The WESCAFE on Webster street is a wonderful example of adaptive reuse done right. With vision and some seed money from Alameda’s Façade Assistance Program, its current owners, Monica and Miguel Trejo, transformed a run-down building into a local gathering place. (Photo AAPS.)

New Chapter for an Old Building
1536 Webster Street

Story by Jerri Holan
Award Recipients:
Miguel & Monica Trejo

Old is new again as coffee shops once more become community magnets. Out are generic designs of chains like Starbucks & Peets, in is a new type of café more rooted in location, authenticity, and unique character. In Alameda, WESCAFE is the real thing—a 1916 landmark building reincarnated into a popular café.

With vision, some seed money from Alameda’s Façade Assistance Program, and lots of TLC by its current owners, Monica and Miguel Trejo, a run-down bank building was transformed into a local gathering place. Their success seems to be stimulating other business along this short but vibrant section of Webster Street, often a forgotten area of Alameda’s commercial community.

WESCAFE is wedged between two adjacent brick buildings of about the same age. The immediate neighborhood is a wonderfully preserved block of old buildings that recalls Webster Streets early business origins. Two-story Victorian

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wood buildings on the north end of the block are complemented by single-story brick commercial buildings on the south end, reflecting the commercial development of the area from about 1875 when the West End Victorian resort boom started until about 1920 when development was spurred by shipyards and different construction materials. Monica and Miguel’s rehabilitation used simple materials to create a distinct and friendly café. The design retains the tactile character of the original building and celebrates traditional materials.

On the exterior, original brickwork and large wood windows have been painted while the decorative brick cornice and beautiful plaster frieze have been restored. On the inside, traditional tilework on the floor and dark wood trim work is reminiscent of the building’s 1916 vintage. Stamped sheet metal ceilings and period light fixtures complete the period ambience while wall stenciling adds the handcrafted quality of local artisans. Colors are soft and traditional, again respectful of the building’s era.

On sunny days, patrons can utilize sidewalk tables or head inside where they can sit or stand as their fancy suits them. The deep narrow lot contains two original buildings separated by a courtyard which has been reconfigured into a covered patio, complete with trees, umbrellas and a soothing fountain, giving customers another outdoor seating alternative available year round. The vintage café feels as if it has always been there, concealing the enormous amount of work that transformed this old bank building into a favorite eating place.

A new kitchen was installed while plumbing, mechanical, and electrical systems were completely replaced and brought up to code. After collapsing in a storm during the remodel, the roof was totally rebuilt and the Trejos added an office and prep area on a mezzanine floor.

Before the Trejos took over the lease on the building in 2009, it had been vacant for years. For many decades, the building housed a bank which closed sometime in the 1980s according to permit records. It then housed a frame store for a couple of years, but after that, it sat neglected and blighted until restoration began in 2008.

In 2008, with Sue G. Russell’s assistance, funds from the City of Alameda’s Façade Assistance Program were used to paint the façade with soft pastel colors, highlighting the handsome building’s proportions and elegant materials and regaining some of its lost character. A few months later, the Trejos signed the lease for their new café and a new chapter began for this humble brick building with a long history on Webster Street.

Built by the Powell Brothers in 1916 for $2,663, the original owners were the West End Building Association, a chamber of commerce-like group which promoted business and real estate in this part of Alameda. The prominent nearby bank on the northwest corner of Haight and Webster was also built the same year by Master Architect John Hudson Thomas, an indication that the period was an important one for Webster Street. Webster Street’s most prosperous era lasted from about 1915 through the 1940s, coinciding with the Bethlehem shipyard on the north end and Neptune Beach at the south. Webster Street’s first banks (West End branches of local banks), its first large movie theater, and its first wave of brick and reinforced concrete buildings date from the early years. By WWI, fire limits had been established along both frontages of the street, requiring brick or reinforced concrete construction. The office building for the West End Building Association along with two larger buildings—Alameda Savings Bank (1917) and the Neptune Theater (1920)—were the street’s first brick structures.

While this small renovation project seems modest in the large scheme of things, in fact, it’s a very important building in the context of Webster Street and commercial development in Alameda. The building is eligible for the California Register of Historic Places and the community is thankful to the Trejos for bringing this distinguished jewel back to life—it’s a wonderful example of adaptive reuse done right.
We Could Take This On
1044 -1044 ½ Central Avenue

Story by Rosemary McNally

Award Recipients: Nancy and Wayne Marzolf

When Nancy and Wayne Marzolf saw 1044-1044 ½ Central in 2005, their first response was, “This is ugly. The front is ugly. The sides are ugly. The front stairs are awful.” It was covered with what looked like tarpaper brick siding. After some research, we have found the official name was “waterproof building manila.” Today, it’s a puzzle where that name originated.

