

Alameda Museum

Quarterly



ACTIVITY APLENTY BELOW A CALM SURFACE

by Judith Lynch

Victoria and Wayne Cain of Alameda Printing Services enjoy the festivities at the membership luncheon.

THE ANNUAL MARCH MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON is not only great fun and a time to catch up with each other, it is one of our most important fund raisers! During a presentation to the Alameda City Council in May, we startled the entire gathering by revealing that we need to raise several thousand dollars each month to keep the museum operating. The membership shindig is one important way, and behind the scenes are activities reminiscent of the joke about the duck. She is swimming serenely on the pond oblivious to all, whilst underneath she is paddling frantically.

We were not frantic, but we sure did paddle hard. Many people do many tasks quietly, calmly and generally without renown. They make certain we get a good meal, swear in the board of directors, bid on superlative (and just OK) silent auction items, and cross our fingers during the raffle for the pricey stuff. Longtime president Diane Coler-Dark is instrumental; she secures the Masonic Hall and makes certain caterer Dennis Wallace is on board to

provide his suave salmon and other treats and for quite a good price! Next job was designing the invitation. Up stepped former board member Freesia Blizzard, who tamed Microsoft Word with her foot on its neck to produce the invitation, then printed by Wayne and Victoria Cain at Alameda Printing Services. Lincoln School students Max Bell and Winnie and Dahlia Wong earned community service credits by getting out the mailing to our extensive list of docents, friends, and local luminaries.

Museum board members always contribute something, as well as take on extra tasks such as pleading with merchants for gift cards and swag.

Continued on page 2...





Jim Smallman, board member, provided prints of the Meyers House to grace each table.



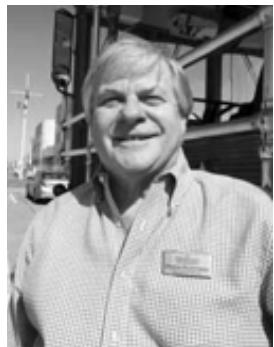
Joanne McKay marshaled her crew to make floral decorations from teapots lent by docents.



Former board member Freesia Blizzard rescued the invitation from the grip of the computer.



Computer whiz and board member Adam Gillitt designed bid sheets that were much easier to use.



Peter Fletcher, our Master of Ceremonies, is also the originator and sponsor of the Museum benefit trolley tours.



When Diane prepares baskets of treats for the silent auction she manages to convince restaurants and stores to give the Museum discounts, so our donations go farther.

Activity...Continued from page 1

Some of us fork over cash to Diane who then creates theme baskets of goodies: champagne and chocolate, a night in Italy, and tea for three were stellar examples this year.

Always our tables are festooned with flowers and other decorations. For our delectation last March, Jim Smallman provided some thirty color images of docents, volunteers and visitors at the Meyers House. Joanne McKay, who has created something special for the tables for the past twelve years, had our docents lend her teapots for the occasion. They provided a delightful variety of size, shape, and color. Then Joanne assembled her teapot flower girls in her parlor, and they made eclectic floral arrangements to enhance each vessel: Thanks to Lois J. Hoffman, Jane Burgelin, and Marilyn Dodge! Joanne and her crew also prepared vaguely vintage labels with the name of the docents, who took home both teapots and flowers after the luncheon.

Adam Gillitt played a significant role: "I worked with Diane Coler-Dark to redesign the bid sheets we use for the silent auction items," he said, referring to well over a hundred forms he completed. "I created a template with the Museum's branding and the spaces to fill in information about each auction item. The new bid sheets were designed so Museum volunteers could prepare them

with ease, and reading and filling them out would be equally simple for potential bidders." He must have succeeded, because the Museum took in more money than ever from the auction.

During the actual event, Johanna Hall sold raffle tickets, Diane and Amanda Shepard staffed the registration table, Ross Dileo and Charlie Howell tended bar, and other board members circulated and chatted. Peter Fletcher presided over the event. He began with the overarching purpose for the get together: "A major reason for the success of the museum and the Meyers House are you faithful docents and other volunteers who perform all manner of tasks from hauling trash to archiving fragile ephemera. Let's also pay tribute to the stamina of forty-three years with the Museum by acknowledging George Gunn our Curator. Our theme this year is the Meyers House and Garden for two reasons," Peter went on. "Because we assumed ownership from the city, and because thanks to you, we are now open for tours twice each month."

Peter also read an excerpt from Mayor Marie Gilmore's proclamation opening Historic Preservation Season:



Meyers Committee Chair Charlie Howell acted as barkeep with Ross Dileo, a longtime museum supporter and docent.

Activity...Continued from page 2

"Whereas, most municipalities dedicate only the month of May to historic preservation, here in Alameda we celebrate an entire Historic Preservation Season; and our heritage will be properly celebrated with ceremonies, walks, art exhibits, slide shows, and a trolley tour." Notice how most of these activities originate with the Museum?

The gala ended with a spirited speech by Docent Coordinator Ellen Chesnut who praised Museum docents and invited them to consider the fate of our history were they not here to keep Alameda lore alive. You can read her speech in full on our website, and please do. You will be inspired!

