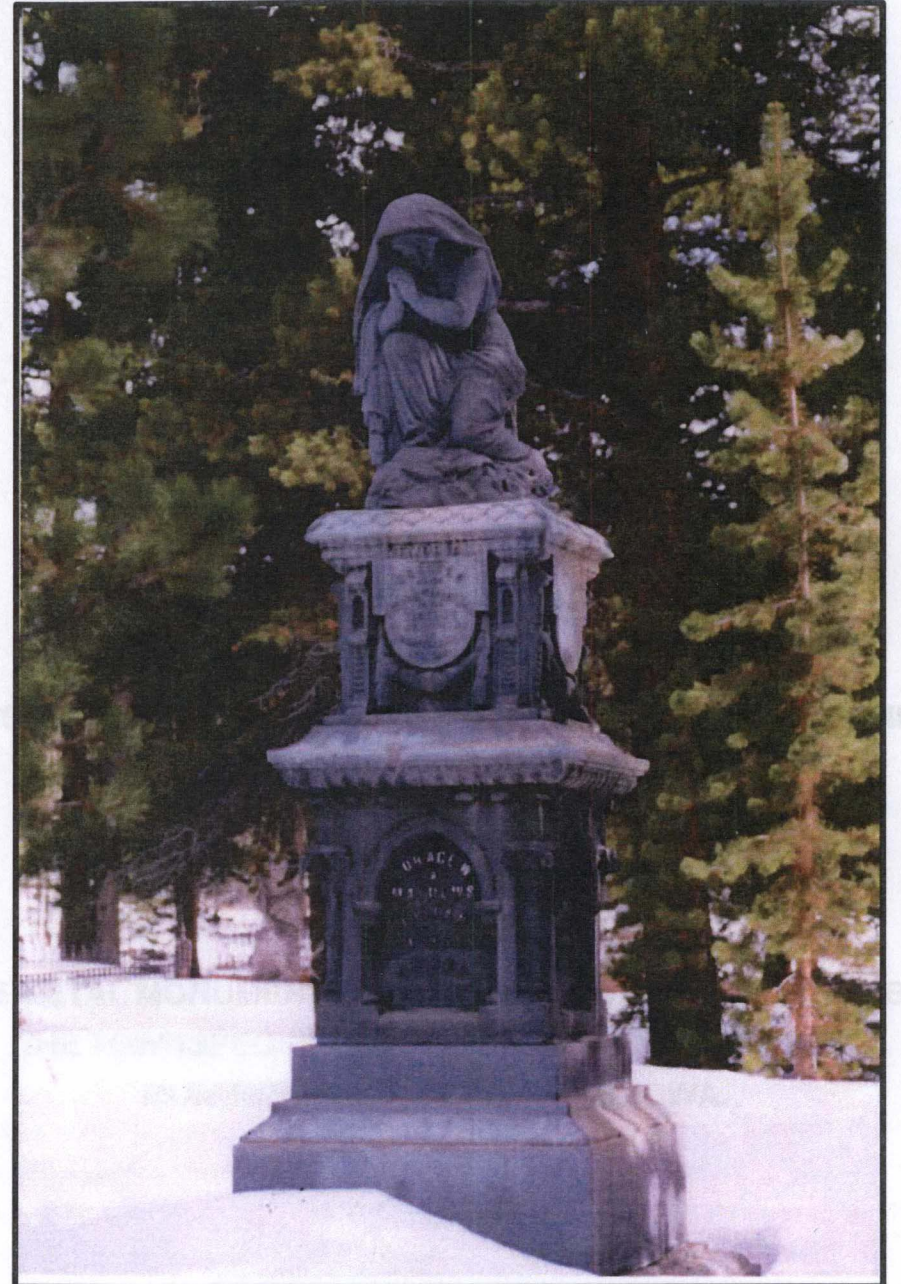


EVERGREEN CEMETERY



WALKING TOUR

EVERGREEN CEMETERY WALK

Est. 1879

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Janice Fox Historical Advisor

EVERGREEN CEMETERY

1879 TO PRESENT

Evergreen is the second cemetery founded in Leadville. It is still an active cemetery since some of the organizations that purchased large plots in 1879 are still functioning. The cemetery is divided into sections where members of various organizations and family members are buried.

