THE CEMETERIES OF REDSTONE ARSENAL

Project Process & Summary

Status as of September 20, 2005
By John P. Rankin
Volunteer Researcher

An effort was undertaken in the summer of 2002 by John P. Rankin as a volunteer historical researcher to document the old family cemeteries located on Redstone Arsenal. The project was initiated at the request of Beverly Curry of the U. S. Army’s Redstone Arsenal Division of Environmental Management. John Rankin was solicited (and eventually agreed to volunteer) for the project as a result of his earlier similar work in finding and documenting cemeteries in and around the City of Madison, Alabama.

The approach for the effort involved personal visitation to the known cemeteries on the arsenal, as recorded on existing maps. Additional cemeteries were found or sought in accordance with reports of unmarked graves from former residents, arsenal personnel, and contract workers on the sties, or from references in old land deeds. Moreover, there were 7 nearby cemeteries documented that are not located within the boundaries of Redstone Arsenal today, but some of the people buried therein were landowners of property that became Army lands.

Each cemetery was visited to perform an initial field survey, as well as to locate and photograph obvious tombstones and fieldstones. Inscribed tombstones were cleaned and photographed in order to have a visual record of the inscriptions and styles of markers. Notes were made of the condition of each cemetery’s grounds, its fence (when so enclosed), and the individual
tombstones and fieldstones. Photographs included overviews to show the condition and layout of the graves. After initial visits, most cemeteries to date have been revisited for the purpose of probing up to 6 inches beneath the ground in and around sunken grave depressions to locate any tombstones that may have been buried by debris and soil through the years.

As of this writing, 49 cemeteries within the arsenal boundaries have been located and documented, but there are indications on old maps of a few more that are known. Moreover, a total of 60 such cemeteries on the arsenal was reported in the 1959 newspaper account shown below. (In order to easily see details of the inserted digital photos here and in the Summary Reports for each cemetery, it will sometimes be necessary to select the “View” function from the Microsoft Word toolbar and then select 200%, if using a computer to examine the files and reports. If using printed hardcopy, then a good magnifying glass may be necessary.)
Many Cemeteries Remain In The Shadow Of Missiles

By WELDIE PAYNE
of The Times Staff

Unnoticed, undisturbed, moved only by the rumbling and roaring of the missile which works at Redstone Arsenal, the people sleep.

Their bodies rest in marble tombs, graced by flowers and inscriptions, but the women, men and children who were killed there lie quietly in their graves.

The sun shines, the clouds move across the grass and all is still on the hillside. A few yards away, a monument stands in memory of those who were killed.

There are about 500 cemeteries on the 24,000 acres of property. Some are very small; others have 500 or 600 graves. Some are new; some are old; some have been there for several years.

They were there before the First World War and before the Second World War. They were there before the Battle of the Bulge and before the Battle of Normandy. They were there when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and when the Allied forces liberated the concentration camps.

The cemetery is a place of quiet reflection, a place of reverence. It is a place where the memories of those who have gone before us are preserved.

The Times, November 8, 1959

Huntsville (AL) Times

Says:

World Due To Death Drop

Economist Daily News Service

Reduction in the birth rate is threatening the world with the dangers of a possible population explosion.

Walter G. Bowditch, consulting actuary, published an article in which he discussed the impact of population growth on the economy.

He warned that unless the more populous nations are able to bring birth rates down to levels where there is a balance between birth and death, the world will face a crisis.

Population of the world grew from 1 billion people in 1900 to 3 billion in 1960. By 2000 it is expected that the world population will reach 6 billion.

He said that if the world's population continues to grow at the current rate, it will be difficult to feed the world's population.

The population explosion is a threat to the world's economy, and to the stability of the world's political system.

Times, November 8, 1959

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The above reference to the “New Market Olive Church Cemetery should be to the “New Mount Olive Church Cemetery”. Reporter Weldon Payne or his editor no doubt got confused with the community by the name of New Market, located in the northeastern part of the county. It is interesting that tombstones are mentioned in this article that are no longer found in the cemeteries being discussed.
Thursday, died Sept. 4, 1908.

With others of their family they lie today, while the earth jumps around them and buildings are raised and missiles built. The stones say they are children, but they would all be grey-haired now.

