



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Since 1913

June 2026 Volume 49, No 6

In cooperation with



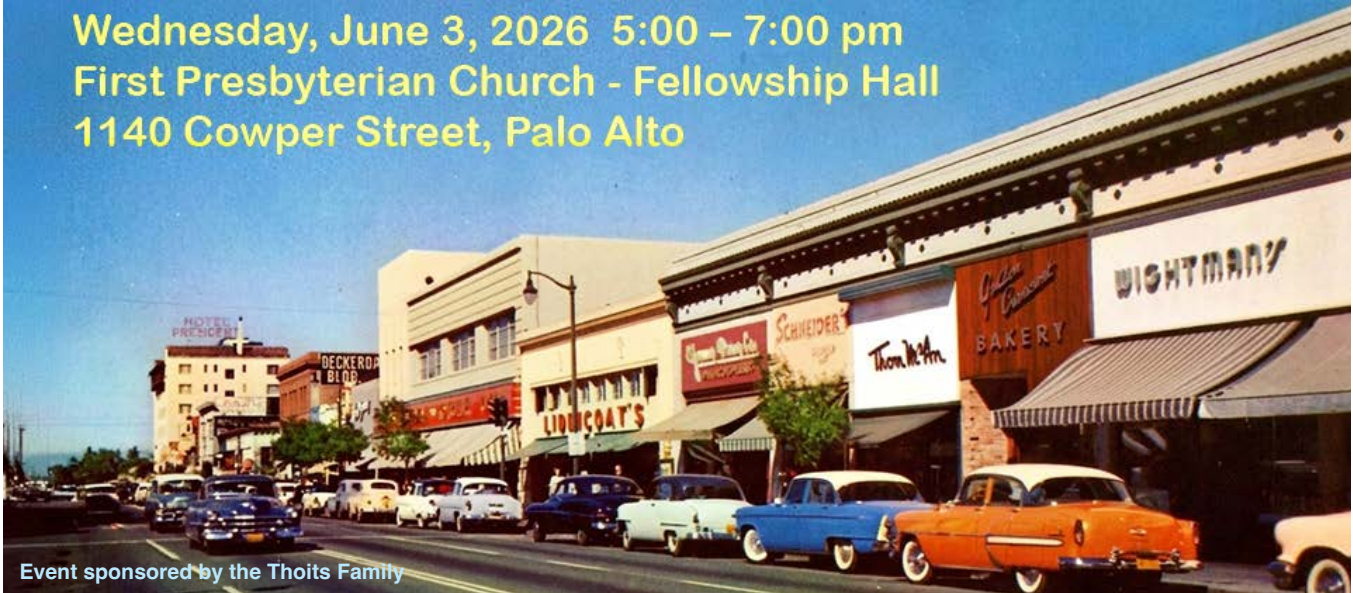
CITY OF
PALO
ALTO

Palo Alto Historical Association presents

PAHA ANNUAL EVENT

Shake, Rattle 'n' Roll

Wednesday, June 3, 2026 5:00 – 7:00 pm
First Presbyterian Church - Fellowship Hall
1140 Cowper Street, Palo Alto



Event sponsored by the Thoits Family

Celebrate with us at this year's PAHA Annual Event, "Shake, Rattle 'n' Roll," as we honor and reminisce about the 1950s in Palo Alto—a community grounded in simplicity, standing on the edge of transformation.

Daily life unfolded outdoors. Children explored creeks, fields and orchards, biking across town and walking to school on their own. Neighbors were often connected for generations, spending evenings strolling University Avenue or grabbing a milkshake at The Peninsula Creamery. The rhythms of life felt steady, local, and deeply rooted.

Entertainment was simple but memorable. At the end of Amarillo Avenue, families drove into the Peninsula Drive-In for an affordable night out. Everyday spots like Fran's Shoe Shine were equally vital, places where stories were exchanged and the "real scoop" of local life was passed along.

The pace of life matched the roads; Palo Alto felt wide open and unhurried. Commuting didn't yet define the day, congestion was rare, and parking was always available. Driving through the area still felt rural, with long views of farmland and open space.

Yet, the city was changing. During the 1950s, the population doubled and over 30 new housing tracts opened. The postwar boom reshaped the landscape with modern designs by Joseph Eichler. For \$12,000, an Eichler home offered modest size but bold ideas—light, openness, and a seamless connection to the outdoors.

New retail at Stanford Shopping Center, Town & Country Village, and Midtown Shopping Center reflected a growing car-centered lifestyle. In 1954, the launch of Stanford Industrial Park planted the seeds of Silicon Valley as Hewlett-Packard and Varian Associates moved in. The decade also brought challenges, such as the 1955 Christmas floods, which damaged hundreds of homes and reminded residents of the vulnerability beneath the growth.

Palo Alto in the 1950s was defined by the balance between the intimate and the emerging. It was a place of childhood freedom and orchards, even as the foundations of a global innovation hub were quietly taking shape.

