



Editor:

The first cemetery used by the city of Leadville, established in 1877, is located at the western end of Elm and Chestnut Streets. This, known as the Leadville City Cemetery and owned by the city, was used until late in 1879, when the Evergreen Cemetery was established. Some of those buried in the old ground were later moved to Evergreen but most still remain where originally buried, unmarked and unlamented.

On May 12, 1879, a Leadville newspaper reported, "The city cemetery is to be taken in charge by a committee from the city fathers, and made over into a respectable burying place for the dead. The number of interments to date are 254." The following article, however, leads one to believe that the City Fathers were derelict in their duties:

At the foot of Chestnut street, a little distance from the Leadville smelting company's works, is an acre plot of ground unfenced, and with the carbonate-like earth thrown up into little heaps. On a closer inspection the stranger will see that many of these carbonate mounds are marked by pieces of boards, slabs and sticks. Two or three have marble slabs, and as many more are marked by pine boards painted in imitation of marble. A Chronicle reporter, in his Sabbath rambles about the suburbs yesterday (May 25, 1879), came upon this barren red clay-colored plot, and found it was the place where the dead of Leadville are buried. There are no flowery lawns, spouting fountains, shady nooks, grassy plats, nor artistically carved marble. The weeping willow, the winding walks, the twining arbor, the rustic chair - there were none of these. In short, there is nothing about the burying place for the dead in Leadville to make a well man desire to die. As the reporter stood in the midst of this dreary city of the carbonate dead, the thought occurred to him that although lain away in this strange place, by strange hands, unknown and unwept, there were those far away whose thoughts must revert to those lonely graves, and are eager for any information of the spot of earth which holds the remains of a brother, husband, father or friend.

In other words, the reporter thought he would find out who had died in Leadville since its discovery two years ago - where they were from and what was their history, and without any fooling he went right to work to do it.

Mr. Harry Talhurst has been the sexton since the 24th of December last. From him the reporter learned that the whole number of interments in the Leadville cemetery, so-called, to date, is two hundred and fifty-one, and none dying in Leadville have been buried at any other place in this part of the country.

The first interment was on the 17th of November, 1877, a little more than eighteen months ago. The body was that of Sullivan Breece, 82 years of age, and to the best information, the first person to die in the present city of Leadville. He was a native of Philadelphia, but had been in the mountains for a number of years. He was a miner by profession, and was known as Captain Breece, after whom the Breece mine, of which his son is now part owner, was named.

From the 17th of November, 1877, the date of Mr. Breece's burial, to the 26th of December, 1878, when the present sexton was placed in charge, there were ninety-one interments. The graves of a considerable number of these, as well as those of a more recent date are unmarked, and probably to all mankind will forever remain unknown. Mr. Talhurst has recently commenced a record of burials, but in but few instances is he able to learn the age or nativity, and in some instances no person can give him the name of the person buried.

So far as could be learned from the rude penciling on the slabs at the head of the graves and from the sexton's book and memory, the following description of the dead in the Leadville cemetery at this date is correct and complete.

The sexton with his record book in hand accompanied the reporter over the graves, pointing out, deciphering and explaining to the fullest of his ability. Among the first burials was George O'Conner, the first City Marshal of Leadville. He came here from Georgetown, but was originally from St. Johns, N. D.. He was shot on the 23rd of April, 1878, while in a quarrel with a man who had been on the police force.

Professor William Roberts died May 8, 1878. He was an assayer by profession and a native of Wales.

The next grave noticed was that of a child who died November 26, 1877. The name painted on the board was Thomas Whistler Anderson, and underneath was the only attempt at poetry in the whole cemetery. The lines ran: Far upon the mountain side / We lay our darling, our little pride / Dear, yes dearer to us was he / Than earth and all its wealth could be.

Michael Hays, father of Mr. Hays, the assayer, died some time in August, 1878, aged about 60.

A. J. Burr, one of the proprietors of the Office saloon, died August 20, 1878, aged 33. Dr. Burr, now of this city, is his brother.

