

# **Pearsall Cemetery**

**Rededicated Aug. 1988**

**Location:**

**Occidental Chemical Corporation  
Muscle Shoals Plant  
Muscle Shoals, Alabama**



## FRIENDS BOARD ALLOCATES FUNDS FOR LOCAL HISTORY - GENEALOGY ROOM

At a special meeting of the Friends of the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library, the board approved \$13,260 for the library. The following amounts were allocated to the local history-genealogy room: \$6495 for a microfilm/microfiche reader/printer, \$630 for furniture, and \$1000 for books. The Friends have raised over \$90,930 for use in the library since 1983 when the Friends organization was established. Money-raising events include a Big Band Concert and a newly established Friends Bookstore.

## PEARSALL CEMETERY

Two years ago NTGS, in cooperation with the Occidental Chemical Corp. and the descendants of the PEARSALL family, helped rededicate the family cemetery to the public. At the time of the dedication, the entire cemetery area had not been cleared nor had fencing been completed. To our dismay, we had not even found all the graves and grave markers. The dedication ceremonies were followed by the first-ever PEARSALL family reunion, attended by both the white and black descendants.

The family now has erected a granite marker that reads:

EDWARD PEARSALL  
FAMILY CEMETERY  
Established 1818  
Rededicated 1988

By  
Black and White  
Descendants

In addition, the Highway Department has erected a sign on the main road near the cemetery that reads:

PEARSALL  
ANTEBELLUM  
CEMETERY

## ASSOCIATION OF ALABAMA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES

On 14 October, representatives from 10 of the genealogical societies in Alabama met in Montgomery to discuss formation of an Alabama association. The call to meet was issued by the Alabama Genealogical Society. Our Natchez Trace Genealogical Society was one of the 10 responding to the call; there are about 30 societies in the state. Interest in an association/alliance/council/federation centered around a calendar of events so that societies could coordinate seminar scheduling, lists of researchers, regional or cooperative seminars, a publication for Alabama queries, support of the state archives, brochure for welcome centers, lobbying and monitoring the legislature, resource libraries in the state, acquisition of records for burned counties, and the like. Financing the association appears to be a major problem. This was a preliminary or first meeting. The only decision made was to prepare a summary and a proposal to associate for all societies to consider. Another meeting will be held in early 1991 to consider responses from the different societies.

## NTGS MEMBERSHIP

As the membership year draws to a close, membership in the society stands at 435. A year ago at this time, membership was 443; this increased to 454 by the end of the fiscal year.

## GENEALOGY CLASS

The National Genealogical Society has just announced that it will provide tuition discounts to group enrollments in its home study course. Our society pioneered in this approach with the added feature of meeting regularly to discuss the lesson topic. We have 45 students now taking the course although not all are enrolled directly in the NGS course.



MATT McKEAN/102H

## Cherishing the past

**Thomas Pennington looks over an aging grave marker at a local "lost cemetery" in Muscle Shoals. Pennington's hobby is finding and restoring old, forgotten graveyards. Story on 5A.**

er to form a reasonable budget.

If county commissions had more taxation power, and the boldness to act, law enforcement and many other public needs could receive better financing. Without that power, lawsuits such as this one may become a common action.

## Clearing history

A part of the Shoals area's early history has been cleared up for a better view.

The Pearsall Cemetery in Muscle Shoals had been covered for years by weeds and other vegetation until Occidental Chemical Co., the Natchez Trace Genealogical Society and Muscle Shoals stepped in. The company and genealogical society were co-sponsors of a dedication ceremony last week honoring the people buried there.

The cemetery was founded by Edward Pearsall, who arrived in Northwest Alabama in 1818. Hugh Dickson, a brother of the Michael Dickson who helped settle Tusculumbia, is also buried there.

While clearing the property makes the cemetery accessible for Pearsall's descendants, it also should be interesting for the entire community because of its historical significance. Tusculumbia is the area's

# TimesDaily

Serving the Shoals area since 1869

Steven Ainsley  
Publisher

Bruce Gaultney  
Editor

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Managing Editor



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oldest city and many of its original families are buried there. Names such as Rather and Rand are among the grave markers, as well as that of Letitia Kornegay, who died in 1832 and is the oldest grave in the cemetery.

For those interested in history, the efforts of Occidental, the genealogical society and the city represent a vital contribution to the city and present an excellent opportunity for research.

## SAVE THAT CEMETERY

Cemeteries are the last physical home of an individual. The tombstones therein are an individual's memorial to time spent on earth. They are a part of our heritage. They deserve our respect, our time, our money.

