

Alameda Museum

Quarterly

DETERMINATION & MATCHING FUNDS — MEYERS HOUSE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

by Robbie Dileo

IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY, but it was late 1994 when the Meyers House & Gardens became a project for Alameda Museum. The goal then, as now, was to create a house museum to honor the legacy of Henry Haight Meyers and his family. A renowned architect with over 260 buildings in his portfolio, it was the generosity of his philanthropic daughters that left the three contiguous lots commonly known as 2021 Alameda Avenue for others to enjoy.

Alameda Museum has always managed and paid for the interior exhibits—the house museum parts. However, over the years, we have expended thousands on exterior related maintenance because there just wasn't enough funding available with the annual bequest that came with the property to keep up with normal deterioration and security items. To secure the property after the studio was robbed several years ago, we had the wrought iron gate and fence installed on the Central Avenue side with financial help from the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society. About three years ago the studio tile roof was repaired because



The Meyers girls, Edith, Jeanette, and Mildred. The daughters of Henry and Bertha Meyers all attended college graduating from U.C. Berkeley. Never marrying, they left their family home for the enjoyment of others. Photo: Meyers House & Gardens Collection.

of water damage to the inside of the building that was also affecting the 3-car garage. Most recently we spent \$7,500 to renovate a basement restroom for public use, re-roofed the front porch and had the main house gutters cleaned, patched, and some down spouts relocated. Now

the house exterior and pergola need painting and repairs—it has been over twenty years since Jeanette Meyers had that work done and the place is looking quite tired.

The East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) manages the Meyers Fund. They have paid out the 5%

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Meyers Campaign . . . Continued from page 1



Henry H. Meyers designed over 260 buildings in the San Francisco Bay Area, Northern California, Hawaii, and Guam. Meyers was the oldest of nine children born in the rural town of Livermore, California. Photo: Meyers House & Garden Collection.

annual support stipulated in the Meyers bequest, but it has not been enough to save extra funds necessary for bigger projects. This past spring we started talking to the EBCF to see what could be done. They do not own the Meyers House & Gardens, but they do have a common interest in administering the wishes of the Meyers sisters. So, in conjunction with EBCF, Alameda Museum is launching the Meyers House Capital Campaign.

The goal is to raise \$40,000 to cover deferred maintenance on the house and make grounds improvements. EBCF is willing to provide up to \$10,000 as a matching grant if we raise \$10,000 or more in funds from now through the end of the year. We have already received some donations but we need your help and those of others who may not even know about the historic property. Please let others know we need their help too. With the exterior looking better and the

grounds more attractive to potential renters (see Meyers House news page 14), the goal is to have rental profits accrue to pay for future maintenance.

We know the economy is still difficult and you must allocate your charitable donations wisely. If you agree that the Meyers House, City Monument #26, is worthy of upkeep, then please make your check payable to Meyers House and mail it c/o Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda CA 94501. We also created a donation button on the new website MeyersHouse.org so you could use your credit card via PayPal.

The Meyers House has separate accounting so we can manage donations and report the results to EBCF for the matching grant. As another venue of Alameda Museum, the contributions to the house and grounds will use the same Non-Profit Tax ID (#94-2464751) and are tax deductible as permitted by law. Amounts of \$250 and higher will be acknowledged with a donation letter.

We decided to offer some benefits at various contribution levels. For instance, at \$250, you would receive complimentary memberships in the Meyers Guild for a year and an invitation for two people to a thank you party in the grounds after the painting is finished. Learn more on our website, MeyersHouse.org and look for our fundraising announcements in the local newspapers, on Facebook, and in upcoming mailings.

If you have or know of a business that can donate goods or services to help with house repairs, please contact us at info@meyershouse.org or call 510-521-1233. The generosity of the community will help keep the Meyers House open for the enjoyment of others, just as the Meyers sisters intended. Remember, the deadline is December 31, 2012. Thank you!

Bertha S. Meyers and her daughters in the garden near the ornate potting shed. Photo: Meyers House & Garden Collection.





BE A MUSEUM DOCENT

*Make some new friends.
Please contact Ellen Chesnut
510-865-1204 for details.*

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**Alameda
MAGAZINE**



From the Curator's Desk

by George C. Gunn

I want to express my appreciation to all who participated in our recent home tour. First, the gracious owners who allowed us to feature their beautiful homes. Second, Valerie Turpen, for the lovely guidebook she created, and Woody Minor for his excellent narrative. Third, Chuck Millar for chairing the event, and Robbie Dileo, in the background, for handling so many of the details needed for such an event. Lastly, Diane Coler-Dark, for organizing the house flow, plus accounting for the income and paying of expenses.

As our membership might be aware, the Museum conducts estate sales in private homes to generate additional funds for the many expenses incurred in running the museum. We just completed part of a sale on Haight Avenue where we spun straw into gold, thanks to the referral by Evelyn Kennedy, agent of Gallagher and Lindsey Realtors. There will be another sale to complete the basement and workshop. These sales would not be possible without the following individuals, Jane Burgelin, Margy and Virgil Silver, Diane Coler-Dark, Gail and Charlie Howell, Barbara Coapman, and Ross and Robbie Dileo.

George C. Gunn
Curator, Alameda Museum

The party after the home tour was enjoyed by all who helped make the event a success.





A Closer Look at the *Star of Alaska* by Ron Ucovich

IN JANUARY OF 1886, A 301-FOOT SQUARE RIGGER SHIP set sail on her maiden voyage from Wales to California. Her name was the *HMS Balclutha*, and she was bound for San Francisco laden with 2,650 tons of coal, which she would exchange for sacks of California wheat. Because the voyage took five months, she could make only one round trip per year. In all, she made five trips bringing coal, pig iron, pottery, cutlery, and Scotch whiskey to San Francisco and returning to Great Britain with California grain.

