

# Alameda Museum

# Quarterly

## HISTORY TOURS ABOUND *by Robbie Dileo*



*(Photo: JaYing Wang and Jack Pigott.)*

*Laid out in 1912, Waterside Terrace featured curving streets with corner pedestal markers and shoreline paths. The view above depicts one of the subdivision's most impressive Arts & Crafts residences, the 1914 Rohr House, 3258 Fernside Boulevard, as it appeared around 1920.*

**T**HE END OF SUMMER AND BEGINNING OF THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR coincide with the biggest annual fund raising event for Alameda Museum and Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS), [www.alameda-preservation.org](http://www.alameda-preservation.org). The Alameda Legacy Home Tour is Sunday, September 23rd. It is the 29th tour since they began in the earliest days of AAPS's history. The combined efforts of our two non-profit organizations have won us accolades from tour guests and the homeowners who have generously donated their homes for touring. We hope to have at least 800 paid tour guests,

with the proceeds allowing us to continue the many programs unique to each organization. Our wonderful sponsor, Little House Cafe, has again generously helped underwrite the expenses of the tour and is part of Perforce Software and Perforce Foundation, located in Alameda at 2300 Blanding Avenue.

Seven homes were selected soon after last year's tour. We are very excited to offer a variety of styles covering several decades from 1884 to 1947. The committee works nearly a year to create the tour. Details about each home

*Continued on page 2...*



**History Tours Abound . . . Continued from page 1**

are compiled into a comprehensive guidebook that includes the ticket and map, plus advertising that provides tour guests information on local services. House Captains are assigned to each home and contribute to story write-ups and management of the day of event docent staff. 110 people will be required as docents for the two shifts. By the time you read this article, if you are expecting to be a volunteer docent and have not heard from a house captain or me, please e-mail [alamedahometour@aim.com](mailto:alamedahometour@aim.com) so we can verify your participation. Docents love to help because they get to see the houses for free and attend a thank you party with the owners and committee members. There will be refreshments for all guests, a gift shop, and vendors who will showcase their products geared toward restoration services and owners of older homes.

Author and historian Woody Minor, who is doing an August 26th walk for AAPS in the historic Mastick Park neighborhood (see page 5 for ad), has written the introductory story for the Legacy Guidebook on the development of Alameda, encompassing the history of the tour houses. It's a fascinating story—from the Spanish land grant to the Peralta family, the gold rush entrepreneurs, the railroads, the forming of the island, to the filling-in of the Fernside estate with houses. Also on the home tour, a chance to see a Julia Morgan home and perhaps the famed architect herself. You will certainly learn many facts about Alameda's growth and development.

Advance tickets for \$30 are available by mail, by visiting one of the three selected merchants (Daisy's, Thomsen's Garden Center, and Wescafe), by purchasing

online through the web site [www.alameda-home-tour.org](http://www.alameda-home-tour.org), and by visiting Alameda Museum the week prior to the tour. Day of event tickets are available at Franklin Park for \$35 and at Alameda Museum.

Guidebooks are nice to read prior to the tour, so we encourage you to pick up your copy at the Museum starting Wednesday, September 19th at 1:30 pm through regular business hours on Saturday. We will also have the Museum open on Sunday, starting at 11:00 am to help with voucher ticket exchanges and day of event ticket sales. The full size gift shop will also be open. The tour is a lovely way to spend the day on the beautiful island of Alameda with your family and friends.

If you wish to make it a full weekend of Alameda history, come visit the Meyers House on Saturday, September 22nd, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. It is \$5 per person and includes a tour of the inside of the lavish 1897 family home of Henry and Bertha Meyers and their three daughters. The property consists of three city lots with gorgeous gardens, the studio/office for Mildred and Henry Meyers, an exhibit on architectural items found in many local houses, and a Fashion and Accessory Exhibit of Meyers apparel. Plan an hour minimum for a docent led visit. We will have Alameda Legacy Home Tour Guidebooks for sale and for exchanging your pre-paid voucher tickets at the door. Hope to see you there!

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*Below: An early advertisement for the development of Mastick Park, Alameda's oldest subdivision, the subject of the upcoming Woody Walk "Birth of the Bungalow" on Sunday, August 26.*





**BE A  
MUSEUM DOCENT**

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

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

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**From the Curator's Desk**

*by George C. Gunn*

*W*e just completed the fourth installment of the late Ralph R. Michaelis' estate. Thanks to Joe Young, Curator Assistant, we were given the task of liquidating the contents of Ralph's three-bedroom home with a lifetime of possessions. As always, my great staff of volunteers rose to the occasion. Endless praise should be given to Ross and Robbie Dileo for hauling the items from San Lorenzo to their garage on Lafayette Street for storage until the day of each sale held in their driveway.

Needless to say, the job of cleaning, pricing, and packing items to move to Alameda by Jane Burgelin and Margy Silver was indispensable. Jane's insistence that items be clean and arranged according to subject makes our sales a pleasure for shoppers. Margy Silver and Diane Coler-Dark were efficient cashiers. The excellent sales staff, with our head salesmen Virgil Silver and Ross, added to the volume of sales and profit. Other key sales day staff: Jim Burgelin, Lavonne Stittle, Barbara Coapman, Gail and Charlie Howell. Reid Davis, Stephanie Paula, and Kevin Frederick also helped. They set up tables, unwrapped and set out merchandise, then boxed unsold items for moving to the museum gift shop. A very long day, all four times.

Gift shop sales have been excellent with the new items, remainders from the garage sales. Virgil and Ross, with help from Charlie, made several trips to bring items to the museum. We also received the entire contents of a home from a long-time Alameda family on Alameda Avenue. Many lovely pieces have been added to the museum collection, but some of the more general household items and tools were added to the last garage sale or became part of gift shop merchandise. It is a lot of manual labor, for which I am very grateful to have a wonderful group of helpers.

In ending, being a modest person by nature, I want to personally acknowledge Ross Dileo for allowing the use of his garage, setting up merchandise, and making some of the items presentable for the sale. The Museum and Meyers House prosper because of volunteers. Thank you for helping me.

