

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Through May 5

Anna Knapp Fitz—An Artist's Legacy.

Los Altos History Museum

51 S. San Antonio Road

Thursday-Sunday 12-4 p.m.

May 2-5

27th California Preservation Conference

"Vintage Sonoma County"

Information available at www.californiapreservation.org

Saturday, May 11

Los Altos Spring Home and Garden Tour

Shuttle buses depart from the Los Altos History Museum.

Tickets are \$30 each in advance.

51 S. San Antonio Road

10 a.m.-4 p.m.

For information, call 650-948-9427 ext. 15.

May 12-18

Preservation Week

Save page 3 for details about the following events.

Monday, May 12

Proclamation and Tour of Ramona Street. City Hall Plaza.

Noon

Tuesday, May 14

Aging Gracefully Learn how to manage home repair costs.

Gamble Garden Center, 1431 Waverley Street

Noon

Wednesday, May 15

Stanford Campus Tour

Meet at entrance to Memorial Church.

Noon

Thursday, May 16

At the Edge of Town Join Emily Renzel to tour an early neighborhood just outside of early Palo Alto.

1002 Forest Avenue.

Noon

A Stroll thru Greenmeadow Enjoy a tour of the Greenmeadow neighborhood with Eichler expert Mark Marcinik.

Greenmeadow Community Center, 303 Parkside Drive

6 p.m.

Friday, May 17

Gamble Garden Center Tour, 1431 Waverley Street

Noon

Saturday, May 18

Tour of Professorville and Recognition of 1902 Homes

Meet at Bryant and Addison.

10:30 a.m.

Presentation of Plaques

221 Kingsley Avenue

11:30 a.m.

Saturday, May 18

An Afternoon in the Garden Membership Event

1490 Edgewood Drive

3-5 p.m.



PAST News

Vol. 15, No. 3

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Spring 2002

Preservation Week 2002

May 12th - May 18th

"Preserving the Spirit of Place"

and celebrating our 100 year old houses

—details on page three—

In appreciation of your valued membership

you are invited to join

the Board of Palo Alto Stanford Heritage

for

An Afternoon in the Garden

of Birge Clark's own house

1490 Edgewood Drive*

Palo Alto

Saturday, May 18, 2002

3 to 5 p.m.

4:30 Presentation of Preservation Awards

Light refreshments will be served.

*The house was designed by Birge Clark in 1936 for his family residence and he lived there until his death. It has been lovingly restored by its present owners, Megan McCaslin & Richard Yankwich and the garden setting is a lovely gathering place.



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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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Preserving the Spirit of Place is the theme of this year's national Preservation Week celebration, which PAST Heritage will observe from May 13 to May 18. See its coverage in this newsletter. It is a profound time for preservationists, who include everyone who values their community and, especially, its Spirit of Place.

Spirit of Place has been defined as that presence of locale that transcends the totality of its elements. It is more readily experienced than measured or defined. We've all felt it. In Palo Alto I find it strongest where Homer Avenue meets Emerson Street, coincidentally(?) where Anna Zschokke built University Park's first house 111 years ago. Where is it for you?

Combine nearby Spirits of Place and you have the spirit of a neighborhood. Continuing, you find the spirit of city. That's our community. Every local Spirit of Place lost to neglect or uncaring development diminishes our community.

Spirit of Place reflects our collective perception, approach, and dedication to community life. And that's how we preserve it or lose it.

A decade ago, one Santa Fe native stated the issue succinctly: "We used to be a community. Now we're a commodity." Somewhere along the path from dedication to dollars, we lose what is really important.

The spirit is us. Preserving the Spirit of Place is our call.



David Bubenik, President

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A MESSAGE FROM RICHARD MOE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL TRUST



Every community has a spirit of place that identifies it as special and unique. It may be a building or a monument or a street, a public square or a stretch of lakeshore or a view of distant mountains. It sets the community apart from every other. It attracts tourists, contributes to the area's stability and livability, and gives residents a sense of connection with their shared heritage.

