

THE TYSON CEMETERY

The Tyson Cemetery is located 14 miles North of Denton, Texas; East of Elm Fork of the Trinity River; $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles North of FM #455 between Sanger and Pilot Point and about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the Cooke County line.

The Cemetery is well-known in the vicinity as a family burial plot. It is on a portion of the 320 acre Survey Patent #59 to Peter Welch on 23 July 1859.

The first person known to be buried in Tyson is J. P. Newton, born 26 March 1821; died 28 March 1856. There are no other marked graves until 1861 when Charles Lee Sullivan died and was buried here. Mr. J. P. Newton and his second wife, Zelitha Raines were married in 1847 in Tennessee and immediately came by water to Jefferson, Texas. From there they came overland to the settlement on Big Elm in what is now Cooke County. J. P. Newton died and was buried at the Tyson Cemetery in 1856. (Family records show 1855; gravestone 1856).

Charles Newton and Charles Lee Sullivan, each born in 1810, followed by Elzy Sullivan in 1811 and Susan Whitehead Newton, wife of Charles Newton, born 1813, are the earliest born persons known buried here.

The land was bought by George W. and Elizabeth Hammons 27 August 1869 from Peter and Elizabeth Welch. On 26 November 1872 George and Elizabeth Hammons sold the land to James Richard Tyson. In 1896 James Richard Tyson and Elizabeth Sullivan Tyson entered into an agreement with their daughter, Mrs. G. (Susan) Nell for $235\frac{1}{4}$ acres of this land.

The deed does not mention $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres given for a cemetery. On 20 October 1903, a deed states that "included in $235\frac{1}{2}$ acres is $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres heretofore deeded for a graveyard out of north part of said land which said $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres is not conveyed by this deed." No deed has as yet been found for this plot of ground; however, affidavits can be obtained from persons still living who have seen this deed or have had it in their possession. Therefore, from known deed records, interviews, and tradition we know that the land was given as a burial ground by James Richard Tyson. Mr. Tyson is buried in Tyson Cemetery. He was born 1829 and died 1899. He was married to (1) M. E. _____ and (2) Elizabeth Susan _____.

Mr. Tyson and M. E. Tyson's son, L. C. (Lem) married the daughter of George W. and Mary Elizabeth Sullivan Hammons, previous owners of this land.

Tyson Cemetery is the burial place of the Sullivan Settlement. A daughter of James Tyson and first wife, M. E. Tyson, Angeline, married Joe D. Sullivan, a brother to Elizabeth Sullivan Hammons. Charles Lee and Elizabeth Hammond Sullivan arrived at Pilot Point in Denton County on Christmas Day 1856 from Carroll County, Missouri. Their son, Jack, and son-in-law George Hammons, had come to Texas a year or two earlier to locate a place to bring their families. Both the Hammon(d)s and Sullivan families bought land near what was later to become known as the Tyson Cemetery, and this became the burial ground for these families and their neighbors. Almost all persons buried here are related in some way. There are about thirty-three (33) Hammons and forty-four (44) Sullivans buried here.

Thirty-five (35) children under age one (1) are known to be buried at Tyson; about 250 graves are marked; 111 are unmarked except for

rocks used as headstones. Other graves are there, but have become lost over the years. Mary Elizabeth Pearson (Pierson) Richardson, buried in Tyson, lived to be a few months over one hundred (100) years of age; having died in 1954. A concentrated effort has been made and is still being carried on to identify the unmarked and unknown graves so that a small marker can be placed on each.

There has always been some type of governing body for Tyson Cemetery; sometimes a volunteer group and at other times an appointed group. In 1963 this group placed a chain link fence around the property. A Memorial Service was held at the time of the W. J. Sullivan Reunion in June 1967. At this service a business meeting was held and it was voted to appoint a committee of four to handle business affairs of the cemetery. This committee met 1 June 1968 and voted to try to obtain \$2,500.00 in contributions for a savings account; the interest only on this amount to be used for upkeep and expenses of the cemetery. Names and addresses of 200 families were obtained. By 1 June 1969 the Cemetery Association had a total of \$3,043.00 in the bank. On 15 Dec. 1971, the Trustees of the Old Fairview School, located about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of the cemetery, donated the $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres to the Cemetery Association. The building and grounds were auctioned 28 May 1973 for \$7,700.00. This was added to the permanent fund of the Cemetery Association. A fifth member was added to the Cemetery Committee; one member rotates off the committee each year and a new member elected at the annual business meeting.

There has been an arbor erected in the cemetery. A complete Plat of the cemetery has been updated, and a card file on each known

burial has been compiled. This file includes all births, deaths, name of husband or wife, and parents of each individual. This information will be included in the permanent history which is being written for the Association.

A flag and pole have been obtained for the cemetery in observance of the Bi-Centennial Year of 1976. The cemetery is currently in use by the community.

In trying to identify graves of persons buried here, one has had to use a lot of circumstantial evidence, heresay, and a lot of thought. For instance, one grave was finally identified by overhearing someone tell this story,.."someone is buried just north of the old west gate who give someone a cow!" "that little girl had shells, broken glass and a lilac bush on her grave" "that person was buried just at the head of...". Then the story is told of the burial which was the beginning of this cemetery, which we have not been successful in proving; A member of the first land survey party in this area after Texas became a state, died and was buried at the site of the present Tyson Cemetery. Also that an Indian was buried there. He was buried at night just as near the old fence as possible in order to keep his burial unknown. These "stories" have been told to each generation in the area and are well-known by each family.

One remembers the early burials as quite different from our present day burials. The men of the community supplied the burial box, the ladies the inside covering; most of the time this was a bedsheet. Sometimes the ladies even made the dress for burial. The body was

then taken in a wagon, hack or buggy to the cemetery. The service was held outside the cemetery grounds under the trees. Then one of the men would take a set of reins from his harness; this would be put underneath the burial box and lowered into the grave which had been dug that day by the men of the community.

Many of us now have experienced the commercial beauty of city cemeteries, but absolutely nowhere can a more peaceful beauty be found than at this burial ground. There is no sadness, just peace. There is no neglect, just love. There is a spirit of cooperation here among the community that is rare. A native of London, England is buried here. She had requested of her family to be buried in this area because it reminded her of the song that has the phrase "dear hearts and gentle people."

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