A HISTORY OF BEECH GROVE CEMETERY

by Dolores Black Rench

The rich heritage of Beech Grove cemetery has often gone unrecognized and has been allowed to sleep quietly as the city of Muncie grew up around it. This hallowed area contains more history of Muncie and Delaware County than any other area. The rich and poor, famous and ordinary, and those whose dreams were fulfilled or shattered with war, all lay side by side here.

Far larger than most cemeteries Beech Grove contains a pioneer section, an ornate Gas Boom section, a Jewish section, a Catholic section, several areas for the poor and thousands of military burials. The 151-year-old cemetery contains many ornate family mausoleums and monuments of Muncie's early industrialists, and there are also modern sections, which include a 150-crypt mausoleum and land for burial sites for many years to come. Municipally owned, it is operated by a superintendent and board of trustees appointed by the city council. It was the only significant cemetery in Muncie for nearly a century and covers 100 acres with approximately 41,000 burials.

The cemetery's site along the White River must have been a beautiful spot, because the first white settlers found that the Delaware Indians had chosen a portion of it for a sacred burial ground. Large clumps of Beech trees along the river bank lent it the name Beech Knoll. Later, when the small village known as Munceytown was formed, picnics and gatherings were held there as described in the History of Delaware County, Indiana, by Frank Haimbaugh quoting *Reminiscences* of Nathaniel Fuller Ethell, 1913 newspaper publisher.

> **Political rallies were made attractive with barbecues. An ox was killed and roasted near long strings of tables in the grove west of town---now part of Beech Grove cemetery. The women of town and country supplied the pies and cakes, bread, pickles and other comestibles, and waited upon the hungry partisans gathered thither from all parts of the county. The country people came in delegations, with banners, fife and drum, cheers and voicings of malediction upon the opposite party.**

Minus Turner, a brick maker and builder, settled in Munseytown in 1829. He described the early graveyards as follows:

> **The first burying-ground was located in the east part of the town, on the north side of east main street, east of Beacon street. This was not a private burying ground but a public one. The next burying place was located on the north side of Adams street, west of Franklin, running back to the alley, containing about the equivalent of two town lots. The graves were on Adams street, none on Jackson. It was cut out in the woods and was therefore surrounded by timber. I had my wife and two children buried here. They, as well as most of the others, were taken up and moved to the new cemetery. The piece of ground located on the river, in the new cemetery, was either purchased or donated by a man named Loutz, and the two additions were afterwards located.[1]**

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[1] Thomas B. Helm, History of Delaware County Indiana, Kingman 1881, p. 32.

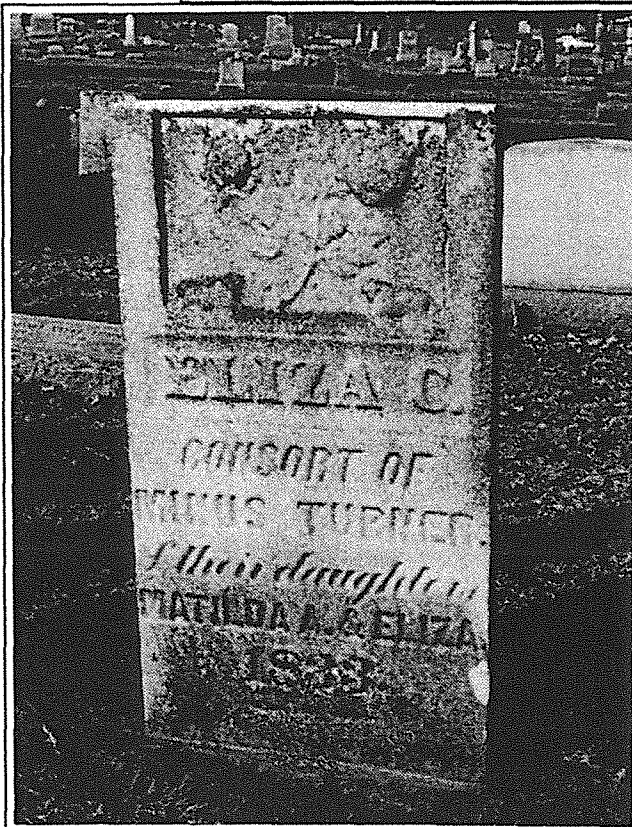Minus Turner. Helm, History of Delaware County, p. 134.

The tombstone bearing the inscriptions of Eliza C. Turner and the two daughters Eliza and Matilda is possibly the most historically significant tombstone in Beech Grove Cemetery because it verifies Minus Turner's description of the origin of the cemetery. Minus Turner is buried nearby with his second wife Fannie Marshall Turner, surrounded by graves of other family members.

Three boxes of unidentified bones found when digging a basement for the Friends Memorial Church, located at the northeast corner of Adams and Cherry Streets, were sent by Joseph A.

Tombstone of Eliza C. Turner and her 2 daughters Matilda A. and Eliza whose remains were removed from the site of the small downtown cemetery after Beech Grove was opened in 1841. Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

