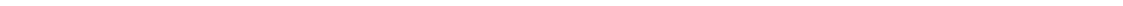




# Institute for Canine Forensics

Specializing in Locating Historic and Prehistoric Burials  
A Non-Invasive Search Tool to Locate Human Remains





## **Bailey**

**January 22, 2009 - October 13, 2021**

Only people who have worked with a canine partner understand the deep bond and love they share. Sadly, ICF lost one of our dogs this month. Bailey was Barbara Pence's first search partner beginning in 2011. They learned, paw-in-hand, to detect historic and prehistoric burials, certified in 2013, and Bailey retired in 2020. Together, they trained for thousands of hours and worked many projects together. Our love goes out to Barbara. Losing Bailey has left a hole in her heart, but also a treasure chest of wonderful memories. Bailey will be missed by all.

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## **San Mateo County Hospital and Poor Farm**

My first visit to the local historic poor farm was December 2001. At that time, I only found a few wooden markers that were hidden in the thick weeds. Like so many of our historic cemeteries, fire destroyed most of them. I wanted to learn more about the cemetery's history to ascertain how many graves it might contain. Starting off at the county historical museum archives I found a few references that led me to the local historical society. There I found two volume of records that listed grave numbers and the names and dates of the deceased. A total of 532 burials were recorded spanning from July 1876 to April 1939.

The Poor Farm cemetery was connected with the county hospital. The hospital was a grim place where the poor, homeless who were sick, and patients with TB or other terminal illness came to die. The homeless and poor were considered inmates and had to work at the hospital, growing food and taking care of animals used for food for the hospital. When inmates or other poor people died that had no other place to go, they were buried at the poor farm cemetery. A wooden marker with a number with placed at the burial and the information was logged in a book.

The older log book I found gave the original country the people came from, the majority of the countries were Ireland, Sweden, France, Germany and Scotland. Out of the 542 listed most of the burials were men, approximately 11 woman and seven babies. The majority of the men were between 50 and 70. As I read more of the log book, I saw "death by train" frequently listed as the cause of death. I later learned that this was a common way destitute people

with no hope ended their life.

We worked the cemetery exploring and discovering many graves for several years. We learned about adobe soils and how they can get to the saturation point and stop scent from being released from the soil and how difficult it was to re-find graves in the dry summer months.

In 2003, working with Russell Skowronek (at that time professor of anthropology and campus archaeologist for Santa Clara University) we got permission to verify a sample of the burials. The goal was to do a paper about the work the dogs were doing locating the graves in this abandoned cemetery. It was exciting to finally have a cemetery where we could ground truth our work!

The brief story is we dug and did not find what we thought or hoped we would find. We dug several locations areas where the dogs alerted and marked graves as well, but we only found fragments of redwood and a few coffin nails. I was so frustrated by our lack of understanding of what we found or not found I stopped going to the cemetery to train.

Many years have passed since our disappointment at not finding what we thought was going to be a slam dunk find. Late this spring (2021) I decided to take our team to the poor farm as most of our handlers had never been there. This location is not workable in the summer as it is not maintained and many areas are impenetrable with poison oak and thick with foxtails. We had a good training and planned to return in the winter.

Some of our questions are, does the acidity of the redwood coffin dissolve the bones? Is it a combination of soil and redwood? Were most of the graves moved and the wooden markers left? I am not sure we will ever find answers to all our questions, but maybe someone else has similar experience that might shed light on our mystery.

We will share more pictures of this fascinating place when we go back to work it this winter.

~Adela~



*2003 Adela and Eva flag the alerts from the dogs. As we stepped back to look at the flags we saw 2 rows with the flags all in a straight line. We hope to recreate our alerts from several years before when we return in the winter.*

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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.

**Our mailing address is:**

Institute for Canine Forensics

P.O. Box 620699

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