

Family Mausolea of Johnson County, Kansas



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Introduction

A mausoleum is a tomb, or private cemetery, and is usually constructed above ground. Mausolea must have the ability to be sealed, yet breathe, and must be fireproof. Metal caskets, usually sealed, and cremains are typically entombed in tiers and often labeled with the decedent's name, birth, and death years.

The word derives from the Mausoleum of Maussollos (near modern-day Bodrum in Turkey), the grave of King Mausollos, the Persian satrap of Caria, whose large tomb was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

- Wikipedia, 4 Sep 2007.

Mausolea, or family vaults, became popular in the United States during the Victorian period (1883 - 1901), when funerary customs abounded and mourning was a true art form. This period of our culture ushered in a change from traditional churchyard burial customs with small door-shaped gravestones, to elaborate rites and customs laced with superstition, large family plots, grandiose monuments and ornate mausolea.

This article will introduce you to the four family mausolea built in Johnson County, Kansas, during the years 1912 to 1928, well after the end of the Victorian Era.

Two of the mausolea are located in the historic old cemetery in Olathe, the Johnson County seat; one is located in the southernmost extremity of the County in Spring Hill; and the newest mausoleum is located in a Catholic cemetery in Lenexa, Kansas.

Black Family Mausoleum, 1912

Olathe Memorial Cemetery, Olathe, KS

The Black family tomb is the oldest mausoleum constructed in Johnson County. This structure, built primarily of rough granite blocks, bears the inscription 1912 // Black centered above the crypt door.

This family mausoleum may have been constructed upon the death of Eliza Mary Black (1822-1912). The Olathe Memorial Cemetery records indicate two possible interment dates for Eliza. The first date of 27 Feb 1912 may coincide with her death and interment, while the second date of 25 May 1912 may indicate the completion of the mausoleum and her entombment within.



Other Black family members preceded Eliza in death. Eliza's grandson was the first of this family to be interred in the Olathe Memorial Cemetery. Charles M.

Black, infant son of George and Maud Black, was 8 months old when laid to rest on 20 Oct 1870. Six years later Eliza's husband, James Black (1814-1876), was called to join his grandson. While their original gravesites are unknown, the cemetery records indicate Charles was moved to the family vault on 14 Apr 1913 and lies with his grandfather in the same coffin.



Four generations of the Black family were interred within this crypt in a span of 47 years, with the last entombment in 1959. From cemetery and census records we can ascertain the relationship of all eight Black family members interred within the mausoleum as follows:

1	James Black
+	Eliza Mary
2	George Black
+	Maud H
3	Charles M Black
3	Effie Ryan Black
+	Daniel T Park
4	Dean Vincent Park

Mary Francis Stroeter was entombed within the Black mausoleum for 26 years. The cemetery records provide evidence that Mary was originally placed within the vault in 1949 and then removed on 7 Jul 1975 for burial in Oakwood Cemetery in Baldwin City, KS. Mary's removal was the last activity in this mausoleum.



Interments

Black, Chas M; Age 08 m; Son of G and M Black

Interred 20 Oct 1870, 14 Apr 1913

Black, James; b. 1814; d. 1876

Age 60 yrs, Interred 23 Nov 1876

Black, E M; b. 1822; d. 1912

Eliza Mary; Age 90 yrs; COD Heart disease

Interred 27 Feb 1912, 25 May 1912

Black, George; b. 17 Mar 1842; d. 02 Jun 1920

Age 78 yrs; COD Paralysis; Born in Sydney, OH

Col 118th O V I Union Cavalry, Interred 4 Jun 1920

Park, Daniel T; b. 1868; d. 1923

Age 56 yrs; COD Tuberculosis; Interred 6 May 1923

Black, Maud N; b. 07 May 1845; d. 25 Jul 1933

Age 88 yrs; Interred 23 Jul 1933

Park, Effie Ryan; d. 1946

Age 73 yrs; COD Cerebral Thrombosis; Interred 7 Feb 1946

Stroeter, Mary (Mollie) Francis

Age 68 yrs; Interred 26 Aug 1949; Removed 6 Jul 1975

Park, Dean V; b. 1898; d. 24 Sep 1959

Age 61 yrs; COD Peritonitis; Interred 30 Sep 1959

Sowers Family Mausoleum, ca. 1916

Spring Hill Cemetery, Spring Hill, KS

As you enter the Spring Hill cemetery you can see the Sowers mausoleum tucked into the side of the cemetery hill.

