

# THE GATE POST

January–March 2026

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800 ALMA STREET, MENLO PARK, CALIFORNIA 94025-3445

(650) 330-2522

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## Office Hours

Tuesdays

Noon–2:00 pm

Located in the

Merrill History Room

(MP Library basement level)



## MPHA Annual Meeting Guest Speaker: Peter Fish

After brief remarks from Sandy Pachaud, MPHA President (see page 2),

Sandy introduced our guest speaker, Peter Fish, who for 30 years was Travel and Deputy Editor for Sunset Magazine spending most of his time on travel, the outdoors and environmental issues.

Peter's talk focused mainly on the history of Sunset Magazine and the way it shaped life in California and the West.

A creation of Southern Pacific Railroad, Sunset Magazine had its start in May 1898 deriving its name from SP's Sunset Limited which ran from New Orleans across the Southwest. Its focus was on the scenic wonders and economic possibilities of California and the West. The magazine struggled through the years until it was purchased by Lawrence Lane and Company in 1928. Under new leadership the magazine found a new audience by covering areas of home design, gardening, cooking

and travel. Because the West was growing twice as fast as the rest of the nation, the magazine thrived.

Realizing the San Francisco Headquarters did not fit the image of a suburban magazine, the Lane's decided to move to the suburbs finding Menlo Park as their home. Cliff May was chosen as the building's architect and Tommy Church as landscape architect.

The magazine shared its "home" by inviting visitors to tour the building and grounds giving visitors home design and landscape ideas that were beautiful and practical. Peter continued with his talk by showing a set of Sunset covers through the years.

Thank you Peter for sharing with us the story of a magazine that we continue to miss today.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I'd like to start by saying that I am grateful and impressed by the enthusiasm of our members and Board members. As I looked back on my 2025 calendar, I realized that MPHA accomplished a great deal.

- ◆ This year we were able to repair the neon Oasis sign, thanks to Frank Merrill.
- ◆ In March we had two successful events. MPHA co-hosted with the West Bay Model Railroad (WBMR), commemorating the WBMR's 75th anniversary. The event also recognized many other landmark anniversaries of Menlo Park businesses such as Round Table Pizza, Draegers, Trader Joes and Keplers.
- ◆ Thirty-four members enjoyed a wonderful annual dinner at Trellis Restaurant which is always a favorite. Thanks to Kurt Ugur who never disappoints and to Martha and Lydia for arranging this.
- ◆ On April 27th, an informative and captivating event with former MP police chief Bruce Cummings and co-speaker Nick Veronico on their newly published book, *The Lost Gas Stations of San Mateo County*. Thanks to Pete Zivkov for filming this event.

*Probably the most momentous event for MPHA happened May 9th. Through the efforts of Karen Kitterman, the nomination of the former Sunset Magazine headquarters as an historical site was passed.*

- ◆ On May 9, Tim Johnston, past president of MPHA, educated third grade students on the history of Menlo Park. The children were attentive, asked many questions and supplied Tim with thoughtful thank you notes.
- ◆ Our 4th annual summer barbecue was hosted at my home.
- ◆ In September MPHA hosted the commemoration of the 125th wedding anniversary of Helen Hopkins to Augustus Tyler taking place at the Hopkins mansion at the Vallombrosa Center. An antique car show graced the grounds. Derik from Clars auction house evaluated people's treasures, sharing historical knowledge about these items. Artifacts from Museum of American Heritage were also on display. And DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) were on hand to inform people of their organization.
- ◆ On October 17th at Feldman's bookstore, MPHA held an event featuring Russ Bertetta and Rodney Paul discussing Rock and Roll poster artists of the 60's and 70's.

- ◆ Also in October, MPHA hosted a tour of the Union Cemetery in Redwood City

MPHA is currently working with the City to install a commemorative bench in honor of Bo Crane. The location will be in Fremont Park.

Mary Kavanaugh Smith has recently joined our board and Joanne Ward is our new volunteer sharing her computer expertise.

Displays in Walgreens window and the main library will continue with the help of Martha, Mary and Lydia.

With the help of former Sunset employees and Hugh Garvey, the current Sunset editor, we hope to reenact a smaller version of the Sunset Celebration Weekend this spring. So look for an upcoming announcement on FB or in The Gate Post.

I'd like to wrap up by saying, a few words about Frank Helfrich. As many of you know, Frank was the face of MPHA. Many years ago, when I made my first trek downstairs to the MPHA office, Frank was there to greet me with a big smile. He made me feel welcome and significant. A more gracious man you'll never meet. Menlo Park was fortunate to have him share his love and knowledge of the City he loved.

Finally, please do not hesitate to reach out with suggestions, recommendations and ideas. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you and see you around MP.

