alameda-preservation.org | June 2025

Alameda PRESERVATION

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALAMEDA ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Winners of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Preservation Awards

JUNE 8, 2025 -5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Veterans Memorial Building • 2203 Central Avenue, Alameda

The Curvy Lady at 929 Lafayette Street

by Karen Lithgow

Award Recipients: Megan and Quinton Larson, Owners; Tony Lima, Rayco Painting.



The Curvy Lady after the asbestos tiles were removed, wood shingles cleaned and all repainted. This view shows the beautiful curves of the home, a new roof adorns the property.

ate may have played a role in Megan and Quinton Larson's purchase of their Leonardville Victorian in 2021. Megan comes from a line of distinguished Alameda preservationists as her grandmother Margaret was involved with the implementation of Measure A in 1973 which halted the teardown of vintage homes and led to the formation of the Alameda Victorian Preservation Society (the original name of the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society). Margaret's Lincoln Avenue Victorian was actually Joseph Leonard's office and was where Megan and her mother were raised.

When Megan and husband Quinton looked to buy a family home, they chose 929 Lafayette because of its location near St. Joseph school and beautiful interior with stunning woodwork and architectural details. Although some of the infrastructure work had already been done, like upgraded electrical, plumbing and foundation, the entire exterior was covered with unsightly asbestos tiles. They decided to overlook the exterior and tackle that project when they could get to it.

After putting a new roof on the home and insulating the attic, Megan and Quinton began researching options to redo the exterior. The two main options included painting over the asbestos tiles or removing continued on page 2...





the tiles and dealing with whatever was underneath. They knew from old photos of the house that it was once covered with wood shingles, but it was unclear how much of the shingles remained and if they were in usable shape. Realizing that the best eventual outcome was restoring the wood shingle exterior, they obtained bids for the asbestos removal and selected Eisen Environmental to do the work.

Megan says that she was terrified of the possibility that the underlying wood shingles would all have to be replaced as that would have greatly increased the cost of the project. Luck was on their side, however, as the vast majority of the wood shingles were still there and in good shape. There was a layer of tar paper covering the shingles that may have protected them from the elements. Thick residue from the tar paper, however, had to be completely sanded off before they could be painted. There were also holes in the shingles from the asbestos tile installation, but their painter was not concerned about those, so they were left as is.

The next difficult decision Megan and Quinton had to make was the new color scheme for the exterior. Quinton said they had 20 swatches of green, blue,

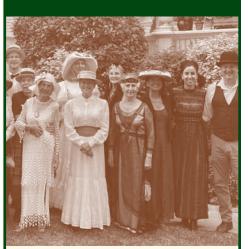
and gray colors painted on the side of the house as they deliberated their final choice. Megan asked a local colorist and designer to weigh in on a color selection which is how they ended up with a dark plum color on the main body of the house.

The railings, balusters, and columns were painted in a deep maroon with a salmon color on the porch ceiling. Then, Tony Lima, Managing Partner at Rayco Painting and team lead for this multi-phased project, expertly directed a team of over 10 carpenters and painters, overseeing all phases of work, including sanding, wood rot removal, turret wood replacement, surface preparation, and painting.

Megan and Quinton also put new lighting on the porch and redid the landscaping to enhance the street appeal of this beautiful home.

Neighbors told the Larson's that their house's nickname was "The Curvy Lady" given its tower, turret, and long curving porch with Tuscan columns and roof-top balconies. The Curvy Lady now has a beautiful new frock to show off to the neighborhood. She also has a happy family living there that plans to take care of her for years to come.

2025 ALAMEDA **LEGACY** HOME TOUR



Save the Date **September 21** 10 am to 4 pm

Tickets will go on sale on-line at Eventbrite.com and/or

alameda-preservation.org

Tickets will be available at events on July 4th or at Franklin Park on the day of the Tour.

Dream House Continues Legacy of Giving! 1021 Union Street by AAPS and Kevis Brownson

Award Recipients: Nancy Joy Gordon, Owner; Andreas Lehmann, Lehmann Glass Studio; Dan Larsen, Larsen Builders; Myron Olson, Olson's Painting Company; Bob Buckter and Bobby Buckter, Bob Buckter Color Consultant; Joy and Jerry Wilkins, Kitchen Design; Pam Kaull, Garden Design and Installation.

his elegant 1892 Victorian home is a textbook example of Queen Anne styling: a round corner tower with "witch cap" roof, prominent gables at the front and sides, varied bay windows, and appliqué of milled wood ornament. The front facade features floral scrolls, sunburst brackets, and a richly ornate porch arrayed with delicate columns and spindle friezes. The wrought-iron cresting on the porch roof is extremely rare. Decorative ironwork was a popular feature on entrances, for fences and on roofs during the Victorian era; however, most wrought iron associated with Victorian houses, including fences, was recycled during World War II.

