

Food, Family

Historical Commission hopes to erect marker at Fisher Robinson Cemetery

By MARY HUNTER
Review Feature Editor

More than a half-century ago, the Fisher Robinson Cemetery had its last burial. At that time, the cemetery fronted on the Old Palestine Highway (now Robbins Road) about 1 1/2 blocks from its juncture with South Palestine Street.)

Through the years, neglect and destruction have taken its toll until little is visible to show proper respect as the final resting place of a number of early-day residents.

Gone, no one knows where, are the tombstones Dottie Taylor remembers that were there when she played as a child.

All that remains are slight grave-shaped depressions in some areas and marker-shaped iron ore rocks which research to obtain an historical marker for this black cemetery overgrown with brambles and trees. Mary Ann Perryman, HCHC member, took notarized statements from people who remembered not only the cemetery, but who was buried there.

In recent months, the City of Athens Historical Commission began work on In 1980, the Henderson County Historical Commission began work on research to obtain an historical marker for this black cemetery overgrown with brambles and trees. Mary Ann Perryman, HCHC member, took notarized statements from people who remembered not only the cemetery, but who was buried there.

has pushed the brush out of most of the cemetery. Members of HCHC met on Saturday, April 14 to work on further cleaning and burning of brush.

Eventually, it is hoped that funds can be raised from interested citizens to erect a Texas State Historical Marker and place a fence around the area. Since the property has been cleared it can now be maintained. The cemetery proper was surveyed and marked according to records on file in the courthouse.

Originally a part of the Dickey Ruffin Partition recorded in Book K, page 401 of the District Court minutes of Henderson County, this little sliver of land was cut off the 40-acre tract by the Old Palestine Highway.

Beginning at the southwest corner of land owned by Nannie Carroll, the land runs south 50 feet to a stake for a corner, then east 462 feet running north of the old Palestine Highway. From there the boundary goes 330 feet to a Black Jack tree, to corner on the the Nannie Carroll tract, and then runs west 185 feet to the beginning place.

During the recent workday, HCHC members recovered pieces of early-day pottery, porcelain and glass as used in vases in years past. Other than some marble pieces and the iron ore rocks tombstones have not been found, yet.

According to Marian Westbrook, HCHC president, stories vary as to what happened to the cemetery.

headstones and markers that had been on the graves. One story is to the effect that the headstones all disappeared in the dark of night many years ago. Another is that the grave markers and headstones were trampled down by livestock when the fence was broken down.

One of the statements given in 1980 was by Laura Shafter Robinson, then 86 years old. She testified she was married to Robert Robinson, son of Fisher Robinson who set aside the property for the colored (black) cemetery.

Unclear is the date of the first burial in this cemetery, but it is known that the first Allen Chapel Episcopal A. M. E. Church was erected next to the cemetery. The church was formed in 1869 on the front steps of the late Laura Miller's father, Wiley Richard. The first building they constructed to the west of the cemetery was built of logs. This was later moved between the two railroad tracks.

So far, research shows the last burial in Fisher Robinson Cemetery was in the late 1920s or even as late as 1931. Various members of the commission are working to secure documentation to apply for the marker.

Once forgotten, this bit of Henderson County history will soon be written for future generations and future historians.



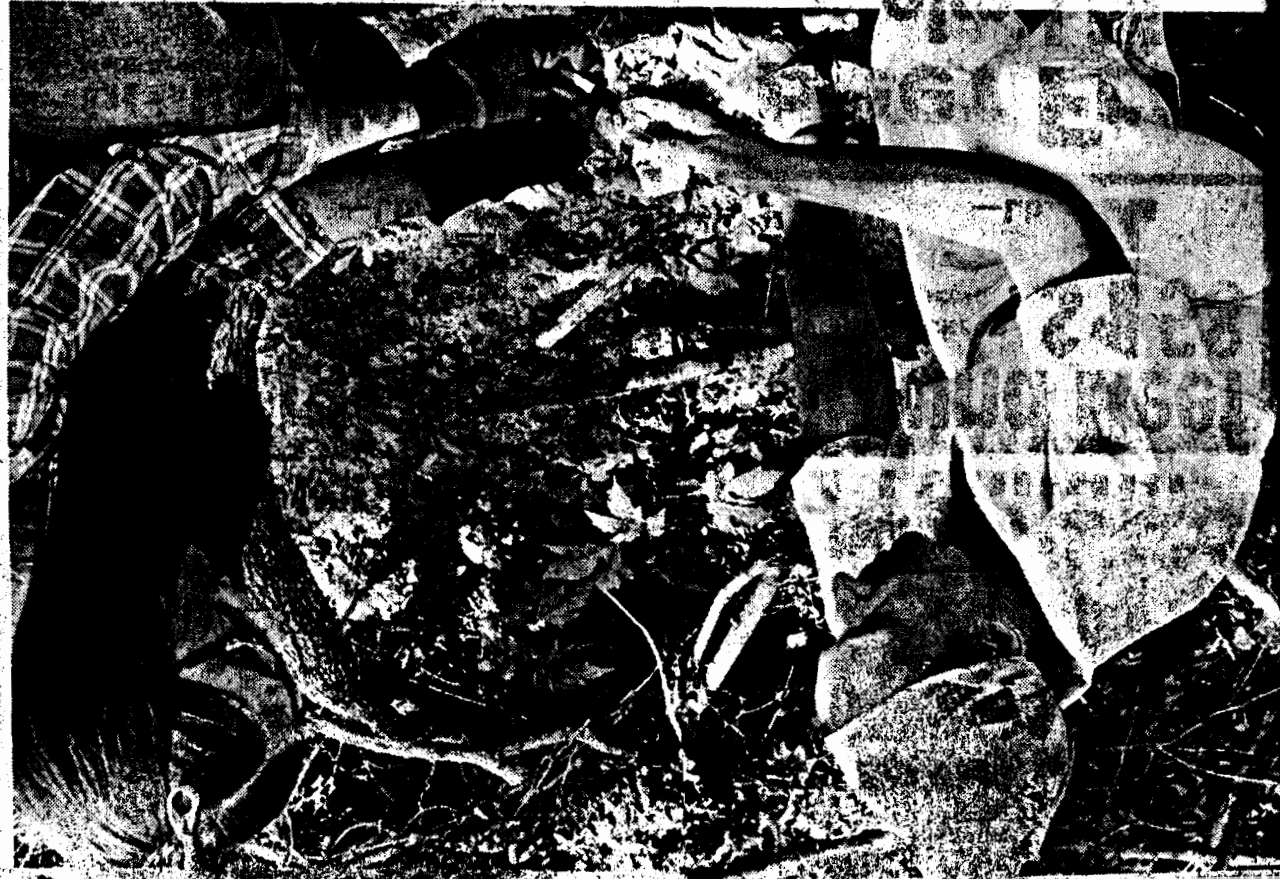


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AD WORK INVOLVED Joann Surls demonstrates the busy working to clean up the cemetery since the property work involved in cleaning up the Fisher Robinson has been cleared, the groups now hopes to maintain the cemetery. The Henderson County Historical Commission is area. (Staff photo by Mary Hunter).



ALY-DAV POTTERY UNCOVERED - Pieces of early-Sarah-Jane-Brown-The-Henderson-County-Historical pottery, perhaps from a vase used to put flowers on the Commission has also found old pieces of porcelain and glass. (Staff photo by Mary Hunter)



CITY HELPS - In recent months, the City of Athens has pushed the brush out of most of the Fisher Robinson Cemetery. Henderson County Historical Commission members, left to right, Sarah Jane Brown, JoAnn Surtz and Marian Westbrook work in the area where the brush has been piled. (Staff photo by Mary Hunter).



HCHC WORKDAY - Some of the Henderson County Historical Commission members pause during a workday recently at the Fisher Robinson Cemetery on Robbins Road. Members (left to right), Sarah Jane Brown (secretary), Marian Westbrook (chairperson), JoAnn Surtz, Clarence Richardson (treasurer) and Mary Ann Pertyman view some of the iron ore rocks thought to be markers in the neglected cemetery for early-day black Athens residents. The local commission will apply to the state commission for a Texas State Historical Marker to be erected on the site when the documentation is complete. (Staff photo by Mary Hunter)