According to a 1982 Leadville Historical Research Cooperative summary, the original Leadville Cemetery was established in November of 1877 at the northwest intersection of McWethy Drive and Highway 24. This acre plot was unfenced and the earth was tossed into mounds marked by sticks, stone slabs and other found materials. Cattle ran loose in the area and the Rio Grande Railroad laid track over some of the graves in 1880. The cemetery's first sexton, Vincent Kreig, kept no records. The second Sexton, Harry Talhurst, began keeping records in 1879. A listing of persons known to be interred in the Original Cemetery is available at Lake County Public Library. Many of the graves were later moved to the Evergreen Cemetery.

The land for the Evergreen Cemetery was purchased by the Evergreen Cemetery Association in 1879. A news item in the local paper announced: *"Those contemplating an early journey to the next world can purchase a stopping place in the Evergreen Cemetery today November 10th, 1879."*

The Cemetery Association thought their organization had clear title to this property; however, the land was under litigation along with adjoining plots under a local ordinance that made land with certain assay values available for placer mining.

In December of 1880, the Union Veterans Hospital was opened under the auspices of the Ladies Auxiliary Society. This hospital was located within a 35 acre sector to the north but containing the cemetery grounds. At the City's annual Washington's birthday celebration A.P. Curry, commander of the Leadville military, read a telegram from Washington, D.C. stating that the U.S. Senate had passed a bill ceding the acreage to the Veterans Association. After some legal maneuvers to settle the placer battles, land for the cemetery was deeded back to the Cemetery Association by the Veterans Association. George Pelter was appointed sexton by the City Council and record keeping improved since Mr. Pelter was also elected coroner and a local undertaker.

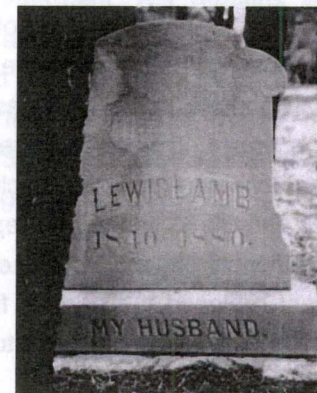
While the city had its share of homeless and destitute from day one, after

the panic of 1884 the number of homeless, unemployed and poverty stricken increased incrementally. The "Free Sections" of the cemetery grew. Two sections of the cemetery map are labeled Protestant Free and Catholic Free. These sections were reserved for those too poor to pay the \$15 cost of a grave. Their interments were handled through a designated mortician. Attempts were made to bury the deceased among those of their own religion but the graves bore no markers.

Families that could afford to buy expensive headstones and fences marked their loss especially on "Decoration Day." This holiday originated to memorialize war veterans and was a time in Leadville for units of the military, fraternal organizations and public officials to don their uniforms and fraternal regalia. They would line up in front of the Court House and march from the intersection of Harrison Avenue and 6th Street to the bandstand at Evergreen Cemetery. The *"History of Leadville and Lake County"* by Don and Jean Griswold details the speeches, grave decorations and parade participants for Decoration Day celebrations and for the funerals of the many famous people buried here.

Among the famous who fought for the South in the Civil war was John B. "Texas Jack" Omohundro, a co-founder of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and U.S. Indian Scout. Charles Vivian, credited with founding the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, was buried here in 1880 but his grave was neglected. On April 16, 1889, two officers of the Denver Elks Lodge and the editor of the Elks newspaper arrived in Leadville, disinterred the body, and removed the remains to the Elks Rest in Boston, Massachusetts. Vivian was never actually a member of the order he founded.

As you read grave stones throughout Evergreen, note the sentiments of the mourners. The oldest marker is in the Old Catholic section and dates to 1879.



NOTABLE RESIDENTS



JOHN B. (TEXAS JACK) OMOHUNDRO, 1846-1880. Born in Virginia, Texas Jack served as a scout for General J.E.B. Stuart of the Confederate Cavalry during the Civil War. He came west at the age of 19 to be a cowboy and plains man. He led Pawnee on summer hunts and was a wilderness guide for the British Earl of Dun Raven. In 1872, with his friend Wm. F. Cody, he gained national fame by co-founding America's first Wild West Show. Later he performed on the stage of his friend H.A.W. Tabor at the Leadville Tabor Theater. Jack and his wife, celebrated danseuse Giuseppina Moriacchi, resided in Leadville where he died of pneumonia at age 33. A headstone donated by "Buffalo Bill" Cody marks his grave site in Leadville's Evergreen (Protestant) Cemetery. Texas Jack was posthumously inducted into the Oklahoma City National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1964. He is prominently featured in the Wm. Cody Museum in Cody, Wyoming. Visit <http://texasjack.org> for more information.



