

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 7  
APRIL 2007  
www.pahistory.org

# The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, May 6 at 2:00 p.m.  
Lucie Stern Community Center  
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Free & open to the public  
Cookies & coffee

## PART—Palo Alto Rapid Transit Streetcars & Interurbans Once Ran in Palo Alto



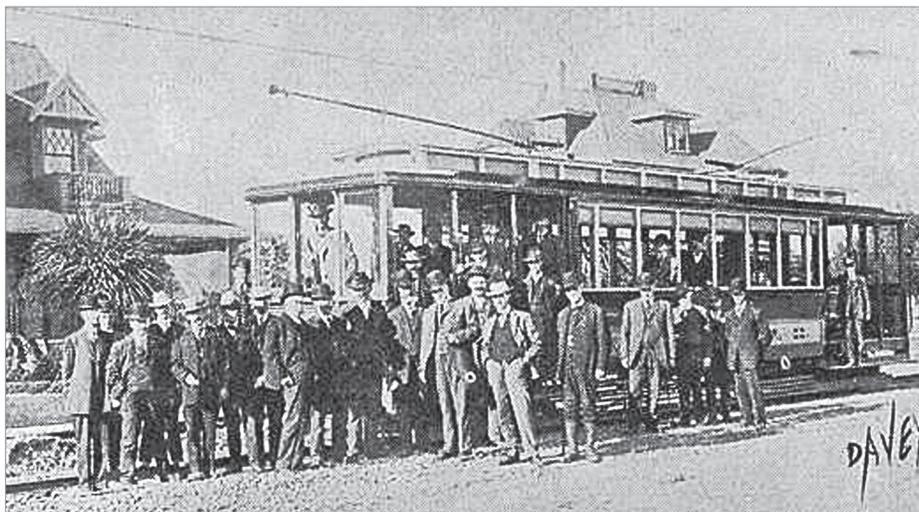
**SPEAKER:**  
Steve Staiger, Palo Alto  
Librarian & Historian,  
Member of PAHA  
Board of Directors

Streetcars, trolleys, and busses have been a part of Palo Alto life since the Marguerite wagons first brought Stanford students from the rail line to campus in the horse and buggy days.

This month PAHA historian, Steve Staiger, and videographer, Brian George, join their talents and interest in urban transportation to bring us the history of rapid, and not so rapid, public transit in Palo Alto.

Steve has been historian for the Palo Alto History Museum for the past twenty-two years. Born in Mill Valley in Marin County, he graduated from Tamalpais High School before going on to the U.C. Davis where he earned a B.S. in History and then U.C. Berkeley for a Master's degree in Library Science. He is a regular columnist for this publication.

*Mayor Parkinson, as motorman,  
driving the first electric car over Palo  
Alto's new railroad. Photo by Davey,  
in the November 14, 1906,  
Palo Alto Tribune (courtesy of the  
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 meeting of the year, held in June, includes a dinner and program. The public is welcome.

**PAHA HERITAGE PROGRAMS**

≡ CHANNEL 30 ≡

**APRIL: SEEN ANY GOOD MOVIES LATELY?**

**MAY: WHAT DID YOU SAY? ORAL HISTORY 101**

**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 during historian's hours:

Tuesday evenings  
Thursday afternoons

## Peninsular Railways' Number 52

In preparation for this month's talk on the streetcars of Palo Alto I visited a great little museum. Well it is not really that small—it stretches more than 18 miles in length.

For many years I have known that one of the streetcars that ran on the interurban rail line in Palo Alto was alive and well in Solano County. On a Saturday in March our videographer Brian George and I, accompanied by our wives, drove to the Western Railroad Museum. The museum is located on the former Sacramento Northern mainline which intersects Highway 12 between Fairfield and Rio Vista. At one time the Sacramento Northern ran electric interurban trains from Oakland to Chico via Sacramento.

### FROM THE DESK OF THE HISTORIAN

STEVE STAIGER

Utilizing a portion of the abandoned track, the museum operates its collection of streetcars and interurbans up and down a five mile stretch of track that runs through the Solano County countryside, empty except for numerous sheep and 100 giant windmills.

