

APRIL 2011
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The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Sunday, April 3 at 2:00 PM at the
Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

The PACIFIC ART LEAGUE *Celebrating 90 Years*



SPEAKER:
Richard Ambrose
*Executive Director
Pacific Art League*

ONE OF THE OLDEST ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE Bay Area, the Pacific Art League (PAL) was established in 1921 as an arts club by a number of Stanford University alums and artists whose desire was to share their passion for American Art.

Currently, PAL has one of the most comprehensive adult art studio and exhibition programs in Silicon Valley. Located in the historic building at 668 Ramona Street, the League is in the process of developing plans to renovate and expand the facility.

Ric Ambrose, as executive director of the Pacific Art League, is responsible for the fiscal and programmatic operations of the organization. He will give an overview of the League's contributions to the community and of its programs and plans for the future.

Ambrose, with over 25 years of curatorial and senior administrative experience in the museum field, has curated over 200 exhibits in art, science, and cultural history. As Curator or Deputy Director, he has worked at the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center in Pueblo, Colorado, the Fresno Metropolitan Museum in Fresno, California, and the City Center for the Arts and Sciences in Charleston, West Virginia. Prior to his present position at PAL, Ambrose was the Project Director of the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley.



Pacific Art League façade (Photos of Richard Ambrose and the Pacific Art League on this page are by Chris Golson.)

THE APRIL CABLE program, *Heritage, on Channel 30* will be "Preservation: Connecting Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," taped at the March 2011 PAHA meeting. DVDs of PAHA programs are available at the Main Library's History Desk, Tuesday, 4-8 PM and Thursday, 1-4 PM.



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PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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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.

IN MEMORIAM

Al Bernal
1928-2011

Doris Harvey
1922-2011

Jan Rimmel
1923-2011

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

Palo Alto, CA 94302

Or join online at www.pahistory.org.
Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee.

Civil War Sesquicentennials, Hmm

SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THE PRESS REPORTS ON FEBRUARY 16TH OF a sesquicentennial celebratory re-enactment of Jefferson Davis' inauguration in Montgomery, Alabama as Provisional President of the Confederate States of



DOUG GRAHAM
President, PAHA

America. Fortunately, the current officers of Alabama had the good grace to stay away from this. But ironically, the sesquicentennial celebration of Abraham Lincoln's First Inauguration on the Capitol steps in Washington, D.C. on March 4 got much less press attention.

We will surely see many more of these sesquicentennial re-enactments and celebrations of battles and events of our bloodiest-ever war, over the next four years. Most of these events will doubtless be generally ignored by Californians. We live so far away from the famous sites that most of us have little knowledge and less interest in civil war history, compared to that found in the eastern, midwestern and southern states.

It should be no surprise that many Californians had somewhat the same attitude in 1861-65. It seems that our state had relatively little influence on the civil war's inception, conduct or outcome. There is a California civil war history website that brags that "...almost no one knows that California had more volunteers per capita in the Union Army than any other state." This statement seemed to me highly unlikely, so I dug deeper into the history and compared state populations with enlistments. It appears that California ranked around the middle of the then-existing 43 states and organized territories of the U.S in terms of the percentage of our population that served in the war. This placed us at the very bottom of the "free" states and below several southern slave states, at about 4% of the overall population in the Union armies (Missouri led, with 25%). California contributed nearly 16,000 troops to the Union during the war, but most of them were garrisoning California forts, chasing rebellious Indian tribes in the West, or facing down secessionist armies in New Mexico and Arizona. I do not know if anyone from Mayfield joined the Union Army, but the population was then so small that I doubt if anyone did.



H.H. Bancroft wrote a history of California during the Civil War years. (Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley).

There was a strong secessionist movement in Southern California (and not inconsiderable in San Francisco). But only Visalia, Los Angeles and San Diego had to be occupied by Union troops throughout the war to prevent secessionist uprisings.

In H.H. Bancroft's detailed political history of California during the Civil War years, published in the 1880s, Santa Clara County hardly rated a mention. Our county was among the smallest in population, without much agriculture and no industry to speak of. Mayfield barely existed as a village, being just a small cluster of buildings. The 1860 census lists 50 people in Fremont Township with Mayfield as their post office (this includes Juana Briones' family of six adults and 5 children in their hilltop home in Rancho Purissima Concepcion). There were 21 adults and 18 children at other residences. Sarah Wallis and her husband Joseph and their four children were listed at Mayfield Farm (now Barron Park). During the war, Mayfield grew considerably, with additional businesses being established, especially after the railroad was put through in 1863 and a station re-located at the village in 1865.



