

# DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to those Marion County pioneers that lie in quiet graves without a trace.

## INTRODUCTION

This project of documenting tombstone inscriptions in all Marion County, Ohio cemeteries was begun in the early spring of 1974 as a result of a family search for ancestors. In March of that year Barbara was researching her grandmother's family, the Maechtles which led her to the Wolfinger Cemetery. Jim joined in the search looking for his ancestor, Jacob Hecker, Sr. who came to Pleasant Township in 1850. He later settled in Big Island Township.

After searching many cemeteries without success we soon began to realize that we were looking at the grave stones of many of the early pioneers of Marion County. These people represented the history of our county. Also it was obvious that many of our cemeteries were in a sad state of disrepair. Many tombstones had deteriorated through the weathering process and were illegible. Several cemeteries had been vandalized. Broken stones were piled along fence rows or under bushes by caretakers and stones were hauled away and used for weights or sidewalks. There were cemeteries where every stone was broken or down and they were completely overgrown with trees, bushes and brambles.

The forces of man and nature were taking their toll, erasing in some instances the only existing record of the lives of these people. We decided to record every tombstone inscription in Marion County to preserve the genealogical information they contained before it was destroyed or lost.

Our forefathers worked hard and suffered many hardships. When they buried their dead they placed tombstones on the graves with the thought that they would always be remembered. They passed laws concerning township trustee responsibilities. These laws are explicit and indicate that all cemeteries are to be protected and preserved. The cemeteries are to be enclosed with a substantial fence that is to be kept in repair. Broken stones are to be repaired. Undergrowth and weeds are to be removed once a year. Provision was made that the trustees could be fined for neglect of duty.

In Marion County there are sixteen burial plots with no trace of any tombstones. Twenty-three cemeteries have less than five stones. There are only seventeen of the 115 total where burials are still taking place. Records of family burial sites were seldom kept and records of the cemetery burials are non-existent except for the modern era. Earlier records cannot be found by any township clerk. Some of these were destroyed by fire at the locations where they were kept. In only the larger cemeteries are the burial records anywhere near complete. Many of the older cemeteries in the county still contain tombstone evidence of our earliest pioneers. In almost every case the remains of these early settlers and their families can be found in the cemetery nearest their homes.

We first needed to find the locations of all the burial grounds in the county, township by township. The most helpful source was a 1930's WPA project which named the cemetery, indicated its exact location, recorded grave sites and burial plots, and identified each war veteran's grave and the name of the veteran.

As we started to follow the directions for each cemetery we discovered that many of them were inaccurate. The measurements were incorrect at times by several miles, the road numbers were wrong and where they got the lot locations was beyond imagination. Two of the cemeteries, sizes and all, never existed. In spite of these problems much of the work was accurate and we are grateful for the WPA records that gave us a starting point. These project maps are located in the Marion County Recorder's office. Also in the Recorder's office are books

recording the transfer of cemeteries to the Township Trustees and the transfer of lands to church organizations. Many times there were cemeteries associated with the church.

Other important sources of early cemeteries are the various Marion County histories, the Marion County atlas, early topographical and landowner maps, DAR records and individual observations of interested citizens. In spite of all these aids there were burial sites that we could not locate. There are undoubtedly many small unlocated cemeteries or family plots that existed in the early days of our history with no record today of their existence.

Cemeteries were often named as a matter of circumstance. Some were given the name of the original landowner. Some were named for the family owning the land or for the family with the largest marker. Others were named after churches or the area. The cemetery names that we have used are consistent with the WPA project and with the book published by the Ohio Genealogical Society. "Ohio Cemeteries".

Many tombstones were unearthed that apparently had been buried for years. Other stones were assembled from scattered fragments. The use of chalk or a metal bristled brush made some inscriptions readable. Shadows of early morning or late afternoon sometimes helped in reading inscriptions that could not be seen at noon. Other tools we used frequently were crowbar, trowel, clippers and shovel. (I must confess that I was never comfortable carrying a shovel into a graveyard.!)

Many pioneer families erected wooden or sandstone monuments to the memory of their dead. Thousands of these monuments have been destroyed and the remaining ones are fast disappearing from our county's cemeteries. Wooden crosses have long since disappeared.

Barbara and I have personally visited all of the 115 cemeteries or burial sites and have taken the data from the stones. This proved to be a great task which required miles and miles of driving, miles of walking, hours of hunting and was followed by years of preparation of the information we had gathered.

In recording these inscriptions we made several decisions for proceeding. We decided to record only the data that had historical and genealogical value. We copied the names and dates as they appeared. There was no attempt to alter spellings or copy sentimental or religious inscriptions.

We also decided to list the tombstone inscriptions alphabetically rather than row by row. Rows do not exist in many cases. What seems to be a row ends abruptly between two other rows. There are very few old cemeteries where it is possible to enumerate in this way.