Goddard to Beech Grove for burial. This establishes the location of the graveyard downtown. The remains from the downtown site were buried in Block 17 Lots 133 and 274 in October 1906 and May 1907 as recorded in Interment Book Two.
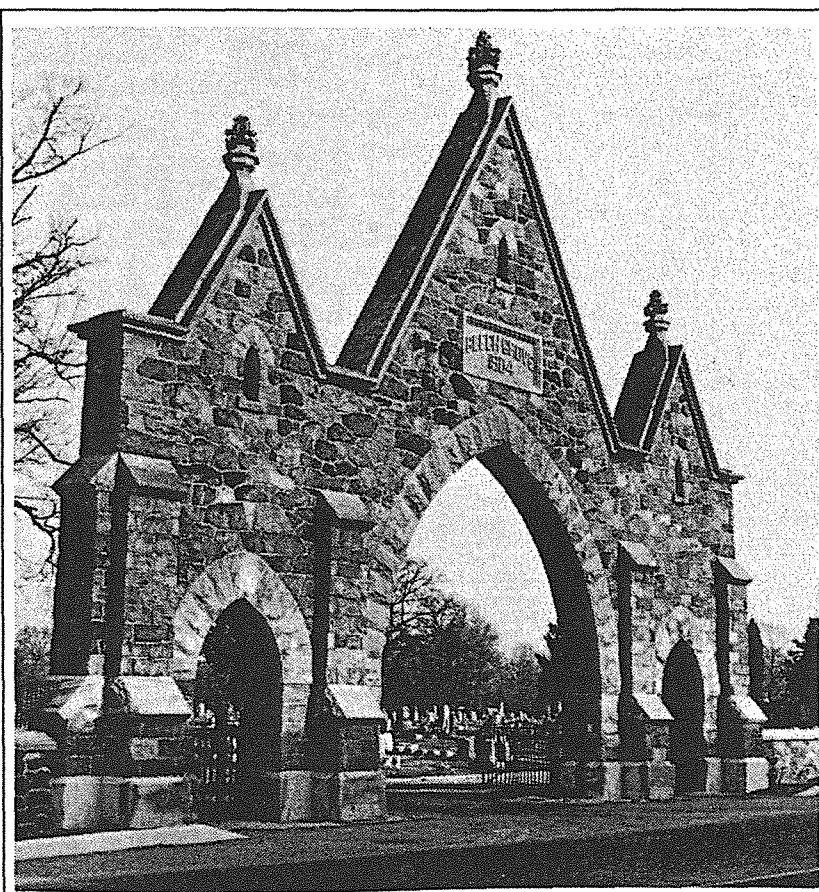
One can imagine the wilderness setting of the first one and one half acres purchased for a graveyard on December 17, 1841 from Moses and Nancy Eby by Samuel W. Harlan, John Jack, and James Hodge, trustees for the citizens of Munceytown.[2] The earliest burials are located in this area of the Old Part of Beech Grove and it is referred to in the interment books as the "Old Ground." This tract was located about a mile from town at that time. When the cemetery opened, many area residents had their family members disinterred from other county cemeteries and family burial plots and moved to Beech Grove.

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[2]Deed Record 6, p. 309, Delaware County Archives, Ball State University. Hereafter cited as DCA:BSU.

Moses Eby died in April 1845 and is probably buried in the ground he sold to the cemetery. His estate was probated in May 1845[3] and mention is made in the estate settlement, of Nancy Lutz formerly Nancy Eby, now the wife of Baltzer Lutz as the recipient of land. Moses had owned a mill site and more than 157 acres of land adjoining the new graveyard.[4] This could explain the Loutz referred to by Minus Turner. Baltzer Lutz and his wife Nancy are buried on lot 770 which is in the Old Ground.

In 1858 two acres of ground were leased from Thomas and Sarah Kirby and then later deeded to the town with five more acres April 30, 1867.[5] One and one half acres was deeded to the Trustees of Munceytown, (Nelson Leonard, William B. Kline, John A. Gilbert, Alexander Wilson and James Truitt) for $114 on July 10, 1858 by John A. Gilbert.[6] One half acre lying immediately east of the cemetery grounds with a house on it was purchased from Thomas Kirby in 1864 for use by the sexton.[7] This is approximately the amount of ground known as the Old Part and covered by most of the interments in this book.

This massive stone archway, located on Kilgore Avenue, is the main entrance to Beech Grove Cemetery. Constructed under the supervision of Superintendent O. W. Crabbs, it is the most unique landmark in the cemetery. The first funeral procession to go through the arch was that of Cathrine Grady, wife of James Grady. The pastor was Rev. G. W. Schmidt of Saint Lawrence Catholic Church. Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

Elizabeth G. Wilson and Volney, her husband, sold thirteen acres to the City of Muncie Oct. 15, 1877 for $2,300. The deed describes the land bounded on the west by the main course of the Democratic Branch, indicating that a stream once passed through the cemetery.[8] Other small purchases were made, but the most significant addition to the cemetery was the John Moore farm of fifty one acres for $12,000 on April 8, 1902. This farm had been known as the John Galbraith farm.[9] At the time of purchase a railroad track was on the site. The west side of the cemetery was reached by gates on each side of the tracks.

