

10-24-70 p. 12

# Turning Cemetery Into Park

A long-delayed effort to convert Redwood City's Union Cemetery into a park — may gain momentum soon because discussion of such a project is included on the agenda for the January meeting of the City Parks and Recreation Commission.

Mrs. Doris Thompson, commission secretary, says she has been gathering information for some time on similar efforts in communities such as Mountain View and Whittier.

The potential and precedent exist, Mrs. Thompson says, for establishing the historic cemetery as a "memorial park" for quiet recreational activities.

The cemetery is on Woodside Expressway, a block west of El Camino Real.

Recounting the history of the cemetery, Mrs. Thompson noted that it was not dedicated to the Union Army as the name might imply. Rather it was founded in 1859 by the Union Cemetery Association. The area where veterans of the Civil War are buried is only a small part of the six-acre plot, she said.

Deeded to Redwood City by the state some years ago, the cemetery is now inactive. There have been no burials since about 1950.

Although Mrs. Thompson consider the cemetery to have historical value worth preserving, she said that remains of some of the more prominent persons originally buried there have been removed.

Also vandalism, as well as simple neglect and the passage of time, have taken a toll of the monuments. The statue of a Union Army rifleman which guards the graves of the civil war veterans has been pulled down at least twice — most recently in June, 1969, only a few days after it had been restored to its pedestal.

Although the graveyard is a state historical landmark, the state contributes no funds for its maintenance.

If the cemetery were to become a park, none of the remaining graves would be removed, Mrs. Thompson said. The area would simply be maintained as "a useful, quiet, respected area."



— Tribune photo by Reg McGovern

A place for quiet recreation?

Redwood City residents will have a voice in the matter. Mrs. Thompson expects that the parks commission, after discussing the project's feasibility, will set up a committee to assess community attitude.

In a sense, those interred in the cemetery will be represented as well, because the committee will also include some of their descendents.

The parks commission meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 6 in the conference room of the Redwood City Community Activities Building, 1400 Roosevelt Ave. The public will be welcome, Mrs. Thompson said.

5/24/71

p. 4

## Memorial Day Rites in RC

REF - RC - CEMETERIES  
PAM

# Union Cemetery 'Revival'

By OTTO TALLENT

Revival of what once was a big civic affair with a large attendance is sought this year with plans being made for Memorial Day services at Redwood City's 112-year-old Union Cemetery — believed to be the only Union cemetery west of the Mississippi River.

The ceremony, with speeches and the placing of fresh flowers on graves, will be held on Monday, May 31, at 9 a.m.

Attendance in the past few years has dwindled. However, sponsors of the event are hopeful that more persons will show up this year to honor the members of America's armed forces who have given their lives for their country — from the time of the Civil War to

the Vietnam and Laotian Wars.

The General George S. Evans Relief Corps 36, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic, is listed as sponsor of the services. Arrangements for speakers were made by Boy Scout Troop 67, co-sponsored by John F. Kennedy School Parent-Teacher Association and the Sunrise Lions Club.

Redwood City Mayor Robert Bury will officiate at the services. The Rev. John P. Uhlig of the Redeemer Lutheran Church will give the invocation and benediction. Colors will be presented by Bonita Parlor 10, Native Daughters of the Golden West.

Speakers will be Thomas R. Daly, president, Sunrise Lions

Club; J. Kenneth Brown, exalted ruler, Elks Club 1991; Vincent Truscelli, commander, American Legion Post 105, and Herman L. Pope, worshipful master, Masonic Lodge 168.

Mrs. Mae Patrick, president of the General George S. Evans Relief Corps, auxiliary of the GAR, will conduct the memorial program and wreath laying ceremony.

James F. Knecht, local rose grower, is donating flowers to be placed on graves. Additional flowers will be needed and those who wish to contribute them should have them at the cemetery by 8 a.m. on May 31.

Twenty-five Boy Scouts from Troop 67, of which Charles K. Korman is committee chairman, have been

cleaning up the cemetery grounds in preparation for the Memorial Day ceremonies as a community service project. They have been assisted by Redwood City Chapter of DeMolay, Junior Girl Scout Troop 1720, and Cub Scout Pack 16.

After the ceremonies, the youths and their leaders who participate in the program will be given breakfast by American Legion Post 105.

"We feel these services once again could become a major annual observance for the citizens of Redwood City," Korman said.

Union Cemetery is located on approximately six acres between Woodside Expressway, Hess Road and Poplar Avenue, just off El Camino Real.



TIDYING UP UNION CEMETERY FOR MEMORIAL DAY — Tribune photo by Tom Bullock  
Boy Scouts Mike Finley, Wayne Stowell, Rich Holtzman pitch in

5/29/71



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# Living Soldier on Job

By OTTO TALIANT

Would you believe that the eight-foot high granite base where an old Union soldier stood guard over Redwood City's 112-year-old Union Cemetery until the life-size statue was toppled by vandals will have an old Union soldier atop it when Memorial Day services are held there Monday at 9 a.m.?

The best way to find out would be to attend the special services. Sponsors of the local services are hopeful that more people will turn out Monday than have during the past few ceremonies honoring members of the armed forces who gave their lives for their country.

One incentive will be to see the old Union soldier.

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Would you believe one in the flesh yet?

The old bronze soldier which had stood watch at the cemetery at Five Points upwards of 100 years was pulled down and mutilated by ghoulish vandals in May, 1957. Fortunately the statue could be restored and by February, 1958, it once more stood guard over the graves of Civil War heroes.

The old soldier's antique rifle had been stolen years before, and the thief caught and sentenced to San Quentin.

Vandals in a Halloween foray in 1968 again inflicted near-fatal wounds upon the bronze soldier, but he fully recovered on May 29, 1969, just one day before Memorial Day. His return was the result of an enthusiastic effort by numerous Redwood City area residents.

Then on June 2, 1969, vandals once again toppled the statue. Volunteer labor worth several thousand dollars went down the drain in the attack, according to Park Supt. Pasco Balzarini, who had spearheaded the effort to piece the soldier together again. Two teenagers implicated in the shattering of the old soldier were arrested.

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Charles K. Korman, committee chairman of Boy Scout Troop 67, which spent hours upon hours cleaning up the grounds and making arrangements for speakers at Monday's ceremonies, said in a letter to the Tribune after the 1970 services: "It didn't seem quite right... not to have the 'Old Soldier' in attendance. It was the first roll call that he's missed!"

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Now coming to the stage is Tom B. Parlett, who has worked for the county 21 years and is messenger-clerk in the mail room in the basement of the old courthouse here. The 100 or so persons he greets in the corridors of the courthouse each day probably wouldn't think of him as a stand-in for the old bronze Union soldier.

However, the Burlingame man who enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1936 and retired from it in November, 1944, as a first lieutenant after service in the South Pacific, has been a "Civil War buff" since he was 12 years old. He now is 58.

When Jerry Shields, who retired four years ago from the Redwood City Post Office after 37 years in civil service

and who now works in the courthouse mail room, called Parlett's attention to a story in the Tribune earlier this week about Monday's memorial services, Parlett volunteered to stand in for the old Union soldier.

