The Tall Tree Newsletter
of the Palo Alto Historical Association

100 Years
Palo Alto Historical Association
1913–2013
The PENINSULA BOY SCOUTS
Salute the Palo Alto Historical Association on its first 100 years!

Boy Scouts of America was established in 1910, and the Stanford Area Council Headquarters was first established in 1912 at High & Lil顿 in Palo Alto. Photos:

- Historic magazine covers
- WWII Community Collection cards
- Eagle Scout Hopkins delivers WWII Community Collection Card to Mrs. Hoover, in 1942: a collection request for books and magazines for our men in service.
- Scouting Heritage merit badge book, for more, search: www.meritbadge.org

The Pacific Skyline Council
Boy Scouts of America
Scouting has positively changed lives for over a hundred years and continues to do so today! Serving over 8,000 Peninsula Youth in 2014—boys and girls. Visit the Council at www.pacsky.org and learn more.

This Centennial, Spring 2014 Tall Tree is printed courtesy of Larry Christenson, Eagle Scout-1981 in recognition of the BSA merit badge, “Scouting Heritage.”
Our mission is to collect, preserve and make available to the public information about the history of Palo Alto.

ONE THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW, PEOPLE will write of this Palo Alto, this time, this place, what you and others here have contributed, how our city came to be. This is one of the great exciting moments and places in history: London, Berlin, Rome, Athens, Ephesus, Alexandria ... Palo Alto is now beginning to earn its place in invention, innovation and intellectual contribution to our western civilization.

How can we, as PAHA volunteers and members, honor, preserve and perpetuate the purpose and the vision with which Jane and Leland Stanford founded their university and then this university town? We perceive that our town grew not in Stanford’s shadow, but under its lamp as still we grow and study and produce.

Gail Woolley, our former president, remarked that when she is asked “how did Palo Alto become like this?” she points out, “It was always like this, from the beginning,” due to vision and integrity and dedicated work. Gail is one of many exceptional people who have worked with PAHA to identify and share the historical footprints and future signposts that mark this small city.

Will our history continue to be collected and preserved for public use? Spreading the information in the archives is basic to PAHA’s work. Outreach is powered by board members and other volunteers and supported by your memberships and donations. In this centennial year, PAHA:

- Presented and recorded for Cable TV and the archives six monthly public programs and one field trip (to the Juana Briones exhibit at the California Historical Society)
- Published eight issues of the Tall Tree newsletter and, separately, a Centennial Collection of post cards
- Provided, through Historian Steve Staiger, local history talks to third grades, City of Palo Alto employees and other groups
- Co-sponsored and co-funded an annual writing contest for students held by the City of Palo Alto Library
- Collected oral histories of long time businesses, individuals and community groups; conducted oral history workshops for Palo Alto High School journalism and theater students
- Co-sponsored the celebration honoring the old Paly Gym prior to its demolition to make way for a new facility
- Opened planning discussions to form policies mutual to PAHA and the future Palo Alto History Museum
- Joined with the Palo Alto History Museum to mount three exhibits: two for the CalTrain 190th anniversary celebrations and one following the May Fete parade
- Received a Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund grant for $5,000 to support adding an Education page to PAHA’s website, content to be developed by four student historians and a teacher, and for use by third grade students and teachers
- Mounted a display in City Hall of images from the archives celebrating our centennial
- Restarted photo cataloging project: there are now over 4,800 images of Palo Alto history on the website
- Expanded our digital footprint beyond our website: PAHA can now be found on Historypin, Youtube, Facebook and Twitter
- Joined the May Fete Parade, with six former presidents, as Honorary Participants

Will future contributions endure and even flower? PAHA’s past tells us that with time, talent and resources—with community interest and support—our work can go forward far into the next 100 years. —john Hackmann, Bardy Wallace
In the Beginning... The Story of PAHA

Keeping alive the history of Palo Alto is the mission of the present-day Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA), founded in 1913 and incorporated in 1948. PAHA maintains the archives that record the development of the city, publishes authoritative pamphlets and books chronicling its special character, and supports an official historian to serve as the centerpiece of its activity, manage the archives, and provide historical information to the public.

But the impulse to recognize and maintain the essence of Palo Alto was felt as early as 1913, when the city was some 20 years old and had a population of 5,000. Forty people met to found Palo Alto's first historical association by the same name. They urged fellow citizens to collect old papers, programs, maps and posters to put on display. The first and only president of the original Palo Alto Historical Association was Harry C. Peterson, then the curator of the Stanford museum and later curator of Sutter's Fort Museum in Sacramento. When he left the city in 1917, the association discontinued meetings and became inactive. Its valuable documents and artifacts were given to the public library for preservation. During the 1920s and 1930s, the association was revived briefly several times.

