

Rockport Cemetery (Original Section & First Addition)

Name of Property

Hot Spring County, Arkansas

County and State

NPS Form 10-900
(October 2000)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rockport Cemetery (Original Section & First Addition)

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Rockport Cemetery, Highway 270 N.

not for publication

city or town Rockport

vicinity

state Arkansas

code AR

county Hot Spring

code 059

zip code _____

3. Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Cathie Matthews
Signature of certifying official/Title

11/28/01
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY -- Cemetery

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY -- Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS.

Rockport Cemetery (Original Section & First Addition)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C moved from its original location.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

1851-1950

Significant Dates

1851, ca. 1900

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(List books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State Agency
Federal Agency

Rockport Cemetery (Original Section & First Addition)

Hot Spring County, Arkansas

Name of Property

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- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Rockport Cemetery (Original Section & First Addition)

Name of Property

Hot Spring County, Arkansas

County and State

1. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 2.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>515391</u>	<u>3804107</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

An oblong drive delineates the boundary for the original section and the first addition of the Rockport Cemetery. The boundary is as follows:

Beginning at the convergence of all drives, proceed up the center drive 470 feet in a westerly direction – following the bend in the drive proceed an additional 414 feet while traveling in a southerly direction – at the next turn in the road follow the drive 220 feet in an easterly direction – at the point where the drive continues to turn, the boundary extends an additional 399 feet to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The selected boundaries encompass the original Rockport Cemetery and the first addition, both of which retain the necessary elements needed to convey integrity of location, setting, design, materials, feeling, association, and workmanship.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kara Mills Oosterhous

organization AIIPP date 10/12/01

street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787

city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72207

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

Rockport Cemetery (Original Section & First Addition)
Name of Property

Hot Spring County, Arkansas
County and State

name Rockport Cemetery Board (Mr. Herman Rasberry, President)
street number 576 Smith Loop telephone _____
city or town Malvern state AR zip code 72104

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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SUMMARY

Rockport Cemetery is the largest and oldest community cemetery associated with the settlement and development of the town of Rockport. The burial ground encompasses a total of 9.88 acres, 2.5 of which are being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The boundary encompasses the southeast one-fourth of the cemetery with a period of significance from 1851 to 1950. This includes the original cemetery donated by Nicholas Miller in 1851 and the first addition donated circa 1900 by Judge John Keith.

ELABORATION

Rockport Cemetery is the largest and oldest community cemetery associated with the settlement and development of the town of Rockport. The only other "publicly-owned" resource that dates to this period of settlement in the community is the 1871 Rockport Methodist Church, which is now clad in artificial siding. The Rockport Cemetery currently covers a total of 9.88 acres, of which 2.5 are being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The boundary encompasses the southeast one-fourth of the cemetery with a period of significance from 1851 to 1950. This includes the original cemetery established in 1851 and the first addition donated circa 1900. Unfortunately the plot maps for the original section and the Keith Section have been lost and the exact date at which these two sections were acquired is unknown.

The setting of the entire cemetery is very pastoral with gently sloping hills and an overall setting that conveys a sense of peace and history. However, it is the original section and the first addition, located in the southeast one-quarter of the cemetery, that possess the greatest amount of integrity, with well over 51% historic burials. The boundaries of this section are easily defined as a circular drive surrounds the entire cemetery with drives bisecting the circle horizontally and vertically, dividing the cemetery into four quadrants, with the southeast quadrant being the oldest.

Rockport Cemetery is an example of a "rural cemetery" in that it was originally located on the outskirts of town although it is now located in an urban area. Many of Rockport's earliest settlers are interred in the cemetery and the various shapes, sizes and materials dispersed throughout the cemetery reflect the economic status of those buried there.

The Rockport Cemetery is the most intact historic resource associated with Rockport's settlement. The Rockport Methodist Church (circa 1871) has been moved from its original construction site, features replacement windows and is currently clad in aluminum siding. The Rockport Bridge was destroyed in a 1988 flood and the Given/Miller House (circa 1834) has lost much of its integrity through the application of artificial siding, additions, and

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replacement of original windows. Only remnants of the Old Military Road (1831) still maintain integrity – thus the Rockport Cemetery best represents the settlement period of Rockport, Arkansas.

