

Livermore Heritage Guild

Saving Yesterday For Tomorrow



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Livermore Masonic Building Is 100 Years Old

Standing majestically on the southwesterly corner of First Street and South Livermore Avenue, the Livermore Masonic Building has been a downtown icon for the past century. The three-story reinforced concrete structure seems to form an inseparable trio with the nearby L. Schenone Building (1914) and tall flagpole (1905 and 2004). February is the 100th anniversary of the dedication ceremony.

Since 1909, the building has housed Mosaic Lodge No. 218, Free & Accepted Masons. The Mosaic Lodge previously met at the McLeod Building diagonally across the intersection. [Most of the McLeod Building was demolished in the early 1920s to make way for the Bank of Italy Building (1921), today home to the *Independent* newspaper.]

Wielding an elaborately engraved silver trowel, Grand Master Oscar L. Lawler laid the cornerstone on May 28, 1909 in a traditional Masonic ceremony.

A copper box containing rosters of Mosaic Lodge membership and newspapers was placed inside of it. Construction had begun earlier while Grand Officers were visiting Mexico.

In late November 1909, the Mosaic Lodge vacated the McLeod Building and convened on an interim basis in the Eagles' Hall in the upper part of the Town Hall building as its furniture was renovated for *Continued on Page 7 ("Masonic")*

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A Message From the President

January 12, 2010

Dear members,

Happy New Year and Decade! I am eager to start on the opportunities in front of us, and one of them has landed in our lap already. In December, we began work on accepting an exciting addition to our collection. 'Exciting' may seem a tad hyperbolic when describing historic artifacts, but see if you don't agree.

Beryl (Maclean) Beckwith, a descendent of the Wagoner, Black and Maclean families of Livermore, contacted me over email. Beryl herself has had a fascinating life in and out of Livermore, but the Wagoners and Macleans have been well known here for generations. For example, Gatzmer Wagoner owned land east of town and one day he saw some unannounced surveyors on his property. That evening he pulled up all their survey stakes and threw the surveyors off the land when they showed up the next day. But once the Navy properly identified its intentions, and this being shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the patriotic Gatz gave the government a good deal on the land that was to become the Livermore Naval Air Station (later L.L.N.L.). Beryl's Uncle Nathan was Nathan Maclean, the first local casualty of World War II (Nov./Dec. '09 newsletter).

The exciting part of the story is that Beryl's grandmother Henrietta was a careful and efficient collector of family photos, papers and artifacts. The Wagoner home on College Avenue? Got a picture. The property description of the Wagoner ranch south of town? Detailed in a family will and a property inspection report. Family genealogy? Yep. Nathan's letters home from his WWII station? Preserved, including one sent the day before he was killed in action. Photos, letters, artifacts and certificates, it is a wonderful collection that gives a great picture of the arc of a Livermore family and we are very fortunate that Beryl has offered to entrust us with it. Dick Finn is already using the information to help fill in the L-AGS index of founding Valley families.

What an excellent time for me to ask if one of you might be interested in helping us to catalog this material, and even help us to design some exhibits based on this in conjunction with other material in our collection. I can imagine an exhibit designed around Livermore's W.W. II vets, or perhaps around Livermore family photos. Often we pay more attention to pictures of buildings or events, but our collections, including this new one, also have some excellent shots of long-standing Livermore families (see, e.g., the photo at bottom of page 7).

One more highlight from a year that was full of them (in spite of what you might have read elsewhere). The beautiful Chinese sign from the Chinese settlement at Coast Manufacturing that we had displayed above the exhibit from the archeological dig at that site had been on loan from Barbara Adams. With Barbara's passing, her daughter Lynda inherited the sign. Since she was moving out of town, she had chosen to take it along with her. However, after some hopefully fond thoughts of Livermore and the Guild, Lyn has decided the sign will be back on display in the History Center. Thanks so much to Lyn!

