

# AURORA LANDMARK PROPERTIES

## NOMINATION FORM

City of Aurora  
Historic Preservation Commission



### SECTION A: SITE INFORMATION AND DESCRIPTION

1. *Name of Nominated Site*

Historic Name: **Melvin Cemetery, Lewis Cemetery**

Current Name: **Melvin-Lewis Cemetery**

2. *Address of Property*

Street Address: **5600 S. Parker Rd., Aurora, CO (immediately southeast)**

County: **Arapahoe**

Zip Code: **80045**

3. *Geographic Description*

P.M.: **6TH** Township: **5S** Range: **66W**

Occupies:

**SE ¼ of NE ¼ of NW ¼ of SE ¼ of Section: 18**

UTM: Zone **13S** UTM East: **515795.58** UTM North: **4385122.84**

Quad Map: **Parker** Year: **1994 (Revised)** Map Scale: **7.5'**

Lot(s): **N/A** Block: **N/A**

Addition: **Pioneer Hills Subdivision, Filing No. 01**

Year of Addition: **2000**

Boundary Description: **The parcel is rectangular and oriented southwest/northeast. It is bound to the southwest by S. Parker Rd/CO Highway 83. The northwest boundary meets a Chick-fil-A store. The northeast parcel boundary meets the parking lots of various stores of the Pioneer Hills Shopping Center while the southeast boundary is bound by a Mattress Firm store.**

4. *Legislative Information*

Aurora Ward #: **5**

Colorado House District: **40**

Colorado Senate District: **26**

5. *Site Owner*

Current:

Name: **VPCC Pioneer LLC**

Address: **1111 Metropolitan Avenue, Suite 700**

City: **Charlotte** State: **NC** Zip: **28204**

Phone: **(704) 206-8300**

Historic:

Name(s): **Melvin Cemetery, Lewis Cemetery**

Source(s) of information: **CO Cultural Resource Survey (OAHN Site Form), Site 5AH.206**

6. *Site Classification*  
 building(s)     district     site     structure     object     area
7. *Site Condition*  
 excellent     good     fair     deteriorated     ruins
8. *Site Location*  
 original location                       moved (date of move \_\_\_\_\_)
9. *Site Use*  
Historic: **Lewis Family Cemetery, Melvin Community Cemetery**  
Current: **Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, abandoned**

**SECTION B: DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION**

10. *Physical and Site Description:*

**Site Description and History**

Melvin-Lewis Cemetery occupies its original location. Oriented southwest-northeast length-wise, the cemetery’s outer boundaries measure approximately 190 feet by 125 feet, though the original size was reported as one acre in 1982.<sup>1</sup> This boundary is defined with a modern sandstone retaining wall, mounted wrought iron fence, and a large iron gate (Figure 1). The cemetery is bordered by the Parker East Trail as well as South Parker Road to the southwest. The other three borders are shared by a Chick-fil-A restaurant drive-through and large parking lots for a number of different businesses (Figures 2-4).



*Figure 1. Melvin-Lewis Cemetery modern iron gate. Facing Southwest. Courtesy of Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society.*

The cemetery sits atop a slight hill, approximately six feet above the northwest-bound lane of present-day South Parker Road. While three of the four vistas are met with modern dining and shopping options, the view to the southwest is impressive. Looking out upon Cherry Creek State Park, this view is closest to the pre-settlement panorama (Figure 5).

The cemetery’s name derives from two important family names, *Melvin* and *Lewis*, the former of which eventually referred to a community. The Melvin family relocated from Connecticut to Colorado in 1859, homesteading a ranch in the Cherry Creek Valley.<sup>2</sup> Their parcel was located near the convergence of the Smoky Hill Trail and the Cherokee Trail.<sup>3</sup> The Smoky Hill Trail was a major thoroughfare for settlers heading to Denver and other western destinations and numerous houses served as well-known way stations along the Trail, named for their distance from Denver. The Melvin family house eventually gained the moniker of “Twelve Mile House.”<sup>2, 3</sup> Enough Colorado settlers took meals and slept at the Melvin house that John and Jane Melvin built a hotel addition to their home.<sup>3</sup>

As the area surrounding the Melvin family grew more populated, the resulting community became known as *Melvin*. Settlers lived on both sides of Cherry Creek and occupied the valley northwest of the cemetery. Between the 1860s and 1880s, Melvin community residents began to bury their relatives on the hill southeast of their homes. It is also possible that unknown

travelers along the Cherokee and Smoky Hill Trails were buried at what was unofficially known as Melvin Cemetery.<sup>3</sup>

