

The Alameda Museum

Quarterly Newsletter

Fall Issue, 2009

Volume XLXI

Number 3



Docent Joanne McKay organized a tour of Museum for the Montclair Women's Club October 14th with luncheon afterwards. They visited the Meyers House & Garden last spring.

Museum closed for holidays, December 14th – January 5th

Meyers House closed December 26th

Visit soon to shop for holiday books, DVDs & gifts.

Cover photo: Robbie Dileo

Featured Articles Inside:

**Closer Look at Sachets, 2010 Lectures,
World's First Aircraft Carrier,
Meyers House Architectural Exhibit Dedication**

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Diane Coler-Dark, President	Chuck Millar, Vice President
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Table of Contents

From the Curator's Desk	3
From the President's Desk	4
From the Secretary's Desk	5
Architectural Exhibit Dedication	6
Closer Look at Sachets	7
2010 Lectures	8
World's First Aircraft Carrier	9
Volunteers	10
How Come? The Posey Tube	11
Unmentionables	12
City Matching Grant Donors	13
What's Happening	14
Matching Grant & Meyers House Guild Membership	15

The Alameda Museum Quarterly Newsletter

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Museum Hours

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

Communications Staff

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From the Curator's Desk

by George Gunn

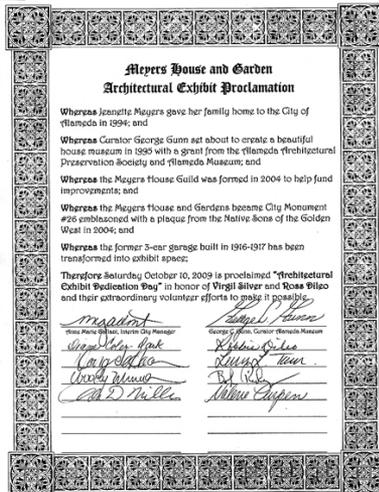
I want to personally thank those who participated in our annual house tour. As always, it was an artistic and financial success. Our own Dennis Reno, Museum Board member, graciously offered his beautiful home for this year's tour. All I heard from the public was complimentary comments on the houses selected and the knowledge of the docents who represented them. This year's tour gave the museum the rare opportunity to display part of our Edwin Siegfried pastel collection, which honored this artist from a pioneer Alameda family.



Left to right: Anne Marie Gallant, Stephanie Paula, Virgil Silver, and John Thomson. Way in background is Chuck Miller

An additional thank you goes to the efforts of Jane Burgelin and her committee for providing the elaborate tea and refreshments that accompanied the opening of the new architectural display at the Meyers House. The new venue will be opened to the public as part of the monthly showing of the house and grounds.

The display was well received by the assembly gathered for the opening. Ms. Anne Marie Gallant, Interim City Manager, read a proclamation that officially dedicated the exhibit to Ross Dileo and Virgil Silver who made it possible. The framed original is now inside the exhibit.



From The President's Desk

by *Diane Coler-Dark*



Always say, “Support Alameda businesses that support the Museum”!

◆ **Books Inc.**, on Park Street, has made accommodations and is now selling Woody Minor’s book, “*A Home in Alameda*”, for the Museum. Last month they had a large showcase display on Alameda books. I told Josette, their manager, that I don’t shop at the big-box stores in the malls. I only shop from our hometown, local, Main-Street merchants. I hope you feel the same, and when you shop at Books Inc., tell them to convey to Josette that you appreciate their continued support.

◆ **Alameda Magazine**, one of our corporate sponsors, had a short article and picture about our new **Phyllis Diller Exhibit** in their November issue on page 26, and also featured “*A Home in Alameda*” by Woody as being available for sale at Museum and Books Inc. If you haven’t subscribed to them yet, it’s only \$20 per year. A digital copy is available on their site, (www.alamedamagazine.com).

