



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

June 2017 Volume 40, No 8



Lucie Stern (1871-1946)

You are cordially
invited to

June Dinner with
speaker Karen Holman,
former Mayor

Wednesday, June 7, 2017
El Camino Room
Mitchell Park Community Center

✧ **Reservation required** ✧

Please RSVP
with the enclosed form
by June 2.

There will be a brief business meeting
during the evening's events.



**KAREN HOLMAN, Speaker
Palo Alto Council Member
Former Mayor**

JUNE DINNER

Wednesday, June 7, 2017, 6:00–9:00 pm

El Palo Alto Room, Mitchell Park Community Center
3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

The PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

presents

“A Community Defined”

**June Dinner with speaker
Karen Holman**

THIS YEAR, THE JUNE DINNER WILL FEATURE A PRESENTATION COUNCIL MEMBER AND FORMER MAYOR, KAREN HOLMAN. Karen is currently in her second term on the Palo Alto City Council and served as Mayor in 2015. Karen is a long-time member of PAHA and an activist in the Palo Alto community, and prior to joining the council, she served for eight years on the Planning and Transportation Commission and among other community service roles, launched the Palo Alto History Museum project, served as Co-chair of the south of Forest Avenue Coordinated Area Plan and was a member of the board of PAHA. Consistent with her environmental interests, Karen also served as Co-chair of the Mid-peninsula Regional Open Space Advisory Committee in 2015-2016.

Karen will be speaking about “A Community Defined”— not just the number of ways “community” is defined by Webster and other references. No matter what the formal definition, most, if not all of us, seem to search out those with whom we can create community.

Be it a community of weavers, golfers, artists, professionals, or activists of one form or another, there does seem to be the desire, and perhaps need, to gravitate



Steve Jobs (1955-2011)

to those with whom we share something in common.

In Palo Alto, so rich in technology and where celebrity is so common as to often go unnoticed, for many it may be the more common things that make up our individual communities.

And if that is so, then what makes up the larger community that is Palo Alto? Are events like the annual May Fete Parade, with its 95-year tradition, enough to pull us all together for another year? Or is it the remarkable number of “cultures” that exist and go along largely unnoticed, but nevertheless are integral to the happiness of so many people. Maybe the larger community is comprised of all the mini-communities. But then what holds us together as Palo Altans?

What do we have in common? Do we have mutual goals and values? What would Noah say?

Don't miss this inspiring presentation!

Marching to the Future



PAHA marchers, including their hero, in the 2017 May Fete Parade.

I had the pleasure of walking in this year's May Fete Parade. The plan was to join Dennis Garcia to carry the banner for PAHA, but instead we walked behind Steve Staiger's grandkids who were eager to assume the responsibility. The parade is all about children, so we enthusiastically agreed that they should do it. The theme was "Our Hero" and PAHA selected Steve as our history hero. The first time I participated in the May Parade was as "King of the May" at age 5 in 1940. I'm sure the reason for my selection was my bright red hair (then!). I was decked out in an impressive costume and carried a scepter. It's remarkable how long the Parade tradition has carried on, supported by generations of volunteers and city officials! — *Ralph Britton*

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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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 Cubberley Community Center, K-7.

Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 pm. General meetings are held the first Sunday of each month (October–December, February–May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 pm. 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.

In March, the Palo Alto History Museum announced that the Executive Director, Myron Freedman was stepping down to allow him to work closer to home. In his two and a half years as the Executive Director, Myron effectively led a number of efforts to expand the word about the museum and to increase the funding for the project. Laura Bajuk, who has been the Development Director, has been appointed Interim Director. At the recent May Fete fair at Heritage Park, Laura and other members of the Museum project had a number of displays and exhibits at the Roth Building, showing views of the current interior as well as the vision for what it will become. Donate today to help finish the building fund and get the Museum underway, at paloaltohistorymuseum.org.



Rendering of the future interior of the Palo Alto History Museum. Courtesy paloaltohistorymuseum.org.

Anna Zschokke: Pioneer in Our Education

Anna Zschokke was one of the first residents of the new town of Palo Alto and the first to record its history. But it was her contributions to the education of the town's youth that qualifies her as a Creator of the Legacy.

Born in Germany in 1849, Anna came to the United States at the age of three. In 1877, she, her husband Oscar, and their son Theodore traveled by railroad from Indiana to California. They settled in Kern County and then moved to Santa Clara, in part due to Oscar's health (TB and malaria). When Oscar died, Anna moved with their children (Irma, Arthur, and Theodore) to Palo Alto in 1890.

The Zschokke family was one of the first six families in the new community.

At first, they lived in a tent on property they had bought, then in a barn, and finally a house—all of these were firsts for the new town. As the population grew, following the opening of Stanford in the fall of 1891, Anna quickly realized that there were enough children to establish a new, separate school, rather than sending students to Mayfield. The new school was built on Bryant Street.

