



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Since 1913

May 2025 Volume 48, No 5

Palo Alto Stanford Heritage & Palo Alto Historical Association presents

The 29th Centennial Plaque & Historic Preservation Awards

Sunday, May 4, 2025 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Palo Alto Art Center ~ 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto



Roth Building at 300 Homer Avenue



Entrance of the Roth Building



944 Cowper Street

Palo Alto Stanford Heritage (PAST), in association with the Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA), will host its 29th presentation of Centennial Plaques to owners of circa 1924 buildings in Palo Alto on May 4, 2025. This tradition began in 1994, initiated by the City of Palo Alto's Historic Resources Board during Palo Alto's Centennial celebration, honoring buildings from 1894 and earlier. In 1996, PAST continued the practice, recognizing structures from 1895 and 1896, and introduced its Preservation Awards to celebrate projects that renovate, rehabilitate, or restore the city's historic architecture.

Preserving Sense of Place: Past, Present, and Future with Samantha Rohman.



Samantha Rohman

A highlight of this year's event is a presentation by Public Historian and Historic Resources Board Vice Chair Samantha Rohman. She will explore notable preservation and stewardship projects from PAST's 25 years of awards, focusing on the features, stories, and sense of place these properties contribute to Palo Alto. Her talk will underscore the enduring value of the city's historic character.

The 2025 Preservation Award will honor the renovated Roth Building, soon to be the Palo Alto History Museum's new home. Owners, architects, contractors, and contributors to this project will be recognized. Additionally, a new accolade, the Bo Crane Award, will debut, presented to David Bower, a former HRB and PAST Board member, for his significant contributions to local historic preservation. Named after Bo Crane—a historian celebrated for his research, lectures, walking tours, and publications—the award will be presented by Crane's widow, Kristen Harrison. PAST Heritage books by Crane will also be available for purchase.

PAST's mission remains dedicated to promoting the preservation of historic architecture, neighborhoods, and the unique identity of greater Palo Alto and Stanford areas. Held annually in May to align with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Preservation Month, this year's theme, "Harnessing the Power of Place," reflects the focus on 1924 Centennial buildings—a challenging endeavor given the hundreds of permits issued that year.

Join PAST and PAHA as we celebrate Palo Alto's rich heritage, with welcomes from Philip Roberts, an overview by Steve Staiger, and refreshments to conclude the event.

THE PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION PRESENTS



PAHA Annual Celebration: "Night At The Museum"

Wednesday, June 4, 2025 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Palo Alto History Museum 300 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto

Come join us for a fun-filled evening at our PAHA Annual Celebration "Night at the Museum" where you can make a little history of your own!

Be the first to explore the newly renovated Roth Building, home of the long-awaited Palo Alto History Museum.

Imagine layers of color, texture, and light encapsulated in this architecturally stunning blank canvas before exhibits are placed.

Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to include your voice, your personal Palo Alto history echoing throughout the breathtaking spaces capturing the slices of life—Then and Now—that make our hometown extraordinary.

Enjoy tours, live music, food and mingle with fellow history enthusiasts.

This is a special moment in time when you can make a little history of your own!

Free for members* plus one guest

***A \$40 PAHA membership includes free admission to our annual event.**

Sign up to become a member on our website, www.pahistory.org

Space is limited and RSVPs are required.

Please make reservations before Sunday, June 1st

with the mail-in coupon below or via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1309250636899>

Everyone is welcome!

Reservations must be received by PAHA no later than Sunday, June 1, 2025.

Name(s)

I/We wish to join PAHA with a \$40 membership..... \$ _____

I/We wish to make a tax deductible donation to PAHA.... \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____



ANNUAL EVENT RESERVATION
Please mail this form
with your check to:
PAHA ANNUAL EVENT
P.O. Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302

**2025 PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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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 conducted using Zoom at 5 pm the first Wednesday of each month (except August).

Public programs are held at 2 pm on the first Sunday of October, December, February, March, and May at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road. 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.

Round Table Pizza

By Bo Crane (1950-2024), Former PAHA Board Member



Founder of Round Table Pizza, Bill Larson

In 1948, Bill Larson was a sophomore attending Palo Alto High School when a night of teenage pranking occurred. While a policeman was searching for the culprits who swiped the keys from his patrol car's ignition, another prankster let the air out his tires. For being that guy, Bill got expelled. Most newspaper accounts state he was a high school dropout, but a Paly classmate of his told me what really happened. It seems that expulsion for spirited hi-jinks sounded better than being a desultory dropout.

