



Old Gilroy City Hall - 1905

THE SOCIETY PAGE

Newsletter of the Gilroy Historical Society

April 2023

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Board of Directors / Museum Shop



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Still Stands



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Donors List



Sponsors



Membership Application

GILROY MUSEUM

195 5th Street • Gilroy, CA 95020
(408) 846-0446

HOURS:

Tuesdays and Thursdays
10AM - 4PM

First and Second Saturdays
10AM - 2PM

Email the museum at:
Gilroy.Museum@cityofgilroy.org

We've Been Invited to the Fellom House. . .



SATURDAY, APRIL 15TH at 2:00 PM

3575 Leavesley Road, Gilroy

Ellen Marden has graciously invited us to see her home, one of Gilroy's oldest houses. It was built by Matthew Fellom, a Dane who was the second man of European heritage to settle in our area, after John Gilroy. He built this house in 1861, soon after marrying his second wife. The house is on the County's list of Historic Resources. Ellen and her former husband restored it in 1997, adding an addition in the rear which matched the house. This gave them room to accommodate their four children! We will be able to tour the first floor and Ellen will tell us more about the house.

GILROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

www.gilroyhistoricalsociety.org (Follow the link on our website to reach our Facebook page)

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Dave Matuszak, <i>Outreach</i>	dmatuszak2@aol.com	(408) 781-0497

Board meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 10 AM at the Museum, or an alternate outdoor location (due to Covid). Let us know if you would like to attend to share ideas.

MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

846-0446 ♦ gilroy.museum@ci.gilroy.ca.us

The following items are for sale with the proceeds going to benefit the Museum.

GHS Historical Footage DVD	\$ 5.00
GHS Gilroy 1950 DVD (55 mins.)	\$ 5.00
GHS Gilroy Museum Tour DVD	\$ 12.00
GHS Oral Histories DVD	\$ 10.00
Old City Hall Collector Spoon	\$ 1.00
Walking Tour Booklets	\$ 1.00
Packet Historical Homes Notecards	\$ 10.00
Single Historical Homes Notecards	\$ 1.00
Postcards	\$ 1.00
Souvenir Pencil	\$.25
Gilroy Museum Mouse Pad	\$ 10.00
Historic Home Prints by R. McGinnis	\$ 10.00/15.00
Tote Bags	\$ 5.00
Juan Bautista De Anza Booklet	\$ 5.00
<i>A Country Doctor in the Valley of Hearts Delight</i> by E. Barratt ...	\$ 5.00
<i>A Hundred Years of the Gilroy Hot Springs</i> by I. Sanderson	\$ 25.00
<i>John Gilroy</i> by Truda Cooling Nelson	\$ 15.00
<i>Gilroy's Old City Hall</i> by Woollacott, Pursell and Myer	\$ 5.00
<i>Images of Gilroy</i> by Claudia Salewske	\$ 20.00
<i>San Martin Then and Now</i> by D. Brodsky	\$ 20.00
Christmas Ornament (Globe)	\$ 10.00
Christmas Ornament (Ceramic)	\$ 10.00



"We're sorry that Amazon has discontinued their Smile program."



Proceeds from Sales Directly Support the Gilroy Museum.

SOCIETY NEWS...

BOWLING IS BACK

By Linda White

Are you ready to bowl? As life gets back to "normal" the Bowl-a-thon is returning to our "regular" time frame. Please join us on **Saturday, April 22, 2023, at 2:00 pm at Morgan Hill Bowl, 650 Tennant Station**, for a fun afternoon of food and bowling... and perhaps a great prize! Proceeds from this event will go towards our Historic Heritage oral history project. Help us to continue this important documentation of Gilroy's history.

See the enclosed flyer and pledge sheet for info. Submit your entry form and fee by April 8th. Continue to collect pledges and turn in your pledge sheet at the event. Hope to see you there!

GRANTS RECEIVED

We are honored to receive a grant of \$2000 from the Gilroy Garlic Festival Association and a grant of \$2500 from the Gilroy Foundation towards our popular oral history film program. These are a huge help as the films cost over \$10,000 to produce!

HERITAGE FILM PREMIERE

The banquet room at Old City Hall was packed with 116 guests who came to enjoy our 2022 film on January 29th. **Vice-President Joanie Lewis** did another outstanding job arranging for both the filming and the luncheon. Here are some photos from the occasion.



Filmmakers Mattie Scariot and Nils Myers from 152 West Productions.



Chris Wheeler, Barbara Biafore and Elaine Bonino prepare to check in guests.

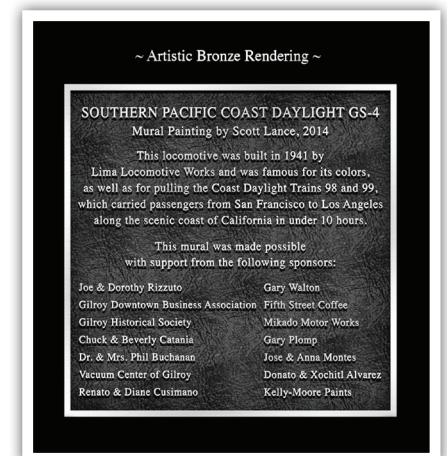


President, Connie Rogers thanking everyone.

