

Pioneer Cemetery Commission
Meeting: 2/12/22

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m.

Those in attendance were Chairperson Lee Embretson, Myra Voss, Bruce Collins, Ellen Collins and Lee Lenth via phone. Also attending was friend of the commission, Frank Phippen.

The minutes of the last meeting, held May 26, 2021, were read and discussed as they were read. The minutes were unanimously approved as written.

New Member Introduction

New committee member Ellen Collins was introduced replacing Leon Dibble, who choose not to be a member for a new term. Ellen told about her interest in history, her membership on the Clayton County Historical Preservation Commission and her interest in the kind of work this commission does.

Tombstone Repair, Resetting and Related Matters

Frank Phippen talked about his work and experience working with and replacing tombstone bases. Frank cited a newspaper article about a pioneer cemetery in Fairfield, Iowa and how the old fallen tombstones were placed horizontally on a cement base rather than placed upright, giving the fragile tombstones more support, suggesting that maybe we could use the same technique repairing and resetting tombstones. Frank also has manuals he purchased on tombstone restoration that he brought to the meeting.

A question was raised about the metal temporary headstone markers that funeral home directors use on new graves—is there a way of using a headstone marker like this on a more permanent basis? Frank noted that he has—placing this type of marker in a cement foundation and suggested members check out the cemetery in Communia to see examples of this type of marker.

Hagensick tombstone--- Frank still has the Hagensick tombstone (a tombstone of a child that was found in the backyard of a house on High Street in Elkader where the child's parents lived). It will be placed next to the tombstones of the boy's parents in the Eastside Cemetery in Elkader.

Related to the Eastman Cemetery--- the wrought iron gateway arch damaged in the tornado several years ago has not been repaired. Lee will discuss this with someone that may be able to do this repair. (Photos were shown of the bent arch.)

Redman Cemetery---Frank repaired a tombstone from this cemetery, and it is ready to be returned to the cemetery for resetting.

Humphrey and Reed Cemeteries

Lee Lenth spoke about the Humphrey Cemetery in Monona on which questions were raised by family members to the board of supervisors in November 2019 and also about the Reed Cemetery in Sperry Township on which there is a legal dispute about the boundaries of the cemetery. It was noted that our commission was briefly involved with both of these cemeteries, establishing that St. Patrick Catholic Church in Monona is responsible for what happened at the Humphrey Cemetery and the Sperry Township Trustees are handling the legal dispute on the Reed Cemetery. (The Pioneer Cemetery Commission is involved with both of these cemeteries only as an interested third party.)

Payment Request

A bill for \$400 was presented by Brian Thiese for the mowing of the Borcharding Pioneer Cemetery during the 2021 mowing season. A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to pay this bill.

Sign—Patterson Cemetery

Discussion has taken place in past meetings related to doing signage at the Patterson Cemetery. Lee Embretson has had some discussions with the Patterson Family and the county engineer about this. Also in this cemetery there is a marker—a large rock—that Myra Voss heard or read-- serves as a headstone for a person that was in transit by wagon train at the time of death. [*History of Clayton County, Iowa – 1882—page 1130--* “The first death occurred in 1849, and was that of a woman, named unknown, who was passing through with an emigrant train, at the house of J. Hoppas.”] It is okay with everyone involved for additional signage to be placed in this cemetery—one sign giving notice of the cemetery and another for the person where the large rock is located. Bruce Collins will work on the design and wording for those signs.

Pioneer Cemetery Records

As a follow-up on the discussion about files and records at our last meeting (May 26, 2021) Frank Phippen again suggested that our commission get more involved with creating, organizing and maintaining records on pioneer cemeteries. It was also noted that these records could at some point be placed on computer files.

Myra Voss said that she has many many records in her home and is concerned about these records and what will happen with them after she is gone. In this regard the question was raised—would the genealogy center provide a space dedicated to these records? (Doing so would give other commission members access to the records and make it possible for those members to help organize and make available those records for family members and others doing research on burial records.)

Ellen Collins said she would ask the Clayton County Genealogy Society if they would provide a dedicated space for the Pioneer Cemetery Commission records.

Other Issues

McClelland Cemetery—it was again mentioned that heavy fencing panels be used as a perimeter in this cemetery.

Ellen Collins will work on a newspaper article to get some publicity for our commission.

Myra Voss said she is no longer able to visit cemeteries and work at cemeteries. She said her husband doesn't want her to do that anymore and she asked to resign. Other committee members said she doesn't have to go to cemeteries anymore and we wanted her to remain on the committee. Myra will remain on the commission but will not be visiting cemeteries—unless she wants to.

A decision was made for our commission to meet again on Saturday March 19th at the genealogy center at 10:00 a.m. It was agreed that Ellen Collins invite Dave Beck, president of the Clayton County Genealogy Society to this meeting.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed to adjourn the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

Bruce Collins
Secretary

