

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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

Preserving Cotati's Past
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October 2017

Marie McNaughton, Editor

Vol. 10 No. 3

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Archiving Administrator:	Judy Gustafson
Membership:	Yvonne Van Dyke
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Museum Volunteer Coordinator:	Bobbie Veronda 795-4545

COTATI MUSEUM HOURS

Every Saturday, 1-4 p.m.
2nd Tuesdays, 5-7 p.m.

For tours and appointments,
call 707-794-0305

*Inside Cotati City Hall
201 West Sierra Avenue*

THE CHS MISSION

As stated in our Articles of Incorporation, dated April 11, 2007, the specific purposes of the Cotati Historical Society are 1) to protect and preserve the history and culture of the City of Cotati, California, 2) to provide a permanent resource (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, and 3) to reach out to the general community and to support similarly guided educational and historical agencies.

History of the Cotati Historical Society & Museum

Part I, The Early Years, 2007 to 2010

As CHS continues its 10th year, we are reviewing the early days of our founding, the beginnings of the museum and the initial events that now constitute Cotati traditions: the spring barbecue, summer parades, and fall history events and open houses.

The Cotati Historical Society was founded in April 2007 by longtime Cotatians Prue and Lloyd Draper. With the pro bono assistance of local attorney Maurice Fredericks, the society incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission of collecting and preserving the history of the community of Cotati.

The Drapers—journalists and former publishers of *The Cotatian* newspaper, as well as cultural and political volunteers—had been accumulating historic images and artifacts for some 50 years, filling their back bedroom with such items as volunteer fire chief Burt Chadwick's barber chair and decades of records of the Cotati Ladies' Improvement Club, founded in 1910. They published *Cotati*, an Arcadia Press Images of America book of historic photos in 2004, and realized that they already had the makings of an archive, permanent displays, and years of museum exhibits.



Visit our new display honoring Prue and Lloyd Draper, curated by CHS vice president Sandra Walton —with assists from Simone Wilson and Bob and Robin Draper

CHS's first directors were Prue as president and Lloyd as vice president; Terry Dutra, treasurer; Suzanne Whipple, secretary; Lisa Moore, ways & means chair (later outreach chair); Connie Martin, newsletter. Membership dues were set at an easy \$10 per year (and remain so in 2017). First on their agenda was creating public awareness of the society and its plans to establish a museum. Within the first year, the City of Cotati agreed to lease space for \$1 a year, in what had been the first grade classroom of the 1921 Cotati School (now Cotati City Hall).

The public kick-off meeting previewed designs for the renewed space, old photos and memorabilia already acquired, and inspired the donation by artist Lorraine Leivas of two acrylic paintings of local landmarks—Church of the Oaks and Spanky's tavern. An article in *The Community Voice* newspaper garnered still more donations—photos of the old post office and first gas station (now Hines Signs) were uncovered. Janice Nelson donated a brass Howe farm scale used on the Rancho Cotate in the 19th century and a gilt-trimmed mustache cup owned by her grandfather Frank Lund who bought his piece of Cotati in 1893.

Continued on page 2



Photo above, Bruce and Gary Martin moved Burt Chadwick's vintage barber chair from the Draper home for restoration, 2009. To the left, Bob Herrerias (far left) and other early museum supporters visited the old first grade classroom to see new dry wall, images of the past, and plans for the future, 2010. Uncredited.



At top, Bruce Martin, Simone Wilson, Bob Renati, Dave Thomas, and Connie Martin dust and load the first display cabinets from Harry Bosworth's Geyserville barn. 2008. Next, at the inaugural CHS BBQ, chefs Ed Gilardi, Bob Carrasca, and Bruce Martin entered bearing poultry. 2009. In the middle, hundreds of old-timers, newcomers, and local officials packed the City Council Chambers to celebrate the museum's grand opening. Well wishers took turns entering the museum, 2010. Above, Lindsay Caudel and Melanie Mattos clipped a webbed portal and musician Laurie Litton shared a polka or two, 2010. At right, Ben Oretsky, Bill Kortum, and Louise Roberts Steacy regaled history buffs at the fall panel event, 2010. Photo credits: Judy and Jerry Pagnusat, Lloyd Draper, Paul Hacker, Patti Davi.

CHS celebrates 10 years of making and preserving history, from page 1

Within our first year, a Memorial Fund was begun in honor of Elaine Thomas, an early supporter of CHS. The first edition of the newsletter was issued and a request for more volunteers and historical artifacts and images was responded to by many.

