

FRIENDS OF BENNETT CEMETERY

Dedicated to preserving and restoring Bennett Cemetery, designated by the Texas Historical Commission as Lavaca County's first Official Historic Texas Cemetery. Bennett Cemetery is located one mile north of Sweet Home on the west side of FM 531 at the Texas Historical Marker.

Volume 1

April 2000

Number 2

Family surnames known to be represented in the cemetery include: Armstrong, Bennett, Bethel, Bingham, Bolsius, Clifton, Cox, Currington, Dew, Durst, Dyer, Ellis, Fisk, Greenwood, Harwood, Hranitzky, Kaiser, Koerth, Kuenstler, Kunetka, Layton, Lehmann, Lewis, McCord, McCutcheon, McGrew, McMurrey, McVey, Middlebrook, Moore, Morgan, Mudd, Neely, Niemann, Noble, Oldham, Perrin, Rathke, Saunders, Schlageter, Sharber, Slanina, Spaulding, Stephenson, Sutton, Tate, Tolleson, Vick and Williams.

SURNAMES ADDED THIS ISSUE: BINGHAM, CURRINGTON, FISK, HRANITZKY, LAYTON, MCGREW, MUDD, STEPHENSON, AND SUTTON.

APRIL 1st MEETING

A number of Friends of the cemetery met at the Hallettsville Chamber of Commerce to form an interim organization and to discuss projects that the Friends might be able to undertake in the next year. Officers elected for the interim organization were President: Gene Bethel, Vice President: Jimmie Ruth Eash, Vice Presidents - Cemetery operations: Frank and Viola Kunetka, Secretary: Bobbie T. Brune, and Treasurer: Georgianne H. Bethel.

Projects that seemed possible to accomplish this year were: (1) cutting and mowing the weeds and grass often enough to prevent them from going to seed and (2) providing a visitor sign-in and info book and self-addressed envelopes near the front gate, probably using a rural mail-box to provide weather protection for the materials.

The group discussed future meetings and decided that one meeting annually would be sufficient and that it should be held the first weekend in April of each year, unless that date was in conflict with Easter or Palm Sunday. When that conflict occurs, a date in March or later in April will be selected.

The group discussed the need to apply to the I.R.S. for a letter of determination of exemption (tax exempt status) and also to file with the Texas Secretary of State for a non-profit corporation charter. All agreed that the costs associated with these actions are beyond the financial means of the Friends at this time, but beginning efforts should be made to locate an attorney who might be willing to do the necessary legal work on a pro bono basis if and when funds are available. Tax-exempt status would make giving more attractive to many donors and potential donors. It would also open the door for us to approach corporations for donations and governmental bodies for grants.

Some of the items mentioned above are set out in more detail in other parts of this newsletter.

HELP! ATTORNEY or C.P.A. TO WORK PRO BONO

See the above article for the reason. Maybe we can find an attorney to work on the corporate charter and a C.P.A. to do the I.R.S. work.

ADOPT A MOWING PROGRAM

After an illness of many months, J.A. Moore died at his home near West Side School house at 7:30 o'clock this

We hope you have visited the cemetery in the last six months and have seen how much better it now looks. You can walk all the way from the gate to the rear fence and from side to side. Does anyone remember when you were last able to do that?

The weeds that have overrun the rear of the cemetery for many years can be brought under control by frequent mowing - before the weeds reseed themselves. In spring and early summer this usually requires several cuttings each month. During late summer, winter, and dry spells, less frequent mowing is generally sufficient.

Lavaca County Commissioner Daniel Peters started us on this program last October when he saw to it that the cemetery was completely mowed for the historical marker dedication. Didn't it look nice?

The Friends have now contracted with Mr. Pat Bujnoch, who lives next to the cemetery, to mow the entire cemetery for \$75 per mowing. At the April 1st meeting, it was agreed that we should encourage all friends to ADOPT A MOWING as their way toward helping preserve the cemetery. This could mean combining with cousins, aunts, uncles, parents, children or friends to raise the \$75 needed to ADOPT A MOWING.

We have a start on bringing the weed infestation under control, but we need everyone's help to continue this work. Please consider ADOPTING A MOWING. The cemetery can be restored and now a start has been made. Please ADOPT A MOWING.

A GLANCE BACKWARD

None of you has sent us a biography of an ancestor buried in the cemetery. To take its place in this issue are two obituaries taken from newspapers printed at the time of the person's death. One of our objectives is to have a bio or obit for every person known to be buried in the cemetery. Surely, some of you have a copy of one of those old, old obituaries. Please send us a copy. Also, send us a bio of your ancestor. We will credit you with it. Obits and bios may both be edited for space reasons. Keep the memory of those ancestors alive!

J. A. Moore Passes Away

morning. His was another of those stubborn cases of illness which the doctors found difficulty in diagnosing. All efforts

to arrest the ravages of the disease, whatever it may have been, were futile. A year ago, Jim Moore was a splendid specimen of physical manhood. After he had been attacked by this malady he has continued to grow worse and all efforts to stop the course of the disease were in vain. It is claimed that his kidneys, liver and lungs were all badly affected.

