

Clanton Cemetery, Chilton County, Alabama

By Derric Scott

The **Clanton Cemetery** is the final resting place for many of the earliest and most influential townspeople in Clanton and Chilton County.

The first known grave is that of the child Dudley Wells Mullins who died August 11, 1872 at the age of 8 months. Dudley was the son of James Toliver Mullins and Mary Ann Wells. The second oldest burial is that of Sarah E. Gullahorn in 1874, an infant daughter of Elisha Thomas (Jr.) and Cornelia Dink Wright Gullahorn. These earliest burials are concentrated in the northern and western parts of the cemetery, near 2nd Avenue North and along 1st Street, which implies that the cemetery started in that area. Mullins' grave (1872) is in Lot #5 Block #16 that was sold by Alfred Baker to Baker County in June 1871.

The Mullins and Gullahorn families are among the earliest to live in the Clanton area. The Gullahorns operated a saw mill near the railroad in the center of what would become the town of Clanton. The only buildings at that time were the saw mill buildings, a log jail, log courthouse, and a few general stores. The Wright families were also early in the area and intermarried with the Gullahorns. The Gullahorn-Wright plot is perhaps the largest in the Cemetery.

(A note: Wyatt, in *Chilton County and Her People*, says that the earliest burial was Mrs. E. Roach in 1875. However, the deaths of Dudley Mullins and Sarah Gullahorn above are clearly earlier. Also, the only similar burial to "Mrs. E. Roach" that can be found today is that of Fannie E. Wright Roach who died in 1882 at the age of 19 after only about a year of marriage.)

Just on the north side of 2nd Avenue North the African-American Salem Baptist Church was built in 1884 near the spot their church had been holding outdoor services in the "grove of trees" for years. This church also had a cemetery known as the "Salem Cemetery." Indications are that this graveyard was located mostly on the southeastern corner of the present day cemetery. Many African-American death certificates of that time state that the deceased was to be buried in the Salem Cemetery in Clanton. Today there are a number of identifiable graves and some large unmarked grassy areas that are believed to have made up this cemetery. The Salem Baptist Church merged with the Friendship Baptist Church around 1925 to form the Union Baptist Church and they located to the west of 9th Street / Enterprise Road. The Salem church building was then used by the Church of God in Christ "The Temple" for about 10 years and then by the "Four-Square Church." Around 1835 the building site became part of the Jones Addition to the cemetery.

Additions

Roberta A. Wilson Addition – Roberta Johnson first married Tipton Mullins and then P. D. Wilson after Mullins' death. Sometime in the mid to late 1920 this addition was added to the eastern side of the Clanton Cemetery, likely after 1925 when the Salem Church had merged/moved away as this addition extended into what was likely the Salem Cemetery area.

W. W. Jones Addition – added about 1935 and encompassed the current northeast corner. This included most of the property formerly owned by the Salem Baptist Church.

Rev. H. M. Sandlin Addition – added about 1944 and encompassed the northwest corner.

Property

It is unclear when the City of Clanton became the "owner" of the whole cemetery area, or even if they ever officially legally did. Some deeds showing parts of it have been found. Practically the entire area was owned by Alfred Baker in the earliest days of Clanton. He sold a few lots (#5 and #12) that are part of the cemetery to Baker County in 1871; however, nothing has been found proving the transfer of the bulk of the cemetery to anyone.