

SACRAMENTO PIONEER ASSOCIATION

OUR 173RD YEAR

PIONEER NEWSLETTER

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SUMMER EDITION



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**Winans Vault
Calistoga, California**

Sacramento Pioneer Association Quarterly Newsletter



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Cover Image: This granite structure, known as Winan's Vault, stands behind Buster's Original Southern BBQ in Calistoga, and once contained the remains of first Sacramento Pioneer Association President Joseph Webb Winans as well as members of his extended family.

Photo by Peter Noack

Sacramento Pioneer Association Pioneer Newsletter TM

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President Katie Brown's Message

Dear Members,

I'm happy to report that we have enjoyed a very active and productive spring. From our wonderful excursion to Calistoga to the enthusiastic engagement of our board members and their committee selections, the Sacramento Pioneer Association is moving forward with energy and purpose.

Our Calistoga excursion, organized by Emily Wheeler with the assistance of Pioneer members Eric Hanson, Michael Shepard, and Jonathan Hunt, was a tremendous success. Guests enjoyed coffee and pastries aboard the bus before arriving in Calistoga for a guided tour of the Sharpsteen Museum, where we learned about the history of the Donner Party.

We then walked through historic downtown Calistoga to the 1860s railroad depot. There, Eric Hanson and Sacramento artist Garr Ugalde shared details of the Robert Louis Stevenson Public Art Project, which will feature a bronze sculpture of Stevenson, his wife Fanny, and their dog, Chuchu. Following a champagne toast to the project, we enjoyed a guided tour of the beautifully restored depot.

Lunch was served at Buster's Southern BBQ, located at the base of Winan's Vault. This provided the perfect setting for Michael Shepard to share the fascinating story of Joseph Winans, the first president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association, who is interred at the historic cemetery in nearby St. Helena. The day concluded with visits to two historic wineries. For those who have not yet joined us on one of these excursions, I encourage you to do so - they are memorable experiences that combine friendship, history, and discovery.

Our board has also been hard at work establishing committee priorities for the coming year. The Scholarship Committee has refined its vision for future awards, while the Events Committee is planning our fall picnic and exploring additional historical activities for members. Our Pioneer Hall, Cemetery, Membership, and Publishing committees are equally engaged in advancing the mission of our organization. It is exciting to see so many members contributing their talents and enthusiasm.

We also encourage any Pioneer member who would like to help plan or facilitate an event to reach out to us. You do not need to serve on the Board of Directors to become actively involved. Whether your interests lie in local history, educational programs, special events, membership outreach, or other activities, we welcome your participation and fresh ideas. The continued success of our Association depends on the involvement and enthusiasm of our members.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our newest members: Jaime Riker Andrews, Robyn Slakey, William Grant Pattison, Kathy Bowker Metzer, Barbara MacAulay Ore, Roger Baccigaluppi, and Catherine Rodebaugh Saslow. We are delighted to have you join us in preserving and celebrating Sacramento's rich history.

As summer settles into the Sacramento Valley, I hope you enjoy the season's abundance of local fruits and produce, warm days, and evenings cooled by our treasured Delta breeze.

I look forward to seeing everyone in September.

Warm regards,

Katie

From the Desk of Vice President Barbara Collopy, Chair of the Scholarship Committee

At the heart of our organization's mission is a commitment to investing in our community and ensuring our Scholarship Program truly reflects our core philosophy. To better align with our values, we are excited to announce a few key updates to the program this year.

Rather than focusing strictly on traditional metrics, our updated selection process will place a deeper emphasis on involvement with our local history community. We are also

expanding our support beyond those in the Sacramento City Unified School District to those living in Sacramento County. Not only will high school seniors be invited to apply, but also those transferring into a local four-year institution. To learn more about our new criteria and upcoming application deadlines, please visit the website.

If you are interested in being an application reader and helping in the selection of Scholarship recipients, please let Barb Collopy know.

Winans Vault

By Michael Shepard

Sarah Adelaide Winans laid her husband to rest within the family tomb, a granite vault built into a hillside in Calistoga, California, by her uncle several years earlier. Her husband, Joseph Webb Winans, had been a prominent man during his lifetime: attorney, judge, financier, writer, poet, newspaper publisher, philanthropist, book collector, and the first president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association...

