

SPIRIT OF THE PIONEER

A newsletter for the families and friends of
the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery
(Across from McArthur Court)

FALL 2005

ALBERTA McMURPHEY: A Daughter of the Pioneers *by Ruth Lake Holmes, Sec. - Treas. Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association*

Alberta Shelton McMurphey (1872 – 1949) was the only daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas W. Shelton. Dr. Shelton was one of Eugene's first doctors, and built a stately house on the south side of Skinner's Butte.

During childhood her only name was "Pet". She was home-schooled. A very talented musician, her parents had a piano for her shipped around Cape Horn. At age 12, when she was ready to go to public school, she decided she needed a "grown-up" name and chose Alberta after her favorite uncle, Albert. Alberta graduated from the U. of O. School of Music at the age of 16.

Alberta met Robert McMurphey, a railway executive, at a Christian conference in the East. He soon obtained a transfer to Portland. Alberta's father, Dr. Shelton, died before he could give his formal consent to their marriage. The wedding took place in the parlor later that year. But her mother, Adah Shelton, remained upstairs – she felt it would be unseemly for her to attend!

Alberta's mother moved to Portland giving the young couple her stately house. There they raised six children. Alberta's civic pride led her to sponsor a city beautification movement in 1919. Rose gardens were planted around the 5th and Willamette Streets train depot, a social center.

With Alberta's vitality and charm and her reputation for "getting things done", she became one of the most influential women in Eugene. Her daughter spoke fondly of many birthdays, weddings and holiday celebrations held at their "Castle on the Hill". As many as 40 people could be seated in and around the dining room.

Alberta was President of the School Board, the Lady's Auxiliary to the Chamber of Commerce, and belonged to the Order of



**Alberta Shelton McMurphey
1872 – 1949**

the Eastern Star as well as the Thimble Club, Eugene's oldest women's club.

Robert McMurphey died in 1921. As the years passed, Alberta's life centered on her children, grand-children, and a few friends from Eastern Star who climbed the hill to visit with her.

On June 28, 1949 a Register Guard article recalled the writer's visit when he brought up a missing daily newspaper. Alberta remarked, "I don't know if I'd trade my times for yours. We had rough times and very good times. It produced some of the greatest scallywags and some of the noblest people that ever walked the Earth. We had a great deal of faith, and that's what has made most of these good things come to pass".

From her windows Alberta still saw the dreams of the pioneers coming to pass. Alberta passed away in 1949 and is at rest in the Shelton-McMurphey plot in our Cemetery along with her husband and her parents.

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Any Comments or
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Please write or
phone us!

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CEMETERY HISTORY: Profiles of Burials in Eugene Pioneer Cemetery

*by Everett Smith, President
Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association*

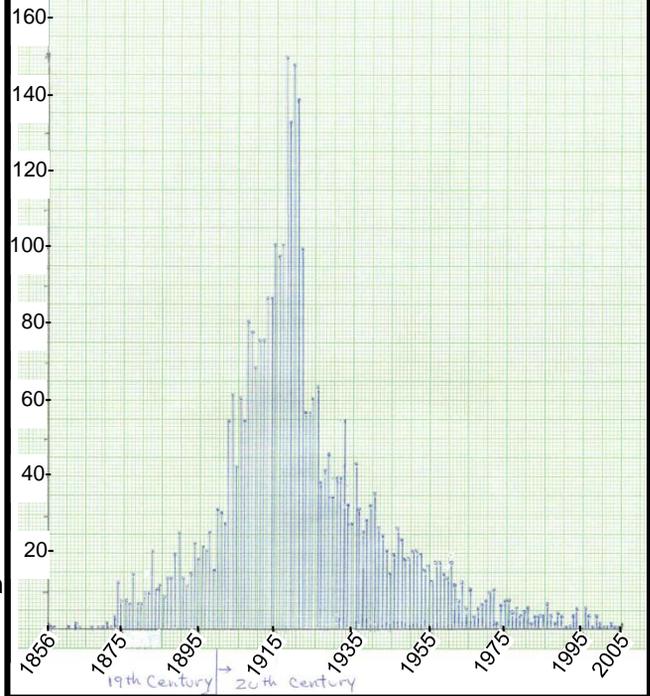
Nearly everyone buried in Eugene Pioneer Cemetery has a European heritage and was part of America's great westward migration. Some came out in wagons on the Oregon trail - true pioneers to Oregon. Others came to the Pacific Northwest in ships, on trains, and eventually via automobiles.

