



Orchard Municipal Cemetery shortly after completion of the rock fence. This property was a gift from the City of Grand Junction from General William Palmer, builder of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. In 1924, with permission from the executor of Palmer's estate, this property which was to have been Palmer Park was laid out as a cemetery. City of Grand Junction photo

OM Cemetery Centerpiece of Remembrance

By Kathy Jordan

In 1888, after the completion of the bridge over the Grand (now Colorado) River allowed easy access for horse and buggy travel to Orchard Mesa, Elizabeth Butt filed on the 40 acres of land that would become the Orchard Mesa Cemetery.

Then she sold the acreage to N.N. Smith and George Thurston.

In 1890, the Masonic Lodge purchased five acres of that property, after selling their gravesites at Hope Cemetery, northwest of the town, back to the Grand Junction Town & Investment Company a year earlier.

Undertaker Melvin O. Whitehead purchased the remaining cemetery land from Thurston and Smith in 1893 and began selling gravesites for burial.

According to the property deed, the "subdivision is for the purpose of a cemetery." Cemeteries were platted like a city, divided into blocks then lots or plots, divided by roads. Undertakers owned the cemeteries and sold gravesites to families.

In 1894 Whitehead sold one-half acre piece of property located just north of the well-known Potters Field to Mesa County for pauper burials.

At the south end of Road 26 ¼ on the incline outside the proper boundaries of the Orchard Mesa Cemetery are two gravesites surrounded by blocks of sandstone. These gravesites were purchased from Whitehead by two pioneer families. J.J. Allen

purchased his plot in 1893, and James Kent purchased his plot, just north of Allen, in 1896.

In 1898 Whitehead sold all the remaining unsold property within the Orchard Mesa Cemetery to Harvey Bucklin.

In 1898 The Woman's Relief Corps No. 17, an auxiliary of the Grand Army of the Republic, purchased one-half acre from Bucklin for the burial of Civil War Veterans.

The International Order of Odd Fellows purchased their three-acre section from Bucklin 1898.

Bucklin sold the remaining unsold gravesites to Undertaker A.A. Gourley in 1901.

Gourley sold to Harry Cannon in January of 1908. Cannon then sold to W.H. Bannister in April of 1908, and W.H. Bannister sold to Ollie Bannister in 1921.

In 1922 Ollie Bannister sold all the unsold gravesites to the City of Grand Junction for \$3,500.

Orchard Mesa Municipal Cemetery

General William Palmer, builder of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, purchased a great deal of land where the track was being laid and the land west of 26 ¼ Road and north of B ¾ Road. That property is now the Municipal Cemetery.

In 1907 Palmer offered to donate more than 50 acres to the City of Grand Junction for use as a park. Palmer had two stipulations: The city would agree to spend \$1,000 a year for 10 years for improvements, and the city would keep the property. Voters rejected the offer. In 1911 the offer was made again, and residents voted in favor of the offer. In 1924, with permission from the executor of Palmer's estate, this property which was to have been Palmer Park was laid out as a cemetery.

Fairview Cemetery on Orchard Mesa

The Fairview Cemetery on Orchard Mesa, the small area surrounded by a split rail fence, is located on the east side of 26 ¼ Road, north of Orchard Mesa Calvary Cemetery.

. The Fairview property was first owned by Robert E. Fletcher and Benton Cannon in 1887. The Grand Junction Town and Investment Company acquired the land in 1904. The city then sold the property to W.H. Bannister, who developed the cemetery.

In 1920 W.H. Bannister sold to Ollie Bannister, who sold to T.F. Callahan, a local mortician, in 1921. The Fairview property changed hands several times before being turned over to the Catholic Church.

According to the 19 headstones in that cemetery, 18 of the people were buried between 1907 and 1928. The 19th headstone shows that, in 2000, a family member was buried in the family site purchased from Bannister in 1907.

It has previously been reported that Orchard Mesa Fairview was a replacement for Hall's Fairview. Deeds show a few remains moved from Hall's Fairview to the Orchard Mesa Cemetery but not to Orchard Mesa Fairview, where burials started in 1907.

The plat for Orchard Mesa Calvary Cemetery is dated March 1906. The document states that the land had been surveyed, staked, platted into lots and blocks, roadways and alleys by Father Thomas H. Conway of the St. Joseph's Catholic Church for use as a cemetery.

The City of Grand Junction took over the Catholic Cemetery holdings in 1965 and added the St. Anthony section, north of the original holding.

The nine cemeteries currently used on Orchard Mesa are: Orchard Mesa, Masonic, I.O.O.F, Veterans, Municipal, Ohr Shalom, established in 1993, Fairview, Calvary, and St. Anthony.

Non-city cemeteries are Grand Junction Memorial Gardens, 2870 N. Avenue, and The Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado, 2830 Riverside Parkway.