

Alameda PRESERVATION Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA
ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Guess What, Honey? We Just Bought Another Fixer-Upper!

by Robert Farrar



Just a short distance from our home lies a Marcus and Rimmel property that is eagerly awaiting restoration. Having previously worked on other Victorian homes, I am excited to immerse myself in this project and restore it to its original splendor, complete with a revitalized color palette and elegant gold leaf accents.

Thirty-two years ago, we took the plunge and bought a fixer-upper in Alameda. By the look, you can see our house is a Marcuse & Rimmel. It had been severely neglected and, among other things, would need new electrical, plumbing, heating, a roof and a foundation – there wasn't even a working bathroom. It was all we could afford at the time, but it became our home, the one we worked on and slowly restored over the years. Along the way, we learned a lot and eventually grew comfortable with the house we had turned into our own. Enter the present day and an unexpected opportunity came knocking – one we just couldn't resist.

Our neighbors, just two doors down, bought their home in 1971 and made some... well, let's just say interesting updates over the years. In 2023, we'd casually mentioned to the family that we might be interested if they ever wanted to sell. Although they weren't ready to sell at the time, they gave us a tour and we quickly realized the house was in need of a serious makeover. Think back to the 60s and 70s – remember those bold trends? You guessed it: green carpet everywhere and even green velvet wallpaper!

Fast forward to December 2024, and the family reached out to us. After 53 years in the house, the matriarch of the family had passed away, and her family decided to sell the house. After some discussion, they expressed an interest in us taking it on. But there was a twist – they wanted to see what we had done with our place first. So we

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Another Fixer-Upper...continued from page 1

gave them a tour, showing off all the work we'd put into our own home over the years. To our delight, they were impressed and decided they wanted us to buy their family home and restore it to its original beauty.

Eager to delve into the property's history, I contacted Woody Minor. His research revealed the home's impressive pedigree. Built in 1892, the house was designed by the renowned architectural duo Marcuse and Rimmel, whose work I've studied extensively.

Woody found multiple citations for 924 Santa Clara Avenue. An *Alameda Argus* entry from April 11, 1892 states, "Marcuse & Rimmel have entered into a contract with William J. Smith to erect a building on the south side of Santa Clara Avenue between Ninth Street and St. Charles Street – \$3,800"; In another *Argus* entry (August 1, 1892), WJ Smith is listed again as owner, but the cost is given as \$5,000. In the *Argus's* 1892 "Holiday Edition", a list of all the homes built that year refers to the home as the Speddy residence with the same cost figure.

WJ Smith was a San Francisco banker who commissioned numerous houses from Marcuse & Rimmel. Based on Woody's research, it appears the house was built on speculation for Smith and later sold to Samuel A. Speddy, whose name appears in the year-end lists but not in the original contract notices. The map books show WJ Smith as owner of 924 Santa Clara in 1892-94, but City Directories list Speddy at this address in those years.



The first Marcuse & Rimmel restored by the Farrars.



Many Marcuse & Rimmel architectural details remain throughout the house...



...while updates and modernizations were added in the 1960s and 1970s.

I also researched the City of Alameda's list of historical permits and found that, in 1936, the house was converted into two units and the garage was built. Perhaps the most exciting thing of all is that the 1930s garage is still standing!

Learning this history pretty much sealed the deal for us. Since our own home is a Marcuse and Rimmel, and given my years spent researching and studying these unique homes, we knew this was an opportunity we couldn't pass up.

So, we bought the house!

Over the next year, we plan to share our journey – detailing everything from the renovation process to navigating the city's planning requirements to exploring the possibility of expanding the basement and building two ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units). The first step in our journey was to review the AAPS referral list (located on our Website under Resources, see page 9) to find a licensed architect and a general contractor who specializes in foundation work.

We're thrilled to embark on this adventure, and we hope you'll follow along. We'll be documenting our progress and sharing stories in future AAPS newsletters. Stay tuned!

Holiday Pizzazz at Pasta Pelican

Story by Kay Weinstein • Images by David Bock

74 AAPS members and their guests enjoyed a festive and delicious holiday party on December 7 at Pasta Pelican. An added bonus was viewing “Merry Estuary,” the annual Lighted Yacht Parade, through the second story windows!

