

JANUARY 2015

VOLUME V, ISSUE I

IN THIS ISSUE

Flooded Funerals	1
On The Shelf	1
President's Message	2
Editorial	2
Support Your Cemetery	3
2016 Tours & Events	3
A New Headstone	6

Flooded Funerals

The Great Flood of the winter of 1861-1862 was caused by a deadly combination of events. It was an El Niño year, though folks in 1861 didn't call it that. ⁽¹⁾ Strong atmospheric rivers are associated with El Niño years ⁽²⁾ and that winter's heavy rainfall was compounded by rivers and streams choked with debris from hydraulic gold mining.

The El Niño phenomenon recurs on two to seven year intervals and, although it occurs along the eastern Pacific on the west coast of South America, it induces large-scale anomalies in the atmosphere. Rainfall increases in Ecuador and northern Peru causing coastal flooding and erosion while droughts can occur in Indonesia and Australia. In stronger episodes, atmospheric anomalies are extensive enough to cause unusually severe winter weather at the higher latitudes of both North and South America.

Scientists have studied the Great Flood, gathering data from rain- and snow-fall throughout the Pacific Northwest that fall and winter and have concluded that an atmospheric river drove moisture north and dumped it on Oregon and northern California in disastrous amounts.

(Continued on page 4)

On The Shelf

In 1916 the wife of Edward Sanner died in Berkeley, California. She was born Sallie Belle Featherstone in Mississippi in 1854. In California she married a man named George Edward Walker which seems a little confusing, how could Mrs. George Walker be the wife of Edward San-

ner? Further, what does a woman who died in Berkeley in 1919 have to do with Sacramento's Historic City Cemetery in 2015?

Born in 1854, Sallie Belle Featherstone was the daughter of a Methodist preacher who ministered to Con-

(Continued on page 5)



President's Message

2015 was a busy year as we continued to work with the City of Sacramento to beautify the Cemetery and provide educational opportunities through historical tours for adults and school children. Funds were raised at the annual Lantern Tours to continue our support and we plan soon to renew our headstone repair project.

In January, letters were sent asking you to renew your support of the OCCC. I urge all to renew your membership and encourage your friends to join. Monies raised through memberships and events support headstone repair, maintenance of activities in the Visitor's Center (office supplies, com-

puter, phone lines, etc.) and memorials.

We're planning a number of events for 2016 beginning with Museum Day on Saturday, February 6 when the public may visit museums free of charge throughout the area. An Open Garden is planned for April, as are Saturday history tours and special ticketed events, culminating in the ever-popular Lantern Tours in October. All in all, 2016 should be a very busy year.

Thanks to all OCCC members and volunteers for making 2015 a successful and productive year.

*Connie Bettencourt, President
Old City Cemetery Committee*

Editorial—Why the Historic City Cemetery is important.

Over the years, cemeteries have gained national recognition as important historical sites. Sacramento's Historic city Cemetery received such recognition in 2014, joining more than 2,600 sites in California, several of which are also cemeteries. These sites are recognized for a variety of reasons: social history, architecture, landscape, historically important burial sites, etc. Our Cemetery includes all of these.

- **Social history**—the cemetery is city-owned and therefore provided burial sites in an egalitarian fashion—all were welcome regardless of race, religion or national origin. Headstones reflect a variety of languages, religions and styles.
- **Architecture**—the cemetery is home to several unique monuments and mausoleums, designed by local artisans and built of locally quarried stone.
- **Landscape**—built before city parks, the cemetery was planned as a garden cemetery in the style of the day, with plantings and pathways designed to draw visitors to the beautiful site.
- **Historical burials**—three governors and many local officials 'reside' in the cemetery along with many who contributed to the settling of the west, built the transcontinental railroad and wrote laws and the state constitution.

Being listed on the National Register of Historic Places is both prestigious and important for the Cemetery as it provides additional protection for its continued preservation and recognition for its important place in the nation's history.

*Judy Eitzen
verlaine@citlink.net*

Support Your Cemetery

The Old City Cemetery Committee is an organization established under the IRS as a 501 (c)(3) exempt non-profit. This qualifies the OCCC as a charity under IRS rules. The term “charitable” includes a variety of organizational purposes including advancement of education, and erecting or maintaining public buildings, monuments or works, both of which are performed by the OCCC.

The OCCC is run by volunteers; we do not employ paid staff. Consequently administrative overhead is just twelve percent of our budgeted expenses. In 2016, we have designated approximately 80% of expenditures toward repair of headstones and for educational tours and events—two primary purposes of our organization.

As we renew our memberships this month, I encourage all to consider making a donation to the OCCC for the continued physical preservation and beautification and community educational goals of our organization.