Sadly, despite its importance in the social, cultural and economic life of the community, the spirit of place is easily destroyed. Older neighborhoods, rich in texture and character, start to decline. Familiar landmarks are allowed to deteriorate or are replaced by new buildings that fail to respect their historic setting. Scenic vistas are spoiled by insensitive development, and precious open space is devoured by sprawl. Uniqueness fades into anonymity. Every place starts looking like Anyplace, and eventually they all look like Noplace.

The theme of Preservation Week 2002, "Preserving the Spirit of Place," calls on us to do all we can to recognize, save and enhance the irreplaceable features that give each community its distinctive character.

Organizing tours and special events that spotlight local treasures, fostering revitalization in commercial and residential neighborhoods, conserving open space, providing tax credits and other incentives for the rehabilitation of historic buildings, launching initiatives to manage sprawl and promote smart growth - all of these are effective tools for preserving the spirit of place.

Make Preservation Week 2002 an occasion for celebrating what's special about your community. Preserve the spirit of place - and pass it on as our gift to future generations.

BIRGE CLARKE*

EACH HAS A STORY TO TELL...

The second **Community Center** at 1305 Middlefield Road (discussed last issue) is in Category One as is Lucie Stern's home at 1990 Cowper (1932). Both were designed by our own beloved Birge Clark. He first met Aunt Lucie when asked to repair the porch of her home in Atherton. That contact led to his designing her home in Palo Alto and the two next door at 1950 and 1928 Cowper for her daughter and her daughter's nurse. In addition to the Community Center consisting of the adult theater, the Ruth Stern wing, the children's theater, and the Fire Circle, Aunt Lucie also gave the people of Palo Alto the **Children's Library** and the **Sea Scout base** at the harbor. Obviously she and Birge enjoyed working together and Palo Alto has benefited greatly from her generosity.

Several other of Birge Clark's designs are in Category One. In fact, the downtown **Post Office** (380 Hamilton-1932) and the **Kathleen Norris house** (1247 Cowper-1927) are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Both are in the *Spanish Colonial Revival* style which Birge preferred to label Early California because the decorative features of his designs were much less elaborate than those of his southern California counterparts. He frequently used hand-wrought iron grills, railings and light fixtures, hand-adzed beams and handmade roof tiles. Houses in this style open up onto rear court yards and face the street with a nearly blank wall. When the first house of this type (1336 Cowper) appeared in 1924 designed by George Washington Smith, a prominent Santa Barbara architect, one city councilman felt the house was a slap in the face to a pedestrian and wanted to pass an ordinance against the style. It is now listed on the National Register.

At one point Birge didn't think his design for the Post Office would be approved. He took his preliminary plans to Washington, D.C. and one morning met with officials who said his design wasn't "stiff enough for a Federal building." He said he was expected at the White House for lunch, but would come back in the afternoon. When he returned, the plans were approved as submitted. It seems Mrs. Hoover had let it be known that she wished the Palo Alto Post Office to resemble the style of the University.

The most cohesive group of buildings in the Spanish Colonial Revival style is found downtown on the 500 block of **Ramona Street**. Birge is responsible for most of them.

Gail Woolley



*Our member recognition event on May 18 will be held in the garden of Birge Clark's family residence.

Look for more stories of our historic treasures in future issues of the PAST Heritage Newsletter. The Summer 2002 issue will feature Pedro de Lemos, who played the other major role on Ramona Street.

**THE SPIRIT OF PLACE:
1005 UNIVERSITY**

From the period of the Spanish settlement until Mexican independence, the property at 1005 University had been part of large Spanish Mission Santa Clara, which covered much of the present-day Santa Clara County.

After Mexico became independent in 1821, the Mission was subdivided into ranchos. The property became part of the Rancho Rinconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito, which encompassed present-day north Palo Alto, extending from San Francisquito Creek on the north beyond Embarcadero on the south, and from El Camino Real on the west, to

San Francisco Bay on the east. In 1835, Don Rafael Soto purchased the land, which was inherited by his daughter Maria Louisa, who married Captain John Greer. Henry Seale bought the property in 1872, and sold it to Timothy and Mary Kellogg Hopkins in 1887. The plot at 1005 University was originally 200 feet by 200 feet, but was subdivided into lots of 100 by 200 by Timothy Hopkins.

