

Alameda Museum

Quarterly

A MEMOIR

Arthur Tadashi Hayashi
October 22, 1922 - May 6, 1994

The author penned this memoir for his children. The Alameda Museum received a floppy disk and a printed copy of the story in 2006. The recent conversion of museum archives to a digital format has made it possible to share his story with you. It has been edited for length and clarity.

The Hayashi family: Tadashi (Arthur), Musumi (Muts), their mother Chitose holding Hozue (Grace), their father Hisaki, Hajime (Paul), and Akira (James or Butch). Image: Florence Nakata Omori.



We, the Japanese, were the largest ethnic group in Alameda. It was a white man's town with about three black families¹ and a few Hispanic families. As I look back now, I realized we lived in an area in Alameda bounded by the estuary north, to Santa Clara Avenue to the south, and Broadway in the east, to Willow Street to the west. Both the Buddhist Church and the Methodist Church were located in the middle of this area. I don't know if it was a matter of deliberate choice or whether we had no choice in the matter as far as real estate was concerned. Because we lived in a small area, whether by design or choice, we had our own Japantown.

The majority of families lived in the small area. Most of the men in our community were gardeners, and we had five nurseries and two florists. Our community had our own grocery stores. Our next-door store made tofu and other Japanese goodies. We had an auto garage and gas station, shoe repair, barber, bathhouse, and our own doctor, Dr. Iriki (Walter Keisuke Iriki, a Stanford graduate). We also had a laundry across the street and two cleaning

shops. Down the street was the Yokohama Cleaners and ours was called Tokyo Cleaners. Although my father had a cleaners, I can still see him riding his bicycle every day to do housework. My father would then come home to press the clothes at night. My mother would watch the store throughout the day doing alterations and ironing of the laundry which we took in.

Within our small community we had a Buddhist Temple and a Methodist Church. Both had a Japanese Language School. The Buddhist Language School was patterned after the schools in the old country. When the bell rang for the start of classes, the kids lined up by class, bowed together to the teachers, and then marched into class. At the Methodist Japanese School, when the bell rang for the start of classes, we would wander in from the basketball court because guys like me only went to Japanese language classes because our mothers insisted we go to class. We went to Japanese Language School after regular school, between 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm, which cut into our playtime.

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The language schools included a summer session of two or three weeks during our regular summer vacation. However, when I look back, I think that if I didn't retain some of the painful era of Japanese School, I wouldn't be alive today.

As I was growing up the Buddhist Temple (which was less than a block away) it had more exciting activities than our Methodist Church. For instance, they had *Kendo* classes and I used to go and watch the older guys bang each other with bamboo swords. Of course they wore protective armor. They had *Judo* classes for both boys and girls. They even had classes in *Sumo* and they had Sumo with other organizations. The Buddhist Church sponsored Japanese movies. Evidently there was a man who brought the Japanese movies to many Japanese communities in California and he would travel from one community to another (Matao Koga and his wife Shigeko Iwaihara). The one draw back was he had only one projector, so at the end of each reel, the lights in the hall would go out while the projectionist threaded the new reel into the projector.

In the fall, the Buddhist Temple had the Moon Festival where they played Japanese records and the girls and some men would dance the Odori around the main temple garden. The Temple had a formal observance of Emperor Hirohito's birthday where two men, generally former soldiers of Japan, would part gauze curtains of a small gazebo-like structure on the stage of the hall. We all would sing the Japanese National Anthem. Another veteran would read a proclamation, which was beyond

comprehension as far as we Nisei were concerned. In all of these activities, I was merely an onlooker and not a participant. Twice a year the Buddhist Temple had a Graduation Dance to honor high school and college graduates. We all looked forward to these dances, as a growing teenager I could hold a girl in my arms. It was quite a thrill.

So you can see that even at just being an observer, the impression of the Japanese culture and background, has been implanted in my mind. I realize now that living in a large and close Japanese community gave me much of the values I have today. My mother used to lecture us, "Do not bring shame to the Family and Community". I rebelled a few times but on the whole, those lessons have had their effect. I remember my mother saying, "Japanese people don't do this" or "Japanese people don't do that". However, once I was able to observe the people in camp, I realize that Japanese people were just as human as everybody else.

I never realized until later how our community tried to protect their kids by encouraging activities such as sports, Japanese Language Schools, graduation dances, picnics, etc. so us kids did not feel deprived, but felt pride in ourselves in our accomplishments.

The earliest memories of my life are when we moved and lived in a commercial laundry on E. 14 Street and 41st Avenue (Oakland). Mrs. Sera (Ken Sera), whom all of us kids called "She Mom", planned to go back to Japan to see her son. This trip would take over a year, so my mother was to take over the responsibility of the household while She Mom was in Japan. Mrs. Sera was a very strong woman and I strongly suspect that she was the person who convinced my mother to send us to the Japanese Methodist Church in Alameda. All the people were originally from the Hiroshima Prefecture in Japan. I feel that this was one of the ways they encouraged people from the same area to learn to get accustomed to a new country. This fact didn't occur to me until I learned that people who worked at the Market Laundry in West Oakland were from another area and experienced the same thing. I guess we Japanese were great organizers for mutual protection.

