

Old Burying Ground Restoration Project

"Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness, the tender mercies of its people, their loyalty to high ideals, and their regard for the laws of the land."

Attributed to William E. Gladstone (1809—1898)

Greenfield, Ohio



The Old Burying Ground

The Old Burying Ground (a.k.a. Pioneer Cemetery) is located in Greenfield, Ohio, Highland County, Madison Township.

General Duncan McArthur, founder of Greenfield in 1799, gave land for the cemetery. There are approximately 870 burials in the cemetery.

The earliest burial is believed to be that of an infant son of John Coffey who died in 1800 (monument not found). The first adult burial was that of William Bell – veteran of the American Revolutionary War – first adult person buried in Highland County - 5/28/1763-11/18/1801. The last known burial occurred in 1988.



The Old Burying Ground

Prominent Abolitionist and Presbyterian minister **Samuel Crothers** is buried here near the site where he gave the first sermon against slavery from a pulpit west of the Allegheny Mountains.

It is believed that the first African-American in Greenfield (Rachel Stafford), a female former slave (died May 21, 1858, at approximately 80 years old), is buried in the cemetery, but so far no monument has been found.

Some burials were moved to the Greenfield Cemetery (Washington Street) to be located with their other family members.



How we Started

Our project leader, Scott Andersen, had been working on the small Dean Graveyard a few miles from Greenfield and thus had an interest in cemetery restoration. He approached John King to see if there would be a desire to take on the Old Burying Ground.

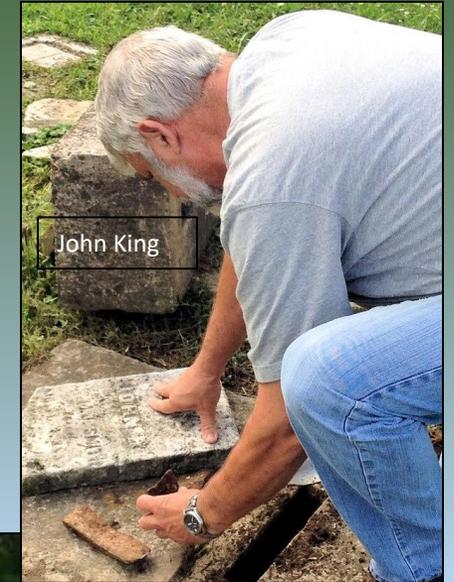
So in September, 2013, Scott and John attended a day-long cemetery restoration workshop in Warren County, Ohio. They each had a desire to see the Old Burying Ground repaired and that workshop gave them the incentive to begin the task of repairing and cleaning all of the stones and markers in the cemetery.

Jay Hardy (Hardy Memorials of Greenfield) offered a workshop of his own at the Old Burying Ground in October, 2013.

The first formal work session at the cemetery was May, 2014, with 3 other volunteers joining Scott, his wife Venus and John. To date, there have been over 30 such organized sessions, led by Scott and John. From what started with only two people now sees upwards of a dozen people helping at a work session. That is well over 860 volunteer hours of work, and that does not count the times Scott and his wife Venus had gone to the cemetery to do work on their own.



Scott Andersen



John King



Jay Hardy



Venus Andersen

Jay Hardy Workshop

Jay Hardy (Hardy Memorials of Greenfield) got us off to a good start by offering a workshop at the Old Burying Ground in October, 2013.

The participants learned his techniques from having been in the monument business in Greenfield for many years.

Learning from Jay's experience and the Warren County workshop propelled us into this venture at the Old Burying Ground.



Challenges

Over the years, weather, neglect, lawnmowers, and vandals took a toll on the cemetery. The lettering on many of the monuments is entirely obliterated, and on others it is extremely difficult to decipher.

Many monuments are broken and some of the pieces have been difficult to find and some impossible to find. In some cases we have found bases but no headstones. Many are leaning and about to fall over.

We have no real map of the locations of specific burials and rely on the list of burials provided in "*Cemetery Inscriptions of Highland County, Ohio*", compiled by David N. McBride, Jane N. McBride.

Some of the challenges are shown to the right.



Making a Difference

Although there has been great progress, we still have a long way to go. But we have a group of determined volunteers and we know we will get it done, but just not sure when.

We can usually muster a couple work sessions each month, weather permitting, and welcome anyone to join us for as much time as possible.

Our scheduled work sessions are posted on the Greenfield Historical Society website calendar (GreenfieldHistoricalSociety.org) and we also send out an email notice to everyone who has helped in the past or has expressed an interest in participating.

We also welcome those that just want to observe the work and progress.



Thanks to Our Volunteers and Supporters

This effort is not just from a couple people. It has been a collaborative effort involving the Village of Greenfield, the Historical Society of Greenfield, Ohio, and the tireless efforts of many volunteer workers:

Scott & Venus Andersen
Michael Anderson
Larry & Shari Bellar
Laura Boyd
Tyler Brown
Jackie Doles
Linda Limes Ellis
Wendy Ellis
Reynold Freshour & son Mike
Michael Gates
Skyler Grate

Jay Hardy
Phil Harewood
Robin Holland (Chillicothe)
Phyllis Kerr (Florida)
John King
Yolanda Lifter
Gloria & Jim Losey
McClain High School students
Marilyn Mitchell
Melanie Peters
Wendy & John Roysse

Kay Scheeler
Harold & Judy Schmidt
Shirley Shields
Patsy Smith
Jim & Susan Thompson
Martha Vann
Geneva Weaver (Columbus)
Diana Zimmerman
Don Zimmerman

Sincere apologies if we have inadvertently left someone off the list.