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He has all the paraphernalia for the job — the uniform, the cap, rifle musket, caliber 58; canteen, musket cartridge box on his right, pistol cartridge box on the rear, musket cap box on a belt in front, a bayonet and scabbard on the left.

With the aid of a ladder, Parlett climbed the door-high base at the cemetery for a Tribune picture and looked for all the world — except for a cape — like the famous old Union soldier.

Actually, Parlett could portray a Yankee or a Confederate soldier. He has uniforms and equipment for both. His grandfathers fought in the Civil War — on opposite sides. His grandfather Samuel Russell Barr was a Yankee, his grandfather Thomas E. Parlett fought on the Confederate side.

Between 1961 and 1965 Parlett, who came to the Peninsula from New Castle, Pa., used his vacation time to participate in the Civil War Centennial, taking part in "battles" in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia.

In 1963 he and 26 other members of the Laurel Brigade of Pikesville, Md., rode horse for nine days, covering the 125-mile trail used 100

years before by Confederate cavalrymen. The men followed the route used by Gen. J.E.B. Stuart and his cavalry troopers. The men also used the same campsites where Stuart and his men rested many years ago.

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Union Cemetery, a triangular tract of about six acres bounded by Woodside Expressway, Poplar Avenue and a row of apartment houses facing on Hess Road, in 1967 became Redwood City's first designated California Historical Landmark. It formerly was a part of the Rancho de las Pulgas. The overpass played havoc with the cemetery, by cutting off entirely the original entrance from Woodside Road.

Actually, only a small portion of the cemetery has to do with Union Army veterans. Forty-five headstones honoring Civil War veterans fringe the granite base where the bronze soldier once stood.

Historian Marian Goodman says the burial ground was not named Union Cemetery because Civil War veterans are buried there. Founders of the Union Cemetery Association, organized Feb. 28, 1859, had in mind, she states, a quotation from Daniel Webster: "Liber-ty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable" — a doctrine that did help trigger the Civil War.

The cemetery has 230 plots, including areas for the Grand Army of the Republic, the Odd fellows and the Masons, as

well as family and individual plots.

The original deed was a trust to the governor of California and his successors. The cemetery was in such a state of neglect that in 1937 Floyd Granger was named head of a veterans committee of the United Veterans Council to see what could be done to establish responsibility for the property.

The state finally said it had no business running a cemetery, and passed a law in 1939 to give the cemetery to Redwood City. The city took its time in accepting the gift. In 1962 the city got title to the cemetery, but when there was talk of establishing a crematorium on the site, the city leased the cemetery for 10 years to Skylawn Memorial Gardens for \$1 a year, and gratefully turned over to it the work and responsibility of keeping the grounds decent.

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There have been suggestions the historic cemetery be made into a memorial park for quiet recreational activities. Veteran newspaperman Barney Glick suggests it would make a striking floral garden, if floral organizations would work with the park department to provide seasonal flowers.

Park Superintendent Balzarini hopes the appearance of Parlett Monday in his old soldier's uniform will spur some individual or organization to build a concrete statue to sit atop the granite pedestal on a permanent basis.

10/2

P. 1 5/29/71  
Living Statue



— Tribune photo by Tom Bullock

Tom Partlett is not a Yankee trooper, nor is he made of granite. But that won't keep him from mounting the granite pedestal of Redwood City's Union Cemetery on Monday to become a stand-in for the Union soldier statue destroyed by vandals several months ago. For the story behind Partlett's strange assignment, please turn to Otto

# Cemetery site bought for \$500, deeded to governor

Tribune

By OTTO TALLENT

Redwood City's Union Cemetery is the granddaddy of all "official" cemeteries in San Mateo County and probably in all of California.

Pilarcitos Cemetery in Half Moon Bay, however, is believed to be one of the county's oldest burial sites.

The small town of Colma, sometimes called the "City of the Dead," has a population of approximately 500 "live" people, while some 500,000 to 600,000 persons are buried there.

And Belmont has a cemetery.

These are some of the nuggets unearthed by the San Mateo County Historical Association as it prepared for a recent tour of cemeteries in the county. There are at least 31 cemeteries in the county.

Union Cemetery, a triangular tract of about six acres bounded by Woodside Expressway, Poplar Avenue and a row of apartment houses facing on Hess Road, in 1967 became Redwood City's first designated California Historical Landmark. It formerly

was part of the Rancho de las Pulgas.

The historical society points out that there were, of course, other cemeteries in existence in 1859 when Union Cemetery was founded, but they were not established in a legal manner.

The unincorporated village that later became Redwood City sprang up around the lumbering and shipping point on Redwood Slough. The settlement had a cemetery of sorts. The village folk had simply agreed that a particular place would be utilized as the cemetery.

All went well until the late 1850s when the piece of land was sold to an outsider from San Francisco. The new owner objected to the cemetery being on his property and pressed for its removal. The Union Cemetery Association was thus formed to establish a new cemetery.

Six acres were acquired for \$500 and work was progressing well. In the meantime, the State Legislature had passed a law regulating the manner in which cemeteries were to be

established. This law went into effect before the plans of the cemetery were completed.

Union Cemetery was the first to be established under the articles of this new state law and therefore the first "official" cemetery in the county and the state.

An unusual aspect of the cemetery's history is the fact that it was owned by the state for more than 100 years. To get around a legal technicality, the Union Cemetery Association deeded the land "... to John B. Weller, Governor of California and his successors in office ..."

This unique arrangement continued until 1962 when the

This unique arrangement continued until 1962 when the state gave the property back to Redwood City.

Park Superintendent Pasco Balzarini is in charge of keeping the cemetery looking respectable. Boy and Girl Scouts and other youths have helped in keeping the site clean.

There have been suggestions the historic cemetery be made into a memorial park for quiet

recreational activities. The late veteran newspaperman Barney Glick suggested it would make a striking floral garden, if floral organizations would work with the park department to provide seasonal flowers.

Members of the design and development committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission last week had a walk-through inspection of the cemetery and will present preliminary findings to the commission at its meeting next Wednesday.

Mrs. Jan Weintraub, chairman, said the committee has pretty well decided it would like to retain the character of Union Cemetery and not make any major changes. The committee leans toward maintaining the site as a historical point of the city, restoring some of the features, putting in wide gravel paths and benches, making it a peaceful area to stroll through.

"This place is on our maps in other parts of the country, but we haven't capitalized on it," Mrs. Weintraub said. "It

is a terrific historical site."

On the committee with Mrs. Weintraub are Frank Guida and James Knecht, with Balzarini and Max Weeks, director of parks and recreation, representing the staff.

Not many people know there is a Belmont cemetery. It was started by William D. Harrington, who was one of Belmont's earliest residents. Harrington bought property from S. M. Mezes, who drew up the first map of Redwood City, and farmed the land.

In 1855, one of Harrington's children died of the measles, according to the County Historical Association's records. On the highest hill which now overlooks upper Crystal Springs Lake the child was buried.

During the winter of the same year several of Harrington's Indian workers died of the same illness. He built coffins for them and because of the rain and mud put them on a horse-drawn sled and dragged them to the cemetery. The Indian graves were marked with headbeads which now

have disappeared.

The few other graves in the cemetery were marked with modest sandstone monuments. The cemetery apparently was not used exclusively by the Harrington family. Burials may have been made there by later owners of the property.

