Topeka Cemetery
Trolley Tour, Railroad Days 2000

Hosted by
Historic Topeka, Inc. in partnership with RAILROAD DAYS

Topeka Cemetery, 1601 SE 10th, is the oldest chartered cemetery in Kansas, established in 1859 by an act approved by the territorial governor and legislative assembly of the territory of Kansas. Dr. F.L. Crane, a city founder, was assigned all rights to the cemetery on December 8, 1859, and had built the house that remains on the cemetery grounds in 1854 for $65.33. The house is currently being used as the cemetery office. The barns on the property were built in 1880 and originally used as horse barns for the race track. The 90-acre cemetery has approximately 33,000 graves.

The Topeka Journal reported in May 30, 1914: "The Topeka cemetery undoubtedly has more beautiful monuments and private vaults than that possessed by any other city the size of Topeka in any other country. Many prominent landscape artists have pronounced the general plat of the Topeka cemetery to be the best arranged of any cemetery in the country."

Many citizens who were actively involved in the development of the Santa Fe Railroad and the city of Topeka now rest in the cemetery. Three former general managers of the Santa Fe Railroad James E. Hurley, C.W. Kouns and Rollo J. Parker are buried there. The Hurley monument was built in 1914 on a 2.5 acre plot. The monument is a solid piece of granite, 40.5 feet tall, which took a team of 26 mules to set.

Of particular interest in the 141 year old cemetery is the six free-standing mausolea and the hillside mausolea row. The mausolea were built between the 1880s and 1923. The first vault in the hillside mausolea row was originally owned by John Stoker, a funeral home director. Patrick Sherman purchased the plot in 1903. Mr. Sherman was the depot master of the Santa Fe Railroad for approximately 30 years.

The other mausolea were originally owned by W.H. Reed, Hiram O. Stanton, Ross Burns, A. I. Redden, Margaret Davis Price, Edward Henry Moeser, Charles W. Horn, the Crane family, and G.J. Mulvane. The Mulvane mausoleum has recently been restored by the Mulvane family. The Crane and Sherman vaults were used as holding vaults in the winter when graves could not be dug because of the frozen ground.

Other notable citizens of Topeka include Vice President Charles Curtis, Guilford Gage, Cyrus K. Holliday and Jane C. Stormont. Five former governors of Kansas, Samuel J. Crawford, George T. Anthony, Thomas Osborne, Arthur Capper and Hugo Walsh are buried at Topeka Cemetery.

Topeka Cemetery is the resting place of Edward Preston McCabe, State Auditor, the first African American to be elected to a statewide office in a Northern state. Mr. McCabe’s wife Sarah and their three children are also buried here.

In 1895, Mr. Gage erected a monument for the soldiers who died in the Civil War Battle of the Blue, October 22, 1864. The monument is a statue of a private standing at parade rest, which cost over $5,000 to erect. Mr. Gage also had a brick road laid for the monument dedication so the people wouldn't have to stand in the mud. According to accounts, approximately 10,000 people attended the dedication.

R.M. Spivey is the only Confederate soldier buried in the Topeka Cemetery. John Logan is the only War of 1812 veteran buried here. There are also indigent soldiers buried in the cemetery. Out of approximately 256 soldier graves, 24 graves do not have markers.

The cemetery originally had exclusive sections for the Topeka Orphans home, Odd Fellows lodge, Elks
lodge, Topeka Typographical Union, St. Johns Evangelical Lutheran Church and the diocese of the Kansas Episcopal church. The Jewish cemetery is located within the boundaries of the Topeka Cemetery.

In a separate section, the cemetery is the resting place for pets. In the May 29, 1930 edition of the Topeka Journal, it was reported "This (pet) plot is being enlarged this spring so as to provide more space, the result of a demand for this service."

Current improvements include a wrought iron fence being installed using funds from a Community Development Block Grant received by the Central Highland Park Neighborhood Improvement Association. The Topeka Cemetery mausolea are in the process of being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The tour guide for Railroad Days 2000 Historic Topeka Cemetery Tour was Sarah McNeive, Topeka Cemetery Board Member. The Topeka Cemetery Board raises money for the perpetual care fund. Contributions may be sent to:

TOPEKA CEMETERY TRUST
1601 SE 10th
Topeka, KS 66607

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN TOPEKA

The Shawnee County Historical Society seeks to promote the preservation of Topeka's historic neighborhoods, buildings and sites through education and advocacy. Volunteers have rallied to save countless historic properties in the city, and have sponsored special events, publications, tours, lectures, preservation awards, and fundraising for projects such as the restoration of the 1880 Ross Rowhouses, acquired by Historic Topeka, Inc. in 1993. HTI merged with the Shawnee County Historical Society in 2003.

Shawnee County Historical Society,
P.O. Box 2201, Topeka, KS 66601-2201