



Ted Kusters of Abba Monument Co. in Newark uses a level to check the base of a grave marker he is repairing at Riverview Cemetery in Wilmington. ROBERT CRAIG/THE NEWS JOURNAL

MONUMENTAL REVIVAL

Grant helps restore crumbling cemetery markers



DELAWARE BACKSTORY
ROBIN BROWN

known fund.

The Delaware Distressed Cemetery Fund was set up by 2008

The tiny grave of 7-month-old Elsie Moreland, who died Nov. 27, 1878, was marked with a "baby crib" of marble.

Sculpted sides extended from a small headstone, tapering to a footstone. A marble base left open a bit of dirt to hold her mourners' flowers.

But time – and perhaps vandals – pulled apart her centuries-old tribute, exposing joining rods, its every piece a killer. A decoration that once sat atop her footstone was gone, just the stub of its securing rod left behind.

But the baby's grave marker is among scores being repaired in an ongoing project at Riverview Cemetery in Wilmington, thanks to a little-



Epoxy was used to piece together this broken gravestone and base.

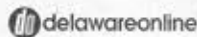
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legislation, sponsored by Sen. Margaret Rose Henry, also starting cemetery registration and adding \$2 to the cost of a death certificate for the fund.

In 2010, the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery got a grant for equipment, said group president Lee Anderson. That paid for a riding mower and mulcher, making maintenance easier at the 42-acre cemetery on both sides of the 3300 block of N. Market St. – opened in 1872.

Early this year, the fund approved a second grant awarding \$10,000 for its proposed monument repair project, working with John W. Pauley Memorials of Wilmington and the Abba



See additional photos of cemetery repairs

Monument Co. of Newark.

Tedd Cocker, cemetery friends vice president, picked a variety of stones for repair in the grant.

One gravestone was in pieces and stained, while another just fell face down as its grave caved in. Another was vandalized, its angled center cube pushed off its base.

"We're hoping to do about 60," Cocker said, walking to a stone being repaired at the cemetery last week, adding, "We've done 18 so far and that's cost \$3,096."

John G. Pauley and Ted Kusters hoisted a

Riverview: Hundreds of stones need repair

HOW TO HELP

» The nonprofit Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery, located at 3300 N. Market St. in Wilmington, seek volunteers from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday to plant bulbs in the cemetery's baby section and do other landscaping work. Volunteers are asked to use the cemetery's chapel/office entrance on Market Street.

» Learn more about Riverview Cemetery, including its rich history, volunteer opportunities, needed donations and burial information, at www.riverviewcem.com or contact the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery at 762-4705 or Box 2173, Wilmington, DE 19899.



Ted Kusters of Abba Monument Co. in Newark (standing) and John G. Pauley of John W. Pauley Cemetery Memorials in Wilmington lower an old gravestone back onto its base, from which it fell years ago at Riverview Cemetery in Wilmington. ROBERT CRAIG/THE NEWS JOURNAL

long-downed gravestone, using a thick rope slung around its middle and a tripod topped with a pulley.

They lowered the stone with its notched bottom fitting an opening in the base, then lifted it – to add epoxy – and lowered it back into place, checking that it was level. Cocker pointed to

Mary J.K. Stone's 1892 gravestone. "This was in about eight pieces," he said. If it broke again, the marble would go before its epoxy joints, which are stronger.

Watching Pauley and Kusters reassemble the base of another stone, he said, "We're very happy with the results and wish we could do more, but it's all a matter of money."

Hundreds of markers still need repair – and some can't be fully fixed.

Baby Elsie's cribstone was re-assembled, but her footstone still has no ornament.

"We don't know what it was," Cocker said. "A

baby lamb, a flower, an angel... It could have been anything."

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