

John Hendrix – Oak Ridge “Prophet” Part 1 (As published in *The Oak Ridger’s Historically Speaking* column on March 15, 2006)

John Hendrix was born in Bear Creek Valley November 9, 1865, very near where Building 9201-4 stands today – in the heart of the western Protected Area of Y-12. He died June 2, 1915, and is buried in Hendrix Creek Subdivision in Oak Ridge in a single grave plot in Bobby Ledford’s yard.

The beautiful spot in Bobby Ledford’s lawn that is on the highest point in Hendrix Creek Subdivision would be a great location for a small city park with a bench, a plaque telling the John Hendrix story and an historic marker to attract the Heritage Tourism visitor! Bobby would welcome this! I have already taken Mayor David Bradshaw to see the location and he was much impressed with the setting and the very large Boxwood tree planted by John Hendrix’s son Curtis Hendrix many years ago that is now some 20 feet tall!

The grave marker is not the original; that one is gone. The one there now was purchased and placed there by Dorothy Bruce and her 1966-67 Jefferson Junior High School students. There was an earlier marker there. Ed Westcott photographed it on October 6, 1944.

The first published reference to the John Hendrix Story I have found was published in *The Oak Ridge Story* by George O. Robinson, Jr. in 1950. This book, though out of print is still sometimes available on eBay. I purchased mine from Jack Johnson, a local book collector.

The story goes like this. Around the turn of the 20th century, John Hendrix’s youngest child died. His wife blamed him for her death, as he had corrected the young child a couple of days before she died. His wife took the other children and went to Arkansas, never to return. Hendrix was very upset by this and prayed to God.

During one prayer he heard a loud voice telling him to sleep on the ground and he would learn the future of this place. Hendrix did as the voice told him, and it must have been in the winter because one story tells of his hair being frozen to the ground. When he returned from 40 nights sleeping on the ground he had tremendous stories to tell, and he told anyone who would listen.

He said, *“I’ve seen it. Bear Creek Valley some day will be filled with great buildings and factories, and they will help toward winning the greatest war that ever will be.*

“And there will be a city on Black Oak Ridge. The center of authority will be on a spot that is middle-way between Sevier Tadlock’s farm and Joe Pyatt’s place.

“A railroad spur will branch off the main L&N line and run down toward Robertsville, and then it will branch off and turn toward Scarboro. It will serve the great city I saw in my vision.

“Big engines will dig big ditches and thousands of people will be running to and fro. They will be building things, and there will be great noise and confusion, and the earth will shake.

“I’ve seen it; it’s coming.”

John Hendrix’s vision occurred just after 1900. He died in 1915. The Manhattan Project came to this area in 1942.

Y-12 is located in Bear Creek Valley, and the uranium 235 used in the first atomic bomb used in the war was obtained from the calutrons at Y-12 and helped win World War II. This saved hundreds of thousands of lives because it avoided an invasion of Japan that was already planned.

The city of Oak Ridge is located on Black Oak Ridge. The DOE federal office building (seat of authority) is located between where the Tadlock farm and the Pyatt place once stood. There is a railroad spur that runs right down the edge of what was once John Hendrix’s property.

My first encounter with the story of John Hendrix came years ago when I learned the location of his grave before there was a Hendrix Creek Subdivision in Oak Ridge. Later, I learned more when I met Grace Raby Crawford, John Hendrix’s adopted step granddaughter. Paralee Raby, Hendrix’s stepdaughter, also took care of him the last few months of his life, for which she was given the 15-acre farm he owned.

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Miss Grace located the house in which Hendrix was born on a map and an aerial photograph I showed her, and shared with me what she knew about Hendrix. She also wrote the story of John Hendrix in *Back of Oak Ridge*, which is available at the American Museum of Science and Energy’s (AMSE) Discovery Shop. Just a few weeks ago, she participated in the local author’s forum at AMSE and signed copies of her book for those who purchased copies that evening. She also signed several copies for the Discovery Shop. She is 90 years young!

In recent years, I have come to know many more Hendrix descendants as they have contacted me by e-mail after viewing the web pages I have created that contain the John Hendrix Story. See <http://smithdray.tripod.com/or/johnhendrixdetails.htm> for more detail. Even the descendants of John’s first wife, Julia Ann, who went to Arkansas have found the web site and contacted me.



Boxwood tree planted by Curtis Allen Hendrix – John and Martha Jane’s son

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Grace Raby Crawford – step granddaughter of John Hendrix