

# THE LEFTOVERS

Issue #28

Fall 2018

## May Valley – El Sobrante

Roxanne Miravalle

For years many have heard and wondered if



May Road or May Valley in El Sobrante were named after Colonel May.

Although I didn't find any article or document indicating

when this road was officially named or if it was named after the Colonel, I do know he had a large parcel of land, as seen in this late 19th century watershed map of San Pablo Creek.



The San Pablo Creek ran through his property which was located on a portion of Rancho El Sobrante bordering along Rancho San Pablo.

So, who was Colonel May and where did he come from and how did he come to live in El Sobrante?

Born William B. May on October 30, 1819 to Thomas and Rebecca (Adams) May, in Dickson County, Tennessee, his family later moved to Arkansas where he resided until 1850. During that time, it is told he served with the Arkansas Regiment and fought in the Mexican War of 1846, whereby he earned the title of Colonel. By February of 1850, he made his way to New Orleans, traveling by way of the Isthmus of Panama and the Chagres river, to the "Land of Gold" arriving in San Francisco on May 5, 1850. He then found his way to the mines at Foster's Bar, on the Yuba river, where, during the Summer of 1850, he succeeded in mining with fair results. By the Fall of 1850, he found himself in Sacramento. Although, he set up a grocery and provision business there, by the Fall of 1852 he closed it out and transferred his residence to Weaverville, in Trinity county. Here, he once more embarked in mining operations, which he continued until the Fall of 1853. While living in Trinity County, he was elected Senator for the Twelfth Senatorial District, then comprising the counties of Trinity, Humboldt, Siskiyou and Klamath which he served during the sessions of 1854-55.

What is interesting, although while in Arkansas he was first married to Sarah Perry in 1838 (also of Tennessee), she is not mentioned in his biography, or that she accompanied him on his travels to California. They had five children together, the youngest being Sarah Alice, born

in February 1850 - the same time he set out for California.

In 1852, he married Mary Ellen (Perry) Inskeep, a widow from Virginia living in San Francisco. They also had five children together. It is during this time that he is living in Sacramento and involved in his political career. According to his biography in the History of Contra Costa County, after serving as Senator from the Twelfth Senatorial district in the sessions of 1854-55, "he settled in Contra Costa County, and commenced farming and stock-raising on his ranch, comprising some five hundred acres and he is now enjoying the comforts of a happy home, with the wife of his choice, both beloved by their children and friends."

Although he had property in Contra Costa County, he is listed with his family as living in Oakland on the US Census of 1870. His name is also listed on another US Census for that same year under Contra Costa County (San Pablo). However, on the Census for Contra Costa County, there is another family listed including a laborer. This very well could be the caretakers of his vast property in El Sobrante, then considered San Pablo. He is listed in the Agricultural Census of 1860 for Contra Costa County with a 300-acre farm valued at \$5000 [equivalent in purchasing power to \$151,895 in 2018]. While the Agricultural Census of 1870 lists a 400-acre farm valued at \$8000 [equivalent in purchasing power to \$153,982 in 2018]. It appears he was a wealthy and successful farmer.

However, not one to rest on his political laurels, he applied for the appointment of county judge in 1874 when the position became vacant after the sudden death of C.W. Lander (who was Contra Costa County judge at that time). Unfortunately, the Governor appointed one of his colleagues instead.

Col. May seems to have been a wealthy, prosperous and successful individual. It is no wonder a road and a valley were named after him! And, although I never found an obituary for this well-known and remarkable man, the place and date of his death is listed in the 'California, Pioneer and Immigrant Files' on Ancestry as San Francisco, 25 Jul 1885.

Resources:

California Digital Newspaper Collection:

<https://cdnc.ucr.edu>; May Family Tree on Ancestry;

History of Contra Costa County, W. A. Slocum & Co., Publishers 1882:

<https://archive.org/stream/historyofcontrcoo00munrrich#page/618>;

Property map

(<http://rememberandgo.ccclib.org/cdm/fullbrowser/collection/maps/id/74/rv/singleitem/rec/1>);

1871 CoCo Map:

<http://digitallibrary.californiahistoricalsociety.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A1528>

## Stroll, 2018—The last Stroll? *Editor*



*Strollin' 2018. From left: Steve James, Emil Munkres, Maurice Abraham.*

As you may have heard, there has been talk that, after 25 years, the El Sobrante Stroll may be coming to an end. Putting on the event is challenging, and the Chamber of Commerce members who have taken on this task are getting worn out. And it is hard to find replacements.

