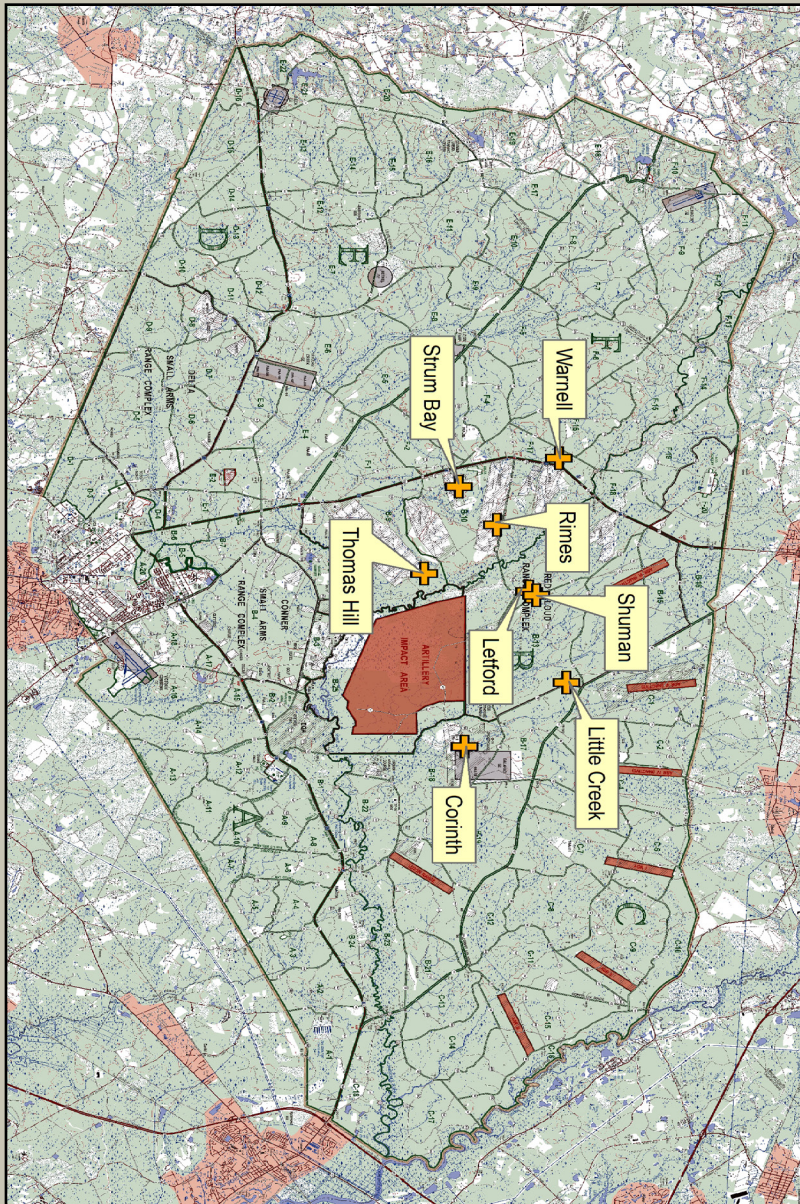
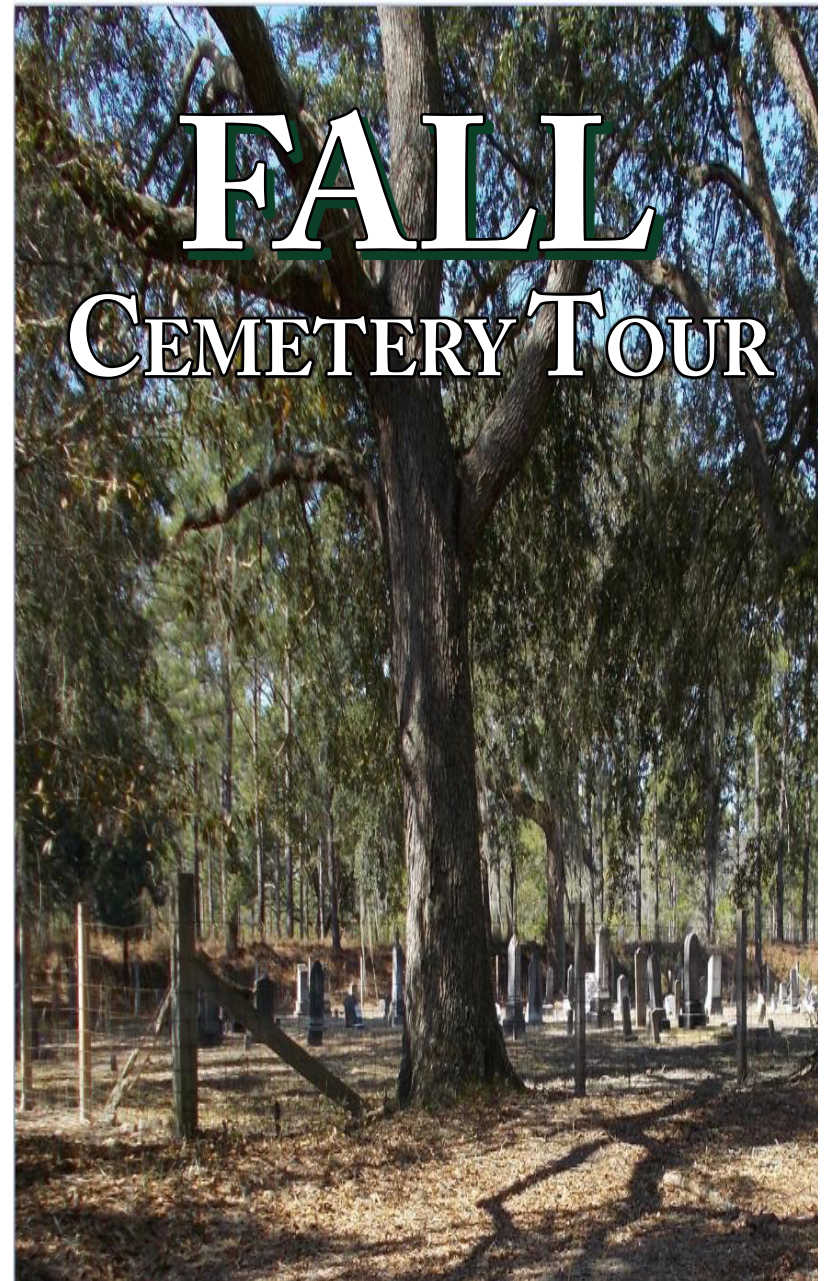


