

JUNE 2011
VOLUME 34, NUMBER 8

The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL DINNER

ALL WELCOME

Reservations required by May 27; \$39 per person

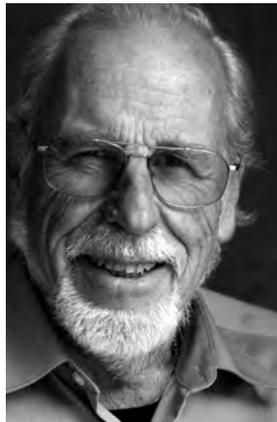
Wednesday, June 1

6:00 PM Social Hour, 7:00 PM Dinner

Ming's Restaurant

1700 Embarcadero, Palo Alto

My Ten Top Stories



SPEAKER:
Jay Thorwaldson
Former Editor
Palo Alto Weekly

Before joining the *Weekly*, he was director of public affairs at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, wrote for the now-defunct *Palo Alto Times* and the *Peninsula Times Tribune*, and for other newspapers. As he wrote of Palo Alto, "Nowhere in the world could you find a more interesting community and people than in Palo Alto. It's been a true privilege to be a central part of local history..."

Jay's retirement did not end his journalistic contributions. He writes a regular online and print column for *Palo Alto Online* and the *Weekly*. Come hear about his "ten top stories."

JAY THORWALDSON'S JOURNALISM CAREER OF MORE than 50 years included award-winning reporting and editing. When he retired in 2010, *Weekly* publisher Bill Johnson said, "We are indebted to Jay for his many achievements during his 10-year tenure at the *Weekly* and will deeply miss his caring and thoughtful approach to covering the news, and his mentorship of the many outstanding journalists that have worked under him." Johnson described how Jay "considers mentoring younger writers as one of his most rewarding responsibilities..."

Before joining the *Weekly*, he was director of public affairs at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, wrote for the now-defunct *Palo*



Jay Thorwaldson carrying water, Kenya, courtesy of Jay Thorwaldson



The Cable program, Heritage, Channel 30 will, over the summer, include various speakers of the past year. New monthly PAHA programs begin in October. DVDs of programs are available at the Main Library's History Desk, Tuesday 4-8PM and Thursday, 1-4PM.

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 193 • Palo Alto, CA 94302
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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.

IN MEMORIAM

Leonard Ely
1923 – 2011

PAHA Life Member

Winfield Scott Christiansen
1912 – 2011

PAHA Life Member



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 join online at www.pahistory.org.

✉ Let us know if you wish to join a PAHA committee, and please specify if you prefer to receive the *Tall Tree* by email or paper.

Civil War Sesquicentennial

THIS SPRING THE OBSERVATION OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL has begun. It includes a series of advertisements in recent issues of history magazines inviting readers to visit Civil War sites in various states. The Civil War began in April 1861 and ended 4 years later in 1865. As a young student of history, I visited a number of Civil War sites including the battlefield at Gettysburg during the Civil War's centennial observation.



FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

For many Californians the Civil War has always been an historic event geographically removed, much like the Revolutionary War of the 1770s. Aside from a few skirmishes and the threat of Confederate raiders off the California coast, the Civil War did not “happen” in California. Yet Californians played a significant role in the conflict. When the South Carolinians fired upon Fort Sumter in April 1861, there was a real fear that California might join the Confederate States. Many of our politicians were originally from southern states and it was felt that their influence might push California to withdraw from the Union. But the newly elected Republican governor was born and raised in New York, and he fought the political battle to keep California in the Union. His name was Leland Stanford, and years later in an interview, he considered his role in keeping California in the Union to be one of his most significant accomplishments (along with building the railroad and his breeding and training trotting horses).



Governor Leland Stanford fought political battles to keep California in the Union (PAHA Guy Miller Archives).

California's major contribution to the Civil War was its gold (and silver from the newly admitted state of Nevada) that was shipped to the East. This wealth helped finance the eventual Union victory. Few Californians saw battle during the war. Most who volunteered saw duty in the West, manning the military forts such as Fort Point, a Civil War relic today. It is similar in design to the series of brick fortresses designed and built in the 1840s through 1860s to defend American ports. Fortunately Fort Point never saw battle, because these forts were obsolete by the time they were completed. New rifling cannon could easily penetrate their massive brick walls, as was demonstrated in several Civil War battles.

The Civil War conflict had an indirect influence on my family's presence in California. In the 1850's the U.S. government established its first naval shipyard on the Pacific coast. In recruiting men to staff the new Mare Island Shipyard, the threat of the Civil War encouraged the Navy to seek ship carpenters in Maine where there were few southern sympathizers. Several of my relatives answered the call, and found life in California to their liking. Their reports encouraged my great-great grandfather and his family to leave Waldoboro Maine and eventually settle in the Napa Valley.

Board Election, 2011–2012

THE ORGANIZATION'S BYLAWS SPECIFY THAT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS SHALL be elected by the members at the Annual Dinner. Terms are three years, renewable three times. The proposed nominees are: New, Kent Stormer; Board members standing for reelection after expired terms are Matt Bowling, Brian George, Douglas Graham, and Tom Wyman. Officers continuing: Douglas Graham, president; Bardy Wallace, recording secretary; Steve Staiger, historian; New officers: Chris Botsford, treasurer; John Hackman, first vice-president; Joyce McClure, second vice-president.

“Location, Location, Location...”

THE RECORD OF LAND VALUE INFLATION IN CALIFORNIA IS A STORY OF SOARING vision and impossible dreams, of greed and recklessness which resulted in an erratic cycle of boom and bust. Values in southwest Palo Alto tell the story. See the table below, which shows the growth in per-acre price from 1847 to 2011. Look at how our land values have outpaced general price index inflation.



