

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR

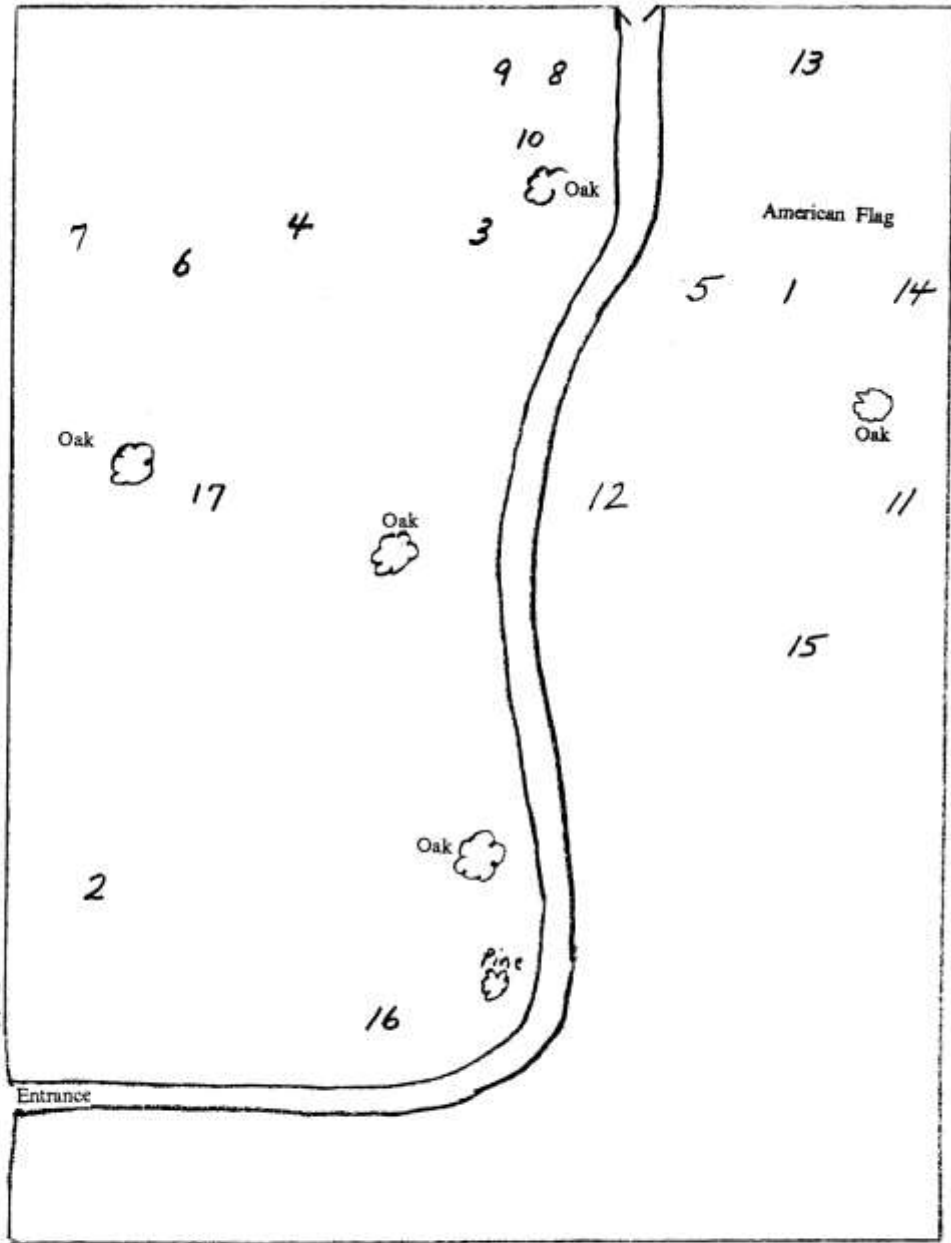


OAK HILL CEMETERY

Moorefield, West Virginia

Compiled by Elizabeth Wolfe Whitener

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Oak Hill Cemetery
Map for directions only (NOT to scale)

