

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK/SITE NAME:** Founders' Memorial Park (aka Old City Cemetery)

**AGENDA ITEM:** II

**OWNER:** City of Houston, Texas

**PC HEARING DATE:** 01-19-06

**APPLICANT:** City of Houston Parks & Recreation Dept.

**HPO FILE NO.:** 05PL06

**LOCATION:** 1217 W. Dallas Street

**DATE ACCEPTED:** Dec-06-05

**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** N/A

**HAHC HEARING DATE:** 12-14-05

**SITE INFORMATION:** Founders' Memorial Park (aka Old City Cemetery), City of Houston, Texas, recorded in the Deed Records of Harris County, Texas, Volume 779, page 431 and Volume 864, page 445, and also known as part of Tract 2, Block 20, Obedience Smith Survey, A-696, Harris County, Texas. The site has been set aside and dedicated for cemetery purposes through historic use (non-active cemetery) and that such property is now occupied by human remains and now maintained as a park of the City of Houston.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:** Founders' Memorial Park was designated by the Texas Historical Commission as a Historic Texas Cemetery on May 10, 2005. Founders' Memorial Park, located at 1217 W. Dallas at Valentine Street in the Fourth Ward, was established as the first cemetery in 1836 at the outskirts of Houston city limits. As early as 1866, the first year a City Directory was published for Houston, the cemetery was being referred to as the "old Methodist Cemetery" either because the Methodist Church used it primarily for the burials of their members or the Methodist Church may have assumed some or all responsibility for its maintenance even though it was a City cemetery. The first Methodist minister to come to Houston was Littleton Fowler, who preached to a large assembly on November 20, 1837, presumably in the Capitol building. The Methodist Church did not erect a building until 1841 until land was donated to them by the Allen Brothers. The Methodist Church later changed its name to the Charles Shearn Memorial Church of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. And as late as 1876, the city cemetery was still referred to as "old Methodist cemetery." However, it was shown as the "city cemetery" on the 1866 and 1869 maps of Houston by W. E. Wood. The City of Houston was once again responsible for maintenance of the cemetery probably after 1876, as it began again to be called thereafter one of the two City Cemeteries. The other city cemetery, referred to as Old City Cemetery II, was as old and was located on Girard Street at Elder (current site of the old Jefferson Davis Hospital, which has been designated as a City of Houston Landmark). The majority of the burials in the City Cemetery on West Dallas Street occurred in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and most burials were discontinued at the cemetery by 1908. In 1928 it was deeded to the Trustees of Congregation Beth Israel, which still owns the cemetery located just to the west and which is adjacent to Founders' Memorial Park. Beth Israel had plans to relocate the graves to other Protestant cemeteries and use it for additional burials for their cemetery. After it was discovered that Houston's most notable citizens were buried there, Congregation Beth Israel decided to deed it back to the City of Houston in 1930. The deed stated that the City of Houston was to "operate and maintain the tract of land as a memorial park and shall beautify and landscape the same in order to make it a fitting memorial park." Old City Cemetery was rededicated and renamed Founders' Memorial Park in 1936 after being restored by San Jacinto Centennial Association. During the Centennial Celebration of Texas in 1936, the State of Texas erected individual monuments commemorating the service of 28 individuals whose graves were located in the cemetery. Since many of the actual gravesites for those individuals were unknown, the monuments were placed at random positions throughout the park. Today, the cemetery comprises 1.2 acres of ground in which early and prominent Houstonians are buried and memorialized, including John Kirby Allen, one of Houston's founders, Texas Governor Mirabeau Lamar's mother, and 22 veterans of the Battle of San Jacinto. Founders' Memorial Park is an integral part of the history of Houston and the 1936 Texas Centennial Celebration. The cemetery is representative of "the pioneer spirit of these early citizens who had the vision" to begin and settle the small village of Houston on the banks of Buffalo Bayou "never dreaming that someday their legacy would become one of the greatest cities in the world."

# CITY OF HOUSTON

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**HISTORY:** THE FOLLOWING IS THE OFFICIAL HISTORIC TEXAS CEMETERY APPLICATION PREPARED BY LYNNA KAY SHUFFIELD, AUGUST 2004, (REVISED WITH JANET WAGNER, OCTOBER 2004) FOR THE ALEXANDER LOVE CHAPTER, NATIONAL SOCIETY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, WHICH WAS ORGANIZED IN HOUSTON, TEXAS ON OCTOBER 16, 1923.