Records show ninety-two persons in the cemetery originally from thirteen different countries in Europe plus Canada. England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland accounted for thirty of these, and persons originally from Canada accounted for seventeen of known international burials. Burials for over 400 persons can be traced to thirty-four different states other than Oregon. Only ten people buried were born in California, and just eight others came from states west of the Rockies. The twelve leading states of origin are these: Illinois(47 burials), New York (42), Iowa (42), Ohio (39), Indiana (35), Missouri (24), Pennsylvania (23), Wisconsin (22), Michigan (19), Minnesota (18), Kentucky (17), and Tennessee (14). People from the Mid-West, Mid-South, and colonial states of New York and Pennsylvania dominated the trek, mostly in the latter half of the 19th Century, into the Willamette Valley.

Total burials in the Pioneer Cemetery far exceed these known places of origin. The actual number of people buried in our cemetery is not known. The best estimate is around 3,800 people and the majority were born in Western Oregon.

The earliest known burial at the cemetery was an infant boy who lived less than a month in 1856. This was two years before Oregon statehood and sixteen years before the local lodge of the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) designated as its cemetery a ten-acre parcel of open land on the east edge of town. By 1870, there were another seven burials at this site. By then, the combined population of Eugene and Springfield was about 1,000.

Population of the two towns tripled between 1870 and 1900. During this interval there were 375 recorded burials in the new cemetery – about one every month on average. A gift of six adjoining acres on the south in 1900, made our cemetery the largest burial ground in the area for many years. In the most active years, from 1900 to 1930, there were 2,148 burials. In 1918, at the height of a worldwide influenza epidemic, a



EUGENE PIONEER CEMETERY BURIALS (On a Year-by-Year Basis)

new grave was prepared on average every three days. A decade earlier, in 1908 and 1909, another upswing in deaths and cemetery burials, nearly 160, reflect an outbreak of typhus in Eugene associated with contaminated water. This sharp rise in fatalities sparked public efforts to promote indoor toilets and to build a safe municipal water system in Eugene. By 1910, the combined population of Eugene and Springfield was approximately 11,000 people.

After 1930, remaining lots available for burials decreased. However, there were still 787 recorded burials between 1930 and 1960. There have been an additional 268 burials since 1960.

Cemetery records show a range of ages among burials. Eight of the people who are at rest in our cemetery lived to be 100. However, the nearly 200 infants buried in our cemetery suggests how fragile young life can be and how subject to disease and illness residents were in early Eugene and Springfield. Babies sometimes died at birth and, infrequently, the mother died also. Records and headstones identify infants living a few weeks, a few months, or a succumbing after one or two years. A century ago diphtheria, polio, whooping cough, measles, mumps, and influenza threatened young lives far more than they do today.

Nearly 900 people that are at rest in our cemetery
(Please see pg. 4 - **PROFILES OF BURIALS**)

Fall Cleanup Party: A Great Success!

*By Quentin Holmes, Board Member
Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association*

With passing each year the Cemetery looks even more inviting to visitors. Much of the credit for this cumulative progress goes to Board Member George Beebe who oversees our periodic work parties.

This Fall, our cemetery cleanup took place on Friday, September 2nd. George scheduled, organized, and helped direct a group from the Lane County Sheriff's Forest Work Crew out of Alma, Oregon. From 9 AM until 3 PM, a crew of ten able-bodied workers systematically moved throughout the Northeast quadrant of the cemetery. Low growing limbs were cut, grass was trimmed around borders, overgrown brush was removed from all the plots, and several invasive trees were felled. As quickly as debris was created it was raked up. Our resident caretaker, George Dull, assisted with piling and transported the debris to a commercial dumpster. Although everyone worked very carefully and responsibly, our cleanup day was not without pain. Several huge nests of "Yellow Jacket" bees were disturbed and sought revenge. In all, six aerosol cans of industrial-strength bee killer were used!

The 32 foot dumpster, that seemed so large when we began, got filled before noon. Numerous times, George Dull climbed up inside it and compacted the limbs and brush with a chainsaw – allowing more debris to be accommodated.

At the end of the workday, the entire North section of the cemetery looked open, cared for, and restful.

[NOTE: Another Cleanup Party is scheduled for May 26th, 2006 – the Friday before Memorial Day 2006.]



George Beebe briefs Sheriff's Forest Work Crew.

(George Beebe is the gentleman in the deep red shirt, and Sheriff's Deputy Jason Dummer is dressed in khaki.)



Cutting Away Overgrown Brush.

(Initially, the tall grave marker could scarcely be seen.)



