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# Register-Pajaronian

WATSONVILLE PAJARO FREEDOM AROMAS CORRALITOS CASTROVILLE APTOS LA SELVA BEACH ROYAL OAKS ELKHORN MOSS LANDING

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## Tour explores history of Croatians in the Pajaro Valley

By TARMO HANNULA  
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

**WATSONVILLE** — Members of the Cabrillo College Foundation explored the history of Croatians in the Pajaro Valley Saturday during an informal tour and lunch.

Sandy Lydon, Historian Emeritus, Cabrillo College, joined Donna Mekis and Kathy Mekis Miller, authors of "Blossoms Into Gold, the Croatians in the Pajaro Valley," in leading the four-hour tour for about 95 people.

The event began at the Watsonville Library meeting room for a presentation. They then viewed the Ag Workers History Center before taking a walk to Watsonville Plaza and past the Lettunich Building.

The group then poured into the lobby of the Resetar Hotel where they learned about the Resetar brothers who came from the former Dubrovnik Republic to San Francisco. The quake of 1906 forced the Resetars, who were operating a café, onwards to where they eventually arrived in Watsonville and began a successful apple farm. The Resetar Hotel opened in 1927 and earned a 20-page spread in the Register-

Pajaronian.

"It was the talk of the town for quite some time," Donna Mekis said. "The Resetar was considered one of the most beautiful hotels on the west coast. The hotel featured a parking garage, a cigar store, a beauty salon, a news stand and — get this — a men's writing room."

Croatians began coming to the Pajaro Valley on the coat tails of the Gold Rush, starting about 1876 and revolutionized the apple industry. By the late 1920s the people from Dubrovnik, and their descendants, made up more than 20 percent of Watsonville and in the 1960s they owned more than one-third of the land in the Pajaro Valley.

Tour members then enjoyed a buffet lunch of Croatian food inside an historic apple packing shed, currently the location of A Tool Shed Equipment Rentals, on West Beach Street owned by the Braycovich family. Streamers adorned the old rafters of the building, similar to the fashion of weddings and other ceremonies by Croatians around 1900 up into the 1930s.

The lunch, catered by Barbara Co. Catering, featured



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Members of the Cabrillo College Foundation enjoy a Croatian style lunch Saturday inside an early-day apple packing shed during a tour that highlighted the history of Croatians in the Pajaro Valley.

Croatian-style chicken, a rolled up style of lasagna, cucumber and tomato salads, cornbread and honey butter. Among the beverages was wine from a Croatian winery, Kirigin Cellars,

near Hecker Pass. Pies from the Gizdich Ranch topped the meal. Lydon went on to explain the importance of railroads in the apple industry and how individual rail line spurs would branch off and

run rail cars right up to the shed's loading docks.

The gathering was comprised of members from the

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

While visiting the lobby of the Resetar Hotel, Sandy Lydon (lower left) talks about the importance of the historic building.

### TOUR

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President's Circle of the Cabrillo College Foundation.

"With your donations and

the hard work of the President's Circle Committee, the President's Circle has raised a record breaking \$265,000 this year," Linda Burroughs told the gathering during lunch. Funds raised, among other things, go to student scholarships and to

help expand innovative programs.

The group was then bussed to Valley Catholic Cemetery to view graves of Croatians of the past and explore their history, Lydon said. The day wrapped up at the Gizdich Ranch.