



## Jitterbugs

by Will Bolton



For at least a couple of decades, a large poster has hung in the Duarte Garage that proudly announced Ford Model T “Jitterbug” races to be held at the Livermore Rodeo Grounds on July 2, 1939. This 42” tall and 29” wide black-and-white poster is quite eye catching and promises “Spills! Action! Thrills!” in a bold Art Deco style. Other than a few casual speculations about the Jitterbug races, there wasn’t much impetus to delve more deeply into the event until Greg Short, a member of the Henry’s A’s Ford Model A club, donated an original souvenir program for the races. The poster mentioned “Speed! Skill! Daring!” but the program stated that the event was sponsored by the Livermore Aerie No. 609 and benefited their Boy Scout fund. Of the 15 Livermore businesses advertised in the 1939 race program, Wentz Bros. Winery seems to be only one still in operation. Of most interest is the listing of the 12 drivers entered in the race from Livermore and cities as far away as Santa Rosa and Stockton. The program also offered this important safety tip: “In

Case of Accident – PLEASE STAY OFF TRACK – Thank You.”

During the 1920s and 1930s, Model T cars were plentiful and relatively cheap. Over 15 million Model Ts were built during its production run from 1908 to 1927. From 1910 to 1912, Ford build Model T Speedsters and raced them - driven by Ford employees – to publicize and promote the cars. Model T races were quite popular and became a staple at county fairs across the US. A stripped down Model T, named “Old Liz,” unexpectedly won the 1922 Pikes Peak Hill Climb. That widely publicized win led to the name “Tin Lizzy” being broadly applied to Model Ts. “Jitterbug” and “Doodlebug” were names for homemade tractors during the depression, often made from discarded Model T cars. The term was applied to Model Ts more generally. The Model T races were often referred to as “Tin Lizzie Derbies” or “Jitterbug Races” or some combination of those terms.

By 1939, the format of “Jitterbug Races” seems to have become fairly standard. A comparison of the rules for the July 1939 Livermore “Model T Jitterbug (Tin Lizzie) Races” and the August 1939 Wichita, Kansas, “Tin Lizzie Derby” had the following rules in common: All cars had to be stock Model Ts; the engine had to be essentially stock, with very minor external modifications; stock Model T wire or wood spoke wheels with any tires that would fit the stock wheels; fenders, running boards, all glass and the windshield frame had to be removed; each car may have two drivers, but only one can operate the car with the other remaining in the pit; and all cars must use regular auto gas. The total purse for the Livermore race was \$385 distributed across several finishing places. The total purse for the Wichita race was \$500. Perhaps indicative of the Midwest location of the Wichita race, its rules included the following: “Anyone being reckless of using unfair methods or using liquors before or during the race

will be disqualified and will forfeit the entry fee.” The Livermore rules were silent on these points.

In 1939, the Livermore Rodeo Grounds were in the Sunken Garden area between Pacific Avenue and South Livermore Avenue, behind the current Police Department and Public Library buildings. There was a wooden grandstand on the south side of the flat dirt track approximately the shape and size of a high school running track. The event was advertised as a 100 mile race divided into four heats. The top four finishers in the first three heats would compete in the fourth heat to determine the places in the overall race.

The race was promoted by a series of items in regional newspapers. The June 30, 1939, Martinez “News Gazette” noted that the Model T racers “...skid around the turns and roar down the straightaways, losing wheels, radiators blowing up, tangling and untangling in one exciting clash after another.” The Livermore “Herald” of the same date pointed out that “Actually, Tin Lizzie races aren’t as dangerous as they seem.” Without helmets, seat belts, rollover bars, or side impact protection, the primary safety item mentioned in the article was: “Wide seats allow the drivers to escape easily when danger threatens.

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**Top left:** Poster in the Duarte Garage. Photo courtesy of Will Bolton

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# Heritage Garden

by Loretta Kaskey

When last I wrote, the garden had gone fallow so we could do some serious water line maintenance. Though the garden demonstrates cultivars from the Ranch's time of significance between 1870s to 1930s, we do indulge in one modern luxury...drip irrigation and an automated timer. Our old lines lasted 10 years but were slowly getting less reliable. The new lines are all in and we can't wait to see the difference they will make.



In the top photo above, volunteers Lauren Robbers and Soraya Rawlings are piecing together irrigation lines, making the connections to the starter lines leading to the beds. The photo directly above is a close up of small tomato seedlings and the new drip irrigation in place. We typically cover the lines and bed with hay to conserve the moisture and shade the root systems of the plants in the Heritage Garden. We'll share the change in these plants come July.

We do have one bed that we had rushed to replace the lines in so we could have a limited winter crop. This bed has onions and an artichoke plant. The top middle photo shows Lauren Robbers harvesting our first artichoke of the season in early April.



She loves how nurturing and caring for this garden has increased her self-esteem. Volunteering has at times been peaceful, productive, and satisfying for the sense of accomplishment it provides.

