



Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

A Presentation by Therese Poletti

The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger

Sunday, January 24, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

Historic Alameda Theatre, 2317 Central Avenue, Alameda, California
FREE for AAPS members; \$5 for non-members



Photo: Valerie Turpen

Timothy Pflueger and his Art Deco Palace in Alameda

When the Alameda Theatre opened on August 16, 1932, the *Oakland Tribune* proclaimed, "The theater is a dominant structure commanding attention and appreciation by its size and striking exterior."

Author Therese Poletti will be showcasing the structure, one of the topics in her book *Art Deco San Francisco: The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger* in her talk on Pflueger. As a special treat, the lecture will take place inside the Pflueger-designed theatre, resplendent since its \$15.2 million restoration in the heart of downtown Alameda.

The lecture will cover Pflueger's humble beginnings to his rise as one of the bay area's most prominent architects of the 1920s to the late 1940s. Many of the photos from the book, by photographer Tom Paiva will illustrate the evolution of Pflueger's work — from his early training in the Beaux-Arts style to the exotic movie palaces such as the Alameda Theatre and the Paramount in Oakland, to more streamlined work of the Great Depression, to the first inkling of modernism in buildings like the Transbay Terminal.

Because of the special venue at the Alameda, which was dark as a movie theatre for nearly 30 years before its grand 2008 reopening, the presentation will include some discussion of the restoration project. The nearly \$40 million project included building a new cineplex connected to the historic theatre, constructing a parking garage and the restoration of the 1932 theatre.

continued on page 2...

Timothy Pflueger... continued from page 1

A San Francisco Native

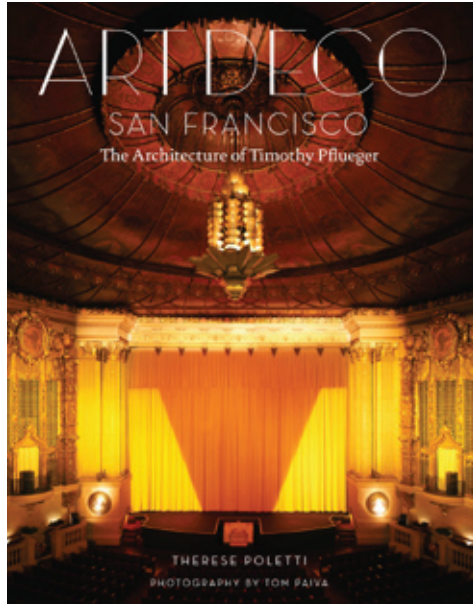
Pflueger was the son of German immigrants who came to San Francisco in the late 1880s. Born in 1892, he grew up in the working class Mission District. He began his career as an architectural draftsman while many in the city rallied to rebuild San Francisco after the devastation of the earthquake and fire of 1906.

Through his early office training with J.R. Miller, who later became his partner, and in classes at the San Francisco Architectural Club, Pflueger was steeped in the Beaux Arts style popular after the turn of the century. He eventually sought more exotic influences beyond Europe's academic teachings for modern expressions of the fast-moving Jazz Age, and later more streamlined forms during the Great Depression.

He designed some of the best-loved neighborhood movie theatres, like the Castro Theatre and big movie palaces, skyscrapers including the Mayan splendor of 450 Sutter and the San Francisco Stock Exchange tower and luncheon club. During the Great Depression, public school projects, such as George



An ad from the Oakland Tribune, August 16, 1932 shows the gala opening movie selections. General admission was 35 cents, loge 40 cents, and children 10 cents. The event was attended by Governor James Rolph Jr. and 5,000 guests.



Therese Poletti's book chronicles the life, work and times of one of San Francisco's important native sons, Timothy Pflueger. ADSF book cover, photo ©Tom Paiva Photography.

Washington High School and stunning cocktail lounges like the Top of the Mark were among the firm's work. Pflueger also was chairman of the board of architects of the Bay Bridge and on the committee of architects who designed the 1939-1940 World's Fair at Treasure Island. Pflueger's Federal Building was among the most modern buildings at the fair. He also came up with the idea for "Art in Action," where muralist Diego Rivera was the star attraction, working amid other well-known local artists, forming an exhibit on the making of art at the fair.

Pflueger was also the president of the San Francisco Art Association for several years and was a founding director of the museum now known as SFMOMA. In the late 1930s and through the 1940s, he also designed several I. Magnin stores for Grover Magnin, including the white marble lady that remains a focal point of Union Square today.

Timothy Pflueger died of a sudden heart attack in 1946 in downtown San Francisco, near many of his buildings, at the age of 54.



