



PRESS RELEASE

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Ohio Historic Marker Arrives for Worthington Cemetery

[DEFIANCE] – Following a years-long effort by several groups and organizations to identify and properly mark Defiance County’s only known historic Black cemetery, an official Ohio Historic Marker for the site has been received and will be installed in the spring, followed by a special dedication ceremony to be held at the site on June 19 (Juneteenth).

Worthington Cemetery is located on Bowman Road in Highland Township, about a quarter mile east of Ohio 15.

Many community members and groups (plus some skilled canines) played a role in securing the marker, including Defiance Public Library System’s (DPLS) Local History Specialist Sarah Marshall; DPLS Reference and Technical Services Manager Renee Hopper; Berne Heilshorn; Kentucky-based KYK9 (Jennifer Jordan Hall, Taylor Bryan, Pocket and Wick); Eric Hubbard and Chris LaMack of the University of Pennsylvania (GPR surveying); the Defiance Area Foundation (grant funding), the Friends of Defiance Public Library (DPL); Jay Budde; Terry Howarth; Defiance Citizens in Action; the Defiance County Commissioners; and Ohio History Connection.

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“This marker helps preserve a unique piece of Defiance County history, and I am humbled to have been a part of the process,” Hopper said.

Also assisting were Defiance College affiliates Steven Bare, Ph.D., assistant professor of history; Angela Sosebee; Alexandra Bevins; Caia Bevins; and Tyler Taylor. Many community volunteers aided in the effort, from researching and sharing information, to probing the ground at the site to release scent for the K9s.

Marshall came across the little-known cemetery while conducting research for the Defiance Public Library’s annual Riverside Cemetery history tour. Using websites like defiancecountygenealogy.org, findagrave.com, and ancestry.com, as well as local connections, helped paint a more complete picture of the land and its owner, Archibald Worthington.

“The Ohio Historic Marker for Worthington Cemetery will serve to honor those that lived and are buried in Highland Township. All of the research and time has been for this purpose,” Marshall said.

A full history of the project is available to read at defiancelibrary.org/blog.

Photo outline: Pictured Thursday in the Nellie Gary Reading Room at Defiance Public Library with Worthington Cemetery’s recently received Ohio Historic Marker are the library system’s Local History Specialist Sarah Marshall (left), and Reference and Technical Services Manager Renee Hopper.

