

Harris Prairie Cemetery

"The cemetery today remains a beautiful place, and the people of Harris Township are proud of the history it holds, indeed, our heritage to behold."

- Mrs. Carrie Hawkins, 1924

fast facts

Located on the south side of Adams Rd. in Harris Township 14500 Adams Rd., Granger, Indiana

There are 218 plots total, 447 burials

Spanning the years of 1834 to 2022

Maintained by the Harris Township

The Need For a Cemetery and how it got its name

The pioneers first arrived in Harris Township in the year 1828. Not long after, family members of the early settlers began to pass away. They had little choice but to put them to rest on their own properties, because there was no common burial ground. The current location of the Harris Prairie Cemetery was first deeded to Joseph Hartman on March 1, 1831. The land was then deeded to Jacob and Susannah Harris on December 16, 1835. They later provided the land for use as a cemetery when they deeded the land to the State of Indiana on December 29, 1857. About the same time, John Metzger provided an acre of land on the North side of Adams RD for construction of a church. However, on June 21, 1858, John Metzger exchanged an acre of land lying next to that which was already donated to the state for his original acre given. A church was never built, and all the land was used as a cemetery. The land was contained within a half-mile strip of prairie belonging to Jacob Harris and known locally as "Harris Prairie". It naturally took on the name "Harris Prairie Cemetery".

Just as vast as the grave markers worldwide are, so too are those found in Harris Prairie Cemetery.

*Tablet Headstone - Taller than it is wide.
Monument Headstone - Wider than it is tall.
Statue Headstone - A sculpted memorial
Bevel Headstone - Short with a slanted face.
Tree Headstone - In the shape of a tree trunk.
Obelisks - A column that tapers toward the top.
Footstone - Marks the foot of an individual grave.*

Who Is Buried Here? the first five people

The first person buried was *Robert Nixon* in 1834 at age 71. Not to be confused with Harris Township Trustee Robert Nixon, husband to Elizabeth Haslett, who was born in 1815 and married Elizabeth in 1838. No connection between the two Robert Nixons has been found yet. Robert Nixon (b. 1764 - d. 1834) came to America from Tyrone County, Ireland.

Sarah Baldwin passed away in 1835 at age 16. Her parents were David and Elizabeth Baldwin. The Baldwins were among the first to build a home in Harris Township. Sarah's brother, Josephus, remained in Harris Township, while her brother, Silas, moved to the Elkhart area, her brother William made a home in Michigan and their father made his way out to California after Elizabeth passed in 1847.

Thomas Creveling passed away in 1836. He was a boatman from Epsy, Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had eight children. She was pregnant with their ninth child when Thomas died and was buried in Harris Township while on a trip to the west.

John Martin was also buried in 1836. Unfortunately, the only information currently known about John is found on his epitaph. He was born in 1784 and died on 8th of October 1836.

Catherine Kennedy died of consumption in 1837. Several families were neighbors in Pennsylvania before moving to Harris Township. The Kennedy family was among them, arriving in 1833. Catherine's brother, Robert Kennedy, became the first school teacher in Harris Township.

There are ten known war veterans buried in Harris Prairie Cemetery.

Management of Cemetery

Who has taken care of it over time?

Although the land for the cemetery was donated in 1856, an association dedicated to maintain and preserve the cemetery wasn't established until 3 November, 1890. Levi Ringle filed papers for Indiana Articles of Association with Secretary of State, Charles Griffin to establish the "Harris Prairie Cemetery Association". It incorporated on December 19, 1890. By the following April, the cemetery was surveyed, separated into 218 lots, and the driveway was developed. Levi Ringle was the first president of the association with Cyrus Ringle and John Shimp serving as trustees. Cyrus Ringle mentions in a memoir that he believes it cost no more than \$10 to bury someone in the early days. The plots themselves cost as low as \$1 in the mid nineteenth century and as high as \$30 around the turn of the century. The association proved to have trouble motivating the community to maintain the cemetery, even to the extent of organizing an annual clean-up day with little satisfaction.

The Harris Prairie Cemetery Association was reorganized on 1 November, 1922 with a renewed determination to care for the lots. The association placed their funds with the County Auditor and drew \$80 per year in interest, but within 40 years, this amount was not enough to maintain the cemetery.

This caused the association to turn over the funds and responsibility of maintaining the cemetery to the Harris Township in 1963. The township used the money to make repairs and build a tool building and put the remaining balance into the general fund.

"It seems that the sleep will be most peaceful for those who are privileged to lie in this beautiful cemetery where the prairie winds blow gently over the soft green grass, and the robins sing in the rustling trees."

Cyrus Ringle, 1931

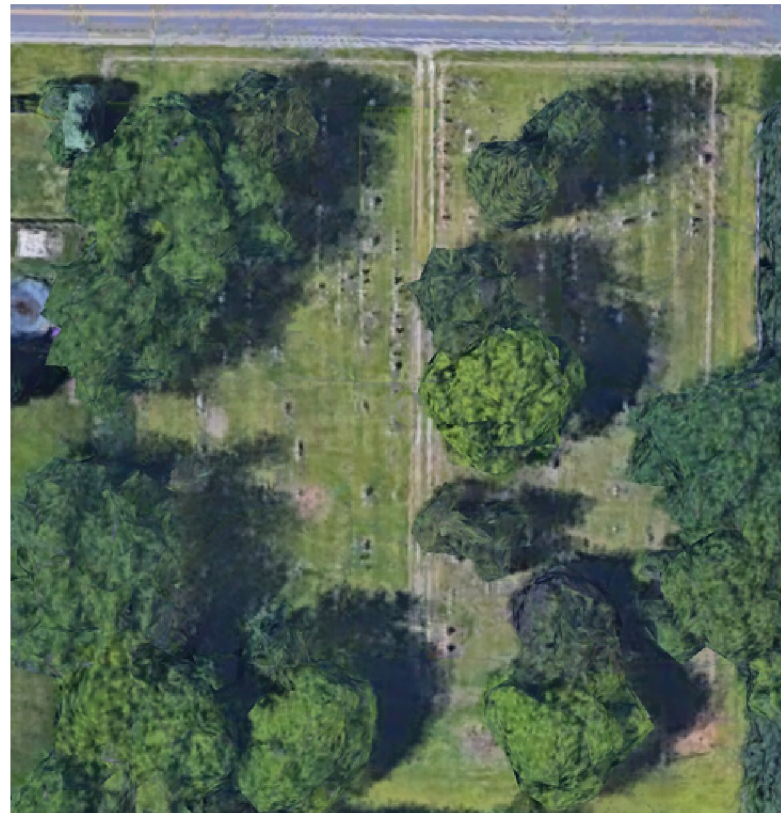
Harris Township Care

Harris Township has maintained and cared for the Harris Prairie Cemetery for sixty years. This includes cutting and trimming the grass, straightening monuments, leveling and seeding the ground, maintaining fences, and cleaning up expired plants, to name a few of the responsibilities.

The township coordinated the restoration of cemetery headstones in 2015-16 and again as recently as 2022, with plans to continue in 2023. The driveway was replenished in 2016 and the roof to the maintenance shed was replaced about the same time.

For more information on the Harris Prairie Cemetery, including news on current projects and pictures, please visit www.harristwp.com.

Burial plots are not available for sale at this time.



An aerial view of the Harris Prairie Cemetery



Harris Township made it possible for stones to be repaired and cleaned in 2022-2023.