

MAY  
2009  
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NUMBER 7

# The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, May 3 at 2:00 p.m.

Free & open to the Public

Lucie Stern Community Center  
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

## The Former AME Zion Church

By Ruth Anne Gray

**THE FORMER AME ZION CHURCH ON RAMONA STREET: AN HISTORIC TRIUMPH**—The former University African Methodist Episcopal Zion



*Speaker:* Ruth Anne Gray, inside the restored church, is the primary preservationist of AME Zion Church.

Church building on Ramona Street in downtown Palo Alto is restored and magnificent again. The historic structure boasts a proud heritage and is a welcome enhancement to Palo Alto history.

Constructed in 1925, this historic church embodies the dedication, and sacrifices of its African American congregation, and served as a community focal point. However, did you know that concerned citizens of all races and walks of life joined together to build the church, and later, to pay off its mortgage?

This edifice is a unique and intriguing symbol of Palo Alto's capacity for community brotherhood and unity. Ruth Anne Gray will share the early history, struggles, contributions, and triumphs of this historic structure. Join us on Sunday, May 3, 2009 at 2:00 PM to find out more.



*AME Zion Church, 1964, courtesy Palo Alto Times*

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the

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 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.

# Government Change Has Lasted a Century

FROM THE TIME THE FIRST RESIDENTS OF THE NEW TOWN of Palo Alto settled in the early 1890's (in time to service the needs of staff and students of the new Stanford University), less than three years later, in 1894, they decided to incorporate. But after 14 years of city government under the laws of the California Constitution, town residents wanted to run their city government without many of the restrictions that limit general law cities, so they changed the legal status of Palo Alto to a charter city.



FROM THE  
DESK OF THE  
HISTORIAN  
Steve Staiger

By 1908 the town was governed by a 5 member Board of Trustees that was expanding city services into the field of municipal utilities. The limitations of governing under the laws of California were evident to a committee of 50 residents who were appointed to study the problem. The committee included businessmen, professors and a group of women (who were still three years away from receiving the right to vote). After many meetings and careful study, the committee recommended a new form of city government under charter provisions. In January

1909 the charter was approved by the voters and became effective on July 1, 1909.

The opportunities available to the community by adopting the charter form of government were numerous, including permitting the City to develop municipally operated utilities. For a community where citizens actively participated in local government in large numbers, the charter form of governing allowed the city to create and direct operations led by citizen managers. Residents, in committee, managed public works projects, made library policy decisions and reviewed public amusement offerings at local movie theaters.

The new charter also provided for a 15 member council, with the new mayor to be chosen by council members, who were elected for six year terms. The council appointed citizens to boards and commissions that ran the day-to-day operations of the town, which was possible in that less complex time. After World War II, the size and complexity of the community demanded change. The 1950 charter originated the city manager position and enlarged staffing.

So, 100 years later, we celebrate those Palo Altans who sought to improve the community by changing the way it was governed.



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Christopher & Jane Botsford  
Peter K. Danner  
Special thanks to  
Deborah Wexler  
who joined as a Life Member



## 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.

# Palo Alto History Museum's Architect

by Karen Holman

THE PALO ALTO HISTORY MUSEUM has undertaken many activities, foremost continuing among them our primary effort to close out the funding need to restore the Roth Building as home for our local stories, artifacts, and activities.

The Roth Building is one of Birge Clark's seminal buildings, and an appropriate home for our community facility. Clark is considered Palo Alto's preeminent architect whose influence was written about by Paula Boghosian, Architectural Historian, in this way, "It seldom happens that a single architect is so influential that his work actually provides a major component of the image of a city."

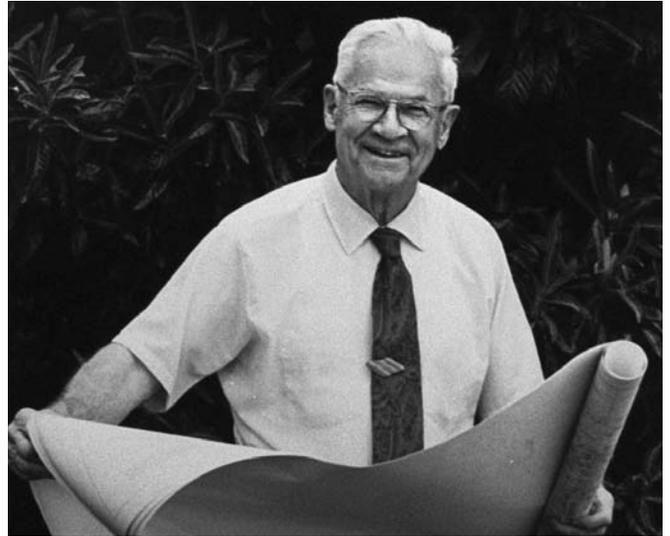
The Birge Clark Society, launched by the Museum at an event featuring Clark's Norris House, has been working with the Museum in an effort led by Dan Garber of Fergus Garber Group that will bring the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to Palo Alto this month to study his architecture, its influences, and the continuing relevance of his buildings.

