

# Alameda Museum Quarterly

## AN ARCHITECTURAL ODYSSEY

*by Woody Minor*

**O**VER THE YEARS, the proximity of San Francisco brought professional architects into close contact with Alameda. The result was an upping of the architectural ante—an accumulation of notable works unusual for a small suburb city. The early tradition of resident San Francisco architects continued into the 20th century with the likes of Henry H. Meyers, Carl Werner, and Andrew T. Hass. All left a legacy and none more so than Meyers, whose civic monuments help to define the city—and whose residence is its sole house museum. His fascinating career parallels the ascendency of the profession in the Bay Area, and warrants a closer look.

Bearing the name of a newly elected governor, Henry Haight Meyers was born in 1867 in the southern Alameda County town of Alvarado—the oldest of nine children of Jacob and Mary Meyers. His father came to California in 1859, crossing the plains by wagon train when he was 23; seven years later he married Mary Eva Kitterlie, who'd arrived by steamship via Panama. Jacob was a hotelkeeper in Alvarado until 1873, when he moved to Livermore to open that town's first hotel. In 1876 he changed his occupation to contractor. His oldest son, who went to work for him right out of high school, might easily have become a traditional designer-builder; instead, he took the bold step of pursuing a career in architecture. Several of his seven brothers would fill the gap, going on to partner with their father.

By 1890 Meyers was in San Francisco, apprenticing in the office of Percy & Hamilton—a sterling choice. A prestigious firm known for stylistic and structural innovation, the partnership of George W. Percy and Frederick Hamilton enjoyed a regional clientele and robust practice, as designers of business blocks, factories, wineries, churches, museums, and residences. Meyers



Henry H. Meyers



Draftsmen at work in Percy & Hamilton's office in San Francisco. Meyers took this photograph in the 1890s. Photos: Meyers House & Garden Collection.

worked in the office ten years, rising to chief draftsman by the end of the decade. In 1894, the young architect married Bertha Sophia May, the daughter of German immigrants who had settled in Alvarado during the gold rush. The Meyers and May families were close, the children like cousins; Henry had known Bertha since childhood. Her late father was a meat merchant who became one of the county's principal landowners. The financial resources of the Mays would help further Meyers' fledgling career.

Joined by Mrs. May, the newlyweds moved to Alameda, renting a house on St. Charles Street around the corner from a train stop. Local voters had just approved bonds for a new city hall, based on the competition-winning design by Percy & Hamilton. The couple settled into

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**Architectural Odyssey...Continued from page 1**

married life, Henry commuting to work across the bay. Shortly before Christmas in 1897, the family moved into their new home on Alameda Avenue. Designed by Meyers, the tasteful Colonial Revival residence was built by his father and brothers; it closely resembled a house designed around the same time for his newly married sister in Livermore. The couple's first child, Mildred, was born in 1898; a second daughter, Edith, arrived in 1900, followed by Jeanette in 1905. The family decamped to Dry Creek Ranch to spend summers in a veranda-shaded cottage also designed by Meyers; the nearly 1,500-acre property of Mrs. May spread over the hills east of Alvarado. These town and country dwellings would serve as the family homes for nearly a century.

The turning point in Meyers' career came with the sudden deaths of Hamilton, in 1899, and Percy, in 1900, when both were around 50. With the likely backing of his mother-in-law, Meyers acquired the business and supervised the completion of unfinished projects. By 1903 he had taken on a younger architect, Clarence R. Ward, as partner. Meyers & Ward rose to prominence after the 1906 earthquake, producing plans for office buildings, warehouses, and factories in the burned district of San Francisco; their masterpiece was the 1908 Alaska Commercial Building, a sumptuous granite-clad tower on California Street (which preservationists tried, and failed, to save in the 1970s). The firm designed houses, apartments, offices, stores, and banks in cities like Alameda, Berkeley, Oakland, Stockton, and Sacramento—even a couple of telegraph cable stations on Guam and Midway. When the partnership ended, in 1910, Meyers celebrated his twentieth year in the profession; he was 43 years old and a well-established architect.

In coming decades his name only grew in stature. From his lofty office at California and Montgomery, atop the Kohl Building—a George W. Percy skyscraper whose completion he supervised—Henry H. Meyers oversaw a wide range of projects in the city and region. His most important new client was the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, beginning in 1912; he soon became the county's official architect, a position he held, alongside his private practice, until his retirement in 1936. His county projects would include portions of the Alameda County Infirmary in San Leandro; a pair of sprawling tuberculosis sanatoria near Livermore; Highland Hospital in Oakland; the Posey Tube Portals in Oakland and Alameda; and ten veterans memorial buildings. By the end of his career the architect



*Alaska Commercial Building, San Francisco, 1908. Meyers & Ward, architect.*

had scores of major commissions to his credit.

Alameda accrued a varied collection of Meyers' work, seven or more houses, two commercial buildings, two churches, two school additions, and two county commissions. The houses include five Gold Coast residences built between 1899 and 1908. The commercial buildings, erected in 1910 and 1913 on the 1400 block Park Street, are notable for their terra cotta and marble trim. First Presbyterian Church is a classical temple rendered in wood, replete with Corinthian columns and arcaded windows, while the warm brick façades of Twin Towers Methodist Church recall Italian Renaissance sources. The county-funded Veterans Memorial Building, like the portals of Posey Tube, mixes Mediterranean and Moderne motifs. This 1929 monument was the capstone to an architecturally distinguished civic center that had its

start with Percy & Hamilton's 1896 City Hall, a testament to Meyers' abiding presence in Alameda.

The family home on Alameda Avenue changed with the years. The addition of a gracious side garden, in 1917, coincided with the death of Meyers' mother; screened by an elegant pergola, it included a large new garage (the architect loved fine cars). One by one, the girls graduated from high school and headed off to UC Berkeley. Mildred received an architecture degree in 1921, at a time when few women entered the profession, and went to work for her father. Edith graduated from medical school in 1926, destined for a notable career as a pediatrician; she was the last to complete her education, and the family celebrated by going abroad for nine months. The 1936 retirement studio Mildred designed for her father, a repository for his library and drawings that became her own studio, stood on a leafy rear lot facing Central Avenue. This serene little building in the Spanish style completed the Alameda compound.

