



Beth Itzchock Cemetery Cleaning and Preservation Project

Beth Itzchock Cemetery
Ashley, McIntosh County, North Dakota

In June 2014, Rebecca and Stuart Kauffman requested information about the preservation of the Beth Itzchock Cemetery in McIntosh County, North Dakota. The cemetery is located at N 46.07831 and W - 99.37872. north of Ashley, North Dakota (Figure 1). After reviewing digital photographs in possession of Mr. Kauffman, my wife and I saw the potential of saving three and potentially four grave markers. We negotiated to work on Sunday, August 17, 2014. We departed Minot on Saturday, August 16 and stayed the night in Bismarck and departed for Ashley at 7:00am CST on Sunday. We arrived at the cemetery at 9:10am where we met with Rebecca and her son Lincoln. After an initial assessment, we confirmed three stones for restorative work. Water had been delivered to the site by a local farmer. This reports provides the details of the project.

Introduction



Figure 1. Ashley, North Dakota. Google Earth.

McIntosh was opened to settlement in 1884 and the small farming community of Ashley followed shortly after in 1888. Most of the inhabitants of the country were German-Russian and they came due to the opportunity for land. A majority of the early settlers were men alone, and they were farmers. They found the land covered with rocks and buffalo bones. In fact, their first incomes consisted on buffalo money paid in exchange for bone. Water was rare, but game was initially plentiful.

A small part of the German Russian population include a small group (estimate of 60 families) of Jews originally from Bessarabia – then part southern Russia, now Rumania. They too came for land, but also wished to avoid the pogroms happening across Europe. But like other Jewish settlements in central North Dakota, the Ashley group would begin an outward migration in the 1920s. Some would move on west, but some left for Palestine, which fell under British protection following World War I. We can only make conjecture about their reasons for departure, but most likely it was the poor land and the onset of the Great Depression. Another event that may have contributed was the arrival of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic in 1918. Seven of the 21 burials in the Beth Itzchock Cemetery date from the tragedy. The cemetery is located 3.1 miles north of Ashley and served as the region's Jewish cemetery. After 1930, none of Jewish settlers remained in McIntosh County. Only until recently did one of the descendants find herself on the landscape.

Sources: <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/articles/magazines/articles/mcintosh.html> and <http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/articles/magazines/articles/lostjews.html>

Pre-Project Survey

A pre-project survey revealed a level site, surrounded by a treeless plain. The cemetery was defined by a deteriorating (but intact) chain link fence with one gate. The fence was oriented north along 48 Avenue SE, which is paved and runs along the east side of the cemetery. The country road is elevated above the cemetery approximately four feet. To the north, south, and west in farm land, defined by a three-strand barbed wire fence. Approximately 50 feet southwest of the main cemetery is another fenced area containing two marked graves of children and potentially two-unmarked graves.

The cemetery consists of markers from the late rural and garden cemetery movements. Markers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are white marble and vary considerably in quality, several appear to have been purchased from the Sears and Roebuck grave marker catalog. Several markers have biological growth, but nothing substantial to consider high risk to stone. Aside from limited biological threat, most of the grave markers appear in good to excellent condition.

Three graves were selected for work.

Grave marker one (Parkansky), was broken into three pieces (no loss) and dry fitted in place. It was also not attached to its base.

Grave marker two (Kiva Bender) required cleaning and the monument decoration was no longer attached (potential loss or destruction).

Grave marker three (Benjamin Reuben), required leveling and the monument attached to its base.

One other grave marker (Grossman) is past the 15° angle of decline and requires leveling. The stone is also loose from the base and represents a SERIOUS safety risk. The leveling should be managed with a hoist and

appropriate lifting hose due to the weight and size of the stone. This should be undertaken by a professional monument company or mason.

The Project

The project was designed to provide necessary cleaning and repair to markers with openings, fracture, or potential loss. The time schedule permitted little training for Rebecca and her support party. My wife and I completed a vast majority of the work, which was conducted in accordance with standards established by the Cemetery Division, National Center for Preservation and Training and Technology, National Park System, Department of the Interior.