In 1904, she was in Alaska headed toward San Francisco laden with canned salmon, when she ran aground near Kodiak Island. The damage was extensive, and the Alaska Packers Association of Alameda purchased the ship for a mere \$500. After extensive repairs, she was renamed the *Star of Alaska*, and she would spend her next 26 summers carrying supplies and about 200 cannery workers to Chignik Bay, and then making the 2,400 mile voyage back to Alameda for service and maintenance during the winter.

The Alaska Packers had a fleet of about 30 vessels. They were all square-rigger wooden ships with a steel hull. By the late 19th Century, steam ships had almost a complete monopoly in sea transportation. Only bulk cargo (grain, lumber, pig iron, coal, cotton, tobacco, charcoal, etc.) was transported by sailing ships. If speed was not an issue, sailing ships were profitable because there was no fuel expense. Sailing ships were especially important in remote areas where fuel was not readily available.

In 1916, Alaska Packers merged with California Packing Corporation (CalPack), and they expanded their trade into shipping canned fruits and



Balclutha is the only square rigged ship left in the San Francisco Bay area and is representative of several different commercial ventures, including lumber and salmon.

vegetables. When they started to ship canned pineapple from Hawaii, the company adopted the name of their premier pineapple label, Del Monte. By 1927, the "Star Fleet" was down to 14 vessels, and by 1933, all their tall ships had been replaced by steamers.

But the *Star of Alaska's* history didn't end there. She was bought by a private party and renamed the *Pacific Queen*. She was rented out to Hollywood, and she was given the stage name *Bounty* for the blockbusting film, "Mutiny on the Bounty." She spent the next 20 years being towed up and down the West Coast as a tourist attraction outfitted as an

18th Century pirate ship. Finally, in 1954, she was purchased by the San Francisco Maritime Museum, and she was renamed *Balclutha*, and after a \$1,250,000 makeover, she was returned to the Hyde Street Pier in San Francisco, where you can visit her today.

In the back of our museum is our Alaska Packers exhibit. On display are two panoramic photographs of the entire Star Fleet docked at the Grand Street Marina. You will see the helm from one of the ships. This old-fashioned wheel is called a "pirate ship steering wheel." It has large grapples for good gripping. The wheel is huge because, before they had power steering, you had a series of cables and sheaves between the pilot and the rudder, and you needed a lot of leverage to maintain control during rough weather.

On the wall above the helm you see a hatch canvas from the *Star of Alaska*. A large hatch which allows access to the cargo hold is called a "scuttle." On an open deck, the scuttle would have a raised "butt" to keep sea water from washing into the hold. When their work was done, the sailors would sit on the scuttle butt and talk about the events of the day. Over the years, the word "scuttlebutt" came to refer to what they were talking about instead of the thing that they were sitting on, and today, "scuttlebutt" is just another word for "gossip."

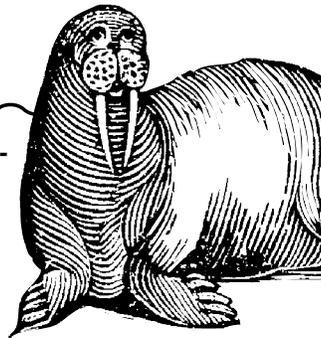
One unusual artifact in the exhibit is the walrus skull, a treasured possession of the ship's captain. Walrus skulls were highly prized trophies of Alaska hunters. They are worth thousands of dollars because of the ivory tusks, much the same as elephant tusks once were. Today, elephants and walrus are protected species, and their ivory can no longer be traded, however the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 does allow for one exception. Walrus ivory and scrimshaw art can still be purchased legally from native Alaskan Eskimos.



The helm of an Alaska Packer ship sets below two panoramic photos of the Grand Street Marina in Alameda, home of the Star Fleet. Photo: Valerie Turpen.

Walrus belong to the pinniped (flipper foot) family, which includes seals and sea lions. These were once land animals, but have adapted to a marine environment. Their legs have evolved over millions of years to be functional for swimming rather than for walking. Walrus can't use their legs to climb onto an iceberg from the ocean, so they evolved very massive tusks and neck muscles which are capable of grappling the ice and dragging their massive bodies out of the water. It is interesting to note that walrus and seals are not actually genetically related. DNA studies have proved that walrus are descendents from the bear family, while seals are members of the canine family, and are descended from an animal similar to a wolf.

One other artifact you will find in our Alaska Packers exhibit is a small cannon. Of course, this cannon is not large enough to sink another ship. Instead of a cannon ball, the barrel was loaded with a canvas pouch containing small pellets. When fired, these pellets would scatter like a shotgun, and could be used against invading pirates. Larger cannons had another practical function on ships. If any sailor needed to be disciplined, his shirt would be removed, and he would be tied over the barrel to be whiplashed by the captain. Today, whenever someone is in a predicament from which there is no escape, we say that he is "over a barrel."



Nomination time is here. Look for a special mailing with a nomination letter and membership renewal notice. Have a question about your membership status? We usually print labels that say PAID THRU something. If you were paid through LIFETIME, that means you are current, but we'd love to get an extra donation from time to time.

You Cannot Keep a Good Docent Down for Long

A hearty welcome back to **CARRIE ERICKSON** who will be docenting again on Saturday morning with Ellen Tilden.



BARBARA GIBSON who broke a rib intends to return after she mends and so does **LOIS SINGLEY**.



I am still on the look out for prospective floaters and some regular positions are open on the weekends. If you know of a personable man or woman who would care to put in just two and a half hours a month to help out, let me know.

