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The Tall Tree

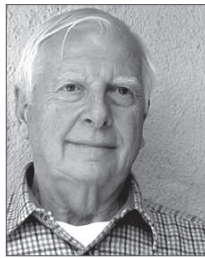
PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, April 2 at 2:00 p.m.
Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Free & open to the public
Cookies & coffee

The Great Earthquake of 1906



SPEAKER:
Tom Wyman,
Engineer &
Geologist

The devastation on the Stanford campus as a result of the 1906 Earthquake has been well reported over the years. Less well known is what happened in Palo Alto. Tom Wyman will talk about the impact of the earthquake in Palo Alto on that fateful day, April 18, 1906, and in the days following.

Few know how Palo Altans banded together with Stanford faculty and students to deal with the aftermath both here in Palo Alto and in San Francisco. It's the heart-warming story of people struggling to recover from a disaster themselves, organizing relief efforts, and reaching out with help to others who suffered even greater losses.

The concept of plate tectonics underlies our understanding of global geology and earthquakes today. Near-legendary Stanford geology professor Bailey Willis, known affectionately by students as "Earthquake Willis," played an interesting role in the development of the concept of continental drift.

Tom graduated from Stanford with engineering degrees and training as a geologist. He is the immediate past-president of the Palo Alto Historical Association.

Join us for this program about the 1906 Earthquake.

Notice to Palo Altans five days after the 1906 quake. (Palo Alto Historical Association Archives)

TO THE CITIZENS OF PALO ALTO:

The Relief Committee wishes to announce the following definite plan for handling the strangers who are taking refuge in our town:

All strangers will be met by members of a reception committee who will take charge of them and guide them to their quarters. Mr. S. S. Seward is in charge of this work.

Any requiring medical attention will receive the same at depot. Dr. John Spencer has charge of this.

Those who have no acquaintances in town to whom they are going will be cared for as follows:

The women and children in Benepe hall; Miss Burritt in charge. The men in a camp opposite Benepe hall; Capt. Detrick in charge. Citizens MUST NOT take strangers home, but will please assist by directing them to reception committee at depot.

No more strangers will be assigned to private homes, nor will further meals be furnished at the Congregational Church, except to those who are now boarding there.

Meals will be at the hall and the camp; Mr. C. C. McCay in charge of commissary.

For the Committee:

G. H. MARX,
Chairman Distribution Committee.
J. E. McDOWELL,
Secretary of Committee.

April 23, 1906.

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 193 • Palo Alto, CA 94302
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The Palo Alto Historical Association, a non-profit organization, was established in 1948 as successor to an earlier organization founded in 1913. Its main objectives are:

- ❖ Collect, organize, and preserve materials pertaining to the history and heritage of Palo Alto.
- ❖ Spread information about Palo Alto's history by means of programs, displays, and publications.
- ❖ Recognize and preserve historic sites and structures.

The Guy Miller Archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association are stored at the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road.

Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month (except for August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 p.m.

General meetings are held the first Sunday of each month (October–December, February–May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 p.m. Meetings include speakers. The final general meeting of the year is held in June and includes a dinner and a program.

The public is welcome at all meetings.

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INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PAHA MEMBER?

Here's how... Pick up a brochure at any library or one of our general meetings. Or, send your name, address, phone number and email address to

PAHA, P.O. Box 193
Palo Alto, CA 94302

with a check for your choice of membership: Individual: \$25; Family: \$40; Sustaining: \$60; Business: \$100; Life: \$350.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Susan Bright Winn

Local earthquake stories are still remembered, even after a hundred years. Here is one of them. Some may remember "Uncle Dan" Wood as a familiar sight driving his stagecoach in Peninsula parades for decades. Uncle Dan was one of the last stagecoach drivers in San Mateo County, driving between Redwood City and Pescadero via La Honda. The Wood family lived at 1110 Hamilton (in a cottage long gone) at the time of the earthquake.

The following is taken from a letter written by his son, Stanley Wood.

"On the morning of April 19, 1906, the morning after the San Francisco earthquake, we were living in Palo Alto, had been badly shaken up and frightened. The house had been moderately damaged, but none of us were hurt. During the afternoon of the 18th, reports began to come down that San Francisco was burning—huge clouds of smoke could be seen in the north, and things didn't look good for S.F. A number of Palo Alto residents had businesses in S.F. and they were anxious to see what had happened to them. There were no trains running, autos were few and far between, and not too dependable, so some of them hired Dad to take them in to S.F. by team. He put six horses on a stage, put me on the seat next to him, and took off. We went in by way of what is now 101 Highway and Mission Street, met hundreds of people leaving the city on foot, horseback and on carriages, all of them scared nearly to death. And when we had reached one of the hilltops in the outer Mission I didn't blame them for being frightened. There in front of us was the burning city. By that time, mid-morning of the 19th, the entire main part of the city was involved, and the wind happened to be blowing from the southeast, so we could see it all. We went down Mission Street until the soldiers stopped us, probably somewhere around 29th and Mission, let the men out to try and work their way downtown, fed and tried to water the team, and waited. Water was hard to find.

"All our passengers got back to us that afternoon. Some had made it all the way down, but most had not. We got back to Palo Alto late that night, after a day I will never forget."

FROM THE DESK OF THE HISTORIAN

Steve Staiger

I grew up with stories of the 1906 earthquake. My grandmother, at age 13, had just moved with her recently widowed mother from San Francisco to Sonoma County. Although unharmed by the quake and the many aftershakes, the family was so frightened that they continued to sleep outdoors for several weeks.

Palo Alto accounts are similar. There were minor injuries but no fatalities. Many buildings suffered damage, primarily from chimneys falling, but the wooden buildings mostly survived. There were a few exceptions such as Lirio Hall which totally collapsed.

Damage on the Stanford campus was much greater. There were two fatalities, and the newer buildings completed during Mrs. Stanford's "stone age," following Leland Stanford's estate legal battles were nearly destroyed. The Memorial Church and the new gymnasium, library and the Memorial Arch were so badly damaged that rebuilding took years.

The aftermath of the earthquake was documented by numerous photographers. Our Archives have many images of Palo Alto and Stanford campus including some "before and after" shots. Over the years survivors have recorded their memories, and we have some of these stories on tape and in the written word.

Following the earthquake, Palo Altans organized relief efforts to assist those less fortunate than themselves. Supplies were sent by wagon to help feed San Francisco survivors camping in tent cities. Afterwards, an extensive report was prepared by local citizens, and several Stanford professors were involved in state and national investigations to determine how such an event might be mitigated. The Palo Alto Library and our Archives have copies of all these reports.

SECOND EXTRA!

PALO ALTO TRIBUNE

WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1906.

TERRIBLE EARTHQUAKE

Great Loss of Life and Property.

DAMAGE WILL AMOUNT TO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

An appalling disaster visited this section of country south from San Francisco to San Jose this morning. At 5:08 an earthquake shock was experienced, which resulted in an untold damage to the entire peninsula.

The devastation at Palo Alto and on the campus is simply astounding. It was almost miraculous that amid the crash of falling buildings and flying missiles that but two lives should have been lost. These fatalities occurred

slightly cut. H. R. Thomas, face and head cut.

A freshman (names not known) wrist broken and arm injured.

Wires are down and no reports north of Redwood City have been received, but the disaster appears to have been widespread.

Such information as could be hastily gathered is given in the following report. The TRIBUNE office is the only newspaper office in town left intact and even here the power is minus and this special is printed on a job press by foot power.

The merchants of the town have gangs busy clearing away the debris and getting ready for business. No one is discouraged and all are making the best of the conditions. While the loss of property is enormous, all are thankful that the loss of life was not greater.

IN PALO ALTO

The results in Palo Alto are heart-rending and the scene is one of ruin and consequent confusion. Nearly

Parkinson's block suffered badly, the building being listed to the east. Parkinson's hardware store was utterly upset and many goods damaged.

Simkin's three story building lost a portion of the walls and the two top stories are three feet out of plumb.

The Stanford building (Fraser & Co.) suffered severely. The back and side walls fell out and the front was damaged. Persons sleeping in the upper rooms were left exposed to the air, but fortunately no one was injured.

The cornice fell from the Mariposa block and the interior was more or less wrecked.

Lesser injuries were sustained by other business buildings. The only structures to escape were the Nevada building, the Bank of Palo Alto and Morris' real estate office.

Much damage was done to residences throughout the town. Scarcely a home escaped, the contents of the rooms being shaken to the floor and everything breakable was broken.

Chimneys are down on nearly every house in town.

