

# Alameda Museum

# Quarterly

## AND THEN THERE WAS LIGHT

by Ron Ucovich

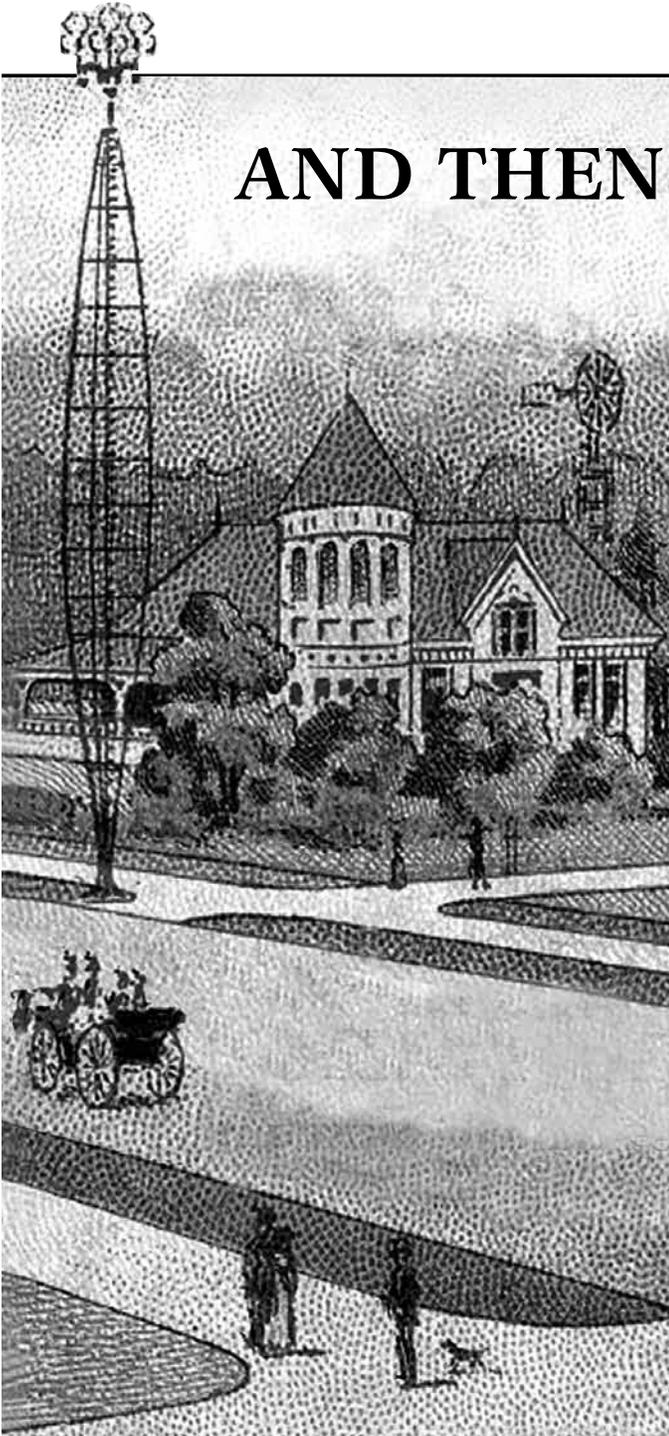
**WHO INVENTED THE LIGHT BULB?** Any schoolboy will probably answer that it was Thomas Edison. Although Mr. Edison did hold many patents for incandescent illumination, dozens of light bulb patents preceded his. Other inventors focused their attention upon illuminating small work areas, but Mr. Edison was a visionary. He was the first inventor to imagine an electric system which would serve a whole community. He was the first person to envision the complex system of generators, wires, transformers, fuses, and voltage regulators that would be required to light up an entire city. In 1880, Mr. Edison was ready to model his futuristic city in Manhattan, New York.

Mr. Edison's electric city was a tremendous success. People came from miles away to see houses that could light up at night with just a flip of the switch. The village lamplighter could retire now. The street lights all turned on at dusk when the city generator was fired up. Manhattan became the Disneyland of 1880.

House lights and street lights required two different types of lighting systems. House lights used vacuum bulbs with a carbon filament. When electric resistance is produced between a positive and negative pole, this produces heat which gives off light. Street lights needed to be brighter. Arc lights are made with two carbon rods parallel to each other, then a huge electric current passes between them causing a blinding white band of electricity to arc across the gap creating a lightning-blue light. Arc lamps needed to be on tall towers, high above the city, because close proximity

*The cover of an 1890 brochure by builder Joseph A. Leonard. The scene promotes Alameda as the ultimate place to live—wide avenues, majestic homes in pristine landscapes, all illuminated by towering arc lights.*

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**And Then There Was Light . . . Continued from page 1**

could damage your eyes. This is the same type of light emitted by arc welders, and it can burn your retina if you are exposed to it without wearing eye protection similar to a welder's mask.

During World War II, before the invention of radar scanning devices, arc lights were used by the Army to search the skies at night to illuminate enemy war planes during an air raid. When the war was over, these searchlights were sold as advertising beacons. They were used at night to attract socialites to theatrical performances. Soon they became overused, and they were used to attract customers to shopping centers, used car lots, square dances, bake sales... you name it. They lost all novelty, and soon they became museum pieces.

Arc lights are no longer used, but in the 1880s, these giant bug zappers were a great improvement over the dim glow produced by gas street lamps. News of these lights spread across the nation, and in 1881, a San Jose man named J.J. Owen suggested that a single monster light erected in the plaza could convert the entire town from night into day. With the financial support of enthusiastic San Jose citizens, their dream became reality. On December 13, 1881, a gigantic 237-foot tower lighted the intersection of Santa Clara and Market Street for the first time. Their enthusiasm, however, was premature. The 24,000 candle-power structure lit only a small area, and after it was damaged in a windstorm, the project was abandoned.

Undaunted by San Jose's failure, Alameda decided to take up the gauntlet. The City contracted with the Jenny Electric Company to build a power plant with the



*The largest lamp of its day was constructed in San Francisco for the 1893 World's Fair in Golden Gate Park. Patterned after the Eiffel Tower in Paris, it rose to a height of 266 feet.*

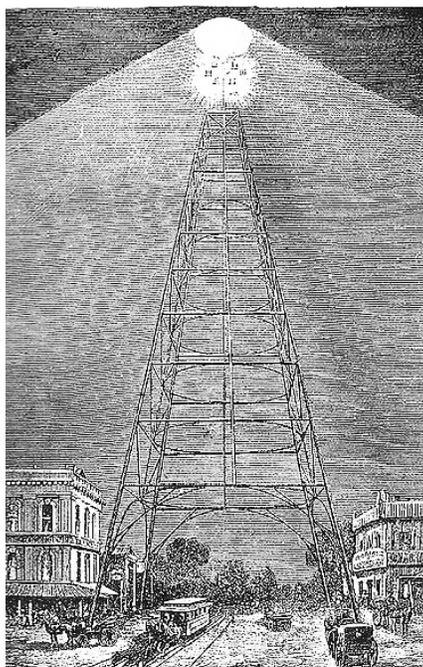
entire infrastructure necessary to run 13 arc lamps. The Alameda Electric Plant was built in 1886 on Park Street. It housed two boilers capable of producing 90 kilowatts of electricity. An average house can run on one kilowatt of power, so these generators could support 90 houses, but at first, it only needed to supply 13 streetlamps. The lamps were mounted on 125-foot stanchions. Two lamps were in the East End, two in West End, two on Park Street, and seven in between.

The arc lamps served the city well, and Alameda enjoyed the distinction of being the second oldest municipally-owned power company on the West Coast, but these carbon arc lamps were difficult to maintain. They required huge amounts of energy, they produced an annoyingly brilliant light, and the carbon electrodes had a very short service life. Six globes were clustered atop each mast, and when one of them burned out, a technician needed to climb the pole to replace it. After 1895, streetlights were erected on shorter poles, and warm incandescent bulbs began to replace the harsh carbon arc bulbs.

By the turn of the century, Alameda had about 50 incandescent streetlights. By then, the electric company was serving, not only streetlights, but private homes as well. By 1905 they had almost 1,000 customers, and by 1915 the number had jumped to 5,000. In the three years between 1911 and 1913, the Alameda Electric Company rebuilt its entire distribution system. A large new generating plant was erected at the corner of Park and Otis. A city-wide system of over 4,000 streetlamps replaced the old ones. Power distribution substations were built on Webster, Grand, and Pearl Streets.

Alameda again enjoyed a state-of-the-art electric system, which served the town for the next six years. The generators,

*Continued on page 3 . . .*



*In 1881, a 237-foot tall moonlight tower was erected in San Jose, making it the first city to be illuminated by an electric light west of the Rocky Mountains.*

*You can see a replica of an antique arc lamp if you visit Old Towne San Jose in Kelly Park.*



**And Then There Was Light . . . Continued from page 2**

however, were fueled by oil, and during World War I, the cost of oil had skyrocketed, and Alameda needed to economize. The answer was to purchase hydroelectric power from outside sources. The company contracted with Great Western Power Company and with PG&E, and in 1919 the 6-year-old power plant on Park Street was retired.

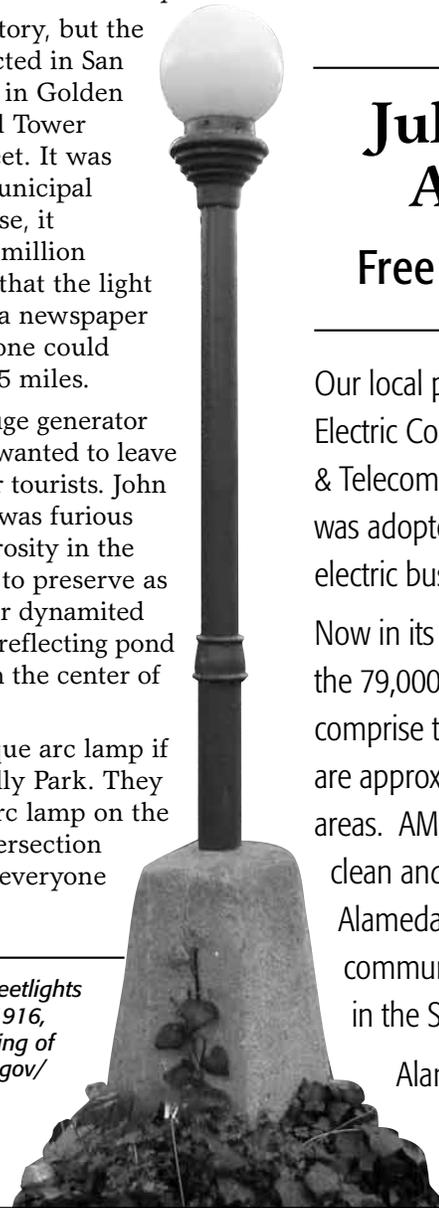
The building sat cold and idle for several years, but in the years between 1922 and 1926, California suffered a paralyzing drought. The reservoirs were depleted, and the hydroelectric generators could not meet the demand, so Alameda again fired up her old boilers to keep the city glowing at night. The old power plant closed for good in 1928, and the building was converted to offices and storage. It was finally demolished in 1972 to build the senior citizen apartment complex that stands there today.

Today, arc lamps are ancient history, but the largest lamp of its day was constructed in San Francisco for the 1893 World's Fair in Golden Gate Park. Patterned after the Eiffel Tower in Paris, it rose to a height of 266 feet. It was designed to display the power of municipal electricity. Designed like a lighthouse, it projected a beam of two and a half million candlepower. History books tell us that the light was so intense that one could read a newspaper under its rays ten miles away, and one could distinguish a ship at a distance of 15 miles.

When the Fair had ended, the huge generator was removed, but the City Council wanted to leave the tower as an observation deck for tourists. John McLaren, the Park Superintendent, was furious at the thought of leaving this monstrosity in the park which he had worked so hard to preserve as natural. He personally had the tower dynamited and the pieces sold as scrap iron. A reflecting pond and fountain mark this spot today in the center of the Concourse near the band shell.

You can see a replica of an antique arc lamp if you visit Old Towne San Jose in Kelly Park. They built a 115-foot model of the first arc lamp on the West Coast, and it stands in the intersection of Hotel Street and Bank Street for everyone to see and enjoy.

*This is an example of one of the 4,200 streetlights installed in Alameda between 1911 and 1916, about 100 remain on the island. For a listing of their locations visit [www.cityofalamedaca.gov/About-Alameda/Street-Lights](http://www.cityofalamedaca.gov/About-Alameda/Street-Lights)*



**Behind the scenes in the second city in the United States to electrify**

## **Years of Power: Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of Alameda Municipal Power**

**A lecture by author and historian  
Woody Minor**

**July 26th, at 7:00 pm  
Alameda Museum**

**Free for members, \$10 for others.**

Our local power company has had a few names: Jenney Electric Company, Bureau of Electricity, Alameda Power & Telecom. In January 2009, "Alameda Municipal Power" was adopted as the collective name for its remaining electric business line.

