

Livermore Heritage Guild

Saving Yesterday For Tomorrow



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Livermore's Historic Legacy to Be Displayed, Part II

When Livermore was established in 1869, the primary residential growth took place south of the railroad tracks. Consequently, the "Old South Side" contains an eclectic collection of homes dating from the town's beginnings to the 20th century. The first annual Livermore Legacy Tour, a historic home tour to be held May 18, will highlight South Side homes of distinction and will benefit the Livermore Heritage Guild. Docents will explain the historic significance of the homes on the tour. Nine homes will be open to visit inside, two garden stops will offer light refreshments, and three homes will be highlighted from the exterior. This is the second article describing the history of tour homes. See the March/April issue of the newsletter to learn about four other homes that will be featured on the tour.

The Raboli House

Charles and Peter Raboli came to America from Lonate Possolo, a village east of Milan, Italy, Charles in about 1885 and Peter in 1896. Charles first settled in the Pleasanton area where he was employed for a short time at the Remillard Brick Yard. Shortly after, he and his wife, Mary, came to Livermore, where in 1891 Charles opened the Colombo Saloon in the basement of the Whitmore Building (now known as

the Yin-Yin building). They had one child, Virginia, who died in 1894. Mary Raboli started back to Italy in the summer of 1898, but was drowned in a maritime accident off the coast of Newfoundland.

Peter Raboli had joined his brother in 1896. Charles traveled to Italy in 1900, and on his return brought with him Peter's wife, Marietta Canziani, and their daughter, Francesca (Frances), and also Adelaide Garatti, who was to become Charles's bride. They were married at St. Peter and Paul's Church in San Francisco.

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A message from the President

April 25, 2008

Dear Members,

I recently returned from a short business trip to Germany. Traveling as a visitor in a foreign land reminded me of a few things not obvious to a resident in familiar surroundings. Not being anchored in the local community, a little plaque, an explanatory illustration, or a representative artifact, can help quickly communicate a sense of the place beyond what a map can tell you.

In the little town of Sankt Blasien, three free-standing human-sized glass panels are etched with a story of the early settlers and show sketches of their lives. Though I neither read nor speak German, the images and a few English-similar words told me of an agrarian past in this medieval town dominated by a domed cathedral. And while the glass triptych was a welcome informative piece, I was disappointed by how much of the story I missed by not seeing anything in my own language.

This led me to think of our own museum in the Carnegie Building. We have a display of artifacts found at the Guild's archaeological dig at the Chinese workers quarters in the old Coast Manufacturing site, and while some items have Chinese characters, we have not translated them for our English speaking visitors, nor do we have Chinese-language descriptions for a Chinese speaking audience that might find these artifacts particularly relevant.

Our town is located on two Mexican land grants. Land granted to Robert Livermore and his partner Jose Noreiga was east of what is now Livermore Avenue. It was here that Livermore and his wife, Josefa Higuera Molina, made their home, which he called Rancho Las Positas. William Mendenhall acquired land from the Bernal family's Rancho El Valle de San Jose (west of Livermore Avenue) and named his new community for Robert Livermore, whom he had known earlier.

While we recognize that neither Josefa nor Jose Noriega were of English-speaking heritage, we have little Spanish language content in our museum to reach out to and engage those who might be most interested in the lives of these figures in forming Livermore's history. One piece of translated text we do have on display is an English translation of the cattle brand registered to Robert by Pio Pico, the last Mexican Governor of California.

So as we think about how to improve connections with our community and visitors, it is useful to remember that not all of them consider English their mother tongue, and we might do well to engage them more fully by presenting our research and stories in the language of their heritage. With that in mind, I would ask any members with special language skills to make a little time and swing into the History Center in the Carnegie Building to contribute stories or translations in any of the languages that make up Livermore's ethnic heritage. It is an opportunity for us to take quite literally the words of our mission statement "...interpreting and sharing historic resources for the education and enjoyment of all."

Jeff Kaskey

President, Livermore Heritage Guild

Legacy, continued from Page 1

In addition to the saloon business, Charles and Peter engaged in wine making. Their first winery was located in a large shed on Second Street between K and L. The earliest known label is dated 1903. They purchased grapes from Cresta Blanca, from Chris Buckley's Ravenswood, and from other vineyards in the area. Several times a week Peter delivered their wines to the Tesla coal mines.

The brothers bought the Whitmore Building in 1908 and moved the Colombo Saloon to the street level and made rooming house accommodations available on the second floor.

