

The History of Riverside Cemetery
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retain their color and remain so for all time."

What a great sales pitch that must have been in 1912! However, in 1938 the condition of the mausoleum became so troubling that some families actually had the remains of their loved ones moved from the abbey to the cemetery. Even today names remain on crypts in the mausoleum for those who have grave stones marking their burial in the cemetery. In March of that year, a delegation consisting of Luther Lyons, Victor Borklund and John Foresman met with the Sheets family, who contended they

While the Riverside Cemetery Association had plans for expansion of the cemetery grounds, it did distinguish itself from the original cemetery, which remained under the control of the township as it had been since 1908. Even today, no record exists showing that Iroquois Township ever deeded the original cemetery to the

Frank T. Hawkins, known as "Squire" Hawkins for being a Justice of the Peace as well. Hawkins was in the furniture and undertaking business as early as 1889 and continued until October of 1918. Morton Ulrey and Moses Sawyer were in the furniture and undertaking business at the turn of the century until about 1909 and

Bernard B. Gragg was undertaking in the early 1900's but turned his attention to being a jeweler and merchant with his brother in 1912. In 1913 we find Lloyd L. Hershman setting up shop in the furniture and undertaking business, having bought the Ulrey Furniture Store and the Gragg funeral business. Hershman was a partner in the Washburn and Hershman furniture

and undertaking parlors at Kentland for a brief time in the teens, but sold out of that establishment after a few short years. In the 1930's, Hershman's son-in-law, Paul Weston, came on board and continued the business after Hershman's death in 1936, later changing the name to Hershman and Weston. Around 1953 Paul's son, Jim Weston, joined the family business and continued to operate the Weston Funeral Home after Paul's death in 1966. Jim chose to leave the business in 1975 when it was purchased by Richard E. Gerts, who has operated the establishment under the Weston-Gerts and Gerts names since that time.

Today, Riverside Cemetery is still governed by a volunteer board of directors and funded through the sale of burial lots and a stipend from Iroquois Township. Over the years several different caretakers have taken great pride in keeping the grounds manicured and maintained, keeping it one of the most beautiful settings in Newton County. A fitting tribute to those pioneers who settled the land and for all those who have followed.



The Brook Abbey, completed in 1940, still stands today at Riverside Cemetery. Photo By Beth Bassett.

Riverside Cemetery Association. Later that month, Laban and Laura Lyons deeded 3.4 acres to the new association and by November, 1927 the new lots had been surveyed and drives and fences built around the new grounds. This expansion is known as blocks 1 and 2, and consists of 237 lots containing six graves each, with the exception of a few end lots that contain only two or four graves each. In 1936 a new caretaker's shed made of stone was built, replacing a delapidated wooden structure located at the same location. In 1947, an additional 3 acres was obtained from the heirs of J.J. McCabe, and 7 more acres were bought in 1960 from Samuel and Winnie Lyons, bringing the total acreage of the cemetery to approximately 20 acres. Block 3 was platted in the early 1960's, adding 119 lots and then increased to 161 lots in December of 1975. The most recent addition, Block 4, was platted in 1980 and added 118 more lots.

A history of any cemetery would not be complete without some research in to the history of the undertakers in the community. The earliest known undertaker in Brook was

The History of The Riverside Cemetery

By Kyle Conrad

As researchers, historians, and genealogists, we many times recognize the historical value a cemetery holds by being the final resting place for the pioneers of our community. However, a cemetery can have a history of it's own, many times due to it being a focal point of a community. Such is the case with Riverside Cemetery.

Riverside Cemetery is located east of Brook on State Road 16. Situated in section 20, it is the only organized cemetery in Iroquois Township. We can trace the beginning of the cemetery to the years prior to 1850, when a 14 year old daughter of pioneers who were traveling west, died and was buried along the Iroquois River. According to an account written for the 1985 *Newton County History* by Gladys (Hershman) Weston, the grave was marked by a boulder and fenced in by small timbers. The story of the first burial had been passed down by J. Bennet Lyons from his father, Samuel Lyons, one of the area's first settlers. A monument was placed at the site of the grave by the community in 1976.

