

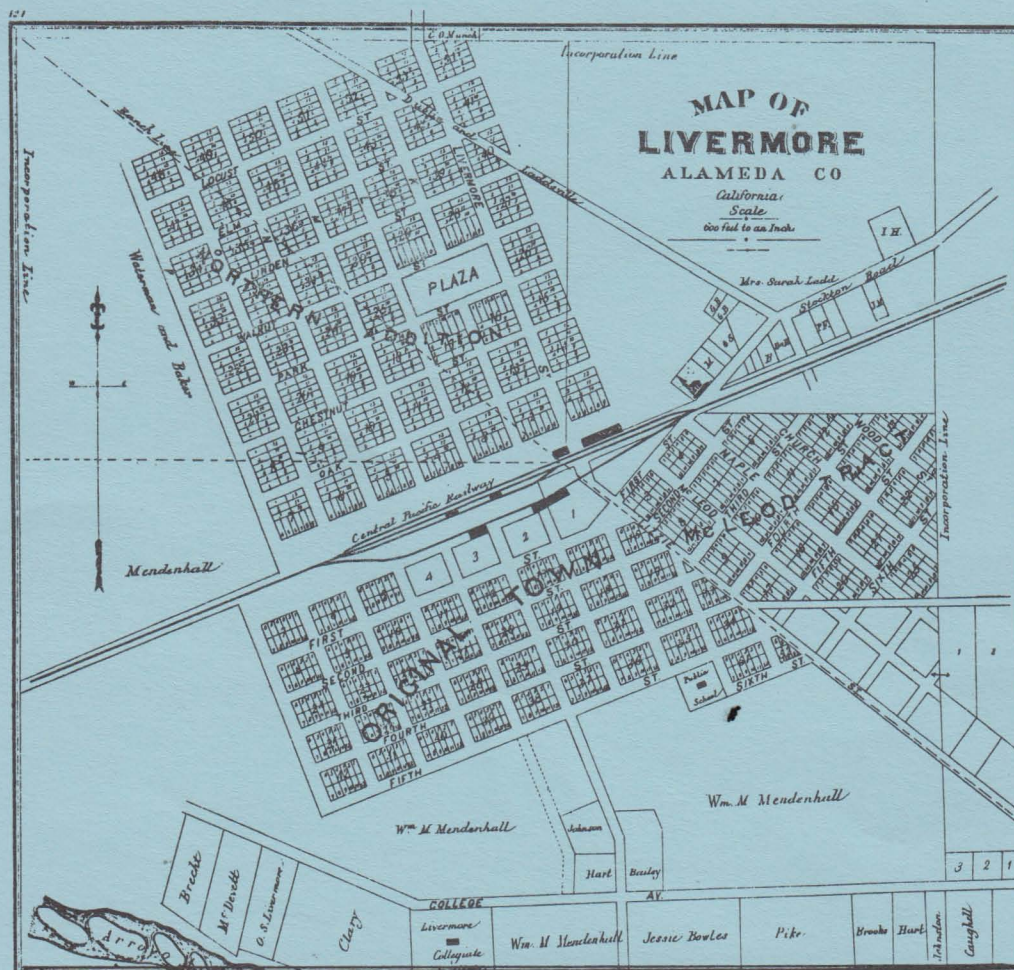


LIVERMORE HERITAGE GUILD

Chapters of Livermore History

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT IN LIVERMORE HISTORY

BY G. B. DRUMMOND



LIVERMORE IN 1876
FROM ALAMEDA COUNTY ATLAS
THOMPSON & WEST, 1878

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REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT IN LIVERMORE HISTORY

Much of the urban pattern of central Livermore had been established by 1889. For twenty years following the city's founding, Livermore was a real-estate developer's paradise. William Mendenhall's Original Town plat of 1869 became surrounded by a number of other subdivisions, some laid out by him, many by others, but all interested in promoting the invigorating climate of the area, the rich properties of the Valley's agricultural lands, and its growing economic base.

