

Livermore Heritage Guild

“Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow”



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The Silver Screen

The first moving picture to be shown in Livermore was in 1896. Only an item in the newspaper notes this occasion. Not much is known about film showings in town until 1908 when I.J. Durand opened a “moving picture show” in the brewery building on First Street. He was advertised as having “first class equipment and will give a high class picture show. He will change pictures twice a week.”

Durand scheduled continuous performances from 7:30 pm to 10 o’clock with matinees on Saturdays and Sundays from 1:30 until 5 pm. He set his admission fee at 10 cents for adults and 5 cents for children under 12.

Within a week a rival appeared. The Orpheum Moving Picture Company moved to town, leasing the Sweeney Opera House at First and McLeod. The principals proposed to run their shows nightly at 7 o’clock, with Sunday matinees from 2 until 5 o’clock. They advertised a full change of program four times a week, with music to be provided by a phonograph costing \$200 “and said to be the best of its kind manufactured.” The Orpheum was not a success.

Another moving picture company moved into the Sweeney Opera House in November 1911 and lasted three months.

Shortly, the Bell Theater opened in McVicar’s Hall at the corner of Second and J Streets. They showed movies only at night; during the day the building was used as a roller skating rink.

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January 1, 2008

Dear Members and Friends,

As the Livermore Heritage Guild enters its 35th year, it is between the gangly twenty-somethings of its past and the mature, focused organization it is working to be. Our finances are already in better order, our projects are better planned, and our collections are better organized. This is an exciting and often challenging time for our Guild, and the good work is going on as we speak.

The city of Livermore is experiencing a maturation of its own, growing from a sprawling bedroom community with a quirky, eclectic downtown to a city with defined ideas about growth and commerce, a master planned downtown that is pedestrian and business friendly, and a heightened community awareness of the intangible things that contribute to our quality of life, including arts and heritage.

The Guild's challenge is to insure that *heritage* stays central to the values of our city, and to integrate ourselves and our mission into the community. Preserving a 1920s Craftsman Bungalow should be as obviously important as having talented artists performing at the Bankhead Theater. A guided history walk or a visit to our heritage museum can be as natural as wine tasting at Blacksmith's square.

If you are reading this, it means you already have enthusiasm for Livermore's heritage and understand its importance as a part of the high quality of life we enjoy here. I invite you, even implore you, to share that enthusiasm with our community by volunteering a little of your time with the Guild to become a part of the many projects and programs we have supporting Heritage Preservation within Livermore.

We are not an organization of thousands, rather each person makes a notable contribution, whether it is writing this newsletter (Thanks, Maxine!), helping with historic research, answering phones or welcoming visitors to our museum. Please come join us! Feel free to drop us an email at lhg@lhg.org or call in at 925-449-9927. If we don't answer, please leave a message – we are a little short handed!!

I am delighted and honored to be your president at this moment in the Guild's life. I have the advantage and challenge of standing on the shoulders of the wonderful people who have built this Guild and who expect it to be led successfully forward.

Jeff Kaskey
President, Livermore Heritage Guild



LHG & LAA Open House

The Heritage Guild and Art Association held a joint open house on Saturday, December 1, in the Carnegie Building. Visitors feasted on a magnificent spread of sweets and savories and met old friends and made new ones. At right, Guild members Muriel Dean and Bill Junk chat with Art Association members.



When the Schenone Building on First Street was under construction, the Bell Theater arranged to have a modern, up-to-date auditorium added on Second Street. One purchased a movie ticket at the First Street booth and walked down a corridor into the theater. (What is now the Second Street Mall was the stage and screen area.)

The Bell's audience was captured by "talkies" in October 1913. The *Herald* carried an explanation of how "talkies" worked. The secret was a device called a synchronizer. It worked between the projector and a huge phonograph. The operator started the projector and the phonograph at the same time. If the picture and the sound were not absolutely together at the start, the operator, through the synchronizer, could speed up either the film or the sound to get them together.

Theater advertising was cluttering the streetscape. In May 1914 the town Board of Trustees notified the moving picture theater proprietors that they could no longer tack movie ads to telephone poles and awning poles in the business district.

People in Livermore had the opportunity to see first-rate pictures when D.W. Griffith's "Intolerance" and "The Clansman" were shown here. Hollywood was cranking out more and more pictures, so that by 1917 the featured film was changed daily. Often a theater venue

showed up to five films a day. Prices remained low: admission was either 5 cents and 10 cents or 5 cents and 15 cents depending on the film.

