

WOODLAND CEMETERY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROJECT

JULY 2023 *Monthly Newsletter* VOLUME 3, ISSUE 7



2023 Juneteenth Festival at Clemson University Logo.

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 cover the 2023 community Juneteenth Festival at Clemson University, preview Marquise Drayton's upcoming publication on college football and campus cemeteries, and provide research and community engagement updates.

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Recap of the 2023 Juneteenth Festival at Clemson University

On June 19, 2023, Clemson University hosted the 2023 community Juneteenth Festival co-sponsored by the City of Seneca, the City of Clemson, the Call My Name Coalition, Clemson University Libraries, and the Legacy Council. Despite the inclement weather outdoors, over five hundred attendees arrived at the Hendrix Student Center to commemorate the Freedom Day of 1865. For many, it was their first time on campus.

Vendors and organizations present included the George and Roszena Shaw Center for Housing & Economic Growth, ADAMA Naturals, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Pickens and Oconee Counties Branches, Smith Aroma, Pickens County Library System, Sharpersons' Executive Leadership, and many more.

There were book signings from motivational speakers like Bryant Smith and Dr. Frankie Felder, the first African American dean at Clemson University. Moody Black and Dove Dupree delivered impressive slam poetry monologues inside the Hendrix Ballroom and McKissick Theater, respectively, for attendees. Dr. Sonia Leverette read *BJ's Big Dream* and other children's books to youth in one of the seminar rooms.

There were food trucks, face painting artists, steel drum performances, a photo booth, cotton candy-making, and a virtual cemetery tour and local Black history exhibit in Cooper Library.

We hope to see those who came and those who wished to have come at next year's Festival.



The SC 4-H Pinckney Leadership Program visiting the Juneteenth Celebration. Photograph by Ashley Jones (CU Marketing and Communications).



Cemetery team genealogist Deborah Robinson distributing t-shirts to youth. Photograph by Ashley Jones (CU Marketing and Communications).

Cemetery History Series #7

An excerpt from "Put 'Em in The Dirt:" College Football's Fascination with Deadly Traditions and the Truth Behind who is Left Behind without Burial Rites. Featured in the 2024 Edition of Francis Marion University's *Carolina Currents: Studies in South Carolina Culture* Publication.

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

Ironically, both flagship universities in South Carolina and Louisiana stake their claim over who's "the real Death Valley."¹ According to a 1945 account by Presbyterian College head coach Lonnie McMillan, after a 76-0 loss from Frank Howard's Clemson Tigers, he referred to the stadium as "Death Valley"² because of the heat within it that made it hard to play as well as its natural ravine shape. But after the recent bout between the shared mascot schools, LSU may have more of a stake in that claim. In 2015, University of Michigan Football Head Coach Jim Harbaugh smashed a buckeye nut with a hammer atop former coach Bo Schembechler's grave ahead of the annual Michigan v. Ohio State rivalry game.³ University of Notre Dame fan Sylvester Cashen cared for the former Fighting Irish Football Head Coach Knute Rocke's gravesite for many years.⁴ Ahead of the 2008 Georgia Bulldogs v. Alabama Crimson Tide game in Athens, GA, then University of Alabama strength and conditioning coach Scott Cochran exclaimed in practice that "They'll be wearing black because they're coming to their own *expletive* funeral," as word came around that the Bulldogs were wearing an all-black uniform combination.⁵ From stadium nicknames to fictional graveyards dedicated to beating opponents on the road, there is a unique commemoration of life's end in college football regarding ways to document big wins.

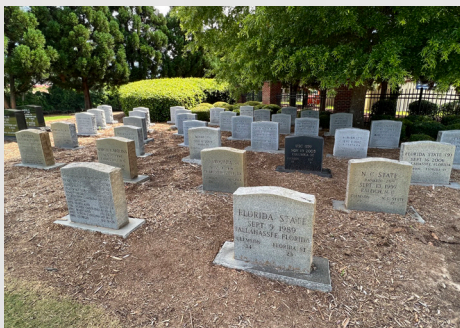
But the heroic folklore of the gridiron on Saturdays detracts from more realistic, dismal, and historical issues at southern Power Five schools. In September 2016, during my sophomore year at UNC-Chapel Hill, I tearfully witnessed a memorial to the 400+ unmarked burials of Black individuals in the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery.⁶ Basketball head coach Dean Smith, dramatist Paul Green, and previous UNC chancellors rest at the campus cemetery. The sacred space is across from Carmichael Basketball Arena. "Mike" Jordan once graced their hardwood floors as a student-athlete.⁷ In the fall, many Clemson Football fans

who wear orange and purple inside Memorial Stadium are unaware of the vast unmarked burials of Black people from different generations since enslavement in Woodland Cemetery that sits above the South stand of the home side. And although the University of Georgia inters its past live dog mascots inside Sanford Stadium⁸ and the University of Alabama's Bryant-Denny Stadium has silent occupants that contrast from the loud fanbase on Saturdays,⁹ they must reckon with their past ties to chattel slavery with cemeteries nearby their respective sporting venues. Thus, I seek to give life to underrepresented death at Clemson, UGA, and Florida State, which each holds deadly traditions for sport.

