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(Photo by Rod sanford/Lansing State Journal)
Restoring history: Girl Scout Allison Findlay, 16, looks over some of the gravestones Monday at the DuBois Cemetery in Alaiedon Township. She is working on a project to document and restore the historic cemetery, which is situated in the middle of a farm field.

LSJ Blogs

Roadside distractions

Speaking of memorials for the dead, what do you think of the spontaneous displays that show up at the scenes of fatal accidents?

Check out my blog at www.lsj.com/schneiderblog

Photo Gallery:

[Allison Findlay, DuBois Cemetery](#)

Schneider: 16-year-old lovingly adopts historic cemetery for project

Girl Scout wants to repair Alaiedon site

ALAIEDON TWP. - I drove past DuBois Cemetery four times before I finally spotted a tombstone jutting, like a broken arm, through the waist-high weeds.

That, says 16-year-old Allison Findlay, is an insult to the 100 souls buried there, as well as to their descendants. It's also, she believes, a betrayal of the township's heritage.

Pointing to toppled, crumbled grave markers lying among the chaos of vegetation, Allison said, "This is our history."

Allison is a Girl Scout, a member of Troop 182. She lives on Willoughby Road and goes to Okemos High School. She has adopted DuBois Cemetery for her Gold Award (the Girl Scout equivalent of Eagle Scout).

Allison plans to clean up the cemetery and document the graves, and to watch her out there, lovingly stroking the weathered stones as though they were kittens, is to know she'll do it if she has to pull out every weed herself.

Allison already has rescued a half-buried stone marking that appears to be the oldest grave in the cemetery - that of Sarah DuBois, who died May 12, 1841. She also has determined that the cemetery holds 11 Civil War veterans and one veteran of the War of 1812.

Through a wheat field

DuBois Cemetery rests on a rise in the middle of a wheat field, a few hundred yards off Every Road, just south of Harper Road, a few miles south of where I live.

An unlocked gate on Every Road opens onto a 10-foot-wide swath recently carved from the wheat, which leads to the graves, which are in various states of disrepair.

Trudging through the wheat field on what is technically a township easement, a visitor to the cemetery can't help but feel like a trespasser, which is part of the reason the cemetery has been abandoned to weeds and day lilies.

Intimidating path

The township's dwindling investment in DuBois, said Alaiedon trustee David Leonard, is a result, to some extent, of the fact that people quit visiting the cemetery. That's partly because nobody's been buried there since the 1920s and partly because the path to the cemetery is foreboding.

"It's intimidating to have to walk through somebody else's field," Leonard said.

Nonetheless, Leonard acknowledged that the township should not have allowed the cemetery to fall into such disrepair.

"We slipped up," he said. "It's the township's fault. We're guilty of benign neglect."

Allison Findlay made her case for kinder treatment of DuBois at a recent meeting of the trustees.

She was convincing, Leonard said.

"We're a little sheepish about the condition of the cemetery," the trustee said, "but she did us a good turn by bringing it to our attention. We'll step up and do something."

What, exactly, is not clear.

The township doesn't own the mowing equipment necessary to navigate the rough terrain of DuBois, which has been largely reclaimed by nature.

But if machines can't do it, Allison Findlay can. She's willing to organize a work party of volunteers willing to do the work by hand.

In fact, she's already made a start.

If you want to help, you can reach her at 655-5854 or at findlayjohn@yahoo.com.

What do you think? Call John Schneider at 377-1175, send a fax to 377-1298 or e-mail

jschneid@lsj.com.

Include your name, phone number, city, town or township.

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