



# PAJARO VALLEY

## Historical Association

Winter 2024

## 10th Annual Stay-at-Home Fundraising Raffle



*PVHA volunteers and staff at the drawing. Left to right Ralph Jacobs, Sue King, Jodi Frensley Martha Muzzi, and Chuck Allen*

Our 10th Annual Stay-at-Home Raffle was held this year with the drawing October 30. Tickets were drawn at the Bockius/Orr house by Sue King. The lucky winners were: Dominic Muzzi, Lisa Muzzi, Kathleen Pedulla, Karen Reader, Dan Carrillo, Helen Hoffman, Colleen Brunetti and Don Henrichsen.

PVHA raised \$16,260 which will be used for the operation and maintenance of the Bockius/Orr House and Borina Archive. A big thank you to all of you who donated prizes and purchased tickets; and thanks to all of those who worked hard to make this happen. 🍀

## Watsonville's Earliest Schools

### The Pajaro School and the School for Black Children

*By Claudia Mize*

In 1853, the Methodist Church housed the first group of school children taught by Seneca Carroll in the village of Pajaro (later known as Watsonville). The church was on the corner of Main and East Fourth (now East Lake). Ten years later in 1863, the first school building was constructed on East Fourth between Main and Brennan. This was the Pajaro School; however, the name was later changed to the Primary School. By 1866, this two-room school was bulging at the seams. Lucius Holbrook was contracted to build on four more rooms at a cost of \$1,920.

The addition was completed on May 5, 1866. The school house bell, valued at \$100, arrived from San Francisco and according to the Pajaro Valley Times, "now occupies the 'swinging' position for which it was destined ... It is a beautiful toned piece of metal." Most of the money was raised through a concert given by the pupils of the school.

*(continued on page 5)*



*Watsonville's first school, Pajaro School, 1866*

# New PVHA Volunteers

On your next visit to the PVHA archives, you might encounter our two newest volunteers, both of whom joined us in July of this year. Alyssa Hanna is a recent graduate of Viola University, where she majored in history, and she is interested in pursuing a career as an archivist. For her starter project, she has been replacing old falling folder labels, and ensuring that all folder topics are listed in our area index binders. Ari Jauregui is currently in the graduate program at San Jose State University, working on a library degree, as well as working part-time as a library assistant for the Santa Cruz Public Libraries. For her starter project, she is reviewing, organizing and numbering the five-volume collection of Betty Lewis newspaper articles, which cover a multitude of frequently-requested topics. We are very pleased to welcome Alyssa and Ari! 🌿



Alyssa Hanna



Ari Jauregui



P.J. Mecozzi, CEO and owner of Del Mar Foods, was the keynote speaker at the Annual Vintage Picnic held June 29, 2024.

## PVHA

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

### Board of Directors

Chuck Allen, President  
Luann M. Lauesen, Secretary  
Ralph Jacobs, Treasurer  
Virginia Banuelos-Avila  
Ken Dobler  
Cathy Mello  
Grayson Moore  
Peter Navaro  
Tony Scurich  
Phil Ybarra  
Sharon Bystran, Emeritas

### Office Administrator

Jodi Frensley

P.O. Box 623 Watsonville, CA 95077  
831-722-0305  
info@pajarovalleyhistory.org

## Jacobs Receives Senior Historian Award

Susan Jacobs received PVHA's first Senior Historian Award in August. Susan is our in-house historian and inspires and educates the volunteers. Growing up in Watsonville, she remembers much of the town's history. Volunteers and visitors constantly go to her when they have questions. If she doesn't know the answers, she knows where to find them. This year PVHA is proud to give Susan the Senior Historian Award for her 16 years of service. 🌿



## Catalogued Collections

Are you looking for specific items at Pajaro Valley Historical Association? You may be in luck. Eight binders containing information on the following items are located in the archive: dolls, purses, hats, military uniforms, children's clothing, dresses, wedding dresses. The binders are easily accessible and include a picture of the item, catalogue number, description and where it can be found. Lynn Clough and Bill Beecher have spent lots of time putting this together and they will have more collections for your perusal in the future. 🌿

# Hecker Pass Over the Years

By Georg Romero

The original road between Watsonville and Gilroy was a narrow, windy turnpike, dating back to 1860. The roadway mostly still exists, now named Mt. Madonna Road, but over the years, it was known at different times as Bodfish Canyon Road, the Watsonville Road and the Old Toll Road.