Olivet Drive

To Moorefield

Oak Hill Cemetery

Oak Hill Cemetery is located on Paskell Hill, just east of Olivet Cemetery with Duffy Hill Drive separating the two cemeteries. According to Hardy County Courthouse records, the Cemetery occupies some two acres. It is bounded on the east with tall pine trees and a quite appropriate log type fence. Spaced among the grave sites are huge, virgin oak trees. President of Oak Hill Cemetery board of directors, Omer Washington, said that he had been told by members of the Halterman family, who had lived just up the road for years, that those giant and serene oak trees had “always been there.” A deed dated 1903 establishes the already existence of Oak Hill Cemetery. Both Omer Washington and Mollie Harvey remembered the cemetery property as having been gifted by Fanny Paskel in documents prepared by “Buddy” Bean.

The Oak Hill Cemetery sign hanging over the entrance way to this secluded spot on the hill is of raised letters, designed and made by local resident Earl Simms. Framed by both the flag of our country and of the State of West Virginia, its elegant simplicity lends credence to the dignity, respect, and loving care of the Oak Hill Cemetery. The carved Oak Hill Cemetery sign hanging in the exit gateway was designed and hand made by Ed Cole, grandson of Angus and Christine Cole; both are buried in the Cemetery.

An earlier board of directors of the Cemetery included Angus Cole (1889-1973), Orpheus “Shook” G. Peck (1901-1978), Burns H. Smith (1898-1950), and William G. Washington (1885-1949). While he was not a member of the board, Dabney Scott was an active supporter and participant in the maintenance of the Cemetery. All of these early members of the board of directors and Mr. Dabney Scott are buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery. It was this board of directors that first fenced the Cemetery in the 1930s. Some fifty years later (in the late 1980s) and with the help of Allen Crites of Petersburg and his tractor to drill post holes, the Cemetery fence was replaced by current president of the board and grandson of William G. Washington, Omer Washington.

In his memory, Washington said that maintenance service at the Cemetery had been provided prior to 1975 by Mr. Conway Turner of Moorefield. While he was still in high school in 1975, Washington began care of the Cemetery. After school and/or on Saturday, he and his push lawn mower kept the Cemetery mowed even during the hottest period of the summer. A near neighbor, Mrs. Myrtle Pickard, carried a large container of ice water or ice tea to him and paused to reminisce about life of the past. In 1983, the then board of directors approved the purchase of a weed eater for use at the Cemetery. Washington acquired and used one there until 1995 when an agreement with Olivet Cemetery board of directors was finalized, and brothers Chester and Jeff Kelly began to provide care of Oak Hill Cemetery in addition to their work with Olivet Cemetery.

With its stately virgin oaks, Oak Hill Cemetery is a quiet and secluded final resting site of deceased ancestors, family members, and friends of the Black community of Moorefield. Each November 11th, Carlton Hillard, Conway Turner, and sometimes Jim Cole, places a small American Flag on the grave of each veteran to honor our American soldiers on Veterans Day.

Some Oak Hill Cemetery Grave Sites

Note: Numbers within () correspond with numbers on the attached Oak Hill Cemetery Tour Map

In their original handwritten work, Clifton and Lila Funkhouser recorded a total of eighty-two identified burial sites when they completed their 1975 census of the Oak Hill Cemetery. Four of these identified grave sites are of the 1800s. Current president of the board of directors of the

Cemetery, Omer Washington is working to complete a detailed plat of the Cemetery. During a walk through the Cemetery, he pointed out grave sites that are unmarked. These appear to pre-date the earliest marked sites.

The following sites are among those identified and recorded by the Funkhousers in their 1975 survey of Oak Hill Cemetery.

- Of record, the earliest site is that of (1) Milly Method who was born in 1813 and died 1878.
- (2) Aaron Howard was born in 1809 and died in 1892, some thirty years after the Civil War.
- (3) Orpheus Calvin died in 1898. No birthdate is recorded for him.
- (4) Alice Randolph was born in 1870 and died at the age of 26, in 1896.
- (5) Maggie Method was born in 1877 and died as a young woman in 1895.

Located near the northwest corner of the Cemetery and in the Ford Family plot is an ancient and worn wooden grave marker. Washington said he had been told it marked the grave of (6) Hattie Ford. Hattie was a sister to Ad Ford and had been "Nanny" to Mrs. Myrtle Pickard when Pickard was a child. The Pickards lived within a quarter of a mile down the hill from the Oak Hill Cemetery.

