

# ST MARY'S CATHOLIC CEMETERY

**Cillon-** James F. Callon died Aug 2, 1861  
Francis Callon died May 11, 1878  
John P. Callon died Jan 14, 1904  
Joseph Callon died April 14, 1909

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## The St. Mary's Cemetery Story

It should not seem strange to anyone that a church was to be built on cemetery land, for this was sacred ground only to be glorified with the building of a house of God. Cemeteries and churches were at one time close to one another because the people who loved God wanted their final resting place near their house of worship.

St. Mary's Cemetery was the first Catholic cemetery in Davenport. It was purchased for a Catholic burial ground by the Rt. Rev. Mathias Loras, Bishop of Iowa, from Judge Gilbert C. R. Mitchell on January 17, 1849, for the sum of one hundred and twenty dollars. This parcel of land contained about three acres. It was part of an original eighty-acre land purchase by Judge Mitchell from the United States government on May 5, 1840. It was recorded at the land office at Dubuque on November 10, 1841, and at the Scott County Court House in 1901.

At one time the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad wanted their right of way through the center of St. Mary's Cemetery. After much discussion between the heads of the railroad and the city fathers permission was granted for a right of way through the southernmost part of the cemetery. As necessary, graves in this small section were relocated.

Through the efforts of Father Pelamourgues, Judge G. C. R. Mitchell and Antoine LeClaire, a serious loss to the Catholics of Davenport was peacefully settled. This was a sacred matter to the good priest for he was well aware that the people of this country had less regard for cemeteries than perhaps any other civilized people in the world. It was not unusual in early days for roads and streets to be forced through graveyards. In this instance a reprieve for the deceased Catholic members of the community was won.

Although St. Mary's Church and rectory are built on part of the cemetery, they were built in the eastern part, with the permission of the Bishop of Iowa and the former heirs of this land. No interments had been made in this part of the cemetery.