

In this Issue

President's Message	2
Spring Events	2
Volunteer Spotlight	3
Volunteer News	4
Full Moon Tour Photos..	4
History of Cemeteries	5
Lantern Tour Photos	7

OCCC Calendar

Saturday, March 4

Symbolism & History Tour

10 am ~ Free

Saturday, March 18

What's Blooming

in the Cemetery Tour

10 am ~ Free

Wednesday, March 22

Birds at the Cemetery Tour

7:30 am ~ Free

Saturday, April 1

History Tour

10 am ~ Free

Saturday, April 15

Open Garden

10 am - 3 pm ~ Rose Sales

Saturday, May 6

Sacramento & California

History Tour

10 am ~ Free

Saturday, May 13

Victorian Garden Party

3 - 6 pm ~ \$25 per person

Reservations: 442-5662

Saturday, May 20

What's Blooming

in the Cemetery

10 am ~ Free

Wednesday, May 24

OCCC Bus Trip

All Day Event ~ \$45

Reservations: 442-5662

WHAT TO DO WITH UNCLE HARRY?

BURIAL CUSTOMS THROUGH THE AGES - PART II

By Dorothy Mills, OCCC Board Member

In the last issue of *The Epitaph*, we explored many cultures' burial customs in our search for a way to properly 'retire' Uncle Harry.

But not liking ants, Uncle Harry would not rest well with an Australian Aborigine burial, and there isn't a dokhma nearby. We aren't planning to mummify or cremate him either. Chinese firecrackers would make his funeral more festive, but there are city ordinances and such to consider. So let's explore some more ideas...

Greek burial customs are distinctly curious. The dead, dressed in their best, lie in state and are carried in unclosed coffins to the church. Uncovered coffins were practiced to deter foul play or robbery of jewelry the body may have on it. In some remote districts the bones are disinterred after a few years, sewn up in embroidered sacks, and deposited in an ossuary near the church.

Some people unaccustomed with the custom would find it odd to see top-hatted mourners on skates drawing a sleigh containing a flower-bedecked coffin with the rest of the mourners skating behind. Yet such is the case in certain areas of Eastern Germany such as Spreewald, where skating and sleighing are the only means of locomotion and transport in the wintertime.

The Victorians made much of death and funerals. Whole books were written as to how it should be done. In the 1830s and 40s, given the shocking conditions of the public graveyards, more thought was given to private cemeteries. Concern was felt that the unsanitary conditions of most cemeteries were in fact helping to foster epidemics and sickness.

In 1831, when the new vaults under St. Martin-in-the-Fields were opened, the Sunday Times reported, "Ladies perambulated the vaults for some time, and the whole had more the appearance of a fashionable parade than a grim repository of decaying mortality." It also had a burial ground some 200 feet square, which was estimated to contain 6,000 to 7,000 bodies.

In 1842, an investigation into graveyards began. It was discovered that what was called a public grave was a vertical shaft, thirty feet deep, where the coffins were put, eighteen to a grave, with no earth whatsoever between them. When this grave was crammed as full as it could be, so that the topmost coffin was within two feet of the surface, it was considered "occupied."

Such overcrowding meant that the old churchyards became exceedingly offensive. It was said that hoards of flies were generated from them.

Continued on page 6

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Join in
the fun

This has been a very productive time for the OCCC and I am delighted to share our successes with you. More than 900 people toured the Cemetery in October as we conducted three private and six public tours. In each case, the private groups booked tours because they had either been on a prior public tour or had heard about tours from our increased publicity. We had to turn some away from our public tours; we were completely booked. We raised enough funds to continue with our restoration and other Cemetery projects.

The credit for this success goes to Jane Howell and her happy band of volunteers. Space limits mention of them by name as more than 20 OCCC volunteers joined those from Old Sacramento's Living History program to put on these events. Jane and her team smoothly coordinated logistics, sound, refreshments, lights, and all that's required behind the scenes. Most Board members participated in one or more tours and speaking as one of these, I found it very enjoyable. Best of all, participants and visitors enjoyed themselves and many stated their plan to return next year.

