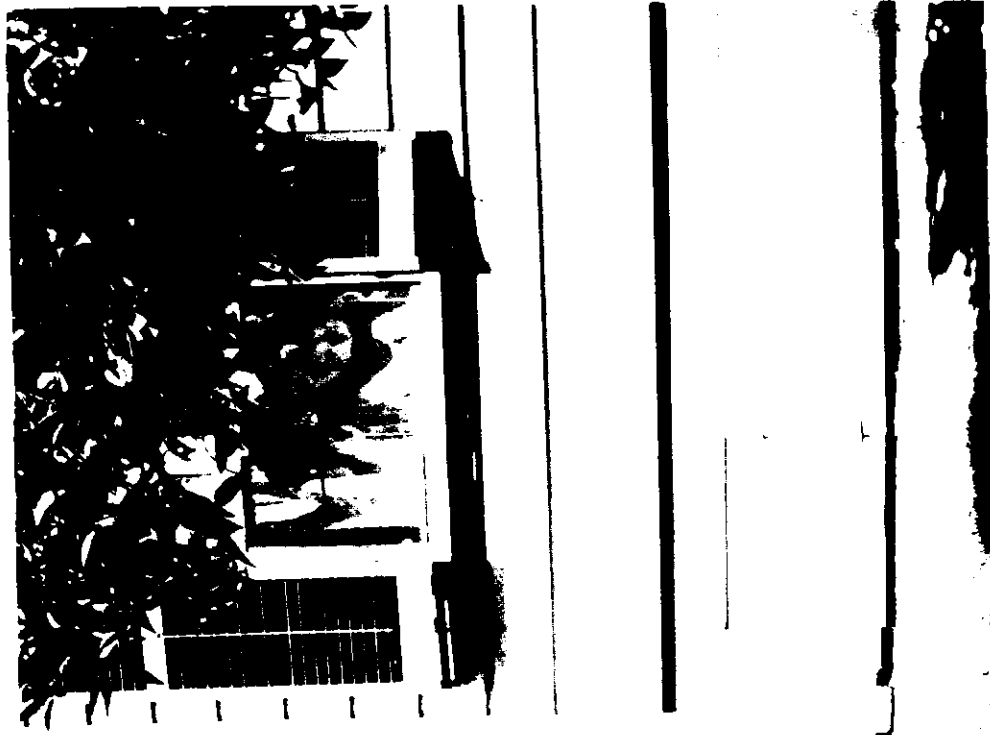


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The Pioneer James Ingham Family
of
Gilroy, California
(c. 1878-1937)



Nettie Ingham, 1911

(Courtesy Gilroy Museum)

St. Patrick's Day-1926

Seven things there are that move men long and deep;
Real homes, firm friends, small children in their sleep,
Slow choiring birds, the restful evening sky,
And the stilled seas that like a blessing lie
Along the land, and God's peace over all.
If earth give these, then life a chant may be
And time the forecourt to eternity.

Attributed to "Rev. N.S. Higgs, in a verse found upon his desk."

Found pasted inside the front cover of Nettie Ingham's
Book of Common Prayer,
Marked, "N.L. Ingham, Gilroy, California, Nov. 4-1930"

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Introduction

The pioneer James Ingham family of Gilroy was not locally famous. They did not come from wealth, nor did any prestige or famous name follow them from their Massachusetts roots to California. None ran for public office, attended college or held a prominent professional position in town.

As early arrivals, settling in Gilroy within the first decade of its 1870 incorporation, the Ingham family brought something else: New England sensibility, and the ability to fit into and form part of a vital new community. Their sense of duty and service, linked by membership in the fraternal and social organizations of the era, helped bond them to others who found a new life in the growing South Santa Clara Valley farm town.

The Inghams were doubtless like other forward-minded people who flocked to the West in the years following the Civil War seeking a more prosperous way of life. They pursued quiet, purposeful lives in their adopted home. If their obituaries, and the memories of friends, are any indication, each member of the Ingham family left behind a legacy of good will, and the knowledge of having made the town where they lived a better place.

The family's head, James Ingham, born in England in 1823, sailed to Stoughton, Massachusetts at age 4 with his widowed mother. A house painter by trade, he carried that occupation to Gilroy in 1877-8 where he, and initially his son, George, continued in a steady and profitable local painting and wallpapering business. Mary Packard Ingham, his wife, traced her genealogy to America's earliest Colonial roots. Her original ancestor to this country, Robert Harris, sailed to Massachusetts from England sometime before the years 1642-43, when the earliest records bearing his name indicate Harris's marriage in Roxbury, Massachusetts. George Ingham, James and Mary's son, spent many years living in Pacific Grove before returning to Gilroy, where he died in 1920. Daughter Nettie Ingham, about whom the majority of this essay deals, was a locally prominent spinster. As a member of numerous social, fraternal and church groups, her name appears frequently and regularly in

the local newspapers, attesting to her participation in civic improvement, charitable works and educational endeavors.

Born in Stoughton, Massachusetts on December 18, 1859, Nettie never married. She came to Gilroy at age 18-19, and lived her entire life, except for her latter years, in the family home. With her death on January 26, 1937, the Ingham family of Gilroy ceased to exist.

Over the years, the Ingham family, and my mother's extended family, the Chesbros, were close friends. My great-grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. Heverland R. Chesbro, were frequent guests in James and Mary Ingham's home for card parties and social occasions. Two of their sons, Arthur Chesbro, and my grandfather, Dr. Elmer J. Chesbro, purchased property from Miss Ingham following the deaths of her parents and brother. Both she, and her brother George, when he was alive, were also socially linked with my extended Gilroy relatives. When she died, having no heirs, Miss Ingham left the bulk of her estate and possessions to my grandfather, who was her doctor, and to several other friends and family members.

Although she died six years before I was born, I heard many accounts and anecdotes of Nettie Ingham. She was universally loved and respected by all. Growing up, I felt as though I almost knew her; it seemed her presence, through memory and tale, lingered with my family long after her passing.

This, then, as best as I can compile it through letters, old newspaper files, official city records, United States Census records and ancestral links on the Internet, is my tribute to the now-extinct James Ingham family, late of Gilroy, California.

Like so many other steadfast pioneers, they made their modest mark on a town and its inhabitants, leaving behind a heritage of which they were probably never aware.

Elizabeth Barratt
Gilroy, California, Spring 2005

Illustrations

1. Nettie Ingham's bedroom set, which came "around the Horn" in 1877-78 when the Inghams moved from Massachusetts to Gilroy, California.
2. Small carved wooden chest belonging to 4 year-old James Ingham, which accompanied him and his widowed mother, Mary Watson Ingham, when they sailed from Leeds, England to Massachusetts in 1827.
3. Ingham family items, including (l. to r.) small Limoges tea service, copper hot water teakettle, white stoneware gravy boat with ladle and teapot.
4. Blue floral Ingham family tea set.
5. Nettie Ingham's cameo rings, brooch and lapel pin; (above) four silver Prayer Book markers on ribbons.
6. Colonial-style coin silver spoons, bottom one bears Mary Packard (Mrs. James) Ingham's monogram.
7. Ship's lantern belonging to James Ingham's stepfather, Captain Obijah Otis, dates to 1820s or earlier.
8. Copper alcohol-burning hot water tea kettle used in Ingham home in Gilroy, dates to 1890s
9. Ingham family cane-seat chair.
10. Ingham family chair with woven rush seat and back.
11. Silver spoons and small covered china tureen from Ingham family.
12. Mary Ingham's "Spanish Shawl," actually white China silk with silk fringe and silk thread phoenix and leaf embroidery, purchased in 1853 and brought back from San Francisco across the Isthmus of Panama to Massachusetts by James Ingham for his wife. The shawl, 25 years later, accompanied the Ingham family when they moved from Massachusetts to Gilroy, California. Nettie's Prayer Book on shawl.
13. Colonial era Queen Anne style highboy with original finish and brasses, thought to have been part of the Robert Harris home in Brookline, Massachusetts, 17th and 18th Centuries. Mary Packard Ingham was a descendant of early Colonial Robert Harris.
14. Seth Thomas mantel clock belonging to the James Ingham family.