*Curator, Alameda Museum*

# Is My House Haunted?

by Ron Ucovich

**I HAD JUST MOVED INTO MY VINTAGE QUEEN ANNE FIXER-UPPER.** Its run-down appearance revealed many decades of wear and weather, but with zeal and enthusiasm, I was determined to restore it to its original dignity. It wasn't long before I realized that there was something very strange going on upstairs. In the master bedroom, the one facing the street, during the darkest hours of the night, I could hear the sound of muffled talking and laughing. This only happened at night, and it was only in this one room, but the voices were real. I don't believe in ghosts, so I decided to do some research.

I was able to track down the descendents of the original owners. The man told me that his grandfather had died in that bedroom in 1907. They dressed the corpse in a black suit, laid him out in a casket, and put the casket in the parlor for viewing. There were no funeral parlors then, and funeral services were always done in the family home, and as friends and neighbors had gathered around the body to pay their respects, grandpa's eyes began to flutter, then he coughed and opened his eyes. People gasped. Grandma fainted. Grandpa was alive!

History has numerous accounts of corpses coming back to life. In a variety of ways, (seizure, coma, narcolepsy, trance, electrocution, poisoning, etc.) a living body can give all appearances of being dead. The skin is unresponsive and pale, breathing and heartbeat are imperceptible, and the body is cold and rigid. Hopefully, the misdiagnosis is discovered before the body is interred, but on many occasions, corpses have been exhumed, and scratches have been discovered inside the casket showing that the body was buried alive and had clawed the inside of the casket in a futile attempt to escape. To prevent this, a body would lie in state in the person's home for several days while a family member would watch over him hoping that the body would awaken. Even today, the custom of viewing a dead body is still called a "wake."

Before the 20th Century, people of England had the idea that after a person died, his spirit might re-enter the body for a short time to attend to some unfinished business. If he came back to life and was trapped in a buried coffin, his business would never be completed. To prevent this, the proper cemeteries of England had the custom of tying a string onto the hand of a corpse. The other end was tied to a bell mounted on top of the gravesite. If the dead body should come back to life, the bell would ring, and the body would be exhumed.

A watchman patrolled the cemetery all night listening for bells. If, perchance, a live body was discovered and rescued, his family would say that he was saved by the bell. There is another expression that we use today. If a man bears a close resemblance to his father, we say that the man is a dead ringer of his father, which means that he died and was revived. And, if you work at your job during night hours, we might say that you work the graveyard shift.

It was not uncommon for bodies in a cemetery to be later exhumed. Before perpetual care was included in the price of a cemetery plot, family members had to rent the space. When the family stopped paying the rent, the coffin was removed to a common graveyard, called a "potter's field." This term dates back hundreds of years to England. When an old quarry where potters used to get their clay was abandoned, the empty pit would be filled with bodies who couldn't afford to be buried in the village cemetery. The term is still used today to refer to a common tomb, as opposed to a private one. Here is another expression that we use today: it was customary for families to give their first son the father's name. While the father was alive, the son would always use the title "junior." Immediately following the burial, the son assumed the father's name, and he was never again called junior.

*Continued on page 5...*





**Is My House Haunted? . . . Continued from page 4**

You can see that there are many traditions and expressions used today which date back to ancient myths and customs. One such myth involves ghosts coming back from the dead to haunt old houses, so rather than assuming that the strange voices that I heard in my bedroom were emanating from the spirit world, I decided to invite a team of paranormal investigators from Berkeley to research the matter.

The researchers are from the Psychology Department at CAL. They study reports of paranormal activity to look for reasonable explanations for phenomena such as cold spots (which may be drafty windows), strange noises (which may be vermin in the walls), moving objects (which may be caused by floor vibrations), and phantom lights (which may be reflections of light from a passing vehicle).

The team set up all types of equipment in my bedroom. They measured sound waves, radio waves, electromagnetic fields, infra-red light, radiation, as well as changes in smell, temperature, pressure, ionization, and moisture content of the air. They did their research at night, because that is when I usually heard the voices, and I had to stay in the room to notify them when the voices occurred.

Then, it happened... I heard the voices. The team grabbed their recorders and amplifiers to search for the source. They found it! The voices were coming from my head! I later learned that, on rare occasions, if you are old enough to have metallic fillings in your teeth, and you are standing in direct line with a low-frequency, high-powered radio transmitter, the amalgam in a tooth could act like the crystal in an old crystal radio set, and actual sound vibrations can be picked up by the bones in your ear. I was satisfied with this explanation, but some of my friends and neighbors are not. They think that it is more fun to believe that the house is haunted by friendly spirits. That way, they can attribute all strange activities to the mysterious behavior of the ghosts. As for me, I have a new philosophy: "Never accept a supernatural explanation when a natural explanation is available."



**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.**

**ALAMEDA ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION SOCIETY PRESENTS**

# Woody Walk

**Sunday, August 26  
at 1:00 pm**

**Meet at the West Marine Parking Lot,  
Corner of Buena Vista Avenue & Constitution Way.  
Please park on adjacent neighborhood streets.**

# Mastick Park Birth of the Bungalow

Walk with historian Woody Minor through  
Alameda's oldest 20th century subdivision—and one  
of its least known historic neighborhoods.



**FREE FOR AAPS MEMBERS • \$5 FOR NON-MEMBERS**  
For more information visit  
[www.alameda-preservation.org](http://www.alameda-preservation.org)



## From the President's Desk

by Robbie Dileo

Measure C, the sales tax proposal on June's ballot, could have provided \$3.5 million funding for interior improvements to make the Carnegie Library suitable for tenancy, with the goal to have it the permanent home for Alameda Museum. Requiring a 2/3 majority vote to pass, it received about 50%. Bundled with many other projects, in a tight economy with a strong public "no new taxes" attitude, now was not the time. Alamedans, generally conservative, like to approve projects one at a time, with serious public debate at each step. When the time is right, when a miracle windfall in funding materializes, let's hope that the Carnegie Library is rehabilitated and again considered for our use.

