

# WOODLAND CEMETERY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROJECT

JUNE 2023 *Monthly Newsletter* VOLUME 3, ISSUE 6



2023 Graduation Pictures. Photograph by Lucas DeBenedetti.

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 Michael Murphy's visit at Clemson University, reflect on Lucas DeBenedetti's time with the cemetery project, share a brief history of the African American Burial Ground, provide research, community engagement updates, and highlight some upcoming local events.

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### **Michael Murphy's visit at Clemson University for the Office of Campus Planning and Legacy Council**

On May 23, 2023, Michael Murphy, Int FRIBA (Fellowship of the Royal Institute of British Architects), visited Clemson University 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, Alabama, the Gun Violence Memorial Project at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, and "The Embrace" with Hank Willis Thomas in Boston, Massachusetts. Currently, Murphy is the Thomas W. Ventulett III Distinguished Chair in Architectural Design at the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) in Atlanta, Georgia. He has also taught at the University of Michigan, Harvard Graduate

School of Design, and Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP). Murphy holds a master's of architecture degree from Harvard Graduate School of Design and a bachelor's of arts degree in English from the University of Chicago.

In his presentation, "The Intimate & The Infinite or The Architecture of Memory," Murphy discussed his core tenets with approaching memorial architecture in marking a site, provoking thought, evoking emotion, and transforming a community to come together to create something unique to them.

His campus visit included a Clemson University Historic Properties tour, a virtual tour of Woodland Cemetery and the African American Burial Ground, a Call My Name virtual tour, and a presentation of his work for the

cemetery team and Campus Planning staff.

Murphy's visit in late May concludes the Office of Campus Planning and Legacy Council's outreach efforts in hosting architects who will share their vision for memorial development as we prepare to enter the memorial design phase for the cemetery project later this year.



Michael Murphy. Source: MASS Design Group.

# WOODLAND CEMETERY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROJECT

## Monthly Newsletter

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### Student Reflections - Lucas DeBenedetti, May 10, 2023

It's difficult to put into words how much this project has meant to me over the past two years. As I prepare to graduate from Clemson on Friday, May 12, I have been reflecting on my time working for the Woodland Cemetery Project.

I joined the cemetery project in Fall 2021, taking part in the project's first Creative Inquiry class. In that class, I learned about the history of Woodland Cemetery and Clemson University as a whole for the first time and was given the opportunity to research a historical topic that interested me pertaining to the cemetery's history. My group and I studied how disease and death affected the enslaved population of Fort Hill Plantation. The Creative Inquiry project opened my eyes to the history around me and left me with the desire to help the project in any way that I could. When the opportunity to join the project as a research assistant became available in January 2022 I immediately rushed to apply. I was lucky enough to get the job and have enjoyed working on the project ever since.

Throughout my time as research assistant, I have taken part in some amazing projects. During the Spring of 2022, with Dr. Collini and Nolly Swan, my former coworker, I helped to create the "[Visual History of Woodland Cemetery.](#)" This was such an interesting project to research, and we discovered so much new information about the cemetery, particularly the destruction of the western half of the cemetery and how it is related to the construction of Lake Hartwell and Clemson's dikes. By the end of the semester, we had created the StoryMaps project that is currently on the cemetery's website.

In the fall of 2022, I went with the team on our trip to William and Mary to meet the [Lemon Project](#) and see their monument. This trip was so inspirational, and I was able to get closer to the rest of the team as well as learn how other universities deal with their history of slavery and racism. The trip gave me hope that one day Clemson will build a memorial to the enslaved men and women, convict laborers, and sharecroppers who have largely been ignored in the greater history of Clemson University.

This past semester I took part in [Universities Studying Slavery, South Carolina](#) Research Symposium where I presented on destruction of the western half of the cemetery and using digital history methods to present my findings to the public. I was also able to gain new skills in genealogy, with the help of genealogist Deborah Robinson, mapping, and research. I have loved all the projects I have worked on, all the trips we have taken as a team, and all the people I have gotten to meet through this experience. I only hope that I was able to make a positive impact on the project and Clemson history as a whole.

The Woodland Cemetery Project team has been extremely supportive of me throughout my entire time on the project. They have been an amazing community for me and have always looked out for me and helped me throughout the entirety of my time working on the project both inside of class and work as well as outside. Firstly, I want to thank Dr. Sara Collini who has been my main mentor throughout my time on the project. Dr. Collini has been incredibly supportive of all my endeavors both inside and outside the project. She has taught me skills that will help me during the rest of my academic and professional career as well as guiding me on how to be a proper historian. I would also like to thank Dr. Thomas for giving me this opportunity to work on this incredible project and always challenging me with new projects. Dr. Thomas has been such an inspirational figure to me and has inspired me to continue pursuing justice in my historical research. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Mandi Barnard, Deborah Robinson, and Marquise Drayton. Each of them has been there for me on different occasions and have been amazing to learn from and get to know them throughout my time on the project.

