

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

A non-profit 501 (c) (3) California corporation Tax ID #30-0421172

Preserving Cotati's Past

P.O. Box 7013 Cotati, CA 94931

E-mail chsinfo@sonic.net

June 2014

Prue Draper & Connie Martin, Editors

Vol. 7 No. 2

INDEX

In this issue, you will find:

SMART Train Station	Page 1
Members & Donors	Page 1
Albino Redwood Tree	Page 2
Unusual Artifacts	Page 2
Recap 2014 BBQ	Page 3
Essay Contest Winner	Page 3

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

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

Thank you and welcome to our most recent NEW and RENEWING MEMBERS:

Martha Brankline, Ralph Cota, Bob
& Wendy Gilman, Sage Howell,
Jeff & Janet Libarle, Al Lockwood,
Sylvia Palmer, Cathalee Thomas,
Sue Wets, Suzanne Whipple

Much appreciated recent DONATIONS:

Bob & Wendy Gilman, Jeff & Janet
Libarle, Sue Wets, Suzanne Whipple

New Cotati Depot is History Reminder

Cotati has a handsome new railroad station being constructed for the coming SMART train service, as well as bus, pedestrian, bicycle and commuter travel. It brings up memories of an account in the Cotati Historical Society's archives about Cotati's first station. The author was a man named **J.M. Breen**, who moved to Cotati in 1905.



New depot to serve the SMART trains as well as buses and commuters is under construction of East Cotati Avenue, designed to resemble the historic Cotati Depot of 1907.

He had lived in San Francisco for 22 years, and said he longed for "pastoral pursuits", and came to Cotati and bought a five-acre property on a "sunny slope" containing a two-room shack, a horse, a cat and 525 chickens. Soon after discovering that his shack leaked tremendously, **Mr. Breen** built what he described as a "neat, substantial cottage". He seems to have been undaunted by the coincidence that the day he moved in was the day of the San Francisco earthquake in 1906.

About a week after coming to Cotati, **Mr. Breen** needed to go to San Francisco, and headed down what is now East Cotati Avenue for the train. Where he expected to find a railroad depot, he found "a low, rough shed with open front, while a board supported by cleats" served as a seat.

By 1907, **Mr. Breen** and other men of Cotati decided they needed to take action for their town, and formed a club called the Cotati Progressive League. **Joseph Reiter** was the president and **J.M. Breen** was secretary. Its 14 members got busy, approached local farmers and the Page family's Cotati Company and got help in improving the roads. Their next project was to get a railroad depot, because chicken farms were rapidly appearing in the area, and railroad transport was the only way to get the eggs to market.

Mr. Breen's column says, "It was no surprise to see 75 or 100 cases of eggs lying beside the track, waiting for the freight train to come along."



Historical Cotati Depot about 1911. Note cart near the entrance and stacks of egg cartons on the platform. (Photo courtesy of Jim Brower)

The League instructed secretary **Breen** to contact Northwestern Pacific Railroad Co., and after having 250 impressive letterheads printed, **Mr. Breen** "bolted the door, pulled down the shades, and with pad and pencil" began composing a letter that he hoped would convince the NWP powers to help Cotati.

When he read his letter to the Progressive League members, he recalls

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1 **Cotati Train Station**

“one of the members of our little band, **Mr. A. Anderson**, remarked: ‘If that letter does not move them we may as well quit.’ “

Apparently it did move them quite effectively, because within a few months, work began, and on Oct. 19, 1907 **Mr. Breen** reported, the Cotati railroad depot was thrown open "a large, spacious and substantial building, with **G.A. Lau** in charge as station agent.” The community rejoiced.

That "large, spacious and substantial building" served the Cotati area until the early 1960's, when the **Santero** family, nearby neighbors, remember that it was demolished.

Commendations are due to the City of Cotati for choosing similar historical architecture for the new depot, even more substantial than the original.



Eggs from Cotati's small ranches were a main cargo for the trains that ran through on East Cotati Avenue in the early days. This view, looking south from East Cotati Ave., shows a cart full of eggs in wooden cases being loaded while horses wait patiently. (Photo courtesy of John R. Page)

No News on Fate of Albino Redwood

The albino redwood tree on E. Cotati Avenue that first got public attention in our last newsletter, is still a subject of great interest. “How’s that tree?” is the query we hear frequently.



News of the rare albino redwood inspired many local artists to create signs and attach them to Cotati city signs as well as to the tree. Creator of this handmade artwork was unidentified - but enthusiastic.

The reason is that it is an extremely rare tree known as a chimeric tree because it has two different sets of DNA resulting in both green and white needles, and is the largest and tallest of its kind in the world.

A second Sonoma-Marín Area Rapid Transit (SMART) train track is planned and will require that the tree be removed. The SMART planners proposed to cut it down; Arborist **Tom Stapleton**, insists the tree must be saved. The City of Cotati has agreed to accept and care for the tree, but the digging and moving must be done by SMART. According to **Matt Stevens**, community relations officer for SMART, they are still studying their actions.

In the meantime, people in many parts of the country became interested in the fate of the rare specimen, signed online petitions, made signs, “friended” the tree on Facebook, and came to Cotati to view it.



Jake Page of Hines Signs shows the sign he produced as a donation to the tree’s fight for survival.

Unusual Craft by Long-Ago Barber



This small whiskey flask is inscribed "Compliments of Cotati Hotel, John Lopus, Prop."

