

# Robinson Family Cemetery

James D. Barnes, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026 – last revised 19<sup>th</sup> April 2026



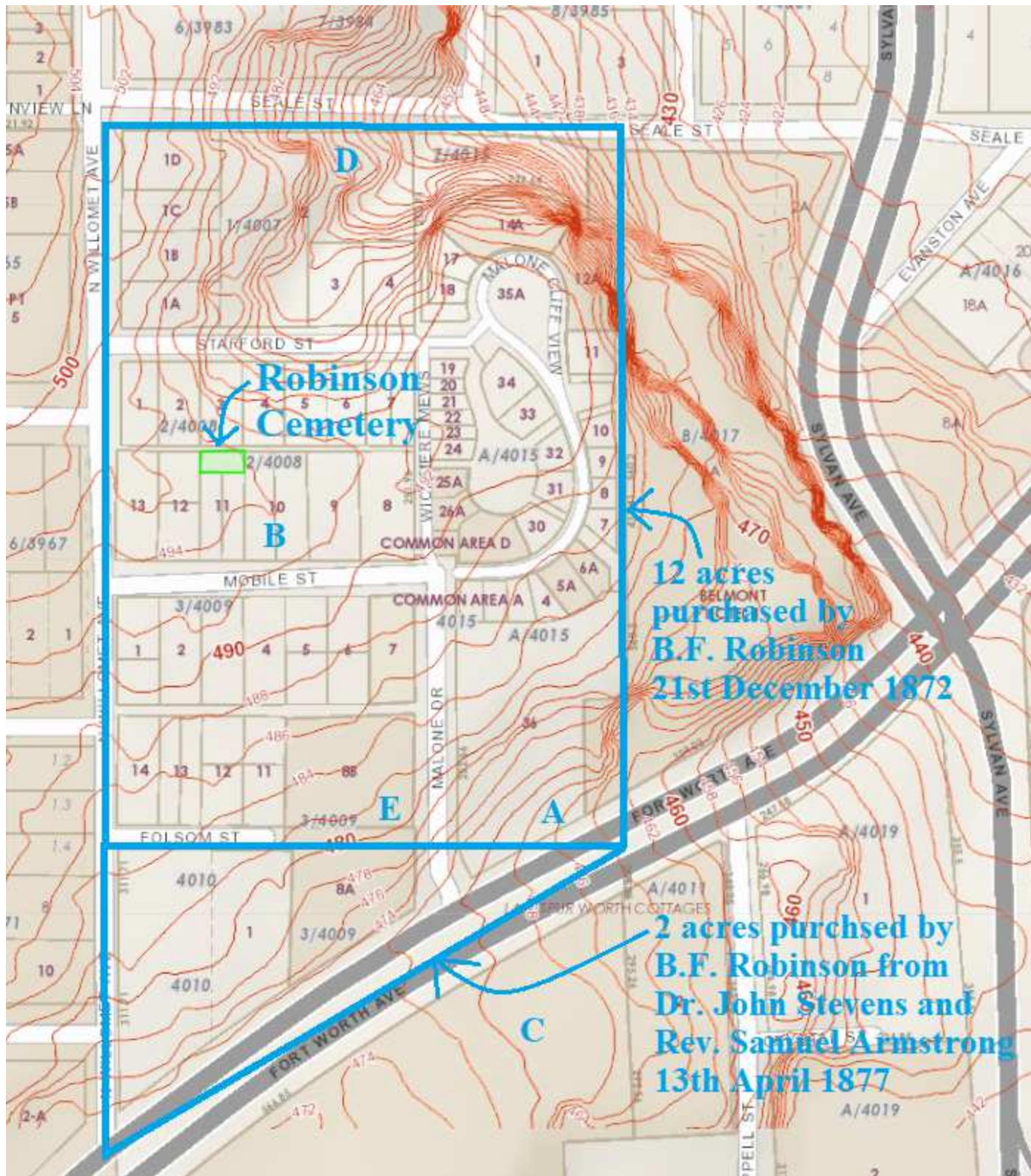
## *Looking northeast into the Robinson Family Cemetery in year 2012*<sup>1</sup>

*Located on the south side of the alley between Mobile and Stafford Streets, east of North Willomet -- (approx. 32.7703°N; 96.8388°W)*

