

Alameda Museum

Quarterly

IT TAKES A VILLAGE *by Robbie Dileo*

THE MARCH 16TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON

with silent auction upstairs in the Masonic Hall's fourth floor was festive, informative, and fun. Museum volunteers were treated to a three course dinner provided by Dennis Wallace, owner of PBS Catering (PBS catering.com). Board members, businesses, and members contributed auction items that make the event a fundraiser, too. Joanne McKay brought lovely table centerpieces, while Robbie and George used the microphone to make announcements and get a few words from Councilmember Stewart Chen and our docents.

Former City Councilmember Doug deHaan gave the ceremonial oath of office and applauded the Museum for its efforts to preserve history—no easy task. He then introduced Joe Woodard and Dorothy Freeman who operate a full multimedia production company (woodard.freemanbusiness.com) who created the presentation on the Jean Sweeney Open Space Park, 22 acres, sometimes called Beltline Park. Alameda Park and Recreation Department has already begun the process for development of a passive park. Stay tuned for updates.

Volunteers are our life's blood and we are blessed with a fantastic group. Docents keep the doors open five



Docents Joanne McKay and Jeannie McCaffery at the festive Alameda Museum Membership Luncheon held March 16. Image: Valerie Turpen.

days a week. Many have been with us for several years and of course we are always looking for new people to join the ranks. All we ask is a commitment of about three hours per month, a love of history, ability to engage the public, and a willingness to take money for the many items we sell in our gift shop. Training is offered to new recruits and occasionally we do refresher classes. There are also other volunteers that come

in, mostly on Saturdays to help manage the collection.

The following are a few key people that you should know about:

ELLEN CHESNUT has been our docent coordinator for five years. She works on the schedule, trying to accommodate the changing docent shifts. As a very active now retired teacher from San Francisco, she volunteers at Mastick Senior Center and takes classes there. She checks

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A Village... *Continued from page 1*

out garage sales for future gift shop items, and her most ambitious project is writing a book of history about her family and the Armenian Holocaust in Turkey. Her enthusiasm is infectious. If you think you would like to help out please give her a call 510-865-1204.

Friday afternoons are always special because **RON UCOVICH** is on duty. He too is a retired teacher with a fantastic love of history that has translated into his being a professional volunteer docent. Did you see the recent article in *Alameda Magazine*, March/April issue? There is our Ron, a docent for the *Potomac*, the *USS Hornet*, archivist for East Bay Regional Park, organizer of walks for the Sierra Club, and the creator of many of our newsletter articles as well as editor. He was responsible for getting us the Phyllis Diller exhibit. We would be lost without him.

JOE YOUNG is called the assistant curator of the photographic collection, but he does so much more. He is there every Saturday helping George with gift shop items, including the research on collectibles and books plus the special signs needed. Joe's latest project with George is creating an inventory of all items that are at the Meyers house. Some are from the Meyers family and our collection but,



Longtime member Eleanor Stallman and loyal docent Barbara Gibson settle in for a fabulous lunch.

the majority of them are what we call props. Props are beautiful things that embellish the exhibits, but do not have specific relevance to Alameda history and could be sold, if funds were needed. Joe was also responsible for the \$10,000 donation that began the Meyers House capital campaign. We recently learned that assistant curatorial services are valued at \$15 per hour. Joe has been putting in about 20 hours per week of late, which translates to \$15,000 per year if we had to pay for his time.

VIRGINIA RIVERA comes in to help George catalog items for the collection. She takes dictation, a rare skill these days. She types the cards on her electric typewriter. Her efforts as secretary to the curator are invaluable. Someday, the collection records will be digital, but the old saying "if it is isn't broken, don't fix it" is perfect, and we'd like to think that we are keeping Ms. Rivera forever young in her early 90s.

CHAD BARR came to us a few years ago from Cal State East Bay. He was working on a project for his Museum Studies degree. He fell in love with the archival collection and decided that he would like to work on the various City of Alameda documents that came to us for cataloguing. Many of these items date back to the late 1800s. He spends the day with us every Saturday assisting George with the collection,

and occasionally brings along a colleague who is also interested in learning about collection management.

Kids from our local schools come on Saturdays to do their community service hours with us. Often they are pressed into service doing house-keeping chores like dusting, vacuuming, cleaning artifacts, rearranging gift shop items, and the occasional bulk mailing tasks of applying labels and filling envelopes. The kids get credit for their hours, a requirement for graduation, but they learn a lot about taking care of a museum and provide volunteer hours that enhance our service to the community.



Socializing at the event were Eva Cloboth with museum member Barry Benioff.

Of course your Board of Directors puts in the time necessary to create exhibits and make decisions on future operations. But it is **DIANE COLER-DARK**, past president, who said "I love to count money" at the luncheon, that is handling the weekly banking, paying bills, and taking caller questions that don't go to the president or curator. She organizes silent auction items, processes home tour ticket sales and gift shop sales. Essentially our office manager, Diane's help is all volunteer and critical to our operation. So you see, we all play a part, but it takes a village of volunteers to keep the museum going for 65 years.



Museum docents Marilyn Dodge (left), and Lois Hoffman (right) with Claudia Lewey.



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

I want to thank all those who participated in the annual Membership Luncheon on March 16th. First, credit should go to Dennis Wallace of PBS Catering for preparing the delicious salmon lunch. Everyone seemed pleased with the results.

Gratitude should also go to the individuals who donated the silent auction items. Special attention should be given to Judith Lynch for the carved wood carousel horse and to Tina and Bill Chapot for the decorative art pottery piece.

In ending, I want to express my appreciation to former Councilmember Doug deHaan who swore in the board of directors and finished with words of praise for the museum.