*Sandra J. Pachaud*



## JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Your membership renewal demonstrates your love of Menlo and continued interest in its history. Please note for those members who renew their membership yearly, you will find in this issue a renewal envelope for your convenience. Remember your support is tax deductible. Membership dues to the Association not only help defray office expenses during the year, but helps pay for preserving information about the history of Menlo Park.

***MPHA thanks you for your continued support.***

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# Welcome to our new Board Members

## Mary Smith



Mary A. Kavanaugh Smith is a lifelong Bay Area resident whose family emigrated from Ireland in 1848 and settled in what is now East Palo Alto in 1850, founding Kavanaugh Industrial Park. Born in Palo Alto, Mary grew up in Atherton and was one of the first babies delivered at the newly opened Stanford Hospital. Inspired by her parents' involvement in the local historical society, Mary has been active in the community her entire life. After her father's passing in 1993, her mother began the Kavanaugh Ice Cream Social, a cherished tradition held for many years under the oak trees by the library.

Mary and her husband Don, both Woodside High School graduates, raised six children—all now married—and are proud grandparents to thirteen. She spent years volunteering in local schools, organizing walk-a-thons, and helping new schools get started. Her first job was helping elderly neighbors in Menlo Park, followed by work at Alec Cleaners. She recently retired from a management role at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF).

She finds deep meaning in the gravesites at Holy Cross Cemetery, which reflect the rich history of the families who built this community—her own included. *MPHA thanks you Mary for joining the Board.*

## Tom Merson



Tom's general interest in history goes back to his family roots as early settlers on Nantucket. He wanted to learn all about eighteenth century Nantucket, the whaling industry and life "in the olden days." This developed into a fascination with all things historical. Now living in Menlo for over 20 years, his love of history continues wondering who were the personalities that made Menlo Park what it is today, what was Middlefield Road like when it was once a dirt wagon way connecting large estates. As a Board member he hopes to learn more about these kinds of things and help others to do the same. Tom earned an undergraduate and law degree from Santa Clara University

and an MS in management, a graduate of the FBI National Academy and a member of the California State Bar. He worked for 30 years in law enforcement with the Palo Alto Police Department retiring at the rank of captain.

*MPHA looks forward to working with you, Tom.*

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## New Volunteer – Joanne Ward



Joanne Ward was born at Hoover Pavilion growing up in Menlo Park and graduating from Menlo Atherton High School. After receiving her under-graduate degree from San Jose State University and Graduate Degree

from Notre Dame de Namur University, she is now retired having worked for San Mateo County in government finance and administration. Joanne's family roots in Menlo go back to early 1930's, and over the years had many conversations with family members explaining what life was like for them growing up in Menlo Park. Because of this, Joanne has a deep interest in learning

about family history and spending time researching and learning more about Menlo Park and California history.

Joanne's interests range from pique assiette mosaic art, to organizing events for friends, river rafting, hiking to volunteering. She even took the time giving a group of friends her own version of the MPHA Victorian Architecture Walk using the MPHA Walking Tour Brochure of Menlo Park. As she said, "After reading in an issue of the Gate Post that MPHA was looking for volunteers, I met with Martha, Mary, and Lydia, introducing me to the treasure trove of historical information in the MPHA office. I knew instantly that I wanted to be a part of the group."

*Joanne, we are so happy that you answered the call for volunteers. Thank You.*

# Before Leland Stanford Junior University: The Stanfords' Palo Alto Estate and Stock Farm Julie Cain

*Julie Cain, Historic Preservation Planner for Heritage Services at Stanford University, on various occasions has written historical articles for the GP. She is particularly interested in 19th-century California history with an emphasis on the role of Chinese immigrants within the state along with the many estates built on the San Francisco Peninsula, including the Stanfords' Palo Alto estate. Some of the articles for the Gate Post were the Nursery at the Hopkins Estate, Searsville Lake Park, the Mysterious Death of Jane Stanford, and Leland Stanford Vintner.*



When Jane and Leland Stanford began to purchase multiple properties on the San Francisco Peninsula in 1876 to form their Palo Alto estate, they had no plans to one day build a university on their property. Transplanted New Yorkers, they moved to Sacramento, California, in 1855. Leland Stanford built up a successful merchant's

business there, along with other business interests, and later invested in and helped build the western half of the first trans-continental railroad. On 14 May 1868, Jane Stanford gave birth to their only child, Leland DeWitt Stanford, after eighteen years of marriage, long after the Stanfords had given up on having children of their own.

The transcontinental railroad was completed one year later on 10 May 1869. This singular event was only the first step in the Stanfords' wealth eventually accumulating to many millions of dollars as their business interests expanded to include shipping, real estate, water development, mining and, of course, building more railroads. The small family moved to San Francisco in 1873 and soon began building their Nob Hill mansion, which was completed in 1876.

Leland Stanford Junior, who had supposedly asked to change his name as a child to match that of his father, was eight years old in 1876.

