

Featured Articles Inside:

A Closer Look, Phyllis Diller Exhibit Aug. 15th, Golden Spike, Meet Jane Burgelin, Woody Walk Aug. 22nd, Driving the Tin Lizzie

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Communications Staff

Contributors George Gunn, Diane Coler-Dark, Judith Lynch, Valerie Turpen, Ron Ucovich, Robbie Dileo Editor - Ron Ucovich



From the Curator's Desk

by George Gunn

In the near future, a new exhibit will open at the

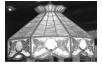
Meyers House. The three-car garage has been transformed into an architectural display. Objects pertaining to architecture, collected over the years, and never before seen, will be



featured. I am sure our membership and the public will enjoy this new venue.

It goes without saying that without the labor and steadfast devotion of Ross Dileo and Virgil Silver, this exhibit would not have happened.





My appreciation also extends to our president, Diane Coler-Dark, and our new board of directors, for their support and interest in funding the exhibit. I am

waiting for their decision on the official opening date. A possible ribbon-cutting event is being considered.



George prepares a plaster bracket, a stained glass shade & art glass windows in the new Meyers House Architectural Exhibit. *Photos by Robbie Dileo*

From The President's Desk by Diane Coler-Dark



At the June 16th City Council meeting, council members Frank Mataresse requested a discussion on alternative uses of the Carnegie Library building. Last year they voted to locate the Planning Department offices there. Now, with city budget shortfalls, and the stressed economy, the extensive funds needed to convert the building to offices are no longer available. Robbie Dileo, Chuck Millar, and Bob Risley spoke at the meeting and expressed appreciation for Councilmember Mataresse's support. The Council directed the city manager to prepare a report on the feasibility of using the building for museum and other non-profit and for-profit entities.



Greg McFann of the Building Department said the plan should contain three parts: first, the cost to occupy the first floor only, since all plumbing and heating were removed during the retrofit; second, the cost to occupy all floors including all

health and safety requirements; and third, the cost to completely rebuild, including a rear elevator and expanded restroom facilities. The report is due in mid-September. This study opens another door to exploring and defining the City's role in supporting the museum. Professional help will be needed for the massive amount of fund-raising required for making improvements, and for relocation and maintenance expenses. Anyone with positive suggestions or willingness to participate, call me at 523-5907.

The Museum wishes to acknowledge the donation made in memory of Dottie Fehn from Barbara Gibson. Dottie was a museum docent and worker for the Alameda Home Tour.

We would also like to acknowledge the donation made in memory of James and Martha Franchi from James and Linda Morrison. The Franchis were long-time museum supporters.

From the Secretary's Desk by Robbie Dileo



Kudo's to **Dewey St. Germaine** and **Brian McDonald** collectors, organizers, and main speakers at 1st Annual Sports Exhibit in the East Gallery through August. The packed July 18th grand opening ceremony included many new faces. Long-time Museum supporter, former Park Director and Council Member **Lil Arnerich** brought wife Norma and then made comments about



the 1960's & 70's ARPD baseball program that shaped many lives and eventually resulted in **Kin Robles** becoming the writer & producer of **"Playball"**, a DVD we now sell for \$20. Check out Kin's blog **PlayBall! - Alameda's Sandlot**

http://playball94501.wordpress.com/ All speakers shared highlights about the importance of sports in Alameda and the many unique items on display. Sports writers took photos and notes, then everybody helped themselves to a wonderful spread that included a large sports-themed cake and drinks. The fritatta and

homemade donuts were to die for! Bravo gents and to your lady helpers!

In 1991, upon Museum's move to current location, I became a member with the main goal/purpose to help build and paint but was quickly roped into administrative duties and serving on the Board.

I got my painting time and then more with the "redo" after the flood. That's my "faux" finished green walkway that leads toward our storage area and the East Gallery floor repair painting (when it got trenched for the sewer work). The pitiful floor into the boiler room, housing the nearly completed Neptune Beach Exhibit was in dire need of help. Voila! Over several days, with **Chuck Millar** help-



ing prep the area, and in time for the Sports Exhibit reception, I created a faux boardwalk with a sandy edge, then with the help of husband **Ross**, installed a picket fence wainscot to dress it all up. Hooray, the beach is almost ready!



I personally look forward to the city's reports on the Carnegie and if/how it might be possible to make it our permanent home. More painting in my future? As members, please do your part to support our efforts to *"preserve the past for the future"*. Attend fundraising events, renew your membership and ask a friend to join also, become a Meyers Guild Member, make a "Bang for the Buck" contribution, and some of you would make excellent docents. Give Jane and Ellen a call (pg.14). There's nothing more valuable than the donation of your time and talent.



