

The legitimate question to put to any Mid West townsman used to be “*From where did you come?*” As you see Cedar Rapids would have been no exception. As word spread of the opportunities brought by the mills, the railroad and other industries, so came the people. The influence of Judge Greene brought the English and Scottish. The Sinclair family represented the first of the Irish population. Every Central European country is represented in the population, It is said that in 1852 twenty five percent of the population was of Czech heritage. By the early 1900’s the Syrian and Greek Merchants made the city home, and although the African American population was here, the numbers increased with the transfer of the Douglas Starch Works to Penick and Ford, a Louisiana company, who brought workers familiar with their process with them. The question about a segregated cemetery is always asked. As you can see, Oak Hill Cemetery was never divided in that manner, but you will see definite areas, as tradition tells us people select the location, based on wanting to be close to those who lived in the same neighborhood, belonged to the same church, were involved in the same organizations or held the same traditions as you did.

*With over 150 years of area history,
and more than 10,000 known burials
it is impossible to include everyone
who has in some way contributed to
the community into one map.
We invite you to explore the stories,
celebrate the memory of these people,
give them the respect they deserve and
share their stories with others.*

Explore your place in history

Lots are still available



Oak Hill Cemetery Association

1705 Mt. Vernon Rd. S. E.
Cedar Rapids Iowa

*Oak Hill Cemetery is non-profit lot owner association dedicated
to preserving the heritage of Linn County, Iowa.*

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Early Immigration and Ethnic Communities

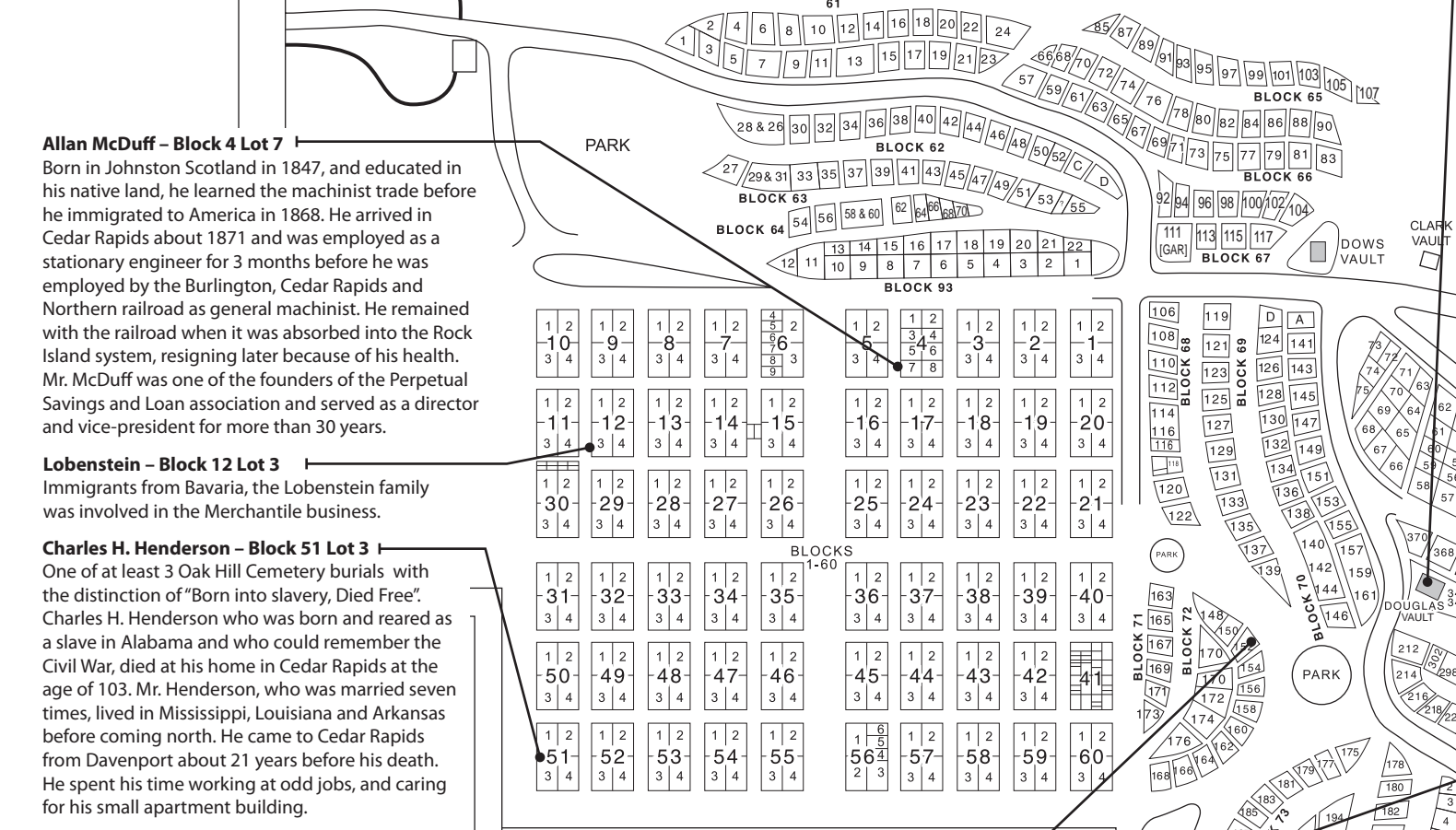
***As Oak Hill Cemetery begins it’s 155th Year,
we invite you to explore your place in history***

