

The "New" Bluffton Cemetery Is Built

Bluffton Was Doomed From the Start

Little did the average Bluffton settler know, but the community of Bluffton was effectively doomed to its destruction from its inception. One day in 1854, a young surveyor named Adam Rankin Johnson, while surveying along the Colorado River, carved two crosses into solid granite, just above an island covered with pecan trees, on each side of the river. Over the years, no one had an idea that these crosses would change the lives of the Bluffton settlers forever.¹

Young Adam Johnson went on to serve his country, the Confederate States of America, and rose to the rank of general, before returning to Burnet, a blinded veteran of a bloody and senseless war between neighbors, brothers, and friends. He was captured by the Yankees, and served the rest of the war as a prisoner of war. Upon his release after the war, he returned to Burnet County, where he lived for his remaining sixty years.

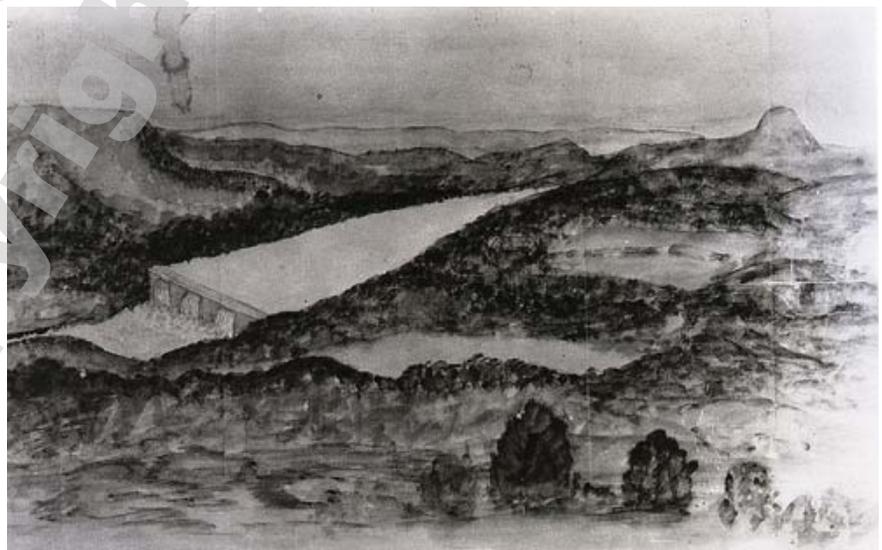
In 1889, Johnson commissioned T. A. Chamberlain to sketch a "proposed dam across the Colorado River" at Shirley Shoals.² He never acted on this, though he had bought some ten acre sites at Shirley Shoals, on the Colorado, and had the water rights that went with them.³ (Remember the 2 X's?)

Adam Johnson founded the town of Marble Falls, known as "the blind man's town."⁴ He built a dam across the Colorado River at Marble Falls to produce electric power, only to go broke. Adam Johnson died in 1922, before realizing his dream of a dam across the Colorado River at the Shir-

ley Shoals, a spot he had selected some 68 years earlier, just for this purpose.

Talk had gone on for years about a dam somewhere in the vicinity of Bluffton or Tow, but nothing had happened. In about 1926, a young Tow boy, Herman (Pete) Alexander was paid eight dollars a month to check the depth of the water under the Tow Bridge.⁵ Little did he know that he was being paid by another Alexander, a Charles H. Alexander (no kin to Pete), who was the same man who had gone broke with Adam Johnson in Marble Falls. He had formed a company, Syndicate Power Company, and had the rights to build six dams on the Colorado River. Seeking funding, he partnered with Samuel Insull, and through some tense business dealings, he eventually brokered a deal with Emery, Peck and Rockwood in 1929, to build a dam at the Shirley Shoals site, a spot picked by Adam Johnson, some 75 years earlier.⁶

So, the people of Bluffton were soon going to lose their community to progress. Soon, they were being forced to sell their properties, and move on to other places away from the river.



"Sketch of Proposed Dam Across the Colorado River - drawn in 1889"
Courtesy LCRA Corporate Archives

"A Fitting Place of Rest"

Building the new dam, initially called “Hamilton Dam”, meant that the entire area of Bluffton would soon be covered by as much as 60-80 ft. of water, and the occupants of their cemetery would be covered too.

