

Warren's Oldest Cemetery mostly scattered as fill dirt in around Macomb County



Above is Bunert Road at left side. The top of the foto is South. the right wide is West. The location is just south of Martin Road. The Bunert red farm house is labeled as is the Bidell Green Hessel Bunert Indian Pioneer Cemetery. The C Bunert farm is located at the top right and the A Bunert farm at the left middle. The Dark square and with sidebar to left (probably where the Bunerts were buried) was all that was left after being plowed into by the farm equipment over the years. The cemetery mound was covered mostly in Lilac bushes. and was reportedly around eighteen feet high or more originally and was surrounded by packed down dirt from vehicles. It had its own access dirt single lane path-road directly to Martin. My friend Fred Weier who still farmed the Bunert farm until its being sold off, was grandson of Ida Bunert born 1887 died c 1975 who married Robert Weier. She was the daughter of the original settler A Bunert. Fred told me the school district took the family land including the Bidel Green Hessell-Bunert-Indian-Pioneer Cemetery (which was registered as a Michigan Cemetery on the undertakers register.) to build Briarwood school near it. By the 1950s the mound had been reduced to around 10 foot height. It was a shrub covered over 60 foot in diameter, sandy mound that looked like an island that kids for many years climbed up with their bikes wagons, and sleds to coast down wearing the sandy hill down. Eventually it was reduced to a low mound. Final height aprox 18 inches. So it must no longer have looked like an Indian mound. There was also a flat area near the cemetery where pioneer burials were. This probably had many child burials as Ida reported her parents telling here about pioneers bringing their dead children there and burying them. She also reported seeing wolves howling on moonlit nights through cracks in the log cabin. The Bunert family had also recognized it as an Indian burial mound because Indians visited it occasionally staying for some time and leaving when the sun was at a certain height. The Bunert family had buried at least two adults near there. These were later moved to

Clinton Grove cemetery.

Ida Weier told the school officials when they took over her property that it was a pioneer and Indian cemetery. Behind her back they referred to her as a crazy old woman. Little did they realize that she was the daughter of pioneers and saw Indians visit there and later was given bones dug up there. But after several findings of bones by the children having dug them up in the sand and kids had also started bringing in human remains from it for show and tell. Surprise! Imagine the teachers being confronted with a human skull for show in tell.

Many remains of children and adults were used as fill dirt around Macomb County before this was stopped. How many dump truck loads were removed was not recorded. To make it worse these were multiple shallow graves piled on one another. But many of the bodies had decomposed as well as smaller bones so were unrecognizable. Also consider this may have been a burial ground for hundreds of years prior to modern age then we have word of Indian related burials in the early 1800s. Then the pioneer burials through perhaps even late 1800s. The mound existed even after the building of Briarwood school in 1966 and was not completely taken away until the early 1970s. So the human remains which were often buried just in a blanket, particularly those of pioneer children were already mostly decomposed. The clothing was also usually cotton or wool which also decomposed rapidly. No cement vaults were used.

But after receivers of fill dirt that the school district had hauled off, reported human remains scandal was about to be let loose and when this was reported to the school authorities and they immediately hired William Dross the closest undertaker. He exhumed over 40 human remains which were reburied in Clinton Grove in several cement vaults with no marker. I checked. I was in Europe in the US Army and returning home around this time but later saw an 8 mm movie of the exhumations.

Fred Weier my friend told me that his grandma said that Indians would come there, stay awhile and leave when the sun was in a certain place and he told me of a pioneer who carried his dead child there. I have done much research on this cemetery but little was found as in those early days few records were kept or filed. The wooden and stone markers are long gone. What remains are the lilac plants planted there. Two to three times the children died for each pioneer adult because there were a lot of childhood diseases resulting in deaths before 1920. So it must have contained many infants and young children. Also in these early days there were no other local cemeteries and the pioneers did not have money to buy a plot even if there was a cemetery. St Clement did not start until 1854 and that was just for Catholics. There were no funeral homes and the dead were buried the same day they died or the next day as the corpse remained in the family home until buried. There were also no hearses here in Warren. The roads were few and very poor so for the local farmers this was the choice. There was a report of an Indian woman aberration and other sightings by unsuspecting home buyers who were not told that part of their property may have been a graveyard.

As a result, pioneer remains along with the accompanying fill dirt were scattered far and wide. And that is what happened to our oldest cemetery.

After 1818 settlers usually buried their dead in shallow graves not far from where they died on their farm, without a casket or stone marker. After 1855 most of the dead were buried in one of three cemeteries: The Bidell Green Hessel Bunert Indian Pioneer Cemetery, The

Warren Union Cemetery or the St Clement Cemetery. After 1880 many were buried at Mt Olivet. There were no known grave stone makers locally. Many people were buried without a casket or marker. Both the St Clement and Warren Union cemeteries date from 1850-1855 but both appear to be preceded by the Bidell Green Hessel Bunert Indian Pioneer Cemetery. In Warren Township the oldest **recorded** cemetery burials were at the Warren Union Cemetery, followed by the St Clement Cemetery. But between the A Bunert Farmhouse and the C Bunert Farmhouse Just N of Martin Road and West of Bunert Road, was an Indian mound and 30-50 feet in diameter. It was most likely an Indian burial mound but this is uncertain which was missed in Hinsdale's research probably because it was so low.