Early this month, we learned that the Fireman's Fence project is completely funded, thanks to a generous donation from Councilman Robert Fong. The Ruhkula Granite and Marble Company is presently constructing new coping for the top of the surround. When this work is complete, the fence (already sandblasted and with new paint) will be replaced on the site. Generous donations from the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Society, the Setzer Foundation, the OCCC and in-kind support from the City of Sacramento have made this major project possible. Jane Howell was instrumental in negotiating these donations and overseeing the project. We hope to dedicate the fence at the Fireman's Memorial next October.

People willing to take on big jobs can be hard to find. This year, a new Board member, Lonnie Ratzlaff agreed to accept the job of Treasurer. According to our Bylaws, she was not eligible until she had served on the Board for six months. Accordingly, Connie Bettencourt volunteered to take on the job for the beginning of this year. I am exceedingly grateful to Connie for doing so, as she is already Chair of two committees; Sales and Membership. Connie not only performed her job admirably, but also has worked with Lonnie to make the end-of-January transition a smooth one. Lonnie comes to the job with some experience as she presently serves in the same capacity for the Historic Rose Garden subcommittee.



Museum Day was February 4 and we'll be back touring and conducting a number of events this Spring - Open Garden and the Victorian Garden Party (Tea) among others. Our organization is only as strong as the number and willingness of its members, and we have developed a cadre of members willing to lead a project or lend a hand. Of course, there's room for more and I encourage all members and volunteers to join in the fun.

Judy Eitzen, OCCC President

Spring Events

OPEN GARDEN

SATURDAY, APRIL 15 ~ 10 AM - 3 PM

The Historic Rose Garden will be in full bloom for the annual Open Garden. Guided tours will offer visitors the opportunity to learn about many of the 'found' roses collected from cemeteries and other sites where the original plants were planted 100 or more years ago. The sale of rooted rose cuttings and snacks and a raffle will raise funds for the maintenance of the garden. Call 916-448-0811.

VICTORIAN GARDEN PARTY

SATURDAY, MAY 13 ~ 3 - 6 PM

Plan to attend a Victorian Garden Party on May 13, 2006, from 3 to 6 pm at the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery. The party will honor Mrs. Margaret Crocker, generous benefactor to the City of Sacramento and the Cemetery. The \$25 a person fee will benefit several restoration projects at the cemetery. Reservations may be made by calling 916-442-5662.

OCCC BUS TRIP

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24 ~ ALL DAY

Have 'Lunch with the Laid to Rest' when the Old City Cemetery Committee bus trip visits Mountain View Cemetery and Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland. We will tour the historic cemetery, stopping for lunch at the Crocker Plot on the famous "Millionaire Row." A guided tour of Chapel of the Chimes' beautiful mausoleum will follow. We'll also visit the shops on Berkeley's fashionable 4th Street. Call 916-442-5662 for information.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

By Sharon Patrician, Volunteer Coordinator

In the next several issues of *The Epitaph* we are highlighting those Adopt A Plot volunteers who have taken on large areas of the Cemetery and beautified them to a significant extent. We asked the following questions:

- (1) Are you retired or still working?
- (2) Why did you choose the Adopt A Plot program as a volunteer effort?
- (3) Has the experience met or exceeded your expectations?
- (4) What do you like best about gardening at the Cemetery?

Our first volunteers are...

Barbara & Scott Browne

Barbara and Scott manage an area behind the Firemen's Plots going south between Laurel and Cedar Avenues.

Barbara is an analyst with the State of California, and Scott is an Inspector/Planner/Estimator at UC Davis.

Barbara has always enjoyed old cemeteries and gardening, "so this seemed a perfect way to indulge two interests at the same time." Scott enjoys putting and working in the garden.

Both Scott and Barbara feel it's been an "experience" but since they had no expectations from the start, they haven't thought about this issue.

Barbara enjoys the challenge of the headstone constraints, the adverse growing conditions and the huge variety of plants. She especially enjoys being there on a sunny Saturday afternoon when no one is around and she can garden in peace. Scott enjoys the sense of accomplishment and overcoming problems, like broken irrigation lines. Both frequently "...think about how it looked last year when they began..." and the incredible changes they have made.



Carol Nelson

Carol manages the plots right below Barbara and Scott Browne's area and right before the Post 1660 Veteran's strip.