The Bell Theater changed ownership several times in the next decade. It was renamed the Livermore Theater in 1923, the California Theater in 1929, and finally in 1931 it was named the State Theater.

Newsreels became popular beginning in the 1920s. Real talkies came in 1929. This innovation essentially put a lot of piano players out of business. Of course, ticket prices went up. By 1940, the price of admission was 45 cents. The State had what was called "Book Night." Patrons were given the opportunity to purchase a volume of the Standard American Encyclopedia for either 15 cents or 25 cents depending on the binding. A new volume was available each week.

Competition appeared when on December 21, 1956, the Vine Theater in Livermore opened its doors. One of its early showings was "Baby Doll" with Carol Baker, which caused a furor among the Catholic community. The State Theater soon closed its doors. There was some talk about reopening the State in the summer of 1958, but nothing ever happened.

-By Gary Drummond

Livermore Echo, April 26, 1906

Moving Houses - Jos. Fletcher this week moved the old Rice cottage which stood at Third and K streets to his lots on East Avenue, and will remove the old town hall building, which was recently purchased from the Dania Society, to the former site of the Rice cottage and will make it over into a dwelling house to be rented.

Livermore Enterprise, December 24, 1875

RUNAWAY - On Wednesday, Mr. Wetterau's bakery wagon was smashed to smithereens by the horse running away. Several rounds were made and a tree or two run over. The horse was not killed, however. Too much good feed the cause.

Auction Update

Everyone loves an auction, RIGHT!

After numerous and obvious addiction withdrawal symptoms of participants and two years of holding our "Annual Last Auction" we have decided to reinstate our Annual Auction and Dinner Fundraiser as a permanent part of the Guilds' activities. The next auction will be in May 2008.

Two years ago, the Garage Committee found they could no longer store auction donations at the Duarte Garage and make the garage a working museum. Finding a secure and cost effective storage place for the collected items collected was a concern; however, the Guild was fortunate to receive the use of a store front in the old Lucky Store Center so the "First Annual Last Auction" came about. The next year, after a time of uncertainty, we rented space at the "old" library on South Livermore.

Good news, there is hope this holiday season! Our storage space still has some room in it! Perhaps while looking for that Christmas gift you purchased for Sally last July, you will find something in the corner of a closet perfect for the auction. The hunt is on! The Auction Committee would like to encourage and challenge you to check under your beds, in the attic, the garage, garden storage shed, or storage unit for interesting and fun auction items to donate to the Guild auction.

Keep your eyes and ears open! Know of a neighbor or friend who is struggling with an estate liquidation; the Guild can help by hauling away their unwanted items in return for a charitable donation. For donations please call Joe Adams 606-0396, Bill Junk at 447-4561, or Anna Siig at 447-5475 to arrange pick up. It could take a day or two to arrange for pickups but we do respond as quickly as possible.

For me, auctions have been an integral part of my life for over 30 years. I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago being dragged to front yard auctions all over the city. These were events where an auctioneer stood on the front porch and sold off the house and contents. It was exciting, and the three of us kids were sent out in search of whatever my parents (Mary and Stan Adams) were looking for. I remember being directed to crawl in attics, garage overhead spaces, and even under houses for that special find. I learned early on about the excitement of "Finding the Find" and winning the bid. I remember clearly the excitement in my mother's eyes when she received that special box from the auctioneer's helper. She would pick through the box as if everything in it were made of the most fragile material that would break at the slightest touch, savoring every moment of the discovery of the treasures stored inside.

WOW! The Heritage Guild's 35th Anniversary is 2008, ***help us find the box of treasures someone out there is anxiously waiting to find and make this the best auction ever!***

Joe Adams, Auction Chairman

Membership News

I am pleased to announce that the LHG Board approved my proposal to offer a 10% discount on ***all Guild merchandise*** purchased by Guild members. As many of you know, a number of years ago Guild members were offered a 10% discount on Guild publications only. During the Guild's reorganization, this policy was dropped or, at best, implemented haphazardly.

Now you can enjoy the same discount on all of the quality gifts and souvenirs that the Guild sells!

Right now, I am in the process of making and distributing membership cards with a reminder of this discount printed on the back. If you are one of the annual members who has not renewed your membership, your name is going to be dropped from the membership list for 2008 . . . unless you send in your membership soon! If that happens, you won't be able to enjoy the discount . . . along with the newsletter and the prestige that comes from belonging to one of Livermore's premier organizations!

