

Livermore Heritage Guild

"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"



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FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS IN LIVERMORE

By Gary Drummond

Do these acronyms make sense to you: IOGT; UPEC; IORM or OdHS ? They represent some of the fraternal organizations that have been popular in Livermore Valley since 1870. They stand for International Order of Good Templars, for Uniao Portuguesa do Estado da California, for Improved Order of Red Men, and for Order der Hermann's Sohnes.

Fraternal organizations in the 19th Century served several purposes. They united immigrant social groups like the Portuguese and the Germans; they assumed civic responsibilities (the International Order of Good Templars was a temperance movement), and they were, probably first and foremost, benevolent societies. In the days before sickness benefits and burial insurance were available, one's membership in a fraternal organization often provided funds for a family in case of emergency.

The earliest recognized fraternal group in Livermore Valley was the Free and Accepted Masons (F&AM), organized in July 1871. At the time there was no suitable facility in Livermore, and the organization's first meeting was held at the Pleasanton Hotel. A more permanent meeting place was soon found when the Pleasanton school district agreed to rent the lodge a room in the schoolhouse for \$6.25 a month – provided the brothers would lathe, plaster and paint the room. The Masons met here until November 1874 when they moved to Livermore, meeting in the IOOF hall on First Street. In 1886, when one of the members, A.

J. McLeod, erected a new 3-story building at the northeast corner of First and Livermore (then Lizzie Street). His design included a suitable lodge room on the third floor. On May 28, 1909, the corner stone was laid for a new Masonic Temple at the southwest corner of First and Livermore, where the Mosaic Lodge 218, F&AM, has maintained its hall since.

Livermore's Independent Order of Odd Fellows was organized in the spring of 1873. Within a year, they had started construction of a lodge hall on First Street. Designed and constructed by J.L. Weilby, a young architect/builder in the community, at a cost of \$4500.00. One of the features requested by the Building Committee was a series of pegs in the anteroom so that the brothers who came from outside the town could hang up their knapsacks (as they usually stayed in local accommodations). The 125-year old IOOF hall is a First Street landmark.

Another local social/ civic group was the Improved Order of Red Men, which traced its origin to the secret patriotic societies founded before the American Revolution, and whose purpose was to promote liberty and to defy the tyranny of the British Crown (one of these secret societies was the Sons of Liberty, best known for hosting the Boston Tea Party in 1773.) The Red Men were formally recognized as a separate organization in 1813. The local lodge was established in Livermore in 1910 as Cotati Tribe #228 at a "council fire" conducted by Grand Sachem Henry Gesford. The "council fire" was allowed to extinguish itself here in the 1960's.

The Order der Hermann's Sohnes was a nationalistic organization organized in Germany about 1848 and brought to America with German immigrants. Its name commemorates Arminius (Hermann in German), the only Germanic chieftain to defeat a Roman Legion. The local branch was

organized here in 1887. Although its local meeting place has not been identified, members of the fraternity are remembered in a fenced-in cemetery plot, marked with the initials OdHS, at Roselawn Cemetery on North Livermore Avenue.



Masonic Building (corner of First Street and S. Livermore Ave.) circa 1920



PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE LIVERMORE DISTRICT
by Gary Drummond

The rich farmlands of the Livermore Valley brought not only opportunity but families and a consequent need for schools. Although Livermore School District had been organized by the county supervisors in 1862, it was not until May, 1866, that a small one-room school, taught by Miss Esther Weeks, opened on what is now Portola Avenue with thirteen pupils - six of whom were from one family. It was a subscription school, as no provision had yet been made for taxation.

By 1869, it was necessary to move the building closer to the population centers of Laddsville and Livermore. After it was relocated on what is now Livermore High School

football field, a second building was needed to accommodate a burgeoning student body. Within a few years, both buildings were moved to land donated by William Mendenhall on Fifth Street where, in 1877, a new two story structure opened. The two original buildings were again moved, one to serve as a saloon on First Street, the other converted into a carpenter shop.

Meantime, other school districts were being formed to offer an up-to-eighth grade education. In the years 1869 to 1898, thirteen school districts, all rural, were organized and either lapsed or were annexed to adjoining districts when the average daily attendance dropped below the minimum required. The May District three miles north of Livermore, the Summit District in Altamont Pass, and the Townsend District east of Greenville Road on Tesla were all organized the same day, May 3, 1869. The Harris District served

children in the coal-mining community of Harrisburg. Organized in 1875, it lapsed in 1904 when the mines closed. The Mocho District, whose school was located at the junction of Mines Road and the road leading to Del Valle Recreation Area, opened and lapsed twice before being annexed to the Livermore District. The school building was moved to Tubbsville, a low income residential area on Railroad Avenue. When the Tesla District school closed in 1913, Father Patrick Power purchased the school furnishings and moved them to St. Michael's Catholic School which opened that year.

