



Springdale

FOUNDED 1854
CEMETERY & MAUSOLEUM

3014 North Prospect Road
Peoria, ILLINOIS 61603
309.681.1400
www.springdalecemetery.com

- BURIAL AREA
- WOODS
- PRAIRIE
- WATER
- TRAILS
- PRIVATE MAUSOLEUM
- POINT OF INTEREST
- TOUR ROUTE





Hervey Lightner Deceased 1896.
He as the builder of Springfield Cemetery.
Pioneer, capitalist and bank president.

Springdale Cemetery was founded in 1854 and reborn in 2003, 230 acres.
77,000 gravesites and space for 50,000 sites still available.

Gerald Thompson was Peoria's most notorious serial rapist and murderer
His last victim was 19-year-old Mildred Hallmark, who was last with him in his car as he made a U-turn on Prospect. Her nude body was discovered June 16, 1935. Her story was told by Norm Kelly in his book "A Hallmark Murder"
Mildred is said to still haunt the cemetery. She's seen dressed all white, pleading for mercy, near the Lightner Monument. Two different versions of her story suggest that her body with either found in the creek near the Perry St. entrance, or it was found near the Lightner Monument.

The formation of the Peoria Bicycle Club on January 25, 1881 by Harry Rouse and Fred Patee was a marketing strategy to sell bikes which Rouse's father, George W. Rouse, and S. B. Hazard (The RouseHazard Co.) manufactured for Charles & Frank Duryea, the designers, right here in Peoria. The Duryea brothers, both from Illinois, were also considered the early pioneers in the automobile industry. One of Rouse-Hazard Co.'s employee, Charles Albert 'Bert' Myers, started cycling in 1883 joined the PBC three years later. Myers, known to be a competitive person, quickly became a skilled cyclist with his knowledge from working at the Rouse-Hazard factory. He began entering in races and winning them. Not only did he win races, but he also set records. World records to be exact. Records like riding a first PBC sponsored 10 miles race in 1887 with a time of 40 minutes 27 seconds and pedaling 289 miles through the streets of Chicago in a 24 hour period. Now a day, it doesn't sound fast. Keep in mind back in that era, all bikes are high wheel fixies and all the roads were unpaved (Safety bike, predecessor of modern day bike, didn't become popular in Europe and N. America until middle to late 1890s). Crowds of cyclists came to Peoria from around the country and Europe to challenge his records while cycling enthusiasts all came to see if he can defend or break his own record which he did on a regular basis. Bert was so skilled, he began racing against the clock instead of other cyclists to intrigue the spectators. One example was his attempt to shatter his own half mile unicycle world record when unicycles were one big wheel with handles. His down-to-earth demeanor and his style of entertaining the audiences were what set himself apart from his competitors. And the crowd loved him for it. His personality was the polar opposite when he is not entertaining as he was quiet and seldom talked about himself. With the invention of the automobile in the 1900s, the popularity of the bicycle and adventure the racers brought began to fade. The Peoria Bicycle Club died in early 1901. However, Bert Myers stayed with the sport, even if it was only for pleasure. While getting ready for his routine morning ride with a friend on May 7, 1933, Myers collapsed in his house of an apparent heart attack. He was 66 years old. Myers was laid to rest in the hills of Springdale Cemetery with the emblem of the League of American Wheelmen (League of American Bicyclists as known today) on his tombstone in honor of all of his lifetime achievements. Bert Myers was truly an equivalent of Eddy Merckx in his era.

Charles A. Myers

Valley View Section 2 Lot 5011 Gravel
Wife Grace Myers

Bert Myers: Cyclist Extraordinaire

This 19th-century cycling champion impressed Peorians with his skill, style, and indomitable will to win.

By Monica Vest

Bert Myers' life revolved around bicycles. They spun his name into cycling fame, they introduced him to his future wife, they provided him his livelihood, and they moved him in more ways than one. Cleanshaven in a time when many men sported handlebar mustaches or goatees, Charles Albert "Bert" Myers relished the bicycling life; he achieved records and accomplishments far beyond modern imagination. If he had wanted to, he could have

claimed the title of the fastest man alive.

Born March 24, 1867, in Toulon, Myers once told a WMBD radio audience that his first bicycle ride came around 1883, two years before he moved to Peoria. He worked for one bicycle manufacturer before joining the Rouse-Hazard Company, and that's where he met the boss' daughter, Grace Hazard, who was one of the first Peoria women to ride and later became his wife.

Thanks to vigorous two-wheeler sales, Harry Rouse and Fred Patee organized the Peoria Bicycle Club (PBC) in 1881. Bert Myers is said to have joined the group in 1886 and then dominated bicycle competition through the rest of the century. "Bert C. Myers was the bright star of the racing days and brought to Peoria lasting fame for the large number of world records he won and nobly defended," noted Josephine Emerson Putnam on the 50th anniversary of the club's founding.

