

# SOLANO COUNTY CEMETERIES VOLUME III

REVISED EDITION

Benicia City Cemetery Burials

Compiled by

Michael J. Hayes



SOLANO COUNTY CEMETERIES

VOL. III

REVISED EDITION

BENICIA CITY CEMETERY BURIALS

BENICIA, CALIFORNIA

1849 - 2007

by

Michael J. Hayes

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**DEDICATED**

**to**

**ANGELA PHYLLIS LYNCH HAYES**

**Thank you**

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"VICTORIAN CEMETERY ART";  
EDMUND V. GILLON, JR.;  
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## INTRODUCTION

The Benicia City Cemetery is laid out in a very simple design, comprising 24 acres and covered by three roadways with the entrance off East Second street via Riverhill Drive. The original entrance was up a steep hill on West Second street. There are several divisions within the cemetery, the largest being the original Catholic Cemetery (the only Catholic burying ground between 1850 and the late 1890's). There is also the Masonic, the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias, and other smaller sections, including the Eagles and the Redmen. The Volunteer Firemen were given a special area by the City Council many years ago, but its location has been elusive. There is also a GAR plot near the Masonic section. The earliest pioneers were buried at the very top of the cemetery hill.

The cemetery is just over 150 years old but the time span for this listing is from 1849 to 2007. This roster starts with 1849 but the first definite burial was in 1850. Several deaths were recorded before 1850, but actual burial places of the people involved have not been verified. One of the more interesting accounts is that of Elizabeth Rhoads.

Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Rhoads, a Mormon pioneer who settled on the Cosumnes River before the Gold Rush, was the mother of nineteen children including three pairs of twins and one set of triplets. After a long overland journey, Elizabeth's health began to falter, competing with the hot weather and lack of medical aid. Thomas decided to take his wife to San Francisco with hopes of improving

her health. Leaving Sacramento on a launch, late in September 1847, the vessel was fitted up as comfortable as possible using bushels of wheat as a make-shift bed. As the craft approached Benicia, Elizabeth's health deteriorated and she died. The launch put into Benicia and Thomas buried his wife on a hillside nearby. The sad pioneer returned to Dry Creek on the Cosumnes and related his tale of sorrow to his children and grandchildren. While in Benicia, Thomas had contracted with a man to mark the grave with a headboard and fence, but when he returned later, he could find no sign of the gravesite.

There are instances of one or two other deaths prior to 1850, but once again, the location of their sites can only be speculated. The history books record that Robert Semple's son, John W. Semple, was the first death in Benicia and that was in 1850. Miles Goodyear died in November of 1849 at Goodyear's Bar in Sierra County but was not buried until the next year when the snows had melted. His wish to be buried in Benicia was carried out by his brother, Andrew.

Represented within the limits of the cemetery are members of the military who fought in the Mexican, the Civil, the Spanish-American, both World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, and even the Indian Wars. The father of one pioneer was with Lord Nelson at Trafalgar; the father of another was with Wellington at Waterloo; and a third person's father fought alongside John Paul Jones in the Revolutionary War. Two other pioneers, buried in the cemetery, were physical witnesses to the joining of the rails at Promontory, Utah in 1869 when the continent was united, linking east and west with rail transportation.

Tradition has it that there are Chinese buried in the cemetery but no definite record has been found. Similarly, there should be more Native Americans but only one location has been found for a California Indian.

In the late 1890's, St. Dominic's opened their own cemetery at the top of the East Fifth street hill on ground donated by the Barry family. This new cemetery replaced the nuns' convent burial ground at St. Catherine's and the priests' monastery cemetery from St. Dominic's, and the parishioners from the City Cemetery. Many families, but not all, decided to move deceased members from the old cemetery to the new one. Consequently, records show some old pioneers of Benicia in two different cemeteries.

The years have taken their toll of the markers, headstones, and monoliths within the cemetery. Age, weather, and vandalism have reduced many touching tributes to rubble. Fortunately, there is a movement to recapture the memory and restore the respect due to Benicia's past citizens. Many plans have been attempted in years past but to no avail.

In 1913, a young man by the name of Archie Rice came to Benicia and proceeded to praise the accomplishments of Benicia's history and outlined the steps to promote Benicia's worthwhile qualities. No area was missed while he spoke to school-children, fraternal clubs, churches, and anyone who would listen. He also toured the three cemeteries and wrote an article in the local paper quoting the one

thousand and fifty buried in the City Cemetery. It is a mystery where he got that figure, as no records survive prior to 1900. Possibly, he reached that number from one of the old cemetery caretakers, or from old city records (now missing), or from an unknown source.

