

## **CESINGER CEMETERY**

Fort Bend County, Needville, Texas'

Researched and Written by  
Esther Schmidt Beard  
Rt. 1 , Box 74  
Guy, Texas 77444

### LOCATION

Located at the intersection of present Roesler Road and Zamanek Road in rural Fort Bend County, Texas, the Cesinger Cemetery is among the oldest cemeteries in its immediate area.<sup>1</sup> The nearest town today is Needville, Texas, which is five miles to the northwest of the cemetery. The property adjacent to the cemetery is now owned by Annabelle Zich Miller.<sup>2</sup>

### NAME

Always called the Cesinger Cemetery by the Cesinger family heirs, this cemetery also has been known for many years by the Needville Community as the Seiler Cemetery.<sup>3</sup> This may be attributed to the fact that the now extinct rural school, which was located across the road from the cemetery, was named the Seiler School. Also, shortly after the Cesinger family settled in Fort Bend County, their daughter, Henriette, married Adolph Seiler in 1893.<sup>4</sup> This couple and most of their children were life-long residents of the vicinity. Upon their deaths, Adolph and Henriette were buried in the cemetery, thus prompting the local people to call it the Seiler Cemetery; however, the real name has always been the Cesinger Cemetery.

### BEGINNING OF THE CEMETERY and DONOR OF THE LAND

This cemetery was begun in 1894 upon the death of Philipina Cesinger, the eight year old daughter of Frederick and Anna Cesinger.<sup>5</sup> When Philipina died, she was "Buried in the southeast corner of the land owned by her brother, George Cesinger, who donated the one acre which became the Cesinger Cemetery.

### CHAIN OF TITLE SHOWING OWNERSHIP OF LAND

Records show that in January, 1893, George Cesinger obtained the SE¼ of Section 42, H. & T.C.R.R. Company Survey (Houston and Texas Central Railway) of 160 acres from his father, Frederick Cesinger.<sup>6</sup> George's land was the southern half of a 320 acre tract that his father had previously acquired on August 19, 1891, as an assignee of Ferdinand Hilbert.<sup>7</sup> A month earlier, in July of 1891, Ferdinand Hilbert was the purchaser of the entire 640 acres of Section 42, H. & T.C.R.R. Company Survey, from the State of Texas.<sup>8</sup> This land was part of the Public School Lands that the State opened to sale and settlement in 1887. In Fort Bend County, the Public School Lands were comprised of four leagues of flat, prairie land between the Brazos and San Bernard Rivers.<sup>9</sup>

### MIGRATION OF THE 1890s and ARRIVAL OF THE CESINGER FAMILY

With the opening of this land which had been public domain, the county realized a large influx of individual families who were seeking to build homes and to farm the land. In this group were people of various national descents; however, very noticeable was the tremendous German migration which took place. These people came from numerous other counties in Texas and from out of state. The arrival of these new inhabitants eventually led to the establishment of a number of small communities, one of which was Needville.

In the fall of 1890, a few settlers began to arrive and to locate around the area that was to become the community of Needville.<sup>10</sup> Among these earliest settlers was the Germanic family of Frederick and Anna Cesinger who were awarded possession of their land in the summer of 1891.<sup>11</sup>

Having begun their family in the State of Michigan, where George, the oldest child, was born in 1870, Frederick and Anna Cesinger gradually migrated southwardly through the mid-western states of Nebraska and

Kansas where their other children were born, namely: Sophia, Henriette, John, Katie, Philipina, and Anna who was barely two years old when the family arrived in Fort Bend County, Texas, in 1891.<sup>12</sup>

Along with the other settlers on the Public School Lands around Needville, the Cesingers found no roads, towns, schools, churches, or cemeteries. All of these elements of civilization had to be established with time.

### CHRONOLOGY OF THE CESINGER CEMETERY

When the need for a cemetery arose, the Cesingers used the southeast corner of George's land for the family burial ground.

