

THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PROBLEMS WITH THE CITY CEMETERY...

Rendered and edited by Olga Sverdlova, April – 2018

The oldest Kherson's cemetery (at least 240 years old) is now located in the center of the city, in the past it used to be the most "inhabited" one. However, when Kherson looked like a big village with a population of several tens of thousands of people, the cemetery was in the steppe, outside the city gate, beside the postal route that connected Kherson with Nikolaev and Odessa.

At the very beginning of the construction of the city, when the cemetery was just beginning to perform its functions, there was a small chapel on its grounds. A little later, in 1804-1808, opposite the main entrance, the Church of All Saints was built.

Later, at the end of the 19th century, the construction of the provincial prison took a whole block in front of the Church of All Saints. And at the beginning of the 20th century, a railroad lay far in the steppe and a complex of railway station buildings was put up. That means the city had grown almost by a mile northwards. Nevertheless, even then it was believed that the central cemetery was outside the city.

By the end of the 19th century the city cemetery occupied a large territory, and it was already «densely populated» then. It should also be noted that by that time private buildings from the southern and eastern sides of the cemetery came very close to its territory, violating sanitary norms.

It seems that there were always problems with the city cemetery in Kherson. In a report on health activities in the city one could read in 1887 that the graves were placed without any order, relatives buried their deceased anywhere and often destroyed fresh graves and demolished monuments. The cemetery was «overcrowded». It often happened that during the digging of a grave one could find 20-30 skulls. In addition, the inhabitants of the nearest homesteads were quietly disassembling the stone fence of the cemetery and putting cattle there to pasture.

Finally, in 1886, a new cemetery was opened, north of the old one. The new cemetery was already taken more seriously; they divided the territory into 71 sections. On August 23, 1887 the new cemetery was consecrated and opened. At the same time, it was prohibited to bury on the territory of the old cemetery. However, in 30 years, it was allowed again, which can be seen from the mingle of the monuments from different eras.

In 1931, there existed an unspeakable instruction for the maintenance and liquidation of cemeteries where it was said: «Early liquidation of cemeteries is allowed in cases of state or local need». Apparently, this article served as a pretext for the early dismantling of the monuments and the eradication of burial places in the case of the expansion of the territory of the combine plant named after G. Petrovsky. The extension of the territory of the plant and erecting residential buildings destroyed the new cemetery. A little later the sports complex "The Petrovets" snatched away a large piece of the territory of the old cemetery.

It is worth remembering that Ilyusha Kulik Street appeared on the map of Kherson only in the 1960s. It passed through the old part of the city cemetery. Sometimes very unique monuments of different epochs were demolished and, at best, randomly piled or dumped in the territory still belonging to the cemetery. That was because the blasé attitude of the state and local authorities barbarously destroyed the memory of the builders and the first residents of Kherson, the memory of our roots. Do not discount the actions of vandals that smashed and desecrated the monuments in the city cemetery during the Soviet era.

Nowadays, the ancient monuments of the so-called Kherson memorial cemetery, which has been plundered and practically destroyed, are unrecognizable because of the absence of portraits of people buried under them, downed letters, plaques, broken monuments ... There is darkness and desolation at the place of repose and "eternal memory" ...

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