

Livermore Heritage Guild

"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"



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September/October 2004

Vol. XXXIII

No. 8

BUILDING A LIBRARY

By Gary Drummond

A library where one can borrow books and read periodicals is not a recent sign of culture in Livermore: the community has had benefit of a library since 1875. The citizens of the town at its founding in the early 1870's were both a socially and culturally diverse population. Socially it attracted those who supported four or five fraternal organizations, two fire companies and a town band. And culturally, it ranged from those who preferred a quiet escape into a Victorian novel to those who supported one of the town's 13 saloons.

In April 1875, the Livermore Library and Dramatic Association organized a library whose holdings were kept at Cross's Jewelry Store at First and Lizzie (now Livermore Avenue) Streets. A family membership cost \$3.00 annually, or for \$20.00 one could have a life membership. The local paper reported that there were 250 volumes available with another 75 on order. In December of that year, the library was moved across the street to George Freeman's furniture store in the IOOF building.

Three years later, in 1878, a successor organization known as the Livermore Public Library Association erected its own building (still standing at 2136 First Street). In 1881, the Association was in perilous state and issued an anxious call for new members. It even offered a "life membership

that would entitle the holder and family to all the privileges of the Association during the term of his or her natural life." But by 1887 public interest had diminished to such an extent that the Library closed, and the books stored in the local newspaper office. In its twelve years, the library had never acquired a permanent librarian.

In 1896, the women of the town organized themselves into a Ladies League of Progress of Livermore. Their first order of business was to re-open a public library. Within eight months, the group had formed a public corporation to finance library acquisitions and pay the bills, purchased the old library building and pulled the books out of storage, and selected a full-time librarian. On October 15, 1896, the Livermore Free Public Library opened its doors.

A year later, the Library Board reported that there were 3500 books on the shelves, and in cooperation of the local paper, it published a "wants" list of new books. The reading room was supplied with 36 newspapers from around the state, donated by their publishers. The local drugstore donated day-old copies of the San Francisco papers.

The Ladies League next lobbied the Town Trustees to consider a tax levy for library support. In September 1901, Livermore became the first town in California to take advantage of new legislation that permitted the establish-

ment of a free public library under municipal control and support.

Now, serious discussions were opened in 1908 with the Carnegie Foundation for a library building grant. A condition of a \$10,000 grant was that the beneficiary would provide the land on which the library would be built. After consideration of several sites, the Town Trustees proposed to acquire the block at Third and J streets for \$9,000 and, at the same time, mitigate a nuisance—the site was occupied by a slaughterhouse.

The grant request and the land acquisition were successful. Contracts were let to construct a library building, which officially opened in May 1911. That summer, the Livermore Women's Improvement Club helped finance the landscaping, plant trees, and finish and furnish the basement rooms. The Carnegie Library building was in use for over 50 years, until the new Civic Center Library was opened in 1966. The venerable old building now houses the Livermore Heritage Guild History Center and the Livermore Art Association.

About the picture used on the masthead for this newsletter

This drawing is from the 1889 aerial view of Livermore; the original document was approximately 20" x 22" and printed in color. W.P Bartlett offered the print as a promotional item if you subscribed to the Livermore Herald. The McLeod Building was replaced in 1920 by the Bank of Italy building that still stands on First Street. The Farmers Union was torn down in 1939. Located on Railroad Avenue, the building was located between what is now the Charlotte's Web building and the Livermore Tattoo building, both of which are partially shown in the drawing. The Charlotte's Web building is the short building on the far left and the Livermore Tattoo building is the tall building on the far right. At the time of the picture, Charlotte's Web was a clothing store and The Livermore Tattoo building was a saloon. The First Presbyterian Church (the church in the bottom left hand corner of the small grouping of four buildings) still stands and is part of the current church on L Street. The building on the upper left was the first Livermore Fire house. It later was relocated across from the Carnegie Library on Third Street and used as a residence. The building was torn down in the 1970's and is now a vacant lot. The other two buildings on the right are churches that have since been replaced. Color reproductions of this aerial view are available at the history center located in the old Carnegie Library.



HERITAGE GUILD HAPPENINGS

DOCENTS NEEDED: Are you interested in becoming a docent at the Museum on Third Street? No experience necessary, we will gladly train. If you are interested in Livermore history, this is a great way to get involved with the Guild and also become acquainted with the various research tools we have available so you can even do your own investigations into Livermore history. Museum hours are Wed. through Sunday 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. If interested, please contact Larry Mauch at larrym49@comcast.net or phone 449-9927. Please leave a message with your name and phone number so we may contact you.



