

# Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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

Preserving Cotati's Past  
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Marie McNaughton, Editor

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President:** John Allred 795-2791  
**Vice President:** Sandra Walton  
**Secretary:** Velma DiMeola  
**Treasurer:** Bobbie Veronda  
**Lead Archivist:** Judy Gustafson  
**Membership:** Connie Martin  
**Newsletter:** Marie McNaughton  
**BBQ Chair:** Ed Gilardi

### BOARD POSITION OPEN SKILL SETS NEEDED

Development . Finance . Grant Writing  
Graphic Arts . Social Media . History

## COTATI MUSEUM HOURS

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

For tours and research  
appointments,  
call 707-794-0305  
*Inside Cotati City Hall*

## 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, 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.

## 1909-1949, Forty Years of Service: The Guglielmetti Telephone Company

By Jack Withington

At the turn of the 20th century, Petaluma's Guglielmetti family operated a 1,700-acre ranch west of town that included vineyards and a dairy. In those days, southern Sonoma County farmers and ranchers who wanted to make or receive a telephone call had to ride or drive to Petaluma. The town's two pay phones were located in competing cigar stores. To place a call, one purchased special tokens at the cash register and inserted them into the wall-hung telephone.

Telephones at the time were large, wood-encased instruments at first used only for emergencies, that is, to summon the doctor or the veterinarian, then to order animal feed and supplies, and ultimately to call a friend or relative for conversation. Users lifted the receiver from the cradle and turned a crank to activate the electric line. Once the operator at the central switchboard noticed the magneto-driven bull's eye open (much like a human eye ball), she came on the line and asked, "number, please?"

Times, they were a-changin' just as they are today, and ambitious entrepreneurs had to think sharp, modernizing their methods and facilities to compete. (Imagine trying to run a 21st-century business without a personal cell phone or computer!)

In 1909, the Guglielmettis decided to order a telephone for their ranch. Pacific Telephone told them the Petaluma line extended only to the city limits. If they wanted rural service the family business would be responsible for stringing the wire the additional seven miles. This they did.

The first line began on Petaluma's Western Avenue, followed Spring Hill Road to Guglielmetti Lane, and then extended to the house. The wires were strung along barns, wooden posts, and barbed wire fences. It wasn't long before neighbors asked if they could tap the Guglielmetti's line.

So, forward-thinking patriarch Giovanni diversified the family business into telecommunications and formed the Guglielmetti Telephone Company, hooking up 10 initial subscribers to a shared "party line." His grandson Will assumed the presidency and directed the firm for 40 years.

The service next covered rural Petaluma, Hessel Station, Spring Hill, Penngrove, and portions of Sonoma Mountain. In 1911, 35 Cotati families and businesses signed up and the company ran party lines from Penngrove to an area north of Cotati called "the Copeland Ditch."

Early telephone numbers were usually one, two, or three digits plus a "ring code." For example, my family's poultry farm on Petaluma Hill Road in Penngrove



Actual Guglielmetti party-line telephone shows mouthpiece, hand crank, and bells. The receiver hangs on the left side. Photo courtesy of Alfred Guglielmetti.

*Continued on page 2*

## *Guglielmetti Telephone Company, from page 1*

had the number “58-F-23.” Our line was 58 and our ring code was 23. Two long rings and three short rings told us the call was for our family.

Of course, everyone else on a line (up to 20 customers) knew when you received a call. Eavesdropping became a way of life for the bored or inquisitive. Picking up the receiver was silent, but nosy neighbors could be caught breathing heavily, coughing, even snoring.

Telephone patrons of the same ethnicity would often use their native tongue to thwart the intruders. Others simply resorted to cursing. A more humorous deterrent was to spread false rumors. Then listeners who shared what they learned were exposed as gossips.

In 1937, the telephone company also installed a coin-operated public telephone outside the Cotati Inn, which was available day or night. This, promised the telephone company “will afford anyone a private wire to Petaluma or Santa Rosa.”

In September 1949, Pacific Telephone purchased the 800-customer utility for \$50,600. In the 1950s, PT&T upgraded from party lines to an exchange system with prefixes, personal numbers, and rotary-dial instruments. Cotati and Penngrove areas became known for the SWIFT numbers, that is, those beginning with 795. Petaluma’s prefix was PORTer or 762.

