

GOOD HOPE CEMETERY, DENTON COUNTY, TEXAS;
ITS HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

Texas Historical Marker Application

This paper was written by Elaine A. Ledlow, member of the Denton County Historical Commission. Grover C. Rue, secretary-treasurer of the Good Hope Cemetery Association, promoted the project and gave valuable assistance in its compilation.

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ITS HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

Elaine A. Ledlow

The Good Hope Cemetery is located in eastern Denton County, Texas, and for more than 115 years has been a free burial place not only for its founders and their descendants, but also for any others of its area. The cemetery, still in use and well maintained, remains as visible evidence of stalwart settlers, who, in the winter of 1853/1854, came in wagons and located in this part of Denton County. In this sparsely settled section they found the rich resources of fertile farm land, creeks and springs, and plentiful timber and pasturage on which to base a self-sufficient community of farmers and livestock raisers. They settled themselves on both sides of Doe Branch, which flows on into Little Elm Creek, and started the building of their log homes and made plans for a meeting-house for church and school.¹

This colony was first known as the Rue Settlement because the largest family groups were those of the brothers, Jacob and Lewis Rue. They, along with the other Missouri families of Ben Armstrong, Pete Hutcherson (or Hutchison), and Rev. W. P. Renison, are credited with building a brush arbor for church meetings as soon as they arrived.² The Rue brothers were married to Weeden sisters, of Missouri, and their sister, Mary Rue, was the wife of Ben Renison, who had also come to the settlement.

The three sons of Jacob Rue who were old enough to apply for land shortly after their arrival, were: Benjamin L., Hiram, and John B. Rue.³ The Texas General Land Office, in its Abstract of All Original Texas Land Titles, records the following sequence

of original grants, issued on July 27 and 28, 1859: Abstracts, #1109, Jacob Rue; #1110, Lewis Rue; #1111, Hiram Rue; #1112, John B. Rue; and #1113, Benjamin L. Rue. Each received 160 acres except Lewis Rue, recorded as 159 acres. It was land out of the Ben L. Rue survey which was used later as the site for Good Hope Cemetery and for the nearby meeting-house, which was used for both church and school.⁴

Ed. F. Bates' History and Reminiscences of Denton County, (1918), lists these Rue Settlement pioneers: Louis (Lewis) Rue, Jake Rue, Ben Rue, Pete Rue, Bill Rue, Dan Rue, B. R. Hodges, John R. Hodges, Rev. Barnett Ware (or Wear), Rev. William Ware, Rev. Jim Burnes, Phil Barnes, John Yeates, Dave Yeates, Jay Jones, Ben Yeates, Pete Hutchison, Mr. Ferguson, Petway Ferguson, Ples Ferguson, C. Copenhavner, Louis Phillips, Steve Dyle, Bill Phillips, Josh Burks, Carroll Jackson, Phil Teeters, James Spencer, Ike Haws, Tom Button, and Marion Jackson.⁵ According to the 1860 Denton County Census, these pioneers' birth states included Missouri, Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas, Wisconsin, and others.⁶

There are few records available for the next years because of the December 1875 fire which destroyed the Denton County courthouse. The Federal Census records, State tax lists, and State land records provide certain information about the settlers.

In 1868 Ben L. Rue sold his land to Carroll Jackson, who had moved from Missouri to the Rue Settlement. The deed for this transaction states that a tract of about four acres had been cut out to be used for a church and school.⁷ Ben Rue then moved to Fannin County, Texas. In 1869 other Rues sold about 400 acres of land to Carroll Jackson,⁸ and some of Jackson's descendants have continued to live on part of that property.

From the founding of this settlement its members had been intent on having their church. Reverend B. R. Hodges, stock raiser, with assistance of others, soon organized a Cumberland Presbyterian church, possibly the first in Denton County. No records of this church, which became inactive in 1925, have been located. However, it is believed by descendants of the pioneers that the church began in 1854, the same year in which the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Flower Mound, southern Denton County, was established.⁹ The Rue Settlement church meetings were held in the one-room log meeting house which had been built for the dual purpose of church and school. It stood about 300 feet northwest of the present north gate of Good Hope Cemetery.

In 1875 a Baptist church was organized on Doe Branch near the home of Carroll Jackson, and it was named Good Hope Baptist Church. On alternate Sundays the Baptist and Presbyterian congregations used the meeting-house. In good weather the congregations met outdoors.¹⁰ The name, Good Hope, thus became the name of the community originally known as the Rue Settlement. Later the name, Parvin, was used for a long interval; however, the name reverted to Good Hope.

