

The Forgotten Revolutionary War Heroes of the Oak Ridge Reservation

part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column during the week of 1/25/2021)

My friends Fred Eiler and Dennis Eggert have shared their research into the Revolutionary soldiers who are known to be buried in cemeteries located within the city limits of Oak Ridge. Dennis has compiled the below information for Historically Speaking. I am pleased to bring this information to you readers. I also hope we can properly recognize these Revolutionary War veterans with at least one historical marker.

I have long been interested in recognizing these individuals but did not have the needed information to confirm the location of the burials. Thanks to Dennis for compiling the results of much research. Enjoy the conclusion of Dennis' report on these soldiers and their resting places.

VI Private Joseph England (1762-1834)

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During the Revolutionary War, Private Joseph England served four tours in the North Carolina Militia ranging from three months to four months each. On his first tour, he pursued Tories along the Yadkin Valley in North Carolina. On his third tour, he engaged the enemy at the Battle of Hanging Rock in South Carolina.

Joseph England is another enigma. Very little is known about where he lived. After his wife died, he moved to Anderson County in 1827 with his sons. After moving here, he lived with his son Alfred somewhere within District 8 of Anderson County which stretched all the way from the west to the east areas of the Oak Ridge Reservation. The 1830 census revealed that Alfred had 10 individuals living with him, and it is believed that his father Joseph was one of them. A final pension payment voucher places Joseph England's death on 13 November 1834. Research by the Daughters of The American Revolution reveals that Joseph England's final resting place is in the Worthington Cemetery. As with all other Oak Ridge Revolutionary War veterans buried here, there is no headstone to mark his exact grave.

VII Drummer Boy William Cross (1761 or 62 –1844)

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, William came to Sullivan County, North Carolina, (now Tennessee) in 1776 with his two older brothers Elijah and Zachariah. Here, all three volunteered to serve in the North Carolina Militia. William entered military service in 1776 at the tender age of 14 or 15 as a drummer boy. Then in 1781, he again enlisted on a second tour "guarding the frontier against British, Tories, and Indians."

In 1818, William moved from Knox County to Anderson County where he bought 174 acres along the East Fork Poplar Creek at the Pine Ridge gap that now separates the City of Oak Ridge from the Y-12 National Security Complex. Here, William settled and became the patriarch of a large multi-generational family. When William Cross died in 1844, his estate was divided among eleven heirs.

Some Cross family genealogical records identify the birth of a Britain Cross in 1776 whom some believe to be another son of William Cross. However, Britain's birth predates the other William Cross siblings by twenty-five years and more.

Lingering questions remain. Considering William Cross' young age in 1776, when Britain was born, was he and Britain related? Or, were two separate Cross families living here? Is William Cross buried in the

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Britain Cross family cemetery or somewhere else closer to his farm at the Pine Ridge gap? The search for answers to these questions remains elusive.

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Regardless, William Cross lived within the Oak Ridge Reservation and is now reverently honored with a marker in the prominent Britain Cross historic Family Cemetery. This cemetery is located on Hwy 95 just beyond the Oak Ridge city limits toward Clinton.

VIII Private James Scarbrough 1755- 1809

IX Patriot William Scarbrough 1753-1830

Originally from Virginia, the Scarbrough brothers served the cause of independence. Patriot William leased his horse and wagon team to the Continental Army while James served in the Virginia Militia during Lord Dunmore's War. In 1774, hostilities erupted over Native American hunting rights in western Virginia between the settlers and the Shawnee and Mingo Nations. Against the will of the British Crown, Virginia Colonial Governor Lord Dunmore raised an armed militia to protect these settlers. Ultimately, the Native Americans were defeated at the Battle of Point Pleasant, Virginia, and forced to sign a treaty. This was the first time Americans exerted their will. The Battle of Point Pleasant is accepted by some patriotic organizations as the first battle of the Revolutionary War.

In 1803, the Scarbroughs settled here when James bought 600 acres of land in the Bethel Valley region along the Clinch River. Later, he purchased an additional 400 acres of land. James' brother, Patriot William, bought parcels of land from him. A small rural community was then established. This rural community went through many changes. First known as Livewell (Lick Skillet from another source), it changed to Delray, next to Scarbroughtown, then to Scarbrough, and now finally Scarboro. Here, James and William built three mills along Reeds Branch, a reliable stream that flowed through the community. After damming this creek, a sluice was built that channeled water to a grist mill, a sawmill, a cording machine, and a flour mill.