Carol is still working as a manager at the State Controller's Office.



In 1991, Carol and her husband, Richard Begley, took over several plots near the Fireman's area. They were interested in Sacramento's early history and wanted to return something to the community while doing what they loved - gardening.

Carol's expectations have been exceeded in several ways. She has learned a tremendous amount about plants; she has met people keen about Sacramento; and learned that "our cemetery is really an integral part of our community's history."

Carol loves the solitude and the daily changes in the plants and how light affects their appearance. "In nearly 15 years, I've never tired of it," Carol says.

Our cemetery
is an integral
part of our
community's
history

VOLUNTEER NEWS

By Sharon Patrician, Volunteer Coordinator

VOLUNTEER HOURS

I still need to hear from all volunteers. Please call or e-mail me at 916-455-8166 or patrician@midtown.net with your monthly volunteer hours.

WEEKLY CITY MEETINGS

If you are an Adopt A Plot volunteer and have questions, concerns or solutions, please attend our semi-weekly Tuesday morning meetings (first and third Tuesdays) with Victor Esparza and Curtis Clark. The meetings start at 10 am at the Cemetery office at the 10th Street gate. They are a good opportunity to learn more about Cemetery business and problem solving. Call Sharon Patrician at 455-8166 if you have any questions.

Rules for interaction

WEEKEND SHERIFF'S CREW

In the Fall issue of the Epitaph, I mentioned the sheriff was working on rules for interaction with the sheriff and the work release crew. I have e-mailed these rules to all Adopt volunteers for whom I have e-mail addresses. For those without e-mail, please let me know if you want a copy. The text will be included in our long-awaited Volunteer Handbook, but I can't guarantee when this will be released.

An addendum to those rules is a request that if your crew hasn't shown up, go down to the brick shed and check. We do request you stay out of the shed area until roll call and crew deployment is done, generally by 8:30 am. Check after that time if your crew has failed to appear.

UPDATE ON VOLUNTEER INFO

I am updating our volunteer list (strictly confidential and only shared with the Committee Board members) and need e-mail addresses. If you have e-mail, please send that address to patrician@midtown.net. Thanks!

GEORGIA FISHER PROJECT

In 2004, our first Victorian Tea was held to raise funds to restore the Georgia Fisher monument, an intriguing example of early tile works in the Cemetery. Our efforts to repair the foundation require an engineer's appraisal which we are in the process of obtaining.

In the meantime, an interpretative sign has been installed at the monument site. The sign details who Georgia Fisher was, what the monument looked like in the 1800's, and proposed plans for its repair and partial restoration. Lou and Marilyn Demas, former Committee members, have been instrumental in creating the project and have offered their help to see the project to completion. The monument is located on Eglantine Avenue on the west side of the Cemetery next to the Historic Rose Garden.

IN MEMORY

Sylvia Monteiro Baty, the daughter of Mary Monteiro, a longtime Adopt A Plot volunteer, died recently. Our deepest sympathy goes to Mary and Sylvia's family.

Patricia Moseley Stanford, one of the Old City Cemetery Committee's earliest volunteers, died recently. Pat was a docent who gave tours, helped with events and had a keen love of history. Our deepest sympathy goes to her family.

Full Moon Tour

October 17, 2005



A SHORT HISTORY OF CEMETERIES

By Barbara Oliva, OCCC Board Member

Styles in burials and cemeteries have evolved. *What?! Fashions in cemeteries? Come on!!!! A cemetery is a cemetery...*

The bones were arranged in an orderly way

In the West, during the Christian era, the tombs cut into stone hillsides in the near east evolved into the catacombs used in Rome and surrounding areas. The earth in and around Rome is riddled with tunnels and passageways. Romans tended to cremate their dead, placing the ashes in a vault or sepulcher catacombs, although they used earth burial of the ashes, too. Non-Romans were dumped unceremoniously in mass graves. Many of the early Christians were originally Jewish and a subterranean cemetery composed of galleries and passages with side recesses for tombs was similar to what they knew in the Holy Land. Cremation was against Jewish law; in addition the catacombs were safer both for worship and for burial during the times Christians were persecuted. Later churches, chapels and basilicas were built over the graves of the saints and martyrs, and burials were within the actual church or in holy ground around the building.



