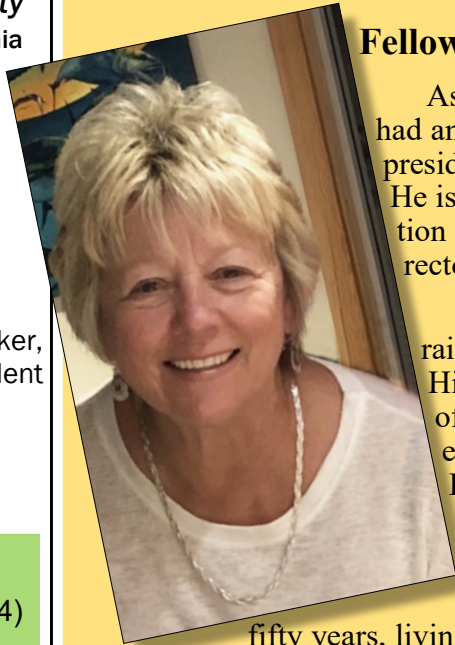


of the
Tuolumne County
Historical Society
Sonora, California

Linda Crocker,
President



Museum Hours:

Tues. & Thurs. (10-4)
Wed. (1-4)
Fri. & Sat. (10-3:30)

History Research Center:

Tues.—Fri. (10-4)

Letter from the President

Fellow Members,

As many of you know, our wonderful Chuck Holland has had an accident that makes him unavailable to continue as our president. Chuck has had surgery and is recuperating at home. He is improving every day and doing well. To fill in the position of president, I was elected at our January Board of Directors meeting, and Allan Bryant was elected 2nd VP.

My name is Linda Crocker. I am a local, born and raised in Sonora. I attended Sonora Elementary and Sonora High School. After graduation, I attended the University of California at Santa Barbara, majoring in history and earning my teaching credentials. I was hired by Sonora Elementary School in 1972 and taught there for twenty-nine years before joining the administration as principal for six years.

My boyfriend, David, and I have been married for over fifty years, living all of them in Sonora. We have a son who is also married living in Riverbank. David and I have done a lot of traveling to many different countries over the years. We especially enjoy Mexico. Additionally, we like to play golf.

The Historical Society is composed of an outstanding group of volunteers. I'm in awe of what they accomplish. It is an honor to step into the role of president. I will try my best to support, maintain, and encourage its success.

Linda Crocker

From Guangdong to Gold Mountain

Thurs., Mar. 19, 3:30 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

Columbia College Library
(See page 3 for free parking instructions.)

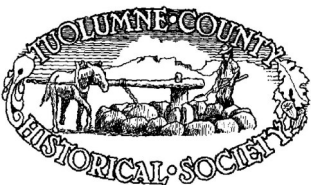
“From Guangdong to Gold Mountain: A Story of Chinese Immigration, Exclusion, and Community” will be the focus of the March Speaker Series. Shannon Van Zant, history professor at Columbia College, will be the program speaker.



Shannon Van Zant

This Speaker Series is made possible through the collaboration of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, ConAmor Building Bridges, Columbia College, Columbia State Historic Park, and the Tuolumne County Historical Society.

For updates on the Speaker Series: <https://www.facebook.com/TCHSociety/>



Welcome New Members:

Bruce Champion
Brad Reinhardt

Elisa Martinez

By Mercedes Tune & Kim Baker

(On behalf of the Mexican and Latin American Research Group)

A dedicated group of local historians established the Mexican and Latin American Research Group a couple of years ago to examine primary and secondary sources and to recover stories long sidelined. Newspapers published at the time of an event, considered primary sources, offer firsthand accounts, public reactions, and editorial perspectives. They also reveal the language, biases, and societal norms of the era. In nineteenth-century California, many official records, memoirs, and early histories were authored by Anglo-American men who viewed Indigenous, Mexican, Latin American, and Black/African American communities through a lens of racial and cultural superiority. Since this perspective permeated historical records and shaped mainstream narratives, this research approach provides invaluable insight and brings to light the complexity of Tuolumne County's multicultural past. The following is one of the stories the Research Group worked on.

Elisa Martinez and Women's Rights to Own Property During the Gold Rush

Long before U.S. law recognized women's rights, Latina women in Tuolumne County owned property, ran businesses, and shaped civic life. Why was California different? Mexico's 1810 Declaration of Independence granted women the right to own property independently of their husbands—rights later embedded in California's early identity through the "The Sole Trader Act" of 1852.

This right is documented during the Gold Rush in the story of Elisa Martinez. She was a remarkable figure among early business owners in California's mining districts. Her settlement, located east of Columbia—between Sawmill Flat and Yankee Hill—was known as El Campo de Martinez. It stands as an example of female entrepreneurship in frontier economies. At its peak, according to various authors and newspapers accounts, her camp was home to as many as 2,000 miners.