*Robinson Family Cemetery* is the graveyard for Major Benjamin Franklin Robinson and his family, who left their Missouri home in Westport (now part of Kansas City) and bought 12 acres on this hilltop in December of 1872.<sup>2</sup> A first daughter, Margaret S. Robinson died at age 27 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1873 and was buried in *La Reunion Cemetery*, on Fish Trap Road about a mile to the northwest. Planning to relocate her grave to his private land, her father had a new grave dug for her here, but then discovered that his daughter's burial had been flooded and its markings washed away. Meanwhile, his second wife, Helen Jane (Acock) Robinson, died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1879; and B.F. Robinson then buried Helen's body here in the grave originally dug for their daughter. There was another burial here in 1879, the grave of an infant granddaughter, Margaret Helen Robinson (1879-1879). We don't have a precise date for her death, but these two 1879 graves mark the beginning of the *Robinson Family Cemetery*. Benjamin F. Franklin, family patriarch, died five years later, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1884, at age 77, and was buried inside the family cemetery alongside his second wife, Helen.

Unmarried teacher Willie Blanche Robinson died on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 1909 and was buried in the *Robinson Family Cemetery*. The Robinson's remaining land in West Dallas wasn't subdivided into the plat of the *Robinson Addition* until May 1909 -- after Willie Blanche Robinson's death. *Robinson Family Cemetery* would have already been a fixed location around which the new geometry of streets and alleys had to be fitted. The subdivision plat did not define a specific cemetery; instead the graveyard was included, without notation, at the rear of one of the residential lots.<sup>3</sup> The death of Willie's brother, D.A. Robinson, in September of that same year 1909, provided another burial in the *Robinson Family Cemetery*. Today there is a tombstone for "*Agnes Pearl Robinson: infant*" about which there is no reliable information. It might have been the original burial of the Agnes Earl Robinson (1907-1911). She is listed in the family genealogy but her tombstone is now in Pleasant Mound Cemetery.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps her burial was moved out of the Robinson Family Cemetery.

For more than a century the *Robinson Family Cemetery* survived as a separate little enclosure at the rear of Lot 11, Block 2 of the Robinson Addition. Robinson Family Cemetery now covers approximately 40 ft. x 20 ft. (~800 sq. ft.). When I first visited, around year 2000, an unlocked gate faced south, at the southwest corner of the cemetery, accessed by walking down the driveway beside a house at 1019 Mobile Street. The main southern portion of lot was later purchased, that old frame house demolished, and two new townhomes were built on the front part of the lot around year 2020. Robbie Robinson and his wife Janice, of Mesquite, have recently undertaken care of the neglected *Robinson Family Cemetery*. They obtained its historical marker.<sup>6</sup> A new fence with a new public access gate through the alley preserves this 19<sup>th</sup> century relic of West Dallas history.



## Robinson family residences:

According to the family's account, Benjamin Franklin Robinson (1807-1884) had been serving in the Confederate army when he was afflicted by a disease resulting in eyesight loss. He moved temporarily to Mexia, Texas; returning to his home in Westport, Missouri (now part of Kansas City) after the war. Finding conditions for Southern sympathizers extremely difficult, B.F. Robinson then sold his Missouri properties and moved to Dallas County, Texas, where late in year 1872 he bought twelve acres along the brow of the hilltop across the Trinity River floodplain from the booming town of Dallas.

**A:** The family built their new homestead at what is now 901 Fort Worth Avenue. It is remarkable that while Benjamin Robinson was so blind he could no longer practice law ("totally blind"), he selected a site whose chief attribute was its magnificent view. For farming he had additionally bought acreage in the David Hunter Survey, west of today's Vilbig Road.

