

# Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA  
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

## The West End: A Place Apart

— Alameda Legacy Home Tour —

Sunday, September 15, 2024 • 10am to 4pm

Tour starts at Longfellow Park, 520 Lincoln Avenue

*Excerpts from Woody Minor's article published in the 2019 August issue of Preservation Press*

There are different takes on "West End." I consider it to begin in the vicinity of Ninth Street, where the shoreline resorts began, and to end at Alameda Point. The area resembles other parts of the city in its rich stock of historic houses, but in other ways it truly is a place apart.

The West End's peculiar dynamism is a legacy of railroads and resorts, airplanes and ships, mobilization and war, public housing, reuse and redevelopment.

### Origin Story

The West End began as a conundrum, a wind-swept point that was also a wooded hinterland. Judging from their shell-mounds, the Alameda Ohlone chose to live at the overland end of the peninsula near trails and streams. Chipman and Aughinbaugh followed precedent after they bought the peninsula from rancho Antonio Maria Peralta in 1851, establishing the gold rush town in the East End. They sold the western tip to Charles Bowman, who marked his boundary with a long-gone ditch near Fourth Street.

Reliable transit brought development. The San Francisco & Alameda Railroad inaugurated service in 1864 along Lincoln (Railroad) Avenue. The Central Pacific soon took over the line, and



*The Croll Building, Webster Street at Central Avenue, circa 1900. Image: Alameda Museum.*

on a September evening in 1869 onlookers witnessed the epochal end of the first overland trip from New York.

Transit improved with the first bridge across the estuary, which opened in 1871 between downtown Oakland and the Alameda marsh.

Taking the name of the Oakland artery, Webster Street soon became the West End equivalent of Park Street, a commercial/civic center with its own post office, school, fire station and jail.

*Continued on page 2...*

*West End...continued from page 1*

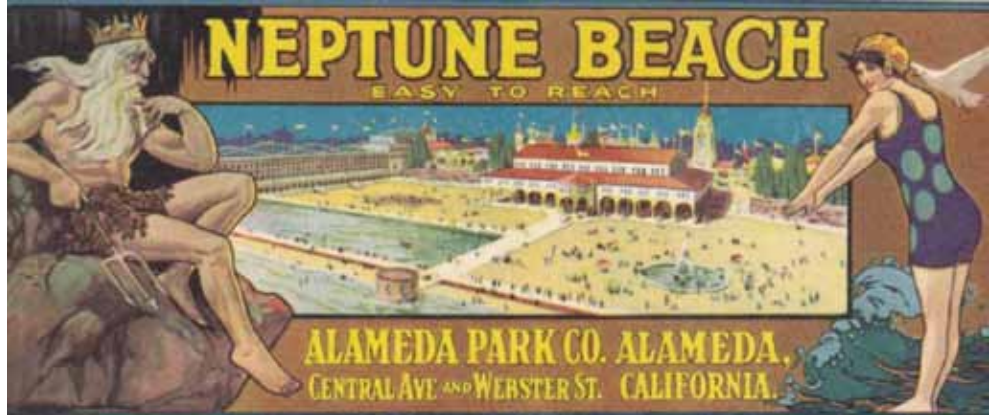
**Victorian Heyday**

When the South Pacific Coast Railroad began local service in 1878, bathing resorts sprang up near train stops on Central Avenue, those well known were Sunny Cove at Fifth, and Neptune Gardens at Webster; and other venues such as the Palace Brewery, Croll's, and Kohlmoos Hotel.

As the shoreline boomed and the business district grew apace, industry also arrived at the point, with a borax refinery, Pacific Coast Oil, later replaced by the Richmond refinery, and the terracota plant of N. Clark and Sons. Woodstock's grid which originally extended through farmland and forest was subdivided and builders like A.R. Denke and Marcuse & Rimmel would make their mark in the West End.

**New Century**

Growth quickened after the 1906 earthquake as bungalows proliferated. The resorts spawned festive courts, like Marion and Palace Courts. But nothing captured the spirit of the era like Neptune Beach, the 1917 bayside resort offered fancy rides, big saltwater pools and aquatic stars. By 1928 the bridge was replaced by the Posey Tube. Lacking streetcar tracks, the two-way tunnel gave birth to stop-and-go commutes and Webster Street soon led the city in gas stations, supermarkets, and large apartment blocks.



*From 1917 to 1939 Neptune Beach was hailed as the Coney Island of the West.*

The West End was also home to the city's two airports: the San Francisco Bay Airdrome, opened in 1930, and Pan American Airways, which launched the world's first transoceanic airline route in 1936. By 1941 the airports were gone along with the trains and ferries and Neptune Beach.

