

THE ROCK POINT CEMETERY  
By Ruby Quakenbush - 1956

In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the West was developing, a problem of the civilized settlers was to provide a respectable and common burial ground for their loved ones. This condition existed along the Rogue River in the vicinity of Rock Point, a settlement of some of the earliest settlers of the Rogue River Valley.

One of these early settlers by the name of J. B. White of Rock Point who had received a donation land grant in 1864 from the Government, recognized this need and in 1874 deeded twenty-six and a fraction acres of land to the public for cemetery purposes. This property was placed under the supervision of three trustees known as Benjamin Haymond, Fred Birdseye and J. L. White. These trustees were to appoint successors in case of death or resignation. When these appointed trustees passed on without naming successors the cemetery was left to the public in general, resulting in a more or less forgotten purpose and a very unsightly place due to lack of interest.

In 1898 a part of this property was sold to the I.O.O.F. Lodge No. 129 of Gold Hill by the trustees for the sum of Fifty Dollars. This lodge maintained the developed their part of the property, making the old cemetery even more unsightly by comparison.

In 1955 the project of cleaning up and reestablishing the old cemetery was brought to the attention of the Gold Hill Grange by it Lecturer, Mrs. Icie Walker, and the Grange adopted this as a community project with full authorization to Mrs. Walker to proceed with it.

Mrs. Walker, with the aid of assistants, was able to uncover and locate the original deed given to the cemetery property by Mr. White. Many efforts had been made in the past by various organizations as well as the Jackson

County Court, to locate this legal paper. The deed was finally found among old papers in the possession of a local resident, descendant of the original trustee, Benjamin Haymond. This deed told book and volume number where it had been recorded at the Jackson County Court House. With the help of the Court House employees the old records were searched, and the recorded deed was found. A copy of the deed was made by Mrs. Walker for future use.

Among the old papers found with the deed in our neighbor's house were old land grants signed by Abraham Lincoln and other Presidents of that time. The history of these old papers uncovered the fact that Benjamin Haymond owned one of the two vaults in the country at that time. The other vault was located in Jacksonville. It was the practice of the early settlers to place important papers in the vault of Mr. Haymond for safe keeping. Many of these papers were not reclaimed.

The cemetery deed with information which had been gathered was placed before the Jackson County Court by the project committee for advisement. The Court referred the committee to the District Attorney. At the advisement of the District Attorney a petition was circulated by Mrs. Walker among the old-time residents who have relatives and friends interred in the old cemetery, giving the County Court authority to name three new trustees to take up the welfare of the cemetery in accordance with the bequest of Mr. White in the deed. This circulation of the petition took many days and much effort to complete. Residents living on Evans Creek, Savage Creek, Birdseye Creek, Foots Creek, Sardine Creek, Galls Creek, and in Sams Valley were contacted; in fact, all of the territory in this vicinity was covered, and all residents proved very helpful, as many descendants of the old pioneer families are still living here. The people contacted were glad to sign the petition and give what information they knew concerning those buried in the cemetery, and all were glad that

interest had been taken to readjust and clean up the property which has been neglected so long. Relatives and descendants of those old pioneers can be found in most all parts of the United States, for the pioneers came here from all parts of our country. Many of them fought Indians to give us the land and valley which we enjoy today. For instance, the old log cabin on Highway 99 near Birdseye Creek was the boyhood home of Fred Birdseye, one of the original trustees named by Mr. White in his deed to the cemetery property. The old house has been well preserved, and a monument has been placed nearby it commemorating the old Birdseye Fort which was built near the log house and was used by the settlers for protection during the uprising of the Rogue River Indians 1851-1856.

L. J. White was born in Livingston County, New York, came to Oregon in 1858 and to Jackson County in 1859. He was married in 1844 and died at Rock Point in 1877 and was buried at Rock Point. Mr. White built the Rock Point Hotel which was also used as a stage stop during early times. This old building still stands and is being used as a home by the present owners.

Before the death of Fred Birdseye, he appointed George W. Lance, Sr. as trustee. Mr. Lance lived on Foots Creek. He was born in Tennessee in 1832, came to Oregon and Jackson County in 1870. He died and was buried in the Rock Point cemetery without naming a successor as trustee, and from this came the confusion which is being corrected by this project. It might be mentioned that Mr. Lance was the grandfather of Floyd Lance now living in Gold Hill.

The petition with forty-eight names attached was presented to the County Court and resulted in the naming of three new trustees, W. L. Wright and Mrs. Nora Wait of Sardine Creek, and Charles E. White of Rogue River. Two of these trustees name are Grange members.

To acquaint people with the project, a cleanup day was held and many Grange members as well as other residents interested participated. A Thanksgiving Dance given November 23, 1955, was well attended and proceeds went to the cemetery fund. The first meeting of the new trustees was held at the home of Mrs. Walker in November 1955. Mrs. Wait was elected Treasurer, Charles White Secretary, and Mr. Wright Chairman of the Trustees. Mrs. Walker was appointed Chairman of the Improvement Committee. A fund of \$217.50 was given to Mrs. Wait, Secretary, on February 3, 1956. This was the proceeds from the November dance and other donations which had been given to help get the project started. Several cleanup days followed, and many hours of labor were donated by both Grange members and others interested. On these cleanup days coffee and sandwiches were served and many workers spent the day clearing brush and burning trash. A great improvement began to be noticeable in a short time.

During this period of reorganization and cleaning up many graves have been remarked, identified and named. Graves have been filled, vegetation and brush cleared away, and many unsightly conditions removed.

The last fund-raising event was a Sausage Breakfast given in the Grange Hall in May which netted a sizeable profit for the project.

A survey of the property is now in progress. When this survey is completed lots will be plotted and various improvements will be undertaken. Lots will be sold under the supervision of the trustees and perpetual care will be established as soon as possible. This is indeed a contrast to the previous methods carried out in the cemetery whereby interments were made without permission or charge, with lack of consideration for the location of other graves, resulting in no orderly system of burial.

The big undertaking now before the committee is to get a sufficient water supply into the cemetery for proper care.

Not only has this project helped to beautify our surroundings; it has kept faith with that worthy pioneer who gave this cemetery to the public so long ago.

Hours devoted by Grangers            370

Hours devoted by non-Grangers    360

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