

Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Winners of the Twenty-Third Annual Preservation Awards



Historic Alameda High School shines again. Image: Technical Imagery Studios.

Historic Alameda High School 2200 Central Avenue

Story by Kay Weinstein

Award Recipients: Robbie Lyng, Director of Construction, Alameda Unified School District; Mark Quattrocchi, Quattrocchi Kwok Architects; Chris Warner, ZFA Structural Engineers.

Restoration of the Historic Alameda High School was truly a monumental project. A preservation award is being given in recognition of five achievements: major seismic retrofit; in-kind replacement of deteriorated original wood windows; correction of extensive deferred maintenance; sensitive interior renovations to accommodate twenty-first century education in 45 classrooms and 11 new science labs; and an excellent paint job.

Architect Carl Werner was born in Philadelphia in 1875. Following graduation from MIT in 1895, he

established O'Brien and Werner Architects in San Francisco. In 1907, he designed and built his Arts & Crafts home at 1303 Bay Street in Alameda. He was active in planning schools, residences, churches and a number of buildings for the Masonic Order. Notable San Francisco projects were the Orpheum and Golden Gate Theaters, as well as Sequoia Union High School.

In 1922, Carl Werner began his solo practice in San Francisco, and would soon design the Historic Alameda High School in the Classical Revival style. With its

continued on page 2...

Historic Alameda High School



The two restored historic buildings feature new ADA compliant ramps and stairs to make accessibility to the buildings easier.



Sullivan Thompson Restoration of Oakland restored the plaster urns outside, as well as 977 windows. Image: Kay Weinstein.



Many of the original 250 windows needed repair, but their wooden sills and brass handles were retained per an agreement with Alameda Architectural Preservation Society.

impressive Greek-temple-like form, this style was used for courthouses, banks, churches, schools and mansions. Classical Revival style buildings often have massive columns with Corinthian, Doric or Ionic capitals; topped by a front-facing pediment. The arrangement of windows and doors is formal and symmetrical. Construction began on the Historic Alameda High School in 1924 and was completed in 1926, at a cost of \$1 million.

Opening in 1926 for 1,248 students, Alameda High School was the pride of the community. It consisted of a central building with 10 classical Ionic columns dominating the main entrance, and the east wing (the Science building) with two grand columns of its own. The two buildings were reinforced concrete and had a 900-foot frontage at 2200 Central Avenue. An impressive structure that covered nearly a city block, it rivaled the 1895 City Hall and the 1902 Carnegie Free Library as one of the largest public buildings in Alameda. The school's theater (Kofman Auditorium) featured 2,300 seats, one of the largest auditoriums in the East Bay. Historic Alameda High School has received city, state, and national landmark status.

In 2012, construction manager Robbie Lyng invited architect Mark Quattrocchi to walk through the two buildings of Historic Alameda High School. Dangerous structural problems were identified, and the old central building was declared unsafe. Mr. Quattrocchi designed and had built a brown seismic debris fence that encircled the buildings, and shored up the high school's walls with braces and anchors so they wouldn't fall too far away from the building in an earthquake. In 2014, 63% of Alameda voters passed Measure I, a \$179.5 million bond that funded the restoration of the Historic Alameda High School. Groundbreaking was on April 24, 2017.

Under the direction of structural engineer Chris Warner, restoration began underground. First, to stabilize the sandy soil under the historic building

that could cause liquefaction in an earthquake, engineers injected grout into the ground at 6,000 different spots. They also drilled helical piles, which look like corkscrews, 30 feet into the ground to anchor the buildings to more stable soil.

The most challenging part of the retrofit came in the insertion of steel seismic cross beams that created a building within the historic building of structural support. They're on all three floors and are set at 45-degree angles to the walls, and provide bracing and lateral resistance in the event of an earthquake. Steel piers were also placed to supplement the original concrete columns to withstand 3,000 pounds of force per square inch. Some of the 1.2 million pounds of steel had to be dropped down from the third floor to the first floor. Portions of the roof and the floor had to be removed in order to drop the steel down using very high cranes.

