



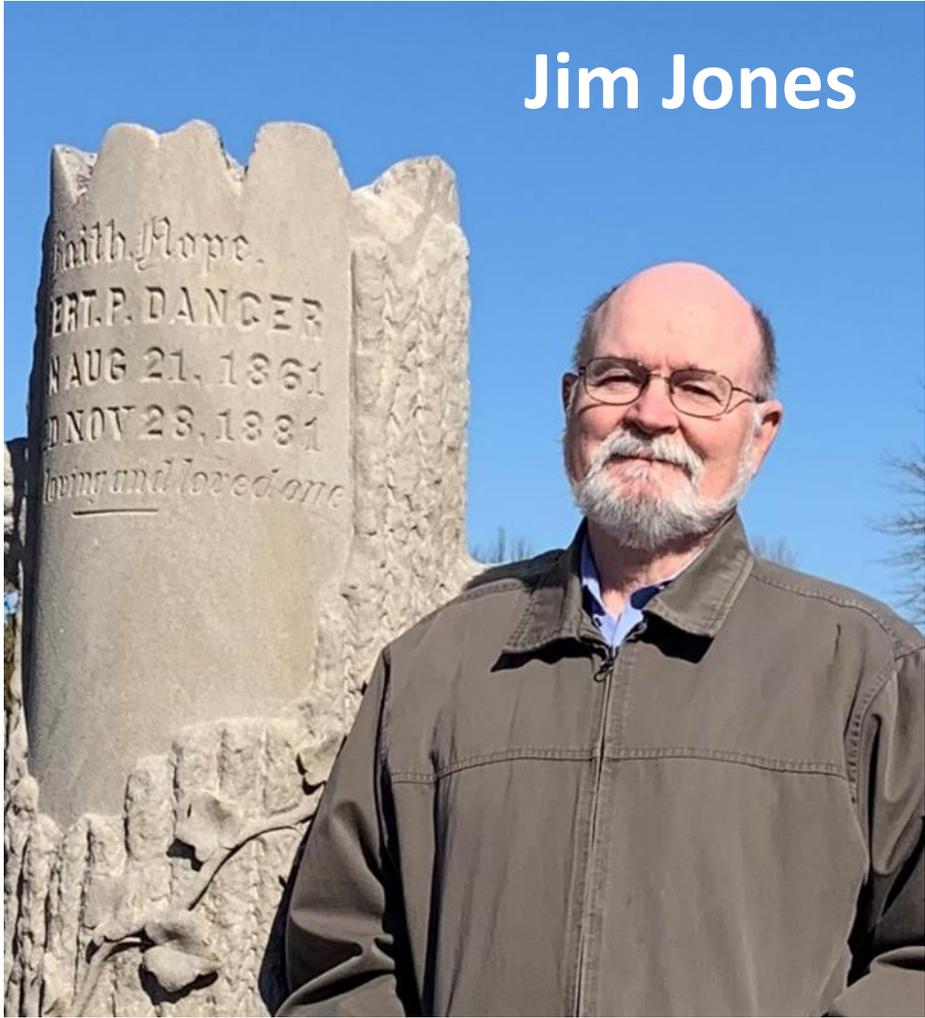
# Unearthing Truths



**Unraveling Stories in Cemetery Logs**

**Jim Jones  
Sexton & Records Manager**

**Website:  
[LamoniRoseHill.org](http://LamoniRoseHill.org)**



Jim Jones

## WHO AM I?

- 1983 moved to Lamoni and joined Graceland to teach Computer Science
- 2014 retired as Professor Emeritus in Comp Sci from Graceland University
- 2014 became a Rose Hill Board Trustee
- I wanted to create a cemetery website
- Today Rose Hill's Secretary/Treasurer, Sexton, Records & Website Manager

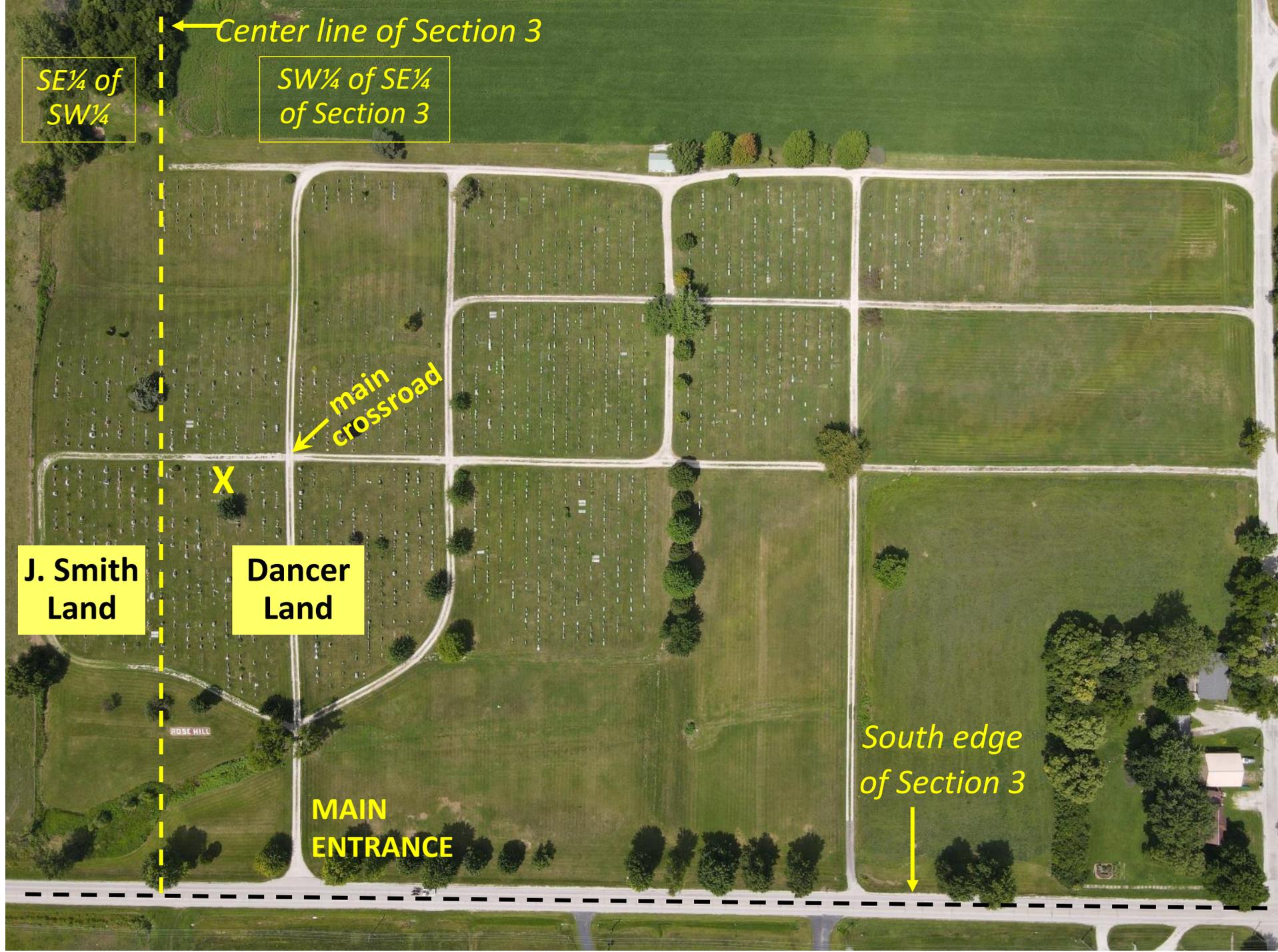
***Q: Who owns the cemetery? What is its origin story? How does it connect to our history?***



