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Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park

CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN ON WOODLAND'S LOOKOUT DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the 1800's and until the 1930's, families picnicked on Sundays and viewed the city from a historic wooden Tower perched atop the "Lookout" at Woodland Cemetery. In October, Woodland announced the reconstruction of a replica Tower as part of its newest cremation development: A "Lookout" Columbarium which will be built upon the original Tower site. Excavation work commenced on October 26th. Construction begins on November 15, 2009 with completion scheduled for Spring, 2010.

"Part of Woodland's Mission is the preservation and restoration of the historic parts of the cemetery so we were excited when we came across a copy of the March 11, 1899 edition of the Dayton Daily News featuring a major "Historic Sketch" about Woodland" said Dave Fitzsimmons President and CEO of Woodland.

The article talked about Woodland's history, but also predicted "Public sentiment is growing, though slowly, in favor of cremation of the dead and doubtless there will be a crematory at Woodland sooner or later..."

"How prescient to predict this in 1899," said FitzSimmons. "Woodland was certainly ahead of the curve even then. Of course, Woodland eventually became one of the first in the Midwest to build a crematory in response to public demand," he said.

Bob Laing, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum said, “Nearly two years ago we conceived the restoration of the Lookout as a gathering place from which to view the city and memorialize our loved ones. We have been consulting with architects, engineers and designers from the “The Tribute Companies” a Wisconsin group that specializes in historic cemetery developments. The actual construction contract has been awarded to a local company, Fender Construction Company, Inc.”

“We were struggling with ideas for an appropriate “feature” for the development” said FitzSimmons. We talked to several Dayton area artists and looked at concepts and themes, but nothing jumped off the page. Then we came across the 1899 Article with a picture of the tower featured on the page (Editor: See attached article). It was labeled “The Lookout,” the highest point in Woodland.”

“That was it”, said Laing. “We had found our feature... a replica of the original observation Tower on the Lookout. It was perfect.”

The replica tower will be 30 feet high and twenty feet across, and be surrounded by a Gathering Plaza for families to use for commemorative and memorial services, perhaps even a wedding or two. “The original Tower was thought to have a wooden stairway up to the crow’s nest on top, but that was considered too dangerous to include in the replica version,” said FitzSimmons.

Phase I of the project will include the Tower, the Gathering Plaza and a 3 section Niche Wall (Columbarium) (Editor: see attached brochure) containing a total of 150 single, double and companion niches for the permanent memorialization of urns containing cremated remains. This Spring, the circular drive around the Lookout development will be repaved and beautified, and a new stairway and landscaping will be completed on the elevated side hills surrounding the Plaza.

Phase II is scheduled for construction at a later date and will consist of the development of a lower niche wall and several private family estates along the circular drive, which will be converted to a meandering pedestrian walkway in Phase II. A date for completion of Phase II has not been set.