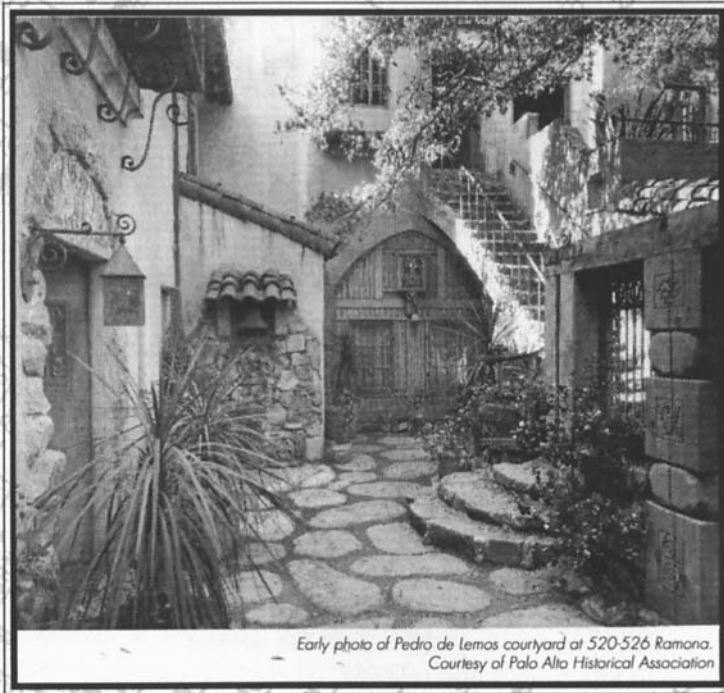
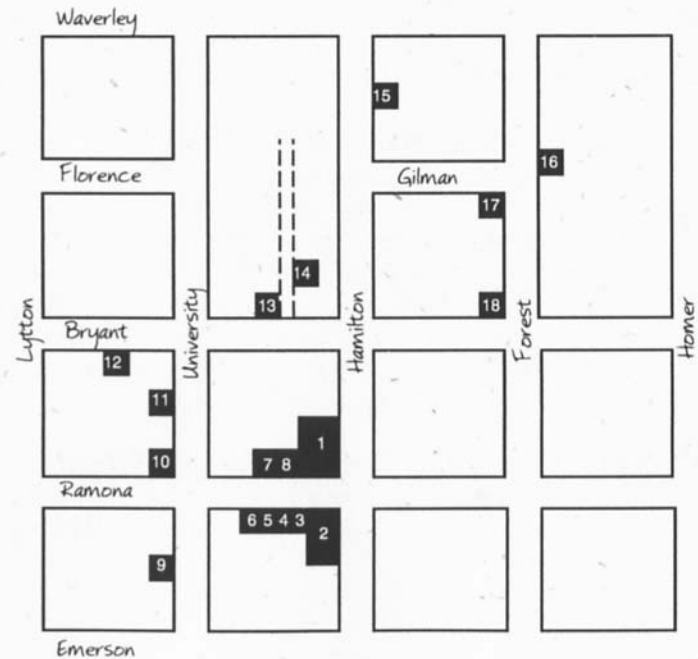


Downtown Palo Alto Sampler



When Leland and Jane Stanford began building their university, they wanted a wholesome university town free of liquor that could provide housing as well as goods and services for both faculty and students. The Stanfords were unsuccessful in convincing nearby Mayfield and Menlo Park to give up their thriving saloons. Consequently, they asked Timothy Hopkins to buy 700 acres of Greer and Seale ranch land for a new town in which the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages was prohibited. The first families arrived in the winter of 1890-91 and Palo Alto began to grow immediately. The town was incorporated in 1894.

Today's "Downtown" is an expansion of Palo Alto's original nucleus. Beginning at the railroad tracks, commercial buildings were slowly added along University, Lytton, and Hamilton Avenues. It wasn't until the 1930s that buildings reached as far as Cowper Street. Houses, churches, the hospital, the library, and schools were interspersed among the "Downtown" food and dry goods stores, hotels, banks, laundries, smithies, bicycle shops and livery stables.



Downtown Palo Alto

Ramona Street Architectural District

The 500 block of Ramona represents an architecturally unified area of buildings constructed between 1924 and 1938. Pedro de Lemos, the regionally prominent designer, and architects Birge M. Clark and William H. Weeks designed the buildings. De Lemos felt that an informal architecture, integrated with nature and lightened by spontaneity, was compatible with commercial use. Clark's buildings continued that approach.

