

Alameda Museum

Quarterly

WATER SO CLEAR

by Myrna van Lunteren



Promoters of Alameda proclaimed the water to be the sweetest in the area. This well-dressed group shows off their irrigation system. The Oakland shoreline can be seen in the distance. Whether they are using their own well or city supplied resources is not known. Image: Alameda Museum.

THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF ALAMEDA, possibly intermingled tribes of semi-nomadic Bay Miwok and Ohlone people, did not live on an island surrounded by salt or brackish water. They lived on a peninsula covered in oak forest, with some sand dunes, surrounded by marsh, with a creek running through it, bringing fresh water down from the hills covered in tall redwood forest. They settled near the San Antonio Creek, thus ensuring abundant fresh drinking water.

During the period of Spanish Mission expansion and Mexican influence there were very few people living on the peninsula. But, with the Gold Rush came enormous numbers of people. In the span of one decade the population of San Francisco had grown by 300%. The development

of Alameda to provide food and charcoal for the masses of miners and those who catered to them, kicked in. The earliest settlers were mostly farmers, and those who somewhat rapaciously cut down the oak forest to provide charcoal for smithies and industries needing fuel. Subsequently more folks found their way to the green rural community where they built homes and spacious, luxurious mansions. As these people each took ownership of a particular piece of land, marked by borderlines, they dug wells on their property to get fresh water, instead of hauling it from the more distant creek.

In contrast to the limited ground water available in arid San Francisco, promoters of Alameda as a superior

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residential area claimed that the water here was the sweetest in the area. The reason for this is in the soil; the aquifer (the body of soil which can contain or transmit groundwater) underlying Alameda is based on fairly coarse, so-called Merritt sands*, about 60 feet deep, which stretches from the side of the Oakland Hills into the Bay. Around Alameda island these sands are covered with a layer of so called bay muds. No major streams feed into this aquifer, the source for the water is direct rainwater. The same is basically true for other nearby cities such as Oakland.

Water in the wells would be artesian, meaning that there was enough fresh water at a higher level somewhere, causing pressure, so that the water would come up into a well without pumping. Artesian water could be found along the southwestern edge of Alameda. It would come up to about two or three feet from the surface. Some wells went only a few feet, others a few hundred feet. By 1877 there were more than 30 artesian wells in Alameda. By 1925 there were 500 producing wells. Most of these were not properly capped and destroyed. In 1953, there were only 135 producing wells reported.

The wells were hand dug by experienced diggers. The water would be stored in water tanks at least a floor up

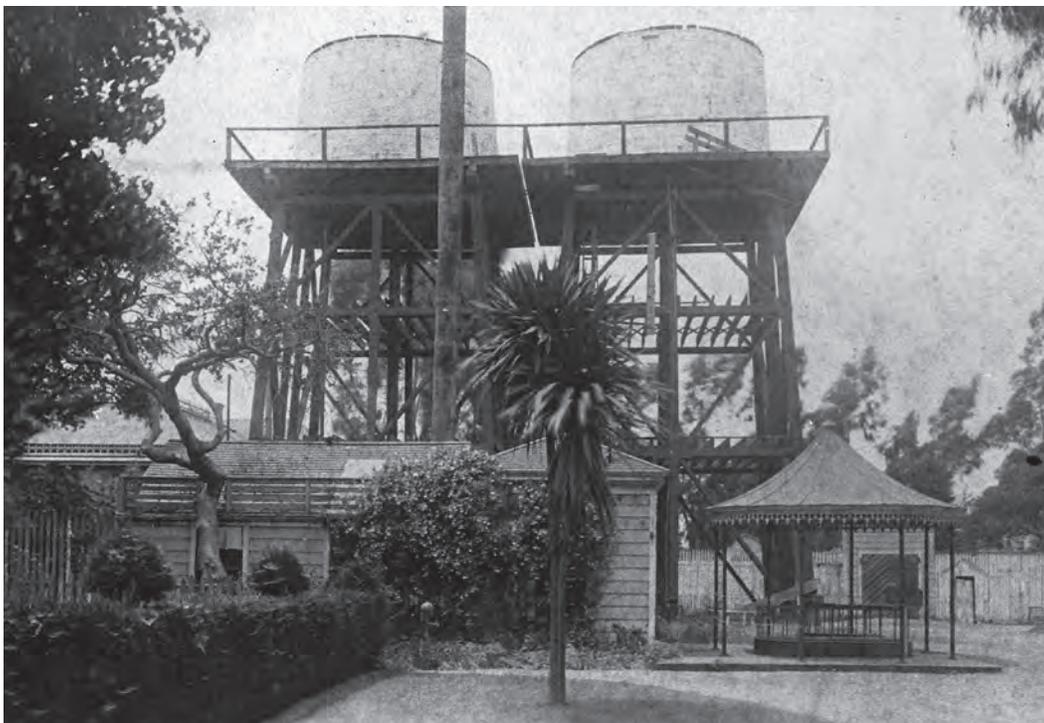
** The Merritt Sands are considered a substratum of the 'Alameda' formation deposited about 1,000,000-200,000 years ago, consisting of interchanging/subsequent layers of alluvial (river) deposits (gravel/course sand) and marine deposits (clay/fine sand).*

from most houses. Often the water tank and the space beneath would be framed in, creating structures called tank-houses, pump-houses, or water-houses. There still is a water tower in the block between Regent, Broadway, Washington, and Calhoun. Most of the water houses have been either torn down, or converted into "in-law" units. If you walk around Alameda and look up from hunting for date stamps in the concrete, or gaping at Victorian splendor, and look just behind the homes, you may spot one.

As the population grew, some enterprising folks started thinking of providing water for others. The first real commercial venture was by Benjamin R. Norton, who had drilled a well on his property on the west side of Grand Street between Santa Clara and Lincoln. He found so much water that his neighbors asked to be hooked up to his well. In 1874 Mr. Norton formalized this and went into the water business as the Alameda Water Company. The well continued to be used into the 1900s, and was by then referred to as "the Old Norton" works. But this well could not supply all Alameda residences.

Around 1878 Alameda town officials considered connecting to the Oakland water system, the Contra Costa Water Company. Anthony Chabot formed the company in 1866 to supply water to the city. By 1868 he had built a dam on Temescal Creek, taking land from Joseph B. Biddleman of the Oakland and Alameda Water Company, thus creating the reservoir that formed Lake Temescal. Realizing the Temescal Creek watershed would be too small, Chabot also bought the Sausal Water Company,

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Benjamin R. Norton started a water service on his property near present-day Seaborn Court. Known as the Alameda Water Company his facility provided nearby Alameda residents with water from his wells and tanks. Norton is listed on the 1880 California census as a Superintendent of water works. Image: Alameda Museum.

