

Once Upon A Time: A short history of the Lipscomb Cemetery

by Pauline Ernst

Lipscomb Mill, ca 1840-1860's

Once upon a time, in 1840 to be exact,¹ Wade Lipscomb and his wife, Mary Elizabeth Baker (called Polly) settled in Pulaski Co., Missouri. They homesteaded 80 acres near Crocker², built a mill and prospered over the next 21 years, buying additional, adjacent acreage.³

During these years, Mary bore at least six daughters and two sons, the first son, John G., dying young.⁴ Possibly at least three additional children also died young.⁵

In 1861 Wade died.⁶ Daughter Sarah, born about 1843, had married Henry Keaton⁷ the previous year. Six children remained with Mary: baby John F., only nine months old, and five daughters, Harriet, Julia, Amanda, Susannah and Nancy, ranging from age three to age fourteen, respectively. During the ensuing years, Mary sold several parcels of her land to William E. Wheeler,⁸ probably needing money to raise the children.

By 1869, daughter Nancy had died. She left a husband, Henry Layman,⁹ and supposedly several children. Daughters Susannah and Amanda had also married by this time,

Susannah about 1866 to John G. Burnett, and Amanda on January 6, 1868, to John Ward Layman, Henry's brother. Daughter Julia married Bartley Leonard Hutsell on January 8, 1871. In 1888 son John married Sophronia T. Murphy.

Wheeler's Mill, ca 1870-ca 1900

In 1875 the youngest daughter, 17-year-old Harriet, married John W. Wheeler, son of William. In 1878 William married the widow Mary Baker Lipscomb, his wife Minerva having died July 19, 1877. By this time the Wheelers had renovated the mill, building cabins to rent, a store and a post office. Thus, the area thrived, becoming known as Wheeler's Mill.¹⁰

John W. Wheeler ran the mill for several years, also serving as postmaster. He served as circuit judge from 1893 to 1896.¹¹ He later moved to Waynesville where he ran a general merchandising store. Two of his granddaughters, Jane Wheeler Sullivan (1919-2002) and Harriet Wheeler Graham (born 1922) told me of spending many happy hours in the store. Jane also, as I recall, worked in the store after school and/or in the summer. Thus, he must have still ran the store in the 1920s and 1930s.

On December 26, 1889, William and Mary Lipscomb Wheeler sold 20 acres

"including the mill and apparatus" to Thomas A. Bray, a son-in-law of William's.¹² William died July 5, 1890, and was buried with Minerva, his first wife, in Antioch Cemetery. Mary died March 3, 1897, and was buried with Wade in the Lipscomb Cemetery. On July 10, 1897, John W. and Harriet's 14-year-old son Willie died in an accident at the mill. Willie is buried in the Antioch Cemetery, as are his parents and his Wheeler grandparents.

In addition to daughter Harriet and grandson Willie, Wade has many other descendants in Antioch Cemetery. His son John F. Lipscomb, his daughter Julia Hutsell, several of his grandchildren, and many of his later descendants are there.

Lipscomb Cemetery, ca 1840- ca 1900

For 60 years, more or less, the Lipscombs, and some others, buried their dead near a walnut tree in the woods on the Lipscomb homestead. Perhaps the first burials were their young son John G. and the three other possible infants. Wade's father, Anderson Lipscomb, could be another early burial.¹³

In 1900 John W. and Harriet Wheeler donated "one-quarter acre, more or less" to Pulaski County for a permanent Lipscomb graveyard.

Unfortunately, Pulaski County does not maintain graveyards. I suppose that Lipscomb descendants cared for the cemetery during the first half of the 1900s, but as time went by the old burial place, sometimes overrun by cattle and possibly vandalized,¹⁴ fell prey to the encroaching woods.

Lipscomb Cemetery, 1980's

Just who is buried in the Lipscomb Cemetery? We do have some records.

In the early 1980's The Pulaski County Museum & Historical Society compiled and published two volumes listing the graves in Pulaski County.¹⁵ Under the heading of Wheeler, Lipscomb Cemetery, page 255 records the following graves (as taken from tombstones, newspaper obituaries, and funeral home records):

Burnett, Mag, no dates

Burnett, Floyd, son of Mag, no dates
Hancock, Nancy Lipscomb,¹⁶ may be buried here

Layman, Nancy (22 Dec 1847-7 Feb 1869), wife of Will Lipscomb, Edwin, may be buried here¹⁷

Lipscomb, Mary (Polly), D 3 Mar 1897, age 77 y 9 m

Lipscomb, Wade, d 18 Nov 1860, age 57, possibly buried here
Seven unknown graves



In 1989 my brothers Frank and John Lipscomb and I (Pauline Ernst) went searching for the old Lipscomb cemetery. We found it,¹⁸ overrun with vines and briars. We also found three broken headstones that read as follows:

Wade Lipscomb, died Nov'r 18, 1861, age 57.

Nancy, wife of W. H. Layman; born Dec 22, 1847; died Feb 7, 1869.

Mary E., wife of Wade Lipscomb; died Mar 3, 1897; age 77 years, 11 months. Restoring the Lipscomb Cemetery, 1999-2003

In 1999, Chuck & Pauline (Lipscomb) Ernst, Raymond & Hortence (Lipscomb) Humphrey, & Frank and Brenda (Sherrill) Lipscomb took on the task of restoring the old cemetery.¹⁹ But first we had to reclaim it. We began to clear the area with chainsaw, weed whacker, rakes and other tools, again uncovering the three broken headstones we had found ten years before.

