

Local historian shares insights into area cemeteries

Lynne Hermansen
Gardner News

Cemeteries offer a space for people to visit and honor their loved ones.

Cemeteries, also, offer many stories and clues to the past.

Gardner Historical Museum historian Claude Steed shared insight to the area's local cemeteries at the Thursday, June 13 Gardner Rotary Club meeting.

"I always had an interest in history and Gardner history," he said. "And I have heard the stories."

Steed traveled around Gardner and Edgerton documenting and researching the cemeteries including ones that had been neglected and forgotten.

Chilton Cemetery

Steed said the cemetery was for William Chilton, his second wife Nancy and their children.

The cemetery is located off of 223rd Street and Spoon Creek Road outside of Edgerton.

Steed said the cemetery was small and had been tucked away, unnoticed and unattended for more than 100 years "right next to the road", until in recent years efforts had been made to clean it up.

"But a lady down the road decided she was going to clean it up," he said. "She did all the work herself, and although she no longer lives nearby, she still comes out and maintains it."

William Chilton's enlistment records listed him as 54 years old illustrating conflicting dates and ages Steed found about Chilton in his research.

"But I also found an 1877 census, (seven years later), where it had listed his age as 72 (years old)," he said. "So there are two things that can happen. People taking down the information were very careless or people lied."

Steed said prior to Chilton's death in 1878, Chilton expressed his desire to be buried in Gardner.

"So he could look out over the land he owned," he said.

Steed said his wife joined him in 1892.

Pleasant Valley Cemetery

Steed said this cemetery is located at the edge of a farm field east of Evening Star Road.

"As I am walking in from the road, and you really can't see anything yet, but underneath that tree (he pointed out) is where the graves are located," he said.

Steed said one of the stones is the only one that is visible when a visitor first walks up to the cemetery site.

The grave marker is for a young boy named John Brume who died in 1878 at the age of 10 (years old).

"During the 1850s and through the 1870s there was a small cluster of homes as well as a school spread out around this area," he said. "This community was known as the last community in Johnson County on the Oregon Trail before it passed into Douglas County."

Steed said he found several other stones that were "just stacked up off to the side."



Photo by Lynne Hermansen

Gardner Historical Museum historian Claude Steed shares facts he learned about area cemeteries at the June 11 Gardner Rotary Club meeting. Above Steed shares pictures from the Four Corners cemetery before it was cleaned up by volunteers in 2018.



Photo credit by Lynne Hermansen

Gardner Historical Museum historian Claude Steed shows Gardner Rotary members at their June 11 meeting where the long forgotten McCamish Township Cemetery was located before it was moved by the railroad.

Steed said one of the stones was for Charles Vance who passed away when he was one year old and had three other siblings buried next to him.

"It seemed that most of the dozen or so people buried here are young children," he said.

Steed said there was a burial spot marker for James Moore, who was born in 1812 and died in 1861.

"And I am not even sure if he is buried here," he said. "I researched him."

Steed read an article from 1861 in the Lawrence Republican newspaper.

The article stated Moore in an attempt to cross the Wakarusa river at Blue Jackets crossing near Eudora drowned.

Moore was with his wife driving a team (of horses) attached to a wagon.

"While crossing on the ferry, the horses got frightened and jumped over, taking the wagon, driver and everyone with them," Steed said. "The driver, as well as the horses, drowned, but the lady was rescued."

Another report Steed found stated Moore was never recovered.

"It also stated this is the only known death on a ferry crossing in the State of Kansas," he said.

Fuller Family Cemetery

Steed said this cemetery resides on the

east side of Cedar Niles Road, a half mile south of 191st Street.

"It is at the southern edge of a 160-acre claim, Fuller took in early 1857," he said. "There is 80 acres on each side of the road."

Steed said the oldest dated stone is for Amos Fuller's wife Amelia, who died in 1861. Amos is buried beside her and passed away in 1878.

"The majority of the dates range through the 1800s, and a few into the 1900s, including one in 1998," he said.

Steed said there is a burial for an Amanda Fuller who passed away in 2022.

"So it is still being used by the Fuller family, and maintained by a member of that family," he said.

