring the Alameda Museum the Official Repository for the City of Alameda. Then she declared Saturday, June 10, 2017, George Gunn Day, "to celebrate his birthday and to thank him for his forty-six years of service to the Alameda Museum and the people of Alameda."



George Gunn and Mayor Trish Spencer. Image Dennis Evanosky.

This marked something special for me as well. It was the first time I've ever seen George so touched. He was speechless.

Docent Dossiers

Who's aboard, what are they doing, and why?

Charles Kahler was born and raised in Oakland on 28th Avenue, down the street from the Montgomery Wards store. This location was not that far from Alameda, and he used to walk or bicycle over to the island.

Charles stated, "Alameda was always a quiet and safe place to walk and ride a bicycle when I was a kid. Today, it is a much busier and more hurried place."

The young man would go to see movies at the Alameda and Neptune theaters. "I also used to stop at Tucker's ice cream shop at Webb and Park streets to get their soft-serve ice cream," Charles recalls. "I took accordion and guitar lessons on Park Street from Turner Music, which was next door and upstairs from where Tucker's is now."

Charles bought his first house in Alameda in 1977 for \$33,300 when house prices were just starting to go up quickly. He remodeled the house over a period of nine years, sold it, and bought a Queen Anne Victorian. "I have been working on the home ever since. In 2005, the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society presented my wife and I with a Preservation Award for our restoration efforts."

Soon after moving to Alameda, Charles found the Alameda Museum, then located in the basement of the old Carnegie Library and became a member. "When on vacation, I like stopping in small museums here and there; I always admire the hard work and effort people have put into presenting their town history. Being a docent at the Alameda



▲ Charles Kahler, history enthusiast.
Image: Evelyn Kennedy

Museum is a good way to honor the hard work of local history buffs."



▲ New Docent Helen Wittman has a keen interest in history, especially early textiles.
Image: Evelyn Kennedy

Helen Wittman is a Texas girl and lived there until after college. "I attended the University of Texas in Austin for my Bachelors degree and masters study, with a minor in Art History. My husband was studying Lighting Design. After graduation, his specialty took us all over the country."

Helen most enjoyed living in Pennsylvania near the site of Washington's winter headquarters. She noted, "You could not help but feel the past living there. In PA the museum I worked at was a building used as a re-supply stop for Washington's troops during the war. Colonial era things might show up at any auction or sale I went to. You just don't get to touch history like that very often and it comes alive for you. I have always liked history and was a docent in three different states."

Helen started collecting antiques, especially early textiles and decided to learn to weave. She appreciated the role they played in our history. "I helped with storage care, mounting exhibits at the museums, and learned more about the area history in the process. I am also an avid reader of both fiction and researching clothing and textiles. I like to consider myself an avid if amateur historian. Without 'womens' work', the men would not have gotten very far with founding a new country."

Helen's son who was living in the Bay Area suggested that she move to Alameda. "It has been three years and I love Alameda. It is very like the suburbs – a big family neighborhood. Now that I am settled, I am renewing my interest in history and museum work."



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Volunteer docents are the folks who keep our doors open. An enthusiastic group, they help run the gift shop, and on occasion, do tasks like help with mailings. Training is available. Do you have three hours to make new friends? Come and spend that time with us!

Docent Coordinator for Alameda Museum
Evelyn Kennedy
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- *Docent Dossiers*
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Alameda Museum Lecture Series 2017

**THERE HAS BEEN A SCHEDULE CHANGE:
JULY & SEPT. LECTURES HAVE SWITCHED TOPICS**

❖ JUNE 22

Early Alameda, the Hayloft, and the First Congregational Church

This architectural gem is the 5th oldest church in Alameda. Ann Beret Johnson is a 4th generation Alamedan and lives in the family home on Alameda Avenue established in 1881 by her great-grandparents. Her mother Shirley acted as family historian caring for family records, movies, and letters. Ann grew up hearing family stories, which sparked an interest in family and community history. Attending First Congregational Church since she was born, she was asked to serve as Church Historian by the Rev. Larry Schulz a task she enjoys, assisted by Ginny Krutilek, another native Alamedan. *Sponsor: Liz Rush, Realtor, McGuire Real Estate.*

❖ JULY 27

European Roots

Dennis Evanosky and Eric J. Kos, authors and *Alameda Sun* executives. On July 17, 1854, Alfred A. Cohen married Emma Grace Poole Gibbons. The couple moved to Alameda and established an estate on the East End they named Fernside. Alfred and Emma can both trace their ancestry to England. Their colorful forebears include a man who owned slaves in Jamaica and another who sat on the jury of the only witch trial in Pennsylvania. Join Eric and Dennis as they introduce these interesting families and trace their stories from California back six generations to Wilshire and London in England. *Sponsor: Evelyn Kennedy, Alain Pinel Realtors, and Alameda Museum Board Member.*

❖ AUGUST 24

'20s and Beyond

Alameda author and historian Woody Minor will speak about homes of the '20s and later in the richly intact neighborhoods of the southeast section of the city. We will see how the bungalow evolved after World War I, interacting with new styles, and witness the Ranch House emerge on the eve of World War II. Among the notable builders whose work we will encounter are the aristocrats George H. Noble, Noble F. Justice, and P. Royal Haulman along with the incomparable Sid Dowling. *Sponsor: Peter Fletcher, Broker, Windermere Real Estate.*

❖ SEPTEMBER 28

Early Black Pioneers of Alameda

Rasheed Shabazz grew up on the West End of Alameda. He received his Bachelors in African American Studies and Political Science, and minored in City and Regional Planning, at UC Berkeley. Black history of Alameda is largely unknown and overlooked. Of the scant attention Black Alamedans have received, most focuses on the post- World War II population. This presentation examines the lives of early Black pioneers of Alameda, focusing on housing, community building, and the origins of racialized residential segregation. *Sponsor: Evelyn Kennedy, Alain Pinel Realtors, and Alameda Museum Board Member.*

NOTE: Lectures are currently being held at the Eagles Hall, 2305 Alameda Avenue across from the Alameda Museum. Admission is free for museum members and \$10 for others. No reserved seats. We open at 6:30 pm on lecture nights. For more information check alamedamuseum.org for updates or call 510-748-0796.