All but one of the first families, who used the cemetery, were related to the Cesingers in some manner. This one exception was the John and Emma Schmidt family who had settled in 1892 about 4 miles west of the Cesinger residence.<sup>13</sup> As Lutherans of the Missouri Synod, these families became friends and worshipped together in the Cesinger home whenever the circuit-riding Lutheran Pastor, the Rev. Ernest August Wenzel from Wharton, Texas, was doing missionary work in the Needville area.<sup>14</sup> Between 1895-1900 two little Schmidt boys died and were buried in the Cesinger Cemetery.<sup>15</sup>

From 1909 to 1928 the cemetery was the church cemetery for the German Evangelical Emmanuel Congregation of Needville, now the Immanuel United Church of Christ in Needville. In 1908 George Cesinger sold his farm and moved his family to San Antonio, Texas.<sup>16</sup> A year later, in 1909, he provided for the care of the cemetery by donating "all that certain Parcel of Land and being one acre, and located in the East Corner of Section 42, H. & T.C. Railway Survey in Fort Bend County, State of Texas, and to be used as Cemetery purposes by the said Congregation...it shall receive perpetual care as a burial ground at the expense of said Evangelical Immanuel Congregation."<sup>17</sup>

The 1910 Census taker found George Cesinger and his family living again near Needville. Following the death of his wife, Elly, in 1911, George moved his family to Dallas where his children could receive more education than that which the 8 grade Seiler School could provide. George worked as a carpenter in San Antonio but regularly returned home to Dallas.<sup>18</sup> Upon George's death in 1927 in Dallas,<sup>19</sup> his body was returned to Needville and buried in the Cesinger Cemetery.

The old records of the Evangelical Emmanuel Congregation reveal that the cemetery was used by just a few church families. Only 12 tombstones in the cemetery date back to this period of time. It is possible that there are some unmarked graves. After purchasing land closer to the town of Needville for their church cemetery, the Church Trustees returned in 1928 the Cesinger Cemetery to the Heirs (children) of George Cesinger, who were Ewalt Cesinger, Mrs. Gerta Cesinger Campbell, Miss Adelina Cesinger, and Mrs. Anita Cesinger Williams, all of whom were living at the time in the Dallas area.<sup>20</sup>

In 1941, the Heirs, led by Miss Adelina and Ewalt, enclosed their one acre cemetery with a permanent fence of concrete posts<sup>21</sup> and steel wire. They were able to erect the fence only after a settlement with the neighbor, Mr. Charles T. Zich, who then owned the adjoining 159 acres of George Cesinger's original 160 acre tract. Mr. Zich had in his possession papers showing that in 1910 he assumed the loan on all of the 160<sup>22</sup> acres, and that in 1939 he paid off the loan and received the Letter Patent from the State of Texas.<sup>23</sup> Before Mr. Zich gave the Cesinger Heirs a deed acknowledging their interest in the cemetery, the Heirs made "full reimbursement (to him) for the proportionate part of the purchase money paid to the State".<sup>24</sup> In one of her letters to her brother, Ewalt, Miss Adelina told of her efforts to settle the dispute and of her offering Mr. Zich the original purchase price of

the acre, plus the interest for 29 years, for a sum total of \$6.75. She wrote, "He said this was agreeable". Thus, by May 23, 1941, the Cesingers had a deed showing the metes and bounds of their cemetery on record in the Fort Bend County Court House.<sup>25</sup>

Research in the Tax Records of Fort Bend County revealed that starting in 1893 George Cesinger paid taxes on all 160 acres, which included the cemetery. When Mr. Zich bought the ¼ Section in 1910, he paid for all 160 acres, however, he rendered for taxation only 159 acres, thus eliminating the cemetery from the tax rolls.

In 1965 another deed regarding this cemetery was written. In this instrument, Betty Jane Cesinger Gossard of Dallas, the only heir of Ewalt Cesinger, relinquished any claim she may have had on the cemetery to her aunts, Gerta Cesinger Campbell and Anita Cesinger Williams. This was part of the settlement of the Estate of her aunt, Miss Adelina Cesinger. No additional information concerning the history of the cemetery is in this deed.

Both Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. Williams died several years ago. Their children are Lowell Earl Campbell of Dallas, Edward Cesinger Campbell of Duncanville, Michael Williams (now deceased), and Anita Williams Niendorf of Hurst.