So, be sure to send in your renewal and continue to support the Livermore Heritage Guild.

Sincerely,

Matthew Schellenberg
2nd Vice President (Membership)

Mark Your Calendars! Don't Miss Highly Anticipated Livermore Legacy Tour!

Want to get up-close and personal with Livermore's past? The Livermore Legacy Tour is one great way to spend a fun and educational day doing just that! The Livermore Legacy Team has been working hard to bring you what we hope will be the first of many annual historic home tours.

The tour will be held on Sunday, May 18, 2008, and will showcase several of Livermore's finest historic homes—both inside and out! Tickets will be sold in advance for \$25 and \$30 the day of the event.

There is, however, a way to attend the event for free as well as attend an entertaining dinner after the event—volunteer! We will need approximately 100 volunteer docents to facilitate the tour. Volunteer docents will host the public as they tour the event for three-hour shifts. In appreciation, docents will have front-line access into all the homes and will attend a "Gratitude Dinner" that evening.

Legacy Tour proceeds will benefit the Livermore Heritage Guild History Mobile, which honorably serves our schools and our citizens by educating them on Livermore's past. It is in great need of being updated and replaced with newer, more dependable equipment.

Please participate in this fine, rewarding event by either attending and/or volunteering. For more information, call Deborah Field at 925-858-2085.

Dutro House at Risk

The house at 292 North L St. has been slated for demolition with city approval granted earlier this year. When the Guild had the opportunity to inspect the site in early October (as a condition of the demolition), members were charmed by what they saw and decided to fight to save it, rather than settle for salvage of a few items.

The house, built in 1924, is in some ways a typical stucco bungalow, but the arched corner entry porch and true arched door, large picture window, and tile fireplace add wonderfully unique touches, as does the angled walkway leading diagonally across the lot to the street corner. The house is a Samuel Bothwell design with his signature vertically asymmetric muntin design in the double hung windows, making this a unique "best of its kind" home, perfect for restoration.

Unfortunately, the clock had almost run out already, so it required some organized scrambling to look for a solution. Anna Siig called around to some people she knew who might have interest and an empty lot available, and Deborah Field, Loretta Kaskey, and I went out to look around the town for other possible spots. With a list of lots in hand, Loretta's experience in doing his-

toric home research for the Guild came in handy, and we soon had names and numbers. Deborah and I started calling to see who might want to take on a relocation and restoration project.

We found a few landowners who felt their properties were compatible and were intrigued enough by the project that they wanted to know more. Deborah organized a meeting between the owners and city staff, and we all assembled at City Hall to get the specifics of what it takes to move a house in Livermore.

The city brought in Paul Spence, David Rashé, Eric Uranga and others whose names I did not write down. You will not be surprised to learn that this is hardly simple, but the city staff was able to lay out the project clearly enough that the inter-



1924 Dutro House, North L and Chestnut Sts., draws Guild attention.

ested landowners could hit their calculators and watch the dollars add up.

The city also promised to do what they could to move the process along if one of the owners decided to take on the project. The developer has been helpful in extending their demolition deadline, offering the house essentially for free, and possibly even donating the money they would have otherwise paid to have the house demolished. Everyone is helping out except old man time.

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Jeff Kaskey Appointed Guild President

At its December meeting, the Board appointed Jeff Kaskey Guild president. A thirty-year veteran of the high tech industry, Jeff came to Livermore in the early 1980s to join Lawrence Livermore Lab's laser program. After eight years at the Lab, Jeff found employment in Silicon Valley as an engineer and later manager in some of the Valley's volatile startups as well as better-known companies including Intergraph, Sun Microsystems, and currently Rambus.

Jeff's responsibilities in project and personnel management have included small project-focused groups, including design leadership of some of Sun's processor modules, to broader teams handling customer technical support around the globe for Rambus. In addition to management roles and giving seminars on system design and high-speed memory technologies, Jeff teaches problem solving, project management, and customer support techniques.

Jeff comes by his historic preservation credentials genetically. Growing up in Worthington, Ohio, in the 1970s, his mother was president of the Worthington Historical Society and was active in the restoration of a decayed 1811 home and its reuse as a historical society museum. His father helped found the Columbus Landmarks Foundation, saving the art deco Union Station arch from a weekend bulldozer raid. Carrying on the tradition, Jeff pro-

posed the current plan to adapt the Livermore train depot as an active transportation hub in our transit center, and is collaborating with residents and the city to try to save the Dutro house on North L St.