## FALL CEMETERY TOUR MAP



DPW Environmental Division 1550 Veterans Parkway, Bldg. 1137  
Fort Stewart, GA 31314 Phone: 912-767-2010

# FALL CEMETERY TOUR



Little Creek, Corinth, Letford, Shuman, Rimes,  
Strum Bay, Thomas Hill, and Warnell Cemeteries



## *LITTLE CREEK CEMETERY*

The Little Creek Cemetery is associated with the Little Creek Baptist Church located in the former community of Downs Town. This cemetery likely also served as a burial place for residents of the nearby communities of Schrenkville to the east and Speirs to the south. The cemetery has 268 marked and 7 unmarked burials. The earliest interment was in 1879 and the latest was in 1991.

Downs Town, named after members of the Downs Family, was a small late 19th/early 20th century agricultural and church community. Members of the Downs, Clayton, Bell, Shuman, and Speir families settled the area by the latter half of the 19th century. Based on cemetery records, Little Creek Baptist Church appears to date from the 1870s. Not long after the families settled in the area, a wooden, one-room schoolhouse was constructed adjacent to the church and was aptly named Little Creek School. The school was closed in the 1920s and the children then attended class in Pembroke. Little Creek Baptist Church continued to serve Downs Town until the creation of Camp Stewart in 1941.