With the increase in automobile use in the early 1900s, it became apparent that this original road was much too narrow to readily accommodate auto traffic (try driving it today and imagine lots of cars trying to travel in each direction). And, improved roads would entice many more visitors to the coast, as described in a 1921 Register Pajaronian editorial: “As everyone knows, any road from the hot San Joaquin Valley to the sea looks good to the people of the interior, and they do

not care where it leads so long as it takes them to the ocean.” Our civic leaders wanted those better roads to lead straight to Watsonville.

Land was acquired, funding was secured, and a new roadway was graded and paved, with significant work done on each side of the county line by both Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County. Although the new road technically became part of the California state highway system in 1915, it was not completed and officially opened to the public until 1928. On May 27, 1928, it was reported that more than 2,000 automobiles came for the grand event, with attendees listening to the fine speeches, enjoying picnic lunches, and generally seeing and being seen. A plaque commemorating the opening of this “Yosemite-to-the-Sea Highway” was installed at the summit on the county



*Plaque commemorating opening of “Yosemite-to-the-Sea Highway”*

line, between Mt. Madonna Inn and the entry road to Mt. Madonna park. The road received the signage designation of State Highway 152 in 1934.

Over the years, a number of businesses were established near the summit, at the site currently occupied by the abandoned Mt. Madonna Inn, to tap into the growing flow of motorists traveling over the mountains. Often combining a restaurant and automobile service, these businesses provided much-needed respite for travelers on this challenging road, especially for the vehicles of the time. The spectacular view of the Pajaro River Valley, now largely hidden by trees and other foliage growth from the past 90+ years, was of course a major part of the draw. The first two businesses (1918–1929 and 1932–1943), both primarily restaurants, each succumbed to fire. The second business included a grocery store and a gas station, and is likely the “Clara-Cruz” service station shown in the accompanying photograph and 1935 aerial view. The third business and building, established in

*(continued on page 4)*



*More than 2,000 automobiles converged for the opening of Hecker Pass on May 27, 1928. Attendees listened to speeches, enjoyed picnic lunches and were just generally out to see and be seen.*

## Hecker Pass continued from page 3

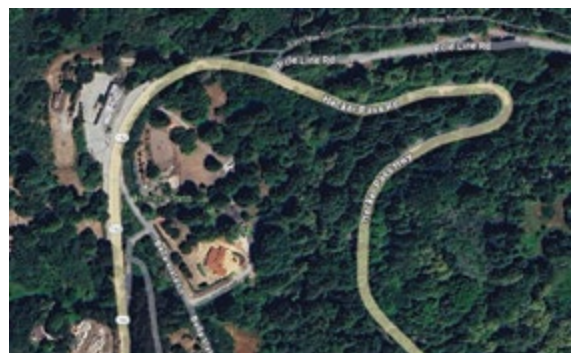
1945, was an inn and restaurant, and fared a little better, lasting until 1965, when the owners (the Beadnell brothers) decided to tear the building down and replace it with a much grander business. The new business, the fourth building on the site, was opened in 1968, as the Mt. Madonna Inn, with a fine dining room, an inn, an expansive dance floor, and large banquet halls able to seat hundreds. This business initially thrived, especially in the 1970s, but eventually succumbed to extended road closures resulting from the 1997 mudslides, and closed down for good in 2004. The property was eventually foreclosed, and the most recent known owner is Sterling Pacific Financial. 🍁



*The Clara-Cruz service station and store in 1935 near the summit*



*Above: 1935 aerial view*



*Right: current Google view*



The Bockius-Orr House, trees and yard will be lit up for Christmas again this year. Drive by in the evening to see the beautiful lights beginning Nov. 12, approximately 5–10 p.m.

The Bockius-Orr House will also have a special Christmas clothing display through January. Call or email for more information or special tours.

PVHA will be closed for the holidays: Nov. 22–Dec. 2 for Thanksgiving; Dec. 20–Jan. 6, 2025 for Christmas.

## New PVHA Board Member

Hello! My name is Grayson Moore, and I'm honored to serve as a new board member with the Pajaro Valley Historical Association. I am a lifelong resident of Watsonville as well as work in the local produce industry. I enjoy volunteering in local events that showcase what our great valley has to offer, such as the Santa Cruz County Fair.

My family history has been rooted in the Pajaro Valley for multiple generations, starting with my great-great grandfather, Mateo Lettunich.