This remarkable piece of handcraft was recently loaned to the Cotati Museum by **John Gray** of Rohnert Park. It was made by **Mr. Gray's** uncle, **John Chaney** who was a barber in Cotati in the early 1900’s, probably about 1920. His barbershop was next door to the Cotati Hotel, which stood near the corner of what is now Old Redwood Highway and LaPlaza, now the site of Spancky’s.

The glass whiskey flask is coated with a gray plaster-like material that is ridged to resemble tree bark, including a few tree knots. It also has a small window with a plaque inscribed “Compliments of Cotati Hotel, **John Lopus**, Prop.”

Mr. Gray also loaned us a curio box decorated in the same bark-like finish with tree knots and a small limb embedded. It was apparently made for a young girl, whose photo is displayed inside the cover.

THIS YEAR'S BBQ TOPPED ALL RECORDS

Our sixth annual chicken barbecue, April 13 in the Cotati Room, turned out to be the most successful ever! We are grateful to the many volunteers who helped us, and the many neighbors and friends who attended and shopped at our silent auction.

Six years ago, when we were pondering a fund-raiser for our new Cotati Historical Society, we decided that reviving the annual Old-Fashioned Cotati Barbecues that started in 1940 would be appropriate and fun. We realized it would be a lot of work for our small group – and it was.



Reunions of long-time friends and neighbors made our barbecue extra enjoyable for, from left, Joan Tunzi, Stan Poncia, Sharon Poncia and Sandy & Bill Tomrose.

But it was a financial success, as well as an opportunity for old friends and neighbors to get together, and it was a great success at that also. It has grown every year since then, partly because of the marvelously delicious barbecued chicken produced by **Ed Gilardi** and his team of chefs; partly because the home-baked goodies at our bake sale are favorites, partly because the silent auction has such remarkable bargains, partly because people enjoy seeing the historic cars on display and listening to music as they chat and sip a beverage.

Some also came to help honor the winner of our fourth grade essay contest on Cotati history. **Marbella Arellano**, a fourth-grader at Thomas Page Academy, won the \$50 prize, and her teacher, **Mira Patel**, also received a \$50 check for classroom supplies. Honorable mention honors went to **Alice J. Brookston** and **Gabriella Bristol Phillips**. Congratulations to all of them.

We are grateful to everyone who helped make the event such a success, financially as well as gastronomically and socially. The Cotati Historical Society treasury received a boost that will help us keep our museum open and other activities proceeding for another year.



Chef and chair of the barbecue was Ed Gilardi, left. His wife Pat, and CHS art director Judy Pagnusat, right, helped greet diners.



Tillie Millerick was one of the long-time Cotati folk who came to visit, eat and enjoy the music outdoors. Her sons Don and Jeff were in her party.



Velma DiMeola, essay contest chair, took a break and enjoyed her meal.



Marie McNaughton, left, Cotati Historical Society president, presents a certificate and check to Marbella Arellano, Historical Essay Contest winner. Her fourth grade teacher, Mira Patel, right, also received a check for her class.



Music by, from left, Pat McCarty, Candace English and Steve Della-Maggiara, kept toes tapping and dancers twirling during the sunny afternoon



Overflow crowd meant some people had to wait in line for their dinners. Among them were Anthony Tusler and Lyndi Brown of Penngrave.

Photos by Jerry Pagnausat

Thank you to our FOOD & SILENT AUCTION Donors who made the BBQ so wonderful!

24 Hour Fitness Club, A Downtown Auto, Bay Cities Produce, Cathryn Fairlee, Chris Davis, Clover Stornetta, Cotati Jewelers, Country Fresh Cafe, Creighton Bell, Cruisin' The Boulevard, Double Decker Lanes, Driven Raceway, Eleanor Miller, Ellyn Moscovitz, Foxtail Golf Club, Freeman Collision Center, Friar Tucks, Gary Santero, Golf Mart, Green Mary's, In & Out Burgers, Jav Amore Cafe, Joan Simon, Judy Gustafson, Judy Pagnusat, Kathy Norwood, Knimble Clothing, Lagunitas Brewery, Larsen's Feed Store, Lowe's, Lynn's Thai Restaurant, Mai Vietnamese Cuisine, Marie McNaughton, Marvin's, Mary's Pizza, Massage Envy Spa, Mazetta's BBQ, Mike's at the Crossroads, Molly Wandrey, Northbay Produce, Oilstop, Olive Garden, Oliver's Markets, Pasta King, Peet's Coffee, Petaluma Cinema West, Pond & Garden, Professional Framing Services, Prue Draper, Red Lobster, Redwood Cafe, Scandia, Simone Wilson, Sonoma County Regional Parks, Sonoma County Harley Davidson, Sonoma Compost, Sonoma County Fair & Bev Palm, Sonoma Raceway, Spancky's, Terrilinda Dairy, The Tradewinds, United Markets, Washoe Creek Golf Course, Washoe House & Yongewa Kitchen Restaurant.

You can still become a member for 2014

We collect dues every January but we are still accepting memberships for 2014. 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 be a member.

Name/s _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

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

Learn more about Cotati history and
the Cotati Museum at our [website:](http://www.cotatihistoricalsociety.org)
www.cotatihistoricalsociety.org

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



Vintage autos were on display in the courtyard during the barbecue, thanks to organizer Rhonda Nole.



Cheerful crowd at our annual Chicken Barbecue lined up for their meal served by Ed Gilardi and a busy team of Historical Society volunteers. The bake sale headed by Judy Gustafson and Silent Auction arranged by Connie Martin also helped make the day a satisfying and financial success.