

SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

OUR 171<sup>ST</sup> YEAR

# PIONEER NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024

SPRING EDITION

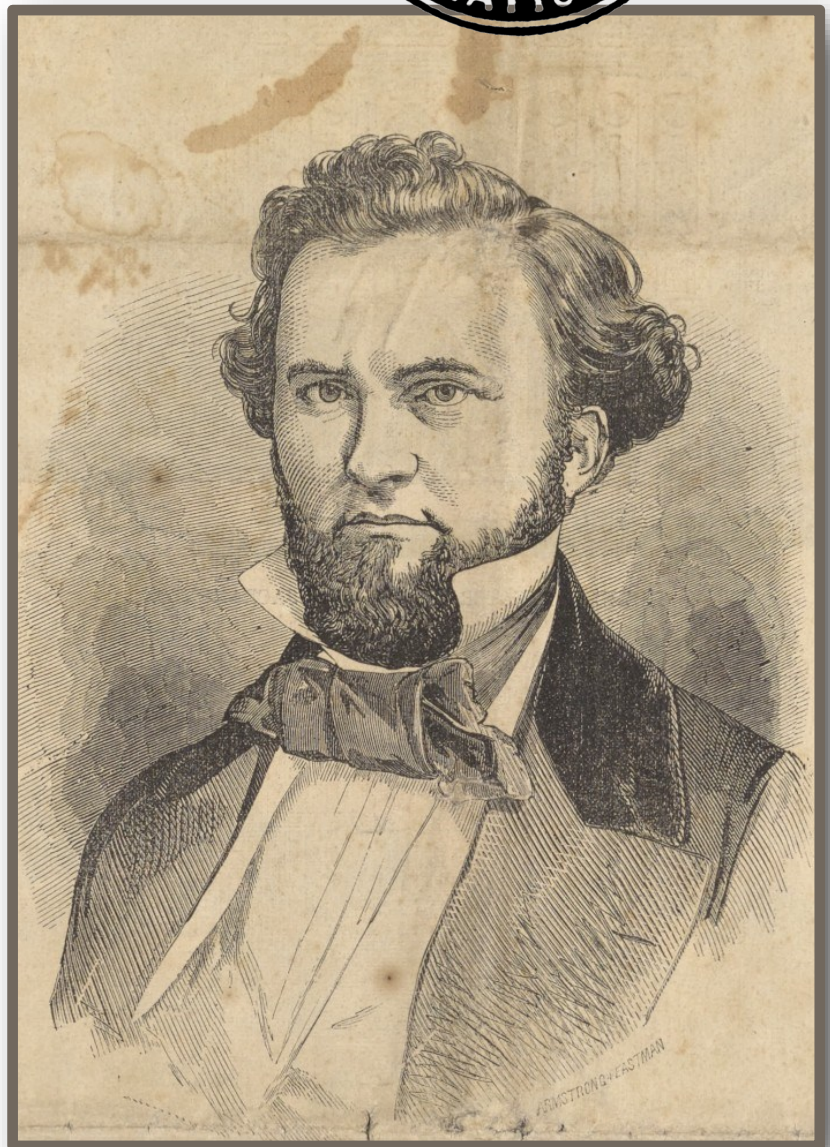


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*California Governor-elect  
J. Neely Johnson c.1855*

# Sacramento Pioneer Association Quarterly Newsletter



## *In Memoriam*

Fred Heistand  
Phyllis Hammer

### Officers

President.....Lori Gualco  
Vice President.....Katie Brown  
Secretary.....Michael Shepard  
Treasurer.....Thom Gilbert

### Directors

**Term ending March 2025**

Jeanie MacAulay Molly Wiese  
Pat Mahon

**Term ending March 2026**

Gary Bazlen Anthony Dick  
Peter Noack

**Term ending March 2027**

Barb Collopy Jonathan Hunt  
Jennifer Basye Sander

### Administrator

Shelley Ford

### Newsletter Editor

Michael Shepard

**Cover image:** The sketch of thirty-year-old Sacramento Pioneer Association member and Governor-elect J. Neely Johnson appeared in the January 1, 1856, edition of Sacramento's *Pictorial Union*, published by James Anthony & Co.

