

Golden Nuggets

SACRAMENTO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY-JUNE 2010

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday May 25, 7:00 PM

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society
5380 Elvas Avenue, Sacramento
Sacramento's Underground
Presentation by Heather Downey

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday June 22, 7:00 PM

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society
5380 Elvas Avenue, Sacramento
Joaquin Murieta
Presentation by Alton Pryor



Sacramento street flooding in the early 1850s

Before the long-anticipated Underground Tours kick off this summer in Old Sacramento, Society members will have the opportunity to find out more about the history of this city's underground sidewalks and raised streets, along with plans for the tours.

Sacramento is the only city in California with raised streets and the lingering architectural features known as the "underground." On the surface, the raising of Sacramento's business district offers accounts of mishap, controversy and, of course, the pioneer-entrepreneurial spirit that has come to define the early history of not only the city, but the Western United States in general. Additionally, the history of this construction project illuminates the opinions and experiences that characterized the first and second generation of Sacramento citizenry while underscoring the one thing they had in common: the desire to ensure that their city remained economically and politically viable. Such an interpretation of Sacramento's "underground" opens doors to enrich and expand Old Sacramento visitors' understanding of the city's history, while also connecting that past to larger trends in American Western and urban history.

This month's speaker, Heather Downey, is a graduate student in Sacramento State's Public History program. She is the subject matter expert for Sacramento's forthcoming Underground Tours, and has designed two interpretive displays describing floods and street raisings in Sacramento. The underground sidewalks, and the interpretive plan for the tour, are the subject of her Master's thesis.

Joaquin Murieta (1829 - c.1853), also called the Mexican or Chilean Robin Hood or the Robin Hood of El Dorado, was a semi-legendary figure in California during the California Gold Rush of the 1850s. He was either an infamous bandit or a Mexican patriot, depending on one's point of view. Murieta was partly the inspiration for the fictional character of Zorro. Alton Pryor has had a long fascination with Murieta.



JOAQUIN, THE MEXICAN ROBBER.

Joaquin the Mountain Robber, Etching by Thomas Armstrong, *Sacramento Union Steamer Edition*, April 22, 1853

History and legend have long accepted him as real. He was a hero in Mexican folklore, and widely accepted as being a notorious bandit during the gold rush. Pryor decided to research the man and prove, once and for all, at least to his satisfaction, whether he was real or not. He will share the results of his research at our June meeting. He will also have printed booklets detailing his research for sale. Alton Pryor is the author of 18 books, two of which are out of print. Some of his books include:

- *Little Known Tales in California History*
- *Classic Tales in California History*
- *Those Wild and Lusty Gold Camps*
- *California's Hidden Gold*
- *Outlaws and Gunslingers*
- *Historic California, Its Colorful Names and How It Got Them*
- *Little Known Tales in Nevada History*
- *The Lawmen*
- *The Bawdy House Girls of the Old West*

LAST NEWSLETTER UNTIL SEPTEMBER. MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR THE JUNE PRESENTATION.

Our New-Look *Nuggets* and Other Gems

By Patricia Turse

Here at last is the new-look *Golden Nuggets* newsletter. You really must go to our web pages to see the new nameplate and a few other touches in living color. Our new logo appears in crisp black and white on page 4—but perhaps you noticed that when you opened your newsletter. We reserve the right to tweak the layout, fonts, and design, but the look is pretty close to complete. We like our new classic dark green and taupe ‘corporate colors’ (designer-speak) and the bold design, and we hope you do too.

This month also marks the official launch of the bi-monthly newsletter and the last newsletter of this 2009-2010 publishing year. We now plan to publish single newsletters for September-October, November-December, January-February, March-April, and May-June. **You’ll need to remember to carefully save your newsletters so you won’t miss any exciting coming events.** SCHS does not normally meet or publish in July or August. We may need to add the occasional postcard, email, or other communication as needed. We will also be publishing more frequent *Golden Notes* booklets to keep you all historically informed.

SCHS has an exciting late summer historical music event coming up for members as part of Sacramento’s Annual Gold Rush Days celebration over Labor Day weekend. Gold Rush Days turn back the clock in Old Sacramento with one last family oriented festival over the Labor Day weekend. More than 200 tons of dirt will be dumped on the streets of Old Sacramento as the annual festival transforms Sacramento’s historic district into a scene straight out of the 1850s. Costumed re-enactors, Wild West gun fights, musicians playing period instruments, dancing, street dramas, and wagon and pony rides are some of the attractions.

On Saturday, September 5, at a time and exact Gold Rush Days location to be determined, SCHS and California State Parks Sacramento District will sponsor an hour concert by historical troubadour Rick Spencer. A historian and musician, Mr. Spencer has a wide variety of fascinating and often funny historical songs in his repertoire and has performed in the U.S., Canada and Europe. After the concert, which will cover songs from the civil war era and from the 1856 John C. Fremont presidential campaign, a reception and short question and answer session with the artist will be provided for SCHS members. More details to come! Save the date.

Mystery Image



This image, property of the Center for Sacramento History (formerly SAMCC), is from the Sacramento Trust for Historic Preservation Collection, donated in 1998. The glass plate black and white negatives were probably taken by the McCurry Foto Company and likely date c.1910-1920. If you can provide CSH staff any information about the image context—or the who, what, when, where and why—please phone 916-808-7072.