Restoration work was carefully executed with close attention to original forms and details. The bronze doors at the main entrance were cleaned, but not polished, to conserve the patina of a historic building. Many of the original windows needed repair, but the wooden sills and brass handles were

retained per agreement with Alameda Architectural Preservation Society. A total of 977 windows were restored by Sullivan Thompson Restoration of Oakland. They also restored the plaster urns outside. 188 new windows, with matching hardware, were constructed by Matheny Factory of San Leandro. Wood cabinetry and even classrooms' original baseboards were restored. When original trim could not be saved, all mill work was customized to match. The original terrazzo floors were restored inside and outside the buildings.

The large amount of windows throughout both buildings allow classrooms to use just natural light instead of electric light at times. The Science Building's third floor also features three restored 16-foot-by-16-foot skylights that illuminate the entire floor with natural light. The two restored historic buildings feature new bathrooms, plumbing, electrical wiring, cooling and heating systems, fire alarms, public address system, data and projection systems. Outside, there are new ADA compliant ramps and stairs to make accessibility to the buildings easier. The stately beige paint and white trim, new benches and landscaping complete the \$55 million project.

A grand re-opening was held on August 8, 2019. Due to the outstanding quality of restoration, Alameda High School is again the pride of the community.



The restored Alameda High School with Ionic columns topped by a front-facing pediment graces Central Avenue. Image: Valerie Turpen.

Colorful Present Matches Colorful Past: 1423 Central Avenue

Story by Jerri Holan

Award Recipients: Valerie and John Moyer, Owners; Virginia Mui and William Glass, Owners.

It all began with plastic melting in an oven. The fire department put out the fire but damaged some interiors. So began a series of improvements at the striking Queen Anne apartment house at 1423 Central Avenue. The walls were fixed, gas lines replaced, minor structural upgrades — including brick and concrete foundation work — were completed and some original interior finishes and light fixtures were restored.

Finally, in 2018, it was time to paint the exterior. When the current owners purchased the property in 2001, it sported chocolate brown paint with beige highlights. John Moyer, one of the owners, hired his faithful contractor, Chong Kim of Century Painting, to perform the work. He gave Chong free rein on the choice of colors. Chong selected a mint green pallet, a much more suitable color for a Queen Anne mansion than brown. He augmented it with four other colors: hunter green, maroon, cream, with tan accents. The end result is dazzling display of Queen Anne details in vivid colors, now proudly displayed on this prominent corner house.

Unfortunately, the other two owners, Virginia Mui and William Glass, were not very happy with the new colors. They preferred the old brown color. Needless to say, they were quite surprised when they were told they were receiving a preservation award for the paint work. We're hoping they'll eventually warm up to the vibrant Victorian hues because this wonderful old home really deserves to shine — its past is as colorful as its present.

It was built in 1889 by A.W. Pattiani and Company, one of Alameda's most renowned Architects and Victorian builders. The original owner of this distinguished home was Harry B. Smith, a San Francisco stockbroker. In 1891, he sold the home to Joseph Thompson Goodman (1838–1917), the owner and editor

of the Virginia City newspaper *The Territorial Enterprise*, one of the largest and most influential newspapers on the West Coast. Goodman hired Samuel Clemens as a reporter for the paper, giving Clemens his "start" as a professional writer.

With a daily circulation of 15,000 at its peak in the 1860s, *The Enterprise* was Nevada's first newspaper. It chronicled the frenzy and financial fallout of the Comstock Lode of silver ore discovered on the eastern slope of Mt. Davidson. After the mining boom died, the paper continued to tell the story of a rough town where unwashed men settled scores with six-shooters. The original *Enterprise* ceased publication in 1893.

In its heyday, *The Enterprise* not only covered the news — it made news. According to a 2015 article in the *LA Times*, "Reporters William 'Dan De Quille' Wright, James 'Lying James' Townsend and Samuel 'Mark Twain' Clemens perfected the art of the Western tall tale with articles that became legendary for their wit."

