Auburn’s Pioneer Cemetery Honored as a Landmark

BY PATRICIA COSGROVE, MUSEUM AND FARM DIRECTOR

Within the boundaries of the City of Auburn lie four historic sites that have been officially honored as City and King County Landmarks. This designation is bestowed upon a place or building that is historically important, significantly unchanged and culturally of value to a community. With this status comes restrictions to modernization and development—and the right to apply for funding for preservation and enhancement efforts. Auburn’s Landmark properties are:

- Auburn Public Library, a 1914 building, located at 306 Auburn Avenue NE
- Auburn Post Office, a 1937 building, located at 20 Auburn Avenue NE
- Auburn Masonic Temple, a 1923-24 building, located at 302-310 East Main Street
- Mary Olson Farm, 1879 site, located at 28728 Green River Road, SE.

We are pleased to announce that Auburn’s Pioneer Cemetery became the City’s fifth Landmark on August 4th, 2016!

An Auburn Mystery, Unique to Auburn, A Storytelling Marvel, A Sacred Place—these are a few of the descriptors one might use for Auburn’s Pioneer Cemetery. Sited across from the Fred Meyer Store on 8th and Auburn Way North, Pioneer Cemetery has a long and unique history to tell.

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Japanese Kite Making Workshop with Artist Greg Kono  
**OCTOBER 2, 1 – 3:30 P.M.**

Work with artist Greg Kono to construct a coffee filter kite using shibori dying techniques and create a masterpiece that can actually fly! No experience is necessary and all materials will be provided. $20 per person, pre-registration required.

Overnight at the Museum – Great Expeditions!  
**NOVEMBER 18 – 19, 7 P.M. – 8 A.M.**

Kids age 7-12 will have a blast learning about some of the world’s greatest explorers at this activity packed overnight adventure! $30 per child, pre-registration required.

Kamishibai Program - The Minidoka Story  
**OCTOBER 16, AT 1 P.M. AND 2 P.M.**

As a teen, storyteller Fumiko Groves was interned at Minidoka incarceration camp in Idaho. She will read The Minidoka Story by Sat Ichikawa, as well as tell a Japanese folk tale. FREE Program – no registration required, seating is first come first served.

Now in its 8th year, the Small Works exhibition and art sale celebrates the diversity of the Pacific Northwest visual artists working in small format in all media. It offers an opportunity to purchase fine artwork at affordable prices during the holiday shopping season.

The exhibition will run from November 16 to December 18, 2016 and is sponsored by the City of Auburn Arts Commission.

Register for Museum events online at wrvmuseum.org.
Becoming a Landmark

As you might guess, there is an official process for a property to be listed as a Landmark. The first step is to Nominate the site for consideration by the King County Landmarks Commission. This document becomes the ‘go to’ resource for absolutely accurate history of a place. Once researched and written, the Landmark Nomination is reviewed by highly qualified historians and preservationists at King County. The public weighs in. It is presented at a formal meeting of the King County Landmarks Commission, plus one special commissioner from Auburn, and the status is bestowed, or not.

The City of Auburn contracted Holly Taylor of Past Forward Northwest Cultural Services to write the Landmark Nomination for Pioneer Cemetery. She is both qualified from the scholarly point of view, and she involves the community in her work and respects their input—things that are terrifically important in local history work.

True to form, not only did she compile and scrutinize archival records, Holly interviewed many people about the Cemetery. While the process took longer than often with staffing and other changes, the Nomination was drafted and by January 2016 we shared it with the community for input. Drafts were reviewed by family members of those buried at the Cemetery, members of the White River Buddhist Temple, city staff and researchers—all kinds of people who had interest in this special place. Suggestions and corrections were compiled into the completed Nomination. That document can be viewed on our website at www.wrvmuseum.org.

One of the joys of this process is working with members of the community who are passionate about the Pioneer Cemetery. Holly visited the White River Buddhist Temple on several occasions, joined families at the Cemetery for two annual Memorial Day celebrations, and consulted with local and family historians as she developed the document.

