

The ALAMEDA ARCHITECTURAL Preservation Society

www.alameda-preservation.org

January, 2006

A.W. Smith . . . Architect Extraordinaire presented by Betty Marvin

Sunday, February 12 at 7:00 PM

**First Presbyterian Church (Corner of Santa Clara Avenue & Chestnut Street)
Parking available behind the church, enter from Santa Clara
Doors open at 6:30 PM • Free for AAPS Membership • \$5.00 for Guests**

Betty Marvin, a well-known Bay Area architectural historian, will present a fascinating slide lecture on architect A.W. Smith. Researchers in the ancient building permits, newspaper building lists, and contract notices of Oakland, Berkeley, and Alameda keep coming across Smith till it's almost a running joke. There are sightings in San Francisco, Palo Alto, Piedmont, Albany, and farther afield. His buildings are visually distinctive, solidly constructed, and ingeniously planned. Loyal clients engaged his services for building after building.

Blessed with the discreetest possible surname, A.W. Smith may have been the most prolific architect in the East Bay in the early 20th century yet he rarely advertised or networked, and understatedly signed his plans "Smith – Architect – Oakland."

A. W. Smith (1864-1933) was born in Louisiana and grew up in Oakland, where his father came to work for the Central Pacific Railroad at the transcontinental terminus. A.W. – Alfred William – attended Oakland High School, worked as a carpenter with his father in the early 1880s, learned his craft as a contractor, and appears in contract notices as an architect by 1892. In a career of over 40 years he designed several hundred buildings (400 listed in the Oakland building permit ledger books



The porch roof on this 1903 Colonial at 1330 Caroline merges into the corner pilaster in one of Smith's characteristic geometric puns.

alone), mostly houses and small to medium sized commercial, industrial, and apartment buildings. He was also in demand for churches, lodges, and institutional buildings throughout his career, from the Enterprise Hall in Oakland (1892) to the San Francisco Korean Methodist Church (1930). Forty to fifty of his buildings have been documented in Alameda so far, with the records available: there are undoubtedly many more.

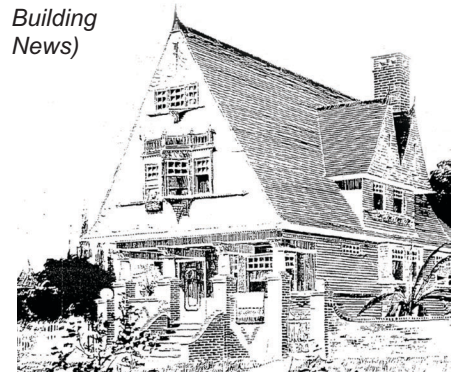
In historian Judith Lynch's words, "As Smith's practice thrived; his residences showcased a gamut of architectural styles. During the era of Victoria, he cantered effortlessly from Queen Anne to Colonial Revival.

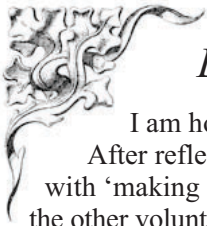
When the 19th century turned, so did he – to bungalows, including those of Craftsman, Shingle, Prairie, and Mission ilk. . . . the Alameda Museum's published listings of structures . . . show how he scampered with agility from one style to the next." In the 1920s he lavished his geometric trickery on decorative brick commercial buildings and applied his Craftsman aesthetic to a generation of solid European Revival homes.

Every city has its self-made architects and builders with local practices, who did – and do – more to shape the area's character than the select gems and jewels of the "name" architects. Smith's buildings – whimsical, severe, naturalistic, honest, unpretentious, charming, exotic, elegant, inventive, eccentric, mannerist, substantial – give a distinctive flavor to our East Bay cities.

On the trail of A.W. Smith for many years, Betty Marvin is a historian, architectural historian, and Julia Morgan impersonator who works at the Oakland City Planning Department's far-famed Cultural Heritage Survey.

