

DESCENDANT COMMUNITY OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY GROUNDS CEMETERIES, INC.

by Judy Klimt Houston, President

<https://descendantcommunity.org>

PART 2: CEMETERY ONE aka WINDSOR TRACT CEMETERY



1878: County Board of Supervisors' Proceedings (at right) raised concerns about the cemetery's limited suitability, with only one third of the 2.5-acre plot deemed suitable for graves.³

This prompted the need for another cemetery, leading to establishment of Cemetery 2 – four years later.

“The Potter’s Field Desecration”, Sheriff confirmed novice grave-robbers desecrated this site. (Fig. 1)

THE POTTER'S FIELD DESECRATION.
Some degree of interest still attaches to the sad fate of the old couple found drowned in the Menomonie Valley last week. The fact that their graves were despoiled has served to perpetuate for awhile remembrance of the tragic affair. Yesterday forenoon an old man inquired at police headquarters whether any clue to the desecrators of rest in death had been developed. He declared himself to be disinterested, yet he felt disposed to fathom the matter, quietly and methodically. His call developed the truth that Sheriff Van Vechten and several deputies visited the Potter's Field and examined the graves. To the mind of the Sheriff the resurrection was not the undertaking of professional uncouthers. The graves were shallow, scarcely three feet below the surface, requiring very little labor, and yet

The visitors had spent more time and caused than the average body snatcher would have accorded on a possible return of from \$20 to \$50. Then the method of opening the coffin appeared to be the work of a novice. A halo had been bored in the lid. Then the cover was pried off so higgledy that it was splintered and rendered useless to reveal the body for transportation.

Sheriff Van Vechten's researches also satisfied him that the remains were carried away in a light spring wagon. The tracks of the vehicle were traced past Laddington's farm. Inquiry among the physicians of the city confirmed his idea that the body was not such an one as would be desirable for dissection. The man had drowned on a warm day, his body had been conveyed miles under a hot sun, had lain in an ill-arranged morgue for a day, and had thus lost its value as a subject for the student. It was said that drowned persons are not much sought after by purveyors for medical colleges. Laddington received two messages in

the winter, even, are not deemed satisfactory. As intimated, there is sufficient interest in this peculiar case to warrant a hope that the mystery will be cleared, sooner or later.

STRIKING TANNERS.

The tanners employed in the establishments of Ald. Zehrauer, Trost & Galvin and William Becker, to the number of over 200, who were receiving wages ranging from \$1.25 to \$2.50 per day, demanded an increase of 10 per cent. yesterday, and upon being refused voted in a strike. The employer subsequently offered to grant the increase to such men as they might select and to discharge the others. The strikers would not accept the proposition, declaring that all must go back at the advance or none. Terms were affected so far as Mr. Zehrauer's men are concerned, but the others are still out. It is hinted that a general strike throughout the city will ensue, as the men are strongly banded together under a

tion. No disturbances of any kind occurred, although the police were notified and held themselves in readiness. A number of the tanners under the influence of liquor indulged in some loud talk among themselves but did not go near the place of work. The men now out were cut two to ten per cent, they ask to be restored about six months ago. Business is reported dull by the manufacturers, who insist that the increase is not justified. They have not determined upon any course of action as yet.

Fig. 1 - Milwaukee Daily Sentinel,
18 July 1879.

Disclaimer: Aerial images showing cemetery map placement(s) are from a 2022-2023 WHS slideshow presentation and are subject to minor changes when provided by the WHS.

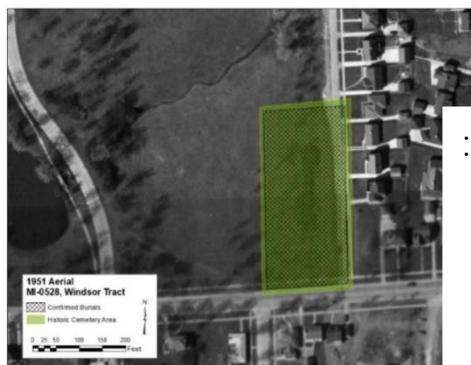


The 1937 aerial photo by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) (Fig. 2), depicts headstones at Cemetery 1.

- Windsor Tract has headstones visible
- Old hospital is already built on cemetery grounds
- Major impact on burials in area

Fig. 2 - 1937 aerial.

Wisconsin Historical Society



Later, in 1951, the WHS aerial (Fig. 3) indicated headstones were removed.

- Headstones removed from Windsor tract
- Development to the east and into Windsor tract has taken place

Fig. 3 - 1951 aerial.

Wisconsin Historical Society

Excavators Find Bones of 4 People

By Harry S. Pease
of The Journal Staff

Sewer excavators have dug up bones of at least four people on the County Institutions grounds at the southeast corner of 84th and Wisconsin and confronted Milwaukee Museum anthropologists with a minor mystery.

1971: Remains disturbed during pipeline excavation adjacent to north side of Wisconsin Ave at the west 8500 block.⁴

<Milwaukee Journal, 19 May 1971: Remains delivered to Museum.

1975: Remains disturbed along Wisconsin Ave due to water main project.^{5 6}



September 2023, a witness informed the descendant community that in 1971, two dump trucks (above arrow) transported excavated soil and human remains westward and dumped them near ponds north of Wisconsin Avenue. Remains later discovered at the site supported this account.^{7 8}

2014 and 2025: WE Energies-related site disturbances in 2014 and 2025 resulted in significant discoveries at Cemetery 1. In 2014, a single mandible of unknown origin was recovered.⁹ In 2025, a subsequent disturbance led to the discovery of two boxes of fragmented human remains, likely originating from Cemetery 2—Froedtert Tract burials used as landfill during the 1930s desecration of approximately 55% of the graves.¹⁰

Cemetery 1 held 500-700 adult burials and over 1,000 if the area also included infants.¹¹

2026: No signage exists at Cemetery 1 to honor these Milwaukee County residents.

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WORKS CITED

¹ See information from WHS: <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS1586> (Retrieved 13 Aug 2024)

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⁴ Bruhy, Mark E. and David F. Overstreet, "Phase I Investigation of Five Proposed Diversion Structures, April 1980 Addendum." Report submitted to Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District. (1980)

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⁷ Balco, William M., Shannon K. Freire, Jade S. Troha, Jean L. Hudson, and Margaret A. Yost. 2025. *Archaeological Monitoring of the Wisconsin Ave. Ponds Landscape Reconstruction, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin*. Report of Investigation 636, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archaeological Research Laboratory, Milwaukee.

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