The vault is of a dugout style, with part of the vault being underground. The outer walls of the mausoleum are constructed with rough granite blocks, and the structure has a peaked roof. Three steps lead down to the crypt door, and on the door is a plaque of the names and dates of those interred within. The header stone above the door is inscribed J W Sowers.

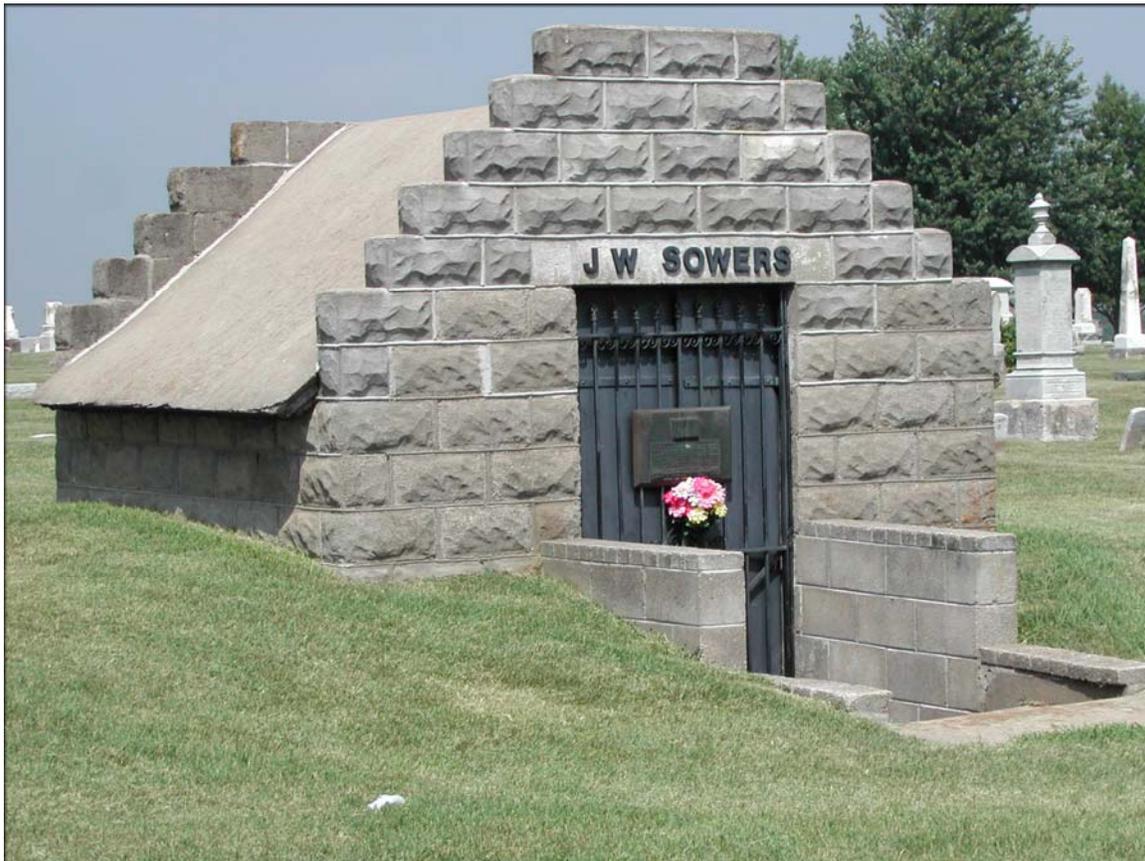


The year when the mausoleum for the James W Sowers family was constructed is unknown. Cemetery records from this time are unavailable, and the family crypt is not mentioned in the obituaries of James and Electa Sowers found in the Spring Hill New Era newspaper. The obituary for James does mention that he served as President of the Spring Hill Cemetery association from 1 Mar 1905 until his death in 1925.

According to a granddaughter of James Sowers, James commissioned the building of the Sowers family vault. The vault was architected with six spaces intended to hold the caskets of James, both of his wives, and his daughters, Annabel, Lusetta, and Ruth. Annabel was interred with her husband, Arthur A. Smiser, in another location within the Spring Hill Cemetery, and Lusetta's husband, Bernard, occupies the remaining casket space. The cremains of the remainder of the family are placed on a shelf inside the vault.

James Sowers' grandparents and parents were some of the earliest pioneers to the Spring Hill, Kansas area, and are also interred in the Spring Hill cemetery. At one time the Sowers owned the land immediately south of the cemetery. James was probably born on the land just on the other side of the fence from this peaceful hillside where he rests for eternity, surrounded by eleven family members spanning four generations:

1	James W Sowers
+	Electa Telford
2	Don C Sowers
+	Helen Smith
3	Don C Sowers, Jr
+	Jane Royea
+	Robert B Armour
4	Martha Jane Armour
2	Lusetta S Sowers
+	Bernard F Young
+	Rosa N Young (second wife of Bernard)
+	Eliza Telford



Interments

Sowers, Electa; b. 1851, d. 1916
 Sowers, James W; b. 1856, d. 1925
 Sowers, Eliza T; b. 1858; d. 1929
 Young, Lusetta S; b. 1885, d. 1939
 Sowers, Don C; b. 1883, d. 1942
 Young, Bernard F; b. 1878, d. 1958
 Sowers, Helen S; b. 1882; d. 1969
 Armour, Robert B; b. 1921, d. 1971
 Young, Rosa N; b. 1882, d. 1979
 Sowers, Jane R; b. 1922, d. 1989
 Armour, Martha Jane; b. 1955, d. 1993
 Sowers, Don C, Jr; b. 1915, d. 1997



Livermore Family Mausoleum, ca. 1922

Olathe Memorial Cemetery, Olathe, KS

The Livermore mausoleum is the second family crypt constructed at the Olathe Memorial Cemetery. This mausoleum was constructed with the vault itself partially below ground level, and an earthen dome constructed above, to give the feeling of an underground burial chamber. A large pyramid-shaped frontispiece was constructed of large rough granite blocks, topped with a large cross made of granite. Livermore is inscribed on the header block centered above the doorway and three steps lead down to the door crypt's door.



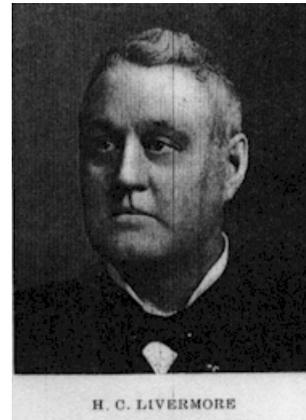
The names of those interred within are not marked on the mausoleum, and only Genoa's casket is marked. The primary source of death dates for the remainder of those interred within is based on obituaries and interment dates found in the cemetery records.

Cemetery records do not show when this block of lots was purchased, and the construction date of the mausoleum is unknown. Genoa Livermore (1855-1922) appears to be the first of the family interred within this vault. Genoa's obituary from the Olathe Mirror indicates she was laid to rest in the family vault, indicating the mausoleum was completed prior to her death.



Six Livermore family members are entombed in this crypt; Harvey and Genoa Livermore, their two children, and their children's spouses, as follows:

1	Harvey Crane Livermore
+	Genoa Margaret Burton
2	Harvey B Livermore
+	Carrie
2	Ettabell Livermore
+	Oscar G Woolverton



Interments

Livermore, Genoa M; b. 13 Jan 1855, Jackson Co, MO; d. 11 Jun 1922;

Wife of H C Livermore; Maiden name Genoa Margaret Burton;

Married 26 Mar 1873; COD apoplexy (stroke); Interred 13 Jun 1922

Livermore, Harvey Crane; Birth 1850, Deansville, NY; Interred 3 Dec 1928

Woolverton, Oscar G; Interred 22 Jan 1943; Age 70

Woolverton, Ettabell; d. 27 May 1945, Oklahoma City, OK;

Interred 13 Jun 1945; Age 69

Livermore, Harvey B; Birth 13 Jan 1855; Interred 5 Nov 1945

Livermore, Carrie; Interred 4 Aug 1958



Strang Mausoleum, 1928

St. John's Catholic Cemetery, Lenexa, KS

The Strang mausoleum was the last mausoleum built in Johnson County, Kansas. This mausoleum is constructed of beautiful Carrera marble featuring columns and religious statuary. Situated at the top of the hill, this mausoleum is the focal point of St. John's Catholic Cemetery.

This ornate mausoleum stands in tribute to and serves as the final resting place for William B Strang, Jr. and his wife, Margaret. William, born in New York in 1857, was the founder of Overland Park, Kansas and the Strang Line Interurban Railroad. The Strang Line, when completed, provided flood-free transportation from Olathe, KS, to Kansas City, MO.



William was a founding member of St. John Catholic Church in Lenexa, KS. Evidence indicates the mausoleum was constructed in the cemetery after the death of Margaret Strang, William's wife, who died six years later in 1927.

William Strang passed away in Excelsior Springs, MO on 13 Jan 1921 at the age of 64 years. According to his obituary, published in the Olathe Mirror on Thursday, 20 Jan 1921 on page 8, Strang was interred at Mt. St. Mary Catholic Cemetery, 2201 Cleveland Ave., Kansas City, MO on Saturday, 15 Jan 1921. According to Margaret's obituary in the Kansas City Star on Sunday, 3 Apr 1927, Margaret died on Saturday, 2 Apr 1927 and was interred "beside her husband in the mausoleum, St Mary's Cemetery, temporarily." Mt. St. Mary's cemetery records indicate that Margaret was interred on 5 Apr 1927, and that both William and Margaret were removed to their vault in Lenexa on 2 Feb 1928. There are no other interments in the Strang family mausoleum.

It appeared that a piece of marble statuary had broken off the top the mausoleum, and was believed to have been a crucifix. In the summer of 2007, a granite crucifix was installed atop this mausoleum.



Interments

Strang, William B, Jr; b. 1857, New York; d. 13 Jan 1921, Excelsior Springs, MO;
Aged 64 yrs;
Interred 15 Jan 1921, Mt St Mary Catholic Cemetery, Kansas City, MO
Interred 2 Feb 1928, St John Catholic Cemetery, Lenexa, KS

Strang, Margaret; d. 2 Apr 1927;
Interred 5 Apr 1927, Mt St Mary Catholic Cemetery, Kansas City, MO
Interred 2 Feb 1928, St John Catholic Cemetery, Lenexa, KS



William B. Strang, Jr



Margaret Strang

Sources

Atlases

1874 Johnson County, Kansas
1902 Johnson County, Kansas
1922 Johnson County, Kansas

Cemeteries

Catholic Cemeteries of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties, Inc., Kansas City, KS.
Mt. St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri.
Olathe Memorial Cemetery, Olathe, Kansas.
Spring Hill Cemetery, Spring Hill, Kansas.
St. John's Catholic Cemetery, Lenexa, Kansas.

Federal Census Records

1860 Kansas, Johnson County
1870 Kansas, Johnson County
1880 Kansas, Johnson County
1900 Kansas, Johnson County
1910 Kansas, Johnson County
1920 Kansas, Johnson County

Newspapers

Kansas City Star
Olathe Mirror
Spring Hill New Era

Photos

1902 Johnson County, Kansas Atlas
Johnson County Museum
Linda K. Lewis, Digital Cemetery
Paul Sowers, Spring Hill, KS

People

Helen Sowers Armour Pym
Paul Sowers, Spring Hill, KS