



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Since 1913

June 2023 Volume 46, No 7

The Palo Alto Historical Association presents

PAHA ANNUAL CELEBRATION: OLD MAYFIELD FUN

Wednesday, June 7, 2023 5:00 – 7:00 pm

El Palo Alto Room, Mitchell Park Community Center - 3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

FREE for members plus one guest

A \$40 PAHA membership includes free admission to our annual event plus one guest

Sign up to become a member on our web site, pahistory.org

Space is limited and RSVPs are required. Make your reservation before May 28



Charles Peterson, bartender, behind the bar of Rehfeld's Place, 1923



Segher's & Spellman's Dancing Academy at Rich's Hall, 1888



Uncle Jim's Cabin, 1874

We are excited to invite you to this year's PAHA cocktail event celebrating Mayfield's storied past. Join us for appetizers, cocktails, displayed Palo Alto artifacts, entertainment, and good old fun!

Before there was Palo Alto, there was Mayfield. Palo Alto and Mayfield were rival towns with two very different reputations. Mayfield grew around Uncle Jim's Cabin, a roadhouse built at the main stagecoach junction with the only saloon in the area. It was immediately popular with travelers and locals alike. As Mayfield expanded, the main attraction was its thirteen saloons and two breweries contributing to the town's wild and rowdy population. Lumbermen and farmhands would spend their week's wages drinking in town. Stanford University students

congregated at the local bars, and the University eventually put up a barrier to block the main access to Mayfield, hoping to prevent them from making the libatious pilgrimage.

In honor of Mayfield's colorful history, and just for fun, we've poured a little bit of our rambunctious past and modern sophistication into a signature cocktail inspired by one of the world's most-popular refreshments in a glass: The Palo Alto Old Fashioned!

Appetizers, wine, beer, and our Palo Alto Old Fashioned signature cocktail will be served. Non-alcoholic beverages include iced tea and lemonade. Each person will receive two free non-transferable drink tickets when they check in at the door.

RSVP by May 28th at Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/paha-annual-celebration-old-mayfield-fun-tickets-615168935847>

**2023 PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Georgie Gleim, President

Rich Green, Vice President

*Molly Tinney, Correspondence
Secretary*

Bo Crane, Recording Secretary

Robert Strohecker, Treasurer

Darla Secor, Historian

Steve Staiger, Historian

Colleen Braff

Jeff Day

Dennis Garcia

Brian George

Catherine Hamrick-Down

Lisa Krieger

Jerry Tinney

Melissa Verber

William Warrior

Tennis and Typewriters

By Jane Israel Honikman

In December 2018, my husband and I pledged a donation to the Palo Alto History Museum to be used for an exhibit honoring my parents' business named after my father, Delmer T. Israel. We are pleased to learn the construction of the Museum will begin soon.

My father's love of tennis led him to forgo Stanford Law School in 1927 and open a small business specializing in stringing, repairing, and selling tennis rackets in downtown Palo Alto. He and my mother, Beatrice, who did the bookkeeping, ran The Tennis Shop together on Ramona Avenue next door to the original public library. The 1929 Crash benefited their business because, during depressions, people tend not to buy anything new. Instead, people would repair and maintain items. Tennis is somewhat seasonal, so when a man offered to sell his typewriter repair business to them, my parents took it on, and the store was renamed Typewriters and Tennis.

pull them out. It truly was a family affair. In 1955, the business moved to 435 University Avenue. The pinnacle of their success came when Silicon Valley began to boom.



Beatrice Levy Israel in front of their shop on University Avenue, 1928

My brother Stephen and his wife Joyce, who had been working full-time with my father since the early 1950s, took over the business after my father retired. After his passing in 1970, the company became Delmer Israel Business

Machine and Tennis Center and thrived for another 10 years. By 1979, as the popularity of tennis waned and business slowed, the inventory was liquidated. At the same time, technology in the business world was rapidly evolving. Computers replaced typewriters, adding machines and cash registers. Rent on University Avenue skyrocketed, so in 1983 they moved the business to 2655 Middlefield Road. Unfortunately, two years later, Delmer T. Israel Family Business closed its doors. Stephen and Joyce moved away from Palo Alto, but my mother lived on University Avenue until her passing in 1998.

I am left with the memories of growing up watching my Palo Alto family business thrive, then die. I still have my wooden tennis racket and the portable Olympia typewriter given to me upon graduating from Paly to take to college. Now it is time to share this unique family business story through an exhibit at the Palo Alto History Museum.



Delmer T. Israel at the workbench of their typewriter and tennis repair shop, 1930

When World War II reached the US, the manufacturing and sale of typewriters and adding machines were strictly forbidden. Typewriter companies were required to divert their materials to make war supplies. This resulted in a demand for repairs. In 1948, my brothers began to work at the store while still in high school. My father would bring home tennis rackets needing broken strings removed, and I would help

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.



Story Hour at the Children's Library, 1941

Tell Us A Story!

It is PAHA's mission to collect, preserve, and present Palo Alto's history, and we'd love to hear from you!

We are always interested in hearing your stories and recollections of Palo Alto and the surrounding communities. Please consider writing your story down and submitting it for publication consideration in a future Tall Tree newsletter!

Submit your story to pahatalltree@gmail.com

Embarcadero Road

By PAHA Board member Bo Crane

In 1769, when the Portola Expedition first camped by what Juan Bautista de Anza later named San Francisquito Creek, many trails wound through the flora from the foothills to the bay. Paths were used by different Muwekma Ohlone tribelets and by game, including grizzly bears seeking the salmon runs fresh from the salt water.

Some 60+ years later, Rafael Soto settled with his wife on the north bank of San Francisquito Creek. Soto was a first-generation native of the pueblo of San Jose who had been employed as a woodcutter in the redwoods upstream. Soto had to make peace with the Ohlone, who still dominated the surrounding land. The creek flowed freely all year long and provided easy access to the bay through what was otherwise tidal mud flats. Soto built a wharf on the creek from which he and his family sold food and goods to travelers. He received a Mexican land grant for his land in 1835, confirmed to his widow in writing in 1841, two years after his death. The Soto house was near where Newell Road meets Greene Middle School. The wharf was where the Newell Road Bridge is today.

The first printed use of the word *embarcadero* may have been with the June 18, 1845 land grant called Rancho Embarcadero de Santa Clara. At the time Mayfield was forming in 1855, Matadero Creek was not the lined channel it is today but spilled out into a flood plain, creating a slough. Lumber and other goods were hauled to what became *Embarcadero de San Francisquito*, a launching area where San Francisquito Creek entered the Mayfield slough. An 1856 map shows an *embarcadero* about where the Baylands Golf Links clubhouse (formally Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course) is today—downstream of the Soto wharf before the creek was rerouted north of the golf course.

When Rafael Soto's wife died in 1851, her eldest daughter, who was married to Irish sea captain John Greer, inherited the land grant. After running into difficulty getting the inheritance confirmed by the California Lands Commission, Greer agreed to allow San Francisco grading contractor, Thomas Seale, to attempt to arrange validation of the grant. When he was successful, Seale was given half the land grant as his fee.

The first house built on Embarcadero Road was located on a large parcel at the corner of the County Road. John Greer originally built the 22-room multi-story house in 1869. An 1876 map depicts Embarcadero Road stretching between “Embarcadero” on the eastern end and the County Road at the western end, with Leland Stanford's newly acquired stock farm on the other side.



Embarcadero Road, pre-1900

Timothy Hopkins acquired the Seale land in the northwest corner of the former Soto grant. He mapped his University Park subdivision in 1888, using

“Embarcadero Road” as the southern boundary. Palo Alto, the name of the subdivision's town, was incorporated in 1894 with Embarcadero Road still the southernmost street with lots only on the north side. Houses existed on that side as of 1900. Land south of Embarcadero Road later became the roads and lots of the Seale Additions.

In 1917, the Palo Alto city limits had grown southward to Oregon Avenue (and across the tracks to El Camino). In 1918, construction of a new Palo Alto High School across from the massive Greer house was completed, opening in 1919. The Embarcadero underpass was built in 1936, changing an on-grade railroad track crossing



The first cars going through the Embarcadero Road underpass, 1936

located so close to the school. The eighty-year-old Greer house was demolished in 1952 and the Town & Country Village shopping center opened a year later.

In the mid-50s, the Embarcadero Road overpass was completed at the Bayshore Highway (now Highway 101), replacing the former stoplight intersection. The eastern end of Embarcadero

Road was used for a landfill, a yacht harbor, golf course, airport, and a wastewater treatment plant. The rerouting of San Francisquito Creek ended a natural scouring of the channel, requiring the yacht harbor to be continually dredged. The dredged mud conveniently provided cover for the dump until the landfill closed, and soon the yacht harbor closed as well. However, the Palo Alto Boat Launch still remains at the eastern end of Embarcadero Road, adjoining the Mayfield Slough, a vestigial remembrance of the *embarcadero's* original purpose.

June Jaunts

It may have been some time since you have jaunted over to the **Los Altos History Museum**. The museum offers a new permanent exhibit, *Making Connections: Stories from the Land*, as well as the J. Gilbert Smith House and Gallery, an architectural Exhibit and Gardens, and a Museum Store. Running through May 28, 2023, the latest exhibit, *The Past Shapes the Future: A Retrospective*, invites the visitor to take a walk down memory lane to reflect on Los Altos's past and contemplate its future. Take the opportunity while you're there to visit the renovated craftsman style J. Gilbert Smith House.

The Los Altos History Museum is located at 51 South San Antonio Road in Los Altos. It is free and open to the public, Thur – Sat, noon-5:00pm. For more detailed information on the Los Altos History Museum, call 650-948-9427 or visit <https://www.losaltoshistory.org/>.



One of the great local treasures is the **San Francisco Bay Trail**. The trail winds its way, link by link, for 350 miles—from San Jose up to Marin and Napa down to the East Bay. When fully completed, it will stretch for 500 miles through 9 counties, 47 cities, 130 parks, and 7 bridges.

If you are less ambitious and looking for something more local, look into Menlo Park's **Bedwell Bayfront Park**, a 160-acre community jewel located at 1600 Marsh Road. The trail consists of a relatively flat, 2-3 mile loop, through marshes and former salt ponds. The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge surrounds it on 3 sides. The park is free and open to the public from 7 am to sunset, when the gates are closed and locked. Free parking, restrooms, and places to refill water bottles are available.

For more information visit <https://menlopark.gov/Parks/Bedwell-Bayfront-Park>.



Image courtesy of Los Altos History Museum

Welcome New PAHA Member
Mary Pat O'Conner

2023 Program Dates

• 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 for program information.

Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the May 7th program, *The 27th Centennial Plaque and Historic Preservation Awards*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link: <https://vimeo.com/814425410>

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.

In Memoriam

Judy Ann Edwards (April 2022)

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



Bo Crane, Peggy McKee, Luana Staiger, Melissa Verber, *Editors*
Jon Kinyon, *Assistant Editor & Design*
Print to Inspire, *Printing*
Photographs courtesy of PAHA Guy Miller Archives unless otherwise noted.

GLEIM
THE
JEWELER
EST. 1931
gleimjewelers.com

BELL'S BOOKS
Fine New, Used & Rare Books
Bought & Sold Since 1935
♦
Open daily : 536 Emerson Street
in downtown Palo Alto
♦
650-323-7822 www.bellsbooks.com