Entrance Gate

According to Tammie Dillon in her cemetery preservation manual, “Grave Concerns,” the entrance gate is symbolic in that it separates the living from the dead. One enters into Rockport Cemetery from Arkansas Highway 270 after passing through an arching metal lynch gate displaying the name “ROCKPORT CEMETERY.” Two stone piers capped with concrete support the arch. A drive approximately .2 of a mile long leads past a subdivision on the south and a car lot and pasture on the north. The subdivision ends before the drive reaches the cemetery and a barrier of old growth trees conceals the burial ground from the adjacent sprawl of housing and businesses on the highway. The main drive provides the only access to the cemetery.

Roadways and Walkways

The roadways, which originally started out as walkways, were paved in 1979 and are comprised of several segments. There is an outer loop that encircles the entire cemetery. There are also two additional roads within the loop that bisect it into four quadrants. There are no sidewalks or paths in the cemetery other than the main drive. The nominated portion of the cemetery (southeast ¼) is surrounded on all sides by the curvilinear drive.

Vegetation

The noise from surrounding development and highway traffic is muffled by a canopy of hardwood and pine trees. An important feature of the cemetery is the wide variety of historic plantings. Red oaks, white oaks and eastern red cedars are those species that predominate on the grounds. The densest concentration of trees is in the nominated portion of the cemetery. There are several large crepemyrtles planted long ago. Other plantings include yucca plants, rosebushes and irises, all of which are common ornamental vegetation in cemeteries.

Open Spaces

Throughout the nominated section there are several “vacant” or “open” spaces. These are most likely unmarked graves. A search through funeral records has revealed that there are several unmarked graves in the nominated section – several of which date to the years spanning 1915 and 1919. There is also a large open space on the north side of the nominated area which has no stones but obviously contains numerous burials due to the various depressions and coloration of the grass.

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Grave Markers and Monuments

Burial markers within the nominated section exhibit a wide variety in size – ranging from small to large - and in style from vernacular to elaborate. The burial stones are predominately carved of marble and granite, although some native stone and concrete is used for the more vernacular markers. White titanium/zinc and bronze are other materials historically used from the 1880s to the 1920s; however, the only bronze marker occurs as a plaque mounted on a Woodmen of the World marker.

The most prominent marker style within this section of the cemetery is the tablet marker. One line of markers located along the eastern boundary of the southeast quadrant are simply slabs of stone. Other monuments using local materials include several markers composed of concrete such as the marker found on the Jack Singleton grave (February 13, 1913). Other styles prevalent in that section are tablet, obelisk and pulpit markers. Also located within the historic section are bevel markers and a few flat and block markers. Iconography is consistent with those found in pioneer/early cemeteries: lambs, books, fingers pointing upwards, lilies, angels, doves, Masonic symbols, draperies, willow trees and urns. One of the most unusual markers in this cemetery features a Celtic cross on one side and a relief carving of an elk or stag on the other.

Two of the larger monuments in the nominated section include the Keith monument, which is composed of an obelisk with a drapery-wrapped pedestal (1903) and the Harris monument, consisting of an urn beneath two classical columns connected by an arch (1906). The oldest grave, recorded on a stone, is that of Elizabeth Winters who was interred 11 August, 1851. Civil War veterans are also buried within the borders of the historic section of Rockport Cemetery.

Enclosures

According to Dillon, one difference between northern and southern states is the number of cemetery enclosures. It has been said that the further south one travels the more plot enclosures will be found in local cemeteries. Within Rockport there are two prominent enclosures. A cast iron fence atop a stone foundation surrounds the monuments of the Thrasher family, while another enclosure made of woven wire surrounds the graves of the Clements and Rowe families. Concrete coping is a frequent enclosure method seen throughout the cemetery. Oftentimes concealed by grass, the coping - which was a common method of grouping family plots - is somewhat obscured in some places.

Integrity

The boundaries of the historic section of Rockport Cemetery, in which the contributing features date from 1851 to 1900, encompass the southeast one-fourth of the site. This includes the original cemetery established in 1851 and the first addition donated circa 1900. The second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth additions are not included within the

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nomination boundaries because the majority of the burials are post-1950 with new burials still occurring. Also located adjacent to the cemetery and outside of the selected boundaries are the memorial gardens, which are independent of the Rockport Cemetery. The entire cemetery possesses the atmosphere of a historic burial ground and contains many important Rockport citizens. However, it is the easily definable historic section that is associated with the establishment and early development of Rockport that also possesses integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, association, workmanship and materials. Very few burials still occur in this section, the only modern interments are for those who purchased plots several years ago. This section has remained intact throughout the years and is the only extant historic resource in Rockport that possesses a high degree of integrity and which dates to Rockport's settlement.

