

The Alameda Museum

Quarterly Newsletter

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Spring, 2007

Number 1



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and more...

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Wednesday - Friday	1:30 pm - 4:00 pm
Saturday	11:00 am - 4:00 pm
Sunday	1:30 pm - 4:00pm

Communications Staff

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From the Curator's Desk

Through the years, at times of adversity, there always seem to be individuals who step forward in our hour of need. The Museum was recently inspected by a member of the Alameda Fire Department. Unbeknown to us, we had several violations of the present fire codes. These violations would have cost a considerable sum to rectify. Well, to make a long story short, Board members Chuck Millar and Robbie Dileo came to the rescue. The doors leading to the warehouse now have an entrance signal, and are framed in Victorian style trim (donated by Ken Carvalho). The canvas is gone, and a handsome entrance was created.

Following our recent disaster, when the Museum was flooded by water from the Masonic Lodge boiler, Robbie and Ross Dileo responded immediately. Robbie stayed all day and into the night to protect the Museum's contents. The following day, Board member Janice Cantu and her husband, Grant Ute, gave additional invaluable help. We owe them all our profound gratitude.

In March, we had one of the finest docent luncheons. Great attendance, good food, terrific silent auction items, and the presence of Mayor Beverly Johnson and Vice Mayor Lena Tam, all added to the success of the event.

George Gunn, Museum Curator

Ken Carvalho
Chief Estimator



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ONWARD & UPWARD

News and Updates
from our
Museum President

Two months have passed since the Museum was flooded, and repair work is finally getting started. The Masons sent us a letter with a very mixed message. The letter said that they wanted us as tenants and they support our mission, but they want to replace the boiler and sewer lines, upgrade the electrical systems, and were in the process of obtaining bids to do so. There was no mention of replacing flooring so we could reopen the historic gallery and gift shop. We could be looking at a lot of downtime with no gift shop income to pay for our monthly expense.

Membership is an annual source of income, and we have launched a membership drive. The Board has sent out appeals to friends and all old members to renew. One docent, **Ellen Chestnut**, copied the membership application and dropped them off around her neighborhood, which got us some new members. Instead of spending her hours in the Museum (since it was closed), she spent them working. Way to go, Ellen!

I'm making a personal appeal to all of *you*. Tear off the back page of the Quarterly (or photocopy it), and get a friend, relative, or neighbor to join. We could double our ranks, and it's a good tax-deductible cause. I send every new member the lecture series list (free for members) and a Meyers House pass.

There was a great turnout for the Annual Membership Luncheon & Silent Auction. More silent auction items than ever, expanded to 8 tables of bargains. Your Board donated auction items (we found out that **Janice Cantu** creates classy jewelry), and performed set-up and take-down for the event. **Gina Mariani** corralled the raffle prizes. **Joanne McKay** lit up the room with her great floral arrangements. **Judith Lunch** wore out her dimples selling raffle tickets. Board husbands **Ross Dileo** and **Richard Knight** tended bar. We were flooded out downstairs, but upstairs we were flooded with good will, and we had Mayor **Beverly Johnson** and Vice Mayor **Lena Tam** to install the Board.

Diane Coler-Dark, Museum President

Recognitions:

An honorarium was donated by **Ken Mathias** of **Alameda Art Glass Studio** on Webster Street, from the Alameda Tea Club.

A \$200 donation was given by **Donna Graven** in memory of her mother **Margueritte Sligh**. Margueritte was a past Docent Coordinator who enlisted her whole family as Museum volunteers.

Food, Fun, and Bargains Galore at the Annual Membership Luncheon...



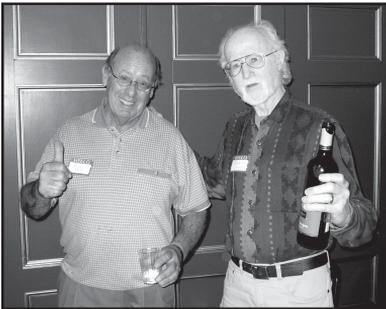
Museum Curator George Gunn with home tour committee member Lois Francis. New Meyers House docents Mark White and Henry Villareal admire silent auction items in the background.



Vice Mayor Lena Tam spent time getting to know Museum members.



Board members, docents, and Museum members all enjoyed themselves at the luncheon.



Volunteer bartenders Ross Dileo and Richard Knight were two very popular men at the luncheon.



