



THE SOCIETY PAGE

Newsletter of the Gilroy Historical Society

JOIN US FOR OUR FIRST HERITAGE LUNCHEON at

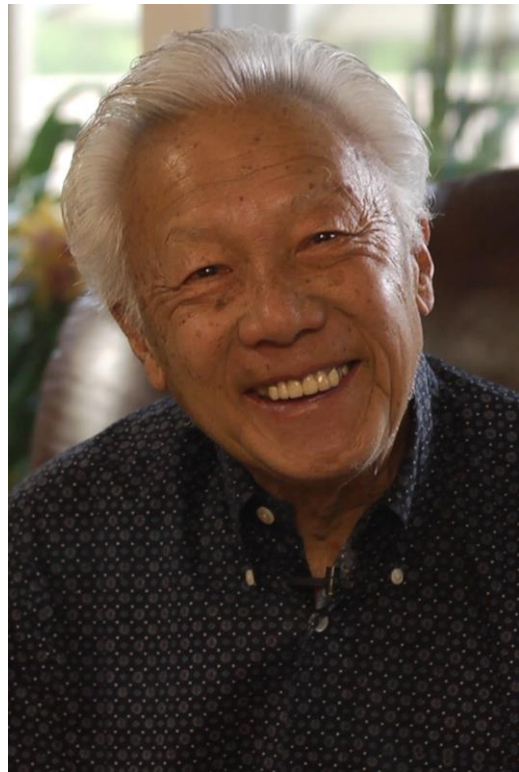
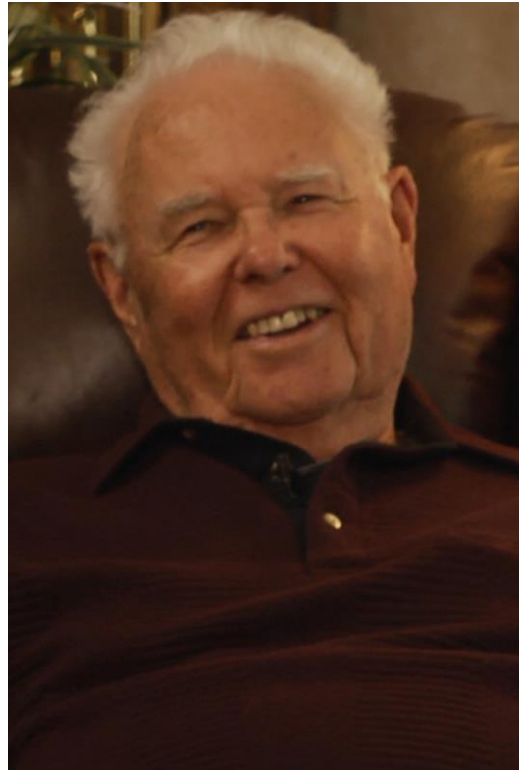
OLD CITY HALL, 7400 Monterey St.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2018 at 12 NOON

We're very excited to present the premiere of our first oral history film honoring **Sig Sanchez, Al Gagliardi, Muriel Brem, Phil Lawton, Mildred Braquet, Richard Young and Ann Jaszewski.**

Mattie Scariott and Nils Myers of 152 West Productions will present their 45-minute film of interviews with these special seniors who helped shape our community and are well known in Gilroy. Invitations will be mailed to you the first week of January. Please make your reservations right away by sending in the response card with your invitation. Seating is limited. Hope to see you there!







HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Your generous response to our year-end appeal makes our Museum Volunteers and Society members feel very supported and appreciated. We know we're biased, but as the third oldest city in Santa Clara County and a Charter City since 1870 we feel Gilroy has a past that is very unique and deserving of recognition.

Our recorded heritage mostly began after the gold rush. Life was difficult in those early days as residents forged their path following periods of three different national governments. As people go through different stages in their lives, so do communities. When transportation changed, so did our economy and our communication methods. One constant has always been agriculture. We began as the Hay and Grain Capital and even now, due to our rich soils and location, agriculture is still an important part of our economy. We're proud to be the Garlic Capital today!

