EVERGREEN CEMETERY HISTORY

“On July 30, 1852, the [Village of Manitowoc] president and clerk were authorized to take $150 from the general funds in full payment for a lot of land purchased from B. Jones for a burying grounds to be deeded to the Village of Manitowoc. Prior to that date, the village had owned a small cemetery at 8th and Park Streets. But with the growth of the village and because of an Asiatic cholera in the early 1850’s, the need for a larger cemetery became a necessity.”  

According to Occupational Monograph 56, an account of Manitowoc history from 1850 to 1860 written by Caroline Hubbard in 1904, the remains of the dead who had been buried in the cemetery on North 8th Street, were removed and re-buried in Evergreen Cemetery, which at that time comprised about 10 acres. An ordinance approved September 19, 1853 and printed in the Manitowoc County Herald Newspaper states “To regulate the burial of the dead in Evergreen Cemetery, and to promote regularity and economy therein:

Be it ordained by the President and Trustees of the Village of Manitowoc:

Sec. 1st. In each and every case when any dead shall be buried in that part of Evergreen Cemetery grounds, known as the “Potter’s Field,” previous to so doing it shall be the duty of the friends of the deceased, or person, or persons having charge of the same, to notify the sexton, or person having charge thereof, with all reasonable dispatch to locate and stake out the spot whereon the grave shall be dug, and for each and every case of neglect or refusal to comply with the foregoing requirements, or digging a grave or graves otherwise than the aforesaid, the party or parties so offending shall be subject to a fine of not less than five nor exceeding twenty five dollars, to be enforced and collected after the manner set forth by the Village Charter and ordinances, for the collection of fines and penalties.

Sec. 2nd. The persons having charge of said Cemetery grounds shall be entitled to the sum of twenty-five cents for each and every service rendered, to be paid by the party so requiring his services, and it shall further be his duty to see that all the requirements of this ordinance are strictly enforced and complied with.”  

James Bennett, Village President and S.A. Wood, Clerk signed the ordinance.

(“Potter’s Field is mentioned in the Bible. It was a place of burial for people in transit, people passing through a community and dying, leaving behind neither a record of themselves nor any money for a burial, a place where poor people might be buried. [Michael Duvall] found a passage in the New Testament from the book of Matthew. It seems that Judas was paid to betray Jesus and hung himself after doing so. The money he left behind was considered blood money, so it was used to purchase land to bury strangers in from a potter.” There are Potter’s Fields all over the country.)

“In August of 1870, S.A. Wood acted as agent for the purchase of 43 acres adjoining Evergreen Cemetery. It was purchased at a cost of $3,000 to be paid in three annual payments of $1,000. In setting the final terms, a rate of 7% interest was added to the yearly payments. In June of 1853, a committee of three [was] appointed to report upon the “expediency of employing some competent person to superintend the cemetery.” A resolution was passed in March of 1878 for the appropriation of $700 for buildings on the cemetery grounds for the use of the sexton. [The sexton’s house
and office were built in 1878 and the office was opened on July 21, 1879.] On July 21, 1879, an ordinance was passed creating the office of city sexton. The ordinance also related to Evergreen Cemetery.

“Section 1: The office of city sexton is hereby created and there shall annually be appointed a suitable and proper person to fill the same who shall receive such compensation of his services as shall time to time be fixed by the board of aldermen.

Section 2: The city sexton shall have charge of the Evergreen Cemetery and keep the grounds, walks, and avenues in good order and free from obstructions. It shall be his duty to enforce the ordinances concerning the cemetery and report violations to the mayor or city attorney for prosecution. He shall have the power to arrest all persons trespassing upon the private grounds or in any manner imprisoning the same. Also to direct how and where any dead body not belonging to any owner of any lot shall be buried and to prevent the deposit of any body in any unsold lot or in any lot the property of another without the owner’s consent. He shall under the direction of the committee on sanitary affairs cause all bodies which may have been or may hereafter be interned without permission in any unsold lot to be removed to the ‘Potters Field’ and the person so entering or causing such internment liable for the expenses of such removal which may be recovered in an action brought by the city.

