

Livermore Heritage Guild

Saving Yesterday For Tomorrow



Photo Courtesy of Chip Lord/"Ant Farm"

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March/April 2010

Vol. XLII, No. 3

Altamont Rock Festival: '60s Abruptly End (Part I of II)

As the 1960's ended, Livermore was at the epicenter of a peculiar convergence of events one December weekend involving two "rock" icons of the decade: moon rocks and rock music. The Altamont Rock Festival, the largest public gathering in the history of eastern Alameda County, delighted an estimated 300,000 observers and taxed the area's transportation, medical and law enforcement systems.

The main excitement in Livermore on Saturday, December 6, 1969 was supposed to be the display of moon rocks outside of the Livermore Public Library (then located at South Livermore Avenue and Pacific Avenue). A banner headline at the top of Friday's *Independent* trumpeted, "Moon Rock Arrives in Livermore; Public Display Slated." Dr. Douglas R. Stephens, a Lawrence Radiation Laboratory chemical engineer, was a principal investigator for analysis of moon rocks for Apollo 11, the first manned lunar mission, five months earlier. He had arranged for two small cubes of moon rock col-

lected by astronauts "Buzz" Aldrin and Neil Armstrong to be exhibited that Saturday and Sunday. Dr. Stephens declared, "They're so unearthly, literally." (A 43-year employee of L.L.N.L., Dr. Stephens died in 2004.) But a different type of "rock" quickly overshadowed this event.

In August 1969, the Woodstock Music & Art Fair was held in rural upstate New York. Hundreds of thousands of people attended the free, multi-day event. The Rolling Stones, a British rock group, wanted to create *Continued on Page 3*

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A Message From the President

March 19, 2010

Dear members,

When writer's block hits, among the curative suggestions offered is to look at anything you've written lately and see what that sparks. Afflicted with just that malaise, I grabbed minutes from a recent Collections Committee meeting. Dry reading to be sure, but we had considered an interesting question whose best answer I have gotten so far is "yes, that is a tough question for all historical museums." So I've decided to drop this conundrum on you, my readers, and invite you to send me your thoughts. Maybe we can get through this writer's block thing together and work on some museum policy at the same time (my, won't that be fun?!).

The question is "What do we save?" and it can be applied to many aspects of the Guild's collection. With a mission such as ours, preserving hundred year-old city records, old photos of civic personalities and artifacts of historical businesses are obvious choices. But if we are truly "Saving Yesterday for Tomorrow," how much of yesterday, and I mean 24 hours ago, should we save for researchers and curious citizens one or two hundred years in the future? Taking "yesterday" just a little more broadly, we have so far decided that keeping old phone books, from the first printed up to current, is a useful idea. Similarly, we have maps of Livermore from the 1970's and 1980's as well as 1900's. On the other hand, we have kept no programs from events at the Bankhead nor menus from downtown restaurants. Where do we draw that line, and why?

It does not seem possible to create a general rule such as "keep one of everything published about Livermore" so I am asking you for ideas on what you think we should keep our hands on from yesterday to enrich the understanding people have of our fair city tomorrow. For instance - should we be hanging on to photos from the 1960's through 1990's, and if so, which ones? In that era, digitization had not really taken hold, and although photos were taken by the millions each day, their ubiquity often kept people from thinking carefully about labeling, filing or preserving them. Snapshot cameras were popular, so photos are often lower resolution and less archival than photos from 50 years prior. If our museum does not keep them, will we know more about how First Street looked in 1915 than in 1965? How about business directories, such as produced by the Chamber of Commerce? Should last year's copy be in our archive?

Ah, the internet will save us! Maybe. I can certainly find information on anything happening today, and I can research historical photos and maps dating to the invention of those techniques, but do we have pictures of when the 1941 Purity grocery store building at First & L (now the Donut Wheel center) got its "Googie" face-lift or records of the wax and wane of the downtown Lucky shopping center (1980-2009)? Is there "an app for that"? How about the story and families of Tubbsville? How will researchers learn about those residents in the year 2151 when asking about Livermore's role in the historical string of social housing experiments?

