

BEULAH CEMETERY

BY JESSIE PRATT DIMMITT

In every new community one of the first considerations must be the planning and laying out of a place to use for burying the dead.

As in other planning, the founders of Colby showed foresight and good judgment in choosing the beautiful site of Beulah cemetery.

The THOMAS COUNTY CAT of March 11, 1886, says that a cemetery association was formed for the purpose of purchasing land and dividing it into lots, the term of the association to be 99 years. The directors of this association were N.J. Adams, A.J. Center, H.E. Weld, W.G. Weld, and N.D. Bean. The capital stock was \$250.00 and this was divided into 50 shares of \$5.00 each. The plans were to lay out ten acres of land in the southeast corner of the H.E. Weld place. Lots were to be 16 feet square and to sell for \$5.00 each "for the time being" according to the Cat. One block each was reserved for the Masons, Odd Fellows, and the G. A. R. (Prior to this time Mr. Weld had allowed some burying on his land as there was no cemetery.) The same newspaper reported, "The Cat printed 100 certificates and 300 deeds for the cemetery association."

The directors of the association wanted a name for the cemetery and asked people to send in suitable names and from the names suggested, Mr. N.D. Bean very appropriately chose Beulah.

Charley Cross, a man killed in a poker game, was the first person buried in the new cemetery, and the April 29, 1886, THOMAS COUNTY CAT said, "Little son of Copeland died and was buried in Beulah cemetery."

In those days very few records were kept, and the little care given the cemetery was done by individuals on their own lots.

In June 1886, Marvin Nisckern, who had a furniture store and was also undertaker, bought the cemetery from the original owners.

In 1909, Mr. George Dimmitt began preparing graves and caring for some lots for individuals while he doubled as city marshal. In 1911, the city bought the cemetery from Mr. Nisckern and Mr. Dimmitt was hired as sexton. There were fences and curbs around a great many individual lots and at this time the entire cemetery was fenced, but there was no water available and it was a cheerless windswept plain. Later a well was dug and a windmill and supply tank installed. In 1921, the Civic League, a group of women dedicated to the task of bettering their city, decided to do something about beautifying the cemetery and raised some money for that purpose. The civic league secretary book states that the ladies spent \$332.11 for trees and shrubs, lengths of hose, and for erecting a small tile and cement building in the cemetery. That was the start and later during their terms as mayor of Colby, Harry Davis and E.H. Benson had many small cedar trees set out. George Dimmitt had probably never heard the term "green thumb" but he knew how to make things grow and he babied the little trees along. He had a few feet of hose, a few feet of pipe had been laid, but for many of the trees he carried water in buckets. About the only tools he had were a hoe, rake, and shovel. He devoted many years of his life to beautifying Beulah

Cemetery. He never owned a car, and walked back and forth twice a day from his home to the cemetery until his death in 1934 at the age of 85. Now there are three power mowers, a tractor, electric tree trimmers and a deep well with an electric pump and water piped at intervals over the cemetery. During the dust storms of the thirties, the buffalo grass all blew out and later, with W.P.A. help, hundreds of tons of dust were hauled out. Thirty-five acres of land were bought by the city adjoining the cemetery on the west and north. In 1949 the Chamber of Commerce appointed a committee with Katherine Schroeder as chairman, to make plans for improving the cemetery. A plan was worked out and each person owning a lot was asked to contribute \$25.00 which would be used to pay for sodding his lot and maybe an adjoining one or two where the owner had long since moved away and his address unknown. Letters were sent all over the country to people who were known to have loved ones buried here, and the responses were very gratifying. Also permission was asked, and granted in most cases, for the curbs to be removed around the lots so that a lawn mower could be used. Occasionally a lot owner would say, "My grandfather put that fence in with his own hands, and what was good enough for him is good enough for me," or words to that effect, but eventually they were all removed and the ground all graded down. With hours and hours of work of hauling and setting sod, planting seed, also, in places and watering, the Cemetery is now like a park in the summer. Much credit should be given to Miss Schroeder for the time and effort she spent in order to make a dream come true. Now perpetual care is given all lots without cost to the owner.

About 1950 an act was passed by the legislature and a petition was circulated over the county and several townships banded together and Colby Cemetery District No. 1 was formed. The cemetery board consists of a trustee from each township included in the district, and the Mayor of Colby and an appointed treasurer and the expenses are taken care of by a tax levy.

In 1961 - There are some 1200 lovely cedar trees in the cemetery now, which are kept beautifully trimmed. A row of lilac bushes along the north and south lines add their beauty in the spring, at their blooming season. An ornamental fence surrounds the cemetery and two gates, one with a sign which reads "Beulah Cemetery 1886" graces the front. The lots range in price from \$30 to \$100 and there are about 2500 people buried there. B.V. Dimmitt, the present sexton, has been in charge since his father's death in 1934 and before that assisted his father for some years. Mr. Oscar Ramey has been a faithful employee at the cemetery for a number of years.

BEULAH CEMETERY

TC YESTERDAY & TODAY p.42

Beulah Cemetery was laid out in early 1886. The name was chosen from many entries. When the cemetery board asked for a name, a Mr. Bean was the winner of the contest.

