

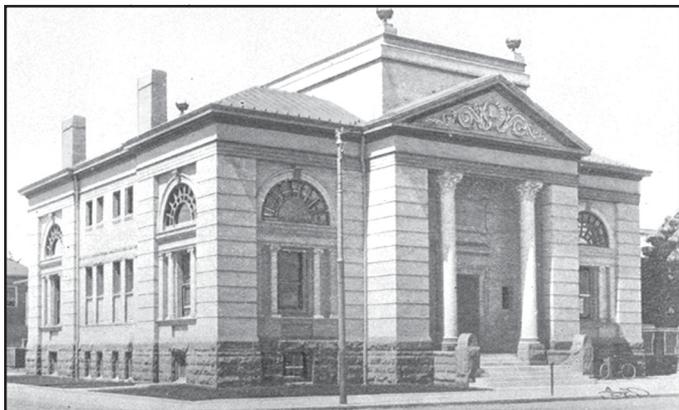
The Alameda Museum

Quarterly Newsletter

Volume XLVI

Spring, 2006

Number 1



- *The Early Days of the Alameda Museum,*
- *Our New Docent Coordinator,*
- *Alameda During the 1906 Earthquake,*
and more...

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The Alameda Museum Quarterly Newsletter

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Sunday	1:30 pm - 4:00pm

Communications Staff

Contributors - George Gunn, Diane Coler-Dark, Judith Lynch, Archie Waterbury
Editor - Gordon Newell Proofreaders - Robbie Dileo, Tracy Manio



From the Curator's Desk

An organization such as ours is completely dependent on a cadre of volunteers. Our president, Diane Coler-Dark, and I have discussed this subject, and we both came to the agreement that the Alameda Museum is very lucky when it comes to volunteers. Our excellent docents, some of whom do double duty by serving at the Meyers House, and our dedicated Board of Directors, keep the operation moving smoothly.

I am personally fortunate to have the services of **Virginia Riveria**, **Cecily Gipson**, and **Joe Young**, who assist me in the many duties involved with the Museum collection, the Meyers House docents, and the gift shop.

In regard to the collection, ever expanding, the items donated can run the gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous. Each item must be catalogued. Thanks to Joe and Virginia, this daunting task is kept under control.

Finally, thanks should be given to **Robbie Dileo**, Estate Sales chairperson, as well as to her husband **Ross**, and the other workers, for making this function of the Museum so fruitful.

George Gunn, Museum Curator

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ONWARD & UPWARD

News and Updates
from our
Museum President

The Museum hosted the January *Greater Alameda Business Association* (GABA) mixer with a great turnout. **George, Robbie**, and I extolled the Museum's value to the community, and **Chuck** gave them a tour of the Neptune Beach exhibit. We are on their website, and our website links to theirs.

The Museum started a worthy cause, to have a new park named for **Andy Pagano**. We talked to the City, and sent a letter requesting the matter to be on the Recreation & Parks Commission's agenda. The Commission's initial impression was favorable, but when it was re-agendized to send a recommendation on to the City Council, the item had to be pulled. It seems that the Rec. Department and the Commission long ago were tasked to develop criteria for naming city property (but they never did). Bummer. We had to get calls out to tell lots of people not to show up for the meeting. If you know of anyone in the Rec. Dept. or on the Commission, ask them to please get the criteria finalized. Better yet, drop a note, or email the City Manager, Mayor, and Councilmembers. I can't think of a more worthy person to be remembered in the town than Andy Pagano. I don't want the developers of Bayport putting up generic signs and then balking at the idea of "Andy Pagano Park."

Robbie Dileo has been giving spiels, excuse me, *talks*, at Cardinal Point to assist people in downsizing prior to moving in. The bottom line is the great estate sales the Museum manages - "Don't throw it away; let the Museum sell it for you," and we are a great cause to support (we will have more information about the Cardinal Point connection in a later *Quarterly* issue). Way to go, Robbie! Robbie also had a profitable estate sale in March, and is planning two more.

