

The Alameda Museum

Quarterly Newsletter

Winter Issue, 2008-2009

Volume XLX

Number 1



☞ Saturday May 2, 11:00 a.m.-noon reception: "**Kids & Queen Victoria,**" twelfth annual art show in the Museum Gallery with work from Alameda elementary students. The opening reception features Queen Victoria (played in 2006 by Edison Teacher Connie Turner, above) and live music by Lillian Cunningham. Free. For information leave a message at 748.0796.

Photo: Judith Lynch

* * * * *

Featured Articles Inside:

**Crocks, Membership Luncheon & Auction Reservation,
Fassing Hotel Door, Two Great Days,
Lectures for 2009, Animal Crackers**

2009 Directors

Diane Coler-Dark, President	Chuck Millar, Vice President
Bob Risley, Treasurer	Robbie Dileo, Secretary
Curator: George Gunn	Adam Koltun
Judith Lynch	Dennis Reno
Ginger Schuler	Michael Studebaker
Sharron Tynn	

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The Alameda Museum Quarterly Newsletter

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by the Communications Staff of the Alameda Museum,

2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501

Telephone 510-521-1233

Website: www.alamedamuseum.org

(The Quarterly is also available in electronic form on the Museum website)

Museum Hours

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

Communications Staff

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George Gunn, Diane Coler-Dark, Judith Lynch, Ron Ucovich, Robbie Dileo
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From the Curator's Desk

by George Gunn

It is with great sadness that I report the passing, suddenly, of our beloved docent, Betty Sewell. A longtime volunteer for the Museum and the Meyers House, her cheerfulness, interest in others, and spontaneous laughter will be missed by all.

* * * * *

The quote "*all good things come to an end,*" justly fits the taking down and boxing of the bridal exhibit at the Meyers House. Jane Burgelin and crew did an outstanding job with this beautiful display. We are planning another exhibit there, however it is still in the planning stages.

* * * * *

Ross Dileo and Virgil Silver have been preparing the three-car garage at the Meyers House for an upcoming exhibit. It is one thing to have the artistic vision, but another to make it become a reality. When the garage is completed it will honor the late Richard Knight, husband of Judith Lynch, and a great supporter of the Museum.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

by Diane Coler-Dark



What a great museum membership we have. Thank you all for your nominations and participation in the election. We now have three new board members rolling up their sleeves to help the Museum: Dennis Reno, Bob Risley, and Sharron Tymn. The membership nominates and elects the board, which then elects the officers. Your officers are: Diane Coler-Dark (president), Chuck Millar (vice president), Robbie Dileo (secretary), and Bob Risley (treasurer). A fund-raising committee was also formed. Dennis Reno took the lead with his high-tech background, and helpers, Ginger Schuler, Michael Studebaker, and Sharron Tymn ready to hit the ground running.

Our museum is now doing what all other successful nonprofits do, soliciting bequests for future funding. Please read the insert in this *Quarterly*, and consider becoming a member of the **Alameda Museum Legacy Society**. We do not want to only thank you for your bequests after you are gone, but to recognize you **now** with your name printed on the Legacy Society Plaque in the Alameda Museum. Personally, years ago, I named an Alameda organization as beneficiary on my IRA and the Museum for a percentage of my estate, because I love my town, and want to ensure the continuation of valuable community assets for future generations.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 21st for the Annual Membership Luncheon, installation of the Board and Silent Auction. If you want to reserve a table, call me at 523 – 5907. Ask some friends; it's a fun time that includes salad, entrée, dessert, and beverage, in a sit-down venue. Check page 8 for your mail-in information.

Many companies have programs of matching funds for donations made by their employees or retirees. Find out if your company has such a procedure and help out the Museum. Just think... you could quadruple your donation by sending in the **double the bang for your buck** form, and applying for the matching company's plan... sweet!

New stuff to look forward to: George Gunn and Ron Ucovich are working to put together a new Phyllis Diller exhibit. Phyllis lived in Alameda for several years when her husband, Fang, worked at the Naval Air Station. Once Ron's neighbor, she is now an *organ donor* to the Alameda Museum.



Gift Shop News

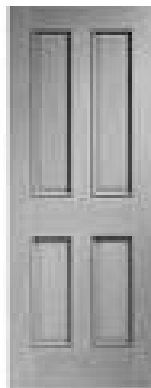
If you haven't visited our museum gift shop lately, don't fail to stop by to check out some of our newly received merchandise, such as...