In 1878 the Good Hope meeting-house was destroyed by a storm. The Presbyterians moved less than a mile away where they built their church in the cluster of a few houses, a store, and a blacksmith shop; this place was called Parvin. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church here remained in use until 1925, when it burned. Then, instead of rebuilding, the members joined churches at the nearby town of Prosper, in Collin County, or other churches in the area.¹¹

The Baptists, after the 1878 loss of the Good Hope meeting-house, moved a few miles eastward to Pleasant Valley, and named their new church there as the Providence Baptist Church.¹² Later that congregation divided and one group again moved eastward to a location known as Richland, and used that name for the church. Other members returned to Parvin in 1885 and organized themselves as the Providence Baptist Church. Another name change occurred in July 1894 when the Providence church became Good Hope Baptist Church.¹³ "This church, which was built in Parvin, continued operation until sometime in 1973/74 when it disbanded, the last pastor of record being M. D. Bishop, then of Celina, according to the Texas Baptist Annual for 1974."¹⁴

In the Handbook of Texas (1952), Parvin is described by Lorena Bates Smith as:

Parvin: a Denton County ghost community on the Collin County line, was called the Rue Settlement in 1854 when it was the site of a log building which served both as school and Presbyterian church. The name was changed to honor Henry Parvin, a local landowner. The settlement had a store, a blacksmith shop, a Baptist church, and a few houses. A piggeer cemetery with many sandstone markers remains.¹⁵

The name, Parvin is still heard st times; a short road leading from farm road #1385 to the cemetery, is named Parvin Road. North from State highway 380, about 15 miles east from Denton, is Good Hope Road, which also leads to the Cemetery.

The small Good Hope school continued to be known by that name throughout most of its existence. (Parvin was sometimes used, or added to the Good Hope name.) A simple local school arrangement was in effect during the first twenty years or more. One of its first teachers was Tolman C. Weeden, age 26, a nephew of Mary and Rachel Weeden, wives of Jacob and Lewis Rue.¹⁶

The Texas Constitution of 1876 established the community school system, which allowed any group of parents to organize themselves into a school community and apply for state funds. An annual reorganization of such groups was required.¹⁷ In the Denton County Commissioners Court Minutes of 1877, the Good Hope School was enumerated.¹⁸ In 1878 the following appeared in the County Judge's School Record for Denton County, page 22:

On the _____ day of August 1878 a petition was filed by Carrol Jackson and others in my office, praying that a School Community be organized at Good Hope. Said petition has been examined and it is hereby ordered that the signers to said petition are constituted and recognized as Good Hope School Community, No. 61. It is further ordered that the sum of \$54.00 be credited on the books of the County Treasurer for the benefit of said Community, to be applied to the maintenance of their Public Free School. It is further ordered, that A. B. Jamison, A. C. Stone, and Carrol Jackson be and are appointed Trustees for said School Community.

/s/ C. C. Scruggs
County Judge

The County Judge's School Record for 1888 showed benefits of \$423.20 being allowed to Good Hope School, in precinct 2.

Records for the school, often with the added name of Parvin, continued to be shown on Denton County school records until 1949, at which time the school consolidation law was put into effect. The Good Hope students were transferred to Denton, the county seat, or to Prosper (Collin County) with bus service provided.²⁰ Former students remember well their years in this small rural school, and value their pictures of it. A 1910 photograph shows about fifty students, with one teacher, who was identified as Professor Brown.²¹ Although it became recognized as a two-year high school, it remained a small school. A 1925 Denton Record-Chronicle article

reported that an additional room was being added to the Good Hope School to accommodate a third teacher, needed because of increased enrollment.²²

Throughout all these years the Good Hope Cemetery remained a focal point for its community. Its land was in use for burials for more than thirty years before it was deeded to the Good Hope Cemetery Association, which was organized May 9, 1903.²³ In 1904, J. W. Wray, first president of the Association, asked Ben L. Rue, then of Fannin County, to transfer to the Association the four acres he had retained for community purposes when, in 1868, he had sold his land to Carroll Jackson. This deed of the land to the Association was signed May 10, 1904, and it is recorded in Denton County Deed Records, volume 89, page 555. It states that the transfer was made for the payment of \$1.00 by the Cemetery Association.²⁴ In a letter of May 1, 1904, Ben L. Rue wrote to a cousin in Good Hope that he had asked Mr. Wray if the cemetery would then be for a particular denomination, and that he was assured that it would be for all.²⁵ Thus, 45 years after its acquisition, Ben L. Rue and wife, Mary J., transferred the four acres of land described as:

