



THE BIRMINGHAM GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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THE PIONEER TRAILS NEWSLETTER

MAY 2017

General Meeting for May: Put on your walking shoes because it's time for the Annual BGS Walking Tour!

The Birmingham Genealogical Society will meet at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 20th at Union Hill Cemetery, located in Homewood (on Hollywood Boulevard, near Highway 280)! Please note there will not be a Board of Directors meeting. Please join us as **Scott Martin**, former BGS President, presents a program on **Union Hill Cemetery**. Union Hill Cemetery is the burial ground of many pioneers and early settlers of the Shades Valley area. Descendants of these settlers helped mold the cities of Mountain Brook and Homewood. Union Hill Cemetery was established in the 1870s but includes gravestones dating back to the early 1850s due to the relocation of two earlier, smaller cemeteries to Union Hill – the Daniel Watkins Cemetery in 1946 and the Enoch Watkins Cemetery in 2004. Scott is also a former President and current director of the Families & Friends of Union Hill Cemetery, a non-profit corporation organized in 1988 for the purpose of the care and maintenance of Union Hill Cemetery. Scott will also provide a demonstration on grave dowsing. Please join us!



Research & Genealogical Tips - courtesy of © Michael John Neill,

“Genealogy Tip of the Day.” <http://genealogytipoftheday.blogspot.com>, TIPDATE.

Is Your Family Bible in the Pension? The pension record of your relative may contain information from the family bible as documentation. If civil records were not available, transcriptions of family information from the Bible or the actual torn-out pages may be included in the pension file.



Buried at the Home? Individuals who died at a veterans' home or hospital may have been buried on the grounds instead of being sent home. If your veteran (or his spouse) is not buried near where he or she lived, see if they were sent to a veterans' hospital.

Get Beyond the Big Wars - The United States has been in wars besides the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War and the two World Wars. Is it possible that your ancestor served in one of the Indian wars, the Spanish-American War, or the Philippine-American War? Involvement in any of those actions would have generated service and possibly pension records.

Were they Responding to an Ad? If your ancestor apparently picked up and moved to where he knew no one, is it possible he was responding to an advertisement? Speculators, land agents, promoted their projects and developments in a variety of ways—including newspapers. It might have been an advertisement that caused your ancestor to pick up and move to where he knew no one.

The past is not dead. It isn't even past. --William Faulkner

Scott A. Martin, BGS Newsletter Editor

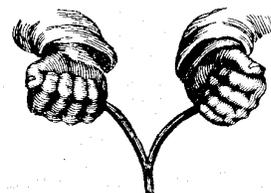
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Grave Dowsing: Finding Old Unmarked Graves

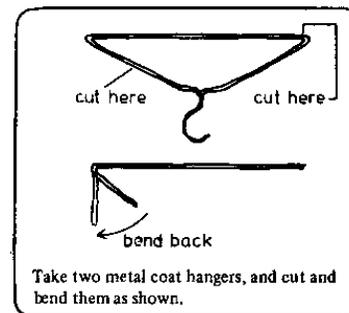
Brenda Marble, Cass County Historical & Genealogy Society Volunteer

<http://members.fortunecity.com/cassmofind/id20.htm><http://members.fortunecity.com/cassmofind/id20.htm>

GRAVE DOWSING: One of the biggest frustrations in genealogy, is being unable to locate the burial site of an ancestor. Although we may have an idea of where this ancestor is buried, we have no proof. Grave dowsing cannot give us the name of the person buried in any un-marked grave, but it can identify the locations of unmarked graves within a cemetery or lot and also provide some clues to their gender and age. You may find that the dowsing rods respond differently for you than as outlined in this article which is why it is extremely important that you practice and develop your own technique. Dowsing is an age-old art that has been used for centuries to locate water, graves and etc. I first learned about grave dowsing from a fellow volunteer at the Cass County Historical Society while working on "The Cemetery Project". Since that time, I have conducted several of my own experiments and researched different theories. I still don't know that answer as to just exactly why this technique works, but I can assure you that this technique does work and has been proven.



