



Photo courtesy of Paula Hinkel

Savannah Update

El Monte Cemetery Association

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LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

First of all, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Joe Castillo, and I was elected President of the Board of Directors for Savannah Memorial Cemetery in July. I have lived in San Gabriel for most of my life and



spent a considerable amount of time at Rosemead Park as well as the In 'N Out on Rosemead Boulevard. I am presently a columnist for the Mid Valley News and write the 'Town Tweets' column covering San Gabriel and Rosemead happenings. I also write the 'Time Jockey' column covering historical persons, places and events in the San Gabriel Valley. I am a Grand Officer for the Native Sons of the Golden West, which is a 125-year plus organization whose mission it is to preserve the history of California. So as you can see I am a local resident who has an interest in the local community and its history, which eventually led me to historical Savannah Cemetery.

One of the first events I participated in as President was to ride in an antique Ford in the 4th of July Parade in Rosemead. Past President Dwain Crum and fellow board member Ross Plasencia also rode in same vehicle representing Savannah. It was so good to see the spirit of the city along the parade route and to notice how much community support came out to participate in and support the various parade entries.

During the past two months, I have worked with the Board to help build a foundation for current and future operations. This board is a collection of experienced and hardworking community volunteers who know the history of the cemetery as well as anyone and its significance to the community. We know there are many challenges which lay ahead for us but we are all willing to work together to do what is right for Savannah and the local communities, especially Rosemead and El Monte. If you haven't heard the great news by now, Savannah Memorial Cemetery was designated by the State of California as Historical Landmark site #1046. This is great news for Savannah

as well as the community as we are one of the few cemeteries in California which have been awarded this designation. The Board is making preparations for the formal dedication and plaque installation and is trying to raise enough money to make this a successful event. No date has been set, but we have organized three committees to plan for the dedication, finalize the verbiage on the bronze plaque and promote fundraisers for the dedication. This is the primary focus of the Board at the present time and we know we have a lot to do for the big day. If you are interested in making a small or large donation, visit our website or mail in a donation to the address listed in this newsletter. Your donation is tax-deductible and will be used for a worthy cause. I look forward to hearing from you with any comments you may have. Please help us to preserve our local history and support Savannah Cemetery through your donation, volunteering or just supporting us. We need your help!

Joe Castillo, President



FALL SPIRIT FEST

Saturday, September 29, 2012

11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Moose Lodge Parking Lot

9304 Mission Drive, Rosemead

A craft fair for the benefit of Savannah Memorial Park. Come join the fun, buy crafts created by local artists, and take a tour of the historic cemetery, too. Learn the history of the area. Call 626-287-4838 for more information and to reserve a space to sell your own creations.

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NOTABLE QUOTABLE

Professor Johnston often said that if you didn't know history, you didn't know anything. You were a leaf that didn't know it was part of a tree.

~Michael Crichton, *Timeline*

**An Early Pioneer . . .****John A. McGirk**

A Justice of the Peace in the early days of El Monte and a citizen of the community since the early eighties, John A. McGirk, has been one of the city's outstanding residents throughout the years of its steady growth and development.

Born of Missouri parentage and nativity, Mr. McGirk is the son of Mathias McGirk, who engaged in farming and in selling wood to the steamboats on the Missouri River, near which his farm was located. Both father and son were Southern sympathizers during the Civil War, however the father was drafted by the Union and required to serve the Northern Army, but on account of the valuable timber on his farm near the river, he was commissioned to furnish wood for the river steamers during the war instead of fighting. The son, near the end of the war, after having assisted his father for several months in the preparation of fuel wood, crossed the river and joined the Confederate Army, serving for three months in General Price's regiment in Illinois. Mathias McGirk died in 1884.

Following the war, the subject of this sketch was given a farm by his father on McGirk's Island, in the middle of the Missouri River near Portland, Missouri. Here, Mr. McGirk farmed and sold wood to the river steamboats until 1875. In that year, he went to Hamilton County, Texas and for ten years, engaged in raising corn, cotton and cattle.

