

# Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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Preserving Cotati's Past  
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Prue Draper & Connie Martin, Editors

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## FAREWELL TERRY..... WELCOME MARIE!

This year we bade farewell to Terry Dutra, who had been on our board of directors since the early days of the incorporation of the Cotati Historical Society, as our treasurer, president, and chair of our very successful barbecues. Thanks for everything.

And we welcome our new president, Marie McNaughton, local resident, professor, author and mother, who has served as our secretary and is now president. We thank her also, for her past duties and for agreeing to lead us.

## SOCIETY OFFICERS

**President:** Marie McNaughton  
795-1982

**V.Pres.:** Connie Martin 795-2772

**Treasurer:** Yvonne VanDyke

**Historian:** Prue Draper

**Art Director:** Judy Pagnusat

**Archive Admin:** Judy Gustafson

**Director:** Gary Santero

**Essay Contest:** Velma DiMeola

**Volunteer Coordinator:**

Barbara Jean Veronda 795-4545

## Rare Albino Redwood Is Thriving in Cotati

The tree doesn't look very impressive. In fact, at some times of year it looks rather sickly. But that's the way it's supposed to look!

It is a redwood tree, on the north side of East Cotati Avenue right next to the railroad tracks. And it's an albino redwood, which turns out to be a very rare tree – just over 100 of them have been recorded in the whole world - the one here in Cotati is the tallest of its kind on record!!

The Cotati albino redwood was brought to our attention by John Schubert, a Russian River area historian who is on the lookout for albino redwoods in the forests around his area. He was surprised that we were unaware of the mysterious tree in our city, and sent us some assorted information, including a letter from Robert Janover, the photographer who produces Sonoma County calendars every year.

Making the Cotati albino redwood especially unusual is the fact that it is a variegated albino redwood, which means that it grows both yellowish and white foliage. It also grows as a single tree, not a small shoot from the base of a larger redwood, as do most of the albinos.

Mr. Janover, fascinated with albino redwoods, had corresponded with Dale Holderman, author of a book "Albino Redwoods – Ghosts of the Forest." He had also conferred with Dave Kutty, a volunteer at Henry Cowell Redwood State Park near Santa Cruz, who was organizing a conference of university experts involved in mapping the entire redwood genome and trying to unravel the mystery of albino redwoods, and Tom Stapleton, a certified arborist who had been working for several years on locating variegated albino redwoods.

*Continued on page 2*



## ANNUAL CHICKEN BARBECUE SET FOR APRIL 13

Following an old Cotati tradition, we will again serve a barbecued chicken dinner on Sunday April 13 from 12 noon to 4 p.m. The menu will feature Ed Gilardi's famous barbecued chicken with beans, coleslaw, roll and beverages. Home baked desserts, beer and wine will also be sold.



*Happy diners at our 2013 barbecue.*

It's our major fundraiser for the year, as well as being our major reunion time. Tickets are on sale at the Chamber of Commerce Office, Cotati Exchange Bank, from members of the Cotati Historical Society or by calling 795-5510. Prices have not gone up - tickets are still only \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door.

We'll hope to see many old friends there. If you would like to donate items for the bake sale, please call Judy Gustafson at 665-5993. Donations for the silent auction are always needed too. Connie Martin, 795-2772, is the person to call to arrange that.

It turned out that Mr. Holterman was told in July, 2012, that the local tree was on the SMART train property and was slated to be removed. He immediately contacted Susan Harvey, who was then Mayor of Cotati, and who jumped to the defense of the rare tree by writing to Deb Fudge of the SMART Train Board of Directors.



*Arborist show unique white and yellow foliage on chimeric albino redwood.*

Ms Fudge got busy checking and wrote back immediately that the tree was not going to be cut down. She said it would be lightly trimmed, and a protective fence would be put up during railroad track construction to keep it safe.

However, since then Carolyn Glendening, the person in charge of Community Education and Outreach for SMART, has investigated and learned that the tree is destined to be cut down because it is too close to a second track that is to be constructed later this year. It is not a true albino, she reports, but a chimeric tree, and was probably planted as an ornamental.

She reports that the tree has been documented by SMART's permitting team; that more than 20

Coast Redwoods will be planted to mitigate removal of the local tree, and that an arborist will take approximately 1000 cuttings from it to propagate saplings, which will be raised in a private nursery and offered for sale.