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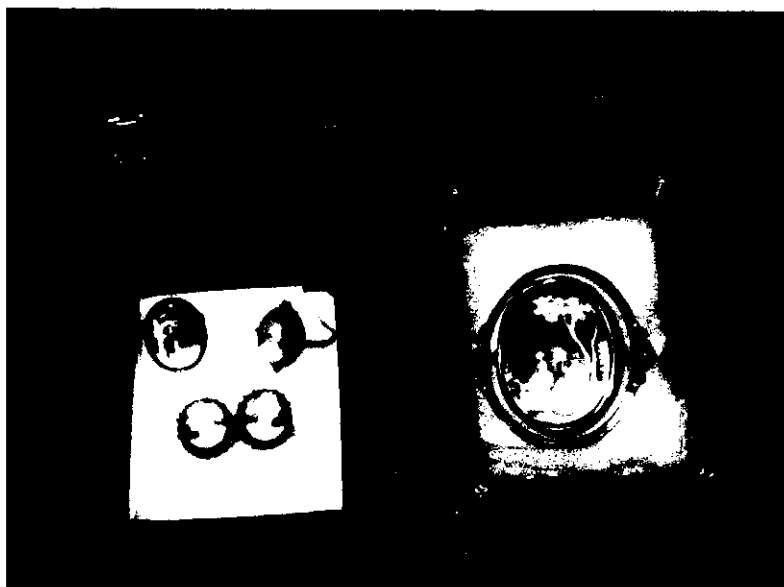
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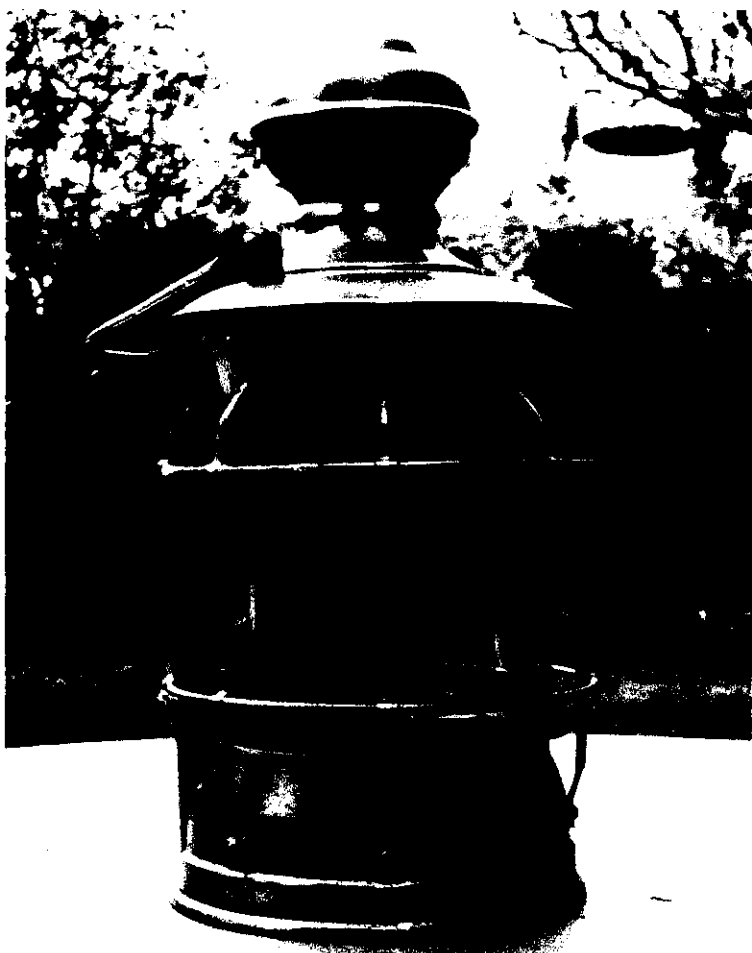
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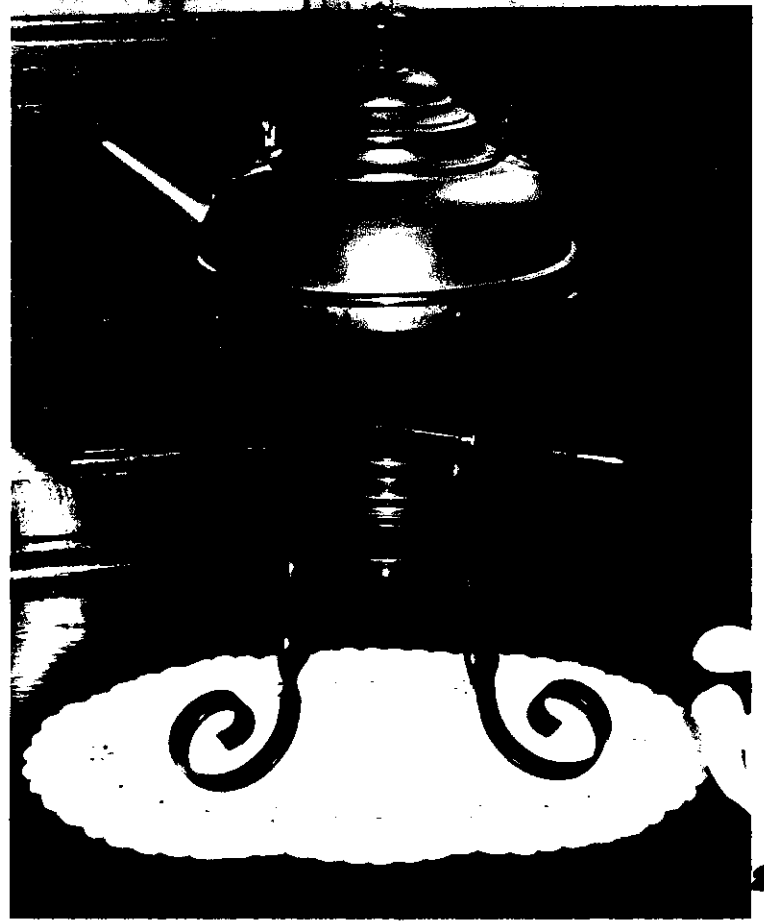
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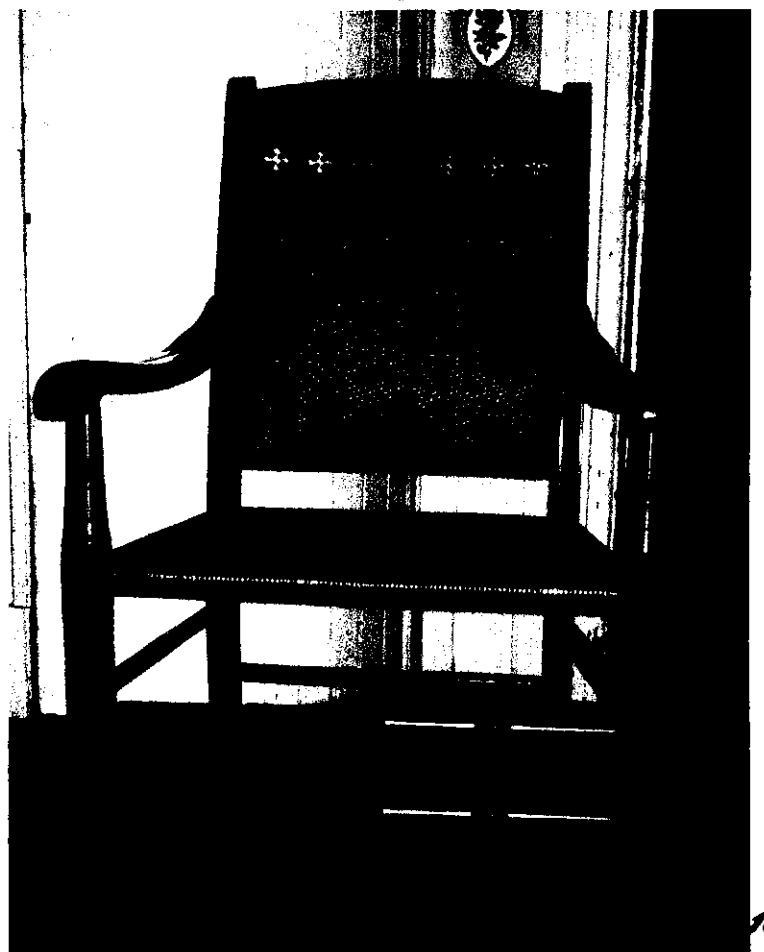