Thank you, Thank you, Carla McGrogan. Carla has stepped up to the plate and is your new **Docent Coordinator**. Carla will be getting out a new schedule and is considering a docent brunch to discuss new procedures, your questions, and suggestions for the Museum. Carla's number is 522-2961. Remember, you don't call Carla to find a replacement if you are unavailable for your shift. Instead, you directly call the floaters list or people who work the same day as you do on a different week.

The Museum is very grateful for a new volunteer. **Elizabeth Herbert** has volunteered to become **Costume Curator**. Docents, you will meet her coming in with her needles and thread to make repairs, cataloging items, and getting the Museum's collection into acid-free boxes and tissue. There will be a future plea for our Archival Preservation Fund to help Elizabeth preserve our large costume collection.

(Museum News, continued)

Thanks to all of our wonderful **Docents** and **Members** who attended the Annual Membership Meeting Installation and Luncheon, and helped make it a success. **Tony Daysog** represented the City and swore in your new Board. Everyone had a good time, and a lot of people left with great bargains from the Silent Auction. Donating to the event were Mario and Wendy Mariani, Joe LoParo with Gallagher and Lindsey, Lynn's Antiques, Silversword Jewelers, and Urban Forest, among others. Last, but not least by a long shot, your Board worked and donated to make this a fun and profitable event. Applause goes to everyone involved.

Diane Coler-Dark, Museum President



City Council member Tony Daysog is swearing in the Museum Board. Treasurer Ken Carvalho was at home with his wife Connie and their new baby daughter.



Docents, Museum members, and Board members had a good time at the Museum luncheon.



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Meet Your Monument *by Judith Lynch*



At 110 years old, ours is the oldest **City Hall** in California. It sits proudly on the corner of Santa Clara Avenue and Oak Street, a handsome red brick and granite building with graceful arches. In 1893, the town of Alameda held a contest to see which architect would draw the best design for City Hall. The winners (from 27 entries) were San Francisco architects Percy & Hamilton, who got a prize of \$500. When the City Hall opened in 1896, it had a tall tower in the center, and you could climb the stairs to the top and see a beautiful view of our city and the Bay beyond.

What happened to the tower? It was taken down in two sections. The top section was damaged during the 1906 earthquake, so it was removed. Then the rest of the tower was dismantled in 1937, because it was judged to be unsafe.

In 1975, Alameda City Hall became the city's first official landmark—**Alameda Historical Monument No. 1**. Then twenty years later, in 1995, the structure was repaired, an elevator was installed, and the electrical system was upgraded for modern computers. Mayor Ralph J. Appezato invited everybody to a celebration, where he said, "The final step in renovating our City Hall is to put the tower back."

During a field trip to City Hall, the Mayor told a second grade class at Washington School about the tower project, and the children quickly joined the campaign. They donated \$23.10 from their cookie money, then wrote a poem about the tower and its magical properties. Other kids sang the 1978 *Alameda Anthem* and added a verse that includes "Now we're going to put back the tower on City Hall!"

The second grade class also built a seven foot tall City Hall model, complete with hundreds of red wooden "bricks" glued onto the clock tower, which sports an Alameda flag. When Mayor Appezato invited the class to display their model at the real City Hall, they responded with gusto. The children trooped up Oak Street, following their model in the back of a vintage truck. The parade was brief but lively, with spirited music by trumpeter Jim Frantz and snare drummer Mark Foglia.

Adam Trujillo told the crowd about the tower model project, "We counted all the bricks and sorted them into different sizes. Then we painted each one; they were drying all over our classroom for days. Then we glued the bricks onto the model." Classmate Louis Cabrera added, "We couldn't believe that grown-ups would let the tower be torn off, so we were glad to give up our cookie money."

If you want to learn more, go in the Oak Street entrance to City Hall. There in the hallway are large framed photographs of City Hall when it opened in 1896, along with charming souvenirs of that day.