George C. Gunn
Curator, Alameda Museum



FANTASTIC NEWS!

Thank you to City Council who unanimously voted for our five year contract to manage the City's portion of the museum collection—old city documents, photos, library, fire and police department items. It was a challenge to figure out the percentages and value of our services. The museum team of Bob Risley, treasurer; Kathleen Brown, consultant; Robbie Dileo, president; and George Gunn, curator with help from Joe Young, assistant curator, analyzed the whole museum collection, time spent, and annual expenses. The contract could not have happened without ARPD Director Amy Wooldridge, City Manager John Russo and City legal staff supplying direction plus the extra support at council session by former Councilmember Doug deHaan, who helped put the proposal all into perspective.

BRAVO.



Croll's Bar & Grill

by Ron Ucovich

HOW COME WE SAY "BAR AND GRILL"? What do grills have to do with drinking alcohol? The reason is because the original expression was "bar and grille." A grille is a structure constructed of vertical rails, and is used for protecting something, much like the grille of your car protects the radiator.

During the 1800s, stores did not bring in large quantities of money. There were only two buildings in town which handled lots of money: the bank, and the town hotel and saloon. The person in charge of receiving and paying money was locked in a security cage, which today we call a "teller's cage," but in those days was referred to as "the grille." The bar was the place where you bought your drink, and the grille is where you paid your bill.

Banks and saloons were the first places which required iron chests to protect their money from fire and theft. The earliest safes were double-walled with a gel filler in between which would insulate during a fire and emit moisture to raise the flash point. The box was made with steel plates riveted onto an angle-iron frame. The door lock was similar to a prison door; it had a slide bolt activated by a giant key. The lock was strong, but the safe could be easily breached by driving a wedge at the seams and snapping off the rivet heads.

Another way to violate an antique safe was to pick the lock. A special tool, called a "jimmy," was devised to manipulate the bolt mechanism without using a key. In 1862, a safe manufacturer named Linus Yale invented the combination lock. This lock could not be manipulated, and bank vaults were very secure until the thieves learned that a swift blow with a sledge hammer could drive the combination lock right through the back of the door, and a crowbar inserted into a crack could pop the door open. Afterwards, doors were constructed in tier layers so pry bars couldn't be driven into the crack, and the door could not be sprung. These tiered doors were made of stacks of steel strips, which made the doors even stronger and warp resistant.

In 1877, Mr. Yale was granted a patent for the padlock. Early padlocks, however, were made of a very light-weight metal, and a quick hammer blow is all that it took to disarm them. In 1924, a Milwaukee lock-

An impenetrable safe from Croll's Bar & Grill. It has many mechanisms that make it hard to open and is fire resistant to keep paper and documents protected.

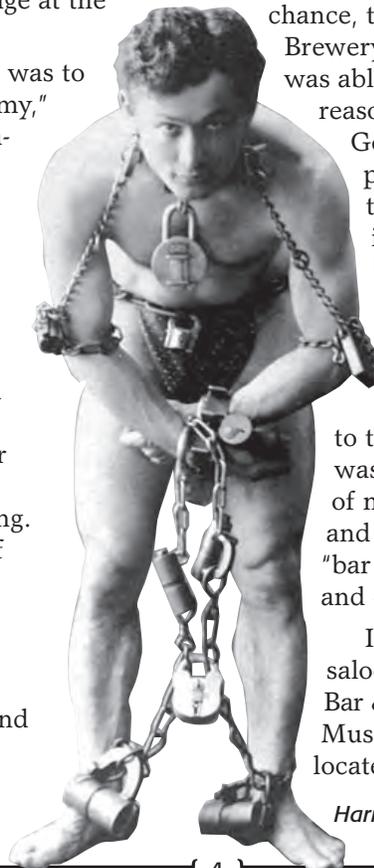


smith named Harry Soref took the laminated steel idea and applied it to padlocks. He called his factory the Master Lock Company, and he began to produce the world's strongest padlocks.

Mr. Soref started his business in a small shop with only three pieces of equipment and five employees. By chance, these were Prohibition years, and the Pabst Brewery was just put out of business, so Mr. Soref was able to purchase this huge factory at a very reasonable price. Also by chance, the Federal Government had a great need for indestructible padlocks because they were closing down all the bars, breweries, wineries and distilleries in the Nation. The Federal Government was buying all the locks that Master Lock could produce.

By the 1880s, safes had gotten so strong and heavy that they were considered indestructible. This is when they were moved to the back room of the bar, and a cash register was used in the front to handle small amounts of money. It was then that the expression "bar and grille" became obsolete, so they changed it to "bar and grill," meaning a place which sold alcohol and quick-fried foods.

In 1883, Johnny Croll bought a hotel and saloon on Webster Street, and he named it "Croll's Bar & Grill." The next time you visit the Alameda Museum, take a close look at Mr. Croll's safe located near the front door. It was state-of-the-art



Harry Houdini

Continued on page 5...



Croll's Bar & Grill . . . Continued from page 4 for its day. It has a combination lock which can't be jimmied, and the lock has drawers behind it so it can't be punched out with a sledge hammer. The doors are seven inches thick, and they are layered in tiers to prevent prying. It has large door pins on the top and bottom of each door to lock them tight, and they have three additional pins on the door edge to lock the two doors together. It has no external rivets which could be chiseled off. It also has many drawers and compartments inside to protect important papers and documents against fire, and the internal drawers require additional keys to open them.

Remember Harry Soref, the guy who invented the first unbreakable padlock? He was the locksmith who taught Harry Houdini how to escape from chains, trunks and straitjackets. When Houdini asked if there was a way to jerry rig a safe, he responded that safes of this type are indestructible.