The *Lewis* portion of the cemetery's name results from the Lewis family of settlers. John and Emmaretta Lewis homesteaded land and built a farmhouse just west of the cemetery. In 1883, the Lewis family purchased property that included the Melvin Cemetery. The Lewis family allowed the continued burial of people at the cemetery and buried several of their own until 1910.<sup>3</sup>



*Figure 2. Melvin-Lewis Cemetery modern stonework and iron fence. Southeast façade. Facing Southwest. Obscured by commercial development.*

The cemetery began the long history of various ownership in February of 1910 when John Lewis' children, Charles Lewis, Walter Lewis, and Ester Herzog, deeded the parcel to Peter Kerker. Upon Peter Kerker's death in 1926, his wife Alice Kerker deeded the property to Lester and Genevieve Dixon. The US Army Corps of Engineers acquired the land from the Dixons as overflow area for the future Cherry Creek Reservoir on June 1, 1944.<sup>2,3</sup>

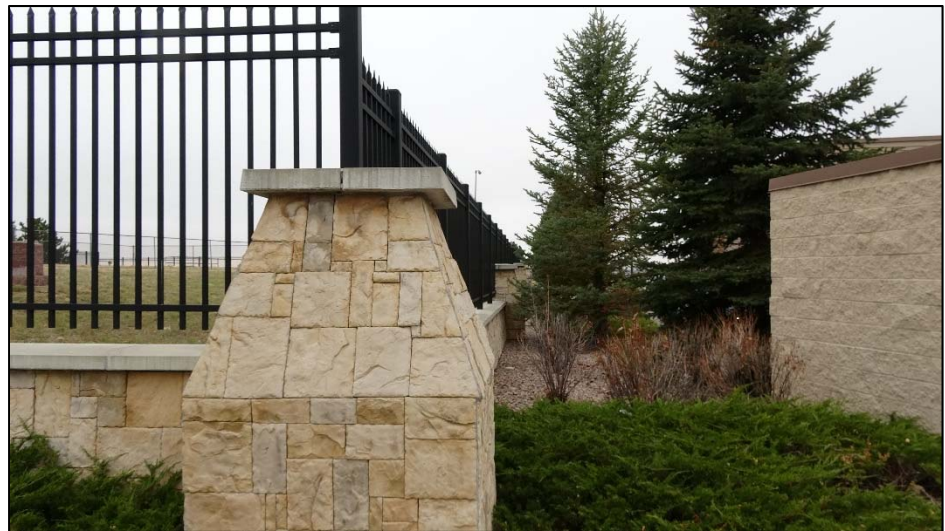
After the construction of the Cherry Creek Dam, starting in 1948 and completed in 1950,<sup>5</sup> the community of Melvin dissolved into Aurora and the greater Denver area. In 1959, Cherry Creek State Park was established.<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, Melvin-Lewis Cemetery survived both the dam's construction and the state park's founding.

In 1957, the federal government's Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare granted Melvin-Lewis Cemetery and land bordering it to the Regents of the University of Colorado.<sup>2</sup>

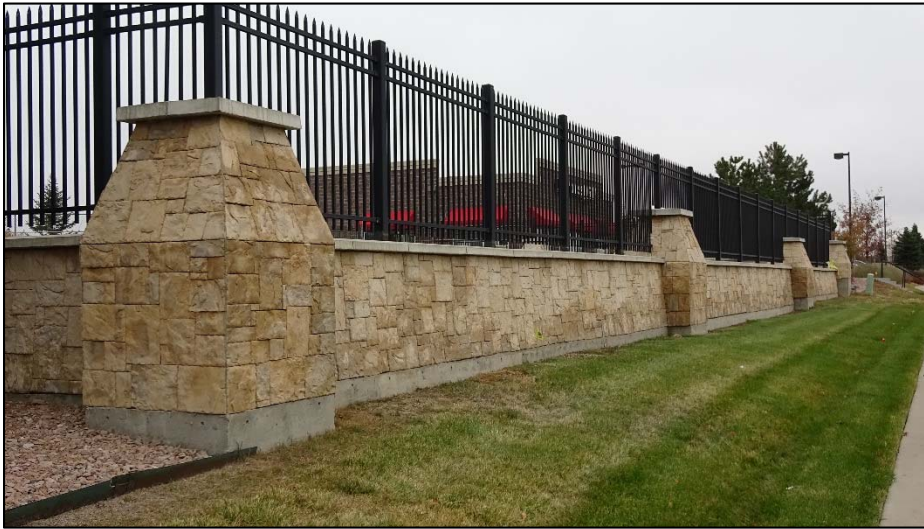
The property was intended to serve research and education purposes. According to the quitclaim deed generated by the transaction,

