



# Livermore Heritage Guild

*Saving Yesterday For Tomorrow*



P.O. Box 961, Livermore, CA 94551

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## Carnegie Centennial Reception: Next Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup>

The Carnegie Library Building is one of Livermore's most beloved edifices. It was home to the Livermore Public Library from the structure's opening in 1911 until 1966. The Livermore Heritage Guild History Center and Livermore Art Association have been based there since the mid-1970s.

In its final Carnegie Centennial year event, the Livermore Heritage Guild will present the Carnegie Centennial Reception next Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at the Veterans Memorial Building (522 South L St.) from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets are \$40 each. They can be purchased at the History Center (2155 Third Street) and at [livermorehistory.com](http://livermorehistory.com) (via PayPal).

Join us for delectable hors d'oeuvres, fine local wines, live bluegrass music, dessert and coffee. Historian and environmentalist Lucy Kortum will present photos and stories of California's 144 Carnegie libraries.

Mrs. Kortum conducted a survey of the Carnegie libraries in California for the California State Office of Historic Preservation and in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree of Master of Arts in History at Sonoma State University. She completed her master's thesis, "Carnegie Library Development in California and the Architecture it Produced 1899-1921," in 1990.

She and her husband Bill are prominent environmental advocates in Petaluma and Sonoma County.



Photo by Jason Bezis

**The Carnegie Library building and park have been the site of numerous civic events over the past century. On June 23, 2011, KPIX-TV aired its "Eye on the Bay" program live from the Farmers' Market there. Host Brian Hackney displayed a *Livermore Herald* story from December 1948 concerning the first television broadcast received in Livermore (above).**

They were recognized in the *Congressional Record* in November 2007. The Kortums were instrumental in placing the California Coastal Initiative on the ballot that resulted in the creation of the California Coastal Commission, a nationally recognized model for open space preservation and the creation of

the California Coastal Trail, a portion of which is named in their honor.

Proceeds from the reception will be used to defray costs associated with the Guild's other Carnegie Centennial events, including the Art & History Fair held last May 14<sup>th</sup>.

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# Townsend School Building (1875) Re-Discovered, Partially Salvaged

The impending demolition of an old farmhouse and barn on five acres of property on the north side of town (6412 Scenic Avenue) set off a flurry of crowbar-wielding Guild members when we learned that the farmhouse had originally been built around the main structure of an old school. The newer barn had been built on site probably in the late 1960's to early 70's, and was pieced together with old telephone poles and railroad ties, but the main ingredient was discarded garage doors from the "Mr. Garage Door" business that the owner operated on site. Garage doors were not just used as doors, but also walls and roof sections. Not sure it would pass code, but it made for interesting architecture. The architecture that we cared most about, however, was the possibility of intact siding from the school that could be used in the future restoration of the historic 1870s Midway schoolhouse, a popular project that has not yet mustered finances or a full project team.

The city and the property owners identified the school as Summit School which had served the town of Altamont. Gary Drummond was sure it was Townsend instead (from southeast of town on Tesla Road). Since I remembered that Summit was still standing in its original location in the 1970's before being burned down, I was willing to agree. In follow-up correspondence, Bob Bronzan, author of a master's thesis in 1973 discussing Livermore's early schools, also confirmed the Townsend provenance. Could the owners be all mistaken? I spoke to various family members who came by as we were dismantling, and all were sure that it was Summit, which, by the way, would have been notably closer than Townsend. In any case, some school building had been moved to a property on Scenic Avenue and after changing hands at least once more, it was modified to become the Fanfa family home.



Photos by Loretta Kaskey

**Above:** Casey Salas, Tom Soules and Jeff Kaskey take a break from removing the back wall siding. **Below left:** The filled-in profiles of three tall windows are visible here. This is the back of the house, but would have been the side of the school building. (Compare with photo on p.3.)



**Below:** Tim Sage watches two more pieces of metal siding fly off the back of the old school building.



A porch and kitchen were added, windows were moved, a second floor was inserted and the whole thing was sheathed in metal siding, but we had a hope that the basic shape and structure of the old school still lived within the walls and would help us to confirm the building's heritage.

Local 1800's schoolhouse architecture was unique in the details, but most of the schools in our area followed a few similar styles. The buildings were tall to allow the heat of the day to rise and help keep the floor space ventilated and cooler. The height was created under either a high, fully hipped roof of low pitch in the Italianate style (Inman and Townsend schools) or a Pioneer Vernacular steep-pitched, simple gabled roof (Mocho, Highland, Green, Vista). Italianate style windows were typically narrow and tall (about 8 feet), while the steeper gabled roofs of the vernacular typically suggested shorter windows. Summit and May were more unique. Both had the steep gabled roof, but May added a prominent bell tower above its portico, while Summit had both the steep pitched roof and the tall Italianate-sized windows and a cupola atop the ridge line.

Most schools had exterior shutters that allowed air movement while providing shade on the sunny side of the building. Three or four windows per side were common. There were sometimes side doors, but usually the main entrance was on one short end, and the far end from the main entrance was the wall with the teacher's desk and blackboard which meant it generally had no windows or doors.

So in confirming that the Scenic house included the Townsend building, we would be looking first to get oriented as to where the original building was within the

new structure, then check for roof pitch and construction, as well as window placement. And regardless of its origin, we were anxious to see if we would find any salvageable material at all.

The developer's representative, Josh Roden of Meritage Homes, while a little dubious that any historic materials of value remained, was very cooperative. So with crow-bars in the hands of Chris George, Jerry Benterou, Greg Gibson, Doug Mansur, Tim Sage, Tom and Barbara Soules, Casey Salas, Brenda Kusler, Loretta Kaskey and your President, the metal siding was peeled off to show that sections of the original siding were still very much in place. Our initial good fortune was multiplied when we confirmed that the wall with no apparent windows in the metal siding in fact had never had any windows. This not only told us the orientation of the original school house, but also gave us an area that had many complete pieces of siding to be salvaged. We did this project in July 2011.

Although the original windows on the building sides had been removed to accommodate modern replacements, the patched woodwork told clearly where the originals had been. Enough of the building had been compromised that preservation of the original school was not an option, but the characteristic siding is a gold mine for the Midway schoolhouse restoration.

We recovered some long, straight, knot-free siding boards of inch-thick redwood of a grade that is simply unavailable today. These were held in place with square-cut nails, pounded into full sized redwood studs that also would not be found in any modern lumber yard. *(Cont'd on p. 6)*

**Townsend Public School operated from this schoolhouse on what is now Tesla Road (east of Greenville Road) from 1875 until its closure in 1944. Sometime after dissolution of the Townsend School District, the building was moved to Scenic Avenue. It was demolished in summer 2011 to make way for the "Fanfare" real estate development, after the Guild's salvage effort. Salvaged materials will be used in the Midway school relocation-renovation project.**



LHG Collection (from a series at Livermore High School library until 1994)



## Duarte Garage/Lincoln Highway Museum: Year in Review

The Duarte Garage/Lincoln Highway Museum is operated by the Livermore Heritage Guild at the corner of Portola Avenue and L Street. The Duarte family constructed the garage as a full-service automobile service station (including Associated brand gasoline, tire and auto sales and vehicle repairs) in 1915 when the State first paved a highway from Livermore to Greenville, the first concrete-surface segment of the Bay Area-San Joaquin Valley highway (today's I-580). The "Highway Garage of Livermore" was strategically located at the Lincoln Highway's eastbound turnoff to Livermore (L Street).

The Lincoln Highway was the nation's first transcontinental highway, extending from New York City to San Francisco via the Livermore Valley. The Lincoln Highway Sacramento-San Francisco segment was re-routed via Solano County after the first Carquinez Bridge opened in 1927. In 1950, the state highway (then known as U.S. 50) moved northward to today's I-580 alignment, diverting much of the through traffic from "Livermore Boulevard" (as today's Portola Ave. was then called). The Duarte family was forced to sell the garage property to the City in the early 1970s.

Ticket sales and donations help to support Garage activities. The Guild generally opens the Garage to the public on the third Sunday of each month. The Garage also opens for special tours, especially for car clubs. Cub Scout groups qualify for a history badge after a Garage visit.