When we moved into Merritt Laundry, I think I was in the second grade in school. Downstairs were three shops. The corner shop I don't remember, but next was a shoe repair shop, and then our laundry shop. We lived on the second floor of a building with two other families and two bachelors. One bachelor had a real samurai sword and I used to sneak into his room just to play with it. Also on the second floor was a kitchen with a stove for cooking and a large table with benches for our meals. The whole personnel of the laundry ate all their meals together.

My father worked in the front to wait on customers and package the individual customers' bundles of laundry. I used to admire the way he used to package, very efficient, very neat, and very compact. In the back of the customer area was the ironing room. There were about five ironing boards. A brazier heated the irons and men and women used to iron the clothes by hand. Next door to the ironing room was what was known as the Marking Room. The



Born in Alameda in 1913, Masunobu Iwaihara is shown with the trophy he won at the California State Sumo Championship in Sacramento. Image: Iwaihara family collection.

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Mochi Tsuki is a New Year tradition from Japan. A group pounds rice which is molded into a flat-oval shape, and served in a hot broth, called Ozoni. Matao Koga (center) and others raise a wooden hammer or "kine" above the mortar or "usu". Image: Iwaihara family collection.

Marking Room was in the back of the shoe shop. Here all the incoming laundry was listed and marked then sent to the next phase. The actual washing was done in a separate large building across a driveway. This building had a large rolling cylinder that ironed out bed sheets and two large revolving washers, a large compartment to dry curtains, and most important of all, the boiler to heat water. At first the fuel for the boilers was coal and I used to play in the coal bin, but later on a gas heater was installed which was more efficient. Living so close together was a wonderful experience. Especially when New Year's rolled around, everybody took part in *Mochi Tsuki* and to watch as the men pounded the rice.

Living in this environment was great. There were two important incidents that were to affect the rest of my life. First of all I was sent to a regular school on E. 12th Street called Dewey Elementary School. Most of the pupils were Caucasian with a large number of Portuguese kids. I was the only Asian there. Anyway, when I first attended, I took a beating regarding my name. They would say "Tadashi Hayashi, Ha Ha". It was kind of tough to stand up to that ridicule, so I went home and asked my father, "What is my English name?" My father answered, "Oscar". He could see by my expression that I didn't care for that name, so he immediately said, "Arthur". I have used it ever since though legally it wasn't on my birth certificate.

The second important event was that my mother insisted I go to Japanese Language School. She enrolled me in a special school located near the Posey Tube that connects Oakland and Alameda. After regular school I would come home and wait on the corner for the school bus to pick me up. The school had two special buses, one for North Oakland and one for East Oakland. I was the

first to be picked up on the East Oakland bus that went as far as Castlemont High and then headed towards the school picking up kids along the way. By the time we arrived at the school, the bus would be full. After a short break the bell would ring, we would line up according to class, bow to the teacher, then march into class. I don't remember the time schedule, but by the time I arrived home, it was generally dark. This went on five days a week during the regular school semester. There were also summer sessions. The Buddhist Temple was across the street and we could see that they also had regular Japanese School. After our family moved back to Alameda I still continued Japanese Language School.

Looking back I'm the luckiest guy in the world. It all started when I was five or six years old. In the old days my mother was preparing a bathtub for my brother Butch who was just a baby at that time. She had put a tub on the floor and had put in the hot water. She had gone into the kitchen for some cold water. My brother Paul and I were having an argument and as I was backing up, I tripped and sat down into the hot water. I remember my father grabbing me and having my mother pour cold water over me, not one, but several buckets full of cold water. Mr. Hanamura, our next-door neighbor gave my father and me a lift to the doctor's. Dr. Liem (likely William Tappan Lum) was a Caucasian doctor who served the Japanese community in those days. I was sent to the Alameda Hospital and I was badly burned on my buttocks and to a lesser extent, near my right shoulder blade. I developed ketoids or scar tissue on my buttocks that made doctors in the future to show interest enough to ask questions. Maybe that is the main reason I hated gym period in high school because we had to strip to change our clothes, so as an alternative I took ROTC.

While I was in the hospital I spoke only Japanese, so when my mother came to visit me I complained to my mother that I would be hungry so how could I get something to eat? My mother taught me to say one word, "hungry" in English and that worked.

The year 1941 has special significance for me, not only because of Pearl Harbor, but the many things I experienced throughout the year. In January of 1941 I graduated Alameda High School. I had planned to attend San Francisco Junior College in the fall. But first I had to have some money to see me through the general plan. I planned to work for a gardener and if I got enough to get ahead, then go to school in the fall or the spring of 1942.