The Woodland Cemetery Project has furthered my love for history immensely and allowed me to discover my passion for justice. It inspired my senior honors thesis, as I combined my loves of World War II history and African American history and led to me writing a thesis on African American soldiers during World War II and how they have been perceived by the American media past and present.

I plan to continue to grow my passion for history and justice at grad school at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte where I will pursue a master's in history. I will take all the lessons and information I have learned in this project to further the research I began with thesis as well as pursuing new research interests in civil rights history. One day I hope to become a history professor and potentially an expert historical witness in civil rights court cases.

The Woodland Cemetery Project has been the most rewarding and meaningful experience during my time at Clemson. I will miss working on this project and seeing my coworkers and mentors so much. The project provided me with a sense of community and purpose that I had been lacking at Clemson. Working on the project has been an unforgettable experience that will stick with me for the rest of my life and will impact how I study history and look at the world around me going forward. I am honored to have worked on project from the first Creative Inquiry class to the present. Though I am leaving the project, I will never forget the experiences I have had, the opportunities to learn and grow I have gained, and the people I have met. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for this project, and I will miss it so much.

By Lucas DeBenedetti, Undergraduate Research Assistant



## Cemetery History Series #6

### A Brief History of the African American Burial Ground in Woodland Cemetery

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

On March 11, 1946, among the five topics that members of Clemson College's Buildings and Ground Committee discussed was "Markers for graves of convicts and slaves on Cemetery Hill." According to committee member Mr. Newman, "it was his understanding that on Cemetery Hill are buried some 200 to 250 slaves and convicts." After a discussion, the committee "unanimously voted to recommend that some type of permanent marker be established on Cemetery Hill to indicate this colored graveyard." One day later David J. Watson, chair of the committee, advised Clemson President R. F. Poole and Business Manager John C. Littlejohn of the motion and recommended that "accurate information should be obtained and placed on the marker."<sup>1</sup> Eleven years later, Watson sent a memo to Henry Hill, director of auxiliary enterprises at Clemson, for the "Clemson Cemetery." Although they were mainly concerned about the maintenance of Woodland Cemetery, the following recommendation was also included: "Enclose area of colored graveyard within a securely constructed wire fence. There is a space approximately 100' x 125' about 400 feet west of Calhoun plot enclosure."<sup>2</sup> Neither of the recommendations was enacted. Thus, Clemson missed the opportunity to memorialize and protect the African American Burial Ground. What follows is a brief overview of the history of this sacred site based on research we have conducted thus far.

The first burials of people of African descent on the land where the Fort Hill Plantation was established and later the Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina was built likely occurred during the antebellum period. In 1801, Reverend James McElhenny, a presbyterian minister for the Old Stone Church in Pendleton, SC, moved onto the land with his family. McElhenny owned 25 enslaved African Americans who likely built Clergy Hall, the four-room home where the minister and his extended family lived.<sup>3</sup> Some of the enslaved persons who labored for the

McElhenny family may have been buried on the site that would become known as Cemetery Hill.

After Rev. McElhenny died in 1812, Floride Bonneau Colhoun purchased the land. John C. Calhoun moved his family to the property in 1826. Enslaved carpenters added 10 rooms to the four-room Clergy Hall, and Calhoun renamed the property Fort Hill. The Calhouns along with Thomas Green Clemson owned over 100 enslaved persons who labored on their plantations and in John Calhoun's mines in South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. To date, however, researchers have only been able to find documentation for one enslaved person, 74-year-old Thom, owned by Mrs. J.C. (Floride) Calhoun, who died in 1850 and was buried at Fort Hill.<sup>4</sup> Although there are other death records for enslaved persons who labored at Fort Hill, their burial place is not noted in the documents. These include Nelly, owned by Floride Calhoun, who died in childbirth in 1856.<sup>5</sup> Then at the end of the Civil War, 70 persons, mostly children, died of whooping cough and measles.<sup>6</sup>

However, there are several elderly enslaved persons listed in various records who are not included in the last inventory of enslaved persons at Fort Hill completed in 1865. For example, 100-year-old Phebe was listed in the "Schedule of Slaves with the Names and Ages" in the deed for the sale of Fort Hill in 1854.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, in 1849, Joseph Scoville reported meeting 112-year-old widow Monemi whose husband Polydore "had lived to a very old age."<sup>8</sup> Also, enslaved persons died in America at disproportionately higher rates during the antebellum period because of harsh living working conditions and the violence associated with slavery.

