

## HISTORY OF PIONEER CEMETERY DOUGLAS, WYOMING

Douglas' first cemetery was established shortly after the founding of "Antelope", an end-of-track tent town that arose in the spring of 1886 near the confluence of Antelope Creek and the North Platte River. A graveyard was started on "Poverty Flats", a patch of prairie a short distance north of the tent town. In June, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad announced that its new station and town site were to be placed one mile further south, on the east side of the North Platte. In early August, the Western Town Lot Company laid out the present town site of Douglas, named in honor of statesman Stephen A. Douglas. In spite of this move, the cemetery was utilized for sixteen years, from 1886 to 1902. The first burial apparently was A. H. Meyers, the victim of a gunfight, on August 10, 1886.

The cemetery was originally located within the boundary of the vast Fort Fetterman Military Reservation. After the government relinquished the military land in 1882, a man named Rouse homesteaded an area containing the original Douglas cemetery. In 1895, *Douglas Budget* editor Bill Barlow urged the city to acquire the cemetery land from Mr. Rouse. However, it wasn't until January 10, 1901 that the City of Douglas finally acquired title to a 38.02 acre tract containing the graveyard, comprising Lot 5 of Section 5, Township 32 North, Range 71 West. According to the patent (#274) issued by the U. S. Government, the parcel was dedicated to "the occupants of the town site of Douglas for park and cemetery purposes."

A year and a half later, in 1902, the Town of Douglas established a new cemetery on elevated terrain adjoining the east side of Douglas. This development followed years of prodding by editor Barlow, who in the pages of the *Budget* implored the city to develop a more conveniently located and attractively landscaped cemetery:

"If there is one thing above another that Douglas needs, it is a cemetery somewhere within reach and one that could be made in a fairly half-way presentable condition. It fairly gives a man the horrors to think of being buried in the dismal out of the way sandhill now being used for that purpose." (Sept. 13, 1899)

"Every death accentuates the fact that we need a cemetery. The one in use now is too far from town and where neither trees and grass can be made to grow - a bleak, sandy waste." (March 19, 1902)

Heeding Barlow's pleas, the Town of Douglas acquired a ten acre parcel on elevated terrain on the east side of town and platted a new burial ground - called Park Cemetery - in May of 1902. The last burials in Pioneer Cemetery occurred in 1902, although LaPrele area

pioneer George D. L. Froggat, who died in 1887, was reportedly re-interred in Pioneer Cemetery in 1907.

The total number of burials in Pioneer Cemetery is open to debate. Editor Bill Barlow stated matter-of-factly in the June 12, 1895 edition of the *Budget* that over 100 bodies were buried in the original city cemetery by that date. Extensive newspaper research by Sharon Lass Field indicated that at least 69 burials are documented, including 32 with names visible on grave monuments today. An undetermined number of wooden grave markers were destroyed by a grass fire that swept through the cemetery in 1946.

Although under city ownership, the old cemetery languished for nearly 75 years, during which time grazing livestock, weather and vandals caused substantial damage to graves and tombstones. During this period, a number of bodies were disinterred and relocated to Park Cemetery.

Interest in preserving the cemetery surfaced in the 1960s, spurred by newspaper articles written by Douglas resident Laura Reid. Reid compiled information about all known burials at Poverty Flats. In 1969, the Douglas Civic Club and the Douglas Woman's Club joined forces to undertake protection and restoration of the cemetery. In 1975, the Town of Douglas fenced a four acre area to prevent further destruction of the monuments and grave plot enclosures. A Bi-Centennial Grant, obtained in 1977, and matched with club funds and labor in kind, enabled restoration work to be performed. Numerous broken and displaced stones were repaired and set in concrete, wrought iron fences were sanded and painted, and damaged fences were replaced with chain link. Crushed white quartz was spread over many graves to limit weed growth. Also in 1977, the City of Douglas acquired an easement and built a road leading to the cemetery.

Continuing its efforts, the Douglas Civic Club in 1980 obtained rubbings of the inscriptions on all stones, some of which were nearly obliterated. These rubbings, laminated in plastic, are kept at the Pioneer Museum located at the Wyoming State Fairgrounds in Douglas.

In the 1970s, Sharon Lass Field completed additional in-depth newspaper research concerning the people buried in Pioneer Cemetery. In 1980, the Douglas Civic Club revised Field's list of burials with data gleaned from tombstone inscriptions and discussions with living relatives of the deceased.

More recently, the relatively barren cemetery site was improved by the planting of thirty hardy scotch pine trees donated in 1993 by the Bauder family of Douglas. Today, more than 110 years after it was first utilized, Pioneer Cemetery remains an important link to Douglas' past, and a poignant reminder of the hardships and brevity of frontier life.