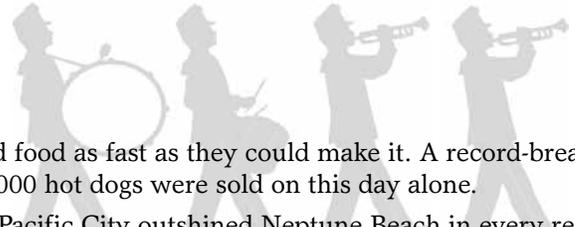
It is mandatory now that prospective docents go through a period of training with another docent or with our president. It's not hard to be a docent. It's fun especially when one is meeting and greeting people at our museum and oftentimes they are new to the island of Alameda, too.



We are goodwill ambassadors. Think about that. Ellen Chesnut



Coney Island Fever *by Ron Ucovich*



THE PANAMA-PACIFIC WORLD'S FAIR OF 1915 in San Francisco sparked pandemic enthusiasm for amusement parks in California. Alameda's Neptune Beach, San Francisco's Whitney's at the Beach, and the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk all tried to compete with the granddaddy of the East Coast, Coney Island. Each park featured a boardwalk, a midway, a dancehall, swimming pools, a roller coaster, a carousel, a scenic railway, and a Ferris wheel.

In 1922, Burlingame put in its bid to compete for the tourist dollar. They built a 90-acre waterfront resort designed to put Neptune Beach out of business. They trucked in 2,000 tons of white sand from Monterey, to create a pristine beach with a 3,200-foot boardwalk. Their midway was built on a pleasure pier which extended 470 feet into the bay, and it terminated at an elegant restaurant called the Ocean Wave. Their dance pavilion was the largest on the West Coast, and the floor was constructed entirely of imported white maple. This pavilion had capacity for 2,000 couples, and it featured some of the finest dance bands of the time. They had a state-of-the-art carousel, and their roller coaster was the fastest in the West. All the construction was completed, and the new resort was christened "Pacific City."

The early 1920s saw great prosperity in Burlingame. Like Hillsborough, Burlingame was home to the country estates of wealthy San Franciscans who were eager to finance the project. Local businessmen, land developers, investors and merchants envisioned the great prosperity that Pacific City could stimulate. Southern Pacific expanded their train service, and for the price of a nickel, tourists could ride the Elephant Tram the one-mile distance from the train station to the foot of Howard Street where giant art-deco arches heralded the entrance to the park.

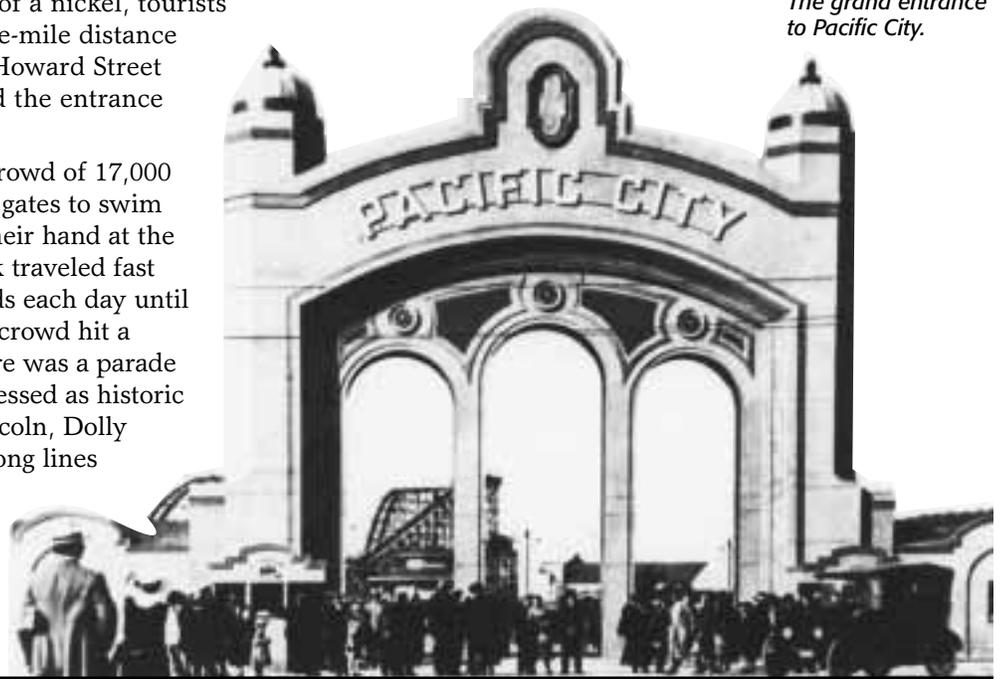
July 1, 1922 was opening day. A crowd of 17,000 each paid a dime to pass through the gates to swim in the water, ride the rides, and try their hand at the midway attractions. News of the park traveled fast and the crowds grew by the thousands each day until July 4, Independence Day, when the crowd hit a record-breaking 100,000 people. There was a parade with military bands and marchers dressed as historic figures like Uncle Sam, Abraham Lincoln, Dolly Madison, and Martha Washington. Long lines formed with people waiting to ride the carousel, the Ferris wheel, and the bumper cars. Concessionaries

sold food as fast as they could make it. A record-breaking 24,000 hot dogs were sold on this day alone.

