

APRIL  
2009  
VOLUME 32  
NUMBER 6

# The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, April 5 at 2:00 p.m.

Free & open to the Public

Lucie Stern Community Center  
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

## From Alsace to Mayfield to Palo Alto

THE MAYFIELD BREWING COMPANY HAS TAKEN ON NEW LIFE after a hiatus of 87 years, named for the town founded in 1855, well before Palo Alto, and for the Company founded in 1868 as the Mayfield Railroad Brewing Company, possibly so-named because the original train out of San Francisco had its terminus at Mayfield.

*Speaker:*

John P. Alderete  
President/CBO  
Mayfield Brewing Co.

The first company was founded by an Alsatian immigrant, Michel Kleinclaus, who brewed and sold steam beer at what is now the corner of California Avenue and Birch Street.

Leland Stanford asked the town to outlaw alcoholic beverages because he hoped to discourage student drinking, but brewers and saloon keepers refused to close down their businesses.

Owners subsequent to the original brewer stayed in business until closed by prohibition in 1920. The new brewery promises a premium, handcrafted beer with a modern flair, as described on their website.

To learn more about the Mayfield Brewery's checkered career, join us at 2:00 on Sunday, April 5.



MAYFIELD BREWING COMPANY  
*Premium Handcrafted Beers*

*Logo for the Mayfield Brewing Company.  
(Courtesy of Mayfield Brewing Company.)*



*Mayfield Brewery, 1915. (Courtesy of John Skibo and San Jose Municipal Record.)*

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 193 • Palo Alto, CA 94302  
650.326.3355 • www.pahistory.org

Jeanne McDonnell & Peggy McKee

*Editors*

Harriette Shakes, *Design*  
Omega Printing, *Printing*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Dick Rosenbaum <i>President</i>	Jan Murphy <i>First Vice President</i>
Gwen Barry <i>Second Vice President</i>	Bardy Wallace <i>Recording Secretary</i>
Bob Jack <i>Treasurer</i>	Steve Staiger <i>Historian</i>
Matt Bowling	Beth Bunnberg
Vicky Ching	Brian George
Betty Gerard	Georgie Gleim
Douglas Graham	Karen Holman
Judy Leahy	Jeanne McDonnell
Peggy McKee	Carol Clifford Mitchell
Tom Wyman	

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:

- ④ Collect, organize, and preserve materials pertaining to the history and heritage of Palo Alto.
- ④ Spread information about Palo Alto's history by means of programs, displays, and publications.
- ④ Recognize and preserve historic sites and structures.

The Guy Miller Archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association are stored at the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road.

Board meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 PM. Schedule of public meetings on p.4.

## Start Working on Your Obituary Now and Update It Over Time

I HAVE OFTEN MENTIONED OUR COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS as being the true treasures of our Association, as they would be for any local history organization. An individual photograph may be a unique record of an event 100 years ago, or of one last month. There is another collection that has tremendous value in the whole, but is almost totally worthless as individual units. I am speaking of an obituary collection and the accompanying index.

More than 30,000 individual obituaries are filed in our Archives. Each obit (for the most part) is a small scrap from a local newspaper printed sometime in the last 120 years. Unlike a photograph or significant document, the individual obituary has no monetary value. The historic value is the information printed on the paper. A quality photocopy or digital scan of the obituary retains the historic value of the obit (and perhaps even increases the value).

The value of the obituaries is in the total collection. It also depends on how well the obituary is written, i.e. how complete and accurate is the information it contains. An obit is often the only accessible record that summarizes a resident's entire life.

Unfortunately the quality of today's obituaries has declined in recent years, attributable in part to the decline in newspaper resources dedicated to obituary writing. But also the survivors of the obituary subject are often reluctant to release the full story of the subject's life, either due to privacy issues, because they do not realize the value of a good obituary, or do not feel that the deceased is newsworthy enough to justify the effort.

I recently read an article in the California Historian that suggested (and even urged) people to write their own obituaries. This may sound strange to some of us, but there is a logic to the idea. The time immediately following a death (especially an unexpected one) is a stressful period. Because of deadlines, the obituary is often written in haste, is far too brief, and may contain errors and omissions.

With an obituary prepared in advance, your life story can be told accurately and completely. Newspapers often assign reporters the task of preparing or revising obituaries for well-known people during slack times, to be ready when the time comes. Writing your own obit is an opportunity for you to remind your family and community of the many accomplishments in your life, especially those events that you experienced long ago, and that have been forgotten or are unknown to your friends and family.

The idea of writing one's own obit should not be seen as strange. The California Historian is right. After all, we often go to great lengths in planning our funerals, wills, and disposition of effects, and that energy should also include our obituaries.



FROM THE  
DESK OF THE  
HISTORIAN  
Steve Staiger



### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Sharon Crandall  
Richard J. Pollak



## BECOME A MEMBER OF PAHA

YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE MEMBERSHIP HELPS PAY FOR PRESERVING INFORMATION about the history of Palo Alto and informing the public about that history. Annual membership dues are: **Individual \$25, Family \$40, Sustaining \$60, Business/Sponsor \$100 and Life Member \$350.** Members receive this newsletter in the mail and a renewal notice in July.

You can join by mail or online. Make checks payable to Palo Alto Historical Association, mail to PAHA Membership, P.O. Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302-0193. Let us know if you require a receipt.

