

A. W. Perry Cemetery Walking Tour



Cemeteries preserve our local history, but sadly are falling into disrepair and neglect. Become involved with your local neighborhood associations and find out how you can help preserve our historic cemeteries.

Thank you for visiting the Perry Cemetery

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**A. W. Perry Homestead Museum
Carrollton Parks and Recreation
1509 N. Perry Road
Carrollton, TX 75006
Phone: 972-466-6380
www.cityofcarrollton.com/museum**

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A. W. Perry Cemetery Walking Tour

HISTORIC PERRY CEMETERY

Established 1896

Welcome to the A.W. Perry Cemetery

In 1976 the Perry Cemetery was awarded a Texas Historical Marker; in 2005 it was recorded as a Historic Texas Cemetery. This walking tour begins with the history of the cemetery and A.W. Perry and his family. You will also learn about important gravestone symbols, burial customs, and how to read the cemetery landscape. Start at the arched entranceway and work your way through the cemetery. The Perry family plot is directly behind the cemetery's Texas historic marker. Wander the cemetery, read the stones. We invite you to enjoy this historic spot.



Alexander Wilson Perry

A.W. Perry and his wife Sarah came to this area from Carrollton, Illinois in 1844 with several other families. They brought their three children and \$30 in cash. A.W. took a headright under the Peters Colony and began the work of developing a farm. In 1857 he built a simple wood frame home for his wife and fourteen children. A.W. cultivated crops, had livestock, raised horses and mules, and even had bee stands. Over time Mr. Perry became one of Dallas County's wealthy and influential citizens.

A.W. Perry Cemetery

The land that the Perry Cemetery sits on was originally owned by the pioneer Joshua B. Lee. In 1850 he was issued a land certificate and he patented 640 acres in Dallas County. This land was located in the heart of Carrollton, with boundaries of: Denton Road on the west; Belt Line on the south; Josey Lane on the east and Ryan Street on the north.

On October 26, 1857 A.W. Perry purchased this land from Joshua B. Lee. He built a simple home, of which the original foundation stones can still be seen behind the present-day A.W. Perry Homestead Museum located at 1509 N. Perry Road. This site was the home of DeWitt and Francis Perry who rest in the Perry family plot. The Perry's continued to own this land for over 120 years.

In January of 1884 A.W. deeded some of his land to the Union Baptist Church. The church was used for both church and school purposes. Today one of the original stained glass windows is on display in Carrollton's Josey Lakes Ranch Library.



Union Baptist
stained glass window

Visit Other Carrollton Cemeteries

Carrollton Black Cemetery* – Approximately 1,000 feet west of Hutton Drive and 600 feet south of Belt Line
Carrollton's early African American citizens were buried in what is today called the Carrollton Community Cemetery. However, to many African Americans, the cemetery is commonly called the "Black Cemetery." This cemetery was established in the late 1800s by Scott Boswell, an early African American farmer.

Furneaux Cemetery** – East and west sides of Cemetery Hill Road, south of Rosemeade Parkway
In 1884 this cemetery was established with the burial of Mr. William Furneaux, who immigrated to Texas in 1857 from England. A Methodist church was originally located on the site.

Riley Cemetery – 1328 Riley Drive
Born in Indiana in 1815, Jacob Riley came to southeastern Denton County in the mid-1850s and claimed a pre-emption grant of 160 acres on Indian Creek. Family members were buried in this burial ground overlooking the Elm Fork of the Trinity River.

Warner Cemetery** – 2600 Belmeade Drive
Robert and Sarah Warner established this family cemetery in 1873. It contains ten marked graves.

Keenan Cemetery** – 2570 Valley View Lane, Farmers Branch
Established on November 11, 1843, it is the oldest cemetery in Dallas County, where Thomas and Sarah Keenan buried their infant son John Keenan. John was the first child born to settlers in what would become Dallas County.

*Carrollton Historic Site

**Texas Historical Commission recognition

Additional Activities

Find the answers to the following questions:

What are the earliest and latest dates you can find in the cemetery?

List unusual first names that you find in the cemetery. What names are popular today? Do you know the origins of your name?

Military service was a memorable event in the lives of many men and women. What military conflicts are listed on gravestones in the cemetery? Hint: Locate A.W. Perry's gravestone.

Make a simple map of a family plot in the cemetery; use lines to show how the people buried there are connected to each other.

Make a collection of your favorite epitaphs.

Draw the various symbols you find on gravestones in a sketchbook. When you get home look up the symbols and determine their meanings.

Make a photographic essay that highlights the cemetery through the change of seasons.

The Perry Cemetery opened with the burial of Sarah Huffman Perry, wife of A.W., who died October 24, 1896. Three months later the cemetery was officially chartered.

