

## CAPTAIN WILLIAM BUTLER

A boulder marks the grave of Captain William Butler, the pioneer militia officer and War of 1812 veteran for whom Butler County was named in 1819. He was killed by Native Americans on March 20, 1818, in an attack led by the warrior Savannah Jack. Butler's remains, with those of his companions also killed that day, Daniel Shaw and William S. Gardner, were recovered from the "Butler Massacre" site in 1858 and moved to the old cemetery, where they were buried with ceremony and honors.



## GEORGE AND EMMA COOK

George M. Cook is among many Confederate soldiers buried or memorialized in Pioneer Cemetery. Born in 1830 in South Carolina, George married Emma Herbert, daughter of Greenville educators Thomas E. Herbert and Dorothy Young, in 1859. Emma died just a year later at age 21. Her beautifully sculpted tombstone has a woman placing a wreath on a small gravestone.



George was killed in the Battle of Seven Pines, Virginia, while serving with the Hayneville Guards, CSA, in 1862. His tombstone has a wreathed, broken tree trunk and soldier-at-attention sculpture, with the epitaph: "For God and my native South."

## WALTER O. PARMER

Pioneer Cemetery has only one mausoleum. Interred here are philanthropist Walter Oliver Parmer, who died in 1932; his wife, Elizabeth Dunklin; and his parents, Dr. Clinton Dale Parmer and Eleanor Oliver. Born in 1855, Walter O. Parmer was a grandson of pioneer Butler County settlers Ephraim Parmer and Matilda Seale. He became a successful merchant, planter and livestock breeder in Greenville before moving to Tennessee. His wife, Elizabeth, was the daughter of James H. Dunklin and Abigail Reid. The Parmers had no children, but had a strong interest in education. They were generous donors to schools in Tennessee and their hometown, Greenville. The W. O. Parmer Elementary School in Greenville was named in Parmer's honor, and the local scholarship endowment that he established continues to provide funds today for deserving students to attend college.



## ABIGAIL SUSAN REID DUNKLIN

(Cover Photo) Abigail Susan Reid Dunklin was born in 1838 and died in 1860 at age 22. She was the wife of James Hilliard Dunklin, and daughter of Archibald McCoy Reid and Elizabeth Ann Herbert. Her ornate pedestal monument is topped with a classical female statue holding a bible and cross (now broken), with symbols of mourning and the brevity of life in wreaths, acanthus leaves, and winged hourglass.



This brochure was made possible by a grant from the "Alabama 200" Bicentennial Commission (1819-2019), with support of the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce; Butler County Historical Society; and Fort Dale Chapter, Daughters of American Revolution. For more information, visit [www.greenvilleal.gov/307/Pioneer-Cemetery](http://www.greenvilleal.gov/307/Pioneer-Cemetery).

All photos and text contributed by Butler County Bicentennial Committee members.



# Pioneer Cemetery

## Greenville's Oldest Historic Cemetery

### Butler County, Alabama

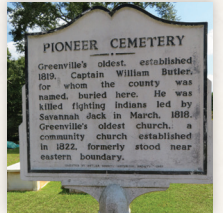
# Pioneer Cemetery

## Greenville's Oldest Historic Cemetery

Greenville's first settlers arrived by wagon train in 1819, in the flood of "Alabama Fever" immigrants who came into Butler County in the early 1800s. The town site was on land originally patented by Ephraim Parmer in 1819.

Greenville became Butler County's seat of government in 1822. Residents set aside a two-acre plot for a church and graveyard, marked on three sides by what are now Walnut, South Park (originally named Cemetery Street), and Dunklin Streets. The western side of the churchyard and cemetery, where the First United Methodist Church stands today, was then the town's western boundary.

Over the years, the communal burial ground was called the "Old Cemetery," the "Methodist burying ground" and the "old pioneers cemetery." Eventually its name became "Pioneer Cemetery."



The earliest marked burial in the cemetery is that of James Dunklin, who was born in 1779 and died in 1827. He was a magistrate and state legislator in South Carolina before emigrating to Alabama. An Indian chief and his wife who befriended the white settlers are said to be among other early burials.

Greenville's first physicians, Dr. Hillary Herbert, and his brother, Dr. George B. Herbert, are buried with their families in Pioneer Cemetery. George's 1819 marriage to Ann Dunklin is one of several said to have been the first marriage in the county.

John Bolling, Greenville's first hotel and tavern owner, lies here; as well as members of the Black, Pickens, Caldwell, Deming, Gafford, Burnett and other early settler families.

