CAMP CREEK CEMETERY

1866-2016

Camp Creek Community has a great story and a rich history. Our roots go deep. The Kansas Nebraska Act created the Nebraska Territory and opened the door to settlement May 30, 1854. In its earliest days this area saw the American Indians, the free-soilers, and the abolitionists traveling along the Jim Lane Trail, along with those looking for agricultural land. Before we became the Nebraska Territory this was part of a huge Native American homeland and Nebraska was just a place to pass through in order to get somewhere else. There were miles and miles of unplowed prairies and untamed rivers. Buffalo, antelope, wolves, quail, and prairie chickens roamed these opened prairies. This area was named Camp Creek because bands of Omaha, Oto, and Missouria Indians camped along the creek in the area.

Permanent settlers began preempting land, buying claims, and moving into this community in late 1854. Many of these settlers entered through Bennett’s Ferry as Gideon Bennett operated a ferry boat there. Later it was called Otoe City and then Minersville. Some of the earliest settlers include:

Alexander & Eleanor (Jenkins) Bain Robert & Ann (Todd) Harney

Jacob & Anna (Schindler) Baltensperger John & Hannah Harrison Alexander & Margaret Bennett John & Elizabeth Hays

Alderman & Jennie (Wolcott) Bloomingdale Albert & Anna (Jacobmeyer) Hauptman Samuel & Agnes (Earle) Campbell Herman & Anna (Rolf) Hauptman

John & Annie (Frost) Casselman James & Sarah Horn John & Anne (Ford) Chapple John & Catherine Jamison

Rueben & Lydia (Little) Church Abraham Kagy

Edgar & Sarah (Church) Clayton Elford & Mary (Sears) Lee

Ephraim & Maria (Heywood) Clayton George F. & Betsy (Strong) Lee

Thomas & Elizabeth (Chapple) Cole Thomas & Mary (Bain) McCune

George & Martha (Shellenberger) Conklin Thomas & Elmina (Foote) Meadville

James Cook George & Grace (Pendleton) Overton

James and Hannah Cook Martin & Mary (Burnes) Overton

John and Lena (Kemmig) Cook Nelson & Etta (Lewis) Overton

Lawson Cook Samuel & Phoebe (Burns) Overton

Charles A. Corsaw Henry & Helen (Cary) Pendleton

Timothy & Elizabeth (Barker) Crook Jacob & Marie Schindler

John & Mary (Kagy) Davis Dietrich & Sarah (Tschanz) Schlinder

Uriah & Sarah (Elkins) Davis Francis & Sarah (Clark) Sim

Jacob & Catherine (Girardet) Epler Frederick & Mary (Hauptman)

James & Eliza (Douglas) Fitchie Stukenholtz

Joseph & Catherine (Greene) Foote John S. & Elizabeth (Hayes) Trail

Canoy & Catherine (Wilkinson) Hanks David C. & Catherine Walters

Susan Hanks Luzerne & Sarah (Strong) Wells

Thompson & Caroline (Roberts) Hanks George & Susan (Hanks) Wright

Jacob & Hannah (Hayden) Harman

These people created a very close-knit neighborhood. Many were good friends and relatives who had traveled here together from the eastern and southern United States, and Canada. Those states included Connecticut, Illinois, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Some families came from Europe, including England, Ireland, Germany, Prussia, Scotland, and Switzerland. There were marriage connections between many of these families. These early settlers became community leaders and performed their civic duties well. They served as constables, on juries, on election boards, and as road commissioners. Some served in the territorial and state legislatures.

Earlier these rugged, courageous, and faithful pioneers had recognized the need for a place of worship and a place to educate their children resulting in the Camp Creek School, which was originally District #1 in Otoe County and was also used for church services on Sunday until the Congregational Church and Downs Chapel (Methodist) were built. The time had now come to establish a burial ground for their loved ones as they wanted to be as close in death as they had been in life.

Camp Creek Cemetery is located seven miles south and three miles east of Nebraska City, also known as 1501 South 70th Rd. Camp Creek Cemetery contains seven and one third acres and is a tribute to the early pioneers. Much love, courage, and labor went into the founding of this country burial ground.

On June 15, 1866 a group of men from the Camp Creek neighborhood met at the Camp Creek schoolhouse with the purpose of taking steps to organize a cemetery association to open a public cemetery. This was at a time when Nebraska was a vast prairie and a territory. At this first meeting temporary officers were elected. A. N. Kagy\* was elected chairman and T. H. McCune\* was elected clerk.

