

An Alpine History Mystery:

What happened to Caroline Beatty's Tombstone?

January 2014

Caroline Beatty died a childless widow on December 28, 1911, and was buried beside her husband Adam in the Alpine Cemetery on Victoria Drive. Her story is interesting because she and Adam were among the early pioneer families in Alpine.

Caroline was born in Illinois on December 29, 1837, the third child and only daughter of Norwegian parents Jorgen and Oline Johnson. Her first husband, Thomas Cureton, was killed in the Cotton Plant, Arkansas battle of the US Civil War in July of 1862. Caroline married Adam Beatty a year later, on September 24, in Milford, Texas by a Justice of the Peace aptly named Valentine Sevier. The couple moved to San Diego County in 1869, setting up farming on a site that would later be named Harbison Canyon. Then, in 1878, the Beatty's moved to a 160 acre homestead at Rancho del Sequan on Tavern Road. Here, they continued farming and they managed 170 bee hives which generated a small income from the honey. But early pioneer life was not without its challenges. They suffered a major set-back in 1890 when a fire destroyed all the Beatty hives and crops. So Adam, age 70, and Caroline, age 54 had to pick up the pieces and start anew.

In 1903 Adam passed away leaving Caroline with their homestead but no other source of income except for a \$12 per month pension granted to widows of war veterans. Caroline's health was also in decline and she was nearly blind, so in 1908 Caroline sold the homestead to the Wheeler family. She died three years later just one day short of her 74th birthday and was buried next to Adam in the Alpine Cemetery.

Although peacefully interred here for 58 years, grave robbers disrupted her quiet repose by stealing her gravestone sometime between 1969 & 1970. By the time the stone was discovered missing, anyone who knew Caroline was also buried here or elsewhere. Caroline had no family in Alpine or even in California as far as we know. So no one was regularly visiting her grave site to notice that the tombstone was gone.



(Caroline's headstone is missing from the capstone left of the tree in this photo)

But that incident is not the end of our story. You see, on June 19, 2009, nearly 40 years after the stone was discovered missing and at a time when everyone had come to accept that her tombstone would never be recovered, Caroline's marker miraculously reappeared. Our mystery question for you is: "What happened to Caroline Beatty's tombstone, and who returned it to its resting place in Alpine?"

If you know the answer, send us a note to mystery@alpinehistory.org or post a comment on the Community Network. Need help solving this one? You can find the answer by searching for "tombstone" on our website: www.alpinehistory.org. Or just come to the museum open house from 2 to 4 pm on January 25 or 26 where docents will be on hand to help you solve this mystery. The museum is located at 2116 Tavern Road in Alpine.