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Interment Records of The Red Mountain Cemetery, 1888-1906

**Burial records transcribed from the Interment Book
Collection 1015**

Scope and Content: Burials in the Red Mountain Cemetery, also known as the Southside Cemetery located along the western boundary of the Birmingham Zoo in Lane Park, Birmingham, Alabama.

Restrictions: Standard preservation and copyright restrictions.

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The Interment Book was a commercially produced ledger bound with the cover embossed "Record of Interment" and each page is printed with the header "Record of Interment, _____ Cemetery". Each page is 14 inches by 16 inches and double sided. Each side of a page will hold approximately 40 handwritten entries. Seventy-two of the 125 pages have entries.

The name of the cemetery was written in at the top of a few pages and varies: 'South Side', 'New South Side' and 'Bham South Side'. This name was apparently the common, public name appearing in City Directories but the cemetery was referred to as the Red Mountain Cemetery in the formal records of the City of Birmingham.

Each page has columns as noted in the following record, except for "Comments" which consists of notes that were written amongst the records and also the clarifications and remarks of the transcriber. Entries that are blurred or otherwise questioned by the transcriber are enclosed in brackets '[]'. Due to obvious poor spelling and the difficulty in interpreting the varied penmanship, most names and comments are printed as best the transcriber could interpret. Where the word seemed obvious under the 'Cause of Death', the apparent meaning is typed and the attempted spelling from the Interment Book is placed in parentheses ().

The Interment Book lists burials from July 1888 to July 1905. Information in the following record is as it appears in the Interment Book with spelling as could be interpreted from the script. Entries as 'unknown', 'not supplied', or 'x' for age of still borns were copied from the original.

Generally accepted as a pottersfield, there are purchases noted inside the back cover:

1. "Hassksin bought [blurred] lot no 90 gave noat."
2. "George Parker bought north half of 91 gave noat."

3. "Simmons bought south half of 92 pd cash."
4. "A of Family bought north half of lot 92 pd cash."
5. "J. W. Walker bought lot 94 paid 1000 Oct 5 1889."
6. "Jennie Beesley bought bought [repeated] south half of 91."

The following interment entries seem to correspond with the above purchases:

- #1. Elizabeth Hoskiss, 22 August 1889, age 2, died of diarrhea, buried in Block 4, lot 90.
- #2. Eliza Parker, 15 April 1889, age 23, died of pneumonia, buried in Block 4, lot 91.
- #3. Isaac Simmons, 2 September 1889, age 54, died of malarial fever, buried in Block 4, lot 92.
- #4. Five different family names are listed as buried in Block 4, lot 92 over a 17-year period.
- #5. The child of Sallie Watson, 6 October 1889, age 1 yr 3 months, cause unknown, buried in Block 4 lot 94.
- #6. There are two infants shown to be buried in the south ½ of lot 91 who died in April and October of 1890.

A total of 36 individuals are marked as buried in Block 4. In each instance 'Block 4' was clearly entered in the record. The next entry would return to specifying 'Row' and 'Lot'.

There are also 25 loose, single sided pages of the same description that are each entitled "Record of Interments, Red Mountain Cemetery, month of ____/____." These were printed by 'Dispatch Print, Birmingham'. The first four pages note that pages H and I are full in the book and are continued on these pages. The first three pages begin with 'Infant of' for May 1898 and ends September 1906. There are 21 pages marked January 1905 to September 1906 that lists all burials in chronological order by each month. Most of the burials before July 1905 are also found in the Interment Book. Names and additional information found only in the loose pages are noted with an asterisk (*) after the surname entry or other detail added.

The total number of interments is 4,711. The Jefferson County Board of Health 'Record of Cemeteries' as it appears in the Partial Inventory of Cemeteries in Jefferson County¹, 1941 at first stats "several hundred graves". An unidentified individual wrote in 4,767 but this probably did not take into account the duplicates that were on the 25 loose pages of interments.

No map, explanation of the arrangement or drawing to show the extent of the cemetery is known to exist. Numbers and letters refer to the blocks, rows and lots with some being designated north, south, east and west.

