



The Lakewood Historical Society

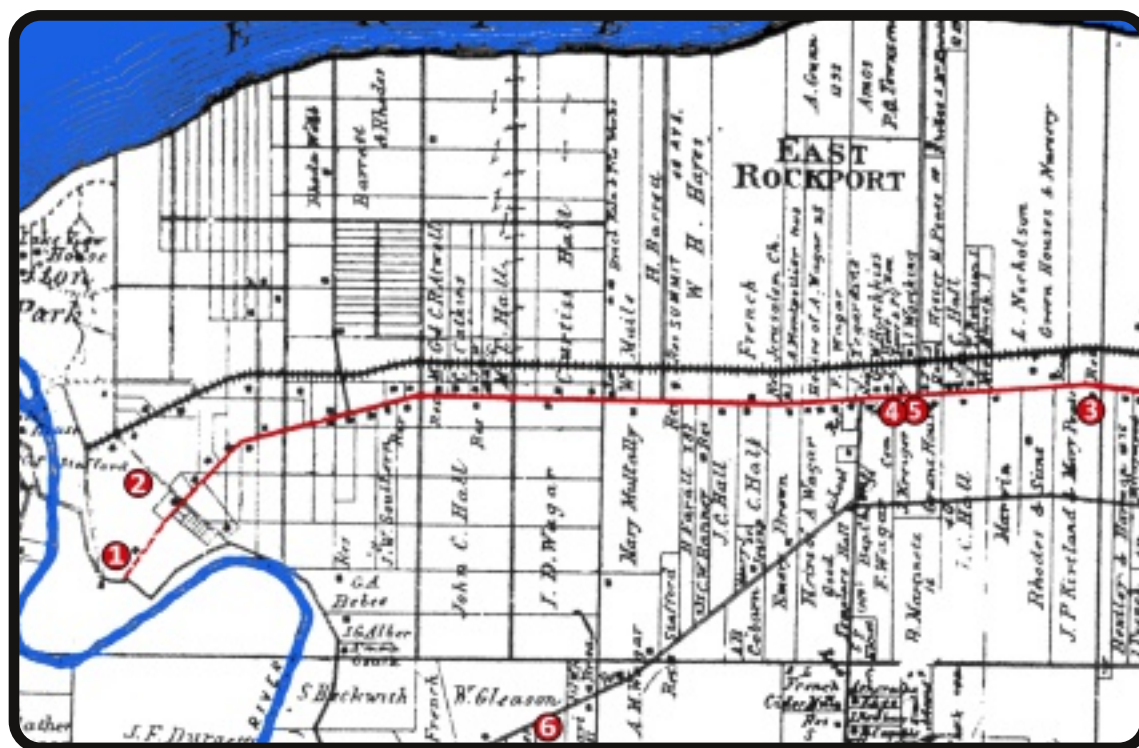
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Rediscovering Our Buried Past: A Glimpse at Lakewood's Lost Cemeteries

By William G. Krejci



-  Detroit Road
-  Lake Erie and Rocky River
-  Approximate Location of Cemeteries
 1. Rockport Tumulus
 2. First Rockport Graveyard
 3. Kirtland Plot
 4. Wagar Cemetery
 5. Kidney Cemetery
 6. Gleason-Edwards Cemetery

Section of 1874 East Rockport Map in Atlas of Cuyahoga County, Ohio 1874 published by Titus, Simmons & Titus.

Cemeteries in Lakewood? There must be some mistake here.

The fact of the matter is that, at one time, there were as many as six burial sites located in Lakewood, with close to twenty in Rockport Township. Though these sites have been, for the most part, exhumed or removed, small traces are almost always left behind. In most cases, burial records were not kept, and therefore it is impossible to say how many remains were also left behind. Though more may have existed, these are the six cemeteries that are known for certain to have stood within the boundaries of Lakewood.

The Rockport Tumulus

This site was located along the far western edge of town. Its exact location rests near the intersection of Detroit and Sloane Avenues. The Rockport Tumulus, a small burial mound, covered about 250 square feet and rose about three feet higher than the surrounding ground. Early settlers farming that section of land knew it to contain human remains and thus decided against running their plows through it. It wasn't until around 1850 that the ground was disturbed by farming activity. The man who turned up the earth found many human bones in the furrows, as well as many metallic buttons and rusted pieces of iron. Finding the land unable to be used for agriculture, the settlers reburied the bones and did not further disturb the site.

During the mid-1860s, prominent local naturalist Jared Potter Kirtland exhumed the site with a friend and had the skulls analyzed by a colleague who was regarded as one of the nation's foremost craniologists, an early title for a forensic anthropologist. This colleague determined that the remains were Anglo-Saxon, not Native American, as was first believed.

Professor Kirtland came to the conclusion that these were the victims of either the Bradstreet or Wilkins disasters, both of which occurred on Lake Erie during Pontiac's Rebellion in the mid-1760s. Further evidence and records of these two disasters refute this evidence.

