

June 2008



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Heritage

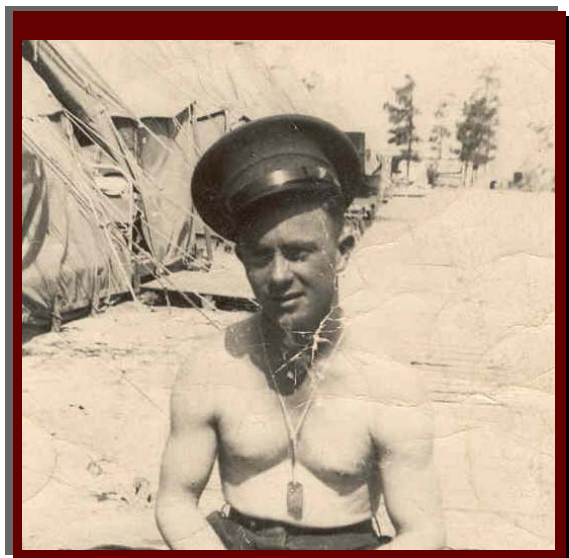
Newsletter



JRTC and Fort Polk
Recognize, Honor and Memorialize

Fort Polk Cemetery Veteran's Honored

The American Legion Post 387, New Llano, and the Emma Sansom chapter of the Order of the Confederate Rose recently volunteered to participate in a community partnership effort with the Heritage Project team in order to provide Memorial Day recognition for veterans interred in Fort Polk's historic cemeteries. Pete Longoria, Bill Brewster, and Luke Clark from Post 387 volunteered their time to place flags and render honors at the burial site of 30 known veterans at 9 Fort Polk cemeteries. Flags were generously donated by the Emma Sansom chapter of the Order of the Confederate Rose, represented by John and Johanna Pate.



“I Remember...”

COW “Tales”

The cattle industry being so important to the Whiskachitta area, anything relating to it affected almost everyone.

Brush fires were a major concern every spring. Not only did fire destroy the dried grass (hay) from the previous season, but as the new grass came out, the cows would go crazy about it. They would follow the burns for miles. Not only was there very little nutrition in the new grass, the cattle would actually go in a run after it, losing weight. In our area the herds were small and several would range together or in the same general area, making it easier to keep control. Each herd owner looked out for and helped the other.

The milk cows were handled in a different way from the range cattle. They were penned up in the evening for milking. They were fed a few nubbins, dry peas, cured peanut tops, or sometimes a little sweet feed if available; anything to enrich the milk supply for the cream, for the wonderful butter. The calves were let out to keep them separated from the cows and to allow them to take advantage of the dewy grass. In the morning the calves were penned with the cows, the cows milked and let out on the range to begin the cycle again. Of course, the calves got their share of the milk twice a day. Good for them!

There were several little communities within the larger community and each had its own way of doing things. This was particularly true at beef killing time.

Several families in our little area took turns providing a yearling for butchering. This was usually accomplished a short distance from our house.

Nature was very cooperative in providing a large oak with a perfect limb for hanging the beef carcass. The meat was divided up among the families as agreed. I remember scaffolds being erected to dry the beef that could not be eaten soon. Beef jerky was good! I also remember Fourth of July barbecues. These were some good times but, for me, the good times were overshadowed by the reaction of the cows. They would run to the butchering scene, lowing and bellowing. This went on for two or three days. We children hurt with them.

Many stories and feelings will, forever, remain untold but thanks for the opportunity to share this one.

Submitted By: Marie (Cryer) White



Beef-killing tree near the George Cryer Homestead-Zion Hills



Historic Dipping Vat

Preserving Cemetery Resources

The Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk, in partnership with Northwestern State University are in the process of mapping, photographing, and documenting the 18 cemeteries within Fort Polk's boundaries. Working with them are two student interns, Caleb and



Heather Johnson, who are collecting raw data from the cemeteries. That data will be transformed into readily available information for the public. Using technology, such as the Total Station, the interns are surveying each of the cemeteries' physical features, which include grave markers, ornamental plantings,

and fences. The interns are recording the inscriptions of every grave marker and the conditions of those graves.