Attendance at this year’s Legacy Home Tour exceeded last year’s. I was disappointed with the pre-sales, but the event-day ticket sales at Franklin Park had lines running into the street. In our current economic climate, it fortified my belief that our museum has good *karma*. Chuck Millar stepped up to the plate and was chairperson for the event. Other contributing board members were Robbie Dileo, Adam Koltun, Judith Lynch, Bob Risley, Sharron Tymn, and yours truly. The featured house on the Home Tour poster was board member Dennis Reno’s with gorgeous gardens on High Street. Event-day ticket sales were boosted by pictures of Dennis’ beautiful home in Bay Area newspapers.

◆
There was a classy, well-attended opening of the Meyers House’s new architectural exhibit in the carriage house. Jane Burgelin and her crew of workers did an outstanding job of organizing the event. Viewing this new exhibit, I realized that George had a clear vision of how to exhibit the artifacts catalogued in the archives, and Ross Dileo and Virgil Silver had the talent to put it together. Thanks for all your hard work.

◆
There is no doubt in my mind that if the City ever finds a way for the Museum to occupy the Carnegie Building, George already has a vision of what it should look like. I also know that he could convert that beautiful building into a museum that will knock everyone’s socks off! I don’t need to tell you how much massive fundraising, pledges, *pro bono* and volunteer work will be needed. But, think BIG ... an exhibit with YOURS or YOUR FAMILY’S name!

◆
The Museum gratefully wishes to acknowledge the donation received from Irene Maslonkowski in memory of our longtime docent and friend, Dottie Fehn.

From the Secretary's Desk by *Robbie Dileo*

Thank you **Joanne McKay** for bringing the **Montclair Women's Club** to the Museum in October. She prepared a lovely invitation and made arrangements for lunch afterwards at C'era Una Volta. **Marilyn Dodge** and **Dorothy Coats**, both regular museum docents, belong to this ladies group and enjoyed learning many new things. As always, it was a wonderful opportunity for me to give a history lesson and answer questions about the Museum's exhibits. They left a nice donation for "Bang for the Buck" that was very much appreciated. This past spring they attended the Meyers House & Garden Museum. Now that the Architectural Exhibit is open, they can plan on something new for a future tour.

What a party! On the October 10th sun-filled grounds, Meyers House Guild Members and invited guests celebrated the opening of the **Architectural Exhibit** in



Seriously, it was a great party! George, Doug deHaan, & Diane looking glum as the celebration ends October 10th.

the former 3-car garage at 2021 Alameda Avenue. Bravo to **Jane Burgelin** and her dedicated helpers. Delectable dessert edibles, tea & wine were served in the garden with guests seated at small tables dressed with unique embroidered & lace table-



cloths and floral arrangements from **Eugenie Thomson** (center, foreground above). Interim City Manager **Anne Marie Gallant** read a proclamation that included the surprise dedication of the exhibit to neighbors Virgil Silver and Ross Dileo. Both



worked many months preparing the building (roof leaks, carpet, lighting) and the displays under George's keen designing eye and were visibly shaken by the proclamation - a secret until it was read.

Besides several Museum Directors, **Virginia Rivera** and **Joe Young** (pictured above), other dignitaries in attendance were **Vice Mayor Doug deHaan**, **Council member Lena Tam**, **ARPD Director Dale Lillard**, **historian Woody Minor**, and **VP of AAPS Valerie Turpen**.



Don congratulates Ross on dedication.

Architectural Exhibit - Message from the Curator

Over the past several months the 3-car garage has been transformed into an exhibit area featuring architectural artifacts from the Museum's collection. Some of these objects, never before exhibited, include doors, hardware, light fixtures, stained glass windows, etc., removed from Alameda buildings, some now demolished. The exhibit illustrates the decorative details that were utilized on such mundane items as door hinges and gas jets. They represent the period of their use and the evolution of taste and design.

The garage, designed by Henry H. Meyers, was constructed between 1916 - 1917, with walls and ceilings completely covered in tongue and groove redwood which was stained and varnished. One notable object on display is a pseudo-Tiffany style hanging lamp created by the late Albert Stagnaro, a stained-glass artist, credited with creating many of the art glass windows in Alameda bungalows. His studio was located on Webster Street.

