

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 24—27 **A Blueprint for Preservation**, the 2003 California Preservation Conference in Santa Barbara. For more information, visit [www.californiapreservation.org](http://www.californiapreservation.org) or call the California Preservation Foundation at 510-763-0972.



Sunday, May 4—**Renovation of the Norris House Gardens and Landscaping**. Palo Alto Historical Association, Lucie Stern Community Center, Middlefield Road, 2:00 p.m.

May 5—10, **Preservation Week**  
See schedule on page 3

Now thru Sunday, May 25 — **On the House: Architecture and Artifacts**. Museum of American Heritage (MOAH), 351 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto CA. For more information, call 650-321-1004 or check their web site at <http://www.moah.org>. Open Friday—Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., free admission.

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# PAST News

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Spring 2003

## Preservation Week 2003 May 5<sup>th</sup>—10<sup>th</sup> Cities, Suburbs and Countryside

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 2003, "Cities, Suburbs, and Countryside," 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 2003 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.

*Richard Moe  
President of the National Trust*



## 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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See the schedule on page 3 for details of the exciting events planned for Preservation Week.

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER—  
OUR LANDMARKS ARE COMING  
DOWN, AGAIN**

On March 12, a bulldozer flattened a Birge Clark colonial revival home on Santa Rita Avenue at Bryant Street. Its replacement is rumored to be a nondescript pile at least twice as large that affronts the neighborhood's serene mid-thirties character. The neighbors protested the demolition for over a year; they loved the house and they appreciated its history, but its owners ignored them. By law, the city is deaf.

It's gone. Another awaits, but with a new hope.

By a 6-3 vote on February 3, the Palo Alto City Council authorized demolition of the historic Family Service Laundry building at 140 Homer Avenue, to make way for a huge condominium and public parking development that would destroy the character of this historic neighborhood.

But as of this writing, a citywide coalition has put the mayhem on hold while it tries to bring the project to a referendum vote. It is significant that one of the alliance's prime objections is the sacrifice of this historic Laundry building—especially significant because its members are not first and foremost preservationists.

The Family Service Laundry building is indeed historic. It is certified eligible for listing on the

**“six Palo Alto City Council members opted for a public parking garage”**

California Register. Not just potentially eligible as the condo developer claims, but eligible. (See related story on page 6).

Built in 1930, the Family Service Laundry served generations of Palo Altans until its structure was incorporated into the neighboring Peninsula Creamery plant in the late 1960's. But, except for an easily removable shed addition on its Homer Avenue façade, it retains its architectural integrity. An architectural historian firm hired by the city has twice certified that integrity.

Why should we care about an industrial building with a rather mundane history: washing shirts, skirts, and bedsheets? On February 3, Beth Bunnberg told the City Council why: Palo Alto's laundries liberated Palo Alto women. Before affordable commercial laundries arrived, women spent 2 to 3 days per week laboring to keep their families' clothing respectable and their household fabrics clean. The laundries freed that time for other interests, including civic activities. Until household automatic washing machines offered a cheaper, more convenient alternative, our laundries were as much a cultural catalyst as a utilitarian resource.

Nevertheless, six Palo Alto City Council members opted for a public parking garage over preserving this significant memento of our history for adaptive reuse today.



**MEMBERSHIP** Due to a glitch in transmitting the data from the membership committee to the newsletter editor the names of our most generous donors were omitted. We apologize for our error and thank you heartily for your enthusiastic support of our efforts. We are also pleased to acknowledge other memberships received since the Winter Newsletter was published.

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- |                               |                        |
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**DOCENT-LED TOURS  
NOW AVAILABLE**

Have a group of friends who'd love to spend an hour learning about Palo Alto's history while strolling through its charming, verdant streets? Want to introduce your child's class to the people and stories of our past?

PAST is again offering their fabulous docent-led group tours of Downtown, Professorville, College Terrace and Homer Avenue. Available by

reservation at 650-328-5670, the walking tours are packed with an hour's worth of wonderful sites and stories about the heroes, villains and everyday people in our own backyard.

The fee is \$20 per group (to be mailed in advance with checks addressed to PAST and sent to PAST Tours, 951 Lincoln Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94301). Groups of school-age children are free. Groups may number up to 10 people per docent and larger

groups will receive more docents.

