

# Ford Cemetery

**GPS Coordinates: 35 08.14 92 18.36 (Approximate)**  
**Township 6 North, Range 12 West, Section 21**  
**Political Township: Harve**

The following census and history of Ford Cemetery was submitted by Charles D. Parsons:

This abandoned cemetery lies approximately two miles from the junction of Highway 287 and Acklin Gap road. Named for the family of James Ford (1813-1895), this cemetery was in use by 1851 and continued to serve the area as a burying ground until around 1900. There are many graves in the cemetery; however, due to neglect and the sale of the property several times over the years, the cemetery has been virtually destroyed.

At the present time, there is a structure erected on part of the cemetery. I personally viewed the cemetery in the early 1990s with Nathan and Barbara (Acklin) Buerer. Several rows of graves were plainly visible, with rocks embedded in the ground at the head and foot of many graves. Although no commercially made monuments were present, I have been told by individuals that there were some in the cemetery at one time, having been removed by a previous owner in an attempt to obliterate any trace of the cemetery. The following members of the Ford family are buried in this cemetery:

1	Ford, Amelia Yates	c. 1814	10 Nov 1851	Born in Harrison Co., VA; Dau of Elijah Yates; Wife of James Ford
2	Ford, Emaline	7 Mar 1842	29 Nov 1857	Dau of James & Amelia Yates Ford
3	Ford, Hannah Guthrie Hartje	10 May 1823	17 Apr 1878	md. Charles Henry Hartje 31 Aug 1843; Wife of James Ford
4	Ford, James	19 June 1813	5 Dec 1895	Born in Harrison Co., VA; Son of Elisha & Eleanor Warder Ford; md. Amelia Yates 8 Nov 1836; md. Hannah Guthrie Hartje 16 Jan 1853; md. Permelia W. Saunders 12 Jul 1878
5	Ford, Matilda	27 Jul 1851	24 Dec 1851	Dau of James & Amelia Yates Ford
6	Ford, Melvina	18 Jan 1846	11 Feb 1855	Dau of James & Amelia Yates Ford
7	Ford, Obadiah	1 Aug 1840	19 Jun 1857	Son of James & Amelia Yates Ford
8	Ford, William	8 Jul 1838	20 Jan 1866	Son of James & Amelia Yates Ford
9	Lavender, Martha Jane Ford	29 Mar 1844	20 Jul 1870	Dau of James & Amelia Yates Ford; md. Joseph Lavender, Jr., 11 Oct 1865

The following article was written by Charles D. Parsons and was published in the Faulkner County Historical Society publication, *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings*:

The area in central Faulkner County now known as Harve Township began to be settled in the years prior to the Civil War. When the earliest settlers arrived, they found a wilderness that required much hard work to tame. One of these settlers, a pioneer from what is now the state of West Virginia, brought his family to the wilds of then Conway County in 1849. His effect upon the communities of Oakland and Holland would be significant and would last until the present time.

In the fall of 1849, James Ford chose to leave his native state and bring his family to Arkansas. He was born June 19, 1813, near the town of Pruntytown,

Harrison County, Virginia. His parents were Elisha Ford (1782-1865) and Eleanor Warder Ford (1795-1879). Elisha Ford, a veteran of the War of 1812, and his wife were first cousins and married on March 18, 1811, in Harrison County. Elisha and Eleanor's grandfather, William Ford I (c.1722-1821) moved from Charles County, Maryland, to Fauquier County, Virginia in the 1770s. Elisha's father, William Ford II (1762-1839) and Eleanor's mother, Nancy Ann Ford Warder (c.1769-1840s) were brother and sister.

James Ford was the oldest of fourteen children, all of whom remained in West Virginia except for him. At the age of 23, he and Amelia Yates were married by James Gawthrop in Harrison County. They had eight children before deciding to move from their home and settle in Arkansas. James and Amelia resided in Harrison County only a short time, for they appear on the 1840 census in next-door Lewis County with one son. It is believed that they remained in Lewis County until their decision to leave the state.

