



THE SOCIETY PAGE

Newsletter of the Gilroy Historical Society

September, 2017

JOIN US FOR LUNCH at
OLD CITY HALL on
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH at 12:00 Noon





7797 Monterey, Mayor Princeville St.



10550 Watsonville Rd., Cordes House

Architectural Historian KRISTA VAN LAAN will be our guest speaker. She recently discovered that the architect for Old City Hall is really Frank Delos Wolfe. In the application for National Register status written in 1975 it was mistakenly attributed to a different architect. Krista will present a Power Point about Mr. Wolfe's buildings in Gilroy with our 1905 Old City Hall being the best known. See page 3 for more info about Krista Van Laan and Frank Delos Wolfe.

Please make reservations by sending your check for \$20 payable to Gilroy Historical Society to our Post Office Box 1621 by Monday, Sept. 25th. At the luncheon you will be able to order your choice of food from seven items on their "limited lunch" menu, including sandwiches, salads, fish and chips and pasta. Iced tea, lemonade and coffee are included. The presentation will be upstairs in the smaller room to the east, capacity 30.



Frank Delos Wolfe: The Architect Behind the Old Gilroy City Hall

San Jose architect Frank Delos Wolfe was one of the most prolific architects of all time. From 1888 to 1926, Wolfe was responsible, both alone and with partners, for more than 1200 works, eight of which are today on the National Register of Historic Places. Among these are some of the most recognizable architectural landmarks in Northern California. Wolfe was an architect who was not afraid to try something different. Between 1899 and 1910, he partnered with young architect Charles McKenzie and the pair became known for their innovative residential design. From 1911 to 1917, inspired by the great midwestern architect Frank Lloyd Wright, Wolfe brought the Prairie style to Northern California. In the last nine years of his career, Wolfe and architectural partner William Ernest Higgins introduced the romantic and beautiful Spanish Revival style. Wolfe designed several buildings in Gilroy, with the 1905 Old Gilroy City Hall being the most well known. This striking building is an example of just how magical the partnership's work could be.

Author and architectural historian Krista Van Laan will talk about and show examples of the impressive body of work of the "most famous architect you never heard of," with special focus on his work in Gilroy and the surrounding communities. From the Old Gilroy City Hall to the San Jose Woman's Club to the Venetian Court of Capitola, the work of Frank Delos Wolfe has helped to shape our cityscapes in lasting ways.

KRISTA VAN LAAN lives in San José, California, where she works in high tech by day and pursues her love of preservation and local architectural history at night. Working with the Preservation Action Council of San Jose, she has organized two San Jose citywide architectural home tours featuring the work of Frank Delos Wolfe. She is the author of the books *Wolfe & Higgins: Master Architects of the Spanish Revival*, *Frank Delos Wolfe: California Prairie Architecture*, and *The Insider's Guide to Technical Writing*.

AND THE WINNERS OF OUR 2017 ARCHITECTURAL AWARDS ARE.....

We are very proud to present our Architectural Award winners this year ([see photos here](#)). The Salvation Army Church is receiving the award for a second time, this year for authentic restoration of its magnificent steeple. The awards were presented to their deserving owners at our Annual Meeting at Gilroy Golf Course on June 25, 2017. Architectural photographer **Kris Knutson** donates his services and brings out the best in these special buildings. Many thanks to the Committee, **Kathy Hodgdon, Chair, Mike Dorn, Bill Faus, Pat Reinhart and Connie Rogers.**

HOW DONATIONS LEAD TO EXPLORATION

Recently the Museum received a significant donation, a very large Native American basket pictured below, found on a ranch near Watsonville and Burchell Roads. Its dimensions are 51 cm. x 51 cm. x 54.5 cm.



1. What tribe created it? How old is it? What relationship does it have to South County? Volunteer Robyn Houts knew that the State Historic Museum in Monterey has a huge collection of baskets and arranged for a field trip to find out more. On August 4th **Susan Voss** took the basket in a city van and led an intrepid group of **Muriel Brem, Roberta Hughan, Gina Czerwinski, Connie Rogers, Maureen Hunter, Trudie Conrotto, Joanne Fierro, Robyn Houts and Bill Faus**, to Monterey. Curator Kris Quist gave us a tour of their Holman collection of 900 baskets and said he would ask his basket expert about our baskets. The answer turned out to be that this one is an Apache olla! What will we do with it? We haven't decided yet.

