

DECEMBER 2010
VOLUME 34, NUMBER 3

The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Sunday, December 5 at 2:00 PM at the
Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

PALO ALTO *Vignettes*



Karen Holman
Vignettes Master of Ceremony
PAHA member and
Palo Alto councilmember

WHEN SURVEYING A COMMUNITY'S ASSETS, we in Palo Alto are rich beyond imagination. Even in difficult economic times, our wealth is worthy of celebration. And, of course, wealth is not to be counted in dollars and cents alone.

Remarkable canopy, architectural landmarks, venerable businesses, environmental assets, intellectual capital, an army of committed volunteers and community leaders... these are only a sampling of our local riches. To honor a few of these and very possibly be reminded of your own part in ensuring the continuing legacy, you are invited to join us for our annual Palo Alto Vignettes program.

The best of outcomes for a landmark home is that the people moving along are supplanted by a family that equally appreciates what it is that is being entrusted to them. Share in this happy outcome for both families and the Professorville treasure that benefits and in turn benefits the community.

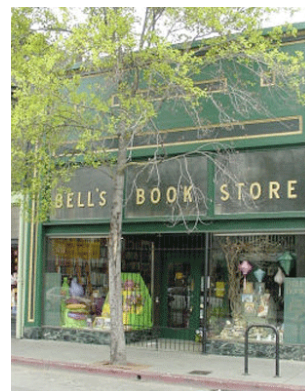
Trees and water have been an integral part of Palo Alto since its earliest beginnings. Join Dave Dockter, Palo Alto's Managing Arborist, to learn more about our canopy as asset, what has preserved and what challenges it.

And lastly, even as communities change over time, how lucky we are to have some businesses that have remained steadfast in our town. The stories shared and experienced in the life of a decades-long retailer are vast and could by themselves be a volume of work.

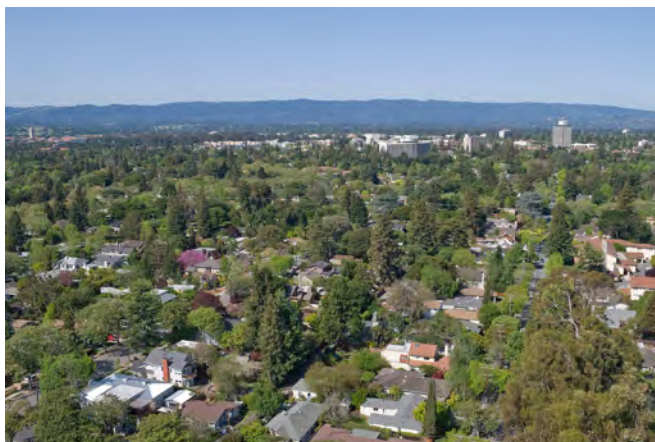
A sampling of these riches and more will be shared with you at our December program. Yours for the asking.



THE DECEMBER CABLE program, *Heritage*, on Channel 30 will be "Busman's Holiday: Edward Durell Stone & Palo Alto," presented by Bob Skolmen, November 7, 2010. DVDs of previous PAHA programs are available at the Main Library's History Desk, Tuesday, 4–8 PM and Thursday, 1–4 PM.



Bell's Books, downtown Palo Alto
(courtesy Matt Bowling)



Palo Alto's canopy, a kite photograph by Scott Haefner, courtesy of Canopy
(www.canopy.org)

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The Palo Alto Historical Association, is a non-profit organization. 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 PAHA are stored at the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road. See the calendar, p.4, for the schedule of public meetings.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



Charles Junkerman
Diana Steeples

BECOME A MEMBER OF PAHA

- Individual \$25
- Family \$40
- Sustaining \$60
- Business/Sponsor \$100
- Life \$350

Make check payable to PAHA and mail to: PAHA Box 193

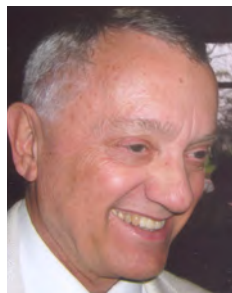
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Or join online at www.pahistory.org.

Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee.