Meanwhile, we have an outstanding museum with historical exhibits, thrilling art shows in the rotating gallery, and a thriving storefront gift shop in the Masonic Hall on Alameda Avenue. Matching display cabinets were recently added to the gift shop and we reused movable partitions and two bookcases to create a furniture sales annex in the boardroom area – it was George's doing, not mine, and it is a wonderful improvement. Loaded with items due to the residuals from various estates and walk-in donations, sales have increased. After twenty-one years, our location is a great home, is improving in appearance, and we are doing well here. Thank you members, the community at large, artists, lecturers, the City of Alameda for rent support, and to the Masons, our landlord, for the large space to allow us to continue collecting and conserving the history of Alameda.

### Changes and updates...

• **Thank you Jerry Meissner**, owner of Alameda Pedicab, who graciously peddled Liz Rush and Mary Fetherolf as our entry in the Mayor's July 4th parade. Signs proclaimed the Museum and Meyers House hours and the July lecture. Alameda Pedicab will be one of our preferred providers of transportation when Meyers House grounds are rented for activities. Jerry provides local rides, with historical narration, around Alameda – a great gift for visiting family. For information visit [www.alameda-pedicab.com](http://www.alameda-pedicab.com).

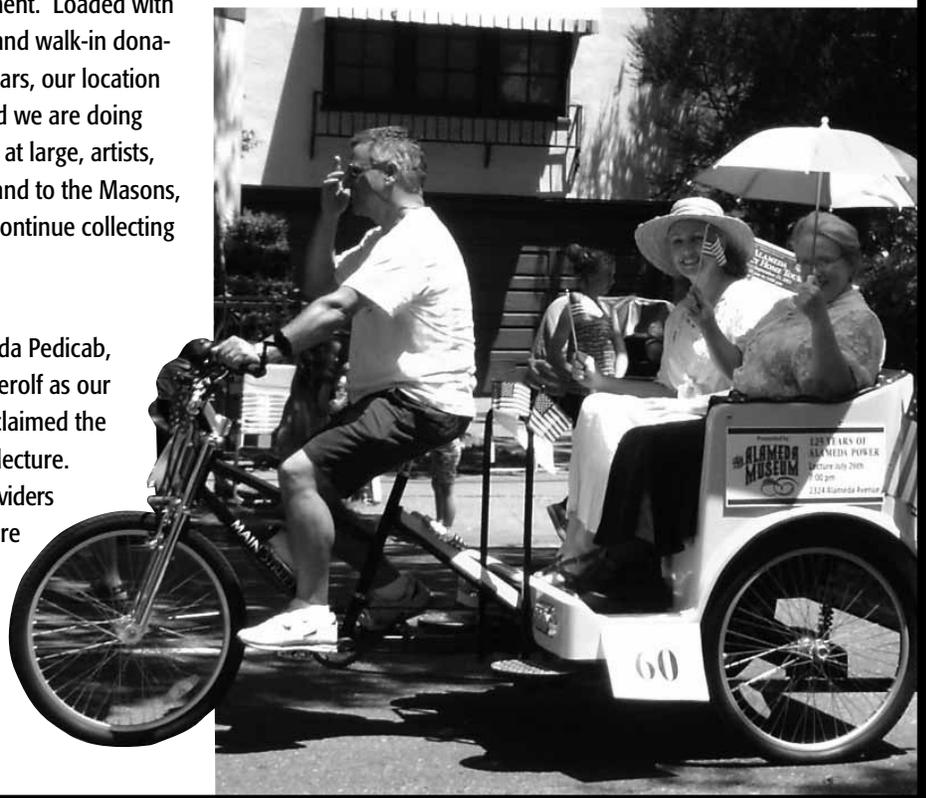
• **The Lippert projectors** are now displayed at Alameda Theatre and Cineplex in conjunction with Alameda Municipal Power's 125th anniversary. Dennis Evanosky, editor of the *Alameda Sun* and a board member, got the museum some press about the move. Our thanks to Dan Mark, Bill Garvine and Ed Schneider at AMP for making this happen and for working with Woody Minor and the museum to have a wonderful July lecture, which they also sponsored.

• **The Art Gallery** is booked solid through 2013 with one exhibit scheduled for September 2014. The art receptions bring in over 100 people, many seeing the main museum for the first time. Check with Curator George Gunn on Saturdays or myself, to get scheduled. We are hoping to have "Art in the Park" shows in the Meyers House grounds in 2013. Contact me to discuss grounds rental ([damsel\\_d@pacbell.net](mailto:damsel_d@pacbell.net) or 510-865-1767).

• **Our wonderful Lecture Series** on the last Thursday of the month brings in people from other communities, besides loyal members. Seating capacity is 75 and we usually fill the gallery. It is also the source of new members, to save the non-member

*Continued on page 7 . . .*

*The museum's July 4th parade entry was provided by Alameda Pedicab, a preferred vendor for the Meyers House & Gardens. Photo: Valerie Turpen.*





**President's Desk . . . Continued from page 6**

\$10 admissions. Organized by the amazing Judith Lynch, school teacher, author, tour de force behind the Kids and Queen Victoria exhibit, and Vice President of the board, she has only a couple of months left to fill in the 2013 schedule. Please contact her at 510-748-0796 if you are interested in being a guest lecturer.

• **The July Park Street Art and Wine Faire**, with our table of information under the awning at Danish Interiors, helped direct people around the corner to the museum. I was a docent both days and gift shop sales were exceptional, coupled with the closing reception for the Cross Currents art show. People told me they come every year to buy something from us. Thank you Julie Kennedy, Dewey and Michelle St. Germaine, Judith Lynch, Jacki Rosen, Charlie and Gail Howell, plus Ross Dileo for help with the extra duties.

• **Sammy L. Hastings**, owner/broker with Hastings Realty Group Inc. out of Millbrae, [www.HRGSF.com](http://www.HRGSF.com) has a channel 26 TV show called "Bay Area Drop In" that began airing Saturday evenings, August 11th. Each show includes a history section, with Alameda featured on the sixth episode scheduled for September 15th. On August 13th his film crew visited the USS Hornet, Meyers House, and Alameda Museum. We hope to have the resulting film clip available for our promotion and appreciated the monetary donation for George's consultation.

