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**GRAND OPENING!**  
**SONOMA COUNTY STORIES**

**A New Permanent Exhibition**

**Saturday, September 9, 2023**

11 am: Welcome & Festivities  
12 pm: Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

**FREE ADMISSION ALL DAY**

**Santa Rosa, CA** – (August 10) The Museum of Sonoma County (MSC) is proud to announce the grand opening of *Sonoma County Stories* - the **groundbreaking permanent exhibition** that encourages the public to engage with the county's past, and contribute to its future, through the **power of storytelling**.

The exhibition starts **Saturday, September 9**, with **festivities at 11 am**, followed by a **12 pm ribbon-cutting** ceremony. The museum opens its doors from 12 pm - 5 pm with **free admission** to everyone to explore the new **multimedia exhibition** as well as all other museum spaces and shows.

**AN EXPLORATION OF INTIMATE HISTORIES**

*Sonoma County Stories* **combines vibrant recorded oral histories with other original sources**. Featured in the exhibition are the personal histories of individuals, families, and communities representing the many cultures present in the county over the **last two centuries**, including **Native American, Latino, Asian, African American, European, and more**. An **immersive experience**, visitors are invited to use **multimedia stations** with access to videos, audio recordings, and images.

**The Origin of the Oral Histories**

This pivotal project is grounded in the three-decade journalistic and preservationist endeavors of **Gaye LeBaron** who spent her career with **The Press Democrat**.

**Everyone Has a Story to Tell**

At its center, the *Sonoma County Stories* project recognizes that the history around us is continually evolving and is an **open and ongoing invitation for people to add to the story**. More than a static display, *Sonoma County Stories* will carry on the legacy, collecting and presenting the community's vibrant stories into the future.



## AN IMPORTANT RENOVATION THROUGH COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The creation of *Sonoma County Stories* was a multi-year project, involving the **participation of numerous county organizations and donors**, which culminated in the renovation of the **historic Santa Rosa post office building** for the purposes of housing the unique exhibition. The building is reopening to the public after a nine-month renovation period.

*Sonoma County Stories* is housed in the entire second floor of the Museum. **It will serve as a powerful learning resource for educators and students**, with school tours, an annual storytelling festival, and a broad range of public and educational programs being planned.

### MULTIMEDIA & HISTORY

Four **touchscreen monitors** provide dynamic history presentations of different topics, incorporating video segments, images, and text. The monitors will allow for new content to be added over time.

### THE WALL OF TIME

An impressive extension of the mezzanine overlooking the Museum's ground floor, *The Wall of Time* features a **floor-to-ceiling glass vitrine stretching over 40 feet**. Dozens of artifacts from the Museum's collection are presented in dramatic fashion, forming a window onto history.

### The Museum of Sonoma County wishes to recognize our partners and thank:

Redwood Empire Chinese Association, Japanese American Citizens League of Sonoma County, Regional Tribal Members, NorCal Media/KRCB, Press Democrat/Sonoma Media Investments, the Sibbett Group, Gizmo Art Production, County of Sonoma, Sonoma State University, Listening for a Change, Latino Service Providers, Multicultural Roots Project/Santa Rosa Department of Community Engagement, and Santa Rosa Junior College, among others.

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### THE INSPIRATION: GAYE LEBARON PREEMINENT ORAL HISTORIAN

The inspiration for *Sonoma County Stories* is **Gaye LeBaron's Oral History Collection**. A dedicated storyteller and historical writer, Gaye entered the male-dominated field of journalism in the 1950's and devoted herself to telling Sonoma County's stories in a unique way. She spent her **entire career with *The Press Democrat***. The exhibition features selections from her video treasure trove **amassed over thirty years** of interviewing members of the county's vast and varied communities. An important part of the exhibition, the interviews are accessible on **interactive screens where visitors can choose the stories they want to hear**.

Beyond the videos, the exhibition will embody Gaye's dedication to finding the stories that shape our community and remind us that our past, present, and future are all interconnected.



## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

### ORAL HISTORIES

Many dozens of video interviews exist, and adapting the interviews for the exhibition is an ongoing process. For the grand opening, a varied selection has been chosen, highlights of which include:

**Young Smith**, a Coast Miwok Indian who served his country in the Army Air Corps during World War II and **Sherrie Smith-Ferri**, a Dry Creek Pomo and one of the world's foremost experts on Pomo basketry and culture.