# Rose Hill Cemetery

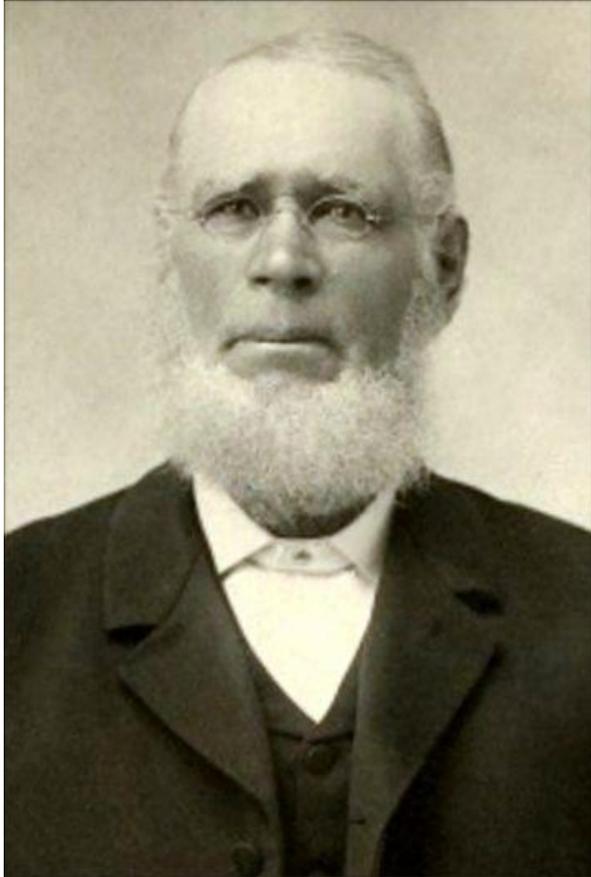
## 1881 first burial

- Albert P. Dancer, 20 yr old
- Son of Rosalia & David

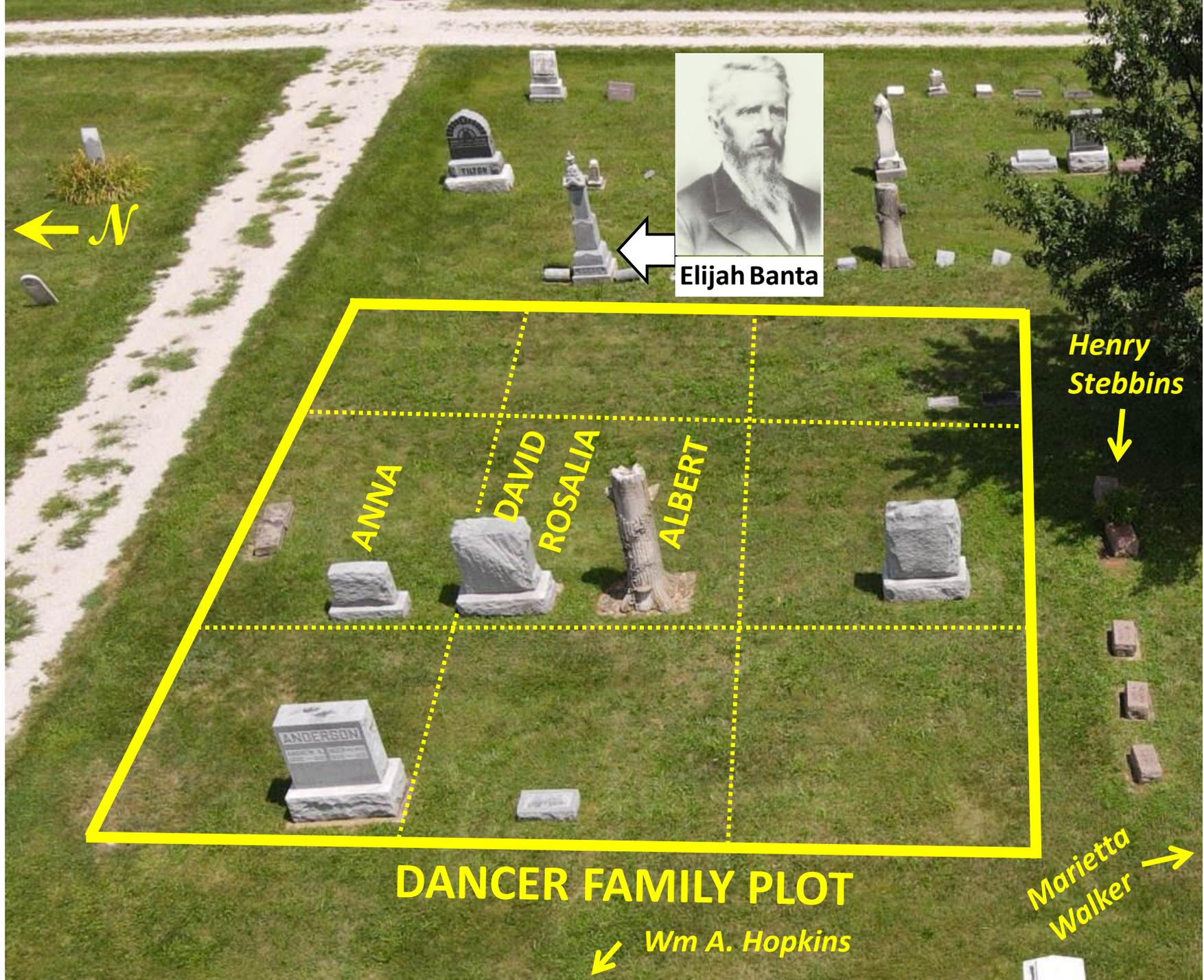




Rose Hill Cemetery



**David Dancer**  
**1827-1898**



**Elijah Banta**

**ANNA**  
**DAVID**  
**ROSALIA**  
**ALBERT**

**DANCER FAMILY PLOT**

**Henry Stebbins**

**Marietta Walker**

**Wm A. Hopkins**



# Rose Hill Cemetery

← Center line of Section 3

Treasure Log

100

Rose Hill Cemetery in Account

DATE			RECEIPTS	
Month	Day	Year	From Whom Received	On What Account
June	4	1886	E. Banta	Deed # 2
"	"	"	S. M. Bass	" 3

1881 first burial

1886 Rose Hill Established

- Rosalia donated this land
- Lots 1 to 551 were platted

From 1934 article in Chronicle and local historian Alma Blair

5 acres

1886

X

Lot 1

1922 Deed

20x40 rods

330' x 660'

### UNANSWERED QUESTIONS:

- Why is the deed dated 1922
- Why isn't lot 1 in NE corner

### Lot Grid Map

572	568	564	560	556	552	976
573	569	565	561	557	553	975
574	570	566	562	558	554	974
575	571	567	563	559	555	973
16	13	10	7	4	1	972
17	14	11	8	5	2	971
18	15	12	9	6	3	970
F23	F24	F25	F26	F27	F28	F29
81	77	73	69	65	61	969

WHAT WE ONCE BELIEVED



# Rose Hill Cemetery

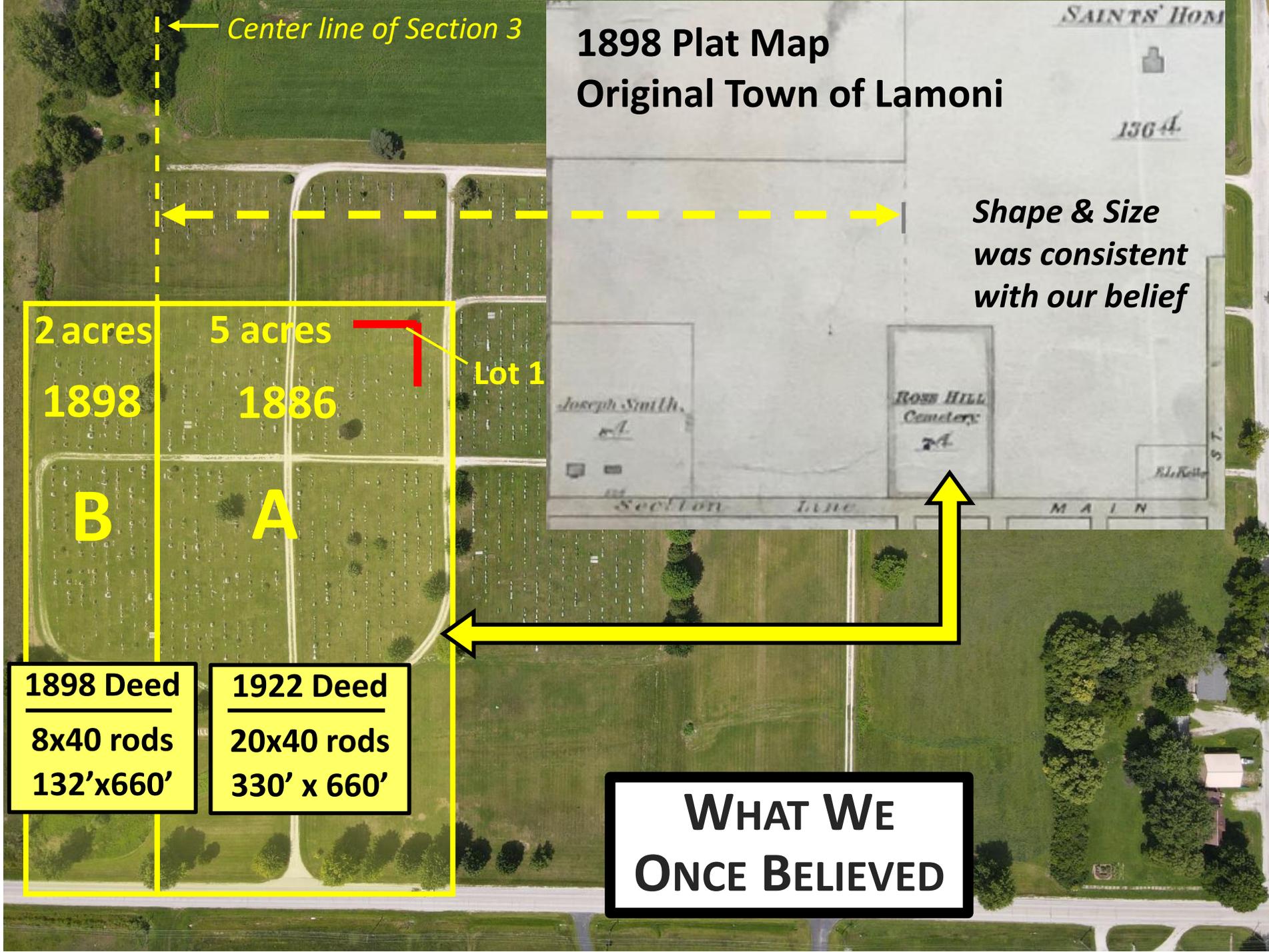
**1881** first burial

**1886** Rose Hill Established

- Rosalia donated land A
- Lots 1 to 551 were platted

**1898** purchased land B

- Bought from RLDS church
- Lots 552 to 958 got added



Center line of Section 3

1898 Plat Map  
Original Town of Lamoni

Shape & Size  
was consistent  
with our belief

2 acres  
1898

5 acres  
1886

Lot 1

B

A

**1898 Deed**  
8x40 rods  
132'x660'

**1922 Deed**  
20x40 rods  
330' x 660'

**WHAT WE  
ONCE BELIEVED**

### Lot Grid Map

572	568	564	560	556	552	976
573	569	565	561	557	553	975
574	570	566	562	558	554	974
575	571	567	563	559	555	973
16	13	10	7	4	1	972
17	14	11	8	5	2	971
18	15	12	9	6	3	970
F23	F24	F25	F26	F27	F28	F29
81	77	73	69	65	61	969

**Aug 3, 1898**

**Deed**

**for**

**Parcel B**

Know all men by these presents That the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a corporation organized under the laws of Iowa, with its principal place of business at Lamoni, Decatur County, in said State, for and in consideration of the sum of one hundred fifty and 00/100 to it in hand paid by J. A. Mansolly, David Anderson & M. Bass, Trustees of the County of Decatur in State of Iowa does hereby sell and convey unto the said Trustees and their successors in office the following described Real Estate, situated in the County of Decatur and State of Iowa, to wit:

Two (2) acres of land lying adjoining and on the west side of Rose Hill cemetery in west Lamoni said county, and particularly described as follows Beginning at a point on the line in the center of the Public Highway at the south east corner of the So. West Quarter (S.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of Section No three (3) town Sixty Seven (67) Range Twenty Seven (27) west, thence due north on said line forty (40) rods, thence due west Eight (8) rods, thence due south forty (40) rods, thence due east to place of beginning except (8) rods. The same for Cemetery purposes. ← "for cemetery purposes"

**Seller:**  
**RLDS Church**

**Price: \$150**

**Buyer: Trustees  
of Decatur Co. (?)**

**Size/Dimensions:**

**2 acres**

**8 x 40 rods**

# Oct 7, 1922 Deed for Parcel A

***We BELIEVED this was the first deed for parcel A, recorded 36 years late***

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

That : Walter H.Dancer and Anna M.Dancer his wife, of Coos County, Oregon; and Alberta P.Kelley and W.B.Kelley, her husband, of Jackson County, Missouri; and Anna A.Dancer, a widow and David A.Dancer and Florence M.Dancer, his wife; and Howard M.Dancer and Elizabeth N . Dancer his wife, of Decatur County, Iowa, sole heirs at law of David Dancer, deceased, late

of the County of Decatur and State of Iowa, in consideration of **One Dollars in hand paid**

by the **Trustees of Rosehill Cemetery** of the County of Decatur and State of Iowa, do hereby

REMISE RELEASE AND QUIT CLAIM unto John Midgorden, W.A.France and W.A.Hopkins, trustees of Rosehill Cemetery and their successors in office to be electe by the Lamoni Branch of the

reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints , all our right, title and interest

in and to the following described premises, with all appurtenances thereunto belonging, situated in the County of Decatur and State of Iowa to-wit:

Beginning at the Southwest corner of the Southeast Quarter (SE<sup>1</sup>) of Section Three (3) in Township Sixty-seven (67) Range Twenty-seven (27), running thence north forty rods, thence east twenty rods, thence south forty rods, thence west twenty rods to the place of beginning, being a part of Rosehill Cemetery.