MAKING DOWSING RODS: There are several ways to make dowsing rods, but I since I have only used one of these methods, that is the method that I will recommend. Start with 2 metal coat hangers. Cut them at the neck just before the point where they join to form the hook of the hanger. Straighten each hanger, trying to get out all bends. Once the hangers are straight, make a 90 degree bend for the handles. I recommend that the handles be 3 to 4 inches long. You may need to vary the handle length depending on the size of your hand. Just be sure that the handle does not extend below beneath the hand. This allows for a light grip and keeps the handle from obstructing movement.



BASIC DOWSING TECHNIQUE: Hold the rods lightly in your hands, with elbows at your waist and forearms parallel to the ground. The rods should be held straight out, also parallel to the ground and parallel with each other. Do not place your thumbs over the bend of the handle, this will restrict movement. Do not grip too tightly, only enough to keep the rods parallel. Approach the suspected gravesite, walking very slowly. If a body is present, the rods will cross in front of you when you are over the grave. Once you step off of the grave, they will uncross.

PRACTICE: Let me stress that in order for this method to work properly, you must go to a cemetery with marked graves and PRACTICE. Everyone develops a slight variance in their technique and just because something works for me does not mean that it will work exactly the same way for everyone.

CEMETERY LAYOUTS: Most cemeteries in the United States bury their dead in a Christian manner. This means that all bodies are laid with the head pointing west and the feet pointing east. It is very important to remember this, as the layout of the body will later help you determine the gender of the person buried there and also help determine if the burial ground contains human remains. I have not yet experimented with Indian burial grounds. It is my understanding that many of them are buried in a sitting position so some alterations to this technique may be necessary while dowsing in Indian burial grounds or cemeteries with different religious backgrounds. The techniques described in this segment will be based on Christian burials.

LOCATING AN UNMARKED CEMETERY: As mentioned earlier, Christian graves are laid out in a west/east direction. When trying to locate a lost cemetery, it is best to walk in north/south direction in order to pick up a pattern. Usually you will find the graves to be separated by 2-3 feet. As you cross each grave, the rods will cross and then uncross as you step off of them. I find that I take 2-3 steps between each grave (this may vary depending

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on the size of your step, which is why practice is, important). If you find that a pattern develops (cross, 3 steps, cross, 3 steps, etc.) you have most likely found a cemetery. You will then need to determine the perimeter of the cemetery. By walking north and south, you can come pretty close to determining where the burials begin and end. When you reach the edge of the burial ground and are no longer picking up bodies, go back to the last grave and begin walking east and west. You will now be picking up on the length of the body, you will get some variances depending on whether infants, children or adults occupy the end graves. Keep walking east and west until you are no longer picking up bodies. By the time you have completed a square, you will have a good idea of the perimeters of the cemetery. Be sure to always check past the last body for at least 20 feet. Remember that you are looking for a pattern. You will find that Christian burial grounds are very well laid out. Side by side and head to toe in perfectly straight lines. This is important to note because animals can also be picked up with dowsing rods, however, it would be unusual for an animal burial ground to be laid out so symmetrically. So, the symmetrical layout of the burials is your first clue that the remains are most likely human.

DETERMINING APPROXIMATE AGE: To determine the approximate age of the person buried in an unmarked grave, begin at the foot/head of the grave and walk the length. The rods will cross at the feet/head and remain crossed until you reach the other end (feet/head) at which time they will uncross when you step off of the body. I count my steps as I walk the length of the body. For me, 1-2 steps indicates an infant, 2-3 a toddler, 3-4 a child, 5 an adolescent or short adult, 6 an adult and 7 a tall adult. Once again, this is where practicing with marked graves helps perfect your technique.