ALAMEDA LEGACY HOME TOUR

**September 28
11:00 am – 5:00 pm
alameda-home-tour.org**



Our friendly, efficient, and dedicated estate sales crew, wearing cheerful red aprons. Photo: Dave Nelson, Kane & Associates Realtors.



From the Curator's Desk

by George C. Gunn

M

ay 31st we had one of our most profitable and successful estate sales in several years. Thanks to Johanna Hall, agent for Kane Real Estate, we obtained permission to conduct an estate sale for the owners, clients of hers. Our volunteer personnel, always efficient and agreeable, consisted of Steve Aced (new to the Museum), Jane Burgelin, Diane Coler-Dark, Ross Dileo, Johanna Hall, Gail and Charlie Howell, Chuck Millar (former board member) and Margy and Virgil Silver. They were on duty all day, occupied with selling estate contents.

The pricing and preparation crew consisted of Jane Burgelin, Gene Calhoun, Ross Dileo, Margy Silver, and myself. Joe Young was also on the crew specializing in pricing books. Enough cannot be said about the Silvers, who provided the signs, designed and painted by Margy. They also placed the signs at vital areas leading to the sale. Virgil, with his consummate salesmanship ability, was responsible for the selling of many high ticket items. In ending, most of all, I want to thank Ross Dileo, for his years of dedication and expertise. His vast knowledge of tools and related items had added so much to the financial success of this sale and many in the past. It is my sad duty to announce the withdrawal of his services for estate sales due to outside duties and responsibilities. He will surely be missed our members and the public.

George C. Gunn

Curator, Alameda Museum

George Gunn Accepts Heritage Award for Meyers House and Garden

by Jim Smallman

THE ELEGANT SAINT FRANCIS YACHT CLUB

welcomed California Heritage Council (CHC) members Thursday evening June 12 for their Annual Awards Dinner. Alameda's Meyers House and Garden received one of the six prestigious awards, presented by John J. Hodges, Honorary CHC Board Chair. Museum Curator George Gunn, who accepted the award in front of an audience of several hundred CHC members, including a contingent of Alameda Museum people. The Alameda group included Jeannie Graham, whose 1897 Colonial Revival home received an award from the CHC last year. Steve Aced and Jim Smallman, both Meyers House Committee members, also attended.

CHC President Christopher Layton narrated a presentation with images by professional photographer Manning Magic: "The Meyers House, erected in 1897, is an example of the Colonial Revival style, popular around the turn of the century. Designed by Henry Haight Meyers, a prominent East Bay architect, the residence served as the home of the Meyers family until 1993, and is furnished with many objects that originally belonged to them" . . . He went on to explain that the house is open to the public for a \$5 donation for tours on the second and fourth Saturday each month, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, with the last tour beginning at 3:00 pm.

There was considerable interest in Alameda, unfamiliar to many, as a city and historic destination. Those of us who live here don't think of Alameda as a secret, but



Curator George Gunn (second from right) receives the award for the Meyers House and Garden from CHC Honorary Board Chair John J. Hodges (left) and President Christopher Layton. Jeannie Graham, who instigated this honor for the Meyers House, smiles in the middle. Image: Timothy/Manning Magic.com

it seems to be one for many CHC members. A mother-daughter conversation was overheard at dinner: The mother, looking at the program, exclaimed that Alameda is one of her favorite communities. The daughter responded that she'd never been "there", and the mother responded, "Oh, it's now *the* in place". They made plans to visit the Meyers House.

Our group gave away several copies of *Alameda's Victorians*, a walking tour brochure available at the Museum. A member of the Packard Club took one, a lady who is organizing a tour for her membership. She now plans to have the tour in Alameda, with antique Packard automobiles driving the walking tour route. Perhaps a Meyers House tour can be included?

Upcoming Museum Events

SATURDAY, JULY 19

Noon – 3:30 pm
Phyllis Diller Day

By the Dames aux Gateaux
Facebook: bit.ly/DillerDay

Crafts • Giveaways • Memorabilia
Huge vintage clothing sale.

SATURDAY, JULY 26

Noon – 3:00 pm

Reception

Oakland Art Alliance

Monday, July 2
Juried show goes up.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 17

2:00 – 3:30 pm

Meyers House Flag Raising

Celebrate the restoration of the family flagpole at the Meyers House with Jim Smallman and Scout Troop 78. Flag raising ceremony at 2:30, light refreshments. If it pleases you, wear vintage clothing. Information, judithal@comcast.net 510-521-1247.



**BE A
MUSEUM DOCENT**
MAKE SOME NEW FRIENDS
Please contact Adam Gillitt
volunteer@alamedamuseum.org
510-764-1325

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

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Alameda
MAGAZINE

Saving the Carriage House

by Dennis Evanovsky

AT 115 YEARS OLD, THE CARRIAGE HOUSE at the Meyers House on Alameda Avenue is showing its age. The fresh paint on the outside of the structure and its new roof hide the fact that the frail building is falling apart at the seams. The Alameda Museum, which took ownership of the Meyers House in 2013, organized a committee with members with construction experience. They are making plans for the preservation of the carriage house and the replacement of dilapidated fencing and repairing other elements important to this official Alameda Monument.