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The High Street Well Field provided abundant water that was pumped to a large tank on the top floor of the Artesian Water Works office building on Park Street. Architect William Patton designed the building, as well as the First National Bank shown on the corner of Central and Park Street. Image: Alameda Museum.

building the Sausal Creek Dam in 1870. The Sausal Water Company had been formed in 1869, providing water from Sausal Creek to Brooklyn township (now the Fruitvale area). Finally from 1873–1876 he built a dam on San Leandro Creek, using a dummy company—the California Water Company. He then sold the dam to the Contra Costa Water Company.** Alameda entered into negotiations with Chabot, with the idea of connecting the island to the Oakland water system. They could not agree on terms and the city fathers did not like what they saw when they toured the facilities.

In 1880 Captain Robert R. Thompson founded the Alameda Artesian Water Works, and purchased Norton's Alameda Water Company. Thompson was successful during the California Gold Rush and subsequently moved to Oregon, where he invested in steamboats ferrying passengers across the Columbia River. After selling that business he invested in real estate in San Francisco and had happened upon a nice property in Alameda, building a mansion there. He drilled wells on the east side of High Street, just south of the intersection of High Street and what is now Thompson Avenue. This field was referred to as the High Street Well Field. Initially it provided abundant water that was pumped to a large tank on the top floor of the Artesian

Water Works office building on Park Street. A telephone line formed the communication between the field and the office; the first telephone line in Alameda.

However, in 1892 salt water intrusions started to occur in the High Street field and the field was abandoned. Similarly, salt water intrusions occurred in wells on the east side in the 1890s as a result of excavation of the tidal canal. Thompson started other fields on the Oakland side of San Leandro Bay near the town of Fitchburg in 1887 and 1893. This last site became known as the Fitchburg Well Field, today the Oakland Coliseum complex occupies this site. This last field remained operational until 1930.

In 1899 the Artesian Water Works were sold to the Contra Costa Water Company and Alameda continued to get water from the Fitchburg Well Field. After a period of fierce competition, Chabot's Contra Costa Water Company merged with the Oakland Water Company, which was based on the Piedmont Springs Power and Water Company, started by William Jackson Dingee.

Robert R. Thompson left his mark on Alameda. On Park Street one can still see one wall of the Artesian Water Works office building on the left side of the structure currently housing a toy store. Also, Thompson started the First National Bank and hired architect William Patton to design the bank building on a lot he owned at the

*** The San Leandro Dam was repaired and raised in 1892, and the reservoir was renamed Lake Chabot in 1889 after the death of Anthony Chabot.*

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Water So Clear . . . *Continued from page 3*

corner of Central and Park (currently home to a pizza restaurant), and the building next door used as an income property.

Ironically, for someone who owned a water business, Thompson refused the offer of fire services at his residence. His newly built mansion burned down in 1884. Part of the estate was later bought by the city and turned into a park; present-day Lincoln Park. All that remains is the metal fence with a decorative gate bordering Lincoln Park along High Street.

The High Street Well Field was sold, renamed Thompson Park and the street was named Thompson Avenue. The location of the wells was left as open space in the middle of the street, now a landscaped divider.

The Fitchburg Well Field, now Alameda's only water supply, was not always without issues. For instance, in February 1909, a storm combined with high tides caused sewage polluted water to flood the field. Evidently some of the wells were not properly protected. Between February 12 and February 14, 1909, about 8,700 residents of Alameda (then having about 22,700 residents) became sick.

By 1906, the Contra Costa Water Company was near bankruptcy. They merged with the Syndicate Water Company, in turn incorporating the Richmond Water Company, and so formed the Peoples Water Company. If you visit the Meyers House on Alameda Avenue the exterior wall of the carriage house holds a metal well cover from this company, which was found on the grounds.

The new Peoples Water Company had a considerable challenge; the population of the East Bay grew about four times in size after the San Francisco Earthquake. In addition, the water distribution system was badly outdated. Alameda's Artesian Water Company, for instance, had used wooden pipes. The Peoples Water Company attempted to acquire more land in order to bore more wells. In 1913 the company purchased the Bay Cities Water Company (founded in 1903), in an attempt to minimize competition. But, by 1916 Peoples Water Company was also having financial problems. On November 29, 1916, the company was sold to E.S. Heller, who turned all the properties he had acquired over to the East Bay Water Company. They built the San Pablo Dam, several treatment plants, and purchased the Union Water Company in 1921.

The WWI effort resulted in additional water demands and from 1918 – 1926 there was a severe drought. As a result of these dry years, the decision was made to construct the Upper San Leandro Dam. Local industries also drilled private wells. As a result of this, East Bay cities voted, and approved the creation the East Bay Municipal Utilities District in 1923.



Left: A metal cover from Alameda's Artesian Water Works headquartered on Park Street is on exhibit in the museum.



Right: This metal cover from the Peoples Water Company was found at the Meyers House. It now is displayed on the side of the carriage house.

EBMUD did a study, and prognosis showed that it was not possible to generate more water locally, and the water supply would be insufficient by 1930. EBMUD decided to not join in San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy project, but instead chose the Mokelumne River to build a new reservoir. Money for the Pardee Dam was approved by vote in 1924. In 1928 EBMUD bought the East Bay Water Company, laid new pipes on its lands, and constructed the triple steel pipe Mokelumne Aquaduct to bring the water to Bay Area reservoirs. By 1930 the San Pablo Reservoir was filled with Sierra Mountain water from the Pardee Reservoir. Just as the situation became dire—dry years increasing demand, aquifers depleted by a decade of over pumping, and salt water intrusions—once again Alameda had clean clear water.

Main Sources:

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Rutter, Dick, 1400 Park Street, Landmark Regains its Prominence, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society website, alameda-preservation.org/programs/preservation-awards/table/1400-park-street/

Evanosky, Dennis, Three Prominent Families Called Lincoln Park Home, Alameda Quarterly, Winter 2015 (and similar articles in the "Alameda Sun" discussing Thompson).

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Please contact the
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The Alameda Museum Quarterly is published four times a year and is available in electronic form on the museum website.

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THANKS TO OUR HERITAGE PARTNER

Alameda Sun



From the President's Podium

by Valerie Turpen

April kicked off with a luncheon to thank our volunteers who donate their time and skills to the museum. This includes docents at the museum and Meyers House, those who work on exhibits and archives, the estate sale team and the museum board. As we are not often at the same place at the same time, we enjoyed our chance to meet, socialize, and have a good meal at Pier 29. Also in April the lecture series began with a presentation on the Transcontinental Railroad by Dennis Evanosky. Check page 6 for a list of the upcoming topics this season.

