

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places

Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Spencer Cemetery

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 668 Burley Hill Road not for publication

city or town Cameron vicinity

state WV code WV county Marshall code 051 zip code 26033

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets
does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional
comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the
National Register.
 See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the
National Register.

removed from the National
Register.

other, (explain:) _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Number of Resources within Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing

Noncontributing

_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions

FUNERARY: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

N/A

Materials

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other Limestone

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B.** removed from its original location.
- C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance:

See Continuation sheets

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

LOCAL

Areas of Significance

ART

Period of Significance

1914

Significant Dates

1914

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

Record # _____

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LOCATION and SETTING

The Spencer Cemetery is located in the rolling hills of West Virginia's Northern Panhandle near the small village of Rock Lick and not far from the larger town of Cameron in Marshall County. It is situated atop a small, mowed hill off Burley Hill Road, a gravel roadway that winds south from State Route 891, and overlooks a valley. The cemetery includes just one grave monument and two related headstones. A wrought iron fence that once surrounded the gravestone has been removed.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Spencer Cemetery's grave marker was erected in 1914 at the death of John W. Spencer. The marker, carved in limestone, includes a single base etched to resemble stone block. The base measures approximately two feet high in the front and three in the rear where the ground slopes. The front of the base, approximately 4.5 feet wide, includes a flower pot with large leaves and a single calla lily. To the right of the flower pot the surname, Spencer, is spelled out in uppercase block letters.

Rising approximately 8 feet from the base are two sections, each carved to resemble a tree trunk with bark that has been sawed flat on top. Each trunk includes a smooth rectangular section in the middle of the front for the inscriptions. The trunk on the left is engraved, "JOHN W. / SPENCER / FEB. 27, 1842 / FEB.5, 1914." That on the right reads, "EFFIE SPENCER / HIS WIFE / FEB. 1, 1866." A raised rectangular section remains below the second inscription for the date of death, which was never engraved. A short ivy vine wraps around the bottom on the trunk on the left while a longer vine wraps around that on the right.

From the inside of each trunk, towards the top, a sawed off branch extends approximately three feet across the front of the opposite trunk. A sawed off branch also extends from the trunk on the left. Carved above the inscription on this trunk is the badge of the Grand Army of the Republic including an eagle with cannons, a flag, and a five point star.

Situated at the base of the marker are two headstones shaped to resemble logs. One is engraved with the word "father" in uppercase block letters and the other with "mother."

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STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE

Spencer Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion C: Art* as a locally distinctive family cemetery gravesite monument. It is also eligible under *Criterion Consideration D: Cemeteries* as it derives its primary significance from distinctive design features. The period of significance is 1914, the year the marker was erected.

The Spencer grave marker is not part of an organized cemetery, but rather it is a small family cemetery plot once located on the family farm. Practicality dictated the formation of the earliest private family cemeteries. As families moved further away from cities and churches it was logical to bury on the family property. Though such burials took place out of necessity at first, it became more of a tradition throughout the later nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century to bury family on the homestead rather than a churchyard or municipal cemetery.¹ In much of Appalachia, where family ties are strong, many family cemeteries include the plot of the family patriarch and matriarch with the graves of succeeding family situated around.² However, the sole grave marker at the Spencer Cemetery marks the gravesite of John W. “Jack” Spencer and his third wife, Effie (Winters) Spencer. His first two wives, Mary Ellen “Mollie” (Hess) Spencer and Rebecca (Keller) Spencer, and fourteen children are buried elsewhere. John and Effie had no children together.

The cemetery is situated at the peak of a small hill off Burley Hill Road. During the period in which the monument was erected, the hilltop was the preferred location for many cemeteries and grave sites. Though some argue that such practice simply represents tradition or that burial on elevated ground is to be closer to heaven, the most likely explanation is that it provided the best drainage and lessened the threat of flooding.³

Many grave markers serve as symbols, suggestive of the life of the person buried there. Not only can gravestones reveal a person’s name and dates of birth and death, but they might also reveal other information on the individual such as their religion, ethnicity, social membership, or occupation. With regard to John Spencer, the engraved badge of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) reveals that he was a veteran of the Civil War serving the Union as membership to the GAR was limited to honorably discharged members of the Union.⁴ Further research indicates that Spencer served in the West Virginia Independent Exempts

¹ Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1992), 4.

² Gerald Milnes, “Cemeteries,” in *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, ed. Ken Sullivan (Charleston, W.Va.: West Virginia Humanities Council, 2006), 119.

³ Thomas J. Hannon, “Western Pennsylvania Cemeteries in Transition: A Model for Subregional Analysis,” in *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture*, ed. Richard E. Meyers (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1989), 245.

⁴ Douglas Keister, *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* (New York: MJF Books, 2004), 199.

