

Redwood City Tribune  
1954

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### City Orders Union Cemetery Title Study

Councilmen believe it's worth from \$350 to \$500 to find out if it would be possible to clear the title of Redwood City's historic Union Cemetery and convert that seven acres to recreation purposes.

"Let's find out once and for all if it can be done, and if so, how big a job it would be to get it done," members of the city council decided last night.

They authorized payment of a fee of from \$350 to \$500 to Edward D. Landels, San Francisco attorney and title-clearing expert, to obtain and submit a report.

The report is expected to cite whether Redwood City may acquire title to the property for recreational purposes.

## RC Takes First Step To Abandon Cemetery

Redwood City's councilmen today were cautiously taking the first step which may eventually lead to the abandonment of historic Union Cemetery so that that ground may blossom, in years to come, as an attractive park.

The move, started more than a year ago by the Park and Recreation Commission, was given a heavy shove by Councilman Carl A. Britschgi last night when he called for a halt to new burials in Union Cemetery.

Before the cemetery can be abandoned under state law no burials can take place for at least two years, he pointed out.

Councilman Floyd D. Granger, who shares with Britschgi a place on the council's Union Cemetery Committee, slowed down immediate action last night, declaring:

"I'm not ready to make a decision yet. We should first get

an idea of the wishes of the people who have an interest in Union Cemetery, find out what their thinking is."

"Well, let's put those people on notice as to what we are thinking and let them come to us."

Grange agreed that Britschgi's proposal could be considered as a "suggestion" and that the council could take up the Union Cemetery question again in 30 days.

At the same time, Granger brought the council news that the state department of finance had approved his request that \$500 additional state funds should be given Redwood City to properly maintain Union Cemetery. The city now receives \$1,500 per year for that purpose and can use to very good advantage the extra \$500 if it is approved by the state legislature, Granger said.

## Playground Plan Nixed For Cemetery

(More council news on Page 3)

Redwood City's historic Union Cemetery may soon be denied any new burials, but the chances of it ever becoming a playground seem remote today.

That appeared to be the sentiment of members of the Redwood City Council today after Councilman Floyd D. Granger, heading the council's cemetery committee, announced last night that "100 per cent of the people" whose deceased antecedents lie in the cemetery are opposed to any future use of the cemetery as a park.

A year ago, the Park and Recreation Commission recommended that the council take appropriate action to convert the cemetery on Woodside Road to park and recreational purposes.

Councilman Carl A. Britschgi, working with Granger on the cemetery problem, said he had also talked to a number of survivors of persons buried in the cemetery.

"The majority of them feel that the cemetery is a sacred plot and they would prefer that not ever be used as a playground.

"It appears however that there would be no objection later in the future if a memorial plaque were to be constructed in the cemetery area, tabulating as many of the names of the deceased as possible.

The councilmen seemed agreed that state officials be queried and, if no objections are forthcoming, an ordinance will be prepared which would end burials in Union Cemetery at the end of five years.

## Union Cemetery Funds Approved

Redwood City's historic Union Cemetery off Woodside Road will get its usual \$1,500 for upkeep this coming year.

That's the most the state will give it despite complaints that the sum is too niggardly to allow proper care of the six-acre cemetery in which many California Civil War veterans are buried.

In Sacramento yesterday a Senate finance subcommittee approved a budget item for the \$1,500. Spokesmen for the committee said that Redwood City wants more than that sum but decided they'd accept the \$1,500 as usual "since the state is going to be paying for upkeep forever."

The plot was accepted as a gift for the state in 1859 by Governor Weller. In 1947 the state found he had no legal authority to accept the grant which called for perpetual care.

Six years ago the legislature passed a law obligating the state to vote annual sums as contract payments to Redwood City for taking care of the 100-year-old burial ground.

Once Over Nightly:

## Cemetery Plan Due For Loud Protest

By CARL L. HOUTCIENS and RICHARD L. DAVIS

"Let the Dead Rest in Peace" . . . This will be a continuing refrain as it meets in a vast disharmony an even louder fanfare from those crying "Land for the Living."

The anguished wail is being sounded, even now, as Redwood City's officials go ahead with studies that may bring about the abandonment for burying purposes of Redwood City's historic Union Square Cemetery.