"The carriage house cornice is rotted, allowing plants to intrude into the structure," said Alameda Museum Curator George Gunn. "Daylight shines into the building where it shouldn't, betraying just how flimsy the building is." Gunn fears that the next big earthquake or even a strong wind could bring the building down. "The place needs a completely new foundation, and a new floor, and the mud sill is rotted out."

Architect Henry Meyers planned the building in about 1899. "It was originally a small barn for his carriage. Meyers would have kept his horses at a livery stable nearby," Gunn said. Fifteen years later, Meyers had purchased an automobile, and he had a garage built on the other side of the house. The carriage changed its role in the Meyers' household and housed the enormous pump for the well, and the tank for the fuel that heated the family home. When that tank was dismantled and salvaged recently by Boy Scout Troop 78, the dangerously dilapidated nature of the small structure became quite apparent.

Meyers designed more than 250 buildings; some of them evident today in Alameda. When you hear the noon music at the Twin Towers Methodist Church on Central Avenue at Oak Street, or pass the stately white Presbyterian Church on Santa Clara Avenue at Chestnut Street, or enter the Posey Tube on the way to Oakland, take a moment. Remember Henry Haight Meyers and his legacy and think about donating some money to have his carriage house restored.

To help send a check payable to the Alameda Museum to the Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda CA 94501. Write "Meyers House Carriage House" on the check. Any amount, big or small, will help restore this important element of Alameda's only house museum. Your contribution is tax-deductible as permitted by law. Please attend the Meyers House fund raiser Sunday afternoon August 17, a flag-raising in honor of the Scouts who have helped care for the home and its grounds. See page 14 for more information.
(Note: This story first appeared in the Alameda Sun June 26, 2014.)

Time to Renew?

Museum Members: We so much appreciate your volunteer time, your gift shop donations and purchases, your lecture attendance, and everything else. Please check to see if your membership is current, because our dues are an important part of the budget for both the Mothership Museum and the Meyers House. Look at the top line in the mailing label of your MQ. That date will be the year through which you have paid. If the year is 2012 or 2013, please go to page 15 and send in the renewal form. **Many thanks!**



Gold Coast Glamour

by Woody Minor



Gold Coast mansions in 1908 as viewed from the Encinal Yacht Club, at the foot of Grand Street. Image: Edgar Cohen.

THIS JUST IN FROM WOODY MINOR:

In August I am returning to the Alameda Museum lecture series, to provide an image-packed presentation of the architectural and social history of the Gold Coast—the city's premier neighborhood from the railroad era. Shoreline oak groves that began as picnic grounds became a setting for fine homes and gardens. Bay views and brisk breezes were part of the scene, enlivened by the regattas of the Encinal Yacht Club.

The Gold Coast derives its identity more from the quality of its houses, gardens, and streetscapes than precisely delineated boundaries. The

neighborhood extends some eight blocks west from the vicinity of Grand Street, along Dayton, Clinton, San Jose, and San Antonio Avenues. The principal cross-streets—Paru, Sherman, Bay, St. Charles, Caroline, and Weber—run south from Encinal and Central Avenues, ending at bulkheads and bluffs on the old bay shore. The original shoreline is now bordered by landlocked lagoons, created in the mid-1950s for the South Shore bay-fill development.

The Gold Coast grew from a patchwork of land tracts, notably Oak Park (1876), Teutonia Park (1877), Encinal Park (1879), and Bay Side (1889). The first wave of homebuilding came with the commuter trains that began rumbling down Encinal and Central Avenues in the late 1870s. These early houses included a number of mansions along Grand Street and the shoreline bluffs, setting the tone for the coming decades. The neighborhood remains a showcase for homes in Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman,

and Period Revival styles, not to mention some good examples of mid-century modernism.

Architects who contributed to this ensemble include Alameda residents A.W. Pattiani, Henry H. Meyers, and Andrew T. Hass, along with a cast of noted designers from the Bay Area—Seth Babson, the Newsoms, Willis Polk, Ernest Coxhead, and Julia Morgan among them. A roll-call of residents would include Tilden Park namesake Charles Lee Tilden, artists Margaret, Esther, and Helen Bruton, and environmentalist Lewis Clark. The lecture will feature rarely seen views of long-vanished mansions, of the old southern shore, and of life in the Gold Coast—notable families, memorable events, and lasting legacies.



Members of the Alameda Tennis Club pose in front of the shingled clubhouse on San Antonio Avenue. The club was a favored venue for the Gold Coast smart set at the turn of the century.

