

# Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA  
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

A Presentation by Woody Minor

## The Bruton House: A Gold Coast Landmark

Thursday, March 8, 2012 at 7:00 pm

**Immanuel Lutheran Church: 1420 Lafayette Street, Alameda, CA**  
(Parking available at the corner of Chestnut Street and Santa Clara Avenue.)  
**Free for AAPS members; \$5 for non-members**



Homeowner and AAPS member Jeannie Graham purchased this Gold Coast gem in 1999. Her interest in preservation and care of her home has led to its designation as Alameda Historical Monument No. 30.

### A Monumental Home

Story by Woody Minor

At the March membership meeting, Woody Minor will present his recent research on the Bruton House, a Gold Coast mansion located at 1240 St. Charles Street, and owned by longtime AAPS member Jeannie Graham. The research was done for the landmark nomination report he submitted to the city's Historical Advisory Board this past October. The HAB concurred with the findings of the report, giving its unanimous stamp of approval for the house's designation as an Alameda Historical Monument.

The house has architectural significance, exemplifying a style, and historical significance for its association with persons important in the artistic history of California. The Bruton House is the eighth residential structure in the city so honored, and it will be formally listed later in March, when the City Council takes action on the issue.

continued on page 2...

**A Monumental Home...continued from page 1.**



Details on the exterior. This view shows the upper stairwell window with Corinthian pilasters; the bay-window cornice with dentils and urn finial; and the roof eave with modillion brackets. Photo: Woody Minor.

The Bruton House ranks among the largest private residences in the city, enclosing over 4,000 square feet of living space on four levels. The parcel, covering nearly 13,000 square feet, is likewise among the city's largest residential lots, graced with one of the oldest oak trees on the island. A gracious Colonial Revival residence with Queen Anne elements, it was designed and built in 1897 by the pioneer Alameda firm of Denis Straub & Son, whose junior partner, Fred P. Fischer, served as architect. Stylistically, it is transitional between Queen Anne and Colonial Revival. The boxy massing, hip roof, and classical detailing are signature elements of Colonial Revival, while the asymmetrical façades, gabled dormers, multiple bays, varied windows, and wraparound porch with eclectic columns are more Queen Anne in feeling.

**Resident Artists**

Commissioned by San Francisco businessman Daniel Bruton, Pacific Coast agent for the American Tobacco Company, the house remained in the family through World War II. Daniel and his wife, Helen, were both natives of Ireland, hailing from the cities of Dublin and Belfast, respectively. Their three daughters, Margaret, Esther, and Helen, all born in the 1890s, were destined to become noted regional

artists. They were raised in the house and spent much of their adult lives there at the height of their careers, in the 1920s and 1930s, using the attic as a studio. The Bruton sisters were frequently covered in reviews and articles in California newspapers of the prewar period. Their parallel careers followed similar paths, resulting in critically acclaimed paintings, etchings, sculptures, mosaics, and murals, and their works can be found in many private collections and museums.

**Developing the Gold Coast**

Woody will also discuss the significance of the house in its Gold Coast milieu, describing its architectural elements as well as its neighborhood setting. The Gold Coast comprises Alameda's most impressive concentration of fine homes, and the lecture will include an overview of the area's development beginning in the late nineteenth century, with a focus on St. Charles Street.

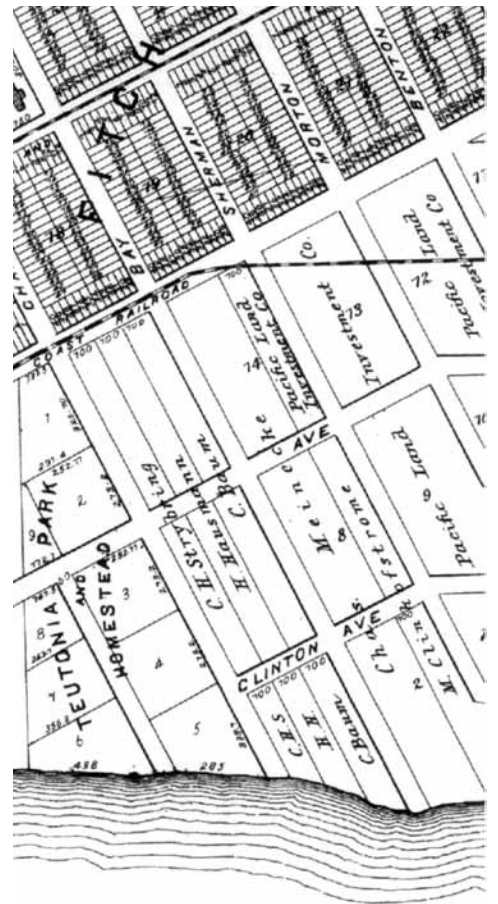
The Bruton House was the first house in an 1897 development known as the Strybing Tract, extending along the east side of St. Charles Street south of San Antonio Avenue. A number of Bay Area architects contributed to the creation of this fine Colonial Revival/Craftsman streetscape, including Henry H. Meyers, Bert E. Remmel, and A. W. Smith.