The band G-Squared set the mood with a wonderful mix of Jazz Standards and holiday songs. Thanks to bandmates Gunther Hofmann on keyboard and Geoff Burnaford on flute for sharing their musical talents with us.

President Brenden Sullivan checked in guests and then took the stage to recognize many volunteers and community members. He asked for a moment of silence to remember George Gunn, former curator of the Alameda Museum and author of two invaluable books documenting Alameda’s architectural history. Next he acknowledged AAPS member Trish Spencer, and thanked her for her service to the City Council.

Brenden then thanked outgoing AAPS board members: Conchita Perales and Patsy Baer (our longest serving board member for 17 years). Finally, he introduced newly elected Board members: Lisa Baker and Shiva Mendez.

Longtime AAPS members, Denise and Scott Brady met the new Brady family (no relation): Jennifer and Scott Brady, and their children Dylan and Vivian. They live in and have been restoring a Craftsman bungalow on Elm Street at Buena Vista Avenue since 2023.

We were honored by the presence of our Preservation Action Committee Chair Christopher Buckley in his signature bow-tie!

Thanks to many volunteers who made this lovely event possible – Brenden Sullivan for his oversight, as well as storing and transporting decorations; Bob Farrar for arranging for the band and photographer; Susan Battersby and Miriam Fox for joining Karen Lithgow and myself on the decorating committee; Dodi Kelleher and Renata Frey for making appetizer trays; David Bock for providing us with excellent photos of the celebration; Dodi Kelleher and Floyd Brown for storing and transporting wine; Karen Lithgow for ordering and bringing two beautiful cakes and to all who helped take down the decorations. Lastly, thanks to Pasta Pelican for the fantastic job they did.

One of two delicious cakes.



Pasta Pelican Restaurant was the location of the AAPS holiday party. Members enjoyed “Merry Estuary,” the annual Lighted Yacht Parade while dining.



Patsy Baer, our longest serving board member.

Band G-Squared (left to right): Gunther Hofmann and Geoff Burnaford.

President Brenden Sullivan checked in guests.



2025 Board Members (left to right): Shiva Mendez, Robert Farrar, Karen Lithgow, Erich Stiger, Dodi Kelleher, outgoing member Patsy Baer, Kay Weinstein, Lisa Baker and Brenden Sullivan.



Among the fun: Brian McDonald wore his stunning Hawaiian outfit.



A festive group (left to right) Marilyn Wire, Elizabeth Farrar, Steven Farrar, Christopher Buckley (PAC Chair), Kristin Moeller, and Valerie Peterson.



New Member Family (left to right): Dylan, Vivian, Scott and Jennifer Brady.



A lighted yacht passing our window, Bah! Humbug!

Letter from the President

Brenden G. Sullivan, President, Alameda Architectural Preservation Society • (415) 889-0754 • bsullivan@alameda-preservation.org

Dear Alameda Architectural Preservation Society,

As we begin a new year, I want to extend my warmest wishes to all of you and express my gratitude for your continued commitment to preserving Alameda's rich architectural heritage. I very much appreciate your financial contributions to our organization, as well as for your time and effort for those that have volunteered.

I hope this year I can inspire more of you to activate your involvement by joining in any one of our various committees – or starting a new one! We are open to all ideas. Your participation is essential in carrying our message to deepen our impact on our community's architectural awareness and safeguard the historic character that makes our community so beautiful and unique.

In 2023, our membership had severely atrophied to approximately 70 memberships and in January, our Board of Directors rolled up their sleeves and got to work on a three-month long membership drive, which successfully brought our numbers to 175! Our efforts have carried through the past two years and we held several in-person community events and most notably, The Alameda Legacy Home Tour. Now, as of the end of 2024, we have 246 members with 15 new memberships just in the past 6 months!

In 2025, we will focus on expanding our outreach to ensure more residents are engaged in our mission. We will be hosting workshops and lectures and continuing to engage in other public and City forums to raise awareness about the importance of preserving Alameda's architectural history. We will also be closely monitoring development proposals to ensure that preservation remains a priority in city planning.

I would to encourage all of you to go online to the AAPS website as soon as possible and look through the various committees we have and volunteer. Volunteers are welcome and needed to assist in the following activities:

- **Preservation Awards**

Join the committee to select award recipients and/or write up articles about selected award winners.

