

History Lives Here

SPRING 2022



History of the Watsonville Depot and the County Railroad

By Claudia Mize

Watsonville's historic railroad depot, built from clear heart redwood lumber from the Santa Cruz Mountains, is a reminder of the rich history of train travel in our area. The depot, built by Southern Pacific Railroad in 1895, withstood both the 1906 and 1989 earthquakes. Only about 90 stations built in California before 1916 survive today, and none are in active service.

The first depot, built in 1871 (which no longer exists), connected the small town of Watsonville, with just a few thousand residents, to the rest of the region. Local farmers and fruit packing houses shipped their strawberries, apples and vegetables by rail. In 1876, railroad surveyors discovered a deposit of granite rock along the Pajaro River Gap between Watsonville and San Juan Bautista. Since then, the railroad has helped to transport crushed granite rock within the A.R. Wilson Quarry and to construction sites throughout California. In 1936, Granite Rock Company moved its corporate offices in Watsonville to 411 Walker Street, adjacent to the then busy Southern Pacific Depot. By the 1970s, freight and passenger rail service had declined, and the depot building was sold to Granite Rock for use as a storage facility, which it remains to this day.

In 1867 the California Coast Railroad



[Santa Cruz MAH]

A patriotic celebration at the station July 23, 1916



The Watsonville Station on Oct. 19, 1971. Passenger service has ended and the station only services freight and local bus connections. Mainline service continues across the Pajaro River at Watsonville Junction.

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Griswold Donation Highlights History of PV Weddings

By Gerry Martin

As June approaches and brides attend to the details of a wedding, PVHA is delighted to share the story of a bride in 1913 as she chose not only her wedding dress but her trousseau of lovely things she would wear on her honeymoon. Part of the trousseau of

Priscilla Fletcher was recently donated to PVHA by her son and Frank Orr's nephew, Frank Orr Griswold. This thread of descendants stretches back to 1870s and forward to Frank and Zoe Orr into the 1990s. At



See **DONATION** Page 7

PVHA's Easter Tree Looks a Little Familiar

By Gerry Martin

The House Committee has decided to cast off the mantle of history and get on board with things that are trending! With the popularity of artificial trees, we have found that tree we put up in December is still fresh as a daisy (though perhaps a bit dusty) in June. For that reason, many people are transforming those

Christmas trees and keeping them up all year!

Perhaps you missed our Valentine's tree and then all those bunnies and eggs on the Easter tree, but please stop by and see our Spring tree decorated with flowered hats, gloves, handbags, and anything else we find that makes us happy when we say good-bye to Winter.



Remembering Pajaro Valley's Own Diane Porter Cooley

It is with a great deal of sadness PVHA says goodbye to our special friend, Diane Porter Cooley. Diane's lifetime in the Pajaro Valley, her long family history here, and her dedication to preserving our history has been an inspiration to so many. Diane's oral history, which can be found in the PVHA Archives, is a wealth of stories on the history of people, places, and particularly agriculture. Her pride in the Pajaro Valley was evident in the many people and organizations she supported. A number of years ago when the Clothing Committee took over the old archive structure



Diane Porter Cooley (left) with her college roommate Sandra Day O'Connor in 2004.

and renamed it the Bernice Porter Annex, Diane was proud to accept this honor in her mother's memory. Our heartfelt condolences to the Cooley family. We will all miss her.



