


Mysteries of "Indian Park" Revealed



Dr. Teresa Burns, Laurie Graney and Kristal Prohaska
Presentation at Platteville Senior Center
September 10, 2020

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This is a follow-up to our February presentation. We will summarize parts of that presentation so you can follow along if you weren't there; the earlier presentation is also still available on-line.

- Three-part video begins here and links from video to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZinCCQL0sY&t=37s>
- Article here: <https://driftlessroadtrip.com/the-mysteries-of-indian-park/>
- This will also be on-line as a video (you're watching it!) and article.

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Why 1917?
The date relates to when it became a park, not to the specific name. (which was then briefly called Cemetery Park and Rosetree Park.) In 1817, the state legislature under Chapter 307 granted the City of Platteville the right to "take care of the grounds therein." "Thereafter the use of said lands for interment shall be prohibited and the title thereto shall be vested in the said city of Platteville."

In 1918,
The City Council voted to remove all bodies from the park and rebury them in Greenwood Cemetery. There's no record this was ever done, and for the case of some cholera victims buried there, it was definitely not done. Notice this is also during the Spanish-flu epidemics.
After the all bodies are removed, the Rosetree Park Committee is "authorized and empowered to level the surface of the ground and to erect lawns on the north and south sides of said park and that the expense, thereof, be borne by the city."
We will look at these actions in greater context later, and this timeline is also available here: <https://driftlessroadtrip.com/what-i-know-about-indian-park-as-of-march-2020/>

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Legends of the name coming from an "Indian buried in the center"?

Before 1841, the name/use of this specific parcel of land is unknown. It makes no sense to connect that legend to a recent grave. Did the legend come from knowledge that many mounds contained burials? Many people have thought the rise in the center of the park (a center once surrounded by an iron fence) was a conical mound. Here's how Effigy Mounds National Monument describes this type of mound:



Conical Mound - Round, dome shaped mounds three to ten feet high and approximately ten feet across. Some can be bigger, some can be smaller.

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Legends of the name coming from an "Indian buried in the center"?

In the early 1800s, this area was Ho-Chunk territory, though there were no known permanent settlements here. A variety of evidence (such as 17 natural springs in the area, other geological features, and a profusion of archaeological finds) makes us speculate that "Indian Park" and the surrounding area was a meeting and trade area in addition to a place where women mined lead. But the "mound-building" culture is not Ho-Chunk (though the Ho-Chunk and others claim descent from this culture) and the reason for the creation of conical, linear and effigy mounds in southwest Wisconsin remains a mystery. Native and non-native archaeologists today assume that conical mounds connect as much or more to native cosmology as to burial, since many mounds do not contain burials.



Almost all conical mounds are over 750 years old; the oldest are 2500 years old.

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Names for "Indian Park"

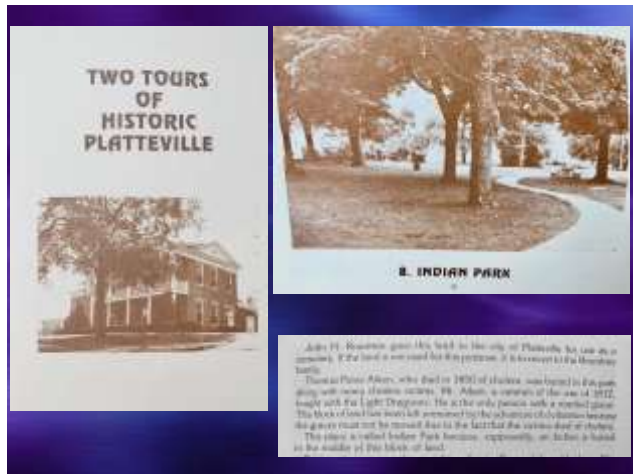
- Presbyterian burial ground (1848, 1868)
 - Presbyterian/Congregationalist burying ground (1847)
 - Hill Cemetery (1853)
 - Hill Graveyard (1854)
 - Cemetery (1861)
 - Lots 9, 10, 19 & 20 of Covell's Addition (1869, 1895)
 - same, plus "Cemetery" (1898)
 - same, plus "Presbyterian burying ground" (1901)
 - "cemetery" and "graveyard" (1901 and 1902)
 - "Public property" (1904)
 - "Indian Park" (from at least 1912 and multiple times since)
 - Cemetery Park (1918)
 - Rountree Park (1918)
 - "North Park" (1929 and multiple times through 1961)
 - "Children's Park" (1938)
 - "Fourth Street Park (also known as North Park and Indian Park)" (1959)
 - "Indian Park" (current name)
- Few if any current residents seem to remember any name but "Indian Park."

More detailed history of names available at:
<https://driftlessroadtrip.com/Indian-Park-naming-history>

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More than one mystery...

- Is the mound in the center a conical mound? Is it a burial mound? Is there more than one mound?
- Who other than 1812 veteran Thomas Aiken and his son's fiancé Elinor Donelson was buried there? Why were cholera victims put in a park in the center of town?
- What is the "mystery stone" on the north side?
- Why were there such oddities in how the property deeds were recorded?

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Contexts beyond Indian Park...

- Ho-Chunk (aka Winnebago) people lived in the area as early settlers arrived, but the "mound builders" predate the Ho-Chunk. Most conical mounds are over 1,000 years old. However, the Ho-Chunk consider themselves descendants of these people and mounds sacred places.
- First Platteville suffered a wave of smallpox deaths then a cholera epidemic. The cholera epidemic claimed many victims including others in Thomas Aiken's family. During the peak of the epidemic the only paper in town, the *Independent American* owned by John Rountree, did not print, so there are no existing obituaries. There are also no sexton records we've found.
- Platteville at that time seemed split between anti-slavery and pro-slavery/"no opinion" churches. This directly effects this property (and the history of the Platteville Academy, a precursor to the Normal School then UW-Platteville)

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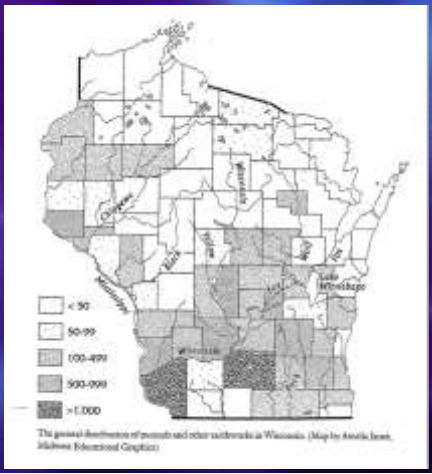
Structure of this presentation

- Generally we want to go from fact to what's likely to what's possible. The exception is the mound, since there has been so much recent discussion about it. We'll introduce the issues surrounding it briefly at the beginning then return to this subject at the end.
- We want to put events in historical context. What interested us most about this project was how so much of town, state and even national history is reflected in one small square of land.

