

Written In Stone

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Looking At Obituaries

Looking at microfilmed newspapers over the past several days, from the years of 1926 & 1939-40, I've discovered obituaries of persons indicating their burials in cemeteries which aren't in our tombstone indexes. When there are unmarked graves in cemeteries, there poses many unanswered questions for both the family researcher and the cemetery preservationist. Finding obituaries answers many of these questions, helping to fill in the gaps.

For instance, at Asbury Cemetery, many unmarked and seemingly empty spaces indicate unknown burials. The Evergreen Courant for Dec 1926 shows Mrs. Frances Wallace, 84 years old died on the 9th & was buried on the 10th. Her only sister, 86 yr. old Catherine Cromartie then went to live with a niece, Mrs. John Mixon in Canoe, AL. According to the Alabama Deaths, 1908-59, Catherine Cromartie then died in Escambia County, AL in December 1929. Another example is that of William R. Roberson who died 7 December 1926 and was laid to rest at Ramah Cemetery. The obituary gave his wife's maiden name as Matilda Crawford, date of marriage and the fact that he was the last and oldest charter member of the Burnt Corn Masonic Lodge. Though he is listed in our index, it gave a different death date as 1932, so finding an obit in the newspaper answered more questions than expected.

In December of 1927, a Simeon Lewis Hawkins passed away in a Montgomery hospital. He was listed as a native of Evergreen, and buried in a local cemetery, though no specific name was given. His brother, Curtis Hawkins was listed as a survivor and also the local L & N Agent. Looking to see if I could find the cemetery, I did discover that a Curtis Hawkins is buried at Olive Branch Cemetery, and between him and another Hawkins, there is an unmarked grave. According to the census for 1920 Conecuh, in Evergreen on Railroad Street, a C. & Lula Hawkins with a 12 year old son named Curtis E. lived, and the senior Hawkins was an L & N RR agent, so perhaps his son followed in his footsteps. The Curtis Edward Hawkins is the one at Olive Branch, and the Lula Brown Hawkins is his mother, so maybe the family is interred at Olive Branch together.

As in everything associated with genealogical research, for every question answered, more questions remain. That's the fun of the research—the journeys it takes one on! Next week, we'll look at where the Hawkins family originated from and how they established themselves in Conecuh County and beyond.