It is popular at the moment to be glad to be escaping the last decade with our skin, but the Guild had many things to be thankful for. One gift I will miss is the assistance we got from our Collections Manager Terry Berry. Terry is moving out of the country, which should be very exciting for her, but leaves us with some challenges. Among many other things, Terry guided us in housing our collection with sounder archival practices and drove adoption of our computer-based collections management system, so we now have our volunteers helping to make our collection searchable and properly cataloged. Her work will carry on, however, and already we are making it possible to continue to increase the cataloging work that Terry championed. If you or someone you know is interested in helping to make our collection more accessible and better protected, we could make excellent use of your time or donations!

Jeff Kaskey

Remembering the 1980 Livermore Earthquakes

Where were you at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 24, 1980? After 30 years, just about everyone who then lived or worked in the Livermore area can still recall the precise moment when the ground shook.

The thirty-second temblor was 5.5 on the Richter scale (M); its "surface-wave magnitude" (a different seismic scale) was 5.8. Its epicenter was 7½ miles southeast of Mount Diablo, about 10 miles north of Livermore, 8 km below the surface. Aftershocks followed at 11:01 a.m. (M 5.2) and 11:03 a.m. (M 4.2). The cluster of earthquakes made it seem, to some, that the ground was in motion for a few minutes. Some people observed the seismic waves rippling through undulating carpet, floor tiles or bricks. (We especially want to learn your stories.)

Two days later, on Saturday, January 26th, another aftershock struck at 6:33 p.m. (M 5.2, U.S.G.S. or M. 5.8, U.C.B.) as many were eating their evening meals. The epicenter of that quake was 2.4 miles north-northeast of the Springtown area's Frick Lake.

Forty-four injuries and one death (possibly from a heart attack) were reported. A construction worker burned his hand while tarring a shaking roof.

Most property damage occurred in Springtown and eastern Livermore. The quake knocked 95 of the 133 units in the Sunrise Mobile Home Park in Springtown off of their supports. The *Oakland Tribune* wrote that the quake shook the mobile homes "like so much tinfoil." Residents, many of whom were senior citizens on fixed incomes, gathered in the recreation center after destruction of their homes; liquor bottles were set out for them. In contrast, observers from U.C. Berkeley found no structural damage to any units in Sun Valley Mobile Estates on Portola Avenue in western Livermore.

The quake damaged portions of the Lawrence Livermore (National) Laboratory. It sheared fist-sized bolts on the Shiva laser (operated 1977 to 1981), misaligned many of its twenty arms and knocked it offline for one month. The quake ruptured a 34,000 gallon tank containing tritiated water (super-heavy water), causing the radioactive substance to drip slowly into an asphalt catch basin below. Although

the tritiated water leak was contained and did not pose a hazard to the larger community, it generated a major controversy as lab officials took nearly ten hours to report it to the public. At Sandia laboratory, a six-foot storage safe fell onto a secretary's desk while she was away.

A damaged fire hydrant flooded the California Steel plant at Vasco & Naylor roads. At the Intel Corporation plant, 250 N. Mines Road (then a very short street), seven workers were injured among rattling equipment and chemicals; delicate semiconductor wafers crashed to the floor. It resumed operation by the evening shift. The plant, which opened in 1973, was Intel's first wafer fabrication facility ("Fab 3") outside of Silicon Valley. It closed circa 1993.



Tilted bookcases at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. U.S.G.S. photo. 1980.

Local wineries experienced significant damage. Wente Bros. winery on Tesla Road estimated that it had lost 100,000 gallons of wine; every filled stainless steel tank buckled, yet tall stacks of cartons nearby did not topple. The quake damaged at least one tank at Concannon. One vat was damaged at Stony Ridge (then at rural Ruby Hill).

Ceiling tiles rained down at the Springtown Holiday Inn (now Doubletree Hotel). The bar and kitchen were "demolished" by the quake, but the hotel re-opened by the evening without food service.

