

Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

There's Real Gold On That House!

by Robert Farrar

Gold! You mean there is real gold on that house? That's right, real gold. Now, how do they do that? Take a closer look at the historic houses in Alameda, especially ones with gold leaf. Some homes have been detailed with gold highlights on small and specific areas for clarity, to be eye-catching, and for accent. Using gold paint is okay, but as with all paints, the color will fade and become noticeably dull. But on some homes the gold continues to shine for years. Why is that? It's because those homes used real gold leaf!

So how is it done? The first thing to consider is what exactly you want to have finished in gold leaf. This will help you to know how much gold leaf to order. Next, consider who will be applying the gold leaf. If you can paint doors and walls, if you can hang wallpaper, and if you have a lot of patience, then you can apply gold leaf yourself.

Over the years I have applied gold leaf extensively, not only on the exterior of my 1893 Marcuse & Remmel house, but on other façades, and on smaller wood and plaster projects I've worked on. Using the best gold leaf you can find is very important, as it will make the job of applying it easier and will last longer. I order gold leaf from L. A. Gold Leaf, a reliable and high quality provider of genuine gold and silver leaf and gilding materials.

I also order the lacquer (adhesive) from the same company. You will need several small "throw away" paint brushes to apply the gold leaf. Be aware that if you are working outside, the more breezy the conditions, the more chances of losing some of the gold leaf to the wind. Early morning is typically the best time to apply it.

The process goes like this: pour a small amount of lacquer into a cup, and with a paint brush, apply a small amount onto the surface where the gold leaf will go. The gold leaf will only stick to what has been lacquered.



Continued on page 2...

Gold leaf brings to life architectural and decorative details in Robert's facade.

Real Gold...continued from page 1



Gold accents highlight details on the plaster medallion.

The lacquer has to dry to just a slight tacky feel. It takes between 45 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes for the lacquer to get to the point where you can apply the gold leaf. Put the paint brush in a plastic bag for future use. Bring a book or listen to music.

When the lacquer is ready, take a sheet of gold leaf and, starting with a corner of the tissue, slowly apply the gold leaf to the tacky

surface. Rub the gold leaf on the lacquer and slowly peel the tissue paper off of the gold leaf. Now don't get mad, but there are times some of the gold leaf will flake off of the tissue and float away. Let it go. After the tissue is removed, rub the spot with your fingers, it's the best way to make it look perfect and smooth.

It usually takes a couple of times rubbing the gold leaf on in certain spots. You can re-apply the lacquer in the areas that the gold leaf does not adhere to.

Start with a small section to get the feel of applying the gold leaf. As you get more comfortable, apply the lacquer to larger areas. Remember, patience is the key to applying the gold leaf.

If you have questions or would like a demonstration on how to apply gold leaf, I'll be happy to help. I have a love for old houses and like to see them fully restored and shining in their glory.



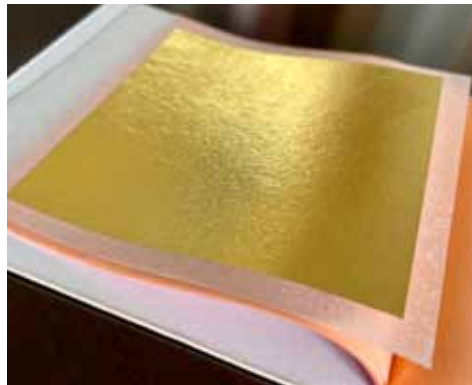
Gold leaf highlights the decorative dots and the capital and pedestal of the columns.

Go For The Gold! Gilding in Architecture

by Conchita Perales

Gilding is the decorative process of applying a layer of a very thin sheet or "leaf" of metal to a surface – be it wood, plaster, or porcelain. The result is a lustrous finish that draws the viewer's eye to the decoration and elevates the viewing experience at a fraction of the cost of creating a real solid object that would be too heavy or soft for its intended use. While gilding most often refers to gold leaf, the term also applies to other metals turned into leaf, like brass, copper, aluminum, palladium, and silver, and can be found on every kind of decorative object – from domes, ceilings and railings, to picture frames, furniture, sculpture and ceramics.

