

The Recovery of Cemetery Hill
at Clemson University:
the African American Burial Ground,
Andrew P. Calhoun Family Plot,
and Woodland Cemetery

3rd annual Preserving Historic Cemeteries Workshop

September 12, 2024

Rhonda R. Thomas, PhD
Calhoun Lemon Professor of Literature
CALM yName Faculty Director
Coordinator of Research and Community Engagement for the
Cemetery Historic Preservation Project @ Clemson University
Clemson, SC



What's inside the sacred site called "Woodland Cemetery" that sits adjacent to Memorial Stadium on the Clemson University campus?

The site was once known as Cemetery Hill.





PRESS ROAD

History *Revealed*

WILLIAMSON ROAD

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIALGROUND

LEGEND

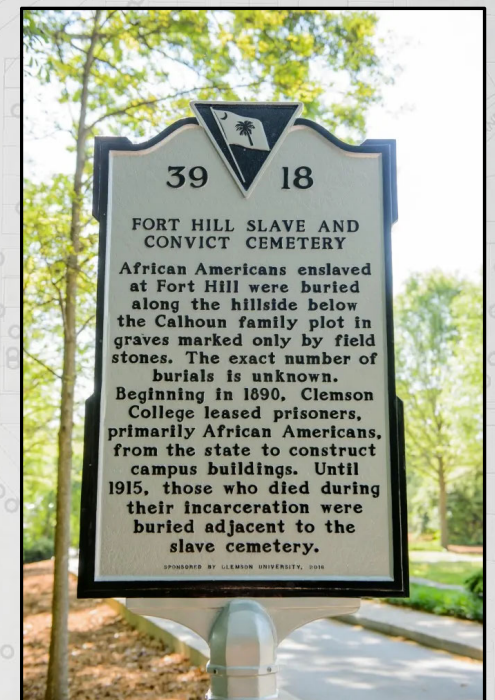
○ UNMARKED GRAVE SITE (UMG)



9/16/2024

The Cemetery Historic Preservation Project

...Call My Name Tour February 11, 2020



SC historical marker installed in 2015



Two concerned
Clemson students

- Sarah Adams and Morgan Molosso
- Actually, the African American Burial Ground was likely established in early 1800s after Rev. James McElhenny moved to the area with 25 enslaved persons who labored at Clergy Hall.

