

**Pioneer Californians of Santa Clara County
2011 Essay Contest**

**The F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club
of
Gilroy, California**

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction	page 2
The F.R.F.G. Study Club: Its Curriculum and Purpose	page 4
The Bay View Study Course: Origins in the Chautauqua	page 5
The Bay View Reading Circle	page 5
The F.R.F.G. Club Founder, Miss Emily Wilson	page 6
The F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club Over the Years	page 9
List of Charter F.R.F.G. Members	page 16
F.R.F.G. Membership List: first full year	page 17
Illustrations	page 18
Endnotes and Sources	page 24

Introduction

Studious From the Start: Gilroy's First Book Collections and Literary Societies

For four decades following its 1870 incorporation, Gilroy citizens had no public library to use and enjoy. To fill the need, organizations often formed their own library collections. Either the members exchanged books as a private club (proprietary) or individuals joined by paying a regular fee to borrow books (subscription.) Several Gilroy social and fraternal groups maintained small proprietary libraries.

One individual of good-will, Mr. Philander Ball, was a member of the local Columbia Branch of the International Lodge of Good Templars. He initiated the first attempt in Gilroy to found a subscription-type lending library, for both members and the public. According to the June 9, 1876 Gilroy Advocate, "The Templars are going to establish a library called the Columbia Library. Mr. Ball's residence on Fifth St. will provide several rooms to be open to the public. Books, papers, periodicals will be available to members, and fees for membership will be \$2.50 per year."

Two years later, in 1878, a temperance society called The Blue Ribbon Club was founded in Gilroy. The group soon established a reading room of its own, with a lounge space offering coffee and ice cream to patrons. Unfortunately, within a year, the impetus fell away and the society sold off its furnishings.

The Blue Ribbon Club combined its book collection with the Good Templars library collection at Mr. Ball's residence. The locale gained a following and after six years of offering reading space to book subscribers, the home was no longer able to hold both expanded collections. According to the January 24, 1880 Gilroy Advocate, a subscription reading room to hold the collection was established on Monterey St. in a room at the rear of A.R. Moore's Photographic Gallery.

Several other social groups maintained small proprietary libraries in Gilroy during the latter portion of this period. One notable collection was housed in the YMCA Reading Room, established for members in January, 1883 at Wright's Parlors.

But still, a free public library, supported by taxes and open to all, remained out of reach to locals for decades. Elections to vote for a public library failed in 1890 and 1894. By 1903, the Gilroy Advocate Editor chastised taxpayers for their laxity, stating, "Gilroy *still* needs a reference or lending library."

It wasn't until January 1906, that the Gilroy City Council finally adopted a resolution to establish and maintain a public library. After Mayor Dunlap wrote to Andrew Carnegie and received a favorable response, the Library Trustees applied to the benefactor for a grant. In March, 1906 Gilroy's petition for \$10,000 for a library building was approved. By November, 1907, a temporary Gilroy Public Library space was established in a front room upstairs at the newly completed City Hall on Monterey and Sixth Streets. By early December, the space was open and functioning, with its first collection of volumes donated by Gilroy's first two literary societies founded for women: the Ladies Reading Circle and the F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club.

Gilroy benefactress Caroline Hoxett donated a lot for the new library building at Fifth and Church Streets in the heart of Gilroy's finest residential district. On July 27, 1910, Gilroy's brand new public library, with 1700 volumes on the shelves, opened its doors for the first time.

The Formation of Women's Study Clubs in Gilroy

Because for so many years the town lacked an adequate public lending library, a book club for women had first been established in 1895, when Miss Emily Wilson founded the Ladies' Reading Circle. The group met in members' homes on a regular basis to read shared titles and hold literary discussions.

To expand upon the reading theme and form a women's club devoted to the study of selected topics of cultural interest, in 1898 Miss Wilson founded an additional club, the F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club.

This second ladies club met to organize on November 9, 1898 at Miss Wilson's home. The group chose the name "F.R.F.G." as an abbreviation for its motto, "Freely Received, Freely Given." The group purpose was to offer a study club that included not only book discussions, but also such topics as travel, art, languages, history, current events and foreign cultures. The membership was limited to 20 regular members, with an additional waiting list of ladies who served as substitutes for absent members and waited their turn to join as regulars. Before long, the popular group had a sizable waiting list of women in town who were eager to join.

