



# P A S T

## N E W S L E T T E R

VOLUME 22 - NUMBER 3

WINTER 2009

### **Palo Alto High School Master Plan**



PAST is making efforts and expressing concerns over the current Palo Alto High School master planning process which has been underway over the last couple of months. The focus of our concerns revolve around these two aspects:

- the new proposed performing arts theater and its impact on the existing historic Haymarket Theater and neighboring Tower building

- its impact on the main entrance to the campus and its presence on Embarcadero Road

Early master plans showed the proposed new 600 seat theater directly in front of the Haymarket Theater with its "rear" end facing Embarcadero. Along with many other members of the community, PAST voiced serious concerns about the proposed location and we are happy to report that our efforts have resulted in a new building location, which is now the preferred plan moving forward.

We were even able to schedule a special meeting with the District, Paly school staff and the architect doing the master plan to review the master plan and to discuss the process that the District has gone through in order to arrive at this "final" master plan. The CEQA process has begun and PAST will be certain to be a constant presence during this process and do all we can to ensure that the significant historical resources that we have at Paly are preserved.

For more information and to follow our progress, click on the advocacy link on our website at: [www.pastheritage.org](http://www.pastheritage.org)

~ *Scott Smithwick*

## President's Column

Since my last report, we have seen great changes take place in our economy. Many of our neighbors are feeling the pinch, and I think we are all nervous about what might be on the horizon for our community as well. I am grateful for the continuing spirit of community service that exists on our board and within our membership, and for the sacrifice of your time and your membership dollars in the support of our historic architecture and neighborhoods.

As you will read in this newsletter, we continue to work with the city on the rehabilitation of the College Terrace Library. This little building was the culmination of over a decade of work by citizens to establish a library convenient to what had been the town of Mayfield. When Mayfield was annexed to Palo Alto in 1924, its residents could no longer use the county library. In 1925 a branch library opened in a room of the old Mayfield City Hall building. Interested residents donated money for this branch, and the City Council appropriated funds to maintain it. The branch was opened to the public three days a week. But soon a more permanent structure was needed.

What we now know as the College Terrace Library was officially opened in 1936 in the depths of the Great Depression. The City Council appropriated funds and federally-funded WPA labor was used in its construction. The building was designed by Charles Sumner (who had served on the planning commission) and constructed by George B. Moore (who had been a councilman and mayor). This library now serves almost 60,000 users per year, many of whom walk or bike to this special local branch. I include myself here; it is a family ritual that once a week, weather permitting, we ride our bikes to the library to exchange our books.

I learned to love Spanish Revival architecture through similar childhood visits to my own branch library in a small town in Florida. It had once been the pro shop for a swanky 20's golf course resort, built in the Spanish style. The resort went bust in the Depression, and many of the buildings were abandoned. The local Woman's Club seized an opportunity, and refurbished the pro shop for the benefit of the town's readers. There was charm and history in that little library building that provided abundant fuel for a child's imagination and love of reading.

So I take great personal pleasure that this little monument to public literacy is preserved unspoiled for many generations to come. I'm proud that it was the result of yet more community service, and a local government with its heart in the right place. It reinforces the necessity of continuing to donate our time. It pays tribute to the citizens of another difficult economic era who cared enough to give of their time and money, to a government that valued small towns enough to spend WPA money on a small unassuming project, and to a service-minded architect and contractor who collaborated on what was probably a very small commission.

~ Grace Hinton, President

### ~ Preservation Month is Coming ~

THE MONTH OF MAY IS PRESERVATION MONTH!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR SUNDAY, MAY 31ST FOR OUR UPCOMING PRESERVATION AWARDS AND CELEBRATION OF THIS YEAR'S CENTENNIAL HOMES. WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US!

Keep up to date by visiting our website at: [www.pastheritage.org](http://www.pastheritage.org)

# Stanford House Tour

5TH ANNUAL STANFORD HISTORIC HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR  
SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009 ~ 1 - 4PM

Anticipating National Preservation Month in May, the annual tour by the Stanford Historical Society's Historic Houses Project offers a rare glimpse into four pre-1930 campus houses designed or influenced by architects A. B. Clark and his son Birge Clark. The tour takes place on Sunday, April 26, from 1 to 4 p.m.