This work is being performed in order for JRTC and Fort Polk to be able to locate and reproduce gravesite identity in the event of a catastrophic disaster. A spin-off of this collected information will provide families and friends of the deceased with a "virtual" means to view and study the original resting places of their ancestors when they are not physically able to visit the cemeteries. The collected information will be shared on a webpage so people can view pieces of their histories. By documenting, photographing, and mapping these cemeteries, JRTC and Fort Polk are helping to preserve various family histories by providing them with the access and means to learn more about their ancestors through the wealth of cultural information that each cemetery provides.

Submitted by: Caleb and Heather Johnson

Family members who would like to submit proposed articles to future editions of the "I Remember..." section may submit them to either James.D.Hudson@conus.army.mil or Doc.Moulton@conus.army.mil. Alternatively, they may contact Mr. Hudson at 337.531.6130 or Doc Moulton at 337.531.6134.

The Calcasieu Ranger District of the U. S. Forest Service is searching for information and photographs of the Fullerton Lumber Mill. The District, working with Forest Service archeologists, hopes to provide an interpretative trail of the mill site in the near future. If you have any information or photographs you would like to share please bring them to Heritage Day.

*Thanks,
Doug Rhodes, USFS*



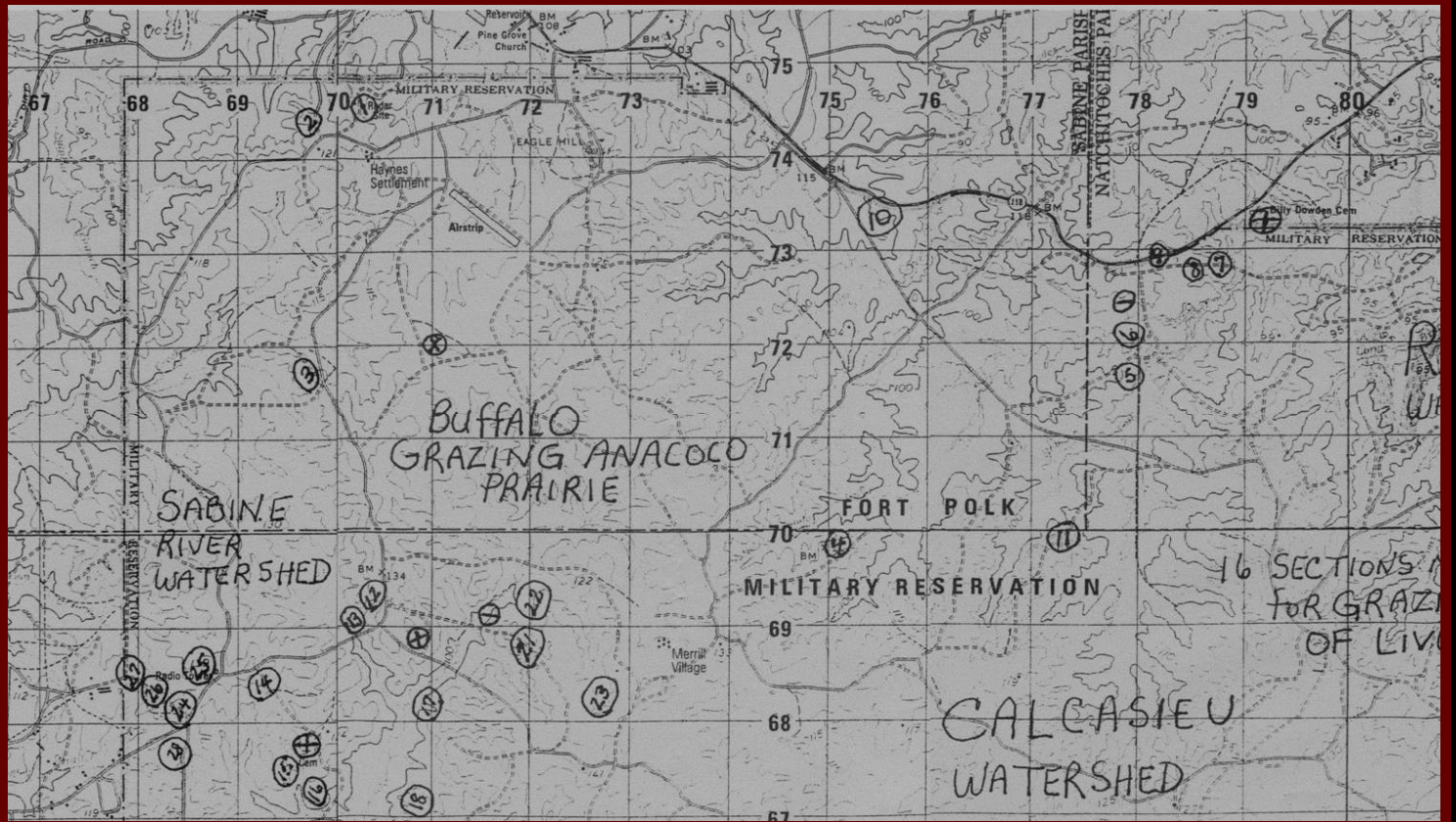
What's Cooking on the Trail of Homestead Maps?

