

THE EVOLUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORIC RURAL AND SMALL TOWN  
BURIAL GROUNDS IN MORGAN COUNTY, GEORGIA AND PRESERVATION  
STRATEGIES TO ENSURE THEIR SURVIVAL

by

JOSHUA JACK RILEY

(Under the Direction of John C. Waters)

ABSTRACT

Morgan County, Georgia's rural and small town burial grounds are highly significant cultural resources. As such, they serve as physical expressions from the past and as historic documents, revealing important information about people who might otherwise be forgotten. Additionally, and more importantly, they embody the kinship, emotion, and spirituality of the people who created them. Despite their value, these resources face a number of threats both natural and human induced. This thesis discusses the evolution and significance of resources of this type within the county that were in their climax of use between the early 1800s and the late 1960s. Furthermore, it identifies the threats that they face today and discusses preservation strategies to ensure their survival.

INDEX WORDS: Cemeteries, Burial Grounds, Morgan County (Ga.), Historic Preservation,  
Burial Customs, Cultural Landscapes, Rural Preservation

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## DEDICATION

To my son and young preservationist in training, Joshua Jack Riley, Jr: May you gain an appreciation for the past and a desire to preserve it as I did from my parents.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development and writing of this thesis has been a long and rewarding journey. Through it I have gained a great appreciation for the resources I have studied and an understanding of those that created them, contributed to them, and are buried within them. However, I was never alone in this process and would like to express my sincere gratitude towards those who helped bring this about. I wish to thank those individuals who, like me, lived and called Georgia's historic heartland home, and are now buried within the resources that I have studied. Their marks on the landscape and contributions to it have provided me with invaluable insight and information that I otherwise would never have known. I would also like to thank my major professor, John C. Waters whose vast knowledge of historic preservation and cultural landscapes has been a tremendous asset. Additionally, I would like to thank the rest of the Historic Preservation faculty at the University of Georgia and those from my previous department at the University of Alaska who have in their own ways contributed to this work. Another individual who has helped guide my work is Tara Cooner, the Senior Planner for Morgan County. Without her guidance and the information she provided, this thesis would not have been possible. Additionally, I owe a debt of gratitude to the staff of the Morgan County Archives for their invaluable help in locating primary resources for this project. Also, to my committee members: Professor Cari Goetcheus, Professor Katherine Melcher, and Tara Cooner, Thank you for your input and support.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Colleen Riley, for teaching me the art of writing and instilling within me a deep regard for the past.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As a child, I spent vacations with my family, touring historic burial grounds from the Civil War era and earlier. Since those early days, burial grounds have played an important role in my development as a preservationist. Throughout my life, their mystery and beauty have intrigued me for both personal and scholastic reasons. My reverence for the past and the role that these resources play as memorials instilled within me a desire to focus my preservation efforts upon them. It is my hope that this work will serve as a model for others interested in documenting historic burial grounds, developing preservation plans for them, and carrying out preservation strategies for their benefit.

Rural and small town burial grounds in Morgan County, Georgia are highly significant cultural resources. They serve as physical expressions from the past in the form of funerary art and cultural landscapes, as well as historic documents that reveal important information about people who might otherwise be forgotten. Additionally, and more importantly, they embody the kinship, emotion, and spirituality of the people who created them. Unfortunately, this significance often goes unnoticed, leading to their neglect and ultimate loss.

The scope of this thesis focuses on rural and small town burial grounds that were in their climax of use between the initial settlement of Morgan County in the early 1800s and the end of the segregation era in the late 1960s. To these ends, it provides a context that assists readers in understanding the historic and design significance of these resources and why they should be preserved. Additionally, it identifies the threats to these resources in Morgan County.

Furthermore, it introduces and analyzes preservation techniques that are suited to rural and small town burial grounds and discusses preservation strategies that can assist in their survival. In short, the resulting manuscript serves as a study of local cemetery resources within Morgan County and acts as a preservation guide for rural burial grounds in general.

### Overview

Since prehistoric times, burial customs have been an important cultural aspect of humanity. Central to these customs are burial grounds and graves, which yield vital information about the people who created them. The post-contact, Southeastern United States is no exception. Community, church, domestic, and slave burial grounds all tell the stories of the men and women who carved an existence for themselves in land that was once an untamed frontier, but now suffers substantial pressure from development and population growth. Although the stories of these individuals are present in every historic burial ground of the South, this thesis focuses on those located in the rural areas and small towns of Morgan County, Georgia.

Rural and small town burial grounds are highly significant for a number of reasons. First, small towns and rural settings represent how most people lived in the United States prior to the early 20th Century and, as a result, yield valuable information about the settlement activities, demographics, and other social aspects that characterized them. Additionally, the resources themselves provide valuable anthropological information about attitudes towards death and burial customs in the past. Furthermore, they are often the only physical cultural remains that are left by a particular group of people in many rural settings, making them even more significant.

Despite their value as cultural resources, historic burial grounds face a number of threats both natural and human induced. However, those in rural and small town settings often suffer the most extreme of these. Natural forces, lack of stewardship, negligent destruction, and

vandalism often lead to their deterioration and ultimate destruction. Additionally, insensitive development threatens the continued existence of many of these resources by cutting them off from their surrounding contexts and exposing them to physical damage. Furthermore, inadequate legal protection and loopholes in state laws make resources of this type even more vulnerable. However, through identification, proper recognition, and appropriate management, many of these valuable resources can be saved for the study and enjoyment of future generations.

## Methodology

### Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the significance of rural burial grounds to the social and physical communities that they represent in Morgan County and what information do they potentially yield?
2. What are the major rural burial ground types in Morgan County and are any of them more predominant or threatened than others?
3. What factors exist in Morgan County that threaten these burial grounds and which are the most serious?
4. What preservation strategies exist that could mitigate the threats that Morgan County's historic burial grounds face?