In addition to the mills, James owned and operated an "ordinary" (an inn), and the first ferry in Anderson County that crossed the Clinch River located where the old dismantled Solway Bridge once stood. As mill owners, an innkeeper, and a ferryboat operator, James and William enjoyed a privileged status. Providing indispensable services to the community, they were exempted by the State Legislature from certain civic duties such as attending certain militia drills, jury duty, and building and maintaining roads. In 1821, William continued to demonstrate his loyalty to his community by donating over an acre of his land to build the Bethel Episcopal Methodist Meeting House. This church was probably located where the old Scarboro school stands today.

In 1809, James Scarbrough died and, like Douglas Oliver, was most likely buried on a knoll near his home. This knoll came under the ownership of his brother, William Scarbrough. Ultimately, William dedicated this knoll for a community cemetery. In old days, a prominent family would often set aside a piece of their property to be used as a final resting place not only for their family, but also for their community. Sometimes these cemeteries were not titled such as were with church cemeteries. The only property deed found for the Scarbrough Cemetery was dated 1942 when the U.S. Army purchased the land. No prior property deeds were found.

The Scarbrough Cemetery monument reveals that the cemetery was founded in 1832; however, this date appears to be based on the earliest tombstone inscription of a burial date. This cemetery may be much older, possibly existing when James Scarbrough died in 1809. William died in 1830 just two years before

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the date on the Scarbrough monument. Here, William and James Scarbrough may, well indeed, rest in peace.

Many Scarbrough descendants still refer to this historic place as "Scarbrough". The original locations of the mills are now underwater due to the Melton Hill reservoir. Amazingly, the old earthen mill dam still exists, camouflaged by dense foliage. Today, an old elementary school along with the Scarbrough Cemetery marks this historic location.

X Pvt. Elias Roberts (abt. 1760-1806)

Little is known of Elias Roberts' early life; however, family history reveals that he was born into a Quaker family in Brownsville, Pennsylvania. Later, when the Revolutionary War erupted, he and brother Zaccheus volunteered to serve the cause of freedom. In 1776, Zaccheus enlisted into a South Carolina regiment and later in 1777, Elias enlisted in Nathaniel Gist's Regiment of the Virginia Continental Line. This Regiment fought at Monmouth and Brandywine. In 1780, Elias' regiment was ordered to the ill fated defense of Charleston, South Carolina, where along with the entire defending army, they were captured. This debacle was the worst American defeat of the war.

After the war, brothers Elias and Zaccheus met and married sisters Nancy and Rebecca Brashears while living in the Pendleton District of South Carolina. Then, in 1794, the Roberts brothers along the Brashears clan moved, as a family unit, to the upper area of Roane County, Tennessee. Just after arriving, Elias leased and then later purchased 500 acres of land along Poplar Creek that would later become part of the Oak Ridge Uranium Enrichment Complex.

Here, Elias and Rebecca established their farm and raised ten children. In 1806, Elias died of an unknown cause and was buried in the Roberts Family Cemetery located near the banks of Poplar Creek. After Elias' death, Rebecca continued to operate the farm with the help of one son for an additional 50 years. During this time younger Roberts descendants would often go swimming on the opposite shore of the creek where it meandered around the family cemetery. This swimming hole became known as "Granny's Bluff" due to the steep embankment that provided these children thrills when they jumped into the water.

Ultimately, the Roberts' farm, including the family cemetery, was sold outside the family. Later in 1942, the U. S. Army purchased this entire region for the top secret Manhattan Project. When the Army meticulously surveyed this area, they could only identify the location of the Roberts Cemetery site by informants only. Unfortunately, all of the headstones and fieldstones were missing. A previous land owner had thoughtlessly removed the gravestones and converted the Roberts Family Cemetery to pastureland.

After government acquisition of this land, construction on the nearby K 31 Uranium Processing Facility began. During the groundwork phase of this construction, the overburden was redeposited away from the facility along the banks of Poplar Creek thereby covering the Roberts Cemetery with approximately three feet of fill dirt. This encapsulated the area where the cemetery exists.

Today, the K-25 site has been de-activated and has been the focus of extensive environmental clean-up. Where K-25 once existed, it is now the Heritage Center of the East Tennessee Technology Park. Within this park, Pvt. Elias Roberts rests in peace somewhere in a vacant field nearby Poplar Creek. However,

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he continues to be reverently honored by a Roberts Family Memorial erected at the nearby George Jones Presbyterian Church Historic Cemetery. This cemetery is located where the old Wheat Community once existed.

