

Alameda Museum

Quarterly

SPORTS FIENDS

by Keith Gleason

DUO'S ENTHUSIASM PUSHES ISLAND ATHLETES TO THE FOREFRONT AT THE ALAMEDA MUSEUM. Brian McDonald and Dewey St. Germaine love to collect sports memorabilia. Born and raised in Alameda, they grew up playing sports and collecting memorabilia of Bay Area professional teams but had never met each other until four years ago.

In 2007, St. Germaine, looking to share his personal collection of Alameda sports memorabilia, started the Alameda Sports Project website. One day, he was doing online research on Chris Speier, the iconic San Francisco Giants

shortstop of the 1970s and 1980s, and Alameda High School alumnus, class of 1968. "I forwarded some information on Speier to Brian via the Baseball Cube website," says St. Germaine. When they talked, the two instantly hit it off and discovered they lived only a few blocks from each other.

After they met, St. Germaine suggested a sports exhibit, so they pooled their collections and put on the first exhibit in 2009 at the Alameda Museum. St. Germaine supplied the baseball bats and most of the jerseys, photos and some trading cards while McDonald also supplied photos, lots of cards and a couple of jerseys. "Our interests were complementary: I focused on old-time players, and he focused on the more recent players," says McDonald.

The first year, they concentrated on professional athletes and then expanded it to college athletes the second year. The two also got help from the Alameda Museum's curator, George Gunn, who found old sports photos from the museum's storage room.

The Alameda Sports Project is dedicated to preserving the legacy of



Brian McDonald (left) and Dewey St. Germaine are sports nuts who pay homage to Alameda's greats. Their collection of local sports memorabilia from local players is featured in the Alameda Sports Exhibit. Photo: Chris Duffy.

Continued on page 2 . . .



Sports Fiends . . .Continued from page 1

high school, college and professional athletes (and their teams) from the Island City who were either born and raised in Alameda or spent their youth and/or high school days on the island. While the project's collection includes cards, jerseys, bats and photos of luminaries of Alameda sports such as NBA star players Jason Kidd and J. R. Rider and Major League Baseball players such as Jimmy Rollins, Dontrelle Willis, Willie Stargell and Chris Speier, it also has information about Mas "Fred" Nakano and Hisaki Hayashi, who played for Alameda Tai Kukai, the Alameda-based Japanese baseball team of the 1920s and 1930s, and memorabilia of Alameda High School basketball player Christine Fairless, class of 1985, who went on to become a Hall of Fame player at the University of Wyoming.

St. Germaine is grateful for the support the museum has given them. "Without the Alameda Museum, the exhibit wouldn't have happened," he says. "And, in turn, we've helped get people into the museum who didn't know Alameda had one." Gunn says the Alameda Museum is happy to host the Alameda Sports Project's exhibit since it's an honorable cause undertaken by two men who are devoted to the subject. "They've made a major contribution since they've exposed the names of these people in various sports who had their beginnings here in Alameda," he says.

When not on display, the Alameda Sports Project resides in the homes of McDonald and St. Germaine. "We like to joke that our wives are happy two months out of the year since everything gets packed up and moves to the museum," says St. Germaine with a laugh. "The only reason I go to work is to pay for my collecting. I'm a compulsive collector," says McDonald, an Oakland longshoreman who graduated from Saint Joseph Notre Dame in 1970.

Despite their wives' reservations, the two collectors are always looking for more material. "I'm constantly contacting colleges so they'll donate jerseys to us. We're always trying to beat the bushes to keep this thing going," says St. Germaine, a student affairs officer in the Ethnic Studies Department at U.C. Berkeley. He graduated from Encinal High School in 1986.

Personal loans and donations have been crucial to the project, too, he says, including that of the late Diane LeMoine, class of '63 at Alameda High, who, prior to her death in 2011, donated some of her late husband Jim's (also class of '63 at AHS) football jerseys and photographs from his NFL days with the Buffalo Bills and Houston Oilers. The families really like that we're keeping the memories of their loved ones alive, says McDonald. "We get lots of reactions from people and some tears as people see photos of themselves and people they knew and played with."

Katie Dougherty has gladly loaned to the exhibit the Pacific Coast League's Hall of Fame plaque of her grandfather, Alamedan Raymond French, who played minor and major league baseball from 1915 to 1939, including for the New York Yankees in 1920 with Babe Ruth. "I was really touched when I saw it. The display was so well done and organized. I didn't realize what an impact Alameda's had on sports," she says.

The project's 2011 exhibit at the Alameda Museum pays tribute to the 20th anniversary of Saint Joseph Notre Dame's first California state basketball championship and to the 2011 NBA Championship title Jason Kidd just won with the Dallas Mavericks.

**THE THIRD ANNUAL
ALAMEDA SPORTS EXHIBIT RUNS
OCTOBER 15 - DECEMBER 11.
TO FIND OUT MORE, GO TO
WWW.ALAMEDASPORTSPROJECT.COM
OR WWW.ALAMEDAMUSEUM.ORG.**



Historical memorabilia from Alameda's early days of baseball. These items and many more are all part of the collection presented in the Alameda Sports Exhibit. Photo: Valerie Turpen.

Article reprinted with permission from Alameda Magazine, September/October 2011. www.alamedamagazine.com



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MUSEUM DOCENT**

*Make some new friends.
Please contact Ellen Chesnut
510-865-1204 for details.*

Alameda Museum Quarterly is published in the spring, summer, fall, and winter of each year and is available in electronic form on the museum web site.

