

OCTOBER 2009
VOLUME 33, NUMBER 1

The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Sunday, October 4 at 2:00 PM at the
Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Charles Dickens and the Woman's Club of Palo Alto



SPEAKER:
**Margaret
Rodgers Feuer**
**Former Woman's
Club President**

WHEN PEOPLE STROLL PAST THE HANDSOME TUDOR CRAFTSMAN building at 475 Homer Avenue, they often wonder "What goes on in there anyway?" The answer to that question and others will be provided by Margaret Feuer at our October 4th meeting. Former President of the Woman's Club, Margaret will discuss the 115 year history of the Woman's Club of Palo Alto and its relationship to the history of women in America.

The Club's first President, Mary Grafton Campbell, foresaw the accomplishments of the women of the Club when, in 1894, she congratulated Palo Alto on "no longer being a sort of half orphan, since it now has City Mothers as well as City Fathers, thus ensuring the better nature" of our City.

Join us to discover how the Woman's Club made and continues to make Palo Alto a great place to live. And definitely come to find out what Charles Dickens, who died in 1870, had to do with a Club founded in 1894!

*Mary Campbell
First President of the
Woman's Club*



Clubhouse, 475 Homer Avenue. Constructed 1916.



Come if you can: This time there will be something extra, that is, giving special notice to Steve Staiger, who has served as our town historian for 25 years. Plus, being there is a chance to talk personally with the speaker and socialize while enjoying our after-program refreshments. If you miss that personal touch, our board member Brian George videotapes the programs which appear the following month on cable Channel 30. The tapes can also be checked out at the history desk in the Main Library.

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 193 • Palo Alto, CA 94302
650.326.3355 • www.pahistory.org

Jeanne McDonnell, Peggy McKee,
Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre

Editors

Harriette Shakes, *Design*
Omega Printing, *Printing*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Doug Graham <i>President</i>	Brian George <i>First Vice President</i>
Gwen Barry <i>Second Vice President</i>	Bardy Wallace <i>Recording Secretary</i>
Bob Jack <i>Treasurer</i>	Steve Staiger <i>Historian</i>
Chris Botsford	Matt Bowling
Beth Bunnenberg	Vicky Ching
Betty Gerard	Georgie Gleim
Karen Holman	Judy Leahy
Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre	
Jeanne McDonnell	Peggy McKee
Dick Rosenbaum	Tom Wyman

Board meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 P.M. Schedule of public meetings on p.4.

Ask Steve!

by **Beth Bunnenberg**

ON SEPTEMBER 13, 1984, THE PAHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIRED YOUNG reference librarian Steve Staiger as Palo Alto Historical Association historian. Thus began the oft-repeated phrase, "Ask Steve." Patty McEwen and several other current members were on the board that year.

Program Chair Jesse Gaspar remembers Steve's joy at discovering local history and sharing it. Carolyn George found him always helpful as she worked on Historic Resource Board forms. Gloria Brown and Steve both worked on the Centennial History Book to make it the best.

Through the years, hundreds of Palo Alto "old timers," newcomers, children, teachers, writers, artists, genealogists, and browsers have appeared at the History Desk to "Ask Steve." Long ago, the phrase was "Ask Guy Miller." Now it is "Ask Steve" and he will teach you how to find it. He might even toss in a San Francisco Giants fact or two.

Steve, here's to 25 years and counting. Thank you, Steve, you have enriched our lives and made the community aware of our local history. We will see you Tuesdays and Thursdays for that photograph, committee meeting, program idea, etc. But do not ask Steve to stay too late because he still plays softball and needs to see his grandchildren.

Golden Dreams

I HAVE JUST FINISHED READING KEVIN STARR'S BOOK *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963*, the eighth in his "America and the California Dream" series. As with his previous titles, Starr, the California State Librarian Emeritus and a professor at the University of Southern California, has done a masterful job of regaling us with the story of California, both the big picture and numerous stories full of interesting detail.

