

CEMETERY RESTORATION PROGRAM

The City of Richmond Cemetery is operated with revenues from burials, lot sales and the transfer of money from The General Fund to the Cemetery Fund. As there is only so much General Fund money available for disbursement to the various Departments to cover operations, the Cemetery Fund receives just enough to cover operational costs, with hopefully a little bit left over at the end of each year. To help keep expenses as low as possible, two seasonal employees perform the grass cutting and trimming. While this has allowed the City to keep the Cemetery looking presentable, the lack of available resources has contributing factor to some less than desirable results.

While the grass was neatly trimmed, many headstones in the oldest two sections of the Cemetery needed some attention. At times, it was simply a case of realignment or straightening.



Sometimes, foundations for some of the larger monuments had to be leveled out.



Some that were knocked over became over grown with grass. These were uncovered and placed back upright.



Some headstones that had been covered up and broken presented a bit of a challenge.



Quite a few headstones just need some minor repairs or T.L.C. to make them more presentable.



Unfortunately, there were a few headstones that were so deteriorated, there was little we could do except lay out the pieces in a respectful manner.



We knew we wanted to address the condition of the oldest sections, but the time that would be involved precluded having full time personnel performing the work on a regular basis. Andrew Potter and Dave Yelencich were hired for the 2012 seasonal. To say that these two gentlemen took immediate “ownership” of the Cemetery would not be an exaggeration. In May, their hours were increased from 30 to 40-hours per week. When not mowing and trimming, they worked with the Public Service Director to level, straighten and recover and repair headstones. The Sexton, Mike Romancheck, assisted when the backhoe was needed to disassemble some of the larger monuments and assisting with installing foundations. Because of the potential of damaging unseen headstone, powered equipment could not be used to locate and/or uncover headstones. Locating was done with a probe rod and digging was done with hand shovels. It was very time consuming work to insure that an unseen headstone was not missed.

Piecing puzzles back together and adding areas of missing headstone so they could be reinstalled, required some thinking outside the box. Andrew and Dave were more than up to the challenge. By the end of October, the first 86 lots of the Original Section had been checked for missing headstones, and when found, repaired and/or reinstalled. Each lot had either 7 or 8 grave plots in them. The oldest headstone in the restored area was dated 1831. There were 17-graves with no markers for which we know the names of the deceased. Sometimes there is no death date listed. Why there are no markers, is unknown. (to access a list of known names but no markers, [click here](#))

There were also 18-graves without markers for which we do not know the names of the deceased. All the hard copy files at City Hall state is "Unknown", without a date death. It is my understanding that a fire destroyed a lot of records many years ago. It is regretful that we will probably never know the names of the deceased. We do know the names of the families who originally purchased these lots. (to access a list of unknown names and no markers, [click here](#)) We request that anyone who may have verifiable information regarding the deceased unknowns, contact us.

Both lists will be updated as work progresses and additional information is obtained.

As a result of the work performed, we found that some of the hard copy records did not accurately reflect information that was on headstones. The layouts for the Original Section, Hall Addition, and Sections 4, 5 and 6 were drawn on computer. The hard copy information was inserted for each grave, after which, the information was visually field checked against information on the headstones and markers. Any hard copy information that conflicted with information on headstones and markers was corrected.

The Public Service Director and Sexton met with Brad Beck, the owner of Lincoln Granite located in Clinton Township. We talked about our program with Brad and showed him pictures of some of the work we were doing, which he was very much in favor of. We discussed the subject of missing markers and what he could provide that was inexpensive, but nice looking. For \$60.00, Brad will supply a 12"x 6"x 2" thick marker, with name and date, if the date is available. This is a flat charge regardless of how many letters are required. Lincoln Granite is involved with restoration projects at other cemeteries.

To show the City Council what he had in mind, the Public Service Director purchased two markers as a donation. These were for a mother and infant that passed away in 1865. The markers are grey with black undertones, gloss finish with black letters. The Richmond Area Good Old Days Festival Committee donated \$300.00 for the purchase of five markers. Without these headstones, the graves would continue to go unmarked and a portion of our community's history would be lost. The City encourages donations from civic and service organizations, as well as, current generation family members.