Section 3: All applications for the purchase of lots in the cemetery shall be made to the city sexton and it shall be his duty to give information in his possession to persons desirous of purchasing lots. He shall be provided with a map on which all lots, which have been or shall be displaced of, shall be designated by writing the name of the purchaser thereon. He shall keep a book in which shall be made a record of all sales of lots in which shall also show ownership of lots already sold. At the request of any person wishing to purchase a lot, he shall grant a certificate describing lot desired, the price and shall also certify that the same has not been sold. If such lot is not purchased within five days of the granting such certificate, the Sexton shall issue another certificate to any person applying therefore.”

“The ordinance, in its entirety, provided for a formal city office with all the powers, duties and obligations fully detailed, and outlining the penalties for removing of flowers to include imprisonment in the county jail ‘not exceeding 25 days.’ The Sexton’s job was not a minor task.”

**The term of Sexton Edward Pasewalk (as recalled by his daughter)**

In the fall of 1987, Ruth Pasewalk Buerstatte Kunish spoke to the Manitowoc County Historical Society about her memories of growing up in the Sexton’s House. She was born there, grew up and was married there. Her father, Edward Pasewalk, was the Sexton from 1912 to 1951.

“My dad worked at the gas company in Manitowoc. There was an ad in the paper for a ‘sexton wanted at Evergreen Cemetery.’ On a dare from Mr. Rudolph, who lived on the south side, my dad applied and they hired him. My parents had just built a little bungalow with all the conveniences on South 10th Street and my mother was absolutely heartbroken to think that my dad would take the job and she would have to move, Mrs. Kunish said.
One Sunday they took the streetcar, which at that time went from downtown to the end of the line on North 18th Street and New York Avenue. There was no viaduct, and where the Veterans Memorial and Manitowoc County buildings are now located was all in woods. My mother said as they approached the house there were workmen in the windows drinking beer. The inside of the home was painted a horrible pea green – every room in the house. Nothing was taken care of. She sat down and almost cried her heart out. But being a good scout, Mrs. Kunish said, she cooperated, gave up the bungalow and moved into the cemetery house. They (parents) worked together cleaning, painting, and getting records set up. My dad took correspondence courses, he learned landscaping and started a little nursery at the end of the cemetery, which saved the city money.

As the years progressed, the house was fixed up, and after many years, bathroom facilities were added. Prior to that, Mrs. Kunish said, the “bathroom toilets” adjoined the barn. A dumb waiter was added. The dumb waiter, as we called it, was a little passageway from the dining room to the pantry so one didn’t have to walk all the way around the hallway to get to the dining room, she said. The “dumb waiter” was also one of the fun parts of the house. When we played hide and seek, we all crawled through it. The house consisted of a lovely living room, big windowsills…dining room, big kitchen with a big wood stove (such yummy aromas) where we would all stand and warm up, a pantry and closets. The upstairs had three bedrooms, closets, and a bathroom. Speaking of the bathroom, I always will remember that my dad had the idea that being in a house way off in the woods like that, when there was an electrical storm we should all get dressed and come down in the living room in case something happened. On this particular night we were all sitting downstairs when a tree fell into the bathroom.

There was a space in the hallway that housed our dollhouse. Many hours were spent there. Mayor Georgenson built it (dollhouse) for my dad and it had electric lights. My two aunts went to Germany and bought the doll furniture while they were there...

Our Christmas celebrations were, I thought, the best. We would all line up at the top of the steps. Being the youngest meant that I could lead when Santa left. The huge Christmas trees up to the ceiling were something,” Mrs. Kunish said.

My childhood in the cemetery was fun galore. At that time, there was a huge register that heated the first floor. There was a huge hill where the viaduct is now. All our friends would come to ski and slide on the hill. We would all stay out there until we were frozen. My mom would have hot chocolate and cookies for any number of kids, who would come to warm up while standing on the heat register. …When the viaduct was built and our hill was taken away, there were many tears. All my friends adored the house, as it was livable, charming and had an air of warmness, she said.

