

Written In Stone

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Finklea Family Cemetery

Plantations once graced the landscape of Alabama and Conecuh County. Today, subdivisions, small communities, and timber companies break up the original, vast plantation holdings. Roads were cut through many of the original farms and family cemeteries, creating a means of transportation between these rural communities. Family names of Feagin, Finklea, Franklin, Henderson, Horton, Johnston, Stallworth and many others from which you'd recognize familiar surnames comprised these plantation families. These families migrated to AL from the Carolinas, CT, GA, MD, VA and other New England states. They had their origin in England, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Russia or Scotland, just to name a few.

Many of the family cemeteries lie forgotten and abandoned where the plantation homesteads once were; some have long been plowed under or planted in long-leaf pine groves; some are still visible if one knows how and where to look.

The Finklea/Finkley Family, first from England, had roots in SC, migrating from Marion County, SC to Monroe County, AL. Many of the first Finklea families settled along the Alabama River at Claiborne, bustling with trade from the river, setting up as merchants, cotton growers, cattle farmers, and buying up parcels of lands in Monroe, Butler, Conecuh & Covington Counties. Sons and daughters married into families that had migrated with them and settled the communities of Beatrice, Buena Vista, Chestnut, Claiborne, Perdue Hill, Tunnel Springs of Monroe; Butler Springs and Garland of Butler County and Sparta of Conecuh County.

In 1855, a Homestead Certificate at Sparta and Elba Land Offices can be found for Hugh Finkley of Butler County in Township 5, Range 11. Other land office records are available for the Finklea family members, from Butler, Conecuh and Monroe Counties. In the 1830 Monroe County Census, there is a Charles Finklea and wife, Cuzza Lane Finklea. Charles died about 1836 and his widow married his un-married brother who already had vast holdings both in Butler and Conecuh Counties. By the 1860's, this Finklea family had settled on what is known as the Finklea Plantation, not far from the old community of Sparta, the second county seat of Conecuh County. Two daughters, and a gentleman, along with Hugh and Cuzzie are on the 1860 Conecuh Census; however, Hugh Finklea died on November 18, 1861 and was buried on his plantation in Conecuh County. His headstone is the only marker present; however, there are places for others buried in this small family plot, overlooked now by shady trees and homes, where children laugh and play once again. The Hugh Finklea Family Cemetery is located on private property on US31 South; is enclosed today by a modern chain-link fence, placed there many years ago by a great-grandson of Hugh Finklea. This cemetery is being named to the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register, as well as being placed on the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance online registry.

For more information on how to preserve and/or register your own family, church or community cemetery, please contact Sherry S. Johnston, Conecuh County Representative for the ACPA at canebrakesociety@yahoo.com or call (251) 578-2670