

MOUNT HOLLY CEMETERY

When the early settlers of Little Rock established the first public burial grounds on the block now occupied by Peabody school, they probably thought that the 300-foot square would be adequate for the town's needs for generations to come. But in 1839, when the town was only two decades old, it became apparent that a larger cemetery was needed, and the Town Council began to consider the possibilities of acquiring a larger plot of ground. Albert Pike appears to have been the leader of the project.

In this year, Roswell Beebe and Chester Ashley were granted patents to most of the lands embraced in the Little Rock townsite, with provisions that they convey a part of the property to the city, county and state for public use. Accordingly, on February 23, 1843, Beebe and Ashley deeded to the City of Little Rock blocks 173, 209, 210 and 211, with the stipulation that if the land should ever be used for anything except a cemetery, it would revert to the original heirs. The deeds were recorded in Record Book O, folios 239 through 245. At the same time, Beebe and Ashley deeded block 179 (the present site of Peabody school) to the city "for the erection thereon of a City Hospital, Workhouse or any other public buildings as may to them seem most conducive to the public good."

The deed specified that the old cemetery was not to be used as a burial ground after May 1, 1843. On March 7, the Council passed an ordinance providing for the appointment of a sexton, whose duties included the supervision of all funerals, digging of graves, partial maintenance and keeping out stray animals. On the same day the new land was officially designated by ordinance as Mount Holly cemetery, but there is no record of how it received the name or who suggested it. The street which bisects the cemetery, running east and west, was named Beebe Avenue for Roswell Beebe.

The first lots were sold in May of 1843, at a public auction, the prices ranging from three to five dollars per lot. The grim business of purchasing a family burial plot was made less unpleasant by a picnic lunch which preceded the sale. At the end of the day, 102 lots had been sold.

Meanwhile, on April 7, William Cummins, a prominent lawyer and Masonic leader, had died. His was the first burial in Mount Holly cemetery, and we presume that his lot was sold in advance of the public auction of lots.

The following year, the price of lots was raised to \$7.50 and in 1850 the price advanced again to \$10. Lot owners were given the right to enclose their lots with iron or wood fences and to erect stone or brick monuments and mausoleums, and to beautify the lots with flowers and shrubbery.

A portion of the cemetery was set aside for Catholic burials, and was enclosed by the Catholic church. This plot was a square of 150 feet on each side, located at the northeast corner of block 173. Apparently the Catholic section was included in the original cemetery plan, and the earliest burial