

Sonoma Mountain Journal

Volume 15, no. 1

December, 2015

This year's Journal highlights the artists, visionaries and spiritual leaders connected with Sonoma Mountain.

Inside

SDC Update

Remembering Bill Kortum

Mountain Wildlife

West Slope News

Valley of the Moon Alliance

Ten Ways to Save Water

New Trails

The first peoples of southern Sonoma county, the Coast Miwok, placed *oona-pa'is* — Sonoma Mountain — at the center of the world, imagining its summit as an island in the primordial ocean at the beginning of time.

Geologists tell a similar story —that Sonoma Mountain's layers of volcanic and sedimentary rock, pushed upward by tectonic forces, rose from the depths of a shallow sea.



GIFTS FROM THE MOUNTAIN

Arthur Dawson

“Mountains are fountains of men
as well as of rivers...”

—John Muir

Sonoma Mountain is not the tallest mountain in the region, but it has a unique pull on the human spirit. Since the beginning of human time it has been a focal point of creation stories. In the recent past the mountain has attracted many visionaries, artists, and spiritual leaders; inspired people who see the world from unusual perspectives.

The mountain's most famous resident, of course, was **Jack London**, who's powerful stories pulled him up from poverty. Settling on Sonoma Mountain was, perhaps, a personal symbol of how much he had risen in the world. London earned fame as a writer, but he was also a social activist who spoke for the common people and regarded his Beauty Ranch as an agricultural experiment that could change the world.

Robert de Ropp moved here long after London's time. An accomplished biochemist, de Ropp later became well known in the sixties counterculture, a man who had “something urgent to say to anyone on a transformational path.” Like London, he had a difficult early life and by age twelve was fending for himself. Earning a doctorate in Plant Physiology,

de Ropp conducted research on cancer, mental illness and psychoactive plant substances.

A scientist with a deeply spiritual side, de Ropp studied with the Ouspenskys, who were disciples of Turkish mystic Gurdjieff. Eventually drawn to California, de Ropp bought property on Sonoma Mountain in 1961 and devoted himself to writing and teaching. Setting up a community dedicated to self-sufficiency, he believed humanity's environmental and spiritual crises had to be faced with body, mind and spirit. De Ropp penned his most influential books, *The Master Game* and *Warrior's Way*, while living on the mountain. Another, *Church of the Earth*, detailed his experiences creating a community. De Ropp died while ocean kayaking in 1987.

After a spiritual experience as a young man, **James Swallow** became a traveling preacher. Around 1940, shortly after he and his family arrived in the area, his children discovered a property for sale on the mountain. It had a breathtaking view but no access from Sonoma Mountain Road far below. Swallow bought it, built a house and single-handedly put in a one-mile access road.



continued on page 4

Letter from the Chair



SDC Update

Meg Beeler

It is challenging to avoid frustration with the State's response to our community concerns about SDC. Countless hours of community testimony, visioning, coalition-building, parent organizing, and ideas for transitional uses have barely been acknowledged in the DDS' *Plan for the Closure of Sonoma Developmental Center* submitted to the State legislature in October 2015 (find it at: www.dds.ca.gov)

The good news: it is quite clear that the State values the site's open space and habitat lands. The State's Closure Plan states: "The Administration and the Department recognize the SDC property's incredible natural resources, historic importance and value to our service delivery system. It is not the intention of the State to declare SDC's property as surplus, but instead to work with the community to identify how the property can best be utilized."

The California Dept. of General Services has also made it clear that the state's preference is to continue to own the entire SDC property after closure of the Developmental Center. In the long-term, we are still aiming for no-cost transfers to Jack London SP and County Regional Parks for the

nearly 800 acres of undeveloped lands. SMP, SLT, Supervisor Gorin, and many county agencies will continue to work to make this happen. The orchard part of SDC was transferred to Jack London, with SMP's help, 13 years ago, so we know it can be done!

Other Challenges

The other big challenges are the various local event permit applications and changes pending with the county on Sonoma Mountain: Belden Barns on Sonoma Mountain Road, Tolay Springs on the old Roche property north of Sonoma Raceway, CA Equestrian Park & Event Center at SDC, the Kroloff property on the west side, and Heritage Roads. SMP receives and monitors permit applications, and we are following closely the neighborhood and county-wide groups working for sustainable policies regarding events and consumer-related "agricultural" use.

