

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 6-May 23—**When Radio Was King.** For more information, call (650) 321-1004 or check the MOAH Web site at <http://www.moah.org>. Open Friday-Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; free admission.



February 8—**The Cardinal Hotel.** Bjarne B. Dahl owner, Palo Alto Historical Association, Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, 2 p.m.

April 28-May 2—**California Preservation Foundation Conference,** San Francisco Presidio. For more information, contact the California Preservation Foundation at (415) 495-0349.

May 3-8 **National Historic Preservation Week**

On-going—**Walking Tours of Downtown, Professorville, College Terrace, or Homer Avenue.** \$20 per docent group of up to 10 persons. To arrange a tour, call (650) 328-5670. or visit our Web site for contact information.



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.



Built in 1904 at 500 Melville

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PAST News

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Winter 2004



Built in 1904 at
334 Whitman Court

Was your house built in 1904?

Want to know how to find out?

Find out here!

Homemade History: Researching Your House

Researching the history of a house is a popular hobby throughout the country. For some, there may be legal or other reasons that demand such research. Researching can be fun and exciting, or full of frustrating dead ends, twists, and puzzles. For most of us, it is a curiosity about our house's history and its former owners and residents that leads us through the maze of information sources toward a clearer picture of our home's past. For residents of Palo Alto, the Main Library on Newell Road can serve as a starting point and assist you in several areas of research.

There are professional researchers who dig through the legal records, city directories, and other sources to compile house histories. These searchers may go back 200 years or more elsewhere in the United States, looking for information on owners and their homes. In the Bay Area, we do not have such a long history to search through. In fact, there are very few homes in the Palo Alto

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER—

Earlier versions of this column opened with best wishes for the new year. All of them fell to writers' remorse, for various reasons.

Along with their other shortcomings, it seemed oddly ironic to welcome a new year on behalf of an organization whose purpose is to celebrate the legacy of the past. What's the good of another year? It takes us further from the golden times.

The century centered on 1900 was a fruitful era indeed. It gave us the Victorian, Richardsonian Romanesque, Craftsman, and Mission Revival styles which make up PAST's mainstay, plus many other architectural expressions that we appreciate to varying degrees. It is a good period to dwell upon. What's to look forward to?

But step back to 200 years ago. Nobody could have foreseen that outpouring. Another is possible, perhaps inevitable. Hopefully soon.

So, Happy New Year, everybody! Here's to new good ideas and their expressions, and to the PAST of the future that will celebrate them.

Our immediate step to that future looks back. The 2003 Holiday House Tour was superb. Kudos and many thanks to Gail Woolley and crew for making it happen.

We are already looking to the next Tour. Its location has not been decided, but the Stanford campus is a strong contender. Suggestions are welcome.

Preparations for Preservation Week 2004 are under way, with veteran organizer Caroline Willis guiding a solid committee. We will present our brass plaques to our centenarian houses again this year, as well as awards for outstanding preservation achievements. Nominations, anyone?

The rest of the program will be featured in our next newsletter.

And we expect to hold a special event for our valued members; whom you will find in your nearest mirror. Stay tuned, and please send us your ideas.

Onward!



PALO ALTO HISTORY MUSEUM PROJECT (UPDATE)—DREAMS OF A PALO ALTO HISTORY MUSEUM A STEP CLOSER TO REALITY

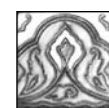
After months of planning and meetings, the Palo Alto History Museum Project Committee submitted its proposal to the City of Palo Alto on Nov. 25. We were the only group submitting a proposal to use the city-owned Roth Building at 300 Homer Avenue, formerly part of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic. Our proposal received high praise from city staff (the best they had ever reviewed), and the city-appointed review committee unanimously recommended City Council approval. We anticipate a lease option on the Roth Building in the next couple of months.

University towns such as Palo Alto are known to engender cultural, intellectual, architectural, and educational riches only dreamed of by other communities. Yet, Palo Alto with this rich history linked so closely to the founding of Stanford University has no place to collect, exhibit, or demonstrate its heritage. In fact, neither Palo Alto nor Stanford has a local history museum.

The Palo Alto History Museum Project Committee has already raised over \$1.3 million of our \$6.5 million fundraising goal through donations and pledges, with another \$1 million effort expected to be successful. Our year-end fundraising letter to the community was very successful and resulted in an average commitment of over \$120 per response. This response is commensurate with the enthusiasm the History Museum Project consistently receives. And once the City Council approves the lease option on the Roth Building, fundraising to upgrade and renovate the 1932 structure will become significantly easier.

Preserving our heritage, as demonstrated by numerous other communities that have already made commitments to their own local history museums, is paramount to ensuring Palo Alto's priceless artifacts and history a future for all the community to experience and enjoy.

Your tax-deductible gifts and pledges are needed to bring this project closer to reality. Please join us in fulfilling our goal and creating your legacy.



Contributions and pledges may be sent to:
Palo Alto History Museum Project,
P.O. Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302

Karen Holman

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: FRANKIE CAMPOS

"I was born to it," says new PAST Heritage Board Member Frankie Campos of her work with the preservation group. "My grandfather's house, which is still standing, has existed for four generations, and I've always loved that there are lots of family stories about it that we've collected through the years. He even had a pump to get water, and the bathroom was an outhouse.

"I've also lived in rural areas in northwest Florida with lots of old houses because people rarely moved (or tore down houses to build new ones in their place). There was a great oral history there and I loved it...Yet when I lived in Southern California, I found that I hated it because everything was new and not so interesting."

Campos is not only a fan of historic preservation but an active participant. "I am the financial manager for Silvestre Iron Works, which was started in 1929 by Mr. Silvestre at Allied Arts. We do custom metal work for homes and businesses." Silvestre, which is now owned by Campos' husband, Carlos, is currently restoring the entry pillars on the gates at the site of the original Stanford home (where the Children's Convalescent Home was located) for a magnificent entrance to Hyatt's new home construction project. The pillars Silvestre is restoring have beautiful curved wrought iron extending in an arc from the entrance and are capped with an ornate light fixture befitting the new project.

Silvestre Iron Works has an interesting history, as well. Mr. Silvestre began at Allied Arts as one of the artisans who built the structures. During the Depression the artisan shops closed, and in 1943 the Woodside-Atherton Auxiliary was able to purchase the property. The hard-working Mr. Silvestre started his business up again in Palo Alto—in the building that is

now Compadres Restaurant south of Page Mill on El Camino Real—until it moved back to Allied Arts.

The tiny, blond, energetic Campos enjoys her husband's work. "I especially like those homes where he created an entire set of bronze windows that will age beautifully like the front doors of Saint Peter's in the Vatican."

Campos' two children are grown. Her daughter, Tasha Souter, is a psychiatrist at Stanford Hospital, and her son is a real estate lawyer in Chicago. Campos



lived in Boston and Washington, D.C. She has fond memories of when she first moved to Palo Alto in 1977 of shopping at the hardware store on Waverly Street where Prolific Oven is now. "It had employees who knew what they were selling and a whole variety of things like table china that you need to run a home." It was an experience similar to shopping at Palo Alto Hardware now.

After more travels, Campos returned to Palo Alto to be a returning student in economics at Stanford. "Carlos and I bought a 1920's home in bad shape and plan to fix it up when we have the time and money." She tosses her hair and laughs when asked if it will have her husband's iron art in it: "Remember the story of the cobbler's wife who didn't have any shoes? I don't think we'll be doing much ironwork in our own home."

Campos will be a thoughtful and productive member of the PAST Board. It's easy to get her excited about history—and she has a history of acting on her interests. Matter of fact, she told me that after talking again about her grandfather's home, she now wants to make a trip back to Florida to visit it.

JudyAnn Edwards



1904 TIDBIT

Palo Alto received a grant of \$10,000 from Andrew Carnegie and built its first public library. This library was used until it was demolished in 1969 and the Civic Center was built.

EDGEWOOD AGAIN IN DANGER

The fate of Palo Alto's Edgewood Plaza Shopping Center (Embarcadero Road at Bayshore) is coming on the block again. Built by Joe Eichler in the 1950s to complement and serve its Eichler neighborhood, Edgewood is unique as Mr. Eichler's only shopping center. And it is again threatened with demolition.

Until a year ago Edgewood was showcased as Palo Alto's first redevelopment opportunity, and it was duly declared a blighted area for the occasion. But our city's enthusiasm wilted when state redevelopment funding dried up.

Now a Menlo Park corporation has stepped up to the plate. While its detailed plans for Edgewood are perhaps to be revealed in March or April, the basic recipe calls for a multi-story mixture of commercial and dwelling units, anchored by an enlarged Albertsons. How this notion might fit into Edgewood's low-density, single-story Eichler neighborhood remains to be seen. PAST is definitely interested. At the October 2002 meeting, the Board of Directors unanimously passed a resolution endorsing the Edgewood Plaza as a potential historic resource and urging its preservation.

Potential, because in 2005 Edgewood passes its 50th anniversary, the threshold for consideration as an official historic resource. Our position is itself historic — it is PAST's first advocacy for a distinctly modern architecture. PAST Heritage believes Edgewood should live to be considered and hopefully favorably judged. So do others, notably the Eichler Network and our Southland counterpart, the Los Angeles Conservancy. We have strong, committed allies. But, for Edgewood to continue fulfilling Joe Eichler's intent to complement and serve its neighborhood, it has to carry on as a functional retail center. Nobody will afford it as a museum. PAST's strategy is therefore to find out how Edgewood can be revitalized to serve today's needs in its historic form, and promote that idea. We plan to work with the developer, the city, and, most importantly, Edgewood's neighborhood to find an acceptable, economically viable plan to retain this unique resource in its original architecture and function. Such an achievement would be a model victory for preservation. Can you help? Please contact me at 328-6721 or at David.Bubenik@HomerAvenue.com. Together we can save Edgewood and make a statement for Palo Alto's values.

David Bubenik



RESEARCHING continued from page 1

area more than 100 years old. This relatively short architectural history permits non-professionals to perform most searches on their own.

House research typically attempts to answer the basic questions:

- Who built my house?
- When was it built?
- What did it cost?
- Who were the previous owners and residents?
- What did the interior and exterior originally look like?

Answers to these questions may be found in your home, your neighborhood, city or county offices, libraries, and local historical collections.

Your first step should be a search of your home. Some houses will have physical evidence present that can be useful in your search. A copy of the original building permit may still be posted (perhaps in the garage or other out-of-the-way place). Sometimes a copy of the blueprints may have been left by a previous owner. From these sources, names and dates can be gathered.

A structural analysis of the house itself may also yield useful information. A knowledgeable person can often estimate dates to within just a few years by dating house fixtures (such as kitchen appliances and bathroom fixtures) or building technologies (such as the presence or absence of certain materials). These estimates are, however, subject to error due to misleading clues left by remodels, especially those employing materials and techniques from different periods, which will mask the true date of construction. Yet these clues will date alterations to the house that may not appear in any official records.

Your neighborhood is another good source of information. Long-time residents may have a wealth of data not found in printed sources. You might be lucky to discover a long-timer who remembers the construction of your house. This person may offer details like the original color, landscaping, or unusual events associated with the house's construction. This neighbor and others may provide you with detailed family histories of earlier residents, including the names and number of children living there. These "oral histories" that you compile may also include information on the development of the neighborhood.

Permits and tax records

After searching your house and talking with neighbors, you will want to look at documentary evidence to confirm what you have learned or to fill in gaps in your knowledge.

Depending on the date of construction and the legal jurisdiction, the city or county building department may have a copy of the building permit issued for your house. Information included in the permit will be the date it was issued, name(s) of the owner and architect and/or builder, cost, and perhaps floor plans. Later building permits will

be evidence of alterations, additions, and major remodels.

A search of the county tax records in San Jose or Redwood City will reveal the real estate transactions associated with your property. It is easier and quicker to search by property parcel number (found on your property tax bill). These transaction records will trace changes of ownership, mortgages, or increases in assessed value (perhaps due to construction). This information is useful in filling in the gaps between previous homeowners.

Library resources

Former residents of Palo Alto and surrounding communities can be found listed in the collection of city directories kept at the Palo Alto Main Library. Years ago Polk city directories were issued for many communities throughout the country. City directory coverage for Palo Alto began in 1895 and continued until 1979. For many of those years residents of the Stanford campus,



Built in 1904 at 1130 Bryant

Menlo Park, and East Palo Alto were included. Unlike the tax records, which record changes in ownership, the city directories trace residents or properties by street address as well as by telephone number. An added feature of the city directory for many years was the listing of occupations for

head of household.

Located in the Palo Alto Main Library, too, are the files of the Palo Alto Historical Association. These files contain several sources of information that can supplement your home's history. The Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA) has a set of Sanborn Fire Insurance maps available for Palo Alto and the former community of Mayfield. These large-scale maps show individual lots and the size and type of buildings constructed thereon

(including auxiliary structures, such as garages and sheds). PAHA also has an extensive collection of photographs, newspaper clippings, and other materials of historic interest. The photographs can be useful in researching the restoration of a building's facade. Other local historical groups and libraries may have similar collections for communities served by them.

Newer houses

You need not have an old historical home to conduct a search of its history. Homes 20 to 30 years of age can reveal an interesting, if short, history. Remember to keep a record of your search and leave a copy with the new owners should you sell the house at some

later date. Your research might be the starting point for a researcher in 2094.

Steve Staiger

Steve Staiger is available for questions at the Palo Alto Main Library Tuesdays from 6-9 p.m. and Thursdays from 2-5 p.m.



Built in 1904 at 1200 Bryant



334 Kingsley



2003 Holiday House Tour

Perhaps the connection with Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey or maybe the name of Slonaker or Mitchell, long-time Palo Alto families, were draws which helped bring so many people to our 16th annual Holiday House Tour. Or maybe it was just the thoughtfulness of the weatherman. At any rate, all seemed pleased with what they saw—five charming homes updated for today's families and still respectful of their centenary age.

On the day of the tour alone, \$8,300 was realized from ticket sales and there were 667 attendees, which is the highest number in all 16 years excepting 1995, when the Squire House was open.

Surely our success was partly due to excellent coverage by three major newspapers thanks to the timeliness and persistence of publicity chair, JudyAnn Edwards. Special recognition also goes to Dianne MacDaniels, who performed many tasks, all with an artistic flair. Due to the diligence of Marda Bucholz, the cookies and cider were donated, increasing our funds. A myriad of tasks from balloons to booties to badges was cheerfully undertaken by the board, and 44 PAST Heritage members staffed the houses.

Most of all, we are grateful to the owners for opening their lovely homes. Thank you, thank you to all!

Gail Woolley, Chair 2003 Holiday House Tour



1147 Ramona



1048 Ramona



944 Bryant



951 Bryant