## NEW MAILING ADDRESS

**Sacramento Pioneer Association  
P. O. Box 292398  
Sacramento, CA 95829**

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# President's Message

Greetings Pioneers,

Our Annual Meeting was a great success. Approximately 120 members attended, including a number of new members. It's always exciting to have new members attend our events. Katie Brown and Jennifer Basye Sander, of our events committee, planned another superb event, and Del Paso Country Club did not disappoint with the meal and service.

Continuing on with the Annual Meeting, Barb Collopy did an outstanding job introducing our four scholarship recipients. All four have commonalities - they achieve very high academic success, participate in school activities and sports, and are involved in outside activities and volunteer work. They are high level in every aspect of high school. The recipients are: Katelyn Guo from the Humanities & International Studies Program (HISP) at McClatchy High School, awarded the Joan Kibbey Taylor scholarship as the number one recipient; Winston Holtkamp from the HISP at McClatchy High School; Marissa Gong from John F. Kennedy High School; and Ariana Graves Vargas from West Campus High School.

Another highlight of the evening was awarding the Pioneer of the Year Award to Steve Huffman. Steve is the outgoing chair of the Pioneer Hall Committee - a position he has held for many years. He has devoted countless hours to leading this committee and interacting with tenants and potential tenants and our broker. He has been instrumental in working with our new first floor tenant which has involved many complex issues and negotiations. His professionalism and knowledge has served the Pioneers splendidly. Congratulations Steve! New member Roger Bilstad will be taking over at the end of the month from Steve. We are lucky to have Roger!

We have many events to look forward to this year. Not the least of which will be the much anticipated grand opening of Pioneer Hall's first floor tenant's Le Macaron French Pastries - please visit for a delicious treat. They expect to open in the next month.

Best to all,  
Lori



# Annual Dinner Meeting

Pioneers gathered on the evening of Thursday, March 7, 2024, at Del Paso Country Club to enjoy the camaraderie of the Association's annual dinner and to conduct the official business of elections.

## Business Meeting Called to Order

After a delicious dinner, President Lori Gualco, having successfully completed her first year as chief officer of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, called the annual meeting to order at 8:05 p.m.

## Reading of the Minutes

On motion by Toran Brown and seconded by no fewer than four members who simultaneously expressed their agreement, the membership voted unanimously to dispensed with the reading of the minutes from the February 20, 2024 board meeting.

## Election of Officers and Directors

In accordance with the bylaws of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, President Gualco appointed this year's Nominating Committee comprised of Molly Wiese, Bill Gould, and Mark Rathe. President Gualco gave the floor to Nominating Committee Chair Molly Wiese to conduct elections.

The membership unanimously approved the election of the following nominees:

## Officers with terms ending March 2025:

President Lori Gualco  
Vice President Katie Brown  
Secretary Michael Shepard  
Treasurer Thom Gilbert

## Directors with term ending March 2027:

Barb Collopy  
Jonathan Hunt  
Jennifer Basye Sander

Reelected President Lori Gualco resumed her role as presiding officer and adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Michael Shepard,  
Secretary





# Sacramento Pioneers and San Francisco Vigilantes

By Michael A. Shepard

In the early years of Sacramento city, an exceptional gathering of civic visionaries and leaders coalesced within the Sacramento Pioneer Association. This fraternal organization attracted a cadre of well-educated and civic-minded men: doctors, attorneys, bankers, mercantilists, and the ink-stained architects of truth - newspaper editors. Esteemed members of the Pioneer Association actively engaged in their community. Several volunteered with Sacramento's fire companies and militias, while a few fostered political aspirations, envisioning reforms on the Pacific Coast.

California's young democracy echoed the political discord of the East. Rival political parties exchanged accusations of corruption through their respective presses. On February 23, 1854, the *Sacramento Daily Union*, under the stewardship of Sacramento Pioneer James Anthony, asserted, "We have very little confidence in political judges or political managers and aspirants, who were educated amid the corrupting influence of the New York city party school." This critique notably targeted Tammany Hall.

