

Beals Cemetery Sign Dedication

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VALE—Eric Beals, Robin Beals Wilkins and family went on a mission to honor their great-great grandpa, as well as their family history and local history. You see, in 1887 Lawrence W. Beals donated an acre of land from the corner of his 288 acre farm for a cemetery. Then in 1906 the land was transferred to the Vale Cemetery Association. However, little was done to keep up the entrance and signage and over the years it deteriorated. With this in mind, the family started to fundraise with hopes of replacing the old plywood sign, with its misspelled words, that marked the entrance of the Beals Cemetery. It is a Butte County Historic Site. That mission came to fruition at the Beals Cemetery sign dedication July 1, 2024.

Addressing the Beals Cemetery sign dedication Kevin Kuchenbecker, Deadwood Historic Preservation Officer said, “History in this area is remarkable.” He went on to talk about how the Black Hills is one big community and to remember that “our mothers and forefathers pioneered this land.”

The Beals family embarked on writing grants and fundraising in hopes of raising enough money to replace the sign. They took the project to the Society of Black Hills Pioneers who helped them acquire an Outside of Deadwood grant for \$4,000 from the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission. The grant required that the funding is matched with other funding on at least a one-to-one basis. To date, four major donors—City of Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission, Society of Black Hills Pioneers, Butte County, SD Historical Society, and F.L. Clarkson Family Foundation of Belle Fourche, SD—have contributed to the cause, as well as many individual contributors.

During the sign dedication, Nancy Haigh presented an American flag on behalf of her mother, Judy Ollila. Judy wanted to honor her brother, Allen Alfred Holst, with this gesture; he is buried at the National Cemetery in Sturgis. The flag will be used to fly on the new flagpole.

The gate and small sign were constructed and installed by Mountain Man Metal Art of Belle.



Left to right: **Anita Knipper**, Deadwood Historic Preservation Commissioner; **Kevin Kuchenbecker**, Deadwood Historic Preservation Officer; Leo Diede, Deadwood Historic Preservation Chair; **Robin Beals Wilkins**, **Eric Beals**, **Ken Wetz**, Butte County Historical Society gather to present a \$4000 check from the Society of Black Hills Pioneers for a new sign, gate, flagpole and entry to the Beals Cemetery in Vale, SD. *Longbrake photo*