

REVIEW

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Some Early Burial Places In Little Rock

By Margaret Smith Ross

On November 20, 1821 a group of men, proprietors of the town of Little Rock, met at Batesville and drew up a bill of assurances which was filed on February 2, 1822 and duly recorded in Pulaski County Deed Book B, pages 129 to 140. These men were William Russell, Henry W. Conway, Robert Crittenden, William Trimble, Robert C. Oden, Thomas P. Eskridge and Joseph Hardin.

They were not particularly generous when it came to donating land in the new town for public use. They dedicated the usual streets and alleys, and made the barest minimum of donations to the town, county and territory, all of which were conditional donations. The most striking omissions in their list of donations were sites for a city hall and a public cemetery.

The town plat filed with the bill of assurances shows no cemetery of any kind, but it extends westward only as far as Arch Street, and consequently does not show Block 179, on which was located the first public cemetery of which we have record. This block, bounded by Fourth, Fifth, Gaines and State Streets, is the former site of Peabody School, which was razed during the summer of 1955. At that time, the primitive little cow-path streets did not extend this far to the west, and it is doubtful if the boundaries of the block were clearly defined, except on paper.

In the absence of a formal donation to the town of Block 179, the indication is that settlers who buried their dead there were actually poaching on private property. So far, nobody has cared to hazard a guess as to when the block was first used as a cemetery, but all sources known to me agree that the interments were entirely unauthorized by the owners of the property.

Be sure as it may, the Town Council not only gave the people the right to use the block as a burial ground, but actually made it illegal to use any other location within the city limits for that purpose. If the owners had given the Town Council the authority to direct the use of this property it is not shown in the deed records.

An ordinance passed by the Council and approved by Major Elijah A.