

NOVEMBER 2010  
VOLUME 34, NUMBER 2

# The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
Sunday, November 7 at 2:00 PM at the  
Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

SPEAKER: BOB SKOLMEN

## Busman's Holiday: Edward Durell Stone & Palo Alto

EDWARD DURELL STONE (PICTURED) WAS ONE OF the first "starchitects" in America. He designed major structures around the world and was called "The most quoted architect since the death of Frank Lloyd Wright." Wright himself was a fan of Stone's work.

In June of 1955 Stone moved from New York to Palo Alto to design the Stanford Medical Center (historic postcard). During his stay, Stone would also design Palo Alto's main library and the (recently demolished) Mitchell Park branch. Stone described his time in Palo Alto as a "busman's holiday" but designing the Medical Center was anything but a vacation. When his designs were finally completed, the architect returned to New York, but the small office he established in Palo Alto remained and thrived. In the late 1960s, Stone would design Palo Alto's Civic Center.

Our November speaker, Bob Skolmen, will present a slideshow of Stone's life, emphasizing the architect's Palo Alto work. Mr. Skolmen, who has worked for the Palo Alto City Library since 1989, has studied Stone's life and work for many years. He created an exhibit of Stone's work for the 1994 Palo Alto Centennial (co-sponsored by PAHA) which was displayed at the city's two Stone-designed libraries. He wrote the Edward Durell Stone entry for the Encyclopedia of Arkansas and contributed research assistance to a biography of Stone to be published next year by Rizzoli International.



*Edward D. Stone, courtesy Wikipedia*



*Stanford Medical Center, courtesy Bob Skolmen*



*Palo Alto Public Library, Main Branch; courtesy Wikipedia*

THE NOVEMBER CABLE program, *Heritage*, on Channel 30 will be "Fine Dining and Burgers," presented by PAHA president Doug Graham, September 26, 2010. DVDs of previous PAHA programs are available at the Main Library's History Desk, Tuesday, 4-8 PM and Thursday, 1-4 PM.

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PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
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The Palo Alto Historical Association, is a non-profit organization. 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 PAHA are stored at the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road. See the calendar, p.4, for the schedule of public meetings.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Joseph Ehrlich**

1920–2010

A life member of PAHA

**Stanley Ross Evans**

1920–2010

Long time PAHA member

## BECOME A MEMBER OF PAHA

- Individual \$25
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Make check payable to PAHA and mail to: PAHA Box 193

Palo Alto, CA 94302

Or join online at [www.pahistory.org](http://www.pahistory.org).  
Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee.

# Opportunities Abound at PAHA

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT PAHA IS UNDERGOING RAPID CHANGE: SEVEN new Directors have assumed responsibilities in the past 48 months. The retirement of several long-term Directors has created new leadership opportunities; we need people to take on major roles, especially as chairs of several key committees.



THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT:  
**Douglas Graham**

**Programs:** The Programs and Speakers Committee, with five Directors and our Historian as current members, needs a new Chair to organize the efforts required to present speakers and programs for eight monthly and one annual meeting every year. This is an exciting opportunity to meet and work with interesting local people.

**Website:** Our website committee hopes to expand and improve the PAHA website. It also needs a Chair to spearhead the effort.

**Webmaster:** We need a technically-skilled person to manage the site and assist with improvements and expansion.

**Marketing:** We need a new Marketing Chair to coordinate promotion and sales of PAHA publications, especially Matt Bowling's new booklet, *A Nice Day for a Stroll* (walking tour of downtown Palo Alto), and his upcoming book, a collection of the best of his stories from *The Daily*.

**Annual Dinner:** We need an event planner to make the arrangements for the Annual Dinner in June, 2011.

**Acknowledgments Chair:** We receive significant donations that must always be acknowledged. "Thank-you" letters are needed whenever we produce joint programs or receive significant assistance,

Many other committees would welcome new people to bring their ideas to keep the association strong and vibrant.

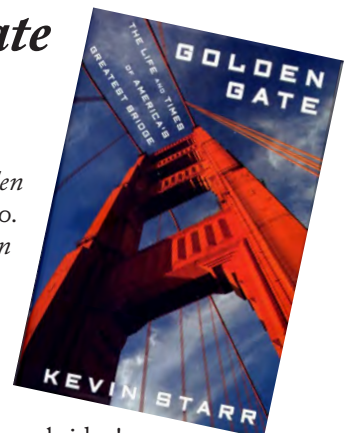
If any of this sounds interesting, or if you would like to help out with membership, publicity, or archives, please contact me at [dgrahampaca@gmail.com](mailto:dgrahampaca@gmail.com), or 650-493-0689. All that is required are enthusiasm and an interest in local history.

## Kevin Starr's *Golden Gate*

from Peggy McKee

A YEAR OR SO AGO, STEVE STAIGER REVIEWED (and urged people to read) the final installment in Kevin Starr's epic, multi-volume history of California, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1953-1960*. I recently read Kevin Starr's most recent book, *Golden Gate: The Life and Times of America's Greatest Bridge*. While I was fascinated to be reminded of the visionaries, the architects and designers, the opponents, the facilitators, the financiers, the movers and shakers, and all the others, I was most interested in the story—a miracle almost—of how we got our bridge!

