



# CROTHERSVILLE TIMES

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## Local Cemetery Landmarks Restored

The statues of E.C. Bess and his wife, Martha, local landmarks for nearly a century near the original entrance of the Crothersville Cemetery, have been replaced and restored.

In September last year the statue of Elisha C. Bess was found toppled and broken. The statue of his wife had been leaning dramatically causing fears of its impending fall.

The Greater Crothersville Heritage Foundation took up the project of raising money to repair and restore the local landmarks. The local group called upon Helen Wildermuth of Stonehugger Cemetery Restoration of Martinsville and Mark Davis of Stone Saver of Hartford City.

The pair are known as the top cemetery stone restorative artists

and preservationists in Indiana.

"We were fortunate to gain the interest and restorative skill of Helen & Mark," said Curt Kovener, Greater Crothersville Heritage Foundation president. "Usually they are booked for cemetery restoration 18 months in advance but because of work in other parts of southern Indiana were able to get our local (continued on page 7)



Cemetery stone restorative artists Helen Wildermuth prepares to apply epoxy while Mark Davis aligns the Elisha Bess statue at the Crothersville Cemetery.

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statues repaired and cleaned in rapid fashion."

The pair dug new foundations for the statues late last month and began the time consuming task of cleaning and repairing the statues last week.

The cemetery stone restoration experts use only chemicals and techniques, which do not damage the stonework.

"There's a lot of time and 'elbow grease' in restoring cemetery stone," said Helen.

A special tripod and hoist were used to lift and position the statues for repair and special epoxy for stone work was used to repair the damage to the Bess statue.

Early in Crothersville's history, Elisha Bess was affiliated with the railroad and resided in a brick home which was formerly located along the east side of the railroad between Main and Howard Streets.

Local history has it that when Martha Bess died on June 15, 1912, Bess sent photographs of her to Italy and commissioned artists to carve a statue of her likeness from marble to adorn her gravesite. The carvers portrayed her with classic Roman style in flowing robe.

Impressed with the artistry, Bess sent photographs of himself and commissioned a similar statue for his gravesite. His, however, portrays the man in business clothes, tie, and a hat.

Purportedly, Bess never got to see the finished product as he died at age 80 on June 23, 1917 before the statue arrived in Crothersville.

The local Heritage Foundation's fundraising efforts to repair and restore cemetery stones in the Crothersville and other township cemeteries will be ongoing, Kovener said.

"There is a lot of work yet to do and as funds become available we hope to continue cleaning, restoring, preserving the heritage and artistry found in our cemeteries," he said.

Area residents who would like to financially assist in the on-going project can make contributions to the Greater Crothersville Heritage Foundation Cemetery Stone Project at the Peoples Bank in Crothersville.

An example of some of the simple cleaning techniques the local Heritage Foundation hopes to implement can be seen on a couple of military markers cleaned by Davis & Wildermuth located just inside the main entrance.

"Visitors will have no trouble identifying the cleaned and restored markers," said Kovener. "They are the brightest, whitest stones in the old part of the cemetery."