I have one more bit of trivia which you can use at your next cocktail party. Houdini was sometimes referred to as the "Lock Buster," and when he saw his actor friend, named Joseph Francis Keaton, perform an escape stunt, Houdini awarded him with his title. Joseph Francis was thereafter known as "Buster" Keaton.



Buster Keaton

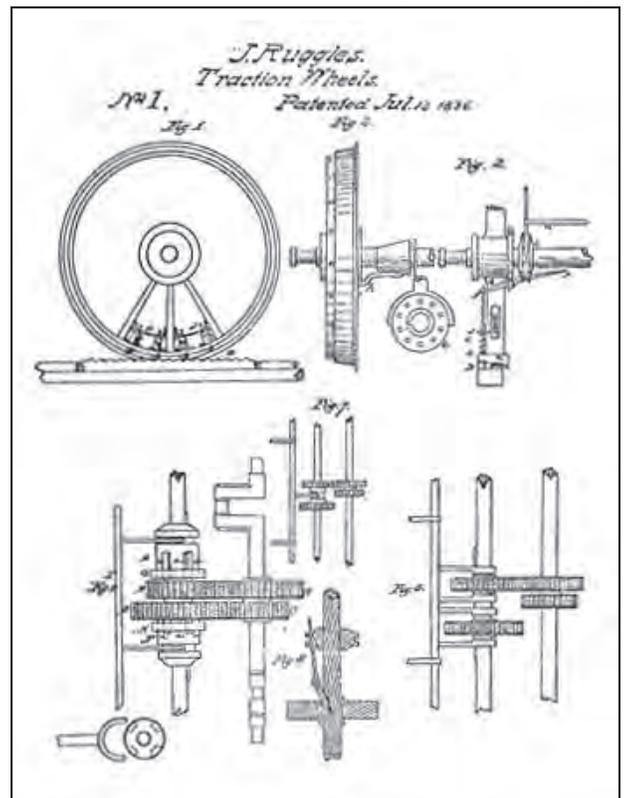
America's First Patent *by Ron Ucovich*

BEFORE AMERICA WON OUR INDEPENDENCE FROM GREAT BRITAIN, we were not allowed to manufacture our own goods. England demanded that we purchase everything from them. After we gained our independence, President George Washington asked Congress to pass a law offering patent protection to aspiring inventors, thereby encouraging domestic creativity and stimulating our national economy. Congress enacted the Patent Act in April of 1790, and three months later the first U.S. patent was granted.

In England, patents were not granted to protect the creator of a new invention, but rather to create monopolies. The English government received royalties from creative entrepreneurs in exchange for exclusive rights to manufacture new products. This monopoly stimulated local employment, as well as supplying England with new products which could be traded to foreign markets. In America, however, the patent was issued to protect the inventor against thieves profiting from other people's inventions.

America's first patent was granted to Mr. Samuel Hopkins of Vermont. He had created a method of refining potash and potassium carbonate, which were essential ingredients in manufacturing glass, chinaware, and soap. The patent fee was \$5 plus a copy fee of 10¢ for every 100 words. Typewriters, carbon paper, and photocopiers did not exist at that time, so all copies had to be produced by hand. The application required a written description with drawings and illustrations of all component parts, and it had to include sufficient detail to allow a skilled worker to duplicate the product when it became public domain after 14 years when the patent expired.

Three patents were granted in 1790: Mr. Hopkins' potash procedure, one for mass-producing tallow candles, and a machine for milling flour. Ironically, these inventions are not numbered patent #1, #2, and #3. Patents were originally recorded by name and date only. In 1836, a devastating fire destroyed the patent office along with most of its contents. A subsequent regulation required all patents to be submitted in duplicate and to be numbered. The second copy had to be stored in a separate archive. Patent #1 was issued in 1836, after nearly 10,000 patents had been issued without numbers.



United States patent number one for a locomotive steam-engine for rail and other roads issued July 13, 1836 to John Ruggles.

There's No There There!

by Ron Ucovich

GERTRUDE STEIN SAID ONCE, REFERRING TO OAKLAND, "THERE'S NO THERE THERE!"

Gertrude was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her father became very wealthy in railroads and land development. Her family moved to Oakland when Gertrude was four years old. By the time she was 17, both her parents had died, so she moved back to the East Coast to live with relatives. She lived in the finest homes and attended the best schools in the country. She dedicated her life to poetry and literature, and in her writings, she often spoke fondly of her recollections of Oakland, and how she longed to go back "there." When her dream became reality, she discovered with great disappointment that her luxurious childhood home had been demolished, and in fact, there was no there there. Oakland became known as the city that has no there there.



The smelters at Selby.

Come to think of it, there are many nearby towns which have no there there. Not much is left of the historic town of Selby, located along the Carquinez Strait. During California's Gold Rush, gold and silver ore was barged down the Sacramento River to Selby, where it was smelted. In 1886, a large blast furnace was



Gertrude Stein left Oakland with a long lasting and not very complimentary tagline.

built so they could smelt iron. The plant closed in 1967, and today, all that remains is the foundation of the large hotel where the workers resided.

