

# THE LEFTOVERS

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*This newsletter is issued quarterly, as part of the mission of the ESHS, to preserve and publicize the history of the community of El Sobrante. If you would like to comment on this newsletter, or submit your own article for publication, please do so via: [ESHistory@Gmail.com](mailto:ESHistory@Gmail.com). Thanks!*



## **Wonderful Collection of Native American Artifacts Donated to ESHS!**

We are indebted to the Philippi family for their generous donation of Indian artifacts collected on their property in El Sobrante. Dorothy and Virgil Philippi moved into their home on Santa Rita Road in the 1940s. Virgil passed on some years ago, and Dorothy recently moved to a senior housing facility. The house is now on the market, and may have been sold by now.

Dorothy is one of El Sobrante's pioneers, and she was very helpful when we were putting together our book on the

history of our town. She explained that their property, about 3 acres, extended all the way down a steep slope to the banks of San Pablo Creek (just east of the intersection at San Pablo Dam Road and Appian Way). They had not occupied the land for long before they began to discover unusual stones, obviously shaped by man for utilitarian use. They contacted the University of California, and in 1950, Professor Robert Heizer, with student help, began the first of several excavations that eventually turned up 11 bodies. Professor Heizer, at the time, estimated that the site had been occupied for 2000 to 3000 years, probably by various groups of people. The last group, encountered at the time of European contact, in the 1770s, was a band of people who have been determined to have belonged to a larger group known as the Ohlone. Interestingly, the bodies found by Professor Heizer were stretched

out full length, which was not the Ohlone custom (they buried their dead in a fetal position). So that fact alone argues for a long habitation time for the site, and for more than one group of people.

The objects themselves are mostly fairly common, consisting of mortars and pestles, grinding and pounding stones, and charmstones. Probably the charmstones are the most interesting, and curious.



They in fact occur throughout North America, but disappear between about 600 to 1000 years ago. No one really knows for what purpose they were made, so they have arbitrarily been assigned a religious significance and given the generic name "charmstone." Some groups drilled a hole in one end and others did not. According to the late Professor George Coles, who examined these objects when they were on loan to us, the people who made charmstones with a hole, always did so, and those who did not drill a hole, never did so. So finding both types in a single mound suggests that the site was used by more than one group. The most complete charmstone in this group has a hole in it; the other three do not, and are fragmentary.

The donation includes three large mortars and one quite small one. Mortars were



used by virtually every group in California and were an extremely useful and versatile kitchen tool. In the mortar were ground the oak nuts that matured in the Fall throughout the state. They also used them to grind smaller grass seeds and larger seeds, such as the buckeye. The mortars in this group are portable, of course, but many sites can be found with large rocks in which a great number of depressions were ground out for communal use. One can imagine a scene in early California in which a dozen or so women are gathered around a tribal mortar site, talking about their husbands, kids, potential suitors, or even rumors of strange white people with beards.



This little mortar was probably used, according to Professor Coles, to grind materials for face and skin painting, sort of like a compact. It even has a depression on the side for the thumb.



Pestles and grinding stones were used either with a mortar or on a flat stone. Grinding and crushing implements were an extremely important part of the California Indian tool-kit. A pestle could be used to crush oily oak seeds in a mortar, but could double as a grinder for crushing grass seeds on a flat stone. The unbroken stone displayed here, with the

somewhat flattened sides, was no doubt used in this fashion.

The pestle on the left is fragmentary, but is an excellent example of a nicely shaped tool that would have fit easily in the hand and was ideally suited to work with a mortar. In fact, it



looks much like a modern stone pestle.

This very large, rough, stone is too big to be an ordinary pestle, and was probably used as a pounder to crush stone or even hard seeds, such as black walnut.

All this stone grinding inevitably meant that



sandy bits were left in the meal, resulting, by about the age of 25, in a very noticeable flattening of the teeth, which were, in other respects, usually quite healthy.

The small, grooved stone shown here is a net sinker. The groove was cut in order to hold a cord, attaching the stone to a circular net (along with many other stones). The net was thrown by the user, most commonly into water to catch fish. But such a net could also be used to capture birds.



Naturally, the El Sobrante Historical Society would love to have its own space to display

these invaluable artifacts, but until that day comes, we will try to place them on temporary display in local venues, such as the library. Will let you know when they will be shown.

And once again, thanks so much to the Philippi family!

We also want to thank Karen Boostrom and Judy Ward.