A sunny spring day in April of 2026 welcomed Sacramento Pioneer Association excursionists to the town that had once featured Sam Brannan's aspiring 19th-century hot springs resort. Inspired by the hot springs of Saratoga, New York, the name *Calistoga* served as a hybrid of California and Saratoga. While the small Napa Valley town now may be best known for its world-class wines, Calistoga is also steeped in history.

The purpose of the trip centered on a chapter of Calistoga's literary past; specifically, the spring and summer of 1880, when author Robert Louis Stevenson and his new bride, Fanny Osbourne, honeymooned with their setter-spaniel mix, Chuchu, at Calistoga's Silverado Mine. Association member Eric Hanson and Sacramento sculptor Garr Ugalde have envisioned a life-size statuary group of the three, cast in bronze, to appear at the historic Calistoga train station to commemorate the arrival of the newlyweds.

Following a presentation about the project by Hanson and Ugalde and a champagne toast on the future site of the Stevenson statues, the excursionists lunched on the back patio of Buster's Original Southern BBQ, where Association Secretary Michael Shepard spoke about a second unexpected historical site only a few steps away. Behind the restaurant, adjacent to its back patio, shaded by oaks and tucked into the hillside, stands a little-known Pioneer monument called Winans Vault. The granite tomb, now vacant, had once held the remains of Joseph Webb Winans, the first president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association.

The vault itself was the work of Samuel Brannan, entrepreneur extraordinaire, California's first millionaire, and the founder of Calistoga. Built in 1869–70 on Brannan's own property, the structure was originally intended as his personal mausoleum. Instead, the vault became the temporary resting place for members of his extended family. Joseph Winans certainly considered himself part of that family by virtue of his wife, Sarah, whom Sam

referred to as his "favorite niece." Sam and Sarah's mother were brother and sister.

Joseph Winans had arrived in California long before Calistoga existed. Born in New York City in 1820, he was a Columbia College-educated attorney who sailed for California in 1849 aboard the bark *Strafford*, a vessel purchased and outfitted by the New York Mining Company. After a seven-month voyage around Cape Horn, the *Strafford* reached San Francisco on August 30, 1849, and continued upriver to Sacramento, where the ship served as a floating residence during the winter.

Joseph opened a law office almost immediately. Sacramento in 1849 was, in the words of biographer Alonzo Phelps, "a vast encampment of tents and rude huts, thronged by a rough and restless multitude, hailing from all parts of the globe...." In the hodge-podge chaos of early Sacramento, the ambitious Winans saw ample opportunity for a member of the New York bar to practice his profession. His partnership with fellow New Yorker John G. Hyer soon became one of the most respected legal firms in the city.

His civic commitments were equally notable. Winans helped organize levee construction, advocated for Sacramento to become the permanent state capital, and in 1854 became the first president of the newly formed Sacramento Pioneer Association. That same year he married Sarah Adelaide Badlam, youngest daughter of Alexander Badlam, Sr.

The Badlams, like Joseph Winans, had come west in the earliest years of statehood. Alexander Badlam, Sr., a Massachusetts native, arrived in 1849 as a Mormon pioneer, though he departed from the faith, and later brought his entire family across the plains. By 1860, census records show Joseph and Sarah Winans living in Sacramento alongside Sarah's parents, her siblings, and her niece Mamie Carpenter. The household would remain blended for decades, even after relocating to San Francisco in 1861.

In February of 1863, a *Sacramento Daily Union* article announced the incorporation of the Pacific Accumulation Loan Company in San Francisco and named Joseph W. Winans as both a director and a corporator of the venture worth \$5 million in capitalization. His colleagues in the high-stakes enterprise included in-law Samuel Brannan, California's first Chief Justice S. C. Hastings, and future Wells Fargo president Lloyd Tevis.

Brannan, meanwhile, was also transforming the Napa Valley. By 1857 he had already erected a hotel six miles from Sulphur Springs (St. Helena), and by 1863 he was advertising the Hot Springs at Calistoga, complete with seven cottages, medicinal

waters, and surveyed town lots. His dream of a "Saratoga of the Pacific" was ambitious, expensive, and ultimately unsustainable, but it left a lasting imprint on the region.