Eastbound Interstate 580 was closed for five hours through the Altamont on January 24th because earth on one side of the Greenville Road underpass settled six to eight inches. There were also reports that rocks had rolled onto the freeway in the Altamont. Traffic was diverted onto the old Altamont Pass Road until two of the four eastbound

Continued on Page 4 ("1980 Quakes")

1980 Quakes *(Continued from Page 3)*

lanes re-opened at 4:02 p.m. Settlement of another inch occurred after the January 26th aftershock.

On the afternoon of January 24th, the U.S. Geological Survey dispatched air and ground reconnaissance teams to the Livermore area to look for surface faulting and landsliding related to the earthquake. The U.S.G.S. found surface breaks that were discontinuous and of small displacement. Surface faulting was visible along the Greenville fault zone (4.2 km to 6.2 km long, extending along the eastern side of Livermore Valley) and Las Positas fault zone (1.1 km long, on the south-eastern edge of the Valley, along the hills behind Sandia laboratory and across Vasco, Tesla and Mines roads). There was right-lateral displacement of approximately one inch along portions of the Greenville fault zone. In 2009, Shirley Volkman, who lives atop the Las Positas Fault (discovered by D.G. Herd in 1975) at Vasco Road, said that she heard a loud sloshing of underground water during the January 24 quake.

The quake knocked out electric power in most of Livermore and part of Pleasanton. Swimming pools and aquaria at many homes lost water.

Supermarkets and liquor stores lost some of their inventory in glass containers. Elsie Bailey, owner of Gardella's Liquors, lamented to the *Valley Times*, "The cheap stuff didn't fall off the shelves." Refrigerated/frozen items were lost in the power outage. A front window broke at the Lucky Pacific Ave. supermarket.

At Livermore and Granada high schools, the quake disrupted final examinations, which quickly resumed. Joe Medeiros recalled in 2010 that evacuated Granada students diligently completed their tests while seated on the floor and ground. Gas leaks were reported at Junction and Joe Michell schools; a water main broke at Jackson Ave. school. Rincon students stayed outside all day as class "pods" were dark after emergency lights ran out. Staff at schools across the area grumbled about how some hysterical parents disrupted the otherwise calm children when they arrived to take their sons and daughters home. Only the Chabot College Valley Campus (today Las Positas College) closed for the day.

Livermore's City Hall had opened just weeks earlier in today's civic center, atop what was then the police

station. Ceiling tiles fell throughout the building and cracks formed in walls. The Livermore police mobilized quickly after the quake because 25 officers were at the headquarters taking a refresher course. The city's emergency operations center in the bunker (now gone) beneath the Rincon fire station was activated.

Pacific Telephone restricted access to the local phone system for one hour to give priority to essential services. Pac Tel tested numerous phones in the Livermore area and found that many were off of their hooks. Bill Goldman explained the seismic acrobatics of a home phone to the *Tribune*, "[I]t was the damndest thing. The phone hopped to the other end of the table on its own and fell off to the floor. I reached and reached but it ran away from me."



Tipped filing cabinets at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. U.S.G.S. photo. 1980.

To fill the communications gap, a network of local "C.B." ("Citizens' Band") radio owners collected and shared intelligence about conditions in various parts of the community, especially the status of nearby schools. Jonathan Scudder, husband of then Junction teacher Vicki Scudder, was part of this C.B. network.

No major damage occurred to the Livermore airport. The *Tribune* reported that Jan May was fueling a plane when the pavement "suddenly turned to Jell-o ... If the plane hadn't been chained down, it would have run over me." In one subdivision, a new tall brick wall fell.

The 5.5 quake was felt across the Bay Area and as far east as Reno. Plaster fell from ceilings at San Francisco City Hall. Store windows broke in Hayward. The BART system shut down 20 minutes for inspection. The *Tribune* offered an "Official Quake Survivor

Quakes *(Cont'd from Page 4)* In Memoriam: Al Ofiesh

Card” for wallet or framing. A one-foot wave was observed in the California Aqueduct in Kettleman City (Kings County), 170 miles away. To the relief of water agencies across the state that depended upon San Joaquin delta water, delta levees held.

