

Warren's Oldest Cemetery Bulldozed



Above is Bunert Road at left side. The top of the foto is South. the right wide is West. The location is just south of Martin Road. The Bunert red farm house is labeled as is the Bunert, Bidell, Green, Hessel, Indian Pioneer Cemetery. The C Bunert farm is located at the top right and the A Bunert farm at the left middle. The Dark square was the cemetery covered mostly in Lilac bushes. the mound was around eighteen inches (not feet) high and was surrounded by packed down dirt from vehicles. It had its own access dirt single land road directly to Martin.

Our area had many cemeteries. For thousands of years persons who died were left to be eaten by animals. Europeans also often left the dead to be eaten by animals. After 1818 settlers buried their dead in shallow graves not far from where they died in the back yard, without a casket or stone marker. After 1850-1855 most of the dead were buried in one of three cemeteries: The Bidell-Green-Weier Cemetery, The Warren Union Cemetery or the St Clement Cemetery. After 1880 many were buried at Mt Olivet. There were almost no grave stone makers locally until after 1855. Many were buried without a casket or marker. Both the St Clement and Warren Union cemeteries date from 1850-1855 but both appear to be preceded by the Bidell-Green-Weier Cemetery. In Warren Township the oldest **recorded** cemetery burials were at the Warren Union Cemetery, followed by the St Clement Cemetery. But between the A Bunert Farmhouse and the C Bunert Farmhouse Just N of Martin Road and West of Bunert Road, was an Indian mound which was reported to be "18 feet tall". It was most likely an Indian burial mound but this is uncertain.

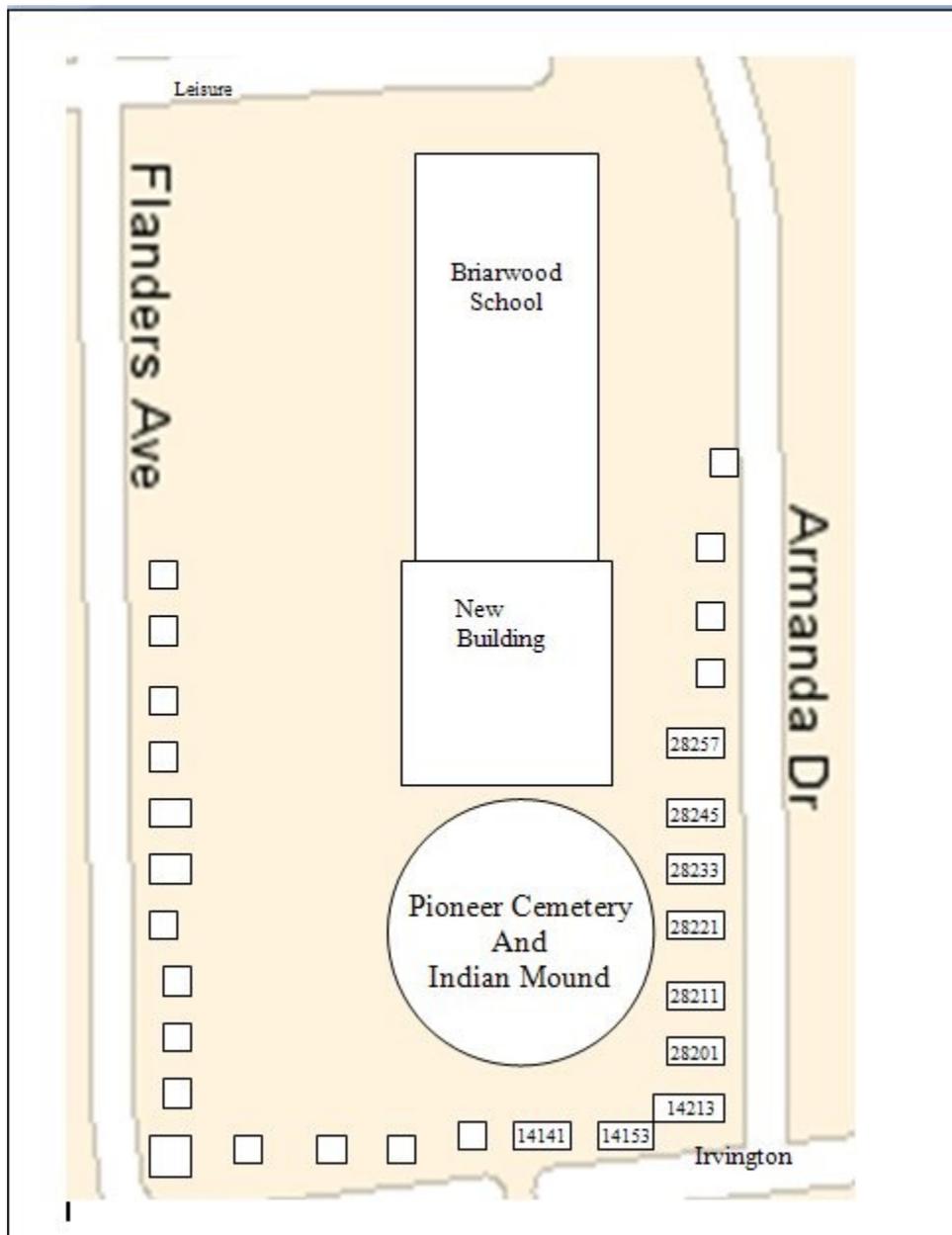
This mound existed prior to the settlement of their farm in 1849. It had become overgrown with weeds and shrubs so much that it was not particularly recognizable as an Indian mound and was missed on the early surveys. The settlers certainly were not in the habit of building mounds 18 feet high. The humble historian traced the 18 foot source to a newspaper article which used ' for feet. It is entirely possible that the symbol should have been a “ which would mean that the mound was only 18 inches high. This is much more likely. This would also explain why it was not noticed in the mounds survey done by Hinsdale and others. The family reported that Indians came around often in the early days. They would read the sun like a clock and would disappear when the sun reached a certain angle. Indian artifacts have been found in the area. Local legends also give credence to the Indian mound theory. This area is generally flat and there is no logical geological explanation for a sand mound given the flatness of the surrounding area. Also considering that there was at least evidence of forty human remains removed from this site and that no archeologist was called in to evaluate the site so that there may have been other evidence that was certainly overlooked. Also consider that at least two dump truck loads of remains were trucked out of the site before it was discovered that at least one of them contained human bones. The family reported that other families sometimes brought relatives there for burial. I talked with one of the older Weiers and was told that their grand parents told them of a man who carried his dead baby for several miles to have it buried there as it was the only cemetery he knew about. Around this landmark early settlers from several families buried their dead. They probably did not know or care if it was an Indian mound or not. Whether or not it was will probably remain unknown as the evidence was destroyed and removed. Early farmers often raided Indian mounds to get pots. There was a road that led from Martin road directly to this cemetery. I have it on an aerial foto and showing the mound in the 1960s. I shall call it the Bunert-Indian Pioneer Cemetery for shortness but it was supposedly registered on the State of Michigan registry as the Bidell-Green-Weier Cemetery. I saw a 8 mm movie in about 1970 showing three burial vaults in which bones were being piled to be buried at Clinton Grove. It is now located on the southern half of the Briarwood school property. I spoke with the undertaker who performed the last removals. I found newspaper articles. And weirdly also found reports of ghost sightings believe it or not.