Like George said in his column, the Museum is very fortunate to have a team of volunteers that are dedicated to estate and garage sales. These same people are also the core group (plus sisters Holly Schmalenberger-Haugen and Gerry Warner) who staff the Meyers House each month. Then there is the wonderful volunteer docent staff for the main museum, headed by the always cheerful Ellen Chesnut, who keep the doors open five days a week – a real

challenge at times. And let's not forget the kids on Saturdays who fulfill their school required community service hours, or Chad Barr and Emily Byrne that assist with the collection, all under George's tutelage.

In closing, special recognition is due a few other people whose extra efforts for the museum help make my job as president easier. Ron Ucovich, a docent every Friday, is the gifted writer of newsletter stories, as well as the editor. A docent for the USS Hornet and the USS Potomac, he also frequently gives local walking history tours. Whenever I spend time in Ron's presence, I always learn something new. He even has "regulars", people who visit just to see him and confirm local facts. Joe Young has helped George as an assistant curator for at least a dozen years. He orders archival materials, helps organize the photograph collection, researches prices for sales items – particularly the rare books and collectibles, and then makes the fancier gift shop signs. He got us the Michaelis estate and he made a \$10,000 donation to the Meyers House. His efforts have been extraordinary. Past president Diane Coler-Dark serves as managing secretary/office manager. She loves to count the sales money and do the banking, a demanding weekly task. She is head cashier at estate/garage sales and the voice for information for the home tour and museum questions. I greatly appreciate her experience and suggestions in helping manage the museum. Both the Museum and Meyers House are run by people who love history and believe in the mission of "preserving the past for the future". To the members, for your loyal support, and to those mentioned above, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I hope to see many of you at the Alameda Legacy Home Tour – bring your friends!

President, 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.**

## ART GALLERY EXHIBITS

**September**

**Feng Jin & others, mixed media.**

**October 13 - December 9**

**4th Annual Sports Project**



## A Closer Look at Photography *by Ron Ucovich*

### THE WORLD'S FIRST PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN IN 1826

by a French scientist named Joseph Niépce. He called his process "heliography" (sun drawing). He invented the camera obscura, a dark room with a small window containing a lens which concentrated reflected light onto a tin plate. He covered the tin surface with a light-sensitive varnish. When sunlight shined on an object for about eight hours, the reflected image was imprinted onto the tin plate. Heliographic prints could not be made of people or anything that moved because the process took many hours to complete.

The world's first human portrait was made in 1839. The exposure time took 15 minutes, so a special device was made to keep the body motionless. It was an iron stanchion with adjustable clamps that attached to the waist and back of the head. The subject wore black clothing, and his skin was powdered with flour to accentuate the contrast.

That same year, a British mathematician named Sir John Frederick Herschel had reduced the exposure time to about one minute. Sir John coined the words "photograph" and "photography." He called his rapid exposure a "snapshot." He also coined the words "positive" and "negative."

By the 1850s, portrait photography had become popular. Cameras were large and cumbersome, and they had to be mounted on a steady tripod. All photography had to be staged. Spontaneous photos did not exist. The photos were personal portraits, or they might be of important

ceremonies, like weddings, ground breakings, ribbon cuttings, award presentations, and funerals.

Photography was expensive, so usually only the upper class could hire a photographer. It was especially important to photograph elderly family members, so after they died, there would always be one photograph to preserve their memory. If a family member died and there was no photograph of him, a photographer would be summoned at once. Hopefully, the photographer would arrive before rigor mortis set in, and the corpse could be posed sitting in a chair or sitting at a desk as though he were still alive. If the eyelids could not be propped open, the eyes would have to be painted onto the finished print. Although it was very costly, color could be artistically applied to the print, and the corpse would have healthy-looking rosy cheeks, much the same as morticians today apply makeup or, possibly, reading glasses to a corpse to make him look more alive.



*Joseph Niépce invented the camera obscura.*

For indoor photography, large reflector screens were used to capture sunlight coming through a window and reflect it onto the subject. Since the 1860s, many experiments were made with flash powder, but its success was disappointing. Magnesium powder burned at an unpredictable rate, and ignition was often incomplete. The room filled with opaque sulfuric fumes and often left the subject coughing and hacking. The flash was bright, and the exposure was slow, so subjects had to gaze to the side of the camera, otherwise



*A panoramic photo of Alameda was taken in 1893 by John E. Nast from the tower of the Artesian Water Works on Park Street.*

his eyes would be closed in the photo. Flash powder was extremely dangerous to work with, and many photographers were injured or even killed by unexpected explosions. Flash powder problems continued until 1929. Then, the powder was enclosed in a glass globe, and thus was born the electric flashbulb.

The next great advancement in photography came when they put two cameras together and photographed an object from two perspectives. When seen through a viewing device called a stereopticon, the two pictures were seen as a single 3-dimensional photo. Popular themes were landscapes, historical events, nature, or people at play. Viewing these became a popular parlor amusement until the advent of motion pictures.

Color photography was created in the 1890s. Scientists had just discovered that the human eye does not discern an infinite range of colors, but rather only three colors (red, blue, and green), which it blends together to produce a broad range of hues. They photographed a scene through red, blue and green filters, then they projected the scene, using a transparency through these same filters, and the image resulted in a whole spectrum of colors, identical to the original scene. When they applied this process chemically in developing the photograph, colored photography was born.

Panoramic photography involved mounting a camera on a tripod which was capable of swiveling horizontally, but not vertically. The resulting photo was a series of individual shots spliced together to form a large panoramic vista. They could take a 360° series of photos from a mountaintop, and mount the photos in a circular room to

duplicate this panoramic vista. In 1888 the "swing lens" camera was invented. The camera has a rotating lens, and a moving slit of light is exposed onto a curved film. The photograph can have a range of 180°, there is minimal distortion, and there are no splice lines.

In 1885, George Eastman invented roll film to replace the dry plates. Cameras were made smaller and could be used by non-professionals. He made film with a cellulose base, which made it very durable and flexible. He also invented the film cartridge, so cameras did not have to be loaded and unloaded in a dark room. He also invented the folding bellows, which allowed for close-up photography.