Pacific City outshined Neptune Beach in every respect, and it promised to be a formidable competitor for the tourist dollar. Neptune Beach, however, had one redeeming asset to its credit. You see...at that time, sewage treatment facilities did not exist. Every building in town had a flush toilet, and all that raw sewage was piped directly into the bay. Alameda's sewage dumped into the bay at the foot of Chestnut Street... a comfortable distance from Neptune Beach. Pacific City's sewage, however, drained into the bay at the foot of Howard Street, just a few hundred feet offshore from the pristine sandy beach. The water soon became a cesspool of septic filth which would rise and fall with the tide. In May of 1923, San Mateo County health officials condemned the beach, and all body contact with the water was forbidden. Pacific City's foggy skies, cold winds, foul air, and polluted water had discouraged all tourism, and in October of 1923, this once-illustrious amusement park closed its doors for the last time.

Pacific City declared bankruptcy in 1925, and the rides and furnishings were sold at auction. Vandalism and arson caused all the buildings to be torn down except for the grand dance pavilion, which was used as a skating rink until 1946. The pleasure pier was used for fishing until it was removed in the 1950s. Today, all that remains is a bronze marker lying next to a lone palm tree which stands in front of the Burlingame dog pound... a humble reminder of the grand amusement park that had a life span of only one year.

The grand entrance to Pacific City.





The Alameda Museum Trolley Tour NAS Alameda

Museum member and Alameda Realtor Peter Fletcher hatched an idea—let’s rent a motorized trolley and follow the route of the Red Trains from one end of the island to the other and make it a benefit for the Museum. He asked train buff Grant Ute to narrate, a smooth move as he is co-author of *Alameda by Rail*.



The 2013 tour will be led by Alameda architect, historian, and raconteur Richard Rutter whose nickname is “Dickipedia,” a pun on the internet know-it-all site Wikipedia. He will reveal much about the history, architecture, and future of the former Naval Air Station.

Details and cost TBA. If you want to reserve a slot, please email judithal@comcast.net



Richard, who flew for the Navy and was stationed at NAS Alameda, was instrumental in getting the A-4, at the Main Gate restored...twice. Photo: Robert Perricone.

What in the World is a Poor Farm?

by Ron Ucovich

IN 18TH CENTURY ENGLAND, people who were poor or mentally ill and could not support themselves were removed from society and locked up in a government facility called a “poorhouse.” Poorhouses were dank, filthy dungeons filled to the brim with the dregs of society. At that time, poverty was seen as dishonorable, as though it came from a lack of responsibility and ambition. Able-bodied detainees were required to work and contribute to the cost of their board, and hordes of them were crammed into detention camp environments. Conditions were so wretched that they drove many victims to suicide. Life didn’t get much worse than that of a poorhouse resident.

Poorhouses were different from debtor’s prison. People could owe a great deal of money and still not be confined to the poorhouse as long as they could provide themselves with food and shelter. If a person, however, was found begging in public, this constituted sufficient grounds for internment.

The “poor farm” was America’s alternative to England’s poorhouse. People who could not support themselves were put up for bid at public auction. They were sold to whichever farmer agreed to provide room and board for the lowest price. The farmer received a small stipend in addition to the free labor. The taxpayer’s contribution was minimal, since it was the farmer who was supplying the food, clothing, and shelter.

The “poor farm” provided all public welfare until the 1860s. After the Civil War, many widows and orphans were left without any means of support. The elderly were left without children to care for them in their old age. Veterans came home wounded or maimed and unable to provide for their families. In 1875 the State Board of Charities was established to provide mental hospitals, orphanages, and nursing homes. During the 1900s, social welfare programs were established. General hospitals were built. Unemployment benefits, Social Security, and Workman’s Compensation laws were enacted. Gone were the days when people were sold into slavery because they couldn’t pay their debts.

When you finish reading this newsletter, DON’T THROW IT AWAY. Pass it on to a neighbor who may not be aware of all the interesting activities going on in our museum.



From the President's Desk

by Robbie Dileo

What a summer. Our biggest fundraising event, was the much-anticipated Alameda Legacy Home Tour. Always an artistic and financial success, it was particularly interesting this year due the mix of house styles and span of building years, complimented by perfect weather. My thanks and appreciation to Little House Cafe for sponsorship funds, the 120 docents for the day, the captains who helped write the guidebook stories, and of course the committee that planned the excellent tour and wonderfully tasty party afterward. I appreciate the generosity of the homeowners – it is no small task to get ready to share one's collections and restoration stories. Homeowners were rewarded by all the positive comments, a certificate of participation, and a free year of membership in both the museum and Alameda Architectural Preservation Society. Bravo to George Gunn and Diane Coler-Dark for house selections.

If you know of an architecturally interesting house that we should consider for next year, we would welcome your suggestions. Got talents to share? Anybody with writing skills or a knack for marketing and promotion might want to volunteer for the home tour committee. Most work is done independently and by email, with usually only an hour face-to-face meeting monthly, and you get to tour for free! Please call the museum at 510-521-1233 or email alamedahometour@aim.com to help. This includes tour docents – you need to sign up each year, it is not automatic.

Greater Alameda Business Association was our guest for their wine tasting event mid-August in the grounds of the Meyers House. Forty people attended, delighted by the venue complete with cocktail tables and chairs. My thanks to Virgil and Margy Silver for providing help with set-up and take down, along with Erika Hohendorf of McCallum Designs who also provided floral table arrangements that were later raffled. A large custom ordered poster-sized Bird's Eye View Map was donated by the museum and board member Ginger Schuler provided a Neptune Beach DVD as additional raffle items. We all had a good time.

Did you stop by the Alameda Museum photo booth at the Neptune Beach Community Celebration? Roller coasters, snow cones, popsicles, and bathing beauties made for a popular booth that helped to bring historic flavor befitting the re-branded former street jam on Webster Street. The fair was sponsored predominantly by the Alameda Chamber of Commerce, West Alameda Business Association and FestivalProducts2.com event planner and chairperson, Jeff Cambra. Thanks for the opportunity and booth space provided for the museum.