Using a Zschokke family fund established back in Switzerland that allowed members of the extended

family to borrow money, Anna built a second house in Palo Alto to use as income property. However, she saw Palo Alto's greater need: a high school, even though Palo Alto was still a small town. As the stu-



Anna Zschokke (1849-1929) was key in founding Palo Alto's excellent school system.

dent population outgrew the space on the second floor of the elementary school on Channing, Anna offered her new house on Forest Avenue to the high school. It served as the high school for several years until a proper one was built across the street from the Channing Avenue elementary school.

As the small town continued to expand, Anna sat down and wrote the first history of Palo Alto. Of course, she had been a witness and

participant in its growth and development. Who better to tell its story, which was published in the *Palo Alto Times*! Anna Zschokke died in 1929.

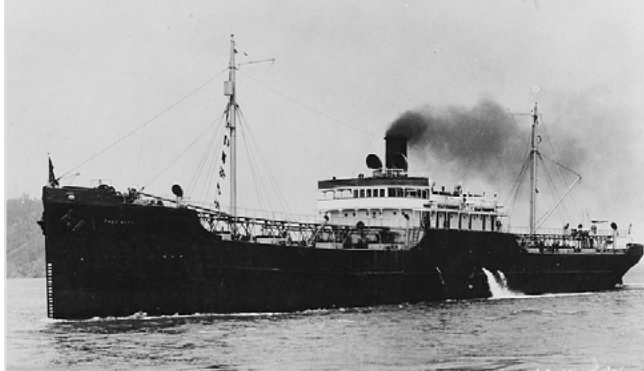
We have long been wanting to honor this Palo Alto pioneer, but she was burdened with a difficult last name. To name a street in her honor would saddle residents with constantly having to pronounce and spell it to both locals and visitors. In 2010, the City took advantage of an opportunity to name a small downtown park on High Street, Anna Zschokke Plaza, in her honor. — *Steve Staiger*

SS Palo Alto at one hundred years

By Peggy McKee

The United States entered the Great War in April 1917, just a century ago, as casualties on the Eastern and Western fronts soared into the hundreds of thousands. Palo Alto had already contributed to the war in a variety of ways, such as Herbert Hoover's and the Woman's Club's efforts to raise funds for Belgian relief. As noted in earlier issues of *Tall Tree*, Camp Fremont, near Palo Alto, trained troops for combat and deployed them to France, and later to Siberia during the Allied Intervention. Perhaps a lesser known story is that of the "concrete boat," SS Palo Alto, conceived during the war due to steel shortages, but not completed and launched until 1919. Acknowledging the role that Palo Alto played during the war, especially in its "work for soldiers," the United States Shipbuilding Corporation decided to christen "the largest concrete ship ever built in the United States," Palo Alto.

Commissioned too late for the war, SS Palo Alto was "moth-balled" in Oakland until 1929 when the Seacliff Amusement Company bought the 434-foot long ship with the idea of transforming her into an entertainment center, towed her to Seacliff State Beach, and refitted her to include the Rainbow Ballroom, a swimming pool, and the Fish Palace restaurant. A newly-constructed 500-foot fishing pier connected the shore to the ship. In her heyday, the SS Palo Alto hosted the likes of Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Paul Whiteman.



The concrete tanker S.S. Palo Alto on sea trials in September 1920. Courtesy Naval History and Heritage Command



Waves crash into S.S. Palo Alto at Rio Del Mar in Aptos this January, after it was torn apart during a storm. Courtesy Kevin Johnson/Santa Cruz Sentinel

Bankruptcy of the Seacliff Amusement Company, the Depression, and a heavy storm in 1932 ended the promoters' dreams to add a hotel and residences to the site. The State of California purchased the ship in 1936, stripped her of her amenities, and left her as an extension of the fishing pier. To add insult to injury, she was deemed unsafe and closed to the public in 1950. Despite efforts to rescue the "cement ship," she continued to deteriorate until the winter of 2016-2017.

Articles in local and national newspapers noted that El Niño storms were battering the wounded landmark and causing bits and pieces "to break off and fall into the pounding waves." The Bay Area News Group commented on "the exploding surf..." and *The Washington Post* described "mighty storm swells." The *Chicago Tribune* picked up an article from the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* commenting that the breakup of SS Palo Alto would "go down as one of the casualties of the Winter of 2017...I couldn't believe it!" lamented a local resident who witnessed the catastrophe: waves reaching 34 feet pummeled the ship and broke it apart.

