



Unmarked Graves

Throughout the United States, Michigan and the World there are many more unmarked graves than marked ones.

Let's examine the facts and see if the facts support the above.

Are your grand parents graves marked? **What about those many family babies who died at birth and who weren't talked about, do they have a marker?** I have a brother and sister both without markers and don't I don't have the money to pay the exorbitant fees and expenses to place a stone on their graves even though I know where the graves are in a well at Forest Lawn cemetery.

Do your great grand parents have a marker? Now repeat that question for a few more generations back. Most families soon run out of locations and also end up with the statement "there is no marker."

How many generations have there been where there now is no marker? Using four generations per 100 years times the number of great grand parents and their brothers and sisters (the average family size being 12 including an average of 2 infant deaths) And remember you have 4 grandparents, 8 great grand parents, 16 great great grand parents and so on. The average family gets into the no marker at the great grand parent level. So that would be $8 + 16 + 32 + 64 + 128 + 256 + 512 + 1024 + 2048 + 4096 + 8192 + 16384 + 32768 + 65536 + 131072 + 262144 + 54288 + 1,048,576 + 2,097,152$ (that is back only 500 years) of course the above cannot continue because of inter marriage between families.

Researchers state that evidence shows that our species (Homo sapiens) has been on this planet for at least 200,000 years. Divide that by 4 generations per hundred years and we get 50,000 generations. So 50,000 generations times lets guess 50,000 gggggggggggggggg

grandparents = 2,500,000,000 or whatever **Enough to make the point that there are far more unmarked graves than marked graves.**

On November 17, 2010 at the Post Cemetery on Mackinac Island, a headstone was placed at the grave site of infant Robert D. Walsh over 117 years after his death at Fort Mackinac. The stillborn son of Private Walter J. Walsh and his wife, Fort Mackinac Hospital Matron Caroline Walsh, was buried at the Post Cemetery on Mackinac Island after his death on August 17, 1892 at Fort Mackinac.

"By properly marking this grave site, we are able to honor the wishes of the family and bring greater historical accuracy to this cemetery," said Mackinac State Historic Parks Director Phil Porter.

Mt Olivet cemetery open from 1888, Mt. Elliott from 1841 was a long wagon trek in bad weather from Warren. **Staff members of many cemeteries have stated that they have hundreds of children buried without markers.** St Clement Cemetery from 1854 is a sister pioneer cemetery to Warren Union Cemetery in Warren Michigan. **Records show 451 child and 299 adult burials before 1898 of which only 28 markers now show a child burial. That gives a ratio of 1.5 child burials for each adult.** There were 17 scattered years when there were about twice the children buried than adults. 5 years had about three times the child burials. One year had 12 times and one year 4 times.

One old caretaker in Warren area admitted that there were a huge number of graves with no marker visible and that they actually had to probe with a rod before they dared dig a new grave. In the old days markers would fall down in the depression made when the old wood caskets caved in and in time covered over. Many mowers were pressed into service and the less markers the faster they could get the mowing done. St Clement had about 1,500 burials prior to 1943. The above is verifiable.

Warren Union Cemetery is aside the Red Run along Chicago Road East of Ryan. Pioneer farmer Peter Gillette sold a parcel of land in 1845 to eighteen families for a burial ground. Each family bought an area of ten feet by thirty feet. This was enough for 10-12 adults plus several children plus several infants that could possibly be buried above adult burials if needed. In addition burial plots were sold to many other pioneer families and the cemetery was expanded several times. If there were lets say 100 families from this time at only 12 persons per owner that would be 1200 burials which is more than the surviving stones in 2012. There are only about 35 surviving readable stones possibly out of those first owners.

Warren Union Cemetery has 1-3000 graves after subtracting aisles and drives. And it was considered filled up by WWII.

