

Alameda Museum

Quarterly

THE DEED IS DONE

by Robbie Dileo

IT'S OFFICIAL. On May 1st, the City of Alameda transferred the Meyers House to Alameda Museum via grant deed. This means that we have complete control of the property that comprises three city lots. The first of two lots on Alameda Avenue consist of the main house and the other has the pergola with main gate and grassy lawns with the former 3-car garage at the rear. Behind that is the Central Avenue lot with the Studio Office, some parking, and the big wrought iron gate entrance into the grounds. Alameda Recreation and Park Director Amy Wooldridge, City Manager John Russo, plus all of City Council, with the cooperation of the East Bay Community Foundation, made it happen.

With ownership comes great responsibility and those huge deferred maintenance issues were addressed. We wasted no time getting the dry rot repairs and leaking roofs done so we could begin painting everything. As mentioned in prior issues of the newsletter and in mailings, the Capital Campaign brought in the needed \$40,000. Now depleted, we achieved marvelous results with these funds. Tim Jacobs did some gate and door repairs in addition to fixing all the house windows to open properly. Romero Roofing fixed leaky



City Monument #26 at 2021 Alameda Avenue is once again stately and beautiful after repairs and new painting. Image: Robbie Dileo.

roofs and gutters. Then the house was gorgeously painted in a historical palette, respecting the original colors of a soft beige house with green window sashes and light trim. We used Kelly-Moore Paints from our local store, selected from their vintage homes chart. The property now looks stately and elegant. It would not have

happened without all the excellent preparation and proper application from Metro Painting, Inc. of San Leandro. We cannot thank the infinite patience and cooperation from Mr. Peter Pak and his crew. The Board deliberated over the colors and we could not be more pleased with the results. Everybody understood the

Continued on page 2...



The Deed . . . Continued from page 1

importance of repairing and painting a City Monument.

The landscaped areas received a serious inspection for diseased and end of lifespan vegetation, from none other than Alameda's expert garden designer and nursery owner, Iris Watson, of Thomsen's Nursery on Lincoln Avenue. Tina Chapot, whose husband Bill did most of the dry rot repairs, and who has a gorgeous yard developed with input from Iris, also helped us mark things for removal. Trees and camellias were trimmed.

A couple of neighbors decided to pitch in with George Gunn, making a quasi garden club to speed up the process of creating lower maintenance garden beds over the next several months. We hired Jose B. Garay Landscaping of Alameda to do the main cutting, trimming and overall yard care. They have fixed most of the sprinklers, so watering is less cumbersome, but it is not all automatic yet. Most of the water comes from a well on the property. Yes, Henry and his family had a wonderful estate and now it looks brand new again.



Pump House with repaired double doors, July, 2013.

The 3-car garage, the old pump house, the back studio windows and pergola, all look beautiful and await the garden parties that will help us keep up with the maintenance and expenses of the estate. The grounds will be opened to host a thank you party on August 17th, for those whose contributions to the capital campaign were at \$250 or higher.



A party under the pergola September 26, 1920. Bertha May Meyers, the wife of Henry is on the left. Her mother Sophia May is seated in the center.

It will be a catered event, featuring local vendors that will be recommended to future renters.

In early September, all Meyers House Guild Members and nearest neighbors will be welcomed to an open grounds party with light refreshments to see and enjoy the improvements. The sisters would be thrilled to see the dream of their home ready for Alamedans and others to enjoy.

Look for your August 17th party announcement. The event is by invitation only and will be mailed by the time you read this end of July issue. If you expected one, or want to increase your donation to the \$250 or more level (funds received within the last 12 months combined) so you can attend, call Robbie Dileo, 510-865-1767, to be added.

We have other improvements we want to make in the next year. Alameda Museum has already advanced \$30,000 in additional funds to get the bulk of the work done. However, it does not cover several

other projects (see Meyers House News, page 10). The more we get done now, the better, to launch our rental activities without future interruption. Your extra and continued support matters. Make checks payable to Meyers House. On behalf of the Board—THANK YOU.



Jeanette Meyers sits under the pergola for her graduation portrait in June, 1919.



BE A MUSEUM DOCENT

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

Alameda Museum Quarterly is published in the spring, summer, fall, and winter of each year and is available in electronic form on the museum website.

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

COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

Contributors: George Gunn,
Robbie Dileo, and Ron Ucovich.
Editor: Ron Ucovich
Proofreader: Robbie Dileo
Designer & Web: Valerie Turpen

MUSEUM DIRECTORS 2013

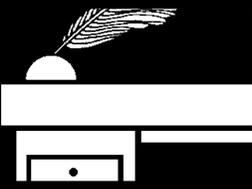
Robbie Dileo, President
Judith Lynch, Vice-President
Bob Risley, Treasurer
Julie Kennedy, Recording Secretary
George Gunn, Curator
Dennis Evanosky
Adam Gillitt
Johanna Hall
Debra Hilding
Charlie Howell
Adam Koltun

THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS

Alameda Sun

Alameda's only locally owned and operated newspaper

Alameda
MAGAZINE

From the Curator's Desk

by George C. Gunn

As of July 19th, the painting of the Meyers House, pergola, and out buildings have been completed. The pump house and library addition to the main house were re-roofed. Gutters and downspouts were added to the pump house and some sidewalk strips replaced.

In the future, depending on funds available, exciting improvements to upgrade the property are planned. The pump house and all the gravel areas could be altered to facilitate events.

