

An Analysis of the Barker Museum's Forest Hill Cemetery Association Reports
by Douglas Shepard, 2013

The Barker Historical Museum has at least one copy each of the printed Annual Reports for 1873, 1878, 1888, 1893, 1900 and 1915. The dates suggest there may have been a deliberate five-year interval between (assuming there was an 1883 issue) at least in the 19th Century. A search of the Cemetery Board's Minutes should make that clear.

Each printed report contains a list of the lot owners. The 1873 edition has a brief history, "origin of the Association." The reports of 1878 and 1888 simply repeat that history. The 1893 edition has a much longer "History of Forest Hill Cemetery," written by the President of the Association, Willard **McKinstry**, which gives more detail about the origins of the Cemetery and the Association. It was repeated in the 1900 and 1915 editions.

The 1915 version adds a note that the Trustees bought 10 and 4/100 acres from the Barker estate on 22 March 1911 and 58/100 acre on Newton St. from Mrs. Catherine M. **Fagan** on 7 November 1914. That increased the grounds from about 24 to some 34 acres. These two latter purchases gave the Cemetery more frontage on Newton St. to the north and east. (The street to the east was then called Glisan St.)

The earlier history explains that soon after the original nine acres were dedicated in 1855, Sections A and C were laid out into family lots. (The grounds originally covered only what are now called Sections A-H.) Section C lies immediately north of the office building (later the site of the Chapel), and Section A is immediately north of that, both running along the Lambert (then Free) St. side.

The 1893 history adds the information that in 1855 Lucius **Hurlbut** visited other "modern" cemeteries, then plotted the ground and mapped Sections A, B and C. "Most of the lots mapped were with curved lines adapted to the topography of the ground." (Another factor must have been the trend at the time toward park-like burial grounds with meandering lanes and many trees.)

The history goes on to explain that as more lots were sold and finances improved, new sections were laid out. In February 1870 the Association bought the old Fairgrounds. Walter **Scott** surveyed it and made a map showing the entire Cemetery. The history says the map shows the Cemetery divided into 24 sections comprising 1,634 lots. That is not accurate. The map actually shows the Cemetery divided into 21 sections comprising 1,788 lots, or 1,790 if Sections H and Q, very small unnumbered parcels, are included. There are several oddities about the map. Section E actually extends into the bottom half of what appears to be Section G. Where the numbering reaches the dividing path, some lot numbers are omitted. The other oddity is that the lot numbers in G begin with the number 2.

In the list of Lot Owners in the 1873 volume only Sections A-G, K and 0 are in use. There were maps glued to the inside back cover of each printed Report, although some have since been detached. The same 1873 map was repeated for each of the Reports through 1900, although the lists of Lot Owners in the editions of 1888, 1893 and 1900 include sections not shown on the 1873 map. In addition, although the two gatehouses were built and functioning by 1896, the map in the 1900 edition still refers to the greenhouse and the **Sexton's** residence/office which had been replaced.

In the 1893 list of Lot Owners, and thereafter, there is a "Soldiers' Section" given just after Section C. It is described as lying south of C and running east. In his "history" **McKinstry**

refers to the 112 Civil War veterans buried in Forest Hill Cemetery as of 1893. However, none is buried in the "Soldiers' Section."

After the purchase of the additional acreage in 1911 and 1914, the new grounds were laid out, some of the old sections were reconfigured and a new map was prepared by George E. **Troupe** of Buffalo and the revised map was engraved by the Matthews-Northrup Works of Buffalo.

However, the map still refers to the greenhouse and the residence/office. One significant addition is names for the various roads through the Cemetery. The section changes are complicated. Because the Cemetery now reached to Newton St. on the east, a fence was run along that side with another entrance about at the middle of the fence. It led directly into what was now called Highland Ave.

The unmarked oval above K and L was replaced by Section J. Section M was expanded into a full circle and renumbered. Above M, a small circle, GG, was inserted. Section T was reconfigured into multiple lots and renumbered. A small part of T at the northern end was made into FF. A large Section AA was established east of T, as well as a new Section TT. Above Highland Ave. was put an L-shaped Section BB, west of that CC and DD. Above DD and to its west was placed Section EE.

On the south, bordering Pioneer Cemetery, Section S was further subdivided and renamed SS. A small triangular section of S near Section 0 was kept with its original numbers, interrupted where the rest of S had been changed. That left grave lots 1-12 and 71-91 in S. The Soldiers' Section south of Section C remained in the list of Lot Owners, with the same names as in 1893, although it is not shown on this 1915 map either. It seems to refer to the blank, unnumbered section at the southwest end of Section E. The Lot Owners listing for this section is the same in the 1893, 1900 and 1915 volumes. The entries and lot numbers are: **Baldwin**, William, 2; **Brosch**, Henry, 4; **Emerson**, Elizabeth A., 8; **Fairless**, Richard, 5; **Holt**, John, 6; **Harmer**, Harriet G., 9; **Harrington**, Thomas, 1; and **Rogers**, Edward, 3.

This seems to indicate there were at least nine lots, all sold except number 7. [Lot 7 was sold 24 March 1874.] [Lot 10 is in the roadway according to the Lot book.]