Note: Woody's Gold Coast Gala is a triple play: The annual Woody Walk features the Gold Coast, sponsored by the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (alameda-preservation.org) August 24. The boffo combination of the walk and the talk will set you up to really enjoy the Alameda Legacy Home Tour September 28, also featuring homes . . . you know where! (alameda-home-tour.org)

From the President's Podium

by Judith Lynch

Changes are happening, and there are new challenges for the Museum this summer. Many thanks to several key people who are either stepping down or cutting back. Ron Ucovich, who served as our editor for years, can no longer continue for personal reasons. He has also submitted many stories about vintage inventions and other artifacts, articles that are favorites. He is not able to provide as many as he has in the past. Check out his article on laundrettes on page 10, and thanks for brightening our days, Ron. Adam Koltun resigned from the Board of Directors, and Ellen Chestnut stepped aside as Docent Coordinator. We appreciate their years of dedication to the Museum.

Another Adam, Adam Gillitt, has volunteered to be our new Docent Coordinator. He is an excellent choice, as he is both a regular docent and a member of the Museum Board. Adam and others are planning a celebration that will be both informative and fun for current docents at the Mothership and at the Meyers House. It will also be an opportunity for us to recruit new docents from amongst our friends, neighbors, and family. Watch your email, your mail box, and the *Quarterly* for news about this fledgling event.

Here is a happy Meyers House and Garden gathering to put on your calendars, whether electronic or paper. Sunday, July 17 from 2:00 – 3:30 in the afternoon, we will commemorate the restoration of the Meyers family's flagpole by Museum volunteer Carl Ramos.



Safe behind his mask, a member of Boy Scout Troop 78 helps take apart the storage tank in the carriage house.



Preparing concrete at the Meyers House: (from left) Zachary, Ian, and Nathan Ramos with their grandfather Carl Ramos, who took the lead in the flagpole restoration effort. He and the boys are building the base for the flagpole.

The gala is also to thank Boy Scout Troop 78, who will raise the first flag on the newly revived pole. Under the supervision of Assistant Scoutmaster Steve Ramos, the young men took on a daunting job. They used acetylene torches to subdue and then salvage the huge metal storage tank in the carriage house, leaving behind quite a servable space.

The always dapper Jim Smallman will preside at the ceremony, and Reverend Nancy Joy Gordon will give the invocation. City Manager John Russo has been invited, as have City Council members, the Chief of Police Paul Rolleri, and Michael D'Orazi, the Fire Chief. We are consulting Lincoln Middle School band leader Tyra Cable about music, and everyone is invited to wear vintage clothing. Light refreshments in the Victorian manner will be served in keeping with the 1897 vintage of the Meyers House.



Judith Lynch
President, Alameda Museum

Drawing of Judith by Otis School first grader Cassie Garcia.

The Six Museum Alliance of Alameda

by Adam Gillitt

AN EXPECTANT HUSH QUIETED THE AUDIENCE in the City Council Chamber Tuesday, June 3rd. Something new was underway, the public unveiling of the mint new Six Museum Alliance. Listen to the Mayor: "WHEREAS, the City of Alameda has in place or underway six museums devoted to different aspects of history, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Marie Gilmore, Mayor of the City of Alameda, do hereby proclaim June, 2014, as History Museum Month, and call upon the people of Alameda to visit, join, and volunteer at these six museums that help make Alameda 'The City Where History Lives.'"

All the Alliance members brought ephemera, prints and artifacts to the art gallery of the Alameda Museum, to give a glimpse into the enticing contents of each place. They are all devoted to history in ways that are distinctly different, yet complement each other. They also took part in the June 26 lecture, "Preserving Our History."

1 **The Alameda Museum**
alamedamuseum.org
2324 Alameda Avenue
(510) 521-1233, email: info@alamedamuseum.org

Open Wednesday – Sunday: 1:30 pm – 4 pm, Saturday: 11 am – 4 pm. Admission: Free, donations eagerly accepted.

The mission of the Alameda Museum is to catalog, conserve, and display documents, photographs, objects, and artifacts relating to the City of Alameda and its citizens. We foster the preparation and publication of materials relating to the history of the City, while providing educational opportunities and experiences through lectures, art gallery exhibits, and the annual September home tour.



Curator Gorge Gunn being photographed by Lori Eanes for an article in "Berkeley Magazine."

2 **The California Historical Radio Society**
CaliforniaHistoricalRadio.com
2152 Central Avenue (not open yet, see below)

The California Historical Radio Society was incorporated in California in 1974, "to promote the research, restoration and preservation of early radio and radio broadcasting history". The group purchased 2152 Central Avenue, Alameda to create the 'New' CHRS Vintage Radio Museum, the Bay Area Radio Hall Of Fame, the James Maxwell Communication Research Library, the Society Of Wireless Pioneers Archives, the Russ Dillberg Radio Repair Shop and teaching facility, Amateur Station W6CF, the Carter B. Smith radio control room and much more.

We see radio as transformational to 20th century society and culture as the Internet has been to the 21st, and we have a passion to tell its stories. When will we be open? Remember we are volunteer driven and all about radio, so stay tuned to CHRS by checking our web site often or just Google: CHRS.

Steve Kushman, Petria MacDonnell, and Rod Wentlet with their antique radio in our Museum art gallery.



