

Redwood City volunteers sprucing up graveyard

Effort underway to preserve 6-acre cemetery dating back to 1859

By Lorna Fernandes
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

REDWOOD CITY — Anxious to preserve a slice of their local heritage, a group of volunteers is working to restore Union Cemetery to its former days of glory.

The serene, 6-acre cemetery was once a picturesque graveyard for some of San Mateo County's most prominent families, esteemed citizens and respected soldiers, including about 40 veterans of the Civil War.

But neglect, weather and vandals weakened the granite tombstones and rusted the metal fences that proudly formed borders for each family plot.

In 1993, a handful of Redwood City residents formed the Historical Union Cemetery Association, a group dedicated to restoring the deteriorating cemetery.

The association has blossomed into a non-profit organization with about 100 members who have volunteered a total of 1,000 hours removing weeds, pruning trees and researching the families buried there.

The work is important and needs to be done before it is too late, according to Helen Graves, a Redwood City resident and founding member of the association.

"Each gravestone tells a story of life in Redwood City at the time," Graves said. "It is important to preserve this history for future generations."

Union Cemetery was made a California Historical Landmark in 1967 and named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, yet a decade later it was still a weed-strewn lot of overgrown trees, monstrous rose bushes and broken headstones.

Graves and the other volunteers painstakingly examined county records of deaths during the mid-1800s to mid-1900s to determine how many people were buried there.

"We have at least 2,300 recorded burials here," Graves said. But many more may have been buried in a potters field located on the Woodside Avenue border of the cemetery.

The original Union Cemetery Association, a group that bought the property in 1859, deeded it to the state with then Gov. John Weller as a trustee. The state returned it to Redwood City in 1962. It is now under the jurisdiction of



DARRYL BUSH

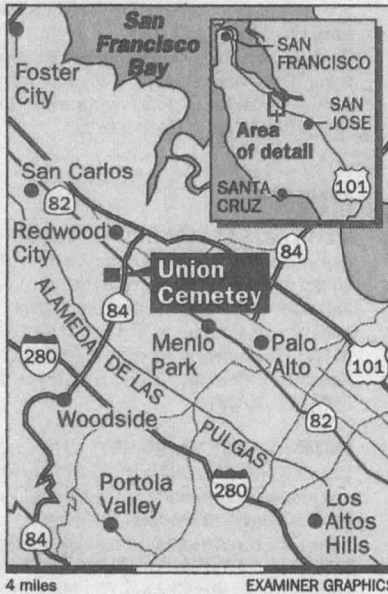
A major restoration effort is now under way at the 1859 Union Cemetery.

the city's Parks and Recreation Department.

Although Union Cemetery lies south of El Camino Real, wedged between Woodside Road and a row of apartment buildings, its flora of mature oak, pine and poplar trees break the distractions of the bustling thoroughfares.

Since the original families landscaped and tended their own burial plots, most of the flowers and shrubs growing in the cemetery were planted almost a century ago.

Roses were a popular grave site shrub, and Union Cemetery must have been ablaze with color at the turn of the century, said Michael O'Brien, chair of the historical association's horticulture



committee.

Although most of the roses were destroyed when the city sprayed the site to eradicate overgrown poison ivy, O'Brien and other volunteers are propagating some surviving heritage roses to reintroduce to the cemetery.

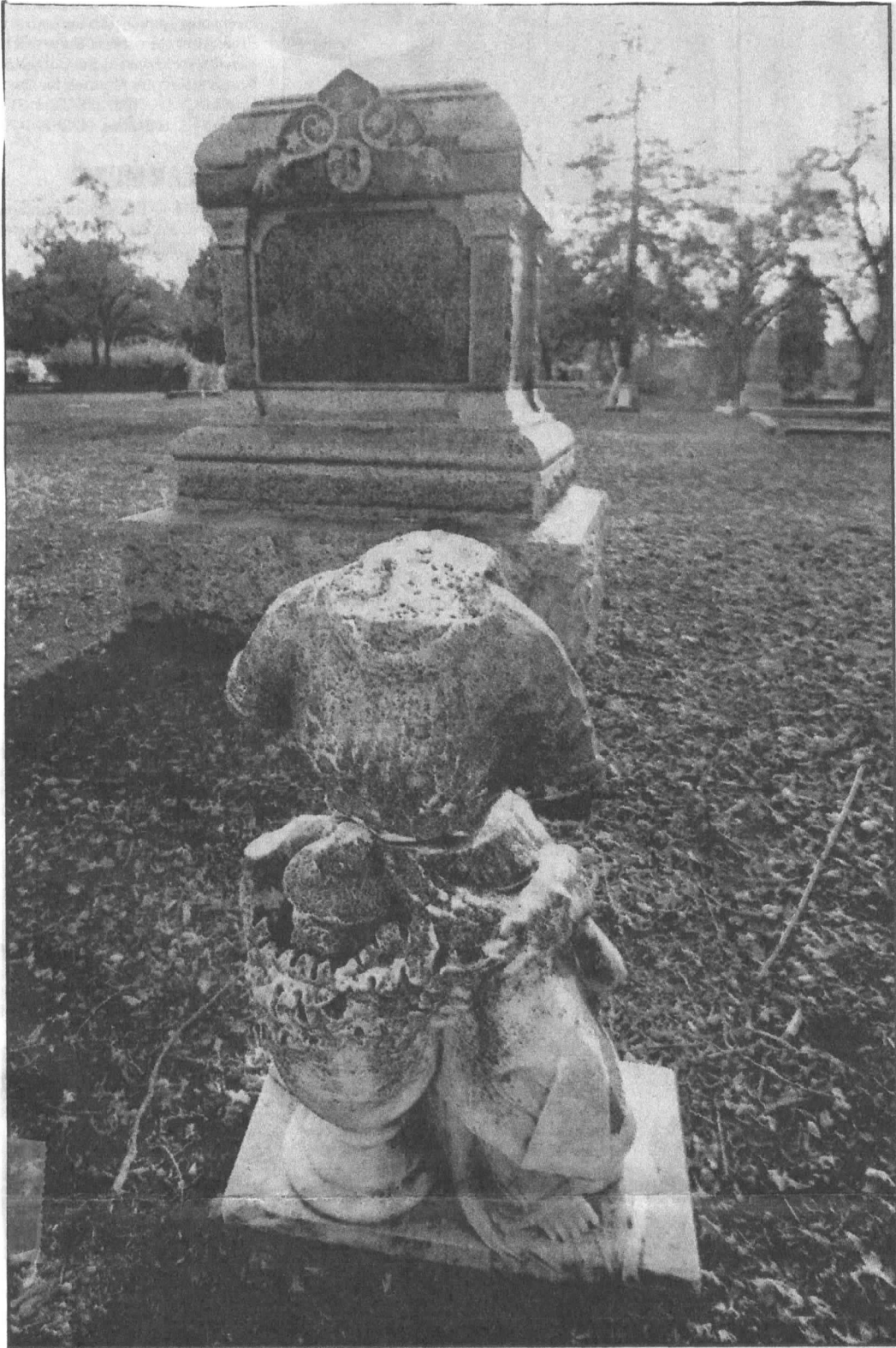
Creamy iris, yellow daffodils and pink amaryllis lilies are also an eye-catching site in the spring, O'Brien said.

