

Community graveyard is forgotten

By FRANK K. VASOVSKI
 have fought a good fight
 have finished my course
 have kept the faith"

George Newton of Sandy Point Road, a black retired farmer living near the cemetery, identified it as "a burial site for the white folks of the Pleasant Hill Community." Newton said some of their relatives were still living "somewhere on Burt Lane," approximately three to four miles northwest of the cemetery.

next visit to Bryan."

The current County Commissioner of Precinct 4, W. A. Stasny, said that Pleasant Hill Community was dissolved in 1930. He said the community's cemetery is now located on private property and the current owner could decide to level the place and build something on it. "This, of course, would be the end of the Red Hill Cemetery," Stasny said.

called, was closed and the majority of people left the community for Bryan and other towns.

Jane A. Fuschak of Smetana and Francis E. Mosley of Burt Lane are granddaughters of W. J. Burt who is buried in the Red Hill Cemetery. They are the last members of the Pleasant Hill Community still living in the area.

enough of us to take care of the cemetery as we used to do in the past."

Mrs. Steven D. Pearce of Bryan was about four years old when she left the community, but has returned many times for short visits. She described the community as "a group of hard working people, trying to eke out their existence of a very poor soil."

The Red Hill Cemetery is located eight miles west of Bryan at the junction of FM 1687 (Sandy Point Road) and Pleasant Hill Road, adjacent to a large gravel pit and across the road from the Bryan city waste disposal area.

The county death register in the Brazos County Clerk's office in Bryan contains no entries for Red Hill Cemetery.

Stasny's predecessor, Clyde J. Porterfield of Bryan, was not available but his wife provided some of the missing information on Pleasant Hill Community.

They recall the time when not only Pleasant Hill but many other communities such as Riverside, Rye, Parker and Thompson Creek were flourishing in the area until the government decided to consolidate the school districts.

The life span of most people buried in the cemetery seems to bear out her observation. More than half of them died before age 35.

It consists of three clusters of graves, most of them in an advanced state of deterioration, surrounded by a grove of oak trees. Some of the markers are torn down, others still well preserved.

Files at the County Tax Assessor-Collector office show the burial site is located near the boundary line between two tracts of land, one belonging to Pearlee L. Hall of Bryan and the other to William A. Faubion of Houston.

"The original settlers living around the Red Hill Cemetery were members of the Pleasant Hill Community," Porterfield said. "We called them 'Goobers' because the soil in the area was too poor to grow cotton and they often planted peanuts."

"Some people moved out to another location, some sold their land and lost contact with each other," Fuschak said.

"They operated self-supporting farms producing their own food and other necessities," Pearce said.

The oldest identifiable grave is dated 1889 and the most recent the elaborate tombstones and hauntingly beautiful inscriptions seem to indicate that the burial place for the members of an early community.

Hall acknowledged that a gravel pit "was located on her property next to the graveyard" but said she did not know the identity of the persons buried in that graveyard.

Mrs. Fred Luther of Bryan is also familiar with the community and its cemetery. She said she believed the original settlers came from Tennessee many years ago.

"Those left behind, like us," Fuschak continued, "are getting older with each day. There are not

None of these people have any solutions to the future of Red Hill Cemetery. Most felt that it should be restored to a status comparable to other cemeteries to preserve a valuable link to the past.

Let there is no evidence of any community near the cemetery, except a few isolated houses scattered over a wide area.

Faubion confirmed the fact that the gravel pit was located at the northwest edge of his tract.

"We used to clean and beautify the graveyard every year in the spring, but because of the dissolution of the community and the dispersal of the relatives, there is nobody now strong enough to care for the graveyard," Luther said. She said that she hoped a patriotic organization, such as Daughters of the American Revolution, could assume custody of the cemetery.

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Moss covers this tombstone marking a 74-year-old grave in the forgotten Red Hill Cemetery eight miles west of Bryan. These weather-beaten markers are the only reminder of the lost community of Pleasant Hill. Battalion photo by Frank Vasovski

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