

While two followed, Father took the short cut, riding his horse up the steep hill, through the rocks and brush as fast as the animal could run. Just before he reached the road, he jumped off and hid behind a large rock. He could see the three coming up the road, the sorrel completely winded. He saw the thief draw one revolver, turn in his saddle and then: "Surrender, in the name of the law."

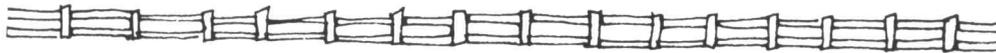
Taken completely by surprise the thief turned in his saddle only to find himself looking right into the business end of a pistol sticking over a large rock. Automatically up went two hands as the tired horse came to a stop. Up came the other two men, Simper swinging a wide loop that snaked out, fell true, and was pulled tight by Simper turning his horse to one side. The thief landed in the road with all of the wind knocked out of him.

They started the return journey, with Simper leading the sorrel. The horse thief in the saddle with his feet tied together under the horse's belly swore considerably while Sharp and Bennion, each with one of those prized revolvers, brought up the rear, joking and laughing.

We saw their dust just after they came over Lookout and met them when they arrived.

Were this fiction, no doubt there would have been enough hot lead slung around on that flat to have warranted us of today building a smelter to reclaim part of it. Enough holes would have been shot in that quiet morning, desert air to have supplied enough holes to have stocked the Swiss cheese market for generations, but this is not fiction. I'll let you in on a secret. The horse pistol Father carried was a fine one. He had plenty of powder and bullets but no caps; Bennion had a belt full of cartridges but no firing pin for his revolver; so Simper had the only serviceable weapon, that is if a rawhide lariat can be called a weapon, that those men had.

Such was the spirit of determination displayed almost daily by our parents in their determination to make this state of ours a fit place in which we might live and enjoy ourselves. Our hats off to all who did such noble work and to all pioneers.



Please Care: Repair a Fence

Raymond D. Ratliff

The "corpse" of the Dry Valley Cemetery lies in a saddle on the edge of the Madeline Plains near Dry Valley Gap and the Termo-Grasshopper Road in Lassen County, north-eastern California (Fig. 1). The original survey plat for the area, made in 1871, shows the Madeline Plains and mentions "good bunchgrass" (Bureau of Land Management, 1959. Range survey-Madeline Unit narrative report).

I first saw the cemetery in the summer of 1958 while on range survey with the Bureau of Land Management out of the town of Susanville. I, as a young range student, saw a textbook example of a "relict area." Inside grew a dense stand of giant wildrye, a few small plants of big sagebrush, a few plants of smaller perennial grasses, and a

little downy brome. Outside the fenced cemetery grew a dense stand of big sagebrush with very little understory vegetation. By looking more carefully, one could spot an occasional plant of giant wildrye which was either closely grazed or well protected by big sagebrush.

Just a few headstones suggested the cemetery's age. Time has dulled my memory, but I recall one headstone for a soldier of World War I who died in the 1920's.

While hunting in the vicinity during the next few years, I passed the cemetery several times. The contrast between the vegetation inside and outside the cemetery always struck me and suggested that management of livestock grazing in the area could be improved.

In the summer of 1965, Richard E. Francis (now with the Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station),

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Fig. 1. The Dry Valley Cemetery is in the southeast 1/4 of section 4, township 34 North, range 12 East in Lassen County, California.

Andrew J. Ratliff (now with the U.S. Coast Guard), my dog, and I visited the cemetery. Inside, it looked like I remembered, but the enclosing fence had been changed. The size had been reduced and a part opened to grazing (Fig. 2A). There was now the cemetery, the big sagebrush, and the recently opened area. In the latter, giant wildrye stubble heights were about 10-inches (25-cm) and shrubs were increasing. Also, more bare soil was exposed there than in either the cemetery or the big sagebrush.

Twenty-four years later (1989) I revisited the cemetery; what I saw hurt! Only the "corpse" of the cemetery remained. The gate stood open, the fence was broken, the few headstones were gone, and the effects of cattle grazing were obvious (Fig. 2B). The giant wildrye inside the cemetery had been grazed, and several large shrubs were now growing there. Outside, there was no evidence of the former fence line or size of the enclosure. Only a hand-painted board placed at the head of a small grave—probably that of a family pet—evidenced concern for the cemetery.

Without a protective fence, all traces of the cemetery will soon be gone. It will no longer be a reference to the past, a picture of the present, or a guide for the future. The cemetery's relict value has been relinquished. Would big



Fig. 2 . (A) The cemetery, the newly opened area to the left, and mature big sagebrush beyond—1965; (B) looking across the cemetery to the same corner—1989.

sagebrush have eventually replaced the giant wildrye without the influence of grazing? Now, we may never know.

When there is no one left to take the time to understand and care, protective fences fall and irreplaceable contacts are lost. I am sure you can recall transect markers that have been lost or vandalized, exclosures that were destroyed, or historical records that were tossed when the person(s) who established them or collected the data moved, retired, or died. We may learn to use high-tech equipment for monitoring and assessing trend but old plots, exclosures, and records are our links with the past. Look around and see if there is a fence you can repair, to reclaim a reference for the future.