

History Lives Here

WINTER 2021



A Christmas Parade makes its way down Main Street in Watsonville (Circa 1948)

Watsonville's history has long included Christmas

Holiday traditions go back more than 100 years

By Elijah Ezeji-Okoye

Christmas has long been celebrated in Watsonville. The Methodist-Episcopal Church, known today as the First United Methodist Church, became the first church in Watsonville in 1852 when the city's population still numbered far below 2000.

As Watsonville grew as a city, so too did its number of religious organizations and churches to accommodate the growing number of residents. At least as early as 1900, churches would deck the halls in preparation for their annual bazaars and teas come Christmas time. These festivities starred booths selling homemade candies and food, hand bell choirs, raffles, music and comedy performances, and good company.

In 1899, the first modern Christmas window display in Watsonville, ornamented with a doll and white handkerchiefs folded in shapes such as swans, made an appearance in the storefront of Alexander's dry goods store on Main Street, drawing throngs of people to view it.

As time wore on, Christmas began to evolve into the more elaborate form of today's times. In 1919, just over a year after the



ABOVE: Picture of the 1924 Watsonville Christmas tree. BELOW: Preparation for Watsonville First Christian Church's annual Christmas Tea and boutique (pictured L-R: Olive Hamisch, Rusty Bradford, Belle Harris)



See **CHRISTMAS** Page 3



Popular Holiday Customs from Decades Ago Would Shock Some Today

By Lou Arbanas

With Watsonville always being a farming community the “harvesting” of protein was singularly unique compared to today’s refrigerated, sanitized supermarket displays. Many born here after 1950 may not remember or even had heard of the holiday Turkey Shoots that various charitable organizations promoted in fund-raising attempts starting at the turn of the 20th century.

While we take for granted refrigeration for perishable products, our grandparents had to use different methods of preserving perishables. Particularly proteins like fowl and red meat. So it was always more desirable to harvest the meat as close to consumption as possible. Enter the custom of the Turkey Shoot for the holidays.

Register Pajaronian ad “15 Nov 1920; item: TURKEY SHOOT SUNDAY. Louis Secondo will give his 12th annual turkey shoot at the foot of Rodriguez street, near Ford, Sunday, November 21. See the fun you’ll have and get a Turkey. Every lady gets 2 Free Chances at a Bird.”

It was not uncommon to see hunters taking advantage of weather, and the opportunity to harvest table protein, even on Main St. at the Park. The art of de-feathering and gutting the birds, along with pulling buckshot has diminished. Much like the cautions of watching out for fish bones.


Some readers may remember in more recent years the Pep Creamery, and the sideline that the owner had was a formal turkey farm here in the valley.



WATSONVILLE

TURKEY SHOOT

**THREE
TURKEY
TARGETS**



**THREE
PLATE
TARGETS**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

Rifle Targets — 22 Rifle Targets
and Many Other Amusements

Bring The Family

AT HEAD OF WALKER ST.

Zar — Kennedy — Lutich

Ad in *Evening Pajaronian* of 15 Dec 1927.



Frank Orr Griswold Visits, Brings Gifts to PVHA

Last Direct Descendant to Live in House Shares Memories During Lunch

By Gerry Martin

A Bockius history moment occurred recently when Frank Orr visited the “house.” That would be Frank Orr Griswold, nephew of Frank Fletcher Orr, who was the last direct descendant to live in the house built in 1870 by Godfrey Miller Bockius.

On a windy fall day in October Frank Orr Griswold and his wife Corinne came to PVHA bearing gifts from their home in Palm Springs.

The items they brought were actually coming home to Watsonville. From dresses worn by Priscilla Fletcher Orr to a little purse belonging to Harriet Rambo Bockius to innumerable family pictures and documents, the collection of our

organization has been greatly enhanced.

Many happy memories from long ago visits were shared over lunch provided by the House Committee. Frank told of travelling from San Diego when he was a child to visit his aunt and uncle. He slept on a couch in the present day office and would also visit his relative Belle next door. In later years he, Corinne, and their children would visit, the last time to attend Zoe Orr’s marriage to Gerry Marcus 1994.

A tour of the house, hat room, carriage house, and garden brought back many memories. To those memories can now be added the experience of the Archives and Annex.

A recent children’s book featuring Godfrey Bockius was written by Corinne Griswold for her grandchildren and donated to PVHA. Compliments and appreciation came in large doses along with promises to keep in touch and continue to share additional memories.

