



## Cemetery connects lost relatives

**BY JUSTIN KASULKA**

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Phillip Shurtleff and B.J. Crayton Peterson have recently discovered that are cousins. Peterson has been researching genealogy at the nearby Staples Cemetery. When he spoke with his friend Alison Tudor who also has been researching local historic cemeteries, she helped find the connection between John Crayton, Peterson, and Shurtleff. Detailed records and research by Velma Fogle followed the path of John Crayton and his children, herself being a descendent of John Crayton.

The John Crayton Cemetery, also known as the Crayton-Spruill Cemetery is located in Martindale, TX on Lehmann Rd near the city cemetery. John Crayton and his son James Lasater Crayton emigrated to the Republic of Texas in 1839 from Marion County, Alabama. John fought in the War if 1812 and both father and son fought in the Mexican War. James Crayton died in the Mexican war January 4, 1847.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1854 a son, also names James, was born to John Crayton and Native American slave Riley Kimble. John Crayton was a widower of 30 years and the owner of 40 slaves when his son was born. Crayton acknowledged his son James "Jim" Crayton and taught him ranching, farming, and how to break wild horses. While children fathered by owners of slaves was not unusual during this time, recognition and rearing of the children by the owner was not a common practice. Jim Crayton made many cattle drives to Kansas and marries Jane Bell Spruill June 14<sup>th</sup> 1872 just before leaving on one of those drives.

JohnCrayton remarried to Mahala Spruill on January 6, 1856. He donated the land for the Crayton-Spruill cemetery to be used as a multi-racial cemetery January 12, 1871. Crayton also donated the land for the nearby Martindale Cemetery. Crayton left his land and inheritance to his son Jim when he died December 2, 1873.

Peterson and Shurtleff have a common ancestry to Crayton. Both of the men have been working with Alison Tudor on the restoration and research of the Crayton-Spruill



Cemetery. Peterson cleared a road for easier access to the cemetery and Shurtleff has been measuring and recording grave sites whose markers have been destroyed or lost and finding the original boundaries of the property. The group also plans to clear out some non-native trees to make the cemetery more open and accessible.

When asked about finding his new relatives Peterson replied, "I think it's great. I wish I had found out a long time ago. I feel good that I can help with work on the cemetery now." More information about many historic cemeteries in Texas can be found online at <http://www.cemeteries-of-tx.com>.