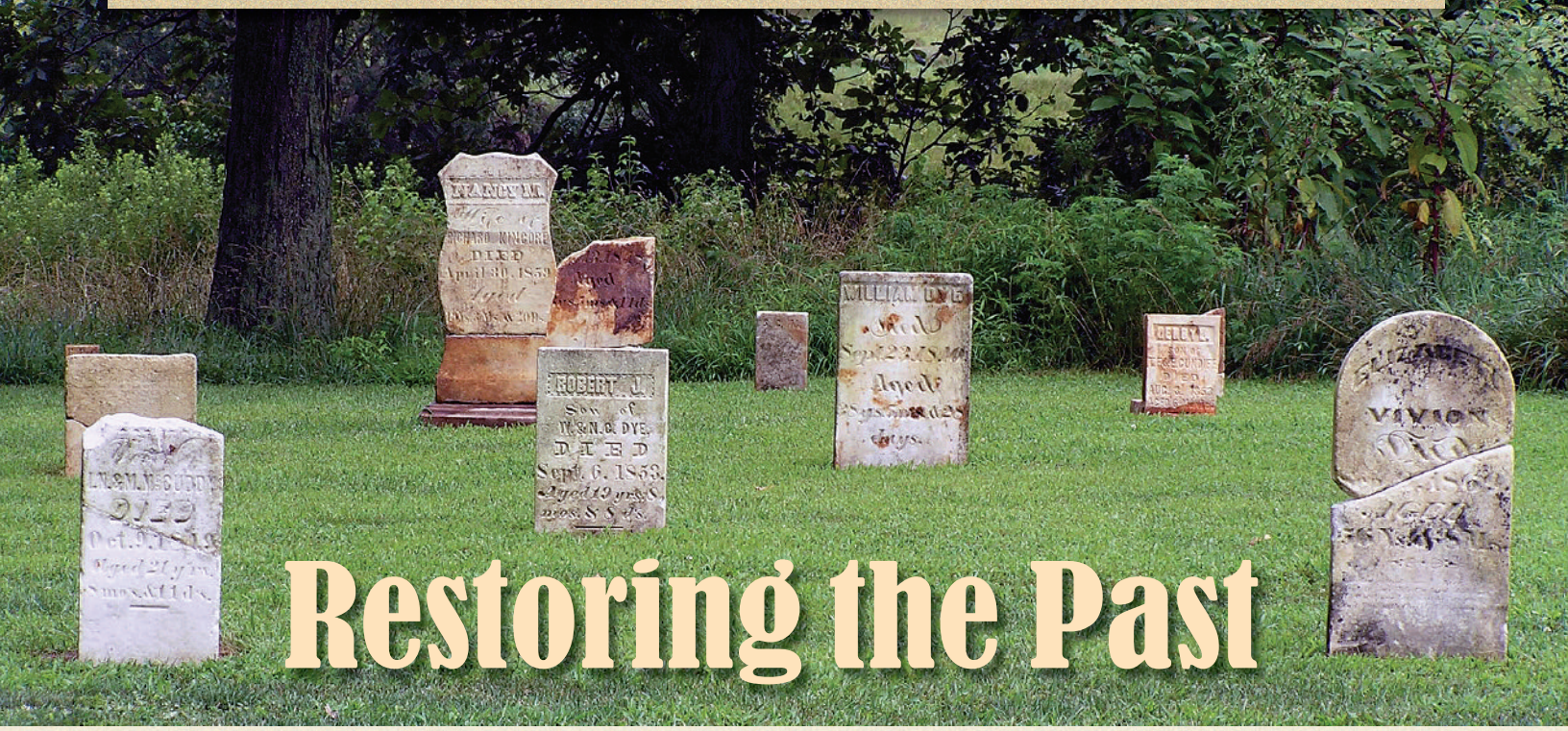
Places of the Past: Cundiff Cemetery, Weldon Springs State Park



Restoring the Past

Story and Photos By
Hal Hassen

Archaeologists interpret the past. Occasionally we get to restore the past.

On June 12th a public dedication was held to mark the completion of a three-year project to restore Cundiff Cemetery at Weldon Springs State Park. Started in 1840 with the burial of William Dye, the Cundiff Cemetery was all but forgotten by 2003. When the Department of Natural Resources acquired the adjacent Nixon property (and Cundiff Cemetery) located just south of Highway 10 in DeWitt County, head and foot stones were no longer visible on the ground surface. Eventually several grave markers were recovered from the nearby slough or found directly below the ground surface. After being stored in a shed at the park for several years, work began on restoring the broken markers and returning them to the cemetery.

Because it is not possible to know where the markers originally were placed, a memorial area was created adjacent to the original burial area. The location of the burial area was based on probing, marker location below the ground surface and interpretation of the surface landscape.

Many of the original markers were broken and required new concrete bases. Using techniques developed and approved by the National Park Service, 26 markers were repaired and placed in the ground. After the repairs were completed, a dedication was held to coincide with celebrations marking the 175th anniversary of the City of Clinton. Despite intense heat and humidity, numerous local residents and one descendant—from the state of Washington—attended.

Cemetery restoration is hard work but not necessarily difficult. If you are interested in restoring one of the many historic Illinois cemeteries, contact Dawn Cobb, Human Skeletal Remains Protection Act Coordinator, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency at dawn.cobb@illinois.gov.

Assisting with the restoration and dedication of Cundiff Cemetery were (left to right) Hal Hassen, Bob Walters, Rev. Walters, Dawn Cobb and Dave Herzog.

The Department of Natural Resources is grateful to the individuals who made the Cundiff Cemetery restoration and dedication a success.

- Weldon Springs State Park: Dave Herzog, Adrian Goede, Adreinne Keiler, Carol Thompson, Darwin Thompson, Gene Crutcher, Jay Wickenhauser
- DNR: Megan Borrowman, Ryan Corey, Kathi Davis, Justin Ramey, Louis Yockey
- Illinois Historic Preservation Agency: Dawn Cobb
- Illinois State Museum Society: Marge Schroeder
- Volunteers: Clinton Youth Initiative, Jesse Gifford, John Heider, Jim and Mikki Judge, DJ Gordon, U. S. Heritage, Inc., Bob Walters, Rev. Walters
- Gary and Carol Cundiff