A Gloser Look by Ron Ucovich

Did you ever notice the transparent telephone at the back of the museum? The first completely synthetic manmade substance was Bakelite, invented by a New York chemist in 1909. It was black in color, and was used to make car parts, knickknacks, jewelry, and telephones. In 1931 the Rohm & Haas Chemical Company invented a clear hard plastic. They named it *Plexiglas*. Then, the DuPont Corporation invented a clear soft plastic, which they named Lucite. By the late 1930s, dozens of products made of Lucite and Plexiglas were created.

At the 1939 World's Fair at Treasure Island, dozens of acrylic products were presented to the public as the epitome of modern technology. Some products were designed with color, such as hearing aids, eyeglass frames, false teeth, and picture frames. Some were slightly tinted, like lampshades, table cloths, and women's hosiery.

But the acrylic products which captured everyone's fancy were totally transparent. This was new... this was different... this was ultramodern. Women's shoes could look like Cinderella's glass slippers. When it rained, you



no longer had to look like the Gorton's Fisherman. You could wear a clear raincoat and carry a clear umbrella. Hats, cigarette holders, and walking sticks could now be transparent.

The most unusual exhibit at the World's Fair was a 1939 Pontiac with a transparent body. You could look through the fenders and see the wheels, or through the hood and see the engine, or through the doors and see the driver. The purpose was to give the driver 360-degree visibility. It's probably good that the idea never caught on. It would be kind of like driving a fishbowl down the street.

Lectures, Art Gallery & Events

LECTURE SERIES

• Thursday August 27: "Just Across the Pond – Oakland Point and the West Oakland Marsh" by architectural historian Betty Marvin. Underwritten by Robbie Dileo; member, Alameda Museum Board.

• Thursday September 24: "Alameda Album" an illustrated talk by Paul Roberts based on two recently discovered vintage photo albums from the 1890s. Underwritten by City Council Member, Frank Matarrese.

NOTE: Lectures are at Alameda Museum. Doors open at 6:30. Lectures start promptly at 7:00 p.m.; doors close by 7:10. No reserved seats. Come early to secure a place, shop for gifts, enjoy the galleries. Admission is free for Museum members and \$5 for others. Topics may change without notice. Ample parking is available at the parking structure, just a block away, with entrance on Oak St. near Central.

In the Art Gallery

July & August: "1st Annual Sports Exhibit" www.alamedasportsproject.com August 15th: "Phyllis Diller Exhibit Opening" reception at 1 pm. September 12th: "Feng Jin Sculpture" reception.

There is no charge for special art gallery exhibits. The public is invited to all receptions. In general, the gallery changes at the end of the month so new exhibit can begin by first weekend in next month.

OTHER EVENTS

- Woody Walk, August 22, 1 pm, starts at Meyers House (pg. 12) www.alameda-preservation.org
- Alameda Legacy Home Tour, September 27th, 11 5. (Cover) *www.alameda-home-tour.org* Guidebook/ticket/maps will be available at the Museum beginning Wednesday, September 23rd at 1:30 until Saturday, September 26th - Museum closes at 4 pm.
- Architectural Exhibit at Meyers House, Grand Opening TBD, late August or early September fee (free to Guild Members).
- Neptune Beach Exhibit TBD opens in October.



GRAND OPENING

Saturday, August 15, 2009 1:00 o'clock

Miss Phyllis Diller

On Saturday, August 15, the Alameda Museum will host its **Grand Opening** of the Phyllis Diller exhibit. Miss Diller just celebrated her 92nd birthday. She claims that 7 is her lucky number... she was born on 7-7-17. She realizes that she is in the sunset years of her life (she calls it the *graveyard shift*), so she is liquidating many of her personal possessions. Most items will be sold to auctioneers who buy collections of celebrity memorabilia, then sell them to souvenir collectors.

Miss Diller sold off many of her possessions, but a few items she reserved for the three museums that have a Phyllis Diller exhibit. There is a small city museum in Lima, Ohio, where Phyllis was born. They have some clothing and furniture from Phyllis' early years. The Smithsonian in Washington D.C. has the whole file cabinet full of jokes, anecdotes, and gags that Miss Diller has collected during her 50 years in show business. And the Alameda Museum, which has the personal artifacts which you are invited to see on August 15.

