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February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025

Keith Famie  
Filmmaker  
Visionalist Entertainment  
28345 Beck Road  
Wixom, MI 48393

Dear Keith,

Thanks for the latest update regarding your production plans for *LAID TO REST* and storytelling surrounding Michigan's some 3000 cemeteries through a series of episodes on Detroit PBS and its various channels.

The possibilities for historical content and engagement through a series of stories exploring Michigan's cemeteries and burial grounds – from Native tribes to European settlers, new immigrants and service men and women – is a topic that has nearly universal appeal for Detroit's various and diverse populations.

Our shared vision for multi-platform distribution and multi-use could begin with a series of three one-hour specials; also presented as a series of six 30-minute episodes as well as in video shorts and other digital content on social media, YouTube channels and the PBS App.

As you continue to secure funding to produce this film, please share our commitment to a Detroit PBS broadcast premiere and let me know if I can help with more information about the broad and deep reach of our various broadcast and digital channels.

And finally, for fans of history, this program is a unique way of telling the Detroit story through it's people and their passion to understand and learn from the past. We are so pleased to include it in our broadcast plans and look forward to a completed project series.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred".

Fred Nahhat  
Senior VP, Production  
Detroit PBS

LAI D TO REST

In 2025, award-winning filmmakers Keith Famie and Mark Salloum will work to tell the stories of some of Michigan's 3,000 cemeteries through a series of episodes on Detroit PBS.

Here in Michigan, we have cemeteries dating back to the 17th century when our Native American Ottawa Tribe created a sacred area for their loved ones. As time went on, the location was shared with European settlers when they moved to the area.

Over the last 300 years, because of Michigan's diverse ethnic population, it's no surprise these places of rest for our loved ones represent rich cultures of faith and spirituality. The production will also feature the sacred ceremony of the military's and law enforcement's color guards' dedications paid to their fallen colleagues.

# Michigan Cemeteries



There are almost 3,400 cemeteries in Michigan located in all 83 counties. They range from Mount Olivet Cemetery in Detroit with over 300 acres, small plots located next to rural churches for their congregation's burials, "lost" cemeteries in the vast northern woodlands and Upper Peninsula, national cemeteries for our fallen heroes to Native America burial sites such as Gros Cap near St. Sault Marie, which was originally adjacent to the Ottawa tribal village in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is one of the oldest cemeteries in the US, which was continuously used by French, English and eventually American settlers.

The places of rest & end-of-life ceremonies for our loved ones vary based on culture, ethnicity, religious faith, native customs and environmentally friendly options.

# *Native American Cemeteries & Burial Grounds*



Michigan and the Great Lakes region is believed to have been occupied and travelled by indigenous populations for over 10,000 years prior to European settlement. Michigan is home to three Indigenous tribes that are considered Anishinabe: the Ojibwe (Chippewa), Ottawa (Odawa), and Potawatomi (Bodawotomi). These tribal nations are related linguistically and culturally and together are known as the “Three Fires Confederacy.”

Tribal burial grounds were located near where the tribes lived, such as along rivers, lakes, and in marshes.

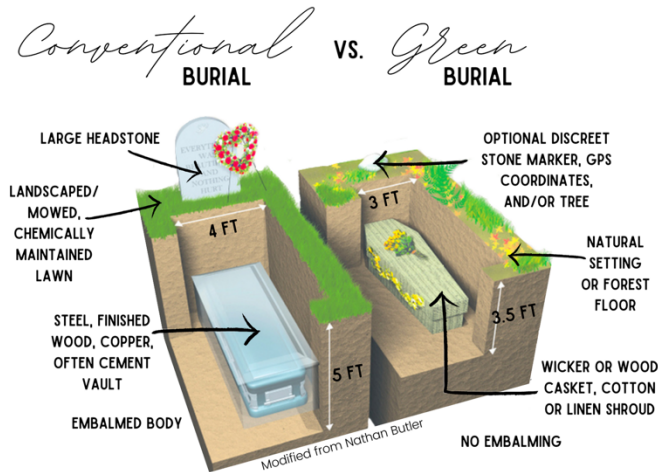
# *Religious-Based Cemeteries*



Michigan is home to cemeteries that serve many religious faiths. There are over 100 Catholic cemeteries. Jewish, Lutheran, Orthodox and Muslim cemeteries are located throughout the State of Michigan as well. Each faith has its own traditions and customs for their end-of-life ceremonies.