Henry Meyers spent his last years serving on the city's planning board and pursuing his love of gardening. He died in 1943, at age 75, followed in 1947 by Bertha. The daughters, now in their forties, never married, devoting themselves to professional and charitable activities. In 1978, Mildred and Jeanette donated Dry Creek Ranch to the East Bay Regional Park District, retaining ownership of the cottage and gardens. With Jeanette's passing in 1993, the Dry Creek property reverted to the park district and the Alameda property became Alameda's first and only house museum—legacies of a remarkable family and two memorable architects.



ALAMEDA MUSEUM QUARTERLY • ISSUE NUMBER 4 • FALL 2013

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## From the Curator's Desk

by George C. Gunn



Y profound thanks for the generosity of the membership, general public, East Bay Community Foundation, Joe Young, and the Museum Board of Directors for funding the following list of projects completed at the Meyers House.

**Roofing:** library wing, front porch, back porch sunroom, back bedroom, and the former pump-house. All gutters were cleaned, repaired, or newly added.

**Carpentry work** mostly for dry rot issues: Pergola, gates, column posts, balustrades and pump-house doors.

**Landscaping:** tree trimming, removal of diseased or end-of-life vegetation, addition of plants, ground cover, and new sod in both front and back yards. New sprinkler system in the front and upgrades to existing system for rear gardens.

**Cement work:** Sidewalk repairs to enhance public access, and by early October, aggregate with brick embellishments inside the pergola to replace loose gravel.

**Painting:** Main house, pergola, and all out-buildings in historical palate reflective of the original colors when first constructed.

As can be seen by the list, the last few months have been very productive. The celebration on August 17th, with many of the donors present, was a festive and delightful event—a chance to reflect and share our accomplishments. There are more projects. The new shed is nearing completion for storage of event tables and chairs. With future funding, an ADA restroom is possible and replacement of back yard gravel with a solid surface.

Robbie Dileo and I have the goal of making the Meyers House & Garden self-supporting by increasing the use of the facility so it is not a financial burden on the museum. We want it to be a showplace for the City and an asset to the community.

George C. Gunn  
Curator, Alameda Museum

## LEGACY SOCIETY

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 call 510-521-1233.**

**THE COMPLETE FLYER IS AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM**

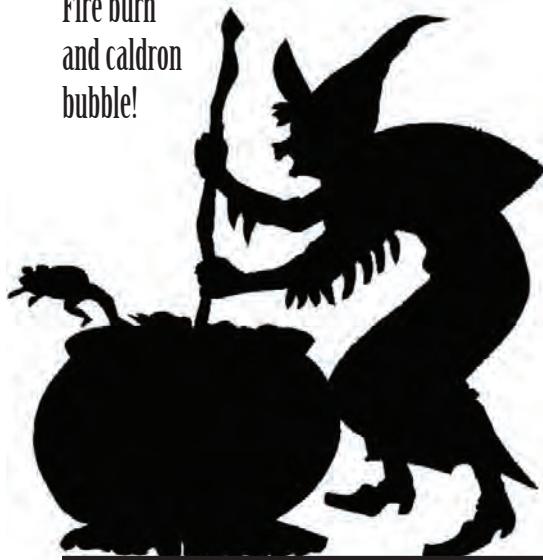
# Women and Their Brooms

by Ron Ucovich

**A BESOM MAID IS A WOMAN** who makes besom brooms for a living. A besom broom is a crude type of sweeping tool which was used in the 18th and 19th Centuries. They are sometimes called "outdoor brooms" when sold in gardening shops today. They differ from conventional brooms in that they use twigs instead of straw, their binding uses split willow stems instead of string, and they are round instead of flat. Witches are always depicted riding on besom brooms.

Witches and brooms just seem to go together. During the Middle Ages, herbs and potions were used for recreational, as well as, pharmacological purposes. Shakespeare's plays often featured old shrews brewing very toxic ingredients such as jimsonweed, devil's weed, mad apple, belladonna, mandrake, henbane, and deadly nightshade. These poisons were not intended to kill the victim, but rather to drug him into a state of psychotropic delirium. The ugly old witch would recite some magic words similar to what Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth: "Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn and caldron bubble," and the victim would fall into a state of psychedelic somnambulism.

Fire burn  
and caldron  
bubble!



The idea that witches fly on broomsticks comes from an ancient practice among adventuresome young women of that era. A toxic fungus develops on stale rye bread. It is called "ergot," and if ingested, it can be a powerful hallucinogenic, however its effects upon the liver are lethal. Liver damage, however, can be averted if the woman absorbs this drug through her vaginal tissues. The ergot ointment could be applied to the smooth handle of her broom and massaged into her genital tissues. The medicinal effects would produce bizarre hallucinations, as well as intense orgasms... an experience not accessible to men.

To a casual observer, witnessing such a sight would have been terrifying. After the woman awoke, she would often describe flying through the air and visiting strange and exotic places, much like the Hippie Generation would describe their experiences on LSD. By studying archaic folklore and artwork, we have learned that this popular medieval practice was the source of the legend that witches once flew on broomsticks.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, women would cook in an open hearth. Ashes and soot required constant cleaning, so women invented a hearth broom. Instead of a long handle, it had short knob of fibers tied in a bundle. These brushes were used for cleaning ashes out of tight corners or for dusting soot off the mantle. In America we call these "whisk brooms," but in England they were called "dust brooms," and this explains why we call the shovel used to pick up the ashes a "dust pan."

Besides cooking your food, the hearth was also used for heating your

*Besom brooms use twigs instead of straw, their binding uses split willow stems, and they are round instead of flat.*

home. Firewood, however, presented a great fire hazard because pressures would build up in the burning wood causing loud pops to eject burning embers onto your shingled roof. There was no way you could extinguish a roof fire, so your only alternative was to grab whatever valuables you could carry, and stand back to watch your house burn to the ground.



For this reason, England turned to coal for a safer fuel, but coal left behind a creosote residue which would build up and obstruct the ventilation. Thus was born the need to hire a chimney sweep to clear the smokestack of the tar residue. In London, the problem was so severe that Queen Victoria decreed that every chimney be cleaned regularly, and stiff penalties were exacted against violators who put their neighbor's house in jeopardy.

In London, tenement houses had a complex system of small interconnected flues, all leading to a central chimney. An adult could not fit into the pipes, so a chimney man would rent a small boy from the village orphanage. Sometimes, destitute parents would sell their children into indentured servitude for a very small amount of money. The work was very hazardous. Some children suffocated from lack of oxygen; others were burned to death; still others were crushed to death by crumbling, dilapidated chimneys. The boys who survived usually died later from respiratory diseases caused by breathing soot, smoke, and creosote gasses.