Now in the possession of Lowell E. Campbell, some of the old family letters regarding the cemetery became one source for this narrative.

In contacts with the living descendants of George Cesinger, this writer learned that, they would like to turn the cemetery over to some local historical organization which would be interested in caring for it.

#### CEMETERY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - 1941

(Note: As all the information for this project was found in the old family letters, separate footnotes for the many details will not be used.)

Old letters from the files of Miss Adelina Cesinger, who was known by

relatives and friends as "Miss Adelina", reveal that she and her brother, Ewalt or "Bud", were responsible for carrying out a major cemetery improvement project in the summer of 1941.

As the Heirs desired to build a new and permanent cemetery fence of concrete posts and steel wire, Miss Adelina hired the local cement contractor, Raymond V. Bartosh, who specialized in cemetery repair work. Throughout the years the cemetery had been enclosed by a simple barbed wire fence which had been repaired many times before 1941.

In one of his letters to Miss Adelina, Mr. Bartosh recommended several changes in the proposed design of the concrete posts in order to strengthen them. He wrote, "... so it will stay there forever". She wrote back, "We appreciate the careful attention you are giving to all details and feel sure the fence, when completed, will be one of which we can be mutually proud, and we also appreciate your efforts to build it to last forever, since that is surely what we want".



Mr. Bartosh built the forms" for the posts and poured them at his home. The design to the left is an exact copy of the sketch that he supplied to the family. The length of each post was 7'4" long, with 3' "to be anchored in the ground. All the posts were reinforced with iron rods, and the tops were solid concrete. Stock fence wire was run through the opening in each post. The openings were then sealed with more concrete. More than 80 of these posts were used around the cemetery. Also made of reinforced concrete, the corner posts and gate posts measure one foot square. Modern at the time, a ten foot iron gate with wire which matched the fence wire was placed at the entrance facing Roesler Road.

In another letter Mr. Bartosh informed Miss Adelina that when he was getting ready to set the corner posts, the neighbor questioned the legality of

the boundary lines between him and the cemetery. As a result, work on the fence was halted. Upon receiving this information, Miss Adelina immediately drove from Dallas to Needville to try to correct the problem. She quickly came to a settlement with the neighbor by paying him the original cost of the one acre and by receiving from him a deed for the one acre with measurements of 207' x 207', which was "all the lands enclosed within the confines of that certain concrete and steel fence now being erected around the same".<sup>27</sup>

Miss Adelina personally took the measurements for the new cemetery fence line to make sure they were not infringing on the neighbor's land. She remained in the area to oversee the project until it was completed. While here she kept in touch with her brother in Dallas. In one letter she explained, "I finally got the cemetery lined up where it is going to look nice. I am changing the gate to the School side, so our people are on the front row instead of way off on the side by the fence."

Another part of the project included the repair of the concrete slabs which covered each Cesinger grave. Even though the old tombstones were still legible, a new marker for each grave was placed. A 10" bronze medallion bearing each person's name and birth and death dates was attached to each concrete slab. Placed at the same time, another medallion was attached to the cemetery gate post. The inscription reads, "Cesinger's Cemetery -1894". Among her letters was a copy of Miss Adelina's order to the Lone Star Brass Foundry, Dallas, for all the medallions.

Also, the length of the Cesinger section in the cemetery was roped off by a heavy metal chain attached to plain concrete posts approximately two feet high.

About 1942, Mr. Bartosh did the curbing work on the Schmidt family lot and the other Schmidt graves next to the Cesinger graves. As a member

of the Schmidt family, this writer remembers seeing this concrete work being done. Since then, several other families had their lots outlined with concrete curbing, and some lots were completely covered with concrete.