With all that is happening, a garden group has been formed, with Gene and Dora Calhoun, Carl and Shirley Ramos, and Kate McAnamey. They are a great group of individuals who seem to know intuitively what needs to be done. With grounds as large as the Meyers House, there is plenty of weeding and watering to be done.



George C. Gunn
Curator, Alameda Museum

Companies Responsible for the Fresh Look of the Meyers House

FOR EXPERT SERVICE WE RECOMMEND:

BR CONCRETE

726 Lincoln Ave, #A, Alameda, CA 94501
(510) 865-2297

CHAPOT CONSTRUCTION

(510) 864-0142

JOSE B. GARAY LANDSCAPING

2220 Buena Vista Ave., Alameda, CA 94501
(510) 523-1930

METRO PAINTING, INC.

21750 Meekland Ave., Hayward, CA 94541
(510) 881-2640

ROMERO ROOFING COMPANY

796 Webster St., Hayward, CA 94544
(510) 581-2795

TIMOTHY JACOBS CONSTRUCTION

1416B Encinal Ave., Alameda, CA 94501
(510) 523-9684



The Barbershop Quartet

by Ron Ucovich

DURING THE LATE 1800s, barbershops often served as community centers. Even men who were not getting a haircut would gather there to visit with their friends and catch up on neighborhood gossip. If someone brought in a banjo, a guitar, or harmonica, he would play a familiar folk song, and his companions would accompany him in 4-part harmony in the same style as a church spiritual. Over the years, a new style of music evolved which required no musical instruments. They employed four voices (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) to supply the four characteristic musical elements (melody, harmony, counterpoint, and contrary motion).

Barbershop quartets became iconic in the early 1900s. The phonograph industry popularized early standards such as *Shine-On Harvest Moon*, *Hello My Baby*, and *Sweet Adeline*. Each quartet would design a unique eye-catching costume consisting of bright colors, a boater-style straw hat, a string necktie, and a vertical-striped vest. By 1920, this musical fad had run its course, and disappeared from public view. Some establishments, however, did preserve the barbershop quartet costume, for example Straw Hat Pizza restaurants, and honky-tonk piano bars.

Vaudeville performances of the 1920s often featured barbershop music, but true to its satirical nature, it would add a corny tag bar at the end to make people laugh. In classical music, an unrelated tune at the end of a composition to indicate closure is called a "coda," but in a vaudeville piece, this humorous riff is called a "tag bar." Their favorite tag bar was called the "king of corn." You sometimes hear the *king of corn* at birthday parties. After they sing the last line of *Happy Birthday to You*,



In the Good ol' Summertime...

someone will bellow out the tag bar: "...and many more."

Another popular tag bar was called the "rip...boom!" It would be an appropriate sound effect for a villain slipping on a banana peel. A similar tag bar was the "rip...rip." It would offer a little suspense, like when the roadrunner hands a time bomb to the coyote. A popular tag bar was called the "old pal." You would find the "old pal" at the end of popular dance tunes, like *In The Mood*.

The most identifiable of all tag bars is called "shave and a haircut." This 7-note riff became popular after the 1915 song called *On the 5:15*, but its accompanying lyrics were not added until the advent of the 1939 show tune called *Shave and a Haircut ...Shampoo*. In the 1950s, Warner Brothers Cartoons changed the wording from "shampoo" to "two bits." They would introduce a scene where you would hear a car horn, church bells, or window shutters banging rhythmically "shave-and-a-haircut", and invariably a cartoon character would appear from nowhere and yell, "TWO BITS!" Soon this became an audience-participation activity. Any insignificant object could tap out shave-and-a-haircut, and the audience would respond in resounding unison, "TWO BITS!"

In 1988, this familiar tag bar became a plot device in the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* The idea was that when a cartoon character hears the first five notes of the tag bar, he can't resist shouting out "TWO BITS!"

We see now that the old-fashioned barbershop quartet had a tremendous influence upon our American folklore. But, quite ironically, it had nothing to do with our American ditty, "shave and a haircut...two bits." That jingle was the clever creation of Looney Tunes.

LEGACY SOCIETY

THE COMPLETE FLYER IS AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM

Gifts from your estate must be \$1,000 or more to be a part of the program. Lesser amounts may be donations to a specific project or archival fund. Perhaps a \$500 Lifetime Membership would be appropriate?

For questions call Robbie at 510-865-1767.



Who Remembers Outhouses?

by Ron Ucovich

ALAMEDA HAS A VERY HIGH SUBTERRANEAN WATER TABLE. This was good news for our earliest settlers because they had a ready supply of drinking water without needing to dig a deep well. This convenience was very short-lived, however, because right behind their house stood the family privy, which very readily contaminated their water supply.

In the 1880s, modern homes were equipped with indoor plumbing. Land developers were required to install underground pipes to drain the sewage into the bay. These pipes were supposed to carry off storm water as well as sewage. Disasters occurred when you had heavy rains during a high tide. The sewers backed up and raw sewage started to sprout up from your basement toilet or drainpipe. The people who used outhouses looked with disgust at their neighbors who had their fancy flush toilets, and then had to shovel excrement out of their basements after a heavy rainfall.

Public restrooms are common in today's world, but back in the cowboy days travelers knew that the only public facilities available were found behind the town hotel. If it was a large hotel, the outhouse was a very long building with a row of seats inside. This necessitated having one facility for men, and a separate one for women. Since many people were not able to read in those days, symbols were put on the door to designate gender: a crescent moon meant that it was a ladies' facility, and a star designated men. And, since outhouses had no windows, the moon or the star was large enough to let in a little bit of light.

A two-story hotel, of course, required a two-story outhouse. A bridge was built to connect the second floor of the hotel to the second floor of the outbuilding. The second story of the outhouse was offset from the first story, so the refuse from the top floor fell behind the wall of the bottom floor.

Home outhouses were a little different from hotel outhouses. The building

was placed at least 50 feet from the house, and the door was always facing away from the house. When the outhouse was in use, the door was often left open for ventilation. Many times, if a person was accustomed to using an outhouse, out of force of habit, he would leave the door open, even when indoors.

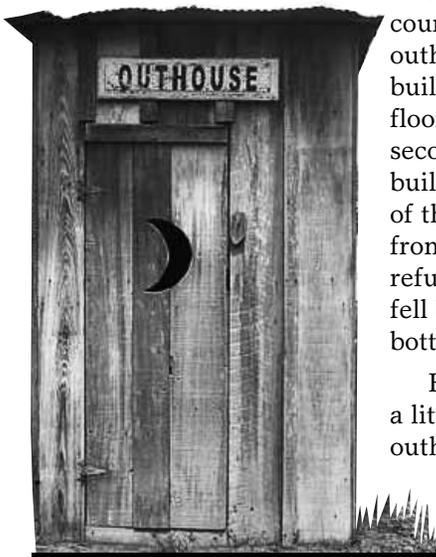
Home outhouses usually had two seats... one large hole for adults, and a smaller one for children. If a small child was forced to use a toilet seat that was too large for him, the results could be humiliating.

The home outhouse would also be equipped with a goodly supply of newspapers. This was not reading material. It was there for hygienic reasons. Old magazines could also be used, however the paper used in magazines had a high clay content, which made it less absorbent than newspaper. The ideal hygienic product was a corncob. It was absorbent, non-abrasive, and even after use, it could be used again as cattle fodder.

Everything that went down the privy hole was biodegradable. When the hole filled up, you would just dig another hole and move the outhouse. Trees grew readily on the former privy location. Fruit trees were particularly popular.

The advent of flush toilets necessitated a new type of toilet paper. It had to be strong enough to use without tearing, yet soft enough to dissolve in water and not clog the plumbing. After toilet paper was invented, there was no way to market it. During the Victorian

Era, it was considered uncouth or even indecent to talk about private body parts or personal bodily functions. Toilet paper was kept behind the counter at the general store. It was sold in a brown paper bag with no words or markings of any kind. The customer would approach the salesclerk, and in hushed tones, he would ask for "privy tissue." He would make his purchase, and then quietly leave the store, hoping that no one noticed what he was buying.





Trust Me...It Works!

by Ron Ucovich

THE FIRST MECHANICAL ELEVATORS ever made were steam winches used to lift coal out of mine shafts. In 1823 a London architect designed an "ascending room," which was like an amusement park ride offering paying customers a scary ride up one story, then back down to terra firma. In 1850, a New York man copied this idea to hoist barrels of flour to the second floor. This elevator worked well for freight, but it was considered treacherous to risk the lives of passengers standing in a cage suspended by a single rope.



Elisha Otis

A furniture builder named Elisha Otis had just invented an automatic wood lathe, and he was making lots of money turning bedsteads and table legs. He used a mechanical hoist to lift his products to the second floor, but he realized that this could be disastrous if the rope were to break. Mr. Otis designed a "safety elevator" which would avoid a

freefall in case the rope snapped. He patented his invention, and then he invested all his money in a new enterprise which he called the Union Elevator Works.

Despite vehement claims of safety, skeptics showed no interest in elevators, and not a single one was sold. In 1854, the World's Fair opened in New York City, and Mr. Otis saw this as an opportunity to promote his invention. He announced a spectacular demonstration that afternoon. Crowds of spectators gathered as Mr. Otis loaded freight onto a cage mounted in an open elevator shaft. The cage was suspended by a rope attached to a winch. Mr. Otis stood on top of the freight as it was slowly hoisted up the tall shaft. Then Mr. Otis ordered them to stop the winch. Next, he shouted, "CUT THE ROPE!"

His assistant swung a large axe, and with one swift blow, he chopped the rope in two. The audience gasped in astonishment. The cage dropped a couple of inches, and then, as if by magic, it hung in midair with no visible means of support. The revolutionary safety brake worked perfectly, and thereafter, Mr. Otis had no trouble selling his elevators. By 1873, over 2,000 Otis elevators had been sold, and in 1889, the Otis Elevator Company was

commissioned to build the elevator that would carry passengers to the top of the Eiffel Tower for the World's Fair in Paris, France.

Elisha Otis decided to apply his "safety" principle to trains. At that time, braking systems were very primitive. When a train needed to slow down, the engineer would sound his whistle to signal his brakemen. The men would climb onto the roof of a boxcar and turn a handwheel. This wheel was attached to a screw linkage which applied friction between the brake shoe and the wheel. This procedure was very slow and unreliable, and in an emergency, it was worthless.

