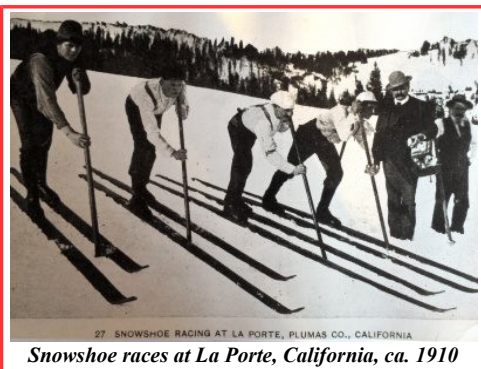


Forensic Dogs Locate Pioneer Graves

by Dian Price

Gold was discovered in California in 1848 and by 1849 there were nearly 90,000 immigrants in California searching for a better life. In 1855 the population estimate was 300,000. The Sierra Mountains were deluged with miners, merchants, and gamblers. The rapid increase in population led to a hasty development of roads and towns, followed by churches, schools, and the inevitable cemeteries.

The town of La Porte California, formerly Rabbit Town or Rabbit Creek, is located in the northeastern corner of California in Plumas County. La Porte was once a thriving hub of the gold rush. At the height of population for Rabbit Creek and its surrounding area there were 3000 residents from many parts of the world, including Scotland, Ireland, England, Scandinavia, Italy, Latin America and China. Gold was discovered in that area in 1850, and by 1857 there were 14 saloons, 2 theatres, 3 hotels, a brewery, a bowling ally, and a Chinatown. Soon to follow were churches, lodges, and the Sons of Temperance. Other mining towns in the area included Gibsonville, Howland Flat, Poker Flat, St Louis, Poverty Hill, Scales, Port Wine, Whiskey Diggins, Hepsidam, Nelson Point and Onion Valley. American snowshoe races originated in La Porte in 1853. The first ski club in the world was organized



there in 1866. Skiing was a way of life and a necessity for survival.

Conditions were harsh in the high Sierra. Snow was often over 15 feet deep, provisions were scarce and expensive, and miners were unprepared. Forty-niners that couldn't cope with the elements perished. In the late 1800's, the State of California put rigid controls on hydraulic mining, and most of the mining communities became ghost towns. Left behind were empty buildings, remnants of the miners' lives, and abandoned cemeteries. Nature has taken these areas back to their natural states, except for the remains of crumbling tombstones that remind us of what it once was.

La Porte is the only surviving town in this area of what is referred to as the Lost Sierra. La Porte now has fewer than two dozen full time residents and over 400 vacation cabins. The La Porte cemetery is the only cemetery in the area that is still maintained. The earliest recorded burial was in 1854, and people from the community are still being buried there.

There is also a Chinese cemetery in La Porte. The Chinese cemetery has no identifiable grave markers, but stands as a reminder of a large Chinese community that was there at one time. In the 1870's there were over 200 immigrants from China. They had their town within the town of La Porte, one block off of Main Street. That street is now named China Alley. A small percentage were merchants and the poorer ones were miners. The cemetery is unmarked and only the locals can lead us to it. There is no accurate count of burials,

but the area is dotted with dozens of small colored flags.

In the summer of 2011, fellow Root Cellar member Lynne Roberts and I took a day trip up mountain dirt roads to visit some abandoned cemeteries. The first was about 7 miles from La Porte at Gibsonville, originally named "Secret Ravine." Gibsonville was settled in 1851. Its population peaked to 700 in 1855 and fell to 2 in 1927. We were puzzled to find a group of people with dogs in the cemetery and we were greeted by a Forest Ranger. He explained that the group was from the Institute for Canine Forensics out of Woodside, California, and had been contracted by the U.S. Forest Service to locate and identify gravesites.

The handlers gave us a demonstration. There were five dogs, and each one was assigned a different flag color. The dogs were detecting the decomposition of human remains in the soil and then sitting on the spot. The handler marked the spot with a colored flag. It was a very impressive activity, and even though we knew what they were doing, we didn't understand why. We wondered what this data would be used for and who would use it.



Our next stop was Howland Flat, 12 miles from La Porte, which was settled in 1850. Howland Flat was once second only to La Porte in population and in importance, and had been home to a large population of Irish Immigrants. By 1860 the population was approximately 2000, and in 1936 the population was zero. Howland Flat has three cemeteries: Catholic, Protestant, and Military. As we visited each cemetery,

we again found them dotted with little colored flags. The question was still "why are they doing this?"

