

Livermore Heritage Guild

Saving Yesterday For Tomorrow



Photo by Bill Nale, eLivermore.com

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"Firefighters' Parade" Mural Dedicated at Old Firehouse

Downtown Livermore has become a bit more colorful with the new "Firefighters' Parade" mural, dedicated on September 21st. Lead artist Vera Gordeev Lowdermilk and assistant Kean Adair Butterfield painted the mural, paid for by the City Commission for the Arts, on the easterly wall of the old city firehouse at 2369 First St.

The City constructed the building, now the Sanctuary Ultra Lounge nightclub, for the fire department in 1906. It served as a fire station until 1976, housing the now-famous light bulb for many years, along with the

1919 Model T chemical truck, 1920 Seagrave fire engine and 1944 Mack fire engine that the Livermore Heritage Guild now maintains. The Model T (driven by Garry Bausch) and the Mack (driven by Bill Junk) returned to their former home, accompanied by two current Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department engines, for the dedication ceremony. A banner represented the absent Seagrave, now under restoration at the Duarte Garage. Dick and Doris Ryon currently own the building.

City officials presented a proclamation. Cher Wollard, Livermore's Poet Laureate, composed and read a poem titled "This Wall." Juliette Goodrich of KPIX-TV signed copies of her book about the light bulb. Many Guild members attended, including retired LFD Division Chief Lynn Owens, who dressed in a vintage uniform. The mural covers nearly 1,400 ft² (80 feet long by 17½ feet high).

Lowdermilk, a longtime Livermore resident, made the original design. Butterfield is a 1973 graduate of Granada High School. They painted the mural over *(Cont'd on p. 2)*

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Photo by Bill Nale, eLivermore.com

Kean Adair Butterfield and Vera Gordeev Lowdermilk painted the mural over a 2½-month period.

Firefighter Mural *(Cont'd from Page 1)*

a ten-week period in mid-2010. They rented a scissor lift to reach the high portions of the wall. Butterfield painted the top portion from the roof, leaning over the edge. Glare and quick-drying paints were challenges on hot, bright summer days, especially on an east-facing wall. They often worked into the dusk twilight, perfecting small details.

The mural is located in a parking lot. Most of the major elements were placed high on the wall in order to be visible above parked automobiles. To prolong the mural's longevity, they bought the most durable paints available, special blends of latex house paints. A "clear coat" was placed atop the mural as an anti-graffiti measure and to filter ultraviolet rays. Al Meadows helped with the early pattern work.

The mural's three segments include a fleet of historic fire engines at right, a parade street scene at center and a set of "bas reliefs" at left [figures representing the Arts (including viticulture), a fireman and the Sciences (atomic symbol and stars)]. A 1956 *Livermore News* photo inspired the arrangement of the fire engine fleet (see Homan's *Historic Livermore*, p. 174). The light bulb is depicted above the Model T. Artistic license was used in its placement within the garage.

The artists did considerable research for the mural. Lowdermilk says that the favorite part of her research was learning about horses (six are in the mural). She visited the Draft Horse Classic in Grass Valley to study horses and a Mines Road ranch to photograph them in harnesses. She examined a steam pumper at the Oakland Museum. (Although steam pumpers were not part of Livermore's fire apparatus, she wanted to include them in the parade.)

Lowdermilk conceived the idea of a "firefighters' parade" while watching fire engines in a Livermore Rodeo Parade with her son in the 1980s. "Kids love them," she said. Her conceptual painting is at the City Hall. Her contract with the City required many of the mural's elements, including an "Art Deco" style (recognizing the building architecture from its renovation as a Depression project in the 1930s).

