



## PARKS AND RECREATION NOTES *Things to do*

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# Morris Hill Cemetery tells lively story of past

By Patti Murphy  
Special to *The Idaho Statesman*

For more than 100 years, Morris Hill Cemetery has been the final resting place for some of Boise's most interesting historical figures.

Among the approximately 30,000 grave sites lie politicians, corporate leaders, military heroes and even assassins whose lives — and deaths — are forever a part of Boise's heritage.

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The 80 acres on which Morris Hill sits was acquired in 1882 by the city of Boise when then-mayor James Pinney purchased the property for \$2,000 from William H. Ridenbaugh and Mrs. Lavinia I. Morris. Today, the cemetery is managed and operated by the Boise Parks and Recreation Department, which also runs Fort Boise Military Cemetery and Pioneer Cemetery.

For those who enjoy history and old cemeteries, Morris Hill offers a self-guided walking tour which allows visitors to take a brief journey into the past. The walking tour was the brainchild of Diane Angoni who has worked at Morris Hill for seven years and has researched many of the people who are buried there.

Stored in Angoni's office is the original Morris Hill burial book, which records the first burial in March of 1882 as that of a 15-year-old William Lind-

say. Many of the causes of death listed in the old book differ greatly from today's, Angoni said.

"People died from things such as snow slide, falling trees, falling rocks, gathering in the head, Brights kidney disease, softening of the brain and constipation," she said. "It was also noted that some people in their 60s had died of old age, a perspective that has certainly changed with the times."

Angoni noticed that many young women committed suicide in the 1800s. She guesses they might have been unhappy mail-order brides for miners.

A pamphlet developed by Angoni to guide visitors through the grounds highlights some of the more interesting characters buried there, such as:

► John Jurko, buried July 9, 1926, after being hung for the murder of his mine claim partner, whom he shot in a dispute

over his wife's honor. His attorneys tried unsuccessfully to have Jurko's sentence commuted to life imprisonment arguing that "he was mentally unstable due to being kicked in the head by a mule when he was younger."

► Harry Orchard, buried April 19, 1954. He died after being jailed for 50 years for the bombing assassination of scores of men in mine labor violence at the turn of the century and for the dynamite slaying of Gov. Frank Steunenberg in Caldwell on Dec. 30, 1905.

► Idaho Gov. Moses Alexander, buried in 1932. He was the first Jewish governor in the United States. He started the Idaho state highway system, workers' compensation and the State Insurance Commission.

Other notables include Joseph Albertson, founder of Albertson's supermarkets and benefactor of the natural habitat park named after his wife,

Kathryn; Harry W. Morrison and Morris Hans Knudsen, founders of Morrison Knudsen; Senator Frank F. Church, and "Peg Leg" Annie Morrow, a brothel owner during the Gold Rush era who lost her legs to frostbite after being caught in a freak snowstorm.

Angoni said there also are some well-known names on the markers that don't necessarily belong to well-known people.

"There's a John and Joseph Kennedy, an Ansel Adams and Michael Jordan," she said. "We also have a Barnum and a Bailey, a family of Basils, Fennels and Sages, a family of Fruits and a family of Fish. It's interesting to walk through and read the headstones."

Morris Hill Cemetery is at 317 N. Latah. The cemetery grounds are open 8 a.m. to dusk, and office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information call 384-4391.