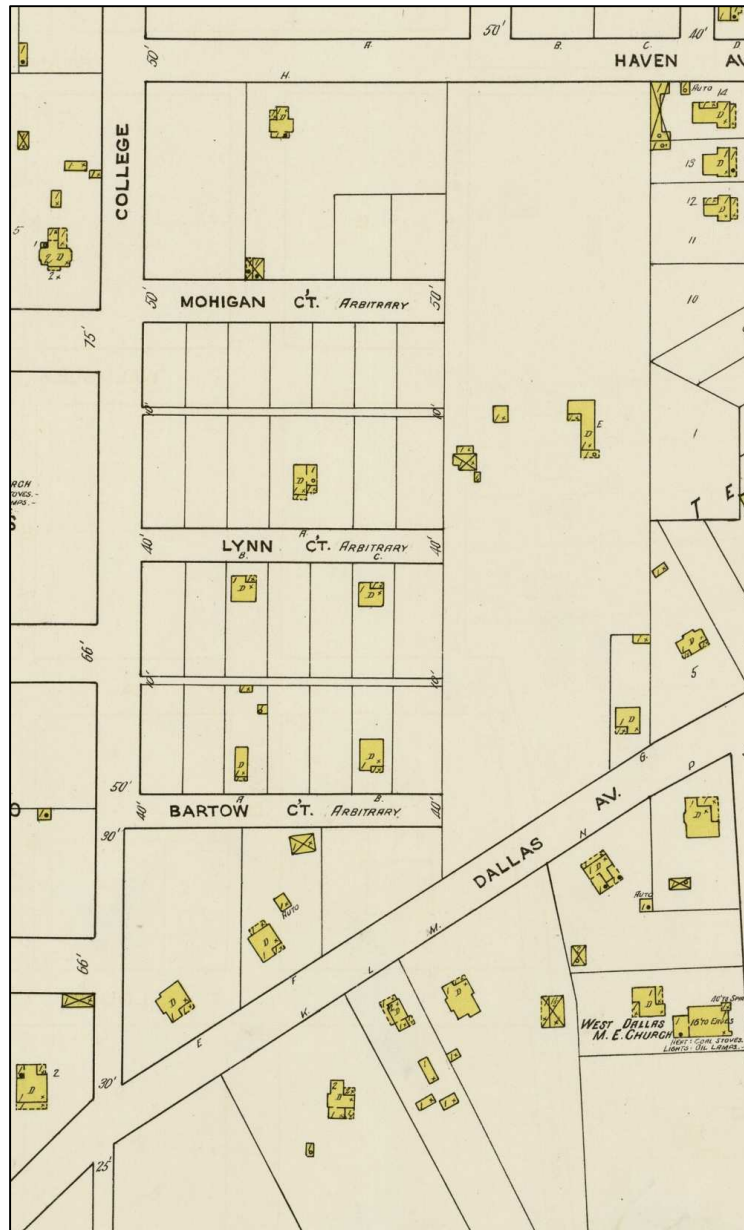
**B:** The small Robinson family house was moved to what is today 1015 Mobile Street. The Robinson Family Cemetery is located about 50 feet west of the backyard of that house location. It is uncertain whether moving the house, or starting the burials in 1879, occurred first.

**C:** Benjamin Robinson's wife Helen helped organize the area's residents to form a Church of Christ congregation, and his daughter Willie B. Robinson started teaching school in the family home. Soon a new "*Mt. Airy Academy*" building was erected on the opposite side of the Fort Worth Road, used for both the church services and school classes during the 1880s.

**D:** Youngest child Frank Menteith Robinson and his wife Hattie Jane (Locke) Robinson return to West Dallas in 1894 and live the final decades of their lives at 1022 Seale Street. The house continued to be occupied by their daughter Maybelle Ewing Robinson, who lived there until the end of her life in the 1975. I am uncertain when that house on Seale Street was initially constructed. Footprints for both the house at 1022 Seale and the house at 1015 Mobile are illustrated in the 1922 edition of the Sanborn Insurance maps. Neither house remains standing today.

**E:** During the 1920s Frank and Hattie Robinson's other daughter, Hattie Frank (Robinson) Churchill, and her husband J.D. Churchill build a new "yellow brick" house at 1009 Fort Worth Avenue, where they live most of the remainder of their lives. Though altered, and with new construction now situated on its original long front lawn, that house remains standing today.

Their son Ralph Churchill once remarked that as a boy the cove behind 1022 Seale Street was called "*Indian Hollow*".



1922 edition of Sanborn Insurance maps; Dallas, Texas-- detail from Sheet 582, Volume 5.