Physicians associated with the interments.

The following are those recorded as Physician in Charge of interments in order of appearance in the interment records. Full names and addresses are from the Birmingham City Directory of the period.

Dr. John C. Dozier – office, 117 ½ 21st; residence, 313 23d. He was employed as the City Health Officer in 1888. The City Physician in 1888 is Dr. A. T. Henley.

¹ Birmingham Public Library (BPL), F332 .J4 P37 1941

Dr. Henry N. Rosser - office, 2012 ½ 1st Avenue N; residence, 502 19th St N. Name often appears as Russer in the 1895 records.

Dr. Jeff D. Gibson – office, 2031 ½ 2nd Avenue; residence 2310 7th Avenue.

Dr. William Henry Wilder – office, 2031 ½ 2^d Ave; residence, 1701 7th Avenue. He was employed as the City Physician in 1897.

Dr. Thomas D. Parke – office, County Health Office, 209-10 Chalifoux Building (sw corner of 1st and 19th St.); residence, 728 West 20th St. N. He was employed as the City Physician in 1895 and 1899.

Dr. Charles Whelan – office, 212 ½ 20th St N, residence, 607 21st St. N. He was the City Physician in 1902, 1911 and 1912.

Dr. Jas. M. Mason – office, 334-6 Hood Bldg, residence, 2010 13th Ave So. He only signed for a few burials in 1902.

Dr. Robert B. Harkness – office, 109 ½ N 20th; residence 1101 N 25th. Name appeared for interment records in 1905. He was the City Health Officer in 1906-1910.

Description and Early History of the Land

Wm Pullen, Sr served in the Revolutionary War and was awarded a 160-acre tract ‘in the Western Lands’, which in 1776 were west of the Appalachian Mountains. Mr. Pullen chose to take his family into the new state of Alabama. His claim is described as the E1/2 of NE1/4 of Sec 7, Tp 18 (79.88 acres) from the USA Jan 7, 1822 per Certificate 2495.

Another military land grant is listed in the Alabama Tract Book page 118: USA to Joseph Byers. 29.98 acres, Jan 16, 1855, Certificate No. 32174.

These parcels passed through several owners until the City of Birmingham purchased 200 acres in 3 parcels in September 1896, February 1889 and 1902. The 1896 legal description is: W 1/2 of NW 1/2 (80 A). Sec 8, Tp 18, R 2 W and SW 1/4 (40 A) Sec 5 Tp 18, R 2 W, Quit Claimed by Wm. P. Hickman, A. Eubank et al, Vol. 211, pg 436, \$21,000 Aug 31, 1896.

In 1889 the City purchased “Part of SW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Sec 5 Twp 18s, Range 2w No of Cahaba Rd. Part of W 1/2 NW 1/4 of Sec 8 Twp 18s Range 2W No of Cahaba Rd. (Zoo) E1/2 of NE 1/2, Sec 7, Tp 18, R 2 W (80 A)” Warranty Deed, Vol. 214, pg 111, Feb 16, 1889, from the Irondale Co, Mr. Ellis Phelan, Pres., for \$8,000.

Records at the Jefferson County Board of Health Bureau of Records and Vital Statistics show that a cemetery was established in February 1893 on the "west side of the road" to be used as a Potter's field in connection with the nearby pest houses. Since only Cahaba Road existed at that time, the records imply that only the area within current Birmingham Zoo. [Lane Park Road was built in 1939.] The report states that the cemetery was abandon in 1909 when the Ketona Potters Field was opened and that the 4,767 graves were left in place. There has been local speculation that some of the graves were moved to the Union Cemetery on Hollywood Blvd but no records support this. [Note: The first burials were July 1888 and actual count is 4, 711 burials.]

Documentation and Research

The Acts of Alabama, from 1870 through 1897 failed to yield any actions by the Alabama Legislature toward the incorporation nor legislative actions toward Southside, Red Mountain nor Oak Hill Cemeteries. Subject search of general and local laws was done for for the terms Birmingham, cemeteries, charters, incorporations, Jefferson County, Oak Hill, public health, Red Mountain and Southside.

Review of the microfilm of the Minutes of the Commissioners Court, Jefferson County, February 12, 1883 through August 30, 1891² had numerous references for payments to various funeral directors, etc for the burials of paupers and unknown deceased individuals but never referred to where the bodies were to be buried.

In the Historical Atlas of Alabama,³ Vol. 2, Cemetery Locations by County, edited by W. Craig Remington, Dept of Geography, U of Al, Tuscaloosa, 1999:

p. 293, "Red Mountain – locale 275-3-S, T18S R2W Sec 8 – See Lane Park."

p. 290, "Lane Park – also known as Red Mountain Cemetery; est. around 1893; approx. 5,000 graves, cemetery last used around 1909 (see note 8) – based on Jeff. Co. Board of Health, Bureau of Records & Vital Statistics, unpublished manuscript held by BPL".

The unpublished manuscript referred to above is "A Partial Inventory of Cemeteries in Jefferson County, AL"⁴.

From the Birmingham Post Jan 17, 1934: Mayor A. O. Lane was responsible for the September 9, 1896 purchase for \$21,000 and the February 16, 1889 land purchase for \$8,000. A 1929 appraisal valued for the property was \$1,000,000. Mayor Lane described the area as: "This tract of land is known to carry a heavy vein of red ore deep under its surface. It is well watered, heavily timbered and picturesque. Its possibilities as Birmingham's greatest playground and beauty spot are manifold."

In a review of the Birmingham city directories, the following entries were found:

1887 - The Birmingham City Directory, Chas. W. Anson & Co. Publisher does not list any cemeteries.

1888 - The Birmingham, Suburban & Bessemer Directory of 1888 by R. L. Polk, page 29 lists four cemeteries but neither Red Mountain, Southside nor another nearby.

1889 - The 1889 and 1890 Birmingham City Directories by R. L. Polk Co. under the Cemetery designation, lists 'Southside Cemetery – P. H. Smith, Sexton: 3 miles south of city.' City directories continue to identify this as Southside or South Side Cemetery while Birmingham City records refer to it as Red Mountain Cemetery.

² BPL Archives, AR 1310

³ BPL G 1340 H57 v2

⁴ BPL F332 .J4 P37 1941

1899 – City Directory, the Officers of City Government in the City Directory identifies ‘Oak Hill Cemetery Sexton – J. P. Lambert’ and ‘Red Mountain Cemetery Sexton – S. M. Cunningham.’ In following years, Mr. Cunningham’s middle initial is also recorded as H, F and M but his name cannot be found in the residential listings to confirm the correct initial

1900 - Maloney’s Birmingham City Directory of 1900, p. 54 under the heading of Cemeteries identifies ‘Southside Cemetery – On Red Mountain, three miles south of city.’

1901 - Under the Officers of City Government in the City Directory identifies ‘Oak Hill Cemetery Sexton – J. P. Lambert’ and ‘Red Mountain Cemetery Sexton – S. H. Cunningham.’

1905 - The Birmingham City Directory by R. L. Polk Co. in the designation ‘Cemetery’, page 29 lists ‘Southside Cemetery, on Red Mountain, 3 miles south of city’ while under officers of the City Government on page 22 lists ‘Sexton of Red Mountain Cemetery, S. F. Cunningham.’

1910 – The last City Directory to list Mr. Cunningham as Sexton of Red Mountain Cemetery though the location of the cemetery continues to be listed until 1928.

1916 - The City Directory lists Southside Cemetery, on Red Mountain, 3 miles s of city but under Officers of the City Government no sexton is listed. Dr. Chas. Whelan is listed as City Physician, whose name often appears as the Physician in Charge for the Red Mountain interments.

1917 - The City Directory lists Dr. Cecil D. Gaston as City Physician.

1928 - Birmingham City Directory of 1928 – page 1519 under Cemeteries, “Southside Cemetery, 3 miles s of city” makes its last appearance. It is not listed in future directories.

Notes found in the records of the City of Birmingham:

In the proceedings of the City Commission⁵ of 1889-91 are the following reports:

City Treasurer, p. 26;

Receipts – Southside Cemetery Sundries

Aug \$ 5.00

Sep \$19.90

Nov \$14.75

Dec \$ 6.25

Disbursements

Apr \$182.37 Cemetery Fence

Receipts

Cemetery Graves – total for year \$1,100 [This must include or it may be just for Oak Hill Cemetery since Southside used only 180-200 graves a year at \$2 per grave.]

Bookkeeper’s Report on page 35;

‘S.S. Cemetery Bonds for purchase of S.S. Cemetery \$29,000.’

and

‘S.S. Cemetery Bonds turned over to owners of land for S.S. Cemetery \$29000

⁵ Proceedings Birmingham Board of Commissioners, (Birmingham Public Library JS 13 .B62)

[This seems to imply that Southside Cemetery was already functioning when purchased.]

Receipts:

From sale of cemetery lots	\$ 951.92
From sale of cemetery graves	\$1,100.00
From Southside Cemetery	\$ 45.90

City Auditor –

Ledger Balance for 1889

Oak Hill Cemetery, expense	\$ 1,416.34
Southside Cemetery, expense	\$29,337.50

Inventory

Oak Hill Cemetery	\$ 4,477.25
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Report of the Sexton of Oak Hill cemetery, page 103:

Receipts	\$2,051.92
Expenses	952.93

“December: County orders credited to S.S. Cemetery - \$277.50.”

1890 - Under Officers of the City of Birmingham, members of the Standing Committee for Cemeteries are J. M. Dean, Geo. M. Morrow and W. C. Rabb.

1890 - In the Officer's Reports are:

Treasurer, page 28

Cemetery lots	\$1,476.00
Cemetery graves	\$ 916.00
Cemetery, Southside	\$ 550.90

City Auditor

Oak Hill department	\$2,120.96
Southside Cemetery department	\$ 443.25

Bookkeeper, page 38

Warrants redeemed

Oak Hill Cemetery	\$326.90
Southside Cemetery	\$145.65

1892 - In the January 1, 1892 report for the preceding year:

Treasurer – Receipts

Cemetery lots	\$2,197.28
Cemetery graves	\$ 964.75
Southside Cemetery	\$ 388.00

1896 - Mayor's Annual Report to the Board of Aldermen, January 1896

[The following report is among other city business, including a report on Oak Hill Cemetery.]

“RED MOUNTAIN CEMETERY

The same arrangement, which we found in operation at this cemetery, has been continued during the past year, namely: The city furnishing the ground and the county interring the pauper dead in the same. You have from time to time been fully advised as to my views in regard to the proper

use to make of the larger body of land not needed for pauper graves, namely: To establish there a reformatory and work farm. This will be done some day, just as soon as the hearts and heads of our people become aroused to this fearfully needed institution.”

1905 - The ‘Report of the Sexton Red Mountain Cemetery’, January 12, 1906⁶ states that during the year 1905, 186 graves were used at \$2.00 per grave. “The city owns two hundred acres of land, known as the Red Mountain Cemetery about three miles south of the city, over Red Mountain. In sections 5, 7, and 8 as follows: E ½ of the NE ¼ S 7, T18, R2W, 80 acres. W ½ of the NW ¼ S8, T18, R2W, 80 acres. The SW ¼, of the SW ¼ S5, T18, R2W, 40 acres, 200 acres. This property is on the southside of Pine Ridge, and lies north of the Oxmoor and Irondale road, the Twenty-sixth street macadam road crosses a part of this land.

The most of this land is well timbered with pine and oak, and is very valuable to the city. I go over this property every day to see that no one is cutting timber or trespassing on it.

In the SW ¼, of S7, T18, R2W, and along the west boundary of said land is the cemetery containing about six acres and is being kept confined to as small a place as is practicable.

In the SW ¼, of S5, T18, R2w, and near the SW corner of said section, the smallpox hospital is located, there are about six acres enclosed with a wire fence, there are several large and commodious houses inside of this enclosure for taking care of patients brought there.

In this same S, T, R, but north of the smallpox hospital is a rock quarry where stone has been gotten for curbing, along First Avenue between Eighteenth and Twenty-first streets. There is no chirt or gravel pits on this land.

There are two fine and never failing springs on the property and several small branches. This property is increasing very fast in value, being about three miles from the city, and the property around it is being developed.

Respectfully submitted, S. F. Cunningham, Sexton.”

1906 - City Auditor reports:

Receipts – cemetery lots	\$1,031.06
Expenditures – cemeteries	#3,795.15

1907 - In the Annual Report Sexton Red Mountain Cemetery, April 10, 1907⁷, Mr. Cunningham’s report gives only the statistics of the operation: 183 graves used, average 15 ¼ graves per month as compared to 186 graves in 1905. S. F. Cunningham.

1908 - In Mayor’s annual message the value of cemeteries was:

*Estimated value of unsold lots July 1, 1907 --	\$25,000.00
Lots sold July 1 to December 31, 1907-----	- <u>2,704.01</u>
	\$ 22,295.99
*Red Mountain, estimated value-----	<u>120,000.00</u>
Total -----	\$142,295.99

(*Values estimated by committee of citizens.)⁸

⁶ Annual Message and Reports of the City of Birmingham, 1905

⁷ Annual Message and Reports of the City of Birmingham, 1906

⁸ Annual Message and Reports of the City of Birmingham, 1907, p. 52.

In that same yearly report, S. F. Cunningham as Sexton of Red Mountain Cemetery reported the use of 205 graves.⁹ (These would have been graves used in 1906.)

The Tennessee Coal Iron and Railway Company 1908 map of the Birmingham District labels the 'Red Mountain Cemetery'.

Pest houses (6?) were maintained in this area, possibly from 1873(?) until WW I when they were burned according to Dr. George Eubanks' daughter, Mrs. Al C. Garber, Sr. to whom I spoke in 1975. Dr. Eubanks cared for the patients at the pest house. His 55-acre farm was located approximately where the West Course of the B'ham Country Club is now. His driveway began on Cahaba Rd, which at that time was a dirt road and ran through the present Plaza of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and what is now North Lane in Mountain Brook. Dr. Charles Whelan is also listed as a pest house physician in the interment records of Red Mountain Cemetery. The pest houses are also mentioned in the 1905 Report of the Sexton of Red Mountain Cemetery.

1910 - In May 1910 a tent city was erected at the east end of Park Place in the northeast (upper area) of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens as a TB sanatorium. This is recognized by a historical marker at the corner of Park Lane and Cahaba Road as the first effort to aid TB victims in North Alabama by the Anti TB Association of Jefferson County. [This started operation four years after the last recorded interment at Red Mountain.]

1934 - Mayor George B. Ward succeeded after a 4 ½ year campaign, to have the area known as Red Mountain Park officially designated as Lane Park in honor of Judge Alexander Oscar Lane, who had served as mayor of Birmingham for four terms, Circuit Court Judge from 1907-1911, member of the first city commission from 1911 to 1915. The Birmingham City Commission passed a resolution January 16, 1934, irrevocably dedicating the above description to be a park under the name of Lane Park to honor the late Alexander Oscar Lane. This was done at the request of George Ward in the fall of 1933. Recorded in Minute Book A-18, page 92.

1935 - Mr. Thomas Brooks was the landscape designer for the WPA from 1935-40 and worked with the newly formed Birmingham Federation of Garden Clubs that sponsored the planting of over 5,000 trees and shrubs to form Lane Park Arboretum which covered a portion of the current Zoo. The work and expenses are documented in a copy of his report to the WPA in 1938 but does not mention anything about graves in the area.

1964 – Birmingham Post Herald, May 23, 1964 reported that workmen removing dirt from a spot near the new rose garden of the botanical Gardens had uncovered at least three graves, facing east and the bones of one skeleton was fairly well preserved. Other items retrieved were flint chips, a couple of copper items similar to shoe lace tips, a small fastener as used on ladies' apparel and a broken bottle with the raised letters 'Birmingham'. Signs of a wooden casket were plainly visible. No information has been found as to what action was taken.

⁹ Annual Message and Reports of the City of Birmingham, 1907, p. 227.