

VOLUME 29, NUMBER 6
MARCH 2006

The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, March 5 at 2:00 p.m.
Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Open to the public
Cookies & coffee

THE GARAGE AT 367 ADDISON AVENUE

This month we welcome Hewlett-Packard historians. Join us for the story of the garage — its history and restoration.

In 1938 Bill Hewlett and David Packard launched what later became, by the toss of a coin, Hewlett-Packard. The beginnings, a 12 x 18 foot garage, were modest, as were the two entrepreneurs. The garage was dedicated as the Birthplace of Silicon Valley in 1989. HP acquired the garage property in 2000.

Both Stanford graduates, Hewlett and Packard had dreamed of starting their own company and with Lucie Packard as their first accountant and marketing person, they began, sharing the \$45 a month rent for their living accommodations and garage work space. Flora Hewlett joined the effort after her marriage to Bill. It was a family business in the truest sense, one based on a trust with its first sales person that lasted some 40 years without a written contract.

The HP Addison Street garage restoration project was completed in 2005 after meticulous efforts to be historically accurate. Once completed, the property in the Professorville neighborhood and near Stanford University was opened to the public for a limited time due to the residential nature of its location.

For those who were unable to attend the opening in December 2005, our March 5 program offers an opportunity to hear about the project from the HP personnel responsible for its success and to view the property and history through visuals and story.

—Karen Holman



L to R: David (Dave) Packard and William (Bill) R. Hewlett. [1939 photo: HP, Brief PDF]



"The Birthplace of Silicon Valley", the restored garage at 367 Addison Avenue, first home of Hewlett-Packard. [photo: J. Shakes, 2005]

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PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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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:

- 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 the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road.

Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month (except for August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 p.m.

General meetings are held the first Sunday of each month (October–December, February–May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 p.m. Meetings include speakers. The final general meeting of the year is held in June and includes a dinner and a program.

The public is welcome at all meetings.

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A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Susan
Bright Winn**

In 1965, we bought a modest "Victorian" house situated in south Palo Alto in a neighborhood of post-war tract homes except for two other Victorians around the corner. How did three vintage homes happen to be built so close to each other in what had to be the country? Then, in 1970, came the American Association of University Women booklet on preservation, *Gone Tomorrow*. On the last page ("Scattered Orphans") were the three homes in my neighborhood. Built in the 1890s in downtown Palo Alto, they were moved to their present location in the late 1940s. My house had been built in 1899 at 332 Bryant Street, across from where Avenidas sits today.

Starting with the building date and original location, I set out to find out more about the dear old house. Using the City Directories and our Obituary files at the Main Library, I learned that a family named Weingartner lived in the house for much of its first 25 years. Mr. Weingartner was the pharmacist at the Rexall Drugstore on University Avenue, and later started his own business. PAHA member Virginia Debs has the Weingartner Pharmacy sign to this day.

In the 1980s, a carpenter I hired to replace the original plaster with sheetrock told me that Polly and Jake lived in the house when it was on Bryant and started their first store in the basement. I visited Polly. Yes, she remembered the house, yes, they had a small furniture business in the basement, but no, that house had been torn down. When I mentioned the Weingartners, and the fact that the house had been moved and not torn down, she exclaimed, "Oh, I'm so glad to hear that."

Then one day my son Dan saw in the newspaper a photo of the original Co-op store in Palo Alto, and he said to me, "Mom, that's our house!" I checked it out and sure enough, the Co-op had also started in the basement of the house when it was located on Bryant.

Much later I learned that "Victorian" was a broad term, and so I asked an expert what the style of my modest home was. She chuckled, "It's a Queen Anne, but in your case, Susan, it's more like a Princess Anne." Home genealogy can be fun, even if it takes forty years to put it together!

FROM THE DESK OF THE HISTORIAN

Steve Staiger

Curious about the history of your home? For most Palo Alto residences the Association's archives can be a great resource for researching your house's history. You can create a genealogy for your home, citing its date of birth, significant events in its history, and the lives of former residents.

Some clues can be found on the property itself. Are there copies of old blueprints or building permit cards in the garage or basement? Original plumbing fixtures are often dated. Perhaps an old-timer down the street can recall stories regarding your home's past, especially facts undocumented by more formal sources.

Previous owners can be traced in the Santa Clara County records in San Jose, and the building permit itself may be full of information which may or may not be accurate. For homes built prior to the mid-1950s, the History Desk index often includes the building permit date, the owner or builder and sometimes the architect. Our copies of the Sanborn Insurance maps detail shape of building, material of construction, and use for structures including outbuildings.

You may want to humanize your home genealogy: our City Directories (Main Library) can provide lists of former residents. Additional resources in the Archives include obituaries and our collection of clippings on businesses, organizations and other aspects of Palo Alto's past.