Consider that the old section was considered full by 1945. Proof of that is in the fact that many of those old families had to buy plots in other cemeteries because their local lots were full, even if markers had not been placed on them. Even Dorothy Cummings states her father had to buy lots in other cemeteries.

Township records, newspaper articles and stories indicate that pauper burials were also done there. They were buried at the back some perhaps outside of the current fence. Remember there was no fence there until 1986.

Many stillborns, infant and child burials were not recorded.

An examination of county records shows that of the 150 stones with children's names at Warren Union Cemetery only 12 were recorded.

Families who suffered stillborn or baby deaths did not usually want a big funeral or a stone as there was a stigma about this. The family home served as the funeral home and most families just buried the remains in the cemetery quickly and privately and did not want a marker to remind them of a stillborn or sickly often unnamed baby which would prolong the sorrow of the guilt ridden grief stricken mother.

Looking at Warren's sister cemetery (St Clement with good records) there were about 1.5-2 child burials per adult burial prior to 1900.

The infant mortality rate back then was very high sometimes over 200 per 1000 per annum so this over years indicate a few hundred.

Old county death records of Warren show there are 500 child deaths per 1000 deaths average but that is probably only ¼ actual child deaths as most were unregistered.

The sister cemetery with good records indicates possibly 1200-2000 per 1000 adults buried. Since Warren Union Cemetery has around 1000 surviving stones that would indicate 1200-2000 children minus the 150 child markers leaves 1050-1850 possible additional unmarked child graves. Of course we don't know the exact number but for sure there were more children buried there than there are stones for now.

And it is known that virtually no stillborns and very few babies were marked by stones.

Our area had many burial places. For thousands of years persons who died were often eaten by animals. Europeans also often left the dead to be eaten by animals. After 1800 settlers buried their dead in shallow graves not far from where they died in the back yard, without a casket or stone marker.

There were many deaths from many diseases we now have cures for which killed many babies, children and adults. Sometimes there were multiple deaths of children in the same family and some died within days of each other. Some may have been placed in the same grave and no marker ever put there.

Remember that there were no funeral homes and that the corpse remained in the family home until burial.

Burial was carried out quickly before WWII. I have diaries from those days that often show a person died and was most often buried the next day. Families did not want a body even of a loved one in the home for long particularly if they had died of an unknown cause. There were fears that what killed the corpse would kill others. Fluids would leak out of the corpse and there were often terrible odors. Within as little as four hours after death decomposition in different body areas may cause tissue gas to form from the bacteria *Clostridium perfringens*. This is particularly true if a contaminate is present such as vomit, feces, a wound,

sores, inflammation, gangrene, etc. The result is a skunk like odor and gasses released. If the house is heated in the winter or if it is summer this is compounded. Decomposition in a part of a corpse can in just a few hours spread to other parts of the body thru fluids and bacteria in the corpse. Terrible fluids would leak out of the corpse. And ask anyone who has slept with a corpse in the next room spooky to be sure and terrifying to children and some adults. There were no funeral homes and no refrigeration or embalming. So in the old days corpse was buried sometimes the same day or the next day and as soon as a grave could be dug which was by hand using pick and shovel. Church services were held as soon as possible.

Sometimes in the family members and diggers were weak or due to rain, snow, frost, cold or other problems the grave may not have been dug deeply in the old days before undertakers and machinery. In the old days in rural America, which is what Warren Township was, families buried their own with just a shovel and sometimes with just a shroud. And those who think that every burial was in a six foot deep 3 foot by 6 foot hole should try digging one to understand the magnitude of the work involved in doing that by hand with only a shovel. Even those who have dug a grave for a family dog in the back yard can attest to the work involved. It was many hours of very hard work. Now days grave heaters thaw the ground in the winter and mechanical diggers do the work in a short time regardless of the weather. Pumps can even pump out the water in the hole. When I placed a stone in a family plot on another cemetery the sexton warned me to be careful digging even for a shallow foundation for the stone as he stated he discovered that sometimes old graves were not dug very deep. With the wooden casket rotted away human bones were all that is left and as a hand shovel planted them there a hand shovel sometimes unintentionally disturbs them many years later. In the back bones were discovered but no one bothered to investigate. Quite some time ago a skull was found exposed there. The fact is this cemetery has been neglected, ignored, vandalized, eroded, abused and I can testify that very few people care about it.

