



Since 1913

# The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO  
HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION

May 2023 Volume 46, No 6

The Palo Alto Historical Association presents

## THE 27TH CENTENNIAL PLAQUE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Sunday, May 7, 2023 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Palo Alto Art Center ~ 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto



Palo Alto Stanford Heritage (PAST), in cooperation with the Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA), will host its 27th presentation of Centennial Plaques to owners of 1922 buildings in Palo Alto. We will also present Historic Preservation Awards to recognize preservation projects that renovate, rehabilitate, or restore local historic buildings.



Our featured speaker is architect Daniel Garber, FAIA, partner at Fergus Garber Architects. Dan's topic will be **Birge Clark: The Early Years, His Time and Influences, 1922 to 1933**. PAST and PAHA are celebrating Architect Birge Clark on the 100th anniversary of the founding of his practice in Palo Alto in 1922.

Birge Clark's long career as an architect was almost solely conducted in Palo Alto. His career was varied enough to include single and multiple family residences, commercial

structures, and prominent institutional buildings. Well known works include the Lou Henry Hoover House on the Stanford University campus, the Medico-Dental Building across from City Hall, and the President Hotel. Other important designs are the Palo Alto Fire and Police Station (now Avenidas), Kathleen Norris House, Roth Building (Palo Alto Medical Clinic), US Post Office on Hamilton Avenue, and the Lucie Stern Community Center.

This program is part of PAST Heritage's mission to promote the importance of preserving the historic architecture, neighborhoods, and character of the greater Palo Alto and Stanford areas. PAST Heritage holds its Centennial Plaque and Historic Preservation Awards program each year during the month of May as part of National Preservation Month.

Please join PAST and PAHA in celebrating the preservation of Palo Alto's unique historic character.

Free and Open to the Public ~ Refreshments Served

**2023 PALO ALTO  
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# “Famous” People Buried in Palo Alto

By PAHA Historian, Steve Staiger

Years ago, while looking at the “Findagrave.com” website, I discovered a list of ten famous people buried in Palo Alto. I found the list for Palo Alto to be a bit puzzling. Since Alta Mesa is the only cemetery in Palo Alto, all of the people on the list should have been buried there. However, the first two “famous people” on the list were not buried in Palo Alto. Jane and Leland Stanford are buried (entombed) on the campus in unincorporated Santa Clara County, though I can understand the confusion for a non-local compiler.

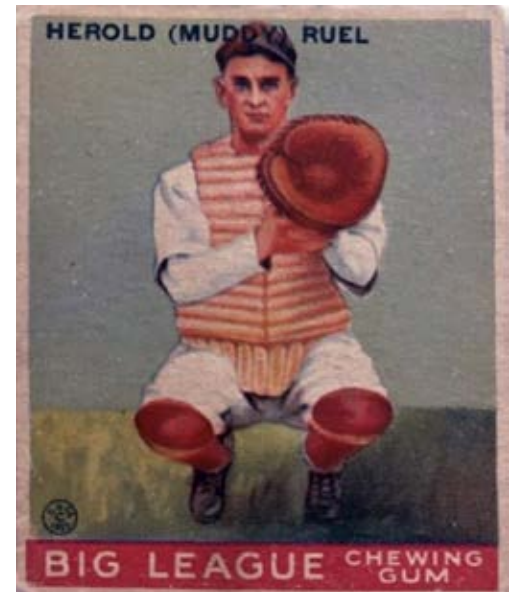
Many of the other names on the top ten list were people who are famous or well-known for their accomplishments of 40, 50, or more years ago. Shirley Temple and “Tennessee” Ernie Ford were well known in the 50s and 60s (and earlier), but I suspect that very few people under the age of 50 today have ever heard of “Tennessee” Ernie Ford.

Other names that made the list include David Packard and Ron McKernan (“Pigpen” of the Grateful Dead). In a future Tall Tree article, I plan to cover the story of William Challee (1904-1989). Challee was an American actor with a very slight connection to Palo Alto, yet he was buried at Alta Mesa. At one time he was considered one of the ten most famous people buried in Palo Alto—more so than Fred or Lewis Terman, William Shockley, or Kathleen Norris—who in my opinion, were more suitable candidates for the top ten list.

