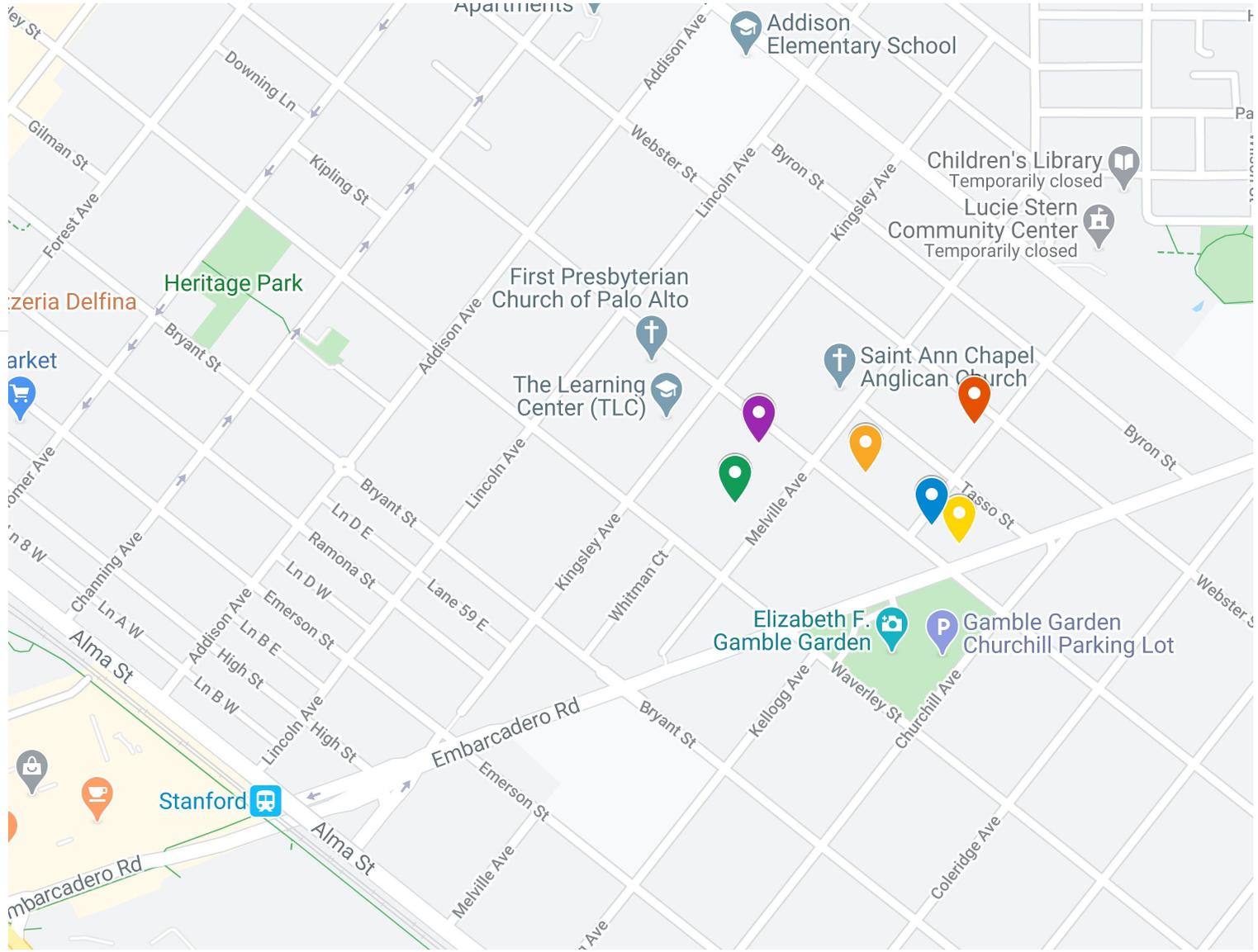


Embarcadero Self-Guided Tour #1

Untitled layer

- 📍 575 Kellogg Ave
- 📍 505 Embarcadero Rd
- 📍 1401 Cowper St
- 📍 1325 Cowper St
- 📍 1236 Cowper St
- 📍 433 Melville Ave

