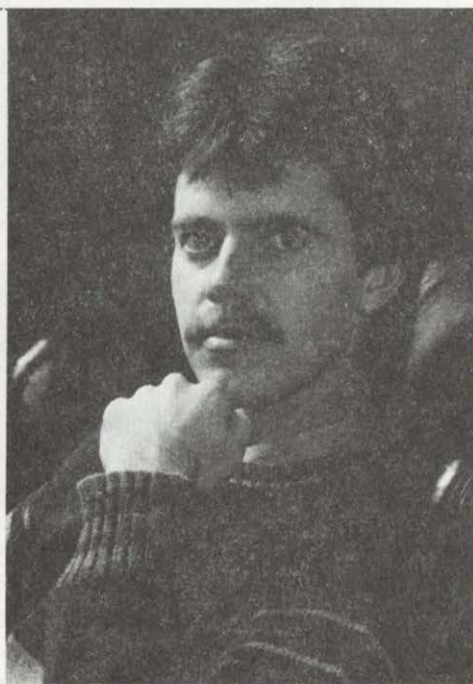


Gone But Not Forgotten....? Cemeteries Of Macon County

By Randy Gene East

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Nestled among most every hill, hollow, and field of Macon County is a cemetery or graveyard as it is commonly called. Our county is typical of most area counties in the fact that our ancestors were buried in the proximity of where they lived. Thus creating cemeteries covering the region. Older persons will tell you that most every farm may have someone "buried in the corner of the garden." For in times past transportation was not as it is today nor was preservation of the deceased as modern as now, so burial was done quickly after death.

There have been approximately 500 cemeteries charted in the county. The size of gravesites will range from one lone burial to one containing as many as 1,600. More will still be rediscovered, as now they may be covered with undergrowth

and not easily discerned, but later may be cleaned and made evident. That clump of bushes with trees growing thru it in the middle of the field may indeed be a graveyard waiting to be cleaned and reclaimed.



*Hargis Cemetery, Union Camp Road
Hand hewed stone on right*

You may think that all tombstones are a fine, fancy granite marker complete with names and dates, easy to see and read, but not so. There are field rocks, trees, iron pieces, and "thin air" marking many graves thru out most every cemetery you might visit. The field rock which is nothing more than a stone you might find lying around is used quite prevalent as a marker. Scattered thru out are several of the crypt type markers. These consist of a rock box about two feet high and six feet long with a large slab rock covering it. This is an old type that dates back to the early 1800's. One type is the iron tombstone which has the data recorded on paper and enclosed behind glass. This was not a durable kind as all trace of identity was lost with the breakage of the glass. Sad to say many graves have the "thin air" marker or plainly stated no marker at all. This can create problems for what keeps someone from being buried over another? Doesn't everyone deserve their final resting place to have some kind of monument? It doesn't have to be expensive as long as the name and dates are discernible.



Civil War Monument

There are many stones that have worn with the passage of time and the elements of nature. To read these you should rub chalk or powder over the engraving. This will bring out the writing and make it more plain to see. Some are covered with dirt or moss and must first be cleaned with a brush, using care not to harm the stone. Another "trick of the trade" is the use of a probe to locate markers that have fallen and are

covered by debris. Some cemeteries had to be visited in the fall or winter because of thick undergrowth, which made access into it impossible. There are of course hundreds of well kept sites of neatly lined graves which are to be appreciated.

A book of Macon County cemeteries has been compiled using the greatest care and effort to locate and identify all graves. This eliminates a lot of questions and searching thru the brush and bramble trying to find an elusive ancestor. If you are looking for ancestors and discover where they are buried, visit the site and take a photograph of the stone for it may not be there or as in as good a shape in years to come for your descendants to see. While you are at it, find out the caretaker of the cemetery and donate towards the maintenance of it. If you can not supply money then donate your time and help in the cleaning of the graveyard. What has been gained to only know the location of a grave, mark it with a monument if it needs one and see to it that it is preserved. This will bring you a closeness to those who have departed even though you may have never known them. It will also give you a sense of accomplishment knowing you have benefited someone.