Thorny climbing roses will eventually be planted along all the borders of the tri-

angular cemetery to deter vandals from jumping the chain-link fences, a problem that has constantly plagued the cemetery.

The lime-green graffiti on grave-

[See CEMETERY, P-3]



DARRYL BUSH

Vandal damaged headstones can be seen throughout Union Cemetery in Redwood City.



A life-size statue of a Union soldier once marked the part of Union Cemetery in Redwood City containing Civil War grave sites. Only the pedestal is left, with the damaged statue in storage awaiting restoration.

◆ *CEMETERY from P-1*

Redwood City spruces up graveyard

stones and carved tree trunks are sometimes discouraging after spending a weekend cleaning the cemetery, Graves said, but the volunteers do what they can.

"We're going to the city for approval to graffiti-coat the headstones," Graves said. The waxy coating will make it easier to clean off any markings.

Meanwhile, volunteers spend one Saturday morning a month pulling weeds, pruning trees and picking up trash.

"Several Eagle scouts have earned badges by removing rust from metal fences," O'Brien said.

The mission of the historic association is threefold:

- ▶ To restore the landscape, headstones and fences in the cemetery to their original state.
- ▶ To identify and record all the bodies in the cemetery.
- ▶ To make the cemetery a place where students can easily research San Mateo County history.

Benjamin Fox, San Mateo County's first judge; the Littlejohn family, members of which owned the first house in Redwood City; and Sarah Wallis, the mother of the suffrage movement in California, were all buried in Union Cemetery, Graves said.

But not all the graves are marked. And all the wooden headstones were removed and placed in storage after it was discovered that transients were using them for firewood, Graves said.

A life-size statue of a Union soldier once marked the plot containing the Civil War grave sites, but repeated vandalism forced the city to remove it. It also is in storage awaiting restoration.

Graves dreams of the day the cemetery will resemble the quiet refuge it once was.

"Union Cemetery has so much to offer," she said. "I would like everyone to have a chance to enjoy it."

◆
Union Cemetery cleanups are from 9 a.m. to noon on the fourth Saturday of every month. The cemetery is located on Woodside Road, just south of El Camino Real.

Planners okay

Almanac
3/15/1995

Union Cemetery historic plan

By Bob Distefano

The Planning Commission this past week adopted the Union Cemetery Historic Site Cultural Resources Action Plan, a modest plan to preserve and promote the 6.5 acre 136-year-old cemetery off Woodside Road, listed on the National Register of Historic Spaces and also a State and City historical landmark.

The Planning Commission added its approvals to earlier ones given by the Park and Recreation Commission this past February 23 and the Historical Resources Advisory Committee this past February 28.

With the City down to only \$5,000 of an original seed grant of \$15,000, Park and Recreation and Community Services management analyst Ramon A. Aguilar, an advisor on Union Cemetery, said the cultural resources action plan was only made possible by the volunteer work of the Historic Union Cemetery Association, a non-profit organization involved with Union Cemetery, with the advice and consent of City staffers.

The Planners gave their approval despite the several criticisms made of the plan by city government watcher

Nita Spangler in a letter to City Manager Ed Everett.

Spangler had asked Everett to withdraw the plan from the Planning commission agenda "until such time that the matter can be reviewed by someone competent in historic preservation resource management."

Aguilar told Planning Chairman Ken McCoy and other Planning Commissioners that three years ago Spangler elected to opt out of the process. "We realized that the Park Department and her had reached a level where we could no longer work together. In fact I even went to her home and talked to her and said, 'Nita, join us. The train is getting ready to leave the station. Many people are jumping on. Be a part of it. Maybe, we won't agree with you but be part of it anyway. Insert your views, your concerns in the group; make it part of the ongoing debate.' She refused to be a part of that effort," Aguilar alleged.

In her letter to Everett, Spangler charged there had been indiscriminate dumping of "tons of gravel" in Union Cemetery which would make it "difficult if not impossible to conduct investigations into what is under the surface."



From Page 1.

these things: we have no money," Aguilar told the Planning Commission.

In June 1992, the City spent \$5,000 on aerial topography maps of the cemetery where the first burial was in 1859 and there were more than 2,000 registered burials and about 150 disinterrments before Redwood City prohibited any more burials there in the 1950s.

Aguilar said another \$5,000 went to supporting the efforts of volunteers to do a physical and photography inventory of the cemetery; with the Park and Recreation Department "sitting" on the final \$5,000 "waiting to see what else we could use it for to benefit the cemetery."

HUAC treasurer Shirley Masters said her group had some 90 members including some out of the area and out of the state.

Aguilar said the "remains" would be on display the first week in May of the old life-sized zinc statue of the Union Soldier that was first erected by the Grand Army of the Republic in 1889 and first vandalized in the 1950s and shattered in 1969.

The display will be part of the historic preservation activities in the City. HUAC hopes to begin raising money to create a new casting of the Union Soldier.

There are some 40 veterans of the Civil War buried in Union Cemetery, which also includes the grave of Samuel Mezes, the founder of Redwood City, originally called Mezesville.

Among other things she said there was a plan to plant more roses along the fences bordering the apartment houses and called them a "high maintenance planting."

HUAC official Michael O'Brien said that the cemetery had historic roses which had survived over the years without any care and more of the same kind would be planted from cuttings.

Spangler criticized the Cultural Resources Action Plan as "not a Cultural or Historic Resource Management Plan as described by the Interior Department in their publications." She said, "It does not cover the content nor is it in the language of the historic preservationist, archaeologist, anthropologist or anyone else with training in that craft."

"In the ideal world if we had the kind of money that Mrs. Spangler is talking about, we could do all these things but we don't. Our budget in the Park and Recreation Department has been contracting for the last three or four years and it appears it will contract a little bit more for another year or two. We're in no position to do any of

See Page 2. ←

Almanac 3-15-1995

BY ALAN SISENWEIN
Staff Reporter

In the 1850s, Redwood City bustled with sailors, lumberjacks and teamsters involved in the thriving lumber trade.

Through on-the-job accidents and old age, many of these 19th century workmen eventually took up permanent residence in Union Cemetery. Other local pioneers, including dozens of Civil War veterans, also joined the graveyard's subterranean populace.

