

The Tall Tree

Newsletter
of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

May 2015 Volume 38, No 8

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED * DINNER CATERED BY CHEF CHU'S

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL DINNER

Wednesday, June 10,

6:00 PM Social Hour, 7:00 PM Dinner catered by Chef Chu's
El Palo Alto Room, Mitchel Park Community Center
3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

PAHA's Public Meetings

GENERAL PROGRAM MEETINGS
are held monthly

2:00-4:00 PM

October - May

at the

Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

PAHA'S ANNUAL DINNER

June 10

6:00 pm: Social Hour

7:00 pm: Dinner

El Palo Alto Room

Mitchell Park Community Center

3700 Middlefield Road

Palo Alto

Dinner catered by Chef Chu's.
Please make reservations
before June 3. \$60 per person.



Professor Shanks (courtesy of Michael Shanks)

On Wednesday, June 10, Stanford Professor Michael Shanks will be the featured speaker at the Palo Alto Historical Association Annual Dinner, this year in the El Palo Alto Room of the new Mitchell Park Community Center. A man of many degrees, interests, and talents, Michael Shanks is Professor of Archaeology and Codirector of the Revs Program at Stanford. He has worked on prehistoric monuments in Europe, the Greek cities of the Mediterranean, and is now exploring the Roman borders of northern England.

He sees a profound linkage between archaeology and design history: his studies of ancient perfume jars triggered a fascination with "practice-based" research and leadership in the d.school, the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design. In Stanford's Revs Program, he is promoting automotive archaeology, a focus on the material history of the automobile as it evolves into radically different forms. Professor Shanks serves on the Board of the Palo Alto History Museum. Join PAHA members, friends, and guests for "An Evening with Professor Michael Shanks."



Michael Shanks at Palo Alto History Museum retreat (courtesy of the Palo Alto History Museum) To see Professor Shanks "in action," visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDcfj_0jy-Q>

PAHA and PAST—Partners in Preservation

Welcome to New Members

Richard L. Raiden
New Life Membership

Virginia de Lemos
New Member

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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In Memoriam

Jerrie E. Devore
–2015



Lizzie Weisshaar, Assistant Postmaster is standing in the doorway. J. S. Spaulding is perched on a window sill reading a newspaper. A sign on the building reads "Fine Stationery." A sign indicates Sunday hours.

The recent joint membership meeting of the Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA) and Palo Alto Stanford Heritage (PAST) illustrated how they complement each other in preserving historically important structures, documents and artifacts city, now in its second century. Its time frame is short compared with many Eastern cities and early California settlements, but this was a period when the peninsula made the transition from an agricultural region to a vast urban population center. Mayfield, the oldest part of what is now Palo Alto, was a residential and commercial village, which merged with Palo Alto in 1925. Palo Alto developed as a city closely connected with the new Stanford University; it also housed a substantial population of rail commuters. With WWII and the emergence of the electronics industry, the city became the technology center it is today. Stanford and industry helped to connect us to the history that defines our city today.

PAHA maintains the City Archives so that anyone interested in Palo Alto history can access a large store of information dating back to the city's beginning. The archives, at Cubberley

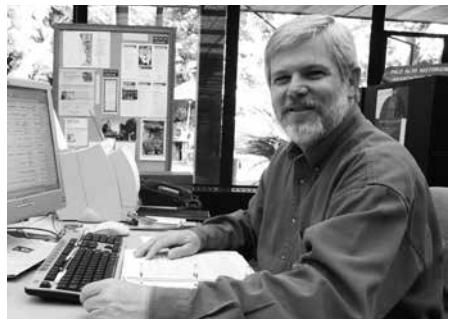
**FROM THE
PRESIDENT** Center room K-7, are open Tuesdays 4 to 8 PM and Thursdays 1 to 5 PM. This store of information is constantly expanding and **Ralph Britton** becoming more accessible as our staff places more of it online. City Historian Steve Staiger and a volunteer staff can help you find items of interest. PAHA's management of the archives is substantially

funded by the Palo Alto Library. PAHA also encourages an interest in history with its presentations at the 10 general meetings, Sunday afternoons at the Lucie Stern Center.

PAST encourages preserving Palo Alto's historic structures. One of the most important concentrations of historic residences is "Professorville," a designated historic district where Stanford's early professors built grand and stately homes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Through the efforts of PAST, this district has retained its character and remains much as it was a century ago. PAST also encourages adaptive reuse of buildings of historical significance and oversees renovations of historic buildings to ensure that Department of Interior guidelines are largely observed. PAST's efforts had an impact on the Children's Library and the College Terrace Library renovations.



