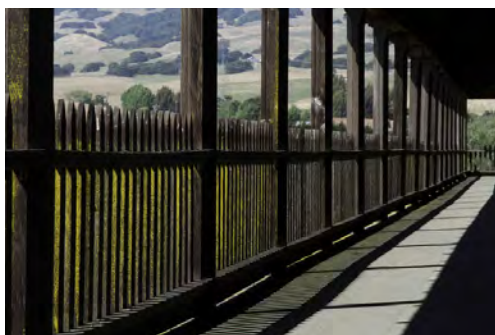


SONOMA and PETALUMA ADOBE STATE HISTORIC PARKS



Docent and SPParks GAZETTE Fall 2026



SPParks UPDATE

Hello fellow SPParkers. Please note, I misspoke at the September Docent meeting about the start of our Association (SPParks). Going over some old bits and things, I read that Ellie Baker, 2003 Sonoma Alcaldessa, was a founding member of the 1982 (I said 1986) Sonoma State Parks Association. So I went digging to find the correct year.

The organization was officially incorporated in June 1982 as the Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic Parks Association. It was formed under the 'cooperating association' model of the California State Park Association, meaning its express purpose was to act as a nonprofit partner that could legally raise funds, manage volunteer efforts, and run education programming where the state government faced budget or administrative limitations. So as I now read it, the formal organizational support for the docent program began in June 1982, when the Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic Parks Association (now known as Sonoma Petaluma Parks, Inc. (SPParks) was incorporated.

(continued on page 2)

SAVE THE DATE

SPParks ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The Annual General Meeting for SPParks Members will be Wednesday, November 11, 2026 at 6 pm in the Sonoma Barracks Theater.

Details will be coming to members soon.

"A Year in Review" - highlights of 2026
Nominations for Board Seats
Presentation of Slate of Officers for 2027
Light Supper * Refreshments * Desserts

DOCENT UPDATE

We had a great turnout for the Docent Picnic at the Petaluma Adobe on a perfect August day. Kit Foster provided the yummy main dishes and we filled in with favorites. Thank you to docents and State Park staff for coming, and thank you to SPParks for your support and the beverages.

At our September meeting, Supervising Ranger Rob Pickett relayed Tyler's announcements, and other State Park issues, including:

- The book club will meet on October 2nd at the Toscano Kitchen
- An upcoming Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, TBD
- A possible SF Presidio field trip in April
- How to get rid of unwanted animals that are destroying the parks without destroying the animals
- The reservoir at the Vallejo Home has been drained and a lot of muck is being dug out by hand
- A planned project for painting, roofing, and woodpecker hole repair, which will include scaffolding, is scheduled for Spring 2027 at the Vallejo Home

Kit and John led an open discussion, mostly concerning health and safety issues, specifically bat guano at the Adobe, and access and surface issues at the Vallejo Home. Rob said he has elevated the health issues to be considered by the State Parks.

We also heard from SPParks Board members that the Victorian Crafts Fair will be coming to an end after a 35 year run. Kit was very sorry about that, since she has enjoyed helping at this event, along with many other volunteers, for several years.

To be clear, Kit has offered to serve as Co-Chair of the Docent Organization for a whole 2 year term which will end in December of 2027. But we need someone to step up to co-chair next year with Kit.

*John Braschi, Docent Co-Chair
Kathryn (Kit) Foster, Docent Co-Chair*

(SPParks Update - continued from page 1)

I believe there is more to this story. To generate revenue without relying solely on state funding, the association took over the operations of the Barracks Store (Barracks Museum Gift Shop was the 1982 name). Every dollar spent on books, historical replicas, and memorabilia at the shop goes directly back into financing restoration projects and interpretation at these Parks.

To wit: recently Elizabeth welcomed a new volunteer at the Barracks Store, Darlene Ford. Stop by to welcome her.

Reminder: All SPParks events and activities at the Parks are enhanced by volunteers.....we can't do it without your time and efforts.

Volunteers make things happen!

See you in the Park!

Anne Cox, SPParks Board President

DOCENT LIBRARY NEWS

A Cry for Help!!

Lisa needs help winnowing down the proliferating books and reorganizing the shelves in our Docent Library.

Please email Lisa at shastatremblay@gmail.com if you can join her for 1+ hours on a day and time of your choice (any day except Wednesday). Many thanks to new docent trainee Kenneth Nugent for revamping and updating the Library "Catalog" spreadsheets!

