

Who Is in the Grave?

A Coloma Mystery Unearthed



The Mystery

When a couple purchased a piece of property near **Coloma, Wisconsin**, they were intrigued by a cryptic note in the deed that there was a gravestone in the corner of the land. Curious about who might be buried there, they sought answers—but all they uncovered were fragments of local lore and anecdotal stories.

The **Coloma Historical Society** eventually connected the couple with **Learn Your Family History**, hoping that more thorough genealogical research might solve the mystery.

After navigating through the woods to reach the grave, the stone was found to be weathered and difficult to read. But with careful observation, a partial inscription emerged:

John
Son of J. and M. Knight
Died
March 28, 1873

(The last line is mostly unreadable. The first word may be "Love.")



So, Who Was John and What Happened to Him?

Tragically, baby **John Knight** lived only **one day**. The cause of death is unknown, but infant mortality was heartbreakingly common in the 19th century. According to *Historical Statistics of the United States*, white infant mortality between 1850 and 1880 ranged from **17.5% to 21.7%**, with infectious diseases like cholera and respiratory ailments claiming many young lives.

Who were his parents?

John's parents were **John Knight** and **Amelia Knight** (née Bechmann). Based on census records, Amelia also went by the names **Melia** and **Molly**, which can and is likely why the gravestone refers to John's parents as "J & M Knight."

John was born **January 26, 1846**, in **Erbach, Germany**, the son of **Johann Neidt and Justine** (surname unknown). His last name appears in historical records as **Knight, Night, and Neidt**, the latter being the original German spelling.

He married **Amelia Bechmann** on **February 23, 1869**, in **Neshkoro, Wisconsin**, born **October 17, 1845**, in **Lindenburg, Germany**, the daughter of **John Bechmann**. Her mother's name remains unknown.



Source: 1870 and 1880 census records, obituaries, findagrave.com and public family trees published on Ancestry.com.

John & Amelia's Final Years

- **Amelia “Molly” Knight** passed away on **November 24, 1900**, at the age of **55**. An obituary in the *Hancock News* described her as “a very kind-hearted, motherly woman, devoted to her home and children.”
- **John Knight** died on **October 11, 1919**, at **age 73**, after residing with his daughter **Mrs. Henry Clocksin** near **Pleasant Lake**. He was remembered in the *Coloma News* as a long-time resident, with funeral services held at the local **Methodist Episcopal Church**.
- Both are buried in **Hillside Cemetery** in Coloma, Wisconsin—**not far from their infant son**, whose gravestone still marks the corner of the old homestead.

Sources: [Findagrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com), cemetery visit and cemetery records.

