

# Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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

Preserving Cotati's Past  
P.O. Box 7013 Cotati, CA 94931  
E-mail [chsinfo@sonic.net](mailto:chsinfo@sonic.net)

June 2013

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.cotatihistoricalsociety.org)  
[www.cotatihistoricalsociety.org](http://www.cotatihistoricalsociety.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

### Welcome to our most recent

#### Donors

Janet Orchard

Barbara Jean Veronda

#### New & Renewing Members

Pat Anderson, Michael Benzon,

Harold & Julie Berkemeier,

Laura Gray, Linell Hardy, Barry

& Darryl Henke, Bob Jensen,

Clifford Miller, John & Lisa

Moore, Bob & Mabel Nelson,

Janet Orchard, Marie Rice, Allen

Stansbury & Eleanor Wass

## WHY DID COTATI WANT TO BE A CITY?

This year marks a half-century since the people of Cotati decided that they needed to have an incorporated municipality instead of just a close-knit town. Let's look at what led them (us) to that conclusion.

People had been living in Cotati for over 60 years. It was a friendly community based on agriculture ....most residents had at least a few chickens and the majority had many more than a few – efficient ranches on which families raised 5000 or more hens and sold the eggs to earn their livelihood.

Cotati had a vital business community, with two grocery stores, several general stores selling tools, clothing and medicines, a feed store, a lumber yard, busy real estate offices and a variety of small independent mom-and-pop type businesses.

There was a public utility district led by a local board of directors that provided water and sewer service and ran an efficient sewage treatment plant. There was a well-trained and equipped fire district with hired professionals managing a big crew of volunteers who turned out in a minute when the fire siren blew. The Cotati School District managed the local school, as it had since 1893. The Chamber of Commerce served as the voice of the community and several service organizations, including the Lions Club, Women's Improvement Club, American Legion and Grange gave the people an opportunity to participate in managing the town.

So.....why incorporate?

It was a matter of self-preservation. For more than 30 years the vast acres of land north of Cotati had been a seed farm.....1600 acres of sweet peas, carrots, lettuce, radishes owned and operated by the Rohnert family....and the people of Cotati were quite accustomed to that. In 1954 Paul Golis and Maurice Fredericks, both attorneys, announced that they had obtained options to the Rohnert lands and were planning a community based on neighborhood units and estimated to have 1500 residents. Cotati people were both astonished and skeptical.

But step-by-step, Rohnert Park became a reality. In 1960, Golis and Fredericks attempted to incorporate as a city. But by a vote of 118 to 85, the pioneers of Rohnert Park rejected the proposal.

That launched a study of joint incorporation of Cotati and Rohnert Park. A municipal expert, William Zion, was engaged to study the two communities; his conclusion was that while it was feasible, he did not feel joint incorporation was advisable.



*Big float in Petaluma parade showed Cotati's pride in being the newest city in California.*

*Continued on page 2*

## Why Cotati Incorporated *Continued from page 1*

Rohnert Park then hired Zion to study their incorporation alone; he approved, and in the summer of 1962, Rohnert Park, with an estimated population of 2,775, became the newest city in Sonoma County.

This was startling news for Cotati folk. Rohnert Park would have powers to control what happened in Cotati, and they were already taking steps to annex some of Cotati's most choice commercial properties. Cotati had worked hard to convince the State of California to build its new university here, and residents were brimming with community pride.

It was Dr. Bill Kortum who immediately realized the danger to the town of Cotati, and he launched the effort to incorporate Cotati. Lloyd Draper led a citizens' committee that began rushing to get signatures of local property owners; Realtor Joe Dorfman located a surveyor who, on a weekend, produced the necessary legal descriptions of the proposed City of Cotati, and the papers were filed one day before Rohnert Park received official city status from the county supervisors.

The election was set for July 2, 1963, and a rally in the Plaza the night before drew a huge crowd for a bonfire, music and speeches. The turnout for the election was record-setting: 84% of the citizens voted...278 in favor, 47 opposed. Sam Houser, Oliver Chadwick, Stanley Olsson, Harold Groom and Al Falletti were elected to the first city council.

