

## **2023 SUMMARY HAGEMANN RANCH REPORT**

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## Overview

The Livermore Heritage Guild continues to be pleased and honored to be able to provide service to and management of Livermore's culturally important Hagemann Ranch. Our role in connecting to the resident non-profits as well as our community and visitors is a significant responsibility that we carry with pride and pleasure. That positive perspective is made possible by the enthusiastic response from all of the important stakeholders.

2023 marks another year with the usual ranch events, projects, partnerships and chores, and additionally we have started working with the professionals who will help guide restoration of the ranch house, as well as structural repairs to two of the barns. Much of this year's report will seem familiar as even the preservation and restoration tasks take their familiar pattern. But just below the surface of the calm duck is some furious paddling, as even familiar tasks require hundreds of volunteer hours, planning meetings, historic research and always coordination.

The Guild has continued to coordinate chores, requirements and ongoing improvements on the site via monthly meetings between the three non-profits operating on the site, as well as many more focused communications for repairs, supplies, and services. The amazing volunteers from the Guild and each of the other programs makes this possible. The team's resourcefulness and dedication continues to make sure the needs of the site are met. This report is a short summary of the Guild's activity for 2023.

## Public Outreach and Programs

### ***Sundays At Hagemann***

As always, our events attract visitors, families often in particular. The no-cost day creates an easy activity choice for a wide range of visitors. Our guests are great-grandparents, packs of teens, strollered tykes, garden groups, history buffs and more, and they come from all over the Bay Area and sometimes beyond.

An active open house program can have dozens of volunteers. Besides the Guild's own members and volunteers from the other programs on site, we benefit from the services of The National Charity League mothers and daughters, local Scout troops, the Young Men's Service League, and guests from one open house sometimes reappear as volunteers for another one.

Besides sharing the historic site with our visitors, they also get to meet **4-H** and **Sunflower Hill**, the other non-profits operating on site, and each group has garnered fans and members from the events. The benefit is mutual, as our non-profit partners on site are among the attractions guests enjoy. We also often have a guest public-interest group offering information or activities. These have included **Zone 7 Water**, **Choose Love Livermore**, **Livermore Library**, **Questers**, **Hispanic Heritage Center** and artists including perennial site exhibitor **Sue Vincent** pottery.

In 2023 we had over 2,000 visitors. Our guests come from a wide area around the region and it is common for us to have visitors from San Jose, the Peninsula, much of the East Bay, Tracy and San Francisco as well as travelers from much farther whose trips coincide with our events. We get a lot of interest in the specifics of Livermore history and the history of our region as well as more general questions regarding a wide range of topics including gardens, architecture and farm work. One of the recurring monthly activities is our Site Tour featuring history of the site in the context of Livermore area history.

Maintaining this as a free event, usually including free refreshments and snacks, is an important aspect of this event (as with most Heritage Guild events). We want to make sure that everyone feels welcome to attend with their whole family, with no concern about affordability. Donations are always gratefully accepted, but we take great pleasure in being accessible in as many ways as possible.

### **January**

Our January Sundays at Hagemann public open house took a slightly more relaxed stance this year, as a freeform "visit and tour" day without a lot of structured events, saving those for the warmer months of the year. Given the flexibility of a relaxed program, we invited the special needs RADD (Recreation for Adults with Developmental Disabilities) group to be involved in the day, and shared their program with Sunflower Hill. It was rainy and chilly, but everyone had a great time.



## February

After a relaxing tour day for January, Mother Nature gave us a challenge and caused a week delay before we could kick off with the popular theme of historic vehicles also featuring a new exhibit of historic farm equipment. The vintage vehicles were parked around the ranch including the Guild's restored 1944 Livermore fire truck.

As we do each month, free refreshments were served, and kids could make their own themed Hagemann Ranch button to wear and take home.

## March

This was Children's Day, and it did not disappoint, attracting over 600 guests. While we have ranch animals every month, for Children's Day 4-H brings in a petting zoo with a menagerie ranging from show rabbits to sheep and guinea pigs. In the back yard, kids get a chance to try out vintage chores and old-time games. The Heritage Guild HistoryMobile also visits in March, presenting our 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Livermore history curriculum, which also works out to be a perfect overview for adults. The day still includes many of our consistent activities, such as artists and the blacksmith shop.