Please Join Us For

Pajaro Valley Historical Association's ANNUAL VINTAGE PICNIC

Dedicated to the memory of
Judy Doering-Nielsen and Louis Arbanas

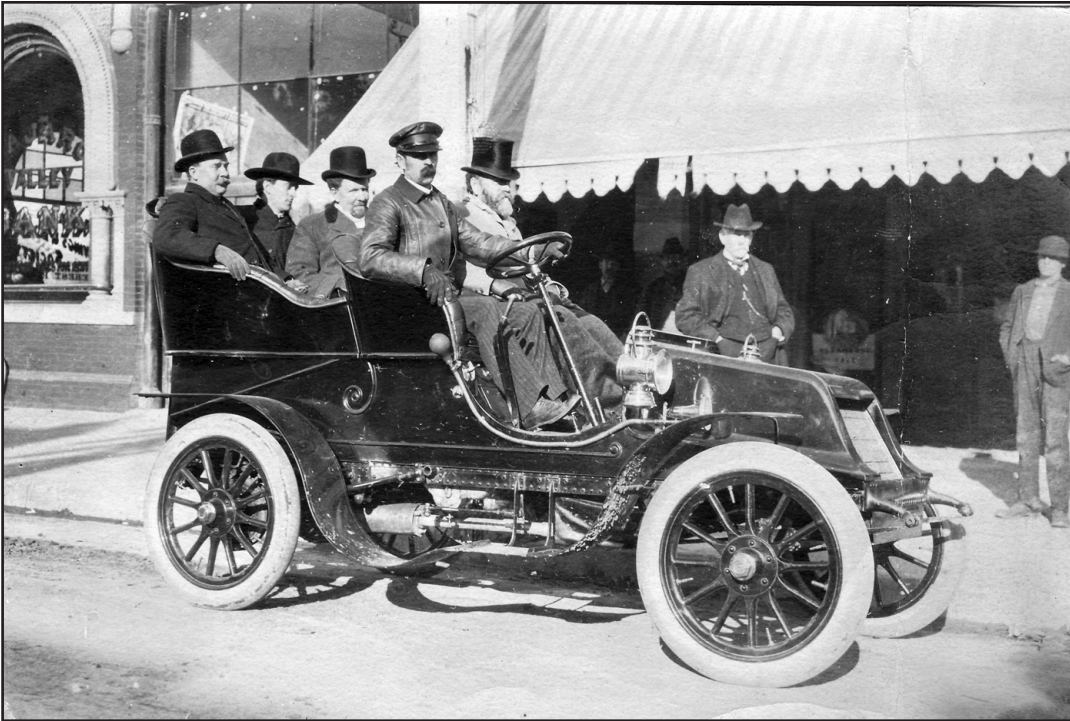
Saturday, July 2nd, 2022

11:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Buffet Lunch at 12:00 PM
Keynote from Edward Kelly

Tickets: \$40. No tickets sold at the door. Pay by check or online by June 21.
Call 831.722.0305 or send check to PVHA, P.O. Box 623, Watsonville, CA 95077-0623
Purchase tickets online at www.pajarovalleyhistory.org







AT LEFT: Albert Joy's new Winton 25-horsepower automobile in 1903. At the time, it was lauded for its ability to seat six people, reach a maximum speed of 50 MPH, and had powerful emergency brakes.

BELOW: 1974 photo of the line for gas at Fast Gas in Watsonville. Due to increasing demand and a shrinking supply of gasoline caused by the 1970s Oil Crisis, lines at gas stations stretched more than 60 cars long, with customers only being able to walk away with 5 gallons at most, if they were lucky to have gotten in line early enough.

The 120-Year History of Automobiles in the Pajaro Valley

By Elijah Ezeji-Okoye

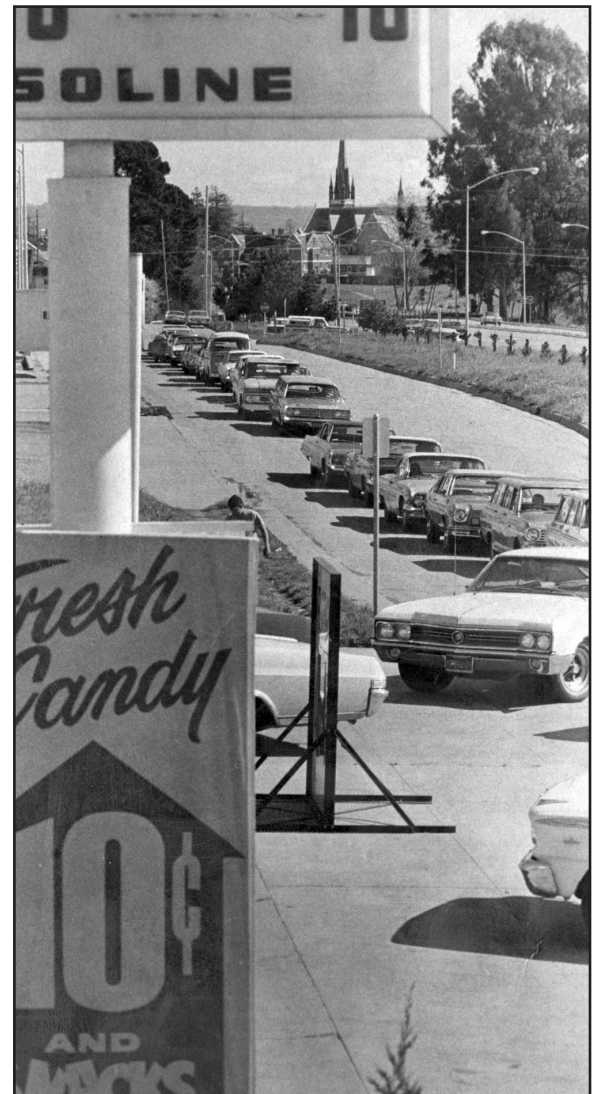
Many of us have felt the pinch of gas prices in 2022 as they've flirted with prices as high as six dollars per gallon here in the Pajaro Valley. For some, the sky high prices may recall memories of the gas shock that struck the United States in the 1970s that spiraled out of the Oil Crisis. Then, gas not only became more expensive but was also rationed with limits of 5 gallons per day. Gasoline, and motor vehicles, however, have long been steeped in scandal prior to both of these periods and for different reasons.

