

Sugar Grove Cemetery

Sugar Grove Cemetery experienced a landmark year in 2020. April marked the fifth anniversary of the transfer of ownership from the private Sugar Grove Cemetery Association to the City of Wilmington. Building from the foundation passed on by the Association, the City of Wilmington has continued to make strides in improved cemetery management and grounds maintenance.

STATISTICS

Burials and Land Sales There were 85 total interments at Sugar Grove Cemetery in 2020. Of these, 24 were cremations and 61 were full burials. Additionally, 82 grave spaces were purchased during the year.

Foundations City workers poured 57 foundations for new grave monuments and set 3 new government markers during 2020. The staff also repaired or leveled the monuments of 52 older graves this year, including pouring 3 replacement bases.

EQUIPPED FOR SUCCESS

In 2020, the City invested in a tractor and two golf carts. These additions, along with equipment purchased in 2019 has improved our efficiency and service.

GROUND AND FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

The cemetery currently operates with a Cemetery Technician/Grounds Manager, full-time laborer, and 1-2 seasonal laborers during the busy mowing and weed-eating season. The team works diligently to preserve and maintain the grandeur and natural beauty of 40-plus acres of developed land and over 15,600 graves.

When not mowing, trimming, and performing burial services, the team removes old shrubs and trees, clearing overgrown areas, and pruning deadwood to keep trees strong and healthy. As is typical, there have been incidents of storm damage throughout the year. Each tree that falls in the cemetery presents a unique challenge. Our staff works carefully to remove tree debris while minimizing damage to the grave spaces and privately owned headstones.

The fence along the front of Sugar Grove Cemetery also underwent significant repairs this summer. Over 2000 feet of the iconic cast iron fence was mended, with broken sections welded and new bolts throughout.

In 2019, a new pole barn was built to house equipment and provide additional workspace. In 2020, further improvements were made in the maintenance shop area, with the addition of asphalt in the drive and parking lot.

EROSION PROJECT

Another maintenance issue addressed at Sugar Grove Cemetery in 2020 was the erosion along the bank of Lytle Creek. The City had been monitoring this erosion issue at the west side of Section 9. As it became clear the graves near the creek would eventually be in jeopardy if the creek continued to cut into the bank, a plan was implemented to construct a retaining wall that would not interfere with the creek flow but would protect the bank. This City contracted out the maintenance project, and approximately 50 feet of retaining wall was installed just before Thanksgiving 2020.

THE BRIDGE

When the City assumed responsibility of Sugar Grove Cemetery in 2015, the bridges became subject to the uniform inspection standards as other city bridges. Unfortunately, the truss bridge over Lytle Creek did not pass state inspection, and it was ordered closed to vehicle traffic until repairs could be completed. The City applied for and was awarded a Municipal Bridge Grant to help offset the cost of repair. Through this process, the bridge, which was built in the early 1900s by the Champion Bridge Company, was identified by the state as a historic structure. This designation means special consideration must be given toward restoration and preservation of the bridge. In 2020, the City hired a design-build contractor to rebuild the bridge. Design of the project is underway, and construction will begin in the spring of 2021 with an expected completion date of fall 2021.

VOLUNTEERISM

As always, the City is grateful to those who volunteer their time to help keep Sugar Grove Cemetery beautiful. This year, because of the Ohio Health Department recommendations against large gatherings, Sugar Grove was not able to host volunteer workdays. A group of volunteers did gather informally prior to Memorial Day to participate in the annual tradition of replacing the flags on veterans' graves, and the Wilmington Garden Club continues to sponsor and maintain flower beds in the cemetery.

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