

Is There Really a Cemetery at Camp Lewis?

For years, campers have heard about a cemetery at Camp Lewis, but is there really one there?

Yes there is, the Winters Farm Burial Ground. In the 1700 and 1800s there were many family burial grounds all over New Jersey when the state was primarily farmland and woods. At that time, land owners would simply select a spot on their property to bury their family members, and friends.

Although there are few documents remaining, the Winters family was among the very early settlers in the Hibernia area dating back to the early 19th century. According to records, as of the late 1800s, an occasional interment was made at the burying ground, one of the last being Peter D. Henderson, presumably a family friend. It was a simple process; relatives prepared the ground, opened the grave and buried the deceased.

Until the 1900s most families cared for their own dead. They prepared, dressed, and displayed their loved ones within the confines of their own home. The body was typically displayed in a coffin that was made at home or purchased from a local carpenter. Later the grave was dug at the family plot.

Caring for your own deceased began to change in the late 1800s. Also during this time period, the family graveyard began moving towards the more park-like settings of formal cemeteries. Soon after, coffin makers began to take on other duties; they offered burial clothes, flowers, preparation of the body, and coordination of the entire funeral service. These tradesmen began to refer to themselves as undertakers, as they were the ones who “undertook” responsibility for funeral arrangements. Around 1900, laws began to appear regulating and standardizing the practice of funerals and burials, and family burial plots fell from use.

Peter Delaney Henderson was born on April 6 1796 in Marcella to Eleazer Henderson and Susan Delany. He married Elizabeth Dunmire (1799-1861) and later Susanna Bostedo (1793-1870) and had 11 children. He died on August 6, 1879. His death certificate shows that he died of congestive fever after a one-week illness.

The remaining headstones in the Winter’s burial ground can be found in the woods a few hundred feet from the Rosenthal Lodge. The original plot of approximately 200 by 200 feet is now overgrown and all stones are toppled with most broken and illegible. Township rerecords indicate that up to 100 people may be buried at this location, but most graves were not marked by permanent stones. And some remains may have been reinterred elsewhere as the plot fell into disuse.

The January 11, 1900 edition of the Rockaway Record newspaper shows that an infant named William Henderson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Henderson (unknown relation to Peter D. Henderson as records show Peter had two sisters and no children named

Michael), died on January 9, 1900 from inflammation of the lungs. Reverend William Stout of Hibernia officiated the internment at the Winters Burying Ground.

By all accounts, William was the last interment ever made at the site.

The question frequently arises about the existing headstones. Is their location the site of the burials, or were they moved from someplace else? Some township records note the current location as the burying ground but no one can say with absolute certainty.

Other burial sites near Camp Lewis include the Zeek Family Burial Ground a few miles to the northeast. This was another small family plot used during the 1800s. The Marcella Union Cemetery, about a mile north of camp, was established in 1901 and is a more traditional cemetery that is still in use. Township records show the names of at least 25 Winters family members interned there, but it is unclear if they are related to the original Winters property owner. St. Patrick's Cemetery is located in the Telemark section of Hibernia and was established in 1869. The last burial here appears to have occurred in the mid-1940s.