

Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

Staff Report

TO: Facilities Committee

FROM: Mat Fuzie, General Manager

PREPARED BY: Mat Fuzie, General Manager

DATE: July 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Midway School

COMMITTEES: N/A

Recommendation: The Facilities Committee should consider and make a recommendation to staff on the request by the Livermore Heritage Guild (LHG) for Livermore Area Recreation and Park District (LARPD) to accept the placement of an historic structure (Midway School) on the grounds of Hagemann Park in partnership with The City of Livermore (COL) and LARPD.

Background: The committee had previously considered this request; however, new information provided by the LHG may change the previous recommendation to deny placement of Midway School in our park. The District denied the request previously due to concerns over who would operate the property and pay for the operation.

Midway School was a school that served the town of Midway in the Altamont Pass area in far Eastern Alameda County. The Town of Midway was a rail stop and no longer exists. The school was built in 1873 and served the residents as part of the Alameda County School District. When the school was shut down the students were moved to the Livermore School District since it was also part of Alameda County.

Proposal: The Heritage Guild is proposing to LARPD that they will be responsible both physically and financially to place the historic structure at Hagemann Park and operate the site as an interpretive site with their resources. They will commit and work with the District so there is no expense incurred by LARPD.

Attachment: East Bay Times article “Forgotten schoolhouse resurfaces”

NEWS

Forgotten schoolhouse resurfaces

By **BAY AREA NEWS GROUP** |

PUBLISHED: March 9, 2006 at 6:15 a.m. | UPDATED: August 17, 2016 at 7:04 a.m.

HISTORY mysteries can be fun and the one being reported this week is great news for history buffs and Livermore Valley country school alumni.

With some tips from Dick Finn and Ann Homan, I pursued rumors that the old Midway Public School, closed in 1946, might still exist, ensconced away on the 4,800 acre Mulqueeney Ranch high up in the Altamont hills off Patterson Pass Road.

A few phone calls resulted in contact with Dave Mulqueeney, once a local businessman and Livermore Chamber president, but now a Paradise Realtor, who invited me to visit the family ranch and see the old school building, still in fairly good shape. It seems that his late father E. J. Mul Mulqueeney attended that school, and years after its closure and abandonment by the county, he decided to rescue it from the hands of vandals and arsonists who had destroyed all the other rural schools in the Valley left empty.

Mulqueeney put it up on skids, hauled it a quarter mile down the road, up his long lane and out behind the ranch buildings for safe keeping. It has since been used as a tack room and storage shed for probably 40 or 50 years, but was never altered or had the interior changed. There is a horse stable attached to one side



An old newspaper clipping indicates that it was built in 1873 near the settlement of Midway, which was a train stop for two railroads that needed extra engines added to pull the long freights through the Altamont Pass. Section hands for the railroads were housed near there and their children attended the little school, along with ranchers offspring. The town of Midway once had a Post Office, dance hall, hotel, two saloons, a slaughterhouse and some warehouses. The Saturday night dances were so popular that they attracted young folks from as far away as Oakland and one of the most popular local bands from Livermore was Jack Gardellas.

During Prohibition there were three or four stills operating in the hills around Midway. But the towns population dwindled in the 1930s and early 40s and now the only remaining building is the schoolhouse.

As Dave showed me the old school, we entered through the front door, which is the original one from the 1940s. Inside on the left is a cloak room including pegs with some of the students names still visible in chalk. Going through a small

from Valley 1

room on the right, once used for storing school materials and library loaner books from the county, we then entered the classroom, still intact with blackboards that actually have writing from 60 years ago. The old pot belly stove is gone — as is all the school furniture — but the hole still remains in the ceiling for the stovepipe.

The school was never electrified but the Mulqueeneys added a couple lightbulbs and plugs later to make it easier to see at night. The large windows on three sides are either boarded up or broken out now, but the frames are still there.

The front porch is long gone, as is the sign that stated Midway Public School, but an old photo provided by one of its alums, Elizabeth Derby Costa, shows how it looked in 1941. The white paint is worn off from years of exposure to the elements, and a few sideboards are loose from the exterior walls, but a coat of paint and new windows almost make it ready for another class of pupils!

At its original location, out back was a storage shed for wood used to feed the stove during the blustery winter months, which was the responsibility of the boys, and outhouses for girls and boys were at opposite ends of the shed. There was no hall atop the roof so the pupils were called in from recess by the teacher



Next week, there will be recollections from three former Midway students about their schooldays and lives during the Depression and World War II years, until the school had to be closed by the county in 1946 when enrollment fell. Those students were then sent to Mountain House to continue their schooling through eighth grade.

If you were a student at Midway and are willing to be interviewed contact Barry Schrader at historian2@sbcglobal.net or call him at (925) 449-7888.

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