

FLOWER MOUND CEMETERY

Historical Narrative researched and written by Thomas Matthews for Historic Texas Cemetery
THC marker application, Denton County. (2003)

A HISTORY OF THE FLOWER MOUND CEMETERY

1. Background

To attract settlers to North Texas, the Republic of Texas offered land grants to investors (impresarios) to establish colonies. In 1841, a group of twenty American and British investors formed the Texas Agricultural, Commercial and Manufacturing Company. The Company was given rights to a vast area of North Texas - covering all or part of 26 present colonies - to colonize. The colony was called "Peters" after William S. Peters, an English investor who headed the settlement efforts.¹ Attracted to this settlement were Matthew B. Donald and his family.²

Matthew Donald was a farmer and Cumberland Presbyterian preacher.³ In 1833, he married Isabella Doyle Douglass in Knox County, Tennessee.⁴ To this union, thirteen children were born - eleven living to adulthood. After stops in Calhoun County, Alabama and Smith County, Texas, Matthew Donald and his family arrived in Denton County, Texas in 1854.⁵

II. The Establishment of the Cemetery

Matthew Donald was a successful farmer, becoming one of the richest farmers in Denton County, TX. He also was a resourceful frontier preacher. In 1854, he set aside ten acres from the W. H. Gibson Survey for a church, campground, and cemetery.⁶ He deeded the land to the church in 1879.⁷

The first church building of Flower Mound Presbyterian Church was constructed of logs. It was replaced by the present church in 1901, which was extensively renovated in 1996. In 1968, the church was granted a historical marker. ⁸ The Tabernacle - where outdoor services and revivals were held - stood west of the church. The present Arbor (still used at times) is located on the site of the Tabernacle. The cemetery is located east of the church on the south side of FM 3040 (Flower Mound Road) between Morris Road and FM 2499 (Long Prairie Road) in Flower Mound, Texas. The address of the church and cemetery is 1501 Flower Mound Road, Flower Mound, Texas 75028.

The cemetery was used soon after it was established. According to the Joseph Knight family, early Flower Mound settlers, the first burial in the cemetery was a little girl who died during a camp meeting held in the Tabernacle. Other early Flower Mound families reported travelers would bury their dead on their way west. ⁹

Early burials still marked are those of Mary P. Knight, 1879; Ola Hall, 1873; and Wash Biggerstaff, 1879. Earliest birthdates on present markers are Anderson Spinks, 1808; Melvina Doyle Baker, 1822; and Thomas M. Maynard, 1822. ¹⁰

III. The Donald Family

Fittingly, Reverend Matthew Donald is buried in the cemetery that he established. He died on January 24, 1886 at the age of 76. His death - according to Flower Mound records - came as a result of swallowing acid by mistake when he thought he was taking medicine for his sleeplessness. ¹¹ His wife, Isabella, died eight years later in 1894. ¹² She is interred next to her husband. The Donald tombstone is inscribed with these poignant words:

We loved them, yes we loved them,
But angels loved them more
and they have sweetly called them
to yonder shining shore. ¹³

Several of the Donald children are buried in the cemetery, including the oldest daughter, Mary Donald Pard, who died in 1879 leaving a husband and several children. ¹⁴ She was buried in the cemetery shortly after Matthew Donald deeded the cemetery to the church. Also buried in the cemetery is Robert Henderson Donald, a brother of Matthew Donald. At one time Robert was active in the Flower Mound Presbyterian Church, serving as a deacon for thirteen years. He also was elected to the Texas Legislature. One of the sons of Robert, R. L. Donald, Sr., was a successful rancher. He was also deeply religious, serving as clerk (secretary) of the Church Session (board) for fifty years. He was active in cemetery affairs. He gave up his responsibilities as clerk in 1954 at the age of 85. He lived until 1962, dying at the age of 93. He is buried in the Donald family plot. Most of the records of the church and cemetery for this fifty-year period are due to his meticulous note taking. ¹⁵

R. L. Donald, Sr.'s son, R. L. Donald, Jr., took up the task of record keeping in 1972. (For eighteen years there were no official records.) R. L., Jr. faithfully supported the church and cemetery. He died in 1996 at the age of 88, the last surviving member of the Donald family. Like his father, he is buried in the Donald family plot. ¹⁶

IV. Funeral Practices

For years, the cemetery affairs were managed by an Association whose officers included representatives from the leading families of the area - the Donalds, the Simmons, and the Crawfords. ¹⁶ Each family of Flower Mound had a plot. There was no charge for a burial. To this day, this practice continues for families with original plots in the cemetery. ¹⁷

James & Hermalee Simmons, Oleta Simmons Greer, and Velma Lee Simmons Morris, long time residents of Flower Mound and members of Flower Mound Presbyterian Church, reminisced about funeral practices in the 1920's and 1930's. For burials, community volunteers would dig the grave. The bodies would be embalmed in a funeral home establishment in either Lewisville or Grapevine. The body would be taken to the home of a family member for viewing. A horse drawn wagon, later a hearse, would bring the casket to the church for the funeral service. After the service, the congregation would adjourn to the cemetery for the burial. ¹⁸

An important day for the cemetery and church is "Decoration Day," held on the last Sunday in April. On this Sunday, the deceased are remembered in a special worship service. Prior to this day, the cemetery is cleared of debris, the grass mowed, and the graves "decorated" with flowers. An offering is taken at Flower Mound Presbyterian Church for the maintenance of the cemetery.

