

Newsletter

Summer Fall 2026

Where Were You 50 Years Ago?

We recently had a chance to sit down with Kelly Smith who worked on a famous art project known as Christo's Running Fence. Back in 1974. French artist Christo Javacheff and his wife Jeanne-Claude, went to numerous governmental bodies and private property owners in Marin and Sonoma Counties seeking advance approval for their years-long project. After getting most entities to agree, the real work began. The exhibit opened on September 8, 1976.

The 18-foot high white nylon Fence stretched over 24.5 miles of pastures, starting on Mecham Road at the south border of Cotati and plunging into the Pacific at Bodega Bay.



Kelly Smith holding the book given to him by Christo, and Judy Gustafson holding Kelly's work shirt. Photo by John Dell'Osso.

One individual of the over 300 who worked on this project and who quit his job making \$15/hour to work on the Fence for \$2.40/hour, was then Cotati resident Kelly Smith, now living in Rohnert Park.

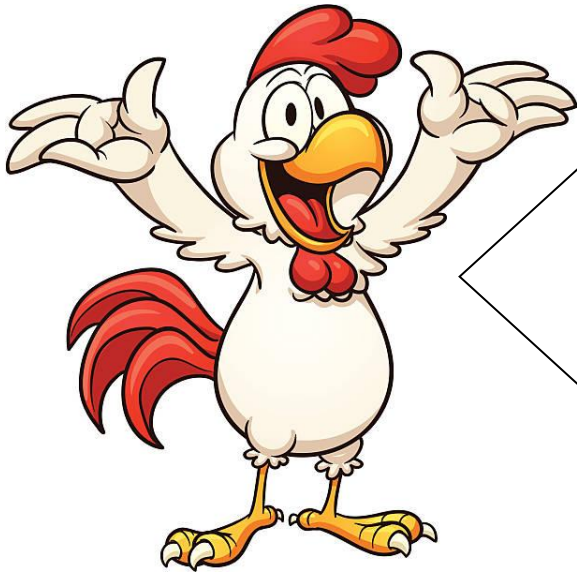
Kelly has worked at several Cotati establishments over the years including The 8-Ball, The Tradewinds and the Yacht Club.

He recalls that this opportunity was something new and different to get involved with.

Use this link to refer to our article from 10 years ago for more on this story. [September-2016-CHS-Newsletter.pdf](#) or go to our webpage and click on News & Events, scroll down to View All Newsletters and click, then scroll down to Fall 2016 and click.

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Mark Your Calendars!!

The old-fashioned chicken BBQ, silent auction, bake sale, classic car show and live music (whew!) next year will be on **Sunday, April 18, 2027**. Stay tuned by keeping your membership current!