Eventually, your search may extend far beyond Palo Alto, but our Association's archives are certainly the place to begin. Interested? Contact me, I will be glad to assist your discovery of history right under your feet.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Shirley DiFani Weiland

Gary & Eileen Ruppel

Lief & Sharon Erickson

Margaret Stehle

Paul Goldstein & Dena Mossar

AND NOBODY NEEDED A FURNACE

Elizabeth Norton (1888-1985) arrived in Palo Alto for the first time in 1915. She and her widowed mother, Mrs. James S. Norton, were visiting Elizabeth's sister, Frances and her husband, Professor Harry Brown, a professor in the Philosophy Department at Stanford. Elizabeth and her mother then returned to their home in New York City, remembering the "delicious smell of eucalyptus" that had greeted them when they got off the train in Palo Alto. In 1919, after bouts with the flu, the Browns urged them to move to this area permanently. Harry Brown, who drew plans for houses as a hobby, designed their home, which still stands at 353 Lowell Avenue.

Miss Norton had a long and interesting life, as a world traveler, as an artist, as a lover of animals. She was among the first residents of Channing House where she spent the last 20 years of her life. Today the Elizabeth Norton Gallery is located at the Pacific Art League, 668 Ramona Street. A bust of Stanford's first president, David Starr Jordan, sculpted by Miss Norton is on display at the Hoover Institute.

Following are excerpts from Elizabeth's autobiography, completed in 1982: "When the question of location came up, I suggested Palo Alto, the flat little village which was the railroad station for Stanford, and where the faculty came to market and do business. A number of faculty families lived there, and it was so near the university one had the advantage of lectures and music. In our case we could make a place for ourselves with a group of people who had more varied interests. Also, it seemed nearer to San Francisco. . .

"Palo Alto was a very new town, but its name described a tall redwood tree on El Camino Real, which had been a landmark for Father Junipero. . . The town was laid out on the bias, with only one road running exactly east and west, and that was Embarcadero, connecting Stanford University with the Chinese vegetable gardeners on the edge of the bay. We were offered a big corner lot on Embarcadero, but the idea of noisy vegetable trucks passing before dawn, on their way to market in the city, did not appeal to us. People said there would never be much traffic there, but we bought a smaller lot on Lowell Avenue, which was the city boundary in 1919 and the last street to have fire protection. It was not paved, but the oak trees were magnificent.

"Harry was planning a delightful bungalow which would fit between an oak tree in front and one behind. Mother was looking for closet space, and I was planning for the skylight and running water for the studio, which would be at the end of one hall. . . Good plumbing and wiring, but plain redwood trim and no frills. People said nobody needed a furnace. I copied Harry's plan to scale onto checked, cross-section paper, allowing for space for partitions, etc., to suit the contractor, and we made all sorts of business arrangements. . .

"When we got back to California we found the house was getting along very well. Building without an architect by "open shop" day labor, may have been unconventional, but Mr. Armstrong was a good contractor, and the union and non-union workmen took turns on the job very amicably. We gave Mr. Armstrong a check every Saturday, so, week by week, everyone was paid.

"When we built we indulged in three baths and three fireplaces but no furnace, because the natives told us in 1919 that nobody needed a furnace in Palo Alto. But after a couple of winters, we had a little room dug out under the house and a gas furnace was put in." —*Susan Bright Winn*



*The Norton home, 353 Lowell Avenue, Palo Alto
[photo: Susan Bright Winn, 2005]*

PAHA'S HERITAGE PROGRAMS ≡ CHANNEL 30 ≡

**FEBRUARY: SWAPPING STORIES IV,
Part B: 1971 City Hall Dedication**

**MARCH: WEST BAY OPERA'S
50TH ANNIVERSARY**

SCHEDULE

Wednesdays 8:00 p.m.
Thursdays Noon
Saturdays 1:00 p.m.

Videos of past PAHA meetings can be checked out from the History Desk at the Main Library during Historian's hours: Tuesday evenings & Thursday afternoons.

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FROM THE GUY MILLER ARCHIVES. . .



This issue — beginning with the restoration of the old HP garage on page one — delves into the history of homes in Palo Alto.

Inside you'll find information about how to begin a home history search, and an article about 353 Lowell Avenue, the residence of Miss Elizabeth Norton. Read her recollections of building a home in the early years of Palo Alto.

Shown here is a photo of Miss Norton from a news clipping in the Daily Palo Alto Times, January 5, 1951. Miss Norton (1888-1985), was a highly respected artist.

This news clipping is drawn from the Guy Miller Archives located at the History Desk in the Main Library, a rich source of information about early Palo Alto.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PAHA MEMBER?

Here's how... Pick up a brochure at any city library or at one of our monthly general meetings. Or, send your name, address, phone number and email address to

PAHA, P.O. Box 193
Palo Alto, CA 94302

with a check for your choice of membership:

Individual:	\$25
Family:	\$40
Sustaining:	\$60
Business:	\$100
Life:	\$350

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