

Standing by tree and covered wagon, look up and wave. Bend down and pick up my headstone, walk over to the audience and place it on the ground, brushing off my hands.

Howdy! Please excuse my appearance, but I'm an old pioneer woman who spent most of my life ranchin', and on a ranch, there are always chores to do, even for us old folks.

I'm here to tell you a little bit about myself and how I came to be buried here in Sunnyslope Cemetery. I was born Jane Mulkins on March 23rd, 1840, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. From there my family moved to Illinois for awhile, but in 1851, harkening the call of the California Gold Rush, we headed west in an oxen drawn covered wagon. I was only 11 years old at the time, traveling with my grandparents, parents and siblings as part of a 100 family wagon train. Those were exciting but dangerous times, and we faced many hardships along the trail as we crossed rushing rivers, waterless deserts, steep mountains and miles and miles of Indian territory. Food was especially scarce crossing the plains, so to supplement the food supply, my family worked a milk cow into the team. Every morning the fresh milk was put in a churn, and after traveling along the bumpy trail all day, we had both butter and buttermilk by dinnertime. Of course food was just as scarce for the Indians as it was for us pioneers, so it probably shouldn't have been much of a surprise that all of the wagon train's oxen, along with our milk cow, were stolen in an Indian raid. Some of our men were able to catch up to the raiding party and recover some of the livestock, although many of the oxen along with our milking cow had already been butchered. In another close call, my five year old sister was kidnaped from the back of our wagon by a group of Indians who had been following the wagon train for several days and had failed in their efforts to make a trade for her. Thankfully, we were able to retrieve her unharmed and none the worse for ware. But by no means was that the end of our trials and tribulations, as both of my grandparents and my father died on the trail near Salt Lake, leaving my mother, with five children in tow, to drive the team the rest of the way to California. We reached what was then the small Mexican village of Los Angeles in 1852. Although it was a struggle, my mother managed to provide for us, even sending us to the local school, where we learned to read and write in Spanish. A while later, we moved to San Diego County where I lived the next forty years of my life, first in old town San Diego, and later on a large ranch in Belina, owned by my husband, James Madison Dye of Kentucky, who came to California via Texas where he also had owned a large ranch as well as having served as a Texas Ranger. Although he was 30 years my senior, we made a good life working the ranch together and raising our five children, that is until his death in 1874. Although heartbroken at his passing, I was given a second chance at happiness when I married David Halstead in 1875. Together, we had three more children, two girls and a boy. Having such a big family came in very handy on a ranch! We continued to work the Belina ranch for some years before starting a new ranch in the unincorporated area of Riverside County known as Temescal Township, on the outskirts of what was then Corona. We owned quite a bit of land off of Lincoln, stretching along the road to Prado. In later years, my husband turned the day to day management of the ranch over to our son, Albert, but along with my husband, I continued to help out around the place. That is until I was laid low by that horrible influenza epidemic that hit our town in 1918 and 1919. After a prolonged illness, I succumbed to influenza and pneumonia on April 6, 1919, shortly after my 79th birthday. But never you mind. I had a long and full life, and I surly want to thank you folks for letting this old pioneer woman tell you all about it.