Despite the siding covering the building, a bit of redwood siding was still visible. Nancy and Wayne were inquisitive and adventurous. They were willing to consider the building, and assessing the building’s potential, their second response was, “We could take this on.”

Soon they were the owners of this 1895 Edwardian. Then they researched other buildings of this vintage and style. They walked the streets of Alameda for hours, taking note of similar buildings. Then they started working on their new home.

The first job on their list was removing that tarpaper brick siding. Each piece of siding was 12” x 36” and had about ten nails in it. Removal was labor intensive, and it took two months of weekends and evenings to remove the siding. In the late 1940s, all of the trim had literally been ripped off the building’s surface. Then the building was covered with the “waterproof building manila” siding with a mineral coat in an attempt to mimic brown bricks. Wayne believes the building had probably been painted in the late 1940s, then covered with that siding. He estimates that by 2005, when he removed the siding, 50% of the building’s exterior was bare, raw wood.

Inside, while they were scouting around in the basement, they discovered a redwood banister, took it upstairs, and said, “Voila! It used to be up here.” They were happy to reinstall it in the house.

Over the next ten months, Wayne, a licensed general contractor, worked with his friend, Kenny Brown, concentrating on the front and sides of the building. They were guided by many scars they found from the trim that had been torn off years earlier. In addition, there were still some visible paint lines, and they had Economy Lumber make custom trim pieces, such as the water table. Original windows are still working and have the authentic wavy glass. The front doors also appear to be original. By mid 2006, they had brought the street side of the building, including the front steps, back to what they most likely looked in 1895.

When it was time to choose paint colors, they were advised to choose colors (light grays and white) similar to neighboring houses. After more research, Nancy stepped up and found historic paint colors at Mark’s Paint. The result is a vibrant color scheme using Lafayette Green, Dorset Gold, Cottage Red, Atrium White, and Sienna Clay Orange. Upon completion of the painting, Nancy and Wayne were delighted when people who had lived in the neighborhood many years ago complimented them on their attractive color scheme.

Currently working on the back of the house, Wayne and Nancy are pleased every time they look at their house. Visionaries, they saw the potential that had been covered up, and have restored 1044-1044 ½ Central back to life.
This circa 1920 image shows the thriving City Market, a multiple vendor emporium housed in twin storefronts at 2317-19 Santa Clara Avenue. Note the car stop sign hovering above the streetscape. (Photo: Alameda Museum as enhanced by Kevin Frederick.)

Subtle Yet Significant Changes
2317 Santa Clara Avenue

Story by Judith Lynch

Award Recipients: LaVonne & Chris Museo, Kesete Kifle
Economic Development Department, City of Alameda

This diffident storefront appears as unassuming as its mercantile history is important. More than a century before the inauguration of the innovative Park Street Market Place—many vendors under one historic roof—owners of this City Market Building initiated the idea. When it opened to acclaim and fanfare in 1908, the City Market was a single building on two parcels of land, 2317 and 2319 Santa Clara, and the design by architect Albert W. Cornelius included a decorative cornice and pilasters marching across the entire front. The opening gala of the market February 7 1908 included a “concert by Boxberger’s Orchester (sic),” according to the Alameda Argus, and the public was invited to “witness the many new wrinkles and late improvements.” The basement level had a smoker for meat, ice machines, and huge refrigerators to store the meat, produce, and seafood described in a series of ads in the Argus. “Thousands thronged” the establishment, which the newspaper declared “the finest market about the bay.” There the vendors thrived, purveyors of oysters, soap, smoked and cured meats, coffee, baked goods, and much more until around 1940 when the City Market went dark. Always in dual ownership, the structure was then partitioned into two stores, upstairs were rooms to rent in 2317 and offices in 2319.

The “twin” at 2319 Santa Clara suffered a stucco attack in 1954, when it was shorn of anything harkening to the original design, and its surface was smothered, rendering the front both smooth and faceless. Its integrity was so “severely compromised,” that the place could not even qualify as a background contributor to the Park Street Historic District where it is located, according to historian Woody Minor. One of early tenants of the modified 2319 storefront was Arthur’s Furniture and Appliances, whose five brother-owners crowed “Progress is our middle name.”