Before I dive into the facts about "the real Death Valley" in Woodland Cemetery beside Memorial Stadium (Nicknamed "Death Valley"), I want to address the folklore that Clemson Football shares in deadly traditions. As the Community Engagement Assistant for the Woodland Cemetery and African American Burial Ground Historic Preservation Project, I thoroughly enjoy asking undergraduate students to do this social experiment while taking them on tours of the campus cemetery. To pass the time while we walk to the next stop at Memorial Stadium from Walter Riggs' tombstone (the first football coach for the Clemson Tigers),¹⁰ I ask those who have cellphone access to look up "Clemson graveyard" on Google Images. What they often find is fascinating. Many results in the search

include pictures of the "The Graveyard" for Clemson Football, located next to their Allen Reeves Football and Practice Facility. There are only so many students who find more images of Woodland Cemetery within the algorithm. In researching this dichotomy, there is far more information about Clemson Athletics' graveyard known than about the resting places of Black people in the African American Burial Ground.

"The Graveyard" can be visited by fans during the year to see how the football program documents ranked road wins dimly. Every offseason, Clemson HC Dabo Swinney and upperclassmen student-athletes unveil new tombstones to the current team that symbolizes wins earned from the previous season's ranked away games.¹¹ The athletic program bases the ranking qualifications on the Coaches/Associated Press (AP) Top 25 Poll during the fall season (It used to be the Top 20 Poll until it expanded for both in the early 1990s).¹² One tombstone at the front row chronicles road wins over Top 20 teams from 1948-1986. A manufacturing company in nearby Easley, SC, initially crafted the symbolic tombstones.¹² But since 2004, Kornegay Funeral Home of Camden, SC, has done so for Clemson Athletics.¹³ The cost of preparing a marker is undisclosed to the public.¹⁴ As of 2023, thirty-seven tombstones are in the makeshift graveyard beside the Seneca River.¹⁵ Head Coach Dabo Swinney is responsible for twenty-six staked there, including two exclusive black granite stones at the far left denoting the 2016 and 2018 national championship victories against Alabama.¹⁶ One tombstone declares the 29-28 victory over the Virginia Cavaliers on October 10, 1992, as "the greatest comeback in Clemson history, as the Tigers scored the last twenty-nine points over the final thirty-two minutes of the game." These granite markers tell stories of epic wins against adversaries away from Clemson, SC, like the controversial ending to the 2019 Fiesta Bowl against #2 Ohio State¹⁷ and the lopsided beatdown of



"The Graveyard" nearby the Seneca River and Reeves Football Complex that honors Top 25 ranked wins on the road for Clemson. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

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Cemetery History Series #7

Continued from previous page

the 2019 ACC Championship Game as the Tigers trumped the #22 Cavaliers 62-17 with it being the most significant margin of victory in conference championship game history.¹⁸ Two tombstones designated for ranked away wins against the Notre Dame Fighting Irish sport a four-leaf clover atop each tombstone, perhaps paying homage or poking fun at former Clemson Athletics

Sports Information Director (SID) Tim Bourret's connection to Clemson, SC, and South Bend, IN.¹⁹ In early April, I walked out to the football cemetery to see two new tombstones dedicated to the double-overtime victory against #16 Wake Forest in Winston Salem on September 24, 2022, and the dominating win over #22 North Carolina on December 3, 2022, for the ACC Championship in Charlotte, NC.²⁰ Both away games I attended

as a Clemson fan. However, it was not an original idea from the Tigers, as it has directly resulted from another ACC deadly tradition in Florida State's "Sod Hill Cemetery."²¹ The first tombstone dedicated to Florida State on September 9, 1989, can further tell how Clemson mimicked FSU's idea.

By Marquise Drayton
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Woodland Cemetery and African American
Historic Burial Ground Preservation Project

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Citations will continue on Page 4 & 5

Research Update

Historian Dr. Mandi Barnard has completed the majority of Calhoun family letters and diaries seeking the names of the enslaved and freed people who had a connection to Ft. Hill. She has found documented evidence of a young enslaved man named Sam who accompanied Duff Green Calhoun to Charleston where he served during the Civil War. Sam died in November 1862 from typhoid fever at Edisto Island, his parents were Christy and Isaac, who appear as house servants in the 1865 inventory of Andrew Pickens Calhoun's estate. She is working to contextualize Confederate finance and debt payments during the Civil War to understand Andrew's finances and the dispute between he and his mother Floride Calhoun over the payment of the mortgage for Ft. Hill. She will consult further records in July held by the Huntington Library.

Dr. Sara Collini, Historian, has been working with the team researching the history of the enslaved communities at and around Fort Hill, including the family of Polydore and Menemin. She has also found more information on the McElhenny family and Clergy Hall Plantation, which was at the site prior to Fort Hill.

