

PAST News

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

Spring 2015

Centennial Home Celebration & Preservation Awards

In the spirit of Mother's Day, we will remember Dr. Esther Clark, pediatrician to many Palo Alto families and founder of the Children's Health Council. Her nephews, Dean and Malcom Clark, (Birge's sons), and some of her patients will share their memories. Presentation of plaques and awards will follow the talk.

Sunday, May 10

2 - 4 p.m.



Lucie Stern Center

1305 Middlefield Road

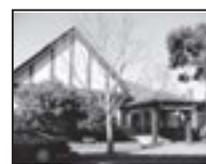
Presented in association with the Palo Alto Historical Association.

Historic Walking Tours

PAST is pleased to offer another series of walking tours. This is a superb opportunity to get out in the sunshine, meet some of your neighbors, and broaden your knowledge and appreciation for our wonderful city. All tours are free and open to the public. *Hayley Stevens, Tour Coordinator*

All tours start at 10 a.m.

- April 11 **Homer Avenue** Led by Steve Emslie
Meet at The Woman's Club, 475 Homer (corner of Cowper and Homer)
- May 9 **Professorville** Led by Gail Woolley
Meet at 1005 Bryant (corner of Bryant and Addison)
- May 16 **College Terrace** Led by Carolyn George
Meet at 1181 College (corner of College and Harvard)
- June 20 **Crescent Park** Led by Margaret Feuer
Meet at Squire House, 900 University (corner of University and Seneca)



Built in 1915



1040 Ramona Street



420 Homer Avenue



755 Santa Ynez Street, Stanford



Help Solve a Mystery

If you know where the Frank D. Wolfe house shown on page 5 was located, please let us know! It was built about 1923 for Gertrude & Nellie Gardiner, but that is as much as Krista Van Laan has been able to determine.

Member Event

This year we hosted the first of what we hope to be our annual Membership Appreciation Event. On February 21st, author Krista Van Laan gave a presentation on architect Frank Delos Wolfe to an audience of 30 members.

Wolfe was a local architect, with many of his prime examples being in our own backyard here in Palo Alto. Four copies of Van Laan's book *Frank Delos Wolfe: California Prairie Architecture* were given out as door prizes. Following the speech and brief

Q&A, attendees mingled to discuss the presentation and enjoy refreshments provided by Coupa Cafe, including an espresso cart with hand crafted beverage service. Thank you to everyone who came to enjoy the afternoon with us, we hope to see you next year for our second annual Membership Appreciation event!

For more information on Frank Delos Wolfe, please see the article on page 6.

Lizzie Orr
Event Coordinator



Frank Delos Wolfe

SAN JOSE ARCHITECT FRANK DELOS WOLFE (1862-1926) MAY HAVE BEEN THE MOST PROLIFIC ARCHITECT OF HIS TIME. Both alone and with partners, he was responsible for as many as 1,000 works during an architectural career that lasted almost 35 years. Eight of these works are today on the National Register of Historic Places.

Frank Wolfe was a self-taught architect with a natural sense of design and an eagerness to try new ideas. His work can be roughly divided into three styles: the unique Neoclassical look of the Wolfe & McKenzie years (1899 – 1910), the Prairie-influenced architecture during the Wolfe & Wolfe years with his son Carl (1912 – 1916), and the Spanish Revival style of his partnership with William Higgins (1918 – 1926). He also worked successfully in many other genres, producing outstanding examples of Craftsman, Mission Revival, and various other revival styles throughout his career.

Frank Wolfe and Charles S. McKenzie can be said to have been the architects most responsible for the look and character of San Jose at the turn of the 20th century. Their successful partnership produced banks, hospitals, schools, and commercial buildings, but they were best known for their residential



Peck-Wilson House, 860 University Avenue — 1906



555 Lytton Avenue — 1896



1052 Bryant Street — 1900

designs with signature features such as cantilevered corner windows and balconies. They designed many of the houses in what are today San Jose's historic neighborhoods as well as neighboring communities in northern California. Several are in Palo Alto, including the Peck Wilson house at 860 University Avenue.

In 1912, inspired by Chicago architect Frank Lloyd Wright, Wolfe began working in the Prairie style. The houses he produced were unlike anything else seen in the area at the time, and received much national attention as well. Solid, square buildings with flat roofs and deep overhanging eaves, stained glass windows, and ornate decoration, these homes seized the attention of people who wanted something unusual, and became the signature style of Frank Delos Wolfe over the next several years. Today, these houses, most of which still exist in San Jose, make San Jose a western center for Prairie architecture.

During the last eight years of his career, Wolfe was best known for his Spanish Revival houses, with partner William Higgins.