Mira L. Cheever died October 28, 1878, aged 38.

A little grave, surrounded by a neat fence, contained the remains of Lena S. Fluke, daughter of the foreman at the Grant Smelter. She died November 15, 1878, aged 4 years.

Harvey Flowers, 1 year old, died the same day.

A slab contained the name of A. A. Summers, a native of Rhode Island, but it gave no further information.

A little further on and the Sexton stopped by the grave of Clara L. Williams. The name was all that was penciled on the rough pine slab, but the Sexton went on to relate that she was from Utica, New York, and that she was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of that city. And then the reporter, who was reared in the same city, remembered the beautiful Clara Williams, the rich merchant's daughter, as the fashionable belle of the town.

A little further on were the graves of W. H. Webster, of Meegs county, Ohio, and \_\_\_\_\_ Cainy, both of whom were killed in a mine some time last October.

Eda Hawes, daughter of Samuel C. Hawes, now of this city, died November 30, 1878.

On a rough board slab, penciled with a trembling hand, was the following inscription: "Rositta Booco, 20 October, 1878, 6 years, 6 mo. This is the Beloved daughter of H. and Catherine Booco."

John I. Senn, September 8, 1878, was on another slab.

At the head of a sunken grave, giving indication that a medical college was near, was the inscription, James W. Haynes, December 9th, 1878.

The slabs of two little graves were inscribed in French. They told of the death of a little boy and girl belonging to Peter Gai (or Gad).

Thad. Cooper, February 17, 1879, aged 30; James Daly, February 28, 1879; F. G. Smith, February 28, 1879.

August Hoppe, aged 40, late proprietor of the Denver House on Chestnut street. Died 5th day of last March.

Samuel Robinson, February 28; George Strickland, died at Ten Mile in March last; John Warwick, an old man, no dates; A. J. Davis, no dates.

May F. Melvine, 40 years old, from Chicago. A milliner, died about March 1st.

S. B. Hyde died April 13; Amos N. Nathan died April 8; H. W. Dakin, known as Capt. Dakin, was a real estate dealer; Benjamin Nason, a native of Michigan; Hugh Prentice, died March 4, 1879; Katy Miller, of Denver, aged 28, died some time in March last.

W. H. Sargent, a barber, died of consumption. A brother in Denver.

John W. Little died some time in March; Reuben G. Smithers died in March; Willie Owens, a child, died in March; C. McChesney died March 15; Anna Maria Lund; Sophia Gropp, wife of Martin Gropp, died March 9.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ross, found dead in the alley back of the Pioneer saloon, in March last.

W. H. Banks; Edward McAyel died March 29, 1879; Orlando Lampson; William Beers, a miner, died March 16, 1879; Edward G. Minks; D. M. Clemen, died April 6, 1879, aged 42; Samuel J. Evans; John Keating; Hank Pertle died March 15, 1879, aged 33; George Irving.

Charles Hines, killed by John Elkins, recently tried and sentenced to State prison for life.

Charles H. Hatten, of Missouri. Died April 11 last.

Judge W. H. Soerty, late of California, died April 12th, last.

Thomas McGaghan, found dead in the Aztec mine; Thomas Lague; C. W. Lewis, found dead in his cabin, some time in April last; Hugh Kelly.

Michael and Mary Hayes, man and wife. Both buried in one grave.

Arthur H. Tyrrell, printer, died May 1, 1879; David Prond; Patrick Garry; J. McFarland, brought from Ten Mile; Charles Shelby; William P. Roberts; George W. Trout (or Trent), late of Denver; M. Guerrier, an Italian, drowned last month at Twin Lakes.

At this point an undertaker's wagon drove up to an open grave and the Sexton asked to be excused for two minutes. Running across the plot, he helped the grave digger lift a large pine box from the wagon and lower it into a grave. The driver of the dead wagon whipped up his horses and rattled away. The Sexton pulled up the ropes from the coffin, and leaving the grave digger to shovel in the grave he returned to the reporter.