This 32 foot Commercial Dumpster got filled!

Profiles of Burials (Cont. from page 2)

were born before 1850. Many lived into the 20th century. Prominent people include Judge J.J. Walton. He raised money to complete Deady Hall, the first building on campus of the University of Oregon. Dr. Thomas Shelton was one of the first doctors in Eugene and donated Skinner Butte Park. Other early Oregonians established the first library, first bank, and first hospital in Eugene. others organized a college; and still others published newspapers.

Most of the people buried in Pioneer Cemetery lived ordinary lives. They raised children, suffered tragedy, served their country, and worked hard for necessities and the few luxuries available in Lane County in the latter half of the 19th century. Early residents undoubtedly enjoyed Western Oregon with its moderate climate, its attractive scenery, and its abundance of fresh water.

There are many in the cemetery who served in the military. Records show 138 veterans of the Civil War. All but one fought on the Union side. One Union soldier, a native of eastern Ohio and migrant to Lane County, earned a Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism during the siege of Vicksburg in 1863. What enticed him to the Willamette Valley after the war? There are twenty known veterans of the Spanish-American war and forty buried who were soldiers in WW I. Five who were killed in action are interred in this cemetery. Ten WW II veterans were buried in the Cemetery. However, there are no known burials of veterans of more recent wars in Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, and Iraq.

The Eugene Pioneer Cemetery is a memorial and tribute to thousands of people at rest who built the first buildings in this area; established businesses; started schools and churches. These individuals established the base that allows the community to thrive today. In coming years, as local population approaches a third of a million people, there may be no ethnic majority, unlike the relatively uniform group who congregated here a century and a half ago. The Pioneer Cemetery contains a good share of their stories.

SOURCES: *Burials in Eugene Pioneer Cemetery are from records of the Oregon Genealogical Society with additions from Ruth Lake Holmes, Jonathon Stafford, Tami Dingle, and several field checkers. Names and dates were then compiled by Otilya Lay, a member of the Oregon Genealogical Society in 2000.*

Entryway and Sign Project

By Sara Leiman, Treasurer of Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Endowment Fund

Most people walking through or traveling by the Cemetery probably do not know the name and born-on date for our Cemetery! Your Board has started phase 1 of a project to improve the identity signs and provide entrance structures. We are using our 2001 Cemetery Preservation Plan as a guide,

Three locations need entrance signs. Both the entrance on the west (originally 16th Avenue) and the entrance via stairs on the east (across from McArthur Court) are used daily by many students, University staff and neighborhood residents. The third location is the Cemetery's southeast corner (at 18th Ave. and University St.) This location is highly visible to the public, and provides many people with their first look into the Cemetery grounds.

These locations need signs, entry structures and landscaping that is clearly visible, that respects the Cemetery's historic and natural character, that includes the name and founding date of the Cemetery, and is of a design befitting the setting and special nature of this place. The Preservation Plan recommended use of "elemental materials" such as stone, metal or wood to harmonize with the surroundings and existing headstones and curbs.

The Plan also recommended we "develop a comprehensive graphic system" to replace and enhance existing signage. If we get the design of the signs planned now, we can use the same design for future signage in the Cemetery (e.g., Interpretive signs, informational signs and regulatory signs).

Your Board has engaged Kate McGee, landscape architect, to design these entryway structures and signs. Kate has worked in Eugene since 1993 and comes highly recommended for her work with non-profits. At the end of Phase 1, we expect to have sketches and drawings for you to see. She will provide cost estimates for building these three signs. At that point, we will be publishing the drawings and starting our fundraising campaign to "get 'er done!"

I think you will be thrilled with these designs. For many years, the efforts of lot owners and volunteers have been focused on simply keeping the grass mowed and the debris hauled away. Now we have a chance to improve our Cemetery and enhance its appearance. Please help us with a contribution to the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association earmarked for the "Entryway and Sign Project". Stay tuned!

LIVING HISTORY OF PIONEERS

EARLY

*by Quentin Holmes, Board Member,
Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Association*

On the night of October 31st, "Living History" took place in the cemetery. The event was organized by Scott Dano from the Dorris Ranch under the Willamalane Park and Recreation District's "Trail Talk" program. More than 25 people attended. Walking by the light of old-time candle lanterns, the hour-long tour stopped at selected graves. At each stop, a re-enactor dressed in period attire gave an informative presentation. It was as though the individual buried there had returned, on Halloween Night, to personally share the story of their life.

Graves visited during the tour included:

- o Marion Evans (killed in 1913 at age 16 while helping an Uncle clear land South of Eugene;
- o Judge J. J. Walton (who went about in 1873 collecting donations to build a roof on Deady Hall);
- o Alberta Shelton McMurfhey (whose historic registry house still stands at 3rd Avenue and Willamette Street – See story on page 1);

- o John H. Brown (shot and killed in 1892 at age 33 during a dispute over a sack of potatoes);
- o John S. Colvell (his estate paid for the tall statue honoring Civil War Veterans);
- o Louis Renninger (awarded Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism during the Siege of Vicksburg in the Civil War);
- o Elizabeth McNett Rehm (served as a nurse during the Civil War);
- o John Montgomery (a veteran of the Confederate Army of America);
- o Luella Dunn Dorris (helped operate the Dorris Ranch located on South 2nd and Dorris Streets in Springfield).

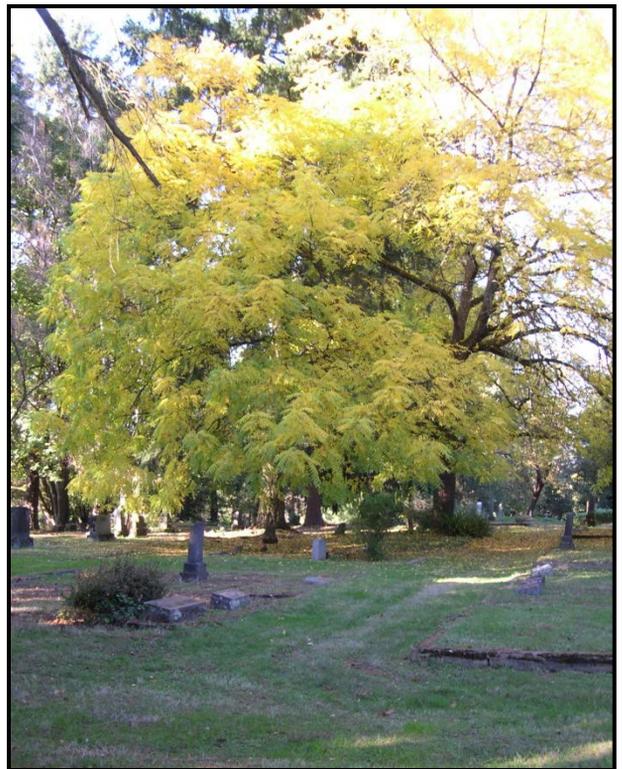
The re-enactors were excellent actors and clearly enjoyed doing a "Living History" interpretation. Many had done in-depth research on the lives of the early pioneers that they were portraying. Several of the attendees expressed hope that this event will be put on again next year.

SEEN RECENTLY IN THE CEMETERY



"Judge J.J. Walton" in 1873.

(Re-enactor Al LePage seeking donations of farm goods to help complete the construction of Deady Hall.)



Autumn Splendor!

(Black Walnut Tree on the Chase Lot in the Southwest Quadrant of the Cemetery.)

EUGENE PIONEER CEMETERY ENDOWMENT FUND

by Sara A. Leiman, Treasurer

Eugene

Pioneer Cemetery Endowment Fund

We aren't good at asking for money. We feel it is our privilege and responsibility as relatives of family members gone before, and as community members appreciative of the beautiful open space the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery provides. As someone once said, "just do it!"

The Fund was started nearly 30 years ago to provide a growing fund for the maintenance of and improvements to the Cemetery. Our historic grounds are NOT a perpetual care cemetery, and all upkeep and projects are either done by volunteers and family members, or through donations to the Association or Endowment Fund. Your capital contributions will be preserved permanently in the Fund to generate income to help defray expenses. To keep our Cemetery in good repair, this Fund **must** grow to keep up with increasing expenses. Please consider a donation, now or in your estate planning. Your donations are tax deductible.

BIG thanks to contributors to date in 2005 to the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery Endowment Fund:

\$500 or more:

Deahn C. Kincaid

\$100-\$249:

Gene Foley Jr.

Sara Leiman and Barbara Groffy

Mary Jean Pagter

Everett Smith

\$50-\$99:

Jerry and Joy Christian

C.C. and R.A. Harshberger

Carol and William Holeman

Clayton Jones

Julie Marlatte

Up to \$49:

Joseph Beemer

Dorothy Hall

Marvin Price

Helen Reed

Roger Smith

June Strand and Linda Miller

Carol and Ronald Thompson

Helen and Malcolm Trupp

Garth and Marie Wilson

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