



# The First Police Woman: A History of The Salinas Police Department

*Lisa Eisemann*

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Dating back to the days of the Wild West, Salinas has had a violent history. From the late 1890s, when the first night watchmen patrolled the streets on foot and without training or weapons, to the state-of-the-art department of 2005, the exceptional men and women who framed the early department are the subjects of many of the legends told in this history. Mae Eisemann was the first policewoman in Salinas and the first female to have a foot patrol in California. As such, she forged the way for other females in law enforcement. The rise of a detective division, the many personalities of the different chiefs, politics and finance are all part of the history of the Salinas Police Department. Most of these stories have never been told outside the department and with their telling comes a responsibility to the memory of fallen officers, an enlightenment for those who serve today, and an opportunity for healing for many families.

Filled with both comedic and tragic episodes, the book details the history not only of the department, but of her officers and non-sworn personnel through the years. Recounting the many heroic acts of officers, it also tells of personal tragedy and gives a voice to those who are unable to tell their stories themselves.

As the granddaughter of the title character in this book, Lisa Eisemann had heard stories about her grandmother for many years. Although Mae Eisemann died less than one year before her birth, Lisa Eisemann kept yellowed newspaper clippings about cases her grandmother worked in the 1940s. From a young age, Eisemann knew she wanted to follow in her grandmother's footsteps and received a B.A. degree in Criminology and Sociology before attending graduate school, where she studied Forensic Science.

Licensed as a private investigator in 1995, Eisemann became interested in researching the history of the police department, particularly as it related to her grandmother's position as the first female police officer. Encouraged by the department's interest in a historical yearbook, she was able to research and write a book not only about Mae Eisemann, but one which included all the characters of the police department from the time it was authorized in 1903.

Lisa Eisemann is married to now retired homicide detective Joe Gunter, whom she met while investigating a murder for the defense. Both are experts in crime scene processing and gangs. The two continue to live in Salinas with their daughter, Terrin, who plans to become a police officer and hopes to work as a canine unit someday. Eisemann also owns the Salinas School of Dance, where she teaches ballet, tap, jazz and Irish dancing to hundreds of students each week. As the director of the Spirit of Salinas Irish Dancers, she and her team have traveled to Ireland to compete in a world level competition.



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