

## The Beginning of Elmwood Cemetery

In December 1901 it was announced that a movement was underway to form a private cemetery corporation within easy access of the City of Winnipeg. Just before the end of 1901 the Elmwood Cemetery Company was incorporated under the Cemeteries Incorporation Act with a paid up of capital of \$50,000, of this \$48,900 had been subscribed from Eastern Canada and \$1,100 from Winnipeg area residents. Elected president of the company was Mr. I. M. Ross and the elected directors were Mr. A. Campbell, John Thompson, F. H. Phippen and Arthur Stewart who was also the manager of the National Trust Company Limited.

A total of 38 acres of property was purchased on land that had been known as the "McIntosh Garden in what was then the Municipality of Kildonan between Birds Hill Road (Henderson Highway) and the Red River. The property was valued at \$300 per acre before the sale with the property assessed at \$3,700 for garden purposes by the Municipality of Kildonan. Mr. Frank H. Nutter a prominent landscape engineer of Minneapolis, Minnesota designed the plans for the cemetery. The plans called for a number of winding gravel avenues interspersed with park-like spaces and a large space reserved in the centre of the property for a mortuary chapel and a receiving tomb. The first project of the company was to establish a system of drainage with the sewers draining into the river.

The grounds were set out to preserve as much as possible the existing large trees on the property which existed of elm, maple, ash and other hardwood trees and as a result the name chosen for the cemetery was the "Elmwood Cemetery". A nursery with greenhouses was established on the grounds to provide for suitable trees, shrubbery and flowers. In the early days purchasers of plot could also purchase shrubs and flowers from these greenhouses. Mr. Robert Aikins, who resigned from the Brookside Cemetery, became the first superintendent of the cemetery. A superintendent's office was established on the north side of the cemetery with the horse stables established opposite the cemetery along the east side of Henderson Highway.

The cemetery was designed to be sufficient for over 25,000 individual interments. The cemetery was created to be entirely nondenominational, the first of its kind in Manitoba. A total of 20% of the sale price of the lots and plots were set aside for a perpetual care fund with the income used to maintain and beautify the grounds along with a large portion of the original \$50,000 paid up capital.

The cemetery was created without the consent of the Municipality of Kildonan and the local residents The Kildonan Council and residents felt the cemetery was forced on the municipality as it was located in a growing area of the municipality too close to the City of Winnipeg. Messrs. Hespeler, Drewry, Sampson, Walker and others who owned large sections of property near the cemetery felt the value of their property would be severely diminished in future sales. As a

cemetery the entire 38 acres would be exempt from taxes which would reduce the taxable revenue of the municipality.

A large delegation of residents protested the creation of the cemetery at the Manitoba Legislature pointing out that if Kildonan was a town or city, it would be able to prevent the creation of a cemetery but as a municipality Kildonan did not have this power. Despite the opposition, the Provincial Government gave its approval for the creation of Elmwood Cemetery.

Elmwood Cemetery opened in July 1902 for its first interment, as of 2013 over 57,000 people have been interred in the cemetery with a number of the original roads filled in for more plots and most graves now containing two burials.

By the time Ward One of the Municipality of Kildonan became part of the City of Winnipeg in 1906, the entire area became known as Elmwood, probably one of the few times a district got its name from the name of a cemetery.