When automobiles first made their debut in the Pajaro Valley in 1902, a whopping 120 years ago, some residents decried the prospect of welcoming gasoline-guzzling vehicles into the Valley with open arms. Opponents to the gasoline car argued they were dangerous explosions-waiting-to-happen that spewed noxious odors and thick smoke. Supporters rebutted that the smell of gasoline-powered cars paled in comparison to the stench of horse manure. At the time, the future of automobiles remained unclear, with the first cars only having been invented less than two decades prior and relying on

power sources ranging from electricity to gasoline to steam.

Gasoline quickly won out, for the time being, as an automobile craze began circulating about the people of Watsonville. Charles Mackrell is reported to be the first person to have owned an automobile in Watsonville. He had procured an Oldsmobile and offered viewing parties and test drives to all those who wanted to lay eyes on and experience his skookum ride. By 1903, the number of Watsonville's converts ballooned despite the town's lack of gas stations, road maps, and motels. However, many of the people – and horses – of Watsonville still took some time to fully acclimate to the new contraption. Many continued to write them off as novelties for the affluent and looked down on the automobilists traveling along Riverside Road on their way from Santa Cruz to Monterey for tearing up the unpaved, dirt roads.

In 1909, Watsonville's then-Mayor, J.A. Linscott, became mired in controversy when he was caught riding shotgun in Guy L. Bailey's car as it whipped at a horrifying speed of 20



See **AUTOS** Page 5

Items of Note

Newcomers

Tina Baine
Kenny Kusumoto

New Members

Nathaniel Scurich
Judy Gittlesohn
Ron Gordon
Abbie Gordon
Kristy Bobeda

Donations

General

William And Cloy Codiga
Rocky and Judy Franich
Jeffery and Lisa Rosendale
Sharon Bystran

Archive/Research

Sandra Davidson (In Memory of Lou Arbanas)

Donations Garden Fund

Don and Dolores French

Historical Tree Preservation

Chuck and Ramona Allen

Donations Costume Fund

Ann Rando

Borina Archive Operations

Charles and Margaret Pilgrim Osborn

Operating Support In Memory of Marvin Byers

Clint and Karen Miller (Outdoor PA System)

Newsletter production

Jon Chown in memory of Steve Bankhead

In Honor of

Ann Alexander Rando

Gerry Martin

Hal Hyde

Dorothy Hyde

Lou Arbanas

Steve and Alice Bankhead
Marilyn Hyde
Sharon Bystran
Catherine Moresco Schimpeler
Chuck and Ramona Allen
Dobie and Ann Jenkins

Items of Note

As of April 22, 2022

Cheryl Daughenbaugh
Lynn Clough
Dan Carrillo
Dominic and Martha Muzzi
Cathy Mello
Gayle and Elizabeth Ivanovich
Betsy Ehm Lobay
Luann Lauesen and Emmanuel Brion
David and Maryann Schnitter
Ralph and Susan Jacobs