In the spring of 1941 baseball season was soon to start. We had a league of Japanese ball teams and in our little world it was an activity everyone looked forward with great anticipation. Yasuharu "Bombo" Yamasaki and I were out together one Saturday night when we saw the field lights on at Washington Park in Alameda. Bombo mentioned the championship girls' softball team was playing that night so I turned to get to the park. This was the last thing I remember to this day.

The next thing I remember was waking up in Highland Hospital. I was in a two-bed room. My roommate had hit a pole with his auto, was thrown out, and skidded on the gravel on his back. His back was a mass of gouges and the

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poor guy groaned and moaned all day and night, not that I didn't blame him. The only real constant pain I had was my fractured right shoulder blade. I had a concussion, some internal injuries, cuts and bruises that I could ignore once the pain went away. I asked my mother how Bombo was doing and she told me he was all right. After ten days I was released to go home. It was after another week at home when my mother told me that Bombo had died two hours after the accident.

I saw the old Model A that was put in our garage, the driver's side, and my side, were smashed and I could see where the other auto had hit me broadside. Later I went to the scene of the accident. It was an intersection and I understand my car was rammed and had rolled up against the house on the corner. The Yamasaki family was going to bring suit against the other driver, however their lawyer advised them that because of the tension between Japan and U.S. it would be advisable to wait a while. As it turned out, no action was taken up about this matter.

Needless to say I didn't play any baseball that year. I spent the summer of 1941 recuperating from my injuries, the main emphasis on my right shoulder. In September I went to visit Paul, my brother, who was working in an apple drying shed in Sebastopol. It was a simple job of inserting apples one at a time into a cup, which cut the core of the apple and peeled the skin off. The skin of the apple and core dropped on to a belt that dumped into a bin that was hauled away every night. The naked apple went down another chute on a belt to women who would clean the apples with paring knives. The apples were then washed and continued on to a slicer, which sliced the apples. The sliced pieces were dropped into wooden trays and they in turn went into the ovens. The sliced dried apples were then dropped into another bin and at night were boxed for shipping. So all Paul had to do was to feed apples one at a time into a cup all day long. For this he was paid \$.35 an hour. At night Paul helped pack the dried apples for \$.50 an hour, but generally this took only a couple of hours.

When Paul had to quit to go back to school, I took his place. I lived alone until the apple season was over and I came home before Thanksgiving.

Then came Pearl Harbor. Like everybody, we were shocked about the news of Pearl Harbor. I suppose as an



Arthur Hayashi graduated from Alameda High School in 1941 where he participated in baseball, football, and ROTC (2nd row behind flag).



average teenager I assumed that our lives would go on smoothly with no problems on our horizon. At first I was carried away by patriotic fever and seriously thought of volunteering for the Army. I had three years of ROTC in high school so I felt I was well acquainted with the military. I'm glad I didn't go ahead. In time we heard about people in San Pedro being evacuated and held in Santa Anita Race Track. We also heard of people in the state of Washington being given the same treatment. It didn't help our sense of self-esteem when Lt. General DeWitt, Commanding General of the Western Defense made a flat statement that "A Jap is a Jap" which then encouraged the Hearst papers to publicize their hate messages.

Pearl Harbor and the following events put pressures on us much more than the average American. California Attorney General Earl Warren before the Congressional Committee stated that the reason the Japanese on the West Coast were quiet was they were waiting for a signal to make an all out "Banzai" effort. With the public statements made by the Army General and the Attorney General of California, the hate groups really came out of the closet.

The Hearst Papers were especially strong in voicing hate for the Japanese in America. Organizations such as the Native Sons & Daughters of the Golden West, the California Grange, American Legion, all super patriots, were pushing for removal from our homes.

When I was in elementary school, two Caucasian friends and I decided to cut school and go swimming at the pool in Neptune Beach because it was a very hot day. Neptune Beach in Alameda was a playground with a Merry-go-round, game concessions and above all, a swimming pool and a beach on San Francisco Bay. I went up to the booth to pay the pool fee when I was asked "Are you Chinese or a Jap?" I was speechless and so one of my friends asked why. We were told if I was a Jap, I couldn't swim in the pool. None of us went swimming that day. So when the hate groups came out after Pearl Harbor, it brought to mind my first experience with what our older members of the community tried to shield us from.

Our parents were denied citizenship by law in 1926. Those of us born in the United States had an average age of early or mid twenties, in other words hadn't had a toe hold in the mainstream of American Life. The F.B.I. moved right in and removed the leaders of the Japanese community. I don't know how they knew who was prom-

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inent, but Mr. Miki was picked up right away. He had a shop that sold Japanese goods, chinaware, cloths, lacquer wares, etc. I just remember cheaply made Japanese toys. What brought it home to me was our next door neighbor Mr. Maruyama. Mr. Maruyama was a gardener and was picked up while he was working. Mr. Maruyama was taken to Angel Island and confined there with the rest of the Japanese leaders in the Bay Area. Mr. Maruyama's wife packed a suitcase with his suit, clean clothes and toilet articles and asked Mr. Maruyama's brother to take the suitcase to Angel Island. Mr. Maruyama's brother was also held and never came back. Attorney General Earl Warren of California told the Congressional Committee that we were not to be trusted.