Now in its 125th year of service, AMP is proud to serve the 79,000 residents and thriving business sector that comprise the City of Alameda. Rates for electric power are approximately 20% lower than those in surrounding areas. AMP's power portfolio, that is typically over 80% clean and renewable, is a major reason that the City of Alameda is now the lowest greenhouse-gas-emitting community in Alameda County and one of the lowest in the State.

Alameda Municipal Power is well known as  
"The Greenest Little Utility in America."



# A Closer Look at Toast

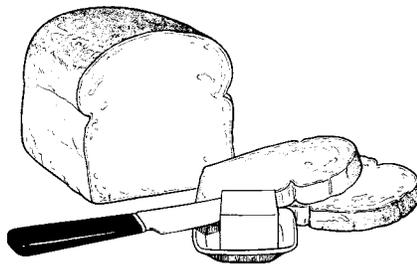
by Ron Ucovich

Who would ever want to bake a nice loaf of bread, then turn around and burn it? Believe it or not, it was the ancient Romans. Their bread was delicious when it was fresh out of the oven, but after a couple of days it became hard and unpalatable. They discovered that if they sliced the loaf, and then laid the slices on hot stones, the bread would acquire a rich nutty flavor and would remain appetizing for many days. They called this bread *tostum*, which in Latin means "burnt."

The British learned this method of preserving bread, and in turn, they introduced toast to the New World. The American colonists used wire frames to hold the sliced bread over an open hearth, and when stoves began to replace the hearth, these wire frames were placed on the stovetop, and the American toaster was born.

For the common citizens of Europe, food was scarce and was never wasted. If bread ever got stale, mothers would soak it in milk and fry it in oil to feed their families. This dish was called Roman toast. If the ladies wanted to serve a very elegant meal, they would trim the crust off the bread, soak the slices in milk and egg, fry it in butter, and serve it topped with honey. Since the French are always associated with fine cuisine, they called this dish French toast, even though it originated in England, not France.

Meat was often served on slices of bread, but during the 18th Century, England's John Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich, ordered his valet to serve him food that he could eat with one hand so he did not have to interrupt his 24-hour gambling card game. The chef prepared slices of beef between two slices of toast. The idea caught on, and this tasty meal was thereafter referred to as a Lord Sandwich, which we now call simply a sandwich.



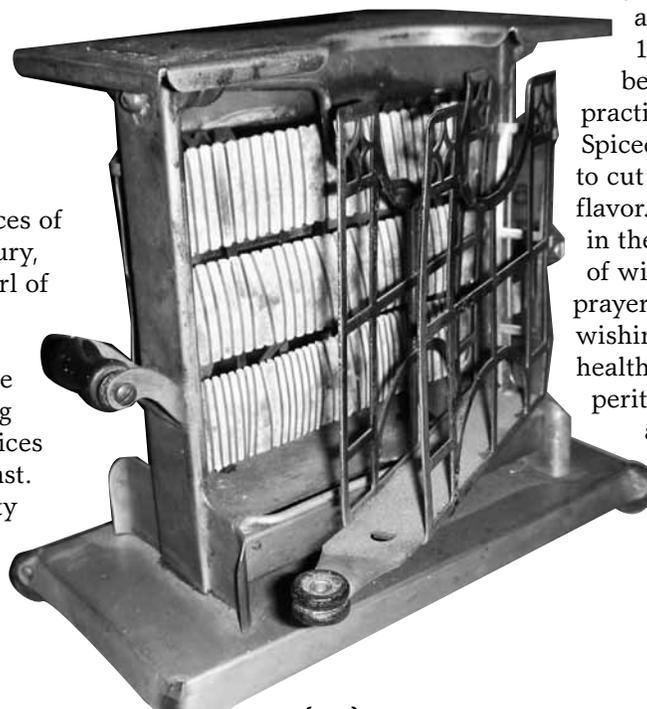
*John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich had a handheld meal named after him, as well as some islands.*

In the early 20th Century, the sidewalk cafes of Paris attracted customers with a fried sandwich called a Croque Monsieur (Crispy Mister). It was a ham and cheese sandwich fried in butter and served warm. The Monte Cristo sandwich, similar to the Croque Monsieur, surprisingly was not named after the Count of Monte Cristo. It was simply a name invented by the Blue Bayou Restaurant at New Orleans Square in Disneyland.

The famous bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich was standard fare at a Victorian tea party. It consisted of the BLT ingredients on slices of bread (without crusts), and fried in bacon fat. Mayonnaise, a French creation, was not introduced until the early 1900s.

Making toast required careful attention. You needed to turn the bread to ensure that it was evenly browned on both sides. You needed to keep it a safe distance from the flame lest you char the surface. In 1926 the Toastmaster Company developed the first electric pop-up toaster. You turned a knob to select your desired degree of darkness. Gone were the days when you had to scrape the carbon off your burnt toast before applying your butter, jam, or marmalade.

In days of antiquity, bread and wine were used in religious ceremonies to accompany a prayer in church. During the 17th Century this tradition became secularized, and it was practiced in restaurants and banquets. Spiced toast was added to the wine to cut the acidity and to enhance the flavor. The host would raise his glass in the air, offering the gods a drink of wine in exchange for a wish. The prayer would be very brief, usually wishing the guest of honor good health, a long life, happiness, or prosperity. Today, we still practice this ancient custom, and ironically, we still call it a "toast."



*This antique toaster and other kitchen devices are on display at the Meyers House and Gardens.*



**BE A  
MUSEUM DOCENT**

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

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THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS



**From the Curator's Desk**

*by George C. Gunn*

*A*s curator, I feel very fortunate to have such a dedicated force of volunteers. Without them, it would be impossible to accomplish the many tasks entailed in running the Museum and Meyers House.

Keeping the doors open is critical to the operation and mission to collect, conserve, and educate through historical exhibits.

As you might be aware, our estate sales and the gift shop are some of our chief sources of revenue. Both of these efforts require a tremendous amount of labor to price and organize merchandise. Donations of household goods are the source of most of the gift shop items. Large or high value objects are sometimes placed on consignment. Currently there are a lot of furniture items available at reasonable prices. Docents can accept a sizeable deposit to reserve an item until it can be paid in full and removed. Docents can also give a receipt of donation, if one is needed, for merchandise dropped at the museum for the gift shop.

Most of the volunteers that help with estate sales serve double duty, as many are docents at both the Meyers House and main museum. I want to thank those who have been especially helpful with the recent garage sales that helped Joe Young with the liquidation of the Michaelis estate. For the bulk of the pricing, hauling, and set-up: Jane Burgelin, Margy and Virgil Silver, Ross and Robbie Dileo. Extra help on the day of sale: Charlie and Gail Howell, Diane Coler-Dark, Barbara Coapman, Reid Davis, Lavonne Stittle, and Kevin Frederick.