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Recommended resources



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Thoughts from the Ho-Chunk Nation's Historic Preservation Officer

"Thank you for contacting the Ho-Chunk Nation with your thoughts and desires regarding determining if the conical mound in Indian Park is of native origin. You ask an interesting question in that there is no set distance from water or to water that determines burial placements. I believe in the field of archaeology there is this misconception that burial mounds for example, are placed in close proximity to water and that there are these set rules or guidelines that govern the placement of earthworks in general. This type of ideology originates within the field of archaeology for their use and it has now become generally accepted by their community to be the case. Traditionally speaking, burials are more apt to be placed where the individual and/or family preferred them to be placed, which doesn't always include easy or short access to water. Ask a handful of archaeologists if earthen mounds were placed on sides of hills, or are there cultural resources such as burials on steep terrain, and they will have varying and differing viewpoints on the matter yet few if any conduct archaeological shovel tests across inclines or steep terrain. In short, their average standards & best practices dictate many thoughts on matters unless critically questioned. Bottom line is, there's always an exception to the rules that need to be considered."

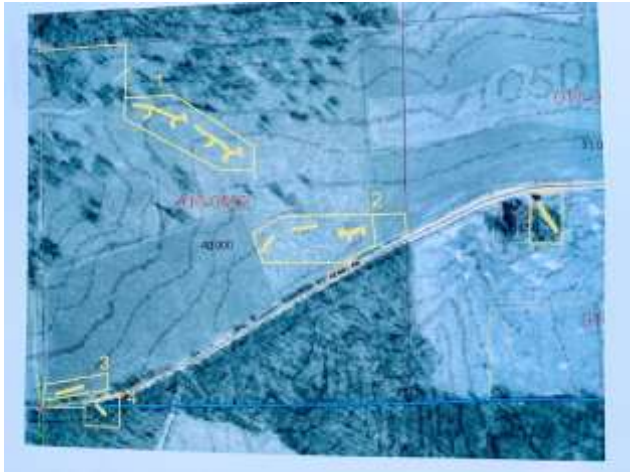
--William Quackenbush, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation

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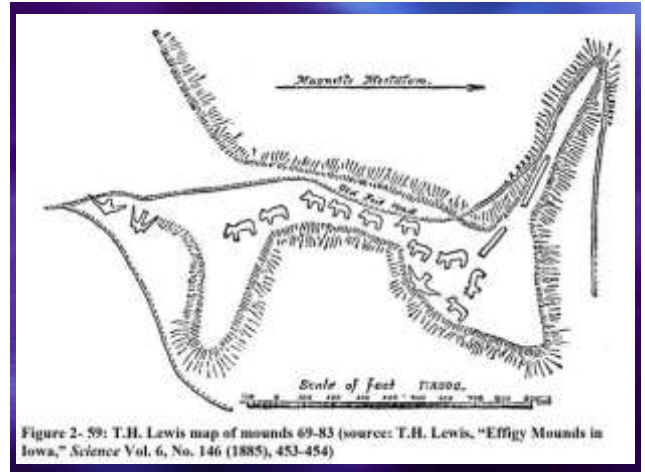
During our presentation, I discussed the next two slides in the context of how known mound clusters in the area connect to native, specifically Ho-Chunk, cosmology. I've added this slide to the .pdf so you know what was discussed! The presentation is available on youtube: search "Indian Park!"

Grant and Dane counties have the highest concentration of mounds in the state, and the state has the highest concentration of native mounds in the world. We should expect that a spring-filled hilly area like Platteville used to be would have not just one but several native mounds. They're simply hard for someone to recognize if someone doesn't know what they're looking for!

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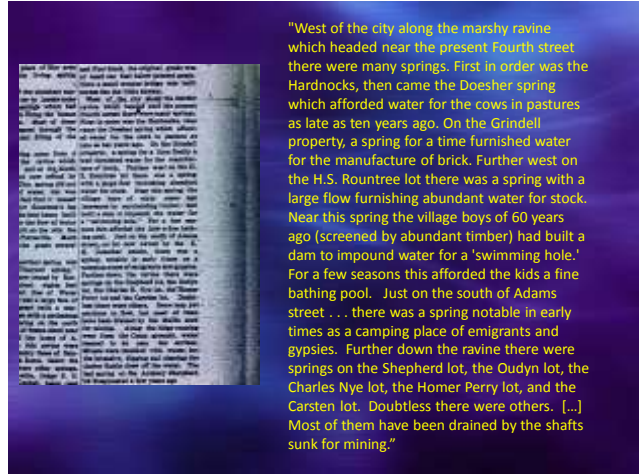
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What history, beside park names, do we know for sure?

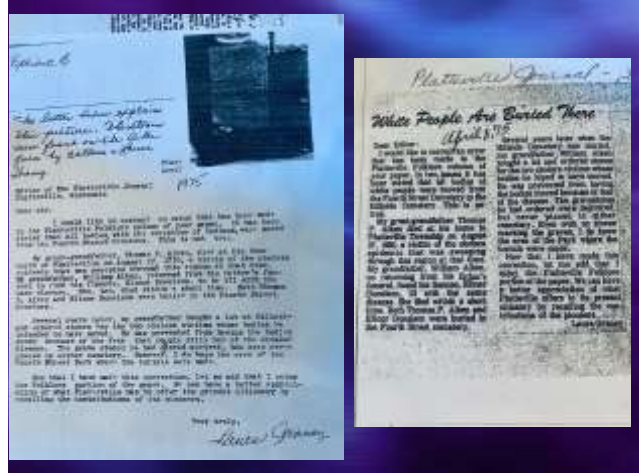
We know the park is/was a cemetery connected to the nearby Congregationalist church and before that the Presbyterian church.

The main question is who and how many people are buried there!

