

THE HANDS THAT ROCKED THE CRADLE
A Brief History of African-Americans and Slavery in the Wheat Community,
Roane County, Tennessee

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Editor's Note: This paper was written by Mr. Neidig in honor of the May 26, 2000, dedication of AEC #2 - Slave Cemetery.

In September of 1856 Mr. C.F. Welcker became quite upset when he realized he had purchased an unsound Negro. He wrote to a doctor in Charleston, South Carolina, that he had lately become the owner of a slave woman named Becky, who was about 27 or 28 years old, and her four-year-old son, Jo (or Ja?). Mr. Welcker goes on to describe the woman's poor health and says that, according to the slave woman, this doctor had treated her. Mr. Welcker asks for a statement as to the girl's unsoundness, complaints, surgeries, etc. He closes his letter referring to himself "as one who wishes to deal on the square with all mankind."

About two years later, in August of 1858, Mr. Welcker received a letter which gives us a clue as to what became of Becky. The letterhead of Clarke & Grubb Commission Merchants in Atlanta, Georgia, described their business as agents for collections of all kinds and dealers in bacon, lard, produce, groceries, and consignments of every description. Apparently, they sold human beings on consignment as well, for in August of 1858 they wrote the following note to Mr. Welcker: "We sold your Negro woman last Saturday for \$400.00. It was all we could get offered."

There was no mention of her son, who by then would have been six years old. Such is one example of slavery in the Wheat community in the years just before the Civil War.

AEC #2 - Slave Cemetery

The path from the top of the grassy hillside leading to the cemetery was carpeted with fallen leaves. As I lifted the barbed-wire pole gate and entered beneath the cathedral-like canopy of white oak and tulip poplar trees, I felt an awe and reverence similar to what I felt at Arlington National Cemetery and Gettysburg. But there was a striking difference. Instead of rows of beautifully sculpted granite and marble monuments, there were only stones from fields or creeks at the heads and feet of sunken, ancient graves. In the silence of that hallowed ground where lay the remains of those who were born and died in bondage, slaves to a myth that one color of God's people should exalt themselves above those of a different hue, I knew that, if at all possible, their story must be told.

I must admit, I felt a wonderful thrill as I later stood upon that ground with a racially mixed group of students and teachers from Oak Ridge and read aloud those immortal

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words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

"...I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down at the table of brotherhood."

Brief History of the Wheat Area, the Weickers, and the Gallahers

Before there was an Oak Ridge, before there was a United States, the native inhabitants of this land made their camps and hunted along the Tennessee and Clinch Rivers. Their trails followed the buffalo, deer, and elk paths from East Tennessee across the Cumberland Plateau to the fertile meadows and salt licks of the Cumberland Basin, where now lies the city of Nashville.

In the midst of treaty negotiations and survey delays in 1794, Elias Roberts sold his property in Pendleton, South Carolina, and bought land in Sugar Grove Valley, which at that time was still a part of Knox County. Over the next five years he bought land at the junction of Clinch River and Poplar Creek. He was probably the first white settler in the area that would later be called Wheat.

The land was rich in timber, and soon the Clinch River became an active highway for logs floating downstream to markets. As the timber disappeared, the area became known as Bald Hill. In 1881 the thriving community, which included Poplar Creek Seminary, as well as other churches and schools, would be named Wheat, after Henry Wheat, who was Postmaster at that time.

In 1942, as part of the Manhattan Project, whose goal was to develop the atomic bomb and put an end to WW II, the

Army Corps of Engineers under the Manhattan District acquired the land. Residents were asked to "vacate immediately," but were given several weeks to move. They were allowed to take only their personal possessions. Flowers, fencing, even hay in the barn had to be left behind.

John Henry and Elizabeth Inman Welcker owned and operated a plantation named Laurel Banks as early as 1810, possibly 1805, located along the Clinch River where K-25 now stands. They had eleven children. The Welcker family was very influential in the early days of Roane County. Members of the family served on various boards, committees, and political offices, including the Tennessee House of Representatives. C. F. Welcker, who owned and operated a mill at the junction of East Fork Poplar Creek and Big Poplar Creek, served as Postmaster from 1853 to 1857, at which time the area was known as Welcker's Mill. Early records show the Welckers were also active in the buying, hiring out, and selling of slaves. John Henry Welcker died in 1838. His wife lived two more years. In 1847 George Hamilton Gallaher bought the Laurel Banks farm.

