



photo credit: Sean Scruggs

Clío works a rock pile to assess whether it is just natural debris or a burial site. In desert conditions, search strategies must prioritize canine safety—dogs are worked only in the cool early mornings, when ground temperatures are safe and rattlesnakes are less active.

Hawthorn Chinese Cemetery 2008



2008 ICF crew

From left to right Kris Black and Osara, Eva Cecil and Nessie, Adela Morris Eros & Rhea, John Grebenkemper & Tali, Tom Pomoroy & Shiloh, David Halverstadt & Emma

The earliest known burial in the Hawthorne Chinese Cemetery took place in 1886, with the last recorded burial in 1913. By the 1920s, very few people of Chinese descent remained in the Hawthorne area, and the cemetery gradually fell into disrepair. Over time, its exact location was forgotten until the 1970s, when survey documents brought to the local museum led to its rediscovery.

In 2008, six handlers from the Institute for Canine Forensics (ICF) visited Hawthorne to assist with locating the cemetery and identifying unmarked graves. They worked from a historic photograph that showed a few wooden fences still standing around family plots. By then, roads had been cut through the site, and the original fencing had disappeared. The survey helped establish the cemetery's boundaries and renewed local awareness of this important piece of Hawthorne's history.



The top picture is the historic cemetery with wooden fences surrounding two different family plots circa 1930's. The bottom picture was taken in 2008 to help guide us in the right area to do the survey. Research shows that an estimated 16 individuals, including infants, are buried in this cemetery. Burial dates range between 1886 and 1912. The large wooden post on the left marks a property corner and was placed by the army after a ca. 1930's survey.

Hawthorne Chinese Cemetery 2025 Update

Seventeen years after our original trip to Hawthorne, the Institute for Canine Forensics (ICF) was requested to assist with locating possible burials in the area, separate from the Chinese cemetery. While there, we also took the opportunity to re-examine the Chinese cemetery we had first surveyed in 2008.

At that time, GPS technology was not a tool we used extensively. The archaeologist on the project recorded GPS points where the dogs alerted, but unfortunately, that data has since been lost. What we do have are

some photographs from 2008. Comparing those to images from 2025, we found the alert locations to be remarkably consistent.

Since the original survey, both our training methods and our understanding of the dogs' abilities have advanced considerably. Returning to the site allowed us to confirm earlier results and evaluate whether current techniques might reveal additional information. Unfortunately, the cemetery has suffered significant disturbance over the years, making it more difficult to confirm the exact locations of burials.

The environment adds further challenges: Hawthorne's harsh summer heat limits work to early mornings or late afternoons, when ground temperatures are cool enough for the dogs.



During our 2025 visit, we found the road through the cemetery had been closed to traffic, and a new sign now marks the area as a cemetery.



2008 Flagged alerts around the rocks. You can also see the road and the many flags around the berm from grading the road. We believe the road might have caused damage to some of the graves.



2025 Clío alerts at one of the big rocks, also flags in the background around the other rocks.

This project is ongoing, and we hope that continued work will bring more clarity to the history of the Hawthorne Chinese Cemetery and honor those laid to rest there.

Adela & Joseph

[Great Basin Anthropological Association](#)

Home of the Great Basin Anthropological Conference

GBAC 2025

October 15-18, 2025—RENO, NEVADA

ICF Presentations at the Great Basin Archaeology Conference

October 15-18, 2025

Nondestructive Alternatives: Canine Remote Sensing (Scenting)

Friday 10/17/25 11:00 AM-12:00 PM

Organizer: Lynne Engelbert

Historic Human Remains Detection (HHRD) dogs, specially trained to identify the odor of historic and pre-contact burials, are increasingly being incorporated into non-invasive archaeological surveys. Their use provides an additional line of evidence in contexts where unmarked burials may be present but are otherwise difficult to detect. HHRD dogs have proven particularly valuable in protecting cultural heritage by identifying burials in advance of construction projects, as well as locating burial areas at risk from erosion, flooding, or other disturbances. This symposium explores both the methodology and applications of HHRD dogs in Great Basin archaeology. Presentations will cover the fundamentals of training and working with detection dogs, strategies for selecting effective teams, and the importance of integrating HHRD canine surveys with other archaeological methods. Several case studies from within the Great Basin will be presented, highlighting how HHRD dogs have contributed to the identification and preservation of vulnerable burial sites. Together, these discussions demonstrate the promise of canine detection as a vital, non-invasive tool for cultural resource management.

