



Photo courtesy of Paula Hinkel

# Savannah Update

*El Monte Cemetery Association*

*Volume 1, Number 3*

*March 2007*

## *Letter from Your President*

I greet you all with a report on what your Board of Directors and Committee chairs have been up to in the last several weeks. In late January we held our annual membership meeting. We agreed among those present that another "annual" membership meeting should be held in July, as there are a number of issues we would like to bring before the membership for a vote. Among these are the terms of service for Board members, the timing of the elections of Board members (so we don't lose the entire Board at once), and others. We are very busy with plans for improvements at the cemetery, and these should be far enough along to present to you all at the meeting. For those of you who cannot attend the meeting in July, fear not as all such plans will be described to you in our subsequent newsletters. As always, we welcome your input at all times. Please feel free to e-mail us with your ideas and opinions, or leave a voice message on the recorder.



*Eric Chase*

If you were not there in January you missed a wonderful event, where your Board presented a plaque and unveiled a commemorative stone to M.C. Gill Corporation for their generous donation that allowed the construction of our new fence along the Mission Drive side. Mr. Stephen Gill, Vice Chairman of M.C. Gill Corporation, was on hand to receive the reward with our sincere thanks. M.C. Gill Corporation has become our partner and ally in the on-going effort to preserve our cemetery and we could not be more pleased! Also along those lines our preservation fund has recently increased, thanks to all of you, and now has a balance of around \$7,500.00. We have many tasks ahead and this money will be of great use in our preservation efforts.

Among several plans afoot, we are considering the final days of selling gravesites at Savannah. The cemetery is nearly full, as you all know. The remaining gravesites, if sold at prevailing market prices, could begin the establishment of a fund for the continued operation of the cemetery. Gravesites will be going on offer to our legacy family members for a fixed period of time, with the remaining gravesites after that time being offered to the public. Once all the available gravesites have been sold and the operating fund has been begun in earnest, your Board and committee chairs will be actively moving for State Historic Landmark status as well as seeking donations from larger foundations and trusts.

A final note, our cemetery cause will be represented with a table at the upcoming Southern California Genealogical Society Jamboree in June. We encourage volunteers to come out and spend a few hours helping out at the table. We will have our banner flying, and the donation envelopes on hand! It is my continuing pleasure to work with you all, and to see our dream for old Savannah realized together. Thanks everyone!

*Eric Chase, President  
El Monte Cemetery Association*



*Mr. Steven Gill (left), Vice Chairman M. C. Gill Corporation being presented with plaque by Eric Chase (right), President El Monte Cemetery Association. Commemorative stone is shown below.*



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### NOTABLE QUOTABLE

"Most of the things worth doing in the world had been declared impossible before they were done."

Louis D. Brandeis



## An Early Pioneer . . .

### **SAMUEL SAWYER THOMPSON and MARGARET McKAMY THOMPSON**

Samuel Sawyer Thompson and Margaret McKamy Thompson were among the early arrivals in El Monte, October 22, 1852. He was a Los Angeles County Supervisor in 1854 and an El Monte justice of the peace in 1861. They have twenty-three descendants buried in the cemetery and many living descendants, including the new board president, Eric Chase. This is the family story of their trip west, dictated by their daughter, Mary McKamy Thompson Cunningham Wyatt (1839-1915) to her granddaughter Eva May Chase Akers.

"Wishing to go west, Samuel Thompson and his wife built a large flatboat and with all their goods floated down the Tennessee River into the Ohio and into the Mississippi River down to the Red River in Louisiana up which they floated and paddled to Shreveport, Louisiana, where they lived. They journeyed about in Louisiana and up to Fort Smith, Arkansas. They went on to St. Augustine, Texas, where their child Mary was born January 28, 1839. At last they went to Bonham, Texas, where they helped form a train of 27 wagons which left Bonham April 10, 1852, to go to the goldfields of California. They went southwest through El Paso, down into Mexico and west through Arizona and Ft. Yuma. On October 22, 1852, they reached El Monte. Due to typhoid fever in his family, S.S. Thompson bought a house and remained in El Monte and a wagon train went on north to gold."

### Calendar of Upcoming Events

June 8, 9, 10, 2007 - 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Genealogy Jamboree - Southern California Genealogical Society (Burbank Airport Marriott, 2500 Hollywood Way, Burbank, CA)

Friday, June 8 12:30 pm to 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 9 9:00 am to 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 10 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m.

