

2014 Brainerd History Week – Evergreen Cemetery History Walk



1950 Flood – View from Washington street showing the original office behind the vault.

Evergreen cemetery was initially organized in 1873, two years after Brainerd was founded, but was not incorporated at that time. It was used as a burying ground for several years but fell into disrepair. It was reorganized and incorporated in 1879 and we have been in continuous operation ever since.

Old News Articles: <http://www.brainerd.net/~evergreencem/news1800s.html>

(At First Avenue gate) Everything to the south, and to the west of the road that runs north from here, was part of the original cemetery grounds. In 1900, additional property was acquired lying to the northeast of this point and after clearing and surveying, burials began in 1905. This gate was not built until 1950, when the entrance at the southeast corner of the cemetery was deemed a safety hazard and was removed. The Office at its current location on 3rd Avenue was also built at this time. The railroad track you see here was originally laid down in the 1880s as a spur of the Northern Pacific Railroad serving a brickyard and a lumber mill in northeast Brainerd. The railroad was later extended into northern Minnesota over the Mississippi River bridge that is now used for Highway 3. That extension was moved and later abandoned, and this remaining short spur is all that's left of the railroad that went north out of Brainerd. Most recently it was used by the local paper mill until the mill was shuttered in the spring of 2013.

75th Anniv. booklet: <http://www.brainerd.net/~evergreencem/75thAnniversaryBooklet.pdf>

Block 12 Lot 29 - Marie DuFresne (doo FRAIN) - died 1890: Marie Wolvert was a native of Belgium, and married Joseph DuFresne in Brainerd in 1889. She died of pneumonia, three months after the birth of her son, Joseph Jr., who was sent to live with his grandparents in Michigan. Her tall monument is inscribed all in French, and names her husband and parents, a rare genealogical goldmine. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=83471732>

Block 13 Lot 27 - Jack O'Neill - died 1883: Jack O'Neill owned and operated the Last Turn Saloon, a popular place in the very early days of Brainerd. Business must have been pretty good because he has a very nice White Bronze monument (by far the largest out of about half-a-dozen in the cemetery). The name "White Bronze" was a marketing gimmick – they are actually made out of zinc and are hollow. After his death, his wife ran a saloon for a while but became best known for running a house of ill repute located where the new Crow Wing County courthouse now stands. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=55699228>

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Block 14 Lots 61-64 - Cemetery Vault: In 1902, a vault was built into the side of the hill facing Evergreen Avenue to be used for the temporary storage of bodies prior to burial or transfer elsewhere. (In later years, little kids riding by on their bicycles would challenge each other to go in there to see who would get creeped out first.) The need for temporary storage declined over the years and the vault was torn down in 1982 and the area was used for traditional burials. Sai Foo Ng is buried in this area.



Block 14 Lot 72 - Anna Mykannen - drowned 1903: In 1896, Anna Mykannen was a 19-year-old from Finland who was among a handful of women allowed to compete unofficially in the first Olympic games held in Athens, Greece. She won the gold in both endurance and speed swimming. Tragically, in 1903, she drowned in a lake just outside Brainerd when her long hair got tangled in a submerged tree stump while out swimming.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=110882718>

Block 11 Lot 12 - Robert Wilson - died 1885: Not much is known about Robert, who died at the age of 38, but his monument is the second largest “White Bronze” monument in our cemetery. “White Bronze” was a marketing gimmick – they are actually made out of zinc and are hollow, not solid.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=64666296>

Block 7 Lot 92 - William Shupe - died 1875: William Shupe was fatally injured in a hunting accident in 1875 and is one of the earliest burials in the cemetery. His headstone is the only known example in the cemetery of the thin, slate-style marker.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=71972320>

Block 8 Lot 23 - Chauncey Sleeper - died 1888: Judge Sleeper arrived in Brainerd in 1872 after serving in the Civil War. He was an attorney and real estate developer and engaged in many civic duties. He platted two additions to the City of Brainerd, built the Sleeper Opera House on what is now South 8th street, and in 1881, he built the Sleeper block, which was destroyed by fire in 1907. Although he never served on the board, he was instrumental in the re-organization of the cemetery association in 1879. He was appointed judge of the Fifteenth judicial district in 1887, shortly before his death.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=46473428>

Block 8 Lot 17 - Frank Johnson - died 1902: Frank Johnson was a partner with Newton McFadden in the McFadden Drug Company. He managed the company’s Pioneer Drug Store in Brainerd. The Johnson monument is pretty unique – a cube mounted on a pedestal and engraved on four sides with the names of family members buried in the lot.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=85971500>