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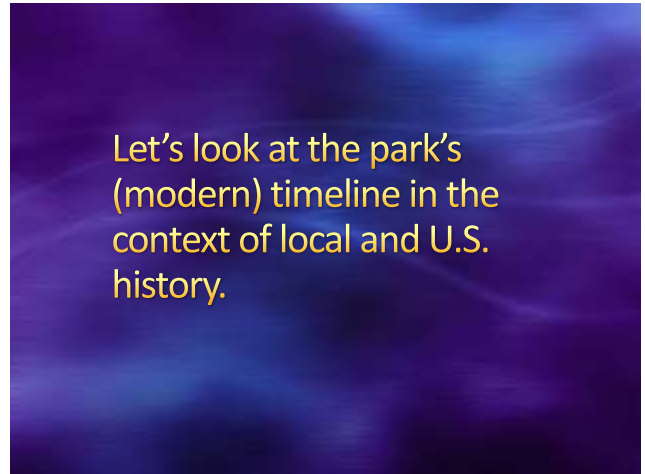
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Setting the stage: Indian Park and Platteville in context

- 1812: Thomas Aiken serves in the War of 1812.
- 1818: Dominated by the "New School" theology, the Presbyterian Church made its strongest statement against slavery.
- 1820: Missouri Compromise: Except for Missouri, slavery is prohibited in the Louisiana Purchase lands north of latitude 36 degrees, 30'.
- 1827: John H. Rountree comes to Platteville.
- 1830: President Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act, authorizing the forced removal of Native Americans living in the eastern part of the country to lands west of the Mississippi River. (By the late 1830's the Jackson Administration relocated nearly 50,000 Native Americans.)

Keep an eye on the interactions between city founder John Rountree (slaveowner) and the Rev. John Lewis and the anti-slavery Presbyterian church which becomes associated with Platteville Academy!

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PLATTEVILLE.

His subscriber has laid out a new Town, at Platteville, in Iowa County, Missouri Territory.

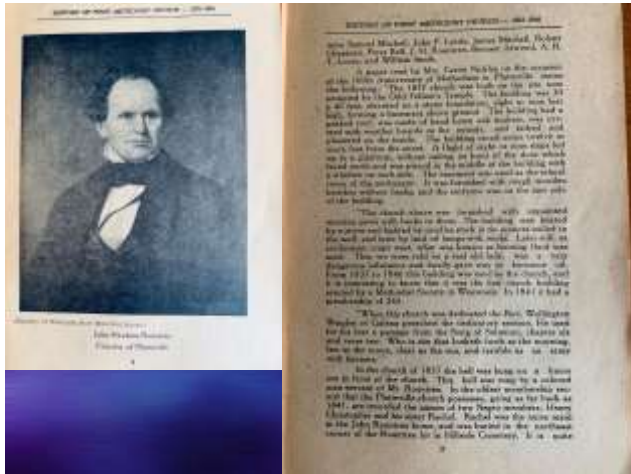
Platteville is handsomely situated on the border of the Prairie, in a grove that connects with the extensive Forest on the Platte River; and is 24 miles North of Galena, 18 miles South-west of Mineral Point, and 12 miles East of the Mississippi, on the main Stage road from Galena to Prairie Du Chien.

The surrounding country is inferior to none, in fertility of soil, and adaptability to agriculture. The timber on the Platte river, is of excellent quality, and abundant; and very convenient to the farming land on the Prairie; the little Platte, which runs within a mile and a half of the Town, is a valuable Mill stream, affording fine falls in various places for mill sites, and a sufficient volume of water at all seasons of the year, to carry extensive Machinery; a Saw mill is already in operation on this stream, 3 miles below Platteville, and another a few miles above Springs and streams of pure water abound in every part of the contiguous Country. In addition to these advantages, it may be safely affirmed that the natural wealth of this region is equal to that of any other portion of the Mining District; attracted by such inducements, an industrious, intelligent and moral population is settling and improving the country rapidly, and purchasing the lands as they come into market.

Persons wishing to purchase property, and settle in the Territory, would do well to explore this section of Country, before purchasing.

JOHN H. ROUNTREE.
May 10, 1827.

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Setting the stage: Indian Park and Platteville in context

- 1831: Nat Turner, an enslaved African American preacher, lead the most significant slave uprising in American history in Virginia. Because of this, Virginia institutes much stricter slave laws. One of the most famous figures in the Abolitionist movement, William Lloyd Garrison starts publishing "The Liberator", a weekly paper that advocates for the complete abolition of slavery. During the same time, Eli Whitney's 1794 patenting of the cotton gin increased southern demand for slave labor.
- 1832: **Fort Dodge is constructed in Platteville** on the northwest corner of Oak and Pine Streets. It is a circular stockade about 100 ft. in diameter, with a 20 ft. by 20 ft. blockhouse.
- 1832: The Black Hawk War began in the month of May.
- 1834: The land office opened in Mineral Point, Wisconsin.
- 1835: Surveying was begun to plot out the first lots and sections of the city of Platteville. Known as the "Original Plan of the Village of Platteville."
- 1836: The survey of Platteville is enlarged to include 28 more lots. (This is where we see the park/cemetery added to the village.)

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Setting the stage: Indian Park and Platteville in context

- 1838: More than 15,000 Cherokee Indians were forced to march from Georgia to present-day Oklahoma by the U.S. government. Approximately 4,000 die from starvation and disease in what is known by the "Trail of Tears." A similar "trail of tears" will later exist for the Ho-Chunk, passing through what is now Effigy Mounds National Monument.
- 1839: War of 1812 veteran Thomas Aiken arrives in Platteville.
- 1839: The first Platteville Academy opens. Presbyterian Rev. John Lewis and his wife Electa Lewis teach there along with the first principle, Josiah Pickard.
- 1843: Smallpox rages in Platteville from December 1843 to February 1844. The population was around 500, and 226 got smallpox.
- 1844: The first major wagon trail for the American Northwest sets out with one thousand pioneers on the Oregon Trail leaving from Elm Grove, Missouri.
- 1844: The Mexican President announces that the annexation of Texas by the U.S. would be considered an act of war by Mexico.
- 1844: Lorenzo Bevans discovers a large amount of lead in Platteville.