The neighboring community of Schrenkville is based on map locations that place it in proximity to the Downs Town Community around the same time period. The origins of Schrenkville are derived from the first recorded postmaster, Martin Schrenk (b. 1864, d. 1910), who was appointed in 1897. Starting in 1901, Schrenkville begins to officially appear on local maps and is depicted approximately five miles northwest of the town of Clyde (Bryan County Seat at the time). Sometime thereafter, the postmaster position was taken up by William G. Gill who retained this position until 1904. In 1912, the community of Schrenkville is depicted in a similar location but by 1920, the location shifts to a location approximately nine miles northwest of Clyde (closer

communities lasted only as long as the timber and naval stores were able to be harvested. From 1887 to 1906, the community had a Post Office (opened in the home of Samuel B. Girardeau) before moving to the home of W. A. Kennedy in 1888 and James S. Darsey in 1889. Upon James Darsey's death in 1904, his son Everette O. Darsey became the Post Master. The Post Office was eventually discontinued on March 15, 1906 and the community began to be served by other offices such as Groveland, Strum Bay, and eventually Hinesville.

In 1912, the community was listed as having only about 35 individuals and the community name mostly disappears from the historical record after this point. By 1920, Oneida was not present on maps published during that time. It is probable that as the town of nearby Willie (about a mile and a half to the south) became increasingly more populated much of this area was thereafter considered to be part of the Willie Community.

There are 88 marked burials in the Warnell Cemetery, the earliest of which dates to 1867. Family names associated with the Warnell Cemetery include: Braddy, Caswell, Collins, Darsey, Denmark, Driggers, Elarbee, Elders, Floyd, Futch, Girardeau, Girtman, Gooden, Grice, Hart, Henderson, Hendry, Kennedy, Lang, McCallum, McGahee, Richardson, Roach, Smith, Stafford, Stubbs, Warnell, and Wright.

Very little evidence remains of the home site as a result of the construction and use of the Red Cloud Ranges. When the home site was initially recorded, only a couple of concrete slabs remained which were likely a portion of the foundation for the old home site. No other artifacts were discovered, largely in part to the inability to excavate the site and only record surface artifacts and features due to the elevated potential for unexploded ordnance in the vicinity. Thomas Hill Cemetery has 203 marked and 3 unmarked burials. The earliest interment was in 1852 and the latest was in 1998.

## *WARNELL CEMETERY*

Located between Taylors Creek Methodist Church and the Long Branch Community, this cemetery was recorded at the time of acquisition by the Army in 1940 as a 3.5 acre tract owned by "Warnell Cemetery" (likely a board of trustees). Warnell Cemetery was a burial ground for what became known in the 1880s as the Oneida Community.

The community of Oneida consisted of a small number of widely spread businesses and farms centered on the turpentine operations of Samuel Bascombe Giradeau and William Allen Kennedy. By 1898, the Oneida community boasted three naval stores manufacturers, three sawmills, two gristmills, four general stores, two cotton gins, a turpentine distillery, commissary, and a blacksmith.

Community leaders included William Allen Kennedy who had been a farmer in Taylors Creek in 1881, Samuel Giradeau (son of Jane Warnell and John E. Giradeau), and William Jackson Bacon. The community never consolidated into a town center and like other turpentine

to the Downs Town community). Schrenkville continues to appear on maps as late as 1930. Although the location of Schrenkville appears to shift slightly over time, it is likely attributed to the location of the appointed Postmaster at any given time, often operating out of a local business or home if no formal post office building is established which was a fairly common practice in rural communities such as Schrenkville.



Little Creek Church and Cemetery also served the community of Speirs which was a rail station built approximately 1.5 miles east of the town of Letford. The station operated on the eastern spur of the Savannah & Southern Railroad from 1913 until the railroad ceased operations in 1923. The station was utilized by the logging and turpentine activities that were ubiquitous in Bryan County at the time. All twelve of the known Speir family burials within Fort Stewart are in the Little Creek Baptist Church Cemetery, with death dates ranging from the 1880s to the 1930s. Many of the communities that begin to appear on maps during this time associated along the Savannah & Southern Railroad and associated tramlines often spurred growth along regular intervals along the route. Established communities that

were located nearby would often shift their population growth closer to the rail line, especially when rail stops were constructed. Since there was not an established community nearby (other than Downs Town), it is suspected that the community may have served a temporary turpentine and/or logging camp while the spur was progressing to the east towards Corinth. Originally, the spur was planned to extend to the larger town of Clyde but the railroad went out of business prior to its intended destination.