[3]Probate Book A, 1845 to 1860, Moses Eby pp. 5-9, Delaware County Clerk's Office.
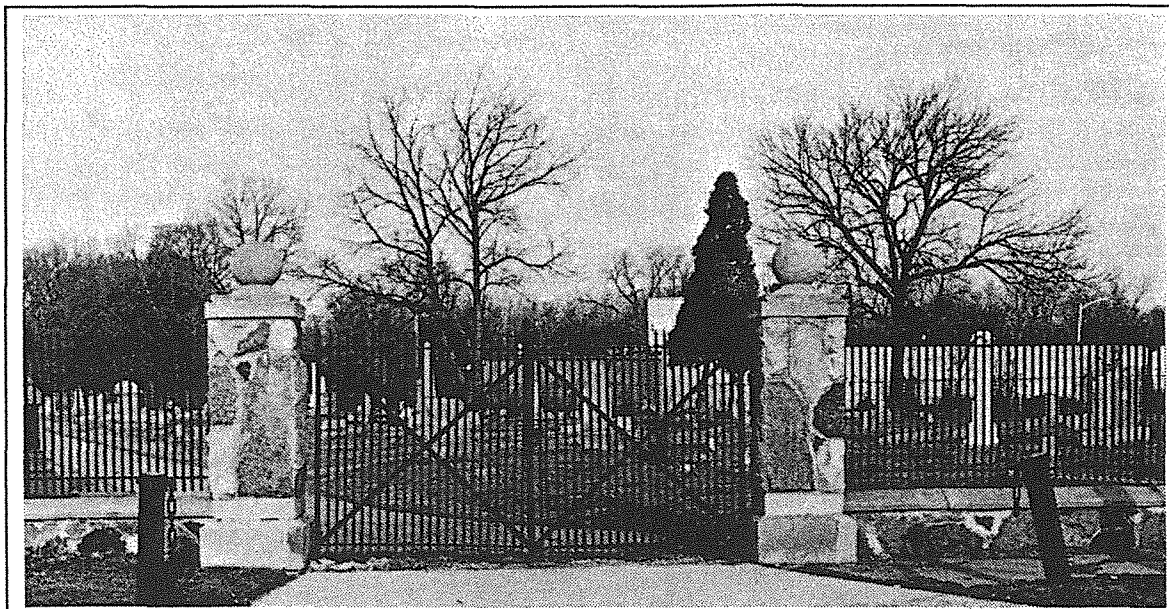[4]Deed Record 4 pp.258 and 357, Deed Record 8, p. 186, Deed Record 6 p. 40, DCA:BSU.
[5]Deed Record 20 p.459 and Deed Record 30 p 238, DCA:BSU
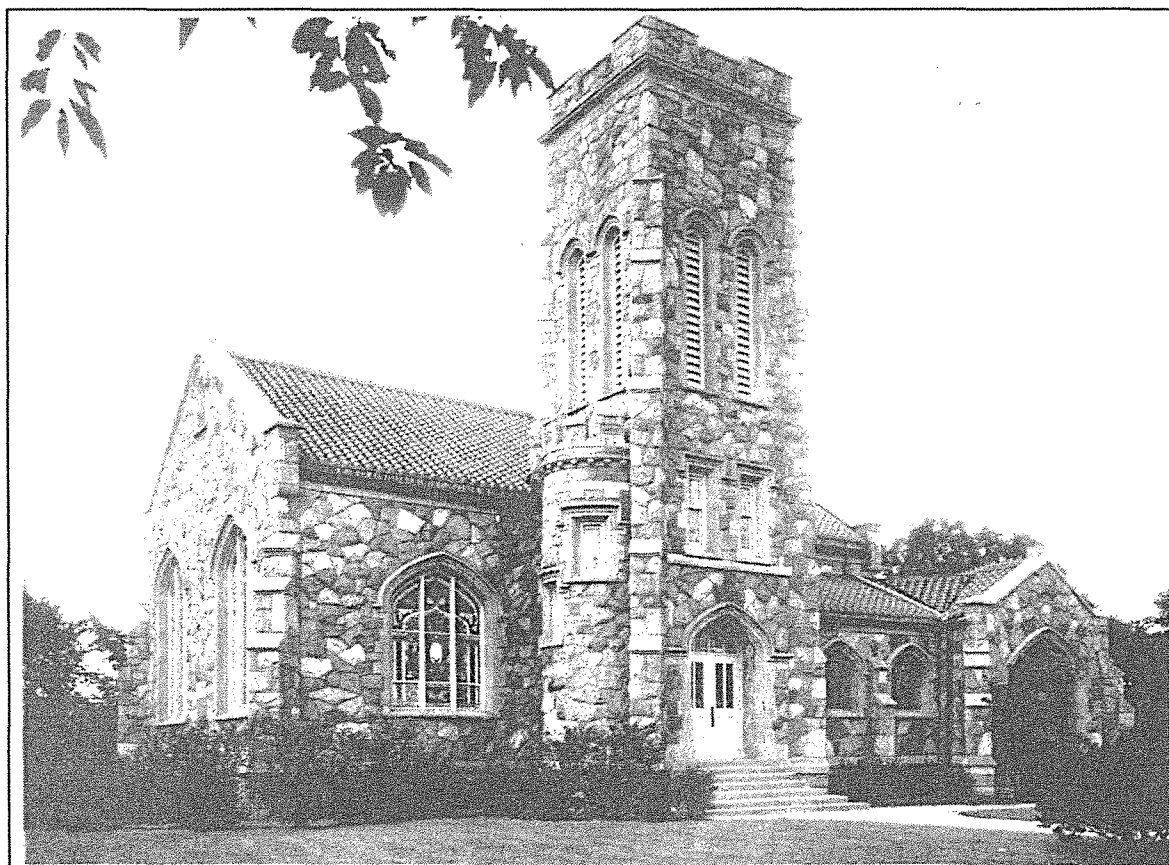[6]Deed Record 20 p. 458, DCA:BSU
[7]Helm, History of Delaware Co., p. 136.
[8]Deed Record 42 p. 328, DCA:BSU.
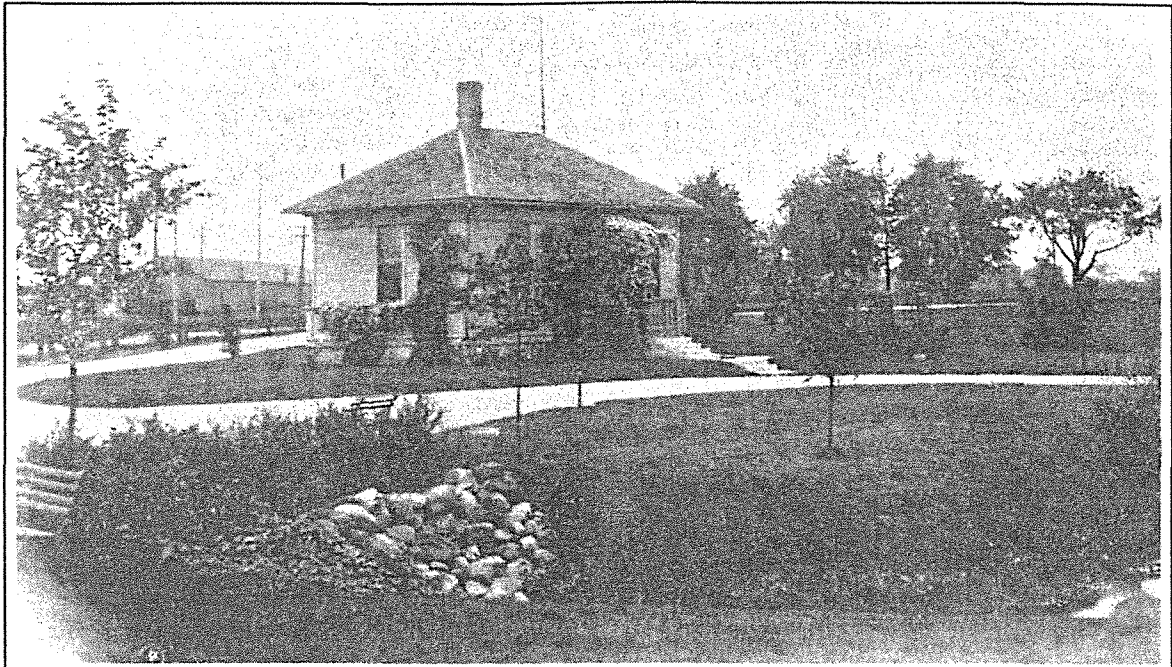[9]Deed Record 111 pp. 125,126, DCA:BSU.