All her life Miss Diller wanted to be a performer, but she realized that her appearance was not a salable asset. She said:

You know what keeps me humble? Mirrors! I considered changing my name when I entered show business, but with a face like this, who cares? Just when I lost my baby fat, I got middle-age spread. I didn't have a good five minutes.

Then, she had a brainstorm. She could use her homely appearance to entertain people. Now, people weren't laughing at her... they were laughing with her!



When you play spin the bottle, if they don't want to kiss you, they have to give you a quarter. Well, hell, by the time I was twelve, I owned my own home!

You are all invited to come to the Grand Opening on August 15. You can see her memorabilia, listen to the routines she performed at the Purple Onion, see photographs of her personal and professional life, and have all your questions answered about her performing style and technique. And, bring your favorite Phyllis Diller joke to share with others.

THE YEAR WAS 1869

by Ron Ucovich

In 1869 the W. T. Garratt Foundry of San Francisco was commissioned to cast a railroad spike made of pure gold. It was to be driven by Leland Stanford into the final tie which joined the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads. The two sides of the spike were engraved with the names of the *Big Four:* Stanford, Crocker, Huntington, and Hopkins.

A special tie made of California laurel was sanded and polished for the occasion. A hole was pre-drilled, and the spike was dropped into the hole. Mr. Stanford pretended to hit the spike, but instead struck the track to make a noise. He shouted "**DONE**" and the crowd of over 1000 people cheered enthusiastically. The laurel tie, unfortunately, was lost in the 1906 fire of San Francisco, but the golden spike, along with the silver-plated maul, are prominently on display in the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University.



This event affected the people of Alameda in a very special way. Until we had a railroad crossing the Sierras, there were no ice boxes, and people had no way of keeping their food from spoiling. There was a fire burning in the stove all day long, and on the stove simmered a pot of stew. This stew was called *pottage* (or in England, *porridge*).

Food was hard to come by, so nothing was wasted. If you had food scraps, or potato peelings, or carrot tops, they would go into the pottage, and you would eat them the next day. Kids hated it. They made up a rhyme which they used to recite while they were jumping rope: "*Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old.*" They ate it hot, they ate it cold, they ate it for nine days, and they hated it.

Now, the new railroad crossed the Sierras at Donner Pass. During the winter, when the lakes froze to about a foot deep, workers would saw the ice into blocks, and store them in huge ice barns. In the summer, they would transport the ice blocks by train, and sell them to us for storing food. Everyone in Alameda had to rush out and buy the newest wrinkle in modern technology: an icebox.



People no longer had to keep leftover food on the stove to keep it from spoiling. They no longer had to have a fire burning day and night for the stew pot. *Bedtime* was referred to as time to *cover the fire* (or in French *couvre feu*) from which we get the word *curfew*.

We get another expression from those days. When a new family moved into the area, all the neighbors would welcome them with small gifts. They would throw a party and each neighbor would bring a hot ember to start a fire burning in the new stove. This type of party, of course, was called a *house warming party*.

Allow Me to Introduce Myself

by Jane Burgelin

Like many other "Californians", I am indeed a *transplant*, whose roots lie deeply buried in a tiny iron ore-mining village in upstate New York. Through marriage to my husband, Jim, (a true native Californian, born in Vallejo), I arrived here in Alameda in April of 1983. Jim's sister,



Karen, married my brother, Bill, on January 1983, and I flew out for their wedding. I was quite **taken** with Karen's older bachelor-brother (Jim), and a correspondence began shortly after my departure home to the frigid winter temperatures of New York.

To make a long story short, Jim proposed to me on the telephone on March 5, 1983, and we were married in New York on April 13. We did not see each other from the time I left California on January 25, until we were married in April, and will be celebrating 26 years of marriage this month! Jim retired from General Motors Acceptance Corporation (GMAC) in 1993, where he had worked for 28 years. We live a simple life together with our sweet, yellow Labrador, Millie, who runs our household!

In my working life, I enjoyed a very long professional career as a registered nurse, having worked for 41 years in a variety of interesting medical settings. I graduated from the Albany Memorial School of Nursing (a 3-year, certificated nursing school) in September 1964 and began my first job at the Veteran's Administration Hospital two days later.

My first love as a young nurse was hospital patient care, particularly in the intensive care and cardiac care units. I was honored to become the first coronary care head nurse to open and train other nurses in the first unit at St. Mary's Hospital in Troy, New York in 1967. After this, I became a Certified Occupational Health Nurse Specialist where I provided training classes for our nurses located at the World Trade Center in New York City. During the 911 crisis, I remember thinking about the nurses I had known who worked in those units.