Lisa Tremblay, Docent Librarian

Professor Jim's History Mystery Quiz

1. In what river was gold discovered in California?
2. Name the ship Sir Francis Drake sailed along California shores?
3. What is California's oldest private institution of higher learning?
4. What valley is often referred to as the "Cradle of California History"?

Answers on page 7

UPCOMING EVENTS

LECTURES: Third Thursday of the month, 7pm-8pm **Barracks Theater**. \$10 general public, \$5 SPParks members, Docents and Park staff free.

- October 15, 2026: **Reese Brooks** - "Dueling in Early California"
- November 19, 2026: **Peter Myerhof** - "Mapping the Last Leg of El Camino Real."
- January 21, 2027: **CW Bayer**: "Andronico Vallejo, the General's Bohemian Son and his Guitar."
- February 18, 2027: **Travis Wagner** - "George H. Derby (Squibob): America's Forgotten Comic Genius"

MUSIC IN THE MISSION: First Thursday of the month, 7pm-8pm Mission Chapel. \$10 general public, \$5 SPParks members.

- October 1: **Kit Kraft & Michael Noel**
- November 5: **Armitano Domingo** - Fandango Salterio
<https://www.armitanodomingo.com/music>
- January 7, 2027: **Chris Caselli and Friends**
- February 4, 2027: **Cliff Zyskowski**, piano & **Erick Joost**, Mandolin

Jorgensen Art Gallery: open during Art Walk, First Thursday of the month, April – October, 5pm – 7pm, Free

Celebration of the 115th Anniversary of California Women's Suffrage – Saturday, October 10, 2026, 11am – 2pm, Barracks, Free

Dia de Los Muertos – Saturday, October 17, 2026, 5pm – 9pm, Barracks, Free

Sonoma County Finding History Day - Saturday, November 7, 2026, 10am - 2pm, Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building, 1351 Maple Avenue, Santa Rosa. Free admission. Free parking.

<https://sonomacountyhistory.org/>

SPParks Annual General Meeting for members – Wednesday, November 11, 2026, 6 pm, Barracks Theater

Victorian Christmas Crafts Workshop – Sunday, November 15, 2026, 11am – 3pm. Vallejo Home. This year will be the 35th and **FINAL** Workshop. Don't miss it!

Docent meeting & holiday celebration – Saturday, December 5, 2026, 10am, Barracks Theater

Holiday on the Northern Frontier – Saturday, December 12, 2026, 5pm – 8pm, Barracks, Mission, Toscano Hotel

Christian Jorgensen Gallery

On October 1st, our last gallery opening in 2026, we will be celebrating Chris Jorgensen's birthday (October 7th 1860) and family heritage with a display of traditional Norwegian arts. Santa Rosa's Freya Lodge has generously agreed to bring items to include on the center table. These objects may have been similar to what was in C.J.'s childhood home in Oslo and also perhaps influenced his beautiful detailed painting style. One of the lodge members who teaches traditional rosemaling (Scandinavian decorative folk painting) will be bringing the objects and also will be on hand to answer questions about the objects and their symbolism. Look for a few Ghirardelli chocolates as homage to Angela Ghirardelli Jorgensen!

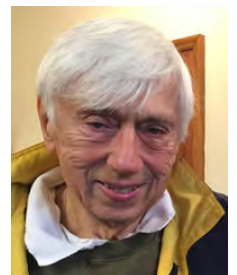
-Jazelle Lieske, Senior Park Aide



Memories of Friends We've Lost

Dave Brummett

Dave was a SPParks board member and served as membership chairperson, editor of the Gazette and organizer of several Annual General Meetings (AGMs). While on our board, Dave prepared and presented several fascinating lectures on John C. Fremont and the creation of the California Republic and dueling in early California (along with Jim Danaher). He was an interesting person always looking for ways to stimulate interest in our local history and historical organizations. Dave was also active in the Sonoma League for Historic Preservation and the Sonoma Valley Historical Society. Dave was a docent at the California Academy of Sciences and his many and varied interests included cycling and technical writing. He was an alumna of the University of Virginia. He passed away this summer, and he will be missed.