Robert Ezra Bowen

Marybeth Bontadelli

David Williams

Robert and Mitzi Williams

Sherae Moresco

Catherine Moresco Shimpeler

Susan Amrhein

Catherine Moresco Schimpeler

Georgia Ivelich O'Hoppe

June Ivelich Pierce

Pat Lewis

Karen and Bill Moncovich

Kilo Galvan

Bill and Karen Moncovich

Curt Evans

Bill and Karen Moncovich

Luann Niebling

Greg and Suke Pavlovich
Jim and Shirley Spain
Sandra Davidson
Karla Rugh Hancock
Ed and Kathleen Banks
Ken and Anne Dobler
John and Judy Eiskamp
John and Antoinette Lukrich
Mary Ellen Irons
Dominic and Martha Muzzi
Mark and Cathy Lauesen
Luann Lauesen and Emmanuel Brion
Tom and Geri Anne Simmons
Billie Jean Sorrensen
Gayle and Elizabeth Ivanovich
Ralph and Susan Jacobs

Judy Doering-Nielsen

Greg and Suke Pavlovich
Louis and Geneva Ivanovich
Gayle and Elizabeth Ivanovich
Irene Hashfield
John and Judy Eiskamp
Ken and Anne Dobler

Ed and Kathleen Banks
Jim and Shirley Spain
Lorraine Washington
Anthony and Deanne Cagnacci
Dominic and Martha Muzzi
Lynn Clough
Tom and Geri Anne Simmons
Patricia Stepovich
Colleen Brunetti
John and Caroline Eiskamp
Frederick and Gail Haas
Joanne Donovan
David de Figueiredo
Dorothea Hatch
Richard and Annie Staniford
John and Megan Martinelli
McElroy Family
Harry And Clarice Wiggins
Betsy Ehm Lobay
Peter and Kristy Bobeda
Luann Lauesen and Emmanuel Brion
Jo Ann Vear
David and Maryann Schnitter
Sharon Bystran
Ralph and Susan Jacobs

Janet Bell

Billie Jean Sorrensen

Steve Bankhead

David and Maryann Schnitter
Jeanette Crosetti
Charles Eadie
Dominic and Martha Muzzi
JoAnn Vear
Tom and GeriAnne Simmons

Diane Porter Cooley

Jim and Shirley Spain
Ken and Anne Dobler
Tom and GeriAnne Simmons
Alex Solano and family
Ralph and Susan Jacobs

Ruth Johnson

Ken and Anne Dobler

Frank Prevedelli

JoAnn Vear

Dolores Mulikin

John and Antoinette Lukrich

Connie Spung

Donald and Diana Henrichsen

Membership Renewed

as of 11/9/2021

Doug and Noris Anderson

Betty Bobeda
 Marybeth Bontadelli
 Colleen Brunetti
 Catherine Coward
 Carl and Fran Dobler
 Don and Dolores French
 John Gallagher
 Dr. and Mrs. Clinton Gurnee
 Fred Haas
 Bonnie Hawley(Friends of S.C. State parks)
 Dorothy Hyde
 Mary Ellen Martinelli
 Donn Marinovich
 Arlene Okamoto Minami
 Jenifer Renzel
 Tony Scurich (Scurich Insurance Services)
 Gino Stefanni

Renewed in December

Karen Bachan
 Sharon Bystran
 Donald and Diane Cooley
 Lon and Annamarie Dugger
 Robert and Linda Erb
 Nita Gizdich
 Helen Hoffman
 Rod and Penny Hudson
 Marilyn Hyde
 Clifford and Linda Leong
 Patricia Novakovich
 Adolph Rosekrans
 Susan Scurich

Jim and Shirley Spain
 Art and Mary Jean Wagner
 Robert and Mitzi Williams
 John and Antoinette Lukrich
 Frank and Loretta Estrada
 Mas and Marcia Hashimoto
 Hubert and Patricia Hudson
 Dan Carrillo
 Cathy Mello
 Tony Scurich and Family
 Brandon and Trisha O'Connor Kett