A stock company had a 10 acre tract surveyed, lots to be 16 by 16 feet with a 4 foot alley between the lots, streets were planned so that each lot in the cemetery faced a street, one can go to any lot without crossing another lot, lots were to sell for \$5 and \$10 before the work of laying out all the lots.

For some reason the stock company had the cemetery only a short time and sold it to M. Niskern, an undertaker. A fence was made around the cemetery but was never kept up, and stock grazed in the cemetery, in order to protect graves from the cattle people put in curbs around their lots and covered the lot with sand, and that was an invitation to red ants which built large sand hills, other people put up fences.

When the lots were bought, a deed was given and was supposed to be recorded at the court house, however many put the deed away and when they moved away there was no record, and for the most part the deed was lost and as the state of Kansas did not keep records of deaths until 1911 there was a period of 25 years that graves could not be identified. Niskern failed to keep records that were accurate. As the years passed, more curbs and fences were put in.

Another thing in those early days friends and neighbors dug the graves and often on the wrong lot. In about 1930 the city had George E. Dimmitt take a census of the cemetery and there were only 25 graves that were unknown out of about 100 lots.

THOMAS COUNTY CAT 11-26-85

Next Saturday at 2 p.m. there will be a meeting in Colby to take steps towards purchasing ground for a cemetery. This is a matter that should interest all, and we speak for a large attendance.

VD pgs.7-8

On about March 15, 1886, Mr. J.B. Hampton arrived in Colby and checked in at the Farmers Hotel, located where the Murphy Cafe is.

Mr. Hampton said the next morning after his arrival he started to work going down the walk south of where the Lowis Drug Store is located. He said the first thing of interest he saw in Colby was a team tied to a hitch rack hitched to a spring wagon and in the wagon was a dead man.

The dead man turned out to be Charley Cross who had been shot the night before in a poker game. His body had been taken a short distance northwest of Gem and placed on a hillside and revolver placed in his hand. There he was found and brought to Colby. The sheriff at once started an investigation, which led him to Wallace, Kansas, where he arrested two men and brought them to Colby. The two men, Charles Snow and Sawdust Charley, were questioned and turned loose for lack of evidence.

Charley Cross was the first person buried in Beulah cemetery. It was always claimed that the climate in the West was so pure that it was necessary to shoot someone in order to start a cemetery. Later A. L. Clovis, Charley Snow and an unknown person were buried on the lot.

A woman named Hattie Sharett bought this lot and a third of a lot adjoining where she is buried.

Beulah Cemetery

TCC 3/25/1886

The Beulah Cemetery Association has purchased of H.E. Weld **eleven** acres of land situated on the SE corner of section 6, town 8, range 32 about 3/4 mile southeast of Colby and have been busy for several days past, surveying the tract into lots and subdivisions.

One block each has been reserved for the use of members of the I.O.O.F. the G.A.R. the Masonic Order, and for the burial of the poor, three squares have also been reserved for public monuments and a number of lots for ornamental purposes.

The lots are 16 feet square and intended for the burial of eight persons. These lots the corporation have decided to place upon the market for a limited time at \$5.00 per lot. The plan of the association is about as follows, viz; The capital stock is divided into fifty shares of \$5.00 each mounting to \$250.00. This has been subscribed by the incorporators, and will be used in the payment of the grounds and the surveying of the same. After a sufficient number have been sold to reimburse the incorporators for their time and money expended a large percentage of the remaining lots will be set aside for the purpose of improvement of the grounds and retaining the same in its proper condition. The necessity of the case had compelled such a course of procedure and it is to be hoped that our efforts may meet the hearty approval of the people.

A chart of the grounds may be seen at the office of Weld Bros. and a copy of the rules and regulations of the association will be furnished upon application.

Respectfully, W.G. Weld, Pres.

TCC 6/10/1886

As soon as lots enough are taken in Beulah cemetery a neat fence will be put around. All those interested should take lots at once and assist in the improvement.

VD

January 1922

The Schroeder Furniture Company has added a new modern motor hearse to their undertaking equipment. This is a great improvement over the old horse drawn hearse, which as was the custom was driven at a walk no matter how cold the day or how far the procession had to go, with the driver perched on a high seat. People were still very superstitious about how funerals should be conducted and many would not allow the grave to be opened before the day of the burial, no matter how cold or stormy the weather, which often proved to be a hardship on the sexton who dug the grave by hand.

VD

Book 3 p. 31

Apr. 3, 1930. 250 trees arrived from Hays Ks., and were planted in Beulah Cemetery. This will make about 18 acres of trees in the cemetery, 99% of the trees lived and are alive in 1974.

Book 5 pgs. 22-23

1944

June 14-The county wide bond drive is again in full swing. The city offers plan for cemetery care, buy a \$50 bond and the interest will go to take care of your lot.

July 5-A cemetery plan for perpetual care has been approved by the city.

Book 5 pg. 33

1946

April 17-Thursdays night vandals drove a truck into Beulah Cemetery stealing and breaking granite vases..

Board of Directors Have Busy Meeting July, 1948

At a luncheon meeting held Thursday, the board of directors of the Colby Chamber of Commerce decided to contribute one car load of crushed rock to the cemetery committee to help with their improvements of the cemetery. They are in the process of constructing all-weather streets in Beulah cemetery and this would help complete the project.