Cecily Gipson almost didn't recognize George Gunn, because he was wearing a tie.

Meet Your Monument *story and images by Judith Lynch*

Our Military Heritage



This noble eagle is one of the cast concrete sculptures that give a sense of history to the former naval base, now called Alameda Point.

At the west end of the island of Alameda is a large portion of filled land that used to be under water. There the U.S. Navy constructed the Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS) before and during World War II. Early in the 1990s, the Navy decided that the base was not needed anymore. They hired architectural historian Sally Woodbridge to investigate the military heritage of the NAS. Her research proved that history abounds there, with dozens of significant old structures designed in the Moderne style popular during the 1930s and '40s. You can recognize these buildings by their imposing columns, gigantic sculptures of real and mythical beasts, and wide decorations with rounded edges. In 1999, the City Council and the Historical Advisory Board recognized the importance of the NAS by designating it as a Historic District.

Recently two architectural historians, Melisa Gadreau and Chris Verplack, made a more thorough study of NAS history. After pawing through obscure files in dusty Navy archives, they learned that renowned architect Albert Kahn designed the jumbo sea plane lagoon hangars. Called "the father of modern factory design," Kahn and his staff planned a great number of industrial war plants and naval bases for the United States military. Melisa and Chris also learned that even the vegetation at Alameda Point has history. Many plants and trees there date back to the 1939 World Fair, called the Golden Gate International Exposition and located on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. The Fair had splendid floral and arboreal displays, because botanists went around the world collecting unusual specimens to plant there. Some of this historic greenery was then transplanted to the Alameda NAS when the Fair was dismantled in 1940 and replaced by the Treasure Island Navy Base.



Local preservationists want the Fight Control Tower and other "marooned" structures added to the Alameda Point Historic District.

The former NAS has been renamed Alameda Point, and the city wants to hire a developer to build a new neighborhood there, complete with housing, shops, and parks. The first developer backed out, when the Navy changed its asking price for the land from nothing to \$108 million. Currently multiple new companies are competing to develop the site. The future of many of the NAS historic buildings is in grave doubt. To see the four proposals firsthand, go to the City of Alameda website, thence to Alameda Point, then click on community involvement. There you can also print out a self-guided tour of the former base and visit in person. I think you and your family will be impressed with the beauty of the place. I hope you will also be concerned about how well this piece of Alameda heritage is being treated.

Judith Lynch serves on the Historical Advisory Board and teaches at Washington School.

History on Display at Alameda Towne Centre

by Robbie Dileo

Alameda Museum proudly announces participation in a public art project for Alameda Towne Centre, funded by HARSCH Development Corporation, as part of their transformation of Southshore Shopping Center. We are delighted to introduce you to the artist, **John Laursen**, who has endeared himself both as a conscientious researcher and expert producer of public art.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, John primarily designed and produced works on paper, specializing in books, posters, and letterpress broadsides. Press-22 is his company in Portland, where a large part of his work involves production of books on photography, history, and art. The Special Collections Department at the University of Oregon Library houses a complete collection of his works on paper. During the past twenty years he has also executed public art projects that involve design and typography on a larger scale via architectural media such as granite, bronze, steel, and porcelain enamel.

Laursen's clients are primarily non-profit organizations focused on the arts, education, history, and the environment. His public art projects have included extensive typographic design for the Oregon Holocaust Memorial and a suite of thirty colorful bronze plaques for the Oregon Convention Center; a current major commission is typography for Portland's Walk of the Heroines, a park at Portland State University honoring women and their contributions to the community. In association with the curator of photography at the Portland Art Museum, he recently founded a non-profit organization to publish books of historical photographs from the Pacific Northwest.

In 2005, he visited Alameda and formulated the idea of a series of framed porcelain-enamel panels depicting interesting and sometimes unique facets of local history. With conceptual approval from HARSCH, John became a regular visitor to our museum and others. He interviewed George Gunn and Woody Minor and delved through our archives with the help of Joe Young, photograph curator, and Board members Chuck Millar and Robbie Dileo. He also consulted with the director of the Alameda Naval Air Museum, Marilyn York, and the curator, Larry Pirack, both of whom were helpful with accessing their collection. In the spring of 2006, John presented draft versions of his panels to the City Art Commission and, after receiving approval from them, began finalizing his project, acquiring additional images from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Oakland Museum, the SF Maritime Museum, the California State Railroad Museum, the California Historical Society, and Pacific Aerial Surveys, as well as from the Oakland Library, the California State Library, and the Bancroft Library in Berkeley.