“For a period of twenty (20) years from the date of this deed the above-described property herein conveyed shall be utilized continuously for the educational purposes and for public health purposes, including research, in accordance with the proposed program and plan as set forth in the applications of the said GRANTEE dated November 21, 1956 as supplemented by certain communications to the Department from the



*Figure 3. Melvin-Lewis Cemetery modern stonework and iron fence. Northwest façade. Facing Southwest. Obscured by commercial development.*

GRANTEE dated December 14, 1956 and December 20, 1956 and by such a communication dated May 27, 1957 in response to inquiries by the Department dated March 25, 1957 and May 3, 1957 and for no other purpose.”<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 4. Melvin-Lewis Cemetery modern stonework and iron fence. Southwest façade. Facing Southeast. Abuts S. Parker Rd.*

Early in the ownership of the University of Colorado, proper memorials at Melvin-Lewis Cemetery became a project of the Cherry Creek Grange. The Grange, organized in 1874, first met approximately one mile southeast of Melvin-Lewis Cemetery at the Melvin Schoolhouse (Aurora Local Landmark No. 1) at the structure’s original location.<sup>7</sup> With a vested interest in the cemetery’s future, the Grange began to work directly with Mr. Denholm in July 1960 to erect a permanent monument to honor

Melvin-Lewis’ original burials.<sup>2</sup> The monument headstone was placed in 1961. The red granite gravestone honors the cemetery as the “John R. Lewis Burial Ground” (Figure 5).



*Figure 5. Melvin-Lewis Cemetery red granite monument, placed by Cherry Creek Grange and the University of Colorado. Facing Southwest.*

When the Pioneer Hills Shopping Center to the northeast was built in the early 2000s (COA building permits), the developers Goldberg Property Associates and Trammell Crow Company

pledged to save the cemetery and improve its fencing (Aurora Sentinel, 1999). Working with Cherry Creek Historical Society, the Pioneer Hills Shopping Center constructed the new walls and fencing to match the tan sandstone exteriors of the nearby stores.

### Burials

In the 1970s, high-school student Rick Mee conducted ethnographic interviews with residents and family of the interred. Through his investigation, Mee identified remaining, possibly remaining, and unconfirmed burials present at Melvin-Lewis. Regina Rouse, Lloyd Glasier, Nancy Peterson, Carol Weber, Barbara Fritts, Nancy Murphy Jensen, and Sandy Weston also interviewed descendants of the pioneer families in the 1970s to the early 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

The cemetery is where many of the descendants' family members are buried, but there is variety in the stories they tell. Oral histories, anecdotal research, and settlement patterns in Arapahoe County all suggest the use of the cemetery as early as the 1860s. The oral data collected suggests that most of the settlers that were buried at the cemetery were buried between 1880s and 1910. According to Alice Kerker Hesse, "at Melvin-Lewis there were many graves; a dozen or more were surrounded by fences. Some had tombstones, others had just wooden markers. Retta Hawkey may still be buried there. Peter Kerker used the land surrounding the cemetery as his upper pasture; he notified the relative of people buried there to move the graves or fence in the graves, so cattle would not trample them, but only two people responded so he gave up." She also said, "There was a lot of graves beyond where the fence is now." In the early 1900s, Elizabeth and Olga Roth counted 90 graves, according to Hazel Davidson. By 1978, there were an estimated 20 graves left.<sup>2</sup>

According to Rozella Hodge, in the early 1940s, all the granite and marble tombstones at Melvin-Lewis were stolen, leaving only sandstone markers and bases. It was believed that this was done because crushed rock was needed in the World War II effort. Betty Carter corroborated this, when she said she could not identify where the graves were because the markers were all stolen, including the Gilberts'. George Vest put an iron fence around his wife's grave, but the fence was stolen. There were markers as late as the late 1960s, according to Mrs. Carter, which differs from the account of Mrs. Hodge.<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 6. Retta Hawkey Lewis' gravesite. Note the iron water pipes used to construct railing. Facing West.*

## CONFIRMED BURIALS AT MELVIN-LEWIS

### *Emmaretta (Retta) Alice Hawkey Lewis*

The only identified and remaining burial is that of Retta Hawkey Lewis, who died in childbirth on January 14, 1891 when she was 21 probably of uremic poisoning during pregnancy.<sup>2</sup> Her grave is marked by an iron railing (Figures 6-7). Retta was the daughter of Robert Hawkey who homesteaded land just south of the cemetery in the late 1880's. Hawkeys two story red brick house still stood, as of the 1970s on the west side of Colorado 83 where Piney Creek joins the Cherry Creek. According to Lloyd Glasier's interview with Mrs. Hodge, "they screwed together water pipes and made a railing to give her a place of honor in the cemetery."<sup>8</sup>



*Figure 7. Retta Hawkey Lewis gravestone mount. Note the embossed "Lewis" on the rhyolite stone.*

Mrs. Rozella McKimmie Hodge, granddaughter to Robert Hawkey, confirmed that her Aunt Retta is buried there and her grave was marked by a metal railing. According to Mrs. Hodge, she was buried there in 1894. She was the daughter of Robert Hawkey and married John H. Lewis.