California Woman Suffrage—100th

OCTOBER, 2011 WILL MARK THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE in California. California voters passed Proposition 4, granting women the right to vote in 1911, 9 years before 36 other states ratified the 19th Amendment to the



THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT: Douglas Graham

U.S. Constitution, allowing women across the nation to exercise their right to vote. The 75th Anniversary, 1986, was the occasion for many celebrations in California. PAHA intends to join with other local history associations and women's groups to ensure a suitable celebration of the centennial in 2011. Already, a group of women has met in Sacramento to kickoff planning for statewide events in March (Women's History Month) and August (90th anniversary of national suffrage,) culminating in a big day at the Women's Museum in Sacramento on Monday, October 10, 2011. One of the themes of the centennial will be "unacknowledged women in California—hidden stories of forgotten women." PAHA will promote the story of our own suffrage pioneer, Sarah Wallis, who led the movement on the west coast. She served from 1870-1878 as the first President of the California Woman Suffrage Educational Association.

Sarah led an exceptionally interesting life. Born on the midwestern frontier in 1825, she married gunsmith Allen Montgomery at the age of 17. They immigrated to California in the Stevens-Murphy wagon party, the second group to walk from Missouri to California and the first to take wagons across the Sierra Nevada. Fortune did not shine on Sarah in her early California years. The couple lived for a time in an isolated cabin in Coloma; before the discovery of gold, she moved away. Allen Montgomery abandoned her twice and finally disappeared during the Gold Rush. Sarah had to support herself as a moral, single woman in the wide-open, brawling boomtown of San Francisco.

There, life improved when she met and married up-and-coming businessman Talbot Green. Green made a fortune speculating in San Francisco real estate. Unfortunately, when he ran for Mayor in 1851, he was unmasked as an absconded bank embezzler from Philadelphia. Although Green abandoned Sarah, he left her the real estate, and she became a wealthy single woman. Fortune continued to shine on Sarah when she met her third husband, a law clerk, Joseph Wallis, who later became a lawyer and judge. Thus began a happy 44-year marriage.

In 1856, Sarah bought Mayfield Farm and built an elaborate, "wedding cake" Victorian mansion; she became a leader in the new village of Mayfield. It was then she became interested in the woman suffrage movement, launched at Seneca Falls in 1848. Recognized as the leading suffragist in California, Sarah invited Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to stay at her Mayfield mansion during their West Coast tour in 1871.

Unfortunately, Sarah and Joseph Wallis lost their fortune in the crash and depression of 1877-78, forcing Sarah to sell her beloved mansion. She continued suffragist meetings in Mayfield but could not support the movement in her previous, grand style. As her circumstances worsened, Sarah Wallis slips from history. She died poor in Los Gatos, living in a cottage owned by her son. Thus, she became one of the "unacknowledged."



*Suffragists march in Oakland 1908
(courtesy California Historical Society).*

Discovering Leland Stanford Jr. in Italy

LAST MONTH MY WIFE AND I SPENT TWO WEEKS ON VACATION IN ITALY, highlighted by 5 days in beautiful Florence. In a city with a rich history, we visited significant historical



FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

sites, one of which commemorated a 126-year old event that was of particular interest to me. In 1884, 15-year old Leland Stanford Junior was touring Europe with his parents. After visits to England and Germany, the family continued to Constantinople and Athens. Somewhere along the way, young Leland became ill.

The parents took their son to Italy in search of better medical care. After brief stays in Naples and Rome, they moved him to Florence. By this time, the doctors had diagnosed typhoid fever. Unfortunately there was no cure for the disease in those days; the Stanfords could only give him rest and hope for a full recovery. After 3 weeks at the Bristol Hotel, Leland Junior died, 2 months short of his 16th birthday. Leland Stanford had a dream that evening, in which his dead son urged him to “adopt” the children of California. This dream bolstered Jane and Leland’s decision to create a university for the children of California, named in memory of

their son – the Leland Stanford Junior University.

We went to find the hotel where Leland Junior died. I remembered reading that there was a memorial plaque on an outside wall of the hotel. We googled “Leland Junior” and learned that the Bristol Hotel was a short 10 minute walk away. Florence’s Bristol hotel is a posh establishment in a neighborhood of elegant shops. The Bristol Hotel staff was puzzled by my inquiries about the death of a young man. An older man came to our assistance, and we learned that Leland Junior could not have died at the Bristol Hotel since it was built several years after his death. The man directed us to the Grand Hotel. There we found the plaque high up on the wall facing the Arno River. The Grand Hotel had been the Bristol Hotel back in the 19th century!