Though we often think of Castroville (about 90 miles south of Livermore) as being the primary California artichoke locale, the connection to be made is through Italian immigrants. Artichokes are deeply embedded in Italian culinary culture. The Livermore Valley had a large Italian population that came to



work in our vineyards. The California artichoke boom happened in the early 1920s, and there's a chance some Livermore Valley farmers experimented with the crop.

I think light purple feels like a color of spring and we see that in the blooming of chives (photo above) and wisteria (photo below) at the Ranch. Hoping you will join us and spy your own colors of spring at Hagemann Ranch.



# Cows in Livermore

by Will Bolton



In the mid-1970s, Las Positas Road between North Livermore Avenue and First Street was a narrow, two-lane asphalt road with relatively little traffic. In the one and 3/4 miles between North Livermore Avenue and First Street, there were no crossing streets, a few farmhouse lanes, and a junction with the I-580 overpass at Las Colinas Road. One day as I rode my bike along Las Positas, I encountered a young calf standing by itself on the gravel verge adjacent to the Las Colinas overpass. It was separated from its mom and clearly agitated. I was concerned about it getting out on Las Positas and being hit by the occasional passing car or truck. This was before cell phones, so I stood there staying between the calf and the road wondering what I should do. Just then I spotted a Livermore Police car headed west on Las Positas. I waved and the cruiser pulled off the road and stopped between me and the calf in a shower of gravel. The officer rolled down his window and asked, "What's up?" I replied that I was worried about the calf getting out on the road. He asked, "What calf?" I pointed across the hood of his cruiser,

thinking "The one you almost hit when you stopped." He gazed to his right, took a contemplative moment, and said, "I'll take it from here." I thanked him and went on with my bike ride. I had been aware of the association of Livermore and cattle from before we moved to California: the Livermore High "Cowboys," the World's Fastest Rodeo, the Rodeo Parade in downtown, the Cattlemen's Association, but this calf encounter made it clear that there really were cows around, and sometimes in, Livermore.

The history of cattle in California goes back to the introduction of Spanish longhorn cattle about 250 years ago. The Spanish cattle were primarily raised for their hides and tallow, which was used for soap and candles, with meat being a less important product. Before refrigeration, meat couldn't be kept long or transported far without special treatment, like drying, salting, pickling, or smoking. However, the Gold Rush brought a rapid rise in, and concentration of, population in Northern California. This increased the demand for meat, which could be processed, sold, and

consumed before spoiling. This change in the market resulted in the introduction of European breeds of cattle that had been bred for meat production; for example, Hereford and Angus. Angus are naturally hornless, fast growing, hardy and adaptable. The breed now dominates the American beef cattle business.

When we moved to Livermore in the 1970s, we lived in Springtown. Just a couple blocks north of our rental there was a fenced pasture with cows. I enjoyed being able to ride my bike a short distance and get a sense of tranquility from being near the open space and the cows. When we moved away from Springtown and the years passed, that sense of proximity to cattle faded. Recently at a work party at the

(Cows, continued on Page 8)

**Top:** A few of Charlie Sweet's cattle with dogs Chester and Reno (on the water tank). On command, Reno will jump into the tank, jump out, and shake, so it's clear if there is water in the tank without having to walk over and look in each tank. Photo by Will Bolton.

# Lusitanics in Livermore

By Carolyn Lord

April is the month when the fullness of spring is readily apparent: wildflowers in the hills, leafed-out trees, blooming citrus, and luxuriant flowers. April also brings perfect spring days for me to sit outside and paint: warm, sunny, with a fresh breeze. In my garden, California poppies and hollyhocks provide the perfect motif to paint.

The title of a painting “Abra Abril” literally translates from Portuguese to English “To open April”. This expresses the idea that Spring has fully arrived and hints at an additional aspect: the contribution of the Portuguese community to the Tri-Valley.

Anticipating a painting trip to Brasil in April 1988, I attended a Chabot College evening class in Portuguese. I learned that Portugal shares the Iberian Peninsula with Spain though Portugal and Spain are not to be conflated! Those who descended from the Spanish language and culture are Hispanic; those who descended from the Portuguese language and culture are Lusitanic. I also learned that Portuguese is the 6th most spoken language in the world after languages such as Mandarin, Spanish and English. This had facilitated global emigration, diplomacy, and international trade.

Portugal’s out-sized influence on world history began in the early 1400s and ended in tragedy with the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami of 1755.

