

Sign of progress for Springhill cemetery

State historical marker to be unveiled Thursday

By Henry Bailey

baileyhank@desotoappeal.com

A ceremony this week in Hernando welcomes a state historical marker for historic Springhill cemetery, setting a new milestone for activists and officials seeking to restore the antebellum site that's as old as the city.

"It's a big step forward. We applied back in April and got the initial OK in July," said Tom Ferguson, whose father, N.C. Ferguson, a former Hernando alderman, was the last person buried in Springhill, in 2006.

"We got the approval from the state Department of Archives quicker than most," said Mayor Chip Johnson. "It's great that we're getting this official recognition showing what a special place in our past this place occupies. When you see a historic marker, you stop because you know something important happened here."

The sturdy metal marker at De-Soto County's oldest cemetery, established in 1836, will be unveiled Thursday at 4 p.m. at the site on the corner of Oak Grove Road and College Street, west of Hernando's downtown square on U.S. 51.

The Friends of Springhill Memorial Gardens and Cemetery have been restoring the location in an effort spearheaded by Ferguson. The five-acre site has some 100 marked graves, only six of which date after 1900. Many of the monuments have artistic carvings.

The cemetery was abandoned for decades and allowed to grow up in kudzu and privet hedge and become a pasture for cattle, but Northwest Mississippi Community College volunteers have been clearing brush and planting cedars, oaks, redbuds and other native trees and plants to restore the natural habitat.

*Please see **MARKER, A2***

Article Continued Below

[See **MARKER** on Page 02](#)

Continued from page DSA1

MARKER

An ornate metal gate was installed at Springhill with NWCC student help earlier this year; plans call for benches, improved lighting and waking paths.

In October, the Friends held an All Hallows Eve fundraiser at Springhill featuring historical characters interred there coming to life and talking about pioneer days. Celebrity re-enactors in costume included Alderman Andrew Miller, Circuit Judge Bobby Chamberlin and Johnson as the city's first mayor, Andrew Satterfield.

The city now is in the process of nominating the cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places.

"We hope the community will embrace the cemetery and that they and visitors to our city will go there, to refresh and reflect," Johnson said. "It doesn't have to be a somber place."

For more information on Springhill, go online to spring hillfriends.org.

— Henry Bailey: (901) 333-2012