

HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

Written by Mrs. O.M. Tillman 1963
Recording Secretary since 1957

For several years (maybe 20) previous to organizing the Providence Cemetery Association the cemetery at Providence Church(or Windsor) had been neglected, except for a few spots kept up by individuals who tried to keep their immediate family graves clean. The fence was down, cattle and hogs ranged there, more than half the cemetery was over-grown with scrub oaks and trees. There was no water nearer than the house of a neighbor.

The custom was, and still is, to have a cemetery work-day twice a year, on the Saturday before the third Sunday in May and October. For many years most families who used the cemetery were represented on work-days and the cemetery was partly kept up: but as time went on, more and more of the families who had buried their dead there moved away and did not get to the work-days. During the same time, and for the same reason the membership of the church there changed. Most of the members of the church were not interested in the cemetery, and do not have any kin burrier there, and never expected to use it themselves.

The state or condition of the cemetery was brought to mind and discussed at each work-day meeting, as more of the cemetery was left to grow up each time because of the lack of labor to do the work. A few of us who are descendants of the founders of Providence Methodist Church and Cemetery began talking of forming an association for the purpose of care of and improvement of conditions of the whole cemetery. Quite a number of us are members of Orange Creek Methodist Church and Campville Methodist Church. We talked but did nothing about it because none of us knew how to begin.

In May, 1957, Rev. Charlie Rogers, who at that time was pastor of both Providence and Campville Methodist Churches attended one of our work-day meetings. After hearing the discussion about an association, he asked that the Orange Creek Church and the Campville Church each send a committee to meet with one that he would appoint at the Providence Church. The groups from Orange Creek and Campville Churches met with the congregation of Providence Church after services there on the night of August 9th 1957. Mrs. Ruby Waters, Mr. L.O. Beckham, and Mrs. O.M. Tillman came from Orange Creek and Mrs. Myra MacCanon from Campville. Mr. Rogers called the meeting to order, and after stating that the purpose of the meeting was to form an association for improvement and care of the cemetery at

Providence Church, he asked Mrs. O.M. Tillman to act as Chairman and Mrs. Marguerite Rogers to act as Secretary. After some discussion it was decided to elect three people would call trustees of the association and a secretary and a treasurer to act with the trustees. Nominations were called for : first for trustees. Several were nominated . They were voted for by secret ballot . L.O. Beckham, Curtis Cannady, and Sales Beckham were elected as trustees of the association. By the same method Mrs. O.M. Tillman was elected secretary and Mrs. Myra MacCanon was elected treasurer.

The new officers met immediately for plans, which were to name the organization "The Providence Cemetery Association : to ask all persons who were interested or had loved ones buried in the cemetery to become members of the Association and to pay \$5.00 per year membership dues to be used deposited in the Bank of Hawthorne and used for the care and improvement of the cemetery. We published a notice in the Gainesville Sun asking all interested parties to attend the next Work-day meet, which would be in October of that year. \$30.00 in dues was received the night the Association was organized.

Before the October Work-day, L.O. Beckham was killed by lightning. The first order of business after the approval by all the members of the organization and plans of the Providence Cemetery Association was to elect a successor for L.O. Beckham. His son J.O. Beckham, was elected to the place. Then Mrs. Bessie Hope stated that she thought there should be five trustees instead of three. After some discussion the members voted to elect two more trustees. All officers to serve one year, to be reelected or replaced at the October Work-day meeting each year. Mrs Hope nominated her brother-in-law, Frank Hope for one trustee, and Seth O. Miller was nominated by Jack Beckham. They were both elected. It was decided that the Executive board, or the five Trustees and the Secretary and Treasurer should meet each First Friday in each month, at the Providence Church to decide ways and means for the work to be done. Any or all members of the association were invited to all meetings. The Board met at the church for a year or more but the road being under construction and rainy weather made travel to the church bad, especially at night. Mrs. Tillman asked them to meet at her home in Campville, where they have met regularly ever since.

By-laws were for the Association were formulated and read to the members at the general or Work-day meeting and were approved by them. Minutes of the Board meetings are kept, and filed. All Members paying dues are given a receipt, signed by either the Secretary or Treasurer. A duplicate

Of the receipt is on file.

Some of the improvements that have been made by the Providence Cemetery Association through the co-operation of its members and friends are: clearing the cemetery of the trees and scrub oaks and brush, putting down a deep well, equipping it with a pump cement-block house and extending a water system over most of the cemetery: planted grass where the brush and scrub oaks were cleared away. The Cement block fence was erected by the association. The association with special help from Frank Hope acquired an additional strip of land on the Windsor side of the cemetery by getting an unused street there closed by the County Commissioners who deeded the cemetery half of the street. On the back side of the cemetery 10½ feet were donated to the cemetery association by Mr. Carl Wilkerson when the fence was being built there. In 1963 The cemetery Association was asked to take over the care of a small private cemetery near the- by. Three nice picnic tables were built at a cost of \$75.00 by the Association for the use of the church and for the semi-annual meetings of the association. The association donated \$100.00 cash and several members and trustees of the association gave their time and labor in building the rest rooms for the Providence Church.

The Trustees of the Providence Cemetery Association at this time are Frank Hope, Curtis Cannady, C.C. Beckham, Mrs. R.L. Snowden, and Jack Oliver. The Treasurer is Mrs. Myra MacCanon. The Secretary is Mrs. OM Tillma