A Sampling of the Meyers House Collection

Donations from an Old Alameda Family



Visitors to the Meyers House Museum often comment that it feels as though the family just stepped out for the day, and will return at any minute. This atmosphere is achieved by decorating with items that are appropriate to the period, many that belonged to the Meyers family, some of which are older than the home. Henry Meyers's mother-in-law, Sophia May, who also lived in the house, brought some of her own furniture. And as with any family home, newer items were added occasionally along the way.

In addition to these original pieces of furniture, the home is also decorated with some wonderful items where were donated over the years. It is fitting that some of the pieces in the Meyers House were donated by another old Alameda family. Shortly after the Meyers House opened in 1997, **Alrita Murphy** donated a beautiful stained-glass lamp, which was made by her father in 1917.

The lamp, with its unusual poinsettia design, was originally a gift from Alrita's father, Albert Stagnaro, to her mother Rita. Albert owned "Stagnaro Art Glass Company" in Oakland, and had one of the first bungalows built in the Fernside district. Alrita still lives in their family home, which features stained-glass windows made by her father. Alrita also donated an elegant pair of French Sevres candelabras, which are proudly displayed in the Meyers House parlor.



Museum Curator George Gunn displays Meyers family photos in donated frames.

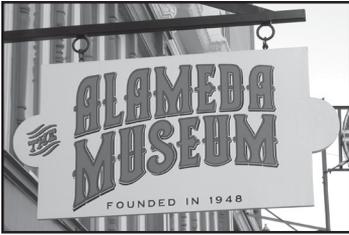


Meyers House docent Trish Nelson in the parlor, near the French Sevres candelabras.

Alrita also donated a cranberry glass apertif set (on display in the dining room) and a pair of gilt tabletop frames, which now contain photographs of original owner and architect Henry Meyers, and his mother-in-law Sophia May.

The Meyers House and Garden, at 2021 Alameda Avenue, is open for tours the fourth Saturday of each month, from 1pm to 4pm. Admission is \$3 per person. For information, call 510-521-1247.

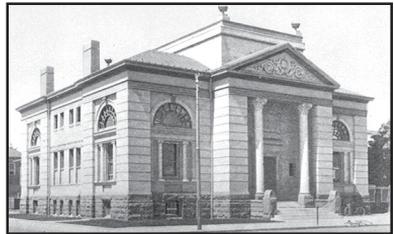
The Early Days of the Alameda Museum



In the Spring of 1948, the world was at peace after World War II, California was celebrating the centennial of the goldrush and statehood, and it was very popular to belong to volunteer organizations. A group of over 100 interested citizens got together to create the “Alameda Historical Society,” the predecessor to the Alameda Museum. Later that year, on September 15, the newly

formed organization elected Fred J. Croll (City Assessor and member of the well-known Croll family) president. A gift of \$223.28 was presented to the Society, part of a wartime servicemen’s recreation fund collected by Otto Rittler, head of the Alameda Recreation Department, along with a letter stating, “We believe Alameda’s war record will play a prominent part in the historical records of the organization.”

In 1951, the City Council gave the Museum its first home, in the basement of the 1902 Alameda Free Library (the Carnegie). The first curator was Dr. Harry Smith, a retired dentist, followed by Myrtle Richards in the 1960’s. George Gunn became the third (and current) curator in March of 1971 (he says



he was 6 years old at the time...). Diane Coler-Dark was interim president in 1999, when new bylaws were being written, and was officially elected president in 2001.

Originally, the Museum displayed information on California history and items from all over the world, but when George became curator, he pushed to change the focus to Alameda-specific history. “It was a battle,” he states, “but I think we are taken more seriously now.” The Museum occupied a small space in the basement of the Carnegie building, so during that time, there was no room for large items, and the collection was mainly composed of donated photographs, documents, newspapers, fire department records, etc., which have been used as research materials for books, including the two books on historic buildings by George Gunn.



