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## Rochester

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# A tale of two honors

**By Jennifer McDonald**  
**C & G Staff Writer**

Stoney Creek Cemetery to receive historical marker,  
soldier rededication

ROCHESTER — Valued pieces of Rochester history lie within a small cemetery, and local organizations are helping make sure they get the credit they deserve.

The grave of Michael Van Wagoner, the first individual to be buried in Stoney Creek Cemetery on Letica Road, will be rededicated Saturday, May 19.

The cemetery will receive a state historical site marker, presented by Samuel Logan Jr. of the Michigan Historical Commission.

Born in about 1750 in New York, Van Wagoner traveled to Michigan after serving in the American Revolution, settling on Washington Road. He lost his wife, Hannah, en route.

All that is know of Van Wagoner is that he passed away in Orion Township near 1825 and is said to be the first person buried in Rochester's Stoney Creek Cemetery. Van Wagoner's grave remained unmarked until 1978, when his descendants, who live in California, erected a monument in his honor.

"Here's a gentleman that fought for our freedom and since he died in 1825, he has not been recognized, and no one knows he's one of the original people that fought in the Revolutionary War," said Rod Wilson, a member of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society and the Oaks Chapter, Michigan Society Sons of the American Revolution. "We think it's very important to honor these people and make sure they're properly recognized."

The ceremony is jointly sponsored by the Oaks Chapter, Michigan Society Sons of the American Revolution and the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm. Other participating organizations include the Stoney Creek Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution and the Rochester-Avon Historical Society.

The cemetery contains approximately 200 graves of some of Avon Township's most illustrious pioneers,



Photo by Jennifer S. McDonald  
Participants include the Stoney Creek Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution and the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, which includes Rod Wilson, and Liz Golding, director of public relations with the Rochester-Avon Historical Society.

said Pat McKay, supervisor of interpretive services at the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm.

The cemetery was established in 1839 when Nathaniel and Sally Millerd sold 1.7 acres of their property with the understanding that it would be “forever used as a public burying ground,” McKay added. Nathaniel Millerd built a gristmill in 1824, operating a general store and the Stoney Creek Post Office out of his home. He also served as Oakland County’s second probate judge.

“That is really something we should be proud of,” McKay said. “I think the state recognized that this cemetery dates back to the very early days of settling the interior wilderness of Michigan, and with the national and state recognition of Stoney Creek Village and Stoney Creek School, it verifies that this historical area is a very significant site, not only in our community and in Michigan, but in (the United States), too.”

The cemetery is significant because six Civil War soldiers are buried there, McKay added, and is home to a 1923 monument recognizing the first Masonic Lodge in the state of Michigan — the Stoney Creek Masonic Lodge No. 5 — that was located in Stoney Creek Village.

The cemetery remains the family burial place for the Taylor and Van Hoosen families, which include Dr. Bertha Van Hoosen, one of Michigan’s first female surgeons, and her niece, Dr. Sarah Van Hoosen Jones, an animal geneticist who transformed her family farm into a prize-winning dairy farm and bull breeding facility by 1933. Lemuel and Sarah Taylor, Stoney Creek Village’s early settlers, and their son, Joshua, who participated in the drafting of Michigan’s constitution in 1836, are also buried there.

“The cemetery is unique because it’s been preserved and maintained,” McKay said. “It also tells the typical story of a Midwestern community that reflects the challenges of world events and how a community worked through them.

“The Village of Stoney Creek is a proud name in this regional area because of the people, the Masonic movement and the willingness and ability of people to survive and prosper in the Michigan wilderness,” he said.

The state marker for the cemetery, which cost about \$3,000, received significant financial support from Rochester Community Schools’ elementary parent teacher associations and Pixley Funeral Home, McKay said.

According to the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, the Stoney Creek Cemetery will be among 10 other sites in the Rochester area to receive historical markers, including the Western Knitting Mill on Water Street, the George W. Vandeventer House on Third Street and the Rochester Opera House, which is now Lytle’s Pharmacy, at 340 Main St.

“Yes, it is a rededication of a grave stone, which many people think is sad, but it’s really a happy time because it give us a chance to recognize this fellow and honor all who are buried here,” Wilson said.

The celebration is scheduled to start at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 19 at Stoney Creek Cemetery on Letica Road.

Following the event, hot dogs will be served at the Rochester Hills Van Hoosen Farm, 1005 Van Hoosen Road, and the Rochester Granger baseball team will play in 1860s style starting at 1 p.m.

Parking will be available at the Rochester Hills Museum. Parking is limited, and a shuttle bus will be available from the Museum to the Stoney Creek Cemetery.

For more information on the marker program, visit [www.michigan.gov/shpo](http://www.michigan.gov/shpo).

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