Thank you for helping us to keep our unique history alive and interpret it for the next generations. There is always something to be learned from the past that is applicable in the present. We're about two thirds of the way towards our goal of \$500,000 held by the Gilroy Foundation. With this amount we believe we can hire a Director for the Gilroy Museum, someone who will set priorities for the collection and provide guidance to volunteers who will be still be needed to interpret our heritage. We are working on a job description for this person and want to partner with the City to make sure our Museum stays alive. A full list of our donors will appear in the next issue.

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON AT THE WILLEY HOUSE

On December 6th we celebrated another successful year the Museum. Lead Volunteer, **Betty Kelly**, loves to put on this special treat for our volunteers with help from **Barbara Biafore** (table decorations), **Deanna Goodrich** (coffee), **Connie Rogers** (sparkling cider and water) and **Karen Pedigo** (candy). David Bozzo catered a delicious meal and Betty brought

Christmas cupcakes. All but one of our thirty volunteers attended and really enjoyed themselves judging by the noise level!

After lunch Lead Volunteer **Tom Howard** summarized our accomplishments for the year. **Maureen Hunter** displayed some of our antique bottles that she decorated for sale at the Museum. **Joanie Lewis** announced the upcoming premiere of our first oral history film. **Connie Rogers** asked the volunteers what type of training they'd be interested in and we discussed how our hours could be expanded to include weekends. But the most special accolade we received was from **Susan Voss**, our official liaison from the City. Susan said that communities are more than buildings and that museum volunteers are the keepers of our culture as a community. She was much more articulate than that, but this is the best I can do.



ONE DAY ONLY – THE KITAJI BIBLES

With our partner, Gilroy Yamato Hot Springs, we staged a very special event at the Gilroy Museum on Saturday, October 21st. 125 people attended! **Laura Dominguez-Yon**, the moving force behind the restoration of the Hot Springs, did most of the display work. She grew up partly at Gilroy Hot Springs where her uncle, Captain Masuo Kitaji, was the caretaker from 1945 until his death in 1973.

While serving as the Japanese Salvation Army Corp leader in Oakland the Captain wanted to preach to worshipers in both English and Japanese. He conceived the idea of creating a bilingual version of the Bible. In 1935 he began transcribing passages from the accepted Japanese translation of that time onto blank pages inserted between the English pages of a large leather bound bible. He worked daily from 5 AM until noon, illustrating passages with artistic skills learned in Japan where he was educated. The first bible was completed in 1945 when the Captain was still interned in the WW II detention camp at Poston, AZ. He created the second bible while at Gilroy Hot Springs.

Like many family bibles, these huge volumes recorded family milestones such as births, baptisms, marriages and death. They also noted historic events (birthdates of US Presidents, WW II battles and the atomic bomb). The face-to-face passages in each language are exquisitely illustrated with examples of biblical stories. What make these bibles truly extraordinary are the clear, nearly flawless, tiny Japanese characters with no cross outs or blotches. Museum curators have said the caliber of writing and illustration is comparable to that of medieval monks.

After being missing for several years the bibles were found in a recycle bin in Oakland in 2016. The finder took them to an auction house for evaluation. When the auction house created a sales brochure and contacted potential buyers one of those recipients asked a family member about them. Negotiation with the auction house allowed several Kitaji family members to reclaim their heritage. The family has decided to place the bibles at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University for several reasons. They currently have a project about the Japanese Diaspora in the US and have the proper storage conditions. We were honored to have the bibles for this one day prior to their going to Stanford.

The Gilroy Museum has a photo exhibit on Gilroy Hot Springs, now part of Henry Coe State Park. Francisco Cantua discovered the Hot Springs were discovered in 1865. They were actively open as a resort for well over 100 years until the hotel burned down in 1980. Now the Friends of Gilroy Yamato Hot Springs is helping the State Park restore some elements of the springs. Last year the Nebraska cabin was restored and the group wants to begin work on the Captain's cabin and Church of the New Born. Visits to the Hot Springs can be arranged by appointment. Visit gilroyhotsprings.net for more information.



