



From “Unknown” to the Known: Recovering Identity at the Lost Scripps Cemetery in San Diego

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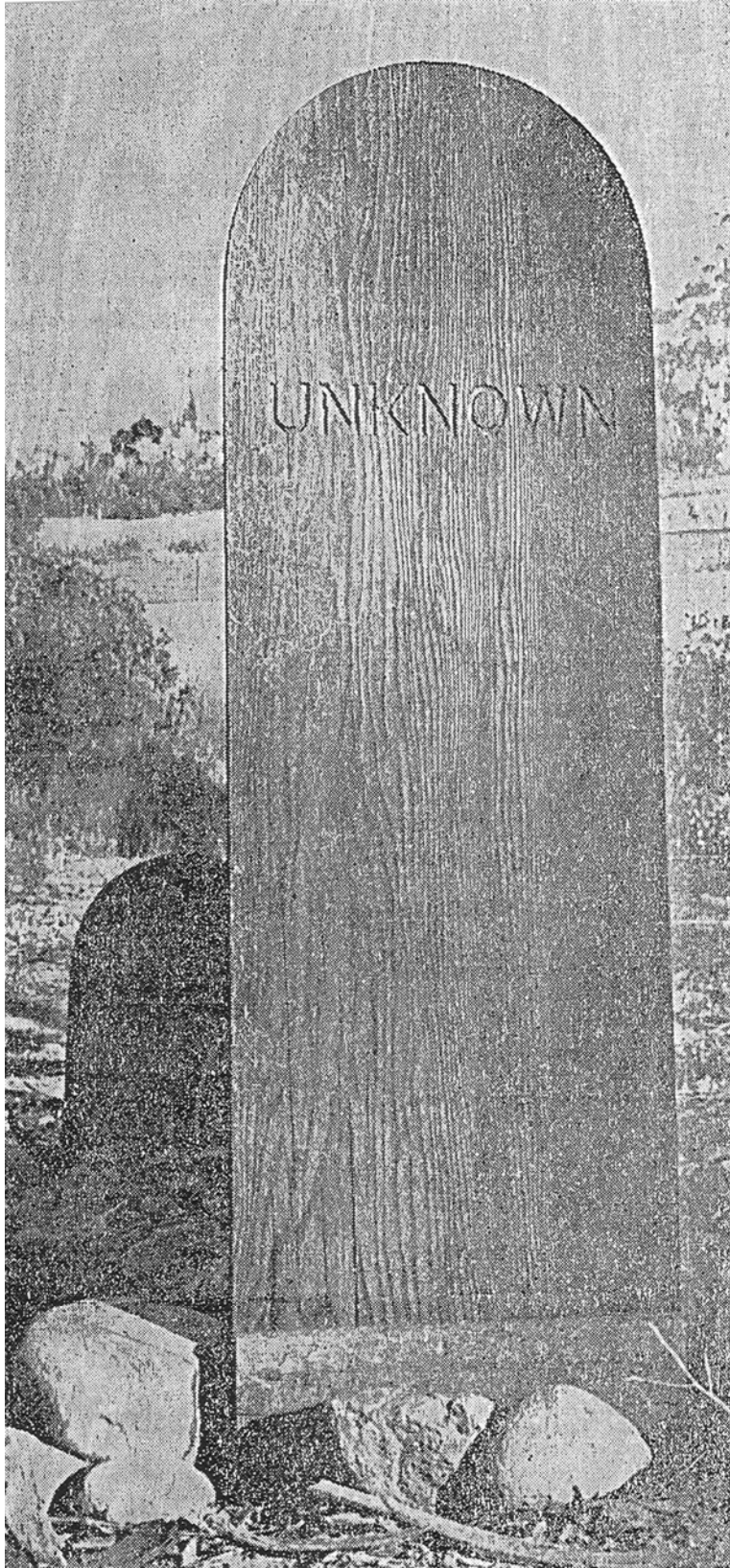
The Scripps Ranch Cemetery, also referred to as the “Miramar Cemetery,” no longer exists. It is somewhat of an enigma due to the lack of written records, although new information concerning several of its occupants has recently come to light through the efforts of the San Diego Gravestone Project (Mallios and Caterino 2007a; Mallios and Caterino 2007b; Caterino and Mallios 2008). The graveyard was once part of the 2100-acre Scripps Ranch purchased by Edward Wyllis Scripps circa 1900 (Peters 1984:160). Scripps named the estate, “Miramar.” It is unknown whether the cemetery was originally established by the Scripps family specifically for the use of their employees, but as was recently discovered, it did hold the remains of several staff members from the Scripps Ranch. The graveyard served as a local burial ground for the small community of Miramar into the 1960s.

