



The Cottage in 1884, a restaurant on Central Avenue along the rail line was run by Louis Schroeder. The signage shows a separate ladies entrance and beer is five cents. The site became known as the Cottage Baths. Carpenter William Shaarschmidt purchased the property and the Schmidt (name change) family ran the business until 1950. Image: Alameda Museum.

REMEMBERING ALAMEDA'S SOUTH SHORE RESORTS by Fred J. Croll

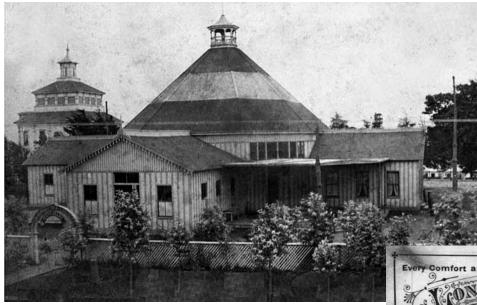
This is an excerpt from the museum archives of a story which ran in the *Alameda Times-Star* on June 24, 1949. It is a reminiscence of Fred J. Croll, Alameda Auditor and Assessor. Croll also founded the Alameda Historical Society in 1948 which eventually became the Alameda Museum. This story has been edited for length and clarity.

The Crolls came to Alameda in 1883. My father, J.G. Croll, was brought here by U.S. Senator James G. Fair, one of the big four Bonanza Kings, who made millions in the Comstock Lode in the fabulous mining days of Nevada. My dad in those days owned and operated a restaurant in Oakland. One of his closest friends was County Supervisor Talcott, a well known dairyman, whose dairy in Fruitvale will be remembered by many early Alamedans. Incidentally, Supervisor George Janssen, an early schoolmate of mine, now represents this district. Janssen, too, can tell the story of the beaches. Talcott introduced my father to Fair who persuaded him to come to Alameda and take over the management of the Neptune Gardens, probably the largest resort of its kind in the West.

The Gardens were acquired by Fair after the 1884 bankruptcy sale, corresponding with the completion of his narrow gauge railroad, which ran from Alameda Point, along Central Avenue, passing the Gardens, to Encinal Avenue, crossing San Leandro Bay to San Jose and terminating at Santa Cruz.

The Gardens had a frontage on Central Avenue running from McKay Avenue to the first house to the east (now

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Neptune Gardens became the Long Branch Swimming Baths. This image shows the arched gateway to the building known as the Wigwam now emblazoned with the words Long Branch.

The building in the distance was the laundry which held large water tanks. The Long Branch Baths ad (below) advertised they were the only bathing establishment on the coast that regularly washes every bathing garment after use.

All Images: Alameda Museum except where noted.

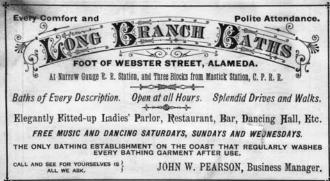
Mountain Mike's Pizza). The grounds were landscaped with flowers, rockeries, promenades, fountains and terraced down to the water. There were several large buildings on the grounds. On the extreme eastern end was a large two-story building, 100 feet high, used as a bath house and laundry. Above the second story were large water tanks, which I believe were used as a pressure system for the entire premises. In later years this building was the headquarters for the Western Athletic Club.

Adjoining this building was the famous Wigwam, a large dance hall. It was a circular building with four large open air wings, the dance floor being in the center. It could accommodate 500 dancers. Years later this building became well known as a political convention hall and as training quarters for nationally known pugilists.

The Gardens also possessed a zoo, the only one in the history of our city. It contained bears, monkeys, eagles, raccoons, badgers, foxes and many other types of wild animals. One time the bears escaped by eating through the wooden cage. It took a posse led by my dad and his help together with the police force, which consisted of four men, and the poundman with his lasso, two days to capture the animals as they roamed through the woods of Alameda.

In the western end of the grounds was a large two-story building called the Hotel Neptune Delmonico. It was a cross between a hotel and a mansion, and contained 16 rooms. This was our family home for many years.

