

# THE RECORD

Fall  
Quarterly  
From Panthers  
to Pacemakers  
pg. 5

## THE WHITTELLS IN BURLINGAME

BY CATHY BAYLOCK

I have always believed that “All roads lead to Burlingame” meaning we have had many noteworthy figures who worked or lived here or attended high school here. Imagine my surprise to learn from the Society’s recent walking tour (of the five original Burlingame Country Club cottages built in 1893) that one belonged to the **Whittells**. The summer home is one of the three Burlingame Country Club cottages that is still standing; its current address is 50 Kammerer Court, Hillsborough.

Some of you may be familiar with the Whittell name due to the exploits of George Jr. (their only biological son and sole heir to a vast fortune) who unwittingly helped conserve nearly the entire east shore of Lake Tahoe, Nevada by a large land purchase in 1936 of 100,000 acres and 27 miles of shoreline spanning from Stateline Nevada as far south as Cave Rock (beyond Glenbrook, NV).

George Jr., despite his “ambition to lead an unproductive life,” managed to sell \$50 million worth of stock just a few months before the stock market crash of October 1929. Whittell had wanted to relocate to Nevada because of its favorable tax climate and he had already moved all his business interests there. His well-timed stock sale made the huge Nevada land purchase possible.

The Whittell fortune was made two generations before George Jr.’s birth when his two grandfathers immigrated west to join the Gold Rush. Both of his grandfathers—his paternal grandfather Hugh Whittell, and his maternal grandfather Nicholas B. Luning—made their way to San Francisco as part of the Gold Rush, arriving in 1849. Hugh Whittell made his fortune “investing in mining claims and buying real estate”. Luning, arriving with \$6000 in hand, opened a small bank specializing in “loans to merchants facing financial emergencies”.



*Whittell Cottage (built 1890s) in August 2022; Photo by Bobbi Benson*

The Whittell and Luning fortunes were wed when Anna Luning married George Whittell (Sr.) in 1879. George Jr. and a twin brother, Nicholas, were born in



*George and Anna (Luning) Whittell  
Courtesy of Bill Watson*

beating Edith Chesebrough (another socialite golfer) in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July tournament. By 1915, parcel maps no longer associated Whittell as the owner of the property. George Sr. died in 1922.



*Whittell Family Mausoleum at Cypress Lawn, Colma  
Photos by Jennifer Pfaff*

1881, though Nicholas was lost to diphtheria in 1885 leaving George Jr. as the sole heir. (Later, a foster brother Alfred also became part of the family but he did not share in the inheritance). In 1890, Anna's sixty-eight year old father died, leaving an estate worth about \$29,000,000, according to the book "Castle in the Sky".

We know that **the Whittells** owned **the** Burlingame cottage from at least 1906 when their name appears on a parcel map as the owner of the middle cottage adjacent to El Camino Real. However, it is likely that they bought the cottage well before 1906. George Sr. was a member of the Burlingame Country Club. His niece, Florence Whittell, was a crack golfer and won the Poniowski Golf Trophy at the Club in 1903

Upon George Sr.'s passing, George Jr. "became one of the richest 40 year-olds in America." He was already a noted playboy, and his inheritance led to the amassing of vast amounts of Nevada real estate and the eventual building of Thunderbird Lodge.

[www.thunderbirdtahoe.org](http://www.thunderbirdtahoe.org) As it would turn out, two days after the Society's Country Club Cottage walking tour, I visited Thunderbird Lodge for a tour and was fortunate to meet their Chief Executive and Curator, Bill Watson. He is the man

credited with single-handedly saving the Thunderbird Lodge from demolition. We chatted about the Whittell and Burlingame connection, and he clearly remembers seeing letters and other memorabilia related to Burlingame in their Archive. Said Archive is in the process of being moved from storage in Carson City to a new building in Incline Village, NV and I hope to follow up with Bill in the future to see what "treasure" he might have on the Whittells who were early purchasers of Burlingame property.

Meanwhile, take a look at their wonderful website to garner an in-depth look at the Whittell legacy in Nevada. Also, you can take a trip to Colma to visit the Whittell mausoleum at Cypress Lawn. We can all be grateful for George Jr.'s role as an "accidental conservationist"!