The Pajaro Valley has been a very important part of my family, and I look forward to contributing to preserving its history for generations to come. 🍁

# Special Luncheon at the Bockius-Orr House

Everyone enjoyed the delicious food and companionship on the patio at the Bockius-Orr house on Sunday, August 25. The afternoon was warm and sunny. Generous members of PVHA had bid on this at the Vintage Picnic in June. Attendees included Chuck and Ramona Allen, Ken and Anne Dobler, Dominic and Martha Muzzi, Clint and Karen Miller, and Ken and Velma Morena. P. J. and Carolyn Mecozzi were invited guests who are now new members of PVHA. P.J. was the featured speaker at the Vintage Picnic. Thanks to all who helped: Matt Ryan, Jodi Frensley, Virginia Avila, Nancy Herrera and Yolanda Rubio. 🍷



## Watsonville Schools continued from page 1

On August 25, 1866, the Pajaro Valley Times reported: “Civil Rights Bill in Pajaro—Monday last when the public school opened in Pajaro [Watsonville] a colored citizen appeared at the schoolhouse and demanded admission for his children on the grounds that he was taxed for the support of the school. No one will doubt that his demand is well based. Movement afoot to provide them school advantages in a separate building from the white children.”

The person asking to have his children admitted to the public school was Robert Johnson, a black farmer from Tennessee. A special tax to build the school was approved by the School Trustees and local people contributed to the fund. They raised \$1,303 for the small building.

In January 1867, the Santa Cruz newspaper published an article signed by “A Visitor” that praised

Watsonville for starting a school for black children. About 12 children attended when it started. A short excerpt of the article follows:

“This school is taught by an accomplished lady teacher, and their progress in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, physiology, and other branches taught, is certainly surprising, when we take into consideration the very short time the school has been in operation... But all praise is due to the people of Watsonville for having overcome this prejudice in so far as to provide them with school facilities in no way inferior to those provided for the whites... In this the people of Watsonville have taken a step in advance of most places in this State...”

This one-room schoolhouse had 18 students in 1870 and the teacher was Miss Mary Bell. Eight of these students had grades of 90%

and three had marks of 100%. By 1873, the school had 25 students and the teacher was Miss Ruth Keith. Fannie Gallagher was the teacher in 1878 with 18 students. This school closed in 1878. The Black community had filed a petition to end the separate-but-equal education policy, but the trustees denied it. The Black community then boycotted the school and it was closed. The building stood until the 1989 earthquake. A door knob from this building was donated to PVHA and is currently on display in the Borina Archive.

*Watsonville; Memories that Linger* by local historian Betty Lewis includes a chapter on “Reading, ‘Riting, and ‘Rithmetic.” More information about these schools and many others can be found in this book, available for purchase at Pajaro Valley Historical Association. 🍷



## Memorials

### Hans Claus

- Erik Claus
- James and Nancy Carroll

### Anka Bulaich

- Alice Bankhead

### Maryann Bulich Schnitter

- Alice Bankhead
- SACO

### Cathy Moresco

- Alice Bankhead
- Sharon Bystran

### Elaina Holzman

- Alice Bankhead

### Willie Yahiro

- Allen and Betty Bjur

### Neil Bowles

- Louis and Geneva Ivanovich

### Todd McFarren

- Lorraine Washington

### Jimmy Spain

- Jim and Shirley Spain

### Marie Roberts

- Joyce Kalich

### Frank Estrada

- Louis and Geneva Ivanovich
- Carl and Fran Dobler
- Jim and Shirley Spain
- Melanie Kett Wirtanen

### Donald & Dianne Cooley

- Melanie Kett Wirtanen

### Jim and Marian Rector

- Melanie Kett Wirtanen

### Stewart and Alice Kett

- Melanie Kett Wirtanen

### Fred Ebey

- Hudson Family

### Grace Dickson Smith and Clara Dickson

- Anonymous

### Thomas Chester Johnson

- Mark and Cathy Lauesen

### Marie Loveless

- Jim and Shirley Spain

### Lou Arbanas

- Jane Parks-McKay

### Betsy and Bill Parks

- Jane Parks-McKay

### Mas Hashimoto

- Marcia Hashimoto

### Patrick Carey

- John and Judy Eiskamp

### Hugh Hudson

- Shirley Kane
- Fran and Carl Dobler

### Gerry Martin

- Louis and Geneva Ivanovich
- Jim and Shirley Spain
- Ken and Anne Dobler
- Lynn Clough
- Nevenka and Zarko Radich

### Stella Jagich

- Karen Butier Basiulis

### Irma Oksen Reaves

- Jim Aldridge

### Mary Seifke

- Michael and Debra Brooks
- Matthew Brooks
- Cindy Marinovich
- Lynn Clough
- Rocky and Judy Franich
- Jill Pacheco
- Daniel Ukesdtad
- Bill and Mable Linneman
- John and Sylvia Kusanovich
- Gary Ukestad
- Helen Ukestad