Arborist Tom Stapleton says this is absolutely unacceptable. He has ascertained that the Cotati tree is 52.5 feet tall, is one of only 10 chimeric albino redwoods known to exist in the world, and is the largest. He does not believe that cuttings would carry the same genes as the original tree. He feels that, if the tree must be removed, it should be transplanted.

On the local scene, the person who knows the albino redwood best is Louise Santero, who has lived on East Cotati Avenue across the street from the rare tree since 1948.. She remembers that it was planted about 60 years ago by Peter Tapian, who lived on a small ranch on the property. Mrs. Santero and Mr. Tapian's daughter, Donna Ramirez, don't know where Mr. Tapian got the tree or why he planted it there.

Mrs. Santero says she has always admired the tree, but it has never looked quite as pretty as it does this year – its white needles seem to be glowing.



*Louise Santero and Certified Arborist Tom Stapleton confer about rare redwood.*

### ***THANK YOU and welcome to our most recent new and renewing members***

Marion Ackerman, Mark Ackerman, Marie Aggio, John Allred, May Andreoli, Marie Baranzini, Mary Bartlett, George & Karen Baur, Creighton Bell, Harold & Julie Berkemeier, Frank & Kathryn Bianchi, Jenny Blaker, Frank & Marlene Blankenship, Lillian Blodgett, Dick & Jo-Ann Braden, George Bunting, Paul & Kerry Burke, Diane Canadas, Ken & Sherri Carli, Fred & Ann Carrasca, Church of the Oaks, Chris Davis, Velma DiMeola, Julie Dinkins, Diane Dorfman, Vickie Dougan, Bob Draper, Prue Draper, Robin Draper, Terry & Will Dutra, Cathryn Fairlee, Jennie Falletti, Jane Ferina, Richard & Victoria Fish, Barbara Gegan, Ed & Pat Gilardi, Janet Gingher, Kevin Gingher, Laura Gray, Harold Griffith, Fred Groverman, Greg & Dana Gustafson, Judy Gustafson, Martha Gustafson, F. Paul & Carolyn Hacker, Bill & Connie Hammerman, Dave & Karen Heisel, Irene Hilsendager, Dennis & Jennifer Hunt, Nancy Hunt, Catharine & Andrew Hutchins, Art & Vicky Ibleto, Mark Ibleto, Alice Inouye, Bob Jensen, Nancy & Larry Justis, Pat Kavanaugh, Val Kingsbury, Bill & Lucy Kortum, Janet & Michael Kurvers, Lorraine Leivas, Mary Lou Lentz, Ben & Esther Loveridge, Syd Lundgren, Steve Maass, Jack & Muriel Mahall, Bruce & Connie Martin, Gary, Kim & Jake Martin, Bruce Martin, Jr., Heather Rose & Ali Martin, Kiyoko Kay Maruyama, Patrick McCarty, Ernest McCulloh, Terry & Barbara McGee, Marie McNaughton, Eleanor Miller, Jerry Miller, Gregg Neilson, Bob & Mabel Nelson, Millie Nibe, Kathy Norwood, Janet Orchard, Tom Origer, Deloris Osborn, Ellen Ostrand, Dolores Owen, John & Anne Page, Jerry & Judy Pagnusat, Bruce Pearson, Gary & Louise Petersen, Ron & Connie Petty, Stan Poncia, Bob & Debbie Renati, Marie Rice, Rick Sager, John & Vickie Scharer, Carl & Mary Schollmann, Tom Scott, Joan Simon, Dan & Carolyn Torliatt, Lee & Majorie Torliatt, Pamela Torliatt, Yvonne Van Dyke, Barbara Jean Veronda, Sandra Walton, Eleanor Wass, Dorothy Watt, Pamela Wilford, Carol Williams, Simone Wilson, Jack Withington, Robin Wood, Ranjini Woodhouse.

### ***Much appreciated DONATIONS***

Marie Aggio, John Allred, Dick & Jo-Ann Braden, Fred & Ann Carrasca, Vickie Dougan, Jennie Falletti, Barbara Gegan, Ed & Pat Gilardi, Janet Gingher, Dave & Karen Heisel, Nancy Hunt, Larry & Nancy Justis, Pat Kavanaugh, Bruce & Connie Martin, Bruce Martin, Jr. & Heather Rose, Barbara & Terry McGee, Bob & Mabel Nelson, Kathy Norwood, Janet Orchard, Deloris Osborn, John & Anne Page, Bruce Pearson, Gary & Louise Petersen, Stan Poncia, Carl & Mary Schollmann, Barbara Jean Veronda, Carol Williams, Ranjini Woodhouse.