MARSHAL GEORGE O'CONNOR was the first lawman killed in Leadville in the line of duty. On April 25, 1878, O'Connor, who held the job of town marshal less than a month, was shot by James Bloodworth, a subordinate whom he intended to fire. The shooter got away on O'Connor's horse and was never found. The original headstone disintegrated over time and became unreadable. That stone was replaced in May 2000 during a public ceremony that included the playing of taps and a 21 gun salute by the Leadville City Police Department. The new monument was purchased with donations from private citizens and the City of Leadville. The City Street Department replaced the original fence and prepared the plot for the new stone. This grave will be tended in perpetuity by the Leadville City Police Department.

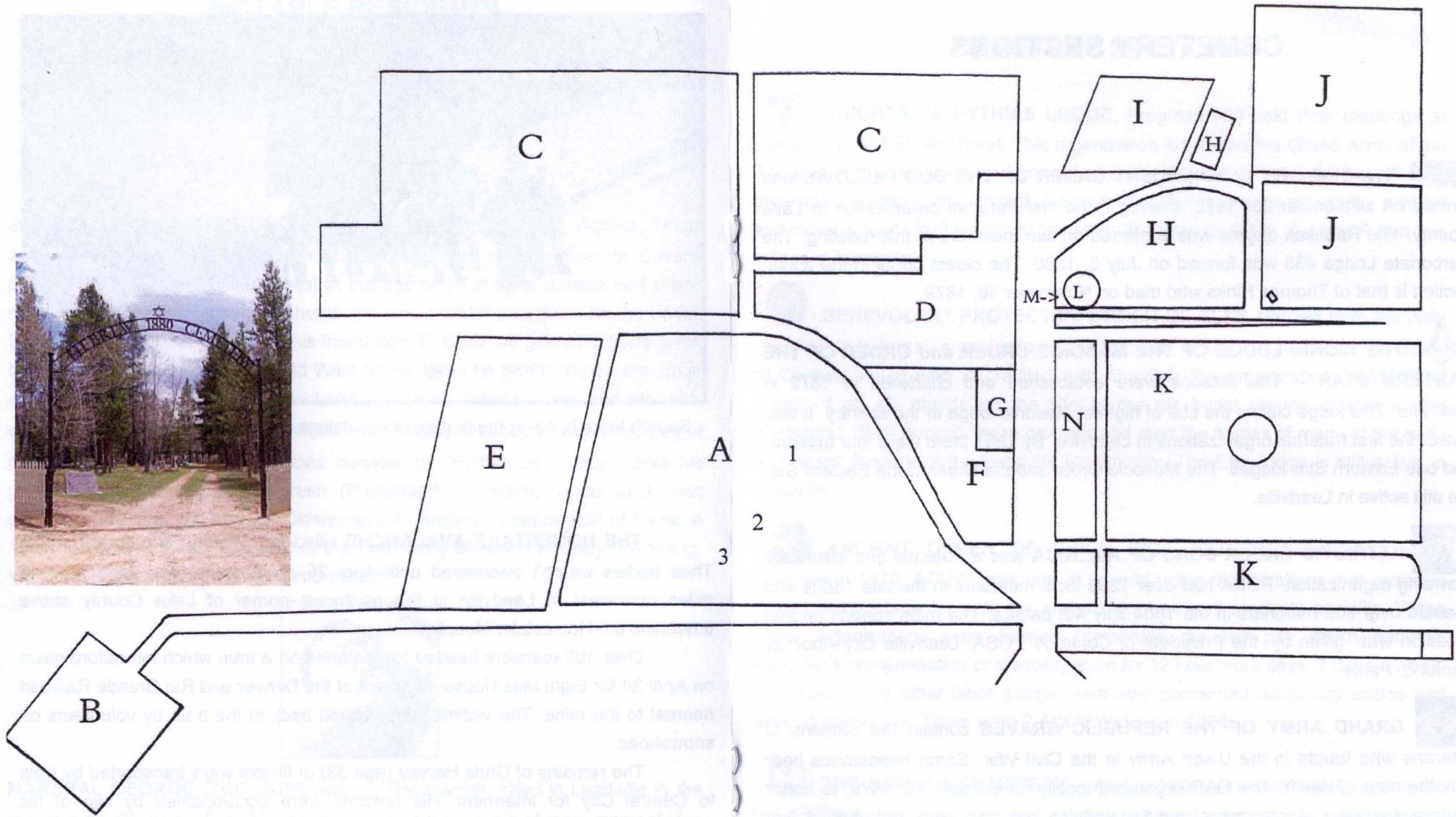
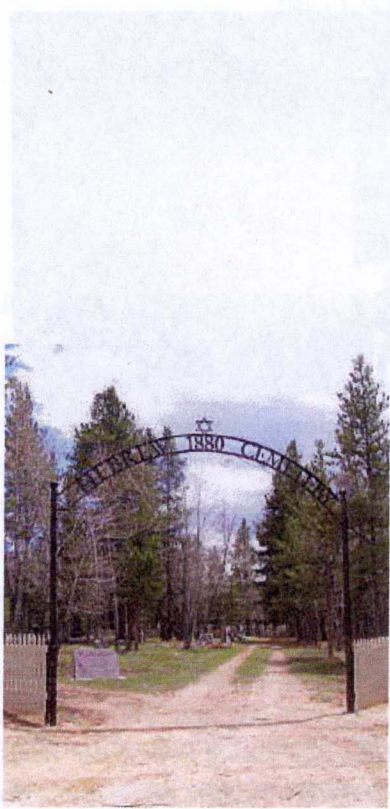


