How You Can Get Involved

The Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery Preservation Committee has an active group of volunteers who maintain the pathways, repair gravestones, keep vegetation under control, raise funds for ongoing maintenance and encourage families and organizations to 'adopt' and maintain small parcels of the cemeteries. An annual schedule of tours and special events is available on the website and from the Recreation & Parks Department.

If you are interested in getting involved, please visit the website (www.srcity.org/ruralcemetery) or call (707) 543-3279 for more information.

Donations can be made to Rural Cemetery, c/o Recreation & Parks Department, 2060 West College Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95401. Please make checks payable to the Community Foundation of Sonoma County. To make an online donation visit srcity.perfectmind.com and click "Donations".

The historical beginnings of the 167-year-old site are not readily apparent to today's visitor. Olivier Beaulieu purchased the land, which included the Cemetery, from Julio Carrillo in 1851. He granted permission for the first burial in 1854. The Cemetery site was sold to John Lucas in 1857, and in 1867 to the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery Association.

The California Carrillo family members were among the first non-native people to live in the area. Doña Maria Carrillo, a widow with many children, brought her family here from Southern California in 1837 at the invitation of her son-in-law, General Mariano Vallejo. She received an 8800-acre land grant from the Mexican government in 1841. The Mexican grant, known as the Rancho Cabeza de Santa Rosa, included the cemetery site and much of the present-day City of Santa Rosa. One of Doña Maria’s sons, Julio Carrillo, helped found Santa Rosa in 1854 and is buried here.

Family gravesites whose nineteenth-century dates show many deaths over a brief span of years attest to the fragility of life in a society without medical means to combat smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid and influenza. Several grave markers erected during the years of the Great Depression are obviously homemade, reflecting the financial hardships of the period. The attention to detail, the materials used in the making of grave markers, and the sentiments inscribed on the monuments speak of a society rich in cultural variety and a timeless interest in preserving family heritage.

This brochure is a guide to the monuments and headstones whose inscriptions offer a glimpse into local lifestyles of a past era. The City of Santa Rosa expresses great appreciation to many volunteers who have helped preserve, maintain and interpret this historic treasure.
Native California Habitat and Memorial Garden. Started in 2001, this garden is located on the grounds of the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery.

Marking a shameful period in Santa Rosa's history, this locust tree is believed to be a sprout from the tree that was used to hang three men victims of the earthquake are buried in private plots throughout the cemetery.

Great Francisco policemen in

The Bacigalupi family plot is a reminder of the Italian immigrants who helped settle Santa Rosa. Natalie Bacigalupi was a director with the Bank of Italy—which later became the Bank of America. The stone is to the east of this site, beyond the olive tree.

Downhill to the right are the graves of about 36 Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans. Although Chinese burials were prohibited in the Rural Cemetery until the 1930s, Japanese were permitted. Further downhill beyond the eucalyptus trees is the Sonoma County Rural Site, burial location for about 350 people buried here by the County since 1943. The previous county site, with about 1500 burials, was the Chanate Cemetery on Chanate Road. It also is now in the process of rehabilitation and open for tours.

This monument marks the plot of the Grace family, founders of Grace Bros. Brewery on W. Third St, now the Hyatt Vineyard Creek Hotel.

Dr. Annabel McGaughey Stuart, d.1914, was a Civil War nurse and Santa Rosa’s first female physician. Her admiring patients called her “Dr. Dear.”

Feedor Hahman, d. 1883, is referred to as one of the founding fathers of Santa Rosa. His stone is to the west on the next aisle. Hahman Drive bears his name.

John McMinus, d. 1884, is one of three veterans in the Cemetery of the War of 1812, in which the British burned the White House.

Dr. John F. Boyce, d. 1898, was Santa Rosa’s first physician. He started his practice in Franklin, a town that preceded Santa Rosa and was located near the town of the Flamingo Hotel. He came to California during the Gold Rush. His home on A Street just south of St. Rose Church still stands.

Julio Carrillo, d. 1911, was one of the founding fathers of Santa Rosa. Julio, brother-in-law of Gen. Mariano Vallejo, sold and donated parcels of land that today make up most of downtown Santa Rosa, and donated the Plaza (Courthouse Square). In June 1997, Carrillo descendants and Masons rededicated a new marble headstone in his honor.

The McDonald plot commemorates a prominent family who was involved in Santa Rosa’s civic affairs and utility ownership for many decades. Behind you is the Taylor stone which for several decades was engulfed by and leaned on by a huge California live oak tree.

John Richards, d. 1879, born a slave, was a very popular black barber in Santa Rosa and assisted freed slaves after the Civil War.

Thomas Hall Jr., d. 1918, was a British émigré who served under General Pershing during the Mexican border conflicts in 1915. He joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I and is buried under the maple leaf after dying in the great influenza epidemic in 1918.

The Fulkerson family vault and their marble monument is to the right. Downhill from this are the graves of 37 veterans of the Mexican, Civil and Spanish-American wars. It was used by the County in 1889 to fulfill a State mandate that veterans have a decent burial site. About 180 Civil War veterans lie in the Rural Cemetery, including about 18 Confederates.

The Fujimoto tombstone is a reminder of the many Asians who played a part in Santa Rosa’s history.

Established in 2011 as a memorial to Santa Rosa victims of the 1906 earthquake, this garden displays a large variety of old-fashioned roses of the sort planted in this cemetery in the late 19th and early 20th century.