He took his bed some six or seven months ago and with the exception of a week or two has not been able to leave it. He did get out for awhile just after Christmas and he thought he was on the road to recovery but not so. Within a short while he had to go back to his bed and has not left his room in several weeks.

The deceased was born March 8, 1862. Thus it is that he was at the time of his death, 49 years and sixteen days old.

Mr. Moore is well known throughout Lavaca and adjoining counties. For twenty-five years or more he has been noted as the best base voice of any man in the country. He spent considerable of his younger years in teaching singing schools. No matter how large a crowd might be engaged in singing "Moore's Base" was always distinctively heard.

Since living in Yoakum he has been engaged in selling fruit trees.

By a previous marriage Mr. Moore has three children living. They are Mrs. Henry Sutton, "Hez" Moore, and Miss Lydia Moore. His present wife was Miss Annie McMurrey, a sister to Mr. Julius McMurrey who lives some four or five miles Northeast of town.

The remains will be laid to rest in New Bethel Cemetery at Sweet Home at ten o'clock tomorrow morning.

To the sorrowing widow and children The Herald offers sincere sympathy. - Yoakum Herald, 24th.

Editors note: The above obituary was printed in the March 31, 1911 Hallettsville Herald. It was reprinted from the Yoakum Herald. It is printed in it's entirety and no changes have been made in grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. Bennett Cemetery has been known by a number of names through the years. New Bethel Cemetery is just one of those names.

A low, gray granite tombstone marks the final resting place of Mr. Moore. His stone is in good condition, and some of Mr. Moore's descendants have made it known that they are interested in preserving the cemetery.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Bennett Cemetery has three very nice neighbors. To the north of us is Victor Smolik whose pasture fronts FM 531 and the cemetery's north boundary. Some of you will recall that during the October 23rd historical marker dedication ceremonies, Mr. Smolik drove his cattle to the far end of the pasture, placed a temporary electric fence to keep them there, and then opened his gate and invited one and all to park next to the cemetery. Some twenty-five or thirty cars were parked in his pasture and only fifty feet or so from the speaker's platform. To my knowledge, no one asked him to do this. How's that for being a good neighbor?

Behind us on the west are Harvey and Mary Ann Matusek, who also attended the dedication ceremonies. Harvey grew up in the white house next door to the cemetery. As a kid, he played in the cemetery. The couple are interested in seeing the cemetery preserved and in all aspects of the

history of Sweet Home. They presently live in Houston, but expect to "retire" in June and then return to Sweet Home. On April 1st, Mr. Matusek led a number of Friends who attended our meeting on an impromptu tour to see the old, old well, now long abandoned, that is thought to have been Stephen Bennett's homestead well dug way back in Republic of Texas days.

To our south and living in the white house that Harvey Matusek grew up in are Patrick Bujnoch and his wife, Pam. The young couple have a toddler that celebrated his second birthday March 30th. Pat has contracted with us to mow the cemetery, and we are fortunate to have a next-door neighbor interested in doing the work.

Next time you are in the area and see one of these neighbors, give 'em a wave and a big Texas howdy! Let's try to be as nice a neighbor to them as they have been to us.

PLEASE DON'T FORGET

1. To tell your relatives and friends that a start has been made in preserving Bennett Cemetery.
2. That we are selectively reducing the size of our mailing list, but we are adding a number of Lavaca and DeWitt County addresses. We would like for every one in those counties to know about us.
3. To help us grow by telling us of persons who should be added to our mailing list (and the reason they should be added). We want everyone interested in the cemetery to receive our newsletter.
4. To attend our next annual meeting scheduled for Saturday April 7, 2001. Make a note of it now. The meeting place (probably in the vicinity of Sweet Home) will be announced later.
5. To ADOPT A MOWING.

DIED

At his residence, near Sweet Home, Lavaca county, STEPHEN BENNETT, aged 90 years, 3 months and 25 days.

Stephen Bennett, the object of this short sketch, and whose demise we are called upon to mourn, was born in Pendleton District, South Carolina in the year 1784. He emigrated to Alabama in 1818, residing near the town of Tuscaloosa; removed to Pickens county in 1826 or '7 and came from thence to Texas in 1840. After stopping for two years in Washington county, where he was burned out, he settled in Lavaca county in the year 1843. He had been a consistent member of the Baptist Church for forty years, and an active participator in all the meetings and business of the Baptist Association for more than thirty years. His death, after a short illness from paralysis, occurred at his homestead, near Sweet Home, in this county, on the last day of the year just closed.

One by one, the ties which bind us to a former generation are ruthlessly snapped, and, one by one, the fathers, whom we have learned to honor, esteem and love, like fruit fully ripe, are gathered into the great harvest of eternity.

"The evil that men do, lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones."

