



NOTORIOUS

A Self-Guided Tour of Portland's Historic Lone Fir Cemetery

Oregon began with a bit of a 'gold rush' fever, the Willamette Valley being the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Portland was viewed as a business opportunity from the inception, and its citizens from the first ran the gamut of society. Within fairly few years, an entire community was up and running, exporting trade goods to all parts of the world, rivaling England (through the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver) for the rights to the area.

During and after the California Gold Rush, many Portlanders struck it richer than the miners, but shipping lumber, produce and other goods to fill their needs. This rowdy beginning lends a backdrop to the tales that follow, some still talked about today.....

On December 23, 1885, a murder was committed unlike any ever seen in Portland. *Emma Merlotin*, aka Anna LaCoz, was a 28-year old prostitute from Brittany, France, and the stereotypical 'hooker with a heart of gold'. She fed neighbors in need and had saved up to buy Christmas gifts for the poor. She was brutally attacked with a hatchet in her home.



At the time, it was believed that the last image a person saw before s/he died was captured on the retina of the eye. To aid in solving the crime, one of Emma's eyes was removed to find out. No one was ever charged with the crime.

A most unfortunate incident, and one which would undoubtedly be treated differently today, one of the most scandalous murders in Oregon history involved a battered woman at the end of her wits. *Charity Lamb* murdered her husband with an axe as he sat eating



dinner with the family. She had intended to escape brutality at home and rescue her daughter, but their plot was found out. Instead, Mrs. Lamb found herself convicted of 2nd degree murder and sentenced to life in the Oregon state penitentiary, which was very crude in those days. She was the only female prisoner.

Later, Charity was moved to Dr. J. C. Hawthorne's asylum for the insane, where she lived out her life. Her burial at Lone Fir was provided by *Dr. Hawthorne*, although the location is unknown.

James Turk was a notorious shanghai captain, one who procured merchant sailors for the many ships trading in Portland's harbor. Unsuspecting young men would find themselves captive in the basements of saloons, having fallen through trap doors made for the purpose. Tunnels ran from the basement cages to the docks, where the captives were loaded aboard ships bound for ports far away. Shanghai, China was the furthest port, hence the name. James Turk had two sons. One joined him willingly in the 'family business'; the other did not. Turk shanghaied him and he was out to sea for three years.





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This beautiful 'sugar marble' Celtic Cross is the only such monument at Lone Fir, a stunning display of Scottish symbolism. Oddly, this marker has no name/date inscription. Cemetery records indicate it was the grave of *Alice Oberle*, a local 'fancy-house' prostitute, reputed to have had '6,000 lovers'. Legend tells us it was



erected by her loyal clientele and that her sister was horrified and had Alice disinterred and re-buried at Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery. Our research verifies this; she and her sister Mary lie side by side in simple graves.

Map of Lone Fir Cemetery

							SE Stark St.	
A	B	5M	6M	11M	C	D	E	
1	2	3	71	10M 24	25	34	35	
6	5 Fireman's Lot	4	8M	9M 23				
7	8	Soldier's Monument		22	Rose Garden	26	33	36
10	9	16		21	27	32	37	
11	12	Mac Leay		20		28	31	38
14	13	18		19	29	30	39	
SE Morrison Gate (Closed)							SE 26th St.	

James Turk Block 13

Oberle Block 13

Charity Lamb Block 14

Emma Merlotin Block 20