After 113 years from the date of its founding, the F.R.F.G. Club remains active to this day.

The F.R.F.G. Study Club: Its Curriculum and Purpose

The F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club records indicate that the first hostess to hold a regular meeting was Etta Eckhart, who entertained the ladies on November 30, 1898. The event was reported in the Gilroy Advocate on December 10, 1898, "A new club has been organized for the mental advancement of our young ladies, with Miss Emily Wilson as the prime mover. The club is still young and has been christened for the present the 'F.R.F.G.' The members meet every Wednesday at 2:30 PM at the different homes. An hour is devoted to miscellaneous literature. At present they are interested in Miss Sidmore's 'Jinrisha Days,' a tale of travels in Japan. Miss Wilson's personal experiences in Japan make the book doubly instructive."

Minnie Dryden closed out the group's first year on May 23, 1899. As an early endeavor, the group read and discussed a selected novel, "Polly Oliver's Problems," at their January 4, 1899 meeting. There are no further records for that year, however, by January 25, 1900, notes in the Secretary-Treasurer's memo book indicate the F.R.F.G. had settled into a system of meeting each Friday afternoon from 2:30 to 4:30 from late September through mid-June, for study and discussion.

The first study topic was on "Raphael." At the same meeting, the Club Call, "Ave Roma Immortalis," was adopted along with the club color, "Roman," which has been described to the author by Mildred Hanna, a 70-year member, as a shade of purple. Other books read during the year were "Gondola Days" by Frances Hopkinson Smith, "The Lion of St. Mark" by George Alfred Henty and "Venetian Life" by William Dean Howells. By April 1900, a paper on "Michelangelo" was presented by one member and each other member brought a reading or essay to share on a facet of Roman history. In January 1901, the volume, "A Roman Singer," by Francis Marion Crawford, was discussed and by March, the group was reading "Roba de Roma" by William Story.

Records for 1901-02 are nearly non-existent, however, regular minutes have been kept since 1903, and a complete collection is in the club archives. Minutes from the 1903 period clearly indicate that the F.R.F.G. had been subscribing to a popular home study program known as The Bay View Study Course.

The Bay View Study Course: Origins in the Chautauqua

The Bay View Course had ties to an earlier Lyceum-style movement known as the Chautauqua, begun at Lake Chautauqua, New York in 1874. The Chautauqua summer gatherings, which grew to attendances of 40,000, studied such topics as religion, politics, economics, science and literature. In time, the name Chautauqua was borrowed by groups of traveling speakers who gave tent-style lectures on various topics, in cities and towns across America, on a scheduled Chautauqua circuit. This nation-wide extension of the original New York summertime assembly provided cultural and social connections for small communities lacking sufficient access to such inspiring offerings.

An educational program, first organized at the Chautauqua Summer Assembly of 1878, evolved from the original program. The course included “The Chautauquan Magazine” and offered membership in a new home study course called the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.¹ The home study program’s purpose was to provide a systematic course of reading in history, literature, science and art. It offered a form of higher education for those without the opportunity to attend college, giving them, according to the materials, “an overview of the college-trained outlook.” For those who were already well-educated, the course offered a chance to refresh and renew their prior studies. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle remains today as America’s oldest continuously operating book and study club.

In its first 20 years, the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific circle’s home study course enrolled about 250,000 members nationwide, with about 50,000 finishing the entire four-year program of study and receiving a diploma for their efforts.² As the course repeated itself every four years, the student could enter at any time and still complete it four years later. The program’s motto was, “Education ends only with life.”

To form a study club, only three or four individuals were needed to gather and form a local circle, which at first were attended by both men and women. The cost was \$5 per year for “The Chautauquan Magazine” and a supply of the year’s study books.

The Bay View Reading Circle

In the summer of 1893, a similar course of home study was organized by the Methodist-sponsored Bay View Association at Bay View, Michigan. Its purpose was to establish a summer institution of higher learning with high scholarly aims. Called the

Bay View Reading Circle, the course used as reading material its own publication, "The Bay View Magazine," to be used in conjunction with a set of selected books for the year's study course. Bay View Study Groups formed their own by-laws, with officers, yearbooks, a motto, a color, a song and often a club call. Groups were limited to 20-30 members, a number which included associate or substitute members. In time the Bay View Study Circles became designated for women only and the men stopped attending.

