

Voices from the Silent City

Historical Walk #1 ... Oberlin Cemetery

The following walking tour is provided by the Decatur County Last Indian Raid Museum.

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Our community's past is filled with many interesting stories and cemeteries tell those stories. Among the cemetery's "residents" are founders of Oberlin and Decatur County, veterans of American wars, journalists, children, ex-slaves, a horse thief, murderers and their victims, suicides victims, as well as many ordinary hard-working people. This walk through the cemetery is designed to be a leisurely stroll that takes you to selected gravesites where you will learn the stories of people who helped shape our city and county. This #1 walk will take you a little less than an hour. Please remember to respect all gravesites. This is one of the older parts of the cemetery. As time permits there will be other printed walking tour guides.

1. Johnson, Peter ... Died at his residence of lung fever. Mr. Johnson was a pioneer of this section of the country and was here at the time of the Indian Raid.

2. Randall, E. I. ... Randall owned and operated a boot and shoe store in Oberlin originating in August of 1879. He was kept busy making boots for cowboys coming into Oberlin from the Western Cattle trail which was only six miles southwest of town. By their word of mouth, he received orders from Texas up to Montana. So, widely had his reputation as an expert bookmaker been heralded by his satisfied customers.

3. Canfield, Charles ... Early in the fall Charlie Canfield, a buffalo hunter who had his family on a homestead here in Decatur County, followed the buffalo west for a load of hides. His wife looked in vain for his return. Weeks went by before word came that his wagon with the hides on it had been found north of Wallace and by it lay the skeleton of a man with a bullet hole in the head back of the ear, where he had been shot from behind. They hauled the skeleton, load and wagon to Wallace.

Believing it to be Canfield, his wife with a two weeks old baby in her arms went to Buffalo Park sixty-five miles, in a wagon, and then to Wallace by railroad. She identified the wagon from among sixty-five that were in the corral and the skeleton as Canfield's by the teeth. She fetched the bones home and our cemetery was started. His grave for many years was unmarked and driven over, but in 1934 when the stones for the victims of the Indian Raid were made, one was made for him.

4. Scott, Emma ... Daughter of Mr. & Mrs. James Kempthorn died of complications from childbirth. She was 24 years old and the wife of Tully Scott. She died August 3, 1888 and the baby died August 20, 1888. She left behind another son Kempthorn Scott. This little wooden stone has been her marker since. It was through research and cemetery lot and block owners we were able to put a name to Emma and her baby son.

5. Randolph, Nina S ... Nina was the oldest daughter of W. S. Langmade, a prominent lawyer and Ex-judge of Oberlin. She died in the maternity ward of St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City. The bodies of mother and babe were brought to Oberlin by train. The baby is buried with her. She was a DCHS graduate of 1913.

6. Cook, Joseph ... Civil War Veteran ... Another old soldier answers last roll call. In August of 1862, Mr. Cook enlisted in the 1st Rhode Island Mounted Volunteers and served during the war being honorably discharged at Winchester, Virginia, June of 1865.

7. Caley, Andrew Jackson, Caley, Earl, Caley, Luke, and Caley, Roy ... Four little boys of Lewis & Amelia Caley. Lew Caley and his wife were among some of the really early settlers of the county. They were here during the Last Indian Raid in which Lew was part of the civilian party that gave the Indians the chase. The four little boys all died of diphtheria just a few weeks apart, Earl and Andrew died on the same day. Earl was 7 years, 8 months, and 8 days old, Andrew Jackson was 3 years, 1 month and 24 days old, Roy was age 5 years, 3 months, and 24 day, and Luke was 6 years, 3 months, and 12 days. They had a baby sister that was born between their deaths.

8. Mix, Millard Enos ... M. E. was another of the early settlers of Decatur County, settling here in 1879. He was engaged in various enterprises in Oberlin including a billiard parlor and a freight line from Buffalo Park Station (now Park, KS). He is said to have brought the first tombstone to town, hauled the press and type for the Oberlin Herald, and assisted in setting them up and helping get out the first issue of the paper in 1879. Later he got into the windmill business, then cattle and hogs, and became president of the First National Bank in Oberlin.

9. Drohen, Patrick ... An early settler in Decatur County who was here at the time of the Last Indian Raid (1878). He and his family survived but what a wreck the Indians made of the Drohen household goods.

10. Fleming, Thomas ... Killed in a drunken brawl by George Keller. Verdict at the Coroner's inquest: "We the jurors find that the deceased came to his death by a missile thrown from the hand of George Keller (heavy metal iron)."