This mound existed prior to the settlement of their farm in 1849. It had become overgrown with weeds and shrubs so much that it was not particularly recognizable as an Indian mound and was missed on the early surveys. The settlers certainly were not in the habit of building mounds 18 feet high. Historian Wesley Arnold interviewed others who stated that the mound was by the time they were biking and sledding was at least ten feet high. One man told me that as a boy he and other kids had to climb up this mountain of sorts which appeared to be like an island. He said that kids often rode down it on bikes and sleds and that once in awhile they would uncover a bone. It was sandy it had been worn down considerably in the many years since the Indians made it. Since it was covered with small trees and shrubs and had bare spots, it was obviously not noticed in the mounds survey done by Hinsdale and others.

The family reported that Indians came around often in the early days. They would read the sun like a clock and would disappear when the sun reached a certain angle. Indian artifacts have been found in the area. Local legends also give credence to the Indian mound theory. This area is generally flat and there is no logical geological explanation for a sand mound given the flatness of the surrounding area. Also considering that there was at least evidence of forty human remains removed from this site and that no archeologist was called in to evaluate the site so that there may have been other evidence that was certainly overlooked. The family reported that other families sometimes brought relatives there for burial. The one Bunert daughter married a Weier so there is a name shift. I talked with one of the older Weiers and was told that their grand parents told them of a man who carried his dead baby for several miles to have it buried there as it was the only cemetery he knew about. Around this landmark early settlers from several families buried their dead. They probably did not know or care if it was an Indian mound or not. Whether or not it will probably remain unknown as the evidence was destroyed and removed. Early farmers often raided Indian mounds to get pots. There was a dirt path that led from Martin road directly to this cemetery. I have it on an aerial foto and showing the mound in the 1960s. I shall call it the Bunert-Indian Pioneer Cemetery for shortness but it was supposedly registered on the State of Michigan undertaker registry as the Bidell, Green, Hessel, Indian Pioneer Cemetery. I saw a 8 mm movie in about 1970 showing three burial vaults in which bones were being piled to be buried at Clinton Grove. It is now located on the southern half of the Briarwood school property. I spoke with the undertaker who performed the last removals. He stated it was an early pioneer cemetery but did not know if Indians were among the oldest bones. I found newspaper articles. And weirdly also found reports of ghost sightings believe it or not.

I interviewed homeowners who reported that their kids and animals sometimes noticed apparitions and sometimes an Indian woman. These were original homeowners whose back yards were built over the graves. These homeowners were not told that their property was

part of a burial ground.

By the 1960s it was overgrown with Lilac shrubs that waved in the breeze. The Lilacs were planted by other families to mark the burial places but had become overgrown over the years. The family was forced by economic reasons to sell the property. The school district would have taken the property anyway as they wanted to build a school there. It was transferred about 1966. Mrs. Ida Weier told the school district that it was a burial ground and wanted all remains to be treated in a "Christian manner". Bunert family burials were removed and reinterred at the Clinton Grove Cemetery in Mt Clemens. There were no other stone markers and all of the wood markers had rotted away and the little stone pebble markers were displaced so it was not particularly recognizable as a burial ground. But she also warned the principal that it was a burial ground. He called her a crazy lady. During construction a skull and other human bones were discovered. (Per Tri City Progress 4 14-1967) In May of 1969 children playing in the school playground discovered more human remains. Imagine the look of shock on the teachers face when they brought the remains into the classroom. Later the principal went over to Ida Weiers house and wanted to question her about the remains. She reminded him that he had branded her a crazy lady for even suggesting that it was a burial ground. At least one contractor dug a load of dirt for fill dirt and dropped it off on someone's property. The homeowner receiving the fill dirt found human remains and called the police who contacted the contractor. Imagine asking for fill dirt and getting human remains dropped off in your driveway. Wow was he in trouble. It wasn't very long when that kids were also showing off human remains from the mound. That finally got the officials attention. The school district wanted everything hushed up so no archeologists were called in and in fact it was them who hired a funeral director. But human remains **of at least 40 humans** were removed from what was left of the mound and the rest of the area was not explored so there is high probability of more remains being under the soccer field.

