

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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Preserving Cotati's Past
P.O. Box 7013 Cotati, CA 94931
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Prue Draper & Connie Martin, Editors

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Cotati Museum Hours:

Saturday 1 - 4 P.M.

2nd Wednesday of each
month 5:30 - 8 P.M.

Special times by appointment

Phone 707-794-0305

SOCIETY OFFICERS

President	V. President
Prue Draper 795-5510	Connie Martin 795-2772
Treasurer	Secretary
Terry Dutra	Suzanne Whipple
Outreach	Art Director
Lisa Moore	Judy Pagnusat
Archiving Administrator	
Judy Gustafson	

PROGRAM ON ANCIENT COTATI

"Thinking Like An Oak", a presentation by historical ecologist Arthur Dawson, drew a capacity crowd to the Cotati Room on March 28. The Cotati Creek Critters and Cotati Historical Society joined forces to sponsor the program, a "first" for us, but one we'd be happy to plan again. Dawson gave us a graphic picture of the early landscape of our area, what lived and grew here, and how modern life has changed the scenery.

Museum Welcomes Jansen Collection

Years ago, about 1980, an experienced historian, Virginia Jansen, moved to our area from the town of Coarsegold, and was intrigued by the colorful history of our area. She had been co-author of a book on the history of eastern Madera County called "As We Were Told", and decided to write a similar book about Cotati-Pennngrove-Rohnert Park history. She began interviewing old-time residents, filming their homes and taping their recollections.



Virginia Jansen, historian

Sadly, she died in an auto accident in 2004 without achieving her goal, and her family, knowing her collection was valuable, but too grief-stricken to cope, put it in storage.

It is the good fortune of the Cotati Museum that Virginia Jansen's children have entrusted her collection to us. We are honored to have this treasure, and grateful to the family for preserving it all these years.

However, it is a daunting responsibility! There are 13 file boxes full of papers, books, maps, tapes and videotapes! We're sure they contain many nuggets of wisdom and memories from local residents who are no longer with us. Examining and cataloging them is a big job, and we are happy to report that a new and very well-qualified archivist, Debbie Dvornik, has volunteered to help us.

We are sincerely thankful to be entrusted with such a precious gift, and will do our best to use it as Virginia Jansen might have wished.



Debbie Dvornik, archivist

Katlin Slatt Wins Our First Historical Essay Contest



Essay Contest Winner Katlin Slatt receives certificate and check from Prue Draper.

This year was the first for what we plan as an annual essay contest about Cotati's history. Fourth-graders at Thomas Page School were asked to write on the theme, "Who was Thomas Page?", describing why he and his family were important to Cotati. The essays were wonderful and a challenge for our judges.

Katlin Slatt, a student in Mrs. Colbert's class was declared the winner, and received a check for \$50 at our annual barbecue. A matching check was given to Katlin's teacher for use in her class.

RECENT DONORS

Helped Us Grow

Paul & Terry Burke
Jennie Falletti
J. Pat Geis
Blair Hardman
Amanda Haselwood
Andrew Kovally
Yvonne VanDyke

NEW MEMBERS Since March 2011

Marie Aggio
John Allred
George & Karen Baur
Frank & Kathryn Bianchi
Sarah Cornelius
Cathryn Fairlee
J. Pat Geis
Janine Loyd
Gregg Neilson
Tim Tilghman & Family
Greg Zirbel

We welcome our new members and remind the few who have not yet paid their \$10/person dues for 2011, that it's not too late!



Lemonade Queen Val Stevenson officiated at the popular lemonade bar.



Gil Gardner entertained with American roots music that kept toes tapping during the afternoon.

Photos courtesy of Creighton Bell.

BARBECUE A SELLOUT SUCCESS!

Our annual chicken barbecue on April 17 was so successful we were embarrassed! In spite of planning carefully, we ran out of food, and even some of our most loyal supporters and hardest workers went hungry. We apologize to all of them and we promise to prepare for a bigger crowd next year. (Mark the date – **April 12, 2012.**)



Chicken Chefs started early. Ed Gilardi, left, produced his usual succulent barbecued chickens, assisted by Glenn Carter, center, Fred Carrasca, right, and Gary Martin (out getting more charcoal).

However, our treasury wasn't embarrassed, as we netted over \$3600 – some \$600 more than last year. That assures that we will be able to continue improving our museum, and keeping the history of Cotati alive through activities like entering the Penngrove Fourth of July Parade on July 3, the Cotati Kids' Day Parade on July 16, preparing an exhibit for the Sonoma County Fair's 75th anniversary celebration, including Cotati Day, July 27 and hosting history programs.

The barbecue never could have happened without the hard work of a host of volunteers who came early, stayed late and worked hard, organized by Terry Dutra and other members of the CHS board. As always, the bake sale, organized by Judy Gustafson, was an artistic and gustatory favorite.



John Allred, standing, center, kept things moving with announcements and the BBQ gave crowds of old friends and neighbors a chance to visit as well as dine.

We are grateful to everyone who helped with setting up the Cotati Room and preparing the food, welcoming guests, creating delicacies for the bake sale, serving food and beverages, entertaining, providing wonderful gifts for our silent auction and handling clean-up duties.