Local lore has it that after Goodman moved to Alameda, Mark Twain was known to have been a guest. Perhaps he even slept in the tall round turret which oversees the neighborhood? Today, the home has been remodeled into 11 apartment units and is well-maintained by the current owners, including an original lobby with magnificent original woodwork and finishes. In contrast, the previous owner had lived in the home for a long-time and one only wonders what lore she knew or what characters she entertained? John promised to sift through the shoe box she left him but I suspect we'll never know.

What we do know is that this colorful Queen Anne has been brought to life, another sparkle added to this dazzling Victorian neighborhood. Thank you John, Virginia, and William.



Above: This black and white photo of 1423 Central Avenue for the 1978 City Survey shows a dark structure. Image: City of Alameda.

Right: Shingles, floral ornaments, and dentil molding are highlighted with a tasteful application of colors.



Above: Chong Kim of Century Painting, selected a mint green pallet. He augmented it with four other colors: hunter green, maroon, cream, with tan accents. The end result is dazzling display of Queen Anne details proudly displayed on this prominent corner house.



This Queen Anne cottage was a former rental home and had not been updated since the 1930s. It retained many original features that were in need of repair.



Both practical and aesthetic enhancements were made to the home. Work included excavation for a legal basement, new garage doors, and restoration of the front stair rails and more. Image: Karen Lithgow.

1305 9th Street

Story by Karen Lithgow

**Award Recipients: Jan Erion, Owner;
Joe Landry, Architect.**

Jan Erion is thrilled to receive a preservation award for the work done on her home at 1305 9th Street and sees it as a satisfying culmination of her life's work as an artist, builder and restorer of houses, local realtor and Victorian homeowner. She began her art career with two degrees from the University of Washington, quickly developing expertise in surface design, painting and color theory. Jan was a successful studio artist in Seattle for over 25 years, primarily as a painter and printmaker, selling original works both nationally and internationally.

Jan went on to build four houses in the Northwest from start to finish, facilitating her "giant hobby of building houses", while working full time as a visual artist. Jan also owned several vintage homes in the Seattle area including Craftsman, Contemporary, beach houses and a 1904 Seattle Salt Box.

With her education and fine arts background and experience building and renovating houses, Jan moved to the Bay Area 10 years ago and began work as a residential realtor. The variety and richness of the vintage homes here eventually inspired her to consider buying an old home in Alameda for herself. A realtor friend was selling a home Jan found appealing and she asked him if he knew of any similar ones coming up for sale. He said, "Yes I do know of one, but it's a real stinker". This "stinker"

ended up being 1305 9th Street and what a project it was! The house was being sold by a man who inherited it from his mother and had been occupied by tenants for many years. The house was in horrible condition as nothing had been done to it since the 1930s. Jan to the rescue!

The tenant occupancy situation of the house meant that Jan had just one hour to take a look through the house and decide if she wanted it. Luckily for Jan, she had the assistance of architect Joe Landry who was able to accompany her to the property. What attracted Jan to the home and helped her decide to buy it was the potential curb appeal, the old and tired but intact exterior trim from 1885, the original molding and baseboards, eight gorgeous paneled doors, a deep lot and a beautiful old oak tree in the back yard. She went ahead with the purchase and immediately set to work. 1305 9th Street was a true Queen Anne Victorian Cottage.

Jan's home renovation experience was critical to help her organize the right repairs. The crumbling brick foundation was replaced and she was able to get a variance from the city to excavate to make a proper basement. Jan was determined to get permits for every inch of the repairs and Joe Landry was very helpful as he is "an extremely talented architect and masterful in working with the city". Joe held weekly meetings with the crew and Jan appreciated that all of the workers were part of a team. Joe's master's degree in architecture came into play in various aspects of the renovation including the creation of templates for the woodwork coming down the front

staircase that continue the design from the porch. Other key contributors to the project included Joe Garry, electrician, and Golden Gate Sheet Metal for their work on the furnace and heating. Local inspectors were also very helpful to the process as they were able to identify some additional work that needed to be done.

Both practical and aesthetic enhancements were made to the home along the way. Jan's workers added insulation while uncovering redwood in the walls wherever possible. A new garage door was added and the windows which were falling apart were replaced with new Milgard windows that have the same profile as the original wooden ones. She also kept the hardwood floors and replaced floors that were not level; adding custom tile. A two-way fireplace and four chandeliers were added to create a glamorous ambiance while keeping the feel of an old house. All of the work that was performed was done with the goal of creating a green building project which led to credits back for the recycling and green achievements.