Many burying grounds are forgotten, lost to memory of all but a few. This happened to the Pearsall Cemetery. For years, one descendant interested in her family history, searched in vain for the cemetery. In 1982 Mary Trautmann of Middleburg, FL found the cemetery with the help of local historian Thomas Pennington. Although land records showed that an acre of land had been reserved for a family cemetery, somewhere, somehow, the cemetery had been sold. It was located on land that then belonged to Diamond Shamrock, since sold to Occidental Chem Corp. Efforts to have the cemetery deeded to the City of Muscle Shoals were aborted during the transfer of property rights from Diamond Shamrock to the new owner.

Mrs. Trautmann, a long time member of the NTGS, provided the society with a copy of her survey. She told what was happening and what was not happening. The society asked another of its members, a member of Oxychem management, to intercede. Lloyd C. "Billy" Clemmons soon presented a favorable report: Top management was not aware that the cemetery existed; as a concerned member of the local community, they wanted to make the cemetery more accessible to descendants. With the approval of descendants, broken markers have been renovated, the area has been cleaned of trees and brush, and a fence has been erected. Colbert Co has surveyed the cemetery area and marked it on maps. On 14 Aug 1988, Occidental dedicated the Edward Pearsall Family Cemetery to the public as an historic cemetery.

*I came and roamed these lands  
Formed history with my very hands  
Then returned to my ancestral bands.*

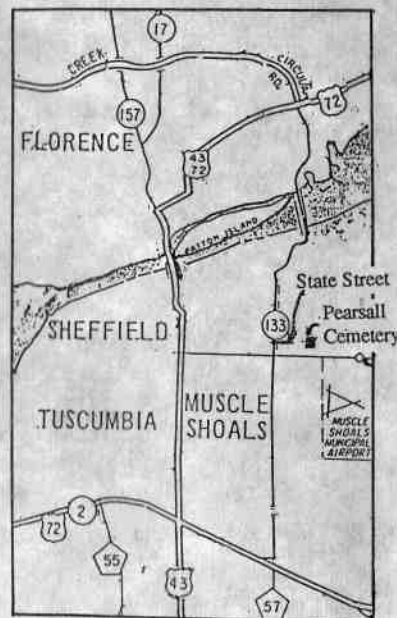
*A memorial carved with master hands  
Lay broken upon these lands  
Until repaired by loving hands.*

## DIRECTIONS

The Edward Pearsall Cemetery is on land purchased from the U. S. Govt., in 1818. To reach the cemetery from Hwys US-72 or US-43 in Colbert Co, go north on Al-133. After crossing Second St., watch for State St., on the right. (The TVA Reservation will be on the left.)

To reach the cemetery from Florence, cross the Tennessee River on Wilson Dam Road (Al-133), go past Occidental Chemical Corporation's plant, and turn left on State St. The cemetery is about 300 yards beyond the end of State Street.

Visitors during the summer months are cautioned to be aware. The cemetery is located near a wooded area; some snakes in the area are poisonous and may try to inhabit the cemetery.



This brochure prepared by:

Natchez Trace Genealogical Society  
P. O. Box 420, Florence, AL 35631

## ANTEBELLUM FAMILY CEMETERY

## EDWARD PEARSALL CEMETERY

Burials include:

Family  
Relatives  
Slaves  
Friends

Muscle Shoals  
Colbert County, Alabama

Preserved through the efforts of  
Descendants, Historians, Friends,  
Occidental Chemical Corporation,  
and  
Natchez Trace Genealogical Society



# IMMIGRATION INTO TUSCUMBIA AREA

In 1815 Michael Dickson brought his family from Tennessee to Oka Kapassa (Ocochoposa or Cold Water), now known as Tuscumbia. His log cabin home-site, purchased from the Choctaw Indian Chief Tuscumbia, was the first in the area. Four of Dickson's brothers-in-law from Smith Co TN, soon followed him. A year later the US Govt acquired much of the Cherokee and Choctaw land in north AL by treaty. Soon after, AL was created a Terr, separate from the Mississippi Terr. That same year (1817), a battalion of US soldiers arrived in Tuscumbia to work on the Post and Military Rd, commonly called the Old Mil.Rd, from Nashville, TN, to Madisonville, LA. It followed the route used by Gen. Andrew Jackson and his men as they returned to TN from defeating the British in New Orleans in early 1815. It also was the route followed by a vast throng of settlers and land speculators who converged on the TN Valley area of AL for the 1818 land sales.