**The Basket Weavers** - A co-production with **Northern California Public Media**, a short film that tells the story of the important Pomo tradition that has been passed down for generations and is now threatened by invasive non-native plant species.



Born on his family's Vine Hill farm in 1902, **Earl Carrillo** is the great-grandson of **Dona Maria Carrillo**, who owned the Mexican land grant that became the city of Santa Rosa.

**George Ortiz** was a farmworker turned social worker widely regarded as the **patron of Latino empowerment** and community pride in Sonoma County. He was a relentless civic titan who co-founded both the vast California Human Development anti-poverty agency and the Latinos Unidos scholarship and cultural organization.

Born in 1909, **Song Wong Bourbeau** was one of the **last residents of Santa Rosa's Chinatown**. She and her husband owned Jam Kee, considered to be the best Chinese restaurant in town. She tells many stories of the Chinese American community of her early childhood.

**Jesse Love** is representative of the demographic changes in Northern California during World War II, when Black migrants from the southwest moved to the Pacific Coast. The small group that came to Santa Rosa in the 1950's founded not only the Community Baptist Church but also the **first local chapter of the NAACP**.



For more than 60 years **Hugh Coddling** was a larger-than-life figure in the economy and politics of Sonoma County, credited with having altered the course of post-World War II Santa Rosa with residential and commercial development.

**Marion McMurtry**, whose great great-grandfather, **Louis Williams Ridenhour**, was the first settler in the Russian River area, tells many stories of the rich history of the region.



## HISTORIC OBJECTS [\(click to download\)](#)

### Latinos Unidos del Condado de Sonoma Banner

The Latinos Unidos del Condado de Sonoma was founded in the 1960's by Monsignor Gerald Cox and George Ortiz to provide college scholarships to Latino/a students in the county. This community group continues to award scholarships to graduating high schoolers today and through the years has advocated for working families and provided support to the Latino community in Sonoma County. This banner, from the organization's early days, is a symbol of two men who wanted to make a difference in their community and succeeded.



### Fu Dog Figurines

These stylized porcelain figures, known as Fu or Foo Dogs, are actually Chinese guardian lions. A pair of guardian lions would traditionally guard the entrance to a building or home. These lions once stood guard at the entrance to the temple in Santa Rosa's historic Chinatown. Song Wong Bourbeau and her family were caretakers of the temple and when the temple was torn down, she took in these figures and eventually entrusted them to the Museum.



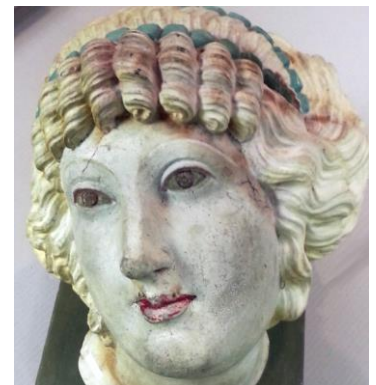
### Grace Brothers Whistle

Grace Brothers Brewery operated in Santa Rosa beginning in 1897 and was known and loved both locally and beyond. This steam whistle once stood on the top of the main brewery building. It signaled breaks and the end of shifts for the brewery staff, but it also served as a fire alarm after the 1906 earthquake, when much of downtown Santa Rosa was damaged.

