

# WOODLAND CEMETERY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROJECT

JANUARY 2023 *Monthly Newsletter* VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1



White flags for unmarked burials lined up by service road of Woodland Cemetery. 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 will provide information about upcoming architect visits on campus, explain the origins of the Woodland Cemetery and African American Burial Ground Historic Preservation Project, provide research, community engagement updates, and highlight some upcoming local events.

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## Architect Visits to Clemson University in January 2023

In January 2023, Clemson University's office of Campus Planning will continue to host architects who will share their vision for memorial development as we prepare to enter into the memorial design phase for the cemetery project later this year. Mario Gooden will be at Clemson University on January 5, 2023, to discuss his architectural work related to the Woodland Cemetery memorialization efforts. A Clemson Design graduate from the class of 1987, Gooden is the Interim Director of the MArch Program at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP), which researches and explores the geospatial aspect of continental Africa and its associated diaspora. Gooden's previous works include Battiste Residence Hall at South Carolina State University, the Woodson African American Museum in St. Petersburg, FL, the Gerald R. Ford Federal Building and US Courthouse in Grand Rapids, MI, and Hunters Point Shipyard in San Francisco, CA.

Also, Michael Murphy, Int FRIBA, will visit Clemson University on January 26, 2023, to discuss his architectural work on public memory and memorials. Murphy is a Founding Principal of MASS Design Group, which uses architecture and design to spark social change and justice. Their past works include the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, AL, the Gun Violence Memorial Project at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, and "The Embrace" with Hank Willis Thomas in Boston, MA. Murphy has taught at the University of Michigan, Harvard Graduate School of Design, and Columbia's GSAPP.

Both of their campus visits will include tours of Historic Properties tours, Woodland Cemetery and African American Burial Ground, a Call My Name campus tour, a visit to the Clemson Area African American Museum, and a presentation of their work for the cemetery team and Campus Planning staff.



Mario Gooden. Source: Columbia Global Centers



Michael Murphy. Source: MASS Design Group

### Cemetery History Series #1

#### Recent history of Woodland Cemetery and project work

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

Although the Woodland Cemetery Stewardship Committee voted unanimously on April 3, 2002, to install a temporary fence to protect some portions of the cemetery, the area designated as the enslaved burial ground on the Southern border of Woodland Cemetery saw periods of poor maintenance and upkeep. By 2015, when Dr. Rhondda Thomas and Dr. James Bostic Jr. led the movement to add state historical markers on campus for Woodland Cemetery and what some Clemson staff characterized as the Fort Hill Slave and Convict Cemetery, the sites of the quarters for the enslaved and stockade for convicted laborers, and the Bottoms where the agricultural field is located, the one-acre area that was fenced in had been filled with trash and construction debris, and the fence was broken. At that time, the site was cleaned out and repaired.

Five years later, in February of 2020, Dr. Thomas gave a "Call My Name" tour with a stop at the entrance of Woodland Cemetery where she discussed the area dedicated to burials of enslaved people and convict laborers. On that day, time did not permit her to lead the group to the site, but she encouraged tour participants to come back to the cemetery and visit the burial ground. A few days later, two undergraduate students, Morgan Molosso and Sarah Adams, returned to the cemetery to view the burial site. When they arrived, they found the enclosure broken down, and the site filled with tailgating trash, in total disarray. These students were extremely upset and contacted Dr. Thomas to find out how to correct the situation.

The pandemic began weeks later, closing campus. As the work of cleaning up the burial site continued. Dr. Paul Anderson, then University Historian, and Dr. Bostic spent time exploring who was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the

cemetery. They also reached out to state archeologist Dr. Jonathan Leader requesting reports for his previous site visits to the cemetery, but no new reports were provided. However, Campus Planning and Design staff recovered and shared a partial report Leader had given Clemson in the early 2000s. By summer 2020, Clemson University Facilities had cleaned out the trash. Soon Facilities staff and Dr. Bostic set about marking the field stones, or rock markers set vertically in the ground, that noted the site of a burial. Eventually they realized that they were finding field stones outside of the original boundary of the fence enclosure. At that point, they requested a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey of the southern area of Woodland Cemetery to recover the extent of what was believed to be the African American Burial Site.

On July 29, 2020, the day before the GPR survey was to begin, Dr. Bostic, Rick Owens of University Facilities, and Kyle Campbell of Preservation South examined the papers of archaeologist Carrel Cowan-Ricks for the first time. Cowan-Ricks's research indicated

that the original site of enslaved burials was the whole western side of Cemetery Hill. Her papers also included a copy of the court order Clemson had requested and received permission from the Oconee County Court in 1960 to disinter the remains of enslaved persons on the west side of the hill and reinter them on the south side where the fenced in area was located. With this information in hand, the team requested an expansion of the original area of the GPR survey to include the western side of Woodland Cemetery. At the end of the first day of the survey, 215 unmarked burials had been recovered, where only 40-50 total burials of enslaved persons were thought to exist.