Many Livermore firemen served as models. At the head of the handpumper fire wagon is Lynn Owens, wearing a white chief's helmet (close observers will see the eagle atop it) and carrying a voice trumpet. He is joined by retired firemen Randy Jennings (far left, was a driver of the Seagrave fire engine) and Randy Griffith (third from left, retired arson investigator). The fireman behind the handpumper who looks directly at the viewer is Jared Jamison (Granada High School, '02), a LFPD fireman who has beat

cancer twice. At the far right is Gregory Lowdermilk, the artist's son, who served as a summer fireman in the Tahoe area. ("I had to paint him in," she says.) Many posed in the parking lot. "One of my greatest honors was to paint these firemen's portraits," Butterfield says. He visited a Pleasanton fire station to photograph old fire helmets, badges and axes. The Guild's Jeff Kaskey admitted him to the History Center basement to inspect an old blue fireman's uniform. Owens shared many firefighting artifacts from his personal collection.

The parade proceeds easterly on a fictitious downtown Livermore street. The hills of Pleasanton Ridge are visible in the distance. Grandchildren of local firefighters and other members of the community are among the spectators. The artists also portrayed modern Livermore's racial and ethnic diversity there.



Photo by Bill Nade, eLivermore.com

Retired LFD fireman Randy Jennings (left) and retired Division Chief Lynn Owens (right) pose in front of the handpumper fire wagon portion of the mural. Jennings is at far left in the mural scene; Owens is in the white helmet.

The "trompe l'oeil" brick wall was meticulously "laid" with tape, levels and paint rollers. The shadows of the grout were brushed in.

The driver of the steam pumper is retired firefighter Rick Lamb (he once worked at this firehouse). He was among the first visitors as the mural was first going up. Lowdermilk says that fireman driving the Seagrave truck (next to the Dalmatian dog) is not the likeness of a single person, but rather is a "composite fireman."

The "LIVERMORE" arch (serif letters improvised from cardboard cutouts) was inspired by civic arches in Pleasant Hill and Pleasanton. The *(Cont'd on p. 7)*

This last newsletter of the year finds us busy with friends and family. Jumping into the year-end holidays, we can think about the many people and things for which we are thankful. At the Guild we are daily reminded of how lucky we are to have the support of generous members, awesome volunteers and an appreciative and interested public. In such situations people sometimes say, "We couldn't do it without you," which of course is quite true, but more importantly, what would be the point? The Guild exists because you believe that the interesting stories and significant pieces of Livermore's history are worth preserving and sharing today and tomorrow. Perhaps because where we live says something about who we are, or perhaps you just appreciate the context and perspective that we get by remembering our history as we consider the future. Anyway, thanks!

I am excited by next year's centennial of our old Carnegie Library building. Besides being the Guild's headquarters, this building represents a significant piece of Livermore's development as a culturally active town. For a town of barely 2,000 people, the library's transition from a storefront on First Street to this formal "temple in the park" in 1911 showed that Livermore intended to continue to value knowledge. Two decades after Livermore had created California's first Union High School, the Carnegie Library put free public literature at the center of a full city block. As the centennial approaches, LARPD has already undertaken a major facelift. Come on by the park and see the freshened face from a major cleaning and paint job. See page 3 for news about our Carnegie centennial events.

Each time I sit to type out this letter I tend to start, like a magpie, with the notion of writing about the sparkly shiny things I've seen in the last month or two. The first starting of the 1920 Seagrave fire engine in October was certainly one of those, as is its appearance along with our 1944 Mack Fire Engine and the Model T Fire Car on the giant mural on the side of the old firehouse (currently Sanctuary restaurant and bar). But we have some interesting things ahead as well that may not get such general notice and I want you to be among the first to know. Some months back, Bill O'Neal, one of the members of our Collections Committee, asked if we might be interested in accepting the donation of a historic airplane. Bill is generally considered thoughtful and sane (not counting his predilection for the banjo) so I thought maybe I misunderstood and imagined that he meant a painting or model that might fit comfortably in the spare storage space we don't have. But no, this was a Piel Emeraude, locally built by Livermore aviator Bob Stearns. Having flown the plane for about four decades, Bob was not getting much use of the plane of late, so thought that, as perhaps the first homebuilt plane in Livermore, we might be able to honor it properly in a display commemorating Livermore's early and continuing connection to flight.

