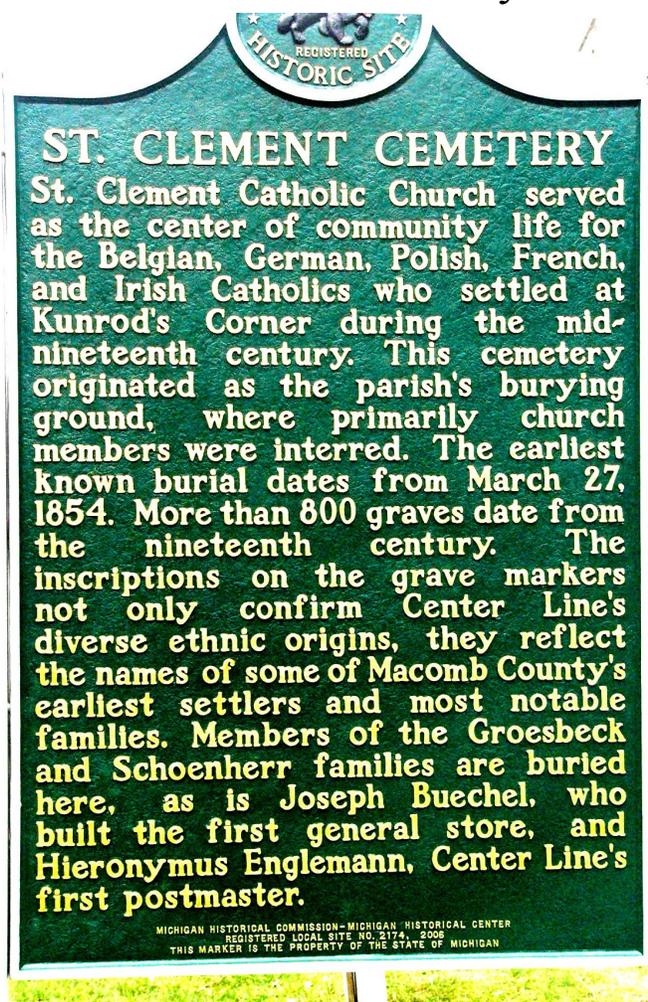


## The History of St Clement Cemetery



The St Clement Cemetery is located on Engleman east of Van Dyke. It is the biggest of our area's pioneer cemeteries. The first known recorded burial was March 27, 1854 although there were probably a few burials prior to that. There are more stillborns, infants, and children buried there prior to 1900 than adults. Of course this is not proven by actual written records but by actual conditions at that time. Very few stillborn, infant and young child deaths were even recorded. The priests were non residents. Due to the fact that there were no undertakers and the corpses remained in the home until burial. Most were buried the same day or next day. There was no embalming. A frequent cause of death was inflammation of the bowels, due to spoiled milk and resulting diarrhea. There were no paper products that could clean up the mess and the smells were to say the least very unpleasant. Gases begin to be released

from some corpses after only a few hours under some conditions. With baby deaths the mother was often devastated and often the families would quickly bury the stillborn or day old baby to help alleviate the mothers anguish. There was no telephone, bus or good transportation to summon the priest. The roads were often seas of mud and there were no hearses. Prior to our three local cemeteries burials were literally on the farm. An old history stated that there were over 800 burials that date from the nineteenth century and it appears to have had over 1,500 burials prior to 1943. Of course those are based on the few surviving records and stones. There were actually many more. If you look at old pioneer cemeteries in Michigan you will see few surviving stones and practically none for stillborns and babies and the unmarked graves far exceed the ones with surviving stones.

There was a time when each family was supposed to maintain the graves by cutting the grass maintaining the stones and wooden markers. Who maintained the rows between the graves? Sometimes no one. The cemetery fell in such a state of unkeptness that the priest felt that the community should use other cemeteries such as Mt Olivet so he encouraged people to have their loved ones buried there. Many folks actually

removed their loved ones and moved them out. In some years this cemetery actually had more bodies removed than were buried. Norman Smith related to me that sometimes funeral directors took the bones out but left the casket. Later when digging for a new burial the old casket was rediscovered halting all work until the truth was discovered often causing more grief to families who just lost a loved one. There are few surviving records of removals. And this Cemetery has been closed to burials several times. It is quite possible that on rare occasion families buried loved ones in secret. People sometimes just buried their loved ones and placed a wooden marker and a few stones piled onto the grave site. Now over a hundred years later all surface indications are gone. In fact Norman Smith indicated that many grave stones were buried and had to be re erected. There may be yet some stones buried. Back many years ago there were no cement vaults. Mostly wooden boxes sometimes cloth covered. In the very early days it is possible that in times of hardship only a shroud may have been used.

