



Since 1913

The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

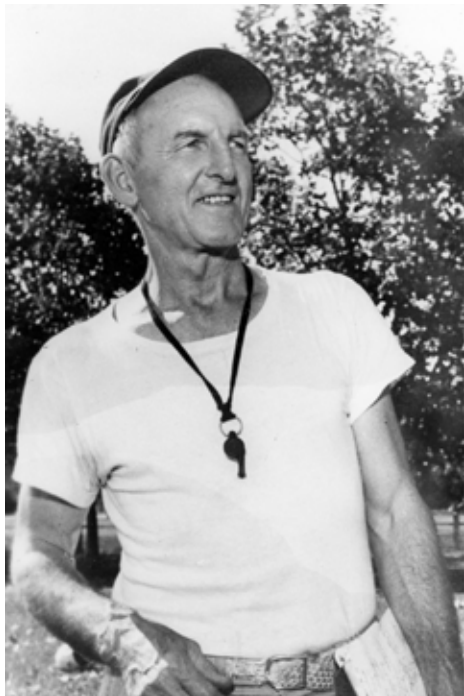
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The Palo Alto Historical Association presents

Recollections: Palo Alto at Midcentury

Sunday, December 3, 2023 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Palo Alto Art Center ~ 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto



Hear stories of Coach Hod Ray (left), Jordan Junior High (top center), Channing Elementary School (bottom center), and Jerry Keithley (right, with family, 1958)

Join us on December 3rd at the Palo Alto Art Center for a trip down Palo Alto's memory lane! Local Palo Alto native, developer and retailer Roxy Rapp and author Wyn Wachhorst will share their stories and trade their Palo Alto experiences with us.

versity Avenue, Rapp's Shoes. After graduating from Menlo College, Roxy opened his first retail store in downtown Palo Alto. In the 1970s, he founded the Athletic Shoe Factory, which he grew into a 68-store chain throughout the western United States.

for El Camino, and the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce.

Wyn Wachhorst lives in Atherton and earned his PhD in American History from Stanford University. He has taught history and American studies at The University of California and San Jose State. Wyn has published numerous books and essays and has also written speeches and articles for astronaut Buzz Aldrin.



Roxy Rapp



Wyn Wachhorst

Roxy grew up as a young boy working in his parents' shoe store on Uni-

Since the 1980s, Roxy has developed more than 30 historical buildings in the Palo Alto area, utilizing his retail experiences and his love of historical buildings.

Roxy has contributed to numerous boards, including Menlo College, Friends of the Junior Museum, Trees

Wyn has also just authored a book (pending publication) titled *Pieces of the Past: Palo Alto Portraits*, financed by Roxy Rapp.

**2023 PALO ALTO
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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, Phone (650) 329-2353.

PAHA Board meetings are held at 5pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Guy Miller Archives.

Public programs are held at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month (October-December and February-May) at various locations in Palo Alto. Programs include speakers. The final program of the year is held in June and includes a dinner and a program. The public is welcome at all programs.

Steinbeck and Palo Alto Avenue

By PAHA Board member, Bo Crane

One of the most interesting features of Palo Alto Avenue is what's no longer there. The author, John Steinbeck, having enrolled at Stanford in 1919, dropped out during his sophomore year. He later returned but with the goal only of learning as much about writing as he could. He got the university to agree he could take the classes he wanted but without concern about graduating. He also got his professors to agree he didn't have to take finals. As such, he left school without a degree.

In the spring 1925, his final year attending Stanford, Steinbeck occupied a shack behind a Victorian house at 330 Palo Alto Avenue. The shack was 7'x7'—just



John Steinbeck in 1939

large enough for a cot, a chair, and a small desk. A water spigot was outside and he was allowed to use the bathroom and kitchen in the house. He had a small outdoor grill for his coffee pot. Small as the shack was and having no money or writing success, he still entertained friends, with plenty of drinking and carousing.

Steinbeck's Nobel Prize for writing would come 37 years later in 1962.

Both the Victorian house and shack are gone and are now part of a 320 Palo Alto Avenue apartment house parking lot.

Finally and fittingly, the street passes by that eponymous redwood for which the avenue and city are so named.



PAHA ONLINE DIGITAL COLLECTION

Recent additions to our online digital collections feature five audio histories, including Birge Clark and Dr. Joe Davis, five Palo Alto Children's Theatre films, including May Fete events, "Pudge" and "Children and the Theater," as well as 25 videos of PAHA Heritage programs. These include "Life in Black and White," "Palo Alto Clinic," and "Palo Alto Trolleys." Go to our website at pahistory.org, click on Digital Collections, then Browse. Select Moving Image and Audio Collection, Update, to find the recordings.

Welcome New PAHA Board Member!



Jon Kinyon

Jon is a 5th generation Palo Altan, an alumni of Cubberley, Paly, and Foothill College. At Mayfield Vocational School he acquired skills that landed him a well paying job at Hewlett-Packard.

He switched careers in his mid-20s, deciding to pursue work in film and television. After several years in San Francisco, he took a job in Southern California, where he ended up settling down.

In 2020, Jon was nominated for a Daytime Emmy Award for a Netflix cartoon show he was lead editor on. In early 2023, he published his first non-fiction novel. He is now working on a sequel.

Bayside Cannery

by PAHA board member, Bo Crane



Sutter Packing Plant (former Bayside Cannery), 1940

In 1877, Sai Yen Chew immigrated to the US from China at age 18. He married Lee Ching in early 1886, and the couple's son, Tom Foon Chew, was born later in the year on December 26.