One of the most satisfying projects for Jan was picking out the color scheme which she of course could do expertly herself. She chose burgundy for the main color to make the house reflect an original Victorian color, to beautify the street. The splendid front door was a surprise housewarming gift from a longtime friend. It came from an 1885 farmhouse in Benicia and was the same vintage as the existing transom—both are original. Jan clearly loves her beautiful Victorian home and cannot wait to prominently display her new award plaque.

2860 Jackson Street

Story by Conchita Perales

Award Recipients: Jerry Schneider, Owner; Don McLean, Carpenter; Oliver Govers, Govers Sidewall Shingling; Bob Buckter, Color Consultant.

When Jerry bought his house in 2008, he knew it was an example of a very early 1900s craftsman cottage, and it was love at first sight. Its history was all there, in its design and stature, and the connection and insight he experienced at that moment was unmistakable, he would restore it.

The house had been another victim of an unfortunate “remodel” that had taken Alameda and other towns by storm during the 1950s. The façade and exterior appearance of the house were totally modified: a thick layer of stucco replaced the original shingle siding, a set of windows were added to the porch hiding two of its distinct columns, and the Douglas fir floor was topped with plywood. Along the way, exterior moldings would be removed and two windows completely covered over.

Jerry, what was the driving force behind removing the stucco and replacing it with shingles? From the moment I bought the house my goal was to bring it back to its original glory, and I knew there was more to it under the stucco exterior. Six months after moving in I completed a small house project in the back entry, and this is when I discovered that the original shingles were still there, right under the stucco. It was at that moment that I decided I would one day remove it and uncover the original shingles. That day finally arrived! And I didn’t need an excuse, there were no underlying issues like cracked plaster, water damage or a new coat of paint, I was ready for the project.

What surprises did you run into during the restoration process? First off, it’s very unfortunate that the previous owners replaced the ORIGINAL wooden windows with AWFUL white veneer windows. So I was thrilled when I discovered two small original windows that had been covered up by the stucco, complete with their frames and glass. I didn’t know they even existed because these windows had also been covered up with sheetrock inside the house. One is on the west side, the standard “cubby hole” window you’ll typically find in Craftsman houses. The second is a small bedroom window on the NW side of the house. Both discoveries were a big surprise, as well as finding the shadows of original moldings that had been removed when the stucco was added in the 1950s.

Another great discovery occurred when we started work on the porch and we uncovered two of the original columns. They had been encased in plywood when a large breeze window was added as part of the 50s remodel. And, to my excited surprise, when I removed the painted plywood that had been laid over the porch floor—hooray! —the original Douglas fir floor was still there! Unfortunately, parts of it were rotted and I couldn’t save it, so I replaced it with the same wood to match the original and it looks amazing. I also sanded and stained the ceiling with a clear varnish to bring out the beautiful Douglas fir grain that had been hidden under layers of paint and stucco.

How long did the process take, did you have a strategy? It took about 10 months from beginning to end, which was longer than I expected. It’s a habit of mine to seek out highly skilled individuals who are “off the radar” to do the work I need, and these skilled craftsman are busy contractors, so I had to wait for their schedules to open. I also chose to do a fair amount of the work myself, so my progress was slow because my free time is limited.

continued on page 6...



Above: 2860 Jackson Street circa 2008. In the 1950s stucco was applied to the house’s exterior in an attempt to modernize it.

Below: The large paned window was added in the 1950s to enclose half the porch, hiding the original double column in the process. Images: Google.com.



Above: The restored cottage’s shingle siding as it might have looked like when originally built. (Known standing in 1909, George Gunn, “Buildings of the Edwardian Period - City of Alameda, 1905 to December 31, 1909”) Images: Conchita Perales.



Left: With the breeze window removed from the porch, the original double column is now exposed. Mirroring the front columns, the design’s understated simplicity speaks of its early craftsmanship.