After many years the wood boxes rot and cave in leaving a depression. Some of these depressions can still be partly seen in the old part. Several of the old stones need repair, support, revitalization and a coating of stone sealer. I am proud of the folks at St Clement. This is partly why I as an unpaid Historian have devoted hundreds of hours working on this historical project.

The record writers had in many cases very poor writing and poor record keeping. Hundreds of names are unreadable. There are years without records. 1850-1853, 1855, 1907-1911, 1922-1928 No known backup records were made. They wrote in Latin and Latinized peoples names.

As the years progressed the records kept getting better. By the 1940s there were standardized and on a usually readable form.

Just because a name is listed here does not mean that the remains are still in the cemetery or ever were. Many were buried elsewhere or removed. There was a time when each family was supposed to maintain the graves by cutting the grass maintaining the stones and wooden markers. Who maintained the rows between the graves? Sometimes no one. The cemetery fell in such a state of unkeptness that the priest felt that the community should use other cemeteries such as Mt Olivet so he encouraged people to have their loved ones buried there. Many folks actually removed their loved ones and moved them out. In some years this cemetery actually had more bodies removed than were buried. Norman Smith related to me that sometimes funeral directors took the bones out but left the casket. Later when digging for a new burial the old casket was rediscovered halting all work until the truth was discovered often causing more grief to families who just lost a loved one.

Mike Grobbel adds this history on his wonderful and informative website:

[http://centerline.grobbel.org/wes/photos\\_st\\_clement.htm](http://centerline.grobbel.org/wes/photos_st_clement.htm)

• the cemetery was closed to burials in the 1930's. Up until 1951 when Fr. T.E. Murray came here, the cemetery had over a period of years grown into a state of neglect and abuse. It had assumed the appearance of a forlorn jungle, with weeds, dead trees and wild vegetation creating this impression. Then, in 1952, a group of women asked Fr. Murray and several men to have it cleaned up so that it would look decent."

• Around 1978, the Parish re-opened the St. Clement Cemetery and added additional land, nearly doubling it in size. A chapel was also built on the grounds, which are now kept in immaculate condition.

The above marker was placed in St Clement Cemetery and dedicated November 5 2006.

There are about 236 veterans buried there.

### St Clement Cemetery

**From 1861-1897 there were 15-20 child burials for every 10 adults average**  
And these are just the ones that made the record book. There were actually more.

Below are some facts from the early years showing that indeed there were more children buried than adults. This was because of the many childhood diseases and lack of good medical care.

#### **year child burials per adult burials over 2x**

**1854 11 children 1yr 12 times as many children than adults buried this year**

1855 0 4? **children** 1 adult **4x**

+ 1856 13 **children** 4 adults **3x**

- 1857 5 **children** 9 adults

+ 1858 7 **children** 4 adults **2x**

- 1859 3 **children** 8 adults

- 1860 4 **children** 8 adults

+ **1861 8 children 2 adults 4x**

+ **1862 10 children 6 adults buried 2x**

+ 1863 6 **children** 3 adults **These are from records but there are many missing**