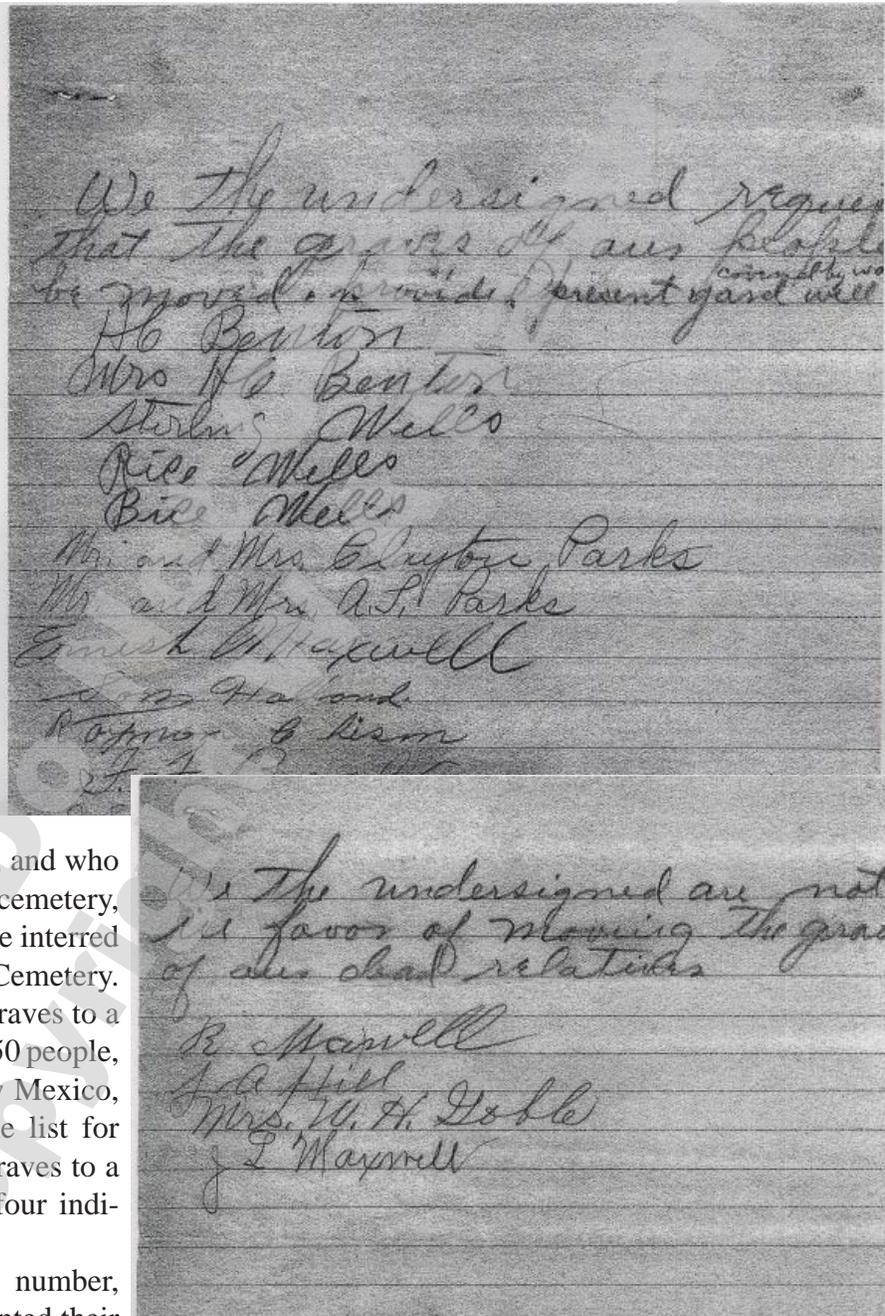
Petitions are Signed

By 1930, the people of the Bluffton area knew they had to take action. Early in 1930, (sometime in January - March) petitions were circulated to see if the citizens were interested in the Bluffton Cemetery, were in favor of moving their cemetery, or leaving it where it was.⁷

The response to the petitions was immediate and overwhelming. The first petition, a petition to determine whether the citizens of Bluffton were interested in the outcome of their beloved old cemetery resulted in over 125 signatures, local, area wide, and as far away as New Mexico and Oklahoma. The second petition sought to find out who was in favor of, and who was opposed to, relocating the cemetery, and moving the remains of those interred in the current Old Bluffton Cemetery. Those in favor of moving the graves to a new cemetery totalled almost 150 people, again from as far away as New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. The list for those opposed to moving the graves to a new cemetery was signed by four individuals, all local.

So, by an overwhelming number, those of Bluffton origin wanted their departed loved ones moved, so that they would not be forever lost under the waters of the lake to come.

The company building the dam was very helpful to the people of Bluffton, by helping them in every phase of organizing the relocation of the Old Bluffton Cemetery. The petitions mentioned here were all transcribed to typewritten form, and the company helped in every way possible. This also included providing initial legal help, until the people could get organized to the point of secur-



“First Page from Petition in favor of the Cemetery Location, and the Petition of those opposed to moving the cemetery”

ing their own. Soon, this would be the case as the people very quickly started the next phase, organizing the Bluffton Cemetery Association.

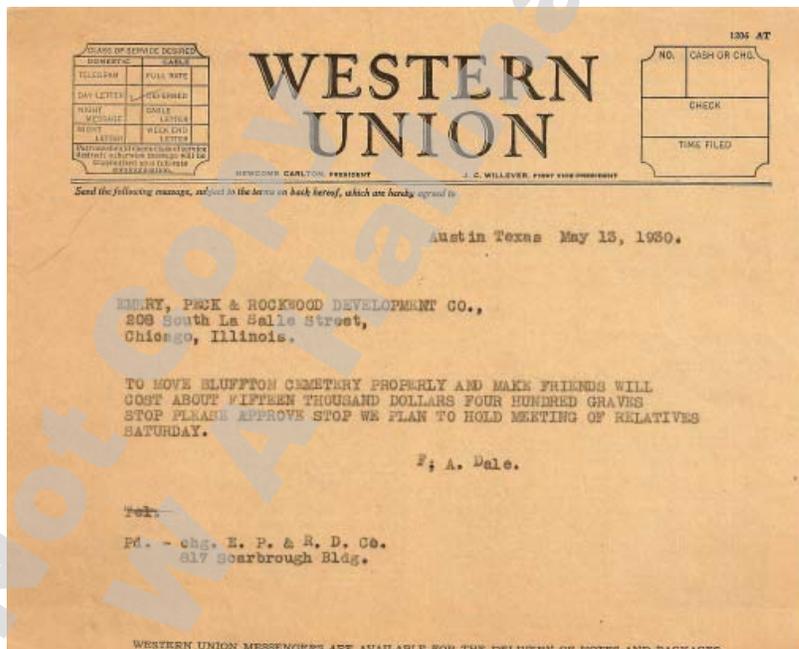
The Bluffton Cemetery Association is Born

By May of 1930, the initial organization of the Bluffton citizens had begun. In a letter dated May 2, 1930, to “Mesdames, Parks, Casner, Hallmark, Davis, and Miss Ligon” from Emery, Peck, & Rockwood Development Co., Edward P. Swick congratulated the community of Bluffton for their actions, and congratulated the ladies for being selected for the initial committee to “supervise the removal and re-establishment of the Bluffton Cemetery.”⁸ Additionally, Swick offered the assistance of Emery, Peck, & Rockwood for the organization of a formal cemetery association, suggested the fledgling organization hire an attorney, purchase land for a new cemetery which the company would pay for, and provide funds for the entire process of moving the graves from the Old Bluffton Cemetery. From the letter, it was obvious that Emery, Peck, and Rockwood was wanting to do everything possible to relocate the old cemetery properly, responsibly, and in a good-faith manner of doing business.

On this same date, May 2, 1930, Swick sent Ray Summerrow, the local representative of Emery, Peck, and Rockwood in Marble Falls, Texas a letter which included a “Form of Resolution.” This resolution spelled out the intentions of Emery, Peck, and Rockwood, as well as the responsibilities of the people of Bluffton.⁹

Things were happening fast at this time. The “Company”, Emery, Peck, and Rockwood, had hired an Austin company, Page Brothers, Architects, to design the proposed New Bluffton Cemetery. The Company had also contacted four

different undertaker companies to determine the costs, and logistics for moving the remains of those interred in the Old Bluffton Cemetery. Estimates had been made as to the cost of building a new cemetery and moving the graves to this new cemetery. A telegram dated May 13, 1930, to the home offices of Emery, Peck, and Rockwood Development Co., of Chicago, Illinois, estimated the cost of relocating the cemetery at \$15,000 for the relocation of about 400 graves.¹⁰ This telegram



“Telegram to Emery, Peck & Rockwood seeking approval”

was a request to approve this amount. The newly forming Bluffton Cemetery Association was having a meeting the following Saturday, May 20, so the local Company managers wanted to have everything in order.

Over fifty Bluffton citizens met on Saturday afternoon, May 20, 1930, in the Bluffton School House and the Bluffton Cemetery Association was born.¹¹ A new committee was selected, which consisted of Miss W. Ligon, Mrs. Tad J. Casner, Mrs. Lillie Benton, Mrs. Will J. Parks, Mrs. George Meadors, Mr. W. J. Hallmark, & Mr. Ross Holland. Miss Ligon was elected as chairman of the newly selected committee.

