



The Society Page

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Gilroy Historical Society

October, 2019

Please join us for these well-deserved Hall of Fame selections:



October 26, 2019
11:30am-1:30pm

We will honor:

Michael Bonfante
Tom Carr
Edith Edde
Karen LaCorte

Old City Hall Restaurant
7400 Monterey Street
Downtown Gilroy
Gilroy.org

Recently the Society's Board of Directors decided to "adopt" this program, previously handled by the Chamber of Commerce. We are in a transition mode this year. Because most of the Hall of Fame Committee members are already Historical Society members (**Donna Pray, Jay Baksa, Edith Edde, Joe Filice and Joanie Lewis**) we decided to make it a Standing Committee of the Society. The event honors outstanding citizens from our past (and present) so we felt it was appropriate. Edith has been a valuable Museum Volunteer for many years and spearheaded the revival of the Hall of Fame program. In addition, she updated the albums the Gilroy Museum keeps with photos and narratives of past winners, going back many years.

Please make your reservation through the Chamber website at Gilroy.org. The cost is \$35 and you may pay by credit card.

MEET DAVE MATUSAK, Our Newest Board Member

Dave has been a member of the Society for almost twenty years. He was one of the first to apply for the Mills Act Program with the City of Gilroy in 2001 for his residence at 555 5th Street, the Renz House, built by Renz and Radtke. He became a Life Member of the Society a few years later.

In 2012 a second home was purchased for grandson Joseph Matuszak, an Iraqi Veteran, at 7751 Rosanna, also known as the Hornlein House. This home was in need of a lot of repair and upgrades, but had historic roots. It was awarded Mills Act status in 2013 and won an Architecture Award from the Society in 2015. In addition to applying for the Mill's Act for these two homes, Dave has helped several other applicants research and prepare their applications.

Prior to moving to Gilroy in 1999 Dave started his career in the Chicago Public Schools as a Machine Shop teacher. He continued teaching in several other districts for 15 years. He then spent 11 years at Nestle Chocolate and Confections as Maintenance Training Manager. At Nestle he was responsible for all training needed to enhance the performance of technical staff as the equipment was being changed from traditional mechanical machinery to computer controls.

After Nestle, Dave spent several years as a vocational education supervisor in the Chicago area, then relocated to Gilroy to take a position with the Santa Clara County Office of Education as Director of the Regional Occupational Program serving school districts in Morgan Hill, Gilroy, Hollister, and Aromas. Dave retired in 2013 after 45 years in vocational training. He continues to be involved in the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce, Gilroy Unified School District committees, and many other community activities. Dave has a lot of energy and many skills. He has already made a big difference in our effectiveness!

Ancient Paths Marker Dedicated at Casa De Fruta

The California State Society Daughters of the American Colonists proudly announces the placement and dedication of the Ancient Paths historical marker at Casa de Fruta on June 15, 2019.

California State Society Regent Barbara Aerni dedicated the marker explaining that it is the 33rd marker placed by the National Society Daughters of the American Colonists acknowledging important trails and paths in the formation of the United States.

Connie Rogers, President of the Gilroy Historical Society gave an overview of the historical significance of the Pacheco Pass area and Casa de Fruta based on research by Society member George Fohner.

The marker was accepted by Joe and Gerrod Zanger representing Casa de Fruta and the Zanger Family. Joe and Gerrod then gave a short history about the beginnings of Casa de Fruta. Refreshments following the ceremony were provided by Casa de Fruta.



Joe and Gerrod Zanger with Barbara Aerni and Pam Bryant, officers of the DAC

One Worthy Project Leads to Another

By Phill Laursen

Example: Improvements to the Old Saint Mary's Cemetery brought people to enjoy it, **Tom Howard and I** among them. While looking at John Gilroy's headstone I remarked it was sad no one had ever written a book about him. Tom responded by telling me about Truda Cooling Nelson's 1981 Master's Thesis — when we were next at the Museum, he showed it to me. Inspired, I Googled her phone number, called and within two minutes had her approval to print it for the Museum's benefit. Without the cemetery project, I may never have learned about the thesis.

And while taking photographs in the cemetery, for use in the booklet, I noticed the headstone for Jose Maria Amador and wondered why a name I associate with the Sierras would be found in

Gilroy. Not long afterward, I was at an event near Sutter Creek and dropped in at their visitor center. I spoke with the attendant about Amador's gravesite in Gilroy and as we drove home thoughts about Amador mingled with those about the Gilroy booklet, and I dove into the Museum's files. I found a rich trove and I eventually gathered quite a collection of information, but the most important work, Amador's memoir, was in Spanish.

And **Lani Yoshimura's** project to bring speakers to the Library resulted in a talk by a San Jose State professor who translated Amador's memoir. My attendance there led to correspondence with him as well as with the Amador Chapter of the D.A.R. Fired up by the new book, when attending another event near Sutter Creek, I went to the Amador County Museum in Jackson. Chatting with the docent, she showed me a copy of reminiscences about Bernal by his son. I was able to purchase a copy from a library in Australia and reading it, I was amazed to find Amador was buried here because he had family in Gilroy; the son worked for Gilroy Schools. Recently I met a descendant of Amador's and he is going to put me in touch with other descendants.

