



Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

A Presentation by Lorna Kollmeyer

Ornamental Plaster

Thursday, October 6, 2011 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

Plus,
Gold Coast
Walking Tour
October 9
See Page 2.



A Resource for Traditional Ornamental Plasterwork

Story by Judith Lynch

Lorna Kollmeyer, the master plaster caster who is the AAPS guest speaker in October, is a person both inspiring and resourceful. She has worked since 1984 restoring sculptural details in homes, hotels, and restaurants throughout the Bay Area.

After a stint as a professional basketball player, Lorna landed in San Francisco in 1984 and, with little experience in restoration work, bought out an ornamental plaster company owned by friends. In a fit of optimism, she submitted a bid to restore scores of Victorian plaster details for the restoration of the Majestic Hotel on Sutter Street. When she got the job by entering an extremely low bid, according to a story in *This Old House*, Lorna bore down and "marshaled the same laser-sharp concentration, attention to details, and ability to work long unbroken hours that made her a precision athlete." She opened a factory and rapidly "learned to sculpt acanthus leaves and scrollwork, discovering that she had a natural artistic touch and an eye for proportion." Her contract was successfully fulfilled, and "The Majestic Hotel put me on the map!" she said. Then her professional career blossomed.

Lorna currently specializes in both restoring and casting architectural elements in several styles, including Victorian, Edwardian, and Art Deco. Her focus is

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Lorna Kollmeyer inspects a large plaster ceiling installation.

Ornamental Plaster...continued from page 1.



custom work, when a client needs help matching an existing molding or architectural element. To accomplish this aspect of restoration, she removes the plasterwork to be replicated and meticulously strips it of layers of old paint. Then after patching the detail, she creates a rubber mold that she uses to reproduce multiple castings of that decoration.

Lorna also has an archival collection of Bay Area patterns for medallions, moldings, plaques and the other enticing bits and pieces of embellishment that enliven both the insides and the outsides of older buildings.

Lorna renounced plaster briefly in 1989 to study computer animation in London, where she soon realized that simulation was lifeless and inert, compared to the sensuous and tactile nature of plaster. After this English epiphany, Lorna returned to San Francisco, freshly inspired, "I'm not making plaster doodads, I am resurrecting history." She now has more than fifty original ceiling medallions, each named after the street it came from. She has also collected and reproduced hundreds of other ornaments. Describing the work as backbreaking and tedious, Lorna also underscored her passion, "What's gratifying is making these lovely things look perfect again."

At the AAPS meeting, Lorna will feature crown moldings, with examples of many types found in local homes. She will also address problems faced by the person who has decorative plaster to restore, and she invites you to bring actual samples, sketches or pictures of any challenges you are facing in your plaster renovation.

In addition to doing custom work, Lorna has created a catalogue of her designs available online at www.lornakollmeyer.com. Or look for her stock items in Berkeley at Ohmega Salvage, 2407 San Pablo Avenue.

Gold Coast Walkabout

Sunday, October 9, 2011
at 1:00 pm

With Paul Roberts & Judith Lynch

**Meet at the corner of Paru Street & San Antonio Avenue,
across from Franklin School**

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



In 1955 Utah Construction changed the southern shore of Alameda forever. The bay side mansions of the Gold Coast became estates perched at the edge of a lagoon. Photo: San Francisco Examiner.

A Tour with Paul Roberts & Judith Lynch

This year the annual AAPS walk will cover a lot of ground and touch on historic preservation issues. All manner of residential architecture will be showcased, and guides will discuss the "lagoonitis" caused by the Utah Construction Company massive bayfill project. They will also talk about A. A. Cohen's nearby railroad and describe the development of Franklin Park. The walk will end at a 1880s home where tour guests will be invited in to see a very Victorian collection of several dozen specimens of taxidermy, including a duck-billed platypus.

About Paul Roberts

Tour guide Paul Roberts served as President of the Alameda Victorian Preservation Society (now AAPS), was head of the Alameda Main Street Project, and led walks here during the 1980s. He is currently president of the board of the Cohen-Bray House in Oakland. Paul and his wife Cathy restored a 1920s Prairie Style home in Berkeley; an Alameda Queen Anne Victorian was next, and that project got Paul hooked on architect A. W. Pattiani, a local luminary whose work will be highlighted during the walk.

About Judith Lynch

Judith Lynch will join Paul as tour guide. She serves on the Historical Advisory Board and teaches first grade at Otis School. She is also on the board of the Alameda Museum where she curates the annual "Kids & Queen Victoria" art show. Its fame has spread so far the Queen herself assumes the body each spring, reviews the art and greets the fledgling artists.

