



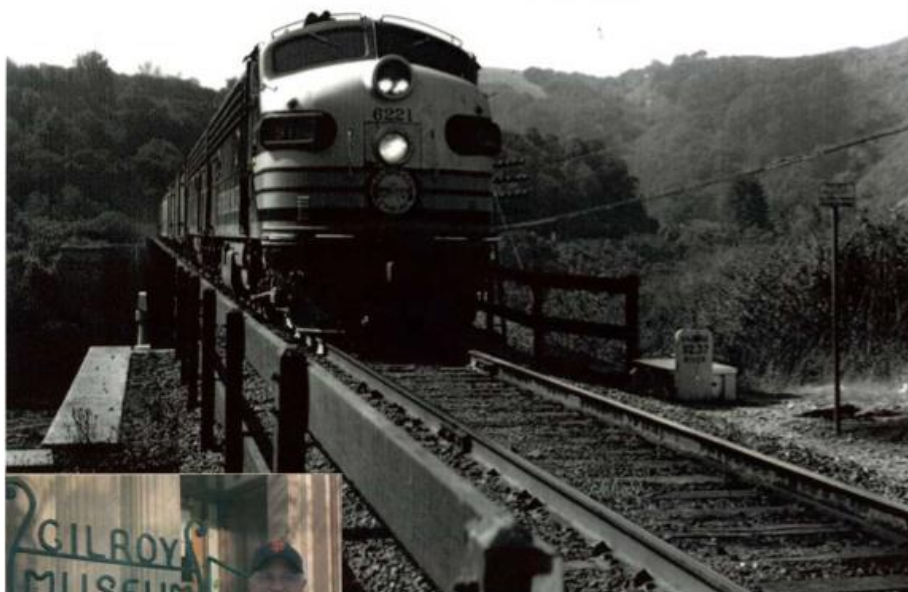
THE SOCIETY PAGE

Newsletter of the Gilroy Historical Society

October 2018

History of Railroads in Gilroy

Saturday, October 13 at 1:30pm
at the Gilroy Library



Learn about the amazing history of the railroads in Gilroy. Presented by railroad enthusiast Mark McPherson.

Co-sponsored by the Gilroy Historical Society.

Gilroy Library, 350 W. Sixth St., Gilroy, CA

(408) 842-8207 www.sccl.org



Meet Our Presenter, Mark Mcpherson

Mark, who is retired from the County Assessor's Office, is a dedicated volunteer at the Gilroy Museum. He has uncovered many little known facts and photos about our railroad history and its significance. Here is his own story about why he has delved so deeply into Gilroy's railroad history.

"Tom Howard asked me, after I had volunteered at the Gilroy Museum for a few months, if there was an area of Gilroy history I had a interest in. I said that Gilroy's railroad history was one area I was thinking of working on. My father and my grandfather had more than 90 years of continuous work with the Southern Pacific and Missouri Pacific railroads. I also had several cousins and uncles working for the Southern Pacific railroad as well. I use to ride the trains from California back to Missouri to see my Grandparents as a child. It was a wonderful experience riding the train on these trips. I also remember a special trip my brother and I had with dad. He took us to the roundhouse in Los Angeles. We got to see giant steam locomotives lifted up in the air with hoists to be repaired. Being only 5 or 6 years old, it was a little scary see such massive machinery hanging above us. It was a memorable experience. I hope that helps you understand why I chose the railroad as my area of working on Gilroy's history."

Our Beautiful Train Station Is 100 Years Old!