Block 8 Lot 24 - Lyman P. White - died 1902: Lyman White came to Brainerd in October of 1870 when it was established as the place where the westward-expanding railroad crossed the Mississippi River. He was 60 years old at the time, a large man and full of energy. He was a land agent for a subsidiary of the Northern Pacific Railroad company and had a hand in the platting of the city of Brainerd and the sale of the lots. He built the first jail and courthouse and started several businesses as well as serving as the mayor of Brainerd. With all of these efforts toward the success of early Brainerd, he was known as the “Father of Brainerd”. He was elected the first President of the Evergreen Cemetery Association at its incorporation in 1879 and served until his death in 1902 at age 92.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=58319656>

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Block 4 Lot 68 - Robert M. Stitt - died 1913: Robert Stitt was a prominent figure in the early years of Brainerd. In the 1890s he was general manager of logging operations for the Northern Mill company. They utilized the new Brainerd & Northern Minnesota Railroad running out of NE Brainerd across the river and into the woods to haul their logs down to their sawmill in NE Brainerd. The family has one of the most distinctive monuments in the old section. It is in the shape of a cut log, lying horizontally. The grave markers are in the shape of small logs, and the lot corner markers are in the shape of small stumps.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=71994272>

Block 7 Lot 120 - Cornelius “Con” O’Brien - died 1932: Con O’Brien came to Brainerd in 1882 and was originally in the logging business. By 1900, he had founded the O’Brien Mercantile company, which was Brainerd's largest department store for many years. He also ran a grocery wholesale business. He was elected mayor twice. He had a large family – at least 13 children – so there are many descendants buried here in Evergreen and many other descendants living in the Brainerd area.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=68124198>

Block 7 Lot 119 - Lillie Williamson - died 1891: Lillie was the one-year-old daughter of William and Jane Williamson. The parents moved away soon after, and sold the rest of the lot to the Crust family. This monument and marker are unique in their detailed design, and seems to be cast out of concrete.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=64523506>

Block 7 Lot 64 - Jorgine (jor jeen) Dullum - died 1893: This monument is one of the few monuments or markers in the cemetery with an inscription in the native language of the immigrant. Jorgine’s funeral was held in the Norwegian Lutheran church on 10th street, so the language is likely Norwegian.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=111667556>

Block 12 Lot 86 - Unknown Pioneers: The remains of seven early burials during the 1870s in a long-forgotten cemetery in east Brainerd were unearthed in December of 1944 during excavations at the Northern Pacific Railway Shops. The skeletons were re-interred at Evergreen in separate graves all in the same lot and jointly marked with a gravestone with the inscription PIONEERS (on top line) DEDICATED TO THE SEVEN UNKNOWN PERSONS FOUND ON THE SHOP GROUNDS OF THE NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY IN DEC.1944. REINTERRED IN THIS SPOT MAY 13,1945, BY THE RAILWAY COMPANY.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=69877857>

((Five-minute refreshment break at four-corners intersection of Blocks 6, 7, 12, 14.))

Block 6 Lot 90 - William Ferris - died 1882: William Ferris was a prominent banker and founded the Bank of Brainerd in 1881. It later became the First National Bank and is now U.S. Bank. The First National Bank building at 6th and Front was the scene of “Baby Face” Nelson’s daring bank robbery in 1933. William’s monument is one of the largest in the cemetery. After William’s death, his son Allen followed in his father’s footsteps, becoming president of the bank in 1892 and later a state senator.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=74128925>

Block 6 Lot 78 - Casper Mills - died 1937: Casper Mills came to the area in the 1890s and was originally active up around Nisswa, later building a summer cabin there. By 1900 he was living in Brainerd and raising his family there. If the Mills name sounds familiar, it’s because his two children, Henry and Stewart, were the founders of what today has become a significant family enterprise with deep local roots. Stewart Mills started what became the Mills Fleet Farm chain of stores and Henry Mills started a Ford auto dealership which later branched out with GM and Honda dealerships.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=74650698>

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Block 6 Lot 54 - Christopher Tennis - died 1886: The inscription on the Tennis family monument not only gives his birth information, it also has the place and manner of his death – “Killed in R.R. Collision at Muskoda” on Dec. 1, 1886. Muskoda no longer exists. Having a cause of death on a monument is very rare. Christopher was a mail sorter working on a train when it collided head-on with another, sending the stacked mail against him and the heating stove. The mail caught fire, and he burned to death.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=69864053>

Block 6 Lot 44 - Jennie Raymond - died 1871: Nothing is known about Jennie. She died the year Brainerd was founded, before the first Brainerd newspaper started publishing in 1872, and there is no record of her death. Only this marker with the oldest date in the cemetery acknowledges her life.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=73936833>

