

## NECROLOGIES

## MATTHEW ANTON SWATEK

1867-1942

Matthew Anton Swatek (spelled "Svatek" in Bohemia), also known and hereafter referred to as "Mike Swatek", was born near Prague, Bohemia (Czechoslovakia), on August 16, 1867. He was the eldest son of Frank and Josephine Swatek.

Frank Swatek was an average citizen of Bohemia, and spent much of his time in the military service of Bohemia. He engaged in the trade of stone and brick masonry. In 1880 Frank and Josephine Swatek disposed of their earthly possessions, and brought their family of seven children, namely: Mary, Mike, Frank, Jr., Antonette, Joseph, Josephine and Charles, to America. After meeting all immigration requirements, they established their first home in America, at Plattsmouth, Nebraska.

Without delay Frank Swatek taught his sons the trade of stone masonry and brick laying. As soon as it was possible, every member of the Swatek family became naturalized citizens of the United States, and as soon as Mike was of voting age, he voted for President Grover Cleveland—and was one of his greatest admirers.

Soon the family moved to Omaha, Nebraska, where work was more plentiful, and by 1887 they had accumulated sufficient money to meet the necessities of life. Possessing the pioneer spirit, and having experienced many hardships, they proceeded to Caldwell, Kansas, where they prepared themselves for the opening of the Oklahoma country.

Mike and his father were in the "Run" of April 22, 1889, first arriving at Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Later they traveled to Guthrie, and by train to Oklahoma City, where Mike Swatek, early in May, staked his present homestead, nine miles southwest of Oklahoma City. This is the homestead which he owned the remainder of his life, no part of it ever having been alienated or mortgaged to anyone.

By 1892, his services as a stone and brick mason became almost indispensable to the growth of Oklahoma City, where he worked by day, and in addition to carrying on his trade, he managed to farm his homestead on Mustang Creek. After Mike Swatek had staked his homestead and begun the work necessary to meet the requirements of the Government for homesteading land, he walked, requiring one day and one night, to Kingfisher, Oklahoma, to comply with the regulations necessary to perpetuate his claim to his homestead. Later he assisted his father in securing a homestead near Wheatland, which has always been known as a Bohemian settlement.

On September 14, 1892, Mike Swatek married Lottie Kasl, and from this union the following children were born: Clara (now deceased); Lily (now deceased); Charles M.; Roy E.; and Marie (néé Swatek) Bohanon.

As early as 1894 he organized a construction company, and started the building of pioneer cities and towns in Oklahoma. In 1908 he organized the M. A. Swatek Construction Company, and operated under that Company until 1935, at which time he retired from the active construction business, turning the M. A. Swatek Construction Company over to his

sons who have continued the operation of the M. A. Swatek Construction Company.

It is said by all those who knew him that Mike Swatek's working day was from sun-up to sun-down; that he worked an average of fifteen hours a day. He was untiring in his efforts and was always a builder. Although he did not have the advantage of a common school education, he was considered well educated. He was a student of history, engineering, philosophy and government, and readily adapted himself to all the problems of the contracting business. He held the record of having been the first contractor to lay a concrete road in the State of Oklahoma—the road from the State Capitol east to Choctaw, Oklahoma—laid in the fall of 1921, now known as Highway #62. He engaged in the road contracting business, and also constructed the streets throughout many cities in Oklahoma. Some of the early day towns in which he constructed the early pavement or brick streets are: Perry, Oklahoma City, Stillwater, Cherokee, Blackwell, Tonkawa, Chickasha, Norman, Pawnee, Cleveland, and many others. In addition to this type of construction, he built many of the finest buildings and structures in Oklahoma City in the early days, among these were the first City Hall in Oklahoma City; the Oklahoma City Water Department building, and the theater building now known as the "Warner", the old Overholser Hippodrome Theater, the "Doc & Bill" Furniture Store, the first annex to the Huckins Hotel, the first annex to St. Anthony's Hospital, and many other buildings.

