

# CEMETERIES OF REDSTONE ARSENAL

## INTRODUCTION

This project to record digital photographic images of the tombstones and cemeteries located on Redstone Arsenal began in the year 2002 – at least with respect to the involvement of volunteer effort by John P. Rankin of Madison, Alabama. **The work is still in progress**, and any files contained herein may be revised in future CD-ROM productions as new information comes to light. For now, each version of the CD-ROM of the results of the effort is labeled and dated to denote status as of a certain time. The entire contents of this CD-ROM are considered to be simply a collection of the photographs, findings, notes and other results of the volunteer effort by John Rankin -- intended for personal, private use only and not for publication or sale. Additional hardcopy research notes, working papers, and collected data regarding each cemetery will be left in the files of the Division of Environmental Management at Redstone Arsenal. This effort has been hosted and sponsored by Beverly Curry, Staff Archaeologist, of that office.

None of the images included on this CD-ROM have been altered to any way change the characterization of information. However, some images have been enhanced with software such as Adobe PhotoDeluxe or Adobe PhotoShop to improve legibility. In addition to the photographs made of the tombstones or graves and cemetery overviews, there are a number of digital images of official records (probate, census, land, and marriage records) that may provide insights into the history of the area and into the lives of the people associated with the cemeteries. In some cases, there are included scans of newspaper clippings and the written memoirs of people who lived on the arsenal lands before the government took the property by eminent domain in the early 1940s era. It is hoped that this means of preserving the record of the cemeteries of Redstone Arsenal will be useful to future students of history and to those who wish to research their lineages through the families who lived on pre-arsenal lands.

The contents of the CD-ROM are organized with generic research aids for the entire area in the top level of folders. The top level of folders also contains a unique folder for each known cemetery on the arsenal. Each cemetery folder has within it a folder for the photographs taken at the site, another folder for the applicable research data that was collected during the project, and normally a “**Summary Report**” file that contains the observations or comments of the volunteer researcher relative to the cemetery. Sometimes a folder or so of information about peripherally associated families will be included within a cemetery folder.

File names within each folder were generally constructed to denote last name \_ first name (or initials) for individuals. For land records, often only the record source book and page number was used for the file name, but even then it was usual practice to add the surname of interest whenever pertinent. For site locations, compass directions of the perspectives were often used in file names to orient the viewer. Sometimes multiple images of the same object were included, with the intent of facilitating the acquisition of pertinent information. For example, a tombstone might have been photographed from different perspectives, hoping that at least one of the various lighting angles would enhance legibility of inscriptions. Of course, before making tombstone photographs, it was normal practice to clean the inscribed areas as necessary. Otherwise, the photographs show “as is” that which was encountered when each cemetery was visited, without restructuring or posturing anything.

Some background data was included for greater appreciation of the historical significance of the cemeteries. For example, the public records of white plantation owners were included in some cemetery folders, even when the cemetery was known to be exclusively a black (African – American or slave) cemetery. That was done so that anyone who is so inclined can research the assumed namesakes of those who were buried in such cemeteries. Additionally, it is recognized that during the years when slavery was practiced in the South, sometimes a white plantation owner would impregnate his female slaves himself, giving rise to some of the Mulatto classifications in census records. Of course, there were also examples of white women marrying black men on pre-arsenal lands, even before social acceptance was somewhat eased by more modern times, so not all Mulatto individuals were the result of the slavery system. Therefore, the lineages of the plantation owners in some cases might be fittingly considered for the earlier Mulatto descendants without undue concern for race classifications.

The image files of census records were sometimes scanned from hardcopies made from microfilm during research at the local library. Other times, the images were taken from Ancestry.com's on-line U.S. census records subscription service. When census records are encountered in **.rtf** or **.doc** extensions of **Word** files, those records were typically taken from the CD-ROM 1880 census database by **FAMILY SEARCH's Family History Resource File**. Such files generally include more families than the one of primary focus. The persons of primary interest (for various reasons) to the researcher and preparer of this work are normally underlined in red or highlighted in yellow in these files. The others were left in the files in order to show neighbors and those of like surname living nearby. Often, whether it is known or not at this time, the neighbors included daughters or sisters of the family of primary interest who had married into the nearby community of families. Neighbors also can provide continuity clues in researching other census years, and they provide indications of the approximate location of homesites when the census enumerator's trail can be defined by known locations of neighboring families.

As stated earlier, several files are duplicated and cross-filed under different names in order to provide for more pertinent "subject of interest" correlations. It will be noted that many of the files have what may appear to be extraneous entries underlined or highlighted when accessed under any given subject name. That resulted from the fact that these are research files used by the author for multiple purposes. The undersigned author has explored the lineages of many more than just the primary subjects of the cemetery work. A large number of the files were already marked for other uses, and those marks are simply carried over into this collection. There may or may not be a connection of some of the highlighted names to the cemetery where a file is found. However, the presence of a file in a cemetery folder indicates that at least one such highlighted name is known to connect to the subject at hand. Others may merely be someone who was noted during previous and possibly unrelated researches. Still, the vast majority of underlinings and highlights will indeed relate to the subject at hand.

A special case is presented by the file on **JORDAN'S CHAPEL**. That particular folder has files of many probate and deed records for various early landowners who were thought at one time or another to possibly have a bearing upon the identification of the location of the old Jordan's Chapel

place of worship. Anyone who uses this CD-ROM for researching early landowners of the Redstone Arsenal area should cross-check the contents of the **JORDAN'S CHAPEL** folder.

The selected collections of data, plus the conclusions drawn in the “**Summary Report**” files about the cemeteries and the associated families, represent the best judgment and research capabilities of the volunteer effort. If any future reviewer can elaborate upon, clarify, or correct any of the data contained herein, it is requested that the undersigned be contacted for that purpose. To the extent possible, updates will be made to provide the expanded or corrected information on future CD-ROM productions. For now, please keep in mind that nothing was done to deliberately distort, modify, or ignore any of the facts encountered in this work. It is offered, as encountered, within the best integrity of the volunteer for all future reviewers to consider for whatever purposes they may have.

It has been my objective in undertaking this effort that the records of the lives of the pioneer families should be preserved in a format that will enable future generations to appreciate their time on this earth. Not all pioneers were “prominent” people, but even the most common of the area’s early settlers had an influence toward the clearing of the land and the certain progression of the region toward the superb living and working conditions offered by the area today. This collection of data and photographs is dedicated to the memory of **all** of the early settlers, with thanks for the lives that they lived through various hardships and joys, which ultimately benefit those who enjoy the land today.

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