The Oakland Zoo foreman noticed nothing unusual about animal behavior related to the quake. A chimp at the School Jungle Safari Project in San Mateo County reacted by screaming, grabbing his blanket and hitting the wall once the shaking stopped, as if to say, “Don’t do this to me again!”

Perhaps the heaviest damage outside of Livermore occurred at the Dublin K-Mart store (later Pak n’ Save, now demolished) and Mel’s Liquors. Peyton Place Ceramics in Pleasanton lost much of its inventory. Patrons at the Dublin Bowl during the Saturday aftershock witnessed a unique event – nature rolled a giant “strike” as 400 pins in all 40 lanes went down, as employee Joe Kreins reported to the *Tribune*.

Prior to 1980, the last time that the Livermore Valley had a sequence of significant local earthquakes was a cluster of five over M 4.0 between March 27 and June 28, 1943. There was no major damage. -By Jason Bezis

The Livermore Heritage Guild is collecting eyewitness accounts of the 1980 Livermore and 1989 Loma Prieta temblors. Please submit your stories, especially concerning your observations of the quakes themselves.

Albert A. Ofiesh, 80, was a founder of the innovative Math Learning Center (M.L.C.) at Livermore High School. The M.L.C. program, begun with fellow teacher George Graham in September 1970, allowed students to work at their own pace, with regular tests to assess progress. Many L.H.S. students took all of their math courses in M.L.C. except calculus. The standard curriculum included a unit in logic that was not offered as a traditional course; advanced subjects included limits and Fibonacci numbers. Principal Paul Reginato helped to clear administrative hurdles at M.L.C.’s founding. Herbert Thomas, L.H.S. math teacher from 1957 to 1987, recalled in 2010, “Al was the prime mover, the dynamic force. He did a little pushing and shoving in getting that set up. Al was a tough guy to buck.” Mr. Thomas said that M.L.C. was not only “good for better students who wanted to move on ahead,” but also “was an effort to make it possible for borderline students to stay in math” because of the self-pacing.



L.H.S. teachers Al Ofiesh, right, and George Graham, left. 1973 *El Vaquero* photo.

Math teachers Nelson and Lorraine Fong (L.H.S., 1973-2009) remembered Mr. Ofiesh in 2010 as one whose “bark is loud, but heart is bigger.” Some students found him to be gruff at first (reminiscent of an Edward G. Robinson movie character), but most eventually warmed to his unique style and the witticisms that he often dispensed with his personalized math tutorials. Mr. Ofiesh hunched over his desk and peered through his glasses as he deciphered students’ work. He often stroked his beard as he pondered a point and then fired interrogatories (and sometimes growled) at the student in the “hot seat” on the other side of his wooden desk leaf. Then he usually defused any tension with a proverb or humorous remark and referred the student to an aide for test grading or further instruction. University of North Texas mathematics Professor William Cherry (L.H.S., 1984) in 2010 recalled Ofiesh’s dedication to students and said M.L.C. “encouraged me to begin independent explorations of mathematical ideas.”

Ofiesh began teaching at L.H.S. in the mid-1960s after a three-year stint at Castro Valley High School. He volunteered many Wednesday nights to advise the school Math Club. He retired in 1995, but remained a consultant to M.L.C. Mr. Fong said of the challenge of being an M.L.C. instructor, “You teach everything, every period. You’re up on everything.” The M.L.C. program ended in the early 2000s. Mr. Ofiesh took pride in his Lebanese ancestry, his Depression-era, large-family roots in western Pennsylvania and his service in the Elks Club. He enjoyed golf, horse racing and poker and was known for seeking advice from people of all ages about football numbers. He prepared tax returns as a side job. Died December 7, 2009, his 80th birthday. Interred, Lower Burrell, PA. -By Jason Bezis (MLC, '87-'91)

On-line extra: Read a 1990 interview with Al Ofiesh.