Raymond made a sign for the cemetery, which the men²⁰ cemented into the ground. Later Raymond added a covered registry for visitors. Recently Hortence purchased a bench that the men have now cemented into the ground, also.

We have all been back at various times doing maintenance on the grounds, but Chuck, being both local (which Raymond and Hortence are not) and retired (which Frank and Brenda are not) has contributed by far the most man-hours. He has mowed, weeded and raked, and put down countless topsoil and weed'n'feed. And still the woods continue to encroach. The upkeep must be constant.

In 2003, Cecil Penland, husband of Audrey Layman,²¹ repaired the three broken tombstones of Wade, Mary, and Nancy. They look great and should last for many years.

With money donated by generous

descendants, we were able to have the cemetery surveyed. The survey shows the cemetery to be 0.061 acre, far less than the quarter acre shown on the abstract. The survey also shows three graves outside the cemetery boundaries, and it shows that the cemetery extends into an area that we did not clear. So we have more work to do.

Lipscomb Cemetery, 2003 & Beyond

Planning for the future, we must consider four things: 1) The graves outside the boundaries, 2) general maintenance, 3) more restoration, and 4) perpetual care.

The present owners of the property surrounding the Lipscomb Cemetery have welcomed our efforts at restoration. They have assured us there will be no problem with our caring for those graves that lie on their property, even suggesting that we include all graves within our fencing, when and if we fence. They stress, however, their desire for privacy. We try to honor that and urge all who visit the cemetery to keep to the right of way and the cemetery, remaining off the owners' private property.

General cleanup needs to be done each spring and then mowing continued at least once a month until fall. The sign needs to be maintained by regularly sweeping away spider webs, dust and debris. We could plant some hardy perennials such as peonies.

Under "more restoration" we would like to fence the corners, perhaps with a practical white fiberglass fencing that is almost everlasting and needs no paint. Of course, fencing the entire cemetery would be nice, but probably far too costly. I would also like to probe the ground for other tombstones. I understand many times missing tombstones are found that way.

Occasional visitors do come to the

cemetery as shown by the registry sign-in sheets. At least one group²² sometimes visits when they have their family reunions. So, planning for posterity seems valid and worthwhile. Somehow, we need to plan for perpetual care. I have not figured that one out yet, but perhaps it will happen.

For more information, or to contribute time, labor or money, contact me by phoning 573-759-3238 or emailing npe1999@yahoo.com.

Pauline Ernst, great great-granddaughter of Wade Lipscomb

¹ 1840 Federal Census for Pulaski County, MO, p. 208.

² Pres. James Polk signed the homestead grant in 1848.

³ *The US Land Sales for Pulaski Co.* shows purchases from 1844-1852 totaling 297 acres.

⁴ John G. is listed only on the 1850 census, so likely he died before the 1860 census. He is probably one of the earlier burials in the Lipscomb Cemetery, with father Wade and sister Nancy soon to follow.

⁵ Several researchers list three additional children, Virginia, b. about 1840, Priscilla, b. about 1845, and Anderson, b. about 1852, but can give no source for this information. Plausibly, however, these children were born and died between census records. Perhaps they are noted in someone's family Bible??

⁶ Several sources list Wade's death as 1860. However, when chalked, his tombstone clearly reads 1861.

⁷ Later she divorced him and married a man, surname Ferrell.

⁸ *History of Pulaski County, Missouri*, vol. 1, p. 78, states that William brought his family to Pulaski Co. in 1868, purchasing a farm, building a large mill in 1873.

⁹ Her tombstone reads "wife of W. H. Layman."

¹⁰ Though today there is no longer a mill, the area is still referred to as

Wheeler's Mill.

¹¹ Various county records verify this information. Also verified by Jane Wheeler Sullivan, granddaughter of JWW & Harriet Lipscomb. See also *Pulaski County's Historic Place Names*, Richard Wilber, page 12.

¹² *Pulaski Co. Abstract Co., Inc., Book 7*, page 577.

¹³ Anderson bought property nearby in 1840, but is not on the 1850 census. Anna Roberts, in her book *The Edwin Hancock Family of Pulaski County*, suggests that Anderson is likely buried in either the Lipscomb Cemetery or the nearby Hamilton Cemetery. The Hamiltons married into the family in 1847.

¹⁴ Wade's tombstone was missing for a time, but reappeared.

¹⁵ *Tombstone Inscriptions Throughout Pulaski County*, State of Missouri, Combined Edition, 29 July 1995.

¹⁶ This would be Wade's sister, Nancy Anderson Lipscomb.

¹⁷ Could this instead be Edwin Hancock, husband of the aforementioned Nancy Lipscomb Hancock? I know of no Edwin Lipscomb.

¹⁸ The present owners of the original Lipscomb homestead/mill (later Wheeler's Mill) have been friendly, generous and helpful to us. They stress, however, their desire for privacy. We try to honor that and urge all who visit the cemetery to keep to the right of way and the cemetery, remaining off the owners' private property.

¹⁹ We three Lipscombs are, of course, descended from John F. Lipscomb, Wade's only adult son.

²⁰ Including our son, Ernie Ernst.

²¹ Audrey's great grandparents were Amanda Lipscomb & John Ward Layman.

²² The Hamilton Family Reunion, descendants of Nancy Anderson Lipscomb, Wade's sister.