



PAST News

Vol. 14, No. 2

P.O. Box 308 • Palo Alto, California 94302 • (650) 299-8878

April 2001

Preservation Week May 7—12

PRESERVATION AWARDS CEREMONY

Saturday, May 12

2—4:00 p.m.

Palo Alto Women's Club

475 Homer Avenue

Featuring

Michael Garavaglia, Preservation Architect:

Using the State Historic Building Code

to Remodel & Rehabilitate Your Historic Home

Have you ever been told by a contractor that you had to rebuild your staircase because it didn't meet current code? Or heard horror stories from friends who had to make massive changes to their historic home when they thought they were starting on a minor remodel? Now is your chance to learn about alternatives which can make it possible to adapt your home for today's needs without rebuilding from the ground up.

100 YEARS OLD IN 2001



1251 Bryant

See article on page 3.

PRESERVATION WEEK WALKING TOURS

Tuesday, May 8 *Greenmeadow: A Utopian Vision of Palo Alto from 1954*, 6:00 p.m., Greenmeadow Way at Greenmeadow Park, K.C. Marcinik, Architect & PAST Board Member

Thursday, May 10 *Ceramic Tile: Early 20th Century Artistry in Palo Alto*, Tom & Ellen Wyman, PAST Tile Enthusiasts

Homer Avenue: Original Palo Alto in Transition, David Bubenik, PAST Board Member (Date, time and meeting place to be announced on PAST website and phone hotline)

PAST Tour Information: www.pastheritage.org 650.299.8878

ARCHITECTURE MONTH WALKING TOURS (Meet at the Palo Alto City Hall Plaza at noon.)

Monday, May 7 *Proclamation by Mayor Sandy Eakins*, Introduction by Kathy Schmidt, AIA, Vice President AIASCV
Alleyways and Paseos, Bob Peterson, AIA, Robert Peterson Architects, Inc., past Chair Architectural Review Board

Tuesday, May 8 *An Architectural Primer*, John Barton, John H. Barton II Architect, Palo Alto Board of Education, Member

Wednesday, May 9 *Making the City: Old and New*, Virginia Warheit, City Sr. Planner and Dave Dockter, City Arborist

Thursday, May 10 *Rediscovering Modernism*, Phillip Woods, AIA, City Planner

Friday, May 11 *The Historic Fabric of Our Streets*, Roger Kohler, Architect, Kohler Associates; Historic Resources Board (HRB), Chair and Marty Bernstein, Architect; HRB, previous PAST President

AIA Tour Information: Patrice Langevin, plangevin@thehayesgroup.com 650.326.8787 x20, American Institute of Architects, Santa Clara Valley Chapter, Events Chair

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

If you've been reading the local papers, you've probably seen mention of a new historic ordinance. The City is trying once again to craft an updated ordinance that will help to protect Palo Alto's historic homes.

At the heart of this proposal is a new voluntary Palo Alto Register of Historic Homes. Only homes currently on the City's historic inventory (categories 1—4) or identified as eligible for California or National Register listing would be eligible for inclusion on the register. And only the property owner can apply for listing.

Once listed, a number of special benefits would be available to the homeowner. The benefits package is still under discussion but may include an increase in allowable floor area, exclusion of attic and basement areas that would otherwise be counted as floor area, and other minor zoning exceptions not granted to other homes. Exemption from expensive flood hazard requirements (triggered when any "substantial improvements" are made to homes in the flood zone) could also save owners of listed properties a great deal during remodeling projects. In return, demolition of a listed home would be prohibited and any changes would be reviewed for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

The benefits under discussion are good as far as they go. They should serve to encourage applications to the Register by folks planning to remodel. But another list of benefits is needed which will attract the owners who are not planning any changes. This is a much harder task and few good ideas have come forth so far. If you have thoughts in this area, I would encourage you to share them with members of the HRB and with the City's Planning staff.

I'm encouraged that we are moving forward with an alternate means of protecting our historic homes. And with or without added benefits, I plan to apply to place my home on the Register as soon as it is implemented!

