

## McAfee cemetery survey

Story and Photos

By Rachel Dean

Herald Staff

The Pioneer James McAfee Cemetery was visited by a team of archaeological surveyors last Thursday. On an invitation from James Harrod Trust, Philip Mink and Jim Coyle of Kentucky Archaeological Survey, which is jointly administered by the Kentucky Heritage Council and the University of Kentucky Department of Anthropology, used radar technology to help locate unmarked graves in the historical cemetery.

The last known written account of the cemetery was completed in 1897 by the Rev. Neander M. Woods. In his account he wrote:

"James McAfee died June 25, 1811, aged 75 years, as we learn from the tombstone at his grave. His wife, Agnes, survived him not quite three years, dying May 2, 1814. They were buried in the old Pioneer Graveyard on the top of the hill, about six or seven hundred yards to the northeast of the old stone house, and about five or six hundred yards to the southwest by south, of the New Providence Churchyard. "The editor of this volume visited the spot in the summer of 1897 and found all the stones of both graves lying flat on the ground and almost hidden from view.

"They are neat stones, and the inscriptions on them are very clear. They have been reset in position, but they lack a proper foundation. The two graves lie side by side and extend due east and west. That of James, which is the more northerly of the two, is just 27 1/2 feet south of the fence which runs east and west and divides the farm of Watts from the field in which the graves are.

"No care whatever is taken of this ancient burial place. It is in an open field where stock roved at will, and unless the descendants of the sainted dead provide a substantial enclosure for the place, in a few years or more, the grave stones will have been broken to pieces and scattered, and the last resting place of the leader of the McAfee brothers will have become indistinguishable and trodden under the feet of cattle and horses.

"There are other graves near by, most of which have no gravestones in position and nothing to indicate whose ashes are sleeping there – an apt illustration of the truth that the deadest and most desolate thing in all this world is a cemetery that has ceased to be used and cared for, and to which loving hands come no more to lay the tributes of affection on the graves who slumber there."

Currently, the cemetery is surrounded by farm land and the subdivision, Rainey Estates. It is at the end of Man O'War Blvd. off Talmage-Mayo Road in McAfee.

Amalie Preston provided the following history of the cemetery and how it came under ownership of the JHT.

"James McAfee is one of five brothers who settled from end of Mercer County to the other – from Salt River all the way to Anderson County. The settlement of McAfee is named for James McAfee because it was on part of his land grant.

"We feel that the first burial in the cemetery was a fatality at the

1781 Indian attack on the McAfee station. It was a fortified station to keep the Indians out. The gentleman killed in the attack was Isaac Clunendike, a Dutchman who was fortified up there for safety. His is probably the first burial there, but he is in one of the unmarked graves.

"So, now we can only see the markers for James McAfee and his wife, Nancy Agnes McAfee. There is also another stone that is broken, for the son of Beriah Magoffin. His brother grew up to be the Civil War governor of Kentucky. His mother was the daughter of Samuel McAfee, a brother to James.

"We know that many family members are buried there, but there are no stones to prove that now.

"We are hoping that from the archaeological survey that was done, we will be able to determine where those burials are, and to at least perhaps replace the field stones that are currently clustered around trees in the graveyard. All of this is in preparation of a Sons of the American Revolution memorial of another brother, Robert McAfee. "Robert's marker is being placed there because he was murdered in New Orleans in 1795. And, since we don't know where he's buried down there, so a marker can't be placed, we can place one here as a memorial to him.

"Two other brothers, George and Samuel, will be honored by the Sons of the American Revolution at the Providence Presbyterian Cemetery Sept. 13 at 11 a.m. All are invited to participate.

"The cemetery was gifted to the JHT in 2004 by Irene Dickerson Knight, whose love of history moved her to preserve this site for generations to come.

"It continues to be a work in progress. A JHT historical marker has been placed on the site and the area has been cleaned of underbrush. JHT will keep the cemetery well maintained. Some family members have also put forth some ideas for landscaping."

For history buffs and cemetery enthusiasts, the fifth annual JHT History Underfoot Cemetery Tour will be held Friday and Saturday, Sept. 19-20 at Spring Hill Cemetery. Tours begin at 6:30 p.m. each day and will leave at approximately 20 minute intervals. The cost per person is \$5. This year, costumed interpreters will represent people whose lives coincided with the life of Abraham Lincoln to celebrate the national Lincoln bicentennial. Those represented will be: Gov. Beriah Magoffin, J.Q. Chenoweth, Lizzie Harden, the Rev. and Mrs. Jesse Head, Dr. Runyo and a Shaker guest.

For more information, call the Harrodsburg/Mercer County Tourist Commission at 734-2364.