

# Livermore Heritage Guild

*Saving Yesterday For Tomorrow*



Photo © 1969, Bill Owens (www.billowens.com)

P.O. Box 961, Livermore, CA 94551

[www.livermorehistory.com](http://www.livermorehistory.com)

Phone 925-449-9927

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## Altamont Rock Festival of 1969: The Aftermath (Part II of II)

*The Altamont Rock Festival on December 6, 1969 was the largest public gathering in eastern Alameda County history. Part I appeared in the March/April 2010 edition. Photographer Bill Owens generously has shared the accompanying images. For his account of Altamont see the book 'Bill Owens' (Damiani, 2008).*

On December 9, 1969, nearly 100 Altamont ranchers gathered at the Livermore Forester's Hall to discuss the concert's aftermath. Robert E. Hannon, attorney for the ranchers and also an Alameda County supervisor (1963-75), led the meeting. Mrs. Connie Jess, whose family owned a ranch adjacent to the Speedway said, "I've never had my privacy so invaded in my whole life ... We just couldn't keep the people out." She said that her family tried to move their cattle as far away as possible, but lost track of them when darkness fell and they decided to secure farm buildings instead. Three days later, they still had not accounted for all cattle. Much grass had been trampled, rendered unfit for grazing, she said.

Bob Gilbert said that concertgoers had severely damaged his five-acre ranch, even burning the Sheriff's 'No Parking' signs as firewood. Gilbert said people threatened him and his home for having cars towed from his property. A Captain White and seven sheriff's deputies eventually surrounded his house for four to five hours. Gilbert said, "I talked to some polite people in that crowd and some of the scum of the earth ... I saw things you wouldn't believe possible out of a human being." He said that people were still camped in the hills. Clyde Tripp, Don Frates, Jack Sweeney and Joe Jess were among the other speakers.

Speedway owner Dick Carter told the ranchers that he had expected at most 50,000 people. *Continued on p. 3.*

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In my early days of building and breaking motorcycles, I kept around a collection of parts that had broken in various ways that served as a reminder of what not to do again ("fall" was high on the list). Pieces of the collection were often brought out during conversation among friends. New acquaintances knew a fair amount more about me once they saw the engine bits I had mangled, extracted and replaced.

That got me thinking about all the other places we have museums that we call something else. Many of the companies I have been with kept a box or cabinet of bits of hardware, old presentations, photos of the first employees, early products, successes as well as failures, and we would trot it out for each new employee or afternoon of reminiscences. That collection served as a shorthand for the company's goals, its trials and tribulations, and the people that motivated it along. Invariably, it was a better reflection of the company than the official mission statement.

In your home I am betting you have your own museum, and probably more than one. Maybe it is a wall of family photos of generations past or of the things that your family does now, like camping or travel. Perhaps you have Grandpa's old guitar, your mother's teaching diploma, a museum of modern art created by the grandkids or antlers mounted on the wall. Your museum may have been purposefully created, like the wall of photos, or the individual items simply seemed to accumulate until you realized that your 30 year hobby of photography has resulted in a respectable camera museum. If you live compactly, the museum may be some wallet photos or a drawer that resists all efforts at eviction. In your humble scribe's house the 'museum' collections range from photos to clocks to tea pots. And still a few motorcycle parts.

It is an interesting urge that we have. To collect and order the things that tell our stories and give us tangible reminders of important developments in our history. Of course these 'museums' are not impartial storytellers at all. We select the items so the story reads the way we choose, exhibiting diplomas, not rejection letters, mountains scaled, not dysentery-ruined vacations. In the news this week is the computer Watson playing the television game show *Jeopardy!* against humans, and how human it seemed. Fine, but I'll be more impressed when Watson asks to keep its own broken circuit boards or decides to frame and hang the *Jeopardy* winnings check. I'll begin to consider it more human when it tells the story of its *Jeopardy* victory and carefully leaves out the part about questions it got wrong.