Reasons for James' decision to leave Virginia remain a mystery, but the story of the journey they made was passed down through the family. The area where James Ford lived was near the Little Kanawha River. This natural waterway led directly to the Ohio River, where the family floated downstream on a flatboat to the Mississippi. They continued down the Mississippi River to the mouth of the Arkansas, where they chose to go upstream. On November 5, 1849, the family landed at the mouth of Cadron Creek, according to the obituary of his daughter, Mary Elizabeth Parsons, who turned one year on that day. James Ford then took his family up the Cadron, choosing to follow the East Fork of the Cadron to the mouth of Harve Creek. Family tradition states that he followed the dry creek bed of Harve Creek through a naturally formed gap on the western end of what was later known as Duran Hill. This creek led the family into a valley, where James chose a homestead in Section 20, Township 6 North, Range 12 West. Land office records show that he took title to 160 acres of land in 1857 and an additional 80 acres in 1859.

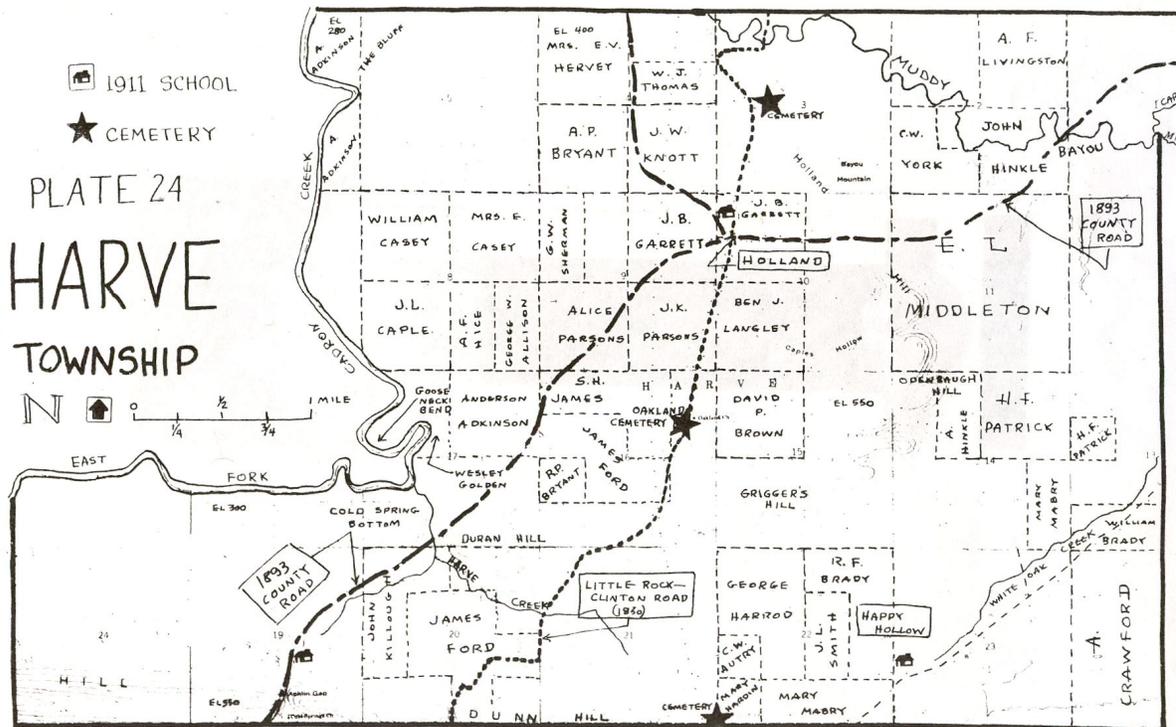
When the Ford family arrived in the area, their neighbors were some distance away. Just to the south, across two steep ridges, Thomas and Jane (Irvin) Carter and their family had been living for only a few years and had erected a cotton gin. A few miles to the east was Thomas Allen and Mary (Lowery) Mabry, living near the gap where Highway 36 currently runs. And to the north, several miles distant, was Jonathan Hardin's Inn, at the crossing of the north-south Little Rock-Clinton Road, and the east-west Springfield-Des Arc Road. James Ford's property was only a few miles west of the Little Rock-Clinton Road, which had been established as a military road about 1825. While the area around their new home was still basically a wilderness, they were not cut off from civilization and had access to major communities via these two roads.