Laura Dominguez-Yon and Dean Yon behind the bibles. Photo by C. Rogers



Trudie Conrotto examining the exhibit. Photo by C. Rogers



Captain Kitaji with one of the bibles on the table

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH DOWNTOWN?

The City's designated Historic District in our downtown runs along Monterey Street from Fourth St. to Eighth St. There are some distinctive buildings, ones we would call keystones or anchors, and several other smaller buildings that are known as contributing buildings. By themselves those aren't significant, but they contribute to a larger whole that is meaningful. Experts have said that our downtown is architecturally qualified to be a National Register Historic District. This designation would provide better historic tax credits (if they are continued) and an increased level of prestige.

Why is maintaining our historic "look" so important? Because it makes us unique. If you took Marketing in school, you learned that it is important to differentiate your product from others who are selling similar goods. The cookie cutter look of franchise businesses and big box stores is one we want to get away from.

So why does our downtown look so neglected? The reasons are complex and there are plenty of fingers pointing blame. But rather than looking for scapegoats, let's work on the positive and try to bring it back to a level we can be proud of! The good news: there are only eight unreinforced masonry buildings (down from 30) that can't be occupied. The former Hall's building at 7401 Monterey St. is almost ready to have new windows and restoration to its upper levels. And the former Elks Building at 7560 Monterey St. is being re-opened as a brewpub. They are planning to have outdoor dining inside a new "parklet" beyond the sidewalk. We can thank the building owners for their investments (and encourage more investment) by patronizing these businesses.

The Gilroy Downtown Business Association has adopted the Main Street Model. Its President, our member **Gary Walton**, has provided the following summary:

Main Street Fundamentals

The Main Street Approach is centered on Transformation Strategies. A Transformation Strategy articulates a

focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy. A program's work on Transformation Strategies should be organized around the Four Points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

A revitalization program's work – and its Transformation Strategies – need to be informed by a solid understanding of local and regional market data, and sustained and inclusive community engagement.

Transformation Strategies – generated through meaningful community engagement and informed by an analysis of the district's market position — help to guide a revitalization program's work. An effective Transformation Strategy serves a particular customer segment, responds to an underserved market demand, or creates a differentiated destination. Transformation Strategies are implemented through comprehensive work in four broad areas, known as the **Four Points**.

ECONOMIC VITALITY focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies. **DESIGN** supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart. **PROMOTION** positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics. **ORGANIZATION** involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

The Eight Guiding Principles - For a Main Street program to be successful, it must whole-heartedly embrace the following time-tested Eight Principles:

COMPREHENSIVE

INCREMENTAL

SELF-HELP

PARTNERSHIPS

IDENTIFYING AND CAPITALIZING ON EXISTING ASSETS Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.

QUALITY

CHANGE

IMPLEMENTATION

Only the 5th principle deals with building on existing assets. Obviously, Gilroy's history is embedded in our historic downtown and its buildings. So yes, history and preservation are an important part of the Main Street program. It sets us apart from every other downtown, because no two are the same.

THE ARCHITECT OF OLD CITY HALL – Frank Delos Wolfe

Our program about Frank Delos Wolfe on Sept. 30th was very successful. Author Krista Van Laan presented a Power Point with pictures of his buildings to thirty people. She knows the Cordes House (1912) at 10550 Watsonville Road is a Wolfe house, so it seems like the Mayor Princevalle House (1909) at 7797 Monterey St. must be his also because it is an almost exact duplicate. While doing research for her books Krista discovered that it was really Wolfe who designed Old City Hall, not the person given credit earlier. In lieu of an honorarium Krista asked us to buy her books and donate them to the Gilroy library. The titles are *Wolfe and Higgins: Master Architects of the Spanish Revival* and *Frank Delos Wolfe: California Prairie Architecture*.

