SONOMA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Don't miss our SWIMSUIT ISSUE of the SVHS Newsletter out next!

New Oral History Project

We're beginning a new oral history project and welcome anyone who would like to participate. Let us know if you know someone who has lived in Sonoma Valley and would like to share their stories.

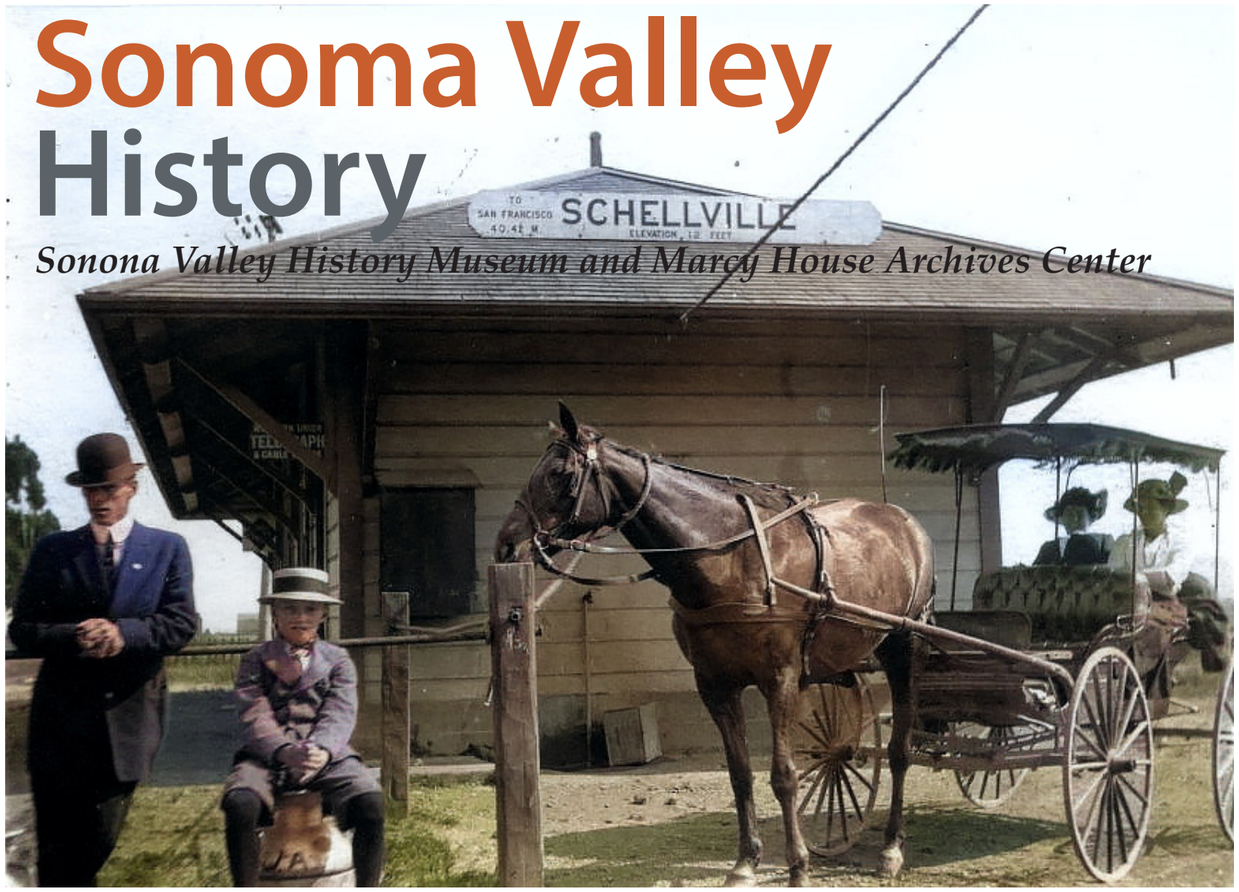
If you have a story to tell, or know someone who does, contact us at *info@SonomaValleyHistory.org*.

