

Written In Stone

By Sherry Johnston

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Grace Family Cemetery

Tucked into a small grassy glade behind Lyeffion School on County Road 30 is an African American cemetery known locally as the Grace Family Cemetery. This cemetery is located in township 7 north, range 11 east, section 29 on what appears to be the Gussie Grace Estate. The burial place is almost hidden from the road where log trucks and school buses loudly rumble past, exploding the serenity with loud noises. One can almost hear the voices telling the stories of the past when it's quiet in the glade.

The earliest known grave belongs to a young child of six, who was born in 1885 and died in 1891. Other names found here besides Grace include Evans, Harrington, Hines, Jackson and Sumpter. There was a Lucy A. Lassiter Grace born in 1858 who died in 1928. In the 1870 Conecuh Census, there was a Lucy A. Lassiter, age 13, living in the household of a Zeuspha and Mary Lassiter. She had 6 siblings at the time, ranging in ages from 20 to 5 years old. In the 1880 Conecuh Census, I found Lucy A. married to Hunter Grace, who farmed the land. They were a young family with 2 young daughters, ages 2 and 8 months. In this census, Lucy says her father was born in Africa, and the birthplace of her mother was unknown. Lucy herself was born in slavery, and just imagine the stories she might have told to those little ones sitting at her knee in the late 1800's.

Today, the descendants of many of those children gather every year at the cemetery to honor their ancestors by keeping the cemetery maintained, and adorn the graves with fresh floral bouquets. This column is published to ensure their stories and final resting places will never be forgotten. If you have more information about this cemetery and others in Conecuh County, please contact me at (251) 578-2670 or email at canebrakesociety@yahoo.com