DETERMINING GENDER: There are two methods to determine gender of the person buried. The first one can give a false reading depending on whether the undertaker buried the person correctly, the second method has proven to be foolproof, so far. It is VERY important to use both methods when determining whether a burial site contains human remains. Method 1: (Overhead) Standing over the center of a grave, hold one rod over your head. The rod will swing around and point to the feet of a male or the head of a female. I don't know the scientific reason for this, but I can only guess that each gender is polarized to the earth by different portions of the body. You may get a false reading. It is uncommon, but does happen, that a person can accidentally be buried backwards. I have found this several times which is why method # 2 is used as confirmation. Method 2: (One-finger) Standing over the center of the grave, balance the handle of one rod on your index finger, holding the rod straight down. The rod will begin making a circular motion. It will rotate clockwise for a male and counterclockwise for a female. No matter how the body is laid in the grave, this method will give the correct gender. This method can also be used when more than two people are buried in one coffin or one grave. In this case you will need to go over the entire grave using the one-finger method. If there is a break between the bodies or a difference in gender, the rods will swing in a pendulum motion and then resume a circular motion. This is good to use when an infant is buried with their mother, etc. Combining the two methods will help determine human or animal remains. Animals will also register gender but it is unlikely that they will all be buried in a Christian manner. So if you find several burials, use the gender methods to determine the layout of the bodies. If all heads point west and the one-finger method agrees with the overhead method, then most likely you have found human remains.

CREMATIONS: Cremations are more difficult to pick up, however, they are detectable if the ashes were buried in a container. When crossing over the buried (contained) ashes, the rods will react differently, swinging together from left to right in a horizontal pendulum motion. You CANNOT determine gender. Using the one-finger method, the rod will circle either clockwise or counterclockwise and then reverse direction, repeating the reversals over and over. If ashes were spread over an area, then of course, they have gone with the four winds and cannot be detected.

DETERMINING HUMAN REMAINS: As mentioned above, animals can be picked up using the rods for grave dowsing and the one-finger method WILL also determine their gender. This is where looking for the layout of the burial becomes important and combining all of the above techniques to make an accurate determination. While checking a field that contained unmarked slave burials, I came across a horse that had been buried. One oddity in checking the grave was that it seemed to be extremely large. I had stepped off 9 paces for the length and about 4-5 for the width. This was an indication that something was not quite right. Doing the gender checks, the overhead

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method indicated female and the one-finger method agreed. Even though this appeared to be a Christian burial, the size remained questionable. I then had to use the one-finger method to get an exact layout of the body and discovered that it had legs protruding to one side. The size was a good indication that the remains were not human but by determining the body layout, I was able to confirm this. Most humans (hopefully) are buried on their backs, animals on their sides. Checking for these slight differences will confirm rather you have human or animal remains. Although a horse is quite larger than a human, dogs, cats and other smaller animals can easily be confused.

DEAD VS LIVING: Since I starting using this technique, I have often wondered what causes the rods to cross. I have done some research and have found that several scientists claim that the rods pick up a disturbance in the earth's magnetic field, other's claim that they are picking up the gases from decaying bodies. I have proven that these theories are incorrect. I give a presentation on dowsing and use a video tape to demonstrate the different techniques; however, this could easily be faked. In order to convince my audience that this method truly works, I asked for volunteers to test the method on living subjects. Much to their amazement, the rods will cross over the body of a living human while they are lying on the floor. They will also give a gender reading. So, the above theories by scientist cannot be true if this method works on living individuals. It has to have something to do with the magnetic field given off by our bodies that remains with the body even after death.

WATER DOWSING: Water dowsing is done much the same way as your basic grave dowsing, however I have found a slight difference in the reaction of the rods when finding a large body of underground water. For me, when I walk over an area that contains a well or larger body of water, my rods begin to take me in a circular motion, both of them pulling me to one direction and around. On water pipes, however, I still get the rod crossing. This segment is important as you must learn to recognize rather you are picking up on a burial or on a water source. You can usually solve this rather quickly by following the length. Most of the time, your water source is a water pipe and once you find the direction that the pipe is laid, the rods will stay crossed as long as you remain over it. One step to the left or right though, will cause your rods to uncross, further establishing the fact that you are over a pipe. This is great for finding the water pipes in your yard and will save money if you ever have to have them dug up.

