

DPW Environmental Division

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SPRING 2024 CEMETERY & HISTORIC SITES TOUR



Poplar Head Cemetery, Zion Traveler Cemetery,
Congregational Cemetery, Smith Cemetery and
Smith Chapel Cemetery

Historic Communities in the Area

Banner (Oak Grove)

The Banner community was an African-American farming and turpentine community that was active from the late 1800s until 1941, when the properties were acquired by the government. Banner was located on the old Hencart Road (GA Hwy 144) which was a major transportation route that led to Savannah. James H. Durrence, a successful turpentine operator residing in Tattnall County, owned much of the land in the former Banner community by the 1880s. The Banner Post Office was opened in 1888 and served as the tax collection center for the community. Around 1917, the railroad station of Kent was added to the Savannah & Southern Railroad, located approximately one mile north of the Banner area, which provided freight and passenger service to the community. By the early twentieth century, Banner disappeared from maps even though there were two active African-American churches in the vicinity, Smith Chapel and Oak Grove Congregational. The Banner area continued to exist as a church and school community with Smith Chapel Church and Oak Grove Church & School functioning as late as 1941. Three cemeteries served the former community of Banner which were Congregational, Smith, and Smith Chapel Cemeteries.



**Interpretive
Painting of
Historical
Turpentine
Operations on
Fort Stewart
(Martin Pate,
2007)**

Zion Traveler Cemetery

This cemetery is associated with an African-American Baptist church of the same name and the former community of Banner. The church was still standing when the land was acquired by the government. The cemetery has only one marked grave dating to 1938. The property adjoining to the church and cemetery was owned by Stepney Miller and his wife, Mattie. Miller was identified as a 70 year old black farmer who owned his dwelling on the 1930 census. The 1930 census revealed that all but one of the families on the same page were identified as black. This could indicate that the area was a small unnamed antebellum black community.



**Only headstone at Zion
Traveler Cemetery**

Additional Online Fort Stewart Cemetery Resources:

<https://home.army.mil/stewart/about/Garrison/DPW/environmental/prevention-and-compliance/crm>

Smith Chapel Cemetery

Smith Chapel Cemetery is within the Banner community, a rural African-American community active from at least the 1880's until 1941. Banner was on the Hencart Road (GA Hwy 144), a major transportation route which led to Savannah. Banner was likely an African-American farming and turpentine community. The land for Smith Chapel Cemetery was from James H. Durrence's estate. Durrence had died in 1911. From his estate four acres of land just south of Oak Grove Congregational Church were sold to the Trustees of the Smith Chapel African Methodist Episcopalian Church, listed as C.B. Porter, S. Stafford, D.W. Smith, A.P. Dekil (or Dekle), A.T. Porter, and J.B. Boggs. Smith Chapel Cemetery has ten marked and seven unmarked graves, the earliest being July 7, 192[3?], the latest being March 7, 1936.



Smith Chapel Cemetery

Jug (Jug Courthouse)

Jug was located between old Fort Stewart Road 144 (Hencart Road) and current GA Hwy 144 just east of Fort Stewart Road 33C. By 1886, Jug was a small rural community within Liberty County. Prior to the 1880s, the Jug community received its name from a trading post on the old Hencart Road where travelers would stop to purchase whiskey brought in from Savannah. By the early twentieth century, Jug had acquired a small courthouse and was soon thereafter referred to as Jug Courthouse.

Kent

In 1917, the Kent rail station was established along the Savannah & Southern Railroad approximately one mile north of the Oak Grove Congregational Church in the Banner Community where Fort Stewart Road 5 crosses the path of the now dismantled Savannah & Southern Railroad. Kent can be found on 1923 and 1930 maps of the area.



