

Local family has renewed interest in Delba Cemetery

Written by Betsy Blevins

Thursday, 16 June 2011 15:31 -

June 16, 2011 - Once again, there is renewed hope for the restoration of the Delba Cemetery on County Road 5040 southwest of Leonard to return it to its attractive, serene setting of years ago. Approximately twenty years ago, Eddie Sudderth, owner of the Summer House in Leonard, and a few like-minded friends, did a clean-up at the cemetery after the last of the old association's members had passed away. Then it remained abandoned for the next fifteen years until The Leonard Boy Scout Troop #156 and Johnny and Lea Head got involved in what became a very productive but short-lived effort. The cane, vinca, rampant poison oak and snakes were daunting challenges at best. So many trees needed to come out. So many cans of insect repellent to be sprayed...



Most people driving by wouldn't know that a cemetery is there because of the longstanding overgrowth of brush and trees, unless they're old timers who know of the town's history. Newcomers to the Leonard area probably won't know that the town of Delba was destroyed by a tornado in 1917. There were many deaths and the town was never rebuilt. People just gradually drifted off to Leonard or any place where they could make a living. Today, the cemetery stands as one of the few reminders of a town and its families, many of whom are buried there in unmarked graves. The most notable marker of the town that once was are the Delba "community" markers on State Highway 78 south of Leonard.

Information was received recently about a known burial of Henry Harrison Davis, born in North Carolina, who was a Civil War veteran and prisoner-of-war. His family eventually settled near Pecan Gap and later moved to a community named Greens Chapel north of Honey Grove in 1899. A descendant great-granddaughter, Rebecca Shirley, has related the story of his demise in the little community of Delba in 1904.

"When times got hard, he would leave home and teach music and violin schools....."and so he came to Delba in the winter of 1904 where he succumbed to appendicitis. The roads were impassable at the time and no one was able to transport him by wagon to his home at Greens Chapel for burial. His grave, like the majority of burials there,

Local family has renewed interest in Delba Cemetery

Written by Betsy Blevins

Thursday, 16 June 2011 15:31 -

does not have a gravestone.

A few months ago, along came Randy and Daneilia Chandler with their wonderful children. The family had fallen in love with this old cemetery and agreed to take the restoration and clean-up on as a family project. They live close by and will be able to work on it as time and weather permits. Even their youngest, Tom, age seven, son Lonnie, age fourteen, plus their grown daughter, Chyanne, who lives out of town, are willing to pitch in and work hard. The Sargents, who live across the road from the cemetery and run their business office for Kemiko Concrete Stains, generously agreed to let Randy dump the cut timber and brush on their property which has been a big help. Randy intends to apply to the State Historical Association to obtain a historical designation for the cemetery. A big improvement will be getting a chain link fence around it to keep livestock and "critters" out. All of this can happen sooner if even a few more people will volunteer a little of their time, energy and money to this very worthwhile project.

Some of the known family names there include Boyle, Brock, Buford, Callis, Clark, Davis, Dickson, Dodson, Duke, Fielder, Guinn, Head, McQuiston, Parr, Stovall, Stubbs, Thrasher, Vawter and Wood.

Call the Chandlers at 972-965-7894 if interested in donating some time or materials and moral support, or if you have family buried there and just want to make a donation to the fencing or maintenance fund. You can go to <http://txfannin.org/> and view all of the county's known cemeteries including Delba and much, much more.