



Since 1913

The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

October 2022 Volume 46, Nº 1

The Palo Alto Historical Association presents

Palo Alto Clinic: Stories from the Physicians

Sunday, October 2, 2022 2:00 – 4:00 pm

In-person at Mitchell Park Community Center, El Palo Alto Room
3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto



The Roth building at 300 Homer Avenue was designed by Birge Clark and built in 1932 (top center). Two murals from 1932 on the Roth Building (left and right). Dr. Russel Lee, one of the founders of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic with Birge Clark, pose together at Lucie Stern Community Center in 1973 (bottom center left). Dr. Esther Clark, one of the founders and partners of the Palo Alto Clinic, at her office desk (bottom center right).

The Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF) has been a presence in Palo Alto for over 90 years. What started as the “Palo Alto Clinic,” which then became the “Palo Alto Medical Clinic,” has had to evolve with the times and the growth of the population. What was once a small building on the corner of Homer Avenue and Bryant Street would grow to encompass the entire block and also occupy many satellite buildings amid

the neighborhood before finally moving to El Camino Real in 1999.

Join us on Sunday, October 2, with pediatrician Ross DeHovitz MD, cardiologist Joel Friedman MD, and family physician Mary Hufty MD, to hear about some of the important and fascinating moments in the history of “the clinic.”

WE ARE EXCITED TO BE HOSTING OUR MONTHLY PROGRAMS IN-PERSON STARTING IN OCTOBER!

PLEASE JOIN US IN THE SPACIOUS EL PALO ALTO ROOM OF THE MITCHELL PARK COMMUNITY CENTER FOR THIS WONDERFUL FREE PROGRAM, FOLLOWED BY REFRESHMENTS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

**2022 PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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The History of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic, Part 1: 1924-1960

By PAHA Historian, Darla Secor

The beginnings of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic started in 1924 when Dr. Russel Van Arsdale Lee moved from San Francisco to Palo Alto to join the medical office of Dr. Thomas Williams. After Dr. Lee joined, the medical practice grew quickly, and the two doctors knew they needed to expand in order to handle the patient load. In 1925, Dr. Edward Roth was brought in to cover



Dr. Russel Lee in his office at the Palo Alto Medical Clinic, circa 1970

obstetrics and surgery, and in 1927 Dr. Esther Clark was added as a pediatrician. In 1929, Dr. Williams retired and was replaced by surgeon Dr. Blake Wilbur, son of Ray Lyman Wilbur, President of Stanford University at the time. Soon after, Dr. Milton Saier, an internist and allergist, and Dr. Herbert L. Niebel, a general practitioner and anesthesiologist, were also added to the office. These six doctors decided to organize formally in 1930, and the Palo Alto Medical Clinic was born.

A new building, designed by Palo Alto architect Birge Clark (brother of pediatrician Dr. Esther Clark), was built on the corner of Homer Avenue and Bryant Street to house the new Clinic. The Clinic was one of the first multi-specialist group practices in the nation at the time. Most physicians were independent general practitioners who saw to all the needs of their patients, and viewed group practices with suspicion. The idea of “socialized medicine” was frowned upon, so much so that at one point a resolution was introduced in the Santa Clara County Medical Society barring any Palo Alto Medical Clinic physician

from membership. As medical and clinical developments led to the creation of separate disciplines and specialists, pioneers like Dr. Lee realized the benefits to both the patients and the doctors of having these specialties at one location.

The newly formed Clinic established itself during the years of the Great Depression. The physicians would often waive their fees if their patients were unable to pay. There were few medical providers in the mid-peninsula and the Clinic saw patients all the way from San Carlos to Sunnyvale. As their practice expanded, the Clinic added more doctors. In 1937, Dr. Robert Dunn, an obstetrician, and Dr. Harold Sox, an internist, joined the practice.

World War II introduced more changes to Palo Alto, as it brought a flood of military personnel to the community, and also saw 40% of the Clinic’s doctors leave to serve in the military. Notably, Dr. Lee was one of the first doctors to leave for the war, and was eventually appointed Chief of Preventative Medicine for the entire Air Force. The doctors who stayed in Palo Alto saw a huge increase in their workload due to the dearth of help, with so many of their colleagues serving. Dr. Dunn was the only obstetrician between San Mateo and San Jose during this time, and reported that he delivered 1,000 babies in one year, an average of 3 per day!

Post WWII there was a population boom in Palo Alto. Between 1940 and 1953, the city’s population more than doubled from 16,774 to 33,753, bringing a strain on the Clinic’s resources. The Clinic was able to add a group of Palo Alto community physicians returning from the war who had new-found appreciation for group practice since they experienced this type of practice during service. This expansion also saw a growth in new specialty areas for the Clinic, including radiology and ophthalmology.

Having enough space seemed to be a never-ending battle for the Clinic; they had run out of room within a few years of building (continued on page 3)

The Palo Alto Historical Association, a 501(c)(3) charitable 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 Cubberley Community Center, K-7, Phone (650) 329-2353.

PAHA Board meetings are held at 4pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Guy Miller Archives.

Public programs are held at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month (October-December, February-May) at various locations in Palo Alto. Programs include speakers. The final program of the year is held in June and includes a dinner and a program. The public is welcome at all programs.

A Tribute to Amanda Brown

By PAHA Historian, Darla Secor

On Monday, May 9, 2022 we received the terrible news that PAHA Board Member, Amanda Brown, had unexpectedly passed away at her apartment in San Jose.

Amanda was born on July 25, 1985 at Stanford Hospital and grew up in Palo Alto, attending Juana Briones Elementary, JLS Middle School, and Gunn High School. During Amanda's senior year, she tragically lost her single parent mother, Martha. This loss had a profound impact on Amanda's life. After graduating high school, she left California and moved to Arkansas to attend the University of Arkansas and Arkansas Tech University, and earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in History.

