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### Bachelor's Grove Cemetery Haunted History, Midlothian, IL.

The settlement at Batchelors Grove began as early as the late 1820s, with larger numbers of immigrants arriving in the 1830s and 1840s. The initial settlers were generally American "Yankees" of English, Irish, and Scottish descent, most of whom came here from New York, Vermont, and Connecticut. The second wave of settlers arriving from Europe, primarily of Germanic origin, began in the late 1840s and was predominately the nationality of immigrants settling in this area for the next fifty years or so.



The cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in south Cook County. It is located in Bremen Township, Cook County, Illinois, on 143rd street three tenths of a mile east of Ridgeland Avenue. It is down a trail that was the former alignment of the Midlothian Turnpike that has been closed to vehicular traffic since the 1960s. The cemetery is on the south side of the Rubio Woods Forest Preserve. The cemetery has been inactive since 1989.

"Bachelor's Grove" is the most historically appropriate name for the Cemetery and former nearby settlement according to publically published works by Brad L. Bettenhausen, President of the Tinley Park Historical Society. It is this variation that is used on the cemetery plat map in the collections of the Tinley Park Historical society, and the original plat for the Village of Bremen from 1853. Numerous other variations of the name exist, such as "Bachelor's," "Bachelor's," and "Batchellor." The name is commonly understood to have come from corruptions of the family name of Batchelder, a locally prominent family when the area was first settled in the 1820s, 30s, and 40s.

Legend has it that the cemetery got its name because only men were buried here, but it actually came from the name of a family who settled in the area. Bachelor's Grove Cemetery was established no later than November 1844 with the burial of Mrs. Eliza Scott, though some sources allude to burials having taken place on the grounds as early as 1836. The cemetery was founded by Edward M. Everden, with some land possibly added in later years by Fredrick Schmidt, though hard evidence of the Schmidt addition has eluded most historical researchers. The last two burials to date were Ms Laura M. McGhee in 1965,

*Note the use of the word "haunting" is in the classical definition of the adjective, meaning "poignant and evocative; difficult to ignore or forget. While not taking a position on the existence or non-existence of actual paranormal activity at Bachelor Grove Cemetery, the perception of paranormal activity, real or imagined, has contributed heavily to the sad history of this historic graveyard, and thus cannot be ignored.*



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and the cremated remains of Robert E. Shields in 1989. The last independent cemetery trustee was Clarence Fulton of Tinley Park, whose family were early settlers of Bremen Township, and many of whom were buried in the cemetery.



Prior to World War II, the cemetery was a typical small township cemetery. In the days when picnicking in cemeteries was fashionable, family members would picnic on the grounds. Some would also fish or swim in the former rock quarry located to the northwest of the cemetery. After World War II however, things changed, and not for the better. Many family members of those buried in the cemetery moved out of the area and no longer visited.

When the Midlothian Turnpike was realigned onto 143rd Street, the former routing became a “lover’s lane,” and a place frequented by teenagers drinking under-age, and otherwise misbehaving. The trustees of the cemetery tried to get a new entrance onto 143rd Street in the 1960s, after the old alignment of the Midlothian Turnpike was closed to vehicular traffic. However, they were unable to gain the required easement from the Cook County Forest Preserve District.

It is also at this time that reports of paranormal activity surrounding the cemetery and nearby Midlothian Turnpike area began to truly spike, peaking in the 1970s and 1980s. This combination of isolated rural location not routinely patrolled by the Sheriff’s Police and reputation as a “haunted” area drew in many people whose interests were demonstrably not in the interests of the cemetery.

Vandalism of graves became almost routine. Almost all of the headstones were vandalized and broken. Some headstones were partially or entirely thrown in to the nearby flooded quarry. Others were removed from the property; some being recovered by police departments as far away as Maywood, Evergreen Park, and Chicago. Evidence of the performance of Satanic Rituals has been found in the cemetery, along with evidence of attempts to open and rob graves. This undesirable conduct was not performed by, caused directly by, or condoned by



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legitimate paranormal researchers. However, the same rumors and reports that attracted legitimate paranormal researchers also attracted those whose behavior was not up to any common standards of decency.



Just beyond the rear barrier of the cemetery is a small, stagnant pond. This pond, while outside of the graveyard, is still not untouched by the horror connected to the place. One night in the late 1970s, two Cook County Forest Preserve officers were on night patrol near here and claimed to see the apparition of a horse emerge from the waters of the pond. The animal appeared to be pulling a plow behind it that was steered by the ghost of an old man. The vision crossed the road in front of the ranger's vehicle, was framed for a moment in the glare of their headlights, and then vanished into the forest. The men simply stared in shock for a moment and then looked at one another to be sure that had both seen the same thing. They later reported the incident and since that time, have not been the last to see the old man and the horse.

Little did the rangers know, but this apparition was actually a part of an old legend connected to the pond. It seems that in the 1870s, a farmer was plowing a nearby field when something startled his horse. The farmer was caught by surprise and became tangled in the reins. He was dragged behind the horse and it plunged into the small pond. Unable to free himself, he was pulled down into the murky water by the weight of the horse and the plow and he drowned.

Clarence Fulton approached Bremen Township, as early as 1967, sought to take over the management and care of the cemetery, but he were turned down. While there was a cemetery association, it was never formally incorporated, and all its assets beyond the cemetery itself had been long since spent coping with the highly destructive vandalism the cemetery suffered. The cemetery was finally taken over by Cook County after being approached by Fulton in 1975.



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It was discovered at that time that the plot sales had not been correctly documented with the county and that the title to the land probably still rested in the hands of the descendants of Edward M. Everden. Cook County obtained clear title to the cemetery by condemnation. The cemetery is now under the supervision and responsibility of the Cemetery Trustees under the Real Estate Management Office of the Cook County Board. Through intergovernmental agreements, responsibility for the maintenance is shared with the Cook County Forest Preserve District, whose land entirely surrounds the cemetery.



Several groups have over the more recent years donated labor to maintaining Bachelor's Grove Cemetery. However, beyond keeping the property somewhat less overgrown, they haven't been able to accomplish much. Between the difficulty in navigating the bureaucracy of Cook County Government, and conflicts with each other as to what the cemetery should be used for and the degree of public access that should be allowed, no headstone maintenance or other work beyond brush and trash removal has been accomplished by anyone.

While owned by the Real Estate Management Office of the Cook County Board, access is governed by the same rules that govern most of the Cook County Forest Preserve District. People may only visit after sunrise, and must leave prior to sunset. Parking is available nearby at the Rubio Woods Forest Preserve parking lots off of the north side of 143rd Street, roughly a 350 yard walk away from the cemetery. Attempting to park any closer is illegal and you will be ticketed or towed without warning or sympathy. The Cook County Sheriff's Police patrol the area at night. If you are caught after dark, you will be arrested.

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