

Written In Stone

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Bull Hill Cemetery, Texas ~ Part II

Bull Hill Cemetery was located in an area of Churchill Jones' plantation some distance from the main house. The Texas plantation encompassed the former 1830's-era Sarahville de Viesca settlement and a natural falls of the Brazos River. It was with this natural falls, that the largest cotton plantation on the frontier was constructed to operate a cotton mill.

Churchill Jones was born Jan 1805 at Caroline County, VA, attended Rappahannock Academy near his home, and after graduation, he left for Alabama to seek his fortune. According to early Conecuh and family historians, he ends up in Conecuh County in the mid-1820's teaching school at Gravella (Owassa). He married Susan Tomlinson in Conecuh County in 1830. Churchill served as Conecuh Circuit Clerk in 1837, was a founding member and 1st Vice President of the Evergreen Academy about 1839; elected to the AL Legislature in 1841, 42, and 43. Sometime during 1850, Churchill Jones toured the state of Texas, looking for suitable land holdings, and when acquiring land in Montgomery County, TX, he sent his overseer, Aylett Dean. He also acquired land at the Falls of the Brazos River in Falls County, TX and there are a series of letters at The Center for American History, TX describing how his overseers, brother-in-law and others were to manage his two Texas plantations until he arrived with his family and slaves. Sometime after 1853, he and the remaining family members arrived in Texas.

Buried in the old slave cemetery are some of the original slaves, who left Alabama with their slave master, and their descendants who never knew any land but Texas. In one of the letters found, Aylett Dean is describing a contract from 1849, between himself and Churchill Jones, containing a listing of men and women who were taken to Texas from the plantation in Conecuh. Approximately 60 enslaved African Americans went with him to the initial settlement from Conecuh County.

Despite the fact that the old Bull Hill Cemetery is that of enslaved African Americans, the first grave could be that of a white man killed during an attack between Native Americans and said to be buried in the area that later became known as Bull Hill. One of Churchill Jones' slaves, Tom Broadus, said that the

old ones had a reverence for the grave, carrying stones from the old spring to fill in and cover it so that the old man's spirit could be at ease.

There are so many interesting facets to the life of Churchill Jones, his family and his slaves, in the recently acquired documents compiled by a descendant, Charles W. Rush; as well as the documents provided by Sharon Styles about those interred in this old, long-ago forgotten cemetery. I would encourage you to come by and read them, browse thru the reports and see for yourself a first-hand report of the early settlement of both this county and in Texas.