I tend towards sarcasm by nature and thought, "Sure, there's space in the front display cabinet, we'll just shove it in where we had been displaying tools from the Duarte Garage." Bill tried to be helpful. "The wings come off ...," he noted, so I imagined we could perhaps leave a few of the tools on display next to the airplane. At our collections meeting, we talked about how we might manage such a donation. (Bill Junk will stop driving the Mack in parades and take kids out for stunt flights instead). The group ignored my sarcastic barbs and decided to approach the Livermore Airport to see if they might have an idea about a venue for a proper display of this aircraft without taking it apart and storing the pieces in glassine envelopes. Collections committee member Terry Rossow (generally our go-to guy for maps) made some calls to find out who at the airport might have some helpful hints. And then magic happened. Terry found that they were planning a new administration building that would include a lobby that might accommodate display space for a small, special aircraft, especially if it had a meaningful tie to local aviation heritage. The fact that we might have just such an airplane available was beyond anything they had dared even consider. Nothing is yet final, but Leander Hauri, LVK Airport Manager, is engaging with Terry and Bob Stearns to get this native Livermore aviator (the plane, not Bob) a permanent home proudly displayed at the Livermore airport. Quoting from Leander's note to Terry: "We are indeed very grateful and honored that Bob and Marion and the Livermore Heritage Guild entrust us with their very special, locally built aircraft!" Once again I am reminded how thankful we can be to have wonderful volunteers and supporters in this community.

At the December board meeting we voted to move the Guild board meetings from the first Wednesday of the month to the second Wednesday of the month. This will reduce conflicts with 'first week of the month' meetings, especially those of the Livermore Cultural Arts Council.

Jeff Kaskey

Carnegie Library Centennial-May 2011: Volunteers Needed

The Carnegie Library Building, the home of the Livermore Heritage Guild History Center, will be 100 years old in 2011. The plans for the Carnegie building's centennial celebration have started to gather momentum, but we still need many volunteers!

Three events are planned: a **"Tea and History"** tentatively planned for **Saturday, January 29th** [a formal afternoon tea with a three-course meal of savories, scones, and dessert (a tradition in 1911), followed by a lecture about the history of tea], the **Carnegie Centennial Benefit Evening and Lecture on Thursday, May 12th** and the **Carnegie Centennial Art and History Fair on Saturday, May 14th**. We're getting started now both because some of our tasks (such as grant writing) have much earlier deadlines and because we want to have as much as possible completed well ahead of time. In addition to the positions outlined below, we need someone to champion our Benefit evening and several people to work on fundraising and publicity.

Our exhibits committee is working on some exciting exhibits, but we still need researchers, a couple of people to stage exhibits (take the research and display items and turn them into an exhibit) and we could also use another editor.

If you are thinking about volunteering to do research, but need some inspiration, here are topic ideas to consider:

- A **history of the Livermore Public Library**, which started before the Carnegie Building and has long grown beyond the building,
- A **history of Andrew Carnegie** and his charitable works,
- Expanding our **children's exhibits** (not 1911-specific),
- **1911 fashion** and
- Several **small exhibits**, such as a timeline, a history of the old First St. flagpole, the history of the rose industry.

We would also like to work on the following exhibits:

- **"A Walk Down First Street,"** a narrative display of what a walk down First Street in 1911 might have been like. What would you see? (Cars vs. horses? Street lights? Dirt road vs. paving? Lots of people or only a few?) What would you have smelled? (Horse manure, cooking smoke, a brewery?) What would you hear, and whom might you meet? How would they behave? For example, if you meet the Sheriff outside of a bar, is he more likely to arrest someone for drunk and disorderly conduct or to join his friends for a drink himself? Would he greet you personally by name, just touch the brim of his hat and give you a nod or ignore you entirely? What were all the storefronts and what could you get at each?

