

Mouth Cemetery
Est. 1837
By Barbara Bedau Brow



The oldest known cemetery in the area, and possible in the county, is Mouth Cemetery in White River Township. Located on a lofty hilly perch, not far from the shores of Lake Michigan, at the end of a dirt road winding through a densely wooded area you will finally come to this historic cemetery. Measuring about three acres in size, it contains approximately 300 graves of which about half of them date to the 19th century.



The oldest marked grave is that of Christian Merke which dates to 1851.

The oldest known settler buried there is Quis Mo Qua, an Ottawa woman who was born in an Indian settlement on the Grand River and came to the White Lake area as a young girl. It is believed that she was born in 1787 and she died 12 December 1897. She had married an Ottawa Indian who went by the surname of Anderson.



Another old timer is Captain William Robinson, the first lighthouse keeper of the area. He died in 1919.

Long before White River Township existed, there was a large Native American village located near the mouth of the White River. Information shows that a great massacre occurred between the tribes on the north shore of White Lake in the mid-1600s. Many of those who died are buried there in unmarked graves.

With the establishment of a post office in 1854, the area became a thriving lumber town. Although the earliest found tombstone in the cemetery was 1851, it is believed that burials may have occurred there

as early as the 1830s. Many of them were buried with simple wooden crosses to mark their graves, which have since deteriorated over time.

In 1859 all of the township records were reportedly burn by the city officials after it was found to be impossible to reconcile the financial records. Along with those records, the burial records were also destroyed.

Some associate the Mouth Cemetery with Professor Joseph Sadony. They are of the belief that some dilapidated buildings visible through the woods are the remnants of his laboratory. This, however, is not the truth.

Admittedly, the cemetery does not have well-manicured lawns with gravestones all in neat rows. An old wrought iron and intricately designed wire fence was the only thing that outlined the cemetery for many years. In the mid 1980's funds were secured and a new wrought iron fence was installed.

Because of its neglected appearance, it seemed to become a "hangout" place of drinking and mischief. In 1987 vandals uprooted several gravestones, while others were broken off their bases. Almost 100 decorative "spears" attached to the top of the railing were broken off and a vehicle was driven into the newly installed wrought-iron fence. Fortunately, the vandals were quickly apprehended.

In 1989 Mouth Cemetery was placed on the State Register of Historic Sites.