After moving back to the Bay Area in 2019, Amanda worked several jobs, including creating social media content for a television show as well as working at Books, Inc. at Town & Country in Palo Alto.

Amanda became a PAHA board member in April 2019. During the pandemic, Amanda committed to showing up at the PAHA Archives and clipped hundreds of articles for our collection as well as writing articles for our Tall Tree Newsletter. After the Archives opened up to the public again, Amanda was a fixture there doing volunteer work or sometimes her own research, but always willing to help with whatever we needed on the particular day. She had a unique perspective on



Amanda Brown

growing up in Palo Alto in the 80s and 90s and added her insights and opinions along with an infusion of sarcastic humor to our work conversations.

In August of 2021, Amanda was hired as the Collections Manager of the Palo Alto History Museum. Even in the short time she worked there, she made great progress in organizing the collection inventory and was instrumental in leading the Museum's Teen Council's oral history project. Her

passion for history and community engagement was evident to anyone who talked to her; one of her greatest desires was to ensure that everyone's history and voice was reflected in the Museum's collection. At the time of her death, she was moving from San Jose to Palo Alto so she could be closer to her job.

I knew Amanda both on a professional and personal basis; she became a great friend over the course of our many conversations in the Archives on Tuesday evenings. One of my lasting impressions of her is how she showed up for the people in her life, despite the loss and tragedy in hers. She was there when people needed her, including myself many times over. I will miss her jokes and funny observations as well as our many conversations about obscure Palo Alto history, pop culture, politics and Marvel movies. She was interred beside her mother at Alta Mesa Cemetery on June 17th at a service well attended by her family, friends, and colleagues.



(continued from page 2) their new property on Homer Avenue. Soon after the war ended, another building was constructed adjoining the Clinic that would be able to house 35 doctors and 100 staff members. As it became apparent that even that addition wasn't enough, they proceeded to buy as much of the block surrounding the Clinic as they could.

Finally in 1961, they were able to find a bit more relief with the construction of a 3-story building, named after Dr. Russel Lee. Another important development during the post-war years was the formation of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation Research Institute. With the help of a donation from Lucie Stern, the Institute was formed in 1950 as a place where physicians and scientists could concentrate full time on research. It had humble



Dr. Marcus Krupp and Dr. Russel Lee at the new Palo Alto Medical Research Foundation Building, 1958

beginnings, with a staff of four in a house on Channing Avenue. It soon established itself as a world-class biomedical research facility, and with a grant from the National Institutes of Health and other donations, the Foundation was able to construct new research facilities in 1958. Many new treatments and breakthroughs came from the Research Foundation in the early years, including a laser treatment for retinal disease in the 1960s, along with physiology of the heart, immunology, and infectious diseases research discoveries.

The Clinic saw the end of an era with the retirement of Dr. Lee in 1960. His legacy would be continued by the election of Dr. Robert Jamplis as the executive director of the Clinic in 1965, who would carry the evolution of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic and Foundation through the 21st century.

October Jaunts

As you plan jaunts in California's great outdoors for the coming months, take advantage of a recently launched program that provides **free, one-day visits to more than 200 state parks**—an opportunity and deal not to be missed!



1,184 public libraries in California have joined the State Library Parks Pass pilot program. The Department of Parks and Recreation enthusiastically announced, "By removing the economic barrier of day-use fees and connecting communities with their libraries, the benefits of parks will be expanded." More detail and information are available at https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30806.

The **James Johnston House** in Half Moon Bay has been an historic coastal landmark for more than 170 years. Ohio pioneer James Johnston built it in 1853 for his wife. The 2-story New England "saltbox style" farmhouse barely survived vandals, high winds, and other weather challenges.



Image courtesy of The Johnston House Foundation, Inc.

Fortunately, it was rediscovered in the 1960s, and the San Mateo Historical Society took on its restoration and renovation. While some Covid protocols still exist, docent tours are available on the 3rd Saturday of the month, 11:00am–3:00pm at 100 Higgins Canyon Road in Half Moon Bay. For more information and details, call 650-726-0329 or visit <http://www.johnstonhouse.org/>.

PAST Docent Guided Walking Tours (~90 minutes each)

This fall's tours will celebrate the centennial of Birge Clark's practice in Palo Alto. They are identified geographically and feature both well-known structures and little known facts. Except where noted, all tours begin on Saturdays at 10:00 am. For more information visit <https://www.pastheritage.org/>.

- October 1: Edgewood. Meet at 1401 Edgewood (at Southwood)
- October 8: Coleridge. Meet at 455 Coleridge (west of Cowper)
- October 15: Webster. Meet at 1455 Webster (north side of Embarcadero)
- October 23 (Sunday): Professorville. Meet at 1005 Bryant St. (corner of Addison)
- November 5: Downtown. Meet at City Hall Plaza, 250 Hamilton Avenue



Welcome New PAHA Members

Robin Chapman
Wendy Crowder

Upcoming Programs

- Nov 6: Valley of Hearts Delight: True Tales from Around the Bay, with author Robin Chapman
- Dec 4: Panel on Open Space History emceed by Karen Holman

Unless otherwise noted, programs are held in person on the first Sunday of the month. Check our website at www.pahistory.org for program information

Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the June 5th program, *Parkey Sharkey*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link: <https://vimeo.com/718096496>

The Heritage Program

You can also watch the most recent PAHA program on local TV. Visit <https://midpenmedia.org/local-tv/> and enter the word "Heritage" in the search box to find the broadcast schedule for PAHA programs.

In Memoriam

Shirley Ely

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