The preservation of a cemetery is of essence if history is to be maintained. A tombstone is invaluable to those doing genealogy, for many times the old family Bible or courthouse records have been lost or destroyed by fire and the grave marker is the only place left that has the information you need recorded. But regardless of what information may be saved by the protection of a cemetery, the number one reason should be out of respect for those buried. Many gravesites have given way to the plow or made way for so called "progress," thru no consent of its own or from the relatives still living. Some people tend to lose their respect for the dead and desecrate or completely destroy graves, leaving no trace at all of its existence. Did they realize they were breaking state laws and were guilty of a felony, could be made to restore the cemetery to its past status, and could receive a fine and a prison term for their actions. Section 46-2-105 of the **Tennessee Code Annotated** is one of several laws governing cemeteries and is quoted as follows: "No person shall willfully destroy, deface, or injure any monument, tomb, gravestone, or other structure placed in said cemetery, or any roadway, walk, fence or inclosure in or around the same, or injure any tree, plant or shrub therein, or hunt or shoot therein, play at any game or amusement therein, or loiter for lascivious or lewd purposes therein, or interfere, by words or actions, with any funeral procession or any religious exercises. These offenses are severally declared felonies and any person guilty thereof shall be fined one thousand, five hundred dollars (\$1,500) or imprisoned in the penitentiary not less than one (1) year nor more than three (3) years, or both, in the discretion of the court." Reverence the deceased and show them the courtesy they merit and disturb them not in their sleep.

Many community and family plots are becoming full and persons are being buried in newer ones that have been formed. These often offer perpetual care, meaning they will be cared for thru out the ages. Other cemeteries are establishing trust funds to provide monies to insure proper care even after the present generations are long gone.

The newest perpetual care cemetery is Anderson and Son Memorial Park located beside Anderson and Son Funeral Home on highway 52 east just out of Lafayette. The first burial was of Lester O. Petty who was born the 23rd day of June 1914 and died the 28th of June 1976. Since then 100 persons have been laid to rest there.

The first perpetual care cemetery in the area was Memorial Gardens. This one is located just out of Lafayette on highway 10 north. The first burial was of Ulus B. Archer who was born the 12th day of January 1888 and died the 1st of February 1964. There are approximately 450 burials at present.

Whitley Cemetery in Red Boiling Springs is now a perpetual care one, though it has been in existence for decades. The city took over the handling of this site in 1984. If you have an interest in a certain cemetery, help in creating a trust fund and set it up on perpetual care. This will eliminate a lot of worry and take the burden off the few noble ones who have the responsibility of each year soliciting for the care of the cemetery.

Graveyards are not always large plots covering several acres sometimes they are as small as one grave. Such is one found in what is now a tobacco patch on the Hollis Scruggs farm in the eleventh district. George Lafayette Hughes, who served as a private in Company A seventh Battalion Tennessee Calvary in the Civil War, was born the 17th of September 1831 and died the 16th of June 1905. He now has a military monument thanks to the efforts of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy organizations which have chapters in our county.

Another small burial plot is on the Glenn Law property in Green Valley. Edward Barbee (born the 11th of December 1815 and died the 18th of July 1894) and his wife Narcissus M. Barbee (born the 28th of January 1821 and died the 19th of November 1887) are buried beside an old farm road on the hill behind the house. A remote and peaceful place to be interred, it is worth the walk thru the woods to visit this site.

Certainly there are some very old burials in our county but unfortunately not all these are identifiable, for many of our

predecessors either could not afford a "store bought" monument or one was not readily available to them. The oldest gravestone thus found is in the Vester Crowder cemetery in the Brattown community. This marker is a crypt type and has this inscription: "Beneath this monument slab lies the remains of Duncan and Isabel Ferguson born in Scil Argyle Shire Scotland in 1762: He died 6th May 1808. She died 1st December 1832. Their children placed this stone in their memory."

Down the road from this one is an old cemetery with six graves marked with fieldrocks with only one of these having any inscription. Engraved on one is J. Ragland born the 16th of November 1796 (or 1786) and died the 17th of October 1822 (or 1899). The dates are not clear and may not be accurate. Who lies in stillness and silence with him remains unknown.

These ever common field-rock-type markers are never to be taken for granted that they have no inscription, for numerous times complete names and dates are found on these, carved perhaps by an old plow point. Such is the case of one found in the Hargis cemetery on the Union Camp road. The grave of Mary Jane Caroline (Uhles) Hargis (born the 18th of July 1819 and died the 25th of August 1859) is marked with a hewed rock measuring by estimation to be two feet wide and three and a half feet high, a labor of love for one now gone. She is buried beside her husband Jackson Washington Hargis born the 17th July 1814 and died the 17th of March 1897. He was the father of 21 children by Mary and his second wife Matilda Jenkins. The only other tombstone is the Civil War monument of Boaz Butcher, Company I fifth Tennessee Calvary. This was said to have been a once larger cemetery with several of the Hargis generations buried here but all that remains are the aforementioned monuments and several fieldrock. It is also thought to have been an Indian burial ground.

Another old fieldstone that is about the same size and has a relatively clear engraving as did Mary Hargis is the gravestone of Mary Sanders (born the 12th of October 1762 and died the 9th of May 1829). She along with several unknown persons are buried on the Floyd Cothron farm off highway 52 west.

