

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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

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Prue Draper, Editor

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April 19 Barbecue Continues a Favorite Old Cotati Tradition

Cotati was just getting started as a community back in the early 1900's when the citizens began holding chicken barbecues. People came from far and near to sit under the trees in the oak grove at the corner of School Street and El Rancho, down below the old Thomas Stokes Page home, and share a meal.

In the 1940's and 1950's, the Cotati barbecue became a much bigger event – sponsored by St. Joseph Church, but joined in by nearly everyone in town – it annually attracted thousands to the Plaza for games and barbecued beef and chicken.

In keeping with the tradition, the Cotati Historical Society will hold a chicken barbecue for the public on Sunday, April 19 from 12 noon to 4 p.m. at the Cotati Room & BBQ area of the Ray Miller Community Center, 216 E. School St., Cotati. All proceeds will go to our museum, which is nearing completion.

Along with the barbecued chicken, the menu will feature beans, coleslaw, a roll and soft drink for \$10 per person. Beer and wine will be available for an additional charge, and music will be provided throughout the afternoon.

A bake sale will be a special attraction, and society members are asked to bring their favorite cake, pie, cookies or cupcakes - using an old family recipe would be especially appropriate. These will be sold whole or by the slice.

Tickets will go on sale soon, and you may reserve yours by e-mailing the society at chsinfo@sonic.net or returning this coupon to CHS, P.O. Box.7013, Cotati, Ca. 94931

SOCIETY OFFICERS

President
Prue Draper

Vice President
Lloyd Draper

Treasurer
Terry Dutra

Secretary
Suzanne Whipple

Outreach Chair
Lisa Moore

Newsletter
Connie Martin

Yes! We want to go to the barbecue on April 19 and our check is enclosed at \$10 per person; please send the tickets to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City & Zip: _____

Number of tickets requested: _____

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

City Office Sign is Relic of Past

Cotati Historical Society continues to welcome donations of memorabilia of Cotati in earlier days. The latest addition to our collection is a sign that graced the front of the Cotati City Office (no City Hall in those days) when Cotati headquarters were located in a small rented house on East Cotati Avenue near Arthur Street.

Mark Thysen, who was city planning director from 1972 to 1978, offered the sign, and reminisced a bit about what Cotati city government was like in those days. Mark was a youth full of enthusiasm, and was popularly known as “Magic Mark.”

He remembers that Paul Salfen, the city manager, and his secretary had their office in one room at the front of the house. Police Chief Tony Locarnini, had the back room as his police department. A shed in the back yard housed extra police equipment.



Mark Thysen was Cotati Planning Director when this sign identified a small house on East Cotati Avenue as the Cotati City Office. It was probably the handiwork of Cotati sign painter Oliver Chadwick.

Mystery Tool No Longer A Mystery



The mystery is declared solved by Bob Clarke!

In our last newsletter, we asked for guesses on the identity of a peculiar farm implement that was stored in a shed on the Veronda-Falletti property. Jennie Falletti didn't know what it was....a long handled, S-shaped metal tool with a very sharp edge. Some people were sure it was a pumpkin smasher, others insisted it was a branding iron. But the edge was too sharp.

The Community Voice picked up the story and published it with a photo of Jennie Falletti, her cousins Barbara Jean Veronda and Martha Gustafson holding the mystery tool. The Cotati Historical Society offered a free membership to whoever could correctly identify the implement.

The power of the press was amazing! The newspaper had hardly been delivered when we got a call from

Gerald Turner in Rohnert Park. “That thing,” he announced, “is a kraut cutter! My grandpa was a blacksmith in Alabama, and he made one for my grandma to cut up cabbage in a wooden wash tub to make sauerkraut!” He said it looked just like our mystery tool.

Gene Camozzi, a member of the dairy family soon called Jennie Falletti to announce that it was a potato and apple cutter – they use to have one for chopping feed for their dairy cows back in the early days.

Gary Santero insisted the big metal S was used by his father to brand wooden vegetable crates – but he later confessed that he'd made that up.

Soon afterward, a call came from Bob Clarke, who said he had one just like it, and had seen several others, and it was a kale cutter, used to chop the greens that chicken farmers fed their laying hens. More prosperous ranchers had mechanical kale cutters – as did Jennie Falletti's parents – but for a starting operation, the mystery implement would certainly do the job.

Bob Clarke's well-known in agricultural circles – his father was a well-known veterinarian and Bob is a professional barn builder; we were given assurance that “if Bob Clarke says that's what it is.....that's what it is!”