If the city council should decide to convert the cemetery at Woodside Road and El Camino Real into a community park or playground—as its park and recreation commission urges—first step would be to halt burials in it for three years.

The hint has gone out and sure to be sounded is a gathering chorus of those whose ancestors lived and died in this area and then were laid to rest in Union Cemetery.

Already comes serious and earnest protest from Mrs. Charles Iverson now of Vallejo who has sent her views on the proposal.

"I wish to protest for myself and family and especially for my ancestors buried in Union Cemetery.

"My grandparents, William Henry Douglass and wife, Sarah, were original owners of our plot and are now buried there.

"Their older children, Annie and Nathaniel, were buried there in 1859 and 1869. Think of it, that's nearly 100 years ago.

"My mother, baby brother and sister are buried there and more recently my father, William Wilbow Douglass.

"My cousin, Mrs. Leslie Sampson living at 612 Winslow St. has her grandparents, Andrew Jumel and our relative, Abe Mathieson, buried in Union Cemetery."

Mrs. Iverson is the former Abby I. Douglass.

Some of Redwood City's oldest residents, sons and grandchildren of some of her settlers, are beginning to rally round the protesting chorus.

Also, preparing to gird for the fight are Redwood City's veterans' organizations that have some of their heroic sons of the services buried in Union Cemetery.

Representatives of all the veterans' organizations, the Gold Star Mothers and the Women's Relief Corps gathered at the Veterans' Hall recently to discuss the matter and who decided first to get "the reasons and purposes" for considering abandonment of Union Cemetery.

"Our feelings are very strong in this matter," says Mrs. Alice R. Foulks, secretary of the Veterans Co-ordinating Council.

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Union Cemetery and Memorial Day: 5-29-57

# RC's Pioneers Not Forgotten

By MICHAEL KERNAN  
Tribune Staff Writer

Memorial Day is a quiet day, a time of listening, on the bright, clipped lawns of military cemeteries, to speeches about war and peace and the lost young men.

There is usually music by a high school band, the Gettysburg Address, and then someone lays a wreath at the foot of the Civil War monument while programs rustle and flies hum.

In Redwood City's old Union Cemetery, 45 headstones fringe a little plot with a statue of a Union soldier in the middle "erected by the grateful people of San Mateo County . . . to the memory of California's patriotic dead who served during the war for the union."

The stones record just names and units. Many of the men served in New York State outfits, Connecticut, Kentucky, Illinois. About half were in California groups, one in the Mexican War. Wives' names are chiseled below on a few stones.

One commemorates a man with an appropriate name, James Peace, "first man to raise our flag in San Mateo County."

Behind this plot extends the six-acre civilian cemetery in a long triangle bordered by high hedges. Children walk through here on shortcuts, the noise of Woodside Road penetrates, as do sounds from nearby houses on the other side.

But within the hedge walls is a place of the gentle ghosts of people who walked the streets of Redwood City when it was a dusty little village, people who loaded, or sailed, or owned the light ships that nosed up the creek to the foot of Broadway, people who drove the loads of redwood down from Woodside to the docks, people who heard, from their stores and shops, the wagons creaking past.

had reached 80, and Ascencion Romera died in 1935 at 77.

Poems and quotations, hackneyed and saccharine, are made moving by the thought of the people who had them written there, who could not say the things they felt.

"Lilly Janke, 3 years, 2 months . . . Suffer little children to come unto Me . . ."

"James L. Brown, died 1875, aged 20 years . . . A father's hope, a mother's pride, an only sister's joy . . . Oh more than all the world beside wert thou to us, dear boy."

At least two dozen grave-stones are broken or cast down, and a few marble cameo monuments are lamentably smashed. Roses and geraniums climb wildly over some plots, and here and there tin cans rust with withered cut flowers in them, but the hedges are kept well and the shell-strewn paths are clean.

Union Cemetery was neglected for years while local officials sought to clear the state's title to the property. Governor Weller was named to take over in the original deed (in Volume I of San Mateo County deeds.) But there was no clear authority for the state to accept.

City Councilman Floyd D. Granger took up the project, and finally, after appeals to

five governors had proved in vain, Senator Richard J. Dolwig had a bill passed in effect ratifying Weller's action. The state now gives the city \$2,000 a year to act as custodian, though "the city spends a lot more than that," according to Granger.

The cemetery was supposed to have been founded in 1859 after three years of negotiations, but beneath three cypress trees are small twin stones, to Anne Ayres, died April 1, 1855, and Mary Ayres, died Dec. 20, 1854.

They are in a plot for the Ayres family, most of the markers being of wood and now unreadable. Other old Redwood City names can be spotted: Kuck, the hotel family; Mina Finger, wife of Theodore Finger, native of Germany; Stanley W. Wood; Melchior Duerst; Mezes; Serrano; Tate.

Today they are names on a stone, names in a book, names on a street map. But once they were alive and lived in the houses (now torn down) and walked in the streets (now repaved) and saw the same hills that we see.

Memorial Day is a remembrance of these people, too, who with their orchards and lumber wagons and tiny schools built our history, changed our directions perhaps even more than the soldiers.

No stories of anguish are carved into the stones, but the visitor can read unwritten words.

A broken stone under a holly tree next to an open field is inscribed to David James Jenkins, 16 years, died in 1865. It is an elaborate monument, with birds and flowers carved in the top and a long, undecipherable poem on the back.

Next to it is another stone, plain and stark, as if the designer were no longer on such formal terms with death.

"Sacred to the memory," it reads, "of David Jenkins, 47 years, 22 days. Also George, son of David and Mary Jenkins, 13 years, 9 months and 10 days."

Both had died Dec. 23, 1867. Jenkins was captain of the sloop C. E. Long, and his son and Charles Boyd and Fred Littlejohn were aboard with him as they left here for San Francisco in a terrible storm.

The ship capsized in the bay. All four were lost.

And what happened to Mary Jenkins after that bleak Christmas? Did she marry again? Did she move away so she would not have to see in new context the familiar streets, the school, the fields, the steel-cold waters of the bay?

There are many infants' graves, some of them fenced in, two feet by one foot. Most of the dead were young. Colin Napier, native of Dundee, Canada, died in 1876 at 24. Robert B. Williams, 23, native of Fifeshire, Scotland, has a thistle carved in his 1867 grave.

On a crude wooden cross: "Elisa Cortez — Die Aug. 10, 1930."

Alfred, son of T. W. and A. Lathrop, died in 1863 at 1 year, 2 months, 12 days. Alice, wife of T. W. Lathrop, died in 1865 at 20 years, 3 months. Hardly any are over 40, though one man



TRIBUNE REPORTER MICHAEL KERNAN EXAMINES HEADSTONES  
... Redwood City's Union Cemetery recalls county's history

—Tribune Photo

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# Meaningless' Act of Vandals Shatters Cemetery Monument

Ghoulish vandals invaded Redwood City's historic Union Cemetery at Woodside Road off El Camino Real, during the night, toppled over and destroyed the life-sized bronze statue erected nearly a century ago to honor San Mateo County's Civil War soldiers. The "vicious and meaningless" act shattered a priceless monument which has, since the end of the Civil War, maintained a direct link between present citizens and heroes of the past, police said.

Outraged citizens and veterans groups today were gathering means to offer a sizeable cash reward for the arrest and conviction of the persons responsible.

Police Captain Theodore Moudakas said that the statue, depicting a Civil War soldier at salute, apparently had been pulled from its granite base, possibly by means of an automobile and a rope. The broken head of the piece was placed on a fence stake at the entrance to the cemetery. The body of the statue was left lying beneath its base on which the following words declared:

"To the memory of California's Patriotic Dead Who Served during the War for the Union." On the other side are the words:

"Erected by Grateful People of San Mateo County. All Honor to the Nation's Defenders."

City Councilman Floyd D. Granger, an expert in matters connected with the Union Cemetery, said he would call on the City Council Monday night to appropriate \$100 reward for arrest and conviction of the vandals.

Gerard J. Poorenaar of American Legion Post 105 said his group would make \$100 available to match any reward up to that amount posted by the city.

Granger said that the statue had been installed shortly after the Civil War under an authorization by San Mateo County officials. He recalled that some years ago, a Civil War gun held in the hands of the statue had been stolen. The thief was caught and sentenced to San Quentin Penitentiary.

The Union Cemetery comprising about six acres was formerly a part of the Rancho de las Pulgas. It was deeded in the 1850s to the California governor and his successors.



