

A DOWSING ROD AND UNMARKED GRAVES IN THE BURIAL GROUND

It is amazing how working on one aspect of history can lead to a stream of related links of interest. A February, 2010 newspaper article described the restoration work underway for the Captain Thomas Espy Post No.153, the Grand Army of the Republic, in the Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall, in Carnegie. Volunteers there also began to work in the Chartiers Cemetery to reclaim the graves and headstones of 140 Civil War veterans, including the founder of the Post, William Henry Harrison Lea. Because William was the grandson of our Major William and Dorathy Lea, volunteer Joseph Hoesch from the Post asked if we could provide added genealogical information on William (1845-1921) from our files on the Lea family. We are glad to share.

In November, 2010, Joseph Hoesch came to Old St. Lukes and his interest was immediately piqued. He is an experienced dowser. and a volunteer at Gettysburg cemeteries where many Civil War troops were buried where they fell. Many graves were unmarked. If families were able to bring their relative back home, the role of undertakers was greatly expanded. Hoesch learned how to dowse some 20 years ago when a telephone maintenance technician in Ohio used dowsing to find buried utility lines.



Hoesch offered to use a dowsing rod (in photo, held in his right hand) in our Burial Ground and Garden to see if there were more unmarked graves than Dr. Ron Carlisle from the University of Pittsburgh found in his 1991 archaeological dig. To our utter amazement, Hoesch has found just over 200 unmarked graves that we had no idea existed. This was perhaps

due to the cost of a headstone being too costly for many families, or headstones that were removed..

Of particular interest is the children's section at the far left corner of the Burial Ground near the Garden House, a mark perhaps of the intense impact of childhood diseases.

Hoesch was unaware of the Christian practice of pointing a grave toward the east, for as the sun rises in the east, so in faith the dead will rise through the Son of God. Hoesch's efforts shows the rows of graves pointed eastward.

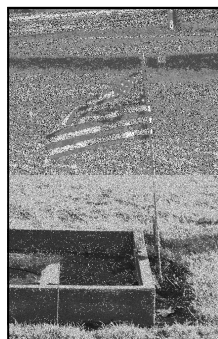
What exactly is dowsing? Is it a believable act?

An early reference to dowsing rods might be the divining rods used in the Old Testament by Moses and Aaron, since then called a Mosaic Rod. In the 16th century, references were made to the use of dowsing to find metals. Skeptics began and continue to this day to voice their doubts.

A divining rod is frequently identified as a "Y" shaped tree branch used to find water. A dowsing rod is "L" shaped, held horizontally and loosely in one hand. It is meant to find a man-made or an object placed under ground. When the foreign object is found, the rod rotates to one side. Obviously in a cemetery, the object is a man-placed coffin and/or body.

When we first saw Hoesch using the rod, we were skeptical until we took the rod and used it over the unmarked graves that Pitt found in their archeological dig which showed the outline of deep graves and the colors of the soil and clay. The rod moved at the start and end of each grave. It was an empirical experience. We became believers as each of us used the rod. There ought to be scientific explanations for dowsing, but until given, it is hard to deny a personal experience.

All of the 200 small orange flags will be removed before the grass is cut this spring To preserve what Joseph Hoesch found, a representative diagram has been made for our records and for our history teaching. Hoesch will hold demonstrations of dowsing in the Burial Ground on certain Sunday afternoons this summer.



In this photo Hoesch placed a marker flag on the right side the grave of Capt. David Steel. By tradition, as in the wedding ceremony, the husband is to the left side, and the wife to the right. Could that be the grave of David's wife Jane Welsh Steel? In a straight line from that flag, extending to the base of a tree, a series of flags are in place. The graves are pointed to the east, and the rising sun.

William Henry Harrison Lea

W. H. H. LEA was the grandson of Major William and Dorathy Lea who bequeathed a portion of their plantation for (Old) St. Luke's Church. In 1861, at age 16, W.H.H. Lea was mustered in as a Corporal in the Civil War, and he was mustered out in 1866 as a 2nd Lieutenant. He married Katherine McQuinty in 1876 and they had three sons and two daughters. He worked as a miller in the R. Lea's Woodville flour mill in the valley below Old St. Luke's Church from 1865 to 1870. He next was an employee in the Mansfield (Carnegie) Post Office, becoming Postmaster in 1899 until 1907. Lea moved to Linesville to be a farmer before moving to Cleveland in 1913. He died in 1921 and was buried in Chartiers Cemetery