**War and After**

World War II hit the West End like a tsunami, sweeping away tideland and farmland for military bases and housing projects. The Naval Air Station swallowed point and mole and appended about 1,500 acres of tideland fill—more than South Shore and Harbor Bay Isle combined—increasing the island's overall length and acreage by half. Meanwhile the wars

in Korea and Vietnam kept the Naval Air Station humming as jets screamed overhead. Webster Street teemed with sailors, bars, all-night restaurants, and drive-in theaters. Apartments obliterated most vestiges of the resorts, leaving only Neptune Court and Crab Cove to recall the Coney Island of the West.

With the 1997 closure of the Naval Air Station the area was rechristened "Alameda Point". The NAS site has been furiously developing under the city's 2010 density bonus ordinance relating to affordable housing; the law, effectively voiding the City Charter's Article 27, is the shape of the future, and in Alameda the future begins in the West End.

*A postcard depicting the Posey Tube, named after George Posey, who was the Alameda County Surveyor during the tunnel's planning and construction, and also chief engineer on the construction project.*



*West End fieldworker in the 1930s. Houses face crops across Third Street, with the tall stack of N. Clark & Sons in the distance. The last of the West End farms would give way to furious development during World War II.*



The vintage 1976 El Dorado Cadillac convertible leads the way! In the Cadillac: Front Row L to R: Kay Weinstein and Alex Lithgow Back Row: Dodi Kelleher and Miriam Fox.

## Parading on July 4th!

Alameda's July 4th parade is billed as the most attended and the longest of its kind in the nation, at 3.3 miles long. As the AAPS float turned onto Park Street, the Alameda Legacy Home Tour banner was prominently displayed, reminding everyone about the Legacy Home Tour taking place this year on September 15th. AAPS President Brenden Sullivan was once again the catalyst for the overall success of the event. He recruited members, friends and family who proudly paraded in support of preserving Alameda's beautifully diverse historic architecture. Special THANK YOUs go to Alex and Karen Lithgow for the classy vintage Cadillac, and to Denise and Scott Brady, Erich Stiger and Bob Farrar, for their help and expertise!



Driving the whole operation is float organizer and AAPS President Brenden Sullivan.



Doree Miles and Joyce Boyd distribute Home Tour fliers.



The Float Committee ready to roll!

Top Row L to R: Brenden Sullivan, Doree Miles, Chris Scott and MJ Rubio.

Standing: Miriam Fox, Dodi Kelleher, Elizabeth Green, Jennifer Brady, Vivian Brady, Leilani Wright, Kay Weinstein, Conchita Perales.

In front: Joyce Boyd.



With her AAPS Preserve Alameda cool cap and t-shirt, Jennifer Brady enjoys the parade mood on Park Street.

Dodi Kelleher

Walking: Elizabeth Green, Leilani Wright and Vivian Brady.



Miriam Fox and Kay Weinstein

# TRAVELOGUE



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

## Havana's "Arquitectura Art Deco"

Glorious Relics of a Bygone Era *by Janice Cantú*



Cab ride in Havana – Janice Cantú and Grant Ute.

Cuba became a destination goal after I saw Ry Cooder's documentary on the history of Cuban music and his rediscovery and recordings of long time Cuban musicians who came to be known in the United States as the Buena Vista Social Club. The sights and sounds of Cuba presented in the documentary were inviting and irresistible.

In 2013 I attended a talk about Art Deco architecture in Havana which reinforced my desire to visit Cuba. And a year later, at the Monterey Jazz Festival, I listened to Cuban brothers Harold and Ruy Lopez-Nussa perform their original music, and found out where in Havana they performed, which added yet another reason to visit the island country.

Traveling to Cuba came to fruition when in early 2015 our local jazz station KCSM announced their sponsorship of a jazz tour in Cuba. At this point there was no question in my mind that this was our cue to take the long awaited trip.

I came away from the experience with a deeper appreciation for Afro Cuban music, for

the rich Art Deco architecture that abounds in Havana and for the people of Cuba. There is a lot to appreciate about the country, and at the same time, a wish that life there could be better for Cuba's people.

There is no auto industry in Cuba, which results in many cars from the 1950's still on the road. The plus side of the 1950 cars in Havana is the nostalgia for that era of cars on the part of Americans who visit the island, and the pristine condition in which the vehicles are maintained.

Havana is an outdoor museum of Art Deco design and architecture. With the end of the Spanish colonialism and the intense North American economic influence of the early 1920s to 1940, the search for a new identity created an explosion of creativity in all aspects of Cuban life, from literature and art, to music and dance, and it remains in its architecture. Today, while many buildings have been demolished or are in disrepair, there is still much to see and enjoy of those that still grace the capital.

### La Casa Quintana

This building, circa 1937 has a simple yet elegant Art Deco facade. The oversized striated pilasters on either side of the entrance are crowned by a cornucopia in high relief. The design ends in a tall frieze with geometric patterns. Even though the windows have been replaced, the decorative original iron work in the balcony still remains.