By 1892, the Eastman Company had cornered the market in cameras, film, processing, and chemicals. He had bought out his major competitor, a man who had named his company the Nodak Company, after the nickname for his home state, North Dakota. Mr. Eastman preferred a distinctive name which could not be mispronounced, so he changed the name to Kodak. The Kodak Company enjoyed an almost total monopoly in the photographic industry until the 1970s, when digital photography was introduced.

The 1893 World's Fair in Golden Gate Park exhibited a beautiful example of state-of-the-art photography of its day. It was a panoramic shot taken by Alameda photographer, John E. Nast. It was taken from the tower of the Artesian Water Works on Park Street. You are facing west. To the left of the photo, you see Park Street looking south, and to the right you see Park Street looking north. Very few landmarks are identifiable. At the intersection to the right is the old Odd Fellows Hall (1878-1926) on Santa Clara. At the intersection to the left is the second Methodist Church (1877). This building was torn down when it was replaced by the Twin Towers Church in 1909. At Central and Oak you see a line of houses which stood there until 1926 when Alameda High School was built. On the corner of Santa Clara and Oak you see an empty lot where City Hall would be built in 1895. Next door is the lot where the Elks Club would be built in 1909. Across the street from City Hall is the empty lot where the Carnegie Library would be built in 1903. There is one building which you can identify... the Masonic Temple (1891) on the corner of Park Street and Alameda Avenue.

This beautiful photograph is on display at the Alameda Museum near the antique toy exhibit. When you look at it, keep in mind that it was taken in 1893, and is a stellar example of panoramic photography, color enhancement, and etch detailing. Also, look very carefully at the emblem at the bottom of the photograph. This emblem was not printed onto the photo... it was etched entirely by hand. The photo is truly a work of art.



# The Village Smithy

by Ron Ucovich

**THE FIRST INDUSTRY THAT EXISTED IN ALAMEDA** was the production of charcoal. Two Frenchmen, Joseph DePassier and Baltazar Maître, established their operation in 1850. They took oak chips and baked them in a covered fire pit until all the moisture was removed. The absence of oxygen kept the wood from burning, and the resulting charred wood chips would burn very hot and clean.

When we think of charcoal today, we think of roasting hot dogs and marshmallows over a backyard barbecue. Actually, both the hot dog sandwich and marshmallow candy were unknown until introduced at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Back in the 1850s, coal was used for cooking food, but charcoal was used in the forges of blacksmith shops because it burns very hot and it doesn't emit sparks.



*The first house in Alameda was barged from San Francisco to the island in 1850. Placed at the edge of the island's oak grove, it was used by Frenchmen Depassier and Maître. Photo: Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library.*

The word "blacksmith" comes from the black fire scale, the layer of oxides that forms on the surface of molten iron. A "whitesmith" on the other hand, works with white metals such as silver or tin. Something that confuses many people is that "smithy" is the shop where the blacksmith works, and "Smitty" is the name given to the man who works in the smithy.

Iron products were originally made of cast iron. Cast iron has a high carbon content and is very brittle. It can't be bent or shaped without cracking. By heating iron with charcoal, it gets very hot and the carbon rises to the surface as slag and is removed leaving a non-brittle steel which can be worked or "wrought." By the 1850s, workable

steel had been developed enough to produce high quality digging tools for the gold miners. Sheet metal was starting to be used on trains and warships. Steel pipes were made to transport drinking water and sewage. Tanks and boilers were made for steam engines. High-quality malleable steel (called mild steel) was used for making swords, knives, files, planes, and chisels. Mild steel was used in all types of construction for making nuts, bolts, nails, and rivets. It was also used in manufacturing for products such as chains, sprockets, gears, pulleys, horseshoes, and barbed wire. The village smithy became the busiest shop in town.

The blacksmith shop was easily identified, even by people who couldn't read. It always had a horseshoe nailed over the main door. This custom dates back to England in the year 959 A.D. As legend goes, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a blacksmith by trade, was asked to shoe the Devil's horse. By mistake, he nailed a horseshoe to the Devil's hoof instead. This caused the Devil great pain, and he demanded to have it removed at once. The Archbishop agreed to remove the shoe only if the Devil promised never to enter a building where a horseshoe is hung over the door.

The blacksmith had to be highly skilled at horseshoeing. If a nail is driven too close to the quick, the horse will show signs of pain or bleeding. Using shoes which are the wrong size, not trimming the hoof properly, using a nail that is not properly curved, or angling the hoof incorrectly, can cause pain or chronic lameness.

There was a blacksmith specialist, like a doctor, who was highly trained and educated in the art of shodding and horse medicine. He was called a "farrier," and before veterinarians existed, the farrier could be called upon for any type of animal treatment. If a farmer had a horse with bone or muscle problems, the farrier would fit him with orthotic shoes. Horses which performed special tasks, like carrying heavy loads, walking on rocks, ice or mud, or competing in racing, jumping or polo, all had to wear specialty shoes.

Dray horses, which hauled heavy loads on public roads, had to be shod in "roughshod." The horseshoe nails had two heads, the first was to hold the shoe in place, and the second one protruded from the shoe to dig into the roadway to supply needed traction. They worked effectively, but at the same time, the cleats tore up the public highways. Today, whenever someone treats other people harshly and with total disregard for their rights, we say that he **rode roughshod** over them for his own interests.

Modern America inherits many expressions from the village blacksmith. He was America's first recycler. He

*Continued on page 11 . . .*



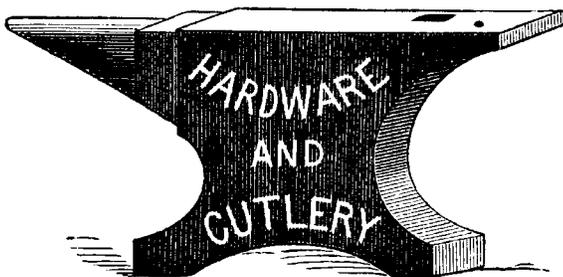
**Village Smithy.** . . Continued from page 10

would buy broken springs, axles, wheels, hinges, or anything else made out of iron, and give you credit toward his services. He would melt all this scrap in a large melting pot and use the iron to make new products. Today, in cities where diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds combine into a homogenous nondescript society, we call this society a **melting pot**. And, whenever tools or machinery get old and worn out, we say that they **went to pot**.