WE'VE BEEN BUSY IN 2023...

Bill Briggs, a retired professor and history buff who lives in Morgan Hill elaborated on his recent book, *Badass Lawman at the Gilroy Library* on February 11th. It is the story of John Hicks Adams who was elected to five terms as Santa Clara County Sheriff. He had a lot of exploits such as a shoot-out near Almaden Quicksilver Mines and being present at the hanging of Tiburcio Vasquez. His significance to Gilroy is that he donated land for Adams School, now the site of Chitactac-Adams County Park on Watsonville Road.

In 2014 Scott Lance painted a wonderful exact replica mural of a Southern Pacific locomotive on the south wall of Fifth Street Coffee Shop. Unfortunately, the sign has become illegible due to the sun and weather. But never fear..... your Society has ordered a handsome new bronze sign which will be installed later this spring.



PIONEER FELLOW HOUSE STILL STANDS

By Ellen Marden

Owner and a 5th generation resident of Santa Clara County

How does one begin to tell the story of a house, a home, a family from so very long ago? The 1861 structure stands now, though it very nearly did not survive. Almost taken down by family strife, weather and simply old age. Never quite abandoned, but left on its own for years and years. The family name survives but no longer resides at the house.

Logically, the builder is the place to start. But his story is very long and could take up an entire book, so I will be brief. There is more information about this family at the Gilroy Museum.

According to the History of Santa Clara County California by Eugene T. Sawyer (1922) Mathew Fellom was one of the early settlers at San Ysidro (now Gilroy). Born a Dane in 1801 he shipped out on a merchant vessel arriving on the California coast sometime between 1822 and 1830. There are conflicting stories, but it is believed that he left the ship in Sonoma County, set off by foot, and reached the Santa Clara Valley where he continued to San Ysidro, which would later be named Gilroy. He was able to gain employment as a soap maker for John Gilroy.

In the John Gilroy Biography by Truda Cooling Nelson (1981, available at the Gilroy Museum) it is noted that from about 1836 until 1843 there were only three foreign settlers in the San Ysidro, John Gilroy, Thomas Doak and Mathew Fellom. The fourth foreign settler to become a resident was Julius Martin in late 1843. He went on to become wealthy as one of the earliest California Gold rush miners.

Over time Mathew Fellom established himself as one of the foundations of the early settlers of Alta California. Fellom was made an alcalde of San Juan Bautista after the American occupation of the area. In 1839 He married a native of Santa Clara County, Manuela Briones born in 1823. Manuela gave birth to eleven children, only three of whom would survive to adulthood. Sons John (b 1840), Semfriano (b 1852) and daughter Adele (b 1847). The family would travel the buggy route to the Mission to attend Mass and baptize the children. The town of Gilroy had not yet been established.



Before restoration.

Matthew acquired 1,750 acres of land on the northeast side of Old Gilroy to raise stock and hay. The Felloms and their ranch were successful, but in 1858 Manuela died at the age of 35. Mathew had become known as one of the most extensive stock raisers in the area. In 1860 at the age of 59 he remarried to Ricarda Castro.

In 1861 (with Abraham Lincoln in the White House) they milled redwood trees from the coast mountains on a site on Leavesley Road where cattle had once grazed. Previously, most the dwellings in the area were the standard adobe. The house Fellom built consisted of what is called a "four square" type building, meaning the original dwelling had two large rooms downstairs and two upstairs and a large rear room or porch which was a cooking area. The house is described in the Heritage Resource Inventory of Santa Clara County as "possibly the oldest residence in the Gilroy area". It stands today in an apricot orchard which once produced cattle and hay.

The location east of Gilroy, afforded the family a front porch view of the horse and buggy route up into the hills for visitors to make their way to the Gilroy Hot Springs.



Mathew Fellom passed away on December 16th 1868. His widow Ricarda Castro Fellom went on to remarry Jose E. Boranda about 1871 at the Fellom ranch house. It is not clear how the house passed on to oldest son John Fellom but on January 4th 1874 John married Blandina Ortega and together they had nine children at the farmhouse. Blandina had deep roots in the area. She was the great-granddaughter of Don Ygnacio Ortega, who received the original Spanish grant for Rancho San Ysidro. John and Blandina were able to continue the successful history of the ranch.

The Gilroy Museum contains more history and details about the Fellom family, including the silver mining son Semfrano and his children, Roy Fellom who became a State Senator and James Fellom a well published author.

Blandina Ortega Fellom passed away April 11, 1923. The January 17th 1925 edition of the Gilroy Advocate headline reads "Last of Dons Passes from Life's Activities" when John Alexander Fellom passed away January 13, 1925 having lived his entire 85 years in the area.