When Nancy Gordon first saw the house in early 1980, she was immediately taken with the elegance of the entry hall. "I was in awe of the spindled fretwork, gorgeous natural curly redwood parlor doors, unusual inlaid hardwood floor and elegant staircase." She realized she could fulfill her dreams to have more space for her family and room for a Steinway grand piano.

The Gordon children, Cindy and Kevin (now adults), were toddlers when the family moved in, and grew up surrounded by construction, "helping" in different ways.

Previous owners of the former boarding house had painted over the interior original stenciling and wallpaper, and the backyard was lined with carports. It was livable but needed work everywhere. The Gordons peeled off layers of paint and wallpaper throughout the house, redoing many walls and some ceilings with Bradbury and Bradbury hand silk screened wallpapers, others with hand stenciled patterns, and the dining room walls with designed panels in Anaglypta painted to look like tooled leather.

They replaced the brick foundation and remodeled the main bathrooms, keeping an historic feel with clawfoot tubs, tiled and hardwood floors, and Victorian light fixtures. The largest project was the entire back of the house, enlarging and completely remodeling the kitchen with a dining area and

sitting room with bay windows, and installing stained glass transom windows, Victorian-style light fixtures and a custom-made copper hood over the commercial stove.

The second floor sleeping porch, poorly constructed in the early 1900s, was completely removed and replaced with a more architecturally sensitive and better constructed addition. The many carports in the backyard were removed and the front and rear gardens landscaped. The original iron cresting above the entry porch was repaired and restored, along with reconstruction of the front porch, stairs, bannisters, and newel posts.

1890s style art glass windows include the transom windows in the kitchen, the elegant stained glass window on the staircase landing, and the brilliant cut, beveled windows for the front doors and the transom, inspired by themes in the Lincrusta-Walton patterns.

The Gordons found period light fixtures for the interior at garage sales and had them repaired and installed, and commissioned additional custom reproduction period light fixtures for the kitchen.

Nancy is eternally grateful for the support of AVPS/ AAPS members over the years, referrals to excellent craftspeople and the talent, work, energy and love put into this home which many people enjoy!



The 1892 home retained some of its original elements including the wrought-iron cresting. The stained-glass window on the staircase landing, shown on the right, was designed by Ken Matthias.



This Queen Anne style residence was designer by Charles S. Shaner and built in 1892 by D. Straub & Son.

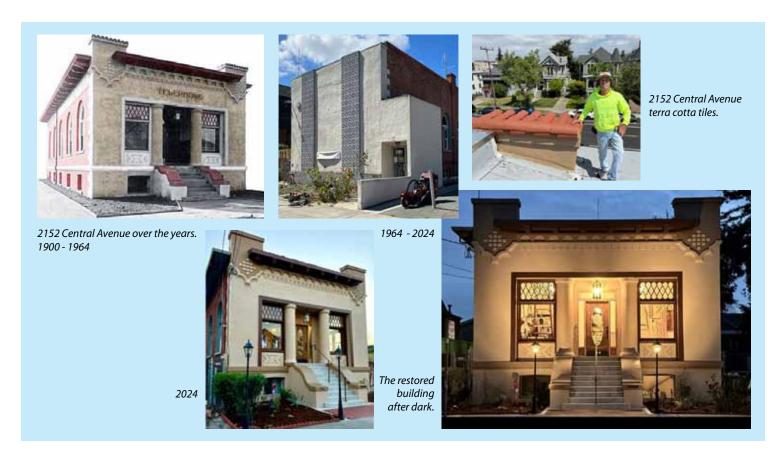


A more structurally sound and architecturally sensitive addition replaced the enclosed porch.



The home was used as a boarding house and an enclosed porch was added in the early 1900s.