Located on Woodside Road, the cemetery stands as a reminder of Redwood City's history.

For decades the cemetery was falling into ruin. About three years ago, local volunteers and the city started a project to restore the graveyard to its original appearance.

"Everybody (in the cemetery) is important to the history of this area - no matter if they were a blacksmith, harness maker or whatever," said Jean Cloud, president of the Historic Union Cemetery Association,

Union Cemetery see renewal, restoration

Inc. (HUCA).

A nonprofit organization, HUCA's volunteers seek to restore and preserve the cemetery.

Noting that the cemetery was founded in 1859, Cloud said many of the city's most prominent pioneers are buried there. Two such individuals were Benjamin F. Fox, San Mateo County's first judge, and William Holder, the first person to build a home in Redwood City.

The cemetery itself was christened "Union" because local residents wanted to show their support for national solidarity when the nation was on the verge of splitting between North and South, Cloud said.

In 1889, 24 years after the Civil War ended, a plot was dedicated to Union veterans. Over 40 former Northern soldiers were interred in the graveyard.

One Civil War veteran was Lt. George Filkins, a white officer who served in an African-American regiment. Cloud said another soldier buried in the yard survived Andersonville, the infamous Georgia prison camp where 13,000 prisoners died of disease and exposure.

Cloud added that many Southerners emigrated to Redwood City after the Civil War, and some may have been Confederate veterans. But none boasted of their rebel past in the pro-Union city. Cloud said



Union: Cemetery repaired

Continued from 1A

Restoring the past

As a reflection of the cemetery's historical importance, local residents lobbied for five years to get it listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Inducted to this list in 1983, the land cannot be significantly altered without federal approval.

Despite this achievement, the cemetery continued to fall apart through a combination of neglect and vandalism.

According to Ramon Aguilar, a city staff liaison to HUCA, three years ago the trees were untrimmed and weeds grew as high as three feet. Pieces of broken monuments lay strewn throughout the yard.

"It looked like it had been abandoned," Aguilar said.

One of the cemetery's most prominent monuments, a Union soldier leaning on a rifle, was smashed to pieces in 1969.

For years local history buffs argued over how best to restore the graveyard. In 1992, however, HUCA was formed to take action.

It joined with the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, which manages the property, to restore the site.

This sentinel will rise again: A statue of a union soldier stood guard over the union cemetery in Redwood City until it was toppled and vandalized in 1969. The statue is in the process of being restored to its original condition and placement.

REDWOOD CITY LIBRARY/TRIBUNE

Some of HUCA's 100-plus members prune the graveyard monthly.

Cloud said HUCA's ultimate goal is to turn the cemetery into a historic park.

HUCA raised \$1,500 to replace 18 smashed gravestones with reproductions, and Aguilar said the city and HUCA soon hope to replace some more.

"We're slowly trying to bring it back (to its original appearance)," Aguilar said. "I think we're starting to succeed."

But not everyone agrees with the city and HUCA's approach to restoring the cemetery.

Nita Spangler, a Redwood City resident who played a large role getting the graveyard listed on the National Register of Historic Places, said a professional preservationist should have been hired to oversee the project.

While she complimented HUCA for keeping the grounds clean, she characterized the

preservation effort as an "amateur approach."

"It's like the difference between building a house with your own plan and having an architect do it," she said. "I think they need professional help in doing it."

Despite these criticisms, HUCA members remain enthusiastic about their efforts. Cloud said a drive is underway to raise about \$25,000 to restore the Union soldier statue.

"A lot of people want to see that soldier back," she said.

Other projects in the works include restoring the abundance of roses which once thrived in the yard and repairing the cemetery's iron gates.

HUCA's members are driven by a love of history, Cloud said.

"It's a great group we have," she said. "They all just love that cemetery."

For more information about HUCA, call 366-0488.

again in Union Cemetery

Vandals have repeatedly wrecked bronze sculpture

By Kim Vo
STAFF WRITER

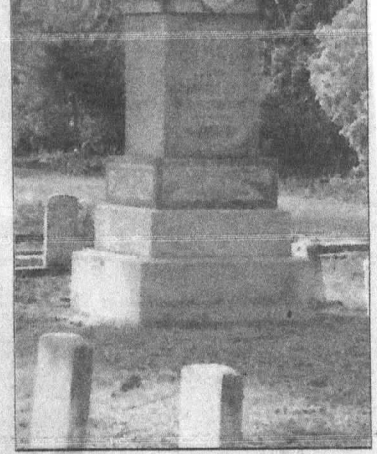
REDWOOD CITY — As soldiers go, the one at Union Cemetery wasn't very tough.

Sure, he watched over guarded over the Grand Army of the Republic soldiers buried in the cemetery's eastern point, but he also had his rifle stolen and let vandals get the jump on him three times.

Still, folks here hold a soft spot for the nearly 7-foot Civil War soldier and they're hoping to resurrect him this year. The Historic Union Cemetery Association has raised \$25,000 to have a sculptor re-

create the soldier from vintage photos and recast him from his shattered bronze remains.

Union Cemetery, located on Woodside Road just west of El Camino Real, is the final resting place for some 2,400 County pioneers and their descendents. The six-acre cemetery dates back to 1859 and is the only one in The County on the National Register of Historic Places, boasting what some consider among the best examples of Victorian funerary art in the area.



JOHN GREEN — Staff

Site where union soldier statue guarded over soldiers in Redwood City.

Please see **Soldier**, NEWS-7

SAN MATEO COUNTY TIMES

Sim Fines
1.28.1998

Soldier: Wore a Confederate cape

Continued from NEWS-1

The group is now collecting money to transport him to and from a Monterey foundry where he'll be re-created and install him under lights "so people won't be knocking it down again in the night," Jean Cloud, association president, said. Cloud's not sure how much the transportation and lighting will cost.

Veterans purchased the soldier in 1884. Sometime between then and the early 1900s, his rifle was stolen. Local folklore says the thief was sent to San Quentin prison for stealing a firearm.

The soldier was toppled by vandals in 1957. Money was collected and the statue was replaced the following year.

A decade later, on Halloween night, pranksters "inflicted near-fatal wounds upon the bronze soldier," newspapers reported at the time. The collection pot was passed again and the soldier was back up May 29, 1969.

It was a short-lived resurrection. Four days later, vandals came again and pushed the soldier off his pedestal, smashing him to bits.

City officials picked up the pieces of his bronze body and stored them in various places around the city.

The pedestal has been empty since then, except on Memorial Day. Since 1971, volunteers have donned a soldier's uniform and stood on the pedestal during ceremonies.

The soldier won't be back in time for this Memorial Day, association members say, but they hope to have him attending the 1999 ceremony, standing on his pedestal, surrounded by security lights — and wearing the wrong cape.