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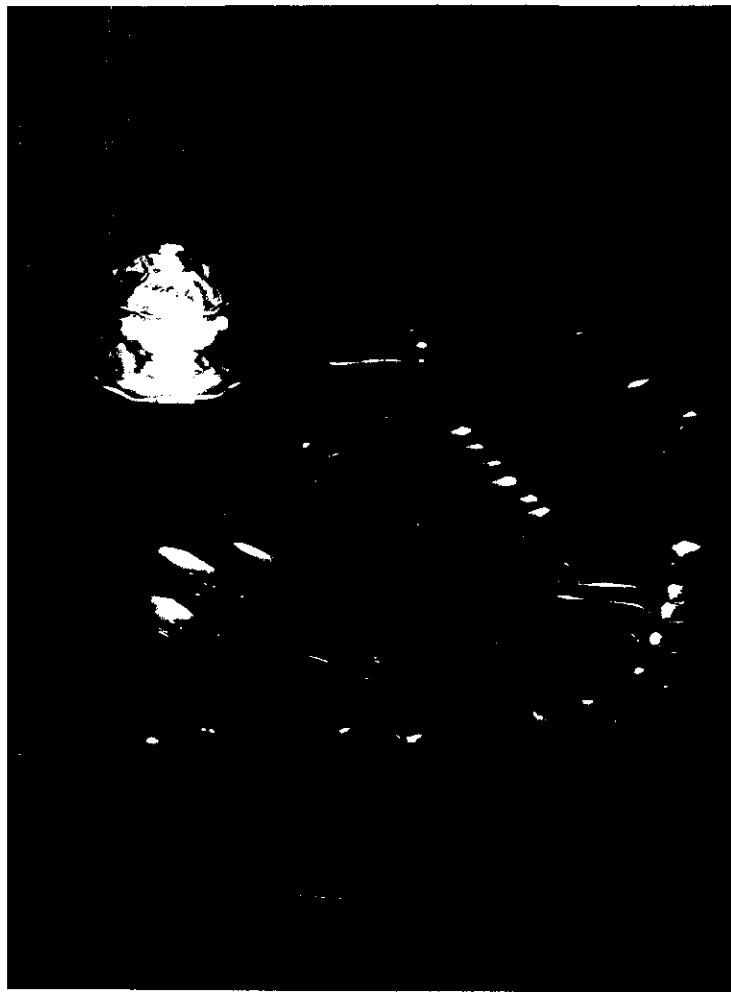
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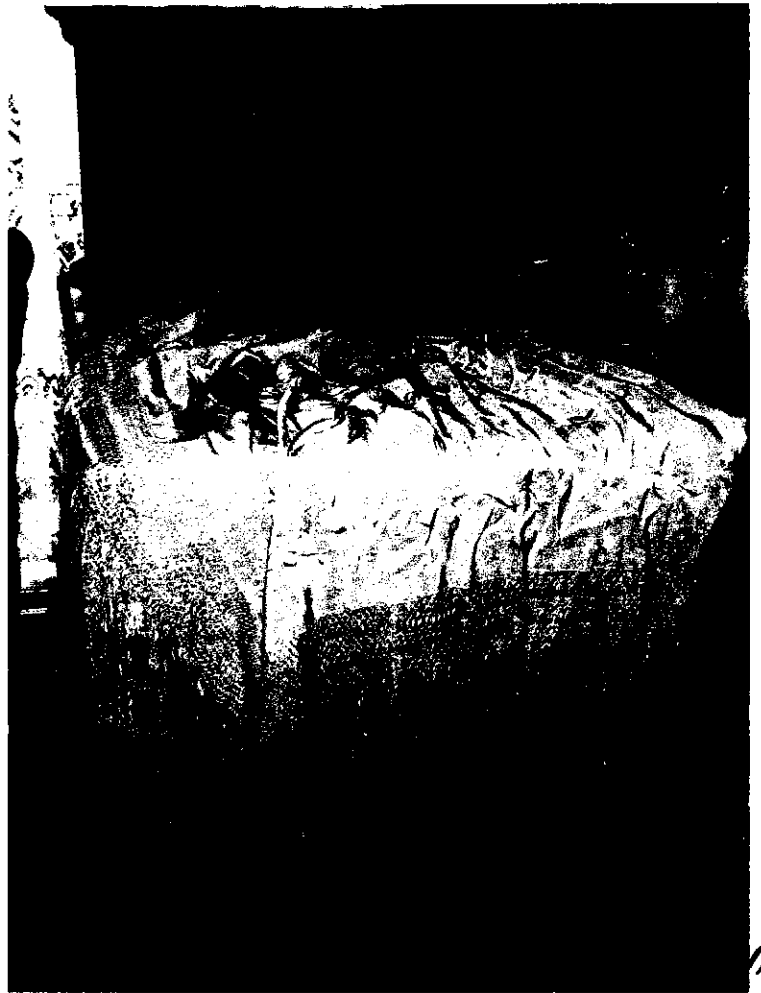
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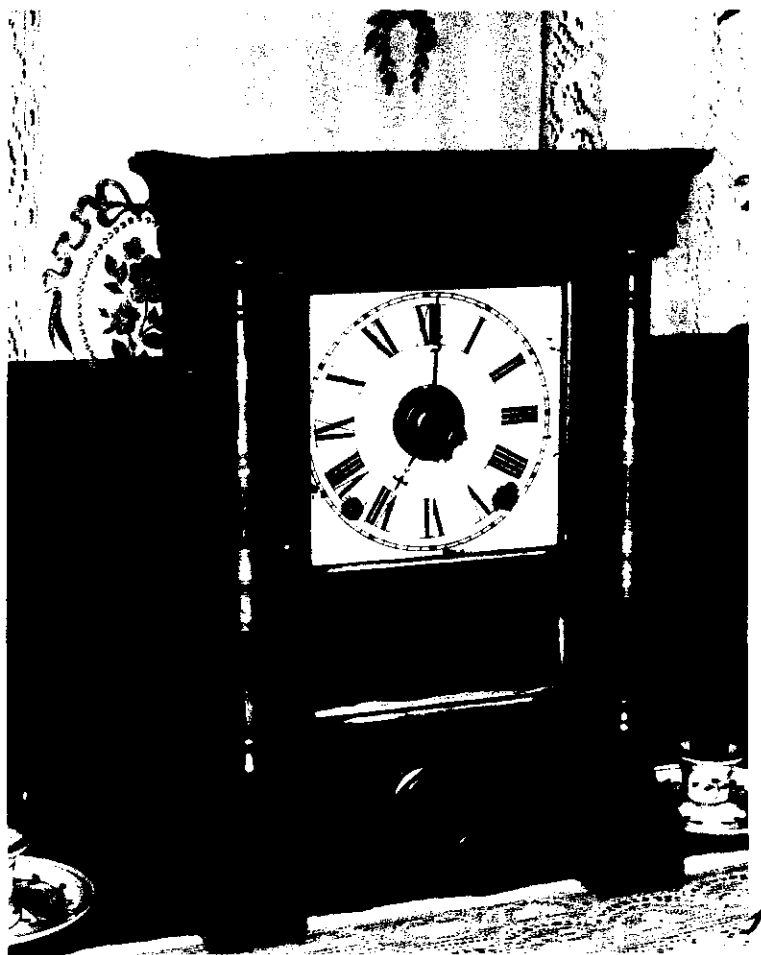
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**The Pioneer Ingham Family
of
Gilroy, California**

