

*Felton*

# Faye G. Belardi Memorial



*Felton, California*



This traditionally-styled New England structure, now the Faye G. Belardi Memorial building and the home of the Felton branch library, was constructed in 1893 to serve as a house of worship for the Presbyterian Church. It was built on land donated to the church in 1869, and its construction cost the local congregation \$1,500.

The little chapel served its church for 63 years. In January of 1955, local Presbyterians held their final service here and then moved into a new and larger building nearby.

The small church building was abandoned and soon sold. Purchasing it were Mr. and Mrs. Nick (Faye G.) Belardi, valley business people, who initially intended to dismantle the church and build a home on the scenic site.

At this time, a second and ultimately dovetailing event was occurring in Felton — the threatened closure of the town's clothes-closet library, which, in fact, was housed in a cloakroom at the Felton Community Hall. The town's mini-library, of course, held no great selection of titles and was open only four hours each week.

Citizens, concerned at losing even their token library, met to find a way to save it. One solution they considered in some depth (knowing the new circumstances of the "old Presbyterian Church") was to purchase the church for the asking price of \$1,000 and have it moved to the old Felton School grounds (a site now occupied by a super market). The citizens studied and restudied plans to raise money to buy and move the church-library building and eventually determined that such a venture, if possible at all, would be no small task for a small town.

In August of that year, tragedy struck the Belardi family when Mrs. Faye G. Belardi lost her life in an automobile accident. Her husband, knowing his wife's love of the church building and its lovely surroundings, generously gave the building and property to the citizens of Felton, stipulating that it should be used as a library or public meeting place. He requested that the building be made a memorial to his wife.

The town gratefully accepted, and a board of trustees was set up to administer the Faye G. Belardi Memorial.

While members of the board along with a group of citizen volunteers went to work on the building, the area's weekly newspaper, the *San Lorenzo Valley Reporter*, owned by Walter and Edith Fikes, petitioned Felton residents for donations and published the names of donors weekly. Under the impact of this good news, over \$1,000 was raised toward renovation costs.

It was with a great deal of loving care that the abandoned little church was restored. Broken windows were replaced, the interior was painted, shelves were built, and floor boards were re-laid as the old painted floor was refinished to its pristine redwood beauty.

On April 15, 1956, the building was dedicated the *Faye G. Belardi Memorial* and became the Felton community's library. Library patrons were welcomed the following day with Mrs. Ted (Mae) Toft as the first volunteer librarian at the desk. Mrs. Geraldine Work, county librarian, trained a staff of volunteer librarians who took turns manning the branch from April to August, 1956, when a paid librarian, Mrs. Edith Fikes, was hired.

Late in 1970, Walter Fikes, editor of the *Reporter* which supported the town's preservation of the building, a devoted worker in its continuing preservation, and a man who was a director of the board of trustees and its chairman for many years, passed away.

The board, to honor him, set aside the south garden as the Walter Fikes Native Garden; and in 1971 a side door was added to the building to allow access to the garden and the shade of its magnificent oak tree. The library board and staff is yearly adding native plants to beautify the area.

Felton takes pride in its historic library building. We ask that you enjoy it and take care of it, as we do.

A scrapbook of detailed history is available in the library.

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*prepared by the  
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