NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ABOUT DSH OR POTTERS FIELD, DELAWARE

Earlier article

The Delmarva Star, Wilmington, Del. Sunday, March 21, 1920.

**Headline: “Potter’s Field – Last Home of State’s Derelicts”**

Photograph of rows of headstones, caption: “In this lonely graveyard, at Farnhurst, rest the bones of the poor, friendless, and unfortunate”. *Same photograph as in 1933 article.*

Subheadings: “1676 White Stones Mark Burial Spots of City’s Derelicts; Potter’s Field at Farnhurst Hides Ghastly Failures in Game of Life; 51 Graves Added to Area Last Year.”

Main story: “Almost hidden from sight at Farnhurst as it lies on low ground by the side of the railroad, the Potter’s Field, last resting place of the poor and friendless, now has a population of 1676. Crowded closely together in the small area, as if even in death, the living begrudged room for the derelicts, there stretches row after row of small white posts – each little post with its number cut in the top of the three-inch marker. 1676 was the last; 1677 will be the next. Just a number cut in the top of the stone to mark the head of the grave, that is all!

God’s Acre, that beautiful phrase which we give to the last resting places of those who have died among their friends and kindred, conjures up a vision of quietude and peace wherein the snow white slabs and showy mausoleums recall to mind the last words of the wounded Southern chieftain, “Let us cross over the river and rest in the shade of the trees.” But the County’s Acre, known more familiarly as the Potter’s Field, arouses no such emotions, and the visitor who strays thither comes away with a feeling of desolation and a tug at the heart strings for the poor unfortunates who lie buried there.

Flotsam and jetsam in the sea of life, here they rest at last – buried at the county’s expense. Who knows what heart aches and what hidden sorrows are hear concealed? What ghastly mistakes and what unfulfilled aspirations of youth are hid beneath the marshy, water-soaked graves? What victims perhaps of manly or womanly ingratitude? Each has run his appointed course and this is the final outcome. They have achieved freedom from the flesh, and their mistakes and misfortunes are covered up with a mound and a white numbered post.

One recalls the tale recorded in the elegy of Gray. “Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid, Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire; Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway’d, Or waked to ecstacy the living lyre.”

The Old Grave Digger.

With pick and long-handled shovel, the old grave digger comes shuffling along. He is hard of hearing, and talks aimlessly and incoherently. “Yes, he has been here four years,” and he points out the two rows he has added to the closely packed area. He talks of the depth of the frost and how hard it is to dig. A newly made grave marks the last burial, and an opening in the soft clay is ready to receive the next. “This last one poisoned hisself,” he says in a dismal voice. “I try to keep it as nice as I can. I plant those trees over there. But what is the use? A feller came out from town last Christmas and cut down one of the cedars in the middle of the yard for a Christmas tree.

“I cover ‘em up well,” he says. “Not like that other feller. Look!” and he pointed to the place where three or four tiny boxes showed above the earth. “The rain washes badly here, and the babies ought to be put in deeper.”

“There ain’t room for any outside boxes here,” he continued. “Just a cofvn (sic) painted black, and a hole big enough to put it down. One feller one time was too long for his box and his feet stuck out.”

The First Potter’s Field.

The first Potter’s Field is said to have been that established outside of the city of Jerusalem. In Matthew XXVII-7, it states: “And they took counsel and bought with them (the thirty pieces of silver the potter’s field to bury strangers in.”) The thirty pieces of silver were those received by Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus, and were returned by him to the priests when he became conscience stricken. Another explanation is that the potters in England and the Continent used to dig out banks of clay for their trade which they failed to fill again. In course of time, the open pits were used to bury members of the trade in, there being no extra labor of excavation. From this grew the modern Potter’s Field.

Old Potter’s Fields.

The old Potter’s Field was located at Eleventh and King streets on the side of the present Court House. It was quite large and beautifully situated. The remains were disinterred and buried in the cemetery in the northwest part of the city, according to Montgomery.

Bodies of the friendless were interred at the old Almshouse in the neighborhood of Front and Broome streets. The almshouse here was built in the eighteenth century, and rebuilt in 1804, being finally superseded by the present almshouse at Farnhurst, but in 1884. It was at this time that the Potter’s Field was probably set apart at its present location.

Last year, Coroner Bullock’s report shows, there were fifty-one bodies interred at Farnhurst. Many of these were of unknown dead, while some were inmates of the country asylums.

It is said that there was a Potter’s Field at New Castle, just above the old site of Fort Casimir in the northeastern section of the town. The river has encroached sixty feet on the old burying ground, and it is not unusual for bones and skulls to be washed out on the beach by the tide. No bodies have been interred in this burying ground for many years.