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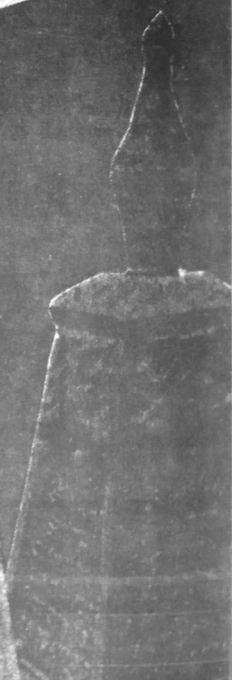
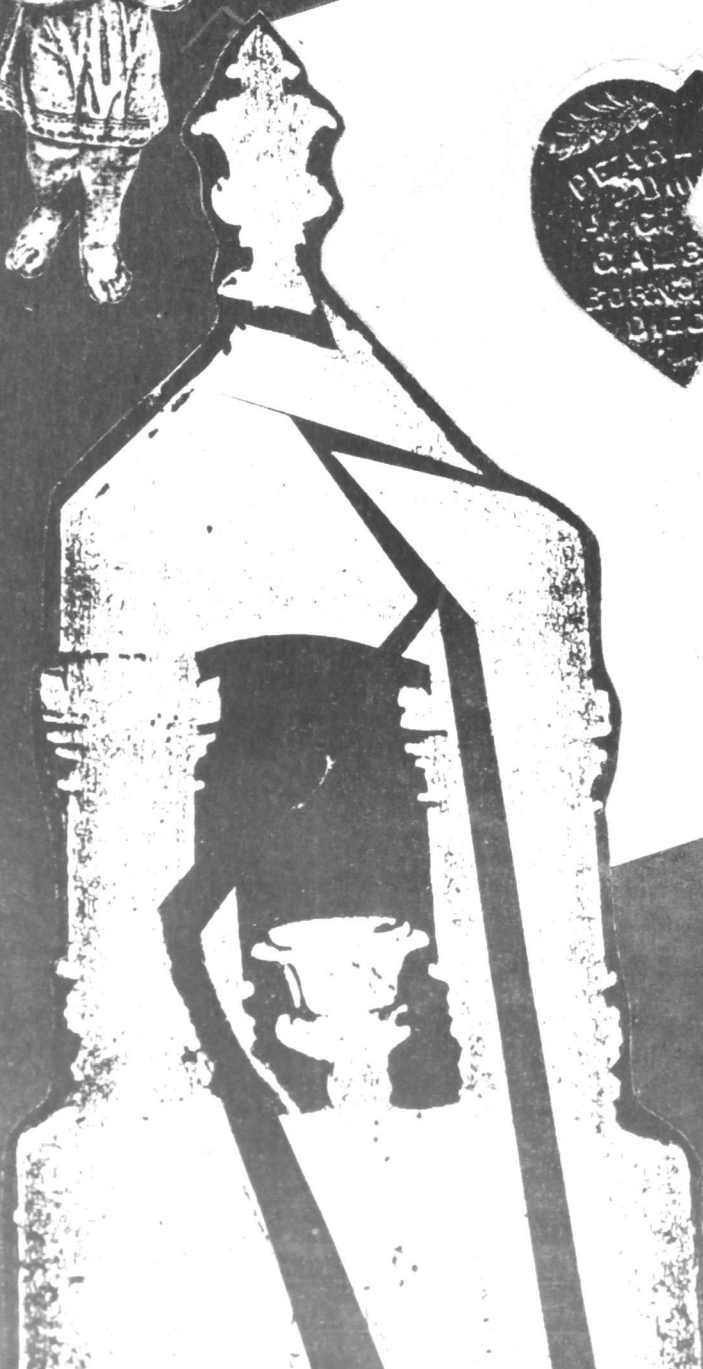
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THE BUTLER CEMETERY:

Evidence of a Community That Cares

By Eulalie Ann Nail



THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

On April 2, 1909, the following notice appeared in the BUTLER HERALD:

The whole community is requested and invited to meet at the cemetery Saturday morning April 3, 1909, at 9:00 for the purpose of cleaning up the cemetery. Bring your shovels, hoes, and rakes. The fence is to be repaired too.

Butler people cared in 1909, and they still care today. Although the cemetery is now maintained by a generous endowment from the estate of William J. and Lula E. Maloy, it is still cared for by the initiative of many individuals.

