

# Historical Ramblings

## Alpha Club's Contributions to Lompoc

Two women's organizations have contributed to Lompoc's quality of life through the years. The Civic Club, a group of women dedicated to the betterment of the community, made many contributions. In 1916 they raised money to construct the archway at Ryon Park. In 1925, they funded the construction of a flagpole at the intersection of Ocean Ave. and H St. commemorating WWI veterans. Money was raised to illuminate the cross on the hill at the end of South H Street and support for the new 1911 Carnegie Library came in the form of donations of books.

The second woman's club, which outlived the now defunct Civic Club, is the Alpha Literary and Improvement Club, organized in 1898 as the Harmony Club. From its inception, the club's mission was clearly to enrich the lives of its members by promoting cultural topics for discussion. Such topics included geography, current literature, music and history. Certainly, before mass media, this was the preferred method to improve one's knowledge in an interactive social setting.

In 1900, the California Federation of Women's Clubs was formed. The Harmony Club became a charter member and formally changed its name to the Alpha Literary and Improvement Club. Their by-laws stated that the object "shall be the mutual improvement of its members in literature and the vital interests of the day." The ladies organized a library committee, under whose leadership a lending library was established, available only to club members. The library committee soon became the most important group within the club. Literary pursuits were furthered with the establishment of a Woman's Book Club in 1907, which led to the donation of a substantial number of books to the new Carnegie Library in 1911.

By 1906, the local organization had established a scholarship fund, reported by the California Federation of Women's Clubs to be the only program of its kind within its membership. The club became quite influential in the community, campaigning for civic improvements, such as paved roads and the construction of a grammar school. By 1922, the ladies were heavily involved in community affairs and were asked to speak on such issues as building restrictions, cruelty to animals, curfews and garbage disposal.

In 1922, the organization presented a Dahlia show, held in the basement of the library. The show eventually evolved into the noted Alpha Club annual Flower Show, which now features flowers of all varieties in many competitive categories.

By 1927 a Music Section was formed. A decision was made to form and support a Choral Society. Later that same year, the ladies interests turned more to home making when they became interested in beautifying their homes through planting better gardens. Their interests also included the proper way to set a table and having a demonstration conducted by the Light Company on how to cook on an electric range.

Another milestone was celebrated in 1927, when the club purchased land at Ocean Ave. and B Street for the eventual construction of a clubhouse in 1934. By the time they moved into the facility, the club had 74 members and one honorary member, with annual dues of \$2.50. The building was enlarged in 1958-59 under president Anita Batty, when the Tea Room was constructed. There was no money for the addition, but Mrs. Batty

approached Hattie Smith, who had served as club president in 1922-23, and handily procured funding for the project.

These days, most citizens only know of the Alpha Club once a year during the annual flower show. Behind the scenes the entire club supports this event for the enjoyment of the hundreds of residents and visitors who attend. Many of us Ocean Ave. and catch a brief glance of the Alpha Club building, not giving it a second thought. Be assured however, that the club is still very active year-round in the community. This active group of women continues to improve our quality of life by returning all monies they raise back to the community via 8 annual scholarships and donations to many local charities.

In November, Alpha Club will celebrate its 106<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Their immediate concern is to raise funds to restore the interior and exterior of their clubhouse building. The ladies are now turning to the community for support – the same community they have supported for 106 years.