- ✓ a nice collection of vintage figurines priced 40% - 60% off standard catalogue prices.
- ✓ a great assortment of large format pre-1920 sheet music, with wonderful illustrations, suitable for framing.
- ✓ our old and rare book department, featuring many first editions, at reasonable prices.
- ✓ a wide selection of costume jewelry priced inexpensively to move.

FOR SALE

**Four 4-panel
Victorian doors,
\$35-\$45 each.**

Call 523-5907



Or, stop by the Museum on Saturday.

From the Secretary's Desk

by Robbie Dileo

The winter issue focus is on the beginning of the lecture series in February and the start of a new board full of ideas to implement. You will find details on the lectures on pages 12 and 13, so mark your calendars. The art gallery schedule will be published next issue, and of course, we'll keep you informed about upcoming projects. Don't forget to come to the Membership Meeting in March and the Silent Auction. Docents come as our guests. It's always fun.

While I'm delighted to be your Secretary for another year, it is with great sadness that I tell you of two amazing members that have passed since our last issue.

REMEMBERED FONDLY



In January, long-time Museum and Meyers House docent, Betty Sewell, died suddenly. Active in real estate and successful in getting us an estate sale a couple years back, we will all miss her wide smile, hearty laugh, fashion flair, and generous heart. Jane Burgelin, Meyers House Docent Chair shared that Betty ALWAYS seemed to have a positive attitude about everything and would find something good to say about the worst situations. Some people see the "glass half empty" Betty always "saw the glass half full"! Dependable, we loved her crazy big red feather hat, big rings, green toenail polish and huge bracelets.

We must also bid farewell to Richard Knight. Many of you will remember him as helper with the lecture series, bartender at the annual luncheons, and husband of Judith Lynch, our Board member and organizer of the Lecture Series and *Kids & Queen Victoria* exhibits. A gifted artist and sculptor, he was one of the most fascinating men that I have known, coupled with an uncompromising joy of life. Richard's recent book on architect Eero Saarinen is the focus of the February 26th lecture. Don't miss it.



A CLOSER LOOK AT CROCKS



The early settlers of our country had to store large quantities of food during the summer months to carry them through the winter. Canning, smoking, drying, and pickling foods was a common summertime activity.

Popular in everyone's basement was the pickling crock. You could find stoneware crocks full of cucumbers, olives, green beans, cabbage, onions, mushrooms, tomatoes, and cauliflower. First, brine was made of water, vinegar, salt, and whatever peppers and spices suited their taste. Pickling crocks were not glazed on the inside, because glazed crocks caused the *miseries*. Actually, we know today that what it caused was lead poisoning, because the vinegar would dissolve the lead contained in the glaze.

Besides pickling, crocks could be used for food storage. Dry foods like beans, rice, salt, flour, and sugar were stored in crocks. In others you would find butter, cheese, sausages, bacon, and oysters. Earthenware jugs were popular for hard liquor until the 1920s, when prohibition put an end to jug making.

Eggs were stored in a crock full of a gooey liquid called *waterglass*, which kept air from passing through the porous shells, and thus preserved them during the winter months when the hens were not laying. Waterglass is the best medium for storage, since it does not taint the flavor of the eggs.



Small crocks were called *piggs*, (an Old English word referring to the type of clay used to make earthenware). There was always a salt pigg within easy reach of the stove. There was usually a larger pigg on the shelf for cookies. Frequently, housewives would keep small amounts of money on hand for incidental expenses. Often women would stash away coins for many years to save up for something special.



Once, a woman went to the village potter to order a custom-made pigg that could not be opened. You would have to break the pigg to get the money out. As a whimsical play on words, the potter made the bank in the shape of a pig, and to this day, these small banks are still called *piggy banks*.

Support and Celebrate with the Alameda Museum

- O Revel in our accomplishments in spite of adversity!
- O Enjoy capital comestibles and convivial company!
- O Meet our directors!
- O Silent auction: bid on marvelous merchandise, choice collectibles, and bountiful baskets of glorious goods

Our annual luncheon and installation of new directors is **Saturday, March 21, 2009** in the Masonic Hall above the Museum, 4th floor, 2312 Alameda Avenue.



The no-host social hour and silent auction* start at noon; a three-course sit-down luncheon follows at 1:00 pm. These festivities are open to the public; bring your friends and neighbors and encourage them to join the Museum.

Please reply by mail by March 16 or call 523.5907 to have your tickets held at the door. Mail this coupon and your check to the Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda 94501.

Name(s) _____

Phone _____ Tickets at \$20 each _____ **

Regret I cannot attend. Please accept my donation of \$ _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

*We need silent auction items. Please call 523.5907 for pick up.