The Bay View Reading Circle, which lasted from 1893 to 1921, had study groups extending across the country. Among its 25,000 members was the F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club of Gilroy.

Although the Bay View Reading Circle no longer exists, the Bay View Association continues to hold a Summer Assembly on its grounds each year.³

The Bay View magazine was published and mailed from Flint, Michigan annually from October to July and covered the Bay View academic year, which ran from November 1 to June 30. The magazine outlined the year's reading program, offered review questions, and advice on how to conduct a successful reading circle. To cover the entire eight-month course cycle, members were expected to dedicate about 30 minutes per day reading the book and article assignments. The monthly magazine issues offered articles which covered a portion of the required readings, the remainder of the assignments were taken from a set of selected books which the student purchased from the company for \$2.50 per year.

A typical example of the Bay View Study Course aims was spelled out in the magazine's first issue of the 1893-94 study year, whose topic for the term was the culture, history, art, music and literature of Germany. "The Bay View Reading Circle aims to provide and direct at the lowest possible expense a choice course of reading, made up after an approved educational plan and to promote habits of home study. It is for people of too limited time for elaborate courses and who are yet ambitious to advance in intelligence and would like to turn their spare moments to good account. It is neither sectarian nor sectional and no one is too old to join it."⁴

The F.R.F.G. Club Founder, Miss Emily Wilson

Her world travels had already taken her through all sorts of climate conditions. Therefore, it was not surprising that Miss Emily Wilson blew into Gilroy on a windswept, rainy night in 1864. The stagecoach trip down from San Jose, in those pre-

railroad days, had been through the dark along a rutted, muddy road. Not wishing to disturb her sister, Mrs. Lavinia Hunter, who lived on Fifth Street, she spent that first, stormy night at the Exchange Hotel on Monterey Street.

For the single traveling woman, the Gilroy trip was not her first bold trek, but it was an unusual one for the era. Emily Wilson began her three-week journey to California from New York, paying a hefty \$345 for the ship tickets. The Civil War was raging, and for safety, she and fellow shipmates were accompanied part-way by a gunboat convoy that passed through both Union and Confederate blockades to reach the Isthmus of Panama. After struggling on foot through snake-infested jungles to cross the small Central American strip, the travelers reached the Pacific. There, they boarded a waiting vessel to sail up the coast to California and into the Golden Gate.

Miss Wilson later described the experience, "A native Californian asked me, upon my first view of San Francisco, as we were sailing in, what my impressions were, and I said I loved it. He assured me I always would, and I have." From San Francisco, Emily caught a train to San Jose, and thence the dark, soggy stage trip to Gilroy.

For nearly 50 years, Miss Wilson came and went from her adopted California home, staying both with her sister in Gilroy and also in the Bay Area, where she met Dr. Cyrus Mills, founder of Mills College. Impressed with her extensive education and literary skills, he invited her to teach at the women's college. She remained at the post for several years before becoming restless for more travel. In between her far-reaching sojourns, she returned several times over the decades to resume her teaching post at Mills.

Mills College wasn't her first teaching experience. Emily Susan Wilson was born in Marlboro, Massachusetts on September 12, 1840, the second oldest of three girls and one boy. As a child, she was taught at home by her parents and grandmother, mostly from the Bible, before continuing her studies at a nearby one-room schoolhouse. At age 17, she entered Mt. Holyoke Seminary, a women's college in South Hadley, Massachusetts. On July 21, 1861, the day she graduated in a class of 66 women, the event coincided with the outbreak of the first battle of Bull Run.

Although she was only 21 years old at the time, Emily was offered a position teaching Latin at her alma mater. She taught for two years before sailing from New York on her first foray into California.

