

February 15, 1994

Approximately two years ago our family began a search for the grave of Sarah Ann Warr Rathbone. The family Bible contained a funeral notice indicating burial in the Union Campground Cemetery on September 16, 1874. In searching for the gravesite, it was discovered the cemetery was located in Township No. 29, Range No. 21, Section No. 3 of Greene County, Missouri.

Our interest increased in the cemetery when in 1993 the City of Springfield announced plans for a proposed Entertainment Zone in northeast Springfield, a portion of the zone being on the site of what was once the Thomas H. Rathbone farm as well as the site of the cemetery.

On November 1, 1993 a presentation was made before the City Council of Springfield, Missouri asking that the abandoned cemetery be preserved and perhaps an historical marker erected to honor the pioneer families who lived and died in the Valley Water Mill vicinity.

Many hours of research have been spent in attempting to establish present ownership of the cemetery. A deed under date of September 29, 1840 reveals the trustees of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church purchased 39.6 acres of land from Joseph and Lucinda Morton. Another deed, dated January 25, 1866, reveals the trustees sold all the land with the exception of approximately three acres for the graveyard. Sometime after the Civil War the church burned and no one today knows just when the fire occurred.

Records cannot be found to establish if the church and/or cemetery were ever incorporated or if the cemetery was ever owned by any other entity besides the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. (It might be mentioned here that some churches of that era assumed the name "Cumberland" but were never affiliated with a mainline denomination.) Since the date of the fire is unknown, we cannot determine who the trustees were at the time of the fire or who the minister might have been.

A meeting of descendants of families buried in Union Campground Cemetery is being called for Sunday, March 13, 1994, 2:30 P.M., in the Community Room, third floor of the Main Library, 397 E. Central, Springfield, Missouri. Your name has been mentioned as a descendant and, if you are interested in the preservation of this historic landmark, we invite you to please come and look over photographs of the cemetery, old maps of the area, and other assorted documents. Your presence would be greatly appreciated; if married, your spouse is cordially invited.

Results of a recent survey will soon be available. Whenever we know the exact boundaries we can proceed to assemble

volunteers and go in and start a general "clean-up." This has to be done in a very careful manner in order not to further damage the gravestones.

As of this writing we have a total of eight families represented but hope to have more involved as the months progress. At our meeting there will be copies of a census of the cemetery, prepared a few years ago by members of The Ozarks Genealogical Society.

Please fill out and return the form below if you have a correction in your mailing address. Also, if you know of someone who should be notified of the meeting on March 13th, please let us know.

Do you have old photographs in your family album of the original pioneer families? Remembered stories about their lives in the Valley Water Mill area? Any recollections of where the church might have been located?

We hope to see you on March 13th!

(Signed)

Evelyn & Bob Gaffga  
Jean & Jim Rayl

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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Other remarks \_\_\_\_\_  
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