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Last of Conleys Joins Family

(Transcriptions are presented without changes except to improve readability.)



*TOMBSTONE...
carries warning*

Helena Conley, last of the three sisters who so staunchly defended ancestral burial grounds called Huron cemetery, has been laid to rest there with other members of her family.

Services yesterday for the 94-year-old spinster were at the Gibson chapel, where the Rev. Judd Jones, pastor of the Washington Avenue Methodist church, spoke of her life.

Proud of her Wyandot Indian ancestry, Miss Conley had the name "Floating Voice" chiseled into her tombstone. Most of the later years of her life were devoted to defending the cemetery on Minnesota Ave. against encroachments of commerce.

Mrs. Bertha Fuchs, who sang for the funerals of the other Conley sisters, sang "In the Garden," and "Haven of Rest."

At 3:30 p.m. Miss Conley's body was borne quietly into the cemetery, where a crowd of passersby had stopped to witness the final burial in Huron cemetery. The services were concluded with a quiet prayer.

Many had come thinking some unusual ceremony might be held. However, the only unexpected gesture was by Mrs. Anna Boulrieris, of 627 Barnett, a Greek immigrant. Dressed in black, and with black scarf, the tiny woman stepped to the coffin and sprinkled sweet balsam with whispered words. Someone removed it.

She later placed it on the vault cover when it was in place. Mrs. Boulrieris explained to friends it was an old Greek custom, and that it helped during the journey to the other world.

"Miss Helena had asked me to do it," she said.

Burial in the cemetery represented a change of mind for Miss Conley since 1956. At that time, angry with the city in a dispute over the cemetery, she said she wished her ashes thrown in the Missouri river, because the river had washed away the family home east of Nearman.

Later she asked her cousin, Mrs. Nina Craig, 3235 N. 50th, to see that she was buried in a walnut casket. The request was observed.

In years past the Conley sisters had lived in a little hut in the cemetery, and put up a fight with the city and national governments to have the cemetery retained by the Wyandot tribe.

Miss Helena Conley claimed she was not in the cemetery during the time that Lida [Lyda] Conley, an attorney, personally defended it.

Floating Voice's tombstone proclaims, "Cursed be the villain that molests these graves."

The sisters had put a curse over the cemetery in times gone by, while feuding with the city. Helena pointed out in 1956 that she had put a curse on the city because her home at 1712 N. 3rd was sold for taxes in 1951. Shortly thereafter the flood came.

She also told a Kansan reporter that one man lost everything he owned even his home, after predicting that the cemetery would be sold and razed.

President Theodore Roosevelt who signed the law to sell Huron cemetery, lost two of his sons in war, and Miss Conley attributed this to the curse.

U.S. Rep. Errett P. Scrivner was among those attending the funeral yesterday. Scrivner has sought to make the cemetery a national shrine.