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Flood-Ravaged Cemetery Is Rededicated

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The raging floodwater that gouged an 85-foot-deep hole in this small town's graveyard in 1993 swept away hundreds of bodies and left behind horrified, distraught relatives.

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They gathered today to remember those who were lost and prayed that the town be spared from another disaster of this magnitude.

About 100 townspeople and relatives of those buried rededicated the site. With umbrellas to shade them from the sun, they stood near a granite memorial that honors the town and those who helped in what has been called the nation's worst cemetery disaster.

The flooded Missouri River cut through the middle of the cemetery, which dates back to the 1820's, toppling headstones and ripping out vaults and human remains.

Dean Snow, the Ray County Coroner, said that 769 of the 1,500 graves were swept away. Of those, the remains in 120 were recovered, identified and reburied. Another 487 could not be identified and were reburied in a mass grave nearby on higher ground. He said 162 were still missing, some so old they probably disintegrated in the flood.

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