Out of school at age 17, Bill signed up to join the Navy but was first sent home for his parents' permission. Stationed overseas, Bill discovered a Japanese-style pizza dish. Returning to California after his hitch, Bill took a series of jobs including driving a Coca-Cola truck, working at Safeway, and finally assisting at a San Mateo pizza place called Hambone's Parlor & Olde British Pub, revising menus and doing promotion. Rumor has it that he concocted the pizza recipe used by Big Al's Gas House (which once had locations in Palo Alto, Redwood City, Santa Cruz, & more).

Considering himself to have enough pizza knowledge, he borrowed \$800 from his father, Henry, a Swedish immigrant. Bill bundled up his household furniture in a pickup truck to present to a bank as collateral for a loan. Along with other loans, he purchased a vacant building at 1235 El Camino Real in Menlo Park. They relocated to 1225 El Camino Real a few years later. Before pizza paddles could be acquired, each morning Bill would remove the flat front door to use as a rolling table. Bill and his wife, Toni, did most of the interior work while Henry helped build the business's tables,

including a large round one for which the restaurant was named. Round Table Pizza opened on December 21, 1959.

By 1978, Bill Larson had sold 75% of his business and retired the following year, wishing he hadn't sold at all. He had 9 children, most of whom worked at Round Table, including son Bob, who was cleaning tables at age 12. Bob attended one year at Paly then Gunn High School, graduating in 1981. Round Table restaurants in Palo Alto were on University Avenue, California Avenue, Colorado Avenue, and Alma Street.



Round Table Pizza's University Avenue location (now closed)

Bob Larson purchased the Menlo Park Round Table in 1987, which he still owns as well as the Colorado Avenue pizza place in Palo Alto. Bob's kids and wife worked at their businesses as well. One rainy afternoon, Bob gave me an interview along with a display of Round Table memorabilia.

Bill died at age 73 in 2006. At the time this article was written in 2023, there were 515 Round Table restaurants, both franchises and corporate-owned, existing in the seven Pacific Coast states, including Nevada and Arizona, as well as in Dubai, Bahrain and Mongolia, with plans to expand further into the Mideast.



Original Round Table at 1235 El Camino Real in Menlo Park

Ollie Johnston: Animator Who Brought Disney to Life

By Jon Kinyon, PAHA Board Member



Ollie Johnston and some of his handiwork

Ollie Johnston, a name synonymous with the golden age of Disney animation, was born in Palo Alto on October 31, 1912. His artistry brought to life some of the most beloved characters in cinema history, such as Bambi's tender moments and Pinocchio's transformation from puppet to boy, enchanting audiences worldwide.

Ollie grew up in Palo Alto and attended Palo Alto High School (Paly), where his passion for art began to flourish. Inspired by the town's natural beauty, he often sketched landscapes and animals. At Stanford University, he studied art and contributed cartoons to the Stanford Chaparral humor magazine. Feeling drawn to animation, he transferred to the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles in his senior year to pursue his dream.

In 1935, Ollie joined Walt Disney Studios as an animator. His talent quickly shone through, and by 1940, he was directing animation for *Pinocchio*, where he animated the iconic scene of Pinocchio's nose growing. Over the next four decades, until his retirement in 1978, he worked on numerous Disney classics. These include *Fantasia*, where Ollie lent his talents to animating the lively centaurs and the delicate movements in the "Nutcracker Suite"; *Snow White*, where he animated the dwarfs' expressive faces; *Bambi*, capturing the grace of the forest animals; *Cinderella*, bringing magic to the fairy godmother's transformations; *Alice in Wonderland*, with its whimsical characters; *Peter Pan*, flying with the Lost Boys; *Lady and the Tramp*, depicting the tender romance between the dogs; *101 Dalmatians*, animating the playful puppies; *The Jungle Book*, with Baloo's carefree spirit; and *Winnie the Pooh*, endearing

audiences with the honey-loving bear. His animations were renowned for their emotional depth and lifelike movement, setting a new standard for the industry.

Ollie's influence on animation is immeasurable. Ranked as the 5th most influential Disney animator in a countdown of 50, his style dominated Disney feature films for decades. He was a master of character animation, imbuing his creations with personality and charm that resonated with audiences of all ages. His work earned him numerous accolades, including the National Medal of Arts in 2005, recognizing his contributions to American culture.