Because the route of Freeway 280 passes so close to the small cemetery, the tombstones were removed to avert any possible vandalism. The County Historical Association hopes that additional facts regarding this early cemetery may come to light.

Half Moon Bay, originally called San Benito, is San Mateo County's oldest town so, the historical association theorizes, it follows that Pilarcitos, early Catholic cemetery, must be one of the county's oldest burial sites.

Although there were many unmarked areas in the cemetery, it is believed that only one burial plot is unoccupied. It is thought that most of the early markers were of wood and have disintegrated or have been removed. Some of

the graves were well protected with cement but unidentified. Some are outlined with wood buried in the ground, but no markers.

The graves of Spanish pioneers whose presence helped to give San Benito its nickname, Spanishtown, are at Pilarcitos. The early Coast-siders come mostly from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Mexico, Chile and Ireland, where the church had deep roots.

The history of Our Lady of the Pillar Parish, published for the 1968 Centennial celebration, states that this cemetery was the site of the first Catholic church, completed in 1868 and destroyed by fire in 1875.

Members of the Tiburcio Vasquez family, who received the grant on the north side of Pilarcitos Creek in 1840, donated the land and reserved the special privilege of being buried under the floor of the church. When the church burned, the Vasquez family claimed the land and began selling cemetery plots to the public. The Archbishop for-

bade them to sell any more plots and the church purchased the property.

The Spanishtown Historical Society hopes to discover more family names and history of people buried at Pilarcitos.

The cemeteries at Colma are of rather recent vintage. In the late 1880s and 1890s several cemeteries located in the area. Because of the limited space within the City and County of San Francisco, the Board of Supervisors in 1901 prohibited further burials within the San Francisco borders.

The legislation drove additional cemeteries into San Mateo County. Many located in Colma, just over the line, where they would still be close to the large population center. On Aug. 11, 1924, the cemetery area was incorporated as Lawndale. In 1941 the name was changed back to Colma to avoid confusion with a town in Los Angeles County with the same name.



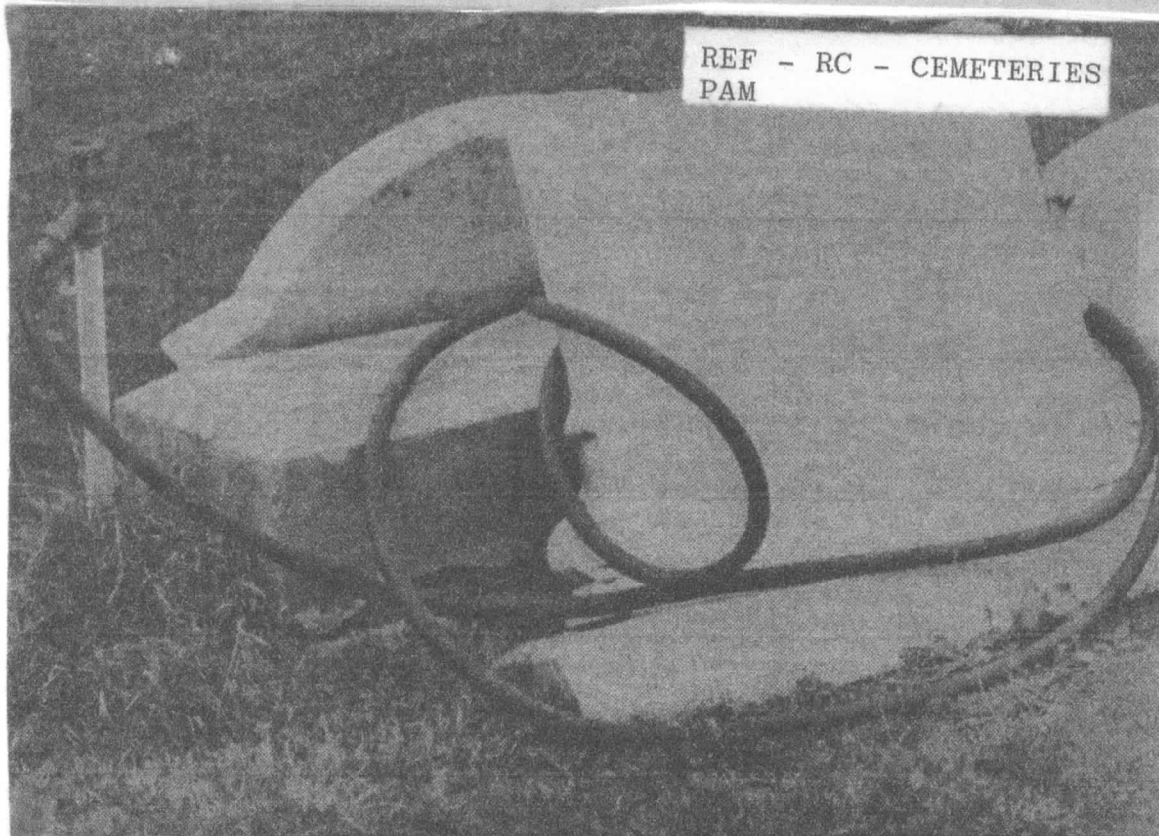
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Tribune 11-27-1974

# UNION CEMETERY

—Staff photos by Tom Bullock

## Time...vandalism take their toll Battered, abused, misused



—Staff photo by Tom Bullock

### Tombstone or a hose rack?

11/27/74

Redwood City's Union Cemetery teeters somewhere between an abandoned graveyard and a rubble-strewn lot. Certainly the use of a cockeyed tombstone as a hose rack is the least of its shame as vandals speed the demise of this 115-year-old cemetery. For that story and additional photos, please turn to Page 5.

1 of 2

City, gradually transforming it into little more than a rubble-strewn lot.

A visitor strolling through the triangular, six-acre parcel just west of Woodside Expressway gets the impression that at least 50 per cent of the monuments and gravestones still visible have been attacked by ghoulish vandals.

The aura of wanton, malicious destruction is overwhelming.

Union Cemetery is the resting place of some of Redwood City's great, near-great and not-so-great, a place shared by the famous and the anonymous, the wealthy and the penniless.

It has also been the object of controversy and buck-passing as long as anyone can remember.

Burials are no longer permitted at Union Cemetery. The cemetery's Burial Register, which fell into disuse about 1916, indicates that nearly 2,000 had been interred but there have been disinterments and reinterments, markers obliterated and moved. It would be difficult at best to determine exactly how many remain buried there.

Monuments and historical records do indicate that among those remaining in Union Cemetery are Siomon Mezes, whose map shaped downtown Redwood City in the 1800's; John Sears, a founder of Searsville and La Honda; George H. Buck, for many years the dominant figure in county government; James Peace, whose gravestone remembers him as the first to raise the U.S. flag in San Mateo County;

William Littlejohn, who built the first bridge across Redwood Creek in about 1854; Horace Templeton, the first man to serve regularly as a judge after the formation of San Mateo County; Capt. John Greer, a founder of Woodside;

An 87-year-old pauper who, when buried at public expense in 1897, was said to have possessed "good evidence" that he was a son of the Emperor Napoleon; an unidentified "Chinaman" found dead in 1895; and an "unknown man found hung" in 1864.