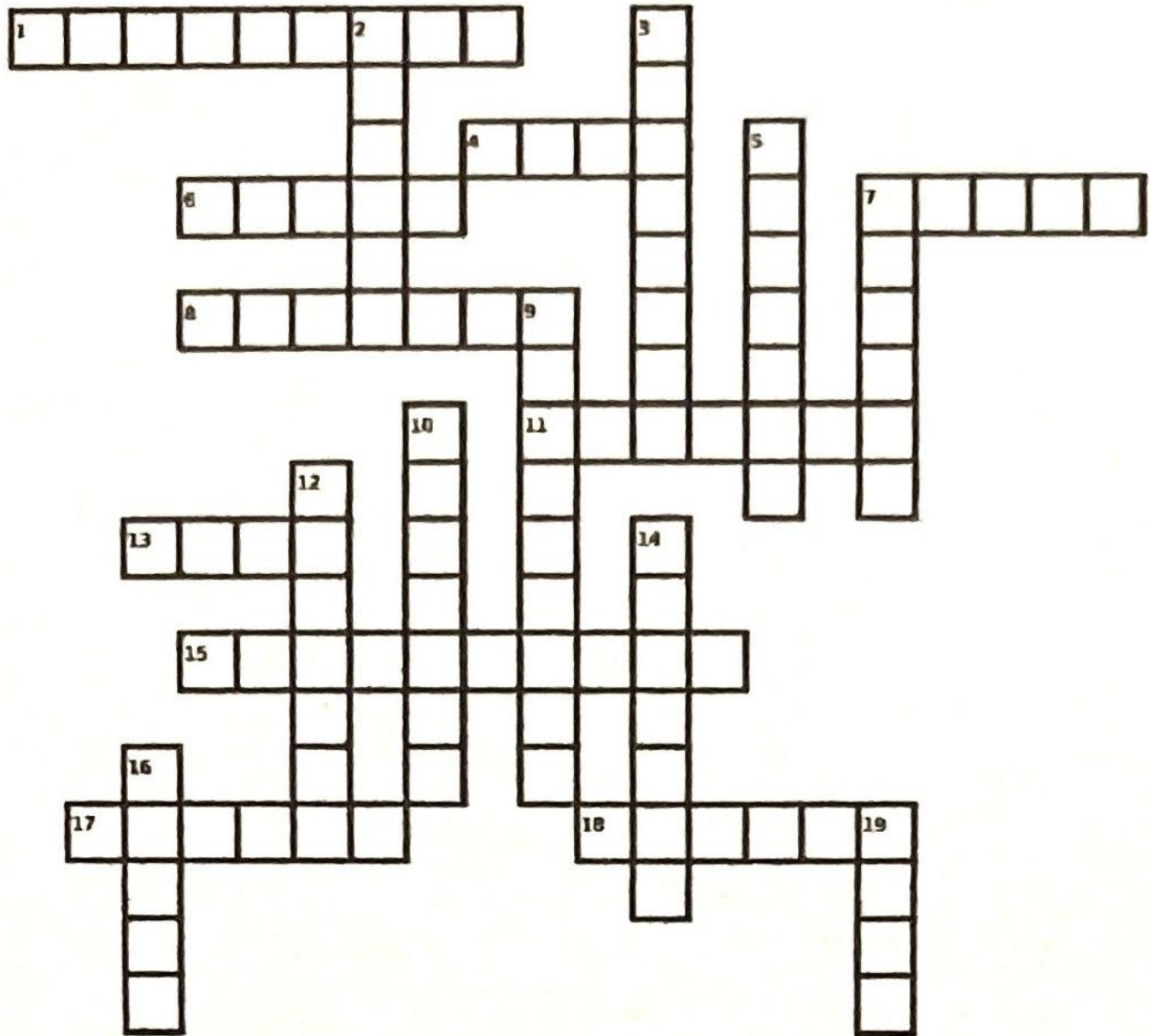


**What is
this
building
today?**

See the
answer on
the back
page.

This image shows a winter flood at the Signal Gas Station from the 1950s but the gas station began in 1931. The City of Cotati rechanneled the creek so flooding was significantly minimized. The business that is currently at this location on Old Redwood Hwy and Henry Street, still looks like a gas station. Complete with cutout wooden gas pumps and a vintage 1930s cab! What is this today? Look at the back page.

Cotati History Crossword Puzzle



Across

1. Inn of the _____
4. A bar beginning with a number, 8-

6. A business that creates signs
7. La _____ Park in downtown
8. First half of ranch name across
from City Hall
11. Rare species of Redwood tree
13. Last name of large family from
Cotati's past
15. A bar named after an ocean breeze
17. Headwaters of the _____ de
Santa Rosa
18. Accordion player statue downtown

Down

2. Post office renamed for him
3. second half of ranch name across
from City Hall
5. music venue now Neer Shalom
7. park named after former County
Supervisor
9. use one and go to Cotati!
10. great market that started here
12. shape of Cotati's plaza
14. Old _____ Hwy
16. a body shop west of the 101
freeway
19. Church of the _____, built in 1907

Thank You To Our Barbecue Sponsors



Photo credits clockwise from upper left: Vanessa Davenport, John Dell'Osso, Jim Johnson, John Dell'Osso, Vanessa Davenport, and Jim Johnson.



Cotati is Music!

Another great annual event sponsored by the Cotati Chamber of Commerce (<https://cotati.org>) is the Cotati Music Festival carrying on with the tradition of being a great musical venue. Cotati became the location in the 1960s - 1980s for such musical icons as the Grateful Dead, John Lee Hooker, Foghat, Neil Young, Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, Huey Lewis and the News and Todd Rundgren to name just a few.

Venues such as the Inn of the Beginning and the Cotati Cabaret were stopovers for these big names before or after they played in San Francisco.

Watch for upcoming musical events in Cotati throughout the year and come and enjoy the great tunes.



Large crowd in La Plaza Park for the Cotati Music Festival. Photo by John Dell'Osso.

