

GERMANTOWN UNION CEMETERY

P.O. Box 337 • 11179 SR 725, West • Germantown, Ohio 45327
937-855-3011 (phone & fax)



We welcome you to a tour of the Germantown Union Cemetery. This burial ground is of great historical interest to our village and township because of the grave markers that remain here. For a variety of reasons, some psychological and some religious, grave markers and their inscriptions are designed to be quite permanent. For many citizens buried here, markers are the only records we have of who or what they were.

We hope you enjoy a visit with some of the history of our town and township. A certainty is that history does abound in its records in stone.

Office Hours: M-F, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Other arrangements by appointment
Cemetery Closes at Dark

OUR HISTORY

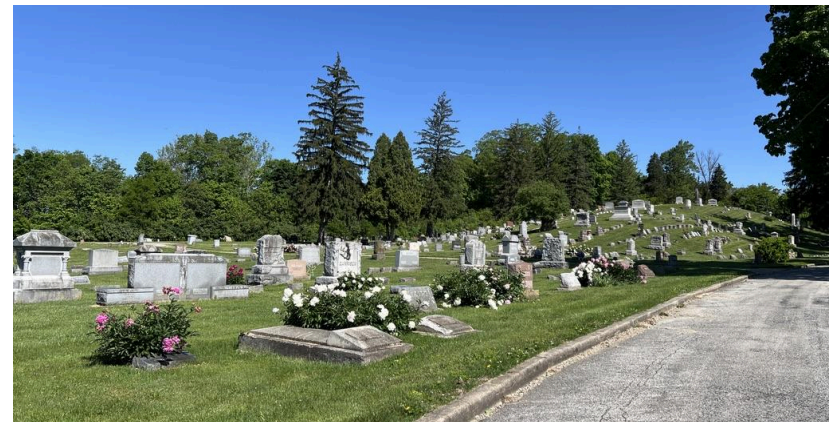
There are in German Township five places for burials.

One was in connection with the Schaffer Church on Winchester Pike, the second on the farm of Jacob Judy at the head of Brown's Run Road, the third on Sunbury Hill, the fourth the graveyard in Germantown (Lutheran church yard) and the fifth, the Germantown Cemetery.

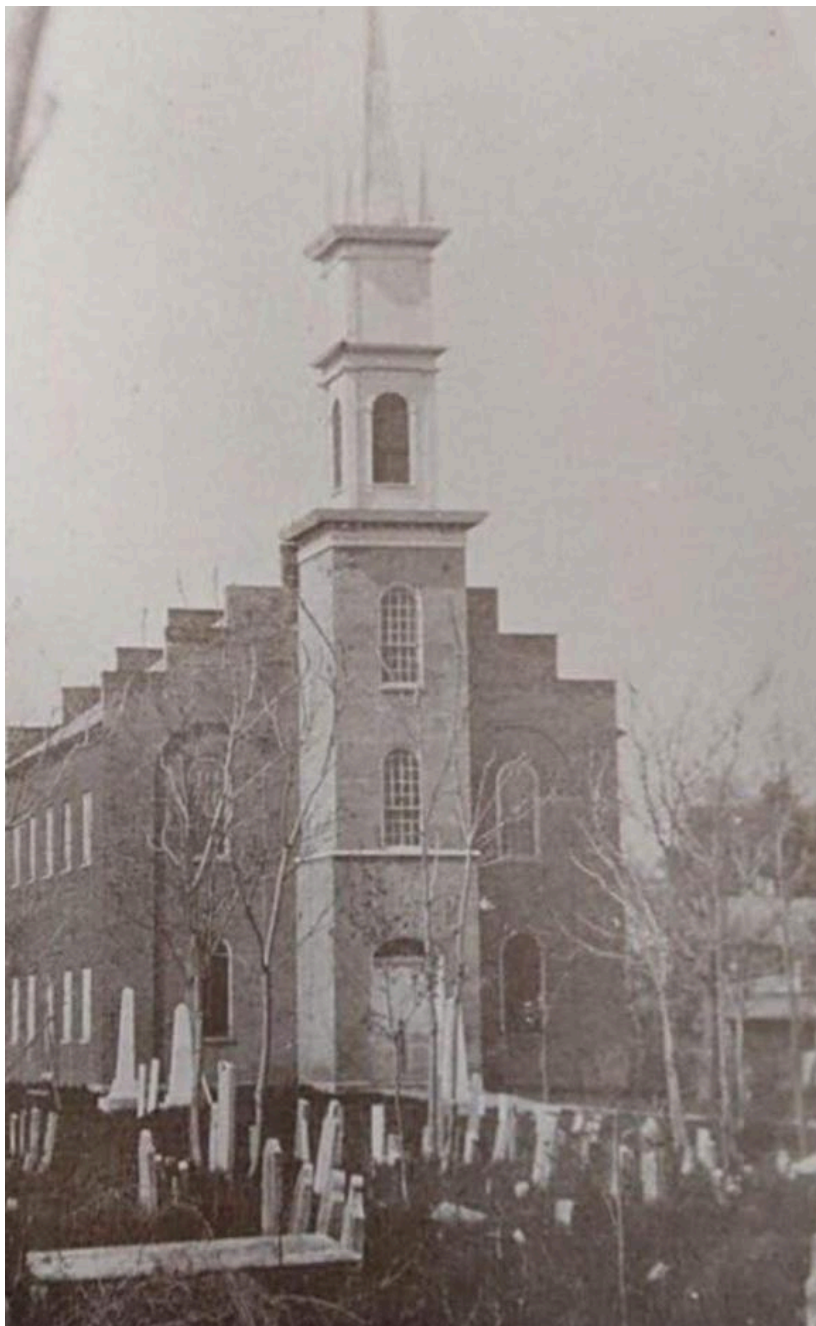
The Sunbury Hill Cemetery is the oldest burial ground in the township, having been established in 1805. The land was donated for this purpose by Christopher Emerick, on whose farm it was situated. The first pioneer who died in the Twin Valley was buried here. When the Germantown Cemetery was laid out, many persons removed their dead from the older burial places to the new cemetery, thus many bodies were taken from Sunbury Hill, most of which were petrified.