2152 Central Avenue - Forgotten Facade Continued by Miriam Fox

Award Recipients: California Historical Radio Society (CHRS), Owner; Rachel Lee, Executive Director, CHRS; Vincent Wu, Structural Engineer, Baseline Designs, Inc.; Mike Morrison, General Contractor, B.A. Morrison; Dan Long, Long's Concrete; Raul Macias, Raul's Painting Services; Aquiles Yepez, Bay Area Foam Shapes Design LLC, Carl Rowe, Rowe's Roofing; Mark Hulbert, Preservation Architecture.

he AAPS November 2024 (available on the AAPS Website) article, "Rescuing a Forgotten Facade: The 2152 Central Avenue Restoration Project", recounts the fascinating history and restoration of this building.

Originally built in 1900 for the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company, the Mission Revival-style building was a significant part of the city's early growth. It was originally operated by fifteen women, serving around 1,000 subscribers. By 1926, the number of subscribers grew to over 7,000 as the city expanded. However, by 1939 the building was phased out in favor of new facilities constructed by Pacific Bell.

In 1946, the Church of Nazarene acquired the building, "modernizing" its facade in the mid-1950s with stucco and decorative concrete blocks. Garner Pre-School took over in 1974, making further modifications. Fast forward to 2014, when the California Historical Radio Society (CHRS) purchased the building, recognizing its architectural importance and restoration potential.

Under the direction of Project Manager Steve Kushman, the restoration team embarked on a mission to return the building to its original Mission Revival glory. The process involved meticulous care and innovative techniques to uncover and preserve original features such as ornate columns, intricate moldings, and

remnants of the mosaic floor. The team faced challenges like replicating missing elements using historical photographs, and ensuring the building's structural integrity after removing the protective concrete facade.

Since that article, there have been updates. A circa 1900 door featuring oval glass was found, shipped, and installed, and a new roof has been added, complemented by curved terra cotta accent tiles. When you drive by after dark, you can see the building illuminated by the new exterior accent lighting.

The restoration was more than a cosmetic makeover; it was a rescue mission to save a piece of history from oblivion. The building now stands as a testament to the power of preservation and the enduring value of architectural heritage. CHRS's vision extends beyond the facade, aiming to create a dynamic cultural center that celebrates the history of communication and technology, making the space relevant to the community.

Inside, original architectural features have been preserved while modern amenities were added, resulting in a stunning blend of old and new. The CHRS hosts various events, including lectures, workshops, and exhibitions, transforming the building into a thriving community hub. Visitors will soon experience the restored mosaic at the top of the stairway as they enter a museum that encompasses much more than radio and broadcasting history, with displays on electronic communications, operational exhibits, a recording studio, and a listening room.

Ultimately, the restoration of 2152 Central Avenue exemplifies the power of preservation, investing in the past to create a brighter future for communities. This historic building, once forgotten, is now a vibrant center of culture and education.

California Historical Radio Society Tour

by Kay Weinstein

ver 50 AAPS members and their quests were treated to an impressive guided tour of the California Historical Radio Society (CHRS) on February 22. The CHRS is an educational non-profit corporation that is the home of the Bay Area Radio Museum and Hall of Fame. They are also the proud owners of their Mission Revival building at 2152 Central Avenue. Named the Norman Leal Building, it was built in 1900 to house the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company. (Please see the November 2024 issue of Alameda Preservation Press for the lead article, "Rescuing a Forgotten Facade: The 2152 Central Avenue Restoration Project" by Miriam Fox.)

CHRS Project Manager Steve Kushman began the tour on the front steps of the building where he described the challenging restoration. An unsightly 1964 facade was removed to uncover many original features: ornate columns, intricate moldings, and even remnants of the original mosaic floor. The team then replicated the missing elements of the facade and ensured the structural integrity of the building.

Next Executive Director Rachel Lee provided an overview of their mission to preserve and celebrate the history of broadcasting. Questions were encouraged!

Visitors were then led up the stairs, through the beautiful new front door, and into the main floor. Volunteer Coordinator Kim Brickman greeted us, and explained that knowledgeable docents were stationed throughout the museum on both floors. We were surrounded by exhibits of historic telegraph machines, telephones, phonographs, antique radios, console radios, portable radios and novelty radios from both the United States and worldwide. We were delighted to discover that many of these items are operational! One of the best is a wooden phone booth containing a crank telephone that you can use to make a call. (There is even a Superman cape hanging in the phone booth!) They also sell restored vintage radios, many with Bluetooth capability.

