

## GARFIELD LUTHERAN CHURCH CEMETERY

The cemetery at Garfield has been a part of the church property since the congregation was first organized in 1892. However, not a lot has been documented or recorded about how it was organized or plotted in the early years. There are records of the deaths at Garfield since 1894. The first recorded death was Martin Andreas Syverson, age 20 months, who died August 24, 1894. The cemetery must have had some survey work done and plots laid out at that time because for the first 25 years or so nearly 70 funerals were held at Garfield, with only about half of them recorded in our present day record keeping system. The older records did not show a location for burial.

The following letter is found in a Record of Interments book of Garfield: *“The Garfield Congregation Cemetery was again surveyed for the second time commencing October 11, 1918, and completed March 8, 1920. Garfield Congregation met at the cemetery May 6, 1920 for the purpose of making and selecting lots. Trees were planted and the fence painted.”* -- Louis Grove, Sexton

The large evergreens were planted in the spring of 1920. It is said that Hans Lindseth and Alert Satre hauled them out from Soholt Nursery in Madison with wagon and team. They and several others planted them.

There was a fence surrounding the church property which was taken out in the 1970's, around the time that the tall evergreens were trimmed from the bottom to get rid of dead branches.

The cemetery was divided into three blocks. Block 1 had five rows, Block 2 had six rows, and Block 3 had seven rows. There were 8 – 16-foot lots in each row separated by a five foot aisle every two lots. Each row was separated by a four foot aisle and each block was separated by a 12 foot aisle or road to allow access by vehicles. Families were allowed to reserve lots. They system continued for many years. Then, at the annual meeting in 1963, the graveyard committee was asked to conduct a study of the cemetery concerning its present status and circumstances regarding the keeping of its records.

The following is taken from a notice written to Garfield members in January, 1964, just before the annual meeting:

*“Due to the fact that there have been no rules and regulations to govern the Sexton, nor helps to make his task easier, and because something has to be done to conserve space in the graveyard, a study has been done. Because there is not enough selection for families that do not have reservations for grave space, the Graveyard Committee drew up the following rules that were presented to the Garfield Church Council, and it was decided to submit them to the Annual Meeting for acceptance or rejections.*

### The Duties of the Sexton

1. The Sexton must keep the records of burials in the Garfield Cemetery.
2. In marking out the graves the Sexton will:
  - a. Place the immediate family members next to each other.
  - b. Leave 24 inches at the head of the grave for markers.
  - c. The head of the family should be to the right facing the rising sun.
  - d. Whenever possible use half lots or vacant unreserved spaces between graves to conserve space.
3. A duplicate copy of burial records shall be kept.

4. Besides the lot numbers, each row of graves shall be identified with a letter from A to R starting at the east row. Each grave space shall be numbered from 1 to 35 in the row starting from the north side.
5. No reservations shall be made until they are needed.”

These rules and regulations were passed and are continued to be used today. There has never been a charge for a cemetery plot at Garfield.

In keeping with the tradition at Garfield, much of the work done involving the cemetery is done by the members of the congregation. Mowing, the grass in the cemetery has always been done by the men in the congregation. In the earlier days, the grass was cut with horse mowers. Some men would come and take the tall grass for feed. A graveyard committee would be in charge of arranging for ‘cemetery cleanup’ when modern grass mowers were used to cut the grass. Today the church council is in charge of arranging for ‘cemetery cleanup,’ and “when many people come it can all be done in about one hour.”

In the late 1970’s the large evergreen trees started to show their age. Then in 1981 arrangements were made to enlarge the church property surrounding the cemetery, adding an additional one acre of land. Through a memorial from Lorraine Connor and her family, in memory of Curtis Connor, new evergreens were planted on the new property with the expectation of having to remove the old trees in the future, allowing the size of the cemetery to expand.

Finally in 1999, the large, old evergreen trees were removed. Many of the men in the congregation came with chain saws, tractors with loaders, 4WD Tractors, bulldozers, and cables to cut, pull down, and dig out the trees. The branches were cut off and burned. The large logs were piled and later sold for lumber. The area was then cleared, leveled, and seeded with new grass.

The Directory Sign Project was begun as a memorial from the Russell Larson family and was completed with the help of several other memorials. A Directory Committee was formed and the following format changes have been made:

1. Two additional rows were added on the west side and two additional rows on the east side.
2. Eight additional spaces are available on the north end of each row.
3. The rows are not lettered from east to west (A-V).
4. The spaces are now numbered from south to north (1-43).

All of the records are now computerized.

Much of this information was taken from the Centennial History and Reminiscence Book published in 1992.