

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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Cotati Museum Hours:

Saturday 1 - 4 P.M.

2nd Wednesday of each
month 5 - 7 P.M.

Special times by appointment

Phone 707-794-0305

Learn more about Cotati history and
the Cotati Museum at our [website:](http://www.cotatihistoricalociety.org)
www.cotatihistoricalociety.org

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

Barbecues Became Local Tradition

When we hold our fifth annual Cotati Historical Society chicken barbecue on April 14, we'll be continuing a historic tradition that made Cotati famous years ago. It started as a family picnic for St. Joseph's Catholic Church parishioners in 1940 when Father Denis Glennon was pastor.

The first was held at Oak Grove near Sonoma; the second and third were held in Olive Grove, near Fetters Springs. World War II, with gasoline rationing and shortages, led the parish to move the annual event to the Cotati Plaza, and how it grew after that! No longer limited to St. Joseph's members, by the early 1950's it had become Northern California's largest chicken and beef barbecue, and advertised itself as "Food, Fun and Frolic for 5000". It was always held in the Plaza on the fourth Sunday in June, and crowds came from miles around.



Beverly Hahn and Doreen Ferrero helped publicize St. Joseph's popular barbecue and festival.



1963 workers preparing for the 23rd BBQ. Left to right are John Fomasi, co-chairman of the chicken barbecue committee; Art Nelson, of the lamb barbecue committee; Joe Aggio, on the bean-cooking committee, and Rosalia Aggio, in charge of salad making.

Preparing for it became a year-round job, and committees held bi-monthly meetings to be sure everything got done. St. Joseph's parishioners welcomed other community members as the menu and program expanded. They cut the wood for the barbecue a year in advance so it would be nicely seasoned.

In addition to chicken, they served pit-roasted beef, and local ranchers raised four steers just for the event. Preparing the well-aged beef was a special art that required the efforts of a sizable committee who cut the meat,

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5th Annual Cotati Historical Society Old Fashioned Chicken BBQ



Sunday April 14, 2013

12 - 4 PM (Meals served until 3 PM)

Ray Miller Community Center, 216 E. School St., Cotati

\$10 in advance, \$12 at door

Tickets available at Chamber of Commerce Office, Cotati Exchange Bank or CHS Board Members
or by calling: (707)795-5508 or 795-3977

*Silent Auction
Live Music*

*Car Show
Bake Sale*

Barbecue Tradition Lives On

Continued from page 1



Marguerite Hahn and her husband Jack were always key players in the barbecue scene. Jack often served as chairman for the day, and Marguerite, seen here selling tickets, was never far behind. She was also the town historian, and took the photos we feature today.

seasoned it and wrapped it in layers of butcher paper, then burlap, and wired the bundles firmly together.

A few days before the barbecue, a deep pit was dug in the Plaza, and filled with firewood, then lit. Keeping the fire going seemed to require a lot of supervision, and men of the community were happy to hang out there through days and nights, with liberal liquid refreshments to keep them relaxed. When the coals were perfect, sheet iron was laid over the coals, the meat bundles laid on the sheet iron, covered with more sheets, and then earth was shoveled over to seal in the succulent delicacy.

Another committee would be cutting the chickens – usually 1200 to 1500 of them – and preparing them for the barbecue. These would be cooked on a 40-foot long barbecue

built of basalt brick lined with fire brick. According to local lore, it was the largest above-ground barbecue in Northern California. In the meantime, the women would be busy cooking more than 300 pounds of beans, making over 1000 pounds of potato salad and slicing hundreds of loaves of bread.

A parade of local families and businesses started the program for the day, there was a “Queen for a Day” contest, music and dancing, bazaar booths and assorted kinds of entertainment. In addition to the great food and drink and the fun of seeing friends from far and near, there were games of all kinds to keep people entertained. They all cost a bit of money, but sometimes they paid off too.

Proceeds of the barbecues paid off all debt on the church and raised money to buy land and build the new hilltop St. Joseph’s Church. After reaching that goal, the workers turned their attention to other endeavors, and the huge barbecues ended. *We are happy to revive the tradition, and we welcome volunteers, goodies for our popular bake sale and items for our silent auction. Like old St. Joseph’s, this is our major fundraiser for the year.*



Fireman Glenn Nylander clowning with antique fire truck as part of the parade.

Welcome to our new and renewing members

Barbara Abramson, Marion Ackerman, Mark Ackerman, Marie Aggio, John Allred, May Andreoli, Erin Armstrong, Marie Baranzini, Laurie-Ann Barbour, Mary Bartlett, George & Karen Baur, Creighton Bell, Frank & Kathryn Bianchi, Jenny Blaker, Lillian Blodgett, Dick & Jo-Ann Braden, Alan Budinsky, George Bunting, Paul & Kerry Burke, Diane Canadas, Ken & Sheri Carli, Ann & Fred Carrasca, Kevin Comora, Sarah Cornelius, Ralph Cota, Chris Davis, Velma DiMeola, Julie Dinkins, Diane Dorfman, Vickie Dougan, Bob Draper, Prue Draper, Robin Draper, Terry & Wil Dutra, Jennie Falletti, Jane Ferina, Geoff & Amy Fox, Maurice & Betty Fredericks, Barbara Gegan, J. Pat Geis, Bob & Wendy Gilman, Faith Gingher, Janet Gingher, Harold Griffith, Fred Groverman, Greg Gustafson, Judy Gustafson, Martha Gustafson, F. Paul & Carolyn Hacker, Bill & Connie Hammerman, Sally Harper, Jone Hayes, Dave & Karen Heisel, Irene Hilsendager, Sage Howell, Dennis & Jennifer Hunt, Nancy Hunt, Andrew & Catharine Hutchins, Art & Vicky Ibleto, Mark Ibleto, Alice Inouye, Nancy Justis, Pat Kavanaugh, Val Kinsbury,

