

SPIRIT OF THE PIONEER

Fall 2025

Newsletter of the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery

www.EugenePioneerCemetery.org

Memorial Day 2025

By Quentin A. Holmes, President, Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association

Memorial Day is the highlight of the year at Eugene Pioneer Cemetery. This year Memorial Day was on May 26th. Our program is organized by Mr. James Walsh of American Legion Post #3. This event brings together veterans, scouts and scoutmasters, musicians, lot owners and friends of the Cemetery.

Older adults and youth alike gather together to honor veterans and others who are at rest in our historic Cemetery. This year some 200 people attended.

As a prelude, the Lane Fire Brigade Bagpipe Band played several rousing tunes. Scouts from Troop No.152 stood respectfully by the north side of the Civil War Lot as the colors were paraded in by the Colonel Edward D. Baker Camp/Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW).



Clockwise from top, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War bringing in "The Colors"; James Walsh, Master of Ceremonies; and Steven Holgate as Abraham Lincoln, presenting the Gettysburg Address.

Photos by Quentin A. Holmes

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from the Rose Quarter



'Blanche Moreau'
Photo by Helen Liu

Elaine Sedlack

worked at the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden for 31 years, where she was in charge of the Asian collection. Her areas of expertise are rhododendrons, Asian maples, and roses. After retiring to Eugene in 2015, Elaine founded the Eugene Heritage Rose Group. She is passionate about old garden roses. Elaine can be found wrangling giant old rose bushes at the Owen Rose Garden and on her hands and knees weeding around the roses at the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery.

Three Moss Roses

By Elaine Sedlack

In the Cemetery are three rose varieties that are classified as Moss Roses, true oddities of the rose world. The "moss" is actually glandular growth thought to be a defense against browsing animals. I doubt it would deter our deer population, though, who are apparently illiterate, and known to eat many of the plants often listed as "deer resistant". Curiously, 'moss' is found only on the old European classes of Damask or Centifolia roses. The Centifolias were bred by the Dutch in the 1600s. They are very closely related to the ancient Damasks, if not botanically the same. The name translates to "100 leaves", actually a reference to the many petaled cupped flower form. These are the roses seen in oil paintings of the Old Masters.

The common moss, *Rosa centifolia* 'Muscosa', would have been familiar to our grandparents. It is a mutant of the cabbage rose. This is one of the very oldest roses to be found here, dating to 1696! Altogether, there are four plants of the common moss; all on the south side of the Cemetery. Two are on the Tanner plot (Block 499), with one each on the Bieling and Billing (Block 411) graves. These very fragrant pink roses have the most pronounced, bright green "moss". The low bushes sucker and spread slowly, offering an opportunity to share divisions. They are



Rosa centifolia 'Muscosa'

spring blooming only, but the rounded, apple-green, serrated leaflets are attractive in the other seasons.

At the opposite, northern end of the Cemetery, growing in almost complete shade on the Snellstrom plot (Block 490), is 'Blanche Moreau', a Damask Moss bred in France in 1880. This is planted on Baby Watson's grave. It is a 6' tall slender growing plant with bristly canes. Initially thought to be the older Moss called 'Quatre Saisons Blanc Mousseux', but recently cor-



'Blanche Moreau'

rectly identified as a seedling of that rose, the differences being a slight pink flush to the flowers, which are not quite as disheveled in form as their parent cultivar. It is also a once bloomer. The relatively small, fragile flowers contrast

beautifully with the dark moss.

'Little Gem' is also from 1880, bred by the English firm of Paul and Sons. William Paul and his son George had a nursery in Cheshunt, 13 miles north of London. William Paul bred some notable roses in Victorian times. Upon his death his son took over the nursery. 'Little Gem' is distinguished by its compact, short stature with charming deep pink flowers packed full of tiny petals. The buds, flower stems, and even the leaf edges



'Little Gem'

are heavily mossed. This rose is part of a donation for the Cemetery from the Friends of Vintage Roses in Sebastopol, California, retrieved and planted by former EPCA board member Cindy Wise in 2019. Initially a foundling from the El Dorado Cemetery near Placerville, California, now thought to be synonymous with 'Little Gem'. It is planted on the Grave of Jane Mills (Block 559).

Be sure to watch for these unusual roses when they come into bloom next spring!

Photos by Elaine Sedlack

Upcoming Book about Eugene Pioneers

Arcadia/The History Press will release an exciting book about our cemetery in the spring of 2026:

Eugene Pioneers: Voices from the Frontier written by C.J. Lake. It's a collection of biographies and archival photos of pioneers who are buried in the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery. At the forefront are stories of migration, fortune-hunting, fur trading, bronco busting and good ole frontier Victorian Americana. Familiar names include:

- **Judge J. J. Walton** (1838-1909)
Helped establish the University of Oregon
- **Norton E. Winnard** (1864 -1933)
Doctor and gold prospector
- **Louis Renninger** (1841-1908)
Medal of Honor Recipient
- **Alberta Shelton McMurphey** (1871-1949)
Second-Generation pioneer
- **Daniel R. Christian III** (1818-1891)
Early pioneer who settled in Eugene
- **Benjamin F. Dorris** (1829-1915)
City Recorder, Mayor of Eugene

Writer C.J. Lake describes the process of researching pioneers at rest in the cemetery. "The Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association's database created by board member, Dorothy Brandner, was essential. Archival photos from the Lane County Historical Museum, Springfield History Museum, Oregon Black Pioneers and input from professors from the University of Oregon and Harvard University made it possible to uncover the personal histories of the men and women who shaped Eugene and the Willamette Valley in the 1800s." C.J. Lake is a EPCA member, University of Oregon alum and relative of pioneer Adelaide Lake and Board President Quentin A. Holmes.

