

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

September 2014

Prue Draper & Connie Martin, Editors

Vol. 7 No. 3

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SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: Marie McNaughton
529-0734
V.Pres.: Connie Martin 795-2772
Secretary: Velma DiMeola
Treasurer: Yvonne VanDyke
Historian: Prue Draper
Art Director: Judy Pagnusat
Archive Admin: Judy Gustafson
Director: Gary Santero
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

Much appreciated recent DONATIONS:

J. P. Geis and
Gary & Reta Santero

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

Erin & Lars Andersen, Michael
Benzon, J. P. Geis, Adrienne
Lauby, Gary & Robin Malone,
Scott Minnis, Dr. Barry & Lois
Santero, Chris Santero, Gary &
Reta Santero, Ken Santero, and
Louise Santero

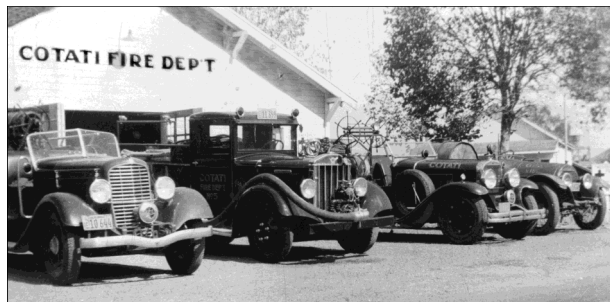
Cotati Volunteer Fire Department Protected Early Community



Cotati Volunteers - By 1950, when this photo was taken, the Cotati Volunteer Fire Department had a large team of firemen who raced to the fire station in the Plaza when the fire siren blew. Left to right, Chief Burt Chadwick, Nick Wodrich, Ralph McGinnis, Walt Jagla, Joe Biscarret, Rolard (Tubby) Braden, Barney Santero, Alvin Olsen, Steve Castelli, George Frengle, Clarence Christiansen, Henry Eickmeyer, Clyde Skill- ing, Les Offutt, Hank Aguirre and Adolph (Curley) Carli.

Cotati was a friendly farming community in the 1920's, with businesses that supported its needs – general stores selling groceries, hardware, medicines and clothes, garages, a blacksmith, a barber, a doctor – and the people more or less took care of themselves and their neighbors.

They even managed their own fire protection and every ranch had a barrel of water and old feed sacks ready to wet and knock down flames. But as the town grew and there were more buildings, there were fire hazards that defied wet feed sacks. When a building caught fire, the Santa Rosa and Petaluma fire departments would send water pumpers and teams to help.



Fire Fleet - In 1941, the Fire Department was proud to display their collection of fire-fighting vehicles. They were bought with funds raised by the Fire Department Women's Auxiliary at card parties and dances, plus donations from citizens.

A house fire on LaPlaza in 1926 ended that practice when the Santa Rosa truck turned over on the way home. Cotati needed its own fire department, and a group of young men banded together to form the Cotati Volunteer Fire Dept. Their charter, dated April 4, 1927, listed Ed Schindler, chief; Valdemar Olsen, Burt

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Cotati Volunteer Fire Department

Chadwick, Elmer Chadwick, Ed Clement, George Mattson, Dick Greenhalgh, Mike Giblin, Robert Ross and John DeBorba.

Using contributions from citizens, (they asked for a donation of \$2.30 from every property owner), the department bought its first fire truck – a Model T ford equipped with two 25-gallon tanks for soda and acid, and six 10-gallon milk cans for water. Mixing the soda with acid formed a gas that pushed the water out through a hose under pressure.

Several firemen served as chief for a year or two, and in 1933 Burt Chadwick was elected chief, a post he held for 34 years. He was succeeded in 1967 by Chief Ralph McGinnis, who died of a heart attack on the way to a fire. Bob Ripplin, still living in Cotati, became chief in 1972.

Fires were reported by telephone, and there were extensions of the fire phone at the fire station, Chief Chadwick's home, Ferrero's General Store and the Frizelle-Enos feed store. All were within running distance of the fire station and had firemen as employees. The first man at the station turned on the siren to alert the community volunteers. Firemen would race for the firehouse, hoping to get there first and be allowed to drive the fire truck.

They had meetings once a week, spending the evening practicing firefighting and rescue techniques. Because they relied on each other in hazardous situations, firemen were particular about who got accepted as a volunteer, and their method of approving an applicant involved a black and a white marble given to each fireman. If they approved an applicant, they dropped a white marble into a covered box. A black marble meant a "No" vote on that candidate.

In the early years, just about every house and farm had a burning barrel in the back yard for garbage. When the burning barrels got too full of ashes, they were taken to the county dump, then at the end of Water Road. In spite of all warnings, there would often be some embers in the bottom. As a result, grass fires were an almost daily occurrence in the summer months and the volunteers and their families knew they could be called away from whatever activities they had planned.

Firemen's wives formed an auxiliary, and supported the department by operating a "telephone tree" to notify firemen who lived too far away to hear the siren. The wives also operated the department radio after that piece of equipment was acquired, and they made sandwiches to deliver to their men on duty.

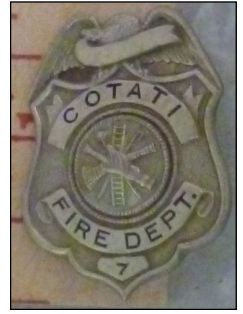
The auxiliary also sponsored card parties and dances to raise funds for the department, which in the early years was not tax-supported but depended on donations. In 1930, the Cotati Fire District became a legal entity and was able to levy property taxes but it still sponsors several fundraising breakfasts every year and welcomes donations.

