



California State Parks

Video Transcript



Still Living: The Pioneer Union Cemetery at Shasta State Historic Park

Good Morning folks, my name is Jack Frost. I'm a tour guide here at Shasta State Historic Park, and today we're going to be visiting the Pioneer Union Cemetery here at Shasta. This cemetery was actually established in 1852 for the residents that established this community back in 1849 during the California Gold Rush.

One of the things that's interesting about cemeteries is this is where you can really start searching the history of the people that lived in the community. We have quite a few graves that we're going to be visiting today. These are our pioneers that lived here in the early days. We'll get a little bit of history from the gravestones themselves, but it's actually the research that you do once you visit a cemetery that really brings out the life history of these folks.

So, if you'll follow me up the steps, we're going to visit some of the first graves here at the top of the hill.

The interesting thing about Shasta is that this is only one of nine cemeteries that are located here within the community. This is considered the pioneer cemetery, where a lot of the early 1849 and 1850 pioneers are buried.

This particular man, Joseph Waugh, was one of the very early miners that came to California in 1849. He mined here locally and traded here within the community that was established as the commercial center of Northern California. But he very quickly realized that it was the commercial activities that were the real gold mine. So Joseph looked at the support structure here in the area and realized that, with the Sacramento River running very closely to us, and the miners having to get to the other side of that river, he established two ferries across the Sacramento River. That was where he established his wealth. The Waugh Ferry was located at Middle Creek, just below Shasta on the Sacramento River, and, eventually, once he prospered from his ferries, he was able to establish the Waugh Hotel. Later in 1873, the Waugh Hotel became the stop for the California-Oregon Railroad Company and the terminal for all freight and all the supplies that came into this community.

So, let's continue on around. This is Joseph Waugh here, and then we're going to visit Colonel William Magee's grave.

This is Colonel William Magee's plot, along with his wife, Mary. Colonel Magee was another pioneer miner that came during 1849. He was one of the men that did the same thing as Mr. Waugh. He left the mining career very early and went back to his old profession that he had

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back East; and that was as a surveyor. When you visit our Courthouse Museum here within Shasta State Historic Park, you'll see the original town survey that Colonel Magee did. Even today, all the property owners that live here within the community, and the State Park itself, still use those original survey lines that Colonel Magee established in the early 1850s.

He was an excellent miner, and in his survey he discovered many mining sites here in the Shasta area. Probably the most important one that he discovered was the Iron Mountain Mine, which is about seven miles north of the town of Shasta. Now, this mine became one of the most prosperous copper and iron mines in the United States. It's still there today, but today it's the seventh most hazardous waste site in the United States--a result of some of the mining operations. Colonel Magee also had a ferry system across the Sacramento River but a little bit further to the south than where Mr. Waugh had his.

Along with Charles Camden and several of the other people here in the community, Colonel Magee established many of the early businesses here in the area. In 1872 when the California-Oregon Railroad Company actually established the town of Redding, which is just to the east of us, Colonel Magee unfortunately was not able to do the surveying of that site. So they brought Benjamin Bernard Redding up from Sacramento, and he did the official town survey for the city of Redding. When he was completed with the survey, he signed his name to the bottom of it and sent it off to Sacramento. A mistake was made in Sacramento. One of our very early pioneer land owners was Major Pearson Reading. They spelled their last names a little bit differently, and Major Reading was who the town was supposed to be named for. Because the surveyor's name was also Redding, the people in Sacramento, when they registered that survey, they ended up switching the two, and it was named for the man that did the survey. We always kind of jokingly say that if Colonel Magee hadn't been down south doing a survey, the people to the east of us might have been living in "McGee-ville" instead of Redding.

Well, we'll walk on through. If you have any questions as we go through on the tour, please feel free to ask about any of these pioneers.

This particular grave marker here is of Ella Sprague. Her father was Royal T. Sprague, who came to California in 1849. Again, like the first two pioneers, Magee and Waugh, he only mined for a very short period of time and then established a store here on Main Street in Shasta and started making his fortune from that retail business. He, along with two other men, in 1852 decided that education was very, very important for this community, and so they established the very first public school here in Northern California in 1852. It still is the school for this community; it's now 150 years old this year.

Royal Sprague went on to revert back to one of his old professions. He was an attorney back East. So he actually established that attorney's office again here in Shasta; started defending people in the courthouse, which is now the museum for the Shasta State Historic Park. And, he then went on to run for, and was successful in his election bid for, senator for Northern California in 1853. A few years later, he was appointed the first Supreme Court Justice for the State of California in Sacramento. And at that time, he and his wife, Frances, moved to Sacramento where they're buried. But their daughter is here in this cemetery. Ironically, she is buried here just a short distance, only about 250 yards away, from where Royal Sprague's cabin sat when he was mining here in 1849.

