

Historian

September/October 2026 ♦ Vol. 70, Issue 5

of the
Tuolumne County
Historical Society
Sonora, California

Museum Hours:

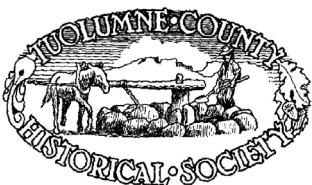
Tues. & Thurs. (10-4)
Wed. (1-4)
Fri. & Sat. (10-3:30)

History Research Center:

Tues. – Fri. (10-4)

Welcome New Members:

Michael Bailey
Heather Blythe
Kurt Bryant
Guy Goodenough
Vincent Lavaroni
James Metzger
Tracy Skelly



Letter from the President



Dave & Linda Crocker in Hawaii

Fellow Members,

Our summer has come to a close, and autumn is just around the corner. Our summer was hot and scary, again, due to the recent fires we endured. Thankfully, we are moving on. Hopefully, there will be no more fires this season. A big thank you to the fire fighters!

Our Historical Society has gone dark until October due to so many of us having personal plans. My husband and I were able to attend a family wedding in Hawaii, which was very special and loads of fun!

Our team will get back to organizing, planning, and offering news, programs, and events this fall. Please feel free to come visit us at our fantastic Museum and use our History Research Center!

Linda Crocker

Dove Fire

Once again downtown Sonora was placed in harm's way due to the Dove Fire, which burned 226 acres and destroyed a dozen structures. Mandatory evacuations were in effect all around the Tuolumne County Museum.

The Dove Fire started five years after the Washington Fire, which burned 136 acres, with forced evacuations and nineteen structures destroyed.

This photo was taken from the property owned by Dave and Linda Crocker at Washington and Bradford Streets.

Bless our firefighters!



Hubert Brady of Columbia

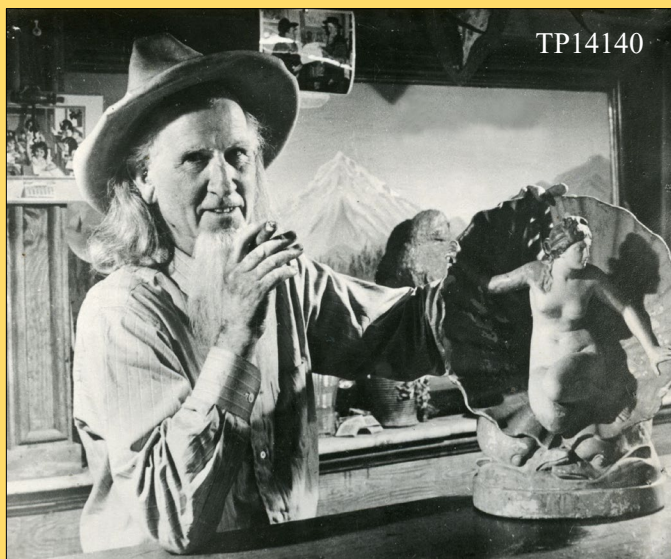
By Sherrin Grout

A true son of Columbia, Hubert Edward Brady was born in Columbia on December 10, 1879, to Margaret Agnes (Banahan) Brady and Matthew C. Brady, who were married in 1869, in St. Anne's rectory. Margaret worked at the Fallon Hotel before meeting and marrying Matthew, who had come to California in 1856 and, by 1860, worked as a clerk in Riley's store in Columbia. Matthew bought the business in 1861 and operated it on the ground floor of the Masonic Building. An active member of the Hibernian Benevolent Society, he also joined Columbia Engine Company No. 2.

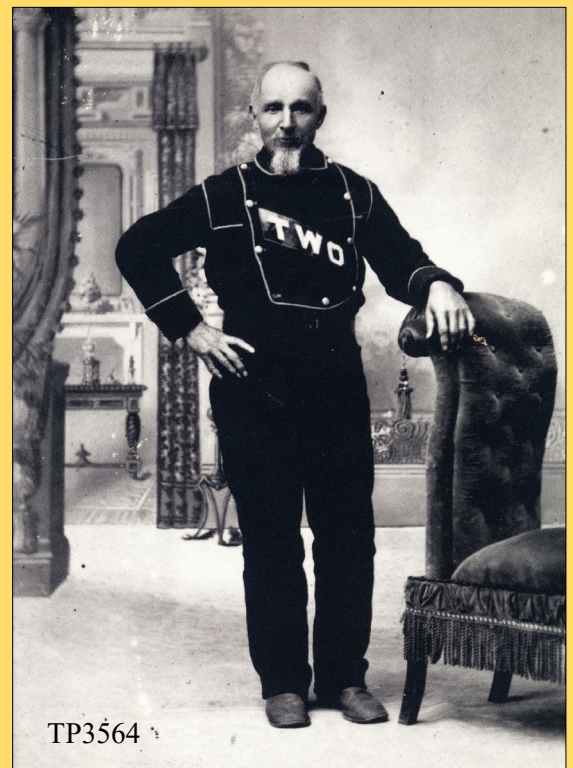
Matthew continued running the business, adding the post office, from 1893-95. After his death, in 1898, from complications of a fall into a flume near Springfield, his wife, Margaret, operated the business in the newly built Brady building still standing on the southeast corner of Fulton and Main.

Hubert and his older brother, Matt Francis Brady, took over the business as the Fancy and Staple Groceries. Like their father, they were also postmasters for a time.