11:00 AM The Basics of Training and Working of Historic Human Remains

Detection Dogs

Lynne Engelbert

11:15 AM The Mystery of the Dry Creek Necropolis

Dave Freeman

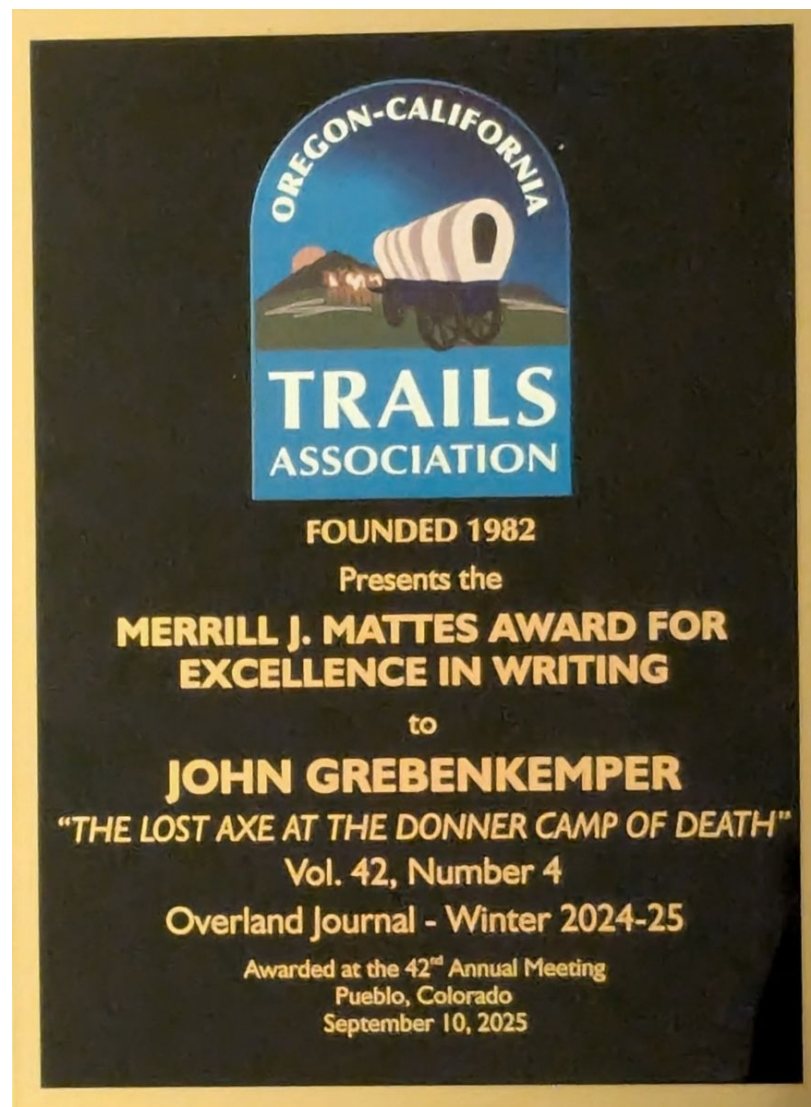
11:30 AM Locating the Grave of John Snyder: Canine Detection and the

Donner Party Story

Adela Morris

11:45 AM Historic Human Remains Detection Dogs: What are they and how are they useful for archaeological mitigation?

Maisie Schwartz, Lynne Engelbert, and Sean Scruggs



Our own John G. was just presented this award.



Institute for Canine Forensics
P.O. Box 620699
Woodside, CA 94062-0699
(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 us out on Facebook or our website. (You can find past newsletters there, too.)

Please feel free to pass this newsletter along to anyone who might be interested.

Copyright © 2024 Institute for Canine Forensics. All rights reserved.