**20 x 40 rods**

Signed this 7th day of October A.D.1922.

**Dancer Heirs**

**Trustees of Rose Hill**

**RLDS affiliated**

**\$1.00**

# An Expense Entry That Made Me Look Twice

100

Rose Hill Cemetery in Account

RECEIPTS						AMOUNT	
DATE			From Whom Received	On What Account	Dollars	Cen	
Month	Day	Year					
June	4	1886	E. Banta	Seed # 2	10		
"	"	"	S. M. Bass	" 3	10		
"	"	"	Henry Hart	" 4	5		
"	"	"	Joseph Smith	" 5	5		
"	"	"	Wm. Bradley	" 6	5		
"	"	"	J. L. Bradley	" 7	5		
Sept	13	"	C. J. Anderson	" 8	5		
Oct.	22	"	John Scott	" 1	5		
"	25	"	D. Dancer	" 9, 10	45		
"	26	"	V. White	" 11	5		
"	28	"	A. H. Stearns	" 12	5		
Nov.	27	"	Estate Robert Booth	" 13	5		
Dec.	8	"	Victoria Truman	" 14	5		
Jan	4	1887	John Davis	" 15	5		
"	18	"	Nephi Lovell	" 16	5		
Mar.		"	H. C. Smith		5		
Mar.	12	"	J. A. J.		2		

101

with the Treasurer.

DATE PAID			EXPENDITURES		AMOUNT	
th	Day	Year	To Whom Paid	On What Account	Dollars	Cents
		1886	For Printing		1	25
			H. A. Stebbins	Writing	1	
				Stamps & Envelopes		40
				Oak Stringers for Repairing Bridge	3	84
				Tile		55
		1887	E. Beantworth	Work	1	
				64 ft. Pipes @ 20 ct	12	80
				Valves		50
			S. Lasley	Work	1	50
			Graham & Walker	For what?	3	4
			"	"	1	4
				66 Rods fence	3	3
				4 1/2 Acres Land	8	1
				Surveying	1	0
			Ackerley	Work	2	
				Surveyor	4	
		1890	Rickey		1	25
						50
		1891	S. M. Bass	Work	3	12
			Alma Bennett	"	4	5
				Lumber for walk	45	86



1887

To Whom?

4 1/2 Acres Land

For what?

?

?

# The Elusive 1887 Deed

## Assumptions:

- An 1887 deed must exist at courthouse: 4  $\frac{1}{20}$  acres sold at \$81
- That deed will unlock clues about the 5 acres deeded in 1922

## At Courthouse: 1880s deeds indexed by first letter name of Seller or Buyer

- I assumed Dancer sold it (unsure of buyer), so I used **Seller index "D"**
- Bad News – Hundreds of D. Dancer sales (Order of Enoch's top landholder)
- Good News – Fewer entries of **Dancer sales in Section 3**
- Bad News – not found in 1887... not found in 1886 ... keep going?
- **FOUND IT in 1885**

# DEED RECORD - Lands.

ACRES, BLACKMAN & Co., Makers, Burlington.

David Dancer & wife

Filed for Record, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1885

at 1 o'clock P.M.

C. S. [Signature] Recorder.

[Signature] Deputy.

E. Banta et al

**Seller: David & Rosalia Dancer**  
**Not just Rosalia**

**Price: \$115**  
**Not donated;**  
**Not \$81**

**300' x 588'**  
**(4 1/20 acres)**

**Not 5 acres;**  
**Nonrectangular**  
**in 1898**

Know all Men by these Presents:

That **David Dancer and Rosalia H. Dancer**  
 his wife  
 of the County of Decatur and State of Iowa for the consideration of  
 One Hundred and fifteen DOLLARS,  
 hereby convey to **E. Banta, R. H. Dailor & S. M. Bass Trustees** and their  
 successors in office  
 of the County of Decatur and State of Iowa the following described  
 real estate, situated in the County of Decatur and State of Iowa, to-wit:

Beginning at the South West corner of the South East  
 quarter of Section Three in Township Sixty seven (67)  
 North, of Range twenty seven West and running thence  
 North five hundred and eighty eight (588 ft), thence East  
 Three Hundred (300) feet, thence South five hundred  
 and eighty eight feet, thence West three hundred feet  
 to place of beginning For Cemetery. to be  
 designated as the Rose Hill Cemetery.

**IMPLIED BY Oct 20<sup>th</sup> DATE:**  
**Rose Hill was being created**  
**as THE cemetery for newly**  
**incorporated City of Lamoni**

**Buyers: 1<sup>st</sup> Trustees Elijah Banta,**  
**Rosalia Dancer, and Seth M. Bass**  
**All prominent city leaders;**  
**Rosalia is clearly the key influencer;**  
**Not owned by RLDS, Bishop, etc.**

**Cemetery is given its name:**  
**Rose Hill Cemetery Not Rosehill**

**Signed Oct 20, 1885**

**Same day city leaders in Leon filing to**  
**incorporate City of Lamoni (Dec 1885)**

And **he** WARRANT THE TITLE of the same against all persons whomsoever.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have set our hand this 20<sup>th</sup> day of October 1885

David Dancer  
 Rosalia H. Dancer



# Rose Hill Cemetery

1881 first burial

**1885** Rose Hill Established

- **Dancers sold us land A**
- Lots 1 to 551 were platted

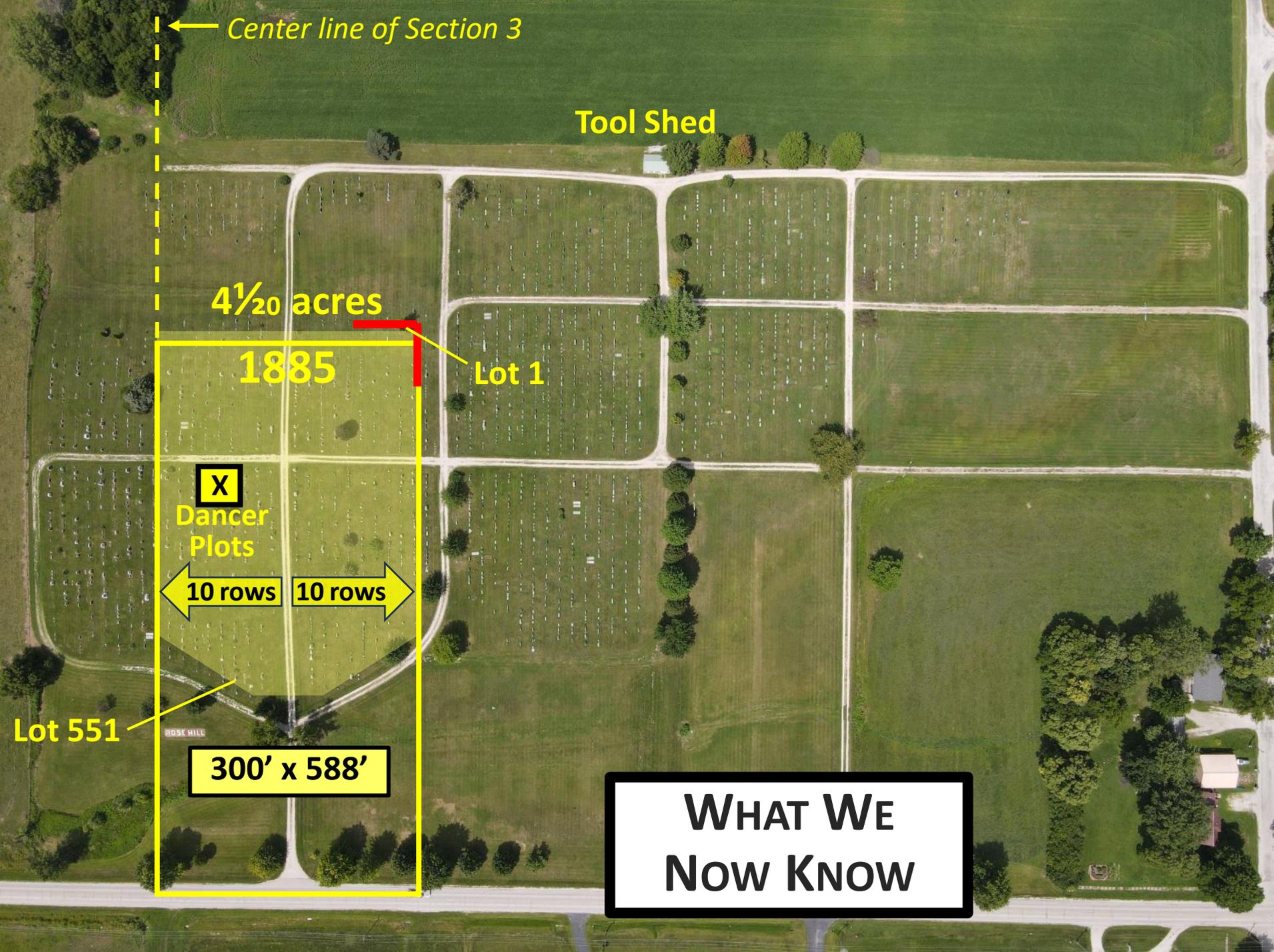
Lot Grid Map

572	568	564	560	556	552	976
573	569	565	561	557	553	975
574	570	566	562	558	554	974
575	571	567	563	559	555	973
16	13	10	7	4	1	972
17	14	11	8	5	2	971
18	15	12	9	6	3	970
F23	F24	F25	F26	F27	F28	F29
81	77	73	69	65	61	969
82	78	74	70	66	62	968
83	79	75	71	67	63	967
84	80	76	72	68	64	966