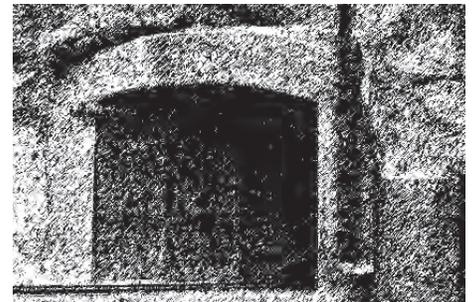
The town of Eckley, located east of Crockett, was a town where they manufactured bricks. The waterfront is still littered with broken brick pieces. The sales office still stands, and proudly displays the many types and sizes of bricks manufactured there. Amidst the broken bricks at the wharf lay the remains of an historic side-wheel ferryboat which burned to the waterline about 40 years ago. It is the skeleton of the *Garden City*, a passenger ferry built in 1879, which for many years was the commuter ferry between Alameda and San Francisco.

Roads and house foundations are all that remains of Valle Vista, a quarry town located near Moraga. The riprap quarry still exists. Riprap is broken rock which is used to armor shorelines, dams, river banks, bridge abutments, and pilings against water erosion. Stairs and walkways can still be seen in Valle Vista made from the local quarry stone.

Photographs are all that is left from the town of Redwood, a logging town in the Oakland hills. The town of about 200 residents populated Redwood until 1926, when Upper San Leandro Dam was constructed and flooded the canyon.

The road between Oakland and Castro Valley had to be relocated higher up the hill, but even though the town is gone, the road is still called Redwood Road.

The town of Giant got its name from the dynamite plant which was located at Point Pinole from 1915 to 1960. It was a company town, and all its residents were employees of the powder works. In addition to houses, the town had a general store, a recreation hall, a dance hall, a hotel, and a post office. Today, all that remains of Giant are empty dynamite bunkers surrounded by large groves of eucalyptus trees. The trees were a safety precaution intended to direct the force of accidental explosions upward to minimize damage and injury.



The silica mine at Somersville.

Somersville was a mining town near Antioch. They mined silica, a pure crystalline sand used in manufacturing window glass. Atlas fruit jars were made from the silica produced here. The silica mineshafts still exist and can be visited today at Black Diamond Regional Park.

Pinehurst was a resort town with no permanent residents. It had a large dance hall which drew crowds of revelers and party-goers to celebrate any special occasion they could think of. The town had some tent cabins, which could be rented during the summer months. Today, the only sign that the town ever existed is a road in the Oakland hills which is still called Pinehurst Road.

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There There . . . *Continued from page 6*

Stewartsville, in the eastern foothills of Mt. Diablo, was a coal mining town. It was just a small collection of shacks and bunkhouses for the miners, but it can still be considered a town, because in 1882 it opened its own post office, run by the owner of the coal mine, William Stewart.

There is one real ghost town with abandoned buildings still standing. It is the town of Drawbridge. A hundred years ago, it was a vacation resort for duck hunters, located out on the mudflats west of today's Fremont. Drawbridge had no stores, no school, no police or fire department. What it had was hotels, gambling halls, pool halls, saloons, and brothels. The town had only a couple dozen residents during the winter months, but the summer months drew hundreds of tourists who came to enjoy the town's services and hospitality.

We see, now, that there are many towns which have no there there, however Oakland is not one of them. In 1988, local artist Roslyn Mazzilli, designed a modern art sculpture of colorful paddles and sails spiraling toward the heavens, suggesting a brighter and freer tomorrow. She entitled the sculpture "There," and she displays it proudly in the plaza of Oakland's Civic Center. Today, Oakland is no longer ashamed of being the city with no there there.

"There" sculpture in Oakland.

Remember Flavor Straws?

by Ron Ucovich

BEFORE 1888, PEOPLE USED TO USE RYE GRASS STEMS to sip cold beverages, but in 1888, an inventor named Marvin Stone was drinking a mint julep on a warm Washington D.C. afternoon. The taste of rye was mixing with the drink and giving it a grassy flavor which he found distasteful, so he decided to make one out of paper. He wound strips of paraffin-coated Manila paper around a pencil and glued it together. It worked perfectly, and that year, he founded the Stone Straw Corporation. His paper straws were tediously rolled by hand until 1906, when Mr. Stone invented his paper-straw winding machine.

The Stone Straw Corporation dominated the straw market for about 50 years. One day, sitting in a soda fountain in San Francisco in the 1930s, Joseph Friedman was watching his daughter fuss over a milkshake. The paper straw kept collapsing in the middle as the young lady stretched to sip from the countertop. Mr. Friedman decided to design a soda straw which would flex at the top without collapsing. In his workshop, he took a paper straw and inserted a screw into the end. He then wrapped some fishing line tightly around the grooves to create accordion pleats in the straw. When the screw was removed, Mr. Friedman had a straw which could bend, and his daughter would be able to drink milkshakes while sitting at a soda fountain counter.

In 1939, Mr. Friedman founded the Flex Straw Company in San

Francisco. At first, his Flex Straws were sold only to hospitals where bed-ridden patients needed to drink liquids while lying in bed. By the 1950s, his invention had hit the public market, and Flex Straws became a household necessity for any family with small children.

In 1956, to encourage children to drink milk, a soda straw company designed a straw which magically converted plain milk into chocolate milk. The straw contained a chocolate strip, (cornstarch, cocoa and sugar), which would impart flavoring as the child drank. Although novel, the idea was not successful, so the company experimented with different flavors and colors. The novelty soon wore out, and within five years, the Flav-R Straw Company was out of business. Mothers preferred Bosco, Nestlé, and Hershey products for flavoring the kids' milk.

During the 1960s, straws switched from paper to plastic. To capture the imagination of children, colorful spiral stripes were painted on the outside. This idea led to the "crazy straw," which was a translucent plastic straw with twists and loops at the top. When liquid was drawn up the winding path, it created a transitory amusement for small children. The "spoon straw" was created in the 1980s. It was an extra-wide straw with a spoon at the bottom for scooping up icy drinks, like Slurpees and slushes.