Tombstones can be a good place to find a bit of history as

with the crypt marker on the Earl Crowder farm between Maple Grove and Brattown. This is the only monument that has an inscription and it reads: "In memory of Mr. Robert Wright, a native of Virginia born 1759 and died August 7, 1831. A hero of the Revolution under General Washington and Green nearly the whole of the War. He died as he lived an honest, high minded honorable man." His wife the former Mary Goodwin is believed buried here as were some slaves.

There are several large cemeteries that are still "active" meaning they are still being used and will continue to grow in size. A beautiful and well maintained one, and the largest in the county, is Hayesville on highway 10 north. This landmark of the community dates back to the first burial of Revolutionary War soldier Hezekiah Blankenship. He was born the 13th of September 1754 and died the 23rd of February 1816. There are approximately 1,600 interred here with all graves known except for 11 which may never have their identity uncovered.

Eulia, located behind Eulia General Baptist Church is a large active one with approximately 1,100 burials. The first buried here was a Mrs. Smothers and twins who died prior to 1862. The exact dates have not yet been established. There is an older section here, as most cemeteries have, with several unidentified graves.

The largest cemetery in the Red Boiling Springs area is the Whitley. It is on Hillcrest Drive but more often referred to as the School House Hill. There are approximately 1,200 buried in this active one. The oldest stone is of Taylor Bean, the infant son of Walter and Frances Bean, he was born the 29th of August 1847 and died the 4th of September 1847.

Another large active graveyard in the vicinity is Smith Chapel located on highway 52 and highway 56. At present there are approximately 700 burials. The oldest dates on a monument are those of baby B.L. Smith born the 21st of October 1884 and died the 5th of January 1885.

Several graveyards provide picturesque views that words could not describe nor an artists' hand capture on his canvas. The Ellis-Wilburn cemetery on the old bottom road is situated

on a plain above the road and displays a sight worthy of anyones appreciation. This old cemetery has many fieldrock markers and three monuments being those of James Ellis born the 24th of August 1811 and died the 30th of March 1873, his wife Elizabeth W. (Day) Ellis born the 10th of September 1813 and died the 7th of January 1897, and Ivens Wilburn born the 19th of February 1809 and died the 30th of July 1885. It is thought that Ellis, Wilburn, Gammon and possibly others are buried here but there remain few who know any about this old burial ground as it is the case with most of the burial sites visited.

Located on a high knoll above the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church on the Galen road is the Frogpond Cemetery. This is one of the highest points in the area and offers an encompassing view from miles around. Gammon, Freeman, Cothron, Marsh, and Stokes families help make up some of those buried here. This cemetery (as with most) has several unmarked burials which need to have tombstones erected before time erases memories and traces of the graves.

The Taylor-Meador Cemetery on the hillside directly behind the telephone exchange on highway 10 south is a very large and old burial site covering a large portion of the hillside. There are only 13 monuments along with several field rock. The earliest dates are those of J.W.B. Meador born the 4th of January 1834 and died the 3rd of April 1836 and N.J. Meador born the 24th of September 1835 and died the 3rd of April 1836. They died the same day most probably by an ailment common to that time. This graveyard also displays a magnificent view of the valley it resides over.

Not all gravesites are on the majestic hill. Some are in the tranquil valley in what sometimes seems to be the deepest hollows around. A very good example is the East Cemetery located in the bottom of a hollow on Long Fork Creek below the Highland community on the Joan Sorenson farm. There are two entrances into this site and either way you must travel down a quiet steep, gravel road. The graveyard lies at the base of one hill beside the road with the creek flowing below it. What a picture this once neglected but now cared for graveyard

makes with the old stones and trees dotting the scene and but-tercups covering each grave.

The oldest marker is a stone with M.E. 1844 chisled on it. The next oldest dates are those of Joseph East born the 7th of July 1784 and died in 1849. His wife Elizabeth (Fitzpatrick) East, born in 1783 and died the 12th of April 1864, is buried at his side. They were the first Easts to migrate to Macon County coming from Patrick County, Virginia in the early 1800's and are the ancestors of all the East related persons of the area. The last burial was of Pleasant Green Shaw who died in 1928. Besides the aforementioned, Marsh, Horn, Howe, Cooks and Stephens are some other names of those that will be found here.

On the Raymond Oldham farm in the old bottom section is the Cothron Cemetery located up a hollow via a narrow gravel road. This is believed to be the original Robert Moore Cothron home place. He was born in 1790 in North Carolina and died in 1873. His wife Winnified (Brinkley) was also born in 1790 in North Carolina and died in 1859. They are the forebearers of all the Cothrons of the region, coming into this area in 1816. They as well as several of the old Cothron generations are felt to be buried here. The first burials are said to have been Martha and Phebe Cothron, who may have been twins, the daughters of William B. and Lucinda Elizabeth (Ellis) Cothron. These young children died of measles probably in the 1850's while their father was away selling tobacco. He returned to find two of his children had died, hence starting the cemetery.

