



Unveiling and Dedication Ceremony
of the
Texas Historical Marker
for

Boonville Cemetery

2421 Boonville Road
Bryan, Texas

Monday, May 13, 2024
1:30 PM

Presented by:
Brazos County Historical Commission



Program

WelcomeVicki Smith-Dicky

Recognition of GuestsHenry Mayo

History of Boonville CemeteryVicki Smith-Dicky

Unveiling of MarkerCusimano-Baxter Family

Acceptance of MarkerJudge Duane Peters

Closing commentsHenry Mayo

Vicki Smith-Dicky

BOONVILLE CEMETERY

WHEN BOONVILLE WAS SELECTED AS THE FIRST SEAT OF BRAZOS COUNTY IN 1841, THE TOWN WAS DESIGNED AND BUILT AROUND A PUBLIC SQUARE WITH A CEMETERY ESTABLISHED SOON AFTERWARDS ON LOT 1, COVERING TEN ACRES. THE EARLIEST DOCUMENTED BURIAL IN THE BOONVILLE CEMETERY IS THAT OF BRAZOS COUNTY SHERIFF, WILLIAM VESS (1804-1846), ALTHOUGH IT IS POSSIBLE THAT EARLIER BURIALS EXIST.

MANY EARLY RESIDENTS ARE BURIED HERE, INCLUDING JAMES I. BOWMAN (1798-1861), WILLIAM BOYLES (1822-1863) AND THE "FATHER OF BRAZOS COUNTY," HARVEY MITCHELL (1821-1901), WHO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING THE AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE OF TEXAS (LATER TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY) TO BRAZOS COUNTY. MANY OF MITCHELL'S AND BOWMAN'S FAMILY MEMBERS AND DESCENDANTS ARE ALSO BURIED HERE. ROBERT JOHNSON (1818-1885), DEVOTED BRAZOS COUNTY PUBLIC SERVANT, IS ALSO BURIED IN BOONVILLE CEMETERY, ALONG WITH MANY OTHER DEDICATED CITIZENS.

ALTHOUGH ORIGINALLY DESIGNATED AS AN ANGLO CEMETERY, BURIALS FOR FREEDMEN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE DOCUMENTED AS THE TOWN OF BOONVILLE BECAME A FARMING COMMUNITY OF FREEDMEN AFTER THE CIVIL WAR. FORMER SLAVES MOSES STERLING (STURLIN) (1839-1903) AND HIS WIFE, MELINDA STERLING (b.1841), WHOSE DESCENDANTS BECAME LEADERS IN THE BOONVILLE COMMUNITY, ARE BURIED HERE ALONG WITH MANY OF THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS.

GRAVE MARKERS COMMEMORATE MILITARY SERVICE FROM THE U.S.-MEXICO WAR TO THE VIETNAM WAR ERA. DECORATIONS AND INSCRIPTIONS INCLUDE RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY AND MASONIC, ODD FELLOWS, AND WOODMEN OF THE WORLD SYMBOLS, SHOWING A RANGE OF ETHNIC, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS. THE BOONVILLE CEMETERY AND THE SURROUNDING HISTORICAL PARK ARE THE ONLY PRESERVED REMNANTS OF THE HISTORIC TOWN OF BOONVILLE.

HISTORIC TEXAS CEMETERY - 2018

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mary Ann Cusimano was the first paid docent at Boonville Heritage Park, when it opened in 2017. She was employed through the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History and funded by a grant from Mervin Peters.

Mary Ann was very interested in the history of Boonville, the cemetery and the pioneers resting there. In August of 2017, she started the application process to have Boonville Cemetery designated as a Historic Texas Cemetery. Her comprehensive research and historical narrative were submitted to the Texas Historical Commission and the designation was awarded in March 2018. Mary Ann next worked with the Brazos County Historical Commission to apply for a large historical marker for the cemetery. It was approved by the THC in 2019, just as she was appointed to the County Historical Commission.

Mary Ann served as secretary on the commission for the next four years. Although she began working the job of her dreams, as a historical interpreter at Barrington Plantation, Mary Ann remained a dedicated volunteer at the Brazos Valley Museum and at Boonville Heritage Park.

She lost her battle with cancer in April 2023, but took comfort in her final days knowing that this historical marker would bear a granite (her choosing) plaque with her name.