For many in Auburn who have any knowledge of the Pioneer Cemetery, a common question has been: why are most of the graves those of Japanese Americans? To answer that, what follows are excerpts from the Landmark Nomination which focus on that part of this site’s story.

CEMETERY ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY EURO-AMERICAN USE

The Auburn Pioneer Cemetery, first known as the Faucett Cemetery, served as a family farmed burial ground starting in the 1860s. Rachel Ann and John T. Faucett (often misspelled Fawcett in historical records) claimed 160 acres on the White River in 1864. Less than a decade earlier, several Euro-American settlers in the immediate area had been killed in conflicts with Native Americans in 1855. The Faucetts had fourteen children, five of whom died in infancy including two daughters Harriett (October 15, 1865 – February 26, 1866) and Mariae J. (December 19, 1850 – March 22, 1866), who were buried on the Faucett property. These are the earliest recorded burials in what became known as the Faucett Cemetery...
Ordinary People, Extraordinary History

Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter, shows the 1889 layout of the cemetery, and includes successive generations of handwritten notations describing who is buried where and other details of this site’s long history. WRVM collection

The Faucetts sold a portion of their claim that included the burial ground to Charles A. and Mary Williams in 1871. The Williams, in turn, separated out an approximately one acre parcel surrounding the burial ground and sold it in 1878 for the sum of one dollar to “L. W. Ballard, Thomas Christopher; and J. R. Stark as Trustees of the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery, King County, Washington Territory, and to their successors in office of said Slaughter Precinct Cemetery.”

The trustees legally recorded a Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter in February 1889 that divided the triangular parcel into 91 plots…. This original, recorded plan served as the base document for a more detailed and elaborate cemetery plot map that is perhaps the most remarkable artifact associated with the site’s history. Also titled the Plan of the Cemetery at Slaughter, this second version contains several handwritten declarations in the margins outside the cemetery boundaries, and a multitude of annotations on individual plots regarding family names and burial dates.

Concerns about valley flooding led to the establishment of Mountain View Cemetery approximately two miles southwest of the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery in 1890…. After Mountain View Cemetery was established, many pioneer families had the graves of loved ones exhumed and moved uphill to the newer facility. Unfortunately, Mountain View’s records do not exist before 1907; meaning that burial information from its initial seventeen years of operation is missing, making it difficult to determine which graves were actually relocated. Diversion of the White River in 1906, and subsequent flood-control projects on the Green River, greatly diminished the threat of flooding in the Auburn area; however, Euro-American families rarely buried their loved ones in the Slaughter Precinct Cemetery after 1895.

In 2016, grave markers remaining at the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery identify fifteen Euro-American individuals associated with seven families: Boyd, Brooks, Faucett, Hart, Hopkins, Pautzke, and unknown, spanning a period from 1866 to 1935. [Auburn Japanese pioneer] Chiyokichi Natsuhara noted that many early grave markers for non-Japanese graves were made of wood, which rotted away leaving graves unidentified. The Auburn Globe-News estimated in 1959 that “there are something like 75 unmarked graves of white people.”

JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY HISTORY AND STEWARDSHIP OF CEMETERY

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The history of the White River Buddhist Temple is an important element of the cemetery’s history, and is closely related to the settlement of Japanese Americans in the White River Valley… The Shirakawa Bukkyokai (White River Buddhist Temple) was formally established in 1912 as a branch of the Seattle Buddhist Church, with approximately 100 members.

According to data compiled by genealogist Roberta Tower, the earliest recorded Japanese burial at the Auburn Pioneer Cemetery occurred in 1890. This may have been unknown to other members of the

Memorial Day 2016, members of Auburn’s White River Buddhist Temple place flowers on family members’ graves.
community as Chiyokichi Natsuhara later wrote: “Back in May 1906, when we lost our one-month-old daughter, we held a funeral for her with a few of our friends, with Rev. Gendo Nakai officiating… At that occasion I remember finding another tombstone of a Japanese named Suketa Kumano who had been killed in 1903 by a railroad accident in Kent.” [Auburn residents may recall the Natsuhara store on West Main Street, opened by Chiyokichi in 1916. In later years he was joined by son Frank and it became Natsuhara & Sons operating into the 1990s.]

