

# INTRODUCTION TO THE WELLS-FARNSWORTH CEMETERY

By Stevie Hughes

**“I am in hopes there is a better day a comin.” Jacob Wells, Vicksburg 1863**

At first glance, those buried in this family cemetery appear to be a random array of disparate surnames: Brannon – Craig – Earnest – Farnsworth – Lovette – Reeves – Ruble – Wells. This is not the case. All of these families were related. For other surnames found in the cemetery, such as Clayton – Lamons – Snowden – Southerland – Wilson, they were either near neighbors and/or workers on the farm, and they, too, are related to each other in some way.

The first family member buried in the cemetery who has a tombstone is Ruth Brannon. Ruth died on August 28, 1849, shortly before her thirtieth birthday. She was a daughter of Jeremiah F. and Mary Ann Wells Farnsworth. Ruth is named in Jeremiah's Will, probated on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1854. The Farnsworth Family was among the wealthiest families in Greene County at that time. The bond for the Estate was \$15,000. Jeremiah owned one male slave, Tennessee, who Jeremiah referred to as his “Man Servant”. Tennessee was virtually given his freedom under his Master's Will, but he was not emancipated. Perhaps Jeremiah believed his “Man Servant”, Tennessee, could be better protected as long as he remained the “property” of the well known Farnsworth family. By 1860, Tennessee had received his full freedom.

At some point, the farm passed from the Farnsworth family into the maternal line of the Wells family. Jeremiah Farnsworth's wife was Mary Ann Wells (1800-1873), a daughter of the Reverend George and Mary Earnest Wells, who are buried at Harrison's Cemetery. The Wells descendants continue to live on this farm today.

The Wells Family was not known to be Slave owners. Yet, both the Farnsworth sons and the Wells sons fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Civil War letters written by Jacob Earnest Wells (1832-1888) have been preserved by the Family. Jacob Wells and his cousins participated in the Siege of Vicksburg, and it appears some did not survive the War.

The Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery is much larger than the list of names on the transcription infers. There are many, many unmarked graves here. Even before the Buford Reynolds survey in the 1960's, the cemetery had been vandalized when an untold number of tombstones were destroyed. The Wells family who remain on this lovely farm, remember a tombstone for a Confederate soldier, whose name is now lost to time. The tombstone had been carved with a pointed top, so “no ####!# Yankee would sit on his grave”. The tombstone “disappeared” one night a number of years ago.

An unknown number of Civil War soldiers were interred here without “real” tombstones – both Union and Confederate alike – in the upper southeast corner of the cemetery. The

only indication of their graves is the slight indentions in the ground. Only one tombstone is present today in this area: George D. Ruble (1845-1892), 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Mounted Infantry, Company E, Union. Interestingly, on the application for his military tombstone, Private Ruble's place of interment is stated as Harrison's Cemetery. Apparently someone made a mistake or changed their mind, because his tombstone stands in Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery.

As is always the case with old cemeteries, a number of tombstones present during the Reynolds survey in the 1960's no longer exist forty-plus years later – especially the smaller children's markers. The three little tombstones for the Reaves children inventoried by Reynolds on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1967, are now gone.

Conversely, two tombstones present today did not exist in 1967. These tombstones were placed many years after the loved one had departed this life: Mariah Love Earnest Wells (1803-1894), the wife of Humphris Wells, and Eliza Jane Southerland Wilson (1870-1905), whose grave remained unmarked until the 1970s. This 2011 transcription of the Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery is the first in which these two names appear.

Three children of Humphris and Mariah Love Earnest Wells died in childhood. The names of these children were lovingly entered into the Family Bible with their dates of birth and dates of death. Yet, their names were not recorded in the 1960's Reynolds transcription. If these children once had tombstones, they have been gone for many, many years. I have included these children, Elbert Luney Wells (1835-1845), Mary Emaline Wells (1841-1853) and Robert William Felix Wells (1846-1853) in this 2011 transcription of the Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery. I am most certain they are buried here with their parents and their siblings who survived childhood.

Yet, several unsolvable mysteries remain, such as....

- Mary Emaline Earnest (1818-1886). Although there is some dispute, I think it is unlikely she ever married. For much of her adult life, from 1860 through 1880, Emaline Earnest lived with her sister, Mariah Love Earnest Wells (1803-1894). There is no tombstone anywhere in Greene County for Emaline Earnest. I personally believe she is buried in an unmarked grave at Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery. Even Emaline's sister Mariah's grave at Wells-Farnsworth remained unmarked for over seventy years.
- Harriet Reaves Ruble, who died before 1847. There are strong family ties among the Reaves, Ruble and Farnsworth families. Harriet's three young sons were removed from their father's household in 1847, and the children were given into the custody of their grandfather, George Reaves. Three Reaves children are buried at Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery. Harriet's son, Private George D. Ruble (1845-1892), is buried at Wells-Farnsworth. I believe Harriet, too, is buried here in an unmarked grave.

- Private John C. Ruble (1843-1873), a son of Harriet Reaves Ruble, and a brother of Private George D. Ruble (1845-1892). Brothers John and George Ruble served together in the same Civil War regiment. The Union tombstone applications for both brothers state they are buried at Harrison's Cemetery. It is a fact Private George D. Ruble's tombstone is at Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery; and it is a fact there is no tombstone at Harrison's Cemetery for Private John C. Ruble. I believe it is more than plausible his tombstone was once at Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery, but was among those tombstones destroyed before the 1967 cemetery survey by Buford Reynolds.

Therefore, departing from the "norm", I am including all of these persons as "probably buried" in the Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery 2011 transcription.

Perhaps the biggest mystery of all.... Outside of the enclosed cemetery, several hundred feet away in a pasture, are three very old "tomb rocks". These rocks have been there for as long as any living member of the Wells family remembers. Could this area be the remnant of a long ago slave cemetery? Could perhaps Tennessee Farnsworth or members of his family be buried in this pasture?

The Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery is enclosed and beautifully maintained. The long, unbroken continuity by the Wells and Farnsworth families on this farm has preserved this historic burial ground. The last person buried in the cemetery was William Oscar Wells who died in 1955. His son, Eugene Wells, a Purple Heart Veteran of World War II, lives on the farm today. Mr. Wells recently celebrated his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Let us all wish Mr. Wells many, many more birthdays yet to come.

On behalf of the Greene County Genealogical Society, it is my special privilege to publish the latest transcription of the Wells-Farnsworth Cemetery and the research into those families interred in this historic ground.

Persons who may have special interest in this Cemetery may wish to purchase the November 2011 issue of The Greene County Pioneer, a publication by the Genealogical Society. This issue includes the transcriptions of the 1854 Will of Jeremiah Farnsworth and the Civil War letters written by Jacob Earnest Wells. Selected historical documents and other information is also included for Jeremiah Farnsworth's "Man Servant", Tennessee Farnsworth, who had obtained his full freedom by 1860. Inquiries may be made to the T. Elmer Cox Historical and Genealogical Library, 423-638-9866.