

Written In Stone

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Evergreen Courant ~ 20 July 2006

Old Beulah Cemetery – Part 2

Old Beulah was, and the cemetery is, located on the old road between Sparta and Brooklyn. On an 1830 Alabama Road map, this road ran from a point on the Chattahoochie River by Montezuma, Brooklyn, Sparta, and on to Claiborne. The church was on the “Hunter Plantation”; later known as the “Miller Plantation”. The Miller Plantation, once owned by the Rube Millsap Estate; then purchased by Thomas Edward McMillan, and was re-named Jay-Villa Plantation. Permission to visit Old Beulah Cemetery must be obtained from the D.W. McMillan Trust; and as always, we encourage those of you who want to go visit our historic cemeteries, to obtain permission from current land owners.

In the cemetery where his pulpit once stood, lies the Rev. Alexander Travis, a pioneer Baptist minister who came to Conecuh County about 1817. He was a farmer; a minister; school trustee; named Evergreen; uncle to William B. Travis, of Alamo fame; and a dedicated “man of the cloth”. His epitaph covers four sides, inscribed with his birthplace of Edgefield Dist., SC in 1790 and his death in Conecuh in 1852; and on the third side reads: “A minister of the gospel for 40 years, he was the fearless and faithful follower of the precepts of our Savior.” On the fourth side: “Let me die the death with the righteous and let my end be like His”.

More poetic words are spoken over the graves of husbands and wives, loved and revered by their families. Susan J., daughter of Wilson Ashley and wife of Sandford Jones reads “Farewell pure spirit, vain the praise we give, the praise you sought from lips angelic flows, farewell the virtues which deserve to live, deserve an ampler bliss than life bestows.”

Captain Wilson Ashley’s wife, Mary Ann’s reads “Farewell, dear wife, a short farewell, that we may meet again above, and rove where angels love to dwell, where trees of life bear fruits of love.” Ashley was a statesman, beloved Sheriff of Conecuh County; Lt., SC Militia, War of 1812; and died 6 years later than his wife; and his epitaph is much simpler, “One of Conecuh’s most respected citizens.”

David Jay and his wife came to Conecuh with modest means, first being the overseer for the Nicholas Stallworth Plantation; later, becoming an established banker, respected citizen, and by the 1850 Agricultural Census was considered one of the wealthiest men in Conecuh County. He and his wife are interred in the cemetery together in a table-type marker with simple “In Memory of My Father and Mother”. The headstone over Caroline Elizabeth Jay’s grave is a study of religious beliefs for that era and reads “God gave. He took. He will restore. He doeth all things well.”

Henry Hunter, a practicing attorney in Sparta, said this about his wife, Elizabeth: “The most blessed in life is born, but to little; but how blessed is one to

whom death gives life eternal. We passed together one life and death. May we be together in eternity.”

There are many more headstones and families represented in this ancient burial ground; many connected by family lines, church membership, or just as friends learning to live and raise their families in a young county of AL; and perhaps the true meaning of friendship in this pioneer land is best spoken with the epitaph of a Connecticut Yankee by the name of Ezra Plumb, who came with his carpenters’ apron and is responsible for some of the best architecture in the area. When he died in 1889, this man’s marker was provided by “Friends of the Southland” and his reads “He was a friend to all.”

If we could just follow in their footsteps, perhaps we too could count on our friends and families to erect such monuments of honor and respect to us when we leave this world for another.