

Linus Graves (1815 – 1897)

Linus Graves was born on April 2, 1815, in Williamstown, Vermont. He was one of eleven children of Calvin and Fannie (Robinson) Graves. The Graves family had deep roots in the United States, with ancestors who came to America from France in 1640. They first settled in Connecticut, then moved to Massachusetts in 1660.

In 1836, Linus moved to Springfield, Illinois, where he started teaching school and studying law. It was there that he became close friends with Abraham Lincoln. Linus later moved to Waynesville, Illinois, where he opened his first business with two partners, Dr. Rogers and John Maris. He also married his first wife, Eveline Sampson, who passed away in 1843, along with their two children.

Linus remarried in 1847 to Virginia Frances Haden, and they moved to Bloomington in 1849. Virginia was born in Kentucky in 1829 and was a teacher before marrying Linus. She was very knowledgeable about current events and deeply involved in church and community activities.

The couple had six children, but two of them died as infants. They moved homes several times in Bloomington due to business and city developments. Linus opened a store with his brother Oliver, selling groceries, dry goods, and hats, and later became involved in real estate. Linus was known as a successful businessman, and his store attracted customers from nearby towns.

In 1859, Linus and other men went to Colorado during the gold rush. Although his mining claim was taken by someone else, Linus returned to Bloomington in 1860 and continued his successful real estate business. Linus also played an important role in founding Evergreen Memorial Cemetery (known as Bloomington Cemetery at the time) in Bloomington, giving land worth \$9,000 for it. He was very involved in the cemetery, helping to improve it for many years.

Linus was active in local politics, first as a member of the Whig Party and later in the Republican Party. He supported abolitionist Owen Lovejoy and was involved in several important political events in the 1850s. Linus also had an interest in railroads and helped donate land for the Illinois Central Railroad.

In his later years, Linus and his wife Virginia faced troubles in their marriage. In 1885, Virginia filed for separation, saying that Linus had abandoned her and was abusive when drinking.

Linus died on January 18, 1897, after suffering a stroke in 1896. His funeral was held at his daughter's home, and he was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery. After his death, his son Arthur Graves took over management of the cemetery.

In the 1960s, the cemetery was taken over by the City of Bloomington Township, and it was eventually merged with the nearby City Cemetery to form Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.