Artist John Laursen performing research at the Alameda Museum

Laursen was commissioned to do 12 individual panels, each approximately 2 x 3 feet, and each describing an historical event, place, or person through pictures, captions, and narrative. In future articles we will showcase the panels and our hopes for a special celebration and dedication ceremony. It would be wonderful if the grand reopening of the Museum could be part of the goal for a late spring installation.

A Field Trip to the Alameda Museum

In January of this year, a group of Kindergarten students from the class of Julie Walsh at Bay Farm School visited the Museum. Ms. Walsh and her students have participated in the April Kids & Queen Victoria show since 1998.

Museum Board member Judith Lynch is shown using the "Teacher Prop Box" to prepare the students to see the Victorian exhibits at the Museum.



Photos by parent Gene Li.

Docents Preserving the Past for the Future

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

Note: *Docent coordinator Carla McGrogan will contact docents when the Museum reopens. Contact Carla at 510-522-2961 if you have any questions.*

CHUCK MILLAR - *Board Member and Volunteer*

Museum Board member Chuck Millar remembers meeting George Gunn at an event in Franklin Park, shortly after he and his wife Birgitt bought their house, which was built in 1910. They were seeking advice on how to restore the living room. After George saw some before-and-after photos of Chuck's home, he convinced Chuck to repair some display cases in the Museum, the first of several such projects. Chuck decided that the Museum would be a great place to volunteer, to become involved with the community and give something back.

Chuck joined the Museum board in 2000, and has never regretted his decision. One of his early projects was to accompany George and Diane to an Alameda City warehouse to sort through old records that the City was going to discard (some real treasures would have been lost otherwise). He has also helped with estate sales, and joined the Alameda Legacy Home Tour committee, taking care of day-of-tour refreshments. A more recent project was to create an elegant doorway in the back of the Museum, leading to the warehouse. The Fire Department told the Museum that the old canvas curtain was a code violation, and that any door back there would have to remain unlocked. Chuck designed the new doorway (making it look Victorian), and with the help of several volunteers - Ken Carvalho, Diane Coler-Dark, George Gunn, Robbie Dileo (and her father), Ross Dileo, and new Board member John Flather. The result is spectacular, and blends in well with the Museum's historical displays.



Chuck Millar in front of the new warehouse doorway

Chuck is a member of the Museum's accession and deaccession committee, and he also represents the Museum at the Historical Advisory Board's Historic Preservation Work Program Adhoc Committee (Chuck jokes that they tried to think of a longer name). The current focus of that committee is to help the City plan several events in May, which will be Historic Preservation Month. He will also be very involved in putting the Museum back together after the flood, taking the opportunity to make some improvements.

Chuck's favorite activity is to create temporary exhibits in the Museum, as a way of changing displays to get people to make more return visits to the Museum. Neptune Beach was the obvious first choice, and was very successful, thanks in part to much assistance from Robbie Dileo and Judith Lynch. The challenge will be to find something equally interesting for the next exhibit. Chuck thinks that transportation could be a very exciting exhibit, thinking of how integral the ferries and trains were to Alameda's early development, including the elaborate stations. As with any major project, volunteers are essential. And as happened with Neptune Beach, hopefully people will hear about the exhibit and donate items to enhance the Museum collection.

Chuck recalls that when he first became involved with the Museum, he assumed he would get some satisfaction out of volunteering, and make some new friends along the way. While that has happened, there was also an unexpected side benefit. As a result of what he has learned and who he has met, he feels much more connected to the community in which he lives. That's the great thing about volunteering with the Museum.

The Great Flood of 2007

On Friday, February 2, the Alameda Museum suffered a completely unexpected setback. There was a malfunction in one of the Masonic building boilers, and a stream of water flowed through the Museum and out onto Alameda Avenue.



The exhibit area of the Museum, after the flood

Robbie Dileo was one of the first Museum Board members to witness the devastation, arriving after she heard the news from Ken Carvalho. She observed water two inches deep throughout the exhibit area and at the docent desk, and took initial photos to document the damage. The Fire Department removed most of the water, using huge squeegees. Weber Plumbing was onsite to help, and Emergency Service Restoration employees, called in by the Masons, removed some of the water from the carpet, which was totally ruined and had to be removed (and paint peeled off the concrete floors underneath the carpet). The baseboards along the walls had to be removed, and holes drilled into the walls to help them dry out.