Eliza Martinez likely arrived in May of 1850 and chose the rich placer deposits of the lower portion of Rattlesnake Gulch to begin mining operations. Upon her arrival with her workers from the Sonora-Sinaloa territory, the name "Spanish Camp" was quickly changed to El Campo de Martinez.

Elisa's story reflects the multicultural foundations of the Gold Rush in Tuolumne County and California, as well as the vital role women played in shaping its communities. Historical accounts indicate that U.S.-born aspiring miners and foreigners arriving from various parts of the world took over the best land portions around Martinez, but respected her successful camp, which reportedly produced surprising amounts of gold. It is easy to imagine the astonished men witnessing a woman managing a mining company, at a time when women had few rights or recognized occupations.

Doña Elisa Martinez was said to be young, strong-willed, and business savvy, arriving with enough wealth and "peons" to establish her operation. She contributed to the economy of both Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties for only a few years but left an indelible mark. She was possibly the first women to own and manage a hard-rock mining company.

Nearby, the area known as Sawmill Flat, which took its name from two sawmills built at the fork of Woods Creek, provided employment for Mexican and Peruvian laborers. Though there are little remains of Sawmill Flat today, it lives on in legend. Folk tales—part history, part myth—claim it was once the headquarters of Joaquín Murrieta, a figure both revered and reviled. To some, he was a freedom fighter resisting injustice, earning the nickname "Robin Hood of El Dorado." To others, he was a bandit and outlaw. Whether hero or outlaw, his story—like Elisa's—has been preserved here. Today, a California Historical Landmark marks the site where Murrieta was reportedly shot near Sawmill Flat.



Sawmill Flat, California Historical Landmark No. 424
Dedicated October 2, 1949

Museum Corner

Latino History in the Gold Country

Thurs., April 16

3:30 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

Online Presentation—link will be available on <https://tchistory.org/>

David Hayes-Bautista is Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture at the UCLA DGSOM. He graduated from UC Berkeley in 1970, served as founding executive director of La Clínica de la Raza in Oakland, CA, and completed his PhD in basic sciences at UCSF in 1974.



Dr. David Hayes-Bautista

Dr. David Hayes-Bautista's research focuses on the impact of racial narratives on research design and methods, especially the use of the six OMB race/ethnic categories in researching health outcomes in multiracial California. For the past seven years, his group has also produced the US Latino GDP, which in 2021 was the fifth largest economy in the world. In July 2024, he was awarded the Academic Leadership Award by the Hispanic National Bar Foundation.

Columbia
College
Library



Fire Station

Directions: Highway 49 to Sawmill Flat Rd, turn left on Columbia College Drive. Turn right at the Fire Station, then turn first right toward parking lots. Walk down the steps to the shuttle stop.

History of Sonora Program

Wed., April 8—3:00 p.m.

Tuolumne County Library

City Historian Pat Perry will be speaking about the history of Sonora, which will celebrate its 175th anniversary in 2026. Pat came to Sonora, in May 1984, as the Finance Director for the City and immediately became interested in Sonora's history. Not very busy at that time and having expressed her interest in the City's history, the City Administrator gave her permission to research people and places important to Sonora's history.

In 2001, when the City of Sonora celebrated its Sesquicentennial, Pat was instrumental in developing special events, such as walking tours for Tuolumne County fourth grade students, which

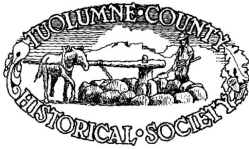
continued through 2019. Pat and others also contributed a weekly article to the *Union Democrat* newspaper. These articles were later published by the Tuolumne County Historical Society as a collection in a book titled *Sonora Remembered*.

In 2002, the City Council appointed Pat as the official Historian for the City of Sonora. Retiring as Finance Director in 2003, Pat has continued to work on the City's history as a volunteer and has an office at City Hall.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear and see what Sonora was like in the past!



Pat Perry
City of Sonora Historian



**TUOLUMNE COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

158 Bradford Street
SONORA, CA 95370-4920

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Sonora, California

*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.*

The *Historian* is published several times a year by the Tuolumne County Historical Society, 158 Bradford St., Sonora, CA 95370-4920 for the benefit of the membership. There is no charge for the *Historian*. (In compliance with Public Law 103-123, 39 U.S.C. 3656 subsection [j].)

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

**Change in address or contact
information?**

Contact Linda Emerson—memberships@tchistory.org

**Future Speaker Series
“Beyond Gold: Stories Across Cultures”**

**May 2 & 3—Cinco de Mayo Festival
Columbia State Historic Park**

The region’s role in the first documented U.S. Cinco de Mayo celebration, by ConAmor and Community Partners at Columbia SHP.

**June 18—3:30 p.m.—5:00 p.m.
Museum Courtyard**

“California’s Black Gold Rush Pioneers,” by Sylvia Roberts, writer and independent history researcher.

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