Calendar

JANUARY

Duarte Garage Open: Sunday, January 17th, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. On "old" Lincoln Highway, Portola Avenue at L Street, Livermore.

History Lecture: Wednesday, January 20th on "**Joesville.**" Guest speaker is LHG President Jeff Kaskey, who will describe the evolution of Joesville from lawless haven past the north edge of town to sports bar and Castle Rock restaurant. Doors open at 7 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m. At Civic Center Library, 1188 South Livermore Avenue, Livermore.

FEBRUARY

History Lecture: Wednesday, February 17th on "**Holdener Dairy,**" which various owners operated on Stanley Blvd. since 1913. It closed in 1980 and its site is now the Peppertree Plaza (Nob Hill) shopping center. Guest speaker is Anne Homan. Doors open at 7 p.m., talk at 7:30 p.m. At Civic Center Library, 1188 South Livermore Avenue, Livermore.

Duarte Garage Open: Sunday, February 21st, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. On "old" Lincoln Highway, Portola Avenue at L Street, Livermore.

ANNUAL AUCTION

Have something to donate to our annual Auction in May? It's not too early for us to pick it up. Let us know at the History Center 449-9927 or contact Bill Junk 447-4561. Thanks!



Chinese New Year Feast of 1874

The Chinese New Year, Year of the Tiger, begins on February 17, 2010. The *Alameda County Advocate*, a newspaper published in "Haywood" (Hayward) between 1870 and 1874, ran an account of a Chinese New Year feast in Livermore in the early morning of February 16, 1874 (Year of the Dog). Dr. Jock Toon, "wishing to appear somewhat Americanized," was the host. The *Advocate's* Livermore correspondent was a guest. He wrote in the racially insensitive style of the period. Dr. Toon apparently was a doctor of Chinese medicine.

The correspondent wrote: "At midnight the moon-eyed caterer stated that "Chow Chow" was ready, and so were we. Sitting down to a table tastefully decorated with gewgaws, tinsels, punks, colored candles, etc., from the Flowery Kingdom, our repast began. Our first course was, as near I could learn, fish whiskers stewed with eggshells – a dish quite relishable. Dish after dish was brought on the table, counting up in the aggregate forty-one courses, cooked in nine different styles, among them being a youthful porker, all with one exception being palatable."

"We had fish, dried, salt and fresh, eggs, duck, turkey and hen, preserves, watermelon seeds, tea, (and the best at that), dried rats, or something closely resembling them that my stomach could not stand; also "Mellican" bread, pies and cakes, washed down with Chinese wine tasting like unto terrible strong fire-water, one gulp of which was sufficient to destroy the strongest of nerves. After our feast we tried the Doc's fancy pipe, an article with which the smoker is compelled to bring smoke through water. After that cigars were brought in, and we amused ourselves for some time, our host in the interim amusing himself by firing fire-crackers, bombs, etc., and trying to make as much confusion as possible. We managed to find our home about daylight." - J. Bezis

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The Livermore Heritage Guild newsletter is published six times per year. Contact the newsletter editor with comments or suggestions for articles.

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Seven Sisters Road

Anna Siig wants to know the origin of the name of "Seven Sisters Road," today a part of Greenville Road. Was it named for the seven Bargmann sisters who lived nearby? Or for the series of dips in the roadway before it was re-engineered in the early 1960s? If you have ideas, please contact the History Center.

Masonic *(Continued from Front Page)*

placement in the new building. The lodge room in the new building was first used on December 20, 1909.

A crowd of approximately 250 attended the dedication ceremony for the Masonic Building on February 11, 1910. Grand Junior Warden W.J. Filmer of San Francisco officiated. Masonic and Eastern Star officials spoke. The Orpheus Orchestra played; many singers performed, including a girl who sang "charmingly" about a cowboy. A late-night banquet was held. Dancing continued into the early morning.

