



Since 1913

The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

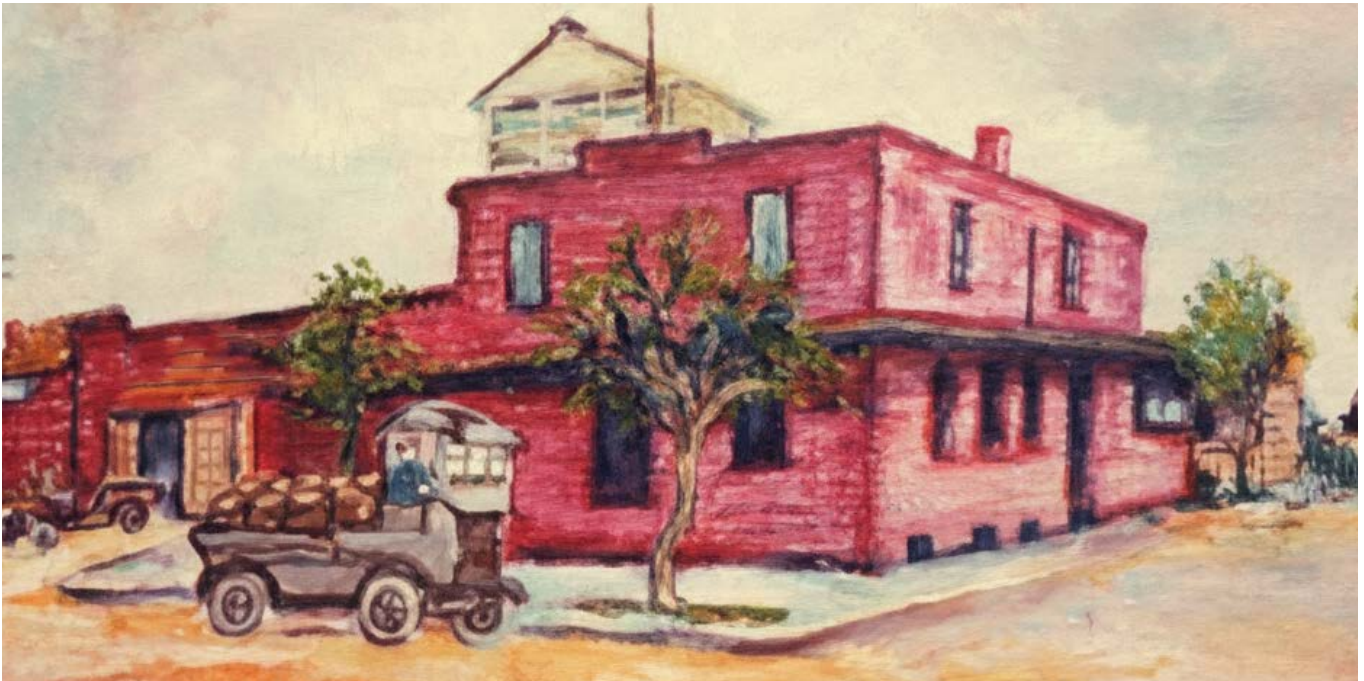
Dec. 2025 Volume 49, No 2

In cooperation with



Palo Alto Historical Association presents

A TOAST TO PALO ALTO – ITS COMPLICATED ALCOHOL STORY



Artist depiction of the Mayfield Brewery, once located at the corner of present-day Birch Street and California Avenue. Painting by Annie Fitz

Sunday, December 14, 2025 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Rinconada Library* ~ 1213 Newell Road, Palo Alto

This month's program will feature PAHA historian Steve Staiger speaking on the history of alcohol in Palo Alto. While many of us know about Palo Alto's "dry days", the actual story is far more interesting with many variations on what was dry and what was not.

The saga of alcohol in Palo Alto has been complicated. This story dates back to the time of the Ohlone, to the wild (and wet) times of Mayfield with its many saloons and local breweries, to the national era of Prohibition, and the various attempts to make Palo Alto a dry town.

Hear how East Palo Alto's "Whiskey Gulch" and the Alpine Inn (aka Zott's) in Portola Valley also contributed the story.



Frank Crist, far left, receives the first legal cocktail at the Shutter Restaurant in Palo Alto on May 21, 1971

Join us for a toast to Frank Crist—the Palo Alto attorney who fought to rid Palo Alto of its dry label in the 1970s!

*Please note that this program will be held in the large meeting room inside the Rinconada Library.