# Cotati Had Constable 100+ Years Ago

There was a time, 'way back in the early 1900's, when Cotati had its own town constable or Justice of the Peace. His name was Charles W. Nelson, and he lived here until 1938. He and his wife, Mary Therese (Curran) Nelson, lived on William Street, in a house that had been the home of Fred Keppel, Cotati ranch Manager, and is now a Montessori School.

Mary Therese was famed for her beautiful singing voice and piano playing, and she was also well-known for her generosity in giving away food to the many "down on their luck" men who came to her back porch.



*Constable Charles W. Nelson with shovel, on front porch of his home on William Street. His wife and Fr. Joe Cunya are behind him, his daughter Josephine and neighbor are in foreground.*



*Charles Nelson, left, led a busy life as well as being the town constable.*

She was also a favorite parishioner of Fr. Joseph Cunya, the resident priest at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, just around the corner from their home. Fr Joe was the godfather of their daughter, Josephine, born in 1914 and was a frequent dinner guest at the Nelson home The Nelsons also had a son, Edward, born in 1917.

Little Josephine became a close friend of a family friend who had a chicken ranch down the street. He let her follow him around the property as he did his chores, and taught her to drive when she was about 10 years old.

Josephine's daughter, Terry Harris of Brentwood, recalls the story of how her grandfather lost his arm. He and his brother Bernard, whose mother had been committed to Napa State Hospital, ran away from home to escape cruelty of a woman who came to live with their father. They headed for the railroad, and in climbing aboard, Charles fell on the tracks and was severely injured, requiring amputation of his right arm. Losing his arm did not seem to slow Mr. Nelson down at all, although he usually seemed to pose for photos with his right arm out of sight. He led an active life and as constable, was known to hold court in his living room.



*Young Josephine Nelson poses in front of a truck filled with crates of chickens – a familiar sight in old Cotati taken about 1932.*

## FIELD TRIP HELPED STUDENTS LEARN COTATI HISTORY

One of our annual projects to help local children understand the history of their community is a field trip and essay contest for fourth graders from Thomas Page Academy. More than 60 children, teachers and parents took part in the field trip on Feb. 5, with Velma DeMeola as chairman and Marie McNaughton, CHS president, welcoming them.

The visitors were divided into groups, and toured the City of Cotati offices and Police Department as well as the Cotati Historical Museum. Through a Power-Point presentation prepared by Cathryn Fairlee and showed by Mrs. McNaughton, students learned about the early history of Cotati. Judy Pagnusat introduced students to the museum.

Deadline for submittal of the essays was Feb. 28 and the judges are currently working on selecting the winner. He or she will be announced the week of March 24 and will receive a \$50 check at our annual barbecue on April 13. A matching prize will be given to his/her teacher for use in their classroom.



*Marie McNaughton, president of the Cotati Historical Society, welcomed the fourth graders, teachers and parents on their field trip.*



*The Police Department was included in the field trip. Judy Gustafson escorted this group and chief Michael Paris, in rear, welcomed them.*



*Assistant City Manager Micah Hinkle, left, and City Engineer Damien Obid, right, explained the planning process in Cotati's Planning Department.*

*Photos by Jerry Pagnusat*

# Time for 2014 dues if you have not paid

We collect dues every January and you too, can help preserve Cotati's history. **Dues are still only \$10 per person per year.** Please complete this form and send with your check to:

**Cotati Historical Society  
P.O. Box 7013  
Cotati, CA 94931**

*Yes I want to renew my membership for 2014*

Name/s \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

*We can save postage by sending quarterly newsletters on-line.*

### Cotati Museum Hours:

Saturday 1 - 4 P.M.  
2nd Tuesday of each  
month 5 - 7 P.M.  
Special times by appointment  
Phone 707-794-0305

Learn more about Cotati history and  
the Cotati Museum at our [website](#):

**Cotati Historical Society  
P.O. Box 7013  
Cotati, CA 94931**

## 6th Annual Old Fashioned **CHICKEN BARBECUE**

**Sunday, April 13, 2014  
12-4 PM**

**(Meals served until 3 pm)**

**Ray Miller Community  
Center**

**216 East School St., Cotati**

**\$10 in advance    \$12 at door**

Live Music

Raffle

Silent  
Auction

Dessert &  
Bake Sale

Beer &  
Wine for  
sale

Car Show

Tickets available at the Chamber of Commerce  
Office & Exchange Bank - Cotati

All proceeds benefit the Cotati Historical Society & Museum