In 1910, the Raboli brothers abandoned the backyard shed and built a two-story winery building near the corner of Second and K Streets. The Raboli brothers built a large seven-bedroom home in 1917 on their Second Street property. Virginia, Charles' older daughter, said, "I suppose the house is in the style of an Italian villa, but it isn't elaborate." Stained glass windows with green and amber grapes flank the living room fireplace. The yellow bricks were the product of the local Livermore brickyard.

An interesting insight into the close-knit family was that the two brothers and their wives and their combined nine children lived in the house together. Virginia said, "We lived like one big family. Our parents never took a side with us children. When one of us was scolded, we were all scolded."

With Prohibition, the Raboli brothers were reduced to selling soft drinks from their former sa-

loon, but they continued to make wine for home consumption in their winery building.

A friend of the Rabolis remembered that the brothers would take their guests into the winery building to try the wine they were making. Some quantity was siphoned out and sampled, and afterward the void was filled with water so that the Federal Revenue inspectors would always find a full barrel.

In the early 1920s the Rabolis bought vineyard property on Mines Road. Two cousins, Julios, Charles's son, and Lionel, Peter's son, were made responsible for the vineyard. Lionel, the last of the children, passed away in January 2000. Recently, the vineyard has been managed by the Wenté's.

The Raboli house has been vacant for more than twenty years and is in its original condition. It will be open to Livermore Legacy Tour ticket holders to tour on the inside.

The Laughlin Moy House

The original construction date for this house is about 1879. It was built by John O'Brien, who at one time was owner of the Livermore Hotel at the southeast corner of First Street and Livermore Avenue. At 690 South K Street, the house has an association with Laughlin Moy, a native of County Donegal, Ireland. Before he came into town, Moy was employed as a sheep shearer in the Midway area. He moved into town in 1886 and purchased a quarter block. When he married, he pulled in another house to create a larger home. Part of his property was used as a dairy until 1900.

For some years, Moy was employed by Peter McKeaney as a butcher. In 1908, he and Dan Moy, his brother, purchased McKeaney's butcher shop and took the business name California Meat Market. H. P. Madison purchased the shop from the Moys in 1910. Later, Laughlin was employed as the library park gardener. He passed away in 1925.

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The Ellen Hart Home

Ellen Hart's cottage is one of the oldest remaining residences in the community. It was finished in December 1875 by architect/builder Julius L. Weilbye. This was one of his first commissions in Livermore, and it stands at 799 South L Street. Weilbye later designed and/or built the Odd Fellows Hall on First Street, the Masonic Temple at Livermore and First, the William Mendenhall residence, and the Dr. McGill home (now Stocking Realty) at Livermore and Fourth Street.



Mrs. Hart was the widow of Thomas Hart who operated a tavern on the "Dublin Road," which was called the Half Way House from 1852 to 1860. Hart later took up farming. He passed away in 1871. Ellen Hart survived him by 46 years, passing away in 1917.

The cottage has obviously been added on to over time, but its essential characteristics still stand out.

The Taylor-Twohey House

The cottage at 2173 Fifth Street is a fine example of Italianate architecture, a prominent style in the 1880s. George V. Taylor, the Livermore town marshal and later a rural route mail carrier, started construction of his home in December 1881 and completed it in the spring of 1882.



In 1906 Thomas Twohey, Jr. became the owner of this property. Twohey, a cement contractor, is best known for his sidewalks. One contract with the City was to create a sidewalk all around the Carnegie block. As you walk around the community, look for Twohey's mason's mark on the Presbyterian Church's L Street side.

It says "T. M. Twohey. 1911". It's one of the few left in the Old South Side.

For More Information

For more information about the tour visit www.livermorehistory.com and click on the Livermore Legacy Tour link or call 925-577-4206. Proceeds will benefit the Livermore History Mobile, a traveling bus that educates local children on Livermore's unique history.

-By Gary Drummond

Dutro House Moved Successfully

Lit in yellow by the sun just rising over the eastern hills, the Dutro house made a sharp turn towards the curb, headed for its new address four blocks away at the corner of Olivina and P Streets. This exciting transition, from condemned property in the path of development to a featured location and impending heritage rehabilitation, is a great victory for everyone. The neighborhood gets a heritage home on a lot that has been vacant for decades, the original developer does not have to send tons of wood and stucco to the dump, the new developer gets a delightful historic property to resell, and Livermore preserves a piece of its historic character for all to see. Visit Bill Nale's eLivermore.com to see more pictures. While you are there, check out the relocation of the historic Gordon house out at Concannon Winery. (See an article on Page 6.) That's two historic properties being moved and rehabilitated for modern re-use in one week!

Those of us intrigued by machines and heavy equipment (judging by the success of shows like *Modern Marvels* and *Monster Garage* there are at least a few of us) spent considerable time discussing the ingenious hydraulic house movers, probably the same as had been used on the Victorian Gordon house earlier in the week. Each of the three eight-wheeled pods that supported the house was capable of pivoting and flexing easily across curbs and dirt

yards. It appeared that when powered by the hydraulic output of a tethered Bobcat, they could be wirelessly controlled, and so in the final 100 feet from Chestnut Avenue onto the lot across P Street, it appeared that the house steered itself slowly under the traffic light (Did



Dutro house moves west on Chestnut Street to its new home on a vacant lot just across N P Street.

you know those things pivot out of the way?) and crawled up the curb to park over its new foundation. Along the way, utilities trucks and cranes scurried back and forth clearing wires in the path, sometimes aided by a nimble worker on the roof.

What really made this move happen, however, was not trucks and timbers but a lot of coordinated planning and innovative thinking by many people interested in seeing a delightful historic property saved for the future. Livermore City Council and staff of Economic Development and Community Development provided crucial support and advice, including making connections between the investor/builder and the original property owners.

The Guild's own Deborah Fields, Anna Siig, Matthew Schellenberg, Loretta Kaskey, and your humble

scribe contacted owners of empty lots to find a new home for the house and also spoke at Council and Commission meetings to rally public and political support. Our local *Independent* kept the story alive for all residents of the area. A critical commitment for this project came from the local investment group Livermore Valley Investments, run by father, Ron, and sons, Scott and Bret, of the Rago family, and their partner Mike Orth and Orth Construction. They are expending money, energy, and skill on this project, buying the target property and plan-



ning an energy efficient rehabilitation.

So the panic is over and the house is saved? Yes, but... The Dutro house is scheduled to be on the Guild's Livermore Legacy Tour in just over one month and the East Bay Green Building Tour two weeks later! LVI and Orth are good, but that's quite a tough schedule. We are anxious to see the next turn the Dutro house makes!

-By Jeff Kaskey

LHG 29th Annual Auction and Spaghetti Dinner

YES! WE ARE STILL ACCEPTING DONATIONS!

It's that time of year again, and the planning has already begun. The 29th Annual LHG Auction and Dinner fundraiser is fast approaching. It has been an exciting year of collecting, and there are many fun, wonderful, crazy and exciting items ready and waiting for the highest bidder.

Anna Siig, Bill Junk, and I have been hauling, sorting, and dusting off donated items; they look especially enticing, and we expect yet another phenomenal fund raising event. We have a large collection of Asian and vintage items, decorative items of all kinds, and many collectable and rare items as well. We have many new furniture and decorator pieces donated by Mel's including all sizes of headboards, mirrors, and chairs. We have many eclectic and unusual older pieces of furniture as well.

The auction will be held May 24; auction preview is from 5 to 7 pm. The auction will begin promptly at 7pm. Dinner service is from 6 to 7 pm. Ticket cost is

\$20.00 per person. Dessert, coffee, and tea will be available throughout the evening. Additional beverages or just dessert tickets can be purchased at the beverage table for \$1 during the event and will be served from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. We will try to accommodate vegetarian requirements if we know in advance, so please let us know when buying your tickets.

Tickets will go on sale beginning May 1, 2008, at the History and Arts Center. Tickets are limited and may not be available at the door so purchase your tickets early and avoid the disappointment of missing a fabulous dinner.

Volunteers are still needed so please let me know if you can help out for garage setup and cleaning or on the evening of the event. joeadams3@comcast.net.

Thank you for your support,
Joe Adams, Auction Chair



Gordon House Moves

The fine Queen Anne residence built by Dr. Cameron G. Gordon at the corner of 4th and K Streets moved for a second time in April.

Dr. Gordon opened his medical office in 1889 in the McLeod building. A year later he returned to Winnepeg to claim a bride. The couple's first home was the C. J. Stevens house on the north side of 1st Street (west of Van's Health Food). In late 1894, the doctor received a bid of \$2,200 to erect a new home, and the house was completed in 1895.

Seemingly unhappy in Livermore, the Gordons moved to Arbuckle, Colusa County, after several years here, and rented out the house. In 1902 Mrs. Gordon returned to Livermore to dispose of the property. The Mack family bought it and remained for many years. After WWII, it appears that more than one family occupied the house.

