

# Cemetery

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aside to pay for maintenance. Holmes said that only the fund's accrued interest can be used and money-raising efforts are on-going in an attempt to boost the total to \$500,000.

While ensuring financial stability is certainly crucial to the cemetery's future, other local residents and scholars are intrigued by its historical and sociological nature.

The first burial in the cemetery took place in 1873, the year after the railroad first arrived in Eugene and three years before the University was founded, adjunct sociology professor Doug Card said. Two-year-old Herman Zumwalt died on Sept. 23 and was buried four days later. Yet, a walk through Pioneer won't always reveal what was a sad truth of the times.

"Medical care was just terrible back then and doctors had minimal skills," Card said. "Often typhoid or smallpox would sweep through and wipe out entire families. Many times when children died young, the parents didn't even bother with a headstone. They'd probably just put up a little marker that would have disappeared a long time ago."

Those vanishing pieces of our history are being recaptured by at least one class of students in the Historical Preservation Program. Julie Osborne, an adjunct professor in the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, is sending her students into the graveyard this fall to study various aspects of cemeteries.

One group of students focuses on the area's folklore components, such as burial traditions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and how those contrast with other cultures' customs. Another group is researching physical components, such as landscape design and restoring headstones.

"A couple of students were a little hesitant at first about the project," Osborne said. "But when you study things like how American cemeteries evolved, the information makes them not so morbid."

"Besides, it's amazing how much you can learn from reading headstones."

Just seeing a small slice of someone's life engraved on a marker can generate curiosity. Even the most seemingly insignificant marker, if found in an odd place, can make a person question the story of its existence. No more than two feet from little Sara Folts' detailed headstone stands another, with just the word "BABY" etched into its face.

Untold tales abound in the cemetery, of course, but Card knows a heart-wrenching one, thanks to his countless hours of exploring the city of Eugene's history. His readings fleshed out the tale of a grave plot that reads "Brown" on its stone boundary, yet contains a marker for Edith B. Linton, who died July 10, 1929, at the age of 73.

As the story goes, Thomas Belshaw, founder of the Eugene Brass Band around 1860, hired a man named J.H. Brown to direct the group. Belshaw's daughter, Edith, was a child prodigy on piano, and as a teen-age girl, she fell in love with Brown.

Edith's parents thought she was too young to marry, so they told Brown if he went away for a year then came back with the same intentions of being married to Edith, he would receive their blessing. Brown did, and the couple eventually married.

For about 10 years, Edith and J.H. were one of Eugene's most celebrated couples — what Card called "a great, passionate love match" — with both appearing in many of the earliest music programs given at the University. In 1882, however, during a scuffle with a man named A.J. Burnison, Brown was killed, leaving Edith a widow. Burnison was acquitted of manslaughter.

Edith later remarried, to a T.D. Linton, but when Edith died, her request to be buried with her first husband was honored.

"That's such a romantic story," Holmes said, when reminded of the drama.

At least once in the past 40 years, the University has proposed different building schemes to EPCA, which would encroach on the Pioneer Cemetery property. Holmes said that officials first

tried to condemn it in 1956 and then in the 1960s wanted to build classroom space over the plot of land, with an open-air first floor so as not to disturb the actual gravesites. That suggestion was quickly rejected.

"The Pioneer Cemetery is in a very good situation," Holmes said. "It's the only valuable green space in the area, so I don't think anyone has to worry about the University taking over the land."

Unfortunately, other acts of destruction do happen on the grounds. Vandalized headstones are common and Card hoped that attention focused on Pioneer doesn't cause an increase in spoiling the area.

"I think part of the reason behind the vandalism is that people are angry at society, and it's very symbolic to have a chance to attack the past," Card said. "In a way, a newspaper article about this place is going to encourage more people to use it, and while it might encourage a small percentage to cause trouble, hopefully it will encourage just a lot more regular students to use and respect it."

That sentiment is partly what drives the Historic Preservation Program to turn its studies toward the cemetery.


"We care about the cemetery just as we care about the historic fabric that makes up our community," program director Don Petting said. "We study cemeteries because of the history of the people who are there."

Card acknowledged that the Eugene Masonic Cemetery, farther south on University Street, actually contains more of Eugene's historic figures, including the city's founders, Eugene and Mary Skinner. But, considering its proximity to the University, Card said Pioneer Cemetery deserves our appreciation as well.

"This is prime development property, and not allowing it to be altered is really a question of our values and whether or not we respect our past," he said. "I once thought it was absurd to block progress. But today, I look at this cemetery and consider its sense of history and see it as a marker for our tradition."

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