



Since 1913

The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

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The Palo Alto Historical Association presents: **Robin Chapman's**

Historic **BAY AREA VISIONARIES**

Sunday, January 20, 2019 2:00 – 4:00 pm

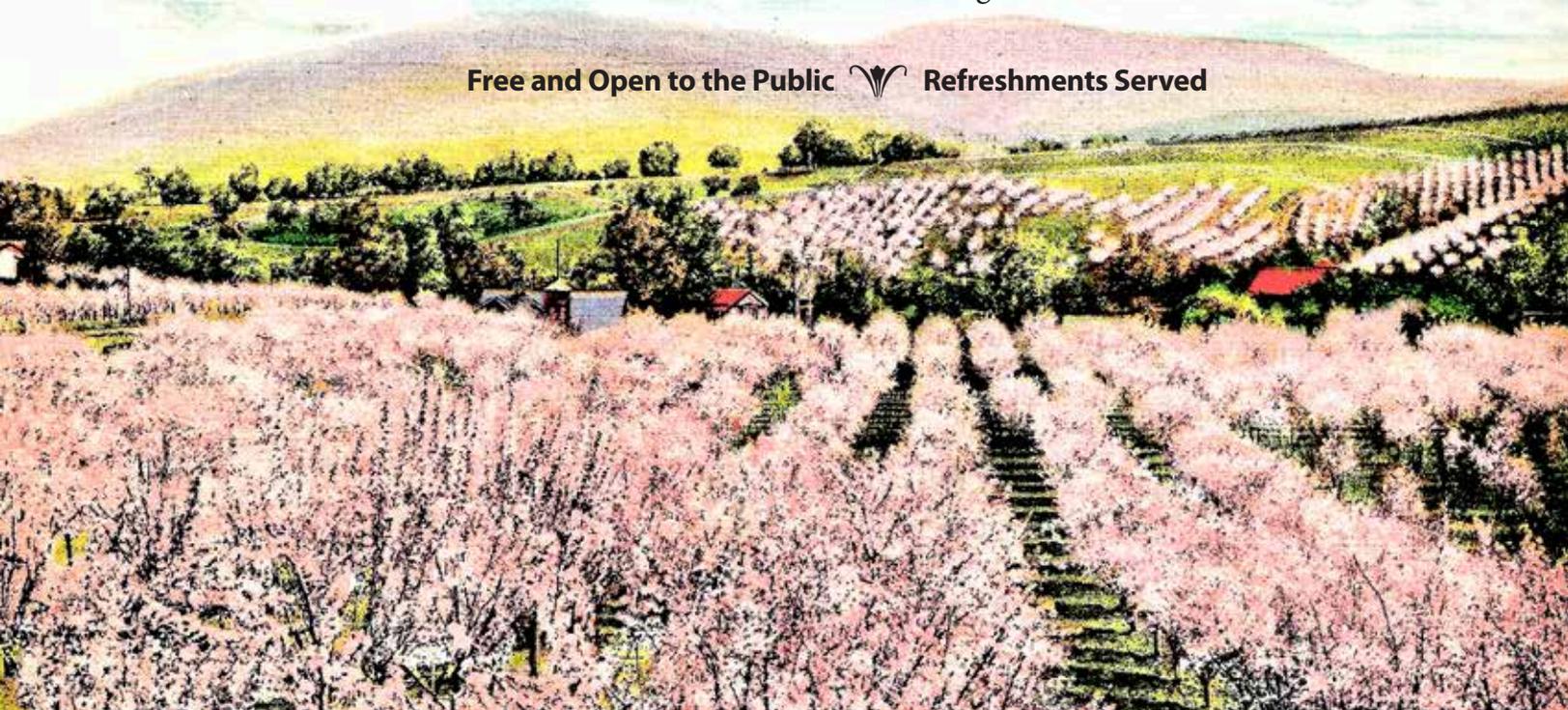
Palo Alto Art Center ~ 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto



Robin Chapman is returning to PAHA to present her latest project: *Historic Bay Area Visionaries*, based on her new book published in October by The History Press. The book tells the story of California from 1781-1915 through the lives of six innovative and interesting people. They include: Lope Inigo, an Ohlone man, born near what is today Mountain View; Juana Briones, known especially in Palo Alto for her success in business and her compassion, both of which are remarkable in light of the challenges she faced; poet and novelist Robert Louis Stevenson came to California on an errand of romance,

but his vision led him to make a difference to California history; heiress Sarah Winchester has inspired many gothic tales, but her true story is much more interesting; immigrant Thomas Foon Chew became a millionaire with his Bay Side Cannery at a challenging time for the Chinese in California; and Charlie Chaplin came to the Bay Area on just his second contract in the movies and during his months here became one of the most famous men in the world. Long before the age of Silicon Valley, these visionaries demonstrated the enterprising spirit of our region.