At the eastern apex of the cemetery is a plot containing the remains of more than 40 Civil War dead. In the middle



repaired at considerable cost. The statue topping the ornate monument erected for Henry Beeger (who died in 1898) has been beheaded by vandals.

A crypt which had been severely damaged by 1963 — the marble plaque shielding its front brick wall was smashed — now is further mutilated by having a fist-sized hole chiseled right through the bricks, presumably to allow the responsible parties to peer inside with a flashlight.

Some of the heavier monuments apparently have been shifted by earth settlement, but many others plainly have been the targets of determined vandals.

And one smashed headstone has been doubling as a gardener's water host rack.

Over the years, responsibility for the cemetery has been tossed about like a hot potato between the city and state and private groups. The city now is responsible for the graveyard.

Pasco Balzarini, Redwood City's parks director, said that the hedges fronting on Woodside Road were cut low to allow police to shine spotlights into Union Cemetery to deter vandalism.

While Balzarini said he feels the condition of the cemetery isn't as bad as it once was, even a cursory examination of Union Cemetery finds it far from satisfactory.

The trouble is that red tape and rising expenses seem to have smothered, all well-intentioned plans to do something about the wretched conditions of the graveyard.

There have been proposals to shift all the remains elsewhere and turn the six-acre cemetery into a park, which the proponents have long said is sorely needed by residents of the surrounding Five Points area.

Others have called for the restoration of the cemetery as close to its original condition as possible, as a memorial park, or as a combination memorial and public park.

Despite pre-Memorial Day spruce-ups, maintenance by the city, periodic clean-ups by Scout groups and the efforts of many individuals concerned with its condition, Union Cemetery appears fated for eventual obliteration.

2 of 2

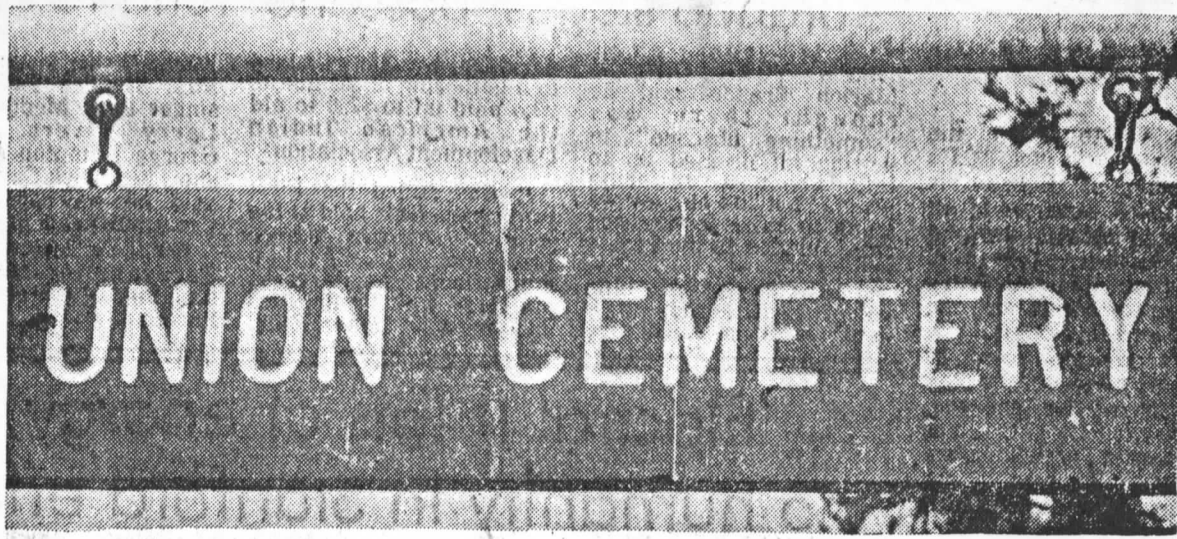


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Tribune

11-27-1974



—Staff photos by Tom Bullock

# Time...vandalism take their toll Battered, abused, misused

By **KEN ROWE**  
Tribune Staff Writer

Combined forces of time and chronic vandalism continue to take their toll on the 115-year-old Union Cemetery in Redwood City, gradually transforming it into little more than a rubble-strewn lot.

A visitor strolling through the triangular, six-acre parcel just west of Woodside Expressway gets the impression that at least 50 per cent of the monuments and gravestones still visible have been attacked by ghoulish vandals.

The aura of wanton, malicious destruction is overwhelming.

Union Cemetery is the resting place of some of Redwood City's great, near-great and not-so-great, a place shared by the famous and the anonymous, the wealthy and the penniless.

It has also been the object of controversy and buck-passing as long as anyone can remember.

Burials are no longer permitted at Union Cemetery. The cemetery's Burial Register, which fell into disuse about 1916, indicates that nearly 2,000 had been interred but there have been disinterments and reinterments, markers obliterated and moved. It would be difficult at



of that plot stands a pedestal, formerly topped by a metal statue of a Union soldier — a statue wrecked repeatedly by vandals through the years, sometimes shortly after being repaired at considerable cost.

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9/17/1975

# Tribune readers' forum

## 'Protect the cemetery'

To the Editor:

This is the year of the bicentennial, and with it all are in the spirit of remembering and respecting our heritage. All around the San Mateo County are numerous projects of restoration, historical paintings on buildings, fireplug-painting, etc.—yet one place seems to be forgotten.

I would like to see a project for the beautification and restoration of the Union Cemetery in Redwood City.

There in the cemetery are many people to remember and honor; they contributed greatly to the growth of San Mateo County. Buried there are people like John Sears, who founded Searsville, and Jas. Peace, who was the first man to raise our flag in San Mateo

County.

Many people do not realize that this is the only Union Cemetery west of the Mississippi River where soldiers of the Civil War and other wars are buried.

Vandalism runs high in the cemetery. Tombstones are pushed over, grave sites defaced and even broken into. Something should be done to prevent this.

One solution might be better fencing, particularly on the side near Poplar Street. Another idea could be to make it a park, with a small fee for upkeep.

Guards or better policing might help protect the cemetery, along with strict enforcement of the laws for crimes committed in the cemetery. Watchmen could be paid, or have an random volunteer guard program. Any ideas to protect the cemetery would be an improvement over the present system. Twice someone has stolen a bronzed statue to honor the war dead, and perhaps with a better system that could have been prevented.

If there is an organization to beautify and protect the cemetery, I would like to know. I have time to volunteer and flower seeds to plant. I hope someone else cares. Let us honor the . . . people

who helped make our heritage and our area what it is.

RICHARD C. ELLIOTT  
1198 Davis St.  
Redwood City

# Union Cemetery

**does not  
rest in peace**

Names like Lieutenant Will Frisbie and heroes such as Jas. Peace, first man to raise the Union flag in San Mateo County, are a rare find these days—unless one ventures into Redwood City's Union Cemetery, eternal home of these and other people of greater (or lesser) distinction.

Formed in 1859 to accommodate the city's population explosion, the association which administered the cemetery addressed such delicate issues as how to guarantee that citizens pay for their final resting place. That problem was resolved in 1873 by association president Curtis Baird who moved that "for the future, where private lots are purchased by individuals, no burial shall be permitted until the said lots are paid for." Needless to say the business-like Baird was re-elected chairman that very same meeting.

