

Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

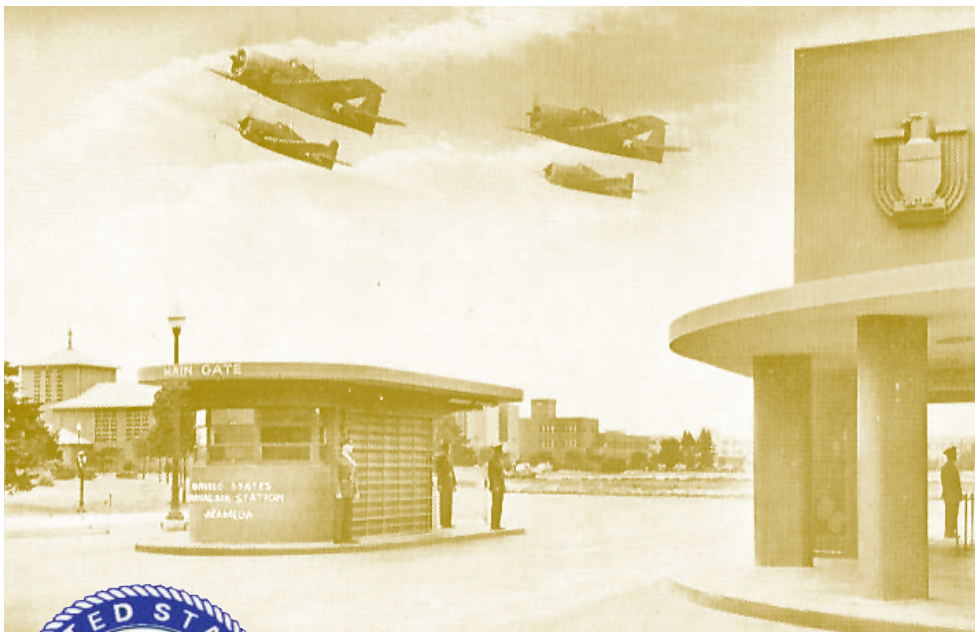
A Presentation by Dick Rutter

History of the Naval Air Station Alameda

Sunday, October 18, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church (Corner of Santa Clara Avenue & Chestnut Street. Parking available off Santa Clara Avenue.)

FREE for AAPS members; \$5 for non-members



A flight of four F-6F Hellcats makes a low pass over NAS Alameda's Main Gate circa 1943. To the left of the Main Gate in the background is the interdenominational Station Chapel. Note the dark wartime colors of the buildings. During 1943, even the runways themselves were camouflaged with different colors of paint. At war's end, the buildings were repainted in their now familiar light yellow colors with blue accents. (Postcard courtesy Dick Rutter.)

So Why Was NAS Alameda Here?

Our October presentation will be a rollicking run through the history of the Naval Air Station Alameda, presented by Dick Rutter, local architect, and former Navy flyer.

Starting with the Spanish in 1772, Dick will take us through the "hows" and more importantly the "whys" of NAS Alameda's development. We will learn about the British naval presence on the West Coast during the 1846 Mexican War, and how Alameda and the SF Bay figured in that conflict, ultimately resulting in control of the region by the U.S. Navy.

We'll see the first landing and take-off of an airplane aboard a ship anchored in San Francisco Bay in 1911, marking the beginning of carrier aviation, and take a ride in the U.S. Navy dirigible USS MACON. At first, dirigibles were seen to offer intercontinental range, comfort, and carrying capacity clearly superior to that of any contemporary fixed wing aircraft, but a

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Naval Air Station Alameda... *continued from page 1*

series of disastrous wrecks doomed the promise of this technology. Today, the USS MACON's own crash wreckage lies on the bottom in the waters off Big Sur, and we'll go down to take a look at it.

Next comes the era of the San Francisco Bay Aerodrome, now the location of College of Alameda, and along with it, Pan Am's seaplane lagoon, home of the famed "China Clipper", and the opening up of the Western Pacific to air travel.



Newly minted Ensign Richard W. Rutter, USN, three months after receiving his Commission and College Diploma, from Astronaut Neil Armstrong. Photo taken at NAS Pensacola, 14 August 1970.

War Time in Alameda

The 1940's brought the construction of NAS Alameda, and we will see some images from the actual construction drawings of the Big Whites, the Base Theater, and CPO Housing.