Reusing photos from the 2006 temporary NB exhibit, I remounted them on posterboard for easier viewing. People were shocked to learn that the tower and arcade rides were at the end of the street extending to the beach. Explaining Alameda's history and encouraging folks to learn more by visiting the museum is something I enjoy. Board director and author/editor of the *Alameda Sun*, Dennis Evanosky, and his partner Eric Kos gave a tour of the NB site on Sunday – part of their walking tour program. Margy and Virgil Silver were a tremendous help Saturday with early set-up and an afternoon shift. Kevin Frederick made take down Sunday a breeze. Valerie Turpen

The Alameda Legacy Home Tour was completed with an appreciation party for homeowners and docents The tour was fun, the weather sunny, and the food exquisite. Left: Corri Jimenez and Jeannie Graham serving wine provided by R&B Cellars. Right: Virgil Silver, Robbie and Ross Dileo, Margy Silver, and Birgitt Evans. Photo: Valerie Turpen.





The Alameda Museum displayed photos of Neptune Beach and enlightened the community on the glory days of Alameda's resort at the Neptune Beach Community Celebration held October 6. Photo: Valerie Turpen.

came to visit Saturday, whisking me away to grab lunch and see the fabulous Alameda Library one-hour documentary on Alameda's Japanese-American history. Kevin and I had scanned images for it from the museum's collection, which Jeannette Copperwaite of the oral history project used to help illustrate the commercial district. The value of historical pictures and our collection was quite evident.

Our first rental of the Meyers House gardens was for an October campaign rally with proceeds going toward house painting. Fifty guests, mostly local people, were not aware the grounds existed and were thoroughly amazed at the beautiful setting. It gave me an excellent opportunity to let people know our plans to rent the grounds and that we are setting up a website, MeyersHouse.org, to showcase the venue. With all the equipment on site – tables and chairs ready to use, plus the addition of some tablecloths, it quickly becomes a perfect garden party location now that the new basement restroom is available. Got a garden party in mind for next spring? Send inquiries to info@meyershouse.org

Tunnel Vision. The Art Gallery exhibit features photos of the Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore Project (see article on page 12). With only eleven photos provided by the Caltrans people, I decided to make it a full gallery display and add items that link it to Alameda and the works of prominent East Bay architect Henry Meyers and his assistant, daughter Mildred. What a great opportunity to showcase their work and our need to raise funds to address deferred maintenance at their family home. On display until the end of the

year, I encourage you to bring family to see it. Kids will like the big digging equipment while adults will appreciate the Meyers Family legacy. It is also a chance to highlight Henry H. Meyers' impact on architecture in Alameda and surrounding cities.

We daily see buildings we often take for granted. Alamedans have generally embraced historical structures and the desire to preserve them, one of the reasons home tours are so well attended. Locals and neighboring community visitors appreciate heritage tourism and our small town ambiance. Rehabilitating and restoring older buildings is often more expensive than building new. But, when one looks around at the younger in-fill apartment buildings or commercial buildings throughout the city, it is sad that the lack of architectural details make them look cheap or outdated in only a few decades. Modern architecture has a place, but it requires good design to fit in with surrounding structures.

Think about the future – it means protecting the important things that represent our past. It is not tunnel vision that will keep Alameda a unique and desirable place to live – it requires a broad vision with a goal to retain historical buildings and the institutions we have come to love. Supporting the museum by renewing your dues is a simple act, as little as \$20 a year. Help us preserve the Meyers House by making a donation to the Capital Campaign before the end of the year. Even your Guild dues of \$25 are used exclusively for the house. And if you have a few hours to volunteer, get involved with some of the activities we provide. It seems like only yesterday when the museum moved to Alameda Avenue – now look at us, twenty something years later. It's been a good journey with many dedicated volunteers who are our life's blood. My heartfelt thanks to all for the efforts made to keep the doors open. As year end approaches and the special mailings go out, do what you can to support our mission!

President, Alameda Museum

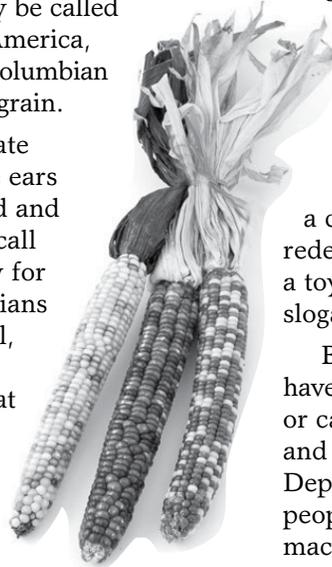


Popcorn at the Movies

by Ron Ucovich

THE WORD "CORN" COMES FROM the German word Korn, which means "kernel." It does not refer to any particular grain. In England corn refers to wheat, and in other countries, to oats, rye, or barley. In America it refers to a plant which should properly be called "maize," a plant native only to North America, so when history books talk about pre-Columbian corn, they are referring to some other grain.

The maize that Native Americans ate looked nothing like modern corn. The ears were small, and the kernels were hard and irregular in size and color. Today, we call this "Indian corn" and it is used solely for decorative purposes. To eat it, the Indians would grind the kernels into cornmeal, add water, and toast cornmeal patties on a campfire. The only other way that these kernels could be eaten was to pop them. These fluffy little maize kernels could be eaten as a snack, or they could be strung into decorative necklaces.



