

Way We Were
September 2018
Ellen Sloan Mawhinney at peace in Glenwood Cemetery
Barbara Bretz, Park City Museum docent

Ellen Sloan was born in Ireland in 1855, before silver was even discovered in Park City. She met and married Robert James Mawhinney and they immigrated to America together in 1874 in search of a better life.

They arrived in a small but growing Park City in 1876 where Bob found a job as an engineer at Marsac Mill. They built their home at the corner of Heber and Main, a close walk to the mill for Bob and the shops for Ellen.

Mining was a dangerous profession and medical care limited. Bob lost two fingers in a machinery accident at the mill and two years later nearly died from blood poisoning after when a rusty nail penetrated his boot after jumping from a mine car.

The presence of loss and grief was not limited to the mines. Ellen and Bob brought eleven children into the world. But in those days, child mortality rates were high, with two of every ten children on average dying before their fifth birthday.

In 1880, the Mawhinneys' newborn son John died at birth. Just three weeks later, they lost four-year-old Agnes. Both were buried in the Park City Cemetery, but when two-year-old Rachael died in 1888, the Mawhinneys bought a large family plot in the Odd Fellows section of the newer Glenwood Cemetery. They moved the bodies of John and Agnes to be buried in the Glenwood with Rachael.

Just one year later, Mary, the firstborn then age fifteen, would join them. She'd developed a horrible swelling disease called dropsy, now a treatable condition known as edema.

Two years later in 1891, Robert Jr., only three weeks old, died of spinal meningitis, the fifth of the Mawhinney children to pass away in eleven years. Six children survived to enjoy their thriving and ever-changing mining town.

In 1898, loss visited the Mawhinneys in a different form. A horrific fire swept through town on June 19, 1898, destroying more than 200 homes and businesses. The Mawhinney home and everything in it went up in flames.

Instead of giving up, they and other Parkites pitched in to rebuild the city. The Mawhinneys constructed a bigger and better five-bedroom home on the same spot. Ellen lived there for another quarter-century, passing in May 1924 at age sixty-eight.

Ellen Mawhinney is a prime example of the citizens, mostly recent immigrants to America, who laid the foundation for a remarkable mining town destined for a bright future. We are pleased the Glenwood Cemetery offers Ellen and her family a beautiful and peaceful resting place.

If you'd like to hear more stories like Ellen's, join the Park City Museum for a special event at the Glenwood Cemetery on September 22. Park City history will come alive through costumed re-enactors. Tours will be offered at 10:45am-12pm or 12:45pm-2pm and cost \$15 per person. All

proceeds benefit the historic cemetery. Space is limited and reservations are required. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit our website at parkcityhistory.org or call 435-649-7457 x102.



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Credit: Courtesy Barbara Bretz

Caption: The Mawhinney family plot at the Glenwood Cemetery. Robert and Ellen are buried here with six of their eleven children.