## Chain of title for the Robinson Family Cemetery:

An unofficial compilation of site ownership history

**1843-1867:** William Nelson Coombes (1803-1867) arrives here from Kentucky in 1843, and reportedly buys this land which had been claimed a year or two earlier by first permanent *White Settlers* Mabel and Charity Gilbert – an original claim and early sales transaction for which I have found no surviving records. The Coombes later file a claim for this square mile under the Peters Colony land grant program; but, as was typical for that slow procedure, their final patent of title -- headright to the chain-of-title-- is not granted until 1855 (Vol. F, page 390). Meanwhile an unpaid debt William N. Coombes left behind in Kentucky is brought to Dallas by an agent seeking payment. Coombes does not pay. With a possible lawsuit looming, in 1849 William Coombes sells his square mile land claim to son Isaac N. Coombes, though in the record William's second wife Rachel Coombes complains (Vol. B, Page 130). About a year and half later, son Isaac then deeds the south half of the William Coombes Survey's square mile back to his step-mother Rachel (Vol. B, Page 488). Isaac Coombes dies in 1854. The lawsuit to collect the unpaid debt from Kentucky finally prevails in a Dallas court. Coombes still will not pay. Probably unaware that the land title had already been transferred to other ownership, the Dallas County Sheriff then sells an unlocated 120 acres out of the south half of the William Coombes Survey at an 1857 auction on the Dallas Courthouse steps (Vol. E, Page 618.) The Coombes refuse to voluntarily locate a settlement boundary-line. Subsequently, a new lawsuit, now over land title, lingers in the courts from 1858 until the end of year 1866, when appeals end at the Texas Supreme Court with final judgment in William Coombes' favor. William dies shortly thereafter. His first wife's estate had never been settled. The entire family agreed to a partition of the southern half of the William Coombes Survey in 1867 (Vol. K; page 135). By that 1867 partition accord, son L.G. Coombes receives ~108 acres including the site of the future Robinson Family Cemetery.

**1868-February-28th:** L.G. Coombes sells this ~108 acres to his brother Z.E. Coombes. (Vol. K, Pages 372).

**1871-March-29th:** Z.E. Coombes sells ~ 80 acres of this to Texas newcomer John H. Stevens (Vol. O, page 121).

**1871-August-3<sup>rd</sup>:** Dr. John H. Stevens (alone) sells 12 acres in the northwest corner of his ~80 acre tract to Thomas Walker and J.D. Kerfoot (Vol. O, page 385).

**1872-December-21:** Kerfoot + Walker then sell those 12 acres to Benjamin Franklin Robinson, who has recently arrived in Dallas County. (Vol. S, page 38). Various Robinson family members live at various points on this 12 acre site for more than a century afterward.

In an affidavit dated 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1914, Frank M. Robinson remarks that John D. Kerfoot's name is often been misstated as "Kerford" (Vol.616, page 517).

**1872-October-12<sup>th</sup>:** Meanwhile Dr. John H. Stevens and his wife Mary (Armstrong) Stevens sell a half-interest to the remaining ~68 acres of the ~80 tract John Stevens had purchased in the William Coombes Survey to Mary's father, Reverend Samuel Armstrong (Vol. R, page 466). Dr. John Horace Stevens and his wife Mary Katherine (Armstrong) Stevens are the namesakes of today's *Stevens Park*. They live, along with Mary's parents, Samuel and Eliza Armstrong, and her step-brother, Dr. William Hora Armstrong, at a new farmhouse they had recent built at today's *Middlebrook Place*.

**1877-March-18<sup>th</sup>:** Eliza A.H. Armstrong, wife of Reverend Armstrong dies on this date according to an affidavit by daughter Mary A. (Armstrong) Stevens Stephenson (Vol. 129 page 224). She dies intestate. She has a surviving son by a prior marriage, John Chappell. Her estate has no probate administration. These becomes factors to understanding a later deed signed by Reverend Armstrong to Maybelle Robinson and her sister Willie Blanche Robinson; and eventually becomes kindling for a larger lawsuit between surviving daughter Mary (Armstrong) Stevens Stephenson and widowed daughter-in-law Ella V. Chappell.

**1877-April-13<sup>th</sup>:** Dr. John and Mary Stevens, along with their father-partner, Reverend Samuel Armstrong, sell a triangular 2+ acre parcel to Benjamin Franklin Robinson -- the property extending south down the hill from the family's original 12 acre tract to the Fort Worth wagon road (Vol. 35, page 182).