The Downtown tour will meet at City Hall Plaza, Professorville tour at Addison and Bryant, Homer Avenue tour at Peet's Coffee, and the College Terrace tour at Amherst and College. Participants will receive informational brochures on their tours as souvenirs.

*For more information, contact Aino Vieira de la Rosa at [Aino@pacbell.net](mailto:Aino@pacbell.net).*

*JudyAnn Edwards*

**HELP WANTED**

**T**he STANFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY—HISTORIC HOUSES COMMITTEE invites those who like treasure hunts and historical jigsaw puzzles to join in preparing histories of campus homes built before 1930.

Each write-up includes the architectural history of the house, background on the people who have lived there, and the changes occupants have made over time. Volunteers, through researching, interviewing current owners (many of whom have considerable information about the houses), and writing, have an opportunity to look behind the walls of early Stanford homes and learn about university history through the fascinating people who have lived and worked on campus.

A research guide to campus houses is available to help researchers get started and occasional workshops are held. Participants need not be members of the Stanford community or the Historical Society, but should have some interest in historical research. House histories are published by the society in a series of booklets that are companion pieces to periodic house tours. The next tour, the society's third since 1995, is tentatively scheduled for spring 2004.

If you are interested in helping research historic campus houses, please contact Marian Adams at (650) 326-9212 or via email at [adams@cdr.stanford.edu](mailto:adams@cdr.stanford.edu)—soon. The houses aren't getting any younger!

**IN MEMORIUM**

PAST Heritage life member and long time College Terrace resident, **Jim Culpepper**, passed away recently in his home town of Tallahassee, Florida. Jim was a devoted supporter of PAST Heritage and of preservation. When our cause needed his help, he was always there for us. He wrote letters to the editor, offered the use of his home, and gave us generous financial support.

Long before many of us were involved, Jim worked with one of PAST's founders, Gail Woolley, to help create a special Neighborhood Preservation Overlay that has helped to protect the historic homes zoned for multi-family development in College Terrace. He understood the importance of neighborhood character and helped to form the College Terrace Residents' Association more than 30 years ago. He and his wife Kay walked the neighborhood distributing flyers calling residents to action. He gave witty speeches to the City Council and deluged our newspaper editors with letters. He badgered the City until they closed College Terrace streets, and Stanford until they agreed to dedicate Peter Coutts Hill as permanent open space.

Jim was a man of great charm, enthusiasm and wit. PAST Heritage has lost a friend and staunch supporter. He will be greatly missed.

## LITIGATION SAGA OF THE JUANA BRIONES HOUSE



On February 20, 2003, Santa Clara Superior Court Judge John Herlihy filed a 26-page decision requiring the property owners to repair the earthquake damage, and remove the illegal alterations made by the previous owner, in addition to performing the basic maintenance to protect the home from further deterioration from the elements. Although the owners may appeal the decision, this ruling is an important step forward in the efforts to protect the house.

This decision brings to an end the lengthy process begun with a suit filed by the owners of the house in 1997 to allow its demolition. At the urging of the newly formed Juana Briones Heritage Foundation, the City of Palo Alto countersued to enforce the Mills contract requiring maintenance and public access in return for almost complete cancellation of property taxes. The trial was delayed for over a year and a half while Judge Herlihy tried to settle the case by arbitration. His point, and the Foundation agreed with him, was that resolving the current dispute would yield only a temporary solution since the owners canceled the Mills contract in January, 1998, making the cancellation effective January, 2008.

One plan was to swap an acre of Esther Clark Park, directly across the road from part of the Briones house property, for the Briones house and land, but the City Council decided not to pursue the land swap because it would probably need to be put to a public vote.

Since the fall of 2001 the Foundation has been in negotiations with the owners of the Briones property and the City of Palo Alto to effect a swap of the Briones property for another property. Both sides were supportive of the swap and, when a property was located early in 2002, agreed to pursue its acquisition. Ultimately and unfortunately, another buyer was eager to acquire that property and made an offer that considerably exceeded what the Foundation believed to be the value of the Briones property, and hence the amount the Foundation believed it could raise to acquire the swap property, and the owners were unwilling to make up the difference.

The Judge decided to proceed with the trial which began on December 2nd resulting in the February 20th ruling.