GRAVES AND OTHER FEATURES OF PIONEER CEMETERY  
 (“POVERTY FLATS”) DOUGLAS WYOMING

Feature Number	Feature Type	Person(s) Buried (from inscription)	Date of Death	Remarks
1	Displaced headstone (Base)	Camplin	Unknown	Associated w/headstone of Douglas Victor Camplin (Feature 7)
2	Displaced headstone	D. C. (Identity unknown)	Unknown	Crude headstone, appears to have been moved from original location.
3	Displaced headstone (Base)	Unknown	Unknown	Crude dressed sandstone slab embedded in soil.
4	Rectangular depression - probable exhumation	Unknown	Unknown	Presumably represents grave moved to Douglas Park Cemetery
5	Grave w/headstone	Margaretha Holdorf	2/9/1899	Headstone made of white marble, top of headstone reset in concrete next to base
6	Grave w/headstone	Margaretha Holdorf	2/9/1899	Basal portion of broken headstone, top portion (F-5) is standing directly adjacent
7	Grave w/headstone	Douglas Victor Camplin	2/7/1889	White marble tablet with convex top, this headstone formerly stood atop base, 45 ft to S-SE and was set in concrete during 1977 cemetery restoration.
8	Base of headstone	Unknown	Unknown	Made of red sandstone; disturbed
9	Grave w/shaft style monument	Harriet J. Skinner	8/6/1889	Monument made of light grey marble
10	Grave w/monument or base	Unknown	Unknown	Untrimmed, irregular-shaped flat slab of buff-colored sandstone
11	Base of headstone	Unknown	Unknown	Made of cast concrete or grey sandstone; formerly supported a 4-sided shaft (missing)
12	Grave w/cylindrical shaft-style monument	Helen V. Gallapaux	4/29/1890	White marble shaft with inscription set on red sandstone base
13	Grave w/headstone base	Unknown	Unknown	Grey cast concrete (pseudo-stone) block; monument missing or displaced
14	Enclosed grave with headstone	Lottie Messenger	1/26/1896	Grey granite headstone; wrought iron enclosure

15	Depression - possible exhumation	Unknown	Unknown	Dimensions approx 4 ft. x 4 ft.
16	Rectangular depression - possible exhumation	Unknown	Unknown	Dimensions approx. 4 ft. x 8 ft.
17	Grave w/headstone	John C. Cowan	10/13/1897	White marble tablet on streaked grey and white marble base
18	Grave w/headstone	May Kimball	5/16/1891	Well preserved small headstone made of white marble
19	Grave w/shaft style monument	Infant son and daughter of B. & Maggie Peterson	10/8/1892 8/29/1897	White/grey marble shaft with "gables" on all sides
20	Grave w/shaft style monument	West W. Miller	1/23/1889	Mottled white/grey marble shaft; top broken/missing
21	Grave w/monument	Charles M. Zummeralt	2/12/1893	Tree trunk shaped monument, made of cast concrete or carved sandstone
22	Enclosed grave w/headstone	Carrie Tate	11/30/1896	
23	Grave w/headstone	Mary Lehman	10/15/1897	
24	Grave w/monument	Joel Davis	1/9/1897	
25	Family grave plot w/enclosure	Willmina Spracklen, Millard Ross Spracklen	11/22/1901 8/20/1894	
26	Grave w/monument	Infant daughter of H. P. & E. G. Allen	7/14/1891	
27	Multiple grave w/shared monument	Alice M & Bertha M. Powell; Florence and Mary Elder	All died on 6/4/1895	
28	Grave w/enclosure	Unknown	Unknown	Small size of enclosure indicates burial was an infant or very young child
29	Family grave plot w/enclosure and large monument	Della M. Blaisdell; John C. Blaisdell	10/30/1896 12/20/1890	
30	Base of headstone	Unknown	Unknown	
31	Grave enclosure; no headstone	Unknown	Unknown	

32	Grave w/headstone and enclosure	Archibald Aymer Oliver Rutherford	2/22/1899	Very well preserved grave
33	Base of headstone	Unknown	Unknown	Small rectangular dressed sandstone slab embedded in soil
34	Base or toppled monument	Unknown	Unknown	Embedded in soil; very eroded
35	Water (hand) pump	N/A	N/A	"Monitor" produced by Baker Mfg. Co., Evansville, Wisconsin
36	Grave w/shaft style monument; modern enclosure	Edwin M Hewins	11/28/1898	Chain link enclosure installed in 1977 by Douglas Civic Club
37	Grave w/enclosure and monument	William Eubank	6/13/1900	Large granite monument within old wrought iron enclosure
38	Grave w/headstone	Unknown	Unknown	Short grey colored granite tablet on granite base
39	Grave w/shaft style monument	Patrick Tobin	10/24/1899	4-sided marble shaft with "gables" on all sides
40	Grave w/shaft style monument	A. S. Ligier	10/31/1899	4-sided marble shaft with "gables" on all sides
41	Grave w/shaft style monument	Arthur A. Falknor	8/14/1901	Monument made of marble
42	Grave w/monument	Tracy O. Buell	9/5/1900	Small tree trunk-shaped monument
43	Enclosed grave w/headstone	Hattie Mull	1902	Plot enclosed by old, delicate wrought iron fence
44	Grave w/headstone	Cora E. Arnold	4/10/1902	Large grey marble monument
45	Depression - possible exhumation	Unknown	Unknown	Dimensions approx. 6 ft. x 7 ft.
46	Depression - possible exhumation	Unknown	Unknown	Dimensions approx. 4 ft. x 8 ft.
47	Depression - possible exhumation	Unknown	Unknown	Dimensions approx. 4 ft. x 7 ft.