In the 1700s, Colonial settlers made breakfast cereal by pouring milk and sugar over popcorn. Early maize, however, had low moisture content, and a lot of kernels had to be toasted to get a few tasty morsels. Over the next couple hundred years, farmers selectively bred maize by picking out only the largest and juiciest grains to seed their next crop. By selective cultivation, they also developed larger ears, taller stalks and purer color.

By the late 1800s, American corn was plump, juicy, and golden colored... just perfect for popping. In 1885, a man named Charles Cretors applied for a peddler's license to operate a mobile, gas-powered popcorn popper on the streets of Chicago. His idea was to let the popping sound and the tantalizing aroma of the fresh popcorn sell his product. Mr. Cretors made a fortune, not by selling popcorn, but rather by selling his popcorn wagons. By the 1900s, all across the Nation you would find Cretors Popping Machines at every public beach, park, circus, fair, and exposition. America was crazy for popcorn.

Circuses had a special way of selling popcorn. They coated it in molasses and shaped it into a ball. In 1891, a circus confectioner named F.W. Rueckheim made a living by selling popcorn balls, peanuts, caramels, marshmallows, and molasses taffy. For the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, Mr. Rueckheim created a concoction of candied popcorn, peanuts, and taffy. A British friend sampled Mr. Rueck-

heim's confection and shouted, "That's crackerjack!"...and the name stuck.

The crackerjack confection was such an attraction at the World's Fair, when the fair terminated, Mr. Rueckheim opened a production and distribution plant in Chicago, and his product was named Cracker Jacks. Rueckheim's grandson, Robert, had just died of pneumonia. As a tribute to this eight-year-old lad, Mr. Rueckheim used a photograph of him dressed up in his little sailor uniform standing next to his black and white dog named Bingo, as the company trademark. Originally, the box was colored black and white, but during World War I, as a flare of patriotism, the colors changed to red, white, and blue, just as we see them today.

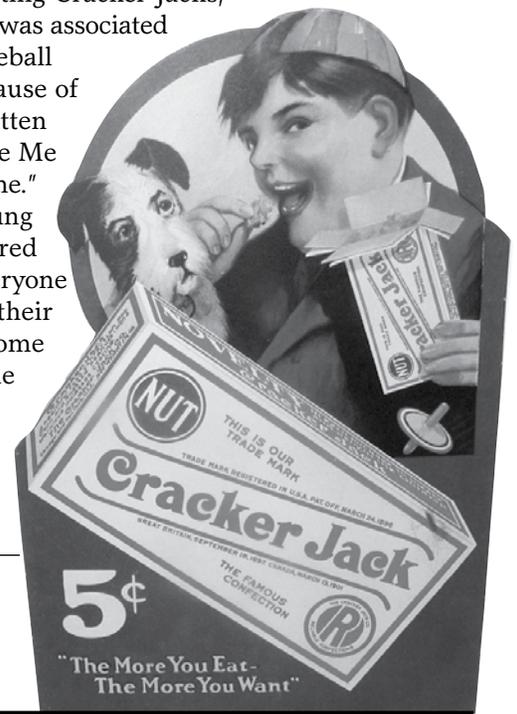
As a marketing technique, Mr. Rueckheim packaged a coupon at the bottom of each box which could be redeemed for small prizes. In 1912, instead of a coupon, a toy trinket was included in the box, and the company slogan became, "a prize in every package."

Before the Great Depression, movie theaters did not have a concession stand in the lobby. Sometimes, a popcorn or candy wagon might be parked in front of the theater and you could bring your snacks in with you. During the Depression, however, candy was an extravagance that few people could afford, so movie theaters placed a popcorn machine in the lobby. It cost the theater about a penny per bag to produce, and they could sell the bag for 5¢. A \$10 investment could net them a \$50 return. This was the easiest way that theaters could make a profit, and soon, all theaters had a popcorn concession in the lobby.

Soon, going to the movies became synonymous with eating popcorn. Eating Cracker Jacks, on the other hand, was associated with watching baseball games. This is because of a popular song written in 1908 called "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." This song is still sung today, over a hundred years later, and everyone sings at the top of their voice when they come to the line, "Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jacks!"

Continued on page 11

Mascots Sailor Jack and his dog, Bingo.





Popcorn. . . Continued from page 10

During World War II, sugar and chocolate became stringently rationed. Candy was no longer available at the movies, and popcorn sales skyrocketed. By the time sugar rationing had ended, popcorn eating and movie watching was a match made in heaven. In the 1960s, when affluence and over-indulgence became commonplace, the size of the popcorn bag had doubled in size, and the price had increased exponentially. If you purchased a glutinous-size bag of popcorn, it was called "king size," as though only a king could ever afford himself such a luxury. By the 1980s, this ideal had reached its ultimate culmination when customers could buy a bucket of popcorn accompanied by a gallon of soda pop to wash it down.

Charles Cretors, the guy who made the first popcorn machine, would be proud that he started the popcorn craze in our country, and we can be a little proud of him, too. The next time you buy popcorn at our historic Alameda Theater, take a look at the name on the machine. It says "Cretors Manufacturing Company, Chicago, Illinois."

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IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR
VOLUNTEERS**

Many hands make light work and it's a chance to make new friends while helping us "preserve the past for the future".

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The Wooden Dinner Plate

by Ron Ucovich

IN ANCIENT EUROPE, PEOPLE USED WOODEN BOWLS for serving food. They were round on the bottom because people ate from their laps instead of from a table. About 1,000 years ago, dinner tables came into use, and flat bowls called "trenchers" were made to serve the food. A large trencher containing meat, cheese, or bread was placed on the table. People ate with fingers and knives, so a diner would whack off a chunk of meat and place it on his individual trencher, and use it as a small cutting board.



