

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WAYNE CENTER CEMETERY.

by Paul B. Phillips.

The first burial in the Wayne Center Cemetery (officially known in the County Records as "The Wayne Cemetery") was that of Joel Blank who died in January 1840 at the age of 23 years and was buried in what is now Block 1, Lot 6. At that date title to the land where the cemetery is located was still in the government, but it is probable that Marcus G. Wheeler was then living on the land - possibly he was homesteading it. This was the only burial prior to the issuance of the Government patent.

On February 8, 1843 the government issued a Patent for the land in and around the cemetery to Marcus G. Wheeler. Marcus G. Wheeler died seven years later, on December 21, 1850, and Mary G. Wheeler and E. L. Guild were appointed his Administrators by the County Court which then sat at Hesperville. In the meantime, according to the inscriptions on the tomb-stones now in the cemetery, the total number of burials rose during his lifetime to fourteen (14). Nothing is on record in the County Records to show that he ever issued any deeds to the burial lots.

At the closing of his estate his widow, Mary G. Wheeler, became the sole owner of the cemetery. She continued to own the cemetery until almost three years after her husband's death. But during her short ownership, as appears from the statements contained in the deeds which she issued, she laid out a plat of the cemetery under the title of "The Wayne Cemetery", which was never recorded. That unrecorded plat is very likely in existence, but the writer has been unable to find where it is. From the locations of the cemetery monuments and the graves of that early period it is apparent that at least in a general way the unrecorded plat conformed to the plat that was made on a resurvey some twenty years later and recorded. However, there are some glaring inconsistencies which will be briefly described later.

Along in the latter months of Mrs. Wheeler's ownership, she issued a number of deeds which were recorded, all of them dated in September 1853. Her first deed was issued to Charles Smith for Lot 4 in Block 1, and was dated September 3, 1853 and recorded November 1, of the same year. Within the same month of September she issued in all sixteen (16) Warranty Deeds for cemetery lots which were recorded at various intervals from 1853 to 1855. How many other deeds for cemetery lots she issued, of course, we do not know. During her ownership the number of burials increased by about twelve, making a total of twenty-six (26). The considerations expressed in all her deeds was either \$3. or \$5.

On November 22, 1853 Mrs. Mary G. Wheeler deeded the cemetery with surrounding land to Daniel Pratt, the grandfather of our Mrs. Clara Pratt (H.J.) Dunton. The writer knows nothing of the history of Mary G. Wheeler, beyond what is stated here, except that on Block 3, Lot 12 is a monument which reads - "Oscar B. - son of M. G. and M. G. Wheeler, died August 13, 1848, age 10 years, 7 months," showing that during her husband's lifetime they lost this ten year old son.

Daniel Pratt held title to the Cemetery from November 22, 1853 until June 2, 1873, when he deeded the cemetery to his son, William O. Pratt, our Mrs. Dunton's father. Only five of the deeds issued by Daniel Pratt have been recorded, although, at the time he deeded to his son the total number of burials had risen to about 100, and some

65 or 70 burial lots were apparently sold, including those sold by the Wheelers. All of Daniel Pratt's deeds were based on the unrecorded plat of Mary G. Wheeler above referred to and the considerations expressed in the deeds continued to be stated at \$3. and \$5.

William O. Pratt, in December 1877, which was four years after he acquired the property from his father and 37 years after the first burial within the tract that we know anything about, caused a re-survey and replatting of the Cemetery under the title of The Wayne Cemetery, to be made by the surveyor, J. G. Vallette, and this plat was filed for record in the County Recorder's office on February 8, 1878, after which all deeds as a matter of course referred to the recorded plat.

At this point it is best to observe that the recorded plat of 1877 strangely enough, does not harmonize with some of the conditions on the ground itself that then existed. For example, running north from the center of the "Bentley Block" shown on the plat, is a 7 foot street or alley which lies between Block III on the west and Block IV on the east. Prior to the re-survey of 1877 there were buried squarely within this street one man and 2 children as follows:

John Oakey, died Feb. 7, 1867, age 50  
Charlotte, daughter of G. M. and John  
Oakey, died June 14, 1866, age 14.  
Edith M. daughter of J. E. and M. A.  
Doyle, died September 23, 1864.

