

How Forgotten Cemetery Became Green Oasis

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

The little cemetery at the top of the hill had been neglected and overlooked for years. Weeds grew tall and debris collected between the stones which were cracked and broken or leaning crazily askew.

The markers bear names such as Ezra and Eliza, Joshua, Nathan, Phoebe, Lydia, Lovilla and Ursula. On some the name is still sharply incised and on others it has been eroded to oblivion.

Still discernible are roses and open prayer books, urns and clasped hands and weeping willow trees carved into the stone.

Some graves are marked by

tall monuments, some by a simple headstone and many have a stone set flat in the ground. Although some mark the graves of men and women whose lives spanned 70 years or more, many are the graves of small children, new-born babies or very young wives.

THE FIRST BURIAL was made in 1837 and the last in 1916. No longer do wives come to place flowers on the grave of a beloved husband or to sit and meditate by the grave of a dead child. Instead, people hurry past and cars whizz by in a steady stream - because this little graveyard is on busy Michigan Avenue just west of Wayne Road. There is a movie theater on one side and a big new shopping center across the road.

The early settlers of Wayne, known in those days as Derby's Corner, chose for their cemetery a peaceful, quiet hilltop that afforded a pleasant view of the surrounding countryside.

It has long since been engulfed by the expanding city - a quiet anachronism in the midst of the hustle and bustle that surround it.

A few years ago Mrs. Mildred Hanchett, city historian, and other members of the community decided that the old "Burial Lot," as it was originally designated, should be preserved and restored as a valuable bit of history. A decorative, antique - style, black wrought iron fence was erected and the area was made neat and tidy.

Jerome Przytup, a landscape architect living in the area, and now a Southfield planning department staff member, designed a two-acre cemetery - park - arboretum. It will include a paved walkway and benches as well as a great many kinds of beautiful ornamental trees.

On Arbor Day, 30 trees were planted. Funds for the trees were donated by the garden club, the Beautification Committee, and the City Historical Commission. Each of the new trees is a different variety and was carefully

selected for its symmetry or artistic form.

Dominating the scene is a tall red oak tree with sturdy, wide-spreading branches. It must have been growing on the hilltop long before the first settlers came to Wayne.

There are also an old silver maple and a large mulberry tree on the west side of the area. Along the eastern edge are some picturesque old Scotch pines, a Norway spruce and some tall junipers. The new trees include both evergreens and shade trees and also numerous smaller flowering trees.

Particularly decorative and appropriate to the cemetery setting are a weeping white birch tree, a weeping flowering cherry and several other weeping trees.

The more summer sun you can exclude from your home, the more efficiently your central air-conditioning system will operate, says the Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Institute.

Proper insulation in roof and walls creates the most effective barrier against the sun, but ARI notes that there are other ways that the homeowner can screen out solar rays.

Plant trees on east, west, and south, and plant plenty of grass and shrubs around windows and glass areas to absorb the heat that will otherwise "bounce" into the house.

Plantings or roof overhangs are helpful over large glass areas, and a light-colored roof will deflect the sun's heat.

Early morning and late afternoon protection is gained when carports, garages, and porches are oriented to east and west.

Other pines and a hemlock have been planted on the west side to create a symmetry and to screen the area on this side. Eventually these groups of evergreens will form a pleasant frame for the scene when it is viewed from Michigan Ave.

Swinging in an arc along the north side are a pin oak, a horse chestnut and some other tall shade trees which serve as a backdrop to terminate the view. The spreading branches will form a canopy to provide shade in summer and also to give a psychological feeling of shelter and protection.

Flowering trees and other

smaller ornamental trees are grouped closer to the walkway where the beauty of their blossoms can be enjoyed at close range.

Each of the 40 kinds of trees in the cemetery will be carefully labeled.

Shoppers can pause to rest a few minutes, businessmen can take a noon-time stroll. School classes and scout groups will be able to absorb some early history and study fine examples of both native and ornamental trees, and all who pass by will enjoy the renewed beauty of this little cemetery that has been given a new lease on life.



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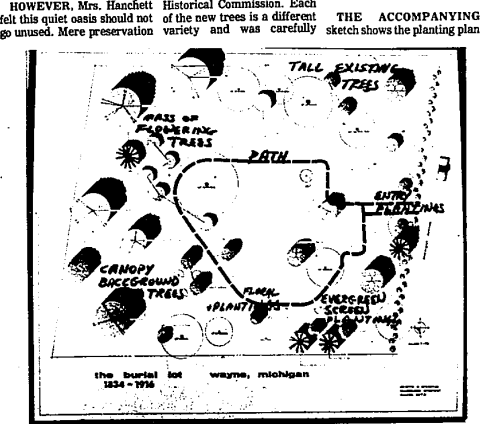


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