

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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

Preserving Cotati's Past

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Marie McNaughton, Editor

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Secretary: Velma DiMeola
Treasurer: Connie Martin
Archiving Administrator: Judy Gustafson
Membership: Yvonne Van Dyke
Newsletter: Marie McNaughton
Museum Volunteer Coordinator: Bobbie Veronda 795-4545
NEW! Board Member: Ed Gilardi

COTATI MUSEUM HOURS

Every Saturday, 1-4 p.m.
2nd Tuesdays, 5-7 p.m.

For tours and appointments,
call 707-794-0305

Inside Cotati City Hall
201 West Sierra Avenue

THE CHS MISSION

As stated in our Articles of Incorporation, dated April 11, 2007, the specific purposes of the Cotati Historical Society are 1) to protect and preserve the history and culture of the City of Cotati, California, 2) to provide a permanent resource (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, and 3) to reach out to the general community and to support similarly guided educational and historical agencies.

History of the Cotati Historical Society & Museum Part II, Making a Difference, 2011 to 2016

Our last newsletter, Fall, Vol. 10, No. 3 recounted the early days and the initial events that now constitute Cotati Historical Society traditions: the spring barbecue, summer parades, fall history events, and open houses.

To recap the essentials, the Cotati Historical Society was organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit in April 2007 by longtime Cotatians, the late Prue and Lloyd Draper. The society's mission is to collect and preserve the history of the area, from the Coast Miwok era to the present. The museum inside Cotati City Hall opened in 2010 to place the collection in public view and to allow for interpretive exhibits. Here we extend the story of the society and museum's integration into the community.

When aviator Fred Wiseman flew over Cotati on February 17, 1911, in the country's first airmail delivery, local housewives waved their aprons to cheer him on. On the 100th anniversary of that flight, in 2011, Cotati Historical Society volunteers waved aprons as a band of hardy walkers retraced Wiseman's route. Walkers toured the Cotati Museum and then brunchted at Church of the Oaks, courtesy of Sally Tomatoes. CHS feted visitors all day in honor of the museum's first anniversary.



2011 history volunteers wave their aprons in honor of the first U.S. airmail flight, over Cotati, in 1911.

This was just the beginning of five years full of a variety of such partnerships. In March 2011, we hosted our first Thomas Page School field trip, as arranged by Lisa Moore, CHS outreach director. Some 60 fourth-grade students learned about Cotati history and were invited to enter our first history essay contest, earning prizes for themselves and their classrooms. Contest winners and runners-up are honored each year at the April barbecue.

The same month CHS partnered with Cotati Creek Critters in hosting a talk and walk by historical ecologist Arthur Dawson, called "Thinking Like an Oak—200 years of Change." The October event panel—Blair Hardman, Frank Hayhurst, Mark Braunstein, Scott Goree, and Bruce Berkowitz—shared their decades of music scene experience in Cotati history.

In 2012, April featured the annual barbecue, summer the usual parades. The year also saw some internal changes. Prue Draper stepped down as president after five years and Terry Dutra stepped up. Connie Martin continued as vice president and co-editor (with Prue) of our newsletter. Archiving administrator Judy Gustafson and Judy Pagnusat continued with their duties. Yvonne Van Dyke and Marie

Bill Kortum, a leader in making Cotati a city, and Jennie Falletti, whose late husband, Al, sat on the first city council, cut the giant 50th birthday cake served to all celebrants of the anniversary in 2013. Photo credit: Irene Hilsendager.



Continued on page 2



CHS celebrates years of making and preserving history, from page 1

McNaughton jumped aboard as treasurer and secretary, respectively. Judy Pagnusat also created an exhibit of Andreoli family photos and news stories about the triplets —Melba, May, and Marie— born in 1938. The panels continue to charm museum visitors today. (Come see!)

The fall panel—Ken Macklin, Ken Carli, Marc Libarle, Carl Schollmann, and Gary Santero—shared their memories of the Cotati School (now City Hall) and opened a floodgate of reminiscences from the audience and a flurry of loans for digitizing and donations of school pictures, report cards, and other memorabilia.