**by
Elizabeth Barratt**

Although she never married, Nettie Ingham hardly played the retiring old maid in local society. Over many decades, her name appears regularly in the social columns of the Gilroy Advocate, Gilroy Gazette and Gilroy Evening Dispatch. An avid card player, she belonged to several weekly ladies' whist and bridge groups, was a long-time participant of the historic F.R.F.G. Reading Club, the P.E.O. Sisterhood, the Ladies' Benevolent Society and was a staunch member of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

Early Colonial Roots

Nettie's American ancestry, on her mother's side, dated back to earliest Colonial society. Her great-great-great-great grandfather, Robert Harris, was born about 1618 in Gloucestershire, England. Although it isn't known exactly when he sailed to America, he married Elizabeth Boffee (also spelled Boughey) in Roxbury, Massachusetts on either 6-21-1642, or 1-24-1643, depending upon the genealogical source. Elizabeth herself had been born, like her husband, in Gloucestershire, England about 1622. The couple had five children, Elizabeth (b. 1-9-1644), John (b. 8-8-1647), Timothy (b. 7-9-1650; d. 9-21-1730 at the homestead inherited from his father), Daniel (b. 5-14-1652; d. 12-15-1733), and Priscilla (b. 10-7-1653; d. 12-1-1684).

The Massachusetts Applications of Freeman, 1630-91, lists Robert Harris as an accepted Freeman. In early Colonial America, being a Freeman meant one was a landowner and had been legally declared free from bondage, requirements necessary to vote and hold public office. Robert Harris's application for designation as a Freeman was approved on 5-22-1650 by the Massachusetts Courts.

The direct line to Nettie's mother from Robert and Elizabeth Harris was through their third son, Timothy (b. 7-9-1650), who married Abigail Morey on 4-24-1697 and died 9-21-1730 at the Harris homestead which he inherited from his father.

Timothy and Abigail Harris's second child, Timothy, was born in Brookline, Massachusetts 4-28-1706. He became a farmer and married Hannah Winchester on 3-24-1731. Hannah died on 8-30-1736, and Timothy remarried some years later, on 1-1-1752, to Elizabeth Stevens.

Timothy and Hannah Harris's third son, Amariah, was born in Brookline on 4-24-1736 and married Elizabeth Lynnfield of Randolph (date not given). They settled on a farm in Stoughton, Massachusetts. Amariah died 9-27-1788.

The Harris homestead and farm passed to Amariah and his first wife Elizabeth's second son, William, born in Stoughton 1-9-1767. William married Vashti (or Vashty) Leach of Stoughton on 7-9-1796. Vashti preceded William in death on 5-20-1850. William died in 1860.

William and Vashti Harris's third child, Mary (b. 7-22- 1800), married Calvin Packard (b. 3-20-1799). Mary and Calvin's fourth child, Mary Packard (b. 5-22-1830), married James Ingham in Stoughton on 1-2-1848. A son, George, was born 1-4-1851 in Avon, Massachusetts. Nettie was James and Mary's second child, born 12-18-1859, in East Stoughton, Massachusetts.

An extract Nettie copied out of the Harris Genealogy volume titled, "Robert Harris and his descendants, " by Luther M. Harris, 1861, describes the original Harris homestead as located in Brookline, Massachusetts, and continues, "nothing is known as to the time Robert Harris removed to America. The first record is found in the registry of Roxbury, which reads, "Robert Harris and Elizabeth (Boughey) or (Boffee) married January 24, 1642-3."

Continuing, the Luther Harris extract describes the original Harris homestead in Brookline as located "on the road from Jamaica Plain to Newton, about a mile from Jamaica Plain." According to the description,

Robert Harris at first erected a small building for a home, about 1653. But not many years later, he built a more commodious residence, called in construction a "garrison house."

In 1796, after being occupied by at least four Harris generations, this house, in a decaying condition, was removed and a few years after (1802) a new one was erected on the same spot. In 1828 the homestead was sold after being in the family nearly one hundred and seventy-five years. This last Harris structure was destroyed by fire in 1854.

In 1898, with the newly founded Daughters of the American Revolution making news and gaining members, Mary and Nettie showed interest in completing the membership application process. On 7-22-1898, in a letter to Mary Ingham, written by a cousin she apparently wasn't acquainted with, Mrs. Clara Detwiller of Radnor, Ohio, states she was seeking to fill gaps in the Harris genealogy. She writes, "Mrs. Eunice Prince of Maine gave me your address and said she thought you could give me the address of Mortimer Brown...I am the granddaughter of John Harris, the brother to your grandfather, William [Harris]."

In a subsequent letter, addressed to Nettie Ingham, dated 8-21-1898, Mrs. Detwiller offers some information about the participation of various Harris ancestors in the Revolutionary War, mentioning Nettie's great-great grandfather, Amariah:

"Amariah Harris lived at about the right time and place to be in the Rev-y War. None whom I have corresponded with know whether he or his brothers were in the war or not, and I have not taken time yet to write to the War Dept....Daniel Harris, brother of Timothy: his son Robert Harris, born in Brookline, Mass. August 1st, 1700 was a Lieutenant, died in 1780, that would make him a very old man for the Rev. But likely he was in some of the earlier wars. Francis Harris, born in Watertown Mass. Oct. 3, 1721 was a captain, member of the Middlesex Convention at Concord Aug. 30, 1774; of the first Provincial Congress of Mass. from Shirley, in Oct. 1774; and of the 2nd [Provincial Congress], from the same town in Feb. 1775. These of course are not quite in direct line of ancestry yet it is all in the family, and I think counts just as much. I do not know the requirements of the Daug. of Rev. or Col. Dames, one reason I began our genealogy was to enable me to join the

former. The above information is obtained from a little [sic.] compiled by Dr. Harris of Brookline, Mass. His early dates I presume are correct but it was after they had multiplied on the face of the earth and scattered to the four winds that he seems to have made so many mistakes. I obtained the book of G.W. Harris, Jamaica Plains, Mass, and a very interesting book it is."

(Note: an email inquiry on 8-8-2004 to the Daughters of the American Revolution Patriot Index Lookup resulted in the following email response on Robert Harris, " This ancestor was not found in our Patriot Index. This does not mean that he did not serve in some capacity during the Revolutionary War. It simply means no one has joined DAR using his service.")

The Ingham's English Heritage

James Ingham, Nettie's father, was born in the village of Huntslet, Township of Leeds, County of York, England on 3-16-1823. At the age of four, he sailed to America with his widowed mother, Mary Watson Ingham. They lived in Stoughton, Massachusetts, where his mother later remarried, to a sea captain named Obijah (or Abijah) Otis of Plymouth.

James Ingham married Mary Packard in Massachusetts on 1-2-1848. In 1853, according to daughter Nettie's notes, he sailed to California, apparently, like so many of the era, to seek wealth, but soon returned. I have in my possession a white silk fringed and embroidered "Spanish Shawl" which he purchased in San Francisco in 1853. He carried the shawl back across the Isthmus of Panama as a gift for his wife when he returned to Massachusetts. The family, I was told, loved to tell the story of how the shawl, a souvenir of James Ingham's sojourn to the Golden West, was brought back to California once again when the family moved permanently from Massachusetts to Gilroy, about 25 years following his first visit.

The United States Census offers the following information:

In the 1850 census, James Ingham's name appears for the first time, along with his wife, Mary, living at Danvers, Essex, Massachusetts, where he is employed as a Carrier.¹

In the 1860 census, James Ingham, age 36 and Mary Ingham, age 30, live at Stoughton, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, where his occupation is listed as a house painter. Two children are listed, George, age 9 and "Hattie" age 2.²

In the 1870 census, James Ingham, age 46 is head of household, still living with his family at Stoughton, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. He is again listed as a house painter.³

The Move to Gilroy

By the time the 1880 census was taken, James Ingham, age 56, is listed as living at Gilroy, Santa Clara County, California. Occupation: Painter. Status: Widower (?). Head of household is now listed as his son, George Ingham.⁴

It can be assumed the Ingham family arrived in Gilroy in 1877 or 1878 as his name first appears on the Gilroy Tax Assessment Roll for the year ending April 30, 1878. The Gilroy Index of the 1884 Great Register of Santa Clara County lists James Ingham as a registered voter, citing his U.S. naturalization date as May 2, 1848, at Boston.

