

## Philomathean Club Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Its Club House on Hunter Street

One hundred years ago this spring the doors of the Philomathean Club House were thrown open to the public, which came in droves to admire the graceful two-story Craftsman design and the large interior rooms that would be available for community use.

The Philomathean Club, which is in its 118<sup>th</sup> year, will observe the centennial anniversary of its gathering place with a “Birthday Open House” on Saturday, March 31. The Bank of Stockton will present an array of historic photographs from its celebrated collection. Archives Manager William Maxwell will facilitate discussion and answer questions on these seldom displayed images.

The structure, at the corner of Acacia and Hunter streets, will be available for tours from 1 to 4 p.m. Members of the Philomathean Club will explain the magnificent building’s history and offer tours of the rarely seen upstairs region, where a formal stage once hosted San Joaquin County musical recitals and the group’s own “Jinx” or melodrama performances. Refreshments will be served, and the event is free. Anyone in the community holding photographic memories of the clubhouse may bring them to the event, or call the president, Mary Jo Gohlke, 983-0900, in advance.

The club house went up under the guidance of architect W.E. Wood and Son with an estimated cost of \$10,868. Alida Barrett led the Philomathean Building Association in selling stock to begin the endeavor. Plans were accepted on June 10, 1911, but a late November date for completion was not met. By January 1912, costs had reached \$15,000. Finally, the club members – numbering more than 300 – held their first meeting on Feb. 9, 1912. They opened the impressive facility to the public on April 15 of that year.

“As the first establishment in the city to be built for and by women, it held a certain historic significance for Stockton,” the late Leslie Crow wrote for the Cultural Heritage Commission.

The building is now on the National Register of Historic Places and is owned by the City of Stockton. Of special significance is the sweeping staircase past a massive stained glass window depicting the Philomathean flower, the La France rose.

The photographs that will grace the lower floors come from a collection acquired in 1990 by bank president Bob Eberhardt from the late photographer Leonard Covello. The photograph collection dates back to the 1850s and includes more than 28,000 historical photos from the Central Valley, the Mother Lode and surrounding communities. The archives have been expanded and scanned into a visual database and linked to corresponding text, allowing researchers to view the photographs on a computer and learn about their content. These may be viewed by appointment at the bank’s Operations Center in downtown Stockton. The Philomathean exhibit is only a tiny fraction of the images held by the bank, but it a good representation of the broad nature of subjects represented in the collection.

The club remains active in the community, sponsoring two scholarships for area graduates and the Summer in the Park concerts. It held its first fund-raiser last June for the Women’s Center of San Joaquin County and hosts fall and winter card parties welcoming the community.

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