**1879-January -3<sup>rd</sup>:** Helen Jane (Acock) Robinson, wife of Benjamin F. Robinson, died and became (apparently) the first burial in the Robinson Family Cemetery. A grave had been dug on the Robinson property to move the burial of daughter Margaret S. Robinson (1846-1873) here, but her grave's original 1873 burial marker in Fish Trap Cemetery had washed away and the body could not be relocated; so, the empty new grave was used for Helen's burial instead. Margaret Helen Robinson, an infant daughter of Dr. R.G. Robinson and his wife Mary Elizabeth (Winston) Robinson, Robinson now has a Robinson Cemetery gravestone now "1879-1879". Most likely her burial would have been later during that year.

**1883-May-5<sup>th</sup>:** Benjamin F. Robinson sells all 14 acres of his William Coombes Survey land, both the 1872 initial twelve acre purchase from Kerfoot + Walker and the adjacent two acre 1877 purchase from the Stevens + Armstrong, to his unmarried daughters Maybelle Robinson and Willie Blanche Robinson (Vol. 64, page 158).

In this deed their ownership is undivided, but full title will pass to the survivor after the first death of either.

Benjamin Franklin Robinson then dies at age 77 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1884, and is buried in the family cemetery.

**1884-July-30<sup>th</sup>:** The three surviving brothers – R.G. Robinson, D.A. Robinson, and F.M. Robinson reiterate the sale of the same 14 acres to their sisters Maybelle and Willie Blanche Robinson. I can only imagine that this was intended to settle possible inheritance questions (Vol. 65, page 582).

**1884-August-23<sup>rd</sup>:** Signing as "*surviving husband of Mrs. Eliza Armstrong, Dec'd*", Reverend Samuel Armstrong reiterates his 1877 sale of the same 2 acres to sisters Maybelle Robinson and Willie B. Robinson. Again, I can only imagine that was intended to settle possible inheritance questions (Vol.72, page 272).

**1887-November-18<sup>th</sup>:** Frank M. Robinson reiterates the deed transfer of 30<sup>th</sup> July 1887, explaining that he had signed it when he was under the 21 years of age. (Vol. 83, page 541). This is the third deed granting this same 14 acre tract(s) to Maybelle and Willie B. Robinson. Frank M. Robinson was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1865. While minors in Texas can own land title, to sell land title it is (presently) required they be at least 18 years of age.

Though it does not pertain to the Robinson Family Cemetery site, it noted here that Maybelle Robinson and her sister, Willie Blanche Robinson, sell five acres off the east side of their 14 acre tract to G. King Meyr on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1884 (Vol. 67; page 256). And they sell the remainder of the two acre triangular tract along Fort Worth Avenue to J.A. Bishop on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1887 (Vol. 92, page 35), with its mortgage "release" affirmed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1894 (Vol. 168,page 242.)

**1895-May-31<sup>st</sup>:** Mabelle Robinson dies at age 35 years old. Her Last Will & Testament leaves all her property to her sister, Willie, who administers her estate. (Dallas County Probate file for Maybelle Robinson -- Case # 2078 -- which was found in PDF format online at the *UNT Portal To Texas History* website in April 2026.) Her burial is in the Robinson Family Cemetery. Full ownership of the 12 acres she and her sister had retained—including the cemetery -- goes to Willie B. Robinson.

**1909-February-4<sup>th</sup>:** Willie Blanche Robinson dies at age 52 (*The Dallas Morning News*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1909, page 7; "*Teachers Adopt Resolutions: Pay Tribute to Memory of the Late Miss Willie Robinson*".) Her burial is in the Robinson Family Cemetery. Neither she nor her sister Maybelle had ever married, neither ever had children. Willie died intestate, it is stated by her brother Frank in an affidavit dated 28<sup>th</sup> December 1910 (Vol. 510, page 230).

**1909-May-14<sup>th</sup>:** The plat of the Robinson Addition was filed by the three Robinson brothers into Dallas County Records (Map Vol. 1, page 217). Simultaneously a series of deeds allocated various lots inside the addition. The existing cemetery had been fitted into the north end of Lot 11, Block 2, which was deeded to Frank Menteith Robinson (Vol. 447, page 362). Undivided ownership of the northeast corner, the site of 1022 Seale Street, was granted to Maybelle Ewing Robinson, age 15, and her sister, Hattie Frank Robinson, age 14, two daughters of Frank M. Robinson. In Texas minors can own title to real estate. (Vol. 447, page 356). Various lots were also allocated to Frank's other two surviving brothers, D. A. Robinson (Vol. 447, page 363), and Robert G. Robinson (Vol. 447, page 357). About 2/3 acre at the northwest corner was deed to Ed. Lauderdale, who served as notary – possibly as payment for preparing plat and deed documents and making the filings (Vol. 447, page 364).