Clark will also be the topic for a local AIA speaker event later in the month. The Stanford Historical Society is featuring Birge at its annual House and Garden Tour "Reimagining the Clark Legacy".

What better, more appropriate location for our local history museum than in one of Birge Clark's seminal buildings. His work is yet another demonstration of how our history truly does spans yesterday, today, and tomorrow as its relevance is made evident.

We invite you to keep us in mind when making your charitable gift decisions.

The Palo Alto History Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization.  
PO Box 676, Palo Alto, CA 943020  
650.322.3089, [kholman@pahistorymuseum.org](mailto:kholman@pahistorymuseum.org)



*Birge Clark, well known architect of many Palo Alto homes and buildings. (Photograph by Carolyn Caddes, courtesy of PAHA.)*



*The Roth Building, a seminal work by Birge Clark, future home of the Palo Alto History Museum. (Photo courtesy of the Palo Alto History Museum.)*

## Nominations to Board Announced

from the Nominating Committee Chair, Tom Wyman

PAHA's Board of Directors accepted the proposed list of nominees to the Board for fiscal year 2009-2010, and these nominees will be presented to the membership for election at the organization's Annual Meeting on June 10. Georgie Gleim, Karen Holman, Carol Clifford Mitchell and Jan Murphy are termed out after three consecutive 3-year terms. To address this substantial loss, the Board agreed to a one-time departure from the bylaws to allow another 3-year term for the three board members, Georgie, Karen and Carol who agreed to continue to serve. The Board expressed its sincere appreciation to Jan Murphy for her dedicated service as Secretary and Vice President who preferred not to extend her term on the Board.

Board members whose terms expire in 2009 but who are eligible and have agreed to stand for reelection for another 3-year term are Beth Bunnenberg, Vicky Ching, Betty Gerard, and Bob Jack.

New Board members seeking election to a three-year term in June are Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre and Chris Botsford.

These names are being submitted to the Association in this issue of the *Tall Tree* 45 days before the Annual Meeting in June. Additional nominations may be submitted by members to the Secretary no later than Saturday May 2, supported by at least ten members who have signed a nominating petition. Such nominations should be submitted to Bardy Wallace, Recording Secretary, at 650 327 4568. At the June annual meeting the membership will elect those nominated to join the Board.

At its May meeting the Board will elect the new board.

# May Is Historic Preservation Month

from Peggy McKee, PAHA co-editor

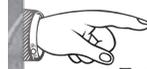
THIS YEAR'S THEME, ANNOUNCED BY THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, is "This Place Matters." I went to the website (<http://www.preservationnation.org/take-action/preservation-month/>) and found a treasure trove of information and suggestions about how other communities and organizations observe Preservation Month, with a plethora of suggestions. Links include "sample activities," a Preservation "discussion Board," and "National Trust Tours." I was intrigued and typed "palo alto" into the search box and found a lovely article on Juana Briones by preservationist Corri Jimenez, who referenced PAHA board member and author of *Juana Briones of 19th Century California*, Jeanne Farr McDonnell. Carlos Castillo had an article about "The Eichler Groupies." There were many more. Have a look and discover ways that you can become a preservationist.



## PAHA Heritage TV Programs Cable Channel 30

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

The April program, Mayfield Brewing Company, by President/CBO of the Company, John P. Alderete, will be on television in May. Brian George tapes the monthly programs, and prepared a DVD of Benita Murchey's March program about "Geologic History of the Bay Area," which includes images that were not available during her presentation. DVDs will be available at the May program for \$10.



## 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:

**MAY 3 AT 2:00 PM**

*The Former AME Zion Church*

**Speaker: Ruth Anne Gray**

**AME Zion Church Preservationist**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10 AT 6 PM**

*Annual Meeting*

**Speaker: Carolyn Caddes, Photographer**

**Dinner at the Palo Alto Sheraton**

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MAY 2009

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NEXT MEETING:

**May 3 at 2:00 PM**

**Followed by a social hour  
and refreshments**