Religious cemeteries represent a large percentage of the absolute total number of cemeteries across the US, many of which are church graveyards.

# Natural / Green Cemeteries



**Natural burial, also called green burial,** involves placing the body of the deceased in the earth in the most natural and environmentally friendly way possible to facilitate its return to the elements.

It may include the use of a biodegradable casket or shroud instead of a metal casket, natural cooling methods instead of embalming, avoiding the use of a concrete vault, and natural grounds-keeping methods like planting wild flowers instead of mowing. It can take place in a section of a conventional cemetery (hybrid), or in a cemetery that is dedicated entirely to green practices, including restoration of the land. **Hybrid cemeteries** have both conventional vault burials as well as natural / green burials in separate sections of the cemetery.

Modern burial practices began in the late 19th century. Natural burial is similar to the way most of humanity cared for its dead before embalming and the development of other recent trends.

# *National Cemeteries*



The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration maintains 155 national cemeteries in 42 states and Puerto Rico as well as 35 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Michigan is home to 3 national cemeteries and one national soldiers' lot with 2 still national cemeteries still open for burials.

Burial in a national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces who have met a minimum active-duty service requirement and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

A veteran's spouse, widow or widower, minor dependent children, and under certain conditions, unmarried adult children with disabilities may also be eligible for burial. Eligible spouses and children may be buried even if they predecease the veteran.

Members of the reserve components of the armed forces who die while on active duty or who die while on training duty, or were eligible for retired pay, may also be eligible for burial.



# Pet Cemeteries



A pet cemetery provides a dedicated, permanent space for pet owners to visit and remember their beloved animals after they pass away, allowing them to grieve and reflect on cherished memories in a meaningful way, similar to how humans are remembered in a traditional cemetery; essentially offering a place to physically connect with their pet even after death, which can be especially important for people who consider their pets as family members.

Unlike burying a pet in your backyard, a cemetery allows you to visit your pet's grave whenever you want, even if you move homes. A pet cemetery ensures your pet's resting place will be maintained and cared for over time. Some pet cemeteries may foster a sense of community among pet owners who have lost beloved companions.



**Bending  
River  
Films**

## **Mark Salloum Director/Producer**

Producer/Director Mark Salloum has been producing short films and video content for nearly three decades. In 1997, he formed Highway Media to fulfill his passion and has since become one of the most awarded studios in Metro Detroit, traveling to 15 states and five countries for their clients. In 2019, Mark released his first feature length documentary, ***Plymouth, Michigan – A Rich History***, which sold out 11 consecutive shows at the Penn Theatre.



By fate or chance, Mark and Keith met in 2024, to discuss their love for filmmaking and decided to collaborate their energy together. Their new studio, Bending River Films, will be the vehicle to produce documentary films which inspire, inform, and initiate their audiences like never before.

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## **Keith Famie Director/Producer/Author**

Director/Producer Keith Famie was, for many years, known as a celebrity chef and a Metro Detroit restaurateur. Famie was also a finalist on the 2001 reality television series, "Survivor, the Australian Outback." Keith hosted his own Food Network series, "Keith Famie's Adventures," traveling the world documenting different cooking styles.

In 2004, Famie embarked on a new journey - documentary filmmaking. "I didn't want to be the 'Adventure Chef' guy anymore. I wanted to help people tell their stories."

Since that life-changing decision, Famie & his company, Visionalist Entertainment Productions, has been awarded twenty-three Michigan Emmys and been nominated several other times for his rich, human-interest storytelling, from a day in the life of children with Down syndrome to stories about Alzheimer's, cancer, healthy aging as well as Detroit's rich history told through documentaries such as ***Detroit: The City of Churches***, ***Detroit: The City of Chefs*** and ***Detroit: The City of Hot Rods & Muscle Cars***.