Be Engaged!

You can help by **donating** on our website or with the enclosed envelope, **following us on Facebook**, coming to our **quarterly meetings**, and continuing to help preserve the scenic, agricultural and natural resources of Sonoma Mountain. We've been at it for over 22 years!

You'll notice that the enclosed envelope asks for your email address. In the long run, we are looking at distributing the *Journal* electronically and notifying you quickly when broad community input and support is needed.

Remembering Bill Kortum

Ted Eliot

Bill Kortum, longtime member of Sonoma Mountain Preservation's steering committee, died on December 20, 2014. He is not just missed; he is irreplaceable.

Bill was Sonoma County's environmental conscience. In his work to preserve the beauty and natural resources of the County he was always softly spoken and strongly persistent. His accomplishments are legendary and include his roles in preventing a nuclear power plant's being built on Bodega Head in the 1960s, getting the California Coastal Conservancy approved by the voters in 1972, helping establish the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District in 1990, and founding Sonoma County Conservation Action in 1991. There is a Kortum trail on the County's coast. He was a longtime Board member of the Sonoma Land Trust.

Bill always admitted that he had failures as well as successes. And he left unfinished efforts to arrange public access to Petaluma's Lafferty Park and to establish scenic "heritage roads", which would not permit commercial activity.

His countless friends and admirers are doing all they can to emulate Bill as they work on these and other environmental issues that confront the County. And they are in close touch with his wonderful and beloved widow, Lucy, who shares his goals for our beautiful county.



Mountain Wildlife: Camera Tracking

Information & photos provided by
Tony Nelson, Sonoma Land Trust

You've seen the deer and turkeys on Sonoma Mountain. You may have been lucky enough to see a fox or bobcat. But have you seen a porcupine?

The grid of remote monitoring cameras on the mountain—placed by Sonoma Land Trust to give us documented information on the wildlife that lives here, and where they roam—have captured that porcupine, along with ongoing data to help us learn more about our wildlife corridors. The corridors are critical for the future of wildlife from Marin County through Sonoma to Blue-Ridge Berryessa Natural Area and the Mendocino National Forest above Indian Valley Reservoir.



What SLT Has Learned

One discovery is that the Sonoma and Stuart Creek underpasses—both within the designated wildlife corridor—have twice the detections as the other two underpasses (at Calabasas and Hooker Creeks) outside the designated corridor.

Another finding is that the “pinch point”—the narrow point between Sonoma and Stuart Creeks—doesn't have constraints: the underpasses are really important to wildlife crossing. This, in turn, means that animals who need a large territory have it, and can pass to and from Sonoma Mountain and the Mayacamas with relative ease.

The remote cameras extend from Fairfield-Osborne on the west side of Sonoma Mountain, through the Valley at SDC and the Regional Park, and across to the Mayacamas, ridge to ridge. The roadkill surveys at Highway 12 and Arnold have shown no particular hotspots, more good news for the wildlife.

Besides porcupine, the cameras have detected bear (in the Mayacamas), nesting Wood Ducks on Hooker Creek, beaver and otter in the creeks, bobcats, fox families, mountain lion and deer. The two mountain lions that took down a buck right in the orchard near Camp Via in early September were unfortunately just beyond the camera's scope!

How Can Our Wildlife Corridor Affect Policy?

The most immediate effect is at SDC: the importance of these corridors is one more reason for the State to transfer the 800 acres to our local parks.

A second impact may be on the next General Plan revision: the data is good evidence for designating



more habitat corridors, and extending clearer and stronger protections to them.

A third impact is on road, bridge, and overpass design. CalTrans requested the SLT report, and will hopefully incorporate the findings into their future bridge replacements.

The final impact is on all public and private landowners, who can assist wildlife's ability to move with fence design, minimal nighttime lighting, keeping pets indoors at night, and so on. Check SMP's blog at sonomamountain.org for more fencing and wildlife corridor articles. For more information on the Sonoma Land Trust, see: www.sonomalandtrust.org



Gifts

Continued

Still a preacher at heart, he called out for guidance. A voice replied that God would bring a congregation to him. At first, only lost motorists showed up, but by the mid-1950s a few regulars began visiting for Bible study and a meal. In the early 1970s, word spread among the Jesus People, as Christian hippies were called, of a holy man with a white beard on the mountain. Swallow welcomed them and soon a full-blown revival was in swing, drawing 150 worshipers a week. Swallow's vision of a mountaintop ministry was fulfilled. He was eighty-eight years old.

