

# Written In Stone

*By: Sherry Johnston*

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## Holiday Grief

Death knows no holiday or age, as we can all attest to. Holiday grief can almost seem unbearable, and the first year without our loved ones with us to share in the celebration of the season can be so painful, with many memories of happier times flooding in during the holiday. For Christians, Christmas is supposed to be a day of celebration—the life of our Savior—the joy and love He brought to our lives, and not the sadness.

Looking at the Alabama Deaths for Conecuh County during the years of 1908-59, there were 18 deaths attributed to December 25<sup>th</sup>. Sadly, illnesses and accidents can happen at any time, but especially hard does it seem when our loved ones actually pass away on Christmas Day. The SSDI or Social Security Death Index for Conecuh County showed 5 deaths from 1992 to 1999. I recognized three of the five, and know the families. Of the 18 deaths during the years 1908-59, the earliest recorded ones began in 1913 and carried thru to 1954, the year before I was born. Many of the family names I recognized as having done research for their descendants, and have visited their graves during the last few years.

I have experienced my own grief, knowing that ‘this Christmas would be the first without’ so many times; as you also have experienced or will do so for the first time this season. Visiting cemeteries, to show respect to our loved ones, our ancestors, friends, or family, we get to see the cemetery at its’ peak—showy red flowers, fresh greenery, and other beautiful arrangements placed at the graves really stand out on a somber gray day of winter, even in South Alabama and Northwest Florida. There are folks who were born on Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, and I honor an old man’s life by placing a Christmas Wreath of fresh greenery on his gravestone every year, despite the fact that he is of no relation to me—just a neighbor from long years ago, I honor his memory because there isn’t anyone left to remember him, and no one deserves not to be remembered, this time of year or any other.

Take some time out for yourself, your family, and visit the gravestones this holiday season. Give yourself time to grieve, permission to do less, spend time with those who uplift you in spirit, and allow others to share your grief, and your joy at having had this or that person in your life, even when death must come at Christmastime.