On the beach adjoining the high land was Long Branch Baths. This was one of a group of bathing establishments that flourished in the early days of Alameda. It reached from Washington Park to the foot of Central Avenue. Adjoining the baths was the famous Neptune Pavilion, one of the largest buildings ever constructed in Alameda



County, much on the style of the Oakland Auditorium, except that it was of wooden construction. In the center of the building was a partition with huge doors.

The western half of the building was used as a theater with a fully dressed stage. The theater had seating for 5,000 people. It was equipped with chairs instead of theater seats and at times the chairs would be removed and the front of the theater would be turned into an arena where broadsword contests by men on horseback would be held. I still remember the name of Major Duncan Ross, the champion broadswordsman of the world.

The eastern half of the building was used as a skating rink, ballroom and, in later years, as a football field by the West End

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John G. Croll in 1915.



South Shore Resorts. . . Continued from page 2

boys in wet weather. The building proved to be a white elephant from the day it was completed. It was torn down in 1894 by Fair and shipped to his ranch in Newark in southern Alameda County, where he had extensive holdings.

On Sundays during the summer, Central Avenue became a miniature Great White Way. At times 25,000 people would be enjoying themselves between Ninth Street and the water at the foot of Fourth Street. The visitors would come by ferry from San Francisco and by horsecar from Oakland.

The most eastern resort was Schuetzen Park, a large picnic ground. Burbank Street runs through the center of this former resort. It was patronized by all the leading German societies of San Francisco. It had a large covered dance hall with a hardwood floor that would hold hundreds. In later years this property was used as a bicycle racing track, with high banked turns and then as a baseball park, the home grounds in the late 1890s of the Alerts and the West End Bazaars, two outstanding teams that represented our city. The only bathing establishment built east of Webster Street was located on the Washington Park baseball diamond, and was called Palm Beach. It was built around 1915 and of all the baths located along the strip, other than Purcell's, it was the only pool built on high land. All others were constructed on the beach. A fortune was lost on the investment and after a year or two the place was abandoned.

Through the efforts of our first city manager, C.E. Hewes, the park was purchased by the city for \$23,000 in 1918. Mr. Hewes, incidentally, was one of our outstanding city managers. This purchase doubled the size of the park. Little do the fans know that today buried in the infield of the diamond are the remains of the Palm Beach pool.

In 1916, a group of men who had operated Surf Beach Park purchased the site of the old Neptune Gardens and founded the largest and best known of all the beaches, naming it Neptune Beach. This property later was acquired by Bob Strehlow, who developed it into an outstanding resort. Southern Pacific ran special trains on Sunday directly to the beach. On some Sundays the attendance

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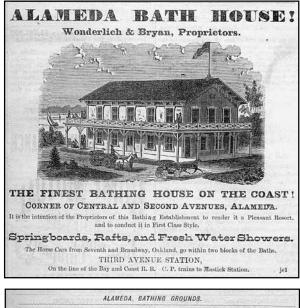
There was a drastic slope down to the beach at Washington Park. The homes along 8th Street at Portola can be seen above the retaining wall in the distance. The swimming pool was on the upper terrace and is now buried under a baseball diamond.

This three-story structure housed the changing rooms for Washington Park in 1918. They were acquired from Palm Beach.





South Shore Resorts. . . Continued from page 3





Bertha Dietz with husband George Masters, Sr. and son Jr. in the water at Sunny Cove Baths. They inherited the baths from Emma and Mary Dietz.



was as high as 20,000. Many of present-day Alamedans were familiar with the place. It was closed down and sold in 1940.

Westerly from here and near the foot of Sixth Street was located the Terrace Baths, built by Haley and Edson in the 1870s. They were the largest and most prominent of the early day resorts. It had a sand bottom pool which was 300 x 350 feet, being one of the largest salt water pools ever built. There were 240 bath houses, club houses, 4,000 bathing suits and 1,200 private suits. For night bathing the pool was lighted by 22 gas lamps. It was closed and abandoned around 1890.

Next along the strip is the well known and modern bathing establishment, Cottage Baths. It is owned and operated under the excellent management of Mrs. Anna Schmidt, known to everybody as Ma Schmidt. She is honored every year by the West End School Boys' Association, being one of the few surviving pioneer mothers of the West End. What a subject she would be for some newspaper or magazine writer. She remembers more than 50 years spent operating the baths, and some of her famous patrons included Jack Dempsey, Al Jolson and our Governor Earl Warren.