In preparation for settlement, the AL Territorial legislature in 1818 created some new counties, including Franklin in which Tuscumbia was located. The US Govt established a land office in Huntsville, about 60 miles up the river from Tuscumbia. People from all over the S as well as the E came to take a fling at speculation. Some town lots sold for as much as \$1800; some farm land, suitable for raising cotton, sold for \$100 per acre.

Edward Pearsall was among these first purchasers of land. On 2 Nov 1818 he bought 320 acres in Sec 30 of Township 3 S, R 10 W, and 160 acres in adjoining Sec 32. He added to this acreage in later years and eventually owned about 1,000 acres. Although the area where Edward settled became Colbert Co in 1867; the land records were never transferred from Franklin Co. When the Franklin Co courthouse burned in 1890, all land records for both counties were lost, except for the initial sales by the Fed Govt. Thus, the details of later land purchases by E. Pearsall are vague.

## EDWARD PEARSALL CEMETERY

In 1872 Nathan G. Pearsall petitioned the Colbert Co Probate Court for a division of his father's estate. The petition states that one acre of the 320 acre Berry Place was reserved for a family burying ground. Regardless of this, the lot was inadvertently sold and now is located in the midst of property owned by Occidental Chem Corp. The cemetery is in the southeast quarter of Sect 30, Township 3S R 10 W. It lies on a low rise of ground about 300 yds beyond (E) the end of State St in Muscle Shoals. Edward Pearsall's home, Locust Lodge, was located on Pond Creek about a mile E of the cemetery in Sect 29. There is another Pearsall Cemetery in the northeast corner of this section; it is black and in current use.

The oldest marked burial in the cemetery is dated 1832. It seems likely that there are even older burials. Edward Pearsall and his wife are listed in the 1820 census for Franklin Co. No children were listed but their first child, Nancy, died as an infant; she possibly is buried in the cemetery. Their second child, Jeremiah, was born in November 1820. His gravesite is marked.

## BURIALS WITH MARKED GRAVES

COUCH, James E. - 30 Oct 1816 - 16 Aug 1854  
 DENTON, John T. - 18 Jan 1852 + 17 Mar 1855; son of Nancy DENTON  
 DICKSON, Hugh - 11 Jan 1780 - 16 Jan 1843; aged 63 y, 6 m, --d  
 DICKSON, Sarah Pearsall - Died 15 Sep 1900; aged 72 y  
 DUNLAP - Infant daughters of W. C. & M. J. DUNLAP  
 DUNLAP - Infant of W. & M. DUNLAP  
 GREGG, N. - 11 Oct 1832 - 11 Nov 1850  
 GREGG, Sarah P. - Died 10 Feb 1842  
 HAMILTON, May Ann Eliza - 23 Dec --- -- Jan 184-; dau of Hanibal & Susan HAMILTON  
 HUDSON, William B. - 5 Jan 1856 - 18 Sep 1870; son of C.T. HUDSON [stone has disappeared]  
 KORNEGAY, Letitia - Died 15 Oct 1832; aged 15 [45?] y, 11 m; widow of Robt. KORNEGAY of N.C.

McCLUNE, D. D. - 13 Dec 1809 - 28 Mar 1845; aged 35 y, 8 m, 13 d  
 McRAE, J. F. - Died 22 July 1848; aged 50  
 PARKER, Hannah P. - 16 Sep 1826 - 1 Jan 1856; married 10 Jan 1853; wife of A. J. PARKER  
 PEARSALL Double  
 Edward - 16 Nov 1785 - 3 Jun 1853; aged 67 y 6 m 18 d  
 Parthenia - 12 Mar 1800 - 23 Dec 1872; wife of E. PEARSALL  
 PEARSALL, Jeremiah - Died 27 Sep 1840; aged 19y 10m 12d  
 PRICE, Madora D. - Died Feb -- --; dau of W. H. and H. H. PRICE  
 PRICE, Robert H. - Died 17 Feb 1847; age 1y 11 m; son of W.H. & E. H. PRICE  
 RAND, Gertrude - Born 11 Dec 1844  
 RATHER - 5 Jul 1872 - 30 Aug 1873; infant dau of John D. & Letitia P. RATHER  
 RATHER, John T. - 25 Feb 1863 - 10 Sep 1868; son of John D. & Letitia P. RATHER  
 SHEARON, [broken] - 22 Apr [broken]  
 STONE, Elizabeth - Died 24 Feb 1856 in the 85th year of her age  
 TONEY, Mary Ann E.D. - Died 7 Mar 1856; age 21; dau of D. McRAE  
 VANDEVER, Wilmoth E. - Died Jul 1840; dau of Solomon & May VANDEVER

