

## Some History of Glasgow Cemeteries

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During a recent gathering of a public body some questions regarding the history of the Glasgow Municipal Cemetery were posed. This article will present some of the highlights of the cemetery's history. To have a full understanding of the history of the present municipally-owned cemetery, one must look back to the early days of Glasgow.

The Trustees of the Town of Glasgow authorized the formation of a burying ground in 1808, nine years after the county seat was established. The burying ground was directly behind the Presbyterian Church on the corner of West Washington Street and Broadway, just one block from the town square. The location of the local burying ground was obvious as in that period such places were associated with churches and the Presbyterian Church being the only religious body in Glasgow for the first twenty years of existence. The space was indeed, a burying ground, indicating that remains were interred in rows in no particular pattern, without regard to family members being buried next to one another; as a death occurred the next space was used. In the majority of cases the grave was marked with only a field stone, if any, though there were a few personalized stones as evidenced by photographs. There is no record of the number of burials in the old space nor a list of names of those buried there. Many years later when the church desired to erect an educational annex, the burying ground was removed with many of the graves being transferred to the present Glasgow Municipal Cemetery.

The second authorized burial place in Glasgow was located on West Cherry Street across from the former Happy Valley School. This particular spot apparently was not terribly popular and fell from favor within a few years. Many graves, mostly unmarked, still can be detected in this space. When the Odd Fellows Lodge created the present Municipal Cemetery many of the graves located here were moved to the newer cemetery.

In 1873 the estate of Joel Depp was settled and his son, Clement Montague Depp, received a portion of the land. In 1875 the younger Depp sold 12 acres to the International Order of the Odd Fellows Lodge #65 for the purpose of developing a cemetery. The space was known as the Odd Fellows Cemetery (not to be confused with the African-American Cemetery known by the same name on West Cherry Street). The Depp family had a graveyard on the property and it was reserved from the rest of the 12 acres, making it the first and oldest plot in the cemetery.

**Figure 1** The Depp family plot at Glasgow Municipal Cemetery is the oldest family plot since it predates the organization of the cemetery for community burials. The two box-type monuments were popular into the 1850's and were used by many well-to-do families. Unfortunately, vandals have greatly damaged the slab tops. Also included in the Depp plot is an area of several graves marked with one stone noting the burial spot of the family's African-American servants.



During the early years of the cemetery the street was known as Wilson Street and later the name was changed to Samson Street since it roughly connected to Samson Street at the intersection of West Main Street. Sometime in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the name was changed to Leslie Avenue as an extension of that existing street.

At the time of the cemetery's creation many of Glasgow's leading citizens were associated with the Lodge and the new venue became popular and attracted the interest of the entire community. This space was truly a cemetery, not a burying ground, for it was laid out with the notion of families purchasing plots to accommodate several persons and there was a plan for the environs. Rather than merely large blocks of ground laid out in rows, the cemetery contained smaller sections, sometimes of irregular shape, intersected by buggy paths to encourage visitation. Some families followed the 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian concept of private property and enclosed their plots with types of fencing. The prime remaining example in the cemetery is the original Dickinson family plot which is enclosed with granite posts bearing the family name between which are draped decorative chains with iron tassels. Many family plots were designated with limestone curbing, some including an engraved threshold bearing the family name as seen in the W.F. Trigg plot.



**Figure 2** Limestone threshold marking the entrance to the W.F. Trigg plot at Glasgow Municipal Cemetery. Trigg was Barren County's first distiller.

The new cemetery also followed the popular dictates of the day with landscaping to create a picturesque environment. Trees were present on the grounds and in particular, evergreen trees such as firs (symbolizing everlasting life) and weeping trees (symbolizing sorrow) were among the most popular. Some of the original evergreen trees can still be seen in the present landscape. Flower beds were added near the graves of loved ones and the most popular flowers were peonies and iris because they bloomed near the observance of Decoration Day. Families sometimes added benches or urns to decorate their plots to make them more inviting. Sunday afternoon buggy rides and pedestrian strollers were a regular sight and groups of people picnicking on the grounds were not uncommon. All in all, the IOOF created a cemetery that was completely in line with the fashion of the day by becoming a pleasant place for the living to visit the dead.



Figure 3 An early postcard featured the Odd Fellows Cemetery near the turn of the 20th century. The Masonic section to the right was then enclosed with a wrought-iron fence.

During much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, marble was the preferred stone to mark graves; granite replaced marble in popularity by the end of the century. Other materials one might find were various metals as evidenced by the Governor Preston H. Leslie (however, Gov. Leslie is buried in Montana, not Glasgow; the plot includes the graves of his first wife and some of their children) plot which features a monument and grave markers made of zinc. The concept of having unique, highly-personalized markers became popular in this era and one can see this in various symbols incorporated into the stones. In keeping with the late 19<sup>th</sup> century trends, many families sought to erect impressive monuments to their dead as can be seen in several instances in Glasgow. The most notable of Glasgow's monuments is the Carden-Ellis monument featuring the near-life-size seated statue of Ella Ellis Carden. Ella and her husband, Lucian W. Carden, resided in the old Christopher Tompkins home (presently the Thistlethwaite home) on North Race Street. Ella died in 1891 and Lucian died in 1893 leaving a highly detailed will devising that his nephew Lucian W. Preston was to purchase a suitable monument for the plot at a cost of \$1,000. He also directed that two individual stones to mark their gravesite be purchased at a cost of \$230.



Figure 4 The Carden-Ellis monument featuring the likeness of Ella Ellis Carden, wife of Lucian W. Carden. Mr. Carden left \$1000 to purchase the monument in his 1893 will.