*It is impossible to include the story of everyone buried at Oak Hill Cemetery at this time,
but if your family has a special story to share please let us know for inclusion in future maps.*

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George Douglas Sr., immigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1845. As a stone mason, he found a demand for his craftsmanship in the building of stone arch bridges and railroad tressle works across North America. In a quarter of a century of intense activity with the railroad, George Douglas acquired the capital to use for the investments and business ventures. The Douglas family invested their capital in businesses that relied on agriculture and a reliable, well-educated labor force made up largely of German and Czech immigrants. They established a shoe factory under the name, Gates, Gifford and Douglas; a cracker factory under the name Jones and Douglas, until it was sold to the National Biscuit Company; and with fellow Scotsman John Stuart and his son Robert, the partnership was developed first for the North Star Oatmeal Mills, then for the Douglas and Stuart Mills in Chicago. Working first in his father's cereal business, **George Bruce Douglas** later became a partner of the business his father co-founded, when the mills were merged into The Quaker Oats Company. George and his brother **Walter Douglas** founded Douglas & Company, which originally processed linseed oil. In 1903, the company switched over to processing corn into starch and related products. In May of 1919, a grain dust explosion destroyed most the buildings on the ten-acre site - the worst industrial accident in Cedar Rapids history. This was the beginning of what we know today as Penford Products Company, as the plant was re-built by Penick and Ford, a subsidiary of a New Orleans Louisiana corn and cane plant.



Allan McDuff – Block 4 Lot 7

Born in Johnston Scotland in 1847, and educated in his native land, he learned the machinist trade before he immigrated to America in 1868. He arrived in Cedar Rapids about 1871 and was employed as a stationary engineer for 3 months before he was employed by the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern railroad as general machinist. He remained with the railroad when it was absorbed into the Rock Island system, resigning later because of his health. Mr. McDuff was one of the founders of the Perpetual Savings and Loan association and served as a director and vice-president for more than 30 years.

Lobenstein – Block 12 Lot 3

Immigrants from Bavaria, the Lobenstein family was involved in the Merchantile business.

Charles H. Henderson – Block 51 Lot 3

One of at least 3 Oak Hill Cemetery burials with the distinction of “Born into slavery, Died Free”. Charles H. Henderson who was born and reared as a slave in Alabama and who could remember the Civil War, died at his home in Cedar Rapids at the age of 103. Mr. Henderson, who was married seven times, lived in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas before coming north. He came to Cedar Rapids from Davenport about 21 years before his death. He spent his time working at odd jobs, and caring for his small apartment building.

Frederick Schauwecker – Block 72 Lot 152

Born in Cedar Rapids in 1896 the son of Theodore & Emma Schauwecker, German parents who had lived in the French speaking Alsace-Lorraine area. He grew up speaking fluent English, German and French. He learned his first musical notes from Lulu Engleman Welty his piano teacher through his high school days. After high school graduation in 1915, he attended the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago and studied several years in France and Germany under famous European instructors. He began his career about 1920. Because of his artistic duties and tours Mr. Schauwecker saw many parts of the world, and his passports were given to Coe College. He also left the bulk of his estate to Coe College to establish endowed scholarships in music.

Theophilus Gottlieb and Susanna Dahler Krebs – Block 9 Lots 4-7

Theophilus Gottlieb and Susanna Dahler Krebs, originally of Berne Switzerland, were founders of the Krebs Greenhouse and Market Garden on the southwest edge of West Cedar Rapids in 1869. Their five sons and two daughters grew up in the area and the greenhouse and garden flourished through at least four generations. The family name is also associated with businesses that include Krebs Monument, and the Dutch Maid Dairy.

Thomas M. Sinclair – Block 76 Lot 210

Thomas M. Sinclair of Belfast Ireland, arrived in Cedar Rapids in 1871 to launch the T.M. Sinclair Company, carried forward by his son, Robert S. Sinclair. The first attempt at a plant was not well received when it was located too close to downtown, and waste and by-products were disposed of in the Cedar River. After a compromise in location, the plant became a success and major employer for many years. This gravesite overlooks the area know for the Sinclair Packing Plant and the neighborhood that developed around it.

Robert Palmer – Block 161 Lot 5

Born in Marlborough England, Mr Palmer came to Cedar Rapids as manager for the R. C. Dun Company holding that post until 1920. Joining with a group of others, he was an organizer of the original Cedar Rapids Savings Bank, and later became the manager of the bank building. Serving as treasurer of many of the community organizations with which he was affiliated, he served in that capacity when Andrew Carnegie donated \$75,000 to the city for a public library building.

Cecil Reed – Block 180

Cecil Reed, the first African American and only black Republican elected to the Iowa House of Representatives was 50 when the federal Civil Rights Act was signed into law in 1964. In 1949 he became the first African American Chamber of Commerce member in the state of Iowa

Harry Carter Bird – Block 179 Lot 13

Although there is no marker, on the lot, Harry Carter Bird, an American Indian is buried here.

Stuart Family– Block 86 Lot 557

John Stuart and his son, Robert set out from Ingersoll Ontario Canada to expand their interest in the oatmeal industry in the United States. They had settled upon Cedar Rapids when their ambition to produced 300 barrels of oatmeal a day could be realized by the quality and quantity of oats raised in the area. They had purchased a building and were fitting it to work as a mill when the elder Stuart fractured his leg. Robert saw the advisability of finding a partner and it is said that he met George Douglas at a service at the First Presbyterian Church. As a fellow Scotsman they took to each other at once. It was with further financial investment Stuart established Douglas and Stuart in Chicago, which eventually merged into Quaker Oats. Stuart Hall at Coe College named for this family.

W. F. Severa – Block 96 Lot 93

Born in Czechoslovakia in 1853, he came to the US in 1868 as a penniless immigrant, working his way from Racine Wisconsin to Cedar Rapids Iowa, and then to Belle Plaine in 1876 where he prepared himself practically for the Pharmaceutical profession. In 1880 as a registered pharmacist he returned to Cedar Rapids and bought a drug store. The business was a success from the start, largely because Mr. Severa was engaged in the manufacture of certain proprietary medicines based on tested prescriptions. Over time demand for the products he was manufacturing grew and after disposing of the retail drug business, in 1903 he founded the W. F. Severa Company. Distribution of preparations known as the Severa Family remedies went worldwide and at one time the Severa Almanacs advertising the products were printed in eleven languages.

Richard Gomer – Block 142 Lot 1271

Company 54 Mass. Inf. 1845-1895 this company was the inspiration for the movie *Glory*

Amelia Jackson Culp –

As a charter member of the Bethel A.M.E. Church she filled every office in that institution. For four years she had been a missionary in Africa and on her return she spent time lecturing.

Rev. Andrew Ford – Block 173 Lot 47

Born June 29, 1845 on a farm adjoining that owned by George Washington Mount Vernon Va., he served in the Civil War with Company H, First Negro Infantry. Rev. Andrew Ford, with his wife, Romelier, served as the first associate pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Cedar Rapids when it was organized in 1871.

Tzu Nien Wang – Block 169 Lot 3

Tzu Nien Wang was born in Hinghua China about 1900. As a student at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, he died of Tuberculosis.

Obadian B. Clare – Block 156 Lot 1314

An African American born in New York in 1851, he moved to Cedar Rapids in 1880. On October 9, 1880 he received a patent for his invention, a trestle that could be folded compactly and easily transported and set up to support heavy carpets for beating to remove dust.

The Syrian Orthodox Society – Block 166

Before the establishment of St. George Cemetery, the Syrian Orthodox Benevolent Society was organized. It was the foundation of the St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church. The Society purchased a series of lots for use by it's church members. In addition to first generation United States citizens, those buried there had birthplaces such as Aithy Syria, Jibjaneen Lebanon, Aris Greece. Noteworthy were the burials of Mike Trialonis of Greece, and John Hatzakis of Cato Asites, Crete. These two young single men were killed in the Douglas Starch Works Explosion in 1919.

John & Josephine Letovsky– Block 159 Lot 1347

Mr. Letovsky, and his father edited the first Czech weekly paper in Cedar Rapids, the Slovan Americky.

Warren A. Hansen – Block 159 Lot 1413

Mr. Hansen was publisher of Kvinden Og Hjeninut, a Norwegian women's magazine, for 50 years in Cedar Rapids. A monthly illustrated journal for the Norwegian and Danish Women in America with a Swedish Edition.

Vaclav Hlavaty – Block 159 Lot 1401

In 1891, the congregation of the Hus Memorial Presbyterian Church of Cedar Rapids called upon Vaclav Hlavaty to be their minister. The following men who served as elders of the church may also be buried at Oak Hill. F. Nemecek, Block 72 Lot 176 Jos. A. Popelka, Block 132 Lot 5 John Dudycha Block 157 Lot 1318 or Block 166 Lot 51 Frank Stary Block 162 Lot 2