**Member docents: You will be guests of the Directors, who appreciate your efforts on behalf of the Museum. Please let us know if you will attend!

Volunteers!



Lou Baca
Barbara Balderston
Harry Bissett
Jane Burgelin
Katherine
Cavanaugh
Ellen Chesnut
Dorothy Coats
Diane Coler-Dark
Charles Daly
Robbie Dileo
Ross Dileo
Marilyn Dodge

*Thank you for the
generous donation
of your time!*

Roni Dodson
Joan Dykema
Carolyn Erickson
June Feder
Dottie Fehn
Pamela Ferrero
Jeanne Gallagher
Barbara Gibson
Leslie Hawksbee
Debra Hilding
Lois Hoffman
Julie Kennedy
Jim Korn
Flora Larson
Barbara Lewis
Gayle Macaitis
Carla McGrogan
Jim McGrogan
Joanne McKay

Frank Nelson
Trish Nelson
Susan Potter
Darlene Pottsgieser
Marjory Quant
Virginia Rivera
Lorraine Salizar
Betty Saunders
Margy Silver
Virgil Silver
Lois Singley
Grace Taube
Wanda Thatcher
Ellen Tilden
Ron Ucovich
Joe Young

Volunteers!



Alameda Museum is always looking for volunteers who are interested in helping make our museum the best that it can be. Enthusiastic docents and volunteers help run the gift shop, do maintenance tasks, and help with mailings. Training is available.

*Docent Coordinator, **Ellen Chesnut, 865-1204**, will contact all new docents and arrange for training at Museum.*

Want to Docent at the Meyers House and Garden Museum?
Docent Coordinator for MHG is **Jane Burgelin, 865-3402**

The Fassking Hotel Door

by Ron Ucovich

The door we see in the Victorian Room of the museum is a remnant of the historic Fassking Hotel. Built in 1872, it was the largest hotel in Alameda in its time. Including the main hotel and outbuildings, plus the gardens and dance pavilion, it occupied the entire city block from Grand to Union Street, and from Santa Clara to Lincoln Avenue.

Upon close inspection of the door, you begin to appreciate the craftsmanship



that went into its construction. Door panels are beveled and mitered, stiles and rails are joined with wooden dowels, and panels are fit into mortise-and-tenon joints. The window is made with pieces of stained, textured, and etched glass. The door is truly a work of art.

Doors began to lose their craftsmanship around the turn of the century, when they began to build them out of plywood.

Plywood was first patented in 1868 by a man named John Mayo. Mr. Mayo glued three layers of wood so that the grain of each layer ran crosswise to the next, thereby making it very strong. Mr. Mayo was a good visionary, but unfortunately, he was a poor marketer. He never found a practical application for his invention.

Many years later, in 1905, Portland, Oregon hosted the World's Fair as part of the 100th anniversary celebration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. One exhibit displayed a new piece of equipment: a rotating lathe which could unroll a log into thin sheets of wood, just like unrolling a new carpet. Using paintbrushes as glue spreaders and house jacks as presses, these sheets of wood were pressed into large panels of very durable material.

The Portland Manufacturing Company in Oregon recognized the potential value of plywood, and they bought the patent and started to manufacture doors. By 1907, they were producing 420 doors a day, and the plywood door industry was born.

For 15 years, plywood was used exclusively for making interior doors. They were called 3-ply veneer doors. The name *plywood* was not coined until the 1920s, when a chemist developed a fully waterproof adhesive that would prevent warping. Now, this weather-resistant product could be used to make exterior doors.

In the 1920s, wood was still being used a lot in the car industry, and the Ford Motor Company bought the rights to use this material in the production of their mass-produced automobiles. And, to this day, we still use words like *floorboard*, *running board*, and *dashboard* as though they were still made out of wood.

Two Great Days

Do you remember what you were doing on the afternoon of July 24, 1969? Probably, like the rest of the world, you were sitting in front of your TV set watching Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin return after leaving the first human footprints on the moon. The world watched as the space capsule splashed down in the Pacific, and the astronauts were airlifted to the USS Hornet, where they were greeted by the president of the United States, Richard Nixon. It was a day that no one will ever forget. We overflowed with excitement, intrigue, pride, and patriotism.



Those same emotions were felt by the citizens of Alameda 100 years earlier, on November 6, 1869. It was the date that the first trainload of passengers crossed the entire nation. Alameda figured prominently in this event. The Golden Spike, driven in Promontory, Utah, was cast in San Francisco at the Garratt Foundry by

Alameda resident, W.T. Garratt. You recognize the name from his son, W.T. Garratt who was the original owner of the Garratt Mansion on Union Street.

