

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, December 9, 2001



Holiday House Tour

Palo Alto, CA

Advance tickets \$20, \$25 at the door.

Saturday January 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2002

Transistors & Vacuum Tubes

Museum of American Heritage

351 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto

This workshop consists of four sessions covering the basics of transistor and vacuum tube circuits. Learn about their invention and development, and construct a project to take home! Suitable for ages 10 and up. Cost to members is \$25 and \$35 to non-members. Scholarships available. Please register by December 21, 2001. For more information, or to register, call 650-321-1004. Registrations forms are available on their website www.moah.org/education/index.html, click on "Registration".

Ongoing

The **Presidio Trust** in San Francisco hosts historical tours and events including a program on the recent ecological restoration of a Chrissy Field tidal marsh that was missing for over one hundred years. Look for their events calendar at: <http://www.presidiotrust.gov>

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Autumn 2001

2001 HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

Sunday, December 9

2—5 p.m.



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.

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Join us for a relaxing afternoon visiting five remarkable Professorville homes.



Begin your walk at 730 Bryant and finish with some refreshments just a few blocks away.



If purchased by December 1, extra tickets are available for \$20 (see form on page 7). After that date, or at the door, they are \$25.



Learn more about one of the featured houses inside on pages 4 and 5. See you there!

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

THE RELUCTANT EVOLVER

It can't be happening. Not to me. I seem to be developing not only a tolerance, but a liking, for modern forms.

Me? The guy whose first awareness of architecture showed up as an early attraction to the reddish-brownstone Richardson Romanesque mansions and railroad station in my hometown? Who indulged in a then-unfashionable fondness for the dilapidated 1880's era business district that the town never quite got around to demolishing, and which is now the revered jewel of its reviving downtown? Who passionately detested the austere, angular styles then emerging as the "fabulous fifties" asserted themselves?

But yesterday I found myself admiring the art in the design of a low-pitched and front-gabled, acres of windows, fifties-era apartment building in Palo Alto. It is wildly out of place in its 1920's bungalow environment, and I would resist building it there today. But there it is, with the novel, ebullient style of its era. Would I object if it were to be torn down? Ask me again, next year.

Maybe it started when I moved into my 1905 Craftsman bungalow four years ago. An expression of the early twentieth century boldly asserting itself, it is aggressively and artfully plain. Its base design element is unadorned rectangles, pleasingly proportioned and skillfully arranged. Totally intellectual. No overt ornamentation in sight. And very, very homey. It is easy to see my house's place in the evolution of the ranch and other modern styles. With its introduction, I began to learn about and appreciate the twentieth century.

The slope is slippery and long, and I won't bore you with all the details. However, one milestone was a fine lecture by PAST's K. C. Marcinik on the architecture of the now-gone Lee Building, the former centerpiece of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic. This building, misplaced in the oldest part of Palo Alto, deserves to be appreciated in its own right. Another highlight was a session at the 2001 California Preservation Foundation conference about statewide efforts to preserve those other-worldly relics of the fifties.

Each era will have its own form of expression. Each expression will become classic to varying degrees. But must they destroy existing classics in the process?

I think not. Picasso created his masterpieces without needing to paint over the Mona Lisa. Our challenge as preservationists is to keep our surviving classics vital and whole, while gracefully accommodating the good ideas of the present. Some of them will be the classics of tomorrow. The rest will be metaphorically painted over in their turn.

The slope is slippery indeed. Following up on PAST's very popular tour of the Green Meadows Eichler neighborhood last May, I advocated for holding his year's Holiday House Tour in an Eichler neighborhood. I lost; it's in Professorville, and that's fine. But I'd be very interested to hear your opinion: should PAST feature Palo Alto's Eichlers in a future Holiday House Tour? Soon?

David Bubenik, President

"Each era will have its own form of expression. Each expression will become classic to varying degrees. But must they destroy existing classics in the process?"

CALIFORNIA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION WORKSHOP

The Officer's Club, Presidio of San Francisco, September 14, 2001

The all-day well-attended workshop at the San Francisco Presidio focused on financial incentives for historic preservation. Tax credits, easement donations, the Mills Act, seismic retrofit incentives, and the use of the State Historic Building Code were presented. Local examples of each incentive were noted. In fact, projects in Palo Alto have employed facade easements, the Mills Act, and utilization of the State Historic Building Code.

Those who attended this workshop included Karen Holman, Planning Commissioner, Dennis Backlund, Planner, Carol Murden, Historic Resources Board, and Martin Bernstein, Historic Resources Board.

