

Written In Stone

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Cemetery Preservation

I had the opportunity to explore a couple of rural cemeteries last week, due to reports of missing headstones, iron fencing, etc. Though I had been informed of several of them, it was still shocking to see the results of the vandalism that had taken place since my last visit. Every time I go to see one where such man-made vandalism has taken place, it reiterates to me why I do cemetery preservation and education. It's imperative that someone document the cemeteries of our predecessors, our families and our forefathers; we have to be willing to tell their stories or their legacy to us will be gone forever.

Cemeteries face an increasing number of threats on a yearly, sometimes monthly basis. In addition to the natural deterioration process of the stones, there is the threat from two man-made sources: pollution and vandalism. The theft of cemetery statuary, stones, and ironwork fencing has become just as commonplace. Abandoned cemeteries are more at risk simply because of their location; receiving less care and attention than those in well-populated areas

In consideration of all the above mentioned issues, we need to record as completely as possible all of the information of a cemetery and keep that documentation in a repository within the county and statewide. The process is very simple, with the Evergreen-Conecuh County Public Library, and the Alabama Historical Commission working together to ensure that the documentation is preserved. The Alabama Department of Archives and History, along with other local and statewide organizations, as well as online agencies are all working together to preserve America's endangered cemeteries; however, we do need your help! This project will ensure that the information of these stones and/or cemeteries is preserved, even if, one day, the actual stone or cemetery is lost.

To find out more about the volunteer opportunities available, and for more information on how to protect, preserve and restore cemeteries within your own 'backyard' visit the following websites: <http://alabama-cemetery-preservation.com> or <http://chicora.org> or <http://www.savinggraves.org> or <http://www.canebrakeghs.com>

As always, if you know of a cemetery with issues of vandalism, or other threats, please call me at 251/578-2670 or email me at canebrakesociety@yahoo.com