

Fulshear Black Cemetery

History

The 3.09 acres, that is known today as the Fulshear Black Cemetery, originated as part of the July 16, 1824 Mexican land grant to Churchill Fulshear Sr., who was one of Stephen F. Austin's original "Old Three Hundred". In the summer of 1824, Churchill moved to Texas from Tennessee with his wife, Betsy, one daughter, Mary, three sons, Benjamin, Graves and Churchill Jr. and one servant. Churchill Sr. died January 18, 1831. By 1850 his son, Churchill Fulshear Jr., had become the owner of a large plantation by inheritance and purchase from heirs of his father, sister and brothers, who had all died. At one time he was said to be one of the largest land owners in Texas. He raised cotton, corn, rice, pecans and livestock, including some of the finest race horses in the United States.

The Civil War and tuberculosis would claim 8 of his family members, leaving himself, a grandson and a dedicated housekeeper, Emma S. Wilson, to reside at Lake Hill, the plantation mansion. Churchill Fulshear Jr. granted the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Rail Road right of way in 1888 and the city of Fulshear was laid out in 1890. In 1892, Churchill Fulshear Jr. died, leaving his land to his grandson, Tommy J. Fulshear, and his longtime housekeeper, Mrs. E. S. Wilson. Mrs. Wilson received "500 acres, more or less, together with twenty five head of horses and fifty head of cattle". The will specified that a survey be conducted as soon as possible to ascertain the exact boundary between the two properties.

Emma Wilson died October 24, 1921 and left her land holdings to Louise Lloyd. Over the years, numerous small parcels of land were sold by various persons claiming to hold an interest in Emma Wilson's land. Many of these land sales were not officially recorded. In order for the surviving heirs to sell their remaining land, an official survey showing the land held by each claimant was required. This was completed in December, 1967, when a land survey was conducted by Henry Steincamp Jr. This survey formed the basis of a "Partition Deed" that was recorded in January, 1968.

The partition deed divided the Mrs. Emma Wilson parcel into four Tracts as follows:

Tract A – 207.806 acres to Lenora Wieting, Emma Nott and Louise Moulton (5/12 of total).

Track B – 207.806 acres to Louise Lloyd (5/12 of total).

Tract C1 – 41.559 acres to Martha Lohmeyer (1/12 of total).

Tract C2 – 41.559 acres to Leslye Garnet Wilson (1/12 of total).

The January 1968 Partition Deed is the first time the Fulshear Black Cemetery is shown on a map with its current legal description. However in 1962, Zingery Map Co. published a plat Book for Ft. Bend County. On page 80, the Fulshear Black Cemetery is labeled "3.09 CEM". It is not shown as being connected with the 190 acres held by Louise Lloyd.

In March 1968, Louise Lloyd sold 190 acres to P. Michael Wells. Once again, the cemetery is not included in the 190 acres but is noted as being one of the boundaries of the 190 acre parcel.

In August of 1990 a lawsuit was filed against Mr. Wells for desecrating the cemetery. Mr. Wells, or one

of his supervisors, had taken control of the cemetery site, bulldozing tombstones and grave markers and locking the access gate to allow his cattle to pasture in the cemetery. The result of this lawsuit legally defined the Fulshear Black Cemetery as belonging to the Fulshear Black Cemetery Association and was recorded in 1995.

The land to the east, south and west of the cemetery was sold by the Estate of P. Michael Wells to Fulshear Land Investment Partners, Ltd. in December 2007. The land to the north of the cemetery is FM-1093 and belongs to Ft. Bend County.

In pre-Civil War Texas, slaves were essential to the development of the plantations. As early as 1840 there were already 572 slaves in Ft. Bend County. By 1850 Ft. Bend was one of six Texas counties with a black majority (2 to 1) population. In 1850 in addition to farm labor, Churchill Fulshear's slaves were put to work making the bricks for the Fulshear plantation mansion, called Lake Hill. The mansion was torn down in 1930 but an occasional brick is unearthed bearing the oak leaf pattern that was stamped into the bricks as they were made.

It was a common practice to bury slaves of a plantation on plantation property. There are at least five known slave cemeteries in the Fulshear area with the Fulshear Black Cemetery being one of the larger. According to early death certificates, the undertaker was listed as Fulshear Drug. The cemetery contains approximately 280 graves with the oldest listed as belonging to Andrew Williams who died 13 April 1905. The oldest visible headstone belongs to Rebecca Scott who died 29 March 1915. There are 16 known Veterans from WWI, WWII, and Viet Nam, with the oldest listed as Theodore Johnson who died 1928. The oldest visible headstone is of WWI Veteran Clarence Hackett who died November, 1933.

The cemetery was associated with a nearby church, Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, which was located just east of the cemetery. The church and cemetery were recalled in sworn affidavits as being in existence as early as 1913. The church burned to the ground after a lightning strike during a spring storm in 1959. In the late 1920's and early 1930's the woods behind the cemetery and the cemetery property was called the "hundreds" and was the site of school picnics and late night gambling parties. The cemetery was also referred to as the "sandpit" which describes the soil located there.

Included among those buried in the Fulshear Black Cemetery are two midwives of the 1940's and 1950's (Fannie Silas Diggs and Della Hurd), a famous area cook, Rosa Lee, who cooked for the Huggins and Pickett families during the 1960's, and Ollie McNeal who was the "Top Cowboy" for the Huggins ranch during the 1960's and 1970's.

Two local entrepreneurs from the 1930's and 1940's were Walter Woods and his Bar-B-Que shop and Liddie Davis. It was said that the savory smoke of Mr. Woods' shop would waft through the streets of downtown Fulshear with everyone eagerly awaiting Walter's call of "It's not R-B-Que. It's Bar-B-Que. Come and get it while it's hot". Liddie Davis could be found on the porch in front of the mercantile stores run by Briscoe and Harris and the Mayes saloon serving her fried fish and homemade ice cream. While frying fish on her portable clay "furnace", she would continue to turn the crank on the ice cream maker that contained the custard she had cooked the night before. One of the more interesting and much loved businessmen was Jimmy "Crip" Gibson. He got his nickname after losing the use of

his legs from ingesting a "home remedy" that included turpentine. With the help of crutches, he was still able to run a delivery service with his horse and buggy. He would wait outside the general store and for \$0.25 he would bring a shoppers ice and groceries to their home. He also supplemented his income by being a bootlegger. Unfortunately, one day his still exploded and burned his already impaired legs. This incident lead to some jail time for 'Crip'.

Also buried within the cemetery are many religious leaders of the community. They range from Johnnie Banks, the first minister of the Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church to Sarah Ann Douglas, a local "missionary". She would walk house to house knocking on doors with her cane and offering to pray with those inside regardless of their race. In the early 1900's, Isom Scott and Lead Farwell played an important role in the formation of the present day Greater Zachery Missionary Baptist Church. Before any church structure existed, the faithful would meet and worship in a location called "the arbors" which was a grouping of trees whose canopy gave shelter to those gathered below. Mr. Scott and Mr. Farwell secured the land for Greater Zachery and helped construct the building and dug the well. The well was later used by the first black school in Fulshear which was located near the church. The old well casings are still visible today.

Although there are many veterans buried in the Fulshear Black Cemetery, one that is still fondly remembered is World War II veteran Raymond Freemond who died in 1944. He was always happy and a friend to everyone. One afternoon while home on leave before shipping off to war, he entertained the neighborhood children by showing the skills he had learned in the Army. All the children had a wonderful time learning to march and salute. Sadly a day came when upon returning home from school, the children were told by their tearful parents that Raymond had been killed in the war.

It should also be noted that the grave of Minnie Gibson Gilmore is located in the cemetery. She is the mother of Ms. Viola Randle, Fulshear's first black mayor.

The Fulshear Black Cemetery continues to serve the community today with the most recent burial taking place June of 2010.