

The Antioch cemetery is a good example of how older graves can be kept in a clean and orderly manner.

History Fading On Neglected Tombstones

By Josephine Hall

Many cemeteries in Hoke County, especially those that are old, some which are abandoned, have been lost to memory.

Numerous others are on the verge of being lost.

A survey, which was established for the purpose of identifying these county grave sites, is finally drawing to a close after several years of hard work.

The idea of a cemetery survey came about when the 1977 North Carolina General Assembly established a committee to launch the program statewide.

It is a voluntary program under the guidance of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

The goal is to map every cemetery in each county with a sheet of information filled out on each cemetery.

Locations of the cemeteries are plotted on geological survey Topographical maps.

Two sets of information sheets and maps are being compiled. One set are being compiled. One set of each will be sent to the Dept. of Archives and History and the other sets will be placed in the Hoke County Library.

Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy Chapter in Raeford have been the volunteer workers in Hoke County.

A committee, composed of Mrs. Herman Koonce, Mrs. Mary Anna McLean, Miss Isabel McFadyen and myself, have furnished the leadership in locating and plotting the cemeteries.

Credit should also go to Mr. Charlie Parsons and members of his drafting classes at Hoke High School. They have plotted the latitudinal and longitudinal locations on the topographic maps.

The organization is interested in history and this is an area that has been untapped too long.

Committee members have received many telephone calls from people wanting to know about graves of their ancestors.

Just recently a young lady from Apex, N.C. called to ask about a McDuffie cemetery.

If anyone knows the whereabouts of this burial site the committee would appreciate being told about it.

Of the cemeteries found, 49 were well maintained and preserved, 17

were poorly maintained or overgrown and 31 were completely abandoned.

Most of those which were well cared for were church cemeteries. About all of those abandoned were family burial grounds.

Interesting information has been turned up regarding many cemeteries and grave sites. Many of them reveal the history in the area.

For example, the old McEachern or Mill Prong cemetery shows that it was the burial site of early Scotch-Highland immigrants who settled in the area in the 18th century. Some came as early as 1770.

A cemetery for slaves is located nearby.

Longstreet Church, which was in the area of Hoke County taken by Ft. Bragg in 1918, was started in 1758.

Many ancestors of Hoke Co. residents were buried there.

After a Civil War battle fought at the Green Spring - Monroe place, also in the reservation, the bodies of some 30 unknown soldiers were buried in the Longstreet Cemetery.

A small marble shaft bears the simple inscription "Confederate Soldiers."

On March 9-10, 1865, General T. Sherman, with a part of his Army, camped in the church yard of Bethel Presbyterian Church where the cemetery is located today. This church was organized in 1776.

After the soldiers left the following day, members examined the

area and found the following request written on a blank page in the pulpit Bible.

"Mr. McNeill (pastor) will please prove the absurdity of the universalists doctrine. Mr. McNeill will preach a sermon from the first Epistle of John, fourth chapter, fourth verse. Mr. McNeill will please pray for old E.S.B. By order of W.T. Sherman, Maj. Comd. U.S. Forces."

This Bible is now in the safe keeping of the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian Church at Montreat, N.C.

About a half mile south of Raeford near the Hoke Co. High School, is the McLean Cemetery.

Dr. Hector McLean, a Scotsman by birth, is buried there.

Dr. McLean founded Edinborough Medical College, the first Medical school in the state.

McLean converted his 10 room brick home, near the cemetery, into a hospital.

During the Civil War, the Yankees stole the valuable instruments used by the students.

Rev. John McIntyre, pastor of Presbyterian churches in the area, died at the age of 102 years, two months and 23 days.

His grave is in the Antioch church cemetery.

Many old graves can be found in the old McCaskill cemetery located at Philippi church.

One is that of Catherine Campbell, wife of William Williamson, niece and adopted daughter of the Duke of

Argyle. She was married in Scotland, and died in N.C. about AD 1805.

The Mt. Grove cemetery in Quewhiffle Township has been there since before the county was formed in 1911.

The old Robeson Co. line runs on the south end of the cemetery.

At the Murdoch McLeod cemetery, also in Quewhiffle, a big millstone sits in the middle of the graveyard and a marble slab shows the recording of the deed in the Register of Deeds office. Four large cedar trees grow at each corner of the cemetery. It is told that members of the McLeod family died of typhoid fever and were buried at night because of fear of the Indians.

Older citizens in the Blue Springs community report that an old Civil War cemetery was located in their area.

A house and garden are built over it today.

They say in another place in their township, a filling station has been built over a cemetery.

Mt. Elam is the oldest Indian cemetery in the county.

The Matthew Graham Cemetery in Blue Springs Township is located by an old railroad which was used to have turpentine in years past. Old cross ties can still be found in the ground there.

In some places there is only one grave - or two.