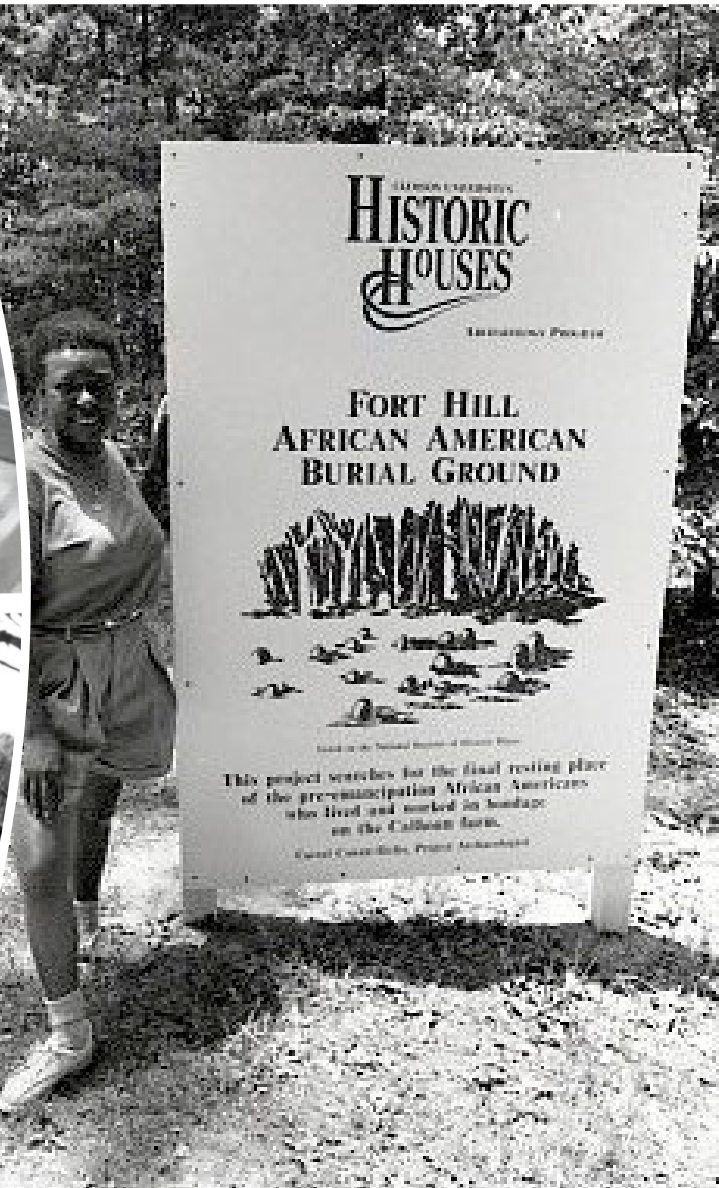


Why are field stones scattered throughout the cemetery?

Carrel Cowan-Ricks

Carrel Cowan-Ricks, a Black archaeology professor working in what was then called the Department of Historic Houses, conducted survey work on the hill, completing three digs on the western slope of the cemetery with students and volunteers. She hypothesizes that there are unmarked graves all over Cemetery Hill, wants to use ground penetrating radar (GPR) to test against her archaeological excavations, and believes she needs a minimum of six years to complete the first phase of the project. However, Clemson lets Professor Cowan-Ricks go in 1993 during a reduction in force, and the project ends without conclusive evidence of African American graves.

9/16/2024



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.)

O R D E R .

On reading and filing the Petition of the Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina,

IT IS ORDERED, that a Notice substantially in the form set out below be published not less than ten (10) days prior to Saturday, September 3, 1960, in THE GREENVILLE NEWS and the ANDERSON INDEPENDENT, and in the August 25 issue of the MESSENGER, a weekly newspaper of general circulation in the Clemson area. The form of the Notice is as follows:

LEGAL NOTICE

Court Order, 1960

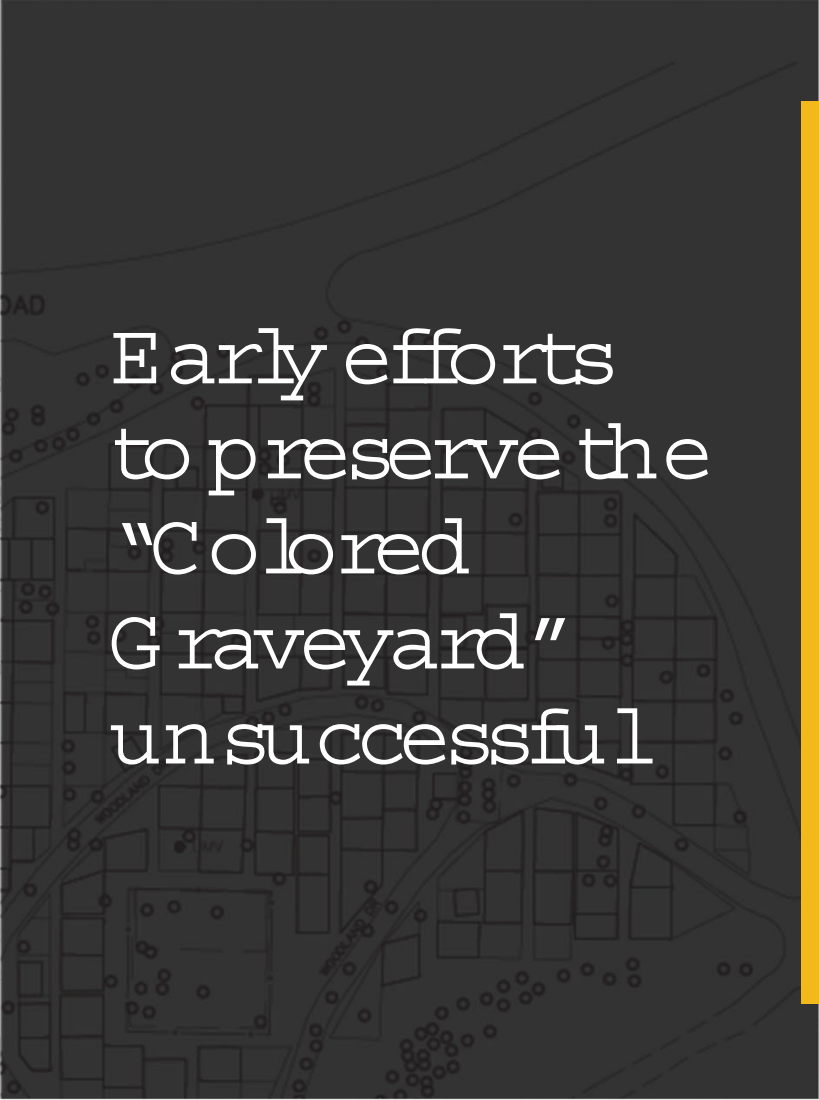
Recovered by Carrel Cowan-Ricks

9/16/2024

The Cemetery Historic Preservation Project



Destroying a burial ground
to protect Clemson College.