This expansive period began with Duarte, King of Portugal (1391-1438)

who encouraged his brother, Henrique o Navegador (Prince Henry the Navigator, 1394-1460) to begin what became known as the “Age of Discovery”. Previously ignored Atlantic islands were colonized: Madeira (1420), Azores (1427), and Cape Verde (1455). Vasco da Gama sailed to India in 1498. Pedro Alvares Cabral discovered Brasil in 1500. Fernao Magalhaes (Ferdinand Magellan) circumnavigated the globe 1519-1522. Joao Rodrigues Cabrilho (Cabrillo) was the first European to navigate the coast of California in 1542. Antonio de Andrade was a Jesuit priest and explorer who was the first European to cross the Himalayas into Tibet in 1624. Portugal’s colonial period was the longest of the European countries, from 1415 to the dissolution of the Portugal Empire on April 25, 1974.

Within the Christian tradition, Pentacost Sunday is a holy day in May that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit, Spirito Santo, on Jesus’ apostles and Mary 50 days after his resurrection. In the 1300s, the Azores were suffering from a famine so the queen of Portugal, Rainha Santa Isabel (1271-1336) sent food-laden ships to the Azores, 900 miles west of Lisbon. The ships arrived on Pentacost Sunday and it was considered a miracle. Centuries later, the Azoreans and their descendants continue to celebrate the compassion of Rainha Santa Isabel.

In Livermore, there was a Portuguese Hall at the southwest corner of North Livermore Avenue and Linden. In May,

Azoreans would crown an honorary queen and parade to Saint Micheal’s Catholic Church at Maple and Fourth Streets. Following Mass, a communal meal was served.

Now that I’m alert to the Lusitanic history and culture, I recognize the influences in our area. Almeida, Amaral, Cabral, and Duarte are common surnames in the valley. Vasco, Andrade, Vargas, and Isabel are freeway exits. As a result, driving around for errands is never mindless when there is so much history close at hand!



Above: “Abra Abril” painting by Carolyn Lord.

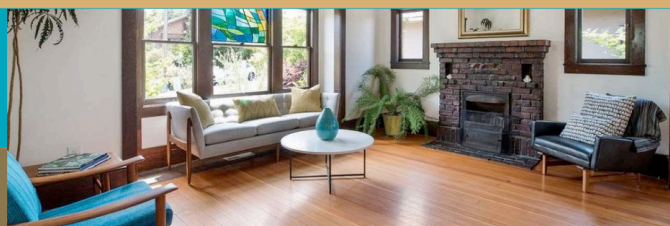
## EXCITING NEWS! HISTORIC HOME TOUR

Saturday,  
October 17, 2026

SAVE THE DATE!

CO-PRESENTED BY  
LIVERMORE HERITAGE GUILD

CO-PRESENTED BY  
LIVERMORE AMADOR SYMPHONY GUILD



# Historic Depot Phone Reconnects

By Jeff Kaskey

When young kids (say, under 25) come into the History Center, I sometimes amuse myself by asking them to show me how they would dial their own number on the black rotary dial phone we have on display. The under -15 group rarely gets it right, and only about half of the 15 – 25 group could phone home. This is perhaps better than I should expect, given that the push button (“touch tone”) phone was introduced in the 1960s and dials were essentially gone from common use by the 1990s. Still, we “dial” a number, so I’ll claim that my pleasure is gained from the opportunity for a lexical teachable moment.

Interestingly, visitors also get to work on our 1926 Sundstrand mechanical calculator which operates with pushbutton digits. A worthy question might be why it was that phones took half a century to catch up with the pushbuttons on calculators. But we digress.

While many of us think of the dial phone as a slightly dated but familiar appliance, phones without dials are considered antiques, having faded from use in the 1930s. We might remember seeing one in a cobwebbed building corner (I personally removed one as part of a renovation on the Case Western Reserve University campus in the 1970s) but few among us saw them in common usage.

This long walk down a winding memory lane is to introduce the phone gifted to the Guild back in May of 2025 by our recently deceased good friend, rail fan, scientist and City Historian, Alan Frank. This is a classic wooden wall telephone which had served in the Southern Pacific Depot in the early 20th century and was not removed until 1965.

The phone is a model 317AE, introduced by Western Electric around 1911. Our model has features that suggest it was made between 1911 and 1916 (there was no formal serial numbering system), with updates retrofitted later. This is a somewhat specialized phone for service at the Depot. It is devoid of any ringer,

which would have been two brass ‘bells’ mounted on the front where you see a rectangular piece of wood trim. My unsupported guess is that the ringer would have been remotely mounted somewhere in the main area of the building, since it is unlikely anyone would be waiting by the phone in the office. Further, this phone does not have the traditional hand held receiver, instead a headset is hardwired in. While this looks like an afterthought, the configuration was documented in the printed instructions for the phone, and was a known modification for use in offices where having both hands free for writing and handling papers would be important.

Phones were well established in Livermore by the time this one was in place, with the first known installation being by J. O. McKown in 1884. Besides being a local druggist, McKown was also a writer for the local paper and the phone helped him get news of neighboring communities easier than using the telegraph. In town phone service soon spread, and by the early 1890s, the town of Altamont became one of the quirky rural communities to rig up a phone system through the barbed wire fencing.

