

Midway Driller

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HONORING THE DEAD -- Bob Cordes (center), head of the Peter Lebeck Chapter of E. Clampus Vitus, unveiled a monument to local pioneers at the Midway Cemetery on 25 Hill. (Staff photo)

Marker unveiled at old cemetery

A stone monument honoring those buried in a local cemetery was unveiled in a ceremony Saturday morning.

The unveiling, by members of the Peter Lebeck Chapter of E. Clampus Vitus, commemorated the old Midway Cemetery on 25 Hill.

Several local residents recalled their memories of the cemetery.

Master of Ceremonies Pete Gianopulos said 473 people were known to have been laid to rest in the cemetery between its dedication on Nov. 6, 1911 until it ceased being used in the 1950's.

Many of the graves are marked with "unknown," indicating the names of the people buried there were not known at the time, Gianopulos said.

Through the work of local volunteers Larry Lyon, Guy Lingo and Fred Thomason, about 90 percent of the graves have been identified, Gianopulos said.

Lingo said West Side pioneer Frank Keller was the first official death recorded in the cemetery, though a child had been buried there one year earlier. Lingo said it was unclear if the land was chosen as a cemetery site because of the child's grave or not.

A move is also underway through the West Kern Oil Museum, now that many people have been identified, to replace the "unknown" markers. Lingo said the museum would like to install new markers identifying each person buried in

the cemetery.

The plaque unveiled Saturday includes an inscription which reads:

"In memory of the men, women and children who were the pioneers of the Midway Sunset oil fields, never to be forgotten. The cemetery was established in November, 1911 by William Brooks of the Taft Undertaking Company on land supplied by Standard Oil."

Bob Cordes, leader of the Bakersfield E. Clampus Vitus chapter, said the plaque was purchased at a discount from Churchill Monuments while the concrete was donated by Ready-Mix Concrete. Members of E. Clampus Vitus, which Cordes called "a state hysterical society," donated the labor.