In the late 1890s Smith built dozens of these steep-roofed shingle houses. A Berkeley reviewer in 1898 likened the roof tips to "the horn of the 'evil one,'" while a current owner describes her house as "in the shape of a cormorant." (drawing from California Architect and Building News)





Letter From The President

I am honored to be given the opportunity to serve you for another year. After reflecting upon our accomplishments from last year, I can sum it up with 'making a difference'. I am deeply grateful to the board members and to all the other volunteers who gave their time and energy towards making it successful.

I see the AAPS as caretakers of our wonderfully historic city. It is our responsibility to educate the public, as well as city officials, regarding issues affecting preservation. I noticed a change in our relationship with city government. Our role as merely *advocates* of preservation changed to *advisors* on preservation. The Preservation Action Committee, chaired by Chris Buckley, made great strides. The City asked for our input on matters such as the Guide to Residential Design and remedies for illegal demolition.

The Alameda Legacy Home Tour was a huge success. "We are running out of guidebooks!" was the plea from volunteers at the ticket booth. Despite getting a late start, committee members from AAPS and the Alameda Museum came together as a team and moved ahead with some positive changes implemented for the future. The tour is the major fundraiser for both organizations every year and it takes many people to make it happen.

Membership increased significantly, thanks to the outreach efforts of Nancy Hird, membership chairperson. This year we need to recruit more members to become involved in the organization and our activities.

As a long time preservationist in Alameda, I am continually amazed and appreciative of what we have here. I see the same homes, commercial and civic buildings again and again, but I never tire of them. What is heartwarming to me are the encounters I have with people who are new to Alameda and who are surprised and charmed by what they see here.

Preservation is about buildings, but it is also about people and how we relate to the buildings. Why do we want to preserve them? Why do we spend so many hours of our precious time volunteering for the cause? Because we love these old buildings and what they do for us now, and we want to preserve them for future generations. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has a slogan: "Protecting the irreplaceable". That is not always an easy task. Once again I want to thank those of you who have helped so much. There is an inscription on a monument in Portland, Oregon that reads: "Good citizens are the riches of a city." Alameda is rich in architecture and in citizenry.

Sincerely, *Denise Brady*

AAPS Board Members 2006

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For more information, please contact:
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Alameda, CA 94501 510.986.9232 www.alameda-preservation.org

PRESERVATION ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

Alameda Theater Update

by Christopher Buckley

As stated in the May, 2005 AAPS News, AAPS strongly supports restoration of the Historic Alameda Theater, but is concerned with the design compatibility of the theater's proposed "Cineplex" and parking garage additions with surrounding historic buildings, especially the historic theater, Twin Towers Methodist Church and Historic Alameda High School. At its August 16, 2005 meeting, the City Council approved the cineplex and parking garage designs, but with conditions that the cineplex be "less modern" and the garage be more like the Art Deco-inspired Walnut Creek Locust Street garage that AAPS has been suggesting as an appropriate prototype for the theater garage. (See the May 2005 AAPS News for a detailed presentation of AAPS's concerns that were presented to the Council on August 16.)

To implement the Council's August 16 direction, City staff hired the Walnut



Above: Original Cineplex design reviewed by the city Council on August 16, 2005.

Below: Revised design for parking garage



Creek garage's designers, Komorous Towey Architects (KTA), to redesign the cineplex exterior and the garage. KTA's designs, presented to the Council on November 1, 2005, are a major improvement over the previous designs, but AAPS still considers the structures too large for their location. Although the new designs respond well to many of AAPS's comments presented at the August 16 Council meeting, the cineplex still maintains a 20" projection over the sidewalk that contributes to the structure's bulk and has an intrusive impact on the surrounding historic buildings.

AAPS submitted detailed comments on the new designs in a November 1, 2005 letter to the City Council and provided an illustrative sketch of a revised cineplex design that incorporated AAPS's recommendations.