This exhibit was made possible due to the efforts of a few dedicated volunteers and many hours, over several months. I thank the Meyers House Guild Membership and the Alameda Museum and Board for their donations and funding of the expenses. Several thousand dollars were used to make significant repairs in the last couple years. The roofs were fixed along with interior windows, walls, and woodwork due to rain damage. It also takes special dedicated volunteers to keep the place clean and staffed. Jane Burgelin, the Meyers House Docent Chair, sees to the staffing of the house during regular and special event tours. It is her team of helpers, notably, Stephanie Paula, Livonne Stittle, and Eugenie Thompson, that brought about this wonderful reception, but also saw to the organization and cleaning that allowed us to recently open the Studio, the main house basement Gift Shop with Laundry Tableau, last year's Wedding Gown display and now, today, open the Architectural Exhibit.

Special recognition and the respectful dedication of this newest exhibit goes to *Ross Dileo* and *Virgil Silver* whose expertise and interest made this display possible. The repairs to studio and garage roofing, new lighting, electrical, plumbing, carpet and painting, were directly through their efforts or supervision of hired contractors. Virgil and Ross hung fixtures, created display boards, and put up with my ever-changing vision of an interesting exhibit. These two men, with support from their wives Margy and Robbie, never fail to bring their talents to make my dream a reality. Thank you also to Ken Mathias for help with replacement window glass, Ruiz Lighting for lamp repairs, now part of the exhibit, and Mulija Ejubovic from ARPD for maintaining the grounds so beautifully.

On behalf of the Museum, I am especially grateful to these volunteers, artisans, and the City of Alameda for allowing us to help preserve City Monument #26 and make it an asset and learning tool for the community.

Signed, **George C. Gunn, Curator**

A CLOSER LOOK AT SACHETS

by Ron Ucovich

A *sachet* is a small bag made of cheesecloth, containing various herbs and spices, such as bay leaf, thyme, parsley, and peppercorns. It is used to add flavor to soups, stews, and gravies. Mulling sachets, used for flavoring ciders and wines, might contain cinnamon, cloves, allspice and orange peel. Today, sachets are often used in cooking, but before the 19th Century, people used to wear them around their necks.



Before the last century, little was known about microbiology. The bubonic plague, for example was thought to be caused by owls. The name comes from *bubo*, the Latin word for owl. People believed in spontaneous generation, for example, they thought maggots bred spontaneously from dead meat. Fleas, they thought, were generated from dust. Malaria, they believed, came from breathing foul air. The word *malaria* comes from Latin meaning *bad air*.

It is only logical, then, that if you wanted to prevent a disease caused by fetid air, all you would have to do is perfume the air to prevent the disease. Thus, little bags of herbs and aromatic flowers were worn around the neck as a prophylaxis.



In our museum's Victorian parlor, you will find a potpourri bowl. These bowls were a creation of the English to ward off the Great Plague of London during the 17th Century. They were thereafter used to perfume the air and prevent disease in addition to the sachet, or asafetida bags, worn around the neck.

The children of England invented a rhyme which they used to recite while skipping rope. It was called *Ring of Roses*. The roses and a "pocket full of posies" referred to the asafetida bag they were wearing, but fighting the disease was futile. The rhyme had nothing to do with *ashes*. The original verse was "ahchoo, ahchoo, we all fall down." This described the fatal sneeze which preceded their physical collapse. The children would all drop to the ground simulating their death from the plague.