In September, 1875, A. J. McLeod platted both commercial and residential lots in a pentagonal area known as the McLeod Tract. Two weeks later, Alexander Esden filed the Northern Addition of 54 residential blocks, and a 2-square block plaza, north of the CPRR tracks. These three - Mendenhall's Original Town, the McLeod Tract and the Northern Addition - formed a geographical nucleus around which later subdivisions converged. Additions were made with almost annual regularity to this nucleus so that by the late 1880's the town's original incorporated bounds were filled in, with the exception of those areas west of Q Street north of the Arroyo Mocho, and north-east of Junction Avenue.

One man who did much to build the community was William Pitt Bartlett. Born in 1855, he left New Portland, Maine at age 15 to learn the printing trade at Boston and Philadelphia. On February 1, 1877, Bartlett became proprietor of a local newspaper, The Enterprize, which he promptly renamed the Livermore Herald.

Bartlett was an extraordinary individual of widely varying interests. His concern for the environment led him, through his newspaper, to advocate

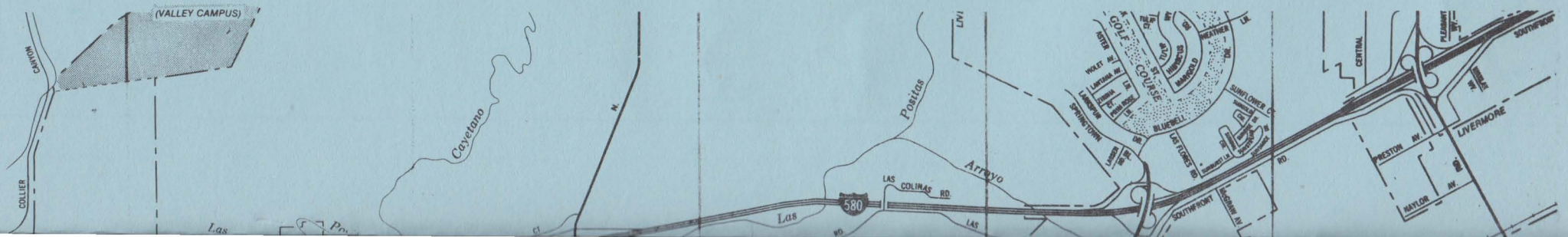
the saving of straw and to encourage the plowing-under of stubble instead of the then current practice of burning off the field. His project of spreading gravel over local roads made those in the Valley among the best in California. Bartlett's gift to the streets in the late 1880's was hundreds of black locust trees which he had planted on all the streets in town and along the country roads leading into the city. A number of these trees can yet be found scattered through the older sections of town, and a fine stand still border Livermore Avenue north of I580. Elsewhere they have been lost to neglect or to road-widening.