On March 13, 1930, the 46th anniversary of Leland Junior’s death, members of the Stanford University Class of 1907 installed the memorial plaque on the wall of the hotel where it remains. Although it is difficult to read the wording, in part due to the height of the plaque, it marks the spot where a young man’s death changed forever the history of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

This Plant Persists

Jeanne McDonnell

AN ARTICLE IN THE CURRENT ISSUE OF CALIFORNIA HISTORY about Luther Burbank solved a perplexity of many years for me. His fame and positive recognition by the academic community as what he called a plant “evoluter” spread worldwide from his farm in Santa Rosa. In the first decades of the 20th century, he believed his major achievement to be hybridizing cactus to remove the thorns that diminished the plant’s commercial value.

Two attributes that Burbank bragged about in his ads and catalogue would have encouraged Charles Palmer Nott to invest in Burbank Cactus: that the plant produced fruit in enormous quantities, and “You Can Laugh at Dry Seasons.”

A large plot of Burbank’s “spineless cactus” still thrives near the Juana Briones house on Old Adobe Rd. In 1900, her daughter Refugio sold Nott the house with 40 acres that she had inherited from her mother. One of Briones’ grandsons, a bank manager in Mayfield (now Palo Alto’s California Avenue area), acted as the real estate agent for this and other family properties. He noted the agricultural value of the land, which Nott, a Stanford botanist, made use of in the years from 1900 to 1925 that he lived there with his family.

In her article, Jane S. Smith wrote that, around 1907 when the spineless cactus became another of his “miraculous crops,” Burbank expected the plant to become “the most important plant on earth for arid regions...” and David Starr Jordan, Stanford’s President, agreed. In our era of irrigation and reservoirs, such claims appear grandiose, but at the time, Nott had good reason to plant spineless “Opuntia” on his farmland, then well outside the borders of Palo Alto.



Steve Staiger pointing to the plaque at the Grand Hotel, Italy (courtesy of Steve and Luana Staiger)

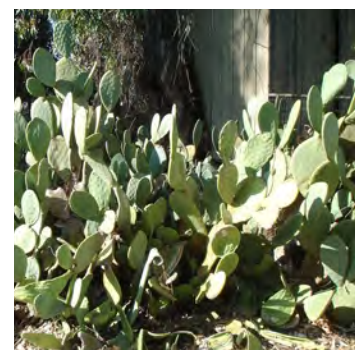
IN MEMORIAM

Eleanor Hays Jadwin
1933 – 2010

Robert B. Roth
1927 – 2010
A life member of PAHA

Charles Mitchell
1940 – 2010

Margery “Marge”
Theobald Colliins
1932 – 2010
Board member and
long-time member of PAHA



Cactus at Juana Briones house (courtesy Melissa Blum)

Bell's Bookstore Celebrates 75 Years



*Faith Bell at Bell's Books, 1993
(courtesy Matt Bowling)*

from Faith Bell... IN 1935 HERBERT BELL DROVE NORTH FROM LOS ANGELES with his employer, David Lawyer, in a station wagon full of books to establish The College Book Shop on the Circle (the end of University Avenue by the train tracks). The shop specialized in textbooks and hoped to attract students as they came to rent bicycles from Smith's. Within the year, David Lawyer determined that there was no money to be made in the shop, and he sold out to Herbert Bell, who established Bell's College Book Shop, later Bell's Bookstore, and for one year Bell's Wonderfull [sic] Bookstore. Now known as Bell's Books, the focus has shifted from textbooks to titles of more general interest, with a mix of used, new, and rare books housed in the Category Two Historic Building at 536 Emerson Street. With shelves rising past the balcony railings, twenty feet up to the original pressed tin ceiling, the inventory of

250,000 titles exceeds that of Palo Alto's main library. Bell's is still owned and operated by the Bell family.

To celebrate 75 years in Palo Alto Bell's will feature a window display of material relating to the printing arts, as well as to the history of the shop. A storewide anniversary sale will take place on November 19–21st, 2010.

PAHA's Public Meetings to Come

Meetings are held at the
Lucie Stern Community Center 2 PM

DEC. 5: *Palo Alto Vignettes*
with Karen Holman

❖ *Save the dates* ❖

PAHA MEETINGS 2011:

JAN. 30

MARCH 6

APRIL 3

MAY 1

JUNE 1

As the editors of the Tall Tree become more "green," we offer you the option of receiving your Tall Tree digitally. If you're interested, please send your request electronically (include your preferred email address) to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace, bdgw@pacbell.net.

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"Palo Alto Vignettes" with
Karen Holman

Lucie Stern Community Center

Refreshments will be served.