## BURIALS WITH UNMARKED GRAVES

### (Blacks)

EDMONDSON, Monk  
 HARRIS, John  
 PEARSON, Ben  
 PEARSON, Ceaser, Jr  
 SMITH, Ada Pearsall - Died 1905

### (Whites)

PEARSALL, Elizabeth - B 1866, D 1885  
 PEARSON, Ella Burns - B 1868, Died in infancy  
 PEARSON, Louisa Sharon - B 1840, died 26 Jun 1876; dau of Thomas PEARSON and Mary Brewer SHEARON  
 PEARSON, Lula - b 1874, D infancy  
 PEARSON, Sallie Gregg - D 1865

## EDWARD PEARSALL AND HIS FAMILY

Edward Pearsall was born in Duplin Co., NC, near Kenansville on 16 Nov 1785. His parents were Jeremiah Pearsall, born 3 Nov 1759, and Hannah Johnston, born 22 Apr 1766, both born in Duplin Co., NC. Edward's sister, Elizabeth, was born on 20 Feb 1788 and his brother, Benjamin, on 1 Aug 1790. Hannah Johnston Pearsall died after Benjamin's birth and Jeremiah then married Patience Moulton. She was born 16 Oct 1764 in Duplin Co., NC. Patience and Jeremiah had five children; Catherine, born 12 Dec 1793; Sarah, born 26 Jul 1795; Mary Jane, born 11 Feb 1798; James Moulton, born 13 Dec 1800; and Dorothy, born 20 Feb 1803.

In 1806, Jeremiah sold out in NC and moved to Dickson Co., TN, with his Dickson and Moulton relatives. Later, in ca 1818, he moved to Lawrence Co., AL. (Moulton, the county seat is named for Jeremiah's Moulton relatives.) While in Dickson Co., TN (named for the same Dickson family that settled in Tuscumbia), Edward Pearsall was sheriff in 1810-11 and an officer in the 25th Regiment of Light Infantry. On 7 Jan 1817 he married Parthenia Shearon, daughter of John and Elizabeth Balthrop Shearon. Parthenia was born 12 Mar 1800 in Warren Co., NC.

In 1821 Edward, along with many others, petitioned Congress for a reduction in the prices they had agreed to pay for the land they had bought in Franklin Co., AL. Congress agreed to a reduction in price. Edward grew cotton and prospered. The 1820 census showed that he owned 13 slaves. As he added more land to his plantation, he added more slaves; in 1840 he had 47; in 1850 he had 62. His family increased also:

Nancy, b ----; died infancy.

Jeremiah, born 15 Nov 1820; died 27 Sep 1840

Elizabeth, born 19 Oct 1822; died 12 Sep 1869

Catherine, born 14 Nov 1824; died 22 Nov 1875

Edward, Jr., born 1827; died 1850

from typhoid fever returning home

from California via Panama and New Orleans; he was buried at sea.

Lucy, born ----; died infancy

Sarah Letitia, born 1 Jun 1834; died 1 Nov 1893

Nathan Gregg, born 17 Nov 1836; died 12 Oct 1900

Mary Anne, born -- Dec 1837;

Thomasella, born 24 Dec 1840; died 22 Nov 1874

Edward and his family lived at 409 E. 4th St in Tuscumbia during the winter so that the girls could attend the Tuscumbia Female Academy. He was a charter member of the Presbyterian Church in Tuscumbia, one of the first justices of the peace, and a trustee of the Tuscumbia Female Academy.

Edward, himself, died in 1853 and Parthenia, his wife, died in 1871. Although the tombstone records her death as 23 Dec 1872, she died in 1871. Both are buried in the Pearsall Cemetery. Jeremiah was a student for the ministry but died at age 20 and is buried in the Pearsall Cemetery. Lucy probably is buried in the Pearsall Cemetery; she died as an infant probably born about 1830. The 1830 census shows three female children under the age of 10 in the household (Elizabeth, Catherine, and Lucy?). This same census also shows three males under the age of 10; Jeremiah and Edward, Jr., would account for two of these; the third child is unknown.

## MARRIAGES OF THE CHILDREN

Elizabeth Pearsall married Samuel Elliott, a wealthy planter who lived at Boxwood, near Trinity in Morgan Co., AL.

Catherine Pearsall married Dr. John Walter Rand, born 17 Sep 1822 in Raleigh, NC. He came to AL in 1831 with his parents who settled near Leighton, Lawrence Co. John Walter graduated from LaGrange College, then received his M.D. diploma from the medical school in Louisville, KY. He practiced at Leighton until 1859 then engaged extensively in planting. He suffered extensive losses during the Civil War but continued as a planter until his death on 16 Feb 1888.

