

NR LISTED

APR 14 1995

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

AHPP

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1. Name of Property

historical name: Norristown Cemetery

other name/site number: N/A

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2. Location

street & number: Lock and Dam Road, Adjacent to Dow Chemical Company
Entrance and just off State Highway 78

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Russellville

vicinity: X

state: AR county: Pope code: AR 115 zip code: 72801

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3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Site

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

N/A

Other Description N/A _____

Materials: foundation N/A _____ roof N/A _____
walls N/A _____ other N/A _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally _____.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A _____

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): D _____

Areas of Significance: EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

Period(s) of Significance: 1853-1934 _____

Significant Dates: 1853-1934 _____

Significant Person(s): N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation: N/A _____

Architect/Builder: N/A _____

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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10. Geographical Data
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Acres of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Table with 4 columns: A, B, C, D. Row 1: 15, 486320, 3899800, B. Row 2: C, D.

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet

Beginning at a point on the southern edge of the associated cemetery access road located approximately 700 feet west of its intersection with the western edge of the Lock and Dam Road, proceed southwesterly (roughly following the treeline) for approximately 250 feet, then southwesterly again for approximately 200 feet (again following the treeline), then northwesterly for approximately 350 feet to the intersection with the southern edge of the associated cemetery access road, then northeasterly along said edge for approximately 600 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all the property associated with the historic cemetery that retains its integrity and is known to contain burials.

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 10/13/94

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500 Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR Zip: 72201

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Summary

The Norristown Cemetery, located on the north bank of the Arkansas River and just east of the Dardanelle Lock and Dam, is a small community burial ground that contains approximately thirty marked graves (and certainly several more that are unmarked). The markers are all constructed of stone and range from the elaborately carved to rough fieldstone walls built around otherwise unmarked burials. The earliest marked death date is 1853 and the latest is 1934.

Elaboration

The Norristown Cemetery, located on the north bank of the Arkansas River and just east of the Dardanelle Lock and Dam, is a small community burial ground that contains approximately thirty marked graves (and certainly several more that are unmarked). The markers are all constructed of stone and range the elaborately carved to rough fieldstone walls built around otherwise unmarked burials. The earliest marked death date is 1853 and the latest is 1934.

Roughly half of the extant grave markers reflect the craftsmanship of professional stone carvers, while the other half are more crudely carved, if carved at all (it should be noted that some of the simpler markers may have been professionally-carved originally, but the carving has eroded away over time). Yet even the larger, more decorated monuments reveal little more than elaborately-carved script denoting the name and death date of the deceased; on several markers, even the birth date has been omitted. Figural representation of any kind is rare.

Of particular note are the large, rectangular arrangements of stones that appear to surround and cover individual burials that are not otherwise marked. There is also one small separate enclosure within the cemetery -- built of fieldstones -- within which are four individual marked burials.

The condition of the cemetery is poor, in spite of the efforts of Dow Chemical Company to secure the site and maintain it. Many gravestones -- originally standing -- have been turned over by vandals, and the elements have also taken their toll, rendering some of the original carving virtually illegible. The city of Russellville, though aware of the cemetery's existence, has not been able to assist with its maintenance and preservation. Descendants of original Norristown settlers from around the region are attempting to organize an effort to restore and maintain the cemetery.

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Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 1**Summary**Criterion A, local significance
(Criteria Consideration D)

The Norristown Cemetery is locally significant under Criterion A through its direct associations with the historic river community of Norristown that was founded nearby in 1829 and which served as the Pope County seat until 1841, when it was moved to Dover. The Norristown Cemetery is the last extant above-ground resource associated with this early Pope County community.