Lest you think DoorDash is a new concept, Gary Drummond writes in the January 2005 Guild newsletter that around the beginning of the 20th Century, “C. H. Acker, who was available at [phone #] Main 61, ran a messenger and buying service, traveling to San Francisco each day to deliver messages and to buy any merchandise his customers ordered.” More generally phone service was already a critical link for business, safety, gossip and connections among friends and family.

Speaking of connection, this item is also a great connection between the Guild and Alan Frank. Alan always enjoyed a good story, so it is nice to have this artifact to tell the story of the SP Depot.



**Top:** The front of the depot phone with a wired in headset; **Above:** The inside of the depot phone. Photos by Jeff Kaskey

# Midway School Project

by Barbara Soules

The City of Livermore granted us Entitlement on March 30th!!! This means we have permission to move forward on the relocation and restoration of Midway School. We will move it from the Mulqueeny Ranch in the Altamont Hills to Hagemann Park next to Historic Hagemann Ranch. We are very grateful to be at this juncture.

It is now in the hands of the architects, contractors, heavy haulers, long haulers and the City building department. All these entities need to coordinate to ensure the next steps of this long project proceed smoothly. For example, the roof and lean-to must be removed and the building stabilized prior to the move. There are two companies involved in the

move. They must both be available to work on the same day. The concrete contractor needs to be ready to pour a foundation when the school building arrives at Hagemann Park. Once the concrete foundation is poured, there is a waiting period for it to cure before any work can be done on the building.

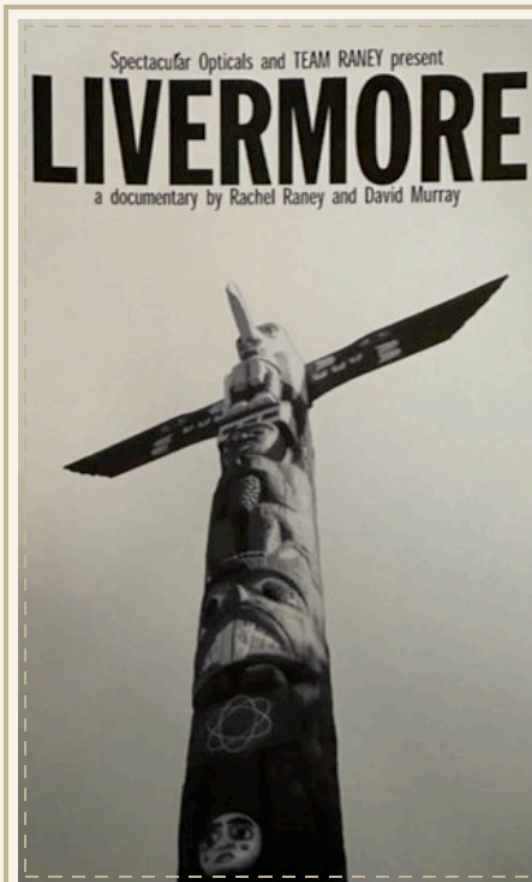
The timing all depends upon the availability of these several players. Be assured that there will be a bold Mail Chimp announcement to LHG members of when the school will be moved. That 17 to 19-mile journey will be a memorable and historic event.

Fundraising continues in earnest. Bricks are selling nicely and major donations



are always welcome. We encourage you to partner with the Guild in creating a new historic museum in Livermore.

To create a realistic Midway classroom environment, we need some additional artifacts. If you have access to any of the items listed on our chalkboard, please contact Barbara at [tbsoules@yahoo.com](mailto:tbsoules@yahoo.com)



*Livermore Heritage Guild in support of  
the City of Livermore's 150th Year of Incorporation*

*presents a special screening of*  
**Livermore: The Movie**

**JUNE 30, 2026**

Doors 6:15 PM · Film at 7:00 PM

*Post-screening Q&A with friends of the film*  
Cathie Cryer Brown, Tom Bramell & Tim Sage

*Ticketing through Vine Cinema and Alehouse - \$8*



# Hagemann Happenings

by Barbara Soules

Spring at Hagemann Ranch is always eventful—new growth, new arrivals, and lots of activity. This year is no exception. Both the Sunflower Hill (SFH) and the Heritage Gardens are planted with new seedlings. 4-H acquired two new bunnies. There are now four cute rabbits in the bunny corner of the H Barn. They are proving to be a big attraction at Open Houses. SFH has eight new chickens of various breeds in their coop. The result is plentiful eggs that are donated to worthy causes. Their three shade structures are complete and proved to be extremely helpful at a recent event on a rainy day.

A very generous professional painter, Jeff Ruesga, saw our bi-colored H Barn exterior and offered to donate his time and skills to repaint it. The results are amazing!

