

Wells Family Cemetery

Tucker, Stone Mountain Road, near Tucker.

Brownings District, DeKalb Co. June 14 1906.

This old cemetery is in a small grove in the
midst of a plowed field. Of the 7 visible
graves, only one bears an inscribed marker. The
stone has shaped tomb of Wm. Mason. His
inscription see below.

SACRED

TO

THE MEMORY OF

WILLIAM MASON WHO

WAS BORN OCT. the 22nd 1795

AND DIED the 19th FEB. 1858.

The other graves are those of various members
of the Wells Family, or whose old home place
the cemetery is situated. Among them are:

Elisha Wells, founder of the family in DeKalb
County and father of Willis L.
Wells, the latter being buried in
the Stone Mountain Cemetery.

Some grandchildren of Willis L. Wells. Mr. Wells
lost two or three sons in Confederate service, whose
bodies were never returned to DeKalb. Some of the
children of these boys are buried in the old fam-
ily cemetery. (at least) well made by H. J. Mathis.

526 Hardendorf Ave., N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
May 8, 1970

*Think I have
everything worked
out for they will
be in a beautiful
location. I have in
mind to have a
will done. We could
lose a
million.*

- Mr. Willis Wells
- Mrs. Claude Carroll
- Mr. Hugh Lewis
- Mrs. Brit Gaston
- Mr. Lamar Turner
- Mr. Carl Wells
- Mr. Fred Wells
- Mr. Harold Wells
- ✓ Mrs. Fred Phillips

Dear Cousins:

Re: Removal of Elisha and Elizabeth Marsh Wells
from Wells family graveyard to Stone Mountain,
Georgia Cemetery - June 8, 9, 10, 1970

Mr. Harold Wells and I have worked out plans to remove our mutual ancestor Elisha Wells, his wife Elizabeth Marsh Wells, their daughter Sally Wells Mason, the infant daughter of James Alvin Wells and other relatives; plus the Wells family slaves to Stone Mountain cemetery.

Stone Mountain cemetery is the nearest cemetery to the Wells family homestead which was first owned by Elisha's son, Willis Lea Wells, in 1838. Willis Lea Wells was the father of James Alvin Wells and the brother of Sally Wells Mason for the information of any of you who may be interested.

Mr. Couch, funeral director at Stone Mountain, will handle the exhumation of the bones. The graves will be arranged in basically the same pattern as they are presently, the slaves being kept at the foot of the white graves. Burial will be in the white section of the cemetery. Stone Mountain is the only cemetery that will grant us permission to keep the white persons and Negroes together. All other cemeteries in the area are segregated cemeteries.

Pattillo Construction Company has been very cooperative and is bearing the entire expense of the removal of the bodies. As our payment for the release of the land they are agreeable to the following arrangement: They will furnish a comparable strip of land in Stone Mountain cemetery. They will put the bones in wooden boxes, prepared for proper burial. They will move such ^{heavy} stones as remain and give us bronze markers for those graves where the stones have been destroyed. Since the cemetery is not perpetual care, they will cement the lot, putting stone in the cement to make it last forever, we hope. Since none of us are getting any younger I was trying to work out something that would relieve us of the burden of caring for the cemetery.

Would you telephone me at your convenience, or drop me a note, and let me know whether the above meets with your approval. If you would like to be present when the site is selected, this is also your privilege.

The removal dates have been scheduled beginning Monday, June 8 and will continue throughout the week until completed. I will need the help of at least the men to stand by for a few hours on the above dates.

living in DeKalb County, Georgia, and his father was with him at that time.

Georgia Home

NOTE: The following description of the home of Willis Lea Wells was written by his granddaughter, Virgil Mary Wells Austin, who was born at this old home.

* * * * *

"The home of Willis Lea Wells was located in DeKalb County on the Stone Mountain-Norcross Road. This road in all of my 61 years has undergone very little change and runs in a northwesterly direction out of Stone Mountain for about two miles, passing over the Stone Mountain car line and taking a northern turn, running through Tucker, Georgia to Norcross. The house (part of which is still standing, forming the back of the present house) was located three miles from Stone Mountain and seven miles from Norcross.

The House

"The house, like many others of its day, was the 'big house' and kitchen type, connected by a covered pass-way. The big house was a two-story log building, weatherboarded and painted white, with a red brick chimney at each end, and a porch running across the front, with columns resting on stone pillars on the outside. There were two doors on the front, each the entrance to separate rooms. There were two doors on the back also. Both the upper and lower stories were divided into two large rooms. The pass-way led from the southern end of the big house into the kitchen, which was divided into two convenient size rooms, with an entrance on the front and back, and a chimney in the center, later moved to the southern end.