The community of Speirs was similar to many of the communities that began to appear along the expanding route of the Savannah & Southern Railroad stations that were previously established church communities, towns, and/or active turpentine operations. However, it appears Speirs was located on a patch of undeveloped dry ground surrounded by map references to Alligator Bay, Jones Bay, and Boggy Head Bay at a point where several north south roads crossed through a corridor between the swamps. Because Speirs did not have its own church, town, or industrial operation, it did not survive the demise of the railroad in 1923.

#### Notable Residents of Downs Town:

##### **PVT Emmett Thomas Downs** (b. 3 SEP 1833; d. 27 NOV 1912)

Emmett Thomas Downs was born September 3, 1833 and was the son of Barrett C. Downs and Sarah Ann Hickman Cox Downs who were early settlers to Bryan County. Emmett's great grandfather was Revolutionary War Adjutant Colonel William Downs Sr. and great-great-grandson of Captain Sir Henry Downs of England and Lady Jane Douglas Downs of the



the Miller Tract in 1935. In the 1930 census, Judge W. C. Hodges owned 1,000 acres and was listed as a Judge of the City Court.



According to Judge Hodges' obituary he was a lifelong resident of Liberty County, excepting a period of time where he studied at the Mercer College of Law and during a short time when he practiced law in Ludowici. He graduated in 1910 and began practice in Hinesville in 1914 where he served as a Judge of County Court for Liberty County. He was also active in Masonic circles and was a member of the Hinesville Lodge Number 271, the Alee Shrine in Savannah, and Scottish Rite Lodge in Savannah. He served as the president of the Georgia Masonic Secretaries Association and on various committees of the Grand Lodge of Georgia. Judge Hodges served as a member of the Selected Services for 15 years and also assisted the U.S. government to abstract titles during its acquisition of many parcels of land across Fort Stewart. He died in 1965 and is buried at Elim Baptist Church Cemetery in Ludowici with his parents and other members of his family.



## THOMAS HILL CEMETERY

Thomas Hill Cemetery is most closely associated with Thomas Hill Methodist Church and associated school located on the west side of the Canoochee River. The community developed during the early to mid-1800s. Cotton and rice were dominant crops for the agricultural community prior to the Civil War in Liberty County. Afterwards, naval stores, timber and turpentine were established as mainstays. The earliest cemetery interments include members of the Lanier family, who settled the area around 1840 and possibly earlier. Other antebellum graves include members of the McGillis and Futch families.

The Thomas Hill Methodist Church and Cemetery appear to date from the 1850s. Sometime thereafter, Thomas Hill School was built adjacent to the church building. In 1912, the Thomas Hill School was consolidated with the newly constructed Willie School. Although the Thomas Hill community was not named, the location of the Thomas Hill Methodist Church and Cemetery is indicated on a 1918 map of the area characterized by widely scattered farmsteads in the surrounding area. The Thomas Hill Methodist Church continued to serve the community until 1941 when the U.S. Army acquired the properties.

At the time of government acquisition, much of the surrounding property that includes the Thomas Hill Cemetery was owned by Judge William Clinton Hodges (b. 1885, d. 1965). The structure depicted by a red X on the map, which sits just north of the Thomas Hill School and Cemetery is believed to be owned by Judge Hodges and was part of a 914 acre tract valued at \$12,800. Originally, this tract was comprised of three separate parcels, which included a parcel known as the Smith Tract in 1935, a parcel known as the Stafford Home Place in 1930, and a parcel known as

Douglas Clan of Scotland. During the Civil War, Emmett Downs was a Private in Company A of Georgia's Hardwick Mounted Rifles who were responsible for defending the Georgia coast and Fort McAllister on the Ogeechee River. Emmett later transferred to Company K, 7th Georgia Cavalry when his unit merged with them. According to family history, he was captured at either the Battle of Trevillian Station in Virginia (or possibly Bull Run) and confined at Elmira in New York.

In 1857, Emmett married Edna Josephine Pate Downs who was his brother Isiaah Benjamin Down's stepdaughter and had twelve children. While a resident of Down's Town, Emmett worked as a farmer and was a member of the local Masonic Order. An early blacksmith operation that was on his lands would eventually be sold, along with all the tools, to Henry Ford and moved to Michigan.

### Edna Josephine "Eddie" Downs Bell (b. 28 NOV 1880, d. 13 JUL 1959) Daughter of Emmett Downs

Edna Josephine Downs Bell, daughter of Emmett Thomas Downs and Edna Josephine Pate Downs, was born November 28, 1880 in Bryan County. At age 15, she married David Clayton Bell, Sr. on July 16, 1896 in the town of Clyde and had eleven children: Marvin Barnard Bell, Birdie Mae Bell Roberts, Ruby Robena Bell McClelland, James Roy Bell, Robert Travis Bell, Lester Wiley Bell, Willie Oscar Bell, Lois Netherae Bell Peyton, Mary Caroline Irene Bell Smith, Edna Josephine "Jo" Bell Deal, and David Clayton Bell, Jr.



At the age of 45, her husband died and she supported her family as a sharecropper and midwife and assisted members of the white and black communities. After the government acquired Fort Stewart in the 1940s, she continued to serve the women of the local community by renting rooms to wives of the soldiers stationed at Camp Stewart. Edna died in 1959 and is buried at Little Creek Cemetery with other members of her family.

## *CORINTH CEMETERY*

The community of Corinth began in the 1880s as a church community and by 1913 it had developed into a small village with a final rail station/stop of the Savannah & Southern Railroad spur. Members of the Strickland, Butler, Shuman, Futch, Priester, and Smith families organized the Corinth Baptist Church on February 25, 1888; however, the Corinth Cemetery was established during the late 1870s and likely started out as a family or small community cemetery. By 1917, the community of Corinth appears on local maps with an active rail-line stop. According to a 1920 map, Corinth Church is located on the northeast side of Savage Creek with approximately eight structures located nearby including the Middle Ground School.

In 1923, the Savannah & Southern Railroad ceased to operate and Corinth appears on a 1925 Railroad Map of Georgia; however, the map shows the lack of an active rail line at this location. Corinth is absent from the 1941 Camp Stewart Road Map, although the Corinth Church is still shown. The church held its last service in June 1941 and afterwards the wood stove was removed and sold. A new fence was purchased for the cemetery and the remaining money was split equally among the church members and the church building was abandoned. There are 116 marked burials and 16 unmarked at this cemetery. The earliest interment was 1870 and the latest was 1960.

In the early 20th century, a row of six houses stood near the Strum Bay-Stewart Town Cemetery. The cemetery area also had a small school. The Strum Bay-Stewart Town Cemetery, located approximately 6.5 miles north of the Pleasant Grove Cemetery, is the believed origin of the Pleasant Grove A.M.E. Church Annual Camp Meeting. At some point in the late 19th century, residents of nearby African-American communities started to gather at the cemetery near Stewart Town each October for the Strum Bay A.M.E. Church Camp Meeting. Similar to the history of the Taylors Creek Cemetery Association Camp Meeting, the popular religious event, filled with spirited sermons, food, and family reunions, lasted throughout the last week of October.

People came by foot, mules, and horse and buggy, loaded up with food for both Camp Meeting participants and their animals. Women set up “tables” made of straw and covered with a sheet to put out their food such as pies, sugarcane, watermelon, and rice for others to stop by and eat. The lemonade served at Camp Meeting was also a special and memorable treat. According to one previous resident, a “little, very small church” stood at the Strum Bay-Stewart Town Cemetery. Because of its small size, church services each night were held under a brush arbor in the woods. The structure featured straw bed flooring, wooden plank pews, and hand-made pulpits and tables. Outside burned an open fire around which the participants camped each night. On Sunday, Camp Meeting finished with services at the little A.M.E. Church, school, and arbor near the Strum Bay-Stewart Town Cemetery. There are 28 marked and 16 unmarked burials in this cemetery. The earliest interment was in 1889 and the latest was in 1991.

Seaborn E. Jones and first appears on local maps starting in 1901.



The Strum Bay A.M.E. Church at Stewart Town, near the community of Willie was organized by the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) movement. The origins of the movement date to 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when a group of African-American Methodists, led by Richard Allen, separated from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church and organized Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia. After the Civil War, Rev. Henry McNeal Turner organized the A.M.E. Church across Georgia. Several new churches emerged in the Fort Stewart area as a result of the movement. In later years, African-American members of the Stewart Town and Strum Bay communities would attend the Pleasant Grove Church in nearby Taylors Creek.

While the date of the establishment of the Strum Bay A.M.E. Church at Stewart Town is not currently known, the organization dates of other area A.M.E. churches include Bethel (1873) and St. Thomas (1891). The earliest known grave at the Strum Bay-Stewart Town Cemetery dates to 1892. There are several unmarked graves, which may date earlier than the earliest known marked grave.

## *LETFORD CEMETERY*

Letford was a late 19th/early 20th century timber and rail community located in Bryan County. In the early 1880s, William G. Tuten operated a sawmill north of the Canoochee River in northwestern Bryan County. Tuten constructed a tramline based in Letford called the Savannah & Southern that linked his sawmill with the Seaboard & Airline Railroad at Norden, seven miles to the north. After the timber was exhausted in the Letford area, he extended his tramline to the southwest across the Canoochee River to the turpentine community of Strum Bay. By 1910, Tuten's tram line extended three miles to the Old Sunbury Road and then to Soules Chapel community where he established a station named Willie, named after his daughter.

By 1910, Letford had prospered and included a Methodist church and cemetery. Letford Methodist Church was located near the town cluster along the road to Pembroke. The Letford School was also located along the same road to the north. The town also acquired a post office by 1916. In 1917, Tuten connected his tram line to Glennville through the town of Lenas (also known as Dukes) and the church communities of Bethel (also known as Lida) and Oak Grove (also known as Kent).

In 1923, the Savannah & Southern Railroad went bankrupt and on July 31, 1923 Oglethorpe Savings & Trust Co. sold the rail line with all its equipment, buildings, and real estate to John D. Bradley. The railroad was dismantled soon after the purchase, when the trestle over the Canoochee River and approximately 5,000 ft of Beards Creek trestle were set on fire and burned beyond repair. Letford continued to exist as a church and school community along a well-traveled road until Fort Stewart acquired the land in 1941. There are four marked burials and the only interment date on record is 1917.



## *SHUMAN CEMETERY*

Shuman Cemetery is a small family cemetery associated with the Town of Letford. Letford was a late 19th/early 20th century timber and rail community. The first recorded church associated with the cemetery was a Methodist church established in 1910. There are two marked burials at this cemetery. The earliest interment was 1892 and the latest was 1894.



The Strum Bay community first appears on a 1901 map of Georgia. During the following year, having exhausted the timber resources in the Letford area, William G. Tuten extended his tramline from Letford to Strum Bay. The rail station established at Strum Bay would serve as the western terminus of the rail line until 1910. The railroad was extended in 1910 to the nearby Soules Chapel community. The rail station at Soules Chapel was named Willie and served as the new western terminus. As the community of Willie grew, Strum Bay faded. The Willie post office opened in 1911, the same year the Strum Bay post office closed. The two-story Willie Consolidated Grade School also opened up in 1911, while the Strum Bay school closed in 1912. Strum Bay remained a small community along the Canoochee River until Camp Stewart was created in 1941. Rimes Cemetery has 34 marked and three unmarked burials. The earliest interment was 1887 and the latest was 1939.

## *STRUM BAY CEMETERY*

Strum Bay Cemetery is associated with two neighboring communities, Stewart Town and Strum Bay. Stewart Town was a late 19th/early 20th century African-American turpentine community associated with the neighboring predominately white community of Strum Bay. The Stewart Town cemetery dates to the 1890s and was located adjacent to the Strum Bay cemetery. At that time, a fence separated these two cemeteries but they have since been combined into one cemetery. As with many African-American communities that existed in the area, Stewart Town was never officially included on any maps and the evidence of its existence comes mainly from former residents. Strum Bay was a late 19th/early 20th century turpentine and rail community located in the area that would later become Willie. Strum Bay had acquired a post office by the late 1880s, located in the home of the postmaster

## *RIMES CEMETERY*

Rimes Cemetery, formerly known as the Harmony Methodist Church cemetery, was associated with the late 19th/early 20th century turpentine and rail community of Strum Bay. Harmony Methodist Church was established in 1888 and around the same time, a post office was established in the Strum Bay community within the home of the first postmaster, Seaborn E. Jones.