

Cemetery upkeep costs time, money

BY CHELSEY COLE
for the Index

Take a walk down the narrow lane at the end of Harrison Street, toward the brick gateposts and a gray marble vault. Soon you'll find yourself amid the stones and markers of Kirksville's oldest cemetery, Forest-Llewellyn, created more than 160 years ago.

Kirksville is home to four cemeteries and Adair County has more than 65, said John Buckwalter, director of Kirksville Public Works.

Buckwalter said Kirksville only has three public cemeteries within city limits.

The city is responsible for the maintenance of public cemeteries, but private cemeteries are maintained by a board, association or church, he said.

"Some of them are family plots and they are maintained and managed just by the families," Buckwalter said.

Buckwalter said the fourth cemetery in Kirksville is a family plot that lies just south of Michigan Street on Osteopathy Street, and the city removed all but one grave from the plot.

The grave lies just beyond the street at the edge of a paved parking lot and belongs to David Slian, who was born in 1794 and died in 1842.

Construction on Osteopathy Street a few years ago caused some concern that the grave would be disrupted, but the city took extra precautions to preserve the cemetery's legacy, Buckwalter said.

Cemeteries often rely on donations to maintain gravesites, but sometimes the boards need extra help, he said.

"We basically took over Forest-

Llewellyn a number of years ago when the board ran out of assets," Buckwalter said.

The cemetery suffered from vandalism and overgrowth so the city contracted with Sheltered Workshops to assist in the cleanup, he said.

Pat Ellebracht, president of the Adair County Historical Society, said Forest-Llewellyn was created in 1845 after a man traveling through town passed away.

"The second person to be buried in Forest-Llewellyn was Jesse Kirk, who Kirksville is named after," Ellebracht said.

The city's takeover of the cemetery was greatly appreciated because it is a historical account of Kirksville's history, Ellebracht said.

When cemeteries go without care, a piece of history is lost, he said.

Forest-Llewellyn is a distinctive piece of Kirksville's history and with a little research, people can discover important figures in Kirksville's past.

Andrew Taylor Still, who was born in 1828 and died in 1917, is buried with his family at the far west end of the cemetery. A.T. Still University, the school of osteopathic medicine in Kirksville, was named in Still's honor.

Another interesting figure from northeast Missouri's past is John Oldham, who was born in 1789 and died in 1862. Oldham is buried with his family in the old section of the cemetery, near Jesse Kirk. Oldham was executed by mistake in Macon, Mo., during the Civil War. There also are 26 confederate soldiers who were killed in the Battle of Kirksville who are buried in a mass grave in the cemetery.



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

The Forest-Llewellyn Cemetery is Kirksville's oldest cemetery and final resting place of town namesake Jesse Kirk.

Forest-Llewellyn's burial records list 75 African Americans buried within the cemetery, but many of their graves are unmarked and don't exist on the cemetery's plot map. Often the records for their burials only include dates of birth and death.

Some markers are too worn to be legible and the dates of birth and death cannot be recorded for some of the graves. Although the markers in Forest-Llewellyn often are overturned or neglected, Ellebracht said this is more often the case in other, smaller cemeteries.

"I'd say it's the smaller cemeteries, the more remote cemeteries that are on private property, that suffer from neglect," Ellebracht said.

He said it's a sign of disrespect, but cemeteries are a lot of work and are costly to maintain.

"People come in here from time to time saying such and such a cemetery is all [overgrown] and something ought to be done about it, [but] most of the time there isn't anything done about it," Ellebracht said.

It's difficult to maintain a cemetery without monetary assistance from agencies or the government, he said.

"A lot of [markers] are destroyed and family information is ruined because, more than likely, it wouldn't have been [written] down anywhere else," Ellebracht said. "They didn't have newspapers and all these things as a way to record it."

The Missouri General Assembly gave the State Board of Health the authority to supervise statewide registration of births and deaths in 1883, but certificates and registration were not required until 1910, according to the Missouri Secretary of State Web site.

Records of births and deaths often vary from county to county prior to 1910. Because of cemetery restoration efforts, however, some records can be preserved.

A relative of Jesse Kirk recently came to the Adair County Historical Society looking for family information and was able to see Kirk's tombstone because the city restored the Forest-Llewellyn cemetery, Ellebracht said.

Kirk died in 1846, prior to the

issuance of death certificates, Ellebracht said.

"If a cemetery is well-kept and maintained people will go to visit it," Ellebracht said. "There is a great deal of interest in genealogy."

Towns come and go, and usually the cemetery is all that is left, he said. The burden of keeping and restoring cemetery records often passes to genealogists.

"A lot of these cemeteries are church cemeteries, and there's nobody left to take care of them," said Bess Mercer, former member of Kirksville's genealogy committee.

Mercer said she assisted in the development of the book, "The Cemeteries in Adair County Missouri," along with Elizabeth Laughlin, who now is deceased.

"Elizabeth Laughlin was receiving inquiries about people buried in Adair County, so she developed a method to easily search the cemeteries," Mercer said.

Mercer said she helped Laughlin organize the Bear Creek cemetery and Novinger cemetery plot records. The records list the deceased by first and last name, the years of birth and death and location of plot she said.

"Elizabeth hoped [the book] would make it easier to search for graves," Mercer said. "It's important to keep an account of our history."

Junior Matt Dunn said he is a cemetery enthusiast, and he said he often visits St. Louis cemeteries and has walked through Forest-Llewellyn a few times.

Cemeteries are creepy, but interesting, he said.

"Keeping them maintained is a pretty big deal because [communities] could lose the history of their town and the people who used to be a part of it," Dunn said.

Police track down suspects in year-old murder case

BY JULIE WILLIAMS
News Editor

An investigation spanning six counties has resulted in the arrest of two individuals for an October 2006 homicide.

Shane Colby Roberts, 28, of Kirksville and his sister Angela Knowles, 27, of Greentop, Mo., were arrested Oct. 22 on charges that include murder and armed criminal action.

The arrests are in connection with the death of Larry Callahan in Knox City, Mo., according to a press release issued by the Knox County Sheriff's Department.

David Brown, Knox County prosecuting attorney, said Roberts has been charged with murder in the first degree, which is punishable by either the death penalty or life in prison without parole, and armed criminal action, which is a class A felony that carries a sentence of up to life in prison.

He said Knowles has been charged with second-degree murder, which is punishable by up to life in prison without parole.

Brown said other cases are pending against Roberts in surrounding counties that involve burglary and misdemeanor and felony theft charges.

"The investigation went on for a little over a year, and there were multiple

law enforcement agencies involved," Brown said.

In addition to the Knox County Sheriff's department, law enforcement units from Shelby, Adair, Sullivan, Macon and Lewis counties were among the agencies involved in the investigation.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol Division of Drug and Crime Control, the Missouri State Water Patrol and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms also were involved, according to the press release. The investigation is ongoing.

Brown said both individuals were arraigned in Knox County last week

and that a date will be set in Knox County associate circuit court for a preliminary hearing probably within 60 days.

Adair County Sheriff Leonard Clark said Roberts and Knowles were arrested in Adair County on Oct. 22.

He said Roberts still is being held in the Adair County Detention Center on a \$250,000 cash-only bond for the murder charge, a \$5,000 cash-only bond for a burglary charge and a \$25,000 cash-only bond for an arson charge.



Shane Colby Roberts



Angela Knowles

Knowles was transferred to Clark County but remains in jail.

Knox County Sheriff Mike Kite said Knowles still is being held on a \$200,000 cash-only bond.

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