The Guild's collections and exhibits come from a similar urge - to tell the stories of our town to the next generation as well as today's visitors. To remind us of those whose shoulders we stand on and what they can teach us. But there are interesting challenges and differences. A failed political campaign helps us understand Livermore's shifting priorities and so is as important as the winner's campaign. We would like to think our collections are without premeditated bias, but the artifacts, letters and photos we don't have are unintentional slights to the stories behind them. While that is frustrating, it is my hope that as we continue to grow the collection and do better at cataloging the collection we



**Bunshah Index in New Binders**

have, we will know the stories incrementally better and get better at sharing the history behind today's Livermore. If you have a spare hour or two each week, perhaps you would be interested in helping us sort through these pieces of our history and fill in our picture of the people and ideas that created our town, its beliefs and livelihoods.

I can never say "Thank You" enough, and this time I want to thank Beverley Ales for her donation to pay for new notebooks to house the Bunshah Index pages. Much of the index of Livermore's 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century newspapers that longtime Guild curator Barbara Bunshah compiled is on the computer, but we still often find ourselves paging through Barbara's handwritten or typed references housed in over a dozen notebooks. The sections on Names and Obituaries in particular get a lot of handling. Until now those notebooks have been cracked and sticky vinyl - hardly archival and ugly as a mud fence. Now they are in matching red binders from Naked Binders which are made in the U.S.A. (Des Moines, Iowa) of archival materials and much nicer to handle. We still need to finish some scanning and transcription, but until then, Barbara's Index is in a more fitting home. Whew. Made it to the end of this letter without inappropriately touching on those Naked Binders. Oops.

**Jeff Kaskey**

## Altamont *(Cont'd from Page 1)*

He said that he had been called to New York for a meeting of people involved in the concert and asked ranchers to submit damage lists to him. "I have been told by the groups involved that they would repair damages," he said. Carter brought with him two young people whom he said were among the "30 to 200" volunteers who were helping him to clean up the area. (The *Independent* said that Carter's volunteers offered to clean up ranches, but many ranchers did not allow it.) Roy Miller, a friend of Carter, said that the rock festival had been beneficial because it made Livermore famous. "We feel we have not done damage to your community or to you as individuals. We feel we have given you a service," Miller said, provoking a chorus of catcalls. Adding to bizarreness, the meeting then quickly broke up when someone at the back of the room called, "Joe Jess' barn is on fire," which turned out to be false.

Other ranchers adapted and profited from the concert. William Morgan Jr. and wife Renee of North Midway Road charged for parking and made \$600. The Morgans offered scrap lumber to fuel fires and offered their barn as a restroom. "We cooperated and didn't have any problems," they told the *Herald* in 1979.

The *Oakland Tribune* reported that the cost of overtime for sheriff's deputies was \$100,000, but Captain Lawrence White gave data suggesting a \$7,000 to \$8,000 figure. Lt. Don McGrett of the California Highway Patrol said that the C.H.P. mostly brought on-duty personnel from other areas, incurring a total of 67 hours of overtime.

Sgt. Gilbert Bates of the Alameda County Sheriff's Department told the *Herald* in 1979, "Fights were going on all the time. But we were so outnumbered, we thought we did well just to keep our hill (where the sheriff's command post was established). The odds were so bad that you couldn't go wandering around by yourself."

Dr. Jerry Schwartz told the *Independent* that many of the 100 or so persons that he treated were high on drugs, but was he surprised that so much drinking had taken place. "I didn't think these people did that," he said. Sgt. Bates told the *Herald* in 1979, "Red Mountain wine was every-

where." As of December 9<sup>th</sup>, just one person was still at Valley Memorial Hospital (VMH). Most victims had been treated and released, but some were transferred to Oakland's Highland Hospital. VMH nurse Joy Woodworth wrote in 2010, "Sat. night things were nasty ... We had so many patients I lost count ... Bad reaction to what was being used by the kids - some with their first experience."

The Rolling Stones hired 19 doctors and six psychiatrists to treat concertgoers at onsite clinics. Allen Holmes of Allen's Ambulance made 25 calls to the festival scene (including five false alarms) and hauled 38 persons. Speedway owner Dick Carter said that he would pay the \$3,000 bill. A 20-year old man from Washington state pulled a gun on Allen's driver Dave Miser and demanded to be taken to a hospital because of a "thorn in his finger." A C.H.P. roadblock stopped the ambulance and the assailant ended up at Santa Rita jail on a charge of suspicion of kidnapping. Four babies were born at the concert site, in medical tents or in a Red Cross van. A nude 21-year old man from Berkeley jumped from an Interstate 580 crossing near the concert site. He was taken to Valley Memorial Hospital and then to Oakland's Highland Hospital in critical condition. Woodworth recalls, "He ... smashed his pelvis on the road below. He was screaming with pain. He thought he was having a baby."