In an era when women had few opportunities to pursue higher education, ladies reading societies had sprung up in parlors across America. Being better informed, members found, enhanced their understanding of the world and encouraged a spirit of camaraderie. Miss Wilson was no exception and in 1895 she founded a local readers' book exchange in Gilroy known variously as the Gilroy Ladies Reading Society, the Reading Circle, and the Tuesday Reading Club. Members met on a weekly basis to share books, discuss literature, and occasionally put on a fund-raising soiree consisting of a lecture or musicale. A typical entry, in April, 1899 in the Gilroy Advocate Society Page, notes that the Reading Circle enjoyed a social and intellectual evening at the Masonic Hall where they heard a presentation by Rev. Walter Myron Lowell. "Palms and ivy brightened the interior, with lilac for decor. The evening lasted from 8 until 11 PM. The entertainment included an instrumental quartet, piano selections, readings and a speech."

In November, 1900, another newspaper entry reads, "The Reading Club met at the home of Mrs. Dr. Chesbro on Tuesday, and after the usual reading and light tea, Mrs. Warren Franklin read an interesting paper on Switzerland, illustrated with photographs."

The Reading Circle lasted until the mid-1950s before disbanding, due to the age of its remaining members and declining attendance.

As a confirmed globetrotter, Miss Wilson took her longest voyage in 1896 on a 300-ton barkentine (a three-masted vessel), sailing 17,000 miles to the South Seas, where she spent 8 months, visiting New Zealand, Java, China, and Japan. She lived for several days at a time in native villages of the Cook, Hawaiian and Tahitian Islands and was the first white woman to visit some remote South Pacific regions.

It was after returning to Gilroy from the eight-month voyage that Miss Wilson began to give occasional public talks about the trip, as well as her other travel experiences. One of her talks was given at the old Willey Hall, located on the southeast corner of Fifth and Egleberry Streets. At the event, she noticed that an enthusiastic group of young women showed lively interest in her presentation. She later invited them to gather at her home for an evening to see photos of her travels and have further discussion. It was on that occasion in 1898 that Miss Wilson suggested they form a weekly study group, choosing the name, "F.R.F.G." for "Freely Receive, Freely Give," embodying the concept that knowledge should be shared with others.

Although she returned to the Gilroy area for brief visits all her life, Miss Wilson moved permanently to the East Coast in May, 1906, making a home in New York City with her niece, artist Elizabeth Hunter. The two ladies spent summers at a family cottage in Redding Ridge, Connecticut. From the East Coast, Emily continued to travel, making numerous trips over the next 30 years, once living in Europe for 2-1/2 years. She made a lengthy voyage to South America, and sailed around the world for the last time at age 87. Her final voyage, at age 92, was a trip to Honolulu on the maiden voyage of the cruise ship, *Mariposa*.. Still out and about at age 99, she visited the New York World's Fair.

In later life Miss Wilson became known as Mt. Holyoke's oldest alumna, and in 1937 received an honorary Doctor of Letters from the institution on its centennial anniversary.

For her 100th birthday, she held a large reception at her Connecticut summer home. Among her 250 guests, Conductor Andre Kostelanetz and Playwright Rachel Carothers paid their respects. Greetings also came from two opera singers, coloratura Lily Pons, and baritone Lawrence Tibbet.

After Emily Wilson died in January 1941, her ashes were sent to Gilroy where her beloved F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club held a Memorial Service prior to her internment in the family plot at the Mason's and I.O.O.F. Cemetery (now known as Gavilan Hills Cemetery.)

Only four months earlier, in a newspaper interview on her 100th birthday, she was asked to share the secret of her longevity. Her sage words offered these reflections, "I would advise people to live life fully, always find something in which to be deeply interested, and don't worry too much, especially about your age. That will take care of itself."

The F.R.F.G. Women's Study Club Over the Years

From the beginning, besides choosing an annual theme to study, each member was to serve once during the meeting year as a hostess and once (or more, if desired) as presenter of a portion of the year's chosen topic. For its first 15 years, the club subscribed to the Bay View Course and covered such assigned topics as Italy, Germany, England, Scandinavia, Russia, the Slavic Countries, China, South America, Mexico, and the United States of America.

After 1913, the group changed focus. At the first Fall meeting of the year, the President would announce the upcoming topic for the year's study, or present a selection of possible subject matter from which the members could choose by a vote. After the topic for the year was selected, members did their own research and report writing. Materials used for topic presentation during this period included magazines such as *Current History*, *National Geographic*, and *Asia*, as well as other supplemental magazine articles or book selections.