And so the saga continues as we wait to see if there will be an appeal!

Gail Woolley

## JUST AN OLD LAUNDRY BUILDING

Many of us first saw historic preservation in the form of fine old residences with echoes of an elegant past. The concept of an old industrial building is a much harder idea for people to understand.

The Family Service Laundry is a case in point. This building at High and Homer has both architectural value and historic significance. Early advertisements showed a building with simple clean lines including a stepped parapet and a very functional roof monitor to provide beautiful natural light. There was honest use of materials such as reinforced concrete, steel trussed roof supports and steel framed industrial windows.

So what is the historic value? It is a part of our social history. Often when I give walking tours or docent at the Museum of American Heritage, I talk to groups about the drudgery of doing laundry at home. During the 20's, 30's, 40's, and early 50's, most middle class homes did not have mechanical washing machines to do the full cycle of washing. The alternative was the scrub board, wash tubs, and perhaps a crank wringer to squeeze out the water. Doing family washing and ironing was a back breaking two day job each week. Therefore, everyone who could do so used the fast, affordable commercial laundry. Remember when everything came back wrapped with neat brown paper and string, washed, ironed, and folded! Commercial laundries freed women by allowing time to do charity work, civic projects, and later, "war work" when men were called to military service. And that is the rest of the story on "that old laundry building!"

Beth Bunnenberg



FOOTNOTE: *The Palo Alto City Council on February 3, 2003 decided that there were overriding considerations and voted to allow the demolition of the Family Service Laundry building.*

## PRESERVATION WEEK 2003 Cities, Suburbs and Countryside

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

### Monday, May 5

Noon  
City Hall Plaza

Proclamation by the Mayor of Palo Alto acknowledging Preservation Week followed by the tour, **Birge Clark and Pedro de Lemos on Ramona Street**—This tour, led by Montgomery Anderson, A.I.A., restoration architect on several de Lemos and Clark structures, will focus on the stylistic details unique to each architect through a comparison of their extensive work on one of Palo Alto's best-known streets.

### Tuesday, May 6

Noon  
Green Library,  
Stanford Campus

**Recent Preservation Projects in the Stanford Academic Core**—Hosted by the Campus Architect's Office, this tour will highlight two historic structures in the heart of campus, the 1919 Green Library by Bakewell and Brown, and Building 30, restored in 1997 to its original condition. Meet at the fountain in front of Green Library, near the intersection of Lasuen Mall and the Main Quad East Gate. *Library entrance must be pre-arranged; please call (650) 328-6530 to reserve a place for this tour.*

### Wednesday, May 7

6 p.m.  
Alvarado Row at  
Campus Drive

**Faculty Housing on the Stanford Campus**—This neighborhood tour provides a snapshot of the early development of faculty/staff housing. Several important Bay Area architects are represented, including Birge Clark, Charles Sumner, and the firm of Bakewell and Brown. Tour given in collaboration with the Stanford Historical Society. Two homes will be open to view. *Limit: 25 attendees.* Please call (650) 328-6530 to reserve a place.

### Thursday, May 8

Noon  
153 Homer Avenue

**It Will All Come Out in the Wash**—Beth Bunnenberg, from the Palo Alto Historic Resources Board, will highlight the many laundries around Homer Avenue in the 1930's and what they meant to the women of their day. Meet in front of Peet's Coffee at 153 Homer Avenue.

### Friday, May 9

Noon  
College Terrace

**Donaldina Cameron**—Meet at 1020 South California Avenue for a glimpse into the life of this former missionary and her work in San Francisco's Chinatown at the turn of the 20th century. Tour her beloved Heatherbloom and take a self-guided College Terrace walking tour.

### Saturday, May 10

10:30 a.m.  
Professorville

**Celebration in Professorville**—Join us in the garden at 365 Lincoln Avenue where the granddaughter of a former owner will share her fond recollections of life in and around the house in her grandparent's day. The festivities include presentation of plaques to houses built in 1903 and the 2003 Preservation Awards. Complete your morning with a self guided tour of Professorville.

## 1903 TIBITS

- *The Great Train Robbery*, the first narrative film, was 10 minutes long and had 14 scenes.
- Ford's Model A was introduced on June 16 for \$850.
- Harley Davidson motorcycles introduced.

