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The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, December 3 at 2:00 p.m.
Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Free & open to the public
Cookies & coffee

Palo Alto Vignettes



EMCEE FOR MEETING:
Karen Holman
Executive Director
Palo Alto History
Museum Project

at the corner of Embarcadero and El Camino where Town & Country Village is now. What former child is not taken back to some personal memory by the innocence and excitement the circus always brought?

This year, we offer new stories for your pleasure, some holiday and some general remembrances. We hope you will join us to have your heart warmed, your funny bone tickled, and your spirit raised by sharing with others these new offerings of the holiday season. —*by Karen Holman*

When the trees begin dropping their leaves, the evenings turn chilly and basketball season tips off, I look forward to the stories that many of you have brought to our December program.

Through Palo Alto Vignettes, we've heard tales about Emil Molinari, the much-loved vegetable man who delivered to Palo Alto homes for so many years. Cole Richmond spoke to us about the cherished AME Church on Ramona. From Mel Pratt, we learned about operating the family grocery, long gone, on Alma Street near downtown.

Would we have otherwise known what it was like spending summers in the stately Squire House on University Avenue? We were charmed by descendants of the Squire family. Patty McEwen enlivened our spirits by painting a scene of Patty and her father watching the circus come to town and set up



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PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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The Palo Alto Historical Association, a non-profit organization, was established in 1948 as successor to an earlier organization founded in 1913. Its main objectives are:

- Collect, organize, and preserve materials pertaining to the history and heritage of Palo Alto.
- Spread information about Palo Alto's history by means of programs, displays, and publications.
- Recognize and preserve historic sites and structures.

The Guy Miller Archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association are stored at the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road.

Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month (except for August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 p.m.

General meetings are held the first Sunday of each month (Oct.–Dec., Feb.–May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 p.m. The final general meeting of the year is held in June and includes a dinner and a program. The public is welcome at all meetings.

PAHA HERITAGE PROGRAMS

≡ CHANNEL 30 ≡

NOVEMBER: THE 1950s, OUR SCHOOLS AFTER WWII

DECEMBER: THE SECRET HISTORY OF SILICON VALLEY

JANUARY: PALO ALTO VIGNETTES

SCHEDULE

Wednesdays 8:00 p.m.

Thursdays Noon

Saturdays 1:00 p.m.

Videos of past PAHA meetings can be checked out from the Main Library's History Desk:
Tuesday evenings
Thursday afternoons

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

RUTH LACEY

Museum Celebrates Businesses—Antique cars were on display outside the Cardinal Hotel on October 26 leading people inside to the Palo Alto History Museum's celebration of 60 Palo Alto businesses that have been in operation for fifty years or more. Exhibits included videos, photo collages, and digital presentations. Six businesses were featured with owners relating short histories of their beginnings. Honorary chairs, owner, Georgie Gleim and Joe Simitian, California State Senator, presented a roll call of businesses by the decade in which they were started. Our local historian, Steve Staiger, connected each decade to historical events occurring elsewhere. The final speaker, Gary Fazzino, former Palo Alto mayor, emphasized the richness of Palo Alto's history that needs to be preserved in the City's own museum.



The Cardinal Hotel as it was in 1924. The hotel was the location of last month's 60 Over 50 event celebrating local businesses. The lobby is restored in keeping with its former appearance. (Photo courtesy of PAHA archives.)

FROM THE DESK OF THE HISTORIAN

STEVE STAIGER

Today's complaints about the commercialization of Christmas are nothing new. In 1924, Macy's sponsored its first Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City to kick off the holiday shopping season.

Two years earlier, Palo Alto's merchants were equally proactive in seeking additional business when they announced a Christmas Party to be held on Friday evening, December 8, 1922. Following months of detailed planning, the Palo Alto Merchants' Association invited residents and their out-of-town friends to attend the "night of 1,000 wonders."

A 50-car motor parade visited the towns surrounding Palo Alto on Thursday afternoon to encourage those residents to attend the gala event the following night. A poster for the event promised that 125 stores would be open "for the purpose of entertaining you." Activities for adults and children would include music and dancing, refreshments, gifts, and a "real" wedding to be held at the Community House at 10:30 pm, with an open invitation to attend.

Miss Gertrude Lorraine Johannsen of San Jose and John Frederick Pitts were indeed married that evening with several thousand people as guests. The Stanford University Band played the wedding march as the couple took its place before the minister on the Community House veranda. A wedding supper was served to the bridal party and about 125 friends at the Ramona Cafeteria. The groom was affiliated with the Piggly Wiggly chain stores which recently opened a store in Palo Alto.

According to the local merchants, the Christmas Party was a success with an estimated crowd of 15,000 attending the festivities. The only negative was the report of shoplifters busy in numerous stores. The merchants planned to repeat the event the following year, but without the wedding.