### Research Methodology

In addition to printed primary and secondary sources, digital materials, oral histories, and personal correspondence, this thesis utilized case studies of existing rural cemeteries within Morgan County and some of its immediate surrounding areas. The author developed these case studies by visiting, surveying, and documenting nineteen rural cemeteries representing three general categories: family, church, and community cemeteries. Although this thesis discusses

the role of slave burial grounds in the county, the author was not able to physically visit any of these sites due to their scarcity and difficulties he encountered in locating them. Therefore, he relied on information documented in the 2007 Morgan County Cemetery Survey (provided by Tara Cooner, Senior Planner for Morgan County) and information from other sources. While surveying the cemeteries, the author used a uniform approach that consisted of a survey that addressed important information such as the age of the cemetery, ownership, categorization, threats, and physical features (a copy of the survey template is located in the Appendix section). The author developed this survey off an example found in *Grave Intentions* by Christine Van Voorhies (pages 54-56); however, the author adapted the survey to suit the rural nature of Morgan County and the burial grounds addressed in this thesis.

Although the burial ground typology utilized in this thesis is based on known burial ground types, the author refined and adapted it to suit the needs of Morgan County. He accomplished this by utilizing information gathered from the 2007 Morgan County Cemetery Survey and other sources. The following individuals provided further information that assisted him with the development of the typology, obtaining background information for many of the sites, and other research elements that contributed to the author's development of this thesis: Tara Cooner, Senior Planner, Morgan County Planning Office; Linda Williams, Archivist, Morgan County Archives; and Marshall W. "Woody" Williams, Archivist, Morgan County Archives.

### Site Selection

The methodology the author followed when selecting these sites involved identifying 90 known burial grounds within the 2007 Morgan County Cemetery Survey, which he categorized according the following four categories: domestic, slave, church, and community burial grounds.

Following this he selected seven domestic burial grounds, six church burial grounds, and six community burial grounds. In selecting these burial grounds, the author chose sites that were spread throughout the county and varied in their level of stewardship, as well as those that contained a wide range of built and landscape resources for study. Through this process the author identified three sites that were not documented in the Cemetery Survey, one of which was located in Morgan County: the Buckhead African American Cemetery. The other two of these were located across the county line in nearby Putnam County, which shares a rural context similar to that of Morgan County.

In addition to the selecting sites that were spread out and evenly placed within the burial ground categories, the author selected them based on their level of condition. The following sites are defined as well preserved: the Old Madison Cemetery, New Cemetery, Buckhead Cemetery, Rutledge Cemetery, Prospect Methodist Church Cemetery, Ponder Cemetery, Davis Cemetery, and Prior Apalachee Cemetery. Sites in fair to good condition included the following: Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery, Studdard Cemetery, Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery, Swords Community Cemetery, Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery, Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery, and Baldwin Cemetery. Sites in advanced stages of disrepair fall within the final category and included the following: the Buckhead African American Cemetery, Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery, William Ruark Cemetery, and Newton-Jones Cemetery. The sites are illustrated on the following map by their respective locations.

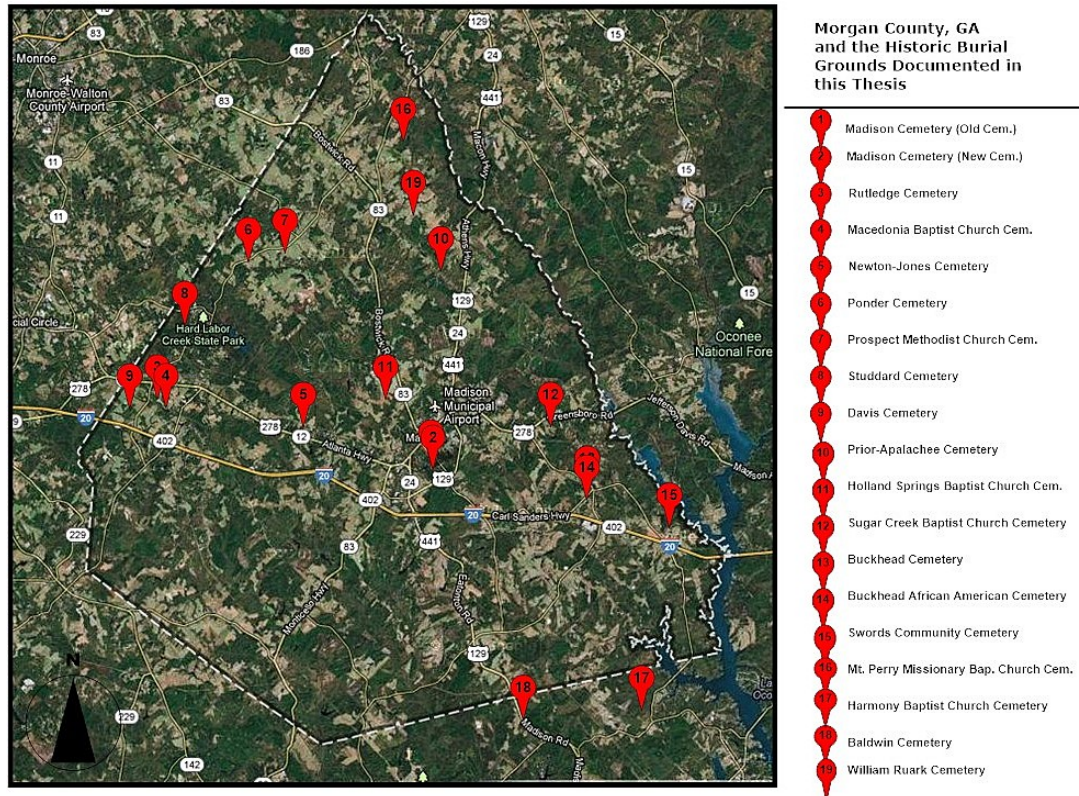


Figure 1. The eighteen burial grounds documented in the county for this thesis (Base map courtesy of Google Maps with graphics and data provided by the author)

Following the surveys, the author analyzed and categorized his findings. During this process, he used the data and other information gathered from the case studies along with other research materials to address the research questions discussed in the previous section. Additionally, he utilized photographs he took of the sites to support the conclusions drawn from them, as well as other information of interest.



