

## Strather's Chapel Baptist Church Cemetery Livermore, McLean County, KY



Messenger-Inquirer Owensboro, KY, Monday, 31 August 2020, p1A:

Livermore resident hopes to preserve Black history of city

By Christie Netherton McLean County News



Several children stand atop a hill side of the Black Missionary Baptist Church (Strather's Chapel), during a flood about 1913.

Livermore resident Holly Johnson said she and others are working to preserve Black history in the area. Recently, she said, there have been restorations efforts in the Black Baptist Church Cemetery in Livermore with another future project in the works.

Johnson operates a popular Facebook page in McLean County called "Livermore, Kentucky — History in Pictures," where she posts about some of the research she does for the city. Recently, she said she has been researching Livermore's Black history and became interested in learning about the two newly restored gravestones that are on the hillside cemetery of the former Black Missionary Baptist Church on Third Street.

"What I've been trying to do is do some research and try to preserve Livermore's Black history because it hasn't really been very well documented," Johnson said. "For years, I had played

in that cemetery when I was a kid, and my mom did, and her dad did ... so I just got curious about it and found out that it was a Civil War soldier buried there."

The two gravestones at the Black Missionary Baptist Church cemetery, according to Johnson, belong to Joshua Howard and Sarah Rowan. Johnson said the original church was torn down in 1958, but the gravestones and the church cornerstone, which reads "Strather's Chapel — 1895" were restored by a former Livermore resident Frank Coffman who Johnson said grew up in Livermore and financed the restoration project.

The larger gravestone belongs to Joshua Howard, who Johnson said was born in 1831 and died in 1892. Johnson said he was a Civil War Union soldier who enlisted in Owensboro and was the first Black man and former slave to purchase and own property in Livermore.

The other gravestone, according to Johnson, belonged to Sarah Rowan, who was born in 1840 and died in 1923. Johnson said Rowan was also a former slave who, after being freed, became a nanny for a prominent Livermore family.

"I thought that what Frank did to have it restored was nice and something to help preserve the Black history of our town," Johnson said.

Johnson said there were originally other gravestones in the cemetery, but many of them were removed in 1958 in an effort to better maintain the property. She said there are no records of the people buried there, but estimates there were at least 40.

Johnson said she has another project in the works for the cemetery. She hopes to have a monument built listing the names of Black men from the area who served in wars.

The project is still in the idea stage, she said, as she still needs financing and permission from the city to have the monument erected in the cemetery. Johnson said, however, that she has already received pledges from two individuals equaling about \$2,000. She said she expects the monument to cost from \$3,000 to \$5,000.



Sarah Rowan, on right, with Bess Moseley; Rowan formerly worked for Moseley as her nanny after being freed; according to Holly Johnson



Gravestones of Joshua Howard (1831-1892) and Sarah Rowan (1840-1923)



Restored gravestone of Joshua Howard (1831-1892)



**Messenger-Inquirer Owensboro, KY, Monday, 4 January 2021, p1C:**

## Livermore residents raise money for monument honoring Black veterans

By Karah Wilson, McLean County News



Owner of the Livermore History Facebook page and local genealogist and historian Holly Kassinger Johnson, and her friend Eldon Eaton, have been raising money to buy a monument dedicated to Black veterans from Livermore.

"In 2013, my friend Eldon, shared many years of his research and photos with me to make a Livermore History Facebook page," Johnson said. "In further research, I was surprised to learn that Livermore had several military servicemen of color. We are putting into place a monument for Black veterans who were born in Livermore, were residents during service or who are buried in the town."

Johnson said the purpose of the monument is to honor Livermore's Black servicemen and to bring about awareness of the battle they fought, above and beyond, against discrimination.

Johnson said Livermore cemeteries were founded during a time of segregation so Black residents had a separate burial site than white residents. Oak Hill Cemetery, Crow Cemetery and Richland Cemetery were all burial places of white residents. Crow Hill and Strather's Chapel were burial places for Black residents.

"The military service of Livermore's Black servicemen has not been documented because many of their descendants moved away," Johnson said. "Additionally, the Crow Hill Cemetery, where many soldiers are buried, is not accessible to the public. The graves have not even been photographed for the Find-a-Grave website."

According to Johnson, there are two Black Civil War soldiers buried in Livermore.

Joshua Howard is buried at Strather's Chapel on land that he sold to the church for that purpose. He was the first Black man and former slave to purchase property in Livermore.

Octavius Patterson was a free Black man when he enlisted in the Ohio regiment. The regiment's soldiers were recruited under the direction of President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. In 1910, Patterson was working as a janitor at a Livermore bank. He is buried at Crow Hill Cemetery.

"Seven soldiers honored on the monument paid the ultimate price during their service," Johnson said. "Six during the Civil War and one in the Korean War."

Henry Tanner, Henry Houston, Samuel Howard, George Rowan, Jerry Moorman and Robert Eaves will be on the monument for having fought in the Civil War. Allen Higgs Jr. will be honored for having fought in the Korean War.