The sculptor recreating the statue discovered in her research that the Union soldier was wearing a Confederate cape, said F.G. Hutchinson, a member of the cemetery association. Members decided to follow "historical accuracy" by keeping, well, the inaccurate cape.

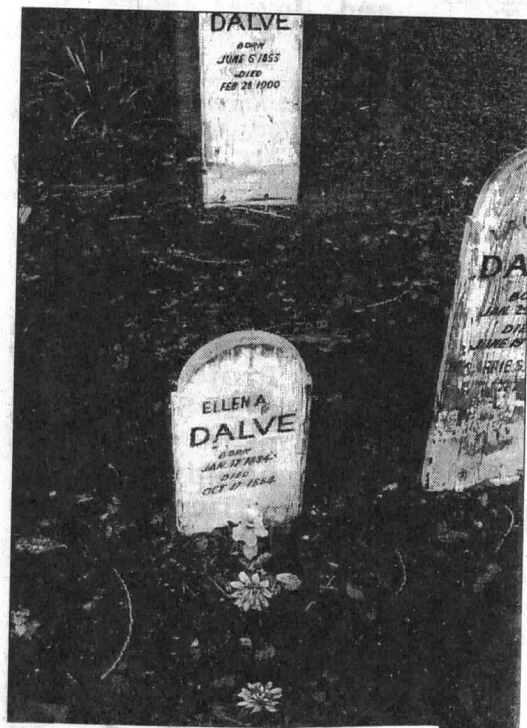
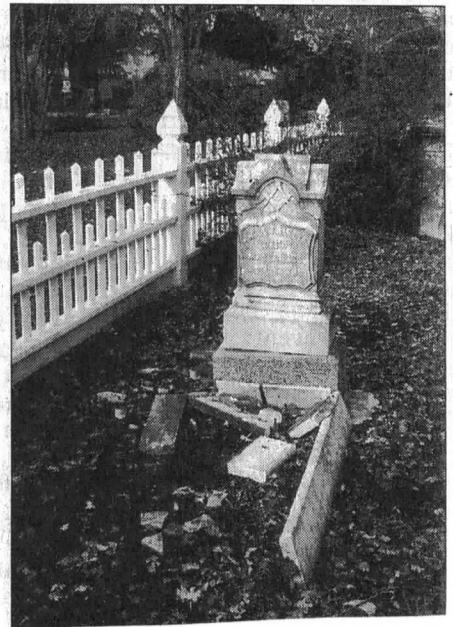
"People who knew there had been a statue there and remember seeing it wanted to see it back," Hutchinson said. "And we figured what they're looking for is a statue of what they remember."

To help, send donations to the Historic Union Cemetery Association, P.O. Box 610033, Redwood City, CA 94061.

Stones

taken back

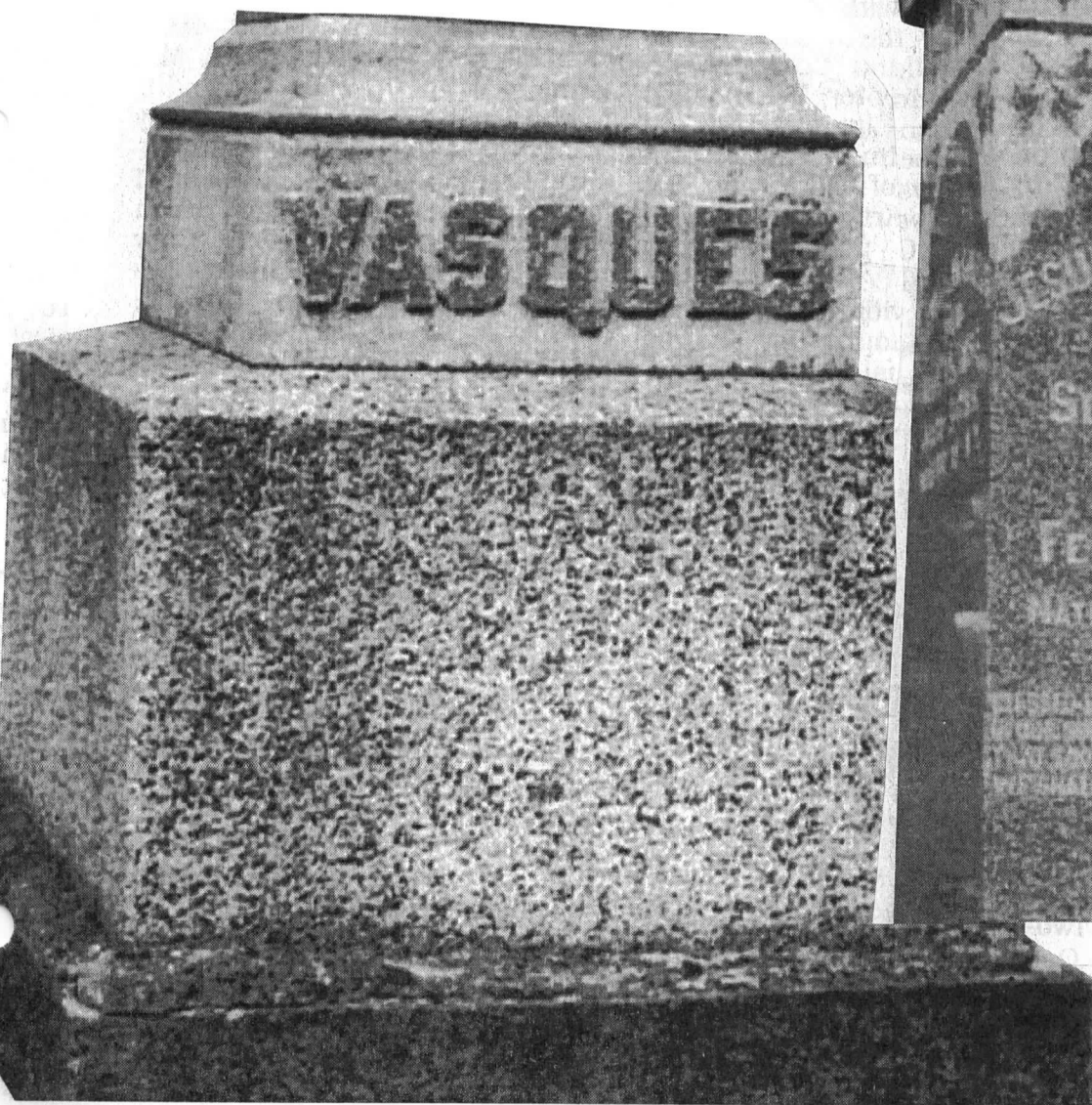
San Mateo County Times



Cemetery evokes city's rich history

Many of the century old tombstones have been carefully whitewashed and the lettering repainted. Although several of the gravesites are quite old, and their inhabitants long forgotten, many Redwood City residents leave mementos. Some of the sturdier tombstones in Union Cemetery, such as the one at right, have withstood the test of time.

