

The answers to these questions probably can be found in the Army's decision to build a chemical munitions manufacturing plant in Huntsville, Alabama. When the Army came to town many things about the former communities contained within the new installation's boundaries were changed—some quickly and drastically; others more slowly over a longer period of time. By 1988, when the graves were uncovered preparatory to removal and reinterment, much about the arsenal reservation bore little resemblance to the pre-Army communities or even the WWII-era installation erected so quickly in 1941-42.

Unfortunately, the archaeological study apparently never took into account the profound impact that this change of land ownership had on the people living in the area as well as on the remains of those who had once called this part of Madison County home. Nor did the study's principal investigators and researchers stop to consider that perhaps the Alabama Highway Department was not the only governmental entity that needed to relocate graves in order to complete a large-scale construction project.

During the course of another research project undertaken in 1994, the MICOM Historical Office unexpectedly uncovered information in the local newspaper, *The Huntsville Times*, that strongly suggests that it was the Army which created the supposedly historic "Elko Switch Cemetery." The available written records are still sketchy, but this interpretation of the known facts does fit the collective memory of there being no such cemetery prior to the Army's arrival.

As the following excerpts from the local newspaper and the Sparkman papers indicate, the Army originally intended to move not only the living but the dead off of its newly acquired reservation. When that plan proved impossible to implement, the Army decided to consolidate over 2300 graves on Huntsville Arsenal (a separate facility from neighboring Redstone Ordnance Plant) into one large cemetery set apart from the main administrative and manufacturing areas of the post. Pearl Harbor and subsequent legal complications concerning contracting precluded the completion of this plan as first envisioned, but some graves directly in the path of the original construction probably had to be moved. Although the original Quartermaster Corps contracts and Chemical Warfare Service records pertaining to the construction of Huntsville Arsenal are no longer available locally, it is reasonable to assume that some sort of removal/reburial arrangement was made with at least one of the two contractors who built the installation.

The Army made known publicly what it wanted to do with the graves on Huntsville Arsenal. Government officials probably began to implement these plans, at least to the extent necessary to accommodate the arsenal construction program. Because access to the arsenal was severely curtailed during WWII (as well as after the war), few people in the local community knew about the relocation of the graves to the reservation's northwest corner. The cemetery location work and public notices remembered by Mr. Driver (see report excerpts below) might well have been part of the Army's gravesite relocation plan.

With the war's end in August 1945 and the later departure of the Army Chemical Warfare Service from Huntsville, most of the people and records that could have shed some light