



Cheesman Park

The History of the park that was once a Cemetery

Everyone has heard stories about homes being built on old cemeteries. How greedy developers neglected to relocate the bodies. That the end results were unhappy spirits haunting these new Denver homes. Here is a story about the old city cemetery that became a city park in the heart of Denver.

In 1859 the area now known as Cheesman Park was given to the people of Denver for use as a cemetery by an act of Congress (this location was located on a sacred Arapaho Indian burial ground) William Larimer, who founded and laid out the first streets in Denver, named the place Mt. Prospect.

THIS CEMETERY is laid out into suitable burial lots, and it is desirable for heads of families, and the different denominations of Christians to secure good lots for decoration and improvement for the burial of the dead.

The proprietors have organized under the charter, by electing Wm. Larimer, Jr., President and John J. Walley, Secretary and Treasurer.

WM. LARIMER, Jr., President.  
JOHN J. WALLEY, Sec'y and Treas.

For further information enquire at the office of the Secretary, (where the plat of burial lots are on file,) first door below the Tremont House, on Front street, West Denver.

N. B. J. J. WALLEY, Undertaker.

CASH FOR FELTS--all the Chicago Hide and Leather Store  
Ab13 L. O. MONTGOMERY & CO.,  
Omaha, N. E.

*A notice placed in the local newspaper announcing the new Cemetery*



The Original Undertaker Was John J. Walley. His office was at 1412 Larimer St. He was originally a cabinet maker by trade.

John J. Walley's background:

John J. Walley took a partner in the business with R. P. Rollins.

In 1890 J.J. Walley, Dr. A.M. Bucknam & R.P. Rollins were taken to court for "Performing an unauthorized Autopsy - Liability to Heirs" and lost the case. The case alleged that the defendants had performed an unauthorized autopsy on Tamar V. Thorpe on January 10, 1890. The family accused the plaintiffs of not getting permission to perform the autopsy, while they stated that the body was given to them by a "friend" of the deceased whom she was living with and in order to have the body buried there had to be a certificate of death, which is why they performed the autopsy. The defendants were awarded \$25,000 for damages and psychological damages. The case was appealed in 1891 because it was discovered that the case was not tried properly and that the Judge had ordered the jury to find in the favor of the plaintiffs. While the judgment was overturned the awarded damages were not refunded because of the judges statement; "I cannot conceive what damages could be proven to a jury. The testimony discloses much that might be commented upon in support of my



*Views of the original Pavilion  
and the fountains*



*The original structure of the Pavilion*



*A view of the park from the air*

conclusion that the plaintiffs ought not to recover in this case, and that the judgment of the court below must be affirmed but respect for the dead and the living forbid it."



*1860 Arapaho Land Grant*

The first person buried in the cemetery was possibly Mr. John Stoefel who was hanged on a Cottonwood tree at the intersection of 10th and Cherry Creek. He was executed for killing his brother in law.

Another famous burial was on March 30 1859. It was Mr. Jack O'Neill; he was gunned down at a local Saloon a man by the name of "Rooker" because of a previous argument. The rocky Mountain News printed the story and

because of the story the park became known as "Jack O'Neil's ranch"

Over time different areas were designated for a variety of purposes. There was a burial place for the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), the Odd Fellows, Society,



*A look at the park when it was an active Cemetery*



*A view from above the park*



*A view of the Pavilion before it was buried*

Masons, Chinese and of course Potters fields. It is the poor inhabitants of Potters field that is of most interest. The Potters field section was just behind a "hospital" that was commonly referred to as the "Pest house" this was that place that victims of small pox were quarantined & sick, elderly and invalids went to die. The building had a mass grave for the people who died at the location and it is in the approximate area of the community garden at the current Botanic Gardens.

The West side of the park was designated the Masonic and Odd Fellows sections.

The South-West corner of the park was designated one of several Potters fields.

The mid-South section of the park was designated the Chinese section.

The location near the Pavilion was designated the Society section and also included some of the Catholic section.

The Northern section was designated the Grand Army of the Republic section.

The location of the new parking lot located East of the Botanic Gardens was designated the Hebrew section.

The Roman Catholic section of the cemetery is now the area known as the Botanic gardens.