The 50th anniversary of Cotati's incorporation as a city centered our activities in 2013. We worked with the city, the chamber, and Kids Day organizers memorializing that civic landmark. Pictures of old Cotati sprang up in storefronts and gathering places, giving locals the chance to compete in the Cotati History Hunt, featuring 31 buildings throughout the decades. Memories of the day included a huge birthday cake, official speeches, music, games, food and merchandise booths. The inimitable Prue Draper gave an extended history walk, riding with her PA system in parade participant Alan Allen's pedicab.

In 2014, the CHS board continued to change as the museum's volunteers sought change in their lives. Terry Dutra and Judy Pagnusat retired and Gary Santero and Velma DiMeola stepped forward. The barbecue and summer parades continued as usual. Our big push that year was to gain recognition for the rare chimera redwood tree growing near the SMART rail tracks. Supporting Russian River historian John Schubert and arborist Tom Stapleton, CHS, the Cotati Council, and SMART management determined that the variegated albino tree deserved to be moved and replanted further away from train traffic. Environmental Design performed the work while a crowd of tree-huggers cheered—making the news locally and internationally. The 2014 special exhibit featured loaned equipment and photos from the Cotati Volunteer Fire Department in its long and storied history. The fall event featured an open house and presentations of Cotati history by Marie McNaughton via Cathryn Fairlee's historical slide show created for the Thomas Page School field trips.

Years 2015 and 2016 flew by with the usual and not so usual events: spring field trip and barbecue, community events and displays, grant awards, upgraded facilities, new volunteers and collection donations, history programs, and changes on the board, especially the addition of John Allred and Sandra Walton, now our president and vice-president as well as major exhibit developers. Bobbie Veronda became our BBQ Silent Auction chair as well as a board member. Events included "How Cotati Streets Got Their Names," featuring Pamela Wilford (whose father, Severa Wilford, initiated the practice of naming streets after Cotati citizens), Ken Macklin, Carl Schollman, and Prue Draper. Judy Gustafson took the lead in our exhibit remembering Christo's *Running Fence* 1976 art installation, running from Cotati into the Pacific Ocean. She borrowed an actual panel of the fence from the Tomales History Center, and materials from actual fence worker and regular CHS volunteer Kelly Smith. Our work continues, sadly without our dear Prue Draper who died earlier this year. May her humor, enthusiasm, and determination to get the story right inspire more community visioning, and the dedicated volunteers necessary to make those dreams come true.



Above, current Cotati City Manager Damien O'Bid explains his former city engineer job to Thomas Page students in 2013. CHS successfully lobbied for the replanting of Cotati's chimera redwood tree in 2014. Cotatian Shannon Roberts shared sculptures by her late father, Dr. John Roberts, in 2015. The *Running Fence* appeared in the museum and the newsletter in 2016.

MYTHBUSTERS!

Do you know of a false local story that begs for correction or clarification—and have evidence to prove it? Contact us at chsinfo@sonic.net or 707-794-0305, and let's bear witness to the truth (as we know it most recently).

One myth CHS would like to put to rest permanently claims that Thomas Stokes Page came to California in 1847 and was appointed sheriff of Sonoma. Yankee physician, Thomas S. Page (1815-1872) did purchase the Rancho Cotate in 1849. However, it was Thomas M. Page who was appointed lawman of the Sonoma District in the 1840s by Mariano Vallejo. Dr. Page, a New Jersey native, did not move with his family to California until 1869. They emigrated from Chile, where he practiced medicine

after his graduation from the first U.S. medical school, at University of Pennsylvania, in 1836.

The erroneous story confusing "Thomas S." and "Thomas M." was first made by one of the researchers for Hubert Howe Bancroft's landmark *History of California*. It was repeated in Honoria Tuomey's 1926 *History of Sonoma County, Volume I*, and continues to sidetrack would-be historians.

This correction follows the research of Sonoma State history MAs Katherine Johnson Rinehart (1994) and Eric R. Stanley (1999). Rinehart and Stanley have since become the head of the Sonoma County Library History and Genealogy Annex and the curator of history at the Sonoma County Museum. Their theses and many other closely documented examinations of Sonoma County history are available through Sonoma State, the county library, multiple historical societies, and our own museum.

