



Grosse Pointe Historical Society

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St. Paul Cemetery Grosse Pointe's Only Cemetery



Have you ever driven past the cemetery on Moross Road and Country Club Lane and wondered whom it belonged to or if there were any famous Grosse Pointers buried there?

The cemetery belongs to St. Paul's Catholic Church on Lake Shore Road, and it definitely holds a lot of history—aside from its use years ago when high school sororities initiated their members by making them spend a few nighttime hours alone there!

The earliest church services in Grosse Pointe were held in the home of Pierre Provencal, one mile south of the Reno property (Now the Grosse Pointe Historical Society Headquarters at 376 Kercheval). St. Paul's first church, however, was a small log chapel built in 1825 on the Reno farm on Lake Shore just beyond the present Vernier Road.

Mass was offered there only once a month. The scattered neighbors gathered each Sunday for the recitation of prayers in common. The roads of that day were so muddy that the few parishioners would walk to church barefooted, carrying their shoes in their hands. During the pastorate of Father Peter Kindekens in 1848, the chapel on the Reno farm was abandoned, and a new site of approximately for acres was selected and purchased from Francois J Fresare where St. Paul's stands today. When it was built in 1848, Lake Shore was still a plank road.



From the time the new church was built, the land in the back was used as a cemetery. It eventually covered approximately a third of the present parking lot. St. Paul's first resident pastor, Father Francis T. DeBroux, fixed up the cemetery behind the church. In 1868, however, the church outgrew the cemetery and needed more space. Father DeBroux purchased 1.86 acres from Magloire and Elisabeth Morass (later spelled Moross) for \$425. Of course, members of the Moross family are buried there along with many other parishioners, including members of the Allard, Cadieux, Beaufait, Moran, Trombley, Van Antwerp, Champine and Neff families.

Many of the stones have deteriorated and the crosses are gone. In 1984, when St. Paul's wanted to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its first funeral mass, and the 150th anniversary of the church itself, the administration sought to locate the grave of Father John Francis Elsen, who was responsible for the major construction of the present church. Sadly, he never lived to see his vision become reality. The first service in the new church was his funeral mass.



Father Elsen's stone had sunk and weeds had grown over the grave. A large wooden cross once marked the grave site, and an ornate white fence surrounded it. When it fell into disrepair, it was removed.

Excavators knew approximately where the grave had been, but needed a backhoe to locate it. Using a majestic elm (with a girth of more than twelve feet, since removed) as a landmark in the middle of the cemetery, they cleared a lane. Digging trenches systematically, they located and uncovered the burial at a depth of five feet. The casket had nearly disintegrated.

The cemetery itself is rectangular - 268 x 303 feet. It was originally divided into four sections by two major roadways. There were 196 plots, each measuring 16 feet. The oldest grave, which was removed from the original cemetery behind the church, is that of Catherine Vernier who died in 1831. Catherine was

married to John Baptiste Vernier and came from France to Canada.

Traditionally, from the time a parishioner died until his or her burial, a priest led members of the congregation in prayers for the deceased. One of the pallbearers passed a hat at the grave and all who were there contributed. These contributions went toward masses for the soul of the departed.

Currently, there are about 500 gravesites, most of which are occupied. What space remains is limited to families who have deeds. St. Paul's, like other churches, has built a columbarium on the church property.

Father Elsen is one of the founders of St. Paul's Church. He is the only known priest to be buried here. He helped with the establishment of St. Paul's and, ironically, the first service held there was his own funeral. His grave was originally marked with a wooden cross and a white fence encircling it. These eventually deteriorated, but the elm tree that was planted by his grave grew large and continued to mark it. In 1984, St. Paul's celebrated its 100-year anniversary and decided to relocate Father Elsen's grave. The remains were discovered at a depth of 5 feet and were nearly entirely disintegrated.

Catherine Vernier died in 1831 at the age of 65 years old. She was married to **John B. Vernier** who died 3 years later at the age of 81. These graves predate the new cemetery and were moved from the old cemetery behind the church.



Louis Allard was born January 25, 1827 and died November 11, 1814. Also buried here is his wife **Theresa**. Louis Allard's great-great-great-grandfather was Francis Allard who was born in France in 1637. Francis was the first Allard to move to America and he moved to French territory in Quebec from France. Sister Clement of the Sacred Heart Convent in Grosse Pointe Farms is Louis Allard's great-granddaughter. She was able to recall, the men of her childhood hauling the large stones to make up the foundation of St. Paul's Church.

Michael Cadieux came to the Detroit area in 1803 at the age of 18 years old. He immigrated because family members had come to the area before him and he was joining them. He married **Archang Gouin** on August 10, 1830 in Detroit. She was born on February 18, 1809 and was twenty-six years his junior. The Cadieux family had 12 children, 7 boys and 5 girls. Richard, Charles, and Isidore were three of their sons. Michael Cadieux died July 24, 1865 and Archang Cadieux died on January 24, 1891.



Richard Cadieux was the son of **Michael and Archang Cadieux** and died April 29, 1910. His father Michael, following family members who came to the Detroit area before him, had immigrated to the Detroit area in 1803 at the age of 18. Michael had the first mail route connecting Detroit to Chicago, which was then called Fort Dearborn.



Louis L. Beaufait was born in 1808 and died in 1887. While Louis L. was the first to establish the Beaufait family in Grosse Pointe, they had long been a prominent family in the area and are considered one of the early settlers. When the family came to the New World they came directly to the area, foregoing the common route of French immigration in which settlers came through Quebec. Louis L. was the grandson of Louis Beaufait was the first Senior Justice in Wayne County. The father of Louis L. was Louis Beaufait's youngest son and was known as 'Colonel Beaufait' as is marked on the gravestone.

Maglary Moross died May 5, 1862 at the young age of 28. The Moross family had a farm that stretched from Lake St. Clair to Mack Avenue along the road that bears their name. The first Moross in the New World was Claude Moross who was born in Paris in 1719. Claude immigrated to Canada, was married and had children. His son Nicolas Anthony Moross came to Detroit and married Mary Ann Bover on October 25, 1773. Maglary Moross was a descendent of these people.

George Moran, is buried with his wife Theresa (Trombley) Moran who died August of 1825. George's grandfather was James Moran who was born in 1661 in France. The Moran family first immigrated to Quebec in Canada when they came to the New World. Pierre Moran was the first of the name in the Detroit area. The Moran farm was located next to the location of St. Paul's church and the first cemetery that was built there was on land purchased from the Moran farm. Pierre's children became land proprietors, clergy, and lawyers.

Richard G. Moran lived from 1828 to 1912 and is buried with his wife, **Mary E. Moran** who lived from 1831 to 1920. The Moran family can be traced back to James Moran who was born in France in 1661.