She recalled how when she was five, her dad bought what they considered an expensive thoroughbred collie for $75. I swear it came with a degree. The workmen all adored him. My mother used to say she swore that when a funeral went in that the dog counted the cars. He wasn’t allowed to go down until all the cars were out and the services were over. He would lie on the lawn and when the last car left, he would zoom down to the graves. A Mr. Stroerer, who had a greenhouse at the corner of 18th and Michigan, would tell Ruth’s dad that he trusted the dog too much, but he was proven wrong. The dog escorted her to the
streetcar on New York Avenue. When it was about time for her to return on the streetcar from her music lessons, Mrs. Pasewalk sent the dog to meet her. “He’d be sitting there waiting for me and wagging his tail. Well, Mr. Stroerer kept hounding my dad until finally they had a bet that he told me about. He said on this particular evening “Mr. Stroerer is going to grab you…” So the bet was on. As promised, Mr. Stroerer did come out and grab me, and much to his astonishment, our dog tore his pants. He really gave it to him. That dog was truly my pal. When I went away to school in Milwaukee, I thought I couldn’t go anywhere without my dog. I was 19 when he died and I felt I had lost one of my dearest friends,” Mrs. Kunish recalled.

There was a chapel in back of the house. “I was the naughty one. I used to sneak in there, set all my dolls in the chapel and play the pump organ. My dad thought that was awful…

There was a vault too, beyond the chapel. Where there was a funeral coming from out of town – they didn’t have mortuaries like now that people went to call at – the body would be put in the vault until the next day, when it was moved into the chapel…When my sister (she was five years older than Ruth) and I had a fight and we would play hide and seek, she would somehow get me in that vault and lock me in there.”

“But the Sexton home was another memory for Mrs. Kunish, a rather unique one…She is perhaps one of the few people to be married in a cemetery. “I loved the house so much. When I was asked to be married to Edward Buerstatte – my uncle was a minister and I said, “I don’t want to be married in our church. I want to be married in my nice home,” she said. That was in 1934. (Buerstatte died [in 1948], and Ruth was later married to Les Kunish).

When her dad contemplated retirement, he hired and trained his successor, Louis Norteman. “Prior to this, my dad had two secretaries…Adelle Norris Connors and Sylvia Braker Van Patten.” After he retired, the Pasewalks bought a bungalow.”

Edward & Hannah Pasewalk, Edward Buerstatte, and Ruth Kunish are buried in lot 1, block 1 of section D.

Section B
Section B includes many spaces that were originally purchased for veterans by the Grand Army of the Republic. On August 13, 2012, a new flagpole was dedicated in Section B in memory of those lost in the Civil War, especially from Manitowoc.

New Cemetery
On February 7, 1977, the Manitowoc Common Council authorized Mayor Anthony V. Dufek and City Attorney Paul Lawent to negotiate for the purchase of 27.4 acres of land from the Rahr Foundation. The property is northwest of Evergreen Cemetery (west of the railroad tracks between Michigan Avenue and Waldo Boulevard and north of Manitou Park). Attorney John P. Nash represented the Rahr Foundation in the negotiations. In June of 1977, the Manitowoc Common Council authorized the Mayor and City Clerk June Fetzer to enter into an agreement with the Rahr Foundation for the purchase of the land for future cemetery purposes. A newspaper article stated “the property will cost the city $80,000 payable over a five year period at a low interest
rate. The Rahr property was reported to be the only suitable land available in the area for future cemetery expansion. The land, considered a prime site for residential development, is being sold to the city at a very reasonable price, [Chairman of the Committee on Cemetery, Parks and Recreation Thomas] Frieder noted.¹⁹

**Cemetery Entrance Sign**

In the mid-1980’s, the first-ever sign for Evergreen Cemetery was erected on North 18th Street. “Calvin Stein, director of building inspection for the City of Manitowoc, designed the 10-foot by 4-foot granite sign. City officials who authorized the marker said the city owned cemetery has never had its own sign since it was established in 1852 and felt it was high time to mark the site. The stone was crafted by Zabel Monuments and weighs four tons. On hand for the erection [were] Council President, Dan Schuster, Parks Department Foreman, Earl Cenefelt, Robert Zabel, Mayor Anthony Dufek, and Parks Committee Chairman Tom Musial.”¹⁰