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THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS



The First Computer Bug

by Ron Ucovich



IN NOVEMBER OF 1945, THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA announced the birth of ENIAC, the nation's first general-purpose electronic computer. It was equipped with 18,000 vacuum tubes and weighed 30 tons. The first problem that they faced when trying to use the computer was that those 18,000 glowing vacuum tubes would attract scores of moths, and a single misguided moth could bring all 30 tons of computer power to a screeching halt. To prevent this, the computer was housed in a sealed, air-conditioned room.

Unbeknownst to the general public, the Navy already had a giant computer housed at Harvard University. It was used during World War II for military intelligence to decipher the German communications code. This computer was not enclosed in an air-conditioned room, and thus it was vulnerable to moth invasion. On September 9, 1945 the monster computer stopped functioning. A moth had gotten trapped between the contacts of a relay and was beaten to death by the incessant toggling of the switch. When the technicians located the problem, they removed the broken body with a pair of tweezers, entered the incident in their log book, and Scotch taped the moth directly onto the log entry. Since that day, the word bug has been used to describe a problem that upsets a computer, and debugging describes the process of fixing it.

Anyone who is interested in seeing this historic moth, still taped to his final resting place, need only come to Alameda. He is on display in the Commodore Grace Hopper exhibit at the USS Hornet Museum at Alameda Point.

**Thank you Ron Ucovich for a beautiful cruise on
the USS Potomac September 29th.**

The sun shined, but it was Ron who delighted the tourists with tidbits about Alameda history and some question and answer repartee. Woody Minor attended, known for his books and his lectures, and was very impressed that Ron could amuse us for over two hours, a feat not easy to accomplish.

Catch Ron at our museum every Friday. There's a reason he is our docent extraordinaire, but he is for others too, including the *USS Hornet* and *Potomac*!

Legacy Society

THE COMPLETE FLYER IS AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM.

Gifts from your estate must be \$1,000 or more to be a part of the program. Lesser amounts may be donations to a specific project or archival fund. Perhaps a \$500 Lifetime Membership would be appropriate?

**For questions about donations, please call
Robbie at 510-865-1767.**



Accidents Happen

by Ron Ucovich

DURING THE 19TH CENTURY, of all the various types of public transportation systems, ferryboats were the safest... and this includes walking. With as many as 55 million passengers a year, injuries were minimal and loss of life was a rarity, but accidents did occur. Injuries might be due to fire, explosion, mechanical failure, collision, or flotation problems. I want to take a minute to relive a few of these dramatic events.

Boiler explosions were quite common, but rarely were passengers killed. The fireman who attended the boiler had to constantly see that steam pressures didn't exceed their limit. Boilers were constructed of iron plates riveted together, and pressure limits could not be tested. If the steam pressure got too high, the boiler would burst without warning. The worst of these occurred in 1859 on the *Contra Costa*. Six people were killed and many injured, and there was considerable loss of horses and property as a result of this tragedy.

Ferryboats used to burn coal until 1888 when the *Julia* was converted to burn fuel oil. While tied to her Vallejo pier, the firemen lit the oil burners, but the boilers were not constructed for such high pressures. Not a fragment of the boilers, or the firemen who tended them, remained to tell the story of the resulting explosion. It was not until 1900 that boilers could be made to contain the pressure created by burning fuel oil.

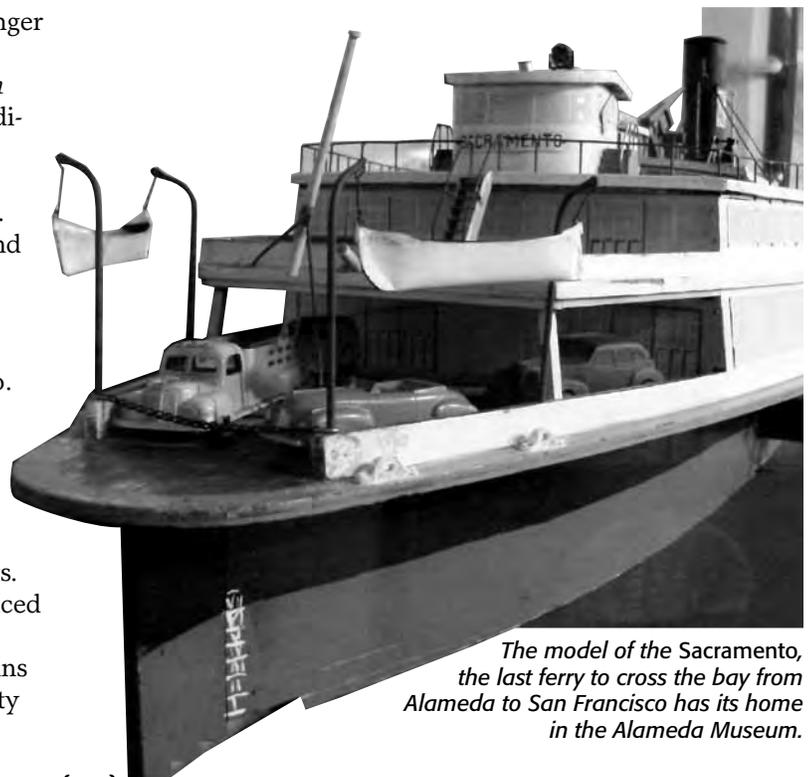
In 1877, the train ferry *Petaluma*, struck the passenger ferry *Clinton*, near Fort Baker in Marin County. The impact was so severe that the *Petaluma* cut the *Clinton* in two. The section containing the engine sank immediately, but passengers were able to move to the stern section which remained afloat. The only loss of life was the chief engineer, who went down with his ship. The ship was a total loss. This collision also put an end to the shipping career of the operator of the *Clinton*, Charles Minturn of Alameda.

