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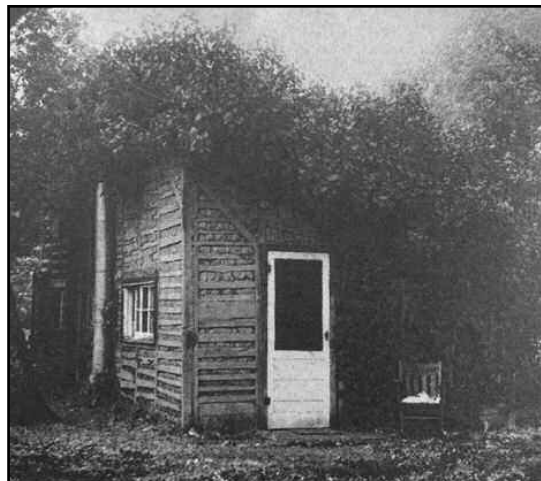
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MOVING MENLO'S OLDEST BUILDING

Moses Kavanaugh, 16 years old in 1880, once spoke of a conversation he had around that time with Dennis Martin, an Irish immigrant, who arrived in the Menlo Park area in 1845. Dennis built his own ranch house in 1846 near what is now Sand Hill Road and I-280. He told Moses that he had personally seen the hut (white door photo) in 1846, the year that the U.S. took California from Mexico. Martin also said that a native family kept cattle nearby in a brush corral. Menlo Park was a part of Rancho de las Pulgas, granted to the

Arguello family, heir to two Presidio commandantes, father and son, who grazed herds on lands as far south as San Francisquito Creek. The hut, 13 feet by 30 feet, in what is now the Willows neighborhood was made of adobe mud packed between redwood slats, all of which was then plastered over. The hut was purchased in 1956 and soon transported by professional house movers to Skyline. See pages 4-5 for more of the story.



THE FAMOUS Menlo Adobe was really a humble building put together roughly as a shelter, historians believe, for the vaqueros on the huge Rancho de las Pulgas. John Wickett, at the time a realtor "saved" it by transporting it to property on the Skyline Boulevard above Woodside where it was used as a radio station.

— Susan Gale Photo Collection



White door now brown (2022)

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President's Message

Tim Johnston

Greetings everyone. They say, "change is inevitable," and this applies to your Association board as well. So, as I open my message, I begin by expressing a heartfelt farewell and THANK YOU to longtime board member, Jym Clendenin.

After nearly ten years of tireless service on the Board, Jym has decided it is time to really enjoy his retirement. Jym's contributions to the Association have touched on virtually every aspect of your Association's mission, most notably: serving a three-year term as Association president, spearheading the Menlo Gates replica project, playing an instrumental role in the "Two Menlos" initiative that resulted in a sister city relationship with our namesake city in Ireland, and developing and managing our original website. Mr. Clendenin, you will be missed!!

At the same time, I would like to extend a big WELCOME to our two newest board members: Angie Robbiano and Matt Horwitz. Angie and Matt bring very diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to the Board. Their energy and enthusiasm will continue to move the Association to the next level of member and community engagement.

As a result of the bylaws amendments passed at last Fall's annual membership meeting, additional board positions are now available. We welcome any expressions of interest from Association members in joining the Board.

Finally, as noted in my last President's message, we have a developed long list of both short and long-term Association projects we want to undertake and accomplish.

Member volunteers will key component in determining the success of our efforts. If you have the time and interest, please let us know. We will be happy to help you understand where and how you can help us out!

Please take good care.

NON-STATIONARY STATION



On December 16, 2021, MPHA board members and guests were given a tour of remodeled Menlo Park Fire District Station #6, at the corner of Oak Grove and Hoover. The tour included the adjacent Fire District History Museum. Former MPHA board member and retired fire captain Tom Carter (*photo above left*), provided background from his many years as son of the fire chief and also as a captain.

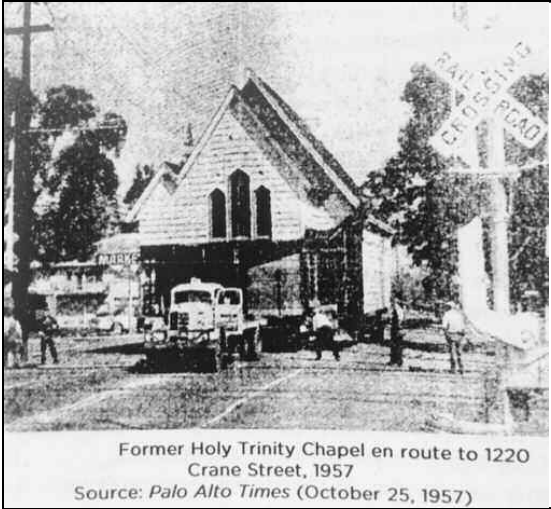
The first station, crewed by volunteers, was originally on Merrill Street between Santa Cruz Ave and Oak Grove Ave. A brick station later supplanted the small wooden structure. In 1955, a new Station #1 went into operation at 300 Middlefield Road. The old firehouse was also moved, stored in back, and kept freshly painted a dark brown (*see photo above right*). As part of Station #6's museum, the old station was moved once again, painted bright red with white lettering (*see photo below*).

