

# Resurrecting buried tales of Santa Cruz' past

By DON WILSON  
Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — The bones of more than 2,000 pioneers molder in their graves at Evergreen Cemetery here among the crumbling fences, the tilting gravestones and the dappling shadows of the trees.

A landslide has blotted out many of the old graves in the cemetery, which is near Harvey West Park on the city's north side.

But there still are intriguing bits of history evident along the

paths among the gravestones — and an organization known as HELP (Help Evergreen Live Permanently) is trying to bring some sense of order back to the once neglected site.

Renie Leaman, a local historian who may know more about Evergreen than anyone else, likes to conduct tours and talk about the graveyard's "tenants" when they were alive — because Evergreen, designated by the state as a point of historical interest, provides a fascinating glimpse into Santa Cruz County's colorful past.

One notorious "resident" of the cemetery, for example, is the gun-toting, whisky-drinking Isaac Graham, born in 1800. He tracked his runaway wife, kids, and gold all the way to Oregon, where a mud-slinging custody fight broke out to rival anything on prime TV.

Mrs. Leaman and HELP are working to restore the cemetery and research the lives of the "tenants." They have scheduled a fundraiser, the Collectible and Memorabilia Show and Sale this Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, featuring over 35 dealers and lectures by specialists in collecting.

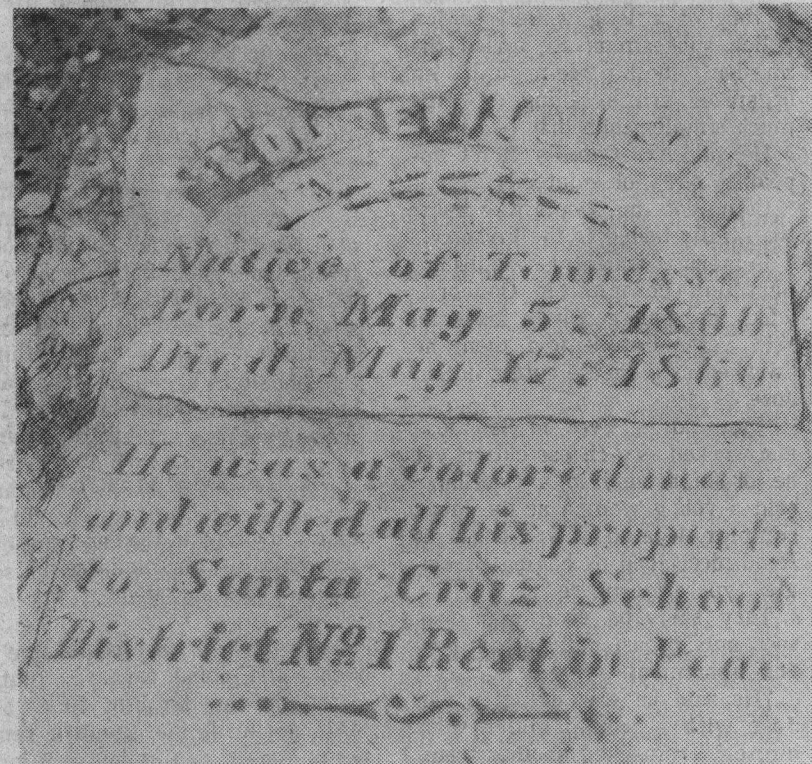
Mrs. Leaman says Evergreen Cemetery was established in the 1850's as one of the first Protestant grave sites in California. Its founders were four early Santa Cruz residents — Samuel A. Bartlett, R. C. Kirby, F. M. Kittredge, and William F. Cooper.

Originally, there were 241 lots laid out on the property. In 1922, the owners of the deeds to these sites formed the Evergreen Cemetery Assn. and this action was followed by purchase of adjacent acreage.

The cemetery now covers more than eight acres of land and is divided into five principal sections. There was the old section made up of original plots, a section for members of the Grand Army of the Republic, a section for free Masons, a Chinese section and an extension section from the original part.



Caretaker Rodney Bertrang tidies up around Loudon Nelson's grave at Evergreen Cemetery — Staff photos



Former slave Loudon Nelson's gravestone tells his story

## The Mercury

5★ SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, THURSDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 1977

29

## Pressure for more housing dooms endangered tar weed

WATSONVILLE — A shortage of housing has prompted a victory of houses over an endangered species of tar weed.

The City Council has given ap-

tive Chris Palmer to preserve the endangered tar weed species.

