

# WOODLAND CEMETERY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROJECT

AUGUST 2022 *Monthly Newsletter* VOLUME 2, ISSUE 8



Photograph by Marquise Drayton

The Woodland Cemetery Preservation Project seeks to tell the stories of the known and previously unknown burials located in Woodland Cemetery on the Clemson University campus. Through research and community engagement we intend to uncover as much as we can about this historic space and to properly commemorate all who are buried here.

In this issue we update you on the launch of the new cemetery website and jobs available for Clemson students, explain the 1960 court order that Oconee County granted Clemson College for Woodland Cemetery, provide research, community engagement updates, and highlight some upcoming local events.

## *In This Issue*

Page 1: Cemetery Website Updated and Student Jobs Available

Page 2: History Series #9

Page 3: History Series #9 Continued; Research Update

Page 4: Community Engagement Update; Upcoming Events

Page 4: Upcoming Events; Meet the Team

## Cemetery Website Updated and Student Jobs Available

The updated website for the Woodland Cemetery and African American Burial Ground Historic Preservation Project will be released later this month. The update has been in the works since last spring, under the guidance of Dr. Sara Collini. It will include content developed by the research and community engagement teams as well by students who were enrolled in the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 Creative Inquiry classes. We thank everyone for their contributions to research and to the project website, including the members of the Community Engagement Council who reviewed several iterations of the website's community engagement page.

On the website you will be able to read about the history of the African American Burial Ground and learn about those are believed to be buried there. You will also be able to read about the founding and history of Woodland Cemetery, including its expansion and changes over the last 100 years.

Additionally, the new project website will contain a detailed and interactive visual history that allows you to see how the cemetery site has changed from the time when the Eastern Band of the Cherokees lived nearby in the town of Esseneca to the modern day. The interactive sliders will allow you to compare aerial photos from before and after significant changes to the cemetery landscape.

You will also find information about our research symposiums, an updated historical timeline, new policies for the cemetery from the Clemson University Board of Trustees, resources for research and education, and a FAQ section.

Additionally, we are hiring Clemson students to work with the cemetery team. Students can apply for these jobs through the Michelin Career Center [website](#).

### **Clemson Undergraduate Students**

Job Title: Communications and Marketing Assistant  
Apply Start: Jul 26, 2022  
Apply End: Aug 26, 2022  
Job ID#: 146586

### **Clemson Graduate Students**

Job Title: Graduate Research Assistant  
Apply Start: Jul 26, 2022  
Apply End: Aug 19, 2022  
Job ID#: 146588



**Woodland Cemetery and  
African American Burial Ground  
Historic Preservation Project**

## Cemetery History Series #9

# Clemson College's 1960 Court Order

This is part of an ongoing series highlighting various aspects of Woodland Cemetery history.

On August 22, 1960, Clemson College administrators petitioned the Court of Common Pleas in Oconee County (where Clemson was then located) for permission to disinter any remains found in an area to the west of the Calhoun family plot on Cemetery Hill and reinter them in a new location to the south. The area was defined as 180-feet long by 90-feet wide. It contained field stones that the petition stated were “thought by legend and ancient report to mark the graves of deceased Negro slaves or of prisoners at one time employed in the construction of the works of the College.”<sup>1</sup> The petition further stated that Clemson staff were unable to determine the identities of those buried or their relatives.

Judge J. B. Pruitt ordered Clemson administrators to put a notice of this plan in three local newspapers for ten days, asking any relatives or friends of those buried in the cemetery to come forward with their objections. According to the court order, no one came forward. On September 3, 1960, the judge granted Clemson’s request. He stated that, “as a general rule, a body cannot be removed from its place of burial without the consent of the next of kin,”<sup>2</sup> but no one had come forward to object to the disinterment. Removal of remains was permitted for “good cause shown,” which Clemson had apparently demonstrated. Lastly, a local law permitted the removal of burial remains “before flooding by water-power pond.” Clemson was therefore “authorized to make exploration to determine whether evidence exists that persons have been buried in the area on the Western slope of Cemetery Hill...”<sup>3</sup> If remains were found, it was the responsibility of the college to

disinter and reinter the remains with a licensed embalmer to an area 300 feet to the south of the original field stones, mark the reinterred graves with the same stones, and mark the area of reinterment. It is not known if any remains were moved.

