

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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Preserving Cotati's Past
P.O. Box 7013 Cotati, CA 94931
E-mail chsinfo@sonic.net

March 2016

Prue Draper & Connie Martin, Editors

Vol. 9 No. 1

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SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: John Allred
795-2791
Vice Pres.: Sandra Walton
Secretary: Velma DiMeola
Treasurer: Connie Martin
Historian: Prue Draper
Archive Admin: Judy Gustafson
Membership: Yvonne VanDyke
Directors: Marie McNaughton
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

Our Mission Statement

As stated in our Articles of Incorporation, dated April 11, 2007, the specific purpose of the Cotati Historical Society is to protect and preserve the history and culture of the City of Cotati, California. Our goal is to provide a museum and interpretive programs for the preservation of artifacts, memorabilia and documents illustrating the past and present life of the Cotati community, municipality and its citizens.

Rich History for Barbecue in Cotati

As we prepare for our annual chicken barbecue on April 10 to benefit the Cotati Historical Society and Museum, we remember that this tradition began back in 1940, as a benefit for the St. Joseph Church parish.

The first three years, during World War II, the gatherings were held on picnic grounds in the Sonoma Valley, led by Parish Priest Rev. Denis Glennon.

In 1943, because of the war-caused gasoline shortage, what had been a parish picnic was moved to the Cotati Plaza. Assorted attractions were added each year, the public was invited, and in 1950, people came from all over the Bay Area to break previous attendance records. The theme was "Food, Fun and Frolic for 5000" and residents from Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Penngrove and Roblar as well as Cotati worked on the committees.

They were proud to report that they would be serving 900 pounds of potatoes, what was described as "mountains of chili beans", sacks of onions, 800 loaves of French bread, three steers and 1500 chickens. Companies all over the Bay Area supported the major effort with labor and donations.

The volunteers served barbecued chicken, just as we do these days, but they soaked it overnight in local wine (no details available on varietal), and they also featured deep pit roast beef. Producing it required weeks of effort by volunteers to dig huge pits in the Plaza, cut and age the firewood, butcher and season the beef and wrap it in packages to go into the pits full of hot coals. This required several nights of fire-tending by men of the community.

Inspired by barbecues of old days, current volunteers will serve barbecued chicken, baked beans, coleslaw, rolls and beverages. We also will have a bake sale, homemade jams, beer, and wine for purchase, and live music. A silent auction will offer an intriguing variety of items for bidders.

This major fund raiser helps us preserve the history of our unique community.



Photo from Draper Collection

In the 1950's, chickens for the barbecues were processed rather casually in the Donohue Poultry Processing Plant on Minnesota Ave. Volunteers did the work. Nowadays our chickens are provided by Oliver's Market, butchered, halved and kept icy at the market until the day of the BBQ.

East Cotati Avenue Early Trade Center

What seems to have been the first general store in Cotati was located near the railroad tracks on East Cotati Avenue.

Opened in 1910 by Gust A. Lau and his brother, Emil A. Lau, it filled a need in the new little community of Cotati. Emil Lau had worked for the railroad for about 10 years, and was named as the first stationmaster of the new Cotati depot, built in 1908.

About the same time, Robert Ross, who had lost his San Francisco book store to the 1906 earthquake, decided to open a general merchandise store on LaPlaza. This grew to be a major enterprise in Cotati, as it sold every need known to man, woman, and child, marketed eggs and ran a movie house next door. Robert Ross also endeared himself to later historians by producing large numbers of postcards of Cotati's scenes and citizens.



With the highway transport improving, autos and trucks became more common. Gust Lau moved his general merchandise store to what had been the Halley General Store on LaPlaza, which was becoming more of a central shopping area for the community.

Photos from Draper Collection

The building in which Gust Lau had operated his business continued as a popular Cotati general merchandise store after it was bought by Frank Ferrero and his wife, Marie in the 1940's.

Ferrero's Market continued to fill local needs until the Ferreros decided to retire. In 1960 they sold the business to George Arthur and Dan Dettling, who also operated it as a general store called Cotati Plaza Market.

In those days, general stores filled a social need as well as a nutritional one. Friends met their neighbors, talked to the store keepers about their recipes and tried on their new clothes and shoes, but Cotati's way of life was changing.

