



Saint Michael
Lutheran Church
African-American Cemetery



Blind Lemon Jefferson - 'See That My Grave Is Kept Clean'



Well, there's one kind-a favor I'll ask of you
Well, there's one kind-a favor I'll ask of you
There's just one kind favor I'll ask of you
You can see that my grave is kept clean.

And there's two white horses following me
And there's two white horses following me
I got two white horses following me
Waiting on my burying ground.

Did you ever hear that coughin' sound?
Did you ever hear that coughin' sound?
Did you ever hear that coughin' sound?
Means another poor boy is underground.

Did you ever hear them church bells tone?
Have you ever hear that church bells tone?
Did you ever hear them church bells tone?
Means another poor boy is dead and gone.

And my heart stopped beating and my hands turned cold
And my heart stopped beating and my hands turned cold
And my heart stopped beating and my hands turned cold
Now I believe what the Bible told.

There's just one last favor I'll ask of you
And there's one last favor I'll ask of you
There's just one last favor I'll ask of you
See that my grave is kept clean.



Hidden History: Awakening an Historic African American Cemetery Lost in Suburbia

Frank W. Anderson

Saint Michael Lutheran Church
Columbia, South Carolina



Where Are We, Really?

Germans started arriving in this area of South Carolina starting in the 1730's.

Immigration really picked up in the 1750's, and the area was known as the Dutch "Deutsch" Fork, bounded by the waters of the Broad and Saluda Rivers.

Our community was known in the earliest records as Pleasant Spring and there were several small settlements or clusters of farmers in the area. For a time, the US Census tables referred to this area as the Fork Township.

Around 1870, with the establishment of a Post Office at the home of John R. Shuler, the community became known as Selwood. Shrouded in obscurity, no one knows for sure how that name came to be. I have speculated that the German/Swiss immigrants who came here early were from the County of Zell - Zellwood?

With the arrival of the railroad, Lake Murray, and the suburbs most identify this area now as Irmo.

Who's buried at this historic cemetery?

There could be as many as 150 graves in this cemetery.

There is one hand-scribed field stone we hope to identify.

The following have markers:

David Bowman 1847 to 3/11/1911

James Bowman 12/13/1909 to 5/15/1910

James Dreher 4/20/1836 to 10/2/1888

Lester Dreher 4/15/1901 to 12/23/1917

George Hall 8/16/1841 to 8/16/1898

William Harman 1857 to 1920

Bessie Lougene Hiller 12/8/1892 to 2/15/1893

Belton Spann 6/25/1854 to 5/8/1912 "FLT" (International Order of Odd Fellows)

+Wife Isabelle, buried at Pleasant Spring AME Church Cemetery 1945

Earl Spence 2/23/1906 to 2/24/1906

E. I. (Elliott Isaiah) Spence 8/4/1874 to 12/8/1918

July Spence 7/4/1845 to 2/15/1912 (founding Elder of Pleasant Spring AME Church "FLT")

John Steward 2/10/1881 to 9/9/1922

Three children of E. I. Spence – Henry 7/1/1896 to 10/14/1900, Earl 2/23 to 2/24/1906,

Esteller 10/23/1899 to 12/7/1911.

Susie Young 1/1/1854 to 11/10/1908

Who's buried at this historic cemetery?

John Dreher, one of the founding Elders of St. Michael Lutheran Church in 1814, farmed 800 acres of land in this area in the 1700-1800's, operating a mill, canal, and ferry on the Saluda River.

Thomas Shuler, another of the founding Elders, farmed 1200 acres in this area. In recent years an interesting genealogical connection has been made with an African-American family in Michigan, with roots in Texas. A family Bible holds the record of an enslaved woman named Tibi who gave birth to a daughter Miranda, fathered by Thomas. The Bible lists Thomas' children from his marriage as 'half-siblings'.

The Shuler farm 'Selwood' does have near it several ancient cemeteries, none of them with marked graves that pre-date Emancipation.



John Wise, another of the founding Elders, farmed and operated a ferry in the area. We also know that he held worship services at his home, served by the pastors of the congregation.



Who's buried at this historic cemetery?

Each of these men enslaved African-Americans and we know from early records that the enslaved community attended worship and their children were baptized by the pastors of the church (see the Journal of Rev'd Godfrey Dreher).

Since there is no other cemetery of this size, known to be an African-American burial ground, and the connections to the Dreher and Spence families make it very likely that it was the burial ground for the community of African-Americans before and after Emancipation in 1863.

Another of the connections of interest come from the Spann family. Belton Spann, who died in 1912, is buried here. His wife, Isabella, who died in 1945 is buried at Pleasant Spring AME Church. The arrival of Lake Murray in between these dates of death coincide with the end of the use of the Saint Michael African American Cemetery around 1922.