Little more recorded information exists on the cemetery from this time until 1895. Obviously, the dates on the grave markers indicate the area continued to be used as a cemetery from the 1850's on, but who owned and maintained the ground on which the original section is located is sketchy. Several grave stones and field stones mark these early graves. On May 31, 1895, however, the Brook Cemetery Association was established for the purpose of providing a cemetery for the citizens of Brook and Iroquois Township. Elected officers included Schuyler Jones, President; Lewis Blankenbaker, Secretary; Edward Hess, Treasurer; and Charles Waling and David Hess, members. Approximately 4.5 acres of land was made available to the new association by John J. McCabe, Quinton Lyons, and Samuel Lyons. One hundred sixty lots were originally platted, but sales must have been sluggish or expenses too high, because in December, 1908 the Brook Cemetery Association deeded the cemetery to Iroquois Township trustee, John J. McCabe. An article appearing in the May

Brook Cemetery's

First Grave. *This monument was erected in 1976 in honor of the first grave at Brook Cemetery, now known as Riverside Cemetery, located along State Road 16, east of Brook, Indiana. It is inscribed "Burial Prior to 1850. A 14 Yr. Old Daughter of Pioneers Moving West".* Photo by Beth Bassett



7, 1909 *Brook Reporter* calls for the restoration of the cemetery, citing numerous problems, including the road leading from the highway to the cemetery. The August 12, 1910 *Brook Reporter* then complements the cemetery association for it's work in putting the cemetery back in shape. We also learn in this article that the cemetery was added on to, increasing the 160 lots to 250.

One of the most interesting facets of Riverside Cemetery is the Brook Abbey. In January of 1912, Laban and Mary Lyons sold a half acre of land just north of the Brook Cemetery to the Newton County

Mausoleum Association. Little is known about this association, but we find out in later news events that a majority of the stock was controlled by the Sheets family in Lowell, Indiana and a Mr. Tucker in Havana, Illinois. Later that year construction began on the 200 crypt mausoleum and the sale of crypts began. An article describing the construction of the building appeared in an edition of the *Brook Reporter* and stated "Bodies deposited in the mausoleum do not decay, but are fully preserved...where they retain their identity... Flowers placed on the casket will

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Newton County Queries

In an attempt to locate missing persons and places in Newton County we have instituted this column on Newton County Queries. Basically these are recent unanswered queries that we have received on our web site. They have been referred to members from the locale, who were not successful in finding a reply. We are now appealing to our wider readership for help. If you know any of the persons or places involved, write to the editor or the Family History Division, or e-mail us at newtonhs@ffni.com and one or the other will reply to the query. Thank you in advance for helping.

1. Looking for Georgia Humberd (1894-1945)--Goodland. She had a brother Roy.--Peter Kamp.
2. Looking for record of great aunt, Lillie Belle (Swartz) Jacobs. In a nursing home near Morocco--Linda Mankowski
3. Looking for descendants of John W. Toyne married Mary J. Short (1877) in Newton County--Sharon Bope
4. Looking for Nancy Alice Freeland, dau of Charles & Nancy Lane Freeland Brown, Jackson Township--Sandy Freeland
5. Need clarification on the spelling of Clara McIlwain. Son Joseph Henry or James Henry born 1899--Dave Reid
6. Seeking information on a Brook Restaurant owned by the Swartz or Spitler family around 1900--Linda Mankowski
7. Seeking descendants and ancestors of Melvin Abbaduska and Mildred Lacock, married May 4, 1929, Newton Co. A (Abbaduska) Lutz
8. Looking for burial site of John Sorel and wife, Elizabeth Peter Robidon. He was born 1800 and she 1810. Came from Quebec by way of Kankakee--Charlene
9. Need information on Wallabe Troup. In 1860 census had a daughter Elen--Shela Light
10. Old tintypes of Blankenbaker, Childs, Porter families of Newton County. May be claimed by interested relative--Gary Clifton