

SONOMA and PETALUMA ADOBE STATE HISTORIC PARKS



Docent and SPParks GAZETTE Spring 2025



SPParks UPDATE

First, thank you to all who responded to our Membership Chair Mike Owen's recent Member renewal emails. Your membership dues help fund SPParks' 3 pillars:

Awareness, Interpretation, and Preservation

Those funds, along with our Barracks Store sales make up the bulk of the money we make available to both Sonoma and Petaluma State Historic Parks. Our Barracks Store is very capably managed by Elizabeth Caban, along with Amelia (paid staff) and several volunteers. I volunteer on 1st & 3rd Thursdays. By the way, Elizabeth is always looking for a few good people to volunteer in the Store. Shifts are 3 or 4 hours, one day a week, morning (not too early) or afternoon. You will have an opportunity to meet people from around the States as well the big wide world, and sometimes even a local! Stop in to speak to Elizabeth or email her at retailmanager@sonomaparks.org. I know she would be delighted to have you join the clan.

Secondly, what a great start to March's Women's History Month with the first Women's History Crawl held in the Barracks on March 1st. Debbie Lee, State Parks staffer, did a fabulous job of finding women's stories, perhaps not known so well to us who live in the 21st century, along with great volunteers to share those stories and the answers to the trivia contest. SPParks was there: Suzanne Berube and I had several attendees sign up for information on our Lectures and Concerts; Sue Vargas and Mary Kearney handled the prize table;

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DOCENT ORGANIZATION UPDATE

At our most recent Docent meeting on Saturday March 8th, we heard about lots of upcoming events and trainings. SPParks President Anne Cox and Docent Sharon Douglas gave us a sneak preview of the fundraiser Tea at the Toscano Hotel/Kitchen on Sunday, May 18th. This will be a guided hotel tour beforehand, followed by the Tea in the Toscano Kitchen. The delicious scones that Sharon handed out after Anne's presentation were a great incentive to get tickets early!

Tyler is working on another volunteer trip/training, this time to the Indian Museum in Sacramento – more info to come. Jennifer shared the upcoming events at the Petaluma Adobe. Sheep Shearing Day will be on April 12th. Besides getting to see sheep get sheared, visitors can learn wool carding and spinning, plus see demonstrations of other fiber crafts. Docents and volunteers are needed for this event!

Living History Day will be May 10th and will be part of the National Historic Preservation Month events in Petaluma. There will be demonstration tables, plus crafts and activities to do with visitors. Docents and volunteers are needed for this event, too! Lunch is provided for volunteers. We will also have craft demonstrations on a regular basis at the Petaluma Adobe on the second and fourth Saturdays starting in April. If you want to demo a historic craft, or volunteer for a special event at the Petaluma Adobe, please email jennifer.hanson@parks.ca.gov



Tickets \$60 - Available, starting April 1, 2025 at the Barracks Gift Store

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SPParks Update *(continued from page 1)*

Yvonne Bowers and Jerome Knill were at the raffle table; Sharon Douglas handed out snacks (purchased by SPParks); and Dee Katson took photos for the newsletter. There were two excellent lectures, held at the beginning and at the end of the Crawl. If you missed either one, you can find the authors' books in the Barracks Store.

Thirdly, mark May 18th for the second annual Toscano Tea. At 12:30pm we will gather in the Toscano Hotel for a tour by Sharon Douglas and Jim Danaher. They will make the history and Hotel people come to life. Then at 1pm join us in the Toscano Kitchen for a wonderful and tasty Tea. Lisa Lavagetto is our chef! Tickets, \$60, will be available at the Barracks Store, cash or credit. This is an important fundraiser for SPParks. So...Who would you invite to this fun day?

Lastly, Jerome has been finding fascinating topics for the 3rd Thursday Lectures in the Mission, and March's lecture by April Farnham, "Capturing California's Adobe Past: The Watercolor Work of Eva Scott Fenyes" was one of the best. Please join us - members pay \$5, while John Q. Public pays \$10, and Docents (lucky them) are free. Jerome's music concerts on the 1st Thursdays will get your toes tapping and body swaying to the rhythms. Members \$5; John Q. \$10.

Anne Cox, Board President

Docent Organization Update *(continued from page 1)*

State Parks Week is June 11-15, 2025. There will be events in both Sonoma and Petaluma to volunteer for and/or attend. Children's Day in Sonoma will also be in June.

