

Since 1913

The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

December 2018 Volume 42, No 3

The Palo Alto Historical Association presents

Vignettes: Tales of Palo Alto

December 2, 2018

Mitchell Park Community Center, El Palo Alto Room
3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. 3:00 to 5:00 pm

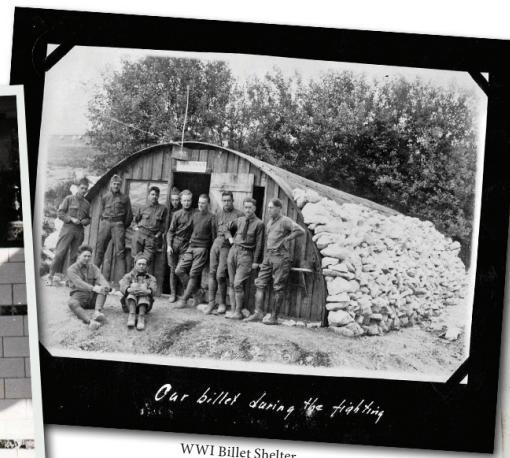
Please note the later than usual start time.



City Café on University Avenue



Gee Beng Mock in front of City Café



WWI Billet Shelter



University AME Zion Church

Join us at our December program for another in our series of Vignettes: Tales of Palo Alto's past.



Karen Homan,
Moderator
Palo Alto Council
Member, Former
Mayor

This year's program once again features Karen Holman as Master of Ceremonies introducing a variety of speakers with their stories of Palo Alto's past.

Vignettes will include a story of a World War I aerial photographer as told by his son; stories of the City Café, the first restaurant in Palo Alto legally run by Chinese residents; stories of the 100-year history of the University AME Zion Church, Palo Alto's oldest black church; and lastly, there will be a vignette on Palo Alto's 125th anniversary and a brief history of previous celebrations.

Free and Open to the Public  Refreshments Served



PRESIDENT'S LETTER
Ralph Britton

**PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Ralph Britton, *President*
- Rich Green, *Vice President*
- Molly Tinney, *Secretary*
- Robert Strohecker, *Treasurer*
- Steve Staiger, *Historian*
- Jeff Day
- Anita Delaney
- Dennis Garcia
- Brian George
- Betty Gerard
- Georgie Gleim
- Debbie Hapgood-Toscaneli
- Heather Pang
- Darla Secor
- Jerry Tinney
- Melissa Verber

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 Cubberley Community Center, K-7, Phone (650) 329-2353.

Board meetings are held at 4pm 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, 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.

Walter Hays School

In 1941, my first school in Palo Alto was Walter Hays, though nothing remains of the original building at the current school site. The lovely kindergarten had a high ceiling and beautiful multi-paned windows making it light and airy. There was a covered open courtyard surrounded by classrooms where assemblies were held with students marching in to a portable windup Victrola playing a somewhat tinny version of a stirring march. Miss Patton



Walter Hays School

was the principal. She had a wooden leg but got around quite well, though students could hear her coming with her thumping walk. She had a chair in her office designated "The Thinking Chair," where students sent to the principal for a misdeed could contemplate the evil of their offense. Miss Patton regularly led children on walks through the playground to the redwood grove behind the Rinconada



**FROM THE DESK OF
Steve Staiger
City Historian**

new college town of Palo Alto. Unlike most of the new Palo Alto residents, he and his young wife were native Californians. He was born in San Francisco, and graduated from the University of California in 1878. He was admitted to the state bar and became one of the leading attorneys practicing in San Francisco.

In 1890, he bought an entire block in the Professorville neighborhood and built a home at 433 Kingsley Avenue where his family, including three children, resided. He became an early Palo Alto commuter, traveling on the Southern Pacific train daily to his law firm in San Francisco.

**JOSEPH
HUTCHINSON
WAS HONORED
IN 1994 AS ONE
OF PALO ALTO'S
"CREATORS OF
THE LEGACY".**

Hutchinson was one of the early residents of the

swimming pool she called the Secret Forest. This was considered a treat and a reward for good citizenship. She had the motto: "Keep our white page clean," encouraging morally upright behavior.

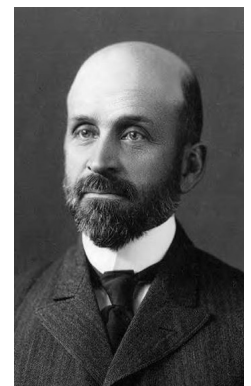
WWII brought the development of a Victory Garden where the driveway is now and children were encouraged to bring a quarter each week to buy a 25-cent War Savings stamp. You pasted these in a booklet that when filled, could be exchanged for a bond worth \$18.75, redeemable at maturity for \$25.