Or go to our web site [www.pahistory.org](http://www.pahistory.org). Click on MEMBERSHIP, then on Network for Good. Once on that site, press Donate Now, and put "membership" in the designation field. Give us your name and address. For gift memberships, also email us at [PAHHistoricalAssn@aol.com](mailto:PAHHistoricalAssn@aol.com) with the name, address, and e-mail address of the recipient.

# Preservation Mingles Past and Future

PALO ALTANS WILL HAVE A LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM at the Roth Building, a project that is moving forward at the present time by gathering donations and planning for the future, sharing the goals of the Palo Alto Historical Association's mission, which is collecting, organizing, and preserving Palo Alto history for present and future generations.

There are a variety of resources available to enhance your knowledge and understanding of our rich heritage, our connection with Stanford, and how our neighboring communities pursue similar goals. Such a resource is no more than a click away.

Visit PAHA Board Member Matt Bowling's wonderful site at [paloaltohistory.com](http://paloaltohistory.com). Follow his links to learn about neighborhoods, historic figures, interesting events, and the like.

The Stanford Historical Society's spring tour features Birge Clark homes on Stanford campus, for which you can prepare yourself by following Matt's link to "Birge Clark" under "People".

If you are not digitally inclined but eager to enjoy these beautiful spring days, venture farther afield by taking 101 to the Moffett Field Historical Museum to see models, photos, and other memorabilia (call 650.603.9827 for more information). Further down the Peninsula, you can find your way to the Peralta Adobe and Fallon House Historic Site, which offer a unique look into the early history of San Jose (408.993.8182).

Our own Museum of American Heritage ([www.moah.org](http://www.moah.org)) on Homer Avenue showcases devices commonly used both commercially and domestically, 1800-1950 with changing exhibits and classes.



*Peralta Adobe House at Peralta Adobe & Fallon House Historic Site. (Courtesy of Lucinda Surber.)*

## Getting Out and About

AS SPRING WEATHER COMES TO PALO ALTO AND ITS ENVIRONS, why not plan an outing, possibly by bicycle, to scenes and sites of local interest. Stop by the History Desk at Palo Alto Library's Main Branch and pick up the brochure, "Pathways to the Past." It contains 27 thumbnail pictures and brief descriptions of historic locations in our area, for example, the Rengstorff House in Shoreline Park. Visit the website [www.r-house.org](http://www.r-house.org) for a virtual tour, or better yet, go there yourself!

The Palo Alto Historical Association archives can be accessed through the historian at the History Desk on Tuesday evenings, 6-9, and Thursday afternoons, 2-5, where you can find out about past events, or ask to see some sample obits. Part of the photo collection is online at the PAHA website, [pahistory.org](http://pahistory.org).



*Historic Rengstorff House, conveniently located in Shoreline Park. (Courtesy of Friends of Rengstorff House.)*



## *Palo Alto Historical Map Entry Form*

PAHA is looking to add entries to a Google map detailing the history of Palo Alto. We are especially interested in locations where events in the city's past occurred. Of special interest are perhaps lesser known events/places that we can add to the map. Examples include, but are not limited to, the location of a long-forgotten favorite restaurant, a building that no longer exists or a store or business that once occupied a particular spot. Please submit the following, and we will enter the information into our online map database. Thanks in advance.

**Your name**

**Email or Phone**

**Historic Location (cross streets, address, or description of the location)**

**A brief or extensive description of what occurred there.**

Information can be dropped off at the History Desk at the Main Library; mailed to Matt Bowling, 1982 W. Bayshore Rd. #311, East Palo Alto 94303; or, emailed to [mtb324@gmail.com](mailto:mtb324@gmail.com).

# Stanford Historical Society

5th annual Historic House and Garden Tour: Sunday, April 26.  
See <http://histsoc.stanford.edu/programs>.

## Gamble Garden

Children's Easter Party (ages 2 to 6) Arts and Crafts and Puppet Show followed by Easter Egg Hunt. Saturday April 11. Sells out early, call for tickets 650 329 1356, ext. 201.



## PAHA Heritage TV Programs Cable Channel 30

WEDNESDAYS 8:00 PM,  
THURSDAYS NOON,  
SATURDAYS 1:00 PM

The March program that featured the "Geologic History of the Bay Area" by Benita Murchey will be on TV in April. Dr. Murchey is the Chief Scientist of the USGS Western Earth Surface Processes team. PAHA monthly public programs are videotaped by Brian George and in addition to being shown on Channel 30, they can be borrowed from the archives at the Main Library on Tuesday evenings, 6-9, and Thursday afternoons, 2-5.

## PAHA's Public Meetings to Come

Most of our public meetings are on the first Sunday from October through May at 2:00 PM at Lucie Stern Community Center.

### NEXT MEETINGS:

APRIL 5 AT 2:00 PM

*Mayfield Brewing Company*

Speaker: John P. Alderete

President/CBO

MAY 3 AT 2:00 PM\*

*This Old House*

Speaker: Carol Blitzer

Assoc. Editor, Palo Alto Weekly

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10 AT 6PM

*Annual Meeting*

Dinner at the Palo Alto Sheraton

\*Note: Margaret Feuer will speak about the history of the Palo Alto Women's Club next October, rescheduled from the previously announced date in May.

# The Tall Tree

APRIL 2009

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 193

PALO ALTO, CA 94302

[www.pahistory.org](http://www.pahistory.org)

NEXT MEETING:

April 5 at 2:00 PM

Followed by a social hour  
and refreshments