

News

Operation Flag visits Westerville's Pioneer Cemetery

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There's one visit down and one to go before Memorial Day for Operation Flag and Westerville's historic Pioneer Cemetery.

After putting in one day of work May 3, volunteers are still being sought for a return visit May 17 to revitalize the oldest section of the cemetery at 865 S. State St., just north of Interstate 270, in time for the national holiday that honors the United States' war dead.

Founded in 1988 by a committee launched by Franklin County Auditor and veteran Joe Testa, the goal of Operation Flag was to make sure every veteran's grave in the county is adorned with a flag for Memorial Day. But while placing the flags, volunteers noticed that older headstones of many of the veterans had fallen into disrepair and were in need of restoration work or replacements. Operation Flag grew to incorporate that work as well as flag placement for the holiday.

Several years ago, restoration work was completed on Westerville's Olde Methodist Cemetery and for 2008, the city's Pioneer Cemetery was chosen.

The area receiving most of the work is the oldest section, originally known as Jameson Cemetery after Robert Jameson, who donated the property in 1817. Besides many Blendon Township pioneers, veterans from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War are buried in Pioneer Cemetery.

Work being done at the site includes headstone repairs and resetting, general clean-up and flower planting.

A new headstone was placed for Lt. Cruger Wright May 3, and another at the grave of Pvt. Origin Rugg, both veterans of the War of 1812. Descendants of these men are being sought for the re-dedication ceremony and relatives or anyone who knows of a descendent should contact Shelley May at 614-462-6272.

The May 17 session, like the May 3 visit, is scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon.

Volunteers are asked to come to the cemetery with gloves, buckets, soft-bristled scrub brushes and shovels if possible. Assisting the volunteers with resetting larger stones will be the Westerville Service Department.

The project concludes with a Memorial Day re-dedication ceremony at 3 p.m. May 26.



SNP photo by Cassandra Bergman
Volunteers on May 3 (from left) Ed Oblock, Michael Sekeres and County Auditor Joe Testa set a new headstone for Lt. Cruger Wright, a War of 1812 veteran, at Pioneer Cemetery.