

WASHINGTON HERITAGE REGISTER

A) Identification

Historic Name: **Peone Methodist Cemetery**
Other Names: **Peone Prairie Cemetery; Peone Cemetery**
Address: 12900 N Bruce Road
City: Mead County: Spokane

B) Site Access (describe site access, restrictions, etc.)

Located southeast of Mead and one-half mile south of the intersection of E Mt. Spokane Park Dr. and N Bruce Rd. There are no restrictions on access.

C) Property owner(s), Address and Zip

Name: Peone Cemetery Association
Address: 6111 W Sundance Dr
City: Spokane State: WA Zip: 99208

D) Legal boundary description and boundary justification

Tax No./Parcel: 36014.9011
Boundary Justification: The nomination encompasses the entire tax lot that is associated with the cemetery.

FORM PREPARED BY

Name: Gail Albright
Address: 6111 W Sundance Dr
City / State / Zip: Spokane, WA 98208
Email: gailsgotmail@aol.com
Phone: 509-994-6382
Nomination Date: March 2026

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E) Category of Property (Choose One)

- building structure (irrigation system, bridge, etc.) district
 object (statue, grave marker, vessel, etc.) cemetery/burial site
 historic site (site of an important event) archaeological site
 traditional cultural property (spiritual or creation site, etc.)
 cultural landscape (habitation, agricultural, industrial, recreational, etc.)

F) Area of Significance – Check as many as apply

- The property belongs to the early settlement, commercial development, or original native occupation of a community or region.
- The property is directly connected to a movement, organization, institution, religion, or club which served as a focal point for a community or group.
- The property is directly connected to specific activities or events which had a lasting impact on the community or region.
- The property is associated with legends, spiritual or religious practices, or life ways which are uniquely related to a piece of land or to a natural feature.
- The property displays strong patterns of land use or alterations of the environment which occurred during the historic period (cultivation, landscaping, industry, mining, irrigation, recreation).
- The property is directly associated with an individual who made an important contribution to a community or to a group of people.
- The property has strong artistic, architectural or engineering qualities, or displays unusual materials or craftwork belonging to a historic era.
- The property was designed or built by an influential architect or reflects the work of an important artisan.
- Archaeological investigation of the property has or will increase our understanding of past cultures or life ways.

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G) Property Description

The Peone Cemetery is located to the southeast of the unincorporated community of Mead north of downtown Spokane. The cemetery rests to the west side of N Bruce Road, a half a mile south of the intersection of E. Mt. Spokane Park Dr (HWY 206).

The cemetery is surrounded by majestic wheat fields and sits on 4.28 acres. The cemetery itself is landscaped with a mix of grass and gravel surrounded by mature trees and a cyclone, chain-link fence. The trees, a variety of deciduous and evergreens, lie on the outside edges of the cemetery with clusters at the northeast corner and southwest corner. Access to the site, which sits above Bruce Rd approx. six feet, is located at southeast corner. Upon entering the site vehicles are directed to the north via a chain-link enclosed lane and then directed to cross underneath a large arched opening. Here two concrete pylons support a metal entrance sign which spells out "Peone Cemetery" in cut-out letters. Decorative scroll work is attached at various locations along the outer edges. The current metal entrance sign is a replacement structure. The original was damaged by a truck, and the current sign mimics the former sign. Date of the entrance gate is unknown. Cast stone angels, sitting upon the concrete pylons are a recent addition and were donated by Kristen Sodemann in 2019.

Burial patterns on the site are inconsistent but generally follow lines running from north to south; all graves in the cemetery continues to be hand dug. Equally random are headstone styles, material and types which vary greatly based on burial dates. Both above ground and flush mounted headstones can be found throughout the cemetery and are not clustered into certain areas. Headstones are generally modest in size with none standing above the rest. Two small columbariums can be found just to the northeast of the entry gate and provide space for 48 cremation niches each.

The number of burials at the cemetery is unknown, and range from over 1,800 to 2,094. Per Find-a-grave, the oldest headstones in the cemetery are those of Gilbert Day (October 17, 1892 – June 16, 1893), and Armstrong P. Ogden (November 28, 1857 – August 28, 1893). However, newspaper articles note that Alvina V. Doak was to be buried at the Peone Cemetery in January of that year. Doak was a little girl and had been fatally injured after being thrown from a buggy by a runaway horse. She has no known headstone in the cemetery. Conversely, Ogden and Day have no death notices in the local newspapers.