IMPROVING OUR AMAH MUTSUN EXHIBIT

The Gilroy Museum has a small exhibit of local tribes. Until recently we called these peoples Ohlone. Now we know they prefer to be called the Amah Mutsun and consist of four small tribes near Gilroy. Their tribal leader, **Valentin Lopez**, grew up in San Martin and is helping his tribe preserve their cultural heritage in several ways. He is advising **Robyn Houts** about how best to present their story in the

Gilroy Museum. Robyn is also a docent at Chitactac Adams County Park on Watsonville Road and an archeologist with a master's degree. We are very fortunate to have Robyn helping us out in other ways too, on our Education Committee and our Museum Management Committee.

ABOUT ROBYN HOUTS

Robyn has been a South County Burchell Road resident for 26 years. A native of Perth Australia, she lived in London, England for four years, married an American, and arrived on the fair shores of California in 1980.

What had been an unattractive, graffitied wayside stop at the "T" of Burchell and Watsonville Road, opened in 1998 as Chitactac Adams County Park, and so began a career change, from Biochemist to Anthropologist. Robyn signed up opening day and has volunteered at Chitactac for the past 20 years. To add depth and understanding to public presentations (Chitactac serves 5,000 students annually), she began taking classes in the fields of Anthropology and Archeology, graduating with a Masters in Anthropology with a Museum emphasis, to become not only a more informed docent at Chitactac but also an Anthropology Professor. Robyn also volunteers at the Gilroy Museum and has volunteered at State Parks for 9 years. She lives at Southern Cross Farm Alpacas, has three grown children and a herd of alpacas.

FILMING OUR ORAL HISTORIES

We've embarked on a significant project of not only recording oral histories but also having them professionally filmed by 152 West Productions. Board Member **Joanie Lewis** was inspired by her father's oral history done through the Morgan Hill Historical Society. She convinced us that it was an important project and agreed to spearhead our efforts. So far our subjects have been **Al Gagliardi, Sig Sanchez, Muriel Brem, Richard Young, Mildred Braquet, Phil Lawton and Ann Jaszewski**. Right now the films are being edited for showing. Stay tuned for their premiere!

OUR ANNUAL PLANNING RETREAT – YOUR HELP NEEDED!

We got off to a great start at a special location, the Holloway House, just south of the post office on Egleberry Street. Owner Jeff and Barbara Orth are justifiably proud of their restoration efforts and were eager to show off the house. It was a special treat

for our board to enjoy the beautiful historical setting in downtown. Here are a few topics we tackled and we could use your help with most of them:

Our Education Committee (**Maureen Hunter, Karen Pedigo and Robyn Houts**) is busy preparing for the school year. They will send letters to every third grade teacher in Gilroy offering classroom visits and Museum tours. Do you like to work with kids?

We want to reach out to different ethnicities that make up Gilroy's heritage. While our collection has some items, we could definitely use more photos and artifacts, especially from Mexican, Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese groups. Do you have any you'd like to donate or let us make copies of?

There are several more buildings in Gilroy that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. These include our train station, the Rebekah Children's Home and the Grange/Japanese School (home of Pintello Comedy Theater). If you like writing and research any of these would be perfect for you!

We'd like to begin work on a booklet to celebrate Gilroy's 150th anniversary. It's coming up soon in 2020! The Museum has the material; we need volunteers to tackle a topic. How should we explain 150 years of progress?

Do you like websites and Facebook? We're trying to be modern too and if you have an interest, you could help the Society.

Volunteer at the Museum three or six hours/month. We want to have two volunteers on duty at a time and have a few days that need another person. And if two people are able to work four hours on a Saturday, we could be open a second weekend. Pick up an application at the Museum or get one from the City website at cityofgilroy.org

If any of these ideas interest you, contact any board member.