Photo by Kris Knutson

Adapted from research by Carol DeSantis

When the railroad first reached Gilroy in 1869 local grain growers had already built a warehouse and were counting on it to help ship their produce to market. A very modest passenger depot was also built, but by the next century complaints about it multiplied. By 1917 it became apparent that renovations would not be sufficient and plans began for an entirely new depot. The story is that a delegation of prominent Gilroy citizens traveled to

Sacramento to lobby the state Railroad Commission, which then ordered Southern Pacific to build a new depot to serve our important hub. When the new Mediterranean Revival depot opened on April 30, 1918 the front page of the local newspaper called the event “an epoch in the history of Gilroy.” The station was extolled as the most artistic railroad on the coast between Santa Barbara and San Francisco. Inside, decorated high ceilings and an oak floor gave a simple if rich detail to the spacious waiting area. Sparkling, modern restrooms boasted tile and marble décor and the new efficient ticket office contained a conductor’s lobby; telegraph operator’s desk, a new hand semaphore system and a pay telephone. The station’s exterior was of cement plaster covering a sturdy redwood framework, topped by a red tile roof.

For 50 years following its opening, the architecturally graceful Gilroy depot served a steady stream of passengers and freight shipments. However, over the years travel by air and auto diminished rail use. Gilroy’s once much-hailed, beautiful, modern depot was closed down in 1971 with the demise of the famous Del Monte train. For the next 30 years, the depot was a mere rail switching station. Before long, the building fell into disrepair and became the target of graffiti. In spite of this Caltrain commute service began in 1992.

In the 1980s a far-sighted downtown revitalization committee recommended the depot be restored and used as a multi-modal transportation hub. This took years! Valley Transportation Authority was finally able to buy the depot from Southern Pacific in the mid 1990s. They leased it to the City, which with considerable effort from the City Council members was able to carry out a million dollar adaptive restoration in 1998. The vision of rehabilitation and reuse as a multi-modal transportation center is being carried out today with Greyhound, VTA buses, Caltrain, Monterey-Salinas Transit, County Express buses from Hollister and taxis all making good use of the property. High Speed Rail may come next!

Sherry Stuart, our loyal member with grant-writing experience, is currently working on a National Register application for the train station. We’ll keep you posted!



Mayor James Princevalle and Mrs. Carroll Wentz soon after the opening in 1918.

Changes Are Coming - Can We Adapt?

The Society has wanted a more structured agreement with the City about our voluntary staffing of the Museum. For almost ten years now we have been operating on the strength of a letter from the Director of Parks and Recreation, Maria DeLeon. These arrangements were born out of necessity, when the City threatened to close the Museum during the financial hard times of 2008 and 2009. Of course we consider ourselves partners with the City. They own the building and the Collection. We are volunteer staff. Both the City and Society would like a little more certainty and spelling out of respective responsibilities. To this end President Connie Rogers and Treasurer Eileen Cavallaro have met several times with Cathy Mirelez, Cultural Arts Supervisor and Susan Voss, Coordinator for City Volunteers. Recently we have also met with Adam Henig, Recreation Manager hammering out a mutual agreement. We are almost there, and look forward to this more secure relationship.

Retirements are part of the changes..... Both Cathy and Susan will be retiring this fall! Susan in mid-October and Cathy at the end of November. We hate to see them go because they have been such reliable and helpful supporters of the Museum. On the other hand they have well earned their retirement, both having been with the City for many years. And as Cathy and Susan retire, the Recreation Department will be re-structuring their administrative staff. The Museum is a “non-traditional” part of their department, so we will need to educate their successors.