Search team bringing the bodies of the victims down from the Homestake Mine.

THE HOMESTAKE AVALANCHE killed ten miners February 22, 1885. Their bodies weren't discovered until April 25. Homestake Mine is located 15 miles northwest of Leadville in the northwest corner of Lake County above timberline on Homestake Mountain.

Over 100 rescuers headed for the mine on a train which left before dawn on April 24 for Eight Mile House, the point of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad nearest to the mine. The victims were carried back to the train by volunteers on snowshoes.

The remains of Chris Harvey (age 33) of Illinois were transported by train to Central City for interment. His remains were accompanied by two of his brothers, James H. and William. The remains of James Burns (age 25) were accompanied back to San Francisco by his brother Edward. Horace (age 28) and Josiah (age 23) Mathews of Seaport, Maine, Sylvester (age 27) and Mortin (age 25) Borden of Nova Scotia, Charles Richards (age 32) of Nova Scotia, and John Locke (age 26) of England are interred at the Homestake Memorial site.



A. Protestant Section

- 1. Homestake Snowslide Site
- 2. George O'Connor Site
- 3. "Texas Jack" Omohundro Site

B. Hebrew Cemetery Section

C. Protestant Free and Catholic Free Sections

D. Old Catholic Section

E. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Section

F. Masonic Section

G. Patriotic Order of Sons of America Section

H. Grand Army of the Republic Section

I. Knights of Pythias Section

J. Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Section and bronze elk statue


K. Ancient Order of Union Workmen Section


L. Band Stand


M. Mausoleum


N. McWethy Memorial and Veterans Memorial

CEMETERY SECTIONS


 **THE ORO CITY INDEPENDENT ORDER OF THE ODD FELLOWS** was formed on September 28, 1872, making it the first fraternal organization in Lake County. The Rebekah degree was conferred on two members at this meeting. The Carbonate Lodge #35 was formed on July 3, 1880. The oldest burial in the IOOF section is that of Thomas Hinks who died on November 16, 1879.


 **THE ICONIC LODGE OF THE MASONIC ORDER and ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR** - The Masons were established and chartered in 1879 in Leadville. This lodge claims the title of highest Masonic lodge in the country. It was one of the first fraternal organizations in Leadville. By 1887 there were four Masonic and one Eastern Star lodges. The Masonic Order and the Order of the Eastern Star are still active in Leadville.


 **PATRIOTIC ORDER SONS OF AMERICA** was a fraternal and insurance providing organization. POSA had over 1200 local members in the late 1880s and boasted over 300 marchers in the 1884 July 4th parade. The main speech on that occasion was given by the President of Colorado POSA, Leadville City Attorney Daniel E. Parks.


