
Posted on Thu, Mar. 25, 2004

P.A. history society to post old photographs on Net

FIRST BATCH NUMBERS 500; ADDITIONAL 10,000 IN THE WORKS

By Dan Stober

The Palo Alto Historical Association's collection of old photographs is going online.

The first batch of 500 photos is available at www.pahistory.org.

The photos range from an 1880s class photo of the well-dressed students at Jane Stanford's free kindergarten to a 1923 snapshot of bartender Charles Peterson standing behind the bar at Rehfeld's Place, at El Camino Real and California Avenue.

Until now, public access to the photo collection has been limited to the 10 hours a week that historian Steve Staiger is on duty at the city's Main Library.

The historical association has 10,500 photos and is always looking for more, said Tom Wyman, the association president.

Money to scan and catalog the photos has been provided by the city of Palo Alto and a \$57,000 grant from the now-defunct Cable Co-op.

About 80 percent of the photos in the collection have been scanned into digital format, but the cataloging of them is moving at a slower pace, Wyman said.

A description of each photo has to be carefully written. ``Digitizing them is really quite easy," Wyman said. "It's describing them so they can be easily retrieved, that's difficult."

The online photos may be copied and used without charge. High-resolution versions can be obtained from Staiger.

Wyman predicts the photos will be used in unexpected ways. Already, real estate agents want to include photographs in their sales brochures. ``They'll be able to correlate the houses they're trying to sell with old-time photos," he said.

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