



1. Jonathan Edwards Pierce (1839-1915), joined his older brother, Abel Head Pierce, in Matagorda County in 1858. After Confederate service he became a rancher with large holdings. He and his wife, Nancy "Nannie" Deborah Lacy (1845-1896) built their home "Rancho Grande" on the Tres Palacios River. Jonathan was the founder of Blessing and builder of Hotel Blessing.

2. Abel Head "Shanghai" Pierce (1834-1900) was born in Little Compton, RI. At age 16 he moved to VA and arrived in TX in Dec. 1853. In Matagorda County he first worked for W. B. Grimes as a cowboy and after serving in the Confederate Army, set out on his own. He amassed great tracts of property on which he raised cattle and farmed rice. His wife Frances "Fannie" Lacy Pierce (1839-1870) is buried with him in the family plot.

3. George W. Anderson (1845-1931) was born in Indiana and was a corporal in Co. G, 6th Indiana Regiment during the Civil War. He married Julia Carley and their family moved to Palacios by 1920.

4. Dr. Homer C. Matthes (1907-1991) received his medical degree from the University of Texas Medical School Branch in Galveston and practiced in Panama from 1938-1946. He moved to Bay City and practiced as a surgeon, obstetrician (delivering 3540 babies) and family physician. He never refused a patient who could not pay his fee. His wife, Margaret (1911-1993), is buried next to him.

5. Ray Lee Penland, Jr. (1949-1968) attended school in Palacios and Port Lavaca. He was a PFC in Co I, 3 Mar, 3 Mar Div USMC. He was killed in action by rifle fire during a fire fight with the enemy near Quang Tri, South Vietnam.

6. Sallie Pearson Rush Hogue (1888-1980) was the mother of US Army Corporal Carl Wesley Rush (1921-1943) who was incarcerated and died as a WWII prisoner of war at Cabanatuan Prison in the Philippines after surviving the Bataan Death March. He was buried at Memphis National Cemetery in Memphis, TN.

7. Alphon Willie "Al" Hurta (1913-2001) moved to Midfield with his family in 1923. He served in the US Army in WWII and was the Matagorda County Commissioner of Precinct No. 4 for 24 years. His wife, Mattie Nora "Totsy" Guynes Hurta (1918-2002) is buried beside him.

8. Martha Jane Hess Hawk (1859-1936) and her husband, Joseph W. Hawk (1858-1935) were Gold Star parents of Private George W. Hawk (1887-1918) who died of wounds received while serving with the WWI American Expeditionary Forces in France. Joseph is buried near his parents.

9. William George King, Jr. (1921-2010) graduated from Blessing High School, served 6 years in the US Navy and was a Pearl Harbor survivor. He married Verna Marie Matthes (1919-1979) and they lived in Blessing and Markham. He was a coach, teacher and principal at Markham Elementary. After retirement he continued with TISD as tax assessor collector/business manager.

10. Aaron Crowder (1843-1922) was born in Ontario, Canada and migrated to the US in 1844. He was living in New York when, at 19, he enlisted in Co. B, NY 151st Infantry Regiment and served from 1862-1865 during the Civil War. He married Susan Rose Bostwick (1865-1936) in 1880 and the family moved to Blessing by 1910 where Mr. Crowder was a truck farmer.

11. Samuel C. Melbourn (1842-1920) was born in NJ. He enlisted at 19 in Co. H, 3rd Regiment, NY Volunteer Infantry as a teamster. He moved to IL then Bell Co., TX where he married Ladosia McMillian. By 1910, Samuel was living in Blessing and died in Midfields.

12. Wylie Martin Kuykendall (1839-1920) began driving cattle at age 10 and at 12 was trailing cattle to MO. After Confederate service as a private in the 1st Regiment, Texas Cavalry, he married Susan Pierce (1841-1920), the sister of Shanghai and Jonathan Pierce. They ranched near Deming's Bridge and later in the Buckeye area. Susan ran the ranch while Wylie was on the cattle drives.