The fate of 2317 was more gentle; the ravages of time and weather rendered it shabby, and a section of the brick cornice plummeted. The two upper left hand windows, originally wooden guillotine in style, were replaced in the 1970s, according to owners Chris and LaVonne Museo, by shorter sliding aluminum windows. “Young children were living upstairs, and the smaller openings made the unit safer for them,” Mrs. Museo said. “We filled the remaining holes below the panes with plywood covered by brick patterned contact paper.”

Enter Sue G. Russell, who manages the Façade Assistance Program under the auspices of the City’s Economic Development Department. Russell worked with the Museos and prepared a detailed list of tasks to renovate 2317, “in keeping with the goal of the preservation of twentieth century commercial architecture.” According to specifications, Oakland-based contractor Kesete Kifle repaired the cornice and the parapet, gently cleaned the soiled brickwork, and replaced the two modernized windows on the upper story with new ones from the Marvin Company. Learning that his work would be singled out by AAPS, Kesete said, “I enjoy working in Alameda. Down the block from 2317 Santa Clara is another of my projects, Paul’s Newsstand.”

Describing his work, Sue said, “He did an excellent job restoring the torn building wall and labored extensively to clean the brickwork. He took great pride in the project and truly put in extra effort.” Completion of these jobs, along with a new paint scheme, brought back some of the flavor of the original City Market Building.

Now let’s work on 2319!
If At First You Don’t Succeed
1524 Bay Street

Story by Betsy Mathieson

Award Recipients:
Tie Jun Liu and Xiao Hong Ruan
Michael Low and Jenny Liu

Fire! A home renovator’s nightmare. In July 2006, the two-story Queen Anne house at 1524 Bay Street was caged in scaffolding, undergoing a renovation and observing the 114th anniversary of its birth. A fire broke out and consumed the roof, the attic, the beautiful front gable and its window, and portions of the second floor. The rest of the structure was somehow spared destruction but doubtless suffered significant smoke and water damage.

Recovery and reconstruction began, with a rebuilt attic designed to serve as a game room. After the new roof and walls were completed, observant passersby noticed that the rebuilt house looked much different from the original, which had been designed by Howard Burns and built by D. Straub &Son in 1892. The roof was flatter and the attic appeared to be higher, with perhaps a lower second-floor ceiling to provide extra space in the attic. The structure had lost a significant aspect of its Queen Anne identity. The City of Alameda Planning Department reviewed the situation and provided guidance to the owners and their builder/engineer, who returned to City Hall with a redrawn set of plans. The attic had been redesigned, the roof configuration would essentially match the original, the slope of the gable would be steepened, and the height of the ridge would be increased. Appropriate architectural details, such as fascia boards below the eaves and eave brackets below the gable, would be reconstructed on the house. Siding and window trim would match the originals. The damaged portions of the house would be reconstructed in accordance with the City of Alameda Design Review Manual, as befits the house's status as a structure eligible for inclusion in the State Historic Resources Inventory, according to the City of Alameda’s Historical Building Study List.

The owners had the initial reconstruction work torn out and began anew. They completed the shell of the structure, roofed and painted it, and continued with a major interior renovation, which included correcting work that others had done without permits over the years. Somehow, during these tough economic times, the house changed hands. The owners moved on.

Current owners Tie Jun Liu, Xiao Hong Ruan, Michael Low, and Jenny Liu bought the vacant, gutted house at 1524 Bay Street last fall. It was surrounded by a 6-foot-tall chain link fence. There was no plaster or sheetrock on the walls. Tie Jun (“T.J.”) Liu, himself a contractor, dived into the renovation project determined to preserve the house’s remaining historic details while adding sheetrock, kitchen cabinets, and other necessities and amenities. The renovation is nearing completion, with final exterior paint and landscaping remaining to complete the return of the house to its former glory.

The house at 1524 Bay Street recovered first from the 2006 fire and second from a hasty initial reconstruction project designed without benefit of the City's Design Guidelines. We would like to acknowledge the accomplishments of the previous owners, who had the understanding and foresight to tear out the first reconstruction work and the patience and dedication to preserve the historic character of their house. In addition, we would like to recognize the initiative and resourcefulness of the new owners for carrying the renovation through to completion, making the house an inviting home that contributes to the historic streetscape once again.
Broadway Star
1356 Broadway

Story by Denise Brady

Award Recipients: Shu and Won Yuen

In May of 2008, Shu and Won Yuen bought the very dilapidated Victorian duplex as a fixer upper investment. Now, nearly two years later it has become their wonderful home. Its faded glory shines once more.