At the time of their arrival in then Conway County, the Ford family consisted of James, age 36, his wife Amelia, age 35, and their six living children: William, age 11; Obadiah, age 9; Emaline, age 7; Martha Jane, age 5; Melvina, age 3; and Mary Elizabeth, age 1. Their first born children, a set of twins, died at birth and were buried in Virginia. Another daughter would be born in 1851, but would die shortly

after birth. James faithfully recorded this information in his family Bible, which is in the possession of his great-great-great-grandson, Charles D. Parsons.

James Ford not only brought with him his young family, but also a strong civic and religious mind as well. He was a licensed Class Leader in the Methodist Episcopal, South, a position in which he would direct the activities of his congregation in the absence of the circuit-riding preacher. Shortly after arriving in the area, he began attending informal worship services in the home of Jonathan Hardin. Settlers in the area met here to worship since there was no organized churches in the area at that time. Perhaps since he was a licensed Class Leader, James formally organized the group as a class of the Methodist Episcopal church, South, and within two years, a circuit rider was appointed to this charge. James began keeping membership records following this first pastoral appointment in 1851. He later named the church he organized Oakland Chapel, and this church still exists today as Oakland United Methodist Church. It is the oldest institution in the Holland community and one of the oldest in Faulkner County, dated to the fall of 1849.

Death was an ever-present burden for pioneer families, and in 1851 took two members of the Ford family. Amelia (Yates) Ford died on November 10, and their infant daughter, Matilda, died on December 24. James buried his wife and daughter on a small rise just to the west of his homestead. Over the years, he buried the remaining members of his family there as well. Other families that moved into the area also chose to use this location for their burying ground. While it has not been used as an active cemetery for close to a century, its location is still dear to those



*Harve Township, showing land ownership in 1873*

whose ancestors chose the site for their final resting place. Today, it lies near the junction of Acklin Gap Road and Happy Hills Road in central Faulkner County and is known as Ford Cemetery.

On January 16, 1853, James married a widow, Hannah (Guthrie) Hartje, ten years his junior. Hannah was born in Delaware and had first married Charles Henry Hartje, an immigrant from Germany. Charles and Hannah were the parents of four children: William Henry (died at birth), Augustus, Charles Henry, and Sophia. Hannah brought her three living children into the Ford home. But life was not easy for these early settlers and death struck the family four times in two years. Melvina Ford died in 1855 and three other children died in 1857: Sophia Hartje on May 7, Obadiah Ford on June 19, and Emaline Ford on November 29. Such a blow must have been trying on this family and today we can only imagine the difficulties they faced as they tried to deal with their losses and making their living from the land.

When the Civil War began, local men and boys left their farms and families to join in the fighting. James' son, William, joined the Confederate forces, serving in Company E, Tenth Arkansas Infantry. He saw action at Shiloh and was captured and paroled at Port Hudson, Louisiana, in July 1863. During this time, James continued to serve as Class Leader of the congregation he now was calling Oakland Chapel. In 1862, he erected a log building in Section 16 on the Little Rock-Clinton Road, about halfway between his home and Jonathan Hardin's Inn, using native oak timber for the logs and giving the church a new name. Due to local turmoil during the war, the group did not meet regularly until the close of the war in 1865.

While he did not lose any children in battle during the war, it was not long following that his son, William, died on January 20, 1866. William was unmarried and was buried in the cemetery with his mother, brother, and sisters. There were times of happiness, though. James' two surviving daughters married in this period. Martha Jane married Joseph Lavender, Jr., in 1865, and Mary Elizabeth married William David Killough in 1866. These marriages brought the hope of grandchildren and the continuation of the Ford family. Joseph and Martha Jane had one daughter, Sarah Jane, who James raised following the death of her mother in 1870, and of her father a few years later. David and Mary had seven children: Hannah Elizabeth, James Marshall, Annie Caroline, Sophia S., Thomas, Minnie Ellen, and Minor A., before David died in 1887.

In 1868, James purchased another 160 acres, this time in Section 16, lying to the west of the land where he had built the log church. He now had two homesteads. Eventually he gave his daughter Mary Elizabeth the property in Section 16, and his granddaughter, Sarah Jane Lavender, his original homestead in Section 20. Sarah Jane married Henry Woodson Parham in 1883, and they resided on this property for many years. It was later always known as the "Parham Place." Following David Killough's death, Mary Elizabeth married Elisha Edward Parsons, and they raised their only child, William Edward, on her property. This land is still in the possession of her Parsons descendants.