It is not as though we are running short of work to preserve our knowledge of Livermore's founding years and the families who were the engines of our town's birth and adolescence. Perhaps that is enough for a historical society to keep track of. Or is there also a responsibility to watch each yesterday for significant events, people, and changes that might help tomorrow's residents have a better understanding of their own heritage (and how do we decide that significance?). Someday, the first 300 years of Livermore's history may be considered its infancy!

Let me know your thoughts, drop an email to jkaskey@yahoo.com

Jeff Kaskey

Altamont *(Continued from Page 1)*

a single-day, West Coast version. "It's a Christmas and Hanukkah gift from the Stones and other groups to American youth," said John Ellsworth Jaymes, president of concert promoter Young American Enterprises, Inc.

The initial plan was to hold the event at San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, but a 49ers vs. Bears football game at Kezar Stadium conflicted. The venue was to be shifted to Sears Point raceway in Sonoma County until a dispute arose with the track's owner over filming rights. After Altamont Speedway lessee Dick Carter offered his facility at what is today the junction of I-205 and I-580 between Livermore and Tracy, the organizers scouted it by helicopter along with Woodstock co-creator Michael Lang. At noon on December 5, 1969, final contracts were signed in attorney Melvin Belli's San Francisco office. Concert organizers rushed over the next 24 hours to prepare the site, delivering stage and sound equipment and portable toilets, much of it by helicopter. Word of a free concert featuring rock legends Santana, Jefferson Airplane, The Flying Burrito Brothers, and Crosby, Stills & Nash and the Rolling Stones spread quickly over radio stations.

Carter donated use of the racetrack "for the publicity and to prove I'm a good guy." He said that he planned to present his own rock concerts there in the future. However, even before the concert, a rift developed between Carter and the Eureka-based property owners, who complained to the Alameda County Sheriff that they did not foresee a large rock concert when they leased the parcel.

Some concertgoers arrived Friday night and camped overnight. Joann Cook of the *Tri-Valley Herald* spent 37 hours at the concert site. At midnight, she observed campfires, wine bottles passed around and a big group chanting "PEACE, PEACE, PEACE" as others used cardboard garbage cans as drums. She saw the streams of people walking from Grantline Road as "refugee lines, going to a party." Between 3 and 4 a.m., she visited an all-night restaurant in Livermore, "We've been going crazy, they told me. Breakfast and hamburgers, we can't keep the dishes clean." Cook and her husband returned to the concert site and watched at 6:35 a.m. while a crowd broke down the gates to enter the speedway grounds. "A sea of water trying to rush into one little hole," she observed. At 8 a.m., she saw "an absolute sea of humanity ... there they were – thousands and thousands and thousands."

The *Herald's* Jeff Garberson and Cathy Smith spent Friday
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Authors' Reception: April 11

Vasco's Livermore, 1910: Portraits from the Hub Saloon is a new, richly-illustrated book of sketches of members of the community of a century ago. Meet authors **Anne Homan** and **Richard Finn** on Sunday, April 11th from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the social hall of Livermore's First Presbyterian Church (K & 4th sts.) for a reception and autographs, along with period music by **Dave Walter**.

night among the campers. Smith wrote, "People like to be with others of their kind. A rock concert is a type of national convention where the members of the hip culture can be with people who speak the same language." She wrote of "people packed so tightly that they couldn't tell who was in what group, and passed the joint or the Red Mountain wine to whomever was sitting next to them."

Garberson and Smith wrote, "It's what's happening, man' ... Row after row after row of Volkswagen buses, out of which poured oddly dressed young men and women with assorted bottles and cameras and transistor radios ... It was a surrealistic collage of America, like a political convention, revival, Yosemite campgrounds during the tourist season, the business section of a large city during rush hour, and flag wavers all blended into one."

