

## Deam Wilderness Cemeteries Polk Township, Monroe County, Indiana



Entrance View of Todd Cemetery



David Sr & Rebecca Hays's  
Grave Stone In Hays 1 Cemetery

### Locations:

Hays #2 86 22 53.1 39 02 25.6  
Hays #1 86 23 46.4 39 02 50.1  
Hillenberg #2 86 21 57.4 39 01 56.3  
Houshower 86 21 39.5 39 02 35.3  
Todd 86 22 39.7 39 00 49.7

Most people probably think of cemeteries as neatly arranged rows of professionally carved stones with manicured lawn. Many smaller, older cemeteries are far removed from this conception. In fact, many are now surrounded by forests and are difficult to locate. Indeed some are lost.

Several Monroe County cemeteries are located in deep forest in the Deam Wilderness area of the Hoosier National Forest. A century or more ago this area was in private ownership and had been largely cleared of its original forest. The ridge tops and valleys were farmed for a few years until the thin soil lost its fertility and would no longer support viable crops or pastures. The federal government purchased most of the land in the first half of the 20th century, and it has gradually reverted to its pre-settlement forested state. The Civilian Conservation Corps helped the process by planting trees, especially white pines, in some of the area. While it was inhabited, settlers established several small family cemeteries. Although some cemeteries for which we have records can no longer be found, a few can be located in the now forested area.

The most remote “located” cemetery in Monroe County is probably the Hays #2 Cemetery, which can be found at the end of a ridge in Polk Township south of Lake Monroe. The nearest road is State Highway 446, some 1.5 miles to the west (as the crow flies). If you want to see this cemetery, you must hike for 3 miles on one of the marked trails in the Deam Wilderness area. You will not see much when you arrive. The forest service has erected a sign identifying the cemetery, which is now surrounded by large trees. There are three crude, uncarved stones that mark the site of graves.

Other cemeteries in the wilderness area, although closer to roads, are even more difficult to access. Hays #1, Hillenberg #2, and Houshower are not on formal trails but are somewhat better preserved than Hays #2. The easiest cemetery to visit (and the largest) in the Deam Wilderness is Todd Cemetery, which has a parking area adjacent to Tower Ridge Road. Terrill Cemetery is also easy to find (a two mile hike north of the Tower Ridge Road fire tower), but it is in Brown County.

What would it have been like to visit this area in the late 19th or early 20th centuries when these cemeteries were in use and there were many small farms in the area? It is fun to let your imagination run wild and develop a mental picture of horse-drawn buggies or model T Fords on rutted, unpaved roads carrying the mourners past small corn fields and pastures to the last resting place of their beloved.

**Read More about it:**

The Terrill Cemetery is discussed in Report 97-557 of the U.S. Senate, 1982, *Charles C Deam Wilderness*. <http://bl-libg-doghill.ads.iu.edu/gpd-web/deamwilderness.pdf>

For a feel of the area involved, refer to *Looking at History: Indiana's Hoosier National Forest Region, 1600-1950*, by Ellen Sieber and Cheryl Ann Munson. U.S.D.A. 1992.