By the start of the fall 2020 semester, then Clemson University Board of Trustees Chairman Smyth McKissick established the Legacy Council to coordinate the cemetery project. McKissick appointed Clemson Trustee David Dukes as chair of the Council, and Dr. Bostic, Dr. Thomas, Dr. Anderson, and Dr. James Barker, Emeritus Clemson President and School of Architecture Professor, as members. That semester, the cemetery research team began to research and document the institutional history of Woodland Cemetery and share it with the public. At the time, the project team included Dr. Anderson, then University historian, research coordinator; Dr. Thomas, community engagement coordinator; Dr. Sara Collini, postdoctoral researcher in university history; and Marissa Davis, graduate student researcher. In the spring of 2021, Dr. Thomas was asked to coordinate both research and community engagement after Dr. Anderson left the project.

Under Dr. Thomas' leadership, the staff of the Woodland Cemetery and African American Burial Ground Research Project has grown to include



Sign inside Woodland Cemetery recognizing the intergenerational nature of the unmarked of Black people burials. Photograph by Dr. Mandi Barnard

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### Cemetery History Series #13

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a Community Engagement Assistant, a Research Historian, a Genealogist, and three undergraduate research assistants. The work of the cemetery project is dedicated to truth telling and restorative justice for the Clemson area descendant community. All who are buried in Woodland Cemetery deserve honor and respect. To that end, in January 2022, the Pathways

Project will begin when all asphalt roadways will be pulled up, and a new pathway installed that will go around any unmarked burial that is presently under the pavement. By the fall of 2023, the Preservation and Memorialization plan will be in place to keep the cemetery site protected indefinitely. Soon thereafter, public discussions will be held regarding the

design and development of a memorial for African American laborers in Clemson University history. This project was sparked in large part by undergraduate student activism on campus.

### Research Update

Dr. Mandi Barnard has been working at Clemson Special Collections and Archives completing research on Clemson President Patrick Mell's papers, and has been working on gathering information on several individuals connected with the first Woodland Cemetery committee. She has been assisting Clemson Oral Historian Dr. LeDatta Grimes with research on Bill Greenlee, and is completing work on Harvey Gantt and his integration of Clemson University in 1963.

Dr. Sara Collini finished up the Fall semester with the students on the Creative Inquiry Team for the cemetery project. The students completed work on the Virtual Tour of the cemetery, which includes stops about the Andrew P. Calhoun plot, grave of Clemson President Walter Riggs and establishment of Woodland Cemetery in 1924, expansion of Memorial Stadium, the segregated neighborhood behind the stadium called the Bottoms in 1950, the impact of Hartwell Dam and the 1960 court order, the archaeological work of Professor Carrel Cowan-Ricks in the 1990s, tailgating, Judge Crawford and the Camellia Garden, and student activism in 21st century. The multimedia Virtual Tour will be available on the cemetery project website for the public in early 2023. It was a great semester, and many of the students will be continuing with the CI Team in the spring.

Dr. Rhondda Thomas reviewed materials in Clemson Libraries' Special Collections and Archives that are associated with Harvey Gantt's two-year quest to gain admission to Clemson ultimately through a class-action lawsuit in 1963 in preparation for the program the cemetery team is hosting on January 31, 2023, in honor of the 60th anniversary of desegregation. The public will be invited to view the "Carolina Stories: The Education of Harvey Gantt" documentary and discuss primary documents associated with this historic event.

#### Carolina Stories: The Education of Harvey Gantt



Cover Art for PBS's "Carolina Stories: The Education of Harvey Gantt," which the cemetery team will be hosting a screening. Photograph: <https://shopscetv.org/products/carolina-stories-the-education-of-harvey-gantt>

Additionally, Dr. Thomas traveled to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia, South Carolina, to conduct research on the convicted laborers whom Clemson trustees leased from the SC state penitentiary to build their school. She has confirmed the names of at least 160 convicted felons, mostly African American men and boys as young as 14 years old, who labored for the college through the early 1900s. Since state convicts worked on the Clemson College worksite until 1915, more names will be confirmed by the cemetery team during future trips to the state archive. Dr. Thomas also conducted research on a court case from the early 1900s involving an African American Clemson employee.

