

of the  
Tuolumne County  
Historical Society  
Sonora, California

Chuck Holland—  
Christmas in Court-  
house Square, 2022

## Hours:

Museum:

Tues. & Thurs. (10-4)

Wed. (1-4)

Fri. & Sat. (10-3:30)

History Research  
Center (HRC):

Tues.-Fri. (9:00-4:00)

## Welcome New Members:

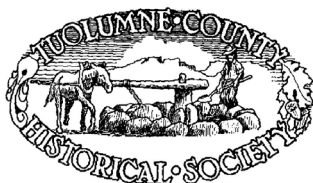
Richard Njirich

Paul Prebin

Jenny Reidel

Constance Ruiz

Wallace Stuart



## Letter from the President

Fellow Members,



As we approach the end of this year, it is a good time to review some of the fixes and improvements around the Museum. One noticeable improvement is our new front door. It took more than a year after the break-in for a custom-made replacement door to arrive and be installed. Things were going along very well until last August, during the 100-degree weather, when the Museum air conditioner gave out. We had to close the Museum for several weeks while parts for “the oldest air conditioner the County had” were rounded up and installed. A crane was needed to move the heavy parts. We now have increased security in the form of a new video surveillance system with several cameras covering our entire Old Jail Complex. A big thanks goes to the County Maintenance Department for taking care of our ongoing maintenance needs.



*Facilities crew installing the new front door of the Museum.*

I have spent a few sessions this year as a greeter at the Museum, and the people I have met, whether from out of town or locals, are always impressed, with the number and quality of our displays. I overheard one man remarking to his wife that they “could easily spend a few hours here.” To encourage our members to visit our interesting Museum, we have scheduled our annual Christmas Open House at the Museum, for Tuesday, December 12, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. I hope you can join us for some warm cider and Christmas cheer.

Chuck Holland

## Celebrate the Holidays at the Museum

Tues., December 12th  
2:00—4:00 p.m.



Annual Christmas Open House with cookies and cider. Come say hello to the board members and see the new exhibits in the Museum.

# FIRE ALARM BOXES

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR OPERATING

Learn where your nearest box is located. Break glass; turn knob opening outside door; pull handle down once, LE GO! Remain at box until apparatus arrives and give driver location of fire.

Box Blast. No.	LOCATION
1-2—12	—Washington and Elkin Streets
1-3—13	—Wash. St. bet. Jackson and Bradford
1-4—14	—Washington and Theall Streets
1-5—15	—Washington at Church Street
1-6—16	—Green and Linoberg Streets
1-7—17	—Corner Dodge and Stewart Streets
2-1—21	—Stewart and Lytton Streets
2-2—22	—Barretta and Otis Streets
2-3—23	—Washington Street bet. Toby and Lytton Sts.
2-4—24	—Stewart and William Streets
2-5—25	—Church Street and Wrights Lane
2-6—26	—Church Street above June Street
2-7—27	—Church Street and Knowles Hill Drive
3-1—31	—Yaney Avenue at Maple Street
3-2—32	—Norlin Street and Bradford Avenue
3-3—33	—Stockton Street, opposite Fairgrounds
3-4—34	—Stockton and Green Streets
3-5—35	—Yaney Avenue at Oak Street
3-6—36	—Bradford Avenue and Sunset Drive
3-1-2—312	—Yaney Avenue and Norlin Street
3-1-3—313	—End of N. Norlin Street
4-1—41	—Columbia Way near Hospital
4-2—42	—Snell Street near Wyckhoff Street
4-3—43	—Washington Street opposite High School
4-4—44	—Corner of Stewart and Hill Streets
5-1—51	—Theall and Shepherd Streets
5-2—52	—Dodge Lane and Theall Street
5-3—53	—Lyon and Shepherd Streets
5-4—54	—Corner of Lyon and Palemone Streets
5-1-2—512	—Summit Avenue
1 blast, call Chief or broken line; 3 blasts, test on system	
4 blasts, fire out	

### EMERGENCY CALLS

Sonora Fire Department	JE 2-7723 2-7431
Sonora Police Department	JE 2-7813
Sheriff's Department	JE 2-7401
State Division of Forestry	JE 2-7423
Bigelow Ambulance	JE 2-7121
Terzich-Wilson Ambulance	JE 2-4585
Calif. Highway Patrol	JE 2-7691

## TUOLUMNE COUNTY REALTY CO.

REAL ESTATE — INSURANCE

PHONE JE 2-7464, SONORA  
HENRY W. RUOFF JENNIE McCALLUM

## Sonora Fire Alarm System

By Pat Perry

At the February 5, 1926, City Council meeting, Mitch Terzich, Chief of the Eureka Engine Company, proposed to the Council that they approve the purchase and installation of a new fire alarm system. No action was taken as the Council wanted to wait until the upcoming April election.