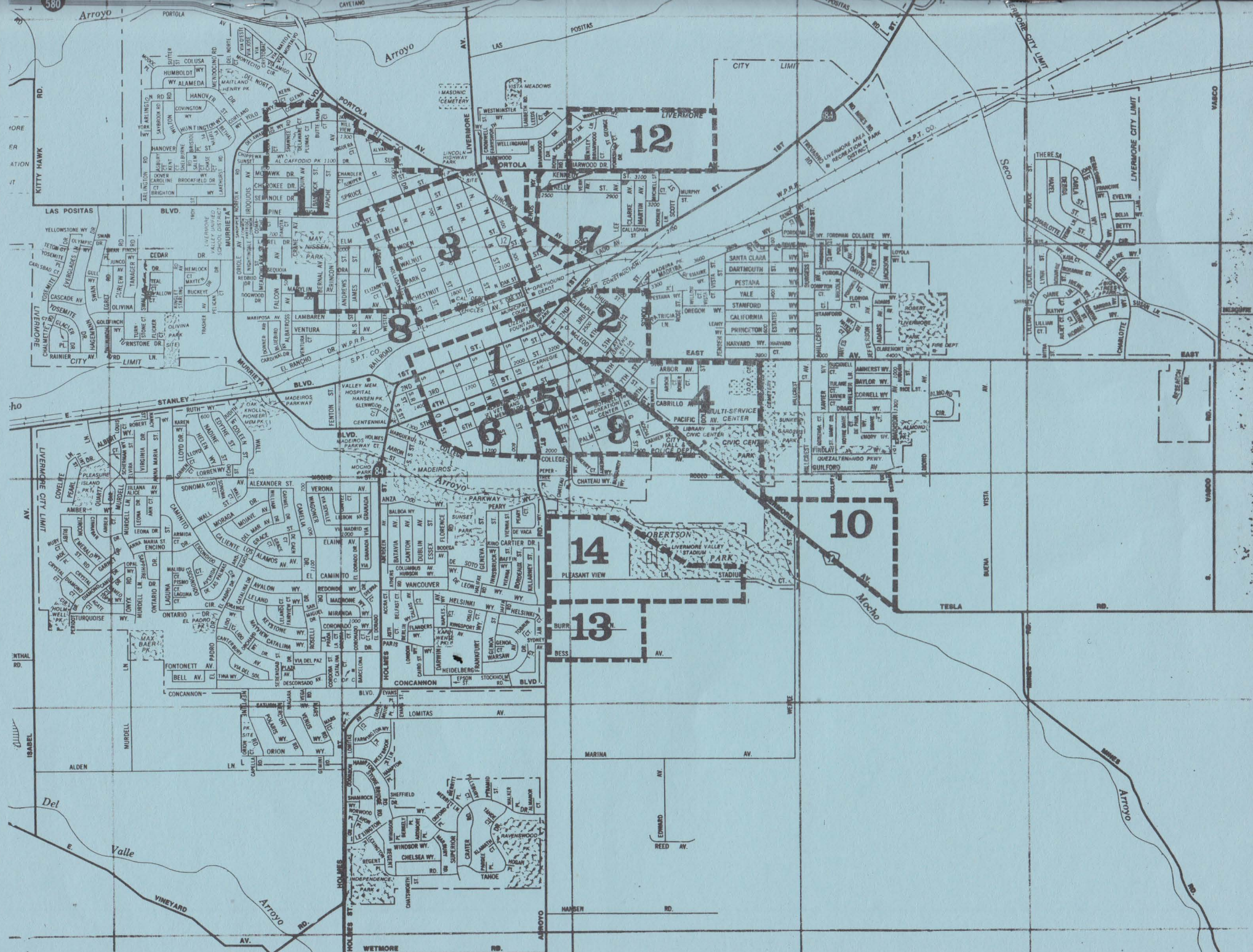
Through his newspaper and his conservation practices, Bartlett worked tirelessly to advertise the Valley's agricultural and economic possibilities. In association with Ernest Schween, Frank Waterman, Georgy C. Stanley and others, he laid out several residential subdivisions within the town limits and small 5 acre tracts in the adjoining countryside, to attract a broad spectrum of buyers. Bartlett's 1889 panoramic view of Livermore is a fine example of a real estate promotional.

To further promote the desirability of living in Livermore, Bartlett published each week in his newspaper a list of new construction permits. His entries ran the gamut from commercial buildings and domestic residences to well-houses and outbuildings. Bartlett's weekly building-news entries have proven a boon to local historians because not only do they describe the type of construction but the size, cost, and often the name of the owner/builder. These columns continued for some twenty years in the Herald after