Founded in 1937

Volume 55 • No. 2 | April-June 2024

Sonoma Valley History

Sonona Valley History Museum and Marcy House Archives Center



Inside this issue:

Rozario's Resort

A once-popular resort near the present-day FAHA was lost to history. Find out what happened there over the years.

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Changes at the Museum

The newly renamed Sonoma Valley History Museum is undergoing many upgrades and improvements. Read about them inside.

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President's Report

Patricia Cullinan

Spring is here and we're busy working on the museum opening. Volunteers have been working to clean and rearrange the museum for new exhibits. Watch for notice of the exact date.

Learn more about our new manager at the Marcy House, Cece Hugo, in her short biography in this newsletter.

California Revealed has digitized more of our archives. There are oral histories online in addition to an extensive

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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 Gallway, Kathleen Hill, Peter Meyerhof, Ron Price, Kate Schertz

Board Meetings

Second Monday of the Month, 4:30pm 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

Sonoma Valley History Museum
270 First Street West (Depot Park), Sonoma

About this Publication

Sonoma Valley History is published quarterly in print and online.

Contact

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

Cover Image

Joe Kiser, Joe Kiser, Jr. (born 1904), Marge Kiser, and Mrs. Large at the Schellville Train Depot in the early 1900s. The sign on the depot reads "to San Francisco 40.41 Mi., Schellville, elevation 12 ft."

Calendar

May 9, 2024 – Zoom Lecture
Julia Ornelas-Higdon, PhD-Assistant Professor of History, CSU Channel Islands, will speak about her new book *Grapes of Conquest* that "discusses that there is remarkably little about the history of the wine industry and the diverse groups who built it. In fact, contemporary stereotypes belie how the state's commercial wine industry was born amid social turmoil and racialized violence in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century California."

May 2024 – TBD, Reopening of the Sonoma Valley History Museum (formerly the Depot Museum)

September 14, 2024 – In Person
Charlie Siebenthal on Sonoma Valley trains.

November - Zoom
Andrew Scott Johnson will speak on his book *Mercury and the Making of California: Mining, Landscape and Race, 1845-1900.*

Videos
Out now or soon:
Murder at the Chinese Laundry reel on Instagram—it's had over 3000 views.
Mission San Francisco Solano
Sonoma Community Shorts from Breck Parkman and his son talking history.

Upcoming Videos:
The Blue Wing Inn
Solomon Schocken
Kate Warfield—Entrepreneur and winemaker
Agostino Pinelli and family
Sonoma Barracks
Nash Patton adobe
Early winemaking and spirits on the Sonoma Plaza and surrounds

President's Report (cont'd)

collection of very rare newspapers. The Library of Congress has one copy of the *Sonoma Expositor* and California Revealed has hundreds of pages! There is also a huge collection of material about the Sonoma Valley Vintage Festival beginning with the first community festival in 1947; funeral records from 1879; and a myriad of other material. Check it out at this link: https://bit.ly/SVHSatCR or use the QR code below.

The Schocken Stroll is happening again on Sunday, May 26 starting at 2 PM. Look for an announcement from us and a link to register in mid-April.

Thank you to all our supporters, we appreciate your commitment.