## CHAPTER 2

### PLACES OF BURIAL AND THEIR CONTEXT IN MORGAN COUNTY'S HISTORY

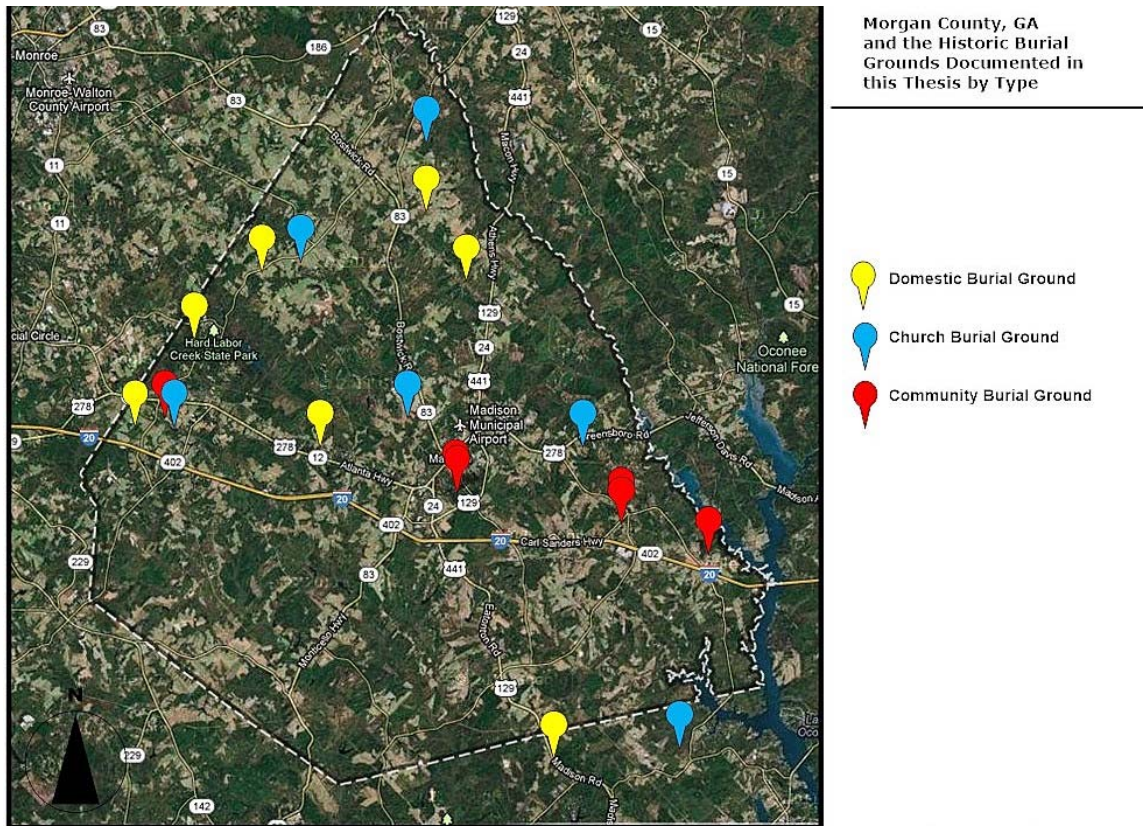


Figure 2. The eighteen burial grounds documented in the county for this thesis by type (Base map courtesy of Google Maps with graphics and data provided by the author)

For thousands of years humans have inhabited the land that makes up present-day Morgan County. During the course of this occupation, distinct human groups from early Native Americans who were part of the Mississippian culture to settlers of European and African descent called it home. As members of these groups lived, survived, and died, they practiced a behavior unique to humans: the ritualized recognition of their dead through burial. Despite the



fact that burial practices and grounds varied depending on who created them and when, they remain embodied with emotion and the hope that life has significance beyond this realm.

Although this holds true for all human groups in Morgan County (and elsewhere throughout the world), a separate story exists for the white and African American settlements that began at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

This story begins in 1795 when Booth Fitzpatrick and his dog journeyed across the Apalachee River from Green County into an unsettled wilderness known today as Morgan County. The country was a wild, virgin frontier that was the home of the Creek people; few white people ever ventured into this area besides a handful of explorers and odd traders. After several days of exploration and camping near a cool spring, Fitzpatrick returned home to tell his brothers what he had found. Upon his return, he spoke of a fertile land that had an “abundance of game” and “vegetation that the soil produced in tropical profusion.” News spread of Fitzpatrick’s discovery and eventually he returned with several men and camped near the same spring he visited during his previous journey. While camping, his companions shot a large buck and hung its head in a tree, earning the spot the name “Buckhead,” which it retains to this day.<sup>2</sup>

Although Booth Fitzpatrick was the first known white person to explore this part of Morgan County, in 1796 his brother, Benjamin became the first to build a home there and take up farming, consequently later becoming one of its early burials. Like many of Morgan County’s earliest settlers, Benjamin was a Revolutionary War veteran who received a land grant

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, “The Mississippian and Late Prehistoric Period (AD 700-1700),” Southeast Archeology; Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archeology of Death and Burial*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000., 142, 145-146.

<sup>2</sup> Martha McWhorter Nunnally, “History of the Town of Buckhead, Georgia 1786-1975,” Unpublished Manuscript (1975)., 1.

for patriotic service. However, he and these early settlers shared the region with the Creek who were by and large a friendly people that tolerated their presence.<sup>3</sup>

As more and more settlers began to establish farms and practice agriculture, trade and religion also moved in. At this time, communities began to spring up in the area in the form of villages, which became areas wherein people traded and interacted socially. One of the earliest of these was located a short distance from the spring where Booth Fitzpatrick had camped and was known as Buckhead (part of Greene County until the 1950s).<sup>4</sup>

As settlement continued, it began to put pressure on the Creek people, causing them to eventually cede their lands in present-day Morgan County in 1803 to the State of Georgia in the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson. Two years later, county officials in Baldwin County (what Morgan County was part of at the time) held a land lottery and another two years later in 1807, opening the area up to general settlement. Although any free, white male could participate in the lottery, only a limited number of land tracts existed for winning. Those who were fortunate enough to win land received it in 202.5-acre parcels; this was the amount determined by the survey chains used to measure it out. These farms were prime examples of the Yeoman ideal promoted so strongly by Thomas Jefferson who was President of the United States when this wave of settlement began. The settlers had a close relationship with the land and a strong spirit of pride and independence. These early agrarians raised crops typical of the region at the time such as corn, hay, cotton, and livestock.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2; Ed Prior, Interview by the Morgan County Oral History Project, April 18, 2009, Morgan County Heritage.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Nunnally, "History of the Town of Buckhead," 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.; Marshall W. Williams, "The Beginnings of Buckhead, Georgia, as Found in Documents at the Morgan County Courthouse," n.d., Papers of the Morgan County Archives on Buckhead, GA, Morgan County Archives, 1; "Madison's History and Development," n.p.: n.p., n.d., 1.