-Yvonne Bowers

Cathie Sandbach

[obituary Press Democrat](#)

Cathie was a longtime member of SPParks and a tireless volunteer at the annual Victorian Christmas Craft Workshop and Christmas at the Mission (now Holidays on the Northern Frontier). She organized many docent field trips including visits to Old Sacramento and Sutter's Fort, Santa Eulalia (the Assistancia in Fairfield), the Castro Adobe



in Watsonville, the State Park Museum in Sacramento and Benicia Capitol State Historic Park. She was instrumental in the Docent Training program. Her husband Hank accompanied her in these endeavors and could always be seen on field trips and at the annual Docent Picnic.

-Yvonne Bowers

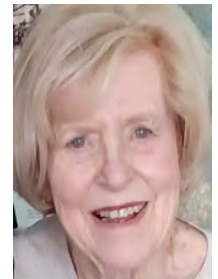
Kay Adams

[obituary Sonoma Index Tribune](#)

I knew Kay and her husband, Al casually through her shop, Kay's Fabric. The shop was located on the Plaza, where the Church Mouse is now. The shop moved to the Sonoma Marketplace mall, until they were unceremoniously tossed out to make way for Whole Foods' expansion. Her sister, Colleen, was married to my friend Gino Gitti, and Kay went to school with my brother, Joe.

SPParks was delighted when Kay attended our Toscano Kitchen Tea in 2025, where she shared memories of living at the Toscano Hotel and working in the Kitchen.

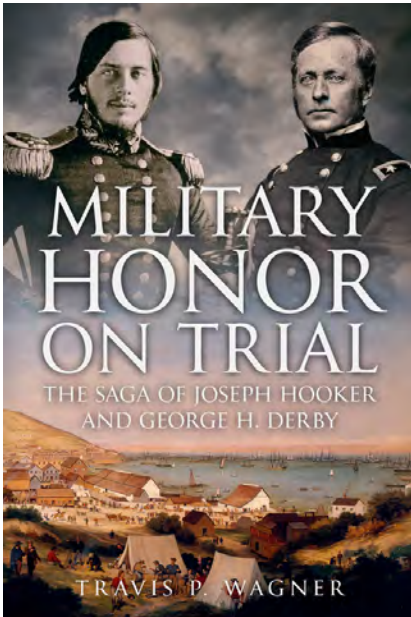
Kay was definitely woven into the fabric of Sonoma.



-Anne Cox

Sonoma's Role in American Military History is Focus of New Book by Sonoma SHP Docent Travis Wagner

A new local history book, ***Military Honor on Trial: The Saga of Joseph Hooker and George H. Derby***, by Travis P. Wagner, brings a dramatic 1851 Sonoma feud to life. Set against the backdrop of Gold Rush California, the book explores a bitter conflict between two strikingly different army officers stationed in Sonoma: the ambitious, arrogant Joseph Hooker — who would later achieve Civil War fame as “Fighting Joe” — and George H. Derby, a quick-witted comic on the rise as one of America’s first celebrity humorists.



Driven by the strict code of military honor at the time, both men launched reckless campaigns to protect their reputations. The conflict quickly escalated into two dramatic courts martial held at the former Union Hotel, resulting in verdicts that reshaped both of their lives and careers.

Part courtroom drama and part Sonoma frontier history, the book also provides new insights into Hooker’s turbulent years in Sonoma Valley after leaving the army. It reveals a complex figure balancing life as a military officer, high-stakes gambler, and struggling frontier farmer before his eventual rise to prominence in the Civil War.

Upcoming Local Events & Availability

Military Honor on Trial is available now for purchase at the Sonoma Barracks Store.

Travis will also be giving two talks detailing the fascinating story of each man behind the saga:

Joseph Hooker: October 15, 2026 at 7:00 PM | Sonoma Community Center

George H. Derby: February 18, 2027 at 7:00 PM | Sonoma Barracks Theater

Travis earned his Ph.D. from George Washington University in public policy with a focus on environmental and natural resource policy. He taught environmental science and policy at the University of Southern Maine for 20 years and part time at Sonoma State from 2018 to 2022. Sometimes you’ll find him serving as a docent at the Sonoma Barracks. Dr. Wagner has written numerous books on the history of American industry, environmental policy, and technology. His latest book, *Military Honor on Trial: The Saga of Joseph Hooker and George H. Derby*, was published by Sequoia Grove Press in August, 2026, and will be available at his upcoming lectures.



