

A FORGOTTEN GRAVEYARD

Deserted and forlorn in the Heart of the City – Unmarked Graves and Unnumbered Dead.

“Why, here is a graveyard,” said a CALL reporter to a companion, as the two were passing the corner of Court and Howard streets, a few days since. “And such it proved to be. It is very probable that, outside of the immediate residents, few people are aware of the existence of the neglected burying place. It has been almost abandoned for over twenty years, and is now in a most dilapidated and disgraceful condition. For years the graveyard was fortunately hid from public view by a high board fence, but as years passed by the fence leaned with age, and (as if ashamed of fulfilling its mission of veiling from sight the forgotten burial place) it partially fell. Then a new enclosure was erected, admitting of view, and so it came to pass that the reporter accidentally ~~discovered~~ the forgotten graveyard. But, with the erection of the fence, no renovation of the grounds was made.

Only a few headstones remain standing, and there are two or three fallen ones scattered about. Here and there stand iron crosses, marking the burial places of dead. When the reporter visited the ground there were ducks and geese roaming about, and the scattered corn gave evidence that this was their accustomed feeding place, and the grounds which their owners utilized. A small dog, of the cur species, was tied to a tree near the Court street front, and tall weeds in charity concealed from public gaze a portion of the Court street front. At the northerly end is a carpenter shop, and window frames, lumber, etc, are scattered about in promiscuous confusion.

The reporter inquired in the carpenter shop for some information regarding this old burial place, but the person addressed was far more reticent than he was courteous. He knew absolutely nothing about it – at least so he said. Fortunately, on the opposite corner, a very intelligent lady was found, who kindly gave such information as she was enabled to impart. She had resided in the neighborhood for the last sixteen years, and consequently could speak for the most part from her personal knowledge. The burial place belongs to St. Mary’s (R. C.) church, corner of High and William streets. Where the carpenter shop now is stood a building in which, for a time, religious services were held, and the lady said she had heard that this was the first foothold of the church in this city. The old building in which services were held was subsequently

removed, and a dwelling (now the carpenter’s shop) erected in its place. “But there seem to be few graves there now,” said the reporter. “Oh, you are mistaken,” was the reply, and the fair informant proceeded to say that the burial place was full of graves. The greater part had been marked by iron crosses, but there were far more headstones than are now standing. The crosses fell and disappeared, and the stones are lying about. Friends of the dead are not sure just where he remains lie, and hence few removals. Said the lady, “In the sixteen years I have been here, there have been only four bodies removed from the ground.” Here, then, is a burial place filled with dead, whose resting places are unmarked, the thriving place of geese, ducks, chickens, dogs and weeds, in one of the most prosperous and valuable parts of the city – forlorn and neglected, forgotten and uncared for for twenty years by a people who “venerate their fathers.” Said the reporter, continuing the conversation, “Why, the property is valuable for building purposes, and it is a wonder that the church has not caused the removal of the remains.” It seemed to the lady, however, that thirty years must pass before the remnants of the bodies could be removed by authority, and such was the reason she gave.

The reporter found but four headstones remaining standing, and a few iron crosses. The four bear inscriptions marking the graves of John Ruperts, who died in 1848; George Theodore Mock, died in 1851; Conrad Felber, died in 1851, and Francis Xavier G*fschele, who died in 1853, at the age of 73, and whose headstone bears the inscription, “Gloria in Excellus Deo.”

Such is the state of another of Newark’s neglected burial places, hidden from public sight for twenty years. Ought not St. Mary’s church, rich in worldly wealth, attend to its own birthplace, where lie in their last stop the pioneers of its prosperity?

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