An interview with Mrs. Hazel Davidson states "...Mr. Lewis passed away in May of 1894 and was buried in this cemetery, but in 1919 he was moved to Fairmount Cemetery. There are many of the old timers buried there whose names do not come to mind. A few are some of the Cummings family, a child by the name of Story and Cleo one by the name of Nelson..."<sup>2</sup>

Betty Carter confirms that Retta Hawkey Lewis was buried in the cemetery. She remembers the grave as the only grave with a marker still standing.

Ann Rowley also confirms that Emmaretta Alice Hawkey Lewis was buried at Melvin-Lewis Cemetery in 1894. This was shared in an interview with Lloyd Glasier in September of 1977.<sup>2</sup>

## POSSIBLE BURIALS AT MELVIN-LEWIS

### *Henry and Hermina Jacobina Kinder Gilbert*

Henry and Mrs. Gilbert, were there as of about 1975. Mrs. Gilbert was in a coffin and Henry Gilbert was cremated and his ashes placed over her coffin. The common grave was north of Retta's, enclosed by a now-gone white picket fence and marked by two conspicuous poles as of 1975. Mrs. Gilbert died in 1894.<sup>2</sup>

Walter Kerker told Regina Rouse in an interview from 1978 that Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert were buried in the cemetery.

Ann Rowley's grandparents on her mother's side were the Gilberts, who are buried northwest of Retta's pipe railing grave. Mr. Gilbert's remains are in an urn on top of Mrs. Gilbert's grave. There are some decayed posts around the Gilbert graves, according to Ann Rowley in an interview with Lloyd Glasier in September 1977. Mrs. Rowley was the only one who mentioned

Mrs. Gilbert by her first name. She claims that Mrs. Gilbert died in 1891.

The two poles “which are obvious” in the cemetery mark where the Gilberts were buried. She in a casket and later his ashes were spread over the plot, according to Rozella Hodge in an interview with Rick Mee in 1975.<sup>2</sup>

#### *George and Sarah Cummings*

George Frank Cummings and his wife (Sarah S.) were there as of about 1975; they had markers at one time [Figure 8]. These were apparently the Cummings family of 17-Mile House. These were Hazel Arnold’s (Cummings) grandparent, according to Rick Mee’s interview with Rozella Hodge in 1975.

According to Ann Rowley, George Frank Cummings died March 30, 1891 at Villa Grove, Colorado, and was reburied from Melvin-Lewis to Fairmount. His second wife, Sarah S. Cummings, died in Denver on November 11, 1935 and is buried at Fairmount.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Robert Ridley Hawkey*

Rozella McKimmie Hodge said in an interview with Nancy Peterson in March of 1978 that a son of Robert and Rosella Hawkey, Robert Ridley Hawkey, lived only 3 days and was buried “on top of the hill.” Her grandfather made a small coffin for him and buried him in a place such that her grandmother (who could not attend the burial) could see the burial ceremony from the window of her house.

Elizabeth Carter claimed that Mrs. Hawkey told her that “Little Robert” was buried at Melvin-Lewis. Mrs. Carter was interviewed by Lloyd Glasier and Carol Weber in May 1978.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Rufus Young*

According to Gladys Ruth Young Littell, interviewed by Barbara Fritts, the James Wesley Young family came from Tarkio, Ohio, and settled in 1872 on Plum Creek. The family moved to Parker Road in 1874. Rufus was the son of JW’s second wife, Mary Murphy Young. “One of JW’s sons, Rufus was killed by a horse and is buried in the Melvin-Lewis Cemetery.”

Betty Carter said that Hazel Davidson’s parents found a small white marble which was the stone for Rufus Young, the little brother of Joe and Lee Young. Betty was interviewed in 1978 by Lloyd Glasier and Carol Weber.