Over all these decades, the Guglielmettis continued diversifying, from electrical contracting to Dodge and Oldsmobile auto dealerships and beyond. Ads for their Truxton Internal Gear Axel Drive distributorship promised “Quicker Delivery Than Teams or Any Other Truck.”

Whatever the latest technology, they were on it.

*Jack Withington is a local, oft-published historian with many stories to share. We hope to print another soon.*

## **IN MEMORIAM Maurice Fredericks**

Attorney Maurice Henry Fredericks, co-founder of the City of Rohnert Park (with law partner Paul Golis), died April 20, 2018. We remember Fredericks for his pro bono legal expertise, helping CHS to develop its founding bylaws and earn its 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax status.

Fredericks was born in Petaluma in 1925, attended St. Vincent High School, enlisted in the U.S. Navy at age 17 in 1942, and became a bomber pilot. After the war he attended undergraduate and law school and served in the Navy Reserve. He joined forces with Golis in 1955. The two formed Alicia Homes to create Rohnert Park. In 1961, he and his wife, Betty, were among the first homeowners in “A section.”

A lifetime aviator, Fredericks often recalled his initial training: practicing landings and takeoffs at the Second World War-era Cotati airfield, just down the road from his hometown.



**Fredericks’s 1940s flight school portrait, from the McNaughton Collection.**

## **THANK YOU TO OUR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS AND KIND DONORS**

### **Members**

Mark & Shannon Ackerman, Frank & Kathryn Bianchi, Jenny Blaker, Cotati Chamber of Commerce, Velma DiMeola, Julie Dinkins, Friar Tuck’s Pub, Reta Kyle & Gary Santero, Jan & Mark Landman,\* Gary & Robin Malone, Marie McNaughton,\* Rick Minervini,\* Lindee Reese, Marie Rice, Barry Santero, Christopher Santero, Second Wind Boutique, Marie & Michael Van Der Porten,\* Carol Williams.\*

\* General donation in addition to dues

### **Memorial Donations**

Martha Gustafson & Harold Griffith for Marjorie Rosselli  
Gary Santero for Evelin & Barney Santero  
Barbara Jean Veronda & Velma Veronda DiMeola for Marjorie Rosselli

## **CHS Archivist/Director Gustafson Earns \$500 Grant**

Judy Gustafson has just received another \$500 Good Neighbor Grant from State Farm Insurance for her 2017 community service to the Cotati Historical Society & Museum. This the ninth year Judy has earned this grant for us—totaling \$4,500 so far. She is now logging her hours for her tenth year.

Judy worked at State Farm for 30 years, retiring in 2004. To encourage community service like Judy’s, State Farm awards grants to retirees who volunteer for a non-profit organization for 40 hours or more in a year. Judy usually puts in more than 80 hours at CHS each year.

Volunteering is rewarding and can be addictive! Enjoy the giving, the camaraderie, AND raise money, too—when your employer or the company from which you retired offers this or similar grants. Many businesses, large and small, do. Just ask your human resources person.

## **Cotati Museum Acquires Rare Rancho Cotati Map from 1890**

The Cotati Museum houses many interesting maps of the old Page rancho, but a new acquisition provides some fine detail. This high-resolution digital copy of a color original at the Bancroft Library at University of California Berkeley has been licensed to CHS for display only.

The map covers Page family real estate for sale from Rancho Cotati and Elysian Park in what is now Penngrove to the Green Valley Rancho near what is now called Cordelia Junction on Interstate 80. It includes such details as the locations of the fruit and berry lands, dairy and grain lands, hop lands and the hop yard. It is illustrated with plantings, flowers, horses, trees, and the few buildings of the time. It lists as landmarks such local businesses as “McNear & Denman, Breeders Clydesdale Horses” and “W. P. Edwards, Olive Orchard and Poultry Farm.”

# CHS 10th Annual Barbecue Showcases Volunteers' Experience & Dedication

This year's 10th Annual CHS Old-Fashioned Chicken BBQ on Sunday, April 8, 2018, showcased the volunteer team's years of experience working together and its dedication to continuous quality improvement. Each year, the CHS fundraising event and town reunion goes more smoothly, serves more guests than previous, garners more public attention, and inspires the ever-expanding generosity of local individuals and businesses.

With 478 chickens cooked, 110 jars of jam conserved, unnumbered cakes, pies, cookies, cupcakes, brownies and banana breads baked, gallons of beans and salad prepared, live music by local band Take Your Medicine, 365 visitors ate well, visited with friends, and funded CHS activities for the next year.

