

Preservation Points

Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS)

By Randy Horton

Introduction to AAPS

It is well established that Alameda's architectural heritage helps make Alameda one of the most desirable communities in which to live in the bay area. Its elegant tree-lined streets, stately Victorians, classic arts and crafts bungalows, and quaint cottages reflect this heritage.

Alameda's origins began in 1820 when the King of Spain granted most of what is now the East Bay to Don Luis Peralta. In 1842, Peralta subdivided the land and gave the property, that later became Alameda, to his son Antonio. The land was used for cattle grazing until the 1849 gold rush. In 1851 the town of Alameda was established at the east end. Later, villages were established: Woodstock in the west and Encinal in the middle. The three communities were incorporated as the City of Alameda in 1872. Rail lines and ferry services grew during the period of 1864 - 1878 connecting Alameda to San Francisco. Excellent transportation and a temperate climate made Alameda a desirable home for San Francisco commuters who brought with them the grand Victorian style of architecture popular in the City. Eventually, homes, as well as, civic, religious and commercial buildings were built around fetchingly designed rail stations. Thousands of these buildings are still intact today. Alameda became an island in 1902 when completion of a tidal canal severed the peninsula from Oakland.

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS), originally the Alameda Victorian Preservation Society, was founded in 1972 to preserve one of the finest and concentrated collections of historical architectural styles left in the bay area. Originally founded to save Victorians from being demolished for multi-unit housing, AAPS also assists owners of older buildings in the improvement of their properties without eroding Alameda's architectural character. The Society also includes involvement with City government, historic home tours, and public-service presentations on a wide variety of topics from lead paint abatement to Victorian wallpaper. Presentations are open to the public.

Expansion and alteration of older structures is sometimes required to accommodate modern living needs. These renovations may compromise the architectural integrity of historic buildings and surrounding neighborhoods. AAPS is available to assist the businessperson and homeowner in accomplishing their goals while preserving the original character of the building.

The Sun is providing a new outreach for AAPS – we'll be featuring "Preservation Points" throughout the year. The column will discuss the problems involved in maintaining or renovating an older building and present possible solutions that preserve architectural integrity. Future topics will include:

- required permits by the City of Alameda
- resources for historic preservation
- hints on "do it yourself" projects
- "stories on restoration projects"
- questions and answers on historic preservation

You are invited to become a member of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society and to visit our web site at: www.alameda-preservation.org. You may also call us at (510) 986- 9232 or write to us with your questions about preservation to: P.O. Box 1677 Alameda, CA. 94501. Please include a stamped, self addressed envelope.