Photo © 1969, Bill Owens (amn.billowens.com)

### **An altercation occurs adjacent to the Altamont concert stage.**

The *Independent* summarized the Livermore City Council's discussion at its December 8, 1969 meeting, "The councilmen were reluctant to condemn the concert or to recommend against any further such events; rather their concern was for proper planning in the future." Councilman Michael Uthe said that he had visited the concert site Friday, Saturday and Sunday. He praised the general control of the crowd, "I'd hate to put 300,000 of my peers together like that," and said that property owners suffered very little in respect to the number of people who attended the event.

Stefan Poniek of KSAN-FM 95 hosted a radio program (*See p. 7*)

## In Memoriam: Gerald Stunkel, Middle School Principal

Gerald H. "Jerry" Stunkel, 79, was the Lincolnesque administrator of Livermore "intermediate" and "middle" schools from 1969 to 1991. Born July 26, 1930, he grew up in Colorado and was an Eagle Scout. Died Dec. 23, 2009.

Leo Croce, Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District superintendent from 1973 to 1989, says, "Jerry was a very outstanding school administrator and a compassionate man - you put those together and you have a strong principal ... He knew kids and their problems."

"Jerry Stunkel was a man of great insight and commitment to doing the right thing for early adolescents," says Sheila Cooper, East Avenue School teacher from 1973 to 1980 and East vice principal from 1983 to 1986. "He was a thoughtful listener, taking in extensive information before making important decisions. This sometimes was difficult for staff members who wanted to move quickly towards resolution of an issue, but I found that Jerry helped me to slow down and look at many sides of an issue. He was guided by moral issues rather than utility issues."



Mendenhall Moles 1976-77 yearbook.

**Jerry Stunkel was East Avenue school principal (1979-90) and Mendenhall school vice principal (1969-79) and principal (1990-91).**

Stunkel received a master's degree from Colorado State College of Education (now University of Northern Colorado). Livermore's schools actively recruited at that college; other alumni, including James and Lorraine Immel, of Sterling and Beulah, Colo., also became teachers in Livermore.

Stunkel began teaching English and advising the California Scholarship Federation club at the rapidly expanding Livermore Union High School in 1957. LHS then had 761 students and nearly 40 instructors. Stunkel accepted one of the eleven new teaching positions that year. Like many new Livermore residents in the 1950s, many of whom were attracted to the "Rad Lab," he was an "immigrant" from another state, moving from Greeley, Colo. The LHS yearbook in his first year was dedicated to "the unending progress and development of this area."

Other new LHS teachers in 1957 included Norman Brennan of El Cerrito (math), Clarence Crew of Oakland (driver training) and Paul Reginato of Dunsmuir (social sci-

ences; principal, 1966-80). Six teachers were then in the English Department, all holders of master's degrees: Stunkel, Robert Anderson (also Colo. State), Ethel Griffin, Kenneth Ryan, Lawrence Guido and Harold Zindell.

At LHS, Stunkel helped to create a humanities program with fellow teacher Shirley Woods. They co-authored an article about it in the *Journal of Secondary Education* in 1964. He was a school tennis coach. By 1961, Stunkel had begun taking on administrative duties at LHS, serving as adult education director. In 1964 he was "area chairman" of an eight-teacher English Department. In 1966, Stunkel left teaching and became Dean of Boys (succeeding Leon Williford), a position that he held until 1968. His job duties were "including, but not limited to, the supervision of boys' attendance, behavior and discipline problems."

In 1968, the Livermore Valley J.U.S.D. granted Stunkel a one-year sabbatical leave for the purpose of doing graduate study leading to a doctorate. His request was the first sabbatical leave granted by the LVJUSD.

Unification of Livermore's high school and elementary school districts in 1965 allowed for freer flow of personnel between schools. Stunkel was vice principal at Mendenhall school from 1969 to 1979, when Robert Dougherty was principal and the mascot was "the Moles" (later "the Mustangs"). There he developed the appearance that became his trademark: a tall bearded man with eyeglasses and a suit. Mendenhall, which began as an institution in fall 1966 and as a campus in March 1967, was a relatively new school when Stunkel moved there. It was the first campus in Livermore built as an intermediate school, with classrooms grouped in 'pods' according to their academic subjects, like a high school.

