

## Calendar of Events

Now through February 24, 2008

**Toys from the Attic exhibit at MOAH**  
See [www.moah.org](http://www.moah.org) for more information

April 27, 2008

**Stanford Historic House & Garden Tour**  
See article on pages 4-5 in this article for more information.

May 18, 2008

**Preservation Month is coming again!**  
See page 7 for more information.

## PAST Heritage Board of Directors

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Betty Britton	Terry Rice
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## Charles Kaiser Sumner Highlighted at HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR 2007



At this year's Holiday House Tour, our members and guests were able to take a glance back at our community between the wars. Charles Sumner, then at the height of his architectural career, was well suited to fulfill the aspirations of the captains of industry who were drawn to the area in the 1920's and 30's. Thanks to him and other notable architects, an ambitious, more prosperous vision of the city began to express itself through the construction of the elegant houses in the newly developed Crescent Park neighborhood.

We are grateful to the owners of the five truly splendid Sumner houses on this year's tour, not only for allowing access to their homes, but for the care taken in the preserving and updating of each. The kitchens were especially notable, for in Sumner's public-versus-private plan organization, kitchens were once the domain only of the servants. Each owner has transformed the kitchen into the center of family life without destroying Sumner's basic plan concept.

The tour team members were very pleased by the response to our theme this year; nearly 600 people attended. The gorgeous weather showed the houses at their best, and even though the gardens were "sleeping," the sunny day made it possible to get a real sense of how important the gardens were to Sumner's concept of the home.

We are grateful to all our volunteers for making this year's tour such a special event. We plan these tours so that those of us who love old buildings can have a lovely afternoon of exploring. At the same time, we hope to spark an interest in members of our community who might come to the tour with a friend, or read a snippet in the paper, and realize how many really good buildings, sometimes works of art, make up our neighborhoods and give Palo Alto its sense of place.

~ Grace Hinton, Holiday House Tour Chair



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[www.pastheritage.org](http://www.pastheritage.org)

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.

## PAST NEWSLETTER

Editor: Scott Smithwick

Contributors: Ralph Britton  
Grace Hinton  
Stanford Historical Society

Photographs: PAST Heritage  
Carolyn George  
Stanford Historical Society

## President's Column

Like many neighborhoods in Palo Alto, mine is largely becoming a resource of lots upon which to build. Built in the 1920s, when there was much open land in the area, the houses provided homes for people with a range of incomes. There were Professors, professionals, many of whom commuted to San Francisco by train, business owners and others of means, but also included were the people who worked in town, teachers, gardeners, shopkeepers, and all manner of blue and white collar workers. The homes varied in size, but almost all were pleasant, welcoming and considered comfortable by their owners. While it is possible to upgrade the old homes and preserve their character, the demand is for new and much larger ones.

Until about 1980, people who worked in the town could afford modest properties where they could accommodate their families close the schools and their jobs. In the 20s, these were usually two and three bedroom houses with a single bath, a small kitchen and breakfast nook and the essential washroom/pantry with a place for an icebox or refrigerator. After the end of WWII, a large number of modest homes began to fill the area south of Oregon Avenue, providing housing for returning service personnel working in the new technology industries such as Varian Associates, Hewlett Packard, and Lockheed. As had always been the case, good schools were considered essential and the new residents enthusiastically supported a rapidly expanding school system. The leaders of the local industries were strongly behind them as well. Then as now, the city attracted families looking for a place where they could expect their children to have good educational opportunities.

Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The city is built out and there is little land available for new housing of any type. The schools, plentiful parks and the amenities available are attractive. So attractive that land values are extremely high. Wealthy people attracted to the community do not want the modest homes that still represent a big part of the housing inventory. The land they occupy represents all the value of these properties; the building's value is negative by the cost to demolish it. Developers recognize that the potential value of a large new house ready for immediate sale can be many times the already high cost of the land. Now the streets are full of the huge trucks removing material from buildings that a few weeks before provided comfortable homes for people. By some estimates demolition debris now comprises *one half* of the solid waste stream from the city. The new houses dwarf the houses remaining from the previous generation.

How does this change stack up against other goals for the city? In a broad sense income diversity is a part of the heritage of the city; historically Palo Alto has been a synergistic community that has had the resident human resources able to meet many of its needs. That this is still desirable is recognized by requiring below-market-rate (BMR) housing in new planned developments. Yet the destruction of the old homes and their replacement with much more expensive ones overwhelms the amount of housing gained by offering some new BMR housing.

The city prides itself as being a "green" city. But consider all the impacts of the destruction of these old but functional properties and their movement to a landfill, along with any installed solar electric or water-heating equipment. As soon as the demolition is finished, a large amount of new material is used up building the vast new structure. Since virtually all of the new houses have large basements to gain floor space, we regularly see large pipes carrying ground water into the storm drains for months on end as these huge pits are being prepared. Meanwhile residents are asked not to waste water. How green is that?

While all property is expensive in the city, these new homes have market values many times those that they replace. Now people who might have afforded something in town have even fewer properties within their price range. If they want to work here they must commute long distances, adding to fuel use and pollution. Ironically, teachers in

## ~ PAST Members ~

### Individual

**Marsha Alper**  
Martin Bernstein  
Pauline Brown  
**Susan Chaput**  
Karen Douglas  
Joette Farrand  
Jean Gee  
**Alice Wilder Hall**  
Barry Lee Johnson  
**Karen Anne Kolling**  
Marguerite Ladner  
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**Clare Smith**  
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**Kathryn Verwillow**  
Lanie Wheeler  
Kris Zavoli

## ~ THANK YOU ~

The PAST Heritage Board of Directors would like to thank each one of our members for their support. We would also like to make note of all of our new members, highlighted in bold in the membership list above - thank you for joining our organization and we look forward to the continued support of all our loyal members.

~ PAST Heritage Board of Directors

## ~ E-Newsletter ~

Would you be interested in receiving our newsletter via e-mail? The PAST Board is considering making this option available to our members. More information will follow in the next newsletter this Spring.

~ Scott Smithwick, Editor

## ~ Preservation Month ~

Preservation Month is coming up in May - our annual Preservation Awards event will be held on May 18th! If you have any suggestions for outstanding preservation projects worthy of an award, please let us know before March 4th. You can leave a message on our hotline at 299-8878 or email our president, Ralph at [ralphbritton@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ralphbritton@sbcglobal.net).

We will also be issuing centennial plaques to all of the Palo Alto homes that turn 100 years old this year!

## PAST Members

### Lifetime

Sarah & Tom Clark  
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Marilyn Sutorius  
Aino Vieira da Rosa  
Cindy & John Wallbrink

our schools are very much affected. The high-quality schools that are much sought after and are in large measure responsible for the high value of property may become unsustainable.

Our diverse heritage is becoming lost in this process. Many of our traditional neighborhoods are becoming a grotesque mix of new "statement" homes and older small ones. Many of the new houses are tasteless cookie-cutter designs built to minimize costs for the developer. Some of the properties destroyed have been truly excellent examples of architecture of their day and not all have been modest either. We can't save everything, but if we want to live in a city that honors its past and accommodates people of many walks of life, there must be some control over the kind and amount of development within our city.

The question is can anything be done? A single-story overlay district has helped to preserve some of the Eichler homes. It's possible that CEQA may prove to be applicable and useful when judiciously applied. Perhaps the city could require the purchase of carbon offsets or require payment to a fund to provide replacement BMR housing for demolitions within the city. A carefully planned and executed preservation ordinance, adequately respectful of property rights, also might be worth revisiting. If nothing is done, it will simply be a matter of time until our balanced community becomes a monoculture of large new homes for those who can afford them. If you have thoughts in this regard, please forward them to: [ralphbritton@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ralphbritton@sbcglobal.net).

~ Ralph Britton

## Treasurer's Report - Mid-Year

At halfway through our 2007-2008 fiscal year, our finances continue to be strong. We exceeded both our targets for membership and Holiday House Tour ticket sales, so that we have met our revenue goal for the year as of this writing. We are within budget on our two biggest general expenses, namely the newsletter and Holiday House Tour.

Advocacy on behalf of preservation is part of PAST's mission. This year, we are pleased to have been able to lend support to the Friends of the Briones House. PAST is matching up to \$5,000.00 to help in their legal effort to save the house, and is acting as a pass-through organization to accept donations on their behalf. So far, we have accepted and matched \$3,700.00. We will continue to accept donations for the matching fund until the end of July, and after that date general donations until further notice.

PAST also donates to educational efforts on behalf of preservation. Palo Alto Historical Association's Guy Miller Archives, housed at Main Library, has been an invaluable resource for our community for many, many years. Hundreds have used its resources to research Palo Alto history over the years. This year the PAST board has committed \$5,000.00 for its current archiving efforts. In addition, we have committed \$1,000.00 (renewable annually) to the Archives to support their outstanding service to Palo Alto.

The Board continues to discuss ways to use our reserve fund to further support local preservation projects. As always, we welcome member input, and will keep you informed as our fiscal year progresses.

~ Grace Hinton, Treasurer

## 4th Annual Stanford Historic House and Garden Tour

Sunday, April 27th, 2008 ~ 1-4 pm

Anticipating National Preservation Month in May, the tour by Stanford Historical Society's Historic Houses Project offers an intimate look at the lives and homes of Stanford's earliest faculty members. This year's tour features historic houses and gardens in one of San Juan Hill's first subdivisions. Open to visitors are four grand houses and gardens of early faculty members, each house telling a story of its owners and their place in Stanford history. Two were designed or influenced by the work of Arthur Bridgeman Clark, one by Charles Kaiser Sumner, who designed many houses on campus and in nearby communities, and the architect on the fourth is unknown. Two houses began as shingle-style homes but because of fire and dry rot were transformed with a stucco exterior in one case and into a New England farmhouse in the other.

Two of the houses will be featured in *Historic Houses V*, to be published in the spring of 2009, and two are in *Historic Houses I: Historic Houses of San Juan Hill*, available online from the Stanford Historical Society's Web site (<http://histsoc.stanford.edu/hh1.shtml>). Together with the house tours, these and other books are part of the Historic Houses Project, which won a prestigious Governor's Historic Preservation Award in 2007.

### A Preview of the houses open for the 2008 tour



#### 1914 Tudor with Craftsman Details

This house, on the National Register of Historic Places, sits atop San Juan Hill facing the Stanford hills. The house's design was a collaboration between architect A. B. Clark and Olive McFarland, wife of biologist Frank Mace McFarland. He played a leading role in organizing Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove and served as its director from 1910 to 1913. Clark created the overall design—an English country cottage with neoclassical accents and a molded shingle roof intended to evoke memories of thatched roofs. Olive McFarland designed the interior, which combined living and laboratory space for her husband's collection of sea slugs.

#### 1905 Shingle-style to 1939 Stucco

The design of this house, built in 1905, was influenced by the work of A. B. Clark on the Durand house next door. House plans, drawn by contractor William Thompson of Palo Alto, show many Clark touches, including the use of Moorish arches on doors and room entries. The house was built by Harris Ryan (Harris J. Ryan Voltage Laboratory), who came to Stanford in 1905 as head of the Electrical Engineering Department. The second owner, Charles Haskell Danforth, a professor of anatomy in the Stanford Medical School, made several changes after a fire badly damaged the house in 1939. Among these were the addition of a family room with a cone-shaped roof and redwood walls, and transformation of the original shingle exterior to stucco. Though changes over the years have moved rooms around, the original footprint has expanded only slightly.



#### 1908 Shingle-style to New England Farmhouse

In its 100 years, this house has been a source of mystery and legend: was it designed by Bernard Maybeck? Probably not. Though its exterior has changed substantially, the interior remains largely faithful to the original plans. It was built for Burt Estes Howard, who was briefly a professor of political science at Stanford. From 1955 to 1965, it was vacant and became overgrown and infested with beehives, so it seemed to hum—little wonder that it became known as haunted. In 1965, because of dry rot, the house's deep eaves had to be sheared back to the roof and the front porch removed, transforming the house into the New England farmhouse it is today. The current owners have beautifully restored the house, retaining many features from the original plans.

#### 1925 Mediterranean Period Style

This house, designed by Charles Kaiser Sumner, is asymmetrical on all four sides, but the repeated elements of stucco, tile, double windows, and French doors create a harmonious whole. For more than half of its eight-decade life, economists have owned this house. But its first owner was Rennie Wilbur Doane, an economic entomologist who graduated in Stanford's class of 1896 and taught from 1905 until 1936. He studied mosquito control and for many years was chairman of the Matadero Mosquito Abatement District. In 1958, the house began its period of being home to Stanford economists, including Lorie Tarshis, Moses Abramovitz, and the current owner.



#### Tour Logistics

These four houses are within easy walking distance of one another. Parking and shuttle service are available at Tresidder Union parking lot; pick up the shuttle in front of the Stanford Faculty Club, across from the lot. Shuttles will take tourgoers to the registration point and between the houses as needed.

#### Tickets

For tickets, mail a check (payable to Stanford Historical Society) to Stanford Historical Society, c/o Sweeney, P.O. Box 19290, Stanford, CA 94309. Tickets purchased by April 18 will cost \$20 per person. After April 18 and on the day of the tour, tickets cost \$25. All tickets will be distributed on the day of the tour at 607 Cabrillo Avenue (corner of Cabrillo and Santa Ynez Street; enter by the driveway off Santa Ynez).

For additional information, visit the Stanford Historical Society's Web site: <http://histsoc.stanford.edu/> or call 650-725-3332 or 650-324-1653. You may also e-mail questions to [cglasser@stanford.edu](mailto:cglasser@stanford.edu) or [susan.sweeney@stanford.edu](mailto:susan.sweeney@stanford.edu).