

# Written In Stone

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*Evergreen Courant ~ 05 January 2007*

## **Martha Austill Grave – Burnt Corn**

From the “History of Washington County, AL” one finds the historical account of how the Old Federal Road was established from the Ocmulgee Cession of 1805. This road was instrumental in settling the original Mississippi Territory or Alabama Frontier, providing the old Indian horse trading paths the way from GA to Natchez and St. Stephens. Washington Co., being the oldest county in AL, was the mother lode of the counties that came afterward. Clarke County, AL became the home of one family with heroic roots in both Monroe and Conecuh Counties. This would be the Evans Austill Family—originating from Pendleton Dist., SC to GA’s Cherokee Agency about 1798. This agency was formed by the US Gov. to civilize the Cherokee Indians; his wife, Mrs. Austill being the first white woman who ventured to live among the Cherokees. Their oldest son, Jeremiah “Jere” Austill, born in SC, became a folk hero along with Sam Dale, James Smith, and a slave named Caesar during the celebrated Canoe Fight during the Creek War. In reading about the Evans Austill Family in present day Clarke County, one finds that when Evans Austill died in 1818, he was buried along the roadside, near the site of Ft. Madison, with a simple marble slab denoting his lonely, final resting place. Interesting to note because a few years later, his daughter-in-law; the teenaged wife of his son, Jeremiah, also lies in a lonely grave along an old roadbed, this one being in Conecuh County. The story goes that Jere Austill married Martha Hayse (Hayes), daughter of Capt. James Hayse, a postmaster in 1821 at Burnt Corn Springs. Martha and Jere married about 1819, and about a year later, in 1820, while covertly watching an Indian skirmish near Claiborne, Martha and others were trying to beat a hasty retreat, falling backward from the rail fence, suffering injuries which led to her death. Bringing her back by ox-team to Burnt Corn, they buried her on a fenced-in tract of land belonging to Capt. Hayse. Today, the simple marble headstone states that she departed life on 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1820 in the 19<sup>th</sup> year of her age. The headstone stands erect along a grassy path on Lowery Trust Land, forgotten through the ages; yet retaining a beauty in memory of a young woman taken in her youth. Lovely wild ferns grow at the base of this simple marble headstone; topped overhead by stately tall pines; a fresh green scent wafting through the air. It is perhaps a lonely site for such a beautiful young woman; however, it must be a peaceful place for the Martha’s, the Evans, and others who lie along the Old Federal Road in early Alabama.

For more information about this family, the Federal Road, and other historical sites in Conecuh County, plan a visit to the Heritage Dept. of the Evergreen Public Library.