

McCURLEY CEMETERY

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McCurley, Texas, a Denton County farm community two miles southeast of Lake Dallas, was named for the McCurley brothers, who settled the area in 1852. (1)

This settlement was located in the forks of Big Elm and Hickory Creek, and was started in 1852 by the French's and McCurley's. They settled on what was known as the McCurley Prairie just west of the Wantland Lake. Two of the early settlers among others were George Washington McCurley and Jonas McCurley, brothers who came from Illinois. (2)

George Washington McCurley's sons were Francis Brown (Frank), Abraham, and George Collins. They remained in the McCurley Prairie area. Jonas McCurley's family moved to the Denton area within a few years.

George Collins McCurley purchased two (2) acres of land adjoining his for the McCurley Community to be used for church, school, and seminary (sic) purposes on November 12, 1894. The property line extended West with the South line of the Graveyard. This deed acknowledges there was already a graveyard in existence. (3)

George Collins McCurley had set aside a parcel of land for family burials. His brother, Abraham, died unmarried on July 16, 1871, and was buried in the cemetery and could have possibly been the first person buried in the cemetery. George C. McCurley had two children to die in infancy, Laura Esabell in 1872 and Walter in 1879 who were also buried there. The sister-in-law of George C., Delilah Evelyn King McCurley, wife of Francis Brown McCurley, died in 1872 and was also buried there. (4)

There are no stones for the above listed but there is no doubt they were buried in the McCurley Cemetery since that is where they lived and George C. McCurley told all his relatives they were buried there.

The first McCurley buried in the cemetery with a marker was the wife of George C., Permelia Ann White McCurley, who died October 28, 1882. (5)

The oldest graves in the cemetery with a marker are G. W. Jones, died May 13, 1877, and Millie J. Holloman, died September 6, 1877. (6)

Family tradition or folklore passed down through two generations is that the first known burial was a passer-by male who came to McCurley Prairie on horseback. He camped in the pasture North of George C. McCurley's house. He was there only a few days, took pneumonia and died. Since an area had been set aside for cemetery purposes, the stranger was buried there with a large fieldstone to mark his grave. The exact date is unknown. Other than this grave, the cemetery was used for family burials only until 1877. Other families in the McCurley Community began to use the cemetery at that time. (7)

The McCurley Cemetery had to be relocated by the United States Corps of Engineers in 1951 when the construction of the Lewisville Lake (Garza-Little Elm Dam and Reservoir) began. According to their survey, there were 106 graves in the cemetery when it was moved. (8)

McCurley Cemetery was moved to Lewisville, Texas adjoining the Old Hall Cemetery with a road separating the two. As the City of Lewisville grew and the population moved further out, the road between the two cemeteries was paved and named. The exact present location of McCurley Cemetery is Northeast Corner of Grandy's Lane and McGee Lane, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south from FM 407.

At the time the cemetery was moved, Robert Lee McCurley and Andrew Jackson McCurley, sons of George C. McCurley, working with the Corps of Engineers identified all the graves.

Plats were drawn as to location of graves in old and new locations. A Cemetery Committee was created at that time consisting of Roy Harper,

President, V. O. Thurmond, Vice President, and Carl McCurley, Secretary-Treasurer and Chairman of Selling lots and Upkeep of Cemetery. The cemetery now and always will have perpetual care due to funds being donated and invested by the Officers/Trustees.

Prior to the cemetery being moved, each family had to maintain their own lots. Many times a certain day was set aside for members of the community to gather and clean the cemetery.

In recent years cemetery lots have been available to the public, but most are still purchased by descendants, distant relatives, or close friends of someone who lived at McCurley Prairie.

Ironically, George Collins McCurley, creator of McCurley Cemetery, was not buried in the cemetery. His last wife outlived him and chose to bury him at Old Hall Cemetery. He was buried on the North edge of Old Hall Cemetery and when the land was chosen for the relocation of McCurley Cemetery, the land adjoining the North side of Old Hall was chosen; therefore, his grave is just across the lane from McCurley Cemetery.

Only two of George C. McCurley's children who lived to adulthood are buried in McCurley Cemetery due to either the others moving out of state or choosing to be buried elsewhere. The two buried there are Roxanna McCurley Thurmond who died August 14, 1980, and Andrew Jackson McCurley who died May 11, 1980, at the age of 105 and was probably the oldest living citizen of Denton County at the time of his death and possibly the oldest native Denton County citizen in the history of Denton County.

In the last few years, a large concrete marker or sign engraved "McCurley Cemetery" was built at the entrance of the cemetery by John Homer McCurley, grandson of George C. McCurley. (9)

Footnotes:

1. The Handbook of Texas, Volume II, by The Texas State Historical Association, 1952.
2. History and Reminiscences of Denton County, by Ed F. Bates, 1918
3. Deed dated Nov. 12, 1894, Page 193, Vol. 54, Denton County, Texas
4. Hand copy of McCurley Family Bible (too delicate to photocopy)
5. Picture of marker
6. Pictures of markers
7. Conversation with Andrew Jackson McCurley, my father.
8. List of graves attached.
9. Picture attached

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bates, Ed F., HISTORY AND REMINISCENCES OF DENTON COUNTY, McNitzky Printing Company, Denton, Texas, 1918, p. 60.

_____. Denton County Clerk, Deed Records, 1894, Vol. 54, P. 193.

McCurley, Abraham, Unpublished Bible Records, 1968 (copy of).

U. S. Corps of Engineers, "Existing and Reinterment Schedule for McCurley Cemetery", 1951., p. 38-40.

Webb, Walter Prescott, THE HANDBOOK OF TEXAS, The Texas State Historical Association, Austin, 1952, Volume II, P. 108.