Photos by Sally Richards



1/15/1999
SM Tim

WOODSIDE Road used to be the gateway to Redwood

City from the mountains. It was where redwood trees were brought to the shore and rafted up the Peninsula to build San Francisco.

Instead of leading up to some of the most beautiful (and expensive) houses in Northern California, it was a dirt road well-traversed by horse-drawn wagons.

There was a lot of activity along Woodside Road. El Camino Real was a dirt road trekked by horse and wagon with the destination of the shimmering Pacific Ocean.

There weren't many cemeteries on the Peninsula in those days. If someone died, they were more often than not buried on their property, or somewhere along the trail they had been traveling.

Many modern day Pen

Sally RICHARDS



insula gardeners have found human remains in their rose gardens. Death was not such a big deal as it is now. There were no standards for coffins, pine would do just fine, and no one would have seen the practicality in the standards set in today's funeral industry.

It was a much simpler time.

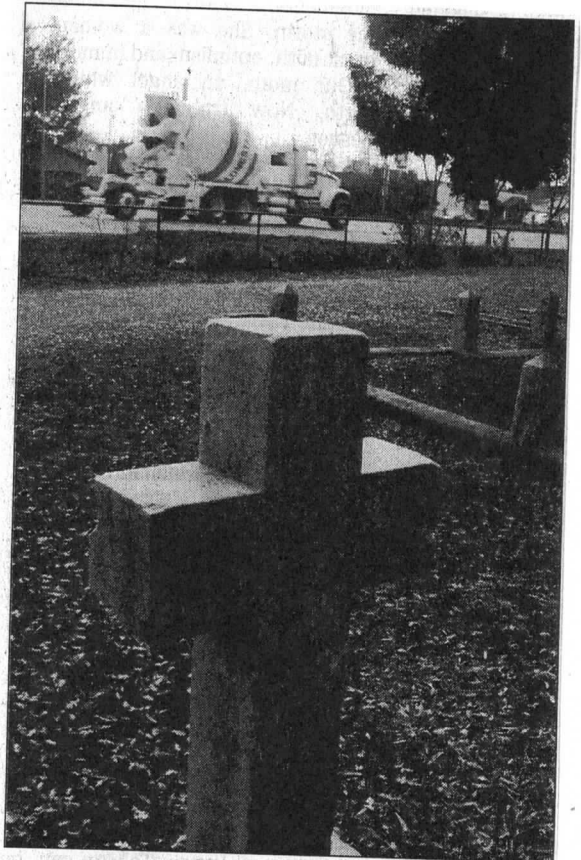
When San Mateo County was formed, in 1856, Redwood City was about the only Peninsula outpost that really looked like the beginnings of a town. The city had several names, including Redwood Landing (since it had the only dock on the Peninsula), Embarcadero and Mezesville.

Simon Mezes was the Arguello family attorney and responsible for

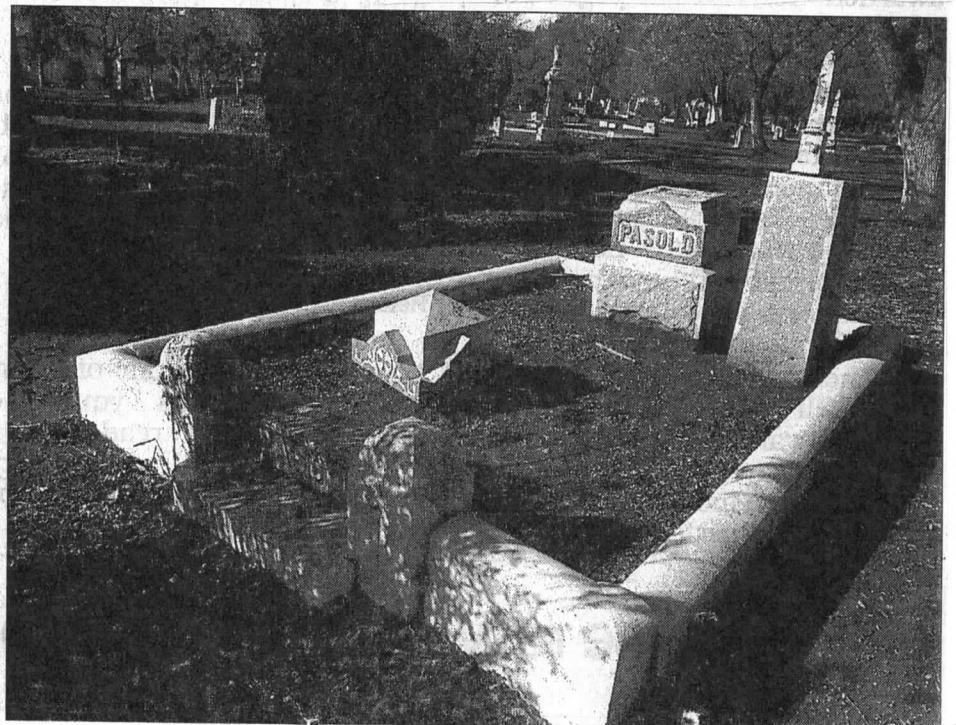
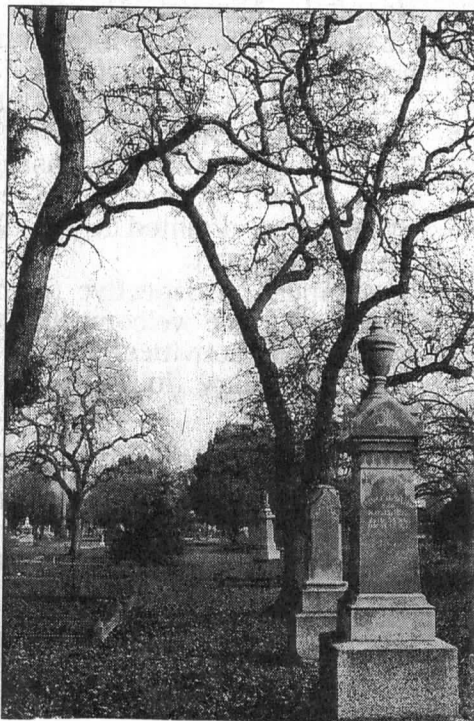
Please see **Cemetery**, LOCAL-3

1-15-1999

SM Times



Bay Area earthquakes since 1906 have aided the elements in toppling monuments.



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founding Redwood City. Mezes, an attorney of good reputation, secured the Mexican title in U.S. court to the 35,000-acre Pulgas Rancho (property extending from San Mateo Creek to Palo Alto). The Arguellos rewarded him with the property that would become Redwood City.

