

Pattea Torrence

Meet the “mayor” of Old Edna

By Beth Phaner ■ Photograph by Dennis Swanson

In 2000, Pattea Torrence and her husband, Jeff Kocan, took ownership of Old Edna, a 100-year-old, two-acre town site in the Edna Valley, a world-class wine-producing region in San Luis Obispo County. Founded in the early 1800s, Old Edna once had a family home, a general mercantile, a blacksmith shop, a butcher shop, a saloon, and a dance hall. Today, thanks to Torrence’s creative vision and ongoing restoration efforts, the charming respite is now home to the Old Edna Antique Store, the Old Edna Custom Gourmet Deli/Cafe, the Gypsy Wagon, and the Edna Valley B&B Cottage, among other structures. Affectionately referred to by locals as the “mayor” of Old Edna, the always energetic Torrence talked with us about her own slice of paradise.

Q: What inspired you to purchase the Old Edna town site?

Pattea: I think it was to have a safe haven for myself, my husband, and my son, and to stretch myself to the limit, knowing I could make this place come to life again. I love seeing people happy. It means the world to me, and it always has. I knew that if I bought my own little town, I might be able to share what I love with others. Something about Old Edna begs you to be honest, kind, and loving. This is how I want to live and how I want my guests to feel.

Q: How did you become interested in historic preservation?

Pattea: My father was a builder. He would take something that was nothing and make it special—make it “sing again,” he would say. My mother had a way with interior design. Neither of them came from much, but what I saw them do was inspiring. I guess you could say it started there.

Q: What’s been the most challenging aspect of operating Old Edna?

Pattea: Doing what needed to be done with very little money. That is when magic happens for me—when a friend calls to help or the lumberyard calls and offers me some wood. I always have my truck ready, and everyone knows I like the stuff that isn’t perfect. It’s the only way I can get the job done, and it is so rewarding to show off my crooked deck or my crooked wall!

Q: How do you promote the town site? Do you work closely with local wineries?

Pattea: I realize the importance of our neighboring wineries. I have worked very hard at fostering good relationships with each of them. We like to think of ourselves as “The Hub,” the central core of Edna Valley. We constantly play chamber of commerce out here and like directing people to the wonderful wineries. I think we are as important to them as they are to us.



Q: Since you took ownership of Old Edna, what’s the most surprising thing you’ve discovered about the property?

Pattea: The discoveries we’ve made have proven to us that we’re doing the right thing. The day I took possession of the property, I found out I would soon be a mother. Later, my father was helping us move into a small cottage, and we discovered an old cellar filled with remnants of the past. Most notable was a children’s bowl in perfect shape from East Liverpool, Ohio, where my father was born. My dad has been extremely involved

in my little boy’s life, and that bowl is especially important to him.

Q: What special projects do you have planned for the town site?

Pattea: Future projects may include our own wine label, as well as a small, extra-special tasting room—maybe even an outdoor kiosk-style tasting room. Our first chardonnay will be named Peaceful Edna. **W**

Old Edna, “The Hub,” is located at State Route 227 and Price Canyon Road, San Luis Obispo; (805) 544-8062; oldedna.com.