The PowerPoint presentation will include numerous historic and contemporary images to elucidate the history, setting, and architecture of this notable



View of the entry hall, showing paneled staircase with mahogany banister and art-glass windows on lower landing. Photo: Busted Construction.

Alameda property. Woody will give some tips on how to do research about your historic home, providing an overview of such indispensable sources as Sanborn maps, assessor's maps, deed conveyances, building permits, newspaper articles, and census data. And he will tell us about the process of preparing landmark nomination reports, from onsite notes to online research to the final, grueling synthesis.



Parcel map showing west-central section of the Gold Coast, 1878. Long, narrow strips of land stretch from Central Avenue to the bay, between St. Charles and Sherman Streets. The parcel owned by C. H. Strybing, on the east side of St. Charles, was subdivided in 1897, twenty years after Teutonia Park on the west side of the street. (Official and Historical Atlas of Alameda County, California, Thompson & West, 1878.)

Woody has been out of the country for over a year, and this is his first presentation to the AAPS since 2009, when he spoke about his book *A Home in Alameda*. He looks forward to sharing new insights he gained into the city's history by way of the lovely Gold Coast home of Jeannie Graham.

#11 ALAMEDA HISTORICAL MONUMENT

# Second Empire Residence 2233 Santa Clara Avenue

**Year of Construction: 1880**

**Architect: Edward Childs**

**Architectural Style: Mansard  
or Second Empire**

**Original Owner: August H. Schnabel**

**Date Monument Status  
Conferred by City Council: 11/20/1979**

*Story excerpt from the City of Alameda  
Historic Preservation Element, 1980.*

In 1880, an imposing mansion was built on Santa Clara Avenue for August H. Schnabel, a German immigrant who had struck it rich in mining. Today, the mansion, at 2233 Santa Clara Avenue is being used as office space.

Schnabel's mansion, although it served for many years as a multi-unit dwelling, has fared better than an identical building once on the adjacent lot. The second mansion long since has been demolished.

Both mansions were designed in the "Second Empire" style which reflected a European architectural taste popular between the years 1850 and 1870. The style is symmetrical, with two or three stories massing on either side of a central pavilion. Its most obvious trademark is the mansard roof. Schnabel's mansion is an adaption of the style with locally available materials. Masonry or brick is replaced here by clapboard siding. The mansion has had numerous re-roofings with wood shakes.

The front elevation is dramatically emphasized by projecting bay windows, polygonal on the first floor and square on the second. The entryway is flanked by unadorned columns with double glass arched doors opening beneath a glass transom.

No significant alterations have changed the front and side elevations since Schnabel's day. A room addition and stairway attached to the back of the house were done in the early part of the 20th century and do not detract from the original design.



## AAPS Kids Preservation Contest is Underway

AAPS Education Committee members Judith Lynch, Johanna Hall, Corri Jimenez and Erich Stiger are excited to report that the 2012 AAPS Kids Preservation Contest is underway. This year's contest focuses on Alameda's 29 official Monuments. Examples include City Hall, Alameda High School, Lincoln Park, several churches and Victorian-era houses, the Del Monte warehouse, and 1,297 historic streetlights. The contest is open to Alameda students in public and private schools and includes classroom projects for grades 1–3 as well as individual/team projects for grades 4–12.

We are spreading the word via media alerts as well as announcements to parents, teachers and students thanks to help from AUSD. In addition, AAPS Education Committee members, including Otis School teacher and Historical Advisory Board member Judith Lynch, will be making slide presentations on the Monuments in select classrooms across Alameda.

A distinguished panel of judges has agreed to help select winners: architect Dennis Owens who chairs the Historical Advisory Board, *Alameda Sun* publishers and authors Dennis Evanovsky and Eric Kos, Museum President Robbie Dileo, AAPS Board Advisor Nancy Hird, and AAPS President Erich Stiger.

Winners in the classroom project category will receive group prizes, such as a pizza or ice cream party. Winners of the individual/team art and essay contests will receive prizes such as gift certificates. Additional prizes will be announced. All contestants will also receive commemorative T-shirts. Winning art will be displayed in various places, and essays will be posted on the AAPS website and sent to local papers. Winners will be introduced at the AAPS 15th Annual Preservation Awards gala the evening of Thursday, May 17 at the Auctions by the Bay Theater at Alameda Point.