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Setting the stage: Indian Park and Platteville in context

- 1847: Rev. John Lewis comes to Platteville accepting a call from the Presbyterian Church. Remember, the Presbyterian church opposes slavery; the first Platteville academy will meet on one floor of the Academy and the church on another. Further, the underground railroad operating in Platteville also has strong ties to the Presbyterian church.


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**Setting the stage:
Indian Park and Platteville in context**



- 1848: Slave-owner and city founder John Rountree, deeded one acre of land to the Presbyterian Church for a cemetery, with the stipulation that this tract of land, "shall be at this time and forever remain a public burying ground for the interment of the dead and shall remain free to all persons to use and occupy for the purposes of interring the dead without tax assessment or charge".
- 1848: The Mexican American War ends (almost half of Mexico's territory will become part of the U.S.) The California Gold Rush begins. Platteville loses some of its population due to the Gold Rush. Wisconsin is admitted as the 30th state.

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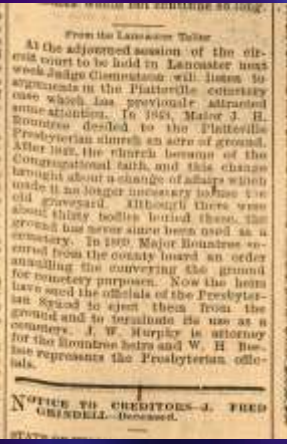
1849-1850: An epidemic strikes again

Disease and Sickness on the Wisconsin Frontier: Cholera
 Author(s): Peter T. Harstad
 Source: *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Spring, 1960), pp. 203-220
 Published by: Wisconsin Historical Society
 Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4633516>
 Accessed: 27-03-2020 18:09 UTC

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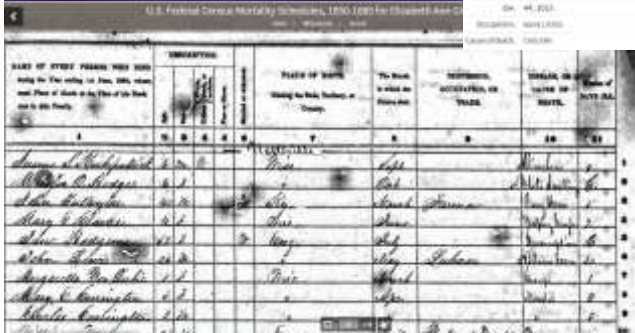


Interestingly, the graves of Thomas P. Allen and Elinor Demelson were not removed in 1917. Laura Droney, the great-granddaughter of Thomas Allen, had firsthand knowledge of "where the burials were made." In 1976, Laura wrote in *The Platteville Journal* that her grandfather William Allen was prevented from removing the graves "because of fear of the disease," cholera.

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Lucky there were still some that recorded many of the 1850 cholera deaths, though not where they were buried: the U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedule (below) which has been carefully transcribed by the Church of Latter Day Saints and appears on ancestry.com in the form you see at the right.

But it did not record everyone. For instance, neither Thomas Allen nor Elinor Demelson appear. Instead, Allen appears in the regular 1850 census because he had not yet died, while those like Elizabeth Gribble who had died appear on the mortality schedule. It also does not record where the victims were buried.



| NAME OF EVERY PERSON WHO DIED | AGE | SEX | COLOR | OCCUPATION | PLACE OF BIRTH | The death is what is shown on this list | DISEASE | OCCUPATION OF YEARS | DISEASE OR STATE OF HEALTH | DATE OF DEATH | PLACE OF BURIAL |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|------------|----------------|---|---------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| James A. Gribble | 62 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 61 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 59 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 57 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 55 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 53 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 51 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 49 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 47 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 45 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 43 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 41 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 39 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 37 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 35 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 33 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 31 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 29 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 27 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 25 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 23 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 21 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 19 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 17 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 15 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 13 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 11 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 9 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 7 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 5 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 3 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |
| John Gribble | 1 | M | W | Farmer | Wis. | Cholera | Cholera | Farmer | Cholera | Sept 10 | Platteville |

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On these slides, you'll see some but not nearly all of those who died.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Surname: Joseph Russell | Surname: William White | Surname: P. C. Philip |
| Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 |
| County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. |
| State: WI | State: WI | State: WI |
| Age: 41 | Age: 30 | Age: 40 |
| Gender: M (Male) | Gender: M (Male) | Gender: M (Male) |
| Month of Death: Jan | Month of Death: Aug | Month of Death: Jun |
| State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: IA | State of Birth: WI |
| ID#: 44_1822 | ID#: 44_2141 | ID#: 44_2184 |
| Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER |
| Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Surname: Thomas Sprague | Surname: John J. Drake | Surname: William Park |
| Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 |
| County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. |
| State: WI | State: WI | State: WI |
| Age: 40 | Age: 21 | Age: 41 |
| Gender: M (Male) | Gender: M (Male) | Gender: M (Male) |
| Month of Death: Jan | Month of Death: Aug | Month of Death: Aug |
| State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI |
| ID#: 44_1822 | ID#: 44_1898 | ID#: 44_2128 |
| Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER |
| Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA |

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| | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Surname: William Anderson | Surname: James Hawkins | Surname: John Sprague | Surname: John Blue |
| Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 |
| County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. |
| State: WI | State: WI | State: WI | State: WI |
| Age: 41 | Age: 30 | Age: 40 | Age: 40 |
| Gender: M (Male) | Gender: M (Male) | Gender: M (Male) | Gender: M (Male) |
| Month of Death: Jan | Month of Death: Jun | Month of Death: Jun | Month of Death: Jun |
| State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI |
| ID#: 44_1822 | ID#: 44_2183 | ID#: 44_2184 | ID#: 44_2185 |
| Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER |
| Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Surname: Mary Ann Stone | Surname: Thomas Sprague | Surname: Rebecca Andrews | Surname: John Baker |
| Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 |
| County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. |
| State: WI | State: WI | State: WI | State: WI |
| Age: 44 | Age: 40 | Age: 15 | Age: 30 |
| Gender: F (Female) | Gender: M (Male) | Gender: F (Female) | Gender: M (Male) |
| Month of Death: Jan | Month of Death: Aug | Month of Death: Aug | Month of Death: Jun |
| State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI |
| ID#: 44_1822 | ID#: 44_1822 | ID#: 44_1822 | ID#: 44_2184 |
| Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER |
| Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA |

The list could go on and on

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Many families lost multiple members. The Sprague and Andrews families were particularly hard hit, losing at least four family members each, including children.

