

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MERRIMACK CEMETERY

The building of Merrimack Manufacturing Co. of Huntsville was begun in 1899. The company began operation in 1900.

The Merrimack Cemetery was available to the people who were employed by the company. The earliest death date on a tombstone is November 22, 1902, (Etta May Cornutt) followed closely by December 18, 1902, (Isaac Brooks). Since death records were not kept in Alabama before 1909, and obituaries were not always printed in the newspapers in the early 1900s, and many graves are not marked with a stone, but with wooden markers that have deteriorated, it is difficult to be certain of any earlier dates of death.

Mr. E. F. DuBose, Principal of Joe Bradley School, came to Merrimack Village as a teacher in 1921. School children would tell him that their pet had died. When asked what they did with the body, they said they just threw it in a hole in the cemetery. Mr. DuBose went to the cemetery and found large sinkholes where graves had been and trees growing out of the graves. He talked about this with mill management who let him use the labor of Bill Edwards, a Black employee of the mill, and they provided soil for filling the holes. Mr. DuBose and Mr. Edwards worked all of the winter of 1921, cutting down trees and filling graves, until the cemetery was in better shape. Mr. DuBose is sure there were no stones left fallen into the graves.

There have been stories of the existence of a plot of the cemetery showing places and names of those buried there. I talked with Mr. Owen Hammett about possible cemetery records kept by the mill office. Mr. Hammett said there are no burial records. If an employee wanted to bury a family member there, Mr. Hammett would write a permit on a slip of paper. That person would give it to the undertaker. The mill office did not keep a record of burials. At times a family would bury a loved one, especially in the case of a premature infant, in the night without benefit of undertaker or permission from the mill management.

When I phoned the Springs Industries, Inc., in Fort Mill, South Carolina, the company who bought Huntsville Mfg. Co. from Lowenstein Co., an attorney talked with me about records they might have kept and said he had looked in the files and found no cemetery records.

There must have been some system of allotting plots to families at one time for family plots do exist. Some are indicated by concrete posts with the family initial inscribed on the top of four posts surrounding an area. Others are fenced in. Many others are marked off by concrete bars or brick set in the ground.

Mr. Lem Speck farmed on the land now occupied by the Milton Frank Stadium and the grove of pine trees. When people needed to have a grave dug, they called on Mr. Speck and he would pace off the site, then someone would dig the grave.

In January of 1946, M. Lowenstein & Sons purchased Merrimack Mfg. Co. and the textile mill was called Huntsville Mfg. Co. The village was then called Huntsville Park. The cemetery was named Huntsville Park Cemetery.

The Lowenstein Company gave Joe Bradley School and the