

Woodlawn Cemetery Association

Founded: 1858

Location: Montpelier (1858– )

In 1858 several Montpelier citizens, headed by the town's founder Abel Baldwin, organized the Woodlawn Cemetery Association to create and run the community's cemetery. Eight lots were sold on the day of the association's founding. Prices ranged from sixty cents to two dollars per lot. As with most burial grounds at the time, the association did not create a fund for the perpetual care of the gravesites.

Interestingly, the association predates the formal existence of the town. Montpelier was not incorporated until 1870. Most of the remains of the earliest settlers of the settlement can be found in the northwest corner of the cemetery, designated as "Old Cemetery."

In the early 1900s the association became a nonprofit organization. Among the organizers of the new trust were Sam Wearly, Merle Tewksbury, and Josiah Twibell. Wearly and his descendants have become the association's major benefactors. Wearly helped to found Wearly Monuments, a company that originated in Montpelier but later moved to Muncie in the 1930s.

In the mid-1960s the Wearly family became the operators of the association. The family provided the drainage ditches, paved the driveways, built the office and storage building, and purchased additional ground for a new section. The family also built fences, donated the granite entrance signs, and provided for the maintenance of the grounds.

In 1994 the Wearly company gave \$1.2 million in property and cash to the city's foundation, the organization that currently operates the cemetery. The company donated 4,000 plots and a \$500,000 trust account to the city's foundation. The foundation made plans to use

part of the gift to create a fourteen-acre park along the Salamonie River that runs through Montpelier. In 1998, Joe Rogers was president of the association.