



The Armada Times

Lee Cemetery restoration nearly complete

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Matthew Fahr, Armada Times Reporter

The culmination of a five-year process is nearing an end for the Lee Cemetery in Ray Township.

With the help of Stonesavers and the Stonehugger Cemetery Restoration companies, all six newly found headstones, as well as all the monuments in the cemetery, have been restored. The Ray Township Historical Society raised funds for the project through a myriad of sources. Work began in 2005.

The first step in the process was clearing away debris and erecting a new fence on the perimeter of the cemetery. That work was completed five years ago with residents and businesses donating the materials and manpower to get the first phase of the project done.

The next step was restoring the six new headstones that were found that



Work began last week on restoring the monument to Margaret Morgan at the Lee Cemetery. She died in 1861. It was one of five monuments restored at the cemetery. (Photo by MATTHEW FAHR)

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same year during a survey done by society member Bernard Pearl. The headstones were found to have sunk almost a foot into the ground and were found to date back to the Civil War era.

Enough money was raised last year to have three of the headstones brought back to life while the other three, and the cemetery monuments, were completed last week.

"It feels wonderful to get this done and see the results of all the hard work that has been put into it," society President Terry Goike said.

The cemetery itself is named after the Lee family who owned the property and then sold it to a group led by Thomas Cooper. According to the society, Lee sold the parcel for \$1 and the deed of that sale was registered in 1859. It is believed that the actual sale was done in 1841, based on a note in the recording deed written by Josiah Lee. It read, "Signed, sealed and delivered the parcel of land documented in the deed to the said parties for the purpose of being used and occupied as a burial ground."

Since then, the cemetery has come to also be known as the Indian Trail Cemetery, the Wolcott Cemetery and the Ray Center Cemetery.

According to the historical society, the first person buried there was Aswath Chubb in 1827 and the last person buried there was Idilla Butterfield in 1906.

The funding goal from the outset was \$8,000 to get all the work complete, including the still-to-be-completed new sign for the site.

The most substantial portion of the funding has come through two grants from the Four County Community Foundation totaling \$1,500.

The historical society held fundraisers ranging from garage sales to bowling events to euchre parties and silent auctions. Proceeds of the 2010 calendar, T-shirt and cookbook sales also helped them to reach their goal. Community Development Block Grant Funds were also part of the effort, and local Boy Scouts built flower boxes to help beautify the site.

"We have done a lot of little things, but they have all added up, and the

support has been great," Goike said. "If the sales of this year's calendars is like last year's, we should be able to put up the new sign and have a dedication in the spring of 2011."

All 35 tablets in the cemetery have now been restored and possibilities for the future include a more detailed survey to find if more headstones are buried farther beneath the surface, but for now Goike is happy seeing this project through to completion.

"Hopefully this will be around for future generations to look at when we are completely finished," she said.

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