This highly ornate Queen Anne residence was built for Elizabeth Hannah in 1892, the builder and architect are unknown. Most likely during the 1930’s, the house was converted into a duplex and remained that way until the Yuens purchased it. For many, many years the house suffered neglect and deferred maintenance. I can personally attest to the wretched condition that it was in, as I saw it when it was on the market. The downstairs was uninhabitable with gaping holes in the walls, ceilings and floors. The upstairs was in a similar state, but was occupied by long term tenants. This was not just a fixer upper, but an extreme fixer upper. I remember worrying about the fate of this special house. It would take the right buyer with the fortitude and skills to make it right again.

Fortunately the Yuens were up for the challenge(s). There were many. One of the most difficult was the daunting task of removing the debris and filth left by the upstairs tenants and others. Shu, Won, their twin daughters Holly and Christina, and Joseph Zhang did most of the cleaning up themselves. Next came dealing with obtaining the permits and approvals from the city, which was fraught with delays and complications. Finally they literally “broke ground” and began with replacing the foundation. They continued with virtually every component of the house. The infrastructure included less exciting, but vitally important, new wiring, plumbing, heating, roof, windows and more. These kinds of improvements contribute to the longevity and preservation of an historic house. Next came the more visually gratifying improvements: beautiful new kitchen and bathrooms, lovely hardwood and tile floors, crown moldings and light fixtures.

As I was touring the house with the family I was struck by the amount of attention to detail and the quality of workmanship throughout. One of the daughters recalled how many weeks her dad spent working on the plans. He came up with a plan that had the least impact on disrupting the interior floor plan. Over the years I have seen far too many rehabilitation projects that were done with poor design, cheap materials and shoddy work. Not the case here. Some of the best examples are the windows and the intricate millwork surrounding them. Many of the pieces were replicated to match the existing ones. The same treatment was given with sections of the exterior siding. The weathered and damaged exterior was superbly restored and prepared for painting. Upon close examination I had trouble differentiating from the old and the new. The color selection and placement beautifully enhance the fanciful and intricate patterns of the applied millwork.

The Yuens were not expecting all of the attention that they got. Neighbors, friends and passers-by all cheered them on as the project inched along. This definitely helped them to keep going. Now they are enjoying life in their beautiful “new” Victorian and love being in Alameda. The daughters pointed out that they are seeing signs of how their efforts are inspiring other improvement projects with neighbors. Yes, that is how it starts and often grows. Thanks to the Yuens for being the spark and for showing us the star on Broadway.
Adaptive Reuse Makes Room for Three Building 024 – Alameda Point Aircraft Painting Facility

Story by Dick Rutter

A n article published in the July 30, 1991, issue of the Alameda Times Star, heralded a great step forward in addressing continuing environmental issues when it announced the completion of Bldg 024, a new aircraft painting and finishing facility located at the Alameda Naval Air Station.

The Federal Government’s efforts to reduce paint and solvent emissions into the environment from the Naval Aviation Depot’s (NADEP) operations had been typically bureaucratic. Appropriation of funds and construction of Building 024 were years in the making. Encompassing 63,000 square feet, Building 024 and its smaller satellite Building 024A cost $19,251,343.00 to construct. Inside, there are three large high-bay aircraft painting hangars, each one about 130-ft square. In addition, there are offices, staff locker, shower, and toilet rooms, a staff lunch room, paint storage and mixing rooms, HEPA filter rooms and plenums, and hazardous waste, paint and solvent recovery and treatment facilities.

No one, least of all the Navy, would ever have predicted that only five years after completion, this state of the art facility would wind up being abandoned to the elements, vagrants, and copper miners. Still able to meet current BAAQMD Air Quality Regulations, Bldg 024 has a current “Paint Application Permit”. This fact alone imparts significant value to the facility. Where else in the Bay Area can one legally paint a complete airliner, tractor trailer rig, double-decker bus, or a construction crane?

Coach Specialties, which several years later became American Bus Repair, LLC, was the first private business to reoccupy Building 024. This large vehicle painting and repair business has been in residence for some ten years. A famous painting of theirs is the jet in front of Encinal High School.

Big open hangar bays are attractive spaces to other businesses as well. John Walker, a special events coordinator, runs Area 51, an event production company. In addition to coordinating manufacturers’ auto shows, John has connections to the television and movie industries as well. Besides being a great event venue, one of those big hangar bays can function as an excellent movie set stage as well.