## Donations

### General

- Sharon Bystran
- Donn Marinovich and Sherrin Grout
- Patricia Johns
- Brandon and Trisha Kett
- John and Megan Martinelli
- Art Wagner
- John and Carol Tietz

### Research

- Ken and Anne Dobler
- Valerie Garnese
- Matthew Grizich

### Costume Jewelry

- Gina Gallucci
- Dana Rugh George
- Vonda Hodges
- Pat Lester



## In Honor of

### Ken Dobler's 85th Birthday

- Lisa Muzzi



## New Volunteers

- Alyssa Hanna
- Ari Jauregui
- Gina Peled



## Welcome New Members

- Frances Schwamm
- Jean Bushman
- Ken and Velma Morena
- Matthew Grizich
- Steven Allen
- Matthew Grizich
- KJ Cerankowski
- Lee Parkhurst



## Membership Renewals

### April

- Agricultural History Project
- Rosemary Anderson
- Paul and Betty Bachan
- Rose Marie Cardona
- Erik Claus
- Sandra Davidson
- Nita Gizdich
- Frank and Corinne Griswold

- Laura Hofmeister
- Betsy Ehm Lobay
- Antoinette Lukrich
- Sam and Kathy Mann
- Dan and Ann McGrath
- Geneva Mehl
- Priscilla Partridge and David Kikuchi
- Dean Robbins
- Jim and Shirley Spain
- Charles and Spomenka Zaninovich

## May

- Margaret Amrhein
- Bill Beecher
- Jean Boeddiker
- Allen and Betty Bjur
- Stephanie Bulich
- Nancy Buoy
- Mabel Cole
- Bridget Fairhurst
- Kenneth and Anne Horner
- Hugh Hudson family
- Ed and Jean Kelly
- Leon and Joann Mattingley
- LeeAnne McDermott
- Michael and Bertie McElroy
- Thoma Mitchell
- SACO
- John and Carol Tietz
- Gary and Patricia Thwing
- John and Mary Altier Walker

## June

- Alvin and Ruby Beilby
- Nancy Bilicich
- Robert and Judi Burick
- Dan Carrillo
- Sarah Chauvet
- Rita Christiansen
- Joe and Natalie Costa
- Marvin and Elaine Del Chiaro
- Lorraine Jurach
- Mark and Cathy Lauesen
- John and Megan Martinelli
- Geneva Mehl
- Bill and Tanya Passey
- Greg and Suke Pavlovich
- Steve and Kerri Stringari
- Nancy Van Galder



## Membership Renewals

### July

- Manuel and Ann Wycoff Carlos
- Dr. Eric and Teresa Del Piero
- Ken and Anne Dobler
- Gayle Ivanovich
- Dominic and Martha Muzzi
- Emil Yappert

### August

- Virginia Avila
- Dave and Claire Baum
- Jody Belgard
- Nancy Codiga
- David and Frances Delfino
- Ron and Connie Deller
- John and Judy Eiskamp
- Marcia Hashimoto
- Shannon Henderson
- Roseann Kalich
- Patricia Lester
- Bob and Renee Mello/ Renbo, Inc.
- Kathleen Moe
- Jane Parks-McKay
- Susan E. Pellis
- Les and Joyce Roth
- Jo Ann Vear
- Melanie Kett Wirtanen

### September

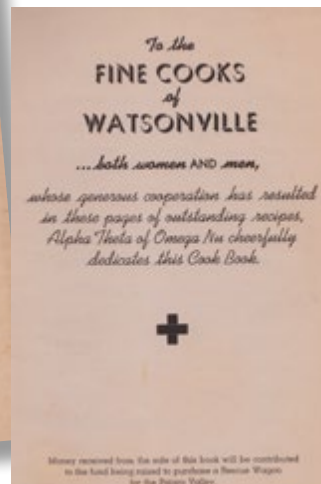
- Catherine Coward
- Gina Gallucci
- Doris Goon
- Bill Hagins ( P.V. Fresh Fruit and Vegetable)
- Bonny Hawley/Friends of S.C. State Parks
- Shirley Ivelich
- Shirley Kane
- Robert and Janey Leonardich
- Kathy Oliver
- Margaret Osborn Pilgrim
- Ricardo Rocha
- Steven and Kristin Smith
- Teri Wempe and Guy George
- Linda Wilshusen