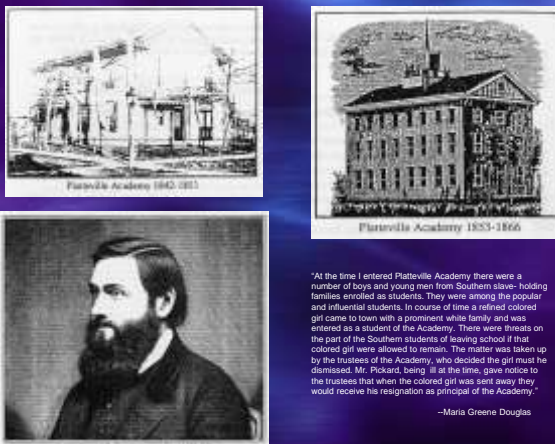
| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Surname: John Sprague Sprague | Surname: Elizabeth J. Andrews |
| Year: 1850 | Year: 1850 |
| County: Grant CO. | County: Grant CO. |
| State: WI | State: WI |
| Age: 41 | Age: 15 |
| Gender: M (Male) | Gender: F (Female) |
| Month of Death: Jan | Month of Death: Jan |
| State of Birth: WI | State of Birth: WI |
| ID#: 44_1822 | ID#: 40_1923 |
| Occupation: FARMER | Occupation: FARMER |
| Cause of Death: CHOLERA | Cause of Death: CHOLERA |

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Timeline of Indian Park (according to state and other local records)

- 1848 – On February 22, 1848 – John Rountree deeds land to the Presbyterian Church to be used as a burying ground for the interment of the dead. It is to be free to all persons to use and occupy for the purpose of interring the dead **without tax assessment or charge**. Today, this parcel of land is known as Indian Park. This deed states that the land is to be used “for and in consideration of their respect for the Christian burial of the dead.” The deed says the land is to “forever remain a cemetery”, and that it is “not to be used for any other purpose whatsoever.” This will become very important in our mystery!
- 1849 – On February 6, 1849 the Wisconsin State Legislature passes an act, Chapter 25, that authorizes the Presbyterian Church in Platteville, Grant County, to change its name and form of government to that of the Congregationalist church. This is a rather unusual act and seems related to the pro-slavery/anti-slavery split in town. Rountree’s side, since he was a slave-owner, would seem obvious. In contrast, the Presbyterian church was strongly anti-slavery.

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Platteville Academy 1843-1853

Platteville Academy 1853-1866

“At the time I entered Platteville Academy there were a number of boys and young men from Southern slave-holding families enrolled as students. They were among the popular and influential students. In course of time a refined colored girl came to town with a prominent white family and was entered as a student of the Academy. There were friends on the part of the Southern students of leaving school if that colored girl were allowed to remain. The matter was taken up by the trustees of the Academy, who decided the girl must be dismissed. Mr. Pickard, being ill at the time, gave notice to the trustees that when the colored girl was sent away they would receive his resignation as principal of the Academy.”

—Maris Greene Douglas


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A more recent rendition of the same story

Slaving Zones in a Post-Abolition World

11 The Price Ten Pay: Choosing Family Friends, and Familiarity over Freedom in the Leeward Islands, 1793–1891 149
Jennifer Richman

12 Black Handicraft, White Masters and Mistresses, and the Americanization of the Upper Mississippi River Valley Lead District 177
Jennifer Kirsten Simon



They did so despite the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1857 Dred Scott decision, which denied black Americans’ legal claims to citizenship. When school trustees dismissed *Ellen Washko* from Platteville Academy in 1853 at the insistence of former “southern slave holding families,” Thomas and Margaret enrolled their daughter at Backford Seminary in Illinois.¹² Henry Christopher, who had raised his sons and first daughter’s childhood while indentured to Samuel Mitchell, returned to his plantation to secure black students’ admittance to Galesburg’s high school in 1868.¹³ There was an imperfect freedom, but more than sixty years after the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had allegedly established Illinois and Wisconsin as free lands, they were no longer bondage states, where slaves in name abandoned, where others lived “free” in name only, and where masters could advantageously exploit the liminal space between slavery and freedom. The legal domain’s African diaspora rose best free at last in the American states their bondage had helped create.

46

Timeline of Indian Park (according to state and other local records)

- 1849 – On July 9, 1849, a deed is recorded in Grant County. This deed deeds the Presbyterian Church property to the Congregational Church for the sum of \$1. This deed mentions the “special act” that was passed by the Wisconsin State Legislature, which was approved on February 6, 1849. This deed specifically states that included with this property is a “certain one acre lot” that is “described and used as a burying ground.”
- 1850 – On August 27, 1850, Thomas Paine Aiken and Eleanor Donelson die from cholera. Aiken and Donelson are buried in the Presbyterian (Congregational) burying ground. A “Bellwood” also dies of cholera and is buried there; none of these three are listed in the 1850 Federal Mortality Schedule; that schedule lists more than 30 cholera deaths but does not say where people are buried.
- 1855 – Enoch Sanford dies of cholera and is buried in the Presbyterian (Congregational) burying ground. Sanford’s will is on the Ancestry website.
- 1855 – On August 17, 1855 a warranty deed is recorded between John and Lydia Rountree and John Lewis. This warranty deed is for 21 acres that surround the area of Indian Park but not the Park itself. A mortgage is also recorded on this date.
- 1855 – The county surveyor certifies that he has laid out lots in the Town of Platteville for John Lewis, E. W. Covell and John Rountree.
- 1856 – A release of mortgage is recorded for the 21 acres that John Lewis bought from John Rountree.
- 1858 – Warranty deed – John Lewis and Electa Lewis to E. W. Covell. It is interesting to note that this warranty deed was not recorded until May 14, 1875. (Consider this discrepancy in terms of the 1960 date of death of Rev. John Lewis.)