Gael Troughton, who makes models for model railroads, attended the lunch and brought his impressive model of Old City Hall made on a 3D printer. He explained how it is done which was fascinating. Gael has also made models of the kiosk and the Nebraska cabin at Gilroy Hot Springs. His business is called Mokelumne River Models. You can see the Old City Hall model on our Society website and look at more of his models on his own website:

www.mokrivermodels.com

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Pacheco State Park, Paula Fatjo's Heritage

This newer State Park is about 20 miles from Gilroy, but contains some fascinating pieces of our heritage. George Fohner is working on a history of that land which will perhaps result in a brochure, booklet or part of the park's website. Part of this history concerns the four roads that have traversed the pass: Andrew Firebaugh's Toll Road was the first and was used by the Butterfield Overland Mail Stagecoach. This was followed by the County Road (1885) and the 1923 State Highway, followed by the Dinosaur Point Road, which had to be altered in 1965 with the building of the San Luis Dam.

Even more interesting is the story of human habitation from the time of the Yokut native people to the Spanish explorers and the granting of Rancho San Luis Gonzaga in 1841. Paula Fatjo was the fifth and final descendent of the original land grant holder. She inherited the ranch in 1948 and moved there, living in the original 1846 ranch house that she had restored. The state condemned most of her 16,000 acres in 1962 in order to build San Luis Reservoir. Unfortunately the weight of her adobe home proved too much for the attempt to move it to higher ground and it fell apart. When Ms. Fatjo died in 1992 she left her remaining land for Pacheco State Park, and endowed it with the income from the windmills.

We can look forward to reading more of this history when it is published, and to visiting the park, especially in the spring when the wildflowers are in bloom.

Gilroy Gold Facebook page

Have you seen the Gilroy Gold Facebook page? A thoughtful young man, Sean Barragan, runs it. He has recently applied to become a Museum Volunteer. He has filmed the William Weeks walking tour and the Old St. Mary Cemetery tour and has posted them on Gilroy Gold. Sometimes he and Linda White (who does our Facebook page) exchange posts. He also posts many other GOOD things about Gilroy, like the recent Christmas Parade. Sean plans to help the Society and the Museum with other posts relevant to our history.

Membership Outreach at CHP Senior Driving Classes

The CHP give a 3-hour Senior Driving Class quarterly, rotating between Gilroy, Morgan Hill and Hollister. Board Members **Karen Pedigo** and **Maureen Hunter** have been providing refreshments at these classes and promoting membership in the Society. Thank you Karen and Maureen! The classes are good for us and the certificate of completion may qualify you for an auto insurance discount.

Amah Mutsun program coming up

Tribal Chairman Valentin Lopez is arranging for a new Amah Mutsun program at both the Gilroy and Morgan Hill libraries on February 24th. The same program is planned for 12 noon in Morgan Hill and 3:30 PM in Gilroy. Stay tuned for details.

Occasional emails from the Gilroy Historical Society?

We are finding that things are happening so quickly that it is difficult for the Society Page to keep our members and friends informed in a timely manner. Initially we were hesitant to inundate our members with emails, but sometimes they are actually helpful! How do you feel about receiving occasional emails from us about events that come up before our next Society Page? Would you mind making sure we have your email address and be OK with if we occasionally send you information?

Amazon Smile

Support the Society by using Amazon Smile. As a qualified 501(c)3 organization the Society receives a small percentage of your order when you place it through smile.amazon.com. Put it on your Favorites and you will help us too!

MUSEUM NEWS

We have decided to change our Tuesday and Thursday hours to 10 AM to 4 PM at the request of the Leads. Please call the museum at 408-846-0446 to make arrangements if you want to come at another time. We're trying to add more Saturday hours from 10 Am to 2 PM to increase our availability to the public. This depends on the willingness of our wonderful volunteers!

We are working on:

- Obtaining interpretive signs for the millstones and soap kettle in our new landscaping.
- Developing a policy by which we can make and receive loans from other museums or individuals on a limited basis. We must obtain the approval of the City Attorney and City Council to do this.

We now have the ability to process your purchases at the Museum and through our website by credit card or Pay Pal. That will make it easier to buy our for sale items!

Speaking of that, we have a large collection of historic bottles found in Gilroy. Some are decorated for your home! Prices are \$7.50 for small ones and \$10. for larger ones. Check them out at the Museum. Samples below.



All bottle photos by C. Rogers