

Fall ends a year of discovery at St. Michael's

As with many headstones at St. Michael's Cemetery, the lack of an anchored base on the sandy hillside meant its placement was unstable—the fate of many headstones. The slope and subsidence of the soil underneath added to their instability. This is the reason so many headstones seemed to have disappeared over the past 157 years, safely hidden under the grass in the sandy soil. To date, volunteers have accounted for 8,500 interments, many not found in church records or maps. The discovery of this little headstone was one of them.



This fall, volunteers noticed something unusual on the cemetery bank while exploring the sod sloping toward State St.



A headstone is freed prior to proper cleaning by volunteers who used approved techniques and products.



Courtesy Deborah Snyder

After cleaning and a thorough evaluation at the site, the stone revealed the name, *'Emma Schabhuettl'* in German script.

The following German script was deciphered by **Thomas J. McCullough**, Assistant Archivist at Moravian Archives:

"Emma, Tochter von Frantz u[nd] Angelina Schabhitl, geboren 1906 Juni 28, gestorben 1907 Januar 3. Ihr Leben war ein Augenblick, ein Frühlingstraum Ihr Erdenglück."

Dieter and Inge Hoehn provided the translation:

"Emma, daughter of Frantz and Angelina Schabhuettl, born 28 Jun 1906, died 3 Jan 1907. Her life was as a blink of an eye, her earthly happiness fleeting as a dream of spring."

Why headstone recovery is worth the effort

by Rosemary C. Buffington

While exploring the sod that sloped toward State St. at St. Michael's Cemetery this fall, volunteers **Ken Bratsch**, **Deborah Snyder** and **Tania Wasko** noticed an irregularity on the bank and probed deeper into the sod. What emerged from the soil was a stone inscribed with the name **Emma Schabhuettl** in German script.

Research found that Emma lived for only six months when she died of *marasmus*, a type of protein-energy malnutrition that affected children. The term 'marasmus' on her death certificate was a phrase used to describe profound weight loss in a child at the time of death.

Since Emma had a twin, perhaps her life started out at a disadvantage—or her immigrant family may have struggled after Emma's birth. Emma's parents, **Frank** and **Angeline Jandersitz Schabhuettl**, emigrated from Austria's Burgenland in 1902. They were members of Holy Ghost Church, a parish started by a congregation of German Catholics.

In the 1960s, Frank and Angeline themselves were ultimately buried in Holy Ghost Cemetery—a newer cemetery that would have already been open for several years before Emma died. It is impossible to know why her family chose to bury Emma in St. Michael's Cemetery.

In response to the recent discovery of Emma's headstone, **Roseann Clavelli** contributed the following recollections of Emma's cousin, **Erwin Schabhuettl**, also known as 'Shops'...



"Why 'Shops?' All the guys on the football team had nicknames and I figure 'Shops' was a play on the 'Schaub' part of his surname. 'Shops' was one of the coaches (*top row, far right in photo above*) of the Pawnee Red Raiders, a Lehigh Valley sandlot football team that played during the late 1930s to early 1940s. 'Shops' was very artistic—he drew caricatures and had beautiful penmanship.

"I have many long, hand-written letters that he wrote me after my dad passed away. He recounted many good stories about their childhood and friendship and I treasure them greatly. I think 'Shops' worked for the electric company." — *Roseann Clavelli*

Through the discovery of Emma's headstone unseen for decades at St. Michael's Cemetery, a sense of perspective is given to so many who lived and died in South Bethlehem—and with these latest recoveries, they are once again remembered.



Courtesy Deborah Snyder

Peeling back sod at St. Michael's Cemetery reveals another hidden headstone in pristine condition.

A little known fact—families of those interred at St. Michael's Cemetery have always been responsible for the upkeep of the burial sites. Since many families have died out or moved away, maintenance of the cemetery now falls to volunteers.

These volunteers have documented at least 8,500 burials in St. Michael's through existing headstones matched to obituaries, death certificates and family recollections. As we discover and document more burial sites every year, we do not always know the specific origin of their locations in the cemetery.

Over time, the steep nature of the cemetery's sandy hill continues to erode headstones that have toppled, sank into the sod and literally disappeared.

The Findagrave website lets us collect the names of the deceased with their stories, photos and families in a virtual, yet somewhat permanent way.

For insights into interments at St. Michael's, visit <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/46191/saint-michael's-cemetery/>

Your support in the form of a donation designated to St. Michael's Cemetery at the Holy Infancy Parish website would make an interesting gift!

Visit <https://www.holyinfancychurch.com/giving/>

