Camp Polk Cemetery

Camp Polk Cemetery—also known as the Hindman Cemetery, for the family who settled there after the camp closed—is approximately three miles northeast of the town of Sisters. Camp Polk was a Civil War-era military post that existed on adjacent land. It was named by the volunteers who were assigned there, most of whom were residents of Polk County.

The cemetery was established when the growing number of white settlers in the area needed a proper place to bury their dead. In 1880, the Hindman family set aside a portion of their homestead for that purpose. Although the cemetery was not associated with the military post, the name Camp Polk prevailed. The post office established by the Hindmans on their property bore the name Camp Polk and was recognized by both local residents and travelers.

Over 170 graves are in the cemetery, although it is likely that other, unmarked graves exist there as well. Nine commemorative markers recognize individuals who are believed to be buried at the site, although their graves have not been located.

Originally, the graves were placed in rows with headstones to the west and footstones to the east. Newer graves have been sited wherever space allowed. The oldest known grave is that of Thomas Summers, who was interred in 1880.

Ownership of and associated responsibilities for the cemetery remain unclear. In 1942, the heirs of the estate of Martha Olson released the land for cemetery purposes to Thelma Roberts as trustee. Maintenance is performed by volunteers. The absence of burial guidelines has resulted in an amalgam of traditional markers and unconventional memorials.

Camp Polk Cemetery is the final resting place for many of central Oregon's founding settlers, including William N. Cox and Erastus P. Buchanan. In 1986, the cemetery was designated a Historic Site by Deschutes County and is listed on the inventory maintained by the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries.

Written by John Hayes

Further Reading:

Clark, Nancy and Betty Howard. *Camp Polk Cemetery, 1880*-1999. Bend, Ore.: Bend Genealogical Society, 2000.

Winch, Martin. *Biography of a Place*. Bend, Ore.: Deschutes County Historical Society, 2006.

Copyright © 2008-2013 Portland State University