

# Forgotten lives can now be found

by [Luther Granquist](#) // July 10th, 2012



More than 2,500 patients lie buried in three St. Peter State Hospital cemeteries. In the earliest cemetery, established shortly after the institution opened in 1866, small wooden crosses with identification tags marked the graves of about 550 patients until a prairie fire destroyed the crosses and tags in 1895. From 1896 to 1913 more than 400 patients were buried with numbered markers in a second part of this original cemetery. After 1913, more than 1,600 patients were buried with numbered markers in a different cemetery on the state hospital grounds.

Remembering With Dignity, a program of ACT (Advocating Change Together), has placed markers with names and dates on the graves in the latter cemetery as well as a few in the earlier cemetery.

Until recently, however, the names of the men, women, boys and girls buried in these cemeteries have not been readily available without a visit to St. Peter. Two volunteers changed that by adding memorial pages on Find A Grave for each of them and thus creating a record of their names for everyone to visit and to possibly find a family member.

Nita Aasen, prompted by the death of her sons Erik and David in a car accident, decided to add memorial pages on Find A Grave for them and for all other persons buried in Resurrection Cemetery in St. Peter after she retired as Nicollet County Public Health Director. She expanded her work to include adding memorial pages for the state hospital patients buried in the St. Peter State Hospital Original Cemetery, which lies adjacent to Resurrection Cemetery.

The first memorial page Steve Carlson added to Find A Grave was for his father. Because Carlson, an insurance agent from Brooklyn Park, felt that no one should be forgotten, he began to add memorial pages for other persons buried in the cemetery where his father was buried. He has since added 16,000 memorial pages, most of them for persons buried in cemeteries in Sibley, Ramsey and Nicollet counties. With the cooperation of Aasen and the Nicollet County Historical Society, he added 1,600 memorial pages for patients buried at the later St. Peter State Hospital Cemetery.

Carlson is also copying the death certificates of as many of these persons as he can find in order to add information about them to their memorial page. He and Aasen hope that family members will see the online memorials, recognize these persons as part of their family, and link them with other relatives. By using the edit tab on a memorial page, interested relatives or friends may

submit corrections or additional information about that person to Aasen and Carlson, who can then add changes to the page.

The markers with names provided by Remembering With Dignity and the memorial pages created by Aasen and Carlson help to prevent these state hospital patients from becoming, as Carlson puts it, a forgotten group of people. They remind us that the persons buried in state hospital cemeteries were not inmates or cases or even residents or consumers but men and women whose lives should be remembered and who deserved and deserve our respect.

The easiest way to find these memorial pages is to Google “St. Peter State Hospital Original Cemetery” or “St. Peter State Hospital Cemetery.” Find A Grave is at [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)

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