

# What Stories Can a Cemetery Tell?

Cemeteries provide valuable evidence that helps to tell the history of a state, city, or community. They contain more than stone records of names and dates of people who lived and died. If you look closely, much more can be revealed about the people, their ways of life, and the times in which they lived.

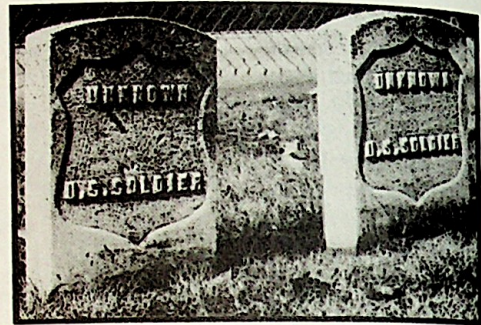
For example, a walk through Crown Hill Cemetery is a lesson in Indiana history. One U.S. president, three vice presidents, ten Indiana governors, and fourteen mayors of Indianapolis all lie with the nearly 176,000 others buried there.

The effects of sickness, epidemics, and disasters can be studied by comparing other evidence of such events with the dates of burials in a cemetery. The rows of even, white military markers are a visual timeline of wars and battles in which the United States has participated.

Symbols on gravestones of social clubs, organizations, and secret societies demonstrate how broadly such groups affect society. The ethnicity of a community can be determined by names and places of birth given. Some gravestones in Indiana are carved in foreign languages. The economic condition of a community and its citizens seem evident. Probably only the wealthy could afford a beautifully carved statue or majestic monument.

Poetry and praise on gravestones may reveal emotions and the depth of love for an individual. Grief may be restrained or passionately declared. Religious preference or personal philosophy may also be disclosed in the carvings of words and symbols on gravestones.

The way a cemetery is cared for can reveal the nature of the community. A well-kept cemetery generally is a reflection of the respect people have for their ancestors. It is a visual statement that those who have died are not forgotten. It is also a reminder of the past, from which individuals and communities have evolved into the present.

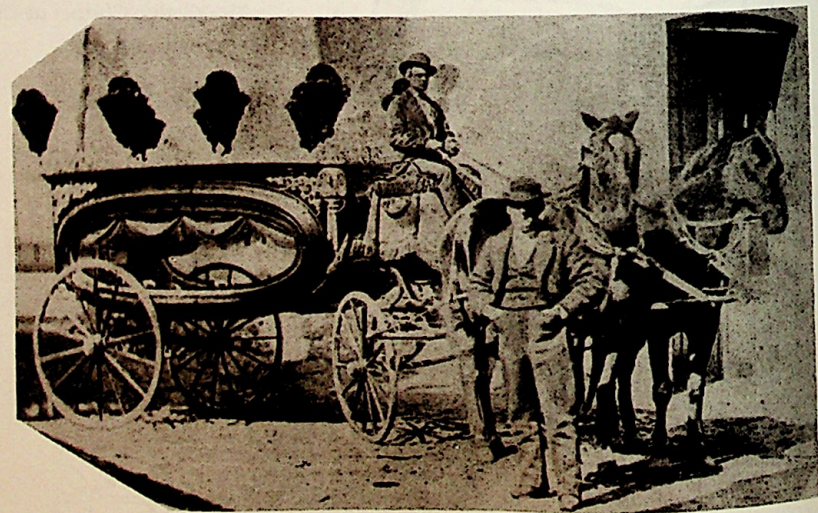


Mary E. Anthrop



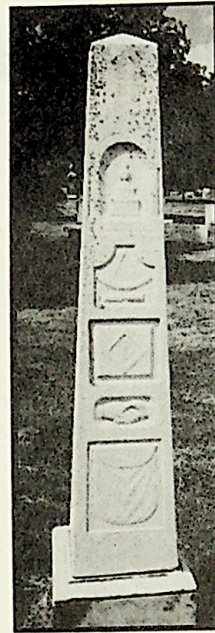
Carrie J. Allen

Known and unknown war veterans are honored and buried in cemeteries all over Indiana. The Archives Division, Indiana Commission on Public Records, has a 1940 survey of all veterans' graves in the state. See page 10.



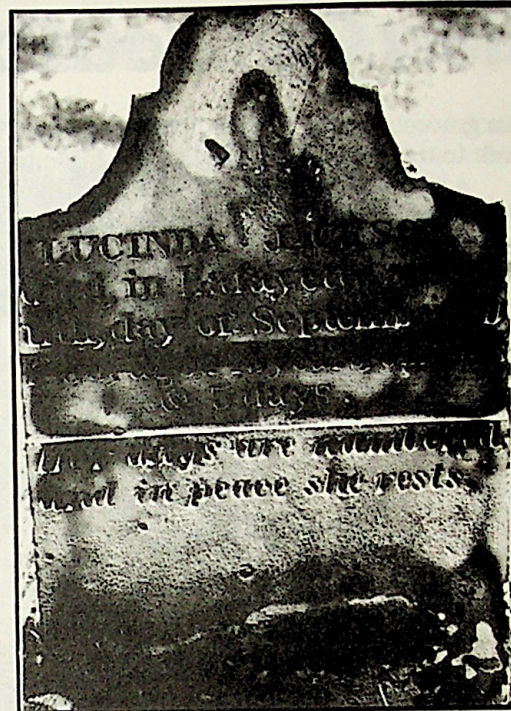
Indiana Division, Indiana State Library

Lucy Ann Seaton died of consumption [tuberculosis] on May 26, 1864. Her death notice in the Indianapolis Daily Journal, June 2, 1864, appeals to the community to attend her funeral: "She will be buried at Crown Hill Cemetery; and, as this is the first interment in this place, as many as can should go out." The horse-drawn hearse, pictured above, carried Seaton's body to Crown Hill. It was owned by undertaker, William W. Weaver.



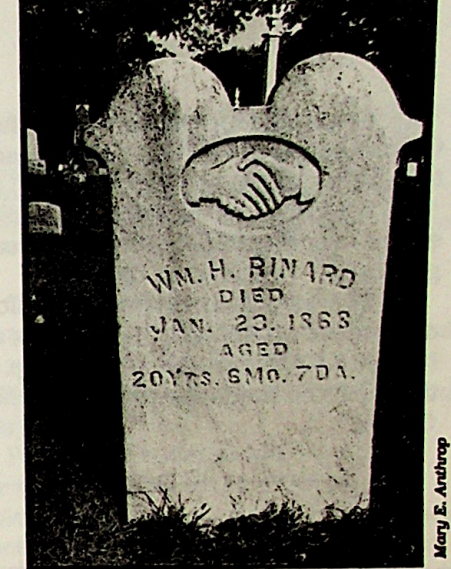
Indiana Historical Bureau

Symbols of clubs and organizations decorate this stone at the Farley Cemetery in Hamilton County.



Mary E. Anthrop

Some gravestones carry a message, like this one in Greenbush Cemetery in Tippecanoe County: "Her days are numbered, and in peace she rests."



Mary E. Anthrop

The clasping hands symbolize enduring faithfulness, as on this Tippecanoe County stone.



Indiana Division, Indiana State Library

This unusual Marion County stone marks the graves of three females, who were struck and killed by lightning, August 13, 1834.



Mary E. Anthrop

The cut limbs of a tree trunk often symbolize lost loved ones, as in this Tippecanoe County example.