**“COPY OF ORIGINAL APPLICATION INSERTED HERE”**

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH AND INFORMATION PROVIDED BY G. RANDLE PACE, HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, CITY OF HOUSTON, TEXAS (DECEMBER, 2005):

Justin Castanie's Survey is filed in the Deed Records of Harris County, Volume M, Page 571. This survey was completed and filed on April 12, 1848 by Frederick Jacob Rothhaas, acting City Engineer and Surveyor. This plat, located just south of St. Felipe (sic) Road (now West Dallas) and just west of the Houston city limits at that time, shows 31 blocks (each block comprising 10 lots), the Justin Castanie Residence tract, and the City Cemetery, today known as Founders' Memorial Park. In the 1866 City Directory, the first published directory for Houston, the area shown on the survey of Justin Castanie, and also the location of the old City Cemetery, was an area where few streets were yet named. The location where residents lived in this area, being located at the western edge of the original Fourth Ward, are listed in the city directory only as "near old Methodist cemetery" or "near San Felipe Road." As early as 1866 (City Directory of Houston), the old city cemetery was being referred to as the "old Methodist Cemetery" either because the Methodist Church used it primarily for the burials of their members or the Methodist Church may have assumed some or all responsibility for its maintenance even though it was a City cemetery. The first Methodist minister to come to Houston was Littleton Fowler, who preached to a large assembly on November 20, 1837, presumably in the Capitol building. The Methodist Church did not erect a building until 1841 until land was donated to them by the Allen Brothers. The Methodist Church later changed its name to Charles Shearn Memorial Church of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. And as late as 1876, the cemetery was still referred to as "old Methodist Cemetery." However, it was shown as the "city cemetery" on the 1866 and 1869 maps of Houston by W. E. Wood, who is listed in the 1866 City Directory as Civil Engineer with office at corner of Main and Franklin.

The City of Houston once again took responsibility for maintenance of the cemetery from the Methodists shortly after 1876, and it became one of the two City Cemeteries again thereafter. The other City Cemetery, referred to as Old City Cemetery II, was as old and was located on Girard Street at Elder (current site of the old Jefferson Davis Hospital, which has been designated as a City Landmark). According to "Houston: A History and Guide," compiled by the Writer's Program of the Works Projects Administration in 1942, the cemetery is described as "one of the city's oldest." It further states that "a simple iron gate gives entrance through a low, red brick wall. Past rose beds and dwarf cedars, a red sandstone walk ends at Founders' Green, marked by a flagpole. Beyond is a landscaped, flag-stoned court, in the center of which stands a sundial. On a brick wall back of the court is a white marble plaque dedicated to the Texas pioneers buried here. Among the many unmarked graves are scores of yellow fever and cholera victims who lie buried; deaths occurred so swiftly and in such great numbers that bodies were placed into long trenches and covered without ceremony." Eventually, the cemetery was again referred to as the "old City Cemetery" in a *Daily Telegraph* article dated August 18, 1876.

Since the cemetery was so important to the history of Houston and Texas, and because it had been neglected for so long, there was much interest generated about it as the 1936 Texas Centennial approached. According to the "Handbook of Texas" the idea of the Texas Centennial celebration originated with Governor James Stephen Hogg, who had mentioned the idea in a speech he made as early as 1900. In 1923 in Corsicana, Texas during the convention of the Advertising clubs, in association with the Texas Press Association, Hogg's idea was put into motion when the Texas Centennial Survey Committee was established to plan a celebration to commemorate the Texas Revolution, and at the same time, advertise Texas to the world. The Texas Centennial Board of One Hundred was established at a meeting in Austin on February 12, 1924, and in June 1934, a permanent Texas Centennial Commission was appointed. Three cities – Dallas, Houston and San Antonio competed to host the centennial exposition. Dallas was eventually chosen to host it, but many other cities planned activities as well. Houston held three celebrations in 1936: Texas Independence in March, the Battle of San Jacinto in April, and the founding of Houston in August. In conjunction with the battle of San Jacinto

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

celebration, the San Jacinto Centennial Association also did not forget the old City Cemetery in Houston, where veterans of the battle rested in addition to those at the battle site. The cemetery had suffered many years of neglect so San Jacinto Centennial Association, which raised funds by public subscription, began their work to improve the burial ground. According to the *San Jacinto Dispatch*, the San Jacinto Centennial Association included many members of the San Jacinto Chapter, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, including Ima Hogg, Madge W. Hearne, Mrs. T. F. White, Mrs. George Berlet, Mrs. E. T. Harris, Mrs. John Milby and Mrs. I. B. McFarland. They had also anointed one of Houston's most prominent citizens, Jesse Holman Jones, as the honorary president of the San Jacinto Centennial Association. Jones also served as director-general of the Texas Centennial celebration in 1936.