Community Outreach is a major goal of our work at the Ranch. In addition to Sundays at Hagemann, there were a couple of other nice events this month. On a recent Saturday SFH held their first “Spring Planting Day”. Guests helped plant a significant part of their garden and enjoyed some good food, games and met the new chickens. The same day, 4-H had Small Animal Field Day. A large

group of 4-Hers brought their small animals, and several set up learning stations associated with their animals. A young goat owner taught me the process of making yarn from the raw wool of an Angora Goat. At one station chicks in an incubator were hatching before our eyes. With a raffle and a “best dressed animal” contest this was an exciting and educational event with lots of member engagement.

In mid-April a team of Guild members led by Dottie Eberly participated in Ag Day at Livermore High School. This was the second year that we taught third graders about blacksmithing tools from the 1900s. They made personal dog tags by pounding letter stamps into aluminum dog tags using an anvil and blacksmithing hammer. Judy Bearrows often has kids and parents do this craft at the Blacksmith Shop during open houses, and she generously donated all the materials for this activity as well.

The regular Open Houses continue. The March theme was Children’s Day with a very large crowd enjoying the 4-H animals, the two guest pigs and the HistoryMobile. It was an unusually warm March day, causing the petting zoo to be moved to the front yard. The rabbits especially liked the new location.

The April Open House was Mad Hatter Tea Party. The Ranch was transformed into Alice’s Wonderland thanks to the creativity of Kathy Lee. Dottie Eberly and team staged a delightful sit-down formal tea party in the front yard and Cantabella Children’s Chorus provided some lovely background music. They are a very talented group.

Please save Sunday, May 31 as a very important date for all LHG members and supporters. The Cars and Engines open house and the traditional auction and spaghetti dinner will both be held on the same day at the Ranch. The name of the combined event is **Livermore Heritage Fair**. Everyone is encouraged to take part in any way you would like. Your talents and time are very much needed. Our resident auctioneer will not be in town, therefore we are still looking for a

replacement auctioneer. Please let us know immediately if you know someone who can fill this position. Significant experience items or donations from local businesses are also very welcome.



**Far Left:** The all-one-color H Barn. **Top:** Small Animal Field Day - the best dressed turtle you will ever see. **Above:** The Kunekune pigs were very friendly at the March Children’s Day event. Photos by Barbara Soules



## Cows

(continued from page 3)

Duarte Garage, Charlie Sweet – a regular volunteer at the Garage – said that he needed to leave a little early to get his ropes, saddle, and other equipment ready to “work cattle” the next day. It suddenly hit me that there were still cows near Livermore and they were still being raised and worked with many of the same tools and techniques that I saw in countless western movies and TV shows like *Rawhide* and *Bonanza* as I grew up.

Charlie Sweet’s family has been ranching near Livermore for about 140 years. When he learned of my interest, Charlie thoughtfully invited me to visit his ranch to look around and to learn more about how the cattle business is done these days (spoiler alert: meat doesn’t magically appear shrink wrapped at the meat counter). The majority of beef production involves a multi-tiered process with a high degree of specialization and development at each level. Charlie has a cow and calf operation which breeds and raises calves until they are ready for the next step in the process. Successfully running this operation takes a lot of knowledge, experience, planning, hard work, and maybe a little luck. The ranchers have to understand the characteristics of the breed they are working and be alert to the condition of the animals in their herd. They have to understand their ground and how much food it can produce to support their animals, which is strongly affected by the typical weather patterns and the year-to-year variations. Ranchers always have to be thinking one or two or more years ahead.

Several times a year, the cattle are “gathered,” that is, moved from their large pasture into a smaller enclosure where they can be worked on individually. This is the “roundup,” which could be done with small 4x4 utility vehicles or horses. Cattle dogs can help keep the cattle moving and together. The cattle are concentrated in progressively smaller enclosed areas. This provides an opportunity to look at each animal more closely, count them, administer vaccinations, and accomplish other necessary actions. Calves get

special attention. Each animal is “marked” with a brand, often by a hot metal iron – just like in the movies. This mark provides easy identification if a cow or calf gets separated from the herd, like the calf on Las Positas Road. Little boy calves receive a structural modification that changes any plans they might have had for the rest of their lives. Charlie’s ranch has an ingenious series of pens that lead to a cattle chute where each animal can be safely and conveniently worked on individually. Calves are often worked on in the pen, on the ground with ropes on the head and heels. This process - used for hundreds of years - seems to be best for the calf and the people.

Pasturing cattle requires significant land. In the area surrounding Livermore, the “stocking level,” or number of acres required for each cow, is between 10-12 up to 40. Having access to land is a

significant consideration for ranchers. Population pressures have driven up the cost of land to the point where it’s likely that no (legal) agricultural activity can generate enough income to pay for the purchase of land. Passing agricultural land from generation to generation takes careful preparation. There are policies and laws that encourage continued agricultural land use, sustainable agriculture, and protection of open space. These include grant programs, agricultural trusts, and conservation easements. There are many social, economic, environmental, and esthetic reasons to preserve agriculture and open space in the face of population pressures. With preparation, planning and commitment, we can hope there will always be cows - if not actually in - at least close to Livermore.