Free and Open to the Public  **Refreshments Served**





PRESIDENT'S LETTER
Ralph Britton

**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 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.

Martin Litton, Environmental Activist

I first met Martin Litton at a meeting of the Palo Alto Airport Association. I had known of his iconic environmental advocacy, so it was a thrill to actually meet him.

A bear of a man, his accomplishments were enormous as well. As a pilot in WWII, he flew gliders into territory behind the German lines. Walking back to allied lines after landing, they once encountered two German soldiers (who surrendered) on the way!

Martin felt the value of the gliders during the war was under-appreciated, as each glider carried a jeep, a field artillery gun and eight soldiers—together and ready for action. Parachute troops, by contrast, had to find each other and their weapons after landing and were more vulnerable.

Martin and his wife Esther operated boat trips on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon for almost 20 years, starting in 1971. They used wooden dories instead of rubber rafts, perhaps a memorial to the boats used by John Wesley Powell's 1869 expedition.

He used his classic Cessna 195 to fly clients to put-in points.

When Disney wanted to develop Mineral King as a ski area, with a road cutting through Sequoia National Park, Martin was horrified and took some young people to pull up the survey stakes. Asked if he had done the same thing when the new Tioga road was being planned in Yosemite, he demurred: "That was Ansel's project."



Martin Litton on the Green River

In 2004, he joined a group of us celebrating "50 years with no damn dam" at Echo Park on the Green River, paddling a kayak part of the way. He died in Portola Valley in May 2014 at the age of 97.



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

Dawn redwood, the variety from China that was thought to be extinct until it was found in the 1940s. I like them so much that I married a girl from Redwood High School.

While researching a trip to England we took in October, I discovered the British are also proud of their redwoods; the oldest ones were grown from seeds collected in California in the 1850s. In fact, a website (www.redwoodworld.co.uk) documents the thousands of redwoods growing throughout Britain. Most of those listed are the giant sequoia that grow in the Sierras, with fewer of the coast redwood

Redwoods in England

and even fewer Dawn redwoods.

While visiting Sussex, we stayed in a small town, Arundel, where I found my first British redwood tree in a church cemetery. I later confirmed it was listed in the online inventory.



Redwood tree at Trebah Garden

We also visited a former colleague of my wife in Falmouth who took us to the Trebah Garden, a nearby botanical garden where he had scouted out a redwood tree for my inspection. We walked for several hundred yards down a lush canyon until we found the tree he was proud to show me. (Continued on page 3)

Willa Cather's Sister

By Anita Delaney

Willa Cather (b. 1873) was a prominent American writer. When Willa was nine, the family moved from a farm near Winchester, Virginia to Red Cloud, Nebraska. Her early novels depicted her experiences growing up on the prairie in Nebraska. Her prairie trilogy includes: *O' Pioneers*, *Song of the Lark*, and *My Antonia*. Willa was the oldest child in the family, and she had six younger siblings. Jessica (b. 1881), the middle child, is the one who this story is about.

Jessica graduated from Red Cloud High School in June 1899. In October 1904, she married James William Auld, a Red Cloud banker. They had three children. Her daughter, Mary Virginia Auld Mellon was a favorite of Willa Cather. After a divorce in 1933, Jessica moved to Palo Alto, California. She lived several places in Palo Alto before settling in at 1102 Forest Avenue.

Willa Cather died in 1947. Around that time Jessica received an inheritance and moved to 1542 Hamilton Avenue, leaving behind furniture, newspapers, magazines, and letters at the Forest residence.

The residence was left vacant for many years, and during that time, vegetation took over the front and back yards. Children in the neighborhood referred to the house as "the haunted house."

In the mid-1950s, my dad worked as a real estate agent. He purchased the home on Forest Avenue in about 1958. At that time, I was in the 8th grade at Jordan Junior High. The family put a great deal of sweat equity into the house to make it a home. Under mounds of vegetation, an old above ground concrete pond was discovered in the back yard.

Knowing that Jessica was Willa Cather's sister, I decided to look through the mountain of old letters to see if I could find one from her famous sister. After much searching, I found one dated February 17, 1929 when Willa was staying at The Grosvenor in New York. Terms of endearment were used in the letter: "Dear Jessie" and "With love to you all, Willie".

Additionally, there was a letter from Willa to her sister Elsie dated October 18, 1904. It begins: "My Dear Little

Sister, I am so glad the wedding went off all right. From what you tell me and from what the paper said I think it must have been awfully pretty... Please make Jess write me all about it. I would to know who gave her the home. Was, oh was it Uncle Tom? I'm so glad they had the Episcopal service.... Write to me often Elsie, and tell me all about your doings. How do you like Latin? All my love to you, Dear. Willie."