The Estate Sales team has been very busy—three events have been held already this year. Our team are experts in setting up, dealing with the public, and getting the job done! If you miss the sale, often remaining items are donated to the museum gift shop, keeping our inventory fresh. Come by, you never know what you might find!

The Park Street Art and Wine Festival is scheduled for the end of July. I am checking the details for a booth again this year. It is important to remind Alameda residents, and to enlighten Alameda's new residents and visitors that our museum archives the history of our city. Stay tuned for booth staffing needs.

Have you visited the Meyers House lately? Maybe it's time for a refresher. Are guests visiting from out of town? Bring them by for a visit. Alameda Avenue is a lovely neighborhood for a stroll on the fourth Saturday of the month.

Valerie Turpen

Valerie Turpen

President, Alameda Museum



*Barbara Coapman,
Jean Follrath, Marilyn Dodge,
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Gerry Warner & Holly
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**MUSEUM
LUNCHEON
APRIL 13**



Robert Welch & Joanne Dykema

Ashok Katdare, Chuck Millar, George Gunn & Carl Ramos

Alameda Museum Lecture Series 2019

- ❖ **MAY 23: A CONCISE HISTORY OF ALAMEDA'S VINTAGE NEON SIGNS – GRETA DUTCHER**
 Local Author Greta Dutcher known for the *Alameda Postcard History Series* and *Images of America – Alameda* presents an illustrated talk on the remaining vintage neon signs in the city of Alameda, with an emphasis on the beauty of neon as an art form; also, the documentation, preservation and restoration of neon signs.
Sponsor: Liz Rush, Realtor, McGuire Real Estate.
- ❖ **JUNE 27: BLACK MILITARY HISTORY – LEON WATKINS & LARRY THOMPSON**
 As founding members of the group The Walking Ghosts of Black History, Watkins and Thompson promote awareness of African-Americans' roll in the military history of the United States, as well as community service and outreach to veterans and active duty military. The presentation will explore African-American service during war time, with a focus on WWII, as NAS Alameda served a major role in protection of the Pacific.
Sponsor: Pacific Coast Community Services.
- ❖ **JULY 25: ALAMEDA LEGENDS ATHLETES AND FIELDS OF DREAMS IN THE ISLAND CITY – JAMES FRANCIS MCGEE**
 Former resident James Francis McGee will bring to life images and stories of yesteryear during his presentation about Alameda athletic legends of days gone by, with an emphasis on Japanese American players in the ATK League. McGee will honor the many athletes who competed on the field of play for the love of the game throughout the decades.
Sponsor: Litho Process Printing.
- ❖ **AUGUST 22: THE WEST END – WOODY MINOR**
 This lecture will relate the history of the West End from the first land divisions during the Gold Rush to the present day. Vintage maps and photographs will help us track the first railroads, bathing resorts, and industries. Webster as the West End "Main Street" will receive due note, as will 20th century icons like Neptune Beach, Bethlehem shipyard, the Naval Air Station, and the wartime housing projects. Along the way we will see how the area's rich history is reflected in its wealth of well-preserved architecture. *Sponsor: Peter Fletcher, Broker, Windermere Real Estate.*

NOTE: Lectures take place at the Alameda Elk's Lodge: 2255 Santa Clara Avenue, downstairs. Parking is available behind the lodge building. Admission is free for museum members and \$10 for others. No reserved seats. We open at 6:30 pm on lecture nights.

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Alameda in the News

What was happening in the Island City

San Francisco Call: February 16, 1909

STOMACH TROUBLE AFFLICTS HUNDREDS

Alameda Epidemic Subject of Investigation on Part of Health Board

The epidemic of stomach and intestinal ailments which began here last Friday and which has thus far afflicted over 2,000 persons, none fatally, was the subject of an investigation at a special meeting of the board of health this morning. The trouble is generally attributed to some impurity in the water supplied by the People's Water Company, but there are those who believe that the epidemic was brought about by some peculiar atmospheric condition. Those who advance the latter theory say that a wave of effluvia may have been blown over the city by a wind current and that this caused the epidemic of stomach and intestinal trouble.

Among those present at the meeting of the health board today in addition to the members were Mayor E. K. Taylor, Superintendent David Morris of the People's Water Company, Secretary S. W. Marks and other officials of the corporation which supplies water here. Miss Jessie Barry, city chemist, submitted a report of a chemical analysis she had made of water drawn from a local main last Saturday. The test showed, according to the report, that the water was chemically pure. The result of a bacteriological test that is being made is expected to be filed with the health authorities tomorrow.

Blame the Water

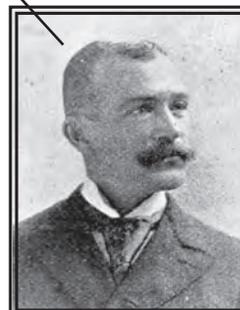
Dr. J. E. Clark and Dr. J. A. Ellis of the Board of Health were of the opinion that the epidemic was due to water. The two physicians reported that they had visited the territory adjacent to the plant at Fitchburg, from which the water supply of this city has been pumped recently, and that they found conditions existing which warranted them in forming the belief that the epidemic was due to water that had become contaminated. The doctors said that

they had noticed a dead dog, a dead pig and a dead calf in pools near the wells, and that it was their theory that during the heavy rains last week, when the Fitchburg region was flooded, that impurities had been carried into the wells and had contaminated the water supply.

The officials of the water company said that Alameda was now being supplied with water from the wells at Alvarado and from Lake Chabot. It was brought out, however, that the water supplied here last week had come from the Fitchburg plant. The water company representatives said that they were ready to furnish Alameda with the best water procurable by the company and that they would meet any reasonable demand made by the municipal authorities to improve the sanitation of the company's water plants.

As a precautionary measure, against further spread of the stomach disorder among school children Superintendent Will C. Wood today ordered that the water be turned off in the buildings and that only distilled water be used for drinking purposes.