Gertrude Rand, born 11 Dec 1844 and buried in the Pearsall Cemetery probably is their daughter. Catherine Pearsall Rand is buried in Tuscumbia's Oakwood Cemetery as are some of their children.

Sarah Letitia Pearsall married John D. Rather (his second wife) at her mother's home on 21 Feb 1856. He was born 7 Jan 1823 in Somerville, Morgan Co., AL. John D. Rather was trained in law and moved to Tuscumbia to practice. He became President of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, was a stockholder, president, and incorporator of the Deshler Female Institute, and a brigadier general in the militia. Their home, called Locust Hill, still stands at 209 S. Cave St, Tuscumbia. The two Rather children in the Pearsall Cemetery are their children.

Nathan Gregg Pearsall married first Louisa Shearon and second Mrs. Laura Davis Sherrod. Louisa was born in 1840 and died on 26 Jun 1876. She is buried in the Pearsall Cemetery but her grave either is not marked or is marked with a broken stone. Louisa and Nathan were first cousins.

Mary Anne Pearsall married Joseph Clark Eve who was born in 1833. They moved to San Marcos, TX, and are buried there.

Thomasella Pearsall married Joshua Burns Moore, a self-trained lawyer, in 1858. He was a successful criminal lawyer and was elected to the AL state senate in 1874-75 and 1875-76. While attending the session in Montgomery in 1874, a tornado leveled his brick home in Tuscumbia and killed both his wife and the two youngest of his four daughters. They are buried in Tuscumbia's Oakwood Cemetery.

In January 1868, some of the land devised to the heirs of Edward Pearsall by court-appointed commissioners was sold. The 240 acres allotted to Nathan G. Pearsall and his sister Letitia Pearsall, said land adjoining that allotted to Catherine Pearsall Rand, was sold to J. Burns Moore, the husband of Thomasella Pearsall. Six years

later the Moores sold this land to John, Thomas, Benjamin, Richard, Robert, and Sarah Pearsall. These Pearsalls were black. Somewhat similarly, in 1872, after the death of Elizabeth Pearsall Elliott in Sept 1869, 135 acres of land, formerly owned by Edward Pearsall, was sold by Elizabeth's heirs (Randolph Jeremiah P., Catherine R., and Annie P. Elliott) to the highest bidder. The purchaser was Ceasar Pearsall, presumed to be black because his son, Ceaser, Jr., was known to be black.

The exact relationship of these Pearsalls to Edward Pearsall has not been determined. Conveyances recorded in the Colbert Co. Court House after 1867 do not specify any relationship. Petitions to the court requesting a division of Edward Pearsall's estate were recorded in Franklin Co., prior to 1867. The records were lost in the 1890 fire at the court house.

Ceasar Pearsall, Sr., died on 15 Jan 1894. The name of his wife is not known but his heirs were Jerre, Green, Ceasar, Samuel, Harriet Watts, Priscilla Keller, Ruth, Wilson, and Annie Pearsall.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF OTHER BURIALS

James E. Couch does not appear in either the 1840 or the 1850 census for Franklin Co., nor in the old land records for the county.

John T. Denton, the three-year-old son of Nancy possibly was the son of James Denton, a 38-year-old overseer from Tennessee in the 1850 census. James was still alive for the 1855 census but may have died before the tombstone was erected.

Hugh Dickson was the son of Joseph and Jane Moulton Dickson. Jane was a sister to Edward Pearsall's step-mother. Hugh Dickson served in the War of 1812 under Capt. Michael Moulton, his uncle who was a brother of Jane and Patience Moulton.

Sarah Pearsall Dickson's gravestone is located in the black section of the cemetery. She probably is one of

the six Pearsalls to whom J. Burns Moore sold land in 1874.

A daughter of Nathan and Sarah Pearsall Gregg is reported to have married a Dunlap. The daughter's name is not known nor are there any Dunlaps in the Franklin Co. census records. The graves of the two infant Dunlaps lend some credence to the report.

Nathan Gregg was a son of Sarah Pearsall and her second husband, Nathan Gregg, Sr. Sarah was a half sister of Edward Pearsall. The senior Greggs had one of the first stores in Courtland, Al, but lost it in the recession of 1836. Not having money to procure advancement for their sons, they moved to LaGrange and served in the Steward's Hall while the sons attended college. Nathan was listed as living in Drury Mays' boarding house in the 1850 census. His brother, John, was a brigadier general in the Confederate Army.

Sarah P. Gregg most likely was the sister of Nathan Gregg, Jr.