In 1885, Mr. McGirk moved to California, settling at once on a place east of El Monte. For a

number of years, he rented land from E.J. Baldwin and engaged in farming. In 1896, he moved to a ranch which he had purchased near Riverside, and farmed there for two years, returning in 1898 to El Monte where he bought the ranch north of town, a portion of which he still owns. In 1875, Mr. McGirk was united in marriage with Miss Ellen Shobe who was (as were both of her parents) a native of Osage County, Missouri.

To this union were born nine children: Luther M., now residing in Modesto; L.S. of Baker, California; Kate, (Mrs. Fred Putman) of El Monte; Clara (Mrs. Frank Hayes) of El Monte; Margaret (Mrs. Henry W. Williams) of Douglas, Arizona; William Neal (address unknown); John P. of San Diego; Nellie, who is unmarried, and living with her father in the old home north of El Monte; and J.C. of Watsonville. The children are all

living at this time.

The mother died in 1920, and since that time, Mr. McGirk has not been active in managing his farm, preferring to retire and turn the work of his ranch over to his children.

In politics, Mr. McGirk is a staunch Democrat. For several years, he served as Justice of the Peace in El Monte. He also served as Trustee of the Lexington Grammar School, and was a member of the first Board of Education of the El Monte High School.

(Source:
http://theusgenweb.org/ca/losangeles/ElMonteBios/MCGIRK_JohnA.htm)

**Calendar of Upcoming Events**

September 29, 2012

Fall Spirit Fest

Craft Fair

(see Page 1 for details)

In Planning

Historical Landmark Celebration

(more details to follow)

OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS



Don & Mary Alley	Peggy & Nancy Huetig
Jerry Case	Brian Lewin
Tracy Fredell-Palestino	Daniel Munoz
Maebel Gongora	Jeanne Schiada
D. & E. Harrington	



From the Past . . .

Los Angeles Star, vol. 4, no. 50, April 28, 1855.
Page 2, Column 3

EDUCATION IN THE MONTE

The District School at the Monte had its annual examination and exhibition on Friday, the 20th of the present month. Being a casual spectator of the exercises, we cannot refrain from expressing the pleasure occasioned by seeing so many evidences of a determination to promote the cause of education.

The school is under the superintendence of the Rev. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Barker, both of whom gave abundant reason for us to believe them possessed of the qualifications [sic] necessary for the success of such nurseries of learning. An examination of the various classes was a tribute to the skill and ability of these Instructors of the Youth, - a compliment to the intelligence and deportment of the pupils under their charge, - and an assurance that those who are developing the resources of a region which had remained so long unconscious of the blessings concealed in its bosom, have conceived the foundation upon which communities can build a permanent prosperity.

Much taste was displayed in the selection of pieces for declamation and dialogue, and after the satisfaction of the audience had been secured by the performance of each youthful competitor, pupil and visitor marched in procession to partake of a neat and plenteous collation; and as we amused ourself [sic] among the delicacies spread out before us, we felt assured that toilsome

journies [sic] had not made the fair residents of the Monte forget the lessons taught them by their mothers - lessons which contribute materially to the charm and pleasure of every well regulated household.

We venture the opinion that no public school in the State is better conducted than this one, and none in a more flourishing condition. The district contains about two hundred and seventy children between the ages of four and eighteen, and for the past three months, the average attendance at the school has been seventy-five - nearly as great as the average attendance at all the Schools in this District, which contains seven hundred and thirteen children, between the ages

of four and eighteen.

We have always felt the liveliest interest in every effort for moral and

intellectual

culture, and must again acknowledge our gratification at witnessing the performance on Friday last. It spoke well for those who are building up for themselves permanent homes in the fairest portion of our country. We saw the elements of a population which will combine intelligence with industrial pursuits, and contribute no small share in promoting the strength and prosperity of our State. In a country where we come in contact with so many operators - see so many communities composed of men whose only object is to beautify a home in some other land, - it is pleasant to visit a neighborhood where everything indicates the attainment of a wealth which will be employed for the development of our own resources, and not be dissipated in some Atlantic City, or buried in some European bank.



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REMEMBER A LOVED ONE – PRESERVE HISTORY – HONOR THE PIONEERS

Send a donation today to help support Savannah Memorial Park and the history preserved there.
With your donation, we can continue our efforts to protect the memory of our origins.

Savannah Memorial Park
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