Tom Carter told the group that a 1923 house had to be moved from the corner to make room for the station. The house still sits at 435 Blake Street, very similar to a 1923 house on the other corner of Hoover



and Oak Grove: just another one of Menlo Park's many moves. For the record, the Church of the Nativity and the former Oasis Pub are not at their original building locations either.

TRACKING THE CHURCH



was hauled seventh-tenths of a mile across the Oak Grove railroad tracks and deposited on the muddy Crane Street lot owned by the Orthodox Church (*see photo above*). Placement of a 71-year-old historical building resolved any

Councilmen Okay Location of New Church Facing Crane Street as Residents Protest

In 1950, a group of Russians, who had fled the communist revolution decades earlier, formed a Russian Orthodox Church diocese in Menlo Park. In 1951, they began renting the chapel of the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church of Pine Street for \$25 a month. Trinity had built a larger church, which is still there.

The Russian group bought a lot on Crane Street in 1955 with the intent to build a new church. Residents on the street protested, but the planning commission approved the application as churches have always been a part of residential neighborhoods. In appealing to the city council, one Crane Street resident stated, "There is no one in Menlo Park who believes in this faith." Whether or not that was accurate, perhaps the resident didn't realize that the church was named the "Nativity Church of the Holy Virgin" and was a Catholic faith, although Eastern, a split that didn't occur until after the first 1,000 years of the Catholic Church. In name, the church was similar to the Nativity Catholic Church on Oak Grove Ave. The council disallowed the appeal with one member retorting, "It's impossible to deny the freedom to worship because people don't live in the city."

A new church was never built, but instead the Trinity Church offered to sell the chapel for \$1 if the Orthodox Church would pay for its transportation. The deal was accepted and in October 1957, the chapel, with the three-windowed rear facing forward,

architectural design issues. It was the third time the chapel had been moved since it was originally, built in 1886 on Encinal Ave across from Felton Drive, where the Stanford family had first attended. The chapel was first moved in 1897 to Oak Grove near Laurel St. In 1947, the chapel was taken a little east to the Pine Street off Ravenswood Ave, where Trinity Church is today.

When the winter cleared and the chapel raised slightly, a foundation was poured in the spring of 1958. The church has been there ever since and sponsors its Holiday Bazaar on the first Saturday of December (*see photo below from 2021*). The church's neighborhood now includes other medical businesses



such as the Menlo Medical Clinic and a bank across the street. Next door, however, is a single-story building built in

1940 and a two-story building from 1951 (according to [spokeo.com](https://www.spokeo.com)), plus a little alley with a 1939 house, all having survived the appearance of the adjoining church.

FROM WILLOWS TO REDWOODS



The hut may have been first improved by Irish immigrant John Murray in the 1850s, working for Isaiah Churchill Woods on his Ravenswood property located on Middlefield Avenue (sometimes called Ravenswood Dairy, although it wasn't a dairy then). Several owners kept fixing up the hut. John Stone Wickett, Palo Alto High School, class of 1934, purchased the hut in the mid-1950s. Wickett had a realty office at 330 El Camino Real in Atherton and a house on Polhemus, where he was allowed to temporarily store the hut. On a wet day in December 1956, he used Anderson Brothers house movers to take the hut up to Skyline Boulevard "above Woodside," where he intended to use it as a radio station.

Transmitting radio waves should be from the top of a hill, right? Jym Clendenin heard that the hut was near the Skeggs Point Scenic View, north of Alice's Restaurant. Across the road from the Skeggs parking lot was a tall hillside. A hundred yards north on Skyline was public hiking access to the the El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space, covering 2,908 acres. Decades ago the land was some 4,400 acres of old forest logging property that Wickett had purchased.

That acreage is similar in acreage to what Juana Briones had acquired in the hills south of Arastradero Road in 1844. Her house on Old Adobe Road was also made of adobe mud stored between wood slats and plastered over. This method of construction provided more insulation than redwood plank walls and was also highly resistant to termites and fire.