Leland Stanford was following the advice of his doctor to spend some time away from business when he and Jane began to build up the Palo Alto estate. Named for the local landmark redwood tree, El Palo Alto, that stood near El Camino Real alongside the San Francisquito Creek, Leland was primarily interested in accomplishing two things at his new property. The first goal was that he had been breeding and racing trotting horses for several years and



he wanted to implement both his breeding program and his innovative training program on a much larger scale. Leland's second goal was to grow "every tree, shrub and vine" that might flourish in California as an example to encourage farming families to move to the Golden State. He believed that California's boom-or-bust economy that closely followed mining's ups and downs would become more stabilized if agriculture became the state's primary economic effort.

Allowing Leland Junior the space to ride his pony and run about with his dogs also figured into the Stanfords' desire to own a country estate far from San Francisco's cold damp summer fogs and busy urban streets. The completion of the San Francisco-San Jose RR spurred many of San Francisco's wealthy elite to purchase land somewhere between south San Francisco and San Jose as the ease of rail transportation overcame having to drive horses on roads that were either dusty or muddy, depending on the time of year. During the latter half of the nineteenth century some fifty estates in all flourished on the San Francisco Peninsula.



These estates tended to be at least 500 acres in size with many of them being much larger; Palo Alto eventually grew to over 8,000 acres in size. The houses were typically large and grand with a tower or two from which to survey the countryside. Elaborate flower gardens, along with rare trees and shrubs, were planted around the houses with a more natural landscape

*(Continued on page 5)*

standing beyond. Greenhouses, artificial lakes, deer parks, aviaries, follies, racetracks and lawn abounded, with the turf being one of the most prized status symbols as precious irrigation was required to keep it looking green year-round. The Stanfords planted lawn all around their house and another five acres of turf stretched between their home and El Camino Real. Cattle and sheep were typically grazed, pigs and chickens were raised, grains were grown, along with hay or alfalfa, and, of course, fruits, nuts and vegetables. Some of the bounty was sent to San Francisco by train where it was enjoyed at the owner's principal city residence. At Palo Alto the laborers who dealt with every aspect of running and maintaining the property were a combination of white and Chinese workers.



Leland Stanford did accomplish his goals of creating a successful breeding and training program for trotters and of growing many different sorts of plants, both ornamental and otherwise, on his land. The Palo Alto Stock Farm, which was located one mile from the house, became world famous by the early-to-mid 1880s. Over the next decade or so nineteen world records were broken by Palo Alto Stock Farm trotters, most of them the progeny of Electioneer, a twelve-year-old stallion purchased by Leland in 1876 despite never having won a race or shown any particular prowess at siring successful trotters. An average of 700 horses lived at the Palo Alto Stock Farm, some out in pasture and others housed within various barns. Leland Stanford had a remarkable eye for a potential winner and his trainer, Charles Marvin, readily adapted to Leland's innovative program that involved interval training. The two men worked remarkably well together, with each giving the other credit for their long-term success in shattering so many world records.

The Stanford Arboretum, which Leland began planting in 1878 after purchasing a record number of trees, shrubs and flowers in New York that were

transported to California by rail, received a lot of press attention in its day. Leland was an inveterate booster of California—he had served as the last biennial governor in 1862-1863—and he was more than happy to talk to the press about two of his favorite subjects, in this case, horses and plants. The Arboretum was planned to be some 350 acres in size and hosted many exotics from around the world in addition to the native Coast Live oaks and Valley oaks that grew naturally on the estate. Leland was so fond of the native oaks he refused to cut one down if at all possible.



The Stanfords spent seven happy years at Palo Alto but everything changed on 13 March 1884 when fifteen-year-old Leland Junior died of typhoid fever while the family was traveling in Europe. Leland was prostrate with grief and dreamed that young Leland stood before him, telling him he still had a reason to live. This dream was the catalyst for the parents to undertake the creation of a university at Palo Alto in their son's memory. The Leland Stanford Junior University opened on 1 October 1891. Although most of the original estate buildings are now long gone, the surviving Red Barn today still shelters horses, many ridden by Stanford students in various competitions, and the Stanford Arboretum still provides beautiful pathways that wind through a combination of venerable trees from the Stanfords' time to new trees planted each year by the university's Grounds Department.

When asking Julie if the Stanfords considered their farm to be in Menlo Park, her response was that Mrs. Stanford most certainly used Menlo Park as the preferred address. Their good friends lived in Menlo Park, namely, Timothy and May Hopkins at Sherwood Hall.

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## UNION CEMETERY TOUR

As you drive past a cemetery located on Woodside Road, do you wonder how old? Who's buried there? Why the U.S. flag?

On October 26, approximately 20 MPHA members and friends enjoyed a private tour of the Historic Union Cemetery in Redwood City. Kathy Kelebe, President of the Historic Union Cemetery Association, guided the group through the grounds and shared fascinating stories about the cemetery and the people laid to rest there.