Hanibal and Susan Hamilton are listed in the 1850 Franklin Co. census as from NC. They appear to have come to AL about 1834-36. Hanibal was an overseer, possibly on one of the many farms in the Pearsall plantation.

The parents of William B. Hudson have not been identified.

The relationship of Letitia Kornegay to Edward Pearsall is not known. There were no other Kornegays in AL at this time although in later years they were in Conecuh and Bibb Counties. Letitia was from NC as were the Pearsalls.

D. D. McClune was listed in the 1840 census with one male aged 15-20 and one male aged 20-30. He was a Tuscumbia merchant.

A John L. McRae is listed in the 1840 census with one male 40-50 and one female 40-50. Mrs. McRae must have died within the next ten years as she

is not listed in the 1850 census. Possibly she also is buried in the Pearsall Cemetery in one of the unmarked graves.

A. J. Parker is listed in the 1855 state census for Franklin Co. with one male over 21 and one female over 21. Apparently Hannah died before having children.

William and Eliza Price were near neighbors of the Pearsalls. They lived in TN until at least 1846 and had a family of four boys and one girl in 1850.

There was a widow E. F. Stone in the 1840 census with two children under five and three aged five to fifteen. She was in the 30-40 age bracket, thus too young to be the Elizabeth buried in the Pearsall Cemetery - unless the 85 year age has been misread.

Solomon Vandever/Vandiver purchased land in Franklin Co. in 1833. He is not listed in either the 1840 or 1850 census for the county.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about this area, see:

COWART, Margaret Matthews. 1985. Old Land Records of Colbert County, Alabama. The author, Huntsville, Al.

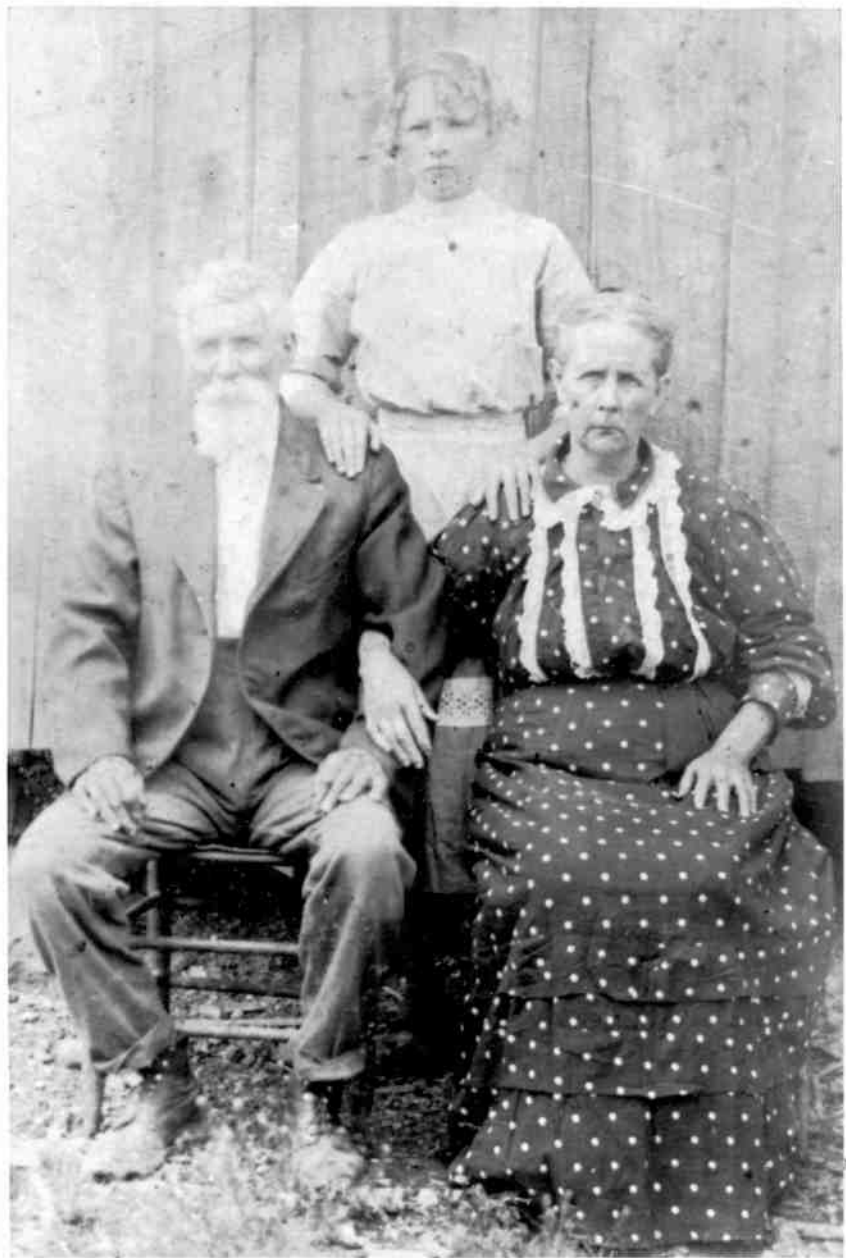
JAMES, T. L. 1945. Colbertians, A History of Colbert County, Alabama, and Some of Its Pioneer Citizens Before 1875. Reprinted 1980. Natchez Trace Genealogical Society, Florence, Al.