Amid this charged political atmosphere, Col. J. Neely Johnson, a prominent Sacramento attorney, entered the gubernatorial race in California. A former stalwart of the waning Whig party, Johnson shifted allegiance to the newly emergent American party, known colloquially as the Know Nothings. His campaign culminated in a stunning victory over the Democratic incumbent, Governor John Bigler, who, like Johnson, held membership in the recently organized Sacramento Pioneer Association.

On Saturday, September 8, 1855, thirty-year-old Governor-elect Johnson made a triumphant arrival in San Francisco aboard the steamer *Antelope* from Sacramento. As he stepped onto the wharf, fervent supporters greeted him with cheers. A procession followed Johnson to the Oriental Hotel where eager citizens of San Francisco awaited his address. The gentleman tasked with introducing the Governor-elect effusively praised him, declaring, "Your name is identified with the great moral and political movement of the day. You are on these shores the embodiment, the personation of the great idea of reform. Thorough reform, and especially of those abuses which have corrupted legislation and the ballot box."

Joseph W. Winans, a distinguished attorney, the founding president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, and former editor of the short-lived Sacramento newspaper *The Index*, delivered a prescient lecture to his fellow Pioneers and the wider

public on April 23, 1856. Entitled "On Union and Disunion," Winans' discourse praised the strength of the nation, "but for the folly and fanaticism which are beginning to prevail among the people." He solemnly warned against nefarious individuals ready to exploit these divisions, cautioning, "A subtler danger to our free institutions lurks in the efforts of those base, bad men, who, with more zeal than patriotism, and more talent than integrity, seek to build their fortunes on the discontents of others, and by kindling into strife the inflammatory elements around them, elevate themselves upon the ruin of the country."

The specter of political corruption loomed large, especially in San Francisco. James King of William, editor of San Francisco's *Evening Bulletin*, dedicated himself to exposing scandalous acts and disreputable men whenever he could through truthful reporting, or, rather, muckraking. Yet, amidst his exposés, King's ink seemed to flow more favorably for Governor Johnson. In a piece appearing in the *Evening Bulletin*, and reprinted in the March 1, 1856, edition of the *Trinity Journal*, King of William likened Johnson to Shakespeare's enigmatic King John, quoting, "My deeds, and speeches, sir, are lines drawn from one centre. What I promise to do, I'll do." The editor portrayed Johnson as a resolute leader. However, given the complex character of King John, known for his cunning political maneuvers and broken promises, James King of William might have subtly suggested a deeper, less flattering interpretation, leaving his readers to discern the veiled insult beneath a veneer of nobility.

Another instance of James King of William's restrained yet confrontational wit appeared in the pages of the *Evening Bulletin's* May 14, 1856, edition. The editor, in unmistakable disapproval of James P. Casey, an elected member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, articulated, "The fact that Casey has been an inmate of Sing-Sing prison in New York, is no offence against the laws of this State, - nor is the fact of his having stuffed himself through the ballot-box as elected to the Board of Supervisors from a district where it is said he was not even a candidate, any justification for Mr. Bagley to shoot Casey, however richly the latter may deserve to have his neck stretched for such fraud on the people."

J. W. Bagley, a former legislator, did indeed discharge his firearm at Casey in August of 1855 following a long and embittered dispute. In turn, Casey retaliated with gunfire, striking Bagley. Casey was exonerated of any wrongdoing under the premise of acting in self-defense. Perhaps James P. Casey harbored the belief that the legal system would once more align in his favor when, on the

evening of May 14, 1856, he shot James King of William in the street as the editor exited the premises of the *Evening Bulletin*. Casey, having exacted his revenge, promptly turned himself in to the Sheriff for his own safety in fear of mob justice.

News of the incident swiftly reached the Sacramento presses, inciting indignation from those who held James King of William in highest esteem. In response to rumors that vigilantes had begun to organize in San Francisco, reminiscent of the lawless days of 1851, Sacramento merchants gathered in front of the Orleans Hotel, not to advocate for hasty retribution against Casey, but to champion the sacred liberty of the press.