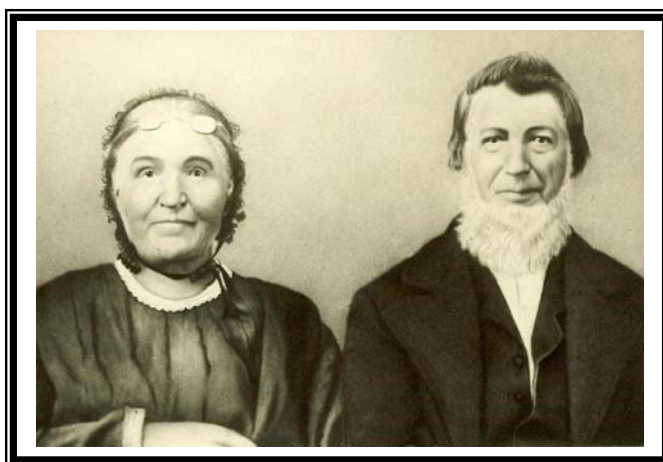
Savannah Pioneer Cemetery will have a table.

For further information, go to:

<http://www.scgsgenealogy.com/jamboree.htm>

**COME BY AND SAY HELLO!!**

**July 21, 2007 Association Membership Meeting**



*Samuel Sawyer Thompson  
and  
Margaret McKamy Thompson*

Their household in California included two young African-American girls, Amelia and Paulina, born in 1847 and 1851 respectively. This story of their presence comes from Martha Russell, another great-granddaughter of the Thompsons: "I've always heard that the S.S. Thompsons had slaves and that he didn't believe in slavery so when he started west he gave them up. The mother of the 2 girls begged him to take them with him for she said they would only live the life of slaves if they stayed behind. They were with the family when they lived on the ranch in Rivera." One of the girls reportedly became a leading midwife in Los Angeles.

*Submitted by David W. Hassler,  
another one of their great-great-grandchildren*

# WANTED

**The sign on the fence reads, "Founded 1850."**

There are stories about graves appearing mysteriously in 1846 or 1847. A search of the records of Rancho San Francisquito owner, Henry Dalton, on whose southwest corner Savannah Cemetery was established, has turned up no evidence of these early graves.

To qualify for national or state historic status, we need to prove the age and integrity of our cemetery. Right now, the oldest we can prove is the marker on the grave of M.A. Rogers from 1853. Perhaps you can help. If you have any family records on deaths or burials prior to 1853, we could use them.

In addition, you might have old photos of the cemetery that show some markers that no longer exist, perhaps even wooden ones. They could be a big help too.

If you can provide any documentation of this kind, we would love to have them.

Contact Dave Hassler at david5295@sbcglobal.net

## OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

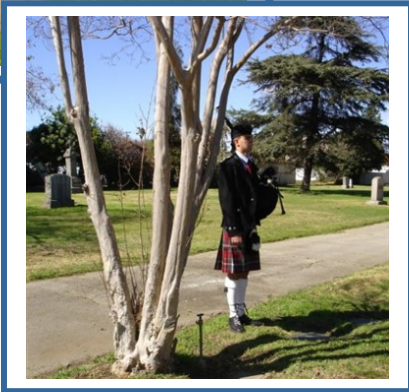


- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Wm. & Sally Baquet     | Darlene Monacelli  |
| Myrna & Daniel Brown   | Karen Ostrander    |
| Darlene Cravea         | Linda Rallo        |
| Helen Chase            | Alyec Ross         |
| Kate Godfrey           | Joan Skaggs        |
| Nancy Goldbloom        | Susan Smock        |
| Del & Aileen Harral    | Bob & Janet Wilson |
| Don & Edith Harrington | Sarah Wilson       |
| Reed & Sara Maxon      |                    |

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

Board and Committee Workshop	April 14, 2007
Association Membership Meeting	July 21, 2007

*(Details to follow)*



## FUNERAL FOR VETERAN FIREFIGHTER

Robert Miles Murray, a 31-year veteran of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, died in January at the age of 81 leaving no family to care for his remains. Fellow firefighters learned of his passing and took it upon themselves to see that he received an appropriate burial.

Savannah Memorial Park was contacted and, upon hearing the story of this courageous man, donated a plot in the cemetery. The casket arrived in a horse-drawn hearse and, following tradition, a bagpiper played 'Amazing Grace'.

Burial was held on February 23, 2007 following a service at Calvary Chapel Golden Springs in Diamond Bar.

**Financial News**

	12/01/06-	
	02/28/07	To Date
Donations	\$2,490.00	\$7,590.00

**Help these funds grow!! Send a donation:**  
 El Monte Cemetery Association  
 P. O. Box 4247  
 El Monte, California 91734

**VETERAN INFORMATION  
REQUESTED**

If you have a Veteran buried at Savannah who served in any branch of the service during any time period, please send us their information - birth date, death date, branch of service, dates of service and any biographical data you may have. This information will be invaluable to our application for historic landmark status. Please mail to El Monte Cemetery Association, P. O. Box 4247, El Monte, California 91734.



**Readers' Comments Wanted**

Please submit your comments, a family biography for publication (please limit to a maximum of 500 words), or just a brief paragraph about what Savannah Pioneer Cemetery means to you. Email: SavannahCemetery@yahoo.com; or contact us at:

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