One of our local WWII heros was Jimmy Doolittle, born in Alameda's "Wedgewood Neighborhood" in 1896. He arrived back in town with 16 B-25's in April 1942 and sailed out on the USS HORNET on the way to the Pacific campaign.

We will learn of the Patrol Squadrons, both land based and water-based at NAS Alameda, and the little known run-up to our involvement in Vietnam.

Bombers After Their Navy Days

One of the highlights of the presentation is the story of airplanes that were turned into Forest Fire Bombers after their Navy days, including the famed Martin Mars Flyingboats, two of which are still flying fire fighting missions 65-years after their original construction. These were the largest flyingboats ever used in regular service, and NAS Alameda was their "homeplate" for 13-years.



After serving in the U.S. Navy for decades, this now privately owned Lockheed P-2V Neptune is dropping fire retardant to protect a fire crew in a Southern California forest fire, 55-years after it was built. (Courtesy Dick Rutter.)

We will witness a "bird strike", as the "Hawaii Mars" lands on Lake Elsinore in Southern California, during its operations fighting the Southern California Fires of 2007.

A Great Ride

We'll finish up with NARF (Naval Air Rework Facility) and all the work they did, Navy Auxiliary Air Fields controlled by NAS Alameda, the beginnings of the Jet Age, and the eventual closing of the base. If you like history and airplanes, this is going to be one great ride, with lots of shots taken from the cockpit!

Story by Kevis Brownson.



President John F. Kennedy deplaned from Air Force One at NAS Alameda, where this picture was taken, on 23 March 1962. This photo, taken in the 1960's, shows a US Navy VIP bird in front of the Tower. (Courtesy Dick Rutter.)



Reloading the Gunfighters! A KA-3B Skywarrior refuels two F-8 Crusaders, last of the gunfighters, in the Mediterranean. (Courtesy Dick Rutter.)

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NANCY HIRD
AAPS PRESIDENT 2009

Dear AAPS Members

I hope you are enjoying the last "Alameda Preservation Press" of 2009. We began the year with a fresh new design and finally, a name for our newsletter thanks to member Lisa Dosa.

This has been a fast and busy year for the Preservation Action Committee headed by Chris Buckley. The PAC has worked with the city to initiate plans for North of Lincoln on Park Street, participated on the city's Customer Service Improvement Committee, provided guidance to the Planning Board to maintain design standards in the face of Planning Department staff reductions, and gave input regarding Density Bonus requirements.

Probably the most contentious issue facing the citizens of Alameda is the question of development at the Naval Air Station. At the present time, our biggest concern is the lack of security and maintenance being done at the Point which is leading to the rapid deterioration of the buildings in the Historic District. AAPS has addressed this concern during meetings with the city staff and has requested the Navy to include provisions to this end as part of the Programmatic Agreement now being developed pursuant to Section 106 of the national Historic Preservation Act for transfer of Alameda Point from the Navy to the City.

Having studied the SunCal Initiative and Specific Plan for Alameda Point, AAPS is in the final stages of releasing a Position Statement regarding the plans for development at the NAS. Because our membership has many diverse perspectives on development in Alameda, AAPS usually does not take a stand on these issues except to lobby strictly for preservation of our historic resources. Our statement will address our reservations regarding lack of guarantees the NAS Historic District will remain registry eligible. It will be published on our website as well as other mediums.

Our updated website will be unveiled in January and will become more interactive with blogging capabilities. We hope this will become a forum for members to share information about preservation resources and techniques.

In addition, we have been planning our 2010 General Membership meetings beginning in January with a lecture by Therese Polletti, author of the outstanding book about Timothy Plueger's Art Deco architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, including the Alameda Theater. Per member requests, Paul Roberts, in March, will go back to the basics of identifying architectural styles popular in Alameda and we will host a guided tour of the Naval Air Station by Dick Rutter. Also on our meeting topics list are green building and probably an election debate or two.

We look forward to celebrating a successful year with you at our annual Holiday Party on December 6th. Look for your invitation in the mail. As always, we invite your participation on the party planning committee. Please call me at 510-523-0825 to volunteer.

Sincerely,

Nancy Hird



The tribute presenting the AAPS newsletter story about the Van Niel Foundry with images of the foundry and Dow building on Clement Avenue.

