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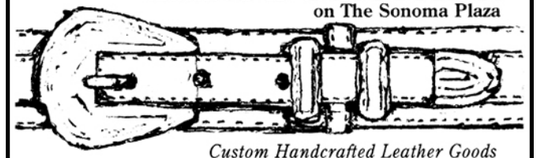
on The Sonoma Plaza



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NEWSLETTER

SONOMA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 53 • NO. 1 JANUARY • FEBRUARY • MARCH 2022

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This newsletter is full of interesting events for 2022. A robust lecture series, three great exhibits, and much to look forward to in 2022. Please be sure to bring your family and friends and share these exciting new exhibits.

New Collections

We have received some amazing collections focusing on Sonoma that we will share in subsequent newsletters starting this issue with the **Ron Zak Collection** on Page 7.

Three Exciting New Exhibits For 2022

Kicking off the trio: **January 15, 2022** will be a wonderful exhibit on the **Sonoma Woman's Club** including displays from their meeting minutes that document some of the more important decisions they have made over the years contributing to the development of Sonoma.

Using SVHS archival photos and other records, graphic designer Tom Whitworth created the display. The Sonoma Woman's Club was instrumental in the Sonoma Plaza looking as it does today: City Hall, the library, and the fishpond fountain. They supported a sewer system, well-baby clinics, disaster relief and war efforts in two world wars.

The Sonoma Woman's Club exhibit was supported by 'California Revealed' a project of the California State Library. The minute books of the Sonoma Valley Woman's Club were digitized by the CA Revealed project that detailed the important work that extraordinary civic organization accomplished. They cooperated with other civic groups often providing funds raised with constant fundraising events.

On **May 1, 2022** we will open an entirely new **Quilt Exhibit**, including quilts from the Society's collection plus some newly created ones.

The final exhibit, planned to open in **September**, will use historical photographs and more recent images to survey **Life on Highway 12** in Boyes Hot Springs across eighty years.

Special Thanks

I would like to thank some of the people who helped make the Sonoma Valley Historical Society successful in 2021: the docents at the museum; the volunteers at the Marcy House; Denis Grimes, who makes sure there is no graffiti on the museum; our newsletter contributors; Barbara Heiman who has put the newsletters together; and Lorrie Fulton, the Collections Manager at the Marcy House.

Patricia Cullinan

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Sonoma Valley Historical Society is to provide a forum and a resource for the study and dissemination of Sonoma Valley history for present and future generations by identifying, collecting, preserving and sharing artifacts, documents and images.

SONOMA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS

Patricia Cullinan, President
Carol Page, Vice President
George McKale, Treasurer
Shelley Hoffman, Secretary

DIRECTORS

Mike Acker
Jim Brewer
Kathleen Hill
Peter Meyerhof
Ron Price
Kate Schertz

BOARD MEETINGS

First Wednesday of the Month
12:00 pm via Zoom

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Sonoma Valley Historical Society was formed in January 1937 and has served the Valley as a nonprofit organization ever since. It is dedicated to the collection, preservation and dissemination of the historic heritage of the "Valley of the Moon".

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

"Sonoma Valley Notes" is the official publication of the Sonoma Valley Historical Society and is published quarterly.

Editor: Barbara Zukin Heiman, Ph.D.
Assistant Editor: Sharon O'Neil

newsletter@sonomavalleyhistoricalsociety.org

SECOND SATURDAY LECTURE SERIES

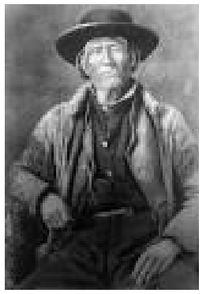
To register for these Zoom lectures, email info@sonomavalleyhistory.org

Readers Books in Sonoma has copies of these books.

FEBRUARY 12, 2022 NOON
Annual Meeting of the Sonoma Valley Historical Society

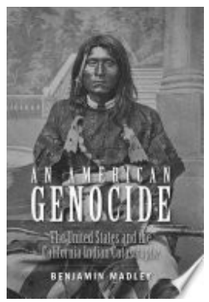
All members will receive a Zoom link to the annual meeting.