2860 Jackson Street

The original shingles were badly damaged by nails that held the lath metal frame in place. Notice the shadow under all windows reveals the trim that was removed when the stucco was applied. Image: Jerry Schneider.



New cedar shingles were used to replace the originals. Their mosaic quality adds a unique play of texture and warm hues to the house.

One setback to the project was not being able to preserve the original shingles. Once the stucco was removed, it was obvious that the shingles were badly damaged from the nails that held the wire lath in place. It was shingle expert Oliver Govers who provided the unique batch of Cedar shingles to replace them; they're beautiful, almost mosaic in their quality and color, something we would've not been able to accomplish if we had tried to restore the existing ones. Now the house looks as it probably did when it was just built!

Are you happy you took the project on after the expense and hassle? Let's all agree the ORIGINAL architects and builders of these old houses KNEW exactly what they were doing when they chose the materials to build them. Remember that these houses were built during a time when they CARED that the house looked perfect, not only to themselves but to their neighbors, and town. It was an art to build a house. I am very happy I brought the house back to its original look. I just wish the four previous owners had not modified the house with their misconstrued actions and ideas about "remodeling" and "upgrading".

Do you have any advice for someone looking to take on a project like this? Do not hold back! Take the house back to its original look and intent, without question. Be diligent, meticulous, patient, and caring. It will all work out as long as you stay firm and persistent. In the end, it is fun and exciting. And when you're finished EVERYONE will congratulate you and douse you with praise. You will be a hero to the community.

As a final thought, I want to say that the work was worth it. The feeling of accomplishment and achievement cannot be replicated. The true feeling that you did something right and pure is not only self-satisfying but also highly satisfying to others who see what you did. So, all your work and investment makes others feel better, and if I may say, the neighborhood, town, city, and world alike.

A Mansion of Change 1723 Central Avenue

Story by Alan H. Teague

Award Recipients: Alan H. Teague, Owner; Nathan Jones & Daniel Stark, North by West Construction; Michael Richardson, Next Level Painting; Myron Olson, Olson Painting.

The Scott Residence is an 1895 Queen Anne located in central Alameda. Designed by Fred Fischer and constructed by Dennis Straub for between \$7,500 and \$10,000, this San Francisco style mansion was the home to George Scott, his second wife and their four children. Alameda mansions tend to be large with many small rooms. San Francisco mansions tend to be large with large rooms. Over the years, this architectural gem has undergone many revisions.

In the early hours of February 6, 1900, a fire broke out in the furnace room. While the fire damage was minimal, the house was mistakenly flooded with water from the second-floor down. Architect D. F. Oliver designed the \$5,000 restoration that followed. His design restructured most of the first floor and added significantly to the size of the house. A new dining hall replaced the wrap-around porch and provided the basis for a master bedroom suite to be constructed on the second floor. The original dining room was converted into a study and the grand staircase to the second floor was created. Corresponding spaces were created on the ground floor and attic.

In March of 1910, daughter Rena Scott married Edward Baxter who was in the automotive business. Around this time, the porte-cochere was constructed for around \$500. This addition established the curved driveway leading to the carriage house located in the rear of the property. In 1911, a photo of this home was published in *Sunset* magazine with the caption "NOWHERE ELSE DO PALMS GROW MORE LUXURIANTLY THAN IN ALAMEDA". This photo has been the basis for the restoration work that has been done on this house.

Unfortunately, between 1915 and 1918, the house underwent a major exterior change. The top floor and roof of the tower were removed, the half-round scales and shiplap siding along with the intricate porch railings were covered in stucco, and the roof peaks over the three gables were changed, removing their decorative aspects. The theory is that this was done to modernize the look of the home.

In the late 1940s the home was sold by the Scott descendants. The new owner converted the main house into three units in June, 1953. The ballroom on the ground floor (basement) became a two-bedroom unit, sealing off a butler pantry and removing the lower half of the stairway from the first floor. At the time, a sun porch existed above the front porch and this was converted into a kitchen for the second floor apartment. Luckily, all of these alterations were done with almost no changes to the existing structure of the house. This conversion to a multi-family residence is probably what saved this home from being torn down and replaced with an apartment building. At one time, there were four mansions in a row on this stretch of Central Avenue. All but the Scott Residence have been demolished and replaced with apartment or condo buildings.