**Renowned burials**

1. J.H.W. Colby, 1821-1853

   A simple headstone, marks the grave of J.H.W. Colby, who “according to *Falge’s History*, was generally known as “Jerry” Colby. He was not only the first lawyer to settle in the county, the first [ever Manitowoc county] judge (he was elected to the position) and first postmaster, he also was the first person to be buried in Evergreen Cemetery. He was, the account stated, born in New Hampshire in 1822 [a conflicting account states he was born in Massachusetts on January 14, 1821¹¹], graduated from Dartmouth College and had training in the law profession before coming to this area in 1846. Shortly after his arrival he was appointed an agent for the Hinckley and Allen lands, one tract of which included about half of the 1915 circa Manitowoc. It was here he met Emily Jones, daughter of Benjamin Jones, one of the founders of Manitowoc.¹² Mr. Jones and his brother, Ferdinand Jones, came west in the early days with the latter remaining in Chicago, and Benjamin coming to Manitowoc to locate.¹³ [Jerry] and Emily were married in the fall of 1850.”¹⁴ In 1853, when the first burial took place, the cemetery looked wild. Some of the trees had been cut down and the brush burned; yet this did not to a great extent decrease the utter loneliness of the place. The first burial of an adult in the new cemetery was made under very pathetic circumstances. Mr. Colby, who had been much interested in securing this property for a cemetery, was the first adult person to be buried in it, dying May 11 [from tuberculosis at the age of 32¹⁵]. Mr. Colby, who had been a public-spirited man, was very popular and consequently the general sense of loss felt in the community was expressed in the large attendance at the funeral. The services were held in the Northside School House. In those days, there were no horses or carriages; so all sorts of vehicles were pressed into use for the occasion. The remains were carried in a spring wagon owned by Mr. Fitch. It was a mild May day, but the roads were almost impassable. As the long procession traveled slowly up the hill overlooking the village, a solitary horseman came galloping over the bridge on a large white horse. Checking his horse at the side of a little boy playing
in the road, the stranger inquired, ‘Can you tell me where Mr. Colby lives?’ The child, looking up with wide open and wondering eyes, answered ‘He don’t live any more; he’s dead, and there they go with him now to the new cemetery.’ The man was Mr. Colby’s brother, who had come all the way from New England [by boat and by stage, including a 30-mile trip on horseback to Manitowoc from Sheboygan] in response to a letter telling of Mr. Colby’s illness. Spurring on his tired horse, he overtook the procession just as it was about to enter the cemetery. Almost beside himself with grief, he rode up to the big wagon that carried the mourners and a halt was called. There was scarcely a dry eye in all the assemblage. The lonely surroundings, the wind moaning through the trees seemed a fitting accompaniment to the sad scene. “At the grave, the casket of the deceased was again opened to give the brother a last look at the remains.”

“The brother insisted on having the funeral postponed. In that first moment of his terrible grief, he felt he could not reconcile himself to the thought of having his brother laid away in that wild, lonely place where he could never see the grave. However, after serious consideration, it was decided that the burial take place and a removal be made later in the season if it was then thought best. Bereaved Mrs. Colby could not persuade herself to consent to have his remains disturbed, so they remain in Evergreen Cemetery to this day.”

“The headstone on the grave toppled over many years ago and through a local banker the headstone was remarked and a poem on the reserve side made legible [prior to 1931]. Years of the elements had erased all but a faint outline of the poem. And here is the poem on the reverse side:

“There is not an hour of the day
Or dreamy night but I am with thee
There is not a wind but whispers
Of thy name and not a flower that
Sleeps beneath the moon but in its
Hues and fragrance bears a thought of thee.”

The Colby headstone is located in lot 6, block 29 of the East Half of the original cemetery.