Known as the 'Elder Swallow,' James radiated unconditional love no matter how strange someone looked or behaved. Hundreds were baptized in a stock tank and rock musicians played for Swallow's services. His revival movement became known as "the Sonoma Mountain Lighthouse." Swallow's proteges extended his ministry out to Healdsburg, Napa and Cotati. Swallow died in 1975, but some of those he inspired are still active in local churches. It is said these congregations continue to offer a rare level of unconditional love and acceptance.

Trude Guermontprez worked her visions into textiles. Of German-Jewish heritage, she remained in



Holland when her family fled the Nazis. Somehow Trude survived the war, though her husband was killed fighting with the French resistance. Afterwards, she came to northern California. A gifted teacher, Trude taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts, the California School of Fine Arts, and at Pond Farm in Guerneville.

Guermontprez created rugs, tapestries and prototypes for the textile industry. Experimenting with techniques and materials, she created painted tapestries and wove poetry into the fabric. She and her second husband, John Elsesser, acquired property next to Jack London State Park in 1970. John built the 'Twill House' for Trude as a rustic retreat and studio. Sadly, she was diagnosed with cancer soon after.

In her final years, Guermontprez received the Craftsmanship Medal from the American Institute of Architects and other prestigious awards. Many of her students have become well-known textile artists themselves



Since the 1950s, Sonoma Mountain has drawn a circle of talented sculptors. **David Best's** spectacular temples, built of recycled materials, have been prominent at Burning Man. His Temple of Stars was a quarter-mile long and 120-feet high. **Marc di Suervo**, winner of the National Medal of Arts for his sculpture, lived on Sonoma Mountain from 1975 to 1988. With

masters degrees in art and physics, the late **Robert Ellison**, made steel sculptures for public spaces, such as the giant scissors on Santa Rosa's Courthouse Square.

Sculptor and writer **Mary McChesney** and her late husband, abstract expressionist painter **Robert McChesney**, were given an acre near the top of Sonoma Mountain in 1952. Mary wrote novels, collected oral histories and produced public sculptures. Praised by art critics in the 'fifties, Robert refused to move to New York to further his career. Perhaps because of this, he never received the fame many say he deserved.



"Near the top of the mountain, the road dips, bends, then snakes through a small grove of redwoods..."

"When you emerge on the other side of the grove, you feel as though you've passed through a portal into another world."

"It's a fitting way to approach Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, because people there view reality just a little bit differently from the way most of us do."

—Sarah Ban Breathnach,
*A Man's Journey to Simple
Abundance*



Sonoma Mountain Zen Center is the mountain's longest-lived spiritual community. It was founded by **Jakusho Kwong**, who was born in Santa Rosa in 1935. Following a serious auto accident, he became a student of Shunryu Suzuki, one of the first zen masters to teach in the U.S. In 1973, Kwong purchased part of an old ranch to start a meditation center. This grew into the Zen Center, where he continues to serve as head abbot. Kwong has led workshops as far away as Poland and Iceland.

Another current resident of Sonoma Mountain is author, professor and Graton Rancheria

chairman **Greg Sarris**. He writes that the mountain, which is in the tribal territory of his ancestors, is "many stories that make up the one story...The stories from the mountain teach important lessons, and many of the songs that Coast Miwok people have sung since the beginning of time are gifts from the mountain."

Despite the vast cultural changes of the last two centuries, Sonoma Mountain continues to be a place of creation and inspiration. Many who have never seen the mountain, or even know it exists, have been nourished by its far-reaching gifts.

West Slope News

Andy Rodgers

The Sonoma Resource Conservation District (RCD) was recently awarded a grant by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to complete a historical hydrology study of the Petaluma River watershed. The Sonoma Mountain uplands encompass headwaters of several streams within this watershed, such as Lichau, Lynch, and Adobe Creeks.