As a student of California history, both academically and for personal interest,



FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

I have read many histories covering episodes in California's past as well as several histories that have attempted to tell the entire story. It has taken Starr eight full-sized volumes to tell his version of California's past, and he still has yet to cover the late 1960's through the 1980's.

He identifies major themes in each volume's time period, and then describes in amazing detail certain events to illustrate how they changed California. This volume in the series is of particular interest to me because it covers the 1950's and early 1960's, the first 13 years of my life. There are stories of events and personalities that I do not recall (being too young) but later heard or read about such as the role of Earl Warren in California state politics (by the time I was aware of Warren he was on the United States Supreme Court).



Kevin Starr, professor of history at the University of Southern California and California State Librarian Emeritus, gave the inaugural talk for the Quake '06 Centennial Lecture Series at Kresge Auditorium.

I recall some of his stories about events and personalities without having fully understood at the time, such as the move of the Los Angeles Dodgers and the San Francisco Giants to California in 1958, or the 1964 vote to defeat the Rumford Fair Housing Act (Proposition 14).

Everyone interested in California's history should read this book or try other titles in the series. All can be found in the Palo Alto City Library collection.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Carolyn Feroben
Tom & Sharon Kelley
Mary Lorey
Leo Lotter, Ph.D
Betty Moore
Joseph & Alice Oeschger
Lolly Osborne
R. Fabian Pease
Gayle & Hank Riggs

IN MEMORIAM

ROLAND CHENOWETH DAVIS

Throughout his adult life, Roland contributed greatly to the well-being and character of Palo Alto. He died in September at the age of 98. He and his wife were life members of PAHA, and helped the organization in many ways over many years. Time for this issue does not permit a longer tribute to him, which we will publish in November. We are grateful that the family requested donations to be made to PAHA in his honor.



“PAH-hah”, We Call Ourselves



FROM
Douglas L. Graham
PAHA President,
2009-2010

“PAH-HAH”, WE CALL OURSELVES. THE PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION. We are sometimes confused with MOAH, the Museum of American Heritage on Homer Avenue, which we pronounce as “MOH-ah”, a little bit like you might ask for “more” if you were from North Georgia. Increasingly, we will probably be confused with our young offshoot, PAHM, the Palo Alto Historical Museum-to-be. I’m not sure if we have yet agreed on how to pronounce PAHM. Also, we are not to be confused with PAST, Palo Alto—Stanford Heritage, which is in the historical preservation business, focusing primarily on preserving old but interesting houses, such as the many architectural gems in Professorville.

So, what does PAH-hah do and who does it? PAHA consists of 300-400 members, a Board of Directors with 17 members currently, and 17 committees of varying sizes, all with too much work to do. One of our objectives in 2009-2010 is to encourage more members to get directly involved in PAHA programs.

PAHA has two main purposes;

- (1) To collect, organize and preserve archives of Palo Alto history.
- (2) To spread information about Palo Alto history through public programs, exhibits, publications, public cable TV, oral histories, historic videos, and the web site.

The Board and its committees currently manage and administer several major programs;

The Guy Miller Archives currently located at the Main Library under the supervision of the Historian, Steve Staiger, who is our sole employee (although there is a contractor assistant, part-time like Steve).

The public programs (seven every year plus an annual dinner). The speakers of the public programs are recorded and shown on local cable TV.

Publications—The *Tall Tree* 8 times per year, plus sales of *The Streets of Palo Alto* and *The Parks of Palo Alto*. This fiscal year (2009-10) we intend to produce a new book by Matt Bowling, a collection of the best of his newspaper articles.

The web site, which will be expanded to include a collection of 13,000 historic photographs. These are already available at the Guy Miller Archives.

Expansion of a small collection of oral histories (audio) and videotapes (including, for the historically-minded masochists, several years of City Council meetings).

Underlying our main work are administrative and support committees and projects.

(1) Funding and expenditure control is critical, of course. In 2008-2009 we took in about \$45,000, spent about \$56,000 and ended the year with about \$88,000 in assets. The net loss was primarily (but not totally) caused by deliberately using savings derived from profits made in the 1990s from sales of the Centennial History, which are now being used to meet the one-time costs of the web site photo project.