***

One graveyard is called the New Market Olive Church Cemetery. In it one stone dates back to 1827. In the Burton Cemetery a death is recorded for 1810.

On one stone is listed the names of John Simpson, Margaret A. Simpson, Marion E. Simpson, and Arthur M. Simpson. John's wife was born Aug. 9, 1816, died Aug. 31, 1874. Did she dream that some of the world's smartest men would someday walk in their backyard — in the years ahead after her country had fought three big wars?

More than a hundred Christmases ago — on Dec. 25, 1844 — died Lucy Clark who was born Nov. 29, in the last decade of the 1700's, but the last digit is worn off the stone. And another Christmas nears and the ground above her is the same, but the town that she once knew has changed, and the green fields have grown in importance.

A few yards from the Ordnance Guided Missile School where troops from all over the world come to train and learn about missiles, a graveyard holds a stone of a person who died March 7, 1860. This person was born in 1772, but there is no name to say who he or she was. Perhaps it was a school teacher, or an outstanding science student or a farmer.

And near the intersection of Mills and Martin Roads, one of the streets which stays the busiest with military and civilian traffic lies the body of a soldier, Cpl. Joseph Beasley, Co. C, 12 USCI. No dates are on his headstone.

There are others ... an old slave graveyard, the Fonell Cemetery, the Rawlings and Lanier Cemetery, the Jacobs Cemetery, Jordan, Timmons ... many more.

... drive past the schools, the living devices, the living cattle, see — symbols of you will also see, behind the fences, and the smaller obelisk of the ground, are the missiles now past; recede.
Microsoft Word documents describing the historical significance (plus records of the lives of the interred people) have been prepared for the 49 cemeteries that have been explored. These cemetery “Summary Reports”, plus the associated report for one of the closely related “off-site” cemeteries, comprise an aggregate of 1613 pages of text and graphics. Altogether, the 990 photographs and associated thousands of images of data that was digitally recorded for the project to date are stored in 175 computer folders containing 4,560 files consisting of 1,592 million bytes of disk space. This magnitude of data requires more than two totally full CD-ROMs to contain it, so the complete data file is now on a 3–CD set.
Each cemetery has a name taken from the list supplied in the year 2002 by Ms. Curry to reflect the designations used by the Army offices. Generally, each cemetery is named according to association with the known landowner family or names inscribed on tombstones, plus a numeric designation that contains the arsenal area number and a sequence number within that area.

Data obtained during research was sometimes associated with more than one cemetery. In such cases, it was often duplicated in the computer file folder for each involved cemetery. However, sometimes the common data was left in generic folders, to be available as needed for any particular cemetery. Likewise, sometimes the data was left in a single cemetery folder and then used from there to insert the image into a different cemetery’s Summary Report.

Each photo was made with a FujiFilm “FinePix” digital camera, with 2.2 megapixels. These images were then downloaded into a computer, and Adobe PhotoDeluxe version 2.0 software was employed to enhance the quality of the images and to trim, rotate, or resize the images as needed. The file density for each photo was converted (after enhancements) to 150 dpi in order to optimize file size and still allow clarity when printed.

Usually the detail of census images downloaded from internet sources was enhanced, trimmed, and annotated as well. When inserted into Summary Reports for the cemeteries, the census images are often difficult to read without magnification due to page fitting restrictions. When viewing the images with a computer, it is quite simple to set the “View” at 200% to facilitate review. When viewing hardcopy (printed) images, it may be necessary to use optical magnification devises for clarity.

Census records were in many cases searched by using on-line sources before “every name” indexes were available. Some of those searches were obviously unsuccessful without “every name” capability, but where these obstacles were noted, the some of the research has been repeated recently with the provision of “every name” indexes. Of course, even with that capability, there are often obstacles in census index searches due to interpretations of old handwriting and differences of given names or initials used from one census to the next. “Most likely” match-up was made whenever possible in these cases, using the data beyond the name fields for clues.
It will be noticed that census records are often red-lined, not only for the person of immediate interest, but also for the neighbors that provide clues to location. As more and more research has been done for early Madison County pioneers, it becomes fairly routine to know approximately where they lived. Each known pioneer can then be a “place marker” for neighbors as the additional families are researched.