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Right behind Ella's grave is the Grotefend plot. There are six members of the family that are buried there. Dr. Grotefend, again, is a pioneer miner that came during 1849; but he also switched back to an old profession and established the St. Charles Hotel here in Shasta. It was considered one of the best hotels in the area. In 1850 you could actually order champagne and oysters at the hotel, which was a real feat considering where you were, so far north of San Francisco. Dr. Grotefend's St. Charles Hotel was destroyed by fire in 1854. Instead of rebuilding the hotel itself, he rebuilt a mercantile store and rented out half of that business to the Dobrowsky Jewelry Store, continued with the merchandising store, and then eventually moved his businesses into Redding in the early 1870s, when that community was established.

Right behind the Grotefend plot, is the Daugh family, spelled almost the same as Waugh, but with a D instead of the W. And John Daugh was also a businessman that owned a hotel here in Shasta. But it wasn't quite as elegant as the St. Charles. It was called the Eagle Hotel. It was a hotel where a miner could go to for a dollar and actually get a bath and a cot and a place to get a quick meal. The Eagle Hotel wasn't very successful for Mr. Daugh. And, in 1853 he came up with a brilliant idea of how to unload this white elephant. He established a lottery, and the grand prize for the lottery was his hotel and all of its interior furnishings. Unfortunately, everyone here in the area knew about the hotel and nobody bought any tickets. So it was the first failed lottery in the state of California.

Well, we're going to be walking on up the hill here. And so if you folks would like to go up this little path here, we'll follow along.

We're going right here to this grave. This is the grave of David Casey who died in 1854 at the age of 40 years. He was a native of Fermoy County, County of Cork, Ireland. Mr. Casey was one of the pioneers that came to Shasta, and he was one of our very first firemen--volunteer fireman--for this community. This cemetery wrought iron gate and fence that's around his gravestone was actually purchased by the volunteer fire department company in his memory when he passed away. Unfortunately, Shasta was plagued for many, many years by forest fires that swept by here and destroyed the town many times. But it was the gallant efforts of the men like David Casey and many others that tried to keep this community going. And, fortunately, today we still have a volunteer fire department company here within the community.

A friend of David Casey's is actually buried here right next to him. This is Prackles' grave. And, as you can see, his fence around his gravesite is little simpler, but this one was actually produced right here in Shasta. This was actually produced by Charles Eames, and the fence around David Casey's was actually ordered from Sacramento--kind of like a store-bought fence around the grave.

Henry Prackle was the local butcher. This was one of the things--you had hotels, you had many businesses--but one of the things you didn't have in those old days was refrigeration or the ability to freeze meat. So the butcher shop here in Shasta sold the beef on-the-hoof and pretty much butchered every week. So that the pioneers that were living here could go to the butcher shop and buy fresh beef. Mr. Prackle eventually sold the butcher shop to Peter Hoff.

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And as you walk through the rest of Shasta State Historic Park, you'll see some of the remnants of that old butcher shop with his cold storage facility.

The fence we mentioned because Charles Eames was the blacksmith. He's buried in one of the other cemeteries here in Shasta, and this was handmade in his blacksmith shop on Main Street. You'll find that a lot of the fences that are around these graves have this pointed arrowhead top to them, and it's very easy to identify his work. Charles Eames died as a young man, and his wife, Elizabeth, was left with several children and no income. So she converted his blacksmith shop to a photographic studio and took portrait photographs of a lot of the early pioneers here of Shasta. She was the first woman photographer here in Northern California. We have a lot of photographs of this particular community thanks to her. I think one of her most famous photographs that she took was of three little boys on the dirt street in the center of Shasta pulling a wagon across to the other side.

Now we'll walk on down through and take a look at some of these graves that are down here and some of the wrought iron fences that are around them.

This small fence that's here at this particular grave is probably the most ornate one here in the whole cemetery, and it's a mystery to us. As you can see, it's a very small fence. It indicates to us that this is probably the grave of a child. But the headstone itself is missing, so we have no idea who was actually buried here. This would have been a great expense to have actually ordered this fence for this grave, so this was an indication of how much this affected the family of losing this child.

The cemetery is a place of mourning, and it's a place to show your respect for the people that are here, but it's also a place where you learn history.

We'll go right here behind us and visit the Prehn family. You might notice that the layout of this grave is very similar to the Grotfend family. The Prehn family, Carl Prehn, actually established one of the more interesting businesses here in Shasta. He established a candy store. It indicates lots of children, and probably a lot of older miners that liked to have a jawbreaker once in a while for a sweet treat. Carl Prehn married Amelia Grotfend, and that's why the two plots look very similar. Her mother and father are buried over here at the entrance to the cemetery, and she is here with her husband and her daughter, Bessie Prehn.