A promotional booklet titled "Gilroy as a Home", which appeared in 1873, just a few years before the Ingham's arrival, touted the town's advantages. One can't help but wonder if newcomers like the Inghams might have been attracted to the town, known only a few years before as Pleasant Valley, by such a publication:

"The city of Gilroy is situated in the southeastern and most beautiful portion of the Santa Clara Valley-"the Garden Valley of the Pacific Coast"-so famous for its beauty, health, wealth, productiveness and varied advantages as a place of residence. It is mainly a new town, its period of active growth dating back only about four years, yet it is incorporated, has an excellent City Government, over two thousand inhabitants, and all the appliances for trade, manufactures, education and social life usually found in much older towns. It is connected with the metropolis of the State by the Southern Pacific Railroad, and with the world at large by two lines of telegraph"⁵

The community prided itself as a healthy place where a perfect climate created abundant summer crops and an economically sound future. Town promoters boasted good roads and land offered at \$50-\$75 per lot. Besides its scenic appeal, Gilroy offered opportunities in trade, education, tobacco and cheese production, dairying, stock raising, and lumbering. The up-and-coming town also had a tannery and a quarry.

According to the 1873 promotional booklet, Gilroy also offered:

“two first-class hotels, six boarding houses, three dry goods stores, one clothing store, two tailoring establishments, six grocery stores, two fruit and vegetable stands, two drug stores, three millinery and dressmaking establishments, two bakeries, two breweries, one hardware store, four blacksmith and wheelwright shops, four restaurants, two tin and stove stores, two saddle and harness shops, three boot and shoe stores, one printing office, three meat markets, one book, stationery and news depot, two jewelry stores, one paint shop, one furniture store, one undertaker, three law offices, two notaries, four livery and feed stables, two photograph galleries, two dentists, one flouring mill, one planing mill, one lumber yard, three barber shops, four physicians, two telegraph offices, post office, express office, one bank.”⁶

The Ingham name appears in a brief item in the Gilroy Advocate issue dated 11-8-1879. It notes “Mr. Jas. Ingham and his daughter ‘Etie’ will start out for Boston next week to visit their old home.”

Once settled in Gilroy, James and son George became house painters, as evidenced in the Directory of the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County, 1881-2. The two appear in the directory on page 363, “Ingham, J. and son (James and George F. Ingham) painters and paper hangers, Martin Street.”⁷ Again in the city and county directory for the years 1884-5 they are listed on page 256.⁸ as pursuing the same occupation.

Reference to James Ingham’s painting trade was mentioned on occasion in the Gilroy Advocate. The 4-16-1881 issue states, “Adam Riehl’s house and fence have been much improved in appearance by Ingham’s paint brush.”

Riehl, like the Inghams, was another early Gilroy arrival. Originally from Frankfurt, Germany, he had arrived in America in 1848, at first

establishing a blacksmithing and mercantile business in Sacramento. He settled permanently in Gilroy in 1867, where he established another local mercantile business, which he operated until 1875. He also went into partnership with Jacob Reither to build the town's first beer business, the popular Gilroy Brewery, opening on Monterey Street in 1868. Adam Riehl, like many early Gilroyans interested in bettering the community while furthering their own business, served several terms on the City Council and in 1878 was elected to one term as mayor. From there, he went on to run for State Assembly, serving two terms in 1882 and 1884.

James Ingham's painting skills are again mentioned in the 8-1-1885 Gilroy Advocate after he had completed a job at Old Gilroy, "San Ysidro schoolhouse has been painted by Mr. Ingham and all fencing around the grounds whitewashed." The article noted that returning students would enjoy the fresh appearance of the premises.

Soon after the Ingham's move to Gilroy, a lengthy court case called the Las Animas Partition Suit had arisen in the township area. The suit, which involved over a thousand litigants, lasted from 1879 until 1887. The legal action was meant to establish clear title to property owners of the former Rancho las Animas, a 21,377 acre parcel which had originally been granted to early arrival Mariano Castro in 1802. The grant had extended from the Pajaro River in the south and across the site of the present City of Gilroy. Over time, as original heirs sold off portions of their property, the land was further carved up into smaller lots. One of the largest owners, cattle baron Henry Miller, came into possession of the largest portion, 12,335 acres, covering the area by then laid out as the fledgling City of Gilroy. Due to poor boundaries, some lots were not well defined, and resulting sales meant some property lines overrode one another. As a further complication, some portions were inadvertently sold to more than one buyer. The Las Animas Partition suit, later called the largest land title suit in the state's history, was filed in San Jose at the 20th District Court of Santa Clara County, on January 3, 1879. In the case, Henry Miller, Thomas Rea and Johanna Fitzgerald, plaintiffs, filed

against defendants Massey Thomas and 268 landowners living in Gilroy. The case was intended to substantiate the claims of the plaintiffs, who wanted clear titles to their land, as well as to establish title for the legal lot owners of record in town. James Ingham was listed, as one of the 268 defendants. By the time the entire suit was settled in 1887, the Ingham lot was valued at \$66.50.

By 7-11-1885, with the first issuance of deeds, the Gilroy Advocate noted city lots were finally legally free to be sold to purchasers for lots of record. "County Clerk Ashmore and trustees for the Las Animas Rancho settlement were at Odd Fellows Hall accepting taxes and issuing deeds and we note the following few names among the new owners of Las Animas lands: P. Princevalle, Reither and Riehl, G. and J. Eustice, Zuck family, J. Ingham, J.L. Weymouth, A. Robinson, M.J. Mayock, G.W. Holloway, Caleb Coates."

It was at this time (1885) my great-grandfather, Dr. Heverland R. Chesbro, purchased one of those lots of record, a small house at 147 (now 7541) N. Church Street, from Jacob Reither. Dr. Chesbro moved the structure one block north to 151 (now 7551) Church Street and built a large Eastlake home, which my husband and I now occupy, on the original lot.

Among those early title purchasers, besides Mr. Ingham, several prominent names in early Gilroy history appear: P. Princevalle's son, James Princevalle, served as Mayor of Gilroy 1920-32; former Gilroy Brewery owner Adam Riehl was mayor 1878-80; his partner Jacob Reither was mayor 1882-86. Amos Robinson established an early hardware business in Gilroy; the father of G.W. Holloway built the town's first hotel; and Michael Mayock, hay foreman at the Miller and Lux Bloomfield Ranch before an accident forced him into retirement, built the Mayock home on his newly purchased Gilroy lot at Sixth and Lewis Sts. The historic residence, moved and restored, now sits on the Gavilan College Campus as a faculty meeting house and offices for the Gilroy Historical Society.

James Ingham passed away 4-19-1895. The Gilroy Advocate issue of April 20 offers this obituary:

"Mr. James Ingham after a lingering paralysis of over two years died at the family residence on Egleberry St. yesterday morning. He was a native of England, coming to this country at the age of three years and settling in Massachusetts. In 1876 he came to Gilroy and has ever since resided here. His wife and children, George and Miss Nettie, gave him their most devoted attention the past two years during his gradual fading away. He was a member of Ruby Council, No. 544, A.L. of H. of this city. Services will be at the home tomorrow, Sunday, at 4:30 p.m."

The Widow, Mary Ingham

Mary Ingham survived her husband to live in the family home with daughter Nettie for another 12 years. She passed away on 1-1-1907. Her obituary appears in the 1-5-1907 Gilroy Advocate:

"Following close upon the death of Mr. Charles Wilson was that of Mrs. Mary B. Ingham, who died Tuesday at her home in this city. Mrs. Ingham had been in poor health for the past five years but was stricken with apoplexy Monday night as she was about to retire. She called her daughter, Miss Nettie, who hastened to her side and summoned assistance. She never regained consciousness, passing peacefully away Tuesday evening. Mrs. Ingham was born in Burrillville, Rhode Island on May 22, 1830. She moved with her parents to Massachusetts, where she married James Ingham on January 2, 1848. Up until 1877 they resided in Avon, Massachusetts when they came direct to Gilroy. She lived a quiet Christian life, devoted to her home, family and children. She was a member of the Episcopal Church and is survived by two children, Mr. George and Miss Nettie Ingham. Her husband died eleven years ago. Ripe in years, and beloved by all, she passes to a higher life. The funeral took place Thursday afternoon from the family residence on Egleberry St. Rev. F.G. Williams conducted the services and the choir was composed of Mrs. Riley, Mrs. Herbert Robinson and Miss Lennon. The floral designs were beautiful. The pallbearers were the same gentlemen who officiated at Mr. Charles Wilson's funeral a week ago: Messrs. Chesbro, C.R. Wilson, Riley, Roxburgh, F. Jones and W.C. Doan. A large circle of friends attended the last, sad rites."

