CROWN HILL'S ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Beauty of the Cemetery Due to Unselfish Spirit and Wise Management.

NATURE'S CHARMS PRESERVED

Consistent Course by Which Effects of Serenity, Peace and Seclusion Have Been Maintained.

"The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." So wrote the English poet Shelley concerning the Protestant cemetery in Rome, in which by a strange coincidence, he himself was finally laid to rest. The same thought would apply in some degree to Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. Not that it is "an open space among ruins," like the little cemetery at Rome, for though it is surrounded by all the marks of modern progress. The atmosphere of sacred seclusion that pervades the inclosure seems to say to the waves of worldly activity that surround its borders, "Thus far shalt thou come but no farther." The living who pass its portals fine themselves at once in an atmosphere entirely distinct from that they left behind, and the dead who find their final resting place amid its quiet borders must feel grateful, if the dead experience human emotions, that their mortal remains have been buried in so sweet a place.

Crown Hill cemetery is a product of evolution, and is typical of the growth of Indianapolis through various stages from a frontier settlement to a straggling village, a capital in the woods, a sleepy country town, a prosperous railroad center, a robust community feeling its strength and demanding recognition, to a metropolitan city of national fame.

The First Burial Ground.

The first burial ground in Indianapolis was a five-acre tract beyond the southwest end of Kentucky avenue and near where the river, overlooking a low marsh or bayou, which was fed by the backwater during the spring freshets, adn, therefore, regarded as unfit for residence purposes.

The graveyard was located in 1821, and Alexander Ralston, the Scotchman who had platted the town, assisted in locating it. The first burial in this primitive burial ground was that of Daniel Shaeffer, who had built a cabin south of Pogues run near where Nicholas McCarty subsequently built a large frame house. At Shaeffer's funeral the way to the new graveyard was so obstructed by dense undergrowth in Kentucky avenue that the little procession had to make a detour to the south, and reach the graveyard by the river bank.

This five-acre tract was the nucleus of old Greenlawn cemetery. It is a long reach from old Greenlawn to modern Crown Hill—as long as that from mud roads to asphalt streets, from log cabins to palatial residences, from corduroys to boulevards.

The old graveyard, southwest of the city, near White river, was comparatively small in extent and poorly cared for. It grew by successive additions of a few acres at a time, given by different citizens, the last one, under the rather pretentious name of Greenlawn cemetery, consisting of two city outlots, plotted by a Philadelphia company that had no interest in the town except to make money out of it.

Crown Hill Formed.

In 1863, when it became evident that the town would soon be in need of a modern cemetery, the Crown Hill Company was formed. The original incorporators were: James Blake, Calvin Fletcher, James M. Ray, W. H. Morrison, Thomas H. Sharpe, W. O. Rockwood, William S. Hubbard, A. E. Vinton, Theodore P. Haughey, , Stoughton A. Fletcher, John C. New, Nicholas McCarty, Jesse D. Carmichael, Charles N. Todd, William Sheets, John M. Kitchen, Robert Browning, A. L. Roache,

George Tousey, Ovid Butler, J. H. Vajen, E. B. Martindale, Herman Lieber, William Wallace, Daniel Yandes, John M. Lord, J. A. Crossland, T. A. Morris, John Love and John Armstrong. Of these only three are now living, Nicholas McCarty, John M. Kitchen and John H. Vajen, and they are still members of the board of managers. Other incorporators who have served and passed away are: L. S. Ayres, Benjamin Harrison, John S. Spann, W. N. Jackson, John Coburn, Fred. K. Rand and other prominent citizens, who gave their weight of their names and their gratuitous services to what might truly be called a labor of love.

The board of incorporators at the present time consists of Nicholas McCarty, Harry S. New, Dr. John M. Kitchen, Frederick M. Ayres, John H. Vajen, Edward Daniels, John H. Holliday, William H. Hubbard, Dr. P. H. Jameson, William E. English, Hervey Bates, Arthur Jordan, Hugh H. Hanna, Otto R. Lieber, George B. Yandes, William L. Elder, Orange S. Runnels, Josiah K. Lilly, John S. Duncan, William O. Reveal, William J. Holliday, Thomas C. Day, Edward F. Claypool, John F. Wallick, Charles W. Mansur, W. H. H. Miller, Ferd L. Mayer, Thomas H. Spann, Albert A. Barnes and Volney T. Malott.

Present Officers and Managers.

The present officers are: President, Volney T. Malott; first vice-president, Nicholas McCarty; second vice-president, John S. Duncan; treasurer, Thomas H. Spann, and secretary, William F. Landes.