Elaboration

The small yet significant community of Norristown was typical of most early communities within the state of Arkansas in that it was located adjacent to and oriented toward a river, in this case the Arkansas. Founded in 1829, Norristown was settled by Samuel Norris of New Jersey (soon to be followed by fellow statesman Joseph H. Brearley) after the Cherokees agreed to relinquish their lands in Arkansas in exchange for lands further west. The town was laid out in the form of a triangle, with the base lying along the bank of the Arkansas River (the triangular form occurred because the river cut diagonally through a quarter-section). The streets running parallel to the river, from south to north, were Water, Front and Second Streets, and those running perpendicular, west to east, were Pine, Ferry, Prairie and Bridge Streets.

Unlike the Dwight Mission that had been established as early as 1820 at the mouth of Illinois Bayou just to the north, Norristown was established as a trading community in an effort to take the earliest possible advantage of the opening of this section of the Arkansas River valley to white settlers. The effort was largely successful, as Norristown prospered, easily becoming a principal trading hub for the surrounding region. By 1830 it had grown to approximately 400 citizens (Little Rock, by comparison, could boast of 537 residents according to the official census of 1833) and so became the obvious choice for the seat of Pope County, which had been established by the state legislature on November 2, 1829 (other sources place the arrival of the county seat at 1834).

Norristown continued to prosper as a civic and commercial center of the Arkansas River valley between Ft. Smith and Little Rock for the next several decades, in spite of the fact that, due to the creation in 1842 of Yell County from that part of Pope County south of the Arkansas, the Pope County seat was then moved northward to the more centrally-located community of Dover. The river continued to be the principal avenue of commerce for the entire region, Norristown

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also lay on the principal overland stage route between Little Rock and Ft. Smith, and it was located centrally among several other significant ports on the River: Lewisburg to the southeast, near the present-day site of Morrilton; Spadra to the northwest in Johnson County; and Dardanelle directly across the river. Thus it became not only an active port but also a ferry landing site for travelers crossing the Arkansas River from the south.

It is reputed that the famous painting of the Arkansas Traveler -- executed by the artist Edward Payson Washburn, son of the founder of the nearby Dwight Mission, Cephas Washburn -- was painted at Norristown. Whether or not this is true, Norristown could certainly boast of its entertainments, including several mercantile establishments that routinely served alcohol in one form or another. By the 1850's the town could also claim an academy, a Masonic Hall, and a church.

Norristown retained its status until the arrival of the railroad in 1873, which both bypassed Norristown and signalled the beginning of a new era in both passenger and freight transportation. Like so many river towns throughout Arkansas, Norristown began to decline thereafter, and by the turn of the century was little more than a memory as any kind of commercial or transportation hub.

The Norristown Cemetery includes, among others, several burials of members of the Brearley family. The Brearley name was among the first to settle here after the relocation of the Indian Boundary, and Colonel David Brearley opened a store on both this side of the Arkansas River and on the other side, at Dardanelle. Also buried here are descendants of the Norris family who married into the Brearley clan.

With the sole exception of the Norristown Cemetery, no above-ground resources survive from the historic community of Norristown. Particularly with the construction of the Dardanelle Lock and Dam just to the north, even the historic roadway leading from the riverbank and north to Dover is now obscured. The Norristown Cemetery remains the only standing resource to remind us of the active, prosperous community that formerly served as such an important destination for so many river travelers and traders. By virtue of these direct and important associations, the Norristown Cemetery is locally significant under Criterion A.

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Bibliography

Banks, Wayne, *History of Yell County*, (Van Buren, Arkansas: 1959).

Original Plat of Norristown, filed and the title recorded on Page 320, Book B, Pope County Records, on file at Pope County Courthouse, Russellville.