 **GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC GRAVES** contain the remains of veterans who fought in the Union Army in the Civil War. Some headstones bear only the date of death. The GAR organized locally on October 15, 1879, to honor General Francis L. Vinton who lived in Leadville and died here that year. A first order of business by the new GAR Post was to issue an invitation to President Ulysses S. Grant to visit Leadville. President Grant arrived on the first train into Leadville on July 22, 1880.

CEMETERY SECTIONS

 **KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS LODGE**, Progress #20 held their meetings at Castle Hall, 123 E. 8th Street. This organization antedated the Grand Army of the Republic and was founded on principles of high morality, friendship, charity, and benevolence among all mankind. A primary function was to help heal the political and moral wounds that remained from the Civil War. In 1887, the K of P had two lodges in Leadville.

 **BENEVOLENT PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS** evolved from the Jolly Corks. This fraternal organization was chartered in 1881, a year after the death of Charles Vivian who is credited with founding the organization. A life-sized statue of an elk stands on the site of the elk burial ground closest to the bandstand. Stroll through these grounds and read the names of many of the early and recent leaders of the Leadville Community. The Elks lodge is still active in Leadville.


 **ANCIENT ORDER OF UNION WORKMEN** established lodges in Leadville in 1879. AOUW was one of several union organizations that provided insurance coverage for sickness and accident as well as death benefits. When these organizations were formed companies did not pay death benefits, workman's compensation or disability even for 12 hour work days, 7 days a week. The AOUW and other labor groups were also concerned about pay scales and working conditions. There were 2 AOUW lodges in 1888.

 **THE HEBREW CEMETERY** - As Leadville grew explosively during the late 1870s it quickly realized and satisfied a need for ample interment acreage. The Jewish community first required space with the passing of Gustave "Fred" Jelenko during June of 1879. He was settled into the southwest corner of the newly established Evergreen Cemetery by the following January, 1880, (he may first have been buried in and then moved from Kokomo on nearby Fremont Pass) at which time title to about 101,000 square feet of that southwest corner had been transferred to the Hebrew Benevolent Association to hold the mortal remains of the pioneer Jews of Leadville. For more information about the Hebrew Cemetery please visit <http://www.jewishleadville.org/cemeteryhistory.html>

A **BANDSTAND** was used on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and for major funerals, often with music provided by bagpipers and bands associated with various fraternal organizations. The original stand was usually draped in bunting and those who attended celebrations and services in Evergreen sat on the lawn, listening to the music and speeches and eating box lunches. This bandstand is similar to the original.

THE RED MAUSOLEUM contains the coffins of the Telfer family, including a hermetically sealed glass topped coffin holding the remains of Spanish American War veteran John Telfer. At one time the mausoleum was open to the public. Later the entryway was cemented because of vandals and young thrill-seekers. The mausoleum is the only structure of its kind in either local cemetery.



 **Veterans Memorial** was erected by the Lake County High School Class of 1963 who contributed the granite monument in memory of their classmate and Congressional Medal of Honor winner, Edgar McWethy of the U.S. Army Corps. McWethy was decorated posthumously for acts of bravery above and beyond the call of duty in the Vietnam War.

A larger marker lists the names of Lake County servicemen who died in the line of duty or as a result of war wounds in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars stage an annual memorial service at these monuments on Veterans Day.



Evergreen Cemetery gate on Decoration Day 1907.

Please respect the spirit of this cemetery and its permanent residents by learning about our history while leaving no sign of your visit.

Historical information came from "*History of Leadville and Lake County*" published by the Colorado Historical Society in cooperation with the University Press of Colorado in 1996. The authors, Don and Jean Griswold, were local residents, highly respected historians and public school teachers.

The Homestake Mine Horror, a personal recollection of Samuel Arnold, was written in 1885 and is available for public view in the Colorado Mountain History Collection of Lake County Public Library.

Cemetery records for 1879-1980 complete with listings, section maps and grave locations are available on: www.lakecountypubliclibrary.org

EDGAR MCWETHY

1944-1967



2007 MEMORIAL FOR ALL U.S. ARMED FORCES



LAKE COUNTY VETERANS KILLED IN ACTION