Laurel Banks was a very prosperous farm. According to the 1860 Roane County census, George Gallaher, Sr., owned \$25,000 worth of real estate. His personal estate was valued at \$36,000. Like most Roane County farmers of the day he raised corn, oats, hay, and other staple crops. He may have raised sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, wheat, and tobacco. Horses, oxen, cows, pigs, chickens, and probably other livestock were found on the Laurel Banks farm. In 1860 George Gallaher, Sr., also owned at least nineteen slaves.

George and Lucinda Gallaher had eight children. David Houston was eleven when his family left the Hardin Valley area of

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Knox County and bought Laurel Banks. In 1859 he married Martha (Mattie) E. Owens, and his father deeded him a farm on Poplar Creek. It was located on present-day Blair Road, opposite the central part of K-25. They called it Maple Hill. David Houston reportedly never believed in slavery; however, when Mattie's father gave them a female slave as a wedding present, he became, at least technically, a slave owner.

When the estate sale was held after the death of C. F. Welcker in 1862, David hired a small Negro boy for \$15.00. In 1857-58 the state of Tennessee had rewritten its slave code. "On letting such slave to hire, the jailer, before delivering him to the hirer, shall cause an iron collar to be put on his neck stamped P. G. (Public Gaol)." Many such laws were often treated casually or disregarded entirely. We don't know if this child was subjected to that degrading practice or not; however, it certainly is a possibility, and it was the law.

Former slaves frequently said that the worst anxiety in a slave's life was the fear and uncertainty of being sold away from one's family and home. There was no way of knowing if one would be sold out of state or to a kind or cruel master. One must also consider that the Tennessee legislature had passed a law in 1853 requiring a slave emancipated from that time on to be removed to Liberia, Africa. With this understanding of the times, hiring the small child may well have been an act of human kindness, giving the child some assurance of being well-cared for and remaining near his family and friends.

Life of a Slave In Bald Hill

We know very little about the daily lives of African-Americans in the Bald Hill area. We can only make some presumptions based upon a few oral traditions and what

we know about slavery in Roane and Anderson counties and generally throughout the South.

When one asks what slavery was like, one needs to ask what the master wanted it to be like. Since slaves were legally considered chattel, or movable property, they were guaranteed no say over any aspect of their lives; thus, the quality of their lives was completely dependent upon the master. Another factor in the quality of one's life was whether one worked, slept, and ate in the master's house, such as a house servant or a favorite child, or practiced a skilled trade, such as blacksmithing, or simply worked in the fields. If a slave was favored by the master, he or she ate better, was better clothed, and generally fared better in all areas.

These levels of status seem to have carried into the slave community as well. The parents of a young female slave often preferred that their daughter marry a house servant as opposed to "just a common field hand." (The majority of slave owners preferred to call their slaves "servants" or "hands.")

Most residents of this area professed a Christian faith and probably attempted to follow the Biblical injunction that masters should be good to their slaves, and slaves should be obedient to their masters. An obedient slave was a good slave. What constituted being "good" to a slave was largely a matter of opinion.

Generally, being good to a slave meant that a slave should be well-fed, provided with some sort of decent shelter and clothing, and not be abused with excessive punishment. A Roane County slave's diet might have been gruel or slop served in a trough and eaten with oyster shells for utensils, as was reportedly the case at a plantation east of Kingston on the old

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Stage Road; or a kind master may have provided his slaves with the same fare that he and his own family enjoyed, as it appears was the case in David Gallaher's home. Shelter often consisted of a small clapboard cabin or hut, or possibly a log cabin chinked with mud between the logs. A nice cabin would have had a floor, stone fireplace and chimney, and perhaps several rooms. Most slaves wore homespun cotton or linsey-woolsey clothing. Receiving a new suit and a pair of shoes per year was not uncommon. Many slaves wore the hand-me-downs from their "white family;" others dressed in rags or what they could scavenge or make. Some children wore only a split shirttail which hung to the knees. This was a one-piece shirt with a hole cut for the head and stitched together on the sides, leaving holes for the arms. Others wore trousers, shirts, or dresses similar to their young white masters and mistresses.

The most common form of punishment for anyone, black or white, in the early days of Roane and Anderson counties was to receive a public whipping from the local constable. Most offenses for a slave called for thirty-nine lashes, or "stripes." Slave owners generally preferred either to administer the whippings themselves, or to have their overseers do it. A slave owner who was abusive to his slaves was looked down upon by his neighbors, sometimes ostracized, occasionally run out of town on a fence rail. This, at least in part, kept many slave owners in check.