They documented the overnight sights (campfires, long hair, beards, dogs), sounds (calls of "Who's got some pot?" and "I need a joint," cries of "mescaline!" "acid!" "wine!," and softer offers of "lids for sale" above a background "dominated hour after hour by the rhythmic drumming") and smells ("the pungent smell of marijuana in the air, and sometimes something stronger"). They wrote of "Chants and cheers emanating from different parts of the camp grounds at different times, sometimes carrying the hundreds and later thousands of young people into synchronized noisemaking," along with a rolling howl "that rose in pitch and volume" across the speedway and hills "similar to the way one howl from a neighborhood dog sets all the other dogs in the same vicinity to howling." People chanted to drumbeats, "All we want (t-tum t-tum t-tum) is to live in peace. All we want..." The speedway fence was torn apart to feed fires.

They observed the scene under gray clouds at dawn, "A thick layer of fog crouched on the Altamont hills. Bodies were scattered all over the hills as if they had been dropped like advertising leaflets. From a distance, they all looked like small black birds, as if a flock of starlings had been poisoned and dropped in their flight pattern."

Altamont *(Continued from Page 3)*

A traffic jam 30 miles long developed on U.S. 50 [now I-580 and I-205] (20 miles eastbound back to west of Livermore; 10 miles westbound back to Tracy). The California Highway Patrol in Bakersfield reported unusually heavy traffic from the Los Angeles area. The Highway Patrol urged motorists from the Bay Area to exit at Greenville Road and take Altamont Pass Road to the speedway. Some attendees rented bicycles in Livermore.

Today's eastbound lanes of Interstate 580 through the Altamont were then under construction, to open to traffic eleven days later. The miles of four empty lanes created parking spaces for many vehicles. Some motorists mistakenly parked along the freeway at Greenville Road, eight miles from the concert site. More than 100 vehicles that were illegally parked along active roads were towed. As of December 9th, many towed vehicles were still at garages in Livermore, chiefly in Armstrong's. Many abandoned vehicles were believed to be stolen.

The *Independent's* Jim Crockett arrived around 2 p.m. via Patterson Pass Road. His paper summarized the event as "Beauty and Tragedy At Altamont Grounds," with photos by Bill Owens. Crockett had to park two miles away and hike over hills to get to the concert. "One of the things that first struck me on arriving on the grounds," he wrote, "was the silence. All those people, all those cars, and it was pleasantly quiet." Crockett described the scene, "Children, dogs and hair everywhere. The most colorful of clothes, and a general feeling of oneness. The desire to make the "People's Festival," not only a massive musical event but also a demonstration of the brotherhood of today's youth was clear." Crockett observed that when the announcer asked if everyone could move back from the stage to ease congestion, "they did. Maybe 150,000 of them and with all their over-night belongings, picked up and moved back. Unheard of." Crockett also reported, "It wasn't all glory, however. Hospitals reported floods of teen-agers on bad drug trips, and all around one could see the blank stares from the empty faces of young boys and girls, obviously stoned, but not bothering anyone else."

The *Oakland Tribune* described the concert crowd as a "sea of blue denim ... They were all in one place at one time for the same reason and even though there was little conversation between strangers it was as though there were no strangers." The *San Jose Mercury News* wrote, "The land in front of the stage was covered with acre

after acre of humanity." The *Modesto Bee* observed, "Take a crowd as large as the one which saw all five games of the 1969 World Series, place them in a weedy ravine between Livermore and Tracy, add 19 rock groups, lots of "pot," wine, sleeping bags and other hippie accoutrements – and you have yesterday's Woodstock west, the biggest bash of them all."

The artists' collective later called "Ant Farm" erected atop a hill a 100' x 100' "Pillow" made of polyethylene (depicted on front page). The *Herald's* John Oliver described it as "an inflatable plastic 'instant building'" where "people could come in and relax away from the crowds." In the book *Ant Farm 1968-1978*, Ant Farm founding partner Chip Lord characterized it as "the tent at the circus" and "the bad trips pavilion."



Photo Courtesy of Chip Lord/"Ant Farm"

A view inside of the 100' by 100' "Pillow" (dubbed the "bad trips pavilion") erected by the Ant Farm art group at various locations, including Altamont.

