

AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND, ANDREW P. CALHOUN FAMILY PLOT, AND WOODLAND CEMETERY HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROJECT

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Retaining wall on the southeast side of the cemetery at Clemson University. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

The Cemetery Preservation Project seeks to tell the stories of the known and previously unknown burials located in the 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 explain new changes to the campus cemetery as it reopens, acknowledge the history of the enslaved owned by the Calhouns, provide research and community engagement updates, and highlight some upcoming local events.

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Woodland Cemetery at Clemson University reopens to the public for visitation

Woodland Cemetery, nestled beside Clemson University's Memorial Stadium ("Death Valley"), at Clemson University is now open again to the public for visitation. The 17.5-acre wooded area actually has three burial grounds: the African American Burial Ground, Andrew Pickens Calhoun Family Plot, and Woodland Cemetery. Over the past ten months, the Pathways Project has significantly improved the campus cemetery, from addressing accessibility concerns in the sacred space to providing additional lighting and security measures. In this article, we will illustrate and explain these changes that visitors will experience when they re-enter.

Visitors can walk along the new klingstone pathways bordered by flagstones upon entering the cemetery. The pebble-like walkway provides a more comfortable feel for foot traffic than the concrete and dirt that once was there.

Benches will be installed in select places throughout the cemetery for reflection and rest. Additionally, a new klingstone pathway has been installed from the grave of President Walter Riggs to the lower pathway near the stadium. Both tour groups and visitors will be able to use this shortcut to save time when visiting the cemetery. A new gate has also been created along the Press Road entrance to the cemetery across from Memorial Stadium's Gate 16 to signal the site's sacredness.

A wrought iron gate and ornamental wrought iron inserts inspired by the craftsmanship of African American blacksmith Philip Simmons of Charleston, SC, will be installed later this year. Additionally, as visitors enter this new gate, they will walk on slabs of stone that were taken from the old gate that was formerly located on the west side of Woodland Cemetery.

For nearly 60 years, Woodland Cemetery was not only a place to bury the dead, but it was also used as a tailgating site and for parking by IPTAY on football game days. However, the cemetery project team and university staff are working to redefine the campus cemetery as a place of reverence and respect and where the public can also learn about Clemson University history. For more information, please visit clemson.edu/cemetery.



Stairway leading from the Riggs Plot towards the gate at Press Road near Memorial Stadium. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

Cemetery History Series #1

Black History and the Enslaved of the Calhouns

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

The Cemetery Project works to recognize and recover the history of the African descended persons who lived on this land and were buried in the African American Burial Ground at Cemetery Hill. Over the past year, the Cemetery Team has made tremendous advances in research to recover the names of enslaved persons beyond the 1854 and 1865 inventories at Fort Hill and has gained an understanding of the broader experiences that enslaved people endured. In recognition of Black History Month, the team is producing a two-part history series featuring our latest research.

Through Calhoun family correspondence, plantation ledgers, newspaper accounts, legal documents, and probate records, the team has pieced together more of the history of the enslaved community who lived and labored at Fort Hill. During the 18th century, Lowcountry planters acquired vast lands and large numbers of enslaved persons to cultivate rice, indigo, and sea island cotton. French Huguenot families, such as the Bonneaus, spread their wealth to the upcountry following the Revolutionary War. Samuel Bonneau owned multiple plantations and nearly 100 enslaved people at his death in 1788. His daughter Floride's husband, John Ewing Colhoun, Sr., accumulated lands and inherited plantations at Santee, Ferry, and Pimlico in the Lowcountry from him. Colhoun began moving enslaved persons from the coast to Twelve Mile Plantation near present day Clemson by 1794.¹

Of the enslaved people Colhoun inherited, Clemson Historic Properties and this team have long known that a woman named Menimin was from Africa. An 1849

article in the New York Herald mentions this fact, and she was said to be 112 years old. James Scoville, who wrote the article anonymously as "A Traveller," since he was John C. Calhoun's private secretary, gave readers a glimpse of the day-to-day life at Fort Hill. He wrote that Menimin had "63 living descendants on this plantation." The Cemetery team has begun to identify some of their descendants after recovering nine new inventories from John Ewing Colhoun, Sr.'s papers held at UNC Chapel Hill. The team has found that Menimin and her partner Polydore had at least 10 children, including Tom, Katy, and Peggy. We believe these three appear in the John C. Calhoun letters, and they also are listed in later inventories already known to the project. We are working to reconstruct this family through the generations and hope to recover where Menimin was from in Africa to tie the histories at Fort Hill back to the transatlantic slave trade.²

Though Scoville's article presented J.C. Calhoun as a benevolent and fair enslaver, relations between enslaved people and their enslavers were not often as harmonious.