A true pioneer, Mr. Swatek took great pride in providing for all the comforts of life for his own family. He believed in his friends and associates and in the future of his country and state. He was one of the organizers of the 89er's organization and was present at all annual banquets, bringing his entire family with him. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, and affiliated himself with Crown Heights Methodist Church of Oklahoma City, taking an active part in the building of this new church. Mike Swatek was a true builder, always working at building something for someone else.

Mike Swatek's character and energy, and his talent for organizing for better building, made him one of the outstanding pioneers among the earliest citizens of Oklahoma City. He opened the Addition known as "Cashion Place" in Oklahoma City, where a City Park at this time is named in honor of him. He served his community in other ways, such as being a member of the Oklahoma City Council, and was a member of the Oklahoma County Excise Board for a number of years, as well as President of the Association of General Contractors.

"Who would not be a Builder  
 To labor day by day?  
 And laboring try to lessen  
 The thorns upon life's way?  
 To help to form a column,  
 All perfect and complete?  
 Fit for building that great Temple  
 Wherein we hope to meet?"

—Luther Bohanon

*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

## GRIFFIN PUTNAM CARR

1882-1951

Oklahomans are prone to accept the advantages of paved highways and of magnificent buildings in the cities of the state, forgetting to visualize this beautiful country as it was fifty years ago, or to bear in mind the labor and patience that have gone into its development.

The life work of Griffin Putnam Carr has left indisputable testimony of his vision, skill and ability in this development. He gave the community in which he lived landmarks that are a credit to his memory and a source of pride to his family and friends. He more than any other man shaped the appearance of modern Shawnee, Oklahoma.

Griffin Putnam Carr was born January 13, 1882, at Gravelly Springs, Alabama, and died August 1, 1951, in Shawnee. He was the son of William T. Carr and Ione Murphrey Carr, and was the oldest of seven children, with three brothers and three sisters. His mother died when he was sixteen years old, and soon afterward the family moved to a farm near Savannah, Tennessee. Like many other American boys he received his education in a country school, which was supplemented later by diligent study and deep reading. His habits of industry and perseverance and his ambition were acquired in the round of chores and hard work that kept him and his younger brother, Andrew, busy from Monday mornings to Saturday nights on the bottom farm near the Tennessee River.

Horace Greeley's admonition, "Young Man Go West," still heralded the call of the Oklahoma country, for soon after Griffin Carr reached the age of twenty-one, he came to the young town of Shawnee, Oklahoma Territory, arriving on January 20, 1903. He had very little in the way of money to pay his expenses but he secured board at the Lake Hotel which was the starting place of many another fortunate young man at the time. Meals there were wholesome and hearty, served at the price of fifteen cents each.

Young Carr started out to find work, and took the first opening that was offered, that of brakeman on the railroad. The weather was very severe for a boy from the South, and he soon gave up this job. Then he found work as a carpenter with Mr. Wingo, a well known contractor of the time, and it was not long until Griffin Carr was taking contracts for himself. The first house that he undertook to build by himself was a large two-story residence for A. B. Jones at Dale, Oklahoma, which is still standing in good condition. Mr. Carr's ability was soon recognized and his services were in constant demand. He later became well known as the contractor for many buildings in Shawnee, including both of the bank buildings, the Elks' building, the Aldridge Hotel, the Junior High School, the Wesley Methodist Church, the First Presbyterian Church and other substantial buildings including several for the Cameron State Agricultural College at Lawton, Oklahoma.

Mr. Carr was married to Miss Docia Pittman on March 17, 1907. They were the parents of three children: Glenn Carr, of Shawnee; and Meryl Carr and Mrs. Edith Carr Guild, of Oklahoma City.

Mr. Carr was a member of Lodge 107, A.F. and M.; Shawnee Chapter 32, R. A. M.; Shawnee Commandery 36, K. T. Consistory at McAlester; the Shrine in Oklahoma City; and the Elks' Lodge and the Rotary Club of Shawnee.

He enjoyed fellowship with his friends and loved out-door sports, especially hunting and fishing. Mr. and Mrs. Carr's residence is counted one of the most beautiful in Shawnee. Their family is popular and respected for its fine social and religious influence that has reached out over the community in the growth of their home city in the state of Oklahoma.

—Florence Drake

*Shawnee, Oklahoma*