The Calvin Starling site in McLauchlin Township is where one grave is located. It is of a northern soldier with Sherman's Army, who was sick or injured and could not travel with his company.

Two ladies in the community took him into their home and cared for him until he died.

Another lone grave of a soldier is located in the school ground of one of the county schools which was closed several years ago.

Another single grave of a two month old child was found recently by some people clearing new ground.

The Raeford cemetery, the largest in the county, is where the grave of The Honorable Mr. J.W. McLauchlin is located.

Mr. McLauchlin, a state senator, is known as the 'Father of Hoke County.'

It is sad to find cemeteries that have been abandoned and grown up with briars and bushes. We were not even able to get into some of them.



The Mill Prong Cemetery is one of the oldest in Hoke County. Some Currie and Gilchrist graves date to the late 1700's and have tombstones which give a brief history of the deceased, noting that they emigrated in 1770 from Cantire, Scotland.

Some are located in the middle of fields with no access road to the cemetery site.

The problem with many family cemeteries is that the family members move away and no one is left to care for the site.

Sometimes property is sold, family members have died and the new owners have no interest in maintaining the burial grounds.

The committee members would like to stir some interest in identifying and preserving those cemeteries which have been neglected so long.

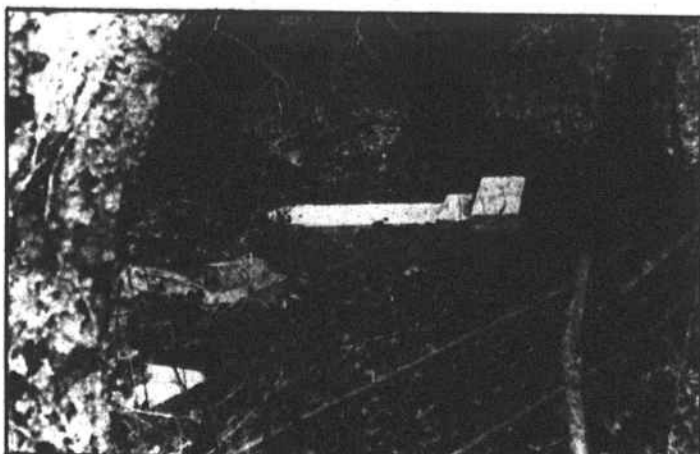
One burial ground in the area of the county near the Fort Bragg Reservation can only be identified by a few trees.

All markers have disappeared. Often markers are damaged by farm animals, farming, fires, neglect and, sad to say, even vandalism.

So far 97 cemeteries have been found in Hoke Co.

The committee is still in the process of chartering grave sites and anyone knowing of one which is not included in this list is asked to report it to one of the committee members: Antioch Church, Ashley Heights, Bethel Church, Bethune, Biggs-Antioch, Biggs-Stonewall, Biblical Gardens, Betsy Blue, Bridges Grove, Dr. Neil W. Brown, Campbell, Center Grove, Chason, Chisholm, Old Civil War, Community Rest, Community United Methodist Church, Confederate Soldier-Reservation, Culbreth, Randall Currie, A.H.

Currie, Currie - Blue Springs, John J. Currie, Davis, Dundarrach Mission, Dundarrach Presbyterian, East Freedom, Ephesus, Gold Hill, Friendship, Graham-Blue Springs, Matthew Graham, Graham - Nicholson (McCain), Graham - Stonewall, Hoke County Holiness, Laurel Hill, Leach Springs, Longstreet, Love, Maynor, McCrimmon, McDiarmid, McDougald, McEachern-Mill Prong, McEachern - Blue Springs, McEachern - McCormick, McFadyen, McGougan No. 1, McGougan No. 2, McGugan, McLauchlin - Blue Springs, McLean - Raeford, McLean - Allendale, McLean - Blue Springs, John McLeod, Murdoch McLeod - Quewhiffle, McLeod - Blue Springs, John McMillian - Allendale, McMillian - Blue Springs, McMillian - Raeford, McNeill - Antioch, McNeill - Stonewall, McNeill - McPhaul - Blue Springs, McPhatter, McPhaul (Hector), McPhaul - Blue Springs, Mt. Elam, Mountain Grove, Mt. Pisgah, Mt. Zion, Parker's Church, Pine Hill, Patterson, Peterson, Philippi (McCaskill), Pittman Family, Pittman Grove, Purcell, Raeford City, Ray, Rockfish Tabernacle Church, Rockfish Grove, Rock Hill, Sandy Grove (Reservation), Sandy Grove (Methodist), Saunders, Shady Grove - Blue Springs, Shady Grove - Stonewall, Shaw, Shiloh, Old Shiloh, Silver Grove, Sinclair, South Hoke Indian, Calvin Starling (Union Soldiers), Sunrise and Wood Family.



RUNDOWN: This cemetery is old and unkept. Monuments are overturned, briars are growing up around them, and the fence that surrounds them is bent and rusted.