*Curator, Alameda Museum*

**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.**



*"Measure C has my vote!"  
— Andrew Carnegie*



## What's Up with Measure C? *by Robbie Dileo*

**THE MUSEUM TRIES TO BE NON-POLITICAL,** but when asked if we wanted to go back to the Carnegie Library, we had to say yes. Measure C on the June 5th ballot is a half-cent sales tax to fund several public projects. C is about CAPITAL improvements, not General Fund expenditures. Public safety, public pool, public all-weather sports field, and yes, public access to the historic Carnegie Library building to house Alameda Museum.

Exterior and seismic upgrades of about \$4 million were done, but there is no HVAC, water, electrical, or ADA access. Empty for 10 years awaiting funds to complete the interior, it sits as a tragic example of the economic downturn and a reminder that historic preservation is important to Alameda. The plan with Measure C is to issue bonds of approximately \$15 million to start projects sooner than later. The Carnegie project is approximately \$3.5 million; about \$2 million less than what was needed in 2007. The savings are due to the downturn in the economy for construction costs, not a major change in the scope of improvements needed to make the building functional for tenancy.

The Carnegie Library opened in 1902, funded by the Andrew Carnegie Foundation, to be used as an educational facility (not offices), on land donated by the Knowland family. The old library is on the National Register of Historic Places. Thanks to Fred Croll, a long-time City Assessor who founded the Alameda Historical Society in 1948, we got space in part of the Carnegie's basement when we became a museum in 1951. We were there for 30 years, rent-free. Today we have grown and would need the entire building to house the collection and continue most of our programs. George Gunn became Curator in 1971, working in the dreary damp basement and knows the building well. His mind is already working on displays. When library staff needed more space, we were moved to the former auto shop in the historic high school. Rent was about \$150 per month to help pay utilities. Our 99-year lease gave us the confidence to let then President, Robert Lippert Jr., spend \$60,000 on improving entrance doors and installing historic streetlights in the breezeway.

Life happens, deals are made, changed, broken, resolved—we lost our lease in the 10th year and with a settlement from the City, we moved to our current location. Alameda Park and Recreation Dept. eventually moved into the Oak Street space. Thus began the museum's rent subsidy from the General Fund. Forty years in basically "free" buildings was our support by having the collection in a City-owned building, now it is monetary support. To balance the 2012/13 General Fund budget, our \$45,000 rent subsidy is in jeopardy. Measure C will allow us to

remain in our current location until the Carnegie is ready for occupancy. Alameda needs to reuse the building as many other cities have—a museum, like Petaluma, Healdsburg and Oakland. A win for both building preservation and the City's history collection.

City Manager John Russo was hired from Oakland, likes non-profits, and appreciates history. He met with us, touring main museum and Meyers House (MH). While MH is owned by the City, from 2012/13 onward, Russo wants a non-profit to manage all parts of it. We are preparing to add rental of the grounds to our house museum duties. It is fair to say Russo appreciates our efforts at conserving the City's tangible items that represent the collection. Our archives are available for research, we educate the public through programs, we provide a venue for artists, and our dedicated volunteers—frugal with funds—are capable of creating exhibits and producing fund-raising events.

We have paid for several large maintenance items at MH over the years. The main museum and MH are an excellent package for providing even better events. In about 3 years, with the Carnegie as our permanent home, we will work our artistic magic on improved exhibits and enhance conservation of the collection. Funds have been set aside from bequests for just this purpose. Measure C will provide us consulting help and keep the rent subsidy going until the move.

Is the Carnegie guaranteed? It depends on promises, good intentions, a lot of hard work, money, and the will of public support. There were architectural plans drawn in 2007 when the Carnegie was being considered for a One Stop Permit Center. The Museum submitted an exhibit plan with drawings for the City to reconsider having offices there. While placement of any exhibit may change, we did go through the exercise of envisioning our museum inside the Carnegie, which came back to life with Measure C. We did not have millions to improve a City-owned building then, nor do we now. Over the years, we have explored ownership or renting at other suitable buildings. The general consensus remains that people expect the Carnegie to be a museum, and people have been asking for years when are we moving in.

Measure C taxes stay in Alameda. People like shopping here and sales tax will be the source of revenue for the various projects. Alameda is safe, attractive, flat, has bus service, a variety of shops and shopping areas, wonderful restaurants, and let's not forget that Target is coming, near the Posey Tube, and it will draw more people from nearby



cities. A few cents from purchases to improve Alameda makes sense—pun intended. There was a Measure C in the early 1990's, to fund a new library and put the museum in the Carnegie. It did not pass. BUT eventually, we did get a new library and now it is time to finish the goal of putting the museum into the old library.

We are aware of some very dedicated museum supporters that will be voting "no." Voting is personal, and reasons vary on why yes or no is preferable. Measure C is a package deal, not a vote to do one project over another. Measure C is a way to do a lot of good things for Alameda, sooner than later. Waiting for tomorrow is procrastination, an option that rarely works because as tomorrow arrives, it becomes "today"—a procrastinator's dream-come-true to do nothing. Alamedans are motivated to make sure the projects get done. Safeguards are to be implemented with promises of careful oversight. Similar to a 30-year mortgage, issuing bonds gets you an asset up from, in this case, cash for construction, and yes, the total cost will end up as nearly twice the price. But who buys a house for cash? Most of us didn't—the best we could do was come up with a substantial down payment and make payments over time while enjoying the asset as we paid for it and hope we got a good interest rate. At some point we have to get the ball rolling on overdue projects. If the Carnegie is not possible today, then when? Some people think that down the road things will be different. They will, but it's been 10 years already. When in the past 30 years has the Carnegie ever been offered to us with support from City staff? Never—until now. It's time to go back home. Measure C is a way to do it.

Whatever the outcome of the June vote, it is important to have the majority decide, so please vote. Rest assured, no matter the outcome, your museum is in good hands and will always have a plan to conserve the collection. We cannot thank each of you enough for caring about our mission to collect, conserve, and showcase history. Your membership matters. The museum plans to be around for another 60 years to preserve the past for the future.

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*The above story is the full version of a concise "Letter to the Editor" which ran in the "Alameda Sun" May 31, 2012.*



## A DOCENT'S OBSERVATION

The first time I came into the Alameda Museum, I was keenly reminded how alike the museum was to the varied antiquarian bookshops I ran during my life in Colorado and Montana. The old smells, the Victorian ambiance and the cheerful, informative docents were very comforting for me as a newcomer to Alameda.

The first time I visited, Wanda Thatcher welcomed me to Alameda, the first person to say this—at that moment I decided to inquire if they needed volunteers!