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1855 DEED

John H. Rountree & wife
To
John Lewis

Know all men by these presents that we, Jno. H. Rountree and Lydia H. Rountree, my wife in consideration of one thousand eight hundred dollars, to us paid by John Lewis, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, do by these presents give, grant, bargain, sell and convey unto the said John Lewis the following described piece or parcel of land, situate lying and being in the County of Grant and State of Wisconsin known and designated as:

Commencing at a limestone rock, eight inches in diameter, from which the sixteenth section corner between northeast and northwest quarters of section fifteen, Town three north, Range one west, bears south, fifty-five and a half degrees east, nine hundred and forty-four links, thence north, seventy-three degrees west, seventeen hundred and sixty-nine links; thence north nineteen degrees west, two hundred and sixty-two links; thence north seventy-one degrees, forty minutes east, eighteen hundred and nineteen links; thence south seventy-three degrees east, eighteen hundred and forty-three links; thence south six hundred and sixty-eight links; thence north seventy-eight and 3/4 degrees west, three chains --- 27/100; thence south seventeen degs west four chains; thence north seventy-three degrees west, three chains; thence south 17 degs west, two chains to the stone and place of beginning, containing twenty-one 01/100 acres of land less one acre, which was deeded to the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church February 22nd, 1848, and recorded in Book M of conveyances on pages 162 & 163 in Grant County, March 14th, 1848, which said acre this deed does not convey.

To have and to hold the above granted premises with the privileges and appurtenances thereto belonging to the said John Lewis, his heirs and assigns, to their use and behoof forever. And I, the said John H. Rountree, for myself and my heirs, executors and administrators do covenant with the said John Lewis, his heirs and assigns that I am lawfully seized in fee of the afore granted premises that they are free from all incumbrances; that I have good right to sell and convey the same to the said John Lewis as aforesaid, and that I will and my heirs, executors and administrators shall warrant and defend the same to the said John Lewis, his heirs and assigns forever against the lawful claims and demands of all persons.

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In witness whereof, we, the said John H. Rountree and Lydia H., his wife, have here unto set our hands and seals this seventeenth day of August in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and fifty five.

Jno. H. Rountree (seal)
Lydia H. Rountree (seal)

Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of,
Ellen R. Rountree, B. F. Wyne

State of Wisconsin
County of Grant

Be it remembered that on this seventeenth day of August A. D. 1855, personally came before me the above named Jno. H. Rountree and Lydia H., his wife, to me known to be the persons who executed the said deed and acknowledged the same to be their free act and deed for the uses and purposes therein mentioned.

B. F. Wyne
Justice of the Peace
Recorded August 18, 1855, at 11 o'clock A. M.
Attest: Wm. McGonigal, Register, By L. O. -----, Deputy

The whole history of this property's deeds and appearance on tax rolls, as researched by Laurie Graney, is here: <https://driftlessroadtrip.com/what-i-know-about-indian-park-as-of-march-2020/>

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Hill or Hillside Cemetery?

Both cemeteries were in Platteville and sometimes get confused. Consider this in terms of Rev. John Lewis.

1860 – On September 2, 1860, John Lewis dies at the age of 43. Lewis was very much respected and loved in the Platteville community. People referred to him as “Saint John.” Lewis was laid to rest on an afternoon of “autumnal splendor.” The entire Academy followed his casket to the cemetery. Congregationalist church records records say he is buried in Hillside cemetery, but there’s no marker there for him. Also, the walk from the old Presbyterian/Congregationalist church to Hillside cemetery is rather far, whereas “Hill Graveyard” was only a block away. (Where is Lewis’s gravestone that you see here? Greenwood cemetery... which really makes no sense at all unless it was moved there from Hill Cemetery.)

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1918 Map of Cemetery Park

51



1860 – December 10, 1860 – A certificate of probate for John Lewis’ estate is recorded. Electa Lewis is named as heir to his estate.

1861 – November 6, 1861 – Tax Deed – Ownership of the cemetery goes to Grant County. (According to Register of Deeds Marilyn Pierce, this should not have happened as the parcel is a cemetery and cemeteries were not to be taxed, though the tax amount of \$2.71 was due from the year 1857.) W. R. Beach represented Grant County in the purchase of the cemetery. Laurie Graney has tied W. R. Beach to the 1850 Beetown cholera per an entry in the 1900 Holford edition of the History of Grant County Wisconsin, which mentions Beach in connection with this event, which decimated Beetown. (Is it coincidental that Beach would purchase a cemetery for the county with known cholera victims?)

52

The Problem

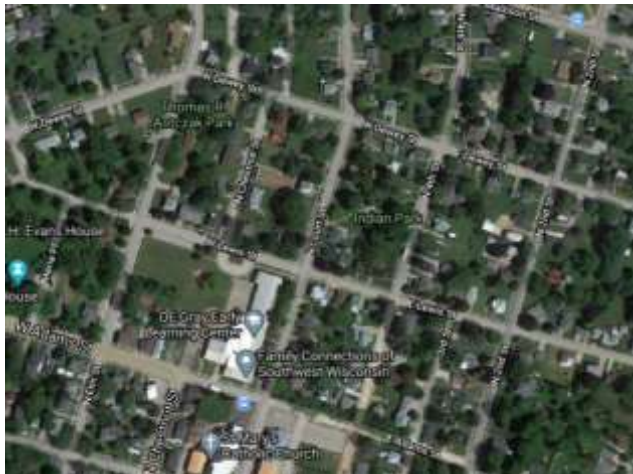
- Rountree, a slaveowner, founds Platteville Academy
- Platteville Academy is associated with the Presbyterian church which is anti-slavery
- The underground railroad in Platteville is also associated with the Platteville Academy. Alvin M. Dixon, first president of the Academy and close friend of Lewis, “runs” this railroad
- At the same time, some free Blacks in Platteville (children of American Jenkins) are sold back into slavery.
- Lewis and Rountree clearly are on opposite sides of this issue. How does that effect the “Presbyterian/Congregationalist burying ground”?

