

# Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA  
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

## Restoring Antique Brass Hardware *by Bryan Aamot*



*A painted hinge in the vice.*

Antique door hinges, window latches and knobs often survive long after paint jobs, renovations and everyday use. When a piece of hardware is caked with paint or buried under tarnish, the temptation is to replace it with a modern reproduction. However, original hardware is part of the story of an old house, and restoring it is usually simpler than you might think.

This guide outlines a fast and hands-on process for revitalizing tarnished or painted hardware. It starts with surface preparation, then walks through a controlled heating and burnishing method that deposits fresh brass onto worn areas. At the end you will find hints for staying safe and preserving your work.

### Materials and Tools

Gather these items before you begin. Having everything at hand makes the process efficient and avoids unnecessary delays:

- Vice: securely holds the piece while you work.
- Heavy Pliers: used for handling.
- Blow torch (propane or MAP gas): provides adjustable heat.
- Steel wire brush drill attachment: removes rust and paint quickly.
- Handheld steel brush: for manual scraping in tight spots.
- Solid brass or brass-plated brush drill attachment: transfers brass during burnishing.

- Safety glasses and thick gloves: protect eyes and hands from heat and debris.
- Optional workshop bib or apron: keeps clothing clean and adds an extra layer of protection.
- Safe Working Area: Work in a well-ventilated area and make sure your workspace is clear.

### Why Save Old Brass?

Real brass (a copper-zinc alloy) is valued for its warm gold color and durability. In historic homes and older furniture, the size, shape and patina of original hinges, strike plates and knobs are integral to the design. New replacements often lack the heft and detailing of a century-old casting and can feel out of place. Restoring hardware lets you keep that authentic look while improving function and shine.

### Preparing the Surface

Start by inspecting the piece. If it is covered in layers of paint or thick tarnish, you need to remove that build-up so the new brass finish can adhere.

- Bulk Paint Removal: Clamp the hardware in the vice and gently apply heat from the torch to soften paint. Use a handheld steel brush or scraper to lift and peel away the bulk of the paint. Work slowly; the goal is to soften, not char, the paint.
- Highlight remaining paint or tarnish. Holding the torch in one hand, sweep the torch over stubborn flecks of paint which should glow red-hot. With the steel brush in the other,

scrub away the loosened residues while the metal is warm.

### Ready to Burnish

With the surface clean, you're ready to apply heat and restore the brass tone. Burnishing deposits brass from the brush onto the base metal, re-coloring worn steel or thin plating. Make sure the workspace is well-ventilated, free of flammable objects and that you have water or a fire extinguisher nearby. Clamp the hardware securely in the vice, but avoid over-tightening so heat doesn't conduct to the vice and weaken your hold.

Wear your safety glasses and thick gloves. Long sleeves and an apron help protect against flying

*Continued on page 2...*

*Highlighting the remaining paint.*



*Antique Brass Hardware...continued from page 1*



Transfer Brass to Metal



Brass fused to the Metal



Finished Results

debris. Work under good lighting so you can monitor color changes; the metal will darken and then glow faintly as it approaches red-hot.

**Quick Burnishing Process**

Follow these four steps to achieve a fresh brass finish. Work in small sections; it is better to finish one area completely before moving to the next.

1. Bring the metal near red-hot. Heat the cleaned area until it is very hot but not glowing brightly. This temperature opens the surface and allows brass to transfer. As the metal reaches near red-hot, stop heating and immediately proceed to the next step.
2. Brush on brass. Using a drill-mounted brass brush, press firmly against the heated surface. The contact deposits a thin layer of brass; move in circles and maintain even pressure. Work quickly before the metal cools and repeat if you want a deeper color. Wipe away debris between passes and reheat as needed.

**Hints for Better Results**

- Clamp opposite side: Tighten the vice firmly but limit the surface area so the vice does not absorb the heat. This allows you heat the part and not the whole vice.
- Work under good lighting: Proper light helps you see when the metal is hot enough and reveals any missed paint or tarnish.
- Small sections: Burnish one small area at a time because the metal cools quickly.
- Skip plastic parts: Do not use heat and burnishing on hinges or latches with plastic inserts or washers; the heat will melt them.

**Finishing and Sealing**

When you are satisfied with the color, allow the hardware to cool. At this stage, a protective coating can help preserve the finish:

- Paste wax: After the burnishing step, apply a thin coat of paste wax while the metal is still slightly warm. Buff it after it dries.

- Clear lacquer or polyurethane: For frequently handled items such as doorknobs, a clear lacquer spray or polyurethane can seal the brass and protect it from oils and moisture. Apply several light coats, letting each dry thoroughly.

**Satisfying Results**

Restoring antique brass hardware is both an act of preservation and a satisfying hands-on project. By combining quick surface preparation with a controlled burnishing technique, you can bring back the warm glow of brass fixtures while respecting the history they represent. With patience, proper safety measures and a willingness to repeat the process as needed, your hinges, latches and knobs can continue to tell their story for decades to come.



## Preservation Awards 2026 Call For Nominations!

AAPS is now seeking nominations for the annual Preservation Awards. Please be on the lookout for an email from the Awards Committee with the Nomination Form. The awards are conferred on restored properties in Alameda with historic or architectural significance. Nominated buildings may range in age from the 19th century through the current day, including commercial properties, churches, governmental structures, single family homes, apartment houses, and ADUs. The awards showcase projects that preserve, restore, and reuse historic properties, and recognizes sensitive new construction that has architectural character and enhances the neighborhood and community that it is a part of.

Please email  
**lbaker@**  
**alameda-preservation.org**  
for a **Nomination Form** or  
call **510-318-0997**.

**Completed forms with all**  
**attachments are**  
**due by March 15, 2026.**

# Letter from the President

Kay Weinstein, President, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society  
510-967-4610 • [kweinstein@alameda-preservation.org](mailto:kweinstein@alameda-preservation.org)

## Dear AAPS Members,

It is an honor to serve as your president for 2026. I moved to Alameda in 2012 and joined AAPS the same year; many of you have been members of Alameda Architectural Preservation Society for much longer. Indeed, we stand on the shoulders of giants, along with spires, steeples, towers and witches' hats! Here are my top 12 reasons that I am enthusiastic about AAPS:

1. Founded in 1972, our Society helped pass a measure to stop demolition of historic buildings and advocated for the first Alameda city historic preservation ordinance.
2. Our Preservation Action Committee continues to advocate for renovating and reusing historic buildings, as well as new construction that is compatible with historic neighborhoods.
3. Many of you volunteer for our major fundraiser, the Legacy Home Tour; a tradition that began 52 years ago. In 2025, Alameda's Bronze Coast Beauties was attended by 565 people, including 140 docents and volunteers from all over the Bay Area!
4. We participate in Alameda's 4th of July Parade!
5. In 1998 we began giving Preservation Awards that honor building owners, architects, contractors, tradespeople and interior designers. In 2022, we began giving new construction awards as well.
6. In 2012, we established our Plaques Program, creating historical monument plaques, historic building plaques, and AAPS Preservation Award plaques. In 2025, we awarded our first new construction plaque. We are also planning to develop interpretive plaques.
7. Our members enjoy private tours of historic homes, as well as workshops and lectures about preservation topics.
8. We publish a beautiful newsletter in print and digital form.
9. We maintain a stellar website.
10. We have established our home at the Veterans Building where we host our board meetings, Preservation Awards and Home Tour After Party.
11. We are developing a database of Alameda's historic buildings that we hope to launch in 2026.
12. With your support, we continue to celebrate, preserve and protect our history!

*Here's looking forward  
to a great year for AAPS!*

*Kay Weinstein*

## THANK YOU to Our 2025 Donors!

Your generosity helps support AAPS's ongoing mission of increasing public awareness and appreciation of historic architecture in Alameda. This is done through a variety of programs including workshops, lectures, preservation awards, historic home tours, preservation advocacy, resource lists, community outreach, and our newsletter.

If you'd like to donate to AAPS to help support these efforts, please visit our website at

[alameda-preservation.org/  
get-involved/donate/](https://alameda-preservation.org/get-involved/donate/)



Tracey & Roger Becker

Julie Conner

Hank Dunlop

Robert & Elizabeth Farrar

Carol Gerdes

Mary Kay Hardwick

Charles Kahler

Dave Kwinter

Bettie Laird

Patricia Lamborn & James Dupont

Megan & Quinton Larson

Dell Martin

Charles McGavin Jr.

Virginia Neuhoff

Janet Noble

Jack Rafferty

John Randolph

Alexandria Salkley

Christopher Seiwald

Holly Sellers

Erich Stiger & Renata Frey

Marisa Villareal

Lenore Walker

Faye Wilson

# A Jolly Holiday Feast at the O'Club

by Lisa Baker

87 AAPS members and guests celebrated the holidays on December 6th. They enjoyed a festive and delicious dinner in the handsome 1941 Trident Room at the Albert H. Dewitt Officer's Club at the former Alameda Naval Air Station.

The band G-Squared – Gunther Hofmann on keyboards and Geoff Burnaford with flute and vocals – set the mood with a great mix of holiday tunes and jazz standards throughout the evening. A talented guest even sang an impromptu solo with the band, to the delight of the crowd.

Dapper Brenden Sullivan, who is our outgoing president but who (thank goodness!) will still be on the board, checked in guests at the door and then took the stage to thank all of the many volunteers who make AAPS events and goals possible, and to encourage our members to volunteer for future events. He paused for a moment of silence to remember Brian McDonald, a longtime member and volunteer. He also thanked Dodi Kelleher for her long service to the board and to the Preservation Action Committee. She will be leaving the board, but will still be a big part of AAPS events, including serving as our faithful "wine steward". Lisa Haderlie Baker was also thanked for heading up the Preservation Awards event in June. Brenden announced our new AAPS president for 2026 – Kay Weinstein – and welcomed new board members Bryan Aamot and Shanna Gaudenti.

Kay Weinstein, as our incoming president, gave an inspiring and spirited address to the crowd, encouraging more volunteer involvement and thanking the many volunteers, homeowners, and community members who make our events, like our spectacular annual Legacy Home Tour, possible.

Speaking of volunteers, thank you to the many people who together created this holiday event: Brenden Sullivan for his tireless oversight, in addition to storing and transporting the decorations; Bob Farrar for getting the great band; Miriam Fox and Kay Weinstein for the excellent photos; Erich Stiger for help with setting up and taking down the event (and his wife, Renata Frey, for the delicious home-made bruschetta!); Shiva Mendez for ordering and transporting two large cakes and three BIG trays of appetizers! Thanks also to Kay Weinstein, Lisa Baker, Sharon Welch, Susan Battersby, and Donna and Peter Fletcher for putting up and taking down decorations.

Many thanks to Alameda's Best Catering for the wonderful dinner, and to the Alameda Recreation and Park District for the rental of the O' Club Trident Room.



The 2026 board (L to R): Shanna Gaudenti, Shiva Mendez, Lisa Baker, Bryan Aamot, Kay Weinstein, Karen Lithgow, Erich Stiger, Bob Farrar, and Brenden Sullivan.



Kay Weinstein, our incoming president, at the podium.



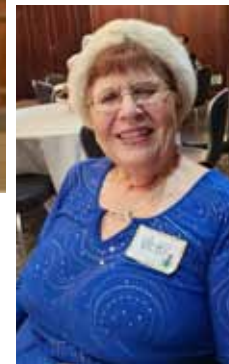
Scott and Denise Brady in their holiday tartans.



Bob Farrar and "Dr. Color" Bob Buckter.



Brenden and Sozdar Sullivan and those fabulous red gloves!



Vicki Bell in sparkly winter blue.



Chris Buckley, Devon Westerholm, and Patsy Baer in festive finery.



Susan Battersby with Peter and Donna Fletcher.



Gunther and Geoff of G-Squared jazz.

## SAVE THE DATES



**Sunday, April 26  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
Veterans Memorial Building  
2203 Central Avenue**

### Nita Riccardi Painting and Restoring Historic Buildings

Nita Riccardi will share her experience of over 28 years preserving architecturally significant and historic properties in the Bay Area. Nita is passionate about the full restoration and preservation of buildings. She works with leading color consultants and period specialists, often collaborating with fellow artisan members of the Artistic License Guild to ensure each Victorian is accurately and beautifully restored.



**Sunday, March 8  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
Veterans Memorial Building  
2203 Central Avenue**

### Mark Bell Restoring Historic Lighting and Making New Things from Old Things

We'll hear from Mark Bell who co-owns and runs Omega Lighting and Design in Berkeley, whose mantra is "making new things from old things." Mark repairs and restores old lighting, designs and makes new pieces from old objects, and runs a shop featuring an array of period lighting along with his unique creations.

## EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

Members Free (\$5 suggested donation) • Non-Members \$10  
Questions? Contact [estiger@alameda-preservation.org](mailto:estiger@alameda-preservation.org)

**RENEW  
TODAY!**  
Don't Miss Out!

Is your Alameda Architectural Preservation Society membership up-to-date? You can renew for the upcoming year by visiting [alameda-preservation.org](http://alameda-preservation.org) or by contacting Robert Farrar at [rfarrar@alameda-preservation.org](mailto:rfarrar@alameda-preservation.org)

# TRAVELOGUE



An illustrated architectural travel story inspired by places visited and experiences encountered.

## Venice! An Orienteering Adventure *by Karen Lithgow*

Given all of the hype about Venice, I thought it might be an overcrowded touristy disappointment. An Italian client of mine convinced me that as I liked historical architecture, I would surely appreciate the richly decorated and unique buildings, bridges and squares of this very old city. So my husband, Alex, and I planned a brief visit as part of a three-week trip to Italy. I made a short list of must-see attractions including a shoe shop selling hand-made velvet loafers. I ended up being absolutely captivated by the beauty and charm of this city and was so glad we made the effort to go.

Taking the Alilaguna water transport from the airport into town was a fast and picturesque way to get close to our hotel and gave us a good initial look at the rows of beautiful building facades. Luckily, we packed light as bags have to be carried up and over the many little stone bridges over the canals. It was a labor of love as every turn through the maze of streets led to ornate doorways, quaint shops selling tantalizing gelato, coffee and pastries, chic clothing, romantic canal-side restaurants and more. We chose one of these charming restaurants for our dinner once we figured out how to navigate back to that spot.

That first evening we researched how this floating city with waterways instead of roads came into being and were surprised at the complexity of the infrastructure. Back in the 5th century, people fleeing barbarian invaders found safety in the marshy defensible Venetian lagoon. Early inhabitants lived on rafts and built simple stilt huts, as the ground was too soft for permanent buildings. Over time, residents hammered millions of wooden piles into the clay seabed until they hit a harder layer creating a stable foundation. A platform of wooden planks was laid on top, distributing the weight, followed by impermeable layers of Istrian stone. The submerged wood, protected from decay, gradually mineralized and hardened, becoming as strong as stone. This now ancient foundation allowed buildings to rise from the water over centuries, evolving into a unique city of canals and islands. Venice was, for over a millennium, the capital of a powerful maritime republic that dominated Mediterranean trade and became a pinnacle of Renaissance art and culture.

In the morning, I decided to get my shoe-shopping mission out of the way first on my own so Alex wouldn't have to come on yet another shopping excursion. This quest turned into a three-hour orienteering adventure across the bulk of Venice as the shop location was at the far end of the City. I say "orienteering" because the only way you can find a specific location in Venice is to hold out your phone map to figure out which directions to take through the maze of streets, bridges, tunnels and plazas. I passed by most of the attractions on our checklist along the way, found two pairs of beautiful shoes, and returned to the hotel as an enthusiastic guide to take my husband through this charming city.



*Historical building facades along the canal.*



*Narrow canal with Gondoliers.*



*Stone bridges and shops.*



*Rialto Bridge spanning the Grand Canal.*

*Velvet loafers from Gondolina Shoes.*



*Continued on page 7...*

TRAVELOGUE...continued from page 6



Saint Mark's Basilica.



Caffé Florian, oldest café in Italy.



Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo.

The church of Santissimo Salvatore.



We soon came upon the iconic Rialto Bridge spanning the Grand Canal which was the result of a 1500s design competition including failed proposals from famous architects such as Michelangelo. The winning submission was Antonio da Ponte's single-arch design with ramps leading to shops on its sides. Finished in 1591, it was a marvel of Renaissance engineering, incorporating shops whose rents funded its maintenance. The bridge is a vital link to the Rialto market, Venice's historic financial and trade center as well as a strikingly beautiful monument. Although we didn't venture inside of a gondola, we thoroughly enjoyed the many glimpses we had of the striped gondoliers and their boats.

Moving on to the majestic St. Mark's Square, we could see how this vast public space lined with the Doge's palace (seat of Venetian government), St. Mark's Basilica (a Byzantine masterpiece), soaring bell tower, astrological clock tower, and arcaded buildings framing the square came to be known as the "drawing room of Europe". Dating back to the 9th century, the square serves as the heart for processions, public ceremonies, markets, and social gatherings. Due to its low elevation, St. Mark's Square famously floods during high tides, a recurring challenge the city faces, yet remains the heart of Venetian life.

While at St. Mark's Square, we spotted the gorgeous Caffé Florian and braved the long lines for a table. Caffé Florian is Italy's oldest café, opening in 1720, serving as a historic cultural hub for famous figures like Casanova, Lord Byron, and Charles Dickens. It's known for its opulent decor and continuous operation for over three centuries. The café's timeless elegance retains its original historic rooms with frescoes, mirrors, and elaborate decorations, offering a journey through different eras. We enjoyed delicious coffee and lasagna while being serenaded with a string quartet just outside. It was a pretty pricey meal, but was a special and worthwhile experience.

Next up was our hunt for the weirdly designed 15th century Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo known for its iconic external, snail-shell-like spiral staircase (the "bovolo"). The staircase was added to a pre-existing Gothic palace, transforming it into a Renaissance landmark for the wealthy Contarini family, famous for its unique design, stunning rooftop views, and use in Orson Welles' Othello. We also came across the nearby Church of San Salvador which is one of Venice's most historically and artistically significant churches. The initial Romanesque structure was consecrated in 1177 by Pope Alexander III, and the current building from the 16th century is a masterpiece of the Venetian Renaissance. The statues on its ornate Baroque facade are primarily figures of saints. A notable historical detail is a cannonball embedded in the base of a column on the facade, a relic from the 1849 Austrian siege of the revolutionary Republic of San Marco.

Our search for another canal-side dinner was again a fun expedition through the various pathways, tunnels and squares. Just after we entered one of these squares, we came across a group of boys playing soccer. The ball came right up to Alex and he lobbed it back to them in expert fashion while they cheered. I think that was the highlight of his visit to Venice! But, the happy spell was broken the next morning after we arrived at the train station and discovered that the Italians decided to have another rail strike that day. Luckily the only train going was the one to our next destination to Trieste!



**ALAMEDA  
ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION  
SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 1677  
Alameda, CA 94501

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
OAKLAND, CA  
PERMIT NO. 7207

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- *Restoring Antique Brass Hardware*
- *Letter From the President*
- *A Jolly Holiday Feast at the O' Club*
- *Travelogue:  
Venice! An Orienteering Adventure*

**For a color version of the newsletter visit  
[alameda-preservation.org](http://alameda-preservation.org)**

**AAPS WELCOMES NEW AND  
RETURNING BOARD MEMBERS**

**AAPS BOARD MEMBERS 2026**

*President*  
Kay Weinstein

*1st Vice President*  
Erich Stiger

*2nd Vice President*  
Lisa Baker

*Advisor to the Board*  
Brenden Sullivan

*Corresponding Secretary*  
Shiva Mendez

*Recording Secretary*  
Karen Lithgow

*Treasurer*  
Robert Farrar

*Member at Large*  
Bryan Aamot

*Member at Large*  
Shanna Gaudenti

For more information, please contact:  
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society  
P.O. Box 1677 • Alameda, CA 94501  
510-479-6489 • [alameda-preservation.org](http://alameda-preservation.org)

Newsletter Design: Valerie Turpen

**AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2026**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 8  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

*Mark Bell – Restoring Historic Lighting*  
Veterans Memorial Building  
2203 Central Avenue

**SUNDAY, APRIL 26  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

*Nita Riccardi –  
Painting and Restoring Historic Buildings*  
Veterans Memorial Building  
2203 Central Avenue

**SUNDAY, JUNE 7  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

*Preservation Awards*  
Veterans Memorial Building  
2203 Central Avenue