One house designed by Birge Clark represents his signature Spanish eclectic period style; a second is in colonial style. A third house, also in Spanish eclectic period style, was designed originally by A. B. Clark but likely with input from his son, who was just beginning his architectural practice. Birge Clark was married here, to the owner's daughter. The fourth house, also by A. B. Clark and once briefly occupied by author Wallace Stegner, was completely rebuilt with a view to designing a "Birge Clark house" for the 21st century.

All four houses will be featured in a new book, *Historic Houses V: Southeast San Juan Neighborhood*, Stanford University, available for advance purchase and on the day of the tour. The book focuses on 21 houses in the southeastern part of the San Juan neighborhood. Together with the house tours, this and other books are part of the Historic Houses Project, which won a prestigious Governor's Historic Preservation Award in 2007.

## A PREVIEW OF THE HOUSES OPEN FOR THE 2009 TOUR

### *1927 Spanish Colonial:*

This house is a fine example of Birge Clark's Spanish period style. With the exception of a 1975 kitchen remodel, the house retains many of his details: cream-colored stucco walls, red-tiled roof, small-paned casement windows, molded-concrete fireplace, built-in cabinetry, and arched doorways. The first owner, Charles Moser, was a member of the civil engineering faculty for 29 years. He survived the 1906 earthquake while a graduate student living in Encina Hall, and participated in the reconstruction of university buildings. He also contributed to the design and construction of many of Stanford's athletic facilities. Astute observers can find evidence of his engineering expertise in and around his former home.

### Highlights include:

- Extensive garden stonework made from 1906 earthquake rubble
- A secret compartment behind a set of bookshelves containing custom-designed sheet music drawers for Charles Moser's musician wife
- Outdoor chairs made from planks salvaged by Moser from Stanford's pre-1921 football stadium
- Original laundry chute and drop-down telephone table
- Three recently added garden topiaries: a deer, a horse, and a leaping rabbit





#### *1924 Colonial:*

This light-filled house designed by Birge Clark overlooks a redwood grove and is surrounded by gardens. The house retains intact many of its architectural details, although it has been updated by its current owners, who took care that the improvements harmonize with the original style. The house was first occupied by education professor William Proctor and his wife, Agnes. In the 1950s, championship swimmer and coach Thomas Haynie and his family enjoyed the interaction between the house and its outdoor space, building a swimming pool for their competitive-swimmer daughters and installing a solarium facing the backyard. The current owners have expanded the

kitchen, bedrooms, and bathrooms, incorporating cathedral ceilings, skylights, art glass windows, and decorative tile.

#### Highlights include:

- Original façade, featuring multi-paned windows and leaded-glass entrance door details

- Extensive garden containing fruit trees, Japanese maples, roses, and flowering perennials, dominated at the front by a majestic live oak tree perhaps planted by the original owners

- Light-filled remodeled kitchen with Mexican tile accents and pavers

- Master suite with a deck overlooking the redwood grove

- Study and living room with original details such as pocket doors, brass light fixtures, brick fireplaces, and painted woodwork

#### *1921 Spanish Eclectic:*

This house was built for astronomer and mathematician Sidney Townley and his family. Art department professor Arthur B. Clark was engaged to design the house, but his son Birge likely did most of the work. The original house included many design details of the Spanish eclectic style that Birge Clark developed in his later work, such as the arched front entry porch, highly textured stucco exterior walls, and wooden balconies. But perhaps the younger Clark had other reasons to spend time on the project, because as soon as the house was built he became engaged to the Townleys' eldest daughter, Lucile. The wedding took place in 1922 in the living room of the house; the couple had four children during their 63-year marriage.



