

FREEPORT CITY CEMETERY

A self-guided walking tour

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Freeport's City Cemetery was started in 1852. The small settlement on the banks of the Pecatonica River was growing into a town and by the early 1850's there was a need for a cemetery. Before the City Cemetery was established, settlers used the Winnebago Indian burial ground located on Monterey Street near the site of Tutty Baker's cabin. An abandoned factory building, the former Keene Canning Company, stands on that site today.

A piece of land out in the country – ten acres – was purchased from a farmer, Temperance Foley, for the purpose of establishing a cemetery. The original ten acres are the four sections nearest Lincoln Boulevard on the north. The 15 acres that make up the southern part of the cemetery was purchased in 1878 when there was a need to expand. In general, the oldest graves in the cemetery are near Lincoln Boulevard on the north and the newest near American Street on the south although after more than 150 years there are still burials in every part of the cemetery.

From the American Street entrance you'll be following a large clockwise circular route that Freeport Junior High Students follow on our cemetery field trip. They stop at 25 locations throughout the cemetery and answer one question from each location. There are three versions: the Lincoln version, the Douglas version and the Tutty version. Each has different questions. We patterned this activity after the Boy Scouts Grant Pilgrimage held annually in Galena.

Cemeteries are community journals. The history of a town is found in the lives of its citizens, and Freeport is no exception. Follow the map and learn about the lives and stories of Freeport's past.

- Location #1 Stoskopf obelisk: The Stoskopf family was a prominent early German family in Freeport. The obelisk shape is common in older cemeteries. Note the elaborate initials "V" and "S" (for Valentine Stoskopf) intertwined on this monument. Many think this looks like a dollar sign.
- Location #2 Daniel Stover obelisk: This large obelisk dominates the cemetery. The Stover family made its money in the manufacturing business. They made small engines and are especially known for their Stover "Ideal" windmills. Daniel Stover died in the early 1900's and left \$10,000 for this monument, a considerable sum in those days. His family had a difficult time settling his estate. It took over 50 years!
- Location #3 Edna Hayden Johnson: Edna Hayden Johnson is the mother of Robert Johnson, who grew up in Freeport, graduated from Freeport High School in 1964 and went on to found BET (Black Entertainment Television). Robert Johnson has many business interests that have made him a billionaire.
- Location #4 Sarah Sides: This small marker can be found by walking west from the third tree that's marked on the map. Sarah Sides founded St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, the first African-American church in Freeport. This church was founded around 1911. Mrs. Sides is buried far from her husband who rests in the "black section" of the City Cemetery. He died thirty years before his wife. That may account for the difference in location.