Conclusion

Except for drummer boy William Cross and Pvt. Elias Roberts, no memorials exist for our Revolutionary War soldiers and patriots who are buried within the Oak Ridge Reservation. Unfortunately, we can only take our best guess as to their final resting places. Historic documents, military records, U.S. Federal Census data, family genealogies, and property deeds were used to identify where in Oak Ridge these individuals lived. Since they lived and died here, they certainly would have been interred nearby. Also, the marriages of their children into other families have certainly created bonds that may give clues as to where they could be buried. In the early 1800's, most graves were only marked with primitive field stones or not marked at all but identified only by small earthen depressions. Little thought was given to permanently marking graves. The immediate families would know where their dearly departed were buried. These family members passed their knowledge of final resting places to their children and grandchildren. They, in turn, passed on what they knew to their children, and after several generations some of this information was lost. When these latter descendants were forced to leave their ancestral homes that were condemned by the U.S. Army, even more information was lost. Although we will never know the final resting places of these Oak Ridge Reservation Revolutionary War heroes, perhaps we can somehow honor their memories.

Dennis Eggert - I wish to thank fellow Sons members Fred Eiler and Charles Manning, and Ms. Ann Hewett Worthington, for their collaboration on this article. Additionally, I wish to thank Ronald Raymond for creating the map.

Thanks again Dennis, for compiling this detailed record of Revolutionary War veterans and where they are buried in Oak Ridge. As a commissioner for the Tennessee Historical Commission, I think it is appropriate that a historical marker be placed in Oak Ridge honoring these Revolutionary War veterans and plan to work toward that end. Anyone who desires to assist in an effort to provide such a historical marker, please contact me at draysmith@comcast.net.

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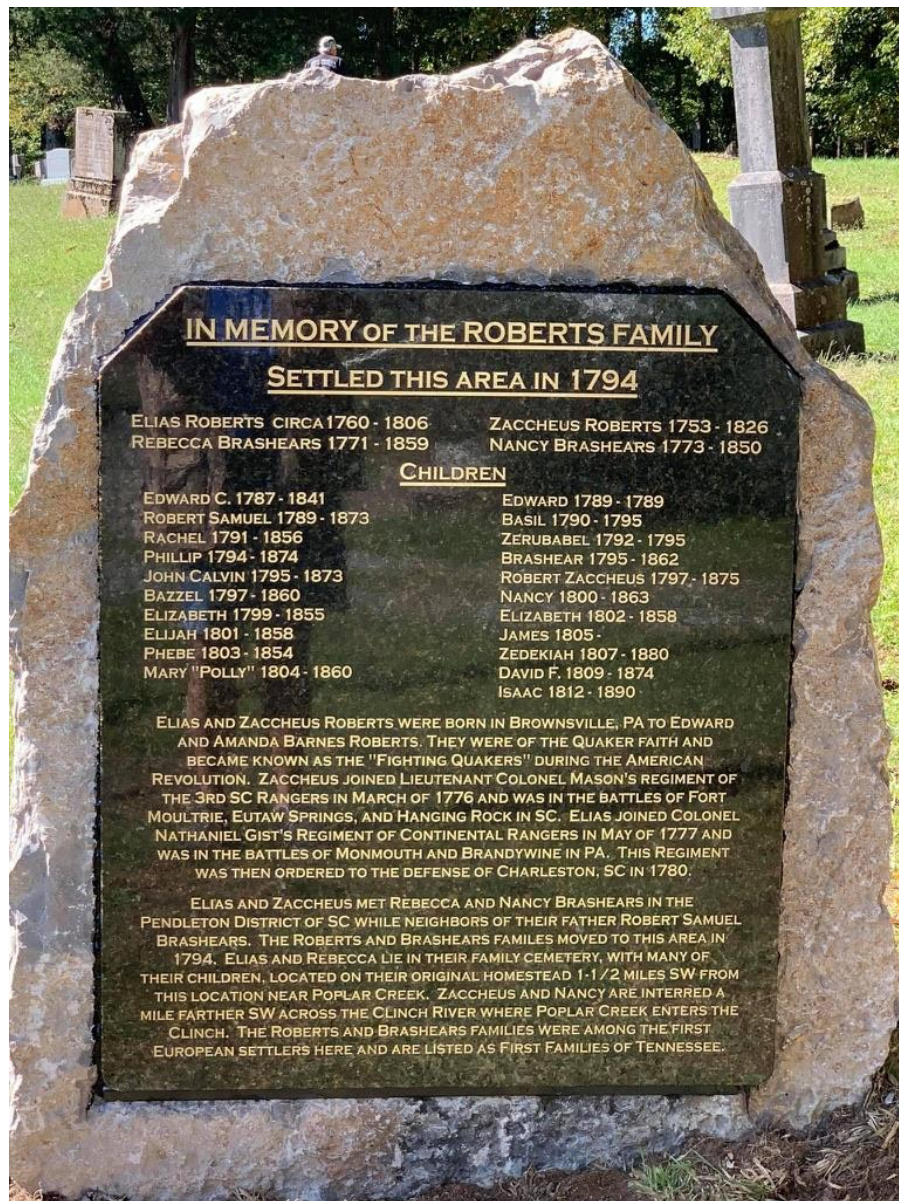
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Historic Worthington Cemetery