It is interesting to note that in 1913 Frank M. Robinson signed affidavit (Vol. 594, page 535) in which he states that his parents Benjamin Franklin Robinson and his wife Helen Robinson had died intestate, and there had been no administration upon the estate of either of them; further that neither of his deceased older sisters, Maybelle Robinson and Willie Blanche Robinson had ever married. Then Frank M. Robinson states that "*B.F. and Helen Robinson left as their only heirs at law, their three sons, R.G. Robinson, D.A. Robinson and F.M. Robinson, this affiant, and their two daughters, Willie B. Robinson and Maybelle Robinson, neither of whom ever married. And he further says that his father and mother left no other children, or descendants of deceased children*". This leaves me to wonder whether or not Frank M. Robinson in 1913 is aware that he had had an older step brother, John DeWilton Robinson (1834-1907) from his father's first marriage; or that he had a surviving nephew, ironically named Benjamin Franklin Robinson (1858-1924), and possibly a surviving niece, Fannie DeWilton Robinson (1855-?) – descendants of his father who might also be legal heirs to his father's estate.

Three of the children of Benjamin Franklin Robinson die in year 1909. First, daughter Willie B. Robinson dies in February. Then her brother Robert Gerard Robinson dies in August, in Henderson County where his Will was probated, according to an affidavit filed by his brother the next year (Vol. 510, page 230). The tombstone of R.G. Robinson in Athens Cemetery, Henderson County, Texas has the date of his death carved as: "Aug. 27, 1909" (FindAGrave, 2026).

Thirdly, brother David Atchison Robinson dies in September. *The Dallas Morning News* reports that D.A. Robinson dies in West Dallas on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1909 – 16 days after the death of his brother in Henderson County. Sole surviving child of B.F. Robinson, Frank, later affirms in an affidavit that his brother D.A. Robinson died a bachelor, and that he and the surviving children who are heirs of R.G. Robinson are the sole heirs of D.A. Robinson. (Vol. 616, page 536).<sup>3</sup> D. A. Robinson's is the last (known) burial in Robinson Cemetery.

Frank M. Robinson remains owner of the family cemetery, living with his wife and daughters at 1022 Seale Street (Dallas City Directory, 1931 and later 1943 Death Certificate of Hattie Locke Robinson). Frank M. Robinson dies on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1932 and his remains are buried in Laurel Land cemetery in Oak Cliff. His wife, Hattie Bertha (Locke) Robinson, who is born in Palo Pinto County, Texas on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 1874, dies in Dallas County on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, 1943 and her burial is also in Laurel Land cemetery. (FindAGrave – April 2026)

**1943-August-7<sup>th</sup>:** A long affidavit (Vol. 2425, pages 211-215) affirms that Frank Menteith Robinson died on August 22<sup>nd</sup> (*FindAGrave* quotes a Death Certificate, with Frank's death having actually been on August 21<sup>st</sup> and that his burial on August 22<sup>nd</sup>). He died intestate and there was no administration upon estate, there being no necessity for one. It goes on to state that Hattie Lock Robinson also died intestate in Dallas County on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1943 and there was no administration taken out upon her estate. It states that Mabelle Ewing Robinson and Hattie Frank Robinson, now wife of J.D. Churchill, were the only heirs of law of said Frank Menteith Robinson and Hattie Robinson, deceased, then lists the real estate assets left by the death of F.M. and Hattie Locke Robinson and divides the various tracts between their two heirs – except the cemetery, where "*it is mutually understood and agree that the said Mrs. Hattie Frank Robinson Churchill, and Mabelle Ewing Robinson, shall each own an undivided 1/2 interest in and to the cemetery lot, hereinabove mentioned, and known as Lot No. 11, Block 2/4008, Robinson Addition, addition to West Dallas, on Mobile Street in the City of Dallas, Dallas County, Texas*".

It is possible that the estates of Mabelle Ewing Robinson and/or Hattie Frank Robinson Churchill made some sort of disposition to the ownership title for this cemetery, but since Dallas Central Appraisal District cites no further ownership transfer, I did not attempt to search for further deeds in the Dallas County Deed Records. Nor did I search for Probate Case records of either Mabelle Ewing Robinson's or Hattie Frank (Robinson) Churchill's estate settlements.



