

THE HISTORIC **Union Cemetery** REDWOOD CITY, CA



Summer 2024 Newsletter

Memorial Day Celebration 2024

In case you missed it, we had a fabulous Memorial Day Celebration in the Cemetery with over 300 persons in attendance. Hope you can make the event in 2025!



Keynote Speaker Jim Hartnett and Master of Ceremonies and HUCA Board Member Barry Kuhl



Color Guard: Boy Scout Troop # 149



Anvil Firing

Volunteer Organization Plays Crucial Maintenance Support Role

by Barry Kuhl

Volunteer support groups are critical for most, if not all, nonprofit organizations. The Historic Union Cemetery is no exception. Being an outside location subject to varying weather and ongoing plant growth, the Cemetery relies on volunteers to help maintain its 6.4-acre site on Woodside Road in Redwood City.

One of the busiest volunteer groups is the Young Men's Service League (YMSL) of southern San Mateo County. YMSL is composed of high school boys who, alongside their moms, donate their time supporting qualified nonprofits thereby earning valuable community service credit hours.

The Historic Union Cemetery has been a philanthropic partner of YMSL for more than two years. The main involvement is a work project event held nearly every month. For two hours on a Saturday morning, the boys and their moms perform tasks from painting, raking and weeding to flower pruning, tree debris collection and trash pickup. Historic Union Cemetery Board Member Barry Kuhl worked with YMSL officers to create this partnership which equally benefits both organizations. He also coordinates and supervises the monthly work project events.

In addition to monthly service work, YMSL volunteers have provided much needed assistance following the annual Memorial Day Celebration as well as participating in the annual Wreaths Across America event in December.

Visitors to the Cemetery often comment how the place looks better now than it ever has and the boys and moms of YMSL are in a large way responsible. The Historic Union Cemetery Board is thankful for all their hard work and looks forward to working together ongoing for the good of the Cemetery.

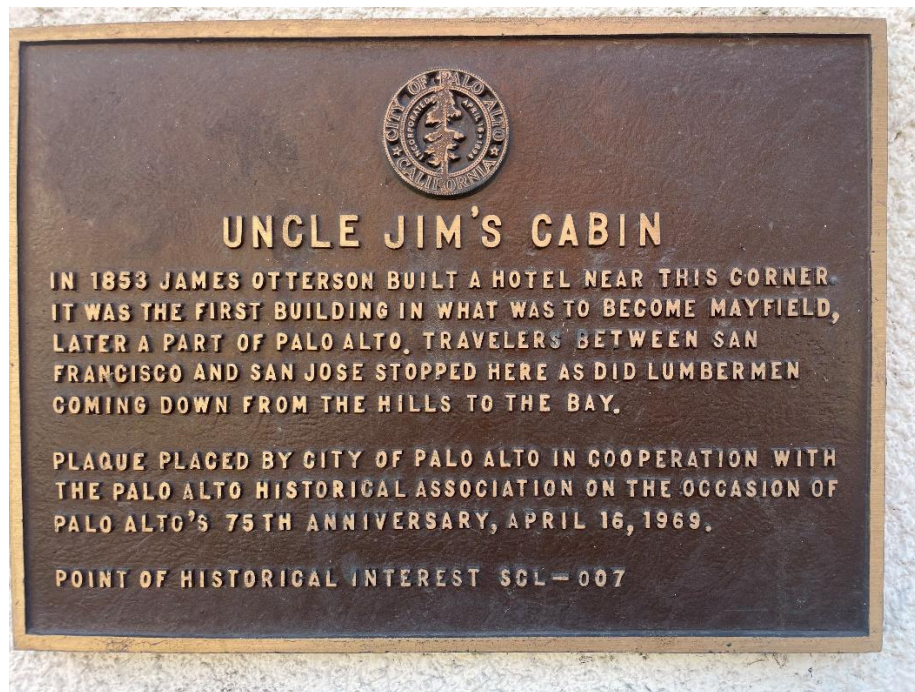


JAMES “Uncle Jim” OTTERSON, SR.