The board of managers consists of Nicholas McCarty, George B. Yandes, Thomas H. Spann, John S. Duncan, Harry S. New, John F. Wallick and Volney T. Malott.

The first duty of the original incorporators was to select a site for the cemetery, and this they did by purchasing, October 12, 1863, forty acres of land from James Trueblood and forty acres from Jonathan Wilson. These purchases were followed at intervals by others: December 2, 1863, 166 acres from Martin Williams; March 6, 1864, six acres from Henry Wright; March 10, 1864, twenty-two acres from H. & L. Wright; July 28, 1871, eighty acres from James W. Bryan; July 10, 1873, fourteen acres from F. M. Finch; July 6, 1878, ten acres from George Danley; July 12, 1878, ten acres from Amos Burchard; July 3, 1889, eighty acres from Mary H. Ruddell, September 27, 1897, seventy acres from Foley heirs, and December, 1907, three acres from William L. Elder.

Some of the land had been given the city for streets and park purposes, leaving as the present acreage of the cemetery, as nearly as can be estimated, 540 acres. The chapel in which so many solemn services have been held was built in 1875. The office at the east gate and the ornamental east entrance were erected in 1885, and the first funeral through the new east entrance was that of former Vice-President Thomas A. Hendricks. The new west entrance building at Thirty-second street, was built in 1901. Almost every year sees new permanent improvements, and the board of managers is now considering the construction of a durable fence of iron, brick and concrete around the entire cemetery.

Ft. Wayne Man's Suggestion.

The first suggestion of a new and modern cemetery for the growing city came Hugh McCullough, the well known banker and long time resident of Ft. Wayne. While here on business in August, 1863, he talked with James M. Ray about a beautiful rural cemetery that had recently been established at Ft. Wayne, under the supervision of John Chislett, superintendent of the Allegheny cemetery. This talk led to a conference of citizens and Mr. Chislett was written to and requested to come here for consultation in regard to a new cemetery for Indianapolis. He came and rendered valuable assistance. It was his judgment and choice that decided that incorporators in favor of the Crown Hill location. He accompanied them on a tour of inspection of grounds and after looking over miles of level land north of the city, as soon as the nursery hill of Martin Williams caught his eye, he at once said to the other members of the party, "That is the spot; buy those grounds at whatever price you have to pay for them." The settled it and Crown Hill nursery farm was included in the first purchase.

The successful financing of the enterprise in its infancy and before the association had a band account and surplus of its own, was largely due to the liberality of Stoughton A. Fletcher, the banker in furnishing at reduced rates of interest, all the working capital the association needed.

At the dedication of the cemetery June 1, 1864, United States Judge, Albert S. White delivered an oration abounding in classic incident and illustration. Turning from general to local thoughts the said: "You do well, friends, to leave for a day the busy pursuits of common life to plant these altars here. Your city is but little older than Jonah's gourd, but where are now the men who built it? Where are your Nobles, you Wallaces, your Merrills, your Coes, you Mitchells, your Coburns, you Stevenses, you Walpoles, your Footes, you Browns, your Morrises, your Saunderses, your McCartys and your Blackfords? Some of them had assisted in establishing old Greenlawn cemetery, but they were all gone." Judge White died shortly after delivering this address.

Tributes to Pioneers.

Today, drawing on the names of those who heard him in 1864, the original incorporators of Crown Hill cemetery, one might say, where are your Rays, your Sharpes, your Hubbards, your Sheetses, your Brownings, your Touseys, your Lords, your Loves? All sleeping in Crown Hill.

The first public sale of lots was made at auction in the grounds on June 8, 1864, when thirty-five lots were sold for $11,241. Among the larger prices paid were James M. Ray, $1,500; James Blake, $1,056; Mrs. Margaret McCarty, $1,300; John C. New, $600; Isaac Coe, $525, T. R. Miller and G. M. Tilford, each $625; Mrs. Caleb B. Smith and Edward King, each $500; John C. Armstrong, $425; Calvin Fletcher, Sr., $465; S. A. Fletcher, Sr. $380; S. A. Fletcher, Jr., $340, and so on. This auction sale of lots furnished the association a timely fund for current expenses.

The report of the secretary in 1875 showed that at that time 345 acres of land had been purchased at a cost of $79, 214; lots had been sold to the amount of $307,127; valuable permanent improvements had been made and the available assets of the company were $68,797. In their report that year (1875) the directors said:

"The cemetery lies some three miles and a half northwest of Indianapolis, but the northern suburbs are approaching it rapidly and are already within a mile of the southern line." On its selection not a little objection was made to its remoteness from the city. Ten years have proved that it was not too remote, and five more are likely to prove that it would have been better farther out. It lies on the highest ground near the city, in any direction, and the hill which gives it its name is the highest point within ten miles.