I then moved to Alameda, and I found a job at the Naval Air Station as head nurse in charge of the dispensary. I worked for the navy for over nine years. Then, in 1990, I took a position at the San Francisco Public Health Department teaching HIV and AIDS transmission classes. One of my most challenging assignments included developing work procedures for elephant handlers at the SF Zoo, whose job included caring for an elephant who had contracted tuberculosis and was undergoing medical treatment. My goal was to prevent TB transmission to the elephant handlers. I retired in 2003. It was time!

The first book I ever purchased when I came to Alameda was from the Alameda Museum. It was about the history of Alameda. I was curious to know more about my new home and the island itself. There, we met George Gunn, and in 2006 George asked Jim and me to participate in the estate sale of one of our elderly neighbors. We were so impressed by the volunteers who participated in the estate sale, and the manner in which it was conducted, that

we volunteered to help out in a few other estate sales that followed. George mentioned that he was looking for docents for the Meyers House and Garden, (which I had never heard of before), so I decided to give it a try. My first day was in April, 2006. During the fall of 2006, Cecily Gipson, the former Meyers House docent coordinator, moved to Concord, and George, in desperation, asked me to assume her role. "It will be really easy," George assured me. "You just have to call a few people each month to docent. That's all!"

As you well know, these easy volunteer assignments have a tendency to take on a life of their own! Since that time, I have completed two rounds of volunteer Meyer House membership drives, several estate sales, including one of the largest and most lucrative estate sales the Museum has ever done, planned and set up a historic wedding gown event which lasted 8 months and with the assistance of four other able-bodied women and George, dismantled the wedding gowns and placed them into preservation boxes and acid-free tissue, which I had to procure through fundraising efforts.

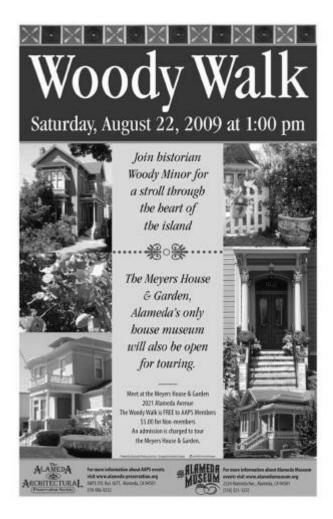


Additionally, we cleaned and hauled out the Meyer House Architectural Studio for its grand opening several months ago after being closed for over 30 years. I assisted George, Ross Dileo and Virgil Silver in cleaning out the collapsed greenhouse for future restoration, after a thorough hauling out and cleaning, restructured the Meyers House basement into our new Gift Shop! We recently uncovered a treasure chest of Meyers House women's vintage clothing, a huge collection of vintage baby clothing from Alameda's most prominent families and a

collection of vintage Easter bonnets at the Alameda Museum that will make wonderful future Meyers House events.

In our most recent project, we just finished renovating the 3-car garage for a new architectural exhibit. So much work has been accomplished by Ross and Virgil, with new track lighting, and the walls being sanded and refurbished. The Museum financed the installation of a new garage roof, as we had a major roof leak during the winter rains, and then new carpeting was installed. Be sure to see it. It is a very interesting exhibit!

Our next mission is to recruit more docents to enable us to be open more often than once a month. George and I continue to plan and scheme with the new jointly formed Committee comprised of three Alameda Preservation Society members and three Alameda Museum Board members to look at ways we can assume a more pro-active role in governing what happens with the Meyers House and Garden Museum in the future. Our hope is not to lose this beautiful historic treasure in the face of today's economic downturn.



The Meyers House & Garden admission is \$4.00 unless you are a Meyers House Guild Member. Guild memberships are \$25 per year, support projects for the property and allow free attendance to special events like last year's Wedding Gown Exhibit or the soon-to-open Architectural Exhibit in the 3-car garage. Page 15 has a membership coupon.

AAPS and the Museum will have membership details at the Woody Walk. Support your local non-profit groups and have a great afternoon strolling an historic neighborhood.

Driving the Tin Lizzie

by Ron Ucovich



Replacing the horse and buggy with an automobile did not happen overnight. First of all, the family horse was part of

the family. You didn't send him off to the glue factory just because you got tired of him. Secondly, early cars were not very reliable, and you needed to keep the horse as your backup. Also, early cars were not used for transportation. They were a novelty... a hobby... a fun way to thumb your nose at your next-door neighbor.

