

# LYONSVILLE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

## 2025 NEWSLETTER

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### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

*Bruce Cady, President*

*Karen Furlong, Vice  
President*

*Judy Birmingham, Secretary*

*Michael Belletete, Treasurer*

*Linda Clarke, Trustee*

*Sharon Comstock, Trustee*

*Ted Corlett, Trustee*

*Matthew George, Trustee*

*Beth Pacanowski, Trustee*

*Mark Richel, Ex-Officio  
Trustee*

*To reach a member of the  
Board, please call our  
Secretary, Judy Birmingham  
at 630-325-3208 or for  
financial questions, our  
Treasurer, Michael Belletete  
at 630-455-6170 and leave  
a message. Thank you.*

### **Lyonsville Cemetery**

**6871 Joliet Road**

**Indian Head Park, IL  
60525**

**Email:**  
[info@lyonsvillecemetery.org](mailto:info@lyonsvillecemetery.org)

**Website:**  
[lyonsvillecemetery.org](http://lyonsvillecemetery.org)

**(To access the cemetery,  
enter off Joliet Road through  
the Church parking lot.)**

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The Cemetery is organized under the Illinois Cemetery Act to exist in perpetuity and in trust for the benefit of the grave owners and is administered by a volunteer board of trustees. The Illinois Comptroller's Office oversees Lyonsville Cemetery and performs an annual audit of our financial records. We are pleased to report we have always been in compliance with State regulations.

From when the first acre of our three-acre country cemetery was sold from Elijah Wentworth to Lyonsville Church in 1848 to create the Lyonsville Cemetery until the present day, the Lyonsville Cemetery has been the final resting place for generations of area residents. The Lyonsville Cemetery Association purchased the Cemetery from the Church in 1889 and through a volunteer Board of Trustees has, for 135 years, endeavored to be good stewards of the property. We are an independent organization and proud the Cemetery is open to all, regardless of religious affiliation.

We encourage you to join us for an upcoming Board meeting. Whether you have a loved one interred at Lyonsville, would like to know more about becoming involved in our preservation efforts, or are simply interested in the history of the Cemetery, we extend an invitation to all to attend any of our Board meetings.

### **2026 Board Meeting Schedule** **Meetings begin at 7:00 pm**

Tuesday, February 10  
Tuesday, May 12  
Tuesday, August 11  
Tuesday, November 10

As meeting dates and location sometime change, please send us an email regarding your interest in attending so we can provide you with the location of the meeting and keep you aware of any changes.

**Cemetery Board Member Updates:** In November, we were fortunate to have two new Board members join the Board of Trustees, Linda Clarke and Ted Corlett. Linda is a descendant of the Vial family, one of the 13 original founding members of Lyonsville Congregational Church. Linda is a life-long member of the community and looks forward to bringing new ideas to the Board. Ted Corlett was a member of Lyonsville Congregational Church from 1985 until closing. He was married there to his wife Melissa, and their children attended Sunday school through high school. Ted commented that he always loved the cemetery and often walked through it. His kids loved having the Easter Egg hunts there, first as gatherers, then as helpers. He feels it is an amazing cemetery with very old graves and names associated with the area. He finally has time to volunteer and looks forward to working with the wonderful board.

We wish to thank the following members for their years of service on the Cemetery Board. Mark Richel, who has served various positions such as Trustee,

Vice President and President for approximately 25 years, is stepping down and will serve as an Ex-Officio member of the Board. In addition, we thank Charles Gerth for his participation on the Board from 2016 to 2025 and appreciate all he has done to help us with various projects.

## **MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVED WITH THE AMERICAN LEGION**

### **ROBERT E. COULTER, JR. POST 1941**

An ongoing tradition at the Lyonsville Cemetery is the observance of Memorial Day with a ceremony conducted by the American Legion Robert E. Coulter, Jr. Post 1941. In the days before the ceremony Boy Scouts from the area place small flags beside the graves of the over 100 veterans buried at Lyonsville. On Memorial Day itself, a bus with American Legion members arrive for the event escorted by police cars and motorcycles. A brief ceremony then takes place near our flagpole which includes the presentation of the American Flag and the flag of each branch of the military, words of remembrance, a prayer, the laying of a memorial wreath, a rifle salute, and is closed with the playing of taps.



As has also become a tradition, the Cemetery Board has refreshments and baked goods for the American Legion and attending public. The event continues to grow each year and we encourage you and your family and friends to join us! We always look forward to welcoming new attendees to the event (the only exception to that may be the very prevalent and overwhelming cicadas attending in 2024!) The tentative timing is 10:00 a.m. on Memorial Day, however, the American Legion visits several cemeteries that day and their arrival timing can vary so we encourage your being at Lyonsville Cemetery by 9:45 a.m.





A special thank you to the Leaders and Boy Scouts from LaGrange Troop 19 for placing the flags on the graves of our veterans, the American Legion and the Mayor of the Village of Indian Head Park for their participation and support of this event.