PAHA's ATTIC

Many long-time residents are holding onto Palo Alto-related objects in the hope that a proper place to display them will be found. For years, due to space limitations, PAHA did not accept such three-dimensional artifacts. However, in 1992, an offer too tempting to refuse came to the PAHA Board of Directors. Did we want the large bank safe from the first bank in Palo Alto? It even had banker Parkinson's name lettered in gold. Susan Winn made the motion to accept the safe, and so began our collection in earnest.

Soon came the offer of a large portrait of young Leland Stanford, Jr. painted by Astley David Montague Cooper. Fortunately, the Museum of American Heritage agreed to display it on the wall of their stairway. Items began to emerge from attics: vintage clothing such as Mr. Wideman's tuxedo, women's dresses of the early 1900s, business items including local milk bottles, a Palo Alto Soda Works bottle and legal seal embossers. Former mayor, Frances Dias, first woman mayor of Palo Alto, donated her artifacts. The Los Altos History House gave PAHA a two-man logging saw and sculptured busts of Don Secundo Robles and the Stanford family by Anne Fitz.

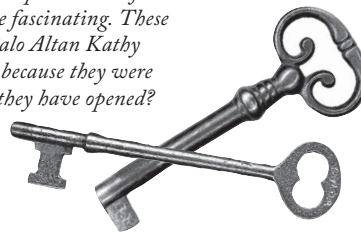
Needless to say, all the items required storage space. Fortunately, we located a small storage locker which is now very close to being completely filled. Our safe has been moved several times and is now stored at 525 University Avenue waiting for the new bank to move into that space.

If anyone knows of free, secure, dry storage space, please call the PAHA Board at (650) 326-3355. We really do need the Palo Alto History Museum. —Beth Bunnenberg



Security Safe Company moving the PAHA bank safe from the Palo Alto Medical Foundation's warehouse storage in 1997. (Photo from Beth Bunnenberg.)

Keys to the safe? Not really. People save artifacts from the past because they are fascinating. These two antique keys belong to Palo Altan Kathy Torgersen. We scanned them because they were interesting. Whatever could they have opened?



WILLIAMS HOUSE TURNS 100

Five months after the Great Earthquake of 1906, Dr. Thomas Williams filed an application for a building permit for a new residence at 351 Homer Avenue. In 1907, Dr. Williams, his wife, Dora, and their two daughters Betty and Rhona, moved into their new home designed by noted architect Ernest Coxhead. They were the only family to live in the house.

The Museum of American Heritage and PAST Heritage will celebrate the 100th anniversary of this historic upper middle class home with two exhibits. The first exhibit, opening February 9, 2007, will focus on the early part of the 20th century, from 1907 to 1932.

Members of PAST Heritage will lead tours highlighting the house's architectural features and family history. They are especially looking for artifacts that relate directly to the Williams family's lives: objects associated with the early days at Stanford University, a wooden icebox, and a steamer trunk. If you have any of these items and are willing to lend them for the anniversary celebration, please call me, Beth Bunnenberg, at: (650) 326-3813, or Betty Brittan (650) 328-0760. —Beth Bunnenberg



The garden gate to the 100 year old Williams House, now home to the Museum of American Heritage. (Photo from Joe Shakes.)



Holiday House Tour

The Palo Alto Stanford Heritage 19th Annual Holiday House Tour will be held on Sunday, December 10, from 1 to 4PM in Professorville. Six houses, all at least 100 years old, will be open. Two are what the newspapers of that day called "Handsome Residences" and one is a "Neat Cottage." The other three are bungalows, one of which was the home of William Hewlett and David Packard, now known as the Birthplace of Silicon Valley.

Tickets will be limited. The price is \$20 before December 1 and \$25 on the day of the tour, if available. Checks should be made out to PAST Heritage and sent to P.O.Box 308, Palo Alto, CA 94302.

Wanted—Lost Videos!

Did you participate in a PAHA monthly program and receive a video-tape of the program? We may need to copy your tape! I have inventoried PAHA's collection of program videos and discovered that some tapes are missing. Most videos made by Alice Beach are lost as well as some made by Ruth Lacey. I am anxious to recover any of the missing tapes so the PAHA archive can be as complete as possible. These tapes are an important part of Palo Alto history as well as a source for material for new videos that PAHA may produce.

Please contact Brian George, 650-494-0561 or briang8897@aol.com if you can help. —*Brian George, PAHA Videographer*

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PAHA MEMBER?

Here's how... Pick up a brochure at any library or at one of our general meetings. Or, send your name, address, phone number and email address to

PAHA, P.O. Box 193
Palo Alto, CA 94302

with a check for your choice of membership: Individual: \$25; Family: \$40; Sustaining: \$60; Business: \$100; Life: \$350.

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