Soon, movies and TV productions were being made, including many episodes of the popular TV series, “Myth Busters”. The two mad scientists and their helpers crash, burn, and blow up stuff—all in their efforts to verify or torpedo commonly held Urban Myths. The relative wastelands of the former Naval Air Station surrounding Building 024, has been for them a site made by the gods.

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Encompassing 63,000 square feet, Building 024 and its smaller satellite Building 024A cost $19,251,343.00 to construct. Inside, there are three large high-bay aircraft painting hangars, each one about 130-ft square. (Photo: Dave Duffin.)
The Preservation Awards Ceremony Honors the Winners in a Grand Style

The optimal goal of AAPS is to educate, increase public awareness and appreciation of historic architecture in Alameda. Each year, AAPS takes time to honor substantial architectural renovations that make a difference in our community and share these efforts with our members, guests and interested parties.

This year’s Preservation Awards Ceremony was akin to having Oscar/Hollywood night take place right here on the Island—with Hollywood glamour and glitz Allen Michaan, the owner of the beautiful, luxurious, and opulent Auctions by the Bay Theater donated the venue and his time to the event (Allen received a Preservation Award for his theater last year). Eight winners completed excellent preservation, restoration, and adaptive reuse projects worthy of recognition and admiration.

The warm reception began at 6:30 pm in the gilded Deco lobby. The room was abuzz as presenters, nominees, and guests mingled over appetizers, wine, and desserts while listening to music by the Franz–Nichols Band.

Jim Franz and Jan Nichols—Franz have been making music together in Alameda for over 15 years. They have appeared as a duo at Angela’s Bistro and in many homes on Alameda’s Holiday Home Tour. Their Band has performed at C’era Una Volta, the Park Street Art & Wine Faire, on the U.S.S. Hornet, in the Alameda Mayor’s 4th of July Parade, and at the opening of the Alameda Theatre. The Band features Jan on Keyboards, Jim on Trumpet & Flugelhorn, Darryl Berk on Guitar, and Ted Connell on Drums.

At 7:30 pm, Master of Ceremonies Ed Holmes kicked off the awards in a hard hat for a construction zone, an atmosphere many of the winners had to...
endure. Ed was a masterful treat for everyone! Who wouldn’t love Ed? He has many talents including physical comedian, mime, clown and actor for the Berkeley Mime Troupe, the San Francisco Opera, the Oakland Symphony, and he has several movie credits to his name. Ed has taught theater movement at ACT, Cal State Hayward, Mills College, Dreamworks, and Sony pictures.

The presentation shared each of the winning projects’ stories—complete with highlights, pictures and key learnings. There were “oohs” and “aahs” by the crowd as images of the bad renovation, dire neglect, fire damage, and inventive reuse was shown. Many a tale was told about how each project turned out to be a success. Well timed music of the era matching the original buildings’ construction dates accompanied each award which further added to the festivities.

The 13th annual Preservation Awards was a fun and informative event that let property owners know how much their work is appreciated in Alameda. And, to give others an idea that they can do it too!

(Event photos: Valerie Turpen.)

Festive house cookies were provided by Kathy Lund of Island Baking Co.

Presenter Rosemary McNally and award nominees Nancy and Wayne Marzolf enjoy the reception.

Monica and Miguel Trejo owners of WesCafe show-off their award.

Jerri Holan attended the ceremony with Deco flair.

Presenter Denise Brady watches as the Shu and Won Yuen family receive their Preservation Award from AAPS President Nancy Hird. MC Ed Homes overlooks the exchange.
IN THIS ISSUE:

• Award Winners
  Thirteenth Annual
  Preservation Awards

AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS for 2010

AUGUST 22
Rutter Walk: NAS Alameda
by Dick Rutter
MEET OUTSIDE AUCTIONS BY THE BAY THEATER

SEPTEMBER 23
Candidates Forum
Meet the Candidates for
Mayor & City Council
IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 26
Alameda Legacy Home Tour

OCTOBER 14
Green Restoration/Rehab/Reuse
by Angie Klein
IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Preservation Action Committee
meets at 7:00 pm on the first Monday of each month
to address issues important to the architectural
preservation of the City of Alameda.
Open to all AAPS members. If you would like to attend
a meeting or would like more information, please call
Chris Buckley at 510-523-0411.

PAC
GET INVOLVED & MAKE A DIFFERENCE!