

Davis Cemetery - Early History

1855 is the date of the earliest grave marker in the Davis Cemetery which is located on land originally purchased by Col. Joseph B. Chiles in 1850. Descriptions of boundary markers between the property of Jerome C. Davis and his brother-in-law Gabriel F. Brown dating to 1861 refer to a "graveyard fence" but few records of early burials exist today. Only one wooden headstone survived the ravages of vandals and grassfires which swept through the grounds in past years. As a result many of the area's earliest residents, in particular a large number of Chinese settlers, now lie in unmarked graves, their identities lost forever. However, headstones of all descriptions still mark the burial place of many pioneers who were laid to rest in the Davisville and Tremont cemeteries.

Records of the Catholic Church show that Mrs. I. S. Chiles gave one acre of land for a cemetery in 1874, and county records show she deeded "one acre of land south and adjoining the Davisville cemetery" to Bishop Alemany May 28, 1880. The Davisville *Enterprise* on September 27, 1900 reported the formation of a Cemetery Association and listed G. W. Pierce, Jr., W. S. Wright, Dr. Walter Bates, Mrs. J. W. Anderson, and Mrs. Minnie Collins as members of the Board of Trustees. W. D. Chiles, who had continued to pay taxes on the cemetery property, agreed to deed an unstated amount of land to the Board of Trustees and plans were made to beautify the plots. Another article on February 8, 1901 announced that the cemetery association had ordered 80 palm and cypress trees to be planted. The Board also voted to have a water tank repaired and had erected a new windmill, the generous gift of William H. Marden.

A petition signed by many local residents asking for incorporation of the Davis Cemetery District was acknowledged by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors on August 31, 1922 with the appointment of trustees J. A. Harby, Mrs. Virginia Saunders (Dixon), and Miss Hattie Weber.

In 1958 the Catholic Diocese deeded to the Davis Cemetery District three acres of cemetery land originally donated by the Chiles family. Acquisition of 20 additional acres purchased from George Chiles between 1962 and 1964 will meet projected needs of the community for the next twenty years.