### October

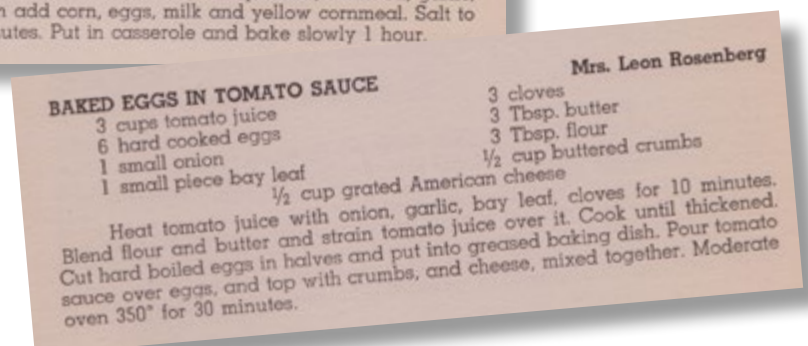
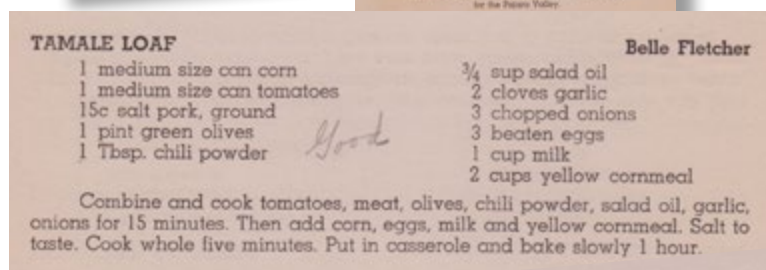
- Dave Bachan/McSherry & Hudson
- Alice Bankhead
- Karen Butier Basiulis
- Sharon Bystran
- Lynn Clough
- Theresa Cordoza
- Carl and Fran Dobler
- Robert and Linda Erbe
- Don and Dolores French
- Brandon and Trisha Kett
- Dennis and Laurie Osmer
- Mark and Carol Pista
- Mark and Karen Sambrailo
- Helen Ukestad
- Lorraine Washingtonn

## 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.



Running out of dinner ideas? Look no further! PVHA's got you covered with shelves of historic cookbooks to peruse, including this one from Alpha Theta from the 1940s. Stop on by!



# My Early Memories of the Pajaro River

By Ken Dobler, PVHA Board Member

In the early 1950s, I was a young farmer. The Pajaro River was something we crossed over going to and from our ranch many times. The levees were built, I believe, sometime in the early 1940s.

During a period in the 1950s, the river was kept somewhat clean, having cattle graze around it through the summers. George Silliman, a local cattleman, would put a single electric "hot wire" on each side of the levee from Pajaro Bridge to Murphy's crossing, which would keep the cattle within the confines of the banks. When the cattle were removed in the fall, George's brother Floyd, who had construction equipment, would use a bulldozer to clear some of the river. However, this was only done for a few years and after the practice was stopped, the river's brush and trees continued to grow. When the Santa Cruz and/or Monterey counties tried to clean the river, they were told by a government agency that they could not, as it was now designated an area of wildlife habitat.

Since then, as the brush and trees have been allowed to grow, they have restricted the flow of the river, causing sediment to build up and river to have less capacity. It has not been cleared since sometime in the 1950s. 🌿



## Annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

*The Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon was held on August 8 at Jalisco Restaurant on the patio. Chuck Allen, our Board President, thanked everyone for all their contributions. Ralph Jacobs gave a special thank you to Jodi Frensley for all her help. Bill Beecher introduced the special Senior Historian Award that was presented to Susan Jacobs.*

# Video Histories

By Bill Beecher

We have been very busy this year adding 20 histories to PVHA's video history collection found in the Borina archive. Our latest interviews/histories include the five people listed here.

- Olivia Espinoza of Olivia's Restaurant
- Matt Grizich
- P.J. Mecozzi, PVHA Vintage Picnic
- Harry Wiggins
- Willie Yahiro memorial

## Histories contributed from other sources:

- Portuguese Immigration from the Azores
- Mas Hashimoto
- Latino Americans
- Agriculture in the Pajaro Valley
- Cannery Strikes of 1985 with Mark Halfmoon
- Ag History Opening
- Santa Cruz County Ag, 2011
- Santa Cruz County Ag, 1998
- John MacDonald
- Dr. Miura, Internment Hospitals
- Derek Whaley and the Santa Cruz Mountain Railroads
- The Lies of Executive Order 9066 [Japanese Internment]
- Paper Children, Hispanic youth caught in the System
- A Challenge to Democracy, a US Government Propaganda film on Japanese Internment

Combined we have over 350 histories covering people, events and businesses. We have transcripts for most of these and indexes for some. They provide a wonderful story and backdrop for our Pajaro Valley. These are the people, events and businesses that have made our Valley what it is. 🌿