## April

Once again we celebrated Alice in Wonderland, which was written in the same decade that Hagemann Ranch was established. The Mad Hatter Tea Party is fun for guests and volunteers alike, though it takes an especially large amount of preparation on our part. Lots of folks showed up in costume, and the tea party was a guest favorite. Puppets and our story teller kept the kids entertained before they headed off to work on vintage crafts.



## May

Rancho Day features ranching activities in a cowboy theme. We had to be agile when some of our performers canceled at the last minute, but filled in with 4-H demonstrations and also brought out the hayride, so no one knew anything was missing. Great cowboy music was provided by Sugar Bear band, and Miss Livermore Rodeo, Maci Hachmann was our celebrity guest. We still had old time crafts and games, and kids and their parents took some time to learn lassoing.

## June, July, August

The heat of summer often means we have lower attendance, so we used the same "visit and tour" format we had for January. Some months actually had ideal weather, so our guests had a great day visiting. We repeated the lassoing lessons, blacksmith activities and gave a number of family tours. It was noted that while kids must be active in other places for the summer, we had a higher percentage of seniors during the summer months. We also had developed our Midway School display, so we could talk to guests about our plans for restoring the Livermore area's last standing one-room school house and bringing it into town. The relaxed schedule is also a big help to our volunteers as they are often traveling during the summer.



## September

We celebrate the beginning of school with a school days theme for August, but this year we called it Recess at the Ranch. This event has old time school sessions as a full sit-down class for the kids, including writing slates, historic readers and school songs. Since Sunflower Hill had an event for their RADD students, we included them in the class sessions and they were very appreciative. We gave tours through the Livermore HistoryMobile, our traveling history museum, and the Livermore-Amador Genealogical Society (L-AGS) talked to people about their own family history as well as that of pioneer Livermore families. The band Joey T and Friends kept us all entertained on this beautiful September day.



## October

Halloween and Día de los Muertos dominate the October event, and many kids as well as adults arrive in costume. While the specific costumes may not reflect the site's historic era, these costume holidays are very historically appropriate. We brought out the hay wagon rides again for this event and the wagon was packed all day with people taking the narrated mobile tour of the site. The hay ride gives a convenient way to tell the story of the site and its relationship to our town, without the usual distractions of a walking tour. We got great reviews from our guests and many talked about having learned more about their town.

## November

Our year of Open House events ends with a celebration of the upcoming holidays. We had a Diwali display, a piñata activity from the Hispanic Heritage Center, and of course a Santa visit. Craft artists created a gift bazaar and we had live piano music throughout the day. Kids could play vintage games and a magician held court under the great pine tree. As always, we gave historic tours of the site and answered lots of questions about local history.

## Partner Programs

The Guild provides support to events and projects of our on-site partners. While each group continues to develop and grow, our support responsibilities tend to stay fairly constant: repairs, clean-up, infrastructure and general assistance. We are also able to aid in coordination between the programs, such as hauling tractor loads of 4-H manure to the Sunflower Hill and Heritage gardens. Likewise, Sunflower Hill's special needs clients often enjoy interactions with the 4-H animals.



4-H animal programs give a direct tie to the ranching heritage of Livermore. Their client list is growing, keeping them very active on the site. Also, with more people spending time gardening at home, their manure supply has become somewhat of a hot commodity. We have already had an informal program of supplying manure for local gardens, but this year we partnered with Alameda County StopWaste and took their composting class, so we can deliver not only better compost but also better gardening information to local home gardeners.



Sunflower Hill continued with their staff and volunteers and special needs clients to produce wholesome food which nourished those in need. Open Heart Kitchen and Culinary Angels are two of the beneficiary programs for food from Sunflower Hill's gardens, while the local special needs community benefits from the Sunflower Hill programs. Because the primary goal of the garden is to provide a nurturing environment for their clients, it is always a delightful space to visit.

Neither partner program is specifically focused on the heritage of the Hagemann site, but both have been excellent partners in preserving the site for our heritage purpose. Both programs supply volunteers to speak with guests at our Open House events and those guests enjoy the opportunities to walk among the SFH gardens and interact with the 4-H horses and goats. Working with these programs continues to be a pleasure and a benefit.