On April 22, 1936 the old City Cemetery on West Dallas (formerly known as San Felipe Road) was re-dedicated with military and civil ceremonies, and rechristened Founders' Memorial Park. The address to the public that day was entitled, "Founders Memorial Park: Rehabilitated and Beautified by San Jacinto Centennial Association, now a sacred shrine where rest the Founders of Houston." The address was delivered by George D. Sears (1888-1959). Sears was a prominent Houstonian as well as a member of the Texas Library and Historical Commission on which he served until 1940. He was an attorney and later General Counsel of the Houston Pipeline Company and Houston Oil Company. He also later practiced law with the well-known firm of Williams, Lee, Hill, Sears and Kennerly (South Texas College of Law Archives). Academically, he is also known for his work in collecting the papers of William Fairfax Gray (1787-1841), another early, prominent attorney in Houston. According to the *Handbook of Texas*, "Gray died in Houston on April 16, 1841 and was buried initially in the old City Cemetery, now Founders' Memorial Park. Upon the death of Gray's wife, his body was removed and interred with her in the Episcopal Cemetery. When Glenwood Cemetery was founded in 1872, "his sons moved their parents' remains there." Over the years, many Houstonians have been reburied in Glenwood Cemetery and elsewhere as their original burial places, such as the two old City Cemeteries, fell into neglect or were abandoned and the sites, such as Old City Cemetery II, were reused. Eventually Andrew Forest Muir republished Gray's famous diary, which chronicles the early history of Houston and Texas. Sears' collection of the Gray Family Papers (1826-1864) was acquired in 1958 by the San Jacinto Museum of History, LaPorte, Texas.

Before the rededication of the cemetery, a marble tablet was placed in the cemetery which reads: "This tablet was placed April 17, 1936 commemorating the rehabilitation of Founders' Memorial Park by the San Jacinto Centennial Association. This park is dedicated to the men and women – many of whom sleep here – who founded and defended the Republic of Texas – May they Rest In Peace. San Jacinto Centennial Association of Houston – L. W. Kemp, Chairman; Founders' Memorial Park Committee: John C. Townes, President; The Executive Committee: Geo. D. Wilson, Chairman, Chester H. Bryan, R. B. Morris, Wm. S. Patton, E. Jeff Barnette, Mrs. I. B. McFarland, Norman H. Beard, Founder of the Association; Herbert Skogland, Landscape Architect."

The first attempt to compile and to document the burials at Founders' Memorial Park from the existing headstones was by Andrew Forest Muir (1916-1969). According to the "Houston Press," Muir, who lived at 946 Courtlandt in Houston Heights at that time, was motivated to secure headstones for his two deceased uncles, Sgt. John G. M. Ewing and Pvt. Hugh McNew. Both men were veterans of the Confederate Army and were buried in the 1860s in the old City Cemetery, but their graves were unmarked. He had to verify with the City of Houston that the graves were in fact unmarked before the U. S. War Department would assist him with the erection of headstones for their graves. This endeavor also motivated him to document all other known burials in the old city cemetery. He copied the "old stones" on June 10, 1933 with assistance of Chester R. Terry and copied the "new stones" (erected in 1936) on April 26 and 28, 1938. Apparently Muir had access to an original plat of the cemetery as he not only transcribed the inscriptions on the old headstones, but he also

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

denoted the grave locations in each Section (1-78). Muir was a notable Houston historian and educator. He privately printed his findings in "Tombstone Inscriptions in Old City Cemetery, 1837-1908, (Founder's Memorial Park) Valentine Street, between West Dallas and Saulnier Avenues, Houston, Texas" in 1938. Muir also noted in his compilation some of the burials that occurred at the cemetery but were subsequently relocated to Glenwood Cemetery on Washington Avenue. The mimeographed copy of his compilation is currently housed at the Clayton Genealogical Library in Houston, and it is perhaps the only remaining copy extant today. Muir's efforts to document the burials in this cemetery, as well as other early cemeteries in Houston, left an invaluable record about Houston's heritage. Not only was Muir able to record over 100 burials in Founders' Memorial Park from the inscriptions found on the remaining tombstones extant at that time, but he was also able to preserve what history remained after many years of neglect and vandalism. Although much of the history originally recorded on the headstones has been lost in the 100 years prior to Muir's documentation effort in 1938, had he not recorded the cemetery when he did, more of Houston's history would have been lost forever. Muir's extensive collection of papers was eventually acquired by the Fondren Library, Woodson Research Center, Rice University where it is housed today.