Representing the company, F. A. Dale, of the Austin office, and Ray Summerrow, of Mar-



*“Bluffton School House where Sept. 20, 1930 Meeting Was Held”
Building is currently behind the existing Bluffton Post Office.*

ble Falls, explained the work that had been done to date, described the proposed new cemetery, and told of the four undertaker companies that had been contacted. The design of the entrance to the new cemetery was said to be “very attractive” and was to have masonry walls, metal gates, and a terra-cotta tile roof over the chapel.

The meeting adjourned with plans for future meetings. These included the discussion of procedures for moving the deceased, hearing the wishes of the community, and looking for land for a new cemetery.

At least two more meetings were held by May 30, 1930, and a news release to the papers of Llano, Burnet, and Marble Falls was issued. It was reported that (a) no graves would be moved until work on the dam was well underway, (b) permission of relatives would be secured before a grave would be moved, also prior notice of any move would be given said relatives, and (c) bodies would be relocated to the relatives’ cemetery of choice.¹² There was a lot of scepticism as to whether a dam would actually be built, and Emery, Peck, and Rockwood wanted to assure everyone of their intentions. It is interesting what would occur in less than two years from this time.

So, the people were getting organized. In the next few months, they would be working on a charter for the organization, bylaws, land selection for the new cemetery, design and construction of the new cemetery, and formulating the methods for the relocation of their loved ones to this new

cemetery.

Purchase of Land

While the initial efforts of setting up the new association were occurring, efforts were also being made to secure land for a New Bluffton Cemetery. By July of 1930, a six acre parcel of land owned by Ross Holland became the property of choice.

It is not known how this property was chosen, nor who made the decisions for this property. However, six acres of land, along then highway 29, about three miles east of Lone Grove, and eight and a half miles west of Old Bluffton, on the southwest corner of the Ross Holland Ranch was selected. The land was generally level, with a gradual slope from the northwest corner, to the southeast corner of the property.

Emery, Peck, and Rockwood agreed to pay Mr. Holland five hundred dollars for this six acres, an extremely reasonable amount for land at the time. This was during the onset of the Great Depression of the 30’s, and one might be lucky to get maybe ten dollars per acre for land: Mr. Holland was paid over \$80 per acre for his land!

Correspondence in the Bluffton Cemetery Archives record the steps that were necessary to assure Holland had clear title to the land. This required that a title search be done, and an abstract for the land be prepared, which took several months.

Next, the parties involved, which included representatives from the Company, the cemetery association, and Mr. Holland, had to conclude the sale. Finally, getting it deeded over to the association would allow construction on the new cemetery to proceed.¹³

Notable names in state and local history worked on this phase, and subsequent work in the cemetery relocation process. The attorney for Emery, Peck, & Rockwood was Senator Alvin J. Wirtz. He was a recognized attorney in Austin, and was appointed as the first general counsel to both Emery, Peck, and Rockwood, and later, LCRA. He served prominently in the business

of forming the Bluffton Cemetery Association, the business of moving the old cemetery, and the business in general of building the dam, later to be renamed, Buchanan Dam. Senator Wirtz was instrumental in preparing the legal documents required by the fledgling Bluffton Cemetery Association, advice, and overall oversight of the project of relocating the Old Bluffton Cemetery.

Senator Wirtz was prominent in the history of the creation of the Highland Lakes. The dam for Lake Lyndon B. Johnson (originally Lake Granite Shoals), was named the Alvin J. Wirtz Dam, in his honor.

Wirtz did not serve without danger as well. As quoted from C. L. Yarbrough's CANYON OF THE EAGLES:

"On January 26 (1934), a retired United States Marshall named Tom Holloman, convinced that Wirtz had unfairly manipulated against him in a land damage suit, walked into Wirtz's office and started shooting. G. W. Peck of Emery, Peck and Rockwood was visiting with Wirtz at the time, and he was shot to death. Wirtz somehow escaped injury."¹⁴

Another well known personage in the Llano Area was attorney Wilburn Oatman. Mr. Oatman was selected as the attorney to represent the Bluffton Cemetery Association. He served as a legal attorney for the association, and also prepared abstracts for different lands as they affected the association.

In a meeting of the citizens of Bluffton held on September 6, 1930, at the Bluffton School House, it was formally announced that land had been selected for the new cemetery; land described earlier as the six acres which belonged to Ross Holland. The committee requested a vote to approve this transaction, and it was approved by a "rising vote." Representatives from Emery, Peck, and Rockwood, stated they would proceed with the purchase and deed it for a new cemetery as soon as some organization had been formed to take title to the land.¹⁵ Finally, on October 25, 1930, the sale was completed, and the deed was conveyed to the Bluffton Cemetery Association.¹⁶

The Bluffton Cemetery Association is Formalized

Even while work was being done to purchase the land for the new cemetery, work was also being done to formalize the creation of the Bluffton Cemetery Association. In the same meeting of September 6, 1930, mentioned earlier, the Bluffton Cemetery Association was formed.

The minutes of the meeting stated that "The next business considered was the formation of a cemetery association which could handle in orderly fashion the matters pertaining to the ownership and conduct of the cemetery." After "careful consideration and discussion", a "rising" vote was held and it was decided to incorporate the cemetery association.

The first trustees, or directors (five), nominated and elected "by individual vote" were: Mose Benton, Ross Holland, Frank Beal, Charles Baker, and A. Chism.

As stated in the minutes, "membership in the association would consist of all persons taking lots in the new cemetery and these members will elect their trustees or directors as vacancies occur and will adopt such rules as they may see fit regarding the new cemetery."

The Company then said that construction on the new cemetery would proceed as soon as title to the land was conveyed to the association. As seen in the previous section, this occurred about seven weeks later, on October 25, 1930.

In a meeting held on September 20, 1930, the newly selected directors employed attorney Wilburn Oatman. He was to prepare bylaws for the Bluffton Cemetery Association, and to prepare papers for the land transfer from Emery, Peck, and Rockwood.

The charter establishing the Bluffton Cemetery Association was submitted to the Texas Secretary of State's office, was approved, and formally issued during the first week of October, 1930.¹⁷ In a meeting of the trustees dated November 24, 1930, proposed bylaws for the association were submitted to the directors by attorney Wilburn Oatman for their approval.¹⁸ These bylaws

were based upon example bylaws provided by Senator Wirtz, earlier in the year. The newly prepared bylaws were subsequently approved by the directors. However, the exact date of the actual approval is unknown. Unfortunately, the charter issued by the state of Texas and the signed set of bylaws is not in the Bluffton Cemetery Association Archives. (See Appendix A)

So, after almost a year of work by dedicated members of the Bluffton community, the Bluffton Cemetery Association was formally (and legally) established, and preparations for the relocation of the Old Bluffton Cemetery were well underway. It cannot be over-emphasized about the efforts and expertise of the Emery, Peck, and Rockwood, Development Co., Senator A. J. Wirtz, and attorney Wilburn Oatman. It was through their guidance and leadership that the people of the little town of Bluffton were able to organize in such a professional manner.