Mt. Pleasant Four Corners Cemetery

Steed said this cemetery is one of his favorites.

The cemetery is located west of 175th St. off of Four Corners Road north a mile and a half and on the east side of the road.

Steed said the cemetery was established in 1879 on two acres donated by J.F. Ridlin.

"There is somewhere around 20 people buried here," he said. Steed said William Easdale was one of the last people buried at the cemetery and passed away Feb., 1908, while living in nearby Olathe.

"When he died, his body was transported out to the cemetery in a horse-drawn hearse," he said.

Steed said when the community of Four Corners disappeared in the 1920s, very little maintenance "or upkeep" was done at the cemetery site.

"Only us long-time residents even knew that there was anything there," he said.

Steed said in 2015 a group of Boy Scouts decided to clean up the cemetery site as part of an Eagle Scout project.

"After working their way in about five or ten feet, they decided the job was bigger than they were, and they abandoned it," he said.

Steed said in 2018, a group of anonymous volunteers decided they wanted to finish the task the Boy Scouts first embarked on three years beforehand.

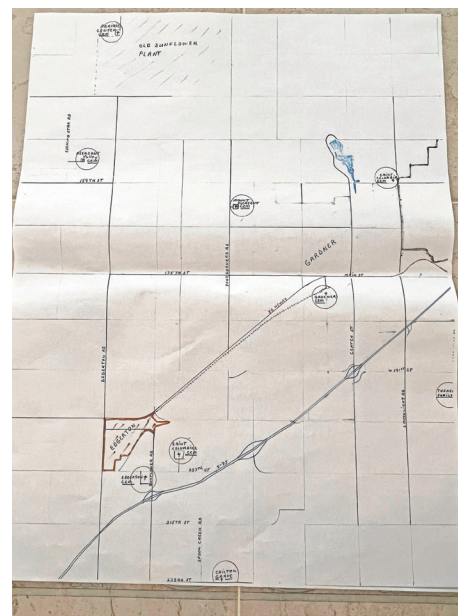
"And it is thankful to their countless hours of work and dedication with the support of other businesses and residents that this cemetery looks the way it does today," he said.

Steed told him it is "just amazing" and before the volunteer group came out a visitor could only see trees.

"They've done amazing things out there," he said.

Steed said when it was first cleaned up, wooden crosses showed up throughout the cemetery.

"There was even some remarks made that well, they are just putting a bunch of white markers out there to make it look good," he said. "And that is not the case at all."



Map from Claude Steed

Gardner Historical Museum historian created a map showing the local area known and hidden cemeteries he traveled to and researched for the Gardner Rotary Club presentation June 11.

Steed said "a lot of" documentation plaques around the cemetery that explain several places discovered when the volunteers began cleaning up the site only had a rock in the ground or a broken piece of a stone.

"So they had ground penetrating radar used over the cemetery site, and a white cross was placed where there was either some stone or something or an indication there was burial that actually took place," he said.

Prairie Center Cemetery

Steed said the cemetery was "officially" established in 1885, but before then the site was used as a burial site for the Hale family.

Joseph Hale is the oldest date of death, who died in 1861.

"In 1885, Michael Hale, who owned the land, sold one acre to use as a cemetery to trustees of the Prairie Union Cemetery," he said.

The cemetery is located adjacent to the former Sunflower Plant site outside DeSoto at the far western boundary.

"Even though over the years its use has declined, burials still occur, and it is well-maintained," he said.

Steed said he has been asked many times about how a person can get to the cemetery.

"And the short answer--it ain't easy," he said.

Steed showed Rotary club members a video his granddaughter took, while his daughter drove him to the cemetery.

They drove from 175th St., turned right onto Edgerton Rd. taking it as far as they could go before running into the Old Sunflower Plant land, turned left and drove two miles to the Johnson County/Douglas County line County Line Road, went two miles north, turned right again, drove a mile and then went a half mile on a gravel road that took them three minutes exactly.

"And on the left-hand side is part of the Sunflower ordinance plant," he said. "That little section on the right was carved out so the cemetery would not be included."

Steed said the fence at the Old Sunflower Plant land have signs that "still read" U.S. Govt. property, "Keep Out."

