

El Toro Memorial Park - Historic Walk

A Brief History

The historic El Toro Cemetery began as an enterprise of the El Toro Land and Water Company in 1896. The company, which was formed to build wells and distribute irrigated water for the community, enticed prospective buyers to purchase stock in the company by selling cemetery plots for one dollar each to every stockholder.

The first burial in the El Toro Cemetery was a 20-year-old woman named Maude Simmons, a member of the DeLong family of El Toro.

By 1923, the cemetery had fallen into neglect. A community play, “The Lion and the Mouse,” raised funds to clear the weeds away.

In 1926, the people of California requested the enactment of legislation to create cemetery districts throughout the state, and in 1927, El Toro Cemetery was sold to Orange County Cemetery District #1 for \$10.00.

The cemetery name was officially changed to the El Toro Memorial Park in 1983. In 1985, District #1, along with the two other cemetery districts, were combined to create the Orange County Cemetery District.

Our Mission

The Orange County Cemetery District manages and maintains Orange County’s public cemeteries in a manner that preserves their beauty, dignity and historical and cultural values, and offers affordable interment service for County residents.

Take a Walk through Time

The beautiful grounds of El Toro Memorial Park, with its peaceful rolling hills and tree lined lanes, is not only a tranquil place for families to remember the lives of departed loved ones, it is also a treasure trove of local history. Interred on the grounds are a host of notable personalities who, each in their own way, helped to shape this community and make it what it is today.

We invite you to stroll the grounds on a specially designed walk that takes you to the gravesites of these unique individuals. The attached maps will help you navigate the grounds. Begin your walk at the tip of Old Section as shown on the park-wide map. The numbers 1 through 30 highlighted in red show you the general location of each gravesite and correspond to the listings in this brochure.

We hope you enjoy your walk through time!

1. Acuna Family Members (OS-Block 28) and (SE-Block 22B)
The Orange County family lived in the sobrante area between Rancho Niguel and Rancho San Joaquin. The word “sobrante” refers to land not part of a land grant. Historians Merle and Mabel Ramsey speculated that Laguna Beach was not part of a land grant because this family and that of Ysidoro Olivaries lived there. Family members buried here are Charles, Pete, Maria, Joe A., Joe M., Grace Marie, Antonio and Maurico.

2. Gerliermo William Grijalva (OS-Block 28)
He was born on family land where the Prado Dam now stands. His family was forced to move when the dam was built. He was a descendent of a member of the Anza Expedition which crossed South Orange County in 1776. He was half Gariellino Indian.

3. Serrano Family Members (SE-Block 22) and (OS-Block 28)
The Alcade (mayor) of Los Angeles in 1799 was Don Francisco Serrano. In return for services rendered by Don Francisco, Mexican Governor Pio Pico awarded his son, Jose Serrano, Rancho Canada de Los Alisos. El Toro Memorial Park, along with the city of Lake Forest and part of the city of Mission Viejo are built on this old rancho. A surviving family adobe can be viewed at Heritage Hill Historical Park. Family members buried here are Andres, Jannie, Francisco, Ruperto and Lola.

4. Anton Carle (OS-Block 28)
As an employee of Dwight Whiting, he planted many of the Eucalyptus trees in El Toro. (They can still be seen along Ridge Route and Lake Forest Drive.) Originally 400 acres with 90 varieties of the tree were planted with the hope that the wood could be used for railroad ties, however, the wood was not suitable for that purpose.

5. Delores Salazar (SE-Block 22)
Widely known (despite his name) as one of the strongest and shrewdest men around. He was known as “Pile Row Charley” for his uncanny ability to be in just the right position to get the “plum” assignments during the work of the bean harvesting.

6. Carl Juul (SE-Block 22)
An immigrant from Denmark who was known as the “Hermit of the Tin Mine.” For 19 years he acted as a guard and caretaker of the Trabuco Tin Mine which was a very lonely job. During heavy rains when the roads turned to mud, he was “holed in.” One day in 1944, he had an appendicitis attack. In tremendous pain, he hiked four miles to the Trabuco Post Office for help. Friends aided him as best they could and then he was taken to Los Angeles for an operation. He did not recover.

7. N. C. White (SE-Block 22)
This name appears as “A. C. White” in Clara Mason Fox’s book, A History of El Toro. Born in New York, he was a carpenter who helped build several local homes. He built what were known as the “homes on the knolls” and on the shores of Lake El Toro. He worked on homes for the families of Keating, Hoyle, Huddy and Twist.