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Infantry, Company B first ranked as a Private then promoted to Second Corporal. The men who were enlisted in this infantry were stationed in Wheeling as guards to protect the new capital.⁵

The orientation of the grave marker might be an indication of Spencer's religion. It faces east-northeast and thus the interred are oriented with their feet facing the same direction. Some believe this is a practice amongst the Christians who believe that, on the last day, Christ will rise in the east and the dead will rise to face Him. More likely, however, is that most grave markers face east to face less severe weathering.⁶

Perhaps the most visual symbol of the Spencer Cemetery grave marker is the marker itself, in the shape of two tree trunks with entwined branches. Treestones, as they are sometimes called, were the result of a movement during the Victorian period in the late nineteenth century that celebrated nature. Naturally, styles popular at the time were reflected in cemeteries as well. Grave monuments were carved, usually from limestone, to resemble tree stumps. Other gravestones reflect the rustic movement by having incorporated twigs and branches into the marker. In some cases, a treestone would serve as the family monument bearing the family name with individual interments marked with headstones shaped like logs. The Spencer marker is unique in that it includes two large trunks, rather than one, each one for a separate individual. Rather than the individual's name and dates of birth/death, the limestone "logs" simply read "Father" and "Mother" at the foot of each stump. Treestones were made popular by both catalogs, such as Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Wards, as well as the Woodman of the World (WOW) Life Assurance Society, a fraternal insurance organization who supported the concept that "no Woodmen shall rest in an unmarked grave."⁷ The Spencer grave monument does not bear the WOW symbol and thus the stump likely was chosen simply because it was in vogue at the time.

While a treestone itself symbolizes a life cut short (though Spencer was 72 when he died), the Spencer marker includes other symbols as well. At the base of the marker is a flower pot with large ferns symbolizing humility, frankness, and sincerity, as well as a single calla lily with large broad leaves symbolizing majestic beauty and marriage.⁸ Also representing marriage are the entwined branches of the two trunks. The ivy, wrapping around to the top of Effie's side of the marker and near the bottom of John's, may have several meanings. Because ivy is a species of evergreen, it represents immortality and fidelity. Further, as real ivy clings to a support, such as a wall or tree, ivy on a tombstone symbolizes attachment, devotion to family, and friendship. The three-pointed leaves of the ivy may symbolize the Trinity, perhaps also a reference to Spencer's faith.⁹

Summary

⁵ Virgil A. Lewis, *Third Biennial Report of the Department of Archives and History of the State of West Virginia*. (Charleston, W.Va.: The News-Mail Company, 1911), 205. And, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of West Virginia* (Wheeling, W.Va.: John F. M'Dermott, 1865), 468.

⁶ Hannon, 247.

⁷ Keister, 189.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 44 and 47.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

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Though treestones were not that rare in the early decades of the twentieth century, the Spencer monument is set apart from the others in its large size and its design, especially as a two-stump treestone monument. Other treestones in Marshall County include four in Moundsville's Greenlawn Cemetery. With exception of the engraved name and dates, each of these markers is the same; simple design, approximately four feet high, and bearing the Woodman of the World symbol. They were all placed in the 1920s or 1930s. Mt. Rose Cemetery, also in Moundsville, has one treestone. It also bears the Woodman of the World symbol, however, this one is taller, approximately six feet in height, and sets atop a base carved to look like logs. The Rock Lick Cemetery, located less than one-half mile from the Spencer monument, does not include any treestones though it dates to the late nineteenth century.

The Spencer Cemetery is significant for its locally distinctive design features in a family cemetery setting. Though the wrought iron fence that once surrounded the gravesite is now gone, the Spencer Cemetery retains excellent integrity.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The National Register boundaries for the Spencer Cemetery encompass an area 10'x10' within the southern section of Marshall County parcel 3-6-17. The grave marker is in the center of the boundary.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the Spencer Cemetery coincides with the historic footprint of the cemetery defined historically by a wrought iron fence which formed an approximate 10'x10'square around the Spencer Cemetery grave monument. The fence is no longer extant.