Peone Cemetery continues to sell plots and niches today. It is well maintained and continues to be a source of pride for the Peone Prairie community.

H) Significance

The Peone Cemetery, northeast of Spokane, is historically significant for its direct connection to many of the early pioneers of the Peone area. The location of the cemetery, on a slight rise, is indicative of 19th century burial practices, which often located burial grounds away from communities for fear of disease. The cemetery serves as the final resting place for some of the areas most significant settlers and was established in c.1893, the date of the earliest headstones.

Reportedly the land for the cemetery was donated to the Peone Methodist Episcopal Church by A.J. Loomis, F. Doak and William H. Stoneman. Later court testimony by Frank E. Lloyd, a nearby farmer, notes that he furnished the lumber for fencing the property in 1893 and that he had dug many of the early graves at the site. The original plat was 2 acres, and then it was expanded in 1936.

By the turn-of-the-century, burial activities at the cemetery were in full gear. Find-a-Grave data shows that 38 internments were at the site by 1900, but that number grew to over 300 by 1920. Over the years community members consistently come together to care for the cemetery. One work party in 1927 brought over 100 people to the site.

The community of Peone can be traced back to Baptiste Peone, the son of a French-Canadian trapper and a Spokane Indian mother. He was chosen by Hudson's Bay Company in 1848 to set up a new trading post along the trade route between Fort Colville and Lake Coeur d'Alene. He chose a site at the southeast edge of a prairie, near a spring a few miles northeast of what is now the city of Spokane. Around this time, he became chief of the Upper Spokane people that lived in the area. With his important job of running this post, he gave his name to the prairie. His band remained mostly peaceful during the Indian Wars of 1855 and 1858. When the region's tribes signed a peace treaty with Col. George Wright, Chief Peone "placed a flag of truce on a lone pine tree near his camp", thus establishing the Treaty tree which is still on Peone Prairie today.

Afterward, Chief Peone welcomed the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries in the 1860s and helped Rev. Joseph Cataldo to erect a small cabin on the Prairie in 1866 which served as a camp house, rectory, church and school – dedicated as St. Michael's (and becoming the first house of worship in present-day Spokane County). Euro-American settlers started arriving in the Peone Prairie area in the late 1870s. Between land grants to the Northern Pacific Railroad and homesteads filed by settlers, land was being claimed quickly. In 1882 Chief Peone made the difficult decision to sell his land.

The Jesuits bought a half-acre section of land two miles from the original site in Bigelow Gulch and the Tribe dispersed to reservations in Coeur d'Alene and Flathead.

Greatly affecting the cemetery was the death of local farmer John Atkinson in 1930. In his will, Atkinson established a trust fund for the "upkeep and maintenance" of the cemetery in honor of his wife Bertha. With no kids, he left his entire estate of \$11,752 (the equivalent of \$225,000 in today's dollars) to the cause. Ten percent of the earnings were to be used for maintenance, while the rest of the funds would be reinvested. At the time it was estimated that the value of the trust might reach several million dollars in 100 years. Once the wishes of the will were revealed, eleven of his relatives contested the provisions and challenged the will in local superior court.

Their main argument at the time was that the Methodist Episcopal Church, who owned the property at the time, had become inactive. And by the time of the court case, they had just one living trustee, Louis Mickelson. Atkinson had also stated explicitly in his will that none of his money should fall into the hands of any priests or ministers. This of course was at odds with the legal ownership of the cemetery grounds. Complicating the matter was the fact that his will was drawn up without the aid of lawyers and was just witnessed by his neighbors.

Their case was closely followed in the local newspaper, with numerous articles which tracked the case for over two years – 1931-1932. The case had been delayed by health issues related to judges reviewing the case. The case went through two judges before being finalized by Judge C.G. Jeffer in November of 1932, who ruled in favor of honoring Atkinson's will..

Atkinson himself was not actually buried on the cemetery grounds, due to limited space. Instead, his body was interred just outside of the cemetery on grounds owned at the time by his brother, Christopher.

After the court case, the friends of Atkinson rallied. They organized numerous work cleanup parties to bring the cemetery up to standards (brush clearing, headstone cleaning, fence painting, etc.) and began the process of organizing. Then Peone Methodist Church counsel J. Webster Hancox and attorney E.E. Sargent, helped a friends group file official incorporation papers with the state. They were formally recognized as the Peone Cemetery Association on June 4, 1936. The initial officers were Louis Mickelson, President; F.E. Lloyd, Vice President; E.W. Well, Treasurer; and Edith Van Leuven, Secretary.

Among the first tasks of the group was to expand the acreage of the cemetery. An additional 2.5 acres were purchased from Dr. C.J. Abrams, which more than doubled the size of the original cemetery within a week of their formation (and it also took in the property where Atkinson was buried). A year later the Methodist Episcopal Conference signed over a quit claim deed for the original cemetery grounds to the Association. The Cemetery Association then hired a surveyor to replat the entire cemetery which was approved by the County in April 1938. New fences followed and a roadway was graded

through the grounds. Trees were planted and restrooms were constructed, and additional plans for the future included the installation of a water system.

Since that time the Cemetery Association has continued its mission, and new burials continue at the cemetery.

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I) Documentation

Xerox and attach any information or evidence that supports the property's significance.

Written Sources (books, articles, newspapers):

Articles of Incorporation – Peone Cemetery Association, June 3, 1936.

Last Will and Testament – John Atkinson – February 27, 1934.

“The Death Record” The Spokesman Review, January 8, 1893.

“Tidy Peone Cemetery” Spokesman Review, May 27, 1927.

“Mead Farmer Dies” The Spokane Chronicle, December 10, 1930.

“Cemetery Will is Under Fire” The Spokane Press, October 24, 1931.

“Left Cemetery \$12,677” Spokesman Review, January 24, 1931.

“Aktinson’s Kin to Protest Will” Spokesman Review, August 27, 1931.

“His Kin Clain Cemetery Cash” Spokesman Review, October 21, 1931.

“Drafts Battle on Unique Will” Spokesman Review, October 23, 1931.

“Atkinson Will Faces Attack” Spokane Chronicle, March 3, 1932.

“End Testimony in Will Trial” Spokane Chronicle, March 4, 1932.

“All Pitched in on Graveyard” Spokesman Review, March 4, 1932.

“Atkinson Buried in Peone” Spokesman Review, July 18, 1932.

“Weeds, Not Care, Cemetery’s Lot” Spokesman Review, July 17, 1932.

“Cemetery to Get Atkinson Estate” Spokesman Review, October 23, 1932.

“Graveyard Will Case Lags” Spokesman Review, November 6, 1932.

“Peone Cemetery Decision Upheld” Spokesman Review, November 27, 1932.

“Noted Cemetery is Beautiful” Spokesman Review, May 31, 1936.

“Cemetery Benefits by Estate Money” Spokane Chronicle, June 5, 1936.

“Peone Cemetery to be Enlarged” Spokesman Review, June 12, 1936.

“Peone Residents Win Title to Cemetery” Spokesman Review, April 4, 1937.

“Judge Jeffers Occupies Spokane Bench” Spokane Chronicle, February 21, 1938.

“Peone Cemetery Adds Property” Spokane Chronicle, June 25, 1938.

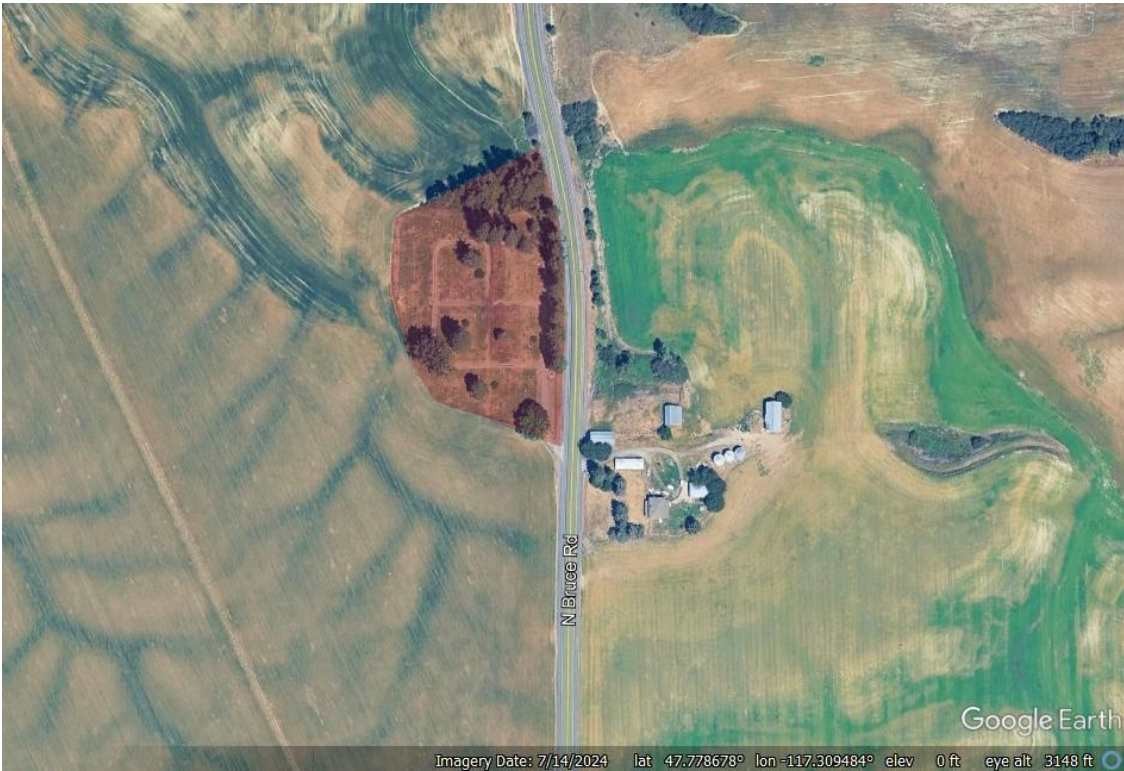
“Bequest Adds to Peone Cemetery Holdings” Spokesman Review, June 25, 1938.

“Trust Fund Aids Peone Cemetery” Spokesman Review, December 28, 1938.

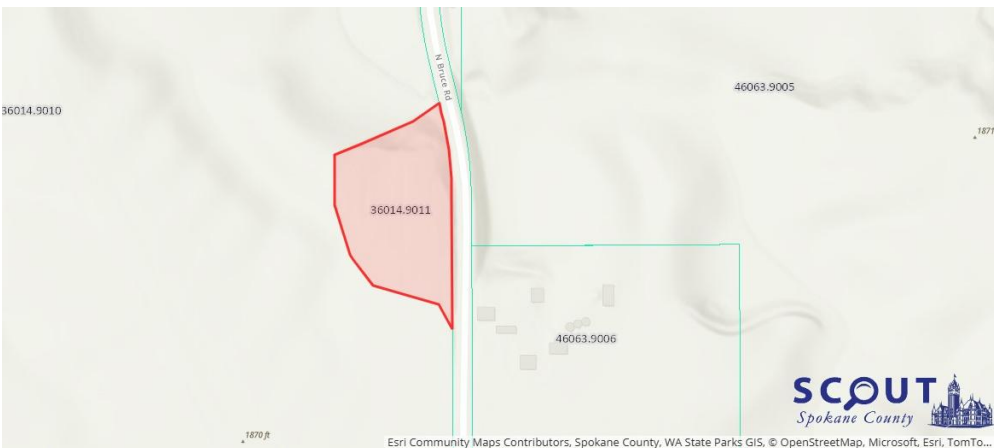
“Landmarks: Treaty Tree n Peone Prairie still stands”. Spokesman Review, December 26, 2013.