Thus began Chiyokichi Natsuhara’s stewardship of the cemetery, which continued for more than half a century. Chiyokichi, also known as Charlie, left Shiga prefecture in 1898 for Canada, and began farming in Auburn 1902. His wife Sen, a picture bride also from Shiga, arrived in Seattle in 1905, and they were married on board the KAMIKAWA MARU in Smith Cove before Sen was allowed to disembark. A 1959 published account of Chiyokichi’s long-standing role as the cemetery’s caretaker explained the sense of obligation that he felt for the cemetery:

“Several of his relatives are buried there, and there are, according to his son, Frank, two stones that represent his respects at these two stones, symbols of an attitude of veneration and sensitivity seldom encountered today… His care of the cemetery has been animated by a traditional respect that Japanese accord their deceased ancestors, and grew out of quasi-obligation placed on the Japanese of Auburn when a 25-foot strip at the rear of the cemetery was deeded to them in 1914.”

By 1928 there were more than sixty Japanese Americans whose cremated remains, in keeping with Japanese Buddhist custom, were buried in the Pioneer Cemetery… Most graves were marked with wooden posts (bohyo), and each year on Memorial Day family members and other volunteers cleaned up the graves. In the fall of 1928, temple members made concrete tablets at the Natsuharas’ warehouse to replace the deteriorating wood markers… The Auburn Globe-Republican praised the Japanese work crews that transformed the cemetery, “from an unkempt weed-grown desolate plot of ground” and noted that in addition to replacing the wood markers, volunteers also leveled the ground, put in grass seed, cleaned up the brush and weeds, and replaced an old wood fence that had partly fallen down with a new iron-rail perimeter fence. The area around the cemetery remained a predominantly agricultural rural landscape until after World War II.

WORLD WAR II AND INTERNMENT ERA

Following the Executive Order 9066 issued in February 1942, Nikkei (all people of Japanese ancestry) living throughout the West Coast Exclusion Zone received orders to evacuate [and were sent to concentration camps such as Tule Lake and Minidoka where they remained for up to three years.]

During the war, Chiyokichi collected donations each year from [incarcerated] Japanese families, and sent the funds to Ray Sonnemann, owner of Sunset Laundry in Auburn and later Auburn City Council member, for memorial Day flowers and repairs at the cemetery. In a 1944 letter to Ray and Esther Sonnemann, Chiyokichi’s son Frank wrote from Minidoka, “Ray, I forgot to write sooner in regards to grass cutting at cemetery. Dad went all over camp contacting people who have graves in Auburn and got together small collection. I had M.O. [money order] made early but forgot again to mail it and write. If you need more write.” Chiyokichi also showed benefit movies at internment camps during the war to raise money to maintain the cemetery.

After World War II, the Natsuharas were one of 25 to 50 Japanese American families who returned to the White/Green River Valley, out of an estimated 300 families who lived in the area before the War. Those who returned to the Auburn area found the cemetery choked with tall grass and weeds, and vandalized, with some Japanese grave markers knocked over, broken, or stolen. Among the headstones that disappeared during WWII was the marker for Chiyokichi and Sen Natsuhara’s daughter Yu, who died in 1911.

Chiyokichi recalled that, after returning from the camps in 1945, Japanese community volunteers resumed their responsibility for maintaining the cemetery. He wrote, “We cleaned it up, the white Americans’ graves as well, in the hope of serving for better future relationships between America and Japan.” The Seattle Times reported in 1946 that “native-born Japanese returning to their homes after wartime dislocation are doing a commendable service here by cleaning up the long-neglected Auburn Pioneer Cemetery.” For their part, the Natsuharas, especially Chiyokichi’s son Frank, consistently stated that while many people thought of the place as a Japanese cemetery, it actually was a pioneer cemetery, perhaps as a way to enhance the broader community’s respect for the site during the fraught post-WWII era.