By the 1960s it was overgrown with Lilac shrubs that waved in the breeze. The Lilacs were planted by other families to mark the burial places but had become overgrown over the years. The family was forced by economic reasons to sell the property. The school district would have taken the property anyway as they wanted to build a school there. It was transferred about 1966. Mrs. Ida Weier told the school district that it was a burial ground and wanted all remains to be treated in a Christian manner. Bunert family burials were removed and reinterred at the Clinton Grove Cemetery in Mt Clemens. There were no other stone markers and all of the wood markers had rotted away and the little stone pebble markers were displaced so it was not particularly recognizable as a burial ground. But she also warned the principal that it was a burial ground. He called her a crazy lady. During construction a skull and other human bones were discovered. (Per Tri City Progress 4 14-1967) In May of 1969 children playing in the school playground discovered more human remains. Imagine the look of shock on the teachers face when they brought the remains into the classroom. Later the principal went over to Ida Weiers house and wanted to question her about the remains. She reminded him that he had branded her a crazy lady for even suggesting that it was a burial ground. One contractor dug a load of dirt for fill dirt and dropped it off on someone's property. The homeowner receiving the fill dirt found skulls and human bones and called the police who contacted the contractor. Imagine asking for fill dirt and getting human remains dropped off in your driveway. Wow was he in trouble. It wasn't very long when that kids were also showing off human remains from the mound. That finally got the officials attention. The school district wanted everything hushed up so no archeologists were called in and in fact it was them who hired a funeral director. The school certainly did not anyone to discover that this was anything other than a single family burial plot. But human remains **of at least 40 humans** were removed from what was left of the mound and the rest of the area was not explored. Historian Wesley Arnold states that he saw movies of this mound being excavated.

William DuRoss the funeral director mentioned that Theuts, Greens, Hessels, and Schoenhers were probably buried there. So it was for sure a pioneer cemetery. Whether or not it was also the remains of an Indian burial ground had not been determined by scientific investigation and will never be never known as the evidence has been removed and scattered. And even though a few bones were removed the balance of the

remains of those pioneer families remain underground. This historian does not believe in ghosts but must report many of sightings over the years by homeowners adjacent to the Briarwood School property. Several families and even children have reported sightings and strange happenings there. As a historian I am honor bound to tell the truth. Strange. This historian feels that a plaque should be erected at least on the on a bench on the grass next to the paved path that goes around the ball field that would and mark this as at least a pioneer cemetery. See historian Wesley Arnold's CD of Warren-Center Line Records which has pictures of all of the old grave stones in both Warren's Union Cemetery and St Clement's Cemetery. These two cemeteries hold most of the remains of the pioneers of Warren.

The Warren Union Cemetery has estimated 1000-3000 graves. The plaque erected there states only 325 but the persons who did that plaque did not consider the county or village records or other research on pioneer families and did not even do a study to estimate how many people were buried there. They also did not consider baby graves which are unmarked. Even today still born and day old baby graves most often go unmarked. St Clement's has over 1,500 burials prior to 1943. But this is an under count as they are missing records for many years.



After much research including consulting maps of that time and interviewing many people it appears that the location is as above in regard to present buildings. The cemetery also appears to have extended into the back yards of houses on West side of Amanda Dr possibly from 28245-28201. It is also possible that the cemetery could have extended into the land onto which the houses were actually built. The builder did not inform the buyers of the houses that their property was on a cemetery . If someone wants more accurate measurements simply compare old aerial maps with newer ones. The problem of course is how extensive was this cemetery and where were burials made prior to the earliest aerial maps. When I interviewed now deceased family members they reported that Indians often came around to visit the cemetery. This leads to speculation but not proof that it may have been also an Indian burial ground. The alleged unproven sighting by more than one old resident of an Indian woman apparition adds more mystery to this site. Although this historian does not believe in ghosts reports of sightings by children and supported by animal behavior deepen the mystery further. Perhaps you could stay on the cemetery for a few full nights and report back to us on your findings.