

Decoration Day History

Memorial Day, which is observed every year on the last Monday of May, was formerly known as Decoration Day. The holiday originated after the American Civil War to commemorate the Union and Confederate soldiers who died in the war. By the 20th century, Memorial Day had been extended to honor all Americans who died while in military service.

Decoration Day was officially proclaimed by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. "The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land," he proclaimed. The date of Decoration Day, as he called it, was chosen because it was not the anniversary of any particular battle.



Memorial Poppy History

In 1915, inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields", Moina Michael conceived of an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. She was the first to wear one and sold poppies to her friends and co-workers with the money going to benefit servicemen in need. Later, Madam Guerin from



France was visiting the United States and learned of this new custom started by Ms. Michael. When Guerin returned to France, she made artificial red poppies to raise money for war orphaned children and widowed women. This tradition soon spread to other countries. In 1921, the Franco-American Children's League sold poppies nationally to benefit war orphans of France and Belgium. The League disbanded a year later, and Madam Guerin approached the VFW for help.

Shortly before Memorial Day in 1922, the VFW became the first veterans' organization to nationally sell poppies. Two years later, their "Buddy"

Poppy program sold artificial poppies made by disabled veterans. In 1948, the US Post Office honored Ms. Michael for her role in founding the national poppy movement by issuing a red, three-cent postage stamp which displayed her likeness.

Veterans of Foreign Wars History

The VFW traces its roots back to 1899 when veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902) founded local organizations to secure rights and benefits for their service. Many veterans had arrived home wounded or sick. There was no medical care or veterans' pension, and veterans were left to care for themselves.

In their misery, some of these veterans banded together and formed organizations that would become known as the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. After chapters were formed in Ohio, Colorado and Pennsylvania, the movement quickly gained momentum. By 1915, membership grew to 5,000; as of 2015, membership is nearly 1.9 million.

Each year the VFW Post 8879 places flags on the graves of deceased veterans in Jordan Cemetery. VFW Post 8879 was incorporated January 6, 1947, as a dedication to John Emerick and Harry Williams. Post 8879 consists of 79 veterans from World War II through the Afghanistan and Iraq conflict in the Global War on Terrorism. The Post meets the first Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at 128 5th Street.



Historic Jordan Cemetery was founded by James C. Jordan who arrived in Polk County in 1846 and homesteaded in the area of the cemetery. Initially the cemetery may have been planned as a family burial area or for burials of members of pioneer families who died on their way westward. Grave markers in the cemetery indicate that one of the first burials occurred in 1855 when Melinda Jordan, James C. Jordan's first wife, died. Records show that Mr. Jordan deeded the cemetery land to a cemetery association to administer. In 1920 the association voted to ask Valley Junction, as West Des Moines then was called, to help maintain the cemetery. Today the City of West Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department maintains the grounds. Monuments in the cemetery contain the names of some of the West Des Moines area's earliest and most prominent residents.

Burial plots are available for purchase in the newer western part of the cemetery. For more information please call 515-222-3444 or email parkrec@wdm.iowa.gov.

Huston Cemetery, often referred to as "The Middle of the Road Cemetery", sits squarely in the middle of the road at 88th Street and Mills Civic Parkway. The small cemetery that includes graves dating back to 1847 was founded by James Brown

Huston who moved to Iowa in 1849 and built and managed a stage-coach line, inn, tavern and the first post office in Dallas County on his farm. There are only eleven people, mostly family members, known to be buried there. Today, the City of West Des Moines Parks & Recreation Department maintains the grounds.

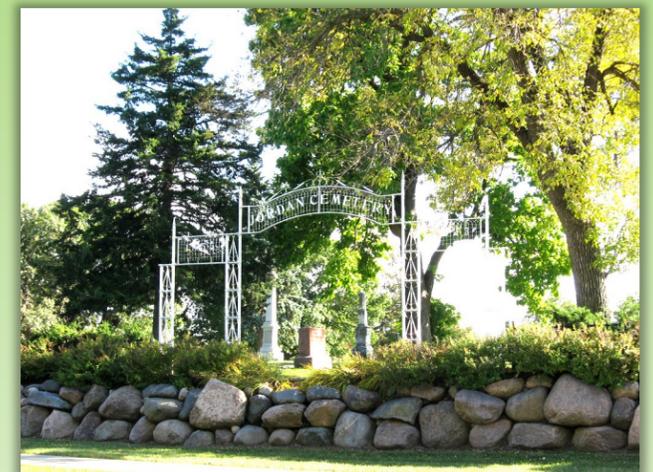


For more information about Jordan Cemetery or Huston Cemetery please call the WDM Parks and Recreation Department at 515-222-3444 or email parkrec@wdm.iowa.gov.