In 1864, the chimney broom was invented. It was made of whale bone, which made it durable enough to loosen even the most stubborn tar deposits. The brush was equipped

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**Brooms... Continued from page 4**

with a set of extension poles, so the flues could now be scrubbed from the rooftop, and chimney boys no longer needed to climb inside the pipes.

Chimney sweeping now became an adult occupation, but the job still had no dignity and the pay was very poor. To elevate his social status, the sweeper would trade his services with the village funeral director in exchange for old clothing. The outfit consisted of a black top hat and a black dress coat with long tails. When the art of chimney sweeping came to America, this funeral attire had already become the conventional uniform of the trade.

In 1906, a door-to-door broom salesman founded a broom and brush company in Hartford, Connecticut. His name was Alfred Fuller, and it was his idea to custom make brushes that were specific for each task you needed to perform. He interviewed housewives, janitors and housekeepers,

and then he designed all his brushes with a specific purpose in mind. He hired the best salesmen he could find, and he paid them on commission. His company logo was: "Make it



A master chimney sweep and his apprentice boy, at the end of the 19th century.  
Photo: Wikipedia.

work, make it last, and guarantee it." Within a few years, Mr. Fuller owned a multi-million dollar enterprise.

During World War II, Mr. Fuller's street vendors were recruited for the war effort. Mr. Fuller turned to women to sell his brushes, and he learned that they were better than the men at selling to housewives. The industry prospered so well that other companies started to use an all-female sales force: Débutante Cosmetics, Avon Cosmetics, Stanley Home Products, and Tupperware. However, with more women joining the labor market, fewer housewives were at home to answer the doorbell. These companies soon had to turn to a new marketing strategy...mail-order catalogues.

We see now, that from the witches of old England, to the Fuller Brush Lady of the 1960s, women have played an invaluable role in the broom industry.

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# The Perfect Jelly Bean

by Ron Ucovich

**IN 1825 IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT PECTIN COULD BE EXTRACTED FROM CITRIC FRUITS,** which was originally used as a congealing agent in jams and jellies. They soon discovered that small drops of concentrated pectin could be coated with sugar and eaten as candies. They called them "gum drops." By the early 1900s, these candies added some corn syrup and were formed into the shape of beans. They were coated with a sugar glaze, and the name was then changed to "jelly beans."

At first, jelly beans were all the same color and flavor, but in the 1930s they were made into a seasonal confection to celebrate Easter. In keeping with the popular myth that the Easter bunny laid festively colored eggs, jelly beans were made in festive colors which corresponded to their mild fruit flavors. You bought jelly beans at the penny candy store until the late 1940s, when they began to wrap candies in polyethylene bags which were then sold at the corner grocery store.

The word "jellybean" is an old slang term for a dandy... a flashy dude who dresses flamboyantly to attract women, but has little character or personality to his credit. They called him that because jelly beans used to be all white in the center. The color and flavor were only in the sugar coating. Over the years, this expression has been replaced by other transient terms popularized by Hollywood show tunes: fancy Dan, dapper Dan, curbstone cutie, drugstore cowboy, and rhinestone cowboy.

For many years, it was thought that your taste buds could perceive only four distinct tastes (sour, bitter, salty and sweet), but this does not account for the vast variety of unique flavors which we experience. Scientists can now identify over 4,000 flavors which we can distinguish. Taste buds work in combination with your nose to identify flavors, and it may take hundreds of chemical combinations to produce a single fruit flavor. The actual tasting is a process done in your nose, not on your tongue. This is why you can't taste foods when you have a cold.

Until the Computer Age, creating artificial flavors was done on a hit-and-miss basis. With the help of a computer, however, technicians can vaporize a food product, and the computer can then identify the odor's molecular structure. With this formula, the technician can chemically reproduce that specific flavor. Paint stores use this same

process to replicate colors. A computer will analyze a paint sample, and will generate the chemical formula which will reproduce the original color.

Since 1869, the Goelitz Candy Company has been a leader in the candy industry. They are best known for their unique creations, such as mini jelly beans, mello-cremes, candy corn, gummy bears, and gummy worms. In 1976, they opened a subdivision hoping to create a perfect jelly bean. They used real fruit juices and natural flavors whenever possible to produce better flavor, and the flavoring and coloring penetrated the entire bean, not just the glaze. Their new factory was named Jelly Belly, and their logo was, "The original gourmet jelly bean."

The first Jelly Bellies were fruit flavored: Very Cherry, Tangerine, Lemon Drop, Green Apple, Grape Jelly, Mango, and Juicy Pear. Then, the company began to use computers to scientifically reproduce distinct flavors. They were then able to manufacture very creative taste sensations: Bubble Gum, Strawberry Cheesecake, Buttered Popcorn, Cream Soda, Tutti-Fruitti, Margarita, Piña Colada, and Cotton Candy.

In the late 1990s, a fictional character named Harry Potter invaded the world of literature. Harry is a wizard with magical powers who lives in a world of non-magical people. He is conflicted between one world where he is an average teenager who goes to school, plays with his friends and develops interesting friendships, and a sorcery world plagued with monsters, evil, treachery, and death.

Harry's world of wizardry encompasses every vile and disgusting aspect of life, which for some reason appeals to a juvenile mentality. The Jelly Belly Company decided to capitalize upon this mania with their line of offensive and repugnant flavors, based upon a product mentioned in the

Harry Potter stories. These tasty confections are called Bertie Bott's Beans, and their most popular flavors are: sausage, soap, vomit, black pepper, grass, sardine, horseradish, booger, spinach, pickle, dirt, earthworm, earwax, and rotten egg.

The next step for the Jelly Belly Company toward achieving the perfect jelly bean was to introduce their line of gourmet flavor medleys. You can now buy a box of jelly beans in epicurean categories, such as the Chocolate Dips assortment. Other popular gourmet assortments are: Sunkist Citrus Mix, Soda Pop Shoppe, Ice Cream Parlor, Snapple Mix, Smoothie Blend, and Cocktail Classics. In my opinion, the Jelly Belly Company has finally reached the pinnacle of perfection. They have turned the casual

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**{ 1 Top Banana + 1 Cream Soda + 1 Coconut = Banana Cream Pie }**

**Jelly Bean...Continued from page 6**

pastime of eating jelly beans into an epicurean contest. Jelly Bellies have always been coated with distinctive colors and markings to clearly identify each flavor. You know what the flavor is before you taste it. Now, they have a medley assortment which challenges you to identify a flavor without this identification.