The next meeting was held June 25, when the offer of George F. Lee\* to give one acre in the corner of S.W.1/4 Section 13, Township 7, Range 14 was accepted. At this meeting the following were named charter members: George F. Lee\*, James Fitchie\*, T.H. McCune\*, A.N. Kagy\*, John Davis\*, Alex Bennett\*, Ephraim Clayton\*, Samuel Campbell\*, C.A. Corsaw\*, and D.C. Walters\*.

The Third meeting was held July 16. At this meeting a constitution was drafted. The following officers were elected: James Fitchie\*, president; George F. Lee\*, clerk; and D.C. Walters\*, treasurer. Those at the meeting wanted to call it “Lee Cemetery” but Mr. Lee\* said “No” and at his suggestion it was called Camp Creek Cemetery after the stream (creek) in the area, which was named ‘Camp Creek’. However, many continued to Lee owevCemetery until years later when the iron fence with the name “Camp Creek Cemetery” on the gate was installed. Lots and grounds were laid out and fencing of the ground was completed on August 15, 1866.

On September 10, 1866, a child of G.L. Dodson\* was buried. Mrs. Hannah Harrison\* was the first adult interment on March 8, 1868. Others followed but it was April 7, 1868 when the most dramatic day in the history of the cemetery occurred. Twenty-eight bodies were removed from homesteads to the cemetery. All the neighbors helped with the re-burials on that day, a very sad, but loving duty. It is interesting to note that before 1900 there were 150 burials with the name “child” which is almost forty per cent of the burials during that time period. Some families lost one or two children while other families lost several. This is another testament as to the hardships these early pioneers faced and yet the strong perseverance of these early pioneer families prevailed.

In 1883 it was voted to enlarge the grounds. George F. Lee\* was paid $56.25 for one acre and sixty-five rods which was added to the cemetery. In 1897 a new constitution was adopted, although there was little variance from the original one.

In 1912 George Wright\* was paid $202.50 for two additional acres and two square rods. The cemetery was now five and twenty-nine hundredths acres large.

The women of the community met in September of 1912 and organized a ladies cemetery association for the purpose of beautifying, preserving, and keeping in better shape this pioneer cemetery. In those days very little mowing was done and each one in his own way tried to beautify the family grave. The women wanted to work in conjunction with the men’s association to make, ‘Our City of the Departed,’ more beautiful. Their aim was to have a nice fence and entrance, rest room and tool house, lowering device, lots filled and seeded to lawn grass, and finally a man through the summer to care for the ground. Membership dues were $1.00 per year. The first president of the women’s group was Mrs. Nelson Overton\*. Assisting officers were Mrs. Lillian Hartley\*, Mrs. E.L. Pursel\*, secretary; and Mrs. Sara E. Clayton\*, treasurer.

Money was raised by subscriptions, donations, suppers, ice cream socials, box socials, luncheons, square dances, pantry sales, and other fund raising events held on quiet summer afternoons and cold winter nights.

Through the efforts of the ladies association, the one story Neo-Classical Revival style chapel was built in 1916 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the cemetery at a cost of $3,000. The building committee of the association was Mrs. Nelson Overton\*, Mrs. Lillian Hartley\*, Mrs. Edgar Clayton\*, and Miss Eleanor McCune\*. The bricks, individually wrapped in paper, were brought in from the East. The cemetery was fenced with a beautiful white iron fence costing $1,150. However, due to weather problems, and construction delays, the dedication was not held until June of 1917. When the chapel was dedicated the inscription bore the legend: “A Memorial to the Pioneers” and the cornerstone bore the dates 1866-1916. The chapel has been used over the years for funeral services and graveside services in the worst of weather. There has also been a wedding and marriage vows have been repeated in the chapel. The chapel has a long tradition of services held on Memorial Day Sunday that still fill it to capacity and beyond every year.

Mrs. Nelson Overton\* was instrumental in starting a permanent fund at this time. The interest was to be used for the up-keep of the cemetery.

The officers of the cemetery association in 1917 were: F.M. Harney\*, president; E. Stout, secretary; John Church\*, treasurer; G. L. Lee\*, manager; E.W. Hanks\*, O. Tucker, Frank Meadville\*, and George T. Overton\*, trustees.

In 1940-1941 the chapel was remodeled at a cost of about $1,000. Mrs. Etta Overton\* donated more than half the funds for this project.