The 1870 Census records show Joseph and Sarah Winans living in San Francisco with their three children, as well as Sarah's sister and her niece Mamie Carpenter. Additionally, Samuel Brannan's name appears on the record. His stated occupation is "Capitalist," with real estate valued at \$1,000,000 and a personal estate worth \$300,000. Meanwhile, Sarah's mother and father lived in Hot Springs Township, Napa County.

Members of the Badlam family, including Sarah's brothers Alexander Jr. and Ezra, managed Brannan's resort in Calistoga, and later Alexander Jr. pursued his own ventures there, including a one-quarter ownership in the Silverado Gold and Silver Mine on Mount St. Helena. In 1874, the mining camp was christened "Silverado" in a champagne-fueled celebration. It soon had a population of over one thousand and was dubbed the "second Virginia City."

It was this same mining camp, abandoned after only a few years of operations, that Robert Louis Stevenson, his new bride, Fanny Osbourne, and her son occupied in the spring of 1880. Their honeymoon in the deserted bunkhouse inspired *The Silverado Squatters*, published in 1883, in which Stevenson wrote, "There were four of us squatters - myself and my wife, the King and Queen of Silverado; Lloyd, the Crown Prince; and Chuchu, the Grand Duke...."

Back in San Francisco, Joseph and Sarah Winans presided over a household at 926 Clay Street that reflected both family and society, balanced with a little bit of fun. The 1880 census lists not only their three children but also Sarah's parents, her sister Mary Carpenter, and her niece Mamie. Their home was known for its hospitality, its extensive art and book collections, and its lively social gatherings. One 1886 account described a winter dancing party hosted by Lillie Winans and her cousin Mamie (now Mrs. Thomas Meagher), both recently returned from New York. The social event featured "the latest Eastern society craze in dancing."

Joseph Winans died in 1887, leaving behind a distinguished public record: president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association and the San Francisco-based Society of California Pioneers, regent of the University of California, dean of Hastings College of Law, founder of the San Francisco Law Library, and president of both the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

An article in the April 6, 1887 *Weekly Calistogan* reported, "Funeral services were held at his late home in San Francisco, 926 Clay Street, Friday afternoon, and in the evening the remains were accompanied across the bay and up Napa Valley by several relatives, and today all that is mortal of the generous man and scholar, Joseph W. Winans, rests in the family tomb in Calistoga."

Sarah's father, Alexander Badlam, Sr., penned a rare letter to his sister back east. The letter dated June 25, 1888, a year after the death of Joseph W. Winans, provides an exceptional account of Badlam family matters. Alexander wrote:

"Sarah married a lawyer, Joseph W. Winans... Since his death, a year ago last March, his great library of ten thousand elegantly bound, rare, ancient and modern books are being sold at auction at ruinous prices... Father and son are deposited in our family tomb at Calistoga Hot Springs, where Mrs. Winans has six fine cottages, one for our summer retreat and the others are rented."

After legislation in Napa County prohibited above-ground interment, the remains of Joseph Winans and other family members were removed in the autumn of 1913. Thomas Francis Meagher III, the son of Sarah's niece Mamie, allowed the remains to be placed in the Meagher family plot in St. Helena Cemetery. Sarah Winans's daughter, Lillie, died in 1914 and joined her father and two brothers in the new plot.

At the age of 75, Sarah Winans had outlived all her children. Late in 1914, she became ill and promised the Calistoga property where she lived to Thomas Meagher III, to be deeded to him upon her death. Her grandnephew removed her from the house and placed her in hospital. She recovered and required a court judgment to reconvey the house to her. When she finally passed away on November 9, 1920, she was laid to rest in the Meagher plot in St. Helena. Cemetery records confirm that the Winans family occupies the Meagher plot, but their graves remain unmarked. The solid remnants, however, of an impressive granite vault, tucked in the hillside behind a celebrated Calistoga BBQ joint, still stand as a monument to Joseph Webb Winans, first president of the Sacramento Pioneer Association.



Three 1776s and Four Flags: A Californian Quarter Millennial Story

By Michael Shepard

Reveling at a Pioneer Hall Fourth of July collation in 1872, Judge T. B. McFarland declared, "It is fitting that the Pioneers of California, in the latter part of the 19th century, should celebrate the day made forever memorable by those historic men, who in the latter part of the 18th century, were not only the pioneers of America, but the pioneers of liberty." McFarland's fellow Pioneers undoubtedly shared his patriotic sentiments.