Notes from the Vice President

By William Burg

This year, students from Sacramento charter high school *The Met* conducted oral history interviews with several SCHS members. The first of these interviews, conducted by student Catherine Pentoney with historian Alan O’Connor, has been completed and transcribed, and will soon be submitted to the Sacramento archives. Other interviews conducted by *The Met* students should follow in the coming months. Thanks to the SCHS members who participated in this project!

SACRAMENTO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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GOLDEN NUGGETS

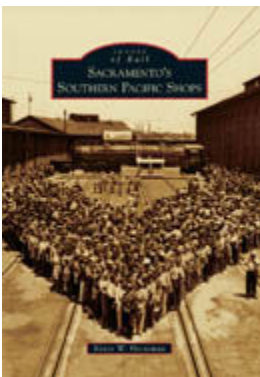
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Email: info@sachistoricalociety.org

Upcoming Books on Sacramento History

Arcadia Publishing has announced the May release of two new books focusing on Sacramento in its Images of America series. Two more will be published later this summer.

Sacramento's Southern Pacific Shops By Kevin W. Hecteman

In 1862, the Central Pacific Railroad was founded and began building eastward from Sacramento as part of the transcontinental railroad. This required a shop capable of keeping the railroad's equipment in running order. So in 1867, in the swamps just north of town, the Sacramento shops were born. For



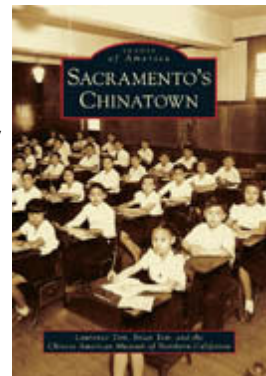
well more than a century, this massive complex kept the Central Pacific and its corporate successor, the Southern Pacific, operating smoothly. For many decades, the shops were the largest employer in the Sacramento area, employing carpenters, painters, draftsmen, boilermakers, electricians, clerks, upholsterers, and others. The shops' forces designed, built,

and maintained locomotives, freight and passenger cars, and other railroading equipment. The complex closed in 1999. Most of the area, popularly known as the Railyards, is set for redevelopment. The California State Railroad Museum handles maintenance and restoration of its collection in two of the shops buildings and plans to develop a railroad technology museum on the site.

Kevin W. Hecteman, author of *Sacramento Southern Railroad*, has mined the collections of the California State Railroad Museum, the Center for Sacramento History, and other sources to tell the story of the Sacramento shops and its people.

Sacramento's Chinatown By Lawrence Tom

Sacramento's Chinatown has played a central role in the history of the Chinese in America since the Gold Rush. It was named Yee Fow (Second City) by the early Chinese pioneers because it was the second stop by steamboat on the way to the gold country. In the 1960s, Sacramento's Chinatown, one of the oldest Chinatowns in America, was largely torn down by redevelopment, but today Chinese Americans in the capital city are planning a Yee Fow Center for History, Culture, and Trade as they seek to remember the past and look to the future.



Author Lawrence Tom was a career executive appointee for the State of California. As a resident of Sacramento for more than 50 years, he has a great interest in preserving the history of the Chinese pioneers in the area. Coauthor Brian Tom is the founder of the Asian American Studies (AAS) program at the University of California, Davis, one of the first AAS programs in the country (founded in June 1969). He is the founder and director of the Chinese American Museum of Northern California. This is their second book with Arcadia Publishing.

Later this summer, two more Arcadia books on local history are due for publication: *California State Fair* by Carson Hendricks, former archivist at the Center for Sacramento History, in July, and *North Sacramento* by Victoria Ehrenreich in August.

SCHS New Membership Form (pass on to friends and colleagues)

Please circle your membership level below:

Personal Memberships

Individual \$35
Senior \$30
Student \$30

Business & Sponsorship

Contributing \$100
Patron \$250
Gold \$500

Educational

Library* \$50 (*Non-voting)

Additional donation \$_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State & ZIP: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Email: _____

Please make your check out to SCHS and send with this form to

SCHS
P.O. Box 160065
Sacramento, CA 95816-0065

Thank you!!

OUT & ABOUT

DATE	TIME	EVENT	PLACE & CONTACT
Tuesday May 25	7:00 PM	SCHS General Membership Meeting Sacramento's Underground Sidewalks Presented by Heather Downey	Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society Building 5380 Elvas Avenue, Sacramento
Friday June 11	1:00 PM	SCHS Board Meeting All members welcome	Contact SCHS for meeting location
Saturday June 19 Sunday June 20	10 AM Sat Parade 11- 6 Festival	Juneteenth Festival Celebrate the Emancipation Proclama- tion with a variety of family activities	William Land Park 1701 Sutterville Road, Sacramento <i>www.sacramentojuneteenth.com</i>
Sunday June 20	7:00 PM	Peter Schrag Retired Sacramento Bee editorial page editor, and nationally known writer	Time Tested Books "Living Library" speaker series 1114 21st Street, Sacramento
Tuesday June 22	7:00 PM	SCHS General Membership Meeting Joaquin Murieta Presented by Alton Pryor	Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society Building 5380 Elvas Avenue, Sacramento



P.O. Box 160065
 Sacramento, CA 95816-0065
 Message phone: 916-443-6265
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