Tract or parcel of land situated in Denton County, Texas, and being a part of the B. L. Rue survey, abstract no. 1113, and described as follows: beginning at the most Southern South East corner of the tract of land described in the deed from B. L. Rue et al. to Carroll Jackson, dated October 30th, 1868, and now recorded in volume M, pages 102 and 103 of the Deed Records of Denton County, Texas, Thence north 10 chains to an inner ell corner of said tract, Thence east four chains to to the place of beginning, containing four acres of land.²⁶

A survey of the cemetery was made in 1983 by Grover C. Rue, secretary-treasurer of the Good Hope Cemetery Association, and others. A location number was given to each marked grave, of which there were 391.²⁷ It is reported, and almost certainly is correct, that there are numerous unmarked graves.²⁸ The 1952 Handbook of Texas account, "Parvin," states that there was "a pioneer cemetery with many sandstone markers." Almost no sandstone markers remain at this time. Some have been replaced by newer stone markers.

There are no records of the first use of this burial ground. At least three members of the early Rue families are probably buried there in unmarked graves. The earliest record is that of Hiram Rue, who died October 23, 1859, according to the 1860 Texas Mortality Schedule.²⁹ Mary F. Weeden Rue, first wife of Jacob Rue, and their son, John B. Rue, are known to have died before 1868,³⁰ and descendants believe that they are buried in this cemetery, which is located about a quarter-mile from Jacob Rue's cabin site. Later cemetery caretakers report that other markers have been lost at times when heavy rains flowed across a part of the cemetery, which is located on land sloping down toward Doe Branch. That drainage strip has been partially filled, and is now grass-covered; more filling is scheduled. Some years ago a lady of the community planted bluebonnets here. Under consideration now is the planting of some native trees in the open area.

The earliest legible marker in Good Hope Cemetery is that of John Phillips, age 21, who died March 18, 1870. He was born in Illinois and was son of William and Susan A. Phillips, who were born in Ohio and Kentucky respectively.³¹ Both are buried in the block with their son. Mr. P. W. Renison's marker is the next earliest, November 7, 1870. Inscriptions on 34 markers show that

the burials occurred more than a hundred years ago. Markers show 48 burials with dates from 1887 through 1899. From 1900 through 1949 there are markers for an average of 38 burials per year; and from 1950 through 1979, an annual average of 23 burials. The 1980s average seems to be considerably lower. The earliest birth shown is May 8, 1814, for Jane M. Adams, who died in 1900; next is that of Lewis R. Rue, born May 1, 1817, and died May 13, 1903. Military service (Civil War, World Wars I and II, or Korea) is recorded on a number of markers.³²

Under a large pecan tree in the east part of the cemetery is a single child's marker, with inscription: "Our Darling/ Covis Salasar/ Nico el 6 Agosto 1924/ y Muria el 8 Agosto 1924." Mr. Clarence Naugher, a former attendant for the cemetery, and others, recall that earlier there were about ten markers under this tree for people with Spanish names.³³

When the Good Hope Cemetery Association was formed in May 1903, the following officers were named: J. B. Wray, president; Petway Ferguson, vice-president; Z. D. Lewis, treasurer; and Kitty Jackson (Mrs. Ira O'Dell), secretary. Named to the Board of Directors were: R. H. Wheeler, Will Curry, Jim Smith, and J. M. M. Harper, chairman. Others who served long periods as officers include: John Naugher, Clarence Naugher, George Ethridge, Emory Knapp, G. C. Rue, Sr., and J. C. Jackson. The present members of the Board are: B. M. Jackson, Grover C. Rue, S. F. Peterman, Brice Jackson, Charles Knapp, Victor Mace, and Tom Moore. Some of these persons are descendants of pioneer settlers.³⁴

An annual meeting of the Association is held on Decoration Day, the last Sunday in April. Business is conducted and often there is a program with music. The Association's records of these annual meetings, beginning with the first meeting in May 1903,

are available. Recorded in these are the listings of names (often 50 to 60) of those who attended and made donations to the cemetery's permanent fund. The secretary-treasurer's 1985 report shows substantial funds for maintenance and equipment. Other invested funds are designated as: Historical (marker) and Memorial (for high chain-link fencing to replace present barbed wire fence).³⁵ There is now a metal double entry gate, with the cemetery's name on its arch, at the north entry.