We would also like to thank Judy Birmingham and Kathy Richel for sewing a patriotic quilt which was raffled off to veterans and active-duty men and women who attended this year's gathering. The winner was Dominic Crescente, a member of the American Legion. Congratulations Dominic!



## FINANCES

The Lyonsville Cemetery Association is a recognized tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(13) of the Internal Revenue Code. As such, contributions to the Cemetery are tax deductible. We receive no local, state, or federal financial support and we rely on the income from our Perpetual Care Fund (Care Fund) and the gifts from individuals and estates to support our work. The principal of our Care Fund can not be spent and is audited annually by the Comptroller's Office of the State of Illinois. Our primary expense is the mowing and trimming of the Cemetery. Annually we select certain projects such as monument restoration, fence repairs, improving signage, etc. as our resources allow.

## OUR SINCERE THANK YOU

Since the printing of last year's newsletter and when this year's went to the printer, we are very grateful to have received gifts from the Arnold, Belletete, Bodine-Walker, Both, Brown, Hollingsworth, Horan, Joynt, Knollmann, Konow, Kruc, Martin, Meile, Richel, Robb, Schweigert, Sharp, Stallard, and Warden families, and also from the IBEW and the Virginia Meile Trust. Many of these names are regular contributors and it is rewarding to see them return. Others had a particular reason to make a contribution this past year. Each and every gift is appreciated. The act of donating funds to the Cemetery, whether the gift is large or small, regular or occasional, is a demonstration of your kindness and appreciation of what the Cemetery represents. Know that we thank you all and hope you consider the Lyonsville Cemetery Association when making charitable gifts and in your estate planning.

## MARKING OUR FOUNDING DATE OF 1848: OLD IS NEW

What were you doing in the mid-1980s? Ronald Reagan became president, Michael Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union, Walter Peyton and the Chicago Bears were winning the Superbowl. And the Lyonsville Cemetery? Past board members were busily applying for and earning a "Centennial" designation from the State of Illinois Historical Society as a continuously operating organization for over 100 years in the State. This now 40-year-old designation is only one piece of evidence to support our current application for a State of Illinois Historical Society marker for our Cemetery, putting us on the map of local and State history. For a list of past recipients, see: <https://historyillinois.org/centennial-business-awards/>. We will keep the community apprised of updates on that designation application.

In addition, we are adding "Est. 1848" to our current signage, thanks to a suggestion from an engaged community member who works for our local school district and often points out to students how far back our history stretches. As they say, "old is new", so when you drive past keep an eye out for the "1848" on our signage.

## UPDATE: THE NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM

Lyonsville Cemetery board member Dr. Sharon L. Comstock in her stewardship role had reached out to scholar Dr. Larry McClellan in applying for the Cemetery to be included in the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad to Freedom. That process has progressed. Dr. McClellan, with researcher Aleksa Kirkus have generously spearheaded the application process, lending their substantive expertise. Their research has now come to a point of examining the Lyonsville archives that span the 1830s- for relationships between Congregational Abolitionists in the near areas. This is a significant step forward, as there are suggested archival evidences that converge disparate collections from Flagg Creek Historical Society, Downers Grove Historical Society, and the Lyonsville Archive Collection (LAC), among others. In 2022 the Illinois State Historical Society presented Dr. McClellan with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his work with Illinois history. His book, *Onward to Chicago*, received the 2023 Memorial Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge from the Underground Railroad Free Press, which they called the "...finest book yet of which takes a close-up look at the Underground Railroad as it actually happened."

"The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom serves to honor, preserve, and promote the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight, which continues to inspire people worldwide. The Network currently represents over 700 locations in 39 states, plus Washington D.C. and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Through its mission, the Network to Freedom helps to advance the idea that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression."

## **ONE ABOLITIONIST FAMILY: BLODGETTS**

In Lyonsville Cemetery we have several families who have relationships to Abolitionism. One such family are the Blodgetts. Locally Israel (1797-1861) and Avis (1796-1882) Blodgett's house in Downers Grove was a station on the Underground Railroad, where they aided and sheltered enslaved freedom seekers in their home. From there Israel would transport them to Philo Carpenter's in Chicago. The Blodgetts' involvement has been verified via primary sources, including accounts by three of Israel's and Avis' children and daughter-in-law.

## **AVAILABILITY OF GRAVES AND PRICING**

Grave plots are still available for purchase at Lyonsville Cemetery. They can be purchased individually or in adjacent multiples. The cost to purchase a single grave is currently \$850. A single grave may contain one full body burial, a combination of a full body burial and an ash inurnment, or two ash inurnments. There is also a specially-designated section for Ash Burials (Lot 307). In this section, an \$800 fee includes the purchase of space for two ash inurnments.

The cost to open and close a grave is dependent on multiple factors such as if it is either for a full body burial or ash burial, the time of the year, weather conditions, etc. Please contact your funeral home or the Cemetery Board to obtain pricing at the time of need.

