



## LIVERMORE HERITAGE GUILD

"Help save yesterday for tomorrow"

### References:

Official map of Alameda County, 1874 (Allardt).

Thompson & West Historical Atlas of Alameda County, 1878

M.W.Wood, History of Alameda County, 1883

Dave Bohn, East of These Golden Shores, 1971

Note: The property where the school was built in 1869 was owned by H.Collde-weihi in 1874. He was a great uncle of Guild member Virginia Bennett.

## MAY PUBLIC SCHOOL

The May School District was formed in 1869 on land belonging to H. Colldeweihi. It was named in honor of George May, an Irishman who settled in this valley in 1864. Six of George May's children were enrolled in the first school in Livermore, the one built near the Livermore Rancho in 1866. May owned 316 acres east of Livermore and had other smaller tracts besides.

According to the records of the school department, the property was deeded to the school district on July 1, 1879 and the deed was from A. Anspacher. The Anspachers had one of Livermore's earliest general merchandise stores. It was on the northwest corner of First and L Streets.

The school was in active use until 1960 when it closed because of low enrollment. It was merged with the Green School District in 1961. The Livermore Area Recreation and Park District then used the school as a theater for the Cask and Mask players, but in 1974, because of deterioration of the building and the failure of the well, use of the building was discontinued.

In October 1974, the Livermore Heritage Guild bought the school building from the school district and leased the two acres of land with an option of continuing the lease for a total of ten years. The Guild has begun to restore the



attractive building with the aim of making it into a community meeting place and education museum.

The earliest pupils we know about at the time of writing were children of Hiram and Casimira Bailey. They lived on their parents' ranch on the northern border of Rancho Las Positas - about two miles northwest of the school. The ranch was Casimira's inheritance from her parents, Robert and Josefa Livermore. Josefa Bailey was the eldest of the Bailey children and Albert was the next. To get to the May School, Josefa had to ride on the same horse as her brother. She didn't like this very much and when the horse shied one time and frightened her, she wouldn't ride on it any more. She was allowed to transfer to the Livermore College in town. Josefa was born in 1863 and probably attended the school soon after it was built.

May School District extended for a considerable distance into Contra Costa County. Its neighbor to the west was Inman School and to the east, Green School. Children walked (or rode horseback if they were lucky) many miles to and from school in those days. In general, the ranchers who were struggling to establish themselves in a new community, did not have time to drive the children to school in their wagons.

But schooling had a very high priority with the pioneers since they established them almost as soon as they built their houses or organized local governments. The bill to authorize the collection of school taxes in the May District was passed in 1874. Financing must have been voluntary before that. In August of 1887 a dance was held at the May School to help finance the purchase of a new bell.

Some recollections of days at the school come

from a book "East of These Golden Shores" published in 1971. A former student and later a trustee John R. Silva was quoted as saying "When I graduated from May School in 1924 there were 42 students and five graduating (from the eighth grade). I can remember quite a few hair-pulling contests when the girls got mad at each other. The teacher Susie Kelly would pull us off our seats by the hair. She came to school in a cart during the warmer months, but in the winter she used a buggy. She had to come from Livermore about four and a half miles away. The students had their own garden plots for vegetables, and some of them came from as far away as eight miles on horseback."

Mrs. John Hunter, who taught at the school from 1930 to 1935, recalled recently that her salary was \$1,500 a year. She had from 25 to 27 pupils in all eight grades each year. There were 13 children from the Manuel Fagundes family at one time. This is possible since many boys went to grade school only when they were not needed to work at home on the farm or ranch, so it sometimes took them to the age of 18 or 19 to complete all eight grades.

The highest enrollment known from current sources was 48 under Miss Kelly, with the lowest being 25. Some other teachers named by those recalling their schooldays included Mrs. Carmel Fannuchi, Mrs. Doreen Adian, Bill Mc Donald, Amelia Hartman, Mrs. Margaret Spearman and Mrs. Verda Ladd.

Mrs. Ladd was the last teacher there when the school closed in 1960. Silvin Rooney, Ernest Oliverly and John Silva were the three members of the board of trustees when it closed, according to Mr. Rooney.

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