

Published by the El Sobrante Historical Society

THE LEFTOVERS

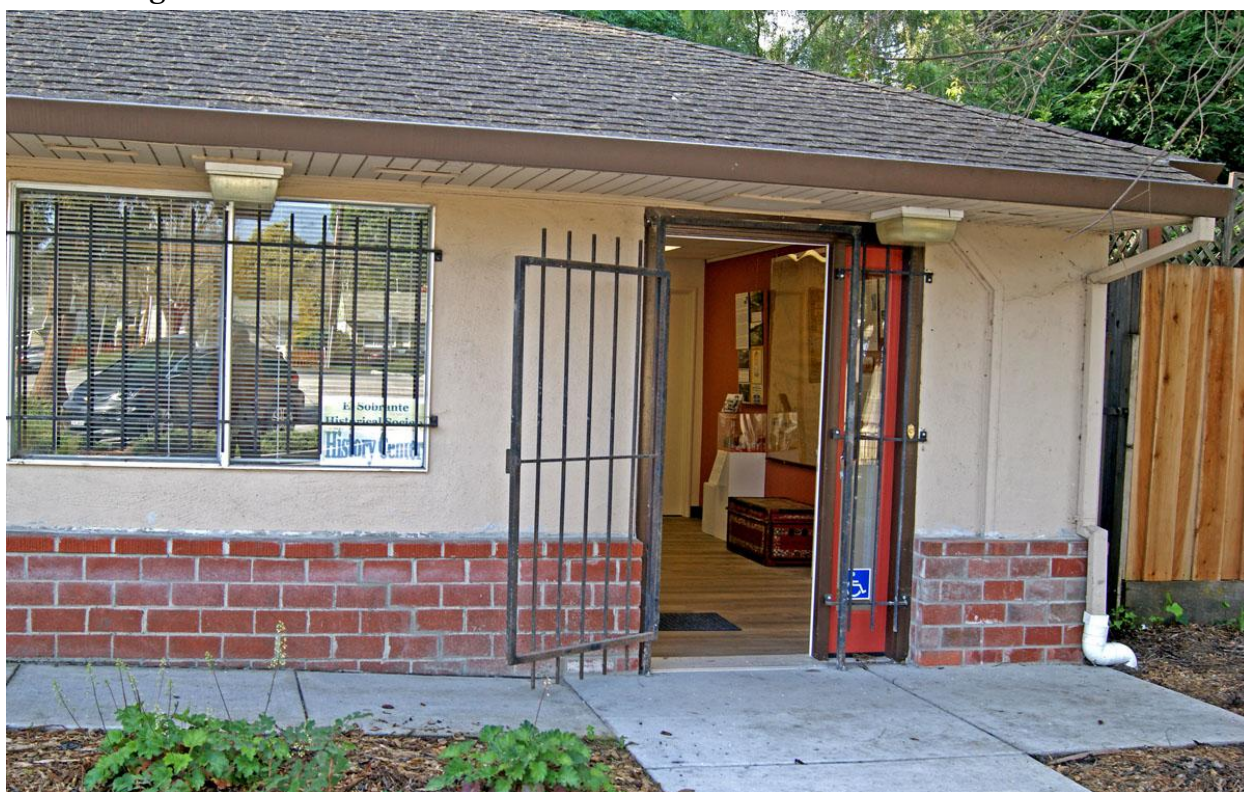
Issue #34

Spring 2020

Sneak Preview!

Donald Bastin

As you are all aware, we are in the midst of a world-wide pandemic, which has altered our lives and plans in ways we could not have foreseen. This is an historic moment, and as history buffs, we know that, in time, this moment will be written about and argued over and analyzed from a hundred different perspectives. All well and good. But for now we have to make the best of the situation. We cannot meet in large groups and hold events and do all the things we had been planning on doing as Spring gradually drifts into Summer. One thing our historical society had planned on doing was opening our new History Center, in the newly refurbished Fahden House. April 4 was our target date. That was blown out of the water, of course. We now have a new tentative date for the opening: June 6. Non-essential activities are currently shut down till May 3rd, but we have no idea that this date will hold. Therefore, we have pushed out the date another month. Hopefully, we will not have to re-schedule again.



In the meantime, we can offer you a sneak preview of our new History Center.

Here we are looking at the entrance to the HC, located on the right (west) side

of the building. As you walk in, you will notice that the displays are arranged in a more-or-less chronological pattern. Thus, the first display deals with the Native Americans that once lived and moved in the area, stopping for long periods along the banks of San Pablo Creek. We have artifacts that we know were found only about a quarter of a mile from our Center, generously donated to us by

the owner of the land on which they were found. We also know a good deal more about the site, as it was closely investigated by a team of researchers from the University of California in 1950.

