

EOFF & CHAPLINE CEMETERY

[Contributed by Linda Fluharty.]

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GRAVES DESECRATED.

Workmen Excavating for a Street in the Old City Cemetery.

Coffins and Their Contents Turned Out by Pick and Shovel, and Carted Away to be Dumped in the Creek.

“To such base uses must we come at last,
Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
May stop a hole to keep the wind away.”

These prophetic verses of Shakespeare are verified in the ruthless destruction of graves now being done at the old city cemetery at the head of Twenty-third street. This city of the dead has outlived its usefulness, and with the recent sale of the property, it has been marked off into lots, and now a street is being graded through it. Skulls and bones, not of Caesar's, but of men identified with the history of Wheeling half a century ago, are rudely disturbed, and carried away to be dumped over the bank of Wheeling creek, or used to fill the lots of property owners.

The ground upon which the cemetery was located was given to the city by Eoff and Chapline to be used for a cemetery, with the stipulation that as soon as it should cease to be devoted to that purpose, it was to revert back to their heirs. The ground sloped gradually, and was filled with nice shade trees. It was a good location for a cemetery, there being at the time but few residences in the vicinity. When there was no more room left, the city secured the property at the east end of Sixteenth street, and when this cemetery was full the location was again changed, this time to Peninsula.

THE OLD GRAVEYARD

was the principal burying ground of the city in its day. The last burial took place about sixteen or eighteen years ago, and at that time the cemetery was in good condition. It was neatly fenced in, the graves were well kept, with an abundance of shade, flowers and shrubbery. When the authorities ceased to pay attention to it, it rapidly went to destruction.

The fence decayed and was destroyed by boys. Cows and other domestic animals were permitted to roam about among the graves without being disturbed. The boys amused themselves by starting stones on the hillside, which crashed against the tombstones and destroyed them. The trees died, and the heavy rains washed deep ruts in the

ground. On several occasions after heavy rains fragments of human bones and skulls were found in the gutter along Twenty-third street. While all this was going on no steps were taken to preserve the cemetery. Persons living in that section of the city who needed stones for building or other purposes secured them from the cemetery. The tombstones were broken, and their inscriptions almost effaced, so that they readily answered these purposes. Many relatives of persons who were buried in the cemetery, had the bodies removed, but hundreds were allowed to remain.

Some time ago the Eoff and Chapline heirs came into possession of the property, and it was afterwards sold. It has been marked off into lots, and is now known as White and Filan's addition. Some months ago, Mr. James McCracken leased a part of the land for the purpose of erecting a stable. In excavating for the foundation, the workmen turned up a number of

BONES AND SKULLS.

Last week work was commenced upon the opening of Jacob Street, from Twenty-second to Twenty-third. The property is graded to a depth of from three to ten feet below the surface, and the workmen have encountered a score of coffins in their excavations. The wood was in a fair state of preservation, but the coffins were cut with the picks, and their contents thrown out with the other dirt, to be carted away. Several skulls and other bones were thrown on the bank, and one or two small boys started to gather them up for the purpose of selling them to some junk dealer for old bones. They were prevented from doing so, however, by persons living in the vicinity, and a hole was dug Sunday night, in which all the bones which could be gathered together were buried.

A *Register* reporter was on the scene yesterday afternoon and watched the progress of the work of excavation for some time. On the side of the bank at a depth of about six feet below the surface, projected a half dozen coffins. The ends were chopped off and the bones pulled out and thrown into the carts. They were then hauled to the creek bank, near the Whittaker mill. Whole other teams carried the dirt to different sections to be used for filling. The coffins were found within a few feet from each other, and some were placed on top of others.

INDIGNATION EXPRESSED.

There has been a great deal of indignation expressed during the progress of the work at the manner in which the graves are disturbed and their contents carelessly carried away. Persons living in the vicinity thought the authorities should take the matter in hand, and whenever a grave was reached, take the coffin out carefully and give it a decent interment at the City Cemetery.

There are no marks by which the graves can be distinguished, all the tombstones having been destroyed. Several fragments of headstones are lying about, but the inscriptions cannot be read. One bears the date 1853, another 1843, and a third

1856. There yet remains considerable work of grading to be done in the cemetery, and it is not too late to take proper care of the coffins which are reached.

Certainly somebody is to blame for the present condition of affairs, although there is a difference of opinion as to who is the responsible party. There should have been a stipulation in the original deed to the city, providing for the removal of bodies, which were not taken care of by relatives or friends, before the property reverted to their heirs. Since this was not done, there is some question as to who should provide for their removal.