The very early history of this old farmhouse is discoverable. But facts get less clear and harder to pin down as years pass as is true with many stories of deaths, ghosts and family feuds. So fast forward to 1996. With the front porch fallen off and all the windows broken this once large 1861 farmhouse was beginning to lean to the south and in such disrepair that it could fall off its mudsill foundation.



**Fellom monument at
Old Saint Mary Cemetery.**



Fellom House in 1996.

But how could anyone let that happen? A four-year recovery project began that included having the entire house hydraulically lifted so that a concrete foundation could be poured to secure the house. It stands today a proud yellow farmhouse with deep roots to the past and memories of the people who were among the earliest settlers in this valley.

MUSEUM NEWS...

NEITHER RAIN NOR SLEET NOR WIND KEEPS GILROY MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS HOME!

By Susan Voss, Museum Manager



During the first three months of 2023, Old Man Winter had his way with us: blowing his blustery best, whipping up storms and floods, and toppling trees and power poles like Tinker Toys. All this less than clement California weather didn't deter the Gilroy Museum volunteers. They braved the elements, rolled up their sleeves and began to rack up an impressive list of accomplishments to start the New Year. Here's just a few highlights, with more to come in successive newsletters!

A new display, devised by volunteer **Cathy Mirelez**, showcases Gilroy Hot Springs artifacts generously lent to the Museum by **Susan McDonald Lundblade** and **Bill McDonald**, the grand children of Emily and William J. McDonald. Grandparents Emily and "W. J." were Gilroy Hot Springs' proprietors from 1904 – 1925. The unique objects and photographs contribute to the display's entertainment theme and proves that the Hot Springs was a happening place in its day! Don't miss George Roop's 1915 Gilroy Hot Springs ledger book. You will marvel at the price of gasoline - 6 gallons for \$1.38! By contrast, a quart of whiskey was priced at \$2.00, so clearly, enjoying leisure time was highly valued! A shuffleboard pennant, given as first prize in a Hot Springs tournament, prominently features in the display. You can learn how Susan McDonald Lundblade serendipitously acquired her ancestors' pennant, but to do so, you'll have to visit the Museum and read the story for yourself!

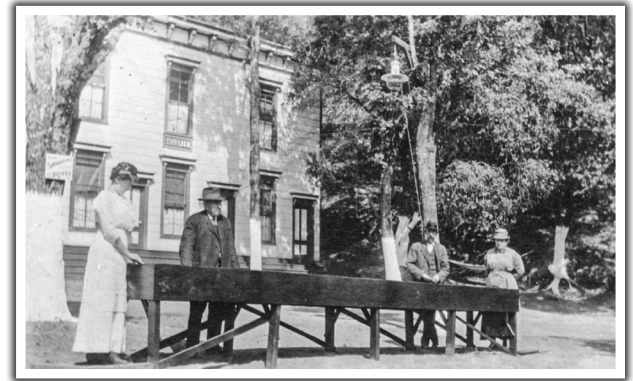


Photo is guests playing shuffleboard at Gilroy Hot Springs.



Eliot School visits Old City Hall on March 16th.

The weather hasn't discouraged Gilroy's school children from touring the Museum. By the close of March, eight different classes will have explored the Museum and been introduced to Gilroy's history. When two classes visit at the same time, Connie Rogers takes one class on a Walking Tour. The children visit the former fire house and its firemen's pole, Old City Hall and its former jail, and the paseo and its history display. Museum and walking tours last about 45 minutes each, include lots of questions, and the children leave with a small bag of historical games and puzzles that reinforces the day's lessons. Since January, 589 school children have experienced Gilroy in a new and very different way. Come April, another three classes are visiting, so if you think you might enjoy helping out with the school tours, please sign up to become a Museum volunteer!

Some volunteers work on specialized tasks, others pitch in where needed, and all of them assist visitors and share in the Museum's daily upkeep. The combined volunteer efforts contribute to the Museum's community outreach, its daily operations, and its passion for telling Gilroy's story. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Susan Voss at the Gilroy Museum. Help us to make known Gilroy's rich and varied heritage! (408-846-0446)



152 WEST
PRODUCTIONS



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Together, the Gilroy Historical Society, the City of Gilroy and the Museum's donors bring Gilroy's story to life!



GILROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Old Gilroy City Hall (1905)

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*...Honoring the integrity of Gilroy Community History
Your membership or gift membership includes a subscription to The Society Page.*

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**GILROY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Gilroy Historical Society

12th Annual Bowlathon

Saturday, April 22, 2023 @ 2:00 pm

Morgan Hill Bowl, 650 Tennant Station



\$25 Entry

BOWL 3
GAMES

Snacks
Raffle Prizes
Awards

Submit entry fee by **April 8th** to:

Linda White, Connie Rogers, or

The Gilroy Museum, 195 5th Street

Or mail: PO Box 1621, Gilroy, CA 95021

For More Information Call 408-847-2861