Bake Sale featured scrumptious cakes, pies, cookies, pies, breads and homemade jams. Judy Gustafson, right, was assisted by Diane Canadas, left, and young serving girls, Jaycee Gustafson, left, and Piper Loden, right.



Happy chicken-lovers! The Historical Society's old-fashioned chicken barbecues have drawn larger crowds every year and this third annual party was no exception. Apologies to those who came after we ran out of chicken!

SINCERE THANKS TO THESE GENEROUS DONORS:

Apple Crate, Barbara's Bakery, Laurie Anne Barbour, J.C. Bracco, Fred & Anne Carrasca, Clover-Stornetta, Chris Davis, Double-Decker Lanes, Franco-American Bakery, Ed & Pat Gilardi, Green Mary, Judy Gustafson, Hub Cyclery, Larsen's Feed Store, Bruce & Connie Martin, Marvin's Restaurant, Mike's at the Crossroads, Neat Tweets, Oliver's Market, Tom Origer & Assoc., Outdoor Pro Shop, Pond Garden, Judy Pagnusant, Stan Poncia, Gary Santero, Sonoma County Compost, Spancky's, Tradewinds, Washoe Creek Golf Course, Nadine Wolford.

Plaza Flagpole a Proud Reminder of Cotati's Patriotism

Soon after Cotati's American Legion Post 103 was established in 1926, the members decided to make the southeast section of the Plaza a memorial to veterans of World War I. It was to contain a circular base and steps leading up to a flagpole and a war surplus cannon.



Cannon leaves the Plaza to join the WWII metal drive.

The Santa Rosa *Press Democrat* reported "the former servicemen plan to make their plaza one of the prettiest in the state."

By spring, 1927, Legion members were hard at work. Giulio Castelli and Milt Palmgren helped build the concrete base and walkways, and trees, lawn and flowerbeds were planted around the circle. Local legend has it that the redwood flagpole came

from Washington State, and was so long that it took two railroad cars to carry it and that about 20 feet of it are buried in the ground.

In the Cotati spirit, the Legionnaires raised the money by holding social events. In 1928 they got so enthusiastic they sponsored two dances on the same night – a modern dance in the Women's Clubhouse and an old fashioned dance at the Odd Fellows Hall.

In the following years, the American Legion arranged patriotic gatherings there, and held a special memorial after Pearl Harbor Day for a local boy, Rudy Theiller, Jr., who was aboard the USS Arizona when it was sunk.

The cannon stayed as a monument in the Plaza until 1942, when it was hauled away and donated to the scrap metal drive that was a big part of the World War II effort.

The flowers around the flagpole have always been part of the scene. Years ago they were huge Shasta daisies. More recently, a local florist, George Schmidt, planted assorted roses.

Keeping the flagpole repaired and painted was always a challenge, one that was handled for years by Oliver Chadwick, a local sign painter. In the 1960's, he did it while swinging from a bosun's chair rigged up by a team of Legionnaires. They hoisted him to the top to polish the ball, then slowly lowered him as he painted his way down the pole.

But in recent years, it had been neglected. A citizen group protested that it wasn't much of a credit to the city, and the city fathers and mothers agreed, but were coping with severe budget problems, and had received steep estimates of costs of renovating the flagpole.

As has often happened in Cotati, citizens stepped in, this time led by the Chamber of Commerce, with assistance from the local man who seems to always have "connections" – Carl Schollmann. According to Chamber of Commerce president Andre Morrow, Carl located people with the necessary equipment and expertise to repair and paint the flagpole, arrange lighting and get it ready for a flag. Showing the kind of community spirit that his family and company are famous for, Lee Fishman of Fishman Supply, donated a flag – a huge, glowing flag that snaps even casual observers to attention.

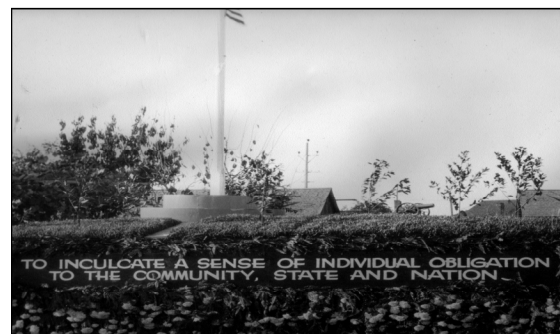
Now the flagpole section has an added attraction: a striking statue of Athena, goddess of wisdom, strategy and war, produced by Santa Rosa artist Peter Crompton.

It's the first of five artworks to be installed in Cotati by the Cotati Arts Project, a Chamber of Commerce sub-group. Cotati Historical Society is proud to be its sponsor.



Athena Unveiled—Artist Peter Crompton, left, CHS President Prue Draper and Chamber President Andre Morrow, right, celebrated the unveiling of the statue of Athena in the Plaza.

It helps continue the dream of the early Cotati citizens who aspired to "make their plaza one of the prettiest in the state."



Parade Float—Legionnaires were so proud of their Plaza section that they depicted it, flagpole, lawn, cannon and all on a parade float about 1940.

NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

You, too, can help preserve Cotati's history as members of the Cotati Historical Society. **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

Name/s _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

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Suzanne Whipple, CHS Secretary, extended a colorful welcome to our third annual barbecue on April 17.