



Photo courtesy of Paula Hinkel

Savannah Update

*El Monte Cemetery Association
September 2006*

Letter from Your President

Members,

I greet you at the end of our first month of effort on behalf of the El Monte Cemetery Association, and what a productive month it has been! As you can see here in our first newsletter, your Board of Directors is already a driving force. It is a great pleasure for me to feel that energy. One of my most delightful discoveries is the depth and quality of talent we, as a Board of Directors, bring to bear on the tasks at hand, and we are looking to expand that pool of resources further, with your help.



Eric Chase

You can help us in two ways, first with your donations to the cause, explained in Vice President

Randy Wiggins' letter enclosed herewith, and second by letting us know of your interests, your talents, and your willingness to participate in future tasks. We have four basic priorities at present. These are:

1. Establishing our legal standing as an association
2. Establishing our financial footing
3. Raising money to support the preservation and continued operation of the cemetery
4. Communication among ourselves and with the general population, to get the word out on what we are doing and why.

We are eager to hear from you! And we all look forward very much to celebrating the success of our work with you, our friends and families, on some sunny day in the not-too-distant future.

Sincerely,
Eric D. Chase
President
El Monte Cemetery Association

As most of you know, on July 15, 2006, supported by an unprecedented number of family members and other concerned individuals, a new Board of Directors of the El Monte Cemetery Association was elected. The new Board consists of the following:

Officers of the Board:

Eric Chase, President
E. Randy Wiggins, Vice President
Wanda Pennington Parker, Secretary
Janice Wiggins White, Treasurer

Board Directors:

James Bias
Victor Haddox
Virgil Ervin
Glenn Pennington
Robyn Steele

Four committees have been set up and are in the process of getting organized. The committees are: Historical Research, Legal Affairs, Financial/Fund Raising, and Communications.

The Committees will address the following issues:

Historical Research: Collect personal histories of those buried at Savannah, perform research necessary to obtain historic landmark status, other miscellaneous research pertinent to Savannah.

Legal Affairs: Determine the current legal status of the Association and the title/ownership of the land. Assist in setting up a not-for-profit California corporation.

Financial/Fund Raising: Review financial situation, establish a budget, research possible grants and submit applications.

Communications: Handle press releases and media coverage, establish communication with general membership and relay progress and any other news.

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NOTABLE QUOTABLE

"The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery . . ."

Nathaniel Hawthorne
American Novelist (1804-1864)

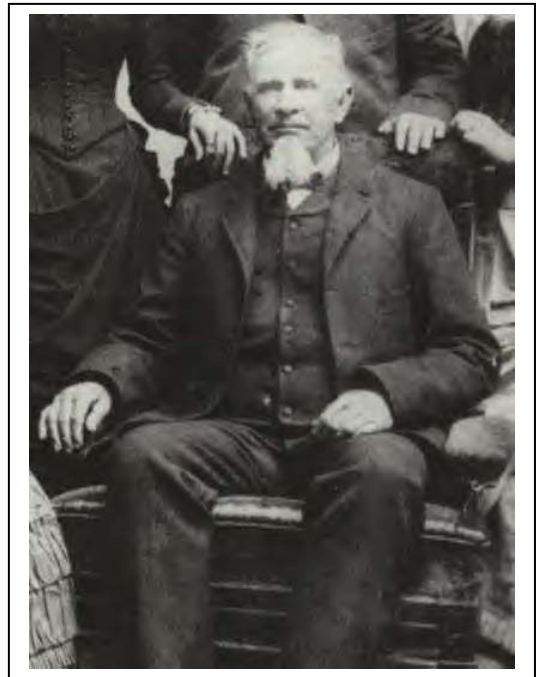
Calendar of Upcoming Events

September 30, 2006	Workshop
10:00 a.m., Rosemead Community Center	
(Board and Committee members only)	
January 20, 2007	Board Meeting
(General membership meeting. Details to follow.)	

*An Early Pioneer . . .***John Guess**

One of the oldest settlers in the vicinity of El Monte was John Guess, who lived one mile west of the city and successfully engaged in general farming and stock raising. Mr. Guess came to California in October 1852, as a pioneer, and witnessed and participated in the development and upbuilding of this community. He was a native of the South, born in Batesville, Independence County, Arkansas, March 28, 1827. His father, Joseph, was born in the east and became an early resident of Arkansas, where he engaged in farming throughout his active life. His death occurred from cholera in New Orleans while there on a trip for merchandise. He was survived by his wife, formerly Lottie Menyard, also a native of the East, her last days being spent with her son in California, dying at the age of eighty-four years. She had three children, of whom the eldest is the subject of the sketch.