When the collective critical comments of politicians opposing a particular measure is voiced, we say that there was an **anvil chorus** of opposition, which refers to the incessant beating of the blacksmith's hammer against his anvil. Anything that creates excitement or enthusiasm is said to be **red hot**, such as a red hot news item. This, of course, refers to hot iron pulled out of the forge. And if the iron is red hot, but is allowed to cool before the blacksmith hammers it, he needs to put it back into the forge because he failed to **strike while the iron is hot**. And, if the forge gets so crowded that the bellows becomes inefficient, we say that time was lost because he had **too many irons in the fire**.

If you were working on the farm, and something broke, and you didn't have time to visit Old Smitty to have it repaired, there was one alternative. The hay that you feed your cattle is shipped in tightly compressed cubical bales tied securely by strands of soft, pliable baling wire. This wire was always set aside to be used later whenever the need arose. It could be used to repair a broken implement of any sort, to wrap the handle of a split hayfork, to hold a broken strap together, to replace a broken chain link, to support a sagging stovepipe, or to replace a broken section of wire fence.

Haywire was an invaluable commodity for making temporary repairs, but occasionally you might meet a farmer who never got around to making a permanent repair, and his whole farm became a collection of broken pieces held together by baling wire. Machines, tools, fences, gates, barns, sheds, and houses were all held together with rusty wire. It was even used to hold the fenders on his paintless jalopy. Farmers and ranchers who have rejected the services of the village blacksmith, lived on farms and ranches which have **gone completely haywire**.



## THE VICTORIAN ALLIANCE 2012 FALL HOUSE TOUR North of the Panhandle (NoPA) Neighborhood SAN FRANCISCO

*Seven beautiful Victorian homes that have retained or regained their 19th century elegance will be showcased.*  
**Sunday, October 21, from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

With a primary focus on Queen Anne architecture, this picturesque style of the 1890's will be highlighted, with its curves and bays, towers and balconies, and the whimsical ornamentation of Cranston & Keenan and other Victorian builders. Docents will be on hand to provide historical background on the house's architect, contractor, craftsmen and the families who settled NoPA in the 19th Century.

This cluster of tour homes is located in San Francisco's North of Panhandle neighborhood, developed soon after the creation of nearby Golden Gate Park and its Panhandle Park.

All residences lie within a relatively flat, compact and walkable area, well served by public transportation. Comfortable dress and shoes are recommended and note that home visits require stair climbing. A Julia Morgan-designed building will house a gift shop, where complimentary refreshments reward tour guests.

All net proceeds benefit the Preservation Grant Fund of The Victorian Alliance, San Francisco's oldest all-volunteer, not-for-profit architectural preservation organization.

**VASF Members: \$25 purchased by Oct. 15, 2012**  
**General Public: \$30 purchased by Oct. 15, 2012**  
**Groups of 10 or more:\* \$25 purchased by Oct. 15, 2012**  
**After Oct. 15, and day-of-tour, all tickets will be \$35**

**On-line Ticket Orders: (nine tickets or less):**

**[www.VictorianAlliance.org](http://www.VictorianAlliance.org)**

**Send check payment with stamped, return envelope to:**

**The Victorian Alliance,**

**Post Office Box 377, Tomales, CA 94971**

**Phone Inquiries: (415) 824-2666**

*\*For group sales, phone Lloyd Anderson: 415-673-5057.*

*For tour program advertising, contact Kyle McGuire:*

*E-mail: [kyle@kymcism.com](mailto:kyle@kymcism.com) or call 415-343-5962.*



## DOCENT NEWS

It is with great appreciation that we bid a fond farewell to two dedicated docents, Ginny Raber and Earl Rivard.

Ginny, it was so much fun working with you, a woman of great enthusiasm and humor. I'm still hoping you will consider working at the Meyers House, or come back as a floater to the main museum.

This definitely is not a firm farewell!

Earl, your dedication and knowledge of Alameda and keen interest in passing on what you knew to our visitors was wonderful. A man of many talents, we know that you only have so much energy to do what you love. When more time is available, we will always welcome your return.

Welcome back to Charles Daly, after successful knee surgery, resuming 4th Wednesday and 4th Saturday morning duties.

Newly back in town and a friend of Diane Coler-Dark, Margaret Duran has become a new docent on 1st Saturdays in the morning slot. She is also available as a substitute on 1st or 2nd Sundays.

### Have you considered being a docent?

Several docents do multiple shifts, but more than two per shift and a deeper pool to cover vacations and illnesses would be nice. There are a variety of volunteer activities, besides being a docent.

Give me a call and I can help you find an activity to match your interests.

A revised docent schedule is available.

Let me know if you need a copy.

**Ellen Chesnut**  
510-865-1204



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

The Meyers sisters were a force that helped start Girls Inc. and Alameda Welfare Council. They would be proud of the effort that made the new restroom in the basement ready for use, including a gorgeous cabinet on the outside wall to enhance the Fashion & Accessory Exhibit. The house has needed this for a long time.

A new TV program called "Bay Area Drop In" came to film part of the house for the history portion of the show on Alameda. Hopefully, the resulting film clips can be used for promotions. We are working toward having an agreement approved by the City of Alameda and the East Bay Community Foundation, so that we may begin renting the grounds in 2013 to raise revenue for future maintenance.

We face a challenge to get deferred maintenance items done. Last painted over 20 years ago, there is dry rot in the pergola and gates, some wood is bare, window cords are broken, and out buildings, particularly the pump house, need roof repairs. Launched with a goal to raise at least \$40,000 to get work done this year, the Meyers House Capital Improvement Fund is a campaign to raise these funds. We are not comfortable waiting until next spring to paint the outside of the main house or pergola. They need it, and if we are to have rental events in the grounds, people will want a beautiful background. \$11,000 has been received to date, mostly due to the donation by Joe Young in the name of Ralph Michaelis. East Bay Community Foundation, who manages the Meyers Trust, has pledged \$10,000 if we raise at least another \$10,000 in new funds by December 31st.