The Yards

"The house was neatly paled in all around, leaving a spacious yard, which was shaded by large sycamore trees. The well, which is all that can be seen of the old home in passing it today, was in the front yard - being taken in by the palings at a distance of about four or five feet, and was conveniently situated from the kitchen, the big house and pass-way. There was a wide shelf on the southern end of the front porch, and there was also one on the back edge of the pass-way. A bucket of water and a wash basin were kept on each shelf.

"In front of the big house were two rock enclosed flower gardens divided by a walk running from the middle of the front porch. Arranged in a neat pattern was a large variety of old

time roses and blooming shrubs. There were some extremely large and very dark red roses, which the old people of that day called the "Augusta rose." Others were white, very delicately tinted with pink. The shrubs were English Dogwood, Althea, Lilac, Mountain Locust, Weigela, Scotch Broom, Crape Myrtle, Snow Ball and a well trained Honey-suckle vine that gave off a delightful fragrance at dusk.

"I can never forget the beauty of the little nook formed by the ends of the two houses where they were joined by the pass-way. On one side of this little place was the chimney of the big house, and clinging to it was a Wisteria vine. At the corner of the house grew shrubbery, and a little ~~space~~ further out a Columbine clung to the corner of the porch. On the opposite side at the corner of the kitchen grew rose bushes, Scotch Broom and English Dogwood, all in line. This little beauty spot was the beginning of the walk leading from the pass-way out to the gate by the well. Day Lilies grew about the old place in profusion. Other flowers were Snow Drops, Blue Bottles, and Iris. The garden lay south of the kitchen, and along its border grew several different colors of Larkspur with here and there a Hollyhock.

Smoke House

"The smoke house was back of the kitchen, and I was told by my father, James Alvin Wells, that the slave quarters had stood near by in the southeastern corner, but I did not learn the names of any of the slaves except that of a woman they called Neeley, and a boy, called Mose.

Note: ~~Dora Cochran, another granddaughter who lived at this old place during the Civil War, said the following negroes belonged to her grandfather: Grace, Timmie, Cath, Neeley and Bobby. Ned Gordon was the husband of one of these colored women. I believe Cousin Dora said Cath was Ned's wife.~~

Lot, Stable & Barn

"The lot lay parallel with the garden and along the roadside, and was enclosed by a rail fence. The buildings were an old log crib mounted on high pillars, a log stable with three compartments, and a large barn which was weatherboarded. About the middle of the lot was a watering trough hewn from a very large tree.

The Orchard and Timberland

"The orchard lay along by the side of the road north and south of the house and across the back. Divided from the orchard on the back by a rail fence was the timberland,

which covered several acres. In these woods and near the head of a branch was the old tanning vat where Willis Wells tanned the hides that went into shoes for his family.

Gin House and Land Under Cultivation

"A very old gin house stood across the road opposite the lot, and on this side lay the larger portion of land under cultivation. ~~Beginning at a point about three or four acres south of the gin house and extending along the road to a distance of two or three acres above the old graveyard.~~

Graveyard

"Out in this big field some distance from the road on the summit of a little hill you will see a small clump of trees. Here is the graveyard of the Wells family. Elisha Wells and his wife, Elizabeth, who lived at this old place for a time, are buried here. Sally Mason, daughter of Elisha and sister of Willis Lea Wells, is buried here also, and many other relatives of a younger generation. (In June, 1970 fourteen graves were relocated in Stone Mountain Cemetery-Old Cemetery Road)

"Negroes are buried on the east side of the little plot, no doubt slaves."

My Impressions

"When I think back about the arrangement around the old home and how well it was planned, down to the smallest detail, I think my ancestors were very intelligent, neat and industrious, and knowing about the times in which they lived and the struggles through which they passed I can, in a great measure, appreciate the background they have left for me."

written by: Virgil Mary Wells (mother of Austin)

* * * * *

Note: From records at the DeKalb County court house we find Willis Lea sold 101½ acres with house to son, James Alvin Wells, February 20, 1880, for \$500 (a profit of \$300) and some land which joined his sons Riley and James Alvin, (100 acres) for \$400. This was on April 27, 1885. It is interesting to note how this place enhanced in value, for on February 20, 1893 James Alvin sold 75 acres (only part of his original purchase) to John Herron for \$1400. This land has changed hands several times since and I understand the highest purchase price was between \$6000 and \$10,000.*

Willis Lea built a home at Stone Mountain, Georgia sometime later, which favored somewhat his old home, and he and his wife lived there until he died in 1887. After his death his son, Riley, came into possession of this house.

* Since the development of St.Mt. Industrial Park this land is reported to have sold for more than two million dollars.

Remarks made at Wells Cemetery lot
Stone Mtn. Cemetery, 4/18/1971 by
Franklin M. Garrett.

