

Whispers Of The Past

It's been a good winter season to work out at the cemetery. I've finally gotten some things finished out there during this warm winter. The ground isn't frozen so digging and resetting some of the stones has been both satisfying and possible. I also discovered there are many multiple-part headstones that have lost the glue that held them together. I discovered this when I began working on little Harry Thayer Hoover's headstone.

As I was scrubbing away, it felt really tippy so I stood up and took the top off. Then, the main writing part of the stone wobbled so I carefully laid it down on the ground. Next, the base part holding it up came right off and finally, the square stone set in the ground was lifted out of the not very flat ground. No wonder it was tippy.

I sprayed all pieces with water and then a mix of Dawn dish soap and water and scrubbed them. I washed them off with water and then sprayed the pieces with a special ultra soapy stuff called D2 Biological Solution. While I waited for it to do its magic, I looked around the cemetery, wondering what other headstones are losing their grip and could possibly tip over in the next few years.

I took out my little notebook and golf pencil and walked around the whole part of the inside circle of the property, testing each stone. There were 29 stones needing to be re-epoxied. Yikes. And this isn't even the whole cemetery.

I am going to need some help in the coming years. Headstones are heavy and I am old. I need some brute strength or someone who can make a tripod block and tackle to lift and hold the parts as they get new epoxy. I ordered and received a special epoxy from a company that makes this just for headstones, but the temperature must be in the 70s at a minimum to set. And I've watched enough

YouTube videos to know exactly how to mix it and set it. Because headstones are so heavy, a little goes a long way, and I can hardly wait to try it.

Back to little Harry. When I first started on his headstone, I thought his name was Harry Thayer and when I tried to find more information about him, I got nowhere. After cleaning the face of the stone, I discovered his whole name was Harry Thayer Hoover. No wonder I couldn't find him in the records. He died in 1877 at one year, 4 months and 9 days from diphtheria. No other family was nearby in the cemetery, so I took the information from the headstone, his parents being D. and H.A. Hoover, and tried to find where they came from or went to. I'm still looking and not giving up. Stay tuned.

In the meantime, I'm scrubbing more on his main headstone, cleaning out the nooks and crannies with a toothbrush and plastic picks where the darker moss, fungi and lichen hang out. It's looking better all the time. It will never be as nice as when it was first put in but at least it's readable now. And being my usual ADD self, I've moved to a couple other headstones and started the process of digging out all the nearby cactus, doing a cursory scrub down, and getting ready to give them the same attention to detail. It continues to be a peaceful and gratifying kind of work.



After I load up all the tools and buckets of my work back into my car, I wander around for a few minutes, looking at the beauty of our surroundings, take a deep breath of clean air, say a little prayer, call the dogs, and slowly mosey on back home.

Job worth the time.