

OWLS HEAD CEMETERY COMMITTEE

And we thought last year was busy! Again, our biggest projects have been the partial preservation of Holiday Beach Cemetery and Lea and Heather's research to document our cemeteries.

Holiday Beach Cemetery preservation was a big undertaking, but with equally big results. We are hoping that we can afford to finish the restoration just after Labor Day this year. If you are interested in the results to date, please look on our Committee's Facebook Page. We've mentioned before how very many volunteer hours the Committee members put into these preservation projects along with those of our preservationist, Joe Ferraninni. We've talked about the processes we go through to make headstones clean, safe, and repaired, so won't go into that this time, however, we still plan on taking a few hours this September to show, like we did last year, those who are interested what is involved in preserving a cemetery.

What was suspected, but still a surprise, nevertheless, was how many unmarked graves appear to be in Holiday Beach Cemetery as well as the other old cemeteries within the Town's boundaries. This might answer your question about why there are only plots available for sale in the Town (Airport) Cemetery.

Last year the Town voted to acquire the abandoned cemetery off Oak Run: Cooper (fka Cooper's Beach) Cemetery. Since there are only a handful of headstones there, we should be able to get those repaired, clean, and standing this year also. We had planned to buy a tripod, but with Walter's help, we arranged to share one that Walter purchased for South Thomaston. This type of equipment makes working with large headstones possible. With the extra money then available in our annual budget, Lea has worked with Frank Ross to design and make signs for each cemetery. By the time this report comes out, they should be installed.

Our Committee has also been working with Gordon Page, Select Board Chair, Andrew Hart, Knox County Chair, and Jeremy Shaw, Airport Manager, this past year negotiating the purchase of the Town (Airport) Cemetery. Currently, the Town leases the cemetery property from Knox County and there has been public hesitancy to purchase plots on leased land. To date, all the surveys, appraisals, and approvals have been obtained and we anticipate acquiring this cemetery will be a warrant article for Town approval. After approval, the Cemetery Ordinances will be updated.

After much research by Lea and Dick Carver as well as by Paul Harrell, the attorney we use for these situations, it was determined that the Merriman (Lighthouse) Cemetery qualified as an abandoned cemetery and is a warrant article for Town approval. There is much work to be done there and because an 1812 War veteran is buried there as well as a former lighthouse keeper, it is important that this cemetery is maintained to State statues. We are hoping that the American Lighthouse Foundation and State of Maine Parks will become involved in our future efforts with this cemetery.

Both Lea and Heather have worked like fiends to come up with a complete list of veterans and a book of transcriptions for all the Town's cemeteries. Soon the Transcription Book will be printed and sold through the Mussel Ridge Historical Society. In addition, both Lea and Heather worked with the Town's webpage designer to get a website for the Committee and that is linked to the Town's website: www.owlshead.maine.gov/project/cemetery-committee. A link to our Facebook page is also there. Additionally, there should also be a link in the "Committee" section of the Town's website to our website. Check it out.

New flag protocols are also available on the Town's/Committee's websites: American flags will be put out the week before Memorial Day and taken up within a week afterwards. The same for Veteran's Day in November. The Committee is also, gradually, replacing the generic veteran's medallions with ones specifying, if known, the war that the veteran served.

We are looking for a new Committee member. Heather Almquist joined last year and is an asset to our team. She is a trained genealogist, among many other things, and has served on several committees for and on the Board of Directors for Maine Old Cemetery Association. She has also worked with us on our preservation efforts for Rose Hill and Holiday Beach Cemeteries. Unfortunately, Jesse Ellis has left to concentrate on her other responsibilities and Michael Voncannon is leaving after June to watch TV and eat bon-bons for the foreseeable future. So, if you are interested in being involved, please call the Town Office or speak directly to one of our members. Our work is very rewarding.

As always, a special thank-you to Terry Morang for keeping our cemeteries looking so nice and to those, like Dick Carver, Steve Cook, Sue Choate, and others, who unselfishly volunteer their time to help.

Respectfully submitted,

William Gay Walter Guptill Lea Carver Heather Almquist Michael Voncannon (retired)

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