

Parks department looking for memorial photos

BY HILARY KINDSCHUH / Lincoln Journal Star

In 1923, the Lincoln Women's Club planned and developed Memorial Avenue, a World War I memorial, in Antelope Park.

Today, Lincoln Parks and Recreation director Lynn Johnson is hoping that somebody might have photos, stories or other memorabilia from the dedication of the memorial, which remains in Antelope Park south of the Auld Recreation Center.

"A picture's worth a thousand words, I think, in this case," he said.

The memorial includes 93 trees along the avenue to recognize 91 men and two women from Lancaster County who died serving in the military during World War I. Each of the trees was planted by a uniformed veteran.

A bronze marker inscribed with the names of the 93 veterans was mounted on a large boulder and placed at the north end of the avenue, and a smaller bronze marker and boulder were placed at the south end of the avenue at South Street.

Memorial Avenue was dedicated on April 2, 1923, with General John J. Pershing participating in the ceremonies.

The Parks and Recreation Department is thinking about developing interpretive signs to tell the history of the avenue, Johnson said.

"It was a classic World War I memo," Johnson said. "When soldiers came back, communities did extraordinary things to commemorate those veterans."

In a memo to the Veterans Memorial Garden Advisory Council, Johnson recommended that the marker and boulder remain at their current location.

"We felt it should stay in place, but that we should also explain its significance," Johnson said.

Maurice Carlton, past chairman of the advisory council, said the board was divided about whether to keep the boulder in its original spot or move it closer to the Veterans Memorial Garden.

"Nobody knows where it's at," said Carlton, a World War II veteran. "I think we owe those veterans some respect, and they're sure as heck not getting it where that plaque is now."

The topic of the memorial will likely come up at the advisory council's next quarterly meeting, in January, Carlton said.

In the meantime, Parks and Recreation director Johnson is encouraging anyone willing to share photos or other mementos to call the department.

"Who knows, 80 years later — did anyone hang onto those photos? Did anyone take photos?" Johnson asked.

"I don't know."

Reach Hilary Kindschuh at 473-7120 or hkindschuh@journalstar.com