

# The Tall Tree

JANUARY 2013  
VOLUME 36, No 4

NEWSLETTER of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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

Sunday, January 27 at 2:00 – 4:00 PM  
Lucie Stern Community Center, Palo Alto  
1305 Middlefield Road

*Speaker: Paul Price of the Paul Price Society Orchestra*



## Music in Palo Alto 1910–1920



*Paul Price, Musician and leader of the Paul Price Society Orchestra*

PAUL PRICE AND HIS SOCIETY ORCHESTRA have been bringing the original sounds of the vintage pop music of the early 20th century to Palo Alto audiences and dancers since the 1980s! They perform their timeless, standard hits from the past as well as almost-forgotten gems with verve and spirit. Paul Price's Society Orchestra faithfully reproduces the music of ragtime, Tin Pan Alley, and the Gershwins, to name just three genres. They also perform for the Varsity Dance Club, which meets at Palo Alto's Masonic Center (461 Florence Avenue, Palo Alto) on the third Sunday of each month. Dancers may listen or waltz, tango, polka to the lively tunes. PAHA welcomes the opportunity to hear Paul Price describe Music in Palo Alto: 1910–1920.

♪ For a charming video of Paul Price's Society Orchestra performing "April Showers," visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=s55CO1cmR28](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s55CO1cmR28)

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

*New Sustaining*  
Nancy Moss

*New Family Members*  
Urban Cummings &  
Christine Clark

Mr. & Mrs. Gordon C. Cole  
Marilyn V. Green &  
Drew A. McCalley

**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 are interested, please send your request (include your preferred email address) to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace, at [bdgw@pacbell.net](mailto:bdgw@pacbell.net).

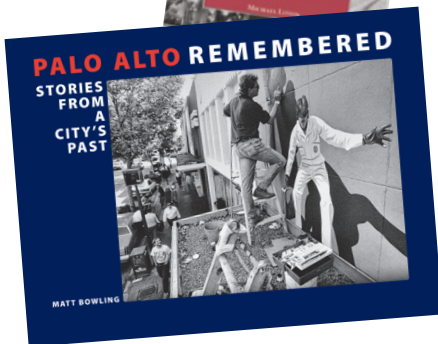
**Oral Histories:** are an invaluable method to preserve local history. To volunteer, help record, or give an oral history, contact: Carol Mitchell at [carolcmitchell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:carolcmitchell@sbcglobal.net).

## IN MEMORIAM

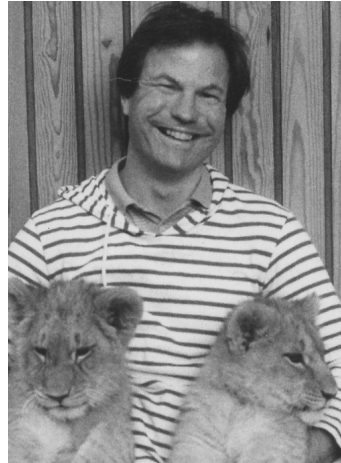
Nancy Heubach  
1934-2012



*New Books from PAHA—Lucie Stern and Palo Alto Remembered*



## The Great Joy of Music in Our Lives



FROM THE PAHA PRESIDENT  
John Hackmann

She knew thousands of songs—Gay Nineties, turn-of-the-century, Roaring Twenties, show tunes—I loved them all. I still have hundreds of tunes and words in my head. Before the war, I think, many college students could play or sing well enough to perform and entertain pleasantly at a party. I recall Bernie Bernstein whose unit went to England to support the RAF. Just before the war, he wrote hundreds of Tin Pan Alley songs; Bernie told me 24 of the 25 men in his unit could play and sing.

In the 1960s, music continued to be a big part of college life; many young people played and sang, as social and political protest came to American campuses. Phil Ochs, a self-described “topical singer” was my favorite. But I love the sentimental show tunes. Paul Price knows and plays, the songs my mom used to sing. Yes, Music is our coming Sunday program, with musical historian and performer ‘non pareil’ Paul Price of Paul Price’s Society Orchestra. I can’t wait to hear him as I have at the Masonic Lodge with his monthly program of vintage “pre-radio” music. Remember before 1906 all pianos were not even tuned the same!

By the way, the piano in my parents’ kitchen was a player piano, so my dad could pump and sing; alternatively, he could strum the ukulele or play the zither. He could croon to my mother, under the moonlight, on the lake in Forest Park, St. Louis. You know the rest.

## Our Website Celebrates PAHA’s New Books

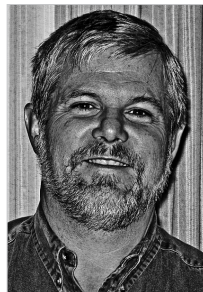
With help from Lynn Murphy, our website is now updated to celebrate two new PAHA publications, *Palo Alto Remembered*, by Matt Bowling, and *Lucie Stern: Palo Alto’s Fairy Godmother*, by Michael Litfin. You can see them on both the PAHA home page at [www.pahistory.org](http://www.pahistory.org). Follow the links to the Publications page for brief summaries of these and other PAHA books. You may purchase the new titles online, at Bell’s Books, Books, Inc. and the Village Stationer in Palo Alto, and at Kepler’s in Menlo Park.

## Heritage Program on Channel 30

The February television program will feature “Palo Alto Vignettes,” the Palo Alto Historical Association’s December program, facilitated by Karen Holman. The broadcast schedule is Wednesdays at 8:00 PM, Thursdays at 10:30 AM, and Saturdays at 1:00 PM.

