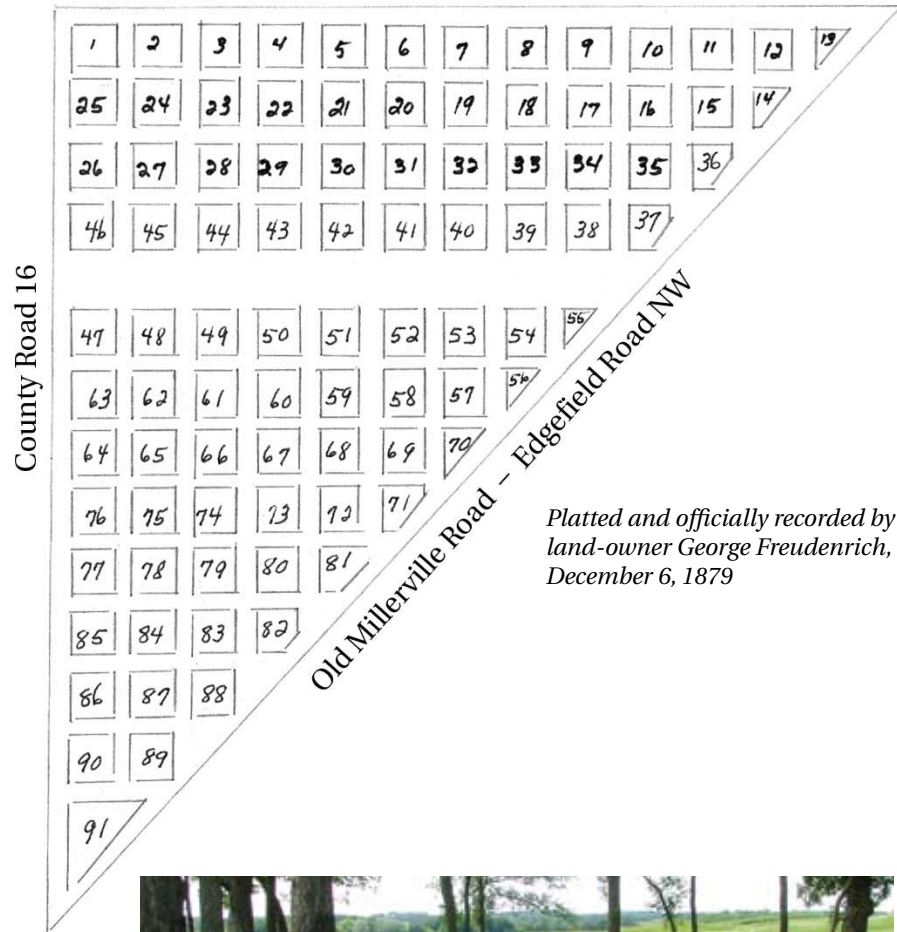


**Edgefield Cemetery • Douglas County • Minnesota**



Platted and officially recorded by land-owner George Freudenrich, December 6, 1879



Edgefield Monument was erected December 9, 2005



Jessie Falaas, Frank Borchert, Phillip Brennon, J.O. Renkes, John Knudson, Joseph Tamble, Albert Holmgren, Elmer Knudson, Frank Schwartz, Carl Linnard and Prosper Seidliger helped to dig up the remains of Christian J. Blatt. Not pictured: Winston Johnson, Otto Wilkin and Francis Brennon



**George Diment, Jr. 1883**

George Diment, Jr. died at the age of 24. Francis Brennon, as a boy, remembered seeing rows of white wooden crosses marking grave sites. These crosses deteriorated and disappeared over the years leaving only 2 stones – Christian J. Blatt and George Diment, Jr.

*Brandon*  
MINNESOTA

*great today, greater tomorrow*

Brandon History Center • P.O. Box 514 • Brandon MN 56315  
www.brandonmn.com

**Edgefield Cemetery  
1866 – 1899**



*Pioneer Area Cemetery located near Chippewa Station and the Abercrombie Trail*

**Cemetery Rededication  
August 2, 2006**

In honor of the pioneers who were laid to rest at Edgefield and to thank those who made the cemetery restoration possible.



## Restoring the Cemetery

There it sat for over 100 years - - a tangled two acres of underbrush, 8 foot tall thistles, various weeds, trees of all sizes, beer cans, junk, rock piles, evidence of a dumping ground, and even a deer hunting stand high in a tree. On the north side lay a huge stone with a cross embossed on it, indicating perhaps a family grave plot.

Where are the 1879 survey markers? Where are the boundaries? Who is responsible for this disregard of our pioneer ancestors? Who has the authority to restore this pioneer burial ground? More than a decade ago several Brandon ladies began to wonder about all this and searched county and township death and burial records. A most tedious task, but it began to create an interest among others, along with the question: “ Why can’t we clean it up?” And so, planning for its restoration began.

Members of the Brandon Lions Club began as early as 1993 to question who was responsible for cleaning up the cemetery. A search of Minnesota law indicated the county was responsible to clean it up and then arrange for the local government or other service organizations to handle restoration and perpetual care.

Brandon Lions Club stepped forward and volunteered to clean up Edgefield. They planned to eventually turn it over to the township. Many trees were cut down during the fall of 1997 and winter of 1998. This was done with the assistance of a member of the Brandon township board. The township board was operating under severe financial constraints but assisted where meager finances could be applied. For example, they financed spraying for weeds, helped with the cost of stump removal, and used their road grader to level portions of the cemetery.