*The Pavilion before and after*



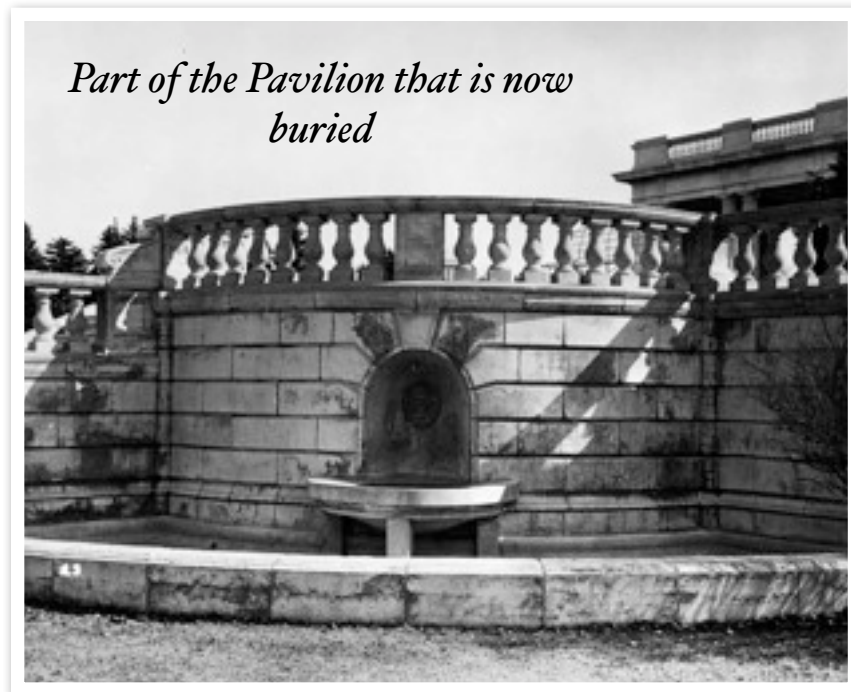
Mayor Bates sold 40 acres of land to the archdiocese; Father Machebeuf of the Roman Catholic Church who managed the purchase. The section was named Mount Calvary Cemetery and was eventually sold back to the city.

The Jewish section was known as the "Hebrew Burying and Prayer Ground" was purchased by the Hebrew Burial Society in 1875. The bodies from this section were removed in 1923, and then it was leased back to the city "forever" and part of it has been the location of an underground reservoir up to this time.

The Chinese section of the cemetery was given to a large population of Chinese who lived in the "Hop Alley" section of Denver. When the bodies were removed from this section it was used as a shrub nursery until 1930.

While all of this was taking place, the ownership of the land changed to John J Walley (The original undertaker). He did not do anything to help the condition of the property. Meanwhile the public was attempting to shut down the cemetery because the area was not the beautiful garden / cemetery that the city wanted.

It was discovered that the property was part of a land treaty that predated 1860, so the

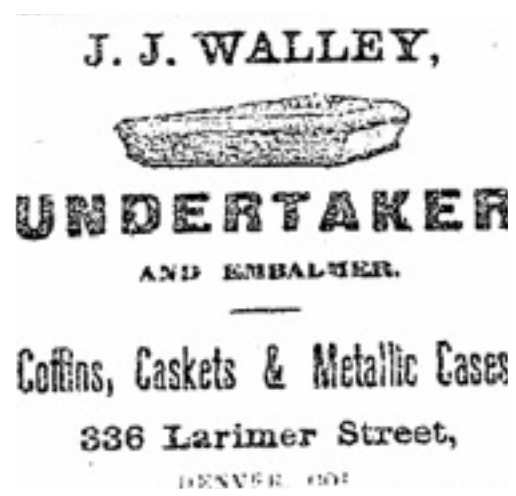


current owner had no legal right to the property. The U.S. sold the land to the city of Denver and Mayor Bates had the city pay a total of \$200.00

By another Act of Congress dated January 25th, 1890 the city was authorized to vacate this parcel of property known as Mt. Prospect Cemetery from a place of burial to a public park. In recognition of Congress doing this for the city, Senator Teller changed the parks name to Congress

Park. It was the responsibility of the living relatives to relocate the bodies of these dearly departed. However those interned at Potters field generally had no family or during the course of their lives participated in activities that guaranteed that none of the living would claim them as relatives.

The city contracted undertaker E. P. McGovern to remove these bodies at a cost of \$1.90 each and for them to be transported to Riverside Cemetery. This gruesome work began on March 14, 1893.



*From an 1859 newspaper*



*The current look of the Pavilion.*

Some of the caskets that Mr. McGovern was using were 1 foot wide by 3 1/2 feet long (Childrens caskets). This was the only size casket available because of a Mining accident in Utah that had caused a shortage of Adult caskets. Because of this he could not fit one body into a single casket, so he broke up most of the bodies to fit into the small caskets. This was a good deal for Mr. McGovern because he was being paid by the body moved. However there were discrepancies in the record keeping because of this and the records themselves being in such disorder. He hired 18 people to help him remove the bodies.

The health commissioner conducted an investigation into the matter and it was one of the final decisions to halt the removal of the bodies and seal the land.

Grave markers with death dates prior to 1876 were moved to Riverside Cemetery and the rest moved to Fairmount Cemetery.

All of the bodies recovered by McGovern were sent to Riverside Cemetery.

McGovern claimed that filling in the graves back in was not part of his job so when he was doing his work all of the graves remained open. This was another reason that the cemetery was sealed early.



*The Botanic Gardens Mansion.*



*A foggy night in October 2010*

Edward P. McGovern's background:

Edward. P. McGovern opened his office at the age of 28, the office was located at 1442 Arapahoe St. and was open for business for over 44 years.

E. P. McGovern was not just the man hired to remove the unknown bodies from the Cemetery, he was also was one of the founders of the Colorado Funeral Directors Association.

In 1880 McGovern opened a new undertaking business with Mr. H. M. Behymer which was located at 542 Larimer St.

In 1881 "McGovern & Co" opened a new office at 371 Arapahoe St. In 1897 the name of the business was changed to the E. P. McGovern Undertaking Company.

1890 McGovern sells "E. P. McGovern Undertakers" to W. P. Horan. (Horan/Horan & McContay)

When McGovern was hired to remove the unknown bodies from City Cemetery the city was so grateful that they appointed him Grand Marshall of the St. Patrick's Day Parade.



In 1900 He listed himself as "Coroner"

In 1903 McGovern's son (Vincent) joins the business as an assistant. His other son (Paul J.) is Deputy Coroner in 1909.

In 1923 McGovern opened a Funeral home at 620 E. Colfax Ave.



*The community garden where the Hospital/"Pest House" and mass grave was located*

1925 E. P. McGovern's name replaced as owner of the Mortuary. He is replaced by Martin J. McGovern.

E. P. McGovern dies in 1925 at the age of 74 (1851-1925)

On March 19, 1893 the Denver Republican headline proclaimed "The Work of Ghouls". The article revealed that workman in charge of removing the bodies were breaking them into fragments and distributing the remains into "two and sometimes three of the boxes in which they are conveyed to the new burial site." The boxes provided by the undertaker were three feet six inches long. Due to the dry soil many of the bodies exhumed were rather well preserved. It must have been a gruesome site to witness intact remains being shattered and stuffed into these undersized boxes. The newsman described the scene; "The line of desecrated graves at the southern boundary of the cemetery sickened and horrified everybody by the appearance they presented. Around their edges were piled broken coffins, rent and tattered shrouds and fragments of clothing


that had been torn from the dead bodies...All were trampled into the ground by the footsteps of the gravediggers like rejected junk."

This horrible site was augmented by the exhumations of the Chinese graves. Work on these graves was funded and carried out by the local Chinese community. These were not professional undertakers. Bodies were removed from the ground; the bones were cleaned and wrapped for shipment to China. The fresher bodies were stripped of their tattered clothing and the decaying flesh scrapped from the bones, and left in the cemetery.


An article from a local newspaper at the time has some interesting facts about Chinese burial practices:

### **"Their Bones Go Home"**

The bones of every Chinaman who dies in this country are sent back to the Celestial empire for interment. They are shipped in large boxes from San Francisco under the designation of "fishbone" at the rate of \$20.00 a ton. This fishbone fiction is in order to evade the rule of the steamship companies, which charge full rates for the transportation of dead bodies, says the New York World.

**J. J. WALLEY,**  
  
**UNDERTAKER**  
AND EMBALMER  
Coffins, Caskets & Metallic Cases.  
336 Larimer Street,  
DENVER, CO.

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**I. N. ROGERS,**  
(AGENT.)  
  
**UNDERTAKER**  
And dealer in  
Metallic Caskets and Cases,  
Walnut and Rosewood Coffins,  
**BURIAL ROBES, ETC**  
Our hearse, together with carriages, furnished at reasonable rates, and all branches of the business promptly attended to.  
*Embalming and Shipping a Specialty.*  
No. 374 Lawrence St.  
RESIDENCE, 539 ARAPAHOE ST.  
C. D. COBB, Proprietor.

*From an 1860 newspaper*

Nearly every Chinaman who comes here is under the care of the Six companies, they sign a contract guaranteeing the return of the bones of the dead for burial with the bones of their ancestors. On every steamer leaving San Francisco there are



*This is the area at Riverside Cemetery that the bodies Undertaker McGovern were buried. They were washed downstream the following year due to a flood. The park management claims that this is not the location and that the bodies are actually buried in unmarked graves located in the South East corner of the Cemetery*

invalid Chinese steerage passengers who hope to live until they reach their native country. An agreement exists between the Six Companies and the steamship managers which forbids the burial of these Chinamen should they die at sea, and the Six Companies furnish coffins of the peculiar Chinese fashion for use in such emergencies.

When a Chinaman dies at sea the body is embalmed, placed in a sealed coffin and lowered into the hold. The expense is paid by the other Chinese passengers and the stewards of the ship, all of whom belong to that race. When the ship reaches Hong Kong the coffins are delivered to the Tung Wah hospital."

In one of the pauper sections of the Cemetery there was a complaint to the Denver Times (Local newspaper) that Mr. Charles Cox (a representative from the local homeowners) who lived at 1064 Gaylord had seen how the paupers were buried. He claimed "the rotten remains" of previous burials dug up, sometimes two from the same grave were left out for hours behind the homes. The undertaker explained that it was easier to dig in previously disturbed earth and the new coffins would lie flat on top of the coffin underneath when it was straightened.

As the Chinese bundled the bones for shipment to China for a proper burial in their native country, the unfortunate former tenants of Potter's field were not to be

treated with the same respect. These poor souls were shipped to Riverside Cemetery.

The plot of land purchased by the city for the re-internment was a plot of land located down by the Platte River. This was bottom land over the hill from the main cemetery known at that time as Poverty Flat.

The March 20, 1893 article from the Denver Republican stated it (the new burial site) was not fit for anything. When the Platte is flooded the whole place is under water. The following year there was a flood and some of the bodies were washed downstream.

This was later denied by the management of the cemetery. They now state that the bodies were buried in a field to the south-east side of the land and that they still remain there today.

This caused quite a controversy at the time. Mayor Rogers ordered all removals stopped. The city built a temporary wood fence around the park and it remained incomplete until 1902. Finally shrubs were planted and the holes filled in where coffins were removed and those that remained had collapsed.

In 1898 the architect and Civil Engineer, Reinhard Scheutze completed the plan for the layout of what is now Cheesman Park. However he died before the park was



*Bodies unearthed on 11/07/2008  
during construction of the  
Botanic Gardens parking lot.*



completed. The final parts of the plan were added by S. R. DeBoer after Mr. Scheutzes death.

The Catholic Church kept their section of the land until 1950 when it was finally used as part of the park. In the later years the section was considered empty and they had abandoned it. The fence that was put in place to keep people out of the area was falling over in areas and it was common to see children playing in the old cemetery and stories have been told of some of the children collecting bones and even of people collecting the old headstones to use for themselves.

There are only six recorded names in the records of Mt. Olivet Cemetery of those who were in Mt. Calvary (Catholic area of the cemetery):

7/10/1864 – The child of James Clifford

1865 – James O’Haire, 3yrs old and James O’Haire, 28yrs old

1865 – F. J. Smith 4yrs old

1866 – Ellen Howlett, 22yrs old

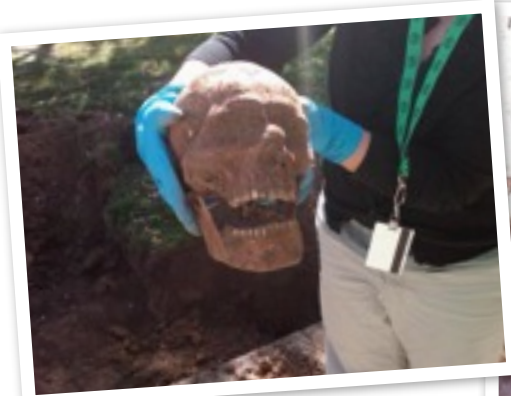
7/26/1866 – James Clifford 28yrs old

During the installation of the road that is on the East side of the Botanic Gardens the City used the records of Mt. Cavalry Cemetery to avoid digging up any bodies that may have possibly been in the area. This was not successful; they unearthed 3 bodies during the construction.

In 1893 the problems with the old Cemetery still persisted, the local newspaper reported; “Aspen Daily Chronicle March 15, 1893

### **Vandals at work**

Vaults in the old City Cemetery at Denver robbed.



*Bodies and Casket pieces  
unearthed 10/28/10*

Denver, March 14 – Vandals have been mutilating the remains of the dead in the old City Cemetery. The vault was closed eleven years ago, in 1882, and since then, until Sunday, the remains have reposed as safe in the vaults, as if they were underground in the grave. Who the remains are, no one knows, as all record of the dead in the City Cemetery is lost in some of the vaults in the city building. The vault has been broken open, and it is said that the jewelry has been removed from the corpse of a woman and that the skeleton of a baby has been stolen. Efforts are being made to discover the depredators.”

When Horace Tabor died in 1899, flags were flown at half staff and 10,000 people were reported to have attended his funeral, his body was interred at Mt. Calvary Cemetery in Denver and later reinterred at Mt. Olivet, where it now rests beside that of Baby Doe. There is a legend that when the family had his body removed from Mt. Calvary there was a large ceremony, and when the body was exhumed the coffin fell apart and the family dog jumped into the grave and ran away with one of Mr. Tabor’s tibias.

In 1907 Gladys Cheesman-Evans and her mother Mrs. Walter S. Cheesman offered the City \$100,000 to name the park in honor of Walter Scott Cheesman and include a pavilion in memory of Mr. Cheesman. The Donation was dependent on the

condition that the park be named after Mr. Cheesman, so the west section was re-named Cheesman Park

Walter Scott Cheesman was born on Long Island, New York in 1838, the youngest of nine children. His father was reportedly "involved in bookbinding and paper mills". During his youth, Walter Cheesman would live in Chicago for awhile where he worked as a druggist before coming to Denver. He also worked as a druggist with a brother in Denver where he sold basic necessities and potable spring water before expanding into real estate. He then became a leading financial player in Denvers early development. One of his most significant roles would be his involvement with other prominent Denverites in building Denver Pacific Railroad from Cheyenne to Denver, critical to the towns early survival. It was completed in 1870. Cheesman was also most responsible for the early expansion of Denvers water infrastructure. He would head four successive water supply companies between 1872 and 1907. Along with three other men, he also founded the organization that became Denver Chamber of Commerce.

An article in the local newspaper at the time discussed the issue of renaming the land; "From the Aspen Democrat Sunday June 16, 1907

### **To Change Name of Congress Park**

Denver, June 15 -

If the name of Congress Park is not changed to Cheesman park, the donation of \$100,000 offered by Mrs. Alice Cheesman, widow of Walter Cheesman and her daughter, will be withdrawn.

For the first time since the offer was made Mrs. Cheesman spoke on the matter this morning. Her statement indicated that her heart is quite set upon having the name of he late husband perpetuated as her offer to the city suggest, and that there is no hope for its modification that some of the officials at the city hall and a large number of citizens hoped for in order that the name of the park might remain and that the park might get the benefit of the donation made by her in order that the name of Cheesman might stand out as the donor of this magnificent gift to the community.



The fact was particularly established that the idea of calling a park by the name of Cheesman emanated from the widow and daughter and is offered by them as a testimonial of their deep love for their husband and father."

The architects that were designing "Congress Park" had many features of the park that were never added. They included a pond with water lilies on the West side of the park and even claimed that several different species of trees were to be imported that "had never been seen in the area before".



The stone for the pavilion was quarried from the caverns of Treasury Mountain.

The pavilion initially included ornate stairways, gardens and a complete lower level.

*Bodies and Casket pieces  
unearthed on 10/28/10*



The current pavillion is only the top half of the original structure. Just after the park was opened the construction of the pavilion was completed and the structure was falling apart. The City Council on October 30, 1909 refused to accept the pavilion because the cement work had been not been done properly. The foundation was cracking and there were concerns of further problems in the cold Colorado winters. The Ladd Sanger Construction Company who had done the cement work was blamed.





*Bodies unearthed 10/28/10 being examined at the Denver Coroners office*

The City never refunded the Cheesman's the money for the construction and refused to pay the contractor due to bad materials and workmanship.

S. R. DeBoer was contracted years later to add the fountains that are on the West side of the pavilion.

In 1913 the Colorado Mountain Club donated the brass monument that shows the mountain view to the West of the park.

In 1907 the work was finished and the new park was opened. It was named in honor of Walter S. Cheesman

The Catholic Church removed the bodies by 1950 that they had remaining in their section and sold the land that is now the Botanical Gardens / Congress Park.

During the 1980s the Botanic Gardens was given a mansion on the property to use as their main office. This home is on the South East corner of the property. It was discovered that the foundation of the house was shifting so they called in an engineering firm to see what could be done to stabilize the building. When the company came in and took core samples of the support dirt under the foundation they discovered that they had found a casket about 12 feet below in what appeared to be a vertical position. It was discovered that this was probably due to the



bentinite soil in the area. A very porous clay. The slightest bit of water and it can make things glide around.

Human Remains Unearthed at Botanic Gardens Bones Believed to be from first Denver Cemetery Construction workers dig up remains from old Denver cemetery near Botanic Gardens.

11/07/08

Friday, 07 Nov 2008, 7:29 PM MST

by Charlie Brennan

FOX 31 reporter

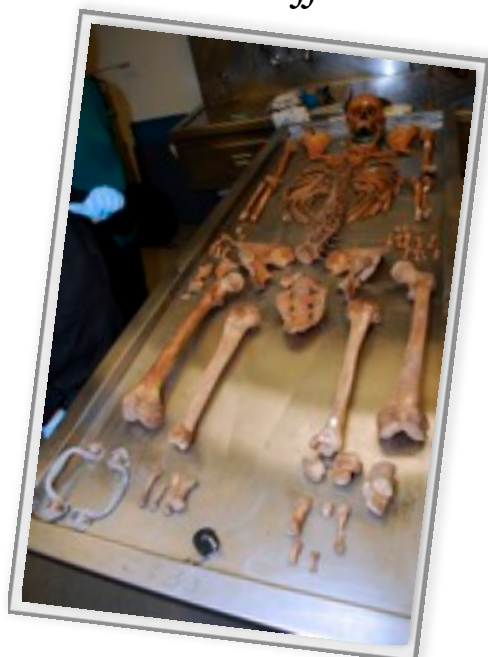


*Bodies unearthed on 10/28/10  
being examined at the Denver  
Coroners office*

DENVER – At the Denver Botanic Gardens, best known as a place to celebrate the beauty of the living, it was a day to focus on the dead on Friday after construction personnel working on a three-level parking garage unearthed apparent human remains left from the site when it was once one of the city's first cemeteries.

Gardens spokesman Will Jones said because the gardens property between Congress and Cheesman parks was once the site a graveyard known as Mount Calvary, the possibility of coming upon old human remains was something that had been planned for.

"Because we were digging deep down into the ground for our new parking deck, we felt it would be prudent to contact the coroner



before any work was done, to ask her what we should do in the highly unlikely event that we find anything," said Jones. "She told us stop immediately what were doing," and to contact the coroners office.

Sure enough, said Jones, "Earlier today just before lunch time, construction crews were digging. They found something that looked like splintered wood, and what may have been human remains. We werent sure of what it was.

"But, per the coroners edict, we stopped what we were doing and contacted her office, and she came on property."

The last burial at Mount Calvary, a portion of which had been granted to Denver for use as a park, was 1908. When Mt. Olivet Cemetery opened in Wheat Ridge in 1891, many of the Mount Calvary bodies were transferred there for re-burial. Then, in 1950, nine years before the Denver Botanic Gardens opened for the first time; most of the remaining 8,600 bodies were also moved to Mt. Olivet.

Most, but it turns out, not all.

Mixed amongst the splintered and dirt-caked remnants of aged coffins, at a depth of 4-to-5 feet, members of the Denver coroners staff found what appeared to be the bones of more than one person, as they carefully and methodically dug with shovels and hand-trowels throughout the afternoon.

When they quit work for the day at nightfall Friday, no confirmation was given on how many sets of remains had been found. But at one point, coroners personnel could be seen placing bones – including what appeared to be mostly intact leg and arm bones – into three separate bags.

There was no indication how much effort, if any, will go into attempting to identify the remains that were found Friday. But Jones said theyll ultimately end up back in the ground at the same place to which all previous Mount Calvary burials were transferred.

"The coroner told us that if any remains were found, they would be removed and

taken to Mt. Olivet cemetery in Wheat Ridge," Jones said. "We want to make sure that these bodies, if they are bodies, we want to make sure that any of those remains are treated with the same respect today as they were treated back then."

The new three-deck parking structure, to be built atop where the remains were found, will provide guest parking of more than 300. It replaces a 180-space surface parking lot visitors have been using until now. The new structure was supposed to open in spring 2009.

"Now, depending on what the coroner tells us, that could change," Jones said. "But, again, were expecting to be complete in April 2009. But, because the coroner is working, our work on the parking deck stops. When she releases the property back to us, well continue work. Until then, were letting the coroner and her people take care of these remains — if they are remains — making sure theyre treated properly."

Jones said he was not worried about the gardens ending up with a haunted parking garage, by building atop the not-so-final resting place of some of Denvers earliest inhabitants.

"You know," said Jones, "Im not much of one to believe in haunting.... With the care and the way were handling things here, the spirits of these body parts — if they are body parts — will be very happy that were treating them respect."

Following the discovery of the remains at the construction site we contacted the Denver Coroner's office and received the following response;

"We have assisted in the excavation of the graves and removal of the skeletons / bones. Once we are sure there are no more (at least where they are doing construction), they will be released for burial at Mt. Olivet. There is no report being generated per se. We have documented in our system that we did an "assist" for the Botanic Gardens, there is no actual investigative report or autopsy report (our only document that is public records, but we did no autopsy, therefore, no report).



The Coroner's office later confirmed that they recovered 46 bodies which were re-interred at Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Four preserved skeletons unearthed at Denvers Cheesman Park, once a cemetery

By The Denver Post

Posted: 11/01/2010 05:28:25 PM MDT

Irrigation work at Denvers Cheesman Park last Thursday and Friday unearthed the former cemeterys eerie past in the form of four preserved skeletons.

The coroners office dated the bones as older than a century and will re-inter them at Mount Olivet Cemetery.

Their identities, however, are lost to history.

"Cheesmans cemetery had a lot of criminals and paupers buried without headstones or any records," said Jill McGranahan, spokeswoman for the Denver Parks and Recreation Department. "Theres really nowhere to look to find out who these bones belonged to."

Today a scenic park southeast of downtown, Cheesman was part of the 320 acres set aside as Prospect Hill Cemetery in 1859.

When the 4 bodies were unearthed during the construction in October of 2010 we contacted the Denver Coroner's office and the Metro State Human Identification Lab to see if it would be helpful to document the bodies and possibly help identify them. An agreement was reached to have the Human Identification Lab examine the bodies and see what could be discovered. We attended the examination for documentation purposes.

During the examination we also assisted in helping in the cleaning of the bones.

In the first examination of the skeletons there were early determinations of possibly 1 female and 3 males that had been discovered. The only items other than skeletal remains were handles from the coffins, nails from the coffins, a hair

comb, a single clothes button, a 22 caliber shell casing and some lining from the brain of one of the skeletons.

During the examination the skeletons were cleaned, measured and photographed to document them.

Some of the preliminary conclusions after the initial examinations were that there were in fact 5 skeletons and that two of them had been mixed up when they were unearthed.

The initial reporting of the bodies was done anonymously by a worker from the landscaping company. He had dug up several of the bones and put them in a box near the road. A park ranger found the box and reported it. This was followed by the person who dug up the bones calling the morning show on KBPI to talk about it. This was the skeleton that turned out to be two skeletons mixed together. This was easy to do because of the skeletons being incomplete and both skulls missing.

The initial reports are that one of the Skeletons was male and in his mid 30's. It is also thought that he may have been a miner due to a sharp break trauma to the back of the hand consistent with a hammer or heavy tool hit, and what appears to be an injury caused by a pick type tool to the leg.

The second skeleton was also male but no other conclusions.

The third skeleton was that of a female that appears to be of a Caucasian/Japanese descent.

The fourth and fifth skeletons were mixed and there are no current conclusions as to any detail.

The skeletons were completely clean without any soft tissue, clothing or wood from the coffins. It was discovered that this was most likely caused due to the bodies only being buried 3-4 feet deep. This would allow the bodies to be exposed to the rain and dry seasons. With this happening the bodies would have been exposed to acetic conditions and oxidation that would have had less of an effect if they had been buried at the traditional 6 foot depth.