+ 1864 8 **children** 6 adults

+ **1865 11 children 6 adults 2x**

+ **1866 11 children 6 adults 2x**

+ 1867 6 **children** 5 adults

+ 1868 3 **children** 3 adults

+ **1869 12 children 1 adults 12x**

+ **1870 14 children 6 adults 2x**

4103

+ **1871 24 children 8 adults 3x**

+ **1872 14 children 4 adults 0.59 +3x**



+ 1914 11 children 8 adults 1.5  
4104

- 1915 6 children 14 adults

- 1916 6 children 13 adults

- 1917 2 children 13 adults

- 1918 6 children 12 adults

+ 1919 14 children 11 adults

+ 1920 5 children 4 adults

- 1921 2 children 3 adults 0.87

593 children 513 adults 1.16

**Only 28 markers were found listing children**

only 1 Marker found for children prior to 1900

2345

Thomas Oct 27 1858 15 yrs

67

Finn John 1884-1884

8 Finn Margaret 1880-1881

9

10

11

12

13

14

15 Japes Angela 1822-1838?

16 Japes Maria E 1861-1886

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

Bierman aurelia Jun 1895 20mo

Campbell Margaret aug 1879

Dunn Thomas d 1859-ag 15

Engleman Aloysius 1875 2 mo 21 days

Friedhoff Valentin b 1856  
 Gill Annie d 1880 ag 12  
 Groesbedk Alice Leona  
 Groesbeck Remi 1878 Oct 1879  
 Halmich Ehantz 1828-1835  
 Halmich August 1838  
 Kaltz Edna 1882 – 1883  
 Klinghammer William 1869-1876  
 Magam Bridget 1866 a 9 months  
 4105  
 Rickabus Frank 1885-1892  
 Friedhoff Valentin 1855 -  
 Rozanna Mary 1878- 1891  
 Rumph Rosa d1884 4 yrs  
 Rumph Caecelia d 1884 ag 2 yrs  
 Schnioblen Margarate d 1875 11 yrs?  
 Schuster Baby  
 Trombley Wilbert 1880 ag 17  
 Wold Johnny 1888-1891 ag 2  
 Bickman Frank 1900 or 01- 1902  
 Grene Clifford Feb 1902-Jun 22 1902  
 Grobbel 1901 1911 may  
 Jenuwine Harold J 1901-1919

There are years without records. 1850-1853, 1855, 1907-1911, 1922-1928 No known backup records were made.

Following this history is a combined index has 4218 entries. It shows there were about 309 actual children, and 1331 possible children indicated ( Certainly no where near all but many of those possibilities were actually children.) A Child (meaning young person) being defined as under 21 years of age. Over 800 burials date from the nineteenth century and over 1,500 burials prior to 1943. But only 28 markers have survived from the 1800s showing a child. Common sense will inform us that of the over 800 burials date from the nineteenth century if the average ratio of burials was 1.5 per adult (which it was and probably even higher due to non recording) that would mean about 1200 additional children buried who now do not have markers. (and over 1,500 burials prior to 1943.) There are virtually no stillborn markers. There were many childhood illnesses that caused children to die. Some families lost several children one right after another. From 1861-1897 there were 15-20 child burials for every 10 adults on average. After this time with better medical care and pasteurization the child death rate declined. And these are just the ones that made the record book. There were actually more. Some stillborns and day old babies were secretly buried. And remember not all burials

were recorded in the old days and many years of records are lost. Some families had plots they had paid for but the official position of the church at that time was that they were not accepting burials any longer.

Some babies are buried on top of another family casket. Newer burials are usually 3-6 feet deep. Old burials vary. If it was done in bad weather or during rain or show storms the grave was usually shallower because they were dug with a shovel and no machine involved. Also is the digger was sick or weak this may have affected the depth. If you disbelieve this try digging a grave by hand with just a shovel. Most people today could not dig a six foot deep by three foot wide grave if they had to.

See Mike Grobbel's website which have the following references

Mike has done an excellent job of recording our Center line History

The following is from [http://centerline.grobbel.org/sc/st\\_clement\\_cemetery.htm](http://centerline.grobbel.org/sc/st_clement_cemetery.htm)

### St. Clement Cemetery

Transcriptions of gravestones with dates of death from 1855 to 1953

Transcribed by Mrs. Lillian Toaz McCormick

(apparently from the DSGR Magazine, circa 1962)

[Page 1](#) | [Page 2](#) | [Page 3](#) | [Page 4](#) | [Page 5](#) | [Page 6](#)

Additional arkives are located at

<http://www.usgwarchives.net/mi/tsphoto/macomb/stclement.htm>

They have pictures of about 150 grave stones.

Note I hope to have pictures here of all of them.

This history is as yet still incomplete and I need further information to make it better.

Signed Wesley Arnold historical researcher