An Art Deco Tribute

The book, *Art Deco San Francisco*, which won a 2009 preservation award from the Art Deco Society of California, will be available for sale at a discount after the presentation. Poletti has been a journalist for 20 years earning an undergraduate degree in English from Santa Clara University and an MS in journalism from the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.

Poletti was first introduced to Pflueger's work by her mother, who took her to the elegant I. Magnin store on Union Square when she was about 13. She became further intrigued with his story while researching a downtown walking tour for San Francisco City Guides, a volunteer organization. Poletti conducts the Downtown Deco tour, which has many Pflueger buildings.

Poletti is currently a senior columnist at Market-Watch, where she writes a twice-weekly column called *Tech Tales*. She has also written for *The Argonaut*, a twice-yearly journal published by the San Francisco Historical Society, and the online edition of *Preservation*, the magazine published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Further information about Pflueger and the book is available at the Web site: www.timothypflueger.com

Book photographer Tom Paiva is a professional, freelance photographer based in Southern California and has had his own business for over 15 years. He specializes in large format photography of industrial and maritime settings, as well as architecture and interiors.

He was educated at the San Francisco Academy of Art and also was an Artist in Residence at the ship *Jeremiah O'Brian* in San Francisco in 1993.

Paiva began shooting the color images for *Art Deco San Francisco* on the summer solstice, where he was able to capture some of Pflueger's buildings in full summer light. More of Paiva's work can be seen at his Web site, tompaiya.com.

Story by Valerie Turpen

Author Therese Poletti, photo ©Tom Paiva Photography.

NANCY HIRD
AAPS PRESIDENT 2010

Dear AAPS Members

There are probably more preservation related issues happening now in our city than ever before and AAPS members are very busy trying to bring positive results to each issue. We are working with the city to develop the new Preservation Ordinance, Density Bonus Ordinance, Design Review revisions and development of the North of Lincoln area of Park Street.

Our attention is focused on the Naval Air Station and upcoming vote to defeat SunCal's Initiative named "Measure B" on the February 2nd ballot. AAPS members have particular concerns regarding the treatment of the NAS Historic District and other contributing structures, such as the Air Control Tower, as proposed by SunCal's Specific Plan that is incorporated in the Initiative. It also excludes Alameda Point from the constraints of "Measure A" which limits residential structures to a size no larger than a duplex giving way to multiple story apartment buildings and condominiums.

In addition to city-wide preservation efforts, the Board of Directors has been making changes to improve our organization. Our new Web site is being upgraded to support both blogging and PayPal. The blog will be useful to members seeking local resources for preservation projects. In hopes of increasing attendance at General Membership Meetings, we will be changing the day and venue in the spring. Please see the story "What's New in 2010" for additional information.

Especially exciting this year is our line-up of topics for our General Membership Meetings. We will begin the year with a special program in the Historic Alameda Theatre presented by Therese Poletti who literally wrote the book on Art Deco architecture in the San Francisco area, which features Timothy Pflueger and our theater. In March, we go back to basics with Paul Roberts who will explain the differences in Alameda architecture as it evolved throughout the island's history. In October, Angela Klein will discuss how to restore residential buildings using environmentally sound methods. Our annual "Woody Walk" this year will become a "Rutter Walk" exploring the architecture at the Naval Air Station. Prior to November, we plan an election debate to learn the preservation priorities of the 2010 candidates for City Council and Mayor of Alameda.

The AAPS Board of Directors is again reaching out to all members to become more involved this year to make our plans a reality. We need a Blog Editor, volunteers to assist distributing posters island-wide to publicize our meetings, help setting up and serving refreshments at General Membership Meetings, participation in the Preservation Action Committee and NAS group, and publicizing Alameda's historic architectural resources at a national level. Members who get involved not only serve our community, but make new friends and have fun doing so. The opportunity to learn is limitless. Please contact me to volunteer to become involved in any of these necessary activities. My e-mail address is nancy.alameda@att.net. Please write "AAPS" in the subject line.

Nancy Hird



AAPS members socialize in the parlor amidst the well-appointed holiday decorations.

Holiday Party was a Festive Event for All

The AAPS thanks Jeannie Graham for her warm hospitality hosting the AAPS's holiday party on December 6. Jeannie opened her beautiful home for the occasion and it was an enjoyable evening of great food and socializing for new and long-time members of our organization. A thank you goes to the party committee members; Kevin Brownson, Birgitt Evans, Rachel Bennett, Nancy Hird, Tom Mantooth, Valerie Turpen, Chris Buckley, and Holly Sellers for their help ensuring all the holiday festivities were in place and well orchestrated.



Good food, libations, and conversation was enjoyed by party guests throughout the evening.

