

## One comment on “DeKalb Township Starts Evergreen Cemetery Restoration Project”

DeKalb Township has started a multi-year restoration project in Evergreen Cemetery. As part of the project DeKalb Township has contracted Helen Wildermuth, and her company Stonehugger Cemetery Restoration Inc., to perform restoration work during the week of August 13 – 18.

This first year Helen and her team were able to repair almost 50 headstones and monuments. During the process the cemetery is probed to locate buried headstones. The team then digs up the headstone, cleans the stone, repairs the foundation, and resets the headstone in an upright position. Headstones that are broken but able to be repaired are epoxied backed together before being reset. Helen and her team also record information that is on the stones and provides the township with before and after photographs.



Evergreen Cemetery is located at the corner of Taylor Street and 7th Street in the city of DeKalb. In Illinois Townships are often the caretakers of cemeteries that have been abandoned and fallen into disrepair. Prior to the township taking ownership the cemetery was operated by various entities throughout its nearly 160 history. DeKalb Township acquired Evergreen and Oakwood Cemeteries in the late 1990s and has been in charge of their operation and upkeep since that time.

Eric Johnson, DeKalb Township Supervisor, started this project as a way to preserve an important piece of local history. “Evergreen Cemetery is the final resting place for many of our town’s early residents and these repairs will ensure that the headstones survive another century.” During the early phases of the project it was discovered that many headstones had fallen over many years ago and had over time sunk into the ground to the point where you could not see them. The longer the stone remains buried the more likely it is to break or wear to the point where it cannot be salvaged.

Of the nearly 50 headstone restored some were beyond repair. In these cases the team gathers as much information as they can from the stone for record keeping purposes and then reburies the fragments where they were found.

Evergreen also serves as the final resting place of several soldiers who served in the War of 1812, The Civil War, and the Spanish American War. As this part of the restoration project was being conducted the township was able to unearth the graves of military veterans which had been buried over time. “We were able to find and repair two headstones from soldiers who had served in the War of 1812.” said Eric Johnson “We were lucky that they were still in good condition and were able to be reset and cleaned.” Not all veteran headstones were as lucky. Johnson added, “We found some that were damaged too badly to repair, but with the information we were able to retrieve we plan on working with the VA to get replacement grave markers.”

The township plans to continue the restoration project over the next several years. After Helen and her team complete their work in Evergreen the same type of work will continue in Oakwood Cemetery. “It took 150 years for the cemeteries to get into this condition, we are not going to be able to fix them overnight.” said Johnson.