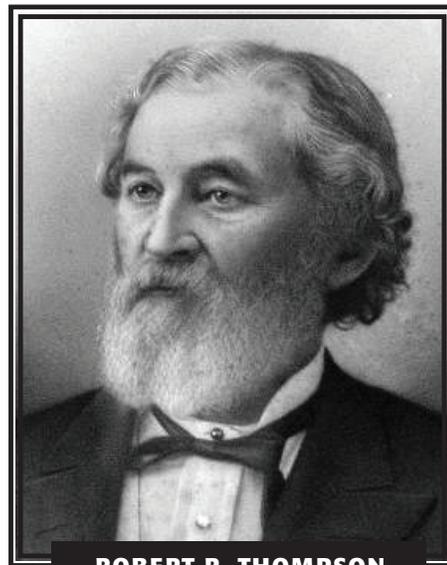
Let's order Perrier!
— E.K. Taylor



The children shall have distilled water.
— Will C. Wood



TO RUL



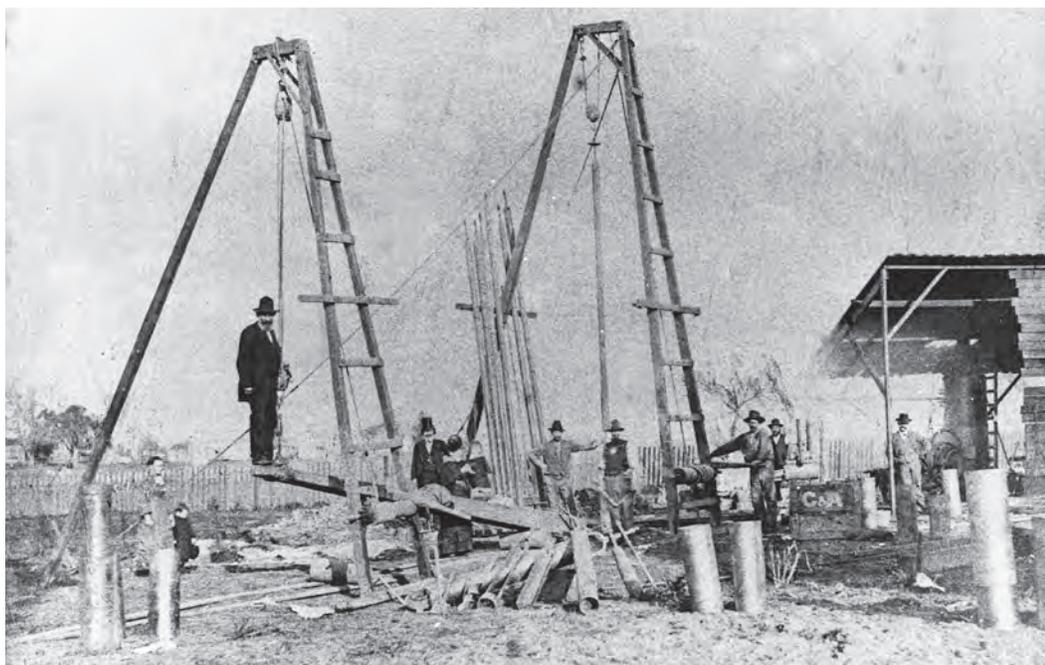
ROBERT R. THOMPSON

Robert R. Thompson (1820 – 1908)
Of Irish descent, Thompson was born in Pennsylvania, crossing the plains to Oregon. After his success in the California Gold Rush he returned to Oregon, where he started the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. Upon its sale he came to Alameda with his wife and children, founding the Artesian Water Works. At his death in 1908 his worth was estimated to be \$3,341,382. That's about \$91 million today.

The Artesian Water Works building supported a 240,000 gallon domestic water storage tank over 30-ft up in the air. Built in 1880 it was mostly demolished in 1955. One wall remains, between DeLauer's Newsstand and Toy Safari.

R. R. Thompson drilled wells on the east side of High Street, just south of the intersection of High Street and what is now Thompson Avenue. This field was referred to as the High Street Well Field.

The man in the lower middle with a top hat is likely Thompson himself. Those involved brought their wives and children to the event. Images: Alameda Museum except where noted.

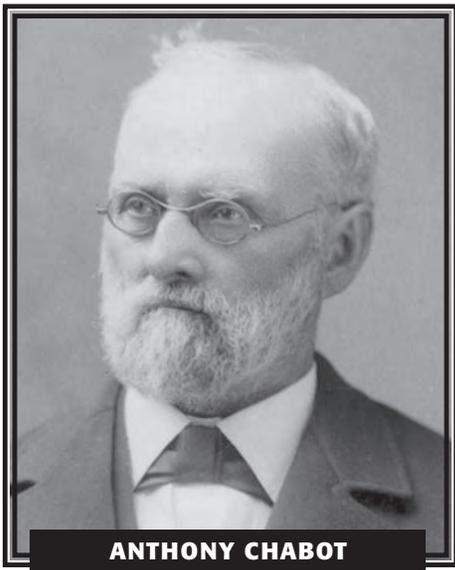


E THE WATER

Anthony Chabot (1813 – 1888) was a businessman and entrepreneur, noted for his contribution to developing hydraulic mining and building water systems, especially in the Bay Area. Chabot founded the Contra Costa Water Company in 1866. He built a dam at Temescal Creek, creating Lake Temescal. In 1870, his company completed a dam at San Leandro Creek, creating a reservoir that would later be named Lake Chabot in Castro Valley. Image: Wikipedia.



The High Street Well buildings are visible to the left in the photo. The location of the wells was left as open space in the middle of the street, now a landscaped divider on Thompson Avenue.



ANTHONY CHABOT

The Fitchburg Well Field in what is now East Oakland, was drilled in 1887 and 1893 by R.R. Thompson and the Alameda Water Company. It was later acquired by the Contra Costa Water Company under Anthony Chabot. The field was located where the Oakland Coliseum complex stands today. For a time it was Alameda's main source of water.



A water tower still stands in the block between Regent, Broadway, Washington, and Calhoun. Image: Myrna van Lunteren.





Canyon in Oakland Boasts Alameda Connections

William Deal, Fritz Boehmer, Edgar Cohen and Sarah Haight played roles. *by Dennis Evanosky*

OAKLAND'S LAUNDRY FARM CANYON carries the Horseshoe Creek branch of Leona Creek from its headwaters on today's Merritt College campus. The creek flows through the redwoods and enters the canyon near Leona Lodge on Mountain Boulevard. It then meanders south to Leona Creek, where it drains into Lake Aliso on the Mills College campus. The creek continues its journey south until it empties into San Leandro Bay near today's Oakland Coliseum.

Establishing the Laundry Farm

In 1859, J.C. and Catherine Davis established a business that they christened "The Laundry Farm." Their company began washing clothes near the confluence of Horseshoe and Leona creeks in the hills southeast of the town of Fruit Vale. The Davises ferried San Francisco's dirty laundry to a landing on San Leandro Bay at the mouth of Leona Creek.

From there, they hauled their begrimed cargo up to Horseshoe Creek, where their washerwomen and laundrymen washed, bleached and dried the clothes. Seamstresses checked for and repaired tears and frays. On July 11, 1860, federal census taker (an Alameda resident) William Grove Deal stopped by to take his count.