My great-grandfather, Dr. H.R. Chesbro, listed as one of Mrs. Ingham's pallbearers, was a long-time family friend.

Nettie's Brother, George Ingham

George Ingham had married Mary Justine Capen on 1-15-1873, while still living in East Stoughton, Massachusetts. The pair traveled West together, apparently with the rest of the Inghams, at first settling in Gilroy. There, at age 29, he is first listed as head of household in the 1880 census, with occupation as a painter.⁹ According to his obituary, George and Mary then spent a short time in Fresno before relocating to Pacific Grove, where he appears, by then a widower, as G.F. Ingham, age 49, in the 1900 United States Census.¹⁰

The January 10, 1891 Gilroy Advocate lists Mary's obituary:

"There has been mourning in the Ingham family this week over the lamentable death of the wife of George Ingham, an estimable lady who has for some years resided at Pacific Grove. Mrs. Ingham was a native of Stoughton, Massachusetts, the eldest daughter of Hiram and Mary Justine Capen. Had she lived until yesterday, she would have been 39 years of age. The place of her birth was her home until her marriage in 1873, of which event next Thursday would be the eighteenth anniversary. Three years of life were passed in East Stoughton, for the remaining fifteen, California has been her home. For this past year, her health has been failing, but when the final call came, it was entirely unexpected, heart failure being the cause of her death. She made many warm friends wherever she went, and was dearly loved by all who really knew her. Her life was spent in work for others, the highest meed of praise that can be given."

In the 1910 census, George Ingham, age 59, is listed as still living in Pacific Grove, with occupation listed as a painter working for a hotel.¹¹

In a letter to me addressed 3-31-1989, my great-aunt, Marion Chesbro Walden, offered the following reminiscences.

"Yes, long ago, there was Nettie Ingham, and her brother George Ingham. My mother [Lily Plunkett Chesbro] often told the story of George Ingham in Pacific Grove. Mom and Dad were married at the home of Mollie Whitehurst in Santa Cruz in 1906. They took "the cars" to Pacific Grove for their honeymoon. In P.G. they were met by Mr. Ingham, with a wheelbarrow, to pick up their luggage. The folks rented a horse and buggy [while on honeymoon] and took a few trips out to what is now the 17-Mile Drive."

Following his wife's demise, George Ingham remained in Pacific Grove for another 23 years. He returned to Gilroy in 1914, to spend his remaining years sharing the family home with Nettie. By the 1920 United States Census, he appears as a resident in the Gilroy home, with Nettie listed as head of household.¹²

The home, and other property in Gilroy, had been deeded to George in 1893¹³ by his father. As this was executed two years before James Ingham's 1895 death, perhaps it was intended to allow George to legally take charge of family property and interests due to the elder Mr. Ingham's declining health. When George passed away on 11-3-1920, the Gilroy Advocate issue for 11-6-1920 offered this obituary:

"Kindly Soul Passes On: In the death of George F. Ingham, which occurred at the family home on Egleberry Street early Wednesday morning, the community has lost a gentleman of the 'old school' who was ever ready with a willing hand and agreeable smile to assist a friend or neighbor. Courtesy was his watchword. Many will miss George Ingham, who went about in his quiet, unostentatious manner, spreading sunshine among the children of the neighborhood and among those who are in the sunset of life. George Ingham was born in Avon, Massachusetts on January 4, 1851 and lacked but two months of his 70th birthday when taken by death. He had been ill since last August when he was stricken with paralysis. His sister, Miss Nettie Ingham, attended him in a most devoted manner during his illness. He came to this state 45 years ago and resided in Gilroy, going to Fresno in 1884. From 1887 to 1914 he made his home in Pacific Grove. His wife died in 1890 and there were no children. He retired to Gilroy 6 years ago and made his home with his sister, Miss Nettie. Mr. Ingham was a well-read man and was particularly interested in the early history of California. He was a member of the Pacific Grove Lodge, F.& A.M. The Episcopal burial service was read by Rev. Francis G. Williams of Carmel at the residence Friday morning at 10:30 and the body was taken to Cypress Lawn Cemetery in San Francisco for cremation."

Nettie and George Ingham's connection to my great-grandfather, Dr. Heverland R. Chesbro, and to both his first wife, Emma Wildey Chesbro, and his second wife, Lily Plunkett Chesbro, was an enduring one. Nettie's ongoing links to the Chesbro children, particularly to sons Arthur Chesbro and Dr.

Elmer Chesbro (my grandfather), as well as daughter Marion Chesbro Walden were also strong.

Miss Ingham was often a guest at the Chesbro home, as noted in a typical entry in the Gilroy Advocate social column on 4-7-1894:

"Dr. and Mrs. H.R. Chesbro gave a pleasant farewell on Saturday evening to Dr. and Mrs. McDonald who have been spending a couple of weeks in our city, and in whose honor two foregoing duplicate whist parties were given by Miss Ingham and Mrs. Caroline Hoxett. Duplicate whist and repast at the Chesbro home was enjoyed by guests: Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Whitehurst, Mesdames Conley, Parsons, Hoxett, Viall, Benn, Misses: Ingham, Sorenson, and Strange, and Mr. George Ingham, were present to bid good bye to this pleasant couple."

Miss Ingham appears to have been a reciprocal hostess, as seen in the Gilroy Advocate of 1-4-1896, "Dr. and Mrs. H.R. Chesbro were at Miss Ingham's with other guests for a card party Monday evening." On 5-14-1898 Miss Ingham and her mother are listed among the guests at the Chesbro home who gathered to celebrate the doctor and wife's fifteenth wedding anniversary. Just before Christmas, 1899, the Gilroy Advocate noted that "Mrs. Chesbro, along with Mrs. Caroline Hoxett, Miss Wilson and Miss Ingham, will give an afternoon function on December 29 to honor Mrs. Leroy Nickel."

It should be noted that Caroline Hoxett, a sister member of the Rebekahs along with Mrs. Chesbro, was a local philanthropist whose generosity provided land for the I.O.O.F Childrens' Home in Gilroy. The William Weeks-designed facility, which still operates, is currently known as Rebekah Childrens' Services. Mrs. Hoxett also gave funds for the clocktower atop Gilroy's Old City Hall and money to purchase the lot on which the Carnegie Library was built. The beneficiary of the social function mentioned in the column, Mrs. Leroy Nickel, was the daughter of cattle baron Henry Miller.

Over the years, Miss Ingham's name appears frequently as both hostess and guest of the Ladies' Whist Club and games of "500." She participated in

another decades-long Chesbro family pastime, the Orchards Whist Club. The group of Gilroy old-timers, whose club was named for an orchard-laden section north of Gilroy, met on Saturday nights at each other's homes, from 1910 until about 1950, for dinner and cards. The Orchards Whist Club observed the annual tradition of gathering at the Chesbro home every New Years' Eve for a "Watch Party." Following the demise of her other family members, Miss Ingham was always included in another traditionally large gathering at the Chesbro home, Thanksgiving dinner.

Nettie Ingham, Gilroy Spinster

In the 1910 census, Nettie L. Ingham, age 50, is listed as head of household, living alone in Gilroy.¹⁴ My great-aunt, Marion Chesbro Walden's 3-31-1989 letter continues:

"I'm glad you have Miss Ingham's things. You really appreciate their value. Miss Ingham was a bright, interesting little woman. Have no idea why she never married. Your grandfather [Elmer] took care of her minor illnesses. They became life-long friends. Elmer listened. He was a good listener. He and Miss Ingham had many a good visit. I think he advised her about business affairs, and helped her in many ways. Finally, he bought her house on Eagleberry St."

Among the Ingham family items which have passed down to me from my grandparents are: an early Colonial Queen Anne style highboy which possibly dates to the Harris homestead era, a small carved wooden chest brought by James Ingham as a child when he and his mother sailed from England for America, a set of coin silver Colonial era spoons, two 19th century chairs, a mid-Victorian bedroom set with marble top dresser and washstand, a Seth Thomas mantle clock, the white "Spanish Shawl" Mr. Ingham brought back from his 1853 trip to San Francisco, Miss Ingham's 1928 Book of Common Prayer, a tea set in blue and white floral china, a few

Stoneware early 19th Century serving pieces, a copper 1890s alcohol burning tea kettle, and some cameo jewelry. (See illustrations.)

In June, 1917 Miss Ingham and her brother George had the old family home torn down. They divided the lot, located on the east side of Egleberry Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets. Nettie and George kept one lot, at 50 N. Egleberry Street, on which they built a cottage. When it was completed in January, 1918, they moved in and held an open house for their friends. In the meantime, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Chesbro purchased the other lot, with a 45 foot frontage, located at 60 N. Egleberry St. They built a bungalow and moved into it in August, 1918. Arthur was the oldest son of Dr. Heverland Chesbro and a local realtor. He was the older brother of my grandfather, Dr. Elmer Chesbro.

George died two years after he and Nettie moved into their new cottage. Within two years, she had sold it to my grandparents. On 1-14-1922, the Gilroy Advocate reported, "Miss Ingham sells her home to Dr. Elmer J. Chesbro, the home is located between Fifth and Sixth Sts., on Egleberry St. She is moving to the Dowell Apts. on Hanna St." My grandparents remained in the Ingham home until 1936, when they sold it to build a new house two blocks away.

My great-aunt Marion's 3-31-1989 letter continued,

"She moved into the Schilling apartments near Fourth and Egleberry. Because of space, and their friendship, Miss Ingham left many of her things in the house for your grandparents. Your grandmother had an appreciation of old furniture and dishes. Your grandmother taught me to appreciate old pictures and art work. Miss Ingham and Georgie Eschenburg were good friends. They lived on the same block. Georgie was Rodney Eschenburg's mother. Rodney's grandfather Eschenburg lived with them."

The Ingham home at 50 N. Egleberry St. was one door removed from the Eschenburg home, located at number 70. The Eschenburg home was demolished in 1925 to build a new home for druggist Martin Johnson. During the 1970s, all residences along the east side of Egleberry Street from Fifth to Sixth Streets were torn down for municipal parking lots. Today, one old

redwood stump, still sprouting fern-like out growth, sits curbside in front of the former Ingham homesite at number 50.

The Ingham family's friend, elder pioneer Rodney Eschenburg, was named for the Rodney family, which had first settled in Delaware in 1682, the same year William Penn settled Pennsylvania. The ancestral line was an illustrious one, and included Rodney's great uncle, Caesar Rodney (1728-1783), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who during his life also served as judge, delegate to the Continental Congress, Governor of Delaware and state supreme court justice. Rodney Eschenburg's great-grandfather, Caesar Augustus Rodney (1772-1824) enjoyed as brilliant a political career as his Uncle Caesar, for whom he was named. He served in both the House of Representatives (1803-5) and the U.S. Senate (1822-3). He was the United States Attorney General in both the Jefferson and Madison administrations (1807-1817). In 1823, he was sent by President James Monroe to South America with a group of commissioners tasked to investigate whether the United States should recognize the era's new republics, then gaining their independence from Spain. The same year, he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Argentina and died in Buenos Aires in 1824. Caesar Rodney's great-grandson, Rodney Eschenburg was an early California pioneer. Born in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1831, he arrived in California on August 28, 1849 after a 105-day trek, walking behind a mule-drawn emigrant train all the way from Illinois. He first visited the Gilroy and South Valley area in 1853. Liking the region, and seeing its future potential, he purchased 343 acres east of Gilroy at San Ysidro for \$3,000. He remained at work in the mines at Auburn until 1858, and then moved permanently to his San Ysidro ranch, where he ran a dairy for 30 years before moving into town to retire. He married New York native Maria Luise Thomas, whom he met in Fresno, in 1863. Of the three children born to the Eschenburgs, two survived, Hermann Rodney and Madelaine. Georgie Eschenburg, Miss Ingham's dear friend, was the widow of Hermann Rodney Eschenburg.

In her 3-31-1989 letter, my great-aunt Marion continues,

"Miss Ingham often came to call at our house. My father [Dr. H.R. Chesbro] 'respected' her opinions on things. In her will, Miss Ingham had many of her possessions listed for certain people. She left a very handsome rocking chair, child's chair and lovely mirror to my mother. I have them and appreciate and love every piece.

"Miss Ingham must have come from a good, educated family in Boston. Most of her things were from her family. Why she came to Gilroy I don't know. Her brother came, but lived in Pacific Grove and finally Gilroy. I don't know what his profession was. He often repaired things at our house. He was a nice man, however Nettie seemed to have the 'spunk.' She had a certain 'standing.'

"Miss Ingham was quite a lady. She was very fond of your grandparents. Who wouldn't be fond of them-I loved them myself..."

In Gilroy, besides her busy social life, Miss Ingham was an active member of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, and the P.E.O. Sisterhood. She also faithfully attended the F.R.F.G. Ladies' Reading Club, a private group which had been founded by Miss Louise Wilson in 1898 and which continues with an active membership today. Limited to 20 members, an applicant's name and recommendation is submitted by a member for election by the group. Potential members were, and are, often on a waiting list for a time, until an active member resigns, or passes away.

The F.R.F.G.'s founder, Miss Emily Wilson, had arrived in Gilroy in 1863 to live with a sister. At the height of the Civil War, her trip West had been fraught with dangerous adventure. In over three weeks' time she traveled by convoy ship through Union and Confederate blockades, traversed the steamy Isthmus of Panama, sailed to San Francisco, took a train to San Jose and finally arrived in Gilroy via stage in a blinding storm.

Besides her extensive travels, including trips to the South Seas and the Orient, Miss Wilson taught at Mills College. When she returned to Gilroy, she first founded a Reading Circle, then the F.R.F.G. weekly study and reading club. At their first meeting, the name "F.R.F.G." was chosen, for

"Freely Receive, Freely Give," embodying the concept that knowledge should be shared with others.

Historically, the F.R.F.G.'s nine-month term runs from mid-September until mid-June. Besides choosing an annual theme for the group to study, each member is expected to serve at least once during the term as a hostess, and to present a selected topic at one meeting. The art of self-improvement, of studying to become well-rounded and informed, and practicing the time-honored ladylike social graces, continues to enhance the membership's spirit of camaraderie.

When Nettie was elected to membership on 10-12-1912, annual dues were a quarter. During that year, the F.R.F.G. studied Spain, Norway, Sweden and Holland. At her first attended meeting following her election, held 10-25-1912, the secretary's minutes record, "The usual explanations were made for the benefit of the new member, the club motto, colors, etc."

Miss Ingham served as the club's President for two years, in 1919 and 1920. A jingle composed for the first luncheon of the year, held at the Eva Princevalle home, noted,

"Miss Ingham,
Our worthy President,
Posses Heaven-Sent
Brains!
She opens the meeting
on time,
This fact is worthy of a
rhyme!
But when you mention
'kitchen,'
She is ready to 'pitch in'
wearing gingham!
She can boil and stew
and bake,
and concoct a scrumptious cake
President Ingham!"

At her first meeting as President, held 10-3-1919, each member responded to roll call with either her experiences of seeing the Fleet that summer, or with a vacation trip description.

The Fleet visit had been a major recent topic in the news. On 8-25-1919, throngs had turned out to watch the Pacific Fleet sail in on a planned visit to Monterey Bay. They were somewhat dismayed when thick fog forced half of the fleet to divide up and head over to Santa Cruz to drop anchor. The visit disappointed many Gilroyans and others who had traveled over to the coast to witness the event. Nonetheless, the occasion was not without its ceremonies. For Monterey's Fleet dignitaries, the day included a visit to Colton Hall, site of California's first Constitutional Convention, and then a trip up the hill to see the Presidio. The day continued with lunch for Fleet Admiral Rodman and officers at the Del Monte Hotel, a ceremony later at the Custom House to honor Commodore Sloat's 7-7-1846 landing and raising of the United States flag, and concluded with a banquet that evening at Del Monte Hotel to honor Admiral Rodman and officers, followed by a dance in the ballroom.