By 1807, with the population of the future Morgan County growing, the Georgia Assembly formally created it out of Baldwin County and designated Madison as its county seat. Despite its formal recognition as a political entity, Morgan County was still a rough and wild place. Diseases, challenges with crops, and the dangers of early agriculture claimed lives, as did old age and other natural causes. As people died, the desire to give them a “Christian” burial became a top priority of their loved ones. Although the earliest burials were likely singular "pioneer" burials, practicality, combined with the Yeoman pride of land ownership, made the domestic burial ground a natural choice for burials once settlement took hold.<sup>6</sup>

### Domestic Burial Grounds

The practice of family burials is not something unique to Morgan County, but was practiced in many rural areas of the south and elsewhere throughout the United States. However, its widespread practice was unique to the United States and marked a significant departure from the predominance of churchyard burials in Europe at the time when many early settlers originated from there. The popularity of domestic burial grounds in Morgan County served the purpose of allowing individuals to remain tied to their land while they remained close to their loved ones in death. Additionally, it served another more practical purpose of being convenient and a way for family members to deal with long distances between their homes, churchyards, and community centers.<sup>7</sup>

The earliest family burials grounds began to spring up in the eastern portions of Morgan County, as well as in the countryside around Madison, Buckhead, and Fairplay, and other early

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<sup>6</sup> ;David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995,14.

<sup>7</sup> Margret M. Coffin, *Death in Early America: The History and Folklore of Customs and Superstitions of Early Medicine, Funerals, Burials, and Mourning*, New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1976, 125-126; Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 15, 17.

settlements. The first known example of these began in 1809 with the death and burial of Robert Pearman. However, earlier burials likely occurred in known and unknown family burial grounds. Additionally, a number of these early burial grounds were often associated with Revolutionary War veterans such as John Adair who succumbed to death in 1812 near Apalachee, Georgia, becoming the first known occupant of his family cemetery.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to Revolutionary War Veterans and their families, enslaved African Americans played an important role in the development of domestic burial grounds. Although most of Morgan County's white residents owned no slaves at all, according to the 1860 U.S. Slave Census, a majority of slaveholders owned less than 20 slaves per household (the minimum to be considered a planter). Additionally, most of these individuals had only a few slaves who worked with them in a family farm dynamic. Although this did not always result in slaves being treated well, it made racial relations closer, which is reflected in some early domestic burial grounds. To these ends, many family burial grounds contained white slave holders and slaves alike.<sup>9</sup>

A good example of such a cemetery is the Prior-Apalachee Cemetery outside of the Apalachee community near Madison. Although this cemetery currently serves as a community cemetery for Apalachee, it began as two separate cemeteries, one being for the Prior family and the other for the community. At the time of the cemetery's beginning, it is unclear exactly how many slaves the Prior family owned. However, the will of John Prior, the family's patriarch and

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<sup>8</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, Morgan County Cemetery Survey, 2007, "John Adair Cemetery;" Madison: Morgan County Planning and Development, 2007; Henry Walton Chapter of NSDAR, "Morgan County Revolutionary War Patriots," [http://henrywalton.georgiastatedar.org/morgan\\_patriot\\_bios.htm](http://henrywalton.georgiastatedar.org/morgan_patriot_bios.htm) (Accessed 03/28/2012).

<sup>9</sup> Tom Blake, "Morgan County, Georgia Largest Slaveholders from 1860 Slave Census Schedules and Surname Matches for African Americans on 1870 Census," Rootsweb, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ajac/gamorgan.htm> (Accessed 2/9/2012); Charles S. Aiken, "New Settlement Pattern of Rural Blacks in the American South." *Geographical Review* 75, NO. 4 (October 1985): 384.

one of the cemetery's first burials, indicates that the number was likely six. Although one of his sons ended up owning 25 slaves by 1860, the Prior-Apalachee cemetery began and remained in the family farm context for quite some time.<sup>10</sup>

This context contributed to how the Priors' treated their slaves, which was well according to one of John's descendants, Ed Prior. This being the case, slaves ate the same things that the family ate, had adequate housing, and worked side-by-side with them in the fields. Additionally, the Prior's did not practice splitting family members up through sale, but allowed them to remain as families on their land. When slaves died, they were buried in the family cemetery along with members of the Prior family and their own ancestors. When visiting the cemetery today physical evidence exists that this may have been the case. Adjacent to the Prior graves, there is an open area between the family and community portions of the burial ground with evidence of grave depressions. In May, 2012, following the author's visit, Daniel Bigman conducted a survey at the site using ground penetrating radar and other technologies in which he discovered that this portion of the burial ground contained slave burials.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Will of John Prior, July 5, 1821, Will Book B (1815-1830) Page 91, Morgan Wills, Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA; Blake, P.A. Miller, "Slave Records in Georgia," P.A. Miller Genealogy Homepage, <http://home.comcast.net/~p.a.miller/genealogy/docs/slaverecords/ga.htm> (Accessed May 4, 2012); "Morgan County, Georgia Largest Slaveholders from 1860 Slave Census Schedules."

<sup>11</sup>Ed Prior, Interview by the Morgan County Oral History Project; Prior-Apalachee Cemetery Site Visit by the author, March 30, 2012; Daniel P. Bigman, *Geophysical Survey at Prior Cemetery, Morgan County, GA*, Athens: n.p., 2012.,1, 30.



