

Coast before the Panama Canal was built, and acquired by Godfrey Bockius, still graces the downstairs living room. The front parlor has become the office for the PVHA. The rear parlor, dubbed the “Brides Room”, serves the happy function of accommodating bridal parties for weddings that take place in the garden setting behind the house. This room is also the major display room for rotating exhibitions. The upstairs is closed to the public and used for storage and work areas.



The Pajaro Valley Historical Association

*Bockius-Orr House
Volck Museum
Borina Archive and
Alzora Snyder & Jane Borg
Research Center*

*332 East Beach Street
Watsonville, California*

*Mailing Address
Post Office Box 623
Watsonville, CA 95077*

Telephone (831) 722-0305

*Web
www.pajarovalleyhistory.org*

*Email
info@pajarovalleyhistory.org*

The Pajaro Valley Historical Association has something for everyone. Whether you are a youngster puzzling over a piece of antique office machinery such as a typewriter, or a senior citizen exclaiming “My grandmother wore a dress like that”, or finding that last piece of information to complete your family’s genealogy, you can be assured of an interesting visit.

If you wish to help preserve the history of the Pajaro Valley, you are invited to become a member of the association.

Categories of membership are listed below.

Donor	\$50.00
Supporter	\$100.00
Benefactor	\$250.00
Patron	\$500.00
Corporate	\$_____

Membership benefits include newsletters, invitations to all association events, and extended use of the Borina Archive and the Alzora Snyder and Jane Borg Research Center. A check, payable to the PVHA, may be sent to:

PVHA, membership
P O Box 623
Watsonville, CA 95077

The PVHA is a nonprofit public benefit corporation organized under the California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law for charitable purposes. Donations to the PVHA are tax deductible within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Tax ID 94-1663161.

THE PAJARO VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

In 1940 a committee of the local chapter of the Native Sons of the Golden West, concerned with preserving local heritage, established the Pajaro Valley Historical Association. The founders set up the PVHA as a not-for-profit organization, with memberships open to all interested individuals and groups. Members receive newsletter, invitations to receptions and other special events, and are entitled to archive research privileges at no cost. The association’s governing board consists of twelve directors.

In 1964 Helen Volck Tucker donated her house at 216 East Beach Street to the PVHA in memory of her first husband, William Volck. The Volck Museum served as the association’s headquarters from 1964 to 1997, when the PVHA moved to the Bockius-Orr house.



Bockius-Orr House, shortly after construction, 1905c

The major activities of the PVHA are the management of the Bockius-Orr House and the operation of the Borina Archive, the Alzora Snyder and Jane Borg Research Center, and the Volck Museum. The association's office is on the first floor of the historic Bockius-Orr House that is open to visitors at no charge, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, or by appointment. Special group tours of the house and gardens may be arranged, and the facilities are rented out for receptions, weddings, and small dinner parties.

There is an extensive collection of textiles and men's and women's clothing, spanning decades of fashions from the 1860s to the present and can be seen in rotating exhibits in the House, Museum, and Archives. The PVHA conducts several fundraising activities each year. Other association traditions are the 4th of July Barbecue and the Holiday Tea.

BORINA ARCHIVE

Alzora Snyder & Jane Borg Research Center

The Association maintains the Archive, a rich resource for writers, teachers, students, genealogists, and others interested in local history. The archive includes the following items, all dealing with the Pajaro Valley:

- Books, manuscripts, newspapers and other printed materials
- Historic posters and photographs
- Maps
- Oral histories
- Historic materials related to agriculture, business, local schools, organizations, and families

All of the Pajaro Valley archive holdings are accessible onsite and available on a limited basis for use by the public for

history programs, public lectures, and offsite exhibits. There are nominal fees for photo duplication and research assistance in excess of half an hour (except for students and PVHA members).

THE VOLCK MUSEUM

Found in the original building that was used as a carriage house are displays of historical artifacts relating to the early days of the Pajaro Valley. This building in addition to the adjacent Tank House offers a glimpse into a time gone by.



Carriage House/Volck Museum



Tank house

THE BOCKIUS-ORR HOUSE - YESTERDAY

Godfrey M. Bockius (1818-1906), a farmer, moved from Pennsylvania to settle in the Pajaro Valley in 1852 purchasing a 70 acre plot of land bounded by Third (now East Beach), Marchant, and Blackburn Streets and extending on the south side to the Pajaro River. He played an active role in organizing the town of Watsonville and became one of its first trustees. Bockius was elected a county judge and served one term as a state assemblyman. He was also one of the founders of the Bank of Watsonville.

In 1870 he commissioned the building of a large Victorian-style house by Alex Chalmers to be added to an original existing structure. Bockius continued to live there with his mother, his wife and their four children. The family cultivated fruit and vegetable crops, including asparagus, blackberries, and rhubarb. The two-story addition to the original single story house was constructed on concrete posts with heavy timber of virgin redwood supporting the frame and sub-flooring. This allowed water to flow freely beneath the house, protecting it from periodic flooding of the Pajaro River. There were four bedrooms and no indoor plumbing, but running water and a downstairs bathroom were added at a later date. The rooms on the ground floor have 12-foot ceilings, while those upstairs have 11-foot ceilings. A carriage house and (water) tank house were built adjacent to the house, and barns housed the farm animals beyond the backyard and gardens. After Bockius's death, various relatives and descendants occupied the house. Frank Fletcher Orr, a great-grandson of Godfrey Bockius, purchased the old homestead from an aunt in 1948.

Orr, schooled in journalism at Stanford University, led a five-decade career marked with distinction. During World War II he was commissioned in the U.S. Army Signal Corps and was in charge of still-picture photography operations in Europe. He joined the staff of the Watsonville Register-Pajaronian in 1939 and ten years later became managing editor, serving in that post until his death in 1985. Due largely to his skill, in 1956 the paper won the Pulitzer and Sigma Delta Chi prizes for public service by a newspaper--the first time any publication had captured both awards in the same year.

Soon after they purchased the Bockius House, Orr and his wife, Zoe Ann Hill, initiated a major remodeling project. Downstairs the renovation crew combined a sitting room, small dining room, and one of the three exterior porches into the present 20-by-30-foot living and dining room. Workers installed a large picture window to provide a generous view of the 200-foot deep front yard, with its long walkway, majestic century-old oaks, crepe myrtle, and boxwood hedges. Also, the kitchen was modernized. Upstairs a bedroom was converted into a bathroom, another bedroom was taken for a library, and a third bedroom eventually became a wardrobe. The fourth room remained as a bedroom.

THE BOCKIUS-ORR HOUSE - TODAY

Fortunately, the damage sustained by the homestead buildings in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake did not permanently mar their character. The house, which Zoe Ann Orr Marcus (she remarried in 1989) donated to the PVHA in 1993, has retained the features and some of the furnishings that she and Frank Orr, and other former residents, cherished. The rare square grand piano, shipped from the East