Early efforts to preserve the “Colored Graveyard” unsuccessful

- March 11, 1946: The college Buildings and Grounds Committee reports that 200 to 250 graves of enslaved people and convicted laborers are believed to be buried on Cemetery Hill and recommends installation of a permanent marker on the site. The recommendation is not acted upon.
- November 22, 1957: The director of the college physical plant recommends that Clemson erect fencing around a 100-foot by 125-foot section west of the Calhoun family plot to “enclose area of a colored graveyard within a securely constructed wire fence.” The recommendation is not acted upon.
- December 5, 1957: A Woodland Cemetery report indicates that “[a]pproximately 100 yards to the west of the Calhoun plot is a burial ground [with rough stone markers] reportedly established for slaves,” noting the site probably was established prior to 1837. “In addition to the slaves reportedly buried here, a number of convicts who died while working on construction of the first college buildings are buried in this area.” They were to “designate on cemetery map area of colored graveyard.”

- Spring 2002: The Woodland Cemetery Stewardship Committee votes to install a temporary fence to “protect portions of the cemetery,” an area on the southern slope then identified as the site of unmarked graves based on a distinct pattern of field stones.
- Fall 2002: The SC state archaeologist conducts ground penetrating radar (GPR) work on the western slope of the cemetery, but “wet soil conditions [prevent] conclusive findings.”

9/16/2024



The Cemetery Historic Preservation Project

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GPR work began on July 29, 2020



More than 500 anomalies believed to be burials of Black people have been recovered throughout the 17.5-acre cemetery site.

Unmarked granite markers were installed for each anomaly believed to be an unmarked grave earlier this year.



History *Revealed*

THE ANDREW PICKENS "A.P." CALHOUN FAMILY
PLOT

LEGEND

○ UNMARKED GRAVE SITE (UMG)

Misleading Plaque

Are John C. Calhoun and his wife Floride buried here?

- John C. Calhoun – St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Charleston, SC
- Floride Calhoun – St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Pendleton, SC

CALHOUN PLANTATION CEMETERY

JOHN CALDWELL CALHOUN

BORN MARCH 18, 1782, ABBEVILLE DISTRICT, S.C.

DIED MARCH 31, 1850, WASHINGTON, D.C.

BURIED ST. PHILIP'S CHURCHYARD, CHARLESTON, S.C.

HIS WIFE

FLORIDE COLHOUN CALHOUN

BORN FEBRUARY 15, 1792, CHARLESTON, S.C.

DIED JULY 25, 1866, PENDLETON, S.C.

BURIED ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCHYARD, PENDLETON, S.C.

IN THIS ENCLOSURE ARE BURIED DESCENDANTS
OF THE HONORABLE JOHN CALDWELL CALHOUN

Andrew P. "AP" Calhoun Family Plot

- Andrew, born April 15, 1811, was John C. and Floride Calhoun's eldest child.
- AP's six-month-old son, John Caldwell Calhoun, died on December 7, 1837, and was buried at top of the hill.
- AP purchased the Fort Hill Plantation and 50 enslaved persons in 1854 from his mother and sister.
- He died on March 16, 1865, at Fort Hill and was buried near his son.
- AP's family members continue to use this burial plot.