One of the preliminary conclusions is that the bodies were buried so shallow due to the existence of the Native American Cemetery that pre-dates the City Cemetery.

### Inspiration for “The Changeling”

The movie is claimed to be from the experiences of writer / playwright Russell Hunter. In 1968 he had rented a Mansion in Denver (Henry Treat Rogers Mansion) located at 1739 E. 13<sup>th</sup> Ave.

The Mansion rented for a low price of only \$200.00 per month which was a deal even in 1968. Mr. Hunter claimed that about a week after moving in he started hearing loud thumps and strange noises coming from a bedroom fireplace. He was eventually so frustrated with the sounds that he screamed “Stop it” and the noises stopped.

The activity then changed to doors opening, paintings flying off of the walls and even claimed that the walls vibrated.

Mr. Hunter was eventually talked into having a séance at the location to find out what was happening.

During the séance the Medium told Mr. Hunter that there was a child who was the son of the original owners of the home whose spirit was trying to pass on his story.

The claim was that when the child was born he was set to inherit \$700 million dollars on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The child had been born sickly and was not expected to live to his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The parents who wanted to claim the money realized that the child would not live long enough to inherit the money decided to adopt a similar looking child to replace the sickly one and lock their real child in a hidden room in the attic.

Mr. Hunter was told that he would be able to confirm the story by finding this hidden room. He claims that there was a hidden door leading to the hidden room. When he opened the door a red rubber ball came bouncing out and down the stairs. He claimed to have found several toys, a bed and a bathtub that the child would have used. They also claimed to have found a diary that belonged to the boy and it contained stories of his life and how his parents had been ashamed of him

from the time of his birth. It also mentioned that his favorite toy had been a red rubber ball.

The Medium eventually told Mr. Hunter that the sickly boy had died and the family had secretly buried him in South Denver in a location that was now under the closet of a home. She also stated that the replacement child had graduated college and had become a successful business man.

The Medium gave him the location of where the boy had been buried and told him that once he unearthed the body he would find a gold medallion that would be inscribed with the boy's birthday.

He claims that when they excavated under the closet of the home they did discover the medallion.

He claims that after the excavation the haunting continued. The walls shook; there were loud thumps and even glass doors exploding. He stated that one time a glass door exploded and cut an artery in his arm.

Mr. Hunter eventually moved from the location to a home on Kearney St. and claimed that the haunting followed him. He was eventually so desperate that he contacted a Priest from the Epiphany Episcopal Church who he claims came out and "Exorcised" the home.

The home was demolished in 1974 and the claims are that when the demolition was being done, one of the walls exploded and crushed a construction worker.

If ever a story existed that would excite paranormal activity this is surely at the top of the list. It has been reported that if one goes to the [park](#) on certain moonlit nights that all the grave outlines can be identified. Some people have claimed that while reclining on the lawn they have found it very difficult to get up, as if some unseen forces are restraining them.

From the [cheesmanpark.net](http://cheesmanpark.net) site:

Some of the Cheesman ghost legends include hearing multiples of whispering



voices and a spot where the sun never casts a shadow at noon. Well, for the first time, I am going to reveal exactly where this spot is. Its underground. And if you dig it up, then it will be above ground. But the sun never shines underground. Hence, no shadows.

### [Go Away Kid, Theres Ghosts in Here!](#)

I can only imagine that many of the Cheesman stories were possibly fabricated in the Victorian era by unscrupulous paid grave removers who were supposed to be neatly exhuming bodies, so the place could become a park. They wanted privacy when they were looting, chopping up skeletons and decayed remains and defiling the remains of everyone, to make a quick buck and leave most of the graves unresolved. I would guess that the presence of little children watching their misdeeds inspired them to make up ghostly stories to run the little witnesses off. The grave hackers did not want these kids to spill the beans. The area was essentially rural at that time or suburban at best. But word of mouth was the main form of gossip.

In one case, a grave worker who was looting, ran off and claimed he was contacted by a ghost. Well, how much credibility are we talking about here? He was paid to remove graves and was caught robbing them. And generally, from what Ive read and heard, the whole project was a fraud anyway. Bones from a single body were being divided and crushed as a pretense of greater human decay, to give the false impression that all of the bodies were being removed.

