SONOMA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Sonoma, CA 95476

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Mission San Francisco Solano de Sonoma painted in1884 by Oriana Weatherbee Day, part of the De Young Museum collection in San Francisco, now in the public domain.

Founded in 1937

Volume 54 • No. 2 | April - June 2023

Sonoma Valley History

Depot Park Museum and Marcy House Archives Center

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The Sonoma Overlook Trail

The 20th Anniversary of the trail is this year. Read about how our community fought for it and have shared it with the world for 20 years. Page 3

The Basalt Rock Quarries Above Sonoma

From the mid-1870s to the early 1900s basalt was mined from above Sonoma to pave San Francisco and other cities. Page 6

President's Report

Patricia Cullinan

2023 is an exciting year for history in Sonoma. July 4th is the 200th Anniversary of the founding of Mission San Francisco Solano, an important part of Sonoma's history.

Beginning last year, the lecture series discussed the effect of the Sonoma Mission on native people, and will continue to look at various aspects of cultural changes in Sonoma.

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SONOMA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Sonoma Valley Historical Society

Officers

Patricia Cullinan, President
Carol Page, Vice President
Laurie Gallian, Treasurer
Shelley Hoffman, Secretary

Directors

Mike Acker, Jim Brewer, Charlotte Galloway, Kathleen Hill, George McHale, Peter Meyerhof, Ron Price, Kate Schertz

Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of the Month, 12:00pm via Zoom.

About the Society

The Sonoma Valley Historical Society was formed in 1937 and is dedicated to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of the historic heritage of the "Valley of the Moon."

Locations

Marcy House Archives and Research Ctr.
205 First Street West, Sonoma
(707) 343-1335

Depot Park Museum
270 First Street West, Sonoma

About this Publication

Sonoma Valley History is published quarterly.

Contact

info@SonomaValleyHistory.org
P.O. Box 861, Sonoma, CA 95476

Cover Image

Glenn and Dennis O'Neil in Mission Highlands look out over land that is now The Sonoma Overlook Trail and Montini Preserve, divided by Norrbom Rd (1st St West in town). The photo is by Richard O'Neil circa 1952 and has been colorized in Adobe Photoshop.

Calendar

Thursday April 13, 2023, 7pm—In the Sonoma Mission Chapel, Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz present "The Yankees, Señor General, Are Not Like Us: Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo and His History of Alta California."

Thursday May 11, 2023, 7pm—in the Mission Chapel Damian Bacich will discuss the explorations of Gabriel Moraga north of San Francisco.

Saturday September 16, 2023—Martha Ann Francisca Vallejo McGettigan will discuss the Suysun (Suisun or Patwin) language—check sonomvalleyhistory.org for time and place.

Sunday September 24, 2023 — "Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Sonoma Mission." The Baile de California will perform in Sonoma. This will be an opportunity to see and learn traditional dances of early California. Look for a time and place.

Sunday October 22, 2023 — "200 years–A Walk Around the Historic Core of Sonoma." Learn about the rich history of Sonoma from pre-contact to the establishment of the Sonoma Mission in 1823 and beyond. The walk will begin with a visit to the Sonoma Mission. Look for details at sonomavalleyhistory.org in the coming months.

President's Report, cont'd

The April lecture will discuss the recollections of General Mariano Vallejo as a witness to early California and Sonoma life.

There will be a display of mission paintings by Mattie Fountain, generously donated to the Sonoma Valley Historical Society by the Bank of America, where they hung for years in Sonoma, their restoration financed by a grant from Steve Hearst.

Look for other events on our website, sonomavalleyhistory.org Please visit the Depot Park museum to see *Getting Away From it All—the Sonoma Valley Resorts* exhibit, a wonderful follow up to Picturing the Springs. Our hard working docents keep the museum open every Saturday and Sunday 1-4pm. We will be closed for a while in the late Spring for heater repairs and will announce our return date as soon as we can.

I am humbled by the show of support, participation, and commitment the membership brings to our organization. You are there at meetings, lectures, and events of your local historical society! That said, time seems to fly but July brings a new membership year and you will be receiving renewal reminders in June.