During the 1970s, the second floor was configured into three apartments. The kitchen over the front porch was divided into two with one connecting to the master bedroom and the other remaining with the front apartment. The master bedroom was divided into a living room with the fireplace and a bedroom connected to the bathroom. The enclosed second floor porch on the back of the house was set up as a kitchen for the third unit. All of the residents used the interior staircases to access their units. This reconfiguration was reverted prior to April, 1984, when the staircase up and over the porte-cochere to the second floor was constructed and the kitchen on that floor was remodeled.

continued on page 7...

1723 Central Avenue



Above: 1723 Central Avenue missing its tower and covered in stucco.

Right: The original half-round shingles were preserved underneath the stucco. It is now one of the most visible parts of this historical gem.



Above: The railing was in great shape with only minimal restoration needed. The lower board was replaced in the straight sections and the curved originals were reusable.



Above: Today, this Queen Anne mansion stands out as one of the premier historical homes on the island. Images: Alan H. Teague.

In 1989, the fireplace in the master bedroom failed and there was a minor fire. While, the original built-ins surrounding this fireplace were not significantly damaged, the fireplace was replaced with a 1980s style insert with surrounding tile. One day, the owner plans to replace the fireplace tiles with more period appropriate ones.

In 1999, the carriage house was completely gutted and given a new purpose in life. Working with the City of Alameda, the owners converted this barn into two apartments. While there were changes made to the exterior, key aspects were kept to maintain the look of the building. The roof line facing the street remains the same and shows how the main house's gables used to appear.

In 2008, The current owner moved in and has been marking off project after project restoring this home to much of its original grandeur. All of the double-hung windows in the main house have been fully restored and weatherproofed. Any modern glass was replaced with vintage glass. These fully functioning windows restored the cooling convection effect created by opening both the top and bottom sashes. A giant gravity furnace was replaced with a modern high-efficiency one and a significant amount of compromised knob-and-tube wiring was updated to modern standards.

In 2010, the restoration of the tower's top floor and roof began. Based on historical photos, this year-long project brought back a crucial piece of this structure's character. True to the original tower, the siding was composed of half-round shingle siding matching the shape and size of the 1895 siding. All of the double-hung windows of the tower were custom made using vintage window weights and pulleys. A hexagonal window found in a crawlspace of the home was also installed. As part of the deconstruction in preparation for the restoration, two original tower joists of old growth redwood were found. These were repurposed to provide the cross-beams supporting the vintage lamp hanging in the completed tower.

In December, 2017, the owner discovered that underneath the stucco on the front porch, the original railing details were preserved. In 2018, as part of

repairing the front porch, the stucco was removed from the walls and railings. The plywood flooring was replaced with tongue and groove flooring. The uncovered shiplap on the walls was in pristine condition and only required a deep cleaning and patching of the holes where the furring strips for the stucco had been located. The railing was in great shape with only minimal restoration needed. The lower board was replaced in all of the straight sections and the curved originals were reusable. The ball decorations had been sliced off on each side to allow for the stucco and after a lot of deliberation it was decided to smooth those off and keep them in place. Today, the railing of the home provides another critical character defining aspect to this home.

Repair work for water leaks around the dining hall bay windows led to the discovery that the original half-round shingles were preserved underneath the stucco. In 2018, as part of the leak repair, the east wall had its layer of stucco removed. This restored exterior brings back another visual piece of the home. This work also unearthed a mystery. The exposed siding showed where a window to the master suite had been but is no longer in existence. One day, we may find out more about this window.

In 2019, a large crack was found in the second floor stucco under a window on the curve of the kitchen. Instead of doing a temporary patch, the owner decided to remove more of the stucco. Over the next couple months, all of the stucco on the second floor of the south side of the mansion was removed. The underlying half-round siding was again in fantastic shape. The only significant issue was where there had been water leaks, the nails securing the shingles had rusted away. After a significant amount of cleaning and patching, the half-round siding is now one of the most visible parts of this historical gem.