Did you ever go to the circus when it came to Palo Alto? Did you take pictures?

We are looking for photos of the circus to include in Matt Bowling's upcoming book about Palo Alto's past. If you have a snapshot you can share with us, please contact Harriette Shakes at 650-906-6250 or harriette@shakesgraphics.com.

Ruth Wilson, Palo Alto City Historian



FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

I RECENTLY LEARNED THAT FORMER PAHA HISTORIAN Ruth Wilson died in December 2010. She was the Historian from the late 1960's until she retired in 1984, when I assumed the position.

She was a native of South Dakota who came to the Bay Area in the early 1950s with her husband, Jay, who worked for United Airlines. She began working as a librarian at the College

Terrace Library in 1953, and worked for the City until she retired in 1967. The library director suggested she apply for the vacant Historian's position, although she claimed she knew little of Palo Alto's history.

When she retired as the Historian in 1984, the local newspapers wrote glowing reports on Palo Alto's "guardian of history." One of her final actions was to suggest that I apply for the position.

Over the years she would often visit the History Desk, or in her later years I would visit her in her home on Moreno Avenue.

As with many women of her generation, Ruth was coy about her age. A neighbor recently told me that she was in her 90's when she died. She was proud of her work as the City's historian. Former PAHA board member Jim Stone, upon her retirement, said that Ruth would be difficult to replace. I have tried to continue her efforts to share our knowledge and love for Palo Alto's history.



Ruth Wilson, City of Palo Alto Historian, working with the historical files at the Main Library. (PAHA Guy Miller Archives)



Nan Bolender Haxo Limbaugh Blackledge

A FEW MONTHS AGO, PAHA LAUNCHED ITS "SAVE A LIFE" ORAL-HISTORY project which documents interesting stories of Palo Altans, and memories of earlier days.

A recent interview was with Nan Bolender Haxo Limbaugh Blackledge. Nan's uniquely-Palo Alto experience began when her grandmother's sister married John F. Newsom. Newsom was a student of Professor John Casper Branner in Geology. Newsom and Branner joined Dr. David Starr Jordan in moving to Palo Alto when Jordan was named first president of Stanford University in 1891.

Nan's grandparents, William H. Kelly and Alberta Perry Kelly, brought the whole family to Palo Alto in 1906 to be close to Mrs. Kelly's sister. Nan's mother, Louise Kelly, was 8 years old at that time and was delighted in the adventure of living in a tent in their Palo Alto backyard after the 1906 earthquake, until their house could be repaired. Louise married Joseph Bolender, and Nan was born.

Growing up, Nan was involved in the Children's Theatre, attended Paly then Stanford University (class of 1946). She taught Physical Education in Palo Alto's junior and high schools in the 1960s, and coached Gunn's girls' swimming team. Until recently, Nan was a Rinconada Masters swimmer.

PAHA's goal is to capture more oral histories from Palo Altans. If you would like to be an interviewee, or would like to help out as an interviewer, contact Carol Mitchell at carolmitchell@sbcglobal.net.



Nan holding up snapshots (Photo courtesy of Joyce McClure)

Things to Do and Places to Go

STANFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL HOUSE AND GARDEN TOUR



Home on tour (Photo courtesy Stanford Historical Society)

Sunday May 1, 2011, 1-4 pm:
ticket required.

The tour features three pre-1930 and two 1936 houses and gardens from the San Juan Neighborhood. Among the architects represented are A.B. and Birge Clark, Charles K. Sumner, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Advance tickets cost \$25 each before April 16, then

\$30. Registration corner Campus Drive East and Arguello Way, parking at Parking Structure 6, 560 Wilbur Way, where a shuttle is available. Mail check to SHS, c/o Sweeney, P.O. Box 19290, Stanford 94309. Map and more information at SHS website, <http://histsoc.stanford.edu/>.



MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HERITAGE

7th Annual Vintage Vehicles and Family Festival

Sunday May 22, 2011, 10 AM-4 PM, free admission

El Camino Park (across from the Stanford Shopping Centre)

Vintage Vehicles, Entertainment and Fun for the Whole Family

PAHA's Public Meetings to Come

Meetings are held at the
Lucie Stern Community Center 2 PM

APRIL 3: "THE PACIFIC ART LEAGUE
CELEBRATING 90 YEARS"

Save the dates

PAHA MEETINGS 2011:

MAY 1: "WATER AT STANFORD"

Speaker: David Freyberg, Prof. of Civil
Engineering, Stanford University

JUNE 1: ANNUAL DINNER

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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Refreshments will be served.