PLEASE NOTE

The AAPS has a new phone number.

Call our general number

510-479-6489

if you have comments or questions.

What's New in 2010

AAPS members have been working hard to make our membership experience more helpful and interesting. Beginning this year, changes we are instituting to our Web site, meeting days and opportunities to make a difference in Alameda are:

Web Site: We rolled out 2009 with a brand new name and look to our newsletter. 2010 brings a new Web site, still available at the old address of www.alameda-preservation.org. Thanks primarily to Kevs Brownson, our new Web site is compatible with emerging technology and will support some exciting new features. Soon, we will be able to accept dues payments and donations via PayPal. Also coming is a long awaited blog area where members can communicate with each other regarding preservation techniques and resources useful when completing restoration projects. One critical component of the blog that we need is a volunteer BLOG EDITOR who will monitor and facilitate communications. This person must be knowledgeable about preservation, have the time available to continually serve in this capacity, and possess communication skills including the ability to relate diplomatically with blog contributors.

Membership Meetings: Early 2010 will see a move of our general membership meetings to Thursday evenings and our home venue will become Immanuel Lutheran Church at the corner of Santa Clara and Lafayette. For those unfamiliar with Immanuel Lutheran Church, it is a historic gothic structure and its congregation recently celebrated its 125th anniversary. We will assess the success of our day and venue change at the end of the year to determine if it will be permanent. If you have feedback throughout the year, Board members would appreciate your input.

Activist Opportunities: As always, the Preservation Action Committee (PAC) needs volunteers to speak out at Planning Board and City Council meetings, as well as investigate and research local and national resources for methods to employ in Alameda preservation actions. PAC members also report potential code violations and take pictures to support the committee's activities.

During the past five years, some PAC members interested in the Naval Air Station have worked with developers, the city and the Navy as gradual



The Immanuel Lutheran Church at the corner of Santa Clara Avenue and Lafayette Street will be the new home of AAPS membership meetings this year. Please review the Calendar of Events for 2010 upcoming meetings.

progress has been made to convey the property to the city. A core group of members represent AAPS as a "consulting party" at the table with the Navy to negotiate the conveyance. This group was instrumental in writing the AAPS Opposition Statement for the SunCal Revitalization Initiative which is included in this newsletter and can be viewed on our Web site. At the present time, this group is expanding and seeking more assistance to educate Alameda voters in hopes of defeating "Measure B". Assuming a successful defeat, members of this group will be instrumental to carry out our strategic plan and work with the city to facilitate alternative opportunities for base development.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation highlights "Endangered Places" and "Places that Matter" each year and AAPS will encourage participation by Alameda community members to get our story out nationally. We hope this will help obtain preservation grants, especially for the historic district at NAS. Every bit of monetary assistance the city can garner is important and it is the role of AAPS members to assist in this effort. More information will be forthcoming.

Story by Nancy Hird

A Good Reason to Walk in Alameda

One of the ways our General Membership Meetings are marketed is with event posters distributed to local businesses, clubs, and other places people gather.

AAPS member Brian McDonald took on the project in 2009 to get the word out. He generally spends two to three hours on four afternoons taking a relaxing walk to the different districts of Alameda with a friend. "We pick different areas each day; Webster Street, Park Street, the crosstown stations, and the Towne Centre. It is a job for two people," states Brian, "One holds the posters while the other provides the push pins or tape."

Brian has a route that includes many of the eateries and businesses he frequents, but he is always looking for places to expand. While delivering a poster for the last lecture on Naval Air Station Alameda he met a woman who wanted a poster for her apartment complex in the west end.

If you would like to help distribute posters or have a suggestion for placement please call Brian McDonald at 510-301-6206 or reach him by e-mail at chiwito@chiwito.com.

Welcome New Board Member Patsy Baer

AAPS BOARD MEMBERS 2010

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P.O. Box 1677 • Alameda, CA 94501
510-479-6489

www.alameda-preservation.org

Newsletter Design: Valerie Turpen 510-522-3734

City Council Approves Density Bonus Ordinance

At its December 1, 2009 meeting, the City Council approved a density bonus ordinance that is required by State law. The ordinance had been undergoing Planning Board and City Council review since last spring, including six public meetings.

The State law can increase residential densities in existing neighborhoods and disrupt a neighborhood's architectural integrity through required relaxations in height limits, minimum setbacks and other development standards that accompany density bonus proposals. These relaxations include the Measure A standards of two units maximum per building, 2,000 sq. ft. minimum lot area per unit and restrictions on attached units.

AAPS has therefore urged that the City's ordinance be written very carefully to minimize adverse effects on existing neighborhoods and minimize the potential of density bonus projects to preempt existing development rules.