19

V. The Cemetery in Recent Years

The cemetery was expanded in recent years. In 1950, the Dyer Family Cemetery was moved to the south side Flower Mound Cemetery. The damming of Denton Creek for the building of Lake Grapevine forced this relocation. ²⁰ In 1957, three acres were added to the east side of Flower Mound Cemetery. ²¹

The cemetery remains active to the present. The current administrator, Craig Mulkey, estimates there are approximately 30 burials a year. Within the next several years, he projects the sale of all the plots. The income from a generous endowment of R.L. Donald, Jr., as well as donations by others, helps cover maintenance costs. ²²

VI. Conclusion

A walk through the cemetery reveals tombstones with inscriptions both poignant and memorable. There are Bible verses such as, "Blessed are those who died in the Lord, for their deeds shall follow after them." We can feel the pain of L.L. and R.E. Donald in the inscription they placed on the marker for their three-year-old daughter, Willie Jewel, "Beautiful, lovely, she was given to earth to bloom again in heaven." We can imagine the quality of R.B. Bradley's life from this inscription, "A loving husband, a father dear, a faithful friend lies buried here." The marker for Nathaniel Connally is inscribed with words suitable for many interred at Flower Mound Cemetery, "He is gone but not forgotten." ²³

Flower Mound Cemetery is a hallowed place. For close to 150 years, the loved ones of Flower Mound families have been buried here. The graves hold the remains of men and women of vision, courage, and faith. Knowing the stories of these persons enhances our appreciation for the rich history of Flower Mound Presbyterian Church and Cemetery.

FOOTNOTES

1. Sweet Flower Mound Land, pp. 4-5.
2. Sweet Flower Mound Land, p. 27.
3. The Greene Group, p. 48.
4. Donald, Matthew B. and Douglass, Isabella Doyle: Marriage Certificate.
5. Mullins, Marion Day.
6. The Greene Group, p. 48.
7. Denton County Records, Vol. N, page 95, May 3, 1879.
8. Fort Worth Star Telegram, May 31, 2000.
9. Sweet Flower Mound Land, p. 190.
10. Flower Mound Cemetery Index of Graves
11. Greene Report, p. 54.
12. Mullins.
13. Cemetery Index.
14. Greene Group, p. 54.
15. Greene Group, p. 59.
16. Sweet Flower Mound Land, p. 191.
17. Mulkey, Craig: Interview.
18. Simmons, James and Greer, Oleta: Interview.
19. Simmons and Greer.
20. Denton County Records, Vol. 359, p. 153, May 5, 1950.
21. Denton County Records, Vol. 414, p. 446, January 25, 1957
22. Mulkey.
23. Cemetery Index

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Denton County Records
2. Donald, Matthew B. and Douglass, Isabella Doyle, Marriage Certificate. Copy at Flower Mound Presbyterian Church.
3. Flower Mound Index of Graves, compiled by Ryan Nielson, May 2000. Copy at Flower Mound Presbyterian Church and the City of Flower Mound.
4. Fort Worth Star Telegram, May 31, 1968. Copy at Flower Mound Presbyterian Church.
5. Greene Group Historical/Cultural Report. Flower Mound New Town Area, June 28, 1972. Copy at Flower Mound Presbyterian Church and the City of Flower Mound. Pages numbered for reference for this history of Flower Mound Cemetery.
6. Mulkey, Craig, Interview, August 31, 2000. Record of remarks at Flower Mound Presbyterian Church.
7. Mullins, Marion Day, Research for Historical Marker for Flower Mound Presbyterian Church.
8. Sweet Flower Mound Land, Elwood Ross, editor, November 10, 1994.
9. Simmons, James & Hermalee, and Greer, Oleta, Interview, August 22, 2000. Record of remarks at Flower Mound Presbyterian Church.

Note: All information was collected and formatted through the diligent work of former Flower Mound Presbyterian Church Interim Pastor, Thomas Matthews. Flower Mound Presbyterian Church and the Flower Mound Cemetery Association wishes to thank Dr. Matthews for all his hard work and efforts in this regard.