

The Tall Tree

NOVEMBER 2013
VOLUME 37, Nº 2

NEWSLETTER of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

General Meeting • Free and Open to the Public • Refreshments Served

Sunday, November 3 at 2:00 – 4:00 PM
Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Speaker: Rich Green, President of the Palo Alto History Museum

It Happened Here

Reflections—the Palo Alto Historical Association and the Museum

AS PAHA PREPARES TO CELEBRATE ITS CENTENNIAL, IT SEEMS APPROPRIATE TO consider the pivotal relationship between it and the Palo Alto History Museum. Rich Green is both a PAHA board member and the recently elected president of the Palo Alto History Museum. He is inspired by the museum's new motto, "It Happened Here." With a degree in archeology, Rich has a long interest in local history and a commitment to preserving its legacy. His leadership brings a vision and energy to realize the dream of a museum to showcase Palo Alto's treasures and to tell Palo Alto's story. Rich will illustrate how the heritage of our modest community has enriched the lives of millions of people the world over. His remarks promise



Rich Green, Board Member, Palo Alto Historical Association and President, Palo Alto History Museum

to remind us of the innovation and creativity that are virtual synonyms of Palo Alto—a city that deserves a great museum!



Illustration of the Roth Building, future home of the Palo Alto History Museum, on the corner of Bryant and Homer [Courtesy of the Palo Alto History Museum]

PAHA's Public Meetings

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP
PROGRAM MEETINGS
are held

2:00–4:00 pm

October – June
at the

Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

CALENDAR

2013

November 3

It Happened Here

Speaker: Rich Green

December 1

Vignettes

2014 [TBA]

January 26

March 2

April 6

May 4

June 4: Annual Dinner

100 Palo Alto HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION 1913~2013 Years

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Harry C. Peterson—The First President of PAHA

FROM THE DESK OF
THE HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

AS PAHA BEGINS THIS YEAR OF OBSERVING ITS
founding 100 years ago, I want to recognize the first
president of the Association, Harry C. Peterson, a

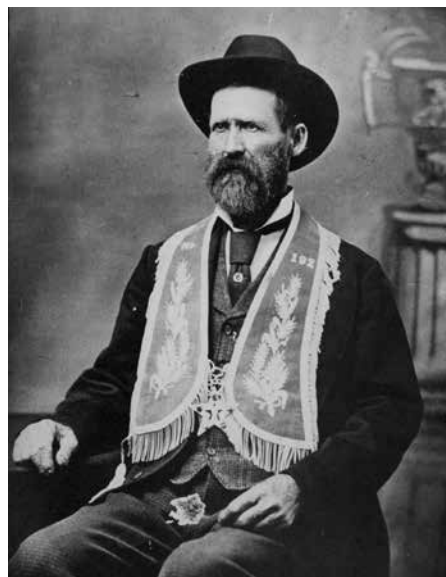
remarkable man whose life story is little known today.

Harry Peterson was born in 1876 in Iowa. Years later, while visiting the new Stanford campus (still under construction) his father, a blacksmith, was hired by Leland Stanford to help with the completion of the campus buildings, and for many years thereafter, was employed as a foreman in the University's engineering department. After living briefly in Mayfield, where Harry attended school, the family moved to 846 Middlefield Road.

At age 23, Harry became the curator of the Stanford Museum of Fine Arts, the museum founded by Jane Stanford to honor her son and house his collection of antiquities. Peterson was a favorite of Mrs. Stanford, and served as the curator for 19 years, after which, in 1918, Pedro de Lemos replaced him.

Peterson was elected to the City Council, where he served for eight years, 1913-21. In 1913 he attended a meeting called by Guy Miller at the Carnegie Library, which was later torn down to build City Hall, and that meeting resulted in the establishment of the Palo Alto Historical Association. Peterson was elected President of the new group and Guy Miller was appointed Historian.

Beginning in the 1920s, Peterson spent most of his time in Sacramento, working with various history groups. He was appointed curator of the Sutter's Fort Historical Museum in 1925. His interest in film led him to being an historic advisor for several Hollywood films including "Pony Express" and "Sutter's Gold." He is the author of a small book "The Romance of California," of which I have a copy. He died in 1941, after a heart attack at the Sutter Museum.



PAHA's two oldest photos: James Broady, 1870, and the two-trunk El Palo Alto, 1875

PAHA's Glory—Photos in the Archives

ALTHOUGH PAHA IS A CENTURY OLD, ITS PHOTO ARCHIVES go back much farther. Among the oldest is that of the two-trunk El Palo Alto, shot in 1875 from the San Mateo County side of San Francisquito Creek. The other is James Broady of Mayfield, the original of which dates to 1870, that was copied by W. H. Myrick in 1888. PAHA now has over 4,000 photos online and accessible through our website.

100 Years! A Walk Through History

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
John Hackmann

LIKE A FRESH FOREST GLEN, THAT ONE MAY WALK in the afternoon, with a love still young, at your side, or in your heart, our Newspaper Archives, and the Photo Archives and the Oral History Archives, and the Program and Speaker Archives, and the Ephemera Archives and the Book Archives and the Physical Objects and Memorabilia Archives are becoming and beguiling, and are conversational companions as we walk through our Palo Alto and our American history.