All kids walked or rode bicycles to school. Parents weren't as protective in those days and gasoline was rationed, so you didn't use the car for unnecessary trips. Schools were built in locations intended to allow for a reasonable walk to school. However, there were perceived risks. Each block along the way had a designated Block Mother with a sign in the window where you were supposed to go if the air raid siren went off. Of course, there were no air raids but there were false alarms.

The school only went to fourth grade; students went to Channing School for fifth and sixth grades before moving on to Jordan Junior High School. Channing House senior residence now occupies the Channing School site.

Hutchinson was active in the new community's development, as well as maintaining his interest in the civic affairs of San Francisco.

Hutchinson and other residents supported the idea of community-owned utilities, especially water in the earliest days. They recognized the advantage of incorporation to manage the ownership of the community utilities.



Joseph Hutchinson

When the town's residents voted to incorporate in 1894, Hutchinson was elected to the governing board. Appointed as the President of the Board of Trustees, he was, in effect, the town's first mayor. Elected town officials were not referred to as council members until the Charter form of government was adopted in 1910.

Hutchinson served (Continued on page 3)



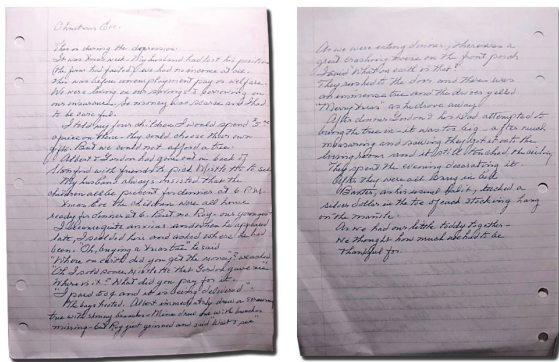
A Special Christmas In Palo Alto



by Jeff Day, PAHA Board Member

My great grandmother, Ellen Hann, enjoyed writing short snippets about her life and about raising her family in Palo Alto when it was a young town. My great grandparents came from British Columbia and settled in Palo Alto on Coleridge Avenue. They had four children, Gordon, Albert, Mina, and Roy (my grandfather). My grandfather's nickname is Teddy in the story below. My great grandfather had lost his job during the Great Depression and they were trying to make ends meet during the holiday season.

In her handwritten story shown in the photo here and transcribed below, my great grandmother wrote a story about that particular Christmas in Palo Alto in the early 1930s.



Ellen Hann's handwritten Christmas story.

THIS IS DURING THE DEPRESSION. IT WAS CHRISTMAS WEEK. MY HUSBAND HAD LOST HIS POSITION (THE FIRM HAD FAILED). WE HAD NO INCOME AT ALL. This was before unemployment or welfare. We were living on our savings and borrowing on our insurance. So money was scarce and I had to be careful.

I told my four children I would spend \$5.00 a piece on them. They could choose their own gifts, but we could not afford a tree.

Albert and Gordon had gone out in back of Stanford with friends to pick Mistletoe to sell. My husband always insisted

that the children all be present for dinner at 6 PM. Xmas Eve. The children were all home ready for dinner at 6, but no Roy-our youngest. I became quite anxious and when he appeared late, I scolded him and asked where he had been.

"Oh, buying a Xmas tree" he said.

"Where on Earth did you get the money" we asked?

"Oh, I sold some Mistletoe that Gordon gave me".

"Where is it? What did you pay for it"?

"I paid 50 cents and it is being delivered".

The boys hooted. Albert immediately drew a scrawny tree with skinny branches. Mina drew one with branches missing, but Roy just grinned and said, "wait and see".

As we were eating dinner, there was a great crashing noise on the front porch. I said, "what on Earth is that"? They rushed to the door and there was an immense tree and the driver yelled, " Merry Xmas" as he drove away.

After dinner Gordon and his dad attempted to bring the tree in, it was too big. After much measuring and sawing, they got it into the living room and it still touched the ceiling. They spent the evening decorating it.

After they were all snug in bed, Baxter as his usual habit, tucked a silver dollar in the toe of each stocking hung on the mantle.

As we had our little toddy together, we thought how much we had to be thankful for.



Hann family, 1946

(Continued from page 2) on the Board of Trustees until 1902. His legal work, both in San Francisco and locally, consumed much of his energy. He was described as a man full of energy, but lacking a "strong physique." In 1910, he suffered a nervous breakdown from his overwork. He and his wife sailed to Honolulu in hopes of regaining his health, without success.