Another collision occurred in 1886. The steamer *San Rafael* left Sausalito heading toward San Francisco. Another ferry, the *Tiburon*, left Vallejo with the same destination. The two rival ferry companies met at Raccoon Strait, and the captains silently challenged each other to a race. They jockeyed for position all the way to the Ferry Building, at which point their paths had to cross to arrive at their respective landings. Fortunately, when they collided, their speed was reduced considerably, and the damage was confined to broken railings, flagstuffs, lifeboats, and windows. The captains were later assailed by a barrage of well-chosen profanity by their respective managers.

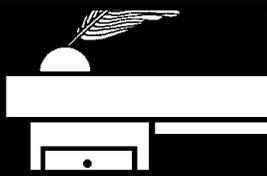
Wildfires aboard ferryboats were disastrous. The ships were constructed of wood, and their cargo was highly flammable. When a fire got out of control, your only alternative was to abandon ship and watch the conflagration. Such was the fortune of the ill-fated *Sausalito*. She was docked at the San Quentin Wharf when a fire broke out. Despite all efforts to extinguish the blaze, it soon raged out of control. She burned to the water line... and so did the pier. Ever since that day in 1884, all ferry service between San Quentin and San Francisco was discontinued.

In 1901, a collision resulted in a sad fatality. The *San Rafael*, arriving at Alcatraz Island in the fog, struck the second *Sausalito*, which was leaving the island a little behind schedule. Passengers were required to put on life jackets, and after about 15 minutes, the *San Rafael* began to list precariously, so the deck hands set a gang plank between the two ships, knowing that she was about to sink. When the last passenger had been safely evacuated, the crew remembered "Old Dick," the horse kept on board to haul express carts on and off the steamer at the terminals. They gave him every opportunity to cross the plank to the *Sausalito*, but he could not be coaxed to abandon his ship. Old Dick went to a watery grave on the ship that had been his home all his life.

The topmost part of the old steamships had a huge crosshead which rocked back and forth. It was called the "walking beam." One end had a push rod that connected to the cylinder head, and the other end connected to the crank that turned the paddle wheels. All the horsepower produced by the huge steam engine would transmit



The model of the *Sacramento*, the last ferry to cross the bay from Alameda to San Francisco has its home in the Alameda Museum.



From the Curator's Desk

by George C. Gunn

I want to thank Robbie Dileo and her committee for providing the refreshments, tables, and chairs plus all the details that went into the lovely reception held for the opening of the fashion exhibit at the Meyers House. When I walked into the yard where the event was held, it was just like attending a wedding reception. The refreshments were arranged so beautifully and enjoyed by all. PBS Catering provided some of the food (pbscater@yahoo.com) and they do our annual luncheons.

I also need to thank all those who participated in our annual home tour. The committee and docents really stepped forward to make it a lovely day. The homeowners, whose generosity and pride of ownership help to make the tour a success every year is the perfect vehicle for acknowledging their attention to detail, creativity, and dedication. Past president Diane Coler-Dark and I are now looking for homes to be on tour next year. It is always difficult to top the past, but we will try.

Curator, Alameda Museum

through this beam. If this beam ever broke, the whole crosshead assembly would shatter, plunge through the roof, and crash into the passenger compartment of the ship. Fortunately, few passengers were on board the new *Sausalito* when this occurred in 1922. No one was injured. Until this time, all woodwork was painted white, and machinery was black, so they could be easily distinguished. It was discovered that a stress fracture developing in the black crosshead was overlooked because it could not be seen. After this catastrophe, walking beams were always painted white.

In 1928, the beautiful new *Peralta* was heavily loaded with commuters crossing homeward bound from San Francisco. As she arrived at the Oakland terminal, passengers began moving forward preparing to disembark when the gangway was lowered. Soon water began to cover the foredeck, and suddenly thirty passengers were washed into the bay. Five of them drowned. It was learned later that the automatic counter-balancing system had malfunctioned and did not pump water into the aft ballast tank. After this incident, ballast tanks were operated by the engineer, and this was not left to automated systems again.

One of the original ships of the San Francisco to Santa Cruz railway was the *Newark*, built in 1877. One foggy evening, she picked up a load of train passengers at the Oakland terminal. Before pulling out of the slip, she gave a long blast of the horn to make sure the route was clear. She listened carefully for a signal from an incoming ferry, and not hearing a response, she slowly pulled away from the pier. By sheer coincidence, the *Oakland* was pulling into port at that same moment. Both ships had sounded

their warning whistles at the exact same time, and neither ship heard the other's signal. The *Oakland* struck the *Newark* in the port paddle wheel, thereby putting her completely out of service.

The *Newark* was now 45 years old, and she needed to be renovated. She was remodeled from stem to stern, and was renamed the *Sacramento*. In 1923 she resumed passenger service between Alameda and San Francisco, and continued service for the next 16 years. After the Bay Bridge was completed in 1935, passengers began to commute by train or bus, and ferry service to Alameda was discontinued.

There was a society of Alameda commuters on the 7:30 run to San Francisco. They called themselves "The Alameda Commuters Club." They built a model of the *Sacramento*, which they displayed proudly on board the ship. On the final crossing, the Club decided to hold a mock funeral for the *Sacramento*. Six pall bearers dressed in black solemnly carried the model to the fantail of the *Sacramento* as the Alameda Band played a mournful dirge. The pall bearers slowly lowered the model into the bay as photographers stood by ready to capture a photo of the model sinking beneath the waves. They never got their photograph, however, because the model did not sink. She floated defiantly on the waves until the Coast Guard retrieved her and returned her to the Commuters Club. Today, 72 years after this historic event, the model of the old *Sacramento* remains on display at the Alameda Museum for everyone to visit and recall the days when passenger ferries ruled the San Francisco Bay.