660' (vertical arrow on left)

620' (vertical arrow on left)

588' (horizontal arrow at bottom)



Center line of Section 3

Tool Shed

4 1/20 acres

1885

Lot 1

X  
Dancer  
Plots

10 rows 10 rows

Lot 551

300' x 588'

**WHAT WE  
NOW KNOW**





# Rose Hill Cemetery

1881 first burial

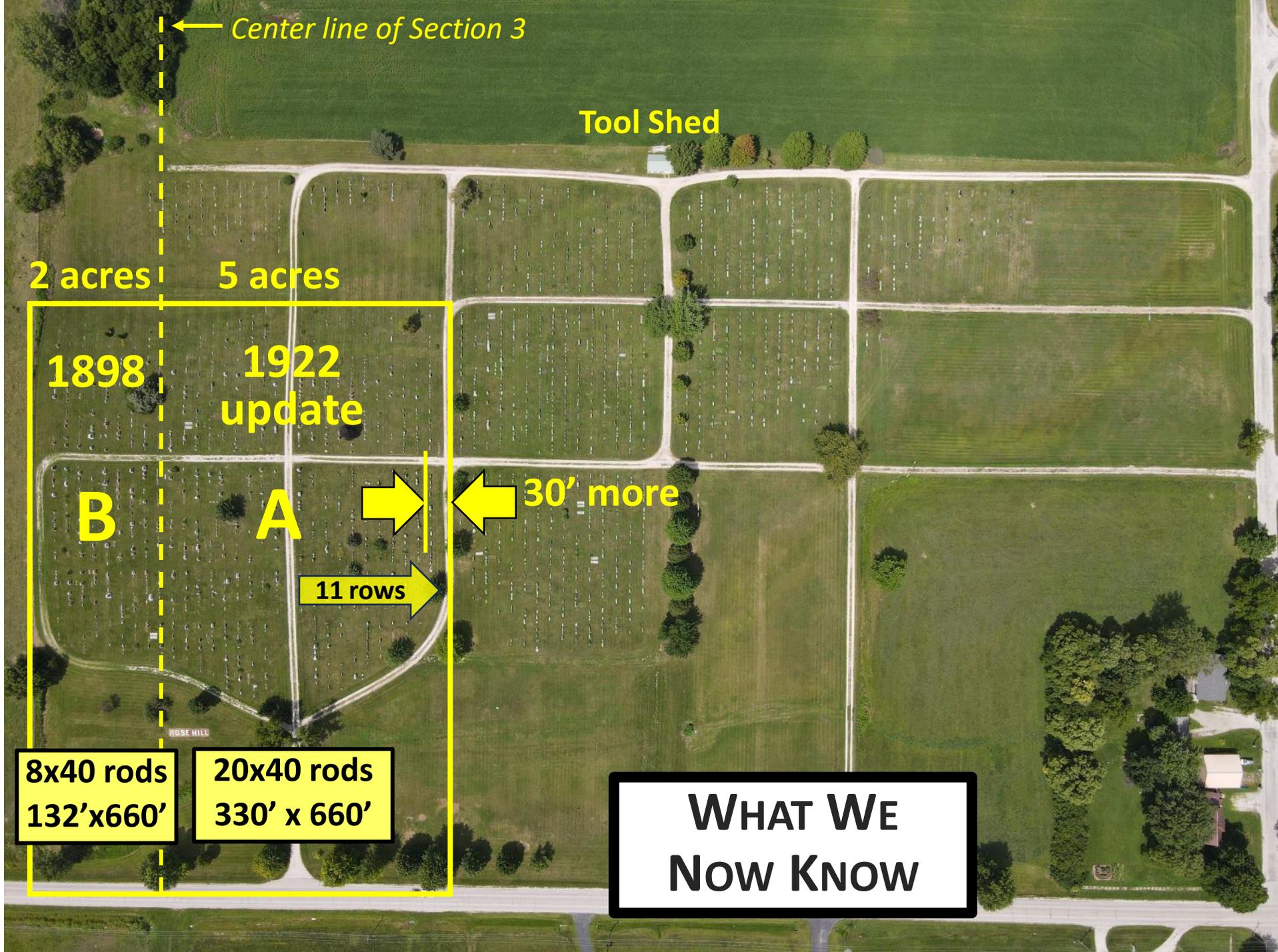
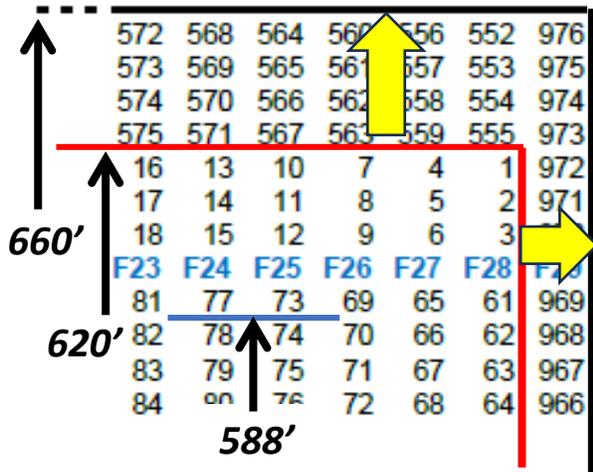
1885 purchased land A

1898 purchased land B

1922 updated land A

- Added one more row
- Added road along E edge
- Shuffled and added lots

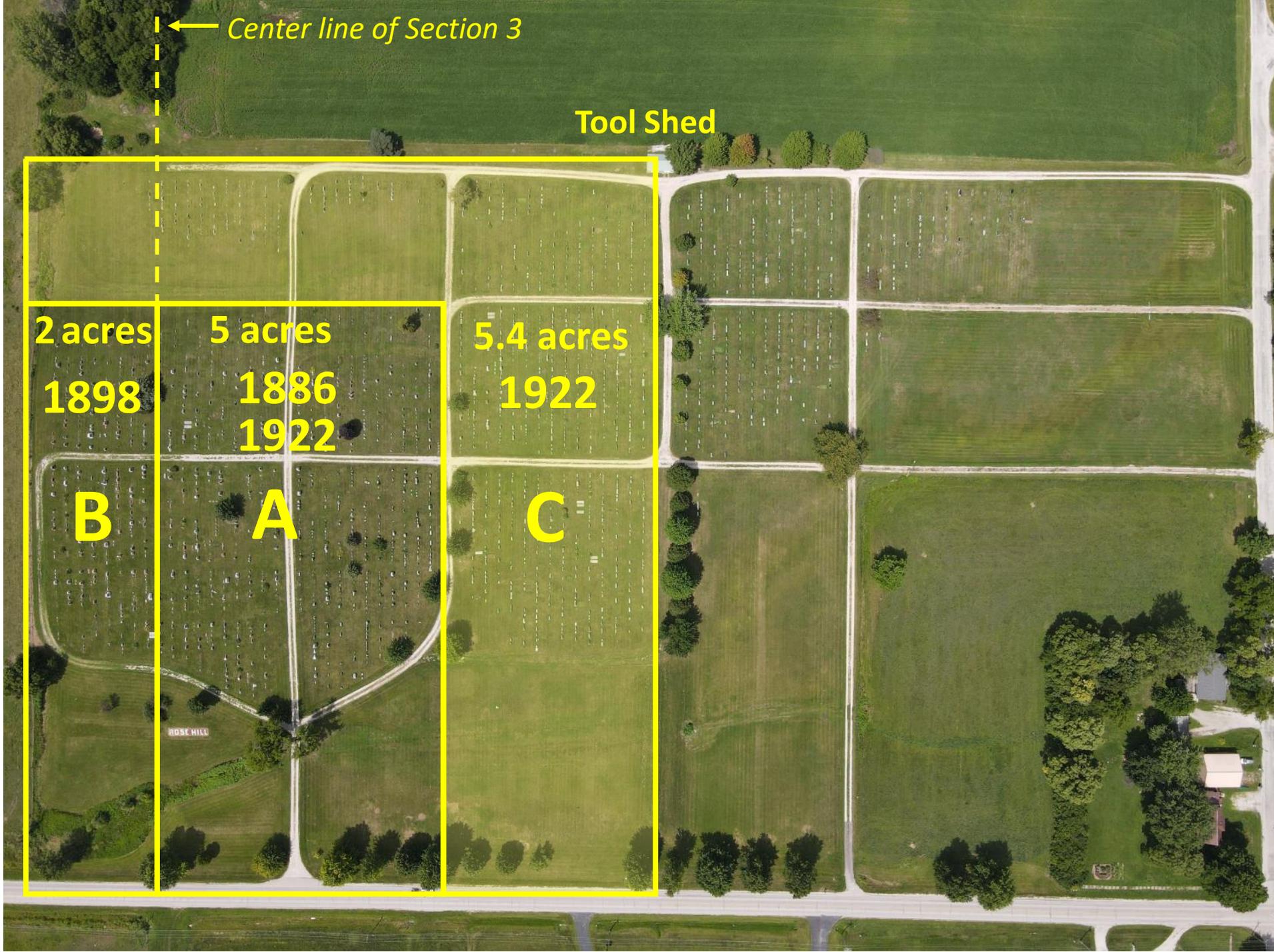
## Lot Grid Map



**WHAT WE  
NOW KNOW**



# Rose Hill Cemetery



← Center line of Section 3

Tool Shed

2 acres  
1898

5 acres  
1886  
1922

5.4 acres  
1922

**B**

**A**

**C**

ROSE HILL

- 1881 first burial
- 1885 purchased land A
- 1898 purchased land B
- 1922 updated land A
- 1922 purchased land C**
  - Paid \$1,164 to RLDS for it
  - Lots 959 to 1862 added