The game is called "Beanboozled." This is an activity which should be attempted by only the most discriminating of palates. The jelly beans are made in pairs with two different flavors having the same color on the outside. The flavors are similar, so it takes a highly trained connoisseur to distinguish between them. A light blue bean, for example, could be either blueberry, or toothpaste. Other popular pairings are: top banana — pencil

shavings; peach — barf; caramel corn — moldy cheese; chocolate pudding — canned dog food; juicy pear — booger; coconut — baby wipes; strawberry jam — centipede; buttered popcorn — rotten egg; licorice — skunk.

Jelly beans have come a long way in the last 200 years. I think the Jelly Belly Company has finally achieved their goal... they have finally achieved the perfect gourmet jelly bean.



*A stylish hat of 1870 featuring an entire Egret.*

## Keep it Under your Hat!

by Ron Ucovich

**THE NEXT TIME YOU VISIT THE ALAMEDA MUSEUM,** check out our showcase display of ladies' accessories. You will find a fine selection of elegant Victorian hatpins. Their function was to secure Milady's hat, but they also made a public statement of a lady's wealth, social status, and sense of fashion.

The popularity of hat pins pinnacled between 1880 and 1920. The flappers of the Roaring Twenties set the trend toward smaller hats and shorter hair. Ostentatiously oversized hats lost all appeal in the fashion world.

During the 1800s, hat pins were painstakingly fashioned by hand, which resulted in small amounts of pins being available for public demand. To meet domestic needs, stores began to import elegant hatpins from France, which began to have a negative impact on the balance of trade. In 1820, Congress passed a law restricting the sale of pins to two days per year—the first and second of January. This law, and similar laws which restricted imports, led to a tradition

which today we call "January sales." The fashion-conscious ladies of society saved their pocket money for this January sale, which led to the expression "spending your pin money."

During the 1800s, hats grew larger and more elaborate. The movie industry of the Twentieth Century introduced actresses like Lillian Russell and Diamond Lil, who popularized flamboyant hats, which the ladies



of refined social status were quick to emulate.

In 1913 the Audubon Society was created to prevent the massive slaughter of birds. Hunters had decimated more than 60 species just to fill the demand for large, colorful bird feathers for hat decorations. Egret, peacock, heron, spoonbill, and ostrich feathers were particularly prized. Spoonbill feathers sold for \$80 an ounce—three times their weight in gold.

When the giant hatpins reached the size of a small sword, the public began to realize that these might be used as weapons. In 1908, a group of suffragettes were brought to court for disorderly conduct while demanding the right to vote. The judge, fearing that the ladies might incite a riot, ordered them to remove their hats and hatpins. Illinois was the first state to enact a law limiting hatpins to nine inches. Other states followed suit. Some states required a cap to cover the tip of the pin to prevent accidental injuries to innocent passersby.

Our society has seen many changes in the past 100 years. Today, our legislature is having heated debates about whether to allow citizens to own automatic weapons to protect themselves, while 100 years ago, a little old lady could be arrested for wearing a hatpin that was more than nine inches long.



## From the President's Desk

by Robbie Dileo

Falling into place... what a year. Most of the goals for the Meyers House with the funds available were accomplished. Certainly, it was the largest project undertaken since we established the museum part of it in 1996/97. George and I had quite a bit of practice under our collective belts, and we added some excellent volunteers along the way.

Back in 1990/91 the main museum moved from the old auto-shop at the high school to 2324 Alameda Avenue. It was not desired, it was required. With City funding support, we packed up with the help of the Fire Dept. via Archie Waterbury, an amazing ex-fire chief, who made it happen. Some of you will recall the "100 Years Ago Today" pieces he did for the *Quarterly*. The board president hired consultants for a new museum – a major re-visioning design. It exhausted all of our funds and lacked member support. That is when George Gunn and I made a pact to build a museum we could be proud of and do it with our last \$1,200 dollars. Yes, we were broke, but not broken. My association with Bill Galli and his family of contractors started with the rebuilding of our museum to best showcase our collection. Those partition walls have withstood many exhibit changes and he earned a lifetime membership for his efforts on our behalf. Once a board member, we have remained friends these past 24 years because we understood commitment to a cause and the hard work needed to accomplish goals, in spite of nay sayers.

Most museum projects are done on a shoestring budget – possible because of thousands of hours of volunteer work and scrounging materials from garages and off the streets. Video store display cases, furniture without glass shelves, we salvaged and fixed. Back in 1994,

Home Tour proceeds made the Meyers House Museum possible. My daughter Becky took her first real steps in 1995 out in the gravel near the Architectural Exhibit. It was during a break from stripping woodwork in the MH master bedroom. It took a year to get the MH museum ready. When I see it today, compared to then, I am amazed by what George has created. We have continued to make improvements in contents and telling the story of the Meyers family. Yes, we have tackled BIG projects over the years. Hey, that flood and total redo of the museum in 2007 wasn't fun, but we did make some improvements that to this day, make me smile. I did not do these projects alone, but only a handful of people did the physical work, and did it for free. My expertise as a home painter and wallpaper person is evident at both museums. The board approved the projects and the treasurer these past few years, Bob Risley, saw that the accounting was done properly and we met with the right people. With only a handful of volunteers doing the majority of the work, I wasn't the president telling people what to do, I was lifting and hauling and making the paint flow. Guess that is why I want, and have expected to have, a working board. The other option is a board that funds all projects by buying a board seat or one that organizes and executes fund raising events so we have money to pay people to do the work. That will be the next direction to go – spread the work to more people, develop teams for certain tasks, get some better press on events, create some new fund raisers. If you are able to help with reorganization ideas, call 510-521-1247 (the new cell phone for the museum and Meyers House).

With a steady hand and our years of working together, George Gunn and I have accomplished major projects in both museums that are worthy of your support. As year end arrives soon, please remember to renew your dues. Do you care about conservation of the collection? Send a donation earmarked for the Archival Fund. Want to see new exhibits? Send a donation with "Gallery" or "Exhibit Fund" on the memo line.