This smaller gate farther east on Kilgore marks the site of the earlier
entrance to the Old Part. The rubble stone and iron fence was added later.
Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

This cemetery chapel took six years to build and was dedicated on Memorial Day in 1912. The interior was decorated with mission oak and stained
glass windows and had a seating capacity of 250. There was a choir box over the south entrance and an organ in the tower. The chapel was only used
for a few years. After funeral directors began building space for services at their establishments the chapel fell into disuse and was razed in April, 1955.
Photograph by Otto Sellers.

This office building was located inside the main gate on the site of the present office/chapel building.
One of the lagoons is partly visible in the foreground. It was replaced in 1921.
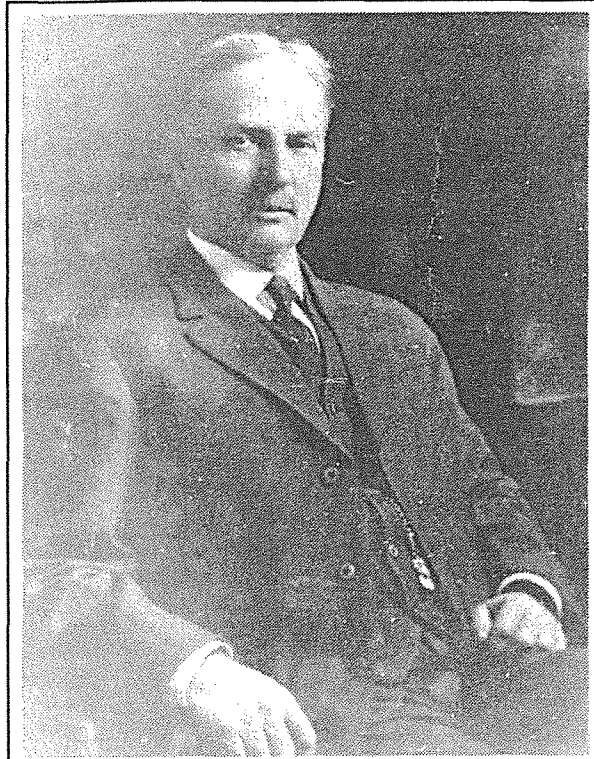Photograph from a 1906 Beech Grove booklet.

Early in this century, Beech Grove Cemetery had the reputation of being one of the most beautiful burial sites in the state. In an undated newspaper article (believed to be from about 1914) found in the Muncie Public Library and headlined "How Beech Grove Has Been Transformed to Finest Necropolis of The State by Conservation of Nature's Setting and Apt Adaptation of Artificial Aids," Estelle Rinehart makes the following observances:

Much new ground has been added to the cemetery plot and at the present time there is 105 acres with 40 acres un-platted. On the latter, there will be two new sections platted this fall. Of the ground known as the new part of the cemetery, the entire outlay has been the idea of Mr. Crabbs (cemetery Supt. O. W. Crabbs, 1899-1915) carried out in detail. The beautiful avenues which wind round and round from a central plat are shaded on either side with well trimmed and various species of foliaged trees, the few unsightly places are hidden with shrubbery and plant growth. Everywhere nature has something to tell about the beauty of her application, for nearly every tree, shrub, blade of grass and flower has been planted by Mr. Crabbs. They are artificial, yet they have a bit of wildness in the profusion and abandon of natural growth, such as one would not expect to find in a cemetery.

Added to the beauty of the landscape are two small lagoons. These are fed by fountains of fresh water piped from the city and are made attractive by being surrounded with plant life, and it seems even in these has Mr. Crabbs found the secret of adaptation. This lesson is exemplified by the growth of cat tails, water lilies and willows and a touch of artistic nature was added when a number of ducks were seen to swim across the water. Everywhere are benches and shady nooks and not a few people, attracted by the general scene, go there to rest.

In the new part many of the fraternal organizations of the city have reserved special sections for burying grounds. Prominently among these is the plat presented to the Williams Post, G.A.R., by the board. All old soldiers buried in this section must have a burial permit properly signed by the Williams Post officials. There are at the present time 72 Civil War veterans and four Spanish American veterans buried in the plat. The plat has been greatly beautified by the presentation of a sundial and cannon ball, which have been properly mounted, and a flag staff.....