In June 1926, the new Council voted to approve purchase of a Gamewell Fire Alarm system for \$5,417.72. The City would have five years to pay for it. It was originally proposed that the City be divided into twelve districts, with an alarm box in each district. It was later decided to have five districts, with multiple boxes in each district. An alarm turned in would automatically blow a code whistle that would be heard all over the city and give the approximate location of the fire. Two bells would be rung, one in each firehouse, both the Independent Hose Company No. 2 and the Eureka Engine Company. All of the City's firemen were volunteers at this time, and in order to save considerable money, the firemen were going to install as much of the system as possible.

In October, Chief Terzich notified the Council that all the necessary equipment was on hand and work connected with installing the system would soon be underway. He also asked that he be authorized to spend a maximum of \$500 for wire.

In December, Terzich reported that installation was progressing well. He also requested the purchase of three additional alarm boxes, with two paid for by the Lions Club and one by the high school. By the end of the month, the new fire alarm system was ready for service. There were five divisions, and ultimately fifty-six alarm boxes. People were informed that to activate the alarm they needed to break the glass, turn the knob-opening outside the door, and pull the handle down once, then let go. They were to stay at the box until firemen arrived to give the definite location of the fire.

Not surprising, there was some confusion when the first call came in. Hubert Pease's residence in South Sonora had a fire in a stovepipe. The alarm was turned in, but the system had not been thoroughly tested. The bell in the Eureka Engine House gave the proper number of sounds, but the siren was too short on toots or screams. So, some of the boys stopped to argue whether it was a joke or a real fire. Others thought they would argue the matter later and were quick to respond for Box 23, where the signal came from, and which was only a stone's throw from the fire. The fire was quickly extinguished and the system proved very accurate.

By 1980, the system was obsolete. With virtually all homes having a telephone, fire dispatch could better determine the exact location of a fire and its severity. Also, in the prior five years, seventy-five of the eighty false alarms had been box alarms.

Retired Fire Captain Craig Peterson remembers the old system well: "When I started at Fire in 1977 as a volunteer, the system was still being used. All of the wires from the boxes came into the station. There was a big alarm panel back in our dispatch of-

fice. Any alarm that came in by box would ring the bell with the code for the box. It would set off the horn on top of the station with the same code. And, there was a hole-punch that punched out the code on a small piece of paper on a reel. There was also a box of wheels with each code on them. The code was for the box closest to the fire. If a fire came in by phone, the on-duty guy would put the correct wheel on this device and it would blow the horn with the code. This was before we had any radios. That same box was used to blow the horn at noon and 7 p.m."

The box, wheels, and paper tape are on display at the Sonora Fire Museum located at 125 North Washington Street.



## Museum Corner

### Century-Old Mementos Returned

TCHS board member Sandy Fisher and HRC Coordinator Brad Fisher were recently presented with a battered metal box containing family letters and mementos going back over a century. The box was found when someone from the Sonora Police Department staff was cleaning out the evidence room, where the box had remained unidentified for two years. Sandy believes the metal box may have been stolen back in 2016, but was recovered by Sonora Police at a homeless encampment after a reported trespassing incident near Woods Creek a couple years ago. Community Service Volunteer David Ernst was assigned the task to find the rightful owners of the box. After finding a 2016 obituary of Leonard Ruoff, Sandy's father, Ernst was able to make the connection. He then stopped by the Museum asking for Sandy, but instead was directed to Brad Fisher, Sandy's son.