9/16/2024

The Cemetery Historic Preservation Project



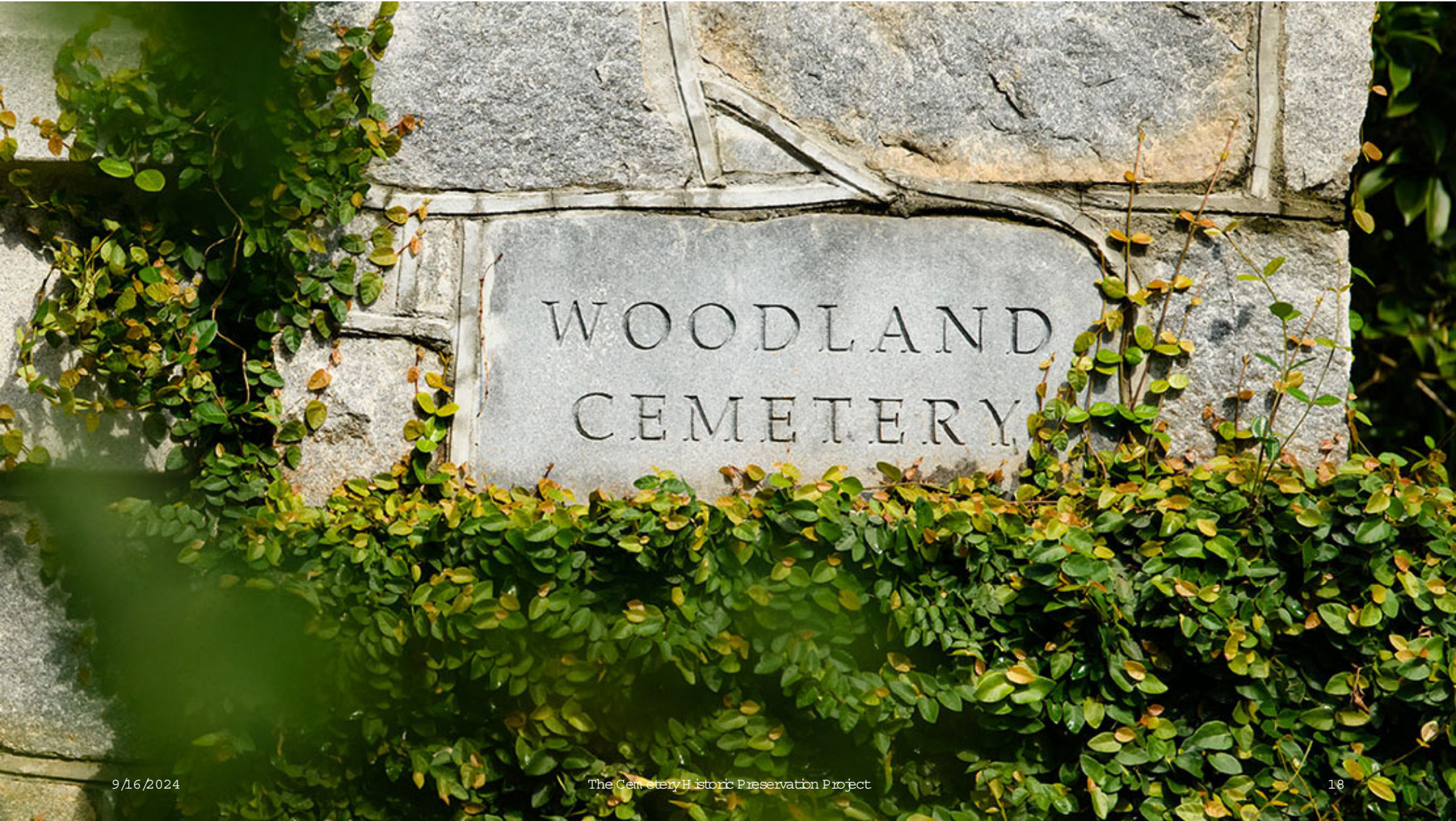
A dark grey map of Woodland Cemetery. The map shows a grid of streets and numerous small circles representing grave sites. The text 'History Revealed' is overlaid in the center. 'History' is in a white serif font, and 'Revealed' is in a white cursive font on a yellow rectangular background. Below the title, 'WOODLAND CEMETERY' is written in a white sans-serif font. At the top, 'PRESS ROAD' is labeled. On the right side, 'WILLIAMSON ROAD' is labeled. In the bottom right corner, there is a legend with the text 'LEGEND' and 'O UNMARKED GRAVE SITE (UMG)'.

