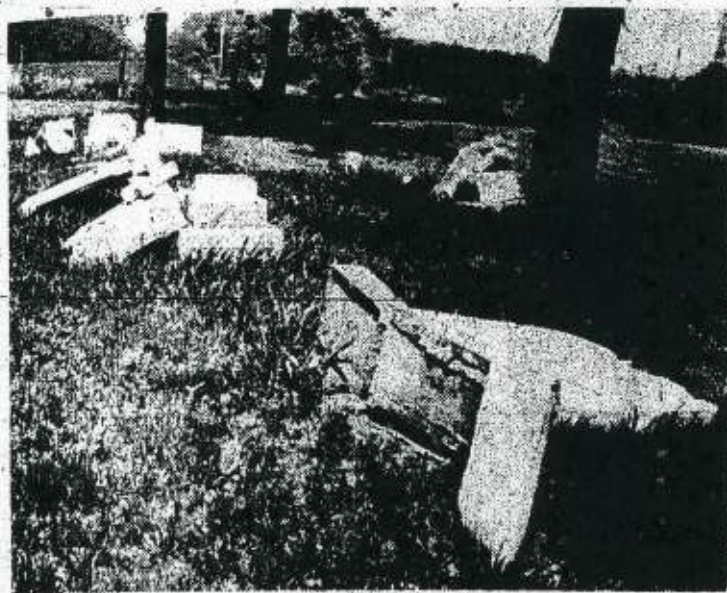


MAY 27, 1965

Memorial Day Gets Scorn from Vandals

For more than a century, many people have walked thru this graceful iron gateway at Mount Thabor cemetery to pay tribute to the deceased. But this month the ancient graveyard has been visited by persons with no such sentiment. Headstones have been knocked over and smashed irreparably.



While this nation has been preparing to pay Reverent Memorial Day tribute to its deceased veterans of war service, graves of long ago heroes of the Revolutionary and Civil wars have been desecrated. This shameful act occurring at Mount Thabor cemetery was committed on either May 8 or 9 by unknown individuals insensible to the gratitude due these men or to decent respect for the dead.

The wicked destruction of 95 per cent of the grave markers and monuments was discovered by Allan Spethman when he went to mow the grass in the old cemetery, which is on Rte. 176 one half mile east of Rte. 47. "It must have been the work of pretty good sized men, fellows late in their teens or older, because some of the stones were tremendously heavy," Spethman declares. "Why would they do such a thing?" he wonders, still finding it hard to believe anyone would be so unfeeling. Beer cans were strewn over the graves.

Many of the pioneers of Catholicism in the community are buried at Mount Thabor and for years St. Thomas church maintained the cemetery. But when the Thomas Sextons of the North Shore found it sadly neglected and the grass growing several feet high they hired Spethman, who operates a landscaping service, to clean it up and keep it in good order, paying him themselves. He has been making regular trips out there, restoring

its neat appearance. Now comes all this wanton destruction.

Mount Thabor cemetery is rich in history. More than 110 years ago Catholics in this small community were served by the church in Woodstock. But in 1856 a small, wooden frame church was erected on the site of Mount Thabor cemetery, and this was the start of St. Thomas church. But as Crystal Lake growth continued, the church building was dismantled and a new and larger edifice was constructed on Pierson st. in Crystal Lake.

Fitting together pieces of the broken stones, one will find such very early day names as Michael Coyne, who was born in 1796 and passed away in 1876. Others include the following: Mary and James Dyer; Patrick Welch; Mary Meehen; Margaret and Luke Gannon; Thomas Finigan; James Byrnes; James Duffy; Patrick Kelly; T. Tiffany; James Goodman; Patrick Duffy and wife Bridget, 1816-1891. Many of the markers carry the wording "A Native of Ireland." One of the headstones was smashed so thoroughly the name cannot be determined but enough is readable to show that here was laid to rest a G.A.R. veteran.

Will these who smashed these gravestones merely be emptying more beer cans and ignoring the significance of some other sacred place on Memorial Day and next Monday while our country is honoring its war dead?