



STATELY MARBLE sculpture marks the final resting place for many of the county's early settlers at the Bennett's Corners Cemetery in Brunswick. The city will soon take over ownership of the 150-year-old burial ground. (Gazette photo)

Roots

City takes over cemetery where early pioneers rest

By BILL MEYER

BRUNSWICK — Underneath the tall evergreens that stand guard over the aged cemetery, many of the older tombstones have had their faces wiped clean by the ravages of time and weather, leaving little clue as to who lies beneath.

The Bennett's Corners Cemetery, near the southwest corner of Boston Road and W. 130th

taking care of the land. Bake and guilt sale proceeds, donations and dues went toward markers, surveying and other maintenance costs. Supplies were often purchased from R.H. Levandowski's general store.

C. W. Morton, an association member, charged the group \$12 to dig a grave, according to faded records. Association families were in turn charged \$15 for a single

Cemetery, near the southwest corner of Boston Road and W. 130th Street, contains the remains of hundreds of area residents, including many early settlers and their descendants.

For 150 years, the burial ground was a private concern for members of the Bennett's Corners Cemetery Association. The land was originally donated to the community in the 1820s by the Brooks family, early pioneers of the township. For more than a century, it served Brunswick, Hinckley, Strongsville, North Royalton and other nearby communities.

BUT NOW, the land is being taken over by the city in order to preserve its heritage and sanctity. Quite simply, there is nobody left alive to take care of it.

The names on the markers are a "Who's Who" of early Brunswick and area settlements. There are dozens of Wilkinsons, Brooks, Carpenters, Clements, Roots, Drapers, Hiers and Waites lying beside the other 400 permanent residents of the cemetery.

A startling number of the dead are children, some who lived not more than a few days. Many died upon reaching adolescence, as childhood diseases took a great toll.

The land itself is divided into three parcels. The original section, to the north, contains the older and more interesting tombstones. In 1880, additional land to the south was bought from the Hier family for \$28, and in 1929, another strip of the Hiers' land to the west was annexed for \$150.

THERE ARE many lots in the cemetery, left to be filled, not that anybody is in any particular hurry to take up residence there. Some 37 people still have lots waiting for them, according to association records turned over to the city by the Levandowski family, which has many relatives buried in the cemetery.

Up until the 20th Century, there was no formal cemetery association, and residents divided maintenance responsibilities among themselves.

The deteriorating condition of the land was the impetus for the formation in 1900 of the Bennett's Corners Cemetery Association. The groups' constitution stated the purpose of the society was to improve the "sadly neglected" land, "thus making it a spot to be proud of instead of a disgrace to our Hamlet, and by doing so, we show honor and respect to our cherished and loved ones who sleep quietly beneath the turf."

in turn charged \$15 for a single grave if the deceased was a relative. Nonrelatives were charged \$25 for the same interment.

In 1948, at the association's last meeting, Mike Morton was chosen president and Corwin Levandowski was selected treasurer. For the next 19 years, Morton took it upon himself to care for the cemetery until he died last summer.

WITH MORTON himself layed to rest in the cemetery, there was nobody left with the time, interest or patience to take care of it. The Levandowski family proposed the city take it over.

Because of the intricacies of state and local law, it has taken many months for all the arrangements to be worked out, but City Solicitor Doug Burns said court action this week has cleared the way for the city's acquisition of the land soon.

And so the cemetery and its quiet tenants will continue to be cared for, a solemn link to where we have been and a constant reminder to where we are going.

With "fairness, goodwill, industry and harmony" declared as the standards of the society, the group met off an on for 20 years, holding its last meeting in 1948.

ONE OF THE chief functions of the group was to raise funds for