The soda straw industry finally reached full circle with the production of juice boxes. Taped neatly to the side of your juice box you will find a tiny straw that looks very much like a stem of rye grass.





From the President's Desk

by Robbie Dileo

To the "Village", my thanks for a wonderful start to 2013 and all the docents who keep our doors open. The luncheon and auction were fun and the result of a great team—your Board of Directors—supplying items and lending a hand to make the day run smoothly. New directors, Adam Gillitt and Johanna Hall are finding tasks to help us already. Adam's assistance with the new Meyers House website is already apparent and Johanna's help with fund raising and lectures will be fantastic. Thank you Debra Hilding for handling the door, Julie Kennedy for bid sheets, Charlie Howell and Ross Dileo for bar duty, Diane Coler-Dark and George Gunn for item selection/organization and the help of Chuck Millar and Adam Koltun for setting up and taking down auction items. I enjoy playing MC with George and sharing our news, but the special praise from Doug deHaan, supporting words from City Councilmember Stewart Chen, and the wonderful program on our future park were the high points.

Everybody needs to know about Joe Woodard and Dorothy Freeman. Together they operate a full multimedia service that can handle large and small tasks. Audio recordings, still photography, video photography, as well as research and technical writing skills are available. They brought the video we watched at the Annual Luncheon on the Jean Sweeney Open Space Preserve. What a joy to see Jean explain in her own words how the years passed, yet the battle was won getting those 22 acres at a fraction of today's

Dorothy Freeman and Joe Woodard provide a variety of multimedia services.



market value. A first class production. Video is so powerful. Check out the website <http://woodard.freemanbusiness.com> for the complete range of services available.

Got a problem with your PC? Dorothy may be able to help. And let's not forget that Joe offers FREE photo portraits at Mastick Senior Center, monthly. Anybody, 50 and over, can be part of Mastick. Arguably the best service to the community, they have classes, social groups, help with services, offer lunch, have Saturday Bingo, and a newly remodeled thrift shop. Check it out!

Inside this issue is a flyer from Alameda Naval Air Museum. Visiting their museum is only \$5 each but getting a family membership for \$55 allows for more frequent visits with the entire family. I was just there and saw the newest exhibit honoring founder Marilyn York, who recently passed away. Done by Boy Scout Troop 73, the story of a woman emerges—a leader few of the ANAM volunteers really knew as a young woman. Quite the gal with her friend Barbara Baack, both WAVES, who in the late 1990s dreamed of a museum and made it happen. I collaborated with tales of how to do this and that, but it was Marilyn and Barbara who did all the heavy lifting. It's a great museum, full of beautiful interesting exhibits and deserves your support.





Need a place for a club meeting or to celebrate an anniversary? The Crow's Nest is a great location on the second floor and there is lots of free parking available. The Spring East Bay Swap Meet for collector Cars & Parts is also held in the Fall. Plan a visit soon and learn more, alamedanavalairmuseum.org

Speaking of museums, the *USS Hornet*, ANAM, Pacific Pinball Museum and our museum met in March to discuss cross promotions and getting the word out to the greater Bay Area to visit Alameda, a town so richly steeped in history. The new version of the City of Alameda website has us all there in the visitor section, so that is a great start. Look for some future joint events as we ramp up to make 2014 the year that everybody realizes what a great city we have and that each museum showcases a particular aspect of our history, and that all are needed to tell the story.

During the Trolley Tour March 23rd, we started our tour of the former Naval Air Base at ANAM's entrance. The surprise that awaited us was the newly restored A-7B, just placed on its pedestal at the East Gate off Appezato Way. What a sight. Dick Rutter, who narrated the trolley tour, went back after the PM tour to paint the pedestal "navy blue". He and his team of volunteers restored this plane and the one at the Main Entrance. It is amazing what determination can accomplish in this town.

President, Alameda Museum

The museum Board of Directors left to right: Debra Hilding, Judith Lynch, Bob Risley, Julie Kennedy, Johanna Hall, Adam Gillitt, Adam Koltun, Dennis Evanosky, Charlie Howell, Robbie Dileo with Doug deHaan giving the ceremonial oath of office.



*One of the Queen Anne style homes that grace older Alameda neighborhoods.
Image: Second grader Jaime Carreon.*

Victoria's Legacy in Alameda

During the second half of the 19th Century, an amalgam of plentiful redwood, gentle climate, skilled artisans, and automated milling machinery fueled the development of deliriously detailed buildings. Because these architectural fancies were built during the 64-year reign of Queen Victoria, they are dubbed Victorians in her honor.

A free summer class for

Mastick Senior Center members offers eight sessions on Victorian history and culture, highlighting the 19th century buildings of Alameda. Classes are Tuesday and Thursday mornings starting June 18.

Five slide shows and three walking tours will show you how to recognize architectural details and distinguish amongst the various styles that abound here. Taught by local author, teacher and Museum Vice President Judith Lynch, who also serves on the City of Alameda Historical Advisory Board.

Space is limited; please call Mastick to reserve a slot: 510-747-7506. A bonus this summer is a cooking session with Chef Jacki, who will teach us to make a very Victorian high tea at Mastick Saturday, June 29.



What's New at the Meyers House & Gardens

At the February 19th meeting, all five council members voted yes to transfer the Meyers House to Alameda Museum. Citing the museum's dedication since 1997 with operating the house museum portion, plus years of our past investment in building improvements for roofs, gutters, restroom and back gate, it was agreed that we are better poised to care for the property and get the grounds ready for rental activities than the City.