The pressures began to get heavier. We were ordered to turn in to the police our weapons, short wave radios and our cameras. I still remember taking our box camera and two folding cameras to the police station. We didn't have any weapons and we couldn't afford a short wave radio. The surprising thing was that when my father went to claim the cameras three years later, he got all of them back.

The pressure mounted when all enemy aliens were ordered out of Alameda, so we stored our few pieces of furniture at the church. My father asked a so-called friend to sell the cleaning equipment, assessed about \$1,200, take out his commission and send the money to my father. We never, ever heard from that man again.

My father belonged to a group that got together quite often to write traditional Japanese poetry. I guess he was quite an intellectual though he loved baseball. The first memories I have of him was when I got to play catch with him when I was about five or six years old. He often spoke publicly and I remember him when he put on a play and acted in the lead. Anyway a member of the poetry group told my father that our family could move into his house in the basement in West Oakland. This man, Mr. Shiozawa, was a tailor and had his shop in the basement with some extra rooms and a kitchen.

My parents, Butch, Muts, and Gracie, moved to West Oakland while Paul and I moved to the home of Sam Miki in Alameda. As Paul and I were not classified as aliens, we could stay in Alameda. We were informed that we were under curfew from 8:00 pm to 6:00 am. I remember going to a movie one night and coming home about 9:00 pm and was scared as hell. Needless to say, I didn't go to the movies anymore at night. Another restriction was that we were not to go beyond a five mile limit from our home. The poor guys that worked in San Francisco could not go to work. Naturally all Japanese banks were closed and all assets frozen.

I took over some of the gardening jobs that some of the Isseis have had for years. In fact when Mr. Ikezoe gave me the keys to the shed of a customer, he broke into tears. Paul also worked as a helper. We shared Sam Miki's expenses.

Mr. Gengo Ito sold me his beat up Model A truck and his gardening tools for \$40.00 so I was in business. Mostly it was maintenance work and I had the luxury of being my own boss.

Sam decided to move out of Alameda and stay with his wife's relatives. Sam tried to sell his furniture so I witnessed these characters, like vultures, come to strip the house of its fine furniture and whatever they could get their hands on. One time when I came home from work, I was informed the F.B.I. came to the house. I had found my personal papers tampered with.

Eventually Sam Miki moved out so Paul and I moved to Oakland and rejoined the family, but not for long. The Bay Area, section by section, was ordered to be evacuated to Tanforan Race Track. We assembled at 18th Street in Oakland next to the Fox Oakland Theater with our bundles of bedding and our suitcases of personal belongings. We were instructed to only bring what we could carry. We were then loaded on buses and taken to Tanforan where we were assigned our room in the tarpaper-covered barracks. Our room was located in the northwest corner of the racetrack and near a latrine and mess hall.

Arthur enlisted in the US Army on August 25, 1944 and eventually served in Japan due to his ability to speak Japanese. He married Fumi Manabe who was also born in Alameda, a girl he first met while housed at the Tanforan Assembly Center. Arthur Tadashi Hayashi's entire memoir can be seen online at AlamedaMuseum.org/Hayashi.

The Alameda Japanese American History Project is based on a US Parks Service grant, to digitize and document materials pertaining to the Japanese in the city of Alameda, pre-war to the 1950s.

The digital scans will be available online at **Densho.org** and the Internet Archive, **Archive.org** to further educate the public about the immigrant experience.

For more information contact Brad Shirakawa at 408-431-2871

Partners on the project are Densho, the Internet Archive, Buddhist Temple of Alameda, Buena Vista Methodist, the Alameda Library, and Rhythmix Cultural Works.

¹ *Black population of Alameda in 1930, 294; in 1940, 249. Reginald James, "Alameda is Our Home," UC Berkeley Sociology Symposium, April 30, 2013.*

