

Early-Day Cemeteries Proved Profitable to Growing Town

By Kathy Jordan

Cemeteries must have been a profitable business in the late 1890s, when Grand Junction was still a hamlet. Mesa County records show that two graveyards were established in that era, both of them located in what is now inside city limits.

Hope Cemetery

According to Gunnison and Mesa County records, Hope Cemetery was the first area planned as a cemetery by the Grand Junction Town and Investment Co. It was located between Independent and Texas Avenues on First Street.

In 1883 John Mayhew filed on 160 acres and immediately sold 60 acres to the Town Company. The Grand Junction Town Company without more ado platted the land and began selling lots.

A.A. Miller purchased the 40 acres to the south of Hope between Independent and North Avenues, which he farmed.

In November 1884 the Masonic Lodge purchased a section of Hope for use as a cemetery for members. The Masons used that section until 1889 when they purchased a section at the newly developed Orchard Mesa Cemetery. The lodge sold its section of Hope back to the Town Company in 1905. The Masons who had been buried in Hope were moved to the Masonic section at the Orchard Mesa Cemetery.

No doubt the development of the cemetery on Orchard Mesa had a great deal to do with the demise of Hope, along with the high water table there. People who had purchased plots or lots from the Town Company in 1885 were selling them back by 1901.

Two people who had purchased lots and plots from the Town Company sold them back in 1905, about the same time a story ran in The Daily Sentinel about the "old City Cemetery". The Sentinel reported that "the old cemetery on the Fruit Ridge (sic) Road, about one mile north of the city limits long ago abandoned, will be entirely cleared and the bodies still remaining in the

old cemetery will be disinterred and removed to the Orchard Mesa Cemetery”.

Records indicate there were fewer than 40 people buried there before the cemetery was abandoned, possibly about the time the last burial was reported. The Town Company owned the cemetery for 22 years before selling the property in 1895

According to a report at the time, it was thought that about 16 bodies remained buried in Hope Cemetery after it was abandoned. Most of those graves were unmarked, and the identity of those buried there was long forgotten. Gourley-Platt Furniture & Undertaking Co. was responsible for moving as many of the unidentified remains as possible to unmarked graves at the Orchard Mesa Cemetery.

In later years William Arcieri and his family owned and operated a nursery at the location.

Hall's Fairview Cemetery

Another early-day Grand Junction burial ground was Hall's Fairview Cemetery, located at the north end of 15th Street.

B. R. Hall purchased the land for the cemetery in December 1887. According to the deed, the property was “15 acres now enclosed and known as Fairview Cemetery.”

Hall sold the cemetery in 1895 to David Crosby. According to the burial records, it appears that the last-recorded interment there was in 1899. Research turned up three deeds that would indicate the remains of people in Fairview were moved to the Orchard Mesa Cemetery.

Hall's Fairview was long forgotten until 1992, when construction workers were installing water and sewer lines for the Ptarmigan Ridge Subdivision. As the workers were moving the earth, human bones were discovered. While no record is available about those bones, it is believed they were re-interred in one of the current cemeteries.