How the State Density Bonus Law Works

Under the State law, the City is required to grant a density bonus of 5% to 35% to affordable and senior housing projects involving five or more units.

Eligible projects include new construction, substantial rehabilitation of existing units, conversion of nonresidential to residential uses and condominium conversions. Developers of density bonus projects can request a relaxation of ANY non-Building Code development standard (the relaxations are called "incentives and concessions" and "waivers") if the relaxation is necessary to make the new units affordable (in the case of "incentives and concessions") or if the standard being relaxed will "physically preclude" the project (in the case of "waivers").

The City must approve the relaxations that meet the above criteria, unless the City finds, among other things, that the relaxations would adversely affect public safety, the physical environment, an Alameda Historical Monument, a property on The City's Historic Building Study List or properties on the California Register of Historical Resources.

AAPS's Response to the City's Draft Ordinance

The State law is very complex and somewhat ambiguous. Local ordinances like Alameda's can correct these ambiguities. To assist its recommendations, AAPS hired attorney Steven Mattas of Meyers and Nave, San Francisco. Mr. Mattas has published articles on the State density bonus law and serves as City Attorney for other Bay Area communities.

Although not explicitly stated in the State law, City staff and Mr. Mattas advised that incentives and concessions listed in the ordinance represent those the City would normally favor over other incentives and concessions. AAPS has therefore urged that the listing of specific incentives and concessions be limited and that, in many cases, "caps" be placed on them describing how much a specific development regulation can be relaxed with City support. AAPS, for example, recommended that any reduced setbacks in existing neighborhoods be limited to the front or rear yards, and to where adjacent buildings already had reduced setbacks and the project's reduced setbacks would not exceed the adjacent buildings' reductions.

AAPS had initially recommended that no incentives or concessions be listed, but was later persuaded by Mr. Mattas that listing some would be helpful because it would discourage the least desirable incentives and concessions and would provide an opportunity to place caps on those that were listed. However, a developer can still request incentives and concessions that are not listed or which exceed the caps, if the developer believes that the incentive or concession is necessary to create the affordable units.

The Planning Board considered the initial draft ordinance last spring. AAPS believed that this draft had many loopholes that would unnecessarily allow problematic projects. AAPS therefore recommended the following ordinance changes:

- 1) Reducing the number of listed incentives and concessions;
- 2) Placing caps on listed incentives and concessions;
- 3) Requiring that the initial five or more units conform to all City development rules, including height limits, minimum setbacks, etc.;
- 4) Limiting "mixed use" developments to nonresidential areas as defined in the City's General Plan;

- 5) Requiring developers to provide economic and other studies demonstrating that an incentive or concession is necessary to provide affordable units and that development standards for which "waivers" are requested would actually "physically preclude" the project;
- 6) Numerous technical changes that strengthen the City's position when working with developers.

City Council Action

The Council accepted almost all of AAPS's recommendations and the adopted ordinance incorporates these recommendations except for the caps on incentives and concessions. However, the incentives and concessions in the adopted ordinance are limited only to commercial and mixed use areas rather than residential areas and the Council directed staff to send the ordinance back to the Planning Board to obtain Board recommendations for incentives and concessions and possible caps in residential areas. AAPS believes that the list of incentives and concessions is sufficiently limited so that caps on those listed for commercial and mixed use areas is now unnecessary.

The Planning Board's recommendations will be considered by the City Council in late January or early February as an amendment to the adopted ordinance.

AAPS would like to thank the Council for recognizing the loopholes in the original ordinance, for supporting AAPS's recommendations and for requiring other ordinance changes to help protect Alameda's neighborhoods.

Story by Chris Buckley

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 informative and fun. We encourage all members to get involved in making decisions.



P.O. Box 1677
Alameda, CA 94501

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AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS for 2010

JANUARY 24

The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger
by Therese Poletti

ALAMEDA THEATRE & CINEPLEX

•

FEBRUARY 2

Measure B SunCal Initiative Election
PLEASE VOTE "NO"

•

MARCH 11

Back to Basics—What's a Stick?
by Paul Roberts

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

AAPS Position Statement Regarding the “Alameda Point Revitalization Initiative”

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society’s Board of Directors Opposes the Alameda Point Revitalization Initiative

Alameda’s own former Naval Air Station is key in connecting Alameda’s past to its present and future. During World War II, Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS) was the most important new air station constructed on the west coast. It was a significant part of the Navy’s Pacific operations and was the launching point for Doolittle’s Raiders. In 1992, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) determined the NAS Historic District to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; the district contains 85 buildings that contribute to the significance of the site. The historic district is significant for its history and for its architecture, with a cohesive site plan, landscape, and Moderne architectural designs. Alameda is honored to contain a historic district tied to events of national historical significance. The district is Alameda’s tangible link to World War II and demands every reasonable preservation effort. The City of Alameda also has designated the NAS Historic District a City Monument.

