



The Society Page

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Gilroy Historical Society

June, 2019

We Invite You for a Special Treat



IOOF Children's Home

Our Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Sunday, June 23rd 12:00 noon
290 IOOF Avenue, Gilroy

**** Presentation of our annual Architecture Awards at Rebekah Children's Services ****

Lunch will be catered by the Kneaded Bakery, the onsite culinary school. The winners of the Architecture Awards will be our guests. Claudia Sandoval of Rebekah Children's Services will speak to us about the Home.

Make your reservation by mailing a check for \$25 per person to the Society at P.O. Box 1621, Gilroy, CA 95021 by June 17th.

July 1st Renewal Date and Dues Structure

This notice appeared in our late December Society Page and we're repeating it here. It means that your dues for 2019 are due by July 1st, which is almost NOW.

During our retreat meeting in August it was decided to change the renewal process for membership in order to avoid confusion. Sometimes our rotating membership year with no set renewal date was difficult to remember. So, we decided to have all members renew on July 1 of each year, unless you are already a Life Member. We hope this will be easier for all of us to remember! It's simple, **JULY 1ST FOR ALL RENEWALS**. Dues are now due by July 1st, 2019.

At the same time, we adjusted our dues to reflect the following:

- Seniors - \$25,
- Individuals - \$35
- Family - \$50
- Life and Corporate Memberships - \$500

The Story of The Children's Home

Gilroy's foremost benefactor, Caroline Amelia Hoxett, was a member of the local Unity Rebekah Lodge and became the state president of the Rebekahs. In that role she was influential in choosing Gilroy as the location for the International Order of Odd Fellows Children's Home, the place where children of their members could live if their parents were unable to care for them. The Home opened in 1897 in a wooden building. After realizing the risk of fire or earthquake, the fraternal organization decided to replace the original home with the safer masonry building we see today. William Weeks, the famous Central Coast architect, designed this beautiful Mediterranean style building which was built by well-known local contractor William Radtke and opened in the fall of 1921. Caroline Hoxett also donated funds for the campanile and chimes. Three arches define the grand entry. The columns in between the arches are impressively carved with faces, acanthus and garlands. Look for the IOOF symbol above the entry. The spacious grounds are beautifully landscaped. It is eligible for the National Register and is indeed a building that instills much pride.

Although the Home was originally an "orphanage", we no longer call it that today. Later the Home began to house dependents of the court. Today it houses a few children who need additional medical and social services in family style cottages that were built in the 1990s. The main building is used for administrative offices for "wrap around services" provided to families and schools throughout the area. In this modern way the home has a continuous record of providing services to children since 1897.

2019 ARCHITECTURE AWARDS

We always look forward to presenting our annual architecture awards, a project we've undertaken since 2011. Our aim is to thank those property owners who have taken excellent care of their historic home or building and to give our historic resources more visibility. This year we have the special treat of presenting the awards at Rebekah Children's Services beautiful Mediterranean-style building. Nominations were open to the public and we appreciate the sharp eyes of everyone who submitted a candidate. Committee members were **Bill Faus, Dave Matuszak, Phill Laursen, Pat Reinhart and Connie Rogers**. And the winners this year are:



265 Fourth Street – Historic House Award



7590 Dowdy St. – Historic House Award



565 Fifth St. – Historic House Award



408 Old Gilroy Street – Historic House Award



465 Fourth St. – Historic House Award



130 Seventh St. – Certificate of Commendation



7630 Carmel St. – Historic House Award



7640 Carmel St. – Historic House Award



7531 Carmel – Historic House Award



650 West Fifth St. – Old Wheeler Hospital – Historic Commercial Building



7500 Monterey St. – Historic Commercial Building – downtown

All buildings photographed by Phill Laursen.

SUCCESSFUL BOWLATHON



On March 23rd our 9th successful bowlathon was held at Gilroy Bowl. It netted \$7901 for our Museum Endowment Fund with the Gilroy Foundation. There are so many people to thank, beginning with Margene Peterson (pictured at left) who again was tops in obtaining pledges. Grace Kawano donated delicious food for our snacks and many wonderful prizes were donated by local merchants. **Linda White** is a pro at organizing this event. Over the nine years we have raised a total of \$47,926.54 for our Museum Endowment Fund, quite a record. Many, many thanks to all who participated and helped!

Margene's photo is by Linda White.

