

MAY 2010
VOLUME 33, NUMBER 7

The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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

PAST Heritage Preservations Awards Program and Ceremony



SPEAKER:
SHIVA SWAMINATHAN
Senior Resource
Planner, City of
Palo Alto Utilities

THE MAY CABLE program on Channel 30 will be "Winter Dellenbach and Palo Alto Activists." Winter recalls the role and contribution of six Palo Alto citizens and their activism for Palo Alto. Tapes of past programs may be borrowed at the Main Library's History Desk, Tuesday, 6-9 PM and Thursday, 2-5 PM.

at the deterioration of its prominent Mission-style door. The PAST Board has voted to "adopt" this little structure, and PAST will be restoring the door and casement windows. Mr. Swaminathan will provide the "back story" to what has been to us a mystery building, and will enlighten us as to its continuing usefulness and the vital role it plays in emergencies.

by Grace Hinton, PAST

PALO ALTO STANFORD HERITAGE (PAST) is pleased to sponsor PAHA's May 2 meeting. This special event celebrates National Preservation Month. PAST will present its annual preservation awards, and acknowledge the centennial of 1910 Palo Alto and Stanford houses with presentation of our traditional plaques to the owners. We will also feature speaker Shiva Swaminathan, who will enlighten us with "The History of Palo Alto Pump Houses and Water Utility." Mr. Swaminathan is a Senior Resource Planner with the City of Palo Alto Utilities and works in the area of electricity and natural gas procurement and conservation.

A little incongruous, you say, to combine preservation awards with a talk on utilities? Why, not at all! Several PAST members have noted the charm of the Hale Street Pumping Station (located at the end of Hale at Palo Alto Avenue), and have expressed dismay



Hale Street Pumping Station, courtesy PAST

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PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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|--|---|
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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.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

NEW MEMBER
Phyllis Mayberg

NEW LIFE MEMBERS
Chris and Jane Botsford

BECOME A MEMBER OF PAHA

- 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 you can join at
www.pahistory.org.

Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee.

Anniversary of the Pony Express



**FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger**

THIS SPRING MARKS THE SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF A SIGNIFICANT, even iconic moment in American history. In April, 1860, a young man left St. Joseph, Missouri, on horseback, heading to California—a state since 1850—on the first leg of the first Pony Express ride. Separated from the rest of the country by more than 1500 miles of mountains, plains, and deserts, Californians were isolated from the news of the nation. It took a stagecoach three weeks to reach California from “St. Joe.” And the fastest steamships were slower still. The Pony Express riders carried the mail (and the news) from Missouri to Sacramento in eleven days! In fact, Californians heard the news of the bombardment of Fort Sumter only 8 days after the first rider left St. Joseph.

Each packet required twenty riders and seventy-five horses to carry a few pounds of mail through hostile environment, bad weather, and possible threats from Indians and robbers. These daring young men on their fast ponies became iconic images in American history. They helped to keep

California on the Union side in the Civil War.

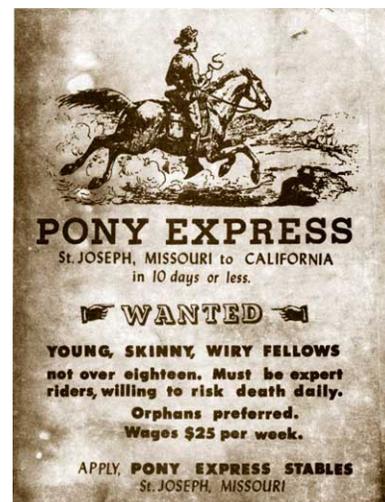
In June, 1860, Congress authorized a federal subsidy to construct a transcontinental telegraph to connect the western frontier states with California. As construction progressed—eastward from the Pacific coast and westward from Missouri—the Pony Express continued carrying the mail for the entire route; however,



Memorial to the Pony Express riders, courtesy "RecumBum" website

telegrams traveled between the ever closer telegraph line terminals. On October 26, 1861, the telegraph lines were joined, linking San Francisco with the East Coast. A few days later, allowing for the in-transit mail to be delivered, the Pony Express ceased operation. Despite the romantic aura that surrounds it, it was never a financial success. Staffing costs, including riders, station managers, and hundreds of horses were enormous. It was superseded by the technological innovation of high speed telegraph delivery of the mail.

Years later, Leland Stanford reflected proudly on how his efforts in building the transcontinental railroad and his role as governor in the early stages of the Civil War helped to keep California in the Union. There was a real possibility that politicians favorable to the Confederate cause might capture power in California and take the state (and its gold) out of the Union. While Leland Stanford was influential in blocking this threat, the Pony Express, in its brief existence, was also instrumental in preserving California's place in the Union.