Rufus Young was born in 1876 and was 2-3 years old when he died. According to Ann Rowley in an interview with Lloyd Glasier in September of 1977, Rufus was a child of the Youngs who homesteaded south of Cherry Creek School. Rufus Young was “scalped by Indians” according to Rozella Hodge’s interview with Rick Mee in 1975, though no one else can confirm this.<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 8. Possible George Frank Cummings gravestone with rhyolite mount. Note the embossed “G. F. C.” on the stone.*

### *Dexter/Dextel Briggs Hopkins*

In a letter to her brother, Leprelet Hopkins, from May 25, 1885, Sarah Hopkins Rose Cummings tells of their father's death near their home at 17 Mile House at age 74: "He will be buried in a grave yard near us just below the school house. Ther (sic) is a place left for him by the side of Ma in the old Foster [Rhode Island] burning (sic) ground."<sup>2</sup>

Dexter/Dextel Brigg Hopkins is buried in Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, according to Rozella Hodge. This was the first burial known to her, May 25, 1886; he was a great-great-grandfather of a Cummings. Rozella Hodge shared this information with Rick Mee in a 1975 interview and 1979 notes from Mee.

Ann Rowley also confirms the memory that Dexter Briggs Hopkins was buried at the cemetery on May 25, 1886. She claims that this was Julia M. Hopkins' father. This is from an interview with Lloyd Glasier from September 1977.<sup>2</sup>

### *Esther Nelson*

14-year-old Esther Nelson, of a Swedish colony on Sampson Gulch, was buried at Melvin-Lewis (Carter and her sister saw a marker on this grave). Betty Carter to Lloyd Glasier and Carol Weber, May 1978

Hazel Davidson also remembered "a daughter of the Nelson family who lived east of Davidsons." This was the last burial known to Hazel.<sup>2</sup>

### *Storey Boy*

Hazel Davidson recalls a young boy from the Storey family being buried. She told this to Rick Mee in 1975 and Nancy Murphy Jensen in 1983.

Ann Rowley also remembers such a baby. There is no first name associated with the boy, just that he was a baby. Ann Rowley recalled this information in September of 1977 when she was interviewed by Lloyd Glasier.<sup>2</sup>

### *Cleo Nelson*

Hazel Davidson recalls a Cleo Nelson being buried at the cemetery in addition to Esther Nelson, probably an older sister. Interview with Rick Mee in 1975 and with Nancy Murphy Jensen in 1983.

Ann Rowley recalls a "child named Nelson" which is probably Cleo, in an interview with Lloyd Glasier in September 1977.<sup>2</sup>

## **UNCONFIRMED BURIALS AT MELVIN-LEWIS**

### *Hawkey Family*

According to Walter Kerker in an interview conducted by Regina Rouse in 1979, there were various members of the Hawkey family buried in the cemetery. "A few of the Hawkey people were buried in the old grave yard. If you remember the white picket fence just inside and north of the pasture gate is where some of the Hawkey family were buried," said Kerker in the same interview. Richard Hawkey used to keep their plot clean and kempt, according to Kerker.<sup>2</sup>



### ***Dennee Family***

Only according to Hazel Davidson were there members of the Dennee family buried at Melvin-Lewis. There is no other information. This was noted by Rick Mee in 1975 and again by Nancy Murphy Jensen in 1983.<sup>2</sup>

### ***An Indian Chief***

Grandma Hawkey recalled a ritual that lasted days to bury an Indian Chief at Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, according to Walter Kerker in a 1979 written interview conducted by Regina Rouse.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Baby Young***

Ann Rowley recalls an additional "Baby Young" being buried in the cemetery. No other source corroborates this. This information was noted by Lloyd Glasier in a September 1977 interview with Mrs. Rowley.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Roth Family***

Hazel Davidson recalls members of the Roth family being buried at the cemetery. This is not corroborated by any other source.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Mary Evans***

According to Ann Rowley, Mary Evans was an old maid aunt of Grandma Rowley. Mrs. Rowley recalls her old main aunt being buried in Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, but does not recall a date. There is no other source confirming this.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Babe Montgomery Ellis and Grace Rowley Cummings***

Ann Rowley is the only interviewee that remembers Babe Ellis and Grace Cummings. There are no other sources that mention these names.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Cummings Family***

Ann Rowley recalls her father, mother, and great-grandfather Cummings being buried at the cemetery. There are no names attached to these titles. They may be corroborated if we can figure out Ann Rowley's family names.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Olof***

Mrs. Rowley recalls a man or boy by the name of Olof being buried at Melvin-Lewis. There are no other sources, no surname, no date, and no family ties.<sup>2</sup>