The Masonic Building immediately became a source of civic pride. The *Echo* newspaper sold half-tone postcards of it (two for five cents).

Julius L. Weilbye (1854-1911), a local architect, was the designer; C.C. Wilder was the builder. Weilbye designed many buildings in the Valley over a 40-year period (see Anne Homan's Dec. 21, 2006 *Independent* column).

The first story was designed for the First National Bank. It included counting rooms, vaults and offices. Later American Trust Bank was located there; it moved circa 1960 to a new building at 2nd & K (now Wells Fargo Bank). A scuba diving shop may have been there in the 1970s. A comic book store (now Fantasy Books & Games) has been there since 1981, moved from another First Street site. Owner Bob Borden says comics are no longer "just a niche market." Vestiges of a vault room (with 18" thick walls) remain.

The second floor contained "a commodious lodge room" (36' by 50') with an oak finish and a ceiling tinted to represent the "star-decked heavens," along with ante-rooms and offices. A dentist (G.A. Therkof) occupied part of the second floor for many years.

Characterized by its dormer windows, the third floor exists only on the First Street side of the building. In 1910, it included a 35' by 26' banquet room, a kitchen, storerooms, dressing rooms and a hat room.

From circa 1917 to 1956, Livermore's telephone exchange was located on the South Livermore Avenue side of the Masonic Building, according to Anne Homan's *Historic Livermore*. Operators there uttered the phrase "Number please" countless times in the era before direct-dial phone service.

Previously, the Anthony hardware store, a modest one-story structure built in 1872, stood on the site. It is remembered today by the abbreviated "M.S. ANTHO" plaque that is in the sidewalk in front of the Masonic Building.

By February 1910, the new Livermore Hardware Company managed by L.J. Nissen had succeeded to M.S. Anthony at a new location. The plumbing department remained in "special charge" of Frederick A. Anthony.

A Chinese laundry neighbored the Masonic Building on South Livermore Avenue in 1910.-By Jason Bezis



Photograph from Beryl Beckwith Collection, left.

(Ms. Beckwith is a granddaughter of Henrietta Wagoner. See p. 2 & below.)

Written on back of photo:

*"Livermore High School
Middler - 1908-9*

Left to Right:

*Girls: Mary O'Donnell, Ida Sutherland, Margaret Mack, Henrietta Wagoner, Eva MacDonald, Edith Monahan
Boys: Anthony O'Donnell, Maitland Henry, Charley Sweet, Chris Buckley, Theodore Mess, Walter Stickler"*

What It Was: Paper Folder

In last issue we asked about an interesting brass item that we had in the collection but could not identify. Many thanks to longtime friend of the Guild, and donor of our Historic Drugstore display, John Sarboraria, for dropping off some pages of *Remington: The Practice of Pharmacy* that described it all very well. *Remington* was first published in 1885, though John has a copy from the 1950's.

In short, the device was used by druggists as a form over which to bend a paper powder packet filled with medication, and was simply known as a "paper folder". While tablet medicines have been around in various forms for a long time, well into the 20th century pharmacists were required to compound some medications themselves. These medications could be incorporated in salves or liquids when appropriate, but were often delivered as powders, measured into individual folded pieces of paper to be dissolved by the patient in a glass of water. Multiple folded packets were fit into small boxes to fulfill the prescription. Part of folding the paper packet involves turning down the ends sharply to contain the powder and fit neatly into the box, and this is where our brass widget

comes in. The "wings" would be adjusted to a width appropriate to the receiving box and used as a form over which to press down the packet ends. John noted that



even when appropriate pills were available, patients sometimes preferred the powders because they were easier to take dissolved in a glass of water. In any event, we will add the paper folder to our historic drugstore display.

Because we wanted to see the device in action, I made up some "powder" and wrapped it in tissue paper approximately as shown in *Remington*. You can see in the picture how the ends get folded down over the wings. To put the paper packet in a box you would then fold the ends all the way over and stack them horizontally in a prescription box.

-By Jeff Kaskey

