

I am an Infectious Diseases physician at UT Medical Center and Blount Memorial Hospital. The following comments are informational in nature. I have a lecture entitled "The Williams Family of Knox County, and their relation to the Sultana Disaster, and the establishment of the Williams Henson Home for Children". I have presented this lecture to some Knoxville Civic organizations and history clubs including the Knoxville Sertoma Club. I am scheduled to present to the Knoxville Ossoli Organization in January 2025.

Adjacent to the property in question is the site of the Bethel (or Mount Bethel) Lutheran Church and Cemetery which was established when "more or less" than 2 acres of property were bequeathed by Lewis E. Williams and his wife Mary Jane Williams on July 22, 1874. A genealogist, David Donahue, estimated there are approximately 100 souls interred at this site.

My Mothers paternal great grandfather is interred in this cemetery. His name was Rice Sams I. He has numerous descendants in the East Tennessee region. Some with whom you may be familiar include Judge Dale Young of Maryville, TN (National news frozen embryo case mid 1980s), former Knoxville City Councilman Gordon Sams, and late 1800s Blount County Justice of the Peace, J.T. Sams. Another descendant of note was Doris Sams, who was the All-American Girls League Baseball Player of the Year in 1947 and 1949. (see movie "A League of Their Own").

The Bethel Lutheran Church site and Cemetery are of substantial historical significance to Knox County. There is a monument to Spencer Harrison Williams of the 3rd Tennessee UNION Cavalry who was killed in the Sultana Disaster on April 27, 1865. Adjacent to Spencer Harrison Williams is his brother Lewis Elbert Williams, and his wife Mary Jane. Lewis was contracted to make gun stocks for the Union Army. A third brother, Joel Williams Jr, and his wife Mary Badgett Williams lie next to Lewis. Joel also served in the Union Army and was shot in the chest by a Confederate minnie ball. He survived his wound, subsequently married and had 5 children. Unfortunately, in 1888, the minnie ball apparently eroded into a pulmonary artery resulting in his death.

The Williams Henson Home for Orphans and Delinquent Boys was established on a portion of the Williams farm in a codicil to Lewis E. Williams will on June 3, 1922. He received financial assistance from Martha Caroline Badgett Henson. As a young lady, she had been a ward of Lewis E. and Mary Jane Williams. Lewis may have lost money in the collapse of the Alec McMillan Company real estate venture sometime between 1918 and 1922. Martha Caroline Badgett Henson contributed \$90,000 in 1918 for the construction of St. Johns Lutheran Church in Knoxville. She and her husband were also the namesakes of Henson Hall on UT Knoxville campus.

Also interred at Bethel Lutheran Cemetery is Esco Lebow who was killed when struck by an automobile while delivering Knoxville News Sentinel newspapers in October 1936 at the corner of Maryville Pike and Topside Road. His stone in the Cemetery appears to be sinking.

My interest in the property presently before the Planning Commission is that the right of way to the Cemetery be maintained for myself and other local descendants of Rice Sams I. Furthermore, the story of the Williams Family therein interred is of notable historical significance to East Tennessee and the Sultana Survivor Descendants Organization in our region. In fact, one of my son-in-laws is a descendant of Pleasant Keeble who was the last living Sultana survivor of the 3rd Tennessee Union Cavalry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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