George helped me with all the contractors to get the Meyers House exterior ready for her debut. The most expensive and messy rehabilitation projects are done. Pergola cement work and a roof on the new storage shed may be done by the time you read this article. Thank you Virgil Silver for your air-powered nail gun and for alerting me to buy the 8 x 12 shed. Assembled by Virgil, Steve Aced and husband Ross, it will be painted by Margy Silver. Romero Roofing will do the shingles, skylight, and gutters. Next project is an ADA restroom in the carriage house and replace gravel areas with a harder surface. Anybody with an idea for fund raising should contact museum or a board member soon. All donations to the Meyers House will be used toward the house and are tax deductible using tax ID number 94-2464751. If you wish, make the check payable to Alameda Museum but say "Meyers House" in the memo section.

The Capital Campaign Donor and Meyers House Guild member parties have come and gone, and were a wonderful success. I especially want to thank Erika Hohendorf of McCallum Designs. She helped me plan the big Thank You Party and also provided the floral arrangements at her cost, to help defray expenses. Her expertise with events was indispensable. Soon there will be a party for event planners and the rental activities will begin in earnest. While we have been using volunteers these past few months (the Silvers, Howells and Dileos) to set up and take down party equipment, we may have paid help for MH functions.

Armed with new pictures from Joe Woodard and Charlie Howell, we have started updating the MH website, thanks to director Adam Gillitt. Long term we are in need of a website maintenance person to take on the main museum site too. See page 15.

Did you see the Neptune Beach exhibit at the Community Celebration on Webster Street, September 7 & 8? Thanks to Alameda Landing, we had a wonderful three-sided booth to show most of the posters we used last year. We brought down a few things to sell, like the Bird's Eye View Map, which was very popular. Charlie Howell spent all day Saturday helping out, with a visit by Adam Gillitt, who did the bulk of the duty on Sunday, with help from board member Johanna Hall. Charlie took down the exhibit and felt very pleased to have shared the history of our beach community with all those who stopped in. Jeff Cambra, Alameda Chamber of Commerce and West Alameda Business Association did a great job of organizing and promoting the event and we were so pleased to bring the story of Neptune Beach to all.

The Alameda Legacy Home Tour guests enjoyed the Meyers House grounds for refreshments and it was the site for the docents, homeowners, and staff party afterwards. We filled the grass area with tables and chairs. Food by PBS Catering was outstanding and all enjoyed the wine donated by R&B Cellars. The tour was well attended and proceeds will help fund projects.

Preserving history, sharing it, educating the public, that is our goal. 2013 was one heck of a year!

President, Alameda Museum



*At the Meyers House Thank You Party, August 17: Virgil & Margy Silver and Ross Dileo. City Manager, John Russo and Museum President, Robbie Dileo greet the crowd.*

*The Alameda Legacy Home Tour held a party for homeowners, staff, and docents on the grounds September 22. Janice Cantu and Grant Ute opened their home for the tour. AAPS President, Erich Stiger, daughter Chiara, and friend Mary Malkic served as docents. Photos: Valerie Turpen.*



## What's New at the Meyers House & Gardens

George said it best, listing all the work accomplished since the transfer of ownership of the Meyers House to Alameda Museum. It was an intense spring and summer when several volunteers and George (being there almost daily), oversaw contractors getting the repairs done and the house painted. With a push to complete it all, we celebrated August 17th with a party for the major donors to the Capital Campaign. The East Bay Community Foundation, represented by Carolyn Doelling and Marion Thompson, joined by Assistant Curator Joe Young, were thanked for their combined \$20,000 donation, that when added to individual gifts, reached the \$40,000 capital campaign goal.

Approximately 60 guests including donors and Board Members attended. Mayor Gilmore stopped by and City Manager John Russo praised our accomplishments. Robbie Dileo, as Mistress of Ceremony, with others, shared words of thanks to all and toasted the three Meyers sisters. After all, it was their gift of the home to the City that is their legacy.

Alameda Museum added \$40,000 to the campaign funds, to accomplish most of the repair goals all at once. With roofs re-shingled by Romero Roofing; all the buildings painted by Metro Painting, Inc. (both Hayward companies), surrounded by the improved grounds groomed by Jose B. Garay Landscaping of Alameda, the property was gleaming. There was a palpable sense of pride by all attendees.

PBS Catering of Alameda, owned by Dennis Wallace, had his talented staff prepare an elegant feast. We did our best to make the old pump-house clean and available for them, and it worked well. Dessert, an assortment of mini cupcakes prepared by Kate Prior from Tucker's Ice Creamery, were as tasty as they were gorgeous. The museum provided beverages, set out on the new tables and chairs we have for garden events. With Charlie Howell serving wine and Erika Hohendorf assisting with the champagne, everybody enjoyed the repast. Erika also created the custom floral arrangements—her company McCallum Designs made the tables look festive. Kathy McIntire, of Balloon Mania and an AAPS director, donated bouquets of balloons to add to the Chinese lantern decorations in the yard. Joe Woodard and Dorothy Freeman of Woodard Multimedia Productions donated photographic services. To see a slide show of the event, go to [jwoodardmedia.com](http://jwoodardmedia.com) and click films for August 17th. A smaller event for Guild members and the neighbors was held on September 8th with punch and cookies for all. At the end, we selected a raffle winner for free tickets to the home tour.

The Museum Board and volunteers worked hard to bring City Monument #26 back to stately elegance. The outside is now as beautiful as the inside. We will continue to honor the legacy of Henry Meyers and his three daughters who donated so much time and talent to Alameda. We appreciate the efforts of all who have contributed—in funds and volunteered labor. To donate, make checks payable to Meyers House, or Meyers House Guild, sent care of Alameda Museum. Call 510-521-1247 or email [info@meyershause.org](mailto:info@meyershause.org) to discuss your event. There is no place in Alameda like it.