San Diegans Lynn and “Santa” Creager contacted the San Diego Gravestone Project in August 2003, recalling their visits to the Scripps Ranch Cemetery sometime around 1970. They remembered wooden crosses and a wooden tablet upon which was written “UNKNOWN.” Many of their memories are corroborated by a 1965 *San Diego Union* article that included a photograph of the tablet (Figure 14.1). The photograph’s caption noted:

The 'headstone' is a carefully fashioned but still crude slab of wood a foot and a half wide, four feet tall. It is in a little-known cemetery 100 yards from the drone of autos on busy U.S. 395 and under the whining of jets landing at Miramar Naval Air Station. It is one of four graves sited in a grove of Eucalyptus trees, which give the cemetery a primitive park-like atmosphere. The other graves' headboards have names and dates (*San Diego Union* 1965).

The cemetery’s location is several hundred yards north of what is now the intersection of Highway 15 and Miramar Road, behind Keith's Restaurant and the Public Storage building. At one time this intersection was the center of the community of Miramar (Lockwood 10/18/1962; Stewart 2004:21). What remains of the cemetery is now under the west shoulder of Highway 15, buried below ten feet of road fill as a result of the expansion of Highway 395 into Highway 15. The north end of Kearney Mesa Drive is presently blocked by a locked gate, but continued past the cemetery prior to its destruction. Some of the eucalyptus trees mentioned in the 1965 *San Diego Union* article still stand.

Scripps Cemetery is briefly mentioned in the National Register Evaluation for the nearby Linda Vista Cemetery on MCAS Miramar. The report states:



*Figure 14.1. Reminiscent of the grave that held the secret stash of gold in *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*, this image of the anonymous tablet at Miramar was taken by a San Diego Union newspaper photographer May of 1965. Courtesy of the San Diego Union-Tribune.*

Members of the mortuary community offered recollections concerning the cemetery at Miramar, known as Scripps Cemetery. The cemetery was very small, with just six graves, and was possibly informal, as documentation has not been found...The Miramar burials were disinterred in the 1960s and were relocated to Mount Hope Cemetery, during preparation for construction of the I-15 freeway (Giacomini and Stewart 2003:32).

Without specific names or dates of reinterment, the search through Mount Hope Cemetery's burial records for the identity of Miramar's relocated dead proved fruitless. Furthermore, the Scripps Ranch Cemetery did not appear in any archaeological or historical database, and CALTRANS was unable to supply any information on the cemetery they destroyed.

The publication of a recent newspaper article on the San Diego Gravestone Project in November of 2007 sparked interest in the lost cemetery that provided additional leads. Michele Clock's front-page *San Diego Union-Tribune* story, "Finding Local History Buried in the Past," stimulated a flurry of phone calls to the San Diego Gravestone Project from individuals wishing to offer information on local cemeteries (Clock 2007). One of the calls came from Jim Hamilton. He relayed the phone number of Ben Telleson, aged 75, of Clairemont, whose sister had been buried at Miramar. The septuagenarian confirmed that his 14-year-old sister, Evelyn, had indeed been buried at the Scripps Ranch Cemetery. Telleson recalled the names of two others who had been interred: Ed Hanlon and a Mrs. Latham. Ben Telleson suggested contacting his younger brother, Grover "Sam" Telleson, who could supply further information.