Another interesting section is the plat of the B.P.O.E. This is located in Section 7 and bounded on the north by Maple Avenue and on the south by the chapel plot. This plot is already enhanced by a

Oscar Wells Crabbs designed many of the buildings and landscaping at Beech Grove as well as McCulloch Park and Muncie Normal Institute, now known as Ball State University. Photograph provided by John Weinberger.

special designing of shrubbery at the southeast and northeast corners. A bronzed elk, surmounting a large boulder, will be the monument for this plat. There is room for 48 graves, the first and only one at the present time being the resting place of Col. Nathaniel Lewis Rice Sawyer.

In the old part of the cemetery, the Munsey tribe of Red Men have a plat and the Masonic lodges also have a very attractive plat with one grave. The Odd Fellows have a plat in the center of the circle with two graves plat in this part of the cemetery. The Knights of Pythias have a section in section 3 of the new cemetery.
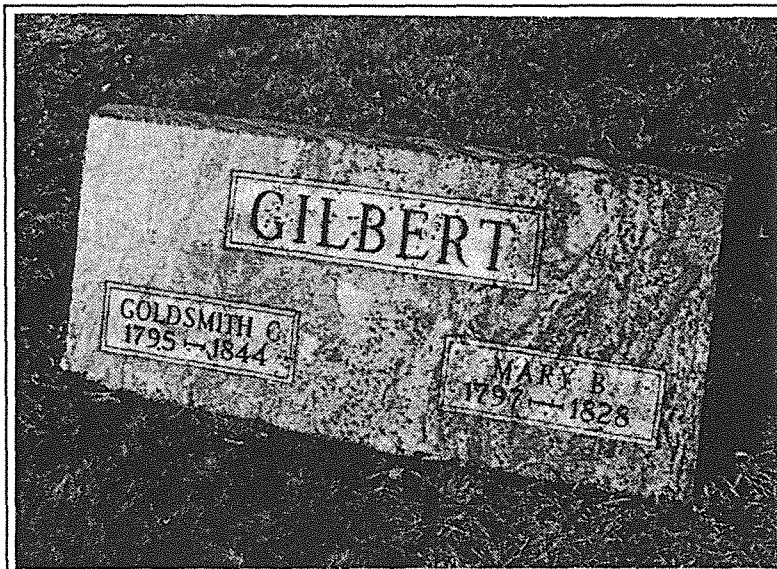
Eight mausoleums have been erected in the cemetery, the oldest of them being the Anthony. This is a quaint structure of brick. Following in their time was the erection of the C.H. Over, Mrs. Martha Johnson, Joseph Goddard, J. M. Maring, Walter Petty estate, Edmund B. Ball and J. W. Smith. The largest and most magnificent structure of the kind will soon be added by D. M. Kitselman, this to contain 18 catacombs. .....

Directly in the center of Section B four lots are set aside for the burial of firemen, who have sacrificed their lives for others. In the direct center of the new part, a place has also been left for a monument, which might be erected by the county council to appropriate money for a public monument, but as yet this has not been done in the county.

Another interesting section is the plot consecrated to the Jewish people. There is also a single grave section to the west of the chapel, and far over to the northwest is that section reserved for the poor. Here are 2,600 graves, the ground being presented by the board and the expense of opening and closing the graves being the gift of the township. This plat has proper sewage and is surrounded by a growth of elm trees.

Some Other Significant Early Burials

Goldsmith Coffeen Gilbert and his wife Mary Bishop Gilbert, the founders of Muncie, are buried in the Old Part. The date of 1828 is inscribed on Mary's tombstone and that is the earliest date in the cemetery. However there is evidence that she did not die until much later than that. Her signature appears with Goldsmith's on land sales up to July 23, 1839.[10] Their log cabin was located near the corner of Walnut and Wysor streets. Their remains were moved at an undetermined date to Beech Grove from a family burial site on their land. Goldsmith died January 20, 1844, and Goldsmith Gilbert Jr. died March 10, 1836. All three are buried on Lot 173 which was not part of the cemetery in 1844.

This modern granite tombstone marks the burial site of the founders, Goldsmith C. and Mary Bishop Gilbert who purchased the land that became the nucleus of the present City of Muncie. The death date on the tombstone indicates that Mary died in 1828. However her signature is recorded with Goldsmith in a sale of a lot July 23, 1839. There are two other tombstones on this lot that are identical in size and color to this one. The purchaser of these tombstones apparently did not know the correct date of death of Mary B. Gilbert. Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