DOUG GRAHAM
President, PAHA

In 1822, Jose Pena was granted free grazing rights to 400 acres and in 1841 was given full ownership of 8,400 acres named Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito. Pena then sold it in 1847 for \$3,500 to Secundino Robles, who called it Rancho Santa Rita. After the American Conquest in 1846 and the Gold Rush in 1848-51, land values rose sharply. Elisha Crosby bought about 250 acres of the rancho in 1853 for \$2,000, named his property “Mayfield Farm,” and built a

substantial farmhouse. Crosby went bankrupt in the Crash of 1857 and Sarah Wallis bought it at a sheriff’s sale for \$10,000. Sarah built a famously impressive “wedding-cake” style Victorian mansion of 20 rooms with 14-foot ceilings. Sarah also added barns and planted orchards. She in turn lost most of her fortune and sold the place to Edward Barron in 1878 at a distress price of \$36,500. Barron added 100 acres and he and his estate held the farm for 41 years, finally selling to real-estate developers in 1919 for nearly \$200,000.

After 1919, the property was subdivided for strawberry and truck-garden farmers, then apricot, pear and berry growers. The first residential subdivision, “Barron Park” was laid out in 1925. After World War II, quarter-acre lots with small houses were selling for about \$5,000-\$10,000. By 1972, values had shot up to \$40,000-\$50,000 for a larger new home on the new standard 6,000-square-foot lot. In the 1970s the inflation was rapid—by 1980 only a few homes were available for less than \$100,000. In the eighties and nineties values went into the stratosphere, with few places being worth less than \$750,000 by the millennium year. Current values hover around \$1.0-1.5 million for ordinary homes and over \$2.0 M for better properties (not counting the mansions on Roble Ridge).



*C. 269. Residence of Edward Barron Esq.
Edward Barron's residence purchased from Sarah Wallis in 1878 (PAHA Guy Miller Archives).*

Year	Approximate per-acre land values in S.W. Palo Alto	Rough Equivalent in 2011 Dollars
1847	\$0.42	\$11.50
1853	\$8.00	\$230.00
1857	\$40.00	\$1,030.00
1878	\$104.29	\$2,350.00
1919	\$571.43	\$7,400.00
1947	\$1,500.00	\$15,000.00
1972	\$10,000.00	\$54,000.00
1980	\$50,000.00	\$136,000.00
1990	\$200,000.00	\$342,000.00
2000	\$500,000.00	\$650,000.00
2011	>\$1,000,000.00	>\$1,000,000.00

Anyone Seen a Shillaly?

BARDY WALLACE WROTE: I’VE BEEN LOOKING AT OLD FAMILY LETTERS, HERE’S a morsel in a letter from my grandmother, Gertrude Marx, to my mother, Barbara Givan, dated Jan. 22, 1942:

“Anne Hadden brought me the queerest gift you can imagine, from Mr. Stephens, the elderly janitor of the Public Library. It looks like a strong, efficient shillaly (bludgeon to you)—polished till it shines like a mirror—and away back in 1906 Mr. Will Hyde and William James planted it near the library entrance. It was a young manzanita shrub in the heyday of its youth, but it fell on evil times and had to be removed a few years ago because of blight. My bludgeon belonged to the healthy branch, but Mr. Stephens, who seems to be a sentimental old gent, cherished it, treated the wood with chemicals, and made various small articles out of it, giving them to the elderly staff members—and now to the elderly female trustee. The reference to Wm. James is that he and Mr. Hyde (then the chairman of the Board) shared an enthusiasm for native wild flowers &c. and thought to make a garden of such on the library grounds. And took trips into the hills to secure them. Now isn’t it funny that I should have a connecting thread running back 36 yrs. to Wm. James and the time he spent here one winter so long ago.”

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Jerrie E. Devore
 Fran Hogan
 Marilyn McDonald
 Rosalie Shepherd

As the editors of the *Tall Tree* become more “green,” we offer you the option of receiving your *Tall Tree* digitally. If you’re interested, please send your request electronically (include your preferred email address) to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace at bdgw@pacbell.net.

Looking for PAHA Publications?

Listed below are community businesses supporting our Palo Alto Historical Association by offering our publications. Consider using their services and products whenever possible, and please thank them for supporting PAHA.



Simkins University Bookstore, 1892
(PAHA Guy Miller Archives)

Bell's Book

536 Emerson Street, Palo Alto
(650) 323-7822

Books' Inc

Town & Country Shopping Center
El Camino Real & Embarcadero, Palo Alto
(650) 321-0600

Kepler's Books

1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park
(650) 324-4321

Village Stationers

310 S. California Avenue, Palo Alto
(650) 326-7970

PAHA's Public Meetings to Come

ANNUAL DINNER AT MING'S
JUNE 1: "MY TEN TOP STORIES"
(for reservations, see below & insert)

◆ Save the Dates ◆

Public meetings: Sundays at the
Lucie Stern Community Center 2 PM

For the Centennial of California
Woman Suffrage:

OCTOBER 2: "SARAH WALLIS,
LOCAL SUFFRAGIST"

Speaker: Douglas Graham

NOVEMBER 6: "CLARA FOLTZ: FIRST
CALIFORNIA WOMAN LAWYER"

Speaker: Professor Barbara Babcock

Things to Do Places to Go

Science and Technology Camp

Museum of American Heritage, 351 Homer Avenue: ages 10 and up, June 20-24
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, \$450 members, \$500 non-members, register by June 1.

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JUNE 2011

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL DINNER:
"My Top Ten Stories"

June 1, 6:00 PM SOCIAL HOUR

7:00 PM DINNER

Ming's Restaurant

Reservations to PAHA required

All welcome, \$39 per person