Other highlights included the vintage car show organized this year by Carl Schollmann. Our usual volunteers this year were aided by a contingent of Technology High School students. Recology donated garbage and recycling services. Larson Feed provided the charcoal, Lagunitas the beer, United Market the produce. And Oliver's Market donated all those chickens! Thanks to them and all of you who made this year especially rewarding.

Silent auction chair Bobbie Veronda reports 68 donors, the vast majority of them CHS members and businesses in our community. We also had more than 11 volunteers working over several days to provide this entertaining time for the participants of the BBQ. Every year the auction's collection of items is different and offers objects for the community to talk about, have fun with, and connect over.

This year we had many household goods—from working lamps to silverplate to Asian art objects, which came from a local estate. Discriminating shoppers discussed how to fit donated items they had not seen since childhood into their current lives. One such glass item was a mystery to everyone who saw it, except the final bidder who was thrilled to obtain it. Turns out it was a candle holder for different sizes of candles and her mother had one just like it when the bidder was a child.

Bobbie asks you to keep CHS in mind for next year when identifying unused items and potentially valuable donations. Incidentally, all items not sold this year were donated to the City of Cotati garage sale benefitting the city recreation program.



# Volunteer Profile: Saying Thanks To Board Member Yvonne Van Dyke



When departing CHS board member Yvonne Van Dyke retired in 2011 after 27 years at North Bay Construction, Inc., it was possible she might put up her feet for a bit, but it was not likely. This woman is bottled enthusiasm. Ask her anything and she will begin her reply with "The great thing about that is . . ."

During the last seven years, she has volunteered her energy, accounting and bookkeeping skills and willingness to address complex community issues across Cotati.

You name it—the Cotati Chamber of Commerce, Farmers Market, Kids Day, the Jazz Festival, Oktoberfest, our 50th town anniversary celebration, the Marin-Sonoma Mosquito Vector District, the Church of the Oaks—she's a cherished contributor and leader. In 2014, she received the Cotati Chamber's Ambassador of the Year award.

Yvonne joined the CHS board in 2012 to serve as treasurer and museum docent and has filled innumerable slots since then, most recently as membership director. On April 8, at the CHS barbecue, the board presented her with a certificate of appreciation and flowers (see above).

Born in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and a self-described Army brat, Yvonne has seen a lot of the world, lived in big cities like Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and came to the south county with her late husband, Donald, in the 1980s. She has five grown children and loves to travel. We wish her well in the next phase of her so-called retirement. Museum visitors can still catch her some Saturdays when she continues to docent.



Photos by Jerry Pagnusat



# CHS Annual Old-Fashioned Chicken BBQ Continues to Offer Fun for All Ages



Photo by Jerry Pagnusat

Thomas Page Academy fourth-grade teacher Mira Patel (2nd from left) and CHS board director Marie McNaughton (2nd from right) pose with three of this year's history essay award winners: Reese Oo and Crystal Alvarez. Oo, Alvarez, and Ms. Patel's classroom received \$50 each. Alexandra Rodriguez (at far right) and Micah Karikari (not pictured) received honorable mentions and souvenir certificates.



Photo by Marie McNaughton

"Take Your Medicine" musicians Ava Grail (left) and Dave McClary (right) and bandmates Pat McCarty, Peter Shurch, Sylvan Eidleman, and Steve Dungan (who were on break when this photo was taken) generated lively music from across genres. Blues, bluegrass, jazz, country, "American songbook," and more created a down-home feel for all.

***Did you know the Cotati Historical Society exhibits art, too?***

*See paintings by local artists Bev Colburn, Lorraine Leivas, and Annie Wirt*

*Antique bronzes by 19th century sculptor Isadore Bonheur*

*Come on by Saturdays, 1-4 p.m., Second Tuesdays, 5-7 p.m. Bring a friend!*

*Inside the west entrance to Cotati City Hall, 201 West Sierra Avenue*

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

## Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming CHS Events

- ◆ Penngrove Parade, Sunday, July 1
- ◆ Kids Day Parade & Festival, Saturday July 14
- ◆ Fall History Event, Sunday, November 4  
*History of the Japanese in the Cotati Area*

To help, donate, or loan artifacts,  
call 707-794-0305 or write [chsinfo@sonic.net](mailto:chsinfo@sonic.net)