Their daughter, Mary Jane Gilbert, was the first white child born in Munceytown and the first white girl born in Delaware County. She is also buried on Lot 173 with her first husband Dr. Daniel Andrews, her second husband Joseph Edmunds, her son George R. Andrews, and his wife America J. Andrews.
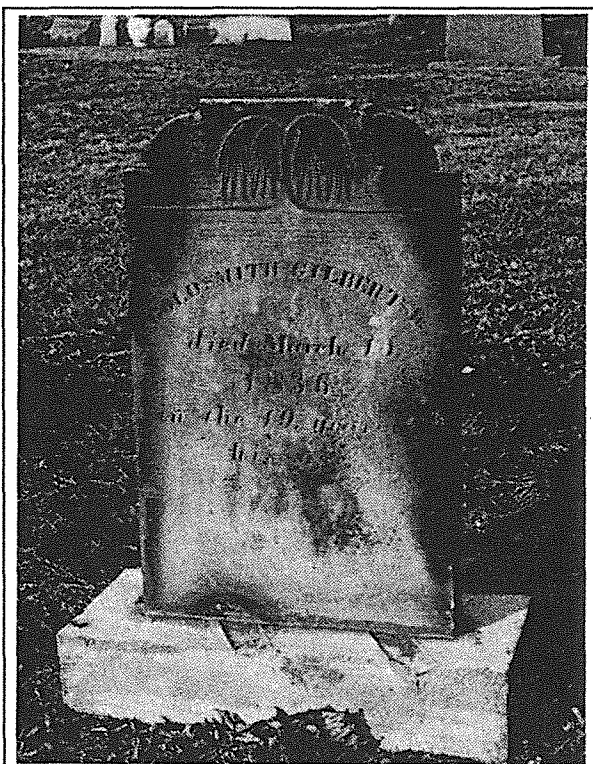
In Interment book 2, interment # 1806 records that the remains of a man, woman and child were found March 18, 1948 when excavating for a basement at 317 Wysor Street. Those remains were also brought to Beech Grove Cemetery for reburial in Section C. The Wysor Street site could have been the early Gilbert family burial plot.
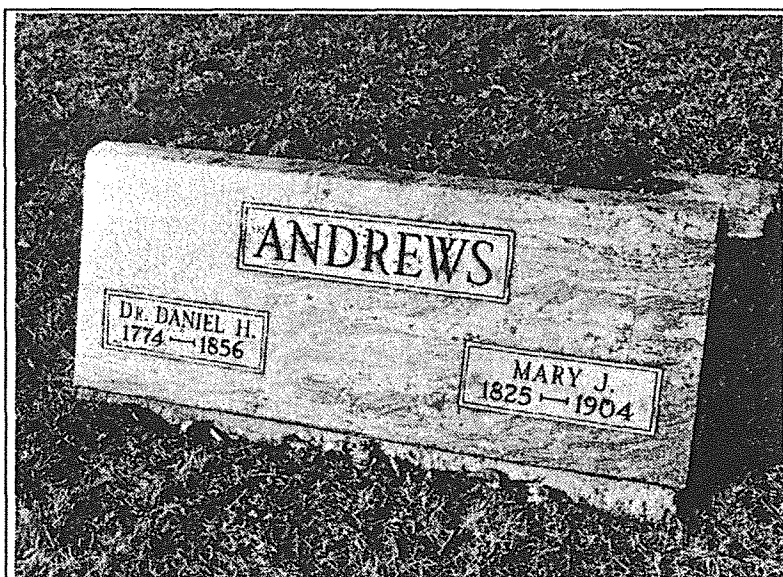
Goldsmith Gilbert encouraged other family members from the Gilbert, Bishop and Coffeen families to move to Munceytown from New York. Many of these early settlers intermarried and are also buried in Beech Grove.

Rev. Scott Richardson, born July 25, 1821, is said to be **the first white child born in Delaware County.** He died while visiting his son in Hartford City, Indiana March 14, 1903 and

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[10]Deed Book 4: p.268, DCA:BSU.

Goldsmith Gilbert Jr. died March 10, 1836 at age 19. This very old tombstone stands beside that of his parents. After the death of his first wife Goldsmith Gilbert Sr. was married to Miss Rachel Jewell, Jan. 24, 1844 and had other children. However none survived him except his daughter Mary Jane. Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

Mary Jane Gilbert, the first white child born in Muncie, is buried here with her first husband, Dr. Daniel H. Andrews. Her second husband, Joseph W. Edmonds, also preceded her in death and is buried on this lot without a tombstone. Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

was buried in Hartford City. His wife Martha Richardson and 11 other family members are buried on Lot 744 at Beech Grove Cemetery.

Revolutionary Soldier Buried

The following is part of an obituary that appeared in the Delaware Co. Democrat, Muncietown, Delaware County Indiana, Saturday Nov. 11, 1843. It is included as an example of the culture of the period when the cemetery was new. A military stone marks the site of the burial of Sewell Gilbert, a half brother of Goldsmith Gilbert,[11] in the Old Ground on Lot 885.

—Obituary—

Another old Revolutionary soldier dead, On the 7th inst., at the hour of 1 o'clock, at the residence of William Gilbert, died SUEL GILBERT, aged eighty-seven years, after a protracted illness of three weeks and two days, during which time, although his sufferings were great, he bore all with that manly fortitude so generally evinced by all old soldiers of the revolution. When he was but a youth of seventeen years, he in defense of his oppressed country, he fought manfully against its invaders, the British.....

It was really gratifying to see the never failing patriotic affection evinced by the ladies of our burgh: although the day was so unpleasant and cold, they came out en mass, to show the respect due to one of

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[11] Gilbert family files by Cecil Beeson, 1974, DCA:BSU.

The names of very early residents who were members of the Martin and Rhoda Galliher family, have been inscribed on this large modern tombstone. Martin was one of the early merchants of Muncie. Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

the defenders of their beloved country, After a very appropriate and elaborate discourse delivered by the Rev. Robert Irvin, on this occasion, the procession moved on toward the grave yard and under the solemn sound of martial music. The scene was really affecting-- twelve armed musketeers, commanded by Capt. Liston marched solemnly along to pay their last tribute at his grave, which was done (to their credit be it said) in a soldier-like manner. As the old warrior lived, so he died: always in good faith with his neighbors, truly honest and a good citizen. May his ashes forever rest in peace. Mr. Irvin closed the scene at the grave yard by an affecting prayer. The relations of the deceased return their sincere thanks to the citizens generally, and particularly to the Muncietown Band for their prompt attention.