- **"Who Would You Be – 1911":** In this computerized exhibit, people would answer a questionnaire about themselves, and get back a sketch of who/what they might have been if they lived in Livermore in 1911. (We are especially seeking a programmer to write the software.)

The exhibits committee already has several topics underway. Loretta Kaskey is working on an exhibit of the suffragette movement, which overlaps with the organizational power behind getting the Carnegie building here in Livermore. Also, a group from the Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area in the Corral Hollow region southeast of Livermore will be putting on an exhibit about the Carnegie Brick Works, whose bricks were used in the construction of the Carnegie Library. *-By Alicia Eltgroth*

If you would like to volunteer for any role, or if you have any suggestions, please contact Alicia Eltgroth (the Carnegie Centennial Committee Chairperson) at (925) 321-1853 or email aeltgroth@sbcglobal.net.

Livermore's Carnegie Library Building was completed in 1911. It housed the Livermore Public Library from 1911 to 1966. The Livermore Heritage Guild History Center has been located there since 1974. This view is from the northeast in an unknown year.



LHG Collection - Photo No. 423

Potter's Pizza: 1960s, '70s Granada High & Lab Worker Favorite

The LHG newsletter begins a new series, "Livermore Nevermore," focusing on local institutions and landmarks that were once part of our daily lives, but are now gone forever. Please submit your ideas or articles for future profiles.

Potter's Pizza was a restaurant that operated at two locations in Livermore from circa 1967 to the late 1970s. The first was in the two-story stuccoed building at 141 N. Livermore Ave. (between Oak St. and Railroad Ave., now the Tri-Valley Housing Opportunity Center), where it replaced Guerrin's Pizza after a major remodel. In 1975, it moved to 186 Maple Street. A new owner changed the name to Russ's Pizza circa 1979.

Daniel Burchfield-vonWolffner (Granada High, '70), now a Fresno resident, was a Potter's employee (a "pieman") from 1968 to 1970 and is today the primary custodian of Potter's lore. He supplied much of the following material. "There was something magical about the old place," he says. Bob and Laura Bowers were the owners; the business name came from Bob's middle name "Potter." "Bob's Special" was the "combination" pizza; "Laura's Special" omitted anchovies.

The dough was homemade and tossed by hand, "the old fashioned way," to form mini, 10", 12", 14" and 16" "pies." Seven cheeses were used. Ex-employee Jack Renaud says that the sauce (homemade daily) "made our pies the best in the valley." Toppings included "Portuguese Linguica," "Beef and Onion," "Louisiana

Shrimp" and green chiles. Potter's also sold sandwiches, green salads, Olympia draught beer and Sebastiani table wine. Customers dined at the restaurant or picked up "orders to go" (10¢ extra). Delivery was only to friends.

Livermore's main pizza parlor in the early 1960s was Simple Simon's in the Lucky shopping center on Pacific Ave. By the late 1960s, restaurant chains had entered the local market, with Round Table at the Louis (later Big T) shopping center on East Ave. and Straw Hat at the Alpha Beta center on Railroad Ave. (now Kragen Auto). Whereas Round Table and Straw Hat were Livermore High student hangouts, Potter's was firmly Matador territory. The

Bowers' two children were G.H.S. students, as were most of the employees. "Potter's Pizza was the center of Granada High social activity," says Stephen Peck (GHS '69). "The place to be, especially after a Teen Canteen dance, a football game (that we would normally lose in those days--not like today), or something else." The jukebox cost 10¢ per song (or three for 25¢). The "luncheon special" was popular with Lab workers.

Many of the bars/saloons in Livermore, especially the neighboring Eddie's 125 Club (125 N. Livermore Ave., now the Good Time Tavern), ordered Potter's pizza (pre-cut into squares) for "finger food" for patrons. The Crest Hotel at 167 N. Livermore Ave. housed many transients, including "Big Mike" Pompileo, who was known as "Livermore's most famous homeless person." Potter's young employees taunted him at first (tossing tomatoes at his window), but eventually gave him imperfect pizzas.