From the Find a Grave website list of the ten most famous people buried in Palo Alto, I found a name I was not familiar with: Herold Ruel. Since this discovery, he has since become one of my favorite baseball players of all time (but still not as highly regarded as Willie Mays). Herold “Muddy” Ruel was born in 1896 and played catcher in the major leagues for 19 years, starting with the St. Louis Browns in 1915, followed by the Yankees, Washington Senators, and Detroit Tigers, before finishing his career with the White Sox in 1934. Historians of the game regard “Muddy” Ruel as one of the finest defensive catchers of all time.

Ruel earned a law degree from Washington University in his hometown of St. Louis.

A college degree in those days for a professional ball player was unusual, and a law degree was extremely rare. He later coached and managed several major league teams before becoming the general manager of the Tigers. He is credited with creating the well-known term for a catcher’s equipment as the “tools of ignorance,” which certainly did not apply to him.



Harold “Muddy” Ruel collectible baseball card

He left professional baseball in 1956 and eventually moved to Palo Alto, residing at 420 Maple Street. One can wonder if his decision to live in Palo Alto may have been influenced by his visit in 1932 when the Detroit Tigers held their Spring Training Camp in Palo Alto, training at the ball field at El Camino Park, and staying at the Cardinal Hotel.

His interesting life ended when he died on November 13, 1963, after his automobile hit a tree on University Avenue. A heart attack was suspected as the cause of the accident. Burial at Alta Mesa logically followed.

Today, if you search the Find a Grave website, you can find Steve Jobs on an updated list of 20 famous people buried at Alta Mesa Cemetery. According to the cemetery, the number of visitors looking for Steve Jobs’ gravesite now surpasses those searching for Pigpen’s grave, who until recently, drew the most visitors.

*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.*

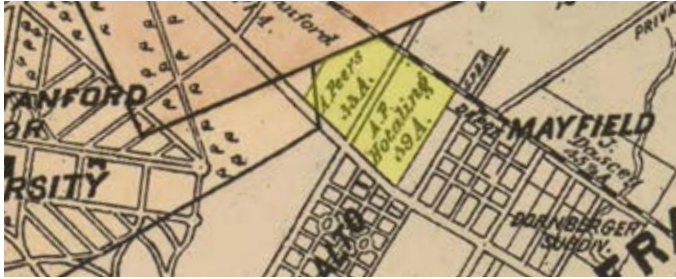
*PAHA Board meetings are held at 5pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Guy Miller Archives.*

*Six public programs are held between October and June, typically the first Sunday of the month with the monthly schedule determined by program and facility availability. Programs include speakers. The final program of the year is held in June and includes a social gathering. The public is welcome at all programs.*

# Hotaling's Whisky

By PAHA Board member Bo Crane

In preparation for last year's first-ever PAST (Palo Alto Stanford Heritage) walking tour of the former town of Mayfield, we came upon an 1889 map indicating a 39-acre parcel adjacent to Mayfield previously owned by A.P. Hotaling. Between El Camino Real and the railroad, the parcel went from Cambridge Avenue to Stanford Avenue. A 33-acre parcel north of Stanford Avenue, including Peers Park, was owned by Mayfield businessman Alexander Peers.



Detail of an 1889 map showing A.P. Hotaling and A. Peers' parcels in Mayfield, shown towards the middle of this image

We know about A. Peers, but who was A.P. Hotaling? Anson Parsons Hotaling was born in 1827 into an established Dutch-origin family in New Baltimore, New York, on the west bank of the Hudson River. In 1852, Hotaling left the East Coast for San Francisco, chasing the gold rush. Unsuccessful in that endeavor, he worked as a store clerk for a wholesale liquor store and, within a couple of years, owned the store. In 1866, Hotaling built the largest liquor repository on the West Coast on Jackson Street in San Francisco. At the time, he was married with one son, three more soon to come, and on his way to becoming wealthy.

So, why did he purchase the empty parcel in Mayfield? Did he want another warehouse on the Peninsula, perhaps even another distillery? Mayfield had plenty of eager saloons, and the train station was adjacent to the parcel. Perhaps Stanford's resistance to booze near his upcoming university was a factor. Whatever his plans, they weren't realized, and the property remained undeveloped.

