

Police unable to find motive in Santa Cruz grave robbery

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SANTA CRUZ — Police investigators say they have been unable to determine a motive for Saturday's grave robbing at historic Evergreen Cemetery in Harvey West Park.

Two teen-agers were arrested at the scene after a passerby saw them digging up a grave and called police.

Officers found a grave unearthed and the casket destroyed. Several bones were found outside the grave and a sack containing larger bones was found on top of a nearby crypt.

The bones are those of DeEtte

Newcomb, who was buried in the cemetery in 1931. According to her great-graunddaughter, Leslie Newcomb, DeEtte Newcomb was among those responsible for cleaning up and restoring the cemetery back in the 1910s. Mrs. Newcomb had the familiar cemetery gate built as a memorial to her two daughters, who had died in Nebraska before the family moved to Santa Cruz.

"When I read about the grave robbing I went to see. I had a feeling it was one of ours," Leslie Newcomb said this morning. "I was not prepared for how deeply it would affect me," she said.

Her great-grandmother's grave is located in a remote canyon section of the cemetery, said to be one of the first Protestant cemeteries in California. The cemetery contains about 900 graves. The first recorded burial was on July 19, 1850.

The remains of many people who helped lay the foundation of Santa Cruz rest in the graveyard. Among them are William Blackburn, the county's first judge; B.A. Case, president of the first temperance society in California; Captain Isaac Graham, a relative of Daniel Boone;

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and Loudon Nelson, an ex-slave who settled in Santa Cruz and left his estate to Mission Hill School upon his death.

Streets, creeks and valleys carry the names of those in Evergreen Cemetery. A few include Scotts (Scotts Valley), Cathcart, Chilverton, Dufour, Gharkey and Bean (creek).

Investigators say Aaron Thomas Carr, 18, and his 17-year-old companion, both students at Soquel High School, have refused to discuss the incident.

Through the years, the cemetery has been the target of many vandals who have damaged or destroyed headstones.

The bones are in the custody of the coroner's office. Leslie Newcomb said her great-grandmother's remains will be returned to the grave.