When the storms subsided, Bill Wolcott of the Santa Cruz District of the California Department of Parks and Recreation wrote, the "doomed vessel will be left to become an artificial reef for fish and other creatures...to eventually break up entirely and be taken back by the Ocean." ~~~~~

Castilleja Students Win at California National History Day

On May 6-7, 2017, over 1400 students competed in the California State National History Day Competition in Rocklin, CA. National History Day is a year-long curriculum engaging over half a million middle- and high-school students around the world; each year students compete by conducting original research on historical topics of interest. The 2017 theme is "Taking a Stand in History." Students create exhibits, documentaries, performances, websites, and papers on a wide range of topics. These research-based projects are entered into contests at the local and affiliate levels. Castilleja School had twenty-nine students—with a total of twenty projects—win

at the Santa Clara County competition and go on to compete in the State finals of National History Day. Of those, eight students made it to the finals round. One group, Divya Ganesan and Saayili Budhiraja, 8th graders at Castilleja, came home as state champions for their website "Woodward and Bernstein: The Watergate Scandal—Taking a Stand for the Truth Through Investigative Journalism." They will go on to compete in the Nationals in June at the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest in College Park, MD. Congratulations to the young historians. You may view their prize-winning website here: 59353168.nhd.weebly.com.

History Jaunts This Summer Celebrating the Fourth of July

On the 4th of July, the **City of Palo Alto** hosts its **36th annual Chili Cook-Off and Summer Festival**, beginning at 12:00 noon at Mitchell Park. For information on how to compete for prizes and to download the entry form, visit www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/csd/events/chilicookoff.asp. **Redwood City** is celebrating its **150th Anniversary as a charter city** with its annual 4th of July parade. Other featured events include a pancake breakfast, entertainment, and fireworks. For details and more information visit www.parade.org.



The flag carried through downtown during Palo Alto's 1994 Centennial parade.

MOAH—The Museum of the American Heritage—announces its **summer concert series**, to commence Thursday, June 8, 7:00 pm at 351 Homer Ave., Palo Alto. Mark your calendars for the Peralta Consort (June 8), Yuri Liberzon (July 13), and Rive Gauche (August 3). Concerts are free to members, \$10 at the door for non-members. For more information, visit moah.org.

Palo Alto Art Center — Hurry to catch **Cultural Kaleidoscope and Youth Art** (April 29-May 28) and mark your calendar for **Michael Light: Planetary Landscape** (June 17-August 27). Michael Light is a renowned photographer and bookmaker who focuses his work on “the environment and how contemporary American culture relates to it.” Located at 1313 Newell Rd, Palo Alto; open Tuesday through Sunday, admission is free. For more on hours and more information, call (650) 329-2366 or visit bit.ly/2qqrhx3.

Summer of Fun at Facebook Festivals, happening every month now through the fall, will include local farmers, cooking demos, food trucks, and kids’ zones. Mark the following dates: “Summer Food Fest” — June 24, 12:00-5:00 pm; “Facebook County Fair”—August 26, 12:00-7:00 pm; “Bacon, Blues & Brews”—September 16, 12:00-5:00 pm; “Dia de los Muertos/Halloween”—October 28. Watch for more information at www.FBintheCommunity.com.

The de Young Museum presents **The Summer of Love Experience: Art, Fashion, and Rock & Roll**, April 8-August 20. This exhibit is a 50th anniversary celebration of the adventurous and colorful counterculture that blossomed in that legendary San Francisco summer; the exhibition presents more than 300 significant cultural artifacts of the time, including almost 150 objects from the Fine Arts Museums’ extensive permanent holdings, enhanced by iconic loans from other institutions. The de Young Museum is located in Golden Gate Park, 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive. For information on hours and admission, visit deyoung.famsf.org/visit-us.

Take a trip through San Francisco’s Hippie History on **the Magic Bus Tour**, brain-child of Chris Hardman of Antenna Theater. The psychedelically-decorated bus takes its passengers on a re-created and re-imagined adventure through the 1960s, complete with background music from the Grateful Dead, Joan Baez, and the Beatles. The Magic Bus leaves Union Square Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm. Advance booking is required at \$70 for adults and \$65 for students. For more information and details, visit www.magicbussf.com.

Have a great summer!
Look for your next Tall Tree in
September with an announcement
of the next meeting
in October 2017.

Heritage Program on Channel 30

The Heritage Program for June
2017 will feature

“PAST Heritage Celebrates
30 Years”

The schedule is

Wednesdays at 8 pm,
Thursdays at 10 am, and
Saturdays at 1 pm
on Channel 30.

DVDs of previous programs may
be borrowed from the PAHA’s Guy
Miller Archives, which are located
at Cubberley, Room K-7.

Hours: Tuesdays, 4-8 pm,
Thursdays, 1-5 pm



Fifty years on, revisit what you may or may not remember from the Summer of Love. Courtesy of the de Young Museum.