

# The Heritage News

Issue 3

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The Heritage News is published by the Jefferson Heritage and Landmark Society.

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## Notice!

Annual membership fees in the Jefferson County Heritage and Landmark Society are now due. New members are most welcome. Dues are \$10.00 per year and may be sent to Mrs. Betty Olson; Treasurer c/o DeSoto Library, 712 S. Main St. DeSoto, Missouri

## Rest In Peace

by: Lisa K. Thompson

Few experiences in family history offer more intrigue, interest, and even recreation than searching for the monuments of our ancestors. History truly comes alive in the stories behind the inscriptions, art, and architecture of these stones.

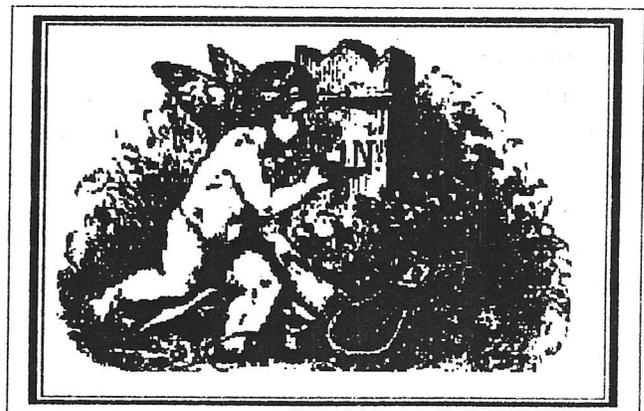
Besides the obvious information that can be gleaned from inscriptions, family historians should be aware of indirect evidence which can be supplied in monument art. Art work can express occupation, interests, cause of death, religious affiliation, membership in ethnic and fraternal organizations and philosophies of life.

Tombstones may be the only record of the original spelling of your surname, and may indicate your family's land of origin. Clues for missing maiden names, children under age twelve, and military service are other bonuses found in cemeteries.

There are basically five kinds of burial grounds found in the United States; churchyard cemeteries, government owned cemeteries, cemeteries owned by churches but not necessarily connected to the church, privately owned cemeteries usually operated as a business, and family cemeteries.

Many cemeteries have been inventoried by various individuals, groups and societies. These records can be found in family history centers and many libraries, including most of our local libraries in Jefferson County. However, when searching for information, it is best to personally visit a cemetery to view all of the graves in the same lot. People buried in the same plot are usually related in some way. Large cemeteries are usually listed in the telephone book, but to find smaller ones, consult the directions on the inventoried records at the library and a good detailed city or county map. Local funeral directors are also good sources, because not only are they familiar with cemeteries in their areas, but they often have additional records. Be aware, however, that many family cemeteries are located on private property, so get permission from the land owners before visiting these. When the weather is too beautiful to allow indoor research, remember that many of these old graveyards are magnificent outdoor libraries!

*Richly embalmed indeed thou art  
In the mausoleum of the Heart.*



Please send articles and items of interest to Lisa K. Thompson at 11210 Harrison Lake Rd. Festus, MO 63028.

## Legends Can Be Dug Up At Local Cemeteries

by: Della Lang

When some people think of cemeteries, they associate them with grief and death. But to historians and genealogists, cemeteries represent life.

Each person buried in a cemetery had a story to tell. Sadly enough, we didn't get to hear all of their stories before they departed this life, but in many instances the stories have been passed down from generation to generation.

Since births were rarely recorded before this century, headstones often become the only official record available.

Finding a long-lost relative or historic figure in an out-of-the-way cemetery is an exciting event for any researcher. And if you're really lucky, you can locate people who know stories about unmarked graves.

Such was the case of Bertha Gifford, who is buried in an unmarked grave near Morse Mill. Bertha was either a murderess or a slightly unbalanced good Samaritan — depending on your viewpoint.

Born in 1876, Bertha spent her life trying to help others. She often tended to sick friends and neighbors when a doctor was unavailable. Those who trusted her homemade medicinal concoctions frequently brought their ailing children to Bertha for treatment.

At least four of her young patients died, but there was no reason to suspect foul play. After all, death was a part of life.

It finally took the untimely death of the Gifford's hired hand, in 1928, to bring the facts to light. Bertha had been treating some of her patients with arsenic, because she was convinced that arsenic was a wonder drug.

Actually, she wasn't completely wrong. From the earliest discovery of arsenic, as a sulfide, this element had been used in various forms as a medicinal agent. (I have a 1897 medical book that prescribes arsenic, in combination with other drugs, to cure everything from "the misery" to pneumonia.)

But it's too late to try to make a case for the lady in the unmarked grave. After a sensational four-day trial, Bertha was found insane, but guilty of murder. She spent the rest of her life in the state

hospital at Farmington, where, believe it or not, she worked as a cook.