Walking Tours of Historic Downtown Continue Through October

Have you ever wondered, “How old is that building?” or “I wish I knew what business was in that building 50 years ago?” Well, we’ve got an answer for you. Sign up for one of our popular downtown walking tours with our knowledgeable docents to learn more about the history of some of the buildings and businesses downtown.

Scheduled for this year on the second Saturday of each month from April through October, all beginning at 11:30 at La Plaza Park downtown and going until about 1:00. Upcoming tours for this year include **September 12 and October 10.**

You can sign up by sending us an email at CotatiMuseum@gmail.com or by leaving a message at 707-794-0305 and leave your name, phone number, the date you are interested in and how many in your group.

Make sure to wear comfortable walking shoes. Since it will take place outdoors and don’t forget the sunscreen!

Is this your last newsletter? Renew now and keep up with CHS events and news!



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Sonoma County Finding History Day 2026

This annual event is a chance for the public to learn more about different areas in Sonoma County and their historic nature. As in past years, over 60 organizations come to share their expertise. This free event is organized by the Sonoma County Historical Society (SonomaCountyHistory.org) and the Sonoma County library. This year, the event will be held on Saturday, November 7 at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building.

Visitors can browse display tables, speak directly with historians and archivists, learn about research resources, discover historic sites and collections, and attend presentations on a wide range of local history topics. Whether you are researching family history, looking for volunteer opportunities, planning visits to museums and



A member of the North Bay Italian Cultural Foundation in 2025, sharing information with visitors. Photo by John Dell'Oso.

about Sonoma County's heritage, Finding History Day offers something for everyone.

Digging Up Fun at Kid's Day



Photo by Mena Motta.

This year's Kid's Day Parade brought the Best Group Award for the CHS creation of Digging For Gold!

Thanks once again to our stellar Docent/Volunteer, Marilee Shipman, for organizing and getting volunteers to walk with the CHS banner. She is in the back of the group wearing the brown shirt and vest!

Thank You To Our New and Renewing Members and Donors

April 1, 2026 – July 31, 2026

Memorial Donations

Shirley Codioli by Lill Aspoy-Codioli
Al & Jenny Falletti by Barbara Morrow
Ed Nordman by Vi Nordman
LaVerne M. Uhte by Carol Uhte

Donations

Karen Griffith & Lou Breuer
Supervisor David Rabbitt, Sonoma County
Board of Supervisors



Don't miss an issue
of our newsletter.
Remember to
**renew your
membership!**

2026 Board of Directors

President	John Dell'Osso
Vice President	Ed Gilardi
Secretary	Val Kingsbury
Treasurer	Kim Martin
Conservation/Restoration Consultant	John Allred
Archiving Administrator	Judy Gustafson
Board Member	Vanessa Davenport
Board Member	Velma DiMeola
Board Member	Gary Martin

Individuals and Families

Patricia Anderson,
Lill Aspoy-Codioli
Lillian Blodgett
Jane Ferina
Karen Griffith & Lou Breuer
Mary Lou Issel & Ken Lentz
Barbara Morrow
Vi Nordman
Tom O'Dell
Jerry & Judy Pagnusat
Marilee Shipman
Marjorie Torliatt
Carol Uhte

2026 Business Memberships

Cotati Accordion Festival
Millerick Bros.
Oliver's Market
Redwood Self Storage

The CHS Mission

Our mission is to preserve Cotati history through the acquisition and preservation of artifacts, photos, archives, and other historical materials. We provide resources for visitors and researchers interested in Cotati's unique past. Our community outreach program enables us to support Cotati-related cultural activities and events and to maintain reciprocal relations with other historical entities.



Cotati Historical Society
PO Box 7013
Cotati CA 94931



The mystery business is Hines Signs, operated by Jake Page. Hines Signs has been in business since 1979. Photo by John Dell'Osso.

Membership/Dues/Donations



This form may be used for new & renewal memberships, general or memorial donations. Thank you for your support of Cotati Historical Society.

Dues: Individual \$20, Family (All members of same household) \$25, Business \$40

____ Yes, I want to join/renew my/our membership: _____

____ An additional donation of \$ _____ is enclosed.

Member Name/s _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

A memorial donation of \$ _____ is enclosed in memory of: _____

Please send an acknowledgment to: _____

Address: _____

Please mail to: **Cotati Historical Society, PO Box 7013, Cotati CA 94931**

Online payments: **cotatimuseum.org/support**