The devil is always in the details, and putting together something like the parade is a headache. But it is hard to imagine the Stroll without it. The bands, the kids, the dancing horses are always a treat.



Nor is the event a financial plus for the Chamber. Even though participants are charged a fee to set up their booths, after all the costs and fees are totaled up, there is little left over at the close of the hectic day.

Nonetheless, the Stroll, after a run of 25 years, has become a signature event in our community. For your historical society, it offers an opportunity to show off a little of our historic photos and artifacts, and to make our presence known. Without a permanent home, this makes the Stroll doubly important to us.

This year, like last, was a success for us, as we signed up over 40 new members, sold a dozen of our books on the history of El Sobrante, and talked to visitors until our voices were hoarse.

Every year we see new families coming into our community, who naturally want to know something about the place they have chosen to call home. The historical society is a natural source for local information, and acts as a kind of glue, tying together the mystery of the present with the knowledge of the past. The Stroll, too, as its history becomes part of the history of the community, is now part of the overall weave of the fabric of that history. It would be a shame to lose that strand now that it has grown strong with age.

But enough of that. Here's hoping that 2019 will see new Chamber members step up to take on the task of making sure that Stroll #26 takes place.

## Museum Plans Moving Ahead

As you may be aware, the El Sobrante Historical Society has been given to understand, by County Supervisor John Gioia, that space will be made for us in the Community building behind the El Sobrante



Library. Naturally enough, plans for renovation of the building

have been put on hold due to the tragic fire that occurred at the library months ago.

Nonetheless, we are assured that funds are committed to this renovation, and that the County has approved a work order, and that, according to John, "The current timeline is that the improvements would be completed by Summer 2019." We are looking forward to having our own space to display artifacts, photos, and documents that we have collected for over seven years. We are also looking forward to using the outdoor space, now a community park, for creative events. *Editor*

**GRAND OPENING:**

# Safeway To Open New Store Here Wednesday

Safeway Stores Inc. will open its new \$125,000 supermarket at Road 20 and San Pablo Dam Road next Wednesday, Oct. 15, store manager Robert L. Griffin, announced this week.

Griffin reported that the 37 employees of the new store have been busy this week stocking the shelves and marking the sale prices for the big opening. "We will be ready Wednesday to serve the people of El Sobrante and surrounding areas," Griffin said.

The store manager said of the 37 employees, only seven are new employees, and they have been trained in the Safeway school in Oakland. The department

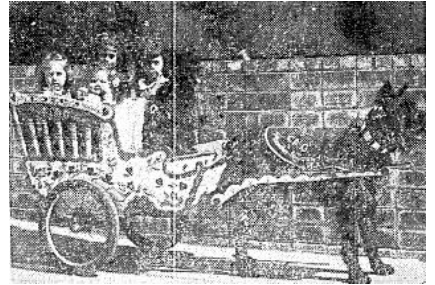
managers assigned to the El Sobrante store are Bob Allison of Walnut Creek, assistant manager; David Sallee of Richmond, produce manager; and Edward Fitzgerald of Richmond, meat department manager.

Griffin stated that the store has seven of the latest type checking stands ready for operation Wednesday. There will also be a grocery sacker for each of the stands.

Construction of the supermarket began last March and was built by the Van Bokkelen-Cole Company of Oakland. The building contains 16,000 square feet of floor space and the parking area will accommodate 150 cars.

In October, 1958, Safeway opened a brand-new store, at the site of the current Walgreen's, near the intersection of the Dam Road and El Portal. This was just one more indication of the growing importance of our community.

The event was marked with sales and special events, including, "For the Kiddies," a "Calo Dog Cart" which, for two days, was available to haul little children around the parking lot.



**at your big new El Sobrante Safeway!**

SSW FINE FOODS		SAFEGWAY DAIRY FAVORITES	
Red Kidney Beans	15¢	Lucerne Cottage Cheese	29¢
Barbecue Beans	21¢	Lucerne Half & Half	30¢
Oven Baked Beans	30¢	Nonfat Skim Milk	35¢
Brown Bread	27¢	Lucerne Sour Cream	29¢
Medium Size Peas	23¢	Lucerne Buttermilk	35¢

**YOUR NEW EL SOBRANTE SAFEGWAY**  
 Located at 3630 SAN PABLO DAM ROAD



In a few short years, El Sobrante would boast a total of 6 supermarkets: Safeway, LoRay, 7-Oaks, Fry's, Lucky, and the Calico Market (now Central Market). Today, only the Central Market, at the corner of Appian Way and Santa Rita Road, remains.

