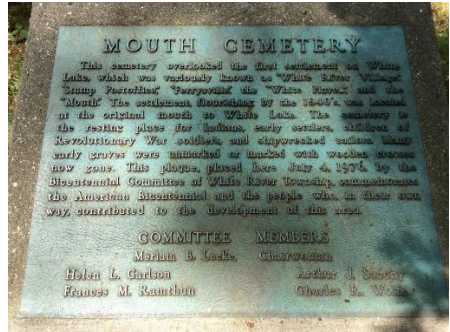
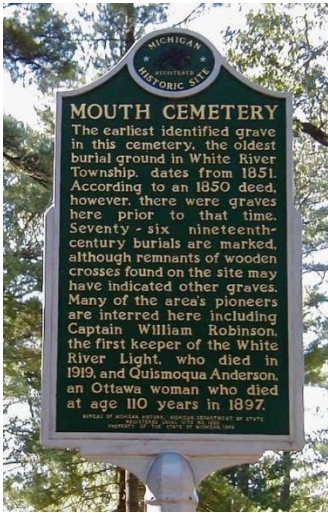




Mouth Cemetery July 16, 2026 White Lake Area Historical Society



The oldest known cemetery in the area is the Mouth Cemetery in White River Township, which was established sometime between the mid-1830s and 1850. No one knows for sure when the first person was buried there. There are no records for when the Cemetery started. There are no records for White River Township from 1848 to 1859 to help find information about the cemetery.

Located on a lofty hilly perch, not far from the shores of Lake Michigan, at the end of a dirt road which winds through a dense wooded area, is where you will find 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 earliest mention of graves at this location was in a deed Ansel Hulbert made to William M. Ferry on November 15, 1849. Ansel mentioned two acres that "...will include the graves now on said lot and which the parties of the first part hereby with the said party of the second part to convey to some proper Municipal Corporation capable of holding the same for a burying ground..." The same description was again described in a deed when William Ferry sold the land to Newell Avery in 1864.

In the early days it is told that 39 lives were lost when an epidemic swept through a passenger ship that was crossing Lake Michigan. They buried those who died in the cemetery with just wooden crosses to mark their graves, which have all since deteriorated.

The oldest marked grave is that of Sarah Jane Beatrice, wife of Charles Beatrice, who died 28 February 1851 at the age of 29 years.

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 on 12 December 1897 at the age of

110 years. She had married an Ottawa Indian who went by the surname of Anderson.

Another old timer is Captain William Robinson III, the first and longest serving keeper of the White River Light Station. Construction on the light house finally began in 1875 and Capt. Robinson even helped with some of the masonry work on the lighthouse himself, since it was the home that he and his family would be living in. He died 2 April 1919, at the age of 87 years, after serving as light keeper for over 47 years.

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 were buried there in unmarked graves.

With the establishment of a post office in 1854, the area became a thriving lumber town with a mill located at the bottom of the hill. Lumbermen, fishermen and sailors were probably also buried there.

In 1859, all of the township records were reportedly burned 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.

In 1877, the white house and barn to the south of the cemetery were owned by William A. Row. He was the Supervisor of White River Township from 1875 until his death in 1901 and is buried in the cemetery. The residence and barn were both built prior to 1876. The barn, which has since been torn down, was a depot stop for horses and wagons passing through. The south room of the residence was used as the Post Office for the village at the Mouth. For a number of years, this residence was also a four-bedroom Boarding house. A

school was located on the hill in front of the house at that time. The Hamilton family have owned the property since 1910.

Admittedly, the cemetery does not have well-manicured grounds with gravestones all in neat rows that one would find in the cities. But a wrought iron and intricately designed wire fence was installed in 1911 and was the only thing that outlined the cemetery for many years. The fence was the result of the enterprise and patriotism of the White River Ladies' Aid Society. The society undertook the task of raising funds for the cemetery fence with entertainments, socials and donations and accumulated the amount needed — \$325. The old undescribed fence was then sold N. W. Jackson for \$12.75.

In 1954, the White River Township Board voted to get a deed and description for Mouth Cemetery.

In 1986, the Mouth Cemetery Preservation Committee was established, and funds were raised for a new wrought iron fence which was installed in May 1987.

Because of its somewhat neglected appearance up to that time, it seemed to become a "hangout" spot for drinking and mischief. In 1987, after just a few short weeks of the installation and dedication of the new fence, 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, two young adults and a youth, were quickly apprehended.

In 1989, the Mouth Cemetery, a place of reverence and respect, was placed on the State Register of Historic Sites.