Sponsors are lining up to support the contest and provide either funding or prizes for winning contestants and classes. AAPS Education Committee member Johanna Hall is seeking more donations; if you or your business would like to take part please call her 510-701-9392. Families, teachers and students: If you want to learn more, visit the new "AAPS Kids" web page at [www.alameda-preservation.org/aaps-kids](http://www.alameda-preservation.org/aaps-kids). You can also e-mail questions to the AAPS Education Committee at [aapskids@alameda-preservation.org](mailto:aapskids@alameda-preservation.org). Deadline for entry is April 20th.

Story by Erich Stiger

## PAC

### GET INVOLVED & 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.

We also maintain an e-mail list to advise AAPS members on ongoing issues that could affect historic properties and provide an opportunity to review and comment on draft AAPS position statements. If you would like to attend a meeting, be added to the e-mail list or would like to obtain more information, please contact

**Chris Buckley at**

**510-523-0411 or [cbuckleyAICP@att.net](mailto:cbuckleyAICP@att.net).**

We are making an impact within the community. It's informative and fun. We encourage all members to get involved in making decisions.

## 15TH ANNUAL PRESERVATION AWARDS – MAY 17



Save the date to see the best restoration projects in our city at the Auctions by the Bay Theater.

Nomination forms are available in the January issue of the *Alameda Preservation Press* and online at the AAPS website [www.alameda-preservation.org](http://www.alameda-preservation.org).

The awards showcase projects that preserve, restore or reuse historic property in a way that enhances its architectural character.

Deadline is March 18, 2012.

## AAPS BOARD MEMBERS 2012

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Erich Stiger • 510-865-2740

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Alan Teague • 415-310-3570

### Advisor to the Board

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For more information, please contact:  
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society  
P.O. Box 1677 • Alameda, CA 94501  
510-479-6489

[www.alameda-preservation.org](http://www.alameda-preservation.org)

Newsletter Design: Valerie Turpen 510-522-3734

Erich Stiger  
AAPS President

## *Dear AAPS Members*

Taking on the role as the new President of AAPS is a somewhat daunting task given how much time and energy the previous President, Nancy Hird, devoted to the job and the wonderful results she achieved. Fortunately for me, I don't have to do it alone as she is still on the Board and very much involved. In addition to Nancy, we have a great Board of Directors that includes Board veterans Chris Buckley, Valerie Turpen, Bob Risley and Patsy Baer, and new members Alan Teague and Corri Jimenez who are already bringing in fresh ideas and new energy to the group. Just as important is the cadre of committed AAPS members outside the Board who volunteer their time helping on a variety of committees and generally pitching in wherever needed. And last, but not least, we couldn't do any of this without the support from all our members whose dues help provide the means to remain an active force in preserving Alameda's architectural heritage. In short, stealing a phrase from Hilary Clinton, "it takes a village" for AAPS to work.

We're hoping that in 2012, we can make that village a little bigger. As always, volunteers are needed for a variety of things: We have the Preservation Awards on May 17th, and welcome ideas for nominations as well as help preparing material and organizing for the event itself. This year's event will also include winners from the first ever Kids Preservation Contest which will help make this the best attended Preservation Awards event to date. That means even more help is needed as we deal with the extra logistics involved.

The California Preservation Foundation is holding its annual conference in Oakland this year from May 3 - 6. AAPS is helping to organize and support this event and making sure that Alameda is featured prominently (see page 7). The annual Alameda Legacy Home Tour takes a lot of preparation and support. Committee meetings are being held once a month to plan the event for September 23rd. For more information visit [www.alameda-home-tour.org](http://www.alameda-home-tour.org). And we can use help organizing and hosting our upcoming slate of great General Membership meetings including Woody Minor's discussion "The Bruton House: A Gold Coast Landmark" being presented March 8th. Anyone with an interest in writing articles is encouraged to contribute to the "Alameda Preservation Press". Contact Valerie Turpen to discuss your topic, 510-522-3734. Finally, the AAPS Preservation Action Committee (PAC) is tackling a number of issues and encourages members to get involved in providing input and supporting its efforts throughout the year (see ad page 4).

In all of these activities, our mission remains the same, to increase public awareness and appreciation of historic architecture in Alameda. One of the main ways we get the word out is through our membership. Therefore, I am encouraging each of you to take on that challenge and reach out to neighbors and friends and invite them to attend AAPS events and hopefully become new members. Becoming more involved in AAPS myself has given me a new awareness and appreciation of the efforts so many members have been making for years. I look forward to working with each of you and with new members to come as we advance on another successful year.