The first automated brakes used steam to activate the brake shoe. If, for some reason, there was no steam pressure, there would be no brakes at all. What Mr. Otis invented was a two-hose system; one hose was for applying the brakes, and the other to deactivate a spring-loaded emergency brake. If you had a runaway boxcar, the loss of steam pressure would automatically activate the emergency brake and bring the rampant car to a safe stop.

A California miner named Andrew Hallidie saw that the rope used to haul ore carts out of gold mines was wearing out very quickly. He thought it would be better to make the rope out of wire, so he returned to San Francisco to open a factory which he named the A.S. Hallidie Wire Rope Company. His wire rope would last about eight times longer than regular hemp rope.



Andrew Hallidie

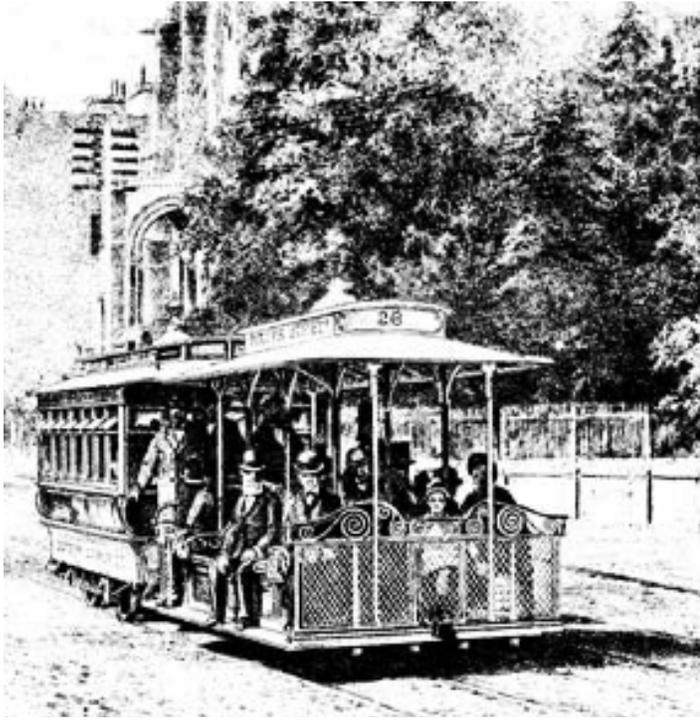
When the "gold fever" had subsided, Mr. Hallidie started to use his wire cable for making suspension bridges. It occurred to him that his cable could also be used to pull a horse car up San Francisco hills which were too steep for horses. He called his new conveyance a "cable car," and in 1873, he was ready for his first run.

The citizens of San Francisco were understandably reluctant to climb aboard a vehicle going up and down the steepest streets in the world, and entrusting their lives to a cable which they couldn't even see. To prove its safety, Mr. Hallidie did not open the ride to passengers.

Continued on page 7...



Trust Me . . . Continued from page 6



The cable car, developed by Andrew Hallidie made climbing the steep San Francisco hills possible.

Instead, he towed a second cable car behind the first to prove it could handle the extra weight. When everyone saw that it was safe, they were ready for their first ride. Special running boards and outside handgrips were added to the car so that more passengers could ride. In a car that was designed for 25 passengers, over 90 people clambered aboard, much to the delight of the excited passengers.

Today, riding on the running board of a moving vehicle is prohibited by California law everywhere except San Francisco. If it were not for the skepticism of reluctant passengers, there would be no such exemption, and tourists would never know the thrill of riding up and down the hills of San Francisco on an over-crowded cable car.

And now for your trivia of the day...Andrew Hallidie was not his real name. At birth, he was named after his father, Andrew Smith. This name sounded too common for Andrew, so he adopted the name of his venerable British uncle, Sir Andrew Hallidie, Royal Physician to the Crown of England, Queen Victoria.

**ALAMEDA ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION SOCIETY PRESENTS**

Woody Walk

with historian **Woody Minor**
Sunday, August 25
at 1:00 pm

Tour begins at Lincoln Park
Corner of Santa Clara Avenue & High Street



Waterside Terrace: Meeting the Modern

This year's walk puts the focus on a groundbreaking 20th century tract. With its curving streets, concrete entrance pedestals, and shoreline access paths, Waterside Terrace introduced modern concepts of subdivision planning to the Island City.

FREE FOR AAPS MEMBERS • \$5 FOR NON-MEMBERS
For more information visit
www.alameda-preservation.org



From the President's Desk

by Robbie Dileo

Stepping up to take over the full operations of the Meyers House and the grounds has been fun and a real challenge, taking hundreds of hours. George and I, after nearly 24 years of working together, have learned how to get the best out of each other. The Board of Directors approved budgets and provided project input along the way. We accomplished so much these past three months, getting most everything wanted and needed done or in progress. The house and grounds are really looking beautiful. The goal to have our Thank You Party for major donors (\$250 or more given in the last 12 months) is set for Saturday, August 17th while Meyers House Guild members and neighbors can see the progress on Sunday, September 8th when we open the grounds from noon to 5pm, with light refreshments.

As President in 1994, I recall asking City Council to accept the gift of the estate for a house museum and it happened. The museum portion opened to the public in 1997, but the grounds and exterior maintenance were the City's responsibility. Flash forward 19 years, and now, on May 1st, via deed transfer, the entire estate became a part of Alameda Museum, via my efforts, the board, and mostly, the City, who realized that we are the right people to take care of the property. None of this could have happened without the East Bay Community Foundation and the Meyers Sister's fund. Now we have come full circle – I am so proud of the revitalization accomplished so quickly.

