

## Presentation highlights city's architecture

By Chris De Benedetti, STAFF WRITER

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### FREMONT

WIVES of local sailors in the 19th century sometimes climbed to a deck atop their homes to glimpse San Francisco Bay, scanning the waters for their husbands returning on ships from long trips abroad.

These "Widow's Walks" — so-called because shipmen were gone so long their wives virtually were "widows" — are part of the architectural history of Fremont's past homes, said Al Minard, a local historian and preservationist.

"This was when the Alameda Creek and estuaries were navigable by sailing ships, before they started damming up the rivers," he said. "The Bay was closer (to Fremont) then."

Minard will discuss this and other home designs buried in the city's past in his lecture, titled "Fremont's Forgotten Architectural History," which is scheduled to begin at 7 tonight at the Fremont Main Library.

The presentation is part of the library's lecture series, a monthly program on city history held every third Wednesday.

Minard volunteers on the Celebrate Fremont Heritage Team, a grass-roots group administering the lecture series and many other community events commemorating the city's 50th anniversary this year. The

retired NUMMI maintenance mechanic also leads the monthly Heritage Bus Tours that take people through Fremont's original five districts.

Janet Cronbach, reference services librarian at the Fremont Main Library, took a Minard-led tour of Fremont homes last fall.

"It was fascinating to hear about some of the things that have happened in Fremont," said Cronbach, responsible for the library's local history collection. "These homes make Fremont unique and (learning about them) provides us a tie with our past."

Minard and fellow Heritage Team member Nydia Estrada have spearheaded the recent creation of a photo book about Fremont architecture, titled "Our City Fremont: A Photo Tour," which can be purchased for \$5 at tonight's lecture.

Minard's passion for local history and preservation is seemingly limitless, as he also volunteers for several historical organizations, including the:

- Mission Peak Heritage Foundation.
- Washington Township Historical Society.
- Alameda County Historical Society.
- Union City Historical Museum.
- Patterson House Advisory Board.



LOCAL HISTORIAN AL MINARD (right) leads a bus tour through Fremont neighborhoods. He will present a virtual tour of the city's architectural history tonight. Presentation highlights city's architecture (ANDA CHU Staff)



People board a restored 1958 General Motors bus owned by the Pacific Bus Museum Saturday afternoon, February 25, 2006, for the Celebrate Fremont Heritage Tour. (Anda Chu - STAFF)

-Conference of California Historical Societies.

In addition, the Fremont Historical Architectural Review Board gave him a plaque in February to honor him for completing eight years of service before being termed out this year. In recent months, he has worked with the Bay Area Historic House Museums on a book chronicling the region's historical homes.

Another unique Fremont building is the Sim Cottage at Shinn Park, which is made of wood from an old sailing ship, Minard said, adding this type of "color and character" should be preserved for the community.

"You can't rebuild a Shinn House or a Patterson House," he said. "They're built with materials that are no longer available and with techniques that are long forgotten by people who were geniuses at their craft.

"Once (a historical home) is gone, it's gone forever."

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