In May 2008, descendants of Cotati's founding family, Olof and Charles Page, toured our city, visited Thomas Page School, and viewed plans for the coming museum, including Patricia Diaz from Santiago, Chile, and John Page of Palo Alto. John Page presented CHS with a detailed, illustrated history of Dr. Thomas Page, his family, and the early ranch.

CHS entered the Penngrove Parade for the first time, featuring Jaime Llopis's 1939 Cadillac limousine. Cotati native Lena Braden, age 92, "waved to the crowd in a manner befitting a queen," according to the newly launched society newsletter. Bob Brooks at Copy, Mail & More donated printing for many years.

On November 20, CHS presented its first fall program in the Cotati Room. "Growing Up In Cotati" featured natives Lena Braden, Jennie Falletti, Harold Griffith, Connie Revard Martin, Gary Santero, Pat Rippin, and Archie Stewart. Siblings B.B., Phreekis, and Sky Paulekas gave a countercultural perspective.

On April 19, 2009 CHS held the first of many sellout barbecues at the Ray Miller Community Center, reviving a longtime Cotati barbecue tradition from the 1940s and 1950s, and to raise funds for the coming museum. A traveling history display in the newly painted space told natives and newcomers about the history of the ranch and town of Cotati over the past 150 years.

In July CHS returned to the Penngrove Parade and added the Kids Day Parade to the summer fun. On October 25, Prue Draper led scores of history buffs on a free walking tour of Cotati's historic streets, parks, and buildings.

Computer and peripherals donated by Kit and Afton Tuveson and museum archive software provided by Mike Sheehan launched the digital archiving of the society's growing collections. Judy Gustafson joined the board as archiving administrator, and SSU librarian Christine Hayes designed our website.

Volunteers and donors continued to flock, offering goods and services, refurbishing artifacts and displays, and preparing the museum for its opening on Sunday, February 28, 2010. Judy Pagnusat joined the board as art director.

The museum's grand opening crowd of 400 was too large to fit in the museum and hall. Ceremonies moved to city council chambers, featuring a cob-webbed portal opened by youngsters Lindsay Caudel and Melanie Mattos. A champagne toast, honors from the California State Senate, and remarks by city officials and historian Gaye LeBaron rounded out the program.

In April 2010, CHS hosts its second barbecue and bake sale, adding a classic car show. Sadly, while founder Lloyd Draper lived to see the museum open in February, he died before the barbecue. In his honor, his family donated a multi-panel museum display for his many historic photos and for new exhibits.

Summer parades followed and fall history night continued in November. The popular event addressed "How, When and Why Did Cotati Incorporate?" with local leaders Ben Oretsky and Bill Kortum, Louise Roberts Steacy, Cotati's first city clerk, and Jennie Falletti, whose late husband, Al, served on Cotati's first city council.

The CHS story will continue in our next issue! For those who can't wait for more Cotati history news and information, visit cotatihistoricalso-ciety.org and the City of Cotati's history site at <http://www.ci.cotati.ca.us/sections/about/history.cfm>.



Volunteer Page

Can you smile? Are you friendly?

The Cotati Historical Museum always needs volunteers to welcome visitors on Saturday afternoons when we are open from 1 to 4 p.m. Greeters work in pairs and the duties are basic: unlock doors, turn on lights, open blinds and prepare to be friendly. We have an instruction pamphlet that tells you everything you need to know. If you are interested, contact Bobbie Veronda, 795-4545.

Also if you work for or are retired from a major employer, a “dollars for hours” volunteer grant program may be available to you and your favorite nonprofits. See the Judy Gustafson story below.

News: Judy Gustafson, A Very Fine Neighbor Indeed

This summer our archiving administrator Judy Gustafson presented an *eighth* annual check for \$500 to CHS from State Farm Insurance, as part of that corporation’s Good Neighbor Grant Program—for a total, so far, of \$4,000. To qualify, a State Farm retiree must work a minimum of 40 hours per calendar year for a nonprofit organization, and apply to the foundation at State Farm headquarters in Bloomington, Illinois. Judy works more than twice that many hours each year. Even before the museum opened, she spent many hours with Prue Draper and Connie Martin at the Draper home. “We all learned the PastPerfect museum database program and created digital records for all the images and artifacts we used to open the museum,” she remembers. Judy also documents museum displays, heads the barbecue bake sale, and maintains the computer system at the museum on a weekly basis.

Profile: Gary Santero (& Family) A driving force in Cotati

That Gary Santero’s service to the historical society and museum dates from our beginnings is only natural since the Santero family connection to Cotati runs six generations deep. They know our city and its history well because they made it.

Gary’s paternal grandparents emigrated from northern Italy directly to Cotati; his maternal relations traveled from Slovenia to San Francisco and then to a Sebastopol cider ranch on State Highway 116. At one point, they had eight living children (six boys and two girls) and they all lived in Cotati.