It is impossible at present to make

SAN FRANCISCO IS IN RUINS

Late Reports Say Fire is Raging in Many Parts of the City. Many People Killed.

The very latest news regarding the disaster at San Francisco was brought to Palo Alto by Mrs. Pierce, who arrived here at 11 a. m. in her automobile. The lady informs the TRIBUNE that the Palace Hotel roof has fallen and one corner of building gone. The Crocker-Woolworth bank is slightly injured and fires have started all along Market street. She saw several dead bodies on Market street and more being taken from the ruined buildings. The gigantic Emporium is a total wreck and wildest excitement prevails throughout the city.

Fires are raging and the Spring Valley pipes have burst leaving the city almost without water.

RUIN AT STANFORD

Stanford University could have sustained no greater damage than so unexpectedly came to it in a moments time. The ruin is simply appalling.

The dome of Memorial Church dropped into the interior of the building. The art glass windows were crushed, the mosaic work was cracked and disfigured and the fine carving was crushed by the weight of the falling material.

Memorial arch lost one corner but was less damaged than other structures. Only the dome of the new library building (uncompleted) remains standing.

Both ends of the new gymnasium were crushed in and the building is a wreck.

The museum suffered less damage, but the loss is considerable.

The most disastrous effect was at Encina Hall. The two towers on this structure fell through to the basement. Julius Hanna was killed by the falling mass at one corner. At another point 3 students fell from the fourth floor to the basement, but crawled out unharmed.

The top half of the front page of the Palo Alto Tribune's "extra" edition for April 18, 1906. (Palo Alto Historical Association Archives)

The Morning of April 18, 1906

The Montgomery Ward building in downtown Palo Alto after the earthquake. (Palo Alto Historical Association Archives)



EARTHQUAKE 1906

Present Montgomery Ward building



The Stanford Memorial Church, Stanford University. The church had only recently been completed prior to the earthquake. (Palo Alto Historical Association Archives)

PAST DOCENT CLASS BEGINS MARCH 23

Palo Alto Stanford Heritage (PAST) will be training a new docent class March 23 to run through the end of April. Classes and tours will be conducted on Thursday evenings. Discover Palo Alto through the stories of its early inhabitants and its architecture. Afterwards, share your knowledge. A commitment to give 12 tours over the next year is required. For information, please call 650/299-8878 or email president@pastheritage.org.

1906 – 2006 EARTHQUAKE CENTENNIAL RESOURCES

Incredibly, much of what we know about the 1906 Earthquake can be seen or read online. Websites of particular interest:

- **USGS, The Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake:** <http://quake.wr.usgs.gov/info/1906/index.html>
- **The 1906 Earthquake Centennial Alliance:** <http://1906centennial.org/>
- **The Great Shake: San Francisco, 1906:** <http://www.exploratorium.edu/faultline/1906/index.html>
- **The Bancroft Library:** <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/earthquake.html>

STANFORD SPRING HOUSE TOUR, APRIL 30

Sunday, April 30, 1:00–4:00, the public is invited to tour four houses designed by highly acclaimed Bay Area architects. These houses are featured in the book, *Historic Houses III: San Juan Neighborhood, Stanford University*. For tickets, send a check (payable to the Stanford Historical Society) to: Stanford Historical Society, c/o Sweeney, P.O. Box 19200, Stanford, CA 94305. Tickets purchased by April 21 are \$20 per person. After that, tickets will be \$25 at the door. For a tour map, see <http://stanford.edu/2006/2006tourmap.pdf>. For more information, call 650/326-9212 or email susan.sweeney@stanford.edu.

IN MEMORIAM

Virginia Beahrs (1911-2005)
Lois Rehor (1936-2005)
Earl F. Schmidt (1921-2006)

PAHA'S HERITAGE PROGRAMS ON CHANNEL 30

MARCH: WEST BAY OPERA'S
50TH ANNIVERSARY

APRIL: THE HP GARAGE

SCHEDULE

Wednesdays 8:00 p.m.
Thursdays Noon
Saturdays 1:00 p.m.

Videos of past PAHA meetings can be checked out from the Main Library's History Desk during historian's hours:

Tuesday evenings
Thursday afternoons

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PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 193

PALO ALTO, CA 94302

NEXT MEETING:

April 2, 2:00 p.m.

Free & open to the public
Cookies & coffee

