



Cemeteries' boundaries can be confusing to history seekers visiting Richmond

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Where is Bob Ford's final resting place?

In a Daily News story on Ford's life, the article stated Ford was buried in Sunny Slope Cemetery.

In reality, Ford is buried in Richmond Cemetery, and the newspaper issued a correction.

The confusion lies in that four cemeteries occupy a small hilly area along Main Street in Richmond.

The first cemetery established there was Shotwell Cemetery around 1840. Ray County Museum Curator Karen Bush said, "The cemetery is surrounded by an iron fence, and many paupers are buried there from the county home."

Levan Thurman said it is identified by the steps going up to it from Main Street. "It's on the ground between the Richmond Cemetery, and the school to the west. The stairs are inscribed 'Shotwell Cemetery,'" said Thurman.

Lisa Smalley, local genealogist said, "Jabez Shotwell owned the land where the cemetery and the school (Shotwell School is now an apartment building) is. A little girl died while visiting in the area, sometime between 1835 and before 1841, and they buried her in his orchard, the site of the current cemetery. Originally, it was just a half-acre. The first family member buried there was Shotwell's daughter, Ester, who died in 1841." Smalley cited her source as the 1973 Ray County History. Mike McCalley of McCalley Abstract and Title said there are between 20 and 30 individuals buried in Shotwell Cemetery.

Mike Graff of Thurman Funeral Home in Richmond said there isn't an owner for the cemetery, but rather a trust has been set up with U.S. Bank Trust Department in Joplin. This was confirmed by McCalley, and Powers Alder of U.S. Bank in Richmond.

Richmond Cemetery was started in 1870, according to Smalley. McCalley said it was originally called the New Cemetery because what is called the Mormon Cemetery (Pioneer Cemetery) was

the first cemetery in Richmond and it was called the Old Cemetery.

“Though it’s called Richmond Cemetery, it has no connection with the city of Richmond and never has had,” said Thurman. “It’s under the jurisdiction of Judge Miller of Circuit Court.” Alder and Bruce Thurman are trustees.

Bush verified Richmond Cemetery as the final resting place of Bob Ford. The stone lies toward the top of the hill. A sign marker indicates its location and a bronze marker has been placed next to the original marker, which is now only a large rock, a victim of people chipping ‘souvenirs’ from it.

Sunny Slope Cemetery appears to be the largest of the four cemeteries and takes up the entire west side of the hill. Smalley said it was started in 1911 according to land records.

The main cemetery on the hill, Thurman indicated it is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Bank Trust, with Mike McCalley serving as voluntary head of its advisory committee.

Graff said, “A not-for-profit corporation runs it. Mike McCalley, Bruce Thurman and Powers Alder are still on the advisory committee. It is in a court-ordered trust with U.S. Bank.”

McCalley said the advisory committee once had around 15 people on it, but some have moved and many have passed away. He said William Yates of U.S. Bank in Richmond set up the trust for the cemetery and the trust department is located in Joplin. Money from the trust helps with the lawn maintenance, which is substantial. It costs \$600 each time the cemetery is mowed.

McCalley said it takes many hours due to the number of stones and the various shapes. Terrain also plays a part in the difficulty. Richmond Cemetery is mowed by the same group and has a separate cost. Both cemeteries are estimated to occupy seven acres each, according to McCalley.

“There are separate funds for Richmond Cemetery and for Sunny Slope,” said Thurman. “They are to be used for maintenance for the cemeteries. The advisory committees are to hold annual meetings, but they don’t have them now. Everyone on them has died out.”

Woodland Cemetery is the newest cemetery in that area, established in 1950. Though the sign on Main Street stands between Shotwell School and the Shotwell Cemetery stairs, Woodland is actually located behind (north) of the school and east of Richmond Cemetery.

Graff said it is owned by Mathew Marrant, son of the former owner, George Marrant of Excelsior Springs.

Thurman said it was meant to be a memorial park-type cemetery, one in which all of the markers lie flat, but that has begun to change.

“The cemetery was developed by Allan Hughes in the 1950s, and the entrance was meant to be right there between the cemetery and the school,” Thurman said. “The only entrance is off of Wilson Blvd.”

To the passersby heading west on Main Street, you see the school, then a sign indicating Woodland Cemetery. Right next to, and appearing to be a part of it, are the stairs leading to the Shotwell Cemetery. The first driveway enters the Richmond Cemetery. Sunny Slope is next to Richmond Cemetery.

Photo: A Richmond Cemetery sign directs history seekers to the final resting place of the man who shot Jesse James. (Photo by Brenda Jensen/The