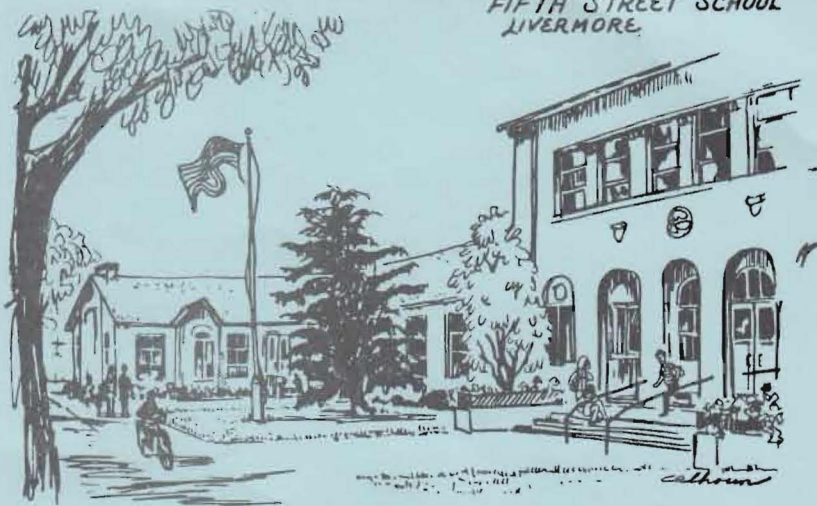


LIVERMORE PUBLIC SCHOOL  
1877-1922

FIFTH STREET SCHOOL  
LIVERMORE.



The Fifth Street School replaced  
Livermore Public School in 1922  
on land donated by Wm Mendenhall.

This brief history was prepared in May, 1982, by

THE LIVERMORE HERITAGE GUILD

as part of its program for an Open House, honoring  
the school's contribution to the community, held  
on May 23, at the school.



## HISTORY OF LIVERMORE'S FIFTH STREET SCHOOL

Today's Fifth Street School is the third set of buildings to occupy the same site.

The first Livermore School was opened in May, 1866, with 13 pupils, 6 of whom were children of George May who was one of the trustees. The teacher was Miss Esther Weeks. The school was on what is now Portola Avenue, near Robert Livermore's Rancho Las Positas.

Desks for the school were financed by a dance given in the school before it opened. The party was attended by people from as far away as Antioch.

In the spring of 1869, before the town of Livermore was established, the school house was moved closer to the newer center of activity, on what is now School St. near the Livermore High School. The following year a second building was needed for the growing enrollment.

William Mendenhall, the founder of the town of Livermore, donated the land bordered by Fifth, Sixth, I, and J Streets for the use of the school, and both buildings were moved there. By 1877, more space was needed. The old buildings were sold and moved (one became a carpenter shop on Fifth Street and the other a saloon on Mill Square). A two-story building was erected on the site. Only the four rooms on the ground floor were finished at first, but in 1880 the second floor was completed also.

The famous writer Jack London was one of Fifth Street School's pupils. In 1883 his home was near Alden Lane and he, like all the other children living southwest of town, walked to this school. It was here that Jack's life-long passion for reading was developed. At school, Jack was given a copy of Washington Irving's Alhambra. This book fascinated him to the extent that he fashioned a miniature Alhambra on the grounds of the ranch.

The 1877 building served Livermore's students for 45 years, but by 1920 the Livermore Herald wrote that "Livermore's essential need" was a "modern grammar school building". Various organizations took up the challenge and students marched with signs and songs through down-

town Livermore to promote the drive. In October, 1921, a \$115,000 bond issue was passed. The old building was dismantled and the lumber salvaged. The new building's architect was H.H.Meyers, who had attended the school 35 years before.

The cornerstone was laid on June 2, 1922 in a ceremony conducted by the California Grand Lodge of Masons, and the school opened in the building on October 2 of the same year. The dedication included "Impressive Ceremonies" conducted by the Grand Officers of the Native Sons of the Golden West and the installation of a plaque at the main entrance bearing the date February 22, 1923.

Early in 1923, the school board purchased additional playground space directly south of the school grounds between I and J Streets. Sixth Street was closed to traffic in that block.

In September, 1943, a fire destroyed the auditorium and the two upstairs classrooms. Repairs were quickly made and by moving the kindergarten to the High School building and a first grade class to the Methodist Church, school was able to resume on schedule, September 27. Renovations were begun the following summer and were completed by early 1945.

In the early days of its existence, the school was referred to as the Public School to distinguish it from the Livermore College which was private. After the Livermore High School opened, it was called the Livermore Grammar School until 1940 when the principal decided that it should be called the Livermore Elementary School. When other elementary schools were built, it became known as the Fifth Street School.

Because of declining enrollment, the present building is now slated for a transition, having been used as an elementary school for 60 years.