

Texas Historical Commission (MC), 10/2/78

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Gregg County (Order #5355)

Location: .9 mi. E of intersection of US 80 and US 271, Gladewater.

ROSEDALE CEMETERY*

WHEN JOHN KETTLE ARMSTRONG AND HIS WIFE SARAH BOUGHT 160 ACRES HERE IN 1844, THEY WERE AMONG THE FIRST SETTLERS. SARAH DIED IN 1856 AND ARMSTRONG SET ASIDE THIS TRACT FOR A CEMETERY. TRADITION SAYS THE ARMSTRONG SLAVES WERE INTERRED OUTSIDE THE GROUNDS. AFTER ARMSTRONG'S DEATH IN 1860, HIS SECOND WIFE MARGARET FISHER MARRIED A MR. STEWART. FOR YEARS THE ARMSTRONGS AND STEWARTS ALLOWED EVERYONE TO USE THE GRAVEYARD WHICH WAS CALLED "STEWART CEMETERY".

AFTER THE RAILROAD STARTED THE TOWN OF GLADEWATER, A CEMETERY ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED IN 1911 AND CHANGED THE NAME OF THE GRAVEYARD TO "ROSEDALE". AN ADDITIONAL FIVE ACRES WERE PURCHASED FROM J. K. ARMSTRONG AND HIS WIFE. "PERMITS" FOR BURIAL WERE SOLD INSTEAD OF PLOTS. WHEN THE EAST TEXAS OIL BOOM BEGAN, THIS POLICY ALLOWED ALL SURFACE AND MINERAL RIGHTS TO REMAIN WITH THE ASSOCIATION. IN 1932 TWO OIL WELLS WERE DRILLED ON THE BURIAL GROUND. THE ASSOCIATION USED THE PROFITS TO BUILD A CARETAKER'S COTTAGE, ROADS, A ROCK FENCE AND TO LANDSCAPE THE GROUNDS.

IN 1973, AFTER 41 YEARS, THE WELLS WERE PLUGGED. STILL IN USE, THE BURIAL GROUND HAS ABOUT 265 UNMARKED AND 750 MARKED GRAVES. MANY OF THE OLDER PLOTS ARE COVERED WITH LARGE RED ROCKS. **

*3/4 inch lettering
**1/2 inch lettering
***1/4 inch lettering

(1978)***

APPROVED
Truett Latimer

by Truett Latimer Resd 11-13-78

FILE COPY - DO NOT REMOVE

5355

ROSEDALE CEMETERY

By Elizabeth Moore (Mrs. John) Osteen

RECEIVED
JUL 27 1978
THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Rosedale Cemetery is located inside the city limits of Gladewater Gregg County, Texas. It is on Highway 80, 9/10 of a mile east of the inter-section with Highway 271. About 265 un-marked graves are in the cemetery and about 750 graves have either funeral home markers or monuments. The first (earliest) marked grave is that of Sarah Armstrong, wife of John Kettle Armstrong, 1797 - 1838. This monument has incorrect dates, for the Armstrong family did not come to Texas until 1844 and the first death was that of Sarah Armstrong, who died in 1856.

dates?

Probably one of the first families to move into the area of the present-day Rosedale Cemetery were the John Kettle Armstrongs. Family tradition says they brought slaves with them and some are buried outside the back fence of the cemetery; however no markers are there.

In 1844 when the Armstrongs moved to the area, it was in Upshur County with Gilmer as the county seat. The 1850 census of Upshur County Texas shows:

John K.(Kettle) Armstrong	m. 44-	b. Ga.	# 422 farmer - value \$3,000
S.A.(Sarah)	f. 36	b. Ala.	
John F. (Franklin)	m 15	b. Ala.	
M.A.(Matilda)	f 13	b. Ala.	
N.C. (Neoma)	f 13	b. Ala.	
Nancy	f 11	b. Ala.	
Wm. P.	m 9	b. Ala.	
S. M.(Martha)	f 7	b. Ala.	
Martin A.	m 5	b. Texas	
D. M.(Dora)	f 3	b. Texas	

The first record of land bought by John Kettle Armstrong is recorded in the Upshur County courthouse in Gilmer, Texas: "21 November 1851- B. N. Hampton sold to John K. Armstrong 160 acres of land in the L.J. Rigsby Survey- Abstract # 309 - North of Sabine River and 14 Miles south of Gilmer, Upshur County, Texas.

family after the Texas migration 2

5355

The first death in the Armstrong ~~was~~ Sarah, wife of John Kettle Armstrong. For the burial place, a ^{tract} ~~place~~ for their cemetery was chosen. John K. was soon re-married to Margaret Fisher. They produced three children before his death in 1860.

Two of the Armstrong young men served in the Civil War. One was killed and buried in a far Southern state. The other returned and is buried in the ^{family} cemetery.