In 1901, Edwin and Louise Braunschweiger of San Francisco bought the plot at the corner of University and Hale Streets from Hopkins. They commissioned the noted Palo Alto builder James Wells to build the home for their young family. The Braunschweigers both came from prosperous German families who had emigrated to the Bay Area in the nineteenth century; Edwin owned a wine and liquor store in San Francisco. The Braunschweigers moved into the house in 1902 and lived there with their children: Herman, Edward, Elyse (Conner), and Viola (Lyne). Unfortunately, Mr. Braunschweiger suffered a series of strokes when he was only in his 40s and died in 1914. Mrs. Braunschweiger remained in the house for several more years with her children, but eventually moved to a home nearby on Middlefield Road. She lived in the Bay Area until her death in 1947. One of the children, Viola Lyne, still survives and lives with her granddaughter, Diane Christiansen in San Mateo.



From 1918 to 1938, the house at 1005 University was owned by a series of people who rented the property to others. (At one

point, the house served as a furniture store.) Since 1944, however, only 4 families have owned and lived in the house: the Groezingers (1944-1947); the Cavagnaros (1947-1959); the Strongs (1959-1992); and its present owners, the Beamers.

In terms of its architectural history, the house was designed and built in the Craftsman style for \$5000 by James Wells, whose other early 20th century houses can be seen around Palo Alto. It was one of the earliest houses in the area, in the small section of the original town that reached beyond Guinda. The original construction had wood shingles, a hipped roof, a downstairs front alcove and an upstairs front alcove. In its early days, the children played in a pony cart. The garden provided a pleasant respite from city living. A hitching post sat out front by an unpaved University Avenue. Louise

Braunschweiger added a second-floor sleeping porch over a carport on the Hale Street side of the house. At a later point, a large porch with pillars and a trellis was added to the front of the house, and during the 1950s, the original shingles and wood trim were entirely stuccoed over. During this time the lot was also subdivided to its present dimensions of 100 feet by 140 feet. The longest-term residents, John and June Strong, who lived in the house for over 30 years and had seven children, enclosed the small upstairs front porch to use as a year-round bedroom for one of their daughters. In 1999-2000, the Beamers recreated the house's original exterior with new shingles, rebuilding the front porch in the Craftsman style and replacing the carport and sleeping porch with a garage and new room for their son.

Diane Tasca



Preservation Week 2002
PRESERVING THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

May 12th thru the 18th

"A celebration of America's diverse history and how historic preservation helps save that heritage."

Monday, May 13
Noon

Proclamation by the Mayor of Palo Alto acknowledging Preservation Week followed by **Voices of Ramona**, a tour of Ramona Street. Caroline Willis and Pat Tyler will recall those who spoke out influencing the development of Ramona Street and downtown. Meet at City Hall Plaza.

Tuesday, May 14
Noon

Aging Gracefully—the nuts and bolts of building a maintenance schedule specifically for your house in order to manage repair costs. With Laura Ferrell of Woodenwings Builders. Gamble Garden Center Carriage House, 1431 Waverley Street.

Wednesday, May 15
Noon

Tour of the "Original" Stanford Campus—step into a world of by-gone days on this tour led by a knowledgeable Stanford docent. Meet in front of Memorial Church.

Thursday, May 16
Noon

At the Edge of Town—Emily Renzel shares her extensive knowledge about the cluster of impressive homes just outside the new town's boundaries. Meet at the front of 1002 Forest Avenue for a short walk in this beautiful neighborhood.

6 p.m.

A Stroll thru Greenmeadow with architect and Eichler expert Mark Marcinik. Meet at the Greenmeadow Community Center, 303 Parkside Drive.

Friday, May 17
Noon

Tour of the Gamble Garden Center house and grounds. Visit with docents in the beautifully blooming gardens and tour the first floor of this wonderful example of a local 1902 home at 1431 Waverley Street.

Saturday, May 18.
10:30 a.m.

Tour of 1902 Houses in Professorville Commencing at Bryant and Addison with a view through history. Listen to stories of many of our Centennial homes and ponder how life has changed in the past century.

11:30 a.m.

Presentation of Plaques to houses built in 1902. Front garden of 221 Kingsley Avenue.

3-5 p.m.