Turn of the Century Basalt Rock Quarries Above Sonoma, cont'd from Page 6

"By 1889, Sonoma was providing 90% of all the blocks used in San Francisco, and [by April] he was sending 80,000 blocks (or 720 tons) per month...The stone was cut to size with chisels and hammers to a specified size: 3-4"W x 8-12"L x 7-8"D. The dimensions of this basalt block that falls within these parameters and was left behind in the quarry, teaches us that a typical block weighed 18 lb.

"The remaining chips from stone cutting were placed in handcars and dumped into gullies where they too remain to this day, as do the overgrown access paths..." Other stones left over from quarrying also went into local buildings, such as the Pinni building, still standing in Sonoma (see picture).

Pinni House, 147 E. Spain, built circa 1906, partly with rubble from the Schocken quarries.

"From 1893 to 1897 there was another economic depression, but Schocken and Sonoma did very well because to stimulate their own economy, San Francisco had instituted major paving projects using Sonoma basalt stone. Schocken soon became the only contractor for all basalt blocks conveyed to San Francisco with contracts for one million blocks in 1893 and again in 1894. Between 1895 and 1909 Schocken remained the principal local supplier of paving blocks although the demand and production decreased." [2]

A small section of cobblestones in Sonoma. Clay and Drumm in SF also still has stones.

The Quarry above General Vallejo's Home (what is now the Montini Preserve, which is contiguous with the Sonoma Overlook Trail)

Agostino Pinelli was instrumental in the quarry industry in Sonoma. He not only managed Schocken's quarry, but also the quarry on what is now the Montini Preserve. As Robert Lynch writes, "Agostino brought to Sonoma many Italian stonecutters, including Samuele Sebastiani—later to become the successful vintner—who drove the horse-drawn wagons loaded with stones down Schocken Hill to the Embarcadero on Sonoma Creek or to the train station in Sonoma's Plaza." [3]

Today, remains of the quarrying on the Montini Preserve are quite evident, not just at the Red Quarry which is noted with a sign on the trail, but also by numerous large divots and excavations that are evident both on-trail and off. With imagination, one can picture a landscape much different than today, with almost no trees, and rock piles everywhere.

The fact that nature has taken over to such an extent that long-standing trees grow from talus piles and hide the environmental devastation that once covered the Montini Preserve actually provides hope that once we are done ravaging the environment nature will once again prevail.

Sources:

[1] Nancy Olmsted Resource Consultants, "A History of Paving Blocks Along San Francisco's South Beach Waterfront," Prepared for the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, July 1991 [https://sfredevelopment.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=1086].

[2] Meyerhof, Peter. Personal correspondence 02/08/2023.

[3] Lynch, Robert M. *The Sonoma Valley Story: Pages Through the Ages*, The Sonoma Index-Tribune, Sonoma, California, 1997.

Turn of the Century Basalt Rock Quarries Above Sonoma

Roy Tennant

From the mid-1870s to the early 1900s, the streets of San Francisco were mostly paved by basalt paving stones extracted from quarries in Sonoma, Marin, Napa, and Solano counties. Millions of blocks enabled flourishing San Francisco to pave, or repave its streets with stone able to withstand the punishment of steel horseshoes and steel-clad wagon wheels.

Other paving methods had been tried and found wanting (for example, wooden paving blocks and round river rocks from the American River near Folsom), while others were too difficult, expensive, or deemed unfit (early macadam and asphalt, despite already being used in Paris, Vienna, and London at the time). When automobiles became more prevalent, basalt blocks were judged too rough and streets began to be paved smooth. [1]

But for approximately 40 years, quarries in the North Bay employed many men in quarrying, shaping, and shipping these stones. In 1878, almost a million and a half basalt paving blocks were shipped to San Francisco from Petaluma alone. "Geologists reported that from '1887 to 1913 at least 136 million paving blocks for the streets of San Francisco, valued at $5,712,000 were produced from numerous quarries in Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma quarries.'" [1]