1327 Oak Street

In 1981, after 30 years in the same location, the Museum needed to find a new home, because the new librarian at the Carnegie wanted to reclaim the basement space for library usage. The Museum relocated a couple of blocks away to 1327 Oak Street, into the building that had served as the auto shop for the old Alameda High School, for the next ten years.

In 1991, the City decided to use the Oak Street location as the office of Parks and Recreation, so the Museum was displaced once again. “Every place we moved, we would fix it up nice and they would kick us out,” remembers curator George Gunn.



The Museum moved to the Masonic Hall in 1991.

The Museum moved to its current location - the ground floor of the Masonic Lodge (circa 1927), in 1991. With this larger space, there was room for more displays, and people began to donate large items, such as furniture. **Bill Galli** generously donated his carpentry skills by building the partitions between the different exhibits. And Robbie Dileo helped George Gunn set up the new exhibits. This location has turned out to be very good for the Museum, easily accessible to foot traffic from the Park Street shopping district, with room for lectures and exhibits.

But now Alameda is getting a new library, and the Carnegie building has sat vacant for several years, waiting to be appreciated again. Many people have suggested that the Museum should move back into the Carnegie. It would be a great way to utilize the historic building for the benefit of the public, and it would enable the Museum to have even more impressive exhibits and more room for donated items and activities, with the support of a new generation of Alameda volunteers.

But it will take money to make the Carnegie building usable. The city spent three million dollars in 2003 on essential maintenance, just to prevent further deterioration - mostly seismic work and a new roof. Now the building is stable, and does not leak, but it still needs massive amounts of interior work (including utilities), at a cost of maybe 2 million dollars. With a facility the size of the Carnegie, the City might also need to hire a part-time executive director to manage things like maintenance and docent schedules (since more docents would be needed).

“After the city spent so much money on the building, I would like to see it used as soon as possible,” states **Mayor Beverly Johnson**, “but we do not have the money to finish it.” She also has concerns about things like mold in the unheated building. The Mayor has talked to Senator Dianne Feinstein, hoping to secure some federal grants. Senator Feinstein supports the idea, but the money just is not available right now. The city faces similar issues with other historic structures, such as the Veterans’ Building. If funds do become available to complete the rehabilitation, then the final decision of how to use the Carnegie building is up to the City Council.



The 1902 Carnegie building today

In some cities, museums are able to get support from large corporate sponsors. But Alameda is primarily a residential community, relying on citizens for fund-raising (the same people who are being asked to give money to school causes, etc.). But maybe we can find the money another way. With public support, it is possible that we can someday move back into the Carnegie building, and make the dream a reality.

Docents Preserving the Past for the Future

Nancy Anderson	Barbara Gibson	Joanne McKay
Lou Baca	Sharon Giovannoli	Bob McPeak
Barbara Balderson	Cecily Gipson	Honora Murphy
Henry Bissett	George Gunn	Frank Nelson
Marge Blaha	Leslie Hawksbee	Trish Nelson
Katherine Cavanaugh	Elizabeth Herbert	Darlene Pottsgeiser
Diane Coler-Dark	Debra Hilding	Marjory Quant
Charles Daly	Lois Hoffman	Virginia Rivera
Robbie Dileo	Julie Kennedy	Betty Saunders
Ross Dileo	Estelle Knowland	Betty Sewell
Anna Dugan	Jim Korn	Lois Singley
Joan Dykema	Flora Larson	Diane Solo
Carrie Erickson	Barbara Lewis	Wanda Thatcher
June Feder	Gayle Macaitis	Ellen Tilden
Donnie Fehn	Carla McGrogan	Clara Tweelinckx
Jeanne Gallagher	Jim McGrogan	Joe Young

SPECIAL MEMORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

In memory of **Hal and Val Stewart**, longtime Alameda residents and Museum supporters, a gift of \$5,000 - in their name by Sondra Mooney, Trustee.