Adjoining Cottage Baths a newcomer appeared in 1917. It was a surf beach operated by Frank McCauley and known as Sunset Beach. It operated until 1919, when it was abandoned and the property taken over by Ma Schmidt. At the foot of Fifth Street were the Newport Baths. It was a large and beautiful structure that flourished during the 1880s. Like many of its competitors, it also had a short life and closed down around 1890.

Many present Alamedans will remember Kiernan's Green Arbor Baths which adjoined the Newport. Here was a small narrow pool, a favorite place for the school kids. West of the Green Arbor was the Sunny Cove, which is still operating. This beach is the oldest of all the resorts, being continually operated by the family of George Masters for more than 60 years. It was famous for its sandy beach and surf bathing, and was extremely popular during the 1890s. A pool was built in 1917. Two small establishments adjoined the Sunny Cove on the west. One was operated by the Porters and was known as the Alameda Beach, the other was called the Sandy Beach.

In 1934, the last and most westerly pool was built by Leo Purcell, a well known resident of Alameda. He is an outstanding swimmer, for years swimming under the colors of the Olympic Club. He holds many records. His many trophies are displayed in a large glass case at the baths. In the rear of the pool is a splendidly decorated room called Marine Hall.

During my long residence in our city, I have seen the filling in by the Naval Air Station over 2,000 acres, a new site of the West End High School, the Maritime School, the Emmons Tract at the foot of Grand Street, the south side of Otis Drive, and now the Tide Lands off Krusi Park.

It is my belief that in the future the shoreline will be at the edge of the Tide Lands approximately a half mile from the present sea wall. At the boundary of the Tide Lands there probably will be constructed a boulevard facing deep water running the entire



South Shore Resorts. . . Continued from page 4

length of the city and facing property owned by the City of Alameda. This will rival the beaches of Santa Cruz and of southern California. If this happens Alameda again will be proud of beautiful sand beaches such as those which attracted pioneers in the early days of California.





THIRD AVENUE STATION, on the Narrow-Gauge Railroad. Near the Foot of Webster Street, Alameda. MR. R. HALEY HAS FITTED UP THESE BATHS WITH ALL MODERN IMprovements, and intends keeping the "Terrace" as a thoroughly respectable, safe and comfortable establishment. Shower Bathsi Comfortable Dressing Rooms I Failroad to Mastick Station; or South Pacific Coast Railroad to Third Avenue Station.

Anna Johnson and William Schaarschmidt in an ocean themed portrait. The couple were married in 1881. He purchased the Cottage Saloon and Restaurant in Alameda which became the Cottage Baths.

William died in 1905 leaving his widow with eight children. She shortened her last name and became known as "Ma" Schmidt proprietor of the baths and mother to Nell Schmidt, championship swimmer.

REMEMBER ! The FIRST Bathing House below Webster street, on Central avenue

The Vintage Shop at the Alameda Museum

Donations of objects to the Alameda Museum are used in two ways. Items are assessed for the importance to Alameda history before being accepted to the archives. Other quality items are sold in our vintage shop and used to raise funds for the museum. We currently are not accepting large furniture. Donations can be brought to the museum during regular business hours on Saturday and Sunday.

If you have questions or are interested in a drop-off on a weekday please leave a message at 510-521-1233 or send an email inquiry to info@alamedamuseum.org.



manual Find Something Unique

WEST END MECCA **FOR BATHERS** by Dennis Evanosky

Bathers found the waters along Alameda's south shore a source of relaxation. In 1877– some forty years before James Strehlow opened Neptune Beach-word reached Alameda that the South Pacific Coast Railroad would be coming to town. It didn't take long for entrepreneurs to cash in on the fact that this new railroad practically hugged the bay shore, helping nurture a new industry: the baths.