## Community Engagement Update

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On December 8, 2022, Marquise Drayton met with Don Smith, the General Manager of Oconee Hill Cemetery, on the campus of the University of Georgia. Established in 1856, Oconee Hill is an active cemetery for Athens, GA, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Oconee Hill Cemetery sits across from UGA's Sanford Stadium in the same manner that Woodland Cemetery is situated beside Clemson's Memorial Stadium. Drayton exchanged ideas about historic preservation and grounds upkeep between each respective campus cemetery with Smith. The latter demonstrated the institutional investment that the school places in Oconee Hill, from ArcGIS mapping for gravesites to a tailgating partnership with UGA Athletics. Afterward, Smith took Drayton on a car-driven tour of the 150 acres of Oconee Hill Cemetery, which includes a Jewish section, a Historic Black Burial Ground, a Georgia Football Lettermen segment, and a greenway with a connecting bridge.

On December 13, 2022, Drayton visited the Welfare Baptist Church in Belton, SC, to see the public viewing

of the Anderson Area Remembrance and Reconciliation Initiative's "The Sculpture," a mammoth structure dedicated to five lynching victims of Anderson County. Created by artist Herman Keith Jr, it is a wood and metal combination that includes hanging glass jars with soil from the places of racial violence in the Upstate area. "The Sculpture" draws inspiration from the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum and Lynching Memorial in Montgomery, AL. Local actress Andrea Seemuller recounted the five victims'



"The Sculpture" glass jars glare in the shadows while lit up inside Welfare Baptist Church's lobby. Photograph by Marquise Drayton

gruesome stories at the event.

Lastly, on December 27-28, Drayton assisted the Clemson Area African American Museum (CAAAM) with their Kwanzaa Celebration. On the first day, CAAAM screened "From Segregation to Justice," a documentary narrating the events that led to *Briggs v. Elliott*, the Summerton, South Carolina, desegregation case that became one of the five cases in the landmark US Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*. On the second day, the museum hosted a showing of "INVENTED Before You Were Born," a documentary about the interracial lineage and history of enslavement in the Bibb family in western Kentucky. Hasan Bakr capped off both days with an inviting drumming performance among the audience.

During some downtime in December, Drayton also ventured into Woodland Cemetery to replace the gold ribbons with teal ribbons for better identification before the Pathways Project closes the campus cemetery in Spring 2023.

Overall, there were 42 in-person Woodland Cemetery tours with 664 participants during the Fall of 2022.

## Upcoming Events

More detailed information and registration for Zoom events can be found on the cemetery web page and our social media. Email [mdrayto@clemson.edu](mailto:mdrayto@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.

**PBS's "Carolina Stories: The Education of Harvey Gantt:" Commemorative Documentary Screening & Historical Documents Analysis, January 31, 2023, 6PM, McKissick Theatre, Hendrix Student Center, Clemson University**

Please join the Woodland Cemetery and Historic African American Burial Ground Preservation Project

team on January 31, 2023, at 6PM as we commemorate the 60th anniversary of Harvey Gantt winning a class-action lawsuit to desegregate Clemson University as its first Black student in 1963.

The cemetery team will be hosting a viewing of PBS's "Carolina Stories: The Education of Harvey Gantt" documentary made for the

celebration of the 50th anniversary of "Integration with Dignity." Narrated by actress Phylicia Rashad with featured photographs by Cecil Williams, it tells the story of Gantt's journey into Clemson from repeated applications for admission to his college graduation in 1965.

Following the film, guests are welcome to examine the historical

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## Upcoming Events

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documents from Harvey Gantt's papers from Clemson Libraries' Special Collection and Archives. In doing so, they can compare the tangible facts within Clemson's archives with the celebratory film made almost a decade ago.

The event is free and open to the public and will be held within McKissick Theater inside the Hendrix Student Center on the campus of Clemson University.

**"Call My Name: The Play,"** Written by Rhondda R. Thomas in collaboration with Tectonic Theater Project, Bellamy Theater at the Brooks Center for Performing Arts, January 29, 7:30PM

Please join the Call My Name Coalition for the first readings of excerpts from "Call My Name: The Play" at the Clemson University Brooks Center. Tickets are only available for the 7:30PM performance on Sunday, January 29, 2023. "Call My Name, Clemson," tells the stories of seven generations of freed and enslaved African Americans who contributed to the Upstate school's history. Tickets are \$10 for Clemson students (with ID) and \$15 for the general public. They can be purchased online [here](#) or by phone via the Brooks Center Box Office: 864-656-7787.



## Meet the Research and Community Engagement

- 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
- Sally Mauldin, Board of Trustees Office Staff
- Dr. Mandi Barnard, Research Historian
- Dr. Sara Collini, Postdoctoral Fellow in University History
- Deborah Robinson, Genealogist
- Dr. David Markus, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, Registered Professional Archaeologist 5174
- Marquise Drayton, Community Engagement Assistant
- Ka'tia Reyes, Undergraduate Communications Assistant
- Jessica Foster, Graduate Research 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