The City Council approved the subdivision Tuesday night and noted that it was doing so partly be-

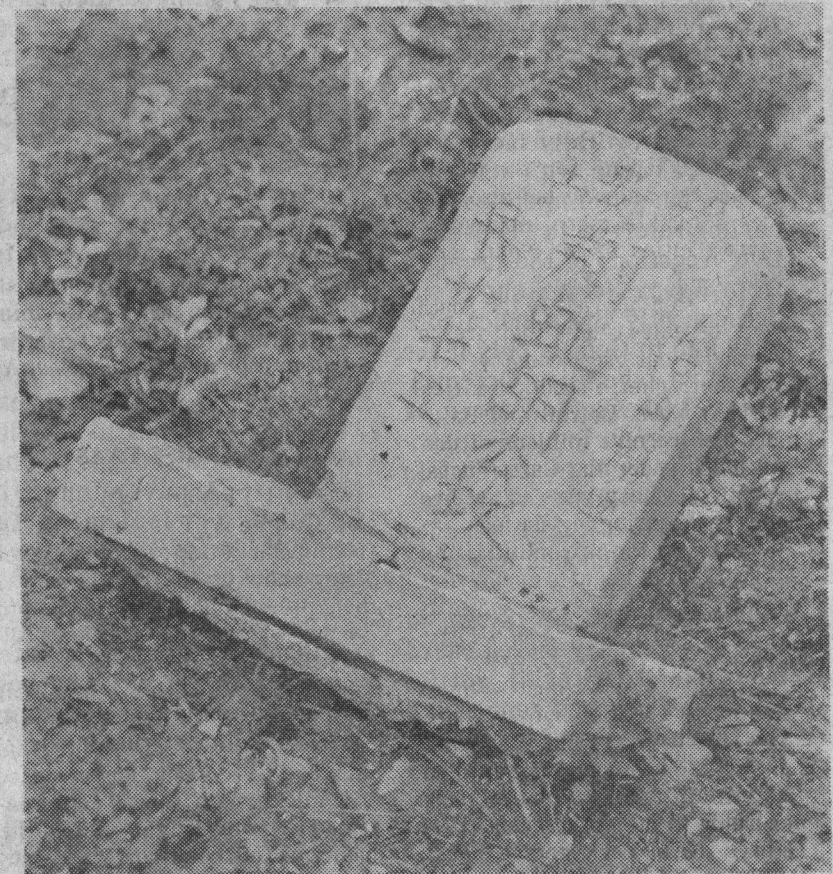
cause of the rare tar weed had been found on the property.

The particular species found here is reportedly an "ancestor" of a noxious weed of a similar nature

Among those buried in the cemetery are Asa Anthony, who died shortly before his 19th birthday. He had enlisted in the California cavalry and marched from his camp on the flat east of the San Lorenzo River to the wharf in Santa Cruz and took the steamer "Salinas" to San Francisco. From there he marched to Camp Alert at the corner of what is now 25th and Folsom in San Francisco. He died there and was returned to Santa Cruz for burial.

Judge William Blackburn, who came to Santa Cruz in 1845 after crossing the country by wagon train, is also buried there. He marched with Fremont's battalion to help take Los Angeles. He operated a sawmill in the Zayante area and when California became a state, he was appointed a judge, the first in Santa Cruz.

Also buried in the cemetery is Loudon Nelson, who was born a slave in Carolina, went to Tennessee with his master and then was freed and made his way to California, arriving in Santa Cruz in the early 1850's. He settled on a small piece of land near the present main post office in downtown Santa Cruz. He later gave his entire



Cemetery's Chinese section is in some disarray

restored with the help of Cabrillo cemetery. They eventually donated



of \$372 — to the children of Santa Cruz to help continue the two-room Mission Hill schoolhouse. The property he gave included a lot and a cabin with a shoe repair business. That property is where the Santa Cruz City School offices are now located on Mission Street. The city school board recently renamed the area Loudon Nelson Plaza.

The Chinese section of the cemetery is only 40 feet by 80 feet and is just uphill from Loudon Nelson's grave.

There are still some original fence posts that were used for a wire fence surrounding the Chinese section. This area is being

store an oven which was used to cook chickens or pigs as part of the Chinese burial ceremony.

Businessmen brothers John, Frank and William Cooper, who later established a store in downtown Santa Cruz, are buried in the

Santa Cruz for a courthouse. The first courthouse erected on the site burned. A second one was used by the county for many years until it was sold in the late 1960's. It is now the "Cooper House" on the Santa Cruz Pacific Garden Mall.

## Lettuce shipments up, but profits way down

**SALINAS** — Lettuce growers in the Salinas Valley are winding down what already has become a record year as far as shipping is concerned.

Yet, paradoxically, the growers are hardly likely to reap a profit. Most, in fact, will lose some of

Nutter figures that in spite of recent highs of \$7 a carton, the average for the year will be in the neighborhood of \$2.75 to \$3.

Last year the average was \$3.78 per-carton.

Nor does Nutter expect last year's financial figures of \$155