As of October 1st all new SPParks memberships are good until the end of 2027. Please join us with your contribution of \$40 or more. For more information visit the membership page on our website: <https://www.sonomaparks.org/about/membership/>

There is a table showing membership levels and benefits. You can join by making a donation through PayPal. There is also a link to the application form which can be mailed with a check. If you have any questions or would like to get an application, please email Mike Owens at SPParks.membership@gmail.com

Please join us in supporting the Sonoma and Petaluma State Historic Parks.

Travel Bug - aka Enrichment Opportunities

Mission San Carlos Borromeo and Other Temptations

Story and Photos by Tim Long

The Travel Bug has an especially rich Monterey-to-Carmel adventure in mind for all of you SHP docents: we'll begin at Monterey's Presidio, follow Father Serra's move of Mission San Carlos Borromeo to the Carmel River, take in today's Carmel Mission and basilica, and still leave room for ocean views, golf temptations, shopping distractions, and a few well-earned jokes along the way.

Start off in Monterey at the Presidio. There is just so much to see throughout Monterey's many historic buildings. Now think about the original Mission San Carlos Borromeo sitting near the Presidio of Spanish Monterey. Conflict was inevitable being that close to the presidio. Some of the presidio's soldiers were raping the native neophyte women and taking them as concubines. Father Serra also had conflicts with the commanding officer. So, Serra moved the mission over the hills to the Carmel River. This put some distance between the neophytes and the soldiers, and it was easier to farm. Also, water was abundant.

The scene around the town of Carmel today is just alarming. Sorry, but the shopping district has extended its Gucci, Sephora lineup for miles! Drive straight through town and stay focused! ... Alright, I know some of you are going to stop, and shop 'till you drop! If you are a golfer, Pebble Beach is calling... Maybe you can get to the Carmel Mission tomorrow.

The Mission San Carlos Borromeo Carmelo is situated near the Carmel River, overlooking it from a raised mesa. The scene is gorgeous. As an added bonus, there is parking! You pay for parking along with everything else, but the mission site is easily accessible. This is an active parish, and when it comes to making money they are not fooling around. There is an entrance fee, and they time the entrance to keep the visitors moving smoothly along. They do not want people to get bunched up in the gift shop and fail to buy anything! All kidding aside, the gift shop is very nice.



You will enter the Carmel Mission at the Basilica Forecourt. It is a stunning example of Moorish architecture with two opposing towers, each with its own distinctive style. The Moorish star window symbolizes spirituality and harmony and sits in the middle of the basilica over the distinctive catenary style arch.

The Carmel Mission was the headquarters for Father Junipero Serra as he founded and developed the first nine missions. Then it became the headquarters for the continued work of Father Lasuén who followed Serra. They are both buried in the basilica along with Father Crespi, Serra's long-time associate.

But wait, there's more! Let's go out to the cemetery and visit the grave of Mr. Harry Downie and his wife Mabel. They worked and lived at the mission for 35 years. Harry was a master cabinetmaker who somehow missed his train in 1931 and never left town. The artifacts at Carmel Mission were nearly all recovered under the direction of, or by the hands of Harry Downie. He restored the statues, the baptismal font, the fountains, and the building itself. Our very own Mission San Francisco Solano also saw some of Harry Downie's work. He oversaw the renovation of our Chapel in the late 1950s and early 1960's. Harry and Mabel are said to have fashioned the statues of Joseph and Mary above the chapel altar.



So, what are you waiting for? It is time to get the bug, and travel to The Mission San Carlos Borromeo Carmelo, and maybe do some shopping on the way!

Casting for Pod-casts – aka More Enrichment Opportunities

Podcast, noun

pod·cast 'pād-,kast

A program (as of music or talk) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet.

– Merriam Webster

Podcasts are primarily an audio medium, which is reflected in the term itself, a portmanteau of "iPod" and "broadcast" coined in 2004. - Wikipedia

Apparently Podcasts are this year's Big Thing. They have become so popular, and ubiquitous, that it may be hard to sift through all the options to find what appeals to you. So, for California history buffs, here are a few to get you started. If you know of other great CA history podcasts, please share links with the Gazette.