3 **Meyers House & Garden**
alamedamuseum.org
2021 Alameda Ave, (510) 521-1247

Open 2nd and 4th Saturday, January through November, 1 pm – 4 pm. Last tour starts at 3 pm. Admission: \$5.

Designated City of Alameda Monument 26, the 1897 home of renowned architect Henry H. Meyers is filled with antique furniture, decorative arts, and charming family mementoes. The fashion and accessory exhibit in the lower level features clothing, framed art, and a kitchen tableau. The Spanish Revival studio of Henry and architect daughter Mildred and the former garage—now hosting an architectural display—are on the grounds of the home. Trained docents, often in vintage attire, provide guided tours. The garden is available for rent for intimate weddings, small parties, and other gatherings.

Continued on page 9 . . .



Meyers committee Chair Charlie Howell uses museum gel to straighten one of the pictures in the June display.

4 The Pacific Pinball Museum pacificpinball.org 1510 Webster Street, (510) 205-6959

Open Tuesday – Thursday: 2 pm – 9 pm, Friday: 2 pm – midnight, Saturday: 11 am – midnight, Sunday: 11 am – 9 pm. Admission: \$15 adults, \$7.50 kids 16 and under.

The Pacific Pinball Museum is dedicated to the promotion and preservation of one of America's great pastimes. We offer a selection of 100 playable pinball machines representing the evolution of flipper pinball. On display are early machines from the '30s and '40s representing the birth of pinball in America to the end of Williams in 2000. In the front are the latest pinball machines from Stern. Rotating exhibits highlight pinball art and artists, our backglass murals and specially themed shows. We use pinball to get families and friends together in a fun, colorful, educational place.

Michael Schiess wrestles with one of the antique pinball machines that are part of their display in the art gallery.



5 U.S.S. Hornet Museum uss-hornet.org 707 W Hornet Avenue (510) 521.8448

Open Daily 10 am – 5 pm. Admission: \$16 adults, \$13 seniors, military & students, \$7 children 5-17. Members & kids under 4 free.

The Aircraft Carrier USS Hornet participated in two of the greatest events of the 20th century — World War II and the Apollo 11 manned space mission. Moored at

historic Alameda Point, the USS Hornet Museum is a timeless memorial to those who defended American values and pursued technological advancements. The eighth American ship and second aircraft carrier to be named "Hornet," CVS-12, a National Historic Landmark, continues the long time association with Alameda that began with her predecessor, CV-8, the carrier that launched the Doolittle raid and fought at the Battle of Midway in 1942.

The Hornet crew, Holly Gallagher and Elizabeth York, outfitted a mannequin with a sailor's general blue uniform.



6 Alameda Naval Air Museum alamedanavalairmuseum.org 2151 Ferry Point Road, (510) 522-4262

Open Saturdays and Sundays: 10 am – 4 pm. Admission: \$5 adults. Military, youth groups and kids under 12 are free.

The Museum, in former Air Terminal Building 77 at Alameda Point, is dedicated to preserving photographs and stories of war workers. From the build-up and support of the Pacific Fleet in WWII to subsequent decades of service during Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm, the Naval Air Station Alameda forever changed our city, the Bay Area, and the nation. Re-live the past in displays of aircraft models, safety gear, medals, uniforms, badges, awards, and photographs. The Crow's Nest is a great location and can be rented for group meetings, presentations, and parties.



The NAM's Larry Pirack brought historic photographs and artifacts to display in the art gallery.

America's First Laundromat

by Ron Ucovich

IN 1871, THE FIRST COIN-OPERATED VENDING MACHINE

was patented in New York City. For a penny, you could buy a stick of chewing gum at Grand Central Station. For 35 years, gum dispensing machines changed very little until the gumball was invented. The gum was sugar coated in bright children-friendly colors and displayed in an eye-catching glass bubble. You could drop a penny into the slot and rotate the handle until the mechanism magically released your gumball down the chute. These machines became very popular, not so much because people loved gumballs, but rather they were fascinated by the magic vending machine.

The first slot machine was invented in 1895. A nickel could buy you a spin of the wheel on a poker machine. The largest payoff won you 50¢ (10 nickels). This machine can be found today at the Liberty Belle Saloon in Reno, Nevada.

In the early 1900s, the penny arcade became popular across the Nation. For a penny you could play pinballs, tell your fortune, play card games, watch a peep show, play musical instruments, or operate mechanical contraptions.

In 1935, an Oklahoma man designed the first parking meter. You would insert a penny into the slot and turn the crank. A clockwork mechanism would tick off 10 minutes, after which a red flag popped up which read "EXPIRED." Imagine... you could rent a parking space for an hour in downtown Oklahoma City for only 6¢.

Coin-operated machines had been around for many years, but they

were made for only things that cost 1¢, because children quickly learned that a vending machine could not tell the difference between a coin and a slug. In the late 1930s, a machine was invented which could distinguish between a real quarter and a fake one. It was a cigarette dispensing machine which was designed to reject slugs. First, you dropped your quarter into the slot, which then passed through a series of tests to verify its validity. A light was shined onto the quarter to make sure there was no hole in it. The quarter then passed by a magnet to see if it was made out of steel. Its weight was then measured to see if it was made of silver.