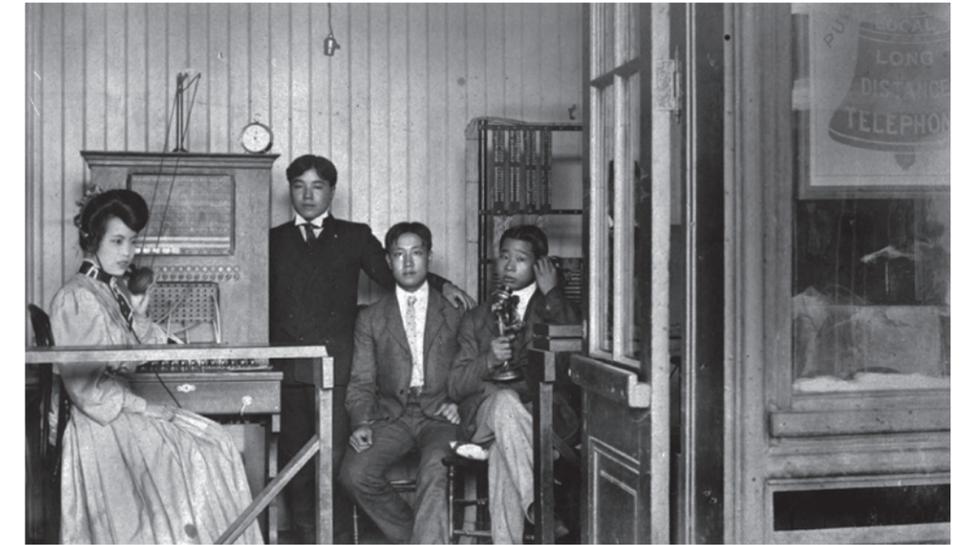
JAPANTOWN DISTRICT >>>

Graduates of the California Certified Imagire Sewing School at 1618 Park Street about 1922.



The first location rented by the Buddhist Temple of Alameda was a storefront at 1630 Park Street shown about 1912. These storefronts were home to several Japanese owned businesses.

A storefront advertising a local and long distance telephone. This switchboard has a female operator. From an album of Alameda photographer Mataichi Ozeki.



ALAMEDA'S JAPANTOWN WAS A COMMUNITY WITH ITS OWN BUSINESSES, HOUSES OF WORSHIP, SPORT TEAMS, AND CULTURAL LEARNING CENTERS.



The Japanese Methodist Church held a farewell service February 15, 1942. Missionaries Dr. J.B. Cobb and his wife were appointed caretakers during the war years. Later the church became the Buena Vista Methodist.

Children and teachers outside the Japanese Language School at 2256 Pacific Avenue.

Chigo, a festival procession outside the Buddhist Temple social hall in 1926.

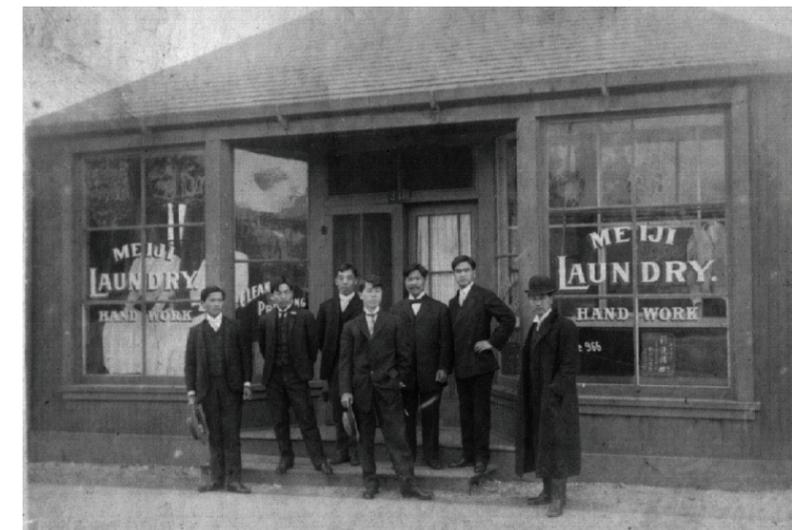
THE ALAMEDA JA HISTORY PROJECT IS COLLECTING PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES OF THESE PIONEERS. TO CONTRIBUTE CONTACT BRAD SHIRAKAWA AT 408-431-2871.

Kakutaro Ikeda was issued a building permit in 1913 for a greenhouse at 2530 Blanding Avenue. His son Harry eventually took over the business known as the Alameda Nursery. The photo shows their delivery truck in front, circa 1930. Today this is the site of the Bridgeside Shopping Center near the Fruitvale Bridge.



A group of well-dressed men outside the Meiji Laundry also at 1618 Park Street about 1905.

Kenji Shiota in front of his shoe store at 1631 1/2 Park Street.



Images: Sewing School, Telephone Office, Language School - Kay Yatabe
Temple First Location - Takuritsu Morita family
Chigo Procession - Iwaihara family collection





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From the President's Podium

by Valerie Turpen

*A*s 2021 closed the museum board said farewell to two of our members, Lynn Houlihan and Myrna van Lunteren. Lynn stepped in as Treasurer and helped organize financial information on a monthly basis during her term. Myrna served as Vice-President and managed the digitization of the museum collection from the start and she applied for the grant that pays for it. She has done an amazing job with volunteers helping to photograph, catalogue, and file the many objects in our warehouse. Myrna writes a good newsletter story, too! All the best to both as they start new adventures. Our other board members have returned for another term.

Things have started to move in the museum, both literally and figuratively. The high-wheel bicycle and the large two-wheeled cart have traveled to the second gallery window, on display for those passing by. A magnificent antique bookcase now resides in the vintage shop thanks to Denise Brady who was instrumental in arranging its donation by the estate of Rosemary Hallum. The piece was moved to the museum by Gilbert Munoz of 3-D Hauling whose team did a great job maneuvering the daily traffic jam on Alameda Avenue.

