

# Livermore Heritage Guild

*"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"*



Reimers Fashion Garage and F.C. Lassen's feed store, located on L Street, circa 1926

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## SUPPLYING WATER IN A NEW COMMUNITY

By Gary Drummond

Supplying water to a growing community like Livermore one hundred and thirty years ago must have been a challenge. Individual wells provided water to some homes and businesses, and perhaps even to one's neighbor. But there was also a community well. It was located on the north side of the street opposite the old City Hall at First and McLeod. Two oil cans were suspended over a wheel so that when one can went down the other came up, and was operated by hand. And that's where many pioneer housewives in Livermore got their supply of domestic water.

By 1875 Livermore had two competing water companies. One was the Arroyo Mocho Water Company, organized in the fall of 1873. It had secured rights to water coming down from what's now the Mines Road area. The other was the Livermore Spring Water Company, incorporated in October, 1874. This company's water came from Las Positas Creek, that runs along what is now I580, and then had a lot more water in it than at present.

What were the motivations for each of these? The Arroyo Mocho Water Company listed water for irrigation as its primary goal, with a supply to town comparatively unimportant. Its distribution system was comprised of wooden pipe, made in Washington Territory and shipped

down here; it was claimed to cost less than iron pipe, would last as long as iron, and most important, the water would be uncontaminated. The company work force dug a ditch 36,183 feet long to bring water close to town, and then laid 7,500 feet of wooden main in the main streets of town with side connections to customers. The Arroyo Mocho Water Company offered free water (for the interim).

The Arroyo Mocho Water Company was never successful in moving water from the Mocho, and instead started taking water from the Arroyo del Valle. In October 1875 the company announced that water had been turned into the street mains, but "for a week or some more to come," it would not furnish water to its customers "as the water will taste of the pipe until it has been washed out." The enterprise was never a success: besides low water pressure, its water smelled strongly of hydrogen sulfide and was unfit for drinking.

The Livermore Spring Water Company, in contrast, pumped water from Las Positas Creek into a series of reservoirs for business and residential service. One reservoir was down near the creek; another was located on the hill opposite the Masonic (Roselawn) Cemetery, and water was pulled up there by a steam pump. (The reservoir was still there as late as 1950.) The water was conveyed into town in a redwood flume one and a half miles long and from there was distributed in the town through iron pipe. As the community grew, it became necessary to provide water

storage facilities near the center of town. Tanks were installed between First Street and the railroad tracks east of Livermore Avenue with a total capacity of 50,000 gallons. It was from that point that water was distributed to businesses and residences for a number of years to come.

There is evidence the Livermore Spring Water Company was undercapitalized. In November, 1875, it assessed its shareholders 75 cents a share, and threatened in its assessment notice that “any stock upon which this assessment shall remain unpaid. . . will be advertised for sale at public auction. . .” And 1500 shares of stock owned by two prominent Livermore men were lost in this way.

A footnote to the town well described in the first paragraph: it was used until about 1880 and then was inadequately filled when abandoned. In the winter of 1889, it caved in for the first time. In February, 1916, a woman walking along the street “was surprised to find herself sinking into the ground. Fortunately her downward progress stopped when she had sunk a few feet. . .” That time the town fathers made certain the well site was completely filled.



Installing sewer pipe on First Street circa 1904

## HERITAGE GUILD HAPPENINGS

### WE ARE LOOKING FOR A TREASURER:

The Livermore Heritage Guild is in need of a Treasurer. The finances are relatively straightforward. We just need someone to manage the checkbook, several savings accounts and submit a monthly report at Board meetings on the second Thursday of each month. If interested, please contact Larry Mauch at larrym49@comcast.net or phone 449-9927. Please leave a message with your name and contact number so we may contact you.

### CARNEGIE LIBRARY DISPLAY COMMITTEE

If you have a creative eye and enjoy the Valley's History, we are going to redo several display cases in April for a May open house. If you would like to participate, please call the History Center on third street or drop by and leave a note. The phone number is (925) 449-9927

### CALENDAR

Sunday, April 10th 1:30-3:30 p.m.  
Retirement Reception for Barbara Bunshah  
Carnegie Library Building

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

Saturday May 28th @ 5:00pm LHG Auction  
Preview @ 5:00pm  
Auction Starts @ 7:00pm

### Agenda for Future History Talks:

**All presentations are held 7 to 9 p.m. in the community meeting room of the Livermore Civic Center Library on South Livermore Avenue**

#### **March 16, 2005:**

**Don Nolte**, retired Director of the Livermore library, will talk about his experience serving in the US Information Service in the years 1951-53 in Cairo, Egypt during a period of political unrest.

**April & May: Because of other scheduled LHG events, the next History Talk will be in June.**

\$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 Brief Word

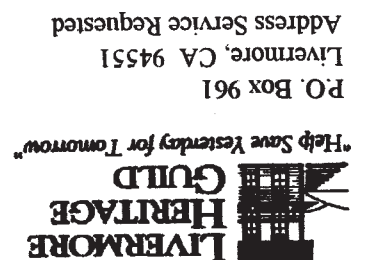
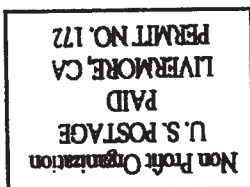
Please join us on April 10th to celebrate Barbara Bunshah's accomplishments with the Livermore Heritage Guild. Barbara has volunteered countless hours as the Curator at the Carnegie Library, as well as compiled an extensive index to the Livermore newspapers, a project that has lasted over 20 years. Barbara's expertise in Livermore's history and her index has aided countless individuals in the community with their own research projects. Barbara has stepped down as curator and is reducing her hours. We want to make a presentation to Barbara and celebrate her accomplishments. We hope you can make it!

In May we will be celebrating Historical Preservation Week at the Carnegie Library with a presentation of awards to individuals who have preserved Livermore History through their exceptional efforts. We will also be featuring several new exhibits on Livermore's history, including the display of Robert Livermore's signed copy of the registration of his cattle brand in 1845. This original document from our archives was signed by Pio Pico, the Mexican Governor of California and Robert Livermore. Details will follow in April.

The Livermore Heritage Guild is a non-profit organization staffed by all volunteer workers. If you enjoy history and want to learn more about our valley, please consider volunteering. We have several active projects we are working on that require various skills. We are currently setting up Past Perfect Museum software and will require data entry experience. We are establishing a museum committee to manage the displays in the Carnegie Library and Duarte Highway Garage. Speaking of which: if you like old cars, fire engines and farm equipment, you might want to get involved with the Highway Garage committee. A couple of hours of your time once or twice a month can make a big difference and you will be surprised by Livermore's rich history.

If you have any comments or want to just say hi, please contact me at [larrym49@comcast.net](mailto:larrym49@comcast.net) or drop by the Carnegie Library on Third Street Wednesday through Sunday 11:30 to 4:00 pm. and speak with one of the volunteer docents.

Thanks and Enjoy,  
Larry Mauch



# Announcements

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We Invite You To Attend A  
Retirement Reception For

**Barbara S. Bunshah**

Sunday  
**April 10, 2005**

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

at the

**Carnegie Library Building**

Third Street, Livermore, California

We will honor Barbara for her outstanding service, accomplishments, and contributions to the Livermore Heritage Guild and the community, and her remarkable commitment to

**“Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow”.**

*Light refreshments will be served*

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**Don't Forget the Annual LHG Auction on May 28th**  
at the Duarte Highway Garage in Livermore.

If you have items you would like to donate please call Bill Junk at 447-4561  
or leave a message at the Carnegie Library Museum at 449-9927

All Proceeds Support the Livermore Heritage Guild