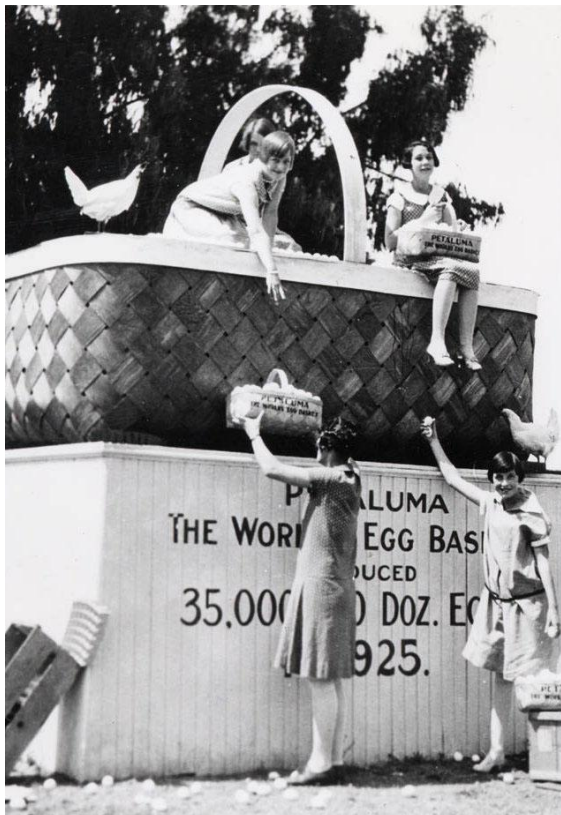
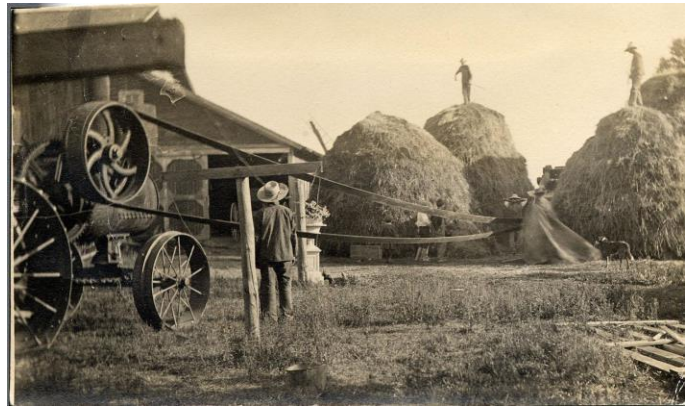


### The Bride of Lammermoor Figurehead

This lady once graced the prow of the "Lammermoor," a British clipper ship that transported trade goods to and from distant ports. As the figurehead of this ship, this sculpture would have sailed all around the world. The "Lammermoor" was wrecked off the coast of Bodega Bay in 1882 during a voyage from Australia to San Francisco, but our "Bride" was salvaged and placed outside of the Murray House in Bodega, where she welcomed customers for decades.



[HISTORIC IMAGES \(click to download\)](#)



**Museum of Sonoma County**  
425 Seventh Street  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
707-579-1500  
[www.museumsc.org](http://www.museumsc.org)

Admission  
Adults: \$10  
Seniors 62+, Students, People with Disabilities: \$7  
Museum Members: FREE  
Children 12 & under: FREE

**Museum Hours**  
**Wednesday - Sunday, 11 am - 5 pm**

*Through Museums for All, those receiving food assistance (SNAP benefits) can gain free admission for up to four (4) people to the Museum of Sonoma County by presenting their EBT card.*

*Closed New Year's Day, President's Day, Easter Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas.*

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### **About the Museum of Sonoma County**

Located in Downtown Santa Rosa on Seventh Street between A and B Streets, the Museum of Sonoma County (MSC) presents exhibitions of modern and contemporary art and local and regional history. MSC is open year-round with changing exhibitions, public programs, school tours, and special events. MSC preserves and manages a regional art and history collection of over 18,000 objects, the region's largest object documentation of Sonoma County's history and culture.

### **Mission**

The Museum of Sonoma County engages and inspires our diverse community with art and history exhibitions, collections, and public programs that are inclusive, educational, and relevant.

### **Smithsonian Affiliate**

The Museum of Sonoma County has been a Smithsonian Affiliate since 2009. Smithsonian Affiliations establishes long-term partnerships with museums, education and cultural organizations to facilitate the loan of Smithsonian artifacts and traveling exhibitions, as well as to develop innovative educational collaborations locally and nationally. Created in 1996 by an act of the Smithsonian Board of Regents, the program is overseen by the Smithsonian's Assistant Secretary for Education and Access and is one of the pillars of the Institution's national outreach efforts. There are more than 200 Smithsonian Affiliates in nearly every state, Puerto Rico and Panama. Affiliates represent the diversity of America's museum community—size, location and subject—and serve all audiences. More than 8,000 Smithsonian artifacts have been displayed at Affiliate locations for the past 20 years.