

## History of Greenhill Cemetery

During the early days of Muskogee the City Cemetery was located at the corner of Sixth Street and Martin Luther King Blvd., in the parking lot directly across the street (West) from the old Baptist Hospital. It was known as the Muskogee Burial Association Cemetery. In the latter part of the 1890 the City leaders began to see the need for a larger cemetery. There was a parcel of land available at the Northeast corner of York and North Street. Eighty acres of this land belonged to the Creek Nation and was purchased by the City of Muskogee for \$1639.00 dollars. Since that time some civic minded businessmen of the area have donated the rest of the land, which is about 160 acres. As best we know the men who donated the land were William S. Murphy, James A. Patterson, Captain F.B. Severs, Clarence W. Turner and Samuel Sondheimer, all of these men are buried here in the cemetery. In 1901 this parcel of land became the City Cemetery, known as Greenhill Cemetery. There were some burials on this property prior to it becoming the city cemetery.

In 1904 all the bodies was removed from the old cemetery and buried at Greenhill. It's not clear exactly how many bodies were moved but Chapman and Johnson were the low bidders, and moved the bodies for \$1819.50. As you enter the front gate of Greenhill Cemetery, immediately to the right, is the Catholic section, known as the St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery. In 1907 the Catholic Church purchased 5.2 acres for this purpose. The purchase price was \$105.00. Straight on back, in the Southeast corner of the cemetery, is the Jewish section of the cemetery, which is known as Beth Ahaba Jewish Cemetery. It is about the same size as the Catholic section, purchased also in 1907, but purchase price is not available. On the back of the cemetery is the old county burial grounds. No records of burials were kept at that time. Greenhill Cemetery is a perpetual care cemetery, 25% of every lot sold, is put into a fund for the perpetual care of the cemetery.

At the present time about 120 acres of the cemetery has been plotted and is being maintained, with 40 acres to be developed later. There are about 60,000 burials in the cemetery at the present time, according to a count made by the local Historical Society. The oldest being Lizzie Nevins who died in 1867. Lizzie is believed to be a part of the Nevins family which ran the ferry boat across the Arkansas River from about where the City Water Plant is today, to a point between the Verdigris and the Grand River. There is a great deal of history here in the cemetery. There is an obelisk for the first Governor of Oklahoma, C.N. Haskell was Governor from 1907-1911. The first and thrice mayor of Muskogee was a man by the name of Patrick Joseph Byrne, born in Ireland in 1843. Alex Posey, outstanding news paper man and poet laureate of the Creek Indians. Alice Robertson, Missionary teacher and the first U.S. Congresswoman from Oklahoma. She was a person that was always thinking of others. If you have lived very long in Muskogee, a walk through the cemetery will bring back memories of old friends and neighbors.

City of Muskogee website: <http://www.cityofmuskogee.com/shell.asp?pg=15>