

Ceremony at old cemetery honors pioneer citizen

Descendants of one of Huntsville's pioneer families assembled at their ancestral cemetery here Sunday to dedicate a memorial marker to Dr. William Simpson, a prominent settler who emigrated from Ireland about 1804 after being sentenced to death by hanging for political activity.

The Simpson cemetery, located east of Dodd Road inside Test Area 1, is a small plot containing several 19th century burials. It was established by Dr. Simpson's son John, born in 1811, whose family and descendants lived for many years on land that became Redstone Arsenal.

Dr. Simpson came to Madison County when it was part of the Mississippi Territory prior to Alabama statehood. He staked out a squatter's claim near Ditto Landing, purchased it from the government land office in 1809 and went on to amass large land holdings in the area. He died in 1816, about age 36, and was buried at Hobb's Island in an unmarked grave.

His great-great-grandson, Dennis Simpson of Hollywood, Calif., who has written a 400-page book about the Simpson family and has another volume nearly finished, arranged the memorial service and obtained from the Veterans Administration a bronze marker commemorating Dr. Simpson's service in the War of 1812. At Horseshoe Bend, Dr. Simpson reportedly helped treat and save the wounded leg of Sam Houston who became president of the Republic of Texas.

Dr. Simpson along with John Hunt was a founding member of the Madison Lodge -1, Alabama's oldest Masonic group, which is now known as Helion Lodge -1. It was represented at the memorial dedication by a contingent and the two top Masons in Alabama, Grand Master Floyd Hambrick and his deputy David Shurey, also attended.

The memorial service included a 21-gun salute from MICHOM's ceremonial platoon unit under SSgt. Jeffrey Wilson, SSgt. Archie Brown led a three-man military color guard, SSgt. Charles Wright blew taps.

In preparation for the ceremony, Charles Hubbert, a University of Alabama archaeologist on assignment to the Environmental Office here, arranged to have the monuments professionally restored and the old iron fence surrounding Simpson cemetery painted.



MEMORIAL — An old family cemetery inside Test Area 1 was the site Sunday of a memorial service for Dr. William Simpson, one of the first people to settle in Madison County. A Veterans Administration bronze plaque was placed in memory of Simpson who served in the War of 1812.

APPENDIX F
DOCTOR WILLIAM SIMPSON - MEMORIAL SERVICE

Finding Dennis Simpson's published works about the Simpson and related families has proved to be a windfall, for the meticulous and exhaustive research that he has already done. Moreover, his gracious permission to use the material has been greatly appreciated. His efforts have honored his ancestors in an outstanding manner, and now some of them rest under the close protection of the United States Army at Redstone Arsenal in Madison County, Alabama, in one of the most historically significant cemeteries in the region.

Prepared by John P. Rankin, September 3, 2005