Bertha Gifford's story is only one of many interesting stories that can be dug up at local cemeteries.

### Epitaphs

#### Benjamin Franklin

*Like the cover of an old book  
It's contents torn out,  
And stripped of its lettering and gilding,  
Lies here, Food for worms,  
But the work shall not be wholly lost,  
For it will, as he believed, appear once more,  
In a new and more perfect Edition  
Corrected and Amended  
By the Author*

#### George Frederick Handel

*To melt the soul, to captivate the ear,  
(Angels such melody might deign to hear)  
To anticipate on earth the joys of heaven  
'Twas Handel's task: to him that power  
was given.*

#### Issac Newton

*Nature and Nature's Law  
Lay hid in night;  
God said, "Let Newton Be!"  
And all was Light.*

#### Edgar Allan Poe

*"Quoth the Raven Nevermore."*

*Now practically a lost art, epitaphs provide history, honor, and indeed, a measure of immortality for those who are remembered.*

## Memories to the Dead The Democrat--March 1872

Civilization in its onward march, while it levels the forest, and subdues the wilds of nature, spares not the abode of the dead. The graveyard of the past generation is overrun by the plowshare of the present; and the very places of its numberless graves are forgotten. The cemetery laid out a few years ago beside a flourishing village (Kimmswick) is now in the heart of a great town; and yields its place to the crowding homes of the living. A few graves are marked by monumental stones, and of these, the ashes are carefully taken away and deposited in some new resting place; but of the many undistinguished, no note can be taken. The survivor may seek in vain for the loved remains that must be left to mingle with common earth until the end of all things. The graves of our dead should be permanently marked! Yet how much neglected the many nameless graves in every Church yard bears us witness.

Against expenditure in honor of the dead, heaven has uttered no prohibition and earth is not injured but benefited by them. All those beautiful emblems which adorn the many tombs around which we wish to linger, assure us we are in a world of warm and loving hearts. The adorning of the sepulchers of the dead once alleviates our grief, and soothes the wounded heart. It also cheers the bereaved to know that an additional embellishment of the grave presents stronger attractions to arrest the attention of the stranger, and causes him to pause and learn the name of one who has shared so largely in the love of others.

### Did You Know?

The term "cemetery" did not come into frequent use until the 19th century.

In New England the carved surface of a gravestone usually faced away from the body, with the headstone facing west, the footstone east, and the body buried between them.

## In Memory of J. M. Whitehead

*died Aug. 15, 1870*  
*As oer the cold sepulchral stone*  
*Some name arrests the passerby*  
*Thus when thou vieweth verse above*  
*May thine attract thy pensive eye,*  
*And when by thee that name is read*  
*Perchance in some succeeding years*  
*Reflect a name as on the dead*  
*And think my heart is buried here*

*(Jefferson County, Missouri)*

## In Memory of Solomon Pease

*Under the sod and under the trees*  
*Lies the body of Solomon Pease.*  
*He is not here, there's only the pod:*  
*Pease shelled out and went to God.*

*(Vermont 1830)*

As life runs on, the road grows strange  
With faces new, and near the end,  
The milestones into headstones change,  
Neath every one a friend.

James Russell Lowell

## The Body Snatchers

In the early part of the nineteenth century the science of anatomy was becoming increasingly popular and, as a result, there was a great demand for human bodies for dissection and research. High prices were paid by anatomy teachers for dead bodies in good condition, which were hard to come by legitimately. Criminal gangs soon realized that a good living could be made from robbing newly-made graves and selling the bodies from them.

## The Democrat — March 1867

There has been an eye-sore existing in the vicinity of our county seat for "lo, these many years," and that eye-sore is our unfenced graveyard. There the bones of many are moldering in the dust. In some instances loving hands have erected headstones with appropriate inscriptions and a paling fence around the grave alone; in others, nothing but a pen of half rotten rails surround the spot; then a piece of clapboard marks the place where some one who once trod this earth now sleeps his last, long sleep. Then again, alas! nothing is left to show the spot where some poor mortal is buried, save a slight depression of the ground and a clump of weeds, which have sprouted in the loosened earth.

Such is human nature! After death, all is very soon forgotten.

Now, Mr. Editor, I do not know what you think about it, but I think this grave yard, so near town, being entirely destitute of a fence is a shame.

Cattle and hogs can go at any time, without let or hindrance, and throw down tombstones, root down newly banked up graves, in fact, the spot appears in worse condition than any heathen community would permit the resting place of their dead to exist.

I should like to see the cemetery enclosed with a neat picket fence, or a good plank fence; or, if neither of the above could be afforded, a substantial rail fence would answer — even that would add to the appearance of the surroundings, and the reputation of our county seat.