Myers won the first PBC-sponsored road race in 1887 when he pumped 10 miles in 40 minutes and 27 seconds. His fame spread beyond local borders the following year when he broke a 24-hour record peddling 289 miles through the streets of Chicago. Don't forget that this was before many roads were paved. The *Peoria Daily Transcript* noted in May 1889 as it proclaimed another string of his victories that Myers won over Chicago crowds many times with his "modest, unassuming manner." Newspaper accounts of the time laud Myers so often that he might have been then what we call an athletic superstar today. His name helped sell 50-cent tickets to high-speed races at Peoria's Lake View Park. One October of 1889 advertisement

urged the public to witness him attempt to shatter his own half-mile unicycle record, when unicycles used to be one big wheel with handles. Another 1888 story told of how he had amazed crowds in Jacksonville with his unicycle and how they "were positively uproarious in their applause when he did a half-mile with the handles behind his back."

Eric Carlson, part of the PBC when it was revitalized in the late 1980s, says, "These early bicyclists were largely charismatic people. They attracted crowds. Myers was a record holder and certainly brought a focus to the Peoria area. Peoria wasn't the biggest player in cycling, but it was an important stop."

Crowds literally stopped to see what Myers would do next. An enthusiastic and skilled competitor, he was not only incredibly fast, but some accounts marveled at the beauty and artistry of just watching him in action. Contenders from around the country and England came to challenge Myers, and he usually came out on top. In fact, in May of 1889 in Chicago he won the two-mile, three-mile, and five-mile races. However, he had reached his bodily limits when he attempted the 100-mile race but "became saddle sore at the end of 40 miles and dropped out."

Beyond The Bike

Myers inspired fellow cyclists and audiences alike says Larry Sprague of Canton, a long-time rider and collector of biking memorabilia. He's a devoted Myers fan and had the opportunity to talk to Myers' only child, Winifred, on several occasions before she died. He has several of Myers'

Preserving Our Past

Griswold, Ford, Chanute, Bradley, Purple, Detweiler, Ballance, Hale, Ingersoll, Proctor, Fulton, Woodruff, Flanagan, Buehler—the names alone tell Peoria's history. And they are just some of the nearly 77,000 people who have been interred in Springdale Cemetery's 227 acres since its founding in 1854. Unfortunately, vandalism, neglect, and Mother Nature have taken their toll. This special series will highlight many of the significant individuals who made lasting contributions to the Peoria area. We hope this inspires you to volunteer your time, talents, and resources to help restore and preserve their final resting place. For more information on how you can help, call 309-681-1400.