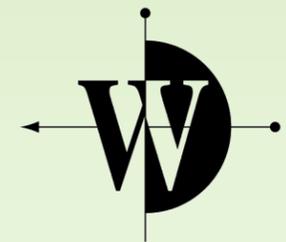
JORDAN CEMETERY

EST. 1855

2950 FULLER ROAD
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA



A RESTING PLACE FOR MANY OF
THE FOUNDING FAMILIES OF
WEST DES MOINES



THE CITY OF
West Des Moines
Parks and Recreation
Department

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1 James C. Jordan Family



James Jordan arrived in Iowa in 1846 from Platte Co., Missouri. Jordan selected a site for a home near a grove of bur oak trees. He owned 1,800 acres of land at one time and was a staunch abolitionist who hid slaves for the Underground Railroad. Mr. Jordan was elected to State Senate in 1853. He was a member of

the Polk County Board of Supervisors three times and was instrumental in bringing the railroad to Valley Junction. Jordan first settled Walnut Township, as West Des Moines was first called, and soon his wife (Melinda) and four children (Benjamin, Emily, Henry and John Q.) joined him.



Their next child (James Finley) was the first baby born to a settler in Walnut Township. Their sixth child (George) soon followed. Melinda passed away in 1855 at the age of 35. James buried Melinda in a



small hilltop cemetery south of Jordan Creek and northwest of the Jordan house, which is now on the Walnut Creek Church Campground. Melinda was moved a few years later to what is now Jordan Cemetery. In 1856, James married again (Cynthia) and had five more children (Ella, Calvin, Eva, Eda and Edward).

2 Calvin and Hopy Bennett

3 Benjamin and Martha Bennett

Benjamin Bennett arrived in Walnut Township with his brother Calvin in 1847. Their brother, Presley, joined them in 1848. Calvin and Hopy Bennett were the first marriage in Walnut Township on January 28, 1849.

The Bennett Schoolhouse (built in 1926 or 1927) on Fuller Road is named after the family.

Bennett School was one of the last one room schools to be built in West Des Moines and was in use until at least 1941. It was originally located on an acre of ground donated by the Bennett family at the southwest corner of what is now known as Fuller Road and 50th Street.



4 Abraham (Abram) and Ann Clegg

5 Edward and Anna Clegg

Abram, with his wife Anna and four children, (Xerxes, Mollie, George and Edward) came by covered wagon from New Hampshire in 1851.



They homesteaded about 200 acres that extends from 56th St. in Des Moines to 8th St. in West Des Moines. In 1865 Abram built a monolithic home. The eight-sided home had a copper roof, walls that were one-foot thick, and a

basement ceiling that was 20-feet high. The home was built on the north side of Ashworth Road where 6th St. would have intersected. The house was a well-known landmark until it was torn down in 1936. Their youngest son, Ed, married Anna and lived his entire life in Valley Junction.

Clegg Park Elementary School (now Walnut Creek Campus) and Clegg Road are named after the family.

6 Abraham and Mary Ashworth

7 Charles "Bert" and Minta Ashworth

Abraham Ashworth came with his father, Richard, to America from England at the age of 6. The Ashworth family, traveling with the Cleggs, arrived in Walnut Township in 1851. In 1856, Richard built a three-room home from native black walnut. Although remodeled several times, the Ashworth house still stands at 1015 Ashworth Road.



Abraham was a part of the California Gold Rush and fought in the Civil War. He married Mary Mott and had several children, including Charles "Bert". Abraham eventually owned 320 acres of farmland.

He bred short-horn cattle and Poland-China hogs. He died in 1901 from pleurisy.

Charles "Bert" Ashworth was a widely known and prominent farmer. Bert was born on the same farm, where his entire life was spent, with the exception of four years at Ames, where he graduated from the Iowa State College in 1889 with a Doctor of Veterinary Service degree. He married Minta, and they had one daughter. He was a member of the Gnemeth Lodge of Masons of Valley Junction and the Modern Woodmen of America.

In 1940, White Pole Road was renamed Ashworth Road in the family's memory.

8 Franklin "Cap" and Jane Isabelle DeFord

Frank "Cap" DeFord owned a tailor shop that was located on the east side of the 100 block of 5th St.

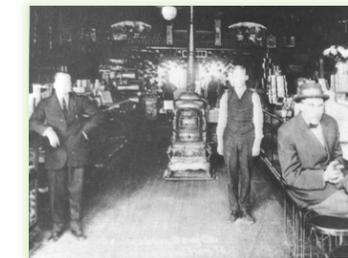


Decorated as an officer in the Civil War, DeFord later reenlisted and fought in South Dakota with General Custer's famous regiment. In 1893, DeFord was elected the first city marshal and street commissioner. DeFord's salary for city marshal and street commissioner was \$21.50 per month. Due to the position's high turn-over rate, the salary was increased to \$45 per month within the first two years.

9 Chelious and Edna Vandenburg

William and Hazel Vandenburg

The Vandenburg Drug Company was originally opened in 1893 by Charles Eaton. In 1912, Chelious bought it from Rice & Kimble. In 1928, Chelious formed a partnership with his brother, William, who was one of the first American soldiers to



land in France on May 8, 1917, in WWI. Their partnership continued until 1970 when Chelious, also a WWI veteran, sold his share to his son Charles. Vandenburg Drug closed its doors for good in 1974.

