

Clayton County Pioneer Cemetery Commission Meeting: Sept 13, 2025

The monthly meeting of the Pioneer Cemetery Commission was called to order shortly after 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 Mildred Stewart, Paul Young, Emily Blon and Sarah Gunderson.

On the agenda for this meeting, a motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Ellen Collins, seconded by David Beck and approved.

The minutes from our last meeting, which was August 23, 2025, that were emailed to the commission members were summarized and discussed briefly at this meeting. A motion to accept the minutes as written was made by David Beck, seconded by Ellen Collins and approved.

On the Treasurer's report, Treasurer Bruce Collins said there was no banking activity since our last meeting so the bank balances are the same as last month. The county funds, \$1,673.00 and Freedom Bank, \$1,424.21. A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report was made by Ellen Collins, seconded by David Beck and approved.

Three bills were presented for payment, one to Charles Jaster for \$25 related to his work in mounting and placing a sign at Barnum Cemetery, and two bills from Bruce Collins, one for travel expense and one for concrete mix used for the Barnum sign that was installed. A motion was made to pay those bills was made by David Beck, seconded by Ellen Collins and approved.

Chinese Railroad Burials

The railroad worker burials along the railroad line near the Giard and Spook Cave area was again discussed. Paul Young has done some historical research on this and noted that some of the burials were workers were of Chinese ancestry, but it may not have been exclusively Chinese workers.

The general consensus of the commission was that before a sign be placed more research is needed to historical document what actually occurred and separate fact from legend that may or may not be historically accurate.

Also, more needs to be done related to contacting land owners in an effort to possibly find the actual burial site of these railroad workers.

Eastman Cemetery

Bruce Collins reported that a phone call was received about maintenance of Eastman Cemetery. That person, Julie Rust who lives in southwest Iowa, said she visited the cemetery where she has ancestors buried and saw that it was overgrown. On Sept 07, the cemetery was visited by Bruce and Ellen Collins confirming what the caller said. Also noted, was that a corner post on the cemetery fencing was damaged by being hit and bent, probably by a vehicle or piece of farm machinery.

Lee Embretson is to follow-up with the person that mowed this cemetery in the past to get it mowed this year. Paul Young noted that maybe a scout troop could mow it as a project. *[A few years ago our commission paid \$400 annually to have this cemetery mowed but then in recent years it was mowed for no charge.]*

Bruce Collins said he called Julie Rust back about the cemetery and told her that our commission is following up in getting the cemetery mowed. She asked if there is anything she could do to help and I (Bruce Collins) told her if we were able to get it mowed I would let her know and suggested that at that point maybe she could send the commission a monetary donation. She was very willing to do that.

Myra's Cemetery Records

As reported in our July meeting, Myra Voss has donated to the CCPCC many cemetery records that she collected over the years. These records, plus a file cabinet that Myra also donated, are housed at the Elkader Genealogy Office. Ellen reported that she has been going to the Genealogy office almost every

Thursday for the last several months and sorting and filing those records by township. Ellen said the job is almost completed.

(Thank you Myra for donating those valuable records so they can be made available to all that are doing research or just have an interest in this type of information.)

The 250th Anniversary of the USA

As discussed in several previous meetings, our commission again discussed doing some sort of program related to men that served in the Revolutionary War the War of 1812 buried in Clayton County. The Reed Cemetery in Sperry Township has one such person buried there, and Reed Cemetery is maintained by Sperry Township. Mildred Stewart is a trustee for this township and she said she was in attendance at our meeting since we have made tentative plans to do some type of memorial event at Reed Cemetery. Ellen Collins suggested as part of this event some sort of poster be made listing the person's name and location or cemetery for all the people serving in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 buried in Clayton County.

Also discussed was Iowa Code related to Pioneer Cemeteries. The trustees of Sperry Township has had some disputes with the owners of land surrounding Reed Cemetery regarding burials that are now part of cultivated fields. The impetus for this discussion was that Barnum Cemetery also has burials that are under cropped farmland.

Barnum Cemetery

Bruce Collins distributed a listing of eleven gravestones collected at the Barnum Cemetery, (*known at the time as King Cemetery*) by the late Lawrence Fox that have been in the process of being restored by Sara Gunderson of Monumental Restoration. Seven of those gravestones are going to be installed at the restored cemetery site this fall. The one recommendation for setting the gravestones was that stones containing the same last name be grouped together.

(On Sept 03 the sign for the Barnum Cemetery was installed at the site.)

Other Business

Related to 911 cemetery addresses, there are no updates.

At the Winkowitsch Cemetery, Lee Embretson said he and Paul Young installed the sign that our commission had made for this site. He also said that the people that live nearby have been maintaining the cemetery and suggested a thank you be sent to them on behalf of our cemetery commission for doing that.

(Ellen Collins subsequent to this meeting did send a thank you note as noted above.)

Related to the Veronica Hall gravestone, there are on updates.

At 11:00 a.m. David Beck made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ellen Collins. The motion passed.

Bruce Collins
Secretary
CCPCC