

Written In Stone

By Sherry Johnston

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Sowell Cemetery

Since I research families, communities, buildings, churches and cemeteries, I get to 'know' quite a number of people from all over the US and abroad. It makes for an interesting conversation as I relate correspondence between myself and other researchers in their quest for their family roots. We are all inter-connected in some way, it would appear; and it's proven that many families migrated together to a 'new world'; whether that was out west or down south. Pioneering took place everywhere, anytime a body left their home and ventured further away—'out west' could mean anything west of where they lived; and sometimes, it was a move south from NY, VA, the Carolinas and elsewhere. Whole neighborhoods left their homes in search of a better life, more land than they could imagine, and a freedom to be whoever they wanted to be! If you start searching for your ancestors in another state or province, most of the times, the same names you see there, you will also find those names again at the place your ancestors settled.

In researching the cemeteries and those interred there, these are some of the clues to finding out more information about them that I look for. I look for similar names in the census and cemetery records; the church directories, and even school records; along with military information and any Bible records that I can find. One family invariably leads me to another and so on.

There are so many cemeteries dotting the landscapes of Conecuh and rural Alabama; many of these are in out of the way places, hidden in the piney woods of our landscape, some completely forgotten until someone like you reads this column and a name reminds you of one you once knew about. I am hoping to stir some memories with the mention of an old Sowell Family Cemetery; one that a Conecuh citizen told me about weeks ago, and that I had the opportunity to visit on Saturday morning. I would dearly love to find out more about the family members interred there in this cemetery. There were only about five identified graves; however, many unmarked graves and some were just marked with ovals of brick; and actually five were the old, wooden markers. Many of these were children, considering the size. Most of the dates were in the late 1880's or even before, and we know that the wooden headstones probably pre-date those stone markers. The pine boughs have protected this cemetery for a number of years; however, these tall pines could possibly fall and break those same old headstones that I so enjoyed seeing this weekend. If you think you might have family buried in this cemetery which is located off US84, please contact me at canebrakesociety@yahoo.com or call me at (251) 578-2670.