### FAMILIES USING THE CEMETERY

#### A. Cesinger relatives, kith and kin

The Family Patriarch, FREDERICK CESINGER, was buried in this cemetery. The Family Matriarch, ANNA DEHM CESINGER, was not buried here. (In 1910 she married again and lived with her husband, F.A. Moers, in Rosenberg, Texas, until her death in 1920). She was buried in the Woodmen of the World Cemetery in Rosenberg).<sup>28</sup>

Also interred in this cemetery are five of the seven children of Frederick and Anna Cesinger, several of their grandchildren, and a number of their great-grandchildren. Tombstones mark the graves of the following family members;

1. Philipina Cesinger (1886-1894)
2. John Cesinger (1880-1902)
  - a. Lillie Cesinger (1901-1901)
3. George Valentin Cesinger (1870-1927)  
Wife - Elly Hilbert Cesinger (1873-1911)
4. Katie Cesinger Zwahr (1884-1962)  
Husband - John Adolph Zwahr (1879-1930)
  - a. Adolph Zwahr and Wife - Virginia  
(1902-1967) (1906-1977)
  - b. August Zwahr and Wife --Emma  
(1907-1980) (1913-1977)
    - (1) August Zwahr, Jr. (1934-1982)
5. Henriette Cesinger Seiler (1878-1964)  
Husband - Adolph Seiler (1870-1938)
  - a. Edwin Seiler (1907-1924)
  - b. Raymond Seiler (1911-1983)
    - (1) Infant (1941-1941)
    - (2) Infant (unmarked)



c. Albert Seller's daughter, Mildred Seiler  
(1921-1924)

A tombstone marks the grave of four year old Richard Hilbert, who probably was a son of Herman and Sophia Cesinger Hilbert. This family moved to Wichita County, Texas, and then on to Frederick, Oklahoma, around 1910-1911.<sup>29</sup>

Along with the Cesinger graves are those of Anna Hilbert, the mother of Herman Hilbert, and Grandma Dehm, the mother of Mrs. Frederick (Anna) Cesinger.

B. Families not related to the Cesingers

As good friends of the Cesinger family, John and Emma Schmidt were permitted to use the cemetery to bury two small sons before 1900. Upon their deaths, John and Emma Schmidt were laid to rest here. Some descendants of this Schmidt family still use the cemetery (Schmidt, Leissner, Browning).

Other non-related families who used the cemetery when it was owned by the Needville Evangelical Emmanuel Congregation were named Brauer, Broze, Hackstedt, Jeske, Kramer and Miller. Of these families, some of the Millers still use the cemetery.

THE CEMETERY TODAY

The earliest Cesinger graves were placed along the east and south boundary lines of the cemetery. Arranged in an angular direction, facing east, all are well marked.

When the Church in Needville owned and used the cemetery, the new graves were aligned in rows running diagonally across the east corner and just behind the Cesinger graves. In later years one family started a straight row of graves facing the fence line on Roesler Road.

Today the cemetery has 60+ marked graves. Some of the senior

citizens of the area remember that there are a number of unmarked graves. Approximately three-fourths of the cemetery is vacant and remains a hay meadow. Standing in the center of the cemetery is an old, non-working pitcher pump. Research did not reveal any information regarding the history of this pump. After fifty years, most of the fence that was built "to last forever" is still in good shape. Several of the concrete posts show some damage caused by drivers who ran into them. One cannot help but wonder how the vehicles that ran into those sturdy posts fared!

As the cemetery does not have a full-fledged caretaker at present, maintenance is done by the various families who use the cemetery; however, at one time the Cesinger descendants in Dallas did arrange for a caretaker. The old Cesinger family letters provide documentation for the following account: With the completion of the cemetery improvement project in 1941, Miss Adelina Cesinger hired Clement Pokluda of Needville as the caretaker. The Pokluda family lived just north of the cemetery. The original agreement gave Mr. Pokluda the hay for cutting the grass and keeping the graves clean, however, as per his request, Miss Adelina usually paid him \$8.00 a year extra for his expenses for a number of years.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1950s, Ewalt Cesinger, the brother of Miss Adelina, approached his first Cousin August Zwahr of Needville about caring for the cemetery. They agreed verbally that August was to be the Caretaker.<sup>31</sup> No monetary compensation was mentioned in their agreement, but Ewalt did furnish a new mower at the time.<sup>32</sup> As Caretaker, August was not to sell lots, but he had the authority to let relatives or friends have space for burial with the understanding that each family was to help keep the cemetery clean.<sup>33</sup> After Ewalt's death, Miss Adelina acknowledged the agreement with August Zwahr and asked him in a letter to continue to look after the cemetery.<sup>34</sup> In 1964, following Miss Adelina's death, August Zwahr wrote to her sister, Mrs. L.E.