Wickett allowed much of his property to be re-logged, disturbing once again the natural setting. He bought and stored all kinds of equipment and machinery, scattering materials all over the property.



Hut set in place on Skyline

Willows

(continued)



Right side door 2022



Front door 2022

Wickett was also permissive with the Bay Area's "Flower Children," allowing such folks to reside on his land in huts left over from previous logging days.

Nature has now retaken the woods, with the exception of a cluster of foreboding sky-high transmission equipment, cordoned off by chain link fencing with razor wire. Without trespassing, we were able to spy the shed, now sided with plywood, perched on a slope, and trapped below massive communication installations. Vents appear around the hut, likely installed to release heat from the radio station equipment that was once working inside, now superseded by far more modern installations.



John Wickett, Paly 1934

There's been some suspicion that John Murray may have built the hut around 1853. But would the Irishman have used packed adobe as Juana Briones had done? It makes sense that the hut predated his arrival. Building in the Spanish/Mexican style was easier with adobe available, and less wood was required to saw wooden slats. Making adobe bricks was a far more involved process and the missions,



Wickett office

which once provided forced labor, were no longer in operation. Vaqueros might not have needed 390 square feet of living area, but Dennis Martin told Moses Kavanaugh that a family lived there in 1846. The Juana Briones home built in 1844 was remodeled so much in subsequent years that, after being damaged by the 1989 earthquake, it was eventually demolished. The single remaining earth wall was removed and stored. In the case of the 1846 Willows hut, the entire building has been saved and placed out of harm's way on a remote forest hilltop, a time capsule for future generations. If not Menlo Park's most famous building, it certainly was its earliest in town until plucked out of the Willows in 1956.

MOVING A ROAD



Murray Barn

John Murray was a native of Queens County, Ireland. Arriving in New York City around 1848, he found his Irish bride, Mary. After making his way to California, John began working for I.C. Woods on his Ravenswood Estate (see Willows Adobe article). When he made enough money, he returned back east to bring his wife out west. Murray worked for Dennis Martin, another Irish immigrant with a ranch near Searsville, before starting his own dairy farm. He intentionally purchased land where hillsides narrowed and was bought out by the company that built Searsville Dam. With the sale, he purchased 70 acres in west Menlo Park. He framed his house with Douglas fir studs and sided it with redwood. Rough-hewn logs were used to support the downstairs ceiling joists. Murray named his new operation Stanford Dairy after the university being constructed.

Murray had built his house as of 1885 on a side slope, making it a side-to-side split level (see photo of front with balcony). Visitors would circle around to take the stairs up to the front door, which faced eastward to Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery, where Murray family members were later interred. The home had no running water. The kitchen wing was separated from the main house by just a few feet. A short, enclosed connecting wing was eventually added, and the window, now boarded up, also faced east and was used to spot any arrivals.

Ever wonder why Avy Ave has a jog in it at the intersection with Santa Cruz Ave? (See photo above



Avy Ave curved past church

with the church that came much later) The barn painting shows a large oak tree behind the barn. That tree is still there, in the middle of Lucky Ave. When Eugene Avy purchased John Murray's dairy farm in 1889 for development, he continued a road from Santa Cruz Ave. straight through to Alameda de las Pulgas. The new road, first named Murray Ave, would have cut through Murray's dairy barn at the edge of Lucky Ave. As such, Murray asked Avy if he could realign the road so that Murray wouldn't have to tear down and rebuild his barn on the 3-acre lot he retained. Avy agreed but only by changing the road's name to Avy Ave, a condition Murray accepted. Lucky Ave was plotted on both sides of the oak, with one side alongside Murray's lot. Avy Ave, a road that wasn't yet built, was thus moved.



Lucky Avenue oak

Road *(continued from page 6)*



Joyce and her father, Jesse Arnold



Front door facing east on left side of deck



Kitchen upstairs at rear

With the sale to Avy, Murray and his wife moved to Menlo Park, but the dairy operation continued. W.C. Wilbur, who lived on Avy with his family and already owned the Home Dairy, ran the Stanford Dairy until his death in 1933, after which the small dairy soon closed.

The family of Thomas Church and Frances Hastings “Fanny” Arnold in 1935 purchased the former Murray ranch lot at 2024 Liberty Park. Tom Arnold managed the stables now located in the barn. When the family began selling lots, he became a rancher with his ranch on the east side of Mt. Hamilton. Jesse Arnold oversaw the sale of the property in 2021 and provided much information used for this article. Jesse has been a frequent contributor to the Gate Post, gratefully appreciated!



Marble fireplace in parlor



Lower level



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Willows Hut (woman unidentified)

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