

LIVING ARCHIVE

- 1830-1865 – More than 139 enslaved people lived and worked at John C. Calhoun’s Fort Hill Plantation.
- Dec. 7, 1837 – John Caldwell Calhoun, the first child of Andrew Pickens Calhoun, dies. He is the first known person to be buried on Cemetery Hill. Enslaved people are believed to be buried further down the hill on the western slope.
- 1865-1888 – Sharecroppers and other laborers who worked on this land may have been buried in the cemetery.
- 1890-1915 – Convicted laborers provided by the state who helped with the construction of Clemson Agricultural College and died during their incarceration are believed to have been buried on Cemetery Hill.
- July 10, 1924 – Clemson College lays out Woodland Cemetery for faculty and staff, as proposed by President Walter M. Riggs. In addition to Calhoun family members, those to be buried in the cemetery include prominent Clemson leadership such as past presidents and trustees. Riggs, who died in January 1924, is buried in the cemetery shortly before Woodland Cemetery is officially established by the university.
- **March 11, 1946 – The college Buildings & Grounds Committee reported that 200-250 graves of enslaved people and convicted laborers are believed to be buried in Woodland Cemetery and recommended installation of a permanent marker on the site. The recommendation is not acted upon.**
[1946 Building & Grounds Minutes \(PDF\)](#)

Citation:

“Minutes of the Building and Grounds Committee, 11 March 1946,” Series 7, Box 1, Folder 6, Robert F. Poole Presidential Records, Committee Files, 1928-1955, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

- During this time, the college begins naming buildings that were to this point called by numbers or generic names. On June 28, 1946, the Board of Trustees renames the Old Main building as Tillman Hall, after the former South Carolina Gov. Ben Tillman, who served from 1890 to 1894.

- **Sept. 16, 1947 – The college Buildings & Grounds Committee recommends naming Sawney Street “for one of (John C.) Calhoun’s favorite slaves who lived down on the branch in this area.” The recommendation is not acted upon.**

Citation:

Minutes of Faculty Senate Meeting, 16 September 1947, Series 36, Box 26, Folder 7, Faculty Senate Records, 1894-1988, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/faculty_senate/10

- **Oct. 29, 1952 – The college Buildings & 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 is not acted upon.**

Citation:

Minutes of Faculty Senate Meeting, 29 October 1952, Series 36, Box 26, Box 9, Faculty Senate Records, 1894-1988, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/faculty_senate/4

- **In this era as well – ca. 1944-1965 – the college landscape and its surrounding area, particularly the area west of campus, undergoes a massive physical transformation. Both the expansion of the college and the building of Lake Hartwell by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers require significant earth-moving construction. The western slope of Cemetery Hill is significantly altered.**

[September 1991 Note to File \(PDF\)](#)

Citation:

Note to File 18 September 1991, Box 2, Folder 17, Carrel Cowan-Ricks Papers 1991-1993, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

- **Nov. 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.”**

[November 1957 Memo \(PDF\)](#)

Citation:

David J. Watson to Henry Hill, 22 November 1957, Box 2, Folder 17, Carrel Cowan-Ricks Papers 1991-1993, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

- **Dec. 5, 1957 – A Woodland Cemetery report indicates that “[a]pproximately 100 yards to the west of the Calhoun plot is a burial ground reportedly established for slaves,” noting the ground 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.”**

[December 1957 Memo \(PDF\)](#)

Citation:

A Report on Woodland Cemetery, 5 December 1957, Box 2, Folder 17, Carrel Cowan-Ricks Papers 1991-1993, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

- The same report recommends “that the college continue to provide lots for its white employees and that the land adjacent to the area, commonly known as Cemetery Hill, be further developed as required for a cemetery.” Burial privileges are to be extended to “any member of the Caucasian race who is a regular employee or who dies in the employment of the college, provided he has been in the service of the college for a period of time exceeding three years.”
- Finally, the report also recommends that the “area of [the] colored graveyard [be] designate[d] on cemetery maps.”
- **Aug. 22, 1960 – Clemson College petitions a South Carolina court to disinter the remains of enslaved and convicted people on the western slope of the cemetery and to move them approximately 300 feet south in order to provide for the “orderly and proper development of the campus.” The petition states that “unmarked field stones set in no regular pattern are thought by legend and ancient report to mark the graves of deceased Negro slaves or of prisoner laborers at one time employed in the construction of the works of the College.”** [1960 Court Order \(PDF\)](#)

Citation:

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, Petition, 22 August 1960, and Order, 3 September 1960, Box 2, Folder 17, Carrel Cowan-Ricks Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Clemson University Libraries.

- Sept. 3, 1960 – The Court grants the college’s request to remove any graves it can identify to the southern slope of the cemetery, where the new “graves [are] to be marked with stones as they are now marked.” It is unclear which or how many are moved. The Court order also stipulates that the area of reinterment “be suitably marked.”
- 1991-1993 – Dr. Carrel Cowen-Ricks, an archeology professor working in what was then called the Department of Historic Houses, conducts survey work on the hill, completing three digs on the western slope of the cemetery. The project ends without conclusive evidence of African-American graves.
- 1993 – The university begins assigning burial plots on the western slope of the hill.
- 2002 – The university installs fencing around an area on the southern slope thought to be the site of unmarked graves based on a distinct pattern of field stones and places signage identifying the area as the “Site of Unknown Burials.”
- **2003 – The university’s Woodland Cemetery Preservation & Development Plan notes that “some areas of the site are suspected to contain unmarked burial plots. Though the extent of these unmarked plots is undetermined, it is suspected that the total area makes up approximately .6 acres of the site.” Maps contained in the plan designate two areas as “areas of historical significance which should be preserved (further investigation needed).” The plan identifies 68 unassigned burial plots on potential unmarked gravesites in the area investigated by Dr. Cowen-Ricks in 1991. Among the plan’s short-term objectives is further investigation using ground-penetrating radar.**

[Cemetery MP 2003 \(PDF\)](#)

Citation:

Woodland Cemetery Preservation & Development Plan: A Summary of the History, Present Status & Future Development Goals, October, 2003, on file at the Clemson University Planning and Design Office.

- April 2004 – The Woodland Cemetery Stewardship Committee requests funds for “ground-penetrating radar work by the State Archeology Department to determine whether or not slave graves exist on the site.”
- 2005 – **Ground-penetrating radar (GPR)** testing on the western slope finds no conclusive evidence of gravesites.
- 2016 – The university erects South Carolina historic markers on campus, including at Woodland Cemetery.
- July 29, 2020 – GPR testing reveals what are believed to be 215 unmarked graves, most of them on the western slope of the hill, within the area traditionally defined as the African-American burial ground. Seven unmarked graves are located under the paved asphalt road, and others are near modern-era burials in Woodland Cemetery.
- August – September 2020 – The site team conducted several phases of additional GPR work that ultimately resulted in a complete survey of the cemetery. That work revealed 604 unmarked burials—most of them clustered on the northern, northwestern, and western slopes of the hill, the area long understood as the African-American burial ground. A substantial number were also detected on the southern and southeastern quadrants of the hill, the site the university used for reburial when it removed and relocated African American gravesites upon acquiring a court’s permission to do so in 1960. The GPR survey also detected unmarked graves in areas the team had not anticipated—most notably, it identified 12 burials at the crest of the hill, within the fenced area enclosing the gravesites of several members of the Calhoun family.