Reared in his native state, John Guess removed with his parents to Conway county when a child, and having lost his father when young, he was deprived of even the limited advantages afforded by the primitive schools of the country. He spent his boyhood days on the home farm assisting in the work and at twenty years of age began life for himself, working farms on shares until he succeeded in accumulating some means. He was married in Arkansas to Mrs. Harriet (Holifield) Rogers, a native of Conway county and a daughter of James Holifield, a pioneer farmer of Arkansas, whose death occurred in Santa Barbara harbor on a steamer on a return trip to California. The first trip of Mr. Guess, to California was begun April 7, 1852, following his marriage in March, making the trip across the plains with two yoke of oxen, one wagon and all-necessary equipment and provisions of nine months. The trip was made with the party commended by Captain William Johnson, mentioned elsewhere in this work. They came through Texas Via Fort Belknap, El Paso and Yuma, entering California by way of this southern route, reaching El Monte after a seven months trip. One night the Indians stampeded their cattle and stole some twenty head. Other than this, they had no serious skirmishes with the Indians en route. A train of eighty wagons with seventy men well armed necessarily precluded any serious trouble with them.



John Guess
28 Mar 1827 – 12 Jan 1919

For three weeks following his arrival he camped within three-quarters of a mile of what was to be his future home. He later located in the vicinity of Compton and began farming. In the spring of 1855 he returned to El Monte, rented a tract of land one year, then purchased a ranch one mile north of El Monte, where he farmed and engaged in the raising of cattle. He subsequently returned to Arkansas with the intention of purchasing and bringing a herd of cattle to California, but owing to the Indian hazard he gave up this plan. Finally concluding to again locate in the sunny land, he accordingly made the trip once more to El Monte in 1859. After selling his first ranch he purchased forty-eight acres on the site of what was then Savannah, and remained in that location until 1867, when he lost in the courts his title to the land, as it was proven property of the early grants. In the same year he located on another



Monument of
John Guess and Family
Savannah Pioneer Cemetery

nearby tract, which also was disputed land known as the old Mission grant, taking possession of one hundred acres where he at once began improvement and cultivation. He set out sycamore trees which to this day still stand as massive sentinels about the place, many of them large and spreading, one measuring two and a half feet in diameter. He engaged in the raising of cattle, hogs, mules and horses, and a little later purchased one hundred and fifty head of cattle, which he drove to Tehachapi and sold. He followed a like course on the Chino Ranch, while his family still lived on the ranch near El Monte. In 1888 he bought an interest in the San Jacinto Ranch, then a part of the Santa Rosa Ranch near Temecula, where he had a herd of eight hundred cattle. He eventually added to his original ranch in El Monte by a purchase of sixty-four acres all being in one tract. He made many improvements on the place and brought it to a high state of cultivation, being about to raise alfalfa without irrigation on seventy acres of the place.

The second marriage of Mr. Guess occurred in Rivera, California and united him with Mrs. Sarah (Anderson) Hooper.

Mr. Guess took a prominent part in the public affairs in the community. He was interested in the First National Bank of El Monte, and served as school trustee for two terms. Fraternally he was a Master Mason, having been made a member of that organization in 1862, in Lexington Lodge No. 104. He belonged to the Baptist Church of El Monte, in which he officiated as trustee. Politically, he was a staunch Jeffersonian Democrat. In memory of the early days in which he came to California, he was a member of the Los Angeles County pioneers. His death occurred in the year 1919.

Source: http://www.cagenweb.com/re/losangeles/ElMonteBios/GUESS_John.htm



Financial News

Fund Raisers	\$0.00
Donations	\$0.00

Help these funds grow!! Send a donation:

El Monte Cemetery Association
P. O. Box 4247
El Monte, California 91734

Visit our web site to read more about us:
<http://www.savannahpioneerccem.blogspot.com/>

Consider making a small purchase to help support the cemetery at:

<http://www.cafepress.com/scgsgenealogy/1615874>
or call 1-877-809-1659.

El Monte Cemetery Association
P. O. Box 4247

El Monte, California 91734
626-287-4838

email: SavannahCemetery@yahoo.com

NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting of El Monte Cemetery Association will be January 20, 2007. All interested persons are welcome. Details to follow. An agenda will be made available at the meeting along with the minutes of the previous meeting.

Readers' Comments Wanted

Please submit your comments, a family history for publication, or just a brief paragraph about what Savannah Pioneer Cemetery means to you.

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El Monte, California 91734