Transfer of the property was deemed easier than a complicated lease. With consent of the East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) and the hard work of Amy Wooldridge, Director of ARPD, working with City Staff, the house will become our responsibility not later than May 1st. As a reminder to all, while the property is transferred on paper, neither the City nor Alameda Museum could ever sell the property. It can only be returned to EBCF for ultimate disposition.

The house comes with deferred maintenance and all the utilities of a residential house, but the annual grant from the Meyers Sisters Fund at EBCF will come to us instead of the City and help offset expenses. Thanks to many of you and the \$10,000 grant from EBCF, we did reach our goal of raising \$40,000 for painting and pergola repairs. Some repairs are higher than anticipated because dry rot damage was more extensive than originally thought. With future painting only weeks away, it made no sense to cut corners.

Repairs were complex and done to last for years. Bill, of W. Chapot Construction, milled custom clear heart redwood and recycled a massive post and parts of a lattice panel to save on materials and to get as close to an exact matching profile for replaced wood. He crafted two full lattice panels to match the others, replaced two posts and concrete

base, and rebuilt the pergola gate entrance, where the front pillars were sitting on sawdust. That the whole pergola did not collapse at the gate is a miracle. At the house, the front porch pillar and lower buttresses were also repaired. Beautiful work, to last our lifetime anyway. Thanks Bill.

So many things to do. The painting bids are mostly in-hand. But first, there is a roof repair over the library, where it has been leaking this winter. We are also looking at the roof bid on the pump house and deciding on priorities like garden sheds for tables, chairs, and food service. Landscape changes for easier maintenance over the years to come are also needed. Some bushes and taller tree-like shrubs are reaching the end of their lifespan and some are blighted. Replacement greenery will require a landscape plan (in the works) and funds to purchase and plant. The sprinkler system in the front yard is broken. Gravel needs to be removed so that a harder surface can be created for tables and chairs. Volunteer labor will be appreciated, so if you are a gardener at heart, let us know how you would like to help. It is hoped that come July or early August, the majority of the work is done. The "Thank You Party" for major donors giving \$250 or more toward the capital campaign will probably be in August.

There will be smaller "introduction" events in the grounds as we let the various business associations, art groups, realtors, and wedding planners learn of the venue. When we are ready to accept bookings, news of rental rates and new pictures will be placed on the website MeyersHouse.org, but for now, we are in deferred maintenance abatement mode. We will gladly accept donations toward the cause, as \$40,000 is not going to cover all that we hope to do this spring. Please make checks payable to Meyers House and send to Alameda Museum. Donations are tax deductible. The house and grounds are going to be a knockout and a fantastic place for events.



The pergola being repaired. Two full lattice panels were crafted to match the others, two posts were replaced and concrete base.



VOLUNTEERS: ALAMEDA MUSEUM & MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Barbara Balderston | Carole King |
| Chad Barr | Adam Koltun |
| Jim & Jane Burgelin | Jana Kurka |
| Janine Carr | Mary Lou Kurtz |
| Katherine Cavanaugh | Gayle Macaitis |
| Ellen Chesnut | Jeannie McCaffery |
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Volunteer docents are the folks who keep our doors open. An enthusiastic group, they help run the gift shop, and on occasion, do tasks like help with mailings. Training is available. Do you have 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**

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A Closer Look at French Fries

by Ron Ucovich

IN 1537, SPANISH EXPLORER JIMENEZ DE QUESADA INTRODUCED TO SPAIN an unusual plant he had found in Columbia. Coming from the nightshade and belladonna family, its leaves were poisonous and of no practical value, but it had large tuberous roots which could be used as cheap fodder for hogs.

According to legend, during the Seven Years War, a French army medical officer named Antoine-Augustine Parmentier, was taken captive by the Prussians, and as part of his prison rations was given potatoes to eat. In France, cultivation of potatoes was banned because they believed that it caused leprosy. While in prison, however, Dr. Parmentier discovered that if you cooked the root well, it made a satisfactory food source, and it produced no ill side effects.

After the war, the potato was still viewed with great suspicion, even though Dr. Parmentier had demonstrated to the medical community that they were safe. Dr. Parmentier hosted elegant dinner parties where he served potatoes to royalty and political leaders. He served potato wedges fried in fish oil, and he allowed the guests to believe they were eating an exotic new seafood. He also obtained permission to plant a field of potatoes near the castle. He had the plot fastidiously guarded by day, but at night he left it unsupervised. The peasants assumed that anything watched so closely must be valuable, and they stole the plants at night. Soon, potatoes were being grown all over France.

In 1785, France suffered a famine, and out of hunger and sheer desperation, they turned to the potato as a means of survival. They even turned the royal gardens at Tuileries into a potato patch. It was then that potatoes gained the respect of the nation. Soon, push carts

appeared on the streets of Paris and you heard vendors crying out "*pommes frites!*"... (fried potatoes).

In 1802, Thomas Jefferson asked his chef to prepare some potatoes "French style" for a White House dinner party. This is the earliest record of fried potatoes being referred to as French, and thereafter, the dish has been called "French fried potatoes." Homemade fries were not very popular, however, because deep frying food in a vat of oil is messy and smelly.

Finally, French fried potatoes were adopted by America's fast-food chains. These were the people who sliced the potatoes into thin strips, which allowed them to fry crispier. By doing this, the fries acquired a higher fat content due to the higher surface-to-volume ratio, and the public has always had a fondness for food with a high fat content. The fast-food chains also added lots of salt, which also appeals to the American consumer.

Burger King was the first company to spray sugar onto the potatoes before frying. This turns the fries from white to golden brown as the sugar caramelizes. McDonalds was the first company to cook their fries twice...once to cook the inside, and the second time to make the outside extra crisp.