Masters often attempted to keep families of slaves together, or at least near each other; however, this frequently did not happen. When a slave owner died, his estate, which included his slaves, was divided among living relatives. Usually male slaves went to sons, and female slaves went to daughters. Some slaves

were presented as wedding presents, such as in the case of David and Mattie; occasionally a slave who was to be sold was allowed to pick his own master. Financial pressures sometimes made slave owners feel they were "forced" to sell one or more of their slaves, often causing the break-up of a family. Mrs. Jeanette Gallaher said that her Grandma Kimbrough (presumably owned by the Kimbroughs) was allowed to keep only one of her children.

Religion played an important role in the lives of many slaves. Most were allowed to attend their owner's churches, but were required to sit in the back or in a balcony. Some slaves were not allowed to attend religious services, so they resorted to secret gatherings in homes or the woods.

Children in slavery usually were not required to do heavy work, such as working in the fields, until about age twelve. Although most probably were expected to perform light chores, their childhoods were often relatively carefree, their time being spent playing with corn shuck dolls, clay marbles, or perhaps fishing or hunting or playing Rawhead Bloody Bones. Frequently, the master's children and the slave children played together, often developing close bonds that lasted throughout their lives.

Slaves traveled within the county with relative ease in the daytime. Passes were viewed by many as an impediment to business. At night, however, Negroes were required to show either a pass signed by their owner or papers giving evidence of emancipation.

There were a few free Negroes living in the Bald Hill area before the Civil War. Free Negroes in Tennessee were regarded as a threat by the majority of the white population. There were a number of reasons for this, whether real or imagined.

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Whites were afraid that free Negroes would encourage and assist runaway slaves. Free Negroes were often suspected as being involved in the trafficking of stolen goods and were especially suspected of spreading abolitionist literature and organizing slave revolts.

In order to reduce and control the free Negro population, various laws were enacted which required a slave, after being emancipated, to leave the state. Other laws stipulated that the freed slave must be colonized in Africa. During times of insurrections or slave revolts, restrictions were increased on all blacks, slave or free. Nat Turner's rebellion in Virginia in 1831, in which fifty-five white people were killed, led to heightened fears all over the South. By 1834 in Tennessee, free blacks were no longer allowed to vote, nor were free Negroes from other states permitted to enter Tennessee. Any slave freed from that time on was required to leave the state. There were many other restrictions as well.

After rumors began to spread in 1856 of a plot for a slave revolt in the iron district of northern Middle Tennessee, a general panic occurred. This led to stricter laws governing the movement and behaviors of all African-Americans in Tennessee: Negroes were required to have written permission from the master to carry guns, knives, or other weapons (which they had formerly been allowed to do for hunting purposes); passes were required when a slave was off the owner's property; and free Negroes without visible means of support and no good cause for such a condition could be hired out for six months or more and, upon a second conviction, could be sentenced for life--essentially returned to slavery.

These laws often went unenforced, and occasionally a determined Negro would

circumvent the law in the courts. In the early 1840s, Susan, a slave, was freed by Nancy McEwen and was to be colonized. She petitioned the court on the grounds that her family was still in bondage, it would be expensive to move to Africa, and it would take years to raise the money. The court ruled that this would, in effect, deprive Susan of her freedom. She won the right to remain in America. There were no state laws in Tennessee against free Negro education; however, some communities passed local ordinances against teaching Negroes to read and write. In the cases of slaves, this was, of course, up to the master. Many masters did teach their slaves to read and write; many did not.

Even slaves sometimes resented free Negroes. Rev. Jermain Loguen, who escaped from Tennessee and became an active abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor, described an incident he witnessed at a camp meeting. Slaves were often allowed to grow extra crops on their own time to earn money. They, as well as free blacks, brought produce to sell at the camp meeting. When some slaves saw their competition, they told their master's sons about it. Apparently somewhat drunk, the master's sons went to the free Negro's improvised store. On some pretense they proceeded to claim to teach the man to be civil to gentlemen. Two minutes later, the man's melons, bottles, and liquors were destroyed. The young ruffians told the man, "Clear out now, you black rascal. Don't be seen about here again."

Mr. Loguen gave his eloquent commentary on the unenviable state of the free black in Tennessee by saying, "If I must live in a slave state, let me be a slave." Freedom has its own rewards, however, for, according to Lester Lamon in 1858, when Tennessee passed a law

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giving a freeman the right to "choose" to become a slave, there were no takers.

Ravaged by War

When war broke out between the North and the South in 1861, the Gallahers sided with their home state of Tennessee. Although the majority of rural East Tennesseans were against secession, the state as a whole voted to join its sister states in the Confederacy. David H. Gallaher enlisted in April 1862 as a private in Company B, 63rd Tennessee Infantry. He was transferred by promotion to 2nd lieutenant in Company K, Love's Regiment of Thomas' Legion, North Carolina, where he served for the duration of the war with many other Roane and Anderson countians, including his brother-in-law and neighbor, A.J. Burum, who had married his sister, Nancy.

In the early years of the war many parts of East and Middle Tennessee, including Roane County, were plagued with Unionist bushwhackers. Barns, homes, and churches were burned; homes were looted; there were lynchings, beatings, and shootings. Company K was initially raised to protect Roane and Anderson counties from these marauding bands whose intentions were often less than patriotic.

General Burnside marched his federal troops from Kentucky through Roane County en route to Knoxville in August of 1863. From that time on Roane County was under Union control. Now the tables were turned. Confederate bushwhackers wreaked havoc in the countryside. They burned, looted, lynched, beat, and shot those who supported the Union.

Throughout the war both armies were faced with the dilemma of feeding and supplying thousands of soldiers. They constantly foraged food off the land, taking

food, horses, whatever they needed or wanted, from private citizens. Sometimes they paid for these items in greenback dollars or Confederate currency; other times they left the civilian residents destitute with promissory notes; often they simply took what they wanted with no payment whatsoever.

In November of 1863 the Gallahers discovered firsthand what that meant. About 100 men from the 79th New York Highlanders left their encampment at Lenoir's Station (present day Lenoir City) on a foraging expedition. One soldier reported that they "...reached the extensive plantation or farm of a Mr. Gallagher (sic) ...who was reported to be a red-hot secessionist; we found him to be a red-headed one, at any rate...On reaching his place we found quite a village of barns and sheds, the buildings well-stocked with corn, oats, and hay...His neighbors had been plundered by the rebels because of their well-known Union sympathies, while he had thus far escaped." The report goes on to say that Mr. Gallaher (presumably George, Sr.) "...watched our proceedings with a good deal of interest, occasionally giving vent to his injured feelings by remarks more forcible than patriotic or polite." Although the federal soldiers offered to purchase hoe-cake, biscuit, and poultry at the house, they were met by "such churlish refusals" that they decided to help themselves anyway. "The people were not molested," said the soldier.

At about this time, according to a Gallaher family story, Mattie and her Negro house servant were doing laundry at the creek. Both women had infant children. The Negro woman was washing clothes and Mattie was nursing the Negro child at her breast when a Union soldier rode by. He expressed his shock and revulsion that a white woman was breast-feeding a Negro

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child. According to Mrs. Ernest Gallaher, Mattie replied, "You're willing to die for them. Why wouldn't I be willing to feed them?" Apparently, there often was a close bond between some slave owners and their servants, or slaves.

The Gallaher-Welcker Cemetery, AEC #1, is located a short distance from the slave cemetery, AEC #2. In this cemetery are buried George Gallaher, Sr., many of his descendants, some Welckers and Burums, and others. There are some unmarked graves just outside the stone walls of this cemetery. These graves are reportedly those of favorite slaves of the Gallaher family or house servants who were close to the family. Perhaps the Negro woman who was washing clothes with Mattie Gallaher lies resting there, close to the family, but in an unmarked grave just outside the walls.

AEC Cemetery #2 - Slave Cemetery Revisited

The slave cemetery, sometimes referred to as the Gallaher-Stone Cemetery, is located .3 of a mile southwest of the K-25 Overlook. It is about 300 feet south of the Oak Ridge Turnpike. In 1979 Mrs. Dorathy Moneymaker counted between 90 and 100 graves. Most were sunken, and there were no inscribed markers.

We will never know the names of all those buried there. It is presumed that slaves who once belonged to the Welckers and Gallahers and the descendants of these slaves were lain to rest in this cemetery. It is also quite possible, even likely, that many other slaves and their descendants who lived on farms nearby were buried here in what was sometimes referred to as the Negro Cemetery. Some of the other families that owned slaves and

lived in the vicinity were the Burums, Carmichaels, Staples, Henleys, Ellises, and Rathers.

