

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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Preserving Cotati's Past

P.O. Box 7013 Cotati, CA 94931

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Prue Draper & Connie Martin, Editors

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See many more BBQ
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cotatihistoricalsociety.org

Cotati Museum Hours:
Saturday 1 - 4 P.M.
2nd Wednesday of each
month 5:30 - 8 P.M.
Special times by appointment
Phone 707-794-0305

SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: Terry Dutra 795-3977

V.Pres.: Connie Martin 795-2772

Secretary: Marie McNaughton

Treasurer: Yvonne VanDyke

Historian: Prue Draper

Art Director: Judy Pagnusat

Archive Admin: Judy Gustafson

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.

Triplet Girls Brought Fame To Cotati In 1938

It was May 18, 1938, and Cotati was front page news. Marie and Egidio Andreoli, who owned a chicken ranch on Cypress Avenue, had triplets – identical baby girls.



Proud parents Maria and Egidio Andreoli beam over their three perfect little daughters, Marie, May and Melba on May 18, 1938. Petaluma General Hospital was deluged with visitors anxious to see the identical infants.

The world had been intrigued four years earlier by the birth of the Dionne quintuplets in Ontario, Canada. The five identical little girls became celebrities. Suddenly, Cotati was front page news when the Andreolis had three identical sisters for their young son Alfredo.

They were born at Petaluma General Hospital, and in those pre-x-ray, pre-sonogram days, they were completely unexpected, although 27-year-old Mrs. Andreoli had joked that she might be carrying twins. The first was born at 1:28 a.m., and weighed 5 pounds, 13 ½ ounces. Twenty minutes later a sister arrived, weighing 4 pounds, 13 ounces and at 1:56 a.m. the third arrived, weighing 5 pounds, 6 ounces. Andreoli said he had been praying for a daughter but had never imagined having three. He was quoted as saying "I guess this takes care of all our hopes, current and future, for quite some time."

The babies were promptly named: Marie, May and Melba. All three were healthy, and were undisturbed by the furor that overwhelmed the hospital, the local Argus-Courier newspaper, and the whole community. Hospital proprietor Mrs. Jo Millmeister was quoted as saying the triplets were "The best babies we ever had in the hospital; they eat and sleep and are no trouble."

The Argus-Courier, reporting that in cities where triplets are born, it was customary for the community to raise a fund for the babies, promptly did so, suggesting that money could be left at the newspaper office. Members of the Petaluma Parlor, Native Daughters of the Golden West, immediately planned a baby shower and other clubs and lodges followed suit with fundraisers of various kinds. The Pet Milk Company promised to supply

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The most welcome gift was the offer by Pet Milk Co. to provide milk for the growing girls. Left to right are Marie, May and Melba, age 23 months. Notice they are all wearing bracelets that were among their many gifts from friends and admirers.

Baby Triplets Made Cotati Famous *Continued from page 1*

milk, local furniture companies offered little beds and bedding, jewelers in Petaluma produced tiny necklaces and silver cups engraved with the girls' names.



Christening on Sept. 11, 1938 at the old St. Joseph's Church was a major celebration for all of Cotati. Left to right Egidio and Maria Andreoli with little Freddy; Mr. & Mrs. J.J. Morris, godparents with Melba; Rev. Father T. Hennesy; Victoria Reichmuth and Harry J. Oberg, godparents with May; Benadetta Crosetti and Andy Cunningham, godparents with Marie.

Local seamstresses made identical dresses and sweaters for the babies, starting a practice of dressing the girls alike that their mother continued until the three were teenagers.

When the Andreolis brought their baby girls home to Cypress Avenue, they prepared for the same avalanche of visitors that had been invading the hospital. May, Marie and Melba were tucked into a trundle bed set in the front window of the house so that admirers could view them without exposing them to germs. People drove from miles away to view the phenomenon of three identical sisters, all cooing and smiling. Big brother Freddie had a box on the front porch so he could peek in at the girls too.

Every event was reported in the Argus-Courier and by September, 1938, when the girls were christened at St. Joseph's Church, they had become celebrities. Every birthday, every donation, every benefit gathering was announced, and the girls grew up being celebrities. By the time they were nine and had their first communion at St. Joseph's, the photogenic three were quite accustomed to posing for photographers.

The triplets attended Cotati School and Petaluma Junior and Senior High Schools, and have continued to live in the Cotati area. Several of them worked in local businesses owned by their big brother, Fred Andreoli, who had a gas station, garage and towing business until his death in an accident on Aug. 15, 1996. Marie and Melba still live on the family ranch on Cypress Avenue, and May lives in Santa Rosa, but retains her social ties to her hometown.

They still have a host of friends in the Cotati area, and remember the days when they were so famous, but are content to live without the constant attention that marked their early years.



In 1956 proud papa Egidio Andreoli was going to visit his relatives in Italy, and took along this photo of his maturing family. In back, left to right, Fred, Maria and Egidio; seated Melba, Marie and May, age 18.



The triplets celebrated their 73rd birthday last year; Melba at left, May in center and Marie, right.