In memory of **Phyllis Woodard**, Alamedan, a gift of \$1,000 - by Kathleen Williams.

Records of donations will be retained for recognition when the Museum has a suitable public place to display them.

Be on the lookout in the Alameda Journal for two upcoming **Estate Sales** (late April/ early May), thanks to *Margaret Lomba* and *Cardinal Point*. Both households are moving to Cardinal Point. If you know someone who can use the Museum's assistance with an estate sale, contact Robbie Dileo at 865-1767.

The newest Museum member...



Julia Christine Zuber Carvalho was born to proud parents Ken and Connie Carvalho (and brother Charles) on Friday, March 10, 2006.



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CARLA MCGROGAN - THE NEW DOCENT COORDINATOR



The Alameda Museum is very pleased to announce that longtime volunteer **Carla McGrogan** is assuming the role of *Docent Coordinator*, taking over the tasks that Wanda Thatcher graciously handled for many years.

Carla and her husband Jim (shown in the photo above with their cat Bert) have been active volunteers for the past 10 years. In addition to regularly serving as Museum docents, they have also been helping George Gunn clean and prepare the Meyers House for tours every month. Visitors to the Meyers House will recognize Jim as the man who collects the donations at the front door.

Jim and Carla lived in Alameda when they were first married 58 years ago. They moved to Hayward and Fremont, but returned to Alameda about 10 years ago when Carla inherited her family home, where they now reside. A friend from church in Fremont was a docent at the Alameda Museum, and suggested that Jim and Carla might want to volunteer as well, which they have been doing happily ever since.

For three years, Carla was also president of the Adelpian Club (an altruistic womens' club founded in the 1890's dedicated to "the cultivation of friendship, the pursuit of learning, sociability, and all things that are uplifting and ennobling"). The members of the Club sold the Central Avenue building because it was no longer feasible to maintain it (their husbands were not as handy as they used to be), with some of the money from the sale being distributed to Alameda elementary schools. There are also plans for the Club to donate some money and items to the Alameda Museum, for use in an exhibit on the Adelpian Club and its role in Alameda history.

Carla is looking forward to her future chairperson work, including meeting with the docents regularly, and coordinating training as needed. She also brings ideas for new activities, maybe something similar to the Tea at Ardenwood Park in Fremont.

The Museum is grateful to Carla, and to the many docents for the vital role they play in its day-to-day operation. More volunteers are always needed, so if you know someone who would like to be a docent, please contact Carla at 510-522-2961.

Alameda Museum Lecture Series - More Fascinating Topics

by *Judith Lynch*

The first two lectures of 2006 were a tremendous success. The transportation duo, Grant Ute and Bruce Singer, wowed the Museum lecture series audience yet again as they presented "Ride the Red Trains" to a full house in February. Trotting on the heels of their September extravaganza about Island development, "Trains, Ferries, and Streetcars," they painstakingly traced the route of the red trains, a local fixture through the 1940's. Using two screens, they offered "then and now" comparisons. It was startling to the audience to see how much of olden Alameda is still left. This lecture had impressive publicity thanks to Dennis Evanosky, *Kidville News*, and the *Alameda Sun*. The pictures accompanying the publicity were so realistic that we got several calls asking if we were going to have "the actual red trains" for people to ride that night.

We ended the month of March with an outstanding lecture by George Gunn, showing images that have been stored in the Museum archives for decades. He was so mesmerizing you could hear a pin drop. All the seats were filled, a few folks were standing, and as always, some were turned away at the door. The pictures were amazing, and the audience was awed by them and by George's commentary, both flawless and funny. There were many attendees that we haven't seen in years, so it was like a family reunion. Several expressed an interest in buying copies of the images he showed, a boost for our treasury. Thanks George!!

The Museum has over 4000 photographs of old Alameda that were donated over the years, sometimes in the form of glass negatives found in attics. The images include exteriors and a few interiors of Victorian homes (some still standing, many not), commercial buildings, Alameda residents from the late 1800's, and more. These photos are available for replication at the Museum gift shop.

