

Cemetery of the Month: Mt. Gilead Cemetery, Monroe County

The Mt. Gilead Cemetery was founded in 1845 in Section 25 of Bloomington directly to the East of the former Mt. Gilead Christian Church at Mt. Gilead Road and SR 45 East. Coordinates are 39.18621° N 86.46754° W. The Church, which closed its doors in 2009 after 160 years of ministry on the same site now is under private ownership.

The size of the Cemetery looks deceptively small when viewed from the road, but records indicate more than one thousand internments/inurnments on the site. The names on the gravestones represents many well-recognized names in Bloomington today such as Alexander, Bales, Belcher, Binkley, Buskirk, Crider, Crouch, Duvall, Fleener, Fleetwood, Galyan, Gray, Hardin, Headley, Hinkle, Lemon, Matlock, Minton, Rogers, Wampler, Weddle and Welch, to name but a few.

Beautiful in any season, this cemetery is graced by an enormous Tulip Poplar, the Indiana state tree, which is located near the center drive. The tree turns a brilliant yellow in the fall. The cemetery is surrounded by a stacked, local fieldstone fence that is equally lovely, especially as it catches falling snow in the winter. Graves range in date from the mid-1880s through this year. Victorian symbolism appears on several gravestones, most notably those made from limestone carved into the shape of detailed cut off tree trunks in varying degrees of complexity of design reflecting a life cut short. There is much to explore at this cemetery.

Resources:

“1939/1940 Maps of Monroe County Cemeteries”, 1995, Researched and Assembled by Claude F. Rice and published by the Monroe County Historical Society Bloomington, IN, page 36

Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography, 2004”, Written and photographed by Douglas Keister, published by Gibbs, Smith Publishing, Salt Lake City, UT

“Mt. Gilead Church Closing Doors Sunday after 160 Years”, (January 22, 2009), Dan Denny, Herald-Times
[www.bloomingtonpedia.org/wiki/Mt. Gilead Christian Church Church](http://www.bloomingtonpedia.org/wiki/Mt._Gilead_Christian_Church_Church)