Pria Graves, President



200 HOMER TO BE HONORED

Every visitor to Whole Foods or St. Michael's Alley will recognize this building, located at 200 Homer Avenue, if not its signage. This year's Preservation Awards include a special recognition for the seventy years of careful maintenance by the owners of the commercial and residential buildings on three of the corners at the intersection of Emerson Street and Homer Avenue. As you stand in appreciation of this special corner, thank Patricia and Earl Schmidt.

RESOURCES FOR LIVING IN YOUR HISTORIC HOME —A Community Service of PAST

Living in an old house is a great pleasure, but is not without its challenges. This year during Preservation Week, PAST will be distributing free resource information to the 300 homeowners on the City's original Historic Resources Inventory. These personalized resource packets will include:

- Information about the history of your home
- A Resource List for Homeowners with helpful supplier and contact information.
- Information about researching the history of your home
- Information about the State Historic Building Code
- Resources for historic gardens
- Information on how to obtain books and periodicals about restoration and living in an old house
- Information about obtaining insurance for historic homes
- Palo Alto history
- Neighborhood walking tour brochures

We have invited the 300 homeowners to pick up their packets at the **Preservation Week Program on Saturday, May 12th**. We need volunteers to help distribute packets to homeowners who are unable to attend. Please contact Sharon Erickson at serickson1@aol.com or 494-0567 if you can help.



**100 YEARS YOUNG AND
BEAUTIFUL AT 1101 ALMA**

HOMER AVE. OCTOBER TOURS & EXHIBITS

Advertised as *Original Palo Alto in Transition*, PAST's festive Celebration of Homer Avenue last October 14 drew a crowd of nearly 100 tour-goers and those curious about the big empty lots left after the Palo Alto Medical Foundation's buildings were demolished. Caroline Willis created a special walking tour highlighting the built environment of this important street during the first few decades of the 20th Century, while Dave Bubenik hosted exhibits and refreshments at the Williams House (Museum of American Heritage). Thanks to the many hard-working volunteers who staffed the event. A special thanks to Ellen Harrington, Executive Director of the Museum, who led a garden tour of the Williams House garden, which is undergoing historic preservation efforts.

From lumber yards and a mill; to transit and storage facilities; to a laundry district; to the Women's Club; to a plumbing and heating business; to the first African-American church building in Palo Alto; to bakeries; to housing for such craftsmen and service workers as hod carriers, bakers, cabinetmakers, teamsters and masons; to automobile repair shops; to the headquarters of the world-famous Palo Alto Medical Clinic, the Homer Avenue corridor over a century has witnessed a mix of commercial and residential uses. The departure of the Clinic and SOFA development plans have resulted in moving several turn-of-the century homes to have a stake in the transition. Planning Commission and City Council hearings and decisions lie ahead in 2001 for a major portion of this important corridor.

The PAST Board is considering featuring a day out in another historic area of Palo Alto next fall and welcomes feedback on whether there is an interest in having an annual fall event like this one. Meanwhile, growing out of Caroline's work on *A Celebration of Homer Avenue*, PAST plans to publish a new flyer describing a self-guided walking tour of historic Homer Avenue.

*Marilyn Bouriedel, Co-Chair,
A Celebration of Homer Avenue*

PAST MEMBERSHIP

For the second year in a row membership in PAST Heritage has exceeded that of the previous year. PAST Heritage now has a total of 256 members of whom 90 joined at the individual level, 103 at the family level, 45 as sponcers, 12 as patrons, and 6 as life members.

A sincere thank you to all of you for your support of PAST's efforts to preserve the character of Palo Alto's built environment.

INDIVIDUAL

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Marge Blackman
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Kathryn Bowden
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PAST Website:

www.pastheritage.org

PAST Hotline:

650-299-8878

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Layout: Carolyn George

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CAN YOU HELP?

The *Museum of American Heritage* needs docents on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. You can find out more about this and other opportunities on their web site: www.moah.org (look under members and volunteers), or call them at 321-1004.

CRUNCHING PALO ALTO—A DEMOLITION UPDATE

As promised in our previous newsletter, PAST Heritage has been documenting the demolition fever in Palo Alto. Our goal is simple: to get the facts and draw what conclusions we may from them. As a byproduct, we are trying to photodocument this unique period in our town's history, as it happens.