Other Veterans

The only other Revolutionary soldier buried at Beech Grove Cemetery is John McConnell who is buried with his wife Barbra on Lot 186. Their remains were disinterred from a burial ground known as Forest Park and reburied on Lot 186. The Paul Revere Chapter of the DAR had markers installed at Beech Grove Cemetery in honor of five other Revolutionary War Veterans who are buried in unmarked graves in other sites in Delaware County. They are Lemuel Peterson, Robert Watkins, William Williams Sr., Thomas Thompson and John Barnes.

Beech Grove Cemetery is the final resting place of veterans from all wars from the Revolutionary War to the Vietnam War. Three large areas are reserved by the American Legion for Veterans from all wars since World War I and services have been held there each Memorial Day since the Civil War.

Inscribed on this tombstone is the family of Major Thomas Walterhouse (1832 - 1882). He was first married to Zerelda B. Kemper and after her death he married her sister Sarah M. Kemper. Both were sisters of Dr. G. W. H. Kemper, local physician and historian. The Walterhouse home on Kilgore Avenue later served as the superintendent's home in the cemetery.

Office Records

The earliest interment book starts December 1, 1867. Beech Grove tradition reports that the early records were destroyed by a fire in city hall, however the first city hall was not built until 1874. City officials met at the court house prior to that time. A fire did occur in the court house office building March 10, 1865 however city records were not reported among the items believed to have been destroyed.[12]

A city ordinance was passed December 2, 1867 with regulations for the cemetery superintendent to keep records of interments in Beech Grove Cemetery.[13] Other rules regarding upkeep and conduct of visitors were also adopted in the ordinance. It is possible no systematic records were kept before this ordinance. For whatever sad reason, the interment records are missing from December 17, 1841 to December 1, 1867. Some records of burials for that time period were retrieved from old lot cards and tombstone readings.

Superintendents at Beech Grove Cemetery

Henry Gotleib - appointed sexton 24 Feb 1864[14]   James M. Campbell - appointed sexton 21 Mar 1865[15]

Superintendents listed in interment books:

Lewis Sears — 16 Jun 1869 - 6 Jul 1878	Benjamin Turner — 17 Jul 1878 - 23 Mar 1881
James H. Cray — 22 Mar 1881 - 7 Oct 1884	I. A. Jewett (Will?) — 7 Oct 1884 - Aug 1899
Oscar Wells Crabbs — Aug 1899 - 1 Jun 1915	Everett Smith — 1 Jun 1915 - 1 Jul 1916
E. A. Boettcher — 1 Jul 1916 - 1 Aug 1919	Jesse G. White — 1 Aug 1919 - Dec 1937
Carl R. Jellisonson — Assistant Supt. Apr 1932 - Dec 1937	Appointed Supt. Dec 1937 - Feb 1969
Robert Justice — Feb 1969 - 25 Feb 1976	James Woodrow Wilson — Jul 1976 - 1 Jan 1983
Bob Graves — Dec 1982 - 29 Aug 1984	William M. Ashby — 10 Sep 1984 - Jun 1991
Gilbert L. Greene--Aug. 1991 to Nov. 1993	Tom Schnuck--Mar. 1994 to present.

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[12]Haimbaugh, Frank D., ed., History of Delaware County Indiana, V 1, Historical Publishing Co. 1924, pp. 164-167.
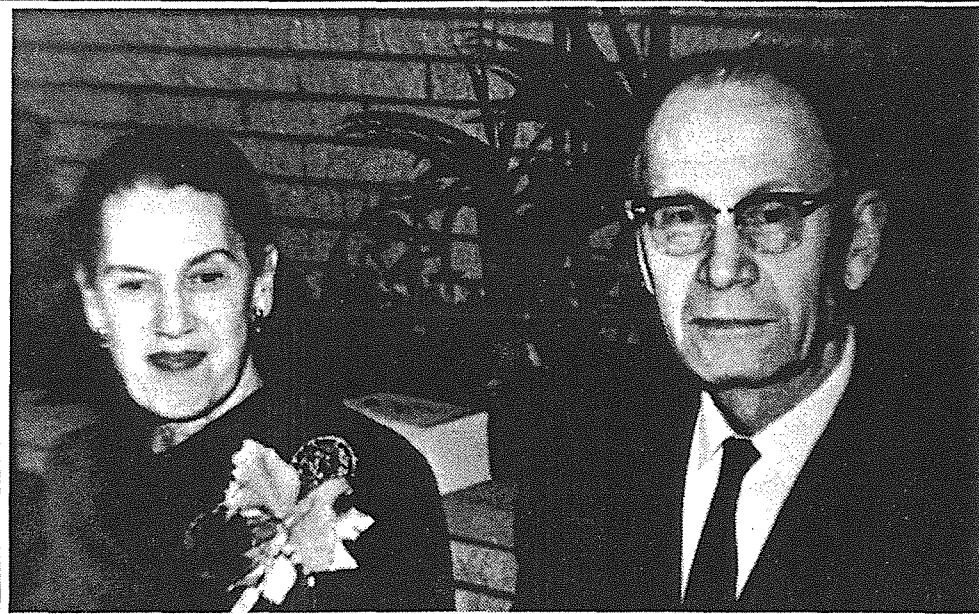[13]City of Muncie Ordinance Book 1865-1892, p.91
[14]Helm, History of Delaware Co., p. 136.
[15]Helm, History of Delaware Co., p.138.