Krista Van Laan,
The author of *Frank Delos Wolfe: California Prairie Architecture*, she has been researching and writing about Wolfe since 2009. She manages the website www.frankdeloswolfe.com

Krista Van Laan (text and photos)



675 Alvarado Row, Stanford — 1925



475 Melville Avenue — 1911



Gertrude & Nellie Gardiner home,
address unknown — ca. 1921/23

Meet Our Board: Lee Lippert



For over a quarter century Lee I. Lippert, AIA, has been a licensed architect in private practice under the aegis of Lippert & Lippert Design with his wife Carol. Having studied architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design, both Lippert and his wife have lived in Palo Alto for the last 30 years. Serving the Palo Alto community the last 17 years on both the Architectural Review Board, and Planning & Transportation Commission, Lippert has also served at the executive leadership level for both the local and state level of American Institute of Architects, the regional architects' professional trade association. He also currently volunteers on the Lytton Gardens Senior Communities board, and has been a Rotary Club member for over a decade.

Lee has been honored three times with PAST Preservation awards, in 2010 for 1345 Cowper Street and in 2013 for the historic bakeries at 206–210 and 212–214 Homer Avenue.



1345 Cowper Street



212–214 Homer Avenue



206–210 Homer Avenue

PAST Heritage Board of Directors

President:	Brian George	Steve Emslie
Vice President:	Tom Johnston	Carolyn George (Webmaster)
Secretary:	Hayley Stevens	Lee Lippert
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		Steve Staiger (Historian)

PAST's Past/PAST's Future: Change in Palo Alto?

What was Palo Alto like before all the changes? Is there a starting point to use as a reference? There are no easy answers since, fundamentally, there is no point when the world stood still. A timeline of local history, based on archives, oral histories, artifacts, etc. would show a continuously changing land, people, buildings, economy, and . . . There is no point where everything was stable.

So how do we adapt to this constantly changing environment? One way is to understand the past through the work of organizations like PAST, Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA), Stanford Historical Society (SHS), Museum of American Heritage (MOAH), and Palo Alto History Museum (PAHM). These groups provide a means to appreciate the dramatic alterations that have been going on since the area was first settled. The Robles family probably worried about changes that impacted their life and the “modernization” of Palo Alto after 1894 certainly worried early residents. Today, we are just as concerned about losing the character of a Palo Alto that really is the culmination of all the decisions by past citizens.

The local history oriented organizations are passionate about providing insight into what we were and how we arrived at today's status. Continuing support of these groups is critical to assuring that we don't forget all the actions that, successful or not, created the Palo Alto of today. What decisions will we make today without reflecting on their potential impacts on living in Palo Alto?

PAST appreciates your support as we fulfil our role as an advocate for preservation of the historic architecture, neighborhoods, and character of the greater Palo Alto Stanford area.

Brian George

Reprinted from the very first PAST newsletter, August 1990.

Lost Street Names

As you stroll through the older neighborhoods of Palo Alto, noticing the rich detail of the homes and pleasant surroundings, take a moment to glance at the sidewalks. They too can add character and detail to the neighborhood.

You will notice that the contractors used to “sign” their work, embossing their names in the damp concrete. Street names were also embossed at the corners, an

easy and attractive way to identify the location. Not all of the street names are spelled correctly, sometimes **Waverley** other times **Waverly**, minor mistakes that add flavor to an historic neighborhood.

Although they were “cast in concrete”, these special details are being lost to the city sidewalk repair program. The City of Palo Alto Public Works Department, who is responsible for the program, no longer embosses the street names at the corners. **Maybe they should**, at least in the older neighborhoods

where the street names are traditional. It would be a simple, inexpensive way to recognize the neighborhood's historic character.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please watch your step. Modern corners have dangerous bumps that can cause a fall if you are taking a photo of a street name!



Calendar of Historical Happenings

April 11, 10 a.m. — **Homer Avenue Walking Tour** led by Steve Emslie. Meet at the Woman's Club, 475 Homer Ave. Free

Tuesday, April 21, 6:15 p.m. Krista Van Laan. Lecture **The Architecture of Frank Delos Wolfe**, Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society, Santa Clara Central Park Library. Free

Sunday, April 26, 1–4 p.m. — **Hidden Gems of Upper Lomita Walking Tour and Treasure Hunt**, Stanford Historical Society, \$15. For information, <http://historicalsociety.stanford.edu>

May 9, 10 a.m. — **Professorville Walking Tour** led by Gail Woolley. Meet at the corner of Addison and Bryant. Free

Sunday, May 10, 2 p.m. — **Preservation/Centennial Home Celebration, and Preservation Awards**.

Palo Alto Historical Association, Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield. Free

May 16, 10 a.m. — **College Terrace Walking Tour** led by Carolyn George. Meet at the corner of College and Harvard (1181 College.) Free

June 20, 10 a.m. — **Crescent Park Walking Tour** led by Margaret Feuer. Meet at the southeast corner of University & Seneca (Squire House). Free

Opening April 17 — **25 Years at the Museum of American Heritage**, 351 Homer Ave., 11 a.m.–4 p.m., Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Free.



PAST News

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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www.pastheritage.org