Woodland Cemetery

Park and Recreation Board...Did You Know?

March 26, 2019
Woodland Cemetery

- Plotted in 1848 – Fort Des Moines Cemetery
- Historical Landmark Designation
- City Owned 1864
- First public cemetery in Iowa
- 42 Acres
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- City Owned 1864
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- St. Ambrose & Jewish Emmanuel
- 1986 Historical Landmark
- First burial – Thomas Casady 1850
- 34,318 burials
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**Patchin Funeral Will Be Held Here**

The body of Mrs. Calista Halsey Patchin will be brought to Des Moines for burial late this week, it was learned this morning, following the report of her death Jan. 5 at Loomis, N.Y.

Services will be held at St. Paul's Episcopal church.

Immediate relatives who are living are: Two sons, Robert R., and Ira H. Patchin of New York; a sister, Miss Alice Halsey, and another son, Philip H. Patchin, of San Francisco.

Mrs. Patchin, who was the widow of Dr. Robert A. Patchin, was a native of Chillicothe, O., and a daughter of Samuel Halsey, a well known newspaper man.

She was a charter member of the Des Moines Women's club, a member of the Iowa Press and Authors' club, and a pioneer of Des Moines.

Mrs. Patchin was educated in Ohio and Albany and became a successful journalist and writer. Following her marriage in 1880 she devoted herself to the development of art and literature in Des Moines.

She was especially active in the organization of the art exhibit and in development of the art collection of the women's club.

Among the writings of Mrs. Patchin were a novel, "Two of Us," and various short stories, one of which, "The Professor," was selected to appear in "Prairie Gold," the collection of works of Iowa writers, compiled by the Iowa Press and Authors club.
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- Sumerfield Still
- Martin Flynn

General Marcellus Crocker

Jefferson Scott Polk

George Carpenter – Drake University
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Charles Weitz
Woodland Cemetery

Gov. Albert B. Cummings

William Morrison

Henry C. Wallace
Woodland Cemetery

Samuel Merrill

Iowa Governor
1868 - 1872
Aug 7, 1822-Aug 31, 1899
Republican
Woodland Cemetery

WORLD WAR I
GOLD STAR MEMORIAL

[Image of a person in uniform holding a wreath in front of a memorial marker.]
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Preserving a piece of history

Looking for a graduation gift? Need a civic project for your club, church or school? Want a sense of accomplishment to take to your grave — and to somebody else? “Well,” says Gerald La Blanc, “the Adopt-a-Monument program will provide a family here in Des Moines or an organization in a nearby club with a lasting legacy.”

That’s a monument, as in representation and La Blanc as in the retired social studies teacher from Altoona. He spent many years in middle school classrooms. He retired 25 years ago. Raising his voice, La Blanc, a former Des Moines resident, and he taught his students to write to the governor and talk to the City Council.

Self-appointed

Now he is the self-appointed conservator of Woodland Cemetery. He has点缀了 cemetery vandalism, accused city officials of cemetery neglect and established — with the blessing of City Hall — the Woodland Cemetery Endowment Fund. He leads cemetery tours by appointment. The Adopt-a-Monument program is new. In beauty, La Blanc says, is the fact that it allows donors to see the monument they that, alone, have restored.

Here’s how it works: Prospective participants can select one of the 11 marble monuments that La Blanc has pegged for cleaning or pick another one that they like. Cost for the 11 ranges from $49.50 to $145.50. Participants pay the money, and All-Brite Brass Cleaning of Des Moines will stabilize (if needed), clean and oil the monument. In return, they get a personalized certificate, a tax-deductible receipt, and the satisfaction of preserving a piece of history.

City’s Oldest

Woodland Cemetery is the city’s oldest. The 65-acre cemetery was established in 1855 and closed to sales in 1956. It holds 88,000 graves, La Blanc says, including four Civil War generals, two Iowa governors and people whose names appear in local history books; on street signs and on buildings: F.M. Hubbard, Hoyt Sherman, Benjamin Yocom and James Savery.

The problem, La Blanc says, is that most of the dedicated in the cemetery have no living relatives here and there is no longer an on-site superintendent. Some of the oldest cemetery grounds are not private memorials. About 25 monuments are off the property because the cemetery was established decades before a road was built to transport the materials to the monument sites.

Gerald La Blanc shows off one of the monuments available for “adoption” at Woodland Cemetery. This marble star-studded granite from New England.

“Marble, as you know, is made from ice pudding down and shelf and various types of fish bones and so on,” La Blanc says. “It’s really not stone as we know it and it’s very susceptible to acid rain.” So the backs of monuments until they become blackened and eroded the carving. Even today, when it rains, La Blanc says, and run at the monuments.

Working People

The line he picked for immediate restoration include monuments covered in snow, as a tree and on a 25-foot obelisk. They mark the graves of average working people. La Blanc says that they dug the streets and they made the homes and the buildings and so on. They are the ones he could find in a history book, but the one he could find in a history book was M.J. King, who was a hospital administrator and a member of the City Council.

The monument for King and his wife, Rose, which is moving four bangers on one hand, will cost $65.50 for steam-cleaning and weatherproofing.

La Blanc plans to move a monument from a spot near Woodland Cemetery. Several of his relatives are buried there, including his grandfather, James Vosepohl, who left Iowa in 1867, came to Des Moines in 1871 and built a home on East Grand Avenue.

La Blanc’s father ran a granite shop on North East 14th Street and earned about $300 of the monuments at Woodland. La Blanc usually can spot them by the flowers his father covered.

La Blanc was a town, he went out with his father to carry them, and there is a monument in the cemetery. While his dad worked, La Blanc filled around the site moving for the next monumber. The monument was missing four bangers on one hand,
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Woodland Tours 2019

Saturday April 13    1:00-3:30
Saturday May 11     1:00 -3:30
Saturday June 8     9:00-11:30
Saturday July 13    9:00-11:30
Saturday August 17  9:00-11:30
Saturday September 14    1:00-3:30
Saturday October 12  1:00-3:30