

No Resting In Peace

Ancient Family Cemetery Ravaged By Time, Vandals

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Many tombstones bear the inscription, "Gone but not forgotten".

However, deep in the woods of an area known as "Shenk's Ferry", in Conestoga Township, there are at least 40 souls, whose bodies lie in the "Benedict Eshleman cemetery" who ARE forgotten.

Situated high on the crest of a hill, their neglected graves have been left to

the mercy of nature, cyclists and vandals.

The silent serenity of their resting place, is broken every Sunday by the deafening roar of dozens of motorcycles maneuvering up and down paths already worn smooth and bare by the wheels of these vehicles.

Vandals or were they thrill seekers? ... have dug down to a depth of two or three feet, in two of the graves.

Tombstones have been broken and

overturned, and the harsh effects of wind, snow, rain and sleet are clearly evident. Much of the lettering on the face of the stones is illegible.

SOME OF THE PEOPLE who are buried there were descendants of Benedict Eshleman, one of the earliest pioneers of this area. Others were neighbors of the Eshlemans ... Stehmans, Warfels, Shenks, Goods ... who lived and worked in the area, over 200 years ago.

By 1750, people were living and working in the southern part of Lancaster County, and probably as a consequence, various industries began to flourish. Men quarried stone, made limestone and farmed. There were grist mills and blacksmiths and trading posts that served laborers and passengers of river related industries.

Benedict Eshleman was one of the those early pioneers, who migrated here from Switzerland sometime around 1720. Records show he acquired 600 acres of land in Conestoga Township, in 1727.

He married Anna Stehman in 1739, and they had eight children ... Benedict Benjamin II, David, John, Veronica (sometimes spelled Bononica or Feronica), Anna, Elizabeth, Barbara, and Maria.

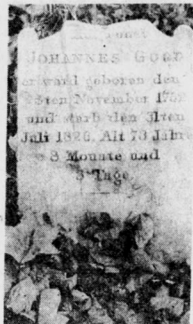
Benedict must have been a farmer, but he also built houses ... one in 1759 for Christian Miller (later the home of Raymond Geib). In 1764 he built the Eshleman homestead at Shenk's Ferry (now the home of Richard Wolf), and later, records state, another house in an area three quarters of a mile southeast of the latter. Two of those houses are still standing, and by all appearances, will stand for a much longer time.

IF THERE IS ANY evidence of the latter mentioned house, it is no more

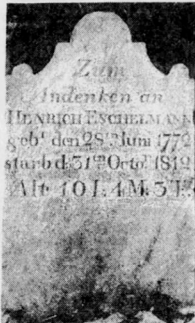


The ravages of time, motorcycles and vandals are evident in this neglected old cemetery at Shenk's Ferry. Located on the crest of a hill, on land once owned by Benedict Eshleman, in Conestoga Township, it contains

about 10 engraved headstones and numerous smaller unmarked slate or field stones (footstones, slaves or Indians?).



Johannes Good's name is not found in historical records. He may have been a neighbor, since other members of the Good family are buried here.



Heinrich Eshleman, a soldier in the Revolutionary War, and Elizabeth Stehman Eshleman, killed in the War of 1812, is one of the few intact stones in the old cemetery.

than the scattered and broken remains of a foundation. Of this, there are many, scattered about among the trees and thick undergrowth of Shenk's Ferry, silently reminding the visitor of the life that once flourished there.

In 1755, Eshleman donated grounds, that he had purchased from Joseph Stehman, his father in law, for the first meetinghouse of the River Corner Mennonite Church, Conestoga R1. In succeeding years he acquired additional tracts of land and by all accounts became quite prosperous.

Benedict's family grew to include Benedict Benjamin the fifth. One of his namesakes died in the Revolutionary War and one fought in the War of 1812.

When Benedict died, he willed the family plantation to his youngest son, John; 200 acres apiece to David and Benjamin the second.

Records are scattered, but apparently the land was passed on to Benjamin the third, the fourth and the fifth, because on December 8, 1891, Jacob Bausman (prominent Lancaster County banker) bought this property, consisting of "155 acres, more or less" for the sum of \$14,275, from Catherine Harnish Eshleman, at a sheriff's sale.

BAUSMAN LATER SOLD this land to John W. B. Bausman, who sold it to H. S. and M. Anna Kerbaugh. It was next sold to Allen and Annie M. Herr, who in turn, sold the land to Fredrick Shoff. Shoff sold it to the present owner, Forrest

Hawkins.

Historical accounts indicate this cemetery, on Hawkins land, is the original Eshleman family cemetery and that apparently, Benedict and Anna Eshleman are buried here. However, there is no headstone to mark their graves.

Hawkins described the situation on the land where the cemetery lies.

"Motorcycles have torn that place apart," he said sadly. "But you can't fight them. You have to get along with them."

"And, you know, they steal the tombstones and make coffee tables out of them," he stated. "I saw one once that didn't come from here. I thought it was repulsive ... really morbid."