During the Texas Centennial in 1936, the gravesites of 28 notable Houstonians, Texans and Veterans of the 1836 Battle of San Jacinto were designated and monuments were erected in their honor. Those 1936 monuments found in Muir's compilation were called "new stones." The notable Houstonians and Texans honored with 1936 Centennial markers were: John Kirby Allen, Mrs. Rebecca Lamar, John W. Moore, John R. Reid, David Porter Richardson and Henry Livingston Thompson. According to "History of Shearn Church," John K. Allen, who died in 1838, was buried in the old City Cemetery, beside his friend, Major James Collinworth. Other members of the Allen family are buried there according to Muir's compilations, including Harvey H. Allen. His headstone read as follows:

"Harvey H. Allen – 2<sup>nd</sup> Chief Justice, Harris County – First R. R. (Railroad) Commissioner, State of Texas – Born Brooklyn N.Y. Nov. 28, 1819 – Died Houston, Texas Apr. 22, 1863"

The veterans honored with 1936 Centennial markers were: Jethro Russell Bancroft, Robert Barr, Moses W. Brigham, John Cheevers, James Collinworth, William Daniel Durham, Amos B. Edson, Joseph Ehlinger, William Gammell, David Grieves, Harvey Homan, Archibald S. Lewis, Jacob Maybee, Robert W. Montgomery (listed on the muster role as M. Montgomery but also known as McGready Montgomery), Major Isaac N. Moreland, Eli Noland (shown as Wesley W. Noland on muster role), John Richardson, Fielding G. Secrest, William S. Stillwell, William C. Swearingen, John Viven and Adjutant General John Austin Wharton. The *Atlas* of the Texas Historical Commission includes 1936 Centennial marker records for all those listed previously except Jacob Maybee and John Austin Wharton.

According to the application for the designation of Founders' Memorial Park as a Historic Texas Cemetery, it was stated that the Texas Centennial records indicate that there were an additional twelve veterans of the Battle of San Jacinto buried in unmarked graves there, which were NOT provided with a 1936 Centennial Monument. However, one veteran, Andrew May Clopper, has been identified from records copied by Muir in 1933. Another veteran, Henry H. Tierwester, is mentioned in an 1873 "The Age" newspaper article as having been buried there. The headstone copied by Muir read as follows:

"A. M. Clopper, A Texas Pioneer of 1822; & Soldier of '36, Born in Pa. 1791. Died in Christ Sept. 16, 1853."

In the newspaper, "The Age" (Houston), dated Monday, June 23, 1873 on page 3, the article discusses the neglected state of the old City Cemetery and also states: "In the course of our rambles we described the grave of Henry Thuewachter (sic) Tierwester, who, at the battle of San Jacinto, received a bullet through his powder

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

horn, which he ever after carried with him till the day of his death.” According to the website of the San Jacinto Museum of History, there is a biography of Henry Tierwester which states: “He died in Houston in 1859. His widow (Phillipine Pugh) signed her will July 25, 1860, and it was opened for probate December 8, 1860. In the will she requested that she be buried by the side of her deceased husband and left funds for a fence to be placed around their graves.” It also states that: “The graves of Mr. and Mrs. Tierwester are now lost.” According to “*The Age*,” the graves are located in old City Cemetery, now Founders’ Memorial Park. Although it is not known how the Centennial Commission knew that there were 12 additional graves of veterans in the old city cemetery that were unmarked, it is also highly possible that there are some others in addition to these 12 veterans whose original headstones were either lost to vandalism, the graves were never marked with a headstone, or the headstones may have sunk into the soft clay. The “*Daily Telegraph*” (Houston), Friday, August 18, 1876 also discusses the neglected cemetery and states: “To the left of the eastern entrance there stands a vault, made to contain about thirty coffins. Many of the apertures in this are open . . . coffins have been broken to pieces. . .” Today, the mausoleum no longer stands on the grounds of the cemetery.

Buried also in the cemetery, according to Muir’s records, was Hugh McCrory. While he was not a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto, he arrived on July 4, 1836 at Independence too late to participate in the war for independence. According to the “*Handbook of Texas*,” General Felix Huston (1800-1857), who was a propagandist for the revolution, and who raised troops and money throughout Kentucky and Mississippi, “incurred a personal debt of \$40,000 raising and equipping soldiers for service in Texas. He left Natchez on May 5, 1836, with Rezin P. Bowie, and an estimated 500 to 700 volunteers for the Texas army, marched across Louisiana, arriving at army headquarters on July 4.” McCrory’s headstone copied by Muir reads:

“Hugh McCrory - Died Sept. 13, 1837 Aged 27 years, a Native of Kentucky - Came to Texas as a volunteer soldier in Gen. Felix Huston’s command in the Spring of 1836.”