Also the decision was made to observe a 1908 cut off date for copying inscriptions in some of the large cemeteries. Since 1908 state law has mandated the recording of vital statistics but for dates before that tombstones are often the only substantiating record of a person's existence. By using this cutoff date it made a seemingly endless task a little more manageable. Exceptions to this policy were made when family members on the same stone or matching stone had death dates later than 1908.

The following cemeteries have the 1908 cut off date:

No. 3 Pleasant Hill	No. 65 Meeker
No. 9 Fairview	No. 68 New Bloomington (Agosta)
No.12 Caledonia, New	No. 85 Prospect
No.14 Claridon	No. 98 Windfall
No.33 Grand Prairie	No.104 Kirkpatrick
No.37 Green Camp	No.112 Waldo
No.64 LaRue	

There are no records included in this book of Marion City, Marion St. Marys and Chapel Heights because their burial records are complete and available. The remaining 99 cemeteries have been copied as completely as possible.

In Marion County there are twenty-two Revolutionary War Veterans buried in various cemeteries. There are many War of 1812 and Mexican War veterans and innumerable graves for veterans of the Civil War. David L. Hartline's fine book "Soldiers of Marion County" lists all known veterans and in many cases there is a listing of where the soldier is buried. The markers for some of these men cannot be found. Many of these monuments simply give the name of the veteran, his rank and his military attachment such as "Co. C. 4th Reg. OVI". There are no dates for birth or death given because the application used to apply for a free monument from the U.S. government only asked for name, rank and outfit. The genealogist need not despair because of the lack of vital statistics on the markers of these veterans because information can be obtained from the National Archives, Washington, D.C. by sending in the name, war and the military affiliation.

Each veteran's grave should have a metal flag marker that was placed there by a service organization. However many of these markers have been moved from one grave to another over the years or have been lost.

Among the things to be taken into consideration by the researcher when using tombstone inscriptions for genealogical records is the fact that many stones were placed years after the deaths occurred and burial records were not kept as they are today. People had to remember the dates and of course there were inaccuracies. If there were records, over the years many of them were lost as a result of fire, etc. In some cases burial records and tombstone data show discrepancies because stone engravers often made mistakes. These errors were permitted to remain uncorrected because of the cost involved in recutting the stone.

Because of the poor condition of many stones it was difficult to keep from making some errors. In copying dates from stones that have weathered over the years we discovered it was often impossible to distinguish between 8,6,9 and 0, between 3 and 5 and between 1, 4 and 7. Many times we could only make a good guess and these numbers and also difficult letters and names are marked with an asterisk.

We have been as careful as possible to transcribe our records accurately from one set of papers to another. This was done four times. In each case the transcriptions have been checked and rechecked but inaccuracies are bound to occur due to human error.

Each cemetery has something interesting that sets it apart from any other. We remember some cemeteries for their beauty, others for their history, special characteristics, vandal damage, inaccessibility and the people that helped us discover the exact site. We remember with amusement that we recorded Rayl Cemetery two times to make sure we had it right and then someone directed us cross country from the opposite direction to the same cemetery after it had been cleaned up and we unknowingly recorded the stones for the third time. At Ebenezer Cemetery we remember the poison ivy and snakes. At Dickason Cemetery we crawled between the saplings to find the stones. We remember the sunken crypt at Virden Cemetery, the 113 word inscription of Daniel Seiter and wife at Zion Cemetery, the lonely upright stone of the the Phillip Dreyer Cemetery, the illustrious history of the Drake, Wyatt and Blockhouse cemeteries and the search for the single stone of Amos Wheeler, Revolutionary War Veteran.

Each cemetery features certain styles and kinds of stones. There are fancy carvings and inscriptions that are certainly unusual. One can find statues, obelisk, field stones, and lovely iron fences around plots. There are military and DAR markers. There are fences, gates, pumps and churches. And we must mention the flowers and ground cover. Peonies, iris, dafodills, wild roses and myrtle abound.

We have spent untold hours of labor and patient sufferance of sunburn, dust, rain, snow, and mosquito, tick and chigger bites. We have and will receive many compensations--the joy in the conviction that this is an

important means of preserving worthwhile genealogical information, the appreciation of future researchers who will use this book, and the enjoyment of the peace and beauty of cemetery surroundings. Of special mention is the feelings of awe and closeness to the families buried in each cemetery. In reading the stones we could relive an entire century of joy and sorrow in the lives of a pioneer family in just a few minutes. We are reminded that these humble people live in the lives of their descendants to whom they have left the principles of honor and usefulness. We felt it our duty to wrest from oblivion the names and records of these people. May your thrill in finding your ancestors in this book equal ours in finding Jacob Hecker in Mounts Cemetery. We finally learned that Jacob Maechtle was buried at the Horeb Cemetery in Rock Creek Township, Wells County, Indiana.

In conclusion let me quote Abraham Lincoln who said "He who does not re-member his ancestry does not deserve to be remembered by his posterity."