The positive response received from last year's cemetery and homestead tours has prompted some folks to 'kick it up a notch' as Emeril Lagasse would say. One group of Heritage family descendants has chosen to begin sketching and mapping their ancestral homesteads based on photographs, oral histories and their best recollection. There has been an amazing amount of detail uncovered during the research process that deserves to be shared.

In response, Fort Polk intends to assist this and other families with map reproduction and the development of facilitated and unguided tour signs that will depict the homestead as it might have been before Camp Polk came into being.

This year, as we drive by these homesteads and stop to stretch our legs, we can learn something special about the families who once lived on the land from the families whose stories have been handed down to the current generation. The maps, sketches and narratives produced will be archived as part of the Heritage Project to assure their availability to future generations; continuing our commitment to the mission, the environment and the community.

Want to contribute and have your family's homesite represented? Just contact the Cultural Resources Manager, Mr. Jim Grafton at 337.531.6011 or the Heritage Project Chairman, Mr. Danny Hudson at 337.531.6130 for help.



Homestead Investigations

It's the post-Depression era in Vernon Parish, Louisiana. Times are hard and jobs are not to be found. The people in Vernon and surrounding parishes are mostly poor but proud subsistence farmers who depend on farming for most of their food. Their gardens and fields provide food and cash crops such as corn, tobacco, cotton and melons. Occasionally a hog or beef was slaughtered to celebrate weddings or the 4th of July, while dances and parties were held at various homes and church or school functions, always promoting a strong sense of community. The sawmills, once a reliable source of jobs and steady wages, are all but gone when the timber is cut out and operations moved to the next mill town. Despite these hardships, folks seemed to always prevail no matter how bad the times were, remaining thankful in the face of adversity.

Many homesteads were abandoned during this period of Fort Polk's history, largely due to financial hardship, the search for greener pastures, and ultimately the needs of the nation to support an inevitable war with Germany and Japan. Most homesteads were completely dismantled and moved to new sites, while some were left surprisingly intact, with remains still visible after almost 70 years. Often enough there are stately trees, fields, wells and historic remnants still standing as witness to places where memories once lived. Beyond the obvious signs of occupation, a deeper look into an old homeplace will often turn up scattered artifacts, which paint an important picture of the daily lifestyle during this period. Through the efforts of the homesite investigation team, we have begun to locate and catalog those former homesteads. This is one of the goals of the Heritage Project; to find and investigate

historic homesites so that we may better understand the people and communities that have enriched Fort Polk's cultural landscape. In addition to the capture of that important history, former residents of that era and their descendents can better reconnect with the past and recall the memories held so dear to all.

Submitted by: Bob Hays



Remnants of a Model T at the W.W. Brown homesite



Chimney wind cap from the George R. Cryer place

Information Sought for Displaced Family Members

On Heritage Day, we were blessed to share the company of a special few; those who were displaced during the formation of Camp Polk. We were proud to recognize your sacrifice, and honored by your presence. As we continue to march toward the 2008 Heritage Day, we would especially like to ensure that we keep you informed of our progress, and perhaps ask your assistance in continuing to collect important historical information. If you are, or know of any of those persons who were displaced, we would like to ask you to provide your contact information to Doc Moulton at the Fort Polk Public Affairs Office. Mr. Moulton can be reached by phone at 337.531.6134, or by email at: doc.moulton@us.army.mil.