2. George Waldo, died 4/7/1862

“The May 11, 1862 issue of the Manitowoc Herald details Captain Waldo’s funeral: “The remains of Capt. Waldo were brought to this place on the Comet on Saturday morning and the funeral ceremonies took place on Sunday. Upon arrival of the body, it was taken to the Masonic Hall, where it remained until 2 P.M., on Sunday, the time appointed for the funeral. A portion of the Masonic burial service was recited in the hall, in the presence of Manitowoc and Tracy Lodges after which a procession was formed in York Street… The procession moved to the Episcopal Church, and after the reading of the burial service, was reformed in the same order and moved to solemn music by the Manitowoc Band, where the impressive funeral service of the Masonic order was completed…” In the Friday, April 18, 1862 issue of The Pilot, it states, in part: “On Tuesday, our citizens were astounded by the sad announcement in the Milwaukee papers that George E. Waldo, late of this village, and Captain of Co. E. 14th Wisconsin Regiment, had fallen in the battle
of Pittsburgh, another martyr to the cause of his country." The article stated how flags were flown at half-mast for the 28 year old Waldo and how "measures will be taken to have the remains of the gallant soldier brought home from the battlefield to his home in Manitowoc for interment." In an in-depth article in the summer of 1986 _Voyageur_ (published by the Brown County Historical Society and the History Department of the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay) about Manitowoc’s entry into the Civil War, UW Center-Manitowoc County historian Dr. Terry Trask writes about April of 1862 when the town lost its first son to the Civil War. “George Edward Waldo fell in the Battle of Shiloh in the valley of the Tennessee River. He died with a gaping hole in his chest in the early afternoon April 7. Three weeks later his body was brought home for burial.” According to one account [Roy] Pfeffer said, the governor of Wisconsin traveled south to ship back Waldo’s body and two soldiers from Michigan. The governor drowned accidentally and the money to cover the trip home was gone. Trask relates how the townspeople raised $100 to send the Rev. George Engles, rector of the Episcopal Church, south to find and bring home the body of Capt. Waldo. “Ten days later, the Comet bumped against the timbers of the north pier, and deck hands carried ashore the metal casket containing the remains of George Waldo. His brother, William, had gone to Milwaukee to accompany the body home by water after it had been delivered there by train from the Tennessee Valley.” It was only five months earlier that George Waldo and his volunteers had sailed off on this same steamboat. Trask describes the funeral procession: “The coffin was flanked by Waldo’s brothers and followed by other relatives, as well as a great assembly of lawyers, civic officials, and citizens. They all made their somber way to the open grave in Evergreen Cemetery high upon a bluff overlooking the river.”

Young Waldo, the account stated, migrated to Manitowoc with his older brother, William, from their family home at Prattsburg, N.Y., sometime in the 1850’s. George married Dolly Wood from Maine. George read law in the office of Judge Charles H. Walker and lived in the Walker home next door to William's home. At the outbreak of the war, at age 26, he was recently admitted to the bar.”

![Image](image.png)

Evergreen Cemetery records show a burial fee of $2.50 was paid April 28, 1862 for a “Mr. Walto;” however, no lot number is specified.

Waldo Boulevard in Manitowoc is named after this war hero.

In the early 1990’s, when Roy Pfeffer, a Manitowoc funeral director and Civil War buff, learned there was no grave marker for Waldo, he decided to do something about it. He “checked historians, cemetery records, news accounts from the time and relatives of the captain living in Chicago. [He] used a metal detector and probe to check possible graves – all with no luck.” He applied for a government marker to identify the Civil War Veteran’s final resting spot. A marker was placed on lot 4, block 27 of the East Half of the original cemetery at the head of the grave of an unknown burial, which was believed to be George Waldo.
3. Nicholas Wollmer, died 1864

“Nicholas Wollmer was born in Germany. He emigrated to the U.S. and settled in Manitowoc in 1847. Wollmer was recorded as one of the first six attorneys in Manitowoc County. Over the following years, Wollmer became actively involved in politics and community affairs. Along with his law practice, Wollmer operated a real estate business, owned and operated the Wollmer Bank and was treasurer of the Manitowoc and Mississippi Railroad Company. In 1854, Wollmer was named District Attorney, replacing James L. Kyle who perished during the cholera epidemic that ravaged the county.

On March 8, 1856, Nicholas Wollmer married Paulina Heineman at Manitowoc. Paulina was also born in Germany and had emigrated to the U.S. with her parents. Nicholas and Paulina Wollmer had four children, with the oldest, Amelia, passing away on August 12, 1858.

With the coming of the Civil War, Nicholas Wollmer was one of several prominent attorneys to render his service to the union cause. In August 1862, Wollmer enlisted as a member of the 26th Wisconsin Volunteers, and on April 13, 1863 was named lieutenant of Company G. On July 20, 1864, the 26th Regiment was taking part in the Atlanta Campaign. As the regiment passed through Peachtree Creek, barely three miles north of Atlanta, it was attacked by a Confederate force under the command of General John B. Hood. Union forces reeled under the surprise attack. It was at this point that Wollmer received a devastating wound to his chest from a Confederate Minie ball. Wollmer was taken to the regimental hospital and later transferred to a federal hospital at Jeffersonville, Indiana. He lingered on for just over a month and on August 20, 1864, succumbed to his wound.