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A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand



54



55

Timeline of Indian Park (according to state and other local records)

- **1861** November 6, 1861 – Tax Deed – Ownership of the cemetery goes to Grant County. (According to Register of Deeds Marilyn Pierce, this should not have happened as the parcel is a cemetery and cemeteries were not to be taxed.) (The tax amount of \$2.71 was due from the year 1857.) W. R. Beach represented Grant County in the purchase of the cemetery. It should be noted that Laurie Graney has tied W. R. Beach's legal activities to the 1850 Beetown cholera (see 1900 Holford edition of the History of Grant County Wisconsin)
- **1868** On May 30, 1868 Grant County quit claim deeds the Presbyterian Burying Ground to John Rountree for \$3.
- **1869** On July 20, 1869 Eliphalet and Rebecca Covell and Electa Lewis quit claim deed Lots 9, 10, 19 & 20 of Covell's Addition, (Indian Park), to John Rountree for \$50. (It is unknown as to why Rountree did this, as the Covells and Electa Lewis did not own and had never owned these lots, and Rountree already had a quit claim deed recorded with Grant County. ?????????????? Electa Lewis had long ago left Platteville and was living in Chicago at this time.)
- **1875** Tax roll records show that John Rountree has ownership of lots 9, 10, 19 & 20 of Covell's Addition.
- **1890** John Rountree dies on June 27, 1890.
- **1895** July 25th, 1895 – Lydia Rountree, Jennie Rountree and John S. Rountree sell Lots 9, 10, 19 and 20 of Covell's Addition and several other parcels to Robert Spear. (Robert Spear, a member of the Grant County Board of Supervisors in 1898, lived in Platteville and is listed as a “capitalist” on the 1900 census. His father John Spear was Platteville City Council in 1892, and the 1920 census lists John Spear as a bank president.

Available in more detail at:
<https://driftlessroadtrip.com/what-i-know-about-indian-park-as-of-march-2020/>

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Timeline of Indian Park (according to state and other local records)

- **1898** Rountree heirs attempt to sue the Presbyterian Synod to eject them from the ground and terminate its use as a cemetery. (Note Chapter 25 of the 1849 Wisconsin State Legislature says the Congregational Church is now the successor in law of the Presbyterian Church.)
- **1898** Court document showing that the Rountree heirs are entitled to possession of 41' 6" on the south side of lots 10 and 19. The balance of lots 10, 19, 9 and 20 are for cemetery purposes.
- **1901** January 15, 1901 – E. B. Rice has a lien recorded at Grant County for lots 9, 10, 19, & 20 of Covell's Addition. (The word "affidavit" is written alongside this handwritten document.) The lien is for compensation of materials, labor and attorney fees, (caring, upkeep and maintenance), of the "Presbyterian burying ground".
- **1901** January 16, 1901 – A deed is recorded at Grant County, which transfers the ownership of Indian Park/Cemetery, Presbyterian burying ground, (except for a strip of land on the south side of lots 10 and 19), to O. W. Barrett. Barrett purchases the cemetery from E. B. Rice and Della E. Rice for \$500.
- **1901 & 1902** tax roll records show that O. W. Barrett is the owner, but no taxes were paid as the said property is a "cemetery" and "graveyard". On June 9, 1902, a survey is done for Lots 10 & 19.
- **1903** tax roll record line is left blank.
- **1904** tax roll record indicates that the property is now "public property".

Available with list of all tax rolls at:
<https://driftlessroadtrip.com/what-i-know-about-indian-park-as-of-march-2020/>

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Timeline of Indian Park : 1917

- **1917** May 29, 1917 – The state legislature passes an act to "vacate" the cemetery. The city is given six months from the passage of the act to "remove all remains" to suitable lots in Greenwood Cemetery in the said City of Platteville. Thereafter, the use of said lands for interment shall be prohibited and the title thereto shall be vested in the said City of Platteville. (Platteville City Council meeting minutes show that the council did not vote to remove the remains from the cemetery until April 3, 1918. (The April 3, 1918 date is over 10 months from the passage of this act.) Once this task was completed, the city council authorized and empowered the Rountree Park Committee to level the surface to the ground, etc.. The remains of several individuals still remain in Indian Park, as these individuals died of cholera. At that point in time, it was believed, if the remains were "dug up" the dreaded disease could once again be spread.) Laurie Graney read through the Platteville City Council meeting for over two years from this date, and was unable to find where the Rountree Park Committee reported back to the council that their task had been completed. The reason why should be obvious: as a search of local papers reflects, most were focused on World War I and the news was not an old park, but young men being drafted for service.
- **1917** The Aiken family ordered grave markers for Thomas Aiken and Eleanor Donelson to be placed at the "new" cemetery where their remains were to be moved. According to both newspaper accounts and Laura Graney's accounts to her daughter-in-law Laurie, the Aiken family was prevented from moving these remains, as Thomas Aiken and Eleanor Donelson had died of cholera and there was fear of spreading the cholera once again. The grave markers were found on the family century farm several years back. Laura Graney said that she and Laurie's father-in-law, Wilburn, had buried the grave markers and indicated the approximate location of them. Copies of the grave markers photos have been sent to the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

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Timeline of Indian Park : 1918

- **1918** March 8, 1918 – City Council votes to rename the cemetery "Rountree Park".
- **1918** April 3, 1918 – City Council votes to remove all bodies found in Rountree Park and to rebury them in Greenwood Cemetery. Rountree Park Committee is then authorized and empowered to level the surface of the ground and to erect fences on the north and south sides of said park and that the expense, thereof, be borne by the city.
- **1918** Most likely date of the final gathering of Native American people in "Indian Park"?
- **1918** Local news is almost entirely focused on World War I. As the war ends, the Spanish Fly epidemic breaks out. Its hard to believe that vacating the cemetery was near the top of anyone's priority list, except perhaps those, like William Aiken, who had ancestors and loved ones buried there.

We'll spend the rest of this presentation on the mystery of native gatherings in the park, the mystery stone, and whether the park was the location of the "burying ground diggings." But the modern origin of the park as a cemetery is no "mystery" at all but an easily documentable fact and the facts match the recorded memories of Platteville residents.

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Now, for the other mysteries....

- **Mystery stone**
- **Native gatherings in the early 1900s and before**
- **"Burial diggings"?**
- **Linear mound?**

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Fate of John Holman, who followed the gold rush to California along with Lewis & Clark Expedition oldtimer Alexander Hamilton Willard and his family.

Holman died and was placed under a large stone, perhaps like our "mystery stone," to keep his body from being eaten by varmints.

62

What does it say? How old is it?

- "Montgomery" misspelled?
- Latin letters above?
- The last four letters look like "MEEV"
- Eastern European name ending?
- No name with this ending appears on any burial or other records we have yet found
- It could be much older than the 1850s!

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WISCONSIN CAPITAL TIMES
12 Dec 1962

Many Historical Mysteries In Platteville Cemeteries

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Conical Mound
 Round, dome shaped mounds of earth that are 7 to 10 feet high and 10 to 20 feet in diameter. They were built between 750 and 3,000 years ago.