Attending my second annual docent luncheon recently and listening to Robbie, George, ET AL, I fully realized how vital EVERYONE is to the present and future of our museum. The smooth daily operations of the museum's gift shop, art gallery, exhibits, the newsletter, and lectures as well as the Meyers House, Special Tours, and Museum-sponsored projects, i.e.: the newsstand, mural at Wells Fargo Bank, demand a full-time focus.

We can thank our President, Robbie Dileo for all her continued and past efforts to help maintain a friendly, vibrant, interesting museum. She gives the museum the full-time focus it needs! Always seeing the "BIG" picture and making "IT" happen!

Thank you Robbie for your winning ways to all of us; and most important for the museum. Robbie couldn't achieve her goals without George, Diane, The Board, and all her docents and friends of the museum. Let us keep it strong!

History is important for all of us in many ways; especially now as the world changes so rapidly. Our children and future generations need to know and understand their history. We established our museums so they can have a special place to observe, to listen, to touch, and learn to value history.

Personally, I'm feeling more and more that I'm apart of a community of kindred souls. Thank you for letting me become a small part of keeping the Alameda History alive!

*Sincerely,  
Bonne Germain, Alameda*





## From the President's Desk

by *Robbie Dileo*

Timing is everything. Ron Ucovich's articles were prepared to help announce the July 11, 125th anniversary of Alameda Municipal Power – AMP. Hope you enjoy them. While I am guilty of occasionally saying Bureau of Electricity, AMP is so much more than a business selling discounted electric service. From the first power plant, towering street lamps, gas powered lighting giving way to electric versions, promoting and selling of electric time-saving household appliances, we owe much of our City's infrastructure to their contributions to the general fund. Learn more at the July 26th 7:00 pm lecture given by historian and author Woody Minor. Members attend free, others are \$10 per person. Joining saves you a lot of money besides helping the museum to preserve the collection.

Reminders about renewing memberships were just mailed and we hope a lot of you will join the Meyers House Guild. Check your label to see if it says 2012. If you just sent your check, we may not have processed the database records to reflect your current status on the newsletter label. Feel free to call me, if you have questions on your status. Keep membership cards handy for quick entry to our events.

The annual membership luncheon with silent auction on St. Patrick's Day was really fun. Almost 100 guests enjoyed PBS

Catering's perfectly cooked Salmon meal with an equally tasty and tender chicken substitute for non-fish people (no corned beef and cabbage, which some feared!). The Trolley Tour theme adorned the sheet cake dessert to compliment train station centerpieces at each table. The main raffle prizes were \$200 and \$100 checks and Trolley Tour Tickets. Erich Stiger, President of AAPS, did the honor of swearing in the directors and shared the upcoming Preservation Season events like the Kids contest focused on the City's 30 historical monuments – like City Hall, Carnegie, Meyers House and Veteran's Building to name a few. George and I made our way around the tables with microphone in hand, sharing volunteer comments, compliments and museum news.

On April 14th, City Manager John Russo presided over the 15th annual Kids & Queen Victoria exhibit and opening reception. The Art Gallery was packed with enthusiastic children and parents awaiting the arrival of Queen Victoria, played once again by Edison teacher Connie Turner. The Queen praised their work, the kids sang a song about Alameda, and then all lined up to meet her. Russo congratulated them all, then thanked the museum for our years of providing a service to the community and conserving a 60-year-old-collection. He hoped that everybody would vote for Measure C to get the Carnegie fixed for a new home for the museum. It was so exciting to have such wonderful support from the City. And of course, it is Judith Lynch, currently our Board Vice President, who has been teaching the teachers, all these years. It is still a thrill to hear kids identify building parts on older homes. Many are now adults, keepers of a legacy of appreciation for the variety of architecture found in Alameda. History is alive and well.

*The 2012 Alameda Museum board was sworn in at the luncheon. Left to right: Charlie Howell, Julie Kennedy, Robbie Dileo, Bob Risley, Ginger Schuler, Freesia Blizard, Dewey St. Germaine, Judith Lynch, Debra Hilding, Adam Koltun, and Dennis Evanosky. Erich Stiger, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society President does the honors.*





*Queen Victoria greeted her subjects from local Alameda grammar schools who learned about her reign and about the historical houses in Alameda that pay tribute to her name.*



*The Train and Trolley Tour was held May 19th. Two tours listened to narration by authors Grant Ute (above) and Judith Lynch while riding on a historic motorized San Francisco cable car.*

Joe Young, who for the past 10 years has helped George with the photograph collection and the gift shop on Saturdays, recently lost his dear friend of 50 years, Ralph Michaelis, from San Lorenzo. They met through work in merchandising. Joe, as executor for Ralph's estate, asked us to help liquidate the home's contents. There have been three sales from the Dileo garage on Lafayette Street with a final 4th sale, yet to be scheduled. Joe and Ralph appreciated the Meyers House, especially the Fashion & Accessory exhibit in the basement. Ralph loved fabrics and linens – as those who attended the garage sales well know. In Ralph's memory, Joe donated a whopping \$10,000 to help launch our Meyers House Capital Improvement Fund (MHCIF). We are extremely grateful for his generosity. Others can help by joining the Meyers House Guild. Getting the grounds in shape and exterior maintenance caught up will enhance the venue for fund-raising events by the museum and others.

The museum purchased several display cases from the Michaelis estate. George and I spent the better part of a Sunday redoing the Gift Shop. Wow, does it look nice. Joe replenished the shelves with new items and things are selling briskly. Another gorgeous case, donated by Joe in memory of Ralph, went to the Meyers House basement. Furniture from the estate is for sale and found mostly in the board meeting area. The Asian bedroom set, dressers, end tables, living room chairs, bookcases, nesting tables, and lamps, are all priced to sell.

*Docents and board members alike enjoyed the museum membership luncheon. Left to right: Ellen Chesnut, Lois Singley, Mary Lou Kurtz, and Freesia Blizard.*

The Alameda Train and Trolley Tour was delightful. With perfect weather, 60 guests enjoyed lunch at the 1400 Bar & Grill at Croll's on Webster, co-owned by Mike Cooper, an Otis school-teacher with Judith Lynch. Peter and Donna Fletcher, co-hosts, had custom banners made for the trolley that will be used on future tours. (Peter conceived the tour idea.) The circular route showed us what remained of the former train stops, buildings, and why our roadways curve through town, highlighted with pictures from earlier years for comparison with today. Grant's book, *Alameda by Rail* is \$20 at the museum. See you next year!

