

Drew Cemetery



Description

Drew Cemetery is a private cemetery located in the Northwest fractional quarter of Section 3 of Marion Township, on the east side of County Farm Road, just south of the former entrance to the Michigan State Sanatorium (now known as High Hillcrest Drive). The cemetery is approximately 1 acre in area and contains 8 known headstones. There are no platted lots in this cemetery, but the headstones are instead in two rows. The provided cemetery map and transcription calls these rows “lots” for consistency with the other cemeteries. The rows of graves are typically 8 feet wide and have a walkway of 6 feet between the rows. The westerly-most “lot” is number 1, and the easterly-most “lot” is number 2 on the included transcription.

Most of the old headstones are difficult to read in their present condition. Therefore, the transcription of this cemetery depends almost entirely on the transcription done by the D.A.R. in the 1940’s (I: 36).

History

The history of this cemetery is best told in the words of Sumner Charles Drew in the 1976 Howell Bicentennial History Photographic Supplement:

Townsend Drew, wife Sarah and two year old son Sheridan headed west from the finger lakes region of New York in 1936(sic) in a wagon pulled by oxen. They reached Michigan in the spring of the same year, as they were fording the spring flooded Shiawassee River, the wagon got wet and their youngest daughter, who was born on the journey died. They settled there at the grave site, section 3 of Marion Township. This was later called the Drew Cemetery still located on County Farm Road directly across from the entrance to Hillcrest Center (55).

Interestingly, there are no headstones in this cemetery that date back to 1836. If a Drew child died at that time, a headstone with her name was not in the cemetery when the D.A.R. transcribed the site in the 1940's, and it is not there now. However, Drew did settle in the area in 1836:

During the summer and fall of 1836 the population of the township was further increased by the arrival and settlement of some 20 or more additional families. Among them were Miles Chubb, who settled in the southeast part. Townsend Drew, from Steuben Co., N.Y., who still resides on the land then purchased by him, it being upon the highest elevation in the town. He early devoted much attention to fruit culture. He also built the first framed house, in the fall of 1836, Mr. Barker Wing doing the carpenter work (Ellis 348).

Another account of this cemetery's history can be found in the 1976 Howell Bicentennial History:

This cemetery was located on land which was part of the original 235 acre farm which Townsend Drew took up in 1839.

It was the burial place of the pioneer Drew family who owned the site of the Michigan State Sanatorium, now Hillcrest. It stood on a knoll, enclosed by a fence, nearly opposite the entrance to the sanatorium and in view of the road, but is now obscured by buildings.

In his will in 1882 Townsend Drew declared "That acre of ground on my farm where my friends have been buried and where I wish to be buried, I give to the Drew family to be used as a burial ground forever."

In the partition of his farm the section which contained the cemetery went to Townsend Drew, Jr. The cemetery lot extended to the center of the north and south roadway. Possibly this section was released to the state for a road.

There are seven Drew burials here ("Drew" 198).

In 1993, Charles E. Garlock, made a survey of the cemetery for Marion Township. At this time, he measured the remnants of the surrounding fence to accurately determine the legal size of the cemetery (Garlock "Drew").

In 1998, Steven Globke cleaned up the cemetery as an Eagle-Scout project. At that time the cemetery was in a poor state of disrepair. His group successfully removed a large amount of brush and vegetation covering the site. Since his efforts, the cemetery has been maintained in a satisfactory manner. Globke also wrote a history of the Drew family that included most of the facts found here. He also said that he could not locate the marker for Fidela Drew (Globke 1). Today, this headstone is just south of an oak tree in "Lot 2."

On February 23, 1999, T. Gilbert Parker, of Parker, Miller & Kehoe Attorney's Office presented an opinion to the Marion Township Clerk that the ownership of the cemetery belonged to the heirs of Townsend Drew, and not to Marion Township. Parker sites several legal documents to support his conclusion (Parker 1).

On March 22, 1999, the Marion Township Board resolved that Drew Cemetery was a private cemetery to be maintained by the heirs of Townsend Drew. This resolution was accepted by Dean Drew. Today, the cemetery is still under the ownership of the Drew family.