

MARCH FEATURE ARTICLE

Erin Grove Cemetery: Cultural and Historical Feature of 48066

Michael H. Rice hosted a video tour of Erin Grove Cemetery in the summer of 2007. This DVD is available from the Roseville Public Library. Watching it before a visit to the cemetery is enriching. You will see Patricia Chownyk, President of the Roseville Historical and Genealogical Society (RHGS) lead a group of society members, focusing on the headstones and history of this park-like cemetery. Originally a much larger (corn) field, it now is located at Little Mack and Masonic, with I-94 behind it and Sam's Club in front.

Before 2007, the cemetery had become overgrown, neglected and debris covered. Headstones were vandalized, buried or leaning, caused by old wooden caskets collapsing below. The dates listed in this article come from the headstones. If the headstone is illegible, we found some information on the web site "Find a Grave" which records 688 burials for this cemetery. Family stories are mostly from Mike's video narrative or from death certificates and links on Find a Grave.

Names change. What is now the City of Roseville, was organized under the name "Orange", by authority given in act of March, 1837. Inhabitants were mostly German Protestant. By March 1843, it was changed to Erin, said to be due to the large influx of Irish citizens. The name Orange didn't correspond to their Hibernian ideas of propriety, and called it Erin after their native isle. Erin Township doesn't exist any longer and is replaced by Roseville and Fraser (and a bit of Lake Township).

Surnames. The names on the headstones reflect the early settlers background of German, Scottish, English and Irish. They include well known Erin Township families, political figures, farmers, office holders and Elders from the Erin Presbyterian church. You see names such as: Little, Brenniman, Common, Chapman, Hetchler, Hall, Motherwill, Rowland, Smith and Chamberlin. However, maiden names may or may not be included.

Birth Place. The earliest births took place in the 1700's. With pride, their headstones may name their birth place in the inscriptions. Below a husband and wife were born in England and their daughter, who died at 17 months old, was probably born locally.

Joseph Williams, Stanford, England 1829-1873, Ellie Williams (his wife), Stanford, England 1823-1900, daughter of above born 1861-1863, John Belcher, Stanford, England 1834-1889, W.B. Adamson, born in Scotland, 1828-1908.

Babies, Service, Marriage. Baby burials are throughout the cemetery, but the majority are in a "baby" section where many are not marked. Some simply have a plain marker, with a name or number. One baby headstone is elaborate, including a picture of the baby which is covered to protect it from the elements. The inscription is, "Our Baby" Rita Andrea Lucido, April 18, 1975—November 11, 1975, One of Gods Most Beautiful Angels".

A record of military service is on many headstones. The inscription may identify if they served in WWI, WWII, Korea or Vietnam. There are also unmarked burials of possible unknown soldiers located near the shed and under the roads leading through and the perimeter of the cemetery. Marked examples: Charles A. Little PVT U.S. Army WWI, 1894-1976, Phillip R. Fogerty PFC U.S. Army, 1936-1979.

A detail on the Chamberlin family headstone is a heart inscribed "Married June 9, 1934". It shows Olga R. 1913-1999 and Earl E. 1912-1985, so we know they were together for 51 years when Earl died.

Lost inscriptions and falling headstones. Mike showed examples of long ago burials that have present day problems. The headstone was very soft material for Henry Savage. It is inscribed "Age 72 years, 11 months and 8 days. Died March 12, 1877". Several lines are illegible and the information is lost. The sphere that once rested on the top is gone.

Another problem is that some headstones were placed on homemade "cobblestone" bases. By using rocks held together with sandy cement, the cement wears away in the weather. The base left is rocks that destabilize the headstone causing it to tip or fall. Another problem is the old custom of using wooden caskets, these eventually degrade and collapse inward and the headstone tips over. Even hard oak wood will succumb and use of cement may degrade, if roots push through. When cement liners began to be used, there was not a standard thickness. The cement on the sides can be as thin as $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Examples of these problems were shown with the headstones of Jan A. Graney and Sally V. Graney.

One family contacted Mike and chose to replace a monument that was becoming illegible. The Kloock family inscription has been replaced, but still sad inscriptions.

Beloved Husband, Joachim Heinrich Carl, 1829-1908, Goldenbow Mechlenburg

Beloved Wife Caroline Dorothee Prohl, 1829-1885, Zuhr Mechlenburg

Beloved son Carl Friedrich Wilhelm, Nov 9, 1861-June 10, 1866

Beloved son Johann Wilhelm Julius, July 14, 1964-June 20, 1866.

Continued in the next newsletter are Erin Grove Cemetery stories about the Rice, Common, Savage, Lasslett and Briody families.

Submitted by: Beverly P. Bishop, PhD.

Remembering When:

Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1876. Roseville first used the utility on January 9, 1911. The Roseville telephone exchange was opened by Michigan Bell Telephone and kept all of south Macomb County buzzing. By 1922, the telephone had a "one girl" switchboard in a building on the corner of Gratiot Avenue and Frazho.

What is the oldest brick building in Roseville?

The brick home of Henry and Mary Savage was built on their farm around 1831. Still standing today on Gratiot, it has been enlarged and now houses the Roseville Masonic Temple. (information from the Eastsider, February 20, 1985 issue)

Cable TV channel TLC has started new episodes of "Who Do You Think You Are". This program follows the journeys of some of the most well known names in American popular culture. You will see how celebrities discover unknown details about themselves and their families while researching their ancestry with the help of historians and genealogical experts. Check your cable guide for dates and times.

Upcoming Events in March in Roseville:

Mentioning unmentionables: A History of Ladies Undergarments, presented by Kim Parr.

Friday, March 24 at 2:00 p.m. Erin Auditorium, 29777 Gratiot Ave., Roseville Mi.

Kim Parr, Director of the Macomb County Historical Society and the Crocker House Museum in Mt. Clemens will present a program on the history of 19th century women's underclothing. She will explain how and why undergarments changed through time.

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Copies of the Images of America-Roseville, Roseville Airport and Wartime Memories of a Tin Can Soldier are available at the Library desk. Pick up a copy. The book's also make a great gift. Contact the Roseville Library if you would like a copy shipped.