These men's names are just a few that will be listed on the monument.

"They all were Livermore residents upon enlistment, yet they were never to return home," Johnson said.

The Livermore City Council gave their approval for the placement of the monument at Strather's Chapel on West Third Street.

A total of \$2,495 was raised through donations for the monument. Thomas Kassinger, Eldon Eaton, the Livermore Lion's Club, George Rhodes, Holly Johnson and Pat Woosley contributed to the donations. The final \$600 donation was received on Christmas Day.

"Although Black and white people both fought in the same wars since the American Revolution, they were not treated the same, during or after their service," Johnson said. "Segregation in the military did not end until July 26, 1948, when President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981. The order ended 170 years of officially sanctioned discrimination and was the first to implement a civil rights policy."

The following veterans are buried at Strather's Chapel Cemetery:

#### Civil War

Alexander Ayer, Ellis Ayer, George Belt, James Belt, Owen Belt, Andrew Crow, Robert Eaves, Henry Houston, Joshua Howard, Samuel Howard, Thomas Lindley, Jerry Moorman, Octavius Patterson, George Rowan, Lewis Rowan, Levi Rowan, Solomon Rowan, John Simmons, Henry Tanner, John Tanner, Silas Whitaker;

#### World War I

George Anderson, Claude Chinn, Bishop Marvin Humphrey, Frank Field, Burnie Moorman, Dora Moorman, Ernest Pope, John Pope, Cliff Porter, Elvin B. Porter, Willie Shultz, Reed Swain, Eddie Taylor;

#### World War II

Carlene Crite Jr., Cooper Daryl Holbrook, Jack Holbrook, George Albert Humphrey, Elbert Washington Humphrey, Charles Edward Taylor;

#### Korean War

Allen Higgs Jr., Clarence L. Thomas Sr.



**Messenger-Inquirer Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 3 April 2021:**

**Veterans monument set in Livermore**

By Karah Wilson, McLean County News

A veterans monument was installed at Strather's Chapel Cemetery recently to honor Black veterans from Livermore.

Holly Kassinger Johnson, owner of the Livermore, Kentucky History Facebook page and local historian, partnered with her friend Eldon Eaton to raise money for the monument in 2020.

According to Johnson, they are in the process of landscaping and adding solar lighting around the monument. More names will be added to the back of the monument in the future.

"The military service of Livermore's Black servicemen has not been documented because many of their descendants moved away," Johnson said. "Additionally, the Crow Hill Cemetery, where many soldiers are buried, is not accessible to the public. The graves have not been photographed for the Find-a-Grave website."

There are two Black Civil War soldiers buried in Livermore. Joshua Howard is buried at Strather's Chapel and Octavius Patterson is buried at Crow Hill Cemetery.

Johnson said there is a stone at Oak Hill Cemetery for Colonel Oren Coin that has been down for a few years and they are collecting funds and have made provisions to have the stone reset.

Coin fought for federal marketing for Kentucky Highway 75 and was president of the Highway 75 Association when the 26-year objective was won in July 1953. The highway was later designated as U.S. 431.

He also served as chairman of the Livermore Chamber of Commerce Committee.

Coin died in 1953 and in May 1956, the armory that was under construction was completed and dedicated to him. The building is now Livermore City Hall.

"I am so glad to see his stone finally being reset," Johnson said.

Strather's Chapel Cemetery is at West Third Street in Livermore.



**Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 12 November 1892, p1:**

**MURDER IN M'LEAN**

Josh. Howard Killed Near Livermore by a Rival Named Jim Bell.

News of the killing of Josh. Howard, colored, by another negro named Jim Bell, near Livermore, reached the city yesterday. The two men had been on bad terms for several months on account of a woman and when they met Thursday night got in a quarrel. Howard made a motion as if to pick up a stick and Bell shot him through the neck with a small rifle he had in his hands, killing him almost instantly. Bell made an effort to get away, but failed to do so. He was taken to Calhoon and put in jail.

Opinions differ as to the degree of Bell's crime. He makes a claim of self defense, but those who know most about the killing think it was thoroughly unjustifiable.



### **Notes by Jerry Long**

Joshua Howard's gravestone at the Strather's Chapel Cemetery records his birth and death dates as 20 October 1831 – 10 November 1892. He is listed in the 1870 and 1880 censuses of Livermore, McLean County, KY. He was reported to be a native of Kentucky. In 1870 in his home were – Ann Howard (38 KY and Sarah Rowan (28 KY). The 1880 census reports that Joshua Howard, farmer, was widowed; living with him was Sarah Rowan (40, black, servant, single). Sarah Rowan died on 19 September 1923 at the Western Kentucky State Hospital at Hopkinsville, KY. Her death certificate reported that she was single. She was returned to Livermore, where she has a tombstone in the Strather's Chapel Cemetery.