From the President's Desk

by Robbie Dileo

The Fashion and Accessory Exhibit opened August 21st to rave reviews and garden reception attended by Meyers House Guild members, Museum Directors and guests. The transformation in the once damp basement is testament to George Gunn's artistic direction and the hard work of his dedicated work team. Nancy Gormley, a loyal supporter and participant in most of our museum events, said the exhibit was "beautifully presented in a unique setting. Like stepping back into the past!". It's a great new addition to the house and would make a wonderful dressing room for a garden wedding.

The triumph was offset by the September 1st retirement of Jane Burgelin. After five years as docent coordinator and key co-creator with George on several excellent Meyers House events, she wished to spend more time with her husband, family, and other volunteer activities. She will remain an occasional docent and help with estate sales, but we will miss her monthly presence and attention to details that is her hallmark. We threw her a surprise farewell with roses and champagne on August 28th in the Meyers House garden. From all of us on the Board, thank you Jane for all

you have accomplished to make our Meyers House so beautiful and George Gunn's 40th Anniversary Party so wonderful.

September 25th's Alameda Legacy Home Tour was a successful endeavor due to the wonderful homes and the dedication of the joint Alameda Architectural Preservation Society and Alameda Museum team. Many of the docents, owners and staff enjoyed the party afterward in the beautiful garden of Eugenie and John Thomson. While corporate sponsor Little House Cafe (affiliated with Perforce Software and their Foundation) underwrites the tour, it was via advertising and guest ticket purchases that funds are raised to benefit both non-profit organizations who are instrumental in helping retain Alameda's identity as a town that appreciates its past. Tour proceeds allow each to carry-on unique programs. The light rain did impact day-of-event sales, so it wasn't the sold out event I was predicting, but still very profitable. The light drizzle broke into sunshine later, so if you didn't attend, it was your loss because the houses were fantastic. Here's hoping next year's tour is even better so we can continue to thrive—keeping history alive by showcasing art, lectures, walking tours, and exhibits. We are looking for houses NOW for next year. Have one to suggest – maybe your own? Call me 510-865-1767 or email alamedahometour@netscape.net.

Election time is coming which means it is time to give us suggestions for new directors and renew your membership—see insert. We will mail out a special letter to current members by end of



Meyers House retirement party for Jane Burgelin (Center): Front: Gail Howell, Barbara Coapman, Holly Schmalenberger-Haugen, Gerry Warner, Margy Silver. Back: Virgil Silver, Claire Risley, Bob Risley, Ross Dileo, Jim McGrogan, and George Gunn.



October for nominations and then by end of November another mailing with the ballot. My goal in 2012 is hoping to focus more attention on the Meyers House and Gardens as a venue for generating revenue to support on-going maintenance. We have a goal to get the entire main house painted next Spring which will cost several thousand dollars. Some needed plumbing and porch roof repairs will commence, sooner than later. The grounds can be a wonderful place for civil group events, birthday or anniversary parties, small weddings, photo shoots, and art events. There is a special joint committee of AAPS and Museum members that meets as needed to oversee MHG projects. We welcome your help as we ramp up our efforts to promote increased usage of the property. Got an event but need a "place"? Call the Museum 510-521-1233 and we'll work out the arrangements.

Year-end brings up the Bang for the Buck/City Matching Grant promotion. For every dollar raised over an established 2006 amount, the City will match our funds up to almost \$4,000. Every member, adding \$10 or more to the annual dues amount, will get us to that figure. We know times are tough and many of you have had to cut back on non-essential expenses. I know I have. But history matters and the City match is used toward rent to warehouse the 60 year old collection. We've always met this challenge, so thank you in advance for your support. See insert for donation form.

I cannot thank the dedicated volunteers enough who helped me pull off a great Bay Area Historical House Museums meeting. At Alameda Museum: Diane Coler-Dark and Bonne Germain who managed to get a few Gift Shop sales and handed out souvenir house tour booklets. At the Meyers House, the thoroughly damp-by-day's-end team who saved the day with their clever lunch service: Valerie Turpen, Mary Fetherolf, Gail and Charlie Howell, Nancy Hird, Erika Hohendorf, Barbara Coapman, and Cheryl Berg our newest recruit. We own over a dozen small tables, some large serving tables, the table cloths, and can arrange for up to 120 chairs, so think about that next garden party and having it at the Meyers House. Call Robbie Dileo, 510-865-1767 or email damsel_d@pacbell.net

President, Alameda Museum



The Home Tour was completed with a party for docents, committee members, and homeowners at the home of Eugenie and John Thomson.

Left: Dianne Read and Janelle Spatz.



Nancy D'Amico, Rosemary McNally, Mary Fetherolf, Keri Spalding, and Brian McDonald.



Committee members Yorkman Lowe, Holly Sellers, Chuck Millar, Birgitt Evans, and Gail Howell.



What's New at the Meyers House & Gardens

Open House Was a Dazzler for Guests

Alameda Museum and the Meyers House were the locations for the Bay Area Historical House Museum (BAHHM) quarterly meeting on October 10th. About 30 representatives from several historic houses enjoyed light breakfast refreshments and a short business meeting with President Randy Hees from the Patterson House Museum at Ardenwood Historic Farm.

After the sharing of other house announcements, George and Robbie gave a presentation on the main museum including tour of exhibits and details on how we acquired the Meyers House. Rain thwarted the garden lunch setting, but the Studio and Architectural Exhibit were filled with tables and floral centerpieces when we arrived. Guests enjoyed the self-serve buffet and were amazed by the grounds, finding it impossible to believe it was the work of a single gifted City ARPD grounds keeper, Mulija Ejubovic.

