

## WELCOME TO THE PETALUMA HISTORY ROOM

The Sonoma County Library welcomes you to the **Petaluma History Room**, where you will find books, manuscripts, historic photographs, newspapers, clippings, maps, city directories, yearbooks, City of Petaluma municipal records, and other materials that chronicle Petaluma's past. Volunteer docents are available to assist you in a variety of ways, including:

- Exploring the fascinating history of Petaluma and the surrounding area
- Getting you started with genealogical research
- Helping you trace the history of your house
- Training you to use online resources and databases
- Locating historic photographs

The Petaluma History Room collection is a community resource of immense value. Efforts to establish the History Room began in 1991 soon after the death of Ed Mannion, a longtime local resident and historian who had accumulated a vast amount of Petaluma and Sonoma County history. The goal was to house and make accessible his collection of books, files, photographs, and documents relating to Petaluma's history. A related goal was to create a place to store items that would later be donated by other historians, such as Ed Fratini. The History Room received more than \$11,000 in contributions from individuals, businesses, and organizations to fund the project. The Library's Gertrude E. Cromwell Trust matched these contributions, and the History Room officially opened in February of 1993.



## THE HISTORY OF PETALUMA

Founded in 1852 and chartered in 1858, Petaluma became a thriving shipping and manufacturing center. For 98 years, the Petaluma River contributed to Petaluma's commercial success, making it at one time the ninth largest municipality and the third busiest inland port in California. Once a major transportation hub for agricultural and many other products to and from San Francisco, Petaluma boasted two famous paddle wheelers, the steamers Gold and Petaluma.



Main Street Looking South, Petaluma, CA

From the 1880s through the 1940s, Petaluma was famous as a poultry town and was known as the "World's Egg Basket." Petaluma was home to the world's only Chicken Pharmacy (as featured in National Geographic and Ripley's Believe It or Not). Petaluma's commercial success resulted in great wealth and is reflected in the town's rich architectural heritage still seen today.



Portrait of Carrie Jones Meyer

After the population soared in the 1960s, the city enacted the "Petaluma Plan" in 1971. This plan limited the number of building permits to 500 annually for a five-year period.

By the late 1940s, high costs and technological advancements forced thousands of chicken farms into the hands of a few large producers. In the 1950s, the economy and demographics changed again, and Petaluma emerged as a bedroom community to the San Francisco Bay Area.

At the same time Petaluma created a greenbelt around the city. The greenbelt acted as a boundary for urban expansion for a set number of years.

The controlled development plan attracted national attention in 1975 when the city was sued by the Construction Industry Association. The city's restriction was upheld by the 9th Circuit Court in 1975, and in 1976 the Supreme Court declined an appeal to reconsider the lower court ruling in this case.

In the late 1990s, Petaluma became known as Telecom Valley when many telecom startup companies established themselves along the Highway 101 corridor. Today dairy ranching remains a principal industry, along with a variety of specialty agricultural products. Telecom Valley's second generation of companies continues to be important to Petaluma's economy.



East Washington Street, Petaluma, CA 1885

## HISTORY OF PETALUMA'S LIBRARY

From the beginning of library service in 1867 to the opening of the library on Fairgrounds Drive in 1976, Petaluma's leaders and citizens have made sure the library has met the ever-growing needs of our community. The Odd Fellows Library Association gathered the original collection of books, which were transferred to the City of Petaluma in 1878. While under the city's stewardship, the library was housed in various locations until 1887 when it was moved to the third floor of the newly constructed City Hall. From City Hall the library moved to the Carnegie building at Fourth and B Streets in 1906.

In 1973, as Petaluma's population grew and the demand for library services rose, the need for a centrally located facility became apparent. The current Petaluma Public Library was constructed with support from the Petaluma City Council and the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and by passage of a bond measure. The building was designed by Beland, Gianelli & Associates of Vallejo and Lieb, Quaresma & Associates of Petaluma. Ralph E. Palmberg of Santa Rosa was the contractor.