

Livermore Heritage Guild

"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"



Livermore Avenue just beyond Railroad Avenue circa 1890s, showing snow covered hills of Mt. Diablo in the background

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The Western Pacific Railroad

By Gary Drummond

Once a spot on the south side of the present railroad tracks between North L and K Streets marked the location of the Western Pacific depot from 1910 until 1956 when the depot was demolished. That space is now occupied by a small commercial center.

It was a great day on August 22, 1910 when Livermore greeted the first passenger train over the then new railroad. Livermore declared a half-day holiday for the arrival of the train. The depot had been decorated with flags and plants, bales of hay, casks of wine and cream cans. Small bottles of Livermore valley wine were presented to passengers on the train by a group of young girls. Attached to each bottle was a small card describing the "liquid sunshine" characteristic of the valley.

The rail line had been carrying freight for some eight months previous. The freight house which was located on the north side of the tracks, still exists, having been moved to the west side of Vasco Road below I580.

The first public use of the depot building was a far cry from railroading - on June 24, 1910, the Christian Endeavor

Society of the Livermore Presbyterian Church held an ice cream social there as a fund-raiser to send delegates to the State convention in San Jose.

Maitland Henry, long-time Livermore Herald editor and publisher, had first-hand experience with the railroad depot. The building had been furnished many months before it was actually used and insurance regulations required that it be occupied. Henry, as a boy of 18 years, was employed to sleep in the building at night. He related that "the job provided excitement aplenty. First," he said. "was summoning up the courage to go over to the building at night. Not only was it an isolated location in those days, but it had no lights or telephone; it had many visitors. These were primarily wanderers who had worked or were seeking work on construction crews. Much finishing work still remained to be done along the right-of-way through the valley. Carrying blanket rolls and looking for a place to spend the night they commonly tried a door and finding it locked were on their way, but others were more persistent, trying all the doors, endeavoring to break in. There was nothing to do but wait them out and then try to regain composure and go to sleep."

He continues his reminiscence: "One night, which started badly, turned out to be the most peaceful of all. Arriving at

the depot late, I found what was to be the passenger waiting room completely occupied by sleeping men. That posed a problem of what to do. A locomotive was parked nearby, with the engineer and firemen in the cab. They told me the men were a construction crew whose foreman had a key to all station buildings, and that night was one of peaceful sleep. It was pleasant relief to me when that particular method of 'working my way through school' came to an end."

He ended his narrative by recalling, "The year 1910 was an eventful one for Livermore. The new Masonic temple was dedicated, and the Livermore Carnegie Library was nearing completion. But the greatest excitement of all was the anticipation of Halley's comet. Livermore, with the rest of the world, approached the fateful May 18, 1910, when the world would go through the tail of the comet, in fearful anticipation of disaster, some even predicting the end of the world. Nothing whatever happened except to provide memory of an unusual event."

(In the mid 1970's both the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific rails through Livermore were consolidated so that the original Western Pacific track is the present railbed through the community.)

COMMENTS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

From Dona Fraser Blackmore, November 2003

This is the most interesting story but some years ago I had work done on my house by a husband and wife team who live 19 miles out Mines. We became very good friends. During a lunch break, one day we talked about a grave out on a ranch on Mines Road (rather large grave). Being me I passed it off (in one ear and out the other) but two weeks ago while having dinner with friends, the husband says "Dona do you know of a grave out on Mines Rd?" I said "yes I do".... He replies....it's my family!!!! Long story short, ranchers, friends, family of the woman in the grave all went Sat. to see the old oak tree, with grave. Come to find out, it is Mary Jane Adams, Stevens, Hearst. One family member that went on Sat. was 93 and she said she remembers a school called Vista. I told her I would try to find out more.



Information that I have regarding Mary Jane Adams, Stevens, Hearst:

- . *Mary Jane Adams (parents Margaret Ann Gill/John Adams of Saline, Missouri)*
- . *Mary Jane was born 2-3-1834 and died 1906 (day of San Francisco earthquake....I think?)*
- . *She married Valentine Livingston Stevens and then William Hearst. She had a daughter, Kate Elizabeth who married Lewis F. Randolph.*

As the ranchers tell it, she lived with a cowboy out in the hills on Mines. My friend (93 years old) did not want to talk about that. My friend remembers playing at the grave or visiting it and some of the family going to Vista School. Sincerely and with MUCH APPRECIATION.....Dona (defb@comcast.net)

Dona, thank you for sharing your story. Here is some information about Vista School

VISTA (school district and school)

Taken from an article in the Herald & News, Monday, July 4, 1966, "Livermore District Has Had 3 Different Names"

Vista was the last of the rural districts to be organized, forming January 30, 1882. It had the shortest existence, being annexed to Mocho March 1, 1897, when it had an average daily attendance of only five. The annexation was strongly protested by some residents of the district, who felt that a change in the location of the school house would increase the attendance, some children being unable to travel the five or six miles required of them.

The protestants claimed the population of the district was growing, but away from the school location. When the district was formed, its residents erected the first building, only 12x20 feet in size, and several years later put up a larger building. It was located on a point of a ridge on the east side of the canyon opposite Cedar Mountain, with a splendid view of the canyon, hence its name.

It was on land located by A.E. Crane, for whose family Crane Ridge, forming the west side of Mocho Canyon, was named. When the district lapsed he had moved to Sunol, and became greatly concerned about the title to the school sites, it having been specified that the land on which the building stood would revert to the owner if the district were ever discontinued. He had sold the property to Leopold Jaccard of Livermore, which caused complications, and contacted county officials as to the status of the school site.

Information is not available on the outcome. After the district lapsed the building was sold at auction in December, 1897. It was purchased by then Supervisor Thomas D. Wells, who said that he would donate it back to the district should it reopen. The nature of the Mocho Canyon area, with the deep canyon and high ridges and lack of roads made school attendance a problem because of travel difficulties. Vista was contiguous to Wilson district, at the mouth of Mocho Canyon, which had been organized before Vista, and also had lapsed and been annexed to Mocho. Vista was actually annexed to what had been Wilson.

HERITAGE GUILD HAPPENINGS

WANTED: Volunteers to lead local 3rd grade classes on weekday downtown walks, while you talk about Livermore history. Walks take approximately 1 hour. Will gladly train. Contact Gary Drummond at gadrum@comcast.net or call 447-5475 for details.

2004 Preservation/Conservation Awards

Each year the Livermore Heritage Guild honors people and/or places that have helped preserve Livermore's History. If you would like to make a nomination please send an email to lcordrey@comcast.net or leave a note at the Carnegie Library or send it to our PO Box with the following information:

Nominee: (Person or Place)

Why you think they should be selected:

Submitted By:

Contact information:

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN! AUCTION TIME

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, March 11 @ 7:00 p.m.

LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, April 8 @ 7:00 p.m.

LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, May 13 @ 7:00 p.m.

LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Saturday, May 29, Livermore Heritage Guild Annual

Auction and spaghetti dinner, Duarte Garage. Auction preview begins at 5 p.m., dinner starts at 6 p.m. and **auction starts at 7 p.m.** Tickets for the dinner can be purchased in advance at the Carnegie Bldg. after May 7 or at the door that evening. Price \$7.00 includes dinner, coffee and dessert.

A Word From the Chair

I want to thank everybody who responded to the new format for the newsletter. All the responses were favorable. In an ongoing effort to improve the content, this month we have added a section "Comments from the Membership". Dona Fraser Blackmore sent an email to our website with a story about the Valley. Anna Siig Drummond researched the Vista school in Dona's story, which is included. We encourage you to either write us a letter or send an email to newsletter@lhg.org. The postal address is on the front page of this newsletter. Selected input will be included in future newsletters.

The Museum Assessment process we spoke about in the last newsletter is scheduled to begin in April. We will keep you informed of the progress. Also note the announcement about the Annual Auction in this newsletter. Because we are now a bi-monthly publication, there will not be another announcement until May, the month of the auction. Please take the time to scour through your garages and closets and contact us if you have any donations for this annual fundraiser.

Larry Mauch

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. (Wednesday)

March 17, 2004:

Barry Schrader, "Muckraking and Mudslinging Between Valley Newspapers"

April 21, 2004:

James "Tobin" Beard, "History of Scottish Games"

May 19, 2004:

Kathy Laughlin and Kim Bonde, "History of the Livermore Rodeo"

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