A second handmade and wooden carved marker identifies the grave of (7) Robert "Rob" Ford (1905-1992). Although it is not confirmed, one of his fourteen children perhaps made this marker with caring hands and a loving heart.

The Jefferson family plot near the north side of the Cemetery contains the burial site of (8) James R. Jefferson (1854 to 1926) and his wife, (9) Hattie Jefferson (1857 to 1948). Molly Harvey told this story of the Jefferson family: "You know the Jefferson lot in the Cemetery. There is a little heart-shaped stone just outside the lot. Mrs. Jefferson told us she was a little girl when her mother was freed [from slavery]. Somebody drove her [mother of Mrs. Jefferson] here [to Moorefield] in a wagon and let her out to walk. That's how Mrs. Jefferson first met her mother. They moved to Washington, D. C., but Mrs. Jefferson made her children promise to bring her back to be buried, and they did." Descendants of the family still live in the Washington, D. C. area. They have returned the remaining burial sites of the family plot to the board of directors of the cemetery for use by those who may be unable to buy their own plot.

According to recollections of Mollie Harvey who lived in the Old Courthouse apartments on Winchester Avenue in Moorefield, part of the Church property on Allegheny Street in Moorefield was George Loveage property. Wife of George W. Loveage, Betty, is buried in an unmarked grave site in Oak Hill Cemetery, as is Virgie Loveage who willed property to the Church. "That's where the Community Center is [on Allegheny Street]." (10) George W. Loveage (1841-1916) is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. "George was a slave, but I don't know who owned him," Ms. Harvey said. George W. Loveage was an original Trustee of the Asbury Church of Moorefield.

Mollie Harvey also remembered (11) Thornton Ball (1841 to 1927)... "a stooped, little old slave." Thornton Ball is buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery. A brother, Lovette Ball, lived his life in Wardensville. Lovette Ball died in the past several years and is buried in the Wardensville area.

According to recollections of 86-year-old Mary Redman, who lived on Funnel Street in Moorefield, Grandma Mary Catherine Boyd is buried in an unmarked site in Oak Hill Cemetery. She was a slave to the Seymour family. Mary Catherine Boyd's husband, Peter, was also a slave but is not buried at Oak Hill. Mrs. Redman didn't know where he was buried. Father of the Seymour family bought him [Peter Boyd] and gave him to his daughter. Mrs. Redman tells the story of Grandma Boyd: One day the children were outside playing. They came running and shouting, "White man comin'! White man comin'!" The owner of Peter Boyd was coming to whip the mother of the children, Mary Catherine Boyd. [The reason for this whipping was not known. Mrs. Redman said it could have been for

anything.] Grandma Boyd watched as he [the white man] rode his horse nearer and finally stopped. She had grabbed a nearby axe and kept it hidden behind her. After he stopped his horse, Grandma Boyd showed the axe and said, "You get off that horse, I'm gonna cut you with this." The man looked at her, turned his horse, and rode away. This story was told by Omer Washington whose mother had told it to him as Mrs. Redman retold it. Mrs. Redman's family was Rhubottoms of Frostburg, MD, but she had lived all her life in Moorefield.

Mrs. Jeanette Simms said her great-grandmother, Martha Brooks, was a slave at "The Willows." Mrs. Simms didn't know the name of her owner, but said great-grandmother Brooks is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. Great-grandfather (12) Andrew Brooks, husband of Martha, is also buried in Oak Hill. Andrew Brooks was grandfather of Nettie Brooks. Records show that the "Mill Island" properties were purchased by the Seymour family in the 1800s, and that Felix Seymour, a wealthy planter and cattleman, built the brick mansion, "Mill Island," about 1847. When his daughter, Sallie, married Maury Randolph of Cumberland, Maryland, Felix Seymour gave the young couple acreage on the west side of the river from his home, "Mill Island." A sturdy log house, barns, and other farm buildings stood on the property, in 1856 Mr. Seymour had a substantial brick dwelling built adjacent to and attached to the log house for the young Randolph couple. This house came to be known as The Willows."