It appears the geography of Lake Murray separated the Black community from this burial ground in the 1920's.

Shuler (1800) and Dreher (1830) Houses



Bush River Road



Windward Point Road



How do we make the connection?

Historical research and genealogy is about putting together pieces from many places!

Church records

Census data

Public certificates

Cemetery markers

Land deeds

Wills and Inventories

Once you look at as many of these as one can find,
sometimes the puzzle begins to take shape.

We are fortunate that we have a number of puzzle pieces in this situation...



July Spence

7/4/1845 to 2/15/1912

A Founding Elder of Pleasant Spring AME Church

July died in 1912. The earliest marked graves at Pleasant Spring AME Church are from 1900, however, there are a group of field-stone marked graves there to this day.

This date represents the firm establishment of a burial ground there.

His son Earl, who survived only a short time was buried here as well in 1906.

We can surmise that there was a compelling reason for July Spence to be buried here, instead of Pleasant Spring AME because he already had family buried here, very possibly family before his son Earl is buried here.

July Spence appears in the United States Census in 1870, 1880, 1900, and 1910.

(The 1890 US Census was destroyed by fire.)

Belton Spann 6/25/1854 to 5/8/1912

Belton died in 1912. His wife, Isabella, died in 1945. He is buried here, she is buried at Pleasant Spring AME.

Belton is listed as her husband on her Death Certificate.

It is possible he is buried with his people in the Cemetery where his family was buried, and she is buried where she went to Church for so many years after his death.

U. S. Dept. of Commerce
Bureau of the Census

Standard Certificate of Death
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
Bureau of Vital Statistics
State Board of Health

File No.—For State Registrar Only
01951

1. PLACE OF DEATH
County of Lexington
Township of 7th
City of Sumter SC
Home Address Sumter, S.C.

Registration District No. 3106 Registered No. B 8

2. FULL NAME Isabella Spann

3. SEX Female 4. COLOR OR RACE Colored 5. Single, Married, Widowed, or Divorced (write the word) Widow

6. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, day, and year) June 23, 1870

7. AGE Years Months Days 41 If less than 1 day, _____ hrs. or _____ min.

8. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, sawyer, bookkeeper, etc. Domestic

9. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, saw mill, bank, etc. _____

10. Date deceased last worked at this occupation (month and year) _____

11. Total time (years) _____

12. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or Country) Lexington Co SC

13. NAME Wm Thompson

14. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or Country) SC

15. MAIDEN NAME Ella Thompson

16. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or Country) _____

17. INFORMANT Willie Belton Spann (Address) Sumter SC

18. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL Place Belton Date 2-18 19 12

19. UNDERTAKER Wm Thompson (Address) Sumter, S.C.

20. FILED 2-17 19 12

21. DATE OF DEATH (month, day, and year) 5-8 19 12

22. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from 2-7 19 12 to 2-7 19 12

I last saw her alive on 2-7 19 12 death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, at 5 PM

The principal cause of death and related causes of importance in order of onset were as follows: acute febrile infection

Was this death due to pregnancy or to childbirth? If so, _____

Name of operation _____

What test confirmed diagnosis? _____ Was there an autopsy? _____

23. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following: Accident, suicide, or homicide? _____ Date of injury _____ 19 _____

Where did injury occur? _____ (Specify city or town, and state)

Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in public place.

Manner of injury _____

Nature of injury _____

24. Was disease or injury in any way related to occupation of deceased? _____

If so, specify _____

(Signed) J. M. Williams M. D.
(Signed) Wm Thompson

MARGIN FOR BINDING
N. B.—WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK.—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD. Every item of information should be carefully supplied. AGE should be stated EXACTLY. PHYSICIANS should state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

1880

Span. Bolton	B. M. 23			1	Farm laborer				1	1	26	26	26
—, Bella	B. F. 20	wife		1	Keeps house				1	1	26	26	26
—, Ella	B. F. 4	daughter									26	26	26
—, Ella	B. F. 4	daughter									28	26	26
—, Minnie	B. F. 3	daughter									26	26	26
Thompson, Julia	B. F. 10	daughter									26	26	26
—, Julia	B. F. 10	daughter		1	Farm laborer				1	1	26	26	26

1900

Span. Bolton	Head	23	M	Feb. 1894	26	25		South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				Harmon	0
—, Bella	Wife	23	F	Aug. 1894	20	20	10	7	South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				
—, Lily M.	Daughter	12	F	April 1898	17	1			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				
—, Ella M.	Daughter	12	F	June 1898	16	1			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				
—, Mattie C.	Daughter	12	F	Aug. 1898	15	1			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				
—, Willie B.	Son	11	M	Aug. 1898	15	1			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				
—, Estel L.	Daughter	11	F	April 1898	7	1			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				
—, Julia B.	Daughter	11	F	Oct. 1898	4	1			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				
—, Ella L.	Daughter	11	F	Sept. 1898	2	1			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina				