ESSAY CONTEST WINNER

The winner of our annual essay contest was revealed at our annual barbecue on April 15.....**Courtney Lee Kelly**. Courtney was among the large group of Thomas Page School fourth grade students who attended our field trip on Feb. 14 to learn more about Cotati's history in general and Dr. Thomas Stokes Page in particular.

Topic for the essay contest was "Describe who Thomas Page was and why he and his family were important to Cotati". The competition was stiff, as many of Courtney's classmates also wrote excellent essays, but hers was picked by the judges' panel as the best.

Courtney's prize was \$50, and the same amount was awarded to her teacher, Robin Greer, to be used to fill classroom needs. Cotati Historical Society President Terry Dutra presented the prizes.

Courtney is the daughter of Shannon Lee Maxwell, loves swimming, enjoys her pets: two cats, a dog and a chinchilla, and says math is her favorite school subject.



CHS President, Terry Dutra, left, presents essay winner's certificate and checks to Courtney Kelly, center, and her teacher, Robin Greer.

2012 BBQ Was The Best Ever

All agreed, our fourth annual barbecue on April 15 was the best so far. Not only was the barbecued chicken produced by Master Chefs Ed Gilardi, Bruce Martin and Fred Carrasca scrumptious, but the rest of the meal was too, and the bake sale was deliciously successful. General chair Terry Dutra managed the busy schedule and a throng of volunteer workers who made it all happen.

Our silent auction and 50/50 raffle this year broke records, not only for the amazing variety of treasures offered to the highest bidders but also for amount of money netted.

A show of vintage autos drew lots of admirers to the sunny courtyard at the Cotati Room, and live music kept the atmosphere lively. Our museum was crowded with browsers all afternoon and our new display on Music in Cotati drew many compliments.

But the most gratifying part, to our society members and to those who attended, were the warm, sociable reunions that took place between old friends and former neighbors. Many who used to live in or around Cotati came to reminisce, and enjoy the "old Cotati tradition" that inspires the annual barbecues.



Musicians: Gil Gardner and Patrick McCarty kept the barbecue crowd entertained.



Smiling servers: Cotati Mayor Sue Harvey and Master Chef Ed Gilardi on the serving line.



Candidate shares meal: Congressman Mike Thompson and his wife Jan, right, buy raffle tickets from Irene Hilsendager, an enthusiastic volunteer.



Museum visitors: Sisters, left to right, Martha Gustafson, Barbara Jean Veronda and Velma Di Meola join Prue Draper and Harold Griffith in touring the museum.

Lucky winner: Joan Simon celebrates winning wine.



Reunion of longtime friends: left to right, Bob Kennedy, Deanna Issel, Ken Lentz, Kathy (Jacobson) Norwood, and May Lou (Issel) Lentz recall their childhoods in Cotati.



Heirloom auto: Reta and Gary Santero displayed their 1938 Plymouth business coupe, which they restored and call "Gussy" in honor of their late uncle, August Bianchi.

Photos courtesy of Jerry Pagnusat

**Since March 2012
We have welcomed -**

DONORS

Bill & Connie Hammerman
J. Pat Geis

NEW MEMBERS

May Andreoli
J. Pat Geis
Bill & Connie Hammerman
Irene Hilsendager
Alice Inouye
Syd Lundgren
Kiyoko Kay Maruyama
Marie Rize

THANK YOU TO THESE MANY GENEROUS BBQ DONORS

A Cut Above, Ann & Fred Carrasca, Barbara's Bakery, Baskin Robbins, Bev Palm, Cafe Salsa, Cathryn Fairlee, Chris Davis, Clover Stornetta Farms, Cotati Oaks True Value, Dana Gustafson, Double Decker Lanes, Driven Raceway, Ed Gilardi, Franco-American Bakery, Freeman Collision Center, Heidi Rose, Hub Cyclery, In & Out Burger, Infineon Raceway, Janet Orchard, Joan Simon, John & Ann Rock, Judy Gustafson, Judy Pagnusat, Kevin Comora, Kurt Kemp, Lagunitas Brewing Co., Larsen's Feed & Pet Supply, Louise Petersen, Marvin's Restaurant, Mike's At The Crossroads, More Unlimited, Nancy Hunt, Oliver's Market, Outback Steakhouse, Outdoor Pro Shop, Papa Murphy's Pizza, Peet's Coffee, Pond & Garden, Prue Draper, Redwood Cafe, Robin Draper, Santero Tractor Service, Scandia Family Fun Center, Simone Wilson & Creighton Bell, Sonoma Compost, Sonoma Co. Regional Parks, Spancky's, Terralinda Dairy, The Tradewinds, Tim Danesi, Washoe Creek Golf Course, Washoe House

NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

You, too, can help preserve Cotati's history as members of the Cotati Historical Society. **Dues are still only \$10 per person per year.** Please complete this form and send with your check to:

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

Name/s _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

2012 Dues were due in January.

We note that some of our most treasured friends have not paid their dues for 2012 although 165 members are paid up. It is only \$10 per year.

A special THANK YOU for their printing courtesy to:

MORE unlimited
8282 Old Redwood Hwy., Cotati
(707)285-3400

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

*Plan to visit our museum and enjoy
the history of music in Cotati.*



Judy Pagnusat, Museum Art Director, welcomes viewers to the new music display in the CHS Museum.