Our Docent Librarian Lisa Tremblay featured books for Women's History Month. And, good news - about a week after the meeting, Docent John Braschi agreed to be the second docent chair.

Thank you John!

Jennifer Hanson, State Park Interpreter I



Suzanne Berube & Anne Cox, SPParks Board
(photo by Dee Katson)

Professor Jim's History Mystery Quiz

1. **What is California's designated state fruit?**
2. **Three cities in California are in the 10 most populated in the U.S. What are they?**
3. **What percentage of citizens in California were born outside of the U.S.?**
4. **What 2025 projected population is larger, Canada or California?**

Answers on page 5

State Parks NEWS

New Tenant Proposed for Toscano Hotel

At its April 2nd meeting, The Sonoma City Council will consider a proposal for a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with CA State Parks for minor renovations and occupancy of the first floor of the Toscano Hotel by the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau. If approved, the City Council would authorize the city manager to take the next steps toward implementation of the proposed JPA with State Parks and sublease arrangements with the Visitors Bureau. For more details, and a link to the proposal, see the Sonoma City Council Agenda [HERE](#).



Toscano Hotel Interior

According to the Sonoma Valley Sun, March 29, 2025, “Recognizing a public agency partnership opportunity for historic preservation and supporting local tourism, the City [of Sonoma] and CA State Parks are proposing a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) for adaptive reuse of the first floor of the Toscano Hotel for a Visitors Center.”

“Adaptive Reuse Partnering with CA State Parks to relocate the Visitor Center to the Toscano Hotel would be a strategic move for the City of Sonoma and CA State Parks to provide access and visibility to this CA State Park asset. The Toscano Hotel Complex and Servants’ Quarters Historic Structures Report (HSR), prepared by CA State Parks in 2013, recommended adaptive reuse of this site, ensuring that the historic integrity of the site is preserved while activating an underutilized space.”



Nature’s Resilient Regrowth After Wildfires

Excerpted from State Parks Weekly Digest, 2/28/25, by Cassandra Chavez, Angeles District



Yucca grows at Inspiration Point in Will Rogers State Historic Park following the Palisades Fire in January. (Photo from Angeles District)

Although Will Rogers State Historic Park is still closed to the public following the Palisades Fire in January, nature’s rebuilding has already begun. Wildfires, while destructive, often trigger nature’s remarkable ability to regenerate. Certain plants, known as fire followers, thrive in the aftermath of fires.

These species have adapted to fire-prone environments and actually benefit from fire, which helps with seed germination, reduces competition and stimulates regrowth from roots. Examples of fire-following plants include soap plant, spikemoss, wild cucumber, lupines, and more.



Emerging plant life proves the regenerative power of nature after wildfires. (Photo by Noa Rische, Angeles District)

Story of Julius Adolph Poppe - December 12, 1823 – December 4, 1879
 Or
 The Last Train to Carp-Ville
 by Jerry Pozo, Docent

Julius Adolph Poppe was born in 1823 in Berlin, Prussia, which became part of Germany in 1870. With his wife, Catherine Bohr and 3 sons and 2 daughters, he moved to the US and on to Glen Ellen, CA in 1852, where he opened a general store with his son Charles. The family moved to downtown Sonoma in 1870, and then purchased 1500 acres from General Vallejo and devised a plan for using freshwater ponds to raise carp. The new home was “Polpula Rancho”, where Cline Winery is today.

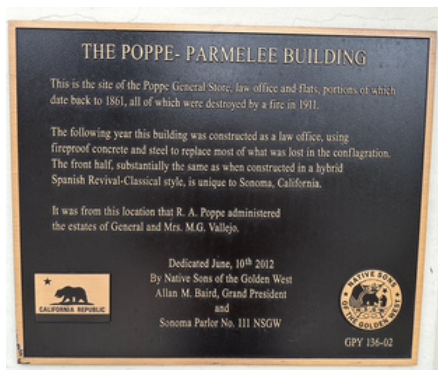


Catherine managed their new general store at 466 First Street East on the east side of Sonoma Plaza. After it burned down, it was rebuilt to what it is today. Their son became one of California’s first lawyers and operated a counter in the store where he practiced law.



Poppe’s idea was to breed carp in Sonoma. He was familiar with carp as a booming business in Germany – carp were indigenous to the Black Sea and bred faster than rabbits, thrived on anything a hog would eat and put on weight 4 times faster.

