

TRAILS:
Tracking
Records,
Archives,
Indigenous
Lineages &
Sites



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What is the TRAILS Project?

■ Community-Driven

An approach that is founded in community knowledge and confirmed with archival research.



■ Preservation-Focused

Focused on documenting historic Indigenous sites related to the Waccamaw People of SC and designed to protect sites at risk of loss.

Background: The Dimery Settlement

The Beginning

John Dimery, a man of Black and Indigenous ancestry, purchased the first section (300 acres) of land in Horry County in the 1820s with inherited money. The documents required a “guardian” signature due to Dimery’s racial designation.

Flourishing Community

Within just two decades the Dimerys were joined by other families of color including the Hatchers, Coopers, Turners, and more. It became a large and very prosperous, yet incredibly tight-knit, farming community. In its heyday there were multiple churches, mills, stores, and a school in the community.

Today

While there are descendants still living on the lands their ancestors once tended, most have left for various reasons. The descendants of those original community leaders are recognized as the Waccamaw and they strive to make their ancestors presence known. Much of the former community is now being cleared and developed and this history is in danger.

Selected Sites

■ Bethel Church Cemetery

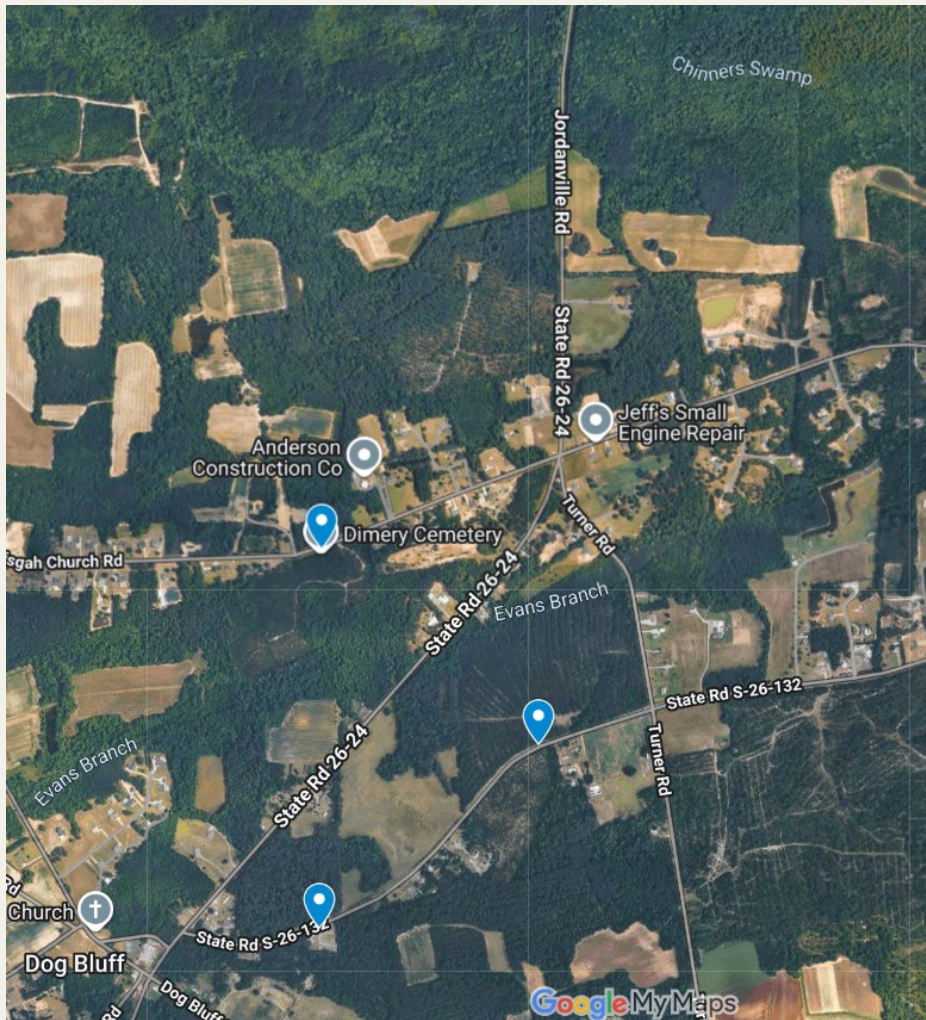
The Bethel Cemetery site dates back to 1878. The church burned down in 1983, but the grounds are still used for burials and are maintained to this day.