Moving on, we encounter the “Rancho” period display, dedicated to the brief period of the Californios and the Rancho El Sobrante. Here we see the centerpiece of our Rancho display, an original Rancho El Sobrante map. Dated 1909, it was the last of a series of El Sobrante Rancho maps, showing the major features of the grant, and the landowners deemed to have legitimate claim to their parcels. As you can see, this is a very large map, and as it is quite fragile, it was a challenge to properly and safely display. It is an outstanding addition to our collection and we sincerely thank the donor, Richard Oliver, for passing it on to us.



Below the Rancho map is a very old “matrimonial” trunk, of Mexican-Spanish design, which has been placed with us on long-term loan from the Contra Costa County Historical Society. Identified as the “Alice Marsh Trunk”, it is associated with the family of John Marsh (Alice was his granddaughter), who was the original American settler in Contra Costa County and who bought the Rancho Los Meganos (in the eastern part of the County) in 1838. The exact provenance of the trunk is uncertain, but it certainly could belong to the early Rancho period (before 1850) and is a wonderful addition to our display. Also on display are three adobe bricks, from the Victor Castro Adobe which was built on land now occupied by the El Cerrito Plaza in the late 1830s. The largest and most complete brick was donated to us by the El Cerrito Historical Society while the two smaller bricks were placed with us on long-term loan by the San Pablo Historical Society.

Moving on, we enter the long period leading up to and including the World War II years. The Rancho was broken up into ranches, usually of fewer than 500 acres, on which cattle and horses roamed and which also supported numerous dairies and poultry farms. The most well-known of the local dairies was the Richmond Farm Creamery, which operated from 1899 until 1955, and which was owned by the Skow family. In the picture above, we can see rare milk bottles from this dairy. It was during this period too, that the San Pablo Dam was constructed, which laid the foundation for the later growth of the El Sobrante community. During the 1930s, young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps lived and worked around the reservoir, and images of this time are also on display. Also on display is a map of the El Sobrante Fire Protection District, which was created in 1944. With the creation of this district, the community of El Sobrante finally took shape. Its boundaries still today define the community that we know.

The post-war years are the subject of the next display. By 1950, the population had expanded to around 7,000, and continued rapid growth was confidently predicted. Many of the businesses and buildings that populate the downtown area are still in existence. The Park Theatre was built in 1949

and the building that houses the Kaliente Restaurant was built in 1946. John Oliver took over a building in 1943 and converted it into a hardware store and gas station. The hardware store is still operated by the Oliver family. And new housing developments went in to accommodate the influx of families. Earl “Flat-top” Smith built his small flat-roofed (but affordable) homes just off the Dam Road: Rancho Vista, just west of the intersection with El Portal, and Canyon Park, just east of the intersection with Clark Road.



In 1950, El Sobrante got its own Foster’s Freeze outlet. It was located in between the Park Theatre and the Park Rexall Pharmacy (the business later moved to the location now known as the El Trompudo Restaurant). Although we don’t know for certain, this sign may be from that early Foster’s Freeze outlet, as it was found locally, is

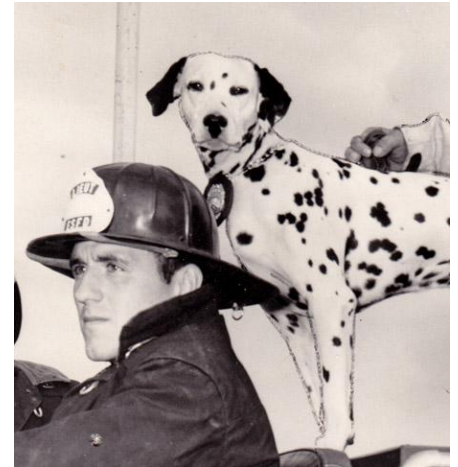
quite rare, and clearly dates to around 1950, as the offerings are only ice-cream related; only later did Foster’s Freeze offer food items such as burgers and fries.

The El Sobrante Fire Department got a modern fire station in 1949, and during the 1950s developed a reputation as a sophisticated and forward-looking organization. But the department had a taste for history also, and in the early 1950s acquired a Dalmatian puppy that was trained as a fire dog.

“Duke,” as he was named, not only became a favorite of the firemen, but a full-fledged member of the



El Sobrante Fire Department, with his own badge. Duke also was shown in dog shows, taking ribbons and cups. He loved the fire engines and the sirens and the excitement of fire-fighting. Sadly, this led to his end, as he was struck by one of the engines as it was exiting the fire house, and had to be put down.

