

# The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Newsletter of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION October 2015 Volume 39, No 2

Since 1913

Sunday, November 1 2:00- 4:00 PM

Lucie Stern Community Center  
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Speaker: Jim Wall, Board Chair, Museum of American Heritage

## PAHA's Public Meetings

### GENERAL PROGRAM MEETINGS

are held monthly

2:00-4:00 PM

October - May

at the

Lucie Stern Community Center

1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

### PAHA'S PUBLIC MEETINGS 2015

Sunday, November 1

Speaker: Jim Wall

"25 Years of the Museum of American Heritage in Palo Alto"

Sunday, December 6

"Palo Alto Vignettes"

### PAHA'S MEETING DATES 2016

January 31, 2016

March 6, 2016

April 3, 2016

May 15, 2016

June 8, 2016



## Celebrating 25 Years of MOAH



MOAH BOARD CHAIR, JIM WALL, WILL PRESENT THE NOVEMBER 1 PROGRAM of the Palo Alto Historical Association where he will describe the history of the Museum of the American Heritage and celebrate its place and role in Palo Alto.

While MOAH and PAHA share a goal to preserve and publicize local history, they are separate institutions; each is governed differently. MOAH opened some of its collections to the public in 1990 on Alma Street and moved to its present home in 1997, the century-old Williams House, at 351 Homer Avenue.

In addition to collecting, assembling and exhibiting period artifacts, the MOAH Board renovated the Williams House and secured support from Mel and Bill Lane to restore its gardens. The Ruth Bell Lane Memorial "Victory Garden" replicates a garden design based on *Sunset Magazine's* 1943 *Vegetable Garden Book*.

MOAH's permanent and rotating exhibits offer 5,000+ artifacts emphasizing invention and technology from 1750-1950. The permanent exhibits include an Early 20th Century Kitchen, a 1920s General Store, The Marshall Mathews Garage, and The Print Shop. Visitors will discover inventions that shaped America and which illustrate the evolution of technology, how and why it has influenced society from inception to the current time and a glimpse of future expectations.

**SPEAKER: JIM WALL**  
**MOAH BOARD CHAIR**

MOAH currently celebrates its first 25 years with a special exhibition (see below); also check out this issue's "Jaunts" to learn more about Palo Alto's Repair Café, which meets periodically at MOAH.

**FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC \* REFRESHMENTS SERVED**

## 25 Years at the Museum of American Heritage: A Retrospective

April 17, 2015 - January 17, 2016

Join us in celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Museum of American Heritage (MOAH). The retrospective highlights memorable exhibits from the past 25 years, offering visitors a glimpse of a variety of artifacts while also following the history and evolution of MOAH itself.

**Regular Hours: Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays 11am to 4pm - Free Admission!**



**PALO ALTO  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

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# Palo Alto annexes Mayfield

90 YEARS AGO, A LOCAL TABLOID NEWSPAPER HEADLINE might have read “California town disappears.” In 1925, Palo Alto voters approved Palo Alto’s annexation of Mayfield: within months almost all trace of Mayfield disappeared.

Mayfield, founded, in 1855, predated Palo Alto (incorporated 1894) by nearly 50 years. It centered on a business hub at the corner of Main Street (now El Camino Real) and Lincoln (now California Avenue) and was a thriving community serving surrounding farms, ranches, and lumbermen who worked in the hills to the West. While the 13 saloons and 2 breweries in town were evidence of the town’s economic vitality, they were a “black eye” to some residents.

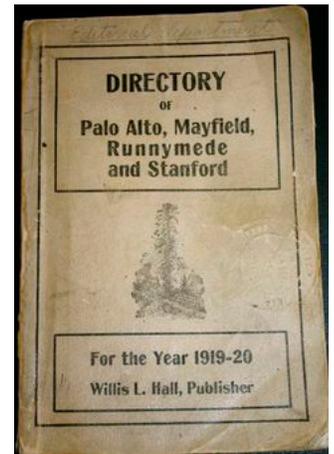
Palo Alto outgrew its neighbor and in 1907, began to talk about annexation. Mayfield incorporated in 1903, and shut down the

**FROM THE DESK OF  
THE HISTORIAN  
Steve Staiger**

saloons, making both towns “semi-dry.” Annexation talks grew in 1918, when the Palo Alto Union High School District extended its boundaries to include Mayfield students. However, there was not enough support for annexation in either town because Mayfield and Palo Alto were so different. Palo Altans were wealthier and better educated than their Mayfield counterparts; they had come to Palo Alto from the Midwest or East Coast, while residents of Mayfield were mostly foreign-born and blue-collar. Palo Alto’s future was brighter than Mayfield’s.

In 1924, Mayfield voters considered but rejected annexation by 26 votes. In 1925, they reconsidered and approved it, 357 to 288. On July 2, 1925, Palo Alto voters voted to annex Mayfield, 1094 to 441. On July 6, 1925, the 1700 residents of Mayfield joined the 9000 residents of Palo Alto: they officially became Palo Altans.

Palo Alto erased the name Mayfield. It became South Palo Alto in the names of libraries and other government functions. Mayfield street names that duplicated Palo Alto’s were renamed: Lincoln became California Avenue. Not all residents of Mayfield were pleased with the changes. Warm feelings for their old town continued for decades. As late as the 1980s, some Palo Alto residents still considered themselves “Mayfieldians,” even though their town had disappeared 60 years before.



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 Cubberly Community Center, K-7.

