

## **CASH CEMETERY Overton Co., TN**

By Jill Thomas

For decades parts of the old Cash Cemetery in Livingston have lain neglected with gravestones broken and unrecognizable and its 169-year-old history seemingly lost.

The old cemetery was know to include the graves of African Americans, both slave and free, at least one Confederate soldier, dignitaries such as the first woman physician in Overton County, Myrtle Lee Smith, and regular folks from the county.

But this Sunday at 3 p.m., the land will be trimmed and ready for a public viewing, a monument to the old cemetery will be dedicated and the names of 164 interred residents will be unveiled.

“There’s room for 60 more names,” said Ralph Richardson, the researcher who began the move to uncover and protect the old cemetery.

“We keep finding new graves all the time,” he said.

The ceremony will include an invocation and benediction by Pastor Wendell Winfree, readings by Barbara Parsons and poetry by Rebecca Pincheon, hymns, and a military salute by the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the unveiling of the monument by Clarence Allen and John Keeton.

For the past ten months Richardson and his cousin Clarence Allen, who both have relatives listed on the monument, have been working to maintain the cemetery.

At first they worked on their own, taking week-ends and using their own machinery to bush-hog the property.

“Then, we realized we needed some help,” Richardson said.

“Mr. Ed Butler and the Sons of the Confederate Veterans have helped us get this ready. They have really become partners in saving the cemetery,” Richardson said.

The Sons of the Confederate Veterans came in to clear away the debris from the graves.

Richardson and Allen are working on getting the cemetery listed on the register of historic places and Tennessee Tech professors Mike Birdwell, Wali Kharif and retired professor Calvin Dickinson have offered to help with applying for cemetery restoration grants.

Livingston Judge John Turnbull helped the two establish a trust fund for cemetery research and upkeep.

Last fall historian/archeologist Dan Sumner Allen with Cumberland Research Group and Corporation did some preliminary tests and has turned his information over to MTSU for study, Richardson said.

“There’s so much more to learn here,” he said.

As Richardson worked on bring in people who could help with the research and evaluation of the old cemetery, he kept inviting people to donate to the Cash Cemetery Trust fund. When it grew to \$1,500 he brought in David Vaughn of Vaughn’s Monuments in Cookeville to do the monument itself.

The four-foot-long, six-foot-tall, 1,500-pound monument is made of Georgia Gray Granite and will stand on a base, Vaughn said.

As far as the future of the cemetery is concerned, the cemetery is still being researched. Public Television station WCTE is working on a documentary of the restoration of the historic property and will be filming the dedication ceremony Sunday.

To get to Cash Cemetery from Cookeville, take Hwy. 111 to the third light in Livingston (the McDonald’s light), turn left on Hwy. 111, go about a mile and a half and turn left just *before* the hot dog stand (the name of that road was not known by the directions giver). Turn right at *immediate* first road. That will connect you to Oak Street where the cemetery is located.

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