Like Frank, I have pondered whether ‘pioneer’ is the correct name for this cemetery. In my past ‘pioneer’ brought to mind an image of Caucasian people in covered wagons crossing the continent. However, over the years as Museum Director, I have had the privilege of knowing many second and third generation Japanese Americans. I have come to realize that the Issei [first generation Japanese immigrants] were certainly pioneers in the truest sense, and that the name is indeed perfect.

Since 1962 when Pioneer Cemetery was deeded over to the City of Auburn, it has been carefully managed by the cemetery staff members of the Auburn Parks Department. I look forward to working with them and the community to do all we can to preserve and honor this meaningful land mark.
Some traditional symbols of Halloween have stayed fairly constant. Jack-o-lanterns have been strongly associated with Halloween in the United States since the 1800s, and are one of the most prominent images used in both modern and vintage Halloween decorations. Black cats and broomsticks are other historically popular images that continue to be seen today.

However, there are a few Halloween symbols that show up in the early 20th century that are no longer so popular—in fact, we hardly think of them as scary at all.

### Scotland

Some early commercial images of Halloween included elements that were distinctly Scottish, including tartan patterns, heather flowers, and figures wearing kilts. The word Halloween (usually written Hallowe’en in the early 20th century) is Scottish in origin—a shortened version of All Hallow’s Eve with the Scottish e’en replacing the last word. These Scottish roots were remembered and used for Halloween décor often paired with glowing jack-o-lanterns.

### Apples

Apples were often seen in Halloween images due to their association with so many different Halloween games. In Helen E. Hollister’s 1917 book, *Por for Games,* the author lists five separate apple-related Halloween games, including Bobbing for Apples, Suspended Apple, and Name the Apple. Many of these games included optional rules for divining the future of the game players in some way. Her section on bobbing for apples instructs:

“Make a small incision in the side of a number of apples and insert, in each of them, a slip of paper bearing a single letter. Place the apples, as before, in a tub half full of water. Each guest, in turn, endeavors to ‘spear’ an apple by holding an ordinary table fork about three feet above the tub and letting it drop. The letter within the captured apple is supposed to be the initial of the future husband or wife of the person who secures it.”

### Red and Green Witches

Witches, dressed in all black with pointed hats and riding broomsticks, are a popular Halloween image. But in the early 20th century, witches were often depicted wearing red and green instead of black. Red cloaks and red hats were especially common. The association of witches and red cloaks comes from folk tales of the British Isles. In these stories, fairies and witches are often used interchangeably as malevolent actors, and the colors they are both described as wearing are red and green. In his 1895 book on the folklore of central England, Sidney Oldall Addy writes: “Witches are dressed exactly like fairies. They wear a red mantle and hood, which covers the whole body.”

### Yellow and Black

Today we think of orange and black as the classic colors associated with Halloween, but that wasn’t always the case. An 1916 issue of *The National Druggist,* a trade journal for owners of drug stores, suggested:

“If you have your soda fountain fixed up with spooks, and hobgoblins, and black cats, it is only reasonable to suppose that it will make an interesting objective point [for Halloween visitors]. The season’s colors, yellow and black, are very striking, and a window decorated with them can be seen for a long distance.”

HALLOWEEN. For most modern Americans, the word instantly conjures images of bats, jack-o-lanterns, spider webs, haunted houses—anything spooky and scary. Halloween has been celebrated in the United States since the middle of the 1800s, when immigrants from the British Isles brought their traditions and holidays with them to North America. It became broadly commercialized in the early 1900s when businesses began selling postcards, decorations, and other Halloween-themed products.
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Send us your email address to arust@auburnwa.gov if you wish to receive our monthly e-newsletter, thanks!

LATE PLAY DATES
FIRST THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH, 6 – 8 P.M.

Bring the kids to the Museum to explore our new hands-on exhibits and participate in themed activities and crafts perfect for families and community groups with kids age 3 – 12. Free, no registration required.

Special Holiday Late Play Date!
Don’t miss our December 1st program where kids can make holiday crafts from around the world and you can bring your camera for a photo op with Santa!