Now a U.C. Santa Cruz professor, Lord said in a 2010 e-mail, "Ant Farm was 'invited' to attend Altamont via a roadie for the Grateful Dead who was a friend of one of the Ant Farmers - Michael Wright. We arrived the night before and inflated the pillow on what seemed like a far stretch from the stage, near the top of the hill. This was a fairly simple task to accomplish, so some of us joined in the crew that was building the stage and the towers for the speakers. Around mid-night Mick Jagger and Keith Richards arrived by helicopter to inspect the scene. It was pretty cold and they joined others around a bonfire wearing their velvet pants." He added, "The pillow was not officially the 'bad trips pavillion' but there were plenty of bad trips and bad vibes that day, and many people seemed to take refuge in the pillow, which was in some ways a calming environment."

Four died and four were born at or near the concert site.

One young man entered the South Bay Aqueduct and drowned while fleeing from the state police during a drug "freakout." His body (wearing a denim shirt, jeans, love beads and an earring) was found two hours later. The coroner still had not identified him after three days.

A hit-and-run accident killed Mark Feiger, 22, and Richard Salov, 22, (both New Jerseyites who recently moved to Berkeley) resting at a campsite along Midway Rd. late Saturday night. Two companions were critically injured. The vehicle owner later claimed that it was stolen. Manuel Martinez, 23 of Whittier, and Linda Sue Krauss, 21 of La Mirada, died en route to the concert after their packed panel truck hit a Hwy. 101 structure near Pismo Beach.

But the death that was to bring notoriety to the Altamont concert was that of Meredith Hunter, an 18 year-old African American man, stabbed twice by 21-year old Hells Angel Alan Passaro. In 1971, Passaro was acquitted of the homicide by a jury that concluded that Passaro had acted in self defense because Hunter had a gun.

The full sequence of events is murky. By most accounts, including the *Rolling Stone* magazine edition of February 7, 1970, Hunter and the Hells Angels interacted a few times that afternoon before the fatal stabbing. Like other concertgoers that day, Hunter (whose autopsy indicated that he was high on "meth") earlier charged the stage, at least twice during the 45 minutes before the stabbing. After Hunter brandished a gun, several Hells Angels members descended upon him. Passaro stabbed Hunter twice with a knife. *Rolling Stone* said that the Stones played the song "Sympathy for the Devil" (other sources say "Under My Thumb") as the fatal stabbing transpired.

"Gimme Shelter," a documentary film financed by the Stones about their 1969 tour, includes footage of the homicide. In a 2000 *Salon* magazine article, Michael Sragow said, "At the soul-shriveling climax, a knife flashes -- and a murder unspools on-screen. The image is so blunt and Jagger's response to it so shrouded or implacable, that the film becomes disturbing in an almost primordial way."

There were other violent acts. The *Herald's* John Oliver reported that as Santana began to play a fat man stripped and danced before the crowd. A fight quickly broke out in which several Hells Angels were involved. Bert Kanegson, the festival site manager and Grateful Dead ex-manager, tried to intervene and received several severe blows to the head in the process. ABC Security Police Sgt.

Steven Ellis said that the helicopter carrying the Rolling Stones arrived so quickly that just six guards were present when a "very violent" man reached over a guard and punched Mick Jagger in the head while screaming, "I hate you! I want to kill you!" Three men were necessary to wrestle the assailant to the ground. The fracas delayed the Stones' act until dusk. The Angels knocked Jefferson Airplane lead singer Marty Balin unconscious on-stage; a female band member pled, "You've gotta keep your bodies off each other unless you intend love." These experiences persuaded the Grateful Dead not to perform.

The *Herald's* Cook ended up in a coveted location backstage where the Hells Angels held misbehaving concertgoers. Cook spoke to dozens of detained youth. She concluded, "They're freaking out to forget where it's at ... not to find out." She wrote, "Oh they hated the Hell's Angels, that unbelievable crowd of kids ... These kids came absolutely in peace. Don't any of you forget that, ever ... They came to party, nothing more."

The *Independent* wrote, "Those close to the stage, packed in like sardines, tell of an aura of fear, violence and selfishness. They were the ones who witnessed the violent beatings administered by the Hells Angels. They saw the single-minded rush of many to get as close to the stage as possible, unconcerned about the discomfort of others. They were aware of the numerous bad drug experiences." In contrast, "Those in the outlying portions of the field ... report an atmosphere of love and brotherhood which permeated everyone about them."

