

# ROCK PRAIRIE CEMETERY HALLTOWN, MISSOURI

## Annual Meeting May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 2:00 P.M.

Chapel Hours:  
Fri Sat & Sun 9 - 4 & Mon. 9 - 3



2022-2023 Board of Directors  
Jim Carson / Jerry Tuttle / Roxie Sharpe /  
Sherry Neeley / Josh Noggle / Mike Pyeatt

## 1/2 Acre Gifted to Rock Prairie!

From its humble beginnings in 1888 when James N. & Sally (Nickel) Downing deeded their 1-1/2-acre "Graveyard on Family Farm" to Lawrence county, Rock Prairie has been blessed with very kind and caring benefactors who have expanded our borders section by section, road by road, and dollar by dollar.

We would be remiss, if we didn't honor those folks from time to time and share publicly how much we appreciate their patronage. Inspired by the gift of our latest good Samaritan, we are including a brief history of each of Rock Prairie's eight sections at the end of this article . . . but first, let's talk more about how this latest gift from a most benevolent donor came about.

As you know, Rock Prairie's only source of income is from plot sales. In a good year, we might sell four or five plots and, at \$300 each, . . . well . . . you can do the math. Donations and gifts from its members are what has kept Rock Prairie going for over 123 years. Last year, however, we sold an unprecedented 24

plots. With the amount of full-burial plots left to sell dwindling, the Board knew the time had finally come to purchase more land. At its October meeting last year, the Board decided to take \$7,000 from the Endowment Fund and make an offer for the little patch of woods at the east end of the cemetery. With no family connection to RPC nor

On behalf of the entire Rock Prairie Cemetery Association membership, the Board would like to extend its most heartfelt and sincere thank you to this incredibly generous and altruistic donor for theirs is the first gift from someone with absolutely no ties to the cemetery. Customarily, we honor land donors by attaching their name to the section; however, in this case, we will honor the request for anonymity and call the new section, the "East Side" section.



**RPC Section History:** From 1888 to 2009, eight patrons led Rock Prairie's expansion

from 1-1/2 acres to over 5 acres today. Those kind folks and their gifts are set forth below to once again express our gratitude as well as enlighten you a bit more about Rock Prairie's storied past.

[Disclaimer: The information contained herein is our best effort at deciphering the archives. If you see an error or omission, we welcome any input to set the record straight.]

any plans to be interred here, the offer was countered with, "You know, I'm not using that land for a thing and you need it, so how about I just give it to you?" The only stipulation was that the donor remain anonymous. Needless to say, the Board was both thrilled and humbled by this selfless act of kindness.

Jerry Tuttle has begun staking and clearing out the underbrush, but tree removal and lot platting will take place at a later date to be determined by the board.

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**CHAPEL:** Evidently, the increase in usage over the past few years has disturbed our little chapel's peaceful, 73-year sleep as the flooring on the east side dropped after a large funeral was held in 2021 — a cause of grave concern to the Board. The first hurdle was finding someone skinny enough to fit through the foundation openings. The next was deciding the best time to avoid any slithering occupants! February was deemed a GO and two brave, slim souls, Mike Pyeatt and son, Kyle, wriggled under the chapel to assess the situation. They found the wall had bowed outward causing the floor to slip off the sill plate. They also saw where cables, eyebolts and a turnbuckle had been used to reinforce and stabilize the structure perhaps in 1927 when it had been rolled two miles over farmland to get here. The fragile nature of an old building requires a delicate touch so Mike and Kyle began ever so slowly to jack up the floor. As it crept up inch by inch, the old nails, boards and walls creaked and shrieked, and moaned and groaned. As if it would help, they held their breath . . .

Obviously, they made it out alive and the chapel is still standing, but it will require one more slithering and jacking session before the floor can be set back on the sill plate with the wall securely back in place.

The Board wants you to know that Mike and Kyle saved the cemetery a considerable amount of money by tackling this job — a job that NO ONE wanted to do. Thanks guys, you're the best!

**UPDATE: Veterans Memorial:** *Veterans Memorial Committee:* In 2022, the Board had several meetings regarding the Veterans Memorial project, including two with a monument firm. The price range for such an installment is rather wide depending on the quality and design one chooses. The Board wants it to be both beautiful and reflect the quaintness of our cemetery in its

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country setting. The proposal set forth by the monument firm was extremely detailed and helpful, but the Board feels obligated to seek proposals from other firms. The process of designing and soliciting proposals and donations can be quite a time-consuming task for a small board such as ours. Therefore, the Board would like to create a "Veterans Memorial Committee" to better research and develop the project. Please let us know if you would be interested in starting up or sitting on that committee. The Board will offer its services in total support of the committee's work. We would like to meet with you to discuss the particulars of the task at hand. Thank you.