A high school education was available almost from the founding of the town. Livermore Collegiate Institute, a private school, was established in 1870 by Dr. W. B. Kingsbury on aptly-named College Avenue. When Kingsbury failed financially, James D. Smith purchased the business in 1875, and for almost twenty years averaged 50 students annually.

Assemblyman Frank R. Fassett of Livermore introduced legislation in Sacramento to provide for union high school districts. Livermore was designated Union High School District No. 1 in 1891, as the first in the state to be formed under the new law. This led to a new high school building in 1893, but it also meant the demise of Livermore Collegiate Institute.

Today, all the rural schools are closed and students in the outlying area attend schools in the Livermore Unified School District.

HERITAGE GUILD HAPPENINGS

Gary Drummond will be offering his "Glimpses of Livermore Past" for the sixth time beginning March 1, 2004. Classes are held at the Ed Rundstrom Learning Center, 555 Sonoma Avenue from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. once a week. You may register at the Adult Education Office in the Center. Registration fee is \$20.00



If you would like to sign up for either a downtown or residential **walking tour**, you may now register by either calling the History Center at 449-9927 or by visiting the History Center and completing a preference card. When several people have signed up for one tour or the other, a Walk Tour Guide will contact you with a time and date to meet.

2004 CALENDARS ARE HERE!

LHG 2004 calendars have arrived. Come down to the Carnegie Bldg. to get your copy now as they will go fast. Price: \$10 which includes tax.



We have a year round pickup for donations for the LHG AUCTION held each year on the Saturday of the Memorial Day weekend. The auction will be upon us soon. Donations of goods and services are greatly appreciated. All usable items will be accepted except books, clothing and furniture (unless considered antique) and computers or computer equipment. Time to clean out those garages and let us help you dispose of those items that need a new home. Phone for pickup: Bill Junk 447-4561, Anna Siig-Drummond 447-5475 or leave a message at the History Center with Barbara Bunshah 449-9927. This has been a fun event for everyone and we look forward to seeing you at the auction!

CALENDAR

Thursday, January 8 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, February 12 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, March 11 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Agenda for Future History Colloquiums:

The next 3 history colloquium meetings will be held at the Bothwell Recreation Center, 8th and H Streets, Livermore at 7 p.m.

January 21, 2004:
Michelle McCumber, "Family Ranchers"

February 18, 2004:
John Shirley, "Personal Experiences in the 1950s"

March 17, 2004:
Barry Schrader, "Mudslinging and Muckraking Between Valley Newspapers"

A Word From the Chair

This year will be a year of growth and change for the Livermore Heritage Guild. The Livermore Heritage Guild has been in existence for 30 years with the primary focus on archiving materials and research. The Board of directors will be seeking ways to expand our presence and involve the community.

Late last year the Board of Directors decided to apply for and was awarded a grant from the American Association of Museums to evaluate our methods and help us achieve best practices in museum management. The Heritage Guild's evaluation will take place over the next several months and will cover all aspects of our operation.

The history colloquium started by Vice Chairman Don Meeker last year has been a big success. The November presentation on Pancho Villa, thanks to a fantastic effort by David and Jolene Abrahams, Barry Schrader and many others, had nearly 200 attendees. We will be looking to refine the process and add additional presentations throughout this year. If you have any suggestions for a topic or know of a knowledgeable speaker you feel might be

appropriate, please contact us via email at historytalk@lhg.org, or you can always drop us a note at our post office box shown on the first page of this newsletter.

As you have already noticed, the newsletter format has been revised. The picture at the top of the newsletter will change with each edition. We recently purchased a new laser printer to improve the quality of the photographs in each edition. This edition's picture is of the railroad depot circa the early 1900's. In order to allow time to develop improved content, beginning with this issue we will be publishing the expanded newsletter every other month. The newsletter will change from a two page format to a four page format and contain more original articles written by local researchers containing more photographs. We will be refining and improving the content throughout this year; we hope you will like the changes. Drop us an email with your comments at editor@lhg.org or drop us a note at the post office box.

We really would like to hear from you!

Larry Mauch

