

Residents of Duck Lake Cemetery

By Barbara Bedau Brow
White Lake Area Historical Society



Stairs at Duck Lake Cemetery & Plaque



Duck Lake Cemetery is located on a wooded lot north of the Duck Lake Channel in Fruitland Township, Muskegon County. It is also known as Mears Cemetery and Fruitland Township Cemetery West. An overgrown historically rich site, it dates back to the 1800s and contains many unmarked graves of early settlers. It is believed that some men from the early Duck Lake sawmill were buried there, as well as mention of a body that washed up on the beach. Some of the notable burials include members of the Austin and O'Connell families. The last known burial took place in 1937.

Here are the 21 names of those who are known to have been buried there. Where possible, additional information, brief history or story about them is provided.

(1) Elmira Ann (ne Carey) Stuben Ader – She was born Elmira Ann Carey in New York on 4 April 1837 to Oliver Carey and his wife Ann M. Baldwin. Around 1856 she married DeWitt C. Stuben (1835-1879) and they had 4 children. Then on 6 October 1883 she married Thomas Ader (1810-1902) in Whitehall. Elmira died in Fruitland Township on 20 September 1903.

(2&3) Two Austin Babies who both died during 1880. Parents: John R. and Almina Austin. No additional records were found.

(4) Baby Girl Austin – Born on 22 June 1883. Died on 22 June 1883 in Fruitland Township. Parents: John and Almina Austin. The Muskegon County Death Record indicated the unnamed female lived for ½ a day.

(5) John Robert Austin – John was born in May 1845 in Wheeling, Ohio County, West Virginia. By the 1870s he had made his way to Grand Rapids, Michigan where he married Miss Almina “Mina” Miller Merriman on 23 August 1875. She was the daughter of Charles N. Merriman and Elmina Covell Miller.

In 1880 they moved to the settlement at Duck Lake where they started a fruit farm on the Michillinda Pines property. In addition to the three infants who died, they also had three daughters who were listed by name in Mrs. J. R. Austin’s obituary. They were: Mina Elma Berner (1878-1953), Mary Elva (1882-1900), and Elvira Leona O’Connell (1890-1928).

After John died on 16 January 1906, his wife continued to operate the summer resort at Michillinda Pines until she sold it to Mrs. W. H. Lewis. When Mrs. Austin died in Chicago in November 1935 her obituary indicated she was survived by her daughter Mrs. Fred Berner (Mina Elma) and her son-in-law J. E. O’Connell, at whose home she passed.

(6) Mary R. (ne Clough) Bradley – Mary was the daughter of Moses and Penelope Clough. She was born in June 1857 in Detroit. On 18 December 1907, at the age of 49, she married William F. Bradley. Mary died in Detroit on 27 September 1921.

(7) Samuel Campbell – Samuel was born in Londonderry, Ireland in 1845. He worked as a Handyman to the J. R. Austin family. The 1920 census showed him as a farm laborer with the Austin & O’Connell household. Samuel died in Fruitland Township on 24 Mar 1932 and requested that he be buried at Duck Lake Cemetery.

(8) Moses Nelson Clough – Moses was born on 22 December 1819 the son of Moses and Elizabeth (ne Moody) Clough. He married Jane Penelope Lamphere on 1 March 1848 in Plymouth, Wayne, Michigan. They had two children, a daughter Mary R (1851-1921) and a son Moses N (1859-1929). Moses died on 27 Apr 1899.

(9) Moses Nelson Clough – Born on 18 November 1859 in Detroit, he was the son of Moses N. and Jane P. (ne Lamphere) Clough. On 17 March 1913, at the age of 54, he married for the first time to Augusta Hess, age 42, in Owosso. His occupation at the time was listed as horseman. He died on 11 October 1929 in Detroit.

(10) Ole Johnson – He was born in Norway on 5 April 1805. He was the father of Ole A. Olson. He and his son immigrated to America in 1855 where they first settled in Wisconsin. In 1861 Ole and his son came to Fruitland Township and took up a homestead in Section 31 on Lake Michigan south of Duck Lake. Ole died on 10 July 1897. He buried near his grandchildren Jennie and John Olson.

