

My Unsolved Mystery

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I think every genealogist has faced a roadblock or stonewall in their research where it seems they just can't continue. They can't seem to find any more information on a family member or something just doesn't make sense. My roadblock involves my great-great grandmother and a little cemetery near the little town of Luther, MI.

When I was a teenager, I remember our family loading up in our 1957 Buick for a Sunday afternoon drive. Sunday afternoon drives were common for our family because as dairy farmers, we had to be sure to return for the evening milking. On this trip, my Grandpa Greenwald went with us and our destination was the Luther area where the Grunewald (now Greenwald) ancestors settled when they emigrated from Germany.

When we reached the area north of Raymond's Corners and east of Luther, my dad pointed out where he and his siblings were born. We saw other areas where our ancestors lived but there were no buildings left standing. Close-by and down a dusty gravel road was the East Ellsworth Cemetery. My great-great-grandfather's grave was easy to find because it was marked by a large headstone with the name Grunewald on it. I was told that this was where my Grandpa Greenwald's grandparents were buried.

Many years later, after my retirement, I became more interested in family history. I took some classes at North Central MI College and learned how to use the computer to find death certificates. I went online and found my great-great grandfather August Grunewald's death certificate, but I couldn't find one for my great-great grandmother Wilhelmina Bramer Grunewald aka Minnie Greenwald. Some time later, I attended monthly genealogy classes at the Petoskey Library. I told our instructor, Barb Herndon about my problem, and she found the missing death certificate under the surname Greenwold. Somebody must have thought the "a" in my great-great-grandmother's last name looked like an "o" and misfiled her death certificate.

In July 2015, I drove down to the Luther area to do some research and visit the graves of my Grunewald/Greenwald ancestors. I found the East Ellsworth Cemetery and the big headstone with the name Grunewald inscribed on it. In front of the stone was a small stone with "Father 8-22-1835 to 3-27-1914" on it. I noticed that to the right of this stone was bare ground. So right away I wondered what happened to my great-great-grandmother's headstone.

After I returned home, I called the Ellsworth Township Clerk and told her about my problem. She said she would check her cemetery records and call me back in a few days. My thinking was that maybe someone had stolen the headstone or maybe the family never bought one for my great-great-grandmother's grave. I was surprised when the township clerk called back and told me that no one was buried next to my great-great grandfather!

Before my next trip to the Luther area a year or two later, I checked Find-A-Grave.com and according to them, Minnie Greenwald is buried in a different cemetery, the North Park Cemetery in the village of Luther. To verify this and find out where the grave was actually located, I called the village office. They said they would check their records and get back with me. After a couple of days, I got a call back from the village clerk and she said Wilhelmina Grunewald aka Minnie Greenwald is not buried in the North Park Cemetery. To help me in my search, she and another employee checked the records for all three cemeteries in Luther Lake County area and didn't find my great-great grandmother buried in any of them. I was dumbfounded! How could that happen? Before our call ended, the village clerk said that it is most likely that Wilhelmina is actually buried next to her husband August Grunewald and for whatever reason, she has no headstone, and no one recorded her burial in the cemetery records.

That's my unsolved mystery. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions, please contact me.

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