The good news is that the loss of historical records and items in the Museum collection was minimal. Most of the archival items are on steel shelves, far enough off the floor that they did not get wet. And thanks to quick thinking and efficient directing by George Gunn, items were shifted as needed. Wet paintings and boxes were unwrapped and moved to dry areas.



The flood originated from a faulty boiler, behind this door in the Museum's permanent exhibit area.



The historical exhibit areas, including the Victorian parlor, stand empty, awaiting new carpet and baseboards and paint.

The historical exhibits had to be completely disassembled and moved into the gallery space (fortunately at the time, there was not anything on display in the East gallery), along with items from the archival area. Of course, future gallery exhibits had to be cancelled indefinitely, but the artists have been very understanding.

In addition to Robbie Dileo, George Gunn, and Diane Coler-Dark, several volunteers spent many hours dealing with the situation, including Grant Ute, Board member Janice Cantu, Kevin Fredericks, and Ross Dileo. The sheetrock at the bottom of each partition wall had to be removed, so that the partitions could be unscrewed from the floor, to facilitate removal of the wet carpet.



With exhibit and archival items temporary stored in the East gallery, it resembles a packed antique store.

The office and the dollhouse display area were untouched, and the area housing the gift shop is intact. The rest of the main exhibit area has been completely emptied (with the gallery area looking like a popular antique store). But every day that the Museum is closed means lost revenue from the gift shop, not to mention the non-monetary loss of not being able to use the Museum facilities. Fortunately, the Alameda Museum Lecture Series has been able to continue, using an alternate location upstairs in the Masonic building.



Potential Museum visitors are turned away by a sign on the door.

Initially it was estimated that the Museum would be closed for a few weeks, but in reality, it has already been closed for over two months, with no specific reopening date in site. The Masons (who own the building) are just beginning some of the basic repairs.

Much work will be required to get the Museum reopened, including replacing all the carpet, repainting all the walls, etc. But on the upside, this can be a great opportunity to reorganize some of the exhibits. And just think of the fabulous grand reopening celebration that can be hosted at the Museum when the day finally arrives.

In the meantime, the Museum needs as much financial support as it can get, from donations and increased membership. Please pass the word along.

Historic Preservation Season

by Judith Lynch

The Museum is an active participant in Historic Preservation Season (April and May) this year. We are working with a group composed of HAB members, Chuck Millar from the Museum Board, Planning Director Cathy Woodbury and members of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS). Mark your calendars and join the jamobree! “Restoration Retrospective” is the theme this year, and we have dubbed the cavalcade of events a “season” because too many things are happening to cram into one short month.

Saturday, April 7, 1-3 p.m.: Kids & Queen Victoria X, the tenth annual art show with work from seven elementary schools, opening reception featuring Alameda Unified School District superintendent Ardella Dailey and, of course, Queen Victoria. Sponsored by the Alameda Museum and the Alameda Education Foundation. Location - Alameda Free Library, rooms A and B, Oak Street and Lincoln Avenue. Free to the public.

Thursday, April 12, 7:00 p.m.: Alameda by Rail, a slide presentation and celebration for the new Arcadia book by *Grant Ute* and *Bruce Singer*. Location - Alameda Museum. Free for Museum members, \$5 for others.

Thursday, April 26, 7:00 p.m.: Earthquake Exodus 1906, a slide lecture by author and historian *Richard Schwartz*. Location - Alameda Museum. Free for Museum members, \$5 for others.

Saturday, May 19: Secret Spaces, an exploration of downtown Alameda led by architect *Richard Rutter*. Free, but reservations are a must. Leave a message at 748.0796 if you want to come along.

Tuesday, May 1, 7:30 p.m.: City Council proclaims Historic Preservation Season!

Saturday, May 5: Leonardville: The Walking Tour, led by author and Historian Woody Minor, based on his Heritage booklet of the same name (time and starting place TBA).

Sunday, May 20: Bike Old Alameda: Critical Glass. Begin at the Alameda Museum with a slide show by glassmaster *Ken Matthias*, then take a self-guided bike tour using a brochure with map and information, followed by a visit to the Meyers House and a picnic in the garden. Sponsored by the Alameda Museum and BikeAlameda. Tickets \$20. Reserve your slot by calling 592.4690.

