

## Auburn's Cemeteries

The story of Auburn's Cemeteries is a bit confusing and some of the details have been lost to time. For clarity, it might be helpful to give each one a distinct name.

The first known cemetery was the "Burying Ground" on the site of the current County Courthouse. The second was the "East Street" cemetery on the site of the current Veterans Memorial Hall and parking lot. The third was the "IOOF Cemetery" just outside the old City Limits. Adjacent to that land, the fourth was the "IOOF Addition" on the corner of Nevada and Fulweiler. These two cemeteries are now combined and currently called the Old Auburn Cemetery. The fifth is the "New Auburn Cemetery" on Collins Drive.



The first mention of a "Burying Ground" in Auburn is from a Land Claim dated October 1852. In this claim Milton P. H. Love and Hiram R. Hawkins are claiming a plot of land on the south side of the Auburn to Illinoistown Road. The accompanying drawing shows a small square of land with Love and Hawkins in the northeast corner and the "Burying Ground" in the southeast corner. The Court House is in the northwest corner and A. Bronk is listed in the southwest corner. Land Claims Book B pg. 86

In June of 1853 Abraham Bronk sold his land adjoining the "Burying Ground and the Courthouse lot to the County for the "purpose of erecting a Court house or other county buildings thereon." Deed Book A pg. 275

We now know this plot of land is the small hill which now houses the current Courthouse. In 1855 a jail was built on the site and its "yard" covered a portion "Burying Ground." Pamphlet: Symbols of Stability, the Courthouses of Placer County.

In February of 1857, the Board of Supervisors made a motion for the Sheriff to contract to move 8 bodies from within the Jail Yard to a "new" burial ground. This new cemetery was located on East Street at the current site of Veterans Memorial Hall and parking lot. BOS Minutes Book A pg. 277

Very little is known about the running of the cemetery on East Street until late 1881 and early 1882, when local citizen Peter Maher was raising subscriptions to replace the "disgracefully dilapidated" fence around the cemetery. He was somewhat successful in raising money and managed to replace the front pickets for a total of 245 feet, he re-

used the old pickets on the side and rear of the lot. Placer Argus 10-17-1881 and 3-4-1882 – Genealogy Trails.com

By 1889 the Old Cemetery on East Street site was now even more “neglected and dilapidated” and a “discredit” to the City. In May of 1889, the local paper was calling for the City to purchase the property for use as a public park. Placer Herald 5-11-1889

In 1895 the State Legislature authorized the Trustees of the City to have the bodies in the Old Cemetery on East Street removed and the property used as a public park. Placer Herald 3-23-1895

It took more than a year for the Trustees to move on the project. It wasn't until June of 1896 that a notice appeared in the Placer Argus notifying the “relatives and friends” of the deceased buried in the old cemetery on East Street to remove the bodies “at once.” The paper listed 37 names of the deceased and 22 bodies whose “names are not ascertainable.” Placer Argus 7-17-1896 – Placer Herald 7-7-1896

It took another year for the City Trustees to authorize the City Clerk to advertise for bids to remove bodies from the City Cemetery on East Street to the IOOF cemetery. The City would pay for pine boxes, burials at 6 feet, with headstones removed and replaced and all moved to lots furnished by the City. Genealogy Trails.com – Placer Argus 4-9-1897

The bodies were not removed to the IOOF Cemetery on Nevada Street until March of 1898. Placer Herald 3-5- 1898

The property on East Street eventually became Sierra Park. In 1931 the City of Auburn sold ½ of the park to the County and the Veterans Memorial Hall was erected. Auburn Journal 1-15-1931 0 BOS Minutes 1-15-1931 – Auburn Journal 5-15-2013

As the cemetery on the East Street site was quite small it was likely getting quite crowded very early. The local Odd Fellows saw the need for additional space and purchased land lying right outside the City limits. It will be called the “IOOF Cemetery.” We know this cemetery was in existence as early as 1870.

The first official plat map of Auburn drawn up for County Judge David W. Spear shows the cemetery at this new site and a deed from May 12, 1870 shows the sale of this property from Judge Spear to the IOOF. Judge Spear was in charge of having plat maps drawn for various cities in the county for the purpose of legitimizing land titles. Essentially the judge “bought” the entire town and then “sold” the property to the occupants for \$1. Deed Book T pg. 337 – Auburn City Plat map of 1870

We have evidence that The Odd Fellows Lodge # 7 was selling some plots to the Eureka Lodge # 16 in 1873 and that pioneer Joseph Walkup, an early state lieutenant

governor, was buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in 1873. The IOOF cemetery book lists sales of lots from 1876 and there most probably is a book that lists earlier sales of plots. IOOF cemetery Book – Thompson and West – Deed Bk. pg. 355

In 1886, the IOOF purchased 10 acres of James Collins land on Nevada Street. This 10 acres is the “IOOF Addition” Placer Herald 4-24-1886 – Deed Book SS pg. 472

News about Auburn’s cemeteries was mostly quiet until 1935 when the IOOF transferred all their cemetery property to the Auburn Cemetery District. Deed Book 346 pg. 255

As the town continued to grow, there was a need for another cemetery. The New Auburn Cemetery was opened in 1962. Currently, in Auburn, we have the New Auburn Cemetery on Collins Drive and the Old Auburn Cemetery (IOOF) on Fulweiler and Nevada Streets. The Cemetery on Courthouse Hill and the Cemetery now under the Veterans Memorial Hall and parking lot no longer exist. Findagrave.com

Another Cemetery in Auburn that is no longer active but probably contains remains is the Cemetery of the Placer County Hospital on Elm Street on the small knoll behind the Wells Fargo Bank. There was a County Hospital on this site dating back to 1863 when the County purchased about 50 acres from Dr. Joshua Marks for the purpose of building a County Hospital for the indigent. It is estimated that about 1,500 bodies were buried at this site. A fire removed many of the wooden markers and by the time the widening of Interstate 80 intruded on the site, they could only identify about 300 graves. Those were moved to the New Auburn Cemetery in 1986 and buried in unmarked graves. BOS Minutes Book b pg. 298, 338,339, 345. 360 – Sacramento Bee 8-13-1985- Sacramento Bee 2-7-1988 – Genealogy Trails.com

Another Cemetery just outside the city limits of Auburn is the Chinese Cemetery on Highway 49. Once considered far out of town it was the resting place for Auburn’s early Chinese population. Although several sources claim that it was established in the 1850’s we know that a Chinese Cemetery existed alongside the East Street Cemetery under the Veteran’s Hall property in 1870.

The first evidence of the Highway 49 cemetery is from 1881 when the Board of Supervisors approved a petition by Wong Lung to disinter the bones of 35 Chinese men and return them to China, in that document they refer to the Chinese Grave Yard “about two miles northerly from town” At some point Charles Yue bought the property for \$10 in gold. It is unclear how many bodies were buried here and unclear how many bones were disinterred and returned to China. Genealogy Trails.com – BOS minutes Vol. D pg. 349 – 1870 map

Maidu/Indian Burying Ground There is no documentation showing when this 3-acre plot in the Long Valley area came into existence. In 1942 when the cemetery was threatened with loss, an unlikely benefactor saved it. Crooner Bing Crosby, the radio and motion picture star, purchased the original 2-acre plot and an addition acre and donated it back to the local Indian tribe. Crosby was brought into the picture through the efforts of Harold H. Robinson, Baptist missionary, and Father J. J. Hynes, pastor of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Auburn. Placer Herald 5-23-1942 -7-4-1942 –  
Genealogy Trails.com

-- **April McDonald**, Auburn City Historian