Today, this Queen Anne mansion stands out as one of the premier historical homes on the island. The restoration of the tower, front porch and decorative siding show the on-going commitment to restoring and preserving this architectural treasure.

Masterly Millworks: Blue Ox, an Incredible Resource for Restoring your Vintage Home

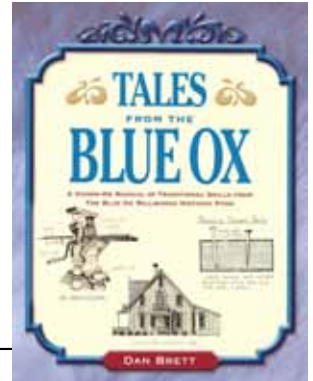
Story by Conchita Perales

Does your house have a rotted railing, a broken baluster, a failing finial or a crippled corbel? Decorative and functional millwork was created in a spectacular variety of shapes and sizes, and it takes a craftsman with the tools and expertise to restore or reproduce these marvelous and intricate house parts. Fortunately, in Eureka, California, we have one of the nation's best artisan millworks shop, a little-known treasure that every homeowner needs to know about. Blue Ox Millworks is one of America's last fully functioning Victorian wood job shops. Their craftsmanship techniques and collection of tools of the last century are utilized to produce authentic custom millwork for homes and commercial buildings throughout the country.

Master craftsman Eric Hollenbeck and his wife Viviana are the co-founders of Blue Ox Millworks and Blue Ox Historic Village. Starting in 1973 as a salvage logging company, they turned to manufacturing after the bottom dropped out of the logging industry during the housing crash of the seventies. Eric went through the "bone piles" of the closing mills and started gathering the antique equipment that today is considered the largest collection of human powered equipment from the 1800s and early 1900s used in the production of custom millwork. Whether custom-made or reproductions of interior and exterior moldings, balusters and columns, windows, doors, gable decorations and Victorian gingerbread, their craftsmen can match any pattern. From the fully functioning blacksmith shop, to the historic craftsman's apothecary and even a working antique print shop, Blue Ox is a haven for authentic craftsmanship. Tours and workshops in the traditional arts are also offered to the public.

After the loss of Victoriana, a source for Victorian-style decorative architectural pieces in San Francisco in 2015, many of us have scrambled to find a worthy replacement provider of such items. Blue Ox has emerged as the essential resource that all of us, owners of vintage homes, have been looking for to recreate and restore our beautiful, yet aging or missing millwork.

Eric's knowledge and expertise brought about his collaboration with Dan Brett, a writer and illustrator with a strong interest in traditional skills. Their partnership gave birth to the book *Tales From the Blue Ox*, a collection of the best tools, techniques and general common sense gleaned from the history of Victorian era ingenuity, and it shares the skills that have been kept alive at the Blue Ox. We'll be featuring some of the fascinating content in subsequent issues, but here's a first taste of Brett's 300 original pen and ink illustrations.



Above: Master craftsman Eric Hollenbeck and his wife Viviana are the founders of Blue Ox Millworks and Historic Park in Eureka, California.

Right: Spandrels and paperdoll balusters headed for Boston; Newel on the Governor's Mansion, Sacramento, California.



Above: Hand turned redwood balusters for Napa, California.



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Marcuse & Rimmel Fans Delighted by Talk

by Karen Lithgow

Architects Marcuse & Rimmel would have been very pleased to see how many adoring fans showed up at a lecture to admire their work, some 130 years after building these marvelous homes. Marcuse and Rimmel aficionados that attended last March's talk by Alameda historian Woody Minor were treated with a wealth of information and visuals that showed the breadth and beauty of these extraordinary Victorians. Woody claims that of all the firms building homes here from the gold rush to present day, this pair of architects was the most interesting and the most prolific. They built an estimated 538 homes in the area over a 12 year time period, approximately 350 of them in Alameda. What's particularly remarkable is that over ninety percent of these buildings are still standing.