In 1993, faced with rapid population growth, the Cotati Fire Protection District and Penngrove District, which encompasses the Liberty area, merged to form Rancho Adobe Fire District. The name was chosen to memorialize the historic Rancho Cotate land grant and the Old Adobe fort within the Penngrove community.

Frank Treanor is now the chief of the combined district, and it has 15 full time staff, 15 part-time firefighters and six volunteer firefighters.

In recent years, tight finances and the failure of several parcel tax elections forced the district to alternate days when their fire stations were open. The good news is that the financial picture is improving and the stations are currently open every day. More good news is that plans are being completed for repainting and re-roofing the weathered Cotati Fire Station.

The Cotati Fire Protection District has been an important part of our community for over 90 years. In the early days of our town, the Cotati School District and the Cotati Fire Protection District gave us our only official identity. Both have altered with the changing times, but we treasure them as part of our 51-year old City of Cotati.



This type of badge was used until the department became Rancho Adobe Fire Department in 1993.



Early Fire Truck - Jack Hahn, a volunteer fireman, drives the 1918 Cadillac equipped as a Cotati fire truck. It had tanks for soda and acid, which, when mixed, produced pressure to pump water from the big drum.

Museum Volunteers Attend Training Session on August 16

Marie McNaughton, president of CHS, produced a training meeting which over a dozen museum assistants attended. Viewing a slide show of early Cotati history, produced by Catherine Fairlee and narrated by Marie, they then toured the museum and learned about the many exhibits and resource materials. Barbara Jean Veronda, volunteer coordinator, will be happy to hear from local residents who would like to help staff the museum.

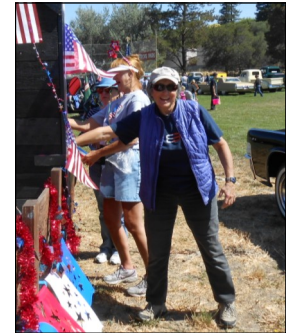
PENNGROVE'S JULY 4TH PARADE & COTATI'S KIDS DAY PARADE



Cousins Joined the Parade - Celebrating Independence Day in the Penngrove parade were, left to right, Kaden Fox, Nora Petersen, Hanna Kistenmacher, Raegan Petersen and Brenden Fox. Bob Herrerias drove his vintage 1947 Dodge truck.



Trophy for Plymouth - Reta Santero, right, displays the first place trophy that she and her husband, Gary, won with their entry of a 1938 Plymouth Deluxe Coupe in the Penngrove Parade. Prue Draper, left, congratulates her. Gary & Reta Santero also represented us with their 1951 Ford 4 Door Deluxe.



Helpers - Simone Wilson, right, Robin Draper and Judy Pagnusat applied the patriotic touches that made our Penngrove entry special.



Photo at left - Volunteers Made It Happen We always enjoy being part of our communities' parades, but it would not be possible without our volunteers. Robin Draper, left, and Sandra Walton lent a hand to help our accordionist mount our float.



Photo at right - A Hero on Kids Day Jim Boggio, a founder of the Cotati Accordion Festival, was the hero we honored in the Cotati Kids Day Parade. Laurie Litton played her accordion as Bob Herrerias again honored us by driving his antique truck.



Loyal volunteer welcomes support - Once again, our hard-working archiving administrator, Judy Gustafson, right, has earned a \$500 donation from State Farm Insurance Co. for the Cotati Museum. Historical Society President Marie McNaughton, left and Treasurer Yvonne VanDyke accept with pleasure. State Farm honors volunteer efforts by its retirees.

Albino Redwood Tree Gains Fame

When we revealed in our March newsletter that we had a mystery tree growing in Cotati, we had no idea how important it would come to be. The tree appealed to news writers all over the U.S. and Cotati's Chimera Albino Redwood became a celebrity. Arborist Tom Stapleton was most adamant that it must not be cut down to make way for SMART railroad tracks. The City of Cotati agreed, and after careful study, the railroad board agreed to transplant the tree across E. Cotati Avenue to a site adjacent to the new Cotati Depot. The work was done by the Environmental Design firm, which will continue to monitor the tree for two years. Louise Santero, a neighbor who saw the tree planted by Peter Tapian some 60 years ago, will watch to be sure the tree is well cared-for.



The Crowd Cheered - As the albino redwood was hoisted from its home to be transplanted across East Cotati Avenue, the large crowd of workers and citizens roared their approval.



Photo at left - Special Care for the Albino Redwood Workers from Environmental Design dug carefully around the albino redwood, encased it in fabric and wires and watered it for days from a big water tank. They are, left to right, Joaquin Paramo, Jose Paramo, Rodolfo Vazquez and Filiberto Reyes.

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 _____

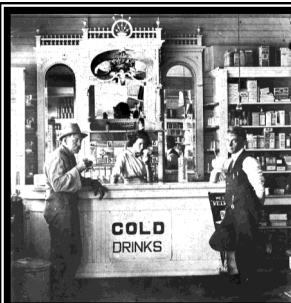
Telephone _____

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:**
www.cotatihistoricalsociety.org

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



Focus on Cotati History

The Cotati Historical Society will host a program about early Cotati with special emphasis on the Page Family and the layout of the town.

Sunday, November 9
1 to 4 p.m.

Cotati Room ~ behind
Cotati City Hall

Public Invited
Free Admission
Refreshments

For further information contact:
CHS President Marie McNaughton 529-0734