In 1877, even before the advent of the SPCRR, a certain "Mr. Salara" started the Alameda Salt Water Baths. The entrance to the baths stood on the southwest corner of Central Avenue and Fifth Street. Perhaps Salara knew that the South Pacific Coast planned to build a station at that very spot. The following February Salara sold his enterprise to John P. Wonderlich. Joseph Baker in Past and Present of Alameda County wrote that Wonderlich "at once commenced elaborate improvements, no less than \$28,000 being spent on them."

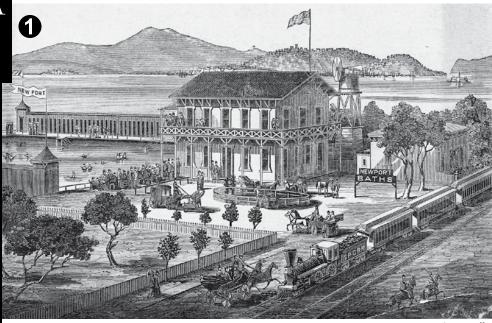
Wonderlich soon took on a partner, Alonzo W. Bryan; the pair renamed their venture the Newport Baths. According to the 1878 Husted's Directory Wonderlich and Bryan soon had company. G.W. Trover opened the Sunny Cove Baths right next door.

Wonderlich, Bryan and Trover soon had even more rivals for the bathers' money. Robert Cook opened Sandy Beach Baths, and John T. Gilman invited bathers to enjoy the waters at his Green Arbor Baths.

In the meantime bathing fever had spread east down Central Avenue. Robert Haley wanted to cash in. He opened the Terrace Baths on the southeast corner of Sixth Street. And a group of investors pooled their money-\$21,000, a tidy sum in 1878-and purchased Patrick Britt's seven-acre farm at the foot of Webster Street. The buyers transformed the Britt farm into the Long Branch Baths.

"The Long Branch Swimming Baths were the largest of the famous Alameda swimming baths, with comfortable rooms and elegantly appointed grounds," Baker wrote. J. W. Pearson was among the Oakland investors who spent \$70,000-this after handing Britt \$21,000 for the propertybuilding the Long Branch Baths. "There are a dancing-pavilion, swings, shooting-ranges, etc., all being leased by Capt. George Cantus, a gentleman well known all over the State of California," Baker gushed.

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FROM THE COLLECTION

Step Right Up and Win a Prize!

by Valerie Turpen

ON DISPLAY NEAR THE NEPTUNE BEACH EXHIBIT is

a collection of humorous figures in a case. These figures are examples of prizes won at a beach or carnival concession. The place to try your luck at Neptune Beach was called the Streets of Damascus.

Carnival games originated in European courts during the Renaissance period. Festivals often lasted for days with an abundance of food and dancing. Jousting competitions were a favorite and other competitive activities included exhibitions of strength, sporting challenges, and contests of skill. Also for amusement were card games, board games, and games of chance.

Forward a few centuries and these same amusements appeared in America. Here carnivals were traveling shows with vaudeville acts, magic, and animal performances. You could also view a variety oddities both of the human and animal kind.

The term "midway" was used at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The *Midway Plaisance* was filled with shows and games. After the exposition closed, the term midway came to be used to signify the area where such entertainment could be found at all fairs, circuses, or amusement parks.

Games like ring toss, balloon and dart, milk bottle knock down, and various tests of strength became the standard and renditions of the originals are still played today. At some point prizes were awarded giving the visitor an incentive to play. These awards ranged from small trinkets made of paper, wood or metal to larger items. Prizes included household goods, stuffed animals, and eventually chalkware figures portraying animals,



The midway at Neptune Beach circa 1930. The Streets of Damascus area was intended to create the feel of an exotic marketplace. Here you could play games and win prizes like chalkware figures, lamps, and dinnerware.

birds, bouquets of flowers, and busts of famous people.

Chalkware is made from Plaster of Paris, a mix of powdered and heattreated gypsum. It was used to create inexpensive ceramics in the 19th century as a substitute for expensive European porcelain. Doll and novelty companies began producing carnival chalkware in large quantities for little money making them the perfect prize on the midway. The figures were handpainted with oil and watercolors. In the 1920s airbrush painting was used extensively. Applying the paint with a spray gun minimized the production time, but the trade-off was a poorer quality rendition of the subject.

Chalkware pigs dogs, and sailors were popular prizes. Images: Alameda Museum.

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The figures in the museum collection include dogs, sailors, and pigs. Two of the sailor figures are clearly a portrayal of Popeye the Sailor Man. This character first appeared in 1929 in the King Features comic strip. Popeye is known for his squinting right eye, muscular forearms with anchor tattoos, and a corncob pipe.

The duck in a sailor suit is obviously a Donald Duck impersonator. This Disney character first appeared in a story with Mickey Mouse in 1931. He made his debut in the signature sailor suit in a film in 1934.

The various dogs, pigs, a saluting sailor, and sailor girl (a product of the 1920s) vary between airbrushed and handpainted. These figures were collected by the prizewinning Fenn family of Alameda Avenue. It is unknown what concession stands they were actually won at. Interesting though that the favorite subject are the sailor figures. "Of course," you may think, "Alameda was a Navy town." Indeed it was, however, Neptune Beach had closed its doors and auctioned off its contents by the time NAS Alameda opened in 1940 and the real sailors came to town.

ALAMEDA MUSEUM QUARTERLY · ISSUE NUMBER 2 · JUNE 2023

BE A MUSEUM DOCENT

MAKE SOME NEW FRIENDS Please contact the

Docent Coordinator Jean Graubart 510-217-8193

volunteer@AlamedaMuseum.org

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

Alameda Museum 2324 Alameda Avenue Alameda, CA 94501 alamedamuseum.org 510-521-1233

Designer: Valerie Turpen

Museum Directors Valerie Turpen, President Rasheed Shabazz, Vice-President Ron Mooney, Treasurer Melissa Warren-Hagaman, Secretary Melissa Marchi Kalie Sacco

A QUESTION:

How is the MJB Coffee company connected to the Siegfried family of Alameda Avenue? There are two reasons. List both reasons and send in an email to: President@alamedamuseum.org The first person to answer correctly will receive two tickets to tour the Meyers estate including the Edwin Siegfried, painter of the marshes display.



From the President's Podium

by Valerie Turpen

t has been a bit of a rollercoaster ride since our last newsletter. The board was expecting to introduce our new Executive Director and run an overview of our plans in this issue, but there were some complications and our selected candidate unfortunately could not continue with the position. The hiring committee is meeting to evaluate our next steps in this process and discussing the best direction for the museum at this time.

Some good news is that the museum has been approved for available funding from the Nonprofit Cultural Institutions section of the California Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program. We also received a grant from the Alameda Community Fund which will help with the continued effort to digitize the archive collection.

On June 21 the Downtown Alameda Business Association held a mixer (see page 11) in the open space on Alameda Avenue hosted by the Alameda Museum and the *Alameda Post*. Adam Gillitt and Dennis Evanosky are great supporters of the museum and former officers on our board. We had a chance to meet some of our neighbors and find out about resources available to us.

The museum has started working with student interns once again. Jean Graubart and Carmen Reid reached out to local high schools offering opportunities for those students with an interest in history. Alameda Unified School District requires students to complete twenty hours of community service in order to graduate. We expect to learn a lot from our high school interns about life in our city, their interests, and input on how to make the museum current.

At the Meyers House volunteer Layne Van has been meeting with me monthly since the beginning of the year. We are photographing every object in the collection for the database. Donation and item information has been entered into the Catalogit system, but each piece also needs a picture. It is amazing how many items are in a three story home and three outbuildings. We will be busy for awhile.

AJB B BAJBB CARROR MANDENSTEIN SCO Thanks to docent Ross Dileo we have a refinished Perfection Smokeless Heater, circa 1920. This portable heater was used to heat an auxiliary work area such as the pump/carriage house, where it was found. It is now on display in the MH garage. Ross also acquired a new addition for the Siegfried gallery, a vintage MJB coffee can. "Why?" You may ask...come by the Meyers estate and find out.

Valerie Turpen President, Alameda Museum

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ISSUE

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Then and Now

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MUSEUM



QUARTERLY

c.1900

The rail line ran along Central Avenue to and from the ferry. This postcard shows the entrance to Sunny Cove Baths on the right with the Fifth Street Station buildings in the distance. Figures can be seen crossing to the train running down the middle of the street. For this photo a car is also included, showing you could access the bathing resorts by many means.