With the site now completely obliterated and the disinterred remains now missing, it is quite impossible to know who exactly was buried in the Rockport Tumulus. The site will have to remain a mystery for now.

First Rockport Graveyard

Located about 700 feet northeast of the tumulus, was the first Rockport graveyard. It was on this small parcel of land that the earliest residents of the township began to inter their dead. Rumors have circulated that it was once the original burial site of Nathan Alger, incorrectly named as Henry in historical documents. Nathan Alger, the first settler to have died in the township, passed on January 21, 1813, at the age of 47. His burial site now exists in the Alger Cemetery at Kamm's Corners. Most likely, the records are incorrect, as Mr. Alger had owned the land that would become Alger Cemetery. It's doubtful that he had been re-interred from the first Rockport graveyard.



Daniel and Aviger Miner's headstone.

It was also rumored that this was the burial site of a number of sailors who drowned off the coast of Lakewood in a shipwreck in 1812. This rumor cannot be verified or dispelled.

One person that is known for certain to have been buried here was a deacon named Daniel Miner who died just one month after

Nathan Alger. Deacon Miner owned the land adjacent to the first Rockport graveyard. It would stand to reason that he would be interred here.

This cemetery stood undisturbed until the 1860s when the site was obliterated to make way for a hotel and resort. It was at this time that the graves that could be located were removed to other cemeteries. Deacon Daniel Miner's remains were moved to Norwalk, where he now takes his repose beside his wife, Aviger.

Today, the site of this cemetery is occupied by the intersection of Edanola Avenue and Riverside Drive.

Whippoorwill Villa

This beautiful estate was the home of prominent area naturalist Jared Potter Kirtland and his family. Professor Kirtland had a great passion for exotic fruits and grew



The Kirtland Family pictured near the end of J. P. Kirtland's life. It is speculated that several of the individuals pictured were buried in the Kirtland plot.

many on his estate which extended from Lake Erie to Madison Avenue. It was here that he also first observed and named what would become known as Kirtland's Warbler.

When Professor Kirtland passed away in 1877, he was buried in a small family plot behind his house. Also at rest here were his second wife, Hanna, two grandsons, a granddaughter-in-law, and a great-granddaughter. He would take his repose here until 1883, at which time his son-in-law had the Kirtland family graves exhumed and removed to Lake View Cemetery.

Today, the exact site of this old cemetery rests just to the south of the gas station on the southwest corner of Detroit Avenue and Bunts Road. A driveway and part of the parking lot now occupy the site.

Wagar Cemetery

Some of Lakewood's older residents may recall the old cemetery that once occupied the site between Belle and St. Charles Avenues on the south side of Detroit Avenue. It was here that, for nearly seventy years, many of Lakewood's earliest residents interred their dead in what was commonly called the Wagar Cemetery.

This burial ground was established in 1826 with the passing of Mars Wagar's mother, Lucy Dwelle Wagar. Mr. Wagar would open the cemetery to neighbors for burials two years later. The final interment here took place in the 1890s. Soon after it fell into a state of neglect and disrepair.

In March of 1951, Lakewood passed an ordinance declaring the cemetery a nuisance, forbidding any further use of the land. It also requested that anyone with family buried there have their loved one's remains relocated to another cemetery. Many did so, but there were quite a few that were left behind. Those that were not relocated were exhumed by the city and relocated to a mass grave at Lakewood Park Cemetery in 1957. Shortly after, the land was leveled and the site was redeveloped.



Sarah Hall pictured above, and her headstone, right, which was left behind when her remains were moved from Wagar Cemetery. Sarah's headstone now resides in the garden of the Oldest Stone House.



Kidney Cemetery

Most people often confuse this small burial ground as being a part of the Wagar Cemetery while, in fact, it was a completely different cemetery. Kidney Cemetery, a sixteen-foot wide strip just to the east of Wagar Cemetery, was established in 1828 with the death of Sally Kidney, the wife of Timothy Seymour Brewster.

The exact number of burials here is unknown, but its fate was the same as the Wagar Cemetery. It, too, was relocated to Lakewood Park Cemetery in September of 1957.

Today, the site exists as a driveway, just to the west of the office building at 14601 Detroit Avenue.



Jeremiah Gleason's headstone.

Gleason-Edwards Cemetery

While workers were setting a new driveway at a residence on Hilliard Boulevard in 2000, they made a startling discovery. It was here that they uncovered two headstones. One belonged to Jeremiah D. Gleason who died in 1868. The other was for Betsey Impett Gibbs, who died in 1854, and her mother, Fanny, who passed in 1872. It was long believed that the Impett family was buried in the Wagar Cemetery near the center of town, but because their farm was located only a short distance from this site, this new evidence may indicate that this was their original place of rest.

The discovery of Jeremiah D. Gleason's headstone made perfect sense though, as the property had once been a part of the Gleason Farm. A great-grandson of Jeremiah recalled in later years that the family cemetery was removed from this site in January 1908. Nine members of



The original site of the Wagar Cemetary, at the corner of Detroit Ave. and St. Charles Ave., as it looks today.

the Gleason and Edwards families were exhumed and relocated to Evergreen Cemetery in Westlake. Sometimes stones just get left behind. Unfortunately stones aren't the only thing that tend to be forgotten. Not removed from this site was Jeremiah's son, Gilroy, who had died in the mid-1840s. His remains are likely still located on that site.