Founded in 1859, Union Cemetery is the oldest cemetery in San Mateo County. It holds both State and National Historic Landmark status, which was granted in the 1960s and 1970s. The name "Union" reflected

the founders' support for the Union cause in the years leading up to the Civil War.

The cemetery is the resting place of about 2,500 individuals, including 38 graves of veterans of the Civil War. Many of the original headstones have been lost over time. In addition to the general population, the cemetery includes designated plots for several fraternal organizations, including IOOF, GAR, Masons, and the Order of Red Men.

Those interested in exploring further can find information about monthly tours on the Association's website: [www.historicunioncemetery.org](http://www.historicunioncemetery.org).



Kathy Kelebe



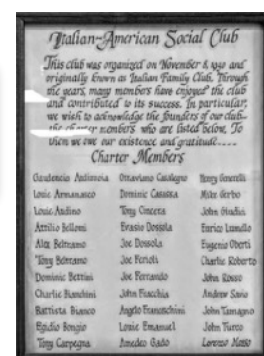
Kathy Kelebe leading the tour.



Many of the grave sites include QR codes that you can scan to find out about the person.

## TIME FOR A CELEBRATION

And a befitting one it was! On November 4, the Italian-American Social Club in Menlo Park celebrated its 95th Birthday. Going back to 1930, Menlo's Italians gathered first at Fremont Park and later in a room over the garage of a house located on the parking lot between Draeger's and Peet's Coffee. Missing their homeland, this was a time for these men to get together, reminisce, play cards, and just socialize while making plans for a clubhouse. By 1937 and at a cost of approximately \$2600, the founders built a clubhouse on Oak Lane at a location that seemed remote since Oak Lane was yet to be paved. The clubhouse was built on two adjoining lots surrounded by open fields prior to present day apartments.



Even though all of the 33 original members have passed, children and grand-children are holding on to the traditions of their ancestors, monthly meetings, bocce ball tournaments, family dinners, and the annual Christmas party for members' children.

**TANTI AUGURI PER UN BUON COMPLEANNO!!!**

## Upcoming Events 2026

**MPHA Annual Dinner**

Sunday, March 1, 2026

*Location will be announced at a later date.*

MPHA is seeking a secretary for our board meetings which are held monthly. If you're interested, please email MPHA at [mphistorical@yahoo.com](mailto:mphistorical@yahoo.com)

The Bo Crane memorial bench will be installed in 2026.

We welcome ideas to how to honor the 100th anniversary of Menlo Park in 2027.

## AN EVENING AT FELDMAN'S BOOKS

An engaging audience at Feldman's Books "traveled back in time" as Russ Bertetta along with Rodney Paul discussed the 1960's use of psychedelic art posters. The bright colors, waving designs, and often times illegible lettering, either promoted rock music of that time or as a way of expressing political beliefs. Russ concentrated on San Francisco poster artists Wes Wilson, Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, Stanley Mouse, and Alton Kelley that publicized rock music performed in San Francisco showing the many designs of these five artists. Following the discussion, music of the era was performed by Time Warp. It was an evening reminiscing to another time in San Francisco, an era of flowers in your hair, the summer or love.

Thanks to Jim Johnston, Mary Ergas, and Sandy Pachaud who made this all happen.



*Presenters: Russ Bertetta and Rodney Paul*



*The band, Time Warp, played 60s classic music.*



*Sandy Pachard, Tim Johnston, and Mary Ergas*

## MEMBERS' STORIES

Do you enjoy writing? Or better yet, want to write an article or two for the Gate Post? The Gate Post editor is asking members to submit an article with some historical significance, such as a person from the past—perhaps a relative, a connection to a past building or home no longer there that has a connection to Menlo Park's history. Submittals could be 100-250 words and include a photo. The Gate Post editor looks forward to working with you. Please email [MPhistorical@yahoo.com](mailto:MPhistorical@yahoo.com) if interested. MPHA thanks you for your continued support.





*Since 1971*

800 Alma Street, Lower Level  
Menlo Park, CA 94025-3445  
(650) 330-2522  
E-mail: [mphistorical@yahoo.com](mailto:mphistorical@yahoo.com)



[www.mphistory.org](http://www.mphistory.org)



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## TIME DATED MATERIAL OR CURRENT RESIDENT

### **Thank You Business Members!**

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Remember to check junk/spam folder  
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### **Become a Member of MPHA**

Simply send a \$30 check made out to "MPHA"  
and mail to: MPHA, 800 Alma St.,  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Please include your mailing address.  
Also, consider including your email address to  
help us save on postage costs and to receive  
documents electronically. You can also join  
through our website: [mphistory.org](http://mphistory.org), and  
click on "Become a member."

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