Robinson family cemetery – April 2026 – view looking southwest

(End)

## FOOTNOTES:

Reference citations for real estate deeds, affidavits, and pertinent newspaper articles have been cited in the text above, so will not be listed again here as footnotes.

1. 2020-July-31<sup>st</sup>; Rachel Stone, *Oak Cliff ADVOCATE*; copyright Advocate Magazine; internet April 2026, 4 pages; "*Hidden West Dallas cemetery to receive historical marker*".
2. Harriett Sue (Churchill) Krayer has been a primary source of information about the Robinson Family Cemetery. Sue happens to be a childhood neighbor and Rosemont Elementary School classmate of mine. Firstly Sue has verbally provided with her personal recollections about her grandparents, parents, and the Robinson cemetery.

Sue Krayer has also provided me with a copy of four typewritten pages of *Notes about West Dallas* – undated, unsigned. These notes appear to be someone's initial "rough draft", containing blanks and "guesses" which I interpret that this was intended for revision, never completed.

One statement in these pages recalls "*putting Grandma in Marg's grave*", by which I deduce that the author was (probably) a grandchild of Helen Robinson, the wife of Benjamin Franklin Robinson who was buried in a grave originally dug for reburial of her daughter Margaret.

Another remark says that the cemetery that "*is owned by School Teacher Granddaughter Miss Maybelle Robinson*" – a statement which doesn't seem aware that in 1943 the cemetery had been jointly deeded to both Maybelle and her sister Hattie, Sue's grandmother. From this I presume that the grandchild who typed these notes was neither Maybellen nor Hattie, but (more likely) a child of Dr. Robert G. Robinson. Since Maybelle Robinson died in 1975, Hattie in 1976; I deduce that these notes were (probably) typed between 1943 and 1975.

Sue Krayer further provided me with a copy of :

*"Robinson Family History: Descendants of Gerrard Robinson"*, by Robert W. Robinson, dated 1980, 25 pages – a genealogical and biographical history of the Robinson family in America. The author appears to be the father of the Robbie Robinson who has recently been providing caretaking work for the Robinson Cemetery. Finding minor errors, I have written a separate list of corrections for this text.

This genealogy also refers to a family history account, titled "*Our Ancestors*", written by Maybelle Ewing Robinson, of unspecified date and unknown length. I did not receive, or read, a copy of her family account.

3. Settlement of the estate of David A. Robinson (Uncle "Ach") is left as a bit of a mystery. *The Dallas Morning News* reports his death on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1909 in an article run the next day: 1909-September-13<sup>th</sup>, *Dallas Morning News*, page 9, "*West Dallas Farmer Dies*". Then nearly four full years later, in 1913-August-12<sup>th</sup>; *Dallas Morning News*, page 16, "*County and Probate Court*", there is a short notice posted: "*Estate of D.A. Robinson, dec'd; petition to probate will dismissed at request and cost of applicant.*" Four months last, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1914 there is an affidavit by last surviving sibling, F.M. Robinson, saying that D.A. Robinson "*died a bachelor and died intestate during September 1909, shortly after the death of R.G. Robinson.*" F.M. Robinson's affidavit then lists the heirs of D.A. Robinson as being himself and the surviving children of deceased brother R.G. Robinson. (Vol. 616, page 536). On the same page (Vol. 616, page 536) Forest W. Robinson and Richard Gano Robertson, sons of R.G. Robinson, by Quit Claim deed, for a price of \$5.00, sell Lot 7, Block 2 of the Robinson Addition to H.C. Haynes, who turns out to be a Vice-President at real estate title company. This appears possibly to be part of the settlement of the estate of David A. Robinson. In the Dallas County Probate Records, I looked through the Indexes of Vol. 9, 10, 12, 12, and 13, spanning years 1903-1920, and found no listing of any probate proceeding for any member of this Robinson family, including D.A. Robinson. This somewhat odd situation does not involve the Robinson Family Cemetery and I have researched no further.
4. *FindAGrave*: burial of Agnes Earle Robinson (1907-1911); Pleasant Mound Cemetery; Dallas County, Texas (April 2026).

(End of Footnotes)