

Written In Stone

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Crary Memorial Cemetery – Part I

Over the last few weeks, researching the families who migrated from the communities of the Fork of the Sepulga River and Duck Creek in Butler, Conecuh and Monroe Counties have taken me to Escambia County, AL and FL where I've located a few of their final resting places. Cemeteries with the proper surname of Bowman; place name of Sardis; and now, the family name of Crary is added to the list where one can find familiar names like Beasley, Browder, Brown, Campbell, Cawthorn, Cooper, Feagin, Fuller, Gilmore, Gray, Joyner, Long, McClammy, Pritchett, Sturdivant, Taylor and Wright.

Bluff Springs was established by John Williamson Crary, Sr. around 1860 when he, Jesse Pritchett, and Samuel S. Johnson purchased two Spanish Land Grants containing about 1500 acres of land. They established the Bluff Springs Land Company, platted a town, laid off streets, lots, parks, etc and named it Bluff Springs for the bluffs overlooking the river and the natural springs in the area. What a grand place for our ancestors to settle—good climate, a bounty of game and fish right at their back door, a new place to call home and raise their families—your ancestors!

According to '*Reminiscences of the Old South, 1834-1866*' by John Williamson Crary, Sr., the Civil War stopped further development of the town, and it disappeared after the war. One of the most important skirmishes between the retreating Southern Army occurred at Bluff Springs; with the high bluff on the river serving as an encampment for soldiers of both sides during the war. Alongside the old Crary Memorial Cemetery, there is a gully supposed to be filled once with relics from the soldiers who died and were buried there. Probably underneath the highway of US 29 one would discover bones of Union soldiers; and young children growing up in Bluff Springs would often find coat buttons, spectacles, pottery shards, etc to take to school for 'show and tell'.

There is little remaining of the town that once was there, a couple of hotels, schools, a CSA Hospital, CSA Headquarters, a park, sawmill, and fine homes. As the South retreated, many of the landmarks were burned to keep the Union from being able to utilize the resources they would have found. Families left with the demise of the war; gradually drifting back to resettle their community with another generation. These generations are the ones found buried at the Crary Memorial Cemetery, which is located in T5N, R31W, S38 in the northernmost part of Escambia County, and we'll talk about some of these families in future columns.