Paved walkway to help visitors get to the west side of Woodland Cemetery which was once thought to be the Historic African American Burial Ground. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

One dramatic instance of enslaved resistance occurred in 1798. In late summer, five people enslaved by John Ewing Colhoun, Sr., at Twelve Mile, plotted to poison their owners and flee the state. Court records state that Hazard developed the plan, and that Will obtained poison to carry out the plan. Hazard, Sukey, Sue, Jack, and Will did poison the Colhoun family and fled. None of the Colhouns died as a result. The five were captured and tried in court on August 12, 1798. Will was hanged for his role in obtaining the poison. The remaining four were all whipped, branded on the forehead, and had their ears cropped as punishment. In the records for Colhoun's estate in 1804, all four people appear at Bonneau's Ferry rice plantation near Charleston. No record exists explaining why the enslaved resisted the Colhouns in this way, but it could be in response to being moved from the coast, or due to the short distance to Cherokee territory, and freedom.³

Floride Bonneau Colhoun, John C. Calhoun's mother-in-law, inherited the lands and enslaved of her husband, and divided them among her children, including Floride Colhoun Calhoun, who came to live at Fort Hill with her husband John and six children in 1826. Calhoun family letters, and oral history point us to instances of enslaved resistance in the 1830s and 1840s. For instance, Historic Properties has documented that Aleck ran away in 1831 after Floride Calhoun threatened to whip him. In 1842 and 1843, siblings Sawney Jr. and Issey both set fires to resist the overseer, and Floride Calhoun, respectively. Furthermore, oral history from descendants of the Calhoun enslaved implies that two enslaved

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Cemetery History Series #1

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persons also tried to poison Floride Calhoun at Fort Hill during the 1840s.⁴

Given the undercurrents of tension at Fort Hill the enslaved endured many hardships. Punishments for resistance included imprisonment, whipping, and relocation or sale away from the Calhoun family. In the early 1840s, several enslaved moved between Fort Hill and the Calhoun's gold mine in Dalhonego, GA. In addition, throughout the 1840s,

upwards of twenty enslaved at a time were moved between Fort Hill and John C. Calhoun's son A.P.'s cotton plantations in Alabama. Issey was among those sent to Alabama as punishment for her arson of the Fort Hill home. Beyond punishment and control, relocation served the Calhouns as an attempt to maximize profit, by increasing labor to improve cotton harvests in Alabama, and to help extract gold. The Calhouns hoped that forcing their enslaved persons to labor across properties and in difficult

conditions would bring financial security. In the end both John C. and A.P. Calhoun died heavily in debt, despite the toil of the enslaved. Next month, the team will discuss what we have learned about the sharecroppers and domestic workers at Fort Hill and the wage laborers at Clemson College.⁵

By Dr. Mandi Barnard
Research Historian
The African American Burial Ground, Andrew Pickens Calhoun Family Plot, and Woodland Cemetery Historic Preservation Project at Clemson University

CITATIONS: 1) October 1794 List of People at Twelve Mile Plantation, Collection 00130, Series 2, Folder 9, John Ewing Colhoun Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC Chapel Hill.
2) Joseph A. Scoville, "A Visit to Fort Hill," The New York Herald (New York, NY), Jul. 26, 1849. <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83030313/1849-07-26/ed-1/>; John Ewing Colhoun Papers, Collection 00130, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC Chapel Hill.
3) Account of 1798, Folder 16, John Ewing Colhoun, Sr. Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. See also W.J. Megginson African American Life in South Carolina's Upper Piedmont, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2022), 26-27.; Will of John Ewing Colhoun, May 30, 1802, in Ancestry.com. South Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1670-1980 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.
4) Robert Lee Meriwether, William Edwin Hemphill, and Clyde N. Wilson, eds., The Papers of John C. Calhoun, Vol. 1-27 (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press for the South Caroliniana Society, 1959-2003), August 27, and September 1, 1831 v 11 462-463.; April 4, 1843 v 17 136.; December 3, 1845 v 22 314-315.
5) R.L. Meriwether, et. al, eds., The Papers of John C. Calhoun, v 12 371, 531-532.; v 16 282-624. v 15 656.; v 21 482-508.; v 23 308.