Alameda Museum Lectures 2010

- ◆ Thursday March 25, 2010: Paul Duchsherer: "Beyond the Bungalow." Underwritten by Michael Studebaker and Cynthia Audet, owners, Gallagher & Lindsey, Inc., Realtors.
- ◆ Thursday April 29, 2010: Architect and preservationist Richard Rutter "History of the Alameda Naval Air Station." Underwritten by Judith Lynch, member, Historical Advisory Board.
- ◆ Thursday May 27, 2010: Glass master Ken Matthias: "Glorious Panes of Alameda." Underwritten by Ginger Schuler, member, Alameda Museum Board; Realtor, Harbor Bay.
- ◆ Thursday June 24, 2010: Dennis Evanosky and Eric Kos, topic TBA. Underwritten by: Dennis Reno, Vice-President, Oracle, member, Alameda Museum Board.
- ◆ Thursday July 29, 2010 Art historian Colette Collester "Van Gogh and his Encounter with France," just in time for the big show opening at the DeYoung featuring French Impressionist paintings on the loose from the d'Orsay Museum in Paris. Underwritten by Peter Fletcher, Real Estate Broker, Windermere Real Estate.
- ◆ Thursday August 26, 2010: Author-historian Gray Brechin "A New Deal for the East Bay: Excavating the Buried Civilization of the Great Depression." Underwritten by: _____
- ◆ Thursday September 29, 2010: Author and historian Richard Schwartz with a new edition of *Berkeley 1900* complete with many new images. Underwritten by: _____

NOTE: All lectures start at 7:00 p.m. at the Alameda Museum.

**FREE for members and \$5 for others. Join now to save on the series.
Memberships: \$20 Senior, \$30 Adult, & \$20 for each extra partner.**

No reserved seats; come early to save a place and enjoy the exhibits in the History Hall and the Art Gallery. Doors open at 6:30 and close at 7:10. Ample parking is available in the Parking Garage on Oak St. at Central Ave.

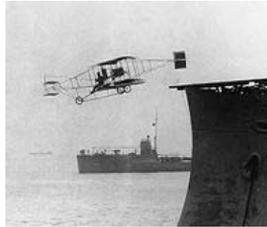
Topics may change without notice. For lecture information or to underwrite and sponsor a lecture, please leave a message for Judith Lynch at 748.0796 or judithal@comcast.net

The World's First Aircraft Carrier

by Ron Ucovich

Following the Great Earthquake of 1906, there was a car salesman in San Francisco who was fascinated by pushing these early cars to their limit. His name was Eugene Ely, and he performed street races and stunts to amaze the audience. After the Wright Brothers achieved their successful flight in 1903, Mr. Ely thought that performing stunts in an airplane would be far more spectacular than racing cars.

In 1910, Mr. Ely took a job in Minnesota working for the Curtis Aircraft Manufacturing Company. He performed flying exhibitions and did sensational stunts to amaze the crowd. The U.S. Navy took a serious interest in these maneuvers, realizing that aviation would be a tremendous asset in time of war, so they asked Mr. Ely if a plane could be equipped to take off and land on a ship. In November of 1910 Mr. Ely managed to take off from a ship especially equipped with a 57-foot wooden runway. The plane was damaged on take off, but Mr. Ely managed to fly for five minutes before landing safely on a beach.



Landing on a ship would be a much greater challenge than taking off. Mr. Ely calculated that he would need a 120-foot runway. The navy chose an armored cruiser, the USS Pennsylvania, and at the Mare Island Shipyard, they constructed a wooden platform over the afterdeck. A series of ropes stretched across the deck to stop the plane. Sandbags were tied to the ends of the ropes. Hooks were attached to the plane's landing gear to catch the ropes, and this would bring the plane to a stop quickly and smoothly without damaging the airplane. Canvas awnings were rigged to the sides of the runway in case of an unexpected swerve.



On January 18, 1911 Ely took off from Tanforan Racetrack. The ship was anchored between San Francisco and Alameda. Spectators crowded the ferry piers of both cities. Ely approached the ship from the south, circled the ship one time, and brought the plane down smoothly and safely, thereby becoming the navy's first aviator. The crowd cheered. His wife shouted, "I knew you could do it!" Photographers snapped pictures and reporters wrote glowing stories.