Figure 3. The grave of John Prior in the Prior-Apalachee Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 4. An open area in the Prior-Apalachee Cemetery with grave depressions that may contain slave burials (Riley)

Another example of a family cemetery located in Morgan County, which contains slave burials is the Studdard Cemetery in Hard Labor Creek State Park. Although any remains of a farm or home-place associated with this cemetery no longer exist, the Studdard family and others have used the site for burials since 1830. However, unlike the Prior-Apalachee Cemetery, the African American and white portions of the cemetery are divided more clearly with the white portion occupying the hill top and the African American portion on its eastern slope. One of the main characteristics setting it apart is the fact that recent African American burials exist at the site; in fact it is still being used by both races as an active cemetery. The association this cemetery and others like it have with African Americans and Caucasians alike in early Morgan County make them highly significant. To these ends, they have the potential to offer valuable information concerning the racial relationships that took place in the Georgia Piedmont during the antebellum era.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, Morgan County Cemetery Survey, 2007, "Studdard Cemetery;" Studdard Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, March 2011.



Figure 5. An open area in the Studdard Cemetery with grave depressions that likely contained slave burials (Riley)

Early domestic burial grounds like the Prior-Apalachee and Studdard Cemeteries were simple and rustic, reflecting the frontier character of the land and the somber attitudes settlers had towards death. Additionally, they were usually located on high, sloped areas on family farms or in other areas that were difficult to farm and varied in their proximity from the main farmstead. However, in many cases, the choice where to locate domestic burial grounds may have had transcendental qualities such as family significance, spiritual significance, and the facilitation of repose.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to setting, one of the most significant aspects of domestic burial grounds and other cemeteries are funerary art in the form of grave markers. Not only do these often contain important written information like birthdates, death dates, and clues about causes of death, they are important design features and artistic expressions, which add to the beauty and romance of the landscapes they are part of. Additionally, their configurations, materials, and other details provide valuable information about the social history and early culture of Morgan County.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Prior-Apalachee Site Visit; Douglas Kiester, *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography*, Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 2004., 32.



In the years prior to the arrival of the railroad in Morgan County (1837-1840 depending on location) families had to utilize local materials and nearby craftsmanship for monument construction and other funerary tasks. Although stonecutters existed in some of the larger communities that more prosperous families like the Priors could employ to construct high style monuments, many families had to rely on folk form monuments that they constructed themselves.<sup>14</sup>

Today this reality is reflected on many of the earlier graves within family burial grounds. Wood, which deteriorates rapidly in the humid environment of the south, was a natural choice for poorer farmers who could not afford more permanent markers because it was abundant and easy to work. Therefore, many burials are difficult to locate because their markers have deteriorated. Over the years, this has led to open spaces in many family burial grounds between more permanent makers, causing many domestic burial grounds to look as though they contain fewer graves than they actually do.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 6. An open area in the Baldwin Cemetery with grave depressions that likely contained wooden markers, which have been lost through time (Riley)



Figure 7. The remnants of a fieldstone marker in the Prior-Apalachee Cemetery (Riley)

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<sup>14</sup> "The Railroad Comes to Georgia," <http://mgagnon.myweb.uga.edu/students/Johnson.htm> (Accessed 04/17/2012); Fredrick B. Goddard, *Where to Emigrate and Why*, New York: Fredrick B. Goddard, Publisher, 1869, 424.

<sup>15</sup> Jessie Lie Farber, "Gravestones in Early America," *Introduction to the Farber Gravestone Collection*, n.p.: American Antiquarian Society, 2003., 15; Prior-Apalachee Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, March 30, 2012; Baldwin Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, March 9, 2012.



Another common pre-railroad material used to mark graves in domestic burial grounds was fieldstone. This material was abundant in Morgan County and farmers often encountered outcrops of it when they prepared their fields for planting and performed other tasks. Therefore, as they moved such stone from their fields they quickly amassed a ready supply for funerary purposes and other uses. When utilizing this material, some families marked them with names, birth dates, and death dates. Additionally, as with the case of the Studdard Cemetery, some even used them to construct stone cairns that resemble vernacular expressions of false crypts. Furthermore, in at least one case, early settlers used them to construct an above ground family tomb in the Elizabeth Lumpkin Cemetery. In any case, fieldstone markers had the disadvantage of blending into the landscape and going unnoticed until organic material, such as leaves, buried them over time, leading to their eventual loss.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 8. Circa 1830s vernacular expressions of false crypts in the Studdard Cemetery in Hard Labor Creek, Morgan County (Riley)

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<sup>16</sup> Studdard Cemetery Site Visit; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, 2007, "Vernacular Burial Traditions," 23; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Elizabeth Lumpkin Cemetery;" George L. Batten, Jr., *Morgan county Citizen*, August 12, 2010, "In Search of Elizabeth a Local Man's Quest to Find the Grave of Elizabeth Lumpkin; Marshall W. Williams to Teri Stewart, n.d., Cemetery Files, Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA.

In addition to fieldstone and wood, a finer local material existed during this time for families who could afford it: marble. Although granite was also available in the area, early settlers favored marble likely because it was much easier to work. However, this preference perhaps had cultural significance as well for its association with Greek architecture, which was gaining popularity at the time. Additionally, its wide use may have had a more idealistic purpose for symbolic qualities of purity and democracy. Fine examples of marble markers exist today in a number of family cemeteries in the county. The Prior-Apalachee cemetery is one example and contains four that date to 1820s during the pre-railroad era.<sup>17</sup>

With the arrival of rail service in the late 1830s and early 1840s, a wider variety of marker styles and materials became available. Wealthier families who once had to rely on local materials and the skills of local carvers to work them could now order expertly cut, high style markers from major cities and have them shipped to the nearest rail depot. From there, they would transport them by mule or horse drawn carts or buckboards to their burial grounds.<sup>18</sup>

The stones ordered by families most often were marble, with granite examples becoming more popular in the early years of the twentieth century. Although some stone sources for markers originated from places outside Georgia, such as Alabama and Tennessee, the state itself was a key marble and granite producer in North America; therefore, native stone proved a natural choice. To these ends, a formalized quarrying industry began in Georgia as of 1840 when an Irish immigrant known as Henry Fitzsimmons established the Long Swamp Marble Company in Pickens County (then part of Cherokee County). Although other larger companies took the

