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THE LEFTOVERS

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2022 Stroll: Windy with rain squalls, but people came
And the Parade went on.

Editor



The rain was not steady; it came in fits and starts, accompanied with violent gusts. Some vendors and presenters packed up and left early, but most stayed on. The strollers were not daunted. They came at least in their usual numbers, and perhaps there were more than usual. Most everyone seemed happy just to see the Stroll again. Absent for two years, we were all ready to get back to whatever is normal these days. Of course the weather was not “normal.” I have been at most of the Strolls since they began in 1994, and the weather was always predictable: hot and windy. To be honest, the rain squalls were a challenge, but we soldiered on until the late afternoon, wrapping things up during the last squall, but largely because the crowds were thinning out.

We were joined in our booth by our treasurer, Steve James, Roxy Miravalle, our VP, and volunteer, Clementina Diaz. Here's what Steve had to say:



ESHS booth at the Stroll. Clem Diaz behind the table

We were excited to get back to normal with our booth at the El Sobrante Stroll. Since the pandemic we have had significant growth in our ES Historical



Beautiful dancing gray, with an impossible mane

Society. Our museum was opened and there were many new donations to be shared. At our Board meeting we planned our booth set up and listed items to bring. Then the weather watch began. Oh Lord, the satellite weather map showed a large storm coming our way. It's not unusual to get a sprinkle in September but this looked much bigger than that. Will they cancel?



Richmond High School Marching Band

We continued to watch the storm tracker. The stroll was on. Don Bastin and I set up our shade/rain tent and anchored down the corners. Most of our paper and books were put away only leaving out one sample. There would be a slight rain then the wind would pick up, then a downpour, then a break. This pattern repeated itself all day and yet the ES faithful still came out. The parade

was delayed but took place, high school bands, local groups, and the ever-popular horsemen. We were surprised by how many people did venture out on such a stormy day. We made some new friends and greeted many old ones. All in all, it was a good day.

To view videos of the parade, visit our website at:
<https://www.elsobranthehistoricalsociety.com/events>

Videos courtesy of Steven James.

See you at the Stroll in September, 2023!



De Anza High School Cheerleaders, suitably dressed for the rain



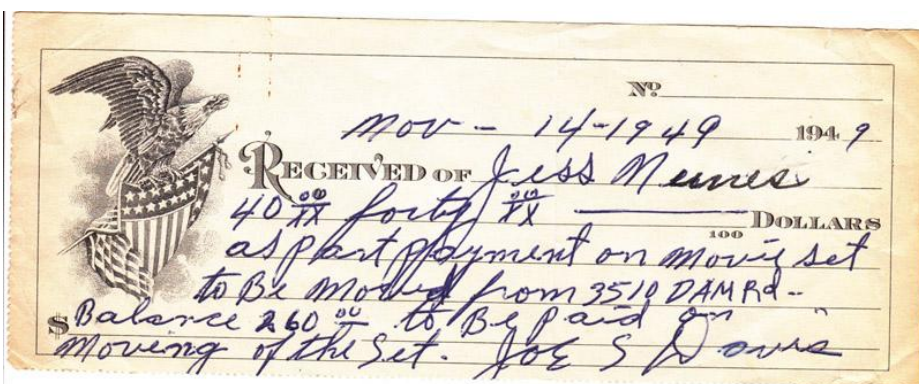
Unraveling the Mystery of the movie “Saddle Tramp”

Donald Bastin

On page 56 of our book on the history of El Sobrante (Arcadia Press, 2012), we show a photo of a movie set, apparently in the area now occupied by the Raley’s shopping center, which we were led to understand, appeared in the movie “Saddle Tramp,” released in July, 1950. The movie starred Joel McCrea, a well-known actor, and the cast included many other notable actors of the time, including John McIntire and Ed Begley.

The owner of the photo, Doraleen Nunes Andrade,

generously allowed us to scan the image, and use it in our book. We also were granted permission to scan a receipt for the purchase of the movie set by her father, Jess Nunes, in 1949, after filming had been completed. According to Doraleen Nunes, Jess bought the buildings and re-assembled them on their cattle ranch, off Castro Ranch Road.



Naturally enough, we wanted to view the movie ourselves, to see the movie set and see if we could identify any other El Sobrante sites. So Maury Abraham purchased a copy, and we watched it. And we watched it again. And then again. Slowly we began to realize that we could recognize nothing at all. Nothing in the film was familiar. While there was a small western town

pictured in the movie, it was clearly not the set that appears in the photo above. So what was going on? Clearly there was a movie made here. We had proof, in the form of the photo of the movie set and the receipt for the sale of that set, which states that it is “part payment on movie set.” And we had Doraleen’s story about how her father had moved the set onto their property and set up the structures for their use (some are allegedly still there). Perhaps it was a different movie. But then a movie titled “Saddle Tramp” was made and did premiere in mid-1950, which goes along with our record, which indicates that a movie (a western) was made here and appears to have been completed late in 1949.

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS REQUEST PREVIEW OF MOVIE FILMED HERE

"Saddle Tramp", a western movie thriller filmed in color and starring local residents was completed here last week, according to Charlie Moore, producer and director.

A group, enlisted by Moore and aided by Andy Yandell, started shooting the movie October 3. Sets of the model frontier town were constructed behind the Trocadero Quizzo, and the scenes of ranch life, rodeos, and cattle rustling were filmed at the Pinole Valley Ranch of Dr. M. L. Fernandez.

Moore said that they had more trouble with the noise of airplanes and trains than anything else in making the movie. He received wonderful cooperation from the actors who are all rodeo hands and have lived the kind of life they portray in the movie. The scenes of rodeos are the "real thing", and there is nothing bogus about this film.

He further contended that the movie will now be sent to Hollywood where Metro Goldwyn Mayer, International, and Warner Brothers have all requested an interview.

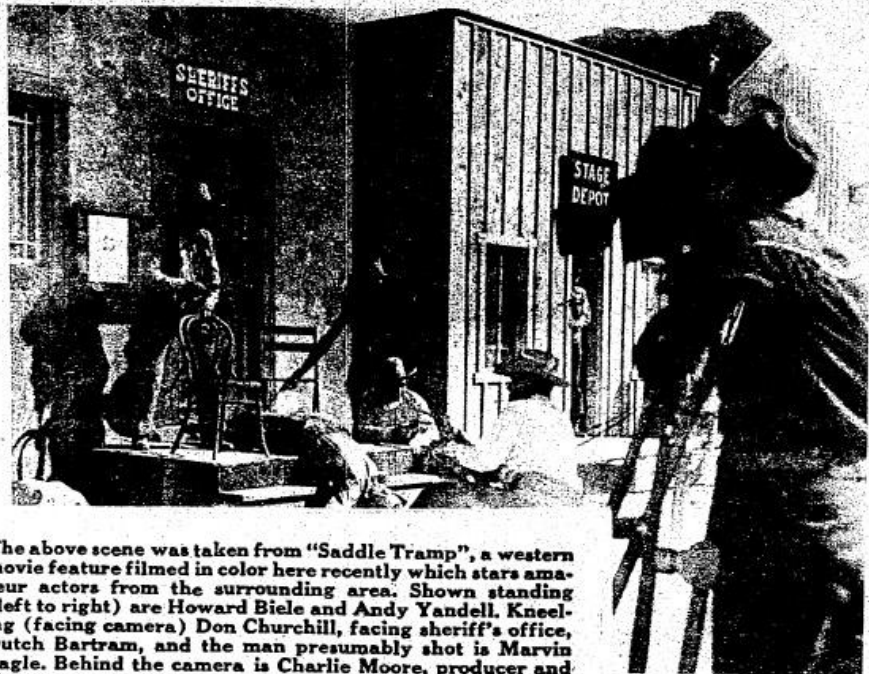
Starring in "Saddle Tramp" are: Andy Yandell, who according to Moore, will crash the Hollywood Westerns when the film is interviewed by name companies. Don Churchill, who plays a saddle tramp in the beginning of the movie which the film was named after, Ginger Churchill and Jim Gile.

Co-starring in the movie are: Howard Biele, of El Sobrante; Hazel Hutson, Richmond; Wilma Yandell, El Sobrante; Benny Brown of Richmond; Dutch Bartram, El Cerrito; Marvin Eagle, Richmond; Kenneth Flagg, El Sobrante; Jess Nunes Sr. and Jess Nunes Jr. of Pinole Valley; Frank Santos, El Sobrante; Manuel Avilla, El Cerrito and Roy Standiford of San Pablo.

So what were we missing?

It was a mystery. In the end we just assumed that, whatever footage was taken in our area was not used, for whatever reason, in the final print. These things no doubt happen. However, recently we have come into information that completely changes this assumption.

Our archives contain a fairly complete record of the local El Sobrante newspaper, the *Herald*. This was a weekly paper, and was printed from around 1947 to 1972. Our records do not contain the first two or three years, and begin in mid 1949. Our records are digital, but not searchable, so we have to carefully review each issue and page to find something we might be looking for. Strange to say, we had not turned to the *Herald* for information about this movie until just recently. But a brief search, using the date of the receipt as a benchmark, revealed the information at left and below.



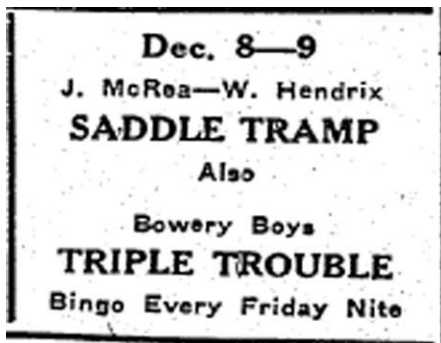
The above scene was taken from "Saddle Tramp", a western movie feature filmed in color here recently which stars amateur actors from the surrounding area. Shown standing (left to right) are Howard Biele and Andy Yandell. Kneeling (facing camera) Don Churchill, facing sheriff's office, Dutch Bartram, and the man presumably shot is Marvin Eagle. Behind the camera is Charlie Moore, producer and director of the film.

There it is. There was a movie called "Saddle Tramp" And it was filmed right here in El Sobrante. It's just not the film that came out of Hollywood in July of 1950. It is a totally local production, with local actors (Jess Nunes, who bought the set, is in it). Howard Biele was the local constable. There are also actors from Richmond, San Pablo and El Cerrito. The producer/director is identified as Charlie Moore, who is not the producer of the Hollywood film.

So we are presented with a new mystery. What happened to the original film, and what were the makers of this film expecting from the Hollywood producers? Normally, if one wants to have a film made in Hollywood, he or she writes a script and, if it is good enough or sensational enough, it may get made. But here we have local folks, raising money, building sets, buying cameras and all the other things that movie-making requires, and hiring actors, in order to make a complete movie, with the intention of---what?

It is not clear from the article what the producer had in mind. The movie was to be “sent to Hollywood where Metro Goldwyn Mayer . . . and Warner Brothers have all requested an interview.” Interview for what? Did Moore expect that one of these companies would buy the film? Moore also states that his main star, Andy Yandell, “will crash the Hollywood Westerns when the film is interviewed by name companies.” What does this mean?

In any case, a Hollywood version of this film was made, but by Universal Pictures, and not MGM or Warner Brothers. We can therefore assume that the film was sent to Hollywood, was reviewed, and, apparently, was liked well enough for a Hollywood version to be made, with actors whose names would be familiar with the movie-going audience. Perhaps Moore was paid for the rights to do this, so also the cost of production might have been covered. If that happened, it may be likely that the original, *El Sobrante* version was part of the deal and was kept by Universal. Or perhaps Moore kept a copy for himself and it is still lying around somewhere. Personally, I would love to see that movie.



In the Herald edition that came out on November 30, 1950, the movie section indicated that Hollywood version of “Saddle Tramp” was part of the line-up, and would be shown on December 8th and 9th. There is nothing in the paper in reference to the fact that a local version of this story was made, nor did a search of several subsequent issues reveal any relevant comments. So the final fate of our local movie remains a mystery.

Another Mystery

The image at right was sent to us by our board member and treasurer, Steve James. Steve is also a board member and the treasurer of the Contra Costa County Historical Society, and while at their History Center in Martinez he noticed this photo that was recently added to their collection. It shows a young woman with a ribbon identifying her as “Miss El Sobrante 1954.” We were not aware of any “Miss El Sobrante” contests at this time, and were naturally curious. On the back, the man is identified as Max Baer, the famous boxer. This was also curious; what was Max Baer doing in El Sobrante?



We initially dismissed the photo as likely referring to the “other” El Sobrante which is situated in southern California. We turned to our other board members who chimed in with opinions, but it was Roxy, as usual, who cleared up much of the mystery.

Turns out there were annual beauty contests for a “Miss Contra Costa County” put on by an organization called the “Contra Costa County Development Association.” According to an article in the Contra Costa Times, dated May 20, 1954, a minimum of 12 entrants were vying for the title, and two of these entrants had already won “community” beauty contests, as indicated in the clipping above, right. So we now know that there was a beauty contest in our own El Sobrante in 1954, and that the winner was Loretta Marziano, age 16, who lived on Road 20 (now El Portal). Further investigation by Roxy showed that Loretta was again a contestant in the 1955 Miss Contra Costa County contest. Interestingly, the second place winner in 1955 was another El Sobrante girl, Judy McCoy.

Entrants who have won 1954 community beauty contests are Nora Lee Bleicher, 16, 1929 Lincoln Avenue, Richmond, recently chosen as Miss Richmond 1954, a high school student; and Loretta Marziano, 16, 5060 Road 20, El Sobrante, winner of the 1954 Miss El Sobrante contest, also a high school student.

So what about Max Baer? Lyle Miller kicked off this conversation by pointing out that the Baer family had roots in the Bay Area, settling for a long while in Livermore, where Max grew to manhood on his father’s ranch. Roxy added that Max was still in the area, in San Leandro, in 1937, when he married. It is not clear why Max was involved with the El Sobrante beauty contest, but it is clear that he had deep connections to the local area; according to Roxy, his parents are buried in Mountain View Cemetery, in Oakland. In any case, like the mystery of our movie, this mystery is partially solved.

Come On By and Visit Your El Sobrante History Center!

Emil Munkres



Our little Museum inside the El Sobrante History Center behind the Library has been up and running for the past year and a half now. We are open every Saturday from 10am to 4pm. Attendance has been good and seems to be steadily growing.

We get all types of visitors - families, library patrons, dog-walkers and native plant people who come to see the beautiful gardens. We see lots of new neighbors who have just recently moved to the area, as well as many folks who've lived here most or all of their lives. Visitors stay anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours. We have something for everyone! And it's Free. We're also open for private tours during the week - just send us an email. My good friend Jeanne Gibson recently asked if we could arrange a personal tour for her and a few of her friends. Jeanne worked as a wartime welder during World War II and has lived in El Sobrante for over 50 years. She is now a resident of the Truewood-Pinole senior community (formerly Bay Park) on Appian Way. I called the programs director at Truewood, Edith Simmons-Body, and we set up a Friday morning field-trip.

What a great visit! Jeanne, Edith and a dozen more showed up. Donald Bastin came by. The History Center Museum has quite a few memory-sparking items and artifacts, and everyone had stories to tell. We went at it for a good two hours and a good time was had by all. Thanks for stopping by!



New Acquisitions

We have been very fortunate to recently receive several collections of local artifacts, donated by long-term residents of El Sobrante.

The collections on this page were donated by David Stelle, retired teacher, neighbor and fellow graduate of De Anza High School, 1961.

At the top of this display are 7 obsidian “points” or “blades” found by David many years ago in disturbed ground along the Pinole shoreline. David had worked on digs with local professor George Coles and was familiar with local Native artifacts. The obsidian pieces on the bottom row are perhaps “scrapers,” which typically would have been used to clean hair or fur from animal hide. The collection also includes three bone “awls,” which would have been used to make holes in hide or vegetable matter, for making garments (actually, the bone on the right may not be an awl, as the tip has been broken off). The three large non-obsidian points in the middle, it should be noted, are not part of Dave’s donation, but were donated earlier by Kimberly Mattox, who lived in El Sobrante as a girl and found these pieces in her yard.

David’s donation is a significant addition to our Native American collection. We now have pieces of obsidian, which we lacked, and also non-stone pieces (bone awls).

David’s second donation dates to the early 1960s, and consists of radiological detection devices that were removed from Pinole Middle School sometime early in this century.



The early 1960s were the height of the Cold War, when the threat of nuclear attack (principally from the Soviet Union) was perceived as very real. Schools around the country were expected to develop local plans to deal with and survive such an attack. These instruments were distributed to schools all over the country by the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, which no longer exists. To view a 1961 Civil Defense schools video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnEsfEfYb8g>

Volunteer Fire Department Badges



Until now, the only badges we had from the old El Sobrante volunteer fire department was the one attached to their dog, Duke. Now we have these very nice examples, donated by Gerald Lehmkuhl. Those of you familiar with our

history will recognize the Lehmkuhl name; the Lehmkuhls were central to the community's development. The top badge was awarded to his father, Melvin George Lehmkuhl on the occasion of his retirement, in 1963. The silver badge belonged to his grandfather, George, who began volunteering in the late 1930s.

Gerald also served as a volunteer firefighter, from 1969 until 1983. At that time the local volunteer department was dissolved and the County took over the operation of the local fire department.

Gerald reports that the men were paid \$6 every time they were called out to a fire, day or night, and \$3 for every hour they were on duty. They were paid twice a year. This rate of pay never changed during the time that Gerald served.



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 elsobranthehistoricalsociety.com.

Visit us on **Facebook**:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ElSobranteHistoricalSociety/>

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; Historical Researcher and writer. Newsletter editor.

Roxanne Miravalle: Vice-President; Historian and Writer; Genealogist.

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

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

Emil Munkres: Director; Historian.

Visit us on-line at:

www.elsobranthehistoricalsociety.com

Questions, Comments, and other communication? Send to:
ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM