

Estes Cemetery History

Contributed by Gwen Hintze

James Estes was born August 6, 1792 in Warren County, Kentucky. As a small child he migrated with his parents, John and Ann Estes to Calloway County, Missouri. After growing up in Calloway and Gasconade Counties, he served in the military in the War of 1812. Returning to Missouri after the war, he married Sarah Laughlin in August 1825. The James Estes family moved to Kaufman County, Texas with the Charles Fenton Mercer Colony after January 1844 and finally settled in the Webb-Mansfield area of Tarrant County in about 1853.

When his wife, Sarah, died April 16, 1857, James Estes dedicated an acre of his farm as a cemetery. A few days later a granddaughter, Mary A. Estes, died and was buried April 22, 1857. A son, Bayless Estes, passed away December 28, 1957 and another granddaughter, Texana T. Estes was buried August 23, 1961. James Estes died March 23, 1864 and was buried beside Sarah.

During the next several years, additional members of the Estes family were interred in the burial ground. By 1867 the Estes Family opened the cemetery to residents of the area who were not members of the family. During the 1880's the communities of Webb, Gertie and Britton developed nearby and the residents started to use the cemetery. There are now 175 identified grave sites representing 60 different family names. There are approximately 50 unmarked graves in Estes Cemetery. Burial in Estes Cemetery is now restricted to the direct descendants of the original families.

In the early 1970's, the City of Grand Prairie annexed the cemetery and surrounding territory into its city limits. About the same time the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers began construction of Joe Pool Lake. A section of Arlington-Webb- Britton Road was closed isolating the cemetery from Webb and other communities north of the lake. This resulted in increased vandalism and the theft and damage of grave markers and ornate fencing. Tombstones had been overturned and broken. The arch and gate was completely destroyed.

In August 1990 a group of descendents met to address the problems that had befallen Estes Cemetery. Under the leadership of Tommie Dell Hance, the great-great granddaughter of James Estes, a new cemetery association was organized. On March 4, 1991, the State of Texas granted a Certificate of Incorporation to the James Estes Memorial Cemetery, Incorporated. This group, with the help of the Grand Prairie Volunteer Fire Department, the Boy Scouts, and other civic organizations, began a major renovation of the cemetery. Tombstones were repaired and reerected, brush and dead trees were removed and the chain link fence was repaired. A new arch and gates were installed in 1994. The cemetery is now maintained by the association on a regular basis.

When Joe Pool Lake was completed the northern and western property lines of the cemetery abutted the lake property. The land to the south and east that was once James Estes'

farm is now a housing development of approximately 1,000 homes. When completed, there will be home sites adjacent to the cemetery fence. The developer, Wynn, Jackson / Grand Peninsula has dedicated a right of way to Arlington-Webb-Britton road for access to the cemetery.

Estes Cemetery is located at 7100 Arlington-Webb-Britton Road in the City of Grand Prairie, Texas. Mailing address for the James Estes Memorial Cemetery, Incorporated is Post Office Box 1030. Mansfield, Texas 75063.