



Women in Union Cemetery: Johanna Pinther Kane

The women featured in this series of articles are part of the Women in Union Cemetery Tour conducted by Mike Roberts in 2024

Johanna Pinther Kane 1861 – 1938

Buried in Placerville Union Cemetery, Section 6 Block 67 Plot E

Portrayed by Jan Le Pouvoir, Save the Graves 2019 & 2021 events

A century ago, Johanna led what is believed to be America's first Suffragette march in Oakland, CA, fueling the movement and leading, eventually, to the passage of the 19th Amendment and the right of women to vote.

Johanna is featured in a famous image which first appeared on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle on August 28, 1908. In it, three well-dressed women march shoulder-to-shoulder with dignity and determination. Johanna is on the right. In the center, dressed all in white, is her step-daughter-in-law, Jeanette Wall Pinther. Jeanette carries the banner of the California Equal Suffrage Association, handsewn and hand-embroidered by Johanna herself.

100 years ago, there were two important women's reform movements going on, the women's rights movement and the women's suffrage movement. Both wanted social and economic changes for women. The rights movement sought equal property and political rights. Suffrage was about the right to vote.

200 brave suffragettes marched on the CA state Republican convention in an effort to convince the delegates to endorse a woman's right to vote.

Johanna grew up in San Francisco. She was a gifted musician and a street-smart kid, marrying her first husband at 18.

In 1906 Johanna married Theodore Pinther. Shortly thereafter, they were displaced by the Great San Francisco Earthquake. Many moved out of the city where they found other civic minded, active women who got engaged in their new communities in unprecedented ways. They formed art leagues and outdoor improvement associations. Her group's focus was on improving utilities and community

services. They built libraries and schools and funded fire departments.

These small civic groups attracted smart, strong-willed women who were growing impatient with gender inequality.

Johanna organized the SF Women's Club and later affiliated with the California Equal Suffrage Association, SESA. "We planned to march on their cigar chomping political confab" • urging a constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote.

Their plans got a lot of attention "the prior year there had been a similar march in London but nothing like it in America. The San Francisco march was orderly and dignified, covering more than a mile in close formation. They took over most of the second-floor gallery at the convention hall, waving banners.

The conventioners ultimately refused to place suffrage into their platform. Was it a failure? Yes and no. They demonstrated that women had a voice. The 19th amendment giving women the right to vote passed nine years later.

Following a second divorce in 1914, Johanna spent her later years in El Dorado County where she and her ex-husband owned land. She married a farmer from Coloma named Henry Kane.

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Interpretation by Mike Roberts, 2024

SaveTheGravesElDorado.org

Category

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Date Created

2024/07/03