



Photo courtesy of Paula Hinkel

Savannah Update

El Monte Cemetery Association

Volume 7, Number 4

June 2013

LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

It's been a Wonderful year. As my Presidential year comes to a close, I would like to look back and reflect on the all the good things which have gone on during my term. The cemetery participated with CAL-AM Water in having our water system evaluated and new water efficient sprinkler heads were installed to replace the older and more inefficient water sprinklers. The Cemetery also hosted its first open house for plot sales in quite a while and sold over \$5,000 in burial plots. We also participated in the 4th of July Parade, the Rosemead City Yard Sale and hosted Rosemead's Memorial Day services. During the course of the year, we continued to receive donations from M.C. Gill Corporation, Rosemead Woman's Club and other charitable organizations. We have held our own budgetary constraints and sought to control our expenses. Two new Board members were added which bring us a wealth of experience and knowledge. And our historical plaque dedication committees are making steady progress in finalizing historical plaque verbiage and the monument design. I would sincerely like to thank all of you who contributed to the success of the past year, especially the dedicated Board members who managed the operations of our Historical Landmark. I would also like to gratefully thank Jeff Allred and the City Of Rosemead for their support and knowledge in providing assistance to the Cemetery whenever it was needed. Overall, it was a very good year and I believe that the cemetery is in better financial condition than it was a year ago and we are now on a path to bigger and better things.



Memorial Day. Savannah hosted Rosemead's Memorial Day services on a bright and sunny Memorial Monday. Over 110 people attended the services which were hosted by Mayor Polly Low. Speeches were given by local elected officials and Justen Wiggins provided a very moving speech on the importance of our veterans and those who gave their life for our country. The El Monte Volunteer choir sang patriotic songs while the

Reyner Aguirre American Legion Post provided the flag presentation and 21-gun salute. 'Taps' and bagpipes were also played in honor of those soldiers who gave their lives for our country. Savannah Cemetery was beautifully decorated with American flags placed on each of the 108 veterans interred on the grounds. Let's hope that Memorial Day will continue to be celebrated with such a positive, honorable and memorable service in honor of the brave men and women who gave their lives for our freedom. A big special thank you to Jan White for coordinating this holiday activity.

Fund Raiser.... M.C. Gill Corporation and Savannah Cemetery have partnered in a fund raising matching program in which all monies raised by the cemetery will be matched 50 cents on every dollar by the very generous M.C. Gill Corporation. The fund raiser will take place between May 30th and Labor Day. So if you are thinking about making a donation to Savannah, now is the time to do it.

Again, I thank you all for your help; it's been a very wonderful year indeed..

Joe Castillo, President

Send any donation amount (no matter how big or small to maximize the match from M. C. Gill Corporation) to:
Savannah Memorial Park
P. O. Box 4247
El Monte, CA 91734

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NOTABLE QUOTABLE

The Present is the living sum-total of the whole
Past. Thomas Carlyle, *Characteristics*

**An Early Pioneer . . .****FIELDING W. GIBSON**

There is no man more widely known by the early settlers of the San Gabriel Valley, in the days of the '50's, than the subject of this sketch. The brief facts given in relation to his early history and association with Los Angeles County are of interest. Mr. Gibson was born near Natchez, Mississippi, in 1809. His father, David Gibson, was a native of South Carolina, and was among the pioneer settlers of that section of Mississippi. His mother was formerly Frances McKinley, a native of Pennsylvania, and a descendant of an old family of that State. Mr. Gibson was reared as a farmer, well schooled in the hardships and labor attending pioneer farming, but was deprived almost entirely of any educational or schooling facilities.

Upon arriving at man's estate he engaged in farming occupations in his native state and in Louisiana. He was also a large dealer and speculator in lands. In 1851 he started from New Orleans and traveled through Mexico to Mazatlan, and thence by steamer to San Francisco. After a short stay in that city he went to Sacramento and immediately sought the mines, remaining for two months. He again returned to the mines, remaining five months, and during that time made \$7,000.

Cattle being high in that county, he concluded there was a speculation in that business. Procuring a suitable outfit at San Gabriel Mission, he hired Mexican herders and proceeded to Sonora, Mexico, where he purchased 550 head of cattle, which he intended driving into the northern counties of California. The Mexicans in his employ, combining with others, commenced a systematic stealing of his stock as soon as the herd was *en route* for the North, and so successfully did they conduct their stealing that upon his arrival in the San Gabriel Valley he had but eighty-two head left. While recruiting his stock, Mr. Gibson determined to settle in the valley. He therefore purchased from Mr. Dalton 250 acres of land, located about one-half mile west of El Monte. This land



Undated picture of the Gibson Family Plot. The large monument is no longer present in the cemetery and it is not known what happened to it.