CHRISTMAS

From page 1

end of World War I, the Watsonville Plaza received its first municipal Christmas tree. The merriments that accompanied the tree included nativity tableaux, Christmas carols sung by students from St. Francis School, bell ringing, and C. G. Redman as Santa Claus presenting gifts and candy to the 2,500 children in attendance.

While the age-old Watsonville fog resulted in the cancellation of Santa’s aerial stunts, his pyrotechnics remained! The inaugural event attracted a crowd representative of the rich and diverse tapestry of people living in Watsonville at the time, and was so well-received that it became an annual hallmark of Christmas in Watsonville.

The Second World War dampened the Christmas festivities – but not the Christmas spirit – in Watsonville. By 1942, wide-ranging dim-out rules pulled the plug on outdoor Christmas lights and required that all indoor illuminations be hidden behind black-out curtains between sunrise and sunset.

Despite the strict rationing of everyday commodities, such as butter, eggs, meat, and gasoline — turkey remained in abundance. In the face of these new restrictions, people still found avenues to enjoy the Christmas jubilations. The USO and Watsonville Girls Battalion hosted a buffet dinner with orchestral entertainment from Camp McQuaide for 500 servicemen. After the conclusion of the war effort, more spruced up Christmas celebrations returned to and proliferated in Watsonville, with downtown donning more extensive decorations and Christmas parades being thrown.

Whether near or far, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy holidays!

CORRECTION

We regret our misidentification of a guest at our annual picnic in our Fall Newsletter. We said Debbie Muth was present, but she was not. Further, we identified her as the Director of the Scotts Valley Historical Museum – she is not. We apologize for the errors.

Items of Note

Membership

New Members

- Carol Heitzig
- Shannon Henderson
- Fred and Nancy Perez
- Martin Drobac
- Donna Otto
- Ruth Griswold Abrams
- Martin Griswold
- Susan Scurich
- Frank and Vita Pritchard

Memorials

Bill and Wilma George

- Shannon Henderson

David Williams

- Robert and Mitzi Williams

Janet Bell

- Dr. and Mrs. Philip Gilman

Stewart B. Kett

and Alice Martinelli Kett

- Melanie Kett Wirtanen

Muriel Hauer

- Claire Etienne

Peter Hauer

- Claire Etienne

Allan E. Petersen

- Betty Jo Petersen

Micky Crumpton

- David and Claire Baum

Neil Marshall

- Jim and Shirley Spain

Hal Hyde

- Dorothy Hyde

Carl Snyder

- Jim and Shirley Spain

Exciting End to the 2021 Stay at Home Raffle

By Martha Muzzi

All fun things must to come to an end eventually. On Oct. 13, the day of our raffle, Ralph Jacobs, Jodi Frensley and Martha Muzzi were at the Bockius-Orr house at 1 p.m. in anticipation of the drawing. All the great prizes were assembled and the tickets filled the drum.

Others helping with the drawing included Virginia Avila, Ron Gordon, his

daughter Kristi Bobeda and her friend Sherri Pengelley. Kristi drew the first ticket, Sherri the second, Ron the third, Virginia the 4th and so on. We were so happy Lou Arbanas and Susan Jacobs popped in for a few minutes.

Congratulations to the Winners!

See **RAFFLE** Page 6

Doug Severin

- Ken and Anne Dobler

In Honor Of

Desktop Publishing/Editing of Fall 2021 Newsletter Donated by Jon Chown in honor of Judy Doering-Nielsen's contributions to the community.

Donations

General

- Dobler and Sons, LLC
- Frank and Vita Pritchard

Costume Fund

- Gina Gallucci

Memberships

Renewed as of August 24, 2021

- Margaret Bloom
- John Kane (KBK Insurance Agency)
- Dennis and Laurie Osmer
- Susan Pelis
- James Scurich
- Tom and Geri Anne Simmons

Renewed in September

- Dave Bachan
- Bill and Cloy Codiga
- Joe and Natalie Costa
- Georgeanne Eiskamp
- Lisa Eiskamp
- Claire Etienne
- Don and Dolores French
- Craig and Dana George
- Dr. and Mrs. Philip Gilman
- Doris Goon
- Bill and Anita Hagins