The earliest marker to be found in the cemetery is for Edna Blanch Payne, the 2½-year-old daughter of W.W. and P.G. Payne. The dates for her read: Born Dec. 11, 1895; Died June 9, 1898. This and numerous other graves for small children and infants are a testament to the hard life endured by the first settlers.

The first two acres for the cemetery were donated by B.F. and Amanda Kiker from the north side of their homestead. Later, more land was purchased from Mrs. O.O. Clark for \$115, September 16, 1922; and again from her estate in 1950 for \$150—bringing the cemetery to its present—day size of eight acres.

The Butler Cemetery is beautiful and well kept. Natural grass, cedar trees, and lilac bushes grow profusely; and in the spring, Indian Blanket, our state wildflower, is scattered over the eight acres. In addition, many birds make the cemetery their home. The cemetery is well cared for because of the Maloys' gift. The story goes that Lula became concerned about the cemetery as a result of the sandburrs caught in her stockings during visits. Seeing the need for perpetual care, she and Will left their two farms to the Butler community for the cemetery's upkeep. The original endowment was invested, and the interest continues to pay for routine maintenance such as mowing, fence repair, and road upkeep.

In 1962, a flag pole and a shelter with seating around the edge were erected as a memorial to the Maloys. The shelter makes a shady spot where old friends can meet and is much

appreciated by the families who return each year. Mr. and Mrs. Maloy are buried just south of the shelter.

Mr. Leonard Kiker, 95, grandson of B.F. Kiker, still occasionally wanders the cemetery today, recalling facts about the lives of those buried there. He remembers when his cousin, Pansy Jones, was fatally injured in a lard-rendering accident. Pansy was 17 years old and was laid to rest in January, 1909.



Kiker Family tombstone.

The story of Walter T. "Toughy" Cravens, 1906-1937, a local cowboy who made it big, is told with a large red granite marker. A picture of Toughy adorns the stone and shows a handsome young man in a western hat. Toughy was performing at a rodeo in New York City's Madison Square Garden when he was thrown by a bull, breaking his neck.

In the northeast corner of the cemetery lies a potter's field, where several unknown persons are buried. One was a man found beside the railroad track. Another was a stranger who died shortly after riding into town in a horse-drawn buggy.

A simple gray granite stone marks the grave of Nish Thomas, 1889-1957, the first black man to live in the Butler area. A soft-spoken, well-liked person, he did handy-man repairs. In addition, Nish, with his team of mules, collected the town's trash. Nish's marker was a gift from Leonard Kiker.

The metal sign that stands at the entrance to the cemetery was made by workers at the nearby Bartlett Gasoline Plant. The word *cemetery*, however, on the original sign, was misspelled, so the workers graciously made a second sign that has lasted through the years.

It would be difficult to know how many lives today are touched by memories of the Butler Cemetery; but if my own family is any indication, the number is considerable. Vera Nail died in 1938 at age 48 and was followed in death in 1939 by her husband, Thomas, age 50, leaving five children. These children had a total of eleven children, and now there are fifteen great-grandchildren. There's a popular country song that has the lyrics "Let me watch my children grow to see what they become..." Vera and Tom weren't able to watch their children grow, but we like to think that they would be very proud of all thirty-one of their descendants.

As one stands before the graves of his or her parents holding a grandchild by the hand, there's a deep sense of continuity. Those loved ones who have gone on before reach back into times past, while the child looks eagerly to the future. One then feels a part of the golden chain of life that links us all together in God's unfolding creation.

On the Memorial Day weekend each year, the senior citizens of Butler prepare a pot-luck dinner for visitors to the cemetery. People from as far away as Oregon and Washington, D.C. frequently come to renew old friendships and share memories. In short, the community of Butler still cares.

HUMAN-INTEREST DETAILS

A country cemetery is a place where one can get a sense of history of the times. Butler has its share of interesting monuments:

The lamb was a popular symbol in the early days. There are several lambs in the Butler Cemetery; for instance, a crumbling little lamb marks the gravesite of the infant daughter of N.L. and Phoebe Blake who died in 1902.

Another lamb watches over a little boy and his twin sister—November 15, 1924—November 16, 1924: "A little time on earth they spent 'till God for them his angel sent."

A beautiful heart-shaped memorial marks the spot where eleven-year-old Pearl Ethel Galbrith lies. She died of unknown causes on January 21, 1901. Her stone reads: "She died as she lived, trusting in God."