Amelia was a schoolteacher here in Shasta for many years, and a lot of her students are still alive and still visit here occasionally to pay their respects to her. Her daughter, Bessie, was also a schoolteacher. She lived here until 1957 and was very spirited in the preservation of this community. We have a lot of our collections within the state park and within the museum thanks to Bessie and Amelia Prehn. One of the things that Bessie Prehn did in the mid 1950s, she established a house tour of some of the pioneer residents' homes here in Shasta. She, along with Mrs. Garrett and Mrs. Litsch, opened their homes up to a Saturday afternoon tea and sold tickets for quite a few months. And, surprisingly, they had over 200 people that showed up and wanted to see these old homes and enjoy tea again in an old Victorian parlor.

The three women took the money and actually purchased the only known complete copy of the *Shasta Courier* newspaper, which was published here in the community. They started printing that newspaper in 1852 and it's actually now called the *Record Searchlight*; it's still actually

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printed daily. Those newspapers were bought from the Carter family, who were the editors of the newspaper back in the 1860s, and they were microfilmed at the Bancroft Library. The microfilm is now available to all libraries and colleges throughout California and really is a great reference and resource tool for early California pioneer history.

Well, if you'll follow me on up through the center, we're going to visit a section of the cemetery towards the back.

This particular plot here is of a woman that was very successful as a businesswoman in the pioneer days. Her name was Phoebe Coulbourn. She was a dressmaker by trade and she also owned a millinery store where she made hats for the ladies here in the community. At one time she owned one of the hotels out in the mountains that the stagecoaches would stop at to change horses and get a meal for all of their passengers. Phoebe Coulbourn continued to run that dress shop and millinery shop for many, many years here in Shasta. But her early years were very difficult for her. Phoebe Coulbourn was a black slave that was brought to California during the Gold Rush years by her owner. She worked here in the Shasta area and in the gold fields and was able to actually purchase her freedom very early on and then established her businesses. She was very concerned about children here in the community and there were a lot of children here that were orphaned. Right next to her grave is her son's grave, her adopted son, who was a small Wintu Indian boy. His name is John--that's the only reference that's on his stone, but she wanted him to be buried right next to her later, and he was.

Here in this oleander bush is the grave of Benjamin Young. Benjamin Young was another African-American that came out to California during the Gold Rush years as a slave and worked very, very hard to obtain his freedom, and then continued to work in the gold fields until he was able to purchase the freedom of his family and bring them out to California also.

Benjamin Young and Phoebe Coulbourn and Dr. Grotefend in the 1860s pooled their money together and established the first school here in Northern California for black and Indian children. That school ran for quite a few years here right next to the regular school. But unfortunately the building itself was destroyed by a snowstorm in the mid-1870s. When Dr. Grotefend and Phoebe Coulbourn and some of the other residents at the time went to the county supervisors and said, "We need money from the county to rebuild the school for the black and Indian children," the Board of County Supervisors said, "No we don't have enough money; integrate the two of them together." So in 1874 we had the first integrated school for all children. Unfortunately, that did not apply, at the time, for the Chinese children. They did not obtain the right to go to the public schools for quite a few years after that.

This is the grave site of the Schuyler Triplets. These were the first triplets born in Shasta County, in the 1860s. This is the grave of Benjamin, Elizabeth, and Charles Schuyler. They only survived for three years. The thing that's kind of unique about this is it's a small grave, but today we have this beautiful oak tree that's growing up out of the center of it. Some of the people that visit the cemetery and they comment about this, they say that the spirit of the three kids today now resides in the mighty oak that's growing up through the center of their grave.

This is something that as you research the county history you find in 1862 and 1863 there was a very devastating cholera epidemic that swept through this area. And you'll find a lot of

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graves of children in these cemeteries in the 1862-63 period. You'll find a lot of women that are also deceased during that period of time. You find that the cholera swept through the children very, very quickly, and the mothers who were taking care of the children and staying at home contracted it at that time. So you'll find a lot of women and children that are buried here. But it's actually through the research that you find that their husbands went on to other careers, possibly in Sacramento, or they moved to Redding, or even to other states here on the West Coast, and are buried elsewhere.

Well, we're going to walk on around and visit this next grave here at the next site.

