GREEN GROVE CEMETERY, 61-1

Summary Report



Green Grove Cemetery, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co. AL., March 11, 2003 Entrance gate, fence damage in background

This cemetery is located in the southwest quarter of Section 14, Township 4 South, Range 2 West. It is abut a quarter mile south of Interstate 565 and perhaps one eighth mile west of Anderson Road. Today Anderson Road no longer crosses the arsenal northern boundary to connect to the southern end of Slaughter Road, as it once did before the boundary fence and Highways 20 and I-565 severed the connection. From the northern end of Anderson Road on the arsenal, one can follow the fence line west until finding a southgoing security fence line, which can be followed toward the cemetery. The cemetery is on a slope that goes down to a small creek that becomes Betts Spring Branch to the south. It may be easier to access the cemetery during

wet seasons (as was done in March of 2003) by simply going though the woods at about a 30-degree angle south of due west from the northern end of Anderson Road. When the creek is reached, follow it south to where an old pond remains with a culvert converted into a mill spout at the dam. There is an old truck cab on the rise immediately east of the dam. The cemetery is slightly south of due west of the dam, up the western slope and at the line where the wooded area ends in an old field.



Patsy Kinney & granddaughter Sydney, descendants of Harrison Owen, landowner of area in 1830s, at old mill pond in Green Grove Community in northwestern corner of Redstone Arsenal in Madison Co. AL; March 5, 2005. Green Grove Cemetery is about 150 yards beyond pond.

(Harrison Owen owned land in the NW/4 of Section 14.)

The "Green Grove Community is probably misnamed, as the same name applies to another community on the extreme south end of the arsenal, near the river.

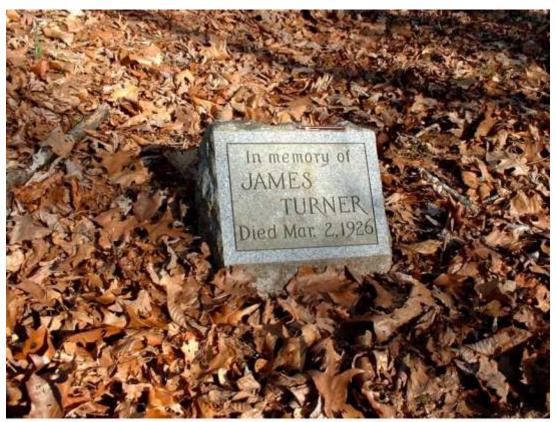
The cemetery is quite large, as compared to other cemeteries on the arsenal. It could easily hold between 500 and 1000 graves, but there is evidence of only a few dozen depressions that are obviously graves today. Likewise, there is only one tombstone remaining, if there ever were more. That stone is for **JAMES TURNER**, who died in 1926.



Green Grove Cemetery, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co. AL, March 11, 2003 Old metal post near entrance gate; tombstone to left of top of post, in background

The post may have been an old sign post to hold the name of the cemetery. It does not appear to be substantial enough to have been a gate post, and there was no evidence of an internal fence in this area of within the cemetery.

The only tombstone found in this cemetery is shown below:



Green Grove Cemetery, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co. AL, March 11, 2003 (The only tombstone found in the cemetery.)

While there were several possibilities for James Turner in the Madison County census records, the one shown in the records below for 1900 and 1910 seem to be the most probable match from the indexes, since he lived immediately south of the cemetery, in an area served by the main north – south road that passed by the cemetery on the way to Triana.

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(1900 census image for James Turner and neighbors.)

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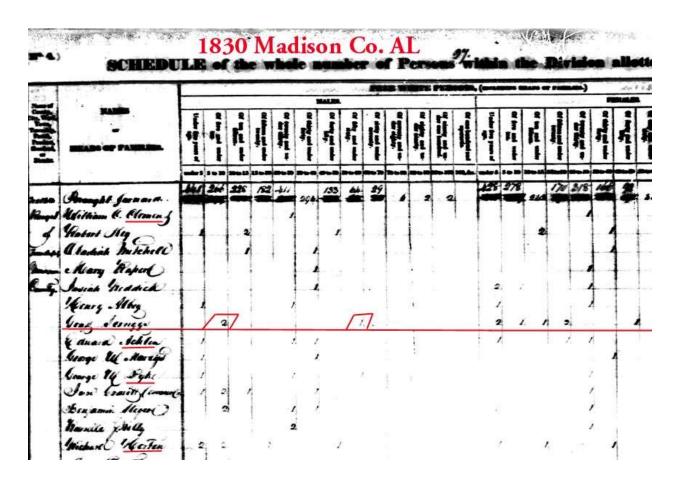
(Composite of portions of two pages from 1910 census.)