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Photographs

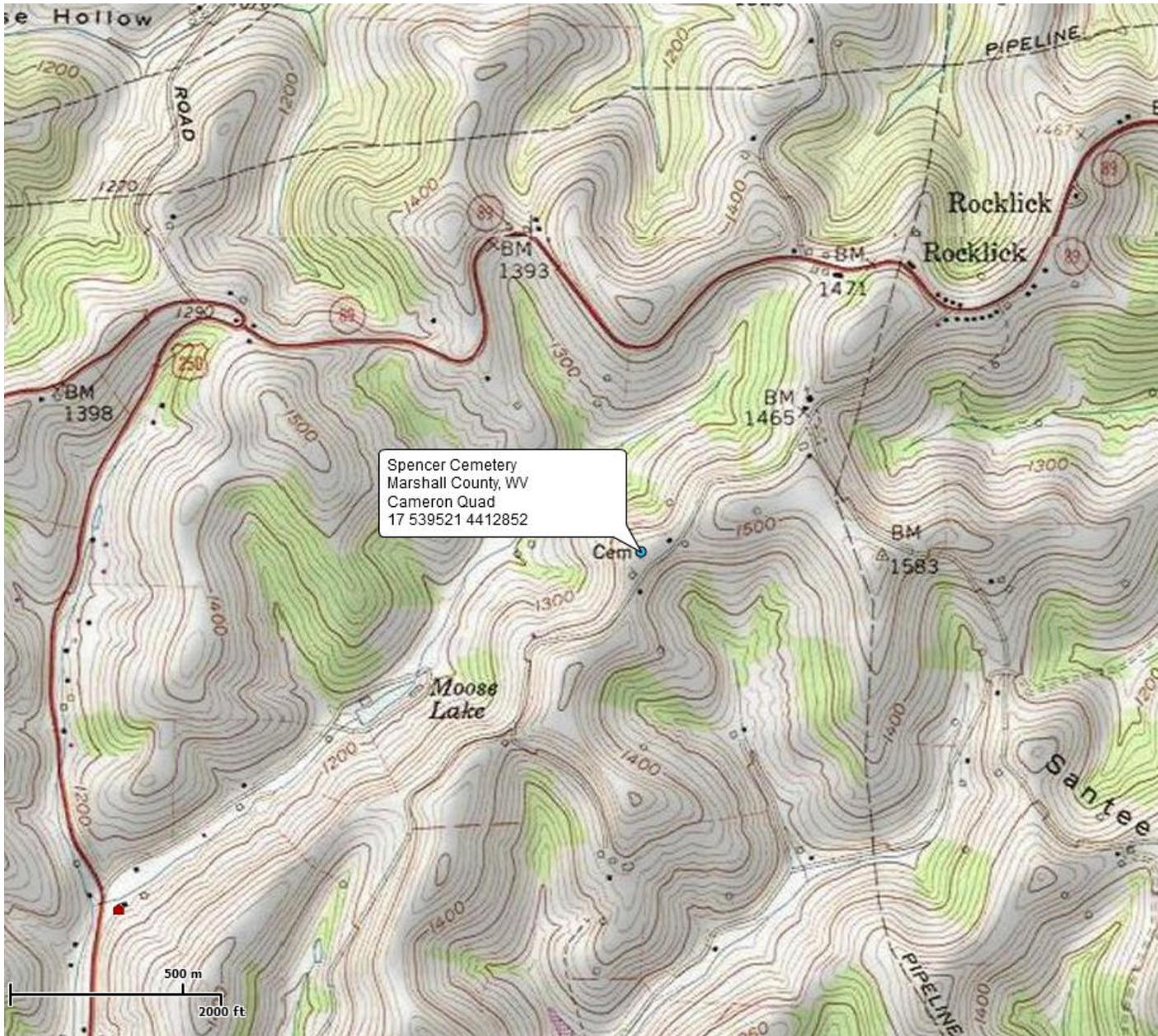
Photo 1 of 5 Spencer Cemetery grave monument, facing west

Photo 2 of 5 Spencer Cemetery, rear of grave monument, facing east-northeast

Photo 3 of 5 Spencer Cemetery detail of headstones, facing north-northwest

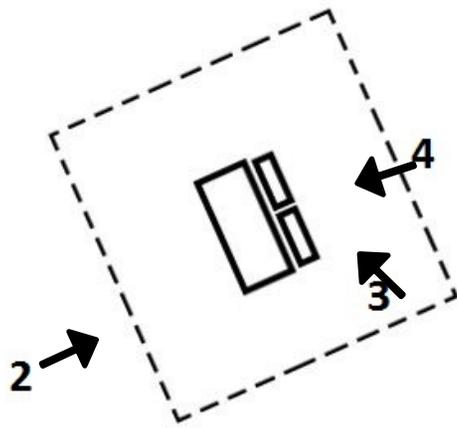
Photo 4 of 5 Spencer Cemetery detail facing west

Photo 5 of 5 Spencer Cemetery setting facing south-southwest



**Spencer Cemetery
Marshall County, WV**

Cameron Quad
17
539521
4412852



Burley Hill Road

Spencer Cemetery Marshall County, WV

----- National Register boundary

← Photo views

Spencer Cemetery
Marshall County, WV



Burley Hill Road





Photo 1: Spencer Cemetery facing west



Photo 2: Spencer Cemetery facing east-northeast



Photo 3: Spencer Cemetery detail facing north-northwest



Photo 4: Spencer Cemetery detail facing west



Photo 5: Spencer Cemetery setting facing south-southwest