[Editor's note: a 1903 property deed was found in a History of SJ archive by S. Winchester researcher MaryJo Ignoffo indicating the original sale from Occidental Land Co. of the cottage to niece Florence Whittell, who subsequently (in 1907) sold the property to Sarah Winchester—to be updated in future newsletter/]



*George Whittell Jr.  
Courtesy of Bill Watson*



# A HOSPITAL IN HILLSBOROUGH?

BY JENNIFER PFAFF

On March 2, 1954, crowds of people celebrated the grand-opening of the newly built Peninsula Hospital (*see photo at right*); this was barely four months before a spectacular fire engulfed and destroyed Darius Ogden Mills' mansion "Happy House", nearby.



Both the opening of the hospital and the fire destroying the Mills' mansion were the culmination of what ultimately became a highly controversial decision-making process to find a site for a new hospital. Shortly after the California legislature passed the California Hospital District Act in 1945, authorizing local communities to form special districts to construct and operate hospitals, San Mateo County created the Peninsula Hospital District. With high hopes that voters would approve the necessary hospital construction bond(s), the task at hand was to quickly identify the best available site.

On August 27, 1948, the *San Mateo Times* newspaper reported that hospital district directors had announced their chosen location:

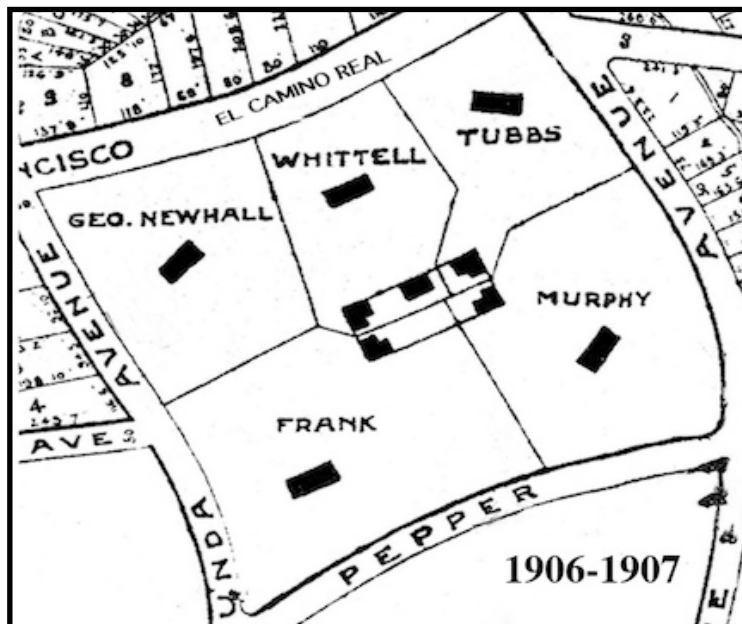
"The new hospital, with a 100-bed capacity, will be located on a 12 ½ acre site on El Camino Real, between Floribunda and Bellevue Avenues...bounded on the west by Pepper Avenue and includes the Captain Barneson estate, and the George Kammerer property. Directors express the opinion the site is the best obtainable from all standpoints...The directors last night ordered Douglas D. Stone, of the firm Stone & Malloy, experts in hospital designing, to rush detailed plans for presentation to the public."

Those familiar with the area (perhaps some of whom participated in our recent walking tour) will recognize the location described above as the historic Burlingame Country Club settlement of 5 privately-owned summer "cottages", originally built in the 1890s, at least 3 of which still existed in 1948 on the large site west of El Camino Real, in Hillsborough. The Barneson (aka Murphy) cottage and George Kammerer (aka

Newlands) cottage had most recently functioned as rest and relaxation quarters for Naval officers on their way out to the Pacific during WWII.

The newspaper article continued: "the hospital would be so built in the middle of the lands so that it would be shielded from the highway [El Camino Real] and kept 100 ft. away from the rear property lines... it would be almost impossible to tell a hospital was present in the area because of the natural aspects

of the site; it combines a central location for the entire district with the benefits of seclusion and quietness...



