by Barbara A. Sykora
Secretary/Treasurer for Auburn Cemetery

Recently a group of concerned citizens undertook a project to refurbish the Auburn Cemetery. Most of the improvements have been completed now and the board of the Auburn Cemetery Association said, "[We] take this opportunity to publicly thank a group of volunteers for seeing and acting on needed improvements to Auburn Cemetery. We greatly appreciate their united efforts in bringing about some good changes in the looks of this country cemetery.

"The work accomplished the last several months has exceeded our expectations, especially in light of the fact we have no church, organization, or agency to hold us up. The spirit of volunteerism brings us together and makes the difference. This is a first-hand testimony to the transformations that can be accomplished by local teamwork. This and a core of generous donors with family members buried in the cemetery, made it possible to purchase the new fence with installation and associated costs, debt free, as a result of a five year fundraising endeavor. A new sign identifying the cemetery has also just become part of the cemetery.

"The board recognizes the following for their contributions: A-1 Excavating with operator Zach Zwiefelhofer, Blaha Farms, Boese Farms, Don Krause, Lauterbach Construction and Auburn Steel Supply, Dave Michels Excavating, Paul and Jodi Scheidecker, Paul Sykora, Thunder Hill Dairy, plus all those who help each year on spring spruce up day."

The old fence and accompanying brushy growth was removed and hauled away. Two new culverts were placed at the driveway entrances. Earth-moving equipment restructured the perimeter, including a 30 foot addition of land. This new addition, which was deeded to the cemetery as a gift by neighboring farmers Paul and Jodi Scheidecker, will possibly accommodate 100 more grave sites. Many willing hands donated time, labor, equipment, and resources to prepare the site for installing the new fence. New grass was seeded down in the work areas with more donated equipment and labor, including the energies of several young lads willing to help complete that project. Another improvement taken on this summer by trustee Paul Sykora was the cleaning, repairing, and leveling of some old needy gravestones.
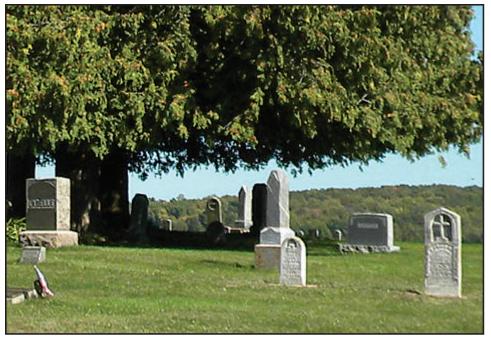
Eddy Cemetery, Chase Settlement Cemetery, First Methodist Protestant Church and Cemetery Association, and Auburn Cemetery. In its long history, the small rural cemetery three miles northwest of Bloomer along County Road Q, has been known by all these names. Today, it is known locally as Auburn Cemetery and has kept its long-handled name of First Methodist Church and Cemetery Association of Auburn for legal purposes. The ecclesiastical society of its origin no longer exits, but the cemetery association part has continued since its inception.

Auburn Cemetery's history goes back to 1868, 20 years after statehood and three years after the end of the Civil War.

The first mention of a burying ground in meeting notes was November 1871.

The society had their property surveyed, "bargaining for one acre of land on the east side of the burying ground for the purpose of building a parsonage." In 1896 it was noted that the June annual meetings were held on the cemetery grounds. In November of 1901, 115 years ago, at a specially called meeting, all property of the First Methodist Protestant Church of Bloomer was deeded to the First Methodist Protestant Church and Cemetery Association of Auburn for the sum of $75. That warranty deed has been preserved in safe keeping along with another deed drawn up in 1915 by Herman and Bertha Pagenkopf, owners of property adjoining the cemetery, correcting the land description on the 1901 deed. Officers at this time were Lumen Bowers, John Meier, E.L. Eddy, and David Stewart. In June, 1902 L. Bowers, John Meier, and Charles Vaux were appointed a committee to collect outstanding accounts due the association on lots. William Stelter was appointed president in 1903 upon the resignation of L. Bowers. Trustees John Meier and Eugene Eddy were left with the matter of fencing, collecting what funds they could for improvement of the cemetery grounds.

In 1906 John Meier and Adolf Lamberg were appointed to purchase fence for the front of the cemetery to collect funds for keeping up cemetery grounds. David Stewart was appointed to work up the cemetery streets. At the 1909

meeting the mowing of the grounds was let to the lowest bidder—Charles Meier being that person, was to be paid $9.00 for the season. A motion was carried to have the name of the cemetery printed above the center gate. 1911—the mowing of the grounds was let to the lowest bidder, which was A.W. Prill, for the sum of $7.75. Charles Vaux agreed to attend to the purchasing of cement blocks for restaking the grounds. The trustees, Adolf Lamberg, Charles Vaux, and Conrad Gehring agreed to see that they are placed on the grounds. Conrad Gehring also consented to do the collecting for keeping cemetery grounds in repair for the ensuing year. In 1912 August Boese was the lowest bidder, securing the mowing job at $10. It was agreed to buy 40 cedar fence posts to repair the fence on the south line of the cemetery furnished by Boese for 9 cents a piece.

1970—with the death of George Wirth, President W. Hass appoints Delbert Stewart to succeed George as secretary/treasurer. 1975—It was decided to reposses all lots for which dues were not paid in the last 5 years. Harry Matzke will fill in grave areas that have settled with more dirt and then re-seed. With Ernest Hass's passing, Delbert Stewart becomes president in 1978 and Christine Stuckert the secretary/treasurer. 1983—condition of some of the lots is discussed. Fill dirt is needed. 1985—repair work is done to some of the gravestones. 1986—discussion held on how to improve the grounds. 1987—

new fence put up around the cemetery with volunteer labor. 1989—Dorothy Conrad becomes secretary/treasurer.

In 2003 Dennis Mickesh assumed the president's office. A surveyor by profession, he commented on the accurate work the early care-takers performed in plotting out the gravesites on the cemetery grounds, sparing following generations some headaches. The lot corner markers measure true. Dennis and wife Carole were instrumental in re-vitalizing active interest in the cemetery association. Their interests in history and genealogy fit well. Dennis and Carole put the names of living lot owners and those buried, lot by lot, into a computer program retrieved from older written records. They established a data base of friends and descendants of those buried in the cemetery, the goal being to have a list of contacts to procure donations for maintenance and continued operating funds. The idea of perpetual care is obsolete today. The desire of the board was to generate enough operating funds to keep the association financially solvent for future generations. Each spring we send out a newsletter as a reminder of the spring spruce-up date. We tell of the previous year's accomplishments and the projects in focus for the current year, along with a contribution sheet to return to the association. Our list has grown to around 150 contacts, with 40 some sending in donations.

In 2014 a kiosk was added to the center of the grounds. It is a framework housing a map of the cemetery iden-

tifying each gravesite. All visitors can locate any gravesite. While president, Dennis Mickesh also initiated an annual spring spruce-up day when interested volunteers come together for on-going maintenance projects. Then we have a noon picnic lunch on the grounds followed by a business meeting. This has proved to be a great way for many hands to make light work. The current board has Bruce Sommerfeld as president, Barbara Sykora as secretary/treasurer, with Don Geissler, Chris McLaughlin, Edwin Metcalf, and Paul Sykora as trustees, and Dorothy Conrad as honorary trustee. The cemetery has a website—Buuthill.com.

Names of those who have served as trustees throughout the history of the association, along with those officers mentioned in the historical account are: Fred Boese, Joseph Bitney, Milton Bitney, Herb Cutsforth, Harold Dietsche, Herman Fehr, John Fehr, LaVern Hass, and George Matzke. Noteworthy examples of long-standing service in this association are: Charles Vaux—44 years, William Stelter—42 years, Jacob Wirth—36 years, Delbert Stewart—33 years, Ernie Hass—31 years. Many of these names are ones you will see today on the gravestones in Auburn Cemetery; laid to rest in the grounds they faithfully maintained for an awesome number of combined years of service. Besides mowing grass, of course, other beautifying tasks are: cleaning, repairing, and leveling gravestones, clearing away brush and other rubbish, keeping the fences clear of growth, bringing in fill to add to sunken areas and leveling, reseeding gravesites, planting new trees and pruning established ones, and lots of trimming. Recognition is not complete without naming Harry Matzke, who perseveringly did most of the above tasks throughout his 35 years of lawn mowing and general care-taking.

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