Gilding with precious metals has been used to stunning effect as an element of decoration in exterior and interior architecture worldwide and it serves to elevate the viewers' perception of



Gold leaf is thinner than the tissue paper it's printed on. Here's an example of a 3"x3" sheet of 23 Karat. The price of gold leaf will vary depending on its karat, and the size and number of sheets included in the hardcover booklets they're commonly sold in. Image: Conchita Perales.

value and importance. The process is believed to have originated in Turkey more than 8,000 years ago, and the ancient Egyptians and Phoenicians commonly used it. Gilding would become a luxury within temples and palaces in Rome by 200 BC, and due to the thickness of the gold leaf used in ancient gilding, the traces that remain are remarkably brilliant and solid. Extending its

use beyond architecture, the ancient Chinese developed the gilding of porcelain around 1200, an art later taken up by the French and other European artists.

In more recent history, "The Gilded Age" refers to the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, where gilding was common in the Classic, Palladian, and Gothic architecture styles adopted and revived in the US after the Civil War. The industrial revolution and the transcontinental railroad created a boom in economic activity and much of the wealth was directed toward the construction of many lavish mansions, grand hotels, and important public and private buildings throughout the country during this period.

Gold Leaf and why use the real thing

Gold leaf, in its purest form, is the strongest, most durable, non-reactive metal in nature. While the leaf itself is millimeters thin, gilding with the purest form of gold leaf will ensure it lasts for decades and withstands all elements. And of all gilding types, gold leaf is the material most commonly used throughout history to decorate religious and political buildings, inside

Continued on page 3. . .

Go for the Gold...continued from page 2



Spectacular gilding on the dome of the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris, completed in 1676 decorated with 27.9 lb of gold leaf. Image: Conchita Perales.

and out. Gold is a noble metal – found in nature in its raw form and resistant to corrosion – very desirable, hard to come by, and a limited resource. It represents nobility, divinity, and high social status, and because of its brilliance, relative scarcity, and sturdiness, it has always been associated with power and wealth.

Gold leaf varies in gold content, so if 24 karat is equivalent to 100% gold, the degree to which gold is mixed with silver or bronze will determine its karat value. Now, gold leaf also varies in weight. It is weighed in grams per 1,000 leaves, and the heavier the leaf, the more resistant it is to corrosion and the longer it will maintain its integrity. So the purer the gold and the heavier it is, the less subject it is to environmental conditions. Using the same rule, interior gilding allows for a lighter leaf and karat.

Whether conserving, restoring, or selecting a type of leaf for a project, consider the architecture of the building or the design of the space to understand the true intent of its use. The art of gilding requires delicacy, precision, and attention, and the results will be admired and last a lifetime!



Gold leaf gilding is commonly used on the walls and ceilings of religious buildings. Here's a beautiful example from the Almudena Cathedral in Madrid, Spain built in 1879. Image: Conchita Perales.

John Canning & Co. used traditional gold leaf and gilding methods when restoring the dome in San Francisco's City Hall. Images: John Canning & Co. website.



GOLD LEAF WORKSHOP

with Robert Farrar
Saturday, March 25th, 2023

at The Frank Bette Center for the Arts from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm
1601 Paru Street, Alameda, CA 94501

Learn how to apply gold leaf to any surface! From highlighting some of your home's exterior details or your interior plaster medallions, to gilding wood frames and porcelain, or even adding numbers to your transom window. Don't miss it!

Donation \$5 per person for members and non-members. All materials will be provided. All ages welcome and no experience required. Space is limited. Reserve your spot today!

Contact rfarrar665@yahoo.com • 530-440-4479



City Council Adopts Housing Element With “Upzoning” Amendments

by Christopher Buckley and Dodi Kelleher

The City Council approved the Housing Element on November 15. On December 6, the Council approved related zoning amendments. Both passed on a 3-2 vote with Councilmembers Daysog and Herrera Spencer dissenting.