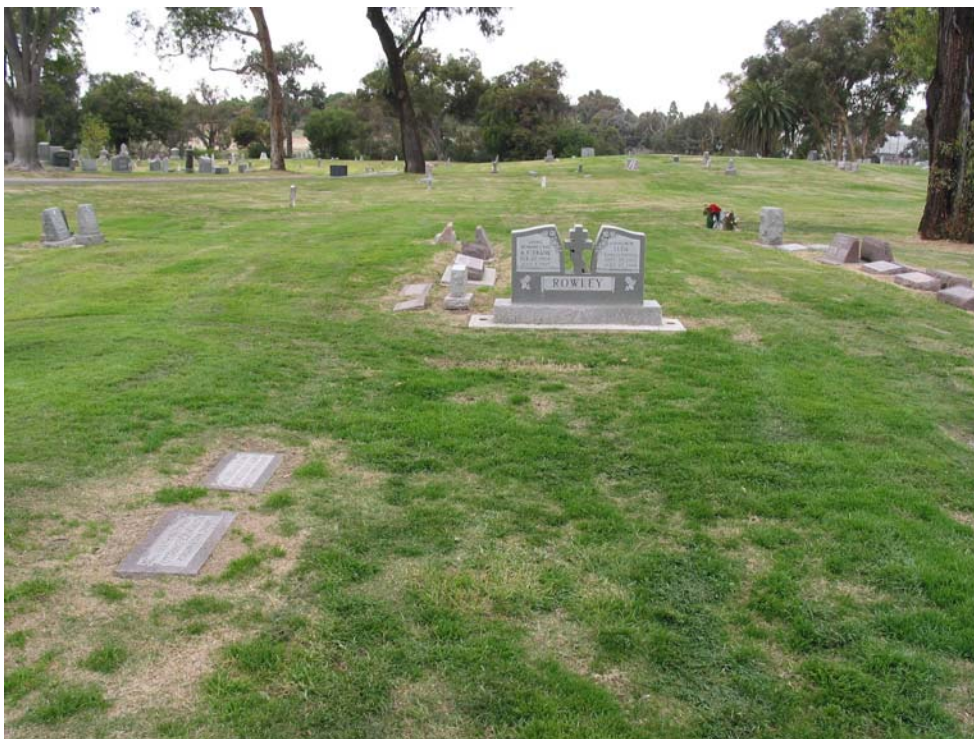


Figure 14.2. The current location of Evelyn Telleson and Edward Hanlon is in an unmarked area next to the Rowley gravestone in Mount Hope Cemetery. Courtesy David M. Caterino, Seth Mallios, and the San Diego Gravestone Project.

Sam Telleson, age 72, remembered the Scripps Ranch Cemetery as being on a mound or small hill that was razed during the expansion of Highway 395. Sam and Ben actually had *two* siblings in the cemetery, the aforementioned Evelyn (6/3/1924-9/21/1938) and a six-month-old sister. It was Sam who signed the paperwork required for exhumation and re-interment. He recalled probes being used to search for graves and was under the impression that neither of his sisters was found. Up to this point, Sam had believed that a gravestone marked the cenotaph of Evelyn at Mount Hope, and that the baby was not memorialized. He confirmed what his brother had said about Ed Hanlon and Mrs. Martha Latham being buried at Scripps Ranch, and suggested the possibility that the old cemetery was the final resting place of John and Elizabeth Vasey, proprietors of the combined Miramar store, library, and post office.