I phoned the Feather River Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest in Oroville, California. This district includes parts of Plumas, Yuba, Sierra, and Butte counties. My call was forwarded to the Forest Service District Archaeologist Jamie Moore. Mr. Moore has been more than willing to send me pictures and to share information. He explained that this is part of their Heritage Program and is funded through the Archaeology Department. It is part of an ongoing effort to preserve these old cemeteries.



There are 26 old cemeteries in the Feather River Ranger District and many of them are being destroyed by mining and logging operations. Souvenir seekers have hauled away the little that remained of the towns, and graves have been desecrated. With the exception of the La Porte Cemetery, these historic cemeteries have not been maintained since the 1950's. Cemetery boundaries and locations have been lost over the years, and in order to restore fences, remove brush and vegetation, and perform cleanup, the graves had to be located. Once the graves were located the information was entered into a GPS. In the Saint Louis cemetery we noticed that large metal spikes had replaced the temporary flags. Mr. Moore said they plan to mark the graves with the spikes in all of the cemeteries so the graves can be easily found by using a metal detector.

Graves that have been located by the forensic canines in the Feather River District are at Gibsonville, St Louis Diggings, Port Wine, the three cemeteries at Howland Flat, and the Chinese cemetery in the town of La Porte. Mr. Moore confirmed that, as was the custom, the bones from the graves of the Chinese were removed and sent back to China. The dogs were still able to detect the decomposition after more than one

hundred and fifty years. He explained that the decomposition can be detected in the surrounding vegetation and even in the trees.

Using dogs to help locate historical or archaeological graves is a new concept. Called HHRD or Historic Human Remains Detections Canines, the dogs are canine archaeologists. Unlike search and rescue dogs, these dogs are trained to search with their nose very close to the ground. Some search in water. This is a non-invasive tool, as the dogs are trained to never dig or pick up remains.

I have visited six of the seven cemeteries where these dogs have searched, and I plan to visit more of the old cemeteries in the summer. I have a renewed interest in the fascinating history of the Lost Sierra and the people that were the first to settle there. As we read those old tombstones we get a story of the people who lived and died there.

While writing this article in December, Dian became snowed in at her cabin in La Porte, surrounded by her books, pictures, and laptop. Between writing sessions, she shoveled enough snow for her dogs to go out, and then returned to her keyboard. --LS

Burials at La Porte Cemetery, La Porte, California



La Porte Cemetery

Helen Weaver Gould and her husband Truman were long time residents of La Porte and were the owners of the La Porte General Store. Helen was a published genealogist, an historian, and an author. She copied and typed this list of burials from the La Porte Cemetery records in 1971. Helen wrote " Why do people write histories? Whatever the hidden psychological reasons may be, there is a desire to share one's hours of research and compilation with others."

GEMETERY RECORDSLA PORTE, PLUMAS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Copied by Helen Weaver Gould
1971

ALLEN

M. M. Allen, Feb. 12, AD 1862, aged 39 years.

AMEY

Lucien H., 1885-1937

BEECHNOR

Michael, 1887-1936

BERRY

Mother- Esther, born in Queens Co., Ireland, April 14, 1830,
died at La Porte, July 13, 1896, aged 66 years, 3 mo. 29 da.

Father-John, born in Watterford Co., Ireland, Mar. 14, 1825,
died at La Porte, April 14, 1869, 44 years, 1 mo.

BEVAN

James Henry Cook, 1865-1938

BUCKLEY

John E., 1865-1908

BURRELL

Isaac, born in Belleville, Jefferson Co., N.Y., July 12, 1826
died at Gibsonville, California, July 20, 1855.

BUSTILLOS

Maria, wife of J. Bustillos, died Nov. 26, 1891, aged 41 yrs.
Father, J.M., died Sept. 8, 1913, aged 76 years.
Gonsallo, son of J. M. Bustillos, died Sept. 13, 1879,
aged 12 years.

J. A. Bustillos, 1870-1932

Michael A., 1878-1948

Maria Rosa, born Aug. 30, 1884, died Jan. 8, 1900.