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SUMMARY

Rockport Cemetery, located off State Highway 270 within the present-day city limits of Rockport is the oldest public burial site associated with the founding and early development of the City of Rockport. The boundary for the section being nominated to the National Register encompasses the southeast one-fourth of the cemetery in which the contributing features date from 1851 to 1950. This includes the original cemetery established by 1851, on land donated by Nicholas Miller, and the first addition donated circa 1900 by Judge John Keith. There are numerous marked and unmarked burials in this section, of which more than 51% were interred prior to 1950. The original cemetery and the first addition are being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, as a site, under Criterion A, Criteria Consideration D for its association with the earliest period of settlement in Rockport, Arkansas.

DESCRIPTION

Rockport, Hot Spring County

On 2 November 1829, Hot Spring County was created from a piece of legislation entitled "An act for the division of Clark County," signed by Governor John Pope. Prior to the admission of the state into the Union in 1836, primarily hunters, trappers, Indians and a few settlers occupied the area now known as Hot Spring County. According to "The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Central Arkansas," the settlement of what is now Hot Spring County began circa 1850 and according to Goodspeed, "those who entered before 1850 may justly be considered pioneers."

Some of the people and families to first settle the area now known as Rockport included: Dr. P.S. Phisick (1820), Andrew Fenter (ca. 1820), Henry Miller (1829), Dr. Mitchell, A.R. Givens (1834), Samuel Emerson (1832), and Nicholas Miller (1848). The opening of the Military Road in 1831 was very instrumental in the settlement of Rockport and the surrounding area. In 1832, Mr. Samuel Emerson arrived in what is now known as Rockport and he and his mother and siblings homesteaded an eighty-acre tract of land. In 1834, Colonel A.R. Givens, a Revolutionary War soldier from Virginia, along with his son-in-law and 60 slaves arrived in the Rockport area. In 1842 his daughter Sarah Margaret came to Rockport and married Samuel Emerson.

Emerson named the town Rockport, after the surrounding rocky terrain and in 1842 he began laying out the town. He was very instrumental in the establishment and settlement of Rockport and was responsible for building the first church and schoolhouse in Rockport, which served the entire county as well. It was not until 1846 that Rockport was officially surveyed and the county seat was moved to Rockport where it remained until 1879.

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From 1842 through the late 1870s, Rockport prospered although it always remained a small town. During Rockport's heyday there was a courthouse square and Main Street which were a focal point of the community. According to an interview by Mrs. Katherine Miller in an article in the *Arkansas Gazette Magazine*, 7 June 1936, Rockport also had a post office and many local businesses that included: The tavern, operated by Andy Floyd and Adam Sharp; Borghour's general store; Miller Mercantile; Bill Nat Henry's general store; Dr. Phisick's office and residence; Dr. Kelly's store; Hugh McCallum's law office; Dr. Haliburton's office; Mart Ward's blacksmith shop; and two saloons. Interspersed with the businesses were homes owned by Sam Emerson, Jack Meyers, William Dyer, Sam Conkel, Bill Davis, Colonel Gellis, Sam Roberson, and the Methodist parsonage.

The coming of the railroad to Malvern, located approximately four miles southwest of Rockport, signaled the demise of the small town. Malvern was founded in 1873, but it did not begin to flourish until 1875 when the Hot Springs Railroad, which connected with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad, came to its borders. In 1875 officials moved the county seat from Rockport to the growing town of Malvern and the town never regained its status as an economic center for the county. Today, Rockport still exists along State Highway 270; however, Rockport Cemetery is the only historic resource remaining that displays a high degree of integrity.

Rockport Cemetery

In an article in the Hot Spring County Historical Journal, *The Heritage*, an article states that it is believed that John A. Miller donated the land for the cemetery in 1851. However according to his grave marker John A. Miller was born in 1836 and thus would have only been 15 years old in 1851. It stands to reason that it was his father, Nicholas Miller, who donated the land for the cemetery since it is located on land that would have been part of his plantation at the time (an eighty-acre plantation he acquired from A. R. Givens in 1848). Nicholas Miller was known for his generosity and religious fervor and was responsible for donating the land a local church constructed in 1849. Thus it is more plausible Nicholas Miller donated the land for the cemetery. The establishment date of 1851 is derived from the oldest known burial, that of Elizabeth Winters whose burial date is recorded as 11 August 1851. Needless to say, it is a very old community cemetery and is referred to in *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Central Arkansas*, published in 1889, as the "Old Rockport Cemetery."

