

Dear Friend of Hastings,

As an Administrator for Lakeside Cemetery, I have had the privilege to work with Heidi Langenfeld, a tireless and cheerful volunteer with Friends of LeDuc and Historic Hastings, to conduct cemetery research. Through this work, I have encountered a piece of Hastings history that I believe calls out for community recognition and reconciliation.

Lakeside Cemetery is naming its new scattering Garden after James Curry. James and his wife are buried at Lakeside. The census records are unclear as to whether James was the son of slaves or poor freedmen. James and his family moved to Hastings in 1885 and joined a small and growing African American community. By all accounts James was an outstanding and valued member of Hastings. In 1891, he and John Wallace, another notable early black resident of Hastings, organized an African Methodist Episcopal Church. They purchased a church property that belonged to the German Baptists located on 5th and Sibley.

This card of thanks was published in the Hastings Democrat 11-22-1896. *“The A.M.E. Church of this city, wishes to extend to the generous people of Minnesota and Wisconsin for the assistance rendered in contributing to the fund raised by Samuel Golden, solicitor, of Prescott, Wis., for the payment on the debt of our church, which we are unable to raise ourselves. The sum raised this year is \$49.81 net.”* Signed by trustees: James Curry, James Wallace, John Wallace, and Cornelius Peterson, Pastor.

In 1907, the church was broken into, torched, and burned to the ground. The church never recovered. This act, which would now be termed a hate crime, was a common occurrence during the Jim Crow historical period, usually in the South, but also in the North.

How would Hastings be different today had this hateful act not occurred and a budding African American community been permitted to grow and flourish? How do we understand and reconcile this act of racial hatred perpetrated by our elders? How can we use this (actively?) forgotten piece of history to make Hastings a better community?

I propose a community wide service/event, ideally, during Black History Month, 2018 aimed at promoting awareness, understanding, and reconciliation. People of faith and others recognize the need to speak and hear truth as the necessary

first step towards forgiveness and reconciliation. Since this crime targeted a Hastings church I especially urge interested members of the Hastings Ministerium to assist in the planning and leading of this event. I invite you to attend a planning a meeting scheduled 1:00 PM Thursday, November 30 at the Lakeside Cemetery Office, 920 Nininger Road, Hastings. Kindly RSVP or direct your questions to me.

Yours truly,

Rich Manke, Administrator
Lakeside Cemetery
cell: 651-331-9169
Office: 437-6656
rmanke55@gmail.com
lakesidecemeteryhastingsmn@gmail.com

PS. Apologies for the short meeting notice. As the holidays fast approach, I think it best to meet soon to provide ourselves as much planning time as possible.