

The New Hope Cemetery at Y-12

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Portal 5 or East Portal, for many years one of the main entrances to the Y-12 National Security Complex, is located across East Portal Road from the New Hope Cemetery. This cemetery is typical of some 70 other family or community cemeteries located on the nearly 60,000 acres that made up the original Clinton Engineer Works and now comprises the Oak Ridge Reservation and the city of Oak Ridge.

According to ***Inscriptions from Old Cemeteries of the Oak Ridge (Manhattan Project) Area, Anderson and Roane Counties, Tennessee***, compiled by Marjorie P. Parsley in 1985, there were 217 known people buried in the New Hope Cemetery at that time. Six more have been added since. Two within the past few weeks. The latest, Donald E. Raby, was buried on December 29, 2016.

Don Raby has a long history with the New Hope community and the New Hope Cemetery. Not long before he passed away, he asked me to take him to the New Hope Cemetery. I knew at the time that Don was suffering with prostate cancer and assumed he wanted to locate a burial plot.

These cemeteries are still active cemeteries and if you have family buried in them, you may also be buried there. Recently I received a call from a gentleman who wanted to know if he could bring some of his relatives from another cemetery and put them in the New Hope Cemetery. Being the first time I had been asked that questions, I indicated I would have to check and see. I did inquire and was told it could be done.

Don chose a spot beside "Corpl. Samuel Raby, Co. D, 3 Tenn. Inf.," who was Don's great, great grandfather. Over the past few years, Don has visited both the New Hope Cemetery and the Mount Vernon Cemetery, located just south and across the top of Chestnut Ridge from Y-12. He enjoyed researching the Raby family history and their connections to the New Hope and Mount Vernon communities.

When Don learned that there were photographs available of all the structures in the Oak Ridge area taken over by the Manhattan Project's Clinton Engineer Works (first named the Kingston Demolition Range, the name Don chose for his research project), he set to work to make them available to descendants of the families. Y-12 provided \$1,000 to fund his research and now anyone can obtain copies of the original homes that were in this area in 1942.

So, much as any other cemeteries, these cemeteries on the Oak Ridge Reservation are being maintained as active cemeteries. One thing to keep in mind, however, there is limited space in most of them. I know of at least one other person who has requested to be buried in the New Hope Cemetery.

Another cemetery close to the entrance of Y-12 is the Jackson Cemetery. It is located south of East Portal Road just across from the New Hope Center. It is a small family plot with only four individuals buried there. Simon Jackson, his wife, sister and mother.

This cemetery is located near where the George Anderson home was located before the Manhattan Project. George visited this location a few years ago, before the New Hope Center was built. He and I stood on the Jackson Cemetery ground and he pointed out where his house stood and several other features of the landscape.

If you notice the Jackson Cemetery is now located on a small knoll. George indicated the area around the cemetery used to be at the same elevation, but had obviously had much of the topsoil removed.

George told of being in the Army during World War II and not knowing that his home had been taken for the Manhattan Project until he returned from the war and could not get back to his house. Of course, it was gone by then. I have photographs taken in 1942 when the 300 acres George's family owned was taken for the Manhattan Project. At George's last visit to the area, in 2005, I pointed out where the New Hope Center was going to be built and he said, "Why, that is right where my corn field was located."

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George's sister thought the land was worth more than the government was offering them, so she took several photos and the family went to court to try and get more money for their farm. They did not succeed in getting any more money, but I sure got a really good set of photographs of this area before the Manhattan Project. We have used these photos extensively in documenting our history.

Don Raby also identified for us the earliest marked grave in the New Hope Cemetery as being Rosannah Johnson who was born March 25, 1819, and died April 25, 1878. Don pointed this out to me on May 13, 2014, while we were on one of his visits to the cemetery.

Don attended the New Hope Cemetery "dedication" on October 5, 2005, when renovations were completed and a rededication ceremony held as part of Y-12's commitment to preserving the history of the site. Volunteers and employees participated in landscaping the area, installing a new rustic wooden fence and informational kiosk describing the history of the cemetery. The headstones were also cleaned at that time. The cemetery has continued to be well maintained since.

"New Hope Cemetery is one of the many indications of history that goes beyond the bricks and mortar of Y-12," said Steve Liedle, deputy manager of Y-12 at the time. David Bradshaw, Mayor of Oak Ridge at the time said, "Y-12 never could have happened without these families. The security of our nation and world stands on the shoulders of the families here today and their ancestors," speaking of those individuals buried in the New Hope Cemetery and other such cemeteries in the area.

The earliest marked grave in Oak Ridge is Polly Rankin, 1778 – 11/16/1811. She is buried in the Scott Cemetery (also known as the Cabbage Cemetery), located south of the Oak Ridge Turnpike at the Gatehouse west of Westover Drive.

For a list of people known to be buried in the 70 historical cemeteries on the Oak Ridge Reservation and within the city of Oak Ridge, the Oak Ridge Public Library has provided the following online reference: <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/department/Library/Oak-Ridge-Room/Oak-Ridge-Cemeteries>

It was an honor to attend the burial of Donald E. Raby today and experience both the 21-gun military salute and the clear sound of Taps in the wind blowing hard from the west. Y-12 supported this burial with the same pride as has come to be expected because of the heritage of the Y-12 mission over the years. The Pall Bearers were Y-12 Security Police Officers.

Don's service in the Navy and his dedication to our history made the historic old New Hope Cemetery shine in the memory of the Raby family and friends today. Those impressions will remain long with us. Don Raby would have been proud of this special treatment and his life was deserving of our admiration.

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Y-12 National Security Complex Security Police Officers serve as Pall Bearers for Don Raby's burial in the New Hope Cemetery (Photo by Mike Watkins, Y-12 Photography)



21-gun salute ceremony for Don Raby, a U. S. Navy veteran (Photo by Mike Watkins, Y-12 Photography)

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An American flag is presented to the family (Photo by Mike Watkins, Y-12 Photography)