In January the museum held a two-day sidewalk sale of books, DVDs, and CDs clearing out much of our inventory. People *do* still love to read handheld tomes! Visitors found some treasures and deals—the entire series of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for instance—that guy was in heaven. Antique books can still be found in the barrister's bookcases now in the front hall.

New member Michael Collier has pepped up sales in the shop with online postings. We do not ship out merchandise, but are alerting visitors to unique items we have for sale. We meet weekly to review and research inventory. Thank you Mike for your hardwork in photographing, measuring, and answering the many questions. Visits have increased both to the museum and the shop.

I have been in touch with several researchers either in person or by email making inquiries about persons, businesses, or properties in Alameda. I hope to run a few stories in the *AMQ* from these historians. Featured in the center spread this month are images from the Alameda Japanese American History Project which museum personnel have been helping to identify.

The Meyers House is open again on the fourth Saturday of the month. Virgil Silver and Ross Dileo have been busy once again in the garden fixing faucets, cleaning the storage area, and maintaining utilities. A new portable toilet was delivered last week. What more can one ask for?

Valerie Turpen

President, Alameda Museum



3-D Hauling carefully loaded and drove this large bookcase across town to its new home in the museum vintage shop.

Then and Now



1951

This ornate Italianate home featured an expansive porch, fanciful details along the roofline, and an elaborate bay window with a dormer. The structure was not to be missed by train passengers arriving at the Park Street Station. Image: Alameda Museum.

2022

Do you remember this grand Italianate residence at 1710 Everett Street north of Tilden Way? According to research by Woody Minor, it was built for Jason Springer, the owner of a company that manufactured wood doors and sash. Constructed in 1877, it was a showcase home in the fashionable neighborhood (now known as The Wedge) that developed around the Park Street Station.

The architect was Theodore A. Eisen, the son of Swedish-born architect Augustus Eisen. Trained in St. Louis, Theodore worked in his father's San Francisco office, later establishing his own firm on Sutter Street. Eisen moved on to Los Angeles in 1887 and continued his career in the south. The Springer House was his only known creation in Alameda.

A story in the *Encinal* November 24, 1877 detailed some of the mansion's attributes. The interior was described as having 13-foot ceilings, a first floor hall 9 feet by 30 feet long, and mantels made of brown mottled Knoxville marble.

Apparently, Springer lost his fortune due to several fires at his factories both in San Francisco and other states. None were insured to cover the cost. There was also a slump in the housing market in the late 1890s, slowing the need for Springer's



Far from ornate, but still a landmark for directions to turn onto Buena Vista Avenue (look for the car wash) the lot was leveled for this building in the 1960s. Although slightly altered, the house still stands at 1712 Everett, as seen at the edge of the top photo. Image: Valerie Turpen.

product, causing further financial loss. By 1895 the former millionaire was working as a laborer at a lumber mill in Dunsmuir, CA. Retired New York capitalist Frederick E. Mason purchased the home where he resided with his wife and two daughters. When one married the son-in-law moved in as well. It was also a terrific place to raise prize-winning chickens and Belgian Hares which could be purchased any day, but Sunday.

In 1930, resident Mrs. Gertrude Lovett discovered her husband Henry Colyer Lovett, Alameda business investor and wealthy paint manufacturer was also living in Berkeley with a university student.

Gertrude was awarded the house in the divorce, but eventually moved to Oregon.

As the house passed on from owner to owner it eventually fell into disrepair, standing empty for many years. As relayed by one of the perpetrators, the youth of Alameda entertained themselves by throwing rocks through the windows.

By the 1960s Good Chevrolet purchased the property with plans to level the lot for an automobile storage site. This plan did not materialize, but a car wash was built the following year. The car wash has also had a series of owners and names, but remains to this day as a spot where you can pay the price to wash, vacuum, and shine your car.



FROM THE COLLECTION

From a Butter Paddle to a Few Peanuts

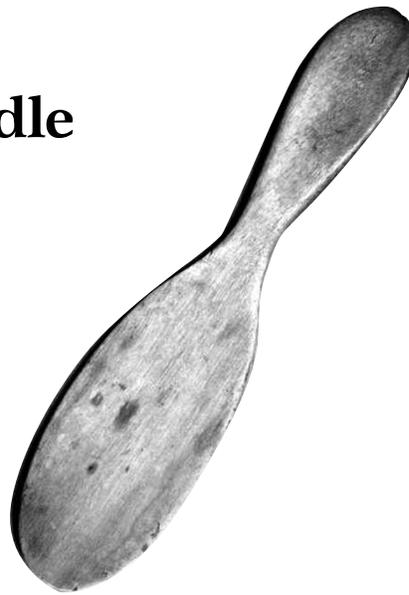
by Ron Ucovich

IN THE VICTORIAN KITCHEN

at the Alameda Museum you will find a utensil that looks like a flattened wooden spoon. It is called a butter paddle, and it was used to scrape the butter off the churn dasher on an old-fashioned butter churn. This paddle was given to my grandmother by her mother about 120 years ago. Her mother needed a butter paddle, so her father made this one out of an old hairbrush. When her mother eventually bought a new paddle, she gave my grandmother the old one to play with. My grandmother kept it her whole life.

Grandma grew up on a country farm near San Antonio, Texas. She was the eldest of 13 children. Farmers always had large families in those days, because it took lots of kids to do all the daily chores. Churning butter was one of her many household duties. First, she had to milk the cow. Then, the milk was poured into the cream separator, which consisted of a spinning drum where centrifugal force floated the cream to the top and the skim milk to the bottom. The cream was then poured into the churn. Modern churns have rotary blades inside, but the older ones had a plunger which churned vertically.

After about half an hour of churning, the cream would begin to get a little stiff. The result was pure whipped cream, which is fine to eat if you are making desserts, but you have another half hour of churning if you want butter. Soon, butter began to separate into clumps, and she then had buttermilk. Next she would color the butter with powdered marigold petals, and then she would keep on churning for another half hour. At that point, the churn would feel very stiff, and the butter would be clumped onto the churn dasher. She then added salt,



This butter paddle in the museum collection was used about 120 years ago for scraping butter from the "dasher" in the butter churn.

A dasher is a device that agitates milk or cream in a churn.

drained it with cheesecloth, then used butter paddles to shape it into a cube.

Whew! That was a lot of work, so making butter was reserved for holidays and special occasions. For everyday cooking, grandma used bacon drippings. Her stove had a built-in cast-iron griddle that had a trough around it with a catch basin for catching the bacon drippings. A typical Sunday morning breakfast would be a pound of bacon, fried eggs, and sliced bread, and everything was fried in bacon grease. It was delicious.

For baking pastries and roasting vegetables, lard was always the preferred fat. Of course, back on the farm, you had to render the lard yourself. Lard and bacon grease are basically the same thing, but bacon grease has a smoky and salty aftertaste which may not be desirable on your homemade biscuits. After a pig was slaughtered, grandma used to trim off all the fat, run the fat through a meat grinder, and bake it slowly for several hours. The liquid fat is strained through cheesecloth, then it is ready to pour into a Mason jar until you are ready to use it. If you buy this product at the grocery store, it is

called pork suet, and it is still available today for anyone interested in retro-cookery.

The practice of churning butter originated in northern Europe. The Austrians developed the art of cooking vegetables in butter sauce. The Germans expanded the idea by making very rich sauces with lemon butter or garlic butter, and they developed a sweet butter cream for topping desserts. The Danes developed the process of rolling yeast dough very thinly, and layering fine coats of butter, and stacking layer upon layer, and rolling, and folding, and rolling again until they had dozens of layers of butter dough. The resulting pastries turned out airy and crispy on the outside, and flaky and buttery on the inside, and to this day, we still call them Danish pastries.

The southern European countries along the Mediterranean Sea did not use butter. A typical dinner table would have a small dish of olive oil for each person to dip his bread. And, for cooking, they would sauté crushed garlic in olive oil to make a garlic sauce as a base for whatever type of vegetable or meat that they desired. Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece are still world-renowned for their exotic olive oils. European connoisseurs are just as particular about their olive oil as they are about their wine.

Both butter and olive oil have an inherent problem: you can't use them for deep-frying food. You can sauté food, but if you fry food at a high temperature, it acquires an unpleasant aftertaste. The smoke point of butter is 275°F, at which point it develops a strong, nutty flavor. This is produced when the protein and sugars begin to caramelize. For many people, this flavor is desirable for grains, rice, and root vegetables. If you go above 300°F, you will begin to get a smoky flavor, which is used mostly for confections, such as toffee, or popcorn. Freshly popped corn topped with caramelized butter is a treat that no one can resist.

I'll bet you thought that butter-scotch originated in Scotland. Wrong! It came from Yorkshire, England.

Continued on page 11. . .



Butter Paddle... *Continued from page 10*

Butterscotch is an Old English word meaning scorched butter. They took brown sugar and butter, and heated it up to the smoke point, and when it cooled, the resulting confection was a caramel sauce they could add to toppings and custards. If they raised the temperature to the burn point, when it cooled the confection was hard and brittle, and was called toffee.

One fortuitous day in 1851, Queen Victoria was touring the township of Doncaster. Upon departing, Her Majesty was presented with a tin of toffee from the village confectionery, which she graciously accepted. She was so delighted with the flavor, she asked her royal chef to prepare for her a softer version of this recipe. The chef made a butter sauce, and raised the temperature to the burn point stage, but as it was cooling, he slowly added cream to the mixture. He called this delightful sauce *caramel*, which in French means sugarcane honey. Today, we use the toffee recipe to make hard confections, such as brittle, nougat, and praline, and the caramel recipe is used to make soft desserts, such as flan, dulce de leche, and crème brûlée.

We see, now, that burnt butter did have practical uses, but for frying at high temperatures, lard was the preferred medium. By the middle 1800s, deep-fried foods became quite popular. In France, French fried potatoes were fashionable. The Portuguese were the first to make a batter of flour, eggs, and baking soda to coat seafood before deep frying it in lard. The Japanese used this idea to make tempura vegetables. Fish and chip stands sprang up all over England, and became as popular as hamburger stands in America. In the northern US states, donut shops popped up everywhere, and in the southern states, fritters were the rage: corn fritters, apple fritters, banana fritters, zucchini fritters, yam fritters, and even okra fritters.

In the year 1903, the Procter & Gamble Company, who had been making hand soap out of beef tallow, experimented with vegetable oil,

trying to create a cleaner, cheaper and more fragrant product. They hydrogenated pure cottonseed oil to harden it so it would remain solid at room temperature, but before adding the lye and soda ash to make it hand soap, they decided to experiment with it as a food source. They were astonished to learn that it made a perfect substitute for butter. It was cheaper to make, it had a high burn point, it was odorless, it was pure white in color, it had a very long shelf life, and it didn't have to be churned. They called it "crystallized cottonseed oil," a name that would later be shortened to "Crisco."

Soon, dozens of companies began to manufacture butter made from hydrogenated vegetable oil. It was named oleomargarine. Most companies simply called their product oleo or margarine, but the butter industry never allowed them to call it butter. They were also prohibited to use artificial coloring to make the margarine look like butter. This law was rescinded during WWII, when animal fat was in short supply, and real butter was very scarce. By 1950, oleomargarine had gained popularity for everyday

The Rosefield Packing Company would be the most successful business to come out of Alameda, California. Before the company turned its attention to the making of peanut butter, it was one of the largest pickle makers in the state of California. In the museum collection is an early metal container from the 1930s.



use, because of the cheaper price, and because it no longer looked like Crisco.

During the early 1900s, a medical doctor named John Harvey Kellogg ran a health spa and sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan. He was a vegetarian and a staunch advocate of a diet rich in whole grains, roots, nuts and berries. Dr. Kellogg employed a nutrition expert named Joseph Rosefield, who helped him engineer health foods for the sanitarium. At that time, all margarine was made from canola, safflower, sunflower, and cotton seeds, because the oils were light and fragrant, and had no strong aftertaste. Mr. Rosefield decided to hydrogenate peanut oil to make a high-protein butter substitute. He called it peanut butter, and the guests at the sanitarium loved it!

Mr. Rosefield retained the rights to manufacture peanut butter, and by 1932 he chose Alameda as the most suitable location to open his new enterprise. As a stroke of genius, Mr. Rosefield chose not to sell his product as a health food, but instead he would target his marketing toward children. He named his peanut butter after a children's cartoon character, Skippy. In the 1950s, when television became popular, the Skippy Company sponsored TV shows that appealed to children. When it sponsored the *Mickey Mouse Club*, the slogan was, "Yippee, Skippy!" When it sponsored *Dennis the Menace*, the slogan was, "If you like peanuts, you'll like Skippy." And the advertising tag line for *You Asked For It* was, "America's favorite bread spread!"

The Skippy factory prospered well at the corner of Webster Street and Atlantic until 1955 when they sold to Best Foods and moved to Texas. Next time you go to Walgreens Drug Store on Webster Street, stand on the sidewalk right next to the front curb, and look down at your feet. Chances are you'll be standing on the plaque that marks the spot where Skippy Peanut Butter was born.





ALAMEDA MUSEUM

2324 Alameda Avenue
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IN MEMORY

Robert Welch

our friend and longtime museum docent unexpectedly passed away in January.

Visitors and volunteers alike could enjoy a stimulating conversation with Robert at the front desk on the fourth Sunday of the month.

We will miss him dearly.

Our condolences go out to his family and many friends. Thank you to those who have honored his memory with donations supporting the Alameda Museum.

THE ALAMEDA MUSEUM BOARD

ALAMEDA MUSEUM

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Interested in research?
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3:00 pm last tour

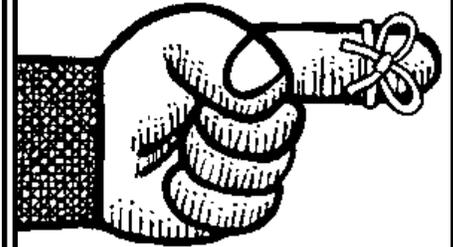
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RETIRING VOLUNTEERS

Lynn Houlihan
Myrna van Lunteren
Stephen Yslas

Thank you for the time you have devoted to the support of the museum and best wishes with your next adventure.

The Alameda Museum Board



A Little Reminder...

Have you renewed your membership?

Check the mailing label on the envelope your newsletter arrived in.