

Livermore Heritage Guild

"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"



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September/October 2006

Vol. XXXVII, No. 6

OIL!!

In the last quarter of the 19th century, farmers in the far east end of Livermore Valley were discovering some unusual natural phenomena. While boring a water well, one farmer hit a gas pocket and, fearing a fire that could destroy his crops, promptly filled it in. Rumors of possible gas and oil strikes persisted for years.

A noted geologist, visiting Livermore in 1885, predicted that "oil would never be found in paying quantities in this vicinity because the strata is so inclined that oil drains toward the San Joaquin Valley and cannot accumulate here." Despite this dire prediction, prospectors walked the territory to locate likely spots where oil might be discovered.

By 1900 enough evidence of oil sands had been uncovered to attract investors. Oil exploration companies sprang up like modern day dot com's. The Alameda Oil Company was formed; the Pleasanton Oil Company attracted some investors; the Livermore Oil Company did likewise; the Alisal Oil Company was another start-up. The Alameda wells usually turned out to be artesian wells with good quality water.

The Fifteen-Three Oil Company began operations in Section 15, Township 3E just before 1900. Optimistic prospects abounded from the beginning. A second well was started. The media

reported that the well was down nearly 1000 feet. Indications of oil looked good and the company was "confident of striking oil in large quantities and of a superior quality."

But a year later, the Fifteen-Three was in trouble. The company issued assessment notices to its stockholders. Delinquent notices went out to those who ignored the call. So the company re-called the stock of those who refused to pay.

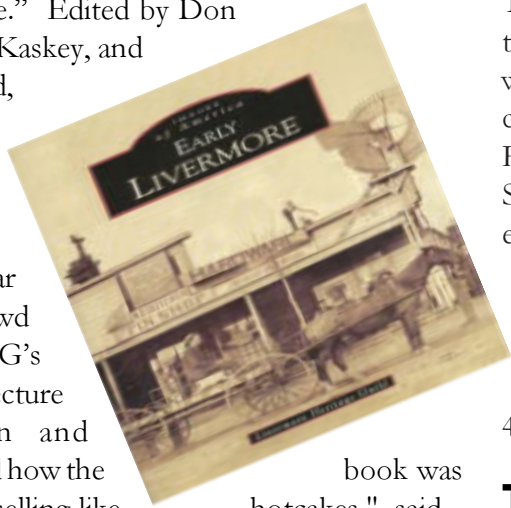
Another year went by before Fifteen-Three management issued another assessment notice. It was obvious by this time the company was in serious trouble. Fifteen-Three was finally declared defunct in 1908, and its equipment sold. The property owner sued because the company had not fulfilled its agreement to fill in the well holes and restore the premises to their original condition.

Meanwhile, wildcat exploration began in the Midway area. More news of enthusiastic prospects was circulated. "The new Midway-Altamont field is on the verge of oil discovery," the Livermore *Herald* reported. For several years, reports that "oil indications continue good" and "there is renewed activity in local fields" kept making media headlines. But a real strike was never made.

By Gary Drummond

“Early Livermore” a best seller

A steady stream of people has been coming into the History Center to buy the LHG’s new book, “Early Livermore.” Edited by Don Meeker, Loretta Kaskey, and Gary Drummond, the 128-page book is a pictorial history of Livermore before World War II. A record crowd attended the LHG’s regular history lecture at which Don and Loretta described how the developed. "It's selling like an LHG docent.



book was hotcakes," said

Be sure to get your copy. Call or drop in at the Carnegie Library Building, 3rd and J Streets in Livermore, Wednesday through Sunday between 11:30 and 4pm. 449-9927. The price of the book is \$19.99 plus tax and shipping.

Midway School Update

The Livermore Heritage Guild, the Livermore School District, and City of Livermore have been exploring ways of moving the Midway School, the one-room school built in 1873, to a suitable location in town and restoring the school for use as an educational experience for school children. All three groups think that with a combined effort of these organizations and with the support of the community the project will be accomplished.

A committee with a member from each organization is establishing a timeline and a budget. Several sites are being discussed including Portola Park. This project will follow normal protocol for approval for any project proposed in Livermore, and public input will be requested when the plans are further developed. In all likelihood this will be an eighteen-month to two-year project, but it is gaining support daily. The people involved are excited, which is a key element in making the project a success. As the timelines are finalized and the budget is established, we will share the information with our membership.

We will be looking for support from the community, both financially and in services to assist with the move and restoration of the school.

The Guild has established a School Restoration Fund; to date the fund has collected nearly \$3,000. If you would like to contribute, your support will be appreciated. Please make checks payable to the Livermore Heritage Guild and note on the check “for Midway School restoration.” If you or your company has experience with a similar type project and would like to help, or if you would like more information, contact David Abrahams the Livermore Heritage Guild’s representative on the committee and can be reached at dmabr1@comcast.net or phone 447-9386.

Two new exhibits

A new exhibit about the Livermore Soda Works is now on display at the History Center. In the planning stage is an exhibit describing the Chinese workers’ quarters at Trevarno, the former Coast Manufacturing site known as “The Fuse Works.” "Chinese Workers Archaeology" will open in mid-September. Be sure to drop in at the Carnegie Building, Third and J Streets to see these exhibits.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Volunteers are always needed. Have fun, meet other members of the Heritage Guild, and contribute to the preservation of Livermore history. Some immediate needs:

Work with collections

David Abrahams, newly appointed collections manager, can use help identifying and cataloging our holdings. We have a great collection of papers and memorabilia, but not all of it has been inventoried. David would like volunteers to examine the contents of boxes and record what they find. That information will be transcribed into our computer database. To volunteer, call David at 447-9386.

Help with the newsletter

If you have limited time, a fun way to help out is to join fellow LHG members preparing the newsletter for mailing. We will meet at the Carnegie Library Saturday, October 28th at 11:30 to fold, collate, label, and chat. Call Maxine at 447-7401 to be sure there hasn’t been a delay in printing or just drop in.

Don't miss the LHG Annual General Meeting and Dinner

The Livermore Heritage Guild will hold its Annual General Meeting and Dinner on September 9th, 2006, from 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm at the Duarte Garage. The sit-down dinner will be at 6:00 PM.

The Riata Diner and Tavern will cater the dinner, which will feature BBQ tri-tip, chicken, and fixin's. The cost is \$20 per person. David Abrahams will speak on "The Bicentennial Revisited."

For reservations please call Jolene and David Abrahams at 447-9386.

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NEW MEMBERS

The Livermore Heritage Guild welcomes

Shirley Anderson, Bob Bronzan, Mary Evans, Eric Anderson, and Marissa Ogden.

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Membership

A wonderful gift for a friend or family member is a membership in the Livermore Heritage Guild. Don't forget that 50% of the membership fee will go to the Midway School fund. Call Jolene Abrahams, membership chair at 447-9386 for information.

It's membership renewal time! Watch your mail for your renewal notice and return it promptly. Your dues support LHG activities and will help preserve the Midway School. Thanks!

Masthead photo: Horse show on Lizzie Street, 1908. The Livermore Hotel is in the background.

CALENDAR

LHG Board Meeting, Wednesday, September 6, 7 pm. Carnegie Library, downstairs.

Livermore Heritage Guild Annual General Meeting, Saturday, September 9, 5:30 pm at the Duarte Garage. See facing article. Call Jolene and David at 447-9386.

History Talk, Wednesday, September 13, 7:30 pm. Retired fireman and unofficial fire department historian Tom Bramell presents "The History of the Livermore Fire Department." Livermore Civic Center Library. \$2 suggested donation. Light refreshments provided.

Duarte Garage open, Sunday, September 17. 10-2 pm.

LHG Board Meeting, Wednesday, October 4, 7 pm. Carnegie Library, downstairs.

History Talk, Wednesday, October 11, 7:30 pm. The 1974 horror film "Warlock Moon" will be shown. It was filmed on the grounds of the Arroyo del Valle Sanitarium, which closed in 1960. Livermore Civic Center Library. \$2 suggested donation. Light refreshments provided.

Duarte Garage open, Sunday, October 15, 10-2 pm.

Newsletter mailing, Saturday, October 28. 11:30, Carnegie Library Building.

LHG Board Meeting, Wednesday, November 1, 7 pm. Carnegie Library, downstairs.

History Talk, Wednesday, November 8, 7:30 pm. Silent film "Bronco Billy" starring George Anderson, one of the partners of the Niles film production company, Essanay. Essanay produced five Charley Chaplin films while at Niles circa 1915. Livermore Civic Center Library. \$2 suggested donation. Light refreshments provided.

Contact Us

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A Brief Word from the President

This has been an exciting year for the Livermore Heritage Guild. The new book, *Early Livermore*, is hot off the press and has been very well received. Don Meeker, Gary Drummond, and Loretta Kaskey have done a great job on it. The Midway School project is moving along. It will be a long-term effort but very worthwhile. Bob Bronzan has been working on a new website for the Heritage Guild that will make available online many of the artifacts and photos from our collections. The web page layout is designed; we just have to start loading material. We plan a redesign of the children's page, with participation by teachers, to make it friendlier and more inviting for students. The new site will not be released for a month or so, but if you would like to take a peek visit www.livermorehistory.com. You can compare it to the old page at www.lhg.org.

For me, this is the end of my term as president. I will soon be relocating to Yankee Hill, near Paradise, California. It has been a great pleasure for me to be involved with the Livermore Heritage Guild. In this day and age, with our busy lives and in many cases long commutes, we feel we don't have the time to get involved with our community and meet the people we share the city with. I know I didn't think I had the time for volunteer work, but in retrospect it has given me a sense of belonging and the feeling that in some small way I contributed. If you have a passion for something, I encourage you to find a volunteer organization in town where you can share and exercise that passion. The personal rewards and the new friends you will make will be pleasantly surprising. If you like history, LHG is a great volunteer organization to consider!

Larry Mauch

