

THE McDOWELL CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

In the year 1853, Major Thomas C. McDowell, a banker of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, came to Dwight before the railroad was put through, and bought over one thousand acres of land from the government, most of which if not all, was in Nevada Township, Livingston County, Illinois. He sold some of this land before his death and willed the remainder, together with other property, to his nieces and nephews. He built the first large house and barn in this community, hauling the material from Morris, the nearest railroad, twenty miles away. He employed a large number of men to run his land, and had his nephew, Archibald B. Dunlap, as his foreman. His sister, Miss Margaretta McDowell, formerly principal of a Ladies' Seminary in Pennsylvania, kept house for him from 1855 or 1856 until her death March 19, 1859. Before her death she requested that she be buried in a specified spot on a certain pretty knoll near the creek on her brother Thomas' land. Her wishes were carried out.

This was the origin of the present McDowell Cemetery. Afterwards other members of the family were buried there, and other people asked permission to bury there and were allowed to do so gratis wherever they wished. Major McDowell died December 2, 1862, and was buried in his own cemetery. This land was included in the quarter section of land bequeathed to his niece, Mrs. Margaret Pringle. In 1868 or 1869, Mrs. Pringle sold her land, but reserved the plat of ground containing the cemetery, which she sold to the Township of Nevada. This township had no personal interest in the cemetery, and it was very much neglected; this caused Archibald B. Dunlap, the nephew of Thomas and Margaretta McDowell, so much anxiety and distress of mind that before his death, August 4, 1883, he purchased the quarter section formerly owned by his uncle and later by his sister, and

purchased from Nevada Township the plat of ground containing the cemetery, and surveyed, and staked out and arranged to deed nineteen and 35-100 acres, including the two and 23-100 acres contained in the original cemetery, to The McDowell Cemetery Association, which he had organized and had incorporated May 7, 1883, but he died before the deed was executed. His widow and children carried out his plans and intentions, and deeded this land to this Association as soon after his death as court proceedings would permit.

As above stated, the organization of this Association was effected May 7, 1883, and the following Board of Directors was named in the Articles of Incorporation: A.B. Dunlop, Daniel Gallup, and John Stewart. The signers of the certificate for the organization and incorporation of this Association were: A.B. Dunlop, John Buffham, Hugh Thompson, A. Marshall, E.F. Bell, C.T. Ingraham, Daniel Gallup, and John Stewart.

In 1894 or 1895 all the papers, by-laws, books, etc. of this Association were lost in the fire which destroyed the home of the secretary, Ben Bell, in Dwight, Illinois.

Among those to whom great credit and honor is due for the maintenance of this Association since its organization and incorporation and for the preservation, care and improvement of the cemetery during the succeeding years should be expressly mentioned: John McConnell, ~~Sr.~~, ^{E.} W.W. Thompson, John Buffham, C.T. Ingraham, John Gemmill, A. Bard Dunlop, Jr., A. Marshall, and E.H. Kneeland. Although a member of this Association only four years previous to her death on February 2, 1914, Mrs. Eliza A. Dunlop, widow of Archibald B. Dunlop, Sr., always felt a vital interest in, care and responsibility for this cemetery and this Association, and ever exerted her efforts and influence to carry out and execute the plans, purposes and intentions of her husband in the maintenance, protection and improvement of this cemetery for all time to come through this Association.

The foregoing paragraphs are taken from the historical sketch which appears in the booklet containing the constitution and by-laws of The McDowell Cemetery Association. It becomes evident to even the most casual reader that not only the cemetery association, but also the entire community is deeply indebted to the Dunlop family. Not only did they donate the land for the present burying ground and the field which lies directly west and south of it, but Mrs. Dunlop and all three of her daughters have been members of the association, two of the latter serving for nearly half a century as secretary of the group, while C.T. Ingraham, one of the signers of the certificate of incorporation, a gentleman known affectionately to the neighbors as "Uncle Charlie," was a brother of Mrs. Dunlop.

When Miss Mary E. Dunlop became secretary of the association, she devoted a great deal of time and effort to the reconstruction of the data that had been lost when the association's records were destroyed in the fire that ~~dest~~ burned the Bell home. She interviewed families in the community whose loved ones are buried in McDowell and corresponded with others who had moved away until, with the help of the president, Mr. W.E. Thompson, she was able to rewrite the records quite fully, a service for which the association is very grateful. After she left Dwight, her sister, Miss Jennie M. Dunlop, was elected secretary in 1916, a post which she filled most ably until 1950, her neat records drawing the admiration of all who have occasion to study the secretary's book.

The men who incorporated the cemetery were among the first to serve as its officers and directors. The minutes show that for years W.E. Thompson was the president, while John McConnell, ~~Sp.~~, was the treasurer. Soon members of other families from the community joined the association and later sons and daughters of the first members began to take part in the affairs of the organization. Among the first of ^{the} ~~the~~ latter group to

to be mentioned should be James McConnell, who, when his father refused to serve longer as treasurer, was elected to that office in 1927, a post which he is still faithfully filling; for the past two years he has also served as caretaker of the grounds, giving freely of his time and labor. His brother, John A. McConnell, is a director of the association, a position he has held for many years. The Misses M. Mabel and Lidella Thompson and Mr. and Mrs. Louis S. Lauritzen, daughters and son-in-law of W. E. Thompson, have long been members of the association, Mr. Lauritzen now serving his third term as president. Mrs. T. W. Davis and Mrs. A. B. Terwillegar, daughters of E. H. Kneeland, have also been identified with the group.

Now some of the third generation of these families are joining the organization. John R. McConnell and Alan J. McConnell, the latter a director, are grandsons of the first John McConnell and John Gemmill, while Verna Terwillegar, the secretary, is a granddaughter of E. H. Kneeland.

Members of other well known families in the community have served or are still serving the association. Among those deserving especial mention are E. O. Welch, president for many years, his membership, following his death, being transferred to his daughter Edith; John Spencer, who acted as caretaker for several years, superintending much of the planting that is now becoming so beautiful; S. H. and A. A. Boyer, the latter president for several terms; ^{and Mrs. A. A. Boyer} N. M. Hoffman, a director for many years; Miss Anna Houck and her brother Russell, the latter president a few terms; and Christ N. Smith, a director, who served for years as caretaker, making the grounds notable for neatness and beauty.

Among the others who might be mentioned are Irwin H. Baker, George Beiswanger, Mr. and Mrs. James Thompson, F. M. Davis and his son T. W. Davis, Archie Spencer, Mrs. Nora Kime, Andrew Skow, Karl Mickelsen, Frank Miller, and A. J. Smith.

Years ago the neighbors used to gather once or twice a ~~y~~ summer with their scythes and a horse-drawn mower or two to clean the cemetery grounds and set the place in order. Today the entire plat is as carefully lawn mowed as any park and the pleasant little knoll, chosen so many years ago by Miss McDowell as her final resting place, stands today a neat, quiet little country burying ground where one by one old friends and neighbors gather in . The members of the association take pride in the appearance of the grounds and are lovingly dedicated to its care and maintenance.