Figure 5 Close-up of Ella Ellis Carden. Her contemporaries noted that the likeness was so accurate that it was “haunting.”

The IOOF Lodge chose to get out of the cemetery business and sold the operation to the City of Glasgow in 1904. From that date to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, other lands were acquired for the project. Sallie and W.A. Lynn operated a cemetery and sold their remaining land to the City in 1944 (though the deed was not recorded until 1954), excepting a 40'x40' plot for their personal use. The Reed S. Kilgore family owned adjoining land and the Kilgore home is now the cemetery sexton's office;

the family sold a portion of their land to the City in 1946. In 1951 Ella M. Kilgore sold an additional 5 acres of land to William L. and Alice Curd McQuown, who in turn sold the land to the City in 1952 to be incorporated into the cemetery.

When visiting the cemetery it is not uncommon to find stones pre-dating the 1875 organization of the cemetery. These stones are generally ones that were removed from other burial sites and placed in the cemetery. The oldest stone in the cemetery is said to be that of Peggy Gorin and it was moved to its present location.

Another phenomenon visible in our cemetery and others is a section dedicated to burial spaces for babies. Some cemeteries refer to such areas as "Babyland" or "Baby Row." In nearly all cases these sections came about following the Great Depression of the 1930's and the new mobility enjoyed by Americans. As young Americans moved about seeking new opportunities they did not have roots in their new locations and when a baby or young child died there was not a family plot available as in generations past. Economic conditions were such that a couple might not be able to purchase a large plot with several grave spaces for future use – and the realization that the family might pick up and move elsewhere. Thus, many cemeteries began the practice of selling single smaller-sized spaces to accommodate the needs of the public. While the reasons for this practice have evolved, the section continues to have active burials.

With the expansion of the cemetery property the Glasgow Garden Club became involved in efforts to beautify the grounds. This effort was led by Osa Lee Follis and Nettie Downing. Soon after World War II a young Mitchell Leichhardt of Bowling Green had just returned from the Air Force and had been trained as a landscape architect. Leichhardt was retained to design the landscape at the front of the property; his devotion to the project persisted even though the coffers of the club were not always enough to pay his fees. Today, the Garden Club maintains the landscaping at the entrance gates on Leslie Avenue.

The massive stone columns which create a focal point from the entrance gates once graced the front of the Farmers National Bank building (later known as the New Farmers National Bank and now occupied by the Chamber of Commerce) on the East Public Square. The columns were incorporated into the design for the Veteran's Memorial .



Figure 6 The pair of imposing columns creating a focal point in the landscape from the entrance of the cemetery.

In addition to the three public cemeteries associated with the City of Glasgow there are or have been private cemeteries located within Glasgow. In the February 5, 1880 edition of the *Glasgow Weekly Times* is a notation that “there are twelve private burying grounds in Glasgow.” Years later the same publication noted on November 8, 1934 eight known graveyards in the town. They included what is now known as the Munford-Crenshaw cemetery; a graveyard located back of the house of Paul W. Holman on South Green Street (believed to have been moved to the Municipal Cemetery); a graveyard behind the Kilgore house on West Washington Street (later moved to the Municipal Cemetery); the James G. Thompson graveyard on his old property then occupied by Charlie Shader (later moved to the Municipal Cemetery and Maplewood Place is now built in the location); a graveyard behind the old Zion Huggins place on Cleveland Avenue facing the triangle park (still intact; only one stone, but six other documented unmarked graves); the Presbyterian Church graveyard; and the Christopher Tompkins graveyard (a part of the original larger property on North Race Street but now easily accessed by Kenwood Court). The article also notes that “when Bartlett Dickinson built his house on West Washington Street, he had to move the graveyard;” that occurred in 1908. Those graves were moved to the Municipal Cemetery. Finally, one must note the two cemeteries traditionally used by African-American residents of Glasgow. The Barlow-Mansfield Cemetery is just off of Cavalry Drive and the Odd Fellows Cemetery is located on West Cherry Street across from the Mormon Church. The privately operated cemetery on Happy Valley Road known as Glasgow Memorial Gardens is a much more modern enterprise.

## **Opportunities to Explore Glasgow Municipal Cemetery**

The public can learn more about the Glasgow Municipal Cemetery and the people buried there through two programs in the coming months. The programs are entirely different though both celebrate the history of our community as found in the cemetery.

A guided Walking Tour of the cemetery will be presented on Saturday, August 6 beginning at 9 AM. The tour begins at the columns at the front of the cemetery and takes around one hour and fifteen minutes. The tour is presented by local historian Sam Terry and it highlights the history of the cemetery, symbols and funerary art found in the cemetery, and the stories of several persons buried there. There is no fee and it is open to the public; in case of rain the tour will be rescheduled. Groups wishing to have a private walking tour may do so by scheduling an appointment by calling 651-3817.

The second annual Harvest of History Cemetery Tour sponsored by the South Central Kentucky Cultural Center will occur on the evenings of September 23 and 24. This program focuses on eight specific persons buried in the cemetery and features costumed interpreters who present a monologue telling the story of the highlighted individual. This year's tour will present the stories of Callie Beals, Indie Bass Weldon, Major Botts, John Wyatt, Flora Harvey Shannon, Pfc. Leon Atha, Gen. Joseph H. Lewis and Lucien and Ella Carden. The tour requires a fee of \$10 with the proceeds benefitting the Cultural Center; reservations may be made by calling Gayle Berry at 651-9792.

Both Terry and Berry note that the programs are intended to explore local history through the stories of the people who made Glasgow and Barren County what it is. Neither tour includes things such as ghost stories, gruesome tales or a focus on the misfortunes or misdeeds of the deceased. The cemetery is a hallowed ground and is treated with appropriate respect for both of these events.