"Yes, I happen to know who that one just put in is. His name is

B. F. Roberts, and he recently came to Leadville from Mackanoy City, Schuylkill county, Pennsylvania. He was a first class engineer by trade, said to be well connected back East. His age was 24, and he is buried at the expense of the county."

Col. W. N. Damerling was penciled at the head of the next grave. The next was John Maryett (?).

J. W. Gillespie came from Boulder. He died April 18, 1879. Young man.

William McGinnis, foreman of a mine and shot by one of the miners; Frank Boyd; Thomas Johnson, aged 40; Dixie Collier; Charles Booker; David Mark, died on the 8th just; John C. Taylor; Henry O'Brian, died April 13, 1879; Charles Ames, from Wisconsin, died April 11, 1879; John Brennan, April 12, 1879; Martin Retzel; \_\_\_\_\_ Hubbs, April 21, 1879; Peter Dooley, April 22, 1879; Mrs. C. H. Baxter, April 22, 1879; William Patterson, April 22, 1879; Mrs. Mary A. Latiemar, April 24, 1879; Mrs. Elizabeth T. Woods, April 24, 1879; Mrs. T. Sullivan, April 24, 1879; Bailey Falkerson, April 24, 1879; Ein. Davis, April 25, 1879; Emma Dawson, April 26, 1879; Mrs. Love, April 27, 1879; Emma Miller, April 27, 1879; Walter Welch, April 29, 1879; Thomas Blanney, May 1, 1879; Lot Davis, May 1, 1879; Wilton Chaffin, May 4, 1879; John Ellis, May 5, 1879.

Charles Huntley, May 5, 1879; Owen Farley, May 6, 1879; Ida Bell Blamey, May 10, 1879; John Shields, the variety actor, May 10, 1879; E. J. Curtis, May 10, 1879; Mrs. L. K. Campbell, May 14, 1879; Lawrence G. Conner, February 14, 1879; Lawrence Haley; L. D. Berry; Alice Jacobs, died in March; Christine F. Sillman, February 20, 1879; \_\_\_\_\_ Hinckley; Dr. X. Chapman of Raymond, Illinois, died May 18, 1879; John W. Lucas, May 18, 1879; Emil Gehring, May 18, 1879; F. Boyd, May 19, 1879; Lawrence Holihan, May 20, 1879; Ola J. Quam, May 21, 1879; Cal. Newman, May 21, 1879.

Vincent Kreig, the first grave digger and undertaker in Leadville, and who buried the first ninety in the cemetery, died February 28, 1879, aged 52 years. He was an undertaker in Denver for many years, and at one time was possessed of considerable wealth.

Bernice E. Campbell died September 30, 1878, aged 8 years; Fred B. Bray, son of E. B. and M. A. Bray, died August 26, 1878, aged 5 years and 10 months; Anson Williams died December 12, 1877.

Dr. D. V. Gates died December 8, 1878. He came to Leadville from Central, this State.

Frank T. Locke, aged 29, died some time last fall; Harry C. Burnham, a child's grave; Mollie Harris, aged 2 years and 8 months; a pine board said "Jesse Dempsey" and another "E. T. Hersey, December 8, 1878"; O. Calvie, aged 52, died November 22, 1878, a native of Italy.

The first name on another board could not be deciphered. The sexton thought it was intended for the name of a woman. The last name was Atchison, and the "age 24, died December 12, 1878" was written plain.

The slab at the head of a full sized grave had the name of A. N. Van Winkle. Thomas Lang, 22 years, was the lead penciling on another board.

Surrounded by a painted picket fence was the grave of Nellie Carpenter, died August 21, 1878, in the 13th year of her age.

Daniel R. Jones died September 4, 1878; William McGee, aged 27, is soon to be taken up and moved to Missouri; J. W. Fisher died June 26, 1878, aged 29 years; Cora Watson, daughter of Mr. Watson, now of this city, died June 19, 1878; John Blatchly died December 26, 1878.

A little pine board at the head of a full sized grave had the simple inscription "Maud King."