- **July 4th Parade**

Help organize our entry in the annual Mayor's Parade and join in the walk, or ride the parade route.

- **Annual Legacy Home Tour**

Be a docent, help in the park or assist with the appreciation gala and see the tour for free.

- **Preservation Action Committee (PAC)**

The PAC is always looking for new members to investigate ongoing and new architectural projects happening in Alameda. Last year, we garnered support from City Planning staff and the HAB for the launch the Historic Building Study List Correction Project. The goal of the project is to use AAPS volunteers to survey, identifying study list inaccuracies and recommend corrections. This group is an excellent way to learn more about architectural preservation and activism at the same time.

As individual members, we can all make a difference by volunteering to further advance the preservation goals of AAPS. We cannot do this without your help. Whether by volunteering your time, attending our events, or supporting us financially, your contributions make all the difference. Together, we can continue to protect Alameda's architectural treasures for future generations.

Thank you for your unwavering support, and I look forward to working with all of you in 2025 to preserve the beauty and history of our beloved city.

Sincerely,

Brenden G. Sullivan

TRAVELOGUE



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

Admiring the Ancient Architecture of Andalucia

Text and images by Karen Lithgow

My husband Alex and I took advantage of the mild September weather and availability of his family house in Mijas, Spain to spend a month in the southeastern province of Andalucia. Past trips to Spain revolved around family get-togethers and this time we decided to visit the historic towns of Cordoba and Seville, towns known for their ancient and magnificent history and architecture spanning two millennia of occupation from the Romans, Muslims and Christians.

We looked for historic places to stay in the oldest parts of town which led us to the lovely Hotel Madinet in old town Cordoba. Driving to this scenic destination, rather than joining a group tour, allowed flexibility in seeing the sights and the choice of our own restaurants and itinerary. The downside, we quickly found out, was that these historic towns are extremely car unfriendly and you have to ditch your car in one of the big parking garages at the end of town and schlep your bags over cobble stone streets to your hotel. Make sure you pack light and wear comfortable walking shoes if you go this route.

The Hotel Madinet is located in an 18th-century house in part of the old Arab medina that was saved from ruin by five owners who recycled much of the original structure. The vestibule has a tiled floor in colorful geometric patterns, a doorway with ornate metalwork evoking Califal filigree, a staircase flanked by twin effigies, and rich plasterwork in the ceilings. Up on the rooftop patio of the hotel, we could see a patchwork of crumbling roofs all across this ancient city. Across the street is a medieval gothic tower whose origins date back to King Ferdinand III, a key figure in the Christian recapture of the city from Arab rule in the 13th century. A few blocks away is the Hamman al Andalus, a subterranean series of candle-lit hot baths surrounded by ancient stone walls that we found delightful after a long hot journey.

The highlight of our trip to Cordoba was our visit to the Mosque-Cathedral which was one of the most breathtakingly beautiful buildings we have ever seen. This massive structure was the accumulated result from a succession of conquering cultures that added rather than replaced important monuments and symbols of their faiths. What we saw upon entry was a dizzying framework of striped arches, ornate plasterwork domes, ceilings and walls, stone statuary, mosaics, elaborate metalwork and more surrounded by the finest displays of showy Christian opulence. The cathedral brochure states that the building



▲ The Historic Center of Cordoba is not only notable for its concentration of cultural and historic structures, but it is also the largest of its kind in Europe. Much of the town is UNESCO registered as a World Heritage Site.



▶ The striped arches of the Cordoba Mosque Cathedral are a defining feature of the mosque's architecture.



◀ The Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos, built in the 8th century, is the place where Ferdinand and Isabella welcomed Christopher Columbus who explained his plans to find a west-bound sea route to India.

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TRAVELOGUE...continued from page 5

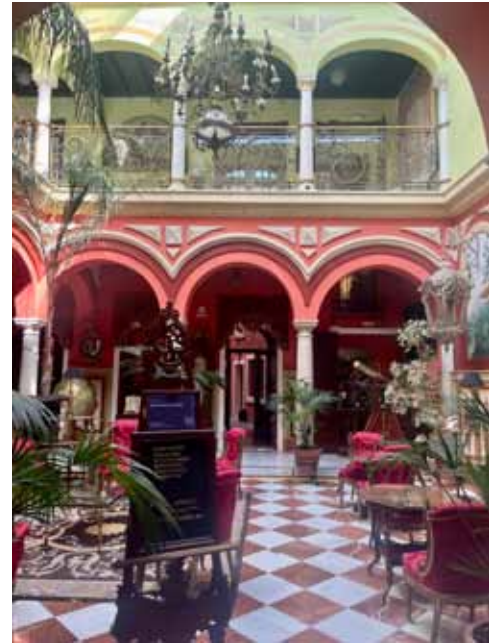
“shows the world the greatness of its history, which began with a Visigoth basilica, flowed into Caliphate splendor, and culminated with Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque art.” It appeared that each successive culture valued the beauty and significance of what was already there before adding onto more of the structure. You’ve really got to see this monument in person to believe it!

Adjacent to the Mosque-Cathedral is the Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos, a medieval palace and fortress which houses some gorgeous mosaics and is surrounded by a beautiful set of gardens and pools. Looking more closely at the gardens you can see a sophisticated system of narrow ditches and small bridges that allow irrigation of the garden through gravity alone. The statuary decorating the garden along with the metalwork on the gates is particularly beautiful. Researching past uses of the Alcázar, I discovered that the building became a headquarters for the Spanish inquisition in 1482 (complete with torture and interrogation chambers) and served as a garrison for Napoleon’s armies in 1810.

Driving on to Seville we again faced the hunt for a car garage before finding the spectacular Hotel Ateneo in the heart of the historic center. The hotel is a former Renaissance palace filled with antiques and well worth the splurge. Our first trek was a walk through the bustling old quarter of town to get to the Plaza de España which I vividly remembered from a college era visit back in 1979. The plaza was created within the lovely Maria Luisa Park as part of the Exposition World’s fair in 1929.

The Plaza de España complex is a huge half-circle with buildings that are accessible by four bridges over a moat, which represent the ancient kingdoms of Spain. Many tiled alcoves were built around the plaza, each representing a different province of Spain. Designer Aníbal González combined a mix of Art Deco, Spanish Renaissance and Baroque Revival and Neo-Mudéjar. We next had a tour of the Royal Alcázar of Seville which is a beautiful medieval palace showcasing a unique fusion of Spanish Christian and Moorish architecture. The Alcázar is Europe’s oldest palace in use with origins back to the 11th century, when Muslim authorities decided to build a fortress in a strategic area of Seville in order to guarantee its security.

Protected by a wall, the Alcázar site is made up of diverse palaces and gardens designed during different historical periods. The Alcázar offers a wide range of styles, combining elements typical of Muslim, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Romantic art, as well as some of the best examples of Mudéjar art, a product of the mix of Islamic and Christian cultures. The palace is known for its outstanding tile decoration including majolica and arista tiles. The upper stories of the Alcázar are still occupied by the royal family when they visit Seville.



▶ The Hotel Ateneo Sevilla, in the historical town center of Seville, is a completely refurbished Renaissance-style palace.



▶ The Plaza de España was designed by the great Sevillian architect Aníbal González as an emblematic space for the Ibero-American Exposition of 1929.



▶ 52 tiled frescoes along the Plaza de España depict each of the Spanish provinces. These azulejos tiles are typical of Andalusia Spain.

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TRAVELOGUE...*continued from page 6*

Along with seeing the many beautiful rooms of the palace, we particularly enjoyed touring the palace gardens. During the period of Muslim rule, the Royal Alcázar featured an extensive area used for gardens, cultivation and corrals. In addition to providing fresh food to the members of the royal court, these spaces also had an aesthetic function. Every care and detail was taken to stimulate the senses: fragrant herbs and flowers were planted, trees were ordered into geometric patterns, pond water was used for its reflection and cooling properties and fountains and water jets were installed for their soothing sound. There is a covered walkway atop the wall surrounding the gardens that allows a wonderful vantage point to look over the grounds.

While not as spectacular in architectural variation as the cathedral in Cordoba, the cathedral in Seville was also worth a visit. I was drawn to an unusual set of statues of medieval stone figures holding up a large tomb. Reading the description I came to find out that this is where "some" of Christopher Columbus's remains are now kept. (The rest are in the Dominican Republic.)

Last but not least, we visited what was billed as the oldest bar in Seville, El Rinconcillo, which has been serving customers since 1670. This charming tavern did not disappoint. The tavern features a beautiful wooden bar, Spanish tilework, high ceilings, sherry canisters, hanging hams and more. The standing room only experience gave us excellent tapas and wine, the best by far during our entire month in Spain!



▲ The Royal Alcázar of Seville is the oldest royal palace in Europe that is still in use today. It dates back to the 11th century, when the Muslim authorities decided to build a fortress in a strategic location to protect the city.



▲ The gardens of the Real Alcázar are a combination of Islamic and Christian styles, with a variety of plants, fountains, and architectural features. The gardens have been transformed over the centuries, and are a living example of the palace's history.

▶ Inside Seville's Cathedral stands a monument to Christopher Columbus. His tomb is held aloft by four allegorical figures representing the four kingdoms of Spain during his life, Castille, Aragon, Navarre, and Leon.



Allen Michaan – A Profile in Preservation

by Brenden Sullivan

Allen Michaan, from his historic theater restorations to creating one of the best antique marketplaces in the world, built a life on restoration and preservation and curated his passion for historic beauty.

Allen was born in 1952 and raised in Stamford, Connecticut. After graduating high school in 1970, he decided to move to Berkeley, California. To make ends meet, he started his own business showing classic films in auditoriums he rented around Berkeley, as well as creating a midnight film series in San Francisco's Palace Theater located in the North Beach district.

Within a few years, he leased and re-purposed an old warehouse on Gilman Street in Berkeley and created the Rialto Theater, which opened in 1972. He assembled the venue using salvaged items rescued from classic theaters that were being demolished around the Bay Area. He purchased old seats, curtains, carpeting, lighting fixtures, and ornamental plaster – rescuing them from landfills – only to bring them back to life in his theater recreation. He named his company, Renaissance Rialto Theaters, (no relation to Rialto Cinemas), as an homage to the original Rialto theater in Stamford, CT, built in 1908.

He created a film selection of classic Hollywood movies, unique documentaries, and a mix of old TV shows and short films. Originally, the venue was a one screen theater,

The Grand Lake Theater opened on March 6, 1926 near Lake Merritt in Oakland. Image: Wikipedia.



The interior of the Auctions By The Bay Theater in Alameda with its ornamental plaster, mural, red velour drapes and chairs, and opulent carpeting. The creation of this Art Deco space won an AAPS Preservation Award in 2009.

but he used the theater's profitability to expand the operation into four screens, which led to even more success. Soon after, Allen began to acquire theater leases around the Bay Area and built his own historic theater empire.

He had gravitated toward historic buildings reopening approximately 21 historic theaters and creating two new theaters in existing buildings. His most prized possession is the Grand Lake in Oakland. Some of the more prominent theaters he opened and operated in the Bay Area were the State in Benicia; the Fine Arts, Shattuck Cinemas and the Sunset theaters in Berkeley; the Park in Lafayette; the Park in Menlo Park; the Orinda in Orinda; the Stanford in Palo Alto; the Bridge, Opera Plaza Cinemas, Presidio, and York theaters in San Francisco; and the El Rey in Walnut Creek. The list also includes the Auctions by the Bay Theater at the former Alameda Naval Air Station which received an AAPS Preservation Award in 2009. (That location was later closed due to constant vandalism and breaking and entry during the pandemic.)

During the '80s and early '90s his company flourished, but things changed once the onslaught of large theater complexes began to dominate the landscape. It was soon almost impossible to book significant films into his single-screen theaters. Unfortunately, he had to sell (and even close) all but one of the

venues – the beautifully restored Grand Lake in Oakland, which is still thriving today.

But although his theater empire took a hit, his other passion continues. When Allen was growing up back east, he would accompany his mother to various antique stores and shops on weekends and summers and his interest in antiques was born. This interest continued to grow and flourish throughout his adult life and even while he was busy restoring and building his vintage theater circuit, he was a fixture at flea markets, antique shops, auctions, and antique fairs around the Bay Area.