Tiny Cotati had saved its identity, and on July 13, 2013, we will celebrate our golden anniversary.

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BARBECUE!



*Jan Landman and Jackie DelOsso served the hundreds of happy diners.*



*Margy James, Eleanor Wass and Cathie Nelson savored the BBQ chicken and all the trimmings.*

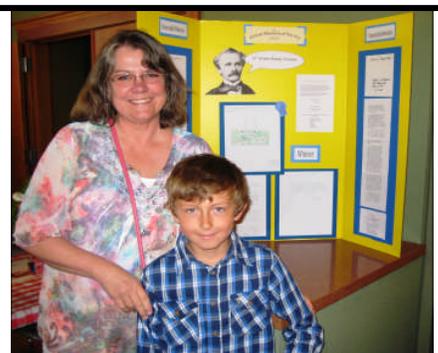


*Rhonda Noles organized a show of classic cars.*

*Photos by Jerry Pagnusat*

Our fifth annual chicken barbecue on April 14 in the Cotati Room was a rousing success as old friends held reunions and enjoyed the scrumptious meal and bake sale. Our silent auction drew enthusiastic bidders and the museum's treasury got a great boost.

***Thank you to the many volunteers who made it possible!***



### **Essay Contest Winner**

Jasper Pamatmat, a fourth grader at Thomas Page Academy, and his teacher, Robin Greer, shared their pride and the prizes awarded for his win of our annual Essay Contest about Thomas Page and his family. Jasper and his teacher each received \$50 checks from CHS President and Barbecue Chairman Terry Dutra.

## ***A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL BARBECUE DONORS!***

**24 Hr. Fitness Health Club, Barbara's Bakery, Brixx, Bruce Martin, Cafe Salsa, Cathryn Fairlee, Chris Davis, Clover Stornetta, Creighton Bell, Cruisin' The Boulevard, Double Decker Lanes, Driven Raceway, Ed Gilardi, Ellen Ostrand, Escape, Foxtail Golf Club, Franco American Bakery, Fred & Ann Carrasca, Freeman Collision Center, Golf Mart, Hawley Winery & Vineyard, Hub Cyclery, In & Out Burger, Joan Simon, Judy Gustafson, Judy Pagnusat, Katherine Rinehart, Kelly Smith, Knimble, Kurt Kemp, Lagunitas, Larsen's Feed Store, Lynn's Thai Restaurant, Mai Vietnamese Cuisine, Marie McNaughton, Marvin's, Mary's Pizza, Michael's Harley-Davidson, Mike's at the Crossroads, Oilstop Drive Thru Oil Change, Oliver's Market, Outback Steakhouse, Papa Murphy's Pizza, Pasta King, Peet's Coffee, Pond & Garden, Professional Framing Services, Prue Draper, Red Lobster Restaurant, Redwood Cafe, Robin Draper, Santero Tractor Service, Scandia Family Fun Center, Simone Wilson, Sonoma Co. Regional Parks, Sonoma Compost, Sonoma Co. Fair/Bev Palm, Sonoma Raceway, Spancky's, Terralinda Dairy, Tradewinds, Washoe Creek Golf Course, Washoe House.**

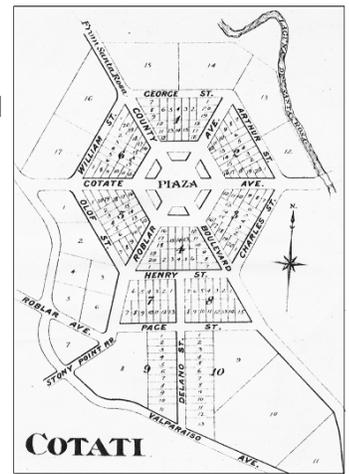
# A local mystery: Cotati hexagons

Throughout the history of architecture and community planning, humans have relied on a few key geometric forms for design: circles, radials, quadrangles, grids and other easily defensible or traversable patterns. There are variants, of course: Orson Fowler's octagon houses of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, for example.