For a two-year period, from 1915-1917, the topic "California" was chosen because, after studying their home state for one year, the group liked the subject so much, they chose to cover it in greater depth the following year. Beginning with a study of the natives, the mission era, and the early years of statehood, members shared reports and selected readings of famous authors who had lived in, or written about, California, such as Bret Harte, Frank Norris, Mark Twain, and Jack London.

At this point, to ensure continuity in its subject matter, as well as unburden the President from the duty of the yearly study topic selection, the Club appointed a Program Committee at the close of each Spring term. During the summer, committee members would select the year's topic and at the first regular Fall term meeting, the year's schedule, along with a printed keepsake Yearbook with meeting calendar and hostess assignments, would be handed out. The committee-selected topic format was followed for the next several decades, with occasional meetings devoted to other items of interest, especially if a member reported in detail on a recent lengthy voyage, or if a major national event had occurred.

Some events were of more local interest. At one meeting in 1922, the minutes note that the ladies adjourned early to walk several blocks over to Hanna Field, which was then the town's westernmost border, located along today's Hanna Street. There, along with a crowd of astonished onlookers, they watched Gilroy's pioneer aviator, Robert Fowler, put on an exhibition of his biplane flying stunts.

Ordinarily, however, the club stuck to established basics. A typical example of the group's annual calendar of programs occurred during the 1928-29 term, which included 11 meetings devoted to paintings, two travelogues, two meetings on current events, with additional topics covering the State of Virginia, the mountains of California, plus a benefit tea and special holiday programs.

Time wasn't entirely devoted to serious study in a member's home. Several traditions begun during the F.R.F.G.'s early years have extended into the present time. For example, the first meeting of the Fall is always a luncheon. This serves to renew acquaintances after the summer break and to kick off the new study year. The club always breaks in early December for holiday preparation, but before doing so, enjoys a small choral concert, a cookie exchange, and shared recollection of past holidays. The final meeting of the Spring is always an outdoor picnic style salad potluck, where members share summer plans and enjoy a final friendly visit before vacation.

The outbreak of two World Wars caused interruptive periods in the Club's history. During World War I, meeting times were often devoted to sewing and knitting items to send to soldiers overseas or to other Red Cross work. In June 1917, members showed the same generosity as they had in donating books to the Carnegie Library project, when they voted to give the Club Treasury's end-of-year balance, in the sum of \$5.00, to the local Red Cross. That fall, members donated an additional \$5.00 to the Soldier's Christmas Boxes fund. And for the duration of World War I, the club voted to dispense with refreshments at the regular meetings. Instead, each hostess donated the \$1.00 average refreshment cost to the Red Cross. During the 1917-1918 term, members were assessed a one-time 50 cents apiece so that a total of \$10 could be collected and given to the Red Cross. Extra group volunteer work saw members helping out at the Red Cross office each Tuesday. Benefit teas for the organization were also held by F.R.F.G. members during the wartime period. Other club efforts of the era benefited the children of war-torn Belgium.

From this period, the group began a habit of regular charitable giving. A particularly notable endeavor lasted for three years, from 1927 until 1930. During this timeframe, F.R.F.G. members sent financial assistance to an Armenian student, Miss Anfir, who was a protégé of F.R.F.G. member Mrs. Anne Cushing, while she studied at college in Constantinople (now Istanbul) Turkey.

Between the two World Wars, during the 1920s and 1930s the F.R.F.G. members focused on such topics as Art and Architecture, National Parks, Travel and Current Events, and Americanism, interspersed with book reviews, observance of special holidays and descriptions of various personal hobbies.

During the 1940-41 term, on the eve of America's entrance into World War II, the club topic for the year was Famous Women and Current Events. The Current Events

topic persisted throughout the duration of the war, as the club members shared overseas news and read contemporary stories and articles with a patriotic theme.