This historical hydrology study, which will be prepared by the San Francisco Estuary Institute & the Aquatic Science Center, will engage a variety of stakeholders and watershed partners to synthesize diverse historical data (such as maps, aerial photographs, historical accounts, and early surveys) in order to enhance understanding of the hydrologic conditions of the Petaluma River watershed.

Findings will be compiled into an illustrated technical report that will discuss implications of the historical findings on future management, restoration, flood control, and groundwater recharge within this watershed.

Once completed, the report and associated data will be available to the general public and local planning agencies for use in evaluating future watershed improvements. For more information on the Petaluma River Watershed Historical Hydrology Study, please contact Anya Starovoytov at (707) 569-1448 or at astarovoytov@sonomarc.org. To learn more about Sonoma RCD and its programs, visit www.sonomarc.org.

Join Us in 2016!

For our **quarterly meetings** on January 27; April 27; July 20 & October 26 at the Sonoma Ecology Center, Sonoma Developmental Center campus.
(Call 996-9967 for directions)

Lend a Helping Hand

For our **website**, www.sonomamountain.org, send us:

- Your Sonoma Mountain photos
- "Why I Love the Mountain" stories about its creatures or anything you find interesting!

For our **Facebook** page:

- Visit us at www.facebook.com/sonomamountain
- Call us at 939-7961 if you'd like to help post photos & comments

Donate

at www.sonomamountain.org or 5850 Grove St., Sonoma, CA 95476



Sonoma Mountain Preservation's Current Board
from left: Arthur Dawson, vice-president; Pat Eliot, Secretary;
Jack Nisson, treasurer; Meg Beeler, president.

Sister Organization: Valley of the Moon Alliance

Kathy Pons

Valley of the Moon Alliance is a grass-roots organization focused on the northern end of Sonoma Valley. Its founding in 2002 was prompted by proposals for two luxury resorts along Highway 12. While one of these projects was abandoned, a lawsuit brought against the Environmental Impact Report for the other, Graywood Resort, failed. Residents are concerned about this project's impact. The only access, two-lane Highway 12, is already subject to heavy auto use. Yet it has already been widened to accommodate additional resort traffic. The resort's guests and hundreds of employees will create excessive impacts on traffic, water, sewage and emergency needs.

The unrestrained development of wineries and tasting rooms is also a problem. There are dozens of these facilities along Highway 12, most of which host weddings, parties and even large concerts. All have significant impacts on the traffic and water supply. A VOTMA-sponsored study showed a growth potential that outpaces anything Napa or Marin have experienced. While VOTMA has never opposed reasonable growth, its members, who are mostly local citizens, want sustainable development that allows everyone to enjoy the quality of life that makes the region such a pleasure to live in.

We have taken up many issues, including: the number of events; groundwater quality and supply, high-impact development, and county General Plan policies

affecting the viability of our communities. Vacation rentals being used as party houses are also causing problems, yet there are no current rules governing their use. VOTMA is addressing this matter as well.

VOTMA has sponsored public meetings, distributed information, and retained legal counsel and consultants to ensure that the specific and cumulative impacts of proposed projects are fully appreciated by the community. The Alliance reaches out to individuals and groups throughout Sonoma County to establish policies and generate political consensus concerning the development of rural areas. While commercial and agricultural interests are well represented at policy-making levels, citizens with a long-term stake in the region are not.


High-impact projects are attractive to political leaders looking to fund mandated projects, like affordable housing. But locating luxury hotels and permitting non-agricultural events in rural areas is poor planning. The Valley of the Moon Alliance has tracked the progress of the county's General Plan update to ensure that policies are considered which bring long-term planning perspectives to the table.

Looking beyond the immediate future, the Valley of the Moon Alliance has undertaken to develop a vision of a creating a sustainable community. As future issues emerge in the ever-changing landscape that is the Valley of the Moon, we will be here to address them.


More info at: www.votma.org

Ten Ways to Save Water in the Garden

Adjusting irrigation times saves more water and money than any other thing you can do.

 **Consider drip irrigation, if you don't have it.** You'll save 20-50% on water use.

 **Run irrigation at night,** especially if you use sprinklers.


 **Adjust irrigation timing seasonally: Example summer drip settings on Sonoma Mountain:**

2 days/week: Hillside plantings—30 minutes.