*Sonora Police Community  
Service Officer  
Chuck Shadle*



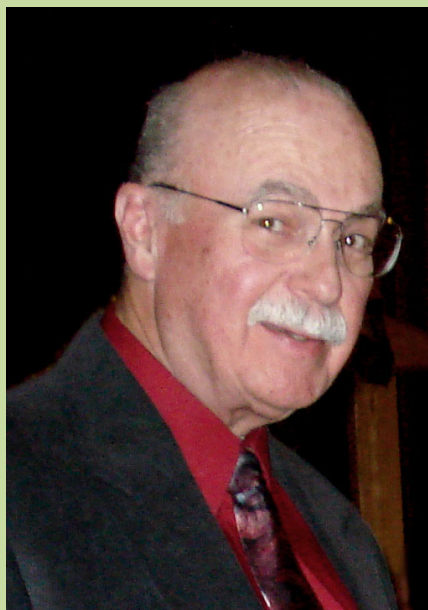
*Sandy Fisher and Sonora Police  
Cpl. Thomas Brickley*

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In the box were letters from Sandy's grandfather, Henry Ruoff, to her grandmother, Hazel, during WWII, and Henry's Sonora High School 1920 commencement announcement. Sandy also found a 1922 prom dance card in her grandmother's handwriting, with names of her dance partners—Henry's name was included.

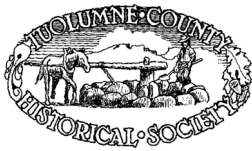
Guy McCarthy from *The Union Democrat* met at the Museum with the officers of the Sonora Police Department, who presented the box to the Fishers. Photos were taken in front of the WWII Museum exhibit honoring Henry and Leonard Ruoff for their service. Henry and Leonard enlisted on the same day, one of the few father and son duos to do so.



*Joseph Celentano*

### Tribute to Joseph Celentano

Joseph T. Celentano passed away on September 3, 2023, after living in Tuolumne County with his wife, Nancy, for almost twenty-five years. During his career in law enforcement with the Los Angeles Police Department, Joe and Nancy became docents at the Autry Museum of the American West. Retiring to Tuolumne County in 1999, Joe and Nancy put some of that knowledge to work when they became involved with the Tuolumne City Memorial Museum (TCMM). Joe later became a TCHS board member in 2007. He went on to become TCHS president in 2008-2009, at the same time he was serving as president of the TCMM (2008) and the Tuolumne County Genealogical Society. In 2011, Joe became the recipient of the Order of the Wheelhorse. He later stepped in to assist the TCHS as acting treasurer and 1st vice-president from 2016-2018. Joe actively participated in the 4th Grade Tours, Museum Days, monthly programs, and led tours of the West Side Lumber railroad trails. He was also instrumental in getting the Space Saver shelving project for the History Research Center on track. Joe's humor and steadfastness will be missed by all who knew him. Condolences to the Celentano family.



**TUOLUMNE COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

158 Bradford Street  
SONORA, CA 95370-4920

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

*The Mission of the Tuolumne County  
Historical Society shall be to discover, collect,  
preserve, and disseminate knowledge about  
the history of Tuolumne County and  
the State of California.*

Non-Profit Organization  
U S POSTAGE PAID  
Permit #15  
Sonora, California

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**Tuolumne County Museum & History Research Center**

158 Bradford Street, Sonora, CA 95370

Museum: 209-532-1317—History Research Center: 209-532-4227

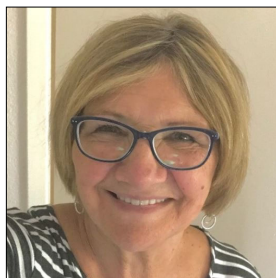
<http://tchistory.org>, [info@tchistory.org](mailto:info@tchistory.org)

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Included with this issue is a Ballot to vote for the Slate of Officers & Directors and the 2024 Budget. Please take time to fill it out and return it to the Museum. Mail the ballot to 158 Bradford St., Sonora, CA 95370, or include it in your 2024 membership envelope. **Remember:** Your membership is valid from January 1 through December 31 each year.

## Welcome New Board Member

At the October board meeting, Linda Emerson was welcomed as a new board member to fill a vacant director position. Linda is on the 2024 slate as a director, along with Sandy Fisher and Janet Montano.



Linda Emerson

### TCHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chuck Holland—President  
Open—1st & 2nd Vice President  
Cheri Holmes—Treasurer  
Betty Sparagna—Recording Secretary  
Kathy Boone—Membership Secretary

#### DIRECTORS

Linda Crocker  
Linda Emerson  
Sandy Fisher  
Mike Ghiorso  
Lisa Mayo  
Janet Montano

### MUSEUM BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Allan Bryant, Chair  
Tina Gordon  
Winnie LoVine  
Mike Macon  
Eleanor Provost  
Betty Sparagna

HRC Coordinator—Brad Fisher

**Change in address or contact  
information?**

Contact Kathy Boone—  
[cookie48@mlode.com](mailto:cookie48@mlode.com) or 209-984-3359