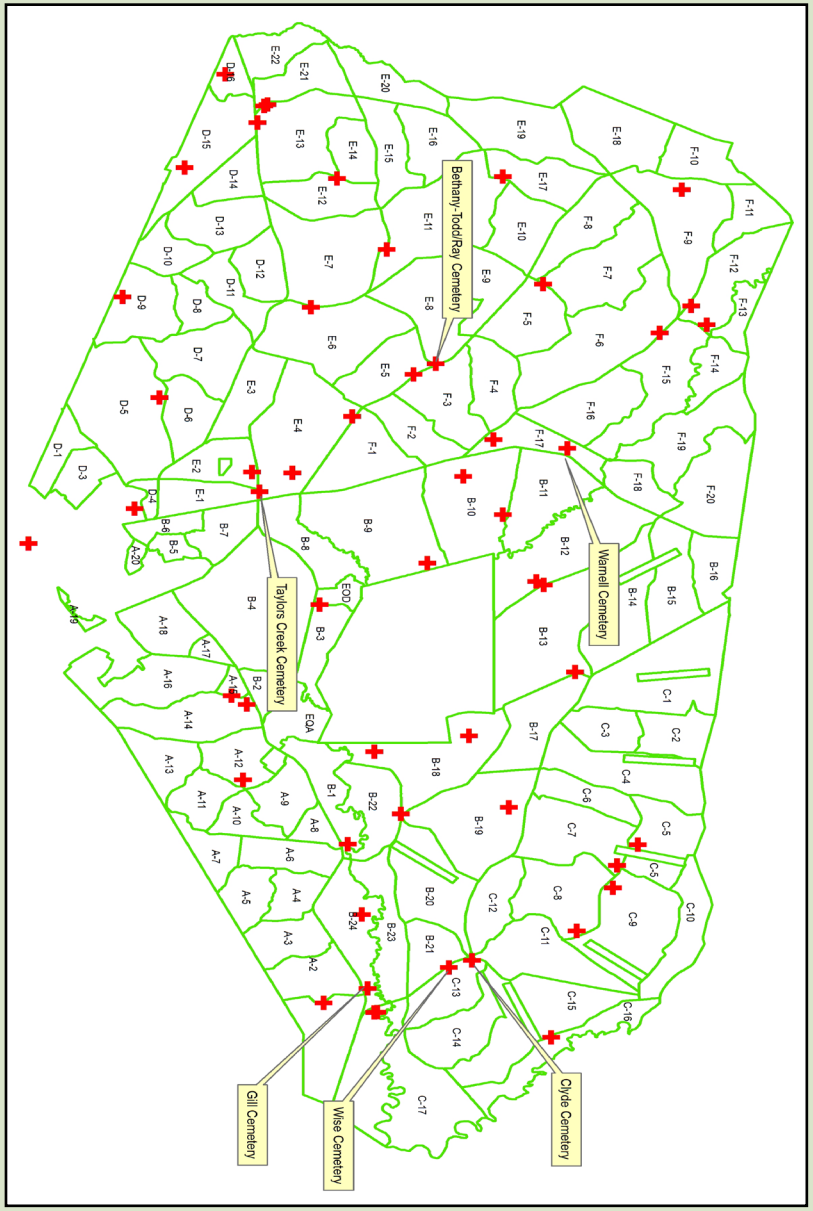
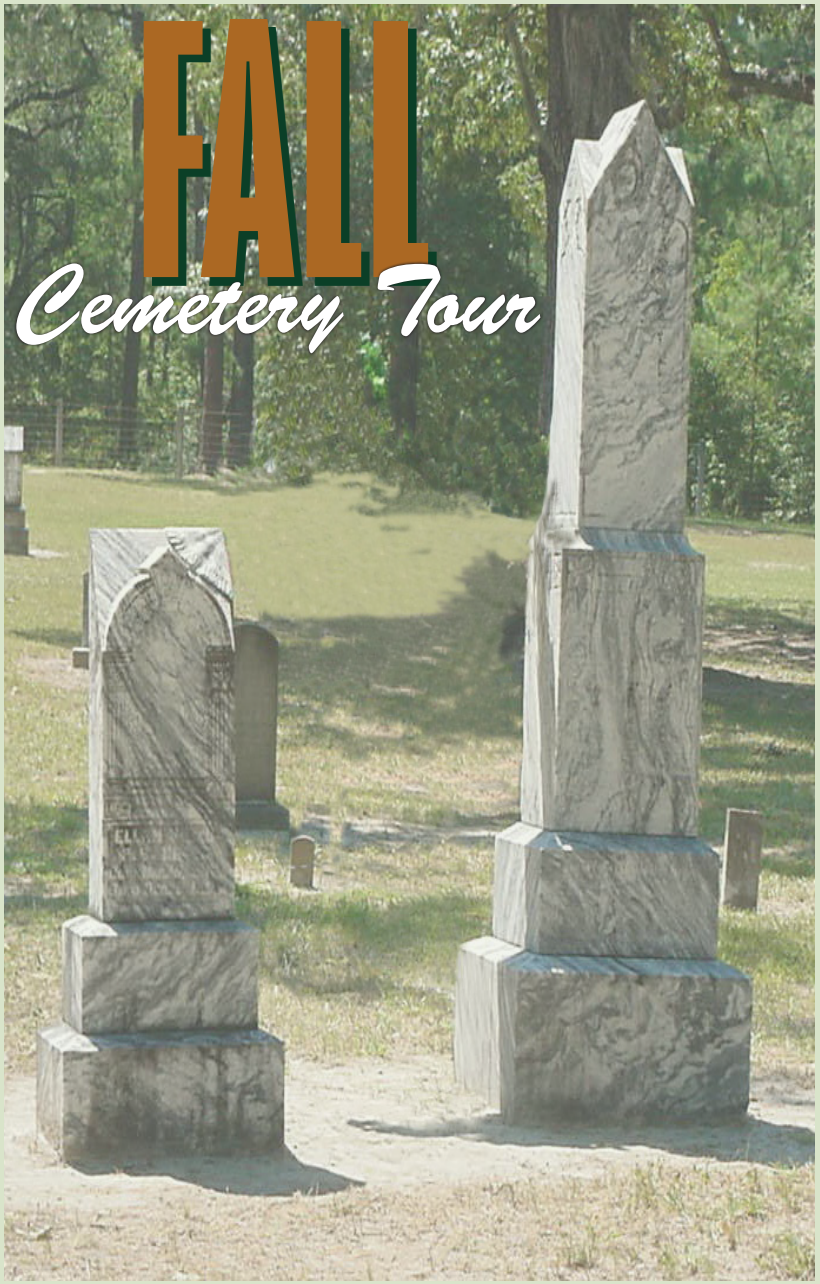
Fall Cemetery Tour Map



