NEWSLETTER of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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

Speaker: Edith Molton

Sunday, April 1 at 2:00 PM Lucie Stern Community Center, Palo Alto

# ESCAPE ON THE LAST TRAIN

A JOURNEY TO SAFETY

**As a young woman of eighteen, now Palo Alto resident, Edith Molton**, began a journey that took her from Berlin to Moscow, to Harbin, to Japan, to Korea, to St. Louis, to Los



Germany, 1922: Edith Molton pictured with Father and Grandfather. In 1940, the young Edith Molton escapes by the "LAST TRAIN FROM GERMANY. (Photo: courtesy of Edith Molton)

Angeles, and at last to Palo Alto. Edith was luckier than many German Jews who did not make it out of Nazi Germany. She had many memorable experiences as she made her way to her present home in Midtown. She made it from Berlin to Moscow and then saw, via the Trans-Siberian Railroad, Siberian summer. In Harbin, then under Japanese authority in what was known as Manchukuo, she worshipped with a large Jewish congregation. From there to Korea, also under Japanese authority, to Japan itself. She boarded a Japanese ship—already secretly outfitted with weapons and ammunition for the coming hostilities—to make the thirteen day voyage to America. Edith's journey took her, her husband, and young son to relatives in St. Louis, Los Angeles, and finally to Palo Alto, where she has made her home ever since.

Join us April 1 to hear this heartstopping true story.

# WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS Karen Bartholomew Coralee Branson



# Heritage Program on Channel 30

Matt's new book!

The TV cable program, *Heritage*, on Channel 30 in April, is "Life in Black and White" from the March 4 meeting. It will be broadcast Wednesdays at 8 PM, Thursdays at 10:30 AM, and Saturdays at 1 PM. DVDs of previous programs may be borrowed at the History Desk of the Palo Alto Main Library, Tue., 4–8 PM & Thur., 1–5 PM.

## A Local History "What If?"



FROM THE DESK OF THE HISTORIAN Steve Staiger

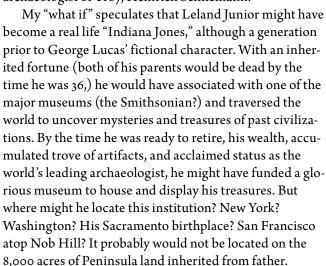
Historians and history buffs enjoy speculating on what "might have been" if historical events had turned out differently. Imagining "what ifs" have prompted historians such as Stephen Ambrose, David McCullough, and others to speculate on some of the most famous "what ifs" in history. What if Napoleon had been victorious at Waterloo? What if General Robert E. Lee had defeated Union forces at Gettysburg? What if D-Day had failed and Hitler had conquered Europe?

I have often pondered a local historical "what if"? What if 15 year old Leland Stanford, Junior had not died on the European trip with his parents? Might our local history have been changed if he had survived into adulthood?

We know that he and his parents were thinking about his college education at one of the "ivies." After graduating from perhaps Harvard or Yale, young Leland would have been 22 in 1891 (the year that Stanford University opened.) He would have been ready to face the world with a myriad of opportunities that his education and family connections would have provided.

Through his father's business connections, he might have begun a career with the railroads, as did his somewhat older contemporary Timothy Hopkins, the unofficial adopted son of Leland Stanford's business partner Mark Hopkins. However, Leland Junior was interested in archaeology. His parents had arranged

a visit to the site of Troy, and a meeting with celebrated archaeologist of Troy, Heinrich Schliemann.



What about life on the Peninsula in this "what if" scenario? Without Stanford University situated where it is, Palo Alto would have developed quite differently. Mayfield (its saloons) would have expanded, as the northern most community in Santa Clara County (the weather would be too nice to ignore). The concept and technology of Silicon Valley would eventually develop somewhere elsewhere, perhaps in southern California, where Fred

elsewhere, perhaps in southern California, where Fred Terman was born, the son of a professor at what was to become Caltech; Terman grew up with a fascination for radio electronics. Without Silicon Valley, the Peninsula might have developed more like Marin and the East Bay, bedroom communities for San Francisco.



The Stanford family, photographed in Paris in 1880



Fred Terman, Ph.D, professor at Stanford University and Silicon Valley pioneer.