It has been reported that the cemetery was used exclusively for African Americans who were too poor to erect tombstones. However, there may be some consideration given to the fact that this area was apparently the center of a small community in the northwestern portion of the arsenal. This statement is based upon the many indications of a settlement on the slope to the east of the small creek and west of Anderson Road. There are numerous stones to indicate old chimney sites and other remnants of housing, as well as the dam across the creek to form a mill pond. It may well be that the earliest phases of the cemetery were used by a white community, before the post-Civil War population shifts in the late 1800s and early 1900s left the area as predominately African American. While there is no proof of that possibility, it should not be entirely ruled out, as there is a lack of data either way.

Further research of the early history of land ownership prior to the Civil War offers significant clues to burials in the cemetery. Margaret Matthews Cowart, in her book **OLD LAND RECORDS OF MADISON COUNTY**, **ALABAMA**, shows that the first owner of the SW/4 of Section 14, T4-R2W, was Gross Scruggs.

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Gross Scruggs purchased the land from the government on the first day of legal sale, 2 February 1818, per Certificate 2586. Gross Scruggs was known to own many slaves, per the 1830 Madison County census records.



Gross Scruggs was shown with a "Free White" household of 10 persons: 2 males age 5 - 10, 1 male age 50 - 60, 2 females age 0 - 5, 1 female age 5 - 10, 1 female age 10 - 15, 2 females age 15 - 20, and 1 female age 40 - 50. The slave count during that census for the Scruggs household is shown on the next page, as inserted below:

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The Scruggs household included 21 male slaves and 20 female slaves. Adding those numbers to the free white household of 10, the total should be 51, but the total written in this census page is given as 51, unless the "7" is perhaps really a "1" that is slanted and has a smudge at the top. Alternatively, there could also be an error in the tally of slaves, or the enumerator simply made a mathematical error. In any event, in 1831 (soon after the census was taken), Gross Scruggs sold the land of the SW/4 of Section 14 in T4-R2W in two parcels. One parcel was sold to Elijah & Joshua Stamps, while the other was sold to Benjamin Bledsoe. Benjamin Bledsoe was one of the earliest landowners adjoining what would become the town of Madison Station in the 1850s, having purchased his land to the northeast of the "school lands" of Section 16, T4-R2W, on 2 February 1818. In 1834, Elijah & Joshua Stamps sold their parcel of the SW/4 of Section 14 to Benjamin Bledsoe also, leaving him in control of all of the SW/4. However, Benjamin Bledsoe didn't keep the land very long, because in 1838 he sold his interest to Richard Holding. The Holding family kept the land until 1873, when it passed to the Carter, Trotman, and Whitworth families – all of whom are known white family pioneers of the town of Madison and the area around it. The land transactions are shown below for Section 14:

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While it seems that only white people owned the land of the cemetery until at least 1912, the character of the cemetery appears to fit an early black and/or slave cemetery. Considering the size of the cemetery, it could easily hold around a thousand graves, if full. It would only make sense for a cemetery to be that large if it were used for burials of those with many slaves and then for a community with a large black population after emancipation. That logic strongly suggests that this was the cemetery used by the slaves of possibly Benjamin Bledsoe, but almost certainly those of Gross Scruggs and Richard Holding. It has already been shown that Gross Scruggs had over 40 slaves around the time that he owned this parcel of land. Below is shown the 1840 census record for the Richard Holding household, which included 98 slaves:

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Oddly enough, the 1840 record above shows that only 58 persons (including the slaves) of the Richard Holding household were "Engaged in Agriculture". He must have used many of his slaves as household servants and in other occupations, such as operating a mill or other enterprise. The 1850 slave schedules show that Richard Holding owned 158 slaves, while the 1860 slave schedules show the Holding family owning 221 slaves. The slaves were divided among Richard Sr., Richard Jr., and William Holding in 1860, with William owning 89 of the 221 slaves.

From the perspective of owning many slaves, and knowing that the Holding family was buried in their own family cemetery where the International Airport is now located, it appears that the cemetery in the SW/4 of Section 14 almost certainly is the old slave cemetery of the Holding family, as a minimum. It may have already been established from 1818 for the slaves of earlier owners of the land, but the large majority of those buried in the cemetery are most likely Holding slaves and their descendants. Accordingly, it would seem appropriate to rename this cemetery as the **Scruggs – Holding Slave Cemetery, 61-1**.

Prepared by John P. Rankin, March 17, 2003; Revised July 24, 2005