Money is needed to tackle some larger remaining tasks, like turning the old pump house into a place that can support catering needs and getting all the gravel areas replaced with a durable hard surface, plus let's hope for a real ADA restroom, sooner than later. We'll continue separate accounting to make reporting easier, as operations for this unique location are not the same as those for the main museum. Donations made payable to Meyers House are still being accepted for capital improvements. Key to the work, besides having funds, are finding excellent craftsmen and gardening services, plus the new volunteers helping out our trusted neighbors the Silvers and my husband Ross (who provides nearly daily volunteer hours), all supporting George and me as we made decisions on the various upgrading projects.

Board members Johanna Hall (with a borrowed BMW) and Charlie Howell with wife Gail, decorated the Museum's July 4th parade entry with our banner proclaiming 65 years of preserving history, the Meyers House available for garden parties, and that the Alameda Legacy Home Tour is coming in September. They did a fantastic job smiling and waving for over three miles.



We will not stop until we make the Meyers House the best City Monument and place for events. We hope to start grounds rental activities by September. We'll post rates and create a brochure in time for the September 22nd Alameda Legacy Home Tour, which will use the grounds for refreshments and a docent/homeowner party afterward.

Main Museum Updates: We continue to have great sales in the gift shop, due to donations of merchandise from members and guests. We recycle the items into cash, so keep the boxes coming. Long a goal of mine, over the next few months, we will get our 4,000 photograph negative collection scanned. Through contact with the College of Alameda College to Career Program, we have an intern named Robbie Erion, who has been learning how to scan and type up the descriptions. The project will eventually require funding. We are accepting donations for it and our other preservation needs, such as acid free storage boxes. Mark donations payable to Alameda Museum, write Archival Fund in the memo space. If you know of easy-to-use software that can be purchased to run on a PC that will allow for thumbnail images to be sorted by categories, let me know.



Robbie Erion at work.



It will take months to scan our collection, but in the meantime, we hope to create a database for public use with research projects so we can begin selling images again. People are always asking "is my house in the collection?" and one day maybe we'll know!

Another new project in the works is to begin upgrading some exhibits with video educational materials. I want to make our information more accessible over the next couple of years. Chuck Millar and I never had enough space to tell the story of the "other beaches" when we created the Neptune Beach Exhibit. Using a video monitor, a PC and a DVD player on video stands will allow us to get those images, movie shorts, and PowerPoint presentations ready this summer. We'll start with what we have, and add new items as they are scanned and ready. If you have an interest in creating movie clips or slide shows with narration, contact me at 510-865-1767 or email, damsel_d@pacbell.net

President, Alameda Museum

BE A DOCENT!

Don't forget the Alameda Legacy Home Tour is Sunday, September 22. If you would like to be a docent and attend the tour for FREE email alamedahometour@aim.com

Meyers House Celebration

Saturday, August 17, 2013
4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Hors d'oeuvre • wine • champagne • dessert
By invitation only event for donors to the Capital Campaign, \$250 and higher within the last 12 months.

Invitations will be mailed by end of July.

If you do not receive one, contact
Robbie Dileo: 510-865-1767
damsel_d@pacbell.net

Meyers House Guild members, nearby neighbors, and those who donated less than \$250 are invited to view the house exterior and grounds on
Sunday, September 8, 2013
12:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Light refreshments will be available.

No RSVP required.

See the improvements and learn about events that could be held on the grounds.



Now is the time to show off the results. The August 17th party is mostly set and invitations should have been received by mail before this newsletter goes out at end of July. The gathering is for major donors who gave at least \$250 to get the house and pergola repaired and painted. If you have given in total, \$250 or more, within the past 12 months, you will get an invitation. Contact Robbie if you feel you were not included in error. The list used was through June. End of July will be the final list. We will accept last minute donations payable to Meyers House, c/o Alameda Museum address.

Floral arrangements provided by McCallum Designs, fantastic food by PBS Catering, a beverage station with wine, champagne, and punch, plus dessert by Tucker's Ice Cream will be featured. There will be other special treats including an opportunity to purchase the book *A Home in Alameda* signed by author Woody Minor. The wonderful people who gave \$1,000 or more will be getting their copies soon – the latest edition – the 4th, has just been printed.

Meyers House Guild

Meyers House Guild Members have been supporting the MH with their dedicated donations. They too will have a special opportunity to see the improved grounds and freshly painted buildings on September 8th, when we open the gates to them and the immediate neighbors, who have been admiring the progress and will suffer with our event parking issues and some noise. We do plan to be good neighbors at all times. Arrive between noon and 5:00 pm. Enjoy a cup of punch and some cookies as you stroll through the estate. Pick up the new brochure so you can plan for your next event.

What's New at the Meyers House & Gardens

Boy Scout Troop 78 volunteered to practice their welding torch skills by disassembling the huge iron water storage tank in the so called Pump House. Unused for decades, it is taking up valuable space. The metal will be recycled with the proceeds funding troop projects and the young men will receive merit badges for their efforts. The next project may be the flagpole repainting and installation in a garden bed bracket that was previously used for a column that supported a clothes line. That column got reused in the pergola repairs. We are recycling as much as we can, using old growth redwood for repairs, whenever possible.



Armen Phelps, Harrison Sims, and assistant scout master Steve Ramos begin the task of dismantling the obsolete pump house water tank.