In America, the standard topping for French fries is ketchup. The British prefer malt vinegar for dipping their fries. The Belgians break a raw egg over their fries just as they come hot out of the fryer. This keeps the fries soft and shiny as well as adding flavor. Other countries dip their fries in mayonnaise, peanut sauce, blue cheese, or various types of salad dressing.

Now, what do you suppose they call French fries in France? If you order *pommes frites* in a restaurant, you will get large fries which we call "steak fries." If you want the thin fries which we are accustomed to, believe it or not, they are called *pommes américains* (American fries).



**ALAMEDA MUSEUM
IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS**

**CALL ROBBIE
510-865-1767 TO OFFER
YOUR SERVICES**

City of Alameda Historic Preservation Season 2013

► **Thursday, April 25, 7:00 pm**
**More on Maybeck: The Inspiring
Saga of the Palace of Fine Arts**

By Gray Brechin author of *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*, and many other books and articles.

Free for Museum members, \$10 for others. Information: 510-748-0796.

► **Thursday, May 23, 7:00 pm**
Preservation Awards Gala

The 16th annual celebration of historic preservation projects on the Island, sponsored by AAPS. Also introducing the winners of the second annual AAPS Kids Preservation Contest.

Free, Auctions by the Bay Theater, 2700 Saratoga Avenue, Alameda. Information: 510-479-6489.

► **Thursday, May 30, 7:00 pm**
Andy Pagano Film Festival

Several movies on local history by Mr. Alameda. Sponsored by the law offices of Susan Jeffries.

Free for Museum members, \$10 for others. Information: 510-748-0796.

► **Saturday, April 27, 1:00 – 4:00 pm**
Saturday, May 25, 1:00 – 4:00 pm
Meyers House & Gardens

Docent-led tour of this official Alameda Monument includes Henry Meyers's architectural studio and displays of vintage clothing and building details. 2021 Alameda Avenue.

Free for Meyers Guild members; \$5 for others. Information: 510-865-1767.

MUSEUM LECTURES JUNE TO OCTOBER

❖ **Thursday June 27, 7:00 pm**
Much Ado

Celebrating 75 years of the Altarena Playhouse, a spunky in-the-round group of players holding forth on High Street. Sponsored by Robbie Dileo, President, Alameda Museum.

❖ **Thursday July 25, 7:00 pm**
**Designing with Nature: Arts and
Crafts Architecture in Northern
California**

Another film by Paul Bockhurst Productions. Sponsored by Janelle Spatz, Realtor, Bayside Real Estate.

❖ **Thursday August 29, 7:00 pm**
**The Chicago World's Fair and the
"Rise" of the Skyscraper**

By U.C. Berkeley professor and architect Greg Castillo. Sponsored by Evelyn Kennedy, Realtor, Gallagher & Lindsey.

❖ **Thursday September 26, 7:00 pm**
**Slide Talk: Learning from Nature:
Tales of two Anselms, Mr. Hall and
Mr. Adams**

Sponsored by Judith Lynch, member, Alameda Historical Advisory Board.

❖ **Thursday, October 24, 7:00 pm**
**Digging Alameda: The Inside Scoop
on the Underground Island**

A slide revelation by publishers and authors Eric Kos and Dennis Evanosky. Sponsored by Ginger and Eric Schuler, Harbor Bay Realty.



JOSEPH WOODARD OFFERS FREE PHOTO PORTRAITS AT MASTICK SENIOR CENTER

The center schedules his visit once a month, usually the afternoon of the third Monday of the month (unless that date coincides with a holiday).



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(510) 747-7500.

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for free!



SEE YOU AT MASTICK!



My First Box of Crayons *by Ron Ucovich*

I DIDN'T HAVE CRAYONS IN THE FIRST GRADE. My teacher, Miss Riordan, didn't like colors. She always wore black clothes. She taught us how to write using brown pencils and brown paper. The paper was very crude, like butcher paper, and it had little chunks of wood in it. The pencil she gave us was so huge that I held the tip with my fist while the other end rested on my shoulder... well, that's what it felt like when I was six years old. Miss Riordan seemed very fussy to me. When I learned how to draw an "E," I was very proud of my accomplishment. Then, Miss Riordan came by and whacked my knuckles with her ruler because she didn't like the way it was facing.

Second grade was a lot happier for me. Mrs. Owens was my teacher, and she wasn't as crabby as Miss Riordan. She gave us all a box of crayons, and we learned to write words using different colors. Each box had eight colors: black, brown, green, orange, red, indigo, and yellow. Mrs. Owens was very understanding. I didn't know the difference between purple and indigo, so she let me call it purple. She didn't whack my knuckles with a ruler if I disagreed with her.

Schoolchildren did not always have the luxury of learning to write with colors. In the 1800s, children learned to write with a slateboard and chalk. In 1900, the Binney and Peckskill Company of Pennsylvania invented special pencils for school kids. They made pencils which were large enough for children to grasp. They replaced pencil lead with graphite, which is less toxic, and they used clay instead of slate to make the lead softer and smoother to use.

In 1903, this same company began production of drawing sticks for children. They took their children-



In the 19th century children carried a framed piece of slate and chalk to school to write their lessons.

friendly pencils and used paraffin wax as a base. Paraffin is the same ingredient that candy factories add to chocolate to keep it from melting. They knew that children like to put colorful objects in their mouths, so their drawing sticks should be as digestible as possible. They added powdered pigment to produce the different colors. They called their new pencils "crayons," which is French for "pencils," and their trademark became "Crayola," which combines two French words meaning "grease pencils."