Eva J. Schmitt, 1919-1965 (daughter of J.J. Bustillos)

CAYOT

Madaline, dau. of Josephine Cayot born May 11, 1854,
died July 7, 1860, aged 6 yrs, 1 mo. 26 days.

CHAPPELL

Ruth Blessing Lewis, 1893-1970

CAYOT

Buried here are: Francois Cayot, Josephine Cayot, Marie Cayot, Baby Cayot, Allis Le Claire Cayot, Francis Cayot, Claire Quigley Cayot, Agnes Corbett Cayot, Francis B. Cayot (1886-1955), Josef Cayot.

CHAMBERLAIN

Brigham H. died Feb. 3, 1892, 63 years; Native of Westboro, Mass.

CHAPPELL

Dad Chappell, 1888-1968, Passed away at Cleghorn Bar while on a fishing trip with his two sons.

CORBETT

Annie, wife of David W. Corbett, born Aug. 31, 1866, died Aug. 13, 1904.

David W. Corbett, born July 29, 1853, died Feb. 7, 1916. Native of Nova Scotia.

Elizabeth E. Corbett, wife of Richard Henry Kingdon, born Aug. 6, 1889, died Jan. 15, 1962.

COUТИERE

Louis, 1852-1933

COSTELLO

John, 1861-1922

CRAIG

John, 1848-1926, Native of Canada.

CRAWFORD

D. N., born Feb. 4, 1828, died Dec. 6, 1865.

DARLEN

T. J., died Apr. 24, 1895, aged 77 years.

DUBUQUE

Alfonse, died Oct. 10, 1896, aged 46 years, 7 mo. 6 days. Native of Canada.

ERMATINGER

Kasper died 1911.
Rose died 1913.

ETTER

Myron Eldon, born Aug. 19, 1909, died Jan. 9, 1971.

GOUILLAARD

Bernard, No En France, Mort Le & Mai 1882, A lage de 62 nars regreter de a veuae el de res amis Trieez your lui.

GRANDBOIS

Eunice A., 1879-1954
Samuel Francis, 1872-1918
Baby Clyde, 1939-1940

HENDEL

Charles W., July 22, 1831-Sept. 20, 1920.

HILANDS

Jacob W., died Aug. 18, 1891, aged 68 yrs. 11 mos.

HILL

R. D., born March 15, 1826, died April 28, 1875,
Aged 49 yrs., 1 mo, 13 days.

HILLMAN

John, born Sept. 29, 1820, died March 22, 1905.
Mary, born Nov. 19, 1830, died April 5, 1914.
Louis L., April 21, 1860-Oct. 8, 1934.
Lester L., Dec. 17, 1889- March 10, 1915.

JONES

Callie, wife of James Jones, died May 26, 1896,
age 41 years, 7 mo. 9 days.

Elizabeth, dau. of James & Callie Jones, died Nov. 28, 1892
age 8 mo. 2 days.

KIEFER

John N., 1843-1915

KINGDON

Mary Jane, dau. of H. & J. Kingdon, died Jan. 16, 1867,
aged 3 yrs, 4 mo. 5 days.

Mary Jane, dau. of Samuel and Mary Kingdon, died Oct. 13,
1870, aged 1 yr. 9 mo. 3 days.

Samuel H., son of S. & M. Kingdon, died Sept. 26, 1885,
11 yrs. 11 mo.

LA PLANTE

Annie, born Jan. 18, 1882, died May 27, 1904.
Dennis, May 18, 1848 - May 23, 1924.
Fred --

LEMIEUX

Mary M., wife of Joseph H., born in Canada Aug. 1, 1858,
died April 6, 1905.

MANN

James, 1882 - 1940

MC CLUSKY

Thomas F., 1883 - 1937

MC LAUGHLIN

John, died Oct. 3, 1886 at La Porte, aged 54 yrs. 3 mo. 11 days. A native of Ireland.

MC MAHON

George F., May 11, 1861 - Dec. 3, 1941.
Emma F., April 18, 1869 - May 26, 1948.
Timothy, 1910
Ellen, 1920

MC NEIL

Hugh, 1819 - 1901
Mary Ann, 1836 - 1896

MERIAN

Ben W. Merian, 1883 - 1908
David A. Merian, 1865 - 1901
Henrietta Kumle Merian, 1869 - 1903

MIGUEL

Manuel Miguel -
B. G., son of M. Miguel born July 14, 1891,
died Jan. 28, 1905.