Scout Armen Phelps makes the first cut while assistant scout master Steve Ramos supervises. The troop will take turns in pairs with the welding torch until the tank is dismantled. The project will take a couple of Saturdays to complete.



VOLUNTEERS: ALAMEDA MUSEUM & MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS

Steve Aced
 Barbara Balderston
 Chad Barr
 Jim & Jane Burgelin
 Gene & Dora Calhoun
 Janine Carr
 Katherine Cavanaugh
 Ellen Chesnut
 Barbara Coapman
 Dorothy Coats
 Diane Coler-Dark
 Cathy Conley
 Charles Daly
 Reid Davis
 Gail deHaan
 Ross & Robbie Dileo
 Marilyn Dodge
 Linda Domholt
 Joanne Dykema
 Robbie Erion
 Caroline Erickson
 Pamela Ferrero
 Barbara Gibson
 Adam Gillitt
 George Gunn
 Leslie Hawksbee
 Debra Hilding
 Lois J. Hoffman
 Charlie & Gail Howell
 Virginia Jones
 Julie Kennedy

Carole King
 Adam Koltun
 Jana Kurka
 Mary Lou Kurtz
 Gayle Macaitis
 Kate McAnamey
 Jeannie McCaffery
 Jim & Carla McGrogan
 Joanne McKay
 Stephanie Paula
 Susan Potter
 Carl & Shirley Ramos
 Virginia Rivera
 Betty Saunders
 Holly Schmalenberger-Haugen
 Norma Serles
 Margy & Virgil Silver
 Lois Singley
 Marcy Skala
 Lavonne & Fred Stittle
 Lois Thomas
 Eugenie & John Thomson
 Ellen Tilden
 Ron Ucovich
 Henry Villareal
 Gerry Warner
 Linda Weinstock
 Robert Welch
 Mark White
 Joe Young

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**

2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda CA 94501

Annual Guild Membership \$25

Dues Amount \$ _____

Additional Contribution \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

I would like to:

Be a Docent

Garden

Clean & Maintain Artifacts

Help with Special Events

Other _____



The First Potato Chip

by Ron Ucovich

IN THE SUMMER OF 1853, A NEW YORKER NAMED GEORGE CRUM was employed as chef in an upscale hotel in Saratoga Springs. On the restaurant menu were "French fried potatoes," a dish introduced to the American table by Thomas Jefferson. The potatoes were peeled, cut into thick wedges, deep fried, and served with a sprinkle of salt.

One day, a very demanding dinner guest ordered a serving of French fries, but promptly rejected the order because they were cut too thick. Mr. Crum, furrowed his eyebrows in disgust, and proceeded to prepare a batch of thin-cut fries. This batch also met with vociferous disapproval, as the customer railed about the thick French fries, the poor service, and the inept chef. In a vindictive flurry, Mr. Crum decided to slice the potatoes paper-thin, and fry them so crisp that they could not possibly be skewered with a fork, but to Mr. Crum's amazement, these crispy treats met with delighted approval.

Seizing the opportunity to market his product, Mr. Crum named his potato snacks "Saratoga Chips," and he added them to the dinner menu as a specialty item. Soon they were boxed and sold to other restaurants throughout the New York area. To make them, potatoes had to be tediously peeled and sliced by hand. It was the invention of the mechanical potato peeler in the 1920s that paved the way for potato chips to soar from a restaurant specialty item to a store-bought snack food in the New England states.

In the 1920s, Herman Lay, a sales representative from the Barrett Food Company, passed out samples of the Saratoga Chips to his grocery customers in the southern states. He amassed such a large clientele that he opened his own distributorship. He used his marketing expertise to promote his product, and by the end of the decade, he was distributing potato chips across the entire East Coast. In 1937 he opened the H.W. Lay factory and began production of an entire line of packaged snack foods.

At first, potato chips were sold in barrels or bins, as were cookies and crackers, but being covered in salt, they absorbed moisture and became stale very quickly. An attorney from Southern California named Laura Scudder

decided to address this problem. She opened a factory in 1926 which packaged potato chips in waxed paper bags, and the bags were ironed shut to seal in the freshness. The process went a little faster with the invention of cellophane, and the bags could be sealed by a crimping process. The Laura Scudder Company was the first factory in America to print a freshness date on the package. Their guarantee of freshness was reflected in their marketing logo: "The Noisiest Chips in the World."

During the 1950s, the Tayto Company developed a method of seasoning potato chips. Their top sellers were Cheese & Onion, and Salt & Vinegar. This small, family-owned enterprise made a fortune by selling their patent to the larger manufacturers. What followed was an explosion of potato chips with every imaginable flavor: onion, garlic, barbecue, sour cream, chives, paprika, lemon, lime, cracked pepper, oregano, chili powder, jalapeño, hickory smoke, dill, and horseradish.

The Pringle Company made chips out of baked mashed potatoes. They are all uniform in size and shape, which allows them to be packaged in cardboard tubes. Shoestring potatoes are also made from mashed potatoes, but they are shaped into shoelace sticks before cooking, and they are also sold in cardboard containers.

In 1965, a young bachelor salesman named Alan Stillman was searching for a bar and grill which would attract working singles. None existed. Night clubs did not attract the labor class, and pool halls did not attract women, so Mr. Stillman designed his own restaurant. The décor was a 1920s discotheque, and the music was modern pop. The employees were young, and they all wore red-and-white striped soccer shirts. He had created America's first singles bar, and he called it T.G.I. Friday's.

