

Catherin Eller Stoker (1773-1850)

Catherine Eller Stoker is the earliest ancestor of the Stokers and Graybills buried in the Stoker - Graybill Cemetery as well as in cemeteries elsewhere in Pottawattamie County and surrounding counties. Her tombstone no longer is to be found in the cemetery. She was born on March 6, 1773 in what is today's Ashe County in the mountains of western North



Carolina. Her parents were Peter Eller and Elizabeth Dick (see "The Ellers in America", by J. W. Hook) of German descent. Catherine married Michael Stoker, Sr. in about 1791 and they had eight children born to them in North Carolina. The Stokers and Graybills moved to Jackson County, Ohio together in 1814 where Michael and Catherine Stoker's ninth child, Eller Stoker was born. Five of the nine children are buried in the Stoker - Graybill Cemetery.

On January 19, 1833 Mormon missionary Luke S. Johnson baptized several members of the Stoker family into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). By the end of 1833 other Stoker and Graybill family members also were baptized through the missionary efforts of Seymour Brunson and John Fisher. Several years later the Stokers and Graybills heeded the

call by Joseph Smith to settle in Missouri. During the next several years the family, along with the rest of the Mormons, was subjected to persecutions in Missouri and the expulsion of the Mormons. The family relocated with the other Latter-day Saints to the state of Illinois. Michael Stoker, Sr. did not make the move from Missouri and it is assumed that he died in Missouri.

Joseph Smith selected an area of Hancock County in Illinois along the Mississippi River for the Latter-day Saints to settle and named the city Nauvoo. Catherine Stoker and most of her progeny lived in the environs of Nauvoo until February, 1846 when the Latter-day Saints were again forced to flee. The Mormon Trail was established through southern Iowa and terminated in Council Bluffs which served as a staging area for the migration on to Utah. It is estimated that Catherine Stoker died in 1850 and was one of the earliest burials in the Stoker - Graybill Cemetery.

There are LDS records that show that Catherine Stoker was baptized for a number of relatives in the Mississippi River prior to the completion of the Nauvoo Temple. After the temple was completed, Catherine Stoker is shown to have received her endowments on Wednesday, January 21, 1846 as recorded on page 163 of the Nauvoo Temple Endowment Register.

On July 30, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois, Catherine Stoker received the following Patriarchal Blessing from Hyrum Smith:

Sister Catherine, I lay my hands upon your head in the name of Jesus of Nazareth and seal you up unto Eternal Life from this very hour for this is thy Blessing for thy days and years are on the decline. Nevertheless there are some more to be multiplied upon thy head and a consolation to inspire your heart yet in the days of your Pilgrimage and you have a crown laid up for you in the Mansion of your Father and ye shall stand in your place and in your station as a Mother in Israel as one that hath kept the commandments and that hath been faithful. Since you believed, therefore you are blessed in time and your blessing shall be continued in eternity, for you are sealed here on earth and sealed in heaven that you may live and be comforted with this comforter that your name is written as is made known by the Spirit in the Lamb's Book of Life and shall not be blotted out, but shall be continued henceforth and forever and there is a blessing on your house, even your children from generation to generation and the priesthood is theirs according to the rights of lineage and the covenants and promises made to their Father Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, let your heart be comforted henceforth and forever for the promise is sure and your days shall yet continue for a season and your name shall be perpetuated from generation to generation and handed down in honor by your children until the latest generation. These blessings I seal upon your head in the name of Jesus. Amen

Copied from the original by Emily Jane Graybill; Council Bluffs, Iowa; March 20, 1916.

Found on "Find-A-Grave" --

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/45081435/catherine-stoker>

Michael Stoker

Son of John Michael & Anna Barbara (Romerin) Stoker. He married Catherine Eller in 1791 in Rowan, North Carolina. They had nine children.

Born in Frederick, Maryland, Michael was christened and baptized in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Recordings of him attending the Church with his family are many.

Because of new territories that opened up, Michael moved south to the border inside North Carolina. He married and had a farm. He was around the Biblical Christian group called the Moravians. Later he would sell the land and move on to Jackson County, Ohio during Christmas of 1815.

Here the family joined the Vega Methodist Church. Because of fighting between the Baptists and Methodists, the Mormons saw it as an opportunity to draw people into the LDS religion.

Stoker threw caution to the wind and was baptized into the Mormon Church. That decision

would eventually cost his family extreme hardship, and him his life. According to LDS records, his home became the main meeting place for the group.

Around 1836 they had to leave the area because of religious unrest. Mormon groups in Ohio were forced to sell their lands and move on. Michael moved on to Far West, Missouri.

Joseph Smith told his followers that this was "Zion" but the LDS group again hit a brick wall. This time they fought with the Missourians, were persecuted, and expelled. Far West did not turn out to be Zion after all.

They lost their land, possessions, and some their very lives. They faced an order from the governor of Missouri which called for the "Mormon Expulsion". The Mormons were to leave immediately or die. By 1840 the expulsion was complete and Michael died during that event and his family was forced to move on without him.

Far West Cemetery is also called "The Mormon Cemetery". Though some claim that his burial site cannot be found.

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<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/10462791/michael-stoker>