On another was written in pencil "R. Essland, died April 18, '78." On the shaved side of a pine limb, driven down at the head of a grave, was penciled, in a woman's hand, "James Elwood, Died April 8, '78. A native of Massachusetts."

"Here," said the sexton, "is the grave of poor Belle Morrow. She was about 22 years old, and everybody says she was a pretty girl. She came to Leadville from Golden and was employed as a waiter girl in the Grand hotel. She died on the 20th day of December last of child birth, and the babe was buried with her in the same coffin."

Emma Weatherby died last October. She was about 11 years old. "Conrad Coughman, aged 2 years" stood at the head of a little grave.

"Here is a grave, the contents of which is unknown to every human being but myself," said the sexton, stopping by the side of a high carbonate mound. "Those who brought the body did not know the name nor where it was placed. It is the grave of a good honest miner named Gathergood. He came here from Monroville, Ohio, and I do not suppose his friends have ever heard of his death. He died up in his cabin some time last February."

The pine board at the next grave said "Little Stranger." "The little coffin," said the Sexton, "was brought to me by a stranger. He asked me to bury it, and then hurried away without leaving his name or address. So I call it the grave of the little stranger."

The first grave dug by the present Sexton was that of Mr. C. C. Burt, who died on the 18th of last December, aged 38. The remains by the side of his brother A. J. Burt are surrounded by a neat fence.

William Tobin, aged 25, was a clerk in one of the Leadville stores. He died the early part of the winter.

Julia Elizabeth, daughter of Jerry Shea, died January 2, '79, aged 4 years and 8 months; Garrett B. Moore, died December 28, '78; Daniel Snow died December 30, '78; Josie Morgan, died January 3, '79; Jessie Downey, died December 30, '78; Magdaline Bailey, died January 2, '79; Duncan McKay, a native of Glasgow, Scotland, died January 9, '79, aged about 33 years; Elisha Mogle died January 17, '79, aged 28; Mary Louk, a native of Arkansas, died January 12, '79, aged 40; Charles Hahn, died on the 15th of last January, aged 46.

Richard Woodley, native of England, died on the 17th of last January, aged 81. He was a practical miner.

A. W. Bergfelt died on the 10th of last January and was buried by the Odd Fellows; Albert A. Hayman died January 13, 1879; Hiram E. Ross died January 4, 1879, aged 6 years and 6 months, a son of P. S. Ross, now of this city; Andrew Bruen died January 20, 1879, aged 28; M. Nicholson died January 20, 1878, aged 33; Charles D. Stuchell died January 21, 1879, aged 34, came here from Sunshine and was buried by the Odd Fellows.

Thomas Heley, unknown, buried by the county; Walter K. Diamond, a native of Texas. Friends in the South said to be very wealthy. He was buried by the county. Michael Keegan was a teamster, died February 1, 1879. Benjamin F. Brandon committed suicide by shooting himself through the head on the first day of February last, and was buried by the F. and A. M.s. L. D. Gregory, stranger, died February 1, 1879. Thomas H. Conklin, unknown, no date of burial.

Thomas Mahony died February 7, 1879; Henry Dumars died February 4, 1879; John Fay, no dates; Morris H. Allen died February 19, 1879, aged 36; Willie J. Hill, February 12, 1879; James McAnney February 16, 1879; James P. Hard January 17, 1879; Thomas Abraham, native of Wales, died February 28, 1879, aged 43; John Donahue, found dead in his cabin up Stray' Horse Gulch, February 20, 1879.

David J. Davis, native of Wales, died February 25, 1879, aged 46; Josephine Wilhelm, February 14, 1879; Eli Lawson, May 21, 1879; Frank Smith, Detroit, Michigan; Mrs. F. Stern died at Kokomo, May 22, 1879; Michael Cuddehey, killed in a mine May 23, 1879. This completes the list of all persons buried at Leadville whose identity is now in any wise known.

