

# Gravesites in Marion Township in need of repair, officials claim

By Lon Medd

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With so many headstones deteriorating in three Marion Township cemeteries, the township is trying to prevent more from crumbling any further.

In Greene Cemetery, Harger Cemetery, and Lakeside Cemetery many of the headstones are anywhere from 100 to 200 years old and are no longer readable.

"A lot of them are limestone headstones, which means they are soft," said Tom Lloyd, who is the township sexton and is responsible for digging graves and selling cemetery lots. "They are just so old you can't even read them anymore."

Preserving these old headstones is a project headed up by Tom Klebba, a consultant with Marion Township.

"We'd like to refurbish some of the old headstones that are unreadable and bring them up to maintenance," he said. "There are sandstone headstones you can barely read and they are deteriorating."

Over the past 10 years, Klebba said there have been one or two headstones which have been repaired by the cemetery sexton.

Repairing the headstones for the most part is not the responsibility of the township, which owns the cemeteries.

When people pay for a gravesite, they pay a perpetual care fee which gives the township the money to care for the cemetery grounds.

Keeping the headstone in good shape is the obligation of the family which buys the plot. However,



Photo by GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

**Numerous gravestones at Greene's Cemetery in Marion Township are crumbling and in need of repair or replacement. The township has a project in the works to take care of the problem.**

many of the families aren't around anymore because the stones come from the 1800s and early 1900s.

Klebba said a lot of stones are broken in half and the pieces are still there.

"There are stones that are three feet tall and the top one or two feet has broken off," he said.

Both Klebba and Lloyd are laying the broken headstones flat on the ground to avoid further dam-

age and any new burial in the cemetery must have a headstone which lays flat to the ground.

Klebba has tried to get local groups to help the township with this project and has been able to get seventh grade students from Three Fires Middle School to come out to the cemeteries.

The students will be doing some grave identification and general clean up.

"The stones are so old and they don't have the information," said teacher Kevin Deadman. "We'll sweep them off and do rubbings of the stones."

Deadman said he could get about 120 students to go out to the cemeteries and plans on getting them out there later in October.

"It's a team-building activity," he said. "We'll make a day out of it."

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