

# Livermore Heritage Guild

*Saving Yesterday For Tomorrow*

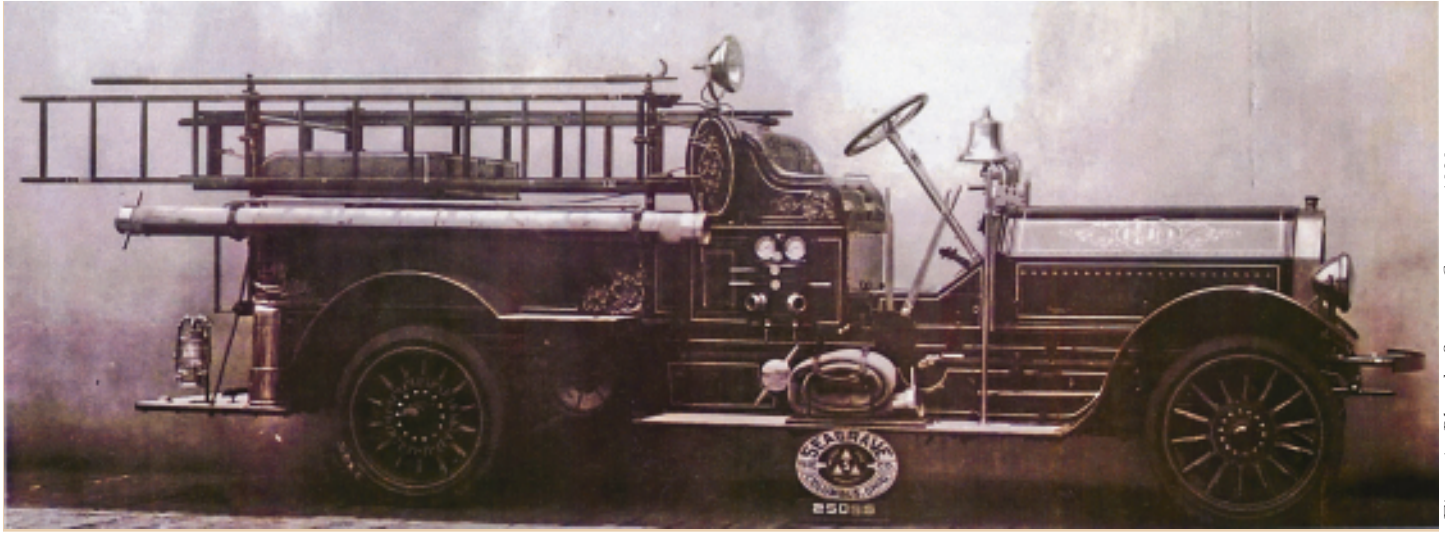


Figure 1 - Photo by Seagrave Company, 1920.

P.O. Box 961, Livermore, CA 94551

[www.livermorehistory.com](http://www.livermorehistory.com)

Phone 925-449-9927

July/August 2010

Vol. XLII, No. 5

## The Revival of Livermore's 1920 Seagrave Fire Engine

St. Michael's Church burned to the ground in 1916. Three years later, the Livermore City Board of Trustees initiated an action to purchase a new fire truck. The Board minutes of September 12, 1919 recorded the acceptance of Resolution 334 stating the city wished to purchase a combination fire engine and hose car capable of pumping 300 to 600 gallons per minute. Philip Coil, Inc., Schnerr & Scheeline, Seagrave, and American LaFrance submitted bids one month later.

On November 17, 1919 the Board authorized the purchase of the highest pumping capacity fire truck from the Seagrave Fire Apparatus Co., Columbus, Ohio (a \$10,750 bid). Voters approved issuance of \$10,000 of municipal bonds, with the remaining \$750 of the purchase price apparently coming from city cash reserves.

