

REPORT ON CONDITION OF SECEDER CEMETERY STONES

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At the last annual meeting of the Portland Mills Cemetery meeting, we were asked to investigate the condition of stones in the old Seceder Cemetery and what it would take for restoration

We found that 163 stones need to be cleaned; 30 stones are not legible; 61 stones need to be leveled; 14 stones are broken off; 1 has a crumbling base, 17 stones are buried; 22 have no foundation; and 5 have moved off center of their foundation.

In investigating the cleaning of stones, we found that the old stones are easily damaged by improper cleaning methods. There is a thorough explanation regarding the correct cleaning method on two videos on the website of the National Center for Preservation Technology & Training www.ncptt.nps.gov/Training/2008-Cemetery-Landscape-Preservation-Workshop.aspx. - Cemetery Monument Conservation and Previous Training Courses.

The website for Indiana Pioneer Cemeteries Restoration Project www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~inpcrp - Cemetery Restoration Tools, also list guidelines for cleaning stones. Their recommendations are attached.

All methods require water and soft (nylon) brushes. The stone should be very wet before attempting any kind of cleaning, and rinsed often during the cleaning process. Some of the recommended cleaners are:

Biocide, internet, \$99.95 gal, diluted makes 32.5 gallon
Orvus Soap, found at TSC, \$26.98 ??gal??. mixing ¼ cups with 1 gallon of water
Kodak Photo-Flo, internet, \$45.99 gal
Ammonia, 1 part to 4 parts water

Since the stones are made of different types of material it is not certain which solution would work best on any particular stone. Each stone should be tested prior to cleaning to determine which cleaner would be effective without causing damage.

We found no person, company or organization that specializes in cleaning stones and therefore have no idea what the cost would be. Any volunteer help should be trained and be very conscientious of possible damage.

There are a number of stones that we feel will be legible after they are cleaned. However, there are 30 stones at this time that can not be read and could use a grave marker.

Our only consideration was a flat marker embedded and level with the ground. This type of marker is already being used at a few stones. They were installed by a monument company.

A new marker would display the name and birth/death dates. David Marrero has done some research in making cement markers. The cost is approximately \$10.00 each. This type of marker, if approved, would require a volunteer or paid person to make up the stones and then embed them in front of the original stone, barring any restrictions.

Another possibility would be an upright stone placed on a foundation. The upright stone has the added cost of a foundation and might be more difficult for grounds maintenance if it were placed in front of the original stone.

The Grounds Keeper's input on placing any type of marker would be required.

As noted above, there are over a hundred stones in need of repairing, leveling, or resetting. There is much information on this subject on both of the websites noted above. Attached is information from the Indiana Pioneer Cemeteries Restoration Project, which will give you an idea of the process. Again, we have no cost estimate. To pursue this would require bids from professionals.