In Sonoma, two basalt quarries were located on Schocken Hill and what is now the Montini Preserve, within easy walking distance north of the City of Sonoma. "In the 1880s and 1890s, Sonoma's basalt rock quarries created the town's third-largest industry, after the wineries and dairies." [2]

Schocken Hill Quarry (east and above the Sonoma Overlook Trail property)
A local businessman, Solomon Schocken, purchased the property east and above the city-owned Mountain Cemetery and established a quarry there in the late 1800s. Battery Hill as it was known then soon became Schocken Hill. Stones were mined from the hill mostly by Italian immigrants.

"Schocken's Quarries, north of Sonoma produced 600,000 blocks in 1893 and shipped 500,000 to San Francisco and Oakland." (Report of State Minerologist, 1894: p. 396-397), as cited in [1].

As Peter Meyerhof writes, "The basalt block industry became a major segment of the economy of Sonoma. Millions of basalt paving stones would be sent to San Francisco, San Jose, and Stockton from Sonoma County...The west and south slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains north of Sonoma were considered one of the best areas of quality basalt deposits and small quarries began in 1882. By 1884 basalt stone from Sonoma County was beginning to be used extensively for paving the streets of San Francisco...

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Sonoma Overlook Trail: A Community Vision That Prevailed Through Controversy

Roy Tennant

Sonoma Overlook Trail wouldn't exist if it weren't for a community that stood up and fought for it, then worked together to build and maintain it.

A Very Brief History of the Area
The native peoples of Sonoma County included the Pomo, Coastal Miwok, and Onasáti (Wappo) tribes. They lived here for thousands of years before the invasion of European settlers—by Spanish Catholic missionaries in 1823, and the Mexican military. Sonoma was the last and northernmost mission established by the church, and therefore also the terminus of El Camino Real, the "royal road" or "King's highway" that connected all the missions in California.

General Mariano Vallejo established a military post here as well as in Petaluma and was instrumental in the foundation of the town of Sonoma in 1834. He built his house not far from what is now Sonoma Overlook Trail. At that time the hillside was known as Battery Hill, and General Vallejo deeded around 60 acres of it to the City to use as a cemetery (known as Mountain Cemetery). Not a lot happened on the property until more modern times (early 1900s to about 1950), when a hillside on the cemetery property served as a dump. For many years local residents hiked various unmaintained trails, drove vehicles up into the hills, and parts became popular party spots for local high school students.

Solomon Schocken bought the property east of, and above Mountain Cemetery (including the crest of the hill) and it shortly became known as Schocken Hill. Not long thereafter he established a rock quarry there. *See the story "Turn of the Century Basalt Quarries Above Sonoma" in this issue for more on this period.*

The Idea for a Trail Takes Shape, 1998-2002
Karen Collins, one of the two key people in establishing the trail, credits Robert Behrens with contacting her sometime in the mid-to-late 90s to show her the property and suggest the idea of a trail. He had contacted her because he had heard she was interested in trails and she served on the City's Community Services and Environment Commission. Karen contacted Executive Director of the Sonoma Ecology Center Richard Dale, since she had heard that he ran on that property. He loved the idea of a trail and suggested that Karen reach out to Maggie Salenger, an SEC Board member, about the idea. "We [Karen and Maggie] started going to the Sonoma City Council with our idea, "Karen described in a recent email, "A Rosewood Hotel representative went to the City also, as they were looking for a hillside location for a hotel. The City Planning Director told him that the trail idea was percolating."

Maggie (left) and Karen.

The Rosewood Resort Controversy, 1999
In May 1999 "Thannisch Development Resources and Paradise Hotels and Resorts were planning Rosewood Resort, a group of guest cottage quadrangles with tennis courts, a restaurant and spa...Edged on the west by Norrbom Road, Rosewood Resort was estimated to total 205,000 square feet and cost $61.8 million" (*Sonoma Index-Tribune*, March 25, 2003).

