

Smartphone technology comes to cemetery

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BEDFORD — Gene Abel has been working in Bedford Green Hill Cemetery for several years. His involvement started in response to vandalism in the cemetery at one time, but has continued from that point to the present. He had involved various other people in parts of the project. The most recent being Dale Platteter.

Platteter is a retired electrical engineer and is up-to-date with many of the technological advances that are being made in the world.

Last week, Abel and Platteter unveiled a QR (Quick Recognition) optical bar code for Green Hill Cemetery. The code is on a new sign on the right side of the road near the entrance of the cemetery.



Dale Platteter, left, and Gene Abel, stand next to the new sign they erected last week in Green Hill Cemetery. The QR (Quick Recognition) code allows people access to a tour at the cemetery via their smartphones.

The code allows cemetery visitors to tour the grounds by using an app on a smartphone.

"Green Hill Cemetery is the first (that I know of) in Indi-

ana to provide a self-guided walking tour of its famous monuments using smartphone technology" Platteter said. "The cemetery is using a unique feature of the smart-

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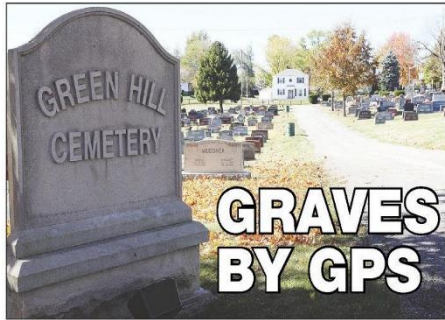
Visit <http://www.greenhillbedford.com> for information about the cemetery and the digital tour.

phone, its built-in Global Positioning System receiver, to navigate through the cemetery to find each monument on the tour."

About 50 cemeteries nationwide use this type of technology.

The tour consists of 33 historical gravesites, representing a cross-section of the limestone artwork and highlighting some of the famous people buried in the cemetery.

People can also view the cemetery's website, [greenhillbedford.com](http://www.greenhillbedford.com). No special software is needed, other than an internet connection.



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The website is sponsored by a grant from the Lawrence County Tourism Commission, promoting the cemetery as a national landmark.

The tour itself is based on the "If Tombstones Could Talk" program developed by the Historic Preservation Committee of Bedford Revitalization Inc. in 2012.

"We modernized the tour with the help of some features built into smartphones," he said. The phone pinpoints the user's location using a blue dot and it

places a red pin at the monument location. The person on the tour walks from his/her current position toward the pin."

The GPS is accurate to within 15 feet, so guests won't get too far off track.

Platteter said while working on the tour function, people began asking if help in finding loved ones' graves could be incorporated into the website.

"We created a search feature to provide assistance in finding certain graves," he said. "By entering a surname, the website allows the user to instantly scan 9,873 of Green Hill's 11,154 interments that are listed on Ancestry.com's 'Find A Grave' database."

That database allows the user to add biographical information,

obituaries, family photos and the GPS coordinates of their loved ones graves, thereby adding to the information on the website.

Abel and Platteter believe there might be as many as 15,000 burials in the cemetery, so there are about 3,900 graves that don't show up on the interment records.

Additional functions on the website include a list of the 11,154 interments in the cemetery, some birth and death dates, burial locations and some section maps.

It also includes a home movie and a link to a video produced by Indiana University highlighting some of the stone carvings on the tour.

The tour includes graves of Moses Fell Dunn, Fred Otis,

Harley Pope, Tom Barton, Lewis Baker and many others.

Restoration work on the old section of Green Hill, to the left of the entrance along 18th Street is ongoing. Many stones have been restored. Some were just leaning and have had new foundations poured. Others had toppled or been knocked over by trees and roots and have been righted. And at least one, the grave of Rebecca Dewey has been recreated completely.

Dewey was the first burial in the cemetery in September 1826. Her marker was long gone, but using old newspaper accounts, Abel was able to approximate the site of her burial and just over a year ago, a new marker was erected in her honor.

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