This compilation of the "residents" of the historic Benicia City Cemetery, besides being a labor of love, has been a very frustrating search, and consequently, not a complete one. The work goes on, and hopefully, it will be revised and updated when, and if, new information on the old pioneers becomes available.

Finally, my apologies for missing anyone or leaving a family member off the list. I hope that remaining members of the families of the men, women and children buried in the City Cemetery will contact this compiler and advise of any mistakes, omissions, or exceptions to this list. Hopefully, a new listing will then be made for the benefit of all concerned.

## PREFACE

The Benicia City Cemetery is a treasure trove of history, sculpture, and beautiful views of Benicia, Mt. Diablo, and the Carquinez Straits. The cemetery is divided into three main parts: the older Main section, Carquinez Gardens, and the new Lawn Section. This survey covers all three and is divided into two listings. One is an alphabetical list and the other is a geographical list. The older main section has been identified with five sections: Pioneer, Catholic, Central, St. Paul's, and Masonic, only as a means to finding a site. There is also another part: the Urn Section just north of the Eagles plot. The alphabetical list is described as follows:

No.	Name	Dates	Age	Location
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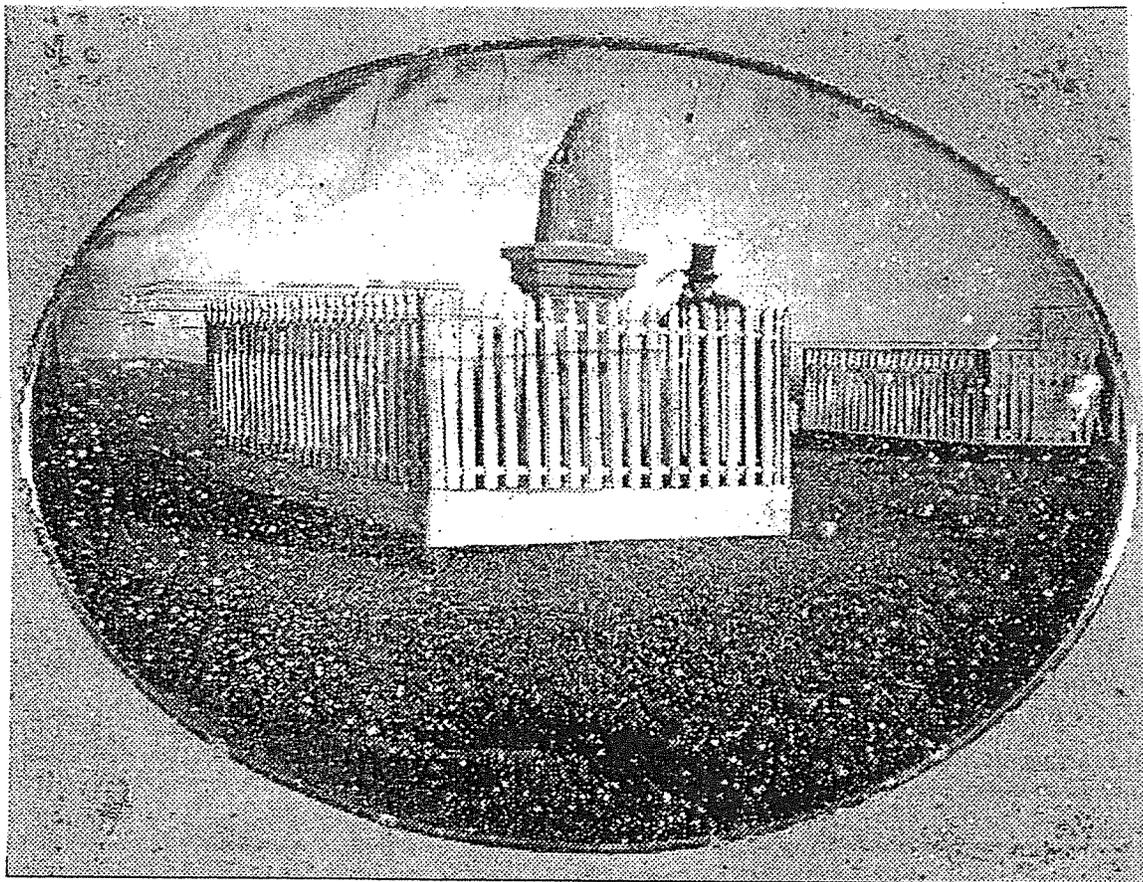
The alphabetical location listing is also identified with the

following:	CG	Carquinez Gardens
	LS	Lawn Section
	S	Scattered (ashes)
21 18		Urn Section

MJH

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*Sunday, March 12, 2000*



John Gulick poses at his brother's grave in this undated photo at City Cemetery. He would die shortly thereafter. Both are now buried in New York.

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