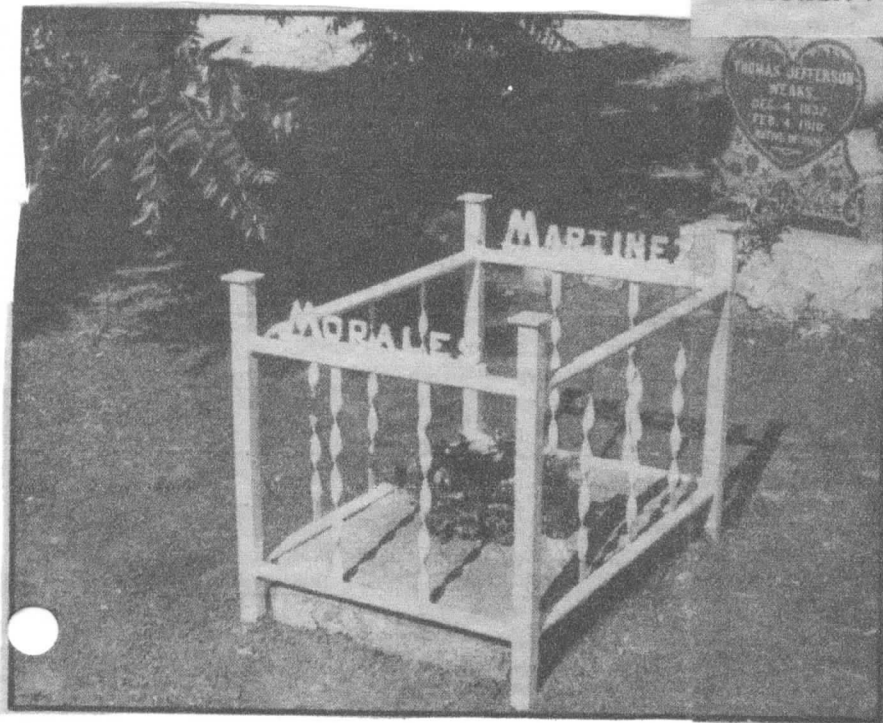
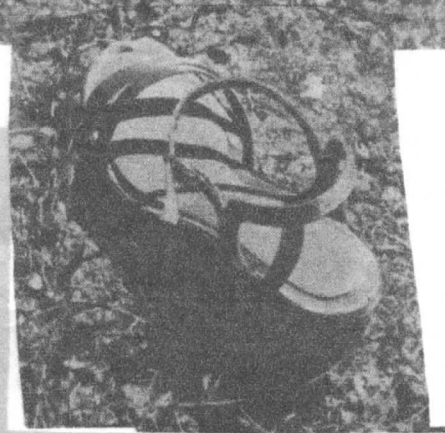
The city assumed ownership of the cemetery in 1962 and has, according to Max Weeks, director of the Parks and Recreation Department, provided "minimal maintenance" of the site. Weeks said that because of limited funds, the city has not been able to maintain the tombstones, many of which have been broken by vandals. There has been talk about restoring it but no formal action has ever been taken by the city to those ends.

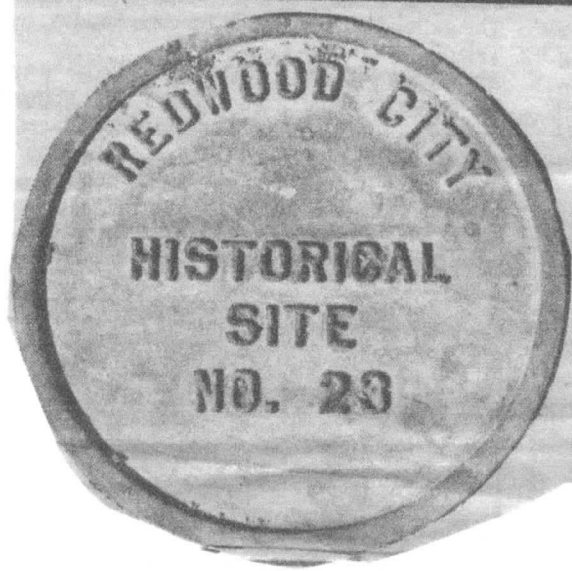
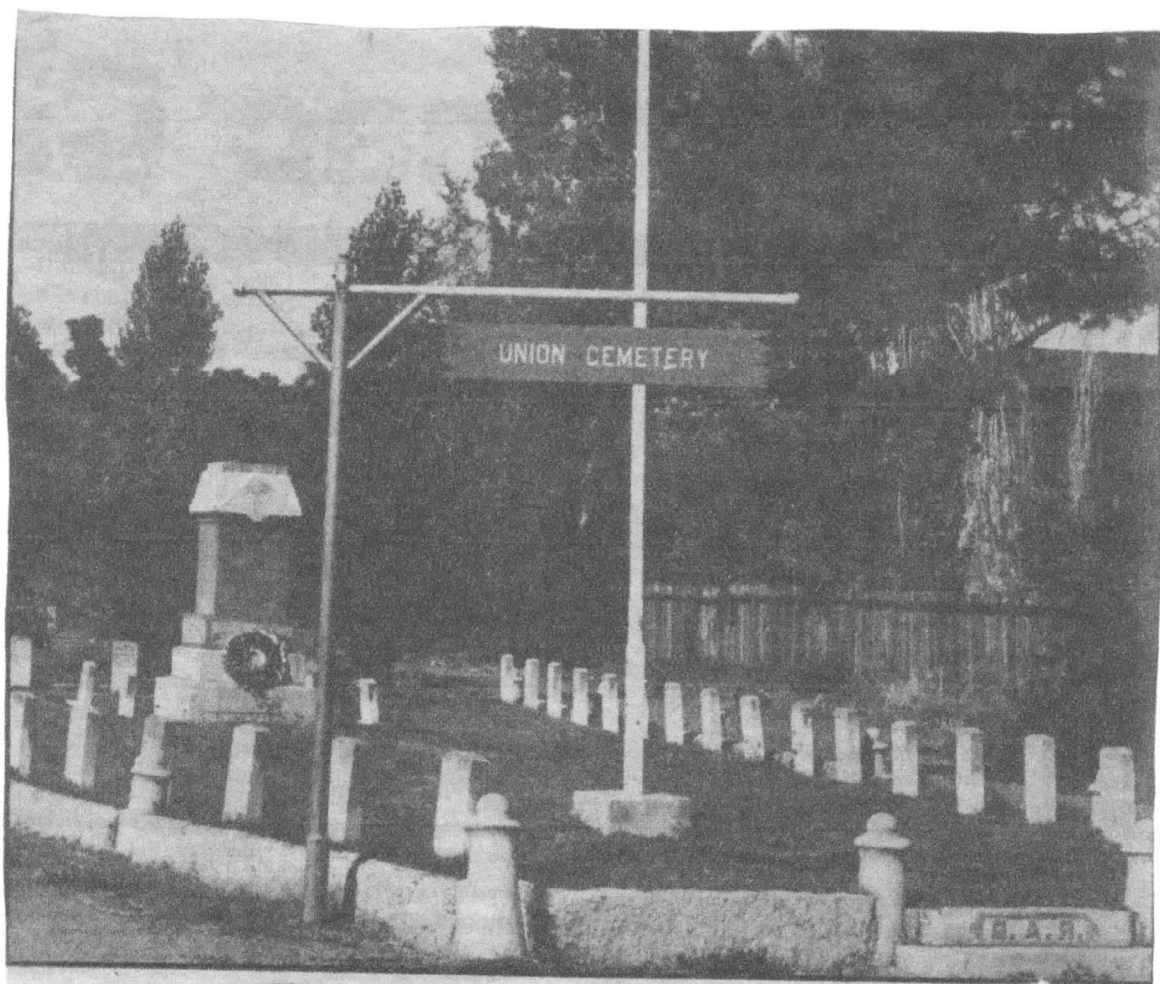
Today the cemetery lies in a disarray, a state which lends it an ancient, almost classical quality. But the image is quickly shattered by the explorer who will find there aluminum beer cans and fast food wrappers still replete with traces of condiments. Add to this birds, butterflies and an occasional derelict, all of which have made the cemetery a home for the living as well as the long dead, and you have Union Cemetery.