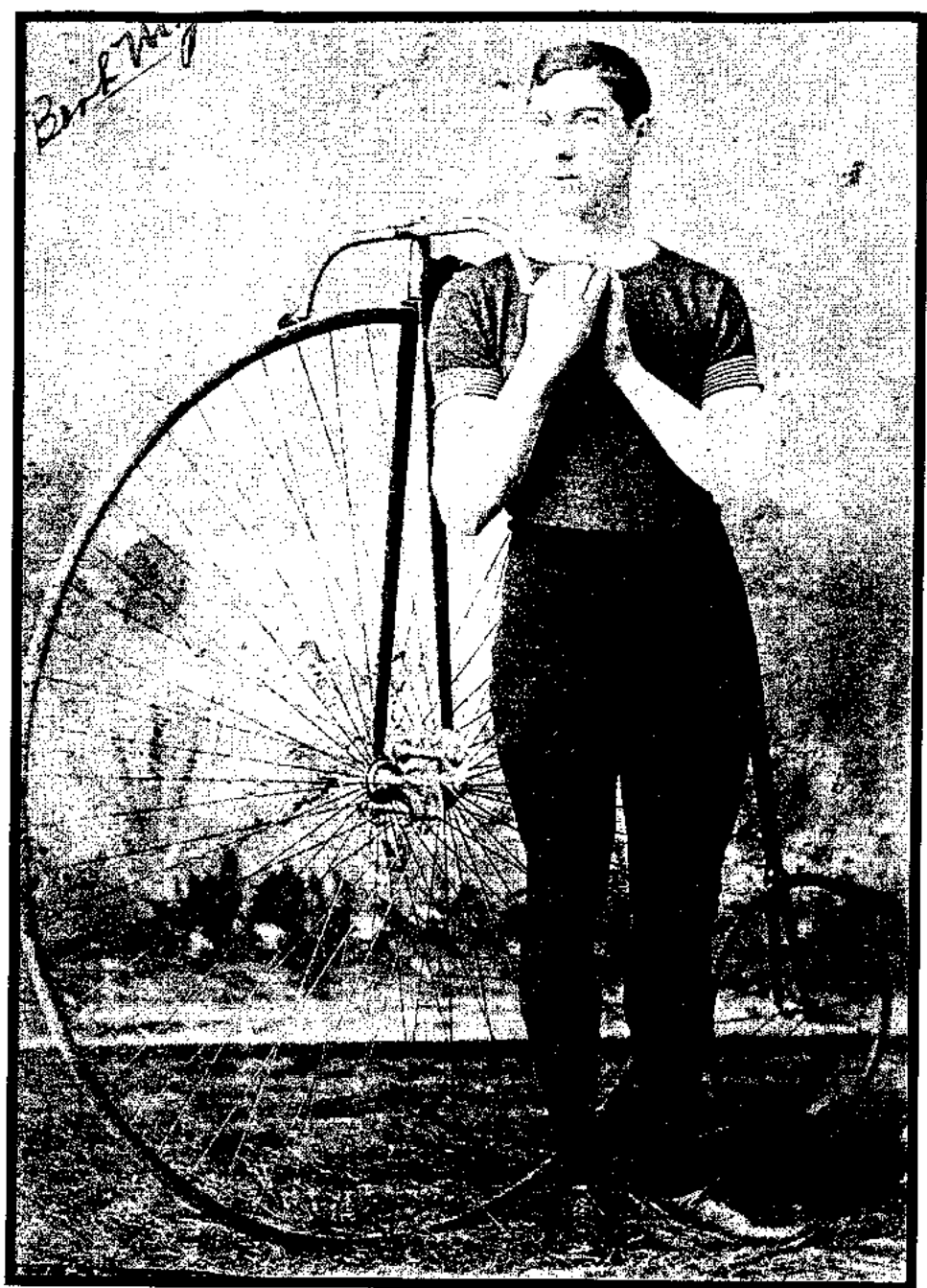
According to Josephine Emerson Putnam on the 50th anniversary of the Peoria Bicycle Club's founding, "Bert Myers was the bright star of the racing days and brought to Peoria lasting fame for the large number of world records he won and nobly defended."

racing medals along with one of his most prized possessions, the engraved cane the PBC gave its top competitor. Sprague happened to come across it in a central Illinois antique shop one day.

His down-to-earth style and the way he entertained audiences were what set Myers apart explains Sprague, who has accumulated much about Peoria's star racer, including newspaper clippings that Myers kept in a journal from many of the 1880s events. He remembers Myers' daughter telling of the only time she ever heard her father curse, and that was when he was riding up Spring Street and his chain broke. "He's remembered for his records and how he raced against some of the most famous cyclists in the world," Sprague says. Sometimes Myers simply competed against himself and the clock when this seven-time state champion wasn't screaming past fellow contenders. "He was always looking for new ways to entertain people."

However, this incredible performer had an unassuming side to him, even in the limelight. "The champion is a quiet, unobtrusive young man who bears honors meekly, talks as little of himself as possible, and is superlatively esteemed by wheelman all over the state," noted one 1888 article that recounted his growing list of feats.

Long before the days of professional athletes sponsoring products, Myers once rode an American Light Champion roadster and in one account "recommended that those who were figuring on buying a new wheel give this model a try." He definitely knew his two-wheelers after working in local bicycle factories, and later he would own a Peoria bicycle shop with his brother.



When 1900 seemed to signal a new era and attitude, lost was the romance and adventure of the bicycle. Many cyclists abandoned their two-wheelers for automobiles, and the PBC died in early 1901 at the tender age of 20. However, Bert Myers stayed with it, even if it was only for pleasure. His photo appeared in the local paper during one unicycle demonstration 40 years after some of his record-breaking races.

One For The Road

Relishing the adventure of the open road, Myers decided to ride one way to St. Louis by himself in March of 1933 when he was 66 years old. Departing Peoria at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, he arrived in St. Louis at 5:30 p.m. the next day and noted that

he was "feeling fine." On May 7, 1933, two months after his St. Louis trek, Myers got up that morning to enjoy his usual bike ride with a friend. However, the "young heart" of this beloved racing hero failed. Before he could even venture outside, he collapsed in his house and died of an apparent heart attack.

One of the most exciting chapters in Peoria's bicycling history ended as Bert Myers was laid to rest in the hills of Springdale Cemetery with the League of American Wheelmen emblem on his tombstone. He was one of those early trailblazers described as having "brain, brawn, sturdy backbone, and indomitable will" by the *Peoria Journal-Transcript*, and he was the best. ❖