

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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

Preserving Cotati's Past
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Prue Draper, Editor

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IMPORTANT MEETING

Wednesday, August 27 will be an important night for the Cotati Historical Society, as the Cotati City Council will consider - and we hope, approve - our lease of the former police department as our first history room/museum. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the main council chamber at Cotati City Hall. Having a good attendance of Historical Society members and enthusiasts at that meeting would help prove to the council that the lease should be approved.

The Cotati Historical Society is an independent non-profit corporation, not a part of the city government, so this legal document is necessary.

The terms are generous – the room would be provided to our society for \$1 per year. The society will be required to carry public liability insurance, and to manage maintenance of the room, paying for materials and utilities we need to manage our program in the room. Attorney Maurice Fredericks has examined the agreement and found no problems with it, and local insurance agent Andre Morrow has obtained the necessary insurance coverage for us.

This is the exciting culmination of a year of planning, and the beginning of what we expect to be a valuable resource in preserving Cotati's history through artifacts, photos and archives. We envision a program that will have the history room open to the public several days a week with docents to help visitors and school groups understand Cotati's past.

Late breaking news of another historic action is on the August 27 City Council Agenda. See page 3.

PENNGROVE PARADE



This beautiful 1939 Cadillac limo, owned and driven by Jaime Llopis represented the Cotati Historical Society in the Penngrove Fourth of July parade. Lena Braden, 92-year-old Cotati native resident was the passenger, and waved to the crowd in a manner befitting a queen.

TIME TO PAY DUES

The board of the Cotati Historical Society has decided, in the interest of being thrifty, that membership dues will be due only once a year. It has been almost a year since our charter membership drive, and it's time to pay dues again. The membership year will run from September 1 to August 31, regardless of when new members join. We believe this will save trouble for our members, and we're sure it will save time for our secretary. We expect the coming year to be extremely busy as we'll be preparing to move into our history room at Cotati City Hall. **Dues remain only \$10 per year per person**, and they should be sent to CHS, P.O. Box 7013, Cotati, CA 94931. Your support is sincerely appreciated.

Please pass this newsletter along to others who are interested in Cotati and its history.

PAGE FAMILY VISIT

Your Cotati Historical Society welcomed a party of 10 descendants of Dr. Thomas Stokes Page, founder of Cotati, on May 11 to tour the town their great-great-great grandfather established over 100 years ago. Most were descendants of Olof Page, eldest son of Thomas and Ana Maria Page.

Thomas Page School had prepared a warm welcome for the party, even though it took place on Mother's Day, and the school was closed. Fifth grade students had made welcoming posters and third graders had written illustrated letters, bound into a book as a permanent keepsake for the family. The visitors had prepared a sumptuous picnic, and the tables in the school courtyard were a perfect spot for it.

Most of the visitors had never been to Cotati before, and one, Patricia Diaz Page, who lives in Santiago, Chile, was paying her first visit to the United States and meeting her cousins for the first time. Others came from Palo Alto, Pleasanton, Santa Rosa and Reno, NV.

They were particularly interested in the hexagonal Cotati La Plaza Park, which was laid out by the Page family in 1893, the streets named for Dr Page's sons Olof, Arthur, Charles, George, William and Henry; the location of the Page mansion which stood on the hill above on El Rancho Drive, and the Page Ranch barn which was on the site of the present St. Joseph Church.

John R. Page presented the Historical Society with a detailed illustrated history of Dr. Page and his Cotati ranch, which will be a valuable addition to the society's archives. The Drapers sent the visitors home with an assortment of souvenirs: hats, tee shirts, ornaments and bags from the Cotati Chamber of Commerce.

The party included John R. and Ann Page of Palo Alto, Maria and Matt Tracy and daughters Maricel and Maya of Pleasanton, Martha Spicer of Reno, NV; Caroline Barnes, Palo Alto; Betsy Bridgeman, Santa Rosa, as well as Patricia Page from Chile.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

If you have received this newsletter by mail, it indicates that we do not have a current e-mail address for you. We can save time, postage and paper by using e-mail as much as possible, so please e-mail a note to us at:

chsinfo@sonic.net



Thomas Page School students had made signs to welcome the Page family visitors. Left to right: Betsy Bridgeman, Caroline Barnes, Martha Spicer, Maya, Maricel and Maria Tracy, Patricia Page and John R. Page.

HISTORY CONTACTS

One of the exciting things about having a historical society is that people who are interested in Cotati history have a contact with others who share their interests. Recently we were contacted by Gary Grossi, a Santa Rosa car racing enthusiast, who was seeking information on the Cotati Drag Strip that operated, during the 1950's and '60's on what had been the Cotati Naval Outlying Field during World War II. Through Gary, we were able to obtain copies of a comprehensive article in the magazine *Vintage Motorsport* describing the races, drivers and cars in beautiful detail.

John R. Page of Palo Alto, a generous donor of support and materials to the society, has given us several documents written by his ancestor, Dr. Thomas Stokes Page, founder of Cotati, as well as a collection of photos of the early Page family.

The society also recently was contacted by Mary Ann Short Weed, who grew up in Cotati. She donated a series of photos of her father, Lyle Short, who was Lions Club District Governor, and also a handsome trophy won by her mother, Gladys Short, for her kennel which was on Henry Street during the 1950's and 60's.

All have been added to the collection of artifacts and archives that will be available to the public in the Cotati History Room at city hall.

LATE NEWS – FALLETTI RANCH TO BE PURCHASED BY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT!

News was released this week that the picturesque Falletti Ranch, located across East School Street from Cotati City Hall, is being purchased by the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the City of Cotati. The vision for the property is that the 4.37-acre farm will become a city park to reflect the historic ranching tradition of this area.

Al Alys, director of the Open Space Authority, which recently approved a matching grant to fund the project, said “The farmhouse on the property will become a museum highlighting the history of the area.”

The Authority’s action allows the Open Space District to contribute \$3,135,000 to the purchase price of the property, protecting the land for the City of Cotati to establish a public park. The sale does not include the home and beautiful garden of Jennie Falletti and her late husband Al, who served many years as a director of the Cotati Public Utility District and a Cotati City Councilman.

The ranch has been owned by the family since 1938, when Jennie’s parents, Pete and Elizabeth

Veronda, lived in the small house near the corner and operated a chicken ranch that was typical of many in this area.

Cotati Mayor Pat Gilardi reported that many people have been working for a long time to make this purchase happen. “It is fantastic to finally see the Falletti Ranch acquisition become a reality.”

Cotati Councilmember Janet Orchard, who has worked hard with Mrs. Falletti for months to preserve the ranch said, “The Falletti Ranch is a community treasure that will provide hands-on education opportunities for years to come. I am thrilled that this is happening.”

Prue Draper, president of the Cotati Historical Society, said, “This is wonderful news! We are happy for Jennie and for Cotati. It’s long been our dream that we could have a model chicken ranch reflecting the early days of Cotati as a community, and displaying some of the myriad ranching equipment that is stored here and there around Cotati.

“When the Walkable Cotati project was in the planning stages several years ago, the planners showed photos of scenes around Cotati and asked residents to rank their favorites. The one that got the most votes was the photo of the Falletti pasture and grazing sheep. Now there’s a way that they can remain part of the Cotati scene forever.”

Attention present and future members

If you are already a member of the Cotati Historical Society, it’s time to pay your dues for the coming year. **\$10 per person per year.** If you are not already a member but would like to join us in preserving Cotati’s history, we welcome you. 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 _____