Deal met and enumerated J.C. and Catherine Davis along with the couple's two-year-old daughter, Mary Catherine. J.C. and Catherine helped the census taker by introducing him to their seamstresses Mary Ward, Sophia Wilson and Johanna Murphy. Deal also counted a trio of washerwomen: Winfred McDonald, Margret White and Frances Wilson.

The Davises also brought the census taker around to the twenty-four laundrymen on site that day. Among them Deal counted the brothers John and Charles Perkins from Connecticut and the Prussians Phil Muscate and Emil Ebert. He also enumerated Welshman John Jones and a forty-three-year-old from Ireland with the intriguing name Master Lawless—both as laborers.

The Great Flood Strikes

Things went well for the Davises until it began raining in November 1861, not much at first. Then, on December 9, the skies opened up, and four intense storms, one on the heels of the other, pounded Northern California. The heavy rains did not stop until January 17, 1862. In January 1862 alone more than 25 inches of rain fell in San Francisco—a record that stands to this day. This deluge went into the history books as the Great Flood of 1862.

J.C. and Catherine watched as these storms destroyed their thriving laundry business. The driving rains sent the creeks over their banks. It loosened the earth and sent their buildings and home sliding into the swollen creeks that the Davises had depended on to wash San Francisco's dirty clothes. The storm's aftermath forced J.C. and

Catherine out of the hills. The 1870 census carries no mention of the Davises' "laundry farm" in Alameda County.

At first William Bovee expressed an interest in their business, and the Davises set up shop with him in Oakland. Bovee had money to invest from the Pioneer Steam Coffee and Spice Mill he created in 1850. Nine years later, he sold his company to Jim Folger, who used Pioneer as the base for his own coffee establishment. We still drink Folger's coffee today.

Pliny Bartlett, George Hallett and Patrick Dalton stepped in and purchased the laundry, renaming it the Contra Costa Laundry Company, and moving it to Kirkham Street in West Oakland. The trio stayed in business until 1902.

Despite the absence of the washerwomen, seamstresses and laundrymen in the canyon, the name "Laundry Farm" stuck. The area became a popular resort, so popular that "by 1876 horse-drawn tour buses brought people to Laundry Farm, which was by then a well-visited picnic area with terrific views," says historian Steve Mix.

Enter the Tompkins

On December 23, 1861, as the second storm that caused the Great Flood pounded Northern California, Edward Tompkins married Sarah Haight. Family lore tells us that the rain curtailed their honeymoon, forcing the newlyweds to stay in San Jose. Sarah was Henry Huntly Haight's half-sister. (Henry served as California's tenth governor and lived in Alameda.) Sometime in the mid-1860s, Edward and the children by his first marriage to Mary Elizabeth Cook purchased the picnic spot where the Davises and their company had once washed clothes.

The 1870 census shows Edward and Sarah living in Oakland with three youngsters: Gilbert, 6; Elizabeth, 4; and Sarah, 2. On November 14, 1872, Edward died, leaving a reasonably well-off widow with three children to raise.

Ten years after her husband's death Sarah became the owner of the Laundry Farm property. The March 29 and April 3, 1882, editions of the *Oakland Tribune* published the recordings of a pair of deeds that reflected Sarah's trading property in Berkeley for the Laundry Farm with her stepchildren Edward, William and Louise Tompkins and Mary Roberts. A few weeks later, Sarah paid for an advertisement in the *Tribune*.

"After June 6, 1882, picnics and trespassing will not be allowed on the Laundry Farm," Sarah said in the terse announcement. She asked the *Tribune* to shout the word "not" by printing it in all capital letters to emphasize her warning to would-be trespassers.

In 1887, the Laundry Farm was in the news again. In its "Across the Bay" section on July 9, 1887, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that the property "was being rumored

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Edgar Cohen photographed the Leona Heights Hotel, which welcomed guests from 1892 until it burned in 1907. Image: Oakland Heritage Alliance.

to be part of a summer resort and water rights scheme." According to the *Chronicle*, the property "has been for many years a popular picnic resort. It has a nice stream of water, a fine view and some other natural attractions in the way of scenery. It could be easily made accessible by a short-branch railroad tapping the Southern Pacific Seminary Park station, just beyond Melrose." The article also stated that "the property commands fine water-rights, where enough water could be stored behind a series of dams to successfully supply the city of Alameda at least."

Just a month after the *Chronicle's* story appeared, Sarah sold the 650-acre Laundry Farm to J.H. Woodward, a railroad man who had come to California as the agent for the Wabash & Western Railway. When he paid for the property, Woodward was serving as president of the Oakland, Alameda & Laundry Farm Railroad Company, which only existed on paper. He paid Sarah some \$70,000 for the real estate (some \$1.72 million in today's dollars).

All Aboard!

In November 1887, Woodward organized the Alameda County Railway Company and built a standard-gauge steam railroad to bring picnickers to his new resort. Service began January 10, 1888. The railway leased the locomotive *J.G. Kellogg* from the Southern Pacific Railroad. The engine—which proudly wore the number 2 as the second locomotive ever built on the West Coast—once ran on A.A. Cohen's San Francisco & Alameda Railroad.

Old Number 2 pulled cars loaded with picnickers out of Sather Station near today East 12th Street and 40th Avenue, up today's 42nd Avenue, where it crossed High Street, to run along Courtland Creek northeast to Leona Heights and into Laundry Farm Canyon. After an 1890 sale the railroad shortened its name to the California Railway. Six years later, the railway extended the line from Sather Station to the newly completed Park Street Bridge. It had a small station in Alameda near the bridge, which closed about 1902, when the San Francisco Bridge Co. cut the channel that later became the Oakland Estuary.

In 1892, the railroad built the three-story Laundry Farm Hotel on a 200-acre site one-quarter mile east of the its

car barn, which stood on the opposite side of the hill from the hotel. The railway company soon extended track from the car barn to the Laundry Farm Hotel. In 1894, the hotel's owners changed its name to the Leona Heights Hotel. The building burned in 1897 but the owners rebuilt. The California Railway discontinued service to the resort the following year. The abandoned track to the hotel was removed; track beds later became roadways; parts of today's Leona Street and Rusting Avenue are two examples.

Oakland "Gold Rush"

In 1892, the same year the Laundry Farm Hotel welcomed its first guests, post-hole diggers on a nearby hill thought they had discovered gold. They took their find to the property owner, Alameda's very own Fritz Boehmer. After having the find assayed, Boehmer disappointedly reported that his workers had discovered pyrite, fool's gold. The assayer told Boehmer not to fret, however. The pyrite contained valuable material including sulfur, and that it was worth mining. Boehmer started operations and named the mine, which was located in the vicinity of today's Stauffer Court, for his daughter, Alma. Then a second mine opened.

