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NYC DEP Completes Restoration Project at Pepacton Cemetery in Delaware County



More Information

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DEP joined by elected officials, veterans and historians for flag-raising ceremony

Project restored hundreds of gravestones for those who were reinterred during construction of Pepacton and Cannonsville reservoirs

High-resolution photos of the cemetery and upgrade work are on DEP's Flickr Page

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was joined on Thursday by elected officials from Delaware County, local historians and veterans to mark the completed restoration of Pepacton Cemetery. Several hundred gravestones were cleaned, repaired and reset over the past two years as part of a project to rehabilitate the decades-old cemetery. In the 1950s and 1960s, more than 400 deceased were removed from local burial grounds and reinterred at Pepacton Cemetery to allow for the construction of Pepacton and Cannonsville reservoirs. The city-owned cemetery was rededicated in their memory on Thursday during a flag-raising ceremony.

"The Delaware County ancestors that are buried in Pepacton Cemetery deserve a final resting place that is dignified and well maintained," **DEP Commissioner Vincent Sapienza** said. "I want to thank the workers who refurbished the memorial stones at the cemetery, and the DEP employees who take pride in the day-to-day upkeep of the cemetery grounds and first called our attention to the improvements that were needed. The City assumed responsibility for this cemetery more than six decades ago, and it is important that we invest resources in its upkeep just as we do with our water supply infrastructure."

Workers began to rehabilitate the cemetery in early 2016, and the final

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improvements were completed this fall. A total of 305 headstones, footstones and monuments were cleaned, repaired and/or reset. This included several large obelisk-style headstones, made of marble or sandstone, that were in danger of tipping. Three headstones were replaced because they were damaged beyond repair. Some damaged and previously unmarked gravesites also received new markers. A total of 39 gravesites were previously marked by plastic name plates that were screwed onto concrete blocks. Some of these nameplates were damaged by the sun, chipped by maintenance equipment, or missing altogether. They were replaced by granite markers attached to bluestone bases. Granite markers were also placed at 68 gravesites that were previously unmarked, giving those deceased a viewable name for the first time.

Special attention was also paid to the gravesites of military veterans. It was previously known that 16 military veterans were buried at Pepacton Cemetery, because their gravestones noted their military service. During the course of the restoration project, local historians discovered through genealogical research that an additional 12 veterans were buried in the cemetery. The 28 veterans identified in the cemetery include those who fought in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, served as Union soldiers in the Civil War, or fought in the Spanish-American War. Each of the veteran gravesites was adorned with a solid bronze flag holder and an emblem to denote the war in which each person fought. The cemetery is also the final resting place for the original settlers of some towns, including Cannonsville and Trout Creek.

In addition to work on the gravestones, DEP also improved the cemetery by trimming trees, cleaning its fences, installing a new directory of those who are buried at the site, and outfitting its flagpole with a new light.

A total of 426 deceased are buried at Pepacton Cemetery. New York City established the cemetery in the 1950s for the purpose of reintering those who were moved from cemeteries to allow for the construction of Pepacton and Cannonsville reservoirs. Twenty-one cemeteries were affected by construction of the two reservoirs, including formal cemeteries and family burial grounds that were often located on farms. A total of 4,521 deceased were reinterred. At the time, families were notified and given the opportunity to reinter their ancestors at a location of their choosing. The remains of those who were not claimed by family were reinterred in Pepacton Cemetery. The City's Board of Water Supply, which was responsible for construction of the reservoirs, was careful to catalogue its work to reinter the bodies. At Pepacton Cemetery, each burial site was marked by a small post that was sunken into the ground and topped with a copper plate. The copper plates included section and grave numbers that corresponded to the names and towns of origin for each of the deceased. Those copper plates—still located in the cemetery but often obscured by soil or grass—were rediscovered as part of the upgrade project to provide named gravestones to those who didn't previously have one. According to historic records, it was anticipated that New York City would transfer ownership of the cemetery to either a cemetery operator or the Town of Andes, but the transfer never happened and the City has owned and maintained the grounds ever since.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of high-quality water each day to more than 9.5 million New Yorkers. This includes more than 70 upstate communities and institutions in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties who consume an average of 110 million total gallons of drinking water daily from New York City's water supply system. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and other professionals in the watershed. In addition to its \$70 million payroll and \$166 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.7 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally

sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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