

**RELIANCE CHURCH CEMETERY
HISTORICAL CEMETERY DESIGNATION AND MARKER
BRAZOS COUNTY, TEXAS**

By Lonnie Jones
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The Reliance Cemetery came into being on April 3, 1874 with the donation of four (4) acres of land that was to form the Reliance Baptist Church, Reliance Cemetery, and Reliance School. Land was donated by two attorneys in Bryan, Texas. These were Mr. B.K Davis and Mr. M. J. Beale (see volume Y, Page 311, Brazos County Deed Records, Brazos County Clerk, Bryan, Texas). The property for the Cemetery is held jointly by the Reliance Baptist Church, although there is a separate body that governs the financing, operation, and maintenance of the Cemetery. Together, the Church and Cemetery occupy 7.613 acres of land. Subsequent donations of land were made by members of the Community in 1951 (Volume 128, page 28 Brazos County Deed Records) and in 1995 (Volume 2371, Page 1886). Both the Church and Cemetery are in operation at present.

The Cemetery is overseen by the Reliance Cemetery Association and about 40 members, a board of directors and officers—president, vice-president, and secretary/treasurer. The association meets annually on the second Sunday in March to develop plans and take care of business. A caretaker is hired to maintain the Cemetery grounds. An endowment arising from contributions by members of the Reliance Community provides a permanent fund to finance the operations and maintenance of the Cemetery.

The Community of Reliance, Texas was first called “Little Georgia,” taking its name from the state from which the original settlers came in a wagon train in the early 1850’s (McGaughey). More settlers from the Southeastern states arrived in the 1870’s to escape the ravages of the Civil War and search for land in Texas to make a new start. David Lloyd of Mississippi changed the community’s name to Reliance in 1873 with the creation of the Reliance Baptist Church.

Most of these settlers were cotton farmers and so, naturally, they cleared land of timber, plowed the earth and planted the crop that they knew

best—cotton. In 1873, W. H. (Uncle Billy) Morgan opened a cotton gin and general store that also included a post office. In the latter years of the 19th century, Reliance prospered with a country store, post office, gristmill, cotton gin, school, church, and community center. In 1905-06, the school had two teachers and 91 students. (McCaughey)

The soil proved to be erodable and was soon depleted to the point that cotton was no longer a feasible farming alternative. The area farms slowly transformed into the extensive cattle ranches of the present. The community population dwindled as families sought employment and residence elsewhere.

Today, the Church, Community Center, and Cemetery remain as the community center of Reliance, as this rural area is rapidly being transitioned from cattle ranching to rural residential developments. The community's close proximity to Bryan/College Station creates a great demand for rural residences with a home and two to twenty acres of land.

The cemetery is located on a major farm to market road (FM 1179) among century old post oak, elm, and hackberry trees. The surrounding prairie has been used for farmland, ranching, and increasingly for rural residences. Sharing property with the Reliance Baptist Church which was also formed in 1874, the burial ground covers some three acres of a total tract size of just over 7.5 acres. It is surrounded by a chain link fence, shaded by oak trees, and divided by paved access roads. An overhead sign clearly marks the main entrance along FM 1179. The earliest legible grave marker is dated 1881, although long-time residents attest to several older graves whose markers have disappeared over time.

This historic cemetery, which has been in continuous operation for 132 years, is in excellent condition with sound financing and competent management to serve the needs of this community for the foreseeable future. As time slips into the future, Reliance Church Cemetery provides a primary connecting link to the history of the community.

Editor's Note: Supplemental information provided by the author follows the bibliography.

Bibliography

Brundidge, Glenna Fourman, *Brazos County History: Rich Past—Bright Future* (Bryan, Texas: Family History Foundation, 1986).

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Charles T. Sadnick III, Historian
History Program Division
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Dear Mr. Sadnick:

In response to your questions about the history of the Reliance Cemetery, I offer the following information. I am sorry that I do not have more complete information. It seems that someone should have made this application some time ago as much has been lost from the deaths of previous generations. Nevertheless, I am pleased to offer the following responses to your questions and identify some pioneers and key leaders of Brazos County and Reliance Community who are buried in the cemetery.

1. When was the Reliance Cemetery Association established?

The Association was organized in 1920 and began to collect dues to pay for the upkeep of the grounds. Mrs. Essie Shealy served as treasurer from 1920 to 1973. Several men served as presidents: Jake Merka, Ralph Cobb, Woody Humphries and M. L. Riley. In 1979 an endowment of \$20,000 was created to provide funds for maintenance. Today that fund amounts to \$100,000.

2. What is the year of the earliest burial in the cemetery? Who is the person interred?

The earliest grave marker in the cemetery is dated June 13, 1881. The person interred in the grave was John F. Isbell. Local people say that there were probably earlier graves but they were marked only with a stone or petrified wood, which is abundant in the area.