Donations in any amount are tax deductible with a check payable to MEYERS HOUSE. You may use the form on page 13, ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION line, to send a donation. We keep accounting separate for the two locations, but the non-profit 501 (c) 3 tax id (94-2464751) covers both locations and belongs to Alameda Museum.

It's time to thank the Meyers sisters for all their philanthropy by keeping their family home in shape and start making it available for garden parties. Have services to donate? Contact Robbie Dileo, Museum President, 510-865-1767.

**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
- Charles Daly
- Reid Davis
- Gail deHaan
- Ross & Robbie Dileo
- Marilyn Dodge
- Linda Domholt
- Margaret Duran
- Joanne Dykema
- Caroline Erickson
- Pam Ferraro
- Jeanne Gallagher
- Bonne Germain
- Barbara Gibson
- George Gunn
- Leslie Hawksbee
- Debra Hilding
- Lois J. Hoffman
- Charlie & Gail Howell
- Virginia Jones
- Mary Lee Kieffer
- Julie Kennedy
- Carole King
- Mary Lou Kurtz
- Flora Larson
- Gayle Macaitis
- Jeannie McCaffery
- Jim & Carla McGrogan
- Joanne McKay
- Chuck Millar
- Stephanie Paula
- 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to:

Be a Docent

Garden

Clean & Maintain Artifacts

Help with Special Events

Other \_\_\_\_\_



# The Penny Arcade

by Ron Ucovich

## THE MIDWAY AT THE WORLD'S FAIR OF 1893

in Golden Gate Park had an attraction which intrigued and bedazzled all fairgoers. The newly-developed electric motor was used to automate all types of coin-operated amusement devices. For the price of one penny, you could operate a digger crane which dispensed hard candies. You could operate a player piano which played a four-hand duet. You could operate an entire band played by robotic monkeys. They had mechanical card games, dominoes, and fortune telling machines. They had miniature mechanized village scenes, like a blacksmith shop, a children's playground, a circus, a zoo, and a small town with electric trains and streetcars. They named this entertainment center a Penny Arcade.

In 1893, fairgoers also got to try out Thomas Edison's new invention, the kinetoscope. They could look into a magnifying eyeglass built into a wooden cabinet. They would turn a crank, and this would advance a film strip over a light bulb with a rapid shutter. They perceived the illusion of a photograph actually moving. They might see a young couple kissing, or a ballerina twirling, or a pretty lady waving at you, or maybe a fat man jumping on a trampoline. There was no plot, but they didn't need one. The moving picture was all that was necessary to make this exhibit a penny well-spent.

By the turn of the century, the world had learned to project film strips onto a bed sheet for a group presentation.

The presentation was called a "flicker." Mr. Edison's next invention was the "kinetophone," which was a combination of the kinetoscope with a phonograph. The idea was to have a motion picture with recorded sound. The idea, however, was not successful until they discovered how to record the soundtrack directly onto the acetate film. There was one idea, however, which was quite successful. The flicker would feature a recording of a fan dancer, balloon dancer, or belly dancer. These films were called "peep shows," and they were well worth the price of a penny.

The kinetoscope soon became so popular that by the turn of the century, kinetoscope parlors began to open. There was a 5¢ admission fee, so they were soon called "nickelodeons." The flickers ran for about one minute, and the action was a little more adventurous... maybe an animal act, a parade, or a stagecoach robbery. Soon, they began to use a lamp to project these short film strips onto a screen. They would show about fifteen unrelated flickers. The audience sat on wooden benches, and they would all react to the film in unison. They would laugh, cheer, boo, scream, or hiss at the same time, which turned watching the flickers into a group participation adventure.

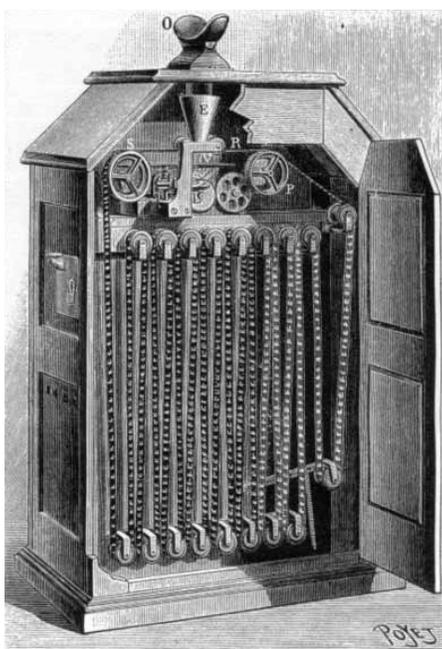
During the Victorian Era, field sports were miniaturized and played on tables so they could be played indoors during bad weather. Ground billiards, hockey, tennis, croquet, shuffleboard and bowling were all played on a miniature scale. Table billiards, then called "bagatelle," was a particularly popular table game. The object was to get nine balls past wooden obstacle pins, and dropped into side pockets.

In 1871, a new model was designed which improved upon the bagatelle game. It used a flat table, a steel ball, obstruction pins, and side pockets, but it was a little smaller. It had a coiled spring and plunger to project the marbles, and the table was inclined so the marbles rolled back toward the player. Players could compete with each other, and scoring was done with pencil and paper.

The game changed very little during the next 60 years. Electrical components were added to make the game more exciting. Over the years, the game went by various names (Bingo Ball, Baffle Ball, Bally Hoo, Bumper, Humpty Dumpty), until 1936 when the name became Pinball. It was no longer played on a countertop, but rather stood on four legs, like a piece of furniture. It had electro-magnetic scoring, flashing lights, brilliant colors, music, bells, horns, sirens, and a tilt alarm. The game was also coin-operated, and instead of paying a flat cover charge, players would pay per game.