Research Update

Historian Dr. Mandi Barnard has continued to gather names of enslaved people connected to Fort Hill in newly digitized archival sources, and is working with Dr. Sara Collini and Deborah Robinson to input the names of enslaved people into the project database.

Historian Dr. Collini finished working with the students on the Creative Inquiry Team for the fall semester. They presented their research projects to members of the cemetery team on the last day of class. Their projects help us understand more about the history of the cemetery and who may be buried there. Their research will be incorporated into the cemetery website, future tours, and Carrel Cowan-Ricks Remembrance Day in March. Dr. Collini continues to work with Deborah Robinson and Dr. Barnard on the database project that is helping to narrow down who may be buried in the unmarked graves.

Genealogist Deborah Robinson finished her family history advisory role with the Creative Inquiry students who ended their year giving amazing final project presentations. She continues to collaborate with Drs. Collini and Barnard on ensuring our relational database is up-to-date with all people and sources about the cemetery. Robinson also presented "What is Genealogy?," as part of the team, to the Clemson University History Class where we talked about who we are and what we do on the cemetery project.



Conclusion of Fall 2023 final presentations for HIST 3890, the Creative Inquiry course for the Cemetery Preservation Project at Clemson University. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

Dr. Rhondda Thomas conducted research in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia, SC, to continue documenting the number of convicted laborers whom Clemson trustees leased to help build the college, including those who died while working on site between 1890 and 1915 and are believed to have been buried on the west side of the campus cemetery then known as Cemetery Hill.

Community Engagement Update

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On December 7, 2023, Marquise Drayton helped the cemetery team present on the historic preservation project on the last day of class for HIST 1000: History of Clemson University, co-taught by University Historian Dr. Otis Pickett and Clemson History Professor Dr. Joshua Catalano. In his segment on community engagement, Drayton explained the different communities involved with the project, shared event programming, and invited those in attendance to subscribe to the monthly newsletter.

On December 15 at 8 PM, Drayton attended the Club Elegant Annual Christmas Dance at the Best Western Inn Conference Room in Clemson, SC. This year's event was the civic organization's first in-person dance around the holidays since before the COVID pandemic in 2019. Mary Jones, an attendee of the first dance in 1964, invited him as a guest at her set of tables. Originally called "Club Ebony," Club Elegant is a

civic, charitable and social club established in the mid-1960s for Black dignitaries like professors, lawyers, and doctors in Pickens and Oconee County. With it beginning at their local homes, the dance has moved over the years to locations like the former Clemson House and the Madren Conference Center & Inn near Lake Hartwell. Along with the annual dance is a scholarship component for high schoolers in each respective county and a golf tournament. A couple of members of the cemetery project's Community Engagement Council attended.

On December 16 at 12PM, Drayton participated in Wreaths Across America (WAA) at Abel Baptist Church in Clemson, SC. Around the holidays, visitors can see wreaths placed upon tombstones at many cemeteries, mainly where veterans lie. Every mid-December, WAA honors those who died in the armed forces. The tradition began in December 1992 at Arlington National Cemetery. A wreath-making family-owned business donated leftover decorations to the notable cemetery. There were several

ceremonies at the Clemson-Central cemeteries on December 16-17, 2023. On this occasion, members from the Abel Baptist Church and Golden View Baptist Church participated, as members of both congregations for each respective African American church are buried in the cemetery. There are over 80 Black veterans buried at the Abel-Golden View Cemetery. Representatives were asked to sit by wreaths for those who served in the US Military or are closely associated with someone in each branch. Drayton sat in for the US Coast Guard given his familial ties to the US Navy (a cousin currently serving). The hour-long ceremony featured the US national anthem, "Taps" played by the Boy Scouts of America Troop 235 in Clemson, and attendees placed wreaths on tombstones with US flags at the nearby cemetery.