1910

Spann, Galtin L.	Head	23	M	40	20	25			South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina		English	Farmer	Home farm	0
—, Isabelle	Wife	23	F	40	20	25	10	7	South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina		English	Farm laborer	Home farm	1
—, Mattie C.	Daughter	2	F	19	8				South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina		English	Farm laborer	Home farm	1
—, Willie	Son	20	M	17	8				South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina		English	Farm laborer	Home farm	1
—, Estelle	Daughter	2	F	18	8				South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina		English	Farm laborer	Home farm	1

A recent visit by Pam Smith of Baltimore, Maryland-
A direct descendant of Belton Spann.





Founding of Pleasant Spring 1869

Tradition states that the African-American community worshipped in a “brush arbor” behind the Shuler House on Old Bush River Road. This would be very close to the present site of Pleasant Spring AME Church, probably near where Yost Creek passes by (as water was a necessity).

The deed for two acres of land was conveyed to:

Pulaski Corley
Silas Corley
July Honseal
July Spence
Frank Dial

In their roles as “Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church” by John R. Shuler in 1869, as recorded by Lexington County.

Each of these men appear for the first time in the US Censuses (except Honseal) in 1870. They can each be followed at least until 1910.

Building of Pleasant Spring 1876?

While there is no specific record of when the first building was built for the congregation, there is a hint in the Congregation Council Record of Saint Michael in 1876. It is also no coincidence that the U.S. Federal Troops left in 1877 after the disputed Gubernatorial election of 1876 between Wade Hampton III and Daniel H. Chamberlain went unresolved and the Hampton 'Red Shirts' embarked on a spree of intimidation of the Black population.

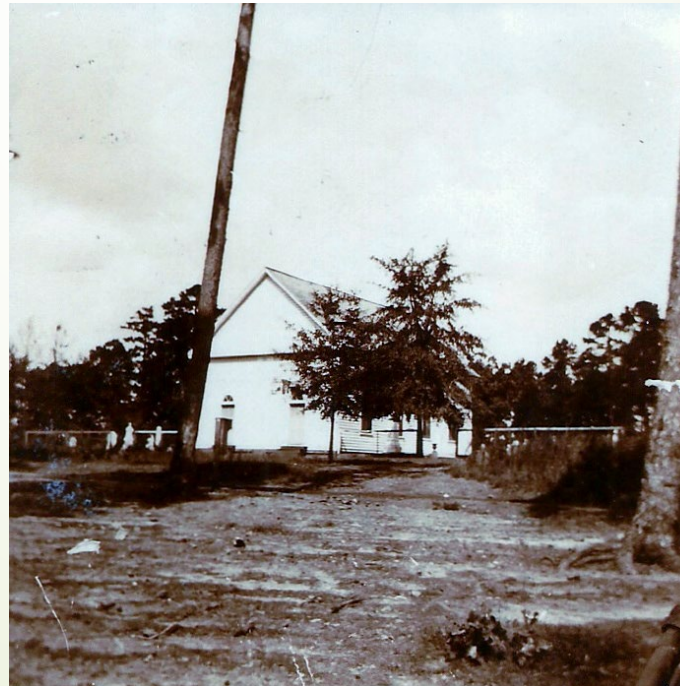
July 22, 1876

The following action was taken by the Council:
In as much as the colored people have no right to the gallery in this Church, Therefore:-
Resolved, That we remove the staircase from the inside of the Church, and that the outside entrance be prepared for the use of the white congregation.

Building of Pleasant Spring 1876?

While the Reconstruction Period was fraught with conflict, it seems that between 1869 and 1876 it is at least plausible the congregation of Pleasant Spring AME Church could have secured the resources and built their own edifice. That is my hope!

Within another four years, Saint Michael embarks upon a building project of their own on the same site as their 1814 building, nearly doubling the size of their Sanctuary, as seen here.



What Do We Know About the Enslaved Members of Saint Michael?