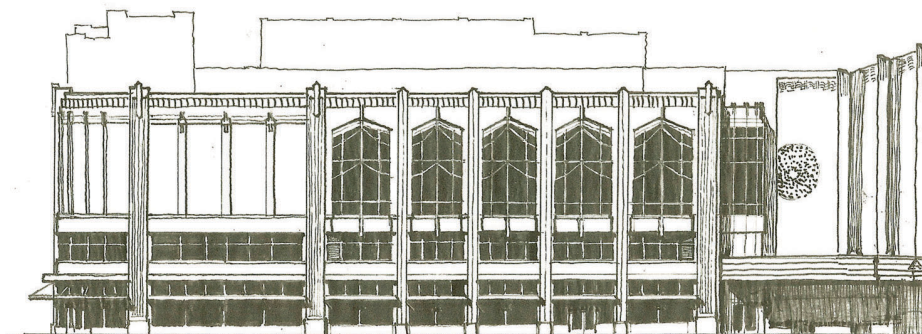


Revised design for Cineplex

AAPS's concerns include the visual impact of the garage's north wall on the Carnegie Building and City Hall which face the north wall across the Long's parking lot. The north wall's height ranges between 60' and 70' and, unlike the well-detailed Oak Street facade, has minimal architectural treatment.

Although the north wall may eventually be hidden by a new building on the Long's site, there is no assurance that

Illustrative revised design for Cineplex prepared by Richard Rutter of A Rule Designs. Included with AAPS November 1, 2005 comments to City Council



this will occur nor indication of what the timing would be. A Civic Center Specific Plan should be adopted, as called for in Alameda's 1991 General Plan, to determine the strategy for the Long's site and the appropriate treatment of the garage's north wall, as well as address other Civic Center development issues. Had a Civic Center plan been promptly developed following the General Plan's 1991 adoption, the controversy now surrounding the cineplex and garage would probably have been avoided.

On January 5, 2006, the revised designs were reviewed by the City's Historical Advisory Board (HAB), which generally considered the cineplex and garage out of scale with the neighboring historic buildings and agreed with the suggestion of AAPS and others that a three dimensional model of the project and neighboring buildings would assist evaluation of the project's relationship to these buildings. Board members also generally indicated agreement with AAPS's other comments as stated in our November 1 letter.

The revised designs and the HAB's comments are currently scheduled for City Council consideration on February 7, 2006, but this date could change.

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. Committee meetings are 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. We are making an impact within the community. It's fun and informative. We encourage all members to GET INVOLVED!

New Members

AAPS welcomes the following new members:

Lorrie Arazi
Brad and Janine Hayward
Don Jones
Anne Farrell
Adrienne Lakadat
Eileen and Jim Wilson
Deirdre and Jason Freeman
Rosemary McCabe Maddock
Faye Wilson
Nancy and Bart Wise
Joy and Michael Johnson
Victor Jin
Nicola Broderick
Sally Mirault
Steve and Dena Anderson
Jay Paul and Adair Roberts
Mary Clark
John Johnston
Marie Latourelle and
Kevin Krajewski
Barbara Bowen
Brent Perrou
Gail Payne and Rob Mann
Katie and Nick deVries
Jeff and Patty Cullen
Karen Lee and Barry Schultz
The Warmerdam Family

Donations

Thank you to those who made donations to AAPS

Sponsor – Adrienne Lakadat
Partner – Nicola Broderick
Partner –
The Warmerdam Family

Correction from May 2005 newsletter:

Partner –
Monica & Matthew Zuck

AAPS Newsletter Editor

Karen Tierney
522.3329 ktierney@sbcglobal.net



AAPS Membership Coupon

If you would like to join the AAPS or renew your membership, please send this portion back with your payment. Membership Chairperson - Nancy Hird @ 523.0825

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

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☐ renewal ☐ new member

Check your Membership category:

☐ Family \$30 ☐ Partner \$100
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☐ Student \$5 ☐ Patron \$500
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P.O. Box 1677, Alameda, CA 94501

AAPS SCHEDULE OF EVENTS for 2006

January 25, Wednesday, 7:30pm

Board of Directors meeting at Nancy Hird's home, 1519 Eastshore Drive

February 12, Sunday, 7:00pm

A.W. Smith, architect, slide lecture presented by speaker Betty Marvin

March 19, Sunday, 7:00 pm

Beyond the Bungalow presented by author Paul Duchscherer

May (date TBA) 7:00 pm

Annual Preservation Awards

July 4, Tuesday

Come join us in Alameda's Annual 4th of July Parade.

September 17, Sunday

Alameda Legacy Home Tour