



Women in Union Cemetery: Lulu Weatherwax

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

Lulu Weatherwax 1873 – 1950

Buried in Placerville Union Cemetery, Section 21A Block 10 Plot E

Portrayed by Lisa Destrow, Save the Graves 2021 event

Lulu Weatherwax was the only child of Charles and Sarah Weatherwax. Charles grew up in El Dorado, where his parents were merchants. He served in the California Cavalry during the Civil War and settled in Placerville thereafter. He owned a hardware store on Main St. and later served as City Clerk in the years before his death.

Lulu recalls her father as distant but “a kind father who just never knew what to make of me.” Her mother Sarah steadfastly supported Lulu and her eccentricities, turning over multiple rooms in one of Placerville’s finest old homes to her daughter. It was a big house still standing at the corner of Bedford and Coleman St. Artists, poets and musicians of all types found Lulu’s door.

Lulu was particularly close to Stella Tracy, Mollie Carpenter and Bine Ingham. Stella bought her work consistently. Bine roomed with Lulu for years. She claimed she was never interested in marriage, children or men. Just art.

Lulu painted on canvas but most loved painting on ceramics. She had one of the first kilns in Placerville. Several examples of her oil paintings and painted china are on display at the El Dorado County Historical Museum. She submitted her work to the 1915 Pan Pacific Exposition in San Francisco and won a ribbon, one of many she was awarded in her life.

In her 20s and 30s Lulu advertised her painted china in the Mt. Democrat, and most certainly did commission pieces, most of her work was given to friends and family. Local historian Mary Cory concludes, “With only the bare outlines of Lulu’s life known to us now, her art is what we now have to remember her by.”

She lived in her parents's home on Bedford until 1945, when, at 72, Lulu moved to San Francisco to live a bohemian lifestyle. She died, apparently very happy, in 1950 at age 77. Her bohemian friends brought her back to Placerville and laid her to rest.

China painting

China painting was a late 19th and early 20th century pastime and livelihood for many American women. It became a "Bob Ross" phenomenon.

Most of the work was done by the overglaze process which involved painting a previously fired hard-china blank, and then refiring it, making the painted design a permanent decoration. A wide variety of blank ceramics, paints and instruction books were widely available.

Interpretation by Mike Roberts, 2024

SaveTheGravesElDorado.org

Category

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Date Created

2024/07/04