As far as present research reveals, there is one Union soldier buried in the cemetery - James Moore - 1841- 1914, was born ⁱⁿ and served ^{from} the State of Pennsylvania.

Margaret Fisher ^{-widow of John Kettle Armstrong-} Armstrong later married a Mr. Stewart and for some time afterward the family cemetery was called the Stewart Cemetery.

For many years, the Armstrong - Stewarts allowed other families to use the Stewart Cemetery. The care of the cemetery was provided by the men and women of the community of less than 300 people. They met on Cemetery Day, the first Tuesday of each month, for weeding, planting flowers, cleaning grave stones and visiting. In 1940, Mrs. O. G. Johnston recalled one particular Cemetery Day in 1885, "The men were putting up a new fence around the grounds. 'My uncle, John K. Armstrong, Jr., who owned the land then, said 'Now men take a little time to think before you go any futher so you'll be sure and fence in enough land for all future needs.' After due consideration, the gathering that day, decided 'just to be safe' they would fence in one acre."

Following 1885 there was almost a half century of tranquility in the small community. The railroad ^{had} came through in 1873, two years after Upshur county had been divided. The Stewart cemetery was then in Gregg County and the name of Gladewater was given to the small town growing about the train station and the post office.

The Stewart Cemetery was used for the local residents and tenderly cared for by the men and women at the Cemetery working each month. In 1911, the ladies decided to organise a Cemetery Association and re-name the cemetery

"Rosedale". Officers elected were Mrs. A.F. Beamer, President, Mrs. Will Hendrix, Vice President, Mrs. L.J. Everett, Secretary-treasurer and Mrs. F.E. Stancil, Commissioner.

The Rosedale Cemetery Association soon realized that the one acre fenced in 1885 was not enough. So J.K. Armstrong and wife E.A. deeded to Mrs. A.F. Beamer, president of the association, and her successors in office, 6 acres, known as Armstrong land, with the original one acre being donated. The additional 5 acres were purchased for \$200.00, ^{a sum of money} lent to the association by E.T. Norton, interest free. Every day became Cemetery Day as the ladies paid off the debt - by making quilts for one dollar each, giving box suppers, serving meals on election days, producing minstrels, having baseball games and charging admission.

As the debt was being paid, life in Gladewater was gradually changing. A few men went to war, several sawmills were established, a few industries were added, a new brick ^{schoolhouse} school was built, a newspaper was started and slowly a few more people moved to Gladewater.

In March, 1931, the picture changed. Oil was discovered in East Texas. Gladewater almost overnight grew from less than 500 people to a teeming mass of over 10,000 persons.

Through some unusual foresight, the cemetery association had (in 1911) decided to sell "permits" for burial instead of lots. The permits were not transferable, the buyer selected the grave spaces and designated the persons for whom they were intended. ^{under} This method of selling "permits" for burial, with no deeds given, the sites ^{were} just registered by the commissioner, allowing all surface and mineral rights to remain in the possession of the association. The officers could lease the portion of unused land, to drill for oil.

The Association appointed Mrs. L.J. Everett and Mrs. F. E. Stancil to enter into a contract with Farland Oil Company of Houston, Texas, to drill two wells in 1932. The Association received \$13,000 cash for the transaction and a 1/8 royalty to all oil produced. The oil company required that the area around the two wells not be used for burials as long as the wells were producing.

Improvements were started on the cemetery. A five-room modern cottage was built for a full-time custodian. The grounds were landscaped, flowers planted, roads built and a picturesque pergola was erected on the north side of the cemetery. A rock fence (a nearly lost art work) was built across the front and the two large rock posts have the following inscriptions in concrete:

ROSEDALE CEMETERY

Organized 1911

Left one:

- Mrs. A.F. Beamer, Pres.
- Mrs. Will Hendrix, Vice Pres.
- Mrs. L.J. Everett, Sec-Treas.
- Mrs. F.E. Stancil, Comm.

1933

- Mrs. L.J. Everett, Pres.
- Mrs. J.P. Jackson, Vice Pres.
- Mrs. J.T. Jeter, Sec.- Treas.
- Mrs. F.E. Stancil, Comm.

ROSEDALE CEMETERY

Right Post:

- Honoring the
- Memory of Our
- Dead
- Beautification
- Committee
- Mrs. L.J. Everett
- Chairman
- Mrs. J.T. Jeter
- Mrs. F.E. Stancil

Originally in the arithmetic is erroneous. See the letter at back.

That was 1933. The two wells were plugged in January of 1973, after forty-two years. As long as the wells were producing, burial permits were not available, but since that time, the vacant land has been surveyed and marked, and there are about 500 spaces available.