## MEDICAL BURIALS AT MELVIN-LEWIS

In addition to early settlers of Aurora and Arapahoe County, also interred at Melvin-Lewis are the ashes of people who donated their bodies to medicine.<sup>2</sup> Under the ownership of the University of Colorado, the school's Health Sciences Center buried the cremated remains in six steel pipes installed at the cemetery.<sup>2</sup>

The actual number of individuals' cremated remains buried varies. A Rocky Mountain News article in 1987 gives the approximation as "hundreds of other people who donated their bodies to science".<sup>8</sup> According to the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, the number could be as high as 1600 people.<sup>3</sup>



*Figure 9. Marker indicating the interred ashes of individuals who donated their bodies to scientific research.*

Regardless of the true number, the central location of the burials is consistent among sources. The cremated remains are interred in the center of the cemetery, surrounded by a chain link fence. A marker states "In Gratitude. They advanced medicine and all have benefited by what they gave"<sup>2</sup>(Figure 8).



*Figure 10. Markers indicating the gravesites of Laura and Irsil Atwell. Note the graves are inside medical fence. Facing north.*

The University of Colorado Health Sciences Center stopped burying ashes of donated medical cadavers in 1986 when it learned that the surrounding land was going to be developed into a shopping center.

### IRSIL AND LAURA ATWELL

Both Irsil "At" Hudson Atwell and Laura Marie Ayers Atwell are buried in the Melvin-Lewis Cemetery. They are buried inside the boundary of the chain-link fence put up by the University of Colorado. Their graves are marked with a wooden post and a small plaque.

factory in 1920, and owned his own junk yard by 1930.<sup>10</sup> The Atwells moved around quite a bit, according to the census records. 1920, 1930 and 1940 all have different addresses listed for the

family. By 1940, the Atwells were living in Grand Ledge, MI, and Irsil was a machinist for an auto factory.<sup>10</sup> By 1942, he was a proprietor of a dray line. The same year, he married Laura Marie Ayers of Eaton, MI.<sup>11</sup> Between their marriage date and 1957, Irsil and Laura had moved to Aurora.

The 1957 Denver City Directory lists their residence in Aurora. Irsil was an auto salesman, but he worked for numerous dealers.<sup>12</sup> In 1957, he was listed as working for Bill Goodro Ford, but by the next year, in 1958, he was listed as a salesman for Stand Motors. In 1965, Irsil was working for Griffith Motors, but by 1966, he was working for Seifert Pontiac. The last record of Irsil before his death was in 1969, where the directory listed him as a salesman for Spedding Chevrolet. Irsil Atwell died on September 3, 1977.<sup>12</sup>



*Figure 11. Marker indicating the gravesite of Irsil Atwell. Facing north.*

Laura Marie Ayers was born in Eaton, MI on June 4, 1920. Her father was a farmer throughout her childhood. By the age of 20, she was working for a private family in Benton, MI doing housework.<sup>10</sup> In 1941, she worked for a different family in Lansing, MI but was still doing housework. She married Irsil Atwell on September 1, 1942.<sup>11</sup> They moved to Colorado before 1957. From 1957 to at least 1966, Laura and Irsil lived at 1315 Dayton Street in Aurora. They moved before 1969 to 16300 East Colfax, where they lived until at least 1977. After Irsil's death in 1977, Laura resided at 15870 East 13<sup>th</sup> Place in Aurora. She lived until August 8, 2010, when she passed away in Lakewood, CO.<sup>12</sup>



*Figure 12. Marker indicating the gravesite of Laura Atwell. Facing north.*

There is no immediate connection between the Atwells and the Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, or the University of Colorado, and there are no written records of either of the Atwells being buried at Melvin-Lewis Cemetery. Though Irsil may have donated his body to the university's Health Sciences Center, Laura did not pass until much later, after the Health Sciences Center had ceased burying their cadavers there. Research does not answer the questions of why they are buried within the boundaries of the chain-link fence, why they both have grave markers, or why Laura was allowed to be buried there as late as 2010.

Original Structure: **1860s** Additions or Alternations: **N/A**

Source of information: **Rick Mee ethnographic research**

11. *Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist, or Designer*

Name: **Unknown**

Location: **Unknown**

Source of information: **N/A**

12. *Architectural Style/Engineering Type*

Type/Style: **American Settler Cemetery**

Source of information: **Colorado Cultural Resource Survey, Site 5AH.206**

## **SECTION C: SITE SIGNIFICANCE**

13. *Significance of Property*

Nomination Criteria:

1. The Property (District) Exemplifies or Reflects the Broad Cultural, Political, Economic, or Social History of the Nation, State, or Community.

2. The Property (District) Is Identified With a Historic Person or Historic Group Significant To National, State, or Local History.