### Teatro America

Opened in March of 1941 within an 11 story building built by architects Fernando Martinez Campos and Pascual de Rojas. It was the first theater in Havana with air conditioning. With amazing Art Deco designed interiors, the auditorium is said to have been modeled after Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

TRAVELOGUE...continued from page 4



At 12 stories high, it was the tallest building in Havana at the time it was built in 1930. The upper part of the building was faced with glazed terracotta reliefs of geometric patterns, flowers and female nudes by the American artist Maxfield Parrish.



The first floor walls, floor, and ceiling are adorned in pink granite from Bavaria, and the two halls are of green marble from floor to ceiling. Most of the marble and granite used for the interior were imported from all across Europe: Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Sweden, Norway and Hungary.



The name of the building is inscribed into the red granite at the base of the facade.

### Bacardi Building

The best example of Havana's Art Deco design is the Bacardi Building, also known as the Edificio Emilio Bacardi. Designed to be the headquarters for the Bacardi Rum Company founded in Cuba in 1862. By the 1920s American tourists flowed into Cuba to beat Prohibition at home, and these were the boom years for Cuba, when Deco became the symbol of a vibrant future. The 1930 landmark building was a result of an architectural design competition held by the Bacardi company. The winners were architects Esteban Rodríguez-Castells and Rafael Fernández Ruenes, who created a building with bold and daring elements such as the stepped design rising above the block base with a chromatic exterior.

Even though the building was largely restored in 2001 by an Italian construction firm, some elements were noticeably deteriorating by the time of our visit. However, it still held an allure and beauty that the passage of time had not diminished. We were fortunate that the guard allowed us to walk around the main floor and even go to the top of the building to take in a panoramic view of old Havana.



Crowning the building is a bronze sculpture of the company logo, a free-tailed bat.



The hall displays an impressive array of designs in a colorful mix of stucco, marble and granite, including leaded glass, show-stopping hanging lamps and ironwork in doors and windows.



The design of the sun's rays embellish the elevator doors.

# PRESERVATION AWARDS 2024

AAPS celebrated its 27th Preservation Awards at the spacious Social Hall of the Immanuel Lutheran Church. Over 80 attendees were present for the informative and entertaining event.

Seven preservation projects were recognized and presented in great detail by property owners, architects and designers, who shared interesting anecdotes and detailed information of their experiences during the construction process. The presentations included before and after pictures that clearly showed the progress of the work during the restoration and renovation of each property. Special thanks go to Kay Weinstein, Miriam Fox and Robert Farrar for presenting in lieu of the recipients.

The awards included residential and commercial buildings and covered a wide range of work, from architecturally-sensitive additions, facade makeovers, full-on restorations and even whole interior and exterior renovations. And as is customary during the ceremony, all award winners receive certificates of recognition and the properties are issued a bronze plaque to be displayed on their facades, recognizing them as Preservation Awardees.

After the presentations, everyone had an opportunity to celebrate, mingle and enjoy the tasty appetizers and libations prepared and served by members and volunteers of the AAPS' hospitality committee.

If you know of a property that deserves recognition, let us know!

**Send an email to Chris Buckley, Committee Chair, at [cbuckleyaicp@att.net](mailto:cbuckleyaicp@att.net)**

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!

Trish Spencer



Mayra Lack and Aaron Kraw



Michael D. Wallace, Rita L. Clancy and Robert Farrar.

Jerri Holan, Architect Daniel Hoy and Tim McCarthy.



Kenneth Shelby, Vanessa and Erik Johnson, Architect Joanna Bianchi & Interior Designer Kimberly McGowan.



Architect Thornton Weiler presents to a full house.



Peggy Cawthon, Brian Lack, Architect Norman Sanchez and Brenden Sullivan.



Tim McCarthy



MC Devon Westerholm brings a happy vibe to the awards ceremony.



1897 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, West End Alameda CA



*Bay of San Fra*

Presented by the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society

ALAMEDA  
LEGACY HOME TOUR

# West End Stories

Sunday September 15, 2024 10am to 4pm

Tour Starts at Longfellow Park, 520 Lincoln Avenue  
Tickets - Café - Store

For more information go to: [alameda-legacy-home-tour.org](http://alameda-legacy-home-tour.org)

  
**ALAMEDA  
ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION  
SOCIETY**

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## AAPS BOARD MEMBERS 2024

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Editor: Conchita Perales  
Newsletter Design: Valerie Turpen



**TICKETS ON SALE NOW!**

The Victorian Alliance of San Francisco Presents:  
**The Noe Valley Historic Home Tour**

**September 8, 2024 - 1 PM - 5 PM**

**VASFSF**

[victorianalliance.org](http://victorianalliance.org)



## ALAMEDA LEGACY HOME TOUR

**Sunday September 15th, 2024  
10am to 4pm**

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Explore the interiors of 6 historic homes  
in the heart of Alameda's West End

Use your member promotion code to get \$5 off your  
ticket when purchased early online at Eventbrite!

**Use Promo Code:  
MEMBER24  
[alameda-legacy-home-tour.org](http://alameda-legacy-home-tour.org)**