

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Lone Grave

A letter has come to me from Mrs. Gladys Sherman of Hayward telling an additional story about the lone grave near Nevada City in California, about which we wrote last October after a visit in that part of the state.

The lone grave, final resting place of a pioneer child and located on Highway 20 several miles east of the Five Mile House, was permanently marked by Mrs. Sherman and her husband just previous to our visit there. They placed a small granite headstone and enclosed the grave by a new white picket fence.

Mrs. Sherman, a former resident of Nevada City had for many years, she writes been interested in the perpetuation of this memorial, and so through her own financing accomplished the recent work. Her interest stems from the fact that as a small child she frequently visited the small roadside grave.

The work now completed recalls the date almost 100 years ago when a small pioneer boy succumbed to the hardships of a long and rigorous journey and found a release from this hectic world beneath the peaceful pine boughs on a lonely mountain ridge.

Many abandoned and forgotten graves line the trails left by California pioneers bound by covered wagons of the 1850s, but the one about which we write is that of Julius Albert Apperson, age two years, two months and days, whose fatal illness during the dark May night in 1858 must have severely rent the hearts of his young pioneer parents. Throughout these long 99 years it has been known as the "Lone Grave."

Mrs. Sherman writes that she was first shown the grave when she was five years old by her stepfather. "After that," she says. "I made a visit to the grave each Decoration Day for many, many years. The yearly trips were interrupted only after I left Nevada City. But now I'm living here in the Bay Area and can once again resume my visits."

Thirty-six years ago, the Morning Union of Grass Valley told the story of the Apperson's tragic arrival in California as follows:

"The Apperson family, who appear to have been relatives of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, mother of the late William Randolph Hearst, camped on the spot where

the lone grave is and where both their young children became ill. Word was sent to Selby Flat, then a populous rival of Nevada City, and some men rode over the hill to render any possible assistance. Within a day or two Julius Albert Apperson, died and was buried there.

"The family continued on and while encamped at Clear Creek their little girl died and was buried on a hillside which has since been used as a cemetery," according to the Morning Union story, "but her name and age is not known and her grave has not been discovered."

An old-timer of Nevada City, a Mr. Fleming, reported that his first sight of the lone grave was in 1877 when he made his first trip over the old Washington road. He remembered well the white fence enclosing the spot which included two cedar saplings, on which a board had been fastened bearing the little boy's name and age.

In 1863 Martin Luther March, a Nevada City lumberman, is believed to have erected a marker and the original fence. "After 1863," the report continues, "It was not until 1921 that George Legge, an active member of the Native Sons, became interested in the history of the grave and repainted the sign. Nine years ago, Mrs. Sherman erected a white lath fence and once again repainted the marker. This last year when she visited the site, she found the marker almost obliterated and parts of the fence missing because of heavy winter snows. She at once began the task of placing the new fence around the grave, repainting the two signs for the two trees, laying the small granite marker and placing a cross consisting of stones which originally lined the grave."