Lyonsville Cemetery **does not** permit "green" burials.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Please feel free to contact us at [info@lyonsvillecemetery.org](mailto:info@lyonsvillecemetery.org) with any questions or concerns you have regarding Lyonsville Cemetery. We look forward to hearing from you! Listed below are some questions we have received and our answers that you might find informative:

**Q. Is a vault required for a burial?**

**A.** Yes, a vault is required for a casket burial, but not for an ash burial. When making plans for the burial with the funeral home, please let them know that a vault is required.

**Q. Can I add a picture (or DAR sticker) to the headstone?**

**A.** Yes a picture or DAR sticker can be added to the headstone but we ask that it be affixed to the headstone and not a stick in the ground that could potentially be stolen or damaged by the lawnmower.

**Q. Can I plant flowers or small shrubs on a grave?**

**A.** We kindly request that your plantings be limited to species that will not spread beyond the immediate gravesite and do not create groundskeeping issues. The Cemetery Board reserves the right to remove overgrown vegetation.

**Q. Can I use the watering stations at the Cemetery?**

**A.** Our water stations are there for your use and are available from approximately June to October. Please make sure you turn the water off when you are done and remove any jugs or containers you may have brought with you.

**Q. Can I place flowers in vases on a grave?**

**A.** Vases with water are **not** permitted. In order to avoid mosquito infestation and groundskeeping issues receptacles that hold water are not allowed.

**Q. Are artificial flowers and other decorations allowed to be placed on graves?**

**A.** Yes. We do request that, if possible, you please remove them in a timely manner. Note that all non-holiday decorations are to be removed from the cemetery by December 1st. Christmas wreaths and decorations are to be removed by February 1st.

**Q. Can I place a bench on the grave?**

**A.** Although there are several benches located throughout the cemetery, the Board has made a decision not to allow any additional benches due to associated groundskeeping issues.

**Q. How do I make a donation to the Cemetery?**

**A.** First, **THANK YOU** for remembering the cemetery when making charitable gifts and in your estate planning. The Lyonsville Cemetery Association is a recognized tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(13) of the Internal Revenue Code. As such, contributions to the Cemetery are tax deductible. We receive no local, state, or federal financial support and rely on the income from our Perpetual Care Fund (Care Fund) and gifts from individuals and estates to support our work. Any level of support makes a difference and is greatly appreciated! Please make your check out to: **Lyonsville Cemetery Association**. Mail to: Lyonsville Cemetery Association, 6871 Joliet Road, Indian Head Park, IL 60525

**Q. I own a grave in the Cemetery but neither I nor any of my family intend to use it. Would the Cemetery buy it back? Can I sell the grave on my own?**

**A.** The Cemetery Board does not buy back graves. If you have proof of ownership (a deed in your name, or a Will or Trust indicating that you inherited the deed) for an unoccupied grave or graves at Lyonsville Cemetery and you want to sell them on your own, you can sell to any interested buyer. However, be aware there usually is no ready market for such sales. Also be cautious as sale ads in the paper and online ads often attract scam artists these days. We recommend finding a buyer through personal contacts, religious organizations, and possibly funeral homes. In the event you are able to find a buyer, there is needed documentation for the sale. You will have to notify the Lyonsville Cemetery Board of the sale and provide us with the existing deed and additionally the name, address, email address, and phone number of the buyer so that we can cancel your current deed and re-issue a new deed to the new owner.

**Q. Can I donate my grave(s) back to the Cemetery Association?**

**A.** Yes, if you have proof of ownership (a deed in your name or a Will or Trust indicating that you inherited the deed) you can donate a grave back to the Cemetery Association. And we are always appreciative of your donation! As we are a not-for-profit organization, the donation may be tax deductible to you. Contact your tax advisor for guidance based on your specific situation.

**Please see our website at [lyonsvillecemetery.org](http://lyonsvillecemetery.org) for additional Q. & A.'s.**

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, PLEASE REPORT ANYTHING THAT NEEDS ATTENTION  
TO THE CEMETERY BOARD. WE NEED AND WANT TO KNOW!**

We appreciate your cooperation and help in keeping the cemetery beautiful.

**HAS YOUR CONTACT INFO CHANGED? ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO OUR MAILING LIST? DO YOU DESIRE TO BE REMOVED FROM OUR MAILING LIST? ANY COMMENTS/INPUT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR BOARD?**

Please complete the form below and return it to the address below or email the information to:

[info@lyonsvillecemetery.org](mailto:info@lyonsvillecemetery.org)

**Lyonsville Cemetery Association  
6871 Joliet Road  
Indian Head Park, IL 60525**

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Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Please update my address:

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If there are any individuals who you would like added to our mailing list, please provide us with their contact information. Thanks!

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Any comments/input for our Board?

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Please check this box should you desire to be removed from our mailing list.