County Grants to Recognize the Importance of History

Santa Clara County has initiated a brand-new program of historic grants to be administered by the County Parks Department. The purpose of the grants is to acknowledge and celebrate untold stories and or underrepresented/disadvantaged communities. This includes the history of women, ethnic groups, viticulture, agriculture among others. Sounds like they had South County in mind!

Your Society has decided to apply for a grant to publish John Gilroy's biography as a booklet. It was originally a well-researched Master's thesis by Truda Cooling Nelson at San Jose State in 1981. Phill Laursen contacted her and she was excited and pleased that we want to publish it. A second grant we are applying for would provide three years' worth of funding to film oral history interviews, as we have done in 2017 and 2018. Although the applications are due by mid-July, we will not know whether we're successful until the Board of Supervisors votes in December and probably would not receive the money until 2020. **Phil Laursen, Joanie Lewis and Connie Rogers** are working on the applications which are detailed and require letters from subject matter experts.

A Glorious Day on Mt. Umunhum

It was a day of adventure for a dozen Society members on Saturday, April 27th when we took the winding road up to the peak of Mt. Umunhum. As it takes an hour from Gilroy, we had plenty of time to build up anticipation. We were rewarded with wildflowers and spectacular views in addition to the radar tower itself. Midpeninsula Open Space District has done a beautiful job providing a picnic shelter with displays, a large parking lot and a drop off lot at the top itself for those who can't climb the 159 steps. The only caveats: bring your own water and pack out your own trash.

Our guide, Basim Jaber, met us in the picnic area. He had already finished guiding the Morgan Hill Society in the AM, but was still fresh and ready to impart his detailed knowledge of the history of the radar tower. He must have done a lot of research about why the tower was built, what its purpose was and how its mission changed over the years. It was once a key part of the west coast's air defense system. The tower was one of a system of 23 similar radar stations in California and one of hundreds across the country that fed radar signals into the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) defense system. This tower was in operation as part of the Almaden Air Force Station from 1957 to 1980. It was closed when technology eclipsed it, but remains an icon above our valley floor.



Both photos by Sean Barragan

Gilroy's 150th Birthday Is Next Year!

Did you ever look at the City seal and notice that it says March 12, 1870? Yes, Gilroy was chartered as a City on that day, making us the third oldest city in Santa Clara County, after San Jose and Santa Clara. We are beginning to make plans for a real civic celebration. Mayor Roland Velasco has appointed a 150 Committee. The first order of business was to develop a logo for the event. The City's Art and Culture Commission sponsored a contest to design the logo. The deadline was May 31st for three age groups. In July the City Council will select a winner in each age category and an overall winner. Then participants will be able to use the logo for street banners and many other ways throughout 2020.

The Committee is going to sponsor the Chamber of Commerce Mixer on Thursday, March 12th, 2020 probably at Old City Hall. On Saturday, March 14th there will be a family friendly celebration. Civic groups will be asked to incorporate the 150th theme into other events all year long. The Museum is already looking forward to some special displays and events. Possibly even a soft cover book commemorating our first one hundred and fifty years. How would you like to be involved?

Gilroy's Historic Resource Inventory

Did you know that a building more than 50 years old can be considered historic? The updated historic resources inventory now in progress is evaluating most Gilroy buildings built prior to 1974. First, historians developed a Context Statement outlining periods of our history and followed these themes during each period: residential development, commercial development, civic and institutional development, transportation infrastructure and agriculture, manufacturing and industry. Next, architectural historians will evaluate the significance of our buildings against these themes. What role did the building play and how important was it? The whole project should be completed by next fall, just in time for our 150th birthday! Our buildings give us a sense of beauty, security and a sense of place. They contribute to our unique qualities as a city and are part of our culture.

Donations to The Museum

We miss our longtime volunteer Horace Fabing very much. Now his children have given the Museum many of his photos, railroad items and telephone collection. These unique items include a Charles Gubser for Congress poster (1952) and a political button saying "Ike, Dick and Charlie" from the same period. Richie Chavarria from Garlic City Auction has donated several Gilroy postcards and photos. Elizabeth Barratt and Diane Kannely Britt have both donated photos, letters and ephemera too numerous to describe. Deborah Anderson, a descendant of both the Filice and Perelli families has donated numerous items from the F & P Cannery which was such a mainstay of Gilroy life in the 1900s. Tom Howard is looking forward to creating a special display of these items in the future. We'll be sure to let you know when it is ready for unveiling!