The small square stone for "Our Darling Baby Flossie" tells us that Flossie was 1½ years old when she died in 1911: "Gone to be an angel."

A little slate-blue angel watches over the place where infant Dorothy M. Campbell was waited through these fifty-six years since she was laid to rest: 1933-1933.

The tallest monument in the cemetery is the P.M. Kiker family marker. Made of marble, it stands seven feet tall.

The obelisk-shaped stone was used in the "teen" years as was the "log" that marked the place where a member of the Modern Woodman of America was buried.

The Masonic and Eastern Star emblems are on many of the head stones scattered throughout the cemetery.

An unusual marker is a four-sided one made of metal with a little bottle-shaped urn on the top. On the sides are recorded the names and dates of the Smith family from 1902 to 1914.

The most ornate of the older monuments is the one that marks the graves of Thomas and Mary Walker. It reads "Gone but not forgotten— Father and Mother." Made of gray granite, it has a three-step base about four feet high on which there is a vase between two large columns. Above this rises a triangle-shaped section engraved with leaves and a large "W" topped by a beautifully shaped urn. This lot is protected by a decorative metal fence as was the custom in the early days.

In contrast to the Walker plot is a small grave marked only with wooden head-and-foot boards. The lettering has long since vanished.

One of the most beautiful monuments is to the memory of Dr. William and Mrs. Rosa Basinger. Dr. Basinger



The Butler Cemetery

was a well-loved physician of the Butler community for many years. The Basingers' stone is made of beautiful white granite with a graceful vase set in the center. On the back side, there are engraved wedding rings with the number "72" in the center along with the words "My true love hath my heart, and I have his."

There are many beautiful markers that have been placed in recent years.

There are large polished black monuments that have intricate pictures engraved on them.

There are different shades of rose and gray granite stones that give clues to family history, and some even have photographs of loved ones.

The cemetery is a step back in time and a formidable place to find a family's roots.

Information for these stories was gathered from Mr. Leonard Kiker, Mrs. Velva Fletcher, and Mrs. Mabel Lowe.

WORDS FROM TOMBSTONES

Sleep on sweet babe and take thy rest:

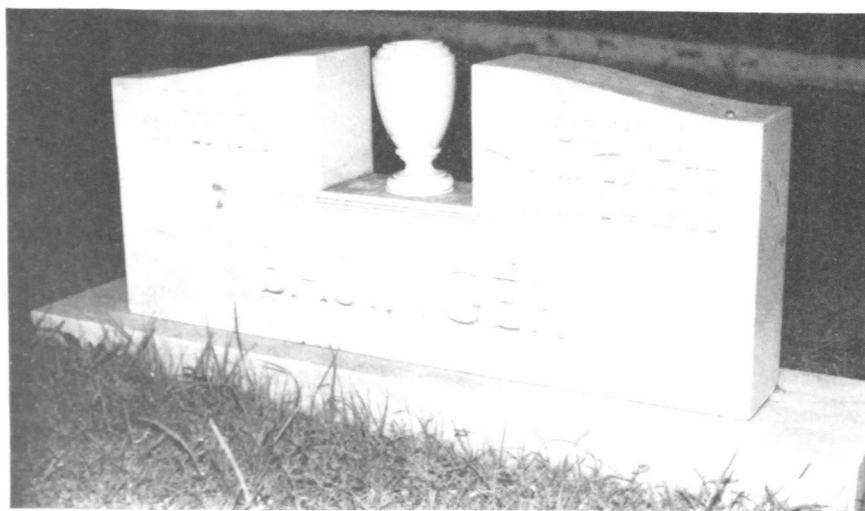
God calls away when He thinks best.

Budded on Earth to bloom in Heaven.

Words on Pansy Jones' marker: Our darling has gone before to greet us on the other shore. Weep not, Papa or Mama, for I am waiting in Heaven for thee. Darling, we miss thee. ●

Photographs courtesy of the author.

EULALIE ANN NAIL, known mostly as LEE ANN NAIL, makes her first appearance as a WESTVIEW writer in this issue. Previously, she was pictured in an article about her husband, Spike. As of September 30 this year, she has retired as librarian at the Weatherford Public Library. This article is her second published work, the first having appeared when she was a fifth grader.



Monument for Dr. William and Mrs. Rosa Basinger.