Construction of the New Bluffton Cemetery

By the time ground was broken for the New Bluffton Cemetery, a lot of work had already occurred. Even before land had been purchased for the new cemetery, the company had been busy planning for the new cemetery. As said earlier, an architectural firm by the name of Page Brothers had been commissioned to design the New Bluffton Cemetery. In the November 24, 1930, meeting of the Bluffton Cemetery Association directors, the design proposed by the company was approved unanimously.¹⁹

Generally, the cemetery was to have a stone wall along the main highway, now Ranch Road 2241. A chapel with a terra-cotta tile roof was to be built, ornamental metal gates were to be built across the entrance, and a circular fountain was to be built immediately inside the entrance, on the main driveway which went north-south through the middle of the entire cemetery.

The cemetery would consist of 302 lots, each lot containing 8 to 10 graves. Each lot would

measure 20' by 20'. Lots 1 through 140 were to be on the west side of the cemetery, while lots 141 through 302 would be on the east side.

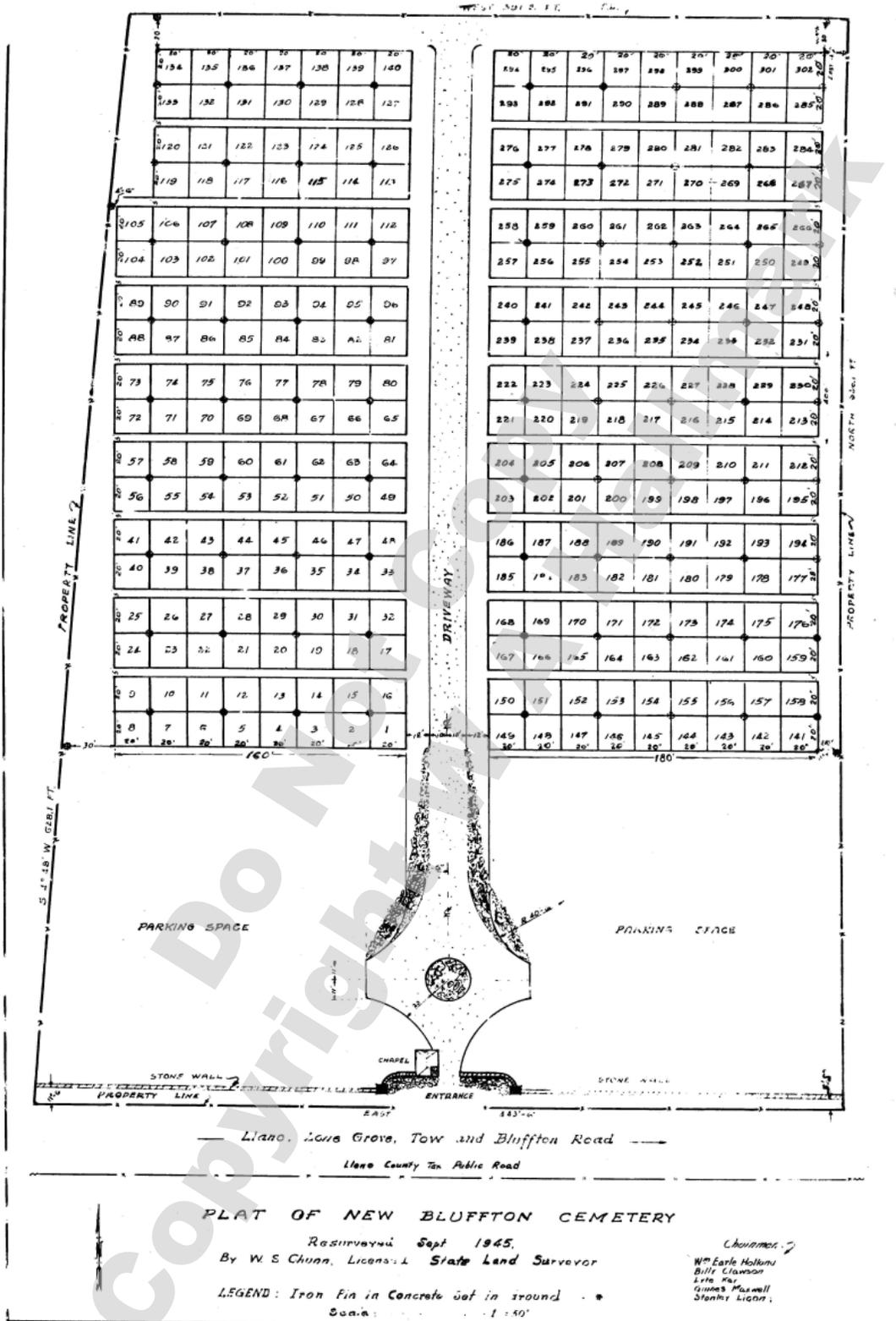
Almost immediately after the land was purchased and deeded to the association, work began on the new cemetery. Actually, work had already been happening at the new cemetery site. Records show payments to Foster Casner and Willford Stephenson for clearing the new 6 acre cemetery, even before the sale had been formally completed. They were each paid \$18 for the week ending August 9, 1930, and \$6 for the days of August 11 and 12, 1930.²⁰ It appears they were each being paid \$3 per day.

The supervision responsible for the construction of Hamilton Dam, which included F. A. Dale and Ray Summerrow, were under extreme pressure to get the deceased moved out of the basin that would form the lake. There were hopes by Emery, Peck, and Rockwood to have Hamilton Dam completed as early as late 1932, at least by the summer of 1933. But, water could not be captured by the new dam until all of the grave removals were completed. So, the pressure was on to get these grave removals completed as soon as possible.

As soon as the cemetery association had possession of the land, construction began in earnest. Bids had already been obtained for things such as the ornamental iron gates for the entrance, terra-cotta tile to used for the roof of the chapel, well,

PHONE 4460 Bluffton Cemetery STATEMENT ALL WORK GUARANTEED
AUSTIN, TEXAS 7-22-35
M. Siggel
Burial Park
TO E. T. SIGGEL & CO. INC.
AUTO BLACKSMITHING AND WOODWORK OF ALL KINDS
ACETYLENE WELDING AND ORNAMENTAL IRON WORK
COR. FIRST AND COLORADO STS.
1 Bid on high in Bluffton
1 double gate \$40.75
All quoted and crated
E. T. Siggel

"Example Bid for Ornamental Gate for Cemetery Entrance"



"Plat of the New Bluffton Cemetery"
 This plat was a resurvey of the cemetery done in September of 1945
 Llano County Clerk's Office

"A Fitting Place of Rest"

The History of the Bluffton Cemetery

and other trim, and fencing (wire, posts, staples , etc.) around the cemetery. The land was cleared, some cattle pens that were on the property were relocated to another part of the Holland Ranch, the cemetery was surveyed and began to be laid out, and masonry work began on building the fence along the front of the cemetery, the chapel, and the well.