Renewed in January

Ag History Project
 Chuck and Ramona Allen
 Norman Atkins
 Daniel and Patricia Davis
 Nancy Ruiz Depuy
 Bridget A. Fairhurst
 Scott and Jodi Frensley
 Dobie and Ann Jenkins
 Tom and Susan Johnson
 Kenny Kusumoto
 Luann Lauesen and Emmanuel Brion
 Bill and Karen Moncovich
 Peter Navarro
 William and Sally Neubauer
 Joann Petznick
 June Ivelich Pierce
 Jeffery and Lisa Rosendale
 John Ruso
 Steven and Kristin Smith

Renewed in February

John Espinoza
 Frank and Loretta Estrada
 Donald and Diana Henrichsen
 Mary Ellen Irons
 Joyce Kalich
 Lawrence Lease
 Terry Locke-Paddon
 Clint and Karen Miller
 Eugene Valla

Renewed in March

Betty Bachan and Paul Bachan Jr.
 Colleen Brunetti
 Rose Marie Cardona
 Maria Goretti Carvalho
 Jeanette Crosetti
 Mimi Crumpton
 Rosa Guerrero
 Bonnie Hawley (Friends of S.C. State Parks)
 Rod and Penny Hudson
 Patricia Johns
 Antoinette Lukrich
 Tamia Marg
 Kathy A. Moe
 Jan Onufay
 Kathleen Reynolds
 Dean Robbins
 Lynn Sullivan
 Emil Yappert

AUTOS

From Page 3

miles per hour through the Valley. Back then, the speed limit was a meager 8 miles per hour on town roads and 12 on highways. Mr. Bailey happily forked over a sum of \$6 but not without ridiculing the ordinance. Over time, the people's woes gave way to the allure of traveling between Watsonville and Monterey in an unprecedentedly quick three hours. More and more, people were succumbing to the allure of the automobile. By 1915, Watsonville had 337 automobiles running the gamut of 40 makes in it.

As cars became more common, so too did the need to revamp Watsonville's infrastructure to be more hospitable to automobiles. Eventually, the roads were paved. It took until 1948, however, for Watsonville to put up its first streetlights, the first of which was erected at the intersection Main Street and Lake Avenue. Now it was the automobilists' turn to adjust to the new ways of the road.

"As cars became more common, so too did the need to revamp Watsonville's infrastructure to be more hospitable to automobiles."

Early complaints with the traffic lights lamented that they did not blare any noise when the signals changed colors. With time, the pedestrians, cyclist, and automobilists of Watsonville adapted to the ways of this new phenomenon, and the rest is history.

With gas prices so high today, electric cars are looking more enviable than ever. While electric cars seem like a new-fangled take on the traditional gas combustion engine, it may surprise you that Santa Cruz County's first electric car dates back to the 1970s. As if by clairvoyance, Gene Jensen sensed that electric cars would become the next big revolution in the auto industry. He took it upon himself to convert his Volkswagen Fastback into an electric car all by himself, removing the engine, clutch, and

gas tank, and replacing them with a series of eight batteries, a mechanism to control the current, and a motor. On the outside, his car looked just like any other car of the same make and model. However, it reportedly didn't make a peep when being driven. The trade-off, Mr. Jensen noted, was that it's speed maxed out at 40 miles per hour and required recharging multiple times per week. Considering there were only 2,500 registered electric cars in the entire United States at the time, Mr. Jensen's ingenuity is quite a marvel.

The history of automobiles have come a long way in their 120-year history in Watsonville. In 2019, Watsonville became home to Santa Cruz county's largest EV charging station at the Overlook Shopping Center. It'll be interesting to see which way automobiles take us in the years ahead. No matter which way we go, there's no doubt we will still be able to revel in the fanfare of the automobiles of yore as they parade through Watsonville in automobile parades and on the casual joyride.

DEPOT

From Page 1

Company was incorporated to connect Gilroy and Watsonville. Frederick Hihn, an investor in this early line, wanted to control the shipping of lumber from Santa Cruz County. In March 1868, the San Francisco & San José Railroad merged with the Santa Clara & Pajaro Valley Railroad, forming the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. A few months later, the Southern Pacific absorbed the Central Pacific Railroad, becoming the largest railroad company on the West Coast.