The Second World War's duration also had its effect on club attendance, as reflected in the May 27, 1943 F.R.F.G. Minutes, which reported the closing meeting of the 1942-43 term, "Thus ended the season. This has been the most strenuous Club year many of us have ever experienced, because of the entrance of all able-bodied women into war activities. In our own Club, Evelyn [Casey], Irma [Kilgore] and others have had to miss some meetings because of being in air observation. Alta [Rycraft] and Eva [Weske] have served many mornings as nurses aides and still managed to get to Club, but at times afternoon duty has called them as well. Ella [Gubser] has given nearly all her season to duty full time to release someone else to do their other necessary work. One of our meetings was held in the evening, as it was the only time most members could gather. Our gracious little President, Mildred [Hanna], the "baby" of the Club, has marvelously managed to carry on at every meeting except two, in spite of the fact that her small son was born in February."

Also due to wartime, the pattern of weekly Friday afternoon meetings that had been the norm for the club's entire 44 years was altered. Meetings were reduced to twice a month, on the second and fourth Fridays during the nine-month club term. The pattern of biweekly meetings continues to the present time.

In a war-torn world, some F.R.F.G. subject matter was especially serious during this period. For the study year 1944-45, the topic was "The Negro Problem: Brown Americans." The subject matter included the culture, social issues and history of African Americans. With the emergence of such post-World War II advancements as plastics, nylon and penicillin, the 1945-46 subject was "Modern Science and Scientific Advancements." During the 1946-47 year, the F.R.F.G., along with clubs across the United States, studied and discussed the volume, "The Anatomy of Peace" a 1945 work by the Hungarian writer-publisher Emery Reves. His work helped popularize the cause of world federalism.⁵ They also discussed the emergence of a new world organization, the United Nations.

A year before the war ended, a shocking accident occurred at the F.R.F.G. annual picnic. According to the June 9, 1944 Gilroy Evening Dispatch, under a front page headline, "Oak Tree Crashes at Hanna Pool, Injures Prominent Gilroyans," an article reported that Club members had been sitting around the swimming pool at Rea Oaks,

a recreational facility located about a mile south of Gilroy along the east side of the former Highway 101 (now Monterey Road.) Suddenly, a nearby 500 year-old oak tree split without warning, fell across the pool and picnic grounds, and straight over the spot where the ladies were seated. Injured members included Helen (Mrs. Arthur) Brown, Eva (Mrs. Henry) Weske who suffered a broken leg, and Ida (Mrs. Jefferson) Parrish who was rendered unconscious and in serious condition. Alma (Mrs. Arthur) Chesbro suffered a broken collarbone and Blanche (Mrs. Rowley) Thomas fainted. Police, firemen and an ambulance were summoned, along with Gilroy physicians, Drs. John and Mary Clark and Dr. Campbell, who came to the site to help. Both Mrs. Weske and Mrs. Chesbro spent the rest of the month recuperating at Wheeler Hospital, with Mrs. Parrish receiving the most severe impact of the accident and remaining in the hospital and in a coma for some time before she finally recuperated.

Beginning in the 1946-47 term, members began to meet more frequently at the Women's Civic Club, the former Caroline Hoxett home located on Fifth Street, interspersed with meetings held at some members' homes. During this time, with wartime gasoline rationing over, the club members often went out of town on daytrips to Pacific Grove, Carmel, Los Gatos and Saratoga, with picnics at Sveadal, Oak Dell Park and Redwood Retreat.

Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s, the club continued its regular study topic efforts, most often choosing for subject matter the various nations of the world which were in the news spotlight at the time. Women in History and Current Events were also frequent subject matter. Now and then, the year's calendar would be filled with book and play reviews.

Although the club no longer has a Program Committee to choose its yearly topics, in the past two decades, the year's theme, except for another two-year study of California, has been personal choice. Members often choose to present an aspect of personal family history, or recount a recent travel adventure, sometimes accompanied by a video of the experience. An occasional book review on a pertinent topic is also popular.

Proudly aware of its longevity as a club, the F.R.F.G. observes its Founders Day anniversary in early November each year. In 1938, for the fortieth anniversary, the club's three remaining Charter members, Miss Josephine Harley, Mrs. Irma Kilgore and Miss Florine Thayer, wore well-preserved dresses and shoes dating to the club's earliest

years. A telegram observing the occasion came from Miss Wilson, "It is a joy and satisfaction that you have held together with so perfect a unity of interest and purpose. To the three charter members, special remembrances. For those who have passed on, a blessed memory, Affectionately, Emily S. Wilson."