Materials used:

Lithomex

D/2 Biological Detergent

Rivo 50 Epoxy A and B by Tanex

Note: participants were briefed from the Material Safety Data Sheet on each product and advised on handling and use risks. Volunteers only used D/2.



Figure 2. Raymond, Lincoln, and Eunice Timbrook toward the end of the project day.

Cleaning and Repair



Figure 3. The Parkansky marker was broken into three dry-filled pieces and was no longer attached to its base.

The stone was dry-fitted together and a previously installed concrete finish between the stone and its base was no longer holding the marker in place.

The pieces were removed from the base and the concrete finish removed by manual means. Once removed the stone surface was cleaned using D/2.



Figure 4. The concrete finish on the Parkansky base prior to removal.

The original pins holes were found beneath the concrete finish still holding the remains of wooden pins, which were removed by drills using a .5 inch mason bit. The holes in the base of the monument were also cleaned and found to be suitable to holding a new, stainless steel pin.

The base was then fastened to lower portion of the monument. Each of the three pieces were then drilled, pinned, and secured using Rivo 50. No overflow occurred and the surface of the marker remained clean. To ensure a smooth set, a frame with clamps was installed to hold the repairs in place, as shown below.



Figure 5. The Parkansky marker in the final stage of repair, culminating a 3.5 hour project.

The supports remained in place until we completed the third project, after which my wife returned to the marker to complete treatment with Litomex (cracks and seam between base and monument), as shown below.



Figure 6. Eunice Timbrook applies Litomex to the seams in the Parkansky monument and base.

The Lithomex will darken somewhat this winter providing a better color match.



Figure 7. The Parkansky marker after Lithomex application (front and rear. The center was still damp and had not dried yet. Humidity on site averaged 80% affecting dry time for both Lithomex and Rivo 50.

The Kiva Bender marker had minor biological growth, but was safe for cleaning. The marble decoration atop the monument was also loose.



Figure 8. Bender monuments showed biological growth and a loose decoration atop the pedestal.

The monument was cleaned by my wife, Rebecca, and her son, Lincoln using D/2 Biological Solution. After cleaning was completed and the stone dried, the damaged support for the decoration was repaired using Lithomex, after which the cleaned decoration was resealed using Rivo 50, as shown below.

The monument will continue to whiten over time.



Figure 9. The repaired decoration atop the Bender monument.



Figure 10. The Bender marker following cleaning and repair.

The Benjamin Reuben marker was the last monument to be treated. The Reuben marker was tilting beyond 15 degrees and was no longer fastened to its base. It was removed from the base, and the base removed

from the ground by shovel and leveled. Like the Parkansky marker, existing pin holes were in excellent shape, preventing the need for drilling.



Figure 11. Rebecca and volunteer Raymond Schneider-Kuhn (Bath, SD) clean the Reuben marker.

Once the base was leveled, the monument was fitted over the newly install stainless steel pins and secured with Riva 50. Lithomex was then installed around the monument base.



Figure 12. Front and rear of completed Reuben marker.

Recommendations

Overall, the Beth Itzchock Cemetery is in remarkable condition. The following recommendations are provided based on our visual inspection:

1. The Grossman monument is loose from the base and while it has not reached the 15 degree threshold, the size and weight of this maker makes it a high risk stone posing a **SERIOUS** risk on death or injury. The monument should be braced this winter with 2.4 studs and supports driven into the ground until professional repair can be completed.

