NEWSLETTER SPRING 2021 VOL II

San Luis Rey Pioneer Cemetery

The historic Pioneer Cemetery in the San Luis Rey Valley has been transferred to the Oceanside Historical Society as Trustees from the Oceanside Unified School District. We will continue the care and upkeep of the cemetery as we have done so since 1989. Below is a brief history.

Sometime in the late 1860's land was designated for a cemetery on a small hill, just southwest from the Mission San Luis Rey. The first known burial in this cemetery is that of one-year-old Catherine Foss, who died in 1869. In 1875 Isaac Kolb donated the land to "reserve for public burying ground or cemetery where the same is now used for that purpose". The following year the cemetery was deeded to the San Luis Rey School District "to hold in trust for a public burying ground".

Early residents of the San Luis Rey Valley took to burying their family members in sections or rows. There is a row of Woodruffs, Hubberts, Lanphers, McNeils, Abilez, etc. The list of those buried continued to grow with the burial of many pioneer members of the Freeman family. Alfred A. Freeman, the patriarch of the Freeman family who came to San Luis Rey from Texas, is buried there with his wife Permelia. The Freemans have a large section near the southwest corner.

Andrew Jackson Myers, the founder of Oceanside and his wife Sophia, along with four of their children: Alfred, Etta, Maggie and Andrew, Jr. are buried at the cemetery. Only two of the children's headstones remain today, that of Maggie and Andrew, Jr., both of whom died very young.

The San Luis Rey Township was a small, tight-knit community. The settlers knew where their loved ones rested and must have assumed that someone would always know and never planned for what lay in store for the cemetery or the fate of their own final resting place. The San Luis Rey School District, although the legal owners of the cemetery, seemed to have kept no official record or count. School Trustee Shirley Woodruff filed the tax exemptions yearly with the county and was responsible for pointing out available burial sites to families looking to bury their dead. He was for years the cemetery's only "caretaker".

Over the years several people attempted to document the burials, but many were simply an inventory of headstones. If an early wooden cross was erected for example, and no longer existed, it was not noted. Early lists estimated 84 burials, but with more indepth research, that number has risen to over 130. Other names include Lusardi, Cerda, Salgado and Meza. It is not known if an actual plot map of the cemetery ever existed.

In the late 1940's the Oceanside Unified School District took over the San Luis Rey School District, and unknowingly acquired the cemetery or became its trustee. Shirley Woodruff, then retired, still continued to file the annual tax forms for the cemetery until his death in 1989. Shirley was buried in this cemetery in the plot that was reserved for him several decades ago, alongside many of his family members. (Continued on Page 3)

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Do you have history questions?
Email us at info@OceansideHistoricalSociety.org

Our Office is Now Open

We are now open on Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm

Starting May 25 We will also open on Tuesdays from 10 am to 2 pm.

If possible, please make an appointment for your visit by calling 760-722-4786 or by email at info@oceansidehistoricalsociety.org

NEW MEMBER

Evan Hueners – Benefactor Level
Welcome and thank you
for your support!

Memberships are Due

At the beginning of the year, or each January, annual memberships become due. Please renew your memberships using the form on the back of this newsletter or renew online via our website:

www.OceansideHistoricalSociety.org

Does not apply to Life Memberships

Thank you for your continued support.

New History Book

Our new History of Oceanside book is still in the works and we hope will be completed and available to the public this coming summer.

This will be a LIMITED edition history of our City, with new stories and features, along with many new historic photos from our ever-growing photo collection. The history will be complete from Oceanside's earliest days through the present.

This book is made possible by a grant from the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, donations from Walmart Store #2245, Smart & Final, and Peter and Linda Weseloh.

This new book is being edited, photos selected amd a work in progress. We will keep you updated.

Earliest known photo of the Pioneer Cemetery, with the headstone of Leovi Cerda in forground.

San Luis Rey Pioneer Cemetery (continued):

Memorial of Officer Dan Bessant

For over 30 years, the Oceanside Historical Society has actively engaged in clean ups, having the cemetery mowed, uprighting headstones that have fallen and keeping watch over the cemetery.

Several years ago, with a grant from the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, and donations from the Oceanside-Pacific Kiwanis Club, along with our members and pioneers descendants, a new fence was erected, along with an arched entrance and gate.

Some may note a large headstone in the southeast corner of the cemetery. It is a memorial to fallen Oceanside Police Office Dan Bessant who was killed in the line of duty. Although Officer Bessant is not buried at the cemetery, his widow asked for permission to place the marker there for his fellow officers to see as they drove by.

In 2013 a large cleanup was done by the Carlsbad California Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Hundreds of people arrived to clean, mow, upright and restore headstones, remove brush and re-grade the cemetery road. In addition, their volunteers helped to document the pioneers who are buried here.

For well over a year volunteers Kevin Leahy and Mario Solis have donated their time to mow/de-weed the cemetery. They have reported any issues to the Historical Society and have been diligent to keep an eye out for any problems.

Just this past weekend a group led by Bishop Livingstone of the Poinsettia Ward of the LDS church, organized another clean up of the cemetery and will work to upright two large headstones that have been toppled.

Some residents and visitors have often expressed concern over the condition of the cemetery, especially in the dry years when they only see "brown grass" and lack of any landscaping. This is no memorial park. This is an historic cemetery and it looks much like it did over 150 years ago, naturally green in the spring after the rains and dry in the summer and fall months. A barbed wire fence was erected many decades ago -- and in the 1980s it was replaced by chainlink fence. We had the fence rebuilt with simple wooden posts, new wire, along with some of the original barbed wire provided to us by rancher Dave Jones. There is no need to beautify the cemetery.

We are very grateful for the LDS church in their efforts, as well as our volunteers Kevin Leahy and Mario Solis, along with our members and friends who have donated both time and money to help us maintain this historic cemetery. We want to assure all concerned of our continuing efforts to maintain and preserve the cemetery as well as to share the history of those pioneers buried there.

Oceanside Historical Society
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Oceanside CA 92049-0125

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Membership Application

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OHS, P O Box 125, Oceanside CA 92049-0125

Donations & memberships may be made through our PayPal account

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