You would see that this is the grave of James Stockton, but you actually have to read the whole name. This is actually James Ella Stockton, wife of Henry Clay Stockton. She was born James Ella Andrews in Mason County, Kentucky, and her father was so sure that he was going to have a boy that he named the baby and actually had the baby's name registered at the local church and in the Bible. To his surprise, he had a daughter, and so she became James Ella, instead of James. Her brother, Andrew, and Henry Clay Stockton came out to California as pioneer Gold Rush miners in 1849. Henry Clay Stockton was a very successful miner here in the area. And Alexander Andrews, who was James Ella's brother, decided that he was going to go back to Kentucky and marry his sweetheart and bring her out to the new prosperous state of California. He had a ranch here, south of Shasta, which would be her new home. Henry Clay Stockton went back with him to be the best man. While in Maysville, Kentucky, Henry Clay Stockton married Andrew's sister, James Ella. And so the two couples took the trip from the East Coast down to Panama, and crossed Panama by mule train, and then came up by ship to San Francisco, riverboat up the Sacramento River to Red Bluff, and then stage coach into their new community of Shasta.

In 1854 Henry Clay Stockton became the sheriff of Shasta County, and he continued that position until 1863. In 1859 he was the only law enforcement officer here in Northern California that requested arms from the Governor of California to protect the Chinese when there was a huge uproar here within the state to deport all the Chinese from the gold camps and send them back to China. Henry Clay Stockton made it known through newspaper ads that he was going to defend the Chinese of Shasta County. He received 200 Springfield rifles from the Governor, from the armory in Sacramento. Everyone here in the area gained a lot of respect for him at that time. He actually gave up the position of Sheriff of Shasta County in 1863 when his wife James Ella died giving birth to their daughter. Her brother, Alexander Andrews, adopted the baby, and Henry Clay Stockton never really recovered from the loss.

Now, if you'll follow me along, we're going to have to actually step across some of the brickwork here. You'll find that a lot of the headstones that are here have typical mourning symbols on them. And quite a few of them have weeping willow trees, which is a German symbol of mourning. So, that'll give you a little bit of a key sometimes as to the nationality of some of these earlier pioneers.

This is the gravestone of Rosanna Bystle. She was the wife of Daniel P. Bystle. As you can see, she died at the age of 35 in August 1861. This may have been an early cholera epidemic at the time. We don't know much about Rosanna Bystle, but we do know that her husband, Daniel, was the cabinet and furniture maker here in the community. That was his profession back on the East Coast before he came out to try his luck at gold mining.

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Another part of cabinetmaking is coffin-making, and he was the undertaker for the community, also. There's an old story that was told by many of the pioneers about Daniel Bystle that when he worked in his shop, he always whistled while he was building furniture. But some of the people that lived very close to his home, when he was building late at night and whistling Yankee Doodle, they knew that there was a funeral for the next day because he only whistled Yankee Doodle while he was building coffins. He was a very busy man here in the community, and he owned a horse-drawn hearse to carry the coffins to the gravesites. Another story that some of the old pioneer families would tell about Mr. Bystle was that the hearse would always be driven at a very slow pace to the cemetery for the funeral. The family would always follow close behind, and then it was customary for the family to follow the hearse back into the center of town before they actually ended the funeral procession. Mr. Bystle was known to travel a little bit more briskly back on the return trip than on the way to the cemetery, so some of the families relate about letters that their great grandmothers talked about them almost having to almost run behind the hearse back into the center of town after the funeral was over.

As you can see on this one, the Bystle's were from Germany, and this is the design that I was talking about of the weeping willow tree that you find as a symbol for mourning for a lot of the early German pioneers here in the community.

This next gravestone that we're actually going to be looking at looks just like a boulder that's sitting here in the cemetery. But this one has a very unique story behind it. This is the grave marker of Ned Schuman. Ned Schuman was a pioneer miner and mined all of his life, even up into his elderly years. This boulder, as you can see, is flat on the top, and it used to sit in front of his cabin about a half a mile north of the cemetery on Rock Creek. This was his dining table that sat in front of his cabin. He always ate all of his meals on the top of this stone out in front of that cabin. Many of the miners that used to travel up to the Iron Mountain Mine remembered Ned, as an older gentleman, always sitting in front of his cabin, watching people going by, waving to them, always having a cup of coffee sitting on the top of this stone. When he passed away, his old friends from the mine took this boulder, split it in half, and carved his name and his birth date and the date that he died here on this, for his headstone. So this really has a personal attachment to this particular individual.

Well, this ends our tour of the cemetery, and we'll be going back down to the hill. Do you have any questions before we leave? Well, I thank you all for coming and hope you enjoyed visiting some of our pioneers here in the cemetery. And we invite to kind of look through and visit some of these other graves that are here and kind of imagine the lives that these people led while they lived here in this old mining camp.

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