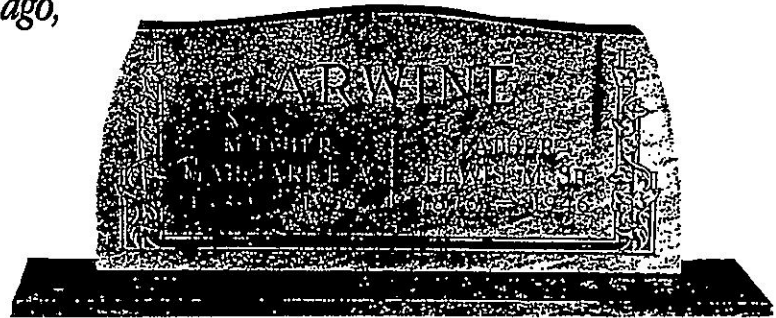


A Family Legacy

Deeded to Tarrant County over a century ago, Hurst's oldest cemetery recalls the city's pioneer past.



"I love this oak tree. When I die I want to be buried here," said 7-year-old Katie Arwine. The year was 1878, and Katie was out for a walk with her father and her brothers and sisters on land owned by her parents, Julia and Daniel Arwine.

Katie wasn't sick. No one knew why she mentioned dying, but two weeks later she became ill and died. Her wish started a chain reaction that has spanned one century and continues into a second.

Katie's mother and father buried her on the hilltop shaded by her favorite tree. She was the first person buried in what was later to become Arwine Cemetery, located on the eastern edge of Hurst near what is now the Village Square Shopping Center.

When Katie died, there were no churches, schools or cemeteries in the area. Her death changed that. Katie's father was a U.S. marshal and a substantial Tarrant County landowner. On June 23, 1879, Katie's parents deeded six acres surrounding her grave to Tarrant County for cemetery, church and school purposes.

Those six acres became home for a 600-plot cemetery and Red Sulphur Spring School. For many years the structure was the only schoolhouse in the area and on Sunday was the community church. Supported by many pioneer families, the school was first named for the spring at the foot of the hill, but later renamed Arwine School because of the land donation.

Daniel and Julia Arwine and their five older children had emigrated from Tennessee in 1865 and settled on land west of what is known now as Morrisdale Estates. Civic-minded and hospitable, they opened their home to many friends and relatives who moved to the area. Until 1912, Hurst was known as Arwine Settlement.

Today the six acres deeded by Daniel and Julia Arwine are used only as the cemetery, a quiet nugget of history open to anyone who chooses to visit. Some

cemetery vandalism exists, but thanks to a bright security light and an active cemetery association, vandalism isn't a big problem.

Katie's favorite tree is believed to stand among the oaks that partially surround the cemetery, but Katie's grave has no marker. The oldest grave bearing a legible marker is that of Minnie Max Adams who died in 1898. Walking through the cemetery, one sees headstones of Confederate soldiers and many settlers: Andersons, Arwines, Hackneys, Hursts, Robertsons, Souders, Sextons and others. Birth and death dates are faded now, but Daniel and Julia Arwine's headstone stands intact, as do those of others who died long ago. Today there aren't many open spaces in Arwine Cemetery, but some gravesites remain reserved for descendants of the area's first families.

In 1878, an isolated hilltop covered with oak trees was a place so loved by a 7-year-old girl she wanted to be buried there. Now, 107 years later, Arwine Cemetery is a peaceful place to meditate, perhaps to believe it is possible to commune with spirits of those gone before, and to be proud of this pocket of history.

—Lu Spurlock ■



Many of the markings on the tombstones in Arwine Cemetery have become almost illegible over a century's time.

Editor's Note: Some of the information for this article was gathered from Georgia Ward, niece of Katie Arwine, as told to her mother, Hattie Arwine Anderson. Hattie was Katie's older sister.