

- Old Gardner Cemetery -

By Peggy Smith Hake

On Highway 17 only a short distance west of the Iberia city limits, there once existed a cemetery with many grave sites, located on the west bank of Gardner Branch. It no longer can be found, only blackberry briars and tall orchard grass are growing there today. The memory of the old cemetery had been hidden in the far reaches of my mind for many years until a letter from Wichita, Kansas, got me back on my 'memory trial.' I could not remember for sure, but I thought there was once old tombstones in that cow pasture. Had I not played around them and caught crawdads out of Gardner Branch when I was a child all those years ago? Some of the old stones were once piled behind a dog pen and stacked in a ditch near the creek.

I have learned that my great grandfather, Harrison Smith, and his two sons, Phelix/Pea, and my grandfather, Frank, hand-carved some of the stones in that cemetery. So, I have a special interest in them. My ancestors were well-known stonemasons in the Big Richwoods for many years. Frank Mace (now deceased) of Iberia told me he could remember the old cemetery so vividly. At one time he thought there were 30 to 40 headstones standing. As a child, he remembered visiting the cemetery with his mother, Mary Adams Mace, and helped her put small

American flags on the graves of some old Civil War soldiers.

Frank was a son of George A. Mace and Mary C. Adams. Mary's mother was kin to the Long family, who lived in the general vicinity of Iberia before the Civil War. Frank stated some of his kinfolks are buried there including the Longs and some of the Adams' as well. Frank also believed there were folks buried in the old cemetery from the families of Castleman, Dial and Peterson. I also think there were members of the Stewart family buried there as well. The Stewart and Long families were among the earliest settlers in the area, which today is part of the Iberia community. The Longs and Stewarts were kinfolks and came to Miller County together about 1840 or perhaps earlier.

The oldtimers who could have remembered this forgotten cemetery have been gone now for several decades. Too many years have passed since any interest has been shown toward this old burial site once called Gardner Cemetery. What a sad story.

I suppose Gardner Cemetery received its name from Gardner Branch, which flows nearby. Evidently Gardner Branch was named for the Felix Gardner family, who owned land just west of Iberia in the late 1800's and early 20th century. The little creek would have probably been part of the Gardner land during those years.

I went to the census records for



Vada Livingston, Ella Waite, and Ethel Waite of Iberia. Courtesy of Marcey Reed.

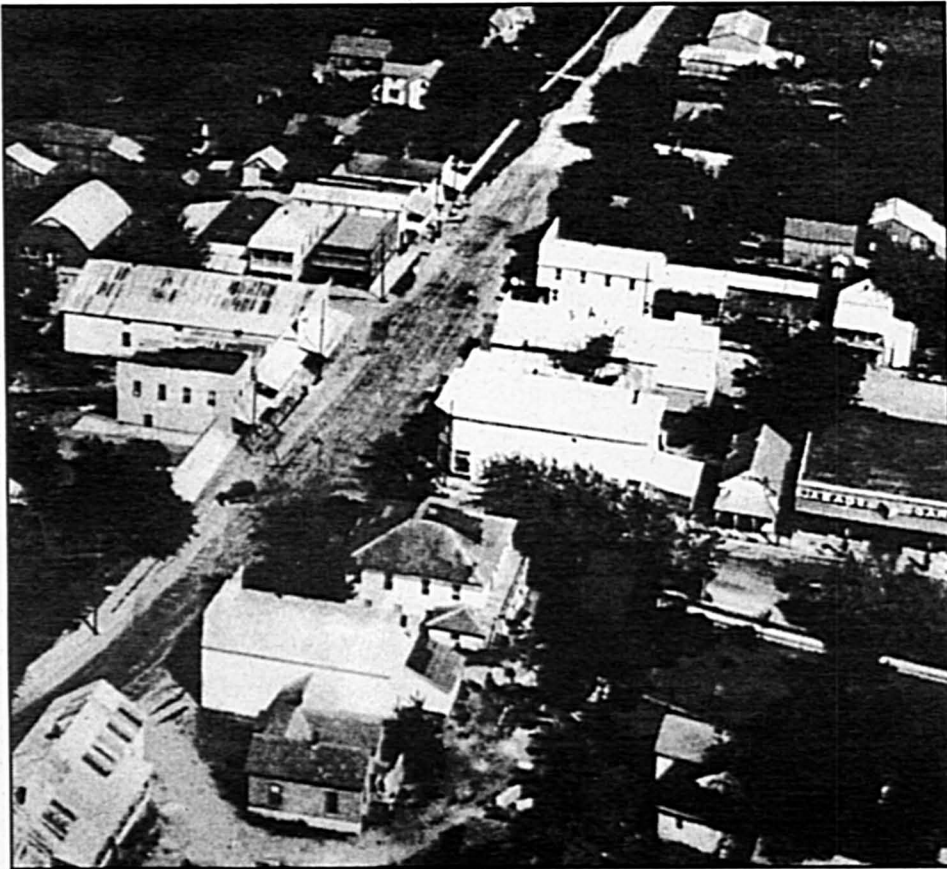


Waynesville High School students in 1929. (Front row, left to right)--Neva Anderson, Irene Gladden, Lena King, Wilma Patton, Virginia Kerr, Grace Ross, and Mae Doolin. (Second row, left to right)--Clova Doolin, Beck Long, Pauline Manes, Annie Pearl Browles, Opal Morrow, Roland Hensley, Cecil Bowling, Warford Gladden, Harbor Gladden, Wilmer Foster, Roy Logan, Henry Hough, Fred Mayor, Elmo Storie, Don Sparks, Norman Shockley, Douglas Long, Sr., Herman Anderson, and Mrs. Holmes, teacher. (Back row, left to right)--Virgie Tabor, Lillian Bailey, Thelma Ross, Bernadine Sparks, Opal Tabor, Harriett Eldridge, Myrtle Pearson, Gladys Sanders, Agnes Pearson, and Florene Bell.

Richwoods township before and after the Civil War years to located the families that may have lived in the general area where the cemetery was located. The family names I found included Stewart, Long, Allen, Lane, Noyes, Dyer, Record, Short, Marks, Gardner, Bailey, Bond, West, Tucker, Lenox, Shackelford, Arnold Condra, Groves, Dickerson, Farnham,

Jones, Blize, Ponder, Aust, Moore, Hume, Setser, Smith, Schell, Lawless/Lollis and Allen.

You can use your imagination and speculate that perhaps some of these old ancestral family names may have been on some of the gravestones that no longer exist.



Aerial view of Iberia taken some time prior to a devastating fire in 1939 that destroyed most of the buildings in the upper left of the picture. Photo courtesy of Jim Eads.



Courtesy of Marcey Reed.

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