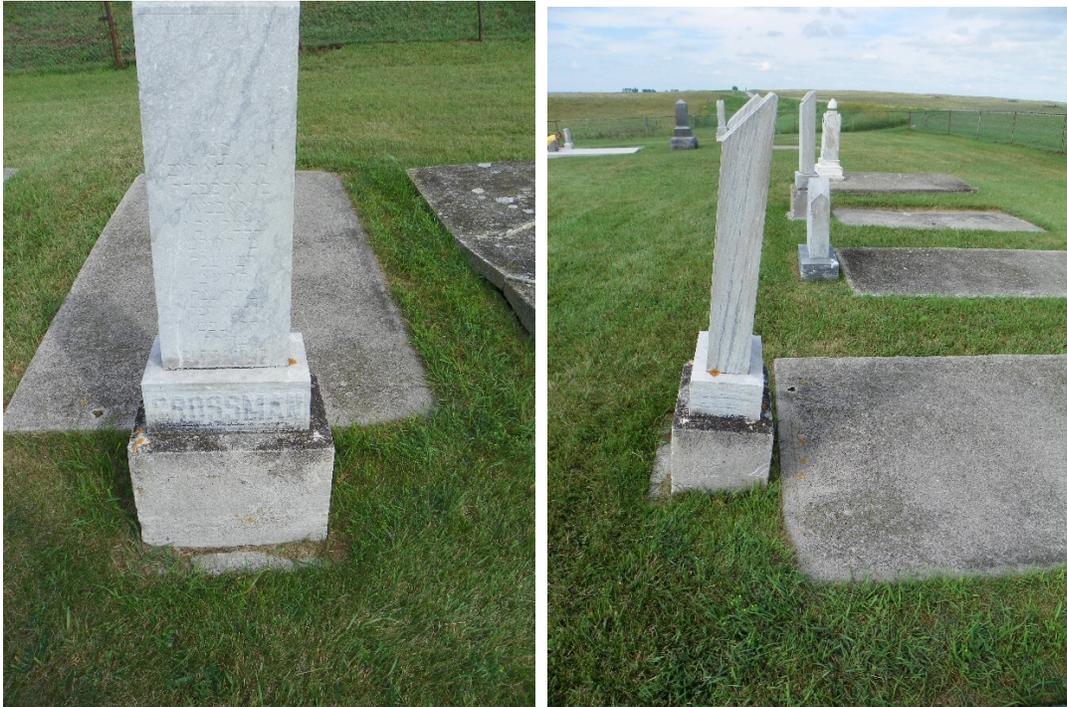


Figure 13. The Grossman marker is a high risk stone posing **SERIOUS risk of death or injury.**

2. The majority of the above ground concrete vaults are in serious need of repair. These do **NOT** contain human remains and are merely overhead protection and demarcation of graves. This is a large scale repair project that will require substantial concrete poured in wooden forms. The existing vaults will have to be broken up first and the debris hauled off site. Again, this is a substantial labor and will require professional services.
3. Three other grave markers could support cleaning and their seams sealed with Lithomex.
4. The child cemetery has one marker that requires cleaning and leveling. The vaults over the graves are also in need of replacement (see photo on next page).
5. It “appears” that the child cemetery contains a minimum of two unmarked graves and potential third may be located on the east side, outside of the fence. This is based on collapsed ground and shape.



Figure 14. Child cemetery and potential site of several unmarked graves.

Materials Required for Continued Maintenance:

Lithomex, available online at: http://store.limeworks.us/product_p/gravekit.htm

Rivo 50 Epoxy A and B available online at: <https://www.defusco.com/tenax-rivo-50-knife-grade-epoxy-1-1-2-liter-kit>

D/2 Biological Cleaner available online at: <http://www.gravestonecleaner.com/shop/d2-biological-solution-1-gallon-size/>

Travel Costs

Item:	Date:	Cost:
Hotel, Bismarck Comfort Inn, I94 and H83	August 16	\$114.45
Gasoline Minot to Ashley Ashley to Minot	August 16 – 17	\$135.00 (include generator fuel)

Note: We absorbed the costs of materials (D/2, Lithomex, and Rivo 50 (A and B)). We estimated costs to be under \$50. A gift to the cemetery and those memorialized within it.

Additional Figures



Figure 15. Extent of damage to Parkansky marker.



Figure 16. The Grossman marker poses a **SERIOUS** risk of injury or death.



Figure 17. Lincoln pauses in cleaning process.



Figure 18. The site during a brief lunch break.



Figure 19. The site observed from the children's cemetery.



Figure 20. The children's cemetery SW of the main cemetery.



Figure 21. We finished the day by using Lithomex on the base of the Ourack stone. We cleaned up the work site and headed for home. A good day's work.