

Livingston County Poor Farm Cemetery



Description

The Livingston County Poor Farm Cemetery is located in the Blossom Farms Estates Site Condominium, in the Southwest quarter of Section 15 of Marion Township, about 600 feet east of County Farm Road and about 200 feet south of Magnolia Garden Drive. The cemetery is approximately 0.4 acres in area, contains 68 known headstones, and is situated in an open park area known as “Blossom Park” on the plat drawings for “Blossom Farms Estates” (Boss 9). There are no platted lots in this cemetery, but the headstones are instead in four rows. The provided cemetery map and transcription calls these rows “lots” for consistency with the other cemeteries. The rows of graves are typically 8 feet wide and have walkways of varying widths between the rows. The longest “lot,” or row, of graves is “Lot 1” or the westerly-most lot, with 24 headstones. The other lots are numbered 2, 3, and 4, proceeding to the east. The transcription of this cemetery has the graves listed from north to south.

Most of the headstones are difficult to read in their present condition. Therefore, the transcription of this cemetery depends almost entirely on the transcription done by the D.A.R. in the 1940’s (I: 88-9).

History

The history of this cemetery is closely tied to that of the Livingston County Poor Farm. The following is a description of the Poor Farm and Cemetery from the 1976 Howell Bicentennial History:

On January 5, 1871 Hiran [sic] Wing of Marion Township sold his farm of 215 acres for \$10,000 to the Board of County Supervisors. A committee composed of the Supervisors of Green Oak, Unadilla, Tyrone, and Conway Twps. made the choice for the location of the poor farm. That very year a new building was started for them, near the road and the Wing farm buildings. A second building called the Infirmary was later built which burned in 1937.

During the 1930's under Mr. Whitacre's direction and using W.F.A. labor, the cemetery on the Poor Farm was improved. However, when the stones were reset, they were set in rows and not over the graves. There were at least 65 burials, a number of them Scotch or Irish. This area, one-seventh of an acre, was at this time fenced, but now the fence is gone, and the county has never done anything to keep up this cemetery (200).

The details of the above mentioned fire are described in the Livingston County Press:

County Farm Infirmary Razed by Fire

Fire of undetermined origin completely destroyed the Livingston Infirmary six miles south of Howell in Marion township the afternoon of October 13, 1937.

Three inmates were carried to safety on cots, while the other fled with what few belongings they could grasp. Loss was estimated at between \$12,000 and \$15,000 with insurance for \$4,500.

Mr. and Mrs. Saunders were in charge of the farm.

Several of the patients were given shelter at the Richardson Inn and homes were opened to others.

Fire was first discovered on the roof and spread rapidly.

One of the patients was 92 years of age, another was 80 both blind and bedridden.

Sometime later a new County Infirmary was established on Howell lake ("County Farm" 18).

The first mention of this cemetery in the land records is when the farm was sold by the county to Stanley H. Knight and wife in January 1939 (Griffith 1). The deed states that the county excepts and reserves ownership of the "County Infirmary Cemetery," an

area 56 feet by 132 feet. The deed also states that no future burials would take place there and that “friends and relatives of deceased persons buried thereon may cross the premises first above described at convenient places for the purposes of visiting said cemetery” (Liber 178, Page 348).

In October of 1993, Charles E. Garlock, made a survey of the cemetery grounds for Marion Township. At this time, he measured the remnants of the surrounding fence, and determined that the cemetery was actually 132 feet by 124 feet by 136 feet by 121 feet (Garlock “County Poor Farm”).

In May of 2003, Boss Engineering recorded the plans for the site condominium of “Blossom Farms Estates” (Liber 4402, Page 368). The cemetery is shown with dimensions very close to those measured by Garlock. The cemetery of this plat is shown as an exception to “Blossom Park.” This plat also shows that access to the cemetery is by a 20 foot wide easement from Magnolia Garden Drive. Today, there is a concrete path that leads from Magnolia Garden Drive to the cemetery. The cemetery is also enclosed by a new fence (Boss 9).

The cemetery is currently owned by Livingston County, for which its maintenance and upkeep the county is still responsible for.