After the Civil War ended, African Americans continued living, working, and dying on the land where Clemson University was built through the mid-twentieth century. Recently emancipated African Americans were employed as sharecroppers,

domestics, and tenant farmers at Fort Hill during Reconstruction. Clemson trustees leased mostly African American convicted laborers, ages 14-67, from the state penitentiary to build a school for young white men. Twelve African American convicted laborers died while building Clemson and are believed to have been buried on Cemetery Hill (Department of Corrections Records, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC.). Clemson administrators and faculty hired African American wage workers as cooks, barbers, farm hands, laundry workers, nurses, construction laborers, and domestics to provide much needed support services for the college. Initially, they lived near white employees on the main campus but were gradually pushed into segregated neighborhoods, including areas in and around the cemetery.

Shortly after Clemson sought and received permission in 1960 from the Oconee County Court to disinter the remains of African Americans from the west side of the cemetery and reinter them on its south side. This order led Clemson to destroy the African American Burial Ground on the lower west side of the cemetery by, utilizing the soil to build dikes around Lake Hartwell. As the soil was removed, however, the remains of what were believed to be several African American children were disturbed and then reburied on the south side of Woodland Cemetery.<sup>9</sup>

Until July 2020, Clemson had designated about a one-acre site on the south side of Woodland Cemetery as the "Fort Hill Slave and Convict Cemetery." After then Clemson students Sarah Adams and Morgan Molosso discovered the neglect of the burial ground shortly after being encouraged to visit the site during a Call My Name campus tour in February 2020, they initiated a process that led to the hiring of a team that conducted Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to detect the number of possible unmarked burials

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### Cemetery History Series #6

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on the site.<sup>10</sup> Researchers are currently analyzing the GPR data and historical records to ensure that all who are buried in Woodland Cemetery and the African American Burial Ground are respected and honored.

By 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

CITATIONS: 1) 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.

2) David J. Watson to Henry Hill, November 22, 1957, Mss 366, Box 2, Folder 17, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

3) Third Census of the United States, Pendleton, South Carolina, 1810, Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Accessed through Ancestry.com.

4) Register of St. Paul's, Saint Paul's Episcopal Church Records, 1819-1971, South Carolina Digital Library Collections, <https://scdl.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/spr/id/1367/rec/52, 307>.

5) Register of St. Paul's, 307.

6) Floride Clemson, A Rebel Came Home; the Diary of Floride Clemson Tells of Her Wartime Adventures in Yankeeland, 1863-64, Her Trip Home to South Carolina, ed. Charles M. McGee, Jr. and Ernest M. Lander, Jr. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1961), 90-91.

7) Calhoun, Floride; Calhoun, Cornelia M.; and Calhoun, Andrew P., "Deed to Fort Hill plantation and enslaved persons between Floride Calhoun, Cornelia M. Calhoun and Andrew P. Calhoun, 1854 May 15" (1854). Thomas Green Clemson Papers, Mss 2. 210, <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1209&context=tgc>.

8) Joseph Scoville, "A Visit to Fort Hill," New York Herald, July 26, 1849, 1.

9) 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, and Order, 3 September 1960, Mss 366, Box 2, Folder 17, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries; Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Note to File, September 18, 1991, Mss 366, Box 2, Folder 17, Papers of Carrel Cowan-Ricks; Carrel Cowan-Ricks, Report of Interview with Robert E. Ware, July 17, 1992, in Series 613, Site History, 1895-2008, The Woodland Cemetery Stewardship Committee Records, <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=woodland>, all in Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

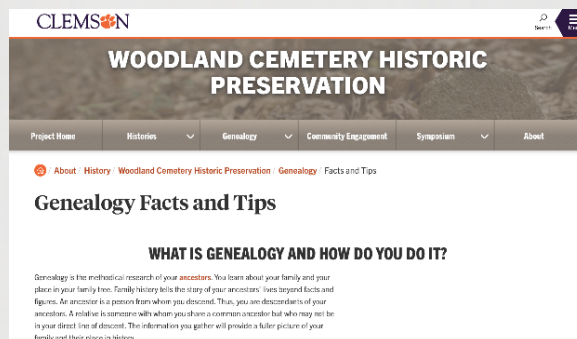
10) Zoe Nicholson, "Clemson students to honor unmarked burial ground for slaves, convict laborers on campus," Greenville News, March 26, 2020.