(Gerta) Campbell of Dallas, for "a few lines in writing showing I am the Caretaker of the cemetery, if it is your wish".<sup>35</sup> Mrs. Campbell's reply informed August Zwahr that he had the authority to care for the cemetery and that her family was truly grateful to him for his interest and concern.<sup>36</sup>

Continuing the agreement that he had made with his cousin, Ewalt Cesinger, August Zwahr served in this capacity until his death in 1980. He was buried next to his wife's grave in the cemetery. Before he died, August asked his son, George, to look after the cemetery. When asked about the caretaker's position, George Zwahr quipped, "I guess I'm the one"! In reality, while George Zwahr arranges to have the hay meadow portion of the cemetery mowed several times a year, the graves are kept clean by a few local families who have loved ones buried in the cemetery.

## FOOTNOTES

1. County Cemetery Files (unpublished), compiled by the Fort Bend County Genealogical Society, George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.
2. From current ownership maps in the Needville Independent School District Tax Office.
3. Kirchenbuch #2, Immanuel's Geminde, pps. 195. 199 - old records of the present Immanuel United Church of Christ, Needville, Texas; Obit-A.Seiler, Rosenberg Herald,1-14-1938 .
4. Fort Bend County Marriage Records, Vol. F, p. 148.
5. Philipina's marker is the oldest marker placed by the Cesinger family; also from information obtained in interview with Hilda Cesinger Clark, a daughter of John Cesinger.
6. Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol. Y, p. 508 .
7. Ibid., Vol. X, p. 171.
8. Fort Bend County Register of School Lands, p. 1.
9. Fort Bend County Commissioners Court Minutes, Vol. A, pps. 43.57-
10. Fort Bend County Register of School Lands, pps. 1-4; Wharton, Clarence R., History of Fort Bend County, p. 224.
11. Fort Bend County Register of School Lands, p. 1; Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol. X, p. 171.
12. Fort Bend County Census Returns: 1900 Census, E.D. #10, Sheets # 16, 17, 19; 1910 Census, E.D. #19. Sheet 6A (p.59) .
13. Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol. Y, p. 401.
14. Meyer, W.G., "A Brief History of Trinity Lutheran Church, 1901-1971". p. 1. This church originally stood between Needville and Beasley. In 1950 the congregation moved to Rosenberg, Tx; Original Certificate of Baptism of Linda Schmidt; interview with Hilda Cesinger Clark.
15. Information obtained from Schmidt Family Genealogy compiled by Esther Schmidt Beard.
16. Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol 44, p. 67.
17. Ibid., Vol. 50, p. 158.
18. Interview with Hilda Clark, his niece who lived with them for several years when she was a young girl.
19. Texas Death Records - on microfilm.
20. Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol. U8, p. 468
21. Original letters of Miss Adelina Cesinger.
22. Fort Bend County Deed "Records, Vol. 55, p. 454 .
23. Ibid., Vol. 186, p. 526.
24. Ibid., Vol. 196, p. 555.

25. Ibid., Vol. 196, p. 555.
26. Ibid., Vol. 480, p. 687.
27. Ibid., Vol. 196, p. 555
28. Fort Bend County Marriage Records, Vol. J, p. 108:W.O.W. Cemetery records - George Memorial Library, Richmond,Tx, Tombstone in W.O.W. Cemetery, Rosenberg, Tx.
29. Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol.58, p. 214 - On 15 Sep 1910 when the homestead of Fred and Anna Cesinger was sold, all the children signed the deed. Sophia Hilbert (nee Cesinger) was then a resident of Wichita County, Texas. Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol. 60, p. 609 -On 23 Sep 1911 Herman Hilbert, husband of Sophia Cesinger Hilbert, signed a deed and his residence was rioted as Frederick, Oklahoma.
30. Letter from Adelina Cesinger to Clement Pokluda, 12 Feb 1948.
31. Letter from August Zwahr to Gerta Campbell, 29 Sep 1964.
32. Information from George Zwahr, Needville, Texas.
33. Letter from August Zwahr to Gerta Campbell, 12 Jan 1965.
34. Ibid., 29 Sep 1964.
35. Ibid., 25 Dec 1964.
36. Letter from Gerta Campbell to August Zwahr, 15 Jan 1965.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books and Pamphlets