The associated family data collected for the cemeteries typically includes digital photos of land records, probate records, wills, census records, and data from sources such as family books, published genealogies, postings from the internet about family histories, and newspaper or court records. However, the vast majority of the data collected focused on the 1800s, with some selected inclusions up to 1920, since that is where the Madison County land record indexes change volumes. [It has been agreed throughout the effort that Ms. Curry would cover the 1900s with her own work, based upon interviews with living persons (and their descendants) who resided on the property before it became part of the arsenal.]

The sheer volume of the digital photos of these records has required many hours of enhancement processing, and some of that effort has not yet been completed, even for many of the digital photos that are already made. After processing, these records will be added to future productions of updates of the master CD-ROMs for the Army. Additionally, if any particular item significantly alters the applicable knowledge base regarding any cemetery, then the Summary Report for that cemetery will be updated as appropriate in the future.

The 7 additional cemeteries outside of the arsenal grounds that have been investigated as being closely related to arsenal land history include the Jamar – Owen Cemetery (just west of Gate 7 on Martin Road), the Jordan’s Chapel Cemetery (on the grounds of Morris Elementary School, south of Bob Wallace Avenue, on property that once was a part of the arsenal), Triana Lakeside Cemetery (near the town of Triana, on Lakeside Drive), Old Triana City Cemetery (in the center of Triana), the Watkins – Rowe Cemetery (located near the southeastern corner of the International Airport), the Wiggins Cemetery (located near the northeastern corner of the International Airport), and the Wiggins Slave Cemetery (located east of the mid-point of the International Airport). Cemeteries outside the eastern boundary of the arsenal are typically already well documented as being within the metropolitan area of Huntsville, and they were not specifically
Of the 7 cemeteries that were included in this report, but located physically outside of current arsenal boundaries, only the Jordan’s Chapel Cemetery has been fully documented with a narrative report for this project. The Jordan’s Chapel Cemetery report consists of 63 pages of text and graphics. The Jordan’s Chapel Cemetery is perhaps one of the most historically significant of all of the cemeteries addressed by this project, as it is the burial place of a prominent pioneer pre-arsenal landowner and American Revolutionary War patriot, Bartholomew Jordan, for whom Jordan’s Chapel was named. Jordan’s Chapel was the second or third oldest Methodist Church in north Alabama, and its location was lost in antiquity until this effort was undertaken.

Summary Reports have been prepared and/or supporting data delivered on CD-ROM to the Army office for the following cemeteries:

- Andy Cowan Cemetery, 63-1 (13 pages)
- Austin Groves Cemetery, 67-2 (43 pages)
- Burton – Morton Cemetery, 71-1 (32 pages)
- Clark Cemetery, 65-2 (36 pages)
- Cooper – Penland Cemetery, 80-1 (12 pages)
- Dickson – Rankin Cemetery, 87-2 (40 pages)
- Elko Switch Cemetery, 20-1 (24 pages)
- Emeline – Inman Cemetery, 62-1 (60 pages)
- Fennil / Fennell Cemetery, 56-1 (35 pages)
- Green Grove Cemetery, 61-1 (14 pages)
- Hancock Cemetery, 62-2 (17 pages)
- Horton – Joiner Cemetery, 87-1 (19 pages)
- Indian Creek Cemetery, 62-3 (10 pages)
- Jamar – New Mt. Hope Church Cemetery, 82-1 (14 pages)
- Jamar – Owen Cemetery [no number; not on arsenal; no report]
- Joiner – Lacey Cemetery, 89-2 (25 pages)
- Jones Cemetery, 37-5 (18 pages)
- Jordan Cemetery, 45-1 (30 pages)
- Jordan – Jacobs Cemetery, 54-1 (29 pages)
- Jordan – Lanier Cemetery, 51-1 (26 pages)
- Jordan’s Chapel Cemetery [no number; not on arsenal] (63 pages)
• Lacey Cemetery, 75-2 (18 pages)
• Lacy Cemetery, 75-1 (70 pages)
• Landman #1 Cemetery, 34-1 (27 pages)
• Landman #2 (Slave) Cemetery, 34-2 (17 pages)
• Lanier Cemetery, 46-3 (28 pages)
• Lanier Slave Cemetery, 46-2 (6 pages)
• Lipscomb Cemetery, 61-2 (39 pages)
• Looney Cemetery, [Number not yet assigned] (45 pages)
• Lynch Cemetery, 80-3 (11 pages)
• Lynch Cemetery, 89-3 (16 pages)
• Madkin Cemetery, 37-2 (11 pages)
• Matkin Cemetery, 37-3 (13 pages)
• McDonnell Cemetery, 37-6 (21 pages)
• Moore – Landman Cemetery, 46-1 (51 pages)
• Pet Cemetery, 35-1 (132 pages)
• Powhaton Toney, 67-1 (41 pages)
• Rawlins – Lanier Cemetery, 37-4 (19 pages)
• Simpson – Jones Cemetery, 65-3 (54 pages)
• Simpson Slave Cemetery, 80-2 (19 pages)
• Smith Cemetery, 72-2 (20 pages)
• Smith Slave Cemetery, 72-1 (17 pages)
• Timmons Cemetery, 89-1 (139 pages)
• Triana Lakeside Cemetery [no number; not on arsenal; no report]
• Triana Old (City) Cemetery [no number; not on arsenal; no report]
• Unknown Cemetery, 52-1 (40 pages) [“Poplar Hill Cemetery”]
• Unknown Cemetery, 83-1 (24 pages) [Jamar-Owen Plantation Cem.]
• Unknown Cemetery, 88-1 (18 pages) [Alex Joiner Cemetery]
• Unnamed Cemetery, 62-4 (37 pages) [Boardman Cemetery]
• Unnamed Cemetery, 65-1 (33 pages) [Horton-Jacobs Cemetery]
• Ward Mountain Cemetery, 20-2 (10 pages)
• Watkins-Rowe Cemetery [no number; not on arsenal; no report]
• Wiggins Cemetery [no number; not on arsenal; no report]
• Wiggins Slave Cemetery [no number; not on arsenal; no report]
• Williams-Scott Cemetery, 37-1 (16 pages)
• Woodward Cemetery, 88-2 (32 pages)
Of these cemeteries, the Lanier family cemeteries are perhaps the most historically noteworthy, as one of them (the Jordan – Lanier Cemetery, 51-1) contains the grave of Rev. William Lanier, who was another Revolutionary War soldier buried on the arsenal. His immediate family and Lanier relatives formed a sort of dynasty in pre-Civil War days, owning a large portion of the land that became the arsenal. Additionally, the Timmons Cemetery holds the story of an extremely prominent family that faded away with time, almost in a typical Tennessee Williams type of tale. Furthermore, the investigation into the Smith Cemetery unfolded the story of Hughy Smith and those who owned the land after his death. Hughy’s descendants all married well and produced influential citizens of the area in the 1800s. However, none of them stayed on the old plantation where his cemetery is located on the arsenal. The land ownership passed first to William Edwards in a courthouse auction, and then William bestowed the Smith Plantation lands upon one of his daughters when she married Henry Grantland. One of Henry Grantland’s daughters married Boling Rice, and they became the parents of Grantland Rice, who in the mid-1900s was America’s foremost sportscaster and sportswriter. In fact, for many years the annual collegiate football championship trophy was named the Grantland Rice Trophy. It was Grantland Rice who coined the term “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” for the linemen of Notre Dame’s football team in the 1900s.

There are, of course, many more fascinating family stories to be associated with the cemeteries of Redstone Arsenal. Most are yet to be written, but there are probably none that will exceed the human interest of the Jacobs family pioneers of arsenal lands. Jacobs descendants are buried in many of the arsenal cemeteries, but it was investigation of the Jordan – Jacobs Cemetery that revealed the story of this extensive family of free blacks and mulattoes who came here from South Carolina around 1822. Apparently, they were free back in South Carolina (probably granted freedom for service during the Revolutionary War), and some of them arrived in Madison County in the company of the earliest Kennamer and Lemley families to come here. They initially settled in the New Hope area of the southeastern part of the county before taking land where the arsenal is today. The Jacobs family was obviously accepted in the pre-Civil War white society, and they established several communities or small towns on the pre-arsenal lands. These settlements included Mullens Flats, Silverhill, Pond Beat, Green Grove, and others.
One of the more interesting oddities that run counter to traditional Southern stories is the fact that the black or mulatto Jacobs families “took in” white families who were in desperate times on occasion. One example is found in the 1850 census, when Hughy Smith’s daughter Mary and her four children by Pleasant Austin (deceased by 1850) were enumerated in the household headed by mulatto Rebecca Jacobs:

Elle / Ellie / Ella Jacobs was the son of Isaac Jacobs and his wife Betty. They were married in Madison County on Dec. 23, 1878. Per the 1900 census records, Ellie Jacobs was born in March of 1884. Isaac was born in January, 1847, and Betty was born in June, 1859. There was another Isaac Jacobs (b. Aug. 1845) in Madison Co., and it is often impossible to differentiate between the two in earlier censuses. They were cousins, part of a group of Jacobs families from SC that came with matriarch Fanny Jacobs, b. 1778 SC. It is likely that the other Jacobs families were headed by her children: Burrell (b. 1801/1810, SC), Unity (b. 1817, SC), Thomas (b. 1801, SC), Isaac (b. 1803, SC), Oliver (b. 1808, SC), and Rebecca (b. 1807, SC). All of these families were listed as Mulatto, and they were obviously free, in order to be named in the census records of 1850. In that year, the family headed by Mulatto "Becka" (Rebecca) Jacobs included 4 Jacobs children, including one of the two Isaacs that could be Ellie’s father. Her household also included the white family of Mary E. Austin (b. 1812, SC). Mary had 4 of her children with her in Rebecca’s household. Judging from the ages and birthplaces of the Jacobs children, the families came to Madison County by 1822. One other likely child of Fannie’s was David Jacobs, listed in the 1850 census as age 43 (b. SC), but enumerated last in the household headed by George W. Jacobs at age 25. This indicates that David was somehow incapacitated.
### 1850 Madison County AL census page 448-A:
#### Families of Isaac Jacobs & Becka Jacobs from South Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Licke</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Licke</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine</td>
<td></td>
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<td>D. To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank J.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret J.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. To</td>
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<td>Harry J.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. J.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam C.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George S.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>D. To</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Joel</td>
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<td>Martha</td>
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### 1850 Madison County AL census page 448-B

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<td>Stanhope</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary S. Austin</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>James R. Austin</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>Frederick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christoph 6</td>
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<td>Sophia J.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D. To</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mary had first married Pleasant Austin, who owned land adjacent to the Smith Plantation and to the Jacobs holdings. Pleasant died before the 1850 census, and Mary didn’t go home to live in the house of her father, apparently choosing instead to live with “Becka” Jacobs and her children. In 1852 Mary married again, this time to William Parker, and moved out of the Jacobs household. It is also interesting to note in the census records that some Jacobs children were named “Stanhope”, apparently after Stanhope Smith, who was a brother of Mary and son of Hughy. Stanhope was a physician, so he may have delivered the Jacobs babies, and their names may have been given in respect and gratitude for that service. It was Stanhope who inherited Hughy’s plantation, but Stanhope refused to remain on the land and be a farmer, so he eventually moved into Huntsville and Morgan County.

The Looney Cemetery is another with great historical significance, as the Looney family was headed in Madison County by Absolem Looney, who was another Revolutionary War soldier. Absolem assumed the defaulted debt for John Hunt’s land where the old Huntsville Airport was located, on the west end of Airport Road. John Hunt, of course, was the recognized first settler of the town of Huntsville. Two of Absolem Looney’s sons took land within the arsenal boundaries, and one of them operated a mill at the confluence of the Indian Creek (today known as Huntsville Spring Branch) with Price’s Branch (also known as Hurricane Creek in the early 1800s) that has now become known as Indian Creek. His mill and surrounding property was bought by Thomas Fearn and his brother to complete the Indian Creek Navigation Company’s plan to transport cotton to the mill site (“Looney’s Landing”), from whence it was transferred to paddle wheeled steamboats for shipment to New Orleans markets. The Looney Cemetery is thought to have been located by using tips from old time residents and by field inspections that indicate possible grave sites, but the use of ground penetrating radar and/or archaeological excavations may be necessary to conclusively prove the existence of a cemetery at the assumed site.

As can be seen from this highly abbreviated overview, there are many items of great historical significance associated with the land that became Redstone Arsenal. While much has already been discovered, very little of the total available information has been compiled into these Summary Reports, and more remains to be discovered or proved with additional research. It is intended that the reports will occasionally be updated as time allows and information is further compiled.
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