

Livermore Heritage Guild

"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"



P.O. Box 961, Livermore, Ca. 94551

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The First Churches in Livermore

By Gary Drummond

First Presbyterian Church

The earliest acknowledged Protestant religious services in Livermore Valley were held in the schoolhouse located somewhere near the intersection of Portola and Murrieta Boulevard intersection beginning in 1866. At first, a Presbyterian minister met with worshipers once monthly. By 1867 a Methodist brother included Livermore in his circuit, and until 1871, the Presbyterians and Methodists alternated religious services.

The Presbyterian Church was formally organized here in February 1871. For the first year, members continued to meet in the schoolhouse, but by May 1872 they were meeting at the Livermore Collegiate Institute on College Avenue. Church services soon moved to a more central location in town, the second floor of Bank Exchange Hall, then located on First Street a short distance east of Livermore Avenue. The minister remembered how "... often mingling with the sounds of praise came curses and clink of glasses from the saloon below. Sometimes a half-drunk reveler would stagger up the stairway to see from whence came the unmuted echoes of prayer and hallowed song."

In December 1873, the Presbyterians commenced construction of a permanent sanctuary seating 250 people and at a cost of \$2000. Construction was interrupted by a windstorm on January 15 1874 that flattened the framing. The builders started again. The structure still stands at the corner of Fourth and K Streets, although much changed from its original appearance.

St. Michael's Catholic Church

From 1872 until 1877, the pastoral care of local Catholics was under a mission, first from San Leandro and later from Mission San Jose. The locals constructed a 25 ft. x 50 ft. building in 1872 on property donated to the church by the Alphonso Ladd estate. It was used only when the priest could arrange to visit Livermore.

The first permanent priest was assigned to Livermore in the summer of 1878, and was replaced nine months later by a pastor who served the parish for the next 38 years. At first, as there was no parish house until 1881, the priest lived with a local family. It was evident with the increasing immigration of Catholic families into the Livermore area that a proper sanctuary was necessary, As early as 1880, St. Michael 's parishioners held bazaars and fairs as fundraisers. It took ten years to raise enough capital to start construction. On March 17, 1891 the new church was dedicated. It was a magnificent wooden Gothic structure. The interior was 56 ft. x 108 ft. and could seat 500 people.

The roof rose to a peak of 70 ft., and the nave was 52 ft. high, from which were suspended two large crystal chandeliers, each having 32 gas lights. The bell tower reached 148 ft. in the air, and it was said the golden cross atop it could be seen from Mt. Diablo.

It was a windy day on August 4, 1916 when St. Michael's Church burned. The exact cause is still unknown. It is said that a fire broke out in a planning mill west of the church. Burning shingles were carried by the wind toward St. Michael's and caught the roof on fire. The town fire engine could not raise enough pressure for water to reach the flames, nor did the firemen have ladders long enough to form a bucket brigade to throw water on the roof. The steeple collapsed into the nave and the building could not be saved.

The Catholic community could not be without a place of worship. Almost immediately construction was started on a new sanctuary at the corner of Fourth and Maple Streets. Here arose the new (the present) St. Michael's Catholic Church, dedicated in June 1918.

Picture on the masthead is circa 1910 of Livermore (the area was formerly known as Laddsville) near Junction Avenue, looking back towards downtown and St. Michael's Catholic Church when it was located on Old First Street.



Annual General Meeting: Because of the Presidential debates, the annual general meeting was lightly attended. David Lowell was gracious enough to stand in at the last minute as speaker because our scheduled speaker had to cancel due to an emergency. David's presentation on the history of rose growing in Livermore was very interesting. It turns out Livermore was a major contributor to the development of many new championship species of roses until the industry relocated in the 1950's and 1960's. If anyone missed this great presentation, you can view this at the Carnegie Bldg.



HERITAGE GUILD HAPPENINGS

DOCENTS NEEDED: Are you interested in becoming a docent at the Museum on Third Street? No experience necessary, we will gladly train. If you are interested in Livermore history, this is a great way to get involved with the Guild and also become acquainted with the various research tools we have available so you can even do your own investigations into Livermore history. Museum hours are Wed. through Sunday 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. If interested, please contact Larry Mauch at larrym49@comcast.net or phone 449-9927. Please leave a message with your name and contact number so we may contact you.



New Officers for 2005: With the passage of the new By-Laws, the titles of officers changed. The Chairman is now the President; The Vice Chairman is now the 1st Vice President. A new title of 2nd Vice President has been created. With that the officers for 2005 are as follows:

- Larry Mauch, President
- Don Meeker, 1st Vice President
- Jolene Abrahams, 2nd Vice President
- Maryalice Faltings, Treasurer
- Susan Junk, Secretary

- Standing committee Chairpersons are:
- Bill Junk: Chairperson, Duarte Garage Museum Committee
 - Barbara Bunshah: Chairperson, History Center Museum Committee
 - Tim Sage: Chairperson, Ways and Means

CALENDAR

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

Thursday, December 9 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, January 13, 2005 @ 7:00 p.m.
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Agenda for Future History Colloquiums:

All presentations are held 7 to 9 p.m. in the community meeting room of the Livermore Civic Center Library on South Livermore Avenue

November 10, 2004:

John Sarboraria is presenting a slide show of his collection of "Historic Photos of Livermore"

December 15, 2004:

Don Meeker and Diana Carey present - "Christmas Sales and Entertainment between the World Wars"

January 19, 2005:

Alan Frank, curator of Niles Canyon RR station, speaks on "Rail Roads and the Tri-Valley"

\$2 suggested donation. Coffee, tea and sweet breads provided by the Library Cafe. The Library Cafe is open until 8:00 p.m. providing sandwiches and drinks



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.

A Word From the Chair

Members of the Livermore Heritage Guild adopted new By-Laws at the last general meeting. Attached are copies of the revised By-Laws.

The Heritage Guild has purchased Past Perfect, a computer program that is specifically designed for museum management. The program will handle our membership mailing list, establish a data base of all our archives and even help catalog displays and exhibits for future reference.

Photographs of items in our archives can be attached electronically to each record for a quick visual reference. We are also purchasing a new computer so we can start building our electronic filing system on Past Perfect.

If you are interested in participating in data entry into the Past Perfect computer database or have any comments about the By-Laws contact me at larrym49@comcast.net or phone the History Center at (925) 449-9927 and leave a message. Hope everyone has a wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas!