The monuments marking these graves in what was afterward platted as a street and whereon is recorded the facts concerning the names and dates of deaths of these persons, are of very old appearance and in all probability existed there when the re-survey was made. The writer does not understand how this and other slightly less glaring contradictions between the ground as it then was and as it was misrepresented on the plat were allowed to happen. It should be added here that the east side of the cemetery, embraced in Block VIII, was not then in use and is comparatively, if not altogether, free from the defects mentioned in the older part.

Only three deeds issued by William O. Pratt were recorded, and the consideration expressed in each of them was \$7. Mr. Pratt continued to own the unsold portion of the cemetery for about 16 years, during which period some 48 burials took place here, bringing the total of burials in 1894 to about 148.

During all of these years there had been no organized care of the cemetery as a whole. On June 2, 1894 the nine old settlers of Wayne Center met at the home of William I. Phillips in Wheaton, Illinois for the purpose of considering some way "to permanently rescue the old 'Wayne Cemetery' from the decay and desolation which had overtaken it." The nine present at the meeting were, Henry A. Smith, Dr. E. C. Guild, H. Wrightson, I. C. Pickering, W. O. Pratt, J. G. Blank, J. R. Gorham, Aaron Blank and William I. Phillips. These nine men applied for a charter for the Wayne Center Cemetery Association, which was issued to them by the Secretary of State of Illinois on June 8, 1894. On June 16 of the same year W. O. Pratt and wife deeded all of the unsold portion of the Wayne Cemetery to the new Association which has administered all its affairs since that date.

Space would not permit a detailed account here of the steps that have been taken to bring the cemetery into its present shape. The first

step taken was to build a fence around the cemetery. Then followed trimming of trees, straightening of tombstones, etc., etc. The first labor was performed by the Directors themselves. One year after organizing Mr. Jonas G. Blank was appointed Superintendent of the grounds. He served for thirteen years and was succeeded by I. C. Pickering who served from 1908 to 1912 and in turn was succeeded by Mr. W. O. Pratt. On June 14, 1924 Mr. Pratt was succeeded by our present Superintendent, Mr. August Petersdorf.

On June 19, 1919 the Elgin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution unveiled the boulder monument, which stands in the southeasterly portion of this cemetery, as a memorial to the soldiers in the Blackhawk War in 1832 who were buried in their blankets on the bank of the Du Page River a little to the east of this cemetery.

On June 23, 1926 Mr. C. L. Clausen of Chicago, who with his family are interested in the Burk Allen Hill lot in the northwesterly portion of our cemetery, completed a survey of the easterly section of the cemetery known as Block 8, and caused the same to be staked out with iron markers around the margins of the block.

Almost from the start of the administration of this cemetery by the Wayne Center Cemetery Association, diligent efforts were made to establish an endowment fund, known as the Permanent Care Fund, from the interest on which the cemetery might be perpetually cared for. Various ways and means were used, such as "endowments" of single lots, gifts, bequests, sale of new lots, etc. The fund grew slowly until in 1928 it amounted to something like \$900. During the following year, largely through the effort of W. I. Phillips, the fund was increased to about \$2800. Other gifts and bequests have been added since then until the Treasurer reported on May 31, 1933 the Permanent Care Fund invested amounted to \$4624.00.

The last of the original incorporators of this association has now left these earthly scenes and it is fitting that we, their children, should preserve a narrative of that on which they bestowed so much loving labor.

It remains here but to add a statistical statement of the burials in this cemetery. There is an indefinite number of unmarked burials in this old cemetery about which we have no records, and such are not counted. The number is not very large. But on the basis of the inscriptions on the tomb-stones we know that at this date the total number of burials here now number about 200. Counting them by decades we have:

Decade beginning 1840	-	14	burials
" " 1850		35	"
" " 1860		41	"
" " 1870		30	"
" " 1880		17	"
" " 1890		15	"
" " 1900		14	"
" " 1910		10	"
" " 1920		15	"
Partial decade - 1930	to date 4		"

A memorandum of burials by decades and years is based on this study  
inserted in the records of the Association.

*Paul B. Phillips*

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Read at Annual Meeting  
of Wayne Center Cemetery  
Association June 16, 1934.