Free and Open to the Public ~ Refreshments Served

**2025 PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Georgie Gleim, President

Rich Green, Vice President

Molly Tinney, Correspondence

Secretary

Robert Strohecker, Treasurer

Darla Secor, Historian

Steve Staiger, Historian

Wendy Crowder

Jeff Day

Ross DeHovitz

Dennis Garcia

Brian George

Catherine Hamrick-Down

Jon Kinyon

Lisa Krieger

Mary Pat O'Connell

Jerry Tinney

Melissa Verber

Jeff Watt

The Carved Tables of Mayfield

By Jon Kinyon, PAHA Board Member



Charlie Meyers shows off one of his prized table tops, 1906

In 2015, I became the proud owner of a rare piece of Palo Alto's past: one of the 13 carved tables from Mayfield's premier saloon, Anzini's Bar, a relic from the late 1890s that captures the rebellious spirit of early Stanford University students. Handling this aged wooden tabletop, etched deeply with initials and graffiti, I feel a strong connection to a bygone era whenever I admire it on the wall of my 21st-century man cave.

Mayfield, established in 1855 as a stage-coach stop along what is now El Camino Real, had become a bustling, rowdy township by the 1890s, known for its proximity to lumber mills and farms, but primarily for its notorious cluster of 13 saloons and two breweries. When Stanford opened in 1891, its students flocked to these bars, seeking escape from the university's strict temperance rules, which were set by founders Leland and Jane Stanford.

Anzini's Bar in the Mayfield Hotel, at the corner of what is now El Camino Real and California Avenue, was the central gathering spot. Students carved their initials and fraternal logos into large round wooden tabletops during boisterous gatherings. Once a tabletop was filled, it was hoisted up and bolted to the wall, and a fresh one was placed to continue the tradition. My table, one of these originals, bears the marks of those nights—carvings telling tales of camaraderie and defiance. I've been searching for the tabletop bearing Herbert Hoover's initials from his student days (1891–1895), but haven't found it yet.

This collection of 13 tables was insured in 1912 for \$50,000 (\$1.6 million in today's dollars) for its historical significance.

After Mayfield's saloons closed under prohibition pressures by 1905, these wall-mounted displays passed through private hands—from bars to restaurants, then a coffee house on Stanford's campus. One found a home at The Oasis Beer Garden in Menlo Park, opened in 1933, where similar carving traditions continued until its 2018 closure. Over time, the collection fragmented, and I seized the chance to purchase one when it became available.

The story of these tables is tied to Charles Meyers, who took over Anzini's before the turn of the century. "Charlie's Place" was a thorn in the side of Stanford President David Starr Jordan and his anti-alcohol campaigns. Meyers was jailed for selling liquor illegally in 1906 and run out of town, only to open a bar at the corner of El Camino and Main Street in Menlo Park. Later, he opened The Junction in Mountain View, dodging a broader 1909 liquor ban. Meyers' persistence, evidenced by his defiant advertisements in school publications and yearbooks, mirrored the students' spirit, and they loved him for it.



Private drinking room at Anzini's bar, 1906

It was Mayfield's refusal to go dry in 1886 that led Leland Stanford to secure funds to establish Palo Alto. By 1925, economic shifts forced Mayfield's annexation by its neighbor, but its legacy endures in artifacts like my table. Similar carving traditions continued at The Oasis (1933–2018) and Rossotti's Alpine Inn in Portola Valley. Carved tabletops at "Zotts" were turned into wall paneling during a 2018–2019 restoration to display this heritage.

I see these tables as a reminder of how our polished present grew from a gritty past, a story etched in wood for all to see.

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 conducted using Zoom at 5 pm the first Wednesday of each month (except August).

Public programs are held at 2 pm on the first Sunday of October, December, February, March, and May at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road. 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.

Setting the Record Straight: When the Twin Tree Fell

By Jeff Watt, PAHA Board Member

The date when one of the Palo Alto redwood twins fell has long been a mystery. Plaques at El Palo Alto Park and Centennial Walk downtown display the only known photograph of the twin-trunked Palo Alto redwood, taken by renowned landscape photographer Carleton Watkins, and claim that one of the twins fell in the 1880s. Though presented as fact on the plaques and in numerous publications, closer examination reveals no conclusive evidence supports this claim.



Centennial plaque

The mystery dates back over 90 years to when Palo Alto's first historian, Guy Miller, set out to pinpoint the date of the twin's fall. For more than 15 years, Miller searched for reports of the event and gathered recollections from pioneers who lived at the time, as documented in the Palo Alto Historical Association archives. In a 1935 *San Jose Mercury Herald* article, he even appealed to readers for help in solving the puzzle. Despite his efforts, no contemporary newspaper report of the twin's fall was found, though Miller accumulated a collection of hazy memories placing the event between the 1870s and 1892. With assistance—and perhaps some influence—from early Mayfield resident William Myrick, Miller

concluded in a 1947 letter to the *Stanford Alumni Review* that the tree probably fell in 1885 or 1886. This was based on records of heavy rainfall that happened to align with Myrick's wife's vague memory of seeing the downed twin across San Francisquito Creek. Though speculative, this date was repeated in later publications, evolving into accepted fact.

My first clue that this was incorrect came from an 1882 *Sacramento Bee* article, apparently unknown to Miller, about Leland Stanford's stock farm. The article explained that the farm was named Palo Alto after a large, isolated redwood whose companion had fallen "some years ago," indicating the twin fell well before 1885 or 1886.