But did you know that Cotati's hexagonal plaza may be one of only three in the world?

Many hexagonal structures and plans have been conceived over the centuries, but few have actually been built and fewer survive. Augustus Woodward's 1807 hexagonal plan for Detroit, mentioned in the text of Cotati's California Landmark plaque in La Plaza, appears to have been abandoned as early as the 1820s. When Rancho Cotate manager Wilfred Page and Santa Rosa civil engineer Newton V.V. Smyth laid out the plaza in 1893, it may have been the only one of its time.

City planning professors David Gordon (Queen's College) and Eran Ben-Joseph (MIT) wrote in 2010 that they knew of only two extant hexagonal plans besides Cotati: a section of New Delhi, India (Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, 1913) and a neighborhood in Wythes-shawe, United Kingdom (designed by Barry Parker, 1927-28).



*The original subdivision map of Cotati commissioned by the Page Family showed the hexagonal plaza.*



*The huge hexagonal Page ranch barn topped the hill where St. Joseph's Church is now.*

The Thomas Page family of the 1800s, primary developer of the Cotate Land Grant, seems to have loved hexagons: The Rancho Cotate barn and watering trough were hexagonal. Aerial views of their Stick-style Victorian home show a hexagonal tower. And, of course, when the Pages planned the town, they created the "Hub of Sonoma County" hexagonal plaza and street plan. Additional research indicates that Page in-laws, the Mailliards of Marin, also had a hexagonal barn.

But no one seems to know the significance of the shape in local planning and architecture.

Can you help the Cotati Historical Society solve this mystery?

No suggestion is too outlandish. More pictures and documents, of course, would be greatly appreciated. Please send any and all information to Marie McNaughton, at [mrmac@sonic.net](mailto:mrmac@sonic.net).

(For Gordon and Ben-Joseph's authoritative paper on hexagonal planning (2000), see <http://web.mit.edu/ejb/www/Hexagonal.pdf>.)

*Contributed by Marie McNaughton*

## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT COTATI?

What was Papa Murphy's Pizza building before it was a pizza store? Has the Eight Ball building always been a bar? How about the Redwood Café? Always a restaurant?

The Cotati Historical Society will give you a chance to show off your knowledge of Cotati's historic buildings and vie for prizes at the July 13 celebration of Cotati's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The "**Cotati History Hunt**" begins in mid June to give everybody a chance to ponder the past lives of 31 historic business buildings in central Cotati.

Questionnaires will be available at the Cotati Chamber of Commerce office, Exchange Bank and Cotati City Hall, beginning June 17. They may be turned in early in a special lockbox at the Exchange Bank or on

July 13 at the Cotati Historical Society booth at the anniversary celebration.

The anniversary celebration will start at 7 a.m. with a free pancake breakfast at the Church of the Oaks. The traditional Kids Day parade begins at 10 a.m. on East School Street adjacent to City Hall and will feature a "Happy Birthday" theme.

Fun in the Plaza will include games for the children, food and merchandise booths, history display, photo booth, history walk thru downtown Cotati led by Prue Draper, and music for dancing and listening.

This is a free public event, and a fitting, Cotati-type celebration of our city's golden anniversary. Let's all join in wishing Cotati 50 more years of peace and prosperity.

# 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.*

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



**CITY OF COTATI** Est. 1893  
Inc. 1963 • 2013

**50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
&  
**Cotati Kids Day**  
Annual Parade & Festival

**Saturday, July 13, 2013**  
La Plaza Park & Downtown Cotati  
7:00 AM - 6:00 PM

The whole town will be celebrating!  
FREE Pancake Breakfast (7:00 - 9:00 am) at Church of the Oaks  
21<sup>st</sup> Annual Kids Day Parade • Games • Contests • Prizes • Kids Activities  
History Tour & Treasure Hunt • Entertainment • Refreshments  
Vendors • Food • Music by PRIDE & JOY  
Local VIP's & More

Presented by:  
City of Cotati, Cotati Chamber of Commerce, Cotati High School, Cotati Historical Society

**WWW.COTATI50TH.COM**