An Afternoon in the Garden Membership Event 1490 Edgewood Drive.

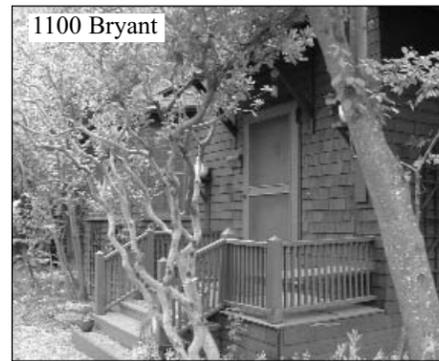


When E.P. Gamble, an heir to the Gamble soap fortune, arrived in town looking to relocate, the Palo Alto Times took note, referring to him as "a gentleman of ample means." In 1902, he built a "villa" at 1431 Waverley Street for his family. His daughter, Elizabeth bequeathed the property to the City of Palo Alto upon her death in 1981.



THE SPIRIT OF PLACE REFLECTED IN THE 100 YEAR OLD HOMES OF GUSTAV LAUMEISTER

Six of the houses we have identified as circa 1902 were built by Gustav Laumeister, one of the first contractors in this area. He helped plant small American flags for the first auction sale of lots in the new town of University Park. Gustav was the son of John Anton Laumeister, who came to the U.S. from the Bavarian town of Aschaffenburg, a city situated close to the heavily forested Spessart mountains. John Laumeister joined the 1849 Argonauts and came to San Francisco where he and his brother Frank started the Pacific Flour Mills. He later moved to San Jose where his son Gustav and two daughters were born. He encouraged his son to go to the University of California, but Gustav instead began working at an early age as a builder in Alameda. He also worked in the Monterey/Carmel area and then moved to Menlo Park in the early 1880's. He helped construct the old winery on the Stanford property, and was on hand after the 1906 earthquake to help with much of the rebuilding of the campus. By this time he had developed quite a lucrative building trade in the new city of Palo Alto.



1100 Bryant

1100 BRYANT AND 308 LINCOLN

According to the AAUW Professorville pamphlet, Mrs.

William A. Kimball had Laumeister build several homes in this early period. Mrs. Kimball was a Civil War widow who was drawn to the area because of the educational possibilities for her two sons. She evidently made a practice of moving into a house while she supervised the building of the next one. One of the houses Laumeister built for her in 1902 was the rustic redwood cottage at **1100 Bryant**. Among the most charming houses in the immediate neighborhood, it is noted for its English garden and the attractive hedge surrounding the house. Descendants of Mrs. Kimball lived in this house until 1970, though in the early years the house was often rented. Dr. Clelia Mosher lived there from 1903 to 1907. An 1894 Stanford graduate, she obtained a medical degree from Johns Hopkins, returned to Palo Alto to practice medicine, and served as a member of the Stanford faculty from 1920 to 1928.

The house at 1100 Bryant Street was built in the dark wood Shingle style, also popular at the time in Berkeley and Pasadena. Bernard Maybeck, the noted Berkeley architect and a proponent of this style, had designed the home

known as the Sunbonnet house on the opposite corner at 1061 Bryant in 1899. A second house built by Laumeister in 1902 for Mrs. Kimball was at **308 Lincoln**, across the street from her cottage. This two-story residence is larger and has many Colonial Revival features, but continues the same Shingle



308 Lincoln

style theme, with its use of redwood shingles and redwood interior paneling and beams. Something about the nature of many of Laumeister's homes makes one think of a Bavarian chalet, perhaps a legacy from his family's background. The first occupant of the house was Edwin Duryea, a young civil engineer from Cornell, who had moved here with his family. He was one of the co-founders of Palo Alto's water district and also served as councilman and vice-mayor. John Charles Lounsbury Fish bought the house in 1920. Fish, who joined the Stanford faculty in 1893, became internationally known in the field of engineering economics.

