

Dear Town of Primrose,

Please don't mow Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Bowers Road.

Fewer than 3000 acres of the 7.6 million acres of prairie and savanna that once covered Wisconsin remain. Over 99.9% were converted to other uses. Pioneer cemeteries are critical remnants of what once existed. They're a record of human history and natural history. They're also a source of inspiration and seeds for restoring prairie and savanna, protecting plants species that built the soil we rely on today.

Mount Pleasant Cemetery is specifically significant because it was among spots surveyed by ecologist John Curtis in the 1950s. He documented over 40 prairie/savanna species there! Though mowed at some point, the site clearly still contains some of those species. And given more time, others could appear. For example, a rare violet was discovered in a pioneer cemetery in Iowa a few years after folks started managing it as a prairie remnant.

I visited the cemetery and must admit it is looking weedy. But it is due to neglect far more than the native plants. Mowing now would just further damage the remnant. For example, the Queen Anne's Lace seed is ripening; mowing now will spread the seed and created a bigger problem down the road. I know, I'm working to control Queen Anne's Lace and other biennial weeds around my own prairie remnant. I'd gladly volunteer to pull the Queen Anne's Lace, and few other obvious weeds, at Mount Pleasant Cemetery to get the ball rolling on a new management effort. The Canada Goldenrod might also go, but I'd want to ask an ecologist first.

If the Board decides not to mow, I'd volunteer to put together a management plan and try to build a volunteer group to implement it, or work with someone else interested in doing this. There are numerous examples of pioneer cemeteries successfully managed as prairie/savanna remnants, there are experienced people in Wisconsin to go to for help, and advice regarding community relations. Surely there's some compromise possible along the spectrum from letting everything grow wild to mowing it down to a fine lawn. And we can do this while respecting the graves of folks buried there.

Thank you for your time.

John A. Raasch
(Resident of Town of Primrose)

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