

The Hunt for the Graves of Peregrine and Elizabeth (Moore) Yoe
by Ross J Cameron, 28 Oct 2005

Merle Moore, Barbara Pemberton, and I had been researching the Yoe family in local and family records. Among the most important references was a letter from Annie Calmes McGraw Thomas, great granddaughter of Rhodeham Yoe who wrote in a letter to Prentice Price about 1950 that many years earlier she had visited Peregrine and Elizabeth Yoe's unmarked graves on the old home place now (1850) owned by Tom Dean. Using land descriptions from some Yoe deeds and old and new maps of the area, Merle was able to identify the approximate area where the Yoe family lived. Merle, Grace, April and I came down early for the 2001 Moore Reunion and drove directly into Russellville first thing on arriving in the area on Thursday afternoon, October 25. Jay Moore who knew the local area met them in Russellville and the "hunt" was on.

With maps in hand we headed southeasterly down Warrensburg Road for about three miles, past an old white frame church. Then we turned left onto Beacon Light Road and went up the hill. Beacon Light Road bears right as an unpaved Pullen Road continues straight. Peregrine and Elizabeth's youngest child and only daughter married Eaton Pullen. We continued on Beacon Light Road passing a water tower on the right. Then we turned around and went back to the area of the water tower. There was no one home at the few houses along this road. We drove around the Russellville area stopping at some homes of Deans that Jay knew but still did not find anyone home. Then we headed for the Hamblen County courthouse in Morristown. Jay's acquaintance with the officials there eased our research efforts there. We did find some deeds and other references to some of the Yoe sons, but nothing on Peregrine and Elizabeth because they died before Hamblen County was organized in 1870 so the records that we needed were at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Dandridge. The part of Jefferson County in which the Yoes had lived became part of the new Hamblen County shortly after their deaths.

On Friday we headed out on another cemetery search. Late that afternoon we got the courthouse at Dandridge. There we got copies of Peregrine's will and some Yoe deeds and records there which would help us in our search later. But now it was time to get ready for the Moore Reunion.

After the reunion, we kept working on finding the graves. On November 5, I emailed Randy Frazier by finding information on the web that he was researching Deans in Hamblen County. He replied quickly that Tom Dean was his maternal grandfather and he was a great help in providing important information on the location of the Dean home and more. He told us that the large white frame house that we had passed on the way to the water tower was the Tom Dean home place. His mother was born in that house and said that its two front rooms had been two log houses joined by a dog run. The log houses were almost certainly the original Yoe home. He also said that there was an old stone-lined dug well about 50 yards behind the house about due west that may have been lost to a modern homesite. Facing the Dean house there were several small out buildings about twenty yards off the back porch. Hen house, privy, smoke house, bee hives, etc. There was a substantial tobacco barn directly across from the dwelling. Roy Heath bought it from Tom Dean and razed them in the 70's.

On 10 November, Merle phoned Randy's aunt, Mrs. Lela Maude Rice Dean who was in an assisted living home in Morristown. She was quite knowledgeable about the Tom Dean spread because she moved into the log cabins with her new husband in 1940. She lived there until she moved into her new home diagonally across the road to the SE. She said she knew nothing about there being graves on that property. She stated they had built a barn back of the house after moving there in 1940. There were other things like a privy, hand-dug well, orchard and a log smoke house there also when she moved there. A family by the name of Crew had done a lot of landscape work and had added siding connecting the two old log structures into one dwelling. This firmly convinced Merle that the two log structures were the home of Peregrine Yoe because there was no other location that fit the deed description -- east of the head spring of Fall Creek which was specified as the northernmost terminus from the straight line to the Nolichucky River to the south, continuing from the headspring of Fall Creek, "leaving Peregrine Yoe's on a line to Cheeks Crossroads". That location is hard by the corner stated and from Peregrine Yoe's, it is all downhill to the headspring of Fall Creek to the west.

Below are some photos with Merle's annotations from his trip in May 2002.