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THE FOWLER MANSION: 221 KINGSLEY

Also in 1902, Laumeister was finishing the large Fowler mansion at **221 Kingsley**. Of his houses still standing from the period, this was certainly the grandest. The large two-story dark brown shingled house has a dormered gambrel roof, a widow's walk, and a lovely wooden gate guarding the front walk. According to McAlester's *A Field Guide to America's Historic Neighborhoods and Museum Houses: the Western States*:

Throughout Professorville, you will find many front yards enclosed with low hedges or short wooden fences and entered through front garden gates. It is not certain when this practice began. Some gates are constructed of natural wood with a small roof above, a favored



221 Kingsley

First Bay Tradition landscape element (and one that had been actively promoted by Gustav Stickley's magazine, the Craftsman). The garden gate at 221 Kingsley Avenue...is an excellent example.

Mrs. Fowler, the widow of a Spanish American War

officer, had the house built for her son Frederick, who was attending Stanford. He later lived in the home with his wife Elsie, the daughter of Stanford's second president, John Casper Branner.

OTHER 1902 HOUSES

Laumeister built two houses on Waverley in 1902, a Craftsman-style house for Mrs. Emma Pleasants at **1022 Waverley** (adjacent to 1020 Waverley, which he had built in 1900) and **650 Waverley** built for Mrs. Harriet Woods. His sixth house is the Colonial Revival home at **430 Kingsley**. The horizontal emphasis of the siding, and wide extension of the roof lines remind one of the Prairie style. This house was built by Laumeister for Professors Albert W. Smith and Mary Roberts Smith. They wrote the Stanford hymn (he wrote the music, she wrote the lyrics), "From the foothills to the bay...Hail, Stanford, Hail!"



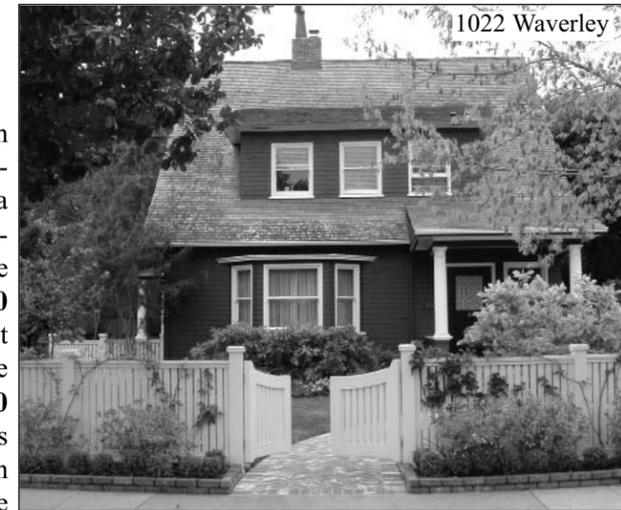
221 Kingsley

The Smiths previously lived at 1146 Waverley, which was built for them in 1893.



650 Waverley

Gustav Laumeister would continue to construct houses in the neighborhood, including several more on Lincoln and Ramona. He also built some of the early office buildings on



1022 Waverley

University Avenue, Castilleja School (attended by one of his daughters), and was responsible for nearly 100 houses in Palo Alto. His second wife, Mabel, was the daughter of Thomas Seale, who once owned all of the land occupied by the original town. Laumeister helped lay out the Seale tract. He also owned a considerable amount of property in what is now East Palo Alto, which he at one time thought of developing as Palo Alto's waterfront. He was an avid mountaineer (a true Bavarian!) and loved motor cars. He was one of the founders of

the Palo Alto Historical Association and was active in many other civic organizations. He worked in the building trade and as a real estate developer for 63 years and died at the age of 90 in 1955.

Sharon Olson



430 Kingsley

Sources:

- Professorville pamphlet (AAUW)
- Gone Tomorrow (AAUW, 1971)
- City of Palo Alto Historic Buildings Inventory (1982)
- Palo Alto Community Book, Guy Miller (1952).
- History of Palo Alto, Dallas England Wood (1939)
- Palo Alto Times (1/2/03, 1/28/48, 1/24/55)
- San Francisco Call Bulletin (12/16/1890)
- Historic Preservation Ordinance Protected Properties List (12/10/00)
- Nomination form for National Register of Historic Places—Professorville Historic District (1971)
- A Field Guide to America's Historic Neighborhoods and Museum Houses: the Western States, Virginia and Lee McAlester (1998).