

Stolen gravestone now a decoration?

Bee Metro Staff

FORESTHILL — The gravestone of one of the first 49ers to mine for gold along the American River might now be a coffee table or a stepping stone at someone's home.

The stone marked the lone grave of Robert Dunbar McKee, located on the Stony Bar mining claim on the river. It was stolen during a burglary and deputies believe it is now being used as a decoration. They said historic gravestones often are stolen and used as conversation pieces in metropolitan homes.

Placer County sheriff's Deputy Dennis Healy, who is trying to locate the thieves and return the marker to

the gravesite, said McKee may have been one of the original 49ers who rushed to the area to search for gold a short time after it was discovered.

He said McKee was born in Butler, Pa., on Jan. 21, 1816, and died at Stony Bar in July 1853. A brother, J. Cooper McGee, a U.S. surgeon, placed the marker on the grave in July of 1874.

Foresthill miners Talmadge Rutledge and Joseph Horton said that in addition to the stone, \$388 in mining equipment was taken from the site during the past month.

They said they were more concerned about returning the marker to its rightful place than in the loss of their equipment.