

Procter Cemetery Restoration Project

The Society's latest project to preserve the community's heritage is the Procter Cemetery Restoration.

Located on 32 Mile Road just west of Romeo Plank Road and north of the Romeo State Airport, the Procter Cemetery is the final resting place for over 500 pioneers, community leaders, farmers, and businessmen, along with many of their families who lived in Ray Township and the surrounding communities. Once maintained by the Ray and Armada Branch Cemetery Society (as the cemetery is located in both townships), the Society's name was changed to the Procter Cemetery Society on May 12, 1900 in honor of the Procter Family whose patriarch was General John L. Procter. The Cemetery was deeded to the Township of Ray in 1956.

The Procter Cemetery includes 130 family names, 20 veterans from the War of 1812, Civil War, and WWI, 18 Ray Township Officials, one State Representative, and three Masonic Lodge members. The ages of those buried range from one day (Rosannah Sutherland) to 100 years (Lydia Jewell).



The Restoration Project is currently in its third phase. From June 16 – September 19, 2024, Heave's Touch Grave Care Service raised, cleaned, and leveled forty-one headstones, tablets, and markers in the first part of this phase. Twenty-three headstones were made of granite, thirteen were marble, two were slate, and three were bronze, one of which is the military marker for William Moses Hicks who served as a Private in World War I. One unexpected benefit of the project included locating the never before recorded small marble tablet of "Angeline" in the Booth family plot. The information about forty-four individuals was recorded.



The second part of this third phase will restore an additional 50 marble tablets. The Society will survey the Cemetery in the spring of 2025 to determine precisely which 50 tablets are in most need of restoration and request bids for the project. Based on previous experience, the Society estimates the cost will be about \$20,000. Our goal is to continue fundraise and apply for grants with anticipated completion date in the summer of 2026.

From August 15-20, 2022, Stonehugger Cemetery Restoration Company completed Phase II carefully restoring 25 monuments and 24 tablets in the Procter Cemetery. As our 2022 Silent Auction proved to be more successful than expected, the Society's Board members approved an additional \$1,000 from the auction and \$2,000 from its fund balance to cover unexpected costs thus allowing four more tablets to be restored.

The original 1843 marble tablet of Seamons Fillmore was discovered buried beneath his family monument during the restoration process. His tablet was restored and erected alongside his restored monument. Unfortunately, the obelisk for his monument remains missing, but will hopefully be discovered one day.



During Phase I of the Procter Cemetery Restoration in 2016, Helen Wildermuth of Stonehugger located an obelisk and finial that were lying down the embankment bordering the Cemetery. These two items were returned to the tops of their rightful monuments in 2022 - the obelisk to the Benjamin H. Freeman family monument and the finial to the Abner S. Hicks family monument.

From May 17-21, 2016, Stonehugger Cemetery Restoration Company restored 55 tablets and two monuments in the Procter Cemetery. Stonehugger also crafted replacement tops for some tablets and generously contributed \$430 towards the project. The project uncovered the headstones of Elzada Smith and Mariam Titus. Both of these women were not listed in any of the known Procter Cemetery readings. Four tablets were returned to their family's plots: Mary Hamblin, George and Charley Hall, and Harrieth Fillmore. Most likely, these markers had fallen over and someone placed them in another area to safeguard them. Stonehugger was able to find their bases, returning them to their original locations.



The transformation of the Procter Cemetery is stunning. The beautifully restored marble tributes to our community's cherished pioneer families now stand proud and glisten in the sunlight. One can imagine what the cemetery looked like in the 1800's when the markers were first lovingly erected, such as the one for Lucy L Briggs who died in 1857 at the age of just 2 years and 18 days. Her headstone states, "A bud on earth, A rose in heaven."

Stonehugger Cemetery Restoration Company has provided a total of three binders documenting all the information and work done to 106 stones. Heaven's Touch Grave Care Service also provided a binder with the information and work done on 41 stones. The Society has also updated the list of those buried in the Procter Cemetery on our website. Those highlighted in green have been restored. Those in yellow are in need of restoration.

PROCTER CEMETERY RESTORATION SPONSORS

PLATINUM SPONSORS

PHASE I

THE FOUR COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

PHASE II

THE FOUR COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

MARGARET A. OBRZUT

THE TOWNSHIP OF RAY

PHASE III – Part One

THE FOUR COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

SILVER SPONSORS

PHASE I

ARMADA AMVETS POST 93

ARMADA LIONS CLUB

AVON PRYOR –

IN MEMORY OF JOHN M. CRAWFORD

RAY TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS

RAY TOWNSHIP LIONS CLUB

ROMEO LIONS CLUB

PHASE II

BOB & CHERIE ALLEN

JOHN & AUDREY HEMR AND FAMILY

RICHARD POINTE

TIM & KAREN SMITH

PHASE III

CHERIE ALLEN

JOHN & AUDREY HEMR AND FAMILY

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PHASE I

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