

Written In Stone

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Earliest Grave Contest

Over the course of this column, we've identified some 50 cemeteries in the canebrakes of SE AL and Conecuh since about 2006. According to the Historical Atlas of Cemeteries by Location, published by the University of AL, there are approximately 152 cemeteries in Conecuh. Local historians, including myself, feel there is many more in number. These cemeteries are lying in fields, pastures, wooded areas, alongside streams and rivers, waiting to be discovered, preserved and protected.

According to a historical survey completed in 1981, many of these cemeteries were identified in five distinct classifications: church; family; community; unknown; and earliest known markers. This last category greatly interests historians, genealogists, and community citizens.

In the historical survey, Old Beulah and Concord were identified as two of the earliest in the county: Old Beulah circa 1827 & Concord circa 1836 in the church category. In the family category, it was Middleton circa 1818 & Rabb circa 1820. Identified as earliest community cemeteries were three: Buffington in Castleberry as early as the 1880's; Old Historical Evergreen in the 1860's; and Repton in the 1880's. The three earmarked for the unknown category included cemeteries in Nichburg and Owassa with no certainty of dates; as well as one in Nymph with the oldest marker stated as 1926. The last category for oldest marked graves numbered 13 actual cemeteries, with the two earliest being again Middleton and Old Beulah.

Written in Stone and The Evergreen Courant is issuing a challenge to you readers to come up with the earliest known marked and legible grave in Conecuh County. Over the past several months, we've given you clues in the column where some of these cemeteries might be located. There are additional clues to be found online with several websites, including <http://www.canebrakeghs.com> , <http://www.trackingyourroots.com> , <http://www.buriedsecrets.com> , and <http://www.rootsweb.com/alconecu> as well as others.

Since the weather is still intolerable, and much to snaky to be prowling about the woods still yet, we're giving you 3 months to report your findings. Please remember many of our cemeteries are on private property, and permission must be granted to access the property. In December, we'll report what cemeteries made the grade with the earliest known marked, legible grave marker found. For more information about cemeteries in Conecuh and AL, visit your local library at 119 Cemetery Avenue, Evergreen, AL.