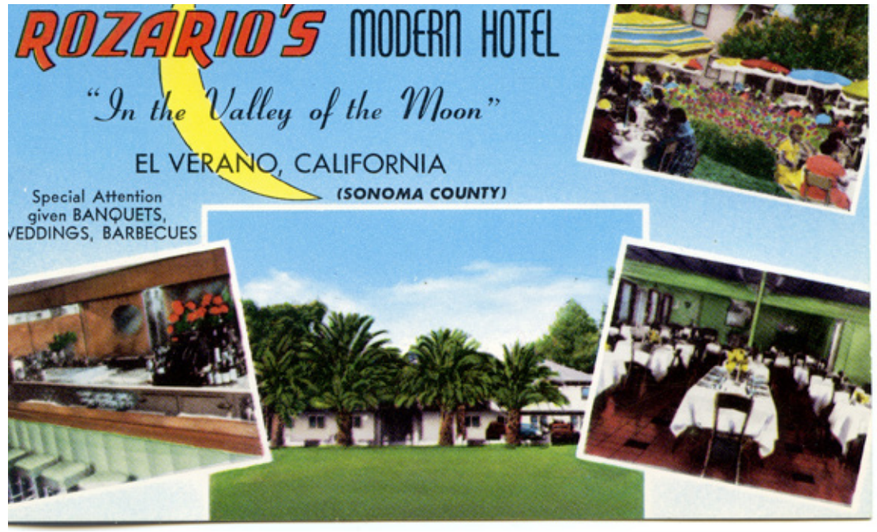
Rozario's Resort

Michael Acker

Rozarios' resort was located on Verano Avenue between Highway 12 and the Verano Avenue bridge. It was the successor to Parente's Villa.

Louis Parente, a notorious bar owner, fight promoter and would-be politician, came to El Verano in 1906 from San Francisco. His original "Villa" opened in 1912. By 1925 he had built a "new" hotel.

According to the *Index Tribune*, "The 43 room hotel, hut, cottages and grounds were purchased by the Rozarios in 1943, and it was on January 1, 1944 that they opened it for business. The former San Francisco and Marin County residents had purchased the property from Joe Parente [actually Louis Parente], colorful Bay Area sports figure who brought many prize fighters here to train."



Rozario's was popular through the 1950s for wedding receptions, fashion shows, and formal dinners. The Rozarios sold the resort to Carl Innskeep and Joe La Rango in 1955. It later became known as the El Verano Inn.

The buildings were torn down in 1985 to make way for an extension of the Finnish American Home Association's housing complex for retired people, which was located behind the old resort building. In that year, the editor of the FAHA Manor News explained in a letter to the editor of the Index Tribune that FAHA wanted to preserve the building, but "could not afford the very expensive improvements necessary…" Thus we lost another piece of our history.

Cece Hugo Joins the Team

Cece Hugo has recently joined the SVHS Archives Team as Administrative Assistant. She's an 18-year resident of Sonoma with a background in marketing and public relations, a passion for photography, and an insatiable curiosity about the history of Sonoma Valley.

"I 'm thrilled to be part of such an enthusiastic team of Sonomans dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history of our beautiful valley," Cece enthused, "I will do my best to continue the same high standard of service set by Lorrie Fulton who has been so generous with her time, wisdom, and know-how as I settle into my place in the Marcy House."

If you have a historical question or project, please make an appointment with Cece at (707) 343-1335 so that we can provide you with the time and attention your inquiry deserves.

Changes at the Museum

Patricia Cullinan

NOTE: Patricia's article, "The Sonoma Valley History Museum" in our last issue outlined the history of how the Sonoma Depot became our local history museum. This article discusses the present and future.

The new heating and cooling units at the museum.

The Sonoma Valley History Museum will open with a new name, more display space, updated permanent exhibits, new heaters, and a new paint job. Graphic artist and interpretative specialist Tom Whitworth is designing the exhibits.

The Rand Train Room will be reorganized with new panels documenting the history of trains in Sonoma Valley from the unique monorail system to the two competing companies: the Southern Pacific Railroad supported by Charles Crocker on the west side of Sonoma Creek and the Sonoma/ Northwest Pacific Railroad line on the east side of Sonoma Creek, both with competing train stations.

Our important Indian baskets will have a new display cabinet and the updated display which will include information about basketry materials.