1906 map showing Hillsborough's 1890s Country Club Cottages (bounded by El Camino Real, Floribunda, Pepper and Bellevue Avenues) In 1948—the preferred location for a new mid-Peninsula hospital

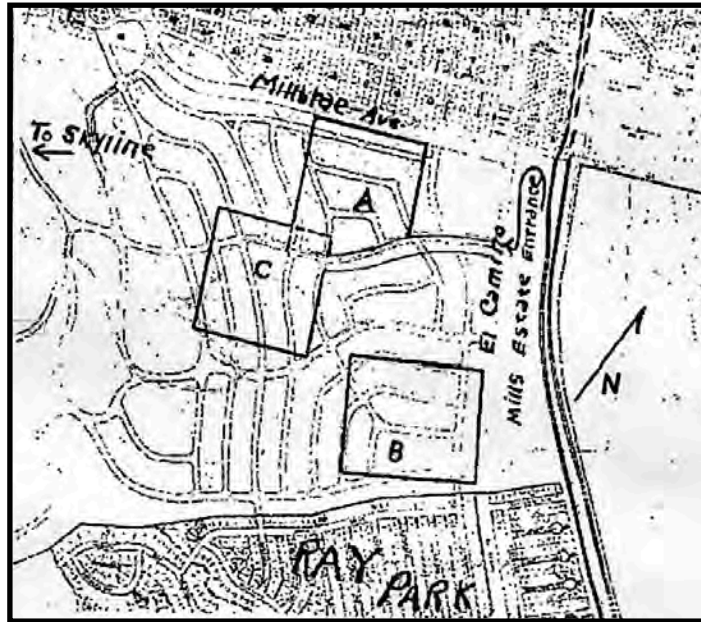
the old Barneson mansion would be ideal for the nurses' home", the directors said.

Reportedly 4 of the 5 Hillsborough Councilmembers had assured hospital directors they would approve use of that site.

This preferred hospital location, however, appears not to have been well-vetted by the general public. Rather, it may have been motivated by the desire of the then current property owners to unload their aging estates that were likely becoming burdensome and costly to maintain. As is currently the case, land-use zoning in Hillsborough was strictly residential, with no commercial businesses, religious nor institutional buildings allowed. The Pepper Avenue side abutted the Country Club grounds with extensive Golf links; Hillsborough was rural, and evidently, most of its residents wanted the town to remain as such.

Less than a month later, in September 1948, the Hillsborough Town Council did an about-face, issuing a statement pledging "years of litigation" if the Hillsborough location were to be included in the November hospital bond measure—a decision several doctors condemned as "misguided".

Not long thereafter, plans for a 100-room hospital, including a maternity floor, were presented in time for the November 1948 election. Notably, the ballot language would not include the actual location for said hospital. On November 3, 1948, Robert Koshland, chairman of the Peninsula Hospital board, and strong proponent of the Hillsborough site, thanked voters for their overwhelming support of the bond measure, promising to make the hospital a reality. Rather than beat a dead horse, the hospital campaign then shifted its focus from Hillsborough to the Mills Estate—considered at least initially, the far inferior choice. By the mid-1930s, both of Mills' children had died and by 1940 the Mills Estate, on behalf of the grandchildren, had started subdividing the vast summer estate they rarely used. Ray Park, as well as Burlingame Village, were early subdivision efforts.



*SM Times March 16, 1949 clipping of a map released by the Mills Estate Co. showing 3 possible hospital sites: "A", located along Millbrae Avenue, was offered at a lower price for appeal. Mills High School campus was eventually built on part of this site. Mills Mansion was located on site "C", it burned down in 1954 and eventually became apartments.*

The Mills Estate Co. had already approved the use of a 23-acre site along Millbrae Avenue for a hospital site. **(SITE A)**. However, a hospital planning and research company had another Mills Estate location in mind. In early March 1949, the Peninsula Hospital district ordered condemnation of 24 acres of the Mills Estate north of Ray Park at El Camino Real **(SITE B)**. Leslie Moore, president of the Mills Estate Co. announced that the proposed site for the nearly \$2,950,000 hospital was not for sale, and that his organization would fight any steps to secure it. Compounding the issues

and interests, the cities of Burlingame and Millbrae were already involved in litigation to determine the boundaries of their cities and how much of the former Mills estate would be annexed by each city. Behind the scenes, Hospital and School Board Trustees planned to collaborate on plans for condemnation of various sites.

