

LOCAL NEWS

Cleaning up stones and identifying veterans

Rochelle DAR service project helps identify 116 more veterans buried in cemetery

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STAFF WRITER

ROCHELLE – The Daughters of the American Revolution recently completed a service project identifying graves of veterans and firefighters in the St. Patrick Catholic Church cemetery who were previously unidentified.

The Daughters of the American Revolution is a national organization with chapters throughout the country. Once a year the organization does a National Day of Service and this year the local chapter decided to partner with the church and help them identify, document and clean off headstones at the cemetery on the south side of town.

The organization chose to do this project because it both helped give veterans the recognition they deserve and represented the three main goals of the organization.

“The project was designed to reflect the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution’s missions of Historic Preservation, Education and Patriotism,” explained Lydia Roberts, vice regent of the Rochelle Chapter.

The church was contacted for permission prior to the project and they provided the



Volunteers from the Daughters of the American Revolution at St. Patrick’s cemetery cleaning the gravestones of veterans who were previously unidentified.

DAR with a list of those buried in the cemetery, location maps of the graves and a list of the known veterans.

The identification process involved splitting the chapter members into different teams who walked through each row of the cemetery placing a small flag at any of the graves of unidentified veterans.

There are a few tricks the organization used to identify which stones belonged to veterans and which ones did not.

“We would place a flag at any grave that mentioned military service, had a bronze U.S. Government Veterans Plaque, or was shaped

with the unique rounded top with the embossed cross used to designate a veteran during or prior to WWI,” said Roberts.

DAR members also marked the name on the list provided by the church.

Once the flags had been placed, another group took photographs of the stones that were marked with the flags. They then collected the flags since cemetery rules do not allow flags to be stuck in the ground beside graves.

Finally, the last group cleaned 32 of the most heavily solid stones with water, a scrub brush and lots of towels. Cleaning chemicals were not used

because it could damage the stones.

The project was very successful at identifying many gravestones of veterans in the cemetery.

“When we started, the church only had 30 veterans on their list, but by the time we finished we had identified 116 additional graves, bringing the total to 146,” Roberts said. “Four of the 116 identified were women and the oldest veteran noted, Theodore L. Schade, served in the Spanish American War in 1898.”

DAR members say there still may be some stones that did not indicate veteran status that they may have missed and are asking the Rochelle community to let them know if they have any information about veterans who were overlooked or not indicated. Community members can reach out with the names of these individuals by contacting St. Patrick’s Church or Lydia Roberts at ViceRegent.DAR.Rochelle@gmail.com.

The future plans of the DAR is to adopt St. Patrick’s Cemetery as a location for the National Wreaths Across America Program whose mission is similar to the missions of the DAR. For the Wreaths Across America Program community members sponsor a wreath for \$15 each

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that will be placed at the graves of veterans on Dec. 14, 2019.

The DAR will need the help of the community to sponsor 150 wreaths that will be placed at the cemetery.

“The deadline to sponsor wreaths is Dec. 2 and sponsorship forms can be picked up at the

Rochelle VFW, St Patrick’s Church or online at wreathscrossamerica.org/IL0136P,” said Roberts.

The DAR would like to give a special thanks to Sharon Duncan at St. Patrick’s Church and all of the chapter members who participated in the project.



Pictured is the grave marker of Minferd L. Peterson before cleaning and after.



MINFERD L PETERSON
WISCONSIN
TEC5 ENGINEERS
WORLD WAR II
JAN 9 1917 AUG 8 1971