"The site is probably as greatly diversified in surface as any similar extent of ground anywhere. On the extreme west line rises Crown Hill, with a level plain running out from its foot on all sides. This is bounded on the south by a series of gentle undulations, extending from the main entrance round to the east side, where they subside into a dell, heavy with forest and underbrush, and partly occupied by a pond which is in course of drainage. On the east, the level from the foot of the hill spreads to a beautiful hollow, deep, shady and retired, along which one of the main roads runs. This combination of hill, plain and knoll, makes as admirable a site for a cemetery as can be conceived in a country where there are no mountains, or cliffs or gorges to add grandeur elements of scenery."

Improvements in Good Taste.

Subsequent improvements, all made with discriminating judgment and good taste, have added to the natural beauties of the original purchase.

The managers have been fortunate and successful from the beginning in obtaining the best results in the way of landscape beauty, both natural and artificial. A cemetery is a place to which we carry those we have loved, and so it should be beautiful, quiet and restful. To aid in obtaining these conditions

cemetery grounds should be securely inclosed and beautified in the best of taste.

Within a cemetery there should be no glaring views, no grand combination of scenic effects. One does not go to a cemetery for Rocky mountain scenery or Niagara Falls impressions. The scenery should bespeak repose and restfulness with grateful harmonies of nature and art. Only a comparatively small portion of a cemetery should be seen at once, one part should be screened from another by low growing trees. These and kindred effects have been well obtained in Crown Hill cemetery.

Grounds Developed by Art.

Not richly endowed by nature with varied scenery, the grounds have been admirably handled and developed by art. This, of course, has been largely due to the good taste and judgment of the two Chisletts, father and son, superintendents, but it has also been greatly aided by the intelligent policy of the managers and their strict adherence to carefully considered rules. Excellent judgment has been used in handling the natural growth of trees, both undergrowth and larger trees, and in the choice and care of those planted. The result is a sylvan growth which affords many beautiful vistas and skylines and which will grow more and more beautiful for a long time to come. Patrons of the cemetery are to be congratulated that it has been the policy of the managers and superintendent to treat the grounds as a whole and not allow one part to be ostentatiously improved or beautified to the detriment or disadvantage of another. Trees are most pleasing when they are left to grow in a natural way and are not trimmed into conventional shapes. In Crown Hill cemetery trees are given a chance to grow as nature lovers and as birds would have them, and so each contributes to the general effect.

The original articles of association contained some wise provisions regarding the future management and permanent policy of the association. Section 2 provided: "The distinct and irrevocable principle on which this association is founded and to remain forever, is that the entire funds arising from the sale of burial lots, and the proceeds of any investment of said funds shall be and they are specifically dedicated to the purchase and approvement of the grounds of the cemetery and keeping them durably and permanently inclosed and in perpetual repair through all future time, including all incidental expense for approach to the cemetery and the proper management of the same; and that no part of such funds shall, as dividend, profit or in any manner whatever, inure to the corporators."

Provision Sacredly Observed.

This provision has been sacredly observed and none of the managers has ever profited a cent by the enterprise. The association is self-perpetuating and may elect new members to fill vacancies, but only a lotholder in the cemetery may act as a corporator. The articles limit the purchase of land for cemetery purposes to six hundred acres and that limit has been nearly reached. The managers are required to set apart annually not less than 10 per cent of the gross annual receipts of the association as a permanent improvement fund, and may increase this annual appropriation if deemed advisable. They are also authorized to invest the surplus funds of the association in public securities or in good real estate mortgage securities. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of the cemetery funds have been thus invested, at interest, and not a dollar has ever been lost.

The rules of the cemetery, in force for many years past, have contributed greatly to its beauty. No person is permitted to plant trees, shrubs or flowers on private lots, though flowers are permitted in vases or urns and cut flowers may be laid on graves to be removed as soon as they become faded and unsightly in appearance. Private fences or inclosures around lots are not permitted; no inclosures of any kind are allowed around graves and no wooden benches, chairs, settees or headboards are allowed on the grounds; trellises of any kind are prohibited; only one stone can be placed at a grave, both head and foot stones being not allowed; no head or foot stone over one foot in height above the surface of the lot is allowed, and all monuments must conform to regulations. These and many other rules are designed to preserve the beauty, symmetry and artistic effect of the grounds, and they are enforced in the interest of

all, on rich and poor alike.