3. Are there any historically significant individuals buried here?

Several individuals should be considered pioneers or leaders in the creation and maintenance of Reliance Cemetery and/or the Reliance Community. Notable among these are:

William Henry Morgan – born 1848 in Hamburg, Georgia, died 1922 in Brazos County, Texas. W. H. (Uncle Billy) Morgan was one of the pioneers who led many of the families to settle in the Reliance Community. He traveled to Texas in the early 1870's with a well drilling crew. Returning to Macon County Georgia, he and another bachelor, John Smith, urged several families to move to Texas to gain a new start after ravages of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Soon thereafter, a wagon train led by W. H. Morgan arrived in the area that they called "Little Georgia" after their home state. It was later named Reliance. Families traveling with the wagon train included the following names: English, Cloud, Morgan, Smith, Mathis, Shealy, Saxon and Jones. Mr. Morgan married Martha Hammond of Kurten in 1877. During his lifetime, W. H. Morgan owned a cotton gin, a Grange store, including Post Office, and land on which he farmed cotton and corn, and ran cattle. An innovator with technology and conservation, he was the first in the community to use gasoline for a water pump and sawmill, and to construct terraces and drainage ditches to conserve soil. He may have been given the affectionate name, Uncle Billy, by non-kinsmen when he extended credit for staples to area families after a rainy spring when there were no crops. The Morgan family supported local churches, schools and community organizations. Mr. Morgan was an active member of the Cedar Creek Masonic Lodge at Kurten, Texas. Upon his death, the following article appeared in the Bryan newspaper, entitled, *Brazos Co. Mourns in Death of Mr. Morgan*: "Like a giant oak, spreading its arms to protect all within its radius, with shelter for the needy within its shadow and protection for the storm-tossed and homeless, so stood this good man, and so his friends looked upon him, throughout his long and useful life. **W. H. and Martha Morgan** are buried in the family plot in Reliance Cemetery.

Walter A. Stewart – born 1831, Harris County, Texas, died 1911, Brazos County, Texas.

Walter A. Stewart died at age 80 in Brazos County and is buried in Reliance Cemetery. He moved to the area after marriage to Miss Sallie Nash in 1857 and affiliated with Cedar Creek Masonic Lodge in 1867. At his death, his lodge brothers, consisting of W. H. Morgan, Noah Lindsey, J. C. Lloyd and D. S. Lloyd wrote the following tribute, " He was old and full of days and, like a sheaf of ripe corn,

was ready to be gathered to his eternal home, his hopes having been fixed in Christ many years ago.” He entered the Confederate service in the early part of the war as a cavalryman and was in the service during the entire war. He was a lieutenant in his company and acquitted himself with honors of a brave and honorable soldier. “Esteemed and loved by all who knew him”, he was buried in Reliance Cemetery on May 8, 1911.

David Stokes Lloyd – born 1831, Clark County Alabama, died 1920, Brazos County, Texas.

David Stokes Lloyd moved to Brazos County in 1860 where he farmed and ran cattle. He was a slave owner and civil war veteran, probably serving with Texas’ 18th Brigade, Brazos County Volunteers. David S. Lloyd is credited with coining the name “Reliance” for the community in 1873 when the Reliance Baptist Church and cemetery were established. This name succeeded the original “Little Georgia” and was intended to depict, “confidence, dependence and a ground of trust.” Mr. Lloyd was a pioneer and original settler of the Reliance community. Throughout his life he was active in community affairs and the church. He was a member of the Cedar Creek Masonic Lodge since 1969. David S. Lloyd is buried in the Reliance Cemetery. A descendant grandson of David Stokes Lloyd was Dr. Bolivar Jones Lloyd, who served as Director of the U. S. Public Health Service in Washington, D.C. Dr. Bolivar Lloyd was the author of numerous scientific journals and was instrumental in finding preventions for yellow fever and bubonic plague.

Jesse Pendleton Lloyd – born 1836, Kemper County, Mississippi, died 1900 in Brazos County, Texas.

Jesse Pendleton Lloyd moved to Brazos County, Texas soon after his marriage to Mary Francis Hood in Clark County Mississippi on December 26, 1860. He served the Confederate States of America as member of the Brazos County Volunteers, 18th Brigade, a part of muster led by Captain G. W. Daniels organized at Hempstead, Texas to prepare for the anticipated invasion of Texas by northern forces. Jesse Pendleton was a charter member of the Cedar Creek Masonic

Lodge, Number 300, at Kurten, Texas created in July 1867. The Lloyd descendents still reside in and provide leadership in Reliance Community.

William Neal Glaze – born 1844, Alabama, died 1914, Brazos County, Texas

William Glaze was a veteran of the Civil War, serving in the army of the Confederate States of America. He is interred with his wife, **Frances Elizabeth Glaze** in the Reliance Cemetery.

Although not all are identified as such, several of the men buried in Reliance Cemetery were soldiers and officers in the Confederate Army. Some served in units in Georgia and other southern states before coming to Texas and a few served with the Texas volunteers.

In more modern times, Mr. **Woodrow Wilson Humphries** (“Woody”) was an outstanding leader in the community and county. While he served on regional and national committees, such as the Farmland Industries Board of Directors, his devotion was always to Reliance Community and Brazos County. He served on the Board of Directors of the First National Bank of Bryan, the oldest locally owned bank in Texas, the Bryan Independent School board, the Reliance Cemetery Association Board of Directors and the Deacon Board of Reliance Baptist Church. Mr. Humphries provided personal finances and leadership in the formation of the endowed trust that today funds the maintenance and operations of the cemetery. Loved and respected by all who knew him, Woody was interred in Reliance Cemetery in 2003.

Sources of information:

Key Leaders;

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William Neal Glaze – Brazos County Historical Commission

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The History of Reliance Baptist Church, Historical Committee, 1999.

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