13. Ellen Swift Partain Rugeley Siringo Sapp (1853-1914) was born in Matagorda County and married Thomas Edward Partain in 1874. She married Frank Rugeley in 1911 and was married to cowboy, Pinkerton detective and author Charles Siringo for a short time in 1913. Ellen was killed near Beaumont in 1916 while on a hunting trip with her fourth husband, E. E. Sapp.

14. James E. "Jimmy" Partain (1875-1900) was the son of Thomas E. Partain (1852-1911) and Ellen Swift Partain. He was engaged to be married to Julia Cornelius in August 1900, but he was drowned about 10 p.m. on Aug. 11th when the rain-swollen waters of the Tres Palacios River washed him and his horse off Deming's Bridge.

15. John Pybus (1816-1909) was born in Liverton, Yorkshire, England and was living in Matagorda County by 1860. He was married to Chloe Pybus (1823-189) and was a farmer and stock raiser. He served the Confederacy in the Tres Palacios Coast Guards, 21st Reserve Company as a private.

16. Sarah Ann Gilliland Kuykendall Kensie Tone (1797-1857) was born in TN and married Robert H. Kuykendall in AR in 1814, Peter Kensie c 1833 in TX and Thomas J. Tone in 1837 in Matagorda County. She is the earliest recorded burial at Hawley.

17. Orpha Brown (1881-1980) and her husband, Herbert L. (1883-1964) were both teachers who moved from Kansas to Texas. In 1909 they visited the Aikin family in Blessing and decided to settle in the young town. Orpha received a Texas county teaching certificate and taught school at the Blessing Masonic Lodge building. She taught all grades for \$60 per month. She and H. L. also taught at Prairie Center, Midfield and Wadsworth.

18. William Walter "Pudge" Heffelfinger (1867-1954) was born in Minneapolis, MN. He attended Yale University and played left guard on Walter Camp's football team 1888-1891. He was a three time All American at Yale and played football for the Chicago Athletic Association. On Nov. 12, 1892 Pudge received \$525 for playing and winning a football game in Pittsburgh, PA. He is the first documented professional football player. He coached college teams in CA, PA and MN, published Heffelfinger's Football Facts and had the first sports quiz show on radio. He married Grace Harriet Pierce (1878-1960) and died at their Live Oak Farm near Blessing.

19. Deming's Bridge marker

History

Hawley Cemetery, first known as Deming's Bridge Cemetery, was established in 1854. It is located on the Tres Palacios River, two miles east of Blessing, Matagorda County, Texas. The cemetery was so named due to the proximity to Deming's Bridge and was adjacent to Tres Palacios Baptist Church which was founded in 1852. The original two acres were donated by Emelius and Norman Savage and Jonathan E. Pierce donated an additional 1.5 acres 1893. The cemetery association purchased an additional 3.5 acres along the south side of the cemetery and the fence was moved to enclose the new acreage. The names of the community and post office were changed from Deming's Bridge to Hawley by Jonathan E. Pierce in 1899. In 1913, Jonathan Pierce and his two daughters, Pearl Pierce Smith and Grace Pierce Heffelfinger deeded an additional 13 acres. The earliest recorded burial was Sarah Tone October 30, 1857. During the 1930s, during a cleanup effort, an out of control brush fire burned the existing wooden markers. The burned markers were replaced by 80 concrete markers and most of the names of those burials are still unknown. The Hawley Cemetery Association was formed in 1939 and maintains the grounds and records. There are six sections in the cemetery, A-H. Burials at Hawley include brothers, A. H. "Shanghai" Pierce and J. E. Pierce and their extended families which includes W. W. "Pudge" Heffelfinger, the first documented professional football player. In 2013 there were 1850 known burials and an undetermined number of unknowns. Included in the 1850 burials are seven war casualties, 375 veterans and seven Gold Star Mothers.



Walking Tour



Blessing, Texas

721 County Road 436 Hawley Cemetery Road
PO Box 343, Blessing, TX 77419
28°53'55.42"N 96°10'44.39"W

http://www.usgenwebsites.org/TXMatagorda/cemetery_hawley.htm