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<sup>17</sup> Prior-Apalachee Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, March 30, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> *Madison's History and Development*, n.p.: n.p., n.d., 7.

industry over, active quarrying exists in Pickens County to this day, with much of the stone in Morgan County's burial grounds originating from its quarries.<sup>19</sup>

As development continued in Morgan County, another significant factor began to influence funerary art in domestic burial grounds. Beginning in the 1830s, cotton took hold as a major cash crop and remained the dominant economic enterprise in the county until the boll weevil crisis of the 1920s. Wealth from cotton enabled some farmers to purchase surrounding parcels of land and consolidate them into large holdings, which generated even more profit. Additionally, even small farmers benefited from cotton wealth, which gave them more disposable income. This was particularly true from the late nineteenth century until 1915 when cotton production peaked in Georgia and entrepreneurs began to establish large textile mills, cottonseed oil refineries, and other lucrative industries associated with the crop. All of this made it possible for more families to begin to have the funds to purchase elaborate funerary art for their departed loved ones.<sup>20</sup>

The two most impressive Morgan County examples of late cotton era markers are located in the Ponder Cemetery near Fairplay. This domestic burial ground dates back to the early to mid-nineteenth century and contains a variety of markers that range from simple field stones to two impressive gothic monuments. These monuments are over twelve feet in height and made of grey marble. The first of these monuments was for George F. Ponder's wife who preceded him in death, along with all fourteen of their children. The monument had such great symbolism to

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<sup>19</sup> E. Merton Coulter, *Georgia: A Short History*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973., 406, 475; Golden Ink, "Pickens County," About North Georgia. [http://ngeorgia.com/ang/Pickens\\_County](http://ngeorgia.com/ang/Pickens_County) (Accessed April 9, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Coulter, *Georgia: A Short History*., 411 and 431; Oliver Jensen, *The American Heritage History of Railroads in America*, New York: American Heritage Bonanza Books, 1981; Brashear Reality Corporation, "Cotton," GeorgiaCountry.com. <http://www.georgiacountry.com/cotton.php> (Accessed April 9, 2012); Adelaide Ponder, Interview by the Morgan County Oral History Project, 2005; *New York Times*. 1884. Cotton Mills in Georgia. January 25.

George that according to his will he wished his executer to "have erected on his grave a tombstone and monument of the same size and design as that of his wife; the material to be Georgia or Tennessee marble."<sup>21</sup>



Figure 9. The elaborate markers of George and Sarah Ponder's graves at the Ponder Cemetery near Fairplay (Riley)

By the early 1900s during this period of prosperity in Morgan County, poorer individuals began to utilize concrete in domestic burial grounds, which they molded into folk form markers that they often inscribed with birth and death dates. Concrete had the advantage of being inexpensive, widely available, and very easy to work. Additionally, unlike wood, it was rather long lasting. Therefore, it became a natural alternative to fieldstone and wood for homemade

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<sup>21</sup> Ponder Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, September, 2010; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Ponder Cemetery;" Will of George F. Ponder, August 20, 1894, Wills (1869-1899), Morgan County Probate Court Wills Probated, Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA; "Churches Own Valuable Land," *The Madisonian*, April 2, 1909, Madison, GA.

markers. Furthermore, it was so practical that even some wealthier residents of the county began to utilize it for high style markers by the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 10. High style concrete grave marker in the Studdard Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 11. A concrete folk form monument in the Ponder Cemetery (Riley)

Other important design features possessed by domestic burial grounds in Morgan County are landscape features. These include natural features such as trees and plantings, as well as built features like walls and fences. Although large oak trees are the most common feature incorporated into domestic burial grounds, families also incorporated other trees like magnolia's and junipers. In fact, both of these are present in the Studdard Cemetery, which contains one of the oldest and largest magnolias of any domestic burial ground within the county; according to Studdard family legend, the original owners planted it.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Vernacular Burial Traditions," 23-26, 29-30.

<sup>23</sup> Studdard Cemetery Site Visit; Prior Apalachee Cemetery Site Visit; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Studdard Cemetery."





Figure 12. A large oak tree at the Prior-Apalachee Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 13. An old magnolia at the Studdard Cemetery (Riley)

Along with trees, families planted nonnative shrubs such as azaleas and some species of roses, as well as flowering bulbs like daffodils and iris in efforts to adorn the graves of their loved ones. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see these flowers and their offspring blooming amidst grass and weeds in overgrown and forgotten cemeteries. This makes plantings important indicators of potential cemetery sites and elements of landscape beauty.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 14. A concrete make do monument with iris and daffodil plantings at the Baldwin Cemetery (Riley)

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<sup>24</sup> Baldwin Cemetery Site Visit; Studard Cemetery Site Visit; Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 15.

Built landscape features in domestic burial grounds (though not as common as natural features) are also important and likely existed in greater number in the past. By and large, early domestic burial grounds in Morgan County continued into the broader landscape with fences existing with the primary intention of keeping livestock out of them. However, some evidence of stone walls exists in certain domestic burial grounds, such as the Studdard and Telitha Adair Cemeteries. Additionally, several fine examples of cast iron fencing are located in others that by miracle or intention survived the scrap drives of two World Wars.<sup>25</sup>

Another built landscape feature that many domestic burial grounds in Morgan County possess is edging around family plots. Families utilized fieldstone, brick, or marble in earlier eras with granite becoming more common in the twentieth century. Although edging was primarily decorative in nature, it also served the more practical purpose of separating the burials of immediate family members from those of their extended family. This is significant because as families grew along with the communities that they were part of, some domestic burial grounds eventually evolved into community cemeteries where the edging served as the primary boundary that separated the burials of different families.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Studdard Cemetery Site Visit; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Telitha Aidair Cemetery," "Brasswell Cemetery."

<sup>26</sup> Prior-Apalachee Cemetery Site Visit; Davis Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, November, 2010; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Davis Cemetery."