was wild and uncultivated, but of a rich, deep soil. He took up his residence upon this purchase and devoted himself to its cultivation and improvement. He engaged in general farming and stock-raising, and soon had one of the representative farms of the valley. He was also engaged in dealing in land in other sections. His long business experience, keen foresight and practical knowledge rendered him uniformly successful in his operations, and secured him a fair competency. Mr. Gibson is at this writing (1889) in his eightieth year, with all his faculties seemingly unimpaired; but desirous of relieving himself from the cares and labors of agricultural pursuits, and at the same time make a sure provision for

his children, he has deeded to each of them fifty acres of the old homestead. Mr. Gibson's long residence and identification with various interests throughout the valley and county, combined with his honorable dealings and manly qualities, have gained him the respect and esteem of a large circle of friends and acquaintances. In political matters he is a consistent Democrat. In 1861-'62-'63 he served as county supervisor from his district. In 1853 Mr. Gibson married Miss Betsey Aldrich, a native of Vermont.

She was the daughter of Hazen Aldrich, also of that State. From this marriage there are five children living, viz.: Edward, who married Miss Alma Jaqua, now living in Los Angeles; Fielding, Brace S., who married Miss Luty Renfro (she died March 24, 1888); Blanche, wife of James S. Chapman, residing in Arizona; and Gadi S. Fielding is a resident of San José. Brace and Gadi are residing on the old homestead, and are engaged in its cultivation, giving their attention to general farming. Mr. Gibson has given all his children the benefit of a good education.

(Source: An Illustrated History of Los Angeles County, California. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1889. Pg. 489-490.)

Calendar of Upcoming Events

July 4, 2013

City of Rosemead Annual Parade



Children of the Savannah...

Charlie Wiggins

In 1893, a handsome family dressed in Sunday clothes, traveled ten miles from their farm in the San Gabriel Valley to a photography studio in downtown Los Angeles for a family portrait. The photographer, A. P. Newdick, seated the farmer who wore pin-striped pants and a starched collar in a wicker chair. The beautiful wife was posed standing by his side. Archibald Wiggins held their firstborn child, Charles E. Wiggins, on his lap, and in the instant that the camera shutter opened and closed, both father and son looked directly into the lens, while Mary Ellen Wiggins gazed wistfully away.



For many years "Archie" and "Mamie" Wiggins doted on their only child, until by 1901 they were a family of four boys - Charles, Louis, Lavelle, and Edwin.

That would change in June, 1905, when a brief account in the *Los Angeles Times* carried this headline, "Lad Drowns in Reservoir." Thirteen-year-old Charlie Wiggins died in a swimming hole a mile and a half southeast of town in deep, cold water below the valley floor. Struggling to live, he called to his companions for help, then slipped below the surface and out of sight. An hour passed before his body was recovered.



In the time of year when school ends and summer begins, the Wiggins buried their oldest son, on the cusp of manhood, in the family plot at Savannah Cemetery, beyond a path that curves away.

Yet in a photograph taken long ago a little boy sat still for his portrait. Dressed in a double-breasted suit and plaid silk bow his image was exposed to light - and for a split second time stopped, capturing a poignant photo of an endearing face.

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OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS



| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Don & Mary Alley | Keith & Judith Latham |
| Tom & Sally Baquet | Bonnie Lott |
| Myrna Brown | Ken Pike |
| Betty Cook | John Rollofson |
| Darlene Cravea | Renay Wallace |
| Don & Mary Dancer | Martha Weaver |
| Christina Jones | Janice White |

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY



It was a beautiful day at Savannah Memorial Park. Many came to honor our veterans, both past and present. The cemetery hosted the City of Rosemead's annual ceremony. We wish to thank all the participants: American Legion Post 261 of El Monte, America Legion Reyner Aguirre Post 748 of San Gabriel, 1st Lt. Commander Justen Wiggins, Captain Dan Buelher of the El Monte Police Department, Col. Qui Van Nguyen, Yvonne Sanders, El Monte Scout Troop 551, Rosemead Mayor Polly Low, Chaplain Don Abraham, Tina Flores of El Monte, and Laura Roybal and Scout Troop 551 for refreshments.



Bob Trepanier

Bob Trepanier, owner of Harry & Sons Radiator Shop in Rosemead, passed away May 13, 2013 after a long battle with cancer. He will be long-remembered for his contributions to the local area and his love of antiques, not to mention his support of Savannah Memorial Park. His funeral was held May 18, 2013 at Savannah. Rest well, Bob.

Merwyn C. Gill

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of Merwyn C. Gill, founder of M. C. Gill Corporation. Mr. Gill passed away on May 30, 2013 at the remarkable age of 102. Mr. Gill was a pioneer in the manufacturing of plastics, building his company to an impressive worldwide presence employing more than 750 people, with its international headquarters in El Monte. His interest in Savannah Memorial Park has been greatly appreciated.

Cool Wraps by Peggy

The hot days of summer will soon be upon us. If you want to keep cool and be stylish at the same time, you must have a Cool Wrap. The head, neck, and wrist wraps come in a wide variety of colors and patterns. Call Peggy at 626-280-2024 for more information.

Proceeds donated to Savannah Memorial Park