FEBRUARY 12, 2022, 2 PM
Jim Bridger
Presented by Jerry Enzler



We all know about the immigrants who came to California in the mid-1800's but few know the story of Jim Bridger: American mountain man, trapper, army scout, wilderness guide, and how he helped to make travel west possible.

MARCH 12, 2022, 2 PM
An American Genocide
Presented by Benjam Madley



Between 1846 and 1873, California's Indian population plunged from perhaps 150,000 to 30,000. Benjamin Madley is the first historian to uncover the full extent of the slaughter, the involvement of state and federal officials, the taxpayer dollars that supported the violence, indigenous resistance, who did the killing, and why the killings ended. This deeply researched book is a comprehensive and chilling history of an American genocide.

Read more on Google Books: tinyurl.com/4jyzayb2

THE SONOMA HERITAGE FOOD INSTITUTE

Kathleen Thompson Hill

The Sonoma Valley Historical Society is pleased to announce the launch of the ***Sonoma Heritage Food Institute***, a resource for community members, scholars, educators, and civic leaders, proposed and led by Kathleen Hill.

Sonoma's storied heritage of wine and food is a microcosm of California, and exemplifies why the Golden State is celebrated for its contributions to American culinary tradition. The goal of the Institute is to create an accessible research collection on everything from the hunter/gatherer cultures of local indigenous First Peoples, to Luther Burbank, to 21st century farmers who use drones to make decisions about vineyard management. Climate change, immigration and the diversity of food traditions, earthquakes, and wildfires are also part of the story.

To get the project underway, Kathleen Hill will use oral histories she has recorded and, with the help of other volunteers, will also interview additional people whose enterprises have influenced the food heritage of Sonoma and beyond. She and the society will also reach out to residents and collect old food advertisements, photographs, pamphlets, menus, recipes, and community cookbooks.

Those who have already contributed ideas and assistance include Patricia Cullinan, David Viviani, Michael Coats, Kate Schertz, Carol Page, Michael Acker, Valerie Mathes, Joanne Filipello, Freya Horne, Fred Thomsen, and Anne McKibben.

Everyone does best what they like to do, so if you would like to help in any way, please contact Kathleen Hill at kathleensonoma@gmail.com or (707) 938-8110.

We will keep you updated as the project progresses.

THE RON ZAK COLLECTION

The Sonoma Valley Historical Society has recently received the works of photographer Ron Zak. This rich photographic journey of the Sonoma Valley documents the people and rebirth of wine-making that began in here in the late 1960s, and we thank Ron for donating his entire collection of Sonoma photographs to us.

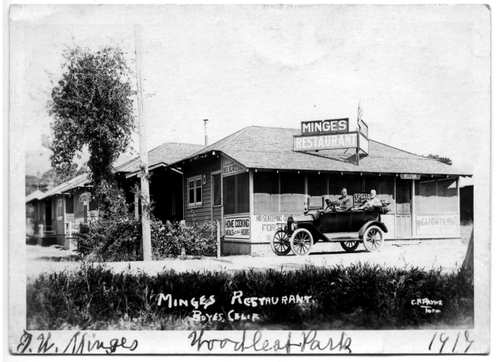
Ron Zak landed in Sonoma in 1979.

The photographer extraordinaire came to our (then) small town when Sonoma had a vibrant community of artists, and visionary winemakers were transforming their craft. Arriving in the right place at the right time, Ron brought his photographic creativity to Gundlach Bundschu Winery with a series of whimsical images for their photo ad campaigns (1980-1990).

He was the creative genius behind the quirky and humorous Sonoma Valley Wine Auction posters that frequently featured local personalities having fun (1993-2013).