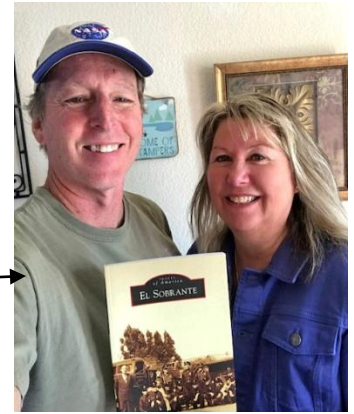


Duke was replaced by his first cousin, and came to be known as Duke II. But he was not the same dog; he showed no enthusiasm for riding in the truck and the noise and confusion only frightened him. So he was quietly retired. According to Asst. Fire Chief Harold Huffman, El Sobrante was the last community in the County to have its own fire dog. In the photo above, we can clearly see the badge hanging around the neck of Duke II.



And now the most amazing part of this story! We have Duke’s badge! This is the **only** El Sobrante Fire Department badge that we have, and it is one of the coolest donations we have ever received. It was donated to us by former El Sobrante resident Jo Ann Ditton (*left*). The badge was in the possession of her late husband, Robert Spriggs, who bred Dalmatians and very possibly ended up

with Duke II when he was “retired.” Jo Ann (who now lives in Florida) found our website online and while reading over one of our newsletters discovered the article we had written some years ago about our famous fire dogs. This brought to mind the badge that her husband had shown to her. She contacted us by email, and with the knowledge that we would be opening our own museum, determined to donate the badge to us. A few months later, we were visited by Jo Ann’s son Bob Spriggs (jr.) and his wife Judy, who were visiting the area from their home in Nevada. Jo Ann had passed along the badge to her son, and Bob passed it along to us. It is now proudly on display in our soon-to-be open History Center!



And here is a photo of the badge! Not. We can’t give too much away. So if you want to see the actual badge, afraid you will have to visit us. Sorry.

We are still putting together our History Center, but the main room, which has been dedicated to the memory of co-founder and late president, Maurice Abraham, is also now the home of much of the memorabilia that we collected from the old De Anza High School (Maury graduated from De Anza in 1960).

Among our most significant and beautiful possessions are these botanical and zoological charts, which were retrieved from one of the science rooms at De Anza.



Had we waited one more day, the doors would have been locked and the charts destroyed. They are quite old, and no doubt had been hanging in the science room since the school opened in 1955. The drawings themselves are even older, probably dating to the late 1920s or 1930s. They are known as “Jurica” charts, as they were the work of Father Hilary Jurica, a Benedictine monk who received a doctorate in biology in 1922. Together with his brother, Edmund, a zoologist, the brothers spent forty years collecting specimens for educational purposes and worked with students to create the Jurica biology charts, still in use today. We have a total of 15 of these charts, which are now on permanent display in our History Center.

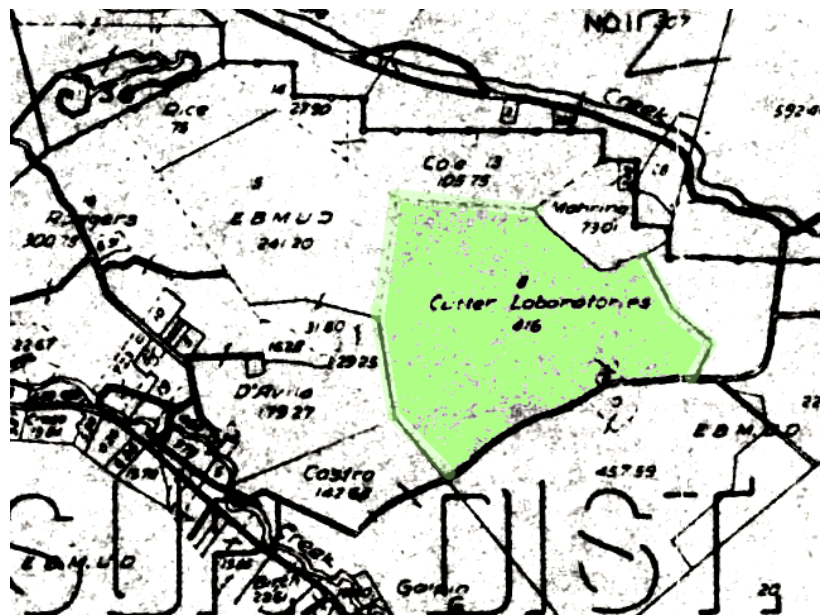
Mark Your Calendar: We are hopeful of opening our History Center on **Saturday, June 6.** We plan to be open from 10 am to 4 pm. As the date approaches we will send out updated information to keep you informed!

Cutter Ranch Laboratory

Roxanne Miraválle

Cutter Laboratories, founded by Edward Ahern Cutter in 1897 and incorporated August 16, 1907 was a family-owned pharmaceutical company located in Berkeley, California. The company was engaged in the manufacture, distribution and sale of human biologicals and pharmaceutical specialties, hospital solutions, human blood products, veterinary biologicals, vaccines and serums totaling approximately 350 items. Cutter's early products included anthrax vaccine, hog cholera (swine fever) virus, and anti-hog cholera serum — and eventually a hog cholera vaccine. The hog cholera vaccine was the first tissue culture vaccine, human or veterinary, ever produced. The company expanded considerably during World War II due to government contracts for blood plasma and penicillin, and Cutter became one of the country's major plasma producers.. The main laboratory plant was located on 5 parcels [20 acres] of land in Berkeley, California and over the years improved with various buildings totaling approximately 286,000 sq. ft. in which manufacturing, research and warehousing operations were conducted.

Cutter Laboratories of Berkeley later purchased ranch property in Contra Costa County along Castro Ranch Road (the exact purchase date is unknown). At the time, a portion of the property was part of the O'Neil family ranch (also known as the Nunes Ranch). Originally, the land was part of the gigantic Sobrante Land Grant given to Juan José Castro from Alta California's Governor Alvarado in 1840. Now, 416 acres of it would be Cutter Ranch Laboratories. The property was maintained as pastureland for horses and cows used in the development of vaccines. The ranch was leased to Frank Lawrence Santos (1901-1959) an experienced rancher and cowboy from San Lorenzo who, as ranch manager, furnished Gonadin serum to the Company. Gonadin was a Cutter Lab patented hormone derived from the serum of pregnant mares to be



Cutter Lab to Sell 416 Acres

EL SOBRANTE, March 10 — Cutter Laboratories of Berkeley will sell 416 acres of ranch land it owns adjacent to Castro Road, north of Sherwood Forest.

Eugene L. Hall, Richmond real estate operator, said Cutter will sell the property to an undisclosed buyer who has placed \$15,000 in escrow toward the purchase.

The price was not announced but Hall said it would be in excess of \$500,000. The land will be used for part of an 814-acre, \$16,000,000 home development previously reported by Hall.

The land was originally purchased to raise horses used in production of various serums, but new methods of developing anti-biotics precluded its use for that purpose, according to Fred Cutter, vice president.

used to stimulate the sex organs of both males and females of all species to their normal function. Blood from the animals was also used to produce tetanus and diphtheria vaccines. This 1938 map of Contra Costa County shows the area now owned by Cutter Laboratory.

In a March 10, 1956 article, seen [here](#), Cutter Labs announced it would sell 416 acres to a developer (Carl Damé Homes) for an undisclosed amount and would use this property for an 814-acre home development proposed to cost \$16,000,000. The parcel was later annexed to Richmond. The Richmond city council amended their general plan to allow for the

Richmond

The Richmond City Council has voted 7-0 to revise the city's general plan to allow the elimination of about 250 acres in open space and set the stage for construction of 430 Carriage Hills homes in the soon-to-be-annexed Cutter Ranch area.

Before council action last week, several speakers including Barbara Vincent of Save San Francisco Bay Association objected, saying that the ridgeland area should continue as open space. Councilmen, however, pointed out that the construction project means local jobs and the new homes would improve the city's image.

El Sobrante

One of the first steps toward the proposed construction of 430 single-family homes on the 388-acre former Cutter Ranch off Castro Ranch Road here was taken this week.

The West Contra Costa Sanitary District board Tuesday night voted to ask the county Local Agency Formation Commission to permit annexation of the ranch to the district to allow sewer hookups to home lots there.

The ranch now is owned by the Dame Construction Co., of San Ramon, which has built many homes in southern Contra Costa County and elsewhere.

new development in December 1980. Only low-lying portions of the Cutter Ranch were developed for housing, however, as the developer worked out a deal with County authorities to preserve 277 acres of higher-elevation land, home to the very rare Alameda manzanita shrub. This housing development became known as Carriage Hills North and South. The preview of Model Homes began showing in February 1985.

In 1974, the Bayer pharmaceutical company purchased Cutter Laboratories of Berkeley.

Source materials: bayer.com; ebparks.org; newspapers.com; archive.org; ancestry.com

History of the Kaliente Restaurant Building

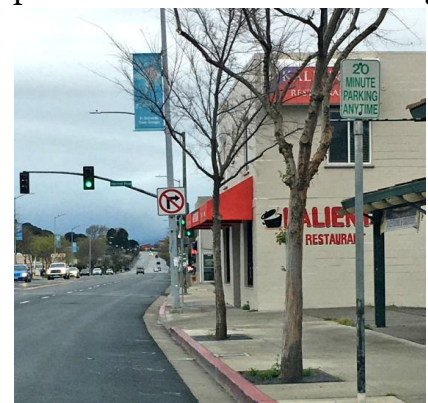
Lyle Miller



corner of the building would have been in the way. For a moment the planners considered removing some of the blocks until they saw how solid the construction was. They decided to “bend” the road slightly instead. During the construction of their new home, Norma remembers her mother cooking a large pot of chili beans on a camp stove for the family and fond memories of her mother’s homemade popcorn balls and ice cream.

When James Wells purchased the property in the 1940s there was a sloping hill on a portion of the land bordered by San Pablo creek & the Dam rd. Arriving home one day with 6 shovels and a couple of wheel barrows, he put the kids to work digging up the hill to level

Recently, I was delighted to meet with Norma Brumbelow, (Wells). Norma grew up at 3803 San Pablo Dam Rd. in a cement block building that her father James built in 1946 with the help of his 7 children. The girls had the task of dousing the blocks in water and carrying them to their father and 2 brothers who mortared them in place. Reinforced with rebar and filled with cement, Norma is certain her Dad’s building isn’t going anywhere, In fact she says when the Dam Road was widened in the early 1950s, the south-west



The “Bend” in the road

the property. When that was completed, the kids cleared the weeds & brush leading down to the creek creating a safe area for the kids to play and picnic away from the busy road.

Norma worked at the Safeway warehouse in Richmond for a few years as a produce inspector and then took a job as a machinist on Canal St. for the next 37 years. One of Norma's sisters married the manager of the Park theatre in 1952, unfortunately, 3 months later the sister fell ill with pneumonia and passed away.



The building at 3803 Dam rd. has had many tenants, from the start, the family used the upper floor as their residence while the lower half was occupied for a short time by Acme



Moving & Storage, aka (Hayhurst moving & storage co.) Then it was a church, (no dates available). In 1953 it was a paint store, selling Pittsburgh Paints. In 1958 it housed Jim's Trading Post, selling sporting goods, guns and men's clothing. Through the '60s and into the 1980s it was an auto parts store (various owners) and today is where Kaliente Restaurant is located.

In about 1962, the Wells family sold the property at 3803 Dam Road and relocated to a remote part of Idaho. At present, 3 siblings remain of the Wells family, all sisters, the eldest being 93, the youngest 70 and Norma who is 83 years young.



New Acquisitions:

In addition to the wonderful El Sobrante Fire Department badge and the "Alice Marsh" trunk, we have added many other items to our collection.

1959 Aerial Map of El Sobrante

This original aerial map, measuring over 9 square feet, vividly displays the dramatic changes that took place in El Sobrante in the mid-1950s. It was donated by Troy Wilson, son of John Wilson, who, along with designer Bob Chang, designed the original ES library building and its upgrade in 1975.



Richmond Union High School Tile



This large, heavy tile once graced the “portal” of the old Richmond Union High School, which served the high school students of Richmond for over 40 years, until it was torn down in 1970. We have 3 additional pieces of the portal, but this piece is the most eye-catching. If you are wondering why we have a piece of Richmond history in our collection, it should be remembered that half of our town lies within the city limits of Richmond, and many of our citizens no doubt attended the old RUHS. *Donated by Donald Bastin*

The following items were donated by the Richmond Museum of History:

El Sobrante Herald newspaper, May 16, 1968. This is a 20th anniversary edition of the Herald, and consists of many articles of historical interest.

Polk’s Directory, 1958. We now have 3 of these valuable directories, which are a great source of personal and business information.

Map of the East Bay. This map, published in the late 1920s or early 1930s, by the Bekins Moving Company, is a valuable addition to our local map collection.

Canyon Oaks/Forest Green Collection:

Donated by Will Plutte (yes, he is related to the former principal of the old De Anza High School), this is a very detailed collection of documents relating to the potential development of land above Clark Road, including several EIRs. Mostly dating to 2005 to 2007.

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 elsobrantehistoricalsociety.com.

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.

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Donald Bastin: President; Historical Researcher and writer. Newsletter editor.

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Visit us on-line at:

www.elsobrantehistoricalsociety.com

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