1934

I U N F

500 Central Avenue, The Kaney Building

This building served as the Fifth Street Station, the stop for the bathing resorts along Alameda's south shore. In the mid-1880s the South Pacific Coast Railroad established a small shelter on the south side of Central Avenue after closing a station at Sixth Street.

This business district was one of many along the rail lines, but one of the smallest in town. A cleaner, a grocery, a barbershop, and later a bookstore were some of the shops located here.

The structure itself was not built on the site, but transported across the bay from San Francisco on a skow. The *Alameda Argus* reported this feat on March 17, 1886.



Looking East on Central the station is the pitched roof building on the right. The entrance to the waiting room is the arched doorway under the white sign. Image: Western Railway Museum Archive No. 32135.

<image>

their home in one of the two flats in the building. Martin died in 1906 after an accident on

the property. His widow Delia and their four children continued to live upstairs while the first floor became a store with a ticket booth for the train station. Mrs. Kaney and her two oldest daughters worked as ticket agents.

Martin Kaney, a fireman on the steamship

Newark, was the owner. His family made

The shingles and the tall display windows were likely added when the building was remodeled to include the storefront. The arched doorway on the left was the entrance to the waiting room.

The trains evolved from steam to electric with overhead lines. Now the trains, the lines, and the rails are gone, but the row of buildings remain and look very much the same as they did in 1934.

ALAMEDA MUSEUM QUARTERLY · ISSUE NUMBER 2 · JUNE 2023

Downtown Alameda Business Association Monthly Mixer Hosted by the Alameda Post and the Alameda Museum

A fun time was had Wednesday, June 21 on Alameda Avenue in front of the museum. It happened to be Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year, but certainly not the warmest in our city. That didn't seem to hinder the meet and greet amongst representatives of businesses in our historic downtown.

It has been awhile since the Alameda Museum has participated in such events due to the lack of them during the pandemic and the little spare time our volunteer staff and board has had since. Thanks to Ron Mooney, Treasurer, AM (and very involved with DABA) teaming up with Adam and Dennis, *Alameda Post* this gathering happened.

It was refreshing to meet our neighbors, learn more about their businesses and tell them more about the museum. We also were treated to food from across the street at Taqueria Mi Burrito.



Chuck Millar, Dennis Evanosky, and Adam Gillitt longtime museum supporters and history buffs. Adam is now the Publisher and Dennis the Historian at the Alameda Post – Alameda's Online News and Information Source.



Nancy Martin, Jean Wolslegel, and Jean Graubart came down to share their knowledge about the Alameda Museum.



Karen Zeltzer of Alameda Family Services was the event speaker. She is shown with Kathy Weber, Executive Director, of the Downtown Alameda Business Association.





Ron Mooney, Treasurer, Alameda Museum.

Mixer attendees. Images: Valerie Turpen.









2324 Alameda Avenue Alameda CA 94501

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ALAMEDA MUSEUM

OPEN WEEKENDS Saturdays - 11:00 am - 4:00 pm Sundays - 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Interested in research? Call 510-521-1233 or email info@AlamedaMuseum.org



Thank You Evelyn Kennedy!

Evelyn Kennedy has been a longtime member and supporter of the Alameda Museum. Her family moved to Alameda in the 1970s and she has been involved with the museum since its days of residence in the Carnegie Library basement.

Evelyn served on numerous committees, held a seat on the museum board, and coordinated volunteer schedules as Docent Coordinator. Evelyn has been greeting visitors as a docent herself for many years.

Enjoy your retirement Evelyn. We will miss you, but it is a well deserved break from all the time you have donated to the Alameda Museum.

The Alameda Museum Board

When you finish reading this newsletter, DON'T THROW IT AWAY. Pass it on to a neighbor who may not be aware of the interesting things at the Alameda Museum.



Benefiting the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

September 17, 2023 10am - 4pm

For more information visit alameda-legacy-home-tour.org

Contact: Denise Brady 510-469-6324 dbrady001@aol.com