

31. MODESTO PIONEER CEMETERY (Formerly Wildley Lodge, I.O.O.F. Cemetery)

905 Scenic Drive (1856)



Landmark Preservation Commission Resolution: October 21, 1996
Designated by City Council: December 3, 1996

Historic Significance: The land for this cemetery was originally part of a land grant signed by President Abraham Lincoln. In 1872, The Wildley Lodge, I.O.O.F., purchased five acres of land between the Masonic and Modesto cemeteries (the Lodge had moved from Tuolumne City, where it had been founded in 1868, to Modesto in 1871). Originally a family cemetery, the land already held graves. The oldest grave in the cemetery is dated to 1856 and is that of an infant girl, Elvira T. McLean. Her brother, William A. McLean, age one year, rests beside her. They were joined by John T. McLean II, age 28, in 1894.

The cemetery's only source of income was selling plots. The plots were all sold many years ago so the cemetery was plagued by financial problems for years. In August 1976, the cemetery's board resigned and gave the trust fund to the California State Cemetery Board. In October 1976, a volunteer citizens committee was formed to oversee the cemetery. In March of that year, the cemetery was incorporated as the Modesto Pioneer Cemetery.