Speaker for the Annual General Meeting

Lisa Carrier, along with her mother, has been very active in promoting the Ohlone culture. Many weekends Lisa can be found at various events demonstrating and eagerly discussing her ancestors' history in the area. Lisa is also involved with recreating the Mutsan dialect, the dialect spoken by the Ohlone indians in the Santa Cruz area. So far, they have created a dictionary of over 2000 words. Lisa, a resident of Livermore, has studied the history of Brushy Peak and the Vasco Caves, a sacred area in the Ohlone culture. Lisa has agreed to give a presentation of approximately 1 1/2 hours on both Brushy Peak, Vasco Caves and her research in recreating her ancestor's native tongue.



30th Anniversary of LHG occupation of Carnegie Building

Please join us for this celebration commemorating the start of the Livermore Heritage Guild in the Carnegie Building on Sunday, October 3, 1:00-3:00 p.m. According to the May 1974 Livermore Heritage Guild newsletter by Janet Newton, "The Guild has been given 552 sq. ft. of the northeast corner of the main floor of the building. A museum committee is being formed to formulate plans for the maximum use of this space. The committee will also decide on long-range plans for a first-class Livermore History Center, which will require much more than 552 sq. ft." The Guild took possession of the Carnegie Building in September 1974 and held a Preview Party that same month with over eleven hundred visitors.

Thanks to Tilli Calhoun and Anna Siig, there is now a small display about the history of Ravenswood and a new display will soon be open about libraries in Livermore.



Washing of the items from the Hexcel/Trevarno dig has begun and will soon go into full swing now that the Garage Sale is over.

CALENDAR

Thursday, September 9 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, September 30 @ 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Annual General Meeting
Bothwell Center, 2466 Eighth St., Livermore
Vote on officers, new by-laws, followed by speaker: Lisa Carrier

Sunday, October 3, 1-3 p.m.
Carnegie Bldg., downstairs mtg. room
30th Anniversary of LHG in Carnegie Bldg.
Refreshments will be served

Thursday, October 14 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, November 11 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Agenda for Future History Colloquiums:
All presentations are held 7 to 9 p.m. in the community meeting room of the Livermore Civic Center Library on South Livermore Avenue

September 15, 2004:
Kim Giuliano will talk on the History of Forest Home Farms in San Ramon. It was a walnut ranch founded by Travis Boone, a relative of Daniel Boone

October 20, 2004:
Bill Owens, who wrote "Suburbia" a photo book of Livermore in the 1970s will discuss his project of doing another photo shoot in Livermore. He is currently working on a photo project for Hayward

November 10, 2004:
John Sarboraria is presenting a slide show of his collection of "Historic Photos of Livermore"

\$2 suggested donation. Coffee, tea and sweet breads provided by the Library Cafe. The Library Cafe is open until 8:00 p.m. providing sandwiches and drinks

A Word From the Chair

It is that time again: time to renew your membership. Enclosed is a flyer you can use to send back with your renewal. Note: the dues are being increased for the first time in many, many years. We compared our dues to other societies and felt the adjustment was necessary to cover mailing and printing costs for the newsletter. See the flyer for the new membership dues rates.

Monday, Sept 27th at the City Council meeting, the Livermore City Council will discuss possible uses for the recently vacated library building. The Livermore Heritage Guild has applied for use of part of the building to house an expanded museum. The current Carnegie Library building offers the Livermore Heritage Guild a total of 1,150 sq ft. of which 365 sq. ft. is suitable as display space. One half the recently vacated library building would provide a total of 7,000 sq ft of which 3000 sq. ft. could be used for displays. This would give us more room for displays and additional room for archival storage and working space to prepare displays. A copy of the request letter is included in this newsletter. The meeting starts at 7:00 pm, we hope to see you there.

Thursday, Sept 30th, we will hold the annual general meeting starting at 7:00pm at the Bothwell Recreation Center located on Eighth Street. We will hold elections for officers and also vote on approval of new By-Laws. Those

of you that are eligible to vote should have already received a package with the proposed officers and a marked up copy of the proposed By-Law changes. The primary change is the officers will be elected for two year terms and the board will consist of six officers and the appointed chairpersons from the various committees. The Chairpersons will replace the previous 10 elected at large board members. The intention is everyone on the board will have assigned responsibilities as a board officer or a committee chairperson. After the election and vote, we will have a presentation by Lisa Carrier, an Ohlone Indian descendent now living in Livermore, who will talk about the significance of Brushy Peak and the Vasco Caves to the Ohlone Indian culture. Lisa has also been involved with resurrecting the Mutson language, the dialect spoken by the Ohlone Indians in the Santa Cruz area. To date they have recovered over 2000 words from their vocabulary; it should be a very interesting presentation.

Sunday, October 3rd marks our 30th year in the Carnegie Library Museum. A new display on the history of Livermore's libraries has been mounted for the occasion. Also, several authors will be present to autograph their books: Dan & Paige Mosier, Ann Homan, Gary Drummond and Merilyn Calhoun. See you there!

Larry Mauch

