BETHANY CEMETERY
(1877-PRESENT)

Bethany Cemetery is historically associated with the Bethany Christian Church and public school. The church supported Add Ran College, now Texas Christian University, for several years. R.W. Carpenter (1832-1898), an early Plano settler and Confederate Civil War veteran, founded the church, school, and cemetery. The first burial here was for an infant named Walter Clark who died January 4, 1877. Carpenter's own young daughter, Mary Katie, died March 14, 1878, and was the second burial. Several other members of the Carpenter family, including R. W. Carpenter himself, are interred in this cemetery, as are many early area residents.

The northern one-third of the property contains several marked burials. Elaborate marble spire or scroll monuments, some with decorative curbing, mark many graves, particularly those of early members of the Carpenter family. Others are marked by more modest marble or granite monuments, although a few are marked only by cinder blocks mounted in the ground. The church, school, and a teacher's dormitory once stood in the southern portion of the cemetery, and evidence of these structures is still visible on the ground. Although this part of the cemetery exhibits no markers, unmarked burials are reported to be present in this area.

The church was founded in 1876 and enjoyed a sizable membership at the turn of the twentieth century. However, as later improvements to roads provided better access to town, membership dwindled. The church disbanded ca. 1933, and the abandoned church building, school, and neighboring structures were eventually razed.

HERITAGE COMMISSION

Bethany Christian Church 1916. Gravestones are visible in the background.

1880 photograph of the home and family of Bethany Cemetery founder R.W. Carpenter.

Early photograph of students of Bethany School, that once stood along with the Bethany Christian Church, on property shared with Bethany Cemetery.

E.A. Carpenter Pharmacy. In addition to founding Bethany Christian Church, school and cemetery, members of the Carpenter family owned some of Plano's early businesses.

Photographs courtesy of the Frances Wells/Texana Collection, Gladys Harrington Library, Plano Public Library System, Plano, Texas