

Whispers Of The Past

One of the most heart-wrenching parts of just about any cemetery has to be all the children in it. The Centerville Cemetery is no exception. I haven't counted them all but between the ones with a headstone and the ones in the State death records unmarked, there are many. While I'm on the subject of sad, I'm going to throw in some mad. One of the things that makes many children's headstones stand out are the ones with the stone lambs that are part of the monument and they sit on top. Almost every single one of the lambs in Centerville are broken or gone. I don't know who collects these but it's probably a good thing I don't know. My only question would be why?



I admit I have periodically taken a break from the veterans and cleaned some of the children's. They seem to need it more. They are harder to read due to the moss, fungus, mold and lichen activity and I don't want them to be forgotten.

Having been to hundreds of cemeteries all over the West, it's easy to see when certain diseases like typhoid, smallpox, or flu came through an area. Children always seem to be the most susceptible but the tools available to treat them were not available in the late 1800s or early 1900s. In researching and looking at countless death certificates, deaths to children are varied, from farm accidents to

drowning, childbirth and disease. While this is true for adults, it seems harder to reconcile their deaths and I can't imagine the pain of the parents. There are several families in Centerville that were hit with multiple children's deaths, the Van Voasts, the Bearys, the Johnsons, the Pickles, and the Marks. Ouch doesn't begin to cover it. As a mother and a daughter, I can't help but feel the pain of it and there really is a different feel to cleaning the headstones of the children, but I can't explain it.

Perhaps the best thing about sitting out at the Centerville Cemetery is the feeling of peace at the resting place for children and adults alike. I know I'm not related to anyone out there or know their stories but in working around their last home, I feel a sense of honor and love for what they brought to this place we call our own home.

Speaking of homes and the anguish of parenting, there are a couple of nesting platforms out there for ospreys. For two years I have watched a pair build a nest on the platform closest to the entrance. I've named them Benny and Joon because it's what I do, name critters. They yell at me every time I show up and I yell back at them using their new names. I only yell because they are far away and I want them to hear me. They have yet to successfully raise any children. They guard the nest like there are eggs or babies but I haven't seen any sign of them so I try to help by giving them advice about nest building. In my opinion, they are terrible nest builders. No substance to them, baling twine and little twigs. If they did have eggs, they'd probably roll off.

One day I was interrupted by a lot of noise at the nest and watched as they flew off the crummy nest one at a time and began chasing a bald eagle away. Then, another bald eagle appeared and they split up. I felt like I was watching an aviation battle in the skies from a World War I movie. All of a sudden, a golden eagle appeared. Both ospreys broke off their respective fights and moved in on the golden. I watched until the eagles were gone and Benny and Joon returned to the nest. I didn't get a lot done that day. Good thing I don't get paid for this job.

Anyone worried about me yet?

If anyone has any information about the cemetery or the topics I'm writing about, you can email me at douthetts@aol.com.