This article gives a summary of the demolition statistics. The next newsletter will present a more detailed analysis, plus a photo gallery.

Our primary information source has been the city's demolition permit application file which we try to review at least twice weekly. It consists of the original permit application forms, plus a list of permits approved and their dates.

Here are the results. Since March 1999, when the record begins, 200 demolition permits have been approved. We have not fully distinguished commercial from residential properties, but the addresses indicate that the great majority are in residential areas. Two garages are included, and another entry is an architecturally endowed outbuilding behind a National Register eligible property that was leveled to make way for a neighboring condo development. Identified burned structures were not counted.

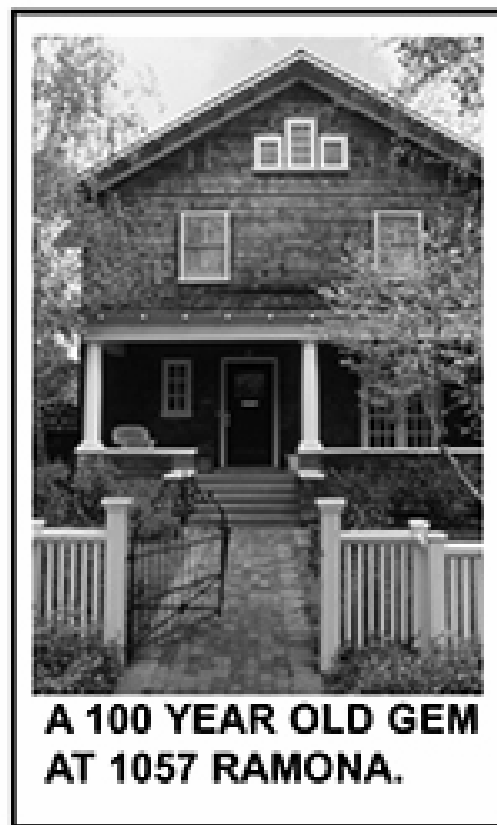
The year 2000 featured 135 demolition permits, almost one every second working day. It reflects an accelerating pace. To quantify it, compare the numbers for the year from April 1999 through 10 March 2000 with the tally for the corresponding year beginning April 2000. This year-to-year comparison avoids differences due to seasonal variations. Sixty-two permits were issued in the first period, 138 in the latter, for an increase of 123 %. That's double the prior rate, plus a fraction. To illustrate, consider that for every four structures demolished in 1999-2000, almost nine went down in the succeeding year.

We need your help. Although the city now requires that photos be provided with demo permit applications, the applicants have no incentive to produce quality pictures. So we snap our own as we can.

But to photograph these luckless buildings before they become holes in the ground, we need as much advance warning as possible. Unfortunately, the city's demolition permit process, our prime data source at present, is very "streamlined"; a permit can be approved the day it is applied for if the applicants have done their homework right. And the house may go down that very day. But the telltale site preparation—the fences around the property and street trees—appear much sooner. If you observe such arrangements, or have reliable neighborhood rumors, please leave a message for our demo watch coordinator at 328-6721. Your own photos are also very welcome.

More in our next issue. In the meantime, a running demo data list will be posted soon on our website www.pastheritage.org.

David Bubenik



HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR 2000

The Holiday House tour on Christmas Tree Lane was a great success, with a record of more than 700 tickets distributed. Weather was beautiful, allowing tour-goers to stroll comfortably over the compact, two-block route. The timing of the tour had been moved to enable later attendees to enjoy the lights on the outdoor garden displays for which the neighborhood has become famous. Five homeowners graciously opened their houses, allowing visitors to see them in their holiday décor, and one lovely backyard garden served as the location for refreshments. More than 50 volunteers contributed their time and enthusiasm to the project, welcoming visitors and describing points of interest in the homes and the neighborhood. To see photos of the tour, please see the PAST website at www.pastheritage.org.

PRESERVATION WEEK MAY 7—12

Mark your calendar for Preservation Week, PAST's annual celebration of our architectural heritage. As a bonus, this year we team with the Santa Clara County AIA chapter in a joint venture: Preservation Week plus Architecture Month. The events begin Monday, May 7 with local tours and culminate with a special speaker at the Awards Ceremony on Saturday afternoon, May 12. We're beginning our celebration one week in advance of National Preservation Week so that you can also attend events taking place in surrounding cities.