Tragically, on October 19 of that same year, Mr. Ely was performing stunts at an air show in Macon, Georgia. His plane failed as he was pulling out of a dive, and he crashed to the ground and was killed. He was 24 years old.



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	Gail Howell

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, 865-1204
 Docent coordinator for Meyers House – Jane Burgelin, 865-3402

HOW COME THE WEBSTER STREET TUBE HAS NO NAME?

by Ron Ucovich

Until 50 years ago, bridges, freeways, tubes, and tunnels were not named. They were simply referred to by where they were going or what they were crossing. Their engineer was only recognized after he passed away. The Park Street Bridge and the High Street Bridge still have no legal name. At about the time the old Fruitvale Bridge was demolished, they began to name new structures after important people, so they named the new bridge after Miller and Sweeney, the legislators who promoted its funding.

In the 1920s, George Posey, an Oakland surveyor and engineer, was contracted by the Leimert Land Development Company to build a bridge. The Leimert Company specialized in artful development of environmentally sensitive areas. So, Mr. Posey was commissioned to design a bridge that would span a beautiful canyon that separated Piedmont and Oakmore Heights in Oakland. The bridge would be 357 feet long and 117 feet high. It would be the largest and most beautiful single-span bridge on the West Coast.



The project was completed in 1926, and named the Sausal Creek Bridge. When Mr. Leimert II died in the 1930s, they renamed the bridge in his honor, and has been since called the Leimert Bridge.

George Posey had another structure to his credit. After the Estuary was opened in the early 1900s, four drawbridges linked Alameda with Oakland. There was so much water traffic that the bridges were continually open, and this obstructed the flow of vehicular traffic, so a tunnel was proposed to pass under the Estuary. This idea was thought to be impossible, because to dig a tunnel, you have to bore through rock. There was no rock under the Estuary, and you can't bore a hole through mud.

Mr. Posey had a unique idea. He would build a tube above ground, then sink it onto a dredged channel. After more than a year of planning, construction began in 1925. The tube was made in pre-cast segments of reinforced concrete at Hunters Point dry dock in San Francisco. They were sealed at both ends, then floated across the bay, then sunk into the trench, and covered with soil to weight them down. The seams were sealed with concrete collars, then the water was pumped out.



The tube was completed in 1928. It was called the Webster Street Tube until Mr. Posey's death in 1932. At that time, to honor its engineer, the tube was dedicated to Mr. Posey. Similarly, the tunnel between Oakland and Orinda was called the Broadway Tunnel until Thomas Caldecott died in 1951. Lake Chabot was called San Leandro Reservoir until Anthony Chabot died in 1888. So, why wasn't the Webster Street Tube named after its engineer? The City asked Mr. Greene if he wanted the tube named in his honor, and he answered, "No, everyone would think *The Greene Tube* just referred to its color.

MENTIONING UNMENTIONABLES

by Ron Ucovich



In 1844 Charles Goodyear invented a technique for vulcanizing rubber. The first rubber condom was produced in 1855. These were an improvement over the pig-intestine type that had been used previously, but they had certain limitations, for example their shelf life was only three months. Consumers, in those days, could not be made aware of product defects because Victorian protocol prohibited behind-the-counter items from displaying product identification, photographs, warning labels, or writing of any kind. The old intestine types were called *cumdums*, (Latin for *sword scabbard*). The newer vulcanized types were called *rubbers*, but the word was never written nor spoken in mixed company. During the 20th Century, the Greek word *prophylactic* was used (meaning *to guard against*), and advertisers were then able to sell their product, as long as the words *condom* or *rubber* were not mentioned.

Until the 20th Century, women wore corsets to support their breasts. In 1889 a French woman designed a health aid which she called a *bien-être*, (meaning *well-being*). It was more comfortable because the weight was supported by the shoulders, rather than being squeezed up from below. It was not popular because its health and comfort benefits could not be advertised. The street name for the product was a *soutien-gorge*, (breast support). In 1907 the word *brassière* (upper arm) was coined. This device was an improvement over the others because it fastened with a hook rather than laces, which made it easier to put on. These were used only by upper class women who had their clothing custom-made. The common women wore camisoles with steel ribs. They were designed to flatten the breasts, rather than to lift them. Fabric bras were not popularized until World War I, when the government restricted the production of camisoles to conserve steel for the war effort.