Joseph W. Winans, who had so recently warned of corrupt men in the body politic, stood before those assembled. He proposed the formation of a committee comprised not of hotheaded agitators, but of judicious and contemplative minds, entrusted with the weighty task of deliberation. Firmly rejecting the tenets of lawlessness and violence, Winans emphasized the imperative of safeguarding every individual engaged in conscientious duty from lawless aggression whether from an assassin or a vigilante mob. Winans, however, concluded, "Mr. King must be avenged if vengeance is due! It rests upon us to vindicate his rights, our rights!" Among the 27 members selected to form Winan's Sacramento committee, 11 held membership in the Sacramento Pioneer Association.

San Francisco's self-titled Vigilance Committee swiftly grew in number by thousands of well-armed men. In a city of law without order, they represented order without law. On May 16, 1856, the Mayor of San Francisco urgently telegraphed Governor J. Neely Johnson, seeking aid to restore *both* law and order. Governor Johnson arrived in the city that evening by steamer to confer with William Tecumseh Sherman, recently appointed as a major-general of the militia (and a future honorary member of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, elected on June 8, 1864). The two men engaged the Vigilance Committee in negotiations. However, their efforts faltered as cooperation from higher authorities within the ranks of the vigilantes did not materialize.

The situation took a tragic turn on May 20, 1856, when James King of William died from the wounds inflicted by James P. Casey. Despite the Sheriff's attempts to secure the jail, the Vigilance Committee defied civil authority. Faced with a multitude of armed men surrounding the station, the Sheriff reluctantly acquiesced to the mob's demands. The vigilantes took custody of King's murderer, and on May 22, 1856, the Vigilance Committee hanged Casey by the neck until dead. That very same day, the solemn funeral procession of James King of

William marched through San Francisco, attended by members of the Sacramento Pioneers.

The Vigilance Committee's brazen actions persisted with open defiance of civil authorities and unlawful arrests of citizens. When the Vigilance Committee refused a *writ of habeas corpus* issued by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California, Governor Johnson took drastic action, and issued a severe proclamation on June 3, 1856:

"I, J. Neely Johnson, Governor of the State of California, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and laws thereof, do hereby declare said county of San Francisco in a state of insurrection; and I hereby order and direct all of the Volunteer Military Companies of the county of San Francisco; also, all persons subject to military duty within said county, to report themselves for duty immediately, to Major General William T. Sherman, Commanding Second Division California Militia, to serve for such term, in the performance of military duty, under the command of said Sherman, until disbanded from service by his orders."

Several militias, however, refused to follow orders against their fellow citizens. Unable to effectively lead, Sherman resigned his commission.

Meanwhile, the Vigilance Committee persisted in its efforts to supplant legal authority in San Francisco. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Governor Johnson urgently sought support from Washington, D.C. He communicated with the President of the United States, requesting assistance from the U. S. Navy Pacific Division to quell the Vigilance Committee's power grab. However, President Franklin Pierce, advised by the U.S. Attorney General, declined Johnson's request, citing that the Vigilance Committee posed a threat only to local and state governments, not the federal government.

During this tumultuous period, the state found itself unable to quash the rebellion, and could only wait for events to unfold. Eventually, on November 3, 1856, the Vigilance Committee dissolved of its own accord. Governor Johnson rescinded the proclamation, and lawful authority was restored in San Francisco.

Reflecting on these events, Governor Johnson's report to *The Journal of the Eighth Session of the Assembly of the State of California* included the following statement: "Since the adjournment of the last session of the Legislature, events have occurred which, from their extraordinary character and disastrous consequences, must constitute an epoch in the history of the State; events, from the very contemplation of which, all lovers of good order and constitutional supremacy, must turn with mingled feelings of sadness and regret." ◆◆◆

# 2024 Award Recipients

## Scholarships

The presence of three graduating seniors, among the four exceptional recipients chosen, highlighted the Scholarship award ceremony this year. Barb Collopy, from the Scholarship Committee, graciously introduced each student and presented them with a framed, personalized certificate, along with the commitment of a \$5,000 award to be directly paid to the university of their enrollment.