The Housing Element and zoning amendments effectively repeal City Charter Article 26 (“Measure A”) and undo the 2020 election defeat of Measure Z. City Planning staff asserts these changes are needed to develop the 5353 new units required by the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) and to meet state fair housing requirements. AAPS believes them not to be necessary to meet the RHNA. Except for Park and Webster Streets, none of the RHNA units depend on these changes and most of the Park and Webster units can be accommodated by simply increasing the density from the existing level of 21.78 units per acre to 30 units. Regarding fair housing, other California cities’ housing elements certified by the State do not involve the magnitude of Alameda’s increases, and the current RHNA development sites are already located across the city.

The potential adverse effects on historic buildings and neighborhoods include:

- Increased residential density by 1½-3 times the Article 26 limit of one unit/2000sf of lot area in the R3 through R6 residential zones. These zones cover much of Central Alameda.
- Unlimited density in the historic North Park Street residential areas (outside R3-R6) and height limit increases from 30’ to 40’ and 35’ to 50’.
- A “Transit Overlay” that would allow unlimited density and height limit increases to at least 40’ in new buildings with units less than 1000 ft. within ¼ mile of the 51 bus line, the 20/21 line on Park Street and other future “high quality” bus lines.
- Increased height limit on Webster Street, from 40’ to 60’, and the 80% of Park that is not already 60’ with unlimited density in both cases.
- Reduced minimum lot size, side and rear setbacks, and increased building coverage.
- Enabling through density increases many more sites eligible for State Density Bonus projects allowing new development that exceeds zoning height limits, often by two or more stories, as well as other zoning waivers. Density bonus projects can occur on lots where five or more regular dwelling units can be developed by right. These projects are especially foreseeable where unlimited density is now allowed, such as on Park Street, Webster Street, the “Stations” and the Transit Overlay, potentially resulting in seven or more stories.

AAPS is evaluating strategies that respond to the Housing Element adoption. If you are an AAPS member, you can join our Preservation Action Committee to receive updates on these strategies by contacting **Christopher Buckley at cbuckleyaicp@att.net**



Density bonus projects can be found in Berkeley and Oakland that substantially exceed the normally required height limits, the project at 2601 San Pablo Avenue (above) in Berkeley has a height of 79 1/2’ (seven stories), although the height limit is only 50’ and 2301 Telegraph Avenue (below) in Oakland that will be 78’ (seven stories) where the by-right height limit is 45’.

Images: 2601 San Pablo Avenue, Trachtenberg Architects via the Berkeleyside. 2301 Telegraph Avenue, Mithun and Parcel Projects via SF YIMBY.



MORE INFORMATION

Housing Element and zoning amendments
www.alameda2040.org/housing

Alameda's Objective Design Review Standards

Note: might help projects be more compatible with historic areas, but cannot regulate height and other building envelope aspects.

www.alamedaca.gov/Departments/Planning-Building-and-Transportation/Planning-Division **Click on Design Guidelines link.**

AAPS letters to the Planning Board, Historical Advisory Board and City Council and Report by architectural historian Kara Brunzell

The Brunzell Report analyzes the Housing Element’s expected adverse effects on Alameda’s historic properties and neighborhoods.

www.alameda-preservation.org/get-involved/advocacy/current-preservation-issues/

Historical Preservation Section of the Municipal Code ARTICLE VII. - HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

https://library.municode.com/ca/alameda/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CHXIIIUHO_ARTVIIHIPR

WHEN YOU HOVER OVER THE LINK NAME PLEASE CLICK ON THE ARROW THAT APPEARS TO REACH THE SITE OR PASTE THE WEBLINK INTO YOUR BROWSER.

Happy Holidays! AAPS Celebrates 2022

A lovely evening was enjoyed by everyone who attended the "Annual Holiday Dinner" last December. Tables were set in the spacious and cozy Home of Truth garden cottage to accommodate the 40 guests who happily mingled and talked over drinks and appetizers. The large fireplace kept the room warm and the bright holiday decor created an inviting place for all of us to be together. Everyone contributed to the evening by bringing unique and delicious homemade dishes and desserts.

A very special thank you to Nancy Gordon, longtime AAPS member and spiritual leader of the Home of Truth, who not only was instrumental in securing the charming cottage for our party, she played the piano and filled the room with holiday music welcoming everyone in. After dinner she even led us all in a Christmas carol sing-along.