### **UPDATE: Veterans Photo Wall:**

The Veterans Photo Wall campaign is being offered to supplement the Veterans Memorial fundraising efforts. A \$50 - \$100 donation is our goal, but any gift will, of course, be accepted. Details are being worked out, but we hope to showcase all 99 veterans buried here using a headstone or civilian photo, if no official veteran photo is available. For your donation, RPC will scan your photo add the name, rank, branch of service and birth & death dates, furnish a frame, and hang via a system designed by Josh Noggle making photos easy to rearrange as they are added.

**BUSINESS:** Your six-member Board of Directors each serve three-year terms that expire in yearly rotations of two seats — this year, those two seats belong to Jerry Tuttle (2014) and Josh Noggle (2015). We are happy to report that Jerry and Josh are willing to commit to another three-year term should you choose to re-elect them. Please join us at the annual meeting to show your support and cast your vote.

*Seventh Board Seat:* For the past several years, the Board has been focusing on revitalizing the cemetery from the

inside out diligently working on some long overdue tasks including making the chapel usable again, updating and digitizing the cemetery database and records, as well as tidying up and repairing the cemetery grounds and finding those pesky corner markers. The Veterans Memorial project has taken up a good deal of the Board's time, too. With several ideas for future projects on hold, the Board would like to open up a seventh seat. Not only is the additional help sorely needed, but it makes for a more democratic voting process. An amendment to the Bylaws to this effect will be presented and voted on at the Annual Meeting this year. Please make plans to attend to cast your vote. Thank you.

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** Naturally, the year we decide to offer another seat on the board, two other seats open up . . . Our two most esteemed and tenured board members, Sherry Neeley and Jim Carson, will be vacating their seats on the board effective May 2024. Together they have served this association for a combined total of 46 years! Sherry was first elected in 1997 during Stanley White's last ten years at the helm. Six years later, in 2003, Jim Carson was elected. This longevity of dedication will more than likely never again be repeated. Though we are sad to see them go, we certainly support their decision and will do our best to preserve their legacy going forward.

This means that we are in need of three new board members. We would really appreciate your input and assistance in locating folks whose passion and skillset matches our needs. If you would like to serve a term on the board or know someone who would be a good fit, call any board member (our phone numbers are on the chapel door or online at [RockPrairieCemetery.com](http://RockPrairieCemetery.com)). Attending the Annual Meetings is also a great way to make yourself known. Names should be submitted in writing

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## Financial Overview As of December 31, 2022

|             | Donations   | Interest   | SubTotal     | Expenses       | Year End Total |
|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Maintenance | \$ 9,851.52 | \$4,744.69 | \$ 14,596.21 | \$ (13,828.45) | \$ 767.76      |

**TREASURER'S STATEMENT:** The financial status of Rock Prairie Cemetery is very stable. Our endowment fund has grown due to selling 28 plots in 2022 (\$8,400). The Maintenance Fund and your generous donations have enabled us to maintain the cemetery and plan for special projects in 2023. We appreciate your continued support and pledge to use your donations for cemetery improvement and long term sustainability. A complete financial report for 2022 will be given at the annual meeting on May 27th. If you have questions, please contact me, Sherry Neeley, at 417-827-0831.

For your convenience, there are 4 easy ways to donate:  
 By mail at: **P.O. Box 45 Halltown, MO 65664**  
 By credit card using the 'PayPal Donate' button  
 on our website: [RockPrairieCemetery.com](http://RockPrairieCemetery.com)  
 By dropping your check in the mail slot at the chapel  
 By choosing something from the Wish List below



**WISH LIST:** A brand new way for you to donate is from a "Wish List" of items or services needed like: (1) a guestbook podium, (2) easels to hold picture boards, (3) portable heaters, (4) security cameras, (5) permanent section signage, (6) topsoil from your farm, (7) your expertise in webpage design, (8) your time and energy for projects (just ask), etc. Simply put . . . the Board needs you! A 135-year-old cemetery with 500 members needs a regularly rotating board and many volunteers to assist that board.

### AmazonSmile Charity Program Ends



As many of you are well aware, I have been extolling the benefits of shopping through the AmazonSmile program for the past couple of years. Just when I thought we were gaining ground, Amazon decided to end the program effective February 20, 2023, stating that after ten years the program did not "create the impact" they had hoped. We were a bit late in getting started, but, after just a little over one year, we managed to accrue \$147.84 in Amazon donations. Two more payments are expected: one for the 1st quarter 2023 and a final payment equal to three average 2022 payments. Our total donations from this effort should be over \$200 when all is said and done. Thank you to all who participated. It was fun and fruitful while it lasted - sigh . . . 😞

### REMINDERS

1. For a simple donation or an obituary solicitation, the chapel is ready and available for funerals, memorial services, celebrations of life, family gatherings, etc.
2. When planning your estate don't forget Rock Prairie — "A gift to Rock Prairie Cemetery will live beyond your lifetime."
3. The days and weeks leading up to Memorial Day see a lot of activity by decorators and visitors to the cemetery. Courtesy and caution are advised when using the cemetery roads. Be mindful of others needing to get around you and remember that some graves are closer to the road than they seem.
4. The wind often blows our beautiful flowers all over the cemetery, and we have no idea where they belong. They end up on the wrong headstone or in the chapel. Please attach a tag to your flowers or saddle indicating the name on the headstone and the section so we can put them back in the right place. Thank you!
5. Don't forget to contact Roxie Sharpe, if you move or change your phone number or email. We don't want to lose touch! — [Roxie@RockPrairieCemetery.com](mailto:Roxie@RockPrairieCemetery.com) or [RockPrairieCemetery@yahoo.com](mailto:RockPrairieCemetery@yahoo.com) or 417-234-4077.

**History . . .** continued from page 1

On Nov. 11, 1899, eleven years after the original graveyard was deeded to the county, GJ McCoy donated one-half acre (85' x 250') growing the little graveyard by one-third northward. [Deed dated 1901]. Today, that boundary is seen in the fence running parallel to I-44 and is called the "**McCoy**" section.

Just before the first meeting of our newly-formed association in 1900, the McCoy section was surveyed by A.B. McCray and platted into blocks and lots along with an unused strip of land (21' x 255.5') on the west boundary of the old cemetery. This strip of land was handily called the "**West Side Strip**" as it was the first and only part of the old cemetery to ever be platted. The SW corner of the West Side Strip was reserved as a turnaround for wagons, but today is a half lot with four plots.

In 1919, after a few burials had been placed outside the cemetery's east boundary, the HT Parnell family donated .75 acres pushing the eastern boundary outward by 96 feet. This land was divided into two sections: "**Downing I**" to the south and "**Downing II**" to the north. The deed was either never filed or lost so in 1936, son, Ross & wife, Gladys, Parnell had a second deed recorded. [To date, neither deed has been located]. In 1927, when the chapel was purchased and rolled on logs two miles north to the cemetery, it was placed at the very edge of this new boundary line.

In 1935, the JN Downing heirs donated a large section of land that would once again move the entire eastern boundary out another 180 feet. This gift created the "**Pearl Downing**" section and left room for the Mausoleum (1965), the outhouses (1990s) and the current-day parking area down to the old crumbling rock

wall. It was named after JN & Sally Downing's daughter, Pearl J. Downing, who never married and lived to be 97.

In 1941, HW & Mildred (McCoy) Garoutte, gave the cemetery a **15' Grassy Roadway** extending the north and west boundaries of the McCoy section and the south and west boundaries of the Old Part. The grassy road is still evident along the fences today and still very useable.

In 1953, John A. & Thelma B. Stewart donated a 16-1/2' wide x 320' long **Road** at the west end converting that part of the old grassy road into a nice firm, mud-free, gravel road.

In 1960, the HP Morris family donated a 341' x 80' plot of land that, after 61 years, moved the west boundary to the present-day fence at Highway O and was simply called the "**New Part**" section. As those things go, the name stuck, but is, obviously, quite the misnomer today.

Officially named Rock Prairie in 1900, it was often called Halltown cemetery. By 1975, after 80 members pledged and paid \$3,231 to install the **chainlink fence**, Zona Wilkerson clinched the name Rock Prairie once and for all by donating the **RPC sign**.

In 2009, the RC & Pat Downing family gifted the little hill on the far east side for cremated remains only. Aptly named, the "**RC & Pat Downing**" Cremated Remains section, it is 188' x 114'. They also allocated \$10,000.00 to the perpetual care of the cemetery.

Now, in 2023, our latest donor's gift has given us pause to be ever mindful of and grateful to you, our members, both past and present who have made Rock Prairie the truly special place it is today. Thank you.

**Board Report . . .**

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in advance of the Annual Meeting or given directly to any board member for consideration. Thank you.

Jerry, Josh, Roxie and Mike are all ready, willing and able to step up and take the reins from Sherry and Jim. With your support, they look forward to continuing the business of preserving Rock Prairie's heritage while keeping our little cemetery both beautiful and financially sound. Thank you.

**Recycled Flowers**



Our flower recycling efforts raised \$395 in 2022 so it will live to see another year! Thank you to all who participated last year. All we ask is a small donation in addition to your regular yearly cemetery donation. Remember, not only are we helping the planet, but we are raising additional funds for the cemetery AND it just might help instill the joys of grave decorating in your children and grandchildren as you let them handpick the flowers to put on grandma's grave. Start your own family tradition while supporting Rock Prairie!

REMINDER: The chapel will only be open May 26<sup>th</sup> thru 28<sup>th</sup> this year from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and Memorial Day from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.