

History of Maple Grove Cemetery

By Howard Teater

Maple Grove is a picturesque cemetery located near the downtown district of Nicholasville, Kentucky. The three entrances to this old cemetery are off North Main Street, Central Avenue, and Richmond Avenue. The cemetery is currently the final resting place of an estimated seven thousand persons.

According to Jessamine County historian, Bennett H. Young, Thomas Jefferson Brown was the first to urge "the necessity of a public cemetery in Nicholasville," and it was Brown who also "helped to lay off Maple Grove Cemetery." It is interesting to note that in 1849, this same Thomas Jefferson Brown became the first person to be buried in Maple Grove Cemetery.

The original part of the cemetery was not on Main Street, but rather on Richmond Avenue, then known as Union Mill Road. The cemetery began on May 16, 1849, when William and Nancy Duncan sold to the City of Nicholasville one and one-half acre of land for \$157.50 (Deed Book U). The money for these six acres was raised by subscription. As time elapsed, more acreage was bought and the cemetery grew to its current twenty-two acres.

On January 2, 1865, a corporation was formed at the office of John S. Bronaugh, and Moreau Brown was named Chairman. The following rules were adopted:

1. All interments in lots shall be restricted to members of the family; and relations, except with special permission;
2. Horses must not be left unless fastened where places are prepared for that purpose;
3. No fast driving upon the grounds will be allowed and no driving other than upon the carriage roads; no ox teams allowed on the grounds for any purpose;
4. No dogs or guns are to be taken on grounds;
5. No person will be permitted to disturb the quiet and good order; (from minutes of Nicholasville Cemetery Company)

Maple Grove is a Caucasian cemetery, with one exception. Found in Section "C", is an interesting monument honoring a black citizen, named Cupid Walker. Mr. Walker was the black Sexton of The Presbyterian Church, at the time of the cholera epidemic. According to local tradition, Cupid Walker buried the many dead, caused by this disease. He died of the disease shortly afterwards. His monument records the following information: "Erected by the citizens of Jessamine County - In Memory of Cupid (of color) - An Honest Man." He died in July 1850, at about seventy years of age.

According to Bennett Young's history, "In 1862, Doctor Charles Mann, then a surgeon in the Confederate Army, was ordered by General Kirby Smith, to gather and care for the sick and wounded who had been left about Camp Dick Robinson. About eighty of these, he brought in private conveyances to Nicholasville, where they were nursed and cared for by the ladies of the community. Those who died there were buried in the Nicholasville Cemetery (Maple Grove Cemetery). After the war, Dr. Mann, with the aid of James S. McKenzie and Charles Oldham, gathered other Confederate dead, including those who had been buried in the Federal Cemetery at Camp Nelson, and brought them to the cemetery at Nicholasville (Maple Grove), where a lot had been generously donated by the cemetery company for that purpose....The original headboards, having rotted down, were replaced by Colonel Bennett H. Young, and these, in turn, by beautiful granite tablets, which now mark them....."

The handsome public monument in front of the County Courthouse was erected by the "Jessamine Confederate Memorial Association" to honor the Confederate buried in Maple Grove. The work for the Confederate Monument was started in 1880, and was dedicated on June 15, 1896. Jefferson Oxley, a former Confederate soldier, was very instrumental in securing funds for this beautiful monument.

Several tombstones have been removed from private family cemeteries and placed in Maple Grove over the years, which accounts for the many tombstones bearing death dates prior to May 16, 1849. The older stones on the main drive came from the Amann Muir Farm Cemetery and were moved to Maple Grove by a relative.