Prairie Grove Cemetery, Collin County, Texas

Prairie Grove Cemetery in southeast Collin County, Texas is the remaining chapter in the lives of many early settlers who migrated to Texas during the 1800’s. By studying the history of the cemetery, one can recapture a part of Texas’s past.

Prairie Grove Cemetery was located on the site of the Prairie Grove Baptist Church which was deeded to the church June 8, 1896 by W. Y. Carver and his wife, Florada. (1)The Carver family had come from North Carolina in 1865 and settled in the area. (2)

A settlement known as Aleo which had its own post office and a drug store in 1895 was nearby. (3) The school was known as the Prairie Grove School. (4) Across from the school in a cluster of pecan trees was the Milan Episcopal Methodist Church South. (5) The Pilot Grove Creek was nearby. (6) Because Aleo was located nearby, the cemetery is sometimes referred to as the Aleo Cemetery. (7)

A newspaper article in 1917 states that there were 175 members in the Prairie Grove Baptist Church and that it was free of debt, indicating the success of the church. Bro. Hulen Coffman, who was converted in the church and had membership in the church many years, was the minister. It states that a new church building would be built due to the growth. (8) A burial ground was needed for the pioneers in the settlement.

The first known burial in the cemetery was Bennie Stephenson, son of William and Josie Stephenson, who died June 12, 1895. (9) When the tornado came through Nevada, Texas May 9, 1927, a number of the dead were buried in the cemetery. (10)

One unusual characteristic of the cemetery is that the Baptist were buried behind the Prairie Grove Baptist Church and the Methodist were buried on the west side of the lane beside the church. (11)

The church was used until the 1950’s; it burned shortly afterward. (12) The cemetery remained with over sixty graves.

Audie Murphy’s mother, Josie Killian Murphy, and grandparents, J. D. Killian and Sarah E. Killian, are buried in the cemetery. Audie Murphy was a famous World War II hero and a movie star who grew up in the area. (13)

The cemetery is cleaned periodically by the Collin County Sheriff’s Department. The gravestones stand amid prairie grass for which the cemetery was named. When the settlers arrived and saw the prairie grass, they named the area Prairie Grove as there were no stumps or trees. The area had native grass and no timber. (14)

DIRECTIONS:
Take US380 to Farmersville. About 1 mile past the Dairy Queen, turn south onto FM547. About 4 miles, turn west onto CR643. The cemetery is about 1 ½ miles further on the north side of CR643. A one-lane dirt road leads into and divides the cemetery into two sections – East & West.

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6. Ibid.
7. Historical Notes, Rike Public Library, Farmersville, Texas.
8. Prairie Grove Church Notes, 1917 (newspaper article found in Muriel Bentley’s possessions).
10. Oral Interview: Virgie Rickman Smith
11. Oral Interview: George C. Murray
12. Oral Interview: Marti Mason
13. Pitts, Alice, Wanda O’Roark and Doris Posey, *Collin County, Texas Cemetery Inscriptions Vol. 1*.
14. Oral Interview: George C. Murray