

A wooden sign for Bellbrook Pioneer Cemetery. The top part of the sign features the word "Bellbrook" in a stylized script font with a leaf graphic above the "l". The bottom part of the sign features the words "PIONEER CEMETERY" in a bold, sans-serif font.

Bellbrook PIONEER CEMETERY

RESTORATION HONORS THE PAST, LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

By Rob Schommer, Bellbrook City Manager | Photos by Ernie Havens

THE PIONEER CEMETERY on Upper Bellbrook Road is the final resting place for many 19th century Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Township residents. With markers dating from 1806 to the 1890s, commemorating veterans and patriots of the American Revolution, the cemetery is an important part of our community's history.

The effects of time and nature have deteriorated many of the headstones, which the city is determined to preserve. The City of Bellbrook has partnered with the Daniel Cooper and Jonathan Dayton chapters of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, with the goal of restoring each gravesite and preserving the site as a whole.

Depending on the condition of each marker, the restoration process involves some combination of carefully and respectfully righting the headstone, reassembling (as necessary) and cleaning. The process is conducted by a restoration professional who manages preservation and community outreach for Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum. The ongoing project will take into consideration the condition of the stones, as well as funding and resources.

The city's involvement is the latest in a string of volunteer efforts to maintain the historic site. An ambitious Boy Scout Troop 375 Eagle Scout project in 2013 indexed and digitally archived each cemetery plot. A volunteer group of Bellbrook High School students cleaned all of the stones. The cemetery was rededicated, and graves of American Revolution patriots were marked. The city is proud to continue this focused interest through the inspiration of those groups, implementing a number of advanced cleaning and restoration efforts since 2024.

Thanks to the actions of organizations and dedicated community members, this historic site will honor our patriots and others buried here, for future generations to see. The city gladly contributes to making sure these efforts continue.

There are not many large collections of graves of this age in the area. The preservation of Pioneer Cemetery will safeguard this valuable piece of our history, bring awareness to the community and ensure that our founders are never forgotten.



To view the Pioneer Cemetery digital archive, visit tinyurl.com/4wpwh6tz.