Born 1805; Died 1886

James Otterson, Sr. was born in Canada around 1805. After marrying, having children and divorcing his first wife, he arrived in the Illinois River town of Hennepin, Putnam County, Illinois in the early 1840's. There he married Elizabeth Smith, a widow with several children. The lure of gold brought him to California alone in 1852. His family, including William Short, his wife and young children, joined him a few months later. In 1853 Otterson settled or rather squatted on land near the intersection of the San Francisco-San Jose Road and the road leading from the redwoods to the bay. At this location Otterson built a tavern and hotel which was known as Uncle Jim's Cabin.

Otterson is given credit for erecting the first building in Mayfield and a plaque has been placed at its approximate site near the corner of El Camino and California Avenue in Palo Alto.



Uncle Jim's Cabin was well placed to serve the needs of travelers between San Francisco and San Jose and the business prospered in the 1850's. In addition, large herds of cattle were frequently driven from the surrounding ranches to the city and the cowboys would stop at the tavern on their way to the market. A huge corral stood behind the tavern. The local butcher also carved up carcasses which hung from a huge oak outside the tavern. In 1855, Otterson was named Postmaster of Mayfield. Unfortunately, when the mail arrived by stage coach, he is reported to have taken the pouch and dumped it on a table in the bar and shouted, "Come and get it!" This did not please the postal authorities who replaced him with his step daughter Sara Ann Smith. Interestingly, Sarah Ann later married William Page, for whom Page Mill Road is named. James Otterson, Jr. a child of Otterson's first marriage, joined his father in California around 1859.

Sometime in the late 1850's James Otterson sold the hotel to a Mr. Crosby. Things did not go well for Otterson or his family. His stepdaughter, Mary Jane Smith Short deserted her husband while he was stationed at Fort Humbolt and left her children in the care of the senior Otterson.

Elizabeth Otterson died in 1872 and was buried on a knoll on what became the Stanford University Campus. James Otterson, Sr. died at the San Mateo County Poor Farm in 1886 and was buried there. Subsequently, both his and his wife's remains were moved to the Union Cemetery and placed in the L.O.R.M. Plot.

School Field Trips in the Cemetery

On April 11, 2024 Kathy Klebe led a school field trip for fourth graders from the Nativity Catholic School in Menlo Park. If you know of any schools that would like a personalized tour for students, please contact Kathy Klebe at kklebe@historicunioncemetery.org



Summer Public Tour Schedule

We hope many of you have taken the time to go on a Union Cemetery tour. The schedule for the summer months is:

June 15  **July 20**  **August 24**

Tours start at 10AM and we meet at the kiosk, just inside the front gate. We will tell you about the early pioneering families of Redwood City, Woodside and surrounding towns in Southern San Mateo County.

A Message from our President, Kathy Klebe

RIP – Doug MacGowan

I got to know Doug about 2 years ago when our mutual interest in local history led him to offer help to the Historic Union Cemetery. Since he was a professional writer, I asked him to research and help me write brochures and short articles related to the Cemetery. He was always eager to help and finished everything quickly and accurately. Doug passed away last week and I want to honor him for his work with us and thank him for his friendship.

Kathy Klebe

Membership

If you are not a member of the Historic Union Cemetery Association (HUCA), please consider joining. Go to the CONTRIBUTE> MEMBERSHIP tab on our website; any credit card will be accepted.

If you'd prefer to join via mail, send a check to HUCA, PO Box 610033, Redwood City CA 94063 Individual membership is \$25, a Family membership is \$50. Thank you for your support!

Deanna Liotta Retires from HUCA Board

Many thanks to Deanna Liotta for her many years being on the HUCA Board of Directors. She had nearly perfect attendance for her whole tenure and we appreciate all her time and effort.

HUCA Board of Directors:

Kathy Klebe - President
kklebe@historicunioncemetery.org

Janet Lawson - Vice President
Jean Tomatis - Treasurer
Bridget Cottrell - Secretary
Maggie Coleman – Membership
hucamembership@gmail.com

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