**Below:** Charlie Sweet and Chester looking over his ranch. Photo by Will Bolton





## An Enduring Glow

by Tom Bramell



On Saturday, June 6, 2026, at Fire Station 6 on East Ave., from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, the Livermore Pleasanton Fire Department will celebrate 125 years of the enduring glow of the Centennial Lightbulb, watching over the firefighters and equipment ready to serve Livermore.

The Livermore Fire Department was organized in 1874 with the establishment of the Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. Two years later, the Niagara Engine Company No.1 was added to the department of volunteers. A two-story truck house was built on Second Street in 1875, to house their firefighting equipment and provide a town hall meeting place upstairs. Today, that location is the site of the Wells Fargo Bank parking lot.

Many of the emergencies the two groups responded to were night time fires. Upon arriving at the truck house, the "Livermore Fire Boys" in the darkness, first lit their kerosene lanterns to gather their equipment, ladders, hose cart, hand pumper and hose wagon, before hand-pulling or hitching horses to respond to the incident.

In 1876, the newly incorporated City of Livermore, was a small town of 830 residents and 91 businesses, with dirt roads and gas-lamp street lighting. By 1899, as the town grew, local businessman Dennis Bernal, owner and superintendent of the Livermore Power

and Water Company, helped usher in a new era by providing water service and bringing electricity to the community. His company became the means of supplying electricity and arc lights to the towns of Livermore and Pleasanton and electric power to neighboring ranches.

It wasn't long before the land on which the company resided came into question and a lawsuit followed with a neighboring gaslight competitor in Livermore, William Mendenhall, shutting down the electric operation through a court order for several days. The lawsuit settled a year later and shortly afterward Mr. Bernal sold his interests in the Livermore Power and Water Company.

Upon selling his company interests, Mr. Bernal donated the lightbulb and fixture to the fire department truck house on Second St., to assist them in the darkness.

In an interview with Mr. Bernal's daughter Zylpha Beck in 1972, she recalled that her sister was nine years old when her father sold his business. Her sister was born in 1892, "so he sold it in 1901," she recalled. "My father was a very generous man, and he never publicized the things he did for other people," she said.

The Fire Department's famous light bulb, is a 60-watt, Mill Type, Shelby lamp, constructed about 1900 by Shelby Electric Company in Shelby, Ohio was delivered to Dennis Bernal and the Livermore Power and Water Company. The lamp is hand blown with a carbon filament and Shelby Company's initial claim was the new light bulb was 20% more efficient that would last 30% longer than the bulbs on the market at that time.

The light remained in the truck house station until 1906 when it was moved to the new fire station attached to the police station and town hall upstairs at 2365 First St., where it remained undisturbed, quietly glowing, continuously providing light over the equipment in the station 24 hours a day.

In 1972, a young reporter, Mike Dunstan, with the Tri-Valley Herald and News, on his first assignment discovered the longevity of the historic light bulb. His article went nation wide and caught international attention as well.

He interviewed John Jensen, who had been a volunteer firefighter in 1905 with the "Livermore Fire Boys". Mr. Jensen recalled the light bulb and its legend. John Anderson, another volunteer, when interviewed, said "I passed it every day on my way to school" and recalled the light never being turned off.

As a result of Mr. Dunstan's investigations and reporting, the bulb's longevity was declared the oldest known working light bulb in 1972 by Guinness Book of World Records and Ripley's Believe It or Not.

In 1976, a new Livermore Headquarters fire station was built on East Ave and the old obsolete fire station on First St was abandoned. In May of that year, the light bulb was moved to its new home at the East Ave station. During the move the light was out for 22 minutes but is still considered the longest continuously burning lightbulb in the world.

Before the lightbulb's move to East Ave. the light hung down low on the apparatus floor. Standing on the tail-step of the engine as it rolled out the door firefighters tapped the bulb for luck causing it to swing back and forth on its long cord. No more, as it now hangs high from the floor.

Today, the light can be viewed on a live webcam at [www.Centennialbulb.org](http://www.Centennialbulb.org).

Juliet Goodrich will emcee the Centennial Light Bulb, 125-year celebration and the event is Free to the public. Activities will include the LHG HistoryMobile, a fire safety house, antique fire apparatus, fire equipment displays, live music, children's activities, memorabilia sales, historical era attire, BBQ, cake and ice cream.

**Above Left:** Light Bulb at Fire Station 6 on East Avenue. Photo by Dick Jones, rjaerial.

# Jitterbugs

(continued from page 1)

The Livermore race was run on July 2, 1939. The top three finishers were all cars and drivers from Santa Rosa. There were a number of breakdowns and collisions but no one was injured. In one incident, two cars became stuck together in a rear-end collision. Fortunately, a third car collided with the two stuck cars, knocking them free...and the race continued. The details of the race are a little hard to understand based on the newspaper accounts. The July 7, 1939 Livermore Herald race description is in the expanded version of this article, with additional photographs, available in the Newsletter archive at the Livermore Heritage Guild website.