Lieutenant Wollmer’s remains were returned to Manitowoc on the Steamer Comet on August 30, 1864. The funeral took place from his residence at 4:00 that same day. Veterans from the 5th and 9th Wisconsin Regiments, who had just returned from the war, constituted a military escort. General Fred Salomon, Lieutenant Colonel Olmsted and other officers and prominent citizens were on hand to lead the procession to Evergreen Cemetery. Wollmer was laid to rest to the sound of a 21-gun salute from his fellow warriors. Lieutenant Nicholas Wollmer had left a wife, three small children and the citizens of Manitowoc to mourn his passing.23

On August 11, 1997, the Manitowoc County Civil War Roundtable held a headstone dedication at Evergreen Cemetery. The program included the reading of news articles & letters, singing, praying, placing flowers, and a 21-gun salute.

**Sextons/Management**

Sextons/superintendents appointed to oversee the cemetery include:

- John Leykom – 1862
- Gustav M. Frase – 1890
- Emil Schroeder – 1900
Edward Pasewalk – 1912-1951

Louis Norteman was named as Superintendent in 1951 and retired April 15, 1983 as Superintendent of Cemetery, Parks, & Forestry. “Norteman was the last to reside at the Sexton House. His office, where both cemetery and parks records were kept until 1983, were in an area totally separate from the attached home. Erna Roepke was his secretary at the time of his retirement.” “The burial vault at Evergreen was no longer used during his tenure, but burials were done winter and summer.” Norteman said, “All we needed was eight working hours notice.” Graves could be dug even when the ground was solidly frozen, with the use of air hammers and a backhoe.”

In 1983, the Cemetery came under the supervision of the Department of Public Works, with Paul R. Steckmesser as the Superintendent of Public Works from 1983 to May 31, 1990.

Earl Cenefelt became the Foreman of the Cemetery, under the direction of Paul Steckmesser, from 1983 to 1988.

Garry John was the Superintendent of Public Works from June 1, 1990 until his death on March 2, 2003.

Dennis L. Schneider was Foreman from 1988 to January 28, 2005.

After Dennis’ retirement, the Cemetery structure changed to have a part-time Manager. Managers and Foreman/Team Leaders;

- January 2005 - May 2007 Jamie Lee, part-time Manager
- January 29, 2005 - 2007 David N. Schultz, Foreman
- 2007 - December 2011 Derek Muench, part-time Manager
- 2007 – Present Jeff Shimek, Foreman
- January 2012 – August 2013 Kevin Glaseser, part-time Manager
- September 2013 – March 2020 Chad Scheinoha, part-time Manager
- March 2020 – Present Billy Hutterer, Interim part-time Manager
“Article 3: Sexton/Superintendent,” Herald Times Reporter [Manitowoc, WI], November 30, 1988


“An Ordinance,” Manitowoc County Herald [Manitowoc, WI], 1853


“Kunish Shares Memories Of Her Home,” Herald Times Reporter [Manitowoc, WI], November 24, 1988

“City To Negotiate For Cemetery Land,” Herald Times Reporter [Manitowoc, WI], February 8, 1977

“City To Purchase Land For Cemetery,” Herald Times Reporter [Manitowoc, WI], June 7, 1977

“Cemetery Has Its Own Headstone,” Herald Times Reporter [Manitowoc, WI], 1984 or 1985?

“Headstone In Evergreen Cemetery Recalls A Bit Of Untold Early History Here,” Manitowoc Herald News [Manitowoc, WI], October 22, 1931


“Headstone In Evergreen Cemetery Recalls A Bit Of Untold Early History Here,” loc.cit.


“Headstone In Evergreen Cemetery Recalls A Bit Of Untold Early History Here,” loc.cit.


“Headstone In Evergreen Cemetery Recalls A Bit Of Untold Early History Here,” loc.cit.


“Headstone In Evergreen Cemetery Recalls A Bit Of Untold Early History Here,” loc.cit.


“Headstone In Evergreen Cemetery Recalls A Bit Of Untold Early History Here,” loc.cit.


“Waldo Of Civil War Has Man Searching,” Unknown newspaper, November 10, 1991

Lieut. Nicholas Wollmer Headstone Replacement Graveside Program, Manitowoc County Civil War Round Table, August 11, 1997