# From Hostess House to Community Center to MacArthur

#### Park to What?

As many PAHA members and preservationists know, Julia Morgan was the first woman to receive an engineering degree from UC (1894) and the first woman architect in California. She designed many signature buildings, among them Hearst Castle and five buildings at Asilomar, to name a few. During World War I,

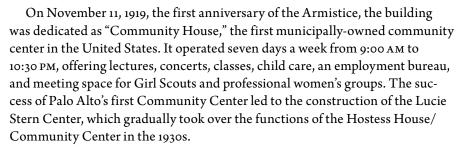


Doug Graham President, PAHA

the YWCA commissioned Morgan to design a "Hostess House" for visitors to troops training at Camp Fremont in Menlo Park. The facility, which combined Craftsman style with utilitarian function, opened in

May, 1918. This classic Morgan building featured light frame, board, and batten construction, exposed functional roof trusses and rafters, complemented by a roomy public reception hall complete with large fireplaces at each end "nestling cozily" under overhanging balconies. When the

Great War ended, the YWCA sold the structure to Palo Alto for \$1. In May, 1919, it was cut into nine pieces and moved to its present location near the Palo Alto Caltrain Station.



From 1935 to 1975, various veterans' organizations leased the building, though maintenance problems arose. From 1979 to 1981, renovations restored the building to its original condition, and it opened in 1981 as what we know as MacArthur Park Restaurant. It has remained virtually unchanged, and a Palo Alto landmark, since that time.

Julia Morgan's Hostess House faces a new challenge. Palo Alto philanthropist and developer, John Arrillaga, proposes to build a theater and office complex on the site where MacArthur Park now sits. His project makes possible Theatre Works' dream of a new, permanent home. On March 5, 2012, the Palo Alto City Council authorized \$250,000 for design and environmental studies on the property. Stanford has pledged financial support for the studies with an eye to easing the impact of the proposed hospital expansion. Preservation of Julia Morgan's ninety-four year old Hostess House is a priority, and the City is requiring that the Hostess House/MacArthur Park building be saved and relocated to a site of the City's choosing. Many questions remain unanswered: What will be a suitable site? Will MacArthur Park be interested in continuing its lease? If relocated to one of Palo Alto's parks, could the building revert to being a Community Center again? Stay tuned!



Community House, designed by Julia Morgan. (from the PAHA archives)



Julia Morgan (from "Inspiring Women")



Renovated interior of Julia Morgan design. (Courtesy of MacArthur Park)

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 email your request (include your preferred email address) to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace, bdgw@pacbell.net.

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

# **History Jaunts**

Spring Lecture Series: Museum of the American Heritage

351 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto 94301

Tuesday, April 10 at 7 PM: "Treasures in Your Attic," featuring antiques expert Steve Yvaska from the San Jose Mercury News.

Wednesday, May 9 at 7 PM: "Solving a Pirate Mystery." Historian Fabio López-Lázaro will discuss the adventure tale, *The Misfortunes of Alonso Ramirez*.

Eclectic Houses of Lower San Juan Neighborhood," Stanford Historical Society
April 22, from1–4 PM: The 8th annual spring house and garden tour features
the lower portion of the San Juan neighborhood, offering glimpses into the history and architecture of homes designed by Birge Clark, Henry C. Collins,
Theodore W. Lenzen, and Charles K. Sumner. Highlights include a 1929
Tudor style house with the owner's elaborate model railroad layout. Tickets,
payable to Stanford Historical Society, are \$25 before April 6; \$30 after April 6.
Send ticket requests to Stanford Historical Society, PO Box 19290, Stanford,
CA 94309. Tickets will be mailed. For information visit the SHS website
(http://histsoc.stanford.edu/hhouses.shtml) or contact Susan Sweeney (susan.
sweeney@stanford.edu, 650-324-1653) or Charlotte Glasser (cglasser@stanford.
edu, 650-725-3332).

"Gardens Full of Life!," Elizabeth Gamble Garden 27th Annual Spring Tour
April 27 and 28, from 10 AM – 4 PM: The tour this year presents five gardens created to incorporate edibles along with flowers. Tickets are \$30 for members, \$35 for non-members; lunch is an additional \$15. For information: 650-329-1356, www.gamblegarden.org.

### 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 dessemination 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*. 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

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

**APRIL 1 AT 2:00:** 

"ESCAPING ON THE LAST TRAIN"

Speakers: Edith Molton

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Save these dates in 2012

MAY 6

"PALO ALTO REMEMBERED"

New Book Celebration

JUNE 6

ANNUAL DINNER

at Ming's

OCTOBER 7

CELEBRATING THE GIRL SCOUT
CENTENNIAL

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