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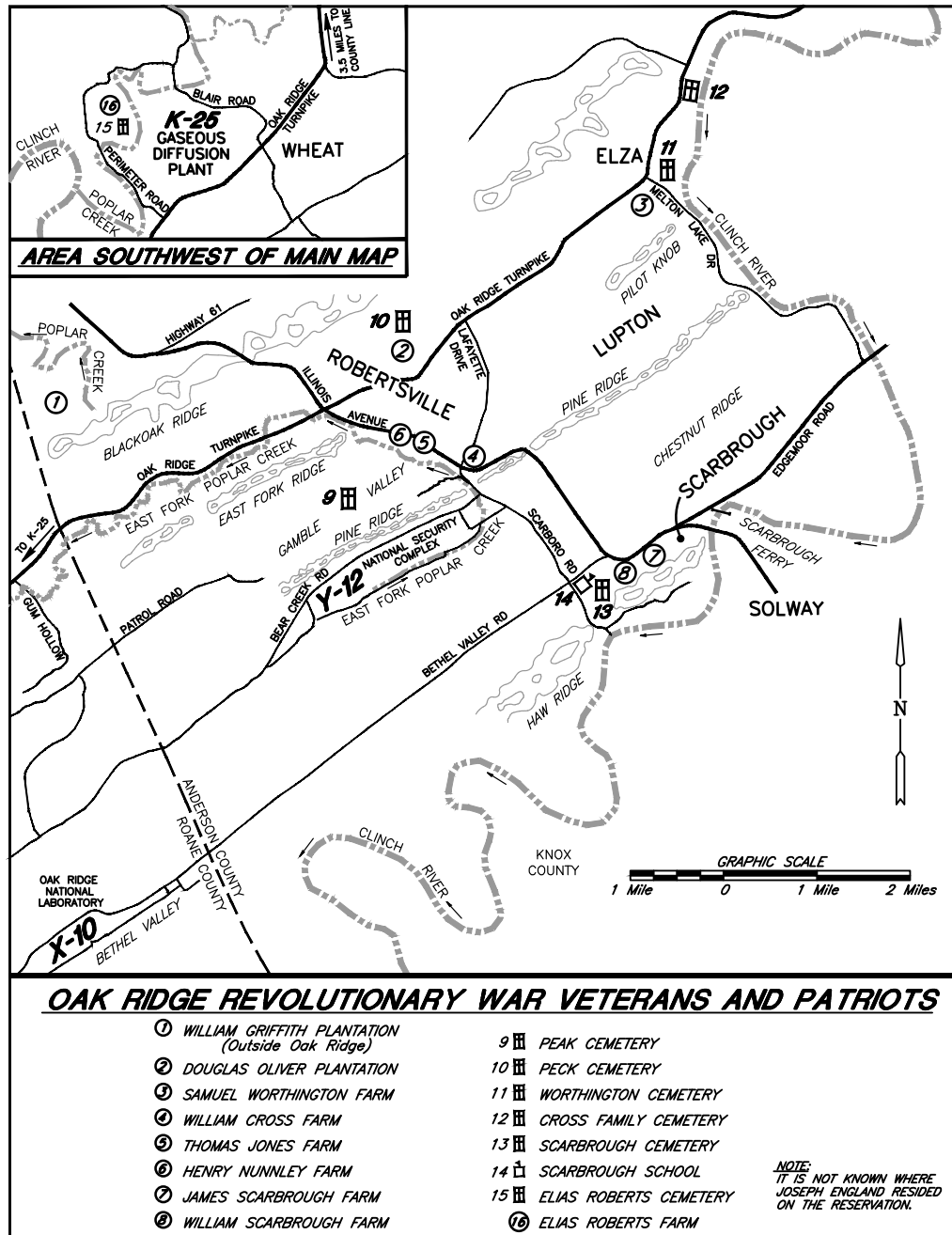
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The Roberts Family Memorial Marker recently installed at the George Jones Memorial Baptist Cemetery
by Ralph Martin

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Map of Revolutionary War soldiers buried in cemeteries in Oak Ridge