Martin Bernstein

RESEARCH CALIFORNIA ON LINE

The California State Archives are available to everyone interested in California history! This new electronic resource combines the collections of the California State Archives with the power of the Internet to bring reliable and entertaining information about our Golden State. Check it out!

www.LearnCalifornia.org



Individual memberships receive one complimentary ticket and all other categories receive two.

Did you misplace your membership envelope?
Use the convenient form below and mail it today!

PAST Heritage

P.O. Box 308

Palo Alto, California 94302

Membership categories:

New Renewal

\$20 Individual \$30 Family \$50 Sponsor \$100 Patron \$500 Lifetime

Number of extra tickets to the **Holiday House Tour** at \$20 per ticket. _____ \$ _____

Total amount enclosed. _____ \$ _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (day) _____ (evening) _____ email _____

Please make check payable to PAST Heritage.

Because PAST Heritage is a tax-exempt charitable organization, contributions are tax deductible in accordance with IRS regulations.

EACH HAS A STORY TO TELL...

More than 500 buildings are listed on the Historic Buildings Inventory of the City of Palo Alto. Twenty-five are in Category One, that is, considered exceptional. Each has a story to tell. Here is one of them.

Several Category One structures were designed by regionally or nationally important architects. Julia Morgan, whose best known work is Hearst Castle, designed the building now occupied by MacArthur Park Restaurant. Originally built during World War I as the YWCA Hostess House at Camp Fremont in Menlo Park, it was purchased by the City of Palo Alto for one dollar and moved to its present location where it became the first municipally supported community center* in the United States. It served the city in that capacity until 1933 when Lucie Stern presented the town with a new center.



* If you've read the articles on the house at 730 Bryant, this is where Polly and Jake met.

Look for more stories of our historic treasures in future issues of the PAST Heritage Newsletter.

SASH WINDOW REPAIR

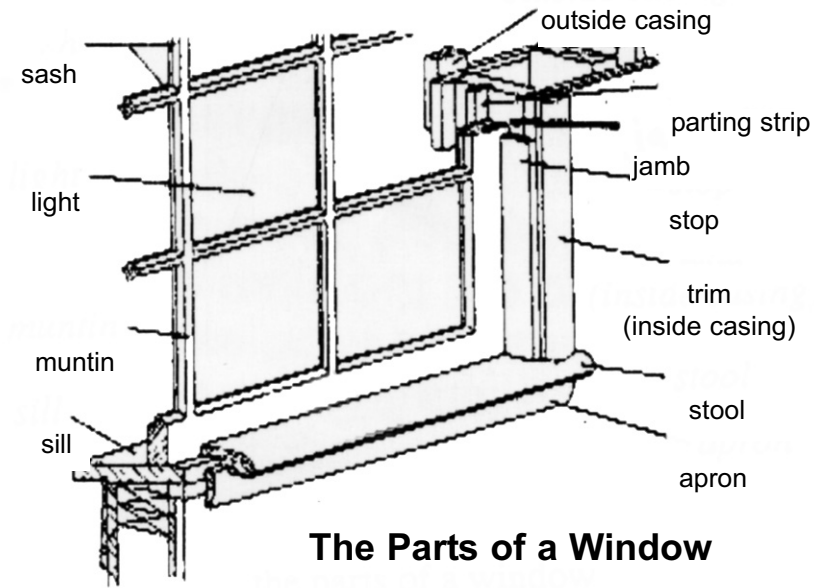
Part of keeping an old house "on it's feet" is making sure that the windows stay in great working order. Lucky for those of us living in older homes, the design is timeless and repairable. Unlike modern windows, our grandparents left us windows that really don't have a time line for failure.

I'm Laura Ferrell, owner of Woodenwings and a master carpenter. In



Now your inside window is free. The ropes will be easy to change.

Grasp the window at the bottom and swing the window in towards you.



The Parts of a Window

this article I will show you how replacing broken weight ropes, retrieving the weights and getting these old beauties working again is simple. For this repair you will need a utility knife, a stiff putty knife (a 5 in 1 tool—ask your helpful hardware store—is great), a hammer, a pair of pliers, a nail set, some 4 penny finish nails and sash cord.

First you need to take off the stops. Take your utility knife and score the paint where the stop meets the jamb. With your stiff putty knife start at the bottom of the stop and carefully pry the stop loose from the jamb.

When you have all three stops off (2 sides and head stop) roll the nails out the back side (unpainted) of the stop using your pliers (this will keep the wood from splintering).

Look on the side of the sash and you will see that the ropes are in a slot.

With your other hand take the rope and loosen it from the slot. Now do the other side. What you should have at this point is a sash (freed from the window unit) and two ropes with a knot in the end tight against the roller guides (with the weights pulling the ropes tight).

To remove the second sash (the outside sash) remove the parting strip and repeat the process for the first window. The parting strip should come free with little hindrance (unless it's been painted and then use your utility knife to again score the paint). Put both windows to the side where they won't break.

Now look on the side jamb and you will notice a small door secured with two

screws. Undo the screws and take the door off. You will see the ropes.

Pull the rope from the knot end (by the roller guide) and the weight should become visible. Take the weight out (through the weight hole). Using your old sash cord as a template, cut the right length of new sash cord. Feed the sash cord through the roller guide until you see it through the weight hole. Tie the weight end with a square knot (remember from scouts?) or any secure knot. A single knot will secure the other end. Do all four weights and ropes at this point.

With two hands take the ropes and place them back into their slots and place the outside window back into the position you removed it from. Put the parting strip back in place and repeat the process with the inside window. With your 4 penny finish nails re-secure the stop. With your nail set counter sink the nail heads. A little touch up paint and you're done.



Congratulations! It's easier than you think. If you get stuck call me and I'll try and walk you through it. My number at Woodenwings is 650-856-4762.

You'll be surprised how easy these windows are to get working again.

POLLY AND JAKE—A LOVE STORY

Nothing in the exterior of the handsome but eclectic 1903 Queen Anne Victorian at 730 Bryant Avenue suggests it sheltered a great Palo Alto love story, that of former owners Polly and Jake Swartz. You can experience the loving and creative force behind the Swartz' home for yourself at the Palo Alto Stanford (PAST) Heritage Holiday House Tour on Sunday, December 9 from 2 to 5 p.m. Enjoy this home's wonderful restoration (sidebar related story) by current owners Chris and Jana Stevens as well as tours of four other historic homes that are just a picturesque stroll away in prestigious Professorville. The Swartz' were 50-year owners of the Polly and Jake furniture and gift-store on the very visible corner of El Camino Real and Page Mill Road. Polly and Jake later became Zebra Copy and is now an AT&T store. If you were one of the lucky ones who shopped there, you have unique memories. The store closed after Jake's death in 1979, but a generation of observant Palo Altans remember Polly and Jake because the empty store's windows displayed colorful glassware until the mid-90's. Polly kept it that way so she could be driven by to relive memories of happy times with Jake.

The saga of Polly and Jake's home at 730 Bryant started long before that. The State of California's Historic Resources Inventory says that the home is a "collection of unusually angled forms [it] is stylistically indefinable, but the decorative elements are primarily Colonial Revival and Eastlake."

The Swartzes were happy to add to the home's eclectic style, once they were able to afford to buy it. Jake was a self-taught and clever craftsman who started a furniture business making custom pieces. The Holiday House Tour home at 730 Bryant benefited from Jake's skills after he bought it in 1941. Still standing are his elegant touches like metal crown finials (said to be from an unidentified demolished historic church) in the highly decorative roofs over his three custom structures. Son Dave has memories of working under the garage's steeply-pitched, gabled and dormered roof on his own Model T Ford as a teenager. "Dad kept a lot of woods, ornamentation and other stuff at the property," says Swartz. "My parents spent six days a week at the store, but Dad would find time to come home and work on the property."

Jake built a bay window and shelving in 730 Bryant for his beloved Polly's Limoges, Haviland and Blue Danube china collections. "Mom wouldn't sell anything at the store that she didn't personally like," Swartz remembered, "and she liked a lot of beautiful things." Polly's glassware was so popular at the store that it eventually outsold the furniture and Polly and Jake evolved into a giftshop.

When the house was sold, Swartz was excited to learn that Chris and Jana Stevens had bought his parents' home. "I had seen another restoration they did in town," said Swartz. "I know that Mom and Dad would approve of what they've done to our place." He was amused at the thought of seeing his former home during the Holiday House Tour. "Mom and Dad worked overtime at the store selling gifts during the holidays," he remembered, "and I was usually at the store helping wrap customers' gifts, so we didn't spend a lot of time at home then."

Judy Ann Edwards

HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR RETURNS TO PROFESSORVILLE

A HOUSE WITH A HISTORY

One of the more intriguing homes on the tour sits at what might be called the entrance to this historic district, at **730 Bryant Street** just south of the Downtown Library. This two-story Queen Anne Victorian was built in 1903 by H. L. Upham for George B. Bramhall, a railroad clerk, for \$3,100. The Palo Alto Times reported on April 3, 1903: "Mr. George Bramhall of San Francisco yesterday moved into his new residence on Bryant Street in block 10. The residence, just completed by H. L. Upham, has a pleasing architectural effect and the interior is conveniently arranged and finely finished in hard woods." Mr. Upham was succeeded by quite a few owners. The Bordens, civic leaders in the 1920s and 1930s, lived next door from around 1913 and then moved into the house in 1927 and lived there until 1930. Joseph Borden owned the Palo Alto Furniture Company from 1913 to 1929 and later was a salesman. He served as President of the Chamber of Commerce and for 11 years on the Board of Education. His wife Grace (Cuthbertson) taught school for nearly twenty years.

The most famous occupants of the house were Pauline and Jacob Swartz, known to the community as Polly and Jake, owners of a gift store at the corner of Page Mill Road and El Camino, who moved into the house in 1941. The couple met at a dance at the old Community House* (now MacArthur Park Restaurant) in the 1920s. Jake was studying law at Stanford, but decided to take up a career of woodworking and furniture building instead. Polly and Jake started their business in 1929, operating out of their then home at 445 Bryant, and soon after that moved it to the El Camino Real site. Jake made furniture to order, sometimes copying expensive pieces, in the back of the store. Polly began selling small gift items along with Jake's furniture.

Bay windows were added in the building to display glass, crystal and china pieces and the shop became known for the colorful glass and pottery displayed in its windows. Jake died in 1979, and Polly continued the business until the shop closed in 1987.

Interviewed by the Palo Alto Times in 1983, Polly commented that "Palo Alto is a nice town, but it's getting too big for its britches...but you know, this is kind of a landmark. When you see Polly and Jake, you know you are in Palo Alto."

When Polly fell ill, the store was kept vacant for ten years, taken care of by her son David but waiting for her return. Outside the shop on the sidewalk are the words she carved when it was still wet, "Polly and Jake, 1929." Polly died in 1997, and the building was finally sold.

Polly and Jake's home on Bryant was awarded historic landmark status by the Historic Resources Board in November, 1997. It was noted in the staff report that the home was "noteworthy for its handsome design, which is an eccentric example of the Victorian style, and for its pristine condition." The property actually includes several structures: the home itself, the garage (1915), a "recreation building" (circa 1945), and a workshop in the rear. According to the report, the ensemble of "period and period-replica buildings...emphasize Jake and Polly's interest in antiques and furnishings."

Sharon Olson and Steve Staiger

SOURCES: *Palo Alto Weekly* 4/16/97, 11/12/97, and 11/26/97
Palo Alto Times 2/21/83
Palo Alto Times Tribune 2/16/87
Historic Resources Board Staff Report 10/15/97 and 11/5/97
City Directories
Historic Buildings Inventory, Palo Alto (1982)
Palo Alto Weekly 11/26/97

"Polly and Jake" by Steve Staiger, *PAST News*, April 1999

* See related story on page 6.



730 BRYANT RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

The intent of this restoration project was to leave the house historically intact from the public right of way. The small addition to the second story allowed us to create 2 bathrooms (where there once was one) and a Master bedroom closet. The sun porch attached to the master bedroom was refurbished and now serves as a small sitting room for the master suite.

The owners, Chris and Jana Stevens, carefully selected tiles to keep the house in the historic flavor while allowing themselves to "color outside the lines." Cable lights, integral color in the plaster and a very modern kitchen (with two species of wood) are the new cloth that was woven into the fabric of this restoration.

The property has several outbuildings. The garage was reinforced and a new "Carriage House Door" was added. Chris and Jana created a "Rumpus Room" out of another building (a perfect place for their teenagers to hang out). Many of the "Polly and Jake-ism's" were left as a reminder of the quirky heritage of 730 Bryant. The living room fireplace surround was built out of pieces from their antique store (which used to be on the corner of Page Mill and El Camino). The whimsical copula on the rumpus room also chronicles the unusual collector's eye that was Polly and Jake's trademark.

This house was a labor of love for both the Stevens family and for Woodenwings.

Laura Ferrell

This house is the first stop on the 2001 Holiday House Tour!

**Avoid the rush.
Don't be disappointed.
Renew your membership today.**

Tickets available at the door for \$25.