For me, and maybe you, too, there is joy and calmness in the arms of our local past, and the deeper understanding it gives of the present. For example, I am told strong single mothers came early to Palo Alto for the free tuition afforded their children. Is that one reason women's right took strong root here?

One hundred years is a long time, and the evidence of achievement here, in this place, this international community of Palo Alto, grows stronger.

Core values has risen as a city council topic. What do each of you see as the "core values" of our town? Certainly community involvements: Mr. Parkinson, the lumberman, first set out the lumber for benches because so many wanted to attend the Presbyterian Church, emblematic of a caring and conscientious community in the 1890s.

And the tremendous effort of the founding of our schools;

And the notion of publicly-owned utilities, advanced by Prof. Charles David Mark, which shaped, and now helps fund, our town;

And the equality of women, so well-articulated by Jane Stanford, and exemplified by many articulate women, and suffrage success, here in Palo Alto.

As we search for 'core values,' we can well search the past, and well search our own PAHA archives. One hundred years of PAHA has preserved this, and now it's held out for each of you.

For me it's like an afternoon walk, in a wooded glen, with a love still young, for our city, and for its past.

Established 1855, the First Mayfield School

THE FIRST MAYFIELD SCHOOL was established in 1855—long before there was a Palo Alto—and was housed in a log cabin. It was on Second Street (now Birch) between Sherman and Grant. It was replaced in 1867 by a two-story frame building at nearly the same place. In 1898 a larger 2-story school was built facing Sherman, and the old one was moved to a location near Main Street (El Camino Real) and Lincoln (California Avenue) and re-purposed, in good old Mayfield tradition, as a brewery.

In 1923, teachers and students marched along Lincoln carrying banners announcing the need for a larger school site. A 4.5 acre site on Stanford University land facing El Camino Real across from Grant Avenue was leased from Stanford and a "magnificent structure of eight classrooms, offices and a large auditorium." The school was designed with arches and tile roofs of Mediterranean style similar to the five-year old Palo Alto High School down the road. This was the elementary school that many of us remember, serving Barron Park until 1948 and parts of South Palo Alto into the early 1950s, as well as "Mayfield" until 1966. It later became the Continuation High School until razed in the 1970s. —Douglas Graham



Sixth grade students pose for a class picture, taken in 1897, in front of the Mayfield School built in 1867.

Heritage Program on Channel 30

PAHA's October program, "Palo Alto's Poundman" by William Warrior, Senior Field Officer for the City of Palo Alto Police Department's Animal Services Division, will be featured in November.

Broadcast schedule:

Wednesday: 8 PM

Thursday: 10:30 AM

Saturday: 1 PM

DVDs of previous programs can be borrowed at the Archives which are temporarily located at Cubberley Room H-5. Hours:

Tuesdays, 4–8 PM, and

Thursdays, 1-5 PM.

History Jaunts

History's Harvest at Museum in Redwood City: As a feature of the current exhibit, "Plowing Ahead: Historic Peninsula Farming," children can churn butter, build apple baskets, and make stick horses and sheep to take home. This event, Saturday, November 9 from 1 to 4 pm, is free with the price of admission, \$5 adults, \$3 seniors and kids, free up to age 5. San Mateo County History Museum, 2200 Broadway. Information at 650 299 0104, www.historysmc.org.

San Jose's 236th Birthday: A festive occasion at California's first Pueblo will have hands-on activities for children, story telling, live music, and dancing, plus a birthday cake and a chance to meet descendants of founding families. Free admission, activity tickets for \$1 each. Sunday, Nov. 24, Noon to 4:00 pm at the Peralta Adobe Historic Site, 175 West Saint John St., San Jose. Food available at the San Pedro Market. Additional information at historysanjose.org.

Looking Ahead: The California Historical Society Museum on Mission Street in San Francisco will open an exhibit in January about Juana Briones, who lived on her 4,000 acre ranch in what is now Palo Alto and Los Altos Hills and in her 80s in Mayfield. A wall of post and beam construction, that is, a split wood lath casement into which adobe was placed, will be on exhibit, from the family home she had constructed on her ranch more than 150 years ago.

Parking, Then and Now: A current Palo Alto news item regards a shortage of parking, mainly at the City's two downtowns, University and California Avenues. Minutes of meetings of the Woman's Club of Palo Alto in its years of origin, which are simultaneous with the City's beginnings, reveal a different parking issue. Club women planted trees (the original Canopy), protected ones that had not been cut down, and watered street trees in the dry season. The Club's board of directors complained to City government officials that people should not be allowed to tie their horses to trees.

In Memoriam

Barney Tanner

We are grateful to a member of our organization for alerting us to an error in our last issue in our spelling of Mr. Tanner's name, which we have corrected here. —the Editors



This photo shows the wall from Juana Briones home being moved for preservation and preparation for display. (Courtesy Clark Akatiff.)

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 dissemination 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.)

All photos are from the Palo Alto Historical Association archives unless otherwise noted.



THE PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
Our mission is to collect, preserve and make available to the public information about the history of Palo Alto.

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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