On March 16, 1949, the Mills Estate Co. unveiled plans for subdividing the Mills Estate property into hundreds of residential home sites. The three potential hospital locations under discussion were disclosed, including the hospital board officials' preference, **(SITE B)** adjacent to Ray Park. Still, the Mills company remained intent on promoting the 23-acre site along Millbrae Avenue **(SITE A)**, even offering that acreage at just \$5,000 per acre.

Likely to the Mills Company's delight, there was immediate opposition to SITE B adjacent Ray Park—not only from residents, but also from Ray Park developers who envisioned further expansion of new residential development there. Petitioners urged the acceptance of the cheaper, more accessible site along Millbrae Avenue, preferred by the Mills Company. The sparring and disagreements continued for months, but it was not enough to dissuade the hospital board from giving its blessing (in December 1950) to the final hospital plans for the \$3 million structure to be built on the preferred Site B, with Burlingame City Council members expressing support for the quick annexation of the Mills' property hospital site into Burlingame.

## “From Panthers to Pacemakers”

**QUARTERLY MEETING: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27th at our new COMMUNITY CENTER:**

**7pm in the MAPLE Room, 2nd floor  
(handicapped accessible; elevator  
from garage parking available).**

### **Burlingame High turns 100 in 2023!**

At our next quarterly meeting **Mark Lucchesi**, the beloved former manager of Mollie Stone’s and current podcaster (Mark at the Mic - You Tube), will lead a panel discussion of past BHS foibles, fables and fun. The panel will include BHS sports announcer (and local



journalist) John Horgan, former English teachers Linda McLaughlin, and Glenn Morgan, Maria Mangini (daughter of the one-and-only Vic Mangini) and former and current students (Rusty Knudsen, class of 1974, and Ella and Ava Giere, class of 2023). This will be an entertaining evening you won’t want to miss! It will also be an opportunity to see the new Community Center.

**Welcome new members:** Amy Lennane and Alex Ferguson; **Thank you to Leslie Brown for her generous donation in memory of her father, Burlingame architect Irving Forbes Brown.**

*This circa 1953-1954 view of the **Mills Estate** as seen from the Skyline towards SF Bay shows the still-intact Mills Mansion “Happy House” surrounded by trees (center left). Peninsula hospital and Burlingame Intermediate School under construction (or newly built) located just south of the mansion—all part of site “B” on the 1949 Mills Estate Co. map (pg. 4) and just adjacent to the Ray Park subdivision. The Mills Mansion at site “C” burned not long after this image was taken.*



*Photo: Courtesy of the Millbrae Historical Society*





### ACQUISITIONS with many thanks

to **Linda Field** for misc. local photographs, including several images (above) taken at the 2022 anti-gun violence rally and parade that took place in downtown Burlingame on June 11, 2022; **Tom Carey** for the San Francisco Chronicle Rotogravure Pictorial Section of December 25, 1932 entitled: White Days on the Peninsula, featuring a number of Burlingame residences and local scenery in falling snow, depicted by local photographers including George W. Manz and Dorothy Crawford; **Mark Lucchesi and Rusty Knudsen** for a July 18<sup>th</sup> podcast walk down memory lane (Burlingame Avenue) in the 1960s, and **Mark** for a July 28<sup>th</sup> podcast interview with **Paulette Munroe**, owner of Morning Glory, and another podcast on August 8<sup>th</sup>, with sisters and Burlingame High students **Ella and Ava Giere**, [editor's note: all podcasts can be heard by clicking on the link "Podcasts and Videos" on [burlingamehistory.org](http://burlingamehistory.org)]; **Russ Cohen** for a photo and clipping related to the Hower Family of Burlingame; **Susan Smith-Bromiley** for biographical information about longtime bakers, Erwin and Inge Hammer, who worked in the bakery business in Burlingame since the 1960s, eventually founding Ingeborg's Bakery in Burlingame, in 1971 (depicted in Erwin's 2014 watercolor at center) at 1308 Burlingame Avenue (now *The Cakery*); **Sue Potts**