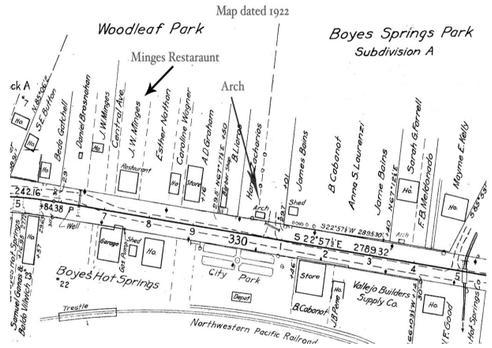
We are excited to have this body of Ron's work, which includes the 1990s portraits of local wine growers that were formerly displayed at Bartholomew Park Winery (1994), his "Salute to the Arts" posters (always a playful rendering of Manet's 'Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe') (1986-1993), and his photos of vintners and winery owners commissioned by Suzanne Brangham for Ramekins Culinary Institute (1994-1995).

THE SPRINGS: JOHN W. MINGES © *Michael Acker*



Minges' original restaurant was located at the corner of Central Avenue and the "Santa Rosa-Sonoma Road," where the old fire station (Voltaire Electric) now stands.

John W. Minges was born in New Orleans in 1845. He came with his family by ox team in that year, over the southern route, to Los Angeles. They later moved to Merced, then Stockton, where he lived for many years and operated the San Joaquin Hotel. In 1905 he moved to Boyes Hot Springs. There he invested in real estate and built many cottages for the summer trade.



Most of his property burned in the great fire of 1923, but he started to rebuild immediately. "Boyes will rise from the ashes again," he said in the Index Tribune. "Fire cannot rob us of our mineral springs, our climate and the whole-souled people who abide here. No siree!" Minges was such a booster of Boyes Springs that he became known as its "mayor." He died in 1931 in Oakland.

The sign to the left of the arch advertises Minges'cottages

Credits

- Photos author's collection.
- Map courtesy Phil Danskin.
- Index Tribune courtesy Sonoma Valley Historical Society, P. O. Box 861, Sonoma, CA 95476

HOW THE GMC SONOMA PICKUP TRUCK GOT ITS NAME

© *Dr. Peter G. Meyerhof*

Over the years, there have been many transportation conveyances named after the city of Sonoma. There have been at least a dozen ships named Sonoma. These include ferries, freighters, and naval ships from the time of the Civil War to World War II. There has been at least one locomotive named Sonoma. But by far the most conveyances with the appellation of Sonoma, have been the pickup trucks manufactured by the General Motors Corporation.

The description of how GMC came to name a pickup Sonoma, comes from a letter written on January 6, 1999 by the GMC Sonoma Brand Manager Christine Mazglad, to Robert Parmelee, Sonoma historian. She related that in the early 1980s, GMC was looking for a new brand name that would distinguish their boring sounding pickup known as the S-15 from other models. At the same time they hoped to find a designation consistent with GMC brands such as Sierra and Yukon identified with geographic locations. Mazglad wrote,"The naming process included nominations from employees as well as more structured focus groups that brainstormed new names that would have the 'right' appeal. We wanted to communicate that this vehicle was a high quality product capable of doing dirty jobs, but was just as comfortable for commuting or using to accomplish those special weekend projects. The Sonoma was proposed by one of our design engineers who had recently returned from a visit to the Sonoma California wine country. The name was viewed as having an air of refinement without being pretentious …to connote hard work that led to personal satisfaction… something with beauty, but down to earth."

And so it came to be that in 1991, the non-descript GMC S-15 compact pickup which had been manufactured since 1984 was renamed the Sonoma. For the following several years, the Sonoma went through various design changes until the name was finally retired in 2004. By this time, over a half million trucks had been manufactured with the name Sonoma and exported by GMC all over the world.

COUNTY OF SONOMA

SPECIAL AWARD

The Sonoma County Historical Records Commission has recognized the Sonoma Valley Historical Society with a 2021 Award in the category of Collaborative Partnerships. The Historical Society was honored for its partnerships with the California State Library, third grade social studies teachers, and local organizations and newspapers.