US Navy wreath display at Abel Baptist Church during Wreaths Across America 2023. Photograph by Marquise Drayton.

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 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.

"Where I'm From" Art Exhibition by Felicia Gibbs Greenlee. On Display for the Public until May 31, 2024. Clemson Area African American Museum (CAAAM). 214 Butler Street, Clemson, SC 29631. "As I grew up here in the South I noticed things that no one else seemed to notice and no one seemed to talk about. This feeling stayed with me throughout my life and I felt com-

pelled to share it in my work. So, "Where I'm From" represents how I see America (Felicia Gibbs Greenlee)." Visit CAAAM to see the "Where I'm From" Art Exhibit by artist Felicia Greenlee before May 31, 2024. The address for the museum is 214 Butler St in Clemson, SC. Felicia Greenlee is a 1993 graduate of Clemson University, where she majored in fine arts. As a textile designer

following undergrad, her artwork visited many places like Greenville Technical College, Clemson University, Sulfur Studios in Savannah, GA, and a traveling exhibit for the Smithsonian Institution.

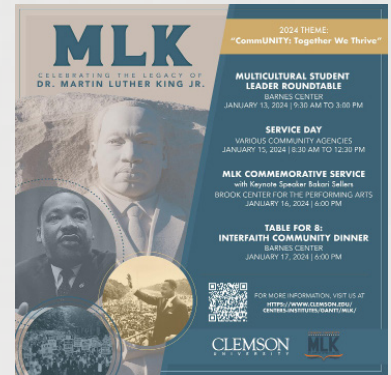
42nd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Keynote Program at Clemson University.

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Upcoming Events

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Presented by the Harvey and Lucinda Gantt Multicultural Center. Tuesday, January 16, 2024 @ 6PM. Brooks Center for the Performing Arts. 141 Jersey Ln, Clemson, South Carolina 29634. Speaker: Bakari Sellers. The commemorative event will include keynote speaker Bakari Sellers. The program will also feature MLK Excellence in Service Awards given to this year's recipients. The event is free and open to the public. Two-time New York Times best-selling author, civil rights activist, attorney, entrepreneur, legislator, and overall prolific voice of the culture, Bakari Sellers, continues to build upon the strong legacy he inherited as the son of Gwendolyn Sellers and civil rights leader Cleveland Sellers, the only person convicted and jailed following the Orangeburg Massacre. The Orangeburg Massacre occurred when nine patrolmen and a police officer shot and killed three African American student protesters and injured over two dozen more on February 8, 1968, at the campus of South Carolina State College, a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in Orangeburg, SC. This shooting resulted from efforts to desegregate the All-Star Bowling Lane. While his dad helped shape movements working alongside Stokely Carmichael, Bayard Rustin, and Malcolm X, Sellers has come into his own, helping to write the blueprint for today's movements with the likes of Rep. James Clyburn, Attorney Benjamin Crump, and President Barack Obama. For the rest of the MLK holiday events sponsored by the Gantt Multicultural Center at Clemson University, please click [here](#).



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, Andrew P. Calhoun Family Plot and Woodland Cemetery Historic Preservation Project
- Sally Mauldin, Strategic Operations Director
- 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
- Candace Boatwright, Graduate Research Assistant
- Alexis Thomas, Undergraduate Research Assistant
- Kathryn Batson, Undergraduate Assistant

And Meet Our Community Engagement Council

- From Anderson: J. T. Boseman; Jack Henderson; Nekaun Swinger; Dr. Beatrice Thompson; Dr. L. Kaifa Roland
- From Clemson-Central: Rosa Grayden; Dalphene Jameson
- From Pendleton: Terence Hassan; Deveraux Williams
- From Oconee County: Shelby Henderson; Kathy Jenkins; Helen Rosemond-Saunders

Questions?

Questions about the cemetery project?
Email afamburials@clemson.edu or call (864) 656-8855