Park, Hugh, *Cephas Washburn's Reminiscences of the Indians*, (1955)

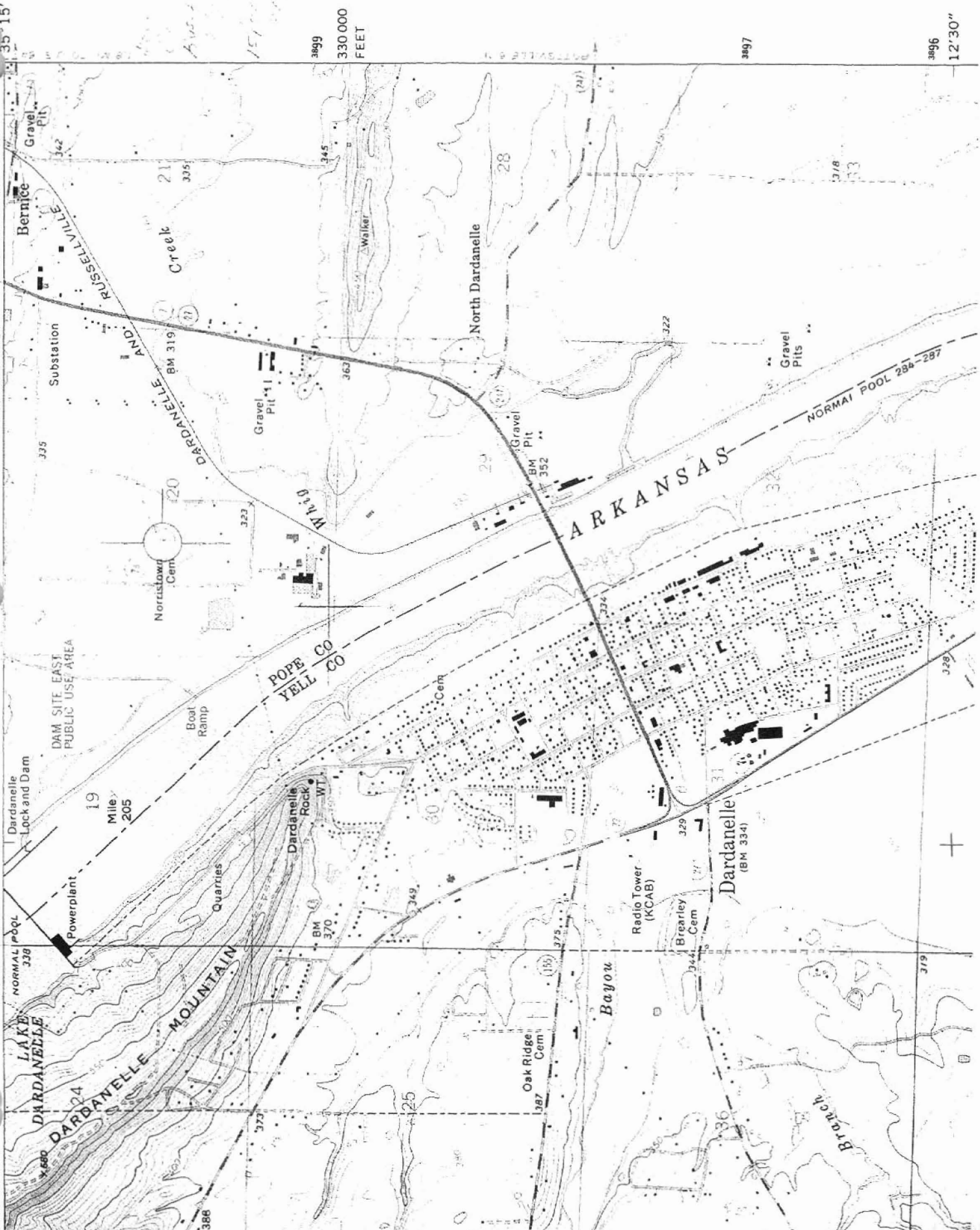
Russellville Centennial Committee, *Russellville Centennial, 1870-1970*, published 1970.

Vance, David L., *Early History of Pope County*, (Mabelvale, Arkansas: 1970).

West, D. Porter, *Early History of Pope County*, (Little Rock: 1968).