3. The Property (District) Embodies Distinguishing Characteristics of an Architectural Type Inherently Valuable to the Study of a Period, Style, Method of Construction, or Indigenous Materials or Craftsmanship.

4. The Property (District) Is Representative as the Work of a Master Builder or Architect.

5. The Property (District) Contains the Possibility of Important Archaeological Discoveries in Prehistory or History.

6. The District Consists of a Definite Area That, Due To Its Unique Location or Singular Characteristics, Represents Established and Familiar Visual Features of the Neighborhood, Community, or City

14. *Periods of Significance*

*Periods of Significance:* **1859-1910, 1957-1986**

*Justification:* **The Melvin family settled the area in 1859 and likely began burying family members and other pioneers directly after settlement. This tradition was upheld when the Melvin family sold their property to the Lewis family. In 1910, the Lewis children sold the property to Peter C. Kerker, who no longer kept the cemetery active. In 1957, the Regents of the University of Colorado was deeded the property for burial of the ashes of individuals who donated their bodies to science. The University continued to bury their cremated remains until 1986 when plans of a shopping center came into view.**

15. *Significance Statement*

**Criteria 1: The period between 1860 and 1910 saw many pioneers and their families on their way west from other parts of the country. It represented the expansion of the United States and Melvin-Lewis Cemetery played a crucial role in the settlement of the west by whites and**

other non-native persons. Not only did the Melvin and Lewis families contribute to the significance of the cemetery, the burial of pioneers moving west is equally as significant to the region's history. Furthermore, in addition to the pioneers buried at the cemetery, individuals who donated their bodies to medical research were also interred from 1957 to 1986. This link to modern medical science demonstrates the robust and interesting history of Melvin-Lewis Cemetery.

Criteria 2: Settling to the east of Denver on the Smoky Hill Trail, westward travelers were acquainted with the Melvin family. Settling in 1859, the Melvin family was a significant part of the community, which eventually bore the name *Melvin*. After purchasing the land on which Melvin-Lewis sits, the Lewis family continued the cemetery tradition. They were also important figures in the Smoky Hill/Melvin community.

16. *Bibliography*

1. CO Cultural Resource Survey (OAHN Site Form), Site 5AH.206, Melvin-Lewis Cemetery
2. Rick Mee (High School Student) Ethnographic Research on Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, 1975-1979  
 Hazel Davidson to Rick Mee, 1975  
 Hazel Davidson to Nancy Murphy Jensen, 1983  
 Rozella McKimmie Hodge to Rick Mee, 1975  
 Walter Kerker to Regina Rouse, 1979  
 Elizabeth (Betty) Carter to Lloyd Glasier and Carol Weber, May 1978  
 Alys Kerker Hesse to Regina Rouse and Sandy Weston, October 1977  
 Rozella McKimmie Hodge to Nancy Peterson, March 1978  
 Gladys Ruth Young Littell to Barbara Fritts, April 1977  
 Ann Rowley to Lloyd Glasier, September 1977  
 Letter from Sarah Hopkins Rose Cummings to her brother Leprelet Hopkins May 25, 1885.
3. Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, "Melvin-Lewis Cemetery," 2006
4. Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, Melvin-Lewis Cemetery webpage; available at <http://www.ccvhsco.com/melvin-lewis-cemetery.html>
5. US Army Corps of Engineers, Cherry Creek Dam webpage; available at <http://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/Missions/Dam-and-Lake-Projects/Tri-Lakes-Projects/Cherry-Creek-Dam/>
6. Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Cherry Creek State Park, "FY09-10 Park Facts"; available at <http://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/CherryCreek/Documents/CherryCreekFactSheetFY0910.pdf>
7. Littleton, Colorado Webpage, "The Granges"; available at <https://www.littletongov.org/my-littleton/littleton-history/other-topics/the-granges>
8. "Old Cemetery to Rest in Peace Amid Shoppers of Another Age," Rocky Mountain News (Michelle Schneider), April 14, 1987
9. "Growth catches little graves on the prairie," Aurora Sentinel (Frank Bell), December 15, 1999
10. US Census Records: Years 1920, 1930, 1940
11. State of Michigan Marriage Licence: Laura and Irsil Atwell
12. Denver City Directories: Years 1957, 1958, 1965, 1966, 1969, 1977.