John Gilroy's Biography

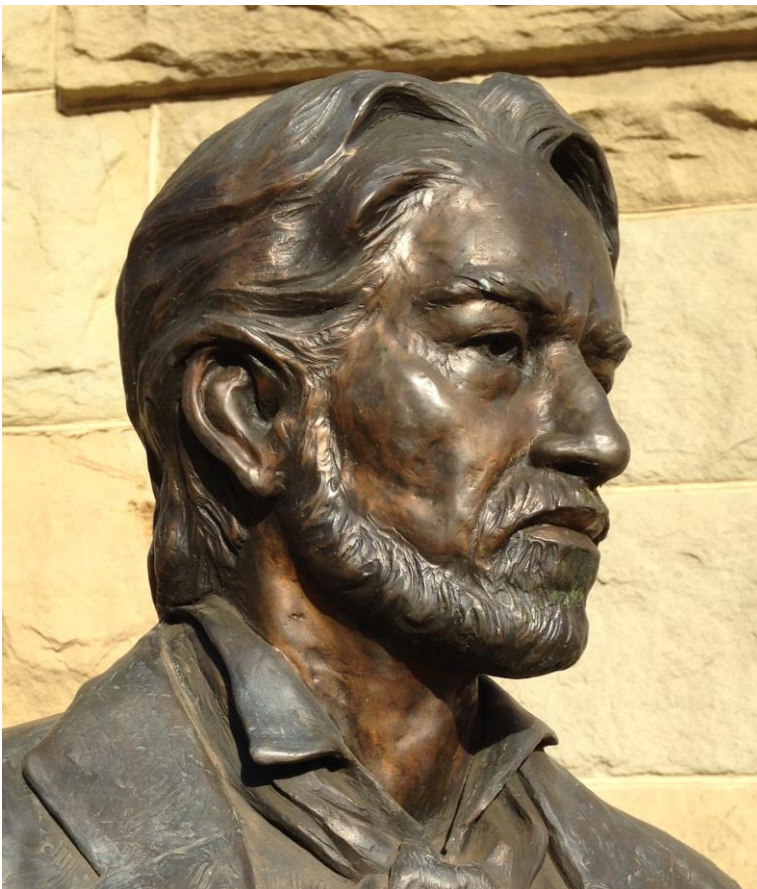


Photo of statue by Old City Hall/Connie Rogers

Our intrepid historian and sleuth, Phill Laursen, tracked down and contacted Truda Cooling Nelson, who wrote John Gilroy's biography for her master's degree thesis at San Jose State in 1981. She truly did a masterful job in researching what is known about John Gilroy including a detailed bibliography listing news accounts of the day, real property transactions from the Santa Clara County book of Deeds, his letters to and from Thomas Larkin, cemetery records, ships records, church records etc. Neither John nor his children left any other written records and there is not even a photograph of him. The statue pictured above was modeled after a photo of his son who was said to look much like his father.

Mrs. Nelson, now elderly and living near Sacramento, has given us permission to print her wonderful thesis as a book. Phill has been painstakingly working with Larry Kwong at the Printing Spot transcribing the typewritten thesis into the In Design program so that it can be reproduced as a booklet. This is still a work in progress, but we hope it can come to fruition in the next few months. We plan to sell it at the Museum.

News From The Museum

The revision of the Amah Mutsun display is still evolving. A new case has been purchased and installed to hold our grinding stones. Thank you Robyn Houts for your dedication to this worthy purpose. Robyn has obtained artifacts on loan from Cabrillo College that were taken from the Chitactac-Adams Park location (so they are really ours) to use in the display. Stay tuned. Volunteer work takes time!

We are thrilled with our recent purchase of several original documents pertaining to the Horace Willson and John Gilroy families. These include portrait photos of Horace Willson and his wife Eunice, their 1846 marriage certificate from Brattleboro, Vermont, an architectural drawing of the home they built on Pacheco Pass about 1859 signed by George Chalmers. This brick house still exists at 1980 Pacheco Pass! However it is almost obscured by foliage. The package included two documents signed by John Gilroy and his wife Clara (her signature with an X) selling property to Horace Willson in 1854 and 1856. We think these interesting documents could benefit from conservation (old paper gets very brittle) before we can display them at the Museum. We'll let you know when!

Thank You Garlic Festival Volunteers - By Barbara Biafore

A big thank you goes out to all our volunteers who so graciously gave of their time working in the information booth making the Garlic Festival a most enjoyable experience for all the attendees. Cheers and thank you go out to the following volunteers: Phyllis Armenta, Jerry Hunter, Pat Reinhart, Connie Rogers, Jim Rogers, Barbara Biafore, Robyn Houts, Phill Laursen, Kathy Laursen, Dave Sturla, Mary Sturla, Edith Edde, Nita Edde Mitchell, Chris Wheeler, Pam Wimmer, Stacey Brindle, and Larry Scettrini. The Gilroy Historical Society hopes you volunteer again next year! We had a great job in the shade of a tent on the Park side and even had chairs to sit down when it wasn't busy.