The Seagrave model 66 fire engine was delivered in August 1920 and quickly placed into service. It was the

city's first pumper truck and likely fought every major fire of the era, from 1920s hay warehouse blazes to the 1943 Fifth Street School inferno. The 1944 Mack, also now preserved by the LHG, was the second pumper.

Figure 1 (above) shows the Seagrave truck, serial no. 25055, as it was photographed at the factory. Figure 2 depicts the Seagrave along with the Ford Model T Chemical Fire Truck purchased a year earlier. (The bare chassis and engine of the Model T were purchased and a local blacksmith shop fabricated the chemical handling equipment. The LHG also has this vehicle now.) The volunteer firemen appear to be sporting new uniforms, further confirming that this photo may have been staged to show off the Seagrave, the Ford and the new uniforms.

The Seagrave was successfully used from 1920 through the mid-1950s. Figure 3 shows the Seagrave in 1951 parked outdoors near a railroad track and still apparently in working order as it displays two fireman's helmets, an intact steering wheel and seat upholstery, hoses, and a siren, but mysteriously no fire bell. *(Continued on p. 4)*



Livermore Fire Dept. 1920 logo on Seagrave hood.

### In This Issue:

President's Message: Duarte Desk Gift, p. 2.  
*Firehouse Light* Author Janet Nolan's Visit, p. 3.  
Calendar: Aug. 18<sup>th</sup> - Midway School Talk, p. 8.  
Calendar: Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> - Annual Meeting, p. 8.

## A Message From the President

Dear Members,

August 7, 2010

In this issue I am excited that we can show you more of the wonderful work happening at the Duarte Garage. That gleaming red engine is a crazy, impossible, complicated project. So, of course, we have a talented, and perhaps crazy, team of folks toiling away, putting in thousands of hours to make it all happen. Show your appreciation by dropping by on our monthly open house days (third Sunday of most months, 10 a.m. til 2 p.m.) and perhaps drop a few green, folding portraits of dead presidents in the "thank you" container while you are there!

While at the garage do not forget that there is other work going on besides flashy red fire engines. In particular, Curator Bill Junk, ably assisted by Neil Riley, Susan Junk and others, has continued to organize and catalog the historic office and tool area. They had some special motivation recently in that we were honored to receive a visit from Fran Duarte and members of his extended family. Fran spent much of a lifetime around this garage built next to the Lincoln Highway, first while his father Frank owned it as a gas station, garage and car dealership, and then as his own man, repairing all manner of machinery there in the shop. Fran's visit was coordinated by Keith and Kathy Erikson who drove up from Arizona bringing along the roll-top desk that originally sat in the corner



Photo by Kathy Erikson.

### **Fran Duarte presents roll-top desk long used at Duarte Garage to the Guild via Jeff Kaskey.**

and rewarding work of restoring and moving their school. A big part of the project was the development of a comprehensive 3rd grade program centered at the school. They have created a day-long reenactment experience to bring the students into a school day in the late 1800s. The day includes penmanship, games, McGuffey Readers, food and costumes. The program is very successful and popular in their school system and was an excellent reference point for us. Thanks to the WSPA! Are you interested in other information about Midway school and Livermore's historic schools? I'll be talking about it at this month's History Lecture on Wednesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>.

History buffs and loyal members, it is not too early to remind you that our annual general meeting is coming up on Saturday, September 25<sup>th</sup>. You are enthusiastically invited to attend, and we'll get ticket information and other specifics out to you shortly. Our speaker will be former Livermore Mayor Cathie Brown.

I also want to remind you that our officer positions are two-year positions, with some voted on in even-numbered years and some in odd-numbered years. This year my position as President and Marie Abbott's position of 1st Vice President come to a vote. Both Marie and I are pleased to run again for these offices, but also want to encourage anyone with an interest in these roles to come forward. Having a seat on the board is a great way to bring in new ideas and to be directly involved in the operation and growth of your Heritage Guild. It continues to be an honor for me to serve as the Guild's President, and I want to encourage others to come forward and bring their energy and ideas to managing the Guild. Thanks!