Stucco walls in muted colors and Spanish tile roofs of varying heights characterize the Spanish Colonial Revival buildings. Look for arches, balconies, wrought iron, and decorative tile. Craftsman-style woodworking details are present in both exteriors and interiors of several buildings. Notice in particular the staircases, mezzanines and hand-adzed beams. Carefully executed details, comfortable massing and interior courts give the District its friendly quality.

1 551-581 Ramona & 255-267 Hamilton (Birge Clark, 1927)

The Medico-Dental building was designed as most others in the district were, to appear as several separate buildings. Note the tile work below the display windows. The section at 551 Ramona is over the ramp of Palo Alto's first underground garage, which is accessed from the alley.

2 556 Ramona & 231-247 Hamilton (William Weeks, 1924)

The uniform roofline and regular fenestration give the Cardinal Hotel a formal appearance. Note the entrances framed by terra cotta tiles and look for the depiction of an automobile. Walk through the lobby and view the glazed tile floor, large wrought-iron sconces and torchiers, columns, boxed beams, skylight and massive mantel incorporating Batchelder tile.

3 538-542 Ramona (Birge Clark, 1927)

Enter into this building to view features unusual for a commercial space but typical of buildings in this district.

4 532-536 Ramona (Birge Clark, 1926)

5 530 Ramona (Birge Clark, 1926)

The cantilevered balcony extending across the façade is typical of the Monterey style, a variant of Spanish Colonial Revival.

6 520-526 Ramona (Pedro de Lemos, 1925)

This building was the catalyst for the district. An eclectic Spanish Colonial Revival, it was designed around a central courtyard with an oak tree; the wisdom of this enclosure generated a lively controversy among Palo Alto residents. (Seismic retrofitting and removal of the diseased oak tree led to remodeling of the forward portion in 1985.) De Lemos was a leader of the Crafts Movement; his artistry is evident in his attention to details. He also incorporated architectural and decorative pieces salvaged from various sources. Notice the capitals of columns from Stanford University that were damaged in the 1906 earthquake now serving as bases for plants.

7 533-537 Ramona (Pedro de Lemos, 1938)

This courtyard building echoes the eclectic Spanish Colonial Revival style of de Lemos' earlier structure across the street. The arched entrance capped by a wrought-iron balcony leads to a large courtyard. Colorful handmade tiles, quarry tile, decorative paving and delicate wrought-iron work add to the charm of the complex.

8 541-545 Ramona (Birge Clark, 1928)

9 223 University (Weeks and Day, 1925)

According to its designers, the Stanford Theater combined the strength and simplicity of the Greek style with the colors of Assyrian art. Like many such movie houses, it fell victim to the declining attendance. In 1987 the David and Lucille Packard Foundation rescued the theater and created a permanent center for the study and enjoyment of classic American films. Two years and six million dollars later the theater reopened after a meticulous restoration under the leadership of David Woodley Packard.

10 251 University (William H. Weeks, 1906)

This quake- and fireproof building was erected immediately after the 1906 earthquake for C.E. Childs, President of the First National Bank of Palo Alto. When the bank merged with the Bank of Italy (Bank of America) in 1928, H.A. Minton remodeled it to the style typical of Bank of America branches at the time. Prominent

are its classical pilasters, rondels of sailing ships and bears, and tile roof.

11 271 University (John Carl Warnecke, 1929)

The facade of this shop building displays the stylistic features of "Zigzag Moderne," a style rare in Palo Alto. It was built for Georgina Ostrander, one of the City's earliest merchants.

12 440-450 Bryant (Birge Clark, 1927)

This Spanish Colonial Revival building housed the Palo Alto's fire, police and municipal court. Walter Stromquist, a partner of Birge Clark, remodeled it in 1978 for the Senior Center.

13 529 Bryant (E.V. Cobby, 1929)

The architecture of this building and its terra cotta tile work is representative of the Spanish Renaissance Revival style. This building is on the site of the first elementary school in Palo Alto.

14 Rear of 535 Bryant (1897)

This small Queen Anne cottage originally faced Bryant. It was built for John F. Byxbee who became City Engineer in 1906. Later he recommended that the City purchase 40 acres of marshland, the nucleus of the 1800-acre Byxbee Park.

15 380 Hamilton (Birge Clark, 1932)

This post office was designed in the California Mission Revival style at the request of President Hoover and Mrs. Hoover. Most post offices in 1932 were Institutional Classic in design; this is unusual.

16 360 Forest (Edwards and Schary, 1932)

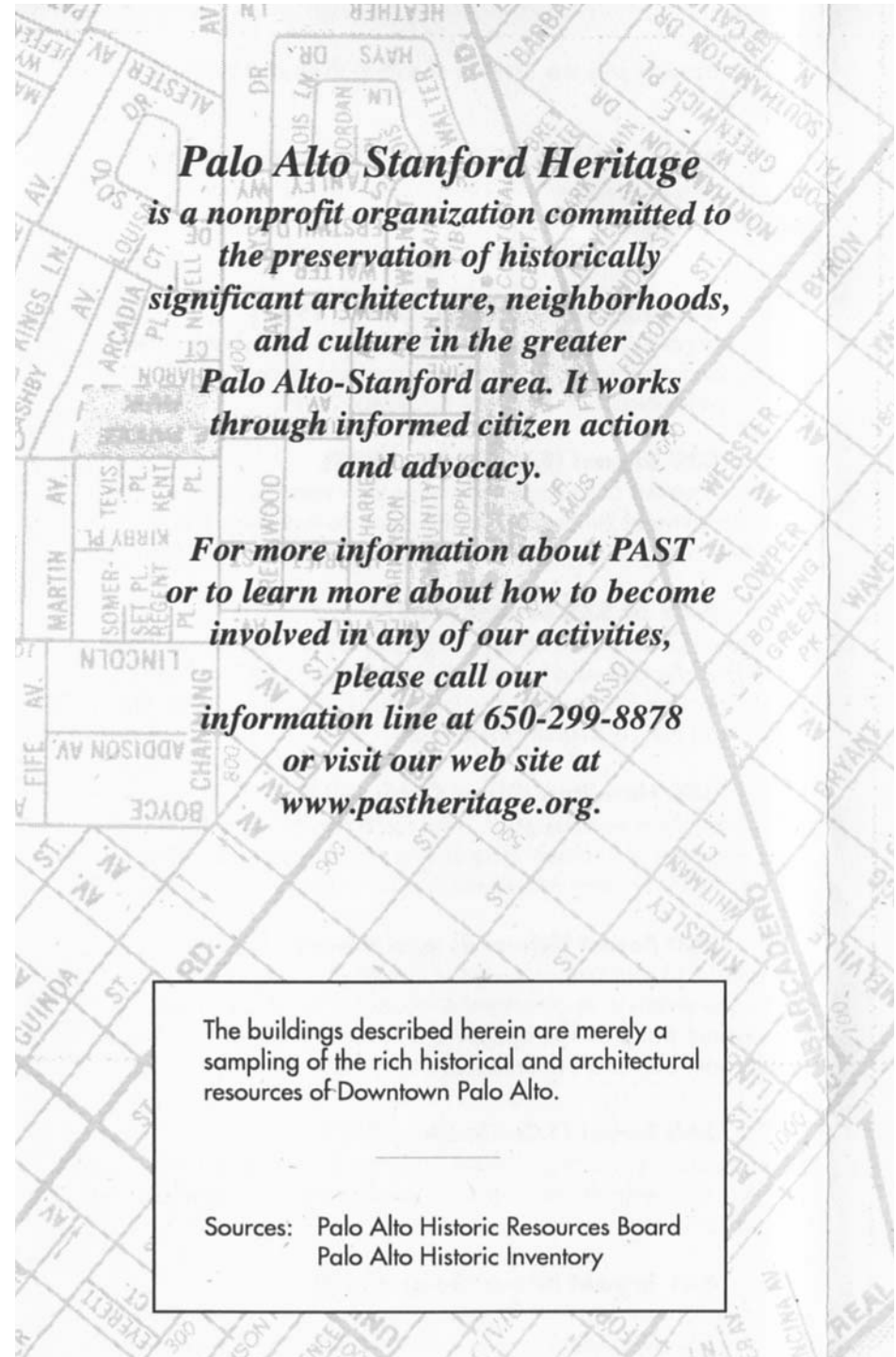
Spanish Colonial Revival in style, Casa Real includes Spanish Baroque details in its ornamented facade center and pierced decorative parapet. This and the apartment building at 345 Forest were both built and owned by William Staller.

17 345 Forest (J.C. Hladik, 1927)

This building, the Laning Chateau, is in the Spanish Colonial Revival style with Moorish elements in its undulating facade and the dome on its roof.

18 661 Bryant (Elmer Gray, 1916)

The First Church of Christ Scientist was designed in the Mission Colonial Revival style. The curved facade repeated in the curved arcade make it well suited to its corner site.



Palo Alto Stanford Heritage
is a nonprofit organization committed to
the preservation of historically
significant architecture, neighborhoods,
and culture in the greater
Palo Alto-Stanford area. It works
through informed citizen action
and advocacy.

For more information about PAST
or to learn more about how to become
involved in any of our activities,
please call our
information line at 650-299-8878
or visit our web site at
www.pastheritage.org.

The buildings described herein are merely a sampling of the rich historical and architectural resources of Downtown Palo Alto.

Sources: Palo Alto Historic Resources Board
Palo Alto Historic Inventory