Story by Judith Lynch

A.W. Pattiani, a Prominent Architect in Alameda

Alfred Washington (A. W.) Pattiani grew up in southern Ohio and Illinois and obtained his early school education in Evanston, Illinois where his father was a photographer and his mother a composer and music teacher. Both of his parents were born and raised in Germany early in the 19th century. Throughout his life, education and music continued to be constants in A. W. Pattiani's life.

A. W. Pattiani obtained apprenticeship training with various architects, beginning in Chicago at age 15 and continuing in San Jose, San Francisco, and Oakland. In 1880 at age 25 he went to Tucson to seek his fortune. He spent over two years as the draftsman for the U.S. Surveyor General for the Arizona Territory, John Wasson. He was also the architect for the Pima County Courthouse and several residences.

In December 1882 he returned to live in Alameda and to establish his own building firm, Wasson and Pattiani, in Oakland. It appears that John Wasson was a silent partner until July 31, 1885 when the firm became known as A. W. Pattiani & Company. On his business cards, he often called himself a Real Estate Broker and Builder.

A. W. Pattiani designed and built his first house, for himself, in Alameda in 1879. Beginning in 1883, he designed and built residences in Alameda, Oakland, and Berkeley plus a few other locations in northern California in a range of styles, including stick-Eastlake, Queen Anne, shingle-style, and colonial revival. In the local press, Pattiani was often credited with being the first to design and build houses in the latest styles. He also built several apartment and commercial buildings and at least one hotel.

Many of the hundreds of houses he built are still standing in Berkeley, Oakland, and especially Alameda. However, many fine residences he built in the 1880's and 1890's near the University of California were destroyed as the University

expanded. Many of the fine residences he built in downtown Oakland were also destroyed as the downtown was redeveloped for commercial and large apartment buildings. In addition, the razing of one of the residences he built on a prominent corner in Alameda was the final straw of popular opinion that led to the passage of Measure A in 1973; the passage and enforcement of Measure A saved the Victorian residential character of Alameda.

Story by Paul Roberts

Free Trees & Shrubs

IN 1-15 GALLON CONTAINERS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL CHRIS BUCKLEY
AT 510-523-0411

Below: An Eastlake or Stick-style cottage built and designed in 1884 by Wasson & Pattiani. Alfred W. Pattiani was one of the East Bay's most prominent and fashionable architects. The home was restored by Bill and Angela Ganci who received an AAPS Preservation Award in 1998. It was also a featured home on the Alameda Legacy Home Tour this year. Photo: Valerie Turpen.



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#9 ALAMEDA HISTORICAL MONUMENT

Croll Building 1400 Webster Street

Year of Construction: 1879

Architect: Unknown

**Architectural Style: Mansard
or Second Empire**

Original Owner: John G. Croll

**Date Monument Status
Conferred by City Council: 5/15/1977**

**Date added to National Register of
Historic Places: 3/25/1982**

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

The Croll Building in 1890.



It survived Prohibition, a 1945 fire which gutted the upstairs hotel rooms, and today the bar downstairs in the Croll Building still is going strong.

Croll's operates on the ground floor of a three-story hotel built in 1879 by Peter Britt. John G. Croll, who had moved to Alameda to manage the amusement park, Neptune Gardens, purchased the hotel in 1891. Croll had the adjoining two-story building to the north along Webster and the one-story addition further north moved to the site about 1902 from Neptune Gardens across Central Avenue. A two-story building on the east side was moved to the site at the same time. The Croll Building, therefore, is an L-shaped grouping of four buildings.

Croll soon began promoting his establishment, and Neptune Gardens which he had leased, as a training center for boxers. Many boxers, famous in their time, trained at Croll's and celebrated writers, including Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London visited Croll's to interview the boxers. Croll discontinued the training center operation soon after the earthquake of 1906.

The original building is architecturally the most interesting in the Croll's complex. The third floor is enclosed by a mansard roof with three arched dormer windows. The ground floor bar is a museum piece of early saloon-builders' art. The Philippine mahogany bar, 30 feet long was manufactured in Boston and shipped around the Horn in 1902. The immense mirrors arrived the same year from Belgium.

The original leaded glass windows remain at the Webster Street entrance. Stained glass windows in transoms above the entrance have been restored to match old photographs.

NANCY HIRD

AAPS PRESIDENT 2011

Dear AAPS Members

Fall is always my favorite time of the year. We have mellowness in the air which is a nice time to walk the island streets and enjoy Alameda's beauty enhanced by the wonderful range of architecture we have maintained over the years. Our architecture reflects the society of those who lived here before.