The interactive wonder continued on the bottom floor. There is a fantastic WWII era Wurlitzer jukebox made out of wood, glass and other non-essential materials. In the kitchen there is a wall filled with novelty radios made to look like food items. There is a 1950s era radio broadcasting room with a United Press International teletype machine. There is a large exhibit of early televisions, many operational. There is a research library, the largest of its kind west of Chicago, IL. There is also a busy radio repair lab, as well as facilities to digitize audio recordings.

We thank the California Historical Radio Society for this wonderful tour of their restored building and incredible museum. It is a community treasure. They save vintage radios from the landfill, restore and rehome them. It was interesting to learn that many of their items came from estate sales, or were donated by heirs. They have a full calendar of events, and they mentor students of all ages! Like most museums, their staff relies upon a team of dedicated volunteers.

For more information, visit: chrsradio.org

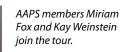


Project Manager Steve Kushman on the front steps of the building where he described the challenging restoration.

Executive Director Rachel Lee detailed CHRS's mission to preserve the history of broadcasting.



Volunteer Coordinator Kim Brickman welcomed AAPS inside.







A small selection of the vintage radios on display.



radio broadcasting room.

A WWII era Wurlitzer jukebox made of wood and adorned with glass.

1528 Mozart Street

by Joyce Boyd

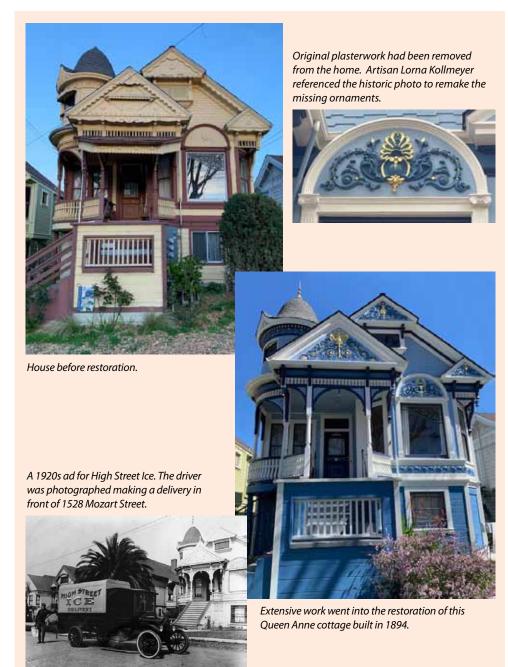
Award Recipients: Joyce Boyd and Peter Conn, Owners; Eric Grunseth, Pacific Northwest Painting and Construction; Myron Olson, Olson's Painting; Lorna Kollmeyer, Lorna Kollmeyer Ornamentals; Cornelia Grunseth, The Color Lady; Ken Shelby, Piggery Panes; Dave Lopez, Advanced Roofing; John Jameson, Jameson Contractors.

ur Queen Anne cottage was built in 1894 by the development team of Marcuse and Remmel. When we purchased the house in 2015, the inspection report was thick as a book; clearly the house had deferred maintenance. Neither of us had any restoration experience but loved the spacious feeling and original character of the house.

We joined AAPS and started going to lectures to get ideas, resources, and tips for restoration. First, we replaced the brick foundation and removed the crumbling chimney working with John Jameson Construction. Ken Shelby of Piggery Panes restored the collapsing stained-glass window in front of the house, and recreated missing leaded and stained-glass windows. We updated the two ground-floor rental apartments working with TEC Electric to update the electrical system. We had Advanced Roofing Services replace the roof and Jenks Gutters and Downspouts replace the qutters.

We restored the rest of the outside of the house in stages as we saved up money for each phase. Our exterior is clad in old growth redwood and although most of the paint was peeling, we were fortunate there was no water damage and we only needed to replace 40 feet of siding. We replaced nine aluminum windows with more historically correct wooden windows working with Russo Windows and Doors. A.T. Weber Plumbing and Mechanical worked on the plumbing and gas lines - repairing and replacing as necessary. Pacific Northwest Painters and Construction (PNPC) did restoration painting of two sides of the exterior, including the extensive restoration on the front of the house. By the time we were ready for the other sides, the owner had retired so we hired Olson Painting to finish the job. Restoration painting is more extensive than a regular paint project. The paint on the house was so deteriorated that it required extensive preparation, priming, waterproofing and then painting.