KELLER, Capt. Arthur H. 1888. History of Tuscumbia, Alabama. Reprinted 1981. Tennessee Valley Historical Society, Sheffield, Al.

LEFTWICH, Nina. 1935. Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals. The author, Tuscumbia, Al.

Journal of Muscle Shoals History. Annual volumes since 1973. Tennessee Valley Historical Society, Sheffield, Al.





# Region / Shoals



MATT McKEAN/Staff

**Tom Pennington, left, helps Doug Stout (in the tractor), Tim Wright and Nicky Romans of the Muscle Shoals city street department move headstones in the Pearsall cemetery.**

# Cemetery care labor of love

By Sherbonda Allen  
Bureau Staff

**MUSCLE SHOALS** — Thomas Pennington has a knack for taking weed covered, long forgotten cemeteries and restoring them to orderliness.

To Pennington, the restorations are just hobbies that take the place of hunting or fishing. He's been the caretaker of sorts for these hidden cemeteries for 15 or 16 years — so long, in fact that people who are concerned with preserving old cemeteries call him before anyone else.

Pennington is in the final restoration stages of an old Pearsall cemetery located off State Street.

"I've known the cemetery was there for about 45 years," Pennington said. "A lady (Mary Trotman) from Florida was referred to me by Eleanor Holder. (Trotman) had been here on and off for four or five years looking for the Pearsall cemetery."

Pennington said it was "one June, three years ago" that Trotman called and asked for his help in locating the cemetery.

"She had been looking in the right place, she just didn't go far enough," Pennington said.

He added that Trotman and her relatives from Middleburg, Fla., were "just overcome when they found it, plus they were upset over the shape it was in."

Pennington has photographs of the area before it was cleared and it's plain to see that one would have to know exactly where the cemetery is to locate it. Trees, weeds and underbrush over the years had grown and covered the old tombstones.

Another photograph, taken after the clean up began, shows the underbrush cleared and pushed back to uncover tombstones that had been pushed or just fallen over. Some graves, Pennington said, had sunk into the point where they had to be refilled with dirt.

Pennington said the Pearsall cemetery began like most plantation cemeteries.

"In those days, families were buried on the land they owned. That's just the way it was done. Now, as the years passed and they moved away or whatever, they were buried in the family cemetery and if the family all died off or moved away, it was more than likely the cemetery would be forgotten," Pennington explained.

Plantation owners also buried slaves on the land but it was rare that a slave's grave would have a marker. Several graves, Pennington said, were without tombstones. Those graves are believed to be former Pearsall slaves.

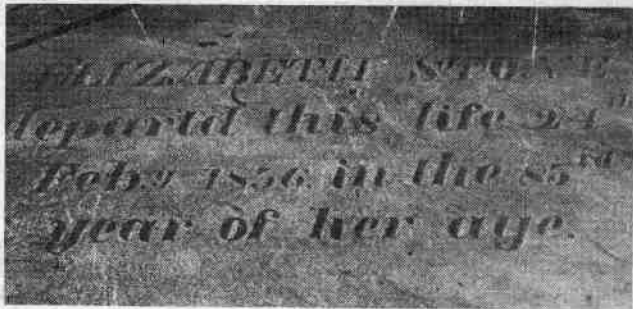
He said the Muscle Shoals commission and street department were "very helpful" in the research and clean-up operations.

"I couldn't find it (the cemetery) on any



"In those days, families were buried on the land they owned. ... Now, as the years passed and they moved away ..., it was more than likely the cemetery would be forgotten."

— Thomas Pennington



One of many markers in "forgotten" graveyard.

courthouse record. There wasn't a trace of it on a plan or map," Pennington said. "Through research, we found a copy of a will in the probate judge's office."

The will belonged to Nathan Pearsall and was dated Nov. 8, 1872.

At the time the will was made, the Pearsall's 320 acres were being divided and sold. Nathan Pearsall stipulated that one acre of the land be set aside for a family burying ground.

