

Clayton County Pioneer Cemetery Commission  
Meeting: December 13, 2025

The meeting of the Pioneer Cemetery Commission was called to order shortly 9:00 a.m. at the Carter House in Elkader.

Those present included Chairperson Lee Embretson, and commission members David Beck, Bruce Collins and Ellen Collins. Also present were friends of the commission, Paul Young and Frank Phippen.

A motion was made by David Beck to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Ellen Collins, and approved.

The minutes from our last meeting, September 13, 2025, and previously emailed to the commission members, were briefly reviewed at this meeting. A motion to accept the minutes as written was made by David Beck, seconded by Ellen Collins. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Bruce Collins said there were disbursements of \$62.25 made from the County Funds since our last meeting with the remaining balance being \$1,610.75. For the commission's funds at Freedom Bank, there was no activity since our last meeting and the balance remains \$1,424.21.

There were three bills presented for approval to pay; one bill from Brian Thiese for \$400 for mowing the Borcharding Cemetery this past season, and bills for mileage reimbursement from Ellen Collins and Lee Embretson. A motion was made to approve these bills for payment by Ellen Collins, seconded by David Beck. The motion passed. *(Brian Thiese has been routinely mowing the Borcharding Cemetery for four or five or more years, for the same price, \$400.)*

### **Barnum Cemetery**

Lee Embretson reported that no gravestones have been reset at the Barnum Cemetery. It was expected that Monumental Restoration (Sarah Gunderson's

Company) was to work on doing that work this past fall. Lee said that before this meeting he attempted to contact Sarah but was not successful; Lee will continue to follow-up on this and have a report for our January meeting.

*To summarize for this past calendar year the work done related to Barnum Cemetery:  
An area of 180' x 2' has been officially recorded at the County Recorder's Office as a Pioneer Cemetery with an easement agreement.  
Fencing was installed on the back perimeter of the above designated area.  
Seeding was done.  
A driveway was installed.  
A cemetery sign was placed at the site.*

## **250th Anniversary of our Nation Commemoration**

There was more discussion related to commemorating the veterans of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 that are laid to rest in our county with David Beck, at one of these cemeteries, playing the role of that veteran at their grave-site; the McClelland Cemetery in Garnavillo Township is a potential site as well as Reed Cemetery in Sperry Township.

There are advantages and disadvantages of the McClelland site: the advantage is, it is off a main highway (Hwy 52) between Garnavillo and Guttenburg, the disadvantage is the cemetery is in the middle of a cultivated field.

Friend of the Commission, Frank Phippen said he would contact the owner of the field surrounding the McClelland Grave site to see if there is a way to access this grave-site by the public to facilitate a commemorative event being held there.

Another location being considered for a commemorative event is Reed Cemetery in Sperry Township where there is a grave for a veteran of the War of 1812. Reed Cemetery is maintained by Sperry Township, but it is on a somewhat remote country road, but certainly accessible, particularly during the time of the year this type of event would take place, for those that make the effort to find it. *(Also related to Reed Cemetery, at our last meeting in September, Mildred Stewart, a trustee for Sperry Township, was in attendance, and it seems she, as a trustee, would do what she could to help us if we held the event at Reed Cemetery.)*

Also briefly mentioned was the Goshen Cemetery in Millville Township, which has a grave for a veteran from the Revolutionary War, Peter Holms from the 5<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment. This cemetery has the same disadvantages as the Reed Cemetery, being accessible but off the beaten track.

Regarding publicity, Ellen Collins will contact Roger Thomas, the coordinator of the Clayton County Museum Crawl, which is occurring in June 2026, to see if our event could be included in the publicity that will be done for the Museum Crawl.

This project remains a work in process.

### **Eastman Cemetery**

As noted at our September meeting, the Eastman Cemetery was not mowed this past growing season and Lee Embretson was to attempt to contact a Mr. Moran, who mowed the cemetery previously, and friend of the commission, Paul Young, was to attempt to contact the Boy Scout Leaders in the area to see if their troops had an interest in taking on this project—mowing the cemetery. Both Lee and Paul said they attempted to make contacts as noted above, but neither one got a response or a call back. Both said they would make another effort related to this.

*(On August 19, 2023 our Pioneer Cemetery Commission had a work session at this cemetery, clearing brush and trimming trees and grass along the fence of the cemetery. There was however basic lawn mowing done by somebody at that time in the main part of the cemetery.)*

### **Chinese Railroad Burials**

As discussed at our August and September meetings, the alleged burials of railroad workers in the vicinity of the railroad tracks near Giard was again discussed. As noted in those meetings, our commission would be interested in putting up a sign somewhere within the vicinity of those burial sites honoring those workers if some historical records could be found about those burials. Friend of the commission, Paul Young, said he has done

considerable research related to the railroads in this area and he has not, at this point, found any historical records about railroad worker's burials.

It was the consensus of our commission that no sign will be done related to this unless, at some point, historical records are found documenting these graves/burials. It is the suspicion that a legend was started and grew to also include Chinese railroad workers, but Paul Young believes there were no Chinese workers involved in building the railroad lines in this area.

### **Other Business**

Related to the gravestone for Veronica Hall that has been discussed at previous meetings, this gravestone is now in the possession of Bruce and Ellen Collins and they determined that this person's burial place is in St. Michael's Cemetery in Elkport, and it is with the approval of the commission that they see that this stone be placed in this cemetery.

Mentioned as new business for the coming months is the possibility of making signs for Shori and Graham and possible other burial sites.

Our next meeting was scheduled for the second Saturday in January, 01/10/26.

At approximately 10:30 a.m. a motion to adjourn was made by David Beck, seconded by Ellen Collins. The motion passed

Bruce Collins  
Secretary/Treasurer