■ Pine Level School//The Dimery School

The Pine Level school, originally called the Dimery/Dimry School, was originally thought to have been built in the 1920s, but is now known to have existed as early as 1868.

■ Dimery Cemetery

The Dimery Family Cemetery is located on privately-owned property off of what is now Pisgah Church Road.



Three Selected Sites

Screenshot of a custom map showcasing the three selected sites and their proximity to each other, Chinner's Swamp, Evans Branch, and the Dog Bluff Township (Now just Dog Bluff).

Bethel Cemetery



Photograph of Bethel Church circa 1975. Courtesy of Patricia Sellers.

Brief History

- The church was originally called “The Dimery Church” for more than a decade, before being referred to as a Baptist Church in many local newspapers. However, the church did not focus on a singular demonimation and was referred to as several names throughout its existence. In it’s last two decades, it was called Bethel Independent Church.
- It burned down in 1983 and was never rebuilt.
- A second church was located on Jeno Road, built several years later, but is now gone.



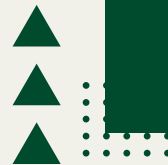


Rev. Elwood Ammons

Still from *Waccamaw Indian People of South Carolina* (2008).
Image courtesy of Special Collections and Archives at the
University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

Challenges Facing Bethel

- Leadership changes
- Dwindling community
- Unidentified graves
- Lack of funding
- Lack of understanding of cultural significance





The Dimery School

Brief History

- Previously thought to have been constructed in the first part of the 20th century, during early research for this project, records indicate the school began in 1868 as a Reconstruction-era Free School, making it the only known Native-only Free School.

Teacher's Report

To be filled out and to accompany Teacher's Account for services rendered during the Fiscal year, commencing November 1st, A. D. 1868, and ending October 31st, A. D. 1869.

Report of *Josiah L. Roberts* Teacher of a Public School
at *Dimery School* ~~Horry~~ County of *Horry* State of
South Carolina.

Josiah Roberts TEACHER.

1. Name of school? *Dimery School*
2. Location of school? *Near Dog Bluff*
3. When did your term or school commence? *7th September 1868*



Photograph of Pine Level School circa 1940. Image courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

Challenges Facing The Dimery School Site

The schoolhouse shuttered in 1955 and the building is gone.

Records of the school were only just located and are still being processed.

Site of former school is in the processed of being developed into a large suburb.



The Dimery

Family

Cemetery



■ Brief History

- This cemetery was on the historic property belonging to the Dimerys as recently as the first quarter of the 21st century. It is proposed that this property is one of the first properties purchased at the inception of the “Dimery Settlement” 50 years prior to the establishment of the Dog Bluff Township.





Photograph of remnants of headstone for David D. Dimery (1829-1901). Photograph courtesy of Susan Rogerson of Find a Grave.

Challenges Facing The Dimery Family Cemetery

Property no longer in the care of/ownership of family members, descendants, or community members.

Only two graves are marked.

Estimate of at least five unmarked graves.



Methodology Framework



■ Our Framework

1. Archival Recovery and Cross-Referencing Information.
2. Community Knowledge & Oral Histories
3. Indigenous Data Sovereignty & Ethical Stewardship
4. Place-Based Mapping & Spatial Analysis



Phase One: Identifying the Sites

Identification and Research

The first phase of the TRAILS project focused on:

- Identifying the three sites
- Conducting archival research
- Establishing historical significance
- Documenting community connections

Copy of birth certificate of Nettie Maude Dimery (1918-1951). Ancestry.com.

Form No. 1

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
Bureau of Vital Statistics
State Board of Health

File No.—For State Registrar Only
34362

County of Jorry
Township of Long Pine
or
Inc. Town of.....
City of..... (No. St. Ward) (If birth occurs in a hospital or other institution, give name of same instead of street and number.)

