

“Memories” by Georgia Caughey (January 19, 1904 – January 14, 2001)

If we are to go way back in time; let us go back to 1830, when the cemetery was located just north of here; at the “Tee” in the road. This community at that time was principally people from the North, and was called “Yankee Town.” However, this land fell in to the hands of a man who forbid others being buried there.

In October of 1861, Mr. Nolan Stewart who owned the land south and west of “Rock Creek,” lost a child. He and Mr. Madison Walsh decided on the present site of Friendship Cemetery. Mr. Stewart buried his child here and deeded one acre of land for Friendship Cemetery.

At a later date (1866) Mr. Walsh who owned land just east of the cemetery donated some land for a school building. On this site a log cabin was erected. To promote some social life in the community a Sunday School was organized in the fall of 1866. Church Services were held by “circuit riders.” The log cabin was christened “Friendship.”

Friendship Cemetery has served three eras: “The Republic of Texas”, “The Confederacy”, and the “Union of the States.” There are people here who served in the “Civil War”, the “Spanish American War”, and World War I and II.

More land has been added to the original acre either by donation or bought. The last in 1979.

I don’t know the exact date of the first “Decoration Day” service, but there are on record year to year minutes from 1904 to the present time.

For many years the last Thursday in April was observed as Decoration Day. A few days prior to that date, the men of the community would meet to work in the cemetery and prepare it for the occasion.

On Wednesday before the big day, the mothers of every household were busy baking bread, pies and cakes and preparing other food. On Thursday everything ceased on the farm; and the entire family dressed in their best, brought well filled baskets of food to Friendship Church to spend the day, to pay tribute to the deceased and to decorate the graves with beautiful spring flowers from their yards.

The morning was devoted to a worship service. At noon a bountiful dinner was held on the lawn. Oh yes, there was an iron wash pot of coffee brewed over an open fire, ready for lunch, served in tin cups with some Sherman merchants’ advertisements in the bottom. I remember some cups from Will Leslie’s Hardware Store.

I remember one time when it was raining at noon. We were still having church in the building I am now looking in. The pews were benches of 8 or 10 feet long made out of two slats. They were moved placing the seats together to form a table. One had to reach over the backs of the benches down into the table. This wasn’t very convenient for the children.

After lunch a business meeting was held. Then the congregation joined in singing old familiar hymns with solos and quartets at intervals. Decoration Day at Friendship was a sacred occasion, looked forward to for weeks in advance. When the children of my generation were young we thought of it as a fun day to see and play with our friends.

It is still a great day to renew acquaintances with those that have moved away and return for the occasion. From year to year we miss familiar faces; but as we say, "the show must go on" and I am sure there will be a Decoration Day for Friendship Cemetery for many years to come.

Georgia Pitt Caughey