Next to the headstone for Hugh McCrory in Founders’ Memorial Park, there is another monument significant in Texas history for Mary Smith McCrory Jones, his wife. That monument copied by Muir read as follows:

“Sacred to the memory of Mary Smith McCrory, Jones – Wife of Hugh McCrory – and late widow of Anson Jones – the last President of the Republic of Texas – Born in Arkansas 1819 – Died in Houston Texas Dec. 31, 1907 – INTERRED IN GLENWOOD”

Apparently a monument was placed here also in 1907 for the death of Mary McCrory Jones, although she was buried in Glenwood Cemetery in Houston next to her second husband, Anson Jones, who had died in Houston on January 9, 1858, and was buried also in Glenwood Cemetery where a 1936 Centennial monument was erected in his honor. The second monument for Mary McCrory Jones was placed in Old City Cemetery due to her connection with her first husband, Hugh McCrory, who was buried there. However, there was another reason for the erection of the duplicate monument in the old City Cemetery. According to Muir’s compilations, Mary’s mother, her mother’s second husband, and some of Mary’s siblings were also buried in Old City Cemetery adjacent to the grave of Hugh McCrory. The headstone for Mary’s mother copied by Muir read as follows:

“Our Beloved Mother – Mrs. Sally Woodruff – Born in West Tennessee, Nov. 10, 1800 – Came to Texas in 1833 – Died June 21, 1845” and “John Woodruff – Born in Kentucky Dec. 25, 1790 – Came to Texas in 1831 – Died in Fort Bend Co. TX. Mar. 27, 1847.”

According to the “*Handbook of Texas*” Mary Smith McCrory Jones was the daughter of John McCutcheon Smith and Sarah “Sallie” Pevehouse. After J. M. Smith died in 1833 in Lawrence County, Arkansas Territory,

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

his wife and her five children moved to Texas and settled in Brazoria County. There Sarah Smith married her second husband, John Woodruff, who eventually moved to Houston in December 1836. It was there that Mary Smith married Hugh McCrory on July 23, 1837, but he died suddenly seven weeks later. Mary Smith McCrory relocated to Austin where she married on May 17, 1840 to Anson Jones, a prominent doctor. According to the San Jacinto Museum website (biographies), Dr. Anson Jones had fought in the ranks during the Battle of San Jacinto “until summoned to care for the wounded. He is shown on the official San Jacinto roll as Surgeon of the Second Regiment of Texas Volunteers.” Later Anson Jones would be elected President of the Republic of Texas in 1844. Jones committed suicide after financial devastation on January 9, 1858 and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery, Houston, Texas. Mary McCrory Jones strived in later life to rectify what “she considered gross misrepresentations of her husband’s role during the annexation controversy.” She tried, unsuccessfully, to produce a favorable biography of Anson Jones and to publish his book, “Republic of Texas.” She also served, largely in a symbolic role, “as the first president of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas from 1891 through 1907.”

Although the “History of Shearn Church” is mute on the subject of the “old Methodist Cemetery,” evidence of the old city cemetery’s early affiliation with or use by the Methodist Church is documented by the burial of many prominent members of that church, including Andrew Crawford, whose headstone read as follows:

“Andrew Crawford – Born June 1, 1816 – Died Mar. 29, 1867”

Also buried next to Crawford are several members of his wife’s family too - the McElroys - who were original settlers of Texas. Crawford’s mother-in-law was Almyra McElroy Powell. Her headstone copied by Muir read as follows:

“Our Mother – Almyra Powell – Born May 8, 1797 - Died Nov. 20, 1839”

According to the City of Houston Landmark Application for the “Sarah Francelia Bell Home, Houston, Texas,” Sarah Francelia McElroy was married first in Houston to Andrew Crawford, and secondly to John W. Bell in Houston as well. Sarah McElroy was born in 1825 in Hartford, Connecticut, and came to Texas with her four siblings and parents, Philip and Almyra McElroy, in 1832, first settling on the Colorado River, eight miles below San Felipe de Austin. This early Texas pioneer family was granted One League (4,428.4 acres) on October 30, 1832 in Travis County. According to the “Handbook of Texas,” Stephen F. Austin founded San Felipe de Austin, located on the west bank of the Brazos River at the Old San Antonio Road crossing. One of the earliest newspapers in Texas, the *Texas Gazette*, began publication there in 1829 which provided information on the McElroy family. Sarah’s father, Philip McElroy, died in 1835 near San Felipe de Austin, and her mother, Almyra, his widow, and all of her children left their possessions behind, and traveled on horseback to the banks of the Sabine River for safety when on March 30, 1836, the town was burned to keep it from falling into the hands of the advancing Mexican army. The flight eastward was known as the “Runaway Scrape.” According to a biography of Sarah’s brother, Charles S. McElroy, which was published in the “History of Fort Bend County,” the family left the Sabine River, and after the Battle of San Jacinto, then came to Harrisburg, and from there to Houston in 1837, where they lived “in the first house built there.” “The house was double log cabins, situated at the foot of what is now Main Street, on Buffalo Bayou, and if still standing would be in the middle of the street.”