When squatters were forced to purchase the property they had staked, a town began to form. And as people are apt to do, they began to die. It was in the 1850s when people began burying their dead in an area located between today's Hess and Woodside roads and Poplar Avenue.

In actuality, the property had been sold to a San Franciscan who didn't fancy his property being used as a cemetery. He tried to have the cemetery removed, but found that fighting people to relocate their loved ones was much more difficult than just selling the property. And that's just what he did.

He sold the six acres to the Union Cemetery Association, an organization formed specifically for the purpose of preserving the property, for \$500. At that same time, the state Legislature passed a law regulating the way cemeteries were managed. The law went into effect before Union Cemetery was fully formed, so it was the first cemetery established under the new articles, and therefore the very first "official" burial ground in California.

Not long thereafter, a Native American mound, assumed to be graves, was leveled in the western section of the property. As time went on, more than 2,400 bodies were buried on the property, including 40 Civil War veterans, 100 "unknowns," a man identified as a "Chinaman" and another who was said only to have been "found hung."

The cemetery took on the name "Union" because the locals wanted to show their solidarity for national solidarity during the Civil War. No one of great celebrity or notoriety was

ever buried at Union Cemetery; it was a real people's cemetery.

There are some people in Union Cemetery who did make a difference to the community in which they lived: James Peace, a man known for raising the first American (prior to statehood) flag in San Mateo County; Captain John Greer, the founder of Woodside; William Littlejohn, who built the first bridge across Redwood Creek; Benjamin Fox, San Mateo's first county judge; William Holder, the first person to build a house in Redwood City; and even a pauper who was said to be a descendant of Napoleon.

Many men have been remembered in historical accounts about the cemetery, but not very many women. The first female to be buried there after the state laws were in place was 4-year-old Anna Douglas. There was also Loviah Starr, who crossed the Plains in a covered wagon from Ohio in 1860.

In the center of the Civil War veteran section of the cemetery (located in the eastern area), the statue of a Union soldier once stood on a pedestal overlooking his fellow Grand Army of the Republic soldiers. The metal statue had been toppled and repaired on many occasions and finally disappeared from the cemetery altogether. Another statue was beheaded.

The cemetery has had its share of vandalism since 1906, when a fence was burned and tombstones broken. Many families removed the markers from gravesites and took them home for safekeeping.

Some even removed the bodies and reburied them in safer cemeteries in Colma. Simon Mezes was one of those so moved.

In 1983, the property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and more people began to hear about the cemetery that boasts some fine examples of Victorian funerary.

The Redwood City Parks and Recreation Department has since taken over the responsi-

1/18/1999

Cemetery:

1/18/1999
Civil War veterans buried there
San Mateo Co. Times

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bility of keeping up the cemetery. Over the years, Memorial Day commemorations have taken place and one man even dressed up as a Union soldier and stood on an empty pedestal.

Many say that you can tell a lot about a city by the way it treats its dead. The people of Redwood City have a passionate relationship with Union Cemetery.

Today, the cemetery is well kept considering its age. The Historic Union Cemetery Association (HUCA, P.O. Box 610033, Redwood City, CA 94061) keeps a close eye on the property and does what it can to encourage volunteers and members to keep the area clean and groomed.

For much of the cemetery, time has been a harsh adversary and has devastated many of the tombstones that lie on the ground where someone has tried piecing them back together. Grand trees shade the peaceful park-like cemetery that opens up to Woodside Road.

Wooden tombstones from the turn of the century have been delicately whitewashed and the names repainted in neat black lettering, and momentous and plastic flowers have been left at graves of people who have been dead for more than 100 years.

Redwood City has taken special care to tend to its dead. HUCA even managed to raise \$25,000 to have the sculpture of the Civil War soldier replicated from photos and recast from its shattered bronze remains.

History is important to Redwood City, even recreating the mistakes that were originally made. The sculptor doing the research to replicate the original statue recently discovered that the Union soldier was wearing a Confederate cape.

The real story that went on behind the scenes of the original casting is anyone's guess. Perhaps a prank by a sculptor with Confederate loyalties. Regardless, the historic accuracy of the original statue will win

over when the new soldier takes his place this year on the pedestal lit by security floodlights that will hopefully insure his safe residency for the next 100 years.

"Right now, we are really in a thrilling time," says Jean Cloud, president of HUCA. "After all these years, we finally have enough money to replicate the soldier, he's at the foundry right now."

Because there was once a time, before the city owned the cemetery, that the property was deeded to the governor of California and his successors, Gray Davis has been invited to attend the reinstatement of the soldier May 8-9 (preceding National Preservation Week), when a big public celebration is planned.

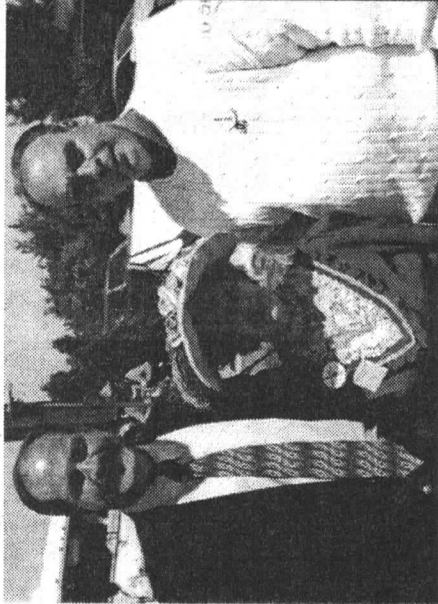
Cloud is researching turn-of-the-century obituaries to uncover the identities of the unknown bodies. The Boy Scouts of America are helping the city keep the park maintained and getting ready for the party.

"My husband told me that when he was a boy, all of his school would come out on Memorial Day and someone would read the Gettysburg Address and someone else would play 'Taps' and then someone would sing 'America.' Then, women would wait by the gates and give each of the children an ice cream cone on the way out," says Cloud of why she became interested in the cemetery. "Now, the group I belong to, the Daughters of the American Revolution, do that same thing each Memorial Day."

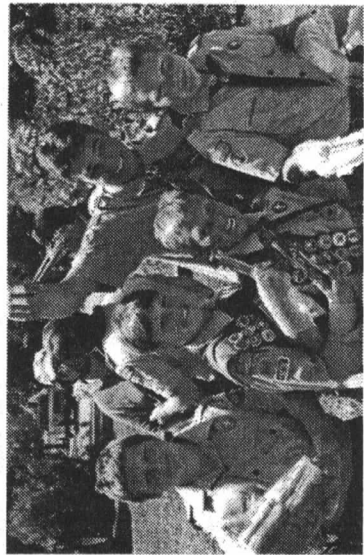
HUCA schedules tours for the public by appointment. Call Jeanne Thivierge, local history specialist, at the Redwood City Library at (650)780-7030 to find out how to purchase Redwood City historic tours for \$5. The walking tour guide has a map and history of Union Cemetery. To reach Cloud, call 650-366-0488 during business hours.