17. *Nomination Preparer*

Name: Lynne Evans Date: 1-May-18  
 Organization: Aurora Historic Preservation Commission  
 Address: 15051 East Alameda Parkway Phone: (303) 739-6661  
 City: Aurora State: CO Zip: 80012

Name: Emma Lane Date: 1-May-18  
 Organization: Aurora Historic Sites and Preservation Office  
 Address: 15051 East Alameda Parkway Phone: (303) 739-6661  
 City: Aurora State: CO Zip: 80012



1111 METROPOLITAN AVENUE  
SUITE 700  
CHARLOTTE, NC 28204  
Main: 704.206.8300  
COLLETTCAPITAL.COM

May 22, 2019

Aurora Historic Preservation Commission  
C/O Drake Brownfield (Historic Preservation Specialist)  
15051 East Alameda Parkway  
Aurora, CO 80012

**To the members of the Aurora Historic Preservation Commission,**

As property owner representative of Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, located immediately southeast of 5600 South Parker Road, Aurora, CO 80015, I support the nomination of the historic cemetery as an Aurora Historic Preservation Landmark. Melvin-Lewis Cemetery is the oldest community cemetery in Aurora, serving as a final resting place for numerous eastern Colorado pioneers, at least one of which is still interred there: Ms. Emmaretta Alice Hawkey Lewis.

In addition to its linkage with early Aurora pioneers, Melvin-Lewis Cemetery also reflects Aurora's early settlement history, when the ridge upon which the cemetery sits looked out onto a vast undeveloped, natural landscape. At one time, the small community of Melvin was visible from the cemetery prior to its flooding for Cherry Creek Reservoir.

Melvin-Lewis Cemetery has been protected from recent commercial development in recent decades and enjoys excellent stewardship, ensuring the resource will be there for years to come. This nomination serves to officiate the fundamental role Melvin-Lewis Cemetery played in the vibrant history of Aurora's earliest beginnings.

Thank you very much for your interest and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Bobbi Jo Conigliaro'.

**Bobbi Jo Conigliaro, CPM**  
Asset Manager - Collett Capital  
Agent for VPCC Pioneer, LLC



*Toll Gate Creek Chapter  
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution  
Historic Preservation ~ Education ~ Patriotism*

May 24, 2019

Aurora Historic Preservation Commission  
C/O Drake Brownfield (Historic Preservation Specialist)  
15051 East Alameda Parkway  
Aurora, CO 80012

To the Members of the Aurora Historic Preservation Commission,

As Chapter Regent of the Toll Gate Creek Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, my Chapter has dedicated many hours to maintaining the grounds of Melvin-Lewis Cemetery, in collaboration with the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society.

As a fervent lover of Colorado history, I support the nomination of the historic cemetery as an Aurora Historic Preservation Landmark. Melvin-Lewis Cemetery is the oldest community cemetery in Aurora, serving as a final resting place for numerous eastern Colorado pioneers, at least one of which is still interred there: Ms. Emmaretta Alice Hawkey Lewis.

In addition to the significant connection to early Aurora pioneers, Melvin-Lewis Cemetery also represents a bygone time in Aurora's early settlement. Melvin-Lewis sits upon a slight ridge that affords a vast west-facing view. Just over a century and a half ago, pioneers were greeted with a beautiful natural landscape, dotted with small settlements like the town of Melvin (now covered by the Cherry Creek Reservoir). With just a little imagination, you can transport back to that time.

Melvin-Lewis Cemetery has been protected from commercial development in recent decades and enjoys excellent stewardship, ensuring the resource will be there for many years. This nomination serves to officially recognize the fundamental role Melvin-Lewis Cemetery played in the vibrant history of Aurora's earliest beginnings. After all, we consider it an Aurora landmark already.

Thank you very much for your interest and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Kimberly Daniels**  
Chapter Regent

Toll Gate Creek Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution

Senior Society President  
Colorado State Society, National Society of the Children of the American Revolution

## **Brownfield, Drake**

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**From:** gohara46@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, June 10, 2019 1:22 PM  
**To:** Brownfield, Drake  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for Landmark Nomination

To Whom It May Concern,                      June 10, 2019

This letter is in support of the nomination of the Melvin-Lewis Cemetery as a historic landmark by the City of Aurora.

The Melvin-Lewis Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in Colorado. We know of only one pioneer who is buried there and several pioneers who are likely buried there, but we also know that several others were initially buried there but were reinterred in Fairmount Cemetery in Denver. This makes for a perfect opportunity to conduct research concerning this burial ground; a sign may be placed on or near the gate to let persons know the history of the cemetery and what questions need to be answered at this historic place. The cemetery lies surrounded by the Pioneer Hills Shopping Center. Landmark status would increase our knowledge of who is (still) buried in this old cemetery, where in the cemetery they are buried, and when they were interred. Landmark status would also increase Melvin-Lewis' chances of being regularly mowed and cared for.

Garry O'Hara  
President, Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society