### Research Update

Dr. Sara Collini finished up the Spring semester with the undergraduate students on the CI Team sharing their research projects. It was a fantastic and productive semester, and the students did a great job on their final projects. They researched movement of enslaved communities between Fort Hill Plantation, Keowee, Hopewell, and Cane Brake in South Carolina, the history of ground penetrating radar (GPR) and public archaeology for the cemetery project, the 1946 memorialization attempt for the African American burial ground by the Clemson Buildings and Grounds Committee, the history of Lee Hall and the quarters for enslaved families, and a 3D reconstruction in ArcGIS of the western half of Cemetery Hill before it was destroyed when dirt was removed to build the dikes on Lake Hartwell.

Dr. Mandi Barnard has continued to trace the names of enslaved at Fort Hill in the letters of the extended Calhoun and Colhoun families. She has worked with Historic Properties staff to share information on Daphne and Bill Lawrence and their youngest son Benjamin, and was able to recover his rough birth time frame in May 1843. The Lawrences were once owned by John Ewing Colhoun, Jr., John C. Calhoun, and Thomas G. Clemson before being given the option to chose their next owner when Thomas Clemson sold the Cane Break Plantation and the enslaved persons he owned in 1851.

The genealogy section of the project's website is now live! The site shares genealogy facts, tips, events, research methods, and resources about how Genealogist Deborah Robinson is using these tools to work with the descendants of people buried in the cemetery to help them research their family histories and historical backgrounds. Please peruse the site and provide and let us know what you think via the [Genealogy Research Feedback Form](#) located in the Descendant and Community Research area.



The newly added genealogy page on <https://www.clemson.edu/about/history/woodland-cemetery/genealogy/index.html>.

Dr. Rhondda Thomas is researching enslaved African Americans owned by Andrew Pickens Calhoun and his sons who were brought to Fort Hill in the 1850s. She is also documenting the post-Civil War labor of Thomas Fruster who was enslaved by the Calhouns at Fort Hill. After he was emancipated, Fruster was employed as laborer by Thomas Clemson at Fort Hill. On May 17-18, 2023, Dr. Thomas took a trip to Charleston, SC, with Clemson's Campus Planning staff, Stephanie Cooper, Barry Anderson, and Rick Owens, to visit the Middleton Plantation and McLeod Plantation to learn about their interpretation of the lives and labors of enslaved persons and African Americans who were employed on the plantations after emancipation and African American burial grounds. The group also stopped by the American College of Building Arts to meet and talk with blacksmith Matthew Garton and other staff about collaborative efforts for the cemetery project and other Clemson building initiatives. Garton carries on the legacy of Philip Simmons, an African American artisan and blacksmith who created more than 500 beautiful ornamental ironworks that are installed throughout Charleston.



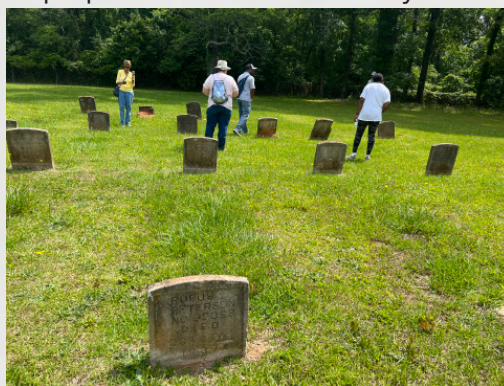
## Community Engagement Update

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On May 6, 2023, Marquise Drayton gave a virtual cemetery tour at Goldenview Baptist Church to those who attended the Free Legal Wills Clinic and Financial Workshop. The George and Roszena Shaw Center for Housing and Economic Growth hosted the community event in Clemson, SC. Cemetery team genealogist Deborah Robinson also held a genealogy workshop in the sanctuary. The audience of ten included members of Clemson City Council and representatives from Richland Cemetery, the first municipal cemetery for African Americans in Greenville, South Carolina.

On May 11, 2023, the cemetery team visited Columbia, SC, to see the neighboring cemeteries near the state capitol. This idea arrived after the Universities Studying Slavery (USS) Conference in Florence, South Carolina, in seeing the connection that the convict laborers sent to Clemson College had with those in the South Carolina State Penitentiary. Debi Hacker, Conservation Administrator and Education Coordinator of the Chicora Foundation, Inc., led a tour of the South Carolina Penitentiary Cemetery on Elmwood Cemetery's outskirts. Following that, Dr. Bobby

Donaldson and Frank Gause of the University of South Carolina's Center for Civil Rights History and Research led a tour of nearby Historic Randolph Cemetery, a private cemetery for the early affluent African Americans in the Midlands SC area. On May 12, 2023, Eric Coleman's history class from Irmo High School visited Clemson University for a virtual tour of Woodland Cemetery that Drayton conducted in Tillman Hall. Coleman '22 was an undergraduate history student in Dr. Caroline Dunn's HIST 1720: The West and the World course that Drayton TA'd for in Fall 2020 as a graduate history student at Clemson. Coleman reached out to Drayton for enrichment activities at Clemson for his 18 students to better understand what life was like for Black people in America across history.



