

An Alpine History Mystery – Solved!

What happened to Caroline Beatty's tombstone?

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The solution to this history mystery was actually written in August 2009 by Carol Walker, author of the Tattered Tidbits column in the monthly Sun Spot Shopper and editor of the Alpine Historical Society Newsletter. Here's her article titled: Caroline's Tombstone Comes Home.

"This story begins where it ends. On a beautiful Alpine day, June 19, 2009, Verna and Wilton Randel took a piece of Alpine history back to its rightful home. The tombstone of Caroline Beatty, 1837-1911, one of Alpine's early pioneers, had been missing from the Alpine Cemetery, on Victoria Drive, for thirty-nine years when the Randels "Googled" Caroline's name and up popped the Alpine Historical Society's website, www.alpinehistory.org.



The Randels sent an e-mail to the Historical Society asking if the tombstone "was of interest to anyone." Of interest? You bet! A phone call was made and, within an hour, the Randels met Carol Morrison, the President of the Historical Society, at the cemetery. The caretaker carefully placed the stone on the base from which it long-ago had been removed.

Now, let's go to the beginning of our story. Around 1970, Verna Randel served as property manager for a rental home across the street from her El Cajon home. After being forced to evict the tenants, the Randels went in to prepare the home for new occupants and discovered the tombstone of Caroline Beatty. They were told that the tombstone had come from the Los Angeles area and felt there was no easy way to research where it belonged. Not wanting to dishonor the deceased, the tombstone

was placed in a beautiful spot in their garden. Throughout the years, their gardeners paid special attention to the area around the tombstone. Some of them believed it was a grave and even left flowers on it. Caroline's tombstone was cared for and loved. But Mr. and Mrs. Randel always wanted to find where it truly belonged.

The Beattys hold a special place in Alpine's history. In 1869, 48-year-old Adam Beatty and his 32-year-old wife Caroline came to the area now known as Harbison Canyon. Their first home was just east of the creek at present Ironsides Park. In 1884, Mr. Beatty received a homestead patent for 160 acres at Rancho del Sequan on Tavern Road. They planted an olive orchard on this property during the 1890s—the orchard still exists. In 1899, Adam Beatty built a farmhouse with his own hands, based on traditional British folk-house forms, it is a design called the "I" house, common in the Tidewater South of the United States prior to 1830. It was moved in 1999 to the Alpine Historical Society's property on Tavern Road, approximately one mile north of its original location. The Beatty House is one of two pioneer houses which today serve as museums. The Beattys were held in high regard by Alpine residents as leaders of the community—they had experienced and participated in Alpine's transition from an isolated frontier to a well-established community. The return of Caroline's tombstone completes the picture—the Beattys will always be important figures in Alpine's history and the Randels are now a part of their story. We sincerely thank them for their care of this important part of our history."

Thanks to Carol Walker for this wonderful story – and the solution to our Alpine History Mystery. Carol's articles are published regularly in the Alpine Historical Society newsletter available free at locations throughout Alpine and delivered to members of the Alpine Historical Society. If you would like to become a member to receive the newsletter and to help support our mission and programs please send a note to: membership@alpinehistory.org or call 619-445-2544 and we'll get membership information out to you right away.