On January 6, 1897, A.W. Perry filed a plat for a burying ground to be called "A.W. Perry Cemetery." The cemetery was adjacent to the Union Baptist Church.



Union Baptist Church,
Beltline Road

In 1898 Mr. Perry and others founded the Perry Cemetery Association; the Association still owns and maintains the cemetery today.

At about 1911, the Union Baptist Church relocated and its land was deeded to the Perry Cemetery Association. In 1974 the church's location in the cemetery became a recorded Texas historic landmark. Locate the marker to learn more about the church.

There are now 450 tombstones in the cemetery, most belonging to pioneer families. There are also about 150 unmarked burials. Today, the cemetery is a 'closed' cemetery as no burial plots are offered except to relatives of families already interred here.

Visiting Guidelines

When visiting a cemetery it is important to respect those who rest there. Therefore please follow the following guidelines:

- * Please do not sit, stand, or lean against the gravestones.
- * Please do not take rubbings of the gravestone inscriptions; many of the stones are deteriorating and rubbings further this process.
- * Please do not remove any fresh or artificial flowers from a gravesite other than those that belong to your family or loved one.
- * Please do not throw paper, cans, or other litter in the cemetery.
- * It is recommended to bring insect repellent; it is also a good idea to wear long pants and closed toe shoes.
- * Visiting hours are between dawn and dusk only.

Cemetery Customs

Pioneers prepared the dead for burial, traditionally called “laying out,” because at this time there were few professional morticians. Therefore the neighbors and church members would usually perform the necessary duties for the grieving families, such as making the coffin or digging the grave.



Perry family plot and
Union Baptist Church

Common of the southern folk cemetery in Texas is the subdivision into family plots marked out by fences, or curbing with bricks, concrete, or marble. Historians believe family plots were created because the majority of traditional southern cemeteries began as private family graveyards. There are many pioneer families interred in family plots at the Perry Cemetery, so keep an eye out for them.

Nearly all southern folk cemeteries have the graves aligned on an east-west axis, including the Perry Cemetery. There are multiple beliefs about this custom: for Christians, the east is the direction of Jerusalem and the second coming; another belief is that the dead should face the rising sun.

Husband and wife also have traditional placements in the southern cemetery; the husband is usually buried to the right, or south, of the woman. This may derive from the Christian belief that Eve was created from the left side of Adam. Furthermore in pre-Christian times the left was considered evil; the English word “sinister” comes from the Latin for left-handed. Does this burial tradition occur often in the Perry Cemetery?



Persons of Interest*



OSCAR “STOGIE” FYKE & CLAUDIA NEELY FYKE

Oscar (July 2, 1881-Mar. 8, 1959) was the son of Elisha Fyke and grandson of Archer Fyke who came to Texas with his family in 1846. Oscar married Claudia Neely in 1904. They first lived in Farmers Branch until the flood of 1908 forced them to relocate to Carrollton. Oscar opened Carrollton Café on the eastside of the downtown Carrollton square in the 1920s.

THOMAS WARNER FAMILY



As a child Thomas Warner (June 4, 1842-June 7, 1910) emigrated to this area from County Cork, Ireland with his family early in 1852. He married Harriet M. Perry (Aug. 30, 1848-June 9, 1928), daughter of A.W.; together they had seven children. Locate Thomas and Harriet’s stone in the Warner family plot. Their epitaph reads “Father! Let thy grace be given, that we may meet in Heaven.”

REV. J.M. MYERS & KIZIAH WILEY MYERS



Rev. J.M. (Nov. 17, 1823-Mar. 6, 1899) helped organize the Union Baptist Church, first Baptist church in Dallas County. The church was first held in a pioneer cabin in 1846. In 1853 J.M. became pastor of the Union Baptist, and was a minister for 50 years. Kiziah (Jan. 21, 1824-Nov. 26, 1884), wife of J.M., was originally buried at the Myers farm, but was moved to the Perry Cemetery after J.M. died. Locate their stone underneath the large cedar tree.

W.T. SQUIBB & AMY MYERS SQUIBB



W.T. (Dec. 29, 1882-Sept. 29, 1968) and his wife Amy (Aug. 2, 1886-Aug. 24, 1973) were teachers in Carrollton’s school that opened in 1902 at the intersection of Belt Line Road and Erie Street. In 1934 W.T. served as the acting mayor of Carrollton. Like many in the cemetery, their joint headstone has morning glories carved around their names.

*These people were selected at random from available photographs. Due to limitations of space, we were not able to include biographical information on all those resting here who had a significant impact on Carrollton’s development.

*Persons of Interest***ALEXANDER WILSON PERRY**

(Jan. 26, 1819-May 22, 1904)

A.W. Perry brought his family to this area from Carrollton, Illinois in 1844. He was a farmer and rancher who had an impact on the development of the local community through providing land for railroads and donating land for churches, schools, and Carrollton's first public cemetery.