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A Native Gathering in the Early 1900s

- Account of Laura Graney (granddaughter of Thomas Aiken), as recorded by herself as well as by Laurie and Dick Graney
- Account of Marjory Lathrop (Dana) Livingston, as recorded by her niece, Kay Tiedemann Young
- Both Laura (Aiken) Graney and Marjory Lathrop (Dana) Livingston independently recalled a gathering held sometime around 1915-1920.

What could this have been? Was it a one-time event?

- Note how this corresponds to the 1918 vote to remove all bodies (though there is no record that bodies ever were removed) and to “level” the ground.
- The native gathering lasted more than one day (“several” in one account; “a few days and nights” in the other.)
- Kay Tiedemann Young writes that according to her aunt, “The people camped right near or at the park and made a lot of noise for many hours. They sang and hollered, [her aunt thought], to keep white people away. The noise was particularly loud at night. At least that what I think she told me.”

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“Burying Ground Diggings”?

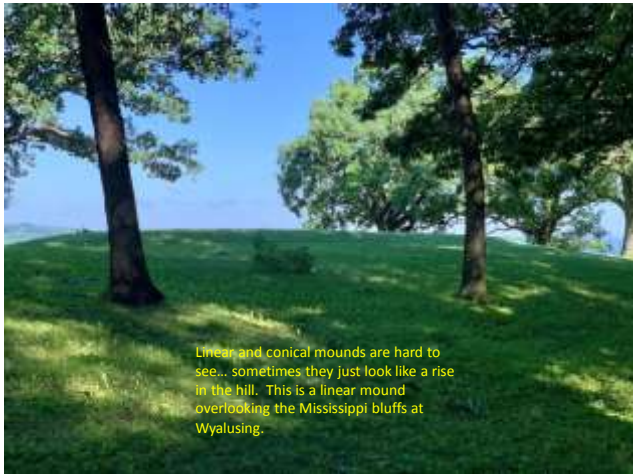
J. F. KIRKPATRICK, Plattville; is of Scotch descent, his ancestors having been banished to South Carolina and Georgia during the religious troubles in the middle of the last century. His grandfather, with six stalwart brothers, fought under Washington and Marion for freedom and revenge upon the mother country. All returned in safety, except the grandsons of Mr. Kirkpatrick, who was fully murdered by Tories. All were over six feet in height, and emigrated from Georgia. The father of Mr. Kirkpatrick, with two brothers, came from Georgia to what is now Madison Co., Ill., in 1806. He was the father of eight sons, of whom John F. was born Sept. 9, 1811. Five of the sons came to the lead regions of Illinois and Wisconsin. J. F. Kirkpatrick came to Belmont Mounds only in 1832 and planted a crop of corn; then came the Indian scare and subsequent war, in which Mr. Kirkpatrick took an active part as one of Capt. Craig's company. Returning to the north of Plattville that fall, he discovered the “Burying Ground Diggings.” He married, near Washburn, Mary J. Boney, who died, as did her four children. The present Mrs. Kirkpatrick was Mary Ellen Somers, born in Clarke Co., Ind.; they have five children—Henrietta (Mrs. George Brunkill), Emma A. (Mrs. Jas. Stevens), Anna, Eda May and Clyde, all born in Plattville. Since 1838, Mr. Kirkpatrick has resided in Plattville. Here he was eight or ten years in mercantile business, and for twenty-two years in the hatching business. Mr. Kirkpatrick has served for many years on both the town and village boards.

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More than one mound?

- As noted earlier, the burying ground has been leveled and fill added. The area used to be hilly enough to be called “Hill Graveyard” and was near multiple springs.
- Doris Scheil’s grandmother, Mary Toomey Rouse, would walk with her granddaughter through the park on the way downtown to Main Street. (Mary Rouse was born in this area in 1876.) Mrs. Scheil remembers her grandmother telling her that there used to be more than one mound in the park.
- Of course, we went to look for where these other mounds might have be! (What were we looking for? Basically soil compacted in a way that leaves some faint outline.) And we (think that we) found it!
- The only way to prove this for certain would be with ground-penetrating radar.

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72



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What's next?



- As you can see, a lot of Platteville's very early history connects to Indian Park. For example: Native American mound(s) and ceremony, the transformation of local geography, John Rountree, Reverend John Lewis, Josiah Pickard, the Academy, veterans, our early pioneers, the smallpox and cholera epidemics, early religion and religious controversy over slavery and the underground railroad, and perhaps even early mining and the powder mill fatalities.
- Incidentally, there is no known deed between the Congregational Church and any other party. Perhaps the Congregational Church might be interested exploring this further... after all, it's their church history, and the church itself is on the National Register of Historic Places.

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What's next?



- It seems that the City of Platteville's interest in this park is periodic. Every few decades the city shows interest in repurposing Indian Park. For instance, in the late 1950's, the Platteville City Council explored the idea of selling Indian Park as four buildable lots. (Attorney Bloch advised against this, and that letter is still on file.) Recently there's been talk of repurposing it again. Why not repurpose it to remind people here of our history, and all the historic currents running through one small piece of land?
- As city managers, other city personnel and city council persons come and go and time marches on, the history of Indian Park has been lost in the shuffle. Perhaps it is time to get the history of Indian Park carved in stone and shown its proper respect. Think of what a wonderful teaching tool it could be!

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In Closing

- At our last presentation on Indian Park, Laurie Graney read to you from an article that was in the Sunday, February 23rd edition of the *Telegraph Herald*, "The Mounds Along the Mississippi River." We ended our first presentation with the last few short paragraphs of the article. Due to much of our presentation today being about the conical mound and other burials in Indian Park, I find it appropriate to read from this article to you again today. It makes no difference your race or culture: the same holds true for all of us. This article reads:
- "I try to be cognizant of cultural appropriation these days. I make no assumptions about the lives and ways of the indigenous peoples who built these mounds. Instead, I focus on what I believe we hold in common, though it often bears repeating, reminding and re-teaching.
- "That the land that holds our dead is sacred.
- "That the land that bears and cradles our lives is sacred.
- "That sacred lands be treated with reverence."
- We hope that soon the proper authorities will decide to recognize the park as an area of local historic significance so its past can be known and appreciated by all in this area.

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Thank you for
listening!