"They didn't start a riot," Dick Carter told the *Independent* about the Hells Angels, "they kept one from happening." The *Independent* wrote of Carter, "He said that the Rolling Stones had footed the bill for most of some 300 security personnel, most of whom were not in uniform. The Angels, he said, were not part of the planning at all but when they arrived, they were offered access to \$500 worth of free beer and only reacted violently when Hunter pulled a gun ..." Other sources dispute the "offer of free beer" part of this story.

-By Jason Bezis

Part II will discuss the aftermath of the Altamont Rock Festival, including effects on nearby ranches.

If you have an Altamont Rock Festival story, we want to hear from you (or anonymously, if you prefer, through your "pseudonym," with your 1969 age and hometown). If you worked at a local restaurant, store, service station or medical clinic, we especially want to learn your observations. Please mail (P.O. Box 961, ZIP 94551) or e-mail (lbg@lbg.org) such materials.

Calendar

MARCH

History Lecture:

Wednesday, March 17th, 7:30 p.m.

Richard Finn shared his research on the "**Gardemeyers**" of Livermore. They were landowners and businessmen who played a part in local history. At Civic Center Library, 1188 South Livermore Ave. Light refreshments.

Duarte Garage

Open: Sunday, March 21st, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. On "old" Lincoln Highway, Portola Avenue at L St.

APRIL

Duarte Garage

Open: Sunday, April 18th, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. On "old" Lincoln Highway, Portola Avenue at L St.

Presentation:

Wednesday, April 21st, 7:30 p.m. Photographer **Dick Jones** will show **pictures of railroad trains** that have come through the area, including a video of a recent re-enactment of President W. H. Taft's visit to Sunol. The holiday "train of lights" also will be featured. At Civic Center Library, 1188 S. Livermore Ave. Light refreshments.

Carnegie Library - 100th

Livermore's Carnegie Library turns 100 in 2011 and LHG plans to celebrate the centennial in a big way. We are planning the following projects with the help of LAA, LARPD, and other area groups:

- Spruce up the building, grounds, and exhibits,
- A "grand opening" benefit to include refreshments, a presentation by an expert on the Carnegie buildings, and the official unveiling of the new exhibits (tentatively planned for the evening of Thursday, May 12, 2011) and
- A major arts and history fair in Carnegie Park on Saturday, May 14, 2011. The history displays will focus on the Library, Carnegie buildings, and 1911 Livermore.

In order to make our visions a reality, we will need plenty of help from our friends and neighbors. Here is a list of the lead positions and a brief description of each position's responsibilities:

Museum, Building, and Grounds Lead:

- Coordinate with LARPD for special projects pertaining to the Carnegie building and grounds.
- Work with the Fundraising Lead to find sponsors in the community for specific projects.

Carnegie Benefit Lead: Organize a benefit evening and "grand opening," including:

- Coordinate volunteers.
- Rent facilities and obtain appropriate permits.
- Decorating and cleaning for the event.
- Coordinate new history displays in Carnegie Building.
- Arrange an event speaker & arrange food & music.

Financial Lead: Manage our budget, bank accounts, and reporting.

Marketing Lead: Coordinate volunteers to create advertising, souvenirs, program production, mailings, and web sites advertising for the events and coordinate with the Centennial Committee to establish a cohesive "look" for all events (retro 1911).

Fundraising Lead: Coordinate volunteers to raise funds to cover the expenses of these events and, hopefully, a few special projects, in addition.

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- Anticipated income sources of funds include grants, community sponsorships, special fundraising events, sales of special fundraising items & a fundraising drive.

Positions are open to LHG and non-LHG members alike and will all report to the Carnegie Centennial Committee.

There will be plenty of additional opportunities to help with these events. We will need people to help with individual displays, site preparation, site clean up, procurement and more. Please contact us to let us know of your interest. We will let you know more in future newsletters. Thank you!