Sincerely,



## Historic Preservation Ordinance Revisions Continue

Since 2005, Alameda's Historical Advisory Board (HAB) has been working on a revision of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The latest draft is a major rewrite of much of the previous draft that was released in August 2010. AAPS has been working very closely with the Board on the revisions over the years and has submitted numerous sets of detailed recommendations. The most recent draft was released in November, and considered at the Board's December meeting. Key provisions include:

- 1) Changing the name of Historical Monuments to "Landmarks" except for the three Historical Monument districts, which would be called "Historic Districts".
- 2) Changing the definition of "demolition" from 30% of building value to include, among other things: removal of more than 50% of the surface of any two exterior walls; or removal of 50% of roof surface areas except for replacement in kind. AAPS believes that this new definition will be easier to quantify and more directly reflects the impact of a project on a historic property's integrity.
- 3) Expanding Board purview to include "major alterations" to properties on the Historic Building Study List. Currently the Board has authority only over demolition or removal of Study List properties.
- 4) Changing the pre-1942 "safety net", that requires HAB approval for demolition of any pre-1942 building, to 50 years old.
- 5) Creating an expanded menu of penalties and other enforcement remedies for illegal demolition and other work without permit or work that exceeds the scope of permits. These remedies include:
  - Payment of a fine equal to either: the replacement value of the resource or up to \$50,000.
  - Requiring the property to be rebuilt if demolished and restored to its original appearance.
  - If the violator is a contractor, notifying the State Contractors License Bureau of the violation.

AAPS had been recommending some of these changes for years, including the revised definition of demolition and stronger and more effective enforcement remedies for illegal work.

### Many Issues with the Latest Revision

The following are some of the more significant:

#### Removal of 1200 Properties from the Historic Building Study List.

The existing Study List, consisting of about 4,000 properties, has been, in effect, replaced by a more limited version, with only about 2,800 of the current list's more highly-rated properties. Although the approximately 1,200 lower rated properties would still be subject to the demolition "safety net" if more than 50 years old, the burden of proof would now be on the HAB to demonstrate that they are historic and should not be demolished. This change would significantly weaken the current program.

#### HAB Reluctance to Change the Pre-1942 "Safety Net" to 50 Years old.

At their December meeting, some HAB members questioned changing the pre-1942 threshold to 50 years. AAPS had supported the 50 year old threshold. HAB

members were concerned, among other things, over the HAB having to review demolition of 1960s "dingbat" apartments. To address these concerns, AAPS suggested that the initial demolition review of post-1942 structures that are more than 50 years old be limited to a staff determination rather than automatic HAB referral. If staff found that the building appeared eligible for the Study List or as a Landmark, the demolition would be referred to the HAB as is currently done for pre-1942 properties. But, if staff concluded that the building does NOT appear eligible, it would send out a notice to the HAB, neighbors and other interested parties with a ten day period for anyone to challenge the determination or for an HAB member to issue a "call for review".

#### Elimination of Protection for Study List Accessory Buildings.

The revised ordinance's demolition protection for Study List properties and buildings over 50 years old applies only to "main buildings", not accessory buildings, such as garages and water towers. Demolition of these buildings would therefore require only a ministerial demolition permit with no public or further staff review. This is problematic, since some of these buildings are significant either on their own or as support structures to the main building. The existing ordinance applies demolition protection to accessory buildings.

**Penalties and Enforcement.** The proposed penalties apply only to Landmarks and district contributors. Under the previous draft, the penalties also applied to the Study List. The previous draft's approach should be restored.

#### Protection of Specially-Designated Privately Owned Landmark Interiors.

Although the draft ordinance gives the HAB authority over interior changes to City-owned Landmarks, such as the Carnegie Building and City Hall, this authority should be expanded to interiors normally opened to the public in other publicly or privately owned Landmarks, such as churches, theaters, and store spaces. Such interiors would be designated as a separate process with owner notification and comment and full public review.

#### Tree Protection Provisions Deleted.

The existing ordinance requires HAB approval for removal of any Coast Live Oak over 10" in diameter and certain other notable trees, such as the palms on Burbank Street. These provisions have been deleted from the revised draft, apparently because the HAB does not include any arborists or other "tree experts". However, these provisions should remain somewhere in the Alameda Municipal Code.



The latest draft also eliminates important findings in the previous draft for Preservation Awards 2012 approval of demolition, relocation or alteration of a historic property and requiring a good faith effort to relocate a historic property approved for demolition.

