

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

An act of kindness gives identity and meaning to a small gravesite at the Fairview Cemetery west of Grant.

After 109 years, a baby's grave in the Softley family plot has a permanent marker thanks to the generosity of the Don Softley family of Grant.

The small stone lacks information other than the year of the unknown baby's birth and death.



Softley said the child had no name, its gender is unknown, and it is unknown whether it was stillborn or lost its life shortly after birth.

According to Softley, the baby's grave at one time had a small metal marker. However, the marker was destroyed, perhaps due to its age and/or getting bumped by mowing equipment.

In researching family history, it was discovered that the infant's parents were Alfred and Cleo Softley. Alfred was a brother to Don Softley's great-grandfather.

Alfred and Cleo Softley left the Grant area around 1916 and moved to North Platte where he served as superintendent of North Platte Normal School. They then moved to Fremont and he taught at the Fremont Normal School and taught English literature at Midlands College.

He later served as a Representative in the Nebraska Legislature from 1935-37.

Softley said he was 13 when his own father died. He said he always noticed the baby's grave when visiting his family's burial site.

The newly erected stone more permanently links the baby to the family plot that has existed in the cemetery for many years.

Softley's great-grandparents homesteaded in Perkins County in 1888.

Local agent Dick Thurin arranged for the stone's placement by Sterling Monument toward the end of September.

Editor's Note: *A biography on the baby's father taken directly from pages of the Blue Book of the Nebraska Legislature.*

ALFRED SOFTLEY (Democrat). Twenty-seventh district. Member of house of representatives in 1935. Born in England, June 26, 1868. Came to Nebraska in 1885. Married Cleo Fauquet, August 26, 1890; four children. Attended public schools in England and Michigan. Received B.Sc. and A.B. degrees from Fremont college. Has taught in rural schools, served as county superintendent, and was Dean of psychology and literature at Fremont college. Is a farmer. Has been county surveyor, precinct assessor, secretary of Dodge county board of conciliation and president of Dodge county farm bureau. Is a member of Baptist church, farmers' union and A. O. U. W.