The Bilbo Cemetery

Cemetery Is Landmark Here

One hundred and twenty-five years ago last April 8, the Bilbo cemetery was used for the first time when eight-year-old Margaret Bilbo was buried in the quaint and picturesque family burial spot on the lake front adjoining the old Bilbo sawmill property.

She was the youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bilbo and was born March 9, 1832. She died April 8, 1841.

The ravages of time and hurricanes and the march of progress have harassed the little family graveyard of the Bilbo family, but the boundaries have been preserved through the years.

Old Camp Atkinson, the only military historical landmark in Southwest Louisiana occupied this tract of land early in the 19th century. It is most noteworthy that the bricks from the old military fortifications were used to form the tombs and markers of the cemetery.

When Thomas Bilbo and his wife came here from Columbus, Miss., in the late 1820s or early 1830s, they observed this tract of land and lived in the old mess hall of Camp Atkinson.

It was a commodious log house and the family was very comfortable.

The little cemetery is described in the records as, "beginning at a point 40 feet south of southeast corner of the Bilbo cemetery and on the south side of Belden Street, thence south 150 feet to an iron pin, which is northwestwardly 16 feet to a cypress tree; thence northwesterly along the north bank of Lake Charles 112 feet to a post. "

"Thence north 127 feet to the south side of Belden Street; thence west along the south side of Belden Street, 130 feet to a point of beginning. It is signed, Elmira Bilbo, attest Jacob Ryan, W. W. Flanders." 

The Bilbo family was comprised of nine children, whose marriages with early settlers laid the foundations of so many of the oldest families. Jacob Ryan, for whom Ryan Street is named and who was so conspicuous in the development of the town, married Rebecca Bilbo.

They had a family of 12 children.

It was the boast of Mr. and Mrs. Ryan that they had four sons and 32 nephews who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War.

The second burial to be made in the little cemetery was that of John Bilbo, eldest son of Thomas Bilbo. Mr. Bilbo, the father, became the third member of the family to be laid to rest there.

Mrs. Bilbo died in 1871 and was buried just at the head of little Margaret's grave.

The Bilbo Cemetery

Sulphur Producing Unit

The Oak Planted by Charles Sallier