Our residential neighbors have also been excellent partners. Families which border the Hagemann site have tolerated the occasional late night neighing of horses and provide security watch with appreciation for ranch operations. This year, after diligently repairing the fence slats providing a modicum of privacy between the ranch and its neighbors, we saw that a collection of slats would consistently go missing after we had carefully replaced them. Once we saw that the children in the yard were avidly watching the 4-H horses through the gap, the slat disappearance made sense and we have not replaced them. The Guild cultivates and is fortunate to have engaged neighbors on all sides.

## **Eagle Scout Projects**

Again the local Scout troops contributed to the ranch with volunteer hours and Eagle Scout projects. To achieve Eagle, a Scout has to do more than simply complete a project. He or she takes the role of project leader, finding a need, collaborating with the beneficiary organization (Hagemann Ranch in our case) to design a solution, then creating materials lists, schedules and teams to make it all happen. These require a fair bit of coordination on our end as well, but the results over the years have been meaningful improvements to the site. This year we had a project that supported the 4-H group while meeting Guild needs, as well as one that centered on the ranch house. Eagle projects don't always line up with the calendar, so the three mentioned here were completed in early 2024, though most of the work was in 2023.



## **Horse Feeders**

The 4-H horses get their daily hay in a mix of ways depending on the paddock. Some are served in tubs on the ground, others eat from elevated feeders. Many of the existing feeders are of modern construction and look out of place on a historic site, so we felt that something more vintage would be appropriate. The new Scout-built feeders are wood, as opposed to the steel and plastic modern versions, and are at a better height and size for our needs. Two were built as part of the Eagle project, but we also got the CAD design so we can build more as needed. Besides looking appropriate for the site, these feeders encourage the horses to get their food from the feeder and its tray, rather



than the ground. This is important for reducing digestive issues such as sand colic which can cause horses distress and even death.

### **Outhouse Cover**

An annoyance for all who work to preserve the historic appearance of the site is the bright plastic outhouse. While essential, we had always thought there might be a way to minimize the obtrusive plastic, so when an Eagle Scout was interested in creating an enclosure for it, we were all in favor. Painted to match the adjacent barn, the enclosure does what all additions to a historic site should do: it is compatible with the site without creating a false historic narrative. Perhaps one of the simpler projects, it has been unanimously praised.



### **House Path Bender Board**

The front of the house includes a semi-circular gravel path as part of the formal garden structure. It has degraded over the years and digging for the recent irrigation work left notable depressions. Additionally, the path as we inherited it was outlined in brick, which we believe was an addition late in the last century, with the original path having been defined by classic bender board. A prospective Eagle Scout took on the project of digging out the existing path and laying in curved bender board for a new path. The actual gravel installation will be done by professionals. This bender board project was completed in early 2024, we are looking forward to getting the gravel done to complete the work.

## ***Heritage Gardens***

The Guild now has two Heritage Garden teams working in close cooperation, with three distinct garden areas. The backyard garden, sometimes called the kitchen garden, shows produce crops from the Ranch’s period of significance, roughly the 1860s to 1930s. It can include household vegetables and cover crops as well as demonstration plantings of agricultural products such as wheat and barley. If the harvested food fills a good-sized basket it is often delivered to a local food bank such as Open Heart Kitchen. Smaller harvests tend to get handed to visitors and volunteers. Some of the seed stocks originally from heritage seed banks are now planted completely from seeds collected in previous ranch harvests.



As it would have been in 1890, the garden is amended with compost created on the ranch, and we presume pollinated by the on-site 4-H bees.

The second Heritage Garden team manages the formal garden at the front of the house as well as a new demonstration orchard on the house’s north side. The formal garden is an accurate portrayal of how the inner “house” area would have been very different from the ranching activities outside the small fenced area of the house. As it would have been during the period of significance, it is adorned with flowers and ornamental trees and bushes, and kept interesting and attractive, not simply ‘farm functional.’

The same team has created a demonstration orchard to the north of the house with fruit trees representing those grown in the Livermore area during our period of significance. Over twenty trees make up the orchard and we look forward to a possible first harvest in 2024 as the trees get settled in. All trees were paid through a donation from the Livermore Amador Valley Garden Club, made possible by a generous grant from Maudie Kuenning.