Pony Express flyer, courtesy National Park Service Archives

Photos Aid Restoration

Beth Bunnberg

MANY OF US ENJOY LOOKING AT HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS, but homeowners and architects also come to the PAHA Archives with specific needs and questions. Architect Aino da Rosa, seeking to restore a Queen Anne house in Professorville that had undergone major front-side additions, wondered what this 1895 house on Addison Avenue looked like when it was built. Our archives had a clear original photograph. A mock-up for *The Live Oak* of January 1, 1900, showed this house and provided documentary evidence to meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards to restore the missing Queen Anne style porch and other decorative features. This type of restoration can qualify owners for square footage bonuses and other benefits. Sometimes, a photograph is worth more than a thousand words.

A researcher from the Los Altos Hills Historical Society is looking for information on the activities of Carl Nelk and his motorcycles in early Palo Alto. He would like to talk with members of the Fred H. Smith family (of Smith's on the Circle) who might have old photographs and other information about the business in the days before World War I. If you can help, contact Steve Staiger (steve.staiger@cityofpaloalto.org). 🍷

Nominations to the Board

from Nominating Committee Chair, Tom Wyman

PAHA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPTED THE PROPOSED list of nominees to the Board for the fiscal year 2010-2011, and these nominees will be presented to the membership for election at the Annual Meeting on June 2. The nominees are: Larry Christenson, John Hackman, Joyce McClure, and Deborah Wexler. Board members whose terms expire in 2010 but are eligible and have agreed to stand for re-election for another 3-year term are Gwen Barry, Jeanne McDonnell, and Bardy Wallace. Board members who are termed out after three consecutive 3-year terms: are Peggy McKee, Judy Leahy, and Dick Rosenbaum. We thank them for their service to PAHA.

As required by the by-laws, these names are being submitted to the Association in this issue of the *Tall Tree*, 30 days

before the Annual Meeting in June. Additional nominations may be submitted by members to the Secretary no later than Friday, May 7, supported by at least 10 members who have signed a nominating petition. Such nominations should be submitted to Bardy Wallace, Recording Secretary (650-327-4563; 356 Lincoln Ave., Palo Alto 94301; bdgw@pacbell.net). At the June Annual Meeting the membership will elect those nominated to join the Board.

Thank you Peggy McKee, Judy Leahy and Dick Rosenbaum for 9 years of service to PAHA!



Check out what was in your neighborhood!

PAHA's Google Earth Map has over 3,000 old photographs of more than 1,000 buildings and places in Palo Alto. Go to PaloAltoHistory.com to check it out!

The Palo Alto Historical Association

HISTORY CORNER

Did you know that the old Sea Scout Building at the Baylands is being restored? Built in quintessential 1940s "Streamline Moderne" style by Birge Clark, the Sea Scout Building with its porthole windows, navigation bridge, flag hoist and smoke stacks was designed to resemble an actual ship. It was the home to the local Sea Scouts, an off-shoot of the Boy Scouts, that taught boys and girls aged 14-20 how to excel in water activities. On the weekend of May 30th, 1941, Palo Alto's "Fairy Godmother" and greatest benefactor, Lucie Stern --- who had given \$3,000 for the base's construction --- christened the building by smashing a bottle of Atlantic Ocean seawater on the deck rail. The 3 day extravaganza of dedication activities included a bonfire, jiu-jitsu, a magic show, barbeque and formal dance. On Sunday, the event concluded with the formal inspection of over 150 Palo Alto and visiting Sea Scouts in their dress uniforms. The building was abandoned after the Yacht Harbor closed in the mid 1980s.

—Matt Bowling

Things to Do in May

MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH, May 9, and other educational activities at Gamble Garden, www.gamblegarden.org, 650-329-1356

PICTURE THIS: A HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Exhibit opening April 23 – October 3

Museum of the American Heritage

351 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto, www.moah.org, 650-321-1004

CYPRESS LAWN LECTURE-WALKS

Colman Memorial Park, Saturdays, first tour April 17, last on October 30. Call: 650-550-8810 for information on topics and dates, or visit www.cypresslawnheritagefoundation.com/events.html.

Juana Briones House News

by Jeanne McDonnell

Preservationists can be happy that the house of a notable woman of 19th century California inspired interest at Stanford in collecting information and artifacts connected to the long search for a way to keep this house safe and sound for history. In the south lobby of Stanford's Green Library, there is now a display of highlights from the archival collection, including newspaper articles, historical photos and drawings, letters, aerial views, and even samples of the adobe wall used to authenticate the house, constructed by Juana Briones in 1844. (Information provided by Professor Albert M. Camarillo)



PAHA's Public Meetings to Come

At Lucie Stern Community Center, 2:00 PM

MAY 2: *PAST Heritage Preservations Awards*

Speaker: Shiva Swaminathan

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2

ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER

Innovation and Mythmakers

Speaker: Paul Saffo



Juana Briones plaque, courtesy Stanford University News

The Tall Tree

MAY, 2010

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Sunday, May 2, 2:00 PM

PAST Heritage Preservation

Awards and Ceremony

Lucie Stern Community Center

Refreshments will be served.