The next three lectures promise to be very exciting and informative.

Lecture #1 - Alameda Point: History in Action - April 27, 2006, by Melisa Gadreau and Chris Verplanck

Recently the architectural firm of Page & Turnbull conducted a thorough study of the history of the Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS), renamed Alameda Point. Amongst other discoveries, their architectural historians Melisa Gadreau and Chris Verplanck learned that renowned architect Albert Kahn designed the jumbo structures that constitute "Hangar Row." Kahn was dubbed "the father of modern factory design." The hangars at our NAS are typical of his designs, with telescoping doors, monitor windows and large corner pylons serving as door enclosures. You can view this stunning cluster of colossal buildings by biking, walking or driving in the East Gate along Appezzatto Parkway (Atlantic Avenue). When the street ends at the Seaplane Lagoon, turn right and then left onto West Tower Avenue to see the hulking hangars so evocative of flight and military endeavor.

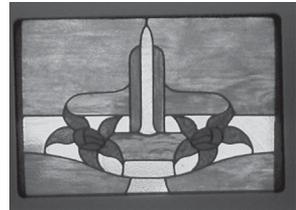
Gadreau and Verplanck also learned that the landscaping and trees at Alameda Point have history. Many date back to the 1939 World's Fair on Treasure Island, the Golden Gate International Exposition that celebrated the opening of the two Bay Bridges. The Fair had floral and arboreal displays of enormous splendor, because botanists installed unusual trees and plants from around the world: 4,000 trees, 70,000 shrubs, and 700,000 flowering plants. Some of this historic herbiage was transplanted at the NAS when the fair was dismantled in 1941.

Lecture #2 - The Anxious Observer of the Difference of Minutes - May 18, by Colette Collester

In her previous lecture, Colette Collester talked about Paris during the late 19th century, discussing the local architecture and the impressionist movement. This time, she again takes us to France when she focuses on the artist Claude Monet. Colette assures us that Monet would have *loved* living in Alameda in the 1870's!

Lecture #3 - Glass Act Redux - June 29, by Ken Matthias

Glassmaster Ken Matthias, stained-glass enthusiast and proprietor of Alameda Art Glass on Webster Street, presents new images of historical glass on the Island. Ken has been a stained-glass artist for more than 30 years, and has photographed windows in more than 1500 homes in Alameda.



Additional Alameda Museum Lectures in 2006:

July 27: Local author and historian Woody Minor presents “Joseph Leonard: Architect,” a slide celebration of Minor’s book *Leonardville Heritage Area*.

August 31: Paul Roberts returns with an investigation into the work of the Newsom Brothers, prominent Bay Area architects who designed the magnificent Carson Mansion in Eureka.

September 28: Architect Richard Rutter presents “Steamboating on San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento Delta from 1850 through 1950.”

All lectures take place at the Alameda Museum at 7:00 p.m. (the doors open at 6:30 p.m., so be sure to arrive early to find parking and get a good seat). Admission is free for Museum members, \$5 for others. For information leave a message at 510.748.0796.

100 YEARS AGO IN ALAMEDA *(provided by Archie Waterbury)*

April 18 marks the 100th anniversary of the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. Betty Correia, then associate editor of the Quarterly, described its effect on Alameda in the April, 1989, issue.

Alameda During the 1906 Earthquake *by Betty Correia*

In the early morning hours of April 18, 1906, an earthquake of tremendous force left havoc and destruction in San Francisco and scores of cities within a fifty-mile radius. Alameda was no exception.

At precisely 5:13 a.m. there was a wholesale stoppage of clocks in Alameda, and residents were awakened by the roar and rumble that preceded the devastating disaster. The shock lasted for one minute and five seconds. Numerous back-yard water tanks swayed and fell from collapsing tank houses, spilling the contents and flooding buildings and property.