Clemson’s motivation to obtain the court order is not entirely clear. In the petition, the college declared the western slope of Cemetery Hill was “valueless,” contradicting earlier claims made in 1946 by the Clemson Buildings and Grounds Committee that the area was the site of the burial ground for African American enslaved persons and convicted laborers.<sup>4</sup> Clemson further stated in the petition that the area was “needed for the orderly and proper development of the campus,” and that the college “has immediate need for possession of the area where said stones are located to excavate and grade the same to be suitable for its corporate purposes.”<sup>5</sup> At that time, Clemson was expanding Memorial Stadium, including



Aerial view of Clemson Memorial Stadium and Clemson College Campus, circa Fall 1960, Series 100, Clemson University Historical Images, Clemson University Libraries.

the construction of the West End Zone, and needed more space for parking.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was also building Hartwell Dam and about to start construction of the two dikes that would protect Clemson’s campus from flooding.

On August 19, 1960, three days prior to the filing of the college’s initial petition, a topographical map of the lower, western area of Cemetery Hill was created by a civil engineer with the Nello L. Teer Company. The map included a “Cemetery” behind the Calhoun family plot, and the location of a “New Cemetery” on the south slope.<sup>7</sup> Nello Teer had won the contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build the two protective dikes on campus in June 1960.<sup>8</sup> About two weeks after the court order was granted, Clemson and the Nello L. Teer Company signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the purpose of clearing and grading the western slope of Cemetery Hill. The MOU stated that 100,000 to 300,000 cubic feet of dirt was to be removed from the area, likely for the construction of the two earthen dikes.<sup>9</sup>

During the excavation and leveling of the lower, western slope of Cemetery Hill, the construction crew came across human remains. The exact location of the remains is not clear, but it seems that they were found outside of the area defined in the court order. The remains were initially thought to be victims of smallpox. Clemson called in toxicologist H. D. Webb and zoology professor Robert Ware for consultation. They examined three to five burials in detail, which included hair, teeth, and coffin nails, and concluded that the remains were of African American

*Continued on next page*

### Cemetery History Series #9

#### Continued from previous page

children. According to Robert Ware, Clemson staff then took "a shovel full of the soil" and reburied the remains in the south slope of Cemetery Hill.<sup>10</sup> It is not known how many burials were located in

the lower, western area of Cemetery Hill in the fall of 1960 or how many burials Clemson moved or possibly destroyed during this phase of campus development. The lower, western area of Cemetery

Hill is now the R-3 residential parking lot between Centennial Boulevard and Perimeter Road.

#### CITATIONS

- 1 State of South Carolina, County of Oconee, Court of Common Pleas, Ex parte: The Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina, In Re: The Purported Cemetery of Unknown Deceased Persons, Petition, 22 August 1960, Mss 366, Box 2, Folder 17, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.
- 2 State of South Carolina, County of Oconee, Court of Common Pleas, Ex parte: The Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina, In Re: The Purported Cemetery of Unknown Deceased Persons, Order, 3 September 1960, Mss 366, Box 2, Folder 17, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.
- 3 State of South Carolina, County of Oconee, Court of Common Pleas, Ex parte: The Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina, In Re: The Purported Cemetery of Unknown Deceased Persons, Order, 3 September 1960, Mss 366, Box 2, Folder 17, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.
- 4 Minutes of the Building and Grounds Committee, March 11, 1946, Series 7, Box 1, Folder 6, Robert F. Poole Presidential Records, Committee Files, 1928-1955, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.
- 5 State of South Carolina, County of Oconee, Court of Common Pleas, Ex parte: The Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina, In Re: The Purported Cemetery of Unknown Deceased Persons, Petition, 22 August 1960, Mss 366, Box 2, Folder 17, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.
- 6 Photographs of Clemson Memorial Stadium West End Zone Seating Construction, 1960, Series 100, Clemson University Historical Images, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries; "Parking Problem Presents Another Of Clemson's Growing Pains That Must Accompany Progress," *The Tiger* (Clemson, SC), September 30, 1960, p. 2.
- 7 Jeno Palotai, Map, August 19, 1960, Mss 366, Oversize Folder OV1, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.
- 8 "\$2.1 Million to Protect Clemson Campus, Contract for Seneca River Diversion Let," *The Greenville News* (Greenville, SC), June 28, 1960.
- 9 Memorandum of Understanding between Clemson and Nello L. Teer Company, September 13, 1960, Mss 366, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.
- 10 Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Interview with H. D. Webb, September 18, 1991, Box 2, Folder 17, Mss 366, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries; Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Interview with Robert Ware, July 17, 1992, Series 613, Site History, 1895-2008, The Woodland Cemetery Stewardship Committee Records, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

### Research Update

Dr. Mandi Barnard has continued to coordinate research for the team for the preservation phase of our project. She is currently examining the papers of Clinton Calhoun Lemon and Dr. Rupert Fike to gain an understanding of how college athletics shaped development around Cemetery Hill.

Dr. Sara Collini has continued to research the full impact of Clemson Athletics on Cemetery Hill and the surrounding landscape, including the construction and expansion of parking lots and paving of roads surrounding Memorial Stadium. She has also been working with the team on reading the meeting minutes and annual reports of the Board of Trustees from 1888 to the present. The team is noting all mentions of the cemetery and surrounding landscape from these records, along with all relevant collections in the campus archives, and putting together a comprehensive historical timeline.

Dr. Rhondda R. Thomas has been assisting with research in the archives regarding the documentation of the history of the cemetery. She has also continued to learn more about the Tom Littlejohn housing project that Clemson originally designed for Black wage workers. Additionally, she is coordinating an effort to develop a database of memorials universities have established to honor enslaved laborers and Black employees.

On Monday, July 18, 2022, Burt Pinnock, FAIA, NOMA, Principal for Baskervill Architects, visited Clemson University to provide a consultation regarding the process for developing a memorial for Woodland Cemetery and the African American Burial Ground. Mainly based in Virginia, Baskervill's architectural work is community-



George, Rhea. (2016). *Awards for Distinguished Achievement Announced*. Retrieved from: (<https://www.aiava.org/awards-for-distinguished-achievement-announced/>)

driven in its commemoration of people and places. These projects include "Hearth: Memorial to the Enslaved" at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, "Reconciliation Plaza and the Richmond Slave Trail" in downtown Richmond, Virginia, and "the Twin Memorials" at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia.

Within his presentation, Mr. Pinnock emphasized including descendant communities in the room for decision-making, determining what an undisputed truth is among people with differing perspectives, and surveying what communities want in memorialization. The remainder of his visit included a "Call My Name" tour facilitated by Dr. Thomas, a Woodland Cemetery tour from the cemetery team, a visit to the Clemson Area African American Museum, and a tour of the Hopewell Plantation House with Clemson University Historian Dr. Otis Pickett, Sr.

## Community Engagement Update

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Marquise Drayton has been steady in his outreach efforts as the new Community Engagement Assistant. On July 21 and 28, 2022, he volunteered with the Blue Ridge Community Center in Seneca, SC, for their summer reading program. Geared towards rising third- and seventh-graders, this initiative is designed to curb the learning loss for students during the summer break.

On July 22, Drayton met with Seneca City Museum leaders Nick McKinney, Director of the Lunney Museum, and Shelby Henderson, Founding Director of the Bertha Lee Strickland Museum and executive director of the City of Seneca's Department of Arts, History, and Culture. They informed him about the local history of Oconee County, the demographic makeup of the city in comparison to the county, and influential people to contact concerning oral history. After speaking with Drayton in City Hall, they led him

on a tour of Mountain View Cemetery Confederate graveyard, and then to Oak Grove Cemetery, a historically Black cemetery. Both are owned by the City of Seneca. Within each, he could see how challenges with historic preservation and remembrance have persisted not only at Clemson University's cemetery but in neighboring towns.

On July 10, 2022, the cemetery team



Photograph by Dr. Mandi Barnard

led free drop-in tours at Woodland Cemetery from 12pm to 4pm. It was a decent turnout of 17 people, including a community group known as "Outdoor Afro" who have an interest in education, conservation, and nature.