Hotaling's eldest child, Anson Jr., had been managing the liquor business but died at 35 in 1899, leaving behind a widow and two children. A year later, Hotaling Sr. died of heart failure at age 73. His next oldest two sons then took over the business. The Hotaling parcel remained undeveloped, and in 1904, both the former Peers and Hotaling parcels in Mayfield became the Evergreen Park tract.

The name "Hotaling" connects to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. The San Francisco warehouse survived both the quake and then the surrounding firestorm. U.S. Navy sailors brought a fire hose a mile from Fisherman's Wharf to save the building. The building remains on the corner of Hotaling Place and Jackson Street. Saving the warehouse prompted a local poet to pen these memorable lines:

*If, as they say, God spanked the town for being over frisky,  
Why did He burn the churches down and save Hotaling's whisky?*



Restored Hotaling warehouse building in the Jackson Square Historical District of San Francisco (photo credit: Google Maps)

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## Walter Hays Elementary School Celebrates 100 Years!

Calling all neighbors, alumni, staff, and Palo Alto community past and present—join the 100th anniversary celebration of Walter Hays Elementary School on May 6!

Begin the day at 10am by cheering on Walter Hays students with their centennial school float in the annual Palo Alto City May Fete Parade. From 2:00-4:00pm gather at Walter Hays campus to visit with old friends to celebrate the Centennial! Commemorative 100 Year t-shirts will be available for purchase, as well as personalized bricks for a walkway at the school. Visit [www.walterhaysschool100.org](http://www.walterhaysschool100.org) for more information.



# May Jaunts

We have survived Covid, unseasonal rain, and cold weather! It's time to go outside and experience spring in California!

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend, watch, or participate in **Palo Alto's 99th May Fete Parade!** This year's theme, "Empowering Wellness through Community," showcases Palo Alto individuals, groups, schools, teams, marching bands, clubs, activities and floats, to name a few of the parade's features. Follow the end of the marchers as they wend their way to Heritage Park (300 Homer Avenue) for more fun, music, activities, booths, games, and prizes. The event is free, open to the public and kicks off at 10:00am, Saturday, May 10, along University Avenue. For details & more information, visit [www.cityofpaloalto.org/mayfete](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/mayfete) or call 650-463-4949. To register your group or business, email [MayFeteFair@gmail.com](mailto:MayFeteFair@gmail.com).



Image courtesy of the city of Palo Alto



Image courtesy of The Stanford Daily

One of the unintended consequences of the recent winter and spring storms has been the almost magical reappearance of **Stanford's Lake Lagunita!** California's prolonged drought did what many thought was irrevocable damage to this Stanford University campus icon. Now, it's worth taking the short walk from the public parking lot at Tressider Student Union (459 Serra Mall) to "Lake Lag," as generations of students have called it.

From the opening of the university in 1891, Lake Lagunita became a significant focus of student social life. In its hey day, "Lake Lag" hosted bonfires, picnics, boat races, sunbathing, swimming, and other activities, including the annual Spring Water Carnival. Fast forward to the mid 1970s, when a full lake became a rarity. Sadly, the 21st century brought drought conditions and the lake's virtual disappearance. The "atmospheric rivers" and "bomb cyclone" of this winter have nearly restored the lake! Once again, students and locals gravitate to its shores, bringing their boats, rafts, and dinghies despite warning signs that surround the circumference of the lake.

A "must" Jaunt will take you to **Cupertino's Cherry Blossom Festival.** This beloved annual event celebrates cherry blossoms as well as Cupertino's sister city relationship with Toyokawa, Japan. It features a wide variety of activities and performances for visitors of all ages. It is free and open to the public, 10:30am-5:30pm, April 29-30, at Cupertino Memorial Park, 21121 Stevens Creek Blvd, Cupertino.



For detailed information, visit <https://www.cupertinocherryblossomfestival.org>.

Welcome New PAHA Member  
Karsten Theess

### 2023 Program Dates

- June 7\*
- October 1
- December 3

\*Unless otherwise noted, programs are held in person on the 1st Sunday of the month. Check our website at [www.pahistory.org](http://www.pahistory.org) for program information.

### Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the March 12th program, *Palo Alto Teens Capture and Preserve Our History*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link: <https://vimeo.com/809837781>

### 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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