

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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Preserving Cotati's Past

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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 5:30 - 8 P.M.

Special times by appointment
Phone 707-794-0305

Learn more about Cotati History and
the Cotati Museum at our Website:
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

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.

Historic 8 Ball Tavern One of Cotati's Oldest Continuing Businesses

Cotati has quite a few antique business buildings, and most of them have changed uses several times over the years. Example: Redwood Café started life as a lumber business, became a pharmacy, changed into a general store and soda fountain, became a student cooperative of many small retail stores, then a café and movie house, and finally, Redwood Café. The corner building housing Arch's Glass and Miller Driving School began as a garage and became a Frizelle -Enos Feed Store. The building containing Knimble Clothing, Brixx Restaurant and Tradewinds Tavern also was an early garage, then a paint factory, and in succeeding years a newspaper plant, an auto parts store, a launderette, a used furniture store and a Greek and later, Italian restaurant.



The brand new 8-Ball Tavern, soon after it opened in 1937. Owners Howard and Mildred Jacobsen had previously owned a tavern in Petaluma.

A notable exception is the 8 Ball Tavern, which was built in 1937, and was named The 8 Ball from the beginning. Builder was Howard Jacobsen, and according to his daughter, Kathleen Jacobsen Norwood, he and his wife Mildred chose the name because they found a battered 8 ball hidden in the rafters of an old house on the property. Nobody knows how or why it got there.

Ken Ross, who lived there with his parents before the Jacobsens, said he had no knowledge of the mysterious ball. He remembered his father, Cecil Ross, as a very shy man who had always worked for his father, Robert Ross, owner of Cotati's big general store. Ken could never remember his father drinking or cursing, and can't imagine him playing pool. He said his mother was a devout Christian Scientist who would have destroyed the 8 ball on sight.

So the origin of the bar's name remains a mystery. But the tavern became a popular community gathering place, with Jacobsen as bartender, assisted by his wife. Their daughter remembers hearing that if her father was tending bar and had a disruptive customer he would always call his wife; the problem-maker would usually listen to her and leave without an incident.

The tavern served hamburgers, sandwiches, pickled eggs, potato salads and other snack foods. Mildred Jacobsen was the cook, along with her mother, Frances Ward, who had been a cook at a popular



Howard Jacobsen and his wife Mildred, original owners and operators of the 8-Ball. They constructed the building and named the tavern after a battered 8-ball they found in the rafters of a building on the property.

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Jacobsen began building apartments behind his tavern in the early 1940's. People still enjoy telling friends that they "live behind the 8-Ball". More apartments were added in later years.

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restaurant known at the Duck Inn, farther north on Redwood Highway. The 8 Ball also had pinball machines and of course, pool tables.

The Jacobsens began building rental apartments in the early 1940's, giving many local residents the opportunity to boast that they "lived behind the Eight Ball."

Glenn Nylander, fondly known as "Stinky" because his logo was a skunk, began tending bar with Jacobsen in about 1945. He continued when Jacobsen retired from bartending to build a new home for his family at the south end of the property.

The Jacobsens sold the bar business to Jack Barley and George Simoncini about 1952, and the house, bar and apartments were sold in 1960 to Simon and Mona Jaffe. Subsequent owners were Armand Waldemar and since 1974, Frank and Marlene Blankenship. Their son Steve managed the business for several years until his death, and the Blankenships now lease the tavern to Rick Grell and John Graham, who carry on its popular reputation.

The apartments have been sold, and a portion of the old Jacobsen property is now the location of Frogsong Co-Housing.



The 8-Ball was still quite new when a run-away car smashed into the front entryway. Note that the building across Charles Street that is now TamaRama was then Rayburn's Grocery and Liquor Store.

All 8-Ball photos courtesy of Kathleen Jacobsen Norwood.

We love to hear from readers - even when they send corrections

We enjoy hearing from people who have read our newsletter and have Cotati memories to share. A recent one was Bruce Cleveland, who wrote to tell us about his grandfather, "Bill" Budinsky, whom we had referred to as "Vladimar". Bruce wanted us to know that although his grandfather was, indeed, called Bill, his real name was Velimir, and he was Serbian.

