Gone But Not Forgotten

Towering trees and gravestones nestled high on a hill serve as visible reminders of lives long passed. Situated on this knoll is Rose Hill Cemetery, a Protestant burial ground for over 200 residents of the Mount Diablo Coal Field.

This pioneer cemetery was in operation from the 1860s to about 1900, with most interments occurring in the 1870s when the towns' populations were at their peak. Many of those buried in the cemetery are children who died of disease and adults who died from accidents or illness. Hardships were many and lifespans shorter than today.

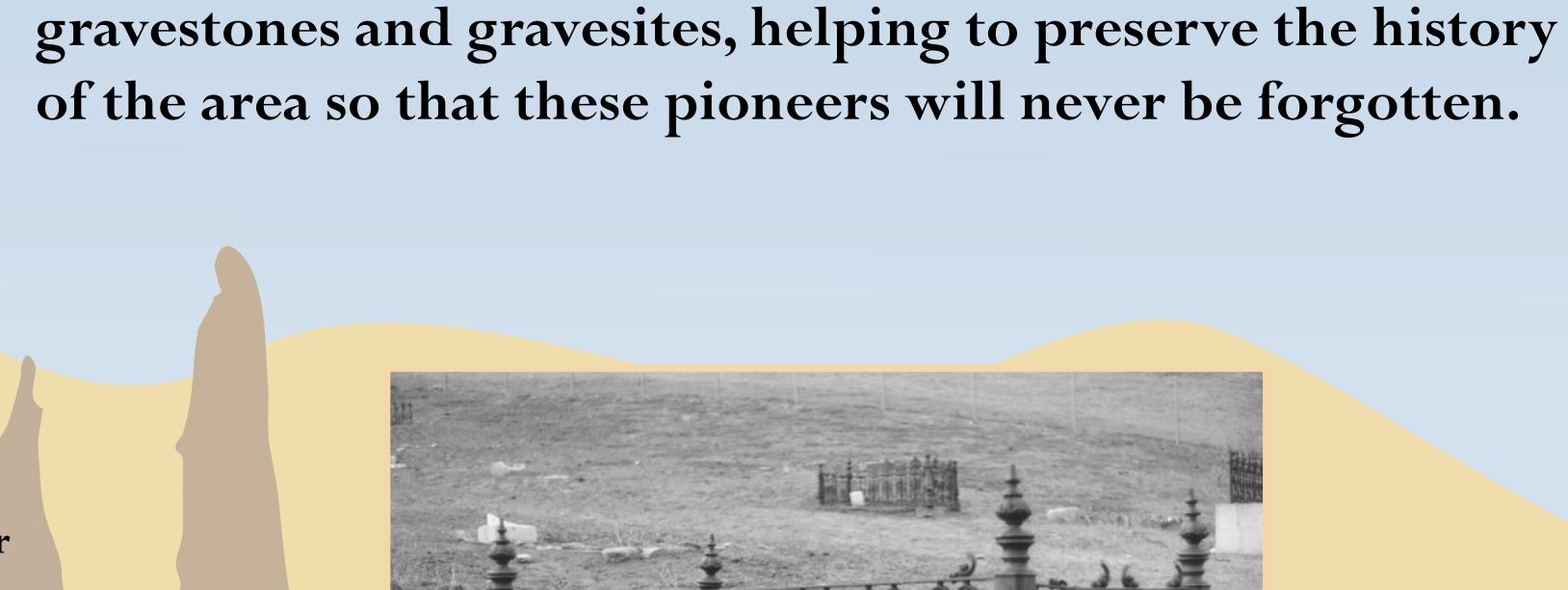Before the East Bay Regional Park District purchased this property, gravestones were broken or stolen from the cemetery. Today, Park Rangers meticulously restore the gravestones and gravesites, helping to preserve the history of the area so that these pioneers will never be forgotten.

Emma (Hayward) Rose, former owner of Rose Hill Cemetery
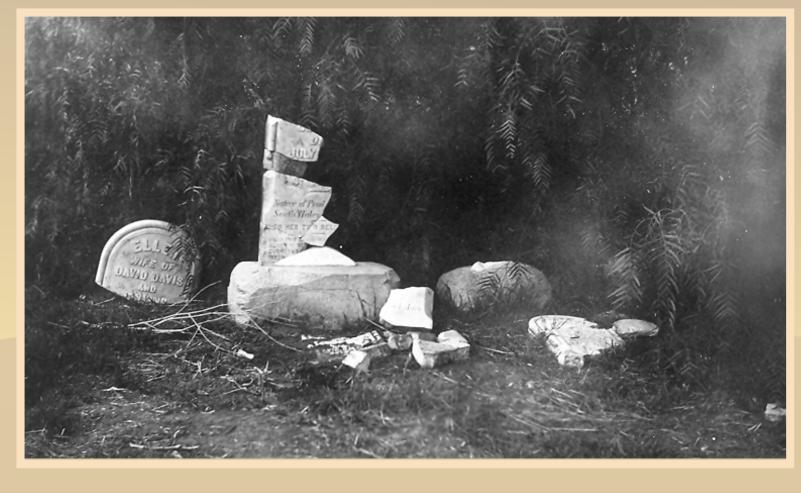
Charity Emrose Alker Collection, EBRPD

Many ornate fences, like the one pictured above in 1969 at the Rebecca Abraham gravesite were destroyed or stolen by vandals over the years.

Photograph by David Stogner

Ellen Jones, a Somersville resident, died of cancer on August 15, 1890 at age 69. She shares a gravestone with her husband, Hugh R. Jones.

Elizabeth Thomas Collection, EBRPD

This circa 1939 photograph of damage to the gravestone of Ellen Davis is an example of the vandalism in Rose Hill Cemetery that has been documented as early as the 1920s. Nearly half the gravestones are missing from the cemetery today.

Photograph by Zelma Myrick, Tony Dunleavy Collection, EBRPD

Black Diamond Park Ranger, Doug Fowler, prepares a marble slab to encase the broken pieces of the Joseph Banks gravestone in September 2009.

Photograph by Monique Looney, EBRPD

Nortonville resident David E. Griffith, photographed here in 1898, died May 20, 1900 after falling off his horse and landing on a fence post.

Tina and William Rees Thomas Collection, EBRPD