**Jeff Kaskey**

## The Firehouse Light Author Janet Nolan Visits Livermore

Janet Nolan of Oak Park, Illinois, author of children's books, doesn't recall when she first heard or read about Livermore's Centennial Light Bulb. She wishes that she did.

The light bulb and its long life (now burning for 109 years) just caught her imagination. Janet eventually began to put together a children's book, *The Firehouse Light*, telling about points of history in each decade of the light bulb's life.

As the points of historical interest piled up in her research, Janet soon realized that there was so much to record -- too much! In addition, much of the material was above the children's age and interest level.



Photo by Steve Bunn

Then the idea came to her to chronicle the changes in fire fighting throughout the years that the bulb has hung in fire stations. Much of what changed in the fire stations also changed for the general public. The lovely illustrations by Marie Lafrance complement the text and tell some of the story.

After almost two years of research and talking with Centennial Light Bulb Committee members (Lynn Owens, Dick Jones and Steve Bunn and Livermore Heritage Guild members, Anna Siig and Gary Drummond), the research was completed. Soon the new book, *The Firehouse Light*, was published and plans made for Janet and her husband, Bill, to come west!

A book signing was held at Towne Center Books in Pleasanton. The next day, June 13<sup>th</sup>, the Nolans joined Light Bulb Committee members for lunch. It was so good to meet in person after all the time communicating by e-mail and phone



Photos by Dick Jones/RJ Aerial Photo.



*The Firehouse Light* is available for purchase at the History Center in the Carnegie Building. Her other books are *A Father's Day Thank You* and *The St. Patrick's Day Shillelagh*.

Thanks to Dick Jones and Steve Bunn for photos of Janet's visit. - By Anna Siig

calls. Everyone then went to the Duarte Garage, where, with a few fans cooling things down, about 50 people enjoyed Janet's talk and book signing sponsored by the Guild.

The Nolans enjoyed seeing the Model T fire car, the 1944 Mack fire truck and the 1920 Seagrave fire truck, which is in mid-restoration. A good time was had by all, even in that heat. It was like "the old days" in Livermore!

The Nolans also visited the old fire station on First Street, where painting of a mural by Bay Area artists Vera Lowdermilk and Kean Butterfield about local fire department history is underway, and the East Avenue fire station, the current home of the light bulb. On First Street they met a bride and groom, whom they greeted.

**Clockwise from top, author Janet Nolan visits 'firehouse light' at East Ave. fire station, inspects mural on First St., presents book, and views Seagrave fire engine at Duarte Garage with husband Bill Nolan and LHG's Jeff Kaskey.**

## Seagrave Restoration *(Cont'd from p. 1)*

Several veteran firemen have indicated that the Seagrave was stored in retired-but-ready status in the corporate yard located where the ACE train station is now located on Railroad Avenue. Figure 4 shows the Seagrave being towed out of its last outdoor resting place west of the Livermore Water Resources facility. A close examination indicates that the wooden steering wheel, bell, siren, and hoses are missing. This indicates that around the 1960s the Seagrave was moved from Railroad Avenue to the Water Treatment Plant and then around 1985 (based upon the age of adjacent vehicles) it was again moved to the Duarte Garage. It was moved because of an agreement leasing the Garage to the LHG in 1976 and then in 1980, loaning the 1920 Seagrave (and the 1944 Mack) to the Guild for the purpose of restoration and display at public events.

### RESTORATION

In 2008, after completing the restoration of the 1919 Ford Model T, Chuck McFann spoke with Bill Junk about starting the restoration of the Seagrave. Bill approved the work, and the restoration began in September, 2008. Chuck solicited help from several friends to bring the rusty, dilapidated fire truck back to its original beautiful condition. The plan was to restore the truck to "parade quality," a term that is ill-defined, but implies a quality that can be both admired and utilized by the community for festive events and parades.

