

Sprague's Corners – Wheat
A Ghost Town

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Today there are but two stone markers left in a cemetery to show where Sprague's Corners – also called Wheat – once existed. Located on Petoskey (State) Road, this small but busy stagecoach stop was important for travelers and settlers.

After the first sawmills were built, people moving to Whitehall would first stop at Sprague's Corners to rest and change horses.

Just east of present-day Whitehall Road in Whitehall Township, there was a combined church and schoolhouse in one building. Nearby, there was a blacksmith shop, a store, a hotel, and a barn where fresh horses waited for travelers heading to the busy new town of Whitehall.

A newspaper article from January 1978 described Sprague's Corners as being created by a group of people who came from Indiana and wanted sand land where they could raise fruit, and liking what they found they came to Michigan.

Sprague's Corners was about 12 miles long and eight miles wide and the State Road had to stop there. The Wheat Cemetery and hotel and stage barn were west of the trail and the school was in the middle of the Whitehall Road. The church was on the south side of the town line road and across from the doctor's office.

The cemetery consisted of about one acre of ground and contained the remains of between 60 to 80 white settlers. There were also several Native Americans buried in the southwest half of the cemetery. The cemetery showed that the town was well-established. Graves were marked with white wooden crosses and simple stones. Rev. Griffith (aka Griffin), who preached at the church-

school, was also buried there as well as the baby daughter of Samuel and Caroline Bronner who died c1865-70. Over time, the shifting sands and winds from Lake Michigan uncovered many of the coffins. Later some of the graves were moved because the land was located in the midst of the "blow". The last burial in the cemetery reportedly took place in 1884.

Two stone markers are all that is left. The oldest marker, which was broken by a fallen tree and later smashed by vandals reads, "A. P. Lanphar...65 Years...3 Months...Died March 6, 1873. No base for the marker has been located. The other marker is for a Civil War veteran named Amasa B. Trowbridge, who died in 1882.

Due to the early passing of A. P. Lanphar and limited available records, no more information could be found about him.

Amasa Trowbridge was born in New York in 1836. He married Irene E. Lyman (1839-1874) in Macomb County on 30 January 1864. They had a son Royal (1870-1966).

Amasa enlisted in the Army of the North on 30 August 1864. He served in Co. G, 3rd Michigan Infantry. He was captured at Appomattox in the closing days of the war in the East. Escaping, he was then sent to Texas where considerable fighting was still going on. On 1 May 1865 he transferred to Company A. He mustered out on 25 May 1866 and returned to the old stage community. He died sometime after 1 June 1880 while he and his son were living in Dalton, as that was when the census was taken.

Information indicates that in 1921 a group of Boy Scouts located the cemetery. At that time there were about a half dozen graves that were marked, and it had a fence around it. In 1925, Scout Leader Russell Shuler rediscovered it.

In October 1964 an application was made to acquire the military headstone for Amasa Trowbridge.

Once again, the Boy Scouts came to the rescue of the cemetery. In October 2022, as his Eagle Scout project, Kaiden Sylvester along with about two dozen volunteers began the task of removing brush and small trees and leaves. They cleared and mulched a path to the gravesite.

Sprague's Corners remains a ghost town. Everything from the once busy town is gone, leaving just the two stone markers to tell its story.