In Terry G. Jordan's Texas Graveyards; A Cultural Legacy, page 16, there is a photograph made in the Good Hope Cemetery in 1974, which Dr. Jordan described in this caption: "On 'Decoration day' a descendant of Tennessean immigrants works his scraped-earth family plot in Good Hope Cemetery in the Blackland Prairie of Denton County. The graves in the foreground are Southern Baptists, those in the background Presbyterian." This is in his chapter, "The Southern Folk Cemetery in Texas."³⁶

The Good Hope community, in eastern Denton County, Texas, beginning in 1854 as the Rue Settlement, has always been an entity without formal incorporation. However, it maintained its school and churches for decades, and its cemetery for more than 115 years--perhaps as long as 126 years--by means of its strong spirit of community. This trait is significantly evident in the on-going care and preservation of its heritage in the Good Hope Cemetery.

NOTES

1. Ed F. Bates, History and Reminiscences of Denton County (Denton, Texas: McNitzky Printing Co., 1918; reprinted by Terrill Wheeler Printing, Inc., 1976), p. 55; Alvin G. Rue, A Curse for Moving Landmarks (n.p.: Privately printed [1975?]) p. 30.
2. Rue, Landmarks, p. 30.
3. Grover C. Rue, Interview: family notes, August 1985.
4. Texas General Land Office, Abstract of All Original Land Titles; Comprising Grants and Locations (Austin: 1941-) vol. 2, p. 196.
5. Bates, Denton County, p. 55.
6. U. S. Census Bureau, Federal Population Census, 1860; Denton County, Texas. (Washington, D. C.: National Archives. Microfilm.
7. Denton County, Texas. Deed Book 89, p. 555.
8. Denton County, Texas. Deed Book M, pp. 102-103.
9. Flower Mound Cumberland Presbyterian Church, History, copied from the original Minute Books by Mrs. A. B. Harmonson (Keller, Texas, 19--) On title-page: "Church first held in log cabin in 1854."
10. J. N. Rayzor, History of Denton County Baptist Association (Denton, Texas: Wm. H. McNitzky, 1936), pp. 38-39.
11. Denton County Home Demonstration Clubs, "Good Hope," In: Emily Fowler & Alma L. Chambers, Denton County Towns and Communities (Denton, Texas: 1956) Unpublished; in Emily Fowler Public Library, Denton.
12. Rayzor, Denton County Baptists, p. 37.
13. Rayzor, Denton County Baptists, p. 38.
14. Francie T. Lautner and Grover C. Rue, "Good Hope" (Arlington, Texas: 1985) Unpublished paper, p. 4. In custody of the authors.
15. Lorena Bates Smith, "Parvin, Texas," In: Handbook of Texas, Walter Webb, ed. (Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, 1952) vol. 2.
16. Grover C. Rue, Interview; family notes, April 1984.
17. Myrtle Watson, "Education; A Debt the Present Owes to the Future" (Denton, Texas: 1976) Unpublished research paper. In custody of Denton County Historical Commission, p. 5.
18. Watson, "Education" p. 7, figure 1.

NOTES (continued)

19. County Judge's School Record for Denton County, 1878. In custody of Denton County Historical Commission.
20. Watson, "Education," p. 7, figure 1.
21. Photograph, 1910. From the collection of Billye Naugher Myers (Mrs. William E. Myers), Irving, Texas.
22. Denton Record-Chronicle, July 21, 1925, p. 6, col. 2.
23. Good Hope Cemetery Association. Records (Minutes of the annual meetings) 1903- p. 1. In custody of Grover C. Rue, Celina, Texas.
24. Denton County, Texas, Deed Book 89, p. 555; Appendix I, this paper.
25. Letter, 1904, Ben L. Rue to Pete Rue. Manuscript. In custody of Grover C. Rue, Celina, Texas.
26. Denton County, Texas, Deed Book. 89, p. 555
27. Good Hope Cemetery Survey, 1983. Incorporated into the Denton County Historical Commission's "County Cemetery Census" file.
28. Lost markers were reported by various persons, including the cemetery recorders, caretakers, and others. No register of burials has been located.
29. 1860 Texas Mortality Schedule: Denton County.
30. These deaths were verified from the Rue family land transfers in 1869, and recorded in Denton County Deed Book M, p. 102-103.
31. 1860 Federal Population Census: Denton County, Texas, Family No. 131.
32. Good Hope Cemetery Survey, 1983.
33. Good Hope Cemetery Survey, 1983; Interview, Clarence Naugher.
34. Good Hope Cemetery Association. Records 1903, p. 1.
35. Appendix II, this paper, Good Hope Cemetery Association 1985 Financial Report and annual letter to members.
36. Terry G. Jordan, Texas Graveyards; A Cultural Legacy, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), p. 16.

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