Restoration can require detective work, and we were lucky to have a picture from the Alameda



Museum of a 1920s ice truck in front of our house. This picture showed original items that were missing such as the front porch stairs, original windows and all the ornamental plasterwork. Fortunately, one of the few plaster restoration specialists, Lorna Kollmeyer, is right here in the Bay Area, and we hired her to remake the missing plasterwork. She is the keeper of many original casting molds some of which were used on our project.

We selected Cornelia Grunseth of the Color Lady & Associates to help us choose paint colors and placement. Our friend, Robert (Bob) Farrar, did an excellent job gold leafing. We found replacement

finials on eBay and purchased a copper roof spire from Weathervanes of Maine.

The current exterior staircase to the front porch is not original, but is in good shape, so we decided not to replace it. We had Ornamental Iron Works create a wrought iron hand railing which replaced a railing made of plumbing pipe and plain 2 x 4s.

Now that the exterior restoration is complete, after years of people quickly passing by to look at the neighboring beautifully restored homes, they now stop to look at ours and even take pictures.



Immanuel Lutheran Church before restoration.



The church facade after completion of Phase I work.

A restored finial above the front door.



Immanuel Lutheran Church Revitalized 1420 Lafayette Street by Kay Weinstein

Award Recipients: Immanuel Lutheran Church; David P. Wessel, Principal, Architectural Resources Group Conservation Services: Megan Carver, Project Manager, Conservator, Architectural Resources Group Conservation Services; Paul Power Construction Company; Juan Carlos Lopez Painting.

mmanuel Lutheran Church at 1420 Lafayette Street is receiving a Preservation Award for Good Stewardship. Originally known as the German Lutheran Church, it was designed by Julius E. Krafft, and built by Herbst & McLeod in 1890 at a cost of \$6,000. In 1942, the church was re-named Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Alameda. To learn more about the history of this church, see the article, "Immanuel Lutheran's Gothic Carpentry Praised, Alameda's Oldest Church Building Now Listed in the National Register of Historic Places" by Architectural Historian Elizabeth Krase Greene in the February 2024 edition of the AAPS Preservation Press newsletter (available on the AAPS website).

An Alameda architectural gem, Immanuel Lutheran Church recently completed Phase I of a III-part rehabilitation project on their historic sanctuary. Architectural Resources Group Conservation Services of San Francisco oversaw the stabilization and replacement of the roof over the sanctuary. ARG also oversaw the repainting of the facade in its original colors. The results are stunning! The gray roof

shingles complement the gray trim, the off-white walls and the dark red front doors. This fine example of Gothic Revival design has begun to be restored to its original beauty.

Fun fact: The Helen Room behind the sanctuary used to be the original Sunday School, and in 1906 was enlarged to become the first parsonage, because there was no housing available for the new pastor after the San Francisco Earthquake.

Immanuel Lutheran Church's Music Director, Terry O'Connor, tells of Juan Carlos Lopez Painting Company stripping 6-7 layers of paint off the facade of the sanctuary and discovering initials carved into the wood. Architectural Resources Group Project Manager Megan Carver comments that despite a very wet winter, the project was completed seamlessly. She looks forward to more rehabilitation and seeing the steeple tower re-shingled.

On March 16, 2025 the community was invited to a beautiful Celebration and Dedication of Phase I of the Rehabilitation Project. Featured were Judy Blank, Immanuel's Church Council President; the Rev. Crystal

Larsen Stewart; Hon. Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, Mayor; the Rev. Bishop Jeff R. Johnson, Sierra Pacific Synod; David Wessel, Principal of Architectural Resources Group; Frederica von Stade and the Young Musicians Choral Orchestra. Many AAPS members attended this event.

The Immanuel Lutheran Church Rehabilitation Fund seeks to raise funding to complete the entire rehabilitation of their historic structure. A target of \$500,000 will be needed for Phase II which will complete the repair and painting of the remaining three exterior sanctuary walls, restoration of stainedglass windows and framing, replacement of the tower shingles, removal of an unsupported furnace exhaust chimney, and painting of the sanctuary interior. An additional \$350,000 will be needed for Phase III which will encompass replacing the current brick/mortar foundation with a new reinforced concrete foundation, removing an exterior water heater closet, and installing a quardrail extension to the current choir loft railing.

