

Township cemetery named county landmark

By Kristen Kucharski For The Sun Mar 31, 2011 9:04PM

Township Supervisor Todd Morse (from left), Amy Munro of the Will County Historical Preservation Committee, township cemetery board member Ben Peterson, cemetery board member Denise Garcia, cemetery board member Richard Grommon and Township Trustee Frank

A historic Wheatland Township landmark is getting some overdue recognition. The township cemetery on 104th Street between Book and Naper/Plainfield roads in unincorporated Naperville was officially recognized Feb. 17 as a historical site by Will County. The dedication was attended by a small group but the energy and enthusiasm was vast. The county presented a bronze plaque to the township, which reads, "Circa 1836 Wheatland Cemetery. This property has been designated a Will County Historic Landmark, Feb. 17, 2011. Will County Historic Preservation and the Will County Board."

The three-member Wheatland Township Cemetery Committee is led by Denise Garcia, Wheatland Township tax collector, as president. Ben Peterson and Rich Grommon worked diligently with Garcia to achieve the designation.

"Receiving the historic landmark status was very important to me," said Garcia. "I felt we owed it to the founders of Wheatland Township, the families that donated the land for the cemetery, the soldiers that gave their lives and are buried at the cemetery, and to the community." Garcia thinks this is a tribute to the history of the township and the people it serves.

According to Wheatland Township, the Wheatland Cemetery was established April 22, 1840. A total of 6.1 acres were donated by Edward and Sally Durant, Robert and Ruth Sheldon, Robert and Maud Clow, and Eliza V. Clow. There are 13 pre-WWI soldiers buried among the cemetery's 192 plots of graves.

In May 2010, Amy Munro from the Will County Historical Preservation Society made a presentation to the Wheatland Township Board raising awareness of historical sites. Garcia decided to pursue the discussion with the cemetery board members, who were immediately taken with the idea.

"It was my brainchild but we accomplished it as a team," Garcia said. Peterson, who Garcia touts as a genius with genealogy and record keeping, began compiling records for a formal presentation.

The Will County Historical Preservation Society has a nomination process where one of 12 criteria must be met to be considered for historic landmark status. Munro shared the nomination information via their website at www.willcountylanduse.com, and advised that the township had met four of the criteria. "There was no hesitation with the approval," said Munro. "The research presented by the township was incredible." Garcia gives all the credit to Peterson for the presentation.

The cemetery received the accolade of a historical landmark at no cost to the township. The plaque will be displayed at the cemetery on a stone donated by George Grommon and family.