Two new exhibits will include a history of vineyards and wineries on the east wall from the missions, early vintners, and three amazing women of the 1870s who won awards and success only to lose their profession to the louse Phylloxera. It will include the amazing photography of Ron Zak who documented the mid 20th century vintners and growers in Sonoma Valley and created much of the art for wine and art celebrations of the 1970s to the 2000s. He has generously donated his Sonoma art photography collection to the Sonoma Valley Historical Society. A more detailed temporary exhibit of wineries and winemaking will be shown in Fall 2024 to tie in with the harvest.

The south wall will have a display of the diversified agriculture of Sonoma Valley that followed the Phylloxera epidemic to the mid 1870s that created the Eden-like reputation of Sonoma Valley for diverse immigrants. Pears, cattle, dairies, apples, chickens, turkeys, cherries, tomatoes, and grains were local products.

Kathleen Hill will be curating the kitchen area exhibit that will rotate describing the people and places of Sonoma that transformed the bounty of Sonoma Valley agricultural products to put food and wine on local and faraway tables.

The school room exhibit will be refreshed but still display the rules for students and teachers that amaze local school children visiting the museum. There will be interactive displays in the near future.

In the years since the last update we have lots of information about the Chinese population of Sonoma and their contribution to the development of Sonoma and its industries and that exhibit will continue to be located in the entry.

I want to thank all the members who have volunteered to help during this process.

We Are History

Roy Tennant

The author rowing the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in 2022.

As a teenager I fell in love with reading history and historical fiction. My typical scenario was to read a historical novel, and then find several non-fiction books about that period to better inform my understanding. It was a magical formula—for me at least—and one that I still find satisfying decades later.

Sometimes it even goes the other way. Recently I read the non-fiction book *King Leopold's Ghost* by Adam Hochschild about the Congo, which then quickly led to re-reading (from when I was a teenager) Joseph Conrad's semi-fictional *Heart of Darkness*, and then the non-fiction *Congo: The Epic History of a People* by David Van Reybrouck. Let's just say I'm happy to take my history with a mix of non-fiction and fiction, which sometimes can seem more true than those who are required to stick to written sources to tell a story.

Having grown up this way, you could say that I've been steeped in history. This trend was not diverted when I became a professional librarian, as I came into frequent contact with staff at the famous Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley when I was a librarian there for 15 years. A short version of a story that's too long to tell is that I created a website for Jack London's work and history in the mid-1990s hosted by UC Berkeley in collaboration with Dr. Clarice Stasz, a noted London scholar at Sonoma State University.

I guess it should be no surprise that not long after I retired over five years ago, I reached out to the Sonoma Valley Historical Society to see how I could help. That quickly led, thanks to Patricia Cullinan and Lorrie Fulton, into helping digitize and catalog our Sonoma Valley collections as well as laying out this newsletter.

My experience among our collections has been revelatory. I've seen family photos, formal portraits, postcards among friends and family members. I've touched letters by Jack London and photographs by Carleton Watkins (with gloves!). I've seen aerial photographs, historic maps, many physical objects, paintings, and more. I've digitized and cataloged high school graduation programs, pamphlets, maps, hundreds of photographs, fruit box labels, and many other things.

In other words, I've witnessed and worked to document and preserve much of the physical evidence of history. The stuff of Sonoma Valley history. The evidence of lives lived, spouses loved, children born and raised, days experienced, and events organized and attended. Life, as it were.

That's when it hit me, late at night when I should have been asleep. There is nothing separating the people whose lives I have helped preserve from my life, or you and those you love. The only thing—the only thing—separating us is time.

If they are history, then we are too, to our descendants. You are history. I am history. *We are history.*

That then means we have a responsibility to document the lives we are living. We need to write and preserve journals, we need to take photographs and share them, we need to publish in print anything that really matters, since so much of what is online may be preserved in some form, but perhaps not the form we wish it to be. In other words, if we care about history, and I think we do, we need to preserve it in the way we wish for it to be preserved.

If you need help with this, reach out to us. We're here to help you preserve your history. After all, *we are all history.*

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