Victorian etiquette required many products to be sold with similar hushed confidentiality: feminine hygiene products, deodorants, laxatives, depilatories, hair dye, and toilette paper. They would be referred to by some pretentious euphemism, and they would be purchased in an unmarked paper bag.



It would be hard to count all the euphemisms created to avoid the word *toilet*. In fact, the word *toilet* itself is a euphemism. The French expression *faire la toilette* refers to personal grooming, and has nothing to do with bathroom fixtures. In the 1800s Thomas Crapper was the owner of a plumbing company, and his name appeared on many plumbing-related products. *Crapper* became the common name for the flush toilet. It is mere coincidence that his name looked like a verb, and as such has been used abusively in our language, thereby requiring other euphemisms for the word *toilet*.

City Matching Grant Donors “Bang for the Buck” in 2009

Elmer Anderson	Chuck Kahler
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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!

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Checked out the Oral History Project at the Alameda Free Library yet?

Jeannette Copperwaite, (jcopperwaite@comcast.net) is ready to film your story. You, the speaker, come up with a 3-5 minute story illustrating Alameda history from your own experience. Not a whole life story, but an aspect or specific time or event related to local history. Once you know what you would want to say and have gathered accompanying images or letters, make an appointment to go to the Alameda Free Library at Oak & Santa Clara to be taped using the "Digital Story Station", which is actually a webcam attached to a computer. Images are scanned and returned that same day. Jeannette edits the story and eventually creates a DVD and cover for the storyteller. Then it is added onto the website (www.alamedastories.org) and a DVD hardcopy becomes part of the Library's permanent collection.

Subjects that she and David Hall (510) 747-7730 would like to cover soon are: *Alameda aviation history, Italians in Alameda, the old Navy Base, founding of the Alameda pools, and Alamedans who were instrumental in developing sports programs and/or went on to become stars in their sport.*

Sounds like she needs to talk with Lil Arnrich and some of the Ratto family members. This is a wonderful opportunity to highlight something unique in your family history and it'd make an outstanding gift that will
"help preserve history for the future".

IN THE ART GALLERY

- ◆ November through December 6th will showcase Alameda Women Artists with a mixed media exhibit. The ending celebration will be Saturday the 5th - public welcome and items for sale.
- ◆ There may be an estate sale in the gallery mid-December or in January. Check local newspapers for ad and details.

OTHER YEAR END ITEMS

- **Meyers House and new Architectural Exhibit** plan to be open on the 4th Saturday of November, the 28th, during the Thanksgiving weekend but will be CLOSED in December due to it being the day after Christmas.
- **Board Election time.** Ballots should arrive mid to late November with various nominees. Please help provide leadership for the Museum and exercise your right to vote. Must be a paid-up member to receive a ballot. If you didn't receive one, call Diane Coler-Dark, 523-5907.
- **Holiday Gift Ideas.** The Museum has Woody Minor's new book, "*A Home in Alameda*", for sale in our gift store. About Leonardville and Bay Station, it highlights the architecture of Joseph Leonard and Marcuse & Rimmel. We also have wonderful books on Alameda history, great DVDs and VHSs, such as *Neptune Beach* and Andy Pagano's *A Look Back*.
- George and Joe will bring out the holiday decorations for sale at bargain basement prices. But hurry! **Museum closes December 14th - January 5th.**

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.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

**Yes, _____ it is okay to list my name in the next Quarterly as a
Friend of the Museum Rent Donor. Tax ID# 942464751**

Meyers House Guild

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.**

Thank you for your support!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

I would like to **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



FOUNDED IN 1948

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

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