**Katelyn Guo**, recipient of the Joan Kibbey Taylor Award for Excellence. Her qualifications include being ranked the #1 student in the McClatchy Humanities and International Studies Program (HISP); team captain of the tennis team; spent summers conducting research at UCSB and UCD in the biomedical field; fluent in Chinese and Spanish; plays flute. Katelyn will attend Brown University.

**Winston Holtkamp**, a top student in McClatchy's HISP; founded Boys4Bikes, a charity organization which has raised over \$70,000 and has donated over 550 bikes to foster youth in the Sacramento Area; volunteers at Sacramento Bicycle Kitchen where he repairs bikes for low-income clients; was on Principal's Honor Roll (4.0 and above) every semester of high school; member of tennis team. Winston plans to study renewable energy in the field of agricultural science.

**Marissa Gong**, attends John F. Kennedy HS; Girl Scouts for over 11 years; 1 of 2 Sacramento area students selected to attend Girl's State civics and leadership program; founder of Christian based organization, FISH club with over 100 members; member of School Site Council, Student Government; member of Basketball team and Track & Field team; National Honor Society; California Scholarship Federation Gold Seal Bearer. Marissa plans to focus her studies on educational equity.

**Adriana Graves Vargas**, attends West Campus High School; member of Sacramento Urban Debate League; volunteer at Front Street Animal Shelter. Adriana plans on a career in Marine Science.

## Pioneer of the Year

Steve Huffman received the Pioneer of the Year award back in 2012 for his exceptional leadership as president, among other notable achievements.

Since his initial recognition, Steve has continued to be one of the Association's most engaged and dedicated members. His commitment was evident as he returned to the board, taking on various crucial roles that have shaped the organization's path forward.

One of Steve's pivotal roles was leading an action committee focused on charting the future course of the Association. His strategic vision and dedication to progress were further showcased as he spearheaded the recruitment efforts for key positions within the Association. This included finding a replacement for the secretary role, previously held by Patsy Dwyer Butler, as well as securing individuals to fill the roles of treasurer and administrator following Lynda Otto's retirement.

In recent years, Association presidents have frequently turned to Steve, recognizing his expertise and leadership qualities, by appointing him as the chair of the nominating committee. In this role, Steve conducted the organization's annual elections with the utmost professionalism, adhering to the time-honored traditions of Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Order.

Perhaps Steve's most enduring and impactful contribution has been his dedication to Pioneer Hall. Over the years, he served as a committee member and later as chair, working to maintain the Hall's integrity and functionality.

Steve's ability to foster positive relationships was evident in his professional interactions with existing, new, and prospective tenants of Pioneer Hall. His collaboration with the law office of Jack Diepenbrock, overseeing legal contracts, and his excellent rapport with the Hall's property management company and commercial leasing agent were instrumental in the smooth operation of the Hall.

In recognition of his decades of selfless dedication and outstanding contributions, the Sacramento Pioneer Association proudly bestows upon Steve Huffman the title of 2024 Pioneer of the Year. This honor recognizes his enduring commitment to the Association's mission and the preservation of our cherished Pioneer Hall.





# Annual Dinner Meeting Award Ceremony



**Katelyn Guo**, McClatchy High School, receives her award certificate from Director and Scholarship Committee member **Barb Collopy**.



**Winston Holtkamp**, McClatchy High School, shakes hands as he receives his scholarship award.



**Marissa Gong**, John F. Kennedy High School, accepts her award from Director **Barb Collopy**.



Treasurer **Thom Gilbert** presents **Steve Huffman** with the 2024 Pioneer of the Year award.

Photos by Shelley Ford



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## Calendar of Events

### 2024

April	Tentative opening of Le Macaron French Patisserie in Pioneer Hall
Thursday, April 25	Lecture featuring Maryellen Burns: <i>Sacramento Food from A to Z</i> , at the Clunie Community Center. More info to follow.
Saturday, September 14	Annual Picnic at Sutter's Fort
December	Holiday Party - location and date to be announced

### March 2024