(11) Elmina Covell (ne Miller) Merriman – She was born on 15 December 1831 in Southfort, Elmira, New York. She married Charles N. Merriman on 18 October 1853 in Southfort, New York. They had 2 children of record: a son Edgar A. who died at the age of 13 years and daughter Almina who became Mrs. J. R. Austin. Elmina Merriman died at Michillinda on 18 February 1895.

(12) Charles N. Merriman was born in Otisco, New York in 1827. Following the death of his first wife, he married Pamelia Strong of Elmira, New York. She died at Hartford, MI in 1907. After moving to Florida, he married Mrs. Eliza Merry at Orlando in 1911. She survived Charles when he died on 20 March 1917 at the age of 90 years.

Merriman was one of the pioneer fruit growing industries in Western Michigan. In the early 1870s he was extensively engaged in the nursery business in Grand Rapids where he was associated in business with the late A. T. Linderman. Merriman came to White Lake in 1877 and settled at Duck Lake. In 1895 forty acres of his farm, known as “The Pines” was purchased by the Michillinda Beach Association as a summer resort.

(13) Eada Olson – She was born to Ole T. and Mary Olson. Using the age in years/months/days listed on her death record, her birthdate was calculated to be 12 September 1886. She died on 23 December 1887 from whooping cough.

(14) John/Johnny Olson – Born on 28 April 1872, the second child of Ole A. and Johanna Matilda Olson. He died on 4 January 1874. Cause of death listed as Poison. He was buried near his Grandfather Ole Johnson.

(15) Jennie/Jenny Olson – Born on 1 April 1874, she was the third child of Ole A. and Johanna Matilda Olson. She died on 17 February 1875. No record of cause has been found. She was the Granddaughter of Ole Johnson and is buried near him.

(16) Johannas F. Peterson – Some records spell his first name Johanas and have him born in Sweden. Civil War records indicate he was born on 14 January 1835 in Norway. According to his obituary, he lived in this area for nearly 50 years and was never married. He died on 15 July 1910. His funeral was held at the home of Frank Johnson of Michillinda where he had been residing for a number of years.

(17) Annie Renner – Born on 3 May 1906 and died on 16 May 1906. She was the infant daughter of Max and Mary (ne Scheck) Renner.

(18) Johnny Sauter – Still born on 17 January 1907. He was the fifth child of Joseph (1857-1948) & Alvina (ne Steinheifer) Sauter (1866-1938). Their other four children included: Lillie (1890-1966); Bertha (1892-1960); Joseph (1894-1983) and August (1897-1983). While Johnny is buried in Duck Lake Cemetery, his parents are buried in Fruitland Township Cemetery.

(19) John Frederick Thompson – Records indicate he was born on 31 Dec 1827 in Germany. He immigrated some time in 1855. On 1 February 1870, he married 39-year-old Mary Jane (ne Stoneburner) Robinson, widow of Stephen H. Robinson, in Grand Haven. This was his second marriage. John died on 10 May 1906 at his home in Fruitland Township. His death certificate indicated that he was the parent of 7 children, with only 1 still living when he passed. His surviving son Henry A. “Hank” (1869-1945) provided the information on the death certificate. Cause of death was pneumonia with old age and liver trouble contributing.

(20) Edwin M. Wilson – Born on 15 May 1862 in New York. He was the oldest child of Jerome and Mary Angeline Wilson. After he came to this area, he was a store and dance hall owner as well as a land developer at Sylvan Beach. He died at Mercy Hospital in Muskegon on 20 June 1938.

(21) Jerome Wilson – Born on 14 September 1835 in New York. He was the son of Manoah and Elega Ann (ne Acker) Wilson. He married a woman named Mary Angeline and they had three children: Edwin M. (1862-1938); Burdetta B. (1865-1888); Adelbert D. (1867-?) Jerome died in Fruitland Township on 16 January 1918, at the age of 82 years 4 months 2 days.

The Bi-Centennial Committee of 1976 dedicated a plaque in honor of the early deceased settlers of the Duck Lake trading post and settlement as well as the lumber jacks, sea disaster victims and the Indians who lived on the shores.