

Report of the Marion County Pioneer Cemetery Commission

January 2017

The Marion County Pioneer Cemetery Commission (MCPCC) had another productive year. In our sixth year, things are swinging more toward maintenance and less toward ensuring that pioneer cemeteries aren't destroyed.

In 2016, we worked on 6 cemeteries:

Bridges (aka Baptist) Cemetery:

Located 2 miles northeast of Attica, Bridges Cemetery is located in the middle of a field on the Dan and Marlys Hollingshead farm. The fall of 2015 MCPCC members cleaned up the cemetery. The fence is in bad repair; plans are to repair/replace it spring 2017.



Bridges Before



Bridges After

Monster Cemetery:

Monster Cemetery was our major project of 2016. The cemetery is located on land owned by Central College for its field station behind Coal Ridge Church. In April, a group of 8 Central employees and 5 MCPCC members went out and pulled out the old plank fencing, which was rotten, and replaced most of it, stopping when a storm came through.

Later, 2 MCPCC members went out and finished the gates and hung the sign. Larry Davis of Des Moines restored and straightened the 22 stones. The cemetery now looks wonderful again. The family of those buried there have contacted us and are thrilled with the work.



Monster finished with signage

Parsons (aka De Hammer) Cemetery:

This cemetery adjoins the Mahaska County line and has a beautiful view over the Des Moines River in extreme southern Lake Prairie Township. Parsons is an unusual cemetery that presented some unique challenges: the cemetery has only one stone but is surrounded by a stone wall. The cemetery sits on a slope and is surrounded by livestock.

Over the years, cows had knocked the blocks of the wall off, and they had tumbled down the hill. A tree in the middle of the cemetery provided shade that the cows wanted to access.

MCPCC worked with owner Steve Vander Hart and contractor John Renaud to remove the old stones and replace them. In addition, the tree in the cemetery was cut down. Vander Hart wants to place another electrified fence around the stone fence to keep cows away.



Parsons Before



Parsons After

Price Cemetery:

Price Cemetery, located southeast of Otley, has been a work in process for almost four years. This year it was finished, with the last phase of stones being repaired by Larry Davis. Because there were almost 150 stones that needed to be repaired, we had divided that into three years. The cemetery is now fenced, repaired, and signage placed.



Price Before



Price After

Stotts-Whitlatch (aka East Columbia) Cemetery:

Located near Columbia, Stotts-Whitlatch is in the back of a farm field and just needed a good cleaning up. Two MCPCC members went out this fall and did some weed eating, and removal of invasive species. While the fence on the cemetery is poor, it is surrounded by crop land and not in danger of being farmed over.



Stotts Whitlatch after cleanup

Walters Cemetery:

Walters is located 1 mile west of Pershing. The cemetery is located across land owned by LMJ Farms and sits in the middle of a field. This is one cemetery that had not been fenced and farming had encroached closer and closer over the years. MCPCC members fenced the cemetery in April 2016 and had the stones repaired by Larry Davis of Des Moines.



“Triage” Tour:

In October, MCPCC member Carl Nollen led a tour of 7 cemeteries in the southwest corner of the county. Six MCPCC members went on this tour, making notes about what needs to be done in the future.

Publicity:

Val spoke to two groups in Marion County: the Rotary Club of Pella and the Master Gardeners Group in Knoxville. In addition, she taught a two-part class on Victorian Gravestone Symbolism for Central College and led the group to explore the symbolism in Rees Cemetery near Pleasantville.

Summary:

Our group remains strong, though we're all getting older and would like to get some younger workers in! We have been harnessing service days at local colleges and schools to get large jobs done.

Our biggest challenge in 2017 will be finding someone to repair pioneer gravestones. Larry Davis of Des Moines, whom we have used for many years, is retiring. Though there are other people in the state who do this, the results vary.

We have been good stewards of the money that Marion County has provided to us and ask for a renewal of the \$5,000 to be received July 1, 2017.

Please contact me if you have questions.

Valerie Van Kooten
Chairperson, MCPCC
Valerievankooten19@gmail.com
(641) 780-1584

**Marion County Pioneer Cemetary Commission
Transactions for CY 2016**

Cash Balance 1/1/16	\$ 75.05
Income:	
County Appropriation	10,000.00

Total Available	10,075.05
Expenses:	
Walters	471.58
Monster	2,161.10
Price	2,860.00

Total Expenses	5,492.68
Cash Balance 12/31/16	\$ 4,582.37
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