Perforce Tribute to the Van Niel Foundry

In June 2008 the Van Niel Foundry building at 2319 Clement Avenue was removed to accommodate city required parking for the Perforce Software office expansion. After its loss, the story "So Long Old Foundry" by Woody Minor appeared in the AAPS newsletter (August 2008) to note the importance of Alameda's industrial landmarks that many of us overlook.

Perforce has since created a memorial to the structure at its former location, now occupied by a green parking area—the lot is covered by grass instead of asphalt.

Christopher Seiwald, CEO of Perforce notes, "While most of the metal had to be scrapped, we were able to recycle the wood and we saved a few pieces to make the display to house Woody's article. Unfortunately, it can't convey the presence that the shed used to have on Clement, but we think people who remember the shed will appreciate seeing just a little bit of it left behind."

MISSING

We are looking for AAPS items that you may have stored in your attic or garage. If you have the AAPS banner or the AAPS sawhorse signs used to direct people to the General Membership meeting locations, please call Nancy Hird at 510-523-0825. The banner is about 6 x 4 feet.

Design Review Under Review

Alameda is considering changing its *Design Review Ordinance*. The ordinance is one of the most critical parts of Alameda's historic preservation program and the main safeguard for protecting Alameda's buildings from adverse changes like incompatible additions, replacement windows and siding.

AAPS made a major effort several years ago, working with the City, to improve the city's *Residential Design Review Manual* (see May, 2006 AAPS newsletter). Since the City Council's adoption of the manual in 2005, the Design Review program has generally worked well from a historic preservation standpoint. AAPS is therefore reviewing the ordinance changes very carefully to make sure that valuable provisions are not lost.

Existing Design Review Program

Under current rules, any exterior change requiring a building permit is subject to Design Review, with a few exceptions, such as skylights, fences and most reroofing. Certain other projects also require Design Review, such as signs, awnings and parking lots.

There are now three kinds of Design Review:

1. Exempt.

- Includes "replacement in kind" of elements like windows, siding, porch railings and stairs.
- Replacement in kind is currently defined as "identical".

2. Minor Design Review.

- Includes nonexempt exterior changes not requiring Major Design Review.
- Replacement of windows, siding, architectural detailing and other elements on pre-1942 buildings will usually be approved under the *Residential Design Review Manual* if they "visually match" the original elements. For example, new elements can be made of different material than the originals (and are therefore not "identical" and eligible for exemption) but can still be approved if they have the same dimensions, surface textures and other features that visually define the originals.
- Decision by staff with possible appeal to the Planning Board.
- No public notification, so only the applicant is in a position to appeal.

3. Major Design Review.

- Required for all new construction, all nonresidential additions and residential additions over 80 square feet or located above the first floor.
- Public notification with ten day comment period.
- Staff decision appealable by anyone to Planning Board.

The main problems with the existing procedure are:

1. No notification to neighbors who could be adversely affected by projects now requiring only Minor Design Review, e.g. a new upper floor window that looks into a neighbor's window or back yard.
2. Not enough city revenue from Minor Design Review, since there is only a \$32 or \$215 flat fee, which often won't cover the staff time needed to process these projects, especially projects that lack well prepared plans. Major Design Review does not have this problem since an hourly fee is charged for deficient applications.



Post-1941 house with an original diamond paned window treatment (top) and a Post-1941 house with a vinyl window replacement (below).
(Photos Kevis Brownson.)

Proposed Revisions

The revisions propose to correct these problems by eliminating and reclassifying Minor Design Review projects as either exempt or Major Design Review.

The expanded exemptions would include:

- Broadening replacement-in-kind from "identical" to "visually match" (which is roughly equivalent to the existing Minor Design Review approval standard).
- Window replacements on post-1941 buildings if opening does not change.
- Solar collectors, cell phone antennas and related equipment.
- One story rear yard additions that visually match the existing building if the addition is less than 500 square feet.

In addition, Major Design Review (which would now be called simply "Design Review") would be expanded to include any nonexempt change to a street elevation or above the first floor.

AAPS Concerns

AAPS provided extensive comments on the staff proposal. The most significant are:

1. Revise the *Residential Design Review Manual* so that it is clear that its very specific definitions of "visually match" for Minor Design Review now applies to exemptions.
2. Continue to require photos and adequate plans for replacement-in-kind elements that claim to "visually match" original elements so that staff can verify that they really match before exempting them. This is especially important.
3. Provide public notification that includes both mailed notice to neighbors and a poster on the property (the staff proposal included only the poster).

