

THE OLD RICKEY CEMETERY: WELLS TOWNSHIP,
JEFFERSON COUNTY, OHIO, 1825-1969?

Prepared by [Dr. John V. Richardson Jr.](#)

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Figure 1: "Wellsburg Township," From the 40x60 inch [Map of Jefferson County, Ohio](#); revised and corrected by Joseph M. Rickey (Philadelphia: Lee and Marsh, 1856) -- Courtesy of The Library of Congress

Across the Ohio River just down from Wellsburg in western Virginia, the Rickey family cemetery was located in the State of Ohio's Jefferson County within Wells Township section number 35—situated in the southern-central portion. About a mile south of the village of Brilliant,¹ Rickey's 200 acres of land was dissected by The Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad² in 1853; and the lower portion, the Belvidere or Joseph Simmons' Fruit Farm and the so-called Blockhouse Farm, sold.³

¹ Apparently, this small village existed at least since 1819 and was previously known as La Grange or the Phillipsburgh Post Office (on the 1856 map). For details of the geological features, especially gravel, see G. Frederick Wright, "Age of the Second Terrace on the Ohio at Brilliant, near Steubenville," [The Journal of Geology](#) 4 (no. 2-3, February-March 1896): 218-219 and "[Response by T. C. Chamberlin,]" on pp. 219-221.

² Chartered in 1845, The Cleveland and Pittsburgh Railroad hauled freight, largely coal on this line. See "The Cleveland & Pittsburgh Rail Road Company vs John Rickey," 28 October 1853 for appropriation of private lands in Wells Township, fractional sections 34 and 35 including the grave yard; bound as [Rail Road Appropriation No. 1](#) (1852-1854; 1887-1890), pages 251-255 held by the Jefferson County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society.

³ Originally, this cemetery was located on the northern boundary of his farm on a high knob (labeled 1278 on page 254 of Appropriation) above today's State Route 7 on land which may now be owned by the

The earliest burial there might have been the senior John Rickey (calculated 1727-9 April 1825 when he fell from his horse and was crushed by a wagon) along with his wife, Machtel "Matilda" Veldtman (1745-after 1800). Logically speaking, their children might have been buried there as well: Brice (1773-1842) and Margaret Cole Rickey (1775-1814). We do know for certain that Ann Morrison (1791-1865) and John Rickey Jr. (1786-1874) were buried there with an "iron railing around his grave and his wife's covered by a marble slab."⁴ Their son, Alexander C. Rickey, who died in 1853 and would also have likely been buried there.

On 19 September 1890, a local newspaper wrote that "The Wellsburg Herald says: 'The Wheeling & Lake Erie Railroad⁵ people have bought the ground occupied by the old Rickey cemetery about a mile below Brilliant, to be used for ballast on the new road. They are said to be offering \$800 to anyone who will remove to remains of the dead to the new Wells township cemetery."⁶ However, it is not clear if this proposed relocation ever occurred because in 1892, a Mrs. Margaret Obney of East Liverpool, Columbiana County, Ohio was interred in the Rickey Cemetery.⁷ Over the passing years, the Rickey family descendants moved away and the cemetery apparently fell into disrepair.

Brilliant Sand Company (aka the Sand Pit at one point). Note that Smiley H. Johnson acquired "the Rickey farm of 100 acres, and subsequently several small patches of land, until to-day he is the owner of over 1,000 acres" according to Caldwell and Newton's History of Belmont and Jefferson County (1880), p. 603, col. 2. As for the "new township cemetery," based on the current Highway Map of Jefferson County, Ohio (2007), this location (about K-14 on their map) sounds like the New Alexandria Cemetery, located just across the township boundary in Cross Creek Township in section 7. While it could be the Tent Church Cemetery (aka Center Cemetery) in the western portion of section 24 along Route 151, this cemetery has stones from the early-to-middle 1800s including those of Richey (sic) family members, so it's not new by any measure.

⁴ In a letter dated 4 August 1982 to Fred A. Huber, the State of Ohio's Adjutant General's Department provided evidence that John Rickey was buried on 28 April 1874 in the Rickey Cemetery located 500 feet of the South Sand Pit on the east side of Route 7. "This is a tabletop stone," according to Vivian Snyder, 1965 and may have had an iron railing around both stones.

⁵ The tracks seem to be those of the Cleveland and Pittsburgh Railroad Company, which may have been part of the Pennsylvania Line (by 1900). See John B. Corns, The Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway (Lynchburg, VA: TLC Publishing, 2002).

⁶ Steubenville Weekly Herald, 19 September 1890, page 3.

⁷ "Brilliant," The Wheeling Register 27 (no. 251, 20 March 1892), p. 3. She does not appear in findagrave.com as of 16 April 2017, but Margaret (born about 1829) appeared in the 1880 Census in La Grange Village, Wells Township in Jefferson County, Ohio.