This year's celebration offers an expanded program of PAST's customary tours of our local heritage, combined with AIA's showings of significant architectural achievements. PAST's offerings include our beleaguered historically unique Homer Avenue historical area, an exploration of the exquisite and often overlooked ceramic tile artistry in our downtown and an insider's view of a 1954 utopian vision in Palo Alto's Greenmeadow neighborhood. Tours are being finalized and a full schedule will be available on our website at www.pastheritage.org.

Finally, our Saturday Awards Ceremony will feature noted Preservation Architect Michael Garavaglia who will share ideas and stories about the State Historical Building Code and tell us how it can be used to rehabilitate and remodel historic homes sensitively and safely. This relatively unknown code offers significant relief from the rigors of modern building code requirements to owners of qualifying buildings. Printed material about the Historic Building Code will be available at the ceremony.

Saturday afternoon continues with the presentation of awards to local home and commercial building owners who have made a special effort to preserve Palo Alto's past. Finally, plaques will be handed out to owners of homes which are 100 years old in 2001.

Join us for an interesting week!

*Look for pictures of more 100
year old homes on other
pages of this newsletter.*



100 YEAR OLD HOMES TO BE HONORED

At the Preservation Awards Ceremony on Saturday, May 12th, PAST will again be awarding bronze plaques to Palo Alto buildings that are 100 years old or older. In 1901 when most of these houses were built, Palo Alto had been an incorporated city for seven years, and had reached a population, as recorded the previous year in the 1900 U.S. Census, of 1,658. Mayfield was still a separate town that was not to become part of Palo Alto for another 24 years.

The first eleven buildings (*) on the following list are on Palo Alto's Historic Inventory and include St. Thomas Aquinas Church, the earliest extant church in Palo Alto. One of the buildings, 1107 Alma (formerly 1101), was built for the Sanors in 1897 at the corner of Hamilton and High. When it was decided in 1922 to build a commercial building at that location, the house was moved to its present site on Alma.

BUILT IN 1901

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| • 301 Addison | • 359 Embarcadero | • 1103 Ramona | 411 Lytton |
| • 1020 Bryant | • 431-433 Kipling | • 745 Waverley | 383 Waverley |
| • 1251 Bryant/305 Melville | • 318 Lincoln | | |
| • 1125 Byron | • 1057 Ramona | | BUILT IN 1897 |
| • 803 Cowper | | | 1101 Alma |

Prosperity to them all!

Join us Saturday May 12 from 2—4:00 p.m. for these presentations and Michael Garavaglia's talk.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, May 7—May 12

PAST Heritage Preservation Week Events in Palo Alto
Information inside this newsletter—look for updates at
www.pastheritage.org/events.html

May 17—20, San Diego

26th Annual California Preservation Conference
Spanning California's History will be explored through four program tracks:

- *Nuts and Bolts—Preservation Programs for Planners and Activists*
- *Fundraising—Cash for All Occasions*
- *Architectural History—California's Recent Past*
- *Preservation Toolkit—Advanced Preservation Techniques*

www.californiapreservation.org/calendar.html

Now—May 27, 2001

Let's Go to the Movies: The Mechanics of Moving Images
Museum of American Heritage
351 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto, 650-321-1004
Fri, Sat & Sun 11a.m.—4 p.m.
www.moah.org/events/index.html

May 13—19

National Preservation Week
The National Trust
www.nationaltrust.org/preservationweek/
Books for Homeowners available at:
www.preservationbooks.org

June 24

PAST Special Members Only Event
Watch for your invitation in early June and plan to join us on a very special house tour!

June 2001

San Francisco's 225th Birthday
The San Francisco Historical Society hosts many tours and events including celebrations in honor of San Francisco's 225th birthday. See their events calendar at:
www.sfhistory.org



PAST News

Palo Alto Stanford Heritage
P.O. Box 308
Palo Alto, CA 94302

PAST Heritage is a nonprofit organization advocating the preservation of the historic architecture, neighborhoods, and character of the greater Palo Alto Stanford area.

www.pastheritage.org