The machine checked for reed marks, (those small ridges cut into the edge of coins to prevent shaving the silver). Then, it checked for a rim, (the raised edge which is designed to make coins stack easier). If the coin didn't pass these tests, it was dropped into the rejection chute. If it passed, a light went on which indicated that you could make your selection by pulling a lever.

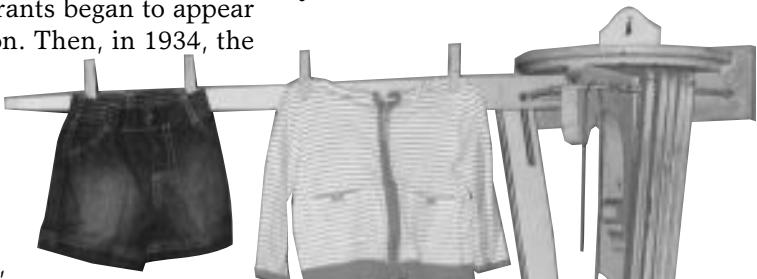
Now that vending machines were able to differentiate between coins and slugs, food vending machines became popular, and soon coin-operated restaurants began to appear across the Nation. Then, in 1934, the first self-service laundromat was opened in Fort Worth, Texas. Washing clothes was not a great problem, because almost everyone had a washing machine at that time, but drying the clothes during winter months was a laborious task. After washing your clothes, you would hang them on a clothesline in your basement where they could air dry for a couple of days. If you didn't have a basement, your only alternative

was to set up a clothes rack over your floor furnace. Your furnace would dry your clothes, heat your house, and fog your windows, all at the same time. Next time you visit the Alameda Museum, check out the Victorian kitchen, and on the wall above the baby's highchair, you will find a drying rack, typical of the ones used 100 years ago.

Summertime was a little easier. You could hang your wet laundry on a clothesline in your backyard, provided that you follow unspoken protocols so as not to provoke gossip among the neighborhood busybodies:

All clothes must be laundered on Monday, never on the weekend. Socks and stockings must be hung by the toes, not the tops. Pants must be hung by the cuffs, not the waistbands. Shirts and blouses must be hung by the tail, never by the shoulders. White clothing must be hung with whites, and colored clothing with colors.

Sheets and towels must be hung on the outside lines and undergarments on the inside lines well out of sight of the neighborhood perverts. Two articles of clothing should share one clothespin to avoid spaces between clothes. Clothing must remain on the line all day, and should be taken in just before dinner time.



*A laundry drying rack on display in the kitchen exhibit at the Alameda Museum.
Image: Ron Ucovich.*

All clothing must be folded neatly and placed into the laundry basket, ready for ironing on Tuesday morning. All clothespins must be removed from the clothesline and stored in a clothespin bag until the next laundry day.

No secrets could be kept from your neighbors when your laundry was hung out for the world to see. You could see how much the children had grown by watching their clothes sizes change. When the clothesline was empty, this meant that your neighbors were on vacation, and a full clothesline showed that they had returned. If towels and swimwear appeared on the line, this meant that they went to the beach. Infant clothes and diapers showed that a baby was born... blue for a boy, and pink for a girl. Extra sheets and bathrobes meant that there was an illness in the house. Dingy or threadbare underwear showed that the family was running low on cash. Fancy tablecloths meant that the Widow Brown had a special guest for dinner, and fancy sheets and towels showed the world that he had spent the night.

Yes, all the neighborhood news could be learned by reading the clotheslines on Monday mornings, but the advent of laundromats did not signify the end to gossip. What did the ladies do while their clothes were being washed at the local coin-op? You're right... they sat around and chatted about the neighborhood gossip.

Triple Play in November

THIS YEAR WE HAVE EXTENDED BOTH THE LECTURE SERIES AND THE ART GALLERY DISPLAYS into the month of November to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Girls Inc., the Alameda affiliate of a nationwide institution encouraging girls to be "strong, smart, and bold!" Two people will share the podium November 13, author and historian Woody Minor and devoted Girls, Inc. volunteer Janet Thoma.

Their building, an official Monument called Greenleaf House after its first owner, appeals greatly to architecture buffs, as it was designed by pedigreed architect Ernest Coxhead.

Woody Minor will present a history of the building and delineate its architectural bones and details. A final sentence in one of Woody's writings: "Greenleaf House is a superb example of the expanded possibilities of a standard style when treated with creative lack of respect by an original and powerful designer."

The building is currently called the Dr. Edith Meyers Center, named after the middle daughter of Henry Haight Meyers, the very family who left us the Meyers House and Garden. According to a story by Robbie Dileo, Dr. Edith M. Meyers was one of the first women in a world dominated by male physicians. She was a graduate of the U.C. Berkeley School of Medicine and had a pediatric practice in Oakland.