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*Robbie Dileo, George Gunn, and Diane Coler-Dark address the crowd, August 17. Woody Minor and Adam Gillitt enjoy luncheon. Erika Hohendorf of McCallum Designs provided floral arrangements and help with wine service. Photos: Joe Woodard Multimedia.*



## VOLUNTEERS: ALAMEDA MUSEUM & MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS

Steve Aced  
Barbara Balderston  
Chad Barr  
Jim & Jane Burgelin  
Gene & Dora Calhoun  
Janine Carr  
Katherine Cavanaugh  
Ellen Chesnut  
Barbara Coapman  
Dorothy Coats  
Diane Coler-Dark  
Cathy Conley  
Charles Daly  
Reid Davis  
Ross & Robbie Dileo  
Marilyn Dodge  
Linda Domholt  
Joanne Dykema  
Robbie Erion  
Pamela Ferrero  
Barbara Gibson  
Adam Gillitt  
George Gunn  
Leslie Hawksbee  
Debra Hilding  
Lois J. Hoffman  
Charlie & Gail Howell  
Virginia Jones  
Julie Kennedy

Carole King  
Adam Koltun  
Jana Kurka  
Mary Lou Kurtz  
Gayle Macaitis  
Kate McAnaney  
Jeannie McCaffery  
Jim & Carla McGrogan  
Joanne McKay  
Susan Potter  
Carl & Shirley Ramos  
Virginia Rivera  
Betty Saunders  
Holly Schmalenberger-Haugen  
Norma Serles  
Margy & Virgil Silver  
Lois Singley  
Marcy Skala  
Lavonne & Fred Stittle  
Lois Thomas  
Eugenie & John Thomson  
Ellen Tilden  
Ron Ucovich  
Henry Villareal  
Gerry Warner  
Robert Welch  
Mark White  
Joe Young

*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**  
**George Gunn, 510-521-1233**



## 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 510-521-1247.**

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

Dues Amount \$\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to:

Be a Docent

Garden

Clean & Maintain Artifacts

Help with Special Events

Other \_\_\_\_\_

# Can You Cut the Mustard?

by Ron Ucovich

Sometimes, if I am cooking a meatloaf, beans, stew, or any type of vegetable or pasta casserole, and the recipe needs just a little extra zing without changing the flavor, I add just a pinch of dry mustard. People will taste the difference, but they won't be able to identify it. I tell them that it is a family secret that I will take to my grave.

Do you know what gives mustard that spicy zip? Mustard seeds have no piquancy at all until you crush them and mix them with cold water. A chemical reaction produces an acid which can actually burn your tongue, but after about 15 minutes, the fire starts to decline. If the fire dies out, this will produce a very mild mustard, but if more acid is added to prevent this decay, the mustard will have a spicy hot flavor. Prepared mustard loses a lot of its piquancy when you cook with it. This can be avoided if you cook with powdered mustard.

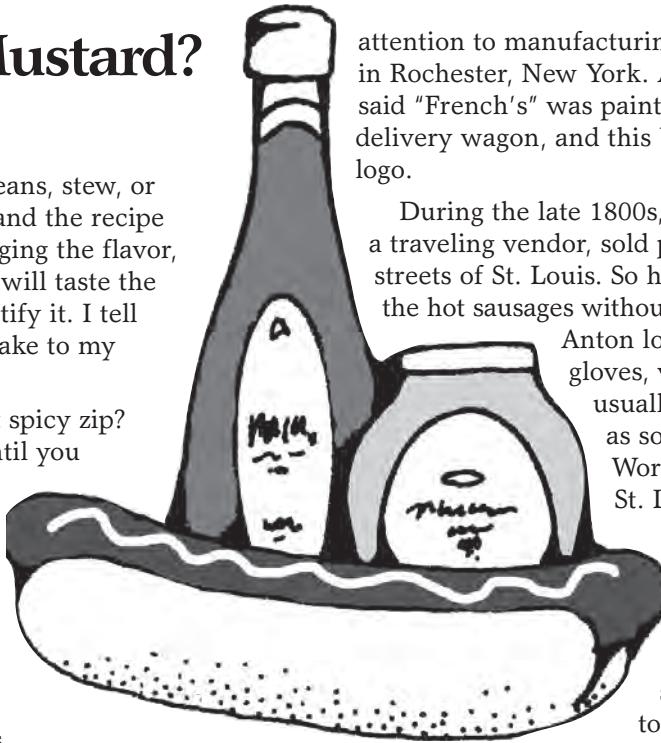
The mustard flower can have either white or brown seeds. The white seeds produce a light-colored mustard. The yellow-orange tint comes from turmeric, a spice which is added for its peppery bite. Currie powder also gets its color by adding turmeric.

Roman monks were the first to experiment using mustard seeds as a spice. They mixed unfermented wine (*mustum*) with ground seeds. Their condiment was called *mustum ardens*, which is Latin for "burning must," and from this we get the word "mustard."

Because of its spicy zest, the word "mustard" used to refer to items of top quality. The old expression "keen as mustard" equates to today's expression "hot stuff." If someone performed at a level below excellence, people would say that he didn't "cut the mustard." In modern vernacular we might say that he "can't cut it," which means that he fell short of expectations.

Dijon, France became famous for their mustard sauce in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, but the process was slow and laborious. Maurice Grey made a sauce with his secret ingredient (white wine), and it was an instant success. He formed a partnership with his financial backer named Auguste Poupon, and their Grey-Poupon mustard became legendary throughout the world.

Ironically, George and Francis French were not Frenchmen. They owned a flour mill in New York. In 1893 their mill burned down, so they turned their



attention to manufacturing French's Mustard in Rochester, New York. A red banner that said "French's" was painted on the side of their delivery wagon, and this became the company logo.

During the late 1800s, Anton Feuchtwanger, a traveling vendor, sold pork sausages on the streets of St. Louis. So his customers could eat the hot sausages without burning their fingers,

Anton loaned them white gloves, which his patrons usually wanted to keep as souvenirs. When the World's Fair opened in St. Louis, Anton wanted to open a frankfurter concession, and not wanting to lose hundreds of white gloves, he commissioned a local bakery to custom-bake rolls to fit his sausages, and to add a spicy zing to the bread, he contracted French's to supply the mustard. Since then, the hot dog on a bun with a splash of mustard has been an American tradition.

It is often assumed that the word "hot dog" refers to the content of the sausage, but this theory remains unsubstantiated. The earliest record of "hot dog" referring to a sausage comes from New Jersey's *Paterson Daily Press*, where it talks about a local street vendor affectionately called "Hot Dog Morris." Mr. Morris' frankfurters were called "hot dogs."

In 1916 a sausage manufacturer named Nathan Handwerker opened a frankfurter concession at Coney Island. He called his sandwiches "hot dogs," but not wanting the public to believe that they contained road kill, he required his vendors to wear a surgeon's smock. This image became so engrained in the public's mind that since that time, all cartoons of hot dog vendors feature the vendor wearing a surgeon's smock.

Ketchup has been a common table condiment for over 200 years, and the thicker the ketchup, the better the quality. This presents quite a problem because thick ketchup won't run out of the bottle. The problem was solved in 1956 with the invention of the squeeze bottle. In the early 1960s, mustard became the second condiment to be sold in squeeze bottles. It wasn't until the late 1970s that the fast food industry introduced other squeeze bottle foods, like mayonnaise, relish, soft cheese, and margarine.

*Continued on page 13 . . .*



The employees of the French Mustard Company on Alphonse Street, Rochester, New York in 1917. Their truck was used to make deliveries around town. Photo: Wikipedia.

### Mustard... Continued from page 12

The leaves of the mustard plant are tasty, and they provide great nutritional benefits. The bright yellow flowers, on the other hand, provide almost no nutrition or flavor. About 300 years ago, however, the Spanish explorers found a very special use for the flower. As they were mapping the land, they would drop a line of mustard seeds on the ground to mark the trail. The following spring, travelers could look across a grassy valley and see a bright yellow stripe clearly marking the route, and this is the reason that we have beautiful fields of wild mustard dotting the verdant grasslands of California today.

## RETURN TO YESTERYEAR: FAMILY HISTORY DAY

### The AAPS Education Committee is excited to announce its 2014 kids preservation project.

"Return to Yesteryear: Family History Day" will take place on Saturday, January 25, 1:00 – 4:00 pm at the Meyers House & Gardens, 2021 Alameda Avenue. Admission is \$5 and gets attendees a "Passport to History" so they can see, learn, and do what people did in days past, from crafts and food to a Victorian house scavenger hunt.

The event is open to people of all ages and features many opportunities to explore how people lived in the earlier days of Alameda. A sampling of activities at the event includes butter making with Chef Jacki Rosen, Victorian paper crafting with Martha Peck, quilting with Sue Fox of Dreamquilt, wood graining techniques with Jim Smallman, a Victorian scavenger hunt, and an interactive display of architectural artifacts. Participants can even have their pictures taken with a chicken at the "Rooster Roster," courtesy of the Alameda Backyard Chicken Coop Society, featuring live chickens and a huge rooster with a baleful gaze.

All of this will take place in the beautifully renovated Meyers House Gardens complete with live music from days bygone provided by Eben Dodd, and even people strolling about in formal Victorian attire.

The AAPS Education Committee was formed in 2011 to further the goal of reaching out to kids and families to increase awareness of the importance of preservation in our community. Over the past two years, the committee



hosted a Kids Preservation Contest that involved hundreds of school children learning about Alameda's historic monuments. Participants entered essays and art projects on local landmarks, prepared binders of drawings and compositions, and worked on group art projects that featured the Alameda Theatre and the historic Greenleaf House. We think this year's project will build on that success as we reach out to schools throughout Alameda to encourage families to take part in this fun event.

If you would like to help with this event or join our committee please contact us at [judithal@comcast.net](mailto:judithal@comcast.net).

# What in the World is a Test Pattern?

by Ron Ucovich

**JULY 3, 1957, THERE WAS A MYSTERY GUEST** on the TV quiz show called I've Got A Secret. His name was Philo Farnsworth, and he was the inventor of the first electronic television set which had no moving parts. It was Mr. Farnsworth who transmitted, without wires, the first live human image onto a 3 ½ inch television screen. The quiz panel asked him many questions, but they were unable to guess his great accomplishment. For stumping the panel, Mr. Farnsworth received \$80 in cash and a carton of Winston cigarettes.

Philo Farnsworth was in high school when he first conceived the idea of electronic television transmission. He showed his plan to his chemistry teacher, who enthusiastically encouraged him to pursue his dream. After high school, Philo continued his experiments while attending Brigham Young University. His experiments were so impressive that a pair of philanthropists agreed to buy him a workshop and sponsor his research. By 1929, Philo was ready to secure his patents and introduce television to the world.

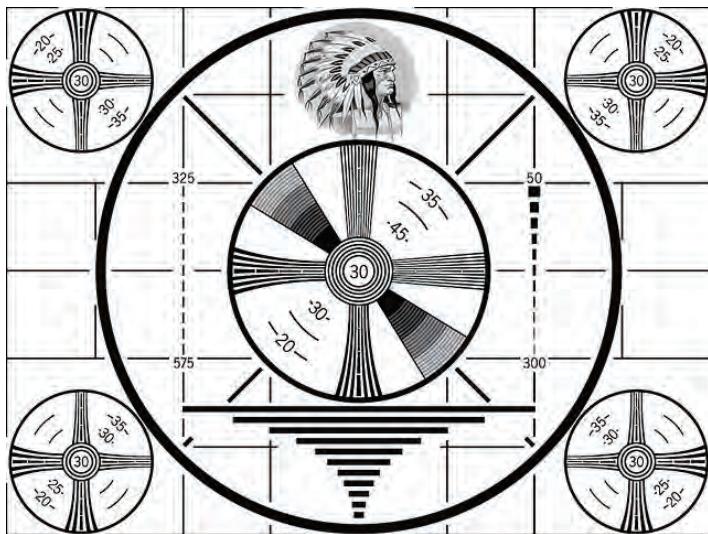
The Stock Market crashed, and newfangled inventions were put on hold for a decade. In 1939, Mr. Farnsworth awed the world again at the World's Fair on Treasure Island. The idea that people could watch movies right in their own living rooms staggered the imagination. Then, World War II came along, and TV was put onto the back burner again. Another decade would pass before television broadcasting became a reality.

In 1948, Northern California's first television station opened in San Francisco. Taken from the nickname for "pictures," their call letters became KPIX. They were assigned to channel 5 on your channel selector, (the top number was 13). They were a subsidiary of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), and their studios were located in the top floor of the Mark Hopkins Hotel in the financial district of San Francisco. Their sign-on and sign-off signature was "Broadcasting from the Top of the Mark, from high atop Nob Hill, this is television station KPIX."

A month after Channel 5 opened, along came Channel 7. They named themselves KGO, and they were an affiliate



Philo Farnsworth



of the ABC network. Their first studios were in the old Sutro Mansion, and their transmitter stood on top of Mount Sutro, right where the 1000-foot-tall Sutro Tower stands today.

In 1949, the *San Francisco Chronicle* opened Channel 4. Named after the nickname for their newspaper, they called their station KRON, and it was affiliated with the NBC network. Their studios were located in the basement of the Chronicle Building on Mission Street, and their transmitting facilities stood atop Mount San Bruno.

By 1950, we in Alameda began to watch TV in the comfort of our own living rooms, and we were one of the very few areas in the Nation to have a choice of three channels. The stations would power up at about 4:00 in the afternoon. They would televise a test pattern until about 4:30 when programming would begin. Your television set contained a control panel which would allow you to adjust your picture for brightness, contrast, focus, vertical hold, and horizontal hold. Your set was powered by vacuum tubes which needed to warm up before functioning properly. The test pattern was a necessary tool for making these fine adjustments. Television was only broadcast for 6 hours per day. At about 10:30, following Federal regulations, the station would play the National Anthem, and then broadcast the test pattern again before powering down for the night.

Programming would begin with children's shows at about 4:30 in the afternoon. Each station had its own shows, so children had to select their favorites from shows like Howdy Doody, Fireman Frank, Kukla Fran and Ollie, Buckskin Dan, Captain Fortune, Crusader Rabbit, Brother Buzz, or Beanie and Cecil. At about 5:30, it was time for the news. The program schedule was very loose, so if the Five O'Clock News started four or five minutes late, nobody seemed to care.

*Continued on page 15...*

**Test Pattern . . . Continued from page 14**

Newscasters always worked alone. They were all middle-aged men of European ancestry, such as Edward R. Murrow, Douglas Edwards, or John Cameron Swayze. Generally, he was just a "talking head" who read you the newspaper. Occasionally, the station would toss in a newsreel which they retrieved from their archive. Many newscasts were sponsored by the Tobacco Industry, and the reporter was required to smoke cigarettes while delivering the news.

After the news, you could watch a variety show. Variety shows were like a collection of circus acts, vaudeville routines, and high school talent shows. Pioneers of this genre included Milton Berle, Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca, Ed Sullivan, Steve Allen, Red Skelton, and Jackie Gleason. Early television also had several situation comedies, the most popular, of course, would be I Love Lucy. Most of these shows were carryovers from radio broadcasting, with shows such as Amos 'n' Andy, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny, Dragnet, Ma and Pa Kettle, and Fibber McGee and Molly.

What remains today of San Francisco's glorious contribution to the television industry? Well... if you go to the corner of California and Mason Streets on Nob Hill, and you go up to the 19th floor of the Mark Hopkins Hotel, you will enter a very elegant cocktail lounge and dance hall with a plaque on the wall identifying this site as the original studio for the first television station in Northern California, the CBS Station KPIX.

There's another monument in San Francisco in front of a warehouse at 202 Green Street in honor of "The Genius of Green Street." This is the laboratory where Philo Farnsworth developed the first TV receiver, and where he worked on the equipment necessary to transmit television through the air. After Mr. Farnsworth had demonstrated to the world that his invention was viable, the people of San Francisco dubbed him "The Genius of Green Street." People who knew him personally also referred to him as the "Boy Genius," because they knew that when he first drew up his plans for wireless electronic television transmission, he was only 14 years old.

**Finished with your newsletter? DON'T THROW IT AWAY! Pass it on and spread the word about the activities at the Alameda Museum.**



John Cameron Swayze

# Elegant WALKING TOUR BROCHURE



**Do you ever wake up on a Saturday morning looking for something to do on the weekend? Or entertain out-of-town visitors who ask, "So, what is there to do in Alameda?"**

AAPS has come to the rescue. A handsome illustrated walking tour brochure is now available that guides the visitor (and locals, too) around our treasured island city.

The inside takes you on a three mile loop through some of the most beautiful Victorian neighborhoods. The loop can be walked in a couple of hours, and nearly all is easy biking, too.

In addition to the tour map and descriptions, the back provides web links to a host of local attractions, from the USS Hornet to the Alameda Museum. It's a great way to welcome a visitor or to spend a weekend yourself.

**Available for \$1 in Alameda at:**

- **Alameda Museum**  
2324 Alameda Avenue
- **Books, Inc.**  
1344 Park Street

**Available by mail for \$2:**

**Includes postage & handling.  
Send check payable to  
AAPS  
PO Box 1677  
Alameda CA 94501**

**WANTED:** Someone with WordPress skills to update our websites. Responsibilities will include posting new content, uploading and formatting images, and other updates and maintenance. Total work would be approximately 30 hours per quarter, for a quarterly stipend of \$300. Skills required include knowledge of WordPress, image editing software, and word processing software. Work will be done at your location on your computer. If you're interested please contact Adam Gillit at adam@gilli.co or 415-225-5858.



FOUNDED IN 1948

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### ALAMEDA MUSEUM 2324 Alameda Avenue

#### HOURS

Wed. – Fri., Sunday  
1:30 pm – 4:00 pm  
Saturday  
11:00 am – 4:00 pm

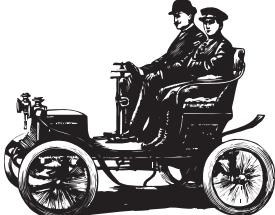
### MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS HOURS 2021 Alameda Avenue

#### HOURS

4th Saturdays  
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**510-521-1233**

[www.alamedamuseum.org](http://www.alamedamuseum.org)



## Upcoming Exhibits at the Museum Art Gallery

Exhibits generally open on the first weekend of the month and close on the last.  
Check local newspapers for exact dates and public receptions.

#### OCTOBER:

Feng Jin — Sculptures

#### NOVEMBER & DECEMBER:

Owen Smith — Mixed Media

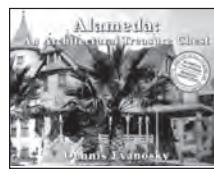
NEW  
SHIPMENT  
AT THE  
MUSEUM

## Books! Just In Time For Holiday Gift Giving

### Alameda: An Architectural Treasure Chest

By Dennis Evanovsky

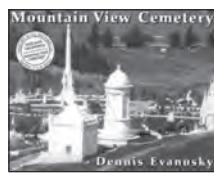
The book explores the history of Alameda from its settlement by the Ohlone Indians to its early 20th century development.



### Mountain View Cemetery

By Dennis Evanovsky

Renowned landscape architect Fredrick Law Olmsted, who also designed New York's Central Park, designed the Oakland cemetery in 1863 — home to renowned 19th and 20th century men and women.



### Ohlone Teacher's Resource

By Richard Di Giacomo

- Full color images of Ohlone sites, homes, tools, and historical paintings
- Classroom activities
- A complete list of places to visit to learn about the Ohlone
- An extensive bibliography of Ohlone books, films, websites and CD-ROM's