President, Alameda Museum

*Robbie Giles*





# A Victorian Tea Party

by Ron Ucovich

**IN AMERICA, SOME PEOPLE REFER TO AFTER-NOON TEA AS "HIGH TEA"** because they think it sounds regal and upper class. England has always set the standard for etiquette and social refinement, so it is logical that we would emulate them. In England, however, high tea refers to dinner, not to tea and pastries served in the afternoon. Afternoon tea is never served in a dining room, but rather in a living room on a low table. This special table should be called a tea table, but generally we call it a coffee table whether it is used for coffee or not, and no matter what type of refreshments are served, the event is called high tea, because "high coffee" just doesn't engender the same degree of prestige.

During the 1800s, the afternoon tea was a common pastime for women of elite society. They would gather in a private home and serve tea and scones while they discussed club accomplishments, social projects, and charitable fund raising. Their tea parties were subject to stringent protocols and rules of conduct. Here are a few examples of their social decorums:

- If scones are served, they must be accompanied by heavy cream, marmalade or lemon curd.
- For a formal event, champagne or sherry should be served after the tea.
- After sitting down, the lady will place her purse against the back of the chair, never upon the floor.
- Napkins are unfolded and placed upon the lap before the tea is served.
- Sugar and lemon should be put into the cup before the tea is poured.
- Butter, cream, and marmalade are placed on the side of the pastry dish and applied with a butter knife to each bite individually.
- When sipping tea, always look into the teacup, never over the top.
- When finished, the spoon is placed behind the teacup, never inside.
- When picking up a scone, raise the pinkie finger to show that you are using only three fingers.
- Pinky fingers, however, are never raised while drinking from a cup.
- If you need to pour the tea into your saucer to cool it, you must sip it from the saucer, and never pour it back into the teacup.

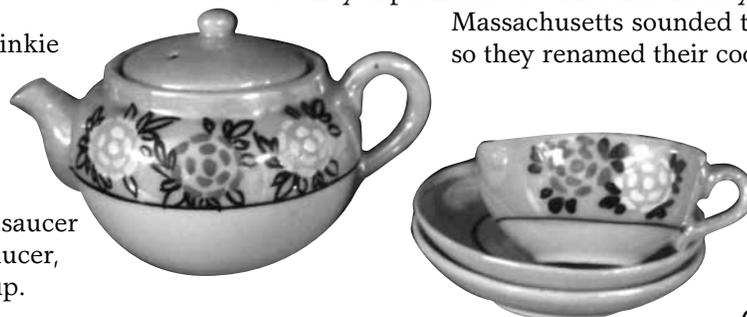


*A social tradition of Victorian society—the afternoon tea.*

In England it was common to serve scones with tea. Modern scones are made with flour, sugar, baking powder, butter, milk and eggs, and you can buy them containing dried fruits, nuts, orange rind, or chocolate chips, but the traditional English scones were simple griddle-fried oatcakes. They used no other flavorings, so a topping such as heavy cream, marmalade or butter was essential.

Crumpets were also popular in England. They used yeast to make them rise, so the texture was soft and chewy. They were traditionally served warm with butter, but modern crumpets are often topped with something sweet like honey, jam, or maple syrup.

The word "biscuit" comes originally from *bis coctum*, which in Latin means "twice baked," or a better translation would be "well-cooked." In America we use "biscuit" to refer to dinner rolls, but in England it refers to cookies. England preserved its tradition of serving scones or crumpets at tea parties, but in 1892 an American named James Mitchell devised a way of manufacturing small crumpet sandwiches with the filling in the middle. His machine extruded a tube of cookie dough with jam in the center, then a roller flattened the tube, then a knife cut the dough into two-inch pieces, then they were baked in an oven. He decided that fig jam made the best filling. The National Biscuit Company (now called Nabisco) was located in Boston, so they decided to call their cookies Fig Bostons. Before long, they realized that Boston was not an appropriate name to be associated with English-style tea parties, so they experimented with other nearby towns. Newton, Massachusetts sounded the most elite, so they renamed their cookies Fig Newtons.



*This child's tea set is on display at the museum.*

*Continued on page 11 . . .*



**Tea Party . . . Continued from page 10**

In 1908 the Sunshine Biscuit Company announced their new cream sandwich consisting of two elegantly embossed, chocolate flavored wafers with a rich cream filling. These were designed to look more elegant than the Fig Newton, thereby stealing the market. It needed a sophisticated name, so they combined the names of the elements which make up water (hydrogen and oxygen), and they named their cookie the Hydrox Cream Sandwich.

In 1912 the Nabisco Company, in an effort to reclaim the cookie market, announced their new cream sandwich. It had two chocolate wafers and a cream filling like the Hydrox, but the cookie was a black color, making it look more attractive on a white serving tray. The wafer was not as brittle as the Hydrox, and it was embossed with an elegant lace curtain pattern. The cream filling had a light yellow color, and was sweeter than the Hydrox. Its name came from *or*, the French word for gold, and on the package, scrolled in gold letters, was the name Oreo. This creation shot Nabisco back to the top of the sales chart, and even today, 100 years later, Oreo cookies outsell all others worldwide with more than 5 billion being sold each year in the U.S. alone.

Women of high society would start their daughters at an early age learning social graces and the art of entertaining. Next time you visit our museum, be sure to check out the toy room. Young ladies always had a doll house which had to be kept meticulously clean when guests arrived. They had a kitchen stove with a tea kettle on it so tea was readily available. They had tiny tea sets, complete with a china teapot, cups, saucers, sugar bowl, creamer, and an elegant serving tray to display dainty pastries.

These items were not really toys. They were teaching devices, and they were only used under mother's supervision until the girl got older. They allowed the young girl to enter a fantasy world where she was the village belle entertaining the most prestigious women in society. Her tea set was an heirloom which she would treasure her entire life, and hopefully pass on to her own daughter one day.

When you visit our exhibit, keep in mind that we are talking about young ladies from wealthy families. Girls from blue-collar families played with stocking dolls, knitting needles, and cast iron stoves. Wealthy girls were taught how to give a proper tea party, while her proletarian counterparts would practice the art of cooking, cleaning, and serving the tea.

## VICTORIA'S LEGACY ON THE ISLAND



During the second half of the 19th Century, a felicitous amalgam of redwood, gentle climate, skilled artisans, and automated milling machinery fueled the development of deliriously detailed buildings on the West Coast. Because these riotous runs of architectural fancy were built during the 64 year reign of Queen Victoria, they are dubbed Victorians in her honor. This free class for Mastick members offers eight sessions on Victorian history and culture, highlighting the 19th century buildings of Alameda. Six slide shows and two walking tours will show you how to recognize architectural details and distinguish amongst the various styles of fancywork homes that abound here.