John Enoch Smiley House, Smiley, Georgia

Smiley (Smiley Settlement)

Smiley (originally known as the Smiley Settlement) was a late 19th/early 20th century agricultural and church community centered around the Poplar Head Baptist Church and cemetery area. The community originated around 1811 when three brothers of the



Poplar Head School, Spring 1903-W.W. Parker, teacher-Back row, left to right; Roy Long, Leon Smiley, Bub Long, (H.C.) Lonnie Knight, Roland Long, Alzada Mobley, Clyde Mobley.
Second row from the rear, left to right: W.A. Smiley, Lillie Smiley, Eva Smiley, Annie Knight (Mrs. H.C. Long) Martha Smiley, Julia Smiley.
Third row from the rear, left to right: Bennie Smiley, Bessie Smiley, Georgia Mobley, Nettie Mobley, unidentified girl; Ona Knight, Madge Long, unidentified girl.
Front row, left to right: Bennie Knight, Herman Knight, John Knight.
The picture was made by the teacher of the school, Wyman Parker, and was loaned to us by his sister, Miss Mary Parker. Picture was taken March 31, 1903.

Newspaper clipping of Poplar Head School Spring 1903

Smiley/Smylie Family moved from South Carolina to a place located between Taylors Creek and Beards Creek in Liberty County (later to become Long County). The three brothers were J.M. Smiley, Neil Smiley, and James Smiley. What we do know about the early settlement comes from one of the brothers, James Smiley, who owned 600 acres in the area in 1826. By 1835, James Smiley was a prosperous farmer who raised cattle, hogs, corn, and potatoes on his farm with the assistance of his family and three female African-American slaves. By the 1870s, one of the Smiley family members had established a general store within the community. In 1879, the general store

Poplar Head Cemetery

Poplar Head Cemetery is located in Long County (formerly Liberty County) in the southwestern portion of Fort Stewart. The cemetery is associated with the Poplar Head Baptist Church, which served the former communities of Smiley and Swindel. The cemetery contains 147 marked and seven unmarked graves. The earliest interment was November 20, 1848 and the latest interment was December 20, 2013.



Wooden Headstone in Poplar Head Cemetery

Smith Cemetery

Smith Cemetery (a.k.a. Gap of the Bays or Smith-Gap of the Bay) was located between the communities of Smiley and Banner, near Smith Chapel and Oak Grove Congregational churches and their associated cemeteries. This African-American cemetery is part of a 743-acre tract the government acquired from Bertha Smith in 1941. Typically, if a cemetery was unnamed during the time of government acquisition, it was



Smith Cemetery

assigned a name associated with the last former land owner. Smith Cemetery has 25 marked graves, ranging from 1883 to 1924, primarily those of the Boggs and Porter families. Little else is known

Historic Cemeteries in the Area

Congregational Cemetery (Oak Grove)

Oak Grove was an early 20th century African-American church and school community located between the Smiley and Banner communities, near Smith and Smith Chapel cemeteries. In 1899, James H. Durrence sold one acre of land to David Baldwin, R.J. Jenkins, and Amos Bragg, the Trustees of the African-American Oak Grove Congregational Church. Baldwin was a farmer born in North Carolina who, by 1910, had seven children and a hired man to help run his farm. Amos Bragg was another farmer who, in 1910, lived in the Glennville area of Tattnall County and could neither read nor write. No information has been discovered about R. J. Jenkins. Congregational Cemetery now marks the site of the Oak Grove Congregational Church. This cemetery has seven marked graves ranging in date from 1914 to 1927.



Congregational Cemetery

was listed as a Liberty County Tax Appointment Station and as the meeting place for the Smiley Agricultural Club. The following year, a post office was formally established. Sometime prior to 1903, the Poplar Head School was established.

Between 1900 and 1919, Smiley was described as a small postal village having a population of 50 that acted as an important trading center for the area. It is suspected that the Dunlevie Tram Line extended along Fort Stewart Road 32 prior to 1920 which provided service to the community of Smiley and also connected Smiley to the Savannah & Southern Railroad to the north. By 1920, Smiley was depicted as a group of eight buildings along both sides of the Walthourville Road and remained fairly unchanged until the land was acquired by the Army in 1941. At that time, many of the former residents of Smiley moved to present day Smiley Crossroads located approximately 1 mile south of the current Fort Stewart border. Poplar Head Church was also relocated from Smiley to Smiley Crossroads in 1941.