The exact donation date for the first addition "Keith Corner," is unknown. Judge John Keith donated the land and he died in 1917, so one must assume that it dates to pre- 1917. His son's monument dating to 1903 is located in this addition and another monument dates to 1899 – thus the circa 1900 date. Information about the cemetery is scarce and because of its age there are no long-time residents alive that remember its establishment. The plat maps for the original section and first addition have long since been destroyed. According to Fred Sebren, a life time resident in the Rockport/Malvern area, oral history states that a mill along the river exploded in the mid-to-late 1800s killing several of Rockport's citizens and they are said to be buried in a mass grave in Rockport Cemetery. There is no

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documentation to support this, however, there is a fairly substantial area which contains no markers in the northwest portion of the nominated area, and due to the various depressions and coloration of the grass cover it is feasible that there are numerous unmarked graves in this area. Whether or not they are related to the explosion, which is thought to have occurred along the Ouachita River at a mill near Rockport, is unknown.

In 1936, during Arkansas's Bicentennial, President Roosevelt visited the Rockport/Malvern area and worshiped at the Old Methodist Church in Rockport where he received a quilt made by Mrs. Verner McMilland, Mrs. Radford and a third unknown woman. It has been stated that President Roosevelt also visited the Rockport Cemetery in 1936.

Pioneer citizens of Rockport buried in the Cemetery

Samuel Emerson (1810-1851)

Samuel Emerson was the founder of Rockport and was elected County Judge in 1842 and again in 1846. He also represented his county as a legislator. He was very instrumental in the establishment and early development of Rockport and he owned and operated the first hotel in Hot Spring County. He also built the first church and school in the county. He and his wife Sarah Margaret (1821-1858) were prominent citizens of Rockport and both are buried in Rockport Cemetery.

Nicholas Miller

Nicholas Miller arrived at Rockport in 1848 and purchased an eighty-acre farm from Colonel A. R. Givens.

W. H. Collie (1833-1911)

Mr. Collie arrived in Hot Spring County in 1845 and settled in Rockport in 1846. He married Narcissa Wilson (1843-1912) and became one of the most successful farmers in the Rockport vicinity. Both are buried in Rockport Cemetery, as are their children.

John Hugh McCallum (1824-1897)

John Hugh McCallum arrived in Rockport in 1860 to take on responsibility as an elected circuit clerk. He served two terms as circuit clerk, and during part of this time he served in the Confederate Army. In 1874 he was elected to the State Senate and in 1886 he was elected county judge. McCallum was one of the leaders in the movement for the construction of a new Hot Spring County court house at Malvern.

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George L. Erwin (1841-1905)

George Erwin arrived in Rockport in 1867, where he and his wife Mary A. Gillis Beauchamp (1842-1910) lived and farmed. Erwin also served in the Twenty-ninth Arkansas Infantry of the Confederate Army. Both are buried in Rockport Cemetery with their children.

D. A. Newman (1818-1895)

D. A. Newman arrived in the Rockport vicinity in 1853 with his wife Sarah Ceips Newman (1820-1885). Mr. Newman served in numerous wars such as the Indian War, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. Mr. Newman was also a well-known figure in Hot Spring County since he served as the justice of the peace for two years, sheriff for six years, and judge for two years. Both are buried in Rockport Cemetery with their children.

The aforementioned people are only a few of the people who contributed to the growth and development of Rockport in various facets. Other pioneer families and their descendants that are buried in the Rockport Cemetery include the Thrashers, McMillian, Keiths, Fenters, Morrisons, Rogers, Eilcoxes and Striblines. Those early residents buried in Rockport Cemetery reflect the establishment, growth, and development of Rockport.

The Rockport Cemetery is the oldest, intact, resource associated with the establishment and growth of Rockport. The original cemetery and the circa 1900 addition are being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, as a site, under **Criterion A, Criteria Consideration D** as the only intact, extant resource, associated with the earliest period of settlement in Rockport, Arkansas.

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Author Not Listed. "Old Rockport: Where the President Worships Wednesday." *The Heritage* 8 (1981): 109-115.

Author Not Listed. "Rockport." *The Heritage* 5 (1978): 83.

Author Not Listed. "The History of the Rockport Cemetery" *The Heritage* 3 (1976): 6-37.

Butler, Judy. Phone Conversation with Kara Oosterhous, 26 September 2001

Sebren, Fred. Phone Conversation with Kara Oosterhous, September 2001.

The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Central Arkansas. Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889.
Reprint, Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1978.

Waters, Judy. Multiple Phone Conversations and Email Exchanges with Kara Oosterhous, 26 September 2001.

Written By:
Kara Mills Oosterhous,
AHPP