About 400 years ago, the upper class people of Europe replaced their trenchers with dinner plates of pewter or silver. The working class continued to use wooden plates. In 18th Century America, wooden dishes continued to be used by all levels of society.

Wooden dinnerware has many advantages over crockery or metal. They are very durable and can be used daily for an entire lifetime. They are easy and very inexpensive to make. Wood is a natural insulator, and it keeps the food warm without

having to warm the plate. Wood presents itself harmoniously with natural food in a way that ceramic or metallic plates could never do. Wooden dishes make no scratchy or clattery noises while eating or serving food.

For proper care, wooden dishes need to be clean and dry after using. In Colonial days, this was done by licking your dish completely after using it. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, licking the dish is far more sanitary than soaking it in water or leaving food particles on it which can breed bacteria. The tradition of licking your plate is recorded in the first verse of a British poem: "Jack Sprat could eat no fat, his wife could eat no lean; and so betwixt the two of them, they licked the platter clean."

A complete dinner in Colonial America required two plates, a large round one for the main course, and a small square one for the salad. Salad was served after the main course because it was served with oil and vinegar dressing, and you would never eat anything containing vinegar while you were drinking wine. So, after the main course was completed, you would use the small square dish for your salad, and ever since that time, a complete dinner of a main course with wine, and finished with salad, is referred to as a square meal.



Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore Project *by Robbie Dileo*



Henry H. Meyers, who was the Alameda County Architect from 1912 until his retirement in 1935, served as the project architect of the original Caldecott Tunnel. Among other aspects of the tunnel, Meyers designed the Art Deco relief on the original Caldecott Tunnel. Photo: Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore Project.

BEING DISPLAYED IN ALAMEDA MUSEUM'S ART GALLERY until the scheduled mid-December closure for the holidays is a series of photographs taken of the Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore Project, by Karl Nielson of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and John Huseby of Caltrans. The project represents a partnership between the Federal Highway Administration, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, and the Alameda County Transportation Commission to build a two-lane fourth tunnel bore north of the existing three Caldecott tunnels. The original tunnel portal was designed by Henry H. Meyers and replaced the old Broadway Tunnel that was built in 1903.

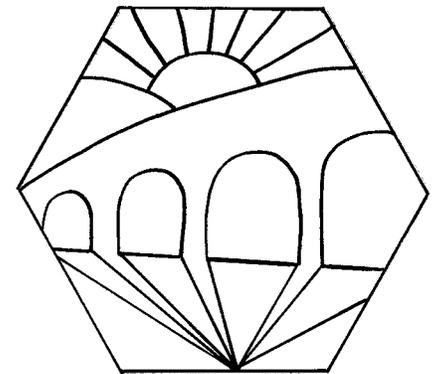
The Museum added several posters to the exhibit, showcasing the legacy of Henry's career with Alameda

churches—Twin Towers Methodist and First Presbyterian and of course our Veteran's Memorial Building, that was one of ten he designed with assistance from daughter Mildred. We did not forget to include our current Capital Campaign to raise funds to do overdue painting and



repairs to his family home, the Meyers House & Gardens located at 2021 Alameda Avenue.

The Caldecott Medallion Design Competition was launched on March 26 to provide children in grades K-12 in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties an opportunity to play a role in the design of an important architectural detail of the Fourth Bore. The Competition drew more than 300 entries from both counties. Our exhibit shows the six winning designs and artists—three designs for each county.



The City of Alameda had a winner from Otis School, ten year old Ellina Bartholomew Coats! Her quote with her design submission: "The Caldecott Tunnels are separate but united. The sun represents rebirth because the sun visits the earth and the tunnels each day. In the picture, the sun is blazing much more than our usual sun would be."

To learn more and see additional photos, visit the project website www.caldecott-tunnel.org

Left: Ellina Bartholomew Coats was a winner in the Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore Medallion Design Competition. Medallions designed by Alameda County students will sit atop the west portal in Oakland.

Above: Ellina's winning design.



Thursdays
@ 7:00 pm

2013

Twelve Years on Stage

by Judith Lynch

When we started the museum lectures in 2001 we never thought the series would still be going strong a dozen years later...Yet 2013 is already completely booked.

We start 2013 with the Alameda debut of a new film by Paul Bockhorst Productions, creators of several movies about California architecture. *Pursuing Beauty: The Architecture of Bernard Maybeck* will be introduced by Peter Fletcher, a graduate of Principia, the college campus designed by Maybeck. Fletcher, a local Real Estate Broker, is also sponsoring the evening. Author and historian Grey Brechin returns to present the saga of the *Palace of Fine Arts*, a Maybeck masterpiece in San Francisco.

In May we host an *Andy Pagano Festival*, with several of his movies on island history. Museum President Robbie Dileo is sponsoring *A Dramatic Century: Celebrating 100 years of the Altarena Playhouse*, the story of our spunky players holding forth on High Street. *Designing with Nature: Arts and Crafts Architecture in Northern California*, another Bockhorst film, will be shown in July and sponsored by Janelle Spatz, Realtor, Bayside Real Estate.

Other talks include a discussion of the *1893 Chicago World's Fair* by U.C. Berkeley professor and architect Greg Castillo, and a glimpse into the life of explorer, photographer, and adventurer *Ansel F. Hall*. The talk on first chief naturalist of the National Park Service will be presented by Alameda resident Johanna Hall, his great grand-daughter.

SPONSORSHIPS

For \$150 you support the museum and have your name or business associated with these illustrious speakers whom you may introduce... or not if you prefer. Please email judithal@comcast.net for sponsorship information.

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Join any time. Dues based on calendar year.
Renewals after September will continue through the next year.