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

1 SW (ILLE WEST) 484 K. 21 W. R. 20 W. 10' 485 1 660 000 FEET 93 35 15'

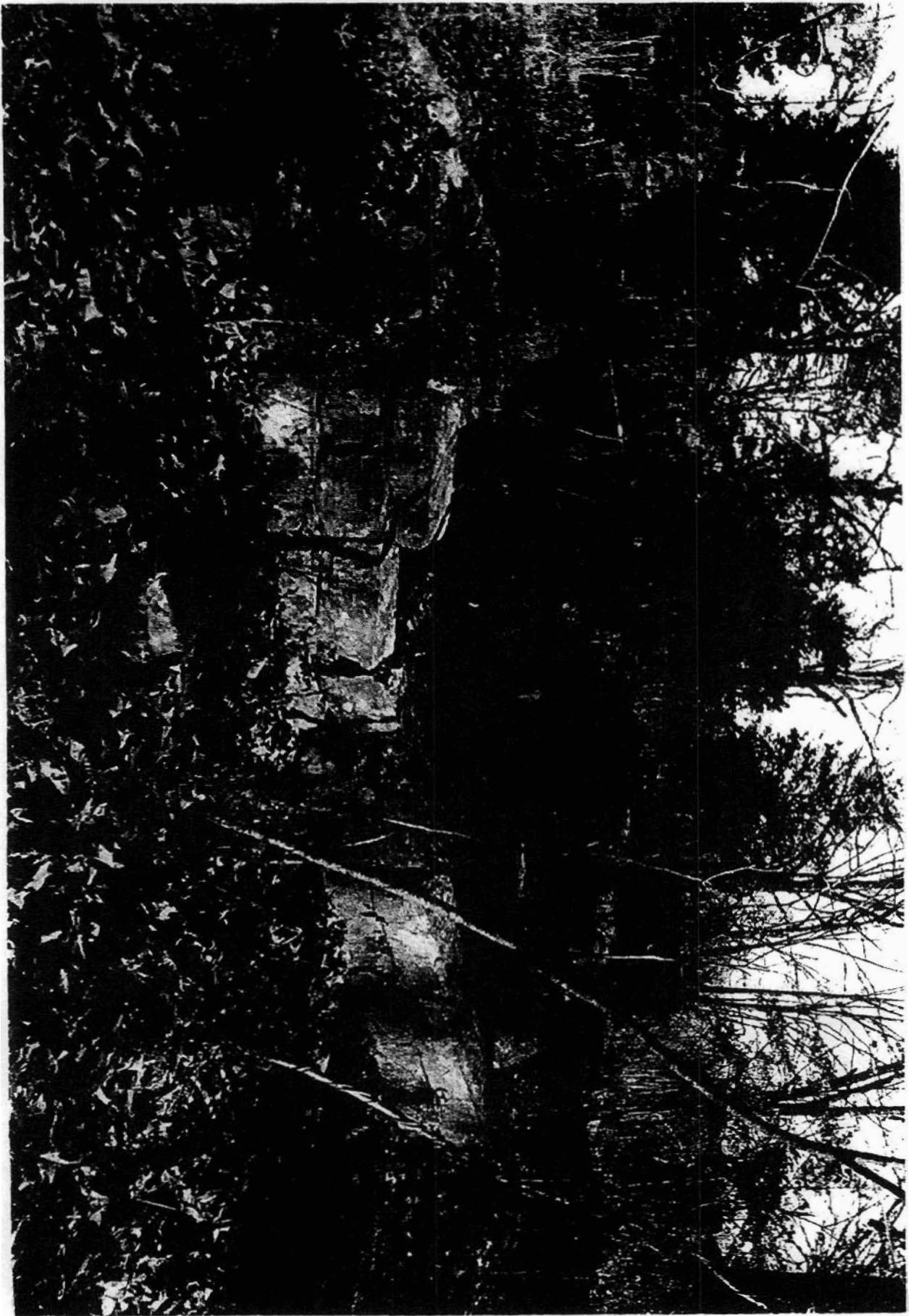


