

## Our Ancestors' Monuments

By Jackie Layne Partin

So I had to open my big mouth, but this time good came forth. I wrote a short story recently commenting on the value we put on memories of our Grannies and Papas. One subject in the article was our Grundy County cemeteries and the care, or lack thereof. At least some citizens took my words to heart and have started talking about ways they might clear the rubble from the graves and repair the stones of those long forgotten. I received calls from as far away as Florida and Kentucky thanking the Historical Society for caring. (Isn't it great that our home county newspaper, the *Grundy County Herald*, is read all over the country? What great advertisement for our county's desire to improve and preserve!)

Because of community meetings and the efforts of Carlton and Angie (Northcutt) Burnett, the Caldwell Cemetery in Providence is looking better every day. Dear reader, it takes truly concerned citizens to tackle the cleanup of an unkempt cemetery with its young trees, bushes, briars, vincas, lilies, broken stones, sunken graves and creepy, crawly creatures, but Carlton and Angie did it. The Burnetts need someone to offer to carry off a pile of brush which cannot be burned in its present locale. Filler dirt for sunken graves is needed. If anyone can help with this situation, please contact the Burnetts or Janelle Taylor who knows where the cemetery is.

So you ask, "Jackie, how much work have you done in any cemetery since you wrote the article? Honestly, I got a little gang together to clean one nearby, but the owner of the land volunteered to continue work on that one—volunteers are great. Hey, as one member of the collected gang commented while he wiped his brow, "Well, that was quick and easy, so let's find another." They are not hard to find. We as a county just have to care, and then go for it.

Our local high school history teacher is excitedly interested in our county's history. He is aware that the burial grounds of our ancestors are part of our history and that we need to keep them accessible as loved ones who have moved on come back to visit and ponder their pasts. His thoughts are to present his students with the idea that they might like to do some of what the Burnetts have done—community service. The Clouse Hill Cemetery is maintained strictly by volunteers. Some families have come there for years to clean, but folks, when we learn that they are having a cleaning, we need to share the responsibilities whether or not our Grannies and Papas are buried there. One or two extra helping hands can make hard work much easier and more

enjoyable. So I raise a beautiful, fragrant, long stem, red rose; it only lifts my spirits when I have someone with whom to share its beauty. So it is with a completed task.

Community service, what is it? The Burnetts' efforts, the high school teacher's planned efforts, those are two great examples, and if that isn't enough, I'll throw in an extra one for free. One day this week as I was driving down Partins' Farm Road, I saw a lady picking up trash on the side of the road. She was picking up all of the rubbish, not just cans. I stopped and chatted with her at which time she invited me to do the same work. I just can't keep my mouth shut or tend to my own business. (Thankfully, I had done the same thing on several occasions, so I was not so badly pricked in my heart.) She was right; we all have a part in brightening our county, lifting the bushel and letting our light shine.

This new found interest in our cemeteries has been fed by the Grundy County Historical Society's work on a cemetery book of the whole county. Did you know that Kitt Meeks and Lt. Col. Riley Bradford Roberts are buried at the Roberts Walls Cemetery? Did you know that just across the road from their burial spots are three unknown graves on the old David Phipps acreage? Did you know that long before Bonnie Oak Cemetery was named and used as a burial ground, an adjacent cemetery called Parson Graveyard was present with possibly some of the oldest burials of the area? Did you know that Josephine Anderson Pearson, an only child (1868-1944), has been walked over in the Monteagle Cemetery for sixty-six years with no one knowing about her life on the Monteagle Assembly, her interest in education and many other community services, or her burial in said cemetery? She has no tombstone. Did you know that there is at least one stone with data present in the Tracy City Cemetery belonging to a black citizen of the town? And did you know that Arthur Carman Cole, D. D. (1869-1941) so loved the school where he taught and that once operated at the now DuBose Center in Monteagle, had his ashes buried there?

A final note that I feel must be mentioned. A young man recently spoke to me about a cemetery wherein he has ancestors buried. He had taken a relative to an adjacent county to visit it. To their dismay, the owner was allowing the land to be used for hog farming. No protection at all was given for the graves. Headstones were uprooted and the ground had become a wallow for pigs. How thoughtless, how heartless, how greedy, how so un-American! Let's stop this kind of thing from happening in our county. And while we are at it, let's rid ourselves of the thought, "I wish those graves were not on my land! I don't want people on my land—dead or alive!" If you have this attitude, please reflect for a moment and imagine that those interred are your parents, spouse or your children, or even a favorite pet; then help

those looking for loved ones find them. The number looking for particular gravesites on private land will be small, and if you help, you will be so blessed. There is nothing like the wonderful feeling one gets inside his or her head when he has helped another along the way.