Stillborn burials were sometimes placed on top of a prior burial or in a shallower grave. Remember this was a very rural area and was mostly farmland. The village itself just had a few little shops but they were way East of here. This was surrounded by farmland and trees so anyone could actually come here and bury a body and probably not be questioned. Of course with time as the area farms were sub-divided that changed. But still people still have their drunken doings and affairs here and as a caretaker for the church I end up picking up their whiskey bottles and condoms. And as crowded as it is now few calls are made to the police. Just a note I found that a few have been scared off by the dark thing here but I am not about to research that and can't verify it. Myself and others have felt the children here at least by day. I have given night tours to researchers can't say we saw anything but we felt sort of a creepy presence. Perhaps it was within us from seeing too many horror movies. Don't know.

Also consider that many stillborns and newborns graves were **were rarely marked**. Many were **buried on top of regular already used lots**. Very few of these were noted on any existing grave stone. Even now many families have baby graves without markers. Consider that **the older graves were most often not marked by stones at all**

There were no grave stone makers in Warren The body was laid out at the family home for friends to see. Sometimes a coffin was constructed but that depended if there were planks available and someone who had a saw and was skilled enough to make one. Many were buried without a casket or marker on the farm as there were few cemeteries around. Families often did not have money to pay for a cemetery lot. Often several family members died within a short time due to diseases we now have cures for such as scarlet fever, cholera, diphtheria, small pox, etc.

Researchers have done the math of all of the above and say that there is high probability that hundreds of children are buried at Warren Union Cemetery without markers.

And we already know that many adults in the very old families were buried there without markers. The famous John L Beebe family is there (without markers) and many other prominent Warren families don't show up on records of any other cemeteries and are most likely buried at Warren Union Cemetery.

But the people who chose the wording for the cemetery plaque just counted surviving stones and did not do a good job at that. They did not do any research or consult any researchers. So their misinformed figure of 325 graves is wrong and misleading. Of course since it is now pressed into a metal monument it has become the sacred gospel of the Warren Historical Society. Just like those who say the world is flat and the sun goes around it they look at the absence of child markers say can't be children buried there. And we researchers and scientists ask OK then where were the children buried from Warren?

Most Cemeteries in the world including those of Macomb County Michigan have unmarked graves. Many old ones like Millar along Metro Parkway east of Schoenherr have almost no readable stones left. We could also state the fact that most burials of past years were not in cemeteries at all rather were in locations close to the site of death and are virtually unmarked. In Europe catacombs abound underground with thousands of unmarked bones. I have been there and seen them. Macaber to say the least but true facts nevertheless. Creepy isn't it.

The writer of this article who is a historical researcher has read and indexed Warren Union Cemetery in Warren Michigan, St Clement Cemetery in Center line Michigan, Brookside, Perkins and Morehead in Fairgrove Michigan and Watrusville in Watrusville Michigan. He has also photographed all visible stones and published the research to local libraries and made it available free on the internet.

Countless family cemeteries across the United States suffer this problem. But there is help. Researchers are identifying locations of family burials and inexpensive markers can be made to mark the graves. The writer has made cement markers by just pouring mortar cement into a rectangular mold then using cement stamps to put in the letters and numbers. The cost is minimal. The letters are then painted inside with black paint then a cement sealer applied to the top of the entire marker. This results in a marker that should last many years. No they are not of the same quality as a professional monument company marker and cement will not outlast granite. But cement marker bricks do the job and meet the need of marking graves or adding information to a site.

See [Save a Grave](#)