

A park on a hill named for William T. Van Dorn

Born in Indiana in 1843, William Van Dorn briefly served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He later worked as a miner and on the Union Pacific railroad. He also invented the Van Dorn Coupler, an automatic railcar coupler that made assembling trains safer.

Van Dorn moved to Lincoln in 1880, inspired by a Thomas Kennard speech envisioning our Capitol City's potential. Wed in 1885, Van Dorn and his wife Emma had three children. Van Dorn remained in Lincoln until 1895 when he moved his family to Chicago to focus on manufacturing the Van Dorn Coupler. He died in 1918, and was laid to rest in Wyuka Cemetery near his parents.

Van Dorn purchased the surrounding land that his family operated as an orchard and nursery. In 1920, William Van Dorn's family donated nine acres of this land for a public park. This park, the adjoining street, and a neighboring subdivision bear the Van Dorn name.