Today's thriving Palo Alto Historical Association was born when the former Palo Alto Times announced on January 19, 1948 that residents interested in supporting an historical association were invited to become founding or charter members by signing the articles of incorporation. Charter members included two former mayors, C. P. Cooley and A. R. Cathcart, Judge George Crothers, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, Elizabeth Gamble, Mrs. David Starr Jordan, Mrs. M. A. Buchan, Mrs. O. L. Elliott, Mrs. Allen Emery, Gustav Laumeister, Guy C. Miller, Mrs. John W. Mitchell, Dr. George Peirce, Dr. Harry B. Reynolds and Mrs. John A. Squire. The Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce took an active part in helping to organize the new group. Included were E. C. Thoits, one of the first life members, former President Herbert Hoover and later Dr. Wallace Sterling, Stanford president.

The role of PAHA historian began with Guy C. Miller, who had preserved records of Palo Alto for many years before a Palo Alto Historical Fund was established in 1943 to finance a new Palo Alto City Historian. He devoted full time to collecting and cataloging historical material and gave talks to local groups. The position later transferred to PAHA when it was incorporated. After Guy Miller's death in 1953, the collection which bears his name was moved from the basement of the Carnegie Library [where City Hall is now] to the new Main Library in 1959. Historians who followed have been Eleanor Bark, Frank Richey, Ralph Hansen (1963–67), Ruth Wilson (1967–1984) and Steve Staiger, 1984 to present.

PAHA has embraced today's technology and is uploading many of its collection of over 13,000 photographs to its website, a digitized archive that can be accessed by any computer with an Internet connection. PAHA has its own website, www.pahistory.org. For seven months of the year, the association presents a first-Sunday afternoon lecture open without charge to the public which is videotaped for airing on public access cable. Popular programs have featured the work of architect Birge Clark, and several have explored the homes developed by Joseph Eichler. PAHA has also recorded oral histories of long time residents. Other functions include participating in the naming of streets and public places. In addition to the book, Palo Alto: a Centennial History by Ward Winslow (1933), PAHA has published books on streets, parks, libraries and the legacy of Lucie Stern, among other topics. While the historian's desk and archives are the heart of PAHA's activity, the organization also maintains an office in the Museum of American Heritage for administrative business, as well as onsite public storage units for archive overflow and artifacts. —Betty Gerard (based on an earlier work by Tom Wyman)
PAHA Celebrates 100—the May Fete Parade, 2014

PAHA celebrated one hundred years by marching as Honorary Participants in the May Fete Parade, May 3, 2014. Former presidents Gail Woolley, Crystal Cagume, Liz Hogan, Dick Rosenbaum, Doug Graham, and president John Hackmann along with historian Steve Staiger walked beside or rode in vintage cars. President John Hackmann came as a 1913 attorney, and former president Doug Graham dressed as Maurice Moore, an US Army officer and resident of Palo Alto in 1913. Everyone wore vintage hats. Directors Pat Briggs, Bardy Wallace and Brian George organized the march. —H. Shakes

Presidents on parade, left to right: 1: Crystal Cagume with sign, beside her Gail Woolley; 2: John Hackmann as a 1913 attorney; 3: Doug Graham as Maurice Moore, US Army and Palo Alto resident of 1913. [Photos: H. Shakes]
The City Historians

When a group of local residents met in 1913 to form the Palo Alto Historical Association, one of their first actions was to appoint Guy Miller as the group's Historian. He took his assignment seriously, serving more than 40 years as Palo Alto's Historian. There have been five Historians since Guy Miller; this is a review of their time with PAHA.

Guy Miller came to Palo Alto in 1897 from Oregon to study at Stanford. For many years he worked in local bookstores including a stint as the manager of the Stanford Bookstore. He served on the City's Library Board from 1911 to 1920. He began collecting and preserving the history of the young town and neighboring university.

Beginning in 1929 Miller was employed by the library part-time to further collect and process the wealth of material that had been collected by the staff, local citizens and Miller himself. When the funding ran out, he continued to work in the basement of the old Carnegie Library as a volunteer. In addition to his work in the archives, he was researching and writing numerous articles (primarily for the Palo Alto Times) and making presentations, usually with a collection of glass slide images, to local schools and community organizations.

