LANIER SLAVE CEMETERY, 46 – 2

Summary Report



Lanier Cemetery 46-2, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co. AL, Jan. 28, 2003

Thought to be a slave cemetery, this burial ground is located just a few yards south of the 46-3 Lanier Cemetery. There are no headstones to be found, but there is ample evidence of many graves from the numerous rectangular depressions in the ground.

This view is from the northeast corner entrance to the cemetery; Gabbie Ehinger visiting the cemetery with John Rankin.



Lanier Cemetery 46-2, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co. AL, Jan. 28, 2003

The cemetery is large, as seen in the above view from the southwest corner, looking toward the northeast, where the old gate was located. The grassy area has few obvious grave depressions, but the southern portion of the cemetery (covered by leaves), has quite a few rectangular depressions.



Lanier Cemetery 46-2, Redstone Arsenal, Madison Co. AL, Jan. 28, 2003

The above view is from the southwestern corner of the cemetery, looking toward the east, across the leaf-covered southern portion of the burial ground.

Since there are no tombstones, land records provide the best way to check on the likely owners of the assumed slave cemetery. Of course, only records up to the time of the Civil War would shed any light upon the slave owners, but the cemetery could well have continued in use by the emancipated former slaves. Many would probably wish to be buried near their parents and grandparents on the "old place", even after being freed, assuming that they continued to stay in the area. Since most freed blacks lacked the funds to travel and buy land elsewhere, they did in fact stay and enter into sharecropping agreements with the legal landowners until they could afford to purchase their own properties.

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OLD LAND RECORDS OF MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA by Margaret Matthews Cowart

The OLD LAND RCORDS book (above) shows that Nancy Auld was the first purchaser of the land containing the cemetery (East Half of SW/4, S6-T5-R1W), as "devisee" of Isaac Jackson, in 1818.

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The INDEX TO LANDS shows that Ann Auld in 1836 sold land in the Southwest Quarter of Section 6, Township 5, Range 1 West, to William H. Lanier, et al. The "et al." portion of that transaction would be for William's brothers Isaac Alexander and Burwell Clinton Lanier. These three brothers bought many parcels of land that became arsenal property, and they always bought it together, as a family partnership. Their life stories and

photographs of their many land transaction deeds are included in the Summary Report of the Lanier 46-1 Cemetery, along with the accompanying CD-ROM delivered to the Army offices for this effort.

Ann Auld, who sold the land to William H. Lanier, must have been an heir of Nancy Auld, who first obtained the land from the government after the 1816 Chickasaw Indian Cessation. The land of that cessation was systematically surveyed for two years before being offered for sale by the government to the squatters who had for the most part already been living on or farming the land for several years – usually from the time of 1806 - 7, as part of the area called the "Sims Settlement" of white encroachers on Indian lands. February 2 of 1818 was its first legal date of sale.

The Lanier brothers generally held the title to the land until after the Civil War, with some part of it being sold in 1856 due to a bankruptcy declaration. However, the majority of the Lanier brothers' lands were retained until they began selling most of it in 1867, after the war. The 1860 census (last one with slaves, before the war) Slave Schedules showed that there were 89 slaves owned by the Lanier brothers. Only 8 of the slaves were attributed to William Lanier in 1860, while another 14 showed ownership by his brother Burwell Clinton Lanier. Isaac Alexander Lanier owned the remaining 67 slaves. It may be that many of them and their ancestors from an earlier generation are buried in this cemetery. As stated before, it may well be that some of their children also returned to this cemetery for their final resting place. Since there are no tombstones, their names are lost in antiquity, unless subsequent land and probate record investigations may reveal some of the names of the slaves and former slaves. At this time, they remain a mystery, lying in a highly protected and undisturbed area of the old Lanier plantation.

Prepared by John P. Rankin, August 28, 2005