The cemetery team roaming through the South Carolina Penitentiary Cemetery at the rear of Elmwood Cemetery in Columbia, SC. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

On May 18, 2023, Drayton led a virtual cemetery tour for student-athlete staff in Clemson Athletics. Lastly, he gave a virtual cemetery tour for a guest from Wales, United Kingdom, on May 23, 2023.

On May 20, 2023, Drayton visited Westview Cemetery in Atlanta, Georgia, to compare it with Woodland Cemetery and other cemeteries nationwide. It is the largest cemetery in the Southeast region of the United States, with over 500 acres. Founded in 1884, it is an active cemetery. Westview Cemetery includes a mausoleum/chapel, a Black burial ground (Rest Haven), a section dedicated by the Salvation Army, a water tower, a Confederate Memorial, a garden, vaults, and other monuments. He visited the gravesites of Rev. Joseph Lowery (civil rights leader), William Hartsfield (mayor of Atlanta), and Vivian Malone (Jones, one of the first African American students to desegregate the University of Alabama).

Finally, Drayton continues to participate in community gatherings. He attended church at Goldenview and Abel Baptist Church in Clemson, SC, to spread the word about the cemetery project. The Woodland Cemetery tour guide handbook for student docents is complete and will be used to train new guides for in-person tours resuming in Fall 2023.

## 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.

**Kids Summer Camp at Blue Ridge Community Center, June 5-8, 2023, from 9AM-5PM, 315 Holland Ave, Seneca, SC 29678.**

The Blue Ridge Community Center will be hosting a 4-day camp for elementary and middle school children between June 5-8, 2023, from 9AM-5PM. It will be held at the Blue Ridge Community Center (315 Holland Avenue, Seneca, South Carolina 29678). Robotics will go from 9AM-12PM and Reading & Exercise from 12PM-5PM.

The Kids Summer Camp is a collaborative effort between the Blue Ridge Community Center and the Blue Ridge Innovation & Entrepreneurship Foundation (BRIEF).

If interested, please call 864-482-1867 and leave a message. The BRCC will return your call. Visit [www.brccseneca.org](http://www.brccseneca.org) or [www.brief-nonprofit.org](http://www.brief-nonprofit.org).

**2023 Juneteenth Festival, June 19, 2023, from 11AM-3PM, Clemson University (Carillon Gardens, North Green, Outdoor Amphithe-**

**ater, Cooper Library), Clemson, SC 29634.**

Please join us on June 19, 2023, from 11 AM-3 PM on Clemson University's campus for the 2023 [Juneteenth Festival](#). It will be held at the Carillon Gardens, North Green, Outdoor Amphitheater, and Cooper Library. What's Happening? Spoken Word and Music Performances. Local Black History Exhibit. Virtual Woodland Cemetery Tour. Call My Name Walking Tour. Au-

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## Upcoming Events

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thor Presentations and Book Signings. Food Trucks and Vendors. Non-profit Organizations. Storytelling and Face Painting for Children. Organizations and vendors that would like to participate in the Juneteenth Festival should click [here](#) and complete the application form by Friday, June 12, 2023. Co-sponsored by the City of Clemson, City of Seneca, Call My Name Coalition, Clemson University Libraries, and Legacy Council.

### Local community events leading up to Juneteenth 2023:

City of Seneca, SC: Best Pound Cake Contest at Seneca City Hall (Tuesday, June 13, 2023, pound cake drop-off from 3-4:30PM; judging will begin at 5PM).

Juneteenth Children's Day at Gignilliat Community Center (Saturday, June 17, 2023, from 9AM-2PM).

Juneteenth Evening Concert featuring music by Xperiencesoul at Norton-Thompson Park (Saturday, June 17, 2023, from 6-9PM).

City of Clemson, SC: Mac Arnold & Plate Full O'Blues Concert at the Clemson Area African American Museum (Sunday, June 18, 2023, from 5-7PM).



[Here](#) is the full lineup for the holiday. For more information, email [callmynamecu@clemson.edu](mailto:callmynamecu@clemson.edu) or call 864-656-8855

## 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, Woodland Cemetery 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

## 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