In 1945 a community fund was established to provide an ongoing salary for Miller as Palo Alto's City Historian. It was reported that Palo Alto was one of only three cities in the United States with an official City Historian. PAHA had a re-birth in 1948 (coinciding with California's centennial observation of the discovery of gold and annexation to the United States), and Miller became the first historian to be paid by the Association. His work continued until 1955, when he walked to the Palo Alto Hospital for a medical procedure from which he did not recover.

Eleanor Bark succeeded Miller as PAHA's Historian. She was the wife of Stanford's William Bark, a professor of medieval history. She had an interest in a more modern history, perhaps due to their residency in Escondite Cottage, one of the oldest buildings on campus. According to her obituary published in 1999, she was the Historian from 1955–58, although there is some indication that she was still working in the archives in early 1959. Bark continued to be active in local history after leaving her position as Historian. She was one of the founders of the Stanford Historical Society in 1976.

There is very limited information about the next historian. The Palo Alto Times reported in May 1959 that the new historian, Frank H. Richey, had been working for a month. His position coincided with the transfer of the archives from the Carnegie Library to the new Main Library on Newell Road which had opened the previous year. The newspaper describes Richey as a "collector of Californiana". It appears that he was at work for a little more than three years. The Palo Alto Times reported in December 1962 that Ralph Hansen had been hired to succeed the "late" Frank Richey, no obituary has been found.

Ralph Hansen became the Historian in January 1963, four months after he came to California (from Utah) to become the Curator of the Stanford Collection. He was a certified archivist, and the plan was to turn the Stanford Collection into the Stanford University Archives. In order to supplement his modest Stanford salary, Hansen sought outside employment, including working nights and Saturdays at Macy's. While not as lucrative as Macy's, the hours working in the PAHA archives were not as onerous. Eventually he worked two nights a week plus all day Saturday in the archives.

One of the first problems facing the new Historian was his first request to speak to a group of residents on the topic of Palo Alto history. With only five months of California residency, his knowledge was limited. He discovered a collection of enlarged mounted photographs in the collection which he used as
The Archives Today

The Guy Miller archives of Palo Alto history are owned by the City of Palo Alto and managed by the Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA).

Over the past century, the archives have always had a home. In 1913, when PAHA formed, they were situated in the old Carnegie Library—where City Hall now stands. Eventually, they were moved to the Main Library on Newell Road and remained there until the library renovation project began in 2013.

The archives are now temporarily housed at the Cubberley Community Center, Room H-5. Open Tuesday evenings, 4–8 pm, and Thursday afternoons, 1–5 pm. Steve Staiger, our city historian, is there to assist members of the public.

As PAHA looks beyond its centennial, the most pressing need is to find a permanent home for the archives. Toward this goal, PAHA supports the establishment of a Palo Alto History Museum in the historic Roth Building at the corner of Bryant and Homer. We hope you will join in this effort.

Steve Staiger

Ruth Wilson had been a Librarian for the City of Palo Alto for many years before deciding to retire in 1967. Ken Wilson (no relation), the City's Head Librarian, encouraged her to accept the part-time position as PAHA's Historian. For many years, she was the voice and face of local history in Palo Alto.

Like many local history groups, PAHA had limited funds available to do its work. Sometimes there were inadequate funds to pay her modest monthly salary. Ruth Wilson set about changing this condition. Along with several members, she developed the first series of postcards that bolstered PAHA's finances. The Streets, Parks and especially the Mayfield books were researched, written and published with her efforts and generated additional funds for the Association.

Wilson spoke to groups, both civic and schools. She was often quoted by reporters in the Palo Alto Times as the authority on "old" Palo Alto. She developed a special relationship with the editors of the Times, allowing her to go through and select photographs from those being culled by the newspaper.

When Ruth Wilson decided to retire again, after 16 years as Historian, she encouraged me, Steve Staiger, to apply for the position. I was hired in 1984. I had been a Reference Librarian for the City of Palo Alto since 1977, and for 18 years I worked part-time for the City and part-time for the Association. I retired from the City several years ago, and have been the Historian for 29 years.

The duties remain the same, but things do change. I still give talks to third graders and civic groups, using the Kodak slide projector and tray of slides (with some changes) that I inherited from Ruth Wilson. We may change to a digital format, but the slides and projector are very reliable. Visitors still come to the archives with specific questions or a general curiosity, but we now handle many inquiries via email, sending digital images or obituaries to people all over the world. Recently I helped a young man in Sweden with an inquiry regarding his great-grandmother who lived in Palo Alto in the 1910s. —Steve Staiger
The Archives and PAHA's Digital Footprint

Palo Alto Historical Association's Centennial Digital Photography Exhibit available on the website Historypin begins with an image of Palo Alto historian Guy Miller (1913-1955) standing in front of a file cabinet. The only keyboard in sight is a black typewriter, and all the resources at his fingertips are kept in paper rather than electronic folders. The fact that this image is available 65 years later on a website that shares space with local history archives from Manchester, England to Peoria, Illinois means that knowledge seekers worldwide can now search for Big Ben and El Palo Alto, the HP Garage and the Taj Mahal by going to the Internet.

