

CEMETERIES STORY PROMPTS CLEANUP BY COMMISSIONER

By LINDSAY McREYNOLDS

A story published in the Herald-Citizen in June about overgrown cemeteries prompted one county commissioner to take action.



A neighbor of the Lovelady Cemetery on Lovelady Road had submitted an “I’d Like to Know” question asking who was in charge of cemeteries, but after calls to numerous funeral homes, monument companies and government agencies, that answer could not be found.

Carol Bradford stands by the tombstone of her great-great-great-grandmother Jane Allison Huddleston in the Lovelady Cemetery.

Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones said that actually no one is in charge of the county’s 500 cemeteries, many of which are overgrown and neglected.

“Some of the cemeteries have their own deed,” Jones said.

“Some are fenced on a farm, but others are in woods and on hillsides with no road access.

“After the I’d Like to Know article came out, Mike Atwood, a 12th District county commissioner, came to the Archives and asked if we knew of a couple of cemeteries that he could work on,” Jones said. “We informed him of two neglected cemeteries that no one had touched in years. One was the Lovelady Cemetery, and the other was the Bradford Cemetery just off Old Kentucky Road.”

A check of Atwood’s work revealed historical graves.

“He volunteered to do this and didn’t want recognition for his work, but when we went to document and take pictures of the Bradford Cemetery, we were amazed at how much work had been done there,” Jones said.

“He had cut trees, bushes, briars, uncovering over 100 grave sites, several of which are influential people of Putnam County, including former Putnam Sheriff Charlie Bradford, who was sheriff in the late 1800s,” Jones said.

“The cemetery was so grown up, there was no grass growing,” Jones continued. “He had cleaned it to the dirt. Since we are in late August, the growing season is almost over. This cemetery will stay clean for six to eight months.”

The only cemetery owned by the City of Cookeville is the Cookeville City Cemetery on Walnut Avenue, but last year, a group of citizens with family buried in the Buck Cemetery discussed the possibility of transferring ownership for the city to maintain as a historical cemetery.

Cookeville City Manager Mike Davidson said the state law has changed so cities may take care of cemeteries.

“We’re waiting to talk with the families (of Buck Cemetery) and make sure they’re okay with it. Then we’ll talk to the council and make sure they’re okay with it.”

Anyone who has information about cemeteries in Putnam County or is interested in volunteering to maintain them should contact the Putnam County Archives at 121 B South Dixie Ave. in Cookeville or 520-0042.

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*Read more about the cemeteries in Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at:
<http://www.ajlambert.com>