Allen recalled that in the early days, the markets in Alameda and Marin City were amazing and great antiques were showcased throughout the 1970s and into the early 1990s. He recalled that one of the first antique markets in Alameda was located at the old drive-in theater, where Marina Village is today. He also recalled that the Marin City market consistently had great antiques and was where most of the local dealers went to buy their antiques. The array of merchandise was broad, of fine quality, and, as he puts it, "simply fantastic."

However, with the development of the old drive-in theater site as part of Marina Village, and the closure of the Marin City market with the construction of a strip mall in its place, there was a void in the Bay Area antique market. In 1997, the Alameda Naval Base closed and he saw an opportunity to create a new marketplace. There was no venue that could accommodate a large antique show as well as provide adequate parking for the people that would be needed to support a large antique show, so the old Alameda Naval runway was perfect.

The initial process took roughly ten months to get approval from the City of Alameda. Dubbed the "Alameda Point Antiques Faire", his new venture started out small in comparison to what it is today, showcasing 200 antique booths at Seaplane Lagoon on the point. Today, it averages 750 booths and 10,000 shoppers. It has been named one of

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Profile in Preservation...continued from page 8



The Alameda Point Antiques Faire attracts 10,000 visitors to its venue the first Sunday of each month.

the best antiques shows in the nation by many reviewers, and one of the five best in the World by Martha Stewart.

Lastly, Allen owns and operates Michaan's Auctions, which is the West Coast's largest full-service auction house, holding free appraisals twice a month, and monthly sales of art and antiques. The monthly sales are held at the Annex Auction Showroom and the Main Gallery, Building 20 at 2701 Monarch Street, Alameda. Please see their catalogs at www.Michaans.com.

Allen's message is, even if you don't have an interest (or passion) for antiques, or if you are environmentally conscious (or want to be), "furnishing with antiques is a green practice and helps save the environment. Every piece of furniture or art that is reused represents a saving of natural resources. We at Michaan's like to say that reuse is recycling. We are the number one recycler in Alameda, because what we do is recycling at its absolute most efficient form."

Antique wares available at Alameda Point.



Preservation Awards 2025 Call For Nominations!

AAPS is now seeking nominations for the annual Preservation Awards. Please be on the look-out 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 1950s, including commercial properties, churches, governmental structures, single family homes and apartment houses. The awards showcase projects that preserve, restore or reuse a historic property in a way that enhances its architectural character.

Please email bsullivan@alameda-preservation for a Nomination Form or call (415) 889-0754.

Completed forms with all attachments are due by March 15, 2025.

Need any work done to your vintage home?



Look no further than the Resource section of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society's website to find that plumber, contractor, electrician, etc. or artisan to hire to repair or enhance your vintage home.



If you've had someone work on your home that's not on our list contact us to add their name to our page.



**[alameda-preservation.org/publications/
resources-recommended-by-building-owners/](http://alameda-preservation.org/publications/resources-recommended-by-building-owners/)**



P.O. Box 1677
Alameda, CA 94501

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

DON'T MISS OUT!

AAPS WELCOMES NEW AND RETURNING BOARD MEMBERS

AAPS BOARD MEMBERS 2025

<i>President</i> Brenden Sullivan	<i>Recording Secretary</i> Karen Lithgow
<i>1st Vice President</i> Erich Stiger	<i>Advisor to the Board</i> Robert Farrar
<i>2nd Vice President</i> Dodi Kelleher	<i>Member at Large</i> Shiva Mendez
<i>Corresponding Secretary</i> Kay Weinstein	<i>Member at Large</i> Lisa Baker

Treasurer: OPEN

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

AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2025

•
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

*Guided Tour of the
California Historical Radio Society*
2152 Central Avenue, Alameda

Please RSVP by February 17th by sending an email to
kweinstein@alameda-preservation.org

•
SUNDAY, JUNE 8
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Preservation Awards
Veterans Memorial Building
2203 Central Avenue

•
FRIDAY, JULY 4
STARTS AT 10:00 AM

4th of July Parade
City of Alameda

•
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Alameda Legacy Home Tour
Location to be Announced

•
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Holiday Party
The Trident Room
Albert H. Dewitt Officers Club
641 West Redline Avenue