As one of Disney's legendary "Nine Old Men," a term coined by Walt Disney himself, Ollie was part of an elite group of animators who shaped the studio's golden era. These animators were responsible for creating Disney's most memorable films and characters. Ollie's lifelong friendship with fellow animator Frank Thomas, also a Stanford alum, led to a fruitful collaboration. Together, they co-authored several books on animation, most notably *Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life*. This seminal work, containing the 12 basic principles of animation, remains a cornerstone of animation education and has helped preserve the techniques developed at Disney for future generations.

Beyond his animation desk, Ollie was an avid train enthusiast. He built a miniature railroad in his backyard, complete with detailed locomotives and landscapes, reflecting his meticulous attention to detail and love for mechanical artistry. This passion even influenced his work, as seen in the character of Mr. Toad in *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*, whose wild ride was inspired by Ollie's love for trains.

Ollie Johnston's legacy extends far beyond his lifetime. His contributions to animation have inspired countless artists and continue to be studied and admired. His techniques are still taught in animation schools worldwide, and his characters remain timeless icons. Even today, animators at Disney and beyond look to Ollie's work for inspiration, applying his principles in both traditional and computer-generated animation. He passed away of natural causes on April 14, 2008, at the age of 95, the last surviving member of the Nine Old Men. His work remains a testament to the power of animation to tell stories and evoke emotions.

Ollie Johnston's life was a journey of creativity and innovation. His animations have left an indelible mark on the world of cinema, bringing joy to generations and setting the bar for character animation. His teachings continue to guide aspiring animators, ensuring that his legacy lives on. Ollie Johnston was not just an animator; he was a storyteller, a visionary, and a true artist.

Rich Green Receives Tall Tree Award



Rich Green

We are thrilled that PAHA's Vice President Rich Green is being recognized this year by the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce to receive the Tall Tree Award for Outstanding Citizen Volunteer. The Tall Tree Awards are given annually to individuals and organizations that have shown exceptional civic contributions and service to the community.

Rich has been instrumental in leading the Palo Alto Museum project over the past dozen years. His persistence and selflessness, together with his technical expertise, have been key to what will be an important addition to Palo Alto's heritage. We salute Rich for this award.

Steve Staiger to Speak at Sunnyvale Museum



Steve Staiger

PAHA Historian Steve Staiger has been invited to speak to group at the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum on June 2, 2025 at 7 p.m. He will be giving a talk on Palo Alto history with special emphasis on Sarah Wallis who has a special connection to the founders of Sunnyvale.

Sunnyvale Historical Society has a delightful history museum, a replica of the original Martin Murphy House, which is located in a City park next to an orchard. In many ways this museum will be a model for our town museum at the Roth Building.

Sunnyvale Heritage Park is located at:

570 E Remington Dr, Sunnyvale, CA 94087

PAST Spring Walking Tours Begin in May



Tours start at 10 a.m. and generally take about 90 minutes.

The tours are free, open to the public, no reservations are required, — just show up, but don't forget to bring water and sun or light rain protection.

Note: Dates and tour leaders are subject to change.

For updated info: PAST Heritage website: www.pastheritage.org

Scheduled Dates:

Sun 5/4 - Homer Ave - Meet at 475 Homer Ave. - Leader: Laura Roberts

Sat 5/17 - Lower College Terrace - Meet at 2310 Yale St. - Leader: Susie Borton

Sun 5/18 - Professorville - Meet at 1005 Bryant St. - Leader: Philip Roberts

Sat 5/31 - Birge Clark, Webster Edgewood - Meet at 1455 Webster - Leader: Kristen Harrison

Sat 6/7 - Professorville - 1005 Bryant St. - Leaders: Anne Gregor & Kris Zavoli

Sat 6/8 - Barron Park - Meet at Bol Park - Leader: Simon Pennington

Welcome New Our Members!

Nancy Deisinger
Sandra Florstedt
Amanda McIntyre
Dr Burley McIntyre
Ollie McIntyre
Sairus Patel
Patrick Peterson
Keith Reckdahl

Upcoming Program Dates

• June 4 (see enclosed flier)

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

Previous PAHA Program

If you missed the March 2nd program, *The Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link: <https://vimeo.com/1068937474>

Got Pics?

We are always on the lookout for old Palo Alto pics, and they don't have to be 100 years old for us to be interested! Please consider donating your old photos of Palo Alto to PAHA.

Contact: Darla Secor
darla.secor@cityofpaloalto.org

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