Donations may be mailed to **Immanuel Lutheran Church** 1910 Santa Clara Avenue, Alameda CA 94501 with "Rehabilitation Project" written on the envelope or memo line of the check, or visit their website: www.immanuel-alameda.org/giving/

Reviving a Marcuse & Remmel Classic at 779 Santa Clara Avenue

by Robert Farrar

Award Recipients: Partners, John Beall and Claire Lloyd.

he 1893 Marcuse & Remmel residence at 779 Santa Clara Avenue, nestled between two other M&R homes, has been lovingly restored after enduring an unfortunate 1970s-era renovation that significantly altered its original facade. Historical photos from 1979 reveal a drastically changed front, featuring a modified roofline and an added brick layer that aged the house poorly.

For four decades, the house served as the residence of Sister Felicia, under the ownership of the Roman Catholic Church of Oakland, where she cultivated a rose garden in the front yard. In 2021, the property came onto the market, attracting the attention of contractor John Beall and his business partner, Claire Lloyd. Recognizing the inherent beauty beneath the dated alterations, they purchased the house. Beall envisioned the project as a chance to revive a hidden Victorian gem. His exploration of the attic uncovered evidence of the original roof supports and front gable, guiding his restoration efforts.

Starting in June 2021, Beall initiated a comprehensive remodeling of both the front and back of the house, securing separate permits for each phase. The initial work focused on creating a comfortable living space, which involved removing energy-saving but aesthetically disruptive 1970s false ceilings to reinstate the original 11-foot ceiling heights. The unremarkable downstairs area was transformed into two bedrooms, two bathrooms (including an ensuite), and a garage.

The subsequent and more challenging phase involved the meticulous reconstruction of the front facade to echo its original design. The addition of a garage necessitated a slightly smaller gable than the original, and the roof pitch was carefully adjusted to integrate with the existing structure. Beall, with a fondness for lonic Greek columns, incorporated two into the front porch design, a unique stylistic element among the island's M&R homes. A second permit facilitated a 12-foot extension at the rear of the house, thoughtfully maintaining the original roof pitch and wall lines for a seamless appearance. This expansion allowed for the relocation of a bathroom and the enlargement of a bedroom.

Leveraging his expertise as a contractor, Beall completed most of the restoration within 18 months, with a few smaller projects slated for completion in the coming year, marking the successful revival of this historic Marcuse & Remmel home.



In 2021 this home was unrecognizable as a Marcuse & Remmel cottage built in 1893.



The challenging phase involved the meticulous reconstruction of the front facade to echo its original design.



A special detail for an M&R.



GET INVOLVED & MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Together we can make a difference in Alameda's future. Share your ideas and participate! We maintain a Google Group list to advise AAPS members on ongoing issues that could affect historic properties.

For more information please contact

Christopher Buckley at 510-523-0411 or cbuckleyAICP@att.net

New Construction: An Old Home Gets New Accessories

by Jerri Holan

Award Recipients: Nancy Lewis, Owner; Hank Hernandez, Alameda Tiny Homes, Builder.

fter Nancy Lewis's husband, Jim, had surgery, they needed a very sterile and controllable environment for him to quarantine in. The Lewis' large, 1906 Colonial Revival was too drafty but they had a large yard that could easily accommodate a small accessory dwelling unit, aka an "ADU." Historically known as in-laws, outlaws, or granny flats, these accessory structures are quite popular now because they offer homeowners many opportunities to improve their properties and state laws have been adopted to encourage their construction. Jim and Nancy took their idea to Hank Hernandez of Alameda Tiny Homes who designed and built a charming cottage for them.

Hank starts with standard plans for these tiny homes, then customizes the plans to suit clients and their properties. For Nancy's house, they selected an 'L' shaped floor plan and added lots of extras: wall

shingles instead of wood siding, window boxes and shutters, solar panels, and double French doors instead of single doors. Then Hank built gable ornaments in each of the gable ends to give the simple roof line some hand-crafted character.

The charming tiny Sherman Street ADU is 525 square feet and includes one bedroom. Not quite Colonial, but certainly not contemporary, the style of the tiny home could be called 'traditional.' It harmonizes with the main house and uses similar features and finishes, such as a gable roof, dividedlight doors, and shingle siding, so that all the materials blend together, making the cottage feel as if it's always been a part of the larger estate. And this is not by accident: in Alameda, the City encourages new accessory structures to be sympathetic with the original home, especially if it's historic.

The modest cottage was completed in three months. Then Nancy's dilapidated old garage needed attention. After a very, very long wait for a demolition permit, Hank finally rebuilt this structure. It, too, blends in with the older home as well as the new ADU through the use of shingle siding, a gable roof, double French doors (again) and panel garage doors.