In the spring of 1872, he set out on a 3-month carp quest, which began with a 3,000 mile journey from San Francisco to New York City. There he boarded a sailing steamer to Germany and then by train to Reinfeld where monks had bred carp for 800 years supplying Catholics with meatless fasting days, and farmers raised carp as a cash food crop. He handpicked a starter stock of 83 Reinfeld carp, half breeding stock male and half female.



(photos by Jerry Pozo)

By the time he got back to New York, only 25 live fish survived. More died on the return train to Sonoma where only 5 fingerling carp survived the nearly 7,000-mile journey. He put the carp in a pond and those 5 flourished with grain and creamery waste. Within 6 months they were 16” in length and had at least 3,000 offspring. Unfortunately, the winter rains raised the ponds and many fish floated over to the nearby Sonoma Creek. Within a short period of time the carp overwhelmed the native trout, bass and steelhead.

The carp were a good investment, selling for \$5 each and \$1 per pound for eating carp. In the 1870’s the U.S. Fish Commission launched a program to promote freshwater fisheries. This created entirely new fisheries by transplanting species new to California.

Over his life Poppe was described as a farmer, orchardist, dairyman, vintner, storekeeper, aquapreneur, and leader of Sonoma County’s German expatriate community. The family’s home in Sonoma was at 564 1st Street East, which was a great example of California Carpenters Gothic Revival architecture, built of wood. It was the only home of this style in Sonoma.

Tragedy struck when he died in 1879 at 55 years of age. He is buried in Sonoma’s Mountain Cemetery alongside his wife. ... Oh, and by the 1890’s, the carp business was failing. But like the English sparrow, it was here to stay.

SONOMA WOMEN SPARK PRESERVATION OF
MISSION SAN FRANCISCO SOLANO

by *Jim Danaher, SPParks Board*

The Sonoma Valley Woman’s Club was founded in 1901. The very next year, the club began to undertake efforts to restore and preserve the two remaining buildings of Mission San Francisco Solano, with permission from the owner, Soloman Schocken. A purchasing fund was started and the Woman’s Club was joined by the Historic Landmarks League of San Francisco (under the direction of Joseph R. Knowland of the Oakland Tribune), the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, and William R. Hearst (who donated \$5,000). By July 1, 1903, the property was acquired for \$3,000, and the remaining funds were set aside for the restoration. A saloon that had been built in front of the chapel was moved, exposing the façade of the chapel. The cupola and roof were removed and then rebuilt, but in a simpler fashion. The padres’ house was cleared out and the roof was repaired. The goal was to donate the property to the California State Parks system and that was accomplished on March 23, 1906.



Sonoma Mission appx. 1900

Twenty-six days later, a major earthquake occurred and a crack appeared on the southwest wall of the chapel. Other than that, there was little apparent damage to the structures. However, in 1908, the roof of the padres’ house collapsed and some interior walls fell. On February 12, 1909, the southwest corner of the chapel wall fell into a pile and exposed the choir loft. Repairs were not completed until 1913. On June 14, 1914, the chapel was open to the public with its nave filled with items of local historic interest. During the years of 1943 and 1944, tile-topped walls were created to enclose a small courtyard.



Sonoma Mission 1922

(photos from California State Parks - Sonoma Mission 200)

History Mystery Quiz

Answers

1. **Avocado**
2. **Los Angeles, San Diego and San Jose**
3. **25%**
4. **California 42.5 million; Canada 40.1 million**

DOCENT LIBRARY NEWS

Highlighting Jesse Benton Fremont for Women's History Month, check out the following titles all available in the Docent Library:

**Jessie Benton Fremont, A Woman Who Made History*, by Catherine Phillips

This 1995 biography describes the American writer and political activist Jessie Ann Benton Fremont. She was the daughter of Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, the wife of military officer, explorer, and politician John C. Frémont.

**Imperfect Union*, by Stephen Inskeep

NPR regular Stephen Inskeep tells the riveting story of John and Jessie Frémont, the husband and wife team who in the 1800s were instrumental in the westward expansion of the United States, and thus became America's first great political couple.

**Mother Lode Narratives*, by Jessie B. Fremont

Originally from Missouri, Jesse Fremont helped write her husband John's tales of exploration in the West and eventually followed him to California to live for a few years on a ranch the Fremonts purchased in the California foothills. John continued to gallivant throughout the West and to travel back East to further his political career; these are short stories dealing with her years living in California on the Las Mariposas Grant.

*Note that many more titles both written by and about Jessie Fremont may be found in bookstores, online, and at the public library. Happy reading!

