

Written In Stone

By Sherry Johnston

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Mt. Union Cemetery

On the Old Campground site of the former Episcopal Church, South in Mt. Union, there is a cemetery where you can find some of the earliest inhabitants of this area laid to rest. About 200 yards away, off the main road, is the Mt. Union Methodist Protestant Church & School, built circa 1890 & 1900.. Both buildings were placed on the Historic Register of AL in 1996; and the Mt. Union Cemetery is currently being surveyed to place on the AL Historic Cemetery Register. The History of Mt. Union is available at the Evergreen-Conecuh County Public Library, along with photos and family histories of this community.

There are at least 100 plus graves in the cemetery today, with the oldest marked grave to be that of John Harper, born and died 1866, the son of R.A. & S.A. Harper. His monument is a small stone obelisk, adorned with etchings, his name, birth and death date given. Close by, another child's grave indicates Leon E. Barlow, was born in Feb. of 1907 and passed away in August of 1907—inscribed on his stone is the saying: “A sunbeam from the world has vanished”. Other stones indicate mothers and fathers, revered by their children; or children with lambs atop their stones and beautiful verses from the Bible to attest to their faith in God, even when the child has been taken from their earthly home. One of the graves was once adorned with shells set amid the rocks covering the grave of Sarah Harper Shaver, wife of John M. Shaver. She was born in 1809 and died in 1871.

Also found here are members of the Ansley, Barfield, Barlow, Congleton, Davis, Edson, Fortner, Frazier, Guy, Hooks, Hudson, Hyde, Ivey, Johns, Mason, Miller, Rountree, Sheffield, Smith, Wiggins' families and others. Many of these families were stalwart members of the Episcopal Church, South or Sepulga Baptist Church located a few miles up the road.

A few years ago, additional land was purchased to enlarge the current cemetery, so that another generation of these same families could rest with their ancestors in this hallowed place. One of the overseeing families to this old campground site was recently visited by loss of their loved one; and she is now buried here. Mrs. Myrtle Latham Hooks, who was born in April of 1926, married to Mr. J.L. Hooks, passed away in February 2007. Those of us who recently visited the cemetery were inspired by the lovely gardens of the Hooks Family, with old fashioned bouquets of daylilies and hydrangea, lifting their heads in the dry breezes and filling the air with their sweet scents, as we strolled among the ancient stones.

Many of the older graves have been recently repaired or replaced. .Some have obviously been cleaned with solvents, which, if not used correctly, can actually add to the deterioration of the stones themselves. Old stones can be cleaned safely without chemical solvents; many of these stones date to the mid or late 1800's so they are not supposed to look brand new. If you'd like to have more information on how to safely clean headstones in your family or church cemetery, please contact me at canebrakesociety@yahoo.com or call (251) 578-2670 and I'll be glad to assist you in learning how to safely clean and repair the stones.