Submitted By: Doc Moulton



Unidentified Graves

The US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Kisatchie District (USFS) and Fort Polk conducted Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) on three of the eighteen cemeteries located on the training lands now used by the US Army, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. GPR is only one non-invasive method utilized by archaeologists today, and consists of sliding an instrument over the ground that sends a radar frequency approximately six feet below the surface to read subsurface anomalies. This signal is sent to an onboard data collector

that records anomalies like ground disturbance or artifacts that exist below the surface. An onboard monitor portrays anomaly information for immediate onsite marking and recording. The collected data is then taken into the office and downloaded onto a computer for further analysis.

Last year, GPR was utilized at the Zion Hill and Davis Cemeteries. Over 70 unmarked graves were indicated to exist at these two cemeteries. On May 16, 2008, GPR was conducted at the Mill Creek Cemetery. Computer analysis for the Mill Creek

Cemetery data collected is ongoing.

However, preliminary data indicates that three unmarked graves exist at this cemetery. More non-invasive cemetery work is planned for the other 15 cemeteries and we welcome volunteers to assist.

Assistance includes sharing information about people who were or might have been buried at any of the cemeteries located on the Army training lands. These cemeteries include: Zion Hill, Davis, Mill Creek, Burns, Cavanaugh, Watson, Sarver, Smith, Sirmon, Woods, Brack, Holly Springs, Smith/Maddox, Merritt, Harriet Gill, Dolly Gill, Fullerton East and Fullerton West. Family members with cemetery information can also volunteer to participate in cemetery field projects to

help identify unmarked graves and homestead histories.

The Fort Polk Cultural Resources Management Office continues to place markers that only identify the head and foot of an unidentified grave site. The Heritage Family Collection and the shared family information help connect marked grave sites to the people buried in these cemeteries. It is through the family members' contributions and their sharing of information that the records of these cemeteries become complete. Help preserve our cemeteries and the heritage of the people who were buried by contacting the Fort Polk Cultural Resources Manager, Jim Grafton, 337.531.6011, with information that may identify and put names and faces to those buried in the Fort Polk Cemeteries.

Submitted By: Ellen Ibert



Heritage Project Genealogy Team

Who are your people? Most people know their parents and grandparents' names, but cannot identify family members much farther back than those generations. Then, one day something happens and some people begin to wonder who they are and what their family history is. Many times this happens after loved ones have passed, and no one is alive to tell us about family history or lineage. That's when the genealogical search begins. It is in that hunger to know and understand our personal history that one endeavors to find answers from the past. This history helps us find our roots and become secure with ourselves. It helps us to understand who we are and why we feel and react the way we do today. We gain personal pride from the knowledge of our heritage.

Genealogical research can be long, complex, and even frustrating. Cousins are another curiosity to resolve in family relations. Common names and lack of personal information may act as a barrier for many, but avid genealogists learn to work through the barriers and answer the questions about ancestry. Their assistance is invaluable and their research, in many cases, helps us understand the reason events transformed the way they did in our history.

Collecting and archiving historical and genealogical data is a daunting task at best. The Fort Polk Heritage Project Committee is considering avenues to more efficiently gather important information about area history, and the genealogy of heritage families that occupied Fort Polk lands from 1820 through the end of private habitation in 1941. Much of this work has already been accomplished by individuals, family groups, and organizations; and the Heritage Project Committee is reaching out to these entities to assist in attaining our historical collection and archiving goals. With this information, the Heritage Project hopes to gain valuable insight into historic communities, social aspects, and most importantly, the people that have so greatly contributed to Fort Polk's cultural landscape.

As a first step in creating a more efficient information capture, the Heritage Project Committee has requested the assistance of the Vernon Historical and Genealogical Society. The Society has graciously agreed to this request, offering years of existing records and the skills necessary to expand the collection to include all families in the data bank. Society representatives will be appointed to the Fort Polk Heritage Genealogical Committee, offering professional assistance in compiling ancestral trees and archiving existing genealogical records in the Fort Polk Heritage Family Collection. We look forward to making these precious resources available to researchers, and will be introducing the Fort Polk Heritage Genealogical Committee members to you in our next newsletter.

Submitted by: Ellen Ibert

