

History of North Kern Cemetery District

The Delano Cemetery was started in 1869 by the Central Pacific Railroad, who was having financial problems and the railroad ended here while it was waiting for more money to continue its construction. The original cemetery was just south of the corner of 11th Avenue and Glenwood Street, next to the railroad tracks.

By 1873, Southern Pacific Railroad took over from Central Pacific and the necessary money was available to continue construction. According to Delano Historical Society records, Central Pacific had Chinese laborers stationed here. A cholera epidemic broke out and many of the Chinese laborers died and they were buried in a common grave.

In 1888, Southern Pacific deeded ten acres to the Delano community at the site of the present cemetery to be used as a cemetery. It is the Historical Society's belief that August Borel was the first resident of Delano to be buried in this new cemetery. After the turn of the century, Southern Pacific decided to develop the West side of the main railroad line by developing side tracks for packing houses. Headstones and remains were moved and placed in the present cemetery. The San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed all of Southern Pacific's records of those early days. We can only guess at the identity of those buried there, and we suppose that most of the remains were brought to the present site from the original cemetery. Southern Pacific did the best they could under the circumstances.

After Delano became a city in 1915, the city council operated the cemetery, and rates were charged for the burial rights. But, in most cases, friends and relatives of the deceased opened and closed the graves, and they were not too particular about where they dug.

After property became available, the city council purchased other parcels and continued to do so for several years.

The Delano Cemetery District was formed by petitioning the Kern County Board of Supervisors to establish the district by a clear majority of 1,385 signatures of the 2,558 registered voters on December 8, 1938. The supervisors voted to establish the district on December 29, 1938. The first District Supervisor, Roy Woollomes,

appointed Jack Busch, Ernest Girard and A.J. Peterson as trustees. Ed Jacobson served as secretary to the board and W.O. Diahl was the superintendent. The first regular meeting of the board was held on March 9, 1939.

In December of 1972, Mrs. Ruth Hefner deeded some 1.5 acres of land known as the Pomfret Memorial Pioneer Cemetery to the district. This cemetery is located at Phillips Road and Porterville-Famoso Highway, about a mile north of Famoso. Contained in this cemetery are about eleven identifiable graves. It is presumed that there are more graves, unmarked because wooden markers, which were sometimes used in the early days, have completely disappeared. It is now marked as a permanent cemetery with the Secretary of State in Sacramento. The district does not use the cemetery for burials today.

As of April 8, 2009, the North Kern Cemetery District consists of 311 square miles in northern Kern County. The District encompasses the communities of Delano, McFarland and Pond. The North Kern Cemetery District office is located at 627 Austin Street. The District has 33 acres developed and under grass and another 50 acres undeveloped. They have averaged 320 burials a year for the last three years.

The District is governed by a five member Board of Trustees that are appointed by the Kern County Board of Supervisors. They meet every second Tuesday of the month at the District office.

The North Kern Cemetery does single depth full size burials and in ground cremation burials. Every full size burial will have two grounds men on duty while cremation services will have one. Services are set one and a half hours apart to avoid traffic from two services being on the grounds at the same time.

The District employs four full-time employees: one full-time secretary and from one to five seasonal temporary employees depending on the time of year. We also utilize the Community Service workers from local court system.

As a public cemetery, the district is supported by property tax revenues. The current budget shows 46% of revenue from local property taxes and 54% from sales and investment income.