At the club's 65th Anniversary, Charter Members Miss Florine Thayer and Mrs. Irma Kilgore were still on hand to celebrate and Miss Thayer even wrote an account of the event that was published in the Gilroy Evening Dispatch. Other very early F.R.F.G. members present for the occasion were Miss Evelyn Casey, Mrs. Eva Princevalle, Mrs. Blanche Thomas and Mrs. Kate Peers. The club held an 80th Anniversary luncheon in 1978, and on

the occasion of its Centennial, on November 8, 1998, Gilroy's oldest women's reading and study club held a high tea for 70 guests at Keith Masonic Lodge, with many members appearing garbed in vintage fashion.

Over the decades since it was founded, the club purpose has remained essentially the same. Membership is still limited to 20. The F.R.F.G.'s practice of bimonthly meetings, begun during World War II, has continued to the present day, with meetings on the first and third Fridays of the month, from 1:30-3:30, between October and May.

Field trips, popular from the club's start, continue. In recent years the club has enjoyed a ranger-guided visit to Adams-Chicot County Park, a tour of the medical museum at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital and a tour and luncheon in San Juan Bautista. A train trip to San Francisco for a tour of the World War II submarine, *U.S.S. Pampanito* was enhanced by the volunteer guide, a World War II submariner, who is the husband of a Club member.

As is the F.R.F.G. custom, a late September luncheon and early June potluck start and finish the club term. Each member is expected to act once as hostess and once as presenter during the year. Charitable giving, established during World War I, continues. Generous cash donations go out at Thanksgiving and Christmas to the local Salvation Army, and recently the Club selected a needy local family to receive Christmas gifts from members.

Some club aspects have been altered with time and circumstances. For example, the F.R.F.G. format is not as strictly or formally adhered to as when the club was founded. And there is no longer a standardized study program, such as the Bay View

Course. But now, as then, members of this longtime organization continue to learn and expand both their horizons and their friendships in this cherished, dedicated, and long-lived Gilroy women's club.

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**Membership List
F.R.F.G. Study Club
Gilroy, California**

**First Meeting held at home of Miss Emily Wilson, November 9, 1898
At this meeting the club name F.R.F.G.* was adopted
Club Meetings: Weekly each Friday from October through May
Hours; 2:30-4:30**

Membership List for 1898-99

Genevieve Blake (January 1899)
Anna Clark (December 1899)
Madge Cleveland (November 1899)
Blanche Cobb (February 1899)
*Minnie Dryden (November, 1898)
*Etta Eckhart (November 1898). "Spending winter in East." November 1899.
*Marie Edwards (November 1898)
*Flora Eipper (November 1898)
*Edith Giles (November 1898). "Moved away from town." April 1899.
*Josie Harley (November 1898)
Belle Hoover (January 1899)
*Mattie Hoover (November 1898)
*Hermoine (Herma) Ladd (November 1898). "Married-moved away." May 1899.
Josie Lawson (November 1899)
Linnell (no further information)
*Bernice Morey (November 1898). "Moved away from town." July 1899.
Elva Nelson (May 1899)
Lottie Roberts (January 1899)
*Florine Thayer (November 1898)
*Maude Wheeler (November 1898). "Gone to Oregon." February 1899.
*Irma Whitney (November 1898)
Ada Wilson (February 1899, died very soon after joining.)
*Miss Emily Wilson (November 1898)
*Kasson Winslow (November 1898). "Living in Francisco." July 1899

*denotes present at first meeting, November 9, 1898

Study subject: January 4, 1899, reading of novel, "Polly Oliver's Problems."

*From: "Truly ye have received, freely give."

F.R.F.G. Members, 1900-01
Club Call "Ave Roma Immortalis" adopted January 25, 1900

Study subjects:

January 25, 1900 "Rapahel"

April 1900, paper on "Michelangelo," program by Miss Dean. Each member brought a history of Rome.