11. Southard, Robert ... Died of smallpox: Back then people had no understanding of how diseases were transmitted and thought that if you came into contact with the afflicted (dead or alive) you would get the pox, too. So, they buried the victims in isolated areas of the graveyard or out in a pasture away from all. This being the reason why this family is buried here.

Southard, Alex ... Died of consumption contracted while serving in the Spanish-American War. A picture of Alex is hanging in one of the rooms at the LandMark Inn.

12. Southard, Daniel Sherman ... Died of tuberculosis.

Southard, Catherine ... Just think... to have your husband and two of your eight children die with such diseases.

13. Smith, Louis Joseph ... Built the Welcome Home arch for the returning Decatur County World War I veterans.

14. Dean, Daniel M ... Took his own life in a moment of mental depression because of sickness of about 15 years with no relief for his ailments.

15. Shaw, Gayl ... Lost his life in an accidental fall from the city power plant smoke stack some 70 feet in the air, while engaged in painting his sophomore class colors.

16. Raza, Antonio ... 35-year-old Mexican

17. Cook, Maggie ... Mrs. Cook suffered convulsions for 26 hours straight before death came. Three month later her grieving husband, W. E. Cook, sold his stock, farming implements and household goods at public sale and moved west.

18. Toops, William ... Civil War Veteran ... A stroke of apoplexy caused the death of Wm. Toops while he was seated at the dinner table.

19. Wear, Ira Otto ... Ira came to Decatur County in 1879 and was one of the first business men (tinner) in the city. He erected the building on Hall Street in 1888 (still standing just west of the LandMark Inn)

20. Colvin, Wyman ... Civil War Veteran ... Mr. Colvin was an early settler of Decatur County, and a prominent and respected citizen, and at the time of his death filled the office of coroner of this county.

21. Becker, John Franklin ... Civil War Veteran ... Mr. Becker was another of Oberlin's early merchants.

22. Tilden, Leslie ... Dr. Tilden was a widely known physician who practiced in the Oberlin area for 50 years. He was of the horse and buggy Doctors, totally devoted to his patients.

23. Beneda, Mata ... Mrs. James Beneda, Jr was killed in the 1942 tornado that hit their home. Mother and daughter met their tragic deaths together. More information on the tornado is available at the Decatur County Museum.

23. Beneda, Alene ... Alene the 14-year-old daughter of James and Mata died of injuries sustained in the tornado. She was a Freshman at DCHS at the time.

24. Morrison, Levi ... L. C. Morrison & Son were at one time the leading merchants of Oberlin. In the summer of 1890, he built a three-story brick store building on west Penn (in the 1960's the two top floors were removed but the main floor remains at 169 S Penn in downtown Oberlin. At the age of 80 he conceived going to the gold fields of Colorado to seek a new fortune. He believed himself able to stand the hardships and worry of a mining life, and while his two daughters did all they could to discourage his going, he was so determined and confident all would be well that they could do nothing but consent to his going. He died at Cripple Creek, Colorado.



Levi Morrison Building

25. Noble, Perry T ... A young prominent lawyer with the firm of Noble and Noble located in Oberlin. He was in Denver visiting his brother who had become disabled serving in WWI and confined to the VA Hospital. Perry took sick and underwent an appendicitis operation of which he died. He was a DCHS graduate of 1917.

25. Noble, Jacob P. ... Died at age 91 but was still practicing law actively but on a more limited scale. He had maintained his office on the second floor of the two-story building which he owned. (This building stands on the SW corner of Penn and Commercial, across south of the Gazebo. He served as Decatur County attorney and was mayor of Oberlin two terms.



26. Riley, Robert Ross ... Died very unexpectedly sitting peacefully in his chair. Born in a sod house and attended rural school. He operated his own photography studio until he went in military service for WWI. After his discharge he resumed his photography, did wallpaper hanging, electrical work, carpentry, and mechanical work. The Decatur County Museum opened in 1958 and Ross had been actively interested in assembling and repairing early relics, and generally assisting the curator, Mrs. Claar in operating the Museum.

27. Park, Rosanna ... Rosa married Nathaniel Park in 1874 and thirteen years later in 1887 he died leaving her with six children all of whom survived their mother. She raised her family alone never remarrying and from research we find that she only asked for assistance from the county poor fund once.