Buy tickets and RSVP:

PAHAJuneCelebration.eventbrite.com

**2026 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 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.

Freddie Maddalena, Restaurateur

By unknown, public obituary



Freddie Maddalena sitting inside Cafe Fino in 1989

Palo Alto restaurateur extraordinaire Freddie Maddalena, who brought a classy cabaret ambiance to downtown Palo Alto, passed away ten years ago on May 7, 2016, after a struggle with Alzheimer's disease. He was 87.

Maddalena was born in Toronto, Canada, to Rosario and Georgina Maddalena. He started in the restaurant and entertainment business at the age of 16 to support his parents. He worked as a busboy at the King Edward Hotel, he told the Palo Alto Weekly in 2001.

In 1950 he opened Mood Indigo, a sophisticated jazz nightclub at Toronto's Barclay Hotel, where he hosted many celebrities, including Sarah Vaughan, Tony Bennett, Sophie Tucker, Dorothy Dandridge, Mel Tormé and Harry Belafonte.

He came to the U.S., working in 1965 as a maître d' of the Grill Room at The Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, when Frank Sinatra and Count Basie and his orchestra were star performers.

Maddalena moved to the Bay Area in the 1960s and worked at the Cabana Resort in Palo Alto when Doris Day owned it. Afterward, he worked at clubs in San Francisco, including the Blue Fox and Ernie's, where he met longtime friend and bartender Maurice Amzallag.

In 1976 he took over the space at 544 Emerson St. in Palo Alto, formerly the Golden Dragon Chinese restaurant, which had been at the site for 62 years. His first restaurant, Maddalena's, became known for its classy white-tablecloth service and

Old World elegance. It also became a legendary hangout for the famous and powerful. Actor Warren Beatty and his crew dined there during the filming of "Heaven Can Wait," which was shot at the Filoli estate in Woodside; Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were also said to have met in the upstairs front room where they conceived of Apple Computer, Inc.

Maddalena always threw a 1920s costume party every five years for friends and regulars. Eventually, he opened a smaller nightclub next door, Cafe Fino, which offered the same food as Maddalena's with a generous side of live jazz. There were even tango lessons.

He closed Maddalena's in 2007. Cafe Fino closed shortly thereafter due in part to the costs of seismic retrofitting, he said at the time. But he could not stay out of the business. He returned to his Palo Alto roots by opening Maddalena's Cabaret Club at the Crowne Plaza Cabana Hotel and Resort. By then, he was 80 years old.

His son, Vince Maddalena, opened 888 Ristorante Italiano in San Carlos several years ago, and Vince's longtime companion, Carolyn Oliver, worked for Freddie Maddalena for 6 1/2 years as a banquet manager.

He was a good dancer and had a very good singing voice, she recalled. He was attentive to his customers and remembered details about them even months after they had visited. She said he remembered the blouse she had worn two months prior when she returned to visit.

"He was a very good host. He loved the ladies, and he loved to dance," Oliver said.

Maddalena was married twice and had six children: four with his first wife, Lilly, and two with his second wife, Eileen. Lilly died in February. He is survived by Eileen of Los Altos; children Ross of New York, Teresa and Gina of Las Vegas, Vince of Menlo Park and Mia and Paul of San Mateo; six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Charles G. “Jerry” Campbell: Palo Alto's G-Man

By Jon Kinyon, PAHA Board Member



Jerry Campbell, early in his FBI career

Charles G. “Jerry” Campbell—also known as G.G. Campbell—was one of Hoover’s elite “Gunslingers,” recruited in January 1934 from the Oklahoma City Police Department alongside Delf A. “Jelly” Bryce and Clarence O. Hurt. All three were proven shooters who had already killed criminals in the line of duty. Before joining the FBI, Campbell helped hunt down Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow after their murderous rampage through Oklahoma and Texas. His firearms expertise and experience chasing major criminals led to his hiring immediately after Congress authorized the Bureau to arm its agents.

In the early 1930s, FBI agents were generally unarmed and not proficient with firearms, though some carried them strictly for self-defense. The Depression era spawned mobile outlaw gangs racing across state lines in fast cars. They carried Thompson Submachine Guns and Browning Automatic Rifles (M1918s), easily outgunning local police.

The 1933 Kansas City Massacre—where two KCPD officers, an FBI agent, a police chief, and their prisoner were killed and two other FBI agents were wounded—exposed the deadly consequences of poor firearms training. It was determined that shotgun fire from an untrained FBI agent contributed to some of the law enforcement deaths. One FBI agent’s son later recalled: “It wasn’t until months after the Kansas City Massacre in 1933 that my father had to learn how to shoot a gun and drive a car.”

This embarrassing disaster transformed the FBI. By mid-1934, agents were authorized to carry guns and gained arrest powers. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was empowered to use any means necessary against ruthless outlaws operating in what amounted to interstate commerce. The “G-Man” was born. Desperate times required desperate measures, and Hoover urgently recruited battle-tested lawmen from

around the country who could “stand and deliver.” Many referred to these recruits as “Hoover’s Gunslingers.”