Other business at Miss Ingham's first meeting as President of the F.R.F.G. included her appointing a theater committee to arrange for any outside trips the club might make, and suggestion that the committee arrange a trip or a picnic for October, also a luncheon for the first meeting following the Christmas holidays. Suggested theme of study for the group's 1919-1920 program was "Various Interesting Cities." The group's founder, Miss Wilson, offered the book, "The War in the Cradle of the World," to fill in any time not fully taken by planned programs. (Every effort, the minutes noted, would be made to open the meetings promptly at 2:30.) Miss Ingham for her part read from "Local Government in Town, Cities and Villages," brief items on town meetings with the form of government adopted by the Pilgrims; the poem, "Our Moderator." A few descriptions of old town government were also read by various members. At the close of the meeting, the theater

committee reported that, weather permitting, a train trip to visit Stanford University would be the following Friday's program.

Another life-long pursuit of Nettie Ingham's was membership in the Ladies' Benevolent Society, one of the longest-lived local womens' organizations in Gilroy, first formed in 1872. A year after its founding, in the aforementioned promotional booklet titled "Gilroy As A Home," the Editor noted, "The Ladies' Benevolent Society is an organization for the amelioration of the wants of the destitute and needy, and has done and is doing good work. Mrs. S.H. Dryden is Secretary. It is sustained principally by voluntary contributions."¹⁵ The civic-minded womens' group wrote up a constitution and dedicated itself to fund-raising to assist impoverished individuals and families. The group's first fund-raiser, a Calico Ball, was thrown to assist families left homeless following a fire in the redwood lumbering area west of town. Over the years, the Ladies' Benevolent Society held dinners, lectures, dances and dues collection to support its worthy causes. The society was helped considerably in its early year by a bachelor, John Harrison, who left it his estate, including property and money. Cattle baron Henry Miller was also a regular donor to the group. The society for many years met at Temperance Hall, located on Martin Street just east of Monterey Street in downtown Gilroy, behind the parking lot of the former Wells Fargo Bank (now Garlic City Billiards.) School teacher and private academy founder, Sarah Severance, was an early pillar of the society. Miss Ingham served as bookkeeper of the Ladies' Benevolent Society from 1889-1893. The society, which lasted until July 1967, turned over its assets of \$17,000 to Wheeler Hospital at the time it disbanded.

Old Stoughton ties were maintained over time, via correspondence between Miss Ingham and her Massachusetts cousin, Fred. E. Harris. Also unmarried, he lived first in Boston, where he worked as an electrician at The Thorndike Hotel, and later in Norfolk Downs, Massachusetts. The two shared a mutual interest in Harris family history. Apparently when the original Harris homestead was broken up and its contents auctioned off,

Fred's father had purchased some old family items. In a letter to Nettie dated 2-23-1905, Fred refers to them:

"I think I will be able to find out more about the old furniture a little later. A Mr. Harris who is now in Europe but who will return this spring is the son of Dr. Harris that wrote the book. He is 77 years old and the last of his family of that generation. His grandfather owned and lived on the old homestead. When he gets back I will see him and find out all I can about the old furniture. My mother remembers hearing about my grandfather William going to the auction at Brookline and thinks that Uncle William went with him. That was when the old Bible was bought. The desk I have is of the same lot...I will enclose a couple of old papers just for curiosity. One of them concerns the quit claim of the heirs of Amariah Harris in favor of William Harris, my grandfather. Amariah was the first owner of the Stoughton farm. The other is Lucy Harris to William. That is grandfather William and his sister Lucy."

In another much later letter, dated 12-17-1918, cousin Fred Harris refers to other old family documents:

"I am writing on the old desk. I fixed it up quite nice and it is an ornament in my mother's room...Aunt Polly left all the old papers in the desk. I have kept the old ones but destroyed a lot of old bills that were of no interest. The oldest one is a deed to Amariah Harris similar to the one I am enclosing, it is dated 1768. The one I am sending to you is the next oldest, 1795...Hoping you are still in good health in your new home and with best wishes to George I wish you a Merry Christmas, Your cousin Fred. E. Harris."

The new home in her cousin's letter refers to the cottage Nettie and George had just completed on the divided Ingham family lot on Egleberry Street, completed two years before George died.

The End Comes

The last United States Census citation for Nettie Ingham appeared in 1930.¹⁶ By the end of her life, in 1937, she had lived alone, first in the Ingham family home, later in an apartment, for 17 years. She passed away at age 78 at 3 p.m. on 1-26-1937 at Wheeler Hospital in Gilroy, following a three-week

illness. On 2-11-1937, The Gilroy Advocate reported Miss Ingham's estate as valued at \$15,000, including a bequest to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church for \$650. The balance was to be divided between her close friends, Mrs. Georgie Eschenburg and Dr. Elmer Chesbro. The article continued:

"Miss Ingham died at 77 last January 26 after poor health suffered for several months. She had no known kin beyond a distant cousin resident in the East, somewhere, her only brother dying here several years ago. Miss Ingham's estate also included valuable antique furniture, linen and jewelry and other personal property, all of which, the will states, had been disposed of beforehand to several friends."

Death must have been an event she gave thought to, as several clippings on the subject, and a poem were glued into her 1928 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. Among them, the "Prayer of Wilberforce" seems to well summarize the philosophy by which Nettie Ingham appears to have lived her life:

Lord, for tomorrow and it needs
 I do not pray;
 Help me from stain of sin
 Just for today;
 Let me both diligently work
 And duly pray,
 Let me be kind in deed and work,
 Just for today;
 Let me be slow to do my will
 Prompt to obey;
 Help me to sacrifice myself
 Just for today.
 Let me no wrong nor idle word
 Unthinking say,
 Set thou thy seal upon my lips
 Just for today,
 So for the morrow and its needs
 I do not pray,
 But keep me, guide me, hold me, Lord
 Just for today.

For a life so well lived, it was perhaps fitting that, in her obituary, published in the Gilroy Dispatch on 1-27-1937, the following observation was

noted, "She was well-known and respected. One of her final wishes was that her funeral be as simple as possible and that but brief public mention be made of her passing."

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Endnotes

- ¹ United States Census, 1850, Roll M432_310, page 89
- ² United States Census, 1860, Roll M653_515, Page 128
- ³ United States Census, 1870, Roll M593_636, Page 306, Image 617
- ⁴ United States Census, 1880 Roll 79_82, Family History Film 1254082, Enumeration district 257, Image 0197
- ⁵ H. Coffin, Ed., Gilroy As A Home. (Gilroy, California, Advocate Printing Office, 1873). p.6
- ⁶ *ibid.*, pp.29-30
- ⁷ Directory of the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County, 1881-2. (San Francisco: L.M.McKenney and Co., Publishers. December 1880). p. 363
- ⁸ Directory of the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County, 1884-5. (San Francisco: L.M. McKenney and Co., Publishers. December 1883). p. 256
- ⁹ United States Census, 1880, Roll T9_82, Family History film 1254082, Enumeration District 257, Image 0197
- ¹⁰ United States Census, 1900, Roll T623 94, p. 2A, Enumeration District 11
- ¹¹ United States Census, 1910, Series T624, Roll 89, part 2, page 157A
- ¹² United States Census, 1920, Roll T625_146, p. 1A, ED 131, Image 0908
- ¹³ Santa Clara County Records. Deed: James Ingham to George F. Ingham, February 13, 1893 at Gilroy, California; filed in Book 179 of Deeds, page 274 on April 16, 1895, by Charles P. Owen, County Recorder.
- ¹⁴ United States Census, 1910, *ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Gilroy As A Home, *op. cit.*, p. 22
- ¹⁶ United States Census, 1930, Roll 220, Enumeration district 12, image 1710

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- Fred E. Harris to Nettie Ingham, written at Norfolk Downs,
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- Mrs. Clara Detwiller to Nettie L. Ingham, August 21, 1898, written at
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- Marion Chesbro Walden to Elizabeth Barratt, March 31, 1989, written
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ending April 30, 1878
- Las Animas Partition Lawsuit, San Jose, California, 20th District Court,
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- Great Register of Santa Clara County, 1884, Gilroy Index
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- Minutes of Meeting, F.R.F.G. Ladies Reading Club, Gilroy, California,
October 12, 1912; October 3, 1919
- "Benevolent Societies" File at Gilroy Historical Museum, Gilroy,
California
- Handwritten note of Nettie Ingham, "White Silk Shawl. Brought from
S.F. by Jas. Ingham-1853."
- Handwritten notes of Nettie Ingham, extract from the volume, "Robert
Harris and his descendants" by Luther M. Harris, 1861

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