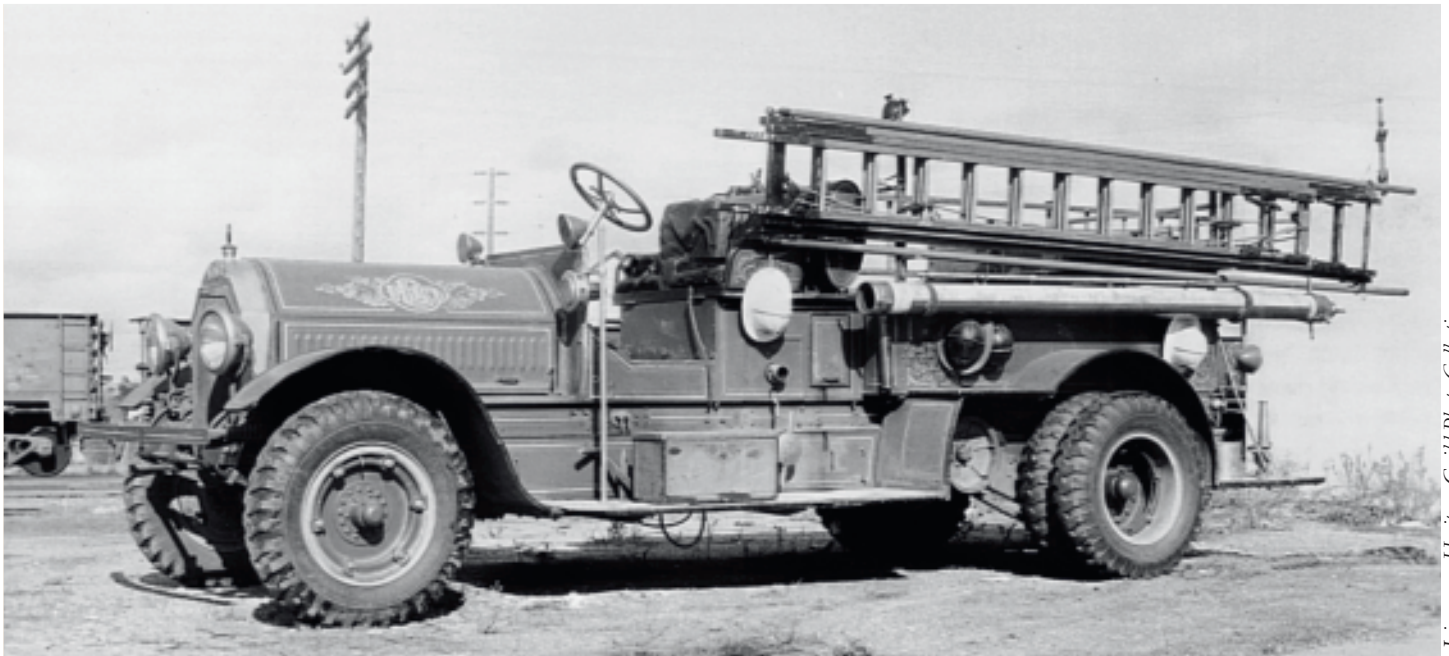
Figure 5 shows the Seagrave as the restoration crew found her when work began. It lacked its original electrical generator (presumably borrowed by someone doing a similar Seagrave restoration), fire bell, siren, spotlight, driver's seat upholstery (destroyed by sitting outdoors in bright sun and rain for 35 years), and steering wheel (only the metal spokes remained). However, nearly all of the structural metal remained un-rusted.



Livermore Heritage Guild Photo Collection.

*Figure 2 (above) - Seagrave Pumper (left) and Ford Model T Chemical Fire Truck (right) with the Livermore volunteer fire department in new uniforms, posed next to Carnegie Library. Figure 3 (below) - Seagrave in 1951 parked outdoors near a railroad track.*

The initial stage of the restoration was creation of a photographic inventory of the machine as it existed. We supplemented this photographic inventory when we located a fully restored 1915 Seagrave in Hayward and a 1921 Seagrave in San Mateo. We visited these vehicles and established a working relationship with the owners.



