

Written In Stone

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Native American Cemetery

Some of our earliest cemeteries are located near the sites of the Indian villages that once populated our county. The Native Americans would look for a water source, some place where they could plant and have their livestock, and create homes for their families. According to Rev. B.F. Riley in "The History of Conecuh", the white residents from Hampden Ride and the Indians, whose villages lay beyond Murder Creek, the stream was a boundary between the two. From time to time, as drought or weather complicated the efforts of both, the Indians would cross the creek, especially with the ready availability of the settler's livestock. The original headquarters of the Muscogee tribe was at Old Town, and though one of the villages was at Old Sparta, the Indians would drive the cattle toward the main council area. The settlers finally had enough, and they organized a group of men and attacked the native inhabitants, driving them further into the canebrakes. Riley states that the settlers set fire to their towns of huts and wigwams, and reduced them to ashes, driving them forever from their lands. However, according to family stories, we know that many of these earliest inhabitants crept back into the region, marrying into the settler or slave families, creating a new race and settling these areas with their own families and descendants.

Many of the Native Americans and African Americans settled near the area of Old Beulah, Jay Villa and Old Sparta. When they died, the Indians and mixed races were buried near the sites of their villages and camps. The elders of these families would hand down stories about their ancestors, and sometimes the descendants would remember where their ancestors were buried. Most of the information we have regarding these old burial sites come from historical records of where the camps were located; family lore; or hearsay from descendants. Most of the time, any visible sign of a burial site is long gone; through the agricultural or timber management practices from the nearly 200 years hence. However, for one reading the cemeteries, you can find some of these old sites, and on entering the ancient burial ground, feel the peace and quiet envelope you, causing you to reflect on the history hidden beneath the surface.

One such cemetery has recently come to light, and it's on private property near the Old Beulah and Jay Villa land. There are some who remember that perhaps as many as 100 mounds once dotted the landscape, on a hill overlooking the small creeks that emptied into Murder Creek some 200 years ago. There are no visible remains, only the spirit of our ancestors and family legends keeping this cemetery forever in our hearts.