DRAWING SONOMA © *Barbara White Perry*

BLUE WING INN, CIRCA 1836
133 EAST SPAIN STREET, SONOMA
CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL LANDMARK NUMBER 17

The Blue Wing Inn was the first hotel north of San Francisco and was built in three phases. The original structure was a small single story adobe, with two-foot thick walls built possibly in 1836. The second part (1841-1846) added a two-story, six-room configuration. The building had the appearance of a typical Monterey style adobe.

In 1852, a 35' by 35' two story adobe addition abutted the west end of the original structure. The dining room and kitchen were located in the east room of the first floor. The central room served as the gambling room next to the saloon, the second floor for overnight guests.

The Blue Wing withstood the great earthquake of 1906 with little damage. In the 1900s Augostino Pinelli owned the inn and used it as a winery. After his death the adobe was not maintained and was soon in disrepair.

In the 1940s the building was purchased and partly restored by Elmer and Alma Spreckles Awl. They sold the property to William and Eleanora Black in 1948, who continued the restoration.

The building was acquired by the State of California in 1968. It has been shuttered and vacant since 2001 when it was deemed unsafe. The building continues to be the subject of constant conversations about preservation and restoration of this architectural treasure. The State has conducted several studies on potential uses for the Blue Wing Inn, but these decisions are controlled by the State and the economic reality of restoring the building.

The Blue Wing Inn has again fallen into disrepair. The interior is gutted in several rooms, the floor is missing, the distinctive blue paint on the doors is faded and peeling, the exterior second-floor balconies now conspicuously droop. The fear of vandalism is constant. This cherished structure must be saved.

The **Blue Wing Inn** is an illustration by Barbara White Perry, a Sonoma Treasure Artist. Her book, ***Drawing Sonoma 2nd Edition***, features historic and unique properties of Sonoma Valley with stories *of each property's past.*

Contact: ***Barbara@BarbaraWhitePerry.com***

SUPPORT THE SONOMA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Sonoma Valley Historical Society is a Sec. 501(C)(3) not-for-profit corporation, and your donation may be tax deductible.

If you would like to discuss possible types of gifts, including legacy gifts through wills and trusts, please contact, George McKale, Board Treasurer, at treasurer@sonomavalleyhistory.org.

You can make a donation by paying by credit card online on the PayPal Button, with a check payable to the Sonoma Valley Historical Society and mail to P. O. Box 861,Sonoma, CA 95476.

OPTIONS FOR MAKING YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION

Donate online or by check

To make your donation online, using any major credit card or Paypal, go to: https://depotparkmuseum.org/:
Mail a check made payable to the Sonoma Valley Historical Society to:
Sonoma Valley Historical Society, P. O. Box 861 Sonoma, California 95476

Take Advantage of Your Employer's Donation Matching Program

If you work for, or are retired from, a company with a matching gift program, your gift may be eligible for a match.

Give a Memorial Gift

If you wish to honor the memory of a family member or friend by contributing to The Sonoma Valley Historical Society, please write to us at the above address and include the name of the individual you are honoring. If you state the designation of the gift, we will contact the family to inform them of your donation.

Donate Securities, Stocks, or Mutual Funds

To transfer securities electronically from a brokerage account, you will need the following information:
Name of Brokerage Firm: Edward Jones, DTC Number: 0057
Account Name: Sonoma Valley Historical Society
Contact Lindsey Stone at Edward Jones for account information to make a transfer at (707)996-4086.

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Donate through the Nugget Market Community Scrip Program
Sign up at: https://scrip.nuggetmarket.com/signup/user and indicate the Sonoma Valley Historical Society, Inc. as your charity.

Would you like your donation to last a lifetime?

You can do so by donating any amount to the Sonoma Valley Historical Society Endowment Fund via the Sonoma Community Foundation. This will enhance our portfolio for maximum stability and return. Your donation, added to others, increases the fund.

The interest made each year is available (as needed) to the Historical Society to run the museum, but the principal remains. It is as easy as writing a check, with the memo line indicating the Sonoma Valley Historical Society endowment as the recipient. You will be donating to your community to enhance the future success of the Historical Society. Your donation is, of course, tax deductible. The address is Sonoma Valley Historical Society, P. O. Box 861, Sonoma, CA 95476