

The Tall Tree

OCTOBER 2011
VOLUME 35, No 1

NEWSLETTER of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING * FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC * REFRESHMENTS SERVED

Speaker: Doug Graham

Sunday, October 2 at 2:00 PM

Lucie Stern Community Center, Palo Alto

SARAH WALLIS— AN ALMOST FORGOTTEN HEROINE



At the celebration of the installation in Barron Park of the state historic plaque in 1986 for the 75th anniversary of California women's gaining voting rights, Julia Powers and Douglas Graham in period costume of Sarah Wallis's time.

AS WE CELEBRATE THE CENTENNIAL OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN EARNING THE RIGHT TO vote in 1911. PAHA President, Douglas Graham, will talk about Sarah Armstrong Montgomery Green Wallis, a founder of the California Woman Suffrage movement.

From her home, Mayfield Farm (now Barron Park,) she became the president of the Mayfield Woman Suffrage Association in 1870, and participated actively in statewide suffrage organizations. As well, she lobbied Sacramento legislators to enact laws to protect and improve the status of women, and won women's right to make contracts. In commemoration of her efforts on behalf of women's suffrage, a state historic marker was dedicated in 1986 at the site of her house on La Selva Street for the 75th anniversary of California women's gaining full and equal voting rights. Doug, a resident of Barron Park and a long-time scholar of Sarah Wallis, will tell her story at PAHA's October general meeting.

History Workshops

If you have ever been interested in writing local history, sign up for one of these workshops!

Writing Local History

Last spring through Stanford Continuing Studies, we offered a 10-week class in writing local history, but there were not enough enrollees to cover Stanford's overhead. This fall we are trying something different.

Co-sponsored by PAHA and the Stanford Historical Society, we are offering a one day workshop at no cost, but registration is required. We will cover topics such as what is local history; where can you find the answers to your specific questions; and what can you do with your local history research. The workshop is on Saturday, October 15, from 10 AM until 4 PM, and is titled "Writing Local History." The ID number is EVT 317. For more information visit Stanford Continuing Studies at www.continuingstudies.stanford.edu or contact me at the Palo Alto Library History Desk. —*Steve Staiger*

How to Do Oral Histories

PAHA is offering a fairly informal class on conducting and recording interviews, an invaluable method to preserve local history. The class is comprised of (1) Introduction and additional information following Steve Staiger's free one day class at Stanford University; (2) A variety of techniques; and (3) examples to help explain techniques that work best.

We encourage those who take this class to consider joining our oral history committee. The workshop will be held at the Lucie Stern Community Center on Saturday, November 5 from 10 AM–1 PM. To register contact Carol Mitchell, carolcmitchell@sbcglobal.net or (650) 326-6951.

Reaching Out to Our Kids

The Historian in the Classroom—THE PAHA BOARD HAS BEEN DISCUSSING the ways to enhance our outreach to Palo Alto school children. Presently, our most important outreach is Historian Steve Staiger's visits to their class rooms. He responds to requests from teachers to bring his slideshow and informal talks to several Palo Alto elementary schools every year. We plan to promote this program more vigorously, although Steve's time is so limited and his responsibilities so many.



DOUG GRAHAM
President, PAHA

PAUSD Teachers Developed a Curriculum...The California State elementary school social studies curriculum mandates that state history (e.g. the missions and the gold rush) be taught in fourth grade and local history in third. Steve's popular materials are aimed at the third-grade reading level. In the 1980s and 90s, former PAUSD teacher-on-special assignment, Harriette Shakes, and other teachers, developed a hands-on, Palo Alto-specific local history curriculum. These resources were maintained by the district's

Instructional Materials Center. In addition field trips to local sites such as the Juana Briones House (unfortunately destroyed by the current owner this year,) their materials included a map of Palo Alto. Children used copies of this map to identify the locations of their houses, their schools, nearby parks, and other landmarks. Teachers developed an extensive poster collection and slide show featuring PAHA's historic photos. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, the Instructional Materials Center was recently closed.