### And closer to home...

- Mayfield was incorporated.
- The Slonaker house was built at 334 Kingsley.



334 Kingsley

**A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:  
FAREWELL TO 300 SANTA RITA AVE.  
1936—2003**

“SOLD” proclaims a real estate ad from September of 2000. It boasts of an “Old Palo Alto jewel...wonderful property offering 6 bedrooms...lovely neighborhood...” Yet in truth, all this ad needed to list was “large 17,000+ square foot lot”. Frankly, this is all our prospective buyer was really looking for. Sadly, on Tuesday, March 11, 2003, that’s exactly what the buyer of the stately colonial style home got. As neighbors watched in utter horror and disbelief, the 1936 Birge Clark home that had been built and lived in by Clifford and Esther Schink for over 67 years was unceremoniously bulldozed!

Based on Palo Alto’s ordinances and review processes in effect at the time, there was nothing in place to protect the house at 300 Santa Rita Avenue. The buyer of this property was thorough in every detail—right down to getting assurance before the home was bought that it could, in fact, be torn down. Ever diligent, preliminary design plans were shrewdly submitted before the Individual Review Process, required for all new second story homes, went into effect in November 2001.

Yes...Mr. and Mrs. Schink would definitely be the last (and only!) owners of the “Old Palo Alto jewel” at 300 Santa Rita. In this case, was “SOLD”, a great misnomer? Should it really have been “SOLD OUT”? Did we somehow fail to protect a distinguished home and the neighborhood that embraced it?

In designing 300 Santa Rita Avenue, Birge Clark designed the quintessential Old Palo Alto home. Almost unheard of nowadays in Palo Alto, Birge Clark actually looked at the property he was given—allowing it to help him scale the house. In this case it begot a perfectly proportioned two-story, 3,756 square foot house that was warm and welcoming by design. An ample front set back further served to make an already gracious front entry more inviting. On a stroll, it was



simply one of the best homes to walk by, especially during the holidays. Through beautifully maintained leaded glass windows, one could glimpse the sturdy wooden staircase and many a festive family gathering.

Yes...Mr. and Mrs. Schink would definitely be the last (and only!) owners of those elegant leaded glass windows, as only a minimal attempt was made to salvage any piece or remembrance of 300 Santa Rita Avenue.

So you ask, what will replace the intimate, modest scale Birge Clark house that added such richness and character to its Santa Rita neighborhood? The planned house will be an aggressive, massive structure of 8,883 square feet. The proposed ultra-contemporary two-story, multi-level house has a flat, tar and gravel type roof and a troweled cement exterior — cold, impersonal materials dominate the structure. In addition, with a greatly diminished set back and side yards, the house will simply overwhelm its lot size.

In the end, are we left with just another demolition story in just another Palo Alto neighborhood? Do we let our anger and sadness pass as we await the construction of yet another overpowering house, so utterly and completely incompatible with its surrounding neighborhood? When do we say some homes do have special redeeming character and historical value...some neighborhoods do have a “sense of place” that shouldn’t be easily tampered with?

Palo Alto has always had a unique challenge of trying to embrace its past, while still being the cornerstone of technology and focused on a culture of new ideas. However, the demolition of 300 Santa Rita Avenue has shown a complete lack of respect for the idea of preserving the best of Palo Alto’s past. It shows how without a commitment to retaining a cultural continuum in Palo Alto, the unique character of a neighborhood can easily be changed and lost forever.

“Who we are” as a city is part “who we were” and part “who we want to be.” Are the results achieved at 300 Santa Rita really “who we want to be?” Perhaps, by its very absence, “the house that Birge built” is still contributing to the neighborhood after all...maybe its awakened us!

Submitted by Dianne MacDaniels

**ALLIED ARTS**

The Allied Arts Guild on Arbor Road in Menlo Park was founded in the early 1930’s to provide a place where California craftsmen could make and sell their art. Built in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the buildings were lovingly detailed by Pedro de Lemos, whose signature cast-concrete pieces remain on site today, remarkably intact. Along with a wealth of ironwork and tile, several murals by Maxine Albro (a student of Diego Rivera) can also be seen on site. All proceeds from the Allied Arts go to benefit the Lucille Salter Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford. The Guild is currently closed pending city approval of a major restoration.

Grace Hinton