4. Require that replacement of post-1941 windows meet at least the following criteria to be exempt:
 - a. No sandwiched grids or muntins between the two sheets of double glazing or other flat grids, unless this is existing. *The Residential Design Review Manual* requires for pre-1942 buildings that grids project at least 3/8" from the exterior face of the glass.
 - b. No horizontal sliding windows except to replace existing sliders.
 - c. No changes to the number of sash per opening.
5. Clarify whether signs and awnings would be exempt or require Design Review. Both should still conform with existing Design Review criteria in the *Webster Street Design Review Manual*.
6. Provide better standards for exempting cell phone antennas and solar collectors, including limits on size, location and visual prominence.

AAPS also suggested that a more straightforward way to address the cost recovery and notification issues might be to keep Minor Design Review and exemptions as they are, but (a) expand Major Design Review to include any upper floor change facing an interior lot line that involves changes that could affect neighbors' privacy or solar access, (b) limit Minor Design Review appeals to the project sponsor (since there is no notification), and (c) add a time and materials fee to Minor Design Review to ensure cost recovery. If Minor Design Review projects are converted to exemptions, it is not clear how the City would achieve cost recovery unless the exemptions have a sign-off fee with a possible hourly surcharge.

Current Status

At its September 10, 2009 meeting, the Planning Board seemed to generally agree with most of AAPS's recommendations. Planning Board comments included:

1. Provide stringent criteria for exemption of all window replacements regardless of age.
2. Provide better criteria for exempting cell phone antennas, solar collectors, but don't be too restrictive with solar collectors (Note: State law limiting restrictions on cell phone antennas and solar collectors needs to be clarified.)
3. Provide mailed notice as well as on site posters.
4. Require a Planning Board rather than just a staff decision for large projects and projects at prominent locations.

A revised ordinance is tentatively scheduled for October 26 Planning Board review and recommendation to the City Council. The ordinance will then be sent to the Council for consideration.

GET INVOLVED AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

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 and we encourage all members to get involved in making decisions.

Get in the Holiday Spirit!



The AAPS annual holiday party is our way of ending the year with a bang—great turnout, mouth-watering food, a generous bar, and always a stunning setting. But it takes effort to make it all happen, and we would love for YOU to help.

Host and hostess assistants are needed across three functions for this year's event to be held Sunday December 6th: Set-up, mid-party care, and clean-up. Everyone helping will be able to enjoy the party.

Let Nancy Hird know your interest in helping by e-mailing nancy.alameda@att.net or calling 510-523-0825.



The gratitude of the AAPS board and your fellow members will be recognized.



Banquet for Architecture Buffs

ARCHITECTURAL GEMS DISPLAY

Starting Saturday October 24, 2009, you can feast on a trio of treasures, the Meyers House museum, Henry Meyers' architectural studio, and a newly minted exhibit of building details gleaned from the extensive collection of the Alameda Museum.

The stately Colonial Revival museum was built in 1897 as the family residence of prominent architect Meyers, who designed dozens of buildings in the Bay Area. Tucked away nearby is the Mission style studio completed in 1935 and designed for Henry Meyers by his daughter Mildred, also a practicing architect.

The commodious garage was just transformed by a band of volunteers. It hosts a display that illuminates the working ways of Alameda architects and builders, with artifacts and ephemera ranging from iron cresting to tiles and from vintage tools to plaster confections.

The Meyers House, Studio, & Architectural Gems Display are open from 1-4 p.m. the fourth Saturday of each month. 2021 Alameda Avenue, between Willow & Chestnut Streets. Admission \$5. For more information call 510.523.5907.

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FACES AND PLACES

The art of local artist Damon Rodrigues is on display at the Alameda Museum during October. "Faces and Places" presents a variety of Damon's work including paintings of old Alameda Postcards. See old time renderings of Neptune Beach, Alameda Victorians, as well as portraits and nature scenes done in pen and ink, charcoal, oil and acrylics.

Alameda Museum: 2324 Alameda Ave off Park St.
Hours are Wed.-Fri., Sun. 1:30-4:00 and Sat. 11:00 am-4:00 pm.

AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS for 2009

OCTOBER 18

History of the Naval Air Station Alameda

by Dick Rutter

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

•

NOVEMBER

AAPS Board Election Ballots Mailed

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DECEMBER 6

AAPS Christmas Party

by Invitation Only