

Tuesday Topics Summary

June 4, 2024

June 4th Tuesday Topics was held at Brewster Place in Topeka in lieu of the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library that provides summer programs for children in June and July. President Mary Lou Davis opened the meeting and spoke about voter registration and the Kansas Senate. She announced the July 2nd Tuesday Topics will again be at Brewster Place. Our July presenter will be Adrienne Olejnik, Vice President of Kansas Action for Children.

President Davis then introduced today's speaker, Lisa Sandmeyer, Superintendent, Historic Topeka Cemetery. Lisa regaled us with fascinating facts and stories about the Topeka Cemetery, which was founded one hundred and sixty years ago as a private corporation. The first Topeka Cemetery was in the middle of the city. Dr. Franklin Crane offered forty acres of his undeveloped land east of the city. One hundred bodies were moved from the original cemetery and reburied in the new location.

Lisa spoke about mausoleum row and the people and families buried in the mausoleums. She showed a photograph of Dr. Crane's house at the cemetery that was occupied for a hundred years. The first floor is used now for the cemetery office.

Lisa showed a photo of the first burial plot in the cemetery and mentioned many famous people who are buried at the cemetery, including Cyrus K. Holliday and Vice President Charles Curtis. While driving around Topeka, you may recognize some names of streets and places related in some way to family names of ancestors buried at Historic Topeka Cemetery, including Oakley, Hummer, Gage, Crane, Ritchie, Branner, Holliday, Capper, Horn, and Mulvane.

A space at the cemetery is reserved for people who are not embalmed and want to be buried in the ground. The bodies in biodegradable caskets are buried in the special section.

Veterans of seven wars are buried at the cemetery. One veteran fought during the War of 1812. Two hundred Union soldiers and nine hundred Civil War veterans are buried at the Topeka cemetery. Others fought in Vietnam, Korea, and WWII. One veteran helped found Lincoln College (now Washburn University). A special section is the resting place of veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic. Their headstones are decorated with American flags on Memorial Day. Dr. Crane would be proud of what the Historic Topeka Cemetery has become.