Both the front yard garden and the demonstration orchard were fitted with drip and low-spray irrigation for maximum water economy. The project started in 2022 and was fully operational in 2023. The kitchen garden has been on drip irrigation since its creation.

## **Special Events**

2023 was the Guild’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so besides the regular Ranch events we brought an audience of members and guests on a progressive dinner that ended with a history talk and the main meal at the ranch. Taking the long view, we discussed the span from native settlement through Spanish, Mexican and American settlement on up to today.

The ranch hosted an ESL group at the site, after they had also taken the Guild’s historic downtown walking tour. While they were language learners at various levels, the site can be a very visual and tactile place, so no one left without having absorbed a lot that we have to offer.

Nancy Roberts once again organized a Plein Aire painting event at the ranch, and again we had a holiday light display spanning much of the entry to remind the public that the Hagemann Ranch site is an active and enthusiastic part of the neighborhood.

Bringing the ranch outside the ranch, we gave a “Then and Now” talk at the Livermore Library about the history of Hagemann Ranch. We were blessed to have some excellent additional research done by Wes Shafer that really helped us tell the ranch’s story and we spoke to a library full house. Wes turned his work into a book published about the Hagemann Ranch.



## **Preservation, Restoration, Infrastructure**

### **Basic Maintenance**

As happens every year, there was a lot of maintenance in 2023, including replacement of fence boards, gate repairs, building stabilization, plumbing fixes and electrical repairs. The activity from each on-site group requires a steady cadence of repairs and we now have a couple of volunteer repair teams sharing the work. Each year sliding doors jump their tracks or old valves refuse to seal, and the sun beats down weathering everything. Mischievous horses knocked down fence boards and gate panels, and we continued with pulling weeds, trimming trees, tending the landscape, etc. The tools for those tasks require maintenance themselves as everything wears and eventually wears out. Overall, the upkeep required of a 5 acre ranch that is over 150 years old is not surprisingly quite substantial.

### **Arborist’s Report and Landscape Action Plan**

2022 saw the first major work based on our contracted Arborist’s Report and related Landscape Action Plan. In 2023 we continued the landscape improvements to the site including bringing in experts for a significant trimming



of the major oaks on site, both for tree health and for safety. We continue to amend and improve the site soil as well, also pursuant to the Arborist's report.

### **Preservation Work**

Since the Guild has been on the Hagemann site, a number of structures have been through significant preservation and restoration, with new projects each year. Previous years have seen restoration of the chicken coop, the windmill building, the wash house / milk house, chicken coop #2 and so on.

This year the building restoration work slowed a bit while more mundane repairs dominated, including rebuilding of some of the large gates and repairing panels and structural elements in various buildings.

In 2022 we had solicited bids for developing plans to preserve the house and create a foundation, and for 2023 we initiated a contract with Avelar (architecture and structural engineering consultants) to do a full analysis of the work required to restore the main house's foundation and provide a robust structure that can carry the house forward another few centuries. They will also be providing guidance on structural improvements to two of the barns. This work should prepare us for the truly major work of preserving and restoring the main house, which currently sits with wood slowly decaying into the dirt. Preservation will not be simple or inexpensive for this complex building (many additions were made in its first decades), but our goal is to preserve it as the centerpiece of the site.



Along with the buildings, we are working to restore the implements and artifacts on this historic site. Our excellent restoration crew took on the bundle wagon project. We had an original, local bundle wagon that was in terrible condition, much of the wood rotten or broken, but enough of the frame existed for us to know what it was. The crew measured all the existing parts, researched similar wagons, and throughout 2023 worked to restore the wagon to its original glory. The story of a ranch depends heavily on providing feed for the livestock so the bundle wagon gives a very real, physical context to that part of our story. Bundle wagons were specialized hay wagons intended to collect hay that had been cut and bundled in the field, resulting in a unique shape.



## Administration

### Volunteers

An important part of administering the site is recruiting and organizing volunteers. As in years past we start with our team of dedicated Guild volunteers and then add groups from NCL (National Charity League), YMSL (Young Men's Service League), Scouts, students looking for community service hours and local residents looking to serve their community. In 2023 we improved our division of labor, with groups separately addressing gardens, yard maintenance, repairs, historic tractor work, event preparation, event operation and building restoration. There is plenty of cross-functional effort, but our teams are becoming more specialized and skilled.

Overall, the Guild provided and coordinated over 3500 volunteer hours for ranch projects. Based on the estimate from Independent Sector, a group that studies the non-profit industry, just the hours alone are valued at well over \$100,000. Skills which would be expensive to hire are volunteered every day, including plumbers, electricians, arborists, craftspeople, planners, designers, gardeners, accountants, preservationists, researchers and more.

The volunteer work is of course without pay, but we do try to reward and recognize our volunteers. Besides effusive thanks, we feed them when needed, recognize their contributions, and this year awarded our Volunteer of the Year award to someone recognized by our whole team as a truly dedicated contributor. The work done by many to preserve Hagemann Ranch for our community is always top of mind.



### Security and Safety

The on-site caretaker, active volunteer programs, vigilant neighbors, a network of cameras, automated gates and probably some luck have contributed to keeping the site safe. Alerts from the Ring cameras keep our attention focused and are immediately checked by our caretaker, though the worst we have seen recently have been horses who outsmarted their gates. When the gates are open for service, classes, projects or similar small activities we do see occasional uninvited visitors, typically curious passers-by, we greet them and direct them to the next Open House event.

The fire alarm system has been operational all year. Though alarms do not prevent fires, the hope is to make sure that any fire does not spread. Fire extinguishers are also stationed around the site and we now have a regular program of checking fire extinguishers and first aid kits to make sure the safety measures we put in place stay ready. Safety system checkups are reported at each monthly meeting as well, keeping safety and security top of mind for our team.

### Utilities, Services

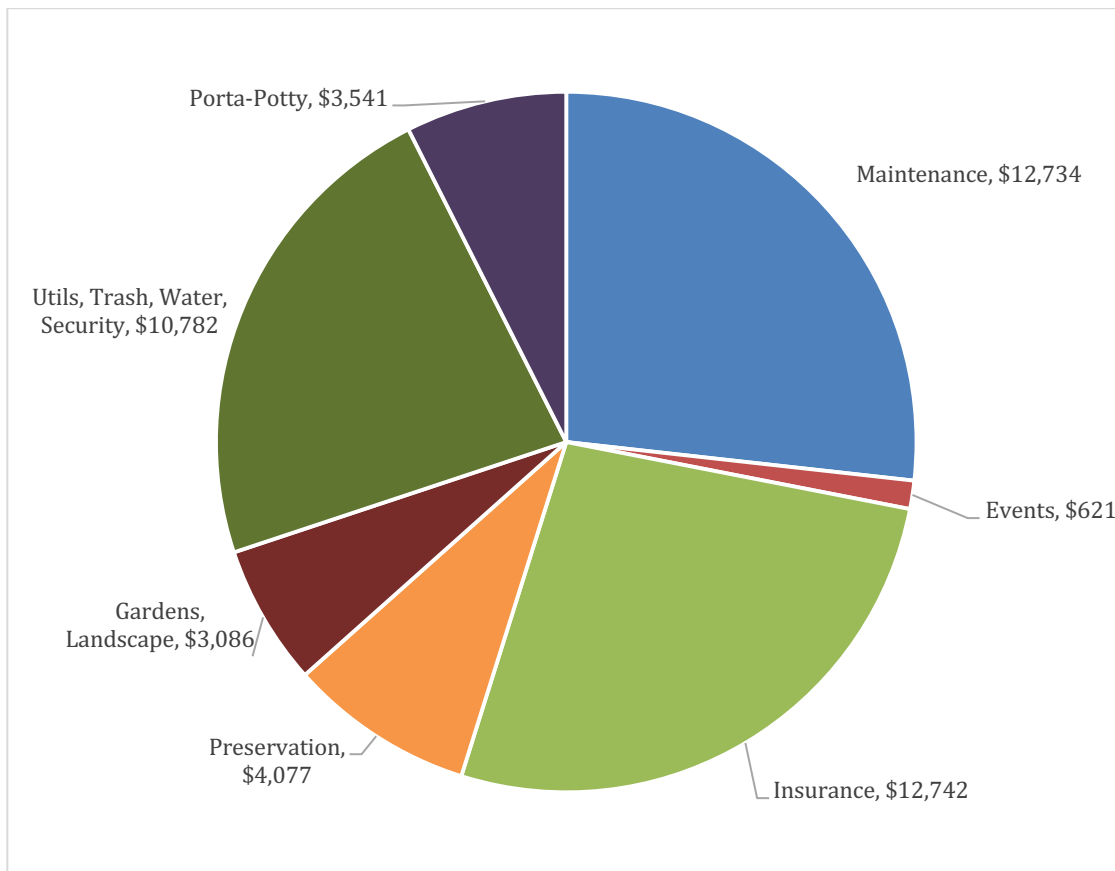
The Heritage Guild manages all utilities and services for the Hagemann Ranch site. Although water is delivered by our on-site well, this creates a significant electricity bill to supply the gardens and animals, even as other electrical usage has fallen due to our increased installation of energy saving lighting. The site has a wireless LAN serving the on-site groups which also allows for security camera access. Other services include monitored fire alarms, porta-potty outhouse, pest control, trash and bottled drinking water.

### 2023 Expenditures

Our annual budget for the site is overseen by the Guild Executive Board and managed by the Hagemann Ranch committee. It is updated throughout the year as new costs, projects or opportunities arise. It covers the recurring liabilities of utilities and services, as well as the costs for preservation, infrastructure and programs. Expenditures

were similar to last year, but the structural/architectural engineering for the house project will be billed in 2024 and will be a very significant cost, roughly equaling the rest of our budget.

As with every year, our largest expenditure is of volunteer time and talent. Events like Sundays at Hagemann roughly break even in dollars given the donations collected at the event, but cost the most in volunteer hours. We are fortunate to draw on the skills of engineers, mechanics, planners, artists, tradespeople, and the willing hands of passionate volunteers of all stripes. Due to the huge volunteer workload, our financial picture is somewhat misleading in terms of where we put our attention, still, it is useful to look at where the money goes. The large Maintenance budget includes mundane preservation materials (fencing, hardware) and materials we purchase for the various Eagle Scout projects. The relatively small Preservation expenditure is again a consequence of the very large number of volunteer hours that go into most of our preservation work and reflect an amazing amount of donated material. The Bundle Wagon noted above was reconstructed with donated custom milled lumber while the Guild paid for a craftsman to create authentic wooden wheels. Purchase of the historic orchard's fruit trees was completely covered by the LAVGC grant and planted by volunteers.



### **2024 Projected Activity**

The most ambitious part of 2024 should be actions related to the architects studying how to restore the Hagemann house by placing it on a solid foundation. Avelar engineers are working on the plan which the Guild will present to the City as a blueprint for preserving this important touchstone of the valley's development. We expect the work will be expensive, but will put the house on a steady footing for future centuries.

The house foundation is a tough act to follow, but the restoration of the front yard garden and paths fits well into the same plan. An Eagle Scout project for part of the path structure is being integrated into the landscape of the front yard, so the house will be properly featured as a centerpiece for the site.



Work continues on the recommendations of the 2022 Arborist's report to improve tree health, and the heritage gardens and orchard will continue to help interpret the story of the site's planted environment. Programmatic work also will continue, including interpretive signage and various restoration projects. And of course, another year of Sundays At Hagemann.

## **Next Steps**

### **Professional Service Work**

Engineering evaluation and recommendations for the house, the H Barn and the Red Barn

### **Infrastructure**

Continue (non-foundation) house restoration such as windows, doors, trim and siding  
Continue collection, restoration and exhibition of artifacts  
Ongoing tree maintenance

### **Interpretive Aspects**

Continuing **Sundays At Hagemann** open house events  
Interpretive general map and signs  
Walking tour guide  
Web presence  
Informative collateral for off-site information and fund raising  
3D printed site model being generated by a Sunflower Hill participant.

*Hagemann Ranch Vision Statement:*

**Hagemann Ranch, where**

**Heritage is shared, interpreted and preserved**

**Hope is nurtured and hearts are opened**

**Harmony reigns**