When the day came to replace Old Betsy, the automobile would inherit the name of the horse. Bessie, Dusty, Lucky, and Molly were common names for the horseless carriage. This is why early cars were called a *tin Lizzie*, because *Lizzie* was a common name for a horse.

Your first problem was that in the year 1900, there were only 144 miles of paved roads in the entire country. Without pavement, highways used to turn to dust in the summer and mud holes in the winter. In the 1800s, John Mc Adam developed a method of keeping the roads from turning to mud when they were wet. He combined clay with gravel, and then leveled the road with a roller. The *macadamized* road was smooth and water resistant. He later used tar as a bonding agent, and he called the product *tarmac*, a word still used in airports today.

In 1900, gasoline could only be purchased at a general store or drug store. It cost 60¢ a gallon, which was a high price to pay in those days. If you couldn't find gasoline, you would have to go to a paint store and run your car on benzene. If you wanted to drive out of town, you would strap two 5-gallon cans of fuel onto the running board, so you would have enough for the return trip.

Until recently, cars always had an ornamental decoration on the front of the hood. This dates back to the early cars, which had a large thermometer mounted on the radiator cap. Cooling systems were very inefficient, and the cars would always overheat on long trips. You wouldn't want to leave home without a spare bag of water hanging in front of the radiator.

The first endurance race in California took place in 1908 on the 7-mile road between San Leandro and Hayward. Competitors would drive their cars at full throttle until the cars boiled over or the wheels fell off. The automobile, which traveled the farthest without mishap, would be declared the winner.

There were no mechanic garages or service stations. If you blew a tire, you were on your own. Most cars carried two spares, just in case. If you had no way to repair a flat tire, your only alternative was to fill the tire with sand until you could purchase a new boot and inner tube.

volunteers

Lou Baca	Jeanne Gallagher	Darlene Pottsgieser
Barbara Balderston	Barbara Gibson	Marjory Quant
Harry Bissett	Cecily Gipson	Virginia Rivera
Jane Burgelin	Leslie Hawksbee	Lorraine Salizar
Katherine Cavanaugh	Debra Hilding	Betty Saunders
Ellen Chesnut	Lois Hoffman	Margy Silver
Elise Clasby	Julie Kennedy	Virgil Silver
Barbara Coapman	Jim Korn	Lois Singley
Dorothy Coats	Flora Larson	Marcy Skala
Diane Coler-Dark	Barbara Lewis	Lavonne Stittle
Charles Daly	Gayle Macaitis	Grace Taube
Robbie Dileo	Carla McGrogan	Wanda Thatcher
Ross Dileo	Jim McGrogan	Ellen Tilden
Marilyn Dodge	Joanne McKay	Ron Ucovich
Roni Dodson	DeAnn Mosbey	Henry Villareal
Joan Dykema	Trish Nelson	Mark White
Carolyn Erickson	Stephanie Paula	Joe Young
Pamela Ferrero	Susan Potter	

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. Have 3 hours to make new friends? Come spend it with us!

Docent Coordinator main Museum, Ellen Chesnut, 865-1204 Docent Coordinator for MHG, Jane Burgelin, 865-3402

City Matching Grant Donors



"Bang for the Buck" in 2009

Sally Beck David Brossard Ellen & Jim Chesnut Virginia Davis Alice Garvin James Hammill Toku Kamel Marlene Kerr

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The City will match your donation. Your \$50 will become \$100, \$250 becomes \$500.

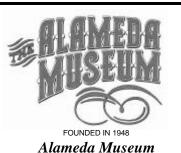
We thank you for your generous support!

City Matching Grant Coupon

The City will match donations that *exceed* our 2006 amount. Please use the coupon below to "*Double the Bang for Your Bucks!*" \$50 becomes \$100. \$500 becomes \$1000. Help "*preserve the past for the future*" by keeping Alameda Museum functioning as a valuable resource - every dollar is critical.

Mail to: Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501

Yes, I want to double my donation for the Alameda Museum.		
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The 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. To help, fill in the coupon below. Make check payable to Meyers House Guild. <i>Thank you for your support!</i>		
Name:		
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<i>I would like to</i> Be a docent Garden Clean & maintain artifacts Help with special events Other		
Annual Guild Membership \$25		
Additional donation: \$ Total enclosed \$		
Information: Call Jane @ 865-3402		
Mail to: Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501		
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Alameda Museum 2324 Alameda Avenue Alameda, CA 94501

Telephone: 510.521.1233

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

Meyers House - 4th Saturdays, 1-4 pm, Fee

Website: www.alamedamuseum.org

Alameda Sun





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