News From The Board

152 West Productions has already filmed our oral histories for this year and wait till you see them! Thank you Joanie Lewis for making all the arrangements under difficulty. You can expect a special viewing luncheon program in January.

What do you think of our new emails to members? We haven't sent many, but they provide an important way for us to keep in touch with you, especially for happenings that can't wait for the next Society Page. We don't have email addresses for everyone and would like to. If you include your email address when you pay your dues, we'll be sure to keep you in the loop.

We had a very productive planning retreat at the Willey House on August 15th. We have 98 members who pay annual dues and 45 Life Members. That is quite impressive! Our financial situation is stable and comfortable. The balances in our own fund and the Lindeleaf Fund with the Gilroy Foundation total \$360,000, which means we are 72% of the way towards our goal of \$500,000. When we get there (or close) we believe the income will allow us to hire a part time director/curator for the Museum. The agreement we are close to reaching with the City will allow us to do this.

Your board members all have special roles they fulfill, as you can see on page 2. In fact, we probably have more jobs than board members to fill them. We've hired Lori VanMeter on an hourly basis to work on our website, but could use a member to feed her news and material. We could use someone to write content for this newsletter. Board Member Karen Pedigo has taken a leave of absence to help raise her five grandchildren in San Jose. We need someone to take her place on the education committee. So if YOU would like to help, we love to have you! Call Connie Rogers at 408-842-8494 to discuss.

Community Events With An Historic Theme

The **Miller Red Barn** Association held a successful "barn fund raising" dinner at the Veterans' Hall on Saturday, September 22nd. Now that the new roof looks so handsome and will protect the barn, they are planning to put in a foundation and floor. They've also applied for a grant from the Santa Clara County Historic Heritage Commission; so keep your fingers crossed for them. The MRB Association has undertaken a huge, complex project and made excellent progress. They deserve our support and congratulations. If you'd like to help them, please contact Gary Walton at gary@Custom-1.com or Patti Perino at mzpattilyn@msn.com

A resurrected **Bonanza Days Parade** was held on September 29th, sponsored by the 2018 Leadership Gilroy class. We entered our beautiful antique hose cart, but at this writing are still looking for volunteers to pull it. Bonanza Days began in 1968 was a great event, especially for kids of all ages who liked to be cowboys. Maybe next year they will try to tie it in with the new Gilroy Rodeo. Both events make us think back to our Cowboy Era, as depicted on the board in our historic Paseo downtown.

Our friends in the **Daughters of American Revolution** are sponsoring the following program in honor of Jose Maria Amador who is buried in Old St. Mary Cemetery. Yes, it is the same day as our railroad program, but in the morning.



The Jose Maria Amador Chapter
 National Society Daughters of the American Revolution
 cordially invites you to the
 Re-Dedication Ceremony honoring Jose Maria Amador
 Saturday, October 13, 2018



Program and Itinerary

**Guest Speaker: Gregorio Mora-Torres,
 San Jose State University Professor and author of**

*California Voices: The Oral Memoirs of
 José María Amador and Lorenzo Asisara*



- 10am-12noon Meeting & Program
 Gilroy Library, 350 W. Sixth St, Gilroy, Ca. 95020
- 12:30-1:15pm Re-Dedication and Blessing
 Old St. Mary's Cemetery, 11 First St. Gilroy, Ca. 95020
 *Enter Alley between Hanna & Church St.
- 1:30PM No-Host Lunch
 Old City Hall Restaurant, 7400 Monterey St. Gilroy, Ca.

For additional information and to RSVP contact: Debbie Janes,
 Chapter Regent at 408.425.2404 or JMADAR.Regent@gmail.com