

Fieldtrip Log: Ferdinand, Indiana

August 10 - 16, 1974

John Allan Cicala  
Fieldwork 811  
Dr. Warren Roberts

Saturday, August 10.

I arrived at the convent around 4:30 in the afternoon. I found out that our fieldtrip had been cut short by a week because of a mix up in the scheduling by the nuns. I went through the card file and made a list of informants both here and in Jasper. We ate dinner and later went to the American Legion Hall. One of the bartenders there, a woman, told us how she prepared turtle soup and mentioned the name of John Lange (his card is on file) who is the main turtle hunter for Ferdinand. We were never able to get a hold of him during our stay. We left the Legion Hall around midnight and returned to the convent.

Sunday, August 11.

Got up early and prepared breakfast. While the others went to Mass (to let the townspeople know that we were Catholic), Barry, Margie, and I washed the dishes. Later we went to the Mariah Hill Church picnic (Mariah Hill is a village southwest of Ferdinand on highway 68). This picnic reminded me very much of our cousins' picnic we have every year back home. First, second, and third cousins, meet, talk, play games, and generally renew old ties and make new friends. This church picnic was very much like that in that the social element, the gathering together of friends, relatives, and acquaintances for the purposes of renewing old ties and making new friends, seemed to be the focal point of the whole affair. Anything that might have detracted from this purpose was eliminated. For example, there was no music of any kind, no dancing, and since the picnic was held on a Sunday, there was no drinking. Families, relations, and friends stuck together. The children especially seemed to stay close to their grandparents. Most of the young couples, at least as far as I could see, were married. I saw very few teenagers and none who had girlfriends with them. This was not the place to take a girl to.

Most of the activities seemed to be oriented toward the family. There was a bingo test, quilts were raffled, old people sat on folding chairs and talked, a "country store" wheel was nailed to a tree, two nuns presided over the "fishing pond" where children fished for a prize, and for those who were hungry, there was a tent where turtle soup was sold and a pavilion where German fried chicken dinners were served.

Marsha, Richard and I went to the cemetery next to the church and looked at the tombstones. The motifs carved on most of them were common for this area--designs of wild roses or doves carrying olive branches in their mouths. We also noticed several unmarked iron crosses sprayed with aluminum paint--another common feature found in the cemeteries in this area. I noticed that this cemetery like many others around here seemed to be so cramped for space that the end of each row of grave mounds nearly touched the headstones of the next row. This means that if you wanted to get to the grave in the middle of the row, you would have to walk on a number of grave mounds. In Detroit most of the Catholic cemeteries have rows of grave mounds separated by a walking path so you would never have to step on the mound itself. I was always taught never to walk on a mound. During our stay at this picnic, I did not see any of the townspeople come and visit this cemetery or place any flowers on the graves. We left around dark and came back to the convent. Later on Richard, Marsha, and I went to visit another cemetery in Jasper. This cemetery was much larger than the one at Mariah Hill. The Catholic rows were easily distinguishable by the presence of crosses on the tombstones. It was raining so we did no rubbings and the darkness prevented us from taking pictures. We left and returned to the convent around midnight.

Monday, August 12.

I got up early, ate breakfast, and went with Richard, Marsha, Martin, Margie, and

Evelyn to see Sister Angela, the convent librarian. Sister Angela met us in one of the library rooms and told us that if we came later that evening, around eight o' clock, she would have more time to talk to us. She did manage though to sit down and talk at length for about an hour on the influence of the Church on the lives of the townspeople. We all had our tape recorders going. Her view of things is definitely biased by her social position in the community: she is a nun and a librarian. To hear her speak one would think the townspeople and the farmers harvested their crops, celebrated their feasts and holidays, and mourned their dead according to the ritual calendar of the Catholic Church. In short we got the point of view of a nun who had little to do with and in fact knew very little about the attitudes and feelings of the German communities in this area. At first none of us<sup>w</sup>ere really aware of this and so we left the Sister feeling a little astonished that there were places in America where the Catholic Church was still preserving some of its ancient rituals. We all then went over to Dale, Indiana (a town southwest of Ferdinand on highway 68). We wanted to talk to Benno Schum about his business--making tombstone monuments. Benno Schum (he is listed in the card file) comes from a family of gravestone carvers who have been in Dale since 1888. His secretary told us that he was too busy now to see us and to come back around 1:30. Richard and Marsha went out to visit more cemeteries while the rest of us went back to the convent to eat lunch. I returned to Dale at 1:30. The others did not come with me thinking perhaps that Schum would not be very profitable as an informant. Richard and Marsha arrived and we taped an interview with Schum that lasted for about forty-five minutes. Schum spoke in a very rapid soft voice (many of the older people around here speak very rapidly) colored with a Southern Indiana twang. He told us how his father had learned the art of gravestone cutting from a traditional monument maker in Huntingburg--a man named Becker. He talked about the motifs on the headstones and in answering our questions as to why certain designs were picked over others, he said that generally speaking the motifs were chosen by the families. A