History *Revealed*

WOODLAND CEMETERY

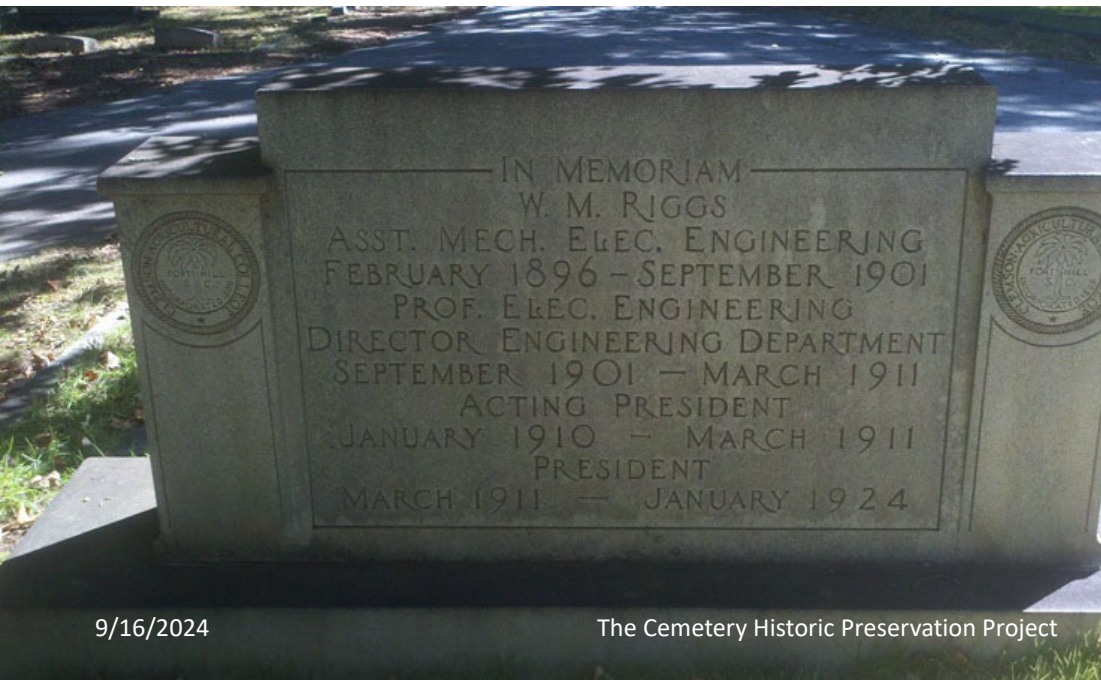
LEGEND

O UNMARKED GRAVE SITE (UMG)



Clemson College
President Walter
Riggs conceives
idea for the
campus cemetery

- Presents idea to Clemson's Board of Trustees on July 4-5, 1922.
- Cemetery Committee chooses "Cemetery Hill" next to AP Calhoun plot.
- Riggs dies in January 1924 and is buried on Cemetery Hill.
- Trustees approved plan for Woodland Cemetery on July 10, 1924.



9/16/2024

The Cemetery Historic Preservation Project



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In 1924, Woodland Cemetery was established for Clemson faculty and officers and their families providing free plots.

No employment service requirements until 1989 when employees had to work at Clemson for five years. In 2005, the service requirement increased to 20 continuous years.

1924-1991

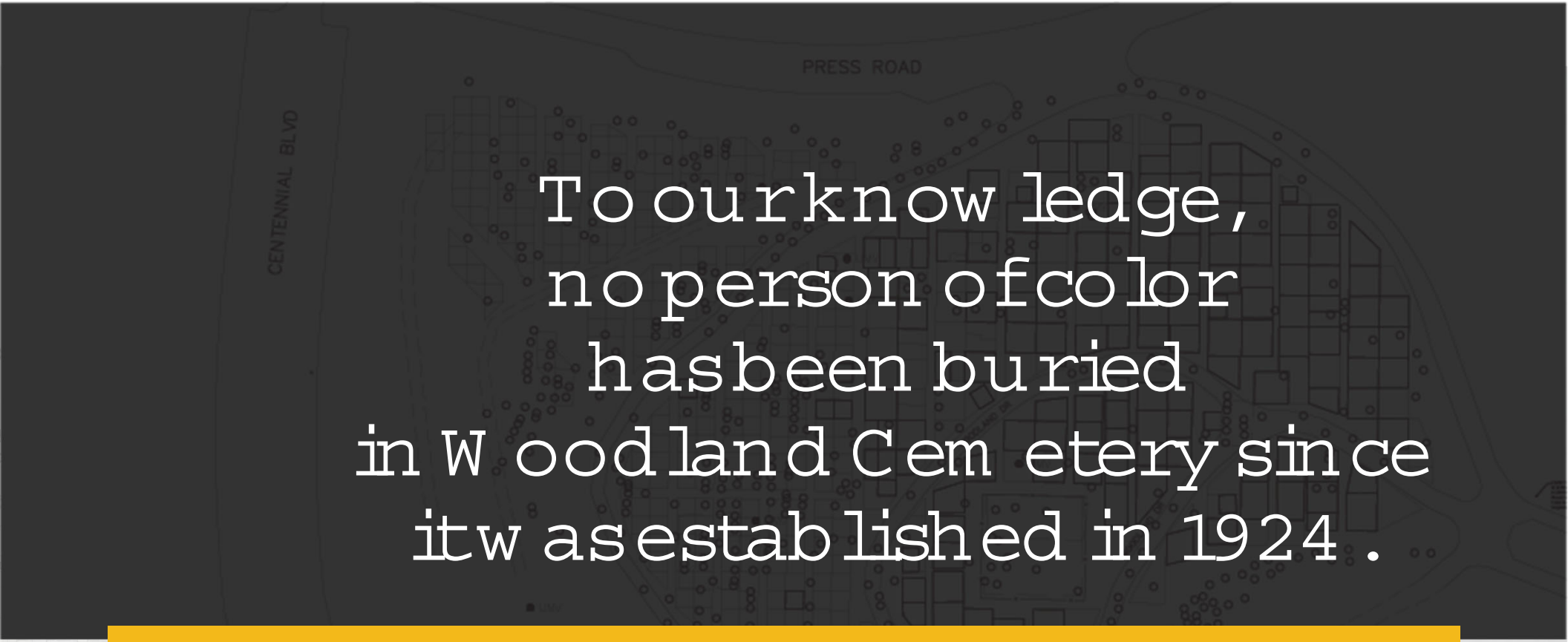
East side: family plots that can hold 8-10 caskets.

