



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Since 1913

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The Palo Alto Historical Association presents via Zoom Webinar

Palo Alto Athletes Prevail at the 1920 Olympics

Sunday January 24, 2021 2:00 to 3:00 pm

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88316827797>



Paly graduate, Morris Kirksey (far right), wins silver in the 1920 Olympics

PAHA Board member, Bo Crane, will be speaking about how five former Palo Alto High School (Paly) athletes contributed to the success of the 1920 U.S. Olympic team a century ago.

After an eight-year hiatus due to the cancellation of the 1916 Olympics during WWI (1914 to 1918), the Olympics recommenced in 1920 in Antwerp, Belgium. Many athletes had put their sport careers on hold during this time to support the war effort. Paly alums Frederick “Feg” Murray (class of 1912), John K. Norton (1912), Robert Lyman “Dink” Templeton (1914), and Morris Kirksey (1914) were no exception. These four plus John “Jack” Patrick,

1917 Paly graduate, would go on to star in the 1920 Olympics in either track, rugby or both sports and bring home four gold medals, two silver medals and one bronze medal.

Join us on January 24th from 2:00-3:00 pm to hear interesting stories about these five former Paly athletes turned Olympians, and how three won spots on the 1920 U.S. rugby team—a team that was expected to be crushed by France, reputedly the best team in the world.

For more information about our programs, and for Zoom instructions, visit our website at www.pahistory.org.

We Are Living History Every Day

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As we continue to slog our way through the Covid pandemic, it's interesting to wonder just how this period will appear to future historians. Looking back at the 1918 flu epidemic, we find little more than a few photographs in our PAHA files. According to the Sedition Act of 1918, which made it a crime to undermine the war effort, discussions of the epidemic were apparently considered to fall into this category.

There is certainly no lack of published information about our current pandemic. What will be especially valuable to future historians, however, will be personal stories of how this has affected local families, local businesses, schools, and other institutions. These are the "between the lines" stories which

are often overlooked, and which can provide color, context, and valuable information to future generations who might be facing another similar trauma. Most relevant as I write this, how did the pandemic affect our holiday celebrations? Did some of us invent new traditions? How did we make this period a special time, rather than focusing on what we cannot do? These will be fascinating bits of history for those future historians.

In the meantime, PAHA hopes you have all managed to find some ways to celebrate our winter holidays. We look forward to virtually seeing you at our next program on January 24th from 2:00-3:00.



The Steve Staiger Award

The Steve Staiger Award was created in 2015 to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to collecting, organizing, and sharing the history of Palo Alto. It has been our custom to grant the award during our June annual meeting dinner, but unfortunately, we were unable to do so this year because of COVID-19 restrictions.



Jim Lyons, recipient of 2020 Steve Staiger Award

The recipient of the 2020 Steve Staiger Award is Jim Lyons, a long-time PAHA member, donor, and volunteer. Jim is a retired dealer of early and rare newspapers and has been a member and volunteer at PAHA for many

years. He has devoted countless hours to preserving and repairing photos, maps, newspapers, and other early publications in our collection.

Most recently, Jim has digitized the contents of two scrapbooks of an early Palo Alto. The scrapbook was put together by Norwood B. Smith, an amateur historian (and PAHA member) and contains photos, articles, and transcripts of oral histories from the late 1800s to the 1950s. Jim has also embarked on cataloging PAHA's book and publication collection.

Jim is a generous donor of supplies, equipment, materials, and artifacts to the Archives. At the beginning of the year, we acquired 66 bound volumes of *The Daily Palo Alto Times* from him, dating from 1908-1933. He has always made time to pass along his wealth of knowledge in identifying and authenticating historic materials, as well as preservation techniques, to PAHA volunteers (and PAHA Historians!).

Thank you, Jim, for your many contributions to PAHA and to the preservation of Palo Alto history!

The Palo Alto Historical Association, a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit organization, was established in 1948 as successor to an earlier organization founded in 1913. 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 the Palo Alto Historical Association are stored at Cubberley Community Center, K-7. Although PAHA continues to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the current restrictions, the Archive is only open for prearranged appointments. To contact the Archive or to make an appointment to visit, email steve.staiger@cityofpaloalto.org or call (650) 329-2353.

Until further notice, PAHA board meetings are held via Zoom Meeting at 4pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). Public programs are held via Zoom Webinar at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month (October-December, February-May). Program information and webinar links are available in the Tall Tree newsletters and on our website, www.pa-history.org. The public is welcome to join all programs.

World's Fastest Viking By PAHA Board Member Bo Crane



Morris Kirksey

Those who have held the record in the 100-yard dash have each been called the World's Fastest Human. Included in this list is Morris Marshall Kirksey, a Palo Alto High School graduate and Stanford alumnus, who is also Paly's only two-time Olympic gold medal winner.

Kirksey was born in Texas, but the family soon moved to the Bay Area. He competed at Paly in fall rugby and spring track with the class that graduated in June of 1914, the month when the heir to the Austrian-Hungary throne was assassinated, soon setting off WWI.

At Stanford, he continued going out for both rugby and track and was getting noticed as a fast sprinter. After the 1916 Olympics were cancelled due to the war in Europe, Morris left Stanford to attend Rice University. The U.S. declared war on Germany in April 1917. As a Rice student, Kirksey registered for the WWI draft in June. A month later he enlisted in the Navy, serving until April 1919.

Returning to Stanford in 1920, Kirksey once again joined the rugby and track teams. The 1920 Olympic trials were held in June at Harvard Stadium. Morris was one of four 100-yard sprinters making the team to race in the 100-meters and 200-meters.