Oral History/Interviews:

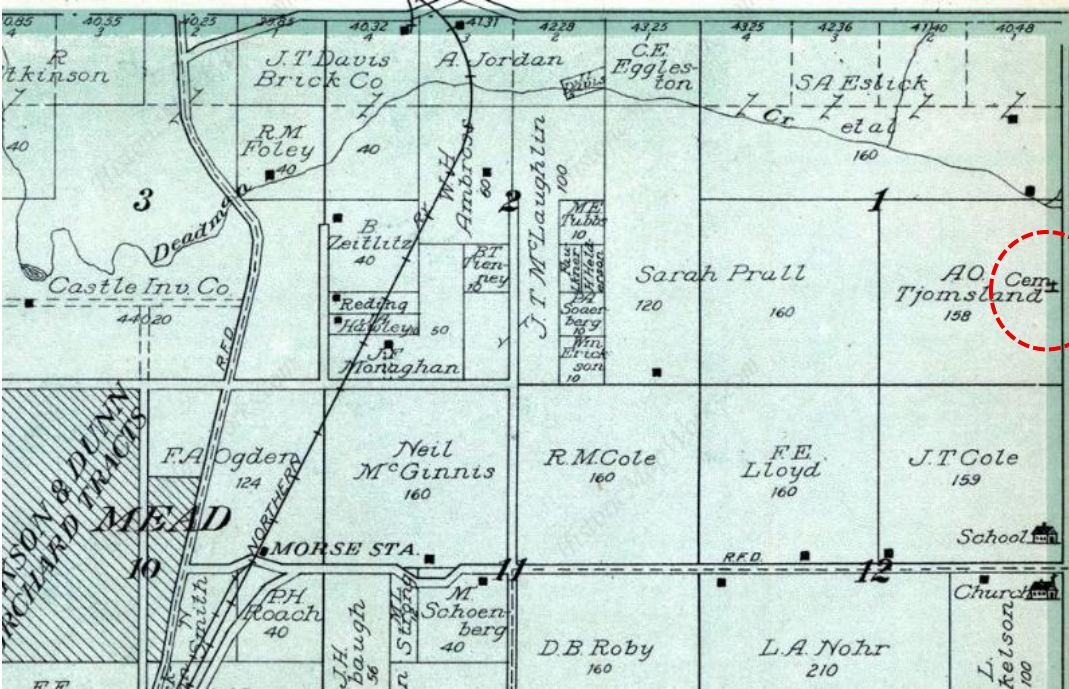
J) Map and Photographs Attach copies of historic maps or photos if available, and current photos (min 5 x 7 digital images, 300 DPI). Include a current map – appropriate Google Earth/U.S.G.S. map and parcel map – with the location of the property and its boundaries clearly marked. (see illustrations).