(Historic Preservation Season, continued)

Saturday, May 26, 1-4 p.m.: **Meyers House** open to the public; docents in vintage clothing. 2021 Alameda Avenue, admission \$3.

Thursday, May 31, 7:00 p.m.: **PWA Buildings in Alameda**, a slide lecture by author and historian *Gray Brechin*, author of New Deal California. Location - Alameda Museum. Free for Museum members, \$5 for others.

Sunday, June 3, 7:00 p.m.: Tenth Annual AAPS Historic Preservation Awards. Location - First Presbyterian Church, Santa Clara Avenue at Chestnut Street.

The Museum Lecture Series goes on despite the great flood. While the Museum Gallery space has been unavailable, the lectures are being held upstairs in the Masonic Hall (thanks to Kevin Stroud for helping to coordinate). During the February lecture, after an appeal to the crowd for help with the Museum's current financial situation, a hat was passed and an extra \$100 was raised.

Additional Lectures for 2007

Thursday June 28: **Dennis Evanosky** and **Eric Kos** will present slides that show Alameda's Bay Shore before the coming of South Shore. Underwritten by Ginger Schuler, Harbor Bay Realty.

Thursday July 26: Architect and historian **Hank Dunlop** on the restoration of the Leland Stanford mansion, the centerpiece of a fabled state park in Sacramento. Underwritten by Estelle Knowland, Alameda Museum Board.

Thursday August 30: Architectural historian **Betty Marvin** "becomes" Julia Morgan, architect of San Simeon. Underwritten by Nancy Anderson, AIA of Dahlin Group Architecture and Planning.

Thursday September 27: Art historian and enthusiast **Colette Collester** on the art of Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) "Cezanne and his beloved hometown of Aix-en-Provence."

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)*

As seen in the pages of the Daily Argus of 1907

On January 13, Alameda experienced its first snow storm in many years. Said the *Argus*, "Snow fell for upwards of an hour in Alameda yesterday morning and gave some of the younger generation their first look at falling snow at close range. The snow came down in big generous flakes, but melted almost as it fell, and the Alameda youths were denied the unholy joy of snowballing unlucky pedestrians..."

"In the afternoon a brisk hail storm gave opportunity to make snow balls out of hail stones...Between the snow and hail storms, there was some wind, a good deal of rain, and a brief bit of sunshine"

The Municipal Light Company was in the headlines constantly during the early months of 1907. In January, an area-wide fuel oil shortage threatened the plant with closure. The big tanks of the Standard Oil Company were empty. The contract with Associated Oil had expired and was awaiting renewal. The Southern Pacific Co., although short of oil itself, came through at the last minute with a carload, enough to run the plant for several days.

One week later, the City Council announced a 30 percent reduction in electric light fees, from 10 cents per 1000 KW to 7 cents per 1000 KW.

In February, the Council ordered the installation of three new electroliers, two in front of City Hall, one in front of the library. Business and home owners throughout the city were also ordering electroliers in front of their property, prompting the paper to remark, "if the present rate of installation is maintained throughout the coming year, Alameda will soon be able to claim the title of the best lighted City in America."

(Which it did. During the late twenties and thirties, municipal promotional materials boasted of, "Alameda, the best lighted city in America.")

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A Meyers family donation

The Museum recently acquired a photo album that was originally compiled by Henry Meyers, before Jeanette was born, showing family photos, and photos of the original parlor, and photos of other homes he designed. Stay tuned for more information in the next issue of the Meyers House Guild newsletter (sent to Guild members twice yearly).

Alameda Museum Event Schedule

- April 12 - lecture, **Bruce Singer** and **Grant Ute** (see page 12)
- April 26 - lecture, **Richard Schwartz** (see page 12)
- May 31 - lecture, **Gray Brechin** (see page 12)
- June 28 - lecture, **Dennis Evanovsky** and **Eric Kos** (see page 12)
- The **Meyers House** is open monthly on the *fourth Saturday*, from 1-4pm.
- The **Board of Directors** meets monthly on the *third Wednesday* at 6:15pm.

East Gallery Displays:

Due to the flood, there are no displays in the East Gallery. The "Kids & Queen Victoria" exhibit was moved to the Alameda Free Library.

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 _____

Dues Category _____ \$ _____

Voluntary Contribution _____ \$ _____

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

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



Alameda Museum

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