Dr. Kenneth Kemp, a local dentist, bought the fine old house planning to demolish it. Then Dorothy Neilsen entered the picture; she was given the house, which she moved in 1966 to the intersection of South Livermore and Tesla Road.

After her death, the Madden interests acquired the property, and later the Wine Group, owners of Concannon Vineyard, bought it. Unoccupied and unsecured, the house was vandalized several times, and the owners decided to move it back on the Concannon property, where it is undergoing a complete renovation. The residence will not be open to the public, but will be used to accommodate company visitors.

-By Gary Drummond

Auction Dinner Menu

Pasta Marinara with Meat Balls

Toasted Warm and Buttery Garlic French Bread

Fresh Tossed Caesar Salad with Parmesan and Croutons

Special Desserts - items sure to please everyone's palate

Beverage

Calendar

LHG Board Meeting, Wednesday, May 7, 7 pm. Carnegie Building (Third and J streets), downstairs. All welcome.

Duarte Garage is not open tin May to prepare for the Auction.

History Talk. No history talk in May.

Livermore Legacy Tour, May 18, 11-5. Visit livermorehistory.com or call 925-557-4206 See article on Page 1 for more details.

LHG Auction and Dinner, Saturday, May 24, 7 pm Duarte Garage, Portola and L Streets. See article on Page 6 for details.

LHG Board Meeting, Wednesday, June 4, 7 pm. Carnegie Building (Third and J streets), downstairs. All welcome.

History Talk, Wednesday, June 18, 7:30 pm. Barry Schrader will present "On the Lincoln Highway from DeKalb, Illinois, to Livermore, California." Doors open at 7 pm. Livermore Civic Center Library, 1188 S. Livermore Avenue. Light refreshments.

Duarte Garage Open Sunday, June 15, 10-2 pm. On the Old Lincoln Highway at the corner of Portola and L Streets.

Newsletter Mailing, Saturday, June 28, 11:30. Carnegie Building, Third and J Streets. Help get the newsletter ready for mailing. Call Maxine at 925-447-7401 or just drop in.

LHG Board Meeting, Wednesday July 2, 7 pm. Carnegie Building (Third and J streets), downstairs. All welcome

Homan Wins Award

LHG member and volunteer Anne Homan's new book *Livermore, California, A to Z* recently received two Bay Area Independent Publishers (BAIPA) awards. Anne's publisher, Jackie Pels, is a member of BAIPA, and she submitted the book for their 2008 book awards. It tied for the overall best book (beating out sports books, cook books, novels, etc.) and won the top award for its interior design. The judges commented often on the "intriguing" A-Z format. Anne was pleased that David R. Johnson was recognized for his wonderful design work.



Nolte Book for Sale

Isabel Nolte's book *Early Pioneers in the Livermore Valley, California, Were One Big Family* will be available for sale at the Carnegie Building (3rd and J Streets) for \$21.75 including tax.

Isabel has done extensive research on the early Irish pioneers that came to the Livermore Valley from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. Many of Irish immigrants were from the counties of Donegal, Galway, and Roscommon. They were farmers and ranchers and had large families, which often intermarried. *Early Pioneers* is their story.

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The Livermore Heritage Guild newsletter is published six times per year. Contact the newsletter editor with comments or suggestions for articles.

Livermore Heritage Guild

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Masthead photo: View of the Livermore Sanitarium. The Mendenhall house is in the center in front of the water tower.

Meet Terry Berry!

The Guild is very pleased to have a new volunteer, Terry Berry, who will be acting as director of the History Center. Terry moved to the Amador-Livermore Valley in 1994 with her husband, Tommie, and her children. A full-time homemaker, Terry enrolled at CSU East Bay and completed a bachelor's degree in history and a master's in public administration with a focus on organizational change in small non-profits.

After completing a two-year commitment as executive director of the Museum on Main, she returned to school and is working on a master's in history. Needless to say, Terry is a proponent of life-long learning.

In addition to school, Terry enjoys traveling and has visited numerous countries, including China, Egypt, Scotland, and France. Last, but definitely not least, she loves spending time with her five grandchildren, especially when playtime includes trips to local museums and historic sites.

Terry is enthusiastic about the work the Guild has done in preserving local history and looks forward to working with the organization. She has begun organizing collection materials, looking at how to maximize the space in the History Center, and working with collection preservation and cataloging.

Welcome, Terry.