2016 Tours and Events

February 6
Museum Day

History Tours

- Feb 20 African-American History
- March 5 Steamship Explosions/ Water Disasters
- April 2 Chinese Tour
- April 23 Tourist in Your Own Town
- May 7 CSI: OCC
- June 4 Civil Disobedience
- July 2 Medical Bag Tour
- July 16 Kids Tour (4th Grade and above)
- August 6 Tales of the Transcontinental Railroad
- September 3 A Dozen Ways to Die: Episode IV
- September 17 Symbolism
- October 1 Firemen’s Tour
- October 5 Masons

Garden Tours

- March 26 Early Bloom Tours
- October 15 Fall Color Tour
- November 19 Fall Color in the Rose Garden

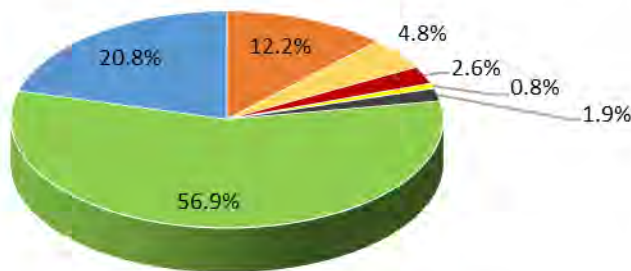
Special Evening Events

- April 16 Romance and Roses
- May 21 Drugs in the Old West
- August 20 Spiritualism
- October (TBD) Lantern Tours

For details go to:

www.oldcitycemetery.com

OCCC Expense Budget 2016



- Administrative
- Supplies/Equip
- Membership
- Sales
- Printed Info
- Repair/Restore
- Tours/Events

Flooding, con't.

(Continued from page 1)

Hydraulic mining was coming under scrutiny in the 1860's as hydraulic hoses washed debris into streams and rivers reducing fish populations, polluting drinking water and leading to local flooding. The winter of 1861-62 was a perfect storm of events. The result was a flood that turned California's entire Central Valley into an inland sea—for months in some places.

As four rivers – Sacramento, Feather, Yuba and American – flooded in turn, the flood crested in Sacramento, while people continued to live their lives, using rowboats and punts to get to market and businesses, while schools remained closed. Because of the city's propensity to flood anyway – this was prior to construction of large flood-control dams – some rental homes in Sacramento came equipped with small rowboats. Albion Sweetser and other enterprising men made a good living constructing houseboats for residential use when properties were inundated. ⁽³⁾

The City Cemetery was built on the highest ground in Sacramento and thus was able to receive burials even during flooded times. ⁽⁴⁾ On December 30, 1861, the Sacramento Union reported a funeral held on the previous day:



FUNERAL OF O.V.CHAPMAN – The funeral of O. V. Chapman took place yesterday afternoon. A large number of the members of the Masonic fraternity assembled in their Hall, and proceeded to Sixth and M. streets, at which point the remains of the deceased were placed in a boat for transportation to the City Cemetery. About fifty-five members of the above named organization followed the remains to the Cemetery – the whole forming a procession of nine boats, presenting an unusual and extraordinary spectacle. The train passed down Sixth street to the railroad, through an opening in the embankment at that point, and thence in a direct line to the Cemetery. The funeral service was pronounced by the Rev. W. H. Hill.

Born in New York, Chapman came to California and like so many other young men, worked as a gold miner. In 1850 the U.S. Census listed him as a miner in Auburn together with two brothers. By 1860, he was married to Eveline, and ran a livery stable in Washington, a small town in Yolo County. After his death from tuberculosis at age 38, his wife continued to run the livery stable.

Although from time to time, the Sacramento Valley experiences floods, with flood-control dams and modern levees, nothing like the Great Flood should be able to recur. At least there should be no more funerals involving floating corteges.

- (1) Fishermen in Peru began to notice warm ocean currents which led to significantly reduced fish populations. The warm equatorial currents appeared around Christmas, hence the name El Niño, Spanish for "The Christ Child".
- (2) Atmospheric rivers are short-lived, narrow streams of wind that carry water vapor from tropical oceans to mid-latitude land areas. They account for about forty percent of California's rainfall. New results presented at the American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco on December 15, 2015, show that atmospheric rivers tend to intensify during El Niño events.
- (3) Albion Chase Sweetser born in Maine in 1819, was a ship joiner who came to California in the summer of 1849. He kept a journal of his trip across the plains. Sweetser became a successful businessman who was active in the community. He was a member of Odd Fellows, volunteer firefighter, founder of the Sons of Temperance and the Sacramento Public Library. He died at 90 and is buried in the Pioneer Plot.
- (4) Cemetery elevation: 15-42 feet above mean sea level.

On the Shelf, con't.

(Continued from page 1)

federate soldiers during the Civil War. Around 1870 Sallie Belle was sent to Clarksville Female Academy in Tennessee, a women's college featuring music, art, normal, commercial and household courses.⁽¹⁾ The Academy served as a hospital during the Civil War until Clarksville was occupied by Union soldiers—but that's another story.

After college Sallie Belle married. And in 1878 her family was hit by one of the most virulent Yellow Fever epidemics in US history.⁽²⁾ She lost her mother, her husband and several other family members before relocating to California.

At some point in his life, George Edward Sanner from New York changed his surname to Walker. Sometimes he used Edward as his given name and sometimes he went under George. His parents were born in France and his mother's maiden name was Welcker—perhaps "Walker" was derived from that? At this time, no one knows.