In vivid prose, filled with anecdotes from his voluminous memory, Dr. Starr situates the adventure—for such it was—in time and place, from the geologic origins of the Golden Gate itself to the emergence of the Bridge as the Bay Area's signal icon. Of particular interest to those of us who are historians was the concluding chapter, "Essay on Sources." If you want to refresh your memory on local lore and history and/or to learn something new, read *Golden Gate*. Dr. Starr will be speaking at Kepler's in Menlo Park at 7:00 PM on December 2.



# Calvin Coolidge's Dog, Palo Alto

FROM TIME TO TIME I HAVE REPORTED ON ACQUISITIONS PURCHASED ON eBay for PAHA's Guy Miller Archives. Board member Brian George monitors eBay for memorabilia and bids to secure them at a reasonable price.



FROM THE  
DESK OF THE  
HISTORIAN  
Steve Staiger

Most of our success has been purchasing photographs and postcards, but we once acquired a doctor's bag previously owned by an early local physician. Recently, Brian discovered and acquired a photograph of President Calvin Coolidge with his dog, "Palo Alto." Of course, I am researching why President Coolidge had a hunting dog named "Palo Alto."

The photograph is an original, 1928, 5"x7" news service photograph of President Coolidge in Wisconsin holding his new dog, with an unidentified man standing nearby. I discovered that during his presidential years, President Coolidge chose a different "summer" White House for a vacation residence away from Washington D.C. In 1927, he went to Custer State Park in the Black Hills of South Dakota. In 1928, he chose Cedar Island Lodge in Brule,

Wisconsin, where he apparently adopted the new dog. Grace and Calvin Coolidge were famous for their pets—at least 10 dogs and a pet raccoon—that shared the White House with them. Fortunately, the pygmy hippo "Billy," received as a gift in 1927, went directly to the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, where he became the great-granddaddy of most of the pygmy hippos in American zoos before his death in 1955.

But why name the dog "Palo Alto"? Their other dogs had more typical names, such as "Rob Roy," "Bessie," "Peter Pan," and a sheep dog named "Calamity Jane" (perhaps from his visit to South Dakota.) Herbert Hoover, a famous Palo Alto resident, was Coolidge's Secretary of Commerce, but it would appear that the two were not friends. When Hoover ran for president, seeking to succeed Coolidge, the President was reluctant to endorse his candidacy.

As we know, our Palo Alto is not the only Palo Alto in the country. An art dealer recently contacted the City of Palo Alto seeking a buyer for an old print depicting the "Battle of Palo Alto." The battle in question was the first major battle in 1846 of the Mexican War, taking place in Texas (the art dealer was advised to look elsewhere.) But the battle did result in the name "Palo Alto" being adopted by communities in Iowa and Pennsylvania. We have a file in the Archives full of clippings on these other Palo Altos.

I am still searching for an explanation for the dog from Wisconsin named "Palo Alto." So far "Silent Cal" and the records remain "mum."



Coolidge, Friend, and Palo Alto: the front (above) and back (below) of the postcard purchased on eBay by Brian George, courtesy of Brian George.

## A Vote for Women's History

from Jeanne McDonnell

Even though the Senate passed a bill in April, 2010, authorizing the National Women's History Museum to be constructed on the Mall, there was and continues to be controversy about the project. Women historians felt somewhat insulted recently when an Oklahoma Senator put the project on hold because he believed there were plenty of such museums; for example, he said, the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in Texas. For more on the National Women's History Museum, visit their website [www.nwhm.org](http://www.nwhm.org).

There will be no controversy here, we hope, against a major centennial celebration—now being planned for next year—to commemorate the momentous achievement by which men of this state voted in 1911 to make California the sixth state where women would have full and equal voting rights with men.



# Things to Do and Places to Go

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

**The PAST Heritage annual Holiday House Tour** is scheduled for Sunday, December 12, featuring homes in Professorville. For more information, visit the PAST website [www.pastheritage.org](http://www.pastheritage.org).

**The Museum of the American Heritage** opens a new exhibit on Friday, Dec. 3, "The Cabinet of Curiosities." MOAH is located at 352 Homer Ave., Palo Alto. For more information, visit [www.moah.org](http://www.moah.org).

**Gamble Garden** continues to offer neighborhood and community events, as well as classes, for example, "Fall and Winter Garden Maintenance" on Nov. 5. Visit the website regularly for news and updates on Gamble's annual holiday celebrations, [www.gamblegarden.org](http://www.gamblegarden.org).



**Rengstorff House offers a Holiday Open House** from 7-9 PM on December 7. This free event offers refreshments and carol singing. Rengstorff House is located at 3070 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View. For more information, visit their website : [www.r-house.org/calendar\\_of\\_events.html](http://www.r-house.org/calendar_of_events.html).

As the editors of the Tall Tree try to become more "green," we offer you the option of receiving your Tall Tree electronically. If you have not already done so, please send your request electronically, including your preferred email address to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace, [bdgw@pacbell.net](mailto:bdgw@pacbell.net).

## PAHA's Public Meetings to Come

Meetings are held at the Lucie Stern Community Center 2 PM

Nov. 7: *The Architecture of Edward D. Stone*

Speaker: Bob Skolmen

Dec. 5: *Palo Alto Vignettes* with Karen Holman

*Save the dates*

### PAHA MEETINGS 2011:

JAN. 30

MARCH 6

APRIL 3

MAY 1

JUNE 1



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Speaker: Bob Skolmen

Lucie Stern Community Center

Refreshments will be served.