We have been unable to find photos of the Livermore Jitterbug Races. If anyone has information or photos related to the 1939 Jitterbug Races, please get in touch.

## Francis Toscano's Car Saga

In the program for the Livermore Jitterbug Races, Francis Toscano, of Sunol, was listed as an entrant but with no car number. The reason for that omission may have been because he didn't have a car to race when he entered. The June 30, 1939, issue of the Livermore Herald had a short item explaining the process Toscano went through in an attempt to get into the race. The fact that he may have already paid his \$10 entry fee might have been the reason for his persistence.

Richard Finn did some genealogical research on the drivers entered in the race. The only person he could find information on was Francis (Frank) R Toscano, born 8 March 1918 in Sunol, Alameda Co. and died 27 Feb 1996 in Claremont, Los Angeles Co. He was buried in Saint Augustine Cemetery in Pleasanton. His father and mother were Frank and Mary Catherine Toscano. In 1940 he was single and a laborer. In his WWII Army Enlistment he is listed as a semiskilled chauffeur or driver.

Livermore Herald  
June 30, 1939

## Credit This Racer With Making A Deal!

If sheer audacity counts in a Tin Lizzie race—and they tell us it's more than half the battle—tab Francis Toscano, Sunol, as a very probable winner in the race Sunday afternoon. He came up this week with a deal that indicates conclusively he'll be out there gambling every inch of the way.

Eager to try his hand at the racing game, Toscano and his mechanic, Sidney Lambert of Pleasanton, searched Oakland used car lots until he found the Model T of his dreams.

Already pretty well stripped, with a motor that purred sweetly, at a price exactly right—\$2 cash—the bus had only one minor deficiency. It had no wheels!

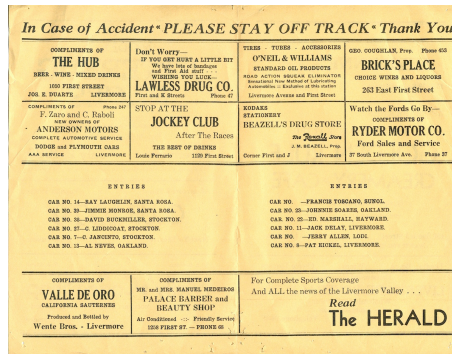
That might have stopped some fellows, but not Toscano. He happened to know that M. L. Avilla, Sunol, owned a complete set of Model T wheels, so he bought the car—\$2 cash—and went into deep conference with Avilla.


The wheel owner was more than a bit reluctant to permit his running gear to take the turns on the Rodeo grounds track. In fact he refused point blank to give, lend, or sell the wheels and the whole deal was at a standstill until Toscano, in a flash of inspiration, evolved the one offer which Avilla couldn't refuse.

And so, Toscano's car, running on Avilla's wheels, will be in the race Sunday afternoon. And after the race, in repayment for the use of his wheels, Avilla GETS THE CAR!



Above: Jitterbug race program, pages 1 & 4.  
Center: Jitterbug race program, pages 2 & 3.  
Right: Livermore Herald, June 30, 1939.  
Scans by Will Bolton





**LIVERMORE  
HERITAGE  
GUILD**

**Save the Date!**

**Annual Auction  
and  
Spaghetti Dinner**

**Dedicated to Anna Siig**

**Saturday, May 31  
6:00pm  
Hagemann Ranch**

## You are Needed ... At the Fair!

Be a volunteer at the Alameda County Fair any time, any day, Wednesdays – Sundays, and earn money for the Heritage Guild!

LHG is pleased to be one of the nonprofits partnering with the Alameda County Fair volunteer program. The Fair uses volunteers to monitor areas such as Small Animals, Amateur Gardens, Fine Arts, Education, and Hobby Buildings, or to work at the concerts or the race track. If you enjoy interacting with people and being a part of the energy and excitement of the fair, this is the place for you. Most volunteers come back year after year and count this among the highlights of their summer.

Volunteers are not paid directly for their time but instead earn \$7 per hour for the Heritage Guild. Last year four LHG

members worked at the Fair and made \$500.00 for the Guild. With your help, we can do better than that this year! It's easy, it's fun, and you're making money for LHG all at the same time! Please join us!

All volunteers will be trained and will receive free admission to the Fair and paid parking for shift working days. Because most shifts are only four hours, volunteers can attend the Fair as a guest before or after their shift. As a bonus, volunteers receive two more admission tickets to the Fair to go back and enjoy the Fair on another day as a guest.

**Use the QR code on the right to create a volunteer account, if you don't already have one.** Once you have your account, schedule your shifts for the 2026 Fair! All this is done online.