Eric Kirchmann, Bill & Lucy Kortum, Janet & Michael Kurvers, Mark & Jan Landman, Lorraine Leivas, Mary Lou Lentz, Jeff & Janet Libarle, Syd Lundgren, Bruce, Heather & Ali Martin, Jr., Bruce & Connie Martin, Gary, Kim & Jake Martin, Kiyoko Maruyama, Mary Nell McCann, Terry & Barbara McGee, Marie McNaughton, Eleanor Miller, Jerry Miller, Millie Nibe, Kathy Jacobsen Norwood, Tom Origer, DeLoris Osborn, Ellen Ostrand, Dolores Owen, John & Anne Page, Jerry & Judy Pagnusat, Ed Patterson, Bruce Pearson, Gary & Louise Petersen, Ron & Connie Petty, Stan Poncia, Jeanne Pratt, Jim Ramsey, Lindee Reese, John Richardson, Bob & Debbie Renati, John & Anne Rock, Marjorie Rosselli, Chris Santero, Gary & Reta Santero, John & Vickie Scharer, Carl & Mary Schollmann, Tom Scott, Mike Sheehan, Joan Simon, Sonoma County Library, Spancky's, Dan & Carolyn Torliatt, Lee & Marjorie Torliatt, Pam Torliatt, Yvonne VanDyke, Barbara Jean Veronda, Dorothy Watt, Mariann Weed, Suzanne Whipple, Pamela Wilford, Carol Williams, Simone Wilson, Jack Withington, Robin Wood.

Much Appreciated DONATIONS

John Allred, Dick & Jo-Ann Braden, Paul & Kerry Burke, Fred & Ann Carrasca, Vickie Dougan, Jennie Falletti, Barbara Gegan, Pat Geis, Bob & Wendy Gilman, Faith Gingher, Janet Gingher, Martha Gustafson, Jone Hayes, Dave & Karen Heisel, Nancy Hunt, Nancy Justis, Michael & Janet Kurvers, Janet & Jeff Libarle, Bruce & Heather Martin, Jr., Terry & Barbara McGee, Marie McNaughton, Kathy Norwood, DeLoris Osborn, John & Anne Page, Bruce Pearson, Gary & Louise Petersen, Bob & Debbie Renati, John Richardson, John & Anne Rock, Gary & Reta Santero, Mike Sheehan, Carol Williams.

Museum Hosts Field Trip

For the third year, the Cotati Historical Society hosted fourth graders from Thomas Page Academy to help them learn more about our city and its history. Accompanied by teachers **Robin Greer** and **Mira Patel**, the 56 students toured Cotati City Hall, Cotati Police Department and our Historical Museum.

The February 7 field trip precedes the essay contest that we sponsor every year on the theme: "Describe who Thomas Page was and why he and his family were important to Cotati".



In the City Council chambers, CHS Art Director **Judy Pagnusat** led an art exercise that illustrated the hexagonal Cotati Plaza and its streets named for sons of Thomas Page, first developer of the Cotati Rancho.

The Police Department visit for one group turned extra exciting when an emergency call came that resulted in an arrest. Reserve Officer **Paul Goodin** introduced students to the booking area.



In the City Administration Office, **Lisa Moore**, a member of the Planning Commission, helped students learn about the Cotati General Plan process and how permits are obtained.

Students will submit their essays by 3 p.m. Friday, March 15, for judging by a committee of CHS members. Cash prizes of \$50 for the winning student and \$50 for his/her class will be awarded at our annual Old Fashioned Chicken Barbecue on April 14.



A welcome by CHS President **Terry Dutra** started the students' day, and they were divided into four groups. Each had parent supervisors and a member of the Historical Society, as they toured the various departments. CHS escorts were, **Velma DiMeola, Connie Martin, Marie McNaughton, Sylvia Palmer and Yvonne VanDyke.**



In the Cotati Museum, professional storyteller **Cathryn Fairlee** told the story of early Cotati, from the lifestyle of the Coast Miwok who were the earliest inhabitants to the arrival of the Thomas Page family and their development of the community of Cotati. Historian **Prue Draper** explained how Cotati has evolved into the busy city it is today.

Photos by Jerry Pagnusat

Cotati Led The Way in 1922

We love mail!

We're indebted to Katherine Rinehart, a Library Associate at the Sonoma County History and Genealogy Library, for a clipping from the Petaluma Daily Courier dated Feb. 19, 1922. It reports that Fred Keppel, manager of the Cotati Rancho for the Page Family, had explained a Cotati tree-planting program at a meeting in Petaluma.

Mr. Keppel said the Cotati Promotion Club had already

planted trees along four miles of the Redwood Highway, and Cotati was inviting Petaluma and Santa Rosa to join in the effort to plant trees along more of the highway. Cotati had ordered enough black walnut trees at a cost of 20 cents each to plant 16 miles of trees 100 feet apart.

The Petaluma audience was enthusiastic about following suit and planting trees that winter, according to the news item.

We wonder if this effort evolved into the redwoods that were planted along the new 101 freeway after it opened.

Still Time to Pay Dues for 2013!

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 to:

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

Yes I want to renew my membership for 2013

Name/s _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

We can save postage by sending quarterly newsletters on-line.

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**

***Help us make our 2013
Silent Auction even bigger!***



Last year's Silent Auction drew lots of bidders. This year's can be even better. Donations of merchandise or gift certificates are welcome.

Call Prue Draper, 795-5510, Connie Martin, 792-2772, or Terry Dutra, 795-3977.