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Earliest Settlers of Lincoln Parish are Buried in the Katy Graveyard

By Margaret Hawkins, feature editor

If there's really a Colvin on every hill as the saying goes, it's hardly any wonder. When they got to this part of the country about the only living thing that greeted them were Indians and wolves.

Their route to Vienna was circuitous at best. The family was originally from England and they settled in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia in 1730. In 1751, the Covins with several other families, settled on the Broad River and Sandy River in Chester County, South Carolina.

For many years they stayed there, but wanderlust struck again in 1807 when Daniel Colvin and his wife Susan Huey Colvin and her family left for the west. They settled near what is now Vienna on Colvin's Creek as early as 1809.

Their trip, though standard for the times, was still difficult and filled with adventure. They crossed over the mountains from South Carolina and went into Kentucky. There, they built barges and floated down river to the Mississippi as far as Natchez.

At that point, Daniel Colvin and the Hueys continued their river trip up the Red River into the Ouachita by using long ropes tied to trees on the sides of the stream.

It took two years to make the journey and they reached Trent's landing in 1809. The area is now called "Old Trenton" and is two miles north of West Monroe. At the landing, they met a party of surveyors sectionizing the country. Two range lines had been run but the surveyors were not allowed to give the location of any fertile sections, but according to the Colvin records, the surveyors did tell them that "anyone following their lines west would come to some mighty pretty country".

Most of the party continued up the Ouachita, stopped at D'Arbonne and landed at Turkey Bluff, and others went into southern Arkansas.

But it was Daniel who traveled an old Indian trail, crossed what is now known as Colvin Creek, and settled. The land was then part of Ouachita county, was later included in Jackson parish, and in 1873 part of it was combined with parts of Bienville, Claiborne and Union to form Lincoln Parish.

The road the pioneers blazed through the wilderness was for three-quarters of a century the main highway across the northern part of Louisiana. Later, the Western Union telegraph company put up lines along the road and it was named the "Wire Road", the name is still has today. Home for the settlers was a double log house which had a long room in the front with two small rooms in the back. A long "plaza" was across the front and faced a wooded slope. The location was about a half-mile west of the creek and a quarter mile from the present Highway 167.

Daniel's wife Susan died in 1840, and Daniel later married a woman whose first name was Katy. Of her, no more than that is known, except that she lived in the old homestead after his death and it was called the "Katy Place," then for an unknown reason, the family burial plot was called the "Katy Graveyard," the name it still retains.

Descendants of the original Colvins remained in this area, multiplied, and now members of the family number more than 3,000. Their annual reunion at the Unionville Church between Vienna and Dubach is one of the largest family gatherings in the area.

The family has been enriched by many families well-known in the area. Most came on the heels of the Colvins and include the Raineys, Simmons, Hedgepeths, Mixons, Lyles, Richards and Smiths. The Stoews, Teagels, Dutys, Gibsons, Brinsons, and Nelsons came soon after as well as the Redwines, Hintons, Grigsbys, Smiths, Llands, Wheats and Roanes.

The old graveyard is now grown up in weeds and underbrush. In recent years, Girl Scout groups have visited the site and have placed sandstone rocks around the perimeter of the graveyard in honor of the early settlers. Some years ago, a woods fire swept over the area and left the markers black. Eugenia Colvin Dawson, one of the descendants spent many hours getting the markers back in passable condition.

Without a guide, it is practically impossible to get to the old graveyard now. At reunions for the last 10 years, the Colvins have discussed plans to renovate their cemetery, but so far, nothing constructive has been done. It is hoped that in the future it can be declared an official historical site of Lincoln Parish.

The Colvins, as well as others fell that few if any historical sites have been designated in North Louisiana and this plot would at least be an appropriate place to begin.