

Explanation of Methodology

It became apparent from the onset of this project that a guide to deal with the wide variety and quality of source material was imperative. The following methodology was established in an effort to treat the source material in a consistent manner.

Also Known As: It is not uncommon for a cemetery to be referred to by two or more names. When this occurs, the variant name of the cemetery is cross-referenced in the spreadsheet.

Church Affiliation: Cemeteries found in close proximity to a church are assumed to be affiliated with the church. Unless otherwise known, the church and cemetery are given the same name. The denomination and date of the church's establishment are included when known.

First Known Interment: The first interment is determined by reviewing all the interment dates of a survey. The earliest date of death found as a result of this review is considered the first known interment. Earlier interments may have occurred, but could not be verified by date. When conflicting sources cite differing dates, the earliest date is used. Interment dates are provided in an effort to place the cemetery within a historical time frame of activity.

Marked and Unmarked Graves: Marked graves are those with legible headstones from which some information about the interment can be deduced. All other graves are considered unmarked. Marked and unmarked graves are obviously an interpretation made by individuals performing cemetery surveys. When a source does not distinguish between marked and unmarked graves, it is assumed that all the graves are marked.

Number of Graves: The number of graves is based upon the count made at the time of a cemetery survey. Recent surveys and cemeteries no longer in use provide the most accurate estimations of graves. Check the date of the source. In cases of very dated sources, no estimation of the number of graves is made. For example, an active cemetery surveyed in the 1960's is likely to have increased markedly in size over the last 40 years. No effort to extrapolate the number of graves is made in this case.

Still in Use: A cemetery with interments within 20 years of the time of the survey. The cemetery may or may not be in use at present.

Surnames: A citation of all the surnames found in a particular cemetery is beyond the scope of the Atlas. Surnames accounting for a preponderance of those found in a cemetery were cited. Surname citations are more inclusive for small cemeteries than for large cemeteries.

Uncertain Location: A cemetery with a description of location that is too vague for accurate plotting is considered to have an "Uncertain Location." This problem varies in degree. If a cemetery could be confidently localized to a site within a particular section, (one square mile) the cemetery is plotted on the county map with a blue dot. Where accurate plotting is not achievable, the location as described by our source is provided. For example, a cemetery described as "at the intersection of County Roads X and Y" is plotted as an "Uncertain Location" because the site could be derived from maps to within a section. A cemetery described as "behind Mr. Smith's barn, 3 miles west of Anywhere, Alabama" could not be plotted with any degree of accuracy.

Unknown Name: If a map source identified the location of a cemetery without providing a name, the cemetery is recorded in the spreadsheet as "Unknown" and is plotted on the county map with an orange dot. Cemeteries with "Unknown Locations" may constitute a portion of the cemeteries with "Unknown" names. Additionally, there are instances of a source providing a survey with a vague description of the location and no name for the cemetery. In this case, the cemetery would be listed by the name "Unknown" under the "Uncertain Location" portion of the spreadsheet.