Sally Richards is a local historian, an international freelance journalist and author. She can be reached at Wryte4u@aol.com.

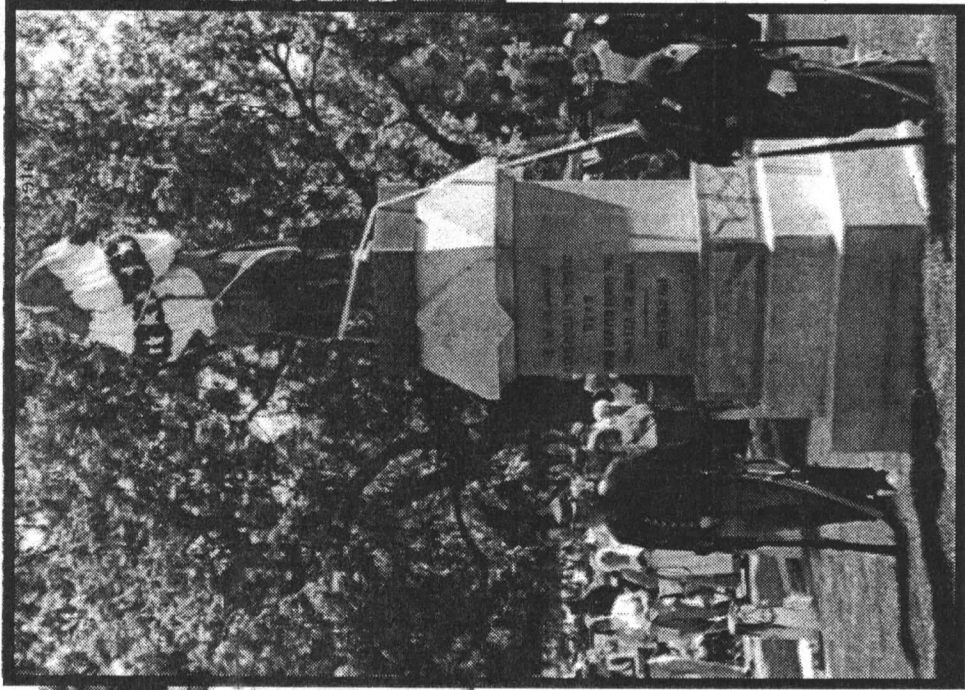
★ REDWOOD CITY UNVEILS ★ STATUE OF THE UNION SOLDIER



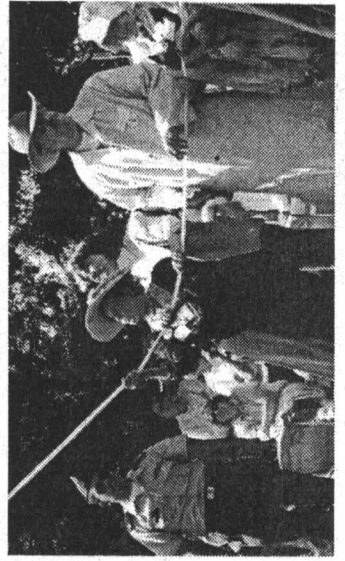
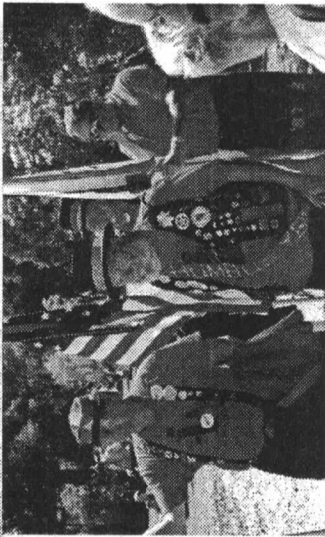
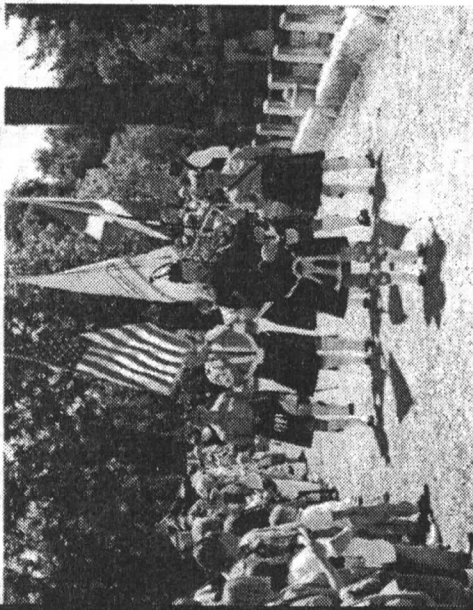
President of the Historical Union Cemetery Association Mrs. Jean Cloud gets congratulated by Councilman Matt Leipzig and Sheriff Don Horsley.



Boy Scout Troop #991 served up some tasty hot dogs!



Soldiers stand guard before the unveiling



Mrs. Jean Cloud starts the unveiling song with HUCA Board members.

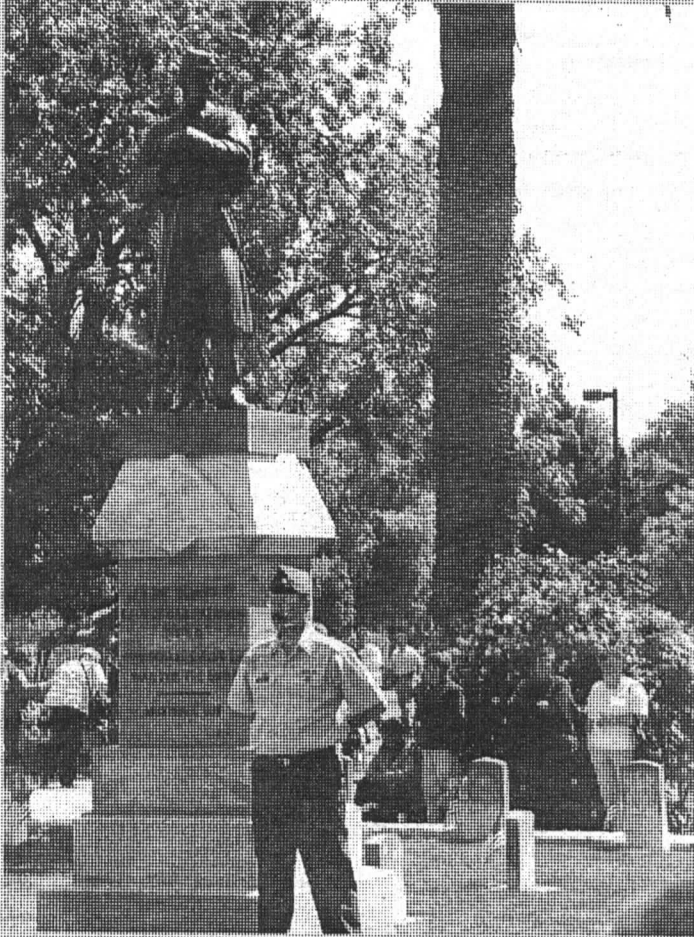
5/12/1999

132

May 12, 1999

RWC Almanac

Redwood City Welcomes Back Union Soldier



It was a glorious and proud day as over 300 community members and dignitaries welcomed back the Union Soldier at the Union Cemetery last Saturday. See page 7 for a photo review of the event and Steve's column for all the details.