(1)

It is quite fitting today that
we are assembled here in the Stone
Mountain Cemetery to commemorate the 200th
anniversary of the birth of the founder
of a pioneer and useful DeKalb County
family - the ancestor of most of you
within hearing of my voice.

Elisha Wells was born 5
years before the Declaration of Inde-
pendence was written and adopted. His
natal year was 1771 and the place
was Caswell County, N.C. - near the
Virginia line and not far from the
present ^{city of} Danville. He was a son of
Miles and Susanna Hardy Wells. Indeed,
the Wells family has been traced back
to 4 brothers who lived in England during
the reign of King John, ~~1198-1216~~ of
Magna Charta fame, who ruled from 1198 to 1216.

On October 19, 1792 Elisha Wells
was married to Elizabeth Mash or
Marsh in N.C. Apparently the young
couple moved about a bit during their
early married life. From land conveyances
we find Elisha in Orange County, N.C.
in 1796; in Caswell Co. again in 1800
and, in 1808 Spartanburg Co. S.C. By
this time his children had all been

born. They were: Abner, Eunice, Afelah, Sarah, Willis Leav, Henry Miles and Henrietta. Abner married Henrietta Williamson; Eunice married Ford Mason. There is no record of Afelah's husband, if any; Sarah married William Mason, brother of Ford; Willis Leav married Drusilla Saxton; Henry Miles married Drusilla's sister, Mary, and Henrietta became Mrs. Rainwater.

In 1829, when all of his children were grown, Elisha left Spartanburg and came to Georgia, settling in Gwinnett County. He brought all of his family except Mrs. Rainwater.

(Gwinnett elder David Detkalf)

(Creation of Detkalf)

The first members of the Wells family to settle in DeKalb were apparently Eunice and Sarah. Their husbands Ford and William Mason are both listed as heads of families in DeKalb's first census, that of 1830.

By 1840 Ford and Eunice were in Gwinnett near Rockbridge, but William and Sarah were in DeKalb, as were Willis Leav, his wife,

Elizabeth.

Willis Lee Wells had been born in Caswell Co. N.C., in 1805, during the presidency of Thomas Jefferson.

He was about 30 when he purchased from Hope H. Watts, of Floyd County, the land upon which the old Wells homestead was built. This tract, 100 acres of Land Lot 184 of the 18th District is on what was later known as the Stone Mountain-Norcross Road, 3 miles northwest of the former.

A granddaughter, Virgil Mary Wells Dustin has left us a description of the house and grounds. In part, it follows:

Read description

Willis Lee and Drusilla Sexton Wells became the parents of 7 children:

Elizabeth Aurelia, married Augustus Cochran Miles Marion, married Emily Overby; Willard Simpson, married Louisa J. Harris; William Henry, married Fannie Hardman; George Riley, married Eliza Jane Hardman; Willis Virgil, unmarried, and James Alvin, married Mary Jane Thompson.

The Civil War years were sad years for Willis and Drusilla. The...

sons, all in United States were killed, in ~~the~~ -
 Miles M. at Baker's Cross, Miss. in 1863;
 Willard ~~son~~ ^{wounded} in the Battle of ~~the~~ in
 1864 ~~and died~~ ^{and died} Willis Vigil, ^{was} shot by a Yankee
 sniper, hidden in an apple tree near Ft.
 Stockman, Virginia; William Honey, was paroled
 at Vicksburg. He ~~did~~ ^{on shipboard} ~~not~~ ~~arrive~~ home and was
 buried in White Bay. Both George Riley
 and James Alvin were in service, but survived
 the ordeal.

Just ^{one} 4 days before the firing on
 Ft. Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, ^{had} precipitated
 the Civil War, the pioneer Elisha Wells
 died on April 16, 1860 at the home of
 his son Willis Leach. He was buried be-
 side his wife Elizabeth, who had passed
 to the great beyond in 1843, in the
 Family cemetery on the summit of a
 little hill in a big field across the road
 from the home.

By the summer of 1970 "progress"
 had reached this part of South. It is more
 necessary, to disturb the tenants of the
 old cemetery, all of whom had rested in
 peace for more than a century. A
 caretaker removed ^{of 19 21 1905} to this spot was
 planned by great-great-grand daughter
 Amelia Twining and other descendants.

So today, we come to honor the memory of an American pioneer and his progeny. It is entirely fitting that the unveiling of the handsome new marker will be performed by the youngest descendant of Elisha Wells.

*Kind I have
everything worked
out for they will
be in a beautiful
location. Graves in
old location to be covered
with stones. Love,
Mildred*

526 Hardendorf Ave., N.E.
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Mildred Carlton French