

# Written In Stone

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## **Hampden Ridge Baptist Church Cemetery**

In March of 2007, I wrote about two cemeteries located off CR17 near the site of our original county seat known as Hampden Ridge. One of the cemeteries is called Hamden Ridge Baptist Church Cemetery, and it's an early African American cemetery with families of some of our earliest families of the Conecuh settlement of Hampden Ridge, many with slavery roots. This cemetery was surveyed for our Conecuh Headstone project back in the early 1980's and only had about 89 graves listed, many unmarked ones at the time. The earliest grave found belonged to Lewis Crosby, born about 1838 and died 1920; however, knowing how early this land was settled, in all probability many of the unmarked graves and mounds would predate 1920 by many years.

One of the advantages of conducting genealogical research, as I've mentioned in the past, is getting acquainted with folks from all over our nation who have roots in Conecuh soil. This week I was given the opportunity to be introduced to members of the Lewis Crosby family, and get to be with them as they walked among the stones of their ancestors. Children, laughing and giggling, also being somber and reverent as they were 'introduced' to their forebears, learning what it was like growing up in the south as a slave, or daughter or son of a slave; or sharecropper, or landowner, or pastor or sister of the church in which he or she was raised. Many of those who are visiting this week have never been further than their home in Detroit MI and were amazed at the 'forests' they saw! The tall knobby pines, the huge oak, walnut, and cedar trees amazed them, along with the vegetation, the biting gnats, and fire ants all added to a thrill they didn't know was waiting on them in rural southern AL. We had such fun, and learned so much about each other, and our ancestors, for many of theirs probably knew mine, as residents of the same communities of Hampden Ridge, Lee and Bellville, in Conecuh County.

All of us are looking for further information about the history of the church, not just the one which is now standing, but one that would have been there when Mr. Crosby possibly died. According to one descendant, it was situated closer to where the cemetery is today, facing another direction, and the cemetery appeared to be much larger than it is now, with possibly mounds and unmarked graves now covered by vegetation. If any of our readers could shed light on this church and the cemetery, or families interred here, please call me at 251.578.2670 or email me at [canbrakesociety@yahoo.com](mailto:canbrakesociety@yahoo.com)