

WILLIAM NEWTON MONROE

William Newton Monroe, Monrovia's founder, was born June 4, 1841, at Flat Creek, Scott County, Indiana, three miles from the little town of Lexington. His parents, Sanders Alexander and Catherine Elizabeth Monroe, were both natives of Virginia. When he was eleven years old the family moved to Iowa where he finished his schooling, went to Ashland University and after graduation, taught school. At the outbreak of the Civil War, at the age of 20 years, he volunteered in the Union Army Cavalry. He fought with distinction during the war and at its conclusion was mustered out with the rank of major. While stationed at Fort Kearny he married Mary Jane Hall, the daughter of a railroad builder, on December 29, 1863. They had four children, Milton, George, Myrtle and Mabelle.

Most of Mr. Monroe's early life was devoted to railroad construction in partnership with Mr. Hall, his father-in-law. They had contracts with the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads. In 1884, having accumulated some \$150,000, the Monroes came to California and began their search for a permanent home. After being shown some land offered for sale by E.J. Baldwin, being a portion of his Santa Anita Rancho, Mr. Monroe purchased 270 acres for his homestead. Here, in 1885 he built his beautiful home, The Oaks, which is still standing on north Primrose avenue.

At this time southern California was having a fantastic boom in real estate. Mr. Monroe, joined by E.F. Spence, J.D. Bicknell and J.F. Crank, who had also bought land from Baldwin contiguous to that of Mr. Monroe, formed a townsite company and laid out a town. Monrovia began with the first sale of lots on May 17, 1886 and the town grew rapidly. In the latter part of 1888 and early 1889 the boom collapsed and a period of severe economic depression ensued. Mr. Monroe then returned to railroad construction.

Over several years he had projects in Mexico, Chile and Alaska. These were followed by others in California.

In their last years the Monroes returned to Monrovia where Mrs. Monroe died February 8, 1932 followed by Mr. Monroe on December 26, 1935. The town they founded is their monument.

T.M. Hotchkiss
May 13, 1985.