"And then it opens up, and you have a nice well-maintained cemetery," he said. "One of the most peaceful looking cemeteries I think you will ever find."

Steed said a board takes care of the cemetery.

"And I think my cousin's husband, Darius Crist, who lives down in Edgerton, I think he is the one who takes care of it," he said.

Edgerton Catholic Cemetery

Steed said this cemetery was established in 1857 and was known as St. Columbine Cemetery.

The cemetery is located a mile south and a half mile east of Edgerton off of 207th St.

Steed said early settlers (many) from France and Ireland built a log cabin church on the east side of the cemetery property, and the first mass was held the same year in 1857.

"The earliest death I could find is 1861," he said. "But we know that the original portion is unplatted, and it is known that there are lost or unmarked graves there."

Steed said the first noticeable thing is a large number of stones that have the name Dwyer, McCarthy or Congdon on them, and they consist of a fourth of the 400 graves.

"And I was told at one time some of the family plots had fences around them to protect them from the animals on the open prairie," he said.

One of the trails from Big Bull Creek also leads to the cemetery right next to it.

CLASSIFIED

Announcements Displays

Announcements

FARMHOUSE WANTED: Retired contractor looking for a farmhouse in rural Johnson county for rent. Will make repairs in lieu of some rent. Or a rent to own situation would be great. Just moved back to the area. Looking for a place to fix up and have a garden. Please call Terry at 913-231-9688.

PUBLIC NOTICE

CITY OF EDGERTON, KANSAS NOTICE OF HEARING FOR REVISIONS TO UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE CASE: UDCA2024-0100

Notice is hereby given that the Planning Commission of the City of Edgerton, Kansas, will hold a Public Hearing at their regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at Edgerton City Hall, 404 E. Nelson Street, Edgerton, Kansas at 7:00 p.m. at which time and place the public may be heard in regard to revisions to the Edgerton Unified Development Code, specifically Article 3 - Agricultural and Residence Districts.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Dated this 18th day of June, 2024.

John Daley, Chairperson
Edgerton Planning Commission

City of Edgerton, P.O. Box 255, 404 E. Nelson St., Edgerton, KS 66021
Published in Gardner News June 19, 2024.

2391210

CITY OF EDGERTON, KANSAS NOTICE OF HEARING FOR CASE: RZ2024-0001

Notice is hereby given that the Planning Commission of the City of Edgerton, Kansas, will hold a Public Hearing at their regular scheduled meeting on Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at the Edgerton City Hall, 404 E. Nelson Street, Edgerton, Kansas at 7:00 p.m. at which time and place the public may be heard in regards to the Rezoning application of the following described real property situated in the City of Edgerton, Johnson County, Kansas to wit:

Midway Ford Truck Center, Inc. represented by Aaron Herman, requests approval for Rezoning the real property generally located west of the interchange of Homestead Lane and Interstate 35 being more particularly described as follows:

All that part of the Southeast Quarter of Section 09, Township 15 South, Range 22 East, Sixth Principal Meridian, Johnson County, Kansas described as follows:

PUBLIC NOTICE

Commencing at the Northeast corner of the Southeast Quarter of said Section 09; thence South 88 degrees 26 minutes 35 seconds West along the North line of the Southeast Quarter of said Section 09, a distance of 630.50 feet to a point on the Northernly right of way line of Interstate 35 as now established; thence South 31 degrees 44 minutes 01 seconds West along said highway right of way, a distance of 277.13 feet; thence South 88 degrees 22 minutes 28 seconds West, a distance of 985.18 feet; thence North 02 degrees 09 minutes 43 seconds West, a distance of 288.57 feet; thence North 61 degrees 23 minutes 59 seconds East, a distance of 820.43 feet to a point on the North line of the Southeast Quarter of said Section 09; thence North 88 degrees 26 minutes 35 seconds East along the North line of the Southeast Quarter of said Section 09, a distance of 691.24 feet to the point of beginning, less that part, if any, taken or used for road purposes.

Dated this 18th day of June, 2024.

John Daley, Chairperson
Edgerton Planning Commission

City of Edgerton, P.O. Box 255, 404 E. Nelson St., Edgerton, KS 66021
Published in Gardner News June 19, 2024.

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