The Board of Directors of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) has carefully reviewed the Initiative, which would, among other things, exempt Alameda Point from the provisions of “Measure A.” Authored by SunCal Companies, the Initiative contains the definitive “Alameda Point Specific Plan” which will govern development at Alameda Point for the next 25 years. AAPS has also reviewed additional public documents related to the Initiative such as the City of Alameda’s Executive Summary of the ballot Initiative.

AAPS has repeatedly requested access to studies completed by SunCal, which evaluate potential adaptive reuse plans for historic buildings at Alameda Point and evaluate the cost of preserving those buildings. Access to these studies is important in order to independently assess SunCal’s conclusions with respect to the economic feasibility of rehabilitating Alameda Point’s historic resources. SunCal has declined to provide AAPS access to these studies.

There are numerous examples of insufficient information within the Initiative, inconsistencies between selected Initiative provisions, and conflicts between provisions in the Initiative that would inappropriately supersede the existing City of Alameda Municipal Code. It should be noted that the City of Alameda’s own Executive Summary, dated 29 May 2009, also voices concern regarding lack of information presented by SunCal.

Some specific AAPS concerns are set forth as follows:

A. AAPS Concerns Regarding Issues as Defined in the Initiative:

1. The Initiative circumvents the established city procedures for reviewing proposed alterations to historic structures. In the Initiative, the Planning Director would have sole authority to determine whether alterations to Historic District contributors are in “substantial conformance” with the Alameda General Plan, the Initiative’s Specific Plan and the Initiative’s Historic Resources Design Guidelines with no input from the Historical Advisory Board (HAB) or the public and with no opportunity to appeal. Under the Alameda Municipal Code, the HAB must approve alterations to Historic Monuments such as the NAS Historic District.
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2. The Historic District's physical boundaries would be significantly reduced in size from those set forth in the 1992 Historic Architectural Resources Inventory by Sally Woodbridge.
3. Historic structures outside the "Preservation Mixed Use" boundaries defined in the Initiative's Specific Plan are subject to the Developer's unilateral demolition by right without any input from the City of Alameda or its residents. Several historic resources, including the Flight Control Tower, WAVES barracks, Seaplane Hangers and Air Terminal are at risk and must be given greater protection.
4. Many historic structures will fall outside the Initiative's new Historic District boundary. It is not clear the re-defined historic district would continue to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, either now or in 25 years at the culmination of the project. Within the designated 25 year time frame described in the Initiative, buildings will be added, removed or altered which could affect the District's historical designation. If enough buildings contributing to the Historic District are demolished or altered, the remaining buildings might no longer qualify for the 20% federal tax credit for improvements to historic buildings. This could make rehabilitating those buildings economically unfeasible.

B. AAPS Concerns Regarding Issues Unresolved by the Initiative:

1. The Initiative, as proposed by SunCal, would supersede the findings of other studies such as an Environmental Impact Report or other environmental documents, thereby weakening protection for historic structures.
2. Development is projected to occur over a period of years. SunCal could elect to keep its entitlement inactive over a period of up to 25 years. Lack of maintenance and security could result in neglect and degradation of historic buildings beyond the possibility of preservation and disqualify the Historic District from the eligibility for the National Register. The Initiative makes no provision for, or assurance of the continued maintenance, security, or preservation of historic structures not involved in an early development phase.
3. Buildings that are currently not considered Historic District contributors, such as the Flight Control Tower, may not be included in an early phase of development. The Initiative does not assure these buildings will be protected from demolition while they await conversion to new uses.
4. The provisions of the Initiative allow higher levels of density, lax demolition controls and an approval process without necessary checks and balances.

SunCal proposes to write its own Historic Resources Design Guidelines (HRDG) and it is unclear if the Guidelines would include Standards set by the Secretary of the Interior. The proposed approval processes for alteration or demolition of historic resources, as included in the Initiative, are often too broad, easily subject to abuse and the boundaries of the Preservation Mixed Use area are not shown consistently within their own Specific Plan.

Given the uncertainties, inconsistencies and lack of information from SunCal Companies as stated above, the AAPS Board is not able to support the "Alameda Point Revitalization Initiative". We are concerned that the Initiative would result in the unnecessary destruction or alteration of significant historic resources.

Adopted by AAPS Board of Directors October 15, 2009