Join us on April 16, 2023 at 11am-1pm at the Sonoma Overlook Trail (198 1st St West) to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the trail! We will have distinguished speakers and the trail book for sale.

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Sonoma Overlook Trail: A Community Vision That Prevailed Through Controversy, cont'd

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When the news came out, the community was energized to oppose it, as the location overlooked the city. Joe Costello, a local attorney, created and led the effort to defeat the hotel proposal, forming the Sonoma Hillside Preservation Alliance. Sonoma City Council, faced with major opposition from city residents, put a measure on the ballot for a special election. Named Measure A, it read "Shall the ordinance prohibiting the lease and sale of certain property behind Mountain Cemetery owned by the City of Sonoma be adopted?" This would prevent the sale of the property for hotel development on the hill above the city. In September 1999, the measure passed overwhelmingly (76.5% yes) and the hotel proposal was defeated. (Sonoma County Registrar of Voters, September 21, 1999). Joe wrote a book about this campaign, *Sonoma Battlefield*.

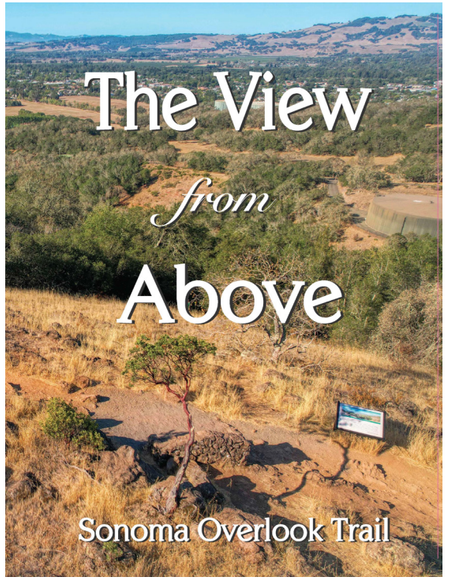
The Trail is Built, 2001-2003

Having defeated the hotel proposal, the community moved on to the long and hard work of raising the money necessary to clean up the dump on the property and construct a trail. Part of this was forming the Mountain Cemetery Trail Task Force Coalition (the trailhead would begin at the Mountain Cemetery), which Karen Collins was involved with. Maggie Salenger, as an SEC Board Member, offered that organization as a "point organization" for trails fundraising and mapping the property. (*Sonoma Index-Tribune*, November 23, 1999). An early and key supporter was State Senator Wes Chesbro.