*Karen holding a grinding stone*

Karen bought the original Philippi home from Dorothy Philippi some years ago, and lived next to Dorothy, who lived in a newer house. They became good friends, and the two were also close

to Judy Ward, who lives just down the street on Santa Rita Road.

*Judy, helping out at the Children's Reading Garden*

When Karen and Judy heard that the Philippi home was to be sold, they put in a word for the family to think of the El Sobrante Historical Society when considering what to do with the Indian artifacts. We are pretty sure that, without the help of Karen and Judy, the story might well have turned out differently.



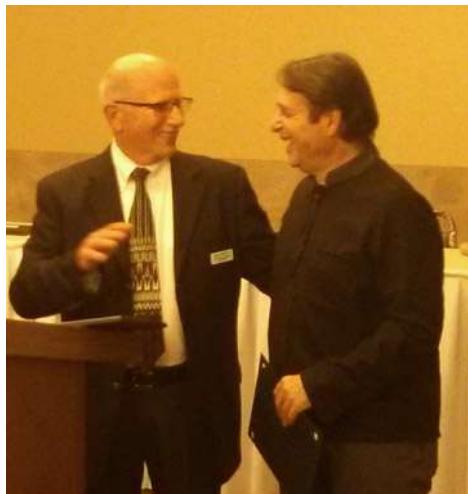
*Karen and Scott (her "significant other") recently moved to Bisbee, Arizona. They have launched themselves on a new life adventure, and we wish them the best.*

## Maurice Abraham Honored as Citizen of the Year, 2015



On Saturday evening, January 30, 2016, the El Sobrante Chamber of Commerce held its annual installation dinner. A highlight of the affair was the awarding of the Citizen of the Year Award to our own Maurice Abraham. Here we see Maury being awarded his certificate by Chamber Treasurer, Bob Davis. Maury also received acknowledgements of the award and his service to the community from County Board Supervisor John Gioia and from the West County Wastewater District Board (presented by Al Granzella).

Maury has long been active in our community. Besides being a member of the



Chamber Board, he is also a member of Citizens for a Greener El Sobrante, and, of course, he is one of the founding members of the El Sobrante Historical Society.

Maury's remarks were brief, noting that he was an "idea person," and that none of what had been accomplished in the last year could have been done without the help and cooperation of many others.

Whatever. We're just glad you're here and working hard for our community.

## Remembering: Ed Campbell

*June 1, 1920-February 21, 2016*



*Ed loved to fish. Here he is in 1995, at the San Pablo Reservoir, holding a prize trout*

It is with sadness that we report the passing of one of El Sobrante's true pioneers. Ed Campbell was a local resident since 1924, when his family moved into their newly-built home just across the street (the Dam Road) from the Skow Dairy. That house still stands, along (appropriately enough) Campbell Lane. When Ed first came here, there was no town of El Sobrante. He lived through its growth and development, and was part of that story.

Ed joined the volunteer fire department in 1942. Before this date, the entire fire department consisted of a single truck, located on the Skow ranch. The truck was supplied by the county, but everything else, including the gasoline, was the responsibility of the Skow family. There was no alarm system, other than the smoke from the numerous grass fires that plagued the hillsides during the summer.



Whoever noticed smoke jumped into the truck, along with whoever else was around and off they went. By 1942, with the rapid growth of the area, the town had its own station, on the west side of Appian Way, just opposite the location of the present-day station.

The department now boasted three trucks. But no one was paid.

Ed married Jeanne Stark, a girl who worked at the Skow Dairy, and had two children, a boy and a girl. He moved to the Whitecliff area of El Sobrante (now Richmond) in the 1950s, where he spent the rest of his life.

Ed Campbell had a perfect memory, even near the end, and, luckily for us, he was an amateur photographer. He took lots of photographs, and not just of family and vacations. It is from his large collection of local town photos that our historical society has gleaned much of what we know about the development of El Sobrante. Several of his pictures appear in our book on the history of our town. We also spent about an hour with him one day, subjecting him to a video-recording, letting him talk freely about whatever he could remember from his past. This is now part of the ESHS archive.

