



Placerville Old City Cemetery

One of Placerville's oldest, most historic, and most tormented cemeteries lies directly above the shoe repair shop at the west end of Main Street and provides a great view of downtown.

For many years this important cultural resource was a disgrace: vandalized, overgrown and trash strewn. The cemetery has a long history of abuse. As far back as the late 1860s conditions were so bad that local fraternalists formed Placerville Union Cemetery and moved their loved ones out of Old City.

Numerous restorations and cleanups were conducted over the years, but lacking stewardship the cemetery has always returned to dereliction. In recent years the homeless situation has exacerbated the problems.

That all changed when the Placerville Emblem club #287, approached the City of Placerville in 2023 and asked if they could adopt Old City Cemetery and clean it up. A few liability release forms later, they got the green light.

The city did an initial round of weed chopping, with finishing touches by Emblem Club volunteers, which set the stage for the miraculous transformation to follow.

About this time Save the Graves approached the city about restoring the spectacular old headstones strewn about the old cemetery. Many were lying on, or under, the ground in pieces. We were excited to learn of the Emblem Club's adoption, and contacted their leadership to see how we could work together. It's been a match made in heaven.

In early January 2024, Save the Graves leadership and headstone repair expert Bryan McIntyre met with the Emblem Club's Headstone Committee Chair Paula Bottenberg to map out a strategy.

On a crisp winter morning a few weeks later a dozen Emblem Club members braved the chill to learn proper headstone cleaning techniques from Bryan. Club members readily took to the work.

Vicki Pease cleaned the headstone of Scotch couple William and Margaret Lacey, who died a week apart in 1875, cause of death unknown. He was 55. She was just 35 years old.

Vicki's husband Greg probed for submerged grave markers and to his great delight discovered the shared headstone of the Fuller brothers under 6 inches of soil. Steven, 31, died in 1852. Samuel, 45, died in 1856.

In the weeks following the discovery, Bryan excavated the pieces, cleaned them, carefully glued them back together with conservation-grade epoxy and reset the marker with lime mortar. Today Stephen and Samuel's marker has never looked better. As of this writing, Bryan has straightened or repaired at least two dozen historic markers in Placerville Old City Cemetery, but there's more to be done.

The Emblem Club returned in force in the spring of 2024 for a more thorough round of landscape maintenance. Aspiring Eagle Scout Justin Boston funded, designed and built a new bench near the front of the cemetery. He also replaced a vandalized old flagpole, which the club originally installed in 1988.

What was once an eyesore, and an attractive nuisance is now a destination for anyone who appreciates Victorian stone carving and local history.

The project earned national recognition from the Supreme Emblem Club of America as an outstanding project. Congratulations ladies!

Placerville Old City Cemetery was part of the 2024/2025 "Lesser Known Placerville Cemeteries" tour led by Mike Roberts, Save the Graves.



Emblem Club member Vicki Pette cleans the

Lacy Headstone Cleaning



1850s headstone was buried under 8" of dirt.

Buried Fuller Headstone



Fuller Headstone Restored



Dr. Sylvanus McIntyre E. Goheen and his brother got "gold fever" and headed west in 1849. They were struck down by Cholera at Independence, Mo. Only one of the brothers made it to California, and he didn't last long. Dr. S.M.E.

Before & After Cleaning

Category

1. Cemetery History

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