

## Michael Brislin (1803-1854)

When Jacob Holdcraft did his survey of the Old Berlin Cemetery in 1959, he listed a stone with the following inscription: "**Michael Brislin**, 22 Apr 1854, age 51" (Names in Stone, #30). This is one of seven stones that have disappeared since that time.

Research has failed to shed very much light on his life, but here is what I have pieced together, based on the information in the italicized notes below:

Michael was born in Ireland around 1803. He immigrated to America, probably in the late 1840's, along with many other Irish immigrants who were seeking relief from the potato famine. He ended up in the village of Berlin, Maryland, which at that time depended on the C&O Canal for most of its commerce. He found lodging with Mary Brunner and her 11-year old son Rufus. The 1850 census indicates that he was a laborer. He died on April 22, 1854, and was buried in the "Old Burying Ground" on the western edge of the village. Nothing is known about any descendants or other family members.

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### Notes:

*There are several Brislin's who lived across the river in Loudoun County at that time, and several are buried in St. Mary's cemetery, in Petersville, including another Michael Brislin who was born in Ireland in 1831 and died as a bachelor in 1896 when he was run over by a train on the railroad bridge at Harper's Ferry. Could this have been the son of the Michael Brislin who was buried in the Old Berlin Cemetery?*

*The only reasonably reliable information we have is from the 1850 census of Berlin, which lists Michael Brislin, age 45, a laborer who was born in Ireland. Living in the same household were Mary (26) and Rufus (11), with ditto marks indicating that their last name was also Brislin. However, there is strong evidence that this was Mary Brunner and her son Rufus, whose ages match those in the census. Mary is the one in the census who is listed as owning real estate, so it may be that Michael Brislin was boarding with her. Mary later married Bill McDonald and ran a boarding house for railroad workers.*

*I am unable to find this Michael Brislin in the 1840 census, and it is reasonable to assume that he came to America between 1845 and 1850 along with many other Irish immigrants due to the potato famine at that time.*