

# Graveyard bugs

Coimetromania (Ko-metro-Ma-ni-a)

*“An abnormal attraction and desire to visit cemeteries.”*

By William Furry

I come by my coimetromania naturally, as my parents courted in Springfield’s Oak Ridge Cemetery years before I was born. I suspect they were drawn to the silence and the privacy of the graveyard, but who knows. They might have got a kick from kissing on tombstones.

Me, I just like reading cenotaphs, epitaphs, and inscriptions carved into marble. Some headstones inscriptions are simple, such as Vachel Lindsay’s “Poet,” in Oak Ridge (Springfield), or Edward Laning’s “Artist,” in Oakland (Petersburg). Other are more complicated, the equivalent of carving the Lord’s prayer on the head of a pin. Being an editor, I prefer pithy.

Lately I’ve been exploring a group Facebook page that indulges my mania without putting miles on the van. “Illinois Cemeteries” has only about



**Macon County stone carver Martin Fitzpatrick, a Civil War veteran, created this symbolic masterpiece, which is in Decatur’s Calvary Cemetery.**



**The rotating monument to Angelo and Rosa DiSalvo in Mt. Carmel Catholic Cemetery.**

136 members, but they all seem to enjoy wandering about in graveyards as much as I do. And the pictures they take and post on the site take me to “cities of the dead” I’ll never visit this side of the grass.

“Dawn” from west central Illinois recently posted photos from an old cemetery in rural Cass County on the old Chandlerville Road. Some of the stones had been reclaimed from the clay and though illegible, had beautiful carvings. Other headstones, chiseled as far back as 1852, needed only a little help to bring them back to their former glory.

Thanks to the Illinois Cemeteries Facebook page, I’ve recently visited cemeteries in Sigel, Bloomington, Onarga, Nauvoo, and Decatur, and seen some amazing sculpture. A photo from the Mt. Carmel Cemetery submitted by “Angie” featured “the rotating monument to Angelo and Rosa DiSalvo,” which includes an entire family—father, mother, and three daughters. It spins, I believe, 180 degrees on a floating marble base.

Macon County resident Michael Delahunty’s posting back in July was so intriguing I decided to look him up and

give him a call. The photo he posted was of an 19th century gravestone in Decatur’s Calvary Cemetery that had symbolism, inscriptions, and lots of cemetery appeal, and Michael added to the mystery by saying his great-grandfather had carved it. Although the stone looks nothing like what it did originally, what remains is still intriguing.

Michael said that his great-grandfather, Martin Fitzpatrick, was born in 1845 and died in 1913, was a Civil War veteran who fought at the battle of Vicksburg, and made his living in Illinois after the war as a stone carver.

“The story goes that the lady who had it carved wanted someplace to sit while visiting her husband,” says Delahunty, referring to the carved stump chair next to the grave marker. She must have had a tiny duff.

My telephone conversation with Delahunty ended on an unexpected, but friendly, note. “Was your father’s name ‘Will,’ by any chance?” Michael asked. When I answered in the affirmative, he replied, “You won’t believe this, but I used to work with him at the phone company. He was a very nice guy.”

You meet the nicest people in the cemetery. 