Stunkel served as principal at East from 1979 to 1990. He was the school's third principal since its opening as an elementary school in January 1956. Stunkel's immediate predecessor was Charles Lindemann, who had succeeded David Dahlke. It was "East Ave. Intermediate School" in 1979-80 with just two grades (7-8); it became "East Ave. Middle School" in 1980 (grades 6-7-8) after closure of nearby Almond Ave. school. Declining student

population and the post-Proposition 13 drop in school district revenues also caused closure of Rincon school. After the LVJUSD school board in April 1980 spared East from closure, Stunkel presided over the transition.

"I found the 7-8 configuration not to be in the best educational and growth interests of pre-teens. Half of the school population left every year for high school. Seventh graders moved suddenly from a self contained and very nurturing elementary school environment to the modified high school structure of an intermediate school," says Cooper.



1958 El Vaquero (LJHS yearbook/ annual)

**Photos of English teacher Gerald Stunkel from 1957-58, his first year at Livermore Union High School.**

To help sixth graders to make the move from "elementary" school to "middle" school, they were assigned to "CORE" classes for half of the day (reading, English, social studies). Stunkel and custodial staff arranged for the new CORE classes to be placed together in the central wing of East's campus. Don Autrey of Jackson Ave. school and Sylvia Clarin and Diane Tarin of Almond school transferred to East to teach the inaugural CORE classes in fall 1980. Also Cheri Huddleston/Cannon taught CORE in the early '80s.

Charles "Chuck" De Paoli, East teacher from 1960-75, vice principal from 1975-82 and principal from 1990-93, remembers Stunkel as "very compassionate and gracious." He says that Stunkel was especially qualified to be a middle school administrator because of his high school teaching and administrative experience. "I think that Jerry's interest was making sure middle school kids were prepared for high school," where classes are "subject-oriented," says De Paoli. "He knew what they were heading for. He knew that they had to make a jump, a bigger jump than we'd like to accept, in a relatively short time," De Paoli added. "Jerry thought it could be done in a less sharp way."

"Jerry's focus with his students and staff was centered on values, integrity and hard work," says Vicki Scudder, East vice principal from 1986-87 and 1989-93 and principal from 2005 to present. "Jerry was first and foremost a great speaker, whether delivering an informal announcement via

the morning bulletin or in presentations to parents or the school community. I remember his eloquence and ability to connect to any audience in a genuine and meaningful way," Scudder says. "He also possessed wonderful skills as a reflective listener--- was always able to listen without interruption or judgment, and then concisely re-state the concern/issue ... I remember his quiet, gentle demeanor, even in the most 'volatile' of situations."

On January 28, 1986, students returning from a four-day Super Bowl weekend (Bears vs. Patriots) were greeted in their "homerooms" by a somber special message by Stunkel over the school public address system. He briefly announced that an accident on the space shuttle *Challenger* had killed seven astronauts (including a teacher) minutes earlier. It was the first national tragedy in the lives of students, most of whom were born after 1970. Cooper says, "Jerry was deeply touched by the *Challenger* tragedy and knew that it was appropriate to share this with the students." Jim Nash, East teacher from 1973 to 2007, says, "I believe Jerry didn't want to delay the inevitable, but it was a shock, to say the least. Almost every single classroom then had discussions about the tragedy, so the tragic event became a learning experience of sorts." Students inundated science teachers Faye Harker/ Younker and Greg Peterson with questions all day.

Lorraine Immel, East math teacher from 1963 to 2001, says that Stunkel "always respected and trusted that his teachers knew how to teach and he did not interfere with their programs or delivery of them." Marilyn Wong, principal's secretary at East from 1980 to 2001, remembers Stunkel as "a wonderful and caring man."

Sensing another aspect of a complex man, Ellen Bell, East librarian in the '80s, says that Stunkel "just couldn't make a decision ... He didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings ... He always saw both sides of an issue; that made it hard to come to a decision." Bell appreciated that he backed her when parents became angry after she caused withholding of report cards for overdue library books.

Some faculty members felt that his actions were often based on how they would make him appear in the school district office, with less than desired emphasis on benefits to the school, students or teachers. One teacher says, "I think he presented a facade as a caring person that began to crumble a bit as you got to know him better. He took the path of least resistance ... This unfortunately resulted in his staff never knowing what was going on until a decision had been made way down the line, even though he had a Principal's Advisory Committee."