One car in their collection is the Peninsular Railways' Number 52 which ran from San Jose to Palo Alto via Cupertino, Los Altos and Mayfield. The museum has more than a dozen old streetcars and interurbans that operate on weekends from their facility alongside Highway 12, with Travis Air Base and its huge planes visible in the distance.

When the volunteer staff at the museum realized why we were there, they gladly adjusted the schedule to feature Number 52 on the first run



*Car 52, which once ran from San Jose to Palo Alto, is part of the Western Railroad Museum's collection in Solano County. (Photo courtesy of the Museum's online files: BAERA #24620, at [www.wrm.org](http://www.wrm.org).)*

that morning. Brian, as you will see on May 6, filmed the car inside and outside as it ran down the rails. We also rode other cars and were able to examine numerous other examples of streetcars and interurbans from Bay Area electric rail lines, including Napa Valley, San Francisco Muni, Sacramento, and several from the Key System which operated in the East Bay into the 1950s.

The museum operates a visitors center with a library, gift shop plus a snack shop and picnic grounds. There is also a restoration barn where you can observe the volunteers repairing and restoring additional cars in their collection.

In the past I have discussed some of the fine local history museums that can be visited in the Bay Area. To that list of museums worthy of your interest, I would add the Western Railroad Museum ([www.wrm.org](http://www.wrm.org)). It is a great place for children or grandchildren, but also for those who remember the streetcars and interurbans that ran throughout the Bay Area.



*Trolley on University Avenue passing the Varsity Theater and heading towards Stanford campus, c. 1910–1925 (courtesy of the Palo Alto Historical Association).*

# Palo Alto Historical Association ANNUAL DINNER

*Everyone is welcome to attend*

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

Social Hour, 6:00 PM

Dinner, 7:00 PM

Sheraton Palo Alto  
625 El Camino Real, Palo Alto

*featuring*

## Memoirs of WWII

**Guest Speaker: Andy Doty**  
**Director of Community Relations (Retired)**  
**Stanford University**

### MENU

Caesar Salad

*Entrée choice of*

Marinated Grilled Free Range Chicken Breast

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Steamed Asparagus

*or*

Porcini Ravioli

Gorgonzola Cream Sauce & Roasted Pine Nuts

Dessert of Tiramisu

Coffee, Herbal Teas

NOTE: Sheraton Palo Alto now charges for parking so we encourage you to carpool.

**ANNUAL DINNER RESERVATION FORM**

Please mail this form with your check to:

PAHA Annual Dinner

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

To make your dinner reservations, fill out the form below. Reservations must be received before June 1, 2007.

<i>Name(s)</i>	<i>Entrée Choice: Chicken    Vegetarian</i>	
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I/We wish # \_\_\_\_\_ reservations at \$42.00 each for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I/We want to contribute \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to PAHA  
(anything in excess of the dinner price is tax deductible). Total enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# NOMINATIONS FOR THE PAHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Nominating Committee has recommended three new Board members for three-year terms: Jeanne McDonnell, Bardy Wallace and Ruth Lacey.

Current Board members who are standing for a new three-year term are: Gwen Barry, Judy Leahy, Michael Litfin, Peggy McKee, Carol Murden, and Dick Rosenbaum.

Members at large may put a name in nomination by preparing a petition signed by at least 10 members of PAHA and submit it to Jan Murphy, Recording Secretary, at 650.493.2477 before Wednesday, May 2. The membership will elect new members to the Board at the PAHA Annual Dinner on Wednesday, June 6, 2007.



## Williams House Exhibit

The Museum of American heritage celebrates the rooth anniversary of the Williams House with an exhibit that highlights the family's life, 1907-1932. The exhibit runs February 9 through June 3, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11-4.

Located at 351 Homer Avenue in Palo Alto, admission is free. See [www.moah.org](http://www.moah.org) for more information.

*Photo shows the Garden gate of the Williams House.*

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Douglas L. Graham  
Matt Bowling

## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PAHA MEMBER?

*Here's how...* Pick up a brochure at any library or 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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APRIL 2007

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