Guests were stunned by the quality and quantity of beautiful objects inside the house. Many took notes from George on how to better care for and display collectibles. We are truly blessed that the Museum's Gift Shop brings in donations for sale that help us acquire lovely things. We can also essentially "store" items from the Museum collection by having them displayed at the house. No other historic house has that benefit. They also don't have the challenge of running a 60-year-old institution open 5 days a week with an art gallery filled by rotating displays. We impressed them, especially since we are a volunteer-run operation.

Several receive support from their city, usually in the form of a building, and some even receive salaries. Each group struggles with programs and fund raising, but every one thinks that having a house museum is critical to the history of their town and of high benefit to the community at large.

I want to thank all the docents who have selflessly fulfilled their duties at the Museum.



The Museum will be open on November 25, 26, & 27, the Thanksgiving weekend but will close after Sunday, December 18th and not reopen until January 4th.

There will be a **DOCENT GET-TOGETHER** December 22nd, at 2:00 p.m. at the Museum with light refreshments. Bring any questions you have and get them answered. **New recruits welcome.**



A guided tour of the exhibits will be given, so mark your calendar. Also, kindly get in touch with me at 510-865-1204 if you cannot meet your obligation so a substitute can be found.

Thank you, Ellen Chesnut

**ALAMEDA MUSEUM
IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS**

Many hands make light work and it's a chance to make new friends while helping us "preserve the past for the future".

CALL ROBBIE 510-865-1767 TO OFFER YOUR SERVICES



VOLUNTEERS: ALAMEDA MUSEUM & MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS

- Lou Baca
- Barbara Balderston
- Doris Bay
- Jim & Jane Burgelin
- Janine Carr
- Katherine Cavanaugh
- Ellen Chesnut
- Barbara Coapman
- Dorothy Coats
- Diane Coler-Dark
- Charles Daly
- Gail deHaan
- Ross & Robbie Dileo
- Marilyn Dodge
- Linda Domholt
- Joanne Dykema
- Caroline Erickson
- Pamela Ferrero
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- Norma Serles
- Margy & Virgil Silver
- Lois Singley
- Marcy Skala
- Lavonne & Fred Stittle
- Eugenie & John Thomson
- Ellen Tilden
- Ron Ucovich
- Henry Villareal
- Gerry Warner
- Robert Welch
- Mark White
- Joe Young
- All Directors

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 3 hours to make new friends? Come and spend it with us!

**Docent coordinator for main museum
Ellen Chesnut, 510-865-1204**

**Docent coordinator for Meyers House
Robbie Dileo, 510-865-1767**



MEYERS HOUSE GUILD

is a separate membership and donation category from Alameda Museum. Funds are used for the sole purpose of maintaining this gorgeous property. Guild members get invitations to MHG special events.

For more information call Robbie 510-865-1767.

Renewals after September continue your membership through the entire following year.



Thank you for your support!

Make check payable to Meyers House Guild.

Mail to: **Alameda Museum**

2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda CA 94501

Annual Guild Membership \$25

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Be a Docent

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A Closer Look at Soap

by Ron Ucovich

MAKING YOUR OWN SOAP WAS A LABORIOUS TASK. You would start with a tub of lard, then take some ashes out of the wood stove. You ran water through the ashes to percolate out the lye. The lard and lye were simmered over an open fire and stirred with a wooden paddle. After a few hours, the soap thickened and was poured into a metal pan to harden. In a couple of weeks, it was dry and ready to cut into cakes. Individually wrapped cakes of soap were first manufactured and sold in New York in 1830. Until then, factory soap was purchased at the dry goods store. The merchant merely hacked a chunk off a huge block of soap, and you would pay by the pound.

Castile soap (first produced in Castile, Spain), used olive oil instead of tallow. By adding brine to the boiling pot, the foamy suds would float to the top to be skimmed off and leaving behind the harsh lye and carbonate mineral matter. Mr. William Procter, a candle maker from Ohio, used this method to create what he called White Soap. People noticed that this frothy soap used to float in water, while other brands would sink. The customers called it "the floating soap."

Mr. Procter figured that customers would realize that it floats because it contains air bubbles, and they were getting less soap for their money. He decided to turn this to his advantage. He formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, James Gamble, and in 1879 they began to manufacture a floating soap which they called Ivory. They advertised it as being 99.44% pure (the remainder being alkali residue). During the 19th Century, Ivory led the market in sales.

Another candle maker, Mr. William Colgate, noticed how successfully the Ivory Company was doing with their olive oil soap. He experimented using various vegetable fats and discovered that palm oil mixed with olive oil made the best soap. In 1898 he started manufacturing his new soap which he named...[can you guess?...]Palmolive.

In 1895 Lever Brothers created an antiseptic soap for hospitals. They called it Lifebuoy Health Soap. When they started marketing to the general public under the name Lifebuoy, they had to coin the term "B.O." because during the Victorian Era, the term "body odor" was not acceptable in public advertising.

In 1890 an Oakland man named Francis Smith formed a company called the Pacific Coast Borax Company. He used a team of 20 mules to haul borax out of Death Valley. Soap manufacturers had been using fat to lift dirt from clothing, but fat does not mix with water. Hot water needed



to be used to rinse the oil off the clothing. Borax, when used as the surfactant, does mix with water, so it makes an effective laundry soap without having to use hot water.

Francis Smith, (by then known as "Borax" Smith), opened his processing plant in 1893 at Alameda Point. It was the largest borax refinery in the world, and one of the first reinforced concrete buildings in the United States. When the factory closed in 1930, it had to be leveled by dynamite. A small red brick storage building is all that remains today of this historic industry.

Borax was replaced by synthetic chemicals in 1933 when the first detergent (non oil-based soap) was created. It was called Dreft, but it still needed hot water to rinse the grime away. In 1943 the Tide Company introduced the first heavy-duty detergent. It kept the grime in suspension and could be rinsed away with hot or cold water. Tide became so popular that store owners were forced to limit the quantity purchased per customer.

