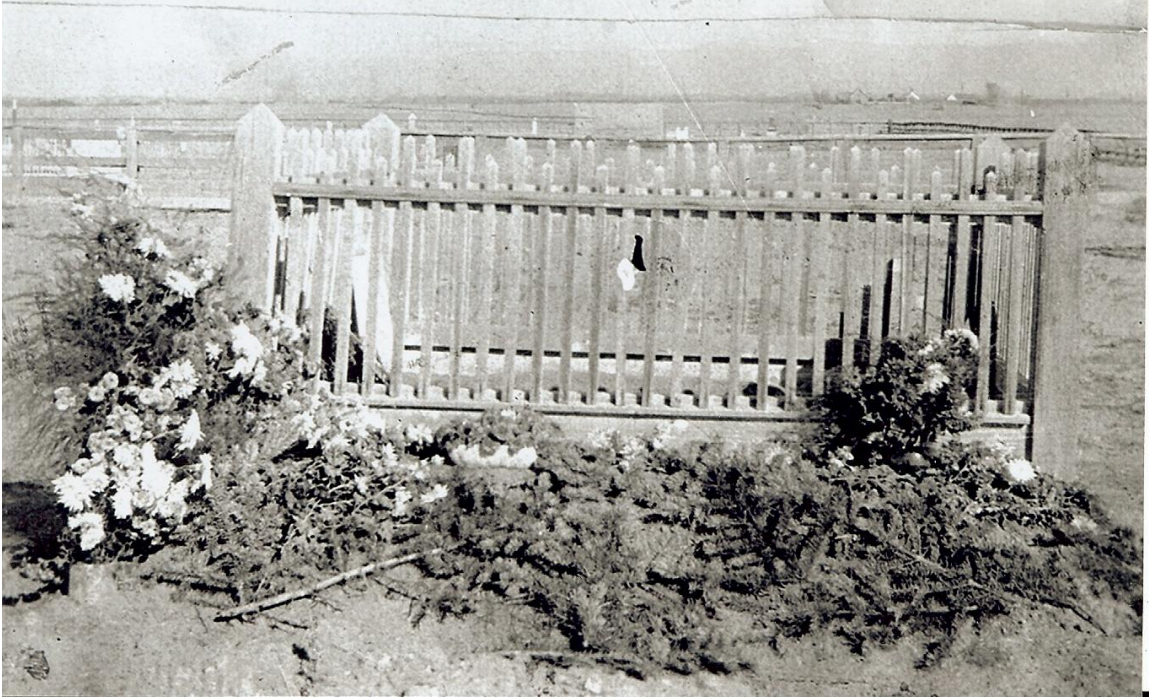


Ross Cemetery



By Kathy Jordan

While western Mesa County's earliest-known cemetery no longer exists, several others in that area are still in use today, thanks to the efforts of volunteer citizens and municipalities.

The Ross Cemetery, possibly the first organized cemetery in the area that became known as the Rhone District, was located north of the railroad tracks on Road 19 1/2, Ross School was just south of the railroad tracks, a short distance away.

The property on which the cemetery and school were established was homesteaded by Marcus and Ellen Ross in 1882.

Four families-- the Ducketts, Lowerys, Gavins and Reesers--came to the area that same year from. Other families settling in the area were the Kellys, Sullivans, Slocombs, Bradleys and Brickfords. They made up a close-knit community representing several different religious backgrounds.

The Ducketts, Lowerys, Gavins and Reesers were part of the group which started the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1882 in Grand Junction. When the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the First United Methodist Church combined, around 1883, Marcus Ross started the Ross School, located south of the railroad track near 19 1/2 Road.

The school was used for social and religious meetings and funerals.

The nearby cemetery was west and north of 19 1/2 Road, next to the railroad right-of-way.

The first recorded burial was that of William Duckett in 1886. Since deaths of his neighbors were recorded as early as 1883, it is possible the cemetery was used earlier than 1886. The last recorded burial at Ross in 1894 was that of Carrie Skeels, daughter of a Fruita Congregational Church minister.

In fall 1896, a storm dumped 3.33 inches of rain in 36 hours in the valley, washing out bridges and railroad tracks and breaching irrigation ditches. The water that came down from the Bookcliffs, combined with the ditch water, apparently washed away the cemetery. There is no record today of many people who were buried at Ross.

However, according to old newspaper articles, some bodies, including that of Carrie Skeels, were moved to Elmwood Cemetery when it opened in 1899. Others, including the Reeser children, were moved to Crown Point.

Some headstones were found in a nearby wash. However, those bodies were never located. Mesa County relatives of Mary Haynes still have her headstone, which was recovered after the flood.

Fruita Calvary and Elmwood Cemeteries

The land for Calvary Cemetery, located on Road 17 1/2 in Fruita, was purchased by The Right Rev. Joseph P. Machebeuf, Catholic Bishop of the Denver Diocese, on June 17, 1889, from A.J. McCune.

Some of the headstones at Calvary are dated before the cemetery was established in 1889. One of those is John Stafford, who died in 1886. It is possible he was buried earlier at Ross Cemetery and then moved when

Calvary was developed. Or he could have been buried on the Stafford farm, because it was not unusual for people in rural areas to bury their family members at home.

By 1953, Calvary was no longer being used. Families began burying their family members in the nearby well-maintained Elmwood Cemetery. Calvary had become a headache for the pastor. There were no grass and no money for the parish to hire a caretaker.

When Calvary became overgrown with weeds the parish priest asked some of the farmers to come to the cemetery with their equipment to cut weeds. In taking on the chore, the farmers moved or destroyed many of the headstones and crosses, making it impossible for every family to know exactly where the bodies of loved ones were. Those who did know marked the graves with crosses. Jose Archuleta, the last-known person buried in Calvary, was interred March 5, 1956.

Meanwhile the cemetery had grown smaller in June 1953, when J.H. and Ethel M. Standifird purchased a two-and-one half-acre portion of the property.

Today, although Calvary is no longer being used for new burials, it is beautifully maintained by volunteer members of the Fruita Catholic Church.

The Elmwood Cemetery Association was incorporated in June of 1895, and consisted of 40 acres. In 1950 the association was dissolved, and a cemetery district was formed. Today the City of Fruita cares for the well-kept cemetery.

Crown Point Cemetery

Incorporation of Bethel Methodist Church on Jan. 27, 1896, was the first step in the development of Crown Point Cemetery on 23 1/2 Road south of I 1/2 Road.

J. L. Duckett, M. P. Sellers, J. U. Harris, M. B. Sharp and George T. Chapman signed the incorporation papers at Loback School House, located in the area of the current Road 23.

May 30, 1896, William H. and Elizabeth Hanson sold 10 acres of land to the Bethel Church for \$35, the deed stating it was for the purpose of a cemetery.

Some of the neighboring property owners contributed the land for the road right-of-way to the cemetery.

Feb. 27, 1904, the trustees for the Methodist Church sold to the Crown Point Cemetery Co., which was incorporated as the Crown Point Cemetery in June of 1904

Over the years Crown Point has been know by several other names. Bethel, because the Bethel Church started the cemetery; Appleton because of its location; Loback, because the first graves sites were sold at the Loback School.

Now Crown Point, known as Veterans Crown Point, is going through a renovation. For years a small portion of the original 10 acres was used as a cemetery, surrounded by a distinctive country-style fence. The entrance to the cemetery featured an entrance gate with two poles supporting a metal cutout that read "Crown Point Cemetery". The City of Grand Junction, which has taken over the cemetery, removed both the fence and classic entryway and replaced them with a split-rail fence.