In keeping with the homespun atmosphere of the restaurant, Mr. Stillman did not want to put a basket of potato chips, French bread, tortilla chips, or breadsticks on each table. He wanted to be different. On every table he served a basket of deep fried potato skins ...the part which other restaurants toss into the garbage bin. They were an instant success, and today, even in elegant restaurants, you can find potato skins on the menu. Who would have ever imagined that potato skins would appear on a restaurant menu? The next thing you know, bakeries will be selling donut holes, and people will be buying drinking water in plastic bottles.



Moon's Lake House was a restaurant on Saratoga Lake in Saratoga Springs, NY. It is reputed to have been the birthplace of the potato chip, or Saratoga chip.

Hosted by: The Alameda Museum & The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society • Sponsored by: Little House Cafe

ALAMEDA LEGACY HOME TOUR

A Self-guided Tour of Six Victorian-era Homes
& Refreshments in the Meyers House Garden

Sunday, September 22, 2013
11:00 am to 5:00 pm

\$30
Advance
ticket vouchers
available at:

Daisy's
1347 Park Street

Thomsen's Garden Center
1113 Lincoln Avenue

Wescafe
1518 Webster Street

\$35
Tour day tickets
available at
Franklin Park
Morton Street &
San Antonio Avenue

Painting by Linda Weinstock

Tickets online: alameda-home-tour.org
Information: 510-523-5907



California's Greatest Hoax

by Ron Ucovich

DURING THE 16TH CENTURY, Spain laid claim to the entire western coast of North and South America. The great Spanish Armada dedicated itself to the task of attacking Native American cities and plundering its wealth, but Great Britain had an equally formidable navy, and it was dedicated to the task of stealing riches from the Spaniards. Thus began the numerous adventures of a young and valiant Vice Admiral who would later be knighted Sir Francis Drake.

Drake's most salient adventure occurred in 1573 when his troops took siege of a mule train heavily laden with gold and silver which the Spaniards were transporting from Peru to the Caribbean Sea. The men had captured about 20 tons of riches. Unable to carry the treasure, they buried much of it in a place where they could retrieve it later. This adventure gave rise to subsequent legends of pirate maps and buried treasure. Walt Disney popularized

these legends in the Hollywood production called *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

In June of 1579, Queen Elizabeth I sent Admiral Drake on an expedition to chart the West Coast of North America. His first landing in California was at Point Loma on the San Diego Bay peninsula. There, he planted a British flag, and he named the land Nova Albion (New Britain). Drake left some men there to start a new colony, then he proceeded northward in search of a northern passage to the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1580, Drake sailed past San Francisco Bay, mapping the land, charting the waters, and keeping extensive records, drawings, and paintings of everything they saw. Not wanting to damage his ship on submerged shoals, he sailed west of the Farallon Islands and was unaware of the Golden Gate entrance to the Bay, which lay undiscovered until 1769. Drake dropped anchor somewhere near Point Reyes to record what he saw and to declare the land as property of the British Flag.

This is all we know about Drake's adventures in this area. When he returned to England to present all his



Queen Elizabeth I

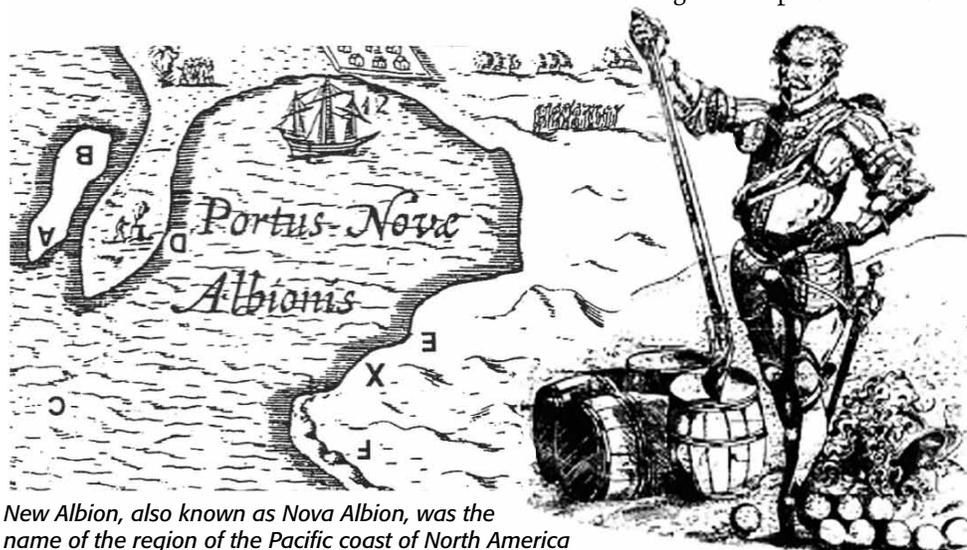
documents to the Queen, they were locked up in a closely guarded archive in Whitehall Palace. Unfortunately, these records were lost forever in 1698 when a great conflagration consumed the palace.

According to British history books, a plate of brass was left at the shore of a bay somewhere near Mendocino County. The plate was inscribed with Drake's name and a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I on a sixpence coin imbedded in the plate. For many decades, historians have been searching for any trace that might remain of this historic monument.

