

Tread softly for an angel band,
Doth guard the silent dust:
And we can safely leave our boy
Our darling in thy trust.

So reads one of the many epitaphs on an anonymous, deteriorating headstone at the pioneer Western Heights cemetery in old West Dallas.

Seven years after Dallas became a town, Western Heights Cemetery was started with the burial of Augstine Byram on June 27, 1848. The last burial was Willie Clyde Brannon on July 19, 1968. ¹

The cemetery is located approximately three and one half miles west of the Dallas County Courthouse ("Old Red") in the 1800 block of Ft. Worth Avenue (U. S. Highway 80). It is bounded by Ft. Worth Avenue on the south, Neal Street on the east, business property on the west and residential property on the north. The cemetery, which contains approximately two hundred graves, is about two acres in size. It is a portion of the William Coombes Survey ² No. 290. Coombes Creek, several blocks away, is named for the Coombes family. The Northeast corner of the cemetery is the Coombes family plot. The cemetery has also been know as Troth, Christian, West Dallas and eventually Western Heights Cemetery. ²

The cemetery was started as a community cemetery where family members could pick an area for the burial of their deceased loved ones. There were no fees charged. On February

14, 1881, B. M. Bradford sold the property to Z. E. Coombes and W. R. Fisher for the nominal sum of fifteen dollars. Coombes and Fisher were the elders of the West Dallas Christian Church. The deed states that the land is to be used "... for the erection of a church building thereon and for a graveyard forever." ³

The church building, however, was never erected near the cemetery. Several old timers have stated a belief that Mrs. Mattie Hord Crawford had more clout than Mr. B. M. Bradford. Mrs. Crawford wanted the building to be located closer to her home, seven blocks to the east. So she donated the building site, headed up the building fund drive and actively sought contributions. A story is told that when she asked the owner of a tavern for a donation, he answered, "I am a saloon keeper." She retorted, "The more need for you to do good with your money." The tavern owner gave her one hundred dollars. Mrs. Crawford also followed a farmer, not known for his generosity, up and down the corn rows he was plowing until he gave a contribution. The Western Heights Church of Christ building was erected in 1875 and services are still conducted there. ^{4,5}

In 1872, at the request of Major B. F. Robinson, General Richard M. Gano, conducted the first meetings in the Mt. Airy schoolhouse for the Western Heights Church of Christ. Since the area was sparsely populated, heralds on horseback would advertise meetings to all the settlers in the area. With that initial revival fifty people were baptized in the Coombes Creek, several blocks to the South. The church grew with the addition of

"Weeping" Joe Harding's congregation from Tennessee. 6,7

William Coombes, on whose portion of the survey No. 290 the cemetery is located, and his family came to Texas from Nelson County, Tennessee, in 1843. He was married for the first time in 1822, was widowed prior to 1848, then remarried in 1848. When he arrived in Texas, Coombes found and purchased a cabin belonging to Dr. Gilbert. Coombes later acquired 640 acres. On survey 290 a row of bois d'arc trees were planted as a hedgerow by the Coombes family. The trees were used as security against the Indians. There was also a well that the Coombes dug from which travelers passing by would drink. 8

Other nearby communities included Hord's Ridge, now Oak Cliff; Eagle Ford, where the railroad stopped in 1873 after it ran out of funds, and La Reunion, the French Utopian settlement that existed from 1855-1858. The immediate area was known as Mt. Airy, named after a one-room schoolhouse close by. The cemetery had existed several years before James Flanders developed Flanders Heights, the first residential development west of the Trinity River. Flanders was one of the best known architects of this time. He designed courthouses, including the fifth Dallas County Courthouse that was erected in 1881 and burned in 1891. Flanders also designed Methodist Churches and other buildings around Texas. 9

The cemetery carries more than just historical interest to many due to the presence of one of the most notorious of criminals from the time of the Depression. Beyond any doubt the

most notorious person buried at Western Heights Cemetery is Clyde C. Barrow (1909-1934) of Bonnie and Clyde fame. His brother Marvin I. Barrow (1905-1933) "Buck" is buried alongside Clyde. Clyde's parents Cumie F. Barrow (1874-1942) and Henry B. Barrow (1874-1957) and older brother Elvin W. Barrow (1894-1947) are also buried in the same family plot.