Lot Grid Map



# Rose Hill Cemetery

1881 first burial

1885 purchased 4.05 acres

1898 purchased 2 acres

1922 updated first part to 5 acres

1922 purchased 5.4 acres more

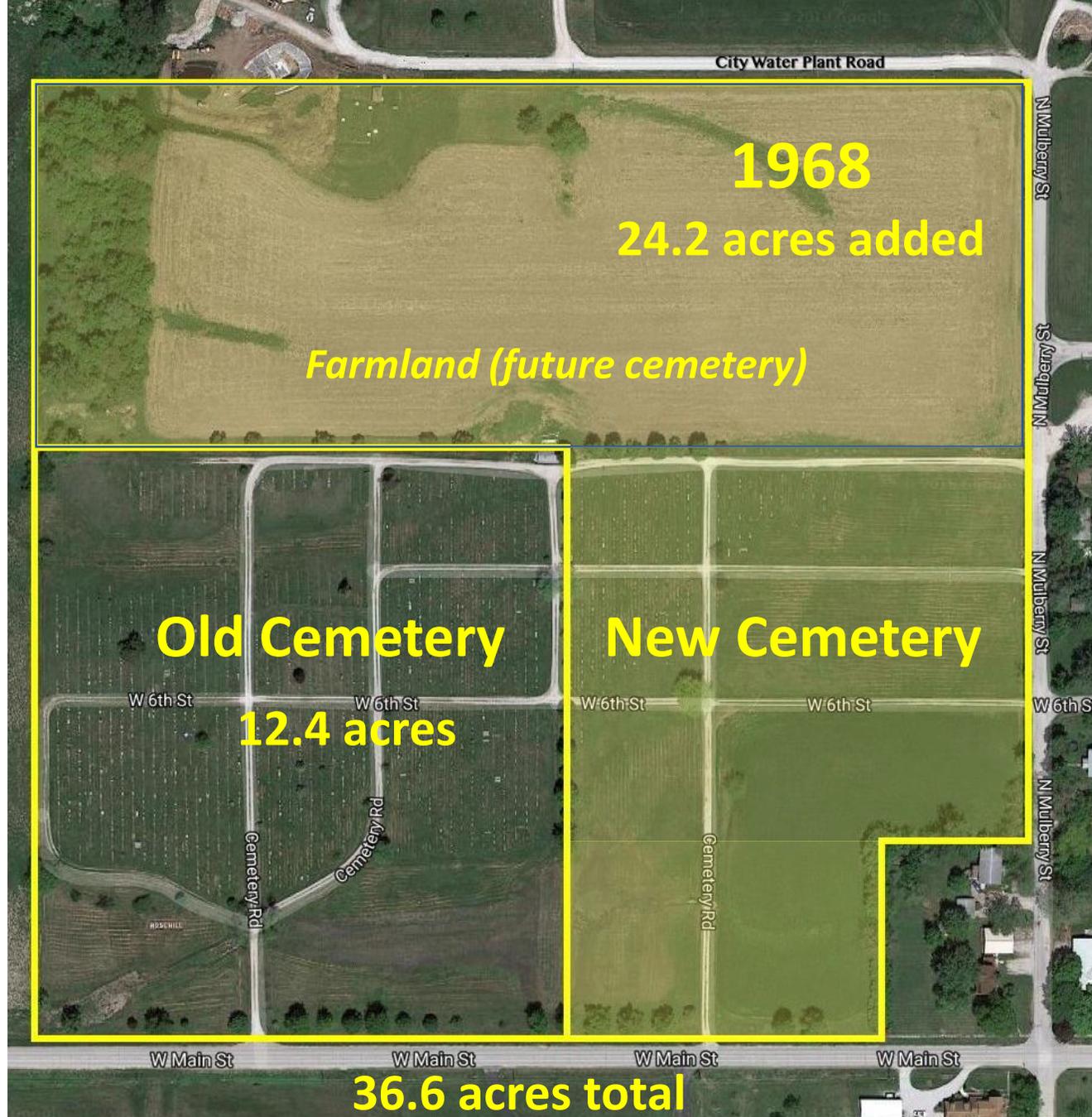
↑ **Old Cemetery (in Sections)**

**1968**

↓ **New Cemetery (in Blocks)**

**1968 major expansion East & North**

- 24.2 acres at \$6K from RLDS church
- Paid \$1K plus \$500/yr +5% interest



SCALE 200 ft



# Rose Hill Cemetery

1881 first burial

1885 purchased 4.05 acres

1898 purchased 2 acres

1922 updated first part to 5 acres

1922 purchased 5.4 acres more

↑ *Old Cemetery (in Sections)*

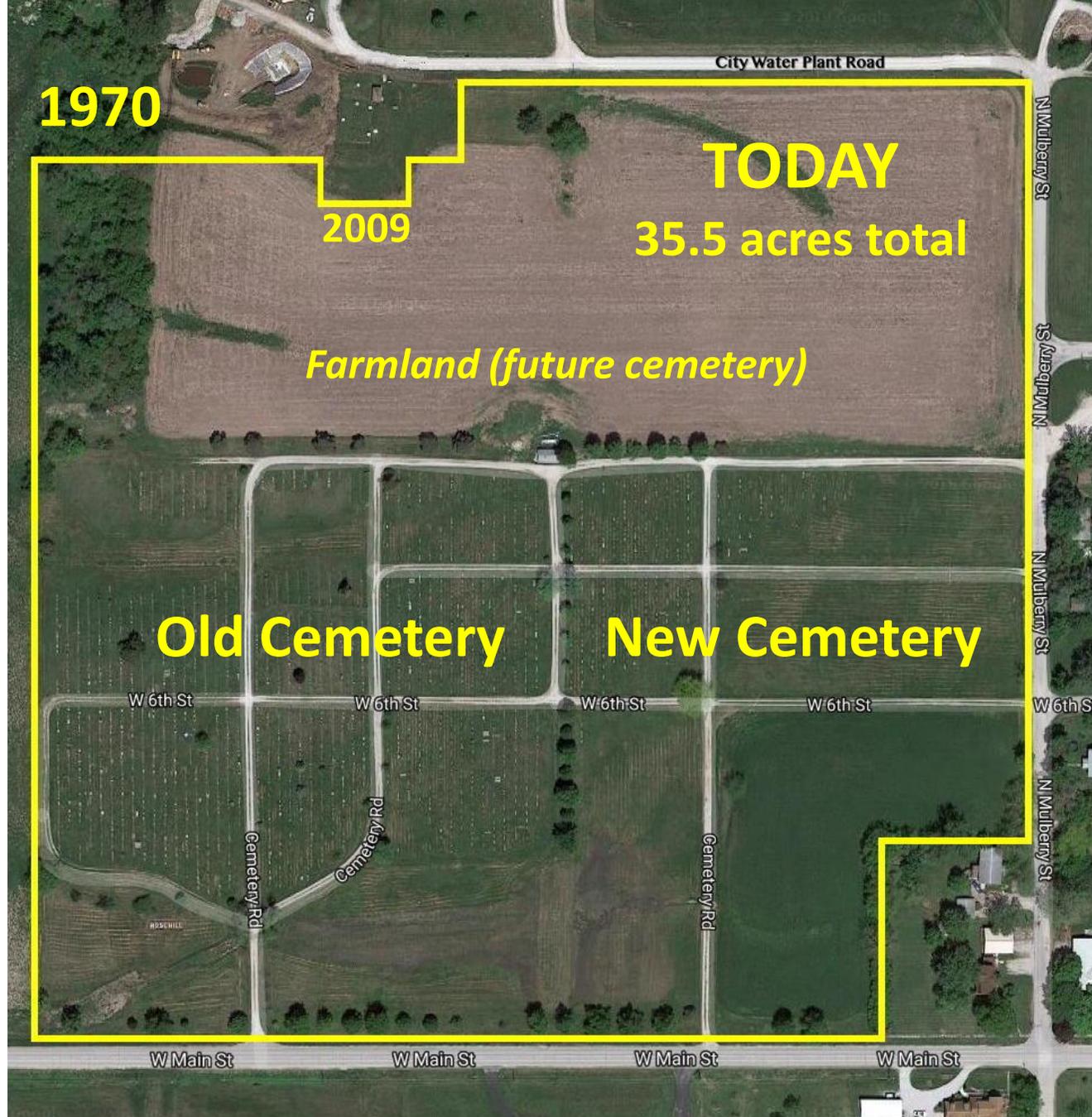
1968

↓ *New Cemetery (in Blocks)*

1968 major expansion of 24.2 acres

**1970 & 2009** sold or gifted pieces

• To city for water plant & well



SCALE 200 ft

# Questions Answered

## Why was the [Treasurer Log](#) so wrong?

- The logbook was probably acquired in the 1890s or 1900
- The first years entries were backdated (from receipts & recollections)
- The \$81 was memory error, unless \$34 paid to Graham & Walker is related

## Why was the 1922 deed issued?

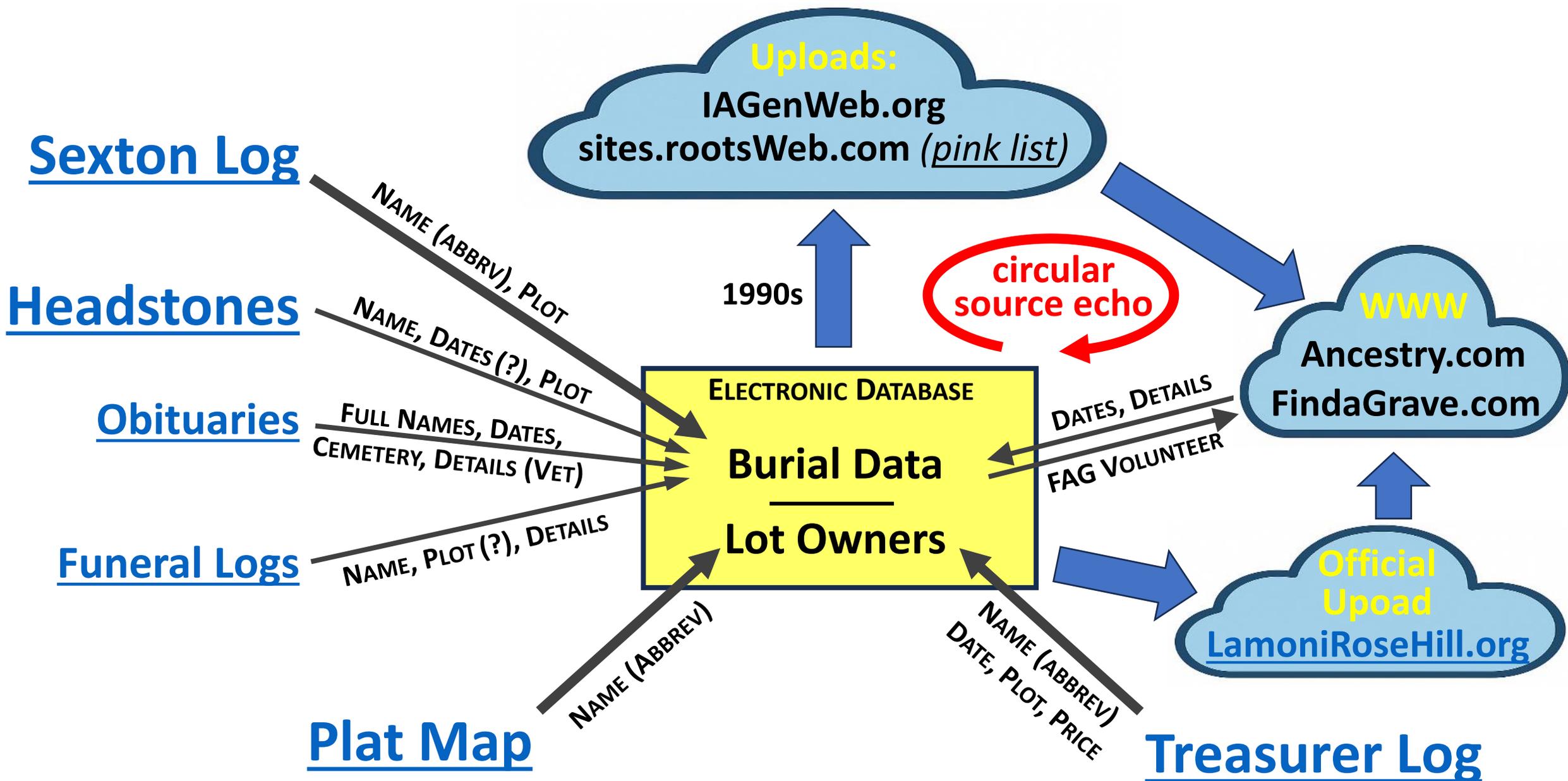
- North border had to move since burials existed north of it on Dancer land
- East border had to move 30' to adjoin with RLDS land we were also buying