kindness of **Tommy McMahon** (Burlingame Public Library) for a 5-volume set of short stories written by Burlingame Mayor, Charlotte Johnson, assembled by Charlotte's great aunt; **Beth Beisecker** for a clipping related to passing of renowned S.F. photographer Fred Lyon, Burlingame High School graduate, and to **Paul, son of Roy Ambrosio**, for a

1956 photo of Roy's Barber Shop and Ippy's bar (shown below), located at 218-220 Lorton Avenue- now "The Cut" and defunct "Alibi" bar, as well as a description of Burlingame's downtown atmosphere during that period.





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## RAZIEL UNGAR IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE BURLINGAME HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

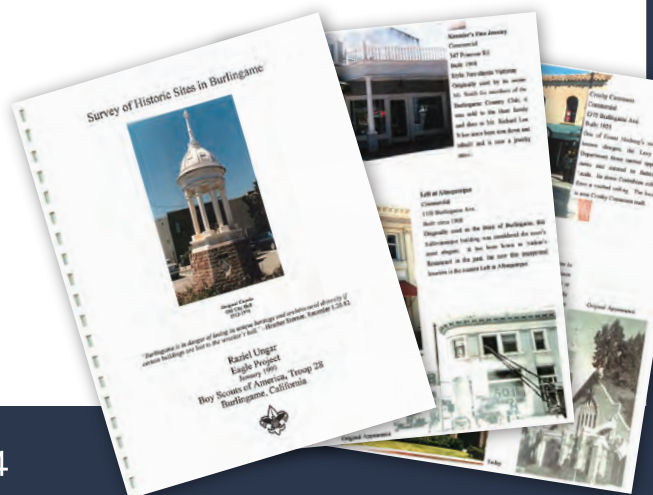
I've been a member since I was 17 years old when Martha May collaborated with me on my Eagle Scout project 'A Survey of Historic Homes in Burlingame'.



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#### Calendar:

**Burlingame Hillsborough  
History Museum 1-4 pm 1st  
Sunday of the month\***

**\*Note: Currently Closed.**

We are reconfiguring our display  
area. Please check our website for  
updates.

#### NEXT EVENT

Quarterly meeting

Thur. Oct 27 at 7pm

BHS — Panthers to Pacemakers  
see pg. 5 for more information

***Please remember us  
in your will or trust***

### President's Message:

In 2018, longtime Burlingame resident **Dale Perkins** was interviewed by the Burlingame Historical Society's Cathy Foxhoven. Dale described himself as a child of the depression, born in Glenwood, Minnesota, a tiny cowtown. His mother raised him, while his father picked up work anywhere he could find it. From his parents, he learned to be nimble and thankful, and to follow his nose. Dale landed a job teaching art with the Burlingame School District in the early 1960s. In 1963, Dale and his wife Evie (both teachers) purchased a home for \$41,000 in the Mills Estate, one of just five available in the subdivision. "I came to Burlingame, and I was in heaven," he often told others of the move to his adopted city.

Dale had far more energy than most anyone. He spent the remaining half-century of his life giving back to the city and its people whom he loved so dearly.

We were saddened to learn of Dale's passing and send our deep condolences to his loved ones. We are deeply appreciative of the artwork he created and donated to benefit our community.

When asked if he preferred one work over others, he mentioned his watercolor of the historic Greyhound Depot:

***"It is my sentimental favorite.  
Many of us pass it every day. It is  
almost poetic— the silence and love  
that it evokes as we quietly pass by."***

Earlier this year, Dale wrote:

***The best has yet to come for each of  
us.....I have always said it and it  
continues to happen.....think of the  
miracles you and each of us have  
created!!! I feel blessed to work with  
all of you over the years!***

The feeling is most certainly mutual.

***- Jennifer Pfaff***

### Current Officers

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