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 (October–December, February–May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 p.m. Meetings include speakers. 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.



L. Marks General Merchandise Store, Mayfield, late 19th century, PAHA

# Recording oral history to preserve our identities

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN  
Ralph Britton



**MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER, JOHAN CASPAR HIRSBRUNNER, ARRIVED IN NEW YORK JULY 31, 1851.** He had a long journey by land and ship from Sumiswald, Switzerland, to New Jersey, where he worked in a button factory for \$4 per month. He found better jobs and earned enough money to send for the lady he married upon her arrival in the US. Her voyage took 56 days as winds forced them to Nassau; there, the ship burned and the passengers lost all their possessions. Their story, which began in the 1850s, continued well into the 20th century!

How do I know all of this? My father typed up my great-grandfather's 21-page story on his Remington portable typewriter. How very fortunate we are to have this document describing a journey and a world so different from our own. You may be surprised when events are remembered and described that have never been talked about. A year or two before he died, my cousin related how he flew "one and a half missions" over Germany in WWII. He parachuted down and spent two years in a stalag, a German prison camp.

No one had heard this story before!

My point: it is worth taking the time and effort to record oral histories while relatives and friends are alive with their memories intact. How sad to lose stories of interesting, historically relevant lives and with them a part of our own identity. My father probably used a notepad to collect my great-grandfather's story and then to type it up on the old typewriter. Today we can record stories on digital media and start on a print version using voice recognition software. PAHA has a latent program to compile oral histories and assist members with such projects. We hope to revive the program and invite you to participate.

**DON'T WAIT—IT'S LATER THAN YOU THINK!**



*PAHA President's great-grand-father, Johan Casper Hirsbrunner, courtesy of Ralph Britton*



*Remington portable typewriter, courtesy of Ralph Britton*

## Local historical associations - Mountain View



Palo Alto is not the only Bay Area or Peninsula community that supports a historical society or association.

The Mountain View Historical Association was established more than 60 years ago and is dedicated to preserving, promoting, and publicizing the town's rich heritage. Meetings occur at 1:00 pm on the first Sundays of February, May, August and November. They are free, open to the public, and take place at the Historic Adobe Building, 157 Moffett Blvd in Mountain View. For information on upcoming programs, visit their website:

<http://www.mountainviewhistorical.org/>

# History Jaunts

**Gamble Garden**, 1431 Waverley, Palo Alto, is offering a special Halloween event on Sunday, October 25, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm (\$15 member- child or adult / \$20) featuring activities for children, including a magic show and a magician. For more information call 650.329.1356 or contact by email [admin@gamblegarden.org](mailto:admin@gamblegarden.org)

**The Repair Café Palo Alto** meets periodically at the Museum of American History (MOAH) at 351 Homer Ave., Palo Alto, with the next event scheduled for Sunday, October 25, 11 am – 3 pm. The volunteer-run community service is dedicated to encouraging the repair and reuse of goods rather than relegating them to landfill. Don't throw away broken tools, gadgets, and appliances—repair them! with experts! For more information visit <http://www.repaircafe-paloalto.org/about.html>

**PAST (Palo Alto Stanford Heritage)** offers free Historic Preservation tours, no reservation required. Sunday, October 25: Meet Kris Zavoli at 10:00 am at 1005 Bryant St. (corner of Addison) to learn about and stroll through Professorville. Saturday, November 1: Meet Steve Emslie at 10:00 a.m. at the Woman's Club of Palo Alto (475 Homer Ave.) to tour historic Homer Avenue.

**The Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve** is a 1,200 acre nature preserve, biological field station, and research facility owned by Stanford University. Jasper Ridge docents offer guided tours introducing visitors to the natural history, geology, and ecology of the preserve; the tours are Thursdays through Sundays, from October through May. The 2 to 2.5 mile hike can be strenuous and reservations are necessary. To arrange a tour, call (650) 851-6813.

**Celebrate Veterans!** On Monday, November 9, Palo Alto City Council will honor local veterans. Come to King Plaza (in front of City Hall, 250 Hamilton) at 3:30 pm for music with the presentation beginning at 4:00 pm. A celebratory proclamation will be read in the Council Chambers

**Volunteer opportunity:** Would you like to review a book on local or California history? Would you like to offer a guest editorial? If yes, send to PAHA, Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302. On the envelope write: Attention: Peggy McKee

## Become a Member of PAHA

We invite you to become a member of the Association and join those who care about Palo Alto and enjoy learning about its history. Your dues make our work possible: we maintain the archives, assist researchers, and disseminate historical information through our publications and public programs. Your generosity will be appreciated for generations to come. Join today!

Individual \$40      Family \$60  
Sustaining \$75      Business/Sponsor \$150      Life \$500

Make check payable to PAHA and mail to: PAHA Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302. Or join online at [pahistory.org](http://pahistory.org). Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee. (Current members should have received renewal notices by post.)



## Heritage Program on Channel 30

PAHA's November 2015 program will feature the October 2015 program,

"From early Sierra Nevada Crossing to Jasper Ridge," presented by Bo Crane.

The schedule is

Wednesdays at 8 PM,  
Thursdays at 10:30 AM, and  
Saturdays at 1 PM

on Ch 30.

DVDs of previous programs may be borrowed from the PAHA Archives, which are located at Cubberley, Room K-7.

Hours: Tuesdays, 4–8 PM,  
Thursdays, 1-5 PM

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the  
PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



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