PRACTICE: Once again, I'm including another segment on practice. I cannot stress the importance of this enough. You cannot be sure that the readings you are getting are accurate unless you have perfected the technique while practicing on marked graves. Do not look at the stone before you attempt dowsing. Do all the methods mentioned above, make your determination and then verify it with the information on the stone. Doing this over and over again, varying gender and ages, and soon you will become comfortable enough to be confident of your dowsing. The more comfortable you become, the more sensitive you will become with the rods. If you are having trouble getting this method to work for you, then you are probably holding the rods too tightly, placing your thumbs over the bends of the rods or walking too fast. If you can rule out these three most common problems, then you probably fall within the 10% who cannot perform this technique.

PROVEN RESULTS: There are many skeptics who will say that this technique does not work. In the summer of 2000, I was given the opportunity to prove that grave dowsing does work when I was called to a local cemetery to check a lot for unmarked graves. Upon dowsing, I found 3 unmarked graves located in the lot. The family, doubting this method, instructed the funeral home to dig anyway. Two wooden coffins were found in the exact locations that the dowsing rods had indicated, the 3rd location was not checked. Was this just luck? You be the judge.

THEORY UPDATE: After further experimenting in different geographical locations and receiving reports from other dowsers who have tried this method throughout the United States, we are finding that that the reactions of the rods when determining gender, vary. In some instances, they react the opposite of what I have reported here. This is why practicing in a marked cemetery in the same geographical location is important. I now feel that the longitude and latitudes of the earth affect the polarity reaction of the rod reading.

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Union Hill Cemetery, sometimes known as Canterbury Cemetery, is located along the north side of the 300 block of Hollywood Boulevard, which is in the Birmingham city limits, adjacent to U.S. Highway 280. The cemetery is known to be the resting place of a number of Confederate soldiers, a few World War I and II soldiers, and at least one veteran from the Spanish-American War. The cemetery established in the 1870s and was adjacent to the former Union Hill Methodist Episcopal Church which moved to Shades Valley in 1873. The church was remodeled in 1928 and the name changed to Canterbury Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1946, burials from the Daniel Watkins Cemetery were moved to Union Hill. As a result of this move, some headstones in the cemetery now date back to the 1850s. The church building was demolished in the 1960s to make way for the rerouting of U. S. Highway 280. In 1988, the **Families and Friends of Union Hill Cemetery** was established as a non-profit corporation organized to care for and maintain the cemetery. In the 1990s, the adjacent property north of the cemetery was developed as offices, necessitating the addition of Union Hill Drive on the cemetery's east side for access to the property. A few graves were covered by the road, but the markers in that area were moved to other parts of the cemetery. Additional burials were moved to Union Hill from the Enoch Anderson Watkins Cemetery in 2004. In 2008, the cemetery was added to the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register. (http://www.bhamwiki.com/w/Union_Hill_Cemetery)

The Birmingham Iron Age, 23 February 1882

Our community was excited last week by the report of a man missing named Billy Poe. After a search of five days he was found near Mr. J. A. McClintock's on Friday evening of last week. Esquire Fancher held an inquest on the body. Mr. Poe had fallen of a bluff of rocks fifty feet high, on rocks below and his body was badly mangled. He and one Mr. Bailey on the Friday before went to Brock's Gap and remained there till Saturday, drinking. After they had gone, about half an hour Mr. Bailey returned to Brock's to get more whiskey but did not return that night to hunt for his friend. It is believed that Poe suicided by jumping off the bluff as he was tracked to the bluff and no other track with him. It is said that on one other occasion he had made an effort to kill himself and was only deterred by the fear of being buried and that he sought this out of the way place to prevent being buried.

Birmingham State Herald, 22 December 1895

The preliminary trial of Officer Byars was continued yesterday morning before Justice Benners in the circuit court ...several witnesses were examined and Attorney Vaughan opened arguments for the prosecution, after which court adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Mr. A.M. Byrum, superintendent of the gas company, was called for the defense. The witness saw Officer Byars running after a woman on the morning of the 16th and saw him fire a pistol in the air and afterwards catch the woman near the place where Lizzie Durr was killed. It was dark and when the officer caught the woman she was about 350 feet from the railroad track. The witness saw no other person near.

Officer J. N. Byars then took the stand on his own behalf. I have been on the force five years. I was on my regular beat in the neighborhood of the gas works on the morning of the 16th. We had instructions from superior officers to watch out for coal thieves. Officer McCullom and I were at the gas works warming about 5 o'clock, when he suggested that we go to Wyeth's saloon and see if all was well. On the way there I saw three forms on a coal car. I drew my pistol and told them to come down. One of them threw a lot of coal on me and the other jumped on me. I fell and my pistol accidentally fired. When I got up I saw one of the women running off and I ran after her. I met Officer McCullom as I was going back. I asked him if he caught any and he said that she had been killed. I thought he was saying the woman I had with me. I asked the woman who threw the coal on me and she said it was a boy. I had no intention of killing anyone. My pistol was a self-acting revolver. Mr. McCollum was behind me when the woman jumped. It was too dark to tell whether the forms on the car were men or women.

The witness was cross-examined, but his statement was not shaken.

Several witnesses testified to defendants good character, among them were M.A. Porter, S.V. Acton, T.C. McDonald, Charles G. Brown and

Dr. Wynam testified that the bullet.....the skull at the base of the brain ...of the center, ranging downward and that its effect was instant death.

Captain Weir of the police force said that he gave defendant instructions to patrol the district where the shooting occurred and give the coal stealing special attention. He also testified as to the defendant's good character. Dr. A.M. Brown's expert testimony harmonized with Dr. Wyman's regarding the location and effect of the wound. After the argument by Attorney Vaughan the court adjourned.

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The Age-Herald, 17 December 1902

Will Massey Still At Large: Will Massey, wanted on a charge of the murder of C.H. Hope Monday afternoon near the corner of Avenue H and Twenty-Second Street, has not yet been captured, though the officers are continuing their search for him. Hope was shot and killed Monday afternoon while driving in wagon. Will Massey was riding by his side, and witnesses say that when the wagon neared the corner of Twenty-second street and Avenue H, Massey jumped down pointing a Winchester rifle at Hope, fired twice, the first shot taking effect and killing him instantly. Witnesses also state that soon as he did the shooting he ran to a wagon in which his father and another man were riding, jumped in, and whipping up the horses, drove rapidly away.

Coroner Paris made an investigation and examined several witnesses yesterday. No one knew who the person were Monday, as they drove quickly away. The coroner went to the scene and had the body of the dead man removed to an undertaking establishment. He then found out the names of the men and issued a warrant for the arrest of Will Massey and his father, Bob Massey. The elder Massey was arrested late Monday night and is now in the county jail. He states that he saw his son shoot Hope, but says he does not know of any quarrel that led up to it, or that there were any differences between the two men.

Will Massey is 20 years old, and has not been seen since he left home at Shades Valley late Monday afternoon. The officers searched the woods in the vicinity but he was not found. The body of Hope was examined yesterday by Dr. Charles Whelen. He found the ball that caused his death, and it is stated to be a 32-calibre Winchester. The elder Massey stated early yesterday morning that his son used a Winchester when he killed Hope. It was said yesterday that Hope had been advised by friends not to go home with the Masseys, and it is understood the officers hold to a theory that there was conspiracy to kill him. The elder Massey is being held on a charge of being an accessory to the crime.

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