Simply pick the dates/times and areas of interest. The Fair's staff tries to honor requests of friends to work together for a shift with most scheduling done on a "first come, first served" basis. Try it! Let's "Celebrate Summer" and help LHG!



## LHG Events Calendar

Date	Time	Event	Place
Wednesday, May 13	7pm	LHG Board Meeting	Virtual Meeting
Sunday, May 17	10am-2pm	Duarte Garage Open House	Duarte Garage
Saturday, May 23	9:30am-12pm	Workday: Hagemann Ranch	Hagemann Ranch
Sunday, May 31	1-5pm	<b>Sundays at Hagemann:</b> Cars and Engines	Hagemann Ranch
Sunday, May 31	6 - 8pm	<b>Spaghetti Dinner/Annual Auction</b>	Hagemann Ranch
Saturday, June 6	10am-2pm	125th Light Bulb Celebration	Fire Station 6
Wednesday, June 10	7pm	LHG Board Meeting	Virtual Meeting
Saturday, June 13	10am	Rodeo Parade	2nd St Livermore
Wednesday, June 17	5:30pm - 7:30pm	150th Celebration	Main Library
Saturday, June 20	9:30am-12pm	Workday: Hagemann Ranch	Hagemann Ranch
Sunday, June 21	10am-2pm	Duarte Garage Open House	Duarte Garage
Sunday, June 28	1-5pm	<b>Sundays at Hagemann:</b> Rancho Day	Hagemann Ranch
Tuesday, June 30	6:30pm	"Livermore, the Movie"	The Vine Cinema
Wednesday, July 8	7pm	LHG Board Meeting	Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, July 15	7pm	Then and Now Talk: Alameda County Sheriff's Office & Law Enforcement-Livermore Valley	Main Library
Saturday, July 18	9:30am-12pm	Workday: Hagemann Ranch	Hagemann Ranch
Sunday, July 19	10am-2pm	Duarte Garage Open House	Duarte Garage
Sunday, July 26	1-5pm	<b>Sundays at Hagemann:</b> Self-guided Tours	Hagemann Ranch
Wednesday, August 12	7pm	LHG Board Meeting	Virtual Meeting
Sunday, August 16	10am-2pm	Duarte Garage Open House	Duarte Garage

# Welcome New and Renewing Members!

## January - March 2026

### Patron

Harry Briley

### Sponsor

Dennis Peifer - NEW

### Senior

Mary Keech Butterfield  
Nancy Harrington  
Kris Kulp - NEW  
Thomas Kulp - NEW  
Lynn Rogan  
Dennis Tungate  
Kathleen Young

### Individual

Ron Chaffee  
Alison Eberly  
Robert Hall  
Jennifer Herman - NEW  
Patrick Timmer

### Household

Keith and Jeanne Brown  
Douglas Jones  
William and Nancy Mohler  
Neal Pann

## In Appreciation

### Donations

Mary Keech Butterfield  
Barbara Sobrepena  
Dennis Tungate

### Midway School Project in memory of Anna Siig

Jay Frost  
Janet Von Toussaint

### Duarte Garage Projects

Tim Sage

### Midway School Project

Gail Bryan  
Patty Burton  
Kaitlyn Dressler  
Rickie Friedli/Giono  
Donald and Linda Milanese

How times have changed ...

Livermore Herald  
August 25, 1881

There is not now a good unoccupied dwelling house in Livermore. In no way would money bring a better interest than investing in half a dozen neat cottage dwellings, which would readily rent for 12 dollars per month each.

An enhanced version of the LHG newsletter containing additional photos and information can be found at:

[https://www.lhg.org/Documents/Newsletters/\\_Menu\\_Newsletters.html](https://www.lhg.org/Documents/Newsletters/_Menu_Newsletters.html)

If you have not heard about our various events, then maybe we don't have your email. Please update us at [lhg@lhg.org](mailto:lhg@lhg.org) and we'll let you know about all the heritage happenings!

## Contact Us

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The Livermore Heritage Guild newsletter is an official publication of the Livermore Heritage Guild. Contact the newsletter editor with comments or suggestions.

The Livermore Heritage Guild History Center is located in the historic 1911 Carnegie Library building at 2155 Third Street.  
925-449-9927

Hours for the History Center are varied at this time. Please call ahead or check the website for updated information as it becomes available.

[www.lhg.org](http://www.lhg.org)

Annual membership dues are: Individual \$25.00, Household \$35.00, Senior (age 62+) \$15.00, Student \$15.00, Sponsor \$75.00 and Patron \$150.00. Life (Individual) \$500.00 memberships are also available.

Renewing memberships online: [www.lhg.org](http://www.lhg.org) hit the JOIN/RENEW button

Please make any checks payable to "LHG."  
Livermore Heritage Guild  
P.O. Box 961  
Livermore, CA 94551

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2026

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FOUR-STAR