Reverend Samuel Oliver, a Methodist minister who brought his family from the green shores of Ireland to settle in Butler County, is buried in Pioneer Cemetery. A simple stone marks the grave of Ina Marie Porter Henry Ockenden, noted literary figure who became the first woman in the Alabama Press Association.

Pioneer Cemetery's first graves were marked by wooden crosses and headboards, which vanished over time. Today, the cemetery contains burials marked with obelisks, box tombs, ornate metal covers and fencing, statuary, decorative curbing, and scallop shell-covered mounds, as well as traditional tablets and ledger stones.

The original graveyard was nearly full by the end of the War Between the States, so a "New Cemetery," now known as Magnolia Cemetery, was established on the west side of the growing town. Interments continued in the old cemetery where families had used burial plots for generations. The last person buried in Pioneer Cemetery was Lilly Black Stanley, who died in 1961. She was the great-granddaughter of early settlers Andrew Martin Pickens and Isabella Caldwell.

In the 1920s, the Father Ryan Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy sponsored a successful fund-raising effort to have an iron fence erected around the cemetery, replacing the picket fences, barbed wire, and privet hedges that had enclosed the cemetery over the years. The gate plaque reads: "The Old Cemetery, 1823-1923." Pioneer Cemetery was added to the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage in 1976.



### JOHN AND ELIZABETH CALDWELL

Born in 1801 in North Carolina, John Carruthers Caldwell was one of the founders of Greenville's Presbyterian church. He married Elizabeth Black in Butler County in 1819, and became a prominent merchant, jeweler and silversmith. He was also a justice of the peace. The Caldwell graves have ornate iron grave covers designed by Joseph R. Abrams, as well as an elaborate double tombstone in marble.



### DUNKLIN CHILDREN

At the top of a tall marble obelisk are the statues of two children. An unnamed infant daughter of James Hilliard Dunklin and Mary Jane Reid died in December 1867; and a son, Thomas Judge Dunklin, died in December 1872, not yet two years old.

### DAVID AND FLORA BUELL

Born in 1836 in Genesee County, New York, David Buell came to Butler County before the War Between the States. He was a teacher and railroad surveyor before enlisting in the Greenville Guards, 8th Alabama Infantry, CSA. His wife, Flora Herbert, was a sister of George Cook's wife, Emma. David earned a law degree and served as a state senator. The cross on his monument is a reminder of his service as a Senior Warden of St. Thomas Episcopal Church. When he died in 1884, Alabama's Bishop Wilmer wrote in eulogy: "The church at Greenville owes its continued existence to his loving care and zeal."



### ELIZABETH ROUTON GAFFORD BRAGG

Unique metal grave covers, designed by local inventor Joseph R. Abrams in the 1870s, mark graves like that of Elizabeth Bragg. Born in Georgia in 1801, Elizabeth came to Butler County with some of our earliest settlers from that state. After her death in 1870, her second husband, Dr. Thomas Bragg, marked her grave with a lovely example of Joseph Abrams' "New Improved Grave Mounds."



### ANNA CATHERINE REID



Anna Catherine Reid, daughter of Archibald McCoy Reid and Elizabeth Ann Herbert, died in 1864 at age 21. Her grave was covered with scallop shells, a popular decorative element in Southern cemeteries. Anna was the granddaughter of pioneers Dr. Hillary Herbert and Abigail Bolling Dunklin, and sister of Abigail Reid Dunklin (cover photo).

### LITTLE MARY DEMING

Little Mary was the infant daughter of John W. Deming and Anna Burnett. She was born in April 1882 and died just a few months later. Childhood illnesses and death were common in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as the numerous small graves in Pioneer Cemetery show. The lamb on Mary's gravestone is a symbol of innocence, purity and Christian sacrifice, often used on children's graves.



In 2008, the City of Greenville began working with the Pioneer Cemetery Preservation Association on much-needed restoration work. The graves were photographed and catalogued, and restoration work began in 2009. Grants from the Alabama Historical Commission have helped with expenses of this important work, and donations will help this work continue. We invite you to visit Pioneer Cemetery to see the completed and ongoing restoration.

The Pioneer Cemetery Preservation Association depends on YOUR support. Help us preserve the historic resting places of Greenville's earliest residents, honor their memories, and share the stories of their lives. Donations are tax deductible.

PCPA, P. O. Box 782, Greenville, AL 36037  
[www.pioneer-cemetery.org](http://www.pioneer-cemetery.org)

