



Jett alerting on a historic grave.



Funerary Customs

Funerary customs are comprised of complex beliefs and practices used by cultures to remember the dead; from the funeral itself to various monuments, prayers, and rituals undertaken in their honor. These customs vary widely between cultures and between religious affiliations within cultures.

Types of Cemeteries

Understanding what kind of cemetery we are looking for influences how we search it or where we expect to find graves. Many of our customs were brought over from Europe as people migrated to the new world. Types and styles of cemeteries have changed over the years as needs and trends change.

Church Yards

Prior to 1830, churchyards or churches were the dominant locations for burials, but only members in good standing could be buried there. Following in the English tradition caskets were placed laid along a east-west line, with the head to the west. They were buried close together to conserve space. Headstones were carved with representations such as death's head or Father Time extinguishing the candle of life. Church cemeteries became dreary dark places with little vegetation; not a welcome place to spend time.

As immigrants and pioneers moved over the country they buried their dead along the trails. Early settlers and homesteaders buried family members on their land in family plots.

Some towns came into being because of the local industry and a company cemetery was developed and then abandoned as the town was abandoned.

Company Town Cemetery, Boca, CA

An example of a company town cemetery is the historic town site of Boca, It is located near Truckee, California, in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Starting in 1866, the Central Pacific Railroad was laying tracks over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. A construction camp was set up at the junction of the Truckee River and Little Truckee River, and soon become known as Boca, "mouth" in Spanish.

Boca was well known for its lumber and ice industries, but its biggest claim to fame was its brewery. The brewery was established in 1876 and was destroyed by a fire in 1893. In its heyday, Boca's brewery produced 30,000 barrels of lager beer each year.

The town of Boca was mostly men who worked for the ice or lumber industry. But by 1873, the town had enough children that a school was built. By 1876 the town had a post office, telegraph office, train depot, hotel, Chinese laundry, general store, butcher shop, brothel, blacksmith shop, saloons, along with its sawmill, ice house and brewery.

Ice was shipped throughout the west, the expanding produce industry and the development of insulated railroad cars greatly stimulated the ice industry. With ice from Boca, fresh California produce could be shipped anywhere in the country. Ice was also used in the Comstock silver mines to cool the deep underground tunnels where temperatures would reach 140°F. Due to the furious competition between the various ice companies, it was decided to combine all operations and, in 1881, Union Ice Company was formed. Ice production was greatly reduced in the 1880's when the Comstock mining era ended and by the turn of the century modern refrigeration and man made ice production took over natural ice harvesting.

The sawmill closed in 1908 because of lack of lumber, every tree near Boca had been harvested without regard to conservation. By the early 1920's the town of Boca was being dismantled. The company cemetery was abandoned.

In 1996 the U.S. Forest service opened an interpretive trail through what was the town of Boca. The trail leads to an old cemetery where some of Boca's long forgotten citizens are buried. Very little is known about who is buried in this cemetery, as records are lost. Just a few head stones remain.

In May 2004, our team was asked by US Forest service archaeologist Carrie Smith, to help with the restoration process of the cemetery. We were asked to look for lost unmarked graves and identify the long lost cemetery boundaries. By using our canine's abilities to locate graves, a total of 55 unmarked graves

were found and marked; and boundaries are now more clearly defined.

You can learn more about Boca by clicking on the Forest Service logo below.

~Adela~



Unfortunately most of the cemetery looks like this, some stone markers remain but the wooden markers and fences are decomposing. The flags indicate where our dogs alerted to human remains scent.

Chinese Cemetery, Auburn, CA

California's Gold Country has many historic Pioneer and Chinese Cemeteries that are a *gold mine* of training opportunities for us. Last September, young Fionn and I met up with a couple of teams returning from a project for some invaluable real-world training.

In our [September 2019 newsletter](#), we discussed some gold rush era Chinese burial customs including how immigrant bodies were buried in shallow graves so the flesh would decompose. Later the bones were dug up, cleaned, carefully packaged, and shipped home where they could be properly buried with their ancestors. In many historic Chinese cemeteries you can still find depressions of exhumation pits where the bones have been removed. We found an exemplar

Chinese cemetery in Auburn.

The gates of the cemetery were notably new, as they have been stolen periodically and replaced. Once through the new gates, we were greeted by a historical plaque and a brick "burner" used for ritualized burning of spiritual tributes. Beyond that, we were alone in a beautiful serene area of grass and trees with dappled shade. We sent the dogs to work and started walking slowly thru the area. The dogs were drawn to, and alerted on, some nearby exhumation pits. While they were up to 2 feet deep, they had been hard to see from a distance away. Once we trained our eyes a bit, we could see many more mounds and pits across the 2 1/2 acres.

The dogs also alerted near several cement markers with chinese characters, presumably identifying the name and town of the person buried, as was typical. According to a submission to the National Register of Historic Places, Chinese miners first settled in the Auburn area in the 1850s. The Chinese Cemetery still contains eleven burials (as well as the aforementioned large sacrificial burner.) All other remains were removed and either returned to China for burial or moved to a local cemetery for reinterment.

This was some of Fionn's first real-world experience. It was amazing to watch him so easily apply his training as he and the others dogs located and alerted on decomposition from over a hundred years ago!

Here's a [KQED California Report article](#) on the cemetery.

Lisa 🕊️❤️🐾



Top Left: New gates of the Chinese Cemetery with the brick burner in the background.

Top Right: Echo starting to alert near concrete marker.

Bottom Left: Concrete marker with Chinese logograms.

Bottom right: Asha alerting at edge of exhumation pit.

Check out our past issues on
our website -

[CLICK HERE](#)



(650) 503-4473 | info@ICFK9.org | www.ICFK9.org

We are happy to talk with you about your project and
how our dogs might help locate human remains or burials.

Call, email, or check out our website.

*Copyright © 2019 * Institute for Canine Forensics*, All rights reserved.*

Our mailing address is:

Institute for Canine Forensics

P.O. Box 620699

Woodside, CA 94062-0699

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).



This email was sent to <<Email Address>>
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
Institute for Canine Forensics · P.O. Box 620699 · Woodside, CA 94062 · USA