

Restoring the Coyle Cemetery
by Brittany Williams

The Coyle Family Graveyard for years has been left to an overgrowth of trees and invasive brush, the grounds have been altered by groundhog holes, the walls have begun to crumble and stones have begun to tilt. With the rediscovery of this cemetery, and a grant provided by the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation, the cemetery is facing a new light.

On June 7th, the trees and overgrowth will be removed from the grounds, the holes from animals will be filled, and the stones will be uncovered again. The Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission will lead the effort to see that the stones will all be cleaned and re-documented. There are believed to be thirteen graves within the walls, but, with other various fieldstones present, there may be more. Scheduled for Saturday, June 18th, there will be a public cleaning day to work on these stones. No previous experience is required as there will be instruction given on site.

The earliest of the graves dates back to the death of W. Moor, who died March 1824, and the latest with the death of Margaret Elizabeth “Mattie” Coyle, May 20, 1921, daughter of Joseph O. Coyle, who never married. There are potentially two soldier graves in the graveyard as well. The first is the grave of Sgt. Joseph C. Coyle, d. March 27, 1864, who served with the 12th Virginia Cavalry Regiment, Company A during the Civil War. He was killed in action near Bunker Hill, WV. There is another grave within the cemetery listed as Major Joseph O. Coyle, d. May 28, 1874, being roughly 52-54 years old at the time of the Civil War he would have been too old for service, but could have had other military service prior. It is known that he was an active member within the Masonic Lodge, with other close family members holding positions within the lodge as well.¹ There are many other Coyle family members buried in the surrounding areas, along with descendants of the family that still live in the area as well. Professional Genealogist Victor Dunn and Coyle descendant has done extensive research on the history of the family with his most recent publication appearing in the spring 2016 edition of *The Genealogist*.

The Coyle Family Graveyard is just one of many historic family cemeteries, and only so much work can be done to protect these important pieces of Jefferson County history. The

¹ Dunn, Victor S., “The Confederate Coyles of Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley.” *The Genealogist*, Spring 2016.

families who have helped to shape the County are an important part of Jefferson County's long history and now, with the help of a generous grant, perhaps one of those family stories can be preserved.