At first, the Crayola Company produced only eight primary colors, but they have been adding colors for over a century, so now they number over 300. Many colors are named after fruits and vegetables, so we can associate a color with a flavor: asparagus, pumpkin, avocado, eggplant, watermelon, grape, raspberry, strawberry, cranberry, mulberry, gooseberry, mint, chestnut, orange, lemon, lime, tangerine, banana, apricot, and peach.

Before 1962, the color peach used to be called flesh. During the Civil Rights Movement, there was great controversy over the proper hue of

flesh, so the name was changed to peach, but the controversy was not mitigated. The Civil Rights people continued to assail the Crayola Company for having the effrontery to suggest that peach-tone should be the proper color of skin. To redeem the company's prestige, the Crayola Company produced a special edition of what they called "Multicultural Crayons." It featured an assortment of eight skin tones ranging from black to white. Consumers were not impressed. They couldn't think of a single use for a box of Crayolas which contained only a spectrum of skin tones, and the product was soon discontinued.

A controversy arose in 1958. Crayola produced a color which they called "Prussian Blue." It referred to the color of the Prussian flag, but during the anti-communist movement of the Sixties, with a flare of political correctness, Crayola discretely changed the name to "midnight blue."

Another controversy emerged in the 1990s. Crayola was producing a color which they called "Indian red." It referred to a reddish pigment commonly found in artwork and textiles from India, but Native Americans believed that it was a racial slur against their ancestors, and they demanded to have the name changed. As a publicity stunt,

Continued on page 15...





Box of Crayons . . . Continued from page 14

the Crayola Company turned this altercation into a contest, and offered a reward for the best entry. Over 250,000 contestants submitted suggestions such as crab claw red, Mars red, baseball mitt, and red clay. The prize winner was chestnut, and to the delight of all Native Americans, Indian red was permanently retired.

Crayola decided that it was time to update the names of their colors, but this time their goal was to be cleverly enticing, rather than descriptive. New, state-of-the-art names included blizzard blue, Caribbean green, electric lime, timberwolf, antique brass, cotton candy, inchworm, cornflower, bittersweet, fuzzy wuzzy, and razzle dazzle.

In 1994, Crayola offered a line of "Gem Tones," among which were emerald, onyx, amethyst, ruby, sapphire, topaz, moonstone, and jade. After this fad, they offered their new line of "Changeables," where you would draw a picture, and then cover a color with a clear crayon to change the underlying color. The next trend was their "Color Mix-ups," where

each color had flecks of other colors mixed in. Their "Pearl Brite" selection offered colors with a shiny pearl sheen. After this, Crayola produced a line of "Glitter" crayons, which had alliterative names like maroon with glitzy gold, red with shimmering silver, and orchid with twinkling turquoise.

Crayola's ultimate insult came when they offered their selection of "Silly Scents," which emitted nondescript odors to accompany the zany colors: alien armpit, Big Foot feet, dingy dungeon, mummy's tomb, smashed pumpkin, and ogre odor.

The Crayola Company had finally adulterated their most salient asset... the smell of fresh crayons. Although it has been over 60 years since I was in the first grade at Mastick School on Santa Clara Avenue, I can still remember the smell of the classrooms. Miss Riordan's room smelled old and musty, kind of like a mausoleum. Mrs. Owen's room, on the other hand, smelled like fun, just like a jar of white flour paste and a brand new box of crayons.

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.

Upcoming Exhibits at the Museum Art Gallery

- **APRIL 13 - 27**
Kids & Queen Victoria 16th Annual Exhibit
Reception Saturday, April 13, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
- **MAY 1 - 31**
Alameda Photographic Society Exhibit
Reception Saturday, May 4, 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm
- **JUNE 5 - 30**
Altarena Playhouse 75th Anniversary Exhibit
Reception Saturday, June 8, 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm

ALAMEDA LEGACY HOME TOUR

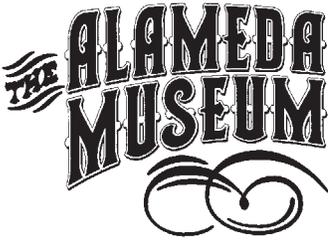
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ALAMEDA MUSEUM

2324 Alameda Avenue

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Saturday

11:00 am – 4:00 pm

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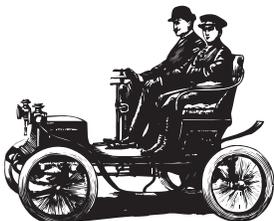
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ALAMEDA MUSEUM LECTURES 2013

- ❖ **THURSDAY, APRIL 25**
More on Maybeck: The Inspiring Saga of the Palace of Fine Arts
By Gray Brechin author of *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin.*
- ❖ **THURSDAY, MAY 30**
Andy Pagano Film Festival
Several movies on local history by Mr. Alameda.
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Celebrating 75 years of the Altarena Playhouse. A spunky in-the-round group of players holding forth on High Street.
- ❖ **THURSDAY, JULY 25**
Designing with Nature: Arts and Crafts Architecture in Northern California
Another film by Paul Bockhorst Productions.
- ❖ **THURSDAY, AUGUST 29**
The Chicago World's Fair and the "Rise" of the Skyscraper
By U.C. Berkeley professor and architect Greg Castillo.
- ❖ **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26**
Learning from Nature: Tales of two Ansel, Mr. Hall and Mr. Adams
A glimpse into the life of explorer, photographer, and adventurer Ansel F. Hall, first chief naturalist and forester of the National Park Service. By Alameda resident Johanna Hall, his great grand-daughter.
- ❖ **Thursday, October 24**
Digging Alameda: The Inside Scoop on the Underground Island
A slide revelation by publishers and authors Eric Kos and Dennis Evanosky.

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.