

Written In Stone

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Yates Graveyard

Looking for a cemetery in a long ago, forgotten place is sometimes like looking for a needle in a haystack; impossible to achieve or so it seems. Using a map or a GPS with coordinates, one can travel far and wide finding location after location. If you don't have an idea of where to look, a map or GPS can be totally useless. What does one do, then, if all you have is a name or community in which to find this forgotten graveyard? I choose to look up the area in question, searching for graveyards on my county map, and if it's possibly on an old family place, we look for major property owners during the time period that folks were to have died and were buried there.

A researcher from CA has contacted me in regard to her family tree. Her surnames include the Byrd, Hawthorne, McIntyre, Nicholson, Palmore and Robbins families—all African American families which can be found in the Owassa/Gravella/Wilcox/Old Town and other surrounding areas of Conecuh County. We have discussed at length the early settlement of Gravella or Gravel Station; the communities of Gregville and Wilcox; as well as Old Town and Cohasset. In talking about graveyards from the early 1920's we've discovered that one of her ancestors was buried in a graveyard at Owassa, according to her death record on microfilm here at the library. She died in June 1926 and was recorded as having been buried at the Yates Graveyard.

The Yates family was here in the early formation of our county, and one of the well-documented manuscripts here on our family history shelves document their migration from GA into the Creek Indian Territory on into Conecuh County by 1816. The Yates married into the Salter & Witherington lines of Conecuh, with many of the Yates being buried at Olive Branch Baptist Church Cemetery there in Owassa. Rebecca (Salter) Yates died sometime before the 1860 Census of Conecuh was taken, and no indication of where she had been buried has been discovered. It might be that she, too, is buried at the old Yates Cemetery. If you have information on where the Yates Cemetery might have been located, please contact me at canebrakesociety@yahoo.com or call me at 251.578.2670.