A long-time Guild member, Jeff is currently chair of the Guild's Historic Awareness and Recognition Committee (HARC), which participates in the Guild's nominations of sites for its preservation awards and is involved in the plans to preserve and restore Livermore's historic Midway School.

The Guild welcomes Jeff; his energy, experience, and good ideas will be a great asset.

Midway School Update

After a lull in activity, the Guild's Historic Awareness and Recognition Committee (HARC) is back working on plans for the Midway School building. You may remember that Midway School, originally built in 1883 and decommissioned in 1946, had disappeared from memory and languished in obscurity until "rediscovered" by Barry Schraeder a little more than a year ago at the Mulqueeney ranch where it functioned as tack room. The Guild was thrilled, and the Mulqueeney family donated the building to the Guild. While in a safe location on

private land for now, the Guild is working to come up with plans to move and restore the school, as well as secure a site, help define how it may be used, etc.

The Guild could not handle this on its own, so we are working with the City of Livermore to share responsibilities, resources and expertise. We have found support and interest throughout city departments, and in particular the Guild has a good friend in Chris Davidson of the Economic Development Department. Chris has responsibilities that are generally related to historic properties. Besides an interest in the Midway project, she is working to complete the purchase of the Hagemann Ranch property. That is quite a happy coincidence for us, since we have felt for a while that a spot on or near the Hagemann Ranch would be a good choice for the



Midway restoration, the two historic resources complementing each other nicely. No deals are signed yet, but we are talking with Chris and others in the city about how we could tie these projects together.

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Calendar

LHG Board Meeting, Friday, January 4, 7 pm. At the home of Anna Siig and Gary Drummond. Call Anna or Gary for directions. 447-5475. Bring a dish to share, either sweet or savory.

History Talk, Wednesday January 16, 7:30 pm. Heritage Properties and Projects, City of Livermore. Civic Center Library, 1188 S. Livermore Ave.

Duarte Garage Open, Sunday, January 20, 10-2 pm. On the Old Lincoln Highway at the corner of Portola and L Streets.

LHG Board Meeting, Wednesday, February 6, 7 pm. Carnegie Building (Third and J streets), downstairs.

Duarte Garage Open Sunday, February 17, 10-2 pm. On the Old Lincoln Highway at the corner of Portola and L Streets.

History Talk, Wednesday, February 20, 7:30 pm. Anne Homan, author of *Historic Livermore, California: A-Z*, will talk about "Unique Women of Livermore." Civic Center Library.

Newsletter Mailing, Saturday, February 23, 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, March 5, 7 pm. Carnegie Building (Third and J streets), downstairs.

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Meanwhile, we organized a small work party to check in on the Midway building, make sure it was reasonably secure, and spray a coat of protective stain on the most weathered side to help it through another winter. The stain happened to be white, so although the project was not intended for aesthetics, an uneven coat of white on the side of the school, still sitting on the remote ranch land, helped us to visualize just how it might have looked 100 years ago to students trudging in for another day of class. We need much more help on this project, from research to resources. If you are interested in getting involved, please drop us a note or call using the contact info at the right. We are more than short-handed and would love to hear about your interest in helping out!

♥ Happy New Year! ♥

As we begin the New Year, we think of our great friends: volunteers who lead tours and research homes, sand down rusty fenders and dig for shards. We think also of our members, whose support validates the Guild's purpose. We think of our partners in the city and other organizations who work with us to save Livermore's heritage. And, of course, we think of our donors who make it all possible.

Thanks to all, and our best wishes for a wonderful new year!

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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.

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Today it is far from done, and in fact if you think you have the right property and the resources to invest, a quick call to Paul Spence at the city could let you know how to get involved. There is at least one partnership still working with the city to consider moving the house to one of two sites. We will keep you posted as we learn more!

-By Jeff Kaskey

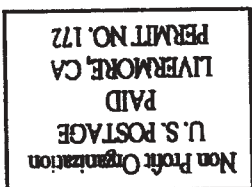
Masthead photo: State Theater Building circa 1931.

2008 Guild Calendar Available

The Guild's history calendar for 2008 is now available for sale at the History Center, Carnegie Building, Third and J Streets. The calendar, with lots of color pictures, features buildings and projects that the Guild has been involved with. The cost of the calendar is \$12.75 plus tax. And don't forget, Guild members will receive a 10% discount!



Images from the 2008 Livermore Heritage Guild Calendar.



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