28. Anthony, Henry ...

Henry M Anthony by his son, Henry M. Anthony

Henry Anthony located on a quarter section of land a short distance southwest of the town of Westfield (now Oberlin). We moved on the land with our covered wagon February 14, 1874, and father started to build a dugout. When he had the work well under way a young man named Ireland came and said that ours was the land he had been assigned. The man who did the locating on the land came and said to my father, "You were the first on the land and the first to do any work and you have a family, we will see you through with that. We will locate the young man on another piece of land."

Father said, "No, there is too much land for two men to quarrel over the same piece. I will look up a location and let him have this piece." So he started out following the Sappa Creek, crossed it and followed the south fork until he came to Section 31-3-29; put his homestead right on the northeast quarter and moved his family on the 5th day of May, 1874, and lived there the rest of his life. We endured many hardships. Most of our supplies for several years were hauled from Buffalo Station. (Park, Kansas)

On April 30, 1876, we thought winter was over. My father started with the ox team for supplies, foodstuff, grain and seed for our spring crop. At that time Buffalo Station (now Park, KS) was a railroad town. He got his load and started home. A blizzard came up, such a blinding snowstorm, but he had to drive to the half-way house before there was any place for him to stay for shelter. It was nearly night when he got there. He had been in severe cold and a blinding snowstorm so long he was almost snow blind. There he stayed until he was able to see and drive home. By that time the snow had melted enough so he could travel. He never was well after that time, but he lived until the 22nd of February of 1877. (When Mr. Anthony died, he was buried on N1/2 11-3-29, southwest of Oberlin, the place where he mistakenly settled on of William Ireland's. When the Oberlin Cemetery was laid out, his remains were moved here.) Mr. Kious kept the half-way house. It was his home. He told me they took my father's seed potatoes, scraped them for a poultice and kept them on my father's eyes for days before the blisters on the eyeballs went down. They feared he would never see again, but by constant and patient care, the blisters went down instead of breaking and on the seventh day he said, "I can see light.) So, he recovered his sight.

28. Anthony, Martha ... The Anthony family removed to Decatur County, Kansas, settling on the south Sappa on the old Texas cattle trail (The Great Western Cattle Trail) about April 8, 1874. There Mr. Anthony died, and he was buried on what is now the W.D. Street farm southwest of Oberlin and when the Oberlin cemetery was laid out, Mr. Anthony's remains were removed there. Mrs. Anthony was married to J. J. Keefer, February 15, 1878, at her residence by Rev. John Wilson, a Presbyterian minister. He later abandoned the family and she filed for divorce. Another strong pioneer mother who sacrificed for her family.

29. Roach Babies.... The 1901 infant was 2 weeks old, Nora who died in 1903 had grip and died of lung fever, and the infant who died in 1906 was only 2 days old. Thank goodness for improvements in medical care and vaccines.

30. Humphrey E. P ... Was killed in the Indian Raid of 1878. More information about him is available at the Decatur County Museum.

30. Humphrey John ... Was killed in the Indian Raid of 1878. More information about him is available at the Decatur County Museum.

31. Humphrey, Eliza Jane ... Mrs. Humphrey along with her husband and son came to his county in 1873 being some of the very first settlers. During the Indian Raid of 1878 her husband and son were killed in the raid. In the "History of the Oberlin United Methodist Church" we found that Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Humphrey were selected as stewards of the first Methodist Class organized in Oberlin in the year 1877. Soon after, a Sunday School class was organized with Mr. Rodehaver as Superintendent. Later Mrs. Humphrey was elected. She lived over ten miles from Oberlin but came in regularly each week even after her husband and son were killed to attend church and Sunday School, walking much of the time.

32. Morgan, Naomi Bertha ... Naomi was the daughter of John and Sarah Rodehaver. Her father homesteaded what is now the townsite of Oberlin. He also gave it the name of Oberlin after his home town of Oberlin, Ohio. Naomi was five at the time when they came to the county in 1873. She would have witnessed the growth of Oberlin from five sod buildings.

32. Morgan, Robert Rodehaver and Madonna ... Robert was the Grandson of the founder of Oberlin, John and Sarah Rodehaver. It was through their generosity that we have the Gateway Civic Center. It was through a one-million-dollar donation that helped fund the center.

