

Germantown Remembered

Little old graveyard marks early pioneers

by Susan Soderberg

How many times have you been to the Weis market in Germantown? Did you realize that there is a little family graveyard right next to the parking lot on the north side? Many people are aware of the cemetery but do not know the significance of it or why it is there.

This little family plot was once on the farm belonging to William Musser. It contains the remains of some of the Musser family and servants, and also of an earlier family by the name of Graff which probably owned the land before William Musser.

According to Joe Yushock, executive in charge of real-estate at the Weis Markets headquarters in Strubury, Pa., after Weis Markets bought the property the graveyard was discovered there. The property had previously been an old farm, so it was not unusual to have a family graveyard there, according to Yushock.

"I don't think it would have been right to remove the graveyard or pave it over. We wanted to treat the cemetery with the dignity it deserved," Yushock said. "It seemed like the decent thing to do. Someday when we go wherever we're supposed to go maybe somebody will do the same for us."

The farmhouse that was on the property, built in the late 1930s, was removed to another location and is now being used as an office building.

Only one tombstone is actually legible, that of Isaac Cox. The others are mainly marked by raw fieldstones with no visible inscription.

In the early days of Germantown, when it was just a little farming village, fieldstones were commonly used for marking graves. Gravestones were very expensive and, since there were no craftsmen of tombstones in the area, gravestones would have had to be bought in Georgetown and brought up by wagon.

William Musser, one of the earlier owners of this farm, came to Germantown from Lancaster County, Pa., as the leader of a group of migrating Germans in 1832. Together with William Cromwell he purchased ten acres with buildings from John Gassaway. He must have prospered here, for in 1836 Musser bought out Cromwell's share of the property along with an additional 177½ acres. The Martinet and Board map of 1865 shows the William Musser farm just east of Clopper Road.

William had one son, Henry. Henry married, inherited the farm and had one son, Henry Marcellus

young.

Henry Marcellus was brought up by the George Nicholl's family who lived on Hoyles Mill Road. When Henry Marcellus Musser grew up he returned to live on his father's farm until the early 1930s.

The original farmhouse burned in 1935. That same year the farm was purchased by Alfred Spates, who is a descendant of the Waters family of Germantown and a prominent lawyer.

A new house was built and Alfred Spates farmed the land using the old barn, built around 1865, to house his livestock. The barn had been built on the foundation of an older, larger barn. The farm covered most of the area that Cinnamon Woods is on today.

Though now the house and barn, and even the original log cabin—which some old timers in Germantown remember—are gone, the cemetery remains to remind us of a people who lived here before.

Those buried in this little graveyard were a brave and hardy stock, breaking new ground and starting a new life here in Germantown. They were self subsistent in their needs, but community-minded in spirit as they gathered at one of the churches, or the local Grange.

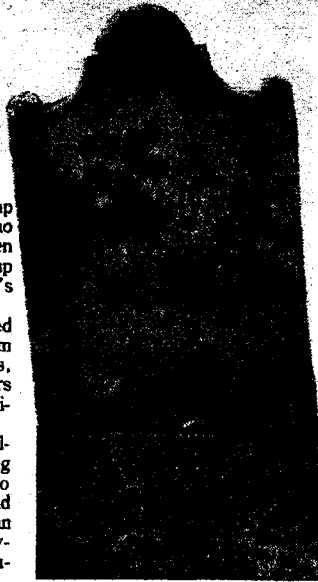


Photo by Chris Spravey

ISAAC COX'S tombstone is the only legible stone left in the graveyard.