Widely praised by his contemporaries as "The Man Who Made Muncie," George Foulke McCulloch was a member of the first board of five trustees appointed April 3, 1905 by the city council to have full control of the cemetery. He remained on the board until his death March 27, 1915. This was the time of the greatest development of buildings and landscaping at Beech Grove with O. W. Crabbs as superintendent. McCulloch was a politician, industrialist, and philanthropist. He is remembered as the founder of the Muncie Morning Star, promoter of such enterprises as the electric street railway, and Muncie Normal University, which preceded Ball State University. Photograph supplied by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

Carl R. Jellison was the superintendent with the longest tenure beginning as a part time worker in 1932. As superintendent 1937 to 1969 with 37 years at Beech Grove, he was well known and respected for his devotion to his job and maintained the cemetery with little financial help from the city government. Carl and his wife Leora (shown here at his retirement party) lived in the superintendent's residence in the cemetery for 27 years and raised a family of four children. The residence was built about 1869 by Civil War Veteran Major Thomas Walterhouse and was razed in 1969. Photograph by Nona Nunnelly.
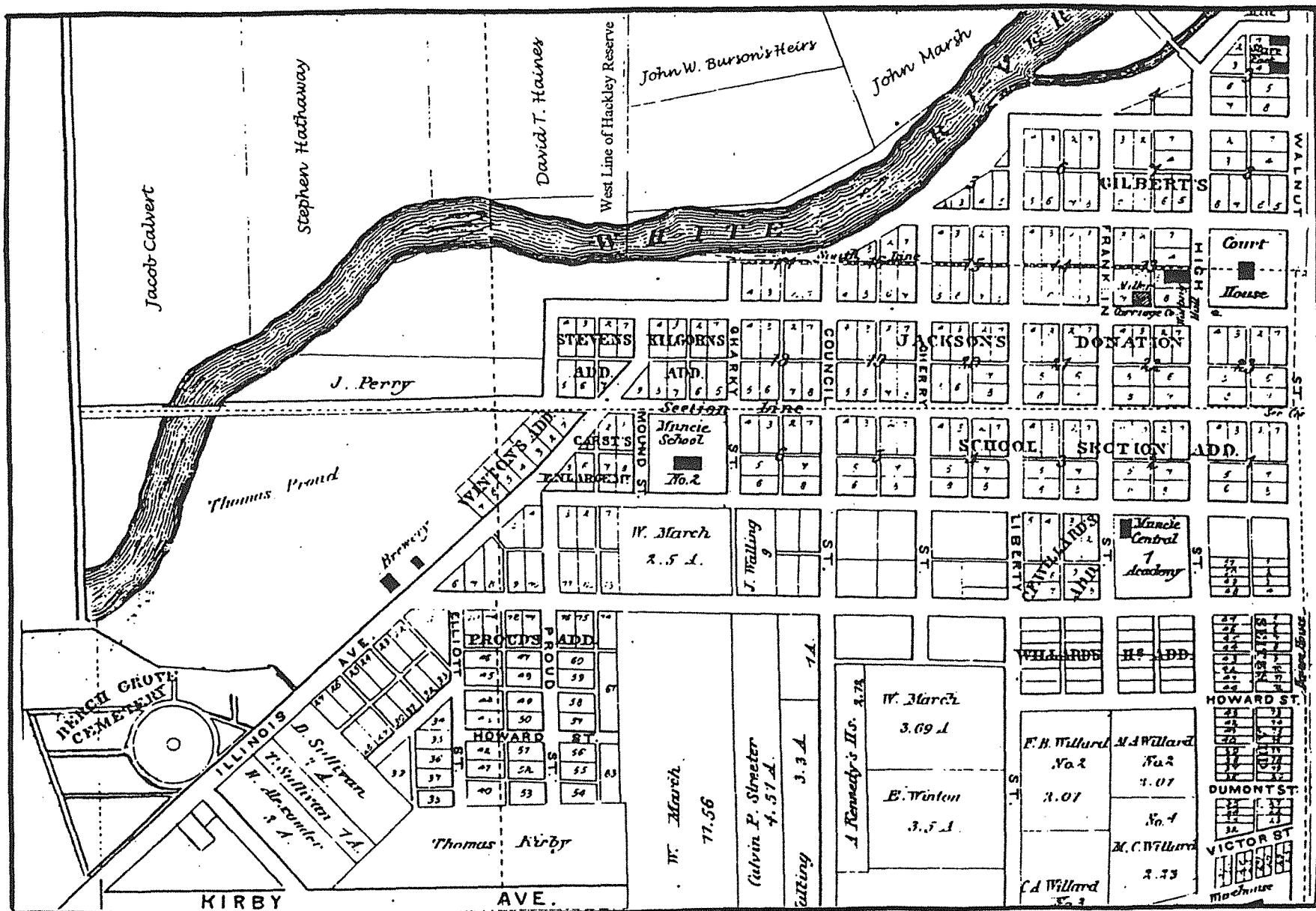
Present and Future

At the beginning of the this century Delaware County was experiencing a time of great economic prosperity and the cemetery was at it's peak in growth and development. Following two world wars and the great depression of the 1930's, many economic and social changes affected the county as well as the cemetery. After the retirement of Carl Jellison in 1969, with 32 years as superintendent, political interests had a greater influence on the appointments of the board of trustees, the hiring of the superintendents, and affecting the operation of the cemetery.

The present superintendent, Gilbert L. Greene has taken great pride in improving the appearance of the cemetery and the public's perception of it as well. He has facilitated the organization of the Friends of Beech Grove Cemetery Society that is dedicated to the beautification and historical preservation of the cemetery. Gilbert Greene and the Friends of Beech Grove Cemetery Society have revived interest in the cemetery and many plans are underway for new landscaping, preserving the monuments and mausoleums, printing brochures and arranging tours. Beech Grove Cemetery is an outdoor museum of art, history, and culture and is Delaware County's largest historic landmark.

The present office/chapel building designed by Architect Cuno Kibele was built in 1921 as an office building. The porch was enclosed in 1974 to make room for a 50 seat chapel area. In 1991 the tile roof and heating system was repaired and the building was redecorated. Photograph by Muncie Newspapers, Inc.

View of Beech Grove Cemetery and West part of Muncie from 1874 Wall Map of Delaware County by
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