January 1901, novel reading, "The Roman Singer"

March 21, 1901, reading on "Roba de Roma"

Anna Clark

Genevieve Blake

Madge Cleveland

Blanche Cobb

Etta Eckhart

Marie Edwards

Flora Eipper

Josie Harley

Bessie Hoover

Mattie Hoover

Josie Lawson

Elva Nelson

Lily Plunkett (entered May 1900 following death of Ada Williams who died soon after joining.

Lottie Roberts

Florine Thayer

Miss Whitehurst

Irma Whitney

Miss Emily Wilson

Total: 18 members

Dues: 5 cents per week

Illustrations

1. F.R.F.G. Annual Picnic, Lovers Point Park, Pacific Grove, CA, 1949
Back Row: Hannah Eschenburg, Anita Emerson, Elma Hadley, Ella Simunovich, Florine Thayer, Irma Kilgore.
Front Row: Evelyn Casey, Alta Rycroft, Irene Martin, Eva Weske, Mildred R. Hanna, Marcia Hanna, Georgie Eschenburg.
2. F.R.F.G. Charter Member Josephine Harley, 1948
3. F.R.F.G. Charter Member Florine Thayer, 1956
4. F.R.F.G. Charter Member Irma Kilgore (left) with Marcia Hanna, 1956
5. F.R.F.G. 65th Anniversary Portrait, Caroline Hoxett Home, Gilroy CA, 1965
Standing: Mildred M. Hanna, Mildred R. Hanna, Maisie Harrison, Astrid Sisson, Blanche Thomas, Ruth Forsyth, Evelyn Casey, Alma Hadley, Claribel Moore, Ann Swift, Jenny Bowen, Ella Simunovich, Emily Gurries.
Seated: Lucille Robinson, Marian Chesbro, Helen Fletcher, Irma Kilgore, Eva Weske, Ina Pyle.
Front Row: Hannah Eschenburg, *Nance Barker, *Jeanne Taylor, Claribel Barton.
 *Nance and Jeanne were "born into the Club."
6. F.R.F.G. 80th Anniversary Portrait
Back Row: Mildred R. Hanna, Vera Ann Swoboda, Olga Cooper, Elma Hadley, Mickey Wright, Marian Chesbro Robinson, Cecily Britton, Maisie Harrison, Dorothy Noll, Norma Dunlap, June Morgan, Ann Swift, Helen Ordway and Mildred M. Hanna.
Front Row: Emilie Goris, Emily Gurries, Aagot Kjellesvig, Hulda Champion, Kathleen Long and Hildegard Schutler.
7. F.R.F.G. 100th Anniversary Portrait
Back row: Carol DeSantis, Carol Gilmore, Hildegard Schutler, Leona Reif, Esther Sue Robnett, Ruth Sacco, Wilda Smith, Floy Ebaugh, Nadine Patterson, Eileen Schumann
Front Row: Olga Cooper, Estella Hoey, Mildred R. Hanna, Huldah Champion, Ellen Siverson.
8. F.R.F.G. Members pose at 1890 Chesbro House, Gilroy, CA, 2011
Back row: Nancy Valencia, Elizabeth Barratt.
Center Row: Carol DeSantis, Sue Ball, Ruth Sacco, Elaine Long,
Front Row: Dolores Horback, Connie Rogers, Ellen Siverson, Leona Reif.
Not included: Estella Hoey, Marjorie Burchell, Christine Flautt, Claudia Salewske, Wilda Smith.





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ENDNOTES

¹ Cable, Mary and Editors, American Heritage Magazine, American Manners and Morals, American Heritage Publishing Company, New York, New York, 1969

² Bay View Club Celebrates 100 Years," The Bryan Times, Bryan, Ohio, May 6, 1980. [HYPERLINK: news.google.com/newspapers?nid=799&dat=19800506&id=UAoLAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=IFEDAAAAIIBA&pg=6464,3272287]

³ "History of the Bay View Association," The Bay View Association of the United Methodist Church. [HYPERLINK: www.bayviewassociation.org/About%20Us/history/]

⁴ "The Bay View Magazine, November, 1893, Volume 1, Number 1, p.1, "John M. Hall, Publisher, Flint, Michigan

⁵ Emery Reves, [HYPERLINK] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emery_Reves

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Keller, Helen Rex. Reader's Digest of Books. New York: The MacMillan Company. 1937

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