The Walkers had two daughters whose descendants researched their family tree. Edward was found in Sacramento's Historic Cemetery with a headstone installed in 1998 by a local veteran's association under the name Edward Sanner. But they could not find a burial place for Sallie Belle Walker.

As George Edward Sanner, Walker served as an apprentice machinist in the New York National Guard in 1864. He was a Private in Company D of the 84th Regiment. According to documents submitted to secure a pension in 1916, he emigrated west in 1867.

As George Edward Walker, he married Sallie Belle in 1880 in the town of Guadalupe in Santa Barbara County. The Walkers eventually moved to Berkeley, California where they raised two daughters and Edward worked as a machinist until an injury to his foot forced retirement. Funds were limited and he applied for and was granted an invalid pension for his service during the Civil War.

In 1919, at the age of 65, Sallie Belle died of an apparent heart attack. Her remains were cremated at the Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland California and there she remained, unclaimed on a shelf with other unclaimed cremains.

After her death, her invalid husband moved to Sacramento to live with a daughter and son-in-law. The injury to his foot became worse over time and he died in 1926 and was buried in Sacramento's City Cemetery.

When researching family burials, descendants located a family plot in Mt. View Cemetery in Oakland, next to the Chapel of the Chimes columbarium. Additional family members were found there, but not Sallie Belle. A further check located Sallie Belle's ashes on a shelf in a back room at the Chapel of the Chimes, where they had remained for 96 years.

Last month, the family brought Sallie Belle to Sacramento's City Cemetery and she was placed with her husband.



Sallie Belle
Featherstone Walker
circa 1897



(1) Normal: term refers to teacher training.

(2) Mosquito-borne viral infection that affected the entire Mississippi River Valley from St. Louis to New Orleans. In 1878 an estimated 120,000 cases of yellow fever resulted in some 20,000 deaths

A New Headstone

Judy Eitzen

Headstones, also called grave markers, tombstones and gravestones have been around pretty much as long as humans have buried the deceased. When visiting the Historic City Cemetery, a wide variety of headstones and monuments mark the burial of our residents. We look at the inscriptions, noting information about the deceased, but do not often think of the mechanics or structure of headstones until or unless they fall over or crack or otherwise become a problem.

The Ruhkala Monument Company has been building and installing monuments, memorials and headstones in cemeteries throughout Northern California since 1889 and has installed or repaired many marble, granite and bronze monuments in the City Cemetery. On a chilly December day, George Tosdado and Robert Cushing installed a flat granite stone commemorating a former Cemetery volunteer, Marilyn Fuqua, and I happened to witness the installation.

The first step is to prepare the space, digging out soil to the appropriate depth. This stone was to be set into a cement surround, so several inches of soil was removed to accommodate the wooden frame in which to set the cement. When the frame was level, a layer of cement was placed in the bottom of the space and smoothed in preparation for the stone. The stone, its face covered in masking tape, was then placed in the opening. Measurements insured that it was centered in the frame and the stone was leveled. George added cement around the stone, and placed rebar to add strength.

Mixing cement is a little like mixing potting soil or cake batter, though it's much heavier work. George's experience (he's been doing this for some 30 years) told him just how much water to add – by the sponge-full. He used floats to smooth the cement surrounding the stone and carefully beveled the edges inside and out. Finally, he slowly pulled off the masking tape to reveal the face of the stone. A little cleanup and the job was done. The wooden frame is left in place until the cement hardens. A beautiful stone carved with Ginkgo leaves from the tree Marilyn loved and carefully installed should last forever...or nearly so.





PHOTOS

PREVIOUS PAGE

Left: measuring water to cement
Right: George & Robert

THIS PAGE

Top: Measure and level
Center: Bevel the edge
Bottom: Installed stone





**Old City Cemetery
Committee, Inc.**

1000 Broadway
Sacramento, CA 95818
916-448-0811

Mission Statement

To join hands with the community to restore, beautify, preserve and protect the Historic City Cemetery, while maintaining access by descendants of the deceased, and to provide educational services to all visitors to the Historic City Cemetery of Sacramento.

We're On the Web
www.oldcitycemetery.com

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers work in the Historic City Cemetery in a variety of ways.

- **Visitor's Center volunteers** assist visitors to find historical information, locate family members and tour the cemetery
- **Tour and Event** volunteers assist with historical tours and special events such as the Lantern Tours
- **Adopt-A-Plot volunteers** maintain a plot or plots within the cemetery, caring for plants, removing weeds and generally keeping a plot tidy.
- **Garden volunteers** work one of three designated gardens; the Historic Rose Garden, Hamilton Square Perennial Garden or the Native Plant Demonstration Garden.

It's very satisfying to work to preserve and protect this important historic site.

Please call **448-0811** or email info@oldcitycemetery.com.

You may also apply through the City of Sacramento volunteer office: www.cityofsacramento.org/HR/Volunteer-Opportunities or call **916-808-8317**