In 2016 an Oregon Historic Cemeteries Grant written by volunteer Loretta Moesta (1965-2020) commissioned profiles for the Cemetery website that were written by C.J. Lake. In 2023, she revisited those profiles and decided to dig deeper into each pioneer's journey west. Drawing from archival photographs, letters and public records the results were absorbing.

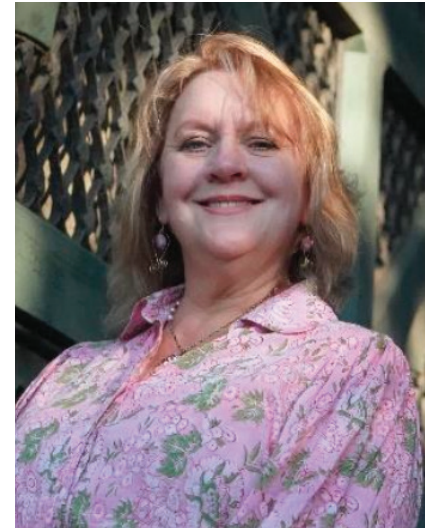
"It was an era when a judge could also be a farmer,

and a medical doctor might prospect for gold. Each of the 60 sketches in the book celebrates the adventurous spirit of the pioneers who traveled west during a pivotal century in America's history. They braved the journey across deserts, rivers and mountain ranges to find opportunity in the farthest corner of the known continent. And they set down roots in Eugene."

The book also features a section on the more than 175 heritage rose bushes that are considered botanical pioneers. "Along the Oregon Trail, women sewed rose cuttings into the hems of their dresses. The moisture of prairie grasses kept these cuttings alive," according to rose expert Elaine Sedlack who founded the Eugene Heritage Rose Group after moving to Eugene in 2015. Cindy Wise, former board member began to document the roses planted in the Cemetery in an inventory list around 2018. Later, Elaine picked up where Cindy left off and now the inventory list documents more than 64 rose cultivars in 26 recognized classes growing on the Cemetery's 16 acres.

Endorsed by author Jane Kirkpatrick and Henry Louis Gates Jr, host of PBS's *Finding Your Roots*, purchase of ***Eugene Pioneers: Voices from the Frontier*** will directly benefit the Cemetery's restoration and preservation mission. The non-profit Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association receives \$10 per copy when purchased at the Annual Memorial Day Ceremony on May 25th, 2026, or by mail.

Editor Laurie Krill of Arcadia/The History Press said the title is a great way to celebrate America's semiquincentennial, the 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence. "2026 is a year to reflect on pioneer history and contributions. It's very well written and will be distributed throughout the state. Arcadia Press is always pleased to partner with local writers and organizations that tell fascinating stories. The Eugene Pioneer Cemetery is a national historic landmark that represents much about Oregon history."

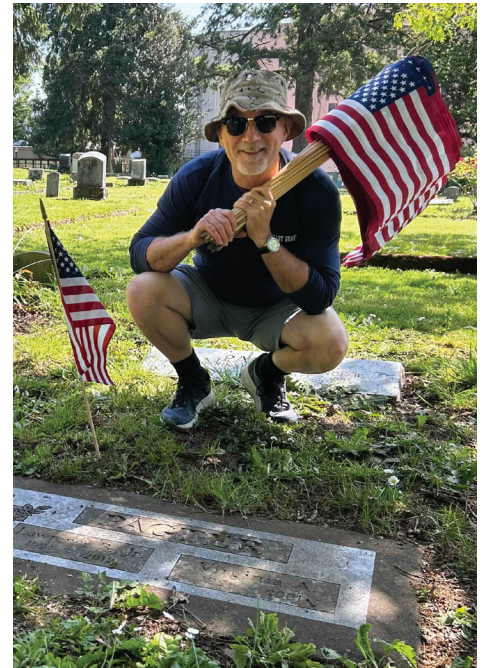


Author C.J. Lake



Alberta Shelton McMurphey

Views around the Cemetery



Clockwise from top left. Sign at University Street and 18th Avenue; groundskeeper George Dull mowing amongst the roses; retired Chief Petty Officer, US Coast Guard, Chuck Kalnbach helping to place flags on veterans graves for Memorial Day; Board President Quentin A. Holmes is also Chief Chainsaw Operator at the Cemetery!

Photos by Helen Liu

Eugene Pioneer Cemetery
www.EugenePioneerCemetery.org
40338 Mohawk River Road
Marcola, Oregon 97454-9741
Address Correction Requested