The Methodist Block at the corner of Park Street and Central Avenue sustained heavy damage. The Alameda Free Library (Carnegie) withstood the vibrations, but hundreds of volumes were hurled from the shelves on all three floors. The Versailles Avenue Station on the narrow gauge railway was so twisted and warped that it could not be used.

The 2,000 gallon water tank on top of the Angel Bakery building on Park Street crashed through the rear of the bakery, demolishing the stairway and flooding the premises. A falling chimney in the Congregational Church tore away one corner of the building, and some schools were damaged. Telephone service was at a complete standstill. All of the Alameda and Oakland long distance lines were out of order.

A vast panorama of flame and smoke was plainly visible across the bay from the Alameda marsh in the West End, where Clark's Pottery Works was almost completely demolished. On Bay Farm Island, numerous cracks and crevices were seen on the surface of the ground. As soon as the magnitude of the calamity became apparent, Alamedans opened their hearts and their purses, helping feed the hungry and accommodate the refugees from San Francisco.

Refugee camps were established on empty parcels of land, and tents were assembled to shelter some of the homeless thousands from the city. Three hundred refugees were located in one camp on the corner of San Antonio Avenue and Oak Street. The streets were filled with strangers. A steady line of refugees registered at the Post Office so that it would be easier for family and friends to locate them in all of the confusion.

Three days after the quake, several cases of smallpox and scarlet fever were reported in San Francisco. Attempting to prevent the diseases from spreading, the Alameda Board of Health advised the people of Alameda not to receive strangers into their homes until they had secured certificates of health from physicians at the relief camps or from the Board of Health.

Ironically, during the fervent reconstruction period following the earthquake, one prominent detail remained missing. The familiar clock tower on the City Hall (by which the local residents would set their pocket watches) was removed after being declared unsafe, and the former landmark has never been replaced.

Alameda Museum Event Schedule

March 30, April 6 - third graders visiting from Bayfarm School

April 8, 1-3pm - Kids & Queen Victoria exhibit opens

April 27, May 18, June 29 - Lecture Series (pages 12&13)

April 29, May 6 - estate sales

Ongoing - Neptune Beach exhibit

The Board of Directors meets monthly on the third Wednesday at 6:15pm.



*image by
Dorothy Bosomworth*

Alameda Museum Annual Dues Schedule

Regular Adult \$30	Senior (over 65) \$18
Associate Adult* \$20	Lifetime \$500 (only one payment, ever!)
Docent or Volunteer \$15	Business (non-voting) \$250

**An Associate Adult is any person who resides in the same household as a Regular Adult member; includes voting privileges.*

Special Offer - If you give a gift membership, your friend or loved one will receive TWO additional bonus gifts: a pass to visit the Meyers House & Gardens, and a copy of *Victoria's Legacy*, featuring historic neighborhood walking tours throughout the Bay Area - six in Alameda. Four issues of the *Museum Quarterly* and admission to all lectures are also free with their membership.

YES! I want to send a gift membership to:

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ e-mail _____

2006 Dues Category _____ \$ _____

Voluntary Contribution _____ \$ _____

Total (check payable to Alameda Museum) _____ \$ _____

Please indicate whether you would like the gifts sent to the recipient or yourself.

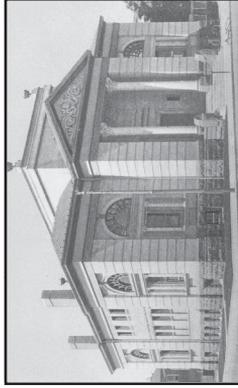
East Gallery Displays:

April, 2006 - Kids & Queen Victoria

May, 2006 - Alameda Photographic Society

June, 2006 - Alameda Art Association, mixed media

July, 2006 - Pattie Heimburger, textured oil paintings



Alameda Museum

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Telephone: 510-521-1233

Museum Hours:

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

Website:

www.AlamedaMuseum.org

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