8. The Glaud H. Rodger Family (SE-Block 22)
They were early settlers in Laguna Canyon. They came to El Toro about 1890. The Rodger family did local hauling and raised barley as their livelihood. Cordie and Ed Rodger worked the tin mines between 1904 and 1906. Ore was brought from Silverado Canyon and was stored in a mine company house at Front and Olive Streets in El Toro until enough had accumulated to fill a railroad car.

9. William Woodhouse (OS-Block 23)
He owned the first automobile in El Toro. Historian Clara Mason Fox described the vehicle in A History of El Toro “as a real ‘gas buggy’... propelled by means of a rope or chain.” He came to El Toro in 1894.

10. Olif Fairchild (OS-Block 23)
He was El Toro’s first railroad station agent and builder of a two-story building that served as a store, post office and hotel. The hotel usually boarded newcomers and railroad section hands. He was born in New York in 1846.

11. The Beck Family (SE-Block 22)
Marie, Annie and Henry Beck all died in November and December of 1899. Historical records indicate that a Beck family had died of “bad water.” It is thought that this is the family of that reference. Official records state the Henry died of typhoid, Mary (his wife) of pneumonia and Annie of tuberculosis. Their son John survived.

12. Joseph Rowse (SE-Block 22)
First man and third person buried at this park. He died on June 23 1896.

13. The John Prothero Family (SE-Block 22)
John Prothero was an immigrant from Wales. He was a local farmer and rancher. Both the El Toro Library and Post Office were built on his family land. Raymond Prothero served for some time on the Board of Trustees for this cemetery.

14. Al (Alvino) and Si (Cyrus) Salazar (SE-Block 22)
They were bachelors who worked in the Whiting family orchards for many years. The two brothers lived alone in the “Glebe” (Parish) House in the olive grove surrounding St. George’s Mission on El Toro Road. Master irrigators, it was believed that they could run water uphill. They were laborers for life, although Al was also considered to be a great baseball player.

15. James and Louisa DeLong (SE-Block 19)
James DeLong was El Toro’s first section foreman. He was in charge of workers who repaired railroad track between Irvine and San Juan Capistrano. He bought the El Toro Store from Olif Fairchild and leased it to several parties. (It burned in 1917.) He married Louisa Simmons in Missouri on September 15, 1885. She died of tuberculosis in May, 1896 and was the second person buried here. Her younger sister, Maude Simmons was the first.

Maude Simmons (SE-Block 19)
A teenager and the first person buried at the park. Records show that she died in June, 1895 but that her burial here was May 20, 1896 (the day her sister was buried here). She was born in Illinois and thought to be the daughter of Henry S. Simmons and Julia Bowler. The family also lived in Missouri.

16. Charles Lyons (SE-Block 19)
Born in Pennsylvania in 1847. He kept a hotel in El Toro and was El Toro’s second railroad station agent following Olif Fairchild. He was an agent for Wells Fargo & Co.

17. The Rosenbaum Family (SE-Block 19)
This family was quite prominent in San Juan Capistrano. Their ranch was in North San Juan Capistrano and bordered Rancho Mission Viejo. They had leaseholds on Rancho Mission Viejo and farmed where Saddleback College now stands. Henry Rosenbaum (the father of Oscar) is credited as being the first person to sell Christmas trees in California when he sold them to miners in San Francisco in 1851.

18. The Reuben Waterman Family

(SE-Block 19)

Mr. Waterman was El Toro's fourth blacksmith. The family lived in the back of the shop and three of his children were born there. He built a barley roller which saved farmers having to take their grain to Irvine to be rolled.

19. Edith Waterman Scott

(SE-Block 19)

She was the daughter of Reuben Waterman. For a time, she worked as the caretaker of the railroad station and lived in an apartment there.

Oscar Scott

(SE-Block 19)

He was the son of El Toro pioneer L. K. Scott, who came to this area in the 1880's. Although he wore very thick glasses, he was an expert marksman and worked as a security guard for the Santa Margarita Ranch and patrolled for the United State Marine Corps Base in El Toro. He was also a Deputy Orange County Sheriff.

20. George Harris

(SE-Block 19)

He came to Aliso Canyon about 1898. He was the County Fire Warden for his district, Assistant Game Warden, Road Boss of El Toro and a member of the Aliso School Board.

21. Cleophas Romero

(SE-Block 20)

Long ago he was hired by local families to dig graves at the cemetery. He would often come at night to dig by moonlight. He had a nickname of "Pi/Pie." Some people say he was called that because he liked pie for dessert.

