

OHRAB Grant Program
The Ohio History Connection State Archives
800 E. 17th Ave., Columbus, OH 43211
Attn: fprevits@ohiohistory.org

RE: Interim Report for Ravenna Township Grant Project, August 29, 2019

Ravenna Township

Grandview Memorial Park Records Preservation Project

Project Director: Sarah Lund-Goldstein, Cemetery Clerk,
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SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT:

Ravenna Township is a small township located near the center of Portage County, Ohio. The Township surrounds the city of Ravenna and shares some services such as the Ravenna City Schools, but the Township Service Department is a clearly separated department from the city.

The rural township maintains a central administration building which houses the Service, Fire, Zoning and General Administration departments, as well as the meeting space for the Ravenna Township Trustees.

In January 2018, The Ravenna Township Trustees took over Grandview Memorial Park, a cemetery started in 1966, within its boundaries per the State of Ohio. This cemetery had previously been a private company operating for more than 50 years. The Township received this cemetery as part of a legal decision by the State of Ohio after the incarceration of its previous owners because of business fraud. Details of these events can be found on the background source links attached with this application.

A part time clerk was hired in February 2018 to organize and gather the state of the business records. This clerk operates as part of the Ravenna Township Service Department, under the supervision of Ray Taylor, Supervisor of the Service Department and Cemetery Sexton. An office within the Service Department was made in 2018 by the Township and is the location of these records. The duties of the clerk are to maintain the paper records of the cemetery, to help the sexton locate plots and to make sure they are available for burials and to issue plot deeds for sales and transfers within the cemetery. While the cemetery does offer burials 6 days per week, the clerk is typically only available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but is available for walk in appointments. There is no charge for research within these files.

Throughout 2018, the clerk tried to get a general overlook of the cemetery and made the assessment determined that the cemetery holds nearly 4,000 burials and the unique paper records are in varying levels of condition from newspaper clippings to sticky notes, to carbon copies and fax paper nearly too faded to read. Further document preservation is needed at this time to preserve these one of a kind records.

The physical documents related to the cemetery fill roughly 33 standard cardboard file boxes, and are held on 2 sturdy metal shelves within the Service Department. It is recommended that the files be transferred to an acid free archival system of files and boxes immediately as the files are deteriorating and the labels are beginning to fall off the file folders.

Digitally, a file server has been dedicated to the use of the cemetery for maintenance of the cemetery. This service currently uses 378 GB of data for the cemetery with a capacity of 813 GB. A suggestion of a backup standalone hard drive for digital preservation is also warranted at this time.

The total requested with this grant application at this time is \$3,400 with an in-kind match of staff hours totaling \$7,020, bringing the expected project cost to \$10,420.

PROGRESS SO FAR:

The Grandview Memorial Park Records Preservation Project has been going strong since the beginning of our grant period. We have scanned 28 storage boxes of archival materials, with only 5 remaining, covering just letters "B" and "C" of approximately 3,400 owners' files.

We have ordered and received archival preservation boxes and file folders from Gaylord Archival. And we have started to migrate the paper files into these new boxes and folders. To date we have spent \$2,846.90 on archival supplies, we will evaluate what else may be needed for the project as we complete the paper file transitions.

We have needed to implement some basic ad-hoc training for our staff on basic archival processes, such as not using regular pens on the boxes, no paper clips and limited use of staples, etc. We now see the need to either post some "how-to" reminder signage in our storage area and/or creating a process manual for future employees.

To date, our financial match stands at \$3,780 for 315 hours of work for our project manager, paid by the Township.

It should be noted that our Township Service Director has surprised us with increasing our physical storage area by making an adjoining space a bit smaller. This welcome assistance allows better access to our materials and will give a more professional appearance for our finished project. In addition, it has provided an ADA compliant access door for visitors. This construction will be completed soon as we deal with the temporary flux of storing our working materials as we transition to this location.

As our scanning nears its end, we will soon be able to address the digital architecture to connect all of these materials together to create a cohesive end product for use online and internally for ongoing use by the cemetery staff. We hope to double check that all of our grave markers have been photographed and geo-tagged before there is snow in the area.

PRESS:

Grandview Memorial Park showing improvement since township takeover, Record Courier Newspaper, Aug. 4, 2019; <https://www.record-courier.com/article/20190804/news/308049916>