Alicia Eltgroth

Carnegie Centennial Committee Chairman

Chief John Michelis: 1950's "Community Policing"

John R. Michelis (1907-1989) was Livermore Police Chief for a record 30½ years (1942 to 1972). A special exhibit on his career, curated by David Abrahams, recently was on display at the Police Department Building. Here Rich Buckley, now a local realtor and world peace non-profit organization founder, recalls an interaction with Chief Michelis circa 1959. The Oldsmobile in the photo below is similar to the vehicle that Mr. Buckley's family drove at the time. -Editor

Livermore Police Chief "Johnny" Michelis served during a period of transition. There was a time when Livermore cops, seeing a kid walking to school in the rain, knew who the kid was, would pull over to the curb and offer the kid a ride to school, out of the rain.

Today the police departments might call that "community policing." Back then it actually "was" community policing because the town was so small (under 16,000). But it was changing. It was sort of like the song lyrics "Rock Island" from the *Music*

Man play when all the salesmen are in the train car passing tidbits around in time to the puffing rhythm of the steam engine:

*Ya can talk, ya can talk, ya can bicker ya can talk,
ya can bicker, bicker bicker ya can talk all ya want
But is different than it was.*

*No it ain't, no it ain't, but ya gotta know the territory.
Shh shh shh shh shh shh shh.*

The cops today will tell you the same thing, "Ya gotta know the territory." Johnny Michelis served during that transition from where a cop on the beat knew the whole town, every kid on the street, every person going to work, every face in every window.

When I was a teenager and borrowed the family's new car with stock twin mufflers, a new officer on the force issued me a ticket for loud mufflers. No testing, no, "hey kid, run up the engine so I can hear it." He just gave me a ticket for loud mufflers. Stock mufflers

mind you! In a brand new Olds from Groth Bros.

I kind of liked the idea of getting a ticket for loud mufflers, it sounded racy. But hey, it was wrong and sure as heck I would be in trouble when I got home. So we kids knew exactly where to go for the court of appeals: Chief Johnny Michelis.

We could walk right in to the old fire station [at First & McLeod] and ask to see Chief Michelis, and why not? We knew him from out at the Rod and Gun Club where he ostensibly liked to show off his deadly aim with his quick-draw, shooting-from-the-hip with a Police Chief snub-nosed .38 on the 25-



yard targets. He was Chief Michelis and we felt we could walk right in and air a grievance and he would listen. And he did.

Imagine that. We felt we could

walk right in to the Chief's office and he would have time to come out and listen to our grievance. "Start the car, run up the engine, let me listen." He would listen to the mufflers and make his call. He was the umpire we respected. You were either safe, or out. His call was final and then you had to pay or go to court.

"Tell your Dad, the mufflers are border-line," he'd say, as he tore up the ticket. "Just don't run your engine fast, you'll be okay."

Ah, the hidden wisdom in his pronouncement. "Just don't run your engine fast, you'll be okay." That's good advice for any hormonal teenager.

By the time Chief Michelis and his tan-Ford, official police chief car were retired, the town seem to have become just too large for any one cop to know the territory fully. "Mayberry, R.F.D." had transitioned into something else.

-By Rich Buckley

Auction: Items Needed

Save this date – the evening of May 27, 2010 – for the Livermore Heritage Guild Auction!

What do a small “tea chest” and large, solid wood file cabinet and an oak, icebox have in common? They are going to the auction!

Yes, some members of the Heritage Guild work on the Guild auction all year around. More people begin to become active, usually around March of each year. Bill Junk, Tim Sage and Auctioneer Lynn Owens recently picked up two items for the auction from the Lea family. Thank you Michal and Jim Lea!

Do you have something that has been lingering on the back deck, hiding in a corner of the garage, roosting on the attic rafters that will be a good auction item? Be brave, make the call! Have the item picked up for the auction.

Call Bill Junk at 447-4561 or Anna Siig at 447-5475 and



[Left to right] Bill Junk (prop master), Anna Siig (an eye for value), Lynn Owens (Auctioneer extraordinaire), Tim Sage (muscle). They are standing in the storage area where Auction items are amassed until the big day!

we will arrange for pick up of your donation. If you prefer to deliver the item or items, we can arrange that as well.

Hope to hear from you and see you at the auction!

-By Anna Siig