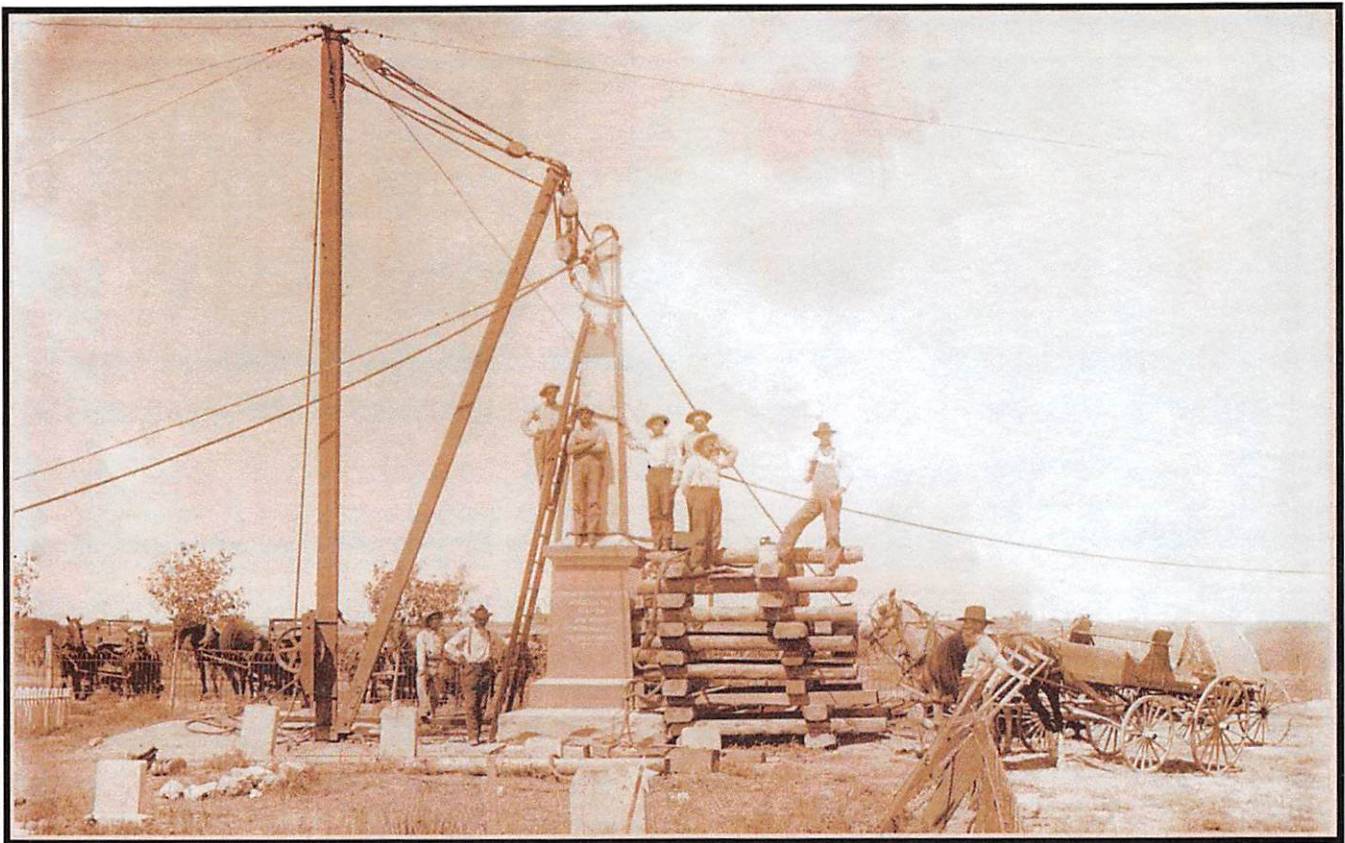
33. John Henry... Horse Thief ... Unmarked but through research, we found an article that Sarah Rodehaver Harvie wrote and said they buried him just south of her lot. In the early days of Oberlin, a "bad man", named John Henry, alias Charley Burch, had the people of the town terrorized. Henry was a horse "dealer" and it was believed that the horses he drove north had been procured in the south without money and without price; and those he drove south had been procured in the north on the same terms.

In October of 1881 Charles Ayer who had been sheriff of the county since January and during his administration had incurred the ill will and hatred of Henry, which anyone who had lived in the county any length of time, knew was a dangerous thing to do. Henry came to town armed with a six-shooter. During the day Henry made threats against the life of the sheriff, consequently he was on the lookout and prepared for any emergency. At some time, the first shot was fired by Henry through the floor of a

building in which Ayers was only about one hundred feet away. Rushing in Ayers found Henry with his hand on his revolver but getting the first shot killed Henry.

