

Roslyn Cemeteries Kittitas County, Washington

Transcribed and compiled by Maggie Rail © 2001.

Lat: 47°13'12", Lon: 121°00'02"W
T20N R15E Sec 17

The town of Roslyn has about 27 burial places. Some are very small, one has only one burial. Most are cemeteries which vary in size from small to quite large. I think the largest perhaps will be the Old City Cemetery.



When I visited, I stopped in the city hall and the lady there said there were 29 cemeteries now. I could only find 27, which includes the 25 I read and two other burial places.

The National Croation Society of USA has two marked graves on a steep hillside. This cemetery was abandoned when ground for Dr Starkovich #2 was obtained, according to literature I obtained from the city hall. It would be across the road in the woods from the abandoned Sokol Lodge Cemetery.

Another one I did not find was a grave of an unknown. This one was by Mt Olivet. I may have walked by it not knowing what it was. It says there is only the base of the headstone.

This is truly a unique town. The many cemeteries came about because of many reasons. Most are/were owned by lodges, three are owned by the city, two are veteran cemeteries.

The second day I was there I was surprised by this loud booming sound ringing across the valley about quarter of twelve-noon, followed by rifle shots. Later I found out there was a military burial in the Veteran cemetery. They always have the traditional military ceremony. I was up in the Dr Starkovich #2 Cemetery.

At one time the county had a poorfarm cemetery, which was not used that much, so in recent years the Veterans were deeded it by the county and it is called Veteran Cemetery #2. It is across the road from the Veteran #1 Cemetery and includes both county burials and veterans in it.

This was a town with diverse nationalities and ethnic groups. All coming here for their own reasons and working the mines in the area as one of the main occupations. It is a mountainous area in the eastern Cascade mountains, not far from the town of Cle Elum.

The Blacks were brought to Roslyn in 1891 by the mine owners to help break a strike. After the strike ended they stayed and became an important part of the community.

The first black mayor in the state of Washington was Willie Craven in Roslyn. Willie's father was the official grave digger and watcher over the cemeteries until he died.

In recent years the group of cemeteries have been designated as historical cemeteries. Each of the cemeteries have been fixed up and marked very well. Guided tours also are given

during the summer months. I found all the cemeteries in good condition, except the abandoned ones were a bit overgrown.

Some of the cemeteries no longer are owned by a lodge as they were when they were started. The city is then responsible for them I was told. Some find a clean up committee to go at least once a year and make these abandoned cemeteries look better. In general the whole cemetery area was well kept in my opinion.

As time passes I suspect more will be buried in the new Memorial cemetery the city has started, because many of these older cemeteries are running out of space.

At the council meeting in October of 2001, an ordinance was passed which created a Cemetery Commission, which will be made up of representatives from each of the local cemeteries. This Commission will meet at least three times a year, once in March, once in April and another time in the Fall to address all major structural changes and any other business needing tended to with these historical cemeteries in Roslyn WA.

The town of Roslyn was made a more popular tourist attraction when the TV program 'Northern Exposure' used it as the setting for their program for several years. It is a worthwhile trip to visit Roslyn, especially the cemeteries.

What I found most unique about these cemeteries is that the majority of them are situated on the sides of the hills. In most of the cemeteries they have terraced the hillside making a level area for the burials, most with concrete for more than one burial on that terrace, and the drop is further than a stair step. I was informed by my legs that it was not the normal way to walk, but I continued reading all of them. The photo at the right is more on top of the hill. As one goes down it gets steeper. The new City Memorial Gardens and a few of the others in that area are on flatter ground.



There have been two major mining accidents which left their mark on the city of Roslyn. The first one in 1892, when 45 were killed, followed by the last one in 1909, which took the lives of 10. Sometimes it was more than one in a family. There is a monument on Pennsylvania Avenue and somehow one is reminded in some way of these tragedies especially when you visit the cemeteries. (See Miners information link)

I acquired the information I have presented from my own readings and either the city hall or the cemetery sexton, which might include old records.

- Maggie Rail