

BROWN - BEARD CEMETERY

Fort Bend County, Texas

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Location

Located in southeastern Fort Bend County, Texas, not far from the west bank of Big Creek, a tributary of the Brazos River, this two acre burial ground dates back to the early days of Texas history. It is in the area long known as the Big Creek Settlement, which was on the road from Richmond to Columbia (in Brazoria County).

The nearest towns today are Richmond, which is twenty miles to the north, and Needville, which is about twenty miles to the northwest. Today, people living in the area receive their mail on the Needville route.

Current county road maps show the BROWN-BEARD CEMETERY to be located near the end of Cumings Road, just off FM 762. (Cumings Road is several miles north of the recently opened Brazos Bend State Park which fronts on FM 762.)

Pertinent Facts Regarding FM 762

Except for a few changes, FM 762 almost follows the same route of the old Richmond-Columbia road. In 1838 the County Commission on Roads "ordered that five Commissioners be appointed to service and select out the best place for a road running from Richmond to the County line of Brazoria and the Route to Columbia - crossing Big Creek at the most suitable place, and report to the Board at its next meeting, and that said Commissioners be Messers--(William) Beard, (George S.) Pentecost, Henry Jones, Joseph Johnson, and Randal Jones."<sup>1</sup>

Records reveal that William Beard was appointed "overseer" for the road until 1841 when Samuel Pharr was appointed to the position.<sup>2</sup> By this time George S. Pentecost had died,<sup>3</sup> and William Beard was in the process of moving to Guadalupe County where he died in 1846.<sup>4</sup>

These names are singled out as all three men lived in the Big Creek Settlement, and the

road followed the western boundary line of the property of Pentecost and Pharr. (The cemetery is about a mile from this road.)

Even though William Beard moved, it must be pointed out that he was the patriarch of the Beard Family connected with this cemetery.

### Historical Background of Families Using the Cemetery

Upon viewing the cemetery, one can readily see that it has three sections - the unmarked grave" area, the BROWN FAMILY area, and the BEARD FAMILY area. Most of the Brown and Beard graves have permanent markers which are legible. Information from about thirty tombstones is attached to the end of this paper.

Family sources<sup>4a</sup> tell us that the unmarked section is that of the PENTECOST FAMILY, early settlers in the area<sup>5</sup> and ancestors of the Browns and Beards. Originally known as the "Pentecost Graveyard"<sup>6</sup>, this cemetery was started on a high ridge, well above flood stage, on the plantation owned by George Samuel Pentecost. Today the unmarked Pentecost graves are in the northeastern part of the cemetery. About eight or nine graves are still outlined by old, crumbling red bricks, some still held together with mortar, which gives evidence of the false tomb style of burial. Also attached to this narrative is a list of people believed to be buried in the unmarked graves. The list was prepared from the genealogical research done by the author.<sup>7</sup>

Exactly why and when the Pentecost Family moved to this area has not been established; however, it is known that George Samuel Pentecost, as one of the original "Three Hundred" still owned, at the time of his death, more than half of the Mexican Land Grant which he received in 1824 in Matagorda County.<sup>8</sup>

Pentecost's property in Fort Bend County consisted of three hundred acres which he purchased in 1837 from SAMUEL PHARR.<sup>9</sup> Listed on Stephen F. Austin's "Register of Families", Samuel Pharr, a single man of twenty-eight, was in Texas as early as 1823; however, he did not receive his Mexican Land Grant until 1831,<sup>10</sup> which was about the same time that he married Lucy Pentecost, oldest daughter of George S. Pentecost.<sup>11</sup> Samuel Pharr's land was One-Quarter of a League located on Big Creek in Fort Bend County.

Pentecost's three hundred acres became home for himself and his seven other children, one

of whom married into the BEARD FAMILY. It is believed that Mrs. Pentecost, the former Martha Ellen Denley, died in Matagorda County. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas list her death as April, 1833.<sup>12</sup> (She could have died at Big Creek).