Historypin literally puts local history on the map by mixing geolocation and historic photographs, encouraging archives to upload photos onto its free website. Digitization of local history collections has exploded over the past few years with the advent of inexpensive scanning technology and free hosting services such as Historypin and Flickr.

The Palo Alto Historical Association already offers a rich collection of images on its website, so in honor of PAHA's centennial year, PAHA adopted a plan to expand its “digital footprint” to increase visibility. This practice is in line with its mission to collect, preserve and make available to the public information about the history of Palo Alto. In addition to Historypin, other places that PAHA's resources are available are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

Future plans include becoming part of the Flickr Commons and perhaps even contributing to the Online Archive of California and the ambitious Digital Public Library of America. It is only fitting that the cradle of technological innovation continues to use new electronic media to ignite curiosity and engender thought.

—Rachel Kellerman
Out of the Filing Cabinets, Into...

As part of its centennial celebration effort, PAHA applied for and received a grant from the Palo Alto Weekly’s Holiday Fund to "Move the Archives Out of the Filing Cabinet, Into the Classroom"—digitally.

The grant provides support for a teacher-supervisor and four high school historians to research and select primary sources to post on a new Education page to be added to the website, pahistory.org. The collected primary sources will be grouped into four themed sets appropriate to third graders’ mandated study of local history in accordance with California’s new Common Core Curriculum standards. PAHA looks forward to mounting the pilot project in the fall of 2014 and having it available to all students and teachers of third grade by spring of 2015.

Discover Palo Alto History Online

Palo Alto Historical Association Website
http://www.pahistory.org/

Historypin Channel
http://www.historypin.com/channels/view/28314/

Historypin Centennial Collection
See the "Collections" tab on PAHA’s Historypin channel (above)

Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Palo-Alto-Historical-Association/504537519643612

PAHA’s YouTube Channel
http://www.youtube.com/user/pahahistory

Twitter @Paloaltohistory
https://twitter.com/Paloaltohistory

Discover More Local History Archives...

Palo Alto Stanford Heritage: www.pasterheritage.org

Online Archive of California: http://www.oac.cdlib.org/

Digital Public Library of America: http://dp.la/

Flickr Commons: http://www.flickr.com/commons

PAHA’s Digital Footprint 2014

Palo Alto Historical Association
Facebook

Historypin Channel
http://www.historypin.com/channels/view/28314/

Historypin Centennial Collection
See "Collections" tab on PAHA’s Historypin channel (above)

Twitter @Paloaltohistory
https://twitter.com/Paloaltohistory

PAHA’s YouTube Channel
http://www.youtube.com/user/pahahistory
Sharing History Through PAHA Programs

Memory Parties, Lantern Slide Shows, Artifact Exhibits, Famous Speakers; just a few of the PAHA public programs presented since its founding in September 1913. One commitment of the association from the beginning was collecting, preserving and sharing the history of Palo Alto. Sharing started when PAHA announced in advance of its first public meeting that anyone planning on attending should “...hunt up those old papers, photos, programs, maps and posters. Bring them out and let us look at them.” Forty people attended with many sharing what they saved. One hundred years later PAHA continues to ask everyone to “bring them out and let us look at them”!

The first planned program in late November 1913 was an exhibit at the library of historical material. The Times carried a detailed description of items on display as old as 1890. Since the new association had no artifacts to exhibit it asked for donations from “patriotic citizens” for “anything at all that savor[s] of the old days.” More than 100 people attended over a three day period with special afternoon programs for school children and evening sessions for adults. High points were a lantern slide show and a pioneer reunion. The Palo Altan newspaper said the slide show was “of early-day scenes by Harry C. Peterson, aided by an assistant with a pointer of mustard stalk, six feet long, several inches in diameter and with limbs like a tree—a relic of the old days when this plant was very common.” Today, PAHA’s monthly programs carry on this tradition although video projectors, computers with PowerPoint, and laser pointers are now used.

