

Why is the Cemetery Named Freeman Cemetery?

Through the years I have had people ask me the question, "Why is the cemetery named Freeman Cemetery and who is it named after?" Unfortunately, as a young person, I never thought to ask my parents and grandparents that question. The only bit of information about the name that I recall is that my father stated that the cemetery was named for a family of Freemans who lived nearby. That satisfied my young mind, but as I have grown older and had that question asked of me numerous times, I decided to set out in search of the correct answer.

With little information, other than the fact that Peyton Hendrix had started the cemetery and that my great-grandfather W. C. Brooks had purchased land containing a section of the cemetery in 1863, I began my research. Knowing that my great-grandfather had owned land in the area previous to 1863, I began with the 1850 census. Listed in the district, that included the cemetery, was the family of W. A. Freeman and his wife Elizabeth and their four year old son, Andrew. Then I moved forward to the census records of 1870, and found that Elizabeth Freeman was listed as living next to W. C. Brooks and his young family. Her husband W. A. was not listed, but several children were listed: Molissie, Mary, William and Margaret, age 10. Listed next door to Elizabeth was her son Andrew Freeman, now age 23, with his wife Jane and young son Oscar. Peyton Hendrix, age 66, was also listed as living with Andrew and Jane, and he was the gentleman who originally donated the land to begin the community burial ground.

So, the mystery begins, is Freeman Cemetery named after this family of Freemans who had an obvious connection to Peyton Hendrix? Or, is it named after another family of Freemans?

Here enters the story of Margaret Etta Freeman, daughter of Willis A. and Elizabeth Harper Freeman, who married T. C. Wood. Is this Margaret the same Margaret that is listed in the census of 1870 as the daughter of Elizabeth Freeman? T. C. Wood was a landowner in the area and he donated the land for the building of nearby Bethany Church. Mr. Wood also owned a portion of the cemetery and he sold it in 1905. T. C. Wood and his wife Margaret had one son who died in childhood. They adopted her nephew Press Freeman when his parents died, according to the obituary of Mr. T. C. Wood which appeared in the Weakley County Press in July, 1937.

There has always been speculation that there are unmarked graves in the cemetery, but there are not any records that indicate where these graves might be. We do know that Press Freeman's brother went in search of his parents' and a brother's graves and was unable to find their names on any of the tombstones in the cemetery.

After searching various Freeman and Brooks family records and old deeds, the information seems to indicate that the name Freeman Cemetery does come from the family of Margaret Freeman Wood who descended from W. A. and Elizabeth Freeman.

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