MODGLIN

James A., 1889 - 1929
Andrew J., April 12, 1892 - June 5, 1966.

MILLER

William, died Nov. 5, 1870, 38 yrs. 7 mo. 3 days.

MULLEN

Catherine, Dec. 12, 1834 - Jan. 21, 1915. R.I.P.
Niel, Nov. 1, 1832 - June 8, 1912. Native of Ireland. R.I.P.
Patrick Joseph, Oct. 2, 1872 - May 7, 1915. Native Calif.

O'ROURKE

John F. born July 19, 1853, died July 19, 1901. Father.
Cleveland Hendricks, 1884 - 1966
Olive, 1916 - 1966

ORR

Clara S., dau. of Peter & Susan Orr, born Aug. 9, 1863,
died, Sept. 6, 1865.

OWENS

Owen H., died Jan 18, 1905.

POST

Almira -

POST

Father- Dennis Post, Dec. 12, 1839 - Feb. 28, 1912.
Mother- Catherine E. Buckley, March 11, 1868-Jan. 14, 1929.
Brother- Archibald D. Post, Mar. 18, 1903 - Jan. 18, 1937.

POST

Father- Leroy John, born Feb. 15, 1890 -
Mother- Ada G. Waterworth, Sept. 25, 1896-Apr. 10, 1918.
Sister- Irene E., Feb. 21, 1898-Oct. 19, 1905.

PRIMEAU

Catherine, 1856 - 1927
Mose, 1857 - 1901
Alfred, Oct. 14, 1879 - Sept. 22, 1965.
Fred, California, Pvt. 1 cl Med Dept., Aug. 31, 1938.
Theresa, 1883 - 1895
William, Nov. 4, 1883 - April 1, 1971.
Vivian, Jan. 20, 1888 - June 4, 1961. (wife of William)
George, 1885 - 1892
Mose Jr., 1887 - 1918
Elmer, 1898 - 1918

QUIGLEY-QUIGGLE

Andrew J., 1827 - 1908
Sarah E., 1830 - 1905
Fred S., 1859 - 1898
W. C., 1871 - 1955
Kittie M., 1875 - 1887
Nettie, 1892 - 1906
Jean Scott Quigley, 1868 - 1957
Grace M. Almlie, 1896 - 1961
Alice M. Bingham, 1897 - 1960
Charles Arthur Bingham, 1885 - 1963

REILLY

Lucille, wife and mother
Lucein Amy, April 19, 1907 - June 23, 1965.

ROBERTS

Joshua, died Dec. 17, 1902, age 41 yrs. Native of England.

SAMARZICH

Dan D., died La Porte Dec. 12, 1906, age 27. Native of Austria.

SCHOFIELD

Alice P., wife of M. E. Schofield, born June 23, 1875,
died Dec. 30, 1896.

SCHUBERT

May E., wife of G. H. Schubert, died Nov. 21, 1902,
age 27 years, 5 mos. 13 days.

SCHULD

William, died May 17, 1928, age 76 years. Native of Germany.

SMITH

John Douglas, Oct. 13, 1865 - June 11, 1936.

STEWARD

E. Frances; 1883 - 1932

J. Frances, 1835 - 1913

STOLTZ

Stanley O., born Mount Carmel, Ill., June 2, 1912,
died Oct. 17, 1969.

THOMPSON

John, born Apr. 10, 1821, died Mar. 8, 1863.
A native of Hermosand, Sweden.

TOMPKINS

George W., born in Starkey, Yates Co., N.Y., June ____
died at La Porte Dec. 3, 1862.

TURPIN

Edward C., Illinois Sl U. S. Navy, April 10, 1906,
Sept. 25, 1967.

WARD

James A., of Mercer Co., Pa., born May 18, 1841,
died at La Porte July 27, 1866.

WENTWORTH

Leander, died Aug. 30, 1866, aged 29 yrs. Native of Maine.
Also his two children died Aug. 7, 1866, aged 7 days.

WILKISON

Theodore D., born March 1, 1902 - died June 7, 1968.

YELIN

Eugene W., California Y2 USNR, World War II,
June 27, 1918 - March 19, 1967.

OUR LITTLE WILLIE. W.S.R.

"TO LIVE IN HEARTS WE LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT TO DIE."