3 days/week: Roses—60 minutes. Established low-water plants—30 minutes.


7 days/week: Vegetables—30 minutes.


Spring settings are about half the summer times and get turned off when it rains.


 **Check soil moisture if your plants appear stressed.** If the soil is wet, you may be overwatering. If it's dry, check that all emitters are working.


 **Mulch both plants and drip lines** (retains water & protects tubing)

 **Check for leaks**

 **Don't overrun the system.** Ponding or run-off means there is too much watering.

 **Keep spare parts.** Drip systems are easiest to repair. Most repairs can be done with new tubing and fittings.

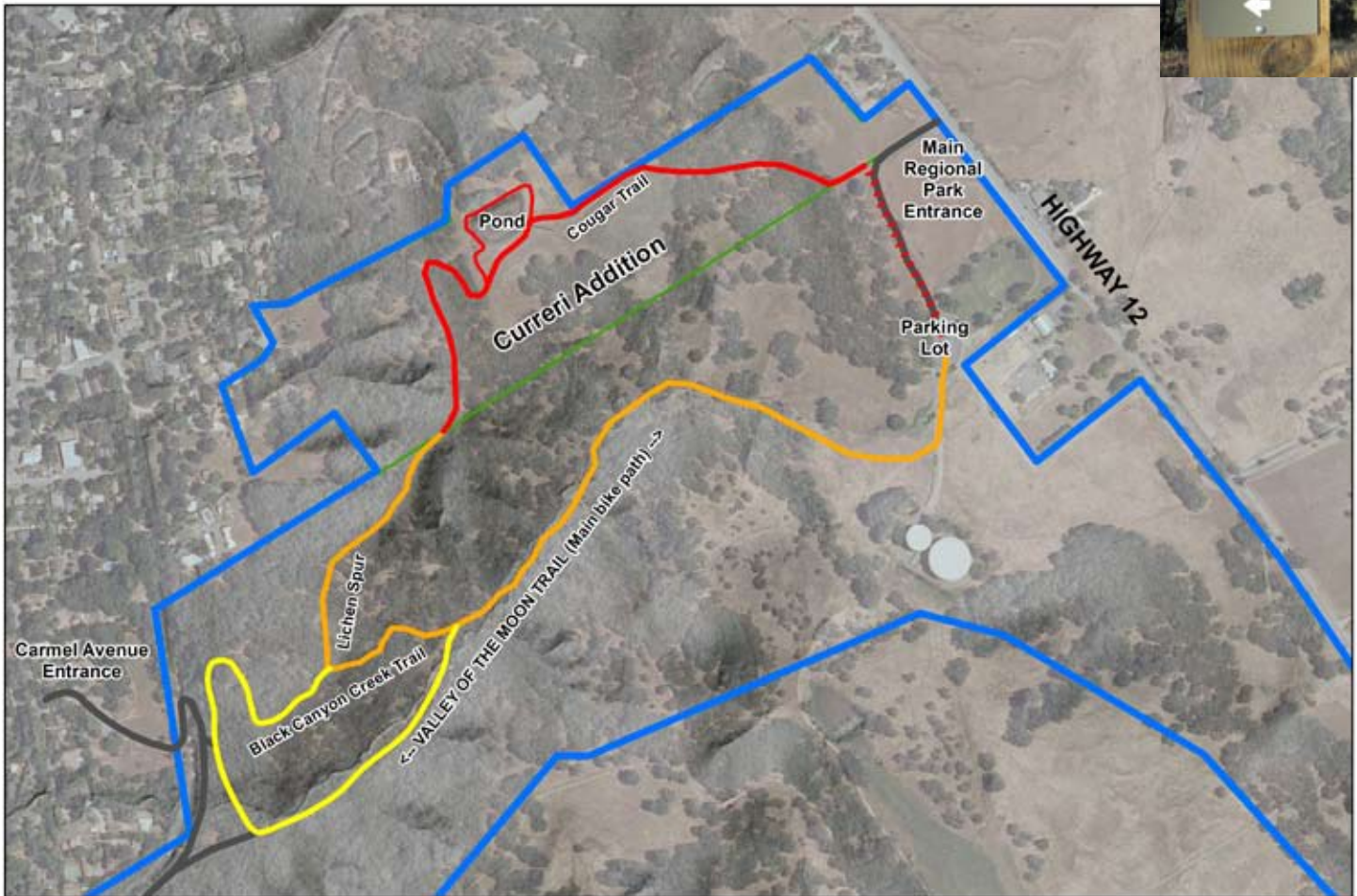
 **Plant low water-use & native plants,** and ornamental stones.