CHS Volunteers and the Community Contribute to Our Fall History Event “Grapes & Wine, Then & Now, In & Around Cotati”

On the afternoon of Sunday Nov. 5, the Cotati Historical Society held its annual fall event, this time featuring the story of the Cotati area’s grape growers and wine makers.

Panelists Jeff James and Rick Knottenbelt began the session with their personal accounts of how they turned their careers toward the joys of the vine. James, owner of the James Family Cellars, here in Cotati, started his vineyard over 20 years ago in hopes that it would continue over the generations. Now an award-winning vintner known for his pinot noirs, James’s wine is most commonly purchased at fine restaurants.

Knottenbelt, a lifelong wine lover, not long ago operated the Cotati Corner Wine Shop with his wife, Sandy. Today, he continues his vinous affair as a wholesale broker. Both James and Knottenbelt shared their expertise in wine lore, marketing, and the inner workings of local wine community.

Marie McNaughton also offered a history presentation and exhibit, describing Sonoma’s indigenous peoples’ food and beverages made from wild grapes, and identifying the 19th century pioneer families who brought and cultivated grape varieties from their home states and countries. The Cotati-Penngrove area was acclaimed as a grape and wine region in the decades between the gold rush and the region’s switchover to chicken and egg production at the turn of the 20th century.

After the panel discussion, James and Knottenbelt acted as event sommeliers, serving wines from their collections, as well as those donated by Karah Estate Vineyards. The wines were complemented by savory hors d’oeuvres made specially by Bobbie Veronda and Velma Veronda DiMeola, and sweet cookies baked by Judy Gustafson and Connie Martin.



Above are a selection of James pinot noirs and a host of appetizers. To the left, wine panelists Rick Knottenbelt (left) and Jeff James (right) regale visitors with stories of grapes, soils, wine making, and sales strategies. At right are historical resources related to Rancho Cotate area growers and vintners of the past.

CHS LOVES ITS VOLUNTEERS

We need you!

What are we looking for?? Cotati is a tiny place in the scope of things, but we’re convinced that it can yield the trained and trainable volunteer personnel that we need. If you are interested, contact Bobbie Veronda, 795-4545, leave a message on the museum machine, 794-0305, or email us about your potential contributions (ordinary and unique) at chsinfo@sonic.net.

- ⇒ *Do you have museum exhibit, management, or archive experience?*
- ⇒ *Do you know graphic design, public relations, nonprofit policy and procedures?*
- ⇒ *Are you willing to share your knowledge of Cotati with museum visitors?*

***The 2018 BBQ will be held
Sunday, April 8, 2018.
Preparation starts in January.
Join new board member and
longtime BBQ chair
Ed Gilardi in hosting
our annual feast.***

Time to renew your dues for 2018

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 2018 @ \$10 per person*
- An additional donation of \$ _____ is enclosed*
- A memorial donation of \$ _____ is enclosed in memory of: _____*

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 online.

THANK YOU TO OUR MOST RECENT CONTRIBUTORS:

Member Janet Tonnelli and donors Barbara Veronda, Velma DiMeola, and Martha Gustafson, in memory of Morton Otani, and Martha Gustafson and Harold Griffith, in memory of Leroy Rossotti.

Cotati Historical Society
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Cotati, CA 94931

CHS President's Message

Seasons greetings to all! I wish everyone a very safe and healthy holiday break. As the festivities begin and the year draws to a close, I am pleased to announce that 2018 promises . . .

A NEW HISTORICAL EXHIBIT

opening at the new Cotati SMART Train Depot (next to the tracks at East Cotati Avenue).

The CHS Board of Directors, in conjunction with the City of Cotati, has developed and in January will install a museum-quality collection of images from Cotati's past. Visitors will see photos of previous depots and businesses at that site and get a sense of the integral part that trains have played in Cotati's development and will play in its future.

Keep your eyes and ears open for the exhibit's opening and regular viewing hours. Check it out!

Best regards,
John Allred