We want to thank Marissa Davis (pictured below on the far right) for contributing to the Woodland Cemetery Project during the past two years. She will leave the project in early August as her time in the Clemson History M.A. program is ending. Her next step is to obtain a master's degree in library and information science and work towards becoming an archivist.

Dr. Rhondda R. Thomas has reached out to her counterparts at other universities to learn more about community engagement practices, particularly in the development of preservation plans and memorials. She is also working closely with community partners in the cities of Seneca and Clemson on the development of a proposal for a Black Heritage Trail that shares the history of people of African descent on campus and in local communities.

## Upcoming Events

More detailed information can be found on the cemetery web page and our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). Email [afam-burials@clemson.edu](mailto:afam-burials@clemson.edu) to suggest an event or get involved. Please also visit the websites for the [Clemson Area African American Museum](#) and [Bertha Lee Strickland Cultural Museum](#) to find other events going on in the community.

### Free Tours of Woodland Cemetery and the African American Burial Ground at Clemson University on Tuesdays and Fridays this Fall

Our cemetery tours will start on Tuesday, August 30, 2022, at 9am, 10am, and 11am on the away football game weeks. The Friday tours will start on Friday, September 9, 2022. Times will

be at 8am, 9am, 10am, and 11am and will be offered when there is a home football game that week.

These one-hour walking tours will introduce you to the research, community engagement, and memorialization efforts undertaken by the project team and local community.

Visitors can park on site at the ceme-

tery. However, Williamson Road and Sistine Hall parking are for Clemson employees only, though students can park there after hours. When traveling to the cemetery please enter Williamson Road via Perimeter Road due to construction at Memorial Stadium. Please wear comfortable walking shoes and bring sunscreen, bug spray, and

*Continued on next page*

## Upcoming Events

*Continued from previous page*

bottled water.

Registration is required for these tours. Register at least one week before your selected tour date via this [Google Form](#).

If you have questions about the tours or have information to share about the African American Burial Ground, please call us at (864) 655-8855, or email us at [afamburials@clemson.edu](mailto:afamburials@clemson.edu).

### "Old Fashion Fish Fry" at Retreat Rosenwald School

The Retreat Rosenwald School in Westminster, South Carolina, is hosting an "Old Fashion Fish Fry" on Saturday, August 6, 2022, from 10am to 4pm. \$7 plates and \$1 drinks/desserts will be on sale with all proceeds going to the Retreat Rosenwald Fund. Tours of the Rosenwald School will be available as well.



*"Old Fashion Fish Fry"*

*at*

*Retreat Rosenwald School  
106 Pleasant Hill Drive  
Westminster, SC 29693*

*10:00 am to 4:00 pm*

*Saturday, August 6, 2022*

*Plates --\$7.00*

*Hot Dogs or Fish, Baked Beans, Slaw or Chips*

*Drinks and Desserts - \$1.00 each*

*All proceeds goes to Retreat Rosenwald Fund!*

*School Tours will be available!*

## Meet the Research and Community Engagement Team

- Dr. Rhondda Thomas, Calhoun Lemon Professor of Literature, Call My Name Faculty Director, and Coordinator of Research and Community Engagement for the African American Burial Ground and Woodland Cemetery Historic Preservation Project
- Dr. Mandi Barnard, Research Historian
- Dr. Sara Collini, Postdoctoral Fellow in University History
- Marissa Davis, Graduate Research Assistant
- Harolynn Williams, Graduate Research Intern
- Marquise Drayton, Community Engagement Assistant
- Alleyia Bailey, Undergraduate Research Assistant
- Lucas DeBenedetti, Undergraduate Research Assistant

## And Meet Our Community Engagement Council

- From Anderson: J. T. Boseman, Jack Henderson, Nekaun Swinger, Dr. Beatrice Thompson
- From Clemson-Central: Rosa Grayden; Dalphine Jameson; Pastor Dr. Zackary Johnson
- From Pendleton: Terence Hassan
- From Oconee County: Shelby Henderson; Kathy Jenkins; Helen Rosemond-Saunders

## Questions?

Questions about the cemetery project?

Email [afamburials@clemson.edu](mailto:afamburials@clemson.edu) or call (864) 656-8855