22. The Whiting Family

(SE-Block 20) and (OS Block 11)

These are members of the Dwight Whiting family. Mr. Whiting developed the community of El Toro in the late 1800's. The Whiting family played a prominent role in El Toro history.

23. Andrew Wesley Thompson

(SE-Block 20)

Mr. Thompson is the cemetery's only known Civil War veteran. As a young man, he ran away from home to enlist in Company M, 2nd Minnesota Cavalry. He operated a trading post at Big Stone Lake, Minnesota, often trading with Sioux Indians. He and a cousin sometimes hunted buffalo for the U.S. government. The meat was used to feed troops nearby. He came to Laguna Canyon about 1876 and helped establish the Mormon Colony there. He was sometimes referred to as a "Mormon Preacher."

24. Milo B. Stevens

(SE-Block 20)

Mr. Stevens owned and operated one of the biggest bean and barley farms in Orange County. The farm was located in Oso Canyon and is now the bottom of Lake Mission Viejo.

Ella Cook Stevens

(SE-Block 20)

The wife of Milo B. Stevens, she was born at what is now known as Cook's Corner in Trabuco Canyon. Milo was born near the intersection of El Toro Road and Laguna Canyon. Their families were pioneers in south Orange County. During the Civil War, the Cook family fought for the South and the Stevens' for the North. Milo Stevens' grandfather was a drummer boy in the Union Army.

George W. Stevens

(SE-Block 20)

Son of Milo and Ella Stevens. He played on an early El Toro softball team (perhaps the first in the area) and pitched for the Santa Ana "All Stars." For more than 30 years, he worked in the oil fields, including Newport's First Whipstock Well. In 1956, he constructed El Toro's first domestic water system. His wife Mae was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Swartz, who operated a bean and apricot farm near where Saddleback Valley Plaza is now located.

25. Charles M. Salter

(SE-Block 20)

This family came to the area in 1888. They are one of the area's oldest families. El Toro's school teachers often boarded with this family during their teaching terms.

26. Judge and Mrs. Keating

(OS-Block 11)

Their daughter met her future husband, El Toro developer Dwight Whiting, at the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego. Mr. Whiting built them a home on Lake El Toro. Judge and Mrs. Keating played a prominent role in the St. George Episcopal Church in El Toro and Mrs. Keating was a founder of the Ladies Aid Society. The Ladies Aid Society was originally made up of women from the "English Colony." They met for socials in the afternoon, gave assistance to the needy, organized Easter egg hunts and held parties at Easter and Christmas.

27. William A. Beaton

(LO-Block 24)

On the tombstone of William A. Beaton, his Army rank is given as "CHR." Mr. Beaton was a chauffeur at the Army Air Balloon School in Arcadia, California and the "CHR" refers to his position of chauffeur. He drove a motorcycle with a side car. He enlisted in the Army on April 20, 1917 (during World War I) "for the period of the emergency."

28. Christian Kent Nelson

(LO-Block 27)

Inventor of the "Eskimo Pie." In 1920, Christian Nelson conceived the idea of a chocolate coated ice cream bar. Russell Stover of the Graham Ice Cream Company in Omaha, Nebraska was enthralled with Christian's idea and became his partner. Christian called his first pie the "I-Scream-Bar;" however, legend says it was Mrs. Stover who came up with the name "Eskimo Pie" at a dinner party.

The last two gravesites are located in the Los Alisos Lawn. Please refer to the overall park map where you will see the approximate locations of these gravesites listed.

29. Brigadier General Leonard Fribourg

(LA-Block 34)

Promoted to Brigadier General in October, 1969, he became Commanding General of the marine Reserve in 1970. He served in the South Pacific in World War II and in Vietnam in 1965. He served as technical advisor on the film "Sands of Iwo Jima" in 1949. The movie was filmed at Camp Pendleton. He played in the legendary World War II "Mosquito Bowl" football game on Guadalcanal in 1944.

30. Florence Griffith Joyner

(LA-Block 34)

She elevated women's track to a new level with her three gold and one silver medal winning performances in the 1988 Summer Olympics. Recognized by her brightly colored, often one-legged outfits and intricately painted fingernails, "Flo-Jo" captured the affection of the world with a rare combination of speed, grace and beauty.



This brochure was prepared in conjunction with the 100th anniversary celebration of the El Toro Memorial Park.

The Orange County Cemetery District wishes to express its appreciation to historians Judy Deeter and Joe Osterman for their efforts in developing this "Historic Walk."

El Toro Memorial Park

Established 1896



Historic Walk



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