March 1993


West side: companion plots for employee and spouse become available.

2005

Northwest corner: companion plots for employee and spouse become available.



To our knowledge,
no person of color
has been buried
in Woodland Cemetery since
it was established in 1924.



Whom maintains the on-campus cemeteries at Clemson University?

- August 1, 1958: W. A. Morrison, son of Professor William A. Morrison who was buried in Woodland Cemetery, visited Clemson and expressed concern that the cemetery "is being poorly maintained. He wanted to start fund for cemetery maintenance with \$1,000 donated by his sister Margaret for a trust.
- December 2000: Stewardship Committee established by Clemson President Jim Barker to oversee the maintenance, protection, and preservation of Woodland Cemetery.
- Current: Clemson Facilities staff provide maintenance services. Cemetery Project coordinators are currently devising a long-term plan to care for the cemetery.

History *Revealed*

SO, WHAT DO WE DO?

LEGEND

○ UNMARKED GRAVE SITE (UMG)

ClemsonNews TOPICS COLLEGES DIVISIONS

OUR Clemson

Clemson University Board adopts policy governing future interments at Woodland Cemetery

Laurie Houghtley


October 24, 2022

The Clemson University Board of Trustees on Friday adopted an updated policy establishing criteria for future interments at Woodland Cemetery. The policy applies the guiding principles that existing interments will be preserved, and an historic preservation plan put in place that honors and respects all who are buried here.

Since July 2020, ground-penetrating radar has revealed a significant number of unmarked graves, all pre-dating the formal establishment of Woodland Cemetery in 1924.

"This is an important moment in the history of Clemson University as we honor the lives of those who are interred and those whose final resting place will be at Woodland Cemetery," said Board Chair Kim Wilkerson. "The Board deeply appreciates the understanding of families of modern burials and the descendant community as we conducted research to establish a preservation plan that respects all who are buried at Woodland Cemetery."


Please direct questions to cmuhistory@clemson.edu or (864) 656-8719.



The Post and Courier GREENVILLE

Radar scan of Clemson cemetery complete but answers on unmarked graves may take years

BY ANNA B. MITCHELL, AMY TELLEPORT@POSTANDCOURIER.COM



ACE Classifieds Greenville News

Clemson students to honor unmarked burial ground for slaves, convict laborers on campus

Zoe Nicholson Greenville News

Published 6:02 a.m. ET March 28, 2020

Created in the early 20th century, Woodland Cemetery is a burial ground for prominent Clemson University figures – presidents, professors and football coaches are all buried in the hilltop plot beside Memorial Stadium.

The Calhouns, the family who founded Fort Hill plantation, are buried atop the steep incline, their graves enclosed by a wrought iron fence.

Venture a few hundred yards down the unpaved road from the cemetery's stone gates, however, and find the unmarked graves of the enslaved peoples once owned by the Calhouns.

The Washington Post

Clemson historians searched for unmarked graves. They found dozens for enslaved people owned by a U.S. vice president.