"About 1895, the Leona Chemical Company began operations on the hillside at the end of present-day McDonnell Avenue," says historian Gordon Laverty. The company named the street for its president and general manager D.A. McDonnell. F.M. "Borax" Smith and the Realty Syndicate later bought the property and controlled this mine.

Just up the hill from the mines, Egbert B. and Andrew L. Stone began quarry operations in 1899. An elaborate tramway system brought stone to the company's crushers near today's Mountain Boulevard and Bermuda Street. Alameda photographer Edgar Cohen once took his children to visit Leona Heights. He photographed them near the tramway and rock crusher.

The Stone brothers, who would later play a role in developing Bay Farm Island, planned to use the rock in their quarry—a fine-grained basalt—for macadam and



This locomotive worked on A. A. Cohen's San Francisco & Alameda Railroad, later it pulled passenger cars into Leona Canyon for the California Railway. Cohen named the locomotive "J.G. Kellogg" for a man who owned a private gold coinage operation in San Francisco. Sources say that Kellogg served on the San Francisco & Alameda Railroad's board of directors. Image: Alameda Museum.

Continued on page 12. . .



Alameda Connection . . . Continued from page 11



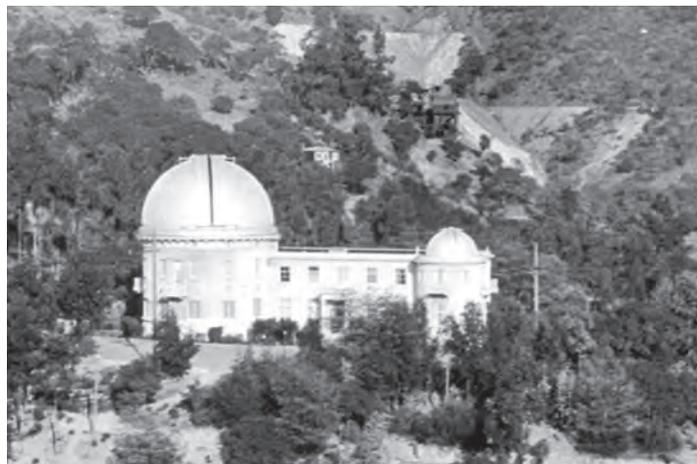
Alameda photographer Edgar Cohen photographed his children Alfred and Bessie at the Stone brothers' tramway and rock crusher at Leona Heights. Image: Oakland Heritage Alliance.

road beds. Then the Western Pacific Railroad came calling. The railroad awarded the Stones the contract to use the stone from their quarry to lay some 120 miles of roadbed for the rails that ran from Oroville into Oakland.

About this time, the nearby mining operations had declined. The sulfur, which had proved a boon, turned to a bane when it began to catch fire inside the mines. But fire wasn't only confined to mine shafts. Miners were using the Leona Hotel for their quarters. On September 7, 1907, a miner's cook stove overheated; the hotel caught

fire for the second time. This time fire companies arrived too late to save the building.

On March 8, 1916, the "new" Chabot Observatory, which had moved from Lafayette Square in Oakland, opened to the public, bringing new life to Leona Heights.



Too much ambient light at Lafayette Square in downtown Oakland forced astronomers to move the Chabot Observatory to Leona Heights. In 2000 the observatory moved a second time to a location higher in the Oakland Hills. The Leona Chemical Company's sulfur mining operation is visible in the distance in this 1916 photograph. Image: Oakland History Room.

Failure on the Farm Leads to Success with the Laundry *by Ron Ucovich*

Naphthalene is a coal tar derivative discovered in the 1820s. It was an efficient solvent to cut oils and grease. It was very effective at removing oil-based stains from clothing. It could also be applied to the skin to remove oil-based irritants such as poison oak, poison ivy and sumac.

In the 1860s, there was an industrious pig farmer in Yanceyville, North Carolina, named Lazarus Fels. Old Lazarus used to fatten his hogs with discarded sour mash that he got from the local distillery. Unfortunately, one load of mash wasn't fermented properly, and he wound up poisoning his entire stock. Not knowing what to do with all these pig carcasses, Lazarus decided to render all the fat, combine it with soda ash and lye, and make bars of soap which he could sell at the general store.

The people of Yanceyville loved the soap, but there weren't enough customers in the area to make his enterprise profitable. In 1873, Lazarus moved his business to Philadelphia, and he changed his lye formula to naphthalene, which had a

sweeter and fresher fragrance. He called his new product Fels Naphtha Soap. It was sold in long, yellow bars so people couldn't mistake it for bath soap, and on the wrapper was the warning: "Caution, exposure to this product can cause eye and skin irritation." Even though it has adverse health effects, customers still remain loyal to this brand because they remember their grandmothers using it, and because they like the smell.

Believe it or not, your sense of smell is the most powerful sense you have to evoke past memories. The whiff of chlorine, for example, might flood your mind with memories of playful pool parties when you were a teenager. Fresh-baked cookies might flash you back to when you were a child watching your mother pull hot cookies from the oven. Freshly-cut grass might remind you of your father mowing the lawn getting ready for a family game of croquet in the backyard. Salty beach air might recall your hippie days of surfing and beach combing in Santa Cruz. For me, the smell of moth-

balls will instantly transport my mind back sixty years to my grandmother's bedroom. Grandma stuffed mothballs in her closet, under her mattress, in her dresser drawers, in the linen closet, on the bookshelves, and in the dozens of steamer trunks which she stored in the attic.

Naphthalene is the main component in mothballs, and although naphthalene is harmful to your health, it is still sold in mothballs today. The package is clearly marked as a poison, and you are warned not to have bodily contact with it. It kills moths, pill bugs and silverfish. It even repels rodents, such as mice, rats, and squirrels, and although it is poisonous, it still has a clean and refreshing aroma. I'll bet whenever you smell mothballs, it calls to mind nostalgic memories of grandma's house.



FROM THE COLLECTION

Buttonhooks & Buttoned Boots

by Myrna van Lunteren

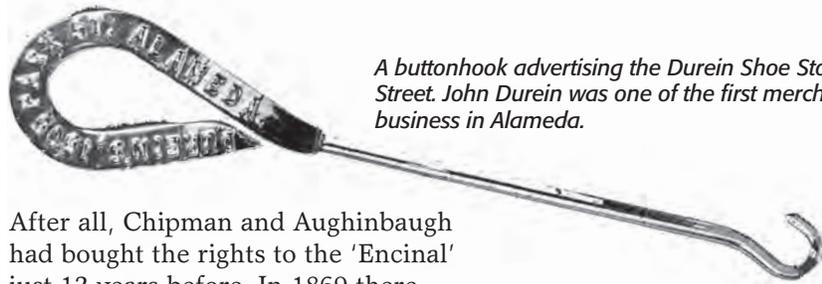
THERE IS A MUSEUM IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND that has 419 single roman shoes, and one pair. In our museum, we have only pairs of shoes, or half-boots. And many of those from the Victorian era have buttons. Lots of little buttons.