Block 6 Lot 47 - Bertha Theviot - died 1937: Bertha was somewhat of a rarity in early Brainerd – a woman business owner. She owned and operated a millinery shop she started in the mid 1880s. A milliner is someone who designs and creates hats, and a millinery shop is where those hats are sold. Her husband had a dry goods business. The size of their monument is a good indicator of their success.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=70270080>

Block 6 Lot 20 - Charles “C.F.” Tift - died 1937: Nothing much is known about Charles. He worked as a railroad car repairer in the Northern Pacific Railway shops and had a wife and two children. His family was probably too poor to buy a traditional marker for his grave, so they creatively constructed one by embedding marbles in a concrete marker to spell out his name.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=70512106>

Block 6 Lot 19 - Allison and Raymond Grant - drowned 1922: Brothers Allison and Raymond Grant drowned in a boating mishap on Gull Lake in 1922. The marker for their grave is a very unique marker made of agates set into a concrete base. The agates spell out GRANT / ALLISON & RAYMOND / DROWNED / JUNE 2, 1922.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=95405238>

((People who don't want to make the trek up to the Civil War vets block can leave at this point.))

Block 5 Lot 73 - August Schultz - drowned 1908: Mr. Schultz is one of 2 recipients of the Carnegie Hero Award buried in Evergreen cemetery. The Carnegie Hero Commission chooses recipients of this award based on their bravery in putting their own lives at risk while saving, or attempting to save, someone else's life. Some die in the attempt, as August did. On June 7, he was one of several people on a steamboat excursion on Rice Lake when a railing failed, plunging a fully dressed woman into the water. He jumped in, helped her back into the boat with the assistance of others, and as he was being assisted back in, another railing collapsed, dumping a number of men into the water on top of him. As he was already exhausted from his life-saving efforts, he drowned in the subsequent chaos. We would never have known his story if his family hadn't commemorated his Hero Award on his monument.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=89204258>
<http://carnegiehero.org/awardees/>

The other Carnegie Hero Award recipient in Evergreen is Benjamin Arnold, in Block 5 Lot 53, who also died while saving someone from drowning, this time on Clark Lake up by Niswaga.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=69291672>

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Block 5 Lot 113 - Severin Koop - died 1901: Severin was one of four brothers who emigrated from Germany and initially settled in St. Joseph, MN, where they learned the merchant and grocery business from Joseph Linneman. Severin and his brother J.W. (Block 5 Lot 62) owned and operated a grocery business in Brainerd. Having one of the tallest monuments in the cemetery is a testament to his success.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=74463454>

Block 17 Lot 9 - Margaret Bush - died 1937: Margaret is the mother of Leslie “Bullet Joe” Bush, one of two major league baseball players born or raised in Brainerd (the other being “Chief” Bender). “Bullet Joe” played in the majors from 1912 through 1928 and pitched in 5 World Series.
<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=69535664>

Block 24 - Civil War Veterans: This small block was owned by the Pap Thomas Post of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic). Thirteen Civil War veterans are buried there. There are many other Civil War veterans buried in the cemetery. Some are grouped together in lots or half-lots. Others are buried with their family members in their own lots.

Block 27 Lot 2 - Dr. Werner Hemstead - died 1952: After graduating from medical school, Dr. Hemstead came to Brainerd in 1882 as the Assistant Chief Surgeon in the Northern Pacific Railroad Hospital, which was located on the west side of the river north of the railroad tracks. The hospital is gone, but the doctor’s and nurse’s quarters are still there, serving other uses. He went into private practice in 1888. He was also the mayor of Brainerd (twice) and involved in several other endeavors. His unpublished memoir, titled “As I Remember”, was discovered in a drawer at the Fine Line Hair Salon at 4th and Kingwood. That magnificently preserved building was his residence. The memoir is online in the Early Accounts web page at the Crow Wing County Historical Society website.

Block 2 - Potter’s Field: (Walk over to the main tar road east of Block 2 going south to the 1st Avenue gate.) The large area to the west with no monuments is the county-owned portion of Block 2. The lots in that area were purchased by the county in 1887 and used as a “Potter’s Field”, where people who were unable to pay for their own burials were buried at the county’s expense. These graves are mostly unmarked. The few markers that are present were probably installed years after the person’s death.

Block 34 Lot 21 - C. Elmer Anderson - died 1998: Further to the north lies C. Elmer Anderson. He served 11 years as Lieutenant Governor before becoming the 28th Governor of Minnesota in 1951. He won reelection in 1952 and served through January 2, 1955. He later served as the mayors of Nisswa and Brainerd before retiring from politics in 1986. He has a very distinctive monument carved of brown granite in the shape of the state of Minnesota.

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=40599070>

