

Looking at the calendar on the wall one can see that Spring officially began March 20. Soon the grass will be turning a deep green and spring flowers will be popping up from their winter slumber. Winter is officially over and it is time to think Spring. When we think of the idea of a fresh beginning many tend to begin working in their yards removing the last of what winter left.

When you begin working in your yard to prepare for the return of Spring you may also want to remember your loved ones. Spring is a perfect time to clean up the grave sites of loved ones. "This is a good time to spruce up the grave sites of the loved ones we have already lost. We can go in and take off the old flowers we had decorating the stones throughout the winter months," stated David Abbott, President of the Clark County Cemetery Commission.

Clark County has over 200 cemeteries throughout the county. The Cemetery Commission meets quarterly to discuss the upkeep and maintenance of the local cemeteries. The Clark County Cemetery Commission's mission is to protect the cemeteries from being destroyed or forgotten. Local Trustees contract the mowing of the cemeteries. Danny Rodden, Clark County Sheriff, also has helped with the upkeep. The sheriff has allotted prisoners to clean up the cemeteries through the work release program.

"Danny has done a fine job helping us and the needs of our local cemeteries. Danny has come to our rescue on several occasions when we have truly needed a cemetery to be cleaned up," Abbott stated. "We also have had local boy scout troops come help us out as they work on community projects. We are also grateful to the boys and their leaders for helping us when we needed them."

Another issue for the Clark County Cemetery Commission is the lost and abandoned cemeteries. There are some cemeteries in Clark County that have been almost forgotten.

"It hurts me when someone takes me to one of the cemeteries and I look around and see that someone has taken the time to plant beautiful flowers and now it is grown up with weeds. You can see the little flowers popping up and know that someone put a lot of care into that cemetery and now it has almost been forgotten," Abbott said.

The Commission recently purchased several more signs to identify cemeteries throughout the county. Jerry Callam has been working to install some of the signs purchased. Callam has worked with the Clark County Cemetery Commission focusing on the cemeteries in Borden.

Callam, a life-long resident of Borden, was installing a sign on a recent Saturday afternoon, with the help of Abbott and Stanley Hurst. The trio installed a green sign with reflective lettering to identify the African American Cemetery located on Daisy Hill Road in Borden. Motorists passing by the cemetery would have no idea since it is located in a yard with no markers or fences to show the boundaries of the old cemetery.

"When I was a kid I remember there being several tombstones still standing in the cemetery,"

Callam recalled as he looked over the now abandoned cemetery. "There were supposed to be several tombstones from here but we were only able to locate one."

The recovered tombstone for the African American Cemetery was dated 1864.

"This once was a business location and the business owner, I guess, removed the tombstones. I was told the cemetery is about 15 feet from the roadway and just on the other side of the trees," Callam explained as he pointed out the boundaries of the cemetery. "This used to be an orchard that was the line for the cemetery."

Callam, a 2005 retiree, enjoys working with the Clark County Cemetery Commission along with his wife, Lena. He became involved through the Borden Historical Society, which meets the last Thursday of each month at the Historical Society in Borden at 6:30 p.m.

"It kinda just dropped on me. I might as well do it, nobody else is," he answered as why he was involved in the upkeep of the local cemeteries.

Callam gets a some help from the Wood Township Trustee, Joann Sullivan, but the majority of the cost of the maintenance and upkeep of the cemeteries he works on is from his own wallet. He does the mowing and upkeep for the Whitson, Howlett and Dow Cemeteries.

"I just started doing it out of the kindness of my heart. I knew nobody else was going to do it, so I might as well," a humble Callam added. "When I first started, Dow Cemetery (on Highway 60), you couldn't even tell there was a cemetery there, it was all grown up. I finally got it cleaned up."

Callam just has one more sign to install at Deam Lake and the signs for the cemeteries in Borden will all be installed.

"This is a story I hear all the time. I hear where people are taking care of these old family cemeteries out of the kindness of their hearts. Some have relatives buried in the cemeteries, some live close to them and others are doing the upkeep because nobody else will. I take my hat off to these people. They truly are great patriots. There is a lot of work and expense keeping the cemeteries cleaned up and well maintained," Abbott added.

Callam and Abbott are just two members of the Clark County Cemetery Commission. Abbott is currently the President of the Cemetery Commission, Tamsie Meurer is Secretary and Board Members include Jerry Callam, John Prall of Henryville and Joann Sullivan, Wood Township Trustee. The Commission also welcomes Paul and Pat Coffman and Dan and Betty Johnson to meetings. Paul Coffman is a past board member and along with his wife, Pat, have completed cemetery inventories while the Johnsons are credited with lots of hard work and dedication in the early stages of implementing the Clark County Cemetery Commission.

Meurer, a retired librarian, was quick to guide people to the DNR website regarding historical cemeteries and preservation.

"I attended a cemetery restoration workshop and learned of the website. I have a paper copy of the manual but anytime a Boy Scout Troop wants to work within a cemetery, I always reference them to the website. You can also do damage in restoration as well as do good," Meurer stated. "The website has cemetery resources, how to make mortar, just lots of information that can be useful with historical cemeteries."

The website located at www.in.gov/dnr/historic/2807.htm, will give you tons of information about historic cemeteries.

When asked why Abbott was involved he stated, "I was appointed to the Cemetery Commission when Dan Johnson was the President. Dan then retired and I was then voted as President. I am glad to be a part of this Commission and serve the community on different boards. This has truly opened my eyes up to the importance of maintaining and protecting local cemeteries," Abbott added.

Abbott concluded, "Let's make sure we all take the time in our busy schedules to clean up our loved ones gravesites."

If your organization or Boy Scout Troop would be interested in cleaning up the abandoned cemetery on Tunnel Mill Road please call Abbott at 502-931-4669.

The Clark County Cemetery Commission meets quarterly at the Sellersburg Library. The next meeting will be held on April 9 at 7:30 p.m. The Sellersburg Library is located at 430 N. Indiana Avenue in Sellersburg. The public is invited and encouraged to attend.