Swindel

Swindel was a late 19th/early 20th century community along Fort Stewart Road 34. The village was named after the Swindle/Swindel family, most of whom were members of the Poplar Head Baptist Church in nearby Smiley. During the 1880s, a general store owned by J.N. Swindle became the focal point of the community. The store served as a local tax collection station for Liberty County in the late 1880s through the 1890s. A post office was established by the late 1880s and remained active until the early 1900s. By 1912, mail was then delivered through Daisy. Swindel disappears from local maps and was replaced by Ty Ty Crossing during the early 1920s but reappears on 1930s Georgia maps.

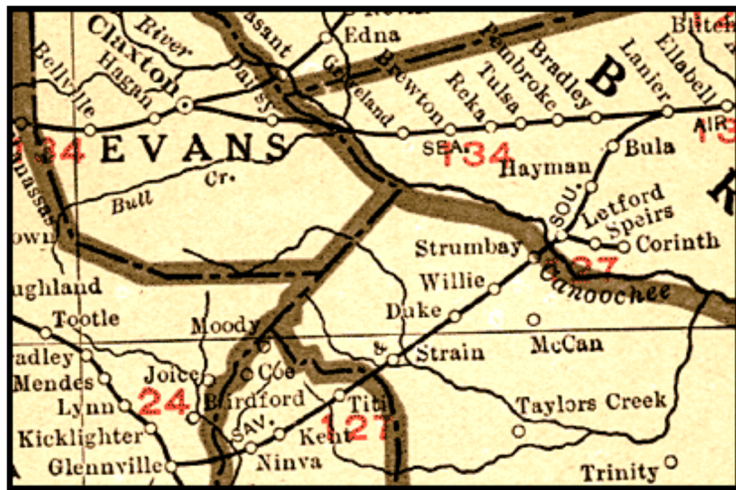
Ty Ty Crossing

Ty Ty Crossing, also known as Ti Ti, developed out of the community of Swindel extending to the north closer to the Savannah & Southern Railroad. With the dismantling of the railroad in 1923, Ty Ty Crossing disappeared within two decades.

Railroads and Tram Lines

Savannah & Southern Railroad

The Savannah & Southern, also known as the Tuten Railroad, started as a lumber tram line. The line extended from Lanier, north of the Installation, to the southwest eventually terminating in Glennville. William Letford, a New Orleans native born in 1839, migrated to Bryan County in about 1875 settling near the Canoochee River, south of Pembroke on Bakers Mill Tract. He started a turpentine operation in the 1880s. The settlement of Letford grew up around this turpentine still. Letford died in 1895 and the ownership of his Letford property fell to the Pembroke Lumber Company.



Savannah & Southern Railroad (Rand McNally 1920)



Logging operation of the Dunlevie Lumber Company



Cleaning turpentine cups 1941

Dukes. In 1917, the western expansion added Strain, Lida, Ti Ti, Kent, and Ninva to the list of towns served by the railroad. And finally in 1919, the railroad made its furthest advance westward, reaching Glennville. The railroad was a moderate success throughout most of its existence. However, by the early 1920s, the railroad was heavily in debt due to the competition with the nation's improved roads and increased automotive travel. The railroad was dismantled in 1923.

Dunlevie Tram Lines

The Dunlevie tram lines were operated by the Southern Timber Company, more commonly called the Dunlevie Lumber Company. The company employed more than 1000 people in the early 1900s in lumber and turpentine operations. The tram lines covered over forty miles in and around the current Fort Stewart Installation area. In 1922, the company officially changed its name to Dunlevie Lumber Company and it went into receivership by the end of the decade.



Dunlevie Lumber Company in Allenhurst, 1912



"Willie May #10" a standard gauge 15-ton 2 truck from Lima Locomotive purchased by W. G. Tuten in 1903

In 1900, The Pembroke Lumber Company transferred ownership of the sawmill/turpentine operation and 2000 acres of timberland, including Letford, to Tuten. The town of Letford was the headquarters for the Savannah & Southern Railroad. In 1902, The Savannah & Southern Railroad extended to the community of Strumbay which was the western terminus until 1910. In 1911, the track extended westward to Willie. The town of Willie began as a direct result of the railroad. In 1916, the rail continued west to



Small gauge tram circa late 1800s in Southeast Georgia

