

Bonacker Family Cemetery

By Dave Hallemann



This secluded cemetery with its fallen monuments and tragic burials is located in T43 R5 S33 NE¼.

38° 25' 37" N / 90° 27' 47" W

Visited February 19th, 2001 by Dave Hallemann.

This cemetery is on land first entered Eli Cadwallader of Jefferson County Missouri on October 1st, 1831, certificate number 2182, for the NE¼ of T43 R5 S33 containing 160 acres.

On May 27th, 1851, James M^cCollock, Sheriff of Jefferson County, sells the tract on the courthouse steps to the highest bidder, Isaac Cadwallader, for \$200.⁰⁰, recorded in Book K Page 450. (This was probably for non-payment of taxes.)

March 24th, 1853, we find Isaac Cadwallader transferring the tract to Thomas Burgess, "...NE¼ Section 33 Township 43 Range 5 containing 160 acres, situated in Jefferson County and State of Missouri, aforesaid being the same land purchased by Eli Cadwallader from the Government of the United States and afterwards purchased by me under mortgage at public sale from the Sheriff of the County of Jefferson as shown by the deed of the aforesaid Sheriff executed to me..." recorded in Book L at Page 338.

On November 22nd, 1854, recorded in Book M at Page 264, Henry C. Bonacker and Katherina his wife, execute a deed of trust to Thomas Burgess for "...NE¼ of Section 33 Township 43 Range 5 containing 160 acres situated on Rock Creek, same tract conveyed by said party of the second part and wife to the party of the first on October 25th, 1854..." On the deed Henry signature is hard to read but is probably Heinrich C. Bonacker, Katherina and Thomas Burgess both signed with their Mark (X). Also in the margin on this page Thomas Burgess released this deed of trust on October 18th, 1854.

Next recorded in Book M Page 354, on October 25th, 1854, Thomas Burgess and wife Mary Ann, transfer to Henry C. Bonacker, all from Jefferson County, (same land description as above) for \$750.⁰⁰. Both Thomas Burgess and Marry Ann Burgess Signed with their mark (X).

The next document I found was the Will of Henry C. Bonacker recorded in Book 43 at Page 182 dated June 14th, 1895. Henry had by this time moved to St. Louis County and remarried to Sophia as Katherina died in 1876. "...It is my wish that a tombstone to cost no more than \$75.⁰⁰ be placed over the grave of my deceased wife and myself and one placed over the grave of my deceased son and his wife not to cost more than \$75.⁰⁰, names to be inscribed on

The following persons are listed on the monuments in this cemetery;



Heir Ruhen In Gott
Here Rest in God

**Katharina M.
Bonacker**

Geb (Born)
4 Dez. (December) 1829

Gest. (Died)
4 Oct. 1876

**Heinrich C.
Bonacker**

Geb (Born)
15 Feb. 1821

Gest. (Died)
5 Juli (July) 1895

Ruhet In Frieden
Rest in Peace

Goodspeed's History on page 425 list Company C. Captains; Henry C. Bonacker commissioned October 22, 1863 vacated by Special Order No. 126, 1864; Henry C. Bonacker commissioned November 7, 1864 vacated March 12, 1865.



**Heir Ruhen In Gott Die Durch
Morderhand Dem
Tode Uberlieferten
Eheute Bonacker**

**C. Josephine
Bonacker**

**Geb (Born)
8 Nov. 1863**

**Gest. (Died)
21 Jan. 1883**

**Louis
Bonacker**

**Geb (Born)
10 Jan. 1861**

**Gest. (Died)
21 Jan. 1883**

Ruhet In Frieden

Rest in Peace

Metal straps holding this monument together

When I took pictures of this cemetery for this article I noticed that the death dates for both C. Josephine and Louis were the same date. I wondered if there was some kind of farm accident that befell this couple. I then noticed the German inscription at the top of the monument. I felt this might explain the accident. As I didn't read German I asked for a translation on the Internet and received the following reply.

Heir Ruhen In Gott Die Durch Morderhand Dem Tode Uberlieferten Eheute Bonacker

Here rest in God delivered to death by a murderer's hand the married couple Bonacker

Goodspeed's History on page 411 had the following;

"Murder of the Bonacres. In January 1884, Mr. Bonacre and wife, young married people living near High Ridge in the northern part of Jefferson County, were brutally murdered with an ax, in their house. The perpetrator or perpetrators of this horrible crime have never been discovered so as to be apprehended."