Graves Total Nearly Fifty Thousand.

The superintendents of the cemetery have been Frederick W. Chislett, elected October 17, 1863, and serving till his death, November 11, 1899. John Chislett, elected to fill the vacancy caused by the death of his father, serving till his resignation, May 31, 1910; Walter A. Wheeler, elected May 31, 1910.

About one-fourth of the entire area of the cemetery grounds has been laid off in lots on forty-eight different sections, and there are still some lots for sale on nearly all of the sections, besides a large proportion of the grounds not yet laid off. On May 1, 1910, the number of burials in the cemetery was: Soldiers, 1,170; burials on lots, 29,760; burials, 14,117; total, 45,047. During the year ended April 30, 1910, the burials averaged more than five a day.

The salaried or paid persons in connection with the cemetery are the superintendent and others actively engaged in current work. There are about seventy men employed during the summer months and about forty during the winter.

Crown Hill Cemetery

By Russ Battreall (For *The Northside Lookout*, Jan. 17, 1941)

The Indiana Gazetter published in 1833 describes Mount McCormick, which was known as the territory which later became Crown Hill cemetery, as follows: "Mount McCormick, a curious, singular hill in Marion county on the Michigan road about four miles from Indianapolis. It stands on the level ground between White River and Fall Creek."

On October 10, 1863, the Crown Hill Cemetery Association, a non-profit organization, was formed. In the articles of incorporation is the following: "The distinct and irrevocable principle on which association is founded and to remain forever is that the entire funds arising from the sale of burial lots and the proceeds of any investment of said funds, shall be and they are specifically dedicated to the purchase and improvement of the grounds of the cemetery, and keeping them durable and permanently enclosed and in perpetual repair through all future time, including all incidental expense for approach to the cemetery and the proper management of the same; and that no part of such funds shall, as divided, profit, or in any manner whatever, inure to the corporators." During this year 1863, 236 acres of ground was purchased to be a part of the original plot, 156 acres was bought from Martin Williams, 40 acres from James Trueblood and another 40 acres was formerly owned by Jonathan Wilson. In March of 1864, 22 acres was purchased from H. and L. Wright. This total of 258 was the original Crown Hill cemetery, which at the present time covers over approximately 540 acres of ground. Frederick W. Chislett was the first superintendent of the cemetery. The first interment was the body of Lucy Ann Seaton on June 1, 1864.

In the year of 1885, new gates were constructed at the east entrance, facing with was then Mississippi street. These gates were officially opened the latter part of that year. The first funeral to pass through the new gates was that of a former Governor of Indiana, Thomas A. Hendricks, who died while serving his term as Vice President of the United States and was buried on the first day of December, 1885.

In 1889, additional ground was purchased to be included in the cemetery. This territory lay north of 38th street and west of Conser avenue. The total purchase included 77 acres from William Foley at the cost of $150 per acre, and 80 acres from Mary Ruddell at $305 per acre.

Seeing the need of new modern fencing to enclose and beautify the cemetery, the work began in 1913 when the old high board fence along 38th street was replaced with 6,705 feet of the latest modern fencing. The following year 4,191 feet was constructed along the west side of Boulevard place from 32nd street to 38th street, and in 1917 and 1935 the Northwestern avenue side was enclosed with the erection of 4,087 fence of fencing. The total cost of this 14-foot fencing was $137,943. In 1926, a subway was built under 38th street, providing a drive that connected with the new section of the cemetery north of 38th street, which was then opened for interments. This new development was finished at the most a half million dollars.

In seventy-six years of operation approximately one hundred and one thousand bodies have been interred in Crown Hill, averaging twelve hundred per year or a fraction better than five each day. Among the outstanding persons buried here are listed two Revolutionary War heroes, John Morrow and Hezekiah Smith; Benjamin Harrison, twenty-third President of the United States; Thomas Marshall, Charles Warren Fairbanks and Thomas A. Hendricks, former Vice Presidents; Oliver Hampton Smith, John W. Kern, Joseph E. McDonald, David Turpie, Albert J. Beveridge, Thomas Taggart, former United States senators; Oliver Perry Morton, Noah Noble, David Wallace, James Whitcomb and Albert G. Porter, former Governors of Indiana; W. W. Miller, United States Attorney General; Henry Lane Wilson, W. D. McCoy and Addison C. Harris, United States diplomatic service; James Whitcomb Riley,

the Hoosier poet; Frank (Kin) Hubbard and Sarah Bolton, famous Indiana writers; Ovid Butler and A. C. Shortridge, noted educators; Otto Stark, Richard B. Gruelle, James Cox and William Tinsley, renowned artists; Dr John S. Bobbs, who had the distinction of performing the first operation for gall stones in America; Edward Black, the youngest soldier of the Civil War who enlisted as a drummer boy at the age of 8 years and 6 months; Alexander Ralston, who laid the plans for the Indianapolis mile square, and many others. The grave of the great publicized modern bandit John Dillinger is located in the east part of the cemetery and curiosity seekers have beaten down the grass on his grave.