It has been stated that this was once a large cemetery covering a broader area than what it does now. Several graves are marked with the ever common fieldstone and it is unknown who lies beneath which stone while others have monuments with data recorded. This graveyard lies between two large hills and is blessed with beauty and tranquility. Being accessible by the one entrance, it affords an isolated and peaceful atmosphere.

A man who is buried with his three wives provides a cemetery with an interesting twist. On the J.D. Sanders farm in the Silaom community you will find "resting in peace," Elder Giles

Claiborn Harris born the 16th of December 1815 and died the 4th of March 1889. Wife number one: Frances Catherine (Meador) born in 1816 and died in 1842; wife number two, Sarah H. (Hawkins) who died in 1847; and wife number three, Elizabeth Catherine (Wood) Davis born in 1826 and died circa 1889. I hope jealousy doesn't carry over into the after life, for if it did this man would surely have his hands full.

In gathering data for our Macon County cemetery book we have visited hundreds of sites and encountered every size, shape, and condition of cemeteries. I have personally crawled thru the thickest of undergrowth and weeds to lay on the ground to read stones, been infested by ticks, walked great distances thru the woods to locate an old county gravesite, and fought off bees who happen to live under the stone that fell face down.

Groundhogs have provided some memorable times in our quest for these cemeteries. They are for some reason attracted to graveyards, perhaps by the solitude, isolation, and grown-up conditions of some sites. Lying on the ground at one such site was a handle off a coffin that the groundhogs had brought out after having made a burrow in the grave. Not wanting a souvenir of our visit, I politely stuck the handle back into the burrow, hoping it would stay.

While at one remote graveyard, I was alone busy deciphering one of the several crypt markers that were there. Suddenly I heard grumbling sounds coming from within one of the tombs! Was this the resident of the tomb thinking someone had finally come to visit and was now wanting to converse with me? Were they sounds of some poor, lost, demented soul seeking someone to haunt? Was it time to meet my Maker! What a relief to find it was only Mr. Groundhog doing whatever one does within the depths of a grave.

It is often stated that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If this is true, there is beauty to behold and stores to unfold within our cemeteries. There is so much to learn by visiting and walking thru a graveyard (and don't be afraid of the dead, its the living you have to worry about). You will see names of those who were once prevalent in the area, but now not a

one of that name remains. The age of a community can be judged by determining the dates found in nearby graveyards. There are the different styles of tombstones contrasting from the old to new. Sympathy flows as you see a mother and babies stone and realize their lives were lost in that travail period of childbirth, as too often occurring episode then. A families anguish is felt as you see the parents tombstone followed by a row of children who were born year after year only to live a short time, taking away most probably by a disease that now is no longer considered life threatening.

Epitaphs provide some often time provoking thought. In the Maple Grove cemetery is the grave of James H. White who was "born in the state of Tennessee" the 31st of January 1779 and died the 22nd of June 1857. His epitaph makes a statement we all must consider, for its message is as true now as it was then. It reads "Remember friends as you pass by, as you are now so once was I. As I am now, you soon must be, prepare for death and follow me."

Other epitaphs may deal with the characteristics of an individual, as that of Sarah (Lee) East (wife of Patterson East) who was born the 14th of January 1828 and died the 11th of March 1886 and is buried in the East Cemetery. Her epitaph: "As a wife devoted, as a mother affectionate, as a friend ever kind and true. In life she exhibited all the graces of a Christian. In death her redeemed spirit returned to God who gave it."

Most persons would not expect to write the saying that would appear on their marker. One never knows that something they might have written or said may one day be immortalized on their monument. Such is the case of Hilda Kay Clark who was born the 15th of February 1956 and died the 21st of March 1982. She lies in eternal comfort at the Memorial Gardens. Taken from one of the many poems she had written, this one line expresses what everyone feels toward a loved one who has departed. "So close in thought you'll always stay, as thought you never went away."

Another example of a self written epitaph is that of Tony Allen Woosley born the 21st of June 1966 and died the 30th

of October 1984. He too is laid to rest at Memorial Gardens. A poem he had written adorns his monument and it describes those feelings that were meaningful to him: "The little things are most worth while, a quiet word, a look, a smile, a listening ear, that's quick to share anothers thoughts, anothers care, though they seem quite small, these little things mean most of all."

Each cemetery has it's own special personality created and moded year after year. Find out for yourself and appreciate it for what it is and eliminate the dread so often associated with one. They are simply a home for the departed and not full of ghosts and goblins waiting behind every stone to spring out and get you. So if you need a break from the noise of the day and need some peace and quiet where you can think and rest, pay a visit to one of the most serene places around, a cemetery.