...and PAHA Now Has It! Fortunately, PAUSD staff member Nancy Peng arranged the donation of much of this material to PAHA. We now have copies of the curriculum, the maps and slides, and many poster-sized blowups of the photos for classroom use. Even better, Harriette Shakes is a PAHA Board Member and Chair of our Publications Committee.

Parallel Efforts are also Under Way PAHA Board Member Matt Bowling has written a book entitled Palo Alto History for Kids: Scavenger Hunts, Stories, Projects and Games that Bring Our City's History Alive. His proposed cover features six scenes from the past, including Mickey, the long-serving donkey mascot of Barron Park (1967-1998.) He hopes to see his book's publication in late 2011. Matt, a teacher and former columnist for the Daily News, is also the author of a recent PAHA booklet, Nice Day for a Stroll - A Walk Through Palo Alto's History.

Ideas and Volunteers Needed Efforts to establish the Palo Alto History Museum (PAHM) are proceeding. Its opening may be only a year or two away. When the Museum is completed, it will house and provide many opportunities for children, young adults, and others interested in the history of their city and its neighborhoods to examine the PAHA resources. In the meantime, the PAHA Board has been entertaining ideas about extending our outreach now. Our success depends upon volunteer "person-power." If you have ideas, or are interested in the project, please contact me at dgrahampaca@gmail.com, or 650-493-0689. Alternatively, contact the PAHA Secretary, Bardy Wallace, at bdgw@pacbell.net, or 650-327-4568. ☘



Note to readers: as the editors of the Tall Tree become more "green," we offer you the option of receiving your Tall Tree digitally. If you're interested, please send your request electronically (include your preferred email address) to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace at bdgw@pacbell.net.

Visiting a Mining Museum

THIS SUMMER I VISITED THE NATIONAL MINING HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM IN Leadville Colorado, the former silver mining boomtown high in the Rocky Mountains.



FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

(Leadville is the highest incorporated city in the United States at 10,152 feet).

As we approached the museum (in a former school building), my wife asked who might be included. Famous miners are not as well-known as baseball players or rock musicians. The first name that came to me was Adolf Sutro who made his fortune solving the water drainage problem in Nevada's Comstock Lode mines. Sure enough, he is one of the 210 men and women honored in the Mining Hall of Fame.

There are few women there, but two husband and wife couples had Bay Area connections. George Hearst made his fortune in the Nevada mines. His wife, Phoebe Apperson Hearst, a notable philanthropist, developed portions of the UC Berkeley campus, including the Hearst Memorial Mining Building.

Herbert Hoover first made his name (and fortune) as a mining engineer and manager in Australia and China after graduating from Stanford University. Lou Henry Hoover, the first female geology student at Stanford, worked with him on the English translation of a 16th century mining treatise *De Re Metallica*. A beautifully bound volume of their book was on display in the museum.

Whenever I visit another museum these days, I look for ideas for our future Palo Alto History Museum. The National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum had several displays with audio effects that simulated a real gold (or coal) mine, but too many display cases full of mineral specimens and mining equipment were visually dull. Because the institution was both a hall of fame and a museum, several rooms had beautiful wood-paneled walls containing nothing but plaques honoring the hall of famers, which was important but seemed wasted space.



Top: Lou Henry Hoover in front of their Stanford home, 1928. Bottom: Herbert Hoover giving an address at the Stanford graduation ceremonies, 1956. Interested in mining, both Lou Henry and Herbert Hoover are represented in the National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum along with other famous residents of the Bay Area.

A Treasure Gone Forever

In the most recent issue of the *Western Historical Quarterly*, Margaret Jacobs wrote that, of the winners of a coveted prize for authors of western history in the last decade, "All but one book required me to dig deep to find the incorporation of women or gender."

I had a similar experience. In the Santa Clara County list of historic sites by the State Office of Historic Preservation, 61 men were named and 5 women, and of those, the information about Juana Briones was incorrect. Her house is no more, but a few pieces have been salvaged, and will be installed in one or more public places that not yet been chosen. The board of PAST will raise funds for this endeavor.