3899 330 000 FEET

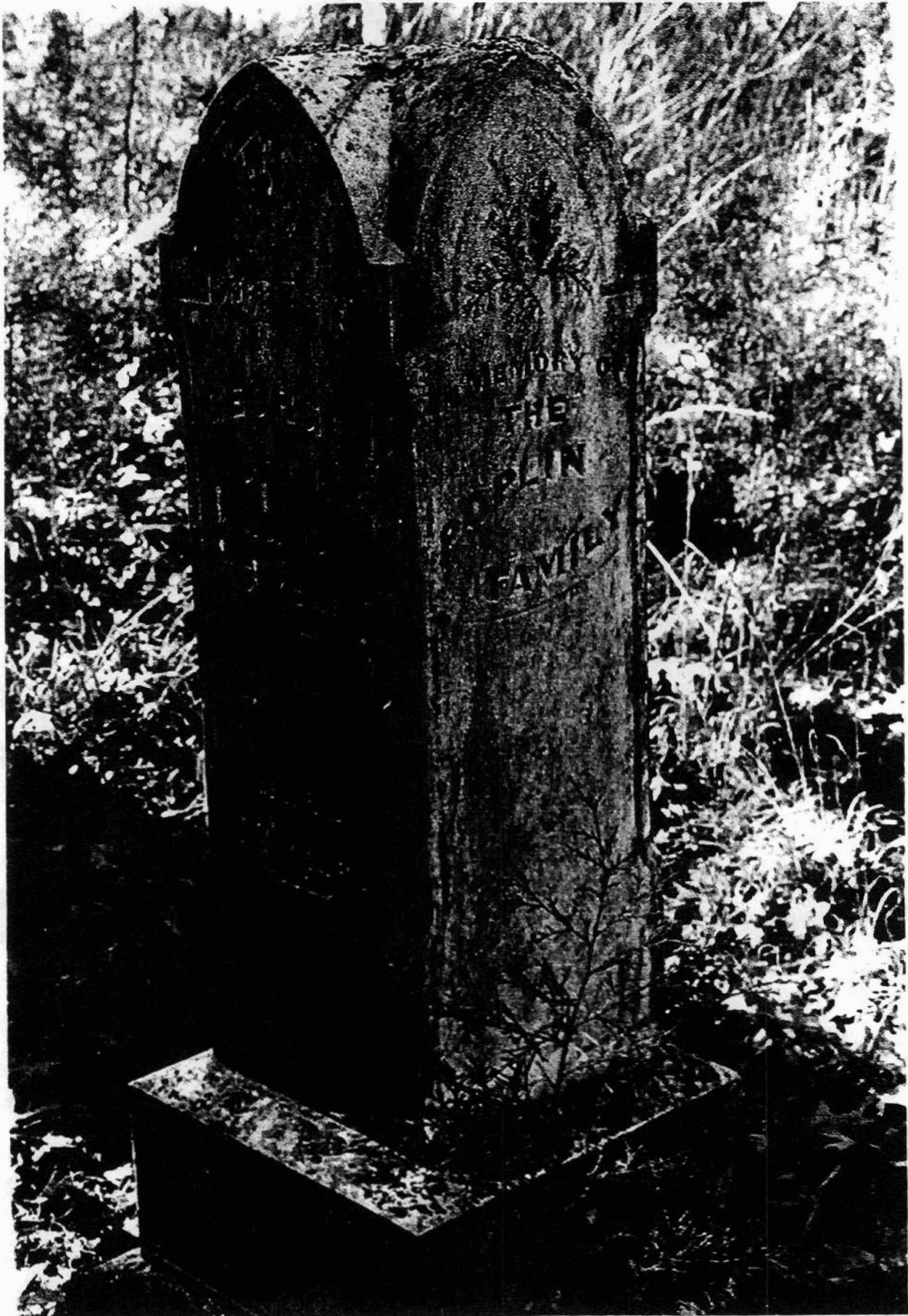
3897

3896 12'30"









HENRY
FAMILY





SOPHIA
WIFE OF
RANCE FOSTER,

DIED FEB. 3, 1906,
AGED 63 YRS.