Figure 15. Remnants of a stone wall in the Studdard Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 16. Cast iron fencing at the Newton John Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 17. Marble edging in the Davis Cemetery (Riley)

In addition to the burial and design customs employed by white families in domestic burial grounds, enslaved African Americans buried at these sites employed similar and unique versions of their own. Like whites, African Americans laid their dead in the Christian east-west orientation. Additionally, they had a strong preference for burying families together in plots or groupings, as did white families. Furthermore, they often constructed folk form markers out of wood and field stone. However, wood itself likely had a deeper cultural significance because of



the fact that it deteriorated, as did the human body. Therefore, it may have been symbolic of the body returning to the earth and the spirit to the spiritual realm.<sup>27</sup>

Despite some similarities in burial customs and cemetery layout, African Americans employed unique design expressions and customs. One of these was the tradition of surface grave goods. These items included broken pottery and glass artifacts, as well as intact personal items associated with their deceased loved, which they placed on top of their graves. Although physical evidence of these items may not be readily visible, the practice associated with them is highly significant and draws a direct link to African burial customs in the Old World. To these ends, the scholar Ross W. Jamieson, explained evidence of surface grave goods as the "the most commonly recognized African-American material culture indicator of cemetery sites."

Additionally, testimony from the 1930s explained the practice of African Americans breaking certain goods before they placed them on the graves as a symbolic action of breaking the chain of death in their community. Furthermore, other theories suggest that they intended the goods to aid the departed on his or her spiritual journey back to Africa following death. Regardless of the meaning, grave goods are important cultural resources; if only present in the archeological record, they are often the only surviving material indicators of the presence of African American graves.<sup>28</sup>

Although direct evidence of grave goods is difficult to find in domestic burial grounds, evidence of it exists in other burial grounds within Morgan County. African American church cemeteries such as the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery contain some evidence of the

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<sup>27</sup> Lynn Rainville, "An Investigation of an Enslaved Community and Slave Cemetery at Mt. Fair, in Brown's Cove, Virginia," *Magazine of Albemarle County History* 61, 2003., 17; Ross W. Jamieson, "Material Culture and Social Death: African American-Burial Practices, *Historical Archeology* 29, 1995., 52

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 50-51; 20. Rainville, "An Investigation of an Enslaved Community and Slave Cemetery at Mt. Fair, in Brown's Cove, Virginia," 20; Roberta Hughes Wright and Wilbur B. Hughes III, *Lay Down Body: Living History of African American Cemeteries*, Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1996., 19-20, 294; Grey Gundaker, "Tradition and Inovation in African-American Yards," *African Arts* Vol 26, No 2 (April, 1993),61.

practice, while strong evidence of it exists in the African American section in the Old Madison Cemetery in Madison. The bottom-left image contains broken pieces of pottery and glass found in a portion of the African American section of the Old Madison Cemetery; this section has suffered from run-off induced erosion. It should be noted that similar examples of such artifacts can be found scattered around this portion of the cemetery, which like many African American burial sites of its age contains relatively few surviving grave markers. Next to this image is a 1920s photograph of an African American burial with grave goods on Sapelo Island.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 18. Possible grave goods mixed with other debris in the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 19. Grave goods on an African American grave on Sapelo Island, GA (c. 1920). Courtesy of the Digital Library of Georgia

### Slave Burial Grounds

Although prior to the Civil War most African American burials took place alongside white burials in domestic burial grounds in Morgan County, separate slave burial grounds also existed in the area. However, there is no surviving information on their exact number.

Additionally, the fact that these landscapes are not easily identifiable and were much more

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<sup>29</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery) by the Author, September, 2010; Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, May 14, 2012.

susceptible to neglect than cemeteries that contained white burials makes this number even more difficult to ascertain. Furthermore, the fact that oral tradition was used to document the location of many of these sites meant that they became lost as elders within the African American community died out and their descendents migrated to urban settings and other areas. Also, the fact that church cemeteries became the main burial grounds for Morgan County's post-bellum African Americans caused such sites to fade into distant memory following the Civil War.<sup>30</sup>

Because of the general rarity of known slave burial grounds in Morgan County and the information they have the potential of providing, they are very important sites. According to the 2007 Morgan County Cemetery Survey, only three slave burial grounds can be identified as such and that is through oral tradition. These burial grounds are listed in the survey as the unidentified cemeteries on Little River Farm, Bethany Road, and Pierce Dairy Road. Although several other unidentified cemeteries exist that could be slave burial grounds, it is not clear if they actually are. Therefore, without significant archeological investigation and further research into the subject, the exact number of slave burial grounds in Morgan County may never be known.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rainville, "An Investigation of an Enslaved Community and Slave Cemetery at Mt. Fair, in Brown's Cove, Virginia," 12.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Unidentified Bethany Road Cemetery," "Unidentified Little River Farm Cemetery," "Unidentified Cemetery on Pierce Dairy Road."



Figure 20. Slave burial ground on Little River Farm in Morgan County (Courtesy of the 2007 Morgan County Cemetery Survey)

The slave burial grounds that do exist in Morgan County are similar in many respects to other examples found throughout the southeastern United States. These sites were most often situated on plantations away from the planter's house, which provided slaves with privacy during funerals and enabled slaveholders to distance themselves from death within the slave community. Additionally, though some scholars believe that slaves may have had some control over where to locate their burial grounds, such locations more than likely had to do more with the site's level of agricultural productivity than its cultural meaning to the slave community. This meant that rocky areas, hilltops, and other areas unfit to farm became natural locations for slave burial grounds.<sup>32</sup>

One unidentified cemetery known as a slave burial ground through oral tradition is located on Bethany Road near Madison. This site is situated between two parcels of land that were likely part of the same holding when it was being used for burials. Over the years, the land became a timber tract and is now a pasture, consequently making it heavily disturbed. However,

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<sup>32</sup> Rainville, "An Investigation of an Enslaved Community and Slave Cemetery at Mt. Fair, in Brown's Cove, Virginia, 13, 24.

strong evidence of grave depressions exists, along with several rustic fieldstone and quartzite markers (also present at the Pierce Dairy Road site). Although present at other burial sites in Morgan County, the use of this stone is significant and may reflect an early African American cultural preference for it.<sup>33</sup>