young child for example who had died recently loved toys and horses. So his family had a design of a horse and a design of a toy carved on his gravestone. In another example, a man died who was a lumberman. His family had the design of a tree placed on his gravestone. That motif happens to be ancient and traditional: it is the tree of life motif. So it is not enough for the collector to go to cemeteries, pick out the motifs, take rubbings and photographs of them and then assemble them together and draw conclusions concerning their distribution, age, traditionalness, and their meaning. The collector must also talk to the priest (many cemeteries in this part of the country are next to the church) and find out what the motifs mean in a religious context and then he should try to get in touch with the surviving members of the family and find out why such and such motif was picked and how it relates to the deceased or to the members of the family. Schum also pulled out a set of monument and motif designs printed on linen and showed them to us saying that they were models his father had used. He also mentioned that he was keeping a scrapbook of gravestone verse, errors, and oddities. He couldn't show those to us because he kept the scrapbook at home. Schum is a difficult man to pin down for an appointment since the nature of his business forces him to have no definite time schedule. However anyone interested in gravestone inscription, verse, and design should look him up.

Richard, Marsha, and I spent the afternoon going to graveyards taking pictures and doing rubbings of the monuments. We went to the Dale cemetery (southwest of Ferdinand off of highway 68), the Mount Zion Cemetery (on highway 162 south of Ferdinand, the turn off before highway 68), the Saint Henry Cemetery (west of Ferdinand on highway 264), and the Fairmount Cemetery in Huntington (north of Ferdinand on highway 64). These cemeteries are all German Catholic. The deceased for the most part all have German surnames. I think I found only a few graves which belonged to people with Irish or French surnames. The inscriptions as well as the gravestone verses, especially the early ones (from 1840 to around 1915), are often in German. After 1915 however the inscriptions and the verses, as one might expect, were written in English. Some of the monuments had, "Killed in Germany," or "Died in Germany," inscribed in the stone.

These sketches represent the crosses, gravestone designs, setifs, inscriptions and verse common to all the cemeteries which we visited. I have named the cemetery only after the more unusual designs not common to the other cemeteries.

## Crosses



iron cross. Usually made by a blacksmith and sprayed with aluminum paint. Usually unmarked.



iron cross with triangular ends. Unmarked.



iron cross with hearts. Unmarked.



iron cross painted red. Unmarked.



iron cross with a small heart on crossbar. Unmarked.



iron cross with open ends. Marked.



iron cross with open hearts. Unmarked.



iron cross with one heart. Unmarked.



iron cross openwork. Usually unmarked.



iron cross. Fleur-de-lis. Set on a base. Unmarked.

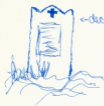


iron cross with openwork. Ends Fleur-de-lis (?) Marked with a metal plaque.



polished iron cross. Plaque contains verse. Set in limestone or sandstone slab. Fleur-de-lis @ ends.

# Gravestones



<decalogue shapes>



stone cross



gravestone made to appear like a pile of rocks, usually marked.



stone monument made to look like books (perhaps a pipe) marked with a plaque.  
(Found in Britain in Huntingdon)

## Motifs



Fleur-de-lis (Hall Cemetery).



interlocking doves. Very ancient motif.



Confrontal flowers. Very ancient motif.



interlocking symbols of love and devotion



He is there



Handy God

Hands point to heaven.



King of Heaven.



Banner's heart, anchor, and cross: faith, hope, and charity.



God grasping the hand of the distressed.



A weeping willow. Christ's mother. Common in America.



Church (Fulda). Rare motif in this area.



Eye pyramid (Fulda). Unusual for this area. Probably masonic.



Topographical monument. The cross is embossed on the stone. A metal cross (zinc) is taken from the cockpit and set upon this embossed cross. The metal cross is not fastened to the stone.

### Inscriptions And one verse

Immortal

of Mary Cousier  
relief of John Cousier  
born May 22, 1789  
departed from this life  
October 25, 1871  
May she rest in peace

carver: Becker

St. Louis:

Catharine Donkey  
born Nov. 1827  
died August 14, 1877  
Native of the County Roscommon  
Parish of Keshelg Ireland

Carver: Becker

St. Louis:

Kelly  
Cousier of Mary  
born in the Parish of Keshelg  
County Roscommon Ireland 1798  
died Nov. 22, 1879

Carver: Becker

Leopold:

In memory of  
Frederick W. A.  
born Jan 29, 1826  
and died Nov. 11  
1898.

Carver: Hill

Remembered by all who knew him  
as a good man and a true one  
and as a man who was always  
true to his friends and to his country.