George S. Pentecost did not enjoy his Fort Bend County "plantation" very long as he died in 1841.<sup>13</sup> His probated Will shows that he referred to his homeplace as his "plantation". There is no tombstone to mark his grave, but it is very likely that he was among the first to be buried in the cemetery which originally bore his name.

Family sources tell us and research indicates that six of Pentecost's grown children and their spouses, including Samuel and Lucy Pharr, are buried in this cemetery too. It is known that two daughters are buried elsewhere. As the other children all lived and died in the Big Creek Settlement, it is only natural that the Pentecost descendants would use the family burial plot.

One of these descendants was SARAH (SALLIE) JANE PENTECOST who married ANDREW JACKSON BEARD, son of the aforementioned William Beard and a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto.<sup>14</sup> It is through this family line that the Beard name became attached to this cemetery.

Sarah's bachelor brother, GEORGE WASHINGTON PENTECOST, also a veteran of San Jacinto, is believed to be buried here.<sup>15</sup>

Another brother, WALTER WILLIAM PENTECOST, was a Confederate Veteran<sup>16</sup> and died while living in the area. Another known Confederate Veteran, M. V. Brumbelow, is buried in the cemetery.<sup>17</sup>

In due time all but one of these Pentecost families died out or moved away. Today, the Big Creek area families who descend from George S. Pentecost trace their lineage through Andrew J. and Sarah Pentecost Beard. Two of their children, Sidney Andrew Beard and Alice Beard Brown (Mrs. A. J. Brown), grew up on Beard land about two miles south of the Pentecost plantation and remained in the area all their lives. Both, along with their spouses, are buried in the old cemetery.

### Cemetery Deed

Fort Bend County Deed Records show that after a number of land transactions throughout the years, the old Pentecost plantation, along with its burial ground, was purchased by a daughter of

Alice Beard Brown. The daughter was Irene Brown Dieter, who could trace her ancestry back to George Samuel Pentecost, her great-grandfather.

In 1918 Mrs. Dieter deeded the two acre plot of land known as the "Pentecost Graveyard" to her widowed mother, Mrs. Alice Brown.<sup>18</sup> The deed reads in part, "..for the purpose of setting apart a graveyard for the use and benefit of Mrs. A. J. Brown, the heirs of A. J. Brown deceased, namely S. J. Brown, T. A. Brown, Eula Brown Brumbelow, Sallie Brown Kennelly, and the following named parties: J. C. Phillips, Sidney Beard, D. V. Howard, G. F. Thompson, Mart and Clara Brumbelow, S. L. Pharr, Lola Scott, and their heirs... known as the Pentecost Graveyard and being two and one-fifth acres with the following metes and bounds...said land to be used for general burial purposes by the above named persons and their heirs."

### Name Changes

Originally known as the PENTECOST GRAVEYARD, the cemetery became known as the BROWN CEMETERY following the 1918 deed.

During the Texas Centennial in 1936, a state marker was placed in memory of Andrew Jackson Beard, the San Jacinto Veteran who married Sarah Pentecost. Area residents now refer to the cemetery as the BROWN-BEARD CEMETERY.

### Cemetery Maintenance

The cemetery is maintained by interested Brown and Beard descendants who gather annually in the spring of the year to mow and clean the entire fenced-in area. Several families keep their plots cleaned year around.

### Current Use

Used occasionally by the "Brown families, the latest burial was in 1980. Even though they have the right to use the cemetery, the Beards have not used it since 1933.

### An Observation

Hearsay tells us that there are a few scattered, unmarked graves in the area, all of which are inaccessible. Of interest to this writer is the fact that there are no signs of other cemeteries in the

area that was known as the Big Creek Settlement.

As early as January, 1848, the County Commissioners' Court Records reveal that elections for the area were to be held at the school house in Big Creek Settlement.<sup>19</sup> This indicates that the area was populated enough to justify having a school. With this in mind, we know that people died, and a cemetery was needed. On occasion one can still hear an old-timer use the term, Big Creek Cemetery, in relation to this cemetery.

It is the opinion of this writer that the Pentecost Graveyard served as a burying ground for the entire community until 1918 when it was deeded to Mrs. Brown with certain restrictions which allowed only relatives to use the cemetery. The metes and bounds in the deed reveal the cemetery to be 2 1/5 acres in size. This is a very large piece of land to have been only a family cemetery.

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. Board of Commissions on Roads and Review, Fort Bend County Clerk's Office, in Probate Records, Bk. A, p. 2.
2. Ibid., pp. 3-11.
3. Fort Bend County Probate Records, Bk. A, p. 247+.
4. Beard Family Bible; Guadalupe County Probate Records, Case #5-
- 4a. Occasional talks with various Beard-Brown relatives over the past 25 years; particular good sources were:
  - a. Wilma Beard, now deceased, daughter-in-law of Sidney Andrew Beard;
  - b. Jack Brown, Needville, Texas, grandson of Alice Beard Brown. He was practically raised by his grandmother.
  - c. Sallie Brown Kennelly, Rosenberg, Texas; born in 1891; daughter of Alice Beard Brown- still living.
  - d. Grace Brumbelow Weakley, Needville, Texas; a granddaughter of Alice Beard Brown; born, raised, and still lives a few miles from the cemetery.
  - e. Laura Phillips Whitten, Rosenberg, Texas, (now deceased); a great granddaughter of George S. Pentecost through the Susan Pentecost line.
5. Fort Bend County Deed Records: Bk. A, p. 140; Bk. B, p. 121. The reference in Book A is the actual deed from Samuel Pharr to George S. Pentecost, written and recorded in January, 1839, and containing the actual metes and bounds. The reference in Book B is the same deed without the metes and bounds, recorded in March, 1846, (after Pentecost's death), but written in 1837.
6. Fort Bend County Deed Records: Bk 76, p. 546.

7. Family papers; Interviews; Deed and Probate Records of Fort Bend, Guadalupe, and Matagorda Counties; Records of Daughters of the Republic of Texas, General Land Office, and Texas State Archives.
8. GLO Records, Austin; Probate-Fort Bend County, Bk. A, p. 247+; Deed Records-Matagorda County: Bk. 1 , p. 27 and p.30; Bk. H, p. 303+ and p. 370.
9. See Footnote #5.
10. General Land Office Records, Austin.
11. Information from Frank Forrest Lewis, great grandson of Samuel and Lucy Pharr. Present address: 357 Irene, Deer Park, Texas.
12. Founders and Patriots of the Republic of Texas, Vol. I, p. 285, Clayton Library, Houston.
13. Fort Bend County Probate Records, Bk. A, p. 247+.
14. General Land Office Records, Austin.
15. Wharton, Clarence R. History of Fort Bend County, The Naylor Company, San Antonio, Texas, 1939, p. 142.
16. Proof of Service from National Archives.
17. CSA Marker in Cemetery.
18. Fort Bend County Deed Records, Vol. 76, p. 546.
19. Fort Bend County Commissioners Court Records, Bk. A, p. 47.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Commissioners Court Records: Fort Bend County, Richmond, Texas

Deed Records: Fort Bend County, Richmond; Guadalupe County, Seguin; Matagorda County, Bay City.

Family Bible and old papers in possession of Esther Beard.

Genealogical Research of Esther Beard and Frank F. Lewis, 357 Irene, Deer Park, Texas.

Interviews with many family members by Esther Beard.

Inventory of tombstones in Brown-Beard Cemetery.

Probate Records: Fort Bend County, Richmond; Guadalupe Co., Seguin.

Records of:

Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Austin

General Land Office, Austin

Texas State Archives, Austin

National Archives, Washington D. C.

Wharton, Clarence R, History of Fort Bend County, The Naylor Co., San Antonio, Texas, 1939.