

Hallettsville Grave Yard

In July of 1870, a Board of Trustees were formed to oversee a cemetery located inside the Hallettsville city limits. The trustees were T.A. Hester, Lee Green, Louis Turner and Volney Ellis.

On July 23, 1870, Mary Jane Ballard, the wife of Collatinus Ballard and daughter of Margaret Hallett, deeded two acres of land to the Trustees for \$20.00 to be used as a cemetery for the white inhabitants of the Town of Hallettsville and vicinity. Stated in the deed the survey began at the NE corner of a former survey for a grave yard of 1 acre. *Note: see Trustees report of January 21, 1875 in this article.*

On May 19, 1873, Mary Jane Ballard deed one acre of land to L.S. Pepper, Jos. August and Isaac Samusch for a Hebrew (Jewish) cemetery. This one acre adjoined the two acres previously deeded and known as the Hallettsville grave yard.

In an October 1874 letter to the editor of the *Hallettsville Herald and Planter* the writer spoke at length about the deplorable condition of the Hallettsville grave yard.

“The deplorable condition of the Hallettsville grave yard has for a long time excited my sympathy in behalf of the dead reposing there. There is not a vestige of fence or enclosure of any kind around the main burial ground to protect the decomposing bodies of some of our nearest and dearest friends from the horses and cattle, and what is worse from being rooted up by the pestiferous swine that so prolifically infest this town.”

The writer goes on to implore the citizen of Hallettsville, with a direct appeal to the ladies of Hallettsville, to raise sufficient funds to place a pine plank fence around the entire ground and have the same wall painted.

The writer ends his letter with *“Further neglect would be a burning disgrace to our town and its people.”*

In January of 1875, T.A. Hester penned a letter to the editor of the *Herald and Planter* on the condition of the grave yard fund controlled by the Board of the Trustees. *“In July of 1870 the board was organized with the sum of \$188.09 placed in their hands as the grave yard fund. The board thought it expedient to purchase on acre of land adjoining the original acre devoted to that purpose which they did at a cost of \$20.00. They also paid out of said fund the sum of \$32.00 for*

grubbing and cleaning off the entire ground. This left on hand of said fund \$135.59. This sum not be deemed sufficient to put a suitable fence around the grounds.”

“I (Hester) feel authorized to say that whenever there is a sufficient amount added to the above sum by subscription or otherwise, to erect a suitable fence around the grave yard ground, that the trustees will at once take steps to that end.”

In August of 1875, L.S. Pepper and Isaac Samusch sold back to the Trustees of the Hallettsville grave yard ½ of an acre of land out of the one acre that had previously been sold to them in 1873 by Mary Jane Ballard.

After being in existence for six years, on April 8, 1879, a Corporation Charter for the Hallettsville Cemetery was filed in the Lavaca County Clerk’s office. The document stated the purpose of the cemetery and how the cemetery would function under the direction of the trustees. Named as trustees in the document were John Buchanan, Mary Ellis, Jane Cates, Josie Viser, D.B. Howerton, H.H. Russell and Ella Tippet.

Under miscellaneous provisions was written: *When the lots of said cemetery shall have been surveyed and platted, the survey and plat shall be recorded in the office of the County Clerk of Lavaca County and shall not be afterwards changed or altered, no lots shall be sold or disposed or until such plat have been recorded....*

Note: no such plat or survey has ever been located in the County Clerk records. However a map showing the general location of the Hallettsville grave yard and the Jewish grave yard was filed in the County Clerk’s office on September 7, 1887.

In 1888, after 18 years in existence, an article in the April 20 edition of the *Hallettsville Herald* about the City Cemetery began with the following paragraph: *What is everybody’s business nobody attends to. This adage is verified every day in the neglect of all public interests and enterprises the care of which is not entrusted to some particular person or association of persons. The proverb finds a striking illustration in the want of attention paid to the public cemetery of our town.*

The writer goes on to state that the board of trustees for the cemetery have not carried out proper yearly elections and that the trustee have done little, in his or her opinion, to maintain the cemetery grounds. Again, a direct appeal is made to the woman of Hallettsville to establish a Ladies Cemetery association to raise funds and oversee the proper maintenance of the cemetery.

The problems with the cemetery were never addressed so in late December of 1889, a newspaper article appeared in the *Hallettsville Herald*. This article discussed the present growth of the city and how the cemetery would soon be in the center of the town proper. The idea was put forth that the cemetery would need to be removed so as not to impede the growth of the town. An appeal was made to the city council to take some steps to remedy the situation.

As an answer to the concerns presented by the existence of the Hallettsville grave yard, in May of 1890 land was donated to the city to create the new Hallettsville City Cemetery.

The long called for Ladies Cemetery Association was formed on May 8, 1894. For many years, this group of local women raised money for the upkeep of not only the new Hallettsville City Cemetery, but for many years, the old Hallettsville grave yard as well. However, eventually the old Hallettsville grave yard was abandoned and became overgrown with weeds, bushes and vines and littered with trash.

In 1952, several civic organizations persuaded the City of Hallettsville to establish a park there with a group of leading citizens supervising its development. The park was named Hallettsville Memorial Park.

Dislocated Markers

Dislocated markers were placed in several cement slabs in an effort to preserve them. Please note that it is documented that some of the markers in these slabs were taken from isolated burial places in a somewhat misguided attempt to save them. Also, a large number of markers were moved to the new Hallettsville City Cemetery after it opened in 1890 from the old grave yard. That is why some markers in the new cemetery have death dates that predate the May 1890 date.

Name	Birth	Death	From	To	Source
Ashby, Dorathe E.	11/11/1833	8/10/1834	Kallus Farm	H'ville grave yard	1
Ashby, John H.P.	3/8/1835	22/8/1835	Kallus Farm	H'ville grave yard	1
Ashby, Mary Garnet	4/4/1795	12/8/1835	Kallus Farm	H'ville grave yard	1
Ashby, Sowel Harris	17/5/1820	4/7/1833	Kallus Farm	H'ville grave yard	1
Green, Damaris	4/11/1849	20/7/1880		H'ville City Cem.	3
Green, Lucretia	21/3/1824	21/1/1887		H'ville City Cem.	3
Greer, Lena	3/10/1888	29/3/1889		H'ville City Cem.	3
Hallett, Margaret	1787	1863	Hallett	H'ville grave yard	4
Kuykendall, Charlie	1/5/1820	21/7/1871		H'ville City Cem.	3

Riemenschneider Henry V.	14/2/1830	15/7/1871		H'ville City Cem.	3
Shoemaker, Henry	18/2/1839	12/1/1880		H'ville City Cem.	3
Shoemaker J. M. Mrs.	13/10/1847	19/7/1886		H'ville City Cem.	3
Speary, Bertha	23/2/1882	30/6/1883		H'ville City Cem.	3
Viser, W. C. Dr.			Grave yard	H'ville City Cem.	2
Watkins, J. S. Col.			Grave yard	H'ville City Cem.	2
Zumwalt, Gabriel	1/5/1809	29/11/1885		H'ville City Cem.	3

Sources:

1. Lavaca County Tribune April 25, 1961 and March 31, 1961
2. Hallettsville Herald September 24, 1891
3. Sammy Tise' Lavaca County, Texas Cemeteries Vol. II, documents a marker for this person in the Hallettsville City Cemetery. The date of death is before that cemetery was established in 1890.
Hallettsville Herald January 8, 1891: "Mr. H Hall, the proprietor of the Cuero marble yard, came in Tuesday to complete arraignments to move quite a number of graves from the old cemetery to the new. Mr. Hall will begin work next week."
4. Lavaca County Tribune March 18, 1952

Bibliography

Lavaca County Deed Vol. M p. 99 July 23, 1870
 Lavaca County Deed Vol. O p. 770 May 19, 1873
 Hallettsville Herald & Planter October 22, 1874
 Hallettsville Herald & Planter January 21, 1875
 Lavaca County Deed Vol. S p. 286 August 13, 1875
 Lavaca County Deed Vol. W p. 121 April 8, 1879
 Lavaca County Deed Vol. 5 p. 569 September 7, 1887
 Hallettsville Herald April 20, 1888
 Hallettsville Herald December 26, 1889
 Lavaca County Deed Vol. 13 p. 463
 Hallettsville Herald April 25, 1895