Philip Gunckel purchased one acre of ground in 1809 for a graveyard on what is the current site of the front lawn of the Lutheran Church. Gunckel provided it for the use of both the Lutheran and Reformed congregations and most of the early residents of the village. It was opened and free to all burials except suicides and murderers. It has been said that as pioneer families passed through the village in Conestoga wagons, they buried their dead here and moved on. When this graveyard was established, it was outside the town limits, but as the town grew, it became situated within the town's borders.

Complaints were made by the people living near it, who claimed that the decay of the dead contaminated the water in their wells. Furthermore, they complained that the decaying bodies were tainting and poisoning the air, thus causing disease. In 1853, the Council limited burial to the graveyard of the Lutheran Church. For health reasons, burial was ceased at the insistence of Dr. J. E. Donnellan. Burial would have ceased anyway, as no plots remained in this cemetery.



A dispute arose between the Lutheran and Reformed congregations concerning control of the Germantown Graveyard. The Reformed congregation decided to move their dead to a site on old Dayton Pike on the east side of Twin Creek. This location was not well chosen due to high water. It was poorly drained and found to be impractical and burials ceased around 1847. The bodies were later moved to the Germantown Cemetery.



Twin Chapel Church stood at the corner of Farmersville-West Carrollton Road and Diamond Mill Road. There was a burial ground at the church. When the congregation closed, these bodies were moved to the Germantown Cemetery. A family burial plot was established by the Zeller family on the Andrew Zeller farm on Little Twin Creek. This farm was bounded by Little Twin, Manning and Diamond Mill Roads. When the bend in Little Twin Creek began to erode, some of the bodies were removed to the Germantown Cemetery.

In the first fifty years of Twin Valley history, the Lutheran Church graveyard was the most popular burial site. An error in the plating and laying out of the town, Back Street (Warren Street) was made to run into the graveyard lot about one-half the width of the street. In front of the graveyard, the street had but one-half its width. A compromise was proposed and accepted in which a part of the graveyard was taken for street and another part, which should also have been street, was left as graveyard. By this arrangement, the town's street was widened but not to its full width. The graveyard still extended 17 feet into the street. To prevent further widening of the street, a strong wall was erected as an enclosure on the south side of the cemetery. It was thought that no one would ever dare remove the wall. But in 1879, these 17 feet of graveyard were condemned and added to the street. The "Chinese Wall" was removed and a neat paling fence was put up. Prior to this, the Reformed congregation owned one-half of this graveyard, but in this same year the Lutherans bought them out, making the place the sole property of the Lutheran congregation.

The Lutherans moved most of their deceased from the Germantown Graveyard to the Germantown Cemetery. Some people's remains, which at the time had no living relatives, were removed to the new Germantown Cemetery. These remains buried in the lawn of the Lutheran Church, the site of the old Graveyard, and their markers lie buried horizontally on top of the graves under the sod. The last burial in this Graveyard was in 1860.

On July 1, 1849, through the initiative of Henry S. Gunckel, an organization was formed called the Germantown Cemetery Association. This association was so favorably received that it was endorsed and signed by 113 individuals living in Germantown at that time. Then it was possible to become a member of the Association for \$10. This entitled a member to a burial lot with 12 spaces. The President of the Association was John Stump, Vice President was Henry S. Gunckel and Treasurer was John Kern. On July 3, 1849, a committee was appointed to inspect suitable tracts of land. This committee recommended the purchase of a 10-acre lot owned by Jacob Koehne, situated one-half mile west of town on Winchester Pike (Market Street). On August 1, 1849, the directors of the Association agreed to purchase the 10 acres at the price of \$100.00 per acre.

A sexton was elected annually to be in care of the grounds and in 1861 a home was built for his residence. An additional 8 acres were secured in 1878 and a fraction was purchased on the north side from Rev. P.C. Prugh. 1995 saw additional acreage purchased from the Falk family, on the East side of the Cemetery. In 2006 an additional 21.5 acres West of the Cemetery was

purchased; providing additional grave spaces for the next 100 years or more.



The Germantown Cemetery remained in the hands of the Cemetery Association until January 1972, when it was transferred to union management provided by the Ohio Revised Code. Operated jointly by Germantown & German Township, it is supported by a 1/2 mill tax levy, sale of burial lots and the cost of opening and closing graves. It became the final resting place for many pioneer citizens of Germantown/German Township, who had earlier been buried in other locations.