

VANDALS TARGET BAXTER CEMETERY

[Liz Engel](#)

Herald-Citizen Staff,

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Herald-Citizen Photo/Liz Engel Baxter resident Joe Elmore walks around the Baxter City Cemetery. Vandalism seems common here, and several tombstones have been targeted. Herald-Citizen Photo/Liz Engle

BAXTER -- Joe Elmore is tired of seeing a sight that he says has become all too common at the Baxter City Cemetery -- grave markers that have been pushed over and broken in half, apparently the result of vandalism.

The tombstones of both his great-grandmother and great-grandfather -- some of the first area residents to be buried there -- are broken. And about seven or eight other tombstones in the small cemetery, located off First Avenue, have seen the same fate.

"It's teenagers and stuff like that, who haven't been taught how to act and the value of things," Elmore alleges. "Anybody who comes in (and does something like this), it doesn't do them any good."

When a marker is broken, Elmore said, it's often the living family members who have to foot the cost to replace it. He and his sister have already replaced one headstone for several hundred dollars.

And the cemetery isn't the only Baxter spot vandals seem to be targeting. A pair of bathrooms located at the town ballpark off Elmore Town Road in between Cornerstone Middle School and Baxter Elementary is also a hot-spot.

The town recently coordinated an effort to lock those bathrooms overnights, hoping that will cut down on the problems.

Because of the vandalism there, it's hard for the town to get any funds from the Putnam County Department of Parks and Recreation, which maintains the park, to update the equipment -- all the money is being used to fix the bathrooms.

And unless someone sees the vandalism first-hand, or a police officer happens to be in the area at the time, it's virtually impossible to catch the culprits.

"It just depends, because we have no idea when they're doing it," said Baxter Police Chief Terry Hutchison. As for the cemetery, it's, "mostly teenagers, school kids who are just coming through and tipping over the tombstones."

Hutchison said that vandalism hasn't really been considered a problem -- it's the first time in several years the cemetery has been targeted -- but he said the town is considering building a chain link fence around that property. The issue will be on the agenda for the town's upcoming May 1 board meeting.

"I wish they could put up a fence to keep kids from coming through there," Hutchison said. "But that takes money, and I don't know what it would cost to do that. It's being addressed."

If anything, Elmore said, Baxter does need to take more responsibility. The town is responsible for mowing and most of the upkeep at the cemetery, but just recently decided not to take a hand in replacing vandalized

tombstones.

"They need to investigate this better," Elmore said. "I know it's difficult, but it's frustrating."

<http://www.ajlambert.com>



Giles Bradford Sr. Obt.

b. 14 January 1815 – d. 17 March 1898

Buried: Baxter Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN

BRADFORD, GILES: Death of an Aged Citizen -- **Giles Bradford**, an old citizen, about 85 years of age, who lived near Ai, in this county, went out to his barn to feed the stock last Thursday morning and failed to return as usual. His wife or some of the family went out to see about him when he was found dead. From appearances he had pitched forward o his face. He was a healthy and stout old man for his age and his death was wholly unexpected. It is said that he had a difficulty with his son, John Bradford, the evening before and had been roughly handled by him. He was buried without an inquest and we suppose from that fact but little importance was attached to the difficulty with his son by the family and friends. [Date: 3/24/1898, Vol. XI, No. 23, Page 5, Cookeville Press, Cookeville, TN]

Giles Bradford Jr. Obt.

b. 5 March 1867 – d. 3 April 1898

Buried: Baxter Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN

BRADFORD, JR., GILES: A BLOODY DEED -- Giles Bradford, Jr., Killed at Ai, Last Sunday. -- James Braswell and Sons, Clay and Claude, Arrested. -- They Will Be Given a Preliminary Hearing Next Saturday at this Place -- Considerable Difficulty was Encountered in Getting at the Exact Facts -- Giles Bradford, Jr., was shot and stabbed to death at Ai last Sunday, by, report says, Clay and Claude Braswell. We learn that a difficulty arose between William Bradford (a nephew of the deceased) and Clay Braswell, when the deceased interfered to separate them. About this time a general fight ensued, several being mixed up in it. In the meantime, Giles Bradford was badly cut in the side and a stab in the back to the hollow, and

shot through both lungs, from the effect of which he died in about four minutes. The jury of inquest reported as we are informed, that the deceased came to his death from a pistol shot fired by Claude Braswell, and bruises with brass knucks on the hand of James Braswell. Warrants for the arrest of Clay, Claude, and James Braswell were sworn out and placed in the hands of the Sheriff, who immediately went to the scene of the trouble and arrested James and Clay Braswell, but failed to find Claude. Clay was lodged in jail to await an examination, while James Braswell was out in charge of the Sheriff. We failed to find the report of the jury of inquest after search in the Clerk's office. The case was set for trial at the court house in Cookeville on last Tuesday, at which time Claude Braswell voluntarily came in and surrendered to the Sheriff. On application of the State the case was continued until next Saturday. James Braswell was allowed to give bond in the sum of \$2000, but Clay and Claude were sent to jail. [Date: 4/7/1898, Vol. XI, No. 25, Page 1, Cookeville Press, Cookeville, TN]