# The Hostess House

**THE HOSTESS HOUSE (AKA COMMUNITY HOUSE, VETERANS HALL, MACARTHUR PARK RESTAURANT)** is one of my favorite buildings in Palo Alto. With the proposed development at 27 University Avenue making headlines, I wanted to review this building's remarkable history.



FROM THE  
DESK OF THE  
HISTORIAN  
Steve Staiger

The United States entered the Great War in April, 1917, and quickly mobilized its resources. Training camps sprang up throughout the country to support the war effort, including Camp Fremont in present day Menlo Park. Some historians suggest that Camp Fremont was established because its terrain resembled northern France, site of 3 years of trench warfare. The YWCA established Hostess Houses on these training camps to provide proper social environments where the soldiers could interact with female visitors. Julia Morgan designed the facilities for Camp Fremont with a building on a site near the present day Menlo Park Presbyterian Church.

The Hostess House was in use for less than a year; when the war ended, Camp Fremont was dismantled.

The town of Palo Alto purchased Julia Morgan's Hostess House for one dollar, sliced it into several pieces, and moved it down El Camino Real to its present location at the southern end of El Camino Park. There, it began its new life as a community center, one of the first facilities of its kind. For approximately 15 years, the Community House was a cherished center and resource, although I have wondered about its location between Highway 101 (El Camino Real) and the railroad tracks (without a grade separation prior to 1941) as being the best place for recreational activities. Indeed, it was its proximity to the railroad tracks and the noise of the express trains steaming through Palo Alto in the early evening that changed the City's use of the building.

Palo Alto's "fairy godmother," Lucie Stern, was annoyed by the sound of the trains as she enjoyed theatrical productions performed by local thespians at the Community House. She solved the problem by relocating the community theatre across town to the new community center that she built on Middlefield Road.

In the mid 1930s, the building became a clubhouse for veterans' groups. In fact, veterans groups continue to meet there. Unfortunately, neither the City nor the veterans provided sufficient funds to maintain the building. By the 1960s, the City realized that the building was in poor condition, and there was discussion whether or not to demolish it altogether. Fortunately, a solution was found when a developer offered to fund its renovation in exchange for the use of the building for a restaurant. MacArthur Park Restaurant opened in 1981.

Over the last 40 years MacArthur Park has had its ups and downs, including the awkward access to the restaurant (unless you come by train.) Julia Morgan's venerable building, however, remains a restored beauty and continues to be a Palo Alto treasure.

**BTW...** *Do you remember Frontier Village, 1961–1980?* For a trip down memory lane, see a slide show and description of Frontier Village online at [http://www.mercurynews.com/history/ci\\_20702631\\_looking-back-san-joses-frontier-village](http://www.mercurynews.com/history/ci_20702631_looking-back-san-joses-frontier-village).

**Preview a Coming Attraction:** The Bing Concert Hall on Stanford campus opens in January 2013. Although some events are sold-out, you can still find free and ticketed events at the new venue; see the winter schedule online at <http://live.stanford.edu/bingconcerthall/>.



Caretaker Charles Olaine stands in front of the Community House, early 20th century (PAHA Guy Miller Archives)



MacArthur Park Restaurant (courtesy of MacArthur Park)

Editors' Note: to hear Steve talk about the Hostess House, visit: <http://blip.tv/paha-heritage/hostess-house-2540245>

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

## History Jaunts

**Canopy's 17th Annual Mayor's Ceremonial Tree Planting & Party** will be held on Thursday, January 31, 5:15–8:00 PM at Cogswell Plaza, 264 Lytton Avenue, followed by a party and awards ceremony at Avenidas, adjacent to Cogswell Plaza. Canopy plans to plant 230 new trees in 2013, care for more than 1,000 young trees, and continue to educate and advocate for our urban forest. Contact Canopy, [www.canopy.org](http://www.canopy.org), for information and reservations.

**San Mateo County History Museum in Redwood City:** Sheri Jansen-Olliges will discuss her new book, *From Timber Barons to Tree Huggers: The Story of Middleton's Redwood Community*, on January 26, 2013 at 1 PM. Attending the talk is free to those who have paid the Museum entry fee of \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors and students.

Admission will be free on February 1, with an 11:00 program for preschoolers about Chinese New Year, and docent tours of the Museum for adults at 2:00 PM.

On March 13 the Museum will open a new exhibit, "Plowing Ahead: Historic Peninsula Farming." Showcased will be recently acquired horse-drawn farm equipment from Runnymede Farm in Woodside. The Museum, at 2200 Broadway, is open daily except Mondays from 10 AM until 4 PM. For information go to [www.historysmc.org](http://www.historysmc.org) or call 650.299.0104.

**Stanford Women in Space:** Monday, February 11 7:30 to 8:30 PM at the Cemex Auditorium at the Knight Management Center. The program will be presented by Eileen Collins MS '86, the first woman Shuttle commander; Barbara Morgan, AB '73, one of the few Teacher Astronauts; and Ellen Ochoa, MS '81, PhD '85, the first Hispanic woman in space, and moderated by Scott Hubbard, Former Director, NASA Ames Research Center.

## 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. Your dues support the preservation of our archives, assistance to researchers and dissemination of Palo Alto historical information through our publications. Join today!

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 [pahistory.org](http://pahistory.org). Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee. (Note: current members will receive renewal notices in July.)

## PAHA's Public Meetings

Meetings, free and open to the public, are held on Sundays at the Lucie Stern Community Center 1305 Middlefield Road.

The next meeting is:

JANUARY 27

*Music in Palo Alto: 1910–1920*

Speaker: Paul Price



Save these dates for Spring 2013

MARCH 3

APRIL 7

MAY 5

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