1. Mrs. Otto Graeber and Mrs. Otto Schulz (compilers), "75th. Anniversary, Church Directory - Immanuel United Church of Christ, Needville, Texas", 1974.
2. Meyer, W.G., "A Brief History of Trinity Lutheran Church, Rosenberg, Texas", 1971.
3. Wharton, Clarence R., History of Fort Bend County, The Naylor Company, San Antonio, Texas, 1939.
4. \_\_\_\_\_, "A Brief History of St. Johns Lutheran Church, Wharton, Texas". 1970.

Census Returns of Fort Bend County (1900 and 1910 on microfilm) in holdings of George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.

### Church Records

1. Immanuel United Church of Christ, Needville, Texas.
2. St. Johns Lutheran Church, Wharton, Texas.
3. Trinity Lutheran Church, Rosenberg, Texas
4. Original Baptismal Certificate of Linda Schmidt, 1894, in possession of her daughter, Mrs. Lorene Leissner Ziesemer, Needville, Texas.
5. Original Marriage Certificate of Linda Schmidt and Hamilton Leissner, 1914, in possession of their daughter, Mrs. Lorene Leissner Ziesemer, Needville, Texas.

County Cemetery Files (unpublished), compiled by the Fort Bend County Genealogical Society', George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.

Interviews (personal and telephone) - notes in possession of this writer.

1. Mrs. Elmore Seiler, Needville, Texas, 2-24-1991, 3-11-1991, 6-24-1991. (Her husband was a son of Henriette Cesinger Seiler).
2. Mrs. Henry (Olivia) Tielke, Needville, Texas, 2-24-1991 ( Her parents, John George and Martha Miller, are buried in the Cesinger Cemetery).
3. Mrs. Sophie Zwahr Raesner McDougal, Needville, Texas, 2-24-1991, 3-15-1991, (A resident of the Seiler Community in the 1940s; a 1st Cousin to Hilda Cesinger Clark).
4. Mrs. Emil (Ada) Leus (now deceased), 2-25-1991, 3-13-1991- (Lived near the Cesinger Cemetery when she was a child).
5. Mrs. Hilda Cesinger Clark, Needville, Texas, 3-19-1991- (Born 28 Jan 1900, she is the daughter of John Cesinger. She has an excellent memory).
6. Mr. Edwin Kueck, Rosenberg, Texas, 4-12-1991. (The Cemetery Chairman for the Immanuel United Church of Christ, Needville, Texas).

7. 7. Mrs. Wayne (Betty Jane Cesinger) Gossard, Sr., 4-23-1991. (A granddaughter of George V. Cesinger).
8. 8. Lowell E. Campbell, Dallas, Texas, 5-7-1991. (A grandson of George V. Cesinger).
9. 9. Mrs. Lillie Wallis, Needville, Texas, 5-27-1991. (Retired Tax A/C for Needville ISD, Needville, Texas).
10. George and Marie Zwahr, Needville, Texas, innumerable occasions. (He is the -grandson^of Katie Cesinger Zwahr) .

Inventory of Tombstones in Cesinger Cemetery.

Letter from Lowell E. Campbell to Esther Beard, 5-17-1991-

Letters of the Cesinger Family Collection, in possession of Lowell E. Campbell, Dallas, Texas. Zerox copies in possession of Esther Beard, Guy, Texas.

#### Maps

1. Fort Bend County Road Map (Coggeshall Map Service, 606 Lela, Harlingen, Texas, 78550).
2. Fort Bend County Land Ownership Maps (Zingery Map Co., Houston-now defunct).

Newspaper - "The Rosenberg Herald", Rosenberg, Texas, 1-14-1938.

Official Records of Fort Bend County, Richmond, Texas.

1. Commissioners Court Minutes
2. Deed Records
3. Marriage Records
4. Probate Records
5. Register of School Lands
6. Tax Records

Texas Death Records, on microfilm, in holdings of George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas.