

David Woolley Cemetery, Chilton County, Alabama

By Derric Scott, June 26, 2025 from various sources.

The David Woolley Cemetery is the family cemetery of David and Martha Frances Woolley. It is in the N ½ of the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of S4 T23 R12E, about 15 miles north of Maplesville "as the crow flies."

The Woolley families are some of the earliest settlers in this area of the state, coming from South Carolina, through Georgia, to the Maplesville area in the early 1820s. These families included the four brothers Basil Andrew (b1777), Zaccheus (b1797), Reason (b1808), and David (b1809). They were all born in South Carolina. According to the birth states of their children, the families first settled in Georgia for a few years then several moved to Bibb County, Alabama, likely between 1821 and 1825. Andrew and Zaccheus were likely the first to move to this area. Zaccheus Woolley's daughter Louisa married Willis Langston and they basically founded the town of Langston Station, later called Jemison. Another son, Reason, Jr., settled north of Maplesville. This area of Bibb County would later become Baker County in 1868 and then be renamed to Chilton County in 1874.

These early Alabama Woolley families settled around the crossroads of the Elyton Road (from Cahawba to Selma to "Birmingham") and the Ft. Jackson Road (from Ft. Jackson to Tuscaloosa). Note that both Cahawba and Tuscaloosa were the capital of Alabama at various times, so these were important roads. The town that developed at this crossroads was called Maplesville, named after the local merchant Steven Maples. According to the Maplesville history book, Andrew Woolley was the first Postmaster there.

The Woolley families soon spread over a wide area. Reason, Jr., settled farther to the north and patented BLM land just to the northwest of Providence Church. Other descendant families settled to the east near Benson (Isabella).

David Woolley was born about 1809 in South Carolina. He and some of his siblings moved slightly west and settled in eastern Georgia. David apparently remained in Georgia longer than his brothers, living on the far eastern side very near South Carolina. He had several children born there through the 1840s, for example Mary in 1843 and Mark in 1845. The family was still in Georgia at the time of the 1850 U. S. Census and it listed David and his two children, Mary C. (6) and Mark R. (4). David's wife was not included so it is possible or likely that she had died. Shortly after the Census he moved his family to Alabama, near his brothers.

On September 30, 1851, very soon after arriving in Alabama, David married the widow Martha Francis Yeldell and in 1854 he bought all 300+ acres from her deceased husband's estate. (Perhaps David's brothers had written him about an eligible widow living nearby?!). David had more children with Francis and all were born in Alabama.

The cemetery is included in this property which was originally patented from the U. S. Government by James Moore in 1828. It was then bought by William Yeldell in 1842 and then by David Woolley in 1854. It is unknown if the cemetery was already present and being used at the time David Woolley bought it. The earliest *known* burial is David's wife, Martha Francis (Yeldell) Woolley, in August 1871.