The sexton, Mr. Harry Talhurst, is constantly on the ground and renders every assistance in his power to friends in quest of the graves of dead relatives. He is also doing much to relieve the spot of its cold, barren and uncivilized appearance. He needs the aid of the city in providing fencing and in the removal of the heaps of dirt and rocks thrown up in opening graves. The Aldermen have passed a resolution to fence, etc., but they execute slowly. In the meantime cattle are nightly running over the graves, causing the Sexton much extra labor and annoyance.

The expense of burying a person in Leadville is light in comparison with other large cities. In New York the cost of the poorest grave, in the most unfashionable cemetery, is twenty-five dollars. This expense may be lessened somewhat by six or seven going into a grave together, one on top of the other. This is now done to a very great extent, even in Greenwood. The expense for a chance in a grave, say with six other fellows, is from ten to fifteen dollars, besides the grave digger's fee for letting you in. In Philadelphia and Boston the cost is said to be about fifteen per cent off from New York prices. Here in Leadville a tired carbonate hunter can have a whole grave, all nice and dry, all to himself, for nothing. The only expense being the seven dollars to the grave digger. Nor are the undertakers' charges high in Leadville as compared with the old cities on either the Eastern or Western frontiers. It has come to be a terrible ordeal for a man in moderate circumstances to have a funeral to pay for on the Atlantic frontier. Very often a poor man has to sell his house and lot, and sometimes all his furniture, in order to give his wife's brother or second cousin a respectable funeral.

Professional mourners, well dressed, now charge from five to ten dollars a funeral besides carriage hire. In Leadville, a first rate funeral, good enough for any body, can be had for twenty-five dollars: grave, stained box, dead wagon and all. As a rule, a good, steady, honest prospector, with wealthy and respectable relations far away, gets buried for nothing. A large number of the unknown graves in the Leadville cemetery were filled at the expense of the county. A considerable number are buried by the Masonic and Odd Fellow lodges now flourishing in this city.

It may not be out of place in this connection to call the attention of the city and county authorities to the loose and irregular manner in which the dead of the city are disposed of. A death certificate or a burial permit has never been heard of. The sexton buries all who come and no questions are asked. A wicked person having a friend to dispose of could split open his head some night, box him up and take him to the city cemetery, pay for the digging of a grave, and both the body and murder would be buried from all the world, probably, for all time to come. The worthy Sexton unsuspectingly gives an instance of this kind of business in the case of the "little stranger," noted above. The system of cheap and quick burials is certainly commendable, but that a little more care should be taken as to who is buried and how they came to die, no one who will take the trouble to investigate can or will deny.

The publication of the names of nearly everybody buried in Leadville is perhaps the most forcible and convincing refutation of slanders about the fearful mortality of this city.



The appearance of the Leadville City Cemetery area  
in 1985.

While the preceeding article, with its endless list of names and dates, may seem a bit dreary, let us keep in mind that it is the only surviving record of some of the people buried in Leadville's original cemetery. Although most burials were not recorded prior to the May 26, 1879, newspaper coverage and an equal or greater number were not recorded after that date, we do have these two hundred-plus names to preserve for future generations of historians and genealogists.

In August of 1880, parties living in the neighborhood of the City Cemetery were complaining about the neglected and unsanitary condition of the graves. That summer, the railroad had constructed its roadbed across a number of graves. From Evergreen Cemetery records we know that approximately seventy-three residents of the Leadville City Cemetery, whether listed in the Chronicle article or not, were eventually moved to Evergreen. Those remaining behind have had streets laid over some of them; others were disturbed when utility pipes were buried; and all have been forgotten.

Other cemeteries and lone gravesites in the immediate area of Leadville are less apt to be overrun by encroaching civilization. A small cemetery near Malta is hidden among trees and on private property. Another, located on Fryer Hill, is forever lost and possibly even beneath a mine dump. Single graves are scattered about Lake County in obscure and out-of-the-way spots. It could be said that the Leadville City Cemetery has already suffered unintentional desecration and faces a bleak future. These nameless pioneer men, women and children deserve our attention. Now.

Editor