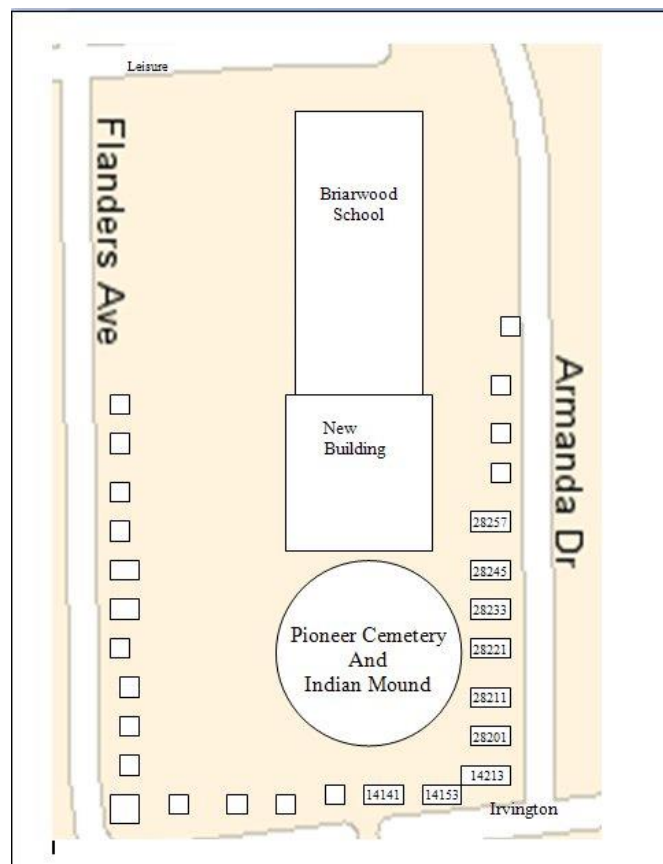
William DuRoss the funeral director mentioned to me that Theuts, Greens, Hessels, and perhaps other pioneers and Indians were probably buried there. So it was for sure a pioneer cemetery. Whether or not it was also the remains of an Indian burial ground had not been determined by scientific investigation and will never be fully known as the remains were removed and scattered far and wide to now unknown places around Macomb County. And even though a few bones were removed the balance of the remains of those pioneer families may remain underground. This historian does not believe in ghosts but must report many of sightings over the years by homeowners adjacent to the Briarwood School property. Several families and even children have reported sightings and strange happenings there. As a historian I am honor bound to tell the truth. Strange. This historian feels that a plaque should be erected at least at the south end of the parking lot facing the soccer field which now encloses much of the area of this cemetery. And mark this as at least a pioneer cemetery.

After much research including consulting maps of that time and interviewing many people it appears that the location is as above in regard to present buildings. The cemetery also appears to have extended into the back yards of houses on West side of Amanda. It is also possible that the cemetery could have extended into the land onto which the houses were actually built. The builder did not inform the buyers of the houses that their property was on a cemetery . When I interviewed now deceased family members they reported that Indians often came around to visit the cemetery. This leads to speculation but not proof that it may have been also an Indian burial ground. The alleged unproven sighting by more than one old

resident of an Indian woman apparition adds more mystery to this site. Although this historian does not believe in ghosts reports of sightings by children and supported by animal behavior deepen the mystery further.

I went through the old maps of pioneer families and was going to try to make up a list of who could have been buried here. I consulted the censuses and what few records remain. All this was futile effort as the Indians, and early pioneers did not register deaths, nor use engraved grave stones, and official records did not give me anything of value. Besides in the early days there were many still born, infant and child deaths all unrecorded. There is little hope that many family records will turn up if they haven't by 2026. I looked for Greens and Hessels and Bidels and did not find any deaths that fit here.

If future generations wish they could have several years from now those removed to Clinton Grove Cemetery exhumed and in a few years the DNA will be able to tell us who they were. This is unlikely considering the current uncaringness about history. So this old historian will let this whole matter rest as an example of a shameful failure to both preserve remains and to preserve the history of those who were here before us.



See historian Wesley Arnold's History Archive of Warren-Center Line Records which has pictures of every old grave stones in both Warren's Union Cemetery and St Clement's Cemetery. It appears that these two cemeteries plus the Bidell Green Hessel Bunert Indian Pioneer Cemetery hold most of the locally buried remains of the pioneers of Warren.

The Warren Union Cemetery has estimated 1000-3000 graves. The plaque erected there states only 325 but the persons who did that plaque did not consider the county or village records or other research on pioneer families and did not even do a study to estimate how

many people were buried there. They also did not consider 2,000 baby and graves which are unmarked. Even today still born and hours old baby graves most often go unmarked. St Clement's has over 1,500 burials prior to 1943. But this is an under count as they are missing records for many years. Latest research indicates over 6,000 individual burials at St Clement about which I have compiled 100 books of research.

With the scientific advances it will soon be possible to get a determination of who was buried there from the vaults at Clinton Grove if that future research is ever done. Some families might want to know if their ggg grandparents are there.

In summary Warren's Oldest cemetery was mostly used as fill dirt removed and scattered around Macomb County.

My hope is that we can at least give them a historical marker and future generations can learn from history. After all at least honoring those who were buried here with a marker is the right thing to do.