Livermore Heritage Guild Photo Collection.

We also found a restored 1920 Seagrave in Redlands, California. The owners have taken quite an interest in our work and have driven from southern California just to observe our progress. Apparently they were able to have their truck restored by inmates of a local prison (Norco).

Disassembly of the entire truck was the initial task. This was frustrated by rusted bolts, very tight valve covers, and a lack of space to store all of the parts as they were removed. Having a group of volunteers who

are diversely talented has been key to the success of our restoration efforts. Jim Boehmke, highly skilled in the art of sheet metal work, was very successful at removing dents and straightening seam lines. Fred Deadrick, a skilled woodworker, was able to recreate the original steering wheel which had been nearly entirely destroyed by years of sunlight and rain. Based on a few scraps of wood from the original steering wheel found in the driver's seat by Susan Junk, he was able to re-manufacture a new wheel.

Many frozen and rusted components required a gas torch to break them free and then careful wire brushing, sanding, and buffing to restore the surface finish. One valve cover was so frozen in place that it resisted unscrewing for nearly a month until finally a special tool was

LHG Photo (No. 465) - Valley Times



*Figure 4 (above) - Seagrave being towed out of its last outdoor storage location west of the Water Treatment Plant on West Jack London Blvd.*

*Figure 5 (right) - Seagrave as the restoration crew found her when work began in 2008.*

*Figure 6 (below) - A paint technician at Tri-Valley Auto Body buffing the newly-painted hose body.*



LHG Photo Collection (No. 467)

Photo by Fred Deadrick



fabricated which required four strong men to turn. It now works flawlessly.

Jeff Kaskey persuaded the owners of the Tri-Valley Auto Body shop to voluntarily take on the task of professionally painting the truck. They went out of their way by convincing Ned's Auto Body Supply, Inc. to donate the paint for the truck. Figure 6 shows a paint technician at Tri-Valley Auto Body buffing the hose body. Disassembly proceeded for nearly six months to where all of the sheet metal parts were

## Seagrave Renewal *(Cont'd from Page 5)*

ready for painting. After careful painting and buffing the sheet metal parts were carefully stored in the old library building on South Livermore Avenue.

With the sheet metal removed, the only remaining part to be restored was the ninety-year old chassis. It was caked with old dirt and grease that required extensive scraping and then steam cleaning provided by Kevin Nista at Early Years and Exotics. Once the chassis was spotless and completely grease-free it was transported to Tri-Valley Auto Body for final painting. Figure 7 shows the completed chassis along with "J.R." Romero and his brother George.

*Figure 7 (right) - Seagrave after chassis painting with brothers George and "J.R." Romero admiring their highly professional paint job.*

*Figure 8 (below) - Large straight six-cylinder engine nearly ready for starting after lying idle for 50 years.*



*Photo by Irving Stoners, 2010.*



*Photo by Fred Deadrick*

With the chassis now painted and the critical drive train components carefully examined and repaired, the restoration crew is anxiously awaiting the re-installation of all of the engine hardware (intake and exhaust manifolds, distributor, starter motor, generator, and electrical wiring) and then the dramatic re-starting of the engine after nearly 50 years of silence. Hopefully this first re-starting can be accomplished sometime in October 2010.

Along with all of the sheet metal and chassis restoration, there has been a slow but methodical process of locating several missing components. An old Seagrave generator was located on eBay and restored by a local

automotive shop, a Seagrave fire bell was found on eBay and has been buffed to perfection, and the old dented headlights have been worked back to shape and nickel plated. A highly professional upholsterer was located and persuaded to restore the leather driver's seat to original condition. Mervyn Nichols has restored the magneto ignition system, Jim Boehmke restored the "German silver" radiator to sparkling condition, and all wheel bearings have been examined and repacked with grease. Six new tires were purchased and are awaiting mounting onto the recently painted wheels.

FUTURE

One of the most distinctive features of old fire trucks was the gold leaf decoration applied by skilled professionals. This is actual gold metal foil (very thin) carefully applied and then lacquered in place to protect the gold. Randy Jennings, a local gilder (and former fireman), is working with our restorers to apply all of the straight gold pin striping and also working to identify an even more skilled gilder to apply the more exotic gold leafing to the engine hood and side panels. The Guild has also been fortunate to identify Lance Cavalieri and John and Sue Houghton who have volunteered to supply the gold foil necessary for the filigree and pin striping. We are currently in the midst of a major fund raising effort to collect \$15,000 to assure completion of the restoration by the end of 2011.

The restoration crew works every Saturday morning at the Duarte (Lincoln Highway) Garage. Visitors who are not afraid of a little work are always welcome. -By Irving F. Stowers



Photo by Fred Deadrick



Photo by Fred Deadrick

Figures 9 & 10 (above) Sheet metal before and after restoration. Figure 11 (left) Ken Nemanic restored the leather upholstery. Figure 12 (below) Members of the Seagrave restoration crew pose on a work day at the Duarte Garage. Left to right - Jeff Kaskey, Jon Scudder, Jim Boehmke, Irv Stowers, Fred Deadrick, Chuck McFann, Susan Junk, Donald Meeker, Tim Sage, Will Bolton, Bill Junk.



Fred Deadrick photo.



Photo by Irving Stowers, 2010.

# Calendar

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18<sup>TH</sup>

**History Lecture: Midway School Update with Jeff Kaskey, Civic Center Library, 1188 S. Livermore Ave. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Talk starts at 7:30 p.m.**

LHG President **Jeff Kaskey** will discuss the plan to move the Midway schoolhouse from the Mulqueeny Ranch to a site in the Valley and renovate it. The schoolhouse was built in 1873 to serve the community of ranchers and rail workers in the mountains east of Livermore.

## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>

**LHG Annual General Meeting.** The keynote speaker will be **Cathie Brown**, Livermore's first elected woman mayor. More details will be forthcoming on this fun-filled evening. Mark your calendar today.



**Revived Seagrave fire engine dash panel. See p.1. (Fred Deadrick photo)**



**Fran Duarte (r.) chats with LHG's Jeff Kaskey (l.) at Duarte Garage. He brought a major gift. See p. 2.**

# Contact Us

### **President**

Jeff Kaskey

jkaskey@yahoo.com

### **1st Vice Pres. (Program Chair)**

Marie Abbott

925-443-9740

### **2nd VP (Membership Chair)**

Janet Von Toussaint

925-455-1426

planetjust4today@comcast.net

### **Secretary**

Susan Junk

susan.kbsj@gmail.com

### **Treasurer**

Dori Campbell - doralene@flash.net

### **Curator of Duarte Garage**

Bill Junk - 925-447-4561

### **Newsletter Editor**

Jason Bezis

925-962-9643 & jbezis@yahoo.com

### **Office Manager**

Lydia Carpenter

925-449-9927 & lhg@lhg.org

The Livermore Heritage Guild  
History Center is located in the  
historic 1911 Carnegie Library  
building at 2155 Third Street.  
History Center hours generally are  
Wednesday through Sunday, 11:30  
a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: (925) 449-  
9927. Free admission.  
Annual membership dues are:  
Individual \$25.00, Family \$35.00,  
Senior (age 62+) \$15.00, Student  
\$15.00, Sponsor \$75.00 and Patron  
\$150.00. Life (Individual) \$500.00  
and Business \$300.00 memberships  
are also available. Please make  
checks payable to "LHG." Mail to  
P.O. Box 961, Livermore, CA 94551.

P.O. Box 961  
Livermore, CA 94551  
Address Service Requested

