



Photo courtesy of Paula Hinkel

# Savannah Update

*El Monte Cemetery Association*

*Volume 1, Number 4*

*June 2007*

## *Letter from Your President*

Greetings Friends of Savannah,

Your Board of Directors has been very busy this spring, attending to the issues involved in running a cemetery, along with our on-going fund raising efforts. We are in the process of identifying potential future larger donors, as well as continuing our outreach to the local community and to our friends and legacy family members. Our mailing list continues to grow, and we are seeing results, with increasing signs of interest from local community organizations including service organizations, governmental agencies, historical and genealogical societies, and schools. I have a very palpable sense that awareness of the significance of this historical treasure is growing each and every week. My sincere thanks to all of you who are volunteering your time and energy to the many activities we have underway through our committees.



*Eric Chase*

On Memorial Day weekend we had a wonderful crowd on hand, many of whom we had not seen before. Local law enforcement got involved in our effort, providing community service workers to aid in our Clean Up Day efforts. Members of the El Monte Historical Society were on hand to help as well. We had many new members from our legacy families, including some of our more well-known families, who showed up for the first time ever. I spent the morning staking out prospective blocks of unoccupied grave plots for future sale, and most of the rest of the day just trying to speak with everyone who came. I am sure I did not get around to everyone, but I put in a few miles in the effort! With regard to future plot sales, we have hired a Ground Penetrating Radar contractor who is looking into the ground with his instruments to tell us if there are any undocumented burials present before we sell a plot. I am expecting the report any day now as I write this.

I have never been more gratified as your President than I was that day, as it reminded me of many Memorial Days past, working with my Grandfather and other family members cleaning up the graves of my ancestors. In short, I had a blast. Great work was done clearing out dead tree branches, raking leaves, trimming graves, and Director Virgil Erwin and his beautiful young bride did monumental work in preparing and re-painting the Valley Boulevard side iron fence. What this day left me with is the fact that we love our dear old Savannah, of that there can be no doubt. Thanks so much everyone.

Please keep those donations coming in, as we are making great progress. I am very excited about the work we have planned for the next six months. On we go!

*Eric Chase, President*



*Ground Penetrating Radar in action  
Gary Mann of National Environmental*

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**NOTABLE QUOTABLE**

"History never looks like history when you are living through it".

John W. Gardner (1912-2002)  
U. S. Administrator

**An Early Pioneer . . .****From the Journal of Benjamin Franklin Maxson**

Benjamin Franklin Maxson was born in Friendship, New York, in 1841. In his early twenties he served with the Wisconsin Infantry in the Civil War. On June 7, 1867, the day after his twenty-sixth birthday, he bid adieu to family and friends and began his journey to California to gain for himself "a competence and to aid in establishing a permanent fund for educational purposes."

His journey began in New York, two years prior to the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. New York city was "rainy and muddy" upon his arrival on the morning of June 8, 1867, but he visited Barnum's Museum and in the evening he saw America's first blockbuster musical, *The Black Crook*.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> he boarded the *San Francisco* and sailed out to sea. He wrote about the many sea sick passengers during the first several days, as well as the large schools of porpoises and flying fish, and the pleasant feeling of seeing islands such as Cuba and Santo Domingo.

After ten days the *San Francisco* dropped anchor in the bay near Greytown (San Juan del Norte), Nicaragua, and passengers boarded river boats without landing and began the trip up the San Juan river. Here the natives approached, offering oranges, bananas, pol cakes, rum, wine, etc. Maxson wrote that the tropical scenery was the most beautiful he had ever beheld. "Such rare plants! . . . The clinging vines decked with beautiful flowers forming natural arbors which far surpass any which I have ever seen constructed by the hand of man." The exotic fauna, the historic ruins of

**Calendar of Upcoming Events**

**July 21, 2007 Association Membership Meeting**  
All interested persons should attend.

El Castillo, as well as the geology were equally impressive.

This route across Central America followed the San Juan between Nicaragua and Costa Rica by boats, horses and mules, hikes around rapids and sand bars, to Lake Nicaragua, then by boat to La Virgen and over land by mules, horses or carriages to San Juan Del Sur, where Benjamin arrived on June 23, 1867. From there he boarded the steamship *America* and headed for San Francisco. With sightings of whales and one false fire alarm, the voyage was "rather pleasant". On July 6 he wrote that he was in San Francisco, "thank goodness," put up at the International Hotel. He explored the city, went to Prospect Hill for a bird's eye view, and to "the Chinese portion to observe their customs and dress."

On July 8 he went aboard a river steamer and started to Sacramento. The "evening pleasant, country fine and rolling and middling. Thickly settled. Wheat and oats in the sheath ready for gathering. Large droves of cattle . . . feeding in the valleys and on hillside. Arrived at Sacramento next morning after being stuck for two hours on a sand bar."

He stayed at the What Cheer House, now a landmark in Old Sacramento, then camped at Richmond Grove while "fitting out for the mountains."

The portion of his journal to which this article refers ends at this point. He later farmed in Colusa, then Tustin and El Monte, being among the first commercial walnut growers in that area. He was an early member of the Lexington Lodge (El Monte Masons) and was a trustee on the Mountain View School Board. El Monte's Maxson Road and Maxson School were named in his honor. He died in 1899. He and his wife, Olive (Merwin) are interred at Savannah.

Submitted by Reed B. Maxson, great-grandson

*Financial News*

	03/01/07-	
	05/31/07	To Date
Donations	\$5,897.00	\$13,487.00

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

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

**Association Membership Meeting July 21, 2007**

El Monte Historical Museum  
 3150 Tyler Avenue, El Monte  
 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 n.  
 Open to all interested persons.

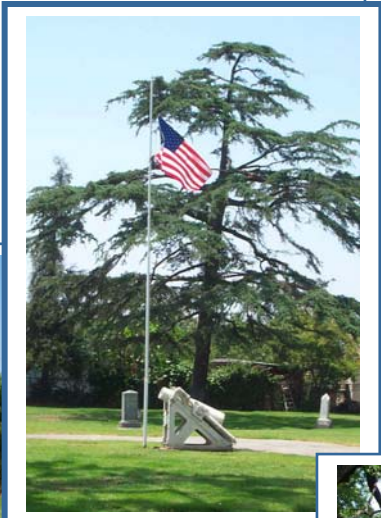
**WE REVIVED THE TRADITION!!**  
 May 26, 2007



*Randy Wiggins*



*Bob Bruesch*



*Jennifer  
George,  
Tweedy  
Descendant*



*Jack Bezner, Wanda Parker,  
Gerry Hedlund, Janice Wiggins  
White, Sue Redding*



*Virgil Ervin and local  
youth*

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**OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS**



Harold & Sally Baquet  
J. Burl Blue  
Myrna & Daniel Brown  
Charles Giboney  
Nancy (Wilson) Goldbloom  
Victoria Guagliardo  
Don & Edith Harrington  
Darrel & Marilyn Kelty  
Ken Pike  
Elizabeth (Robinson) Rockwell  
Janice (Wiggins) White  
Sarah Wilson  
Tom & Marilyn Wilson

THANK YOU!

*El Monte Cemetery Association*  
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*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