

**THE
PAST** PALO ALTO STANFORD HERITAGE
NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1990 - THE FIRST ISSUE

OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER

The board of Palo Alto Stanford Heritage is proud to present the first issue of *The PAST Newsletter*. We hope that the newsletter will be a forum for preservation in Palo Alto. Neighborhood change, restoration projects, buildings threatened by demolition, preservation events and the people who work to preserve the character of our town can all be noted in the newsletter.

LAST CHANCE TO SAVE QUEEN ANNE

The Queen Anne Victorian home at 545 Forest Avenue is a category II building in the Palo Alto inventory of historic buildings. Even so, its future is in jeopardy. The property, zoned for high density development, apartments or townhouses, is about to be developed.

In July, the Board of PAST sent a letter to the Palo Alto City Council urging it to find a way to save the building from demolition. The Council responded and emphasized its support for historic preservation.

The City Council asked staff to investigate moving the house to a city-owned property on Middlefield Road, an old well site that the City hopes to sell soon.

A private developer is also considering moving the house to a lot on Palo Alto Avenue. Neither house

move will be easy, but with encouragement from the City, one of the moves should save the Victorian.

The City Council also reinforced the need for the city staff to be flexible when reviewing sites for older homes. Unfortunately, the new, more restrictive R-1 zoning rules make both restoring and moving older homes more difficult. Both the HRB and staff are looking at ways to ease the zoning burden on older buildings and historic neighborhoods.

You can help by writing to the City Council members thanking them for their action on 545 Forest and asking them to continue their support of historic preservation.

WEEKLY HISTORIC WALKING TOURS ARE A HUGE PALO ALTO SUCCESS

Two years in the making, cast of tens, more sweeping than Halley's Comet, more sublime than spring on the Seine, experience the PAST Heritage Walking Tours of Downtown Palo Alto and Professorville.

Enjoy the wit and charm of knowledgeable docents as they lead you through the history of Palo Alto. Have your most pressing questions answered with authority:

- Who was Ramona anyway?
- What is a modillion?
- When was the Cornell Connection?
- Where is the Street of the Athletes?
- How do we identify a Main Streeter?

THE PAST NEWSLETTER - August 1990

Hundreds of newcomers, visitors and seasoned Palo Altans have been swept into the past as they strolled along sun drenched streets with the eternal crackling of magnolia leaves under their feet, or have jostled along Ramona Street with the smells of the Cardinal Hotel Barber Shop in their nostrils and entered into the urbane ambience of Pearl's Oyster Bar.

TOUR SCHEDULES

PROFESSORVILLE TOUR:

-- Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.
-- Meet at 1005 Bryant Street, at the intersection of Addison Avenue.

DOWNTOWN PALO ALTO TOUR:

-- Wednesdays at 11:00
-- Meet in the lobby of the Palo Alto City Hall, 250 Hamilton Avenue.

CALL FOR WALKING TOUR DOCENTS

If you wish to be part of these wonderful adventures, the doors of opportunity are now swinging open. The PAST docents are seeking a few good docents who wish to enlighten the throngs to the rich history of Palo Alto.

Training will include eight enlivening lectures on local history and architecture, to take place during the fall of 1990. If you share our interest in historical Palo Alto and own a pair of sturdy walking shoes, call Carolyn Pierce (324-1789) before September 7 to request an application to join us in this unique opportunity for fun and service.

WHAT IS PAST UP TO NOW?

In 1987 a small group of residents from Palo Alto and Stanford began working to bring the 1988 State Preservation Conference to town. They formed a non-profit corporation which they named Palo Alto Stanford Heritage or PAST.

Following the Conference, they decided to keep the group together. In two years, PAST has moved from the frenzy of co-hosting the conference to the more stable, long-term mission of preservation in the Palo Alto area.

The goal of PAST is to establish and maintain a positive, active stance on preservation. We recognize that changes must take place in a healthy community, but that a successful community also respects and protects its heritage: the city's foundation for the future.

The list of PAST functions continues to grow. The Holiday house tour in Professorville has become an annual event attracting more than 300 people. PAST has sponsored a "ReHab Right" workshop on restoration and a program to identify and preserve the historic character of neighborhoods.

Last year, PAST inaugurated the Walking Tours of Professorville and Downtown Palo Alto. The success of the walking tours attests to a strong community interest in preservation.

The historic neighborhoods of Palo Alto help give the entire town its unique identity and character. This year the board hopes to build on its success and find new ways to keep the character and charm of Palo Alto's heritage intact.

BOARD SELECTS NEW OFFICERS

Ken Alzman, President, is a former member of the Palo Alto Historic Resources Board (HRB).

Vice-president Linda Northway is a former member of the HRB and co-chair of the walking tours and docent training program last year.

Betsy Gifford and Noel Blase will share Secretary responsibilities.

Jack Kidder remains as Treasurer, a job he has held since PAST was organized in 1987.

The newest member of the board, Joan Jack, also chairs the Historic Walking Tours program this year.

Jonathan Gifford, Elizabeth Kittas, Susan Sweeney, Don Winbigler and Gail Woolley fill the remaining board seats.

CALL FOR RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS

Have you ever wondered who designed your house, who built it or how much it cost in 1924? Have you ever been curious about who lived in the wonderful old building around the corner from you? Now may be the time to begin finding the answers.

The current Palo Alto historic inventory contains more than 300 buildings, only a portion of those that could be included. Each building needs a pedigree before it can be added to the inventory -- the names of its architect, builder and owners; a review of its residents; a summary of notable events; and an architectural description.

This fall PAST will form a team of volunteers to assist the Historic Resources Board when it expands the Professorville Historic District and adds new sites to the inventory. While some experience will be helpful, an interest in learning about local historic research and the willingness to help are the primary criteria. PAST will train successful applicants.

To receive an application when the program is ready later this year, please send us your name, address and phone number.

LOST STREET NAMES

As you stroll through the older neighborhoods of Palo Alto, noticing the rich detail of the homes and pleasant surroundings, take a moment to glance at the sidewalks. They too can add character and detail to the neighborhood.

You will notice that the contractors used to "sign" their work, embossing their names in the damp concrete. Street names were also embossed at the corners, an easy and attractive way to identify the location. Not all of the street names are spelled correctly, sometimes Waverley other times Waverly, minor mistakes that add flavor to an historic neighborhood.

Although they were "cast in concrete," these special details are being lost to the city sidewalk repair program. The City of Palo Alto Public Works Department, who is responsible for the program, no longer embosses the street names at the corners. **Maybe they should,** at least in the older neighborhoods where the street names are traditional. It would be a simple, inexpensive way to recognize the neighborhood's historic character.

COMING EVENTS

On Saturday, August 11, 1990, our neighbor, Mountain View, will include selfguided historic tours of the downtown and Old Mountain View Neighborhood during the "Discover Downtown" celebration.

PAST plans for this year:

- Walking Tour docent training.
- Research Training Program.
- Professorville Holiday House Tour.
- Stanford Campus Historic Tour.
- Workshop on How to Prepare an Old House for the Next Earthquake.

Please send your comments and ideas to:

THE PAST NEWSLETTER
1057 Ramona Street
Palo Alto, CA 04301

THE PAST NEWSLETTER ASKS:

WHERE DID THE STREET NAMES GO?
CAN A QUEEN ANNE BE SAVED?
WHAT NEXT FOR PAST?
WHAT IS A MODILLION?
HOW CAN YOU BECOME INVOLVED?
WHO GIVES THE BEST TOURS OF PALO ALTO?
-THEN GIVES MOST OF THE ANSWERS.



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