After the victory at San Jacinto, many returned to San Felipe, as did Almyra McElroy. On February 4, 1838 as widow of Philip McElroy, she was granted one labor of land. She was married for a second time shortly thereafter to George W. Powell, another early Texas pioneer, who had been granted a 1/3 League in July 1836, for being a “Citizen of the Republic.” Together, they had a son, named George P. Powell. Almyra McElroy

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

Powell died shortly thereafter on November 20, 1839 and was buried in the “old City Cemetery” (Founders’ Memorial Park) in Houston. Also buried there and also documented by Muir were two other children of Almyra McElroy Powell, who had preceded her in death. Those children were: Mary Almyra McElroy and Napoleon B. McElroy, both of whom had died as young children and who were also siblings of Sarah McElroy Crawford. Their headstones are evidence of some of the earliest burials in the cemetery and they read as follows:

“Our Sister – Mary Almyra McElroy – Born Dec. 9, 1819 – Died July 7, 1837” and “Our Brother – Napoleon B. McElroy – Born June 21, 1832 (Texas) – Died Nov. 21, 1839”

Sarah McElroy married Andrew Crawford in the Methodist Church on September 19, 1844, which was one of the very, first marriages performed in that “new” church. Andrew Crawford, who was a tailor and entrepreneur, was a charter member of the Methodist Church, according to the “History of Shearn Church” (Charles Shearn Memorial Church of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the successor of the first Methodist Church in Houston). Sarah McElroy was one of the first members of the Methodist Church as well. Andrew Crawford, a prominent Houstonian, died in 1867 during a yellow fever epidemic. Andrew J. Burke was the executor of his will. According to Muir’s compilations, five of the children of A. J. Burke died at a very early age between 1843 and 1861 and are also buried in the old City Cemetery.

Charles Shearn, namesake of Shearn Church, assisted in the inventory of Andrew Crawford’s estate. According to the “Handbook of Texas,” Charles Shearn (1794-1871) immigrated to Texas in 1834. The Texas Revolution induced him to join the Revolutionary Army. He served with Philip Dimmitt's command of volunteers at La Bahía, where he signed the Goliad Declaration of Independence in 1835. He and his son, John Shearn, were captured by Mexican forces under José de Urrea but were subsequently released as British citizens. Shearn moved his family in 1837 to Houston, where he was involved in mercantile operations, served on the city council as an overseer of the San Felipe Road from Houston to Piney Point, and held the post of Harris County chief justice for six years. After the death of his first wife, Mary (Pode) Shearn, he married Ann Maria Caldwell Waltmon in 1844. He was the financial agent of the *Texas Christian Advocate* (later the *United Methodist Reporter*) from 1852 to 1855 and 1864 to 1865. He also was an original trustee of the Houston Scientific Institute, incorporated on November 10, 1866, ‘for the increase and diffusion of knowledge.’ Shearn died on November 21, 1871.” He and his two wives were most likely buried in the Old Methodist Cemetery as were many of his fellow Methodists, including his friend, Andrew Crawford. According to “History of Shearn Church,” when the new church was erected in 1866, it was named Charles Shearn Memorial Church of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and called simply Shearn Church. Charles Shearn had been a Steward of the Methodist Church since its founding in Houston in 1841. He had not only given a lifetime of devotion to his church, but he also had generously supported the church financially, giving \$2,000 toward its construction so that it might be freed from debt before his death. He also gave freely of his time when the epidemics visited Houston, and those were frequent. He devoted his whole time to the visitation of the sick as well as the needs of the poor. Even when another “new” church building was proposed in 1881, it was again affirmed and “Resolved, That the name of the new church be, The Charles Shearn Memorial Church of the Methodist Episcopal, South,’ and this we accord as an act expressive of the high regard and affection in which our glorified brother is held by the membership.” The Shearn Church name continued to be used until 1910, until the current building was constructed as a “united” Methodist congregation at 1320 Main Street, after which it was renamed First United Methodist Church.

The yellow fever epidemic of 1867, which took the life of Andrew Crawford, also claimed many other lives of Houstonians, including some prominent members, Teachers and Sunday School scholars of the Methodist Church. According to “History of Shearn Church,” the epidemic claimed their Pastor, Rev. William Rees, and his wife, Mrs. Melissa (Rabb) Rees, whose funerals were the first in their new church, which had been erected



# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

in 1866. Others members who died included: Rev. James McLeod, Dr. J. L. Bryan, Hon. I. C. Spence, Mrs. Louisa Bering, Miss Candac Adams, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Simms, Miss Mary Morris, Miss Mary Ann Cross, Miss Texas DeChaumes, Miss Dora DeChaumes, Miss Belle Dawson, Master Ralph Culbertson, Master John L. Diamond, and Master Francis Carter. It is very likely that these Methodist members would have been buried in Old City Cemetery, then known as Old Methodist Cemetery. It was even likely that some if not all were buried in a mass grave, which was the burial practice at that time when large numbers of deaths occurred from yellow fever.

Because Sarah Crawford's mother and siblings were buried in old City Cemetery, because many prominent citizens were buried there, and because many relatives of the members of the Methodist Church were buried there as well, that would most likely have been the driving force for the Methodist Church to take over the responsibility of the maintenance of the old City Cemetery, when it became neglected by the City of Houston. After all, many influential Houstonians, including the McElroys, the Crawfords and the Burkes were Charter members of the Methodist Church, thus placed in a position in the community to have influenced such action by the Methodist Church. And many prominent Methodists, including Andrew Crawford, was buried there in 1867, which by that time was known as the "old Methodist Cemetery." After Andrew Crawford died, his widow, Sarah McElroy Crawford, is found living with her sister, Elizabeth Butt and her husband, F. N. Butt (1870 Census of Harris County). According to the "History of Shearn Church," Mrs. Butt was a charter member of Shearn's "Ladies' Aid Society," organized in 1876, as was her sister, Sarah McElroy Crawford.

At her death in 1914 in Houston, Texas, Sarah Francelia (McElroy) Crawford Bell bequeathed the bulk of her sizeable estate for the construction and the endowment of a home for indigent widows of Methodist ministers. The Sarah Francelia Bell Home was eventually built in 1922 at 1111 Rosalie Street (City of Houston Landmark) by the Methodist Church, which managed and administered the Trust. The Trust continued to operate the home at that location until 1951 after which the site was sold. Today the building has been restored and is now used as an office. Not only is the Methodist Trust still providing living assistance to elderly women at different locations in Texas today, but the Trustees recognize that Mrs. Bell's bequest was instrumental in initially helping the Methodist Hospital itself to be established and later develop into one of the best medical facilities in the world.

Further evidence of the cemetery's affiliation with the Methodist Church is recorded on the headstone of Mrs. Susan Thwing. The headstone copied by Muir read as follows:

"Mrs. Susan Thwing – Wife of Rev. Ed. F. Thwing of the Texas Annual Conference – Died August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1856, Aged 27 years 12 days – We part, but not forever."

According to the "General Minutes of the Mississippi Methodist Conference" found in the Historical Archives at Millsaps College, Rev. Edward Francis Thwing (1812-1878), a native of South Carolina, was a Methodist Minister Circuit Rider, who attended the 1846 Mississippi Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, representing the Monroe District (Washita). In 1847 he again was representing the Monroe District (Columbia) at the conference where he was admitted "into full connection and elected to deacon orders." According to *Ancestry.com* website, he had returned to his native South Carolina, where in Oconee County, he was a circuit preacher for Hopewell Methodist Church in 1860. He eventually returned to Texas where he died on February 16, 1878 in Giddings, Lee County.

Thanks to the efforts of the website called, "*Find A Grave*," most of the known burials as well as photographs of some of the headstones and markers placed at the "old City Cemetery," now known as Founders' Memorial Park, have been included there. Several local historians and genealogists have entered the information on the

# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

website, some of which is the result of their own investigations, but also as a result of the invaluable records compiled by Andrew Forest Muir. The website can be found at: <http://www.findagrave.com>.

San Felipe Road, originally the thoroughfare which ran on the north side of old City Cemetery and the original road by which the cemetery was accessed from Houston, actually ran from Harrisburg to San Felipe de Austin. This road was shown on Justin Castanie's Survey, filed on April 12, 1848 by Frederick Jacob Rothhaas, acting City Engineer and Surveyor. The Castanie plat shows the location of "City Cemetery" as well as a road just to the north of it, called St. Felipe (sic) Road. Today this road in Houston has been renamed and is now known as West Dallas Street.

