

City of Chino ❖ Hall of Fame

presented on June 1, 2005 honoring

Mary Jane Riley

Mary Jane Riley, 1871-1957. It was summer 1907...with only an idea, a cookie and a cup of tea to offer, Mary Jane Riley invited six neighbors to spend an afternoon at her home. They were asked to bring their mending or sewing. Thus, one woman's inspiration and action developed into the East Side Thimble Club. The goal...“To be of service to the community.”

Incorporated as a non-profit in 1923, the following year they numbered seventy-five. As their membership grew, so did their community service.

Under her leadership, the group was a mainstay at George Junior (Boys) Republic, and with the opening of Casa Colina Convalescent Home for Crippled Children in 1938, they donated countless hours to making life a little more comfortable for the young polio patients. These women were known to can two hundred quarts of fruit for the facility in a single day. No child in their knowledge attended school without needed clothes and nutrition. They knitted, stitched and quilted their way through two world wars. Many more were aided by this band of relentless workers with food, clothing, elbow grease and cash donations. Their fundraisers for the benefit of the community were endless.

Circa 1920 they purchased what is now the Old Schoolhouse and converted it into their headquarters and the town hall. Almost all civic functions, church meetings and social gatherings were held at the Thimble Club with the ladies in charge of dinners.

Long on common sense and inner strength, “Janie” Riley was a member of the Baptist Church, a leader in the American Legion Auxiliary, and one of the first females in line when given the right to vote. She also served on that initial election board.

Mrs. Riley passed away a few months before August 8, 1957 which marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Thimble Club. At that time, a local magazine article stated in tribute to her, “Few organizations had such a lengthy life doing so much for so many.” It was established on such a firm foundation, the ladies were still going well into their eighties, and in every sense true to their motto...“To be of service to the community.”