# Rose Hill's RLDS Connection

- The RLDS church has never donated any land or funding for Rose Hill
- All land deeds show the Trustees of the cemetery as the new land owner
- 1901 bylaws placed oversight authority with Lamoni RLDS congregation
- 1905 minutes recorded approval for Rose Hill to be transferred to the city
  - Problem: 25¢ lot assessments were inadequate and hard to collect
  - Solution: if city-owned then a cemetery tax assessment was an option
  - Aborted: an upcoming 1906 Iowa law let cities pay a non-city cemetery

*Rose Hill is a wholly-owned affiliate of Lamoni CofC congregation and it gets its 501(c)3 status through the parent organization, Community of Christ*

# HOW DID WE GET OUR ELECTRONIC RECORDS



# Electronic versus Hardcopy Records

## PROs

- Can be made public on the Web
- Can search quickly to find something
- Can sort it in many ways to answer questions and find errors
  - by DOD – *Who died most recently? Who was first? Who was first veteran?*
  - by Age (DOD minus DOB) – *Who was the oldest? How many infant burials?*
  - by Lot ID – *Who else is buried in the same lot?*
  - by Location – *Does the reported order match what I see at the cemetery?*

## CONs

- Shorter lifespan than handwritten
- Must be converted to new formats and media
- Upgrades and conversions can have side effects on the data

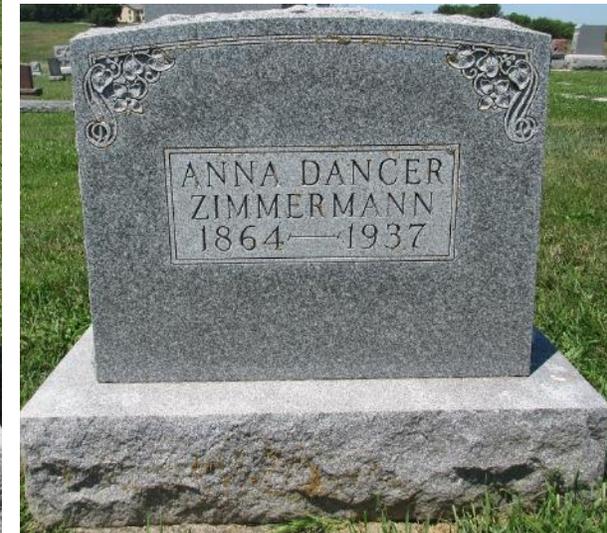


# CASE #1 - A Surprising Error Discovered in 2020

With a BY LOCATION burial list in hand I walked burials row by row and...

The Dancer family headstones were **MISSING** from the listing for their row !

How's it possible? ...first burial ...most notable family ...huge monuments ...was I wrong





# Sexton's Log – Dancer Lots

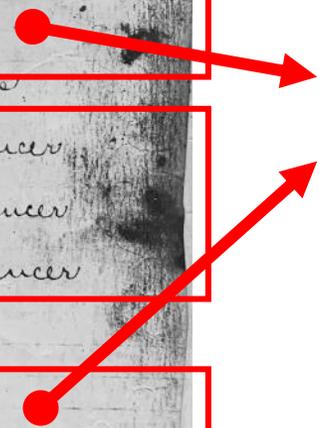
Burials were never entered for

- Albert Dancer
- David Dancer
- Rosalia Dancer
- Anna [Dancer] Zimmerman
- Esther Dancer
- Elizabeth Dancer
- And 3 young children

Lot	1	2	3	4	Name
267	Mary Elizabeth Culver	Elizabeth Culver			
268	John Francis De Long	SARAH ELLEN DE LONG	Otto P. Harris	Anna Cole	
269		Hattie E Banta			
270	Wm E Banta	Mary Banta		Elijah Banta	
271		Louise Nye Godfrey			
272					Vol White
273					W. Dancer
274					W. Dancer
275	Mary Ellen Dancer	Baby Wash			E. Jones
276					H. Dancer
277					H. Dancer
278					H. Dancer
279					D. Dancer
280	Henry A Stebbins	Clara B. Stebbins			
281	Inger Anderson	Andrew K Anderson			
282					D. Dancer
283					D. Dancer
284					H. A. Stebbins
285	J. A.		Calla		

This column has NAME of Lot Owner but often not entered in sexton's log

Should say D. Dancer too





# Treasurer Log – Dancer Lots

page 100

DATE			RECEIPTS		AMOUNT	
Month	Day	Year	From Whom Received	On What Account	Dollars	Cents
June	4	1886	E. Banta	Deed # 2	10	
"	"	"	S. M. Bass	" 3	10	
"	"	"	Henry Hart	" 4	5	
"	"	"	Joseph Smith	" 5	5	
"	"	"	Wm. Bradley	" 6	5	
"	"	"	F. L. Bradley	" 7	5	
Sept	13	"	C. J. Anderson	" 8	5	
Oct	22	"	John Scott	" 1	5	
"	25	"	D. Dancer	" 9, 10	45	
"	26	"	V. White	" 11	5	
"	28	"	A. H. Stearns	" 12	5	

10/25/1886 - D. Dancer paid \$45 for lots recorded on deeds 9 & 10

First part of log shows David Dancer as the owner of 9 lots, at \$5 each

DATE PAID				EXPENDITURES		AMOUNT	
No. of Voucher	Month	Day	Year	To Whom Paid	On What Account	Dollars	Cents
281				D. Dancer		5	
282				D. Dancer	<b>Lots 281-283</b>	5	
283				D. Dancer		5	
284				H. A. Stebbins		5	
285				Fannie Hopkins		5	
286				W. A. Hopkins		5	
287				Wm. Hopkins		5	
288				Frank Hopkins		5	
289				A. B. Young		5	
290				W. A. Hopkins		5	
291				F. M. Hall	Transfer at Rebecca Wans Request to F. M. Hall	5	
292				F. M. Hall		5	
293				D. D. Young		5	
294				D. D. Young		5	
295				F. M. Hall	R. S. Salysards	5	
296				R. S. Salysards		5	
297				F. A. Smith	assigned and new deed # 61, 4/29/86	5	
298				B. D. Fleet	(C. H. Brown) leased to Mrs Chas Bess	5	
299				B. D. Fleet	(C. H. Brown) leased to Mrs Chas Bess	5	
300				B. J. Anderson		5	
301				J. T. Silver		5	
302				B. D. Fleet		5	
303				B. D. Fleet		5	
304				John Martini		5	
305				Lemi Atkinson		5	
306				B. D. Fleet		5	
307				B. D. Fleet		5	
308				J. H. Martini		5	
309				M. Walker		5	
310				M. Walker		5	
311				M. Walker	Transferred by M. Walker's request to Mrs R. M. Burbonaw	5	
312				C. Stafford	Oct 21, 1886 M. Walker's property	5	
313				M. Walker	to Mrs R. M. Burbonaw	5	
314				M. Walker		5	
315				M. Walker		5	
316				C. Stafford		5	
317				L. B. Gaultier		5	
318				L. B. Gaultier		5	
319				Marce Sarreman		5	
320				A. Stebbins		5	

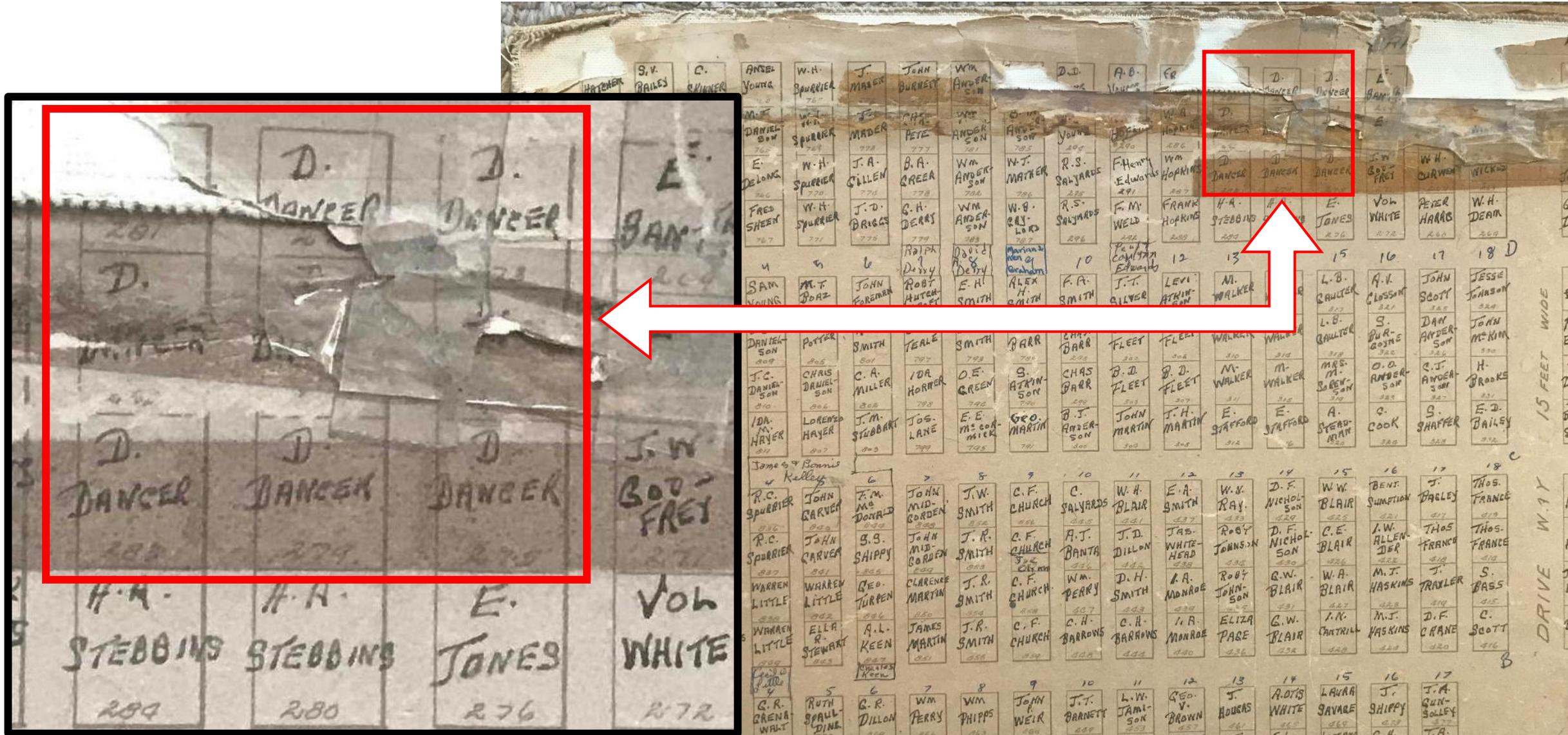
261	L. Newman	
262	M. A. Wicker	
263	C. A. Wicker	5
264	M. H. Dancer	5
265	H. L. Lelton	
266	J. J. Robinson	5
267	M. H. Curman	5
268	P. Harris	5
269	E. Banta	5
270	E. Banta	5
271	J. W. Godfrey	5
272	V. White	5
273	D. Dancer	5
274	D. Dancer	5
275	D. Dancer	5
276	D. Dancer	5
277	D. Dancer	5
278	D. Dancer	5
279	D. Dancer	5
280	H. A. Stebbins	5

Lots 273-275

Lots 277-279



# Cemetery Plat Map – Section 2 and Dancer Lots





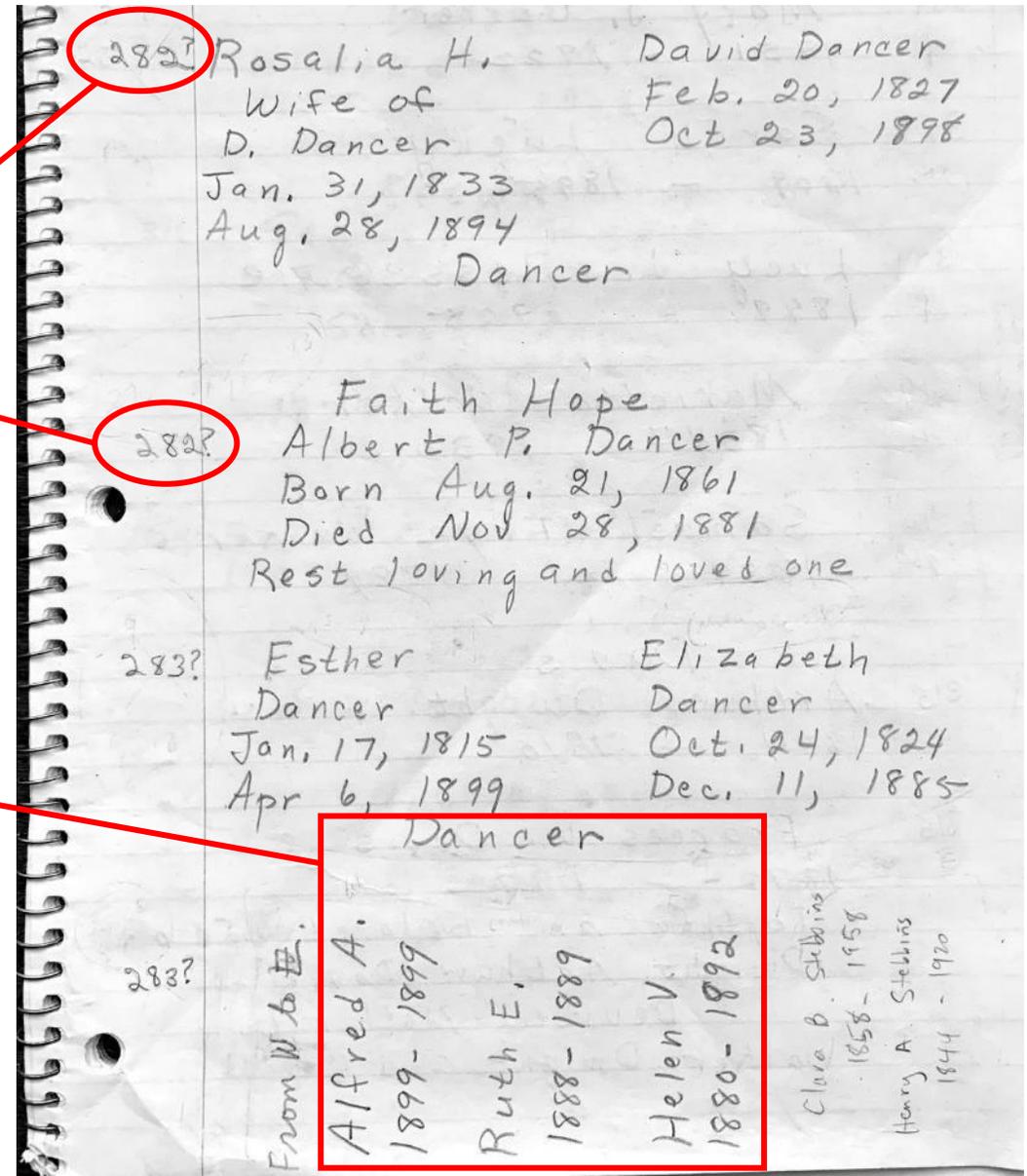
# Headstone Inscription Notes

Created by Barbara Lee Collins & Arline Tilford

## Logical Assumptions (but wrong)

Lot 282 makes sense if burials were on west side of headstone instead of east. Non-standard engravings likely confused. It should be lot 278 (in the next row west).

An unfortunate placement of names from separate monuments on the page misled the transcriber to think these children were Dancers children.



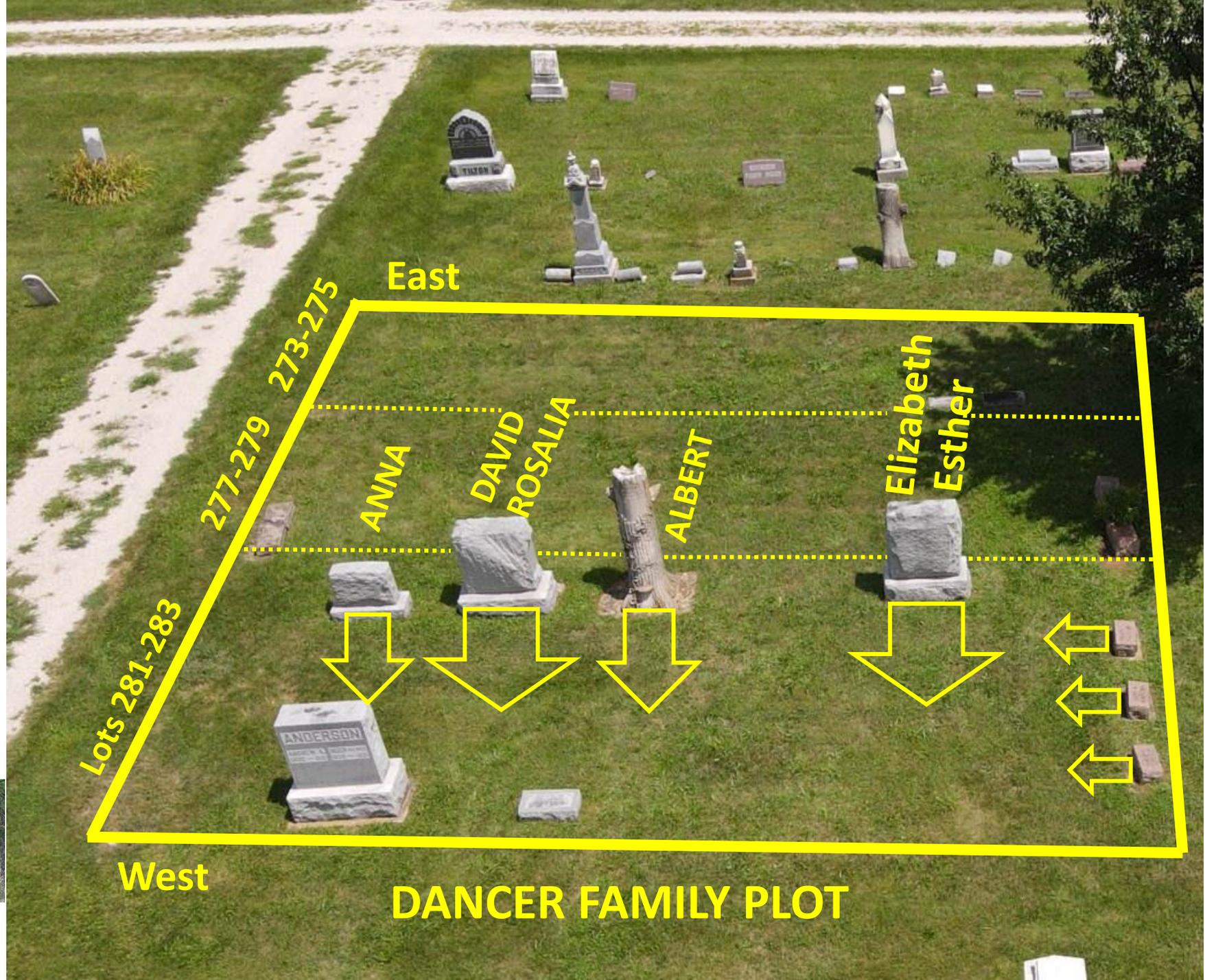


# Rose Hill Cemetery

## WHAT WE THOUGHT

- The Dancers are buried in the first (west) row of family plot
- Burials are on the opposite side of the headstone engravings
- The 3 infant stones are in the Dancer plot, thus Dancer infants

Alfred A. - Ruth E. - Helen V.