The California Southern Railroad Company, a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific, completed the line connecting Gilroy to Salinas via Watsonville in 1872. However, it did not pass through the town of Watsonville but remained in the community of Pajaro. Locals now had access to the railroad, but had to cross the county line to get their wares to the trains. This was inconvenient, but manageable.

Frederick Hihn and residents of Santa Cruz were unhappy. They insisted on a railroad that went to Santa Cruz. In 1872, the Santa Cruz & Watsonville Railroad was founded. Initially, funding fell through. The company, reincorporated in September 1872 as the Santa Cruz Railroad, planned to bring the railroad through Watsonville to Santa Cruz. The line would be locally built and narrow-gauged to save money. Progress began in mid-1873.

Watsonville, however, had voted against the railroad and was locked out of negotiations. In December 1874, the town sued the railroad, stating they had reneged on terms from 1873. The proposed "Watsonville Station" was not close enough to the town to meet the terms of the agreement. The court agreed with Watsonville and the track was realigned to run closer to Watsonville. Construction began from both ends. The initial construction began in Santa Cruz heading toward Watsonville, while bridgework on the Pajaro River Bridge began after the court's decision.

In 1875, fifty-cent excursions began on weekends between Santa Cruz and Aptos. In April 1876, Santa Cruz Railroad's Watsonville-Santa Cruz line was completed and the small "Betsy Jane" locomotive delivered the first revenue load – two carloads of potatoes.



In October 1874, the Betsy Jane, a tiny steam locomotive, arrived. Designed in Santa Cruz and built in San Francisco, it was the work engine used to build the railroad.

Aptos Historical Association

Passenger service began on May 7, 1876. The Jupiter, one of the largest trains, met up with the Betsy Jane, a small steam locomotive, in Aptos. This was the beginning of trains running from Pajaro via Watsonville, Aptos, and Camp Capitola to Santa Cruz!

From 1876 to 1880, the Santa Cruz Railroad did reasonably well financially, but had competition with the Southern Pacific at Pajaro. Since the tracks were a smaller gauge than the Southern Pacific, the cars were not interchangeable. All freight and passengers had to be transferred at Pajaro. In 1880, the over-the-mountain South Pacific Coast Railroad was completed to Santa Cruz. Unfortunately, in February 1881, a flood demolished the trestle over the San Lorenzo River. The Santa Cruz Railroad went through a turbulent five years before being acquired by the Southern Pacific. The tracks were overhauled to standard-gauge, allowing them to compete with the narrow-gauge South Pacific Coast route over the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Hihn, Spreckels and other stockholders were no longer willing to subsidize operations in the face of competition with the South Pacific Coast and Southern Pacific Railroads. The Santa Cruz Railroad went into bankruptcy. In October 1881, the Southern Pacific bought the Santa Cruz Railroad at auction and began laying standard-gauge track, which was completed by September 1883. As soon as standard-gauge track reached Aptos, Southern Pacific built a spur line into Aptos Creek Canyon to harvest the timber. It was the most expensive rail line that they had ever constructed.

In January of 1887, Southern Pacific bought the over-the-mountain South Pacific Coast Railroad and controlled Santa Cruz County's two main railroad lines promoting tourism and industries. In 1888, Spreckels opened the largest beet sugar factory in

North America in Watsonville using the railroad to haul its products. The factory helped Watsonville to weather the depression of the 1890s.

By 1918, eighteen passenger, and six freight trains a day arrived and departed Santa Cruz. Trains also provided transportation for high school students from Felton and Aptos to Santa Cruz and Watsonville high schools. In the 1920s, after the lumber played out, apples became the next big agricultural commodity to rely on rail transportation.

In 1927, Southern Pacific began the Suntan Special, an excursion train from San Jose to the Santa Cruz beach. The most popular years of the Suntan Special were the late 1930s. It carried about 5,000 riders a day – a round trip cost \$1.25! At least one train ran each operating day along the coast to Watsonville Junction to drop passengers off at Seabright, Capitola, and Aptos.

The Suntan Special was suspended during World War II, resuming service from July 1947 until September 1959, carrying about 900 passengers per trip. After 1959, this service became less common and disappeared around 1965. Passenger service at Watsonville Depot ended in 1938, but freight service continued until very recently. Spurs to various local freight concerns still exist today around the site of the depot.