So the mystery is solved – and Bob Clarke generously donated the famous tool to the Historical Society for our museum. Thanks, Bob, and for solving the mystery, and for the interesting artifact.

Great Community Support for Museum

Cotati Historical Society is happy to report that work is progressing quickly on renovation of the future Cotati Museum in the space in Cotati City Hall that was formerly the Police Department.

Terry Dutra is representing the City of Cotati during the process, and Lisa Moore is managing the donation process. Architect Robert Leys launched the process by producing the first remodeling plans.

Bruce Hammond and Steven Eichbaum of Hammond Fine Homes are overseeing the project, with Dianne Thompson, Cotati City Manager, in charge of design decisions. Johnny Kistenmacher of Aladdin's Electric is donating the electrical service, and Dennis Thomas and North Counties Dry Wall will donate the sheetrock and application. Dunn Edwards is donating all the paint for the project. Rick Stewart of Arch's Glass is donating and installing a window, and Michael Pastryk of Liberty Valley Doors is donating and installing a custom-built door to match the vintage doors in the 1920's-era former school that is now Cotati City Hall. Geoff Fox will direct when it's time to refinish the floors in the former school room and Pat Gilardi will head a team of volunteers in painting walls and woodwork.

Efforts are being made to make the room reminiscent of the classroom that it was when the building was the Cotati Elementary School.

Furnishings are being repaired and refinished in a warehouse being donated by Bruce and Connie Martin, who have also provided furniture-moving services. Dave Thomas, Bob Renati, Simone Wilson and Robin Draper also helped with moving display cases donated by Harry Bosworth of Geyserville. They are being refinished by a team of workers that includes Jim Wolford, Connie Martin, Prue Draper and Dave Thomas. Paul Harvey is producing a cabinet that will house newspaper files. A large cabinet was provided by J Dollwet of Penngrove, and a handsome library table donated by TJ Nelson of Windsor. An oak desk was a gift from the West County Museum in Sebastopol, two lighted display cases were obtained from the Petaluma Museum and antique oak file cabinets will come from the City of Cotati.

Michael Schwager, Professor of Art History and Director of the University Art Gallery at Sonoma State University, has agreed to advise the society in setting up the museum.

Prue Draper, Cotati Historical Society president, said she is delighted with the support the project is getting from the community. "It's heartwarming to know that so many people are interested in preserving Cotati's history and making it available to our citizens - young and old - and to visitors of our city," she said.

Successful History Night

Our History Night on Nov. 20 was a big success! A crowd of over 50 people heard reminiscences of Cotati from speakers ranging from 92-year-old Lena Braden to the youthful sons of Vito and Sue Paulekas - BB, Sky and Phreekis.

Mrs. Braden remembered growing up on her family's chicken ranch on Madrone Avenue, and the day when her father trusted her to take the family's horse and wagon and deliver crates of eggs to the railroad depot on East Cotati Avenue. Jennie Falletti reminisced about her family, the Verondas, and their chicken ranch on what is now West Sierra Avenue. Connie Martin read from an autobiography written by her mother, Marguerite Revard, about growing up in Cotati as the daughter of real estate agents, Robert and Ethel Clothier. Gary Santero reminisced about his life on a busy family farm, and claimed that the mystery farm implement on display had been used by his father to brand wooden vegetable crates. Harold Griffith recalled history of the Cotati Volunteer Department, as well as his

childhood in Cotati. BB, Sky and Phreekis Paulekas remembered how their father, Vito, led dances in the Plaza, built the town's first bandstand and the statue of Chief Cotate. But most of all, they remembered the forts they built here and there around Cotati.

Lloyd Draper had an exhibit of historic Cotati photos on display, and after the program, visitors enjoyed talking to the speakers and remembering the Cotati of the past.

Thanks to Oliver's Market which provided cookies for the refreshment hour after the program and to the City of Cotati for granting use of the Cotati Room. Also thanks to Ian Streebel of Rancho Cotate High School Video Production class who is working on producing a video of the evening.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

If you have received this newsletter in the mail and you have e-mail, please send your e-mail address to: chsinfo@sonic.net. The Society saves lots of money by distributing newsletters electronically!

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 _____

A special THANK YOU for their printing courtesy to:

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(707)285-3400

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Cotati, Ca. 94931

CHS
Upcoming Event
April 19
Old Fashion
Chicken Barbecue
See Page 1 for details.