The Post and Courier GREENVILLE

Clemson discovers graves of dozens of people enslaved by John C. Calhoun

BY ERIC CONNOR ECKHART@POSTANDCOURIER.COM



ClemsonNews TOPICS COLLEGES DIVISIONS

OUR Clemson

Construction to begin on Woodland Cemetery enhancements

Ryan Reed

February 13, 2023


Fencing will be erected this week as construction begins on a \$3.5 million enhancement project at Woodland Cemetery. The scope of work includes relocating existing walkways and service drives and adding lighting and cameras to improve accessibility and security in and around the area.

During the construction period, access to the cemetery will be limited in order to keep the construction environment safe. The University is working with the contractor to develop some days of access during the project for visitation and University officials have been in direct contact with family members of those interred at the cemetery.

Individuals seeking access to visit a grave between February and the anticipated conclusion of construction in July should email cmuhistory@clemson.edu to schedule a time and to ensure safe access to the grave site.

As construction is ongoing, the project's cone helmets will be displayed on signage near the cemetery.

- Existing burials in Woodland Cemetery will not be disturbed.
- We will honor and respect all graves through an appropriate preservation plan, and




Lots of media coverage . . .

AP WORLD U.S. ELECTION 2024 POLITICS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS SCIENCE FACT CHECK ODDITIES

Labor Day: What's open? Israel-Hamas war Coco Gauff crashes out Philippines storm deaths USC beat LSU

At Clemson, unmarked slave graves highlight plantation past



7NEWS WSPA.COM SIGN UP

Weather Sports Back to School Your Carolina Livin' Upstate Community Report It! About Us

DO WHAT I DID - CALL BATH FITTER

NEWS

Radar detects possible 200+ unmarked graves from 1800s at Clemson cemetery

by: WSPA Staff, Asia Wilson
 Posted: Aug 17, 2020 / 1:29 AM EDT
 Updated: Aug 17, 2020 / 11:14 PM EDT

CELESTON, SC (WSPA) – Clemson University officials announced Monday that ground-penetrating radar revealed the possible locations of more than 200 unmarked graves believed to be those of African Americans that date back more than century.

According to a news release, the radar revealed the possible locations of the graves in Woodland Cemetery on Clemson's campus.

Clemson officials said the graves are believed to be those of "enslaved people who worked from about 1830 to 1865 on John C. Calhoun's Fort Hill Plantation and later as sharecroppers and Black

DO WHAT I DID - CALL BATH FITTER

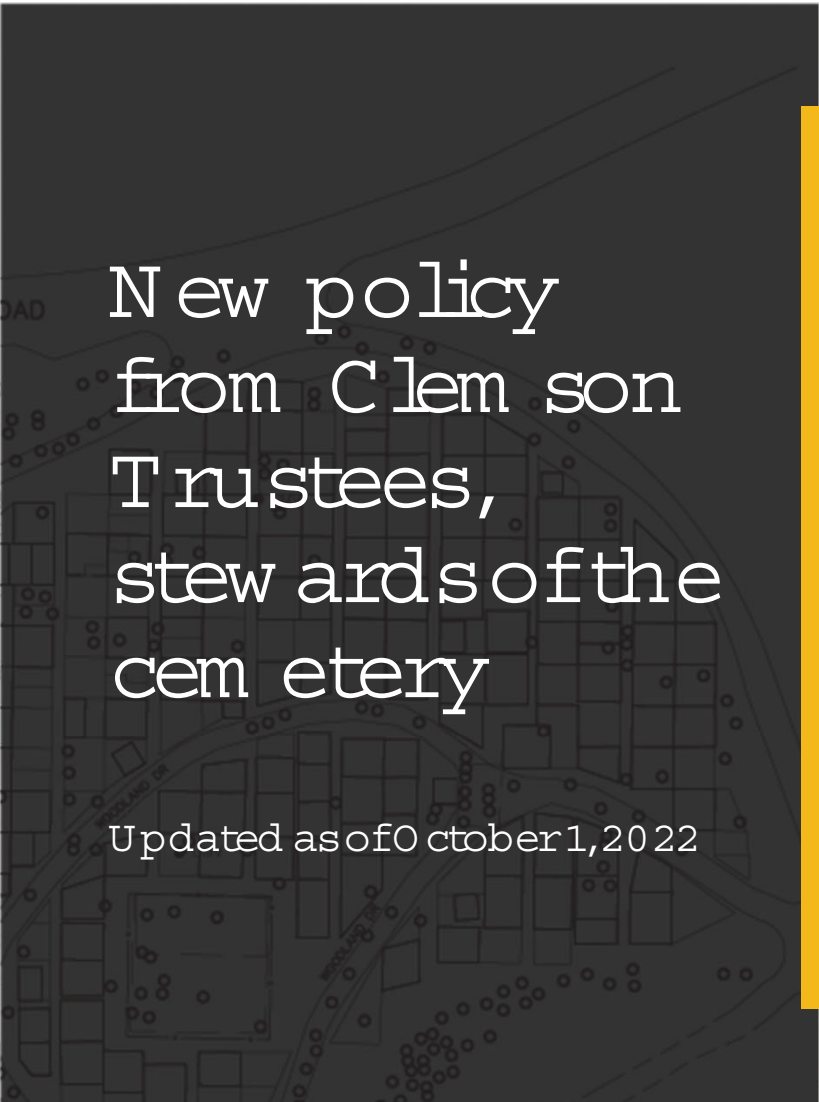
The Cemetery Historic Preservation Project

