

Algonquin Civil War Veterans

Origins of Algonquin Cemetery



Gillilan Grave sites, First Settlers

Algonquin's first cemetery was the Gillilan family burial ground on the Gillilan family farm along Cary-Algonquin Road about mile from the present Algonquin Cemetery. The first death and burial in McHenry County was **Deida Gillilan**, the fifteen year old daughter of Samuel and Margaret Gillilan who were the first settlers in the county. Her death occurred in 1835 less than one year after she came to settle in Algonquin.

First burials took place in family plots near the homesteads. The Gillilans and Cornish families had plots like as well as many other families. Later the pioneer graves were moved to village cemetery after 1853.

One of the earliest settlers and land speculators was Samuel Edwards. Samuel bought some 1,019 acres of land in the early 1840's. During early town meeting which was held for the purpose of naming the town, he suggested the name of Algonquin. The first name Oceola was rejected since there was already at that time a town named Oscola. Town meeting was called and the name Algonquin came from Mr. Samuel Edwards. This was a very famous schooner on Lake Superior named Algonquin which means "people across the waters." The Edwards family with several other investors were owners in the schooner which happened to be the only vessel sailing in Lake Superior in the early 1840's after the British trading vessel sank in Copper Harbor.

Samuel Edwards married Janette C. Thomas on August 10, 1841 after his purchased in late 1830's a thousand acres in and around the pioneer town of Cornish Ferry which later became known as Algonquin. Samuel's wife, Janette C. Edwards died two years later in May 10, 1843 at the age of 27 years old. Samuel died only four months after his wife's death, on September 22, 1843.



Edward Family graves overlooking the Fox River Valley

No children became of this union. Samuel Edwards had his wife buried on his land parcels that had one of the best views of the Fox River valley. The view has long gone when the trees have replaced the prairies at the time of arrival of the pioneers. Private cemetery was located just south of the Gillilan farm lands at the intersection of the road to Cary Station. Edward's land holdings were given to Eli Henderson. The town was officially named Algonquin later that same year of his death in December 1843 which was his suggestion. Eli Henderson donates the land for the cemetery which as part of the Edwards Estate.

Village received the deed for land as public cemetery on December 30, 1853.

The cemetery lands were later expanded in 1919 across Cary-Algonquin road into the once Gillilan Farm. First burial on the new site was Mrs. E. S. Jayne who burial took place in July 1923. The was later constructed by Walter Zimmerman occurred in 1955. The most recent parcel added the historic section of the cemetery was strip along western border and Fantasy Festival (or the old Tafel Motel property) in 2009.

(Note: **Block One** and **Block Two** the graves follow section lines going east and west. But the graves located in Block Three and Four were laid parallel to Cary-Algonquin Road intersects the Historic Cemetery from the new addition in 1920. Add to the confusion, headstone in grave in **Block One** are at the foot of the graves, while in **Block Two** the stone are located at the head.)