Bill Junk is the Duarte Garage/Lincoln Highway Museum curator. He observes, "With more volunteers, we could be open more than one scheduled day each month. As it is, some of us are approaching burn-out." "Joesville" was a nearby highway dining and lodging center (subject of the



By Dick Jones/R.J. Aerial Photo

January 2010 Guild history lecture). Mr. Junk believes that a Joesville display would be appropriate in the Garage. He also suggests that more "hands-on" displays would be useful, especially for school-age visitors. He would like the Lincoln Highway exhibit to be upgraded in advance of the highway's national centennial commemoration in 2013.

Mr. Junk is favorably impressed with the fire engine renovation projects. Since September 2008, on most Saturday mornings the Garage has hosted the crew of volunteers who are restoring the City's retired 1920 Seagrave fire engine. "The restoration of the Model T and the Seagrave has been done by a talented and dedicated crew mostly of retirees from Lawrence Livermore Lab and Sandia California Lab. The Guild, following our motto of 'Save Yesterday For Tomorrow,' took in the three fire engines from outdoor storage and neglect – never expecting they would be restored and running again," he says.

Marie Abbott is a docent at the Garage and a Guild vice president. "The Garage is one of a kind. It's amazing it's intact in this day and age. It makes you feel so good to share it with our visitors," she says. "People like the feel of it and the garage 'smell.'" (It's odor from the grease pit, she notes.) Ms. Abbott, too, anticipates the Lincoln Highway centennial in 2013. With the help of many generous contributors, she recently collected vehicle license plates from all of the Lincoln Highway states. She wants to improve displays of various artifacts, including farm equipment and a piece of wooden water pipe from 1870s Livermore. She would like to find more ways to increase funds available for Garage displays and maintenance.

The following is a summary (chiefly compiled by Bill Junk) of various Duarte Garage/Lincoln Highway Museum activities since mid-2010:



By Dick Jones/R.J. Aerial Photo

**Left:** Visitors (many from the Bay Area Horseless Carriage Club) examine Seagrave engine in October 2010. **Right:** Applause for the Seagrave's first successful public engine start.

**June 2010:** Members of the extended Duarte family, led by **Fran Duarte**, visited and presented the desk used in the Garage office and some tools used in the Garage.

## Year at Duarte Garage *(Cont'd from Page 4)*

The three retired Livermore fire engines maintained by the Guild (1919 Model T, 1920 Seagrave, 1944 Mack) were in the **Rodeo Parade**. The 1920 Seagrave was on the bed of a tow truck as it was not yet ready to roll on its own. The **"Firefighters' Parade" mural** was dedicated on the wall of the former fire station on First Street. It features all three of the Guild's fire engines. The 1944 Mack and the 1919 Model T attended the dedication ceremony. Author Janet Nolan sold and signed her children's book titled **"The Firehouse Light"** at the Garage on June 13<sup>th</sup>.

**July 2010:** Volunteer Neil Riley set up a system to record and identify old tools donated to the Garage.

**September 2010:** Former Livermore Mayor Cathie Brown spoke at the Guild's **Annual General Meeting** and dinner at the Garage. The **Good News Bears** took photos with the Mack truck for their 2011 calendar.

**October 2010:** The **Bay Area Horseless Carriage Club** visited and had lunch with us. They arrived in at least eight vehicles manufactured before 1916 (see photo below). They witnessed the **first public start** of the restored 1920 Seagrave fire engine (see photos on p. 4). Lynn Owens served as auctioneer for bidding on the honor of activating the magneto to start the engine. Another fundraising effort was a \$5 donation for the privilege of ringing the truck bell. The event generated more than \$900.

**November 2010:** The Garage was used as a polling place for the statewide election. (The Garage has been a polling place in recent presidential elections, too.)

**January 2011:** The **NorCal Classic Car Club** visited with their elegant autos ('34 Pierce Silver Arrow; '33 Franklin 16B; '24 Kissel 6-55; '36 Packard; '38, '40, & '41 Cadillacs).