Over our 100 year history there have been hundreds of public programs and events related to local history, many exhibits at local libraries, and extensive sharing of Palo Alto archive material which includes over 13,000 still images, films, videos and audio tapes. There is little information on the early years but starting in 1948 PAHA incorporated and organized frequent meetings to share local history. Examples over that 65 year period include: 1940/50s—Memorial parties; 1960s—luncheons with speakers covering Spanish Land Grants, Peter Coutts, 50 Over 50 Businesses, Student Essay winners, and Dr. Lee DeForest. Also, Annual Dinner Meeting programs about Railroads, and Dr. Terman; 1970s—topics included Bay Lands preservation, Hewlett-Packard, Mayfield, Portola, early Chinese, Kathleen Norris, early churches, and Mission Revival Architecture; 1980s—audiences enjoyed learning about Frank Lloyd Wright, Trolleys, Animal Shelter, Shoe Business, and Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur; 1990s—speakers talked about Funeral Businesses, Cops & Robbers, Aunt Lucie, Camp Fremont, and Juana Briones; 2000s—subjects included Eichlers, Greg Brown Murals, Castilleja, Leland Stanford, Children’s Theatre, and Film Festivals; 2010s—meetings covered Gamble Garden, Paly Football, Sarah Wallis, Sea Scouts, Music, and California Slim.

The PAHA archives preserve many audio and video recordings of programs as old as 1987. PAHA’s contributions to enhancing the understanding of the rich history of Palo Alto are remarkable and underscore the past, present and future value of our association. —Brian George
Over the Years—A Sampling of PAHA's Publications

The Tall Tree, PAHA's official monthly newsletter, is planned and edited by Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre, Jeannine McDonnell, Peggy McKee and designed by Harriette Shakes. It features information about upcoming programs, a collection of articles of current interest to members, and a "History Jaunts" section of current events on the back. The Tall Tree, initially printed at irregular intervals as small pamphlets on historical topics, only much later became the monthly newsletter familiar to today’s readers.

Books, pamphlets, brochures and postcards are selected, edited and sent to press at the direction of the Publications Committee; Harriette Shakes, Betty Gerard, Brian George, Larry Christenson, Doug Graham, Jeannine McDonnell and Chris Botsford. The committee has brought out two books, a new publication, Palo Alto Remembered by Matt Bowling and a reprinted edition of Lucie Stern: Palo Alto's Fairy Godmother by Michael Litfin, in the past two years. This year it added a Centennial set to the postcard collections.

PAHA publications in print are available at Bell's Books, Books Inc. and the Village Stationer in Palo Alto. Those publications no longer in print, can be checked out at the city libraries or at the archives in Cubberley Community Center, Room H-5. —H. Shakes


PAHA published Palo Alto: A Centennial History to honor the City’s centennial in 1994. A definitive work, it is available through Palo Alto local libraries.
A Future Museum in an Historic Setting

The Palo Alto History Museum values PAHM’s enthusiasm for a local history museum and celebrates a call to action—to convey the essence of a unique history of an innovative and caring community. The Roth Building, our museum’s future site, is located at 300 Homer Avenue on Heritage Park and is central to the Homer Avenue Historical District. Once rehabilitated, the 22,580 square foot, city-owned building will provide a permanent home for PAHM’s extensive city archives. Among the museum’s many benefits will be community gathering rooms, classrooms, interactive exhibits and a media center. The focus, inspired by Stanford University’s “design thinking,” will be the human experience as visitors inhabit the space and interact with exhibits. This dynamic, participatory museum will be a core resource to connect people of all ages and interests.

The Roth Building itself housed a significant advance in the structure of medical services. In the early 1930s, six forward-looking physicians led by Russel V. A. Lee, MD, made the decision—radical at the time—to join their practices in a multispecialty medical partnership. They engaged local architect Birge Clark to design a home for the clinic. The building we see today, opened in 1932 and named later for founding partner Fritz Roth, MD, grew from their vision. Central to the renovation of the Roth Building is the preservation of its historic style, art deco features and the famous Arnutoff murals.

It Happened Here. For well over a century, astonishing people in Palo Alto have created innovations that affect the lives of millions of people around the globe. Palo Alto is uniquely poised at the intersection of intellectual, technological, financial, design and green-energy trends. In many ways, Palo Alto is among the most influential communities in the world—rich with heritage and pride. A city this vibrant deserves a great museum.

Community financial support is crucial to rehabilitating the building and creating the museum’s exciting programs and exhibits. The PAHM Board of Directors warmly encourages your time, talent and financial contributions. Visit us at www.paloaltohistorymuseum.org or call 650-322-3089 to learn more.