### Other AAPS Recommendations

Some AAPS recommendations are not yet reflected in the draft ordinance, but are being considered by the HAB. These include:

- 1) Allowing the City to use alternative methods other than "demolition or destruction" for "imminently hazardous" structures, including buildings damaged by earthquakes. These additional methods include repair and



Interiors of Alameda Historic Landmarks intended for public use, such as the First Presbyterian Church on Santa Clara Avenue, should be protected under the Preservation Ordinance. Photo: Dick Rutter.

## Old Roots, New Growth: Cultivating Communities

**37th Annual California Preservation Conference  
Oakland Marriott City Center,  
Thursday, May 3 – Sunday, May 6**

The California Preservation Foundation will collaborate with the Oakland Heritage Alliance, the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society and many other partners to present the 37th Annual California Preservation Conference. The Conference provides a once-a-year opportunity for professionals and grass-roots community organizers to learn about new and on-going preservation initiatives and activities throughout the state. Participants enjoy an opportunity to network, while sponsors and volunteers benefit from contributing to the success of this not-to-be-missed statewide historic preservation event.

Oakland has made great progress in preserving its industrial heritage and the surrounding East Bay area has embraced many new preservation initiatives. Discover how these achievements apply to efforts throughout California by attending tours, workshops, and sessions that explore a diverse range of preservation interests.

Study Tours showcasing Alameda sites are:

- **From the Fox to Pflueger: Golden Age of Theaters**  
The Historic Alameda Theatre
- **Ground-breaking Women at Three Restored East Bay Historic Houses**  
The Meyers House and Gardens
- **WWII to Present – Adaptively Re-Using Structures of the Past**  
Alameda Naval Air Station

Other special events and tours will highlight Lake Merritt, the 1891 Unitarian Church, University of California at Berkeley, Rosie the Riveter/ World War II Home Front National Historical Park, and Peralta Hacienda among other distinctive historic sites.

**For more information about the 2012 California Preservation Conference, please visit [www.californiapreservation.org](http://www.californiapreservation.org) or call CPF at 415-495-0349.**



selective demolition and ordering street or sidewalk closures and erection of street or sidewalk barricades as interim abatement measures.

- 2) Adding a provision allowing the City to require that a building be "deconstructed" for salvage rather than demolished to avoid a repetition of the "Yellow House" (2513 Buena Vista Avenue) demolition.
- 3) Change from five years to 10 years the period during which the site of an illegally altered, relocated or demolished historic building cannot be developed in excess of the historic building's floor area ratio or dwelling unit density.
- 4) Require deed recordations where limits are imposed on building size due to penalties.
- 5) If requiring an illegally demolished or altered property to be restored to its original appearance is inappropriate (such as where a very different design was already approved, as in the case several years ago of 616 Pacific Avenue), allow the HAB to require enhancements to the previously approved design.
- 6) Ban the contractor from doing work in the City for a specified period (perhaps three years), pulling permits, working for an owner/builder, or working under a different name.
- 7) If illegal work is not corrected, authorize the City to: (a) take whatever corrective action is necessary, including providing security, weatherization, engineering analysis of the building's stability, preparation and implementation of any interim stabilization plan, and completion of all work; and (b) putting a lien on the property to cover the City's expenses.

A further revision of the ordinance is tentatively scheduled for consideration at the Board's May, 2012 meeting. A formal public hearing on the draft will be held by the Board on later date. The draft ordinance will also be reviewed by other City boards and Commissions and by the State historic Preservation Office. Final approval of the ordinance will be by the City Council. The HAB's staff believes that the total review and adoption process will take at least a year.

Story by Christopher Buckley

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37th Annual California Preservation Conference*

♻️ printed on recycled paper.

**AAPS would like to thank members who  
donated to the organization in 2011.  
Your outstanding support is greatly appreciated.**

*Germaine Long  
Barbara Sayre  
Brian Hotoff & Linda Reynolds  
Thomas & Katerhine Saxby  
William J. Houston  
Carol Gerdes & Don Coughlan  
Jon & Corinne Lambden  
Chris & Trudi Seiwald  
Nancy & John Randolph  
Ry & Melinda Samuelson  
Bill Essert – Wooden Window  
John & Ruth Motter  
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## AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2012

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**MARCH 8**

*The Bruton House: A Gold Coast Landmark  
by Woody Minor*

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

•  
**MAY 3 – 6**

*California Preservation Foundation Conference  
with Special Tours of Alameda*

OAKLAND MARRIOTT CITY CENTER  
[www.californiapreservation.org](http://www.californiapreservation.org)

•  
**MAY 17**

*15th Annual Preservation Awards*  
AUCTIONS BY THE BAY THEATER