In a 7 August 1965 inventory entitled “Rickey Cemetery,” Vivian Snyder reported finding the Rickey Cemetery--“completely grown up, terrible condition;” but, she went on to list the tombstones of eighteen individuals⁸ buried therein that she could identify: 1) **Amy Eliza Brainerd** (died 3 Nov 1852, aged 24 years—born about 1828); 2) the Chalfant family members including a) **Reuben** (26 Dec 1818-30 Jan 1865), b) **Sarah** wife of R. Chalfant (12 Jun 1829-31 Jul 1873), and c) **Caroline**, daughter (23 Sep 1854-17 Jul 1873); 3) **Lloyd Farmer** (died 11 Aug 1867, 74 years—born about 1793); 4) **George Graget** (died 28 June 1873, 76 years—born about 1797); 5) **Virginia Green**, daughter of L&M (died 25 Jan 1853, 9 years, 5 months, and 1 day—born cal 24 Aug 1843); 6) the **Reed** family, a) **J. M.** (died 7 Aug 1877, 76 years—born about 1801), b) **Elizabeth** (died 18 Jun 1890, 67 years—born about 1823), and c) **Mary L.** daughter (died 23 Aug 1887, 36 years—born about 1851); 7) the **John Rickey** family, a) **John** born in Center County, PA, 23 Mar 1786 and died 15 Apr 1874 along with his wife, **Ann Morrison**, born in Chester County, PA on 20 Feb 1791, and died 21 Jun 1865); 8) the **William Rickey** family including a) **William E.**, died 13 Jun 1853, 29 years—born about 1824), b) **A. J.** died 21 Dec 1853 (25 years, 11 months and 1 day, born cal 20 Jan 1828), c) **Caroline**, wife of A.J. (died 30 Jul 1851, 25 years, and 2 months—born cal 30 May 1826), d) **Henry** died 1847 (stone broken); 9) **John Robinson** (died 11 Mar 1853, 22 years, 1 month and 1 day—born cal 30 May 1826); and, 10) **Lucinda Wells**, daughter of W.R. and G. A. (died 31 May 1861, 1 year, 6 months, and 28 days--born cal 3 Nov 1859). Snyder concluded her report--“many more graves, now grown up and most stones down.”⁹

Finally, Troutman suggests that in 1969, this cemetery was actually relocated, supposedly to the New Alexandria Cemetery in Cross Creek Township, Jefferson County, Ohio.¹⁰

⁸ An April 2017 search of findagrave.com by name and death year did not locate any of these individuals reburied elsewhere in Ohio.

⁹ Vivian Snyder, “Rickey Cemetery,” 7 August 1965; possession of Ohio Genealogical Society (FFO 3262). A GenealogyBank.com search of these individuals did not turn up any local obituaries in April 2017.

¹⁰ Troutman's Ohio Cemeteries, p. 336, col. 2. Note that Richard Roe, The Jefferson County, Ohio Cemeteries No. 4 (1997) which includes the New Alexandria Cemetery only lists three Rickey names and does not mention any mass reburial of the Rickey family at any time (see p. 249).

Appendices

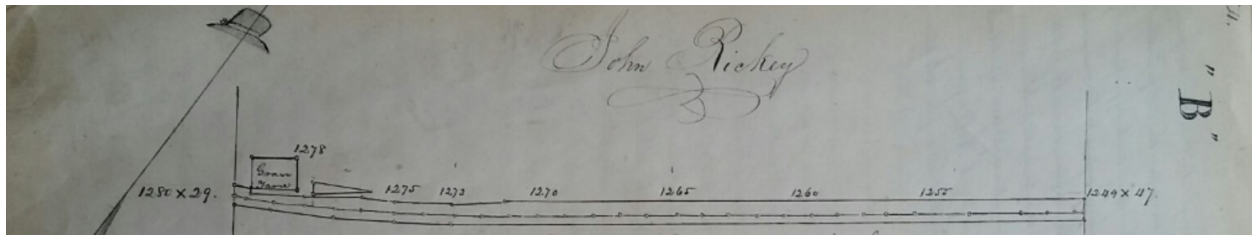


Figure 2: Grave Yard at point 1278 to 1280 from page 254 of *Rail Road Appropriation*
(Courtesy of the Jefferson County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society)

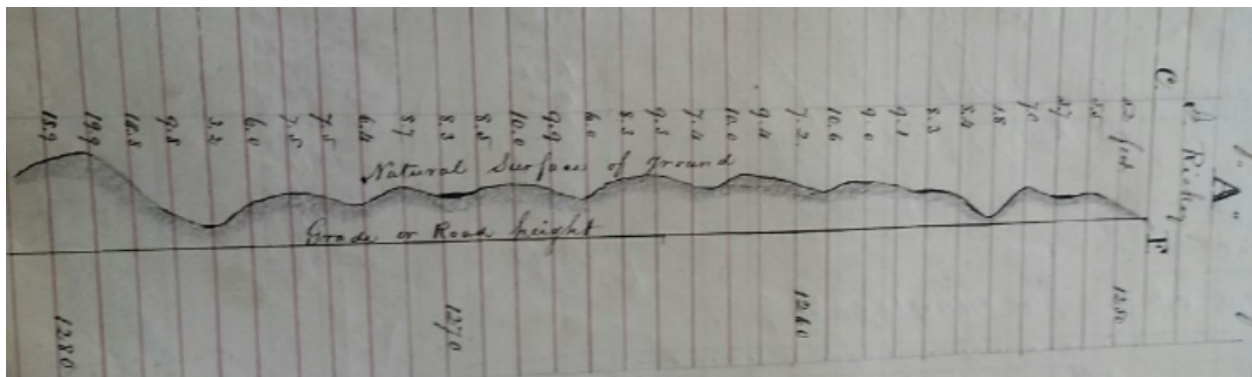


Figure 3: "Natural Surface of Ground/Grade of Road Height" from page 253
(Courtesy of the Jefferson County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society)

Acknowledgements

Curt Morrow for contributing his insights about the Rickey's family cemetery in Jefferson County, Ohio; see his [Family History of William & Hattie Hickerson](#) (2014, pages 3, 104-105, and 109). The Ohio Genealogical Society for providing information on its First Families of Ohio inductees and Flora L. VerStraten-Merrin, Vice President of the Jefferson County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society for locating and then sharing images from the [Rail Road Appropriation](#) book. Mr. Jeffery A. Davis Jr., Manager of Real Estate for the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway Company for trying to locate records regarding the relevant 1890s land transactions during April 2017.

Still pending information from Wells Township, Paulette Coss; try the NA Village Office at (740) 598-3588.