Registration District No. 3503 Registered No. 41
(For use of Local Registrar)

(1) **Full Name of Child** Nettie Maude Dimery (If child is not yet named, make supplemental report as directed)

(3) BOY OR GIRL girl (4) Male or Female (5) Number in order of birth (6) Are Parents Married? ye (7) DATE OF BIRTH Oct 14 18
(Name of Month) (Day) (Year)

FATHER.		MOTHER.	
(8) FULL NAME <u>Conroy Dimery</u>	(14) NAME BEFORE MARRIAGE <u>Dorothy Dimery</u>	(15) PRESENT POSTOFFICE OF FATHER <u>U.S. Army, France</u>	(16) PRESENT POSTOFFICE OF MOTHER <u>Galivants Ferry, S.C. P.F.</u>
(9) RACE <u>Croatan</u>	(17) RACE <u>Croatan</u>	(11) AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>23</u> (Year)	(12) AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>35</u> (Year)
(10) BIRTHPLACE <u>Jorry Co., S.C.</u>	(13) BIRTHPLACE <u>Jorry Co., S.C.</u>	(13) OCCUPATION <u>Soldier</u>	(14) OCCUPATION <u>Farming</u>
(20) Number of children born to mother, including present birth <u>1</u>	(21) Number of children of this mother now living, including present birth <u>1</u>	CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR MIDWIFE	
(22) I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was <u>born alive</u> at <u>2:40 P.M.</u> on the date above stated. (Born alive or stillborn. (Hour A. M. or P. M.))			
(23) (Signature) <u>W. E. King</u>	(24) State whether Physician or Midwife <u>M.D.</u>	(25) Address of Physician or Midwife <u>Aynor, SC</u>	
Given name added from a supplemental report		(26) Witness (Signature of Witness necessary only when question 22 is signed by mark)	
		(27) Filed <u>10/20</u> at <u>18</u> (28) <u>Wm. Johnson</u> Local Registrar	

When there was no attending physician or midwife, then the father, householder, etc. should make this return. If a child breathes even once, it must not be reported as stillborn. No report is desired of stillbirths before the fifth month of pregnancy.

Phase One: Identifying the Sites

Methods Used:

Research included:

- Census records
- Land records
- Death certificates
- Historical maps
- Oral histories
- Community knowledge



Photograph of John Turner. Courtesy of StoryCorp.

Phase Two: Preserving Bethel Cemetery

Beginning Preservation Work



Ground Penetrating Radar Survey

- Ground penetrating radar survey completed
- Conducted in February 2026
- Used to identify possible unmarked graves
- Provides critical data for protection and planning

You cannot protect graves that have not been identified.

Some newly identified unmarked graves at Bethel 2026.



Rebuilding Relationships

Key Points:

- Relationship rebuilding between:
Cemetery Board of Trustees
Tribal government
- Communication process began in
November
- Work is ongoing and nearing
completion

Preservation requires collaboration.

Waccamaw citizens working on
longhouse project. Photograph from
WIPSC Facebook.



Phase Two: Preserving Bethel Cemetery

Cemetery Mapping and Documentation

Beginning in May:

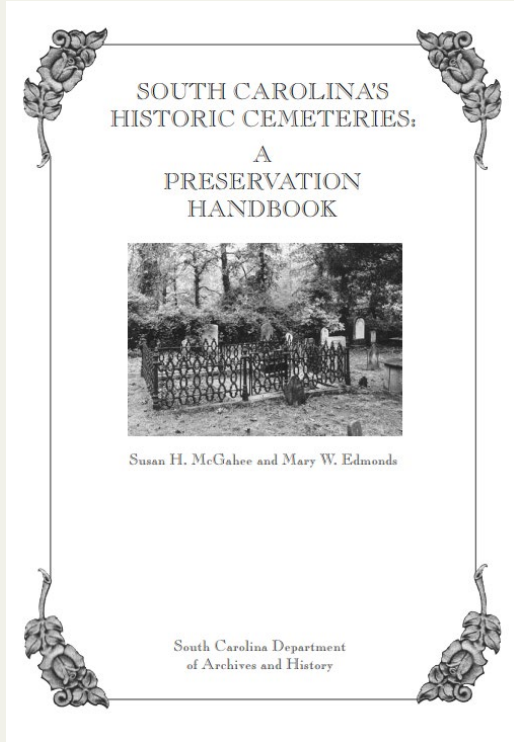
A student cohort led by Dr. Carolyn Dillian will:

- o Sketch the cemetery
- o Document all graves
- o Record both marked and unmarked burials
- o Create a cemetery database

Photograph of Bethel Church circa 1975.
Courtesy of Patricia Sellers.



Why Documentation Matters



This work ensures:

- Families can locate ancestors
- Burial locations are protected
- Future burials are planned responsibly
- The cemetery is preserved for future generations

Cover of SC Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook Courtesy of SCDAH.