Nettie Brooks, age 91 at the time of the September 1998 interview, remembered and spoke of many events of her younger days. She said that Mr. Gilbert Bean and Poppa (William and Kate Brooks were her parents) raised corn and wheat on the farm near the Bean's Mill on South Main Street in Moorefield. The corn and wheat were ground at the old mill. Mrs. Brooks thought the arrangement must have been "share cropping."

Grandparents of Nettie Brooks were Martha (Mary Jane was her given name) and Andrew Brooks. Her grandmother was a slave and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. [In Oak Hill Cemetery, Martha (Mary Jane) Brooks does not have a date of birth, she died in 1930.] Ms. Brooks' grandfather (12) Andrew Brooks (1840 to 1912) was born free, the son of slaves. Kittie Brooks was great-grandmother of Nettie Brooks. She said, "My great-grandmother, Kittie Brooks, was a slave with the McNeill family of Willow Wall. She was freed when her master died." Ms. Brooks said that her grandmother, Martha (Mary Jane) was also a slave of the McNeill family. When a McNeill daughter married a Randolph of "The Willows," Martha was given to the daughter. Kittie was freed before grandfather, Andrew Brooks, was born. Grandmother Martha (Mary Jane) met Grandfather Andrew at "The Willows."

Nettie Brooks related this story of Emily Duffy Ford. "Emily Duffy Ford is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery. She was a slave and used to tell us about the Civil War – how Virginia wanted to have slaves, but West Virginia didn't." Emily Duffy Ford is not listed in the Funkhouser Cemetery census of 1975. She, along with other, rests in one of the unmarked burial sites. *[See pages 7-8 in this booklet for another interview, with Emily Duffy Ford – Aunt Em.]*

(13) Angus Cole (1889-1973) and Christine Cole (1902-1983), grandparents of Ed Cole who designed and constructed the Oak Hill Cemetery sign which hangs at the northern exit gate of the Cemetery. Angus Cole was a member of the original board of directors of Oak Hill Cemetery.

(14) Orpheus G. "Shook" Peck (1901-1978), a member of the original board of directors of Oak Hill Cemetery.

(15) Burns H. Smith (1898-1950), a member of the original board of directors of Oak Hill Cemetery.

(16) William G. Washington (1885-1949), a member of the original board of directors of Oak Hill Cemetery.

(17) Dabney M. Scott (1902-1998), a supporter and worker for Oak Hill Cemetery.

Other Oak Hill burial sites include Ernest Ford (1907-1960) and his wife, S. Elizabeth Ford (1907-1977). They were grandparents of Wade, Amelia, and William Ford who died during the 1914 flu epidemic and are buried in unmarked sites in the Cemetery. It is said that William Ford was a fine person, and a hard worker. Elizabeth Ford was granddaughter of William and Amelia Hychew, and a niece of Wade Hychew. "Mr. Bill" William Hychew died during the flu epidemic of 1914.

In 1998 and after having read the Self-Guided Tour booklet on Oak Hill Cemetery, Mary M. Redman wrote a note and mailed it along with a copy of a 1939 interview of "Aunt Em" Duffy. The interview was published in *The Moorefield Examiner*. "Aunt Em" is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. A copy of the interview (see pages 7-8 in this booklet) as published in the paper is included with this updated Self-Guided Tour of Oak Hill Cemetery.

During the years of Moorefield's "gas" street lights (early 1900s), the lights needed to be lit each evening at dusk and extinguished again in the early morning hours. "Stogie" Rowe of Moorefield and a member of the Rowe family buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery served as "lamp lighter" for a number of years. Following Rowe's service, Fred Brooks served as "lamp lighter" until electricity arrived on the downtown streets of Moorefield. Boyd McWorther, an early resident of Moorefield, gave a picture of the old "lamplighter" (Stogie Rowe) to Ms. Mollie Harvey who was instrumental in having the picture hung in the Asbury Church on Allegheny Street in Moorefield.

Notes on Asbury Church, Allegheny Street

The first church of the Black families of Moorefield was in the same area as the current church on Allegheny Street. Nettie Brooks said that when a minister was sent here in '63, he found the church in such terrible condition, leaking roof and much worse, it was determined that a new church must be built. A marker in back of today's Asbury Church is dated 1870. Ms. Brooks said that Miss Willie J. Lowery (1891-1960 and buried in Oak Hill Cemetery) and Miss Rachel Lowery solicited money to pay for the building. P. E. Thrush, an undertaker with his establishment on Main Street in Moorefield, gave money for the church roof. Each trustee of the church and each steward was assessed \$25 plus their labor for the new church. Ladies of the church held suppers, dinners, cake-walks and more to raise money for the church.