#### Highlights include:

- Living room fireplace featuring Batchelder scenic tiles

- Original redwood kitchen cabinetry

- Sleeping porch with redwood casement windows and copper screens

- Fruit trees edging a lawn that was formerly an orchard



### *1920 Spanish Eclectic:*

Originally a small one-story cottage designed by Arthur B. Clark in 1920, this unusual house was completely rebuilt in 1997–99 after the current owners discovered that its foundation had been badly damaged by the 1989 earthquake. They asked architect Stephen W. Sanborn to design a “Birge Clark house” modernized for the 21st century. Sanborn’s plan added more than 3,000 square feet on two floors to the house while retaining in updated form some of the design and details of the 1920 structure. The house has had many occupants, as it was rented to students and junior faculty for almost 30 years after its first owners, professor of medicine George Barnett and his wife, Anna, moved across the street in 1931 to live with Anna’s father, retired professor of chemistry Edward Franklin. During 1946–47, Wallace Stegner, author and founder of Stanford’s creative writing program, was in residence.

#### Highlights include:

Living room, dining room, and library/study, as well as divided-pane windows and doors throughout the original footprint, based on the 1920 plans

Birge Clark–style stucco exterior, red tiled roof, and shallow-arched window and doorway openings

A row of small niches in the living room, holding a collection of miniature Southwest Indian pots

In the front garden, a bench made of sandstone recovered from the Quad after the 1906 earthquake

A dramatic multi-paned arched window on a sky-lit staircase landing, framing a redwood tree that shades the house’s front entrance



#### **Tour Logistics**

All four houses are within walking distance of one another. Parking and shuttle service are available at Tresidder Union parking lot; pick up the shuttle in front of the Stanford Faculty Club, across from the lot. Shuttles will take tour goers to the registration point and between the houses as needed.

**Note:** Tour goers should be aware that these houses may have uneven paths, and stairs without railings. Please wear appropriate footwear.

For tickets, mail a check (payable to Stanford Historical Society) to Stanford Historical Society, c/o Sweeney, P.O. Box 19290, Stanford, CA 94309. Tickets purchased by April 17 will cost \$20 per person, or \$35 for a ticket plus a copy of *Historic Houses V*. After April 17 and on the day of the tour, tickets cost \$25. All tickets will be distributed on the day of the tour at 669 Mirada Avenue. See the insert in this newsletter for more information and ticket ordering.

For additional information, visit the Stanford Historical Society’s Web site: <http://histsoc.stanford.edu/> or call 650-725-3332 or 650-324-1653. You may also e-mail questions to [cglasser@stanford.edu](mailto:cglasser@stanford.edu) or [susan.sweeney@stanford.edu](mailto:susan.sweeney@stanford.edu)

# Holiday House Tour Wrap-Up



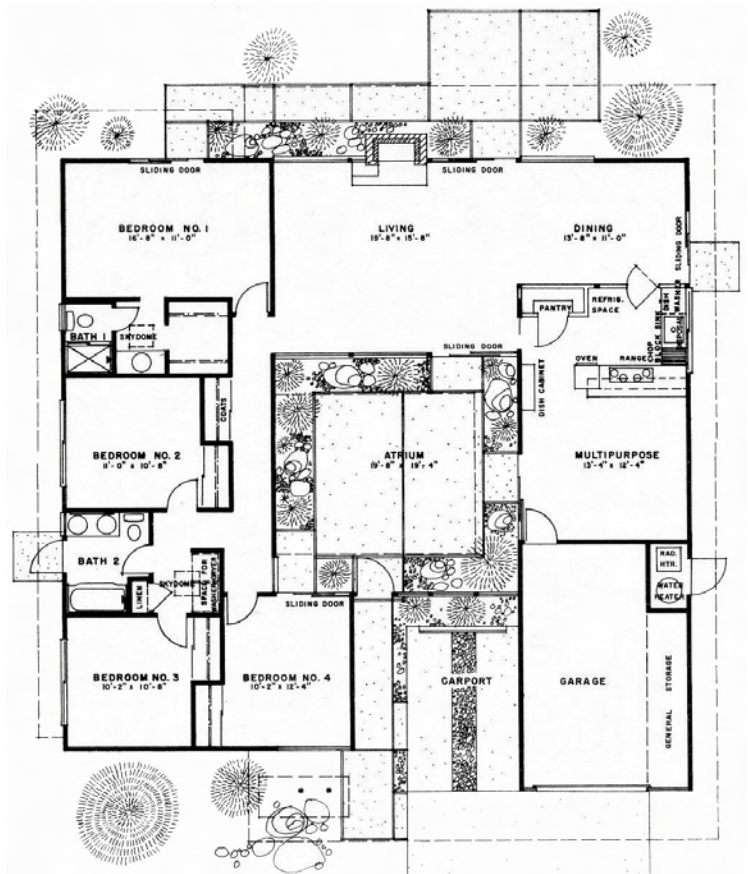
## HISTORIC MODERNISM: PALO ALTO'S EICHLER HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Holiday House Tour 2008 featured seven houses by visionary developer Joseph Eichler located in Palo Alto's newest National Register Districts, Greenmeadow and Green Gables, as well as in Eichler's Edgewood development. A little rain didn't spoil the enjoyment and enthusiasm of the nearly 350 people who toured the houses. Our ticket sales, excluding tickets that are included with memberships, raised nearly \$4,000.

We are grateful to the owners of the six exemplary houses on this year's tour, not only for allowing access to their homes, but for the care taken in the preserving and updating of each.

Thanks to all our volunteers for making this year's tour a unique event. While we tend to think of historic buildings as very old, it's worth reminding ourselves that Palo Alto played a part in the avant-garde of architecture during the post war boom. It's important to recognize the importance of these neighborhoods in the architectural firmament.

~ Grace Hinton, Holiday House Co-Chair



# College Terrace Library Planning

## COLLEGE TERRACE LIBRARY PLAN APPROVED BY HRB

On January 21, 2009, the Historic Resources Board unanimously approved the City's proposed renovation plans for College Terrace Library at 2300 Wellesley Street. PAST has been working closely with the City and the Architect (the KPA Group of Oakland, CA) on this project since early 2007.

As you may remember from our Summer 2008 newsletter, PAST has been pressing hard to keep the library reading room free of visible structural upgrades. As the project progressed, the architect continued to include two large steel beams that crossed the reading room at the same level as the graceful wrought iron ties, a solution that would have blocked the clear view in both directions to the arched windows at either end. This view, PAST believes, is one of the key defining features of this library.

PAST hired its own structural engineer to peer-review the structural drawings, and met in the summer with KPA's engineer to discuss options. Not only did we get the beams removed from the reading room (they will go over the ceiling instead), the structural solution also allows for new insulation, electrical upgrades, and fire sprinklers—all hidden above the ceiling. The City will be breaking ground on the construction sometime during the coming spring.

For more information about the library, see our Summer newsletter on line at: [www.pastheritage.org](http://www.pastheritage.org)

~ Grace Hinton, President



## New Board Member Spotlight

THE PAST BOARD IS PLEASED TO WELCOME ONE OF ITS NEWEST MEMBERS - JEANNE FARR MCDONNELL

Jeanne Farr McDonnell founded and was the Executive Director of the!Women's Heritage Museum!for ten years. She helped create an exhibit on California Woman Suffrage for the 75th anniversary in 1986 of women's gaining voting rights in the state. That exhibit was shown annually in various venues, most recently last year in the State Museum in Sacramento. !

She is the author of Juana Briones of 19th!Century California, published in 2008 by the University of Arizona Press, and she continues to work to save the Briones house in Palo Alto, constructed in 1844.!Jeanne originated preservation efforts and with a committee and the cooperation of the owner, she managed public tours of the house in the 1980s.!

Jeanne has an AA from Stephens College, a BA from Ohio State University, an MA from Columbia University, and was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Brussels. In Palo Alto, she served as Executive Director of Nature Explorations and of Canopy. She was member of the board of the Institute for Historical Study, a coalition of independent scholars, and is currently on the board of the Palo Alto Historical Association.!!





## Calendar of Events

*Now through March 29, 2009*

**Music to One's Ears** at MOAH -  
See [www.moah.org](http://www.moah.org)

*April 17, 2009 - MOAH's next exhibit*

**California Living the Sunset Way** at  
MOAH - See [www.moah.org](http://www.moah.org)

*April 26, 2009*

**Stanford Historical Society's 5th Annual  
Historic House & Garden Tour** - See  
article in this issue and insert flyer!

## PAST Heritage Board of Directors

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### Palo Alto Stanford Heritage

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

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