 **Install a rain switch,** which turns off automatic irrigation valves when it rains.

More info on saving water inside and out can be found at:

www.savingwaterpartnership.org/calculator

New Trail in Glen Ellen! Curreri Addition, Sonoma Valley Regional Park



- REGIONAL PARK BOUNDARY
- Former Curreri Property Boundary
- Entrance Roads & Trails

Curreri Loop Trail

- Road from Parking lot to trailhead (0.15 mile)
- New Cougar Trail (0.5 miles)
- Short Loop Return (1.45 round trip)
- Longer Loop Return (1.85 miles round trip)

A year ago, in the fall of 2014, the Sonoma Land Trust acquired 29 acres adjacent to the Sonoma Valley Regional Park in Glen Ellen and immediately transferred the land to the Regional Park. The Moore Foundation and the Sonoma County Agricultural & Open Space District also provided funding for the property, which had been owned by the Curreri family since the 1940s.

"The importance of this acquisition belies its smaller acreage," said John McCaull, Sonoma Land Trust project manager. "Like a puzzle, sometimes it is the smaller pieces

that make everything come together." The Curreri addition not only adds to the Regional Park, it also protects a crucial piece of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, which runs from Sonoma Mountain to the Mayacamas (see page 3).

The newly accessible trail at Curreri offers outstanding views of Sonoma Mountain, passes by a spring-fed pond, and can be walked as part of a loop connecting with the main bike trail which runs from Arnold Drive to the main parking area off Highway 12.

The trailhead is along the Park's entrance road from Highway



12. It can also be accessed from the Park's back entrance on Carmel Avenue, off Arnold Drive in downtown Glen Ellen.

More information, including a map of the whole park, can be found at: <http://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/>



Sonoma Mountain Preservation

5850 Grove Street Sonoma CA 95476
Web site : sonomamountain.org

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
O'DELL

Thanks to Our Recent Donors

Albert & Ruth Fisk
Alec Peters
Allen & Donna Jones
Anne Teller
Arthur & Jill Dawson
Barbara Blake
Bonnie Kneibler
Carol Williams
Dave Martinelli
Doug Hanford
Duane V. Herberg
Ellen McNight
Elliott Raleigh
Evelyn Hunt
Grace Pratt
Harry D. Koch
Hope & Jack Nisson
James Fontanilla & Brett Cooper
Joan Geary
Joe Leiber
John & Stephanie Barinaga
John Branscome
John Sheehy
Judy Scotchmoor

Katherine Culligan
Kathleen Mugele
Kevin & Donna Wilson
Leslie Whiting
Linda Felt
Lucy Kortum
Mariann Weber
Marilyn Goode
Marina Balchunas
Marlene Jordan
Marthe Norwick
Mary Ferrario
Meg Beeler & Tom von Tersch
Michael & Helen Bates
Michael Weihman
Mickey Cooke & Erik Holbek
Nancy Branstetter
Nancy Dakin
Nancy Sheppard
& Peter Poullada
Nicholas Freedman
Nina Holland
Pat & Ted Eliot
Paul & Sheila Leach

Richard Grahman
Roger Leventhal
Roland A. Gangloff
Ron & Sandy Dodge
Rosemary McCreary
Scott D. Tweten
Stephanie Storms
Susan Gorin
Tamara Tovey
Terry & Chic Gast
Terry & Karen Larson
Valerie Arelt
Vivion Rodriguez
Wells Whitney
William Bucklin

Photo Credits:

Page 1: newstracts.org/sonomamt.ranch.html
Page 2: Sonoma Land Trust (Bill Kortum)
Page 3: Sonoma Land Trust (all)
Page 4: Oakland Museum (wall hanging)
www.PositivelyPetaluma.com (temple)
Wikimedia (Jakusho Kwong)