Jerry Campbell joined during this pivotal shift. After brief training, he was assigned to the Chicago office in June 1934. On July 22, 1934, he was one of the 21 agents assigned to the Dillinger squad to conduct the ambush outside the Biograph Theater, set up by Anna Sage, the “Lady in Red.” Campbell stood directly across the street, at the ready. He was standing right across the street from the theater when Dillinger stepped out. If Dillinger had walked straight ahead, he would have run into Jerry Campbell. Instead, Dillinger turned left and was killed by three other agents in a gun battle that became part of American folklore.

Less than a year later, Campbell took part in the Florida gunfight with Ma Barker and her gang, the arrest of Doc Barker, and the final shootout with Fred and Ma Barker. He also tangled with the likes of Pretty Boy Floyd, Baby Face Nelson, and Machine Gun Kelly. Campbell served on the FBI’s “Flying Squad,” specializing in bank robberies, kidnappings, and extortion—crimes that were very dangerous and often required the use of deadly force.



Clyde Barrow & Bonnie Parker's bullet-riddled “Death Car.”

Campbell and the other early shooters formed the nucleus of the FBI’s firearms training program. In the 1930s and early ‘40s, with only 400 to 500 FBI agents nationwide, they traveled throughout the country wherever needed. Campbell’s early exploits built his own—and the FBI’s—legendary reputation. After the gangster problem was settled, these prized shooters received preferential treatment from Hoover and were definitely in the “favorite son” category.

In 1946, Campbell opened the FBI’s Palo Alto Resident Agency under the San Francisco Field Office. A San Francisco Chronicle story described a 1952 trick-shooting exhibition that Campbell and others gave to FBI personnel in San Francisco. They fired machine guns, rifles, pistols, and shotguns backward, between their legs, and behind their backs. (Continued on Page 4)

Palo Alto's G-Man (Continued from page 3)

During his nearly 20-year tenure as Senior Resident Agent in Palo Alto, the office was known to focus on local counterintelligence, primarily monitoring Communist Party USA (CPUSA) activities in the San Francisco Bay Area. Its proximity to Stanford University made it central to surveillance of suspected communist infiltration among faculty, students, and campus activists amid Cold War hysteria. There was also a Palo Alto CPUSA cell; undercover informant Karl Prussion of Los Altos reported on it regularly to the FBI.

The Palo Alto FBI office handled day-to-day informant management, surveillance, and investigations, feeding intelligence upward within the FBI on subversion and related threats. No high-profile prosecutions were publicly linked to Campbell by name, which is entirely consistent with compartmentalized counterintelligence work.

After spending most of his career in Palo Alto, he retired in 1965. Former FBI Special Agent Roger Hartley, who worked with him from 1958 to 1965, described him as "very down to earth, wasn't boastful or a loud talker, and was very low-key" despite his previous work on high-profile, and extremely dangerous cases. Hartley noted Campbell was part of an elite

group akin to today's SWAT teams.

Campbell told The Palo Alto Times in 1966 that he joined the FBI because "it was a good, steady job." After retirement, he worked part-time for a firearms company and shared his expertise with police departments all over Northern California.



Some of Jerry's favorite guns, auctioned following his death

Jerry Campbell lived 50 years in his Palo Alto home. He died of a heart attack there in 1991 at age 84. At that time, he was one of the last two men who could personally recount the Dillinger ambush. He was survived by his wife, Betty, of Palo Alto, and a sister, Charlotte Williams, of Vallejo.



Artist's rendering by Jon Kinyon

On March 4, 1987, a life-size fiberglass Colonel Sanders was kidnapped from a display window in front of a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant on El Camino Real at Cambridge Avenue. A \$500 reward was offered for his safe return, but there were no takers. The sharply dressed Colonel was held captive for six weeks, and then he mysteriously appeared on a foggy Easter morning standing at the Gates of Hell, the centerpiece of the Rodin Sculpture Garden at Stanford University. Missing were his glasses, walking cane, and chicken bucket. A note attached to the icon's lapel read: "I've seen it all—it's not a pretty picture. Take me home!"

A smaller postscript addressed the owners of the KFC franchise: "I never meant to worry you—I just needed some space. Happy Easter!" The iconic statue is now on prominent display at the first KFC restaurant (aka Harman's) in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Upcoming Program Dates

- Oct 4 • Dec 6 • Feb 7
- Mar 7 • May 2

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 March 1st program, *The 30th Centennial Plaque & Historic Preservation Awards*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link:
<https://vimeo.com/1189188194>

Got Pics?

We are always on the lookout for old Palo Alto pics, and they don't have to be 100 years old for us to be interested! Please consider donating your old photos of Palo Alto to PAHA.

Contact: Darla Secor
darla.secor@cityofpaloalto.org

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



Jon Kinyon, *Lead Editor & Design*
Georgie Gleim, Luana Staiger,
Melissa Verber, *Editors*

Photographs courtesy of PAHA Guy Miller
Archives unless otherwise noted.