In 1917 Edwin Cox was a door-to-door salesman in San Francisco. To promote sales of his aluminum cookware, he decided to offer a small gift to potential customers. He soaked steel wool pads in a thick soap, then he dried them in his oven, and he passed these out like business cards. Housewives liked his pads more than his pans, so he gave up the cookware business and sold nothing but steel wool pads. He called them the Save Our Saucepans pads, and his business skyrocketed. He later shortened the name to S.O.S.

Not all marketing schemes are successful. In 1982 the Sunlight dishwashing soap company mailed out free samples of their new product. The package promoted their "new and improved, lemon-scented liquid." The Poison Control Center in Maryland reported that in July of that year, 79 people mistook the samples as lemon juice, and they drank it.



2012 Alameda Museum Lectures & Future Events

- ▶ **Thursday March 29, 2012:** Authors and *Alameda Sun* executives Dennis Evanosky and Eric Kos: *Underneath It All: Alameda Infrastructure*.
- ▶ **Thursday April 26, 2012:** Judith Lynch: *Monuments of Alameda*.
- ▶ **Thursday May 31, 2012:** Author Inge Horton: *Early Women Architects of the East Bay*, featuring Mildred Meyers of Meyers house fame.
- ▶ **Thursday June 28, 2012:** Local author and transportation buff Grant Ute on his new book *A Century of Public Transportation in San Francisco*.
- ▶ **Thursday July 26, 2012:** We have invited Betty Marvin to either recreate her marvelous mimicry of Julia Morgan or to revisit Alameda architect A. W. Smith.
- ▶ **Thursday August 30, 2012:** Kevin "the Diligent" Frederick: *Research and Findings*: how we discovered the truth about Alameda's oldest commercial building, the Encinal Saloon, aka the storage structure for Gim's Chinese Restaurant.
- ▶ **Thursday September 27, 2012:** Joy Pratt: *Worthy Works*: the WPA in Alameda, based on research by Joy and Carol Chamberlin.

IN THE ART GALLERY

- ▶ **JANUARY:** Nautica Angilly and her group with mixed media, dance, poetry and celebration of Jack London's birthday.
- ▶ **APRIL: Kids & Queen Victoria**
Saturday April 7, 2012, 11:00 a.m. until Noon.
Queen Victoria will make the royal progress through the museum to meet the artists and view their work.

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Home Tour Trepidations

by Judith Lynch

WHEN CHUCK MILLAR AND ROBBIE DILEO APPROACHED ME about opening my home for the September tour, I hesitated. "Who would pay to see my house?" I asked Chuck, who admitted that it would not really matter if people liked the place, as we would already have their ticket money. Curator George Gunn was most persuasive. In a lengthy phone message, he praised the color scheme, the contemporary art, the antique crockery, and the brightly-patterned rugs. After relenting, I used the tour date as a deadline to get done what should have been done all along.

Three of my left-hand neighbors proposed to replace part of the chain-link fence in the backyard with a wooden one, so that got done. The foundation on my 1907 Shingle style house was failing, so John Jameson and his crew spent the summer replacing it, so that got done. My longtime gardener Amanda Shepard gallantly tried to keep up with the depredations wrought on her woodland bower by the jackhammers,



Designer Lary Huls building the gate.
Photos: Judith Lynch.

the hoses, the cement trucks, the wheelbarrows, the concrete siphon . . . and the accidental havoc created by six fellows lounging around the Jiffyjohn to catch a smoke before work. Tons of tanbark later, the yard was presentable, so that got done.

The new wood fence made the leftover chain link fence and gate on the other side look sad and shabby. I needed a gate designer, so Amanda suggested Lary Huls (yes he does spell his name that way). He has a deep and quiet manner, and he studied the house upstairs and down, inside and out and consulted references on the Craftsman era garden. Then he proposed a fence of massive redwood posts and a muscular gate with a center arch and side slung rectangles. The gate was based on the Palladian window at the front of the house, part of the original design by architect A.W. Smith. His idea had deft touches such as pointy headed copper post covers, oval filets of dark redwood as a color counterpoint, and my favorite detail, a small round metal device called a "malleable washer," a tame name for a fitting right off a steam locomotive.

Lary got huge redwood posts from a lumberyard in Richmond and recycled the timber shorings of an old train tunnel near San Quentin. Then he deposited a shop full of machinery in the back yard. There he and assistant David McLean planed down the posts, leaving a blizzard of sawdust that Amanda cleverly worked into mulch. The dilapidated chain link trappings were replaced with a temporary orange plastic grid. The posts went in, the rafters went in, the beams went in, the copper went on, the washers went on . . . Last of all, they built the gate. Its fanlight arch was composed of two hefty pieces of redwood and carted to Berkeley where Lary shaped it with an industrial band saw. We almost made the house tour deadline; foul weather and a distressed tree got in the way. Even



Docent Sofia Orduña next to a plywood cutout of AAPS member Ken Carvalho's grandfather used for tour signage.

though the gate wasn't finished, tour guests admired the fence, saw the final design, and read about the process in a pamphlet called "Gatebook."

Many friends came to be docents during the tour, including the Orduña family: Rodrigo, Laurel, and Sofia, a star in third grader at Otis School. Sofia made history as the first elementary school student ever to act as a docent, this in more than 25 years of home tours! She presided over the dining room with grace and told our guests, "The table is set with Flow Blue china from the Victorian era. The huge white napkins are from Else Reisner. She brought two dozen monogrammed napkins with her in the one suitcase she was allowed to bring out. She gave them to Judith, who collects old linen . . . and uses it!"

Then Sofia recalled how she and classmates made their own tour of the house. "The first graders and their families always come here to eat lunch. Then the kids sit on the floor and sing while Judith plays the piano. It was built around 1910, the same era as the house."

Note: You can contact Amanda Shepard at 650-776-7480 and Lary Huls at 510-393-9581.



The malleable washer.



How Come It's Illegal To Deface Coins?

by Ron Ucovich

IN THE YEAR 1809 AN ENGLISHMAN NAMED JOHN WRIGHT did experiments trying to find new uses for electricity. He discovered that if you take a metal object (e.g. a steel fork) and wire it to the negative terminal of a battery, and wire another metal (e.g. copper) to the positive terminal, then you submerge the two objects in electrolyte (saline and metallic ion solution), when you apply the electric current, the copper ions (positive charge) will be attracted to the fork (negative charge), and the fork will be laminated with a coating of copper. Mr. Wright discovered that potassium cyanide made a suitable electrolyte for precious metals, and thus he was able to produce tableware and jewelry plated in gold or silver.

Explorers, trappers, miners, soldiers, and sailors had to spend many months away from a food source. They had a serious need for non-corroding steel food containers. In 1825 they started to electroplate cans with a thin coating of tin, which combined the strength of steel with the corrosion resistance of tin. By the Gold Rush days, tin-plated cans were in popular use. They learned, however, that the lead solder used to seal the can could leach into the food and cause lead poisoning. In the 1860s cans were sealed by folding and rolling the can's rim. Lead was no longer used, but the cans were difficult to cut open. In 1870 a can opener with a rotating wheel was invented, and tin-plated cans have been safely used ever since.

For corrosion resistance, electroplating with zinc is most efficient. Zinc resists rust caused by moisture, acid, and even salt water. When electroplated, the zinc is permanently bonded to the steel core. It is not just a sealer, like paint, and it doesn't peel or chip away from the steel. By the 1870s, factories were producing galvanized buckets, washboards, bathtubs, laundry tubs, and milk pails. Corrugated galvanized panels were used as sheeting for sheds and barns, and longer panels were manufactured for roofing material on factories and warehouses.

Now, whenever a new technology is invented, there is always someone looking for a way to abuse it. And so it was with a man named Joshua Tatum. In 1883, the Mint changed the design of the 5¢ piece. In doing so, it unknowingly presented a great opportunity to Mr. Tatum. He noticed that the new nickel was about the same size as the \$5 gold coin. He also realized that there was nothing on the coin to denote what the denomination was. The new coin was called the "V" nickel due to the fact that a large Roman numeral for "five" was stamped on the reverse of the coin. Young Mr. Tatum struck up a partnership with a friend who was skilled in the art of electroplating. Using a 24-carat gold electroplate, they were able to convert many thousands of the new 5¢ pieces into what appeared to be \$5 gold coins.

Joshua went from town to town, hitting every store he could find and purchasing five-cent items. Each time he would lay down one of his phony \$5 gold coins, the clerk would respond by returning \$4.95 change. This was apparently a very profitable business for several months. After it was finally realized that the \$5 gold coins were only nickels, Josh was quickly apprehended and prosecuted for his crime.

A very strange thing happened in court. Mr. Tatum was acquitted of the major charge because none of the witnesses could admit that he actually told them the coins were \$5 gold pieces. You see, he couldn't! Josh Tatum was a deaf mute and was unable

to say anything. All he ever did was put the coins on the counter and accept, in return, the purchased 5¢ items and a gift of \$4.95 in change, which he happily accepted.

Mr. Tatum's efforts prompted the government to immediately suspend minting the new nickel and change the die to include the word "cents" under the Roman numeral "V" on the coin's back side. The ridges on the edge were removed to distinguish nickels from more valuable coins. A new law stated that from that day forward, it was illegal to change, alter, or modify U.S. currency in any way.

By the way, Joshua Tatum's phony \$5 gold pieces can still be bought today through coin dealers. Ironically, these nickels still sell for \$4.95.



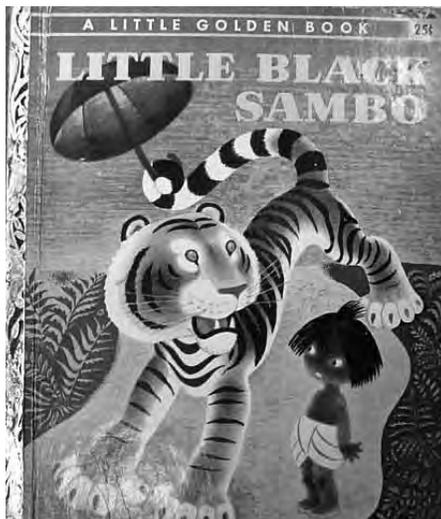
The 1883 \$5 gold piece was the same size as the nickel, making it easy to confuse the two for a loss of \$4.95 when making change.



Pardon My Insensitivity

by Ron Ucovich

THERE WAS AN INDIAN FABLE WRITTEN IN 1899 called "Little Black Sambo." Sambo was a dark-skinned Indian boy who goes into the woods wearing colorful new clothes, shoes, and an umbrella. He encounters four tigers who threaten to kill him, and to save his life, he offers the tigers his new outfit, which the conceited tigers quickly snatch away. The tigers fight so jealously over the clothing that they chase each other around a tree until they are reduced to a pool of butter. Sambo reclaims his clothes and eats the delicious butter on a stack of pancakes.