In November 1971, the Alameda Girls' Club planned to name its first location, 1419 Union Street, the "Dr. Edith Meyers Center." They wanted to honor her as one of incorporators of the organization and as one of the board members most committed to fund-raising. Sadly, Dr. Meyers died a few days before that dedication. When the highly successful group needed to expand, they bought Greenleaf House in 1983 and also named it in her honor.



Greenleaf House designed by architect Coxhead and built in 1891.



What is That? Where is That?

A new game for readers of the *Alameda Museum Quarterly*: Here is an obscure image from somewhere in Alameda. Clue: Look down! See if you can figure it out and email your answer to us at info@alamedamuseum.org to have your answer featured in the next issue as Super Sleuth. If you have your own secret spot in town, please send it to us along with a clue and the answer to have it published in a future *MQ*.



Docent Dossiers

Who's aboard, what are they doing, and why?

Reid Davis

I first came to Alameda as a guest from Oakland, playing live music with a band in 2003 at John Patrick's on Park Street. I got a job at Alameda Natural Grocery in 2006 and worked at the Alameda Theatre as a projectionist in 2008, shortly after it reopened. As time went on I became the lead technician and a manager, fascinated by its maritime inspired Art Deco architecture and its history.

My wife Alex and I and our daughter Iris moved to Alameda Avenue from the Brooklyn District of Oakland. Our family would walk down our street and always stop at the Meyers House garden, when it was a passive park, and we would enjoy its beauty and peace, and unbelievable flowers.

In 2012 I decided to volunteer for the Meyers House. I went into the Alameda Museum on a Saturday, I met George Gunn and Joe Young.

I went with George to the Meyers House, met the great docents, and loved learning so much about the city's and house's and family's histories!

I've been a docent and helping out there for over two years. I hear the guests that come to the house say they are getting so much more than they expected. Some visit just to see one item of their own family's history that was donated to the museum. I think they might feel a part of the Meyers family history by being in the house. The magic they experience is due in part to the Meyers family, for having the forethought not to sell their house but to give it to the museum, and even larger in part to the care George Gunn has taken in curating the home. Putting myself in history's present, I can share with others the importance of the present and future of the house and garden. It is a truly magical experience!



Reid's friendly smile helps Meyers House visitors feel welcome.

Ron Ucovich



Multi-talented Ron acts as a docent in several places and often contributes stories to the "Alameda Museum Quarterly."

For many years, I have conducted history walks in interesting towns of the Bay Area as a volunteer for the Sierra Club. I came to the Alameda Museum about twenty years ago to research my history tour. Curator George Gunn was very patient with me, answering all my questions and curiosities about the town. I thought that when I retired, this would be a fun place to spend my spare time.

I lived in Alameda when I was a child, and attended Mastick School, and Washington Middle School. My parents also grew up here. They met at Porter School and graduated from Alameda High School and were married in 1942. My father worked on the construction crew for the City of Alameda. He probably helped build the streets, sidewalks, or parks in your neighborhood.

In 1955, my father took a job with Southern Pacific, and we moved to San Leandro. After high school, I attended San Jose State University, then took a teaching position in San Mateo, until I retired in 2006. I finally had the time to come back to the Alameda Museum and sign up as a docent. I'm here every Friday afternoon. If you have a chance, come by and see me. We can have a chat about the history of your neighborhood.

GET COMMITTEED!

Please consider joining one of our committees.

Have fun, learn lots, meet different people, and get the satisfaction of helping out the Museum and the Meyers House! We have listed the chair of each committee, followed by his or her email and phone number.

Please use email if you can, as most of us prefer it.



■ Budget & Fund Raising:

Dennis Evanovsky
evanovsky@gmail.com
510-263-1470

■ Collections, Events & Exhibits:

Adam Gillitt
volunteer@alamedamuseum.org
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■ Membership, Docent & Volunteer Recruitment:

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510-521-1247

■ Publicity & Communications:

Dennis Evanovsky
evanovsky@gmail.com
510-263-1470

Profit From Down-sizing and Culling Your Treasures

by Johanna Hall

IF YOU ARE RECOVERING FROM THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE, moving to smaller quarters, or awash in clutter, the Alameda Museum has an expert estate and consignment sale team that can take care of everything for you. And when you engage us, not only do you keep more of the revenue than by utilizing a for-profit estate sale company; you also may be eligible for a tax deduction (please consult your tax advisor for information about charitable contributions).

Each sale is personally orchestrated by Curator George Gunn and his team of experts in jewelry, books, art, collectibles, and tools. They also research items for up-to-date information about values and prices. Most notably, the team meticulously inventories your belongings to ensure your family treasures are not sold if you overlooked them, establishes prices for seemingly insignificant items to increase your revenues, and goes to great lengths to preserve your privacy. All of your donations are vital to the Museum's educational and historic preservation programs.

For more information, either email us info@alamedamuseum.org, log on to our website (alamedamuseum.org); or call Diane (510-523-5907) or Johanna (510-701-9392).