In the Olympic finals of the 100-meter race, Charley Paddock, doing his trademark leap at the finish, nosed out Kirksey for gold as both were clocked at 10.8 seconds, leaving Kirksey with a silver medal. A few days later, he narrowly finished fourth in his 200-meter semifinal, again by an inch, but this time missing out on the final. Running

anchor on the 4 x 100-meter relay, Kirksey helped set a new relay world record, finally getting his gold medal!

The rugby championship was held two weeks later. Because rugby was still being played in California universities along with football, Bay Area college players comprised most of the team, including Kirksey. On a rainy day, the U.S. beat France, giving Kirksey his second gold.

Back at Stanford, Kirksey continued racing and won the 100-yard race at the 1921 Intercollegiate Association track meet. Later that spring, he tied Charley Paddock's record time of 9.6 seconds while barely losing at the finish line once again.



Morris Kirksey and Charley Paddock. Photo courtesy of www.charlespaddock.com With a Stanford degree in philosophy, Morris went onto the St. Louis Medical College, becoming a physician. In the early 1930s, he taught at San Francisco's Stanford University Hospital. Married, he and his wife moved to Stockton, where he was a staff psychiatrist for the California Department of Corrections for 25 years, assigned to both San Quentin and Folsom prisons.

Morris died at age 86 in 1981. His 100-meter Olympic time would put him fourth best in the Paly record book. But at one time he was the Worlds Fastest (Paly) Viking—an inch away from being the World's Fastest Human.



Together, as a Community, We've Made History

by Rich Green, President of the Palo Alto Museum

After a challenging year with confusing messages from the City Council, we remain committed to bringing the inspirational history of the Palo Alto-Stanford community to life in the new Palo Alto Museum.

In many respects, Palo Alto invented the modern world. From the DeForest vacuum tube to the inventions of the PC and mobile computing, the counter culture, Grateful Dead, Apple and Google, our history needs to be preserved, now, and for the future. There are hundreds of stories created for, by, and with a community working together, that the PAHA Archive and a museum devoted to Palo Alto, will illuminate and preserve.

The Palo Alto Museum will be an extraordinary opportunity to reveal the lessons of our past, embrace our responsibility and passion for the present, and drive a future that has positive social impact and creates thoughtful and meaningful innovation.

The historic Roth Building is the ideal location to build this community's Museum, and we continue to work in partnership with the City to advance its rehabilitation. In the new year, we will go before a new City Council with renewed vigor and purpose. With approved plans and an active building permit already in place, we've identified the fastest and most cost-effective way to bring a history museum to our community.

For more information on the Palo Alto Museum and to help with your support, visit paloaltohistorymuseum.org.

Jaunting During the Pandemic

As I sit here on a bright, crisp, sunny day, in December, we are still in the midst of a shelter-in-place mandate with instructions from local health officials and the governor to persevere with masks and social distancing. That said, before going on a jaunt, check the accompanying telephone numbers or websites for updates and current health mandates.

Entwined is a monumental piece of public art in the Peacock Meadow of **Golden Gate Park** (240 JFK Drive, between McLaren Lodge and the Conservatory of Flowers). Created by San Francisco artist, Charles Gaden, Entwined celebrates the 150th anniversary of Golden Gate Park. The trees range from 12 to 20 feet in height and their illuminated canopies are as large as 30 feet wide. You can also admire Entwined during the day, even when the LED lights are not ablaze. This stunning installation will remain in Golden Gate Park through February 28, and the installation is illuminated from sundown until 8:30 pm. For more information, visit <https://www.goldengatepark150.com/entwined>.



Image courtesy of Karen Sundback



Image courtesy of City of Palo Alto

Medical and health care professionals urge us to put on our masks and get some exercise walking or biking outdoors, perhaps with one family member or one friend. The **Bay Trail** — which includes **Palo Alto's Baylands Nature Preserve** — now comprises 350 miles of trails. I recommend you start at **Byxbee Park**, 2375 Embarcadero Road. Entrance is free, as is parking; you may bring your dog, so long as he/she is on a leash. In addition to hiking and biking, Byxbee is a popular bird-watching site. You may also enjoy the outdoor art installations that make Byxbee so special to Palo Altans. Visit www.baytrail.org for maps and more information, especially during the pandemic.

The world of Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh is coming to San Francisco in a new digital art experience that brings some of the artist's best-known works to life in astounding scale. The **Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit** will make its west coast premiere beginning March 18 at SVN West, located at 10 South Van Ness. Utilizing projection technology, visitors will be able to step into images like his famous *Starry Night*, *Sunflowers*, and *The Bedroom*. Check for accessibility and tickets at www.vangoghsf.com, or by phone at 844-307-4644.



Image courtesy of Lighthouse Immersive

PAHA Upcoming Programs

Sunday, March 7, 2021 from 2:00-3:00 via Zoom Webinar
Check our website at www.pahistory.org for program information

Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the December 6 program, "Celebrating Gryphon Stringed Instruments' 50th Anniversary," you can find the video on Vimeo by using the link below. Also on this site, you can find other recent PAHA programs, including "Palo Alto: Then and Now."
<https://vimeo.com/489702794>

The Heritage Program

This month's heritage program features "Celebrating Gryphon Stringed Instruments' 50th Anniversary" with Frank Ford and Richard Johnston. This program airs on Channel 28 or 30 on various days and times. It is simultaneously streamed on the Media Center website midpenmedia.org/heritage. Check website for schedule.

Welcome New PAHA Members!

Patrick Peterson and Woodbury Historical Tours

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