That one acre cemetery was never recorded as a cemetery. As more land was sold and Pearsalls left the area, those remaining who may have died in the area were not buried in the cemetery.

The "ownership" was eventually traced to Diamond Shamrock.

"I went to Diamond Shamrock and talked with (Nick Crisler, the president) and their records showed they owned the land that had the cemetery one it," Pennington said.

He said Crisler was cooperative and will-

ing to help Pennington find the old cemetery.

"There were roughly 40 marked graves and maybe 40 or 50 unmarked graves," Pennington said. "It's a big cemetery. We're still finding places where the ground is sunk in."

He added that he'll make crosses similar to the ones on graves at Arlington National Cemetery to be placed on the unmarked graves, just so people will know where they are.

Pennington's hobby has carried him from "Woodward Avenue to Lawrence County and almost to Franklin County." He said there are many old family graves that are lost forever because some modern-day farmers have plowed over the areas or the markers were destroyed by cattle.

"I don't like to see any cemetery abused and vandalized," he said. "The law provides what you can do with a cemetery. You can move one in the proper way, if you have to."

# Ceremony to dedicate cemetery



MATT MCKEAN/Staff

**Bob Bentley cleans around grave of a slave named Mila.**

**By Lorene Frederick**  
Staff Writer

**MUSCLE SHOALS** — The dedication Sunday of Pearsall Cemetery will be the first formal ceremony in the old family plot since the last person was buried here 88 years ago.

The 2:30 p.m. event is planned to honor both the black and white people buried in the old family plot.

The cemetery was founded by Edward Pearsall, who came to Northwest Alabama in 1818 to make his fortune in the newly opened Tennessee Valley and became a wealthy planter and large slave holder.

The dedication is being co-sponsored by Natchez Trace Genealogical Society and Occidental Chemical Co. The two organizations have teamed up with descendants to preserve the cemetery, according to Dr. Darrel Russell, who is handling some of the details for the society.

One of the speakers will be Mary Erwine, a descendent of Edward Pearsall.

Erwine said she has traced the Pearsalls back to 1553.

"They were in this country before the Mayflower," she said.

"I traced Edward's line to North Carolina and Tennessee. Edward came here from Dickson County, Tenn. He had 10 or 11 children. They all seem to have married well. He died very wealthy, I understand. He owned more than 1,000 acres of what is now Listerhill."

It is said that after Edward Pearsall died, his wife, Parthenia, sold land to the black Pearsalls for \$1 an acre, reasoning that if she gave it to them free, later descendants might have some legal claim."

Forest Mitchell, a descendant of the black Pearsalls, will also be on the program.

"I have some of the bricks my grandfather made on that plantation," Mitchell said.

Other speakers include Gerry Clarke, plant manager for Occidental; William Johnson, mayor of Muscle Shoals.

"We expect at least 50 of Edward Pearsall's de-

scendants to attend," Russell said. "The first to register has a family of eight."

After the death of Edward and Parthenia Pearsall, the estate was divided. Although the cemetery was reserved from sale, it did sell and in later transactions became a part of an industrial property, owned first by Diamond Shamrock and then Occidental.

Edward Pearsall was buried there in 1853, his wife in 1872. Several members of his large family, other relatives, a few of his friends, and a number of his slaves were buried in the plot. The oldest grave is that of Letitia Kornegay who died in 1832. The last burial was in 1900.

Hugh Dickson, a brother of the Michael Dickson who helped found Tusculumbia, was buried in the Pearsall Cemetery. He was related to the Moulton family that gave Moulton, Ala. its name.

Events leading up to the dedication began in 1982 when Mary Trautmann of Middleburg, Fla., in the process of compiling her family history, came to the Shoals area.

Like many another family graveyards, the Pearsall plot had almost been forgotten. It's location was known to only a few. Thomas Pennington, a local historian, helped Trautmann find it and then proceeded to clear it off.

"It was so overgrown, we had to hack our way in — we killed 17 rattlesnakes," Pennington recalled.

By the time Billy Clemmons, Occidental's manager of human resources, learned of the cemetery, it was again overgrown.

Clemmons and his company wanted to improve the looks of the cemetery and make it accessible to Edward Pearsall's descendants. Broken markers have been restored and the area has been cleared of trees and brush.

Bob Bentley, a volunteer worker, has repaired several stones.

Clemmons said he hopes to have the area fenced by the day of the dedication.

However, more graves have been found in an adjoining wooded area.



## REGION/STATE



Billy Clemmons of Occidental Chemical looks over an old tombstone in the Pearsall Cemetery.

MATT McKEAN/Staff





