Upon receiving this translation Betty Olson furnished the following newspaper article for me;

Jefferson County Record

"Wednesday 30 January 1884. The AXE - A husband and wife murdered through its agency. The most horrible murder ever chronicled in the history of Jefferson County occurred on Monday night of last week, some three miles north of High Ridge, on the Morse's Mill and St. Louis gravel road. About six weeks ago Louis Bonacker, a hard-working, honest young German, who was reared in this county was united in marriage to Josephine Glatt, daughter of Conrad Glatt who lives near Maxville. Having previously rented a farm between High Ridge and Fenton, he took his young wife to it, where to begin life in earnest, and by hard work accumulate something for a "rainy day." They lived happily together as none but those enjoying a blissful honeymoon can, until that fatal Monday.

Not many hundred yards from Bonacker's house is a country store, which is run by a lady named Horan. Mrs. Horan and those residing with her, noticed that no smoke ascended from the Bonacker's residence on Tuesday, and not seeing any of them during the day, they concluded that the young couple were visiting relatives, and made no further investigation. The following morning it was the same. Louis Helderbran passed the house in the morning, on his way to Fenton and saw that the door was open, and no smoke coming from the chimney. On returning from Fenton he noticed what he had seen in the morning, and thinking this rather strange, he got off his horse and made an investigation. Peering through the door he saw Mrs. Bonacker lying upon the floor, attired only in a chemise and short skirt. On the bed in another room lay her husband, with his head nearly severed from the body. Helderbran made no further investigation but immediately gave the alarm, and people flocked to the scene of horror from Fenton, High Ridge and elsewhere.

From what we have heard and read about the matter, we have come to this conclusion: namely, that someone staid all night at Bonacker's and when the host and hostess were sound asleep, the person got up, went into the sleeping room, armed with an axe, and dealt Mr.

Bonacker a blow that killed him. This awakened the wife, who ran out of the house, closely pursued by the fiend, overtaken in the road, and, after a hard struggle, she too was killed; after which she was dragged into the house again and left lying on the floor. This conclusion is arrived through the fact that some blankets and pillows were fixed near the stove in the kitchen, which formed as comfortable a pallet as they could, under their present circumstances, give a friend or stranger who chanced to stay all night with them. It could be seen where he had dragged the woman over the ground, as she had several cuts and bruises upon her body. It is evident that he struck her several times before succeeding in killing her.

What the motive that prompted this awful deed might have been, is yet a mystery. That it could have been for robbery is hardly probable, as anybody might have known that the young couple did not have much to be valuable, and there was nothing taken save a short (word missing ?) and an overcoat. That it was old discarded lover of the ill-fated woman--a theory advanced by many, we do not credit, for such an one would hardly have been granted the privilege of staying all night. It is one of those mysteries, probably that will never be solved, unless the guilty man may be caught and made (to) confess.

No definite clew has yet been found. However, it is the general belief that a young man, who came through Fenton on the evening before the murder, going toward High Ridge, and who stopped at several farm-houses before reaching Bonacker's, and asked for a night's lodging, committed the deed. He was not seen at High Ridge, neither did any one see him at Bonacker's; but as it must have been dark when he arrived there it is not surprising that he was not seen to enter. The following morning, before sun-up, the same individual was seen on a less public thoroughfare, going toward St. Louis. This looks very suspicious in deed; but as it was fully 36 hours later before the horrible discovery was made, he had plenty of time to lay a thousand miles between himself and the scene of the tragedy, if he so desired.

The young man above referred to had a small hand-satchel in his possession, which seen before the murder, which was subsequently found by some boys, in a hollow tree near Bonacker's, which leaves no doubt as to his guilt. Some four or five arrests have been in as many different states, but all proved to be the wrong man.

An inquest was held and the substance of the verdict was that they came to the death from cuts of an axe in the hands of an unknown party. They were both buried on Friday in the private cemetery of Squire Wm. Bonacker, and a large concourse of people attended. The relatives of the murdered couple, who are quite numerous in this county and are numbered among our best citizens, have the sympathy of the entire community, and we hope they will bear their afflictions as it behooves good Christians."

Thus ends this tragic chapter of Jefferson County's history.

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