Three men are known to have done all of the masonry work. They were Wiley Johnson, David Hallmark, and his son Aubrey Hallmark. Wiley laid all of the stone, David mixed all of the concrete (or mud), and Aubrey hauled sand from nearby Miller Creek (.7 of a mile to the east). Bill Hallmark (92 years old), double-first cousin to Aubrey, and nephew to David recalls that Aubrey told him of hauling all of the sand by a mule drawn wagon. He would go to Miller Creek, manually load the wagon, one shovel at a time, and then, he, and his two mules, Kit and Kate, would head back to the cemetery construction site. But, he had an ingenious way of unloading his wagon. Aubrey told Bill that he had the bottom boards of his wagon just lying loose in the bottom of the wagon. When he started loading the wagon at Miller Creek, he would make sure they were laid flat to make a floor, then he would load the wagon. However, when he got back to the cemetery, he would dig down in the sand to the bottom, then turn each floor board up on its end, and the sand would drop through the bottom, “unloading” itself!²¹

Lots were identified by survey markers which identified the lots on each of the four corners of the marker. For example, for lots 1,2,15, and 16, a marker was placed in the center of these four lots. The marker was marked with the numbers 1 & 2 on the top left and right

of the marker, and 16 & 15 on bottom left and right of the marker. On the plat on page 23 these survey markers can be seen, at the intersection of every four lots.



“Lot Survey Marker for lots 1, 2, 15, & 16”

By December 1, 1930, a report by the company showed that about \$4,275 had been spent on the construction of the New Bluffton Cemetery, \$3,775 for construction on the cemetery, and \$500 for the land purchase.²² The

Cemetery Plat	Men's & Sd	R & S
Subtotal from p. 3.		\$ 2,108.00
M	Fence posts 100 @ .20	32.00
	2 Corner posts	3.00
M	Hauling Posts	22.00
L	Wire fencing	125.00
L	Installation of fence	50.00
C	Mixing Charalls. contract	150.00
C	Roof tiles laid & delivered	225.00
M. L. S. H.	Gate Hauling & Sign	110.00
M	Shimber roof in place	65.00
	Flashing in place	2.00
		2,892.00
	15% Contingencies & Spec Off. + L.A.S	434.00
	Supervision	400.00
		\$ 3,726.00
	Interest	50.00
		\$ 3,776.00
	Land Cost	500.
	Removing Graves Cost	11,700.
	Interest on latter 2)	
C	Shanty -	300.
L.	Driveway -	200.
M. L.	Contract	10.

2108
 Dec. 21 1930
 193
 Dec. 21 1930
 193
 4300
 2108

“Estimated Cost of Cemetery - December 2, 1930”

“A Fitting Place of Rest”

cemetery was nearing completion by the end of the first quarter of 1931. The next phase would be populating the cemetery with the deceased from the Old Bluffton Cemetery, and those from other areas in the basin of the Colorado River that would be covered by the waters of Hamilton Dam.

a body was moved, relatives had to sign permission forms which gave the association the rights for the removal. Then, prior to moving any grave, the association notified the families of the date that the relocation would occur.

*Relocations to the
New Bluffton
Cemetery*

After setting up the procedures for the relocation of the graves, the first step was the assignment of lots at the new cemetery for these removals. Lot application forms were provided

Even though a great amount of work had been done thus far, the major work remained. That was the relocation of the deceased to the new cemetery. First, all of the graves had to be located. Then, relatives had to be located. Next, these relatives had to give their permission for the relocation of their loved ones. Finally, the graves had to be moved. This was indeed a monumental task. One report showed an estimate of 464 graves that would be have to be moved, about 394 from the Old Bluffton Cemetery.²³

Emery, Peck, and Rockwood, working through the Bluffton Cemetery Association, tried to be very considerate of the wishes of those who were affected by the grave removals. This included giving relatives the choice of whether to move their family members, and, if the deceased were to be moved, the families could decide where the deceased would be moved. Additionally, relatives were given free lots at the New Bluffton Cemetery and were able, for the most part, to select the locations of these lots. The association not only gave lots for those who were already deceased, and to be moved, but also to anyone related to these deceased. Before

The Bluffton Cemetery Association
c/o Mr. Ross Holland, Secretary
Llano, Texas

I hereby make application to the Bluffton Cemetery Association for a burial plot in the new Bluffton Cemetery to accommodate _____ graves. I understand there will be no charge for the burial plot. My preference as to location of plot would be in the vicinity of Lot No. 32 (see note below).

The members of my family now buried in the present Bluffton Cemetery are:

Sam W. Ligon
Buxton C. Ligon
Jeddie Christina Ligon
Addie May

It is understood that by making this application and accepting lots in the new Cemetery I do not thereby obligate myself to have such graves removed to the new Cemetery, and nothing herein shall be considered an agreement on my part for such removal.

Mrs Jennie Ligon is wife of Sam Ligon and Mother of 3 above Children - This application signed by her Son and wife.

Signed: J. S. Ligon
Address: Bluffton, Tex
Date: Jan. 24, 1931

NOTE: - A plat showing arrangement of lots in the New Bluffton Cemetery is available for inspection at the Bluffton Store or from any of the trustees of the Association. Assignments of plots to applicants will be made in a manner to be determined by the Trustees.

Trustees of the Bluffton Cemetery Association
H. C. Benton, Kingsland.
R. R. Holland, Lone Grove.
F. F. Beal, Bluffton.
Chas. Baker, Bluffton.
W. A. Chism, Tow.

"Example Lot Application Form"
Used to assign lots at the New Bluffton Cemetery

where families requested a specific lot, the names of those to be moved were also listed, and the lot requests were signed. As can be seen from the example form, the applicants were assured that there would be no cost involved to them. They were also advised that applying for the lot did not obligate them to move their loved one(s). A

But before the first grave relocations could begin, the New Bluffton Cemetery got its first two occupants. Imogene Clendennen, the six year old daughter of Claud and Maggie Clendennen, passed away on May 8, 1931.²³ Her father applied for lot 64 in the cemetery on May 9, 1931.²⁴ Imogene was buried in lot 64, grave 1, becoming the first to be buried in the New Bluffton Cemetery. The burial card for lot 64 is annotated “This was the first burial in this cemetery.”²⁵



“New Bluffton Cemetery - December 12, 1931”
Notice the large number of graves in the background
Courtesy of LCRA Corporate Archives

The second person to be buried in the New Bluffton Cemetery was Ollie Meador. Ollie was a 21 year old young man who was tragically killed as the result of a fire at a “gas station” where he was working, near Briggs, in Burnet County. There was some talk at the time that he was possibly the victim of a robbery, and the fire was caused by the robbers. Records show that he passed away on June 22, 1931.²⁶ His fa-

ther, George W. Meador, had applied for lot 128 in the cemetery on March 31, 1931, and it was less than three months before it would be used.²⁷ Ollie was buried in lot 128, grave 5. The Meadors had two other relatives that were to be moved into this lot, but the deceased relatives had yet to be relocated.



“Grave Removals from the Old Bluffton Cemetery - July 21, 1931”
Undertakers removing the grave of Edna Earl Holland
Courtesy of LCRA Corporate Archives

Records show that the first grave relocations occurred on July 20, 1931. The first to be moved were from the Holland Cemetery. These included Hiram Casner, Nancy Ann Casner, Annie Lee Casner, two unknown infants thought to be Casners, and a Graham infant. Moved from the Old Bluffton Cemetery on this date include Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Perkins.²⁸

Grave movements continued at a rapid pace from this date. As of the end of January, 1932, 309 graves had been moved. 276 had been moved from the Old Bluffton Cemetery, 21 from the Holland Cemetery, 4 from the O’Donnell

Cemetery, 3 from the Chestnutt Cemetery, 3 from the Olney Cemetery, 1 from the baseline of the dam, and 1 from Dick Maxwell's field. Of these, to the New Bluffton Cemetery-288, Odd Fellows Cemetery in Burnet-15, Old Burnet Cemetery-3, Post Mountain Cemetery in Burnet-2, and the Board Branch Cemetery in Lone Grove-1.²⁹

By far, the majority of those moved from the basin of the lake were moved to the New Bluffton cemetery. From the Old Bluffton Cemetery, of approximately 394 graves identified, about 383 were moved to the New Bluffton Cemetery, and about 11 were moved to Burnet County cemeteries.

Three other Bluffton people died and were buried in the New Bluffton Cemetery in 1931. They were H. C. Benton, who died on July 24, 1931. I. V. Walters died on July 27, 1931. Finally, Isaac Byler Maxwell, the 94 year old pioneer, who helped found the community of Bluffton, died on December 15, 1931, and was buried in the New Bluffton Cemetery.

But, the job of grave relocations came to an abrupt stop. On April 20, 1932, without prior warning, work on Hamilton Dam ceased. The dam was approximately 40% complete and over \$4,000,000 had been spent so far.³⁰

The Company Went Broke

In the world of high finance, Samuel Insull had gone broke. Emery, Peck, and Rockwood Development Company, owned and controlled by Insull, was forced into bankruptcy. Samuel Insull owned and controlled over sixty companies and many other independent companies depended on his companies for their survival.

As a result of the Insull empire collapse, literally hundreds of thousands lost their

livelihoods overnight. The fall of Insull's empire helped result in placing the United States into a devastating depression.

Insull at one time controlled an empire of \$500 million, with less than \$27 million in equity. Once his businesses collapsed, he fled initially to France. To avoid extradition, he then moved to Greece. In 1934, through the assistance of the Turkish government, he was sent back to the USA to face charges of mail fraud and antitrust activities. He was defended by Floyd Thompson, a famous Chicago attorney and was found not guilty of all charges. He and his wife subsequently moved back to France.³¹

Samuel Insull died in near poverty. An excerpt from the internet site, Wikipedia, states:

"According to The New York Times, Mr. and Mrs. Insull had arrived in Paris to see the Bastille Day festivities. Insull suffered from a heart ailment, and his wife Gladys had asked him not to take the Métro because it was bad for his heart. Nevertheless, Insull had made frequent declarations that he was 'now a poor man' and descended a long flight of stairs at the Place de la Concorde station and died of a heart attack just as he stepped toward the ticket taker; he had 30 francs (eighty four cents) in his pocket at the time and was identified by a hotel laundry bill in his pocket. Insull was receiving an annual pension totaling \$21,000 from three of his former companies when he died.

Insull was buried near his parents on July 23, 1938 in Putney Vale Cemetery, London, the city of his birth. His estate was found to be worth about \$1,000 and his debts totaled \$14,000,000, according to his will."

Workers on the Hamilton Dam project were suddenly left without jobs, and no money. The locals, men from Bluffton and Tow, went back home, some walking. Others, continued to live in the construction settlements and basically started living off the land, hunting and fishing, and raising gardens for food.

The people of Bluffton now had two cemeteries. The



"Samuel Insull"

"A Fitting Place of Rest"

Old Bluffton Cemetery had about 103 graves remaining. The New Bluffton Cemetery, had 288 who had been relocated to the new cemetery, and 5 who had died in 1931.

However, as people continued to die after the demise of Emery, Peck, & Rockwood, they were buried at the New Bluffton Cemetery. In 1932, three were buried, in 1933, six were buried, in 1934, three were buried, and in 1935, six were buried in the new cemetery.

But, despite the fact that the Old Bluffton Cemetery was in a total state of disarray due to the relocations of 276 graves, and was no longer fit for use, one couple was buried there; Kate Maxwell, who died on July 15, 1932, and her husband Richard (Dick), when he died on August 8, 1933. Why would they be buried at the Old Bluffton Cemetery? Well, Dick had been one of the four who had signed the petition against moving the old cemetery back in 1930. He had not given permission to move any of his family; so five of his family members were still buried in the old cemetery at the time of his and her deaths. So, they were buried with their family, at the Old Bluffton Cemetery. However, in 1937, all seven of them were relocated to the New Bluffton Cemetery; some of the last to be moved from the old cemetery.

Some would tell you, “I told you so.” Those who objected to moving the cemetery had doubts that the dam would ever be built, and this was proving to be the case, with a big chunk of concrete about 8 miles downstream blocking about half of the river bed, and no one knew for sure what would happen to it. Almost a prophet, Mrs. Will H. Goble, who also had signed the petition against moving the

old cemetery, wrote a letter to Emery, Peck, and Rockwood in May of 1930, and said, “...I am not willing to do any thing about havin my folks moved from where they are till that Dam is almost finish. For one reason something might hapen and the Dam might never be built and I hope it is never built...”³²

LCRA is Formed

Senator Wirtz did not give up on the dam. He became receiver for Central Texas Hydroelectric and tried to tap into the Public Works Administration, a Roosevelt created project, which his administration created in 1933, as part of its New Deal. But, Wirtz’s efforts were not successful, as PWA administrator Harold Ickes would not allow any of the PWA’s funds to be used on private projects.

So, Wirtz started working on a public Colorado River authority. With the help of two Texas congressmen, Joseph J. Mansfield, and James Buchanan, he was successful in the creation of the authority. Wirtz sweetened the pie for congress-



*Hamilton Dam, February 28, 1932
“Two months before ‘the company’ went broke”
Courtesy LCRA Corporate Archives*

“A Fitting Place of Rest”

man Buchanan, by assuring him that the name of the dam would be changed from Hamilton Dam, to "Buchanan" Dam. So by the end of 1933, Wirtz had funding lined up for the completion of the dam. The only thing he needed now was a governmental authority.

After almost a year of political wrangling, the Colorado River Authority was formed on November 10, 1934. However, the name was short-lived, as in 1935, two more river authorities were created and were named the Upper and Central Colorado River Authorities. So, the Colorado River Authority became the Lower Colorado River Authority - LCRA.³³

Relocations to the New Bluffton Cemetery Resume

By the second half of 1935, LCRA was getting organized, and work began again on the now known, Buchanan Dam project. LCRA correspondence in the Bluffton Cemetery Association Archives, regarding the cemetery, is found dating as early as November, 1935.

The first thing that had to be done was the cleaning of the cemetery. Evidently, during the preceding three and a half years, upkeep had not been done. Jim Maxwell was hired to do the job.³⁴ In a letter to L. C. Clark, Treasurer, by Vernon Greer, Assistant to the Land Commissioner of LCRA, a list of what was needed to clean the New Bluffton Cemetery was requested. This included:

- 4 common laborers
- 1 skilled concrete man
- 1 truck and driver
- 4 or more weed hoes
- 2 or more hand rakes
- 1 spade - or more
- 1 file - or more
- 1 ten qt. bucket
- 1 axe
- 2 sacks cement
- enough lumber to build a new 4x6 box for mixing concrete

The letter requested the use of the men until the "program" was completed. It was estimated that it would take six working days to complete the cleanup.³⁵

Another letter, dated January 23, 1936, requested payment for labor on the New Bluffton Cemetery. These men, and their jobs were listed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Job Classification</u>
Vernon Sydow	8	Concrete Finisher
Mack D. Davis	24	Truck Driver with truck
Leslie Allen	40	Common Labor
A. N. Allen	40	Common Labor
D. G. Hallmark	40	Common Labor
Jack L. Maxwell	40	Common Labor ³⁶

In other correspondence found in the Bluffton Cemetery Association Archives records, pay for most labor was about forty cents per hour.

In a letter to Senator Wirtz from Ray Summerrow dated January 31, 1936, a summary of the status of the grave relocation project to date was given. Here are some of the details:

Old Bluffton Cemetery	282 moved
Old Bluffton Cemetery	112 to be moved
Holland Cemetery	6 moved
Holland Cemetery	13 to be moved
Chestnutt Cemetery	10 to be moved ³⁷

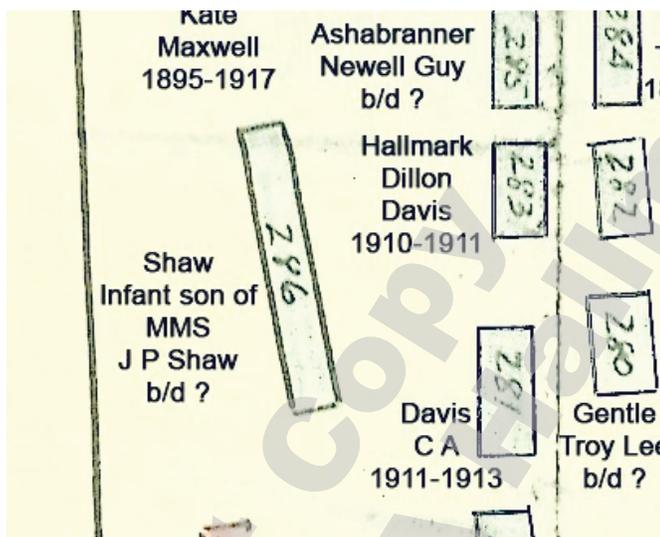
This did not include those located in places like the O'Donnell Cemetery, the Olney Cemetery, a grave on I. B. Maxwell's land, a grave in the Behrn's field, a grave on the Frazier property, and possibly others. So, it is estimated that there were at least 150 graves or so yet to be moved.

The actual process of moving graves began again almost immediately. In a report dated May 2, 1936, Vernon Greer stated that 77 graves had been moved to that date. He stated that "Getting along fine with the work, and every one is well pleased."³⁸

It is not known exactly who all was involved in the actual work of relocating the graves. However, from time reports turned in during the months of April and May of 1936, it is known that the following men did work on the relocations: T. C. Anthony, Joe Bible, D. J. Hallmark, E. E. Key,

L. C. Littleton, Jim Maxwell, W. O. Maxwell, W. B. Miller, A. N. Owens, A. A. Warden, and J. R. Winn.³⁹ Of course there were most likely others who worked relocating the graves during this time period, but they are not reflected in records in the Bluffton Cemetery Association Archives.

The actual process of moving the graves was a difficult job. First, the deceased had to be identified, if possible. Then the grave(s) had to be found. As has been seen in previous sections of this book, finding the graves had to be a very difficult process. The cemeteries were grown up with weeds and underbrush making this exceptionally hard. Once the general area of the grave was known, the actual digging began. On the Old Bluffton Cemetery plat (pages 4 & 5), it can be



Grave site of J. P. Shaw Infant Son
 Moved to New Bluffton Cemetery on November 6, 1931
 Courtesy LCRA Corporate Archives

seen that sometimes, large holes had to be dug before remains could be found. In the illustration on this page, see the space that had to be dug up to find the remains of the J. P. Shaw infant son. This was not uncommon. Sometimes what was thought to be a grave proved to be no grave at all. During the years of 1936 and 1937, 16 "graves" were dug up that did not prove to be graves.

Once a grave was opened, it was seldom that an intact body was found. In many cases, a few teeth, some bones, some buttons or other clothing, or in some cases, only discolored earth was found. Bill Hallmark stated that when his great grandfather Caleb Davis' remains were relocated, only one leg bone was identified.⁴⁰ Mr. Davis, 79 years old when he died in November of 1908, had been buried for 21 years. In C. L. Yarbrough's book, CANYON OF THE EAGLES he tells of Jim Maxwell having this recollection. "...of one he was very certain, as Mike Walters (he

should be added as one who worked on grave relocations) carefully removed a small bit of blackened soil that had once been an apple crate and a tiny body, Jim Maxwell sat at the grave's edge and remembered a sad day sixty-six years before."⁴¹ He was referring to the Nelson infant girl that he had buried, as a six year old, helping a one armed Mexican.

However, this was not always the case. In some cases, bodies were recovered that were in surprisingly good condition. Karylon "Bitsy" Hallmark Russell said that her father Aubrey Hallmark related that some of the remains in the Holland Cemetery were in surprisingly good condition. It seems to have been a function of the moisture in the soil at the various grave locations.

Regardless of the condition of the remains of the deceased however, they were treated with respect and dignity. As was stated earlier, on the day of relocation, the area around the grave was



"Hearse Used to Relocate Bodies from the Old Bluffton Cemetery to the New Bluffton Cemetery" - July 21, 1931
 Courtesy LCRA Corporate Archives

The History of the Bluffton Cemetery

roped off, and only relatives and those working on the actual removals and relocations were allowed to be present. All remains, from a shovel full of earth, to an intact body and casket, were placed in a new wooden box, and then the remains were taken to the new location. Also, they were taken by a hearse, not loaded in the back of a truck, or anything like that.

By the end of 1936, 103 graves had been removed from the basin of the Colorado River during that year. This left an estimated 47-50 graves to be moved. Some were families, primarily the Jim and Richard Maxwell families, who would not give permission to remove their family members, until they settled on the purchase of their properties by the LCRA. The majority of the others were unknowns and several, whose families would not agree to move them. The LCRA went to court and got court orders to remove these remaining bodies. So, by May of 1937, the LCRA had permission to remove all the remaining graves in the basin to be covered by Lake Buchanan.

Well, this is not entirely true. Mrs. Samantha Chesnut (or Chestnutt - it is spelled both ways in early documents), the mother of O. K. Chesnut, was left in the Chesnut Cemetery, to be covered by the lake when it filled. Relatives were in a battle over the Chesnut estate, and her son O. K.,

now deceased, when approached by Emery, Peck and Rockwood, had wanted her to remain where she was first buried. So, the LCRA relented, and she was not moved. From the best investigation of the records at that time, this appears to be the only person whose remains were covered by Lake Buchanan. It might be noted here that O. K. Chesnut was a very colorful figure in early Burnet/Llano Counties history. It would be worthwhile to read C. L. Yarbrough's account of O. K., in his book CANYON OF THE EAGLES. In fact, Mr. Yarbrough reported in his book that when O. K. was approached about moving his mother, he refused, and reportedly said, "Where a good tree falleth, there let it lay."

On May 20, 1937, the gates of Lake Buchanan were closed and water started collecting in



*Remains of Shovel found at Old Bluffton Cemetery in fall, 2011
Probably used to move graves to New Bluffton Cemetery*

Hamilton Dam, Texas
January 26, 1932
Report: Mr. Rawls

RECORD OF GRAVE REMOVALS FROM CEMETERIES UNDER
HAMILTON DAM PROJECT

Moved from Old Bluffton Cemetery	276
Moved from Holland Cemetery	21
Moved from O'Donnell Cemetery	4
Moved from Chestnut Cemetery	3
Moved from Olney Cemetery	3
Moved from Base line of Dam	1
Moved from R. Maxwell's Field	1
Total	<u>309</u>
Moved to New Bluffton Cemetery	288
Moved to Odd Fellows Cemetery	15
Moved to Old Burnet Cemetery	3
Moved to Post Mountain Cemetery	2
Moved to Lone Grove Cemetery	1
	<u>309</u>

*"Record of Grave Removals from Cemeteries Under Hamilton Dam Project"
January 26, 1932*

Bluffton Cemetery Association Archives

"A Fitting Place of Rest"

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRAVES MOVED BUCHANAN DAM BASIN, BY BURNET FURNITURE CO. FOR LOWER COLORADO RIVER AUTHORITY. - - - - - 150	
From Old Bluffton Cemetery to New Bluffton Cemetery	99
From Old Bluffton Cemetery to Post Mountain Cemetery	2
From Old Bluffton Cemetery to Odd Fellows Cemetery	4
From Holland Cemetery to Post Mountain Cemetery	1
From Holland Cemetery to New Bluffton Cemetery	9
From Chestnut Cemetery to New Bluffton Cemetery	10
From O'Donnell Cemetery to New Bluffton Cemetery	13
From O'Donnell Cemetery to Post Mountain Cemetery	8
From Chestnut Cemetery to Post Mountain Cemetery	2
From Behrens pasture to Board Branch Cemetery	1
From R. Maxwell place to New Bluffton Cemetery	1
From J. Frazier place to New Bluffton Cemetery	1
From Garrett place to New Bluffton Cemetery	1
Total	150

Summary of Graves moved by LCRA in 1936 & 1937
Bluffton Cemetery Association Archives

the lake basin. However, all of the graves had yet to be moved. In fact, records show that there were still 33 to be moved. By May 27th, these were moved, and this brought to an end the relocations of the dead in the Colorado River basin.

Moving the deceased proved to be a much bigger job than anyone at the time could have imagined. In fact, back in 1931, Emery, Peck and Rockwood had estimated that all graves could be moved by the end of 1932! In the final analysis, it appears that 459 graves were moved, 309 by Emery, Peck & Rockwood, and 150 by LCRA. Of these, 422 were moved to the New Bluffton Cemetery, 13 to the Post Mountain Cemetery, 19 to Oddfellows Cemetery, 3 to Old Burnet Cemetery, and 2 to Board Branch in Lone Grove.⁴²

So, all but one had been removed from the river bottom. But, that was not all, during the time from 1931 through June of 1937, 35 additional burials had occurred at the cemetery. So, as of the end of June, 1937, there were 457 persons buried in the New Bluffton Cemetery.

As can be seen from the next page, the lake began to rise very quickly. It was expected

that it could take three, to maybe four years to fill Lake Buchanan. However, within a year the lake was at more than 80% capacity. Then, on July 22, 1938, due to heavy rains upstream, the lake began to fill rapidly. The lake only lacked 5 feet being full, so not having the capacity necessary for the incoming water, flood gates began to be opened. In all, 20 gates were opened which allowed a tremendous amount of water to go flooding down the Colorado River. Below Austin there was extensive flooding and there was criticism that Buchanan Dam caused the flood. An investigation followed, and it was found that indeed the dam kept the flooding from being much worse.

So, finally, the old communities covered by the waters of Lake Buchanan ceased to exist. The New Bluffton Cemetery became the symbol to the past to those who had established communities along the river. It is fitting that the New Bluffton Cemetery serves as a living testimony, among the dead, of those who blazed the trail for those generations that followed, and to those who continue to follow.



***Rising Waters under and around the
Old Bluffton Bridge during the summer of 1937***

Top Left - Waters of Lake Buchanan rising under the Old Bluffton Bridge

Middle - View looking north at the rising waters of the lake, from the middle of the Old Bluffton Bridge

Bottom Right - Waters of Lake Buchanan surrounding the Old Bluffton Bridge



These pictures were taken by the author's uncle, Leland Hallmark, and are dated July 1937, Fox Company, San Antonio, Texas. It is not known exactly what dates the pictures were taken.

Photos courtesy Leland Hallmark Estate, daughter Linnie Ora Hallmark Osbourn and husband Weldon Osbourn

"A Fitting Place of Rest"