The traditional holiday get-together is also a great opportunity to thank the outgoing Board for their work and accomplishments, and to welcome and introduce the newly elected Board for the coming year. We'd like to heartily acknowledge the past Presidents and Officers who attended the event and the contributions they continue to make to our community, including Nancy Hird, Chris Buckley, Denise



AAPS 2023 Board Standing: Robert Farrar, Janet Gibson, Karen Lithgow, outgoing member Devon Westerholm, incoming member Dodi Kelleher and President elect Brenden Sullivan. Seated: Patsy Baer, Conchita Perales and Joyce Boyd.

and Scott Brady, Valerie Turpen, Woody Minor, Lois Francis, and Erich Stiger.

Join in and help make it all happen!

Our holiday dinners, as well as other events and activities held throughout the year, owe their success to our member's support, work and contributions. Thank you! We'd like to encourage everyone to volunteer. Help us grow, organize events you care about, meet others with similar interests and have fun doing it. Sign up for a committee and make 2023 a year to remember!

Go to: alameda-preservation.org/get-involved/volunteer



Above: Nancy Gordon ready to play holiday tunes.

Below: Outgoing President Karen Lithgow proudly shares AAPS' accomplishments during her three year tenure.



TRAVELOGUE



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

We Had a Ball!

by Denise and Scott Brady

This past summer, we attended a vintage dance week to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Flying Cloud Vintage Dance Academy, located in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was a week of vintage ballroom dance lessons, with historic balls in the evenings. We have attended these types of events in the past, in locales as varied as New Orleans, Prague, and Paris. As a bit of background information, we define vintage ballroom dancing as the dances that our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents would have done. In the days before radio, television, and the internet, people's amusements had to be local and live. Dancing to live music, be it a fiddle and guitar at a cèilidh in Ireland or a full orchestra in a Paris ballroom, was a grand way to spend an evening. And, in a time when social rules were more fixed, waltzing around a dance floor was the perfect opportunity for a young man to meet a young lady and get to know her better. . .

The city of Cincinnati plays an important role in the expansion and prosperity of the early United States. It was founded in 1788 and was named in honor of the Society of Cincinnati. Located at the confluence of the Licking and Ohio rivers, it became an important trading post, and grew rich from industries such as meatpacking, iron production, and manufacturing. This wealth is reflected in the rich stock of historic buildings that still remain in its downtown core. The first significant bridge to span the Ohio River at Cincinnati is the John Roebling Bridge, a 1,057 foot long suspension bridge, designed by the German-born



▲ The impressive John Roebling Bridge completed in 1866, was the longest single span suspension bridge in the country, until Roebling himself broke the record again when he built the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883.

Denise and friend at the Phoenix Edwardian Ball. Tiffany stained glass windows serve as backdrop for the historic dance. ▼



The Phoenix was built in 1893 and designed in the Italian Renaissance style. ▼



American civil engineer John Roebling and completed in 1866. It was the longest single span suspension bridge until it was overtaken by Roebling's more famous structure, the Brooklyn Bridge, in 1883.

The first of the week's themed historic balls took place in the "Phoenix." The building was constructed in 1893 as a Jewish businessman's club. It was designed in the Italian Renaissance style, and features Tiffany stained glass windows. It was listed on the National Register in 1985. It is currently run as a private event center, with many weddings taking place. The ball was set in the Edwardian era (think "Titanic") and featured music such as ragtime and the Castle Walk.

The second ball took place at the Netherland Plaza Hotel, in the Hall of Mirrors. This hotel is an Art Deco masterpiece, designed to rival the Waldorf Astoria. Originally called the Carew Tower and constructed between 1929 and 1931, it was at the time the tallest building

Continued on page 7. . .

TRAVELOGUE...*continued from page 6*



▲ *Costumed Ball at The 1931 Netherland Plaza Hotel's Hall of Mirrors. Impressive Art Deco styled metal railings decorate the second level.*

west of the Alleghenies. The restoration of the hotel won a 1985 Preservation Honor Award, and in 1989 it became a charter member of the Historic Hotels of America. The Hall of Mirrors ballroom was modeled after its namesake at the Palace of Versailles. The art deco detailing in this building rivals and exceeds much of the art deco architecture in San Francisco. The

Union Terminal Train Station boasts the largest half dome interior in the western hemisphere, measuring 180 feet wide by 106 feet tall. ▼

theme of the ball was mid-century Victorian, interestingly set in art deco surroundings.