In 1936, this historic plaque was discovered by a man who gave it to a friend to have it verified at the University of Berkeley. Professor Bolton, director of the University Library, was so excited about the discovery that he convinced the president of the California Historical Society to purchase the plate for \$3,500. In 1939, the plate was proudly exhibited in the Hall of California History at the World's Fair on Treasure Island. Photographs of it appeared in textbooks and magazines across the entire Nation.

Despite all the praise and fanfare, there were skeptics who raised a suspicious eyebrow over this brass icon. The wording on the plaque was not appropriate for the Elizabethan Era, for example, the plate reads "Queen Elizabeth," instead of the formal "Elizabeth, by grace of God, Queen of England." The cut of the plate was too perfect, and the metal finish was too shiny.

For 40 years, the plaque was considered legitimate until modern scientific developments shed new light on the relic. Gamma-ray absorption tests revealed that the brass was



New Albion, also known as Nova Albion, was the name of the region of the Pacific coast of North America explored by Sir Francis Drake and claimed by him for England in 1579.

Continued on page 15 . . .



Greatest Hoax . . . Continued from page 14

flattened by modern rolling equipment, and not by a 16th Century hammer. Neutron activation analysis found that the brass contained too much zinc and had too few impurities for its age. Stereo microscopy tests revealed that the edges of the plaque were cut by modern cutting equipment. The plaque was a fraud.

Meticulous detail went into the plaque's creation. It was made from crude brass, and the text was chiseled by hand. The raised edges of each letter were hammered flat. The plate was seared over a wood fire, and then sand and ash were hammered into the surface to create an aged appearance. The plate was then buried in the ground for a period of time.

After the conspiracy was discovered, members of the E Clampus Vitus society revealed their elaborate hoax. This club is an exclusive fraternity of prominent history buffs who research historical events and play harmless pranks on fellow members for their own amusement. Through a series of unforeseen events, this prank got into the public arena, and went completely out of control.

Although it is now known to be fraudulent, this historic icon continues to be a centerpiece attraction at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley. It has kindled renewed interest in California's history and in our early explorers. Drake's plate may not be authentic, but it is still a real piece of California's history, and it is still a fun story to tell.

Upcoming Exhibits at the Museum Art Gallery

Exhibits generally open on the first weekend of the month and close on the last. Check local newspapers for exact dates and public receptions.

■ **JULY**

Cross Currents
Mixed Media

■ **AUGUST**

Women Artists of Alameda
Mixed Media

■ **SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER**

Feng Jin
Sculptures

■ **NOVEMBER & DECEMBER**

Owen Smith
Mixed Media

JOIN ALAMEDA MUSEUM

Preserving the Past for the Future
for over 60 Years

Your Annual Membership helps:

- Fund Children Programs
- Support Local Artists
- Free Monthly Lectures
- Receive *Alameda Museum Quarterly*
- Free Meyers House Pass (new members only)

For more information call 510-523-5907
or visit www.alamedamuseum.org

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



Tax I.D. #94-2464751

Membership levels are annual, except one-time Lifetime. Please check the appropriate box or boxes. Thank you for your support.

- \$30 Adult
- \$20 2nd Household Member*
- \$20 Senior
- \$15 Docent/Volunteer
- \$250 Business Member
- \$500 Lifetime Member
(one payment only, for life of the member)

*Person who resides with a paid Adult Member at same address, also gets voting privilege.

Make check payable to: Alameda Museum
Mail to: **Alameda Museum**
2324 Alameda Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501

Dues Amount \$ _____

Additional Contribution \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____



FOUNDED IN 1948

2324 Alameda Avenue
Alameda CA 94501

Return Address Requested

NON PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT NO. 80

ALAMEDA, CA

94501

IN THIS ISSUE

- *The Deed is Done*
- *From the Curator's Desk*
- *The Barbershop Quartet*
- *Who Remembers Outhouses?*
- *Trust Me...It Works*
- *From the President's Desk*
- *What's New at the Meyers House*
- *The First Potato Chip*
- *California's Greatest Hoax*

ALAMEDA MUSEUM

2324 Alameda Avenue

HOURS

Wed. – Fri., Sunday

1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Saturday

11:00 am – 4:00 pm

MEYERS HOUSE & GARDENS HOURS

2021 Alameda Avenue

HOURS

4th Saturdays

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

510-521-1233

www.alamedamuseum.org



ALAMEDA MUSEUM LECTURES 2013

❖ **THURSDAY, AUGUST 29**
The Chicago World's Fair and the "Rise" of the Skyscraper
By U.C. Berkeley professor and architect Greg Castillo.

❖ **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26**
Learning from Nature: Tales of Two Ansel, Mr. Hall and Mr. Adams
A glimpse into the life of explorer, photographer, and adventurer Ansel F. Hall, first chief naturalist and forester of the National Park Service. By Alameda resident Johanna Hall, his great grand-daughter.

❖ **Thursday, October 24**
Digging Alameda: The Inside Scoop on the Underground Island
A slide revelation by publishers and authors Eric Kos and Dennis Evanosky.

NOTE: All lectures start at 7:00 p.m. at the Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue near Park Street. 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 \$10 for others. Topics may change without notice. For lecture information leave a message at 510-748-0796 or check www.alamedamuseum.org.



SAVE THE DATE

Alameda Legacy Home Tour

September 22, 2013

www.alameda-home-tour.org