

New stones now mark the graves of Delaware Civil War veterans



DELAWARE BACKSTORY
ROBIN BROWN

WILMINGTON — Some of Riverview Cemetery's oldest graves just got the newest stones.

They are the graves of nearly a dozen Civil War veterans.

Tedd Cocker of Newark, a career Army retiree, joined the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery two years ago after visiting to see the graves of Civil War soldiers in the 87-acre graveyard.

In working on the cemetery inventory, he said, many such graves were listed as "NSF" or "no stone found." Other Civil War veterans' stones were broken, sunken or so worn they couldn't be read.



George Pauley of Newark places a new headstone last week on the grave of Civil War veteran George A. Baldwin in Riverview Cemetery. The Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery obtained the federally issued markers as part of their efforts to maintain and improve the formerly neglected cemetery. THE NEWS JOURNAL/SUCHAT PEDERSON

Graves: Volunteers find records, place new stones

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He set about to replace them.

The U.S. government issues headstones and brass markers for veterans' graves, but getting them requires the submission of "muster-in and muster-out records," Cocker said. He found

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records of 11 in the state archives and filed requests. The new stones' receipt had to be certified, as did the old ones' destruction and new ones' installation.

George Pauley of Newark handled that. A retired teacher, he works for his grandfather's namesake John W. Pauley Cemetery Memorials on Lancaster Avenue, where his dad also worked.

Out of respect for the historic soldiers, Pauley donated his time and services to remove the old stones and place the new ones. After some graves had gone unmarked for more than a century, he

said, "these guys deserve their markers."

On a steamy day last week, he brought friend and fellow volunteer Wayne Vassalotti of Elsmere to help put in the new stones.

Vassalotti's son, Mike, a West Point grad and Army colonel, was wounded and decorated in the first Gulf War and now is on loan to the Department of Defense. "That's why I'm here," he said.

At the grave of 4th Delaware Infantry Private George A. Baldwin, they first dug out a sunken, discolored and illegible stone. They dug a rectangular hole 2 feet deep for new one. They layered in about 50 pounds each of marble stone including hammered remnants of the old marker, Quickcrete and sand, then stood the stronger granite replacement — about 250 pounds — in the hole. After shoveling in and tamping dirt,

they returned grass clumps to its base.

"Original stones didn't have foundations," Pauley said. "That's why they fell and broke."

Except for one stone that arrived broken, all the replacement stones, including those for a father and son and two cousins, were placed in time for a Memorial Day service Monday.

Cocker isn't done yet. He is researching more Civil War vets to get stones, "then we'll start on the Spanish-American War," he said.

Replacing the stones or markers for later wars' vets will require help, he said, because copies of their discharge papers are required — and only families can get them.

Learn more about Riverview Cemetery, including how to help, at www.riverviewcem.com.