Photos and text by Anatole Burkin.

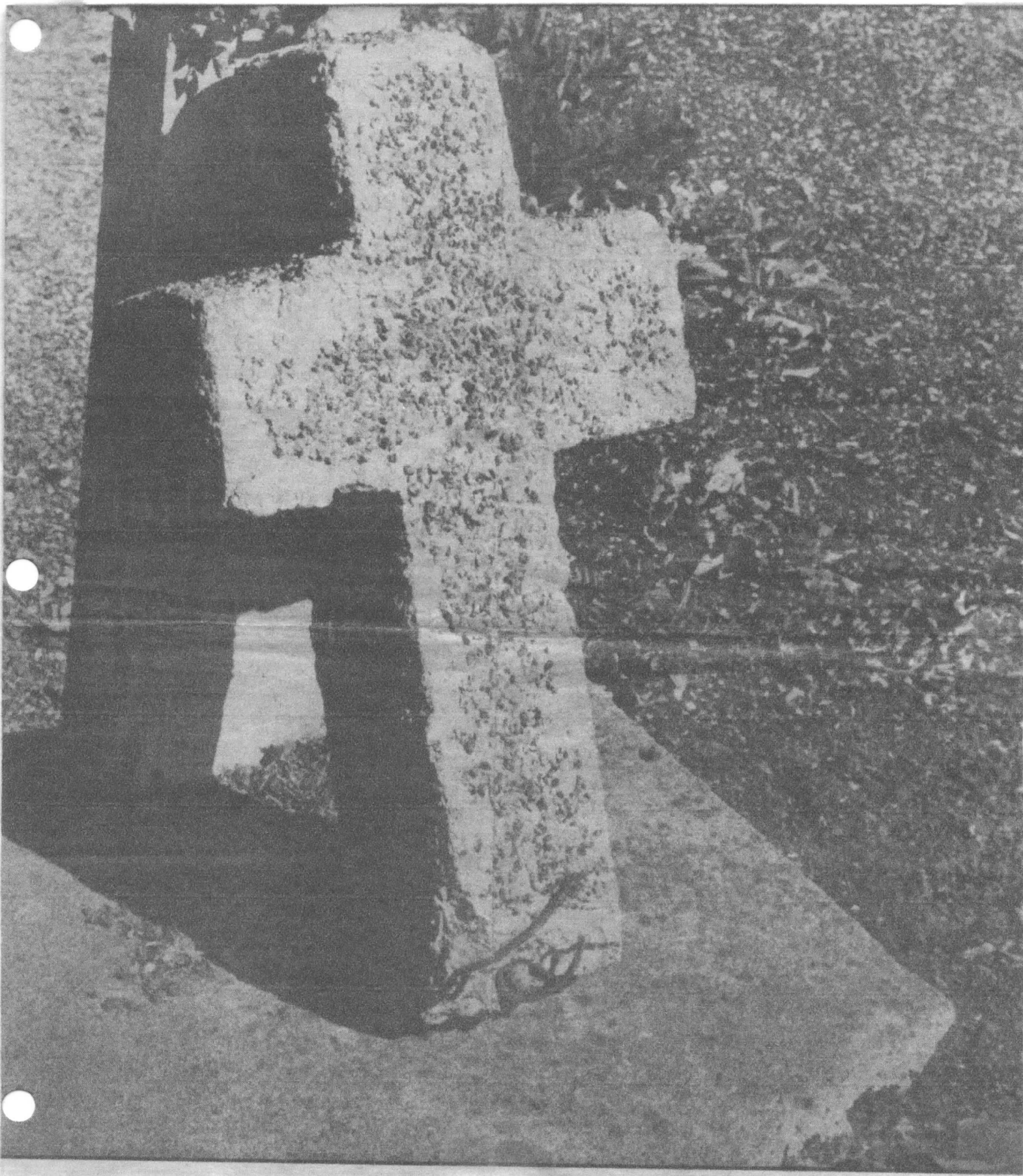


A broken cross leans against the post of a headstone (top); crib-like gravesite that hasn't suffered the ravages of vandals (right); monarch butterfly perched on a wildflower.





View of the cemetery from Woodside Rd. looking west (Top); official historical marker; pair of women's shoes left on a gravesite.



11-28-79

Times Tribune

# Historic designation sought for cemetery

REDWOOD CITY — Designation of Union Cemetery as a national historic landmark is being sought by the city Archives Committee.

Mrs. Roy N. Cloud and Mrs. Ferris W. Miles are coordinating the drive to find a list of those having relatives and ancestors buried at the Civil War cemetery located off Woodside Road near El Camino Real.

The Archives Committee has sought to receive special dispensation from the city, which now provides nominal care but has been unable to cope with vandalism that has caused considerable damage to monuments and headstones, some of which date back more than 100 years.

Union Cemetery was deeded to the governors of California during its first 100 years of existence, then turned over to the jurisdiction of Redwood City in the 1960s.

Mrs. Cloud said that to obtain status for the cemetery as a national monument the committee must show evidence that there are families living whose relatives are buried there. Anyone having information to this effect is asked to call Mrs. Cloud at 366-4888 or Mrs. Miles at 366-5371.

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Times Tribune Weekly Staff Photo by Reg McGovern

Union Cemetery in Redwood City is a candidate for national landmark status.



REF - R.C. - CEMETERIES  
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## Old soldiers need a lift

Uncle Sam himself may be the last best hope in the decades-old campaign to restore the solemn dignity of the perennially vandalized Union Cemetery in Redwood City west of El Camino Real.

The latest community effort to rehabilitate the 120-year-old burial grounds is being led by Redwood City's Archives Committee. This group, headed by Mrs. Roy N. Cloud and Mrs. Ferris W. Miles, seeks to have the Civil War veterans' graveyard designated a national historic

landmark. That could bring some budgeted federal funds to maintain the cemetery more adequately. Nothing fancy, just basic conservatorship. It's a sensible goal.

Over the years, responsibility for the tattered, eyesore site has bounced back and forth. The state, which originally got the six-acre, park-like property as a gift, virtually unloaded the maintenance burden on the city, though it's listed as a state historical landmark.