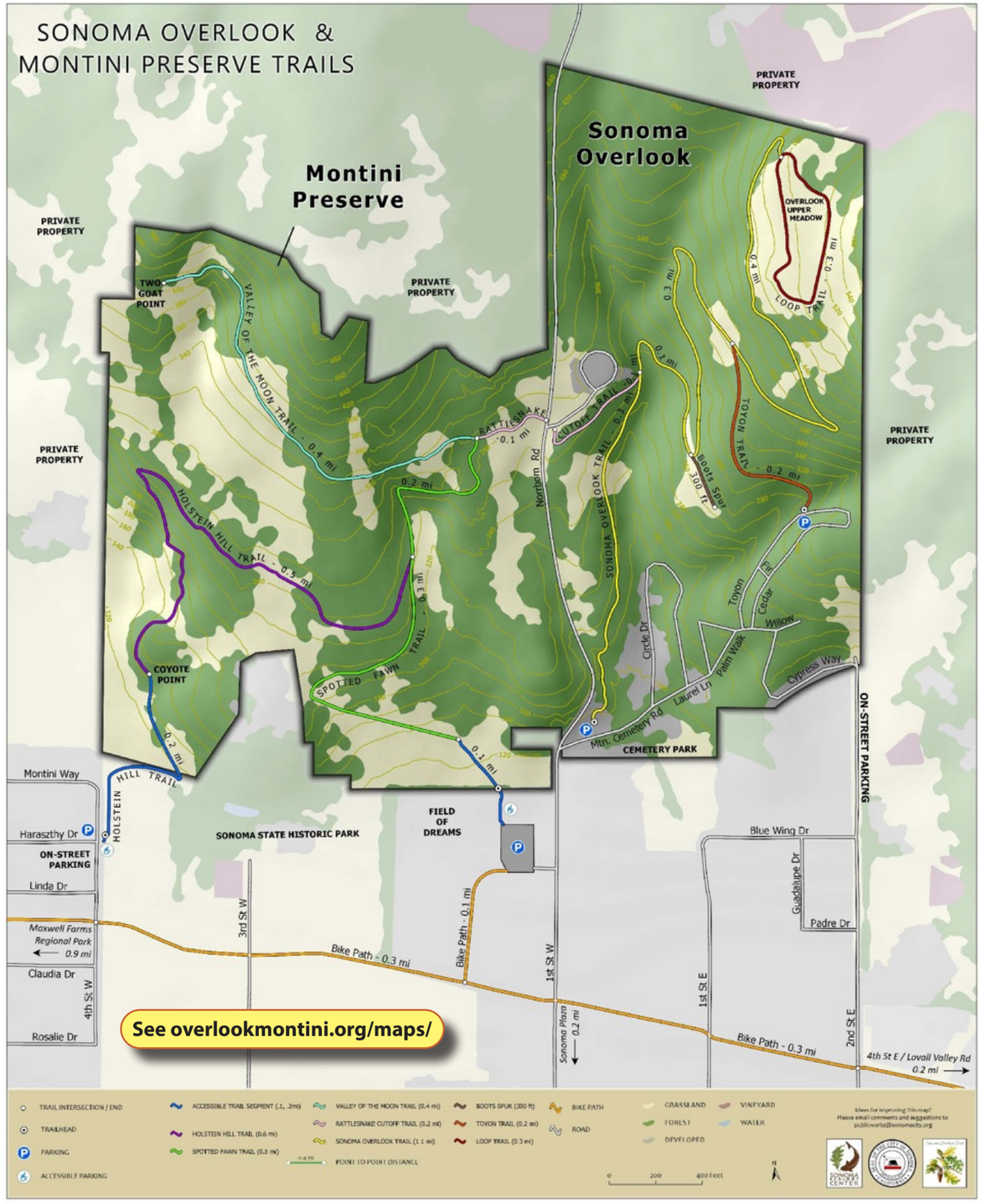
Nearly two years later, in 2001, trail construction began with Jim Jacobsen as trail contractor and teams of volunteers. The trail was dedicated in October 2002, but not opened to hikers until Spring 2003. The tradition of a Hikers Notebook began with the trail itself, when Dan Son placed it there: "A small notebook housed in an old plastic fertilizer jar documents visitors' impressions and their gratitude to the people who protected the hillside parcel from the hands of developers and spent their weekends weeding poison oak from the path. 'They are really these lovely things these people are inspired to write when they get up there and are looking out over Sonoma,' [Karen] Collins said." (*Sonoma Index-Tribune*, March 25, 2003).

Sonoma Overlook Trail Task Force

An all-volunteer Sonoma Overlook Trail Task Force was established by the City of Sonoma after the trail was opened. The task force created the SOT Mission Statement, started a docent program to guide public hikes as well as for 4th grade classes in Sonoma schools, and organized volunteer work-days for maintenance of the trail. Around 2006 the group was renamed as the Sonoma Overlook Trail Stewards.



The Trail Today

The trail now receives 55,000 visits annually, and is maintained by the Sonoma Overlook Trail Stewards—an all-volunteer group of nearly two dozen men and women. The group cooperates with the City of Sonoma as the owner of the property, and the Sonoma Ecology Center, which serves as the group's fiscal agent. Ongoing work goes into the trail to both upgrade sections and maintain its integrity and usability. Also, several large projects (such as a trail re-route) have been undertaken to improve and better maintain the trail.

This is an excerpt from the book 'The View From Above' published to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Sonoma Overlook Trail. It's based on the thoughts and art of trail hikers as recorded in the notebooks placed at the top of the trail since its opening. Ordering information is at ***overlookmontini.org/book/*** *.*