

Crocker Five Years From Now

By Willie Williams, Crocker High School, 1923

I certainly was surprised when I stepped off the train at Crocker, to see the new improvements that had been made during my absence of five years.

The first thing that I noticed was the streets, they had been built up and had been paved and in the center of the street was a spear shaped sign reading "Keep to the right." Looking farther down the street I saw an old man with a cart sweeping the street.

My attention was next drawn by the ringing of a bell some where near the depot and I asked a gentleman standing near me what it meant. He said that it was a bell put at the crossing to warn people

not to cross the tracks when a train was approaching.

I walked on farther down the street to the public well and to my surprise I found they had new pumps and a sink down below for the water to go beneath the ground instead of flowing out into the street. Just then a one horse wagon came by with the sign City Junk Remover written on it. He turned down Center street and went straight for the alleys.

On the other side of the street were new buildings with various signs, Crocker Cafe, Crocker Laundry Co and Palace Theatre. I continued walking down the street until I saw on the other side the City Park with small trees growing and large flower beds with lovely

flowers. Many children were playing in the park, swinging and sliding on slide boards.

As I stood watching the children play a man slapped me on the back and I turned to see one of my old schoolmates. We talked for some time about the improvements of Crocker, then he said you haven't saw our new school and Gym, have you? We went over to the school and he took me through the different rooms of the grades, then went over to another building which he said was the high school building, for they had given the old high school building over to the grades. From the high school we went to the Gym and here I saw all the modern equipment, even a swimming pool. My schoolmate told me he was a

member of the board at that time, and they had ordered a picture machine for the school so different subjects could be shown and understood more fully.

When I got home that evening I was told that an inspector came around once a week to see that everything was kept clean around the house. That night I read for a while by a bright electric light and before I retired for the night I looked toward town to see its streets well lighted by many street lights.

Willie's short, fantasized composition of what he envisioned for Crocker five years down the road not only offers an insight into the idealism of yesterday's youths, but also itemized amenities that did not exist in that community in 1922.

Cemetery Stewardship

The heroes and heroines of historical preservation, though sometimes not plentiful, often can make a big impact in protecting our past. Recent action by a few concerned citizens has resulted in the restoration of one of Pulaski County's old cemeteries.

Arriving at the site of the Burchard cemetery, two ladies interested in genealogical research found the old burial plot in a dilapidated condition. They discovered many tombstones had been toppled over and the site had been overgrown by vegetation.

Realizing the need for immediate action, the women talked with the current owner of the property, who promptly agreed to erect a fence around the cemetery to protect it from grazing cattle and to reset the stones that had fallen.

Then the ladies contacted long-time resident Mae Johnson to enlist her help. Mae approached the late Eula Burchard for assistance in collecting funds to pay for the upkeep of the old historic cemetery. The latter readily agreed to send a letter of appeal to Burchard family descendants, resulting in the successful collection of the necessary funds.

Meanwhile, the property owner at his own expense placed a nice protective fence around the treasured site. And now, the Burchard cemetery has been saved from neglect and decay.

But there are other cemeteries around that require similar action. The above example should be an inspiration for other citizens to assume the role of cemetery stew-

ards. In an age where people show good stewardship in adopting a stretch of highway for the purpose of clearing it of litter, adopting a rural cemetery for a somewhat similar purpose seems to be an excellent idea.

The Maries Countian, a quarterly newsletter of the Historical Society of Maries County, recently transmitted a request by Debby Alexander, Route 3, Box 568, Dixon, MO 65459, that a little cemetery on her farm has stones in need of repair. She would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in repairing the stones and keeping the cemetery site well-groomed on a regular basis.

Surnames represented at this, the Powers Cemetery, include Powers, Rigsby, Willis, Helton, Hanson, and Hollis. Tombstone names of the Powers include John T., Jeff, J. T., M. A., Allen, Wellon, and Wesley. The Rigsbeys (also spelled Rigsby on some of the gravestones) include Elizabeth, Leonard, Margaret E., James H., Wellon, J. W., and Matilda. Also buried here is an infant son of J. C. and L. E. Rigsbey. He died at birth on Jan. 13th, 1875.

J. C. may have been the John C. Rigsby mentioned in an earlier article in this edition of the Gazette. John C. moved from southern Maries County to a place in Pulaski County along the Big Piney River, where apparently he became a successful livestock trader.

The gravesites at Burchard cemetery, by the way, are of Charles B. Burchard, George A. Burchard,



A TOMBSTONE AT BURCHARD CEMETERY. Courtesy of Vi Tyson and Veda Ousley.

Gussie L. Burchard, James H. Burchard, Margaret Burchard, Laura E. Burchard, M. E. Burchard, Margaret Burchard, James H. Burchard, Merlie E. Burchard, Louisa Carson, W. S. Carson, George Mc Corkle, Louisa Phillips, and Essie M. Turville. Bostick is another surname represented. There are several graves marked only by a fieldstone, or otherwise unmarked.

The Burchards were early settlers of Pulaski County. James H. Burchard was born in 1815 and died August 17, 1863, when Union soldiers took him to the edge of

Waynesville and put him to death for reporting some of the soldiers to the government for destroying property belonging to residents of the community.

According to obituaries, all of the gravesites in this cemetery are of direct descendants of James H. Burchard and his wife, Margaret.

In writing of this need for local cemetery stewardship, the Old Settlers' Gazette would like to commend as well as recognize the many citizens, organizations, and cemetery associations that continue to provide the necessary upkeep for their respective sites.