Crown Hill cemetery lists among the three leading cemeteries in this country today. A force of ninety employees maintain and supervise its operation. The gates are opened at 7 a.m. daily and Sunday and closed at sunset. Those who observe the rules of the cemetery are invited to visit the final resting place of over one hundred thousand former Hoosiers who at one time formed the life blood of this community.

Smart Horses of 60 Years Ago

By Anton Scherrer

(1942)

For NO reason whatever save the eternal wonder of things in general, I got out of bed this morning thinking about the smart horses in Indianapolis some 60 years ago when I was a kid.

There was Lady Lord, for instance. She was the pick of the so-called "Crown Hill horses" in Wood & Foundray's livery stable. That was back in the days when a horse and buggy was the only way to reach the cemetery unless, of course, one wanted to walk.

To be sure, the wter company people occasionally used the Canal as a means of transportation for this purpose. As a rule, the boats started at the Yellow Bridge (Michigan St. and Indiana Ave.). They never started later than the crack of dawn.

After a cruise of four hours, the passengers were dumped in the neighborhod of what is now known as Golden Hills. From the terminal, the voyagers had to find their way on foot to the cemetery. These trips, however, were in the nature of excursions reserved for holidays (Decoration Day, for example). They were of no help to people who felt an immediate urge to visit Crown Hill.

Whatever you do, don't confuse a horse of Lady Lord's intellectual attainments with those used to haul funeral processions. The so-called Crown Hill horses, of which Lady Lord was the prize example, were sleepy old jog-trots who could be trusted not to run away with a woman driver behind them. No self-respecting man would hire one except as a last resort.

Lady Lord Knew a Woman's Age

LADY LORD was so smart that she could tell a woman's age. No fooling. When a woman customer came to Wood's stable, Lady Lord would walk around her several times, sort of size her up and figure out the kind of trot necessary to get her safely to Crown Hill.

For a woman over 60 years old, Lady Lord had a trot approximately the tempo of the Largo con gran expressions of Beethoven's Opus 7. It was the slowest gait of her repertoire. Those under 40 were treated to a trot not unlike that of the Allegretto of Schubert's Opus 78. And all those women drivers between the ages of 40 and 60 went to Crown Hill (and back, too) to the tempo of Mendelssohn's Opus 36, No. 1.

Which reminds me of Mr. Renner, the blacksmith of our neighborhood when I was a kid. One morning when Mr. Renner came to open his shop, he found a horse standing all alone in front of his door. He recognized it immediately as one belonging to a dray driver living on Union St. at the time.

Shoe Missing; Splinter in Foot

THE HORSE appeared to be in distress and kept pawing its foot on the ground. When Mr. Renner examined the horse, he discovered that one of its shoes was missing. It had a splinter in its foot, too. He fixed up everything and returned the horse to its owner. At the same time he presented his bill for services rendered.

When the drayman heard the story of his horse talking command of his own affairs, he wouldn't believe it. Said it was preposterous, except that he used a shorter word. It led to more and uglier words loud enough for the horse to hear. It ended with Mr. Renner returning to his shop empty-handed. He was madder than hops!

Next morning, the drayman hitched the horse to his wagon and started for a day's work. Instead of using Union St. as was his habit, he went up Meridian St. Sure—plain cussedness, just to get Mr.

Renner's goat.

When the horse saw Mr. Renner standing in front of his shop, it gave him a wink and started running. At Merrill St., the horse got out of hand. At South St. it ran into a baker's wagon and smashed it to smithereens. You couldn't recognize the dray either. When Mr. Renner heard about it, he said he did[n't] care whether he ever got his money or not.

There's a story, too, that once upon a time a horse walked into Dr. Pritchard's office. All by himself, mind you. It turned out that the horse had such a bad case of colic that it took the old veterinarian hours to get it fixed up. I wouldn't know whether the story is true or not. It happened out my bailiwick. I wouldn't palm off anything in this column that wasn't the gospel truth.

File: Crown Hill's Origin and Development
Author: Wayne Sanford
Location: Marty's Computer