To get to San Francisco, the train had to be uncoupled and loaded onto a ferryboat, and then reassembled in San Francisco. This was supposed to be done in Oakland, but since Oakland had no train tracks, and Alameda did, the transcontinental train used the Alameda tracks for about a year until the Oakland line was completed.

On the morning of the great event, dozens of volunteers met at Cohen's Wharf at the foot of Pacific Avenue. The men framed a wooden arch near the freight barn at the end of the line. The women festooned the arch with evergreen boughs and cut flowers. To either side of the arch hung dozens of flags. By noon, everything was ready for the train's arrival. People arrived carrying baskets full of picnic foods. Everyone was dressed in his Sunday best. The band stood by, patiently awaiting their cue to play. The train had left Sacramento at 10 a.m. By 4 p.m. the flowers had begun to wilt, and the food had all been eaten. The crowd began to dissipate. By 6 p.m. it was dark, and the few remaining diehards decided to call it a day.

The train had encountered a series of interruptions and misadventures in every town it passed through. At almost 10 p.m. the train arrived at Alameda, belching smoke and clanging its bell. The crowd began to reassemble, this time carrying lanterns instead of picnic baskets. The band began to play, and the excitement grew as people waved and cheered.

A bronze plaque marks the site of this great event. It is in the plaza at the City Hall Annex at Alameda Point. Go see it, and relive the day.

If you are at Alameda Towne Centre, one of the large enamel history plaques called "Alameda Shore" shows Cohen's Wharf, circa 1868, and mentions it being the terminus in the autumn of 1869.

Museum Lectures for 2009

The Alameda Museum began its annual lecture series in 2001, and over the years speakers both famous and notorious have held forth. Something about the Alameda air must entice spirits from the ethereal zone, because we have hosted Louis Comfort Tiffany, Queen Victoria, Consort Prince Albert, Governor George Pardee, architect Julia Morgan and Ricardo the Reprobate on work furlough to clean Pardee's stables. If you would like to underwrite one of these exciting lectures in 2009, the cost is only \$150, and for that amount you get your name on all publicity, and you can introduce the speaker. (Or not) Only one is still bereft of a sponsor. To secure one, call Judith Lynch 748.0796, or email judithal@comcast.net

☉Thursday February 26: "**Musing on Modernism**" a talk about *Saarinen's Quest*, a new book by the late Richard Knight, Alameda artist and author. Eero Saarinen was the architect for the St. Louis Arch and other visionary projects. Knight's illustrated lecture will be presented by Alameda architect and author Pierluigi Serraino, who wrote the Endnote for the Saarinen book. Underwritten by Judith Lynch; member, Historical Advisory Board; member, Alameda Museum Board.

☉Thursday March 26: "**Fair, Please**" transportation buff and author Grant Ute on how people came from all over, by ferry, train, cable car, and trolley, to see the wonders of the Panama Pacific International Exposition, AKA the 1915 World's Fair. Underwritten by Janelle Spatz, board member Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) and Realtor, Bayside Real Estate.

☉Thursday April 30: "**A.A. Cohen and Old Fernside**," by architect and historian Hank Dunlop. Underwritten by Michael Studebaker and Cynthia Audet, owners, Gallagher & Lindsey, Inc., Realtors.

☉Thursday May 28: "**A Home in Alameda**," by local author and historian Woody Minor, based on his new book about Victorian era development. Underwritten by Ginger Schuler, member, Alameda Museum Board; Realtor, Harbor Bay.

☉Thursday June 25: "**Pioneer Families of Alameda**" presented by Dennis Evanosky and Eric Kos, coauthors of *San Francisco in Photographs* and *East Bay Then and Now*. Underwritten by Patricia M. Sahadi as a birthday present to herself.

☉Thursday July 30: "**Winslow Homer and the Post Civil War Era in America,**" Art historian Colette Colester returns with another dynamic lecture. Underwritten by Peter Fletcher, Real Estate Broker, Windermere Real Estate.

☉Thursday August 27: "**Swamps, Marshes, and Other Oakland Detritus**" by architectural historian Betty Marvin. Underwritten by Robbie Dileo; member, Alameda Museum Board.

☉Thursday September 24: "**Alameda Album**" an illustrated talk by Paul Roberts based on two recently discovered vintage photo albums from the 1890s.

NOTE: All lectures start at 7:00 p.m. at the Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue near Park Street. In case a lecture is cancelled Curator George Gunn will present a talk illustrated with images of hidden treasures from the Museum Archives. No reserved seats; come early to save a place and enjoy the exhibits in the History Hall and the Art Gallery. Admission is free for Museum members and \$5 for others. Topics may change without notice.