AndI found the San Jose State professor was unaware the existence of the writings of Amador's son, so now he has even more information.

And Amador's memoir gives details about a military mission up through the Sacramento Valley and onward to the Columbia River — I'd already learned from my work on the John Gilroy booklet that he had gone along as an interpreter for the expedition, so Gilroy and Amador were together in life as well as in death!

And Amador's memoir confirmed something I suspected but for which I didn't have confirmation: that the Monterey-based soldier, Joaquin Solis, who led an 1829 revolt against the Mexican Governor there, is the same Joaquin Solis for whom the Solis Rancho (in the Hecker Pass/Watsonville Road corridor) is named.

History Roundtable Discussion

A spontaneous gathering of like minds erupted at the Museum recently. A group of members and friends decided to start a history discussion group. Joe Robinson is the leader of more than a dozen history buffs. They bring different topics and try to feature some of the more unusual events and anecdotes. The group meets monthly from about 6 to 8 PM. If you are interested, email the Museum at Gilroy.museum@cityofgilroy and ask to be put on the notification list.

Railroad Depot Wins National Register Status

Congratulations to all of us! In July the Society received official notification from the State Office of Historic Preservation that the Gilroy Southern Pacific Railroad Depot has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Sherri Stuart was a valuable writer for the detailed application and the intrepid Phill Laursen took photos. Get ready for a dedication/celebration sometime this fall! We have ordered a beautiful bronze plaque for the building.

This station replaced the original 1869 model which citizens decried as totally inadequate. After a delegation of local city fathers protested to the State Railroad Commission, they ordered Southern Pacific (which had previously refused) to build a new, modern depot. This lovely Mediterranean style building was completed in 1918 and enjoyed a huge celebration.

Over the next fifty years the popularity of airplanes and auto use diminished travel by rail. Gilroy's once much-hailed, beautiful, depot was closed down in 1971 with the cessation of the Del Monte passenger service. Before long, the building fell into disrepair and became a target for graffiti. For the next 30 years, the depot was a mere rail switching station for freight trains. Although Caltrain commute service began in 1992, the station itself remained boarded up.

In 1998, again spurred by citizens' demands, the City's restoration efforts brought the structure's use and beauty around full circle. A grand reopening celebrated the return of the passenger service, complete with historically accurate restoration of the waiting area and ticket office, and exterior painting true to the building's original colors. The restored Gilroy depot today has become a multimodal transportation hub serving the needs of Gilroy and the south Santa Clara region.



News from the Museum

There's a LOT going on at the Museum! Sprightly and faithful Betty Kelly retired at the end of June. Betty was a Lead every Tuesday, all day, for ten years! We have two new wonderful volunteers, recently retired city employees **Susan Voss and Cathy Mirelez**. Susan has taken on the

responsibility of a Lead position part time and Cathy is helping create a new exhibit about the Cannery.

Deborah Anderson, a Filice and Perelli descendant, has given the Museum many objects related to the F & P Cannery that was a major Gilroy employer for so many years. The handsome new apartment complex that has taken its place at 111 Lewis Street sought help from the Museum with their art work and used some of Deborah's photos in their hallways and activity rooms. The owner, Meta Housing, generously donated \$1000 to the Museum.

Your Board Has Been Busy

We held a very productive Retreat on August 14th at the Willey House. Dave Matuszak participated and contributed many constructive ideas. Whereupon we elected him to be an official board member. We discussed the good progress on our endowment funds with the Gilroy Foundation and took beginning steps towards hiring a Director/Curator for the Museum. And much, much more.

Our biggest accomplishment of the summer was submitting two detailed grant applications to Santa Clara County. **Phill Laursen and Connie Rogers** worked on our request for \$3000 to publish a biography of John Gilroy. Phill spent many hours translating Truda Cooling Nelson's scholarly typewritten thesis into the InDesign software program enabling it to be printed. **Joanie Lewis and Connie Rogers** also spent many hours on the application for \$30,000 to cover three years of filming oral histories. Each application required more than 30 supporting documents which were uploaded to a special site of the County Parks Department. The applications will be reviewed by a committee which will make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The Board is expected to vote on those recommendations in December. Special thanks to **Elizabeth Barratt, Pat Snar Escamilla and Teddy Goodrich** who wrote reference letters as historic experts and to a dozen friends who wrote community support letters for our applications.

Reminders...

- We are still accepting dues for 2019-2020, if you forgot during summer vacation.
- Are you shopping more than ever from Amazon? Did you know that you can benefit the Society at no extra cost to you? You only have to remember to order through www.smile.amazon.com (instead of www.amazon.com)! Once you have chosen Gilroy Historical Society as the non-profit that you want to help, .5% of your purchase amount goes directly into our checking account. Thanks for thinking of us!
- Bill Foley, Director of the California Pioneers Film Archive reminds us that they will be glad to preserve your fragile old films. They will transfer in full HD from 8mm, Super 8, 16mm, slides, or negative film, and provide a free digital copy to the donor, either a DVD or a flash drive. The flash drive allows donors to the video send it to social media, edit it themselves, etc. The Pioneers have partnered with many local and international museums and documentarians, and

have now been scanning film for 10 years! The best contact to get in touch with them is sccpioneers@gmail.com.

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