

Canaan Cemetery, Chilton County, Alabama

By Derric Scott

The **Canaan Cemetery** is located in Mt. Creek just across the road and a bit north of the **Confederate Soldiers' Home Cemetery #1**. All of the known burials are from the Dennis and related families. Today the Confederate Memorial Park maintains this cemetery.

(**Speculative note:** since

- a 1908 history of the church stated that the nearest cemetery was the **Confederate Cemetery**
- the church disbanded in the 1906-1910 timeframe
- the first known burial was teenager George W. Long in 1913 (his grandmother was a Dennis)
- all known burials are from the Dennis and related families

this cemetery might have actually been a Dennis family cemetery started near the old **Canaan Baptist Church** site around 1913 that took on the name of the old church over time. However, so far it does not appear that any Dennis family member ever owned the property, although many were founding members of the church.)

The property was obtained from the US BLM by George Cooper in 1860 and then owned by J. M. Falkner and his widow from 1882 until 1937. This is the Falkner that donated the land for the Confederate Soldiers' Home. The cemetery site was then owned by G. E. Hawes and then the J. W. Hand family, whose apparent descendants own it today. It does not appear that the church ever owned the property outright.

Canaan Baptist Church

There was a **Canaan Baptist Church** in Mt. Creek in the 1800s and early 1900s. The exact location isn't yet known to me although it was likely very near the cemetery site (a 1937 aerial photo shows a church-like building directly between it and the road. The church was organized in 1850 and then re-organized in 1888. It seems to have disappeared around 1906. One article suggested it split up into the other local churches over doctrine issues, especially missions.

The church hosted annual singings that became famous and continued to be held for over 75 years. The first was in 1890 and they were still being held at Canaan in 1905. The singing continued after the church was disbanded. The **Salem Baptist Church** near the river picked it up and held it annually until that community was bought out by Alabama Power and flooded by Mitchell Dam about 1922. The singing lived on, however, and **Providence Baptist Church (#2)** continued the tradition, calling it the **Old Salem May Singing**.

The Dennis and extended families were very active in the church, especially that of Joel M. Dennis. Also the Thomas Pyron family was prominent. After the church dissolved Pyron went to Chestnut Creek and then moved to Clanton by 1910 and then on to Bessemer.