SOME EARLY LIVERMORE SUBDIVISIONS

<u>MAP NUMBER</u>	<u>AREA</u>	<u>FILED BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>
1	ORIGINAL TOWN OF LIVERMORE	W. M. MENDENHALL	NOVEMBER 4, 1869
2	MCLEOD TRACT	A. J. MCLEOD	SEPTEMBER 8, 1875
3	NORTHERN ADDITION	ALEXANDER ESDEN	SEPTEMBER 20, 1875
4	SMITH AND GRANT ADDITION	SMITH AND GRANT	APRIL 9, 1878
5	SOUTHERN ADDITION	W. M. MENDENHALL	FEBRUARY 14, 1883
6	SOUTHERN ADDITION	W. M. MENDENHALL	JULY 31, 1885
7	LADD ESTATE SUBDIVISION	SIMON FOSCALINA	OCTOBER 22, 1885
8	LIVERMORE VILLA ADDITION	WATERMAN, STANLEY AND BARTLETT	DECEMBER 29, 1885
9	SOUTHERN ADDITION	W. P. BARTLETT	OCTOBER 5, 1887
10	BACKUS TRACT	MENDENHALL AND GUTMAN	NOVEMBER 16, 1887
11	MOUNTAIN VIEW ADDITION	WATERMAN, STANLEY AND BARTLETT	JANUARY 24, 1888
12	LIVERMORE HEIGHTS	W. P. BARTLETT	FEBRUARY 23, 1888
13	BURR TRACT	F. C. BURR	MARCH 30, 1910
14	PLEASANT VIEW TRACT	MCDONALD AND MURPHEY	AUGUST 9, 1910





Bartlett sold the newspaper in 1891.¹⁾

The eastern end of the Livermore Valley continued to grow, peaking in the great real estate boom of 1885-1886. On one day alone in 1885, over \$7,000 worth of town lots were sold at auction. In the surrounding area, development took place on all sides of the town.

As early as 1882, a rural subdivision known as the Berkeley Tract was surveyed on the west side of the present Isabel Avenue near the Arroyo del Valle. The land was primarily devoted to viticulture because of the nature of the soil, and has more recently been given over to gravel extraction. To the north were the Livermore Heights and Mountain View Additions both in 1888 and in both of which Bartlett had interests. South of the Arroyo Mocho were the Lomitas Tract, the Burr Tract which was laid out by F. C. Burr in 1910, and the Pleasant View Tract established by D. J. Murphy and W. J. McDonald later that same year. All of these were platted in 5 acre-and-up holdings. Some properties were purchased by immigrants who originally came to the Valley as agricultural workers. Others were sold to families who left the Bay Area after the 1906 Earthquake.

Generally, most of the town lots laid out in the 1870's and 1880's have retained their original dimensions and orientation: some have not. For instance, the lots in the McLeod Addition were initially platted to run north and south (face the numbered streets). Today, only some maintain this

¹⁾After selling the newspaper, Bartlett worked for a short time at borax mining near Mojave, and then moved to Porterville, California where he died in 1921.

orientation. Bartlett's Livermore Villa Addition, on the west side of P Street north of Chestnut, consisted of thirteen lots, each 150' wide by 290' deep. Three lots there have remained the same size for 92 years, while other have been redivided. The Northern Addition was sparsely settled as late as 1930. Fifty years ago most blocks in this area contained only two or three houses; three blocks had no structures on them at all. The south side of the railroad tracks was the preferred residential area. But the street widths of 56 to 60 feet in Livermore's initial subdivisions set the standard for later tracts.

The boundaries of the original limits of Livermore did not change in the 73 years following the town's incorporation until 1949, when they were revised to accommodate a 55 acre annexation made in the northwest corner of the city. From its beginning as a town-site covering 610 acres, Livermore grew by its 100th birthday to cover over 13 square miles. Livermore Orchard Addition, and Oak Spring and Brookside Tracts are now only memories. Others like the Backus Tract, probably existed only on a land speculator's map. But they are all among the precursors of a long tradition of real estate development in the Valley that includes Livermore's contemporary Granada Woods, Shadowbrook and Valley East subdivisions.