## The Cemetery was Re-surveyed in 1998

The Brandon Lions Club fund raiser was conducted in the fall of 1998. A sum of \$600 was raised to pay most of the cost of fabricating a large, steel “EDGEFIELD CEMETERY” sign which was placed at the south end of the cemetery. Gil Moe of Alexandria made the sign. Later, a Lions member made a large flower box and placed it beneath the sign. Another Lions member planted perennial flowers in the box and kept it weeded and watered.

Except for spraying, labor for the project was handled mostly by Lions members. Brush-cutters, front-end loaders and various other types of farm machinery were used as the job progressed. Hauling huge rocks and disposing of a number of rock piles required help from others in the community.

Little crosses, made of re-bar and painted white, were fabricated and placed by the sign and along the sides of the cemetery, not to mark graves but to indicate it was a cemetery to all who passed by.

## The Future of Edgefield

In 2003, Brandon Township accepted full responsibility for the maintenance of Edgefield Cemetery ad infinitum. In support of this effort, it would be well for other members of the community to continue a search for names of pioneers who are interred there.

*The inscription on the plaque at Edgefield Cemetery reads as follows:*

## EDGEFIELD

### BRANDON’S PIONEER CEMETERY - EST, CA. 1866

The origin of Brandon and its pioneer cemetery began in 1859, when a road, joined by various ox cart trails, was completed between St. Cloud and Fort Abercrombie on the Red River of the North. This “Abercrombie Trail” gave birth to numerous stage stations along its wilderness route. One such station was Chippewa, so named because of its location off the north shore of Little Chippewa Lake. The station was owned and operated by Henry and Mary Gager under a mail delivery contract with Burbank and Waite Stage Line.

When a Sioux Indian uprising began in 1862 the settlers, including the Gager family, fled the area and were replaced by soldiers from the 8th Regiment of Minnesota Volunteers out of Fort Ripley. Chippewa Station was then called Fort Chippewa. On a hill just west of the settlement, the soldiers built crude sod barracks with logs laid across the top covered with straw and earth. In 1866, as settlers began to return, Swiss immigrant George A. Freudenreich purchased Gager’s 160 acre homestead and stage station. He renamed the station Chippewa City and set aside two acres for a cemetery, one third mile to the north. The city was renamed “Brandon” in 1869 as a tribute to Brandon, VT, the birthplace of Senator Stephen A. Douglas, who had been helpful in bringing statehood to Minnesota and after whom Douglas County was named.

Brandon village thrived. It became a major trading post in the area, with a post office, school, hotel, blacksmith shop, store and barns for horses, mules and oxen. The cemetery was in use by at least 1866. In 1879, the cemetery was platted and officially recorded as Edgefield Cemetery by land owner George Freudenreich, who then returned to Switzerland. He later arranged to sell all of his holdings, less Edgefield Cemetery. The railroad reached the Brandon area in the fall of 1879, 2.5 miles south of the original village. Brandon then moved to the railhead, where it stands today. The village stage station, for 21 years earlier, and often referred to as Old Brandon by the settlers, slowly returned to the plow.

It has been estimated that many pioneer families were buried at Edgefield, however, only two headstones had been found. No burial records have been located, leading to the conclusion that Mr. Freudenreich handled the sale of grave plots on a private basis. Burials at Edgefield would have continued well into the 1890’s, since the new Brandon did not acquire cemetery land near its present location until 1889.

*by Bud Greenquist*

## Christian J. Blatt

Christian Blatt was a Civil War veteran, who farmed a homestead northwest of Lake Aaron in LeafValley township. He apparently never married.

According to historian Carl M. Klein of Millerville Township, Mr. Blatt was killed in 1888 by Henry Schecker, who, reportedly shot him off his mower over a land dispute. Mr. Blatt was buried in Edgefield Cemetery and Mr. Schecker was sentenced to life in the penitentiary.

In April 1897, the Evansville Enterprise reported that Henry Schecker apparently had applied for a pardon. The request set forth that the killing was done in self defense and that he did not receive a fair and impartial trial.

Henry Schecker’s sentence was commuted to 12 years for good behavior but not until the year 1900, which would give him 12 years in prison, having been sentenced in 1888.

This is not the end of Christian Blatt’s history. Each Memorial Day, American Legion Post 278 in Brandon held its traditional memorial service, including a ceremony at the grave of a veteran. Because there were no veterans buried in the Brandon cemetery, Memorial Day services were held each year at Edgefield Cemetery, where Mr. Blatt lay, three miles to the north. This was a burden on the legion post and on the citizens who wished to attend the ritual. For this reason, the Legion sought and received legal authority to move the remains of Mr. Blatt, the only known veteran in Edgefield, to the Brandon Cemetery, a short distance from the city. There he was joined by other veterans as the years passed.

Rest well, Christian J. Blatt.

*by Bud Greenquist 2/15/2006*



*Christian J. Blatt was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1918, under the direction of John Knudson, he was moved from Edgefield Cemetery to the Brandon Cemetery in this Hoplin-Nelson Funeral Coach. The Legion members marched along side of the funeral coach for the approximate three mile trip.*

*See additional photo on back of brochure.*