

# THIS MONTH'S TOP STORIES: TAG UPDATES, ID UPDATES, LITERATURE, AND MORE!



JUNE / JULY 2022

FACEBOOK



WEBSITE



EMAIL



PHOTOS FEATURE MEMBERS OF THE RED HILL  
CEMETERY FACEBOOK GROUP

# IDENTIFICATION OF GRAVE SITES: MARY'S REPORT

by Mary Esther Smith

We want to thank Rick Williams for lending us a metal detector, it's lighter, smaller, and works great.

We have finished our first archival mission, which resulted in locating the metal license stops which establish the grave locations on the east side of the cemetery.

The second mission is to search for the license tags attached to the stops that might include a two- or three-digit number. These numbers will provide identification of the persons interned. Over the years, these tags have been lost or damaged due to rust, neglect, and damage from the installation of an electric transmission line.

To find the license tags, we removed the layers of pine straw; other tags were barely covered by the soil, and some required removal of up to four inches of dirt. As the soil is being removed, a magnet is used to check the soil to see if metal fragments are present.





The license tags recovered could be in fragments, or in some sections could reveal the number or a full tag. Each element is placed in a plastic bag and marked with all the required information. This includes location index number, date, grave location

number, and archivist. The tag numbers, either two or three digits, are noted on the death registry for the cemetery grave locations and for the names of those interred.

Since the automobile tags were manufactured in the 1930s, we have speculated that wooden crosses could have marked the graves. Rusted nails have been found in the graves which could have been used in holding the wooden crosses together.

Another interesting find is the placement of a rock in the grave, giving the impression that possibly a family member marked the grave for subsequent visits.

The continued preservation and discovery of the stobs, plates, and grave locations will someday provide a permanent public record of Red Hill Prison Cemetery.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We are indebted to the following for their continued support:

Stan Aldridge

Edwin Atkins

Diana Boland

Ross Carnes

Claudia Clifton

Cynthia Ward-Edwards

Joey Fernandez

Matt Flower

Tom Gresham

Kerri Gebler

Kevin Haywood

Max Hamilton

Billy Hobbs

Jay Jarvis

Dennis Lovello

Steve Morrison Jr.

Chris McKearney

Lauren Paschal Puls

Carley Reeves

Ron Richardson

Mary Esther Smith

Frank Smith

Len Strozier

David Sutton

Rob Thrower

Bill Torpy

Jessica Whitehead

Michelle Wright

Rick Franzman

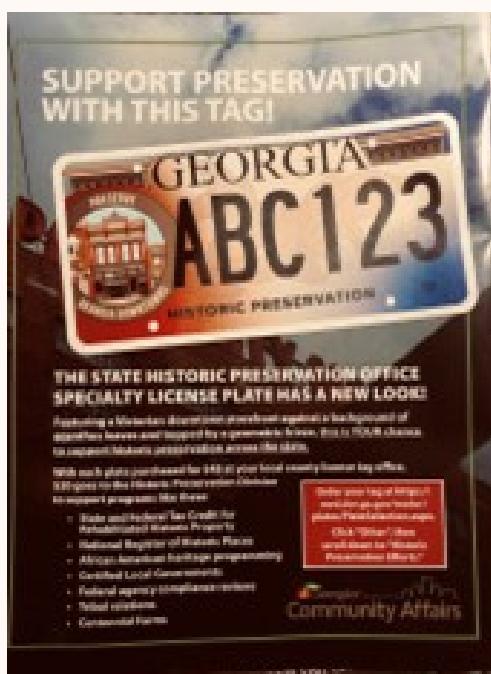
Steve Morris, Jr.

Weaver

Representative Rick Williams

Representative Gerald Greene

Mayor Mary Parham-Copelan



## GEORGIA OFFERS A HISTORIC PRESERVATION LICENSE TAG

All money goes to support preservation programs. Contact DCA if you think WE should be included?

# DEATH REGISTRY UPDATE

Contributors Diana Boland and Carley Reeves continue with documentation. The death certificates list the place of burial as GSPF (Georgia State Prison Farm), but William Henry Tate confirms the cemetery name as it is listed as Red Hill Cemetery. You can check it out [here](#). Updated 7.9.2022.

Males: 400

Females: 32

Unknown Sex: 19

Black: 348

White: 84

Indigenous: 1

Black Males: 327

White Males: 73

Black Females: 21

White Females: 11

Infants: 9

Legal Electrocutions: 162

Total Entries: 451



Over 75% are African American.

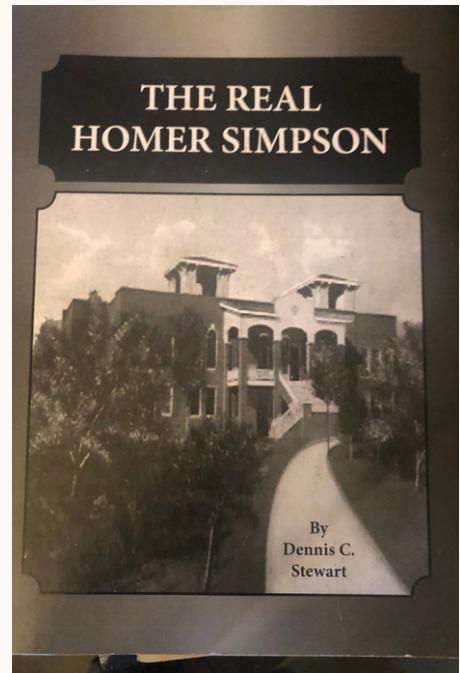
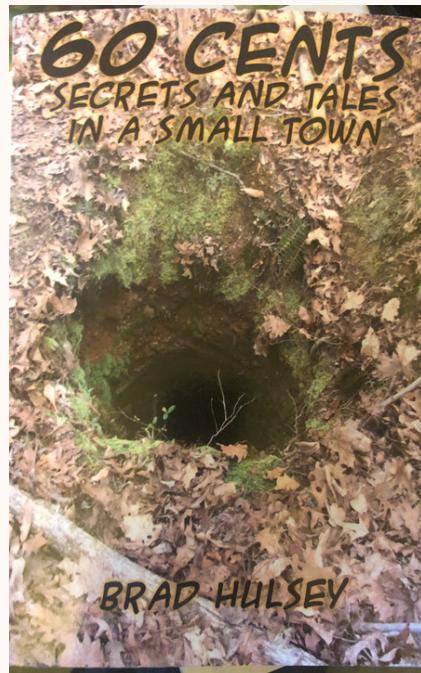
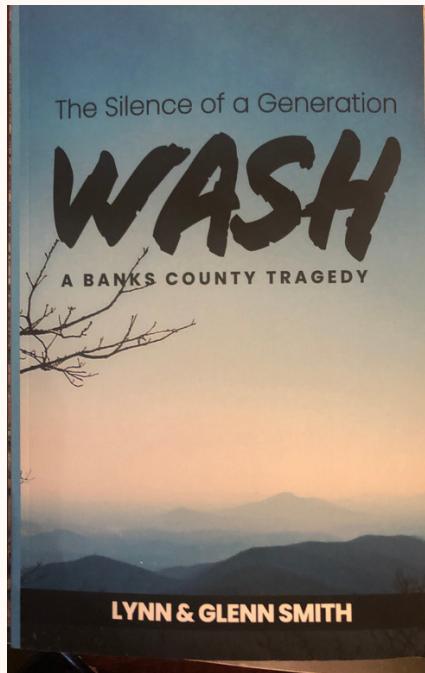
## SUGGESTED READING

Three of our members who had family members electrocuted have written books. We will feature them next month and all are available at the Attic Antiques in Milledgeville or on Amazon.

“WASH: A Banks County Tragedy” by Lynn & Glenn Smith

“60 Cents: Secrets and Tales in a Small Town” by Brad Hulsey

“The Real Homer Simpson” by Dennis C. Stewart. From police chief to bank robber, to man of faith, and his family’s heroic efforts to save him from execution.



# CEMETERY SLEUTH REPORT

by Edwin Atkins

Last month, we learned how the white Cherokee roses planted at the graves assisted us in finding the grave sites. We also explored the age and style of the barbed wire fencing which has assisted us in determining the cemetery boundaries. But why is an old license plate important to the restoration of Red Hill Prison Cemetery?



**PRISONERS TO  
MAKE AUTO TAGS**

*Machines installed at State Farm  
to Make Automobile Tags for  
Georgia*

Auto owners will purchase Georgia made tags in 1930, the machinery to manufacture auto tag, has been installed at the State Prison

A 1936 Prison Commission report to the Governor: "Automobile tags for the State of Georgia for the years 1930 -1936 have been manufactured by the prisoners at the State Farm. This marks the establishment of the first prison industry in Georgia.

About forty prisoners, some of them unable to do heavy work have been afforded employment and the operation of the plant has proved both economical and successful. The cost to the State was about half the average cost of tags in nearby states. Buildings at the male camp were remodeled to take care of the new industry.



George A. Fisher, Superintendent of the License Tag plant reported to the Commission that 500,000 sets of tags were manufactured at a cost of 65¢ per set. The average cost per set in five neighboring states is 10¢ and our cost of 65¢ resulted in savings of \$20,000.00. The total cost of the installation of the tag plant was \$30,000.00, which has saved the State of Georgia approximately four times what the installation originally cost.

1930 Black on gray  
1931 White on dark green  
1932 White on dark blue  
1933 Dark blue on orange  
1934 Orange on dark blue  
1935 Dark blue on orange  
1936 Orange on dark blue  
1937 Dark blue on orange

### To Mark Prison Graves

MILLEDGEVILLE, Ga., June 25.—(AP)—The State Prison Cemetery, containing about 1,500 graves, most of them unmarked, is to have a definite system of identification worked out by the superintendent, Rollie H. Lawrence. A number placed on the grave will correspond with a number in the prison records.

What happened to the tags which were not sold or were incorrectly stamped? Why, they became grave markers!

Rolland H. Lawrence, on June 25, 1935, was interviewed by an Associated Press reporter stating, "1500 graves, most of them unmarked, is to have a definite system of identification, worked out by the superintendent and a number will be placed on the grave which will correspond to a number in the prison records. (Note: we are asking the Department of Corrections for this document).

In 1986, Forest Turner, during an interview with Don Schanche Jr. recalls, "About 30 rusting grave markers are still there on the half acre site. Another 300 or more are gone, many of them apparently knocked down when a utility company cut a right of way through the woods. But neat rows of indentations remain in the ground where convicts lie buried." In 1996, Larry Findlay Sr. identified 295 of the interred men, women, and children. Most of the license plates used to mark graves are slowly but surely being consumed by time, weather and neglect.



In 2014, when Edwin C Atkins, the great-grandson of the prison Chaplain Dr. E.C. Atkins arrived in Baldwin County, he immediately surveyed the prison and cemetery. The Red Hill Cemetery (a name which had been spoken by his family) was overgrown and neglected; he witnessed approximately eight license tag markers on empty metal posts. In 2016, when Tom Gresham and the Southeastern Archeological Service surveyed the cemetery, they found approximately ten metal license tags. The survey concluded that 600-650 graves were present in Red Hill Prison Cemetery.

Conclusion: It is sad but true that the more time rolls on, the more time rolls back, and what is lost really will stay lost in this cemetery unless we can do something to change that. This is our mission and if we are to know our history and our future, we must listen to the voices frozen in the monuments of cemeteries. Even the unmarked and forgotten have something to share. For in this chorus of storytellers, we find our place as Georgians and as human beings.

# BIRTHDAY CAKE



Let's celebrate, as June is our six-month anniversary. We have documented a great deal of history, identified most of the Eastside graves, and moved forward in the restoration of Red Hill Prison Cemetery.

## ARCHIVED NEWS

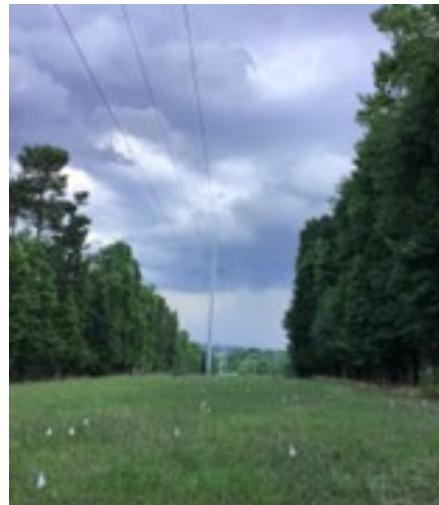
Check out our past newsletters:

[May 2022](#)

[April 2022](#)

[March 2022](#)

[January / February 2022](#)



## FRIENDS OF RED HILL PRISON CEMETERY

by Mary Esther Smith and Edwin Atkins



In January of 2022 with the State Properties' permission, we began a dedicated preservation effort. The graves with tags are identified and a search for the metal posts which held tags has been successful. Mary has found over 180 graves with the assistance of Kevin Haywood, metal detectionists, and cadaver dogs, the curiosity of Kerri Gebler, and Claudia Clifton.

## ITEMS TO ADDRESS IN AUGUST

State Visitation

Security

Beautification

Website Design

Video production for YouTube and Social Media

Crowdfunding

Department of Corrections & Archives Research

Grants and Donations

You can donate to our bank:

Magnolia State Bank

P.O. Box 1989

Gray, Georgia 31032 Attention - Terry Ramsey