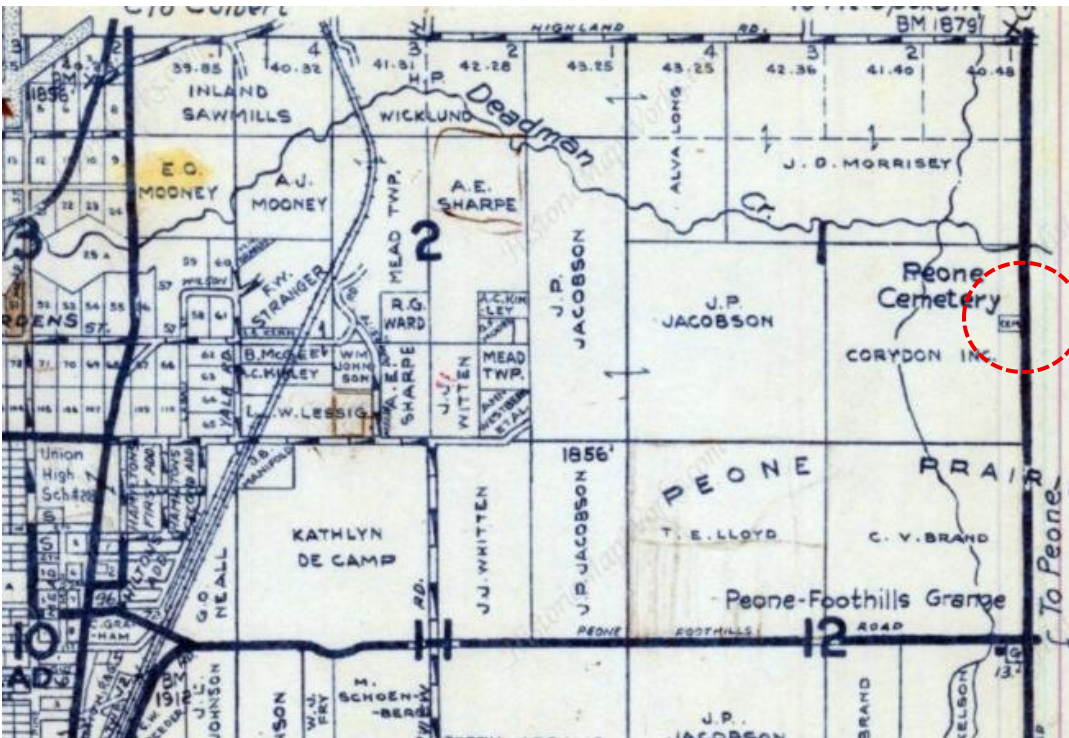
Peone Cemetery
Google Earth Map



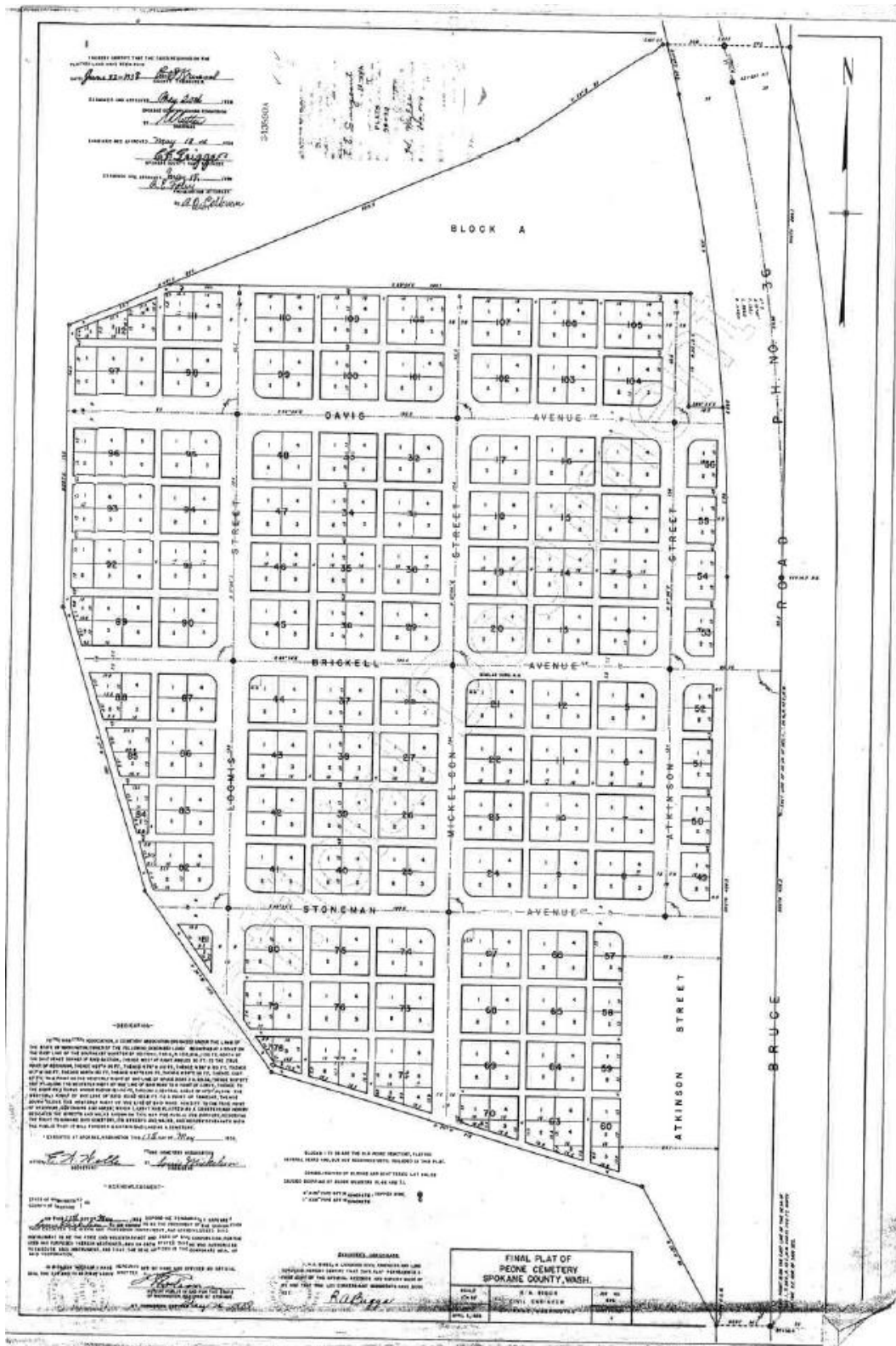
Peone Cemetery
Spokane County Map
Tax Lot No. 36014.9011