His wife, Mary, and he lived at 501 East Cotati Ave. with their two children, Alan and Ann, who is Bruce Cleveland's mother. Bill Budinsky was a skilled builder and contractor, and built many homes in and around Cotati, including the Falletti home on West Sierra Avenue. He also was well-known for building picnic furniture for the Plaza, and an altar for St. Joseph's Church.

Bruce recalled that his grandfather used hand tools he had learned to handle in his home country, Yugoslavia, and as an apprentice in San Francisco after escaping from Europe during World War I.

Bruce said he still has fond memories of the Cotati of the 60's and 70's when he and his brother would play in the fields around their grandparents' home.

Bill Budinsky died in 1983, but his wife Mary continued to live in their family home until her death in 2008.

Another message came from Alan Gerald, who enjoyed our story about the Ass-To-Ass Races. Alan said he won third place in an Ass-To-Ass race and also in the Half-Ass race, in which he competed with Actor Robin Williams and beat him. They met outside the port-a-johns.

Alan also recollects that one of the race t-shirts had the distinction of being the only t-shirt officially banned at Disneyland

Alan also sent us this photo of the two stuffed donkeys he won, and which he still treasures.



These cute stuffed donkeys were prizes at the Ass-to-Ass races. Alan Gerald still has them on his bookshelf.

2013 Membership Drive

January will mark the time when membership dues are payable, and we'll be sending out renewal notices for 2013.

If you would like to send in your 2013 dues before the end of the year, please use the form on page 4 of this newsletter.

Your renewals will be greatly appreciated, and will help us in our goal of preserving Cotati's history.

Welcome to our new members - We are happy to know that you also cherish Cotati history.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Alan Budinsky | Millie Nibe |
| Velma DiMeola | Mariann Short Weed |
| Misti Harris | Robin Wood |
| Pat Kavanaugh | |

Memories of Cotati School Enlivened Afternoon Program



Featured speakers were, left to right, Ken Macklin, Ken Carli, Marc Libarle, Prue Draper, moderator, Karl Schollmann and Gary Santero.

Memories of school days ranging from the 1920's to the 1970's had the audience nodding and giggling on November 4 as former students recalled what it was like to attend Cotati School. Gary Santero, one of the featured speakers, remembered the "board of education" - an oversized ping-pong paddle—that was occasionally administered by a principal, to the pain of a misbehaving pupil. Marc Libarle recalled riding his bicycle to school every day and parking in a big barn.



Mona Rivers Pelton, left and Lillian Elison Blodgett reminisced about their days as Cotati School students. Judy Pagnusat is at right.

Ken Carli remembered smuggling chalk into a classmate's tuna sandwich. Tricks like that earned detention in the hall or cloakroom. Karl Schollmann had special reverence for Principal Annagene Cornish, who drove a 1956 white Thunderbird convertible.

Paul Arthur especially cherished hot dog days and the joy of "graduation" from the small playground to a big fourth grade one with a huge eucalyptus tree.

Lillian Blodgett, whose family came from Finland, remembered that she spoke no English when she started school, and complained when she had to go again. Mona Pelton's recollection was how sad and puzzled she felt when her Japanese-American schoolmates were relocated.

Our sincere thanks to all who attended, and contributed a precious assortment of souvenirs of their school days for our museum collection.

Photos by Jerry Pagnusat

Wedding Guests Tour the Cotati Historical Museum



Don Scales, left and Jayme James, right, were greeted by Museum Docent Jennie Falletti when they visited after the Carpenter-Jellicoe wedding.



It's unusual for a wedding to include a visit to a museum, but that's what happened on October 6, when Kim Carpenter and Roger Jellicoe exchanged vows at the Church of the Oaks.



Newlyweds dance - a "first" for our museum. Kim is the daughter of Yvonne Van-Dyke, Cotati Historical Society Treasurer.

Cotati School Photos & Memorabilia needed:

We are gathering items in preparation for a Cotati School exhibit that will be on display during 2013.

Items can be donated or just loaned for the year. If photos, we will return them after copying.

Share your memories!

2013 Calendar

January	Membership renewals mailed
February 7	Thomas Page 4th grade field trip to Cotati Historical Museum, City Hall & Police Department.
March 15	History contest essays due
April 14	Annual BBQ & Silent Auction

IT'S TIME TO PAY YOUR DUES!

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.

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*From all of us at the
Cotati Historical Society*