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

FALL Cemetery Tour

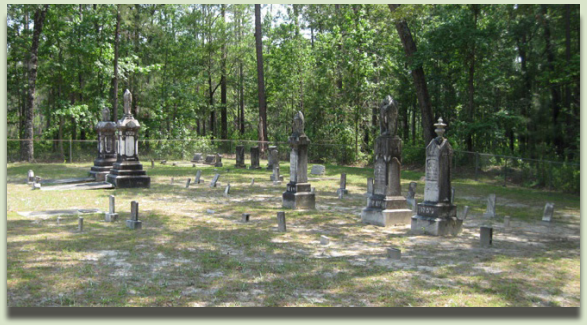


Bethany (Todd-Ray), Warnell, Salem, Z.R. Moody, and Jerusalem Cemeteries

BETHANY (TODD-RAY) CEMETERY

This cemetery is located within a community which has changed names over the years. Initially, it was known as the Ray Settlement but has also been known as Bethany, Dukes, and Lenas at various times of its history. Prominent families of the area included the Rays, Todds, Mobleys, Bacons, and Whittens. This cemetery is believed to have begun as a family cemetery as the first marked burial dates to 1886, which precedes the establishment of the nearby Bethany Baptist Church that was established in 1893 when Joseph J. Whitten gave the trustees of the church 1.5 acres to build a church and cemetery. The original Trustees included Richard Way, John Mobley, and a gentleman with the surname of Curry. The church had anywhere between 100 and 150 members and there are a total of 45 marked graves recorded in the cemetery.

One of the more prominent citizens of the area was William J. Bacon (1860-1918) who purchased property about a quarter mile to the north of present day Bethany Cemetery in about 1890. By 1898, William Bacon ran a sawmill, gristmill, and cotton gin on his farm, and soon opened a general store. Another prominent individual was Joseph L. Whitten who operated a turpentine distillery in the area beginning in the early 1910s. In 1920, the Savannah & Southern Railroad was extended from the town of Willie to the Bethany community. It was during this time, that the community was briefly known as Dukes and Lenas which were stops along the railroad. Although the railroad fell into bankruptcy in 1923 and the railroad was quickly dismantled thereafter, the old railbed continued to serve as an important transportation route for horse and buggy as well as automobiles as the years progressed.



In 1942 with the military acquiring the area, the congregation was faced with either building a new church or moving their existing church. It was decided to move the Old Jerusalem church to its current location in Groveland. During the transition between moving the new church, members met at the Old Salem Church as it was no longer being used during this tumultuous period.

JERUSALEM CEMETERY

There are 117 marked graves in this cemetery, dating from 1890 to 2016. This cemetery marks the site of the Jerusalem Baptist Church and surrounding community, and served the African-American community within Long Branch, located a half mile to the south. In 1865 a group of recently emancipated African-Americans founded the church and for the first two years met under a brush arbor. In 1867 Miles Moody donated land to the church and the congregants built a log structure and Reverend R. Williams was called as their pastor until 1872. The church then had seven more ministers until early 1887 when Reverend S. N. Walker was called to serve. The first Board of Deacons for the Church were prominent African American farmers and included Samuel Boggs, M. C. Cassedy, Francis Geiger, Moses and Joseph Johnson, Edward Levant and Cyrus Moody.

In the year that Rev. S.N. Walker was called to pastor, a committee was formed to build a new church. The new wood frame church was 40 feet by 60 feet with a porch and two doors in front (left side for men and right side for women). When Rev. Walker died in 1930, Rev. Lockett was the pastor of the church for about a year and then Rev. N.C. Conner took over as the new pastor, who was also the founder of the Conners Temple Baptist Church in Savannah. Membership at this time was no more than about 50 members which paid 60 cents a month or donated work to pay their dues to maintain the church. The first Sunday school was also organized around this time by Houston Johnson and was their first Superintendent.

Bethany Cemetery is named after the Bethany Baptist Church that was established on September 11, 1893 when Joseph J. Whitten gave the trustees of the church 1.5 acres of land. During the late 1800s, the community was known as the "Ray Settlement". Around 1917, the community would become known as Lenas when the Savannah & Southern Railroad extended from the neighboring town of Willie to the east. However, that community name was short-lived and would be changed to Dukes by 1920. The name of Dukes (the name of a local family) was given to the recently established rail depot. After the Savannah & Southern Railroad was abandoned in 1923, Dukes slowly faded away and the area became known as the Bethany community. The cemetery has also been known as Todd-Ray, after the Todd and Ray families that are prominent in the cemetery. The Bethany Baptist Church served the community until it was disbanded in 1941, when the federal government acquired the land for Camp Stewart Military Reservation. During this time it was estimated there were between 100 and 150 members of the church. A total of 45 marked burials and ten unmarked burials have been documented at this cemetery. The earliest interment was in 1886 and the most recent was in 1980.

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 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. Giradeau) 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.

MORE CONTENT NEEDED

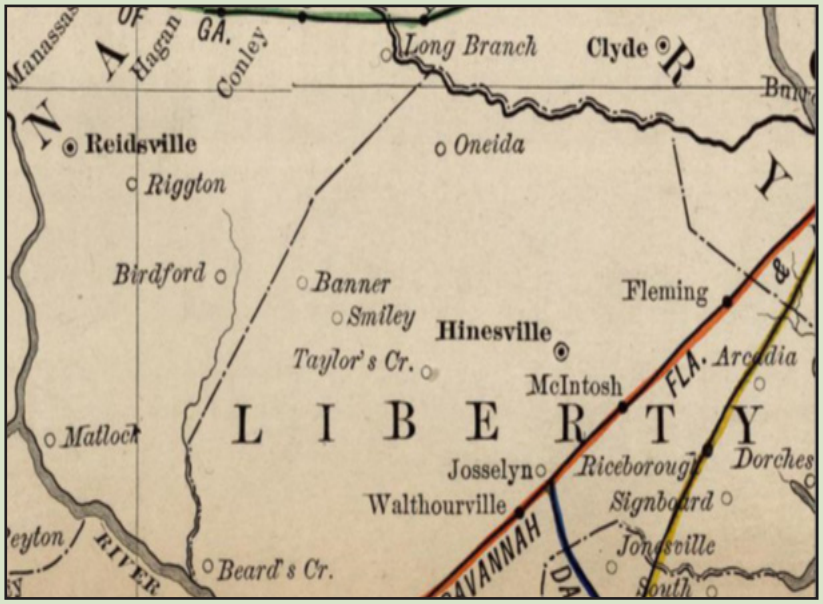
Z.R. MOODY CEMETERY

The Z.R. Moody Cemetery has 21 marked graves ranging in date from 1866 to 1937. The cemetery was part of a 716-acre tract owned by Mrs. Zada Rushing Moody in 1941. This tract was part of traditional Moody family holdings and was at the center of the Long Branch community. It may have started out as a Moody family cemetery, as the first burial in 1866 was that of Dr. Manning J. Moody, who may also have owned the property at that time. Dr. Moody was one of the most prominent members of the local community since the 1840s, practicing medicine, having extensive agricultural holdings, and serving a term each in the state house and senate. Most of the other burials are from the related Sullivan and Southwell families.

WARNELL CEMETERY

The community of Oneida appears on maps from 1889 although declined from about 1900. 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.