Tim Foster (GHS '70, Potter's employee) Collection

Above: The Potter's Pizza menu (c. 1969-70) featured a drawing of its building. Below: Interior view in 1970: Left to right: Fred Beem (Amador '72) & Dave Elliot (GHS'71).



In 1974, the downtown railroad relocation project began, including construction of the N. Livermore Ave. underpass (completed Feb. 1976). "We suffered for more than six months while the streets were torn up," owner Laura Guttridge (following a divorce from Bob) told the *Herald* in 1977. Faced with long-term reduced street access and visibility, Potter's moved to Maple St. in January 1975, but the transplant did not take. In summer 1977, the Maple St. reconstruction project severely restricted access to the new Potter's. Customers had to reach it through "a maze" of back streets from East Ave. via the Jensen tract. Ads offered silver dollars to customers who navigated this route. In Oct. 1977, Guttridge sold Potter's, declaring that her personal health (16 to 18 hour work days), not the access problems, motivated the sale.

Dan created a Facebook website forum called "Potters Pizza/Guerrins Pizza Alumni & Friends" in February. Former employees and patrons gathered in Livermore on July 31st to reminisce about their experiences at Potter's. Jolene Genoni Broz says the large attendance showed "the impact that 'place' had on all our lives." -Jason Bezis

For Unique, Local Holiday Gift Ideas: Visit the LHG Store

For gift ideas, look no further than the Livermore Heritage Guild History Center store. The Carnegie Building is open Wednesdays to Sundays, 11:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Come by and do some holiday shopping in a friendly, interesting and calm atmosphere! Guild members receive a 10% discount. (The Livermore Art Association also has many fine items available in the Carnegie Building.)

BOOKS ABOUT LOCAL PLACES

Historic Livermore, California: A-Z by Anne Homan is the most comprehensive history of the Livermore Valley that has been published. \$34.95.

History of Tesla: A California Coal Mining Town by Dan L. Mosier (an expert on the Corral Hollow region) and Earle E. Williams (late historian of Tracy area) answers questions and dispels myths about a now-vanished community that thrived a century ago southeast of Livermore (namesake of Tesla Road). \$29.95.

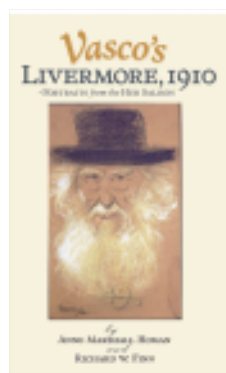
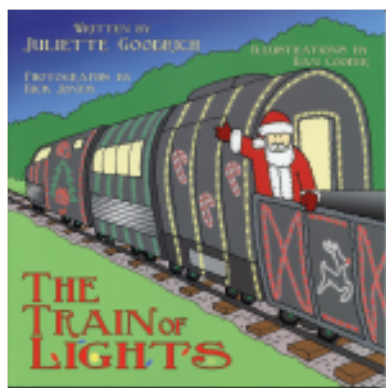
Morning Side of Mount Diablo: An Illustrated Account of the San Francisco Bay Area's Historic Morgan Territory Road by Anne Homan is about the Morgan Territory area north of Livermore. \$28.50.

Images of America: Early Livermore is an Arcadia Press book of photographs that the Livermore Heritage Guild composed. \$19.99.

The Charm of Old Livermore by the late Janet Newton, illustrated with her watercolor paintings. \$10.00.

