

Old Burying Ground Preservation Project

Greenfield, Ohio

"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)



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 almost 900 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). He was disinterred from the Old Burying Ground and re-buried in the Greenfield Cemetery in the Bell family plot.

The last known burial occurred in 1988.



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 preservation. 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 preservation 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 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 approximately **70 organized sessions**, led by Scott and John. From what started with only two people now sees upwards of 10 or more people helping at a work session. That is approximately **1500 volunteer hours** of work (thru mid-2021), 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 inscriptions on many of the monuments are 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 (so far). 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.



Noted Burials

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. She was listed in the 1850 census as a member of the Samuel Crothers household.

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



1850	Samuel Crothers	66 m	Blacksmith	2701	Pa	31
	Amanda D.	48 F			Wife	32
	James G.	19 m	Student			33
	Mary D.	14 F				34
	Mrs. Beaufe	8 m				35
	Kenneth A. Foster	25 F				36
	Rachel Stafford	70 F m			Wife	37
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As we began to document the burials, we found some interesting information:

Veterans from 5 Wars

- Revolutionary War (1)
- War of 1812 (14)
- Civil War (24)
- Spanish American War (1)
- WWII (1)

Fernau (Virnau), Johannes (John Fernow) was born in Herleshausen Germany on Feb 21, 1760. He was a soldier in the Erbprinz Regt, was captured with Cornwallis's Army at Yorktown where he became one of the many prisoners housed in the Hessian Barracks in Frederick.

Early Birth Dates

- Born in the 1700s 201
- Born in the 1800s 596
- Born in the 1900s 3
- Unknown birth year 84
- Earliest Birth Year 1774

Age Ranges at Time of Death

Under 1 year old	117
1 – 10 years old	172
About one third under age of 11	
20 – 29 years old	102
70 – 79 years old	93
80 – 89 years old	60
90 or older	6

Most recent death date 1988

Years with Most Deaths

- 1862 36
- 1854 35
- 1861 30
- 1852 26
- 1864 26
- 1846 25
- 1860 25
- 1848 24
- 1849 23
- 1853 23
- 1863 23

A Devoted Teacher

John C. Thompson, "Professional Teacher", b. in New Jersey Apr. 26, 1815, d. Feb. 13, 1856, a. 40-9- 17. "This monument is erected to the memory of their former devoted teacher by his pupils at Salem Academy at College Hill, Ind., at Frankfort and at Greenfield, O., as a token of their personal esteem and in gratitude for his faithful service."

Inscription – "a refugee from the South", d. Sept. 2, 1866, a. 16yrs 4mos. "Erected by M.E. Sabbath School of Greenfield, O."



Unique monument for Dellie Mowery

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 our progress.



Rewards

- Sense of pride
- Knowing we have made descendants happy to have a relative's marker repaired
- Community involvement in such a worthwhile project
- Honoring our deceased citizens
- Working with others who share a common concern



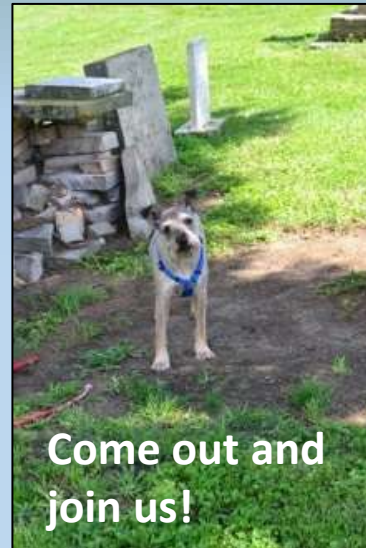
Future Plans

- There's plenty more to do, so this project will continue for quite some time
- Involvement of new people
- Recording of inscriptions, burial locations, GPS locations, photos
- A map of the cemetery



Follow our Progress

- Scheduled sessions posted on our web calendar - greenfieldhistoricalsociety.org/ghs-Calendar.html
- Ask to be included in our email announcing scheduled sessions and summarizing work sessions.



Come out and join us!

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Old Burial Ground
next to Travellers
Rest

Please join other volunteers as we continue to make improvements to the Old Burial Ground. We'll start at 8:30 a.m. and work as long as we have the energy. Come help and stay as long as you can.



Thanks to Our Volunteers and Supporters

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

Scott & Venus Andersen
Michael Anderson
Avery Applegate
Joel Armlovich
Angie Barber
Larry & Shari Bellar
Laura Boyd
Tyler Brown
Jackie Doles
Linda Limes Ellis
Wendy Ellis
Jason Evans

Reynold Freshour & son Mike
Michael Gates
John Glaze
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 Royse
Kay Scheeler
Harold & Judy Schmidt
Shirley Shields
Patsy Smith
Jim & Susan Thompson
Martha Vann
Geneva Weaver (Columbus)
Diana & Don Zimmerman
Suzi Frizzell Zint

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



“The Wall”

In 2007 – 2009 volunteers wanted to repair the stone wall at the front of the cemetery bordering McArthur Way.

It was a massive effort and resulted in a much nicer look to the cemetery front perimeter. During the process, workers encountered various broken monument pieces and in an effort to see that they were not lost or further destroyed, installed many within the wall. However . . .

now that we have been preserving monuments within the cemetery, we have found where many of those pieces should have been re-located.