Names of Coloured Members

<i>Male Members</i>	<i>Female Members</i>
Adam - Jacob Bickley	Nan - Jacob Wingard
Jack - Rev. M. Kauch	Patty - George J. Derrick
Edmund - Frederick Wyes	Elopra - Rev. M. Kauch
George - John Dicks	Lacey - M ^{rs} James Bickley, Wid
Sam - John Dicks	Fanny - John Holler
Haywood - Jacob Wingard	Harriet - do do
Winnam - Jacob Wingard	Lacey - Jacob Wingard
June - Thomas Wingard	Calcy - David Rogers
Jack - John Thulens, Died	Belia - John Dicks
Isaac - J. J. Dreher	June - Jacob Stach
Solomon - J. B. Hyler, Died	Nan - Maryam Thulens
William - J. B. Hyler	Cliza - Rebecca Dreher
Buzzel - O. A. Dreher's	Vona - J. Wyes
Emanuel - J. H. Wises	Juda - E. W. Rogers
Robert - J. H. Conner	Hannah - D. W. Rogers
Thomas - Ditto	Martha - J. B. Hyler
Samuel - Dr. B. R. Wyes	Betsy - John Smith
James - Ditto	Lydia - John Thulens
Robert - O. A. Dreher	Hannah - O. A. Dreher
Caleb W. - M ^{rs} M. A. M. Hyler	Catharine - J. Wingard
Joe - J. H. Conner	Lacey - J. J. Dreher
Solomon D. - J. J. Dreher	Emanuel - J. H. Thulens
Esse - J. J. Wingard	Mariah - J. F. Wingard
Peter - Mrs. Holler	Julia - M ^{rs} M. A. M. Hyler
Adam - Ist Wingard	Abigail - O. A. Dreher
Johnson - Dr. B. R. Wyes	Laura - M ^{rs} R. Dreher
Walter - George Derrick	Rachel - John Holler
	Harriet - Dr. B. R. Wyes

<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
	Lacey - Dr. B. R. Wyes
	Sam - J. Bickley
	Fanny - J. Bickley



What Do We Know About the Enslaved Members of Saint Michael's?

Sadly, very little.

There is no date ascribed to this list; however, it appears that the Record Book was "updated" in 1842 and this would have been during the Enslaved Period in the life of the congregation. I am currently working to try and "cross-reference" names and compare dates of deaths of the white members with the list, as well as trying to identify Colored Members by their first names on subsequent US Census Rolls.

However, the list of Colored Members, listed by gender, first name, and who they belonged to, could be unique in itself.



How and Why Were There Enslaved Members of Saint Michael?

At the 1814 North Carolina Synod meeting where Saint Michael was entered into membership of that Synod, John Dreher proposed a Resolution that the Lutheran Church attend to the spiritual and religious needs of the African-Americans in their midst.

We know from his Diary that the Reverend Godfrey Dreher (John's son) baptized many African-American children from 1819-1851.

It seems inconceivable to us that these two institutions - Slavery and the Church can so easily be held together without conflict.

The Enslaved African-American Lutherans, listed as members, used a separate entrance to attend worship in the gallery (balcony) of the Church.



Where Do We Go From Here?

We hope to continue building bridges of understanding and reconciliation with our sister congregation - Pleasant Spring AME Church.

As we honor those who have gone before us, may we pass on to generations to come a sense that we are Christians on our way.

Our hope is that more study will help us understand the historical significance of this Cemetery, and that we can continue to maintain it in a manner that preserves and protects it.

It would also be wonderful to enclose it and put an historical monument there to share with the world this story of the Enslaved Community here in our community.



Exciting New Developments!

We have garnered support from the owners of the property, community members, and other partners.

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Exciting New Developments!

SC Department of Archeology is providing GPR – ground penetrating radar to assist us in expanding our understand of the cemetery.



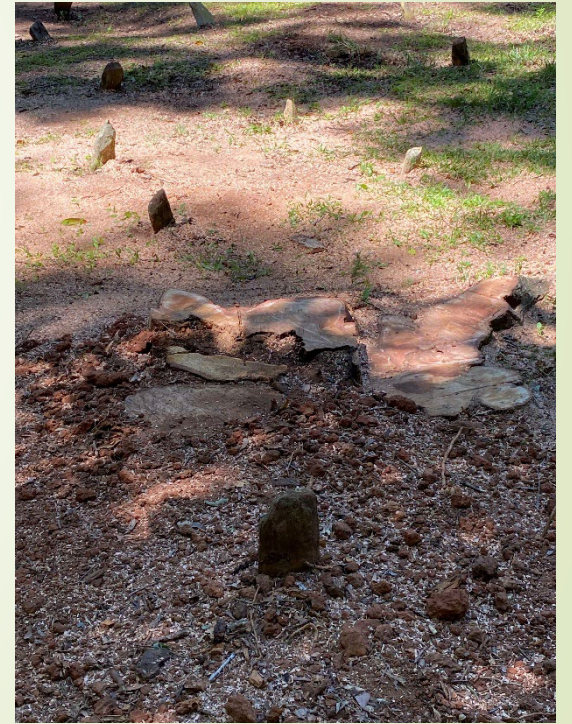
And of course challenges!

Hurricane Helene in September of 2024 dropped one VERY LARGE tree and several smaller trees and LOTS of branches and debris...



And...

Some other fun things...



Finally...

Serenity...