The story was meant to be an allegory dealing with the consequences of pride and vanity. Since Little Sambo was dark-skinned, he was later portrayed as an African boy, despite the fact that there are no tigers in Africa. In the 1950s, a chain of restaurants opened, and the owners thought it would be cute to use the Sambo name and image as a theme for their pancake house. The

name was considered clever until the NAACP sued the restaurant claiming the name was a racial slur. They forced the company to shorten their name from Sambo's to Sam's.

In the 1800s there was a black-face minstrel comedy called "Zip Coon." The word "coon" came to refer to a good-natured black person. Since blacks were famous for their Southern-fried chicken, and since railroad porters and stewards were usually black, a chain of restaurants originating in Salt Lake City adopted a company logo portraying a black porter carrying a tray of chicken. The restaurant was named the Coon Chicken Inn. By the 1950s, the word "coon" had become derogatory, and the NAACP forced the chain out of business.

In the 1800s, a common occupation of blacks was as a horse groom or stable boy. Lawn jockeys were a popular yard decoration in upper-class homes. The original lawn jockey was a black youth dressed in jockey's clothing and holding up one hand as though taking the reins of a horse. His name was "Jocko," and he was portrayed with extremely exaggerated features: glossy black skin, large black eyes with white margins, flat nose, thick red lips, and curly black hair. These lawn decorations are now considered racially insensitive, and the few remaining Jockos have since been repainted with pink skin.



Because the American Indian introduced the Europeans to tobacco, depiction of Native Americans has always been used to advertise tobacco products. Ever since the 18th Century, you could find a life-size wooden carving of an Indian brave guarding the entrance to tobacco shops. He would be dressed in festive clothing of furs and feathers. His expressionless, stoic face was often streaked with colorful war paint. Increased political correctness has called for an end to the use of the cigar store Indian, and has relegated existing carvings to museums and antique shops.

The Frito Bandito was the cartoon mascot of a popular snack food company back in the 1960s. The character was voiced by the Looney Toons voice actor, Mel Blanc, creator of the Speedy Gonzales character. The bandito was modeled after the stereotypical image of a Mexican bandit. He sported a black moustache, a huge straw sombrero, a 6-shooter on each hip, and a double-slung bandoleer across his chest. He spoke broken English and robbed strangers of their Frito corn chips. The commercial included a song that said, "Ay, ay, ay, ay! I am dee Frito Bandito. I like Frito's Corn Chips, I love dem, I do. I want Frito Corn Chips. I'll take dem from you." The Anti-Defamation League prompted the Frito-Lay Company to change their icon to American cowboys, which they subsequently named the Muncha Bunch Boys.

Continued on page 15...



Pardon My Insensitivity...Continued from page 14

Americans with Disabilities were harsh critics of Mel Blanc because of all his cartoon characters who had speech impediments. A "lisp" is any mispronunciation of the letter "S." Daffy Duck, Sylvester the Cat, and Tweety Pie all had lisps of various kinds. Elmer Fudd couldn't pronounce his "R"s, and Porky Pig had a stutter. Foghorn Leghorn had a perseverative, I SAY, a perseverative speech impediment. The ADA people sued Looney Toons for demeaning people with speech defects, but since it was clear that the cartoons were all loveable characters, there was no derogatory intent, and the case was dismissed.



Just as Aunt Jemima wore a white apron and red bandana, Uncle Ben's rice used the image of an elderly black gentleman wearing a white shirt and black bow tie to suggest that he was a domestic servant. During the 19th Century, Negro domestic workers were never given the title of Mr. or Miss. They were always called aunt or uncle even though they were not blood relatives. Mr. and Miss were titles used by blacks when addressing their employers and even their employer's children. Critics of the rice company claim that calling their product Uncle Ben's is tantamount to names like Uncle Remus or Uncle Tom.



This understated Italianate residence is one of Alameda's official "Monuments," known in most cities as landmarks. All our monuments will be celebrated in the April 2012 lecture. Photo: Judith Lynch.

Lectorial Luminaries

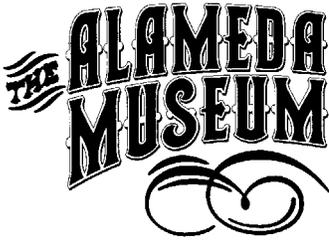
by Judith Lynch

WHEN I FIRST PROPOSED THAT THE MUSEUM HOST a lecture series in 2000, I was thinking to organize it for just one year. Soon it will be a dozen years, and we can be proud of the quality of our speakers. If you want to see an alphabetical list of most of them, please check our website. These people are friends of the Museum, they never get paid to speak and often donate copies of their books to our gift shop.

Our roster for 2012 includes new voices: Joy Pratt and her compatriot Carol Chamberlin were totally inspired by Gray Brechin's museum lecture on the New Deal programs, in particular those of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Gray invited our audience to help him in the quest for WPA activities in Alameda, and the two women tracked down all manner of things from schools and bridges to storm drains and tree plantings.

Also new in our series is Kevin Frederick, whose dogged scrutiny of electronic archives, U.S. Census material, newspapers on microfilm, and oral history enabled us to identify, validate, and then preserve what turned out to be Alameda's oldest commercial building. Kevin will show artifacts unearthed by Ross Dileo when the Linoaks Motel was torn down to make way for the new main library.

If you would like to underwrite one of these lectures, please call or email Judith, 510-748-0796 or judithal@comcast.net. Becoming a sponsor only costs \$150 and for that you get to introduce the speaker. (Unless you would rather not!)



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Recipes can be sent by email to: folcookbook@gmail.com or
 by U.S. mail to P.O. Box 1024, Alameda, CA 94501. Please
 write "recipe" on the envelope. There is a suggested format
 available and do provide a phone number with your submission.
 There is a five (5) recipe limit per FOL member*. Please send
 recipes by November 15, 2011.

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 with your recipe? Annual memberships (a bargain) get you
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