

Written In Stone

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Bethel West Cemetery ~ Part I

One of the largest cemeteries in the northern part of Conecuh County is located nearly on the Butler County line, with many of those buried there having straddled the line with their residences, farms, and families. Bethel West Cemetery is located on Highway 106, in township 9 north and range 11 east. This cemetery is not very far, as the crow flies, from the old Russell Cemetery. Unfortunately, many of the oldest graves are just sunken in places, long forgotten by citizens long gone from their earthly home. The Conecuh County Headstone Volume One listed over 275 graves as of 1981 with many vacant spaces at that time which have probably been filled in.

According to the Alabama Historical Atlas of Cemeteries by Location in all 67 Counties of AL, the Conecuh section listed Bethel West as having the first known interment as William H. Hanks (1829-1863) with family surnames of Dean, Goodwin, Hanks, Sims and Wright common to this cemetery still in use. Listed in the Conecuh Headstone book is Sgt. William H. Hanks, born 1 January 1829 served in the 23rd Alabama Infantry, Company A of the CSA, and he died 1 May 1863. In census years for 1850 & 1860, he and his family are found in Wilcox County, AL near Rehoboth; however, by 1880, his widow and young family can be found in the Fork of the Sepulga community of Conecuh County. His widow, Mary F. Hanks is also buried at Bethel West; she was born in 1839 and died in 1910.

The History of the 23rd Alabama Infantry can be found online at <http://www.canerossi.us/23ala/part1.htm> as well as in other volumes found in the Evergreen-Conecuh County Public Library. We are in the process of moving our holdings back to our renovated facility at 119 Cemetery Avenue, so our archives may be unattainable for a short period of time. Next week, we'll talk about some of the other families found interred at Bethel West and their connection to the establishment of our county as well as surrounding counties.

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