

## THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY BUILDING

In 1901 Livermore was the first community in the state to take advantage of a new state law allowing Sixth Class cities to organize tax-supported, municipal libraries. In the same year, having heard of the grants being made to libraries by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, the Library Board made an initial attempt to gain such a grant. The project simmered until 1908 when Mrs. Dell C. Savage became President of the Library Board. Mrs. Savage worked resolutely to keep up interest in libraries and led the campaign to obtain a Carnegie Building for Livermore.

Funds were raised in the community and by the spring of 1909 a lot at the corner of Fifth and K streets had been purchased and the Town Trustees had agreed to contribute \$1,000 a year for ten years to support the library (the latter a proviso required by Carnegie)? Approval of the grant from Carnegie was accomplished in October 1909 and a bond election was scheduled in December of the same year. The bond election passed with only 18 dissenting votes. There followed months of planning and consultations to design a building and to have the design (by architect William H. Weeks) approved by Carnegie.

Since opposition had developed to the 5<sup>th</sup> & K St. site another site nearer the center of town was selected: The McKeany Block\* (the present site). Work began on the building in June 1910 and it was completed and opened for use in May 1911.

The building remained the Livermore Library until Labor Day weekend in 1966 when the books were moved (by the staff and by members of the Job Corps) to a new building on South Livermore Avenue in the Civic Center.

Since September 1974 the Carnegie Building has housed the Livermore Art Assn. Gallery and the History Center of the Livermore Heritage Guild.

The portrait of Andrew Carnegie which hangs to the left of the main entrance was donated to the building by the Livermore Library from its new quarters.

At one time there were over twenty-eight hundred Carnegie Libraries in English-speaking countries around the world. Many of the buildings have been demolished. Livermore's Carnegie Building is one of a very few remaining in the Bay Area.

Written by Barbara Bunshah

\*The McKeaney Block once was the site of a stock yard, slaughter house, barn and house. Horses and cattle were kept on the block. The barn burned and the site came available at a reasonable price.