Women's buttoned boots became popular around 1880 and stayed popular until around 1930. Closing those shoes and boots required a lot of fiddling with the tiny buttons and holes, and so, the buttonhook became a necessity for fashionable ladies.

The first reference to a buttonhook was reportedly from 1611, so it was not a new invention. However, before ladies buttoned boots, this was mostly an item used by men, for pulling buttons through tough leather, such as was used in military clothing and footwear. But with the advent of the new ladies' footwear fashion, delicate buttonhooks were produced with handles in a wide range of materials. Silversmiths would make sets of hair brushes with matching buttonhooks, souvenir shops sold buttonhooks with their cities' emblem, and enterprising business owners gave away buttonhooks with their company's name on them as a novelty item.

Our Alameda Museum has three buttonhooks on display; one with a silver handle, one with a handle made out of celluloid (an early plastic), and one as a marketing item from Durein's Shoe Store in Alameda. The first two are of uncertain origin but illustrate the need for the device to get into the boots.

Durein's (1863-1928, according to the caption in the display) was one of the first merchants in Alameda.



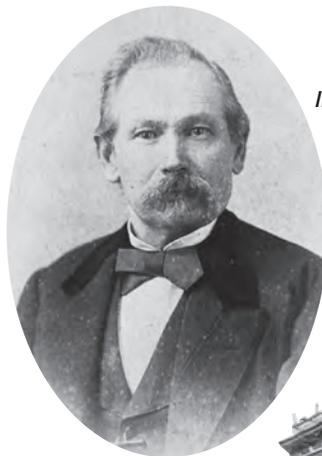
A buttonhook advertising the Durein Shoe Store on Park Street. John Durein was one of the first merchants to open a business in Alameda.

After all, Chipman and Aughinbaugh had bought the rights to the 'Encinal' just 12 years before. In 1869 there were only 12 buildings along Park Street and Durein's must have been one of them. John Durein (1829- abt. 1905, originally Joannes Durein from Hayna, Pfalz, Bavaria, Germany) was a bootmaker who set up shop in a two-story wooden building located at what would become 1505 Park Street. He called the business Durein's, and in 1897 and 1898 advertised in the *Overland Monthly* as the "Pioneer Shoe Store". In 1880 John and his wife Gottlieba, maiden name Glas, and their two children, Lila and Louis John (1874-1941) lived above the shop.

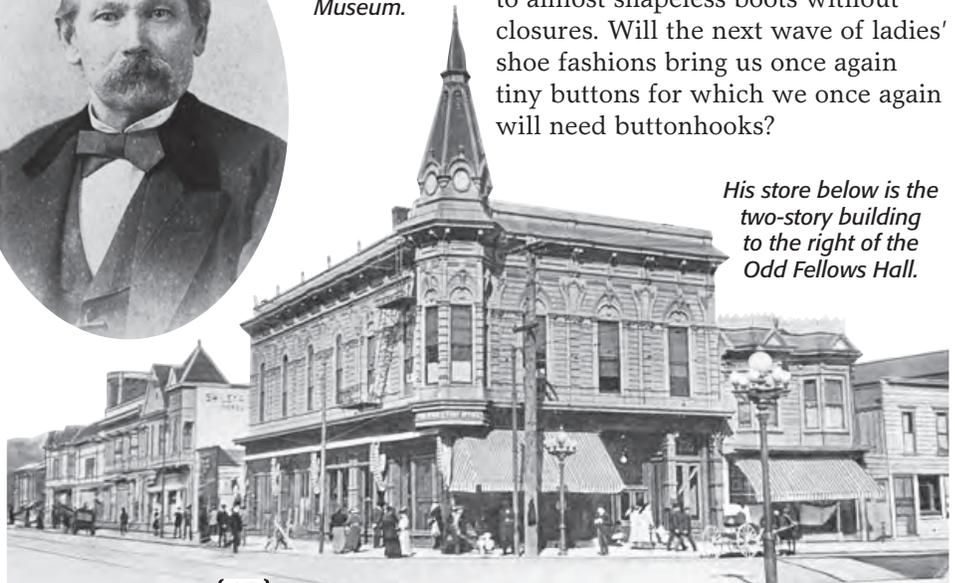
By 1892 son Louis John Durein was a salesman in the shoe store. He took over at the death of his father, and by 1911 he had moved to his own house on Santa Clara Avenue with his son and wife, Alice Elizabeth Fluhr, from a Los Angeles hotel-family. By 1921 however, he had lost his first wife to complications

resulting from the birth of his second son, and had remarried. The shoe store had been damaged by the 1920 Park Street Fire, at which time gawkers apparently helped themselves to the inventory Louis was trying to save. By 1925 the spark had gone out of the shoe business, and Louis must have decided to take advantage of the fact he now owned valuable commercial real estate. The damaged, old, wooden building at 1505-1507 Park Street was torn down, and the current one-story building was built in 1926. In 1927 the 1507 side of the new building attracted the interest of a Mr. O. Hansen who started a restaurant. There is still a restaurant at that spot, in name remembering Mr. Hansen. The 1505 side has seen a wide variety of businesses over the years.

So, Durein's Pioneer Shoe Store disappeared around the same time as the buttoned boots and buttonhooks. After the practical inventions of zippers and Velcro, fashion turned to almost shapeless boots without closures. Will the next wave of ladies' shoe fashions bring us once again tiny buttons for which we once again will need buttonhooks?



Proprietor John Durein. Image: Alameda Museum.



His store below is the two-story building to the right of the Odd Fellows Hall.

Docent Dossiers

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

Gina Boscacci

I grew up in New England— Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Maine. While the summers were always pleasant, the winter weather... was not so much! My youth hobbies took advantage of the nature present around me. I particularly enjoyed horseback riding and hiking. I opted for the warmer climate of Virginia when I left for college and never moved back. While I still love New England, I just don't like the weather there that much! Snow is best experienced by visiting it and then leaving, not living through it.

After college, I got a job with Godiva Chocolates that grew to account manager. I initially drove a territory that included much of the Mid-Atlantic Coast, and later I transferred to the West and covered the major continental cities west from Denver. Through my work and vacations, I have been to all 50 US States. Working for a chocolatier was fun (especially sampling the product), but the travel was exhausting. Having seen much of the country, I knew I wanted to settle in the Bay Area; and eventually did so.