In 1890, Tom's father began a small canning business called the Precita Canning Company at Sacramento and Sansome Streets in San Francisco. In the 1900 census, Yen Chew modestly listed himself as a "bookkeeper," keeping a low personal profile. When the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed the cannery, Yen Chew moved the business to Alviso, a port at the bay's south end that served as a shipping port between San Francisco and San Jose. The company took over a former watch factory and became Bay Side Canning, later spelled as "Bayside." By 1910, his son Tom was the general foreman, and soon his father turned the business over to him.

In 1918, Thomas Foon, as he liked to be called, purchased four acres of undeveloped land in Mayfield in order to start a second cannery. He also built 19 houses for his workers. His father died in 1919 in Alviso, where Foon continued to live on El Dorado Street and N. Taylor Street (in a house that's still preserved), raising his family of eight children. He began a third cannery in Isleton on the Sacramento River in 1919.

Building a new plant in Mayfield offered all kinds of advantages. The Southern Pacific line was close by, plus a wye rail junction ran behind the building, extending to Los Gatos. With the Frenchman Peter Coutts long gone and Stanford University primarily built, employment was limited to town services, including a lumber yard. The only other industry was the Palo Alto Brewery, which was allowed to operate in a town that had outlawed saloons. However, the brewery shut down once Prohibition took effect in January 1920. The other advantage was that Foon could build his cannery from scratch without adjusting to an existing building. An experienced local contractor from San Jose, John Charles Thorp, born in England, constructed the plant.

Mayfield was annexed to Palo Alto in 1925, and Bayside Cannery was addressed as 340 Portage Avenue.

An influx of labor meant jobs but also low wages. Bayside contributed to making the Santa Clara Valley the largest fruit-growing and processing center in the world in the 1920s, and Foon's canneries formed the third biggest in California.

A Yuba City cannery purchased the Palo Alto Bayside plant in 1928 and changed the name to its own business name: Sutter Packing Company. Foon kept the Alviso and Isleton Bayside canneries and the Thomas Foon Chew Land Company, owning orchards and rice fields. Alviso remains ground zero for the Bayside Canning Company. Several of the decaying buildings in Alviso are still decorated with fading murals depicting the era in which the plant prospered.



Original monitor roof, 2023

Thomas Foon Chew died on February 23, 1931. His death didn't make the local Palo Alto paper but 25,000 attended his funeral procession in San Francisco's Chinatown. Sutter Packing closed the plant in 1949, which marked the decline of the vaunted local agricultural era. Other businesses later shared the Portage Avenue premises—most recently Fry's Electronics, which closed in December 2019.

In September 2023, the Palo Alto City Council approved a development agreement that would keep the former cannery's central portion (twin roof ridges) feature, with modifications, while allowing for other portions to be demolished.

December Jaunts

One of the joys of living in California is the continuing horticultural delights we can enjoy all year round, including winter. Now is the perfect time to take a jaunt to the **UC Santa Cruz Arboretum and Botanic Garden** where you can enjoy literally thousands of interesting individual plants in collection. The gardens are open daily from 9 am to 5 pm, but be sure to check the website for any seasonal exceptions. The gardens provide a wonderful habitat for many bird species, including a wide array of resident and migratory birds. Bird tours are offered on Tuesday mornings beginning at 9:15 am. For details on hours, admission and how to get there, visit <https://arboretum.ucsc.edu/index.html>.



Image courtesy of Santa Cruz Arboretum and Botanic Garden



Image courtesy of POST

The **Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST)** offers many opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors on local hiking trails with spectacular vistas. Try the **The Máyyan 'Ooyákma – Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve**, which has a large area of rare serpentine grasslands views looking into Coyote Valley and across to Loma Prieta, the tallest peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Visit <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/preserves/coyoteridge.html> for a map, information, and how to obtain a Butterfly Pass for access to protected trails. If you are interested in a guided hike or organized, group outings, visit <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/preserves/events.html>.

This is a beautiful time of year to visit the **Palo Alto EcoCenter in Byxbee Park** at the Baylands, 2560 Embarcadero Road. The renovated building was designed in 1941 by Birge Clark and built for the Sea Scouts. It was designed to resemble a ship with porthole windows and a navigation bridge. Menlo Park photographer Jennifer Fraser recommends visiting the EcoCenter in autumn when "... the sun is low on the horizon and the marsh grasses glow gold and red." Plan your jaunt by calling 650-493-8000 or checking their website as hours change seasonally and vary according to the availability of docent volunteers, <https://www.environmentalvolunteers.org/ecocenter/>. You can also read up on the Sea Scout House/EcoCenter and learn how Palo Alto almost lost this historic treasure, and wiser heads prevailed to renovate the structure and make it the headquarters of Environmental Volunteers.



Image courtesy of Andrew Ling

Welcome New PAHA Members

Mary Ann Norton
Suzanne Redfern-West
David Sigua
Chinin Tana

Upcoming Program Dates

• January 28* • March 10*
• May 5

*Unless otherwise noted, programs are held in person on the first Sunday of the months we present programs. Check our website at www.pahistory.org for program information.

Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the Oct. 8th program, *Palo Alto Glory*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link: <https://vimeo.com/874458189>

The Heritage Program

You can also watch the most recent PAHA program on local TV. Visit <https://midpenmedia.org/local-tv/> and enter the word "Heritage" in the search box to find the broadcast schedule for PAHA programs.



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Jon Kinyon, Lead Editor & Design
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