**GRAND OPENING ...**  
**BANDUCCI'S CHEVRON SERVICE**  
 5329 DAM ROAD — EL SOBRANTE

<p><b>GIFTS!</b></p> <p>FREE! San Francisco Giants baseball caps given with purchase of 10 gallons of gas.</p>	<p>Complete modern up-to-date lubrication facilities.</p> <p><b>Chevron Products</b></p> <p>Complete Line of Batteries and Atlas tires Accessories</p>	<p><b>FREE!</b></p> <p>Blue chip stamps with each purchase.</p> <p>Balloons and soda pop for everyone.</p>
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**AUTOGRAPHED S.F. GIANTS BASEBALLS TO BE AWARDED**

Another grand opening took place a few miles east, near Ed's Tavern. The Banducci family decided to upgrade their auto service operation, which had not been remodeled for at least 20 years. Times had changed since the picture (following page) was taken around 1940. The station still sold gas refined by the same company (but now called Chevron) but dispensed that gas from 4 modern pumps, rather than the single glass-cylinder type that can be seen

just below the word  
“oil” in this photo.

The opening was suitably festive, with free soda pop and balloons, free SF Giants baseball caps (with gas purchase), and baseballs autographed by members of the Giants team as prizes.

The 1940 photo is courtesy of Ed Campbell, El Sobrante pioneer, and owner of the



Oldsmobile in front of Ed,s. The car next to the gas pump appears to be a late 1930s Chevrolet.



A GRAND OPENING is set for Saturday at the new Banducci Chevron Service Station pictured above at 5329 Dam Road. Giant Baseball caps, autographed baseballs, ballons and soda pop will be given away at the opening. Pictured in the insert are, left

to right, Joe Vierra, Mrs. Banducci's son-in-law who will manage the station, Mrs. Ed Banducci, Sr., Ed Banducci, Jr., and Johnny Banducci. The station was designed by Ed Banducci, Sr., who passed away recently. Photo by Jerner.

There is still a gas station at this site, but it is not a Chevron station and the business is no longer owned or run by members of the Banducci family.

## Meet The New Board Members



**Roxanne  
Miravalle**

Growing up in San Pablo, I have lived in the Bay Area all my life.

I attended Catholic schools locally; an elementary school in San Pablo, and a

high school in Berkeley.

I became interested in our local history not too long ago and started researching Bay Area history, creating a Facebook group to share my findings; it has now become my obsession. Doing genealogical family tree research is another one of my hobbies, which I incorporate into my research of local history.

Aside from all the research, I also have a creative side. I design and create greeting cards, along with my other scrapbooking hobbies and dabble in making jewelry as well. Since retiring in 2014, I have all the time in the world now to create and research.

Becoming a member of the El Sobrante Historical Society is a dream come true. I am now setting my sites on becoming a Board member of the California Historical Society. Oh, the stories I could tell!

### **Emil Munkres**

Rancho San Pablo native. Grew up on Dam Road near La Honda. Went to Sheldon and Crespi, graduating from De Anza in '81.

Have always been a big fan of finding out more about anything to do with local history in West Contra Costa and especially all aspects of early El Sobrante. The more obscure, the better!

*The Leftovers* is published quarterly. Articles for publication are encouraged, as are comments. See e-mail address below.

*The El Sobrante Historical Society is a formal nonprofit organization, and donations may be tax-deductible. We are dedicated to the preservation and display of the history of the community of El Sobrante. We depend on our members and local residents for the information, artifacts, and photographs that make up the society's collection. Become a member and help out! It's free and simple. Just visit the website, at [eshist.org](http://eshist.org).*

Visit us on **Facebook**.

### **Mission Statement**

*To promote the awareness and appreciation of El Sobrante Valley history through preservation and education, and chronicling of the community's heritage for current and future generations.*

### **ESHS Board of Directors**

**Donald Bastin:** President, Newsletter Editor, Historical Researcher and writer.

**Maurice Abraham:** Vice-President Administrator, Facebook Page; Historical Researcher and writer.

**Steve James:** Treasurer; Membership and Communication Secretary; Researcher/writer.

**Lyle Miller:** Secretary; Community Liaison; Researcher/writer.

**Roxanne Miravalle:** Director, Historian and Writer; Genealogist

**Emil Munkres:** Director, Historian.

Visit us on-line at: [www.eshist.org](http://www.eshist.org)  
Questions, Comments, and other communication? Send to:  
[ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM)