

The Gravestones of St Clement Cemetery Center Line Michigan in Warren Township

Compiled by Prof Wesley E Arnold MA humble historian

Note this is a work in progress. I am putting this up a few pages at a time as I add them. If I live long enough you will have all of the stones.

Also I plan to redo several of the pictures with side lighting to better see the inscriptions/

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WHERE THEY BURN BOOKS THEY WILL BURN MEN.
Where they take away freedoms
THEY WILL TAKE AWAY MEN!

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Visit my Historical web site at **macombhistory.us** where there are lots of pictures.
See some of my other 40 or so books

For most of the history of our area there were no cemeteries as we know them.

After 1845-1855 most of the dead were buried in one of six places 1 on the farm: 2 The Bidell-Green-Weier Cemetery, 3 The Warren Union Cemetery, 4 The St Clement Cemetery. or in a Detroit cemetery like Mt Elliot, or in Oakland County cemeteries. After 1880 some were buried at Mt Olivet on Van Dyke near Six Mile Road. There were almost no grave stone makers locally until after 1855. Many were buried without a casket or engraved stone marker. Often wooden markers were used. Of course these are long gone.

The St Clement Cemetery is located on Engleman West of Van Dyke. The first known recorded burial was March 27, 1854. According to Marie Miller the church secretary, my first estimate of many years ago was an under estimate. (It was Over 800 burials date from the nineteenth century and over 1,500 burials prior to 1943.) Her new estimate as of 2013 is 3,300 total and 1351 prior to 1900.

Many record writers should be punished because of their disregard for clear writing and poor record keeping. Hundreds of names are unreadable. There are years without records. 1850-1853, 1855, 1907-1911, 1922-1928 Heard this may have been to careless smoking. No known backup records were made. They wrote in Latin and Latinized peoples names.

Just because a name is listed on the record 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 former fire chief and a caretaker at the cemetery, 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 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 was 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. Lastly these names have to be studied, and revised into correctness based on handwriting, and other records. This will take a few more years of research. With each new priest at St Clements old workers are fired and new ones are hired. This often leads to no continuity particularly in regard to the cemetery. Valuable knowledge is lost. A caretaker at St Clement admitted that in the older parts of the cemetery they go exploring for caskets and stones before they dig. They use a metal rod to probe for a stone or casket. And when they dig they watch for bones because the old wooden coffins have deteriorated into dirt as have some of the bones. Sometimes all that is left is teeth and perhaps a metal button or belt buckle. It was reported in 2011 that St Clement may have lost some of its records and Wesley Arnold may now have more old records than they do. The good news is he publishes all of his research for all to see and for free. I went there to do a little research and they refused to give me information on a death that was over 100 years old. They told me that only family members could get this. Well all of the family members are dead. I told them that I was the person who rescued their cemetery record book from the trash 30 years ago and 6 years ago I was the one who filmed their cemetery records and that they are using my CD disk I gave them to look up records even now. But in the last few years they have failed to maintain the records and make back up records. Their refusal to share 100 year old records with the very historian who saved their records and put a lot of time and effort in saving their records was unjustified and ignorant. But this lack of adequate care of priceless records is the norm around the world. At least St Clement had fairly good records although many are unreadable and many years are totally missing. The two other Warren pioneer cemeteries have no surviving records at all.

More research needs to be done into the early years.

The pictures that follow are of mostly the oldest stones. I want to redo many of them to get better quality pictures and to make the engraving easier to read. That will take much time and effort. If I die before this task is done it would be of benefit if someone would complete this work for the benefit of our community (which is my purpose as all of my books are given away for free.)

Best Wishes to all from Prof Wesley E Arnold humble historian.