This photograph of Marjorie Eaton from the PAHA collection is a reminder of the value of the Briones house for several generations after her death in 1889. The place was a vibrant colony of artists,



Marjorie Eaton, an actress, seen through multiple mirror reflections. (Photograph by Carolyn Caddes from the PAHA Archives.)

among whom were Marjorie Eaton, an actor and painter, some of whose work was displayed at the Palo Alto Art Center after her death; Lucretia Van Horn, several of whose paintings are now in the collection of the Oakland Museum, and she was for a time an associate of Diego Rivera; Tom Hunt, a mosaic artist who said Van Horn was his mentor, and who did the photography and writing of a superb book of places where the early pioneers crossed the Sierra. Louise Nevelson, a world-renowned sculptor, spent a month or more each year at the home; and Edith Cox Eaton, who purchased the property in 1925. She was one of the foremost clothing designers of San Francisco. —Jeanne McDonnell

Our mission is to collect, preserve and make available to the public information about the history of Palo Alto.

History Jaunts

San Mateo County History Museum

1930s Silent Films about Life on the Peninsula: Saturday Oct 8, 1:00
2200 Broadway, Redwood City. Museum admission \$3 to \$5.

Open for Business

The Palo Alto History Museum to be will one day feature Palo Alto businesses in operation for 50 years or more. At present there is a display in the Main Library with forms for anyone with information or memories about such firms to fill out, plus "favorite newer businesses."

Heritage House Tours

PAST's annual house tours will be Sunday, December 11 in College Terrace. More details will follow in our November newsletter.

A Walk, A Drama, A Talk

Celebrating this year's Centennial of Women's Voting Rights in California, sponsored by San Juan Bautista State Historic Park and the Plaza History Association. October 1, starts at 11:30 at the Plaza Hotel, final event, a reception behind the Castro-Breen Adobe at 2:00. Admission \$3.00; 16 and under free.

Heritage Program on Channel 30

The TV cable program, *Heritage*, on Channel 30 in October will be "75 Years of Children's Theatre Magic" with Michael Litfin. The theatre will celebrate 80 years in 2012.

Douglas Graham's October 2 program on suffragist **Sarah Wallis** will be shown in November. DVDs of previous programs can be borrowed at the history desk at the Palo Alto Main Library, Tuesday 4-8 PM and Thursday 1-4 PM.



BECOME A MEMBER OF PAHA

We invite you to become a member of the Association and join those who care about Palo Alto and enjoy learning about its history.

Individual \$25 Family \$40
Sustaining \$60 Business/Sponsor \$100 Life \$350

Make check payable to PAHA and mail to: PAHA Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302.
Or join online at www.pahistory.org. Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee.

PAHA's Public Meetings

Sundays at 2:00 at the
Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

OCTOBER 2: "SARAH WALLIS—AN ALMOST FORGOTTEN HEROINE"

Speaker: Douglas Graham

NOVEMBER 6: "CLARA FOLTZ: CALIFORNIA'S FIRST WOMAN LAWYER"

Speaker: Barbara Babcock

DECEMBER 4: "VIGNETTES OF LOCAL EXPERIENCES"

Host: Karen Holman

Save these dates in 2012

JAN 15

MARCH 4

APRIL 1

MAY 6

JUNE: ANNUAL DINNER, TBA

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Doug Graham, *President*

John Hackman, *First Vice President*

Joyce McClure, *Second Vice President*

Bardy Wallace, *Recording Secretary*

Chris Botsford, *Treasurer*

Steve Staiger, *Historian*

Gwen Barry

Matt Bowling

Beth Bunnenberg

Vicky Ching

Larry Christenson

Brian George

Betty Gerard

Georgie Gleim

Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre

Jeanne McDonnell

Carol Clifford Mitchell

Harriette Shakes

Kent Stormer

Tom Wyman

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year
by the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Jeanne McDonnell, Peggy McKee,

Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre

Editors

Harriette Shakes, *Design*

Omega Printing, *Printing*