

HISTORY SPEAKS IN CEMETERY WALK

Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen

Posted Sunday, September 11, 2016

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(Cookeville City Cemetery "residents" Barbara Sue Newman (Tomi Sims) and Nancy Ruth Harris (Aasta Thurman), along with "radio announcer" Dave Johnson, prepare for the Sept. 17 Cookeville Cemetery Walk).

Several Cookeville City Cemetery "residents" are rising to tell their stories.

It's happening Sept. 17 during the Cookeville Cemetery Walk at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

"It's truly an entertaining evening," Cookeville museums manager Beth Thompson said of the walk, in which groups are led by a guide to the various grave sites along a candlelit path. "I never get tired of hearing these stories."

The Cemetery Walk, presented every two years by the Cookeville History and Depot museums and the Department of Leisure Services and Public Facilities, is themed "Stroll Through the Tales of Our Town."

Tickets are \$15 and available at the Cookeville Performing Arts Center and cpactn.com.

"It has been very successful," said Judy Duke, former museums manager, who directed the first Cookeville Cemetery Walk in 2002. "A lot of people have said they know more about Cookeville — even people who have lived here all their life — by going on the walk and listening to the different stories.

"Some of them are fun, and you can get a good laugh. Others are more serious. But it's not a ghostly thing. It's more of a respectful, historical and educational thing."

Among the stories to be told is that of Barbara Sue Newman and Nancy Ruth Harris, a couple of 14-year-old Cookeville Central High School students who were killed in a car crash in 1954.

“They were on a date, and not long after the boys picked them up, this accident happened,” Thompson said. “They were very well-liked girls in the school, and everyone at that time remembers this because it was such a big deal.”

The girls are being portrayed by eighth-graders Tomi Sims of Avery Trace Middle School and Aasta Thurman of Algood Middle School. Radio announcer David Johnson will also be there to share the “breaking news” of the tragedy.

Cemetery Walk participants will also visit the graves of Mary Elizabeth “Mollie” Shanks (1853-1936) of the historic Shanks Hotel, which burned across from the Cookeville Depot in 1971, and her son, Charles Shanks (1877-1903). They are being portrayed by Duke and Tennessee Tech University student Jacob Roberts.

Dr. James McDonald Goodpasture (1827-1876), who built Cookeville’s first home — the Jared House on Washington Ave. and 1st St. — will be played by Cookeville City Council member Dwight Henry.

Elijah Crowell (1809-1863), portrayed by Matt Beal of the local theater community, will share his story at the Civil War Monument.

Also “rising” for the occasion will be Dorothy Printz Pennebaker (1906-1989), founder of the Tech Players theater group, played by Kim Frick-Welker of CPAC, and moonshiner Campbell Morgan (1845-1926), played by TTU history professor Michael Birdwell.

Mahaley Wiley Shaw, who donated the land for the city cemetery, will also be there.

“We’re not actually visiting her grave, but she will chat with people as they come into the cemetery,” Thompson said of Shaw, who will be portrayed by Joyce Tatum of Sparta.

The Ballingers, a Cookeville folk and Americana band, will be playing bluegrass gospel music 30 minutes prior to each walk.

Herald- Citizen, Cookeville, TN: September 11, 2016

*Read more about Cookeville City Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>