I have lived in various parts of the Bay Area including Alameda, Dublin, El Sobrante, and



▲ *Gina Boscacci with an antique camera on display.*

Fremont. My first stop in Alameda was in the 1980s when I rented a small duplex in central Alameda. Unfortunately, even back then, finding a place in Alameda to rent that would allow me to keep my dogs was a challenge. I hoped that I would someday be able to return as a homeowner.

I loved the small town feel of Alameda. I liked that I could take walks and ride my bike easily because the island is so flat! When our son

went away to college, we started looking for our retirement home here. I knew Alameda was where I wanted to be, and am extremely happy to say that we eventually found and purchased our home. We have been here eight years now and yes, have seen the island change, much like the rest of the Bay Area. We greatly enjoy and take advantage of living near Park Street with so many great restaurants and shops. We also like being able to walk to the movie theater.

As a part of my travels, I have been to museums of all kinds all over the world. These include museums of art, music, and whatever. Recent museums included the Museum of Mustard in Middleton, Wisconsin (near Madison) and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio. Museums are places that tell about a place and are an important part of travel.

I am fascinated by the exhibits at the museum. The museum helps explain the history of people and places of Alameda. As a docent at the museum, I have met many interesting visitors who share stories of the past.

My favorite part of the museum has to be the gift shop! It is fun to poke through the donated items that the museum offers at great prices! Last visit I came away with some jigsaw puzzles which we have enjoyed throughout this rainy season.

Images: Evelyn Kennedy



Jean Graubart

I am delighted to be joining the team of volunteers at the Alameda Museum. I have lived in Alameda for nearly six years after moving here from Maryland when my daughter was due to have her baby boy.

I find this to be a very easy place to live, convenient and comfortable, and I enjoy the small town feeling very much. It is different than any place I have lived and that includes Los Angeles, San Francisco, Texas, Ohio, Maryland, Washington, DC and New York.

◀ *Jean Graubart shows some wares in the museum kitchen exhibit.*

I have enjoyed visiting the museum and bringing friends and family who visit from many places, all of whom enjoy it and always buy something special from the gift shop. It is always fun to walk around and imagine what life was like years ago; the rooms and exhibits remind me of the Smithsonian's American History Museum and make for a warm and interesting time.

The docents are always friendly and helpful and I have wanted to be a part of it for a while. It is a very small way I can give back to this community.

Farewell to the Queen

by Judith Lynch

AROUND THE TURN OF THIS CENTURY, the Alameda Museum took a chance on local elementary students by reserving the entire month of April for a show of their drawings, photographs, maps, and writing. Over the next fifteen years, dozens of teachers taught Alamedans grades K-6 about local heritage through learning about vintage homes; their endeavors culminated in the annual "Kids & Queen Victoria" exhibit. A Museum board member developed an extensive guide to teaching about Island past. She also produced slide shows and bins of old inventions and Victorian era house parts that circulated to educators throughout the district. Significant concepts in the curriculum included: History is all around us! You can learn about our past by going outside, because Alameda is an outdoor museum with some 4,000 buildings sporting fancy gingerbread decorations.

As the show and the "Living History" program gained momentum, an accomplished actress stepped forward to act as Queen Victoria. Invited to don a gown, wear a bejeweled crown, and be draped with a signature blue sash, veteran teacher Connie Turner quickly agreed. Fueled by the passion that accompanied most of her efforts, in her guise as Queen, Connie helped hundreds of Alameda youngsters and their families accept their role as loving stewards of the architectural remnants of the Queen's reign, 64 years from 1837-1901.

Students, teachers, and families were honored to meet the Queen, who "ruled" over their Museum show each spring. Although American citizens owe no obeisance to royalty, gracious Alamedans wanted to observe the proper courtesies. Youngsters appeared in formal dress and practiced meeting the monarch. They learned to greet the Queen by saying "Good morning, Your Majesty" and



**QUEEN VICTORIA
BY CONNIE TURNER**

shaking her right hand gently. Then girls would drop a curtsy and boys bow or nod their heads.

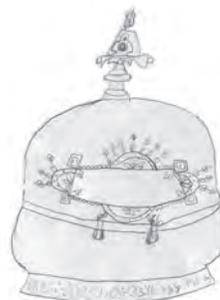
Following traditional court protocol, those assembled stood and sang "God Save the Queen." Then they serenaded her with "The Alameda Anthem," including a new verse: "History abounds here, Victorians and all. And now we're going to put back the tower on City Hall. . . Where ere we roam, it's truly home. Alameda, Alameda, our home town."

Each year local luminaries vied to preside at the opening of the show, taking turns to review the art, meet students families, and introduce the Queen. Over fifteen years, Mayors Ralph Appezato, Beverly Johnson, and Marie Gilmore took the microphone, then Vice-Mayors Al Dewitt and Doug deHaun served as chairs, as did council member Frank Matarrese. Superintendent of Schools Kirsten Vitale took a turn, as did her successor Ardella Dailey, who graciously assumed presiding duties at the Main Library when a flood suspended museum operations. City Manager John Russo introduced the final iteration, "Welcome to the fifteenth annual Kids & Queen Victoria exhibit, an 'Only in Alameda' event. Our kids are the only elementary students throughout the land who have their own museum show devoted to local architecture and history," he said. "Historic houses are a tangible aspect of our past. We have thousands of buildings left from the days when Victoria ruled!"

Connie Turner died recently but her spirit and the joyful nature with which she imbued her life and her role as Queen Victoria will live on! Long may you reign over our hearts, Connie, and thank you for helping many in Alameda appreciate the heritage on the island, the architectural styles that were "born" during your tenure.



a tea cup



Above: Queen's portrait by Don Cunningham.

Drawings displayed during a Kids & Queen Victoria exhibit at the Alameda Museum.



**ALAMEDA
MUSEUM**

2324 Alameda Avenue
Alameda CA 94501

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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

510-521-1233

MEYERS HOUSE & GARDEN
2021 Alameda Avenue

HOURS

4th Saturdays
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

(Last tour at 3:00 pm)

alamedamuseum.org

ALAMEDA LEGACY HOME TOUR

... Sunday ...

September 22, 2019
10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Calling All Docents!

FREE ADMISSION to the tour in exchange for being a docent on either the early or late shift.

Two shifts: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Enjoy a day of Alameda's finest architecture and finish with a dinner party for docents and homeowners at the Elks Lodge.

Contact Patty Ferrari at 510-217-8946

patty5138@gmail.com

or Denise Brady at 510-469-6324

dbrady001@aol.com



*Costumes
admired but not
required.*