We see the desire to keep up with the style of the day, the rebellious youth seeking to live in natural settings, as opposed to their parents opulent and dark Victorians. The technology introduced at the 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego slowly brought stucco to many exterior finishes, while WWII gave way to the simple Moderne architecture and little other imaginative changes. We went from friendly walking neighborhoods to an automobile dominated culture.

Opening up our Alameda Architectural History book, we are fortunate to have a range of a few early rustic farm and commercial buildings and the Gothic Revival Webster House that was built and sent around the Horn in 1854. From the Mid 1800's to the 20th century, Alamedans enjoy a wonderful collection of Victorians as they progressed from Italianate to Stick to the elaborate Queen Anne styles. In the next century, architecture brought us Transitional or Colonial Revival styles. The transition to the 1900's also gave Alameda's historical inventory a "back to nature" look found in the Arts and Crafts structures and then the ubiquitous California Bungalow, often with stucco finish, front porches and low pitched gable roofs. Beginning in the 1920's and through 1941, architecture began to mimic the past with various revival styles such as Tudor, Spanish, and French. It was also the beginning of the "Moderne" style, seen extensively at the old Alameda Naval Base. The California Ranch House became popular starting in the late 1930's with its "L" shape including a dominating attached garage to house the newly popular automobile.

The automobile also led to the demise of the front porch that had welcomed neighbors convening during an evening walk. To me, as a person living in a mid-fifties split level home with its tiny front porch and dominate garage, I feel the auto was the biggest negative influence on architectural trends. People don't know their neighbors and seldom is there conversation with them during an evening stroll. Now, we have alley ways from which drive-ways and garages emerge—a further guarantee you will not see a neighbor.

Happily, those of us with a love of the various types of architecture found in Alameda have each other to share our house stories, "how to" advice and exciting restoration plans. Many houses and commercial properties have been given a second life, thanks to patient conscientious owners and façade grants. An AAPS member recently replaced the tower on his house that had been removed long ago and held an open house to show everyone the realization of his dream we had all heard about for so long. Throughout the history of AAPS, members have helped each other and shared the glory of a finished project. I can almost guarantee that you will be hearing more about this tower in the future.

Sincerely, 



AAPS Youth Contests

I'm excited to report that after submitting letters to the editor in the *Alameda Sun* and *Alameda Journal*, we were able to recruit some great new volunteers to help with the AAPS Youth Contests project. Things are off to a great start with lots of new ideas and energy all around.

As part of AAPS's dedication to preservation in Alameda, we want to make sure that every generation understands the importance of our architectural heritage and its role in helping make Alameda such a special place. The idea behind the Youth Contests project is to come up with contests that present fun and educational opportunities to get that message to our kids.

Potential ideas include a citywide treasure hunt oriented around Alameda's historic monuments. Or an essay contest where kids write about why preservation matters and maybe gets them to focus on something in their home or neighborhood. Themes might also include preservation as an important tool in creating environmental sustainability. Of course, we hope to have some great prizes too.

While the committee is off to a good start, we could always use more volunteers to help with any of the following:

- Come up with creative, fun ideas for contests
- Work with local businesses to become sponsors
- Interact with local schools
- Organize an awards event

If you are interested in being part of this fun opportunity to engage our kids, please contact me at stigerfrey@yahoo.com.

— Erich Stiger,



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 printed on recycled paper.

WANTED: BLOG EDITOR

www.alameda-preservation.org

DUTIES:

- Develop content for Alameda Architectural Preservation Society blog 48 weeks per year (off December – New Year).
Subject matter: Appropriate restoration techniques, green rebuilding, helpful vendors, contractors, architects, humorous preservation stories. Find potential content providers who can write articles for the blog on their own projects; edit author submissions for interest and appropriateness.
- Monitor and approve reader comments daily, editing or deleting inappropriate content.

CONTACT

nancy.alameda@att.net

Please write "AAPS" in the subject line.

AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2011

•
SEPTEMBER 25

Alameda Legacy Home Tour

•
OCTOBER 6

Ornamental Plaster
by Lorna Kollmeyer

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

•
OCTOBER 9, 1:00 PM

Gold Coast Walkabout
with Paul Roberts & Judith Lynch

CORNER OF PARU STREET & SAN ANTONIO AVENUE

•
DECEMBER TBD

AAPS Holiday Party

CALL 510-523-0825 TO VOLUNTEER YOUR HOME.