

Spotlight on Headstones: Chinese Burials; Inventor's Monument

After the Independent Order of Odd Fellows founded in 1854 what is today called Salem Pioneer Cemetery, a section of the grounds became the temporary resting place of Chinese sojourners whose remains by custom were later recovered and sent to their ancestral homeland in China. By 1900, the burials had become more permanent. Last July, Eagle Scout candidate Peter Anderson of West Salem reviewed 52 Chinese burials listed in the Friends of Pioneer Cemetery database, the locations of which only about half are known from records. Peter organized a field survey in the northwest section where plot boundaries have largely disappeared. The effort of sixteen members and supporters of Boy Scout Troop 127 verified the presence of ten headstones of Chinese-Americans.

Regular visitors to the southeast sector of the grounds know the stacked monument surmounted by a colossal sphere of polished granite that for some years leaned downhill at a highly precarious angle. The weighty grave marker was professionally leveled by Jeff Hilts Marker Setting last August under terms of a new City contract (see note on page 4). The monument marks the resting place of Salem gunsmith and dry goods retailer Benjamin Forstner (1834-1897), who came to Oregon in 1863 as a member of the Christian communal colony which settled Aurora. In 1865, the Pennsylvania native moved to Salem, where he invented a drilling tool patented in 1874. Subsequently, he and a new partner patented an improvement advertised as the "Webfoot Auger." The Forstner flange bit was embraced by wood workers for its precision and is still used today.



The granite monument of Benjamin Forstner (1834-1897) was professionally leveled in August. Forstner invented the flange bit, a common wood-working tool.



Eagle Scout candidate Peter Anderson of West Salem pointed out the headstone of Dora Jung Sing Lee with its epitaph in Western and Chinese characters.

Endowment Fund Update

Salem Pioneer Cemetery's Endowed Fund was established within The Salem Foundation Charitable Trust in 1999 for long term care and protection of the cemetery. In 2011, the fund's earning power was boosted by \$6,310 in gifts from seventy-eight individual contributors.

To help the City toward an enhanced level of maintenance and to accomplish betterment work that could not be undertaken otherwise, the ongoing goal is to build the endowment to \$500,000. In the current market, the value of the fund stands at \$487,019. Proceeds from the endowment provided the City with supplemental funds in the amount of \$10,902 in 2011. Endowment funds typically are used for special cemetery-wide projects and major monument repairs and stabilization. In 2011, a part of the proceeds was used to establish a competitively-selected contractor of record to undertake monument repairs on a regular basis that will advance the pace of headstone recovery set by FOPC field volunteers beginning in 2004.

Field Volunteers Expand Schedule

The Friends of Pioneer Cemetery field volunteers gathered, as usual, on the second Saturday morning of each month beginning in March to groom plots and reset fallen headstones area by area. In order to gain more traction across the full 16-acre grounds, crew leaders scheduled additional parties for volunteers who were able to continue the work on two Monday mornings per month. The expanded schedule proved so productive it was extended through December 2011 and adopted for the ensuing calendar year.

Crew leaders Dale Palmquist and Mark Fields greatly appreciated the support of these community volunteers who participated in field work in 2011.

Suzanne Apodaca

Art Fogarty

Naomi Guerrero, Blanchet

David Jackson

Fred Klatz

Randy Miles

Kathy Moreland

Pat Norman

Harold Otto

Elisabeth Potter

Omar Ricalday, No. Salem HS

Penny and Jose Ruiz

Grant Rutherford

Karen Sewell

Claudine Shaw

Alicia Suarez

Bill and Linda Warren

Tristan Wrosch, Macalester

Elisabeth Potter was joined by Pat Norman, Moya McKeehan, and Art Fogarty in manning the Visitor Help Station over the Memorial Day weekend. FOPC volunteers also turned out after Memorial Day to collect masses of spent flowers and vases.



Dale Palmquist and Mark Fields raised and leveled leaning headstones during the August work party with the help of Harold Otto, far right, whose mutt bar steadied a base as its excavated area was filled.



Field crew regulars turned out in force for the work party in April. Above, left to right, are Mark Fields, Suzanne Apodaca, Kathy Moreland, Pat Norman, Dale Palmquist, and Harold Otto.

April workers pictured below, left to right, are Randy Miles, David Jackson, Grant Rutherford, Claudine Shaw, and Fred Klatz



Volunteers are always needed and welcome. For schedule information, please contact Tibby Larson, Volunteer Coordinator for Parks Operations, Salem Parks and Transportation Services Division, talarton@cityofsalem.net or 503-589-2197.



VIP visitors were welcomed to Salem Pioneer Cemetery by Addie Rickey and Elisabeth Potter on June 9. The State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation and staff of the State Historic Preservation Office toured the National Register-eligible property in conjunction with a summer meeting in the capital city.



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Friends of Pioneer Cemetery provides this Annual Report for your information in association with the Parks and Transportation Services Division, City of Salem Department of Public Works. If you wish to contribute to the Salem Pioneer Cemetery Fund, make additions or corrections to the mailing list, or have your name removed from the mailing list, a return envelope is provided within.

Larson Retirement Brings Change to Key Supervisory Role



Gene Larson, left, long-time leader in the City's Parks organization, retired in June. John Kleeman, right, succeeded him as Parks Operations Supervisor whose jurisdiction includes Salem Pioneer Cemetery.

Gene Larson, long-time Supervisor of Parks Operations, retired in June, 2011 after 32 years of service to the City of Salem. He fully believed in Pioneer Cemetery's value to the community. With the close support of Project Leader Keith Smith, over the years he responded to vandal and storm-caused emergencies, deployed inmate and seasonal work crews, helped coordinate public events in the cemetery, and prepared the grounds in advance of Memorial Day. John Kleeman, formerly a Parks Project Leader, was named to succeed Mr. Larson as Parks Operations Supervisor for all holdings in South Salem. In 2010, Mr. Kleeman coordinated the State grant-supported project to restore the concrete-capped England family plot located inside the Hoyt Street entrance.

New Contracts Advance Basic Maintenance and Restoration

Recent visitors to Salem Pioneer Cemetery will have noticed the beneficial effect of regular professional grounds keeping. In 2011, the contract for mowing was awarded to neighboring City View Cemetery, whose personnel and equipment are readily accessible and efficient. Rick Hilts, owner-manager of City View Cemetery, has long assumed responsibility for daily opening of the entrance gate and registering and conducting contemporary burials in Pioneer Cemetery. In a separate initiative made possible by support from the FOPC Endowed Fund, in 2011 a contractor-of-record position was established for ongoing qualified monument repair services. In a competitive selection process, Jeff Hilts Marker Setting, having a long record of prior work in the cemetery, was awarded the contract.



Rick Hilts, left, owns and manages City View Cemetery adjacent to Pioneer Cemetery. Jeff Hilts, right, pictured with wife Gloria, operates an independent headstone setting and repair service.