

# Written In Stone

*By Sherry Johnston*

*Evergreen Courant ~ 08 March 2007*

## Crosby Cemetery

On a recent February afternoon, I seized an opportunity to explore an old family cemetery near Hampden Ridge with one of the descendants of this family. A poem, which reads in part: "Some people come into our lives, and then softly go, leaving footprints on our hearts, and we're never the same." This poem reflects how I've always felt toward the family whose ancestors inhabited the area; causing me to consider those who knew the earliest families probably felt the same way.

As a First Family of Conecuh, they settled the Hampden Ridge area between Belleville & Sparta around 1818; Hampden Ridge being the first county seat of Conecuh before moving it to Sparta. Several families migrated here from SC, some related by blood, many by marriage. They came to farm, raise families, start churches, and create our community. One was the family of Chesley & Sarah Hughes Crosby, having moved here from Chester Co., SC with Chesley's sister, Ursula and her husband, Major Mabry Thomas. Chesley became a prosperous planter & landowner, with interests throughout the county, a dedicated steward to his church, Belleville Baptist Church, with a family of 8 children who went on to become leaders in their own right in Conecuh.

In a quiet, secluded corner in the piney woods of Conecuh, lie the solemn graves of Chesley & Sarah Hughes Crosby. There are only the two marked graves of this couple visible; however, indentations indicate there may have been others buried here. Etched on Sarah's tombstone are the words: "My work is done. I will rest." With 8 children, Sarah was a busy mother, faithful, hard-working wife, and stewardess in her church and community. She died in 1857, about 7 years prior to her husband passing away. Inscribed on husband Chesley's grave are two phrases: one is 'an honest man'; and the other is a Christian Latin proverb, used in new papal installations: 'sic transit Gloria mundi' translated in English as meaning "Thus passes away the glory of the world". Emily Dickinson wrote a poem with this Latin phrase in it; and as the custom around 1845-1900, Latin terminology was often used to add a flourish to tombstone inscriptions.

The Crosby and Thomas families made a difference in the lives of many in Hampden Ridge, Belleville, and all of Conecuh County as their descendants each made their own mark in their families and communities. The Crosby, Farnham, King, Lee, Riley, Shaw and Thomas families are just a few of the people who came into our communities, making a difference and leaving footprints on our hearts forever.