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What's New at the Meyers House & Gardens

A Tale of Two Paintings

by Joe Young, Curatorial Assistant

Artists have been known to speak of their paintings as their “children”. If we accept that metaphor, then the Alameda Museum participated recently in a mini “family reunion” that involved a painting located in distant Munich, Germany, and another in nearby Hayward.

It all began when a letter arrived in the Curator’s office from Mark di Frangia, a longtime American resident in Germany, who introduced himself as a great-grandson of Gertrude A. Snow Brooks, a well-known Alameda artist. He kindly offered to donate a painting by her in his possession and also indicated that his brother, Brian Harris of Hayward, would most likely be happy to donate one, too.

This, of course, came as great news to us. Some years ago the mother of these two men, Marilyn Harris, donated two items made by the artist Gertrude Brooks – a carved oak piano bench and an oil painting of a redwood grove. Both items are now currently on exhibit in the newly-opened basement gallery of the Meyers House. So, the addition of two more works by this artist would certainly augment our presentation.

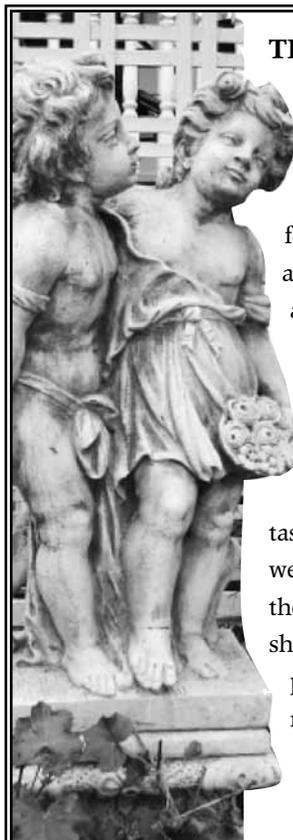
But who was Gertrude Brooks? According to Edan M. Hughes’ definitive reference book *Artists in California 1786-1940*, she was born in Vallejo in 1866 and moved with her family to Alameda in 1875. As a teenager she studied art in San Francisco. After her marriage she resided at 1813 Alameda Avenue, and therein she established her studio. Mr. Hughes speaks of her as “a highly skilled painter, her rare works include small

oils of the redwoods, still lifes, Chinatown and scenes of the San Francisco Bay area”. She died in Alameda on February 7, 1947.

The painting from Germany, though shipped by air freight, took a good month to arrive due to an extended sojourn with US Customs where the minor damage to the molded frame may have occurred; fortunately our talented George Gunn corrected this problem. The painting is a beautiful still life of a floral bouquet. The painting from Hayward was brought to us in person by Mr. Harris who presented us with an attractive redwood grove scene, probably painted in Muir Woods. He kindly indicated that we might be considered as a recipient in the future of other works by his great-grandmother that he possesses.

So, the next time you visit the Meyers House, stop by the basement gallery and enjoy the exhibit of Alameda’s celebrated woman artist, saying “hello” to her re-united “children”.

Gertrude A. Snow Brooks



THE MEYERS GARDENS are an Alameda asset that should be enjoyed, not just as part of a house museum tour, but available for rental opportunities. Whether for small weddings, birthday parties anniversary parties, teas, brunches, art shows, chamber music recitals, or the backdrop for photographs, renting out the grounds is critical to raising funds to help maintain the property. Alameda Museum is now preparing to manage that task. We created a new dedicated website **MeyersHouse.org** to showcase the venue. In the next few weeks, it should have most of the information people would need to know about renting the grounds. **For inquiries, please call 510-521-1233 or email info@meyershouse.org**



VOLUNTEERS: ALAMEDA MUSEUM & MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS

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- Marilyn Dodge
- Linda Domholt
- Margaret Duran
- Joanne Dykema
- Caroline Erickson
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- Bonne Germain
- Barbara Gibson
- George Gunn
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- Virginia Rivera
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- Holly Schmalenberger-Haugen
- Norma Serles
- Margy & Virgil Silver
- Lois Singley
- Marcy Skala
- Lavonne & Fred Stittle
- Eugenie & John Thomson
- Ellen Tilden
- Ron Ucovich
- Henry Villareal
- Gerry Warner
- Robert Welch
- Mark White
- Joe Young
- All Directors

Volunteer docents are the folks who keep our doors open. An enthusiastic group, they help run the gift shop, and on occasion, do tasks like help with mailings. Training is available. Do you have 3 hours to make new friends? Come and spend it with us!

**Docent coordinator for main museum
Ellen Chesnut, 510-865-1204**

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



MEYERS HOUSE GUILD

is a separate membership and donation category from Alameda Museum. Funds are used for the sole purpose of maintaining this gorgeous property. Guild members get invitations to MHG special events.

For more information call Robbie 510-865-1767.

Renewals after September continue your membership through the entire following year.



Thank you for your support!

Make check payable to Meyers House Guild.

Mail to: **Alameda Museum**

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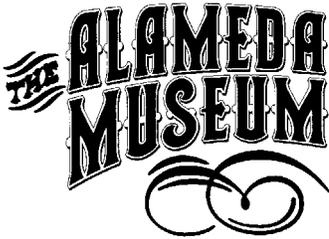
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1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Saturday

11:00 am – 4:00 pm

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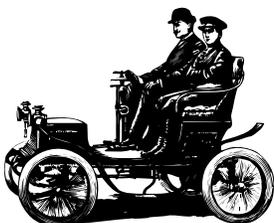
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www.alamedamuseum.org



REMEMBER

The donation deadline for the
Meyers House Capital Campaign
is December 31, 2012.

Your contribution will be
matched up to \$10,000 by East
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Checks must be payable to
Meyers House (send to main
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Thank you for your support!