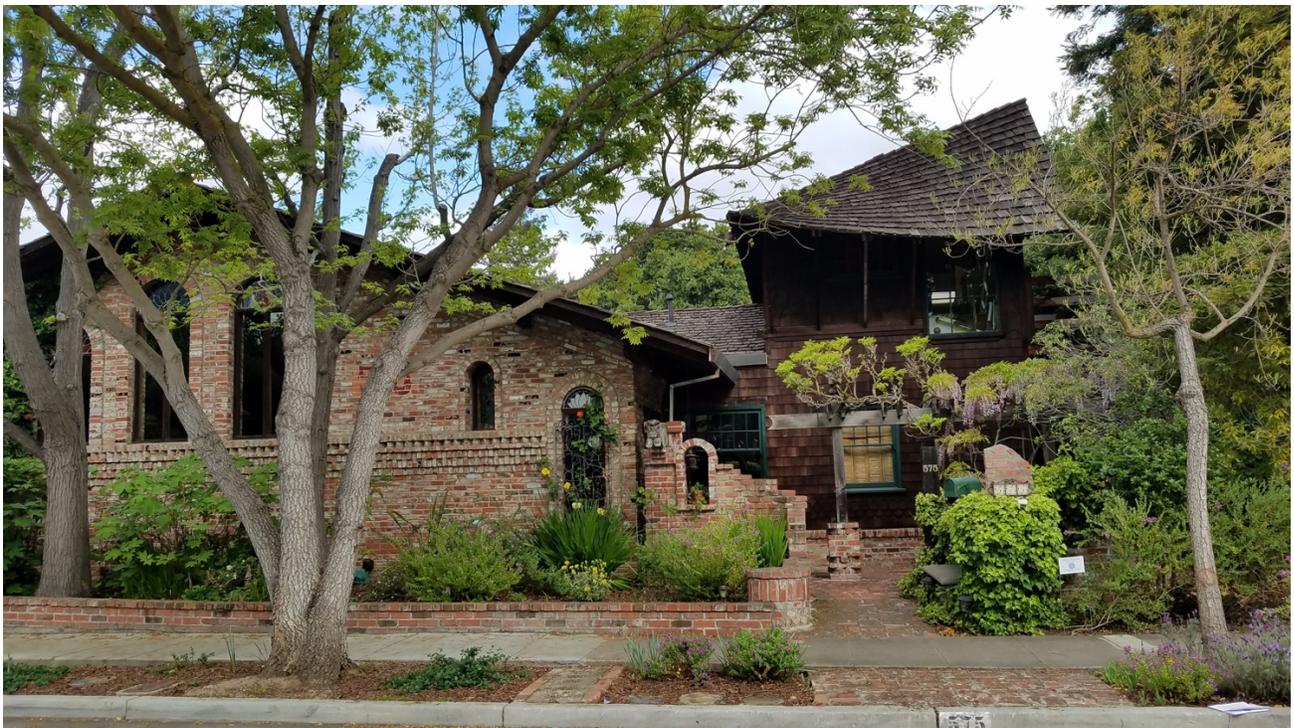


The Woman's Club of Palo Alto
HISTORIC MEMBER SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR #2:
NORTH EMBARCADERO AREA
By Carolyn Pierce & Sue Krumbein

It is our desire to share with you the homes, lives, and families of some of the earliest members of the Woman's Club - many of whom were as active, if not more so, than their husbands, in making Palo Alto what it is today. These past members were identified from the Club's oldest rosters, and through them, it is our desire to give you a little peek into the earliest years of our city.

You may either print this as your walking-guide or take an armchair tour from the comfort of your home using the photos provided.

Start the tour at **575 Kellogg**, the home of Mrs. Charlotte and Walter Dingley which was built in 1907.



Charlotte Dingley and her husband, Walter, settled in Palo Alto early, arriving in 1897. Besides serving as a past president of the Woman's Club, Charlotte was also active in the "Fortnightly Music Club." This group was started by several Stanford faculty wives as a music study group, but quickly evolved into an evening performance club for both men and women. The Fortnightly Music Club continued strong over many decades and laid the

foundation for the Woman's Club Concert Series (both past and recently revived), as well as the Lively Arts Series at Stanford.

Walk west on Kellogg, turn left on Tasso, and turn right on Embarcadero. Stop at **505 Embarcadero.**



1905 Embarcadero Road near Emerson Street

505 Embarcadero:

This Colonial Revival Cottage with a spacious veranda and gabled dormers was built in 1907. Unfortunately, the tall fence in front makes it very hard to see.



Gertrude Dibble, who lived here with her husband Wilson, was a charter member of the Woman’s Club and a noted essayist. We know from her writing that this home initially attracted her because of the beautiful trees and spacious driveway. Inside the home, she loved the Stickley light fixtures and leaded windows, but what she enjoyed most was the precision woodwork which included oak paneling and all manner of built-ins, such as the clever window seats throughout the house. In truth, with its generous porch and gabled dormers, the house still retains a lot of charm and warmth, both inside and out. The Dibbles purchased it for \$3,000.





Gertrude's husband, Wilson Dibble, was a newspaper man, builder and poet. He had also served as the Dakota County Superintendent of Public Instruction. Because education was so immensely important to the Dibbles, they moved from Nebraska to Palo Alto so Charles' younger sisters and the Dibble daughters could attend the newly created Stanford University which was tuition free at the time. To its credit, Stanford welcomed women long before any other major university did so.

After a lifetime as an editor and publisher, Wilson Dibble turned his heart to flowers, specifically the Holland tulip. He was one of the first to grow the bulbs commercially and ultimately became known as the "father" of the west coast tulip industry. He also spent his later years writing poetry and prose, much of which was published.

Now continue down Embarcadero and turn right on Cowper to **1401 Cowper Street.**



This two-story shingled Craftsman home was built in 1909. It was the home of Mrs. Jane (Jennie) and Edgar A. Soper.