In 1996, Union Pacific Railroad bought the Watsonville-Santa Cruz line. On October 12, 2012, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission completed acquisition of the Santa Cruz Branch line. Currently there are discussions about the future of the rail right of way.

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Info for this article compiled from Pajaro Valley History files, Graniterock.com, and santacruztrains.com



Judy Doering-Nielsen



Lou Arbanas

Remembering Judy Doering Nielsen and Lou Arbanas

Sadly PVHA lost two of our long time, dedicated volunteers: Judy Doering Nielsen and Lou Arbanas. Both were very involved in preserving the history of the Pajaro Valley, as well as serving the community. They will be greatly missed.

Judy Doering Nielsen, a Board Member since 2004, and our President since 2014, passed away January 19, 2022. Judy's major contribution to PVHA was raising \$1,000,000 to buy the property next door to PVHA and build the Borina Archive.

Judy also helped start our annual stay-at-home raffle, spearheaded the Christmas Holiday Lights event at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, brewed the tea at our Annual Christmas Tea, worked at securing grants, and

much more. Judy never backed away from a challenge and cared deeply for PVHA.

Lou Arbanas became a PVHA volunteer in 2006. He enjoyed sharing his knowledge of the Pajaro Valley with visitors to the archive. Lou spent many hours coordinating and organizing the archives. He helped local businesses and families find historical information and pictures. He assisted the press when the Register-Pajaronian or Sentinel needed help from the PVHA.

He was our IT expert, Editor/Producer of the membership newsletter and other mailings, the monitor of our website and Facebook page, archive researcher, and much more. He passed away November 14, 2021, leaving big shoes to fill.



DONATION

From Page 1

that time, the Pajaro Valley Historical Association was entrusted to become the new stewards of the historic Bockius House.

Priscilla was part of that generational thread and we can only imagine her excitement as she shopped for items for her wedding. The lovely pink silk and ecru lace evening dress with the weighted demi-train and silver and pearl embellishments are a beautiful addition to the costume collection. The accompanying satin shoes and bright pink stockings complete the outfit.

Not only did we have the pleasure of meeting Frank Griswold and his wife Corrine, the items they brought were of such historic value that the House Committee wanted to feature some as soon as possible. We hope you are able to stop by soon to enjoy them in person.

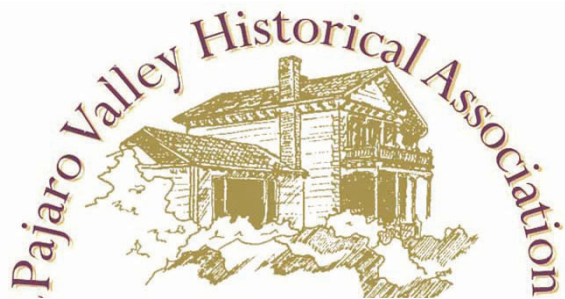
90th Birthday Party held at Bockius-Orr House

By Claudia Mize

Antoinette Lukrich celebrated her 90th birthday with friends and family On Nov. 17. The luncheon was held at the Bockius-Orr house. The beautiful decorations were done by her sister-in-law, Anne Lukrich Dobler, along with Anne's daughter, Deanne Dobler Cagnacci. Antoinette was so pleased – it was the perfect venue.

If you want to celebrate a special event at PVHA, contact our Rental Manager Alice Bankhead at 831-722-2087.





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

Board of Directors

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Ralph Jacobs, Treasurer
Luann Lauesen, Secretary
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John Espinoza
Peter Navarro
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Office Administrator: Jodi Frensley

ADDRESS: P.O. Box 623 Watsonville CA 95077

PHONE: 831-722-0305

EMAIL: info@pajarovalleyhistory.org



PVHA Holiday Lights Display Wins First Place Award, Shines Bright at Fairgrounds

By Claudia Mize

Last year, the PVHA Holiday Lights display won the 1st place award! The beautiful display was made possible by PVHA volunteers Jodi and Scott Frensley, Anne Dobler, Ralph Jacobs, Chuck Allen,

Virginia Avila, Teri Wimpe. It was displayed at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds.

A big thank you to Home Depot on 41st for their Community Outreach program that donated \$1000 to PVHA for this display.

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: _____

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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
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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

