

Finding Family –June 2017

Finding Rhoda's Cemetery

By Marie Bowen

Genealogy is said to be the second most popular hobby in the United States. Supplemented by DNA testing, we are able to time-travel back generations. If we are attentive, we will be led beyond names to personal, geographic, and military histories, religions, occupations, and migrations.

For years, I have been compiling the genealogy and history of the Walters Springs family of Pope Valley because I am related to many of the family's current descendants. Through online and local resources and family stories, I've learned about the Walters' westward journey from North Carolina to Missouri, then to Sonoma and Napa Counties by 1860, and later into Kern and Solano Counties. More than 200 members of this family are found in one of my Ancestry family trees.

Of course, ancestors eventually die, and so I've needed to find cemeteries and family burial grounds, several of which exist in Pope Valley. I knew of the Walters graves in Pope Valley/Barnett (aka "Valley") Cemetery and in the Duvall Family Cemetery, but I had not heard of "Rhoda's Cemetery" until I looked at a listing of Valley Cemetery burials found at Napa Valley Genealogical Society.

Unexpectedly, the list identified three Walters family members who had been "re-interred from Rhoda's...a cemetery...on a hill," in the area of Valley Cemetery, probably in the mid-1890s.

Finding deeds to and from a Manuel Rhoda/Rhoda at the Napa County Recorder's Official Index-Public Records site, I searched his name at the St. Helena Star website. There, I found a real estate transaction in June 12, 1885, for "35 acres near Pope Creek," from George Neil to Manuel Rhoda for \$700.

Manuel Rhoda, I later learned, lived on that property until his 1928 death, acquiring an additional five acres before 1895. To find this 40-acre parcel on the 1895 Official Map of Napa County required a bit of squinting, but I located it near the northerly corner of Locallomi Rancho, across from lands then owned by Jesse Barnett.

So, here was one Rhoda-Barnett link. But, since I had never been to Valley Cemetery, I needed more proof that the two cemeteries were near each other.

I requested directions to Valley Cemetery from two helpful sources, learning that it lies within Juliana Vineyards along Barnett Road after the paved portion ends. Using a topographic map of Barnett Road, and after one seriously wrong turn, I followed the road northwesterly toward what I knew had been the location of the Rhoda property.