Kevin Woodruff: **Kevin's Occasional Pods** is Kevin's retirement project, which is to produce podcasts – on an occasional basis – about curious aspects of California history.

kevinsoccasionalpods.com

April Farnham recommends:

Dr. Damian Bacich does some excellent podcasts on California history at [Podcast - The California Frontier Project](#).

I was directly involved in his podcast episodes regarding Californio Soldiers Wives last year - it was an interesting experience.

Jordan Mattox: ["History of California"](#). Mattox interviewed SPParks lecturer John Boessnecker about his book on Joaquin Murrieta back in January 2026. He's interviewed some great authors over the last few months - perhaps some more ideas/inspiration for future SPParks lectures.

Guinga concert – Sunday, August 23, 2026

Jazz Society/SPParks Collaboration a big success.



The Sonoma Valley Jazz Society was very excited to put on this joint concert with SPParks. We were fortunate to have Guinga and Anna Paes perform in the Mission after they were part of the faculty presenting at California Brazil Camp 2026 the prior week in Cazadero.

Guinga's birth name is Carlos Althier de Souza Lemos Escobar. He was born in a suburb of Rio de Janeiro in 1950. Guinga began guitar lessons with his uncle at age 11 and started composing music at the age of 14. In 1976 he enrolled for several years of classical guitar studies with Jodacil Damaceno, one of the most prominent classical guitarists in the history of Brazilian music. Guinga also graduated from dental school in 1975, a parallel career he practiced for nearly 30 years. He has released many albums of beautiful music over the years.



(photo by Jonathan Hsu,
Sonoma Valley Jazz Society
Board member)

Book Review

November is National American Indian Heritage Month

Grand Avenue by Greg Sarris

Not what I expected, this book of short stories surprised me. Comprised of a collection of interconnected short stories and set in the late 20th century, its characters are poor people in north and west Sonoma County most of whom are of indigenous or partly indigenous descent. Although there are a few references to native cultural activities, the poignant stories mostly explore how people living in poverty manage their lives.

Sonoma County readers will recognize local landmarks and may enjoy reading about characters harvesting prunes and swimming in the Russian River. What docents will NOT find are in-depth descriptions of traditional indigenous cultural practices. Instead these are tales told from a very different perspective from the dominant middle class culture here in Sonoma County.

-Lisa Tremblay



SONOMA STATE HISTORIC PARK EVENTS

Nature & Community Fair - Saturday, August 8, 2026*(Photos by Dee Katson)*

California State Parks once again hosted a wide array of fascinating exhibits in the annual Nature & Community Fair in August. Local environmental and civic organizations, as well as State Parks and SPParks, invited participation in environmental conservation, restoration, preservation and education. Most popular with young families were the pigeons, sheep, a calf and a donkey. Thanks to Dave Duplantier and Sonoma SHP staff for hosting another successful community event.

**Cumbia dancing – Saturday, September 19, 2026***(Photos by Debbie Lee & Yvonne Bowers)*

In honor of Latino Heritage Month on a beautiful Saturday in September, California State Parks hosted an exciting Cumbia dancing night in collaboration with the La Luz Center, Casa Colibrí Healing, and SPParks. Over 200 visitors enjoyed dancing, live music, monarch and marigold crafts, community and snacks. The event created a strong sense of joy, culture and community. It was a wonderful evening!



Founder of the La Luz Center, Ligia Booker (in purple, at center) along with volunteer hosts from La Luz, Casa Colibrí Healing and State Parks

-Deborah Lee, SHP Interpreter, Relevancy & History**History Mystery Quiz
Answers**

1. American River
2. Golden Hind
3. Santa Clara University 1851
4. Sonoma Valley

Monarchs & Marigolds – Saturday, August 29, 2026

(Photos by Dee Katson)

The first annual Monarchs and Marigolds event was very much a success with more than 200 visitors. There were a variety of interactive activities for visitors to participate in such as butterfly origami, paper marigolds and decorating wooden butterflies, just to name a few. Plus, we hosted a guest speaker from the Xerces Society and showed a touching documentary on marigolds. A hearty thanks to Tom Palmquist, who built the beautiful butterfly grove and Eric Pando, who built the cool marigold arch.

-Deborah Lee, SHP Interpreter, Relevancy & History



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 Theater on the 2nd Saturday in March,
 June and September and on the 1st Saturday in
 December

Sonoma Petaluma Parks
 P.O. Box 1702
 Sonoma, CA 95476