By 1964, a big, modern grocery named Sissa's was built in Rohnert Park. George Arthur remembers that it was on level ground, and the steps leading up to his and Dettling's Plaza Market were proving difficult for customers. So he and Dettling went out of business.

John and June Nielsen bought the old store, demolished it and built a restaurant that later became Mom's Boarding House, and then the Yacht Club. It is now Dre's Bar & Grill.



Since the San Francisco and Northwestern Railroad was the main way that travelers reached Cotati in the early days, this location on East Cotati Ave. was the logical place for the town's first general store. Gust A. Lau was proprietor.

General merchandise meant exactly that: meats, canned foods, boots, clothing, fabrics, pots and pans, underwear, seeds, peanut butter and tools of all kinds. Often the storekeeper was also the agent for egg dealers, and bought eggs from the local ranchers to sell to distributors in the city. Many times he was also the postmaster – a title that often changed with the administration in Washington, D.C.

In 1920 Gust Lau bought out his brother Emil, and carried on the general merchandise business alone, moving his business to LaPlaza, where it thrived and expanded.

ON THE SQUARE		FERRERO'S		YOUR FRIENDLY SHOPPING CENTER
Reserved Right To Limit Quantity				
Thurs Fri Sat SPECIALS		Fruit and Produce Cool - Fresh - Crisp		
Join YOU GET A 25c COUPON inside CRISCO 3 89c lbs. <small>SEE US FOR DETAILS</small>	SPECIAL COUPON inside Giant Tide SAVE 10c on your next Tide purchase	ARTICHOKES	6 for 29c	
HUNTS CATSUP	2 for 25c	BANANAS	2 lbs 29c	
TEA GARDEN SYRUP	24 oz 35c	CELERY	2 large heads 29c	
LADYS CHOICE MARGARINE	24c	YAMS	fancy 2 lbs 29c	
		Overalls, Work Clothes Work Shoes, Boots & Tennis Shoes Also a large selection of Hardware & Household Items		
FROZEN FOODS				
Ferrero's High Quality Meats				
CHUCK ROAST	lb 37c	SALT PORK	lb 48c	
GROUND BEEF fresh	lb 39c	LUNCH MEATS assorted	lb 59c	

Ad from the 1951 Cotatian newspaper.



New President - Photo by Judy Gustafson

John Allred, owner for over 20 years of the Professional Framing shop on LaPlaza, accepts congratulations as he assumes the presidency of the Cotati Historical Society from Marie McNaughton. Mrs. McNaughton had been our president for the past two years and secretary for two years. She entertained the CHS Board of Directors at a festive dinner at her home.

OUR MOST RECENT NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Marion Ackerman, John Allred, Lars & Erin Andersen, Mary Bartlett, Harold Berkemeier, Frank & Kathryn Bianchi, Jenny Blaker, Frank & Marlene Blankenship, Richard & Jo-Ann Braden, George Bunting, Paul & Kerry Burke, Diane Canadas, Kenneth & Sherri Carli, Ann & Fred Carrasca, Beverly Colburn, Ralph Cota, Clifton Davenport, Chris Davis, Velma DiMeola, Julie Dinkins, Diane Dorfman, Vicki Dougan, Prue, Bob & Robin Draper, Terry & Will Dutra, Cathryn Fairlee, Jennie Falletti, Jane Ferina, Barbara Gegan, Janet Gingher, Kevin Gingher, Harold Griffith, Fred Groverman, Judy Gustafson, Martha Gustafson, Connie & Bill Hammerman, Linell Hardy, David & Karen Heisel, Catherine Hendrix, Melvin Hendrix, Irene Hilsendager, Nancy Hunt, Jennifer & Dennis Hunt, Mark Ibleto, Alice Inouye, Bob Jensen, Stephen Jones, Larry & Nancy Justis, Pat Kavanaugh, June Kimball, Lucy Kortum, Michael & Janet Kurvers, Bob & Alice Larsen, Ken & Amy Larsen, Andrienne Lauby, Jeff & Janet Libarle, Esther Loveridge, Gary & Robin Malone, Bruce & Connie Martin, Gary, Kim & Jake Martin, Bruce, Heather & Ali Martin, Eleanor Miller, Scott Minnis, Robert Nelson, Gregg Nelson, Mildred Nibe, Kathleen Norwood, Deloris Osborne, Ellen Ostrand, John & Anne Page, Bob Parker, Bruce Pearson, Ron & Connie Petty, Stan Poncia, Bob & Debbie Renati, Louise Santero, Sharie Sbrazza, Carl & Mary Schollmann, Michael Sheehan, Joan Simon, Sonoma Co. Library, Louise Steacy, Pam Torliatt, Marjorie & Lee Torliatt, Dan & Carolyn Torliatt, Barbara Jean Veronda, Pamela Wilford, Jack Withington.