In 1923, a young man named George Whitney opened a photography concession near the Cliff House restaurant

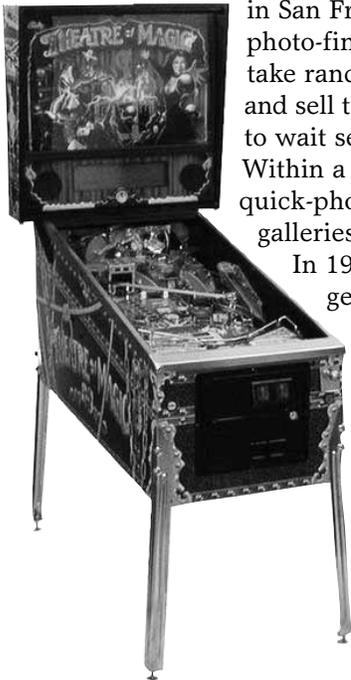
*Continued on page 15...*



*The kinetoscope is an early motion picture exhibition device. Though not a movie projector—it was designed for films to be viewed individually through the window of a cabinet housing its components—the kinetoscope introduced the basic approach that would become the standard for all cinematic projection.  
Image: Wikipedia.org.*



**Penny Arcade . . . Continued from page 14**



*An electronic pinball machine, a favorite at the arcade.*

in San Francisco. He invented a fast photo-finishing process where he could take random photographs of tourists, and sell them on the spot without having to wait several days to be developed. Within a year, he owned not only the quick-photo studio, but also four photo galleries and a souvenir shop as well.

In 1926, Mr. Whitney became the general manager of a string of privately-owned concessions, shops and rides at a beachside resort known as Chutes at the Beach.

When Mr. Whitney had control of all the resort concessions, he changed the name to Whitney's at the Beach. In 1929 the Depression hit, and these tourist businesses began to fail. One by one, Mr. Whitney would purchase these failed businesses, and eventually

he owned three blocks of tourist attractions. As a marketing effort, he changed the name to Playland at the Beach, and he continued to expand his empire. By 1934, he had 14 rides, 25 concessions, and five restaurants. In 1937 he purchased a vacant building called the Cliff House.

In 1942 Mr. Whitney bought the carrousel from Alameda's defunct Neptune Beach. In 1952 he bought the Sutro Baths. He converted the bathhouse into an ice skating rink, and he turned the rest of the building into a huge museum. His goal was to own the largest amusement park in the world. His ambition was never realized, however, because Mr. Whitney died in 1958, and his son who inherited the empire, had no interest in his father's dream. He sold the land to developers who bulldozed it all to build condominiums. Fortunately, the Cliff House was spared from the wrecking ball, and also the most enjoyable of all San Francisco tourist attractions, the Musée Mécanique, with more than 300 interactive penny arcade machines.

In 2002, the National Park Service temporarily relocated the museum to Fisherman's Wharf while the Cliff House was being renovated. Its original owner, Ed Zelinsky, passed the business to his son Dan, who continues today to service and repair all these machines for everyone to visit and enjoy.

If you have an interest in antique pinball machines, you can visit Alameda's Pacific Pinball Museum. They own a collection of more than 800 pinball machines and other penny arcade amusements, 90 of which you can try out for yourself at 1510 Webster Street. No quarters are necessary. For a flat entrance fee, you can play for hours remembering your youth and reliving the days when people really controlled interactive games without the need for an electronic circuit board.

## DO YOU KNOW DATABASE SOFTWARE?

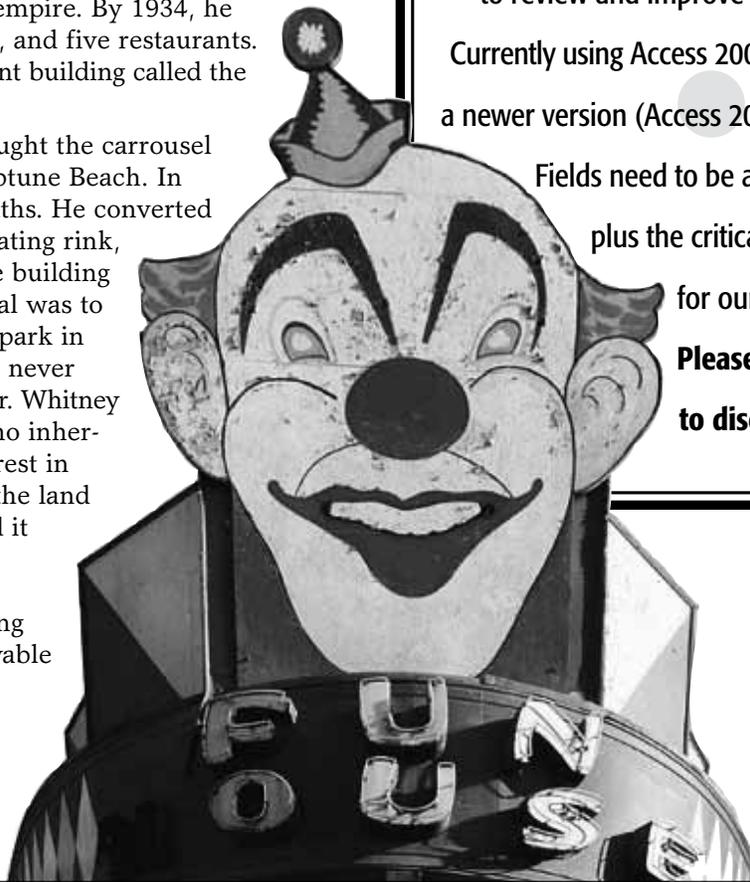
**We are looking for help, hopefully by a volunteer, to review and improve our database program.**

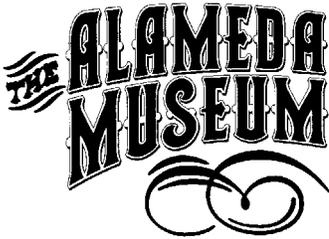
Currently using Access 2000, we need to migrate to a newer version (Access 2010) or other software.

Fields need to be added, reports improved, plus the critical generation of labels

for our various mailings.

**Please contact Robbie Dileo to discuss, 510-865-1767.**





FOUNDED IN 1948

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## IN THIS ISSUE

- *History Tours Abound*
- *From the Curator's Desk*
- *Is My House Haunted?*
- *From the President's Desk*
- *A Closer Look at Photography*
- *The Village Smithy*
- *What's New at the Meyers House*
- *The Penny Arcade*

### 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, 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