Taught by local author and Otis teacher Judith Lynch, who serves on the City of Alameda Historical Advisory Board. Sessions are held Tuesday and Thursday mornings in room E, Mastick Center. Space is limited; please call Mastick to reserve a slot: 510-747-7506. You have to join the Mastick Center but that is also free.

- 1 Tuesday, June 19, 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** "Victorian Verve:" Inventions that galvanized the era of delightful excess.
- 2 Thursday, June 21, 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** "Making Gingerbread in the Gingerbread Era:" Details that delight the eye and the mill-working machinery that made it possible.
- 3 Tuesday, June 26, 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** "Learning to Look" Movie: Houses Have History.
- 4 Thursday, June 28, 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** "Speaking of Styles" Three major Bay Area Victorian styles, Italianate, Stick, and Queen Anne.
- 5 Tuesday, July 3 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** "Underneath it All" Misguided Improvements: disguises that make old buildings look modern.
- 6 Thursday, July 5, 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** Walk: In the Land of Marcuse and Rimmel.
- 7 Tuesday, July 10, 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** "Alameda Development:" How Transportation Shaped the Island, our Official Monuments (AKA Landmarks).
- 8 Thursday, July 12, 10:00 am – 11:00 am:** Walk: See an official Alameda Monument and explore Outer Pacific Avenue.

**GET TO WORK...  
LOOKING FOR HELP WITH A  
REMODELING PROJECT?**

Ted Mader, former owner of a graphic design business from Seattle, retired to the Oakland Rockridge area in 2007. He has been doing sensitive and historically correct kitchen, bath, window and patio work. He has his own tools and wants to move to Alameda – hopefully to live in a free “needs fixing up” house or basement.

He prefers to work at his own pace for a modest rate and can do the designing. A big fan of reusing and recycling items, like from Urban Ore, he is very knowledgeable in period hardware and finding that “just right” item to complete a project. Isn’t it time to get to that long planned “redo”? Ted is a true gentleman with a website of some of his projects.

[http://web.mac.com/tedmader2/house\\_renovation/Rockridge\\_House.html](http://web.mac.com/tedmader2/house_renovation/Rockridge_House.html)

He recently met with President Robbie Dileo and toured the Meyers House, where we hope to use his talents. Check out Ted’s work and email him at [tedmader2@mac.com](mailto:tedmader2@mac.com)

# How Come Teakettles Whistle?

by Ron Ucovich



pressure cooker from his childhood, and as a novelty, he added a whistle to some teakettles he was producing.

In 1921 there was a house wares fair in Chicago for wholesalers. To attract prospective customers to his booth, Mr. Block kept a kettle whistling continuously during the entire week-long show. The annoying sound drove all the fairgoers crazy, but it attracted a lot of attention, and dozens of wholesalers had placed orders. Mr. Block’s teakettle business flourished, and soon he was producing 35,000 novelty kettles per month.

Mr. Block was the first to admit that his invention made no great contribution to the American kitchen, but it did bring a smile of amusement to the lips of those who stopped to listen to the piercing sound, and although it was only designed as a whimsical novelty, the built-in whistle has been an integral part of teakettles ever since.

**THE WHISTLING TEAKETTLE WAS CONCEIVED** by a cookware manufacturer named Joseph Block. As a boy growing up in New York, young Joseph Block had watched his father design a pressurized potato cooker that whistled at the end of the cooking cycle. Many years later, when Mr. Block had his own cookware business, he recalled how fascinated he was with the whistling

## NEW IN THE GIFT SHOP

- **We have a new Neptune Beach poster for sale.**
- Comprised of three views of the former resort, the photo print is 36” wide by 24” tall, and priced at **\$45**, including sales tax.
- **The supply is limited.** By special order, it can be produced in a smaller size, at a lower price.
- **If any of the photos in the Neptune Beach exhibit interest you, please contact Robbie to discuss reproduction, pricing, and sizes. 510-865-1767 or [damsel\\_d@pacbell.net](mailto:damsel_d@pacbell.net)**
- We also have Alameda Museum Logo T-Shirts **\$18 each.**





## IN MEMORIAM

*Donations in  
Ralph Michaelis' name were  
received for the  
Archival Fund, thanks  
to Joe Young.*

*Thank you Gwen Meader  
and Josephine Polito for  
remembering Ralph with  
your contribution to help  
preserve our collection*

*Another contribution was  
received from  
Virginia Davis, in memory  
of Leslie Kieffer Gillis,  
daughter of museum  
docent Mary Lee Kieffer.*



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

A recent mailing asked you to check your renewal status with the museum and consider joining the Meyers House Guild. Your mailing label would say Paid for 2012 or Paid for Life. Some said Paid for MHG 2012, meaning your dues are current. If part of the label code has a "Q", then your dues are probably lapsed or will say COMP for complimentary. Those with 2011 are definitely lapsed. Codes are reviewed and updated before all mailings, but we sometimes mess up correcting the label files. Those with a "V" are true members with the ability to vote. The mailing's goal was to encourage everybody to become a Meyers House Guild member and make sure everybody got a membership card.

Meyers House Guild funds are dedicated for use at the house. Lack of City funds coupled with expenses that would be over and above the funds received from the East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) each year, means larger deferred maintenance problems have grown. The garden pergola and main house have some dry rot and require painting within a year. The old pump house needs the roof replaced, holes mended and the doors are rotted at the bottom. Some larger garden tasks and tree trimmings go undone.

Joe Young launched our campaign to raise funds for improvements at the house. Called MHCIF for short (Meyers House Capital Improvement Fund), we have always had separate financial statements and bank accounts for the Meyers House, although along with the museum, we are one in the same 501(c)3 non-profit organization. What is new, is asking for larger donations and putting Alameda Museum in charge of getting the larger maintenance problems handled. EBCF has indicated a willingness to grant between \$7,500 and \$10,000 in the next several weeks. We hope the City will contribute along with the Architectural Preservation Society and our members. Increasing publicity of the grounds and making it available to others for rent is under development along with a dedicated web site and brochures. We have met with a professional consultant to assist us with creating a joint Alameda Museum and Meyers House memorandum of understanding with the City. The Park Dept. budget for 2012/13 for the MH indicates spinning off the operations to a non-profit, much like what was done with FAAS and the animal shelter. How to write the MOU depends on the outcome of Measure C. A yes vote will make things much easier, but either way, there needs to be a new agreement. We are a package deal – two locations, different hours, but the same organization of members and volunteers.

**STOP**

**When you finish reading  
this newsletter,  
DON'T THROW IT AWAY.**

**Pass it on to a neighbor  
who may not be aware of  
all the interesting activities  
going on in our museum.**



Read more on Page 14



Workers from Romero Roofing replaced the porch roof, re-routed downspouts, and made sure all of the house gutters were clean and sealed.