Clyde Barrow and his gang killed twelve men over a twenty-four month crime spree. Bonnie had requested that she and Clyde be buried side by side. After they were killed in the famous ambush Bonnie's mother was quoted as saying "Clyde had her for two years and look what it did to her." Bonnie was buried in Fish Trap Cemetery, then later moved. Clyde's body could be viewed at the Sparkman-Holtz-Brand Chapel on Ross Avenue, previously, the Belo Mansion, and now used by the Dallas Bar Association. Hot dog stands were set up along with the soda pop vendors to help feed the thousands that came to view the body. It is told that the rug in the funeral home was worn out by the estimated thirty thousand who viewed Clyde's body. ^{10,11}

During the funeral Cumie Barrow was heard sobbing for her son while the crowd outside was snickering. Henry Barrow was a broken man who cried as he followed the coffin to the hearse. Newspaper boys contributed money for wreaths since their incomes had tripled because of Bonnie and Clyde's crime spree. Clyde was buried at sunset at the Western Heights Cemetery while a low flying plane dropped a floral wreath. ^{12,13,14,15}

In 1958 Ishmel Brewer was helping clear away the weeds from Clyde's grave. He had gone to school with Barrow.

In 1968 Clyde's tombstone was missing on the 34th anniversary of his death. It was found five days later and returned. Beginning in 1976 during the yearly Texas-OU weekend madness, Clyde's headstone would be stolen for four consecutive years. Howard Wade, a trustee of the cemetery, contacted Mrs. Artie Key, Clyde's sister, and told her he would take care of the tombstone and ensure that no one could steal it. He dropped two tons of cement down six feet and placed the headstone flush with the ground; the headstone has not been stolen since. ¹⁶

Among the people buried at Western Heights Cemetery are William R. Fisher (1836-1900), one of the original trustees of the cemetery, and his wives, Mary A. Fisher (1850-1881) and Maggie C. Fisher (1853-1936). All three are buried in the Coombes plot in the northeast corner of the cemetery. The cemetery also contains Z. E. Coombes (1837-1917) and his wife Rebecca Bedford Coombes. Z. E. Coombes was one of the first trustees of the cemetery. He was a veteran of the Civil War in Company G, Texas Cavalry. William Nelson Coombes (1858-1936) a judge of the Dallas County Court of Law Number 1 and 2 and his wife, Katie Freeman Coombes, are also buried there. Judge W. N. Coombes remembered plowing on the family farm where Zang Boulevard is today. He also recalled carrying a gun to protect the women during the Civil War when he was a boy of eight years of age. ¹⁷

This pioneer cemetery is also the final resting place of Mary Ellen Cole Tuggle (1845-1928) and her husband William Thomas Tuggle (1843-1925). Mary Ellen is the daughter of Calvin Cole and thought to be the first white female to be born and survive in Dallas County. Texas was still a Republic when Mary Ellen was born. She was the granddaughter of Dr. John Cole, who settled in the Cedar Springs area. The Coles has come to Texas in 1844, from Virginia, Tennessee and Arkansas. William and Mary Ellen had ten children, three of whom are interred in Western Heights Cemetery. They are Dee Wilton Tuggle (1874-1929), William Witcher Tuggle (1877-1877) and Cora Elinose Tuggle (1879-1937). William Thomas Tuggle was a veteran of the Civil War having served in Walker's Division and Young's Regiment. ¹⁸

Other known burials are those of Marcus B. Ormsby and Tom Ormsby, father and brother of Dr. Floyd E. Ormsby, an early day physician in this area. Dr. Ormsby practiced medicine for many years. ¹⁹

This is also the final resting place for John Loupot (1835-1904) and his wife Rosina Getzer Loupot (1850-1919). He was born in Ardennes, France, and his wife in Switzerland. John learned the trade of masonry from his father, then at sixteen worked in Sedan as a grocery keeper. At twenty he came to America by way of France, Belgium, England, New Orleans and Galveston. He then came up the Trinity River to Newport. He covered the remaining 150 miles by foot to Dallas. On this journey he spoke no English and had problems securing food. He

swam the swollen streams with his clothes tied on his back. Loupot reached Dallas with a total of fifteen cents. For a year he was with La Reunion farming. He then started improving the farm that he eventually owned. It was called Loupot's French Creamery and Dairy. He advertised in the Weekly Herald that he had groceries, sugar, coffee, candy, canned fruit and choice liquors. John and Rosina had five children. ²⁰

Robert J. Mills (1849-1922) and his wife Elfleda Ellis Coombes Mills (1853-1930) are also interred at Western Heights Cemetery. Robert was born in Kentucky and lived with his parents until he was twenty two. He then taught school for two years, herded cattle then started farming in Dallas, in 1873. Robert and Elfleda had six children and the family were members of the Western Heights Church. ²¹