Jessica Cather's home at 1102 Forest Avenue, Palo Alto.
Photo courtesy of Anita Delaney

One piece of furniture Jessica left behind at the Forest house was an oak writing desk. This became my desk through my high school and college years. When I settled into my Palo Alto home in the late 1970s, my mother gave it to me. While moving the desk, some papers from Red Cloud, Nebraska were dislodged. There was a blank statement from Drugs and Stationery, an advertisement for World Day of Prayer, February 28, 1936, and a recipe for Nut Bread. Also left behind was a first edition of *My Mortal Enemy* (1926).

Once in the early 1960s, Jessica came to the Forest house to see my dad on business. From a bedroom window, I looked outside and saw my dad and Jessica walk toward the garage. She was a short, slender, petite woman.

The home on Forest Avenue is no longer there. The property was sold about 1993, and the new owners tore it down to build a larger two-story home. Jessica Cather Auld's obituary appeared in the Palo Alto Times on November 27, 1964. Jessica died suddenly on Thanksgiving Day, 1964. She is interred at Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland, California.



(Continued from page 2) On the way, I noted several other redwood trees we walked by, and several days later, he emailed us to say he had discovered more redwoods in a park in Falmouth. None of them were listed on the website's inventory.

All of the redwoods we found in the botanical garden were coast redwoods. Devon and Cornwall, in the southwest of England, are known as the "British Riviera"

for its milder climate which is due to the effect of the Gulf Stream. The coast redwood does not like the colder climate with the snow that its relative, the giant sequoia, finds acceptable whether in the Sierras or the northern parts of Britain.

The Trebah Garden is well worth a visit for the lush, almost tropical, gardens. It is like California, only with more rain, and very unlike most of Britain.

History Jaunts for the Winter

Burn off those holiday calories by going ice skating! A traditional and old favorite is the **Winter Lodge**, 3009 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto, where families have enjoyed its indoor and outdoor rinks for 60 years! Winter Lodge is open for public skating through the middle of April with an entry fee of \$12 (plus \$5 skate rental). For more information, and to find out about times, classes, group parties, call (650) 493-4566 or visit the website www.winterlodge.com.

“I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream”! Although a little pricey, but by all accounts well worth the price of admission (\$38) visit the **Museum of Ice Cream**, 1 Grant Ave., San Francisco. There, you—with or without family—can sample ice cream, wade through a pool of rainbow sprinkles, and/or climb a pink, rock candy wall. For more information on hours and tickets, visit www.museumoficecream.com.

Make a 2019 resolution to explore San Jose, the “Capital of Silicon Valley,” where opportunities to discover its rich historical and cultural heritage await your discovery. One “must see” site—especially if you’ve never been there with your children or grandchildren — is the **Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum**, located in the Rose Garden, 1660 Park Avenue, San Jose. The museum is open Wed-Fri, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm; Sat-Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm; closed Mon-Tues.. For ticket information, a group trip, or a docent tour, visit the website <https://egyptianmuseum.org>.

If you’re looking for a family outing during the rainy (one can only hope) days of January, head off to the **Walt Disney Family Museum**, located in the Presidio, 104 Montgomery St., San Francisco. The museum celebrates the life and legacy of this iconic cartoonist and arbiter of children’s entertainment. January provides a rich offering of activities relating to the life of Walt Disney, his beloved cartoon characters, and his movies. For information about tickets and docent tours, visit www.waltdisney.org or call (415) 345-6800; the museum is open daily (except Tuesdays) 10:00 am – 6:00 pm.

If you haven’t driven around the Google campus for a while, be sure to visit to see the **Google Android Lawn Statues**. They comprise a series of large foam statues based on the names for versions of Google’s Android mobile operating system, which are named after desserts and sweet treats. They are located at 1981 Landings Dr., Mountain View. Better yet, if you have a friend or relative who works at Google, see if they can arrange a tour for you.

Welcome New Members!

Monica Yeung Arima
Walter Enos
Ralph and Yvonne Cheng

PAHA Upcoming Programs

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

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

May 5 - Historic Preservation Month
featuring PAST Awards

The Heritage Program

for January 2019 will feature
PAHA’s December 2018
program, Vignettes:
Tales of Palo Alto.
Karen Holman hosts a variety
of speakers sharing stories
of Palo Alto’s past.

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



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Archives unless otherwise noted.

Last Chance - Get Your 2019 PAHA Calendar!



If you are a PAHA member, remember to pick up your FREE 2019 PAHA calendar at the program on January 20th. This year’s calendar again features another series of historic Palo Alto images from the Archives. The calendar is free to members and \$15 for nonmembers. Note that they are not being mailed out, so be sure to pick yours up at the January 20th program or come by the Archives.