Alabama Register
Property Information

RECEIVED
SEP 11 1996
Ala. Historical Commission

1. Name

historic Davis Cemetery

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 3.2 mi SW of U.S.78 on Al. 18 (NW¼ S. 18 T 15S Rge 5W)

~~city, town~~ Horse Creek Blvd. ✓ vicinity of Dora, Al.

state Alabama county Walker

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	✓ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
✓ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Cemetery is owned by the community

street & number

city, town ___ vicinity of state Zip

5. Please use space below to sketch floor plan/site plan.

See attached map.

6. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	___ original site
___ good	___ ruins	___ altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

7. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
✓ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
✓ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

8. Major Bibliographical References

Dora Centenial Book 1886 - 1986 City of Dora
Davis Family History compiled by Tilda Norberg 78 Clinton Ave. Staten Island, New York 10301

9. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____
Quadrangle name Dora
Quadrangle scale _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

10. Form Prepared By

name/title Janice H. Bennett Trustee of Davis Cemetery Inc.
organization Davis Cemetery Inc. Board of Trustees
date 9-9-96
street & number 11 Nail Lane
telephone 205 - 648-9704
city or town Dora
state Al. Zip 35062

11. Please submit color slides of the property with this form.

12. Please return ALABAMA REGISTER form to:

ALABAMA REGISTER COORDINATOR
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
468 SOUTH PERRY STREET
MONTGOMERY ALABAMA 36130-0900

DAVIS CEMETERY
Davis Cemetery Road
on the north side of Horse Creek Blvd.(Co.Rd.18), approx. 3.2 miles west of U.S. 78
Dora, Walker County

Property owner:
Davis Cemetery, Inc.
c/o Mrs. Janice H. Bennett, Trustee
11 Nail Lane
Dora, Alabama 35062
205-648-9704

SUMMARY:

The Davis Cemetery, located in the eastern Walker County community of Dora, contains nearly a thousand graves dating from 1847 to the present. It is located on approximately five-and-a-half acres at the northwestern edge of the town. Originally the family burial ground of James M. Davis, one of the county's earliest settlers, it was given to the community in 1888 by Louisa Hoover Davis, wife of Daniel Davis. In addition to the burials from the early settlement period, the cemetery also contains graves from the late-19th century period during which Dora experienced rapid growth as a coal mining town. Notable graves include those of prominent citizens, veterans of the Mexican and Civil Wars, and French immigrants who came to work in the local coal mines.

DESCRIPTION:

Situated on a hilltop at the northwestern edge of the town of Dora, the Davis Cemetery is located in the eastern part of Walker County and the lower section of the Cumberland Plateau region, and it is a part of the Warrior Basin of the Appaliachain Coal Field. The cemetery contains approximately 5.5 acres overlooking densely wooded land in three directions and Horse Creek Boulevard on the south. The Second Baptist Church is adjacent to the cemetery on the southeast corner, separated by the Davis Cemetery Road. The Second Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, a recent structure, is located in the southeastern corner of the cemetery property. Just across the Horse Creek Boulevard is the track of the Burlington Northern Railroad, which came to Dora in 1886 as the Kansas City, Memphis, and Birmingham RR. The cemetery faces an area known as "Old French Town" (once inhabitated by French immigrants who came to Dora to dig coal) and sites of two coal mining camps (Nos. 10 & 11), but no structures remain from either of these.

Within the boundaries of the cemetery, the oldest graves date from 1847 and are located at the greatest elevation in the western/northwestern section. A road, known as the Davis Cemetery Road, runs north from Horsecreek Boulevard, bisecting the property, then turning west to encircle the hilltop and denote the older section. Later graves (early-20th century) are located inside this circular road on the downward sloping land to the east and south of the older section. Just inside the circle to the east of the 19th century graves, is a valley which is still used for burials.

The eastern half of the property, outside this circular road, slopes gently upward from west to east and is bisected by a second segment of the road, forming the lower half of an irregular "8" when looking at it from the east. This section was opened for burials in 1993.