By the 1700s, churchyards were crowded, unhealthy places, with bodies and tombstones frequently placed on top of each other. In Paris as walls and earth gave way, scattering remains onto city streets, bodies were disinterred and stored in the catacombs. Because there was no way to identify individual remains, the bones were arranged in an orderly way, with skulls, femurs, etc. arranged in rows. The catacombs in Paris have some three to six million bodies stored in this way.

Health problems caused by cemeteries within cities prompted the establishment of cemeteries outside in the country. Paris was the first, and America soon followed. Here in the United States, by the mid 1800s, there were two main types of cemeteries, traditional and garden, or rural cemeteries.

Traditional included private burials on farms or private land, towns or groups establishing burial grounds in the countryside or in town, usually by religious denomination. If there were several denominations represented, they were separated by a fence. Specialized sites such as military, paupers, etc. were also included. Graves faced east to have the best view of the rising sun on the Day of Judgment. The north side of the cemetery was the Devil's domain. Stillborns, bastards, and strangers were buried there. Suicides, if buried in sacred ground at all, couldn't be brought in through the gate, but must be passed over the wall. Coffins were often placed on top of one another, sometimes slowly raising the ground level. Fences and gates protected the cemetery from wandering livestock.

Garden cemeteries were modeled after the Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, named after the confessor priest of Louis XIV. These cemeteries were "a new romantic kind of cemetery" outside the town, characterized by shady walks, winding carriage ways, and decorative plantings, the opposite of crowded churchyards. This design was expressive of the changes in other areas of life at that time. Capability Brown's garden design concepts contributed to the changed philosophy of design and use of the garden cemeteries. Highgate in England and Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts were early examples. Garden cemeteries became public recreation areas, with people enjoying the parklike environment, even bringing picnics on weekend afternoons. There was an emphasis on an image of peacefulness surrounded by nature as opposed to the horribleness of earlier cemeteries: nature to be enjoyed rather than tamed.

The cemeteries where today we find the roses that were planted in the 1800s were mostly garden cemeteries, or influenced by that type of cemetery.

The most recent styles, lawn cemeteries and memorial parks such as Forest Lawn in Los Angeles, have evolved in the 20th Century. Whereas the rural cemetery contained various paths, fenced off family plots, and often times a large iron fence and gate surrounding it, the promoters of the later stages foresaw a different image. In the early 20th century open, smooth sweeps of grass with imbedded tombstones were introduced as an alternative to separate family plots and upright headstones. Although it was thought that this type of cemetery would be easier to care for, experience has shown it actually costs more to maintain imbedded stones than it does upright stones because imbedded stones tend to settle, and require expensive resetting. There seems now to be a movement toward more interesting types of markers that are not necessarily flat and embedded.

WHAT TO DO WITH UNCLE HARRY? - PART II

CONTINUED

At other times, in order to make room, corpses not a week buried were chopped up and burnt. Choppers and saws were kept in the graveyards. There was frequently a charnel house, or bone house, in the graveyard. Gravediggers often stole lead from the coffins and sold the bodies to surgeons. Coffins were occasionally sold to undertakers for reuse, but far more commonly were sold as firewood.

I paint
the Dead

In 1850, the reports of the Parliamentary Committee and the various exposures of scandals connected with burials, had prepared public opinion for an attempt at a solution. It had been discovered that properly maintained cemeteries did not necessarily depress the status of a neighborhood. Properly maintained and supervised, these places for the dead seemed to be the answer.



Now we have decided on a beautiful coffin, in a respectable graveyard for Uncle Harry, what is there left to think about?

Shall we have Uncle Harry's portrait painted? Don't faint. It was quite common to take a picture of the deceased or have a portrait painted. In 1892, there appeared in the *Placer Argus* the following article, copied from the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*. I will leave out a few of the more gruesome details the author gave us.

I PAINT THE DEAD

I have done quite a good deal of this and have been able to put on canvas some lifelike portraits of the dead. I first get a photographic likeness of the deceased. There is perhaps no photographic in existence, or the sorrowing relative wishes to have the countenance preserved as it appeared shortly before death.

I raise the body a little in the bed or prop it up in a chair; this is a much better way. The body's portrait has to be made more carefully if it is in a coffin.

I take several different views of the corpse, with varying light and positions. It is a delicate and tedious process requiring infinite pains and skill.

It is slightly chilling if the cadaver loses its balance and drops an arm or tumbles forward just as you get ready to remove the shutter of the camera.

I know Uncle Harry won't sit still for that.

Is there anything more to do now? We have chosen the coffin, the cemetery and decided not to have a picture painted, what now?

If you lived out in the country, it was no problem to bury your dead near your house, or up on a pretty hill. When people stopped being buried from their own parlor and decided to let someone else do the work, the businesses that sprung up were called "Funeral Parlors."

But how did people protect their loved ones from grave robbers?

Security for these places was necessary because of the medical students who often dug up bodies for medical research, and vandals who would try to get at any valuables the person might have been buried with. A Sexton was hired and lived right in the cemetery.



Some filled the grave with sticks, large stones or straw. Another method was to place the deceased in a holding vault. Left long enough, the body would start to deteriorate and would therefore be useless to the medical profession.

The methods grave robbers used to extract the body from the grave and leave little evidence is a bit gruesome so I will leave that out...

After the Civil War, when the railroads spread across the continent, procuring bodies from greater distances was made possible. They would be put in barrels of brine and shipped wherever needed.

Maybe we could put Uncle Harry in a cemetery such as they have in New Orleans. All the crypts are above ground, due to the high water table. They also have a "Year and a Day" law. After that time the bones are removed and placed

UNCLE HARRY, CONTINUED

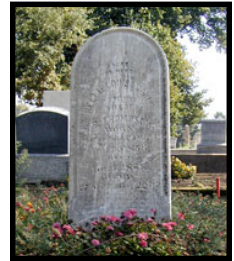


in a section of the tomb under the floor. That way they can use the same crypt for years and years.

He was kind of homely

Now, the last item is a tombstone for Uncle Harry. Just look in a 1902 Sears & Roebuck catalogue and you will find tombstones for sale from \$10 to \$60, marble, pre-lettered if desired, and freight paid as far as the Rocky Mountains. Free for the asking is the book *Tombstones and Monuments*, printed and distributed by Sears & Roebuck in Chicago. Granite markers were priced from \$4 to \$214. Also included in catalogue are the mourning clothes in vogue at the time. Ornamental fencing was also listed for sale. Mourning jewelry made from precious stones or a lock of hair from the deceased was also available.

Homemade mourning memorials are varied in kind, but one especially liked was the Graveyard Quilt. One in particular was the creation of a mother in 1839, to memorialize her two young sons. The patchwork quilt has a central embroidered "graveyard" surrounded by fencing, pathway and rose arbor sewn in various colors. Small "coffins" with paper tags and the names of family members were appliquéd around the border of the quilt, and at the time of death, each tiny coffin was removed from the border and placed in the central "graveyard."



Now, I think we have attended to everything. Uncle Harry was bald, so no hair jewelry, and he was kind of homely so no pictures. None of the family can sew, so no quilt. I guess we will just have to remember him as best we can and visit his grave at least once a year.

Halloween lantern Tours

October 28, 29 & 30, 2005





Old City Cemetery Committee, Inc.
 1000 Broadway, Sacramento, CA 95818
 916-448-0811 • www.OldCityCemetery.com

 If you're receiving this newsletter, you're important to the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery!
Are you a member of the Old City Cemetery Committee?

The Old City Cemetery Committee, Inc. is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit association, whose purpose is to maintain and preserve the beauty and integrity of the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery. Membership is only \$15 per individual, \$20 for families and \$35 for businesses. Join today!

Membership Application

Annual Dues (Membership runs January 1 through December 31):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron: \$200 - \$299 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family: \$20.00 (One household, One voting member) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor: \$300 - \$599 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business: \$35.00 (One voting member per business) | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver Sponsor: \$600 - \$999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donation: Amount & designation: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Gold Sponsor: \$1000+ |

Name (Include all names if Family Membership) _____

Voting member's name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone (day): _____ Phone (eves): _____

E-Mail: _____

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