



CALVARY HILL CEMETERY

By Frances James (1922 – 2019)

Calvary Hill Cemetery at 3235 Lombardy Lane is the second cemetery within the city limits of Dallas owned by the Catholic Diocese. The first cemetery was a four to seven acre site, (before the streets were widened) purchased in 1874, near the Houston and Texas Central Railroad and Hall Street. By 1909 it was running out of space as many of the pioneer Catholic families had reserved their own plots. Therefore the Diocese started looking for one hundred acres of land to develop for a new, larger cemetery.

In 1924 the Dallas Diocese purchased land they found north of the city of Dallas that had been owned by Clement Letot. His home and family cemetery were on it. Letot had purchased the land in 1874 in the Shelby Survey when he came to Dallas. After his death in 1907 his estate was divided among his descendants.

The Letot family cemetery began when two of their teenage sons, who died within two months of each other, were buried in 1884 and 1885 near the family home. They were followed all too soon in 1903 by Clement's wife Natalie and then Clement himself.

Calvary Hill Cemetery is professionally designed and landscaped and there is a beautiful, unusual large mosaic in a circle area designed by the late prominent artist Octavio Medellin (1907-1999) erected in the late 1940s. One of the craftsmen who worked closely on this mosaic is Lee Suarez. Medellin who was quite versatile used Lee through the years because he was not only such an excellent glass cutter but was able to follow the patterns, pictures and colors Medellin had designed.

Medellin himself is buried next to the sculpture.

Many prominent Catholics of the twentieth century in Dallas are buried at Calvary Hill, including Tom Braniff (1883-1954) and his wife Bess (1887-1954) and their two adult children who predeceased them. Braniff was an insurance man like his father when he purchased a second hand airplane in 1927. This started one of the first airlines in the Southwest and developed into one of the largest airlines in the world. Mr. Braniff was a devout Catholic and was honored by his church as a Knight of Malta and a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher. In 1944 he was granted the Title of Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great by Pope Pius XII, the highest honor that can be bestowed on a layman. He died in a private plane crash in Louisiana.

James, Frances, "Dallas County History – From the Ground Up, Vol. I," 2007.

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