Page 112, Mead
 From **Spokane County 1912**, Washington
 Published by Geo. A. Ogle in 1912

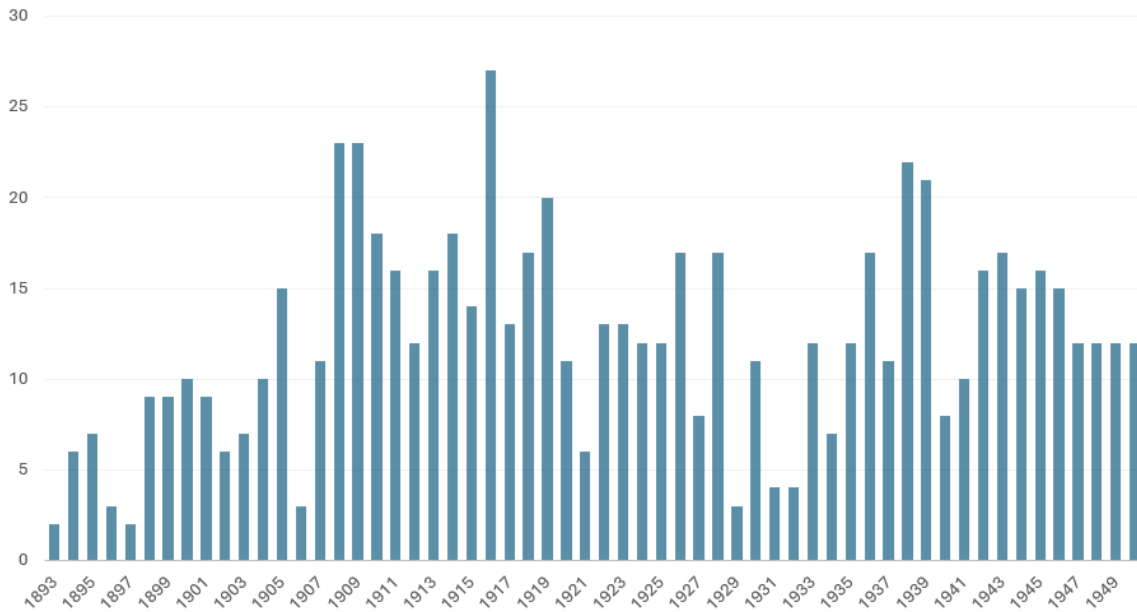


Township 26 N., Range 43 E., Spokane, Hillyard, Dartford
 From **Spokane County 1950**, Washington
 Published by Metsker Maps in 1950



Peone Cemetery
Final Plat Map
June 22, 1938

Burials By Year



ATKINSON'S KIN TO PROTEST WILL

\$12,000 Property Was Left as Trust for Upkeep of Peone Cemetery.

Judge Leavy was told yesterday that relatives of John Atkinson, who created a perpetual trust to keep Peone cemetery green, probably would contest the unique will, which gives his \$12,000 in property for care of the graveyard.

The First National Trust and Savings bank reported to Judge Leavy yesterday that it had found a family burial lot where several were buried. They obtained permission to erect a monument with the name Atkinson on it, and erect a small headstone for the grave of John Atkinson.

The files showed that relatives of Atkinson were receiving reports and that they probably would contest the will, which is said to be of doubtful validity.

Atkinson was a widower and had no children. His wife, Bertha Atkinson, is dead. He provided that a trust fund to be known as the Bertha Atkinson memorial fund be created and the income should go for care of the cemetery forever.

Spokesman Review – August 27, 1931

BEAUTIFY CEMETERY

Money left by the late John Atkinson, Green Bluffs district farmer, has been used to beautify Peone cemetery. Mr. Atkinson, who died nearly three years ago, left his estate of \$10,000 to the Peone cemetery with the proviso that the Old National bank here should administer it.

Spokane Chronicle – May 31, 1933

Current Photographs