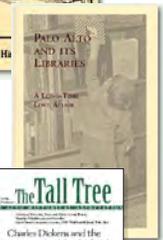
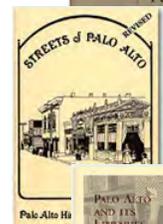
(2) The archives are exceeding capacity at the main library, both on the ground floor and in the basement. We are expanding our public storage space from one unit to two and inventorying what is in public storage so that we can begin to make these historic materials available to the public.

This is your association. We can only move forward on these and other programs by constantly bringing in new people. We need your help.

Thank You From All Palo Altans

A MEMBER HAS RECENTLY PLEDGED \$5000 TO OUR ASSOCIATION TO ENSURE THAT our photo digitalization project continues to place our photographs on our website so they may be viewed by everyone interested in Palo Alto’s history. There is a concern that this important project can not be entirely funded by the Association’s reserves. In the past, the Cable Coop and the Friends of the Palo Alto Library have contributed significantly to the project’s ongoing expenses.

It is the donor’s hope that her gift will encourage other members to make similar contributions to keep this worthwhile project funded in the forthcoming years. Her gift will provide for the staffing required to catalog hundreds of additional images to the several thousand photographs already processed. It is the Board’s hope that you will consider joining her in supporting this sharing of Palo Alto’s historical images by making your own donation. If you have any questions please contact Steve Staiger at the library at 650 326 3355 or Beth Bunnenburg at 326 3813, or visit the history archives in the Main Library from 2:00 to 5:00 Thursdays or 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Tuesdays.



Steve Staiger, Historian, at his desk at the Main Library, plus thumbnails of PAHA publications.



BECOME A MEMBER OF PAHA

- ☛ Individual \$25
- ☛ Family \$49
- ☛ Sustaining \$60
- ☛ Business/Sponsor \$100
- ☛ Life \$350

Make check payable to PAHA and mail to:

PAHA Box 193
Palo Alto, CA 94302

Save A Life!

WE ARE MOVING AHEAD WITH PLANS TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR anyone wishing to record their personal history or share stories of life in Palo Alto. The Media Center on San Antonio Rd. has offered space for twice weekly recording sessions and PAHA will be providing the recording system. This system will produce an audio CD for each speaker as well as a digital copy for the PAHA archives. The sessions should start by the end of October.

We need volunteers to run the sessions which are 4 hours long. We will train the volunteers in how to make the recordings as well as any support activities needed to make the sessions run smoothly.

Please let us know if you would like more information or are ready to volunteer. You can leave a message on PAHA's phone, 650-326-3355 or contact Carol Mitchell at 650-326-6951 or e-mail: carolmitchell@sbcglobal.net.

Heritage Programs

DURING SEPTEMBER THE HERITAGE PROGRAM ON CABLE CHANNEL 30 is a rerun of "Seen Any Good Movies Lately?" It features movies about Palo Alto people and events as well as advice on preservation of media including film, video/audio tape, and photos. Wednesdays 8:00 p.m., Thursdays at noon, Saturdays at 1:00 p.m.

October will repeat "What Did You Say?", a valuable program on making oral histories, a good introduction for anyone interested in using PAHA'S planned facilities for saving a life by recording oral histories.



PAHA's Public Meetings to Come

At Lucie Stern Community Center, 2:00 PM

NEXT MEETINGS:

NOVEMBER 1

This Old House

Speaker: Carol Blitzer,
Reporter, Palo Alto Weekly

DECEMBER 6

Vignettes

Hosted by Karen Holman
Project Director
Palo Alto History Museum

PROGRAMS TO BE ANNOUNCED:

January 31

March 7

April 4

May 2

June Banquet



The Tall Tree

OCTOBER 2009

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 193

PALO ALTO, CA 94302

www.pahistory.org

NEXT MEETING:

Sunday, October 4

Lucie Stern Community Center

Refreshments will be served.