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# There's a story on lone grave near Texas 347

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Perhaps nothing sparks human curiosity more than to find a lone gravesite on the prairie, replete with headstone and a wire fence. Such a grave is in plain sight of cars traveling Texas 347, north of Dupont Chemical Plant. The grave is about 100 feet north of Stanolind Road to Neches River and about 100 yards east of Texas 347.

The name on the headstone reads "Elisha O. Brewer," who died on August 5, 1883. Immediately the viewer ponders who Brewer might have been and why he was buried in such an isolated spot. Actually Brewer was buried in the backyard of what was then his home.

Brewer was born in Port Neches in 1852, the son of William and Caroline Hillebrandt Brewer, a well-to-do ranching family, and a grandson of Christian Hillebrandt, for whom Hillebrandt Bayou is named.

One day before Columbus C. Caswell, mayor of Beaumont, died on August 6, 1883, Brewer had driven his wagon to Beaumont to visit the mayor, in whose sawmill Brewer had once worked. Upon returning home and un-harnessing his wagon, Brewer was kicked in the groin by his horse. Galveston Daily News of Aug. 13, 1883, observed:

"...On Sunday afternoon, near Spindle Top, ... a boy saw a horse running from a stable... and afterward he found Mr. Brewer lying in front of the stable, evidently hurt. He immediately ran for Mrs. Brewer, who was at a relative's home a short distance away, and upon returning, she found her husband had crawled to a block...'Oh, Ma, I'm badly hurt!' he exclaimed, as he expired in her arms..."

Brewer's wife was the former Mary Courts, whom he had married 12 years earlier, and who was a granddaughter of John Sparks, the first settler about 1845

at the present site of Port Arthur. Why Mrs. Brewer chose to bury her husband in the backyard instead of the neighboring family cemetery is unknown. Earlier hurricanes and yellow fever had forced several Sparks families to abandon Sparks' Settlement on the shore of Lake Sabine. They either tore down or moved about six houses and rebuilt them at the second Sparks' Settlement at the present site of Dupont Chemical plant.

In 1955 when the Dupont Company bought their present location south of Beaumont, they found about ten graves of the vine-covered and long-abandoned Sparks Cemetery, which had to be moved to Magnolia Cemetery.

Another lone grave site, that of Seaborn Berry, is located in the Mobil tank farm at Port Neches, near where high land meets the Neches River marsh. Berry, originally from Newton County, moved to Smith Bluff about 1865, where he bought the 177-acre Maria Turner survey from Michael Staffen. Berry, already 70 years old, married Henrietta Staffen, a young widow with five children. Berry died in 1881 and was buried near his home.

The last time I saw Seaborn Berry's tombstone, it was covered with blackberry briars and brambles and was located near an abandoned pump house. Seaborn's brother, Radford Berry, who also moved to Smith Bluff in 1865, was earlier a land office agent for Lorenzo de Zavala's colony at Nacogdoches and in 1835 had issued some of the Mexican land grants in Jefferson County.

Today the farmhouses and stables are long gone, and only the gravestones remain to bear mute witness of an earlier age. The western bluff of the Neches River marsh between Beaumont and Groves contained at least ten lost family cemeteries, the locations of which are no longer known today.

[http://www.wtblock.com/wtblockjr/lone\\_grave.htm](http://www.wtblock.com/wtblockjr/lone_grave.htm)