

Do You Remember?

By Anne Homan
Livermore City Historian



The Ellen Rowe Concannon House

the *Herald*. Plumber Fred Tretzel remembered that the Gordons had the first private home bathtub with piped-in running water in Livermore. An *Echo* article on December 24, 1896 noted that Dr. Gordon had moved his practice north to Arbuckle, a small town in Colusa County, California. Dr. Gordon's signatures on Alameda County death entries run from 1890 to 1895.

Many owners followed. The house gradually became somewhat dilapidated. David and Dorothy Nielsen bought the aging Victorian beauty. In October 1966 they had the house moved from K Street to a lot where South Livermore Avenue becomes Tesla Road. Their plans were to restore it for use as a bed and breakfast. The rooms are large and all the bedrooms have closets. Numerous windows allow light throughout the house. Passersby fell in love with the majestic old place and hoped for renovation.

The Nielsens' enthusiastic plans did not work out. They both died in the 1990s. The house suffered through more years of deterioration. In 2002 their children sold it to John and Virginia Madden. Virginia was especially concerned about preserving it. In an article in the *Times* in November, she said that the old paint had been scraped off, the leaks plugged, and a coat of white primer put on. The Maddens grew increasingly frustrated at the costs of bringing water and sewer service to the site. In 2004 the Wine Group, which owns nearby Concannon Vineyard, bought

the house. They had the house moved to the winery grounds and placed on a new foundation. Bill Nale at *eLivermore.com* has a wonderful series of photos that follow the move from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on April 7, 2008.

I visited the house this past week several times. It has been painted very tastefully in a light greenish-tan with red-brown highlights. Close up, it is easy to see the dove tail shingles on the top half of the house. The front porch and its balcony and all the gingerbread have been painted off-white. Underneath the main front window, which forms part of a bay, are rough cement panels decorated with pebbles that the renovating team recreated to match the originals. All the windows were replaced with double-pane glass. The 48-foot chimney preserved. A second outside staircase has been added, so that the front porch has two entrances as well as two doors into the house. The little back porch, which probably led to the doctor's office, no longer has an

outside staircase.

Shakespeare's Associates has been allowed to use the house for summer productions. This past summer they presented *Hamlet* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Their dramaturge, Peggy Riley, has pointed out that the house and the stage they place in front of it are similar to the original Globe Theater of Shakespeare's day. Although a circular building, the Globe was open to the sky. Its stage jutted out into the audience. The front porch of the old house has an upper balcony perfect for Juliet or for castle ramparts. The two porch doors serve for entrances and exits. The house is similar to the Elizabethan "tiring house," the backstage of the Globe that stored props and costumes, and allowed space for actors to change costumes and move backstage.

The interior of the house has not been restored yet, but its outer shell once again presents a proud view to visitors and play audiences. It has been named in honor of the wife of the Concannon Vineyard founder—Ellen Rowe Concannon. James Concannon met her in Maine. The two Irish immigrants married in 1874. They came to Livermore ten years later and raised ten children.

(Readers can reach me at am50homan@yahoo.com.)

Poetry Workshop Of

"Revising Towards a Vision" in the classroom workshop will be held Saturday, October 20, 2012 from noon to 4 p.m. in the Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Ave., Pleasanton.

Pre-reservation is required. Cost is \$15. Tickets available at (925) 931-4848 or www.firehousearts.org.

Bring paper, pen and your imaginations.

This will be a onetime chance to work with Jose Faus. José Faus is a native of Bogota, Colombia and a longtime resident of the Kansas City area. He received degrees in Studio Art/Painting and Creative Writing/Journalism from

Dr. Cameron G. Gordon did not stay here very long, but his striking Queen Anne style home has remained a landmark in Livermore. Born in Canada in 1854, he came to Livermore in 1889 after receiving his medical degree from Cooper Medical College in San Francisco. In 1890 he left for a visit to Winnipeg, Canada, where he married Martha Richie on October 17. They arrived in Livermore about a month later. He opened his office downtown on First Street in rooms 15 and 16 in McLeod's Building across the hall from Dr. Savage's dental office; at first he probably rented a home for his family. Their first child, a daughter, was born in 1891 but died of cholera in 1892. Two sons followed in short order, in 1892 and 1894.

Perhaps the rented home was becoming too small for their growing family. In 1895, Gordon had a large frame house built on the northwest corner of Fourth and K. Rasmus Albertson of Hayward won the bid to construct the house. There were some complaints from local builders. Dr. Gordon had the bids published in the *Echo* newspaper: the highest bid had been \$3,250 and Albertson's low bid was \$2,220. Dr. Gordon moved his office to the back of his new house. The house was built in the Queen Anne style, with a square-shaped tower capped by a square pyramid roof. The tower has three half-moon windows. A front porch and balcony decorated with spindles go around the tower and end at two matching gabled wings. The Gordons planted cherry trees in front of their house. The family played croquet on the large lawn. A photograph of the finished house appeared in the 1896 Special Edition of