In 1916, the year Jennie Soper joined the Woman's Club, she was among those rarest of creatures - a native Californian. She was born into a San Jose pioneer family and taught school for a time in Almaden, a major center for once-prosperous quicksilver mines. Jenny was the mother of three children and eventually became a nurse. Jennie's husband, Edgar, was the child of German immigrant parents, but he, too, grew up in San Jose, where he married Jennie, his childhood sweetheart.

During the years that Stanford University was under construction, Edgar Soper served as the railway agent at the Menlo Park train station. All the stone and materials used for constructing the campus passed through Edgar's office, as well as early-day Stanford notables, who became his life-long friends. When the University finally opened, Edgar was asked to become its first postmaster.

After a few houses had begun to spring up in the new town of Palo Alto, Edgar and Jennie moved here, and he became an expense agent for a little express company known as Wells Fargo. In those years, Wells Fargo was primarily a financial transport company. It was noted in the newspaper article announcing Edgar's retirement that he hadn't taken a vacation in 20 years!

It is interesting to note that the 1910 Census shows the Sopers with 3 children and 2 renters - one a Mr. Heath Titcomb, a Wells Fargo clerk, and the other a Mr. Watio Hiti, age 20, who was a Japanese immigrant. All three of the Soper sons attended Stanford, and their granddaughter, Elva B. Soper, was the first woman to be appointed to the local Municipal Court (1976).



1899 - Wells Fargo offices were located in the 2-story building on the left.

Continue north on Cowper to 1325. The house at **1325 Cowper** Street was built in 1909 and was the home of Mrs. Cleo and Dr. Dennison A. Russell.



Dennison Russell’s family first settled in Mayfield in 1888, a logging town featuring approximately one saloon per actual citizen. They subsequently moved to Palo Alto in 1894. Cleo graduated from Stanford in 1903, married Dennison, and the young couple lived in this house until 1917. It was during this time that Cleo was a member of the Woman’s Club. Dennison subsequently took a position as the pastor of a San Francisco church, but the Russells returned to Palo Alto from 1923-27 while their daughter attended Stanford.



1894: University Avenue “Circle” and train station circa 1894

Continue north on Cowper to 1236, a home built in 1910. This was the home of Mr. James and Mrs. Sara White.



Sara, an artist, taught drawing in the Lytton Public Grammar School. To foster art appreciation among her young students, she established a “Loan Art” exhibit in the school with paintings and prints lent by local residents from their own collections. Among these were copies of the best masterpieces, and from time-to-time, Sara would serve as docent to the students viewing them. Sara is credited for establishing an art curriculum in the Palo Alto schools and held viewings of her students’ art creations at the Woman’s Club.



1893 Stanford Surveying Squad: James White lower right; Herbert upper right

Walk back south on Cowper and turn right on Melville to **433 Melville**.



This was the home of Mrs. Julia and Charles H. Gilbert. Built in 1894, this Queen Anne Shingle Style house was designed by A.B. Clark, a local architect and the father of Birge Clark. (Birge also became an architect and designed many buildings in Palo Alto, including houses, schools, and public buildings.) Notice the wrap around veranda with columns and the various wood textures used in the horizontal bands to unify the form of the building.

Having graduated from the Oxford Female Seminary and spent some years as Superintendent of the Bloomington Indiana high school system, Julia came to Stanford University for her PHD. Though she died young at the age of thirty-eight from a blood clot in her brain, she was a brilliant woman, and a pivotal figure in many arenas.

Julia was a founder and early president of the Woman's Club, and she formed the Civic League to investigate and propose civic improvements; nonetheless, creating a public library for Palo Alto was her strongest passion. She led the drive to gather hundreds of suitable books, implemented a lending system, and was a significant figure in finding a home for the new library. The concept of a children's library room was particularly dear to her heart.

In a letter to a friend, Julia Gilbert wrote, *"It is one of the things that makes living in Palo Alto worthwhile, to know that here, original work is done for the good of general human progress."*

Julia's husband, Charles, was a Prof. of Zoology at Stanford and an expert ichthyologist, advising both the government and the fishing industry. He is also among the earliest experts to recognize the need for an environmental perspective. Charles was the first to study the amount of salmon that could be fished without depleting populations. The Palo Alto Times noted, *"In this capacity, Charles Gilbert completely overcame the early opposition on the part of the canners, with the result that they regulated their conduct in accordance with his judgement."*

All of the Gilbert's children attended Stanford.



1899 - The Gilbert home is pictured within the circle, #3, upper right.

Conclusion: As we enjoy Woman's Club activities at the club, it's interesting to think about those who were members long ago. They came to Palo Alto for a variety of reasons, but once they were here, they enjoyed the civic nature of the town, and the women,

especially, benefitted from friendships they made at the Club and the important work they did in the community.

We hope you enjoyed your walk and will join us for future excursions this fall when Club Days resume. Thank you for joining us, Carolyn & Sue