Many in town will remember Gary’s parents, Barney and Evelin. Like many couples of their generation, they met at a dance at the Cotati Women’s Club (now Ner Shalom temple) in 1940 were married, and stayed right here. After Barney left the military in 1946, the two bought a farm on Old Redwood Highway at the north entrance to town. There they raised their sons, Gary and Barry. Barney also drove a truck for the Frizelle Enos Feed Company. He passed away in 2004.

Evelin became known as the “Window Lady of Cotati.” It started with her putting a “Happy Birthday” window banner facing into the front room for her boys. Later she turned the banners outward so they could be read as Old Red drivers passed the house. Once asked if she would put up a 50th Anniversary notice for a friend, she began to display hundreds of notices of local birthdays, anniversaries, bar mitzvahs, miscellaneous thank you messages, and congratulations—a new one nearly every day. It became a joyful tradition to enter and exit north Cotati and read the messages. Evelyn died in 2009 and the building was razed, but memories of the happy window greetings remain strong.

Gary recently recalled that from the Santero house he could ride his bike to Ferrero’s store in five minutes to pick up milk and—although there was no rapid electronic communications at that time other than the telephone—his mother knew if he did wrong before he got back home. She need not have worried; Gary turned out quite responsibly, working as a local California Highway Patrol officer for 34 years. He also volunteered as a Cotati firefighter for 25.

Not so coincidentally, Gary loves cars of all kinds, but he collects and carefully restores vintage vehicles. Since 2013 Gary has driven a number of them as Cotati Historical Society entries

in the Penngrove 4th of July Parade, winning awards First Place in 2013, best decorated in 2015, and best vintage vehicle just this summer. (See back page for his latest winning entry for 2017.) The trophies are on display at the museum, along with others won in the Penngrove and Kids Day parades.

He was a CHS board director from 2014 to 2017. Among his many duties he oversaw the creation of the Cotati Historical Society grocery bags—seen all over town and available at the museum.

On the board or off, Gary has each year donated his time, truck, and trailer to make the annual barbecue so successful. He works for two days straight. Early Saturday morning he transports equipment and supplies from our storage unit to the Miller Community Center, and helps with the set-up. On Sunday morning he picks up tables and chairs from the Church of the Oaks and sets them up. After a long day of barbecuing, he returns the supplies and equipment to storage for the next year. He also makes generous donations to the silent auction. Anytime you visit on those two spring days, you can see Gary working and schmoozing and making sure it’s a fun, smooth-running and profitable weekend for all.

What Gary loves best about Cotati are both the old memories and the new ones he creates every day. The CHS board thanks him for his many years of service, including his directorship from 2014 to 2017.

—Bobbie Veronda



Gary and Reta Santero and “Gussy,” a 1938 Plymouth Deluxe Coupe and first place winner of the 2013 Penngrove 4th of July Parade. Don’t miss the “Cotati” license plate!

THANK YOU TO OUR MOST RECENT CHS MEMBERS & KIND DONORS

New and/or renewing members: Richard Blue, Sean Bressie, Cotati Chamber of Commerce, Adrienne Lauby, Bette McKnight, Rick Minervini. Memorial donations may be made in honor of loved ones; this money is reserved for specific educational purposes. Kiyoko Maruyama in memory of Phyllis Hatsue Otani, Barbara Ryan in memory of Ed & Annie Minatta, and Jean Schulz in memory of Prue Draper. CHS also appreciates unrestricted donations for daily operations.



SUMMER PARADE TROPHIES GO TO CHS!

To the left, CHS stalwarts Gary and Reta Santero lead the way with their “best antique auto,” a two-toned 1926 Dodge Coupe, in the Penngrove 4th of July Parade on July 2. To the right, Thomas Page Academy students honorably mentioned in the 2017 CHS history essay competition marched to support their school and CHS in the July 8 Kids Day Parade. (From left) Kimberly Pineda, Zuri Ruiz, Aaliyah Salgado, and Cali Fioni won again in the parade’s best group category for their vocal and physical “enthusiasm.” Photos courtesy of John Allred and the City of Cotati.

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

Mark Your Calendars Now

*for the
10th Annual CHS Fall History Event*

**Grapes & Wine
Then & Now
In & Around Cotati**

**Sunday, November 5, 2017
1 to 3 p.m.**

*At Miller Community Center & Cotati City Hall
201 West Sierra Avenue at East School Street*

FREE TO CHS MEMBERS & THE PUBLIC

Learn from local panelists
Share your stories old & new
Refreshments provided