In early September, he turned on the gas in his bathroom,



Waverley Street construction with Joseph Hutchinson in the foreground

lay on the floor, and "awaited the end." The official cause of death was "asphyxiation by gas administered by himself while temporarily deranged." He died at the age of 53.

There is a photograph in the PAHA Photograph Collection of Hutchinson, with his son on his shoulders and daughter standing next to him, watching sidewalk

construction on Waverley Street near the family home. For years it was the only known photo of Hutchinson.

History Jaunts for the Winter

Don't miss the semi-annual **Holiday Marketplace** sponsored by the Garden Club of Palo Alto. This year the highly popular event will take place 10:00 am – 3:00 pm on Saturday, December 1 at the Presbyterian Church, 1140 Cowper St., Palo Alto. Admission is free. Items for sale include jams, jellies, and candies, holiday wreaths, decorated mini trees, planted paperwhite baskets, gift tags, to name just a few. Most items have been created by Garden Club members especially for this event.



Luminous: A Celebration of Color & Light. November 17 – December 23. **The House and Gardens of the Filoli** historical estate will celebrate color and light with a fresh new take on Holiday decor in every room of the house and throughout the garden. Filoli Historic House & Garden, 86 Cañada Road, Woodside. For more information visit the website <https://filoli.org/event/holiday-teas>

The Foster, located at 940 Commercial St., Palo Alto, houses the permanent collection of the Foster Art & Wilderness Foundation. The foundation was established to preserve and keep intact Tony Foster's watercolor journey paintings as a whole work of art. The Foster also serves as a venue for art, wilderness, educational and community programs and events. The current exhibition celebrates Tony Foster's latest journey, "Exploring Beauty: Watercolour Diaries from the Wild." Admission is free. The Foster is open weekdays 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, weekends noon to 5:00 pm. For more information, visit the website www.thefoster.org or call call (650) 209-7181.

Hurry over to the **Herbert Hoover Memorial Exhibit Pavilion**—located on the Stanford campus adjacent to Hoover Tower—to see the powerful exhibit, "We Shot The War: Overseas Weekly in Vietnam." Rarely seen photographs explore and reveal the relationship between war, politics, and journalism during the Vietnam era. The exhibit is free and open to the public through December 8, 2018, Tuesday –Saturday, 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. Parking on campus is free on Saturdays. For more information, call (650) 723-3563.

The Cantor Arts Center on the Stanford campus, is a local treasure! The permanent collection is worth a first, second, and third visit. Two limited exhibits are available as well, throughout the holidays and after: "Contact Warhol: Photography Without End," continues at the Cantor until January 6, 2019; "The Spaces Between," by artist Do Ho Suh until February 25, 2019. The Cantor, located at 328 Lomita Drive, Stanford, is closed on Tuesdays, and open Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00 am – 5:00 pm, Thursdays 11:00 am to 8:00 pm, Fridays and Sundays 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Free admission. For more information, visit the website <https://museum.stanford.edu> or call (650) 723-4177.

Welcome New Member!
Sergio Mello

PAHA Upcoming Programs

January 20 - *Visionaries of Santa Clara Valley*, with author Robin Chapman

March 3 - *Santa Clara Valley before Silicon Valley*, with Ralph Britton

April 7 - *The Life of Timothy Hopkins*, with Steve Staiger

The Heritage Program for December 2018 will feature PAHA's November 2018 program, **LSD in Palo Alto: The World Would Never Be the Same**

Rich Green, PAHA Vice President and President of the Palo Alto History Museum, explores the fascinating history of LSD in Palo Alto and, with special guests Daniel Kottke and Dr. James Fadiman, illuminates LSD's contribution to creativity and inspiration that could have occurred only in Palo Alto.

Weds. 8 pm, Thurs. 10 am
& Sat. 12 pm on Channel 30

DVDs available from
the Guy Miller Archives
Tues. 4-8 pm, Thurs. 1-5 pm

The Tall Tree is published
eight times a year by the
PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Available Now - 2019 PAHA Calendar!



Back by popular demand, the 2019 PAHA Calendar is available for pick-up and purchase at the December 2nd PAHA program. This year's calendar features another series of historic Palo Alto images from the Archives. The calendar is free to members and \$15 for nonmembers. If you would like additional calendars, they are available for purchase at Bell's Books, Books, Inc., and the PAHA Archives. They make great gifts for friends and family, but act quickly, as there is a limited supply.



Peggy McKee, Melissa Verber,
Debbie Hapgood-Toscanelli,
Luana Staiger, *Editorial*
Jon Kinyon, *Design*
Omega Printing, *Printing*

Photographs courtesy of PAHA Guy Miller
Archives unless otherwise noted.