

Artisan restores Silver Spring church's Rocks of ages

BY DAN MILLER

Of Our Carlisle Bureau

Robert Mosko uses a small brush to remove deposits of green moss and lichens from the tombstone of Mary Anderson Crain, who died April 15, 1870, at age 26 and is buried in Silver Spring Presbyterian Cemetery.

Carbon has blackened the stone, but visible in the granite is a hand-carved three-dimensional anchor in the shape of a cross; a symbol of love and hope, Mosko said.

Crain's is one of about 1,100 surviving monuments in this 2-acre cemetery on the grounds of Silver Spring Presbyterian Church in Silver Spring Twp.

Some monuments are much older, the oldest dating to 1747, and in much worse condition as the elements have worn some stones smooth.

So the church has hired Mosko to begin what parishioner and cemetery volunteer Bill Spoon calls the largest monument repair project in the cemetery's history.

Mosko, 32, of Hanover said it was about six years ago that he began to research how to restore old cemeteries, such as the one he used to see every day at the end of his parents' road in Carroll County, Md.

"Just to walk past that cemetery just fascinated the dickens out of me," Mosko said.

He used to be a full-time paramedic, but now Mosko makes his living restoring cemeteries.

He sees his role as "getting the markers to look as they did when they were first set there, with as minimal intervention as possible," even if they date to 1742.

Mosko -- who named his 4-year old business Jordan's Dad Restoration and Repair, for his 6-year-old son Jordan -- said he restores cemeteries because he likes history. If so, he's

in the right place.

According to church records, the Silver Spring Presbyterian Cemetery includes the remains of some 40 soldiers from the Revolutionary War era, some who saw battle and others who were called up for other needs.

Maj. Andrew Galbraith, a member of the Cumberland County militia, served on the staff of Gen. George Washington, according to church records. Galbraith died in 1806.

The cemetery also holds the remains of John Carothers Sr., a lawyer, and his wife, Mary. They were murdered in 1798 by Sarah Clark, who put arsenic in a family tub of butter to kill Mary Carothers in what has been termed a "love triangle."

Clark was found guilty of first-degree murder and on Oct. 30, 1799, sentenced to death by hanging on the Cumberland County gallows by Judge James Riddle.

Spoon said legend has it that Clark was the first woman hanged in the county.

Ester Harris McChesney, who died in 1757, was once married to John Harris. Harris in 1734 established the ferry service across the Susquehanna River that led to the development of Harrisburg.

The cemetery is also the final resting place of Ann Witherspoon Walker. She was married to Presbyterian Pastor John Witherspoon, the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence.

The work Mosko is doing is the first step in a restoration project that may take years, depending on the availability of church money.

"It is our hope this year to take care of the repair, leveling and raising of the worst of the stones. We will go to the next level at a later date, based in part on (Mosko's) recommendations," Spoon said.