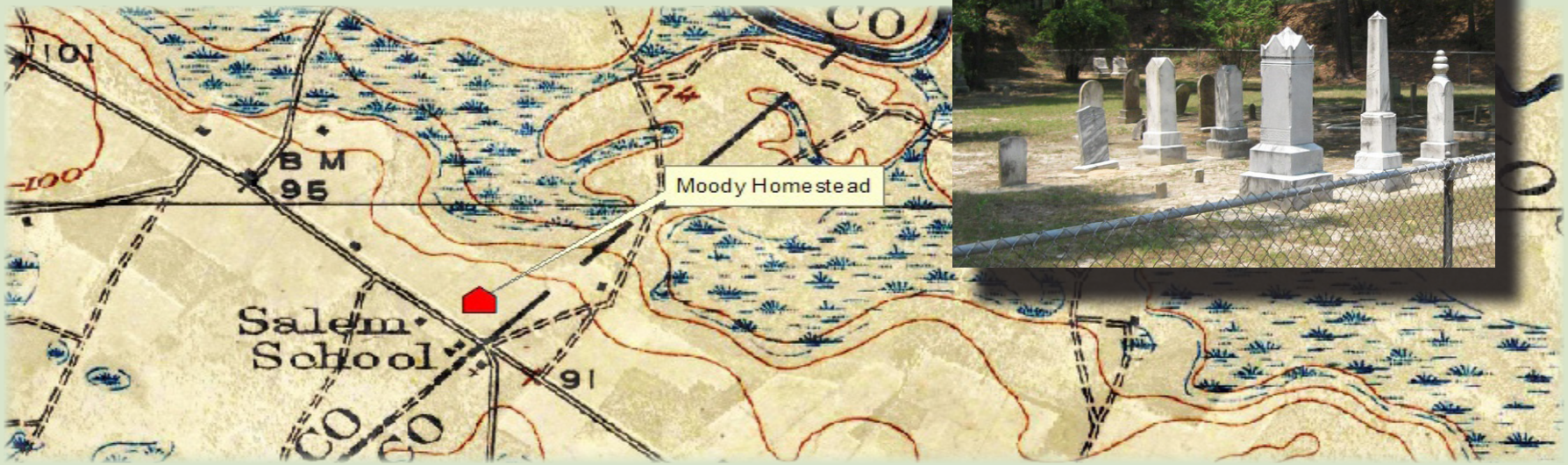
There are 88 marked graves in the Warnell Cemetery, the earliest of which dates to 1867. Family names associated with the Warnell Cemetry include: Braddy, Caswell, Collins, Darsey, Denmark, Driggers, Elarbee, Elders, Floyd, Futch, Girardeau, Girtman, Gooden, Grice, Hart, Henderson, Hendry, Kennedy, Lang,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



SALEM CEMETERY

Between 1808 and 1810, the South Salem Church and cemetery were established making it one of the earliest cemeteries at Fort Stewart. Although the granite marker denotes an early 1800s establishment, the earliest surviving grave marker within the cemetery dates to 1855. In all likelihood, the initial headstones were likely wooden markers that have long since decayed. The Salem cemetery has 67 marked graves and span from 1855 to 1935.

The Salem cemetery is located within the area that would become known as Long Branch (also known as Moody's). During the 1840s, James Moody built a home just south of the Wells Ferry Crossing on the Canoochee River. By 1857, the Long Branch Post Office was established in the home of James Moody's son, Dr. Manning J. Moody. The center of Long Branch was at an important crossroads with one road leading to Reidsville to the west, Wells Ferry (crossing the Canoochee River) to the north, and southeast towards Taylors Creek and Hinesville. This important transportation point quickly became an important agricultural shipping point. During the latter half of the 19th century, the pine forests surrounding Long Branch were utilized for timbering and turpentining, which became a large part of the local economy with logs and barrels of turpentine and rosin rafted down the Canoochee to the port of Savannah.



However, by the 1880s, the town appears to have been sparsely populated with only 25 people living in town with no schools and only one church (Salem Church). The community contained a gristmill, a wheel wright, a post office, several physicians and 18 planters and farmers. Only three years later, in 1883, Long Branch is listed a village of 100 inhabitants with a new school and continued to rely on cotton, rice, lumber and naval stores as their primary exports. It was during this time that Long Branch was known as Moody's, largely from the seemingly hereditary position of Post Master within the Moody Family as well as the Moody Bridge being constructed over the Canoochee River over the former Well's Ferry. By the 1890s, the town once again was known as Long Branch.

By the late nineteenth century, water transport became outmoded by the relatively inexpensive rail transport in the area. As a result, Long Branch began to suffer since it did not have a rail line. By the early 20th century as the pine forests were decimated, Long Branch began to fade away. In 1906, the post office was closed permanently with mail service for the area split between Daisy, Groveland, and Oneida.