Emancipation came in 1865. The Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 freed only slaves in states, or parts of states, that were in rebellion against the United States government. Since East Tennessee was under Union control at that time, the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to slaves in this region. Negroes in the area probably continued to use what later came to be called AEC #2.

An African-American school, also used as a church, existed in the Wheat area at least as early as 1895. On December 28, 1894, D. H. Gallaher made a warranty deed for \$1.00 to W. P. Ellis, Richard Gallaher, and K. G. Gallaher, who were the trustees of the church. This church/school was approximately 300 yards east of the Administration Building in the K-25 area, according to Mrs. Moneymaker. Members of the church may have used this cemetery.

When the federal government assumed ownership of the Wheat area in 1942, many small cemeteries were consolidated into larger ones. There were numerous cemeteries recorded when the Army Corps of Engineers took over. The Department of Energy now maintains thirty-one. It is possible that some smaller Negro cemeteries were consolidated into this one; however, I have seen no evidence that this occurred.

Much remains to be discovered regarding African-American history in Wheat. Many questions have yet to be answered, and each answer leads to ten more questions! We cannot, as yet, state with certainty the names of those who are buried here, but we will continue to honor their memory in reverence and with dignity. Below is a list of names of some of the slaves and their approximate ages who

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once were owned by the Welckers, Gallahers, and Burums. Perhaps some of them or their relatives now rest in AEC #2 Slave Cemetery.

Welckers: a woman named Lida; George, about twenty years old in 1814; a man named Loam; Abraham (40), his wife Milly (35) and five of their children: Alexandra (9), a seven-year-old, Hanah (5), Caleb (3), Abraham (18 or 20 months); a girl named Lucky or Tucky; Milly (10); Ceno (sp?) Ellick (26); Be(s?) (14); Becky's son Jo or Ja (4 in 1856).

Gallahers: In 1837, Primus (111 or 112), Jude (4), Tom and Sal, Lun and her child Malinda, Ben, David, Wash. In 1838, John. Others were Frank, Marinda, Richard (Dick), Primus, Martha, Easter, Franklin, Louvena, Martha, Jude (Juda?).

Burums: Julia, Jepp (a child in 1864).

The following names appear as Colored parents of students between the ages of six and twenty in the 15th District of Roane County, 1867. Some have been previously listed as former slaves of the Welckers, Gallahers, or Burums: Richard Roberts, Prime Gallaher, Isaac Oliver, Franklin Gallaher, Wesley Burum, Nathan Staples, Richard Gallaher, Susan Macrossky, Henry Jordan.

Some additional names appear on the 1869 list: Martha Gallaher, Louvena Gallaher, Nelson Bradley, Seyrey Dale, Dick Roberts, John Rather, Frank Galbraith, Fanny Rather, Thos. Potter, Sr.

This list is far from complete. If you or someone you know has an ancestor who might be buried in AEC #2, please let us know.

Acknowledgements

A thousand thanks to all who have assisted in the preservation, gathering, and compiling of stories of the people, places,

and times that have become history. The following people have been especially helpful providing information used in this article, and I am extremely grateful to them: the late Snyder Roberts, whose efforts paved the way for many to follow; Mrs. Dorothy Money maker; Mr. Eugene Pickel; Mr. Robert Bailey and the Roane County Heritage Commission; Mr. Rufus Smith; and the Gallaher family.

We, the committee, are grateful for, as well as encouraged and uplifted by, the cooperative and helpful spirit of the descendants of both slaves and slave owners.

Appendix 1

How We Got Started on This Project

"I've always known that my great-grandmother was a slave in the Wheat community, and that her name, prior to marrying W. P. Ellis, was Gallaher," says Rufus Smith. "I was aware of the existence of the cemetery before this. I just didn't know where it was."

Oak Ridge City Councilman Will Minter says that several years ago he heard there was a slave grave site on the DOE property. "I just never could find it," he says.

I was ecstatic when Mr. Eugene Pickel, author of *A History of Roane County to 1860*, agreed to speak with me at his home. When he told me there was a slave cemetery near K-25 which he'd always wanted to visit, something told me I had to go there.

These three paths were destined to cross in January of 2000. "Something very interesting happened to me on the way to the cemetery the first time," remembers Rufus Smith. "I knew of the general location of the cemetery from about 1984 because it is clearly marked on the DOE

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map of the reservation. Knowing about it was one thing; dealing with it was what hadn't happened. (There was) a 1930-something edition of the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* (Tuesday, 11-27-1934) that had an Anderson County/Clinton section. It included a story on Mattie Gallaher (Mrs. David Houston Gallaher) who at the time was ninety-five years old. It hit me real hard that my grandmother (Mattie Ellis Hardin) probably got her name Mattie from this woman. While at the cemetery I began to wonder if some of my ancestors were buried there, and I really wanted to do something to clean up the cemetery and maintain it."

