



PAST News

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P.O. Box 308 • Palo Alto, California 94302

Summer 2018

Fall Saturday Morning Historic Walking Tours

New stops! New leaders! Best of all, there are no conflicts with football games. (Stanford's schedule is full of night football.) Tours are free, although donations are always welcome! Join us for a fun and friendly walk through town — We look forward to seeing you.



College Terrace
Oct. 6

Led by Carolyn George
Meet at 1181 College (corner of College and Harvard)



Downtown
Oct. 13

Led by Margaret Feuer and Bo Crane
Meet at City Hall Plaza, 250 Hamilton Avenue
(See page 5 for a tidbit from this tour)



Professorville
Oct. 20

Led by Bo Crane and Anne Gregor
Meet at 1005 Bryant (corner of Bryant and Addison)



Homer Avenue
Nov. 2

Led by Steve Emslie
Meet at The Woman's Club, 475 Homer Avenue

Rain or shine! – All tours start at 10 a.m.

Thirty years after PAST's beginning when planning for the 1988 CPF Conference, we were honored to contribute \$5,000 to be a Capital Sponsor of the 2018 conference when it returned to Palo Alto-Stanford in May. Our participation included an information table at the headquarters, leading two tours, Downtown and Professorville, a Homer Avenue seminar, and providing the speaker for the kickoff reception. (See page 6 for excerpts from Barbara Wilcox's talk.) The conference theme was *Deep Roots in Dynamic Times*.

President's Letter

I want to thank you for your support of PAST Heritage during 2018. Your membership allows us to accomplish a number of important projects that focus on promoting the preservation of local historic architecture. Recently this Spring PAST celebrated the centennial of two important community architectural icons; Palo Alto High School at Embarcadero Road and El Camino Real, and Julia Morgan's Camp Fremont Hostess House, now housing MacArthur Park Restaurant. Their significance is that these are probably Palo Alto's only remaining century old civic structures.

With our efforts recognizing Palo Alto High School, we recently had success in preventing a significant historic blunder, when the Palo Alto Unified School District unveiled its photovoltaic solar panel plan at various school sites throughout the community. The proposed solar carport project could have detrimentally impacted the historic setting and diminished the visual quality of the original century old structure. While Palo Alto Unified School District is exempt from local regulation under the Field Act, the impacts of the proposed solar carport scheme was significant enough that it merited historic review and analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This state law requires that all buildings and structures over 50 years old, and those listed on local, state, or Federal historic registers, undergo a qualified Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE), and Historic Structures Report (HSR) as to the appropriateness of modifications, alterations, and adjacent construction; reviewed, evaluated, and analyzed for potential incompatibility.

While the price of solar panels has become economically competitive, and represents a significant renewable energy resource in the never ending goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and battling global warming, the proposed location of the solar carports were incompatible with the historic appearance of the Renaissance Revival architecture. The location of the proposed solar carports along the frontage of both El Camino Real and Embarcadero Road would be viewed as a dominant feature; an irreconcilable blemish on the century old historic edifice.

But, through PAST Heritage's advocacy we were able to generate community opposition, and persuade the PAUSD leadership to consider less visible, alternative locations for the Paly solar panels. Without our intervention the pristine view of Paly's main building and front entry would now be obscured.

But, we can't undertake these historic preservation education efforts without your financial support. As we move into the Fall and end of the year, please help us continue PAST Heritage's legacy for the next 30 years by renewing your membership today. We will mail you renewal information in October. Please use the enclosed envelope to renew as well as to let us know how you can help PAST take on new projects impacting local historic preservation

Thank You,

Lee I. Lippert, PAST President

Preservation Month Wrap Up

On May 6, PAST celebrated Preservation Month with the distribution of centennial plaques and the presentation of awards to a Professorville home and two Stanford projects. And, continuing a new tradition, topped off the afternoon with strawberry shortcake!

2018 Centennial Plaques



50 Embarcadero road
Palo Alto High School



1020 High Street
Alan Peterson & Janis Stevenson



610 Melville Avenue
Richard & Joanne Saxon



1435 Tasso Street
Brian Kelley & Pennie Hink



640 Tennyson Avenue
Guy & Janet Dijulio



110 Waverley Street
Nancy Merritt



1400 Webster Street
Claire & Ed Lauing



27 University Avenue
MacArthur Park

Other 1918 Homes



576 Everett Avenue



765 Hamilton Avenue



1044 High Street



1119 High Street



340 Lowell Avenue



137 Webster Street

It's interesting to note that there were fewer centennial homes this year than usual. One explanation could be that building materials were in short supply because of the participation of the United States in World War I.



2018 Preservation Awards



Roble Gymnasium

Owner: Stanford University
Architects: CAW Architects
Contractor: Vance Brown Builders

The Spanish Eclectic original architecture by Arthur Brown, originally constructed as a women’s gymnasium in 1931, was converted to house the Department of Theater & Performance Studies Division of Dance and the Roble Arts Gym. The infrastructure and accessibility were updated and the courtyards and landscape rehabilitated in the spirit of the original design.