Photo by Sharkey

**PRICELESS MONUMENT DESTROYED BY VANDALS**  
... Police Captain Moudakas surveys damage

City Park and Recreation Commission that historic Union Cemetery be considered as a possible future park today had the city council in the position of "backing into an impossibility."

It also opened up an argument as to whether Redwood City is maintaining the cemetery "in good condition" with the \$1,500 allowed for that purpose by the State of California.

Mayor Floyd D. Granger said he had been hearing about the possibility of remodeling the cemetery into a park "for the past 15 years."

"I wish it could be done," he said, "but I can tell you that you're backing into a virtual impossibility."

The park commission has asked the council to provide funds so that a determination of possible legal necessities for the change could be obtained.

"Union Cemetery should be considered as a possible future park in view of its present deplorable condition and because it's an eyesore to the community," the commissioners recommended.

City Atty. Cuthbert B. Currie asked the park commission to take back its description of the cemetery as "in deplorable condition."

"The city is taking \$1,500 from the state to keep Union Cemetery in a good condition," he pointed out.

Park Commissioner Irving Gold, upholding the commission's choice of the word, insisted:

"Deplorable is the word. The cemetery is in a deplorable condition."

Councilwoman Christine Timney wanted to know what's being done with the \$1,500.

"There's weeds all over the place . . . and poison ivy. Graves are covered over. In some places the weeds are so thick you can't find the graves," she said.

City Mgr. Ernest A. Rolison said that the city was spending more than \$1,500 trying to keep the cemetery up.

Currie reminded the council of some of the obstacles it faces if it should proceed with the suggestion.

"The property was originally deeded to the governor in the 1860's to be held in trust for the benefit of a burial association. The original grant was strictly for cemetery purposes. Many rights in the graveyard were acquired by out and out purchase and the job of disinterring the bodies would involve a mammoth legal problem. The whole thing is a highly technical title problem."

He said that it would cost from \$500 to \$1,000 just to get a specialist to study the problems involved and then it might require special legislation to

## Discourages Cemetery Park Plan

RC Council Roundup:

### Civil War Statue

### To Be Reconstructed

Redwood City's city councilmen, in a busy 3-hour session last night took action on a variety of matters. They included

CIVIL WAR STATUE — The Civil War Soldier in Union Cemetery, which, until vandals invaded the cemetery ground some weeks ago, had stood for nearly a century, will stand once again.

The metal cast life-size statue, memorializing Redwood City's Union Army veterans, can be repaired, the council was informed last night. However, it will cost about \$350 and take 30 days time of Robert Levy of Burlingame, antique repair and restoration specialist.

Levy said that missing parts can be remodelled and that the entire statue can be restored to its former commanding state. On motion of Councilman Floyd D. Granger, City Manager Ernest A. Rolison was instructed to notify the state agency in charge of Union Cemetery maintenance of the estimated cost of restoration and ask that either that additional funds be allocated for the repair or that costs be charged to the regular \$2,000 received yearly for cemetery maintenance.

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## IOOF Posts Reward In Cemetery Probe

A reward has been posted with the Redwood City police for arrest and conviction of the vandals who toppled a monument at the graves of Civil War soldiers in Union Cemetery Friday night.

Bay View Lodge 109, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, has posted a reward of \$100 with Police Chief William Faulstich.

The lifesize figure of a Union soldier had been pulled from its base in the cemetery.

Edgar Giles, noble grand of Bay View Lodge, stated that many of its early day members are at rest in the cemetery.

The act of vandalism has

irked officials, civic and patriotic bodies.

Last night, the city council, acting on request of councilman Floyd D. Granger, instructed Robert Costello, city attorney, to report at next council session if the city may legally issue a reward in the case.

The council also authorized Granger to seek state funds for repairing the soldier-statue and for fencing the old cemetery. Granger is to make the request of State Senator Richard J. Dolwig.

Redwood City Post, American Legion, is reported as preparing also to issue a reward of \$100 for arrest and conviction of the vandals.

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REPLACING CIVIL WAR MONUMENT HERE  
... Ole Olson (left) Floyd Granger, center, and  
Pasco Balzarini, on ladder

## Cemetery Statue Back, Vandalism Repaired

A life-sized bronze statue of a union soldier once again stands guard in Redwood City's historic Union Cemetery on Woodside Road after having been shattered by vandals.

The night of July 13 vandals, supposedly by use of a rope and automobile, pulled the monument down, breaking off a leg and the head.