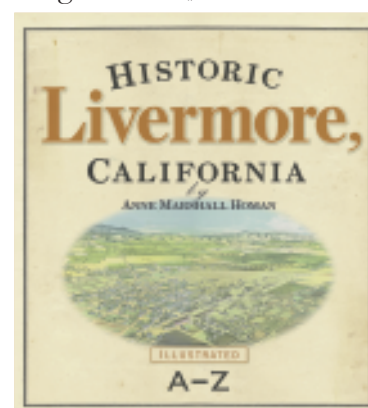
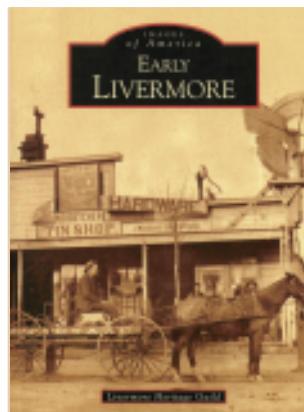
Train of Lights is a new children's book about the holiday train between Sunol and Niles via the Niles Canyon Railway. Juliette Goodrich, writer; Dick Jones, photographer and Dan Cooper, illustrator. \$17.00.

Livermore's centennial light bulb inspired **The Firehouse Light**, written by Janet Nolan and illustrated by



Marie Lafrance. As horse-drawn carriages make room for automobiles, dirt roads give way to paved streets, and new buildings transform small clusters of homes into bustling neighborhoods, a small town grows and changes. Fires once fought by bucket brigades and hand-pulled hose carts are now attended by full-time firefighters and modern fire trucks. \$15.99.

The Little Light Shines Bright by Juliette Goodrich and illustrated by Roseanna Lester is a children's book about Livermore's centennial light bulb. \$12.95.



BOOKS ABOUT LOCAL PEOPLE

Vasco's Livermore, 1910: Portraits from the Hub Saloon by Anne Homan and Richard W. Finn. A collection of hundred-year-old portraits of local residents by Australian caricaturist Vasco Loureiro and short stories about the persons depicted. Step through the saloon doors, go back a century and meet some memorable characters. \$15.99.

The Early Pioneers in the Livermore Valley, California: We're One Big Family by Isabel Whaan Nolte is a genealogical study focusing on early local Irish-American families. \$25.00.

The Holm Family Cookbook: A Culinary Tale of Danish Tradition and Western Lore in The Golden State of California by local artist Tilli Calhoun (née Holm) and her family, which operated a large ranch south of today's Stanley Blvd. and east of Isabel Ave. for much of the 20th century. Their Danish traditions melded with Western life, especially in the kitchen. \$29.95.

I Remember: Stories of a Combat Infantryman in Italy, France, & Germany in World War II by Dr. John Shirley, local veterinarian and Livermore mayor from 1963-65, is about his experiences with the 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, U.S. Army. \$15.

(Cont'd on p. 7)

Firefighter Mural *(Cont'd from Page 2)*

sunburst patterns were Lowdermilk's own creation. The arch partially conceals a pipe that runs along the top of the wall. The artists integrated the pipe into the mural by "hanging" bunting from it. The cat at the mural's far left, looking at hummingbirds, is an alley cat (named 'Vera,' for the artist) that appeared during the project.

The cameos on the right of the mural, above the garage doors, are of the late Attilio "Butch" Viale (1921-60) (left), a butcher (the Viale store building still stands at the southwesterly corner of 1st & McLeod) and volunteer fireman (he was among the first to respond to mid-1900s fire bells), and Wendell Jordan (right), Livermore fire foreman in the 1870s. Between them is a 1920s-era "LFD" logo that Butterfield found during his visits to

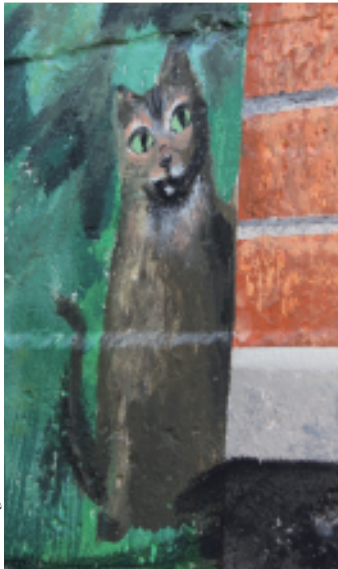


Photo by Bill Nale, eLivermore.com

the Duarte Garage to study the Seagrave restoration. On either side are Art Deco-style firefighting vehicles, supporting the 1930s details of the building behind.

Journalist Les Mahler has documented the mural's creation in his richly-illustrated book *Firefighters' Parade* (email: les.mahler@gmail.com). "In essence, the book details Vera's and Kean's

Above: "Vera" the alley cat peers from behind a "brick wall" on the left side of the mural, looking at hummingbirds (not visible). **Right:** Members of the Livermore Heritage Guild pose between the 1944 Mack and 1919 Model T vehicles after the mural dedication ceremony on Sept. 21st. Left to right: Garry Bausch, Irv Stowers (kneeling), Bill Junk, Ralph Moir and Chuck McFann. Building owners Doris Ryon and Dick Ryon are seated in the Model T.



Photo by Bill Nale, eLivermore.com

bringing the mural together," Mahler said. "I started taking pictures almost from Day One; thereafter, I continued to detail the coming together of the mural ... from the largest aspect to the smallest, even during the evening and nighttime hours." He added, "I've been fascinated by the many murals in and around town, so when I had the chance to not only see how the process worked, but also watch it day to day, I didn't hesitate."

Lowdermilk said, "A lot of what I do is instinct – if it looks right, it is right." She intentionally painted the horses larger than life size. Her other local artwork includes murals at the Multi-Service Center on Pacific Ave. (water scene) and at Mel's and Sansar restaurants on First St. Butterfield's local artwork includes a painting at Tesla Vintners, a plein air-style Indian village mural (now gone) and Thai Buddhist shrine at Lemon Grass restaurant and a large replica of Monet's "Field of Poppies" that hung many years in a French restaurant. His mother Arline taught art classes at what is now the Bothwell Center.

"We wanted to do a realistic mural that featured drama and trompe l'oeil. Everything that we painted was to enhance the 'big picture,' down to the gold leaf, the bricks, the faces, the machines and animals," said the artists. They hope to paint more history murals here. *-by Jason Bezis*

Gift Ideas *(Cont'd from Page 6)*

The Klondike News: The Adventures of Livermore Area Residents from 1897 to 1906 During the Alaska Gold Rush, edited by G. B. Drummond and Anna T. Siig. \$12.95.

The Chinese Experience in the Livermore Area by G.B. Drummond. \$4.60.

OTHER ITEMS: The "official coffee mug" of the Heritage Guild. Cobalt blue with white lettering. \$8.50.

Assorted cards & gift tags by Pat Hoenig - original artwork and impressed flowers.

Stationery depicting local landmarks by Tilli Calhoun. A great small gift or "stocking stuffer."

Calendar

No events in December.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 16TH Duarte Garage Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m on "old" Lincoln Highway, Portola Ave. at L St.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19TH History Lecture: Dr. John Shirley,

veterinarian and 1960s Livermore Mayor, Civic Center Library, 1188 S. Livermore Ave. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Talk starts at 7:30 p.m. Suggested \$2 donation.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29TH 'Tea and History' event (tentative) benefiting Carnegie Building centenary. Time & location to be announced.



The Livermore Heritage Guild 2011 calendar features photos of local workplaces in the 1890s and early 20th century. The Tesla coal mine, a vineyard, a winery and a saloon are among the depicted locales. Above: Bernhardt & Colldeweih Blacksmith shop, 2nd St. between L & M Sts.

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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.

Annual membership dues are:
Individual \$25.00, Family \$35.00, Senior (age 62+) \$15.00, Student \$15.00, Sponsor \$75.00 and Patron \$150.00. Life (Individual) \$500.00 and Business \$300.00 memberships are also available. Please make checks payable to "LHG." Mail to P.O. Box 961, Livermore, CA 94551.

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