Four years later, as the country prepared for its Centennial, the *Sacramento Daily Union* described Pioneer Hall once more adorned in full patriotic splendor: "Festoons of tricolor were drawn along its cornice... lines of small flags led from the balcony corners of the roof... and from there to the flagstaff, which bore a magnificent new National banner. With the accompanying illumination, the Hall made indeed a fine display."

A century and a half have passed since that centennial and our nation now prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. We Sacramento Pioneers may also pause to honor two other quarter-millennial anniversaries that shaped our own state's beginnings: the founding of the Presidio of San Francisco on September 17, 1776, and Misión San Francisco de Asís (Mission Dolores) on October 9, 1776. These three 1776s illuminate California's path from Spanish Crown to American liberty.

Perhaps no figure embodies this convergence more fully than Sacramento Pioneer Association member General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, whose life spanned four sovereignties and whose legacy links the anniversaries commemorated this year.

Born in Monterey in 1808 under the Spanish flag, Vallejo was the son of Ignacio Vallejo, a soldier who had marched into Alta California with the 1769 Portolá-Serra expedition. After Mexico won independence in 1821, young Vallejo rose to prominence under the Mexican flag, becoming Comandante General of Alta California and founder of the town of Sonoma.

In 1846, during the brief and turbulent Bear Flag Revolt, Vallejo was arrested in Sonoma, escorted to Sutter's Fort, and, for several weeks, lived beneath the Bear Flag of the short-lived California Republic. Following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which concluded the Mexican American War in 1848, he spent the remainder of his long public life as a citizen of the United States, serving as a delegate to California's first constitutional convention and in the first State Senate.

Vallejo played a notable role in the centennial celebrations of 1876. At the 100th anniversary of Mission Dolores and the Presidio, he delivered the principal Spanish-language oration, recognizing California's Spanish and Mexican heritage.

As we celebrate the Quarter Millennial of 1776, Vallejo's legacy stands to remind us that California's identity is the product of many histories, Indigenous, Spanish, Mexican, American, and many others, bound together on the western shore of a free nation.



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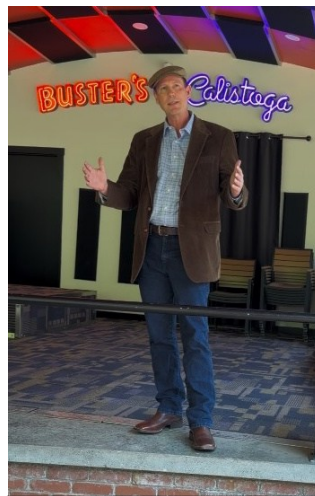
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Pioneer Excursion to Calistoga, April 24, 2026



Lunch at Buster's BBQ



Secretary Shepard tells of Winans Vault



Pioneer Excursionists deep in the wine cellar of Joseph Cellars

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Sacramento Pioneer Association member Eric Hanson has championed a vision to install a public work of art at the Calistoga train depot honoring Robert Louis Stevenson, who honeymooned in and later immortalized the little hot-springs town in his writings. The planned installation features a trio of bronze figures by Sacramento sculptor Garr Ugalde: a lifelike Stevenson seated on a Victorian bench, his new bride Fanny Osbourne standing at his left, and their loyal setter-spaniel mix, Chuchu, resting at his feet. The bench space beside Stevenson, directly before Fanny, will remain intentionally open, inviting visitors to step into the scene and engage with the artwork. Mr. Hanson's nonprofit, Robert Louis Stevenson Public Art, a 501(c)(3), is currently welcoming contributions to support the project.



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Events & Dates to Remember

July

Saturday, July 4

250th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence

September

Wednesday, September 9

California Statehood

Wednesday, September 17

250th Anniversary of San Francisco's Presidio

Saturday, September 19

Annual Pioneer Picnic at the historic Old Sloughhouse Inn

October

Friday, October 9

250th Anniversary of the Founding of San Francisco's Mission

December

Thursday, December 3

Annual Holiday Gala at the Sutter Club

July 2026