Alameda Museum has long run the interior of the house as a museum dedicated to honoring the family. We have spent thousands of dollars in repairs and improvements since 1994—the back yard iron gate and fence, the studio roof, fence repairs, interior repairs due to leaking roof, and most recently, the front porch roof with whole house gutter cleaning, and the long needed restroom for public use. By removing a wall between the toilet-only room (toilet didn't work) and the former basement dark room (with covered over sink) and a bit of reconfiguring, we now have a functioning powder room. This was much less costly than the \$150,000 originally suggested for a restroom/dressing building. The Fashion and Accessory exhibit is large, attractive, and can serve as a dressing area for brides and attendants. The Meyers Studio/Office has a small working restroom and could serve as the male grooming area. An ADA restroom is still required, so for now, the portable toilet will remain. Receptions are now possible for parties up to about 100 people. Taking pictures, like for weddings or proms, will require getting the pergola painted ASAP. But it is all coming together.

The City's fiscal year starts July 1, so it is our goal to become the operating partner of the entire Meyers House property around that time. Once funds and agreements are in place, getting the house painted later this year will not only enhance the appearance, it will enhance the long-term life of City monument #26. So far, the Greater Alameda Business Association has asked for a Thursday event in August. Girls Inc. just won a free tea party in the grounds and viewing of the Meyers House as part of the AAPS May 17th Preservation Awards at Auctions by the Bay Theater. Their entry was a collage of their house, the former Edith Meyers Center, originally designed by Ernest Coxhead. Seemed

a perfect gift for 19 young ladies who embody the attributes of the Meyers sisters as strong, independent women. Other winners got free passes to see the house during regular hours. Do you have a need for a unique Alameda gift or reception? Maybe the Meyers House is a solution. We will start slowly, gaining experience with vendors and other groups, but our expertise with parties in the grounds is well known and it is time to share the unique garden setting. Please contact President Robbie Dileo, 510-865-1767, damsel\_d@pacbell.net to plan your event.

In other house news, we were the last stop May 3rd on a tour of three historic houses by attendees of the California Preservation Foundation conference in Oakland. The Camron-Stanford house on Lake Merritt was followed by the Cohen-Bray house on 29th Avenue. Annalee Allen, columnist for the *Oakland Tribune* and writer of historical books, was on the bus providing narration on buildings along the route. Robbie helped at Cohen-Bray then got on the bus to explain Alameda sites on route to the MH and then back to the Oakland Convention Center. Although they ran 45 minutes late due to traffic and too long getting started, 38 people enjoyed the tour. Most felt the best house was last with the least time remaining. Everybody wished they were not rushed through the Meyers estate. We did our best. Many thanks to George Gunn, Margy Silver, Charlie Howell and Ross Dileo, for getting them through the house and grounds so swiftly. Light refreshments provided near the Studio were welcome after a long afternoon, as was the new restroom. The tour's focus on ground-breaking women and architecture included a write-up provided by each house. We now have a small booklet at the house that says zero about "the stuff" inside the house, instead focusing on changes to the property during the sisters' lifetime. Buildings designed by Henry with help from Mildred were also incorporated along with the historical timeline for the Dry Creek Ranch property near Union City. Mostly women on the bus tour, they did appreciate all the beautiful items in the house, but at 10 minutes per floor or out-building, we touched only briefly on things we usually enjoy spending time explaining.

**If you haven't seen the house in a few years, you should visit to see all the changes. Guild members are free, \$5 for others. Open 1:00 to 4:00 pm on 4th Saturdays and by appointment on other days for large groups, with a minimum charge of \$150 and a few weeks notice.**





## VOLUNTEERS: ALAMEDA MUSEUM & MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS

- Lou Baca
- Barbara Balderston
- Chad Barr
- Jim & Jane Burgelin
- Janine Carr
- Katherine Cavanaugh
- Ellen Chesnut
- Barbara Coapman
- Dorothy Coats
- Diane Coler-Dark
- Cathy Conley
- Reid Davis
- Gail deHaan
- Ross & Robbie Dileo
- Marilyn Dodge
- Linda Domholt
- Joanne Dykema
- Caroline Erickson
- Pamela Ferrero
- Jeanne Gallagher
- Bonne Germain
- Barbara Gibson
- George Gunn
- Leslie Hawksbee
- Debra Hilding
- Lois J. Hoffman
- Charlie & Gail Howell
- Virginia Jones
- Mary Lee Keiffer
- Julie Kennedy
- Carole King
- Mary Lou Kurtz
- Flora Larson
- Gayle Macaitis
- Jeannie McCaffery
- Jim & Carla McGrogan
- Joanne McKay
- Chuck Millar
- Stephanie Paula
- Ginny Raber
- Earl Rivard
- Virginia Rivera
- Betty Saunders
- Holly Schmalenberger-Haugen
- 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  
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 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

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

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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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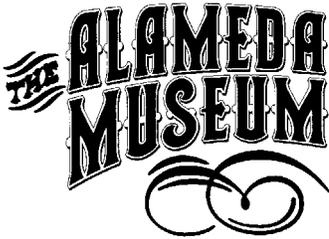
Be a Docent

Garden

Clean & Maintain Artifacts

Help with Special Events

Other \_\_\_\_\_



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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)



## ALAMEDA MUSEUM LECTURES 2012

❖ **THURSDAY, JUNE 28**  
**A Century of Public Transportation  
in San Francisco**

Local author and transportation buff  
Grant Ute on his new book.

❖ **THURSDAY, JULY 26**  
**Years of Power:  
Celebrating the 125th Anniversary  
of Alameda Municipal Power**

Behind the scenes in the second city in the  
entire United States to electrify.

❖ **THURSDAY, AUGUST 30**  
**Research and Findings**

How we discovered the truth about Alameda's  
oldest commercial building, the Encinal  
Saloon, aka Gim's Chinese Restaurant with  
Kevin "the Diligent" Frederick.

❖ **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27**  
**An Albino Angel's Resurrection**

Architect Richard Rutter tells the saga of  
one of the airplanes on pylons at NAS.

*NOTE: All lectures start at 7:00 p.m. at the Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue near Park Street. No reserved seats; come early to save a place and enjoy the exhibits in the History Hall and the Art Gallery. Admission is free for Museum members and \$10 for others. Topics may change without notice. For lecture information leave a message at 510-748-0796 or check [www.alamedamuseum.org](http://www.alamedamuseum.org).*



## SAVE THE DATE

Alameda Legacy Home Tour

September 23, 2012