34. Harvie, Sarah Jane Rodehaver ... Sarah arrived in Oberlin September of 1873. Her husband, John Rodehaver had homesteaded the section which was platted for the town. So, the Rodehaver name is closely associated with that of Oberlin. Part of the residential section bears the name Rodehaver Addition and one of the city's main avenues bears the name. Sarah is credited for choosing the location of this cemetery and for bringing the first preacher to town. Later, she and John were divorced, and she remarried Edwin Gilmore and after his death she married John Harvie.

Check out the monument and kiosk for information about the Last Indian Raid in Kansas of 1878.



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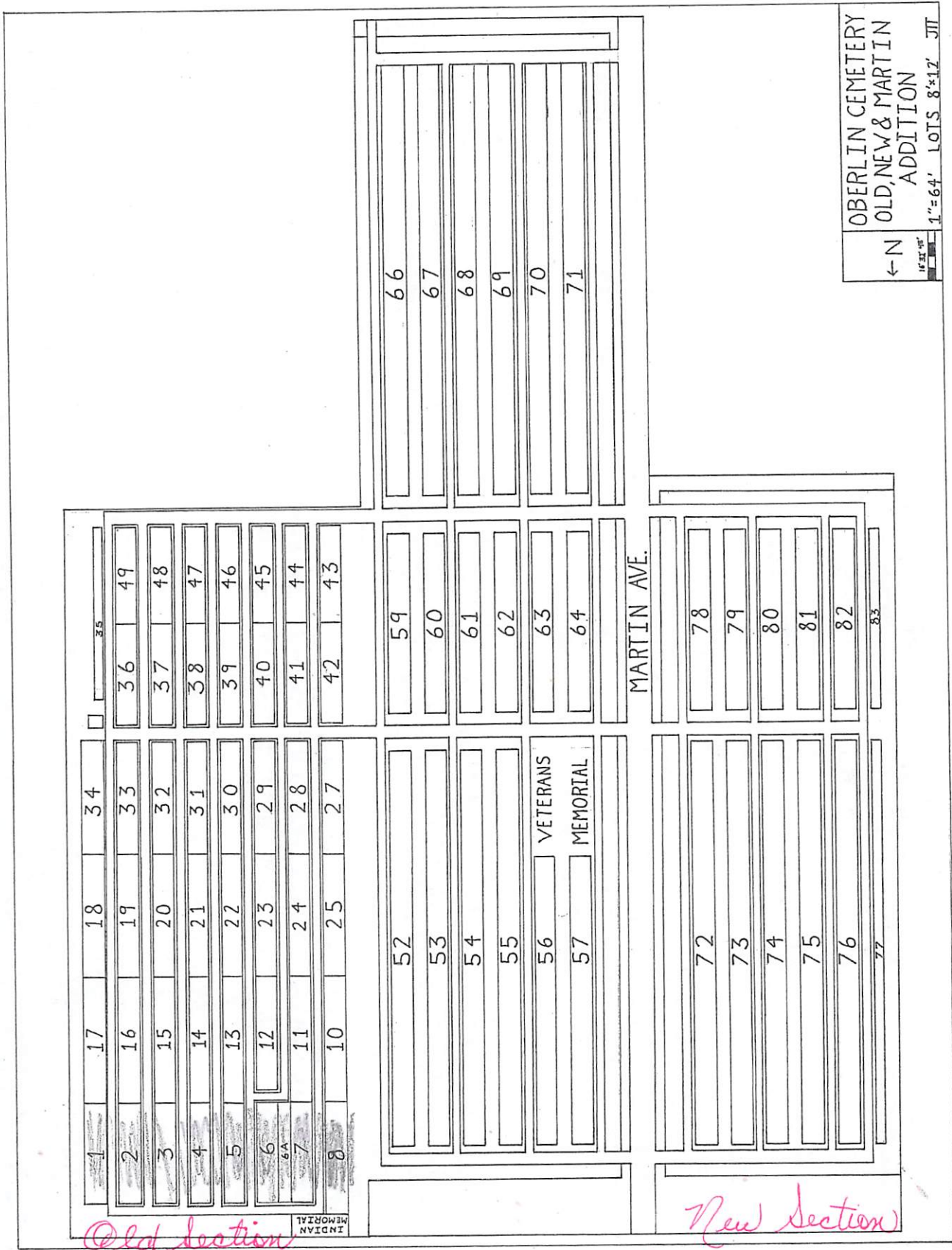
West

Brick Wall

Those killed in the Indian Raid of 1878

LAST INDIAN RAID
MEMORIAL

North



Old Section

New Section

← N
1"=64' LOTS 8'x12' JTT
OBERLIN CEMETERY
OLD, NEW & MARTIN
ADDITION