It has been a long, losing battle for Redwood City's municipal masters, other deeply concerned citizens and relatives of those buried there to rid the historic cemetery of repeated, senseless vandalism and littering. It has been a sad specter through the years — broken monuments and headstones and a seeming wanton disrespect by trespassers for the thousands buried there. Community adult and youth groups have tried periodic repairs and cleanup drives. But their vigilance alone isn't enough.

The immediate task of the archives campaigners is to gather evidence to show federal officials that there are families still living whose relatives are buried in Union Cemetery. The last burial there was in 1959. Official burial lists after the 1930s seem to have been lost in the shuffle of time. So, it is going to take intense digging in county records and family memory books to fill in the gaps. The more such names are rediscovered, the stronger will be the committee's case for national landmark status.

Those with information to help the Redwood City archivists in their project may contact Mrs. Cloud at 366-0488 or Mrs. Miles at 366-5371. They can help make the Union Cemetery a much prouder landmark — as it deserved to be from the start.



Vandals have demolished grave markers, time has wreaked its own slow-paced havoc in Redwood City's Union Cem

# Pioneer graveyard suffers rav

By Mike Lassiter

Tucked under a house on the Peninsula for safekeeping are two tombstones from the Union Cemetery.

The descendant of the Redwood City pioneers thus commemorated is afraid the headstones would be knocked over if she took them back. Or maybe worse, be stolen.

There is ample evidence to feed that fear.

What was a turn-of-the-century rally grounds for Memorial Day celebrations and the reading of the Gettysburg Address, today could pass for a Civil War battleground.

Over the years, vandals and a lack of care has left this state historical landmark pretty much in rubble. And almost unnoticed, despite its location near the busy intersection of Highway 84 and El Camino Real.

At times, it has been suggested the estimated 1,700 to 2,000 graves be relocated, the tombstones leveled, and the site converted to a picnic area with barbecue pits.

But Jean Cloud and her fellow members of the Redwood City Library Archives Committee are out to lay such "bright ideas" to rest.

Their goal is to have the site placed

on the National Register of Historic Places. That would qualify the cemetery for possible federal funds for restoration.

To succeed, however, they must show the cemetery is not only old, but an historic spot with sufficient public interest in having it perpetuated.

There is no question about the cemetery's age. It dates back to the mid-1850s, when Redwood Slough was a teeming port, supported by shipping and the lumber industry.

Without any formal designation, the plot became the graveyard for the mushrooming community.

In 1859, San Franciscan Horace Hawes bought the tract of land that included the makeshift cemetery. He was less than enchanted with the graveyard, which some claimed had been originally an Indian burial ground.

To save the site, an association of citizens raised \$500 to buy the piece of land from Hawes. In the interim, the Legislature passed the first state regulations for cemeteries.

The timing made the Union Cemetery the first legally sanctioned cemetery in San Mateo County, and probably the first in the state.

However, there were some legal complications. And to settle the matter, the cemetery was deeded to Gov. John B. Weller and his successors.

Cloud said the nature of the problem remains a mystery. "Legal technicalities. As far as I know, that's what they have always just said."

In any case, the cemetery carried its unique status until 1962 when it was deeded by the state to Redwood City.

The name Union Cemetery didn't come by chance. It carried very definite political implications. The secessionist movement was brewing at the time and the cemetery association wanted to make its feelings known loud and clear, according to historians.

Buried in the cemetery are several Civil War veterans. As best as they can tell from burial records, all had fought on the Union side, Cloud said. "Not soldiers who had fallen on the field of battle. But veterans who had moved here."

The graveyard's demise began in the 1930s, a combination of the automobile and the emergence of perpetual care cemeteries.

The automobile made distant graveyards readily accessible. And furthermore, those cemeteries guaranteed the

grounds would always be cared for. This led many families to move their loved ones out of the Union Cemetery. Just how many bodies were moved and which ones is unclear.

What had been the final resting place of such luminaries as Horace Templeton, the county's first regent judge, and mapmaker S.M. Mezesville was the forerunner of Redwood City, changed in character. It became a pauper's graveyard, except for those with strong family tradition.

It has been at least 25 years since the Union Cemetery has been used.

Once or twice a year, the Scouts or some other group would come in to do some cleanup. And city, since it took over, occasional seniors in crews to cut back the foliage and sprinkle wood chips on the ground.

But most of the gravestones have been allowed to topple over. Several wooden grave markers are off the ground, leaning against crumbling concrete walls.

The elaborateness of several monuments has been victimized. Atop an inscription, "John H. Titus, Born Titusville, New Jersey, 1928. Died i



sl paced havoc in Redwood City's Union Cemetery, which dates from before the Civil War

Examiner / John Gorman

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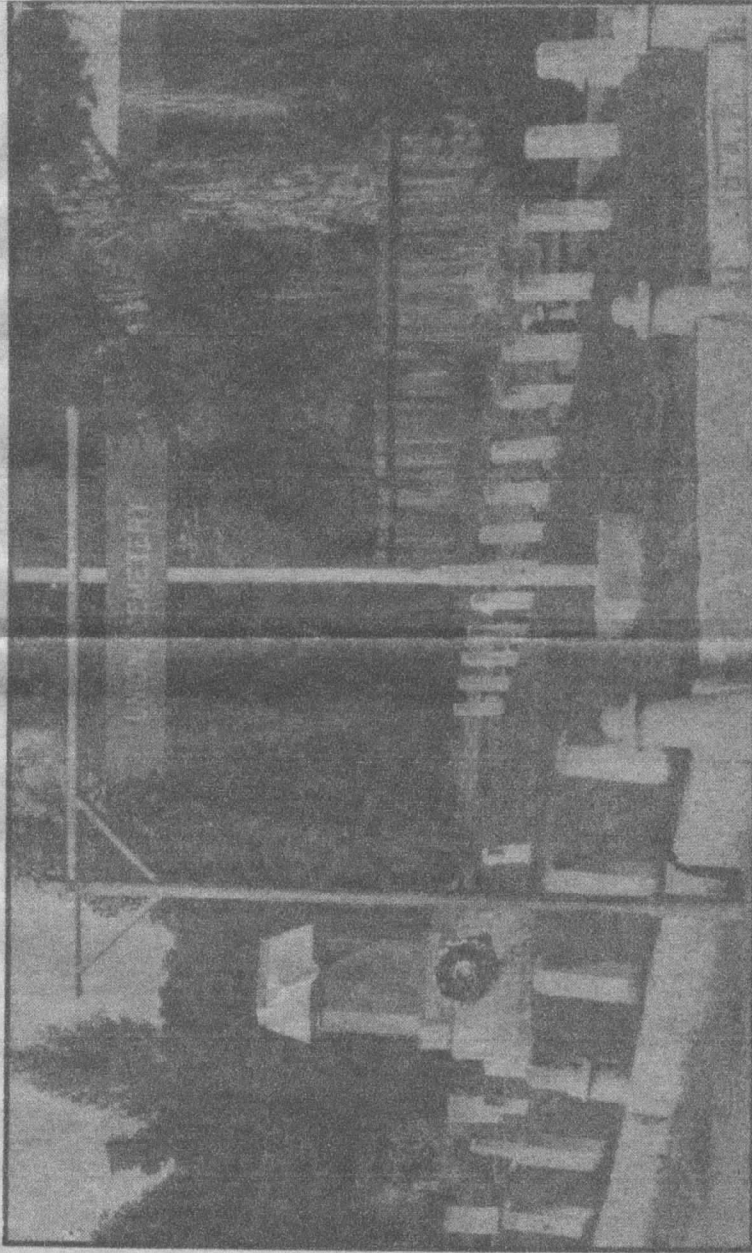
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Francisco April 29, 1891. Aged 63 years, 2 months and 7 days," is a decapitated statue. Where the visage used to be, now sits a straw cowboy hat. Since the archives committee put out the word it is looking to complete the history of the cemetery, Cloud said there have been many calls, including the tale from the woman with the tombstones. "There's lots of interest," she said. "Everybody wants to talk and tell about growing up in Redwood City. And tell how their grandfather came from Italy to here, from Massachusetts to here." From the inscriptions on the grave-stones, she could add England and Germany to that list. Cloud said their effort has gained momentum from the general upsurge in interest about genealogy. Since "Roots," she noted, "people are anxious to know where their ancestors are buried." The key to the chain across the Union Cemetery entrance is kept by the neighboring Crippon & Flynn Woodside Chapel. Three or four times a month, someone comes by to borrow the key, said Colin Flynn.

