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WHAT'S HAPPENING



## Dunkle Cemetery uses ground-penetrating radar to locate graves

Published by education on Fri, 08/30/2019 - 6:00am

By: Steve Chapman

Dunkle Cemetery, located west of Lawrenceburg, had an unusual visitor recently. Steve Watson, owner of Global GPR service, of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, came to the cemetery on Wed., Aug. 21, with his ground-penetrating radar to examine the grounds. He was there looking for unmarked graves.

Dunkle Cemetery, founded in 1854, is open for anybody to be buried there, free of charge. Over the years, some people have been buried there with only a simple marker which may have been moved, or in some cases, no marker at all. This has caused confusion as to which plots were still available for future burials.

Sammy Miller, a member of the cemetery's board, said Watson was hired to check the site and make a map that would indicate which plots were still open.

"The cemetery's 150-plus years old," Miller said. "When the land was donated by Joseph Miller, he stipulated that burials would be open to anybody, at no cost, to be buried there. (As a result) we've had a lot of burials with either just a rock or no marker at all. As the years go along, those rocks get moved along, so as the cemetery (got) a little fuller, the board started having some issues (where) someone will say, 'I'd like to have a plot near my family,' and we don't necessarily know what's available because there could have been a burial there 40 years ago, and it was never marked, and we don't know it."

Miller described the ground-penetrating radar as a device which resembled "a lawnmower," and said it could penetrate the ground at up to 20 feet. The images, he said, would not show an actual body, but rather a disturbance in the earth which would indicate somebody was buried there. Watson, he said, also made a map of the cemetery, showing which plots are still open; a record of which plots have graves and which ones are open will be made available to the public.

"We'll publish this information online and keep it updated, that way ... anyone can go online and say, 'That (plot's) not available,'" Miller said.

Miller estimated between 100 and 150 plots are still open in Dunkle Cemetery, and that there are up to 40 unmarked graves at the cemetery. The board, he said, is still deciding on whether to mark them, adding that if they do, they will use something simple for the markers.

"We're not going to pay for a headstone, obviously," he said.

For more information on Dunkle Cemetery, call board member Mike Britain at (417) 491-4590.

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