

Written In Stone

By Sherry Johnston

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Magnolia Cemetery

The year is 1925 and as The Evergreen Courant goes to press, the paper is authorized to state that the lands of Mrs. Anne Hope Oliver, containing 282 acres within the corporate limits of Evergreen will be sold by the Britt Davis Auction Company on November 25th. This body of land has been divided into tracts of desirable size for building lots and will be sold at public auction to the highest bidders and on terms to suit the purchasers. Also promised at the Auction would be a bag of gold to one lucky winner!

About the same time, there is found in the newspapers a couple more articles: one that advertised how much it costs to put an obituary in the newspapers--\$.05 per line; and the second one was an advertisement for cemetery monuments, both granite and marble ones could be ordered from S.P. Powell, shipped directly from the factory to the buyer.

In a later issue, the newspaper stated that Evergreen was on the eve of a residential building boom evidenced by the recent sale of the Anne Hope Oliver Tract. The lands were sold in small lots principally to local people; and the sale netted \$8600.00. Another news item in the same issue stated that 29 acres of this tract, located at the edge of town on the Evergreen-Castleberry Road was sold to the local Town Council for use as a cemetery. The tract of land was and is located in Township 5 North, Range 11 East, and Section 9 on the end of Magnolia Avenue.

In December of the following year, the newspaper reported that Civil Engineer, Mr. B.L. Moore, had been retained by the Town Council to make a survey and plat of the grounds. He had completed his paperwork and was grading the drives and walkways with assistance from the City Street crews working under the direction of Chief Grady Moore. The lot was described as one of beauty and with the modern improvements planned by the town officials, would assure the citizens of a beautiful cemetery adequate for the future needs of the community.

In Conecuh Headstones, Vol. 2, a burial listing as of 1981 is given. A supplement followed a few years later. In the University of Alabama Cemetery Atlas, Magnolia Cemetery is registered as # 64-SE, showing approximately 2200 graves as of 1999. This number would greatly be increased today. There are a couple of earlier headstones recorded in the Conecuh Headstone book that would suggest that these family members might have been moved at some later date from another burial place—one being 1923 and another that was in September of 1926. It's feasible that John Steadman Stearns, born August 19, 1877 and died September 5, 1926 could be the first interment in the newly established Magnolia Cemetery. There was another burial in December 1926, with others recorded in 1928; as well as a few unmarked graves that could possibly be before or after any of those dates. If one were to walk through this cemetery today, one would learn several things about those who are resting there. A headstone with the carving of a guitar, an engraved picture of an ambulance, or wildlife, or flowers—many of these depict what the interest of the loved ones were. Garden clubs, service organizations, and local citizens have assisted through the years with chain link fencing, and beautiful wrought iron gates signifying the entrance of the Magnolia Cemetery. This cemetery is maintained by The City of Evergreen today.