Such should not be the case; the example of a good and Mr. Bennett exhibited, throughout his long life, the most unsullied honor, strict integrity, indefatigable industry, warm sympathizing charity, and consistent christianity. The community was called upon to deplore the loss of a valuable member, and the church, of an efficient officer, whose counsels had often availed her, and whose pure life was an epitome of her teachings.

Youth, manhood and age may each gather a lesson from his life; youth may take example of his honesty and industry; manhood, of his undeviating rectitude and unsullied honor; and age of his calm, peaceful faith, and dependence upon a loving Savior.

Editors note: The above appeared in the January 7, 1875 issue of the *Hallettsville Herald and Planter*. It is copied in it's entirety without change in grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.

Bennett and his wife Mary Breazeale Bennett established the cemetery on their homestead. The first burial was, in all probability, that of their daughter, Sarah Bennett (1819-1846). The Stephen and Mary Breazeale Bennett plot is enclosed by a chain link fence near the center of the cemetery.

Stephen Bennett was a veteran of the Creek Indian War, which was part of the War of 1812. The Creek Indians had allied themselves with the English in that war. An American flag frequently flies over Bennett's grave, thanks to Mr. Frank Kunetka and the Sweet Home American Legion.

WAS LOST BUT NOW AM FOUND

(sort of)

Did you notice that several surnames have been added to those previously shown as represented in the cemetery? On February 8, 1981, Mr. Sammy Tise, with Barbara and Bertice Tise, surveyed the cemetery and found 84 markers. Those were the names we previously reported and are those recorded in Mr. Tise's "Lavaca County, Texas Cemetery Records," Volume 1, copyrighted in 1983. Subsequently, in his Volume IV, he reported finding nine additional markers bearing the surnames Bingham, Currington, Hranitzky, and Layton. Still later, in his Volume VI, Mr. Tise stated he had been advised of two other burials in "New Bethel Cemetery" (now Bennett Cemetery). These were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Mudd. It is not clear if there were markers for this couple.

We are adding these surnames to the previous list and hope that we may find some of their descendants. There are probably many more surnames in the cemetery in (now) unmarked graves. If you have knowledge of any, please let us know and include as much information as you can provide about each person.

A complete set of Mr. Tise's works is in the Friench Simpson Memorial Library in Hallettsville. They are available to the public for reference use.

We are also adding the surnames McGrew, Fisk, Stephenson, and Sutton. There is a fairly recent and very nice marker on "memorial row" for Lorenzo Dow McGrew (1828-1885). He was not reported by Mr. Tise, because the marker was placed after Mr. Tise made his surveys.

Additionally, Mr. Tom Finger of Shiner has advised us that his grandmother is buried in the cemetery and that her maiden name was Fisk. She was the wife of James Alfred Moore, III, who we have known to be in the cemetery. Mr. Finger also reports other kins-people in the cemetery with the surnames Stephenson and Sutton. We're adding all of these names to our list. Thank you, Mr. Finger.

noble life should not fail of its effect.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

If you have not made a donation this year, please consider making a gift at this time. Maybe you can "ADOPT A MOWING." Get together with relatives.

There will probably never be a better opportunity to help preserve and eventually do some restoration work on Lavaca County's first cemetery to be designated by the Texas Historical Commission as an **Official Historic Texas Cemetery**.

Please make checks payable to "**Friends of Bennett Cemetery**." All checks and correspondence will be gratefully acknowledged. Send the checks to my attention: Gene Bethel, 14264 Coral Harbor Ct., Dallas, Texas 75234.

WHAT A NICE TRIBUTE!

We have received a very nice donation made in honor and memory of Mrs. Edith Tolleson Essary who died several years ago. The gift was made by her niece, Jimmie Ruth Eash, who earlier had made a sizable gift to the Friends. "Deedie" had ancestors buried in the cemetery and was interested in the cemetery's preservation. She was an especially honored guest at the 1994 cemetery ceremonies conducted by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and the US Daughters of 1812.

Perhaps this tribute to a loved one by Mrs. Eash will inspire similar thoughts in others. If you care to memorialize a deceased person, we will acknowledge your gift. Additionally, we will send a letter from "Friends of Bennett Cemetery" to a person you may designate, stating that your memorial to the deceased will be used to help preserve and restore the historic Bennett Cemetery. The size of your gift will not be revealed. Donations can be sent to:

Gene D. Bethel
dba Friends of Bennett Cemetery
14264 Coral Harbor Ct.
Dallas, TX 75234

E-MAIL ADDRESS

We are looking for ways to make your donations go a little farther. One of our Friends in Florida has suggested that we could save some postage by E-mailing the newsletter to those of you who have E-mail.

We like the idea and think we have solved the technical challenges to be able to do it, so we're going to give it a try.

Our address is friends@newtexas.com. If you are willing to receive your next newsletter in this manner, please let us know by sending us your E-Mail address. If you should not be able to download and print it, we'll send you a printed copy via regular mail.

We now plan to publish the next newsletter in the first half of October 2000.