This morning the statue, thoroughly repaired, was placed back on its pedestal in a plot containing the bodies of soldiers who fought for the union in the Civil War.

Pasco Balzarini, Redwood City superintendent of parks and buildings, directed its replacement.

The repairs were made by Robert Levy, of Burlingame, at cost of approximately \$370, Balzarini said. The state allows this city \$2,000 for upkeep of the cemetery. Cost of the

repair will come from this fund.

Floyd Granger, San Mateo County veterans service officer, was present at the replacement.

The plaque on the statue bears this message: "To the memory of California's Patriotic Dead Who Served during the War for the Union. Erected by Grateful People of San Mateo County. All Honor to the Nation's Defenders."

Police Chief William L. Faustich said today that he has instructed all officers on night duty in the area of the cemetery to keep strict watch for vandals.

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# Urge New City Park Site At RC's Union Cemetery

Conversion of Redwood City's historic Union Cemetery, in the Five Points area in the heart of Redwood City, into use as a city park was advocated today by the city's park and recreation commission.

Members of the commission, meeting in the city council chambers last night, dusted off the controversial proposal which has been suggested at various times over the past dozen or so years.

It reappeared after Park Commissioner Irving Gold reported on the latest investigation into the feasibility of making fuller use of the cemetery ground that dates back to pre-Civil War days and contains the remains of many of Redwood City's and the Peninsula's pioneers.

"We realize the plan has a great many obstacles," Gold said.

"Many of the heirs of those who have been buried in the cemetery are now living and it will take a considerable amount of legal advice to learn the procedures necessary to go into the problem."

Members of the commission will forward the suggestion to the city council and ask that funds be allocated to obtain legal advice necessary to continue the investigation into the possibility.

Presently the city receives \$1,500 per year from the state to help maintain the cemetery under its present use.

The lively session of the park commission was further spiced by the appearance of representatives from various Redwood City Parent-Teacher Associations insisting that more attention be given recreational activities for teen-agers.

Spokesmen, under the leadership of Mrs. Roy Cloud of the Sequoia High School PTA declared that while the present

physical program for high school groups seemed satisfactory, "there is a definite need for more cultural activities."

Recreation Dir. Alfred Morton was authorized to meet with the PTA representatives in an effort to bring satisfactory solution to the demands.

Also arranged was a study meeting with representatives of elementary school parent-teacher groups to get a schedule of priority for new recreation facilities throughout Redwood City.

The matter of adding a heating system to the Community Park swimming pool will be sent to the city council, it was decided, after Morton reported that plans for the installation now are complete. The council set aside \$5,600 in the budget for the purpose. There has been some discussion as to the advisability of the installation until fuller all-year-round use of the pool is made.

Len Tornell of the Westwood Terrace Improvement Club reported that his group had donated more than \$250 to obtain new playground equipment to be added to the Westwood Park playground.

Park Supt. Pasco Balzarini reported that turfing of two main sections of Community Park has been completed and that work on turfing the Goodwin School play area is going forward.

Vincent Rambo, newly appointed commission member, attended his first meeting, over which Chmn. Hiram Stout presided.

11-5-57

# Cemetery Maintenance Is Problem

Union Cemetery, the county's oldest maintained cemetery, passed its 100th birthday last March, virtually unnoticed.

Governor John B. Weller accepted the land March 30, 1859, for \$500 on behalf of himself and his successors in office. Some six acres of Rancho de las Pulgas were included.

The state gives Redwood City \$2,000 a year to keep the place up. No plots may change hands, and only an occasional interment is made there for the families that still own vacant plots. The last interment was at least three years ago, according to local morticians.

Citizens sometimes complain that the cemetery at Woodside Road and Poplar Avenue, is in poor repair, but actually the grounds are kept clean and clipped by the city. City workers cannot do much about the plots themselves, which are private property.

Vandals frequently tip over old headstones, and two years ago the life-size bronze statue of a Civil War soldier was knocked off its pedestal and smashed. State funds were used to restore it.

City workmen right the fallen stones during regular cleanup sessions, but some are so old or damaged that they cannot be righted. In general the cemetery is better kept up than two years ago when it was featured in a Tribune story.

A 1955 plan to remove the graves and convert the place to a park was rejected by relatives of the deceased.

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