

Whispers of the Past

Rabbit hole research is my new specialty when it comes to the Centerville Cemetery occupants.

This is when I chase unknowns out there to determine who is out there. I also spend an inordinate amount of time chasing down the history of each person through a bunch of websites like Find A Grave, Ancestry, Archives, Newspapers, and anything else that will let me use it for free. I do have an account with Ancestry because my family has built our own tree.

The latest rabbit hole is from a headstone I couldn't read to save my life. It's bumpy and made out of a rough stone weathered to a point I could only tell something was on it by running my hands down the face and turning my head at weird angles if the sun was just right. Something is on there but what? I tried tracing paper with both chalk and pencils. I was only able to pick out the word 'George' and that was it. Frustrated, I went back to work on other priorities but it still bugged me.

Every so often, I return to YouTube for more cleaning headstone videos and I stumbled on some guys walking through a forest in Tennessee who found an old cemetery. Most of the headstones were lying down and broken, unreadable. The narrator with his Tennessee accent, explained how he managed to get to the information on the stones. Flour. He pulled a bag of flour out of his backpack and opened it. With one handful, he wiped it down the face of the stone that was standing until letters and numbers popped. Pretty soon, we knew who was buried there, when they were born and died and some other information.

I jumped up from my chair and computer and went to the kitchen cabinet and grabbed a bag of flour. I loaded up the dogs and my new flour friend and headed

to the mystery headstone. I was hopeful, excited and in my head, I was speaking with a Tennessee accent. With one magical handful of flour, I was able to discover a guy named George Siggs, born in 1824 and died July 26 1879. See picture. Mystery stone solved.



That night, I jumped on the computer again to find out who George Siggs was and ran into a bit of a brick wall again. This is not uncommon in research but it is frustrating. All I could find on him was an 1870 census showing him in the Diamond City district of Meagher County but I don't think he lived there, or at least he didn't live there long.

He filed for 100 acres using the Homestead Act down by Canton and became a farmer. He came from England, settled here in November 1865 at the age of 41, was a lifelong bachelor, a good farmer and neighbor but drank away his money and sold his farm to the Leary brothers. I didn't find a death certificate but he only lived to the age of 55.

There is a story about him in Broadwater Bygones driving a team of oxen up to Diamond City, visiting the tavern and falling asleep in his wagon on the way home and then somehow losing his oxen. How did they get loose? These and more questions are what keep me hooked on this hobby I didn't know I wanted.

Did you know people in those days called the owners of land acquired by the Homestead Act squatters? Feels like today the term 'squatters' has a whole different meaning.

I shouldn't call my research rabbit holes. I should call it gopher holes since there are a lot of gophers and holes out there. And cactus.

Comments or information you want to share can be sent to me at douthetts@aol.com