

# Cemetery Mystery Solution Unearthed

Steve Smith as told to Dani Crossley

Being a volunteer at the Society brings challenging research requests and rewarding solutions to ancestral mysteries. Last fall Mary Doyle, from the Philadelphia area, contacted us for help in locating her grandmother, Catherine K. Doyle's, burial location. Here is the way she described the background that led up to her request in an email to Steve Smith.

*This journey for our family history started several years ago in search of ancestry and heritage. We are a family of 12 children to Kathleen (Wallace) and James Doyle. Our childhood was pretty typical for the 50s and 60s. We moved from Philadelphia to the suburbs in 1954, and lived in that home for many years. Many fond memories remain with us of our childhood. Despite each of our parents' challenging childhoods, they were meant to create a family of 12 children. My mother and her siblings were placed in a Catholic orphanage in Philadelphia after the death of her mother. As each one reached the age of sixteen, they left the orphanage to create their future. She remained close to her siblings, as each one left the orphanage.*

*Our father was also raised in Philadelphia with one sister. Their family faced a major crisis with their parents. Our grandmother Catherine K. Doyle was admitted to Norristown State Hospital at the age of 42; the year was 1937. She remained there for many years. This part of her history was lost to us until recently. My father and his sister were left to grow up in a challenging world. He entered the military at a young age and served in Europe during WWII.*

*We were raised without grandparents in our lives; therefore, we did not benefit from the richness that grandparents can provide to family life. We never knew what happened to our grandmother. Each of us had some vague and variable memories that were passed onto us by our mother. As we became young adults, we lost our father to a sudden and unexpected death at the age of 59. You can imagine the loss that created for our mother and family. Our focus shifted to her and the remaining children at home.*

*With the loss of our father, we never had the benefit of discussing his parents to any degree. He was hard-working, faithful, and dedicated husband, provider, as well as father to his family. Regarding our grandmother, we were never contacted with any further information after she was hospitalized. Through the help of the internet, phone calls, and obtaining health records, we were able to determine that she was transferred to Bloomsburg Health Care Center in 1983. It was hard to determine why she was transferred there; again, no contact was made to our family. With the help of Ancestry.com, we were able to track down a small obituary for her. Much to our surprise, we discovered that she died on 12/24/1989.*

## Mrs. Catherine K. Doyle

Bloomsburg resident since 1983

Mrs. Catherine K. Doyle, 95, formerly of Philadelphia, died at 9:12 a.m. Sunday at the Bloomsburg Health Care Center where she had lived since Sept. 1983.

She was born in Philadelphia, the daughter of late Joseph and Catherine (Conay) Cane.

She was a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

She is survived by two children: James Doyle and Catherine K. Metz, both of Philadelphia.

Funeral arrangements will be announced by the Kriner-Elwell-Wilt Funeral Home, 325 Market St., Bloomsburg.

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*As a family, we wanted to locate her place of burial. With the help of the local funeral director, Dean Kriner, we discovered that she was buried at New Rosemont Cemetery in Columbia County in the town of Espy. Finding the exact gravesite would be more challenging. I was referred to the Columbia County Historical and Genealogical Society for further research. I was introduced to Steve Smith at the office and we are very grateful to him for much-needed support, efforts and diligence in locating the gravesite.*

OWNER	HOWER, CLYDE R.																		
ADDRESS																			
CITY	201-203-202-204																		
BLOCK	C	LOT NO.	DATE																
SIZE	1616x24	GRAVES	816																
1.	EUGENE E. HOWER 4/6/28																		
2.	MRS. W. HAGENBUCH 2/5/29																		
3.	WALTER HAGENBUCH 10/10/38																		
4.	MRS. EDWARD EVANS 12/20/41																		
5.	ESTELLA HOWER 6/17/60																		
6.	R. CLYDE HOWER 1/2/67																		
7.	HAZEL HOWER 5/3/88																		
5.	Remaining lot gave to Kriner																		
6. See Dean Kriner Card.																			
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Bloomsburg, Pa.																			

*Only the original seven burials are shown on the cemetery's card for lots 201-204*

Steve picks up the story here. On October 21st several family members met him at New Rosemont Cemetery. Steve spoke to the grounds man there and he pulled the card associated with Catherine's burial. The four lots with places for sixteen burials were purchased in 1928 by Clyde Hower for his 16-year-old son who had died of an accidental gunshot wound. After all the Hower family members who would be buried there (7), the remaining plots were given to Kriner Funeral Home. Unrelated people were then interred there by the funeral home.

As Steve and his visitors looked at the visible stones, it was very obvious that Catherine was not among them. Studying the layout, it appeared to Steve that there was room for a burial between Hazel Hower and Katie Pool. He began scraping at the ground with his heel. It was soon apparent that something was down there. He got down on his hands and knees and began clawing at the dirt with his fingers. Pretty soon in the small area he had cleared appeared the year 1989! There were high hopes that Catherine had been found. With the assistance of the grounds man, the rest of the well-preserved stone was revealed and there she was: Catherine K. Doyle, 1894-1989.



Back to Mary for the conclusion of the story:

*The stone was completely covered with grass and dirt. We were overwhelmed with this discovery and we are forever grateful to Steve for his help. With the assistance of the grounds men staff, the stone was positioned above ground level and will be stabilized with a base.*

*It was a beautiful October day that provided our family with a tangible gift to our past. Much to our amazement and surprise, our grandmother lived to be 95. She outlived both of her children. She was lost to us in this life due to life challenges, but we are very happy that we were able to obtain more information about her life and the ending of her life. Somehow, in spite of her life circumstances she survived to the age of 95, through grit and strength. Not knowing her in this life is something we grieve as a family. I know she would have been proud of her son and the legacy he passed onto his children. Despite never knowing our grandmother, the experience of obtaining some of her information, especially her burial location and date of her passing, provides comfort to our family and allows us to understand our family history better. As mentioned previously, we are very grateful to Steve Smith and the Columbia County Historical and Genealogical Society for their help with this endeavor.*