

Where's Rachel?

The Old Burying Ground (a.k.a. Pioneer Cemetery) extends from the current location of Travellers Rest parallel to Paint Creek to the creek access road at the end of South Street. General Duncan McArthur, founder of Greenfield in 1799, gave land for the cemetery which has almost 900 burials.

In his book "*A Greene Countrie Towne*", F.R. Harris wrote that the first African-American female in Greenfield was named Rachel. She was also listed in the book "*Cemetery Inscriptions of Highland County, Ohio*" by David and Jane McBride as: STAFFORD, Rachel d. May 21, 1858, a. about 80 yrs.

So when preservation efforts by a small group of volunteers began in 2014 to clean, repair, locate, and preserve gravestones in the Old Burying Ground, it became a goal to locate the burial place of Rachel. She has a noteworthy place in Greenfield's history and her gravestone needed to be located and repaired if necessary.

A prominent burial in the cemetery is Abolitionist and Presbyterian minister Samuel Crothers. Rev. Crothers gave the first sermon against slavery from a pulpit west of the Allegheny Mountains. Rachel, a female former slave, was listed in the 1850 census as a member of the Samuel Crothers household. F.R. Harris reported an old ledger of the Douglas tannery which recorded the purchase of a pair of shoes for "Rachel" in 1848 by Dr. Samuel Crothers, pastor of the Greenfield Presbyterian Church. It was assumed that this was an act of kindness.

It has been difficult to find much information about Rachel although emancipation records and a couple pages written in "*All in the Same Spaceship*", (Wayne L. Snider) about Rachel have been found. Her last name was not used by people who knew her, but the United States Census of 1850 listed her age reported as seventy years and her birthplace as the State of Maryland. Snider also wrote:
"It may be only a coincidence but an interesting one that among the early Quaker settlers of Highland County were William and Rachel Stafford, who left North Carolina in 1804 and settled in the Fall Creek region near enough to have been friends of Samuel Gibson. Could it be that Rachel received the name of Stafford from them or other Staffords of the area and later went with the Crothers family?"

There is also a record in the Highland County Recorder's Office of the emancipation of a Negro slave named Rachel and a record was made in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in 1800, by Samuel Gibson,

indicating his purpose to emancipate the eighteen year old Rachel when she became twenty-five years of age in 1807. The Daniel Scott "*History of the Early Settlement of Highland County*" tells of a Samuel Gibson who came from Kentucky to the Rocky Fork region of Highland County in 1803. The age given in the court record would make Rachel 68 years in 1850 corresponding to the 70 years reported in the U. S. Census.

The location of her gravestone remained a mystery until late June, 2018. Due to poor conditions of many of the gravestones, and missing stones, it was often felt that evidence of her burial would never be found. But that all changed when her headstone was found broken, and lying flat on the ground near the back tree line of the cemetery. The inscription was difficult to read at first, but upon further study, it was obvious that this was the missing "Rachel".

The gravestone is shown below on the left. A better look is shown in the middle. The repaired stone is shown on the right. The stone is a typical marble gravestone found in the Old Burying Ground with a slotted stone base. The stone is now cleaned, repaired, and reinstalled it so it will hopefully last another 160 years!



Efforts to preserve the Old Burying Ground continue throughout the year. New volunteers are always welcome. If you are interested, email info@greenfieldhistoricalsociety.org and you will receive emails announcing scheduled volunteer sessions as well as summaries of previous work sessions.