Site markers have been placed also in Travis County by the Texas Historical Commission about the early roads of Texas leading to San Felipe de Austin, which was the "first Anglo-American capital of Texas. It came into being on July 26, 1828, as capital of the Austin Colony, by decree of the Mexican government. Father of Texas, Stephen F. Austin, had begun under the 1821 grant from Mexico the settlement of more than 1,000 families. The original colony ran from the coast on the south to the old San Antonio Road on the north, and from the Lavaca River on the west to the San Jacinto River on the east. In this first American town in Texas lived Austin, William Barret Travis, Sam Houston, David G. Burnet and Jane Long. All settlers crossed its threshold for land grants. After the organization of other colonies, this continued to be the recognized center of Texas. It was capital of the Mexican Department of Brazos, site of the Conventions of 1832 and 1833 and the Consultation of 1835 where Texans aired grievances and tried to reach understanding with Mexico. The provisional government created with Henry Smith as governor in 1835 functioned here until it gave way to the convention declaring Texas independent of Mexico on March 2, 1836."

"During the mid-1820s, when Stephen F. Austin was founding San Felipe de Austin, the only roads in the area were wagon ruts of beaten trails marked by notched trees. Within a decade, however, the village of San Felipe . . . had become a hub from which 8 or more roads projected. Many of these were small, intra-colony routes, but the main trails extended to major towns or joined "highways," such as the San Antonio Road (El Camino Real). A main route, which passed through San Felipe, was the Atascosita Road, connecting Goliad with the United States. It took its name from Atascosa (Spanish for "boggy") Spring near Liberty, which once was its main terminus. The Gotier Trace, another travel artery, was laid out about 1830 by pioneer James Gotier. It joined the northern and southern parts of Austin's colony and was used for decades. The San Felipe Road proper, which ran to Harrisburg, transported goods inland from the Gulf Coast. Even the main thoroughfares, however, were dusty trails in the summer and impassable quagmires in the winter, often flooded by knee-deep water." In 1936 during the Texas Centennial Celebration, a granite marker was placed at the entrance to Founders' Memorial Park to commemorate old San Felipe Road. The marker was erected by the Lady Washington Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, which was established in Houston on November 14, 1899. The marker reads as follows:

"1836 – 1936" – Old San Felipe Road – Erected by Lady Washington Chapter, D. A. R."

While other veterans of the Battle of San Jacinto are buried in the old City Cemetery, now known as Founders' Memorial Park, and while there is no marker there associated with them specifically, they are "included" in the plaque honoring all the early Texas pioneers buried there. According to the "Handbook of Texas," the most significant monument to commemorate the Battle of San Jacinto as well as the birth of Texas began to be constructed in 1936 during the Texas Centennial. That monument is the San Jacinto Monument, located at the site of the Battle of San Jacinto in LaPorte, Texas, near Houston. The monument was designed by the notable and prolific Houston architect, Alfred C. Finn, from a design suggested by Jesse Holman Jones. The monument, which stands 570 feet tall crowned by a thirty-four-foot star, which symbolizes the "lone star" of

# CITY OF HOUSTON

**Archaeological & Historical Commission**

**Planning and Development Department**

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Texas, was constructed between 1936 and 1939 to commemorate the heroes of the Battle of San Jacinto and all other persons who helped win the independence of Texas. Jesse H. Jones, Chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, honorary president of the San Jacinto Centennial Association and director-general of the Texas Centennial Celebration in 1936, sealed the cornerstone of the San Jacinto Monument in April, 1937, the tallest masonry monument in the United States.

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

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# CITY OF HOUSTON

## Archaeological & Historical Commission

## Planning and Development Department

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# CITY OF HOUSTON

**Archaeological & Historical Commission**

**Planning and Development Department**

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# CITY OF HOUSTON

**Archaeological & Historical Commission**

**Planning and Development Department**

**APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION:**

**Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Protected Landmark.**

(a) The HAHC and the commission, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider three or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the Protected Landmark designation. If the HAHC reviews an application for designation of a Protected Landmark initiated after the designation of the Landmark, the HAHC shall review the basis for its initial recommendation for designation and may recommend designation of the landmark as a protected landmark unless the property owner elects to designate and if the landmark has met at least (3) three of the criteria of Section 33-224 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO) at the time of its designation or, based upon additional information considered by the HAHC, the landmark then meets at least (3) three of criteria of Section 33-224 of the HPO, as follows:

**S NA S - satisfies D - does not satisfy NA - not applicable**

- (1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation;
- (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;
- (3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;
- (4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;
- (5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;
- (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
- (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

**OR**

- The property was constructed before 1905;

**OR**

- The property was listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a “contributing structure” in an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places;

**OR**

- The property was designated as a State of Texas Recorded Texas Historical Landmark.

**HAHC PUBLIC HEARING: NO OPPOSITION**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommends that the Houston Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommends to City Council the Protected Landmark Designation of Founders' Memorial Park at 1217 W. Dallas Street.



SITE LOCATION MAP  
FOUNDER'S MEMORIAL PARK  
1217 W. DALLAS STREET  
NOT TO SCALE