With an arbor and some trellis work, all three structures are tied together into one harmonious family. And with new landscaping, a fountain courtyard and brick driveway, the tiny home is a perfect fit for its older home, and a good sister to its brother garage. Nancy and Hank did such a good job, in fact, that the City uses a video of their project on its website to show homeowners how to build ADUs. Take a look!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YD4tHNP3sKs





The courtyard between the Garage and ADU. The garage was also rebuilt by Hank Hernandez of Alameda Tiny Homes.

The L-shaped ADU is 525 square feet and includes one bedroom.



The Tiny Home ensemble harmonizes with the main house and uses similar features and finishes to blend in.

Painted Lady Award for a Marcuse & Remmel Victorian

by Karen Lithgow

Award Recipients: Robert and Elizabeth Farrar, Owners.

n 1992, Robert and Elizabeth Farrar set out to find a home in Alameda. They discovered a spacious Marcuse & Remmel Victorian brimming with potential. Elizabeth was drawn to this particular Victorian for its appealing layout. However, the house was in disrepair at the time of purchase. Robert prioritized creating a functional bathroom, as the previous elderly owners had modified the only full bathroom for wheelchair access. The Farrars undertook extensive renovations, replacing the plumbing and electrical systems, the brick foundation, multiple aluminum-framed windows, and the roof. They also upgraded the basement rental unit to help offset restoration costs.

During that period, many nearby vintage homes were in a state of decline, characterized by faded, peeling monochromatic paint schemes and missing architectural details such as gingerbread trim and wooden stair bannisters. Robert recognized that their Victorian's facade retained a remarkable amount of gingerbread detail, including exquisite plasterwork friezes adorned with shells and other decorative elements. The rounded porch, typical of Marcuse and Remmel Victorians, featured fanciful corner cutouts, pendants, and spindles. Unfortunately, these details were obscured by a dull tan-mustard color that enveloped the home.

Robert and Elizabeth were introduced to Building Exterior Colorist Bob Buckter, who was tasked with developing a color scheme to accentuate the architectural details. In 1999, they collaborated with Buckter to create a color palette for their home, selecting gray-green as the base color. Buckter devised a four-color paint scheme that included a gold hue to highlight the gingerbread details. This new color combination provided sufficient contrast between the plasterwork, gingerbread, and background, showcasing the intricate details and enhancing the lovely spindle work and cutouts. During the 1990s, it was common to apply a single base color to the entire exterior of Victorians.

In 2002, the Farrars temporarily relocated for work, returning to Alameda in 2015. With Robert recently retired and eager to continue the restoration of their home, both inside and out, he began in 2017 to expand the exterior paint scheme. This time, he collaborated with Bob Buckter to incorporate a broader palette of eight vibrant colors. Robert took on the project solo, securing his own scaffolding and dedicating three weeks to each side of the house. He introduced a darker color to the lower half of the house, reflecting a new trend in Victorian exteriors. The front section, rich in gingerbread detail, required three months of work, including the repair of the seashell plaster and the application of four colors on each spindle. Additionally, he enhanced the design with more gold leaf, a striking improvement over gold paint, which Robert learned to apply himself. Since then, he has utilized his newfound expertise in gold leafing to assist others with their painting projects and to teach workshops for the AAPS. He has also gained extensive knowledge about Marcuse & Remmel Victorians, becoming a valuable resource for the community.



The house before any painting which had just one exterior color.



Cheap labor provided by future restorers Steven Farrar and Rowan Lithgow.





The final result includes the remodeled front staircase.

2024 Preservation Award Plaques Around Town



1538 Verdi Street Owners, Rita L. Clancy and Michael D. Wallace





1028 Eagle Avenue Owner, Kathi Honegger



1926 Chestnut Street Owner, Rick Gomez



2168 Alameda Avenue Owners, Erik and Vanessa Johnson



1222 Park Street Owners, Aaron Kraw, Justin Jarin, Miquel Rodriguez, James Rollins, Alicia Cotta, and Dave Kim



Photos by Liz and Robert Farrar





1436 Webster Street Owners, Tim McCarthy and Family



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 Twenty-Eighth Annual

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For more information, please contact:
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P.O. Box 1677 • Alameda, CA 94501
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AAPS SCHEDULE of EVENTS 2025

SUNDAY, JUNE 8 • 5:00 PM - 7:00 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