## The Democrat — Jan. 1878

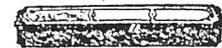
There is a much needed institution. A recorded graveyard, containing nearly two acres, enclosed with a plank fence, at the Protestant Episcopal Church, at Sunnyside, in Plattin township; equidistant (4 miles) from Hematitie and Victoria, on the road from Plattin Creek to Victoria and Hematite. It is regularly laid out in blocks, 40 X 20 feet, having five foot paths between; each block containing four lots each, 20 X 10 feet. The ground is entirely free, but to provide for repairs, etc., \$1 is charged for a single grave lot 10 X 4; \$2.50 for a lot 20 X 10; \$5 for a half block. All persons interested are requested and invited to meet at the graveyard on the morning of Saturday, January 5th, 1878 to select such lots as they wish, and if the weather is then so

the ground can be worked, each to bring a mattock, grubbing hoe, or an axe, to clear the ground so that it can be, in the Spring, sown with grass seed. Such work will be allowed as part of the cost of lots.

## Robert Coxwell, Undertaker

Robert Coxwell, dealer in furniture and undertaker in 1877, was a native of Devonshire, England, and was born in 1844. He received his education at Exeter College in his native country. In 1871, he and his wife, the former Miss Martha Bement, also of Devonshire, immigrated to the United States. They remained in New York City for about six months, then moved to DeSoto. In politics, Mr Coxwell was a Republican, and fraternally a Knight of Pythias. Mr. and Mrs. Coxwell were members of the Congregational Church.

ROBT COXWELL,  
**UNDERTAKER,**  
Main Street, Opposite Depot,  
DE SOTO, MO.



Mr. Coxwell begs leave to call attention to the fact that he is engaged in the business of

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also the celebrated

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Boxes of all kinds and Emblems of every description.  
Orders by Telegraph promptly attended to.

## William J. Kirk

Judge William J. Kirk, undertaker and dealer in agricultural implements, postmaster, notary public and real estate agent, at Maxville, Mo., was born in St. Louis, October 1, 1839. He served in the Enrolled Missouri Militia as captain of Company H, Eightieth Regiment, and operated on the Iron Mountain Railroad. In 1863 he married Mary Josephine Ruess. He was instrumental in establishing the postoffice at Maxville. Mr Kirk was a Democrat and was elected in 1880 as county judge from the First District where he served one term. He was a member of the Catholic Knights of America.

**W. J. KIRK,**  
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of all kinds and descriptions, and

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BURIAL CASES, SHROUDS &c.  
at Eastern Figures, for Cash.

## Fred Heiligtag

Fred Heiligtag is the second of four generations in the business of undertaker. His parents were August and Catherine Heiligtag, who first started the family in this line of work. Fred was raised primarily in the area of Antonia. He married "Minnie" Buechting. They attended the St. Lukes E & R Church. Their sons, Arthur W. and Elmer, along with their wives Helen and Fern, and their children, have carried on the family tradition with several funeral parlors, a monument company and cemetery.

Fred Heiligtag. Peter Paul, Jr.  
**HEILIGTAG & PAUL,**  
**UNDERTAKERS,**  
**ANTONIA and**  
**MAXVILLE, MO.**

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## LOUIS RIEBER

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## FURNITURE;

—ALSO—

## UNDERTAKER,

SOUTH MAIN STREET,  
 DE SOTO, MO.

## HENRY BRIMMER,

House Springs, : : Mo.,

Undertaker  
 and Embalmer.

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**CASKETS, ROBES ETC.**  
 HEARSE furnished when desired. Your  
 custom solicited. jan1'03tly

## John Heller,

High Ridge, Mo.,

UNDERTAKER

—AND—

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SPECIAL attention given to Designing and Erecting first-class Cemetery Improvements.

## John W. Bement

John W. Bement was born in 1829 in Devonshire, England. He located in Jefferson Co., in 1868, where he bought a farm three miles south of DeSoto. He was employed as a bridge carpenter on the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad. He established a boarding house in Desoto in 1883 and became proprietor of the DeSoto House Hotel in 1885. He married Mary Hale. Mr Bement was a Democrat and a member of the Masonic order.

Note: His sister Martha was the wife of Robert Coxwell who had a similar Furniture/Undertaker business advertisement. Perhaps their business was connected in some way

## ACRES OF FURNITURE!



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Carol Diaz-Granados Duncan, professional archaeologist and part-time instructor at Washington University, will give a slide presentation covering her research on the petroglyphs and pictographs of Missouri at Jefferson College in the Little Theatre, Arts and Science building on April 18, 1993 at 2:30 p.m. Her research has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the Cave Research Foundation, and Washington University. To date, Carol, with the help of her husband Jim Duncan, has documented 125 sites in the state. For over three years, they have surveyed sites with Frank Magre, the local authority on prehistoric rock art. Carol is finishing up her Ph.D. this spring at the university. The presentation is open to the public.



Jefferson Heritage and Landmarks Society

Hillsboro, MO 63050