Lisa Tremblay, Docent Librarian

[Editors note: book reviews of these favorites, or other treasured books are welcome for future issues of the Gazette.]

NEXT DOCENT QUARTERLY MEETING

**Saturday, June 14, 2025, 10:00 AM
BARRACKS A/V ROOM**

UPCOMING EVENTS

LECTURES: Third Thursday of the month, 7 pm Mission Chapel. \$10 general public, \$5 SPParks members, Docents and Park staff free.

- April 17: **CW Bayer** - Lecture & Gold Rush Songs from the 1850s
- May 15: **Emily Walski** - Following Padre Altimira's Path
- June-August: No lectures - enjoy the summer!

MUSIC IN THE MISSION: First Thursday of the month, 7 pm Mission Chapel. \$10 general public, \$5 SPParks members.

- April 3: **Dawn & Tony with Michael Fecskes**
- May 1: **Raven and the D'Vine Band**
- June 5: **Lisa Davis & Friends** - chamber music
- July-August: No concerts in the Mission - enjoy music in the Plaza Tuesdays and Sundays

Sheep Shearing Day: Saturday April 12, 2025

11 am - 2 pm, at Petaluma Adobe
Live sheep shearing demonstrations reveal how wool comes off sheep and turns into yarn.

Living History Day: Saturday, May 10, 2025

at Petaluma Adobe
1840's Mexican California comes to life in the two-story adobe walls of General Vallejo's rancho headquarters. Details TBA.

Tosceno Tea: Sunday, May 18, 2025, 12:30 pm

SPParks fundraiser at Toscano Hotel and Kitchen. Tickets \$60 available at the Barracks Gift Store.

Children's Day: Sunday, June 8, 2025,

1 pm – 4 pm at Sonoma Barracks. Activities for children, free for kids of all ages. Details coming soon

State Parks Week - June 11-15, 2025

Celebrate California's 280 state parks through various online and in-person events! Details TBA.

Women's History Crawl - March 1, 2025

The inaugural Women's History Crawl at the Sonoma Barracks on Saturday March 1, 2025, was a huge success. Hundreds of visitors attended the event despite the cool windy start of Women's History month. A book discussion on *Testimonios: Early California through the Eyes of Women, 1815–1848* by Rose Marie Beebe and Robert Senkewicz, kicked off the Crawl, and another book discussion, *Alice: Memoirs of a Barbary Coast Prostitute*, by Ivy Anderson and Devon Angus closed out the event. Twenty-one organizations took part in the crawl, each highlighting a featured woman or women. Twelve organizations contributed to the crawl prizes. Stellar Snacks, a woman owned business in Carson City, Nevada donated pretzels for the event.

We received very positive feedback from the public during and after the event. People were pleased with the large number and diversity of the organizations involved, the passion and knowledge of the organizations, the book discussions, and the crawl prizes. One of the crawl prize winners commented that she could not stop telling people about the event. She learned so much new information on California women, and called it an "Oscar worthy event!" This event would not have been as successful without the many volunteers who helped before and during the event. A very special thank you to SPParks for their continued generosity and support! We are beyond pleased with this event and look forward to next year's event!

Debbie Lee, State Park Interpreter I

(photos by Dee Katson)



State Parks Celebrates Volunteers in Parks Program for Global Volunteer Month

Story from: Marisa Warnock, State Parks Partnerships Division

April is Global Volunteer Month, so let's celebrate the incredible volunteers of California State Parks' Volunteers in Parks Program (VIPP)! Your hard work protects our natural and cultural treasures and shines brightly across California. From trail maintenance to visitor education, your dedication makes a real difference in preserving these vital spaces for everyone. Thank you for your service and for making our parks brighter! Visit the [VIPP webpage](#) for more information and to learn how to apply as a volunteer in our state parks.



And from *Sonoma Petaluma Parks (SPParks)*, Thank You to all the Docents and other volunteers who bring our local Historic Parks to life.

LINKS

GAZETTE Editor: Dee Katson:
administrator@sonomaparks.org

Sonoma Petaluma Parks Association (SPParks):
sonomaparks.org

Sonoma State Historic Park
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=479

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park
https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=474

MEETINGS

SPParks Board meets 2nd Tuesday of the month,
10 AM

Docent Quarterly Meetings at 10 AM in the Sonoma Barracks A/V room on the 2nd Saturday in March, June and September and on the 1st Saturday in December

Sonoma Petaluma Parks
P.O. Box 1702
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