In 1961 Jim Hanks\* created a new cemetery map on a roller shade which gave the location of each grave. Although the old cemetery map was on high grade linen-paper, it was wearing out. After all, it was nearly one hundred years old. In 2015 Jim\* updated the 1961 cemetery map and the Camp Creek Cemetery burial guide. Anyone wishing to locate a grave in Camp Creek Cemetery may access it through Campcreekcemeteryne.com

Gary Harpster\* laid the stone for the base of the flagpole in memory of Tracy Harpster\*,Gary\* and Patsy’s\* daughter, in 1989-1990.

Robert Spire donated two acres to Camp Creek Cemetery in 1990 when settling his mother, Louise Coe Spire’s estate. The cemetery is now seven and thirty-one hundredths acres large.

In 1993 Richard\* and Nancy Hoch\* donated the beautiful stained glass window located in the middle of the east wall as a memorial to Lynn and Irene DeLong, Nancy’s parents, and their nephew, Fred Cady III\*. The window was from the Presbyterian Church in Nebraska City when it was taken down after the present church was completed.

Dave Manes tuck-pointed the brickwork on the chapel and repaired the roof in 2001.

Steve Baltensperger\* created a data base of the cemetery in 2001 that was very useful in the development of the new website.

In the spring of 2003 Laura Crook\* for her Senior Design individual project created a plan to enhance the site by restoring the landscape by making it feel like it was back on the plains. She did this as a tribute to the Pioneers who were buried there.

In 2004 the Camp Creek Cemetery board decided to install a matching fence for a total of 375 feet to fence the new addition along the west side of the cemetery. Syracuse Iron Works was contracted to manufacture the new fence. Gate posts and footings were installed with volunteer labor from the cemetery board. Ron Badberg\* laid the block. The cost was $14,250 for the fence plus approximately $4,900 for block, cement, caps, and paint.

Keeping with the times, the Camp Creek Cemetery Association, Inc. was incorporated as a public benefit corporation under the Nebraska Non-Profit Corporation Act in 2006.

In 2009 Kathy Neumann McKillip\* applied for a grant of $7,500.00 from The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum through the “Re-Tree Nebraska” program on behalf of Camp Creek Cemetery Association that enabled the association to plant trees in the cemetery. The trees in 2009 were planted by the Earl May Seed and Nursery store in Nebraska City. These trees have been cared for by Lucille Sharp\*. Many additional trees have been planted since 2009.

In March of 2011 The Nebraska State Historical Society and the United States Department of Interior, National Parks Service certified that the Camp Creek Cemetery, first addition, as well as the chapel, had been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In January of 2012 The National Park Service evaluated the burial site of Barbara Ann Kagy Mayhew Bradway\* as making a significant contribution to the understanding of the Underground Railroad in American history. It met the requirements for inclusion in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. Historic signs were placed and then dedicated at the Memorial Day service May 27, 2012.

During the summer of 2012, new basement windows and new doors for the chapel were installed. The windows on the main floor were re-glazed and painted. The basement floor was cemented and the basement walls were stuccoed.

The Rural Water District installed a water hydrant just north of the main gate as a testing station in 2013.

A new roof was put on the chapel by Roofers, Inc. at a cost of $1,600.00 in 2014.

Current Camp Creek Cemetery Association Board members include: Ed Baltensperger, president (descended from the Baltensperger and Schindler early settlers), Steve Baltensperger (descended from the Baltensperger, Bloomingdale, and Schindler early settlers), James Cook, treasurer (descended from the Cook early settlers), John Crook (descended from the Baltensperger, Crook and Schindler early settlers), John Golden (descended from the Wells early settlers), Ed Rowen, Jr., vice-president (descended from the Wells early settlers), Lucille Sharp, secretary (descended from the Chapple, Cole, Cook, and U. Davis early settlers), Mark Trail (descended from the early Hays and Trail settlers), and Richard Warner (descended from the Jacob Harman early settlers).

At the time of this writing, January 30, 2016, Camp Creek Cemetery with 1,320 burials stands as a tribute to the brave, courageous, and rugged pioneers who wanted to be as close in death as they had been in life when they founded Camp Creek Cemetery 150 years ago. The spirit of the pioneers of 1866 and 1912 continues as we pursue the work of our forefathers while meeting the needs of today.

An asterisk after a name indicates that person was an original settler or a descendent of an original settler.

Compiled by Lucille Sharp, Secretary, Camp Creek Cemetery Association, Inc. 2016 and updated August 21, 2018. At the close of December 31, 2017, Camp Creek Cemetery had 1,327 burials. Burials will be updated yearly at the close of each year.