A. C. Brown (1833-1893) was born in Maryland and reared in Ohio until he was sixteen. In 1852 he went from New Orleans to San Francisco via Nicaragua taking six months. For seventeen years he engaged in mining successfully. In 1870 he came to Texas and at that time purchased his farm of 356 acres near Eagle Ford. He and his wife, Emma S. J. Wood Brown had seven children. Mrs. Brown was a member of the Western Heights Church of Christ. ²²

George Fuller (1845-1905) was a gardener in West Dallas and a native of England. In 1874 he came to Dallas. He had seven acres of land and married Emily Howlett Fuller in 1869. They had four children. ²³

Robert James Lowry (1836-1921) was born in Mississippi and raised in Louisiana. He married Olivia Elizabeth Feffries Lowry in 1856. Lowry enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1862. He was in Company G, Third Arkansas regiment, Hood's Brigade and served with the Army of Northern Virginia. He was never captured, sick or wounded and never missed a battle. In 1874, Lowry moved to Dallas county. Olivia died in 1885 and Lowry married Mary Smith Lowry (1846-1925). Robert and Olivia had seven children and Mary had none. ²⁴

In 1905, Homer E. and Hattie J. Ferguson sold one half acre on the east side of the cemetery to the Farmers and Mechanics Lumber, Inc. The same one half acre was sold to Ms. Anna Struck (1864-1923) and dedicated as a family plot. Her husband, Heinrick Frederick Struck (1856-1917) is buried in that plot along with Anna. He was born in Germany as was Anna. Their son Henry Care Struck (1890-1955), a veteran of World War I is also buried in the Western Heights Cemetery. In 1890 the Struck family home was constructed for \$1000 at 1923 Edgefield. This home is now being restored. ²⁵

The total number of persons buried at the Western Heights Cemetery is believed to be approximately two hundred. Those listed below are among the less renowned but identifiable and about whom some personal history could be confirmed.

Fillmon M. Goodwin (1844-1906) a teamster;

James R. Lasater (1844-1907) a laborer;

Ruby Mills (1879-1907) daughter of R. J. and Elfleda Mills,

a teacher at Oak Cliff Central;
George Rice (1840-1915) a teamster;
P. W. Proffitt (1851-1912) a laborer with Texas P. C. Co.;
Lottie Whittington (1879-1929) employed at Sanger Brothers;
Frank M. Whittington (1867-1930) a barber;
Dee Wilton Tuggle (1874-1929) son of Mary Ellen and William
Thomas, worked in the collar department of Schoellkopf
Co.;
Tressie Shuffield (1904-1920) a packer at Brown Cracker and
C. Co.;
W. H. Morse (1835-1922) a dairyman;
Minna Kaschke (1877-1924) a seamstress for Rose-Rogers Co.;
Earnest Kaschke (1873-1929) a laborer;
J. W. Eyster (1857-1927) a painter;
Floyd C. Basden (1899-1922) a driver;
W. L. Allison (1882-1939) a welder for Robinson Machine
Forge;
Juliett Emmons (1880-1934) an operator for Texas Paper Box
Co.;
John W. Talbert (1862-1933) an oiler at Lone Star Cement
Co.;
Calvin F. Tennison (1876-1931) a stillman at Oriental Oil
Co. Refinery #1;
David Tilley (1875-1939) mill operator at Trinity Portland
Cement Co.;
Chester M. Wright, Sr. (1884-1935) a baker at Brown Cracker
and C. Co.;

Henry Barrow (1874-1957) owned a service station;
Frank M. Leatherman (1908-1944) clerk at Metropolitan Drug
Store;

John T. Nichols (1884-1948) truck operator.

Thomas A. Leatherman (1884-1941) leather worker at
Schoellkopf Co.; 26,27,28,29,30

During the 1960's and 1970's Ralph D. Churchill, a trustee for the cemetery, contacted the Sunset High School Y-Teens, Southern Methodist University Fraternities and Sororities and the Boy Scouts to help care for the graveyard. A descendant of several of the people buried there, Harriet Long Evans would walk her lawn mower five blocks to the cemetery to mow her family plot. She had to stop this after heart by-pass surgery at seventy three years of age. 31

The Western Heights Church disbanded in 1985 due to the population shift in the neighborhood. The congregation sold the buildings to a Hispanic Church. The spanish congregation chose not to take responsibility of the cemetery. Ralph Churchill then contacted Trinity Oaks Church of Christ on Hampton Road and that congregation is currently the trustees of the cemetery. 32

Most buried here helped to develop the community of Western Heights. There are veterans of the Civil War, World Wars I and II along with their wives, mothers and children. This is the history of a pioneer community from the mid 1800's to the mid 1900's. A Texas Historical Marker is soon to be installed. 33

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