**February 2011:** The Bireley Brothers replaced about twenty **roof braces** in the Garage that were cracked or bowed. A member of the California chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association enlisted our help in making an

appeal to the City of Livermore to erect **signs marking the Lincoln Highway route** through the City. (The California Chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association in most years hosts guided tours of the pioneer route from Sacramento to San Francisco and stops here.)

**April 2011:** For his Eagle Scout project, Christopher Nielsen set up an exhibit in the Garage explaining and demonstrating the workings of a magneto ignition system.



Photo by Jason Begis

**Left: Former Mayor Cathie Brown** spoke at the Garage in Sept. 2010 at the Annual General Meeting.

**Below: Bay Area Horseless Carriage Club** vehicles lined Pine St. on a rainy Sunday in Oct. 2010.

**May 2011:** The Guild's annual **auction** was held at the Garage. The Model T was present at the **Carnegie Library building centennial celebration**. The Model T also transported the mayor leading a parade of cancer survivors down First Street to start Stage 4 of the **AMGEN Tour of California** bicycle race. A **Bay Area Porsche club** visited the Garage. (All car clubs are welcomed. Some spend an hour and some hold a meeting here and some bring food and have lunch here.)

**June 2011:** Volunteers tuned up and shined up the three fire trucks for the **Rodeo Parade**. Fire Station #6 had a 110 year celebration for its famous long-burning **light bulb** and invited our three fire engines. Many visited the Garage on **Father's Day**. KPIX-TV took many pictures in the Garage for its June 23<sup>rd</sup> **"Eye on the Bay"** program.

**September 2011:** Guild's Annual General Meeting and dinner at the Garage. Irv Stowers and Will Bolton presented the story of the Seagrave fire engine restoration.

By Dick Jones/R.J. Aerial Photo





## School Salvage *(Cont'd from Page 3)*

These will be excellent restoration materials. Even the nails can be reused. Century-old redwood also splits at the slightest provocation, but we learned to remove the siding generally intact along with a fair number of the square-cut nails.

Square-cut nails are a bit of a story on their own. Metal nails of various forms have been with us for thousands of years, but as individually handforged items they were anything but the "common nail." Old structures were sometimes burned down simply to recover these valuable nails. There are conflicting timelines of the mechanization of their manufacture, but there is general agreement that the first nails mechanically sheared from flat iron plate ("cut nails") appear in the late 18th century. They continued with only minor variation until the 1890's when steel wire made our familiar round nails possible. The changeover was gradual, but by the 1910's round nails were predominant. Not quite extinct today, square cut nails still find application in concrete (with a pre-drilled hole) as well as specialty woodworking such as flooring and boatbuilding. The square nail is in some ways a better nail, in that it grips the wood better and reduces splitting, were it

not for the fact that the round ones are so much cheaper they might still be quite popular.

So we have recovered some restoration material, now what about the accurate origin of the school? Yes, well. As we got a better look at the skeleton of the school, the details did seem to match nicely to the Townsend school. In particular, note the last window on the right in the historic photo on page 3. It is very close to the corner of the building and a look at the framework of the soon-to-be-demolished house on Scenic Ave. indicated similar construction. And while the Scenic Ave. house looks a little taller than Townsend, as part of the move the building was put on a raised foundation of about three feet. The original structure is still quite apparent and appears to match Townsend accurately. The modifications of the Scenic house completely removed what would have been the front of Townsend School, so no useful evidence is there. We were only able to strip one window side of the building because the other side had been covered in asbestos tile, which we were not allowed to disturb. By the time the demolition company was done, there was nothing left to photograph.

The roofline is a good match to Townsend, and while the Fanfa family had added a second story to the house, they did it without raising the roof, instead taking advantage of the original tall structure and cutting away the ceiling joists to create loft space under the original rafters. Everything we could see suggested that the roofline and outer structure were original.