As I was saying....

I told you it was going to be a spectacular event. I told you, you would regret it if you missed it. But by the looks of the crowd on Saturday not many residents did miss the unveiling of the Statue of the Union Soldier at the Union Cemetery on Woodside Road. It was one of those special hometown events that you really can't describe because it was so special but I will try. The cemetery looked fantastic with the red, white and blue flying high, as the event goers were treated to live music, history of the cemetery plots and of course the return of our Union Soldier. Assemblyman **Ted Lempert** and Vice Mayor **Ira Ruskin** paid tribute at the event by honoring us with sentimental and short speeches honoring **Mrs. Jean Cloud** and members of the Historical Union Cemetery board. Other politicians attending were council members **Dick Claire**, **Matt Leipzig** and **Jeff Ira**. Mayor **Diane Howard** had to miss the event to attend a wedding in Oregon. Sheriff **Don Horsley** was also there as was former Mayor **Bob Bury** and former councilman **Ian Bain**. It was great to see so many residents turning out to watch our city history unfold. Park and Recreation

Supervisor **Ramon Aguilar** was acknowledged for his hard work and dedication to the project. The Boy Scouts of

America, Troop 991 from Redwood City have been working at the cemetery as a project of their own and cooked up some tasty hot dogs for everyone. The crowd sang hymns during the hour and a half dedication and cheered with pride as Cloud and her board unveiled the statue. Talk about goose bumps! The dedication brought out the old-timers as well as the young members of our community. It was a Kodak moment for sure. So when your driving down Woodside Road and see our soldier standing as a proud symbol of our community and for the many men and women who have fought for our country, give him a honk or better yet stop, get out of your car and pay tribute to the many community minded residents who worked so hard on this project by visiting the cemetery and enjoying another Redwood City landmark. Gee, I love this town!

by Steve Penna



May 19, 1999

THE INDEPENDENT SERVING REDWOOD CITY

HOMETOWN

Statue dedication



ROBERT PAUL

Civil War reenactors recently participated in a special ceremony on Saturday, May 8 at the Union Cemetery on Woodside Road in Redwood City. The ceremony was rededication of a statue of a Union soldier that was vandalized and removed over 30-years ago. Approximately 300 people were in attendance for the event.

Union Cemetery Was Deteriorated Even Back In 1911

*By Jean Cloud,
President
Historic Union
Cemetery Association*



Early photo of Union Soldier

(Courtesy RC archives)

by Jean Cloud

(Now that the status of the Civil War Soldier is back in its place, and many complimentary things have been said about cemetery improvements, it may be appropriate to relate some of the precarious situations that have happened at this historic place, alluded to as "deterioration" and "vandalism" and why it is a miracle that the cemetery is here today.

Throughout its history, there seems to have been a voice in the community which has come to Union Cemetery's rescue, and the 141-year-old cemetery is again on its way to becoming a source of pride in this area.)

**Redwood City Democrat
March 11, 1911**

"Must we be judged by this disgrace"

"Sacred resting place of the City's departed ones is being wantonly desecrated. Nearby residents make Union Cemetery a common ground where acts of vandalism are committed"

"One of the best known magazine writers of America has recently said that he could form a just estimate of a community by the care that a community gives to its dead.

"Granting that is true, is there a man or woman in Redwood City who would be willing to be judged by the conditions that exist at Union Cemetery?"

"The general condition of the cemetery has long been a matter of regret and apology. With here and there a well-kept lot, there have yet been many spots rankly overgrown with poison oak or weeds, many fences falling with age, and monuments undermined from the earthquake of five years ago.

"These conditions have been accepted as being part of an old cemetery and, if this were all, what was everybody's business might still have continued to be nobody's business.

"With the opening of the tracts adjoining the cemetery, matters have been infinitely worse. This place of the dead had become a common thoroughfare for the residents going and coming to their homes.

"Portions of the cemetery fence have been cut to provide rear exits and, in one place, a driveway gate has been put in that teams of various description may pass in and out.

"Bands of chickens wander about at will, scratching and digging from lot to lot. Instead of trying to keep these fowl at home, baseboards of the fence have been knocked off to allow them freer access.

"One of the atrocities that was recently witnessed was a band of some twenty odd chickens, digging under a floral piece of a newly made grave.

"Then, seeing some of their elders who were no respectors of the dead, the children have appropriated the place as a playground. Dodging balls or shots from toy guns is no uncommon experience of those who claim the right to visit the spot where their loved ones lie.

5/19/1999

"Graves covered with glass and broken vases, that have been made targets for those same guns, greet one on every side, and lucky are they who do not have the flowers stripped from the graves.

These are absolute facts, which call for immediate and determined action.

"The Town Trustees have signified their willingness to help in this matter. The Civic Section of the Women's Club, of which Mrs. Robert Brown is chairman, is ready to put its shoulder to the wheel, but

these cannot act alone. It would seem that the lot owners must be the ones to take definite steps toward forming a new cemetery association or reorganizing the old association, that this ground that is hallowed to many, may receive protection.

"There must be some of the older residents who can be of valuable assistance in the solution of this problem. Let us all then get to work quickly so that we may be quickly relieved of this disgrace that has been thrust upon the community."

(Again, some 60 years later, when Ray Spangler was editor of the Redwood City Tribune, his editorial on Union Cemetery appeared.)

"It's Amazing! Proposals to abandon Cemetery brings no outcry.

"With the event of the Five Points overpass, there is considerable discussion in town about the old Union Cemetery.

"Some one would make it over into a park, or develop it for apartments, and there is no protest."

"Let me give you a little history of the cemetery, derived from the pages of "The Illustrated History of San Mateo County, California by Moore and

DePue, 1878." His editorial then continued with the history."

(At this point in time, there were those who cared and, with their efforts and love, changed the destiny of our dear old cemetery.)