Kingscote Gardens

Owner: Stanford University
Architect: Architectural Resources Group
Contractor: Devcon

This elegant 1917 Italian Renaissance-style building, constructed as housing for faculty and staff, suffered severe damage in the Loma Prieta Earthquake and the cost of retrofitting prohibited continued residential usage. Architectural Resources Group of San Francisco was given the task of converting it for offices. Two main interior features were preserved: the curved glass sunroom and main staircase. The historic exterior was repainted.



1027 Bryant Street, Professorville

Owner: John & Jennifer Tarlton
Architect: Fergus Garber Young Architects
Contractor: Steve Tower

This is a renovation of a uniquely blended 1898 Colonial Revival/Queen Anne/Craftsman style home. FGY Architects consulted historic photographs and documents to replace the front façade elements and return the home to its former relationship with the street. The historic turret on the northwest corner, roof and front porch gable were reinstated, while the roofing, fenestration, and siding have been repaired or replaced.

William Staller's Apartments

by Bo Crane

Two similar apartment houses that diagonally face each other are on the Downtown Tour. One is Staller Court, formerly the more elegantly named, Laning Chateau, at 345 Forest Avenue, and Casa Real, across the street at 360 Forest Avenue. They both were developed by William Staller, a German immigrant, and were designed with immigrant involvement as well.

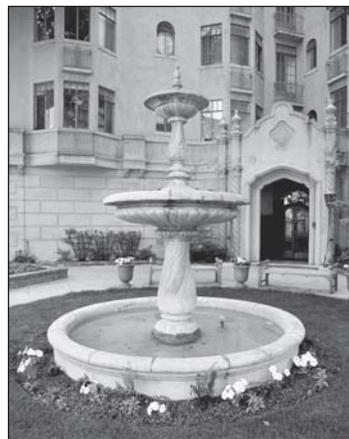
Staller Court, which was the apartment building's original name for several years, is a Spanish Colonial Revival with a Moorish variant and a golden dome. Born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now the Czech Republic, Bohemian John C. Hladik was the architect, having immigrated in 1897. His office was on Market Street in San Francisco. He had designed what's known as the Jazz Age Tower, built in 1926 in the City, a year before Staller Court in 1927, before the 1929 Depression hit.

Casa Real was designed with Mission style variant. Thomas Edwards and Harry Schary were the architects. Edwards was born in San Francisco but his in-laws were Lithuanian and Polish, with whom he first lived. The marriage didn't last and soon he was living with his mother and three spinster sisters. At age 56 in 1930, he was still with them in San Mateo.

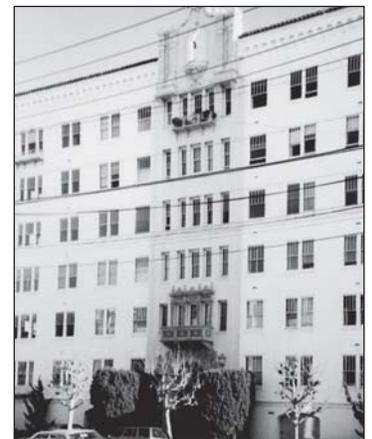
Edwards' partner, Harry Schary, was born in Chicago to Russian parents. In 1930 at age 32, he and his wife, plus their two children, were living with her father, born in New York to Polish parents. Edwards & Schary designed two Spanish Baroque buildings in San Mateo, built in 1931.

Compared to the clapboard-sided apartment building at 332 Forest Avenue, built in 1925, the two Staller buildings look like Hollywood movie sets, perhaps reflecting the fantasy look of 1920s movies, whereas the plain-appearance of the nearby apartment building though only two years older shows a restraint leftover from the Great War that ended in 1918. Staller was born in a town near Dusseldorf and emigrated at age 32 in 1923, the year of the Beer Hall Putsch, declaring for U.S. citizenship within a month of arrival. He survived the Great Depression by accepting short-term rentals, unlike most apartment owners, and also lived at Casa Real, where he was listed as manager in the 1932 directory and remained so.

Staller lived for 30 years with his wife at Casa Real, where he passed at age 60 in 1951. His foray from Germany into Palo Alto created two classical buildings from the golden age of the late 1920s.



**Staller Court /
Laning Chateau**



Casa Real



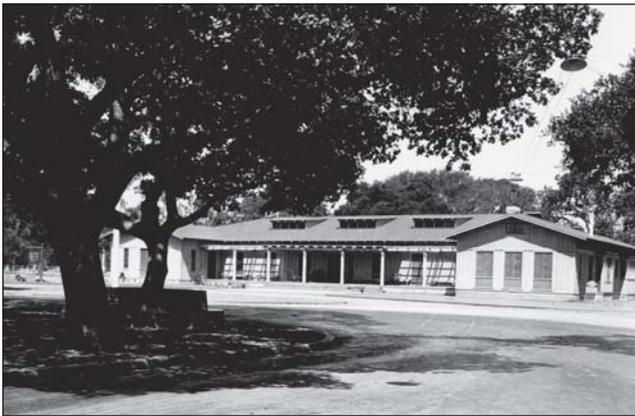
332 Forest Avenue

Julia Morgan's Hostess House: A Legacy of Community Engagement

by Barbara Wilcox

One hundred years ago, in 1918, America was at war. Julia Morgan's Hostess House — later, Palo Alto's community center, and now MacArthur Park Restaurant, is a legacy of that war. The building tells us how Americans felt about that war, and how they worked afterward to pivot from war into peacetime service for the public good.

The Hostess House was originally on the edge of the Army's World War I-era Camp Fremont, on Santa Cruz Avenue, where Menlo Church is now. The city of Palo Alto bought it and moved it to University Avenue in 1919.



Most World War I military installations had a Hostess House. Very few survive. At Hostess Houses, soldiers could meet female loved ones in comfort, and the military could monitor what kind of females were meeting the soldiers. They were zones of domesticity that counteracted war's brutalizing effects. They were built and staffed by the YWCA, with a mix of federal and private funds. They were run entirely by women and built primarily by three women architects — Katherine Budd, Fay Kellogg, and Julia Morgan.

Morgan was the first woman to graduate from UC Berkeley in civil engineering; the first woman to enter the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, then the top architecture school in the world; and the first woman licensed as an architect in California. When she got the Camp Fremont job she was already well known. She had worked for the YWCA since 1913, through her patron Phoebe Hearst. Only a few months after completing the Hostess House, Morgan would get the commission for what we know as Hearst Castle from Phoebe's son, William Randolph Hearst.



Morgan hated publicity. She hated what she called "talking architects." So a lot of what we know about the Hostess Houses comes from the other two architects, Kellogg and Budd. Budd wrote that the Hostess Houses had to consist mainly of large undivided central spaces: 50 feet wide without supports. This was partly for cost reasons. It was also so Hostess House matrons could more easily monitor the activity inside.

The Hostess Houses had visible interior roof supports, like barns, because Budd thought they were airy and welcoming. They had fireplaces to evoke homeliness and hospitality — Budd's had gigantic fireplaces, capable of burning logs six feet long. They had porches and verandas to mediate the privacy of the house and the harsh world outside.

All of this is native to Julia Morgan's own Arts and Crafts vocabulary — features she often used in her residential work. But it was also part of the conscious Hostess House program.

Camp Fremont's Hostess House opened May 25, 1918 with a reception chaired by Mrs. Ray Lyman Wilbur, wife of the president of Stanford. He was a huge war booster and played a big role in bringing Camp Fremont to the Peninsula.

Photos show its interior not too different from today's. It had a cafeteria and a child care room, so wives of soldiers could bring the kids for visits. On the mezzanine were small desks and chairs for writing letters. Below was a switchboard to connect the visiting women with their men in camp.



Many weddings were held here. The Army worried about some of these weddings. It was thought here and elsewhere that disreputable women were blackmailing soldiers into marriage to get their steady pay and insurance. Camp Fremont's adjutant asked the San Mateo County clerk to stop issuing marriage licenses to troops because so many of the brides were older than the grooms, and in his words, "looked like bad characters."

But it all came to an end after just a few months, when Camp Fremont's troops finally mobilized in autumn 1918. The war ended a month after that. Camp Fremont's buildings and other assets were sold at auction. The city of Palo Alto obtained the Hostess House for a dollar for use as a community center and veterans building.

Ray Lyman Wilbur had a hand in this, too. You may have wondered why there are so many Veterans Memorial Buildings dating from the 1920s and 30s. Wilbur was on the national committee that decided such buildings would be the most appropriate memorials – as opposed to fountains, statues, etc. He wanted these buildings to house and perpetuate the type of selfless public service that the fallen soldiers and the entire war embodied. Palo Alto's Hostess House became one of the first.

As decades went by, the building's functions shifted to the Lucie Stern Community Center, and Morgan's building fell into disrepair. In 1976, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Four years later, the city offered it to anyone who would renovate it with minimum exterior changes. For more than 30 years, MacArthur Park and owners Faz Poursohi and Charles Frank have hosted community gatherings there, while veterans groups still meet in a wing of the building as they have for a century.



Barbara Wilcox is author of *World War I Army Training by San Francisco Bay: The Story of Camp Fremont*.

Calendar of Historical Happenings

Oct 6, 13, 20 and Nov. 2 — **Walking Tours**—see front page for details. *Museum of American Heritage: Vintage toys: It's Child's Play.* 9/28/18 to 2/17/19; 351 Homer Ave., 11 a.m.–4 p.m., Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Free.

Oct. 7, 2 p.m., Sunday Palo Alto Historical Association **walk from Channing House to Palo Alto High School** **Historic Resources Board** — 1st & 3rd Wed. – 8:30 a.m., City

Look for a letter in the mail in October . . . Your 2019 membership dues support our preservation activities including plaques, awards and walking tours!

PAST Heritage Board of Directors

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www.pastheritage.org



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Palo Alto Stanford Heritage
P.O. Box 308
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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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