Armed with this new information, members of the San Diego Gravestone Project were able to search Mount Hope Cemetery's database. To aid the search, David Lupo, the director of Mount Hope, allowed access to the original burial plot invoices. By cross-referencing the records, a task made easier by some detailed notations made in 1977, three individuals were successfully identified as having been exhumed from the Scripps Ranch Cemetery and then reburied at Mount Hope on December 20, 1977. The plots and vaults were paid for by W.H. Lipscomb, Inc., a contractor for the highway project. Featheringill Mortuary provided the transportation and mortuary services.

The three individuals are Evelyn Telleson, Edward Hanlon, and Bert E. Hendrix. Evelyn Telleson and Edward Hanlon (4/12/1872-3/24/1961) are buried side by side in unmarked graves to the left of the Frank and Luda Rowley gravestone (Figure 14.2). Sam Telleson was surprised to learn that his older sister's remains had, in fact, been located and re-interred. Unfortunately, she was never given a headstone. Sam described Edward Hanlon as an employee of the Scripps Ranch, the chief landscape artist and equestrian manager. John and Elizabeth Vasey are buried nearby, as are other Telleson family members, but they were buried at Mount Hope directly and were never occupants of Miramar Cemetery. The third individual to be reinterred was Bert Elmer Hendrix (7/20/1892-5/22/1966), the foreman of Scripps Ranch. He is buried in another section of the cemetery (Figure 14.3). According to Sam Telleson, Mr. Hendrix was the foreman of Scripps Ranch.

Historical references mention four to six burials at the Scripps Ranch cemetery. Three individuals were reburied and, through fate or fortune, their new graves were rediscovered. At least one grave still remains under the speeding traffic of highway 15, that of "Baby" Telleson.

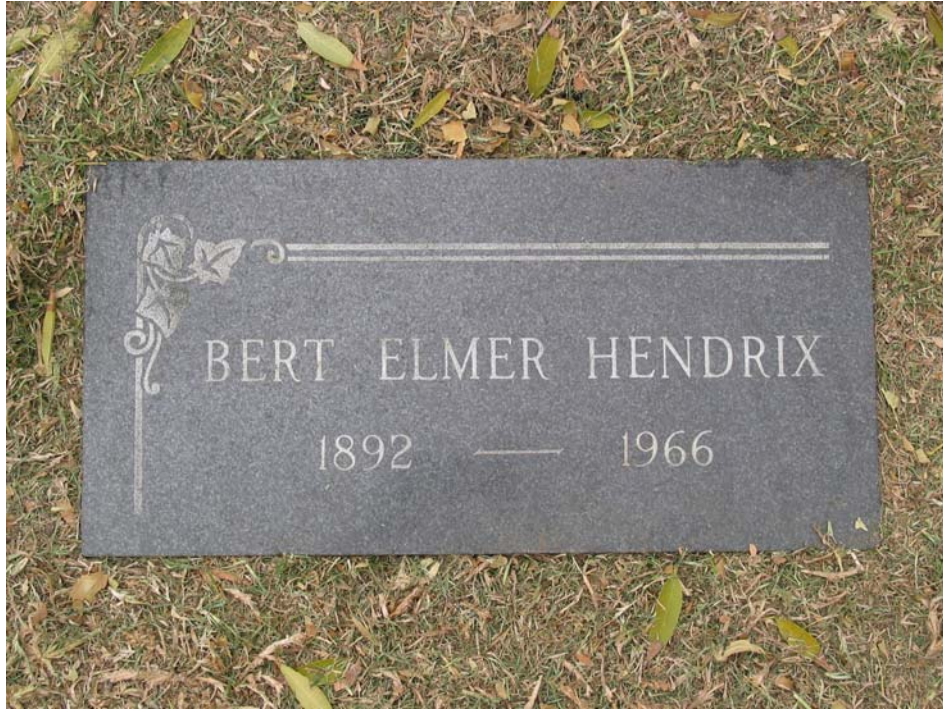


Figure 14.3. Bert Elmer Hendrix's Mount Hope flush marker.
Courtesy David M. Caterino, Seth Mallios, and the San Diego Gravestone Project.

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