The next ball was actually an Edwardian afternoon tea dance at Peterloon Estate, a county manor outside of Cincinnati. This estate was designed and built in 1928 - 1930 for Cincinnati developer John J. Emery and his wife, Irene. Emery was, coincidentally, the developer of the Netherland Plaza Hotel. Peterloon was designed to rival the great country houses of Europe, and is a blend of Georgian and Queen Anne styles. It boasts 36 rooms on a 1,200 acre estate. Irene Gibson Emery was the daughter of Charles Dana Gibson, whose "Gibson Girl" was the personification of turn-of-the-century feminine ideal. Charles Gibson was a regular visitor, and his drawings and paintings still adorn the house's walls.

The final ball of the week was a 1930's jazz age ball featuring big band swing music at the Union Terminal Train Station. Union Terminal was one of the last Great American Train Stations, and opened in 1933. It boasts the largest half dome interior in the western hemisphere, measuring 180 feet wide by 106 feet tall. The enormous mosaic mural on the dome depicts the expansion of the United States, and represents fifteen local businesses, including

Baldwin Pianos and Procter & Gamble. The station was designed to serve up to 17,000 passengers and 216 trains per day, but by the late 1970's had fallen into disrepair. After many years of unsuccessful efforts to renovate it and multiple efforts to demolish it, the station was fully restored in 2018. In addition to Amtrak, it also houses several museums and is once again an active civic monument.

We had a fantastic time and absolutely enjoyed our opportunity to explore Cincinnati through an historic architecture lens. By participating in these themed balls we were literally transported to another time and space, filled with the sounds of the period music and the color and pageantry of the costumes of our fellow dancers. The experience completely exceeded our expectations and we can't wait for our next adventure!

Ready to swing! Scott stands in front of the Union Terminal Train Station, fully restored in 2018. In addition to Amtrak, the station houses several museums and is an active civic monument.





P.O. Box 1677
Alameda, CA 94501

AAPS WELCOMES NEW AND RETURNING BOARD MEMBERS

AAPS BOARD MEMBERS 2023

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For more information, please contact:
Alameda Architectural Preservation Society
P.O. Box 1677 • Alameda, CA 94501
510-479-6489 • alameda-preservation.org
Editor: Conchita Perales
Newsletter Design: Valerie Turpen • 510-522-3734

ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEW YEAR?

Is your Alameda Architectural Preservation Society
membership up-to-date?

You can renew for the upcoming year by visiting
alameda-preservation.org
or contact Robert Farrar at
rfarrar665@yahoo.com

DON'T MISS OUT!



“ROYAL COURTIERS” TO PERFORM AT HOME TOUR OPENING

by Judith Lynch

Regally bedecked courtiers will perform 19th century dances at **Franklin Park at 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. September 17**, when the 2023 Home Tour opens. In between, the “high-borns” will saunter around greeting Home Tour guests and partaking of refreshments at the café.

They continue a tradition of aristocrats who frequented our Island since 1998. They embarked here to view the artwork of Alameda students at “Kids & Queen Victoria.” That exhibit was hosted at the Alameda Museum annually for 15 years. According to a devoted scribe, it was “the only show throughout the land devoted to writing, art, crafts, and sculpture produced by K-5 students.”

When the Queen learned about this display in her honor, she assumed the persona each Spring to attend. Whilst she is there, children sing “God Save the Queen” and “The Alameda Anthem,” then greet her with a bow or curtsy. Two local eminences, Realtor Denise Brady and architect Scott Brady, were the first Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Denise designed costumes befitting the pair, and Scott grew sideburns, to better emulate the Prince. Over the years the Queen was welcomed by several Alameda Mayors, the Superintendent of Schools, and City Manager John Russo.

This Fall, these dancers continue a long Island tradition. We welcome understudies for aristocrats role-playing the Monarch for whom thousands of Alameda vintage homes are named. Should you come upon this historically dressed cadre during the Home Tour, please extend the courtesies with a formal greeting.

No need to bow or curtsy!