

History Committee visits City Cemetery

By Irma West, MD

Society History Committee members recently visited the City Cemetery at 10th and Broadway to learn more about Sacramento's medical past. Well-deserving of its status as an official state historical landmark, the cemetery dates back to 1849 when Captain John Sutter donated 10 acres of land to the city.

Since then about 38 acres have been added to accommodate about 17,000 Sacramentans interred there, including a group of pioneer physicians remarkable for their contributions to the medical and public health history of the city.

Thomas Logan, MD

The most prestigious physician gravesite viewed by the History Committee was that of Thomas Logan, MD, 1808-1876. He is the only physician buried in the State Plot with Governors and other officials, which is directly past the main gate. Dr. Logan's contributions to medicine and public health are nationwide.

After receiving his medical degree from the Medical College of South Carolina he spent a year in Europe pursuing medical studies and became an expert on cholera. A charter member of the AMA in 1947, Dr. Logan sailed into San Francisco in 1850 in search of gold.

He arrived in Sacramento as the cholera epidemic of 1850 was underway. He never reached the gold fields. Dr. Logan became the best-known physician in the West because of his writings and wide-ranging contributions to medicine and other fields. His collection of meteorological data made him the first "weather bureau" in the West and his records were later adopted as the official records of the U.S. Weather Bureau. He also gathered the first mortality data for the Pacific Coast.

In 1868 he wrote the first medical history of Sacramento. He was the prime mover in establishing the medical organizations of Sacramento and the State as well as the formation of the Sacramento and the California Boards of Health. Dr. Logan was elected President of the American Medical Association in 1872.

Dr. Hatch also served as the first president of the Sacramento Board of Health and the Secretary of the California State Board of Health.

Henry L. Nichols, MD

Henry L. Nichols, MD, 1823-1915, is buried in his family plot about one-half block to the right of the Cemetery main gate. He was a physician of wide-ranging talents and contributions, both inside and outside medicine.

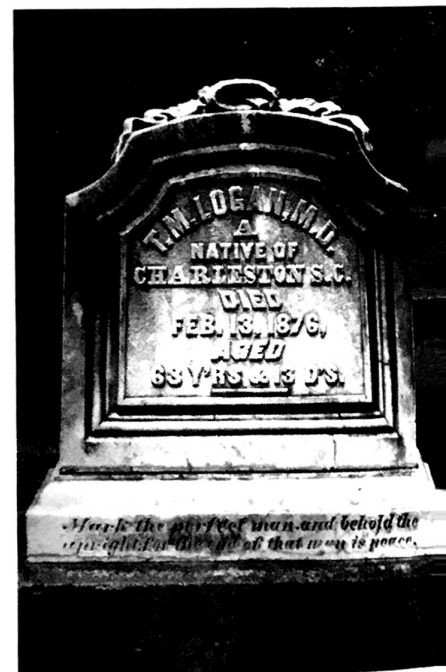
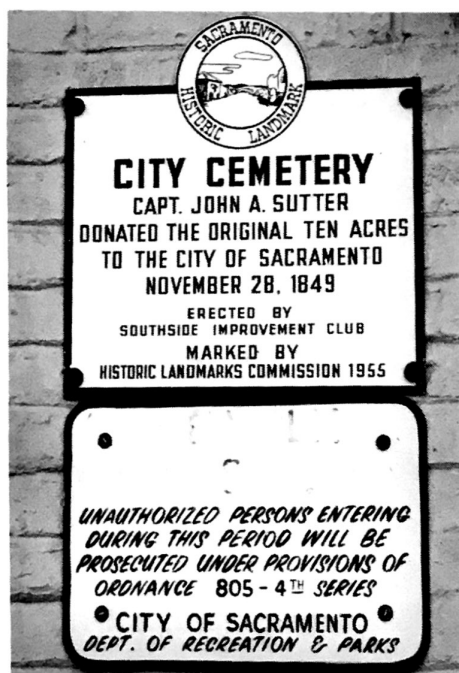
Dr. Nichols received his degree from Maine Medical School and came to Sacramento in 1853. He was one of the 11 physicians who organized the Sacramento Society for Medical Improvement and became its President in 1885.

An active community member, Dr. Nichols served as President of the Board of Supervisors and ex-officio Mayor in 1858. His report, "Water Supply of Sacramento" initiated a clean water supply for the City. From 1867 to 1871 Dr. Nichols served as California Secretary of State.

Frederick W. Hatch, MD

The headstone of Frederick W. Hatch, MD, 1821-1888 is a short walk to the left after entering the main gate of the cemetery. Dr. Hatch came to Sacramento from Virginia in 1853 after receiving his medical degree from New York University Medical School.

Dr. Hatch worked closely with Dr. Logan in promoting the medical and public health interests of the State and community. He also had a great interest in public education and became Commissioner and Superintendent of Schools, 1854-56. Dr. Hatch served as the first President of the Sacramento Society for Medical Improvement (Sacramento-El Dorado Medical Society) from 1868-74.



Joseph M. Montgomery, MD

The Old Masonic Plot is about a block's walk southeast of the main gate. Buried here are Joseph M. Montgomery, MD, 1818-1888, and Charles Duncombe, MD, who died in 1867.

Dr. Montgomery was graduated in Medicine from both the Universities of Virginia and Pennsylvania. He was active in the formation of the local and state medical associations and served as the second president of SSMI. He also served as president of the Sacramento Board of Health and was a member of the California State Board of Health.

Other physician headstones located during the Committee's tour of the cemetery included Dr. Ridgely Great-house, 1804-1852; George Williams, MD, 1823-1855; Lemon Bates, MD, and W. L. Herriman, MD, 1847-1877.

The committee visited the mass grave of the 800 (some estimates are 500, others over 1,000) victims of the 1850 cholera epidemic. In this mass grave are 17 physicians. They were among the 25-30 physicians practicing in the city who did not flee with most of population, but instead remained with the sick and dying.

Nowhere in recorded history have such a large proportion of the physicians died while caring for victims of an epidemic. Apparently these physicians were first buried in the cemetery at Sutter's Fort; however, all of the cholera victims

buried there were moved to the City Cemetery in 1852 because of flooding at the Fort. There is no memorial for these pioneer doctors, although their names are on record.

Cemeteries often leave visitors with a dejected feeling. An additional aspect of the Sacramento City Cemetery causing this sensation is the state of disrepair. Committee members could not help but notice the broken tombstones,

crumbling foundations and poor landscape maintenance.

The Historical Committee plans for a restoration project of physician graves and the creation of plaques of recognition. Society members wishing to participate or donate to this project, please contact Dr. Robert LaPerriere at 486-5590. Checks can be made to the Paul Guttman Library with a notation to "Cemetery Restoration Fund." ■

LAW OFFICES OF DAVID YOUNG ATTORNEYS AT LAW

700 S. FLOWER STREET, SUITE 2200
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 620-1037

SERVICE TO HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Legal Consultation in the areas of:

- ★ staff privileges and licensing
- ★ disciplinary proceedings and peer review
- ★ credentialing and accreditation
- ★ antitrust and exclusionary practices
- ★ conflicts of interest
- ★ matters involving professional relationships