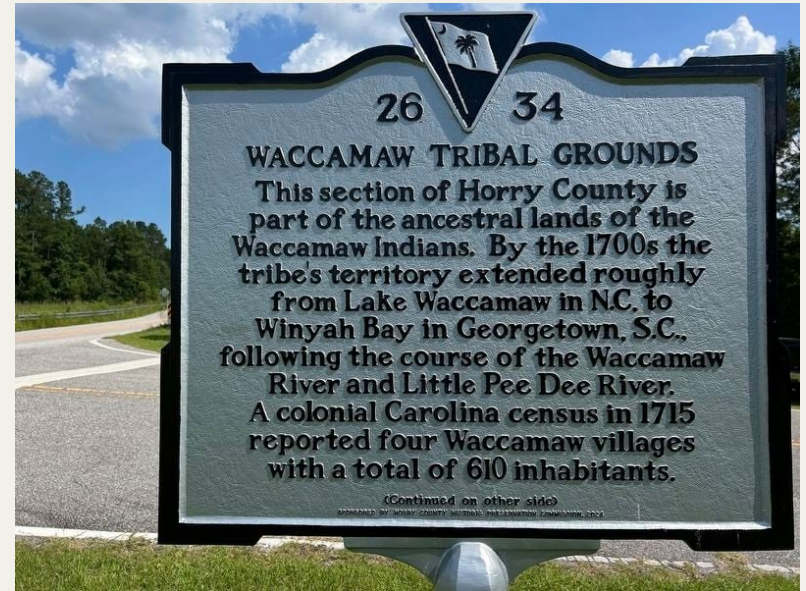
Documenting Traditional Plant Knowledge

- Flora in and around the cemetery will be documented
- Plants may have traditional or cultural significance
- Supports preservation of ecological and cultural knowledge



Long-Term Preservation Goals

- Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places
- Submission through the South Carolina Department of Archives and History
- Application for a historic marker(s)
- Pursuit of funding for long-term maintenance



Historic Marker at Waccamaw Tribal Grounds, Aynor, SC. Photograph by Charles Wright. Sourced from Historic Marker Database.

Phase Three: Next Steps



■ Expanding the Historical Record

- Continued Archival Research
- Listening to and potentially recording further oral histories.
- Analysis of newly discovered documents.
- Confirmation of Reconstruction-era origins.
- Documentation of Indigenous student attendance.
- Eventually working toward proper research and documentation on other church and cemetery at Jenó Road (Hatcher Cemetery)

Next Steps for the Bethel Cemetery

■ Collaboration

Tribal Council is working with elected Cemetery Trustees to build meaningful dialogue.

■ Document the history.

Once the graves are documented with the help of CCU Faculty & Students, this will be recorded in an accessible database for descendants.

■ Apply for historic marker.

Work with SCDAH and community to acquire a historic marker for the cemetery and work toward submission to the National Register of Historic Places.

Next Steps for the Dimery School Site

■ Continue research.

More in-depth research at SCDAH regarding Reconstruction Era status.

■ Document the history.

Complete genealogical analysis of students listed in the school roster.

■ Apply for historic marker.

Work with SCDAH and community to acquire a historic marker.



Next Steps for the Dimery Family Cemetery

■ Continue research/GPR

Research must include GPR to identify number of graves at location.

■ Identify/Document burial locations

This is not impossible but is improbable. However, if more property records become accessible we can cross reference names from those and the Census records with Dimerys whose burial locations remain unknown.

■ Submit application for marker.

In the future, a marker will be necessary for this place as well, to tie those buried there to the Settlement itself.

A Note on Working With Communities as an Outsider

- Listen first, act later. Take time to understand the community before proposing solutions.
- Build relationships before starting projects. Trust is the foundation of sustainable work.
- Respect local knowledge and leadership. Community members are experts in their own history.
- Be transparent about goals and limitations. Clearly communicate what you can and cannot do.
- Share decision-making power. Communities should help guide the work that affects them.
- Honor cultural protocols and boundaries. Not everything needs to be documented or shared publicly .
- Commit to long-term engagement. Responsible work does not end when the project ends.



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Thank you!



Citations:

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Thank you to Elizabeth Laney, Research Associate at USC Beaufort’s Institute for the Study of the Reconstruction Era.