At school events, Stunkel bounced with visible enthusiasm as he spoke. He embellished his remarks with rhetorical flourishes (announcing an award of candy as "sinful chocolates"). He often handwrote notes of appreciation or sympathy to staff members. "He wrote notes to me when I faced some sad times within my family," says Elda Montgomery, East English and social studies teacher from 1981 to 1999, "I always felt that the reason he didn't easily make decisions was partly wanting to stay in the good graces of the downtown office and parents and Jerry's gentle nature." Nash says it was evident Stunkel had taught English, "His 'memos' to the staff and his letters to parents were spot-on with regard to grammar."

Stunkel instituted a tradition of "Principal's Honor Roll Teas" in tribute to high-achieving students and invited their families. One day in February 1983, he administered the school from a desk on top of a corridor roof, fulfilling a promise to students who had met a goal. Scudder says that after she became East vice principal in 1986, "I checked out the ladder to the roof. I remember telling him there was NO way I could repeat that or accompany him up there if he wanted a re-do!" She added, "Although he had a great sense of propriety, he was truly fun-loving."

Perhaps the biggest fete at East during Stunkel's tenure was the commemoration of the school's 30<sup>th</sup> full year in spring of 1987. He presided over a school-wide assembly, a launch of 800+ balloons, cutting of a huge cake (assembled by parent Bev Tanaka), a time capsule burial, the school's first 'Academic Olympics' and a Saturday campus clean-up. (The author was involved with many of these efforts.) Many of today's campus enhancements, including the dolphin stained glass window, are from his era.

In 1988, the state Department of Education designated East a "Distinguished School" (an honor that the school repeated in 2009). A "review-team" of educators from outside of the Livermore district came to the school, visited most classrooms and interviewed staff, students, and parents. Scudder credits this award partially to Stunkel's leadership. "He was ahead of his time in recognizing that the school needed to be a place where parents felt welcome and involved," she says.

Eighth grade "promotion" ceremonies generated controversy at East in the '80s. Stunkel and many others believed that many of the students were not dressing age-appropriately; too many were appearing in formal wear. Efforts to impose a dress code prompted a backlash.

Stunkel returned to Mendenhall to serve as principal

during the 1990-91 year (trading jobs with Charles De Paoli, his onetime vice principal), then retired. In 1993-94, he served as a short-term administrative substitute at Rancho Las Positas and Sunset elementary schools.

Scudder says that the duties of middle school principal have changed in the past 20 years. "We now have a population where, in many cases, both parents work outside of the home. That fact has prompted more interaction via e-mail and similar technology. Parents rely on web-based on-line checking of student grades and performance, rather than the drop-in visit with the administrator," Scudder says. "His focus on academics continues, but today we have increased 'external' oversight via state testing and API accountability. Parent access to the internet also gives them instant access to test scores, information on other programs, and we need to keep a competitive edge. Jerry was certainly 'parent friendly,' but I suspect I do a little more PR outreach (and make more requests for donations to fund programs) than he did," she adds.



**East Avenue Middle School logos from mid-1980s.**

Unknown to many in the Livermore school community, Stunkel was a deeply religious man. "Those of us who knew Jerry only at school actually didn't know very much about the 'private' side of Jerry Stunkel, and that was his role through his church as a caregiver and comforting friend to hundreds of people," said Nash, after Stunkel's memorial service. Bell says, "He would have made a good minister because he was such a kind man." Scudder says Stunkel was "very balanced in his personal and professional life. ... integrity and balance were of primary importance."

Stunkel was a member of the Pleasanton Presbyterian Church's "Balloon Platoon" comedy drill team that has appeared in many Livermore rodeo parades, among other venues. Many Platoon members wore their sailors' caps at his memorial service at Centerpointe Presbyterian Church in Pleasanton on January 2, 2010 to pay tribute. *-by Jason Bezis (E.A.M.S. Class of 1987). (Danita Cowgill at LVJUSD compiled a chronology of Stunkel's career as background information for this article.)*

## Altamont *(Cont'd from Page 2)*

on December 7, 1969 that focused on the aftermath of Altamont. The *Independent* summarized the discussion, "They went so far as to question the future of their subculture, the effects of widespread drug use, and the failure of the universal love ethic." The 1970 documentary *Gimme Shelter* featured scenes from Altamont (film rights were why the concert was moved from Sears Pt. raceway).



Photo © 1969, Bill Owens (www.billowens.com)

**Wide view of "Jefferson Airplane" on the concert stage at the Altamont Rock Festival, December 6, 1969.**

The Alameda County Planning Commission allowed the speedway to continue holding races, but banned rock and roll events, and placed a 3,000-spectator limit, among other conditions. Mrs. Alta Mae Anderson, mother of stabbing victim Meredith Hunter, called for the speedway to be converted into a public park. In July 1970, Dick Carter gave up trying to re-open the Altamont Speedway. On April 1, 1973, the track held its first race since the 1969 concert. Charlie Jessop was the new owner.

The *Tri-Valley Herald* wrote a series about the concert's tenth anniversary in 1979. An editorial stated, "A lot has changed in ten years ... There was a clear sense that concert indeed celebrated the end of an era. It was no strange phenomenon that the so-called 'hippies' and 'flower children' began to quietly disappear soon after the festival was held." One attendee told the *Herald* in 1979 that Altamont was the "waning stages of this tribal kind of consciousness where everybody could get together and share."

Dick Carter told the *Herald* in 1979 that forty-three lawsuits were filed against him related to the Altamont concert (but one resident said that just one rancher ever recovered damages). Young American Enterprises, the organizer of the concert, had a \$1 million insurance policy, but neglected to transfer it from Sears Point to Altamont. Carter said that the two checks that he received from the Rolling Stones bounced and that the Stones claimed that their promoter had taken all of the money. Carter lost the

racetrack and all of his property and spent eight years getting out of debt. He denied hiring the Hells Angels as security guards. He said that some volunteers stayed behind for three months to clean up after the concert, accepting nothing but food in payment. He continued to defend his decision to allow the concert, saying, "You put half a million Baptist ministers on 87 acres and they're going to have some problems."

The Sheriff's Office finally closed its homicide investigation concerning Hunter in 2005, following a two-year inquiry that concluded that there was not a second unidentified assailant who had inflicted the fatal wounds.

The Altamont Festival deserves re-assessment, 41 years later. Just as the spirit of brotherhood generally prevailed far from the raucous concert stage and fatal stabbing, perhaps the passage of years will allow a broader appreciation of what went right at Altamont. *-by Jason Bezis*

# Calendar

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>

**History Lecture: Don Meeker on Livermore parks & recreation history,** Civic Center Library, 1188 S. Livermore Ave. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Talk starts at 7:30 p.m. Suggested \$2 donation.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 20<sup>TH</sup> Duarte Garage Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m** on "old" Lincoln Highway, Portola Ave. at L St.

**THURSDAY, MAY 12<sup>TH</sup> Carnegie Centennial Benefit Evening & Lecture; SATURDAY, MAY 14<sup>TH</sup>, Carnegie Centennial Art & History Fair**

**Photo at right:** One of several Livermore celebrations in 1911, the United Ancient Order of Druids carnival lasted four days in April. It included motorcycle races, a confetti battle, a track meet, three parades and a king and queen to rule over festivities. The *S.F. Call* reported 5,000 in attendance. Special train

## Carnival King and Queen Will Continue Joint Reign for Life

*Henry Leroy Beck and his bride, who until yesterday was Miss Jeanette Jackson, in their regal robes as king and queen of the Druids' carnival held in Livermore last year.*



services were offered from Oakland for the duration of the festivities. Catch the spirit of this festive year during the Carnegie Centennial Celebration on May 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011. -By Lydia Carpenter

# Contact Us

## President

Jeff Kaskey

jkaskey@yahoo.com

## 1st Vice Pres. (Program Chair)

Marie Abbott

925-443-9740

## 2nd VP (Membership Chair)

Vacant

## Secretary

Susan Junk

susan.kbsj@gmail.com

## Treasurer

Dori Campbell - doralene@flash.net

## Curator of Duarte Garage

Bill Junk - 925-447-4561

## Newsletter Editor

Jason Bezis

925-962-9643 & jbezis@yahoo.com

## Office Manager

Lydia Carpenter

925-449-9927 & lhg@lhg.org

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:  
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