Armed with this evidence, I combed through online newspaper databases using various keywords, hoping to find a report that had eluded Miller. I discovered a brief item in the November 20, 1875, *San Mateo Gazette*, reporting that a large redwood had fallen across San Francisquito Creek the past week during a storm. As the only contemporary report of a redwood falling in the area during the 1870s or 1880s, it likely described the twin, but the details were insufficient for certainty.

Over the next two years, I worked to corroborate this finding. Dating Watkins' twin redwoods photograph to 1874, uncovering an overlooked 1877 photograph of the single-trunked tree, and finding an 1888 magazine article suggesting the twin fell before Stanford's initial stock farm land purchase in 1876 all supported the 1875 date. All the pieces of the puzzle fit together, yet I suspected a more detailed report from November 1875 might exist, given the Palo Alto redwood's reputation as a famous regional landmark during that era.

Nearly giving up hope, I checked for Bay Area newspapers I had overlooked and discovered the *San Mateo Times*, a short-lived weekly in print in 1875. Though not available online, a microfilm copy was held at UC Berkeley, where I viewed it. On page 3 of the Saturday, November 20, 1875 issue, was the detailed report I had hoped to find. It described a large tree, blown down in a storm the past week, as one of a pair of giant redwoods—well-known landmarks—on San Francisquito Creek near Menlo Park. This unquestionably referred to El Palo Alto's companion. Another article on the same page reported that the storm peaked on Tuesday night, "during which a perfect hurricane of wind and rain was raging."

After more than 90 years, the report that eluded Palo Alto historians has been found and the mystery solved. We now know with certainty that a furious November 1875 storm felled the redwood twin, likely at its peak on Tuesday night, November 16.

From the Archives:

Fulton Street "CHRISTMAS FAIRYLAND LANE"

Year 1940

In a common desire to promote Christmas joy throughout the holidays, particularly for the children of the 1700 and 1800 blocks on Fulton Street, and to foster a similar spirit throughout the community and Palo Alto, it has been decided by the residents of these two blocks to have, in addition to their individual decorations, illuminated Christmas trees maintained in the parking areas throughout the Christmas holidays.

Pursuant to the above the committee is pleased to report that 54 Christmas trees will be illuminated each with 15 lights and placed in the parking areas, as follows:

W.E. Atkinson	1726 Fulton - 3	A.V. Travis	1801 Fulton - 2
H.L. Oberg	1716 Fulton - 2	R.B. West	1802 Fulton - 2
J.N. Paulson	1734 Fulton - 3	O.R. Ogren	1810 Fulton - 2
Mrs. H.C. Cole	1745 Fulton - 3	J.M. Wylie	1820 Fulton - 2
T.F. Conroy	1748 Fulton - 2	J.T. Cotter	1821 Fulton - 2
E.C. Fitzgerald	1755 Fulton - 2	O. Sorrick	1833 Fulton - 2
H.A. Des Marais	1756 Fulton - 2	H.E. Hansen	1845 Fulton - 2
W.B. Martin	1765 Fulton - 2	H.L. Weber	1850 Fulton - 3
C.F. Salz	1766 Fulton - 2	A.J. Chappell	1861 Fulton - 2
A.C. Taft	1770 Fulton - 2	E.T. Hartmann	1880 Fulton - 2
J.O. Snyder, 757	Tennyson - 3	E.S. Best	1881 Fulton - 2
G.D. English	1775 Fulton - 2	E.E. Hardy	1830 Fulton - 3

The total cost per unit is as follows, including tree, pipe, lights (\$2.50 per unit), and extension wires:

1 Unit \$5.15; 2 Units \$8.40; 3 Units \$11.25

The committee wishes to thank the residents for their cooperation and support in making the decorations for this, the first year, a possibility and expectant success.

The 1940 Committee
Edward E. Hardy
Geo. D. English

This is the 1940 list of neighbors on the 1700 and 1800 blocks of Fulton Street who participated in the brand new Christmas Fairyland Lane, as it was initially named.

Christmas Tree Lane was dreamed up by Judge Edward Hardy (1830 Fulton). Each year (except for one year during World War II) the neighbors along these two blocks of Fulton Street have decorated their houses with holiday themed decorations, some of which has been passed down from one homeowner to the next.

The residents also adorn the street with 72 small Douglas Firs and string them with multi-colored lights. The city of Palo Alto changes the street lamp covers from white to red, and the street is magically transformed into Christmas Tree Lane for two weeks during the holiday.

Welcome Our New Member!

Judith Kleinberg

Upcoming Program Dates

• Feb 1 • Mar 1 • May 3

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 Program

If you missed the October 12th program, *Last Gas Stations of San Mateo County*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link: <https://vimeo.com/1134968365>

In Memoriam:

John Arnold



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



Jon Kinyon, Lead Editor & Design
Luana Staiger, Melissa Verber, Editors
Copy Factory, Printing

Photographs courtesy of PAHA Guy Miller
Archives unless otherwise noted.