

THE BURRIS LEGACY  
By Martha Bentley

Near the northeast corner of our county lies a true treasure – 47 acres of beautiful parkland with a liberal sprinkling of majestic oaks. In 1924 the children of David Burris, an early settler in the area, generously presented this land to Kings County to be used as a county park, as a memorial to their parents, pioneer settlers Mr. and Mrs. David Burris.

Coming originally from Missouri, David Burris was attracted to California by the Gold Rush. Joining a large group of adventurous young men setting out to try their luck in the gold mines, he arrived in our golden state in 1849 and mined along the Feather River, meeting with marked success.

After three years in the gold fields, he returned to the east in 1852, making that journey via the isthmus of Panama. Restless again, three years later, he closed out his farming interests there and, driving a hundred head of cattle across the plains, returned to California. After spending one year in Solano County, he drove his cattle to Tulare County and turned them loose at Kings River where he purchased 800 acres for \$1.25 an acre, equal to 40 cents in gold. When his efforts to dispose of this land in 1869 were unsuccessful, he sold his herd of cattle, which by this time had increased in number to over three thousand, and threw in the land.

Returning once again to northern California, he engaged in banking and was responsible for establishing several banking institutions

Growing tired of that life, he returned to the Kings River area in 1881 with his wife, Julia, whom he had wed in 1857. He built a fourteen room home for his family, consisting of his wife, their six sons and four daughters. This home was surely one of the grandest in Kings County, with a marble fireplace in almost every room, a bath and running water throughout and a large brick cellar in which food was stored.

When not attending classes in the tankhouse schoolroom, the children played in a large area where many deer, a black bear, a monkey and other animals were kept. There was a bunkhouse to accommodate the large number of employees, as well as three barns and a cook house.

To this pioneer family, we owe our thanks for the beautiful setting for family and group outings, an outstanding educational program and the Kings County Museum.

Sources:

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