Volunteers pitch in to save historic cemetery

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ABBEVILLE — Graceland Cemetery, the historic burial ground where many early business and civic leaders are buried is getting a new lease on life.

The Graceland Cemetery Association Inc. has assumed the care and maintenance of the cemetery from the Abbeville Masonic Lodge. The lodge has been responsible for the Graceland Avenue site since it was founded in 1908.

Chad Edwards, association president and attorney whose ancestors made the initial donation of land for the cemetery, said considerable work has been done in the few short weeks since the transfer took place.

Plans are to build sidewalks, fix drainage problems and construct a road to link the cemetery to the La. 14 Bypass directly across from the U.S. Post Office.

“We also plan to have a veterans memorial of some kind. We have veterans from the Civil War, Spanish-American War and every conflict since then represented at the cemetery.”

Chad Edwards
Association president and attorney whose ancestors made the initial donation of land for the cemetery

Volunteer Sawyer White, a member of the TRIAD partnership of senior citizens and law enforcement, has been refurbishing gravesites, just as he did at the Old Masonic Cemetery on South Main Street.

White said he has been working on above-ground tombs with brick and mortar, repairing the effects of time and vandalism. “It’s a matter of civic pride and getting involved in the community,” he said.

Danyorilla Goforth, a resident of a low-income housing development on Graceland Avenue, said the work is noticeable and welcomed.

“It sure looks nice. I’m glad someone is taking care of that old graveyard,” she said.

Edwards said fences are being repaired and Italian cypress trees planted along the fencelines.

Charter members of the association are the American Legion, the Greater Abbeville-Vermilion Chamber of Commerce, the Abbeville Women’s Club, the Abbeville Garden Club, the Vermilion Parish Genealogical Society, the parish Historical Society, the Knights of Columbus, the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Woodmen of the World and the Masons.