THANK YOU TO OUR MANY GENEROUS DONORS

Marion Ackerman, John Allred, Harold Berkemeier, Frank & Kathryn Bianchi, Richard & Jo-Ann Braden, George Bunting, Paul & Kerry Burke, Ann & Fred Carrasca, Ralph Cota, Vicki Dougan, Jennie Falletti, Barbara Gegan, Janet Gingher, Kevin Gingher, David & Karen Heisel, Nancy Hunt, Alice Inouye, Larry & Nancy Justis, Jeff & Janet Libarle, Gary & Robin Malone, Bruce & Connie Martin, Bruce, Jr. & Heather Martin, Scott Minnis, Robert Nelson, Kathleen Norwood, Deloris Osborne, John & Anne Page, Bruce Pearson, Michael Sheehan, Pam Torliatt, Barbara Jean Veronda, Pamela Wilford,

Lorraine Leivas Memorial Planned

Lorraine Leivas, a talented artist and active, enthusiastic member of the Cotati community for over 50 years, died on January 23 after a long illness. She and her husband, Don, had their home and art studio on West School Street and reared three children, Chris, Gina and Joe, who attended Cotati schools.

Lorraine was always an active school and church volunteer, as well as gaining fame as an artist. She specialized in plein air art and won awards for her striking paintings of Sonoma County scenes.

Her family plans a celebration of her life later this year. They requested donations in Lorraine's memory to the Cotati Historical Society and memorial fund gifts have been received from Dorothy Aggio, George Arthur, Pete Callinan, Julie Catalono, Roshan Dahl, George Delfabro, Prue Draper, Nancy Hunt, Christopher Leivas, Eleanor Miller, and Pat Tyler.



Can anyone help us identify this baseball team and players and where the photo was taken? Notation on the back says that it was taken on April 22, 1923. It was sent to the Cotati Museum by Joyce Arnold, who tells us that the kneeling player second from the left was Roy Miller, a cousin of Josephine Miller Barnes and the son of Ted and Alice Miller. Ted Miller was custodian of the Cotati School. If you have any clues, please send them to chsinfo@sonic.net.

CORRECTION!

We made a big mistake in our last newsletter story about the Washoe House, and it was soon brought to our attention by Nancy Hunt, a Cotati resident and proud member of the Petersen clan. We said that the quarry for which Stony Point Road was named was still in business today.

Wrong! The original Stony Point Quarry was on what is now Petersen Road, on the hill behind the homes, including the historic one owned by Nancy's grandfather Arfst Petersen, who came to California from the Isle of Fohr in 1889.

Still time to pay dues for 2016

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.

Yes I want to renew my membership for 2016 @ \$10 per person

An additional donation of \$ _____ is enclosed

**Please send to:
Cotati Historical Society
P.O. Box 7013
Cotati, CA 94931**

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

The Cotati Historical Museum always needs volunteers to welcome visitors on Saturday afternoons, when we are open from 1 to 4 p.m. Docents work in pairs and the duties are basic - unlock doors, turn on lights, open blinds and prepare to be friendly. We have an instruction pamphlet that tells you everything you need to know. If you are interested, contact Barbara Jean Veronda, 795-4545.

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

8th Annual

Old-Fashioned Chicken BBQ

Sunday, April 10, 2016

12:00 Noon - 4:00 pm — Meals served until 3:00 pm

Cotati Room, Ray Miller Community Center, 216 E. School St.

\$12 in advance, \$15 at the door

Meal includes: One-half chicken,
beans, coleslaw, roll & drink

Live Music - Silent Auction
Beer, Wine & Dessert for Sale

Tickets available at:
Cotati Chamber of Commerce & Exchange Bank
By calling 707-794-0305
Or emailing chsinfo@sonic.net

All proceeds benefit the Cotati Historical Society & Museum

The Cotati Barbecue Tradition Continues . . .