Deborah Robinson, Genealogist, is using the source documents recovered by Drs. Collini and Barnard to build family trees of enslaved persons at Fort Hill, Keowee, Hopewell, and Cane Brake Plantations in the South Carolina Upper Piedmont region. One such family is headed by enslaved patriarch Polydore, born in Africa, and his wife, Menemin, who lived to be at least 112. Research suggests that by 1849, they had about 63 living descendants spread across several plantations. Polydore, Menemin, and their children Peggy, Tom, Billy, Dinah, Kitty, Binah, and Jimmy begin showing up as a family unit in records dated about 1793.



Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveying done on Old Stone Church's cemetery grounds in Clemson, SC. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

The dates further suggest Menemin was born in 1737 and may have been forcibly brought to the American colonies during the transatlantic slave trade.

Dr. Rhondda Thomas is continuing research to document enslaved persons whom the Calhouns mortgaged when they purchased land or whom they willed as gifts to their children as well as the names of convicted laborers whom Clemson trustees leased from the state penitentiary that actually worked on site to build Clemson College. She is also following up on a tip about the McElhenny family's involvement in the slave trade.

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Community Engagement Update

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On June 3, 2023, Marquise Drayton visited South-View Cemetery in Atlanta, Georgia, to compare it with Woodland Cemetery's history and other cemeteries in the country. Nine former enslaved African Americans turned businessmen established the resting place for those who looked like them in Atlanta after seeing the mistreatment of Blacks at other cemeteries around the city. South-View is 100 acres, including a non-perpetual and perpetual care section. Notable people buried here include US Representative John Lewis, baseball legend Hank Aaron, civil rights leader Julian Bond, Martin Luther King, Sr., and his wife, Alberta King. The latter two mentioned are the parents of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who once lay here at South-View Cemetery. The King Center for Nonviolent Social Change on Auburn Avenue in Downtown Atlanta is his relocated home of eternal rest in 1970. Benjamin Mays, King's mentor at Morehouse College, was also once laid to rest at the historic African American burial ground. Mays tomb and his wife were moved to the Historically Black College/University in 1995. Later that same day, Drayton visited the African American Burial Ground at Oconee Hill Cemetery, across from the University of Georgia's Sanford Stadium. True to Black tradition regarding burials, the broken tombstones and fieldstones

were nearby a body of water in the North Oconee River.

On June 13, he gave a virtual cemetery tour for representatives from a similar historic preservation project in the Virginia Tech Reynolds Homestead. They contacted the cemetery project to see what ideas each project could exchange in programming and vice versa.

From June 17-19, Drayton participated in community outreach at local Juneteenth events. On Saturday, June 17, he attended the city of Seneca's Juneteenth Evening Concert featuring Xperiencesoul. The following day on June 18, he volunteered to help with parking at the Clemson Area African American Museum for their Juneteenth Concert featuring music by Mac Arnold



Marquise Drayton giving a virtual cemetery tour inside Cooper Library's history room at Clemson University. Photograph by Josh Wilson (CU Marketing and Communications).

& Plate Full O'Blues. Then on Monday, June 19, Drayton gave a virtual tour of Woodland Cemetery at Clemson University inside Cooper Library's history room for ten attendees. Throughout the day, he helped with set up and tear down for the community event.

During a virtual tour on June 28, Drayton provided information to Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Clemson, SC, on Woodland Cemetery. The hosting church, St. Paul Episcopal in Pendleton, SC, scheduled this as part of a campus ministry initiative they were participating in. One student in attendance, who studies with Clemson's School of Architecture, expressed interest in collaborating with the cemetery project.

Lastly, he has submitted his Universities Studying Slavery and Historic Cemeteries Research Symposium conference paper, "Put 'Em In the Dirt:" College Football's Fascination with Deadly Tradition and the Truth Behind Who is Left Behind without Burial Rites," for publication. It will debut in 2024 within Francis Marion University's *Carolina Currents: Studies in South Carolina Culture*.

The cemetery team would like to welcome Anthony Herrera on board as the Woodland Cemetery Superintendent. With a background in landscaping, he is responsible for the on-the-grounds duties of the campus cemetery.

Cemetery History Series #7 Citations Continued

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Evergreen Cemetery sits itself beside the University of Alabama's Bryant-Denny Stadium (Photo: AL.com). The cemetery is owned by the city and maintained by community volunteers in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.



Owned by the City of Athens, Georgia, Oconee Hill Cemetery is across from UGA's Sanford Stadium (Photo: Adventuresincemeteryhopping.com). In 2017, the University reinterred Black remains here that were found under Baldwin Hall, a former slave quarter site, in 2015.



Although Florida State University does not have a campus cemetery, their football program's "Sod Cemetery" preceded Clemson Football's "Graveyard" in its deadly way of commemorating wins on the road for the Noles (Photo: NYTimes.com). Both traditions have received ire from some who find them distasteful.

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
- Anthony Herrera, Woodland Cemetery Superintendent
- 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@clemsun.edu or call (864) 656-8855