A tremendous building boom in Alameda during 1889 to 1891 saw home prices doubling during that time. The boom attracted the attention of German immigrants Felix Marcuse and Julius Rimmel who left their occupations as grocer and musician, respectively, to become housing developers. The pair's ability to find the land, architectural plans, materials, contractors and financing for a large number of ornate and unique homes allowed them to thrive and eventually dominate the building scene. Woody points out that the duo built entire streetscapes and at their peak built over 50 houses a year. Although they were meant



A Marcuse & Rimmel cottage at 1215 Pacific Avenue.

for the working and middle class, the homes had unusually detailed and beautiful facades and contain some very attractive interior features. The vast majority are known as high-basement cottages with one decorative main floor up top and a simpler basement-type floor below. Many of the homes have the Marcuse and Rimmel trademark leaf-patterned redwood trim. I have this trim in my home and it's what first caught my eye and made me fall in love with my Marcuse and Rimmel!

Woody's slideshow of the various Marcuse and Rimmel Alameda homes followed a chronological timeline and he showed us their wide variety of details in a progression of styles. He says the architects were in a league of their own with a great deal of variety and originality which was apparent from the many photos he showed to us. I happened to spy a few proud owners of these homes in the audience that absolutely beamed when their houses were featured in the slideshow. A sadder note finished his presentation when Woody described the descent of the architect's career demise and bankruptcy in 1900 at the end of the building boom. He went on to speculate what they might have built if they had been able to continue.

The Marcuse and Rimmel homes have also inspired a very special fan club headed up by Alameda resident Robert Farrar who owns one of their more spectacular creations. Robert has created a survey to give Marcuse and Rimmel owners, along with a visit to their homes, to begin cataloguing the many features of the properties. Robert talked to the lecture audience about his findings to date, noting the similarities and differences of the homes, and his eventual goal of creating a website and online map just for these unique properties. What Robert found common to all of the homeowners is that everyone loves their Marcuse and Rimmel!

MARCUSE & RIMMEL DATABASE

Contact Robert Farrar
rfarrar665@yahoo.com
530-440-4479



An overwhelming success! Woody Minor and Robert Farrar's engaging presentation attracted more than one hundred attendees to the early March lecture. Image: Conchita Perales.



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Robert Risley Passes

Alameda's preservation movement lost one of its giants in late May. Bob was one of the key members of the Alameda Museum and Alameda Architectural Preservation Society, functioning as Treasurer on the boards of both organizations for over 15 years.

His commitment to the preservation of Alameda's history is evident by his service and volunteer work. Over the years Bob and his wife, Claire, generously shared their beautiful home and grounds on Grand Street with friends and neighbors for the annual Alameda Fourth of July Parade.

Beyond his professional excellence, Bob Risley was a friend to many. He will be greatly missed. Our thoughts and condolences go out to his family.

**Alameda Architectural
Preservation Society**

AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2020

• **POSTPONED**

23rd Annual
Preservation Award Gala

• **SEPTEMBER 27**

Legacy Home Tour
Virtual Experience

*Explore the Bay Station Heritage Area
on a self-guided tour narrated by Woody Minor;
participate in a scavenger hunt designed by
Judith Lynch; set your drawing skills in motion
with Linda Weinstock; meet vendors,
access resources and much more!*

DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Like many organizations this year, AAPS has needed to cancel or postpone some of our live events. We hope that by the end of the year we can hold events again, possibly in a different type of format. Stay tuned as we work out how to provide entertaining and informative events for our AAPS members and the public.

In the meantime, rest assured that our Preservation Action Committee (PAC) is hard at work representing our collective interests as our city officials look to modify Alameda laws affecting the preservation of buildings and neighborhoods.

Article 26 of the city charter (previous Measure A) is of particular focus this year and we are actively participating in the discussion of possible changes. We will

continue to keep you informed via emails to our members.

Also, we are taking the time to completely revamp our website to make it more attractive, informative, and easier to navigate. One change we are particularly excited about is the addition of a "Resource" page including descriptions and links for people and businesses that provide restoration, preservation and enhancement of vintage homes.

Please reach out to us with any comments, concerns or questions you may have about our organization. We hope to see you all in person very soon!

**For more information about AAPS
and PAC Committee updates visit
alameda-preservation.org**