Many of the stones that were left behind at the Wagar Cemetery can now be found in the garden behind the Lakewood Historical Society. It is here, also, that Betsey Gibbs and Fanny Impett's headstone can be seen. Jeremiah Gleason's headstone has since been placed at his family plot at Evergreen Cemetery in Westlake.

It was with the helpful assistance of the Lakewood Historical Society that I was able to come up with many of these stories and burial locations. These historical accounts, told in greater detail, as well as dozens more like them, will be available in a book entitled *Buried Beneath Cleveland: Lost Cemeteries of Cuyahoga County*, which is slated to be released this coming October.

Curtis Block Historic Designation Update

By Hilary Schickler, Preservation Committee Chair Person and LHAB Representative

A unanimous vote was cast at the May 7, 2015, meeting of the Lakewood Planning Commission determining the property at 14501 Detroit Avenue, also known as the Curtis Block is eligible for historic designation. This is the first step in a two-step process to designate the property as historic under Chapter 1134 of local ordinances.

This virtually intact commercial structure, with storefronts on the first level and apartments on the second floor, was built in two sections dating from 1913 and 1925. The property was developed by the Hall family, one of the first settlers in what was then known as Rockport Township. It remained in their family until it was purchased by the hospital in the 1980s. Charles Pennington, noted local architect and zoning board member, is credited as the architect. It is also a contributing building at one of the few remaining intersections in Lakewood with all four original commercial structures.

The matter of designation was discussed by the owner, The Lakewood Hospital Association, at their board of

trustees meeting in June. Mr. Rick Sicha, chairman of the Lakewood Heritage Advisory Board, provided a presentation on the history of the structure and information on historic designation. While the board took no action at that meeting, the matter will be on the agenda for their September meeting. It is anticipated that the second hearing before the planning commission will be at the October meeting at the earliest. It is at the second meeting that the planning commission votes on whether to actually designate the eligible structure. The planning commission meeting is open to the public and comments are encouraged.

Historic designation, under local code, does not require owners to do anything special to their property nor does it even prevent demolition. It does, however, provide some level of protection against inappropriate alterations and gives demolition requests additional scrutiny.

If you are interested in becoming involved in preservation issues, contact preservation@lakewoodhistory.org.

Oldest Stone House Tombstone Display

By Mazie Adams; edited by Amanda Francazio

When the old Wagar Cemetery was relocated in 1957, a few remaining stones were placed in a city maintenance garage. Years later they were rediscovered and moved to the Oldest Stone House garden. These stones survive as examples of stone cutting art and are visual reminders of the hardship of our early community's pioneer life. Each stone has a story to tell.



The Hall Family headstone and obelisk found in a service yard after vandals knocked over most of the stones. The stones were kept in the yard with other discarded items such as telephone poles and old drain pipes.

Joseph and Sarah Hall came to Rockport from England in 1837 and built a stone house like our museum on the southwest corner of Marlowe and Detroit. Sarah's inscription reads "Born at Chatteris, Isle of Ely, County of Cambridge, England."

Joseph Howe, who emigrated from England in 1861, was the first postmaster in a general store just west of Belle. His wife, Ellen Calkins, was the daughter of Reverend Charles Calkins, who brought his family to Rockport from Vermont in 1832. Reverend Calkins was one of the first ministers to come to the Western Reserve. Joseph and Ellen Calkins Howe lost a five-day-old baby girl.

John Farrow was musically inclined. He played the organ and gave music lessons to children in the community. At one time he conducted services in the Little Church of the Redeemer. John and Frances Olive Farrow lost two young children. Carrie Mabel lived less than a year and Sherwin Day lived to be just five years old.

Jonathan (1825-1880) and Hannah (1828-1884) Bates's stone includes the inscriptions "How desolate our home bereft of thee" and "Asleep in Jesus."

Mark Tegardine, also from England, brought his wife, Jane Hale, and their children to Rockport in 1843. One of their sons, Jacob Tegardine, became the fourth mayor of Lakewood Hamlet in 1900. Mark and Jane also lost young children, two-year-old Peter and one-year-old James.

Charles Whitehead died in 1882 "Aged 43 Y, 7 M, 29 d" and his daughter Fannie died "Aged 3 &, 4 M, 10d". Research has revealed Charles served in the Civil War as a musician in Co. C of the 67th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

Betsy Impett Gibbs (d. 1854) and Fanny Impett (d. 1872), whose names are carved on a double stone, were mother and daughter. The Impett family property was located south of the Gleason family property, near the Gleason family plot. Unearthed recently in renovations on Hilliard Blvd., the stone was generously donated to the Lakewood Historical Society, and placed in the garden with the surviving stones from the Wagar family cemetery.



Wagar Cemetery before its removal and development.