This all led to a nearly ironclad case that the house had been Townsend school. But I had missed an important detail. That is, the Summit school for which we had photos was the one built in 1894, replacing the original built in 1862. There were news accounts in the 1950's that referred to "the old Summit school" but that turns out to be the 1894 school, so they are of little help. It was becoming annoyingly difficult to completely rule out the original Summit school without some evidence of what it looked like. The 1862 school was sold to Thomas Ryder (*Pleasanton Times*, 1892, quoted by Anne Homan) but then there is silence. The Fanfa family says that in the 1940's or 1950's the contractor hired to finally tear it down instead apparently bought it and likely moved it somewhere, plausibly to Scenic Avenue (City Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report, April 7, 2011). In the same time period, November 1944, Townsend school was put up for sale by the school district at a minimum price of \$288 after the district was annexed to Livermore, so either school could have been available to be moved to the Scenic Avenue site. The Townsend site was never sold; it is reported in 1955 as being returned to Louis Nissen, but that report has no mention of the building, further suggesting it had been earlier moved.



Photo by Loretta Kaskey

**Here's our booty - some stacks of recovered redwood siding, for possible use in the Midway School relocation and renovation project.**

Generally, if I want ironclad evidence of a detail in Livermore's  
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history, I consult Anne Homan's *Historic Livermore, California*, and in this case she comes through with "...Townsend school [...] was moved into Livermore and modified into a two-story home in the 6400 block of Scenic Avenue" (page 472), which seems quite solid. I checked her reference, which was Dan Mosier's article in this newsletter in April 2003 entitled "The Name 'Townsend,'" in which he carefully explains how we have retained Moses D. Townsend's name for a school though few people knew who Townsend was. Dan Mosier cites personal communications with Gary Drummond in 2001 as his source. This condensed my sources back to Bob Bronzan and Gary Drummond, which I consider to be nearly unimpeachable, but still I was looking for a primary source.

Back to the photo archive, where I had already been. Now that I knew that I was looking for something before 1894, I was delighted to find a Summit School class photo from 1890. It was a close-up, with no detail about the shape of the building, but the siding of the building was clearly vertical planks, completely different from the horizontal drop-lap siding we found on the Scenic Avenue house. This photo confirmed our theory. You won't make money betting against our local historians.

**Right:** Guild Director at Large, Barbara Soules removes square nails from the siding. Nails and siding can be used in the Midway reconstruction.

**Below left:** Guild member Chris George avoids the dust with a Soviet-bloc gas mask.

**Below right:** Original redwood siding emerges from under the metal siding. Without the protective cover, the siding would be in much worse condition.



In postscript, the name of the new development to be built on Scenic Ave. is "Fanfare." It is common for developers to name new projects to evoke a location's heritage. Here in Livermore we have Arroyo Crossing, near Arroyo Mocho, and

Ruby Hill is adjacent to the Ruby Hill winery. Fanfare? It was the home of the Fanfa family, of course.

**Jeff Kaskey**



## LHG Calendar

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9<sup>TH</sup>**, Carnegie Centennial Reception, Veterans Memorial Building, 522 L Street from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets available at History Center and at [www.livermorehistory.com](http://www.livermorehistory.com).

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16<sup>TH</sup>**, Duarte Garage Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on "old" Lincoln Highway, Portola Ave. at L St. [Also Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>: "History of Camp Parks" talk at Dublin Library, 200 Civic Plaza, 2 p.m.] No LHG History Lectures scheduled for the remainder of 2011.



Photo by Jason Bezis



Ed Rominger, left, donated a plywood-covered album of photographs related to Naval Air Station Livermore to the Guild in July. Guild Vice President Marie Abbott, right, accepted the gift. Lt. Cmdr. Clifford Rominger, Mr. Rominger's father, was the last base commander of N.A.S. Livermore in 1949-51. The Livermore Radiation Laboratory (now L.L.N.L.) took over the site in 1952. The impetus for the gift was Will Bolton's July History Lecture concerning the history of the N.A.S.

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The Livermore Heritage Guild  
History Center is located in the  
historic 1911 Carnegie Library  
building at 2155 Third Street.  
History Center hours generally are  
Wednesday through Sunday, 11:30  
a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: (925) 449-  
9927. Free admission.  
**CARNEGIE  
CENTENNIAL  
RECEPTION**  
Next Sunday, 3 pm  
October 9th, 3 pm  
See front page.  
Public invited.  
Tickets \$40

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