Prior to P. E. Thrush's establishment of a funeral home service in Moorefield, John and Jane Redman were undertakers who cared for the bodies and funerals of Moorefield Black families.

“AUNT EM” DUFFEY

The following is from a 1939 interview with “Aunt Em” Duffey at her home. A copy of the 1939 printing of the interview as published in *The Moorefield Examiner* was provided by Mary M. Redman in 1998 with a note saying, “I read the Self-Guided Tour booklet on Oak Hill Cemetery and Olivet Cemetery. They were very interesting. I noticed a couple of our born slaves buried in Oak Hill Cemetery were not mentioned. My great-grandmother, “Aunt Em” Duffy was buried there. I attended the services there. I don't remember where her plot is, I was just a youngster. The other ones were probably buried there also.”

“AUNT EM” DUFFEY

(As published in *The Moorefield Examiner* in 1939)

When we wrote up Bill Hichew several weeks ago, we said he was the last of Moorefield's born slaves. But we knew before the paper was out that we had made a mistake. “Aunt Phoebe” Turner is one and so is “Aunt Em” Duffey.

We went over to see Aunt Em in her little house along the Fork and she was sitting in her spotless room avoiding the heat. Not having seen her for several years, we were impressed by how young and well she looked but she said she was “feelin’ pretty grunty.” She said that if she only felt as well as people told her she looked, she guessed she would just tear things apart, but her legs bother her. She does her own housekeeping for herself and the son who lives with her, even though she has to do a little of it and rest a while before doing the remainder. She said that keeping chickens made her run around too much, but she did like to have her own. Except for the last couple of years, she did her own gardening.

We asked her how old she was and she said, “I don't rightly know. But when the war was over, the Big War, that is, I was old enough to wait tables and on Mistress. Parran Parsons says that I was about nine years old at that time.” So we figured that Aunt Em was born around 1856. Her father was Sol Gray, whom she tells us did not come to a very good end, and her mother later married John Redmond; many of us remember “Aunt Jane” who lived by the bridge.

After the war, the Bakers (Mr. Billy) built a house for Jane and her children and they lived near Durgon for some time until they moved up on South Fork. Emma began to work out about this time, starting with “Miss Sallie Welton,” wife of Mr. Felix B. She stayed with them for several years and later worked for Garrett Cunninghams, Misses Fillie and Betty Welton, Mrs. George Fisher – in fact, Aunt Em says, “I reckon I worked for everybody on the Branch – that is, all the big folks.”

She told us that she used to walk to Petersburg from Mr. Welton's to go to a picnic and dance, dance all night and walk home again in time to go to work the next day. She says, “Ain't nobody worth nothin' these days. All they thinks about is drinking – why if we even thought anyone had a drink at our dances, we put him out and made him stay out!”

Aunt Em married Bob Duffey and moved on South Fork on the Parran property where Bob worked. She told us she had a big wedding with lots of people there – “whenever there's food, there's always a crowd.” She had her own home on the Fork and raised a family. Out of the ten children, four are still living: Harry Duffey, at home; Sally Tross, Durgon; Kate Tross, town; Nettie Redmond, Pennsylvania. She said, “Them chillen’ listened to me. When I said ‘stop,’ they stopped. Now days, youngsters’ is so no-count, they ain't had no up-bringing.”

A few years ago Aunt Em married a second time, Bob Duffey having died, to Ad Ford. He, too is gone and Aunt Em says she misses him very much. "He was always around and when he did go out he come back at a proper time. I guess if I'd had an ornery man I'd just naturally have killed him."

Aunt Em says she thinks times are getting harder instead of better and she looks for "slaves again," or "war." She, too, thinks it might be a good idea if some of the younger generation had been brought up as slaves because then they would have some manners and be more worth while.

There are many of us who have Aunt Em to thank for some of our own manners and training and we hope she has more years in her cabin on the Fork.