During the 1870s and 1880s, James was not only active in the church, but also served as a Democratic committeeman from Harve Township. He also leased a small tract of his land in Section 20 to the directors of School District No. 63, which is believed to be the site of the New Bethel School, which closed about 1915. It was also during this time that he lose his second wife, Hannah in 1878. James buried her in Ford Cemetery with the rest of the family. He did not grieve long, however, because just three months after her death, he married a third time to Permelia W. Saunders.

In the early 1880s, James and Permelia left their farm in Harve Township and moved to Conway, where life would be easier for the aging couple. His reason for moving is unknown: perhaps it was the fact that he was getting older or that his granddaughter had married and was now head of her own household. In 1881, he purchased from F. M. Bryant Lot 16, Block 6 at the corner of Prairie and Chestnut streets, where the parking lot for Regions Bank is now located. Here James and Permelia lived until her death in 1892. James did not bury Permelia in Ford Cemetery with the rest of his family, but in Oak Grove Cemetery in Conway. She has a large monument inscribed "Mrs. P. W. Ford," which is located near the graves of some of Conway's founding fathers.

Following her death, James moved back to live with his daughter, Mary Elizabeth Parsons, and her family near the Oakland Methodist Church. Here he passed away on December 5, at the age of 82. His obituary in the *Arkansas Gazette* stated that he was a pioneer in Arkansas and had been a Mason and a Methodist for over half a century. He was buried in Ford Cemetery with his children and first two wives.

At his death, James had one surviving sister living in West Virginia. After receiving word of her brother's death, Mary Ford Dunnington (1832-1905) of Webster, Taylor County, West Virginia, wrote back to her niece, Mary Elizabeth Parsons. In her letter, she told that there were fourteen children in her family and that she was the only remaining one, but she did not list any names. She also told where her parents and brothers and sisters were buried in West Virginia and that James was the only one that had left the state. She asked for information concerning his age, church membership, a copy of his obituary, and any sort of keepsake she might have, for she had things from her other siblings and wanted something of James' as well. This letter, dated January 31, 1896, has been a trendous help in tracking the whereabouts of James' family in West Virginia.

James Ford can be counted among the earliest settlers of Faulkner County, arriving here when it was still a sparsely settled wilderness. He endured hardships and losses of family members as well as the joy and fulfillment of his church and community. His influence and dedication in his establishment of Oakland United Methodist Church is evident to this day, and we, his descendants, can be proud to claim him as our ancestor.

In a communication received by email in October 2003, it was stated that "the stones have been pushed up, they line the driveway, and a shed built over the cemetery. We were told that the last person that tried to go see about it was run off with a gun."

Family researchers and genealogists owe a debt of gratitude to Charles Parsons for his indepth research and written history of the Ford family and others in and around Holland, Arkansas. Without his efforts and willingness to share his history, Ford Cemetery might have become entirely lost to the past. While the fate of this cemetery is tragic and unbelievable, we now have a record that will keep the memory of this cemetery alive.

It is believed that the following individuals were also buried in the cemetery, as they are immediate members of the Ford family. [Note: The last entry of Martha Mabry has been added because Pence Funeral Home records listed her as being buried in "Ford Graveyard."]

10	Killough, John	24 Aug 1881	4 Sep 1881	Son of William David & Mary Elizabeth Ford Killough
11	Killough, Sophia S.	c. 1876	1880s	Dau of William David & Mary Elizabeth Ford Killough
12	Killough, Thomas S.	c. 1879	1887	Son of William David & Mary Elizabeth Ford Killough
13	Killough, (Unnamed Infant)			Child of William David & Mary Elizabeth Ford Killough
14	Killough, William David	c. 1843	2 May 1887	Son of William & Elizabeth Bybee Killough; md. Mary Elizabeth Ford (dau of James & Amelia Yates Ford) 11 Nov 1866
15	Lavender, Joseph, Jr.	c. 1842	c. 1872	Son of Joseph & Mahala Allen Lavender; md. Martha Jane Ford 11 Oct 1865; md. Amanda A. Garrett 5 Mar 1871
16	Mabry, Martha	c. 1835	10 Dec 1898	Age 63; of Holland, died of pneumonia, buried at Ford Graveyard

**RESOURCES:**

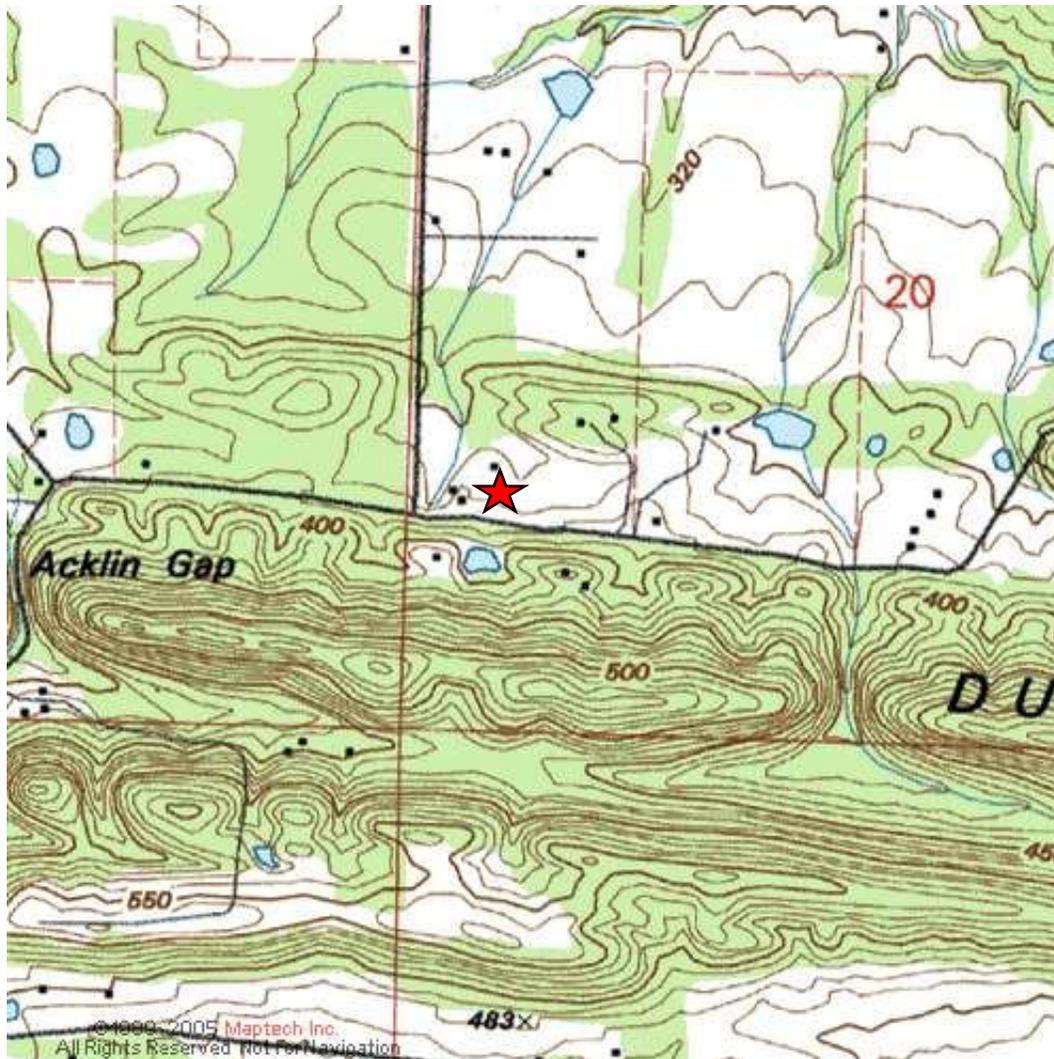
Allen, Desmond Walls. Pence Funeral Home, Conway, Arkansas, 1881-1904. Vol. I. Arkansas Research, Inc., 1986.

Faulkner County Census of Cemeteries as of December 31, 1987. Faulkner County Historical Society

Shubert, Dwight. Faulkner County Marriage Index, 1873-1925, Vol. 1, 1996.



Oakland, Ford, and Hardin Cemeteries



**Driving Directions:** From the junction of Arkansas highways 36 and 287, drive north on 287 for approximately two miles to its junction with Acklin Gap Road; turn left (west) on Acklin Gap Road and go approximately one mile. The cemetery is up on a ridge on the left (east) side of the road.