**SARAH HUFFMAN PERRY**

(Jan. 11, 1842-Oct. 24, 1896)

Sarah Huffman married A.W. Perry on January 9, 1840, in Greene County, Illinois. She was the daughter of William Huffman, a Kentuckian farmer. Sarah, her husband A.W., and their three children settled in this area in 1884. Together they had fourteen children. Many of their descendants still live in Carrollton today.

**DEWITT CLINTON PERRY FAMILY**

DeWitt (Jan. 10, 1858-Aug. 9, 1930) was the son of A.W. and Sarah Perry. He married Francis Grimes (May 5, 1866-April 21, 1967); they had one child, Pearl. In 1909 DeWitt tore down his childhood home and reused its materials to construct a larger house. Today it is the A.W. Perry Homestead Museum. Francis and DeWitt were valued members of the community; in 1951 Mrs. Perry was honored as Carrollton's "Most Useful Citizen."

**PEARL PERRY GRAVLEY**

(June 18, 1889-May 7, 1992)

Pearl Perry Gravley was the daughter of DeWitt and Francis Perry, and granddaughter of A.W. and Sarah Perry. She donated her family's home and ten acres of surrounding property to the city of Carrollton for use as a museum and serene park in 1975. Pearl passed away just before the age of 103.



The Anglo-Saxon *lichgate*, or "corpse-gate," is common in Texas; it is a ceremonial arched entranceway with an overhead arch. Traditionally the funeral procession passes beneath the lichgate, while everyday visitors enter by way of smaller, unarched gates. See if you can locate the lichgate in the Perry Cemetery.

A tradition that happened annually in the spring, usually around the first of May, was called "decoration day." On this day communities would gather at the cemetery to work the graves by cleaning, hoeing and raking. At midday they would have a meal together in a picnic-like atmosphere. Today most cemeteries have hired workers to perform repairs; therefore this tradition has become more of a community or family reunion.



Dinner on the ground east of Union Baptist Church on Beltline Road

LEARNING FROM THE LANDSCAPE

A cemetery's landscape is full of symbolic meanings; even the flowers, plants, and trees are chosen for a reason. People often choose these symbolic plants to honor and beautify the last homes of those who rest there. Walk around to identify the following plants.

The cedar tree, which appears most consistently in Texas graveyards, is an evergreen and symbolizes eternal life. Locate the hundred-year-old cedar tree at the front of the Perry cemetery.

There are nine crape myrtle trees located along the front of the Perry Cemetery. The crape myrtle, an evergreen, is a symbol of resurrection.

Other traditional cemetery flowers that are common throughout Texas are the rosebush, lily, iris, and azalea.

Common Gravestone Symbols



A Bible or open book symbolizes faith or knowledge. Find Rev. J.M. Myers and Kiziah (Kesiah) Wiley Myers stone underneath the old cedar tree.



A lamb symbolizes innocence, and is usually found on the gravestones for young children and infants. Many young pioneer children did not survive due to the harsh and unforgiving conditions of Texas in the 1800s, including common illness and little to no medical facilities. Locate one of the many gravestones in the cemetery that has a lamb.



The Morning Glory flower is one of the most commonly used symbols in the Perry Cemetery. It can symbolize the beginning of life, the bonds of love, youth, or the death of child. Pearl Perry Gravley's stone has morning glories framing her name.



The Star of David is the Jewish symbol of divine protection. There is only one Star of David in the cemetery, located on the gravestone of Ralph De Burgos.



Another common symbol is the palm frond. This plant symbolizes spiritual victory and eternal peace. There are palm fronds on the headstone of Goladay C. Cook, located in the Cook family plot.

Common Gravestone Symbols

There are a number of fraternal organizations represented in the Perry Cemetery. These include the Woodmen of the World, the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows, and the Freemasons.



The Woodmen of the World, founded on June 6, 1890, is a financial services organization and the largest fraternal benefit society in the United States. There are multiple Woodmen of the World markers in the Perry Cemetery. The markers normally are shaped like a sawn-off tree stump; other symbols used are axes, woodworking tools, and logs. Find E.B. Baxley's woodmen marker, shown in this photograph.



The Independent Order of the Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization dating from the 18th century. Find Louis C. Myers' gravestone, located in the Myers family plot. Underneath his name are three links with the letters "F. L. T." inserted in the links. The "F" represents "Friendship," the "L" represents "Love," and "T" represents "Truth." The three links symbolize the members' fraternal bond.



The Freemasons comprise a worldwide fraternity emphasizing personal study, self-improvement, and social betterment via individual involvement and philanthropy. The most common freemason symbol is the square and compasses. Locate the gravestone of Ernest L. Russell, shown in the photograph.