Meyers House and Garden – A Different Perspective

Words and images by Jim Smallman

Photographs of the Meyers House and Garden almost always emphasize its beauty and charm. The lovely garden, festooned with flowers. The pergola, suggesting lazy Sunday afternoons as the Meyers ladies enjoyed tea. The architectural studio, where one can easily imagine Mildred working away on a design. It is a wonderful image. Unfortunately, there is another side to the picture. The house and garden are well over a century old, and some elements of this idyllic setting are showing their age. Three elements on the property are sufficiently deteriorated that, without action, their existence may be in jeopardy.

The Oak Tree

Between the fence and the Meyer architectural studio, a coast live oak tree has matured over the past few decades. The tree has damaged the fence, and is also threatening the studio's foundation. This is potentially a very costly problem. Beyond cost considerations, the historic fabric of the studio office, where Mildred Meyer worked, could be irreparably damaged. The obvious solution is to remove the tree, but nothing is simple. Coast live oaks are protected in Alameda, so the City must approve its removal. The Museum board is pursuing that approval as the *Quarterly* goes to press. Estimates for the



permit application and the arborist report that must accompany it are \$1,100. Once approved—a matter of 40-50 days according to city staff—the tree must be removed by a licensed, insured, and bonded arborist.

The Fences

The parking area fronting on Central Avenue is flanked by two simple board fences. Built several decades ago, these fences are rotting away. Several boards have fallen, and the holes in the fence could be easily entered by curious children. The fences on both sides need replacement.



The Carriage House

The carriage house has evolved over the years. It was built when the main house was constructed, in 1897. Later it was enlarged to accommodate an automobile. At that time the Meyers House sat on a single lot facing Alameda Avenue, and the driveway ran alongside the main house.



In 1916 the adjacent lot was acquired, a three-car garage was constructed and the formal gardens that now grace the property were developed. The carriage house then was converted to a pump house, to protect the well and water storage tank that irrigated the newly expanded gardens.

Over all the years of evolution, however, the carriage house never received a proper foundation. It was built on a typical "mud sill" foundation. Two by six redwood planks were laid flat on the ground and the structure built above it. Heart redwood resists rotting, but in continuous contact with moist earth even this noble wood succumbs. A few pictures show the precarious nature of this building. It is considered essential that the building be stabilized so it may be used for exhibits. A new foundation, slab, and structural reinforcement are urgently needed.





VOLUNTEERS: ALAMEDA MUSEUM & MEYERS HOUSE & GARDEN

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Julie Kennedy	Joe Young

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 Alameda Museum
Adam Gillitt
volunteer@alamedamuseum.org
510-764-1325

**Docent coordinator for Meyers House
George Gunn, 510-521-1233**

JOIN ALAMEDA MUSEUM

Preserving the Past for the Future
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Join any time. Dues based on calendar year.
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the next year.



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ALAMEDA MUSEUM

2324 Alameda Avenue

HOURS

Wed. – Fri., Sunday
1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Saturday
11:00 am – 4:00 pm

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MEYERS HOUSE & GARDEN

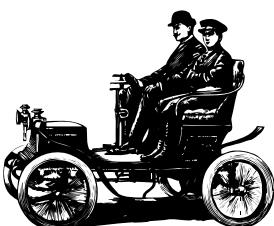
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HOURS

2nd & 4th Saturdays
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
(Last tour at 3:00 pm)

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www.alamedamuseum.org



ALAMEDA MUSEUM LECTURES 2014

❖ THURSDAY, JULY 31

Living in a Brown Shingle Home By Lucia Howard, architect and coauthor of the new book *Shingle Style: Living in a Brown Shingle Home*. Sponsor: Janelle Spatz, Realtor, Bayside Real Estate.

❖ THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

Gold Coast Glamour Local historian and author Woody Minor. Sponsor: Evelyn Kennedy, Realtor, Gallagher & Lindsey, Inc.

❖ THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

1868 Hayward Fault Earthquake Author Richard Schwartz. A mild precursor to what will happen here in the future. Includes accounts of people who lived through the devastating 1868 tremor. Sponsor: Johanna Hall, Alameda Museum Board of Directors.

❖ THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30

**Six Short Blocks That Are Long on History:
A Century on Post Street from the Gold Rush to the 1950s** Robin Seeley talks about the history and architecture of her Alameda neighborhood. Sponsor: Robbie Dileo, former President, Alameda Museum.

❖ THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13

**Greenleaf House, Dr. Edith Meyers,
and 50 years of Girls, Inc.**

Local historian Woody Minor on the history and architecture of Greenleaf House, currently the home of Girls, Inc. and named in honor of Dr. Meyers; Janet Thoma will discuss Edith Meyers' role in organizing and promoting the group and will present a celebration of the first 50 years of helping girls be strong and bold. Girls, Inc. will also have a display in the art gallery through mid-December. Sponsor: still needed, email judithal@comcast.net.

NOTE: Lectures take place at the Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue off Park Street. Admission is free for museum members and \$10 for others. No reserved seats. We open at 6:30 pm on lecture nights. Come early to save a seat and enjoy the displays in the History and Art Galleries. For information leave a message at 510-748-0796 and check alamedamuseum.org.