The graves in the cemetery include approximately 736 burials marked with tombstones and approximately 200 others which have only rock headstones or no markings at all. Two cedar trees (possibly planted when the cemetery was given to the community), and a variety of oak, maple, and pine trees shade the landscape. Numerous designs and shapes of markers appear, with most of the older markers being marble or rough stone. Several box-type graves made of stone or concrete slabs appear, and there are even three such graves marked with red bricks. Newer graves are marked with granite tombstones.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Davis Cemetery is eligible for listing on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage under Criterion A for the context of settlement from 1847 to the late-nineteenth century. It is also potentially eligible under Criterion D for its ability to yield information. The cemetery dates from 1847 and contains the graves of the community's earliest settlers, including James M. Davis who recorded the first land purchase in the area in 1830. After 1888, it became significant as the community burial ground during a period when construction of the railroad and the rapid development of the coal industry brought an influx of residents. Graves of prominent local residents, veterans from the Mexican and Civil Wars, and coal miners, including a number of French immigrants likely brought in by the coal company (probably TCI), are found in the cemetery. The graves of the French immigrants possibly remain as the only evidence of their settlement in the community.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY:

As the family burial ground of James M. Davis (c.1790-1874), the Davis Cemetery contains graves of the area's earliest pioneers, the earliest being that of Jacob Davis (May 13, 1847). James M. Davis brought his family to Alabama from Raliegh, North Carolina, during the 1820's. After settling for a short time in Blount Springs, he moved to Walker County and on February 13, 1830, filed a claim for land in Section 18, Township 15, Range 5, which was located on Horse Creek and extended westward to the Warrior River. It was this area which later became known as "Sharon," later "Horse Creek," and finally as the town of Dora.

By 1870, the state's coal industry was beginning to develop, and coal had been found in the Dora area. In 1886, construction of the Kansas City, Memphis, and Birmingham Railroad at Dora (then known as "Sharon") led to the rapid development of the local coal industry and the resulting influx of miners to the region. Local historians report that a group of French immigrants came to Dora in the late-19th or early-20th century to work in the mines, residing in an area known as "Old French Town."

As the community grew, according to tradition, Daniel Davis (1816-1874) and his wife Louisa Hoover Davis (1819-1898) foresaw the need for a community cemetery and church. As local historians report, Louisa Davis, following the death of her husband in 1888, donated their family burial ground to the community and financed the construction of a church on the property.

Early plantings in the cemetery are believed to have included ten cedar trees, two of which possibly remain. The church originally was known as the "White Church," since it was a two story frame building, painted white, with the sanctuary below and a Masonic Lodge above, and it has been used by congregations of Methodists, Nazarenes and Baptists.

The following year, in 1889, Louisa Davis contributed $100 toward the construction of a school known as the "Hard Bargain School," for the bargaining that was required to complete the construction. Daniel Monroe Davis (1866-1931), grandson of Daniel and Louisa, was the first teacher at the log school, following his graduation from the Southern Medical School in Atlanta. He later attended the Bellevue School of Medicine in New York but returned to Walker County in 1893 to work as a company doctor for the local mining companies. Dr. Davis is buried in the Davis Cemetery.

The cemetery contains graves of many prominent local residents, veterans from the Mexican and Civil Wars, and many coal miners, including a number of French immigrants. Graves marked with names such as Baptiste, Ca Chon, Da Lafayette, De Loach, Gaillard, Grissett, Marquis, and Vedell point to the latter conclusion. Futher support for this is given by the text furnished by state historians Rogers and Ward, who record that up to 18.7 per cent of Alabama mine workers were foreign born, some coming as individuals and some brought as groups by mining companies. Further investigation of the immigrant population in Dora might yield additional evidence.

Sources:

Bennett, Janice. Local History of Davis Cemetery, n.p.,n.d.

Owen, Thomas McAdory. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography, (Chicago, The S.J.Clark Publishing Company, 1921) vol.I,283-285; vol.II, 1373.

Rogers, Ward, Atkins, Flynt. Alabama: The History of a Deep South State, (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1994) 277-287.