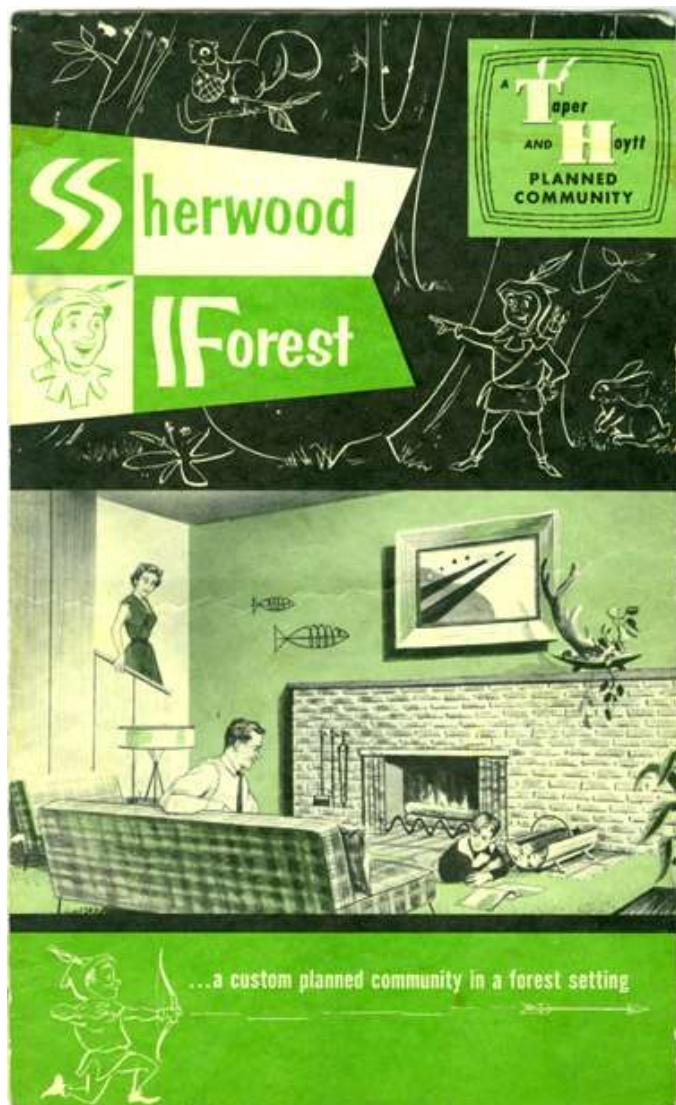
For a more complete life story about this very interesting character, visit our website, at ESHISTORY.ORG, and click on the newsletter tab. Open the Summer 2013 issue of *The Leftovers*.



## Historic Document Added to Archive

Paula Barber grew up in El Sobrante and graduated from De Anza High School in 1965. She and her family moved into the brand-new Sherwood Forest housing development in 1955. Not too long ago, Paula moved back into the home that her parents left her, and that is where she resides today.

While going through some of her parents' records, she came across the original sales brochure for the Sherwood Forest development. She contacted us and generously allowed us to scan the document for our records.



It was not called a "development," but a "Planned Community." Also, like many such projects of the time, the developer attempted to attract buyers by appealing to the "country"

nature of the environment. Ironically, the “forest” (mostly eucalyptus) had to be cut down to make room for the homes. Nowhere in the six-page brochure does the builder make mention of El Sobrante or nearby Richmond as the location of the site, but mention is made of Orinda.

Two models were offered, the “Country Squire,”



and the “Cape Cottage.”



Though their outward appearance was different, the square footage was the same (about 1450 sq ft) and both offered 4 bedrooms and 2 baths. And the price was the same, just under \$14,000. Each home came with a built-in electric range, hardwood floors, a two-car garage, and a garbage disposal.

While small by today’s standards, these homes were a far cry from the much smaller homes offered to local buyers only a few years before, usually with only 2 bedrooms and one bath. And they offered styling to appeal to a rising middle class. For those of us who grew up in these homes, Sherwood Forest was a dream compared to where we had come from. Our own bedroom, hills to roam and a brand-new high school to attend. Not too shabby.

**The El Sobrante Historical Society is an informal nonprofit organization, dedicated solely 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.**

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 Steering Committee:

**1. Maurice Abraham:**  
Administrator, Facebook Page;  
Historical Researcher and writer.

**2. Donald Bastin:** Administrator,  
Website; Newsletter Editor;  
Historical Researcher and writer.

**3. Steve James:** Membership and  
Communication Secretary;

**4. Lyle Miller:** Community Liaison  
and general support.

Visit us on-line at: **ESHIST.ORG**  
Questions, Comments, and  
other communication? Send to:  
**ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM**

**Join us at the Chamber of Commerce  
“Fun-Raiser,” Sunday, May 1, 1-5 pm,  
Mechanics Bank Parking Lot. More at:  
<http://www.elsobrantecachamber.com/>**