During the oil boom days (1931-1942), many spaces inside the old cemetery area were used. In the back of the old cemetery, there is a large plot that had not been used. Many of the oil field workers, who came looking for jobs, lost their babies- so in this area - many were buried. After the oil boom settled to an even tempo, many transient workers moved away, and few came back to mark the baby graves. A few monuments and funeral markers remain to tell the story but most of the funeral markers are un-readable. One funeral home marker (now gone) told the story of one "J.B. Darnell, died 7 December, 1934, about 32 years old."

Another old monument in the back of the cemetery has caused much interest. It is about 8 feet tall with the notation: "Christine Thompson Cowans, born in Pertshire, Scotland 1832, died 1874. There are no other Cowans buried in the cemetery and after research of Cowans living in the area and queries in Genealogical magazines, no record was found. During Gladewater's centennial year (1973), a great-niece of Mrs. Cowan's came and told ^{the community} that Christina was the wife of the railroad foreman who was building the railroad in 1873/74. The family went west with the construction group and some time in the 1900's her daughters returned and had the monument erected.

Dr. Tom Armstrong, a young veterinarian in Gladewater, and a direct descendant of the first Armstrong, tells about the incorrectly dated monuments placed at the early graves. Tom thought his father, Tom, Sr., had erected the monuments in the early 1930's when Tom, Jr., was a child. ^{However,} In recent years as Tom, Jr., was going through his father's papers, he found that his father knew the correct dates. Now he does not know who put the incorrectly dated monuments up - perhaps an aunt ^{or} uncle. The earliest graves were covered with large red rocks and you can plainly see one rock scratched with "J.K. Armstrong".

The officers of the Rosedale Cemetery were as listed on the entrance plaques. Mrs. L.J. Everett served as president until about 1960. Mrs. S.D. Todd was elected president and served until her death in 1970. Written records were very sparsely kept during these years or at least they were not passed down to the present time. Some of the other officers have been: Mrs. J.E. Sport, Mrs. Grady Coleman, Mrs. Asa Phillips, Mrs. Bert Bray, Mrs. E.T. Norton, Mrs. Brazzil, Mrs. Simmons, Mrs. Rollins, Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Lucille Paine, Mrs. Rupert York, Mrs. R.W. Burnett, Miss Hazel Ponder and Mr. Jim McComie. The present officers of the association are: Mrs. John Osteen, president, Mrs. Bert Newman, Vice president, Mrs. Jean Adams, treasurer, Mrs. Rupert York, secretary and Mrs. Pat Dake, commissioner.

Bibliography:

1850 census, Upshur County, Texas

Upshur County Court Records, 21 November 1851

Gregg County, Texas Deed Records - Volume 27, page 439-441

Story Written About Cemetery, by Mrs. L.W. Pelphrey - printed in

Shreveport Times 1 December 1940 and in Gladewater Tribune 24 February 1941

Unpublished History of the Armstrong Family by Dr. Tom Armstrong of
Gladewater

Gladewater Centennial Book, 1873- 1973 , published 1973, Nauty Byrd Mayer,
Editor.

Rosedale Cemetery group to dedicate marker Saturday

The Rosedale Cemetery Association is planning a special marker dedication Saturday at 10 a.m. to memorialize the unmarked graves of about 30 children.

The marker will dedicate "Babyland," an area within the cemetery where a minimum of 29 children were buried between 1931 and 1942, said association president Elizabeth Osteen. Information on the children buried there is not available to the public, she added.

"In the Oil Boom days, people lost their babies while they were living here and then they moved on," Mrs. Osteen said. "They never

came back to mark the graves." Only five or six were marked with temporary markers.

During the early years, cemetery records left much to be desired, she said, but she does have some records on the children buried in "Babyland," located near the rear of the cemetery to the right of the pagoda.

Rosedale Cemetery is on Hwy. 80 across from Brookshire's.

The Rosedale Cemetery Association supplied the marker, and Mrs. Osteen said the group has been planning the event for some time.

The public is cordially invited to attend.



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

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December 6, 2001

Bob Barbee, Commissioner Precinct 3
Gregg County, Texas
Route 3, Box 648
Longview, Texas 75604

Re: Rosedale Cemetery

Dear Commissioner Barbee:

The Rosedale Cemetery Association requests assistance from Gregg County in the repair of the streets at the entrance and within the cemetery. Originally the principle streets in the cemetery apparently were of gravel and asphalt. They are very much in need of repair and the association does not have the funds to do this work.

Rosedale Cemetery is a very historic cemetery in Gregg County having received an Official Texas Historical Marker in 1978. Through some unusual foresight, the association, in 1911, decided to sell "permits" instead of lots. This meant, that when oil was discovered in the 1930s and two wells were drilled on the cemetery property, all the royalties went to the association for major improvements and upkeep of the cemetery. It was known as the "World's Richest Cemetery". The wells were plugged in January of 1972.

The Rosedale Cemetery Association and the Gregg County Historical Commission will appreciate any assistance Gregg County might provide to re-pave these cemetery streets.

Respectfully submitted,

Norman Black, D.D.S., Chairman