Some have relatives buried there and some are young people interested in the history of the headstones. Recently, an old man arrived on Flynn's doorstep. The man said he had come 2,000 miles to check the Union Cemetery to see if a relative of his is buried there. Cloud said her group is being as thorough as possible in documenting the unique characteristics of the cemetery and the interest in its restoration. "But we don't want to string it out two or three years," she said, "because in the meantime somebody else may get an idea to do something else with the cemetery." Redwood City Parks and Recreation Director Max Weeks, whose department now handles the cemetery's affairs, said the city hopes the study will provide enough information to consider whether it would be worth restoring the site. Whether there is enough interest or if it would be fiscally within reason remains to be seen, he said.

# A new look for Union Cemetery



Redwood City Library's Archives Committee hopes to resurrect Union Cemetery with federal funds. Photo by Anatole Burkin.

If the determination of two Redwood City residents pays off, Union Cemetery will eventually be restored. Jean Cloud and Nita Spangler, representing the Archives Committee of the Redwood City Library, have obtained aid from the University of California, Berkeley, to help record historical data surrounding the site.

Three students will analyze the site and make an application to place it on the National Registrar of Historical Places. They will begin the archeological study in early January.

The students, under the direction of Archeology Professor James Deetz, will photograph each stone and estimate when it was originally cut, said Cloud. Any recommendations they make about the cemetery's restoration will help put it in the running for federal funding, said Cloud.

At one time, rumors circulated around the city suggesting that the area should be converted to a park.

"Our concern is that from time to time, people get the idea to level it (Union Cemetery) off and perhaps build a park, or picnic site or something," explained Cloud. She noted that the cemetery is historically important because several prominent Redwood City residents are buried there.

The six-acre cemetery has 1700 stones, and it is estimated that there may be as many as 2000 bodies buried there, according to Spangler.

The cemetery, established in 1859, also has a special plot for Civil War veterans. The land was once part of Rancho de las Pulgas, and William Cary Jones was owner of a large parcel.

Jones later sold it to Horace Hawes, who objected about the cemetery and inspired the community to organize an association, according to Spangler.

The property was put in trust with the governor of California, and the title remained there for the next century. The cemetery was decided to Redwood City in

1962. In 1964 it was registered as California Historic Landmark No. 816.

In recent years, the cemetery has been plagued by vandals, who have destroyed stones and littered the area.

Spangler and Cloud will work on the project with Max C. Weeks, director of parks and recreation. Since the city owns the cemetery, the city council would have to approve any proposals, said Weeks.

by Eren Goknar

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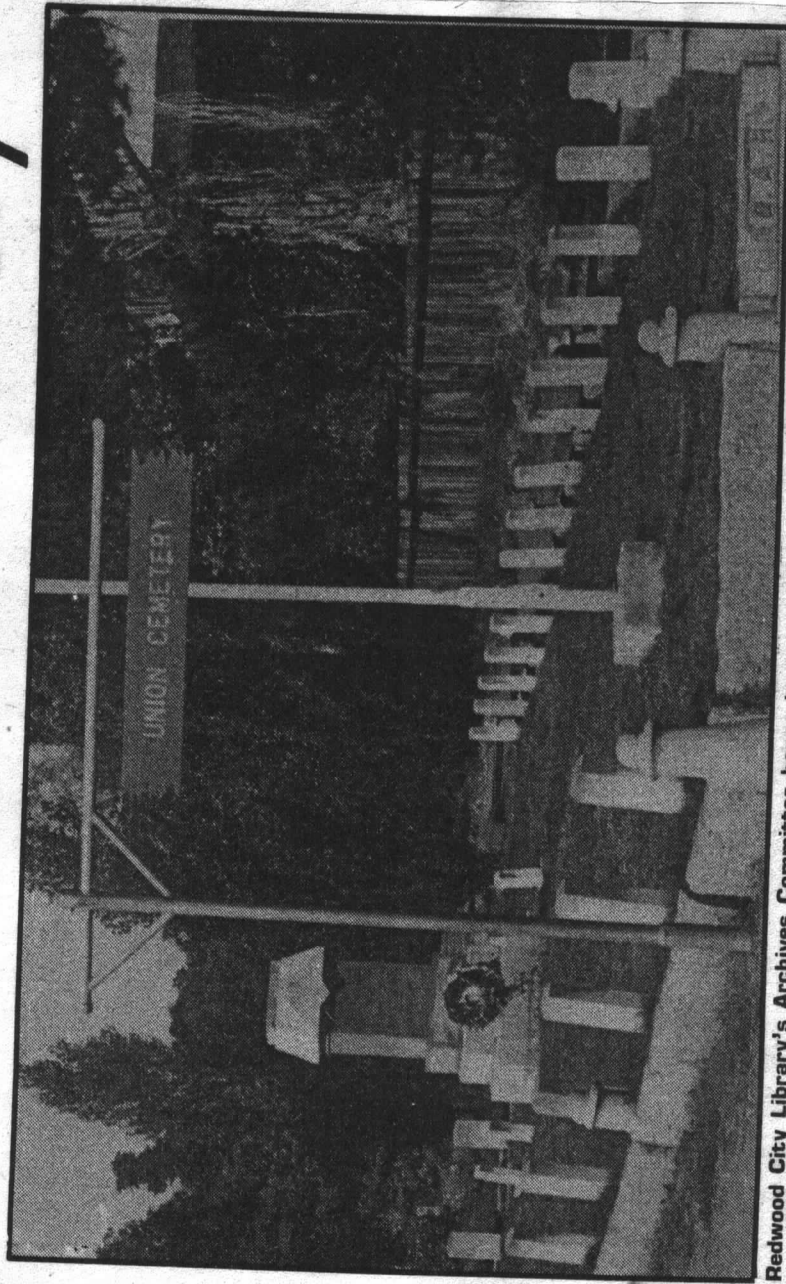
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12/26/79