### DANCER FAMILY PLOT

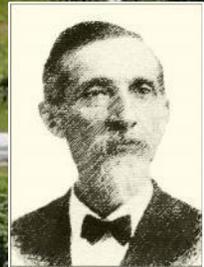
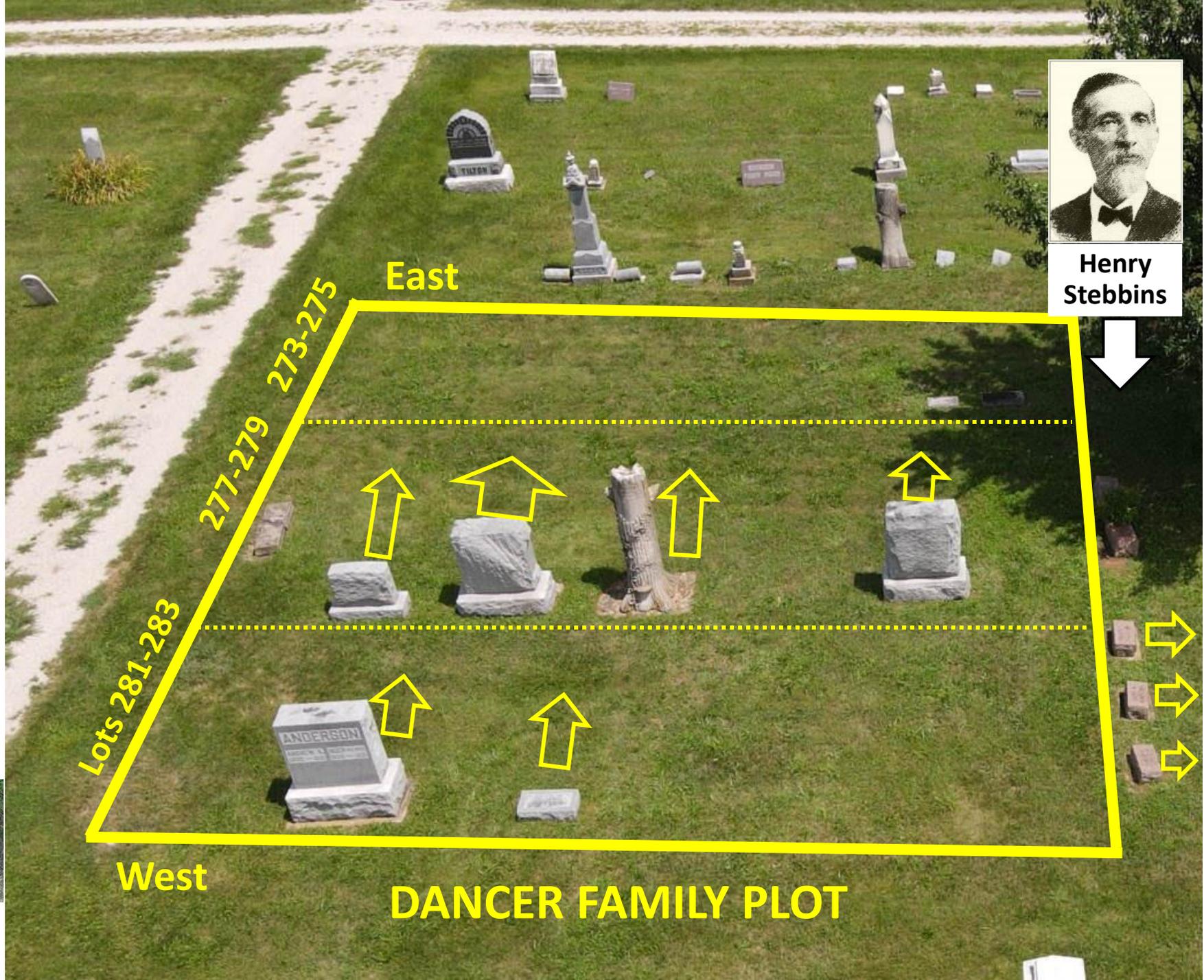


# Rose Hill Cemetery

## WHAT ~~WE THOUGHT~~ WAS REAL

- The Dancers are buried in the ~~first (west)~~ row of family plot **middle**
- Burials are on the ~~opposite~~ **same** side of the headstone engravings
- The 3 infant stones are in the ~~Dancer~~ plot, thus ~~Dancer~~ **Stebbins**

**Alfreda**  
~~Alfred A.~~ - Ruth E. - Helen V.



Henry Stebbins



**DANCER FAMILY PLOT**

## Case #2 - Curious Error in Lot 672

- Lot 672 has a James A. Ballantyne 1921-1921 marker
- Lot 672 has no burial entry in sexton log
- Record search for him comes up empty
- A likely candidate exists 7 years later:  
James Arthur Ballantyne 1928-1928
  - May 1928 [Obit](#) and [Funeral Record](#)
  - J.C. Ballantyne paid for lot 672 on 12/13/1928 in the Treasurer Log

*If this is in error, how is that plausible?*



**ANSWER – Marker was installed after Dec. 1941 when White Funeral Home became White-Marsh Funeral Home. It's plausible the wrong year was given**

A photograph of a cemetery on a grassy hill. In the foreground, the words "ROSE HILL" are written in large, white, serif letters on a bed of reddish-brown mulch. The background shows numerous gravestones of various shapes and sizes, some with American flags on poles. There are several trees, including a large green one on the left and a bare one on the right. The sky is clear and blue.

**Questions?**

**Acknowledgements:**

**Hale and Barbara Lee Collins**

**Arline Tilford**

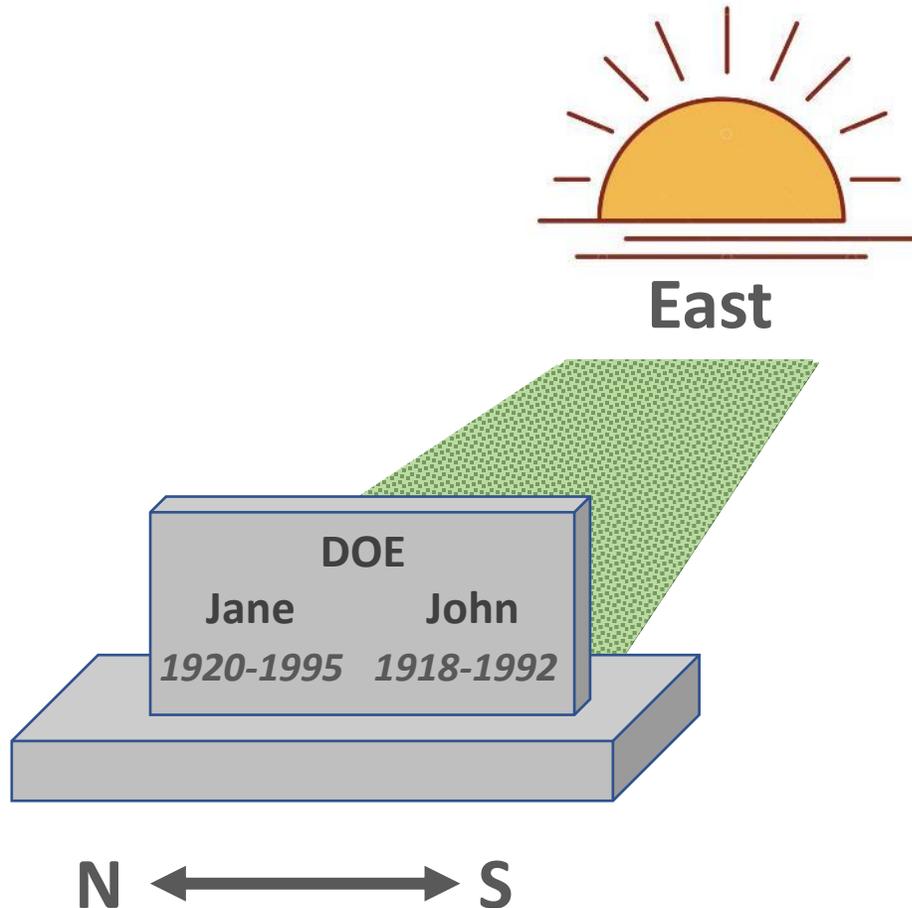
**Volunteers, Boards, Sextons**

**Alma Blair**

**David Mohler**

# Cemetery 101

## Traditional Orientation for Burials and Headstones



- Burials that face eastward
  - Eastern Star, Sunrise, New Life
- Names on west face of stone
  - Read without standing on grave
  - Sometimes not followed
- Wife left (N), husband right (S)
  - Same sides as for wedding vows
  - Often not followed



# BARRIERS TO ACCURATE CEMETERY RECORDS

- 1. Handwritten records were not intended for public or historical use**
  - Sexton typically focused only on name and burial plot – not dates , full names, or other details
  - Names were often abbreviated (Mrs. Parsons, J. Doe) or misspelled (Herington vs Harrington)
- 2. Headstone inscriptions may contradict obituaries, vital records, or true burial locations**
  - Monuments that are installed decades later may be based on faulty or forgotten information
  - Monuments placed while a person is still living will not have a future name change due to marriage
  - Obituary of the first deceased spouse very likely has more accurate info than that of the second
  - Widows who have a joint headstone with first spouse may decide to be buried in a different space than what the headstone implies, in order to be buried between first and second spouses
- 3. Errors get codified during the shift from written to public electronic records**
  - Typos and other data entry mistakes get a life of their own once they get online (and AI may use it too!)
  - Rigidly preserving misspelled names from historic records hinders electronic search
  - Although the public is helpful in reporting errors, triple check before deleting what you think is a duplicate or adding what you think is a missing record since you may end up changing history
- 4. When a grave is disinterred and relocated, old obits or burial notices are inaccurate**