Fallout Shelters



FROM THE DESK OF
THE HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

I recently came across a carbon copy (that dates it!) of a typewritten document from the City of Palo Alto for “Building permits issued for the month of September, 1961.” Included were listings for new construction as well as for “additions and repairs.” The City issued 6 permits for new residences with a total valuation of \$110,000 (average of \$18,333 per residence.) One permit was issued for a new motel valued at \$1,600,000 and 3 swimming pools with a total valuation of \$11,200.

Prices have escalated in the last 50+ years! The real shocker to me was the item, for “fallout shelter.” In September, 1961, the City of Palo Alto issued permits for 3 fallout shelters. I assume that these were private installations for a family’s backyard. The 3 shelters’ permits were valued at \$5143.

During the Cold War—at its height in the 1960s--the threat of nuclear attack was a serious concern for many Americans. Across the country, communities planned and built civil defense facilities to ensure the survival of their citizens. Palo Alto’s new City Hall, designed in the mid-1960s, provided protection from nuclear fallout. Schools emerged as popular sites for public, community fallout shelters. With enough concrete and earth around them, the shelters could protect their occupants from all but a direct hit.

For many citizens, community plans and provisions were not enough. Concerned residents built private shelters in their own backyards. Stocked with food, water, and other essentials, a family could survive underground for several weeks before it would be safe to come outside. A couple in southern California recently discovered a fully stocked fallout shelter in the backyard of their recently purchased home.

Today, fallout shelters are not in demand. With more powerful nuclear weapons and our location in Silicon Valley, a likely prime target of any attack, the need for a backyard shelter may be moot. Many sit abandoned in backyards; however, owners of some shelters have found new uses for their Cold War relics: transforming a shelter into a wine cellar is a not uncommon re-use in today’s Silicon Valley.



Fallout Shelter Sign (Wikipedia Commons)



Idealized Fallout Shelter of the 1950s (Wikipedia Commons)

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www.pahistory.org

History Jaunts

San Mateo County History Museum, July 4. 10–4:00, children may hand-crank and taste ice cream, make traditional Independence Day crafts. Vintage films of the Peninsula start at 1:00. Activities coincide with the Redwood City holiday parade. Museum exhibits relate to happenings from Ohlone times to the present. Half price admission for the Day: Adults \$3, seniors and students \$2, children 5 and under free. Museum is in old courthouse in Redwood City, 2200 Broadway. For more information, see: www.historysmc.org or call: 650.299.0104.

Museum of American Heritage celebrates its 25th anniversary with a Retrospective exhibit that features its origins, programs, garden, valuable collection, and what the building and location have meant to the community over the years. 351 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto. Open 11–4, Fri., Sat., Sun. Admission free. 650.321.1004

PAST, Historic Walking Tours. On June 20, the last of four spring tours features Crescent Park homes. The walks broaden knowledge of Palo Alto architecture and residents over the years. Tour starts 10:00 AM, free, open to the public. Meet at Squire House, 800 University Ave. (corner University and Seneca). PAST advocates for preservation of historic architecture, neighborhoods, and character of the greater Palo Alto-Stanford area through citizen involvement and education. P.O. Box 308, Palo Alto 94302.

History Park, San Jose. Public Archaeology Event, May 17, 12–4 for children 4 to 12 and their families. Participate in a mock excavation activity, uncover part of San Jose's past. 1650 Senter Road. For more information see <http://marketstreet.stanford.edu>.

Palo Alto Art Center. For summer activities and programs, call 650 617 3136 or check online at www.paacf.org. Classes include Fueling the Creative Habit, Wed. evenings, begins May 20; Sculpting the Human Figure, a Ceramics-Figure in Clay class, begins May 30. PARC is located at 1313 Newell Rd. in Palo Alto.

Bing Music Hall programs. Subscriptions for the fall-spring season available for purchase to renewing subscribers start May 31, following a period for Stanford Live donors and Bing Members. General public subscriptions will go on sale June 8; single tickets purchase begins Aug. 25. For more, visit live.stanford.edu.

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 make our work possible: we maintain the archives, assist researchers, and disseminate historical information through our publications and public programs. Your generosity will be appreciated for generations to come. 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 November.)



The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the
PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
Our mission is to collect, preserve and make
available to the public information
about the history of Palo Alto.

Jeanne McDonnell, Peggy McKee,
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Omega Printing, Printing



PAHA Archives are located at
Cubberley, Room K-7. Hours:
Tuesdays, 4–8 PM; Thursdays, 1–5 PM.
Contact Steve Staiger at 650-329-2353 or
email steve.staiger@cityofpaloalto.org.