After semi-retiring, Hubert operated a "museum" next door to the Douglass Saloon. He could often be seen sitting on a bench under a still-standing catalpa tree, next to a horse trough, greeting visitors and telling tall tales.

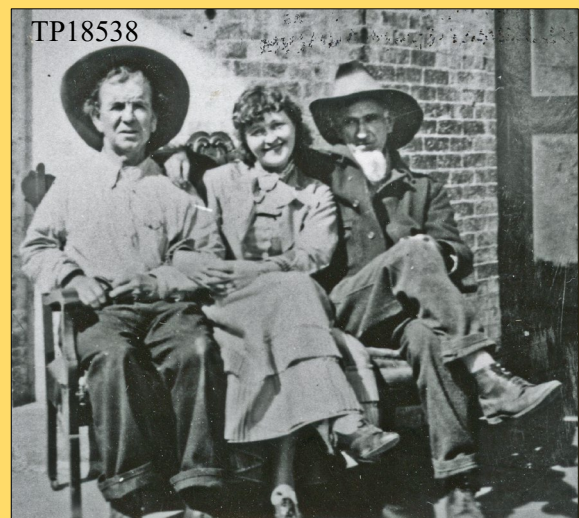


The image, at top right, of Hubert Brady in a Columbia Engine Company No. 2 uniform, The same engine company to which his father belonged. This is one of the few images of Hubert as a young man. The image on the left is Brady in his "museum." The lower right photo shows, left to right: Shorty Moore, Otheto Weston, and Hubert Brady pose in front of the Stage Driver's Retreat.



Hubert Edward Brady

Hubert was the source of information for Otheto Weston during her time working for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). He was interviewed by Sidney Robertson for Weston's California Folk Song collection, also under the auspices of the WPA, and provided rich material for George Ezra Dane's book, *Ghost Town*. So many photos of him exist that, on his death, a friend called him "just about the most photographed man in California."



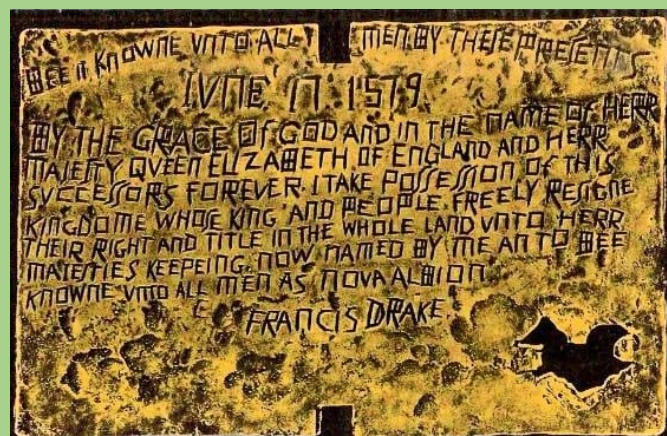
Museum Corner

Drake's Plate Hoax

Wed., October 14, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Tuolumne County Library, Greenley Rd., Sonora

Back by popular demand, David Simmerly, local radio host and history buff, will present the *Drake's Plate Hoax*, an interesting and entertaining story on October 14, 2026, at the Tuolumne County Library.



A small brass marker embedded in a rock on the Tuolumne Rancheria is a clue to solving the state's most infamous historical "mystery." Members of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus – a fraternal organization that mixed history with practical jokes – was behind the plate all along. ECV originated during the 1849 Gold Rush. Their own motto, "Credo quia absurdum" ("I believe because it is absurd"), sums up the spirit behind the prank.

For years, California schoolchildren were taught that a brass marker, discovered in 1936, was Sir Francis Drake's Plate of Brasse, an artifact recording the California coastal landing, in 1579, of the English explorer and his ship, the *Golden Hinde*. Although it was historical evidence that created the story, it was science performed by Dr. Frank Asaro and his colleague Helen Michel that confirmed what a few historians had suspected all along of the plate's dubious origins.

Matuca (Amatuca) was first established in 1948 with its founding members making up a who's-who list of the locally prominent. The original charter includes names like Stevenot, Holman, Symons, Trabucco, Segerstrom, Carkeet, Hearst, and Lavagnino.

Join us and enjoy this interesting story!



www.ecvmatucal849.org/about

The name Matuca comes from the three counties that make up its territory: Mariposa, Tuolumne, and Calaveras. When originally formed, it also included Amador County, hence its original name Amatuca.

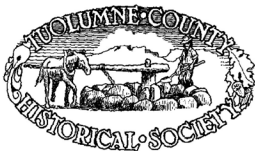
Bhend Tall Clock

Ryan Thomas, local horologist, cleaned and set up the recently donated Bhend tall clock.

Constructed in 1973 by John "Jack" Bhend, a Columbia resident and past president of the TCHS, the clock's movements are exposed. The escapement mechanism is made of wood. The gears and escapements are fully visible, turning this clock into a work of art.

Stop by the Tuolumne County Museum to see this gem. The tall clock is run on special occasions.





**TUOLUMNE COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

158 Bradford Street
SONORA, CA 95370-4920

Non-Profit Organization
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Sonora, California

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*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



Soap Box Derby Exhibit

Each year the Exhibits Committee displays artifacts/photos in the Main Library on Greenley Road, Sonora. The display will run through the month of September.

This year the committee chose to celebrate the Soap Box Derby (1939 – 1941) with trophies, helmet, brochures, pennant, official shirts, and photos.

The Sonora Chamber of Commerce will present the return of the Soap Box Derby **on April 27, 2027.**



More information

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