- Mas and Marcia Hashimoto
- Ralph and Susan Jacobs
- Shirley Kane
- Jo Marie Lake
- Mark and Cathy Lauesen
- Robert and Janey Leonardich
- Elizabeth Ludden
- Marilyn Marker
- Mary Ellen Martinelli
- Julie Oliver (C&N Tractor)
- Bernice Palmtag
- Walter and Patricia Phillips
- Margaret Osborn Pilgrim
- Diane Robey
- Caroline Rodgers
- Mary L. Siefke
- Harry and Clarice Wiggins
- Robert and Mitzi Williams
- Melanie Kett Wirtanen

Renewed in October

- Karen Basiulis
- Theresa Cordoza
- Mary Eves
- Gina Gallucci
- Helen Harness
- Dorothy Hyde
- Greg and Suke Pavlovich
- Charles and Margaret Pilgrim
- Deborah Rider
- Ricardo Rocha
- Mark and Karen Sambrailo
- Billie Jean Sorensen
- Helen Ukestad
- Lorraine Washington

Renewed in November

- Sarah Chauvet
- Ron and Connie Deller
- Jeff and Karen Kane
- John and Frances McGrath Kovarik



PVHA Lends Wonderful Bits of History to Rodgers House Fair Exhibit

By Trisha Kett

Despite Covid, volunteers were able to give our usual tours of the Rodgers House during the Santa Cruz County Fair this past September.

Our thanks go to the PVHA for sending a committee out to provide items from Esther Steinbeck Rodgers for display in our living room. We were loaned one of the tan silk dresses that Esther wore in the 1920s, as well as another dress she wore in the '40s for special occasions.

There were also three cloches, a gorgeous pair of fancy white gloves and a lovely beaded handbag. Many people who came on our tours remarked on the wonderful pieces of clothing and the arrangement of them. Often we heard remarks like "Aren't those beautiful!" or the like. Once a young girl said "What cute hats!"

Truly, PVHA's contribution was enjoyed by many who visited the Rodgers House this year, and we are grateful for the loan that was made to us.

Once again, PVHA, it was nice to work with you!

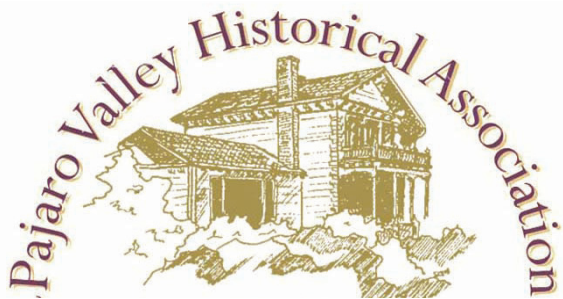


Appreciation Luncheon Held for PVHA Volunteers

By Claudia Mize

The PVHA Board held an appreciation luncheon for our volunteers on Sept. 16. It was a beautiful day on the Bockius-Orr house patio. Delicious salads, sandwiches and desserts were furnished by PVHA. We enjoyed getting together and being outdoors.





Preserving the History of the Greater Pajaro Valley
Established 1940 ~ Incorporated 1956

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I.T. Committee Chair: Louis Arbanas

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RAFFLE

From page 3



7th Annual Stay At Home Fundraiser

Winners:

Mission Ranch: Mark & Carol Pista

Case of wine etc.: Clint & Karen Miller

Dining out A: Melissa & Bill Rimassa

Capitola Suites: Betty Kaiser

Dining out B: Cathy Mello

Golf Package: Bob Leonardich



Want to join now or need to renew? We'd love to have you become a member of PVHA

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please Make Checks Payable to "PVHA"
PO BOX 623 Watsonville CA 95077

Or join via our website at www.pajarovalleyhistory.org (Visa or Mastercard)

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal Membership Expiration Date _____

☐ Donor \$50 ☐ Supporter \$100 ☐ Benefactor \$250 ☐ Patron \$500 ☐ Corporate \$_____

Other Donation \$ _____ to be used for _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: _____ Total Enclosed: _____

Email: _____

(We are updating our database and would like to include your email address please)

All contributions are tax deductible within the meaning of
Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code — Tax ID 94-1663161

Ways to Donate

- Become a Member
- Upgrade your Membership Level
- Make a general donation to the PVHA
- Make a donation to our endowment funds: The Historic Preservation Fund or Archive Fund, both established at The Community Foundation

WE ACCEPT