9/16/2024

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Began offering cemetery tours during the pandemic



New policy from Clemson Trustees, stewards of the cemetery

Updated as of October 1, 2022

Guiding Principles

- Existing interments in Woodland Cemetery from all eras will be preserved and should not be disturbed.
- All interments in Woodland Cemetery from all eras will be honored and respected.

Future internments

- Group 1: Companion and family plots
- Group 2: Persons with designated plot number
- Group 3: Persons with reservation and not assigned a plot
- Persons who do not fall within Groups 1, 2, or 3 are not eligible for interment in Woodland Cemetery.

Creating the Cemetery Historic Preservation Project

Organization and Outreach: Trustees appointed a Legacy Council to assist with creating preservation plan and community engagement initiatives. Met 1-2 months for three years.

Hired staff: postdoc, community engagement assistant, and a historian

Operations: hired a superintendent and devised a new title for long-term staff member, cemetery operations and strategic initiative director.

Involved students: hired student research assistants and started an undergraduate Creative Inquiry team .

More Outreach: appointed a Community Engagement Council for descendants and hosted Zoom meetings for descendants, modern families, and the public.

Creating the Cemetery Historic Preservation Project

Developed public programs and initiatives: covid testing, Carrel Cowan-Ricks Day, a monthly newsletter, social media presence.

Transitioning to permanent project: hired educator/interpreter, research assistant professor (academic home in Interdisciplinary Studies) and public historian.

Ensured longevity: developing a strategic plan.

Expanded our public programs: Secrets of the Silent, October 17 and 18, 2024, tours resume in February 2025, revamping social media, developing community partnerships

Long-term goal: be the epicenter of Clemson University history on campus.

Completion of Pathways Project authorized by Clemson Trustees

\$3.5 million project
February 2023 – January 2024

- Created new pathways
- Enhanced security
- Created new North gate entrance
- Installed new lighting
- Hosted "sneak peek" in November 2023 for about 100 guests, including modern burial families, descendant community, and stakeholders
- Installed benches, new interpretative signage
- Began installation of African American Heritage Garden





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MICHAEL MURPHY STUDIO

- Hired Michael Murphy Studio to design Memorial for Black Laborers.
 - Murphy designed the Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, AL
 - Announced project and introduced Murphy and team in March 2024 in Charleston.
 - Appointed advisory committee that began meeting in July 2024.
 - Conceptual design for memorial will be presented to Clemson's Board of Trustees in April 2024.
- 

Memorial for Black Laborers Project



The land never forgot . . .

9/16/2024

The Cemetery Historic Preservation Project

October 29, 1952

Clemson's Buildings and Grounds Committee recommends that the Camellia Test Garden southeast of the cemetery be named Judge Crawford Camellia Garden in "honor of the old colored gardener who worked for Clemson College for approximately 50 years." The recommendation was not acted upon.

Spring 2021

Camellias were found blooming on South side of Cemetery.

Fall 2024

A Camellia garden is being planted in Judge Crawford's honor on the South side of the cemetery.

History *Revealed*





Learn more

- Website :
www.clemson.edu/cemetery
- Newsletter: email
afamburials@clemson.edu and ask
to be added to listserv
- Social Media :
 - Facebook - @ClemsonUCemetery
 - Instagram - @clemsonucemetery
 - Twitter - @CUCemetery
- Cemetery Tours will begin again in
February 2025

History *Revealed*

Q&A

WWW.CLEMSON.EDU/CEMETERY

○ UNMARKED GRAVE SITE (UMG)