

Do You Remember?

By Anne Homan
Livermore City Historian



Hansen Park—the World's Smallest?

First, S, Second, and Holmes Streets come together. The city created a triangular park at the intersection, 15 feet along each side, to help control traffic. Carlo Ferrario, whom I wrote about recently in the column on his old winery building, began to develop the little area into a miniature park, planting flowers and shrubs. The *Oakland Tribune* published an article about the possible "Lilliputian championship" of the place, saying that it was probably the smallest park on record.

Ferrario was the unofficial commissioner of the park; according to the *Trib*, "he runs it just as he pleases." At the time, the only other park in Livermore were the old high school grounds at Eighth and H Streets. Ferrario sent for shrubs and trees from Italy.

He personally supervised squeezing them into the limited area. On May 10, 1935, the *Herald* mentioned that the city planned to erect signs marking the spot as "Carlo Ferrario's Park." At the end of May, the newspaper said that not just signs, but bronze plaques, were installed at each corner of the park, officially naming it

"Carlo Ferrario Park."

In 1937 Jackson and Perkins opened a rose-growing business in the Livermore Valley on land belonging to August Hagemann, where the airport is today. Other rose growers followed as well as hybridizers, and the rose business flourished here until 1968. The Livermore Lion's Club and the East Bay Rose Society developed Carlo Ferrario Park into a rose garden to showcase locally developed roses. Many varieties hybridized by Dr. Walter Lammerts were included, as well as varieties developed by Dr. Dennison Morey and Gene Boerner.

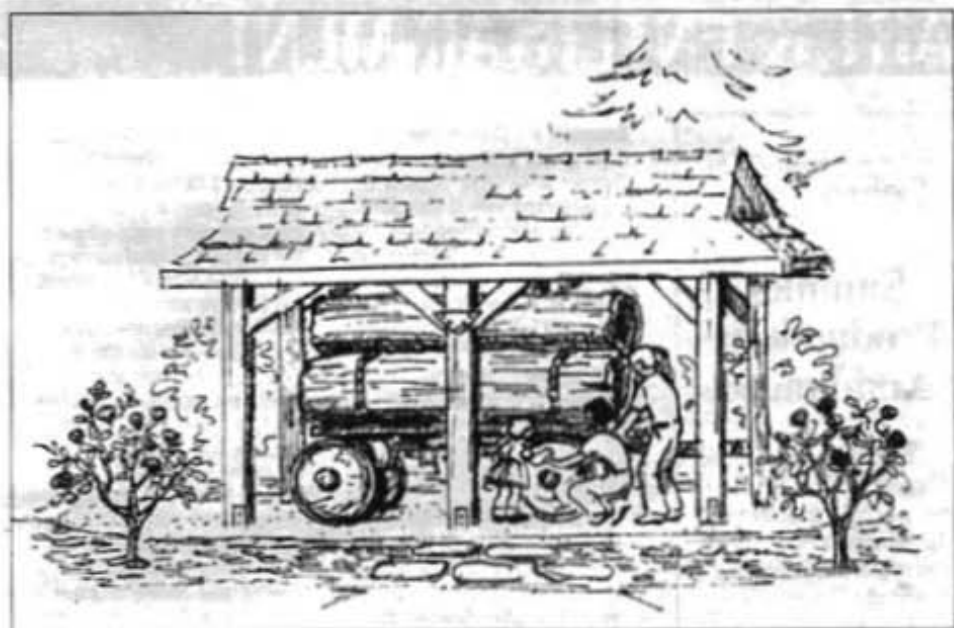
The park was renamed for prominent Livermore citizen Rasmus A. Hansen. On Sunday June 7, 1964, a ceremony celebrated the opening of the little park. Mabel Hansen, Rasmus's widow, was present and accepted a fragrant bouquet of deep red Chrysler Imperial roses, one of many varieties hybridized by Lammerts. The *Herald and News* writer estimated that the roses on display in the garden were worth about \$7,000. Jackson and Perkins and Amling DeVor Nurseries were two of the seven grow-

ers who contributed rose bushes.

The City of Livermore took over responsibility of caring for the park, with public works department employees Mike Krlitich and Ivan Meyers regularly caring for the roses.

In February 1963 the *Herald and News* published a map of the proposed park design. The original rose beds were all named, Lammerts' famous All-American rose, Charlotte Armstrong (pink), located in a large bed at the northwest corner, and Morey's All-American, Kings Ransom (deep yellow), in a similar large planting at the northeast corner. Around the proposed fountain were three beds of white roses.

The rest of the garden beds on opening day in June 1964 flaunted many colors—myriad shades of pink, red, apricot, yellow—and many types, from hybrid tea roses to grandiflora to a miniature China rose to rose shrubs like Dortmund and Spring Morning. Some, like the Personality rose, were chosen for their fragrance. The Soroptimist Club contributed 33 varieties of old-fashioned roses, favorites of the



Drawing by Tilli Calhoun of the 1849 timber wagon.

Hansens.

Dr. Lammerts later remarked, "I'm glad Livermore has such a spot—so peaceful—and beautiful, too."

The fountain was constructed after the opening. A call went up for contributions. Many local people gave to the fund. Developer Masud Mehran added enough to provide the amount needed. The fountain is still in place.

At the approximate site of the Kings Ransom roses at the northeast corner is a delightful stature of two playing children. In 2005 when my granddaughter and I searched, we could only find one of the originally planted roses, the pink Queen Elizabeth, hybridized by Lammerts. We wandered through the park, enjoying its beauty and checking the little tags attached to the plants: Olympiad, Iceberg, Double Delight, Midas Touch, Secret, Veterans' Honor, Snow-

fire, Apothecary Rose, Aloha. When I visited yesterday, none of the roses had tags, so I could no longer tell what they are. That is a shame—the names are so creative and evocative.

A large wooden wagon loaded with lumber rests under a shelter among the roses. Martin Luther Marsh built this wagon by hand in 1849 for the M.L. and D. Marsh Lumber Company in Nevada City. The huge wheels—42 inches in diameter—were constructed of pine with their outer edges hand-forged in steel. Marsh's company hauled lumber from the Sierra to a Nevada City sawmill, until it was abandoned in 1917.

His grandson, Carl, moved to Livermore in 1931 and gave permission to the Livermore Chamber of Commerce to retrieve the wagon and bring it to Livermore. Bernard Mourterot displayed it in front of

his Trevano Auto Camp at First Street and Portola Avenue (then Highway 50) during the 1930s and '40s. The Livermore rodeo used it for advertising. For the 1931 rodeo parade, 16 oxen pulled the old wagon. It remained part of the parade until 1936.

The cargo of three logs in Hansen Park was cut near Santa Cruz and donated by Earl E. Johnson, who owned a lumber company in Livermore. Carl Marsh gave the wagon to the city. It was moved to Carlo Ferrario Park in 1955. In 1988 the city restored the wheels and extended the structure over the wagon to protect it from the weather.

Livermore no longer has the funds to maintain the garden properly. The Livermore Amador Valley Garden club is organizing a volunteer effort to help the city maintain and improve the park.

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