

A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MRS. RAY HOWARD,

NEE CLARINDA JENNETTE SWEET

On February 15, 1859 in Foster Center, or no doubt it was then called "The Hemlock", a daughter was born to Abijah and Salvania Phillips Sweet who were then living in the homestead owned by Capt. George Phillips, father of Salvania. Both the Sweet and Phillips families were always interested in the public and civic welfare of the community and during the Dorr War Capt. George Phillips commanded a troop of soldiers which used to train nearby what is now Spears Cemetery.

The little girl, Nettie, attended a one-room school not far from her home where she proved an apt pupil. Many of the boys and girls who began their education in these little one-room schools, showed in later years, the grounding they had received when later they entered into the life of the community. Now these schools have become obsolete and soon will be only a memory to the few left who attended them.

Of the various teachers who taught at the Rounds School, there was a young man, Ray Howard, who was a member of one of the Howard families from which Howard Hill received its name. At that time Nettie Sweet was a young girl in her middle teens, possessing much natural ability and charm. With her bright black eyes and curly hair it is no wonder the young school master succumbed to her charms. So in 1877, at the age of 18, she and Mr. Howard were married. For many years they lived just south of "The Hemlock" where Mr. Howard had a Wheelwright shop.

In the meantime, on the old Phillips farm owned by Thomas Phillips, was located a community cemetery, the last resting place of Mrs. Howard's mother and father also of her husband's people and many many other relatives and friends of both. For awhile this cemetery was cared for by those interested in their own lots. Finally the Phillips farm was sold to George Spears and the cemetery became known as the Spears Cemetery. Still the care was by individuals, though the whole area might be mowed once or twice a year, the grass left in windrows or perhaps raked into a pile. The unkempt appearance of this last resting place of so many loved ones troubled Mrs. Howard so much so that she began a systematic campaign to better conditions there. She and her niece, Mrs. Louis Cole, wrote many many letters to those whom she knew should or ought to be interested, explaining what her ambition was and asking for donations so that a fund might

be established and the income from same be used for the upkeep of the cemetery. In this project Mrs. Howard was also joined by Mr. George Tucker.

At long last her dream was fulfilled and she lived to see from her small beginning a cemetery that was duly incorporated to be known as The Spears Cemetery Association. Mr. Benjamin Eddy, whom Mrs. Howard had known from young manhood, was also interested in this plot and through his efforts, were secured the Incorporation papers, also this same Mr. Eddy became our President in 1922 at our first meeting and has served successively during the ensuing years. Also Mr. Ernest Nye has been our faithful Secretary-Treasurer over a period of years.

We now have a sizeable fund to draw upon and are indeed fortunate to have as sexton, Mr. Russell Wells, who aside from the monetary angle is vitally interested in the care and upkeep of our cemetery.

In closing I should like to read Longfellow's "God's Acre", a poem which Mrs. Howard knew and loved.

"God's-Acre"

I Like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's-Acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping
dust.

God's-Acre! Yes, that blessed name imparts
Comfort to those, who in the grave have sown
The seed, that they had garnered in their
hearts,
Their bread of life, alas! no more their own.

Then shall the good stand in immortal
bloom,
In the fair gardens of that second birth;
And each bright blossom, mingle its perfume
With that of flowers, which never bloomed
on earth.

This is the field and Acre of our God.
This is the place, where human harvests grow.

Read by Mrs. Esther Drowne at the thirty-first annual meeting of the Spears' Cemetery Association, April 25, 1953.