Many other thoughts began to occur to him in the solemn presence of that burial ground. He began to wonder about his own ancestry, and how differently his grandmother's siblings looked from each other. In the midst of the overwhelming emotion, he began to think of the lost heritage of so many African-Americans. "You probably know that the presence of Africans and African-Americans really has been overlooked in the Oak Ridge story," he says. "I also started thinking about a marker to memorialize the site and acknowledge the presence of Africans in the community. We need to find a way to begin to understand something about the area in a more specific way than what we've been told in the past."

Mr. Will Minter says it was a pretty Sunday when he and Horace Miller went up the hill for the first time and walked the site. "All of a sudden," says Mr. Minter, "the wind put up speed and it started getting dark. The rain started coming and we both had the feeling of something present. I knew then that I had to know more."

Mr. Minter says he frequently visited the Oak Ridge Library; he read Mrs. Moneymaker's book, *We'll Call It Wheat*; he

studied census records; and he "began talking to anyone that would listen." The Director of the Roane County Heritage Commission, Mr. Robert Bailey, told him about a teacher in the Oak Ridge Schools named David, who also was interested and was doing research on this slave grave site. "I only had David's first name, but I found him, and we were instant friends." When Will Minter and Rufus Smith shared stories, wheels really started turning.

"If you want to learn about Roane County history," said my friend and co-worker Marion Malone, "then you need to talk to Gene Pickel." She told me that he used to teach at Oak Ridge High School, and that he has a magical ability to make history come alive.

I have always nurtured a love of history, and as a fourth-grade teacher of not only the "3 Rs," but also Tennessee history, I always keep one eye open for new opportunities to learn. The scarcity of heritage for my African-American students has always been a source of sadness and a challenge for me. I was visiting the museum at the Old Roane County Courthouse and was thrilled to discover *A History of Roane County to 1860* by Eugene Pickel. In addition to a wealth of information on antebellum Roane County, it contains the largest single body of research on slavery in Roane County that I have yet found. If I was thrilled to discover Mr. Pickel's book, I was ecstatic when he agreed to meet with me at his home. His gentle presence and exciting stories captivated me far longer than he may have intended. One item would prove to be of particular interest. He told me there was a slave cemetery on the way to Oak Ridge. That was in December of 1997.

I have already described my first visit to Slave Cemetery AEC #2. I heard no voices, saw no apparitions, yet I felt in my

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heart there was something I must do. It occurred to me that, in addition to providing a channel for the voices of the forgotten disenfranchised members of our human community, there seemed to be enormous potential for racial healing in a society that desperately needs unity between the sons and daughters of diverse heritage. I was aware of an interdenominational project of a similar nature which had been done in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee. Perhaps it could work here as well. But there was still far too much I needed to know before presenting any ideas to local churches.

My search led me to fireball of energy Mrs. Dorathy Moneymaker and her wonderful book, *We'll Call It Wheat*; to Robert Bailey, who is an inexhaustible source of information and Roane County's resident historian; to Mrs. Lucille Gallaher, who at ninety-five years was more lucid than I was at twenty-five; and to many other priceless human treasures of knowledge. I poured through many books, websites, diaries, and narratives by those who had experienced slavery or slave owning first hand. I was especially on the lookout for items related to Roane County, particularly the Wheat area. Newspapers from the first

half of the 19th century, microfilmed military records, and lots of wonderful books have helped unlock many doors and show me just how little I know.

I was extremely curious on that day in January (this year) when I was called from my classroom in Oak Ridge to answer a phone call from Oak Ridge City Councilman Will Minter. I was even more perplexed when he said, "You and I are going to become good friends." I began to discover that I was not the only one on this quest for information regarding slavery in the Wheat area and AEC #2. Will and I had been haunting the same libraries, reading some of the same books, talking to some of the same people, and following some of the same leads trying to discover who were those nameless martyrs to a myth laying at rest in AEC #2.

Then Will introduced me to Rufus Smith. When Rufus told me that his great-grandmother had been owned by the Gallahers, I knew that our steps had been guided. I looked at Will; I looked at Rufus; and everyone seemed to know: it had been only a matter of time until our paths should cross. ❖