

Gray Methodist Episcopal Church & Cemetery of Waverly, Codington County, South Dakota

Location: “All of Lots number One, Two, Three, Four of Block Nine of the original townsite of Waverly—“

Directions: Southeast part of the town of Waverly, South Dakota

Cemetery contact or sextant: N/A

Copyright © by Watertown Regional Genealogical Society, 2006.

This file may be freely copied by individuals and non-profit organizations for their private use and may not be used for commercial purposes. Any other use, including publication, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission by electronic, mechanical, or other means requires the written approval of the file's author. While the information presented here is accurate to our knowledge, no guarantee of accuracy is implied.

The scope of this Codington County Cemetery Census Project is to provide an accurate and complete census of all of the rural cemeteries and individual burials in Codington County, South Dakota. It includes all known burials in the county with the exception of the two large Watertown cemeteries, Mount Hope and St. Mary's Catholic. Records have been researched at the cemeteries, cross-referenced with courthouse records, and the cemeteries walked.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to Merva Carlson for her tireless efforts toward compiling this information. The project has been largely hers. Merva has devoted hundreds of hours to make this census the most complete and accurate cemetery census ever done in Codington County. This project would never have been completed without her dogged determination and attention to detail. We wish to also thank Delores Hartley, Marge Bunde, and Erland Carlson for their assistance.

Watertown Regional Genealogical Society, c/o Watertown Regional Library, 611 B Ave NE,
Watertown, South Dakota 57201

Key:

- Sec = Section ; Bk = Block; Lt=Lot; Gr=Grave
- Under the Comments section:
- Relationships;
 - AKA or Nickname = "____";
 - Age = Year, Month, Day;
 - Epitaphs in "____";
 - COD = Cause of Death, as listed in the death record or word of mouth.
 - NBC = No burial card listed at the County Court House.
 - BC = Burial Card at the County Court House
 - DR = Death Record present in County Court House with book/page/line number, etc.
 - NDR = No death record present at County Court House
 - M = Marker present in cemetery
 - NM = No marker present in cemetery
 - b. = birthplace
 - d. = place of death
 - p. = parents
 - w. = wife
 - h. = husband
 - f. = father
 - m. = mother
 - Maiden name in (____)
 - Military information found on burial card at the County Court House or on marker in cemetery

- MB = Marriage Book

Major Sources (but not limited to):

- Watertown Public Opinion
- Codington County Death Records
- Codington County Death Records – No death records are at the Codington County Courthouse before July 1905
- The First 100 Years – Codington County 1879-1979 (History of Codington County)
- Church Records
- Pictorial History of Codington County, South Dakota
- Word of mouth: Noted as such in comment section.

History of Gray Methodist Episcopal Church & Cemetery of Waverly and others

One of the first buildings put up after the townsite was moved was the Methodist Church, which stood in the southeast part of town. It was an attractive L-shaped structure with an angular belfry entrance. It was moved to Webster or Waubay (Waubay is supposedly the correct place.) when the Methodist population dwindled. An acre of Cemetery was $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of the church. There were a few graves with little or no markers



and there is no sign of the plot today. (From the First 100 years in Codington County, 1879-1979 (p.96)

Unknown Photo

Another (undocumented) source says: By 1912 the majority of the area population was Catholic. They acquired the land in Waverly of the former site of that M.E. Church in question. A livery barn was moved to the site and the new Catholic parish house was also built there.

According to Wright Tarbell, county historian writing about “Cemeteries Near Waverly, Codington County” for Watertown’s Public Opinion in June 1953: In the 1880’s—a one acre plot on the William Comes farm near the M. and St. L. tracks south

of Waverly was used by settlers of Irish and Scotch descent. “These settlers had their own Methodist Church at Waverly in those early days—“

Later—They were replaced sometime later by German Catholic settlers who built a church and laid out their own cemetery”

There are copies of the deed for the church (“All of Lots number One, Two, Three, Four of Block Nine of the original townsite of Waverly—“)

1. The first, a warranty deed dated August 10, 1885, names Charles F. Hatch, Trustee and Waverly townsite Company, selling the above land for the sum of Two Dollars, to the Gray Methodist Episcopal Church of Waverly, D.T.
2. A special warranty deed, dated December 4, 1902, the Gray Methodist Episcopal Church sells the above land to Frank Achartz of Waverly for Fifty Dollars
3. The third warranty deed, dated January 11, 1913, for the above land, is Frank A. Achartz selling for Fifty-Five Dollars to Thomas O’Gorman.

The purchaser of the land in 1913 (Thomas O’Gorman) is surely an Irishman that gives credence to the Catholics purchasing the land once used by Methodists for their church.

Getting back to what happened between the above deeds numbered 1 & 2, there are copies of 1893-dated documents from the trustees of both the Waverly and Watertown Methodist Episcopal Churches in which Waverly’s trustees are applying the funds from the sale of their church building towards the debt on Watertown’s church to which most of Waverly’s members have transferred their membership (and Watertown’s trustees are accepting those monies).

Known pastors who served Waverly were: W.S. Taylor 1883, W.D. Deeble 1885, C. B. Gilbert 1887, Donald McLean 1888 and J. W. Stokesbury 1890.

An article in the Watertown Public Opinion in 1953: taken from the records of Shaw-Messer

“Another chapter in the early history of Codington County is yet to be unfolded after the discovery of an early homesteader’s burial ground just south of Waverly.

Speculation as to who is buried in the one-acre plot on the William Comes farm near the M. and St. L. tracks a quarter-mile south of Waverly began recently when burrowing badgers began unearthing human bones, casket handles and pieces of rough boxes on the site. Comes first contacted Cliff Englund, Codington County sheriff, to see what could be done.

Comes said he had heard there was an old burial ground on his property but never knew the exact location. Sheriff Englund, State Game Warden H.H. Deblon and Wright Tarbell, county historian, visited the site several times.

The remains which had been disinterred by the badgers included several leg and foot bones, four casket handles and several dozen small pieces of wood, the latter probably coming from a rough box or casket. These were later reburied on the site by Tarbell.

In checking county historical records and other data, Tarbell concluded that the cemetery was used during the 1880’s. He believes the first settlers using it were of Irish and Scotch descent. These settlers had their own Methodist Church at Waverly in those early days. They were replaced some time later by German Catholic settlers who built a church and laid out their own cemetery.

Although records do not disclose the exact number of persons buried there, Tarbell believes that four graves still exist in the plot. Other Waverly residents buried there were moved to the Catholic cemetery in Waverly or to Watertown, some as late as 1906.

By talking to some of the elder citizens of Waverly, Tarbell discovered the name of one settler still believed buried there. He was Jacob Hess, an early homesteader, who had descendants still living in the Waverly area. Names of the others thought to be still buried there are not confirmed. It is believed that one woman was among them.

A survey taken by the WPA in the 1930's shows that four persons are still buried in the plot but this survey did not disclose the number of graves that were later moved, either.

Tarbell says that this plot is one of several early burial plots in the county, which have no markers or tombstones to indicate that graves are present. The others include a larger cemetery near Medicine Lake and one near the intersection of Highways 20 and 25 near Lake Kampeska.

For some time, Tarbell has been compiling a list of graves of all veterans buried in Codington County. Although the now obscure burial plot near Waverly probably does not contain veteran's graves, Tarbell is anxious to learn the names of persons buried there and more details about the early Waverly settlers. He has a large collection of early Codington County records, documents, literature and photographs, probably the largest in existence. These are kept in the American Legion Memorial Library on the fourth floor of the Courthouse.