Ample parking is available at the new parking structure, just a block away, with entrance on Oak Street near Central.

For lecture information leave a message at 748.0796 or check alameda-museum.org.

Ricardo the reprobate takes his ease on the steps of the Pardee Home prior to introducing the Governor at his Alameda Museum lecture.



Image: Judith Lynch

How Come?

by Ron Ucovich

How come a box of animal crackers has a string handle?

Animal crackers were first made in England in the 1890s. They are



technically cookies, but in England, cookies are called *crackers*. They were flat bread cookies bearing the likeness of five different wild animals. They were sold in a tin box, and they were made for special occasions.

In 1902, the *National Biscuit Company*, now known as *Nabisco*, took this idea and capitalized on two marketing schemes. First, this was the era when P.T. Barnum was popularizing the *Greatest Show on Earth*, and they called their cookies *Barnum's Animals*, and they were sold in boxes resembling circus wagons, thereby capturing the imaginations of children and adults alike. They also expanded their menagerie to include eighteen distinct shapes: buffalo, camel, cougar, elephant, giraffe, gorilla, hippopotamus, hyena, kangaroo, lion, monkey, rhinoceros, seal, sheep, tiger, zebra, sitting bear, and walking bear.

The second stroke of advertising genius was to sell the cookies as Christmas decorations. Christmas trees in the early 1900s were said to be brought by Santa Claus on Christmas Eve, and they were simple evergreen trees decorated with treats which the children could eat on Christmas Day. Peppermint sticks, for example, were made in the shape of a walking cane so they could be hung on the Christmas tree. Similarly, the animal cookies were sold in a cardboard box with a string handle to attach to the tree.

The idea was an instant success. Though, designed as a seasonal confection, popular demand was that Nabisco decided to continue production throughout the year. The string handle made the box easy for children to carry, and it made a suitable play purse for little girls. Each box contained 22 cookies, but since they were randomly packed by machine, no child could expect to get a full complement of all 18 animals, so they competed to see who could get the greatest assortment.



The children also developed a ritual for consuming the cookies. For some inexplicable reason, the order of dismemberment became important for the children: the back legs, the fore legs, the head, and lastly the body.

City Matching Grant

“Friends of the Museum Rent Donors” for City matching funds:

Alameda Women Artists	Alice Godfrey	Bill & Irene Palmer
Ellen Avak	Shirley & Ron Goodman	Louise Parker
Catherine Baker	Philip & Donna Gravem	Frank Perkins
Ann Bracci	Lynn Groh	Darlene Pottgeiser
Dr. Alice Challen	James Hammill	Suzanne Renee
Beverly Church	William Houston	Grant & Jo Robinson
Elsie Clasby	Victor Jin	Betty Sanderson
Betty Ann Cogliati	Toku Kamei	Margaret Seaman
C. C. Coleman	Estelle Knowland	Betty Sewell
Diane Coler-Dark	Adam Koltun	Carol Sharon
Virginia Davis	Linda Larkin	James Shivley
Betty Barry Deal	Flora & Larry Larson	Lois Singley
Ross & Robbie Dileo	Barbara Lewis	Elizabeth Steffen
Catherine Edwards	Guy & Nancy Mayes	Wanda Thatcher
Wm. & Georga Eggett	Lillian Molzan	Emily Thurston
Rose Foster	Beverly Moore	Bill & Laura Tippet
Jeanne Gallagher	Audrey O'Brian	Harry Wolf
Alice Garvin	David Obera	

The Museum thanks all of you for your generous support.

The City will match donations that *exceed* our 2006 amount. We almost met that goal in 2007 and reached it in 2008. The City deducted “the match” in advance for 2008, so we were out of pocket to pay rent more than ever before. **Now we can get it back and start on 2009 ~ THANK YOU!** With about 400 members, if we all donate an extra \$10, we’ll make our goal. Please use the coupon below to ***Double the Bang for Your Bucks!*** \$25 becomes \$50. \$500 is \$1000. Help “*preserve the past for the future*” by keeping Alameda Museum functioning as a valuable resource - every dollar is critical.

Mail to: Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501

Yes, I want to double my donation for the Alameda Museum.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

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



FOUNDED IN 1948

Alameda Museum
2324 Alameda Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501

Telephone: 510.521.1233

Museum Hours:

Wed.-Fri, Sunday: 1:30pm - 4:00 pm

Saturday: 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Website:

www.alamedamuseum.org

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