As a marker for burials, the use of quartzite by slaves is not unique to Georgia. In fact, slaves at the Mt. Fair Cemetery in Brown's Cove, Virginia used it on a limited number of burials. According to Lynn Rainsville, who conducted a study of this site, the stone may have served the purpose of identifying a person's "age, sex, or status." Additionally, it may have served the purpose of identifying how a particular individual died such as "suicide or death at an advanced age." Furthermore, it may just be that the stone was the first type available to African Americans in Brown's Cove and Morgan County alike, making its use coincidental. However, the fact that its use was limited at Mt. Fair and within Morgan County gives it a sense of mystery and adds to its importance as a design feature in the burial grounds where it is located.<sup>34</sup>

Although the slave burial grounds within Morgan County are not easily identifiable, they are important sites that have much to tell about the lives of enslaved African Americans within the area. Additionally, they serve as important cultural symbols to the descendants of the individuals buried within them in a collective sense. However, their active use ended shortly after the Civil War when African Americans began to establish their own burial grounds that were separate from white ownership and influence in Morgan County.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Unidentified Bethany Road Cemetery," "Unidentified Cemetery on Pierce Dairy Road."; Rainville, "An Investigation of an Enslaved Community and Slave Cemetery at Mt. Fair, in Brown's Cove, Virginia, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 16; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Unidentified Cemetery on Pierce Dairy Road."

<sup>35</sup> Rainville, "An Investigation of an Enslaved Community and Slave Cemetery at Mt. Fair, in Brown's Cove, Virginia, 22, 26.



Figure 21. Quartzite marker in a slave burial ground on Bethany Road (Riley)



Figure 22. A pink quartzite marker in a slave burial ground on Pierce Dairy Road (Riley)

### Church Burial Grounds

Church burial grounds are another historic cemetery type that exists in Morgan County. Their presence and importance comes as no surprise, due to the county's rural nature and the fact that churches historically served as one of the main places where inhabitants interacted socially. However, the story of church burial grounds began relatively late in the county's history; they did not begin to appear until during the Civil War, nearly sixty years after the establishment of the first churches. From this period, until the early 1900s, church burial grounds played an increasingly important role in burial practices within the county and today represent a common option for burial.<sup>36</sup>

Several explanations exist for the late start of church burial grounds. One possible reason was that it was simply impractical for settlers to transport bodies for long distances between farms and churchyards in the years before chemical embalming and adequate roads. Another reason could have been sanitary concerns, which became augmented by news from abroad concerning the health hazards of overcrowded church and urban cemeteries of the time. Furthermore, the desire of Morgan County's early residents to contain disease epidemics likely

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<sup>36</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*.

compounded this. However, for whatever the reason, it is clear that the early residents of Morgan County did not prefer church burials.<sup>37</sup>

The lack of preference for church burial grounds in the early history of the county can be observed in some of the deeds from its earliest churches. One such example is the 1812 deed for a parcel of land that an early landowner in the area named Jeremiah McCoy sold to the Sandy Creek Baptist Church. Although the beginning of this document reads much like other deeds from the period, it contains an "exception" at the end that sets it apart from many of its counterparts. This clause prohibited the church from having a "burial yard" on the parcel of land with the understanding that the parcel would revert back to its original owner in the event of a violation.<sup>38</sup>

As attitudes towards church burial grounds began to change during the Civil War, congregations often developed them around existing domestic burial grounds. This was likely due to the fact that religious congregations ended up purchasing land that contained domestic features such as burial grounds, which likely resulted in the major shift in demographics and land tenure that took place during and after the war. One example of a church burial ground that may have followed this pattern was the Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery, located between Buckhead and Madison. Although settlers in this area organized the church in 1806, its current building dates to the mid to late 1800s and is likely not the original location of the building used in the early years of the church's existence. Therefore, the congregation likely moved to this location sometime in the mid to late 1800s. The cemetery at the present site had its beginnings

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<sup>37</sup> Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 174; James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death*, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2001., 114-116;

<sup>38</sup>Deed agreement between Jeremiah McCoy and the Sandy Creek Baptist Church, August 31, 1812, Morgan County Deeds, Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA; Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, May 14, 2012; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Sandy Creek Baptist Church Cemetery," "Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery."



in the 1860s with the establishment of the Fears family plot, which may have begun as a separate domestic burial ground. Over the years, the congregation began to use the land that surrounded the Fears section for burials, making it a family plot in a larger church burial ground.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 23. The Fears Family Cemetery, which is now part of the Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 24. Sugar Creek Baptist Church (Riley)

Today, the site contains a number of burials that date to the mid- to late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, and it is still actively used for burials. However, what makes it, and other similar examples within Morgan County unique, is the fact that the burial ground was not incorporated into the churchyard of the church. Instead, the congregation located it across a paved street known as Sugar Creek Road that likely began as an older unpaved trail or road.<sup>40</sup>

Separated church burial grounds occur in other areas of Morgan County and make up four of the eleven known cemeteries of this type that fall within the period of significance for this project. Another example is located near Buckhead at the Harmony Baptist Church. Although this burial ground is located across the county line in Putnam County, its context is

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<sup>39</sup> Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery."



similar to that of Morgan County due to its rural nature and close proximity. The congregation itself is one of the earliest in the area, dating back to 1807. However, like the previous example, the current building and its site are not the original and date to the early 1900s. Additionally, like the Sugar Creek Baptist Church, the Harmony Baptist Church is located across a paved road from its burial ground. Furthermore, the marked graves within the burial ground date as early as the late 1860s and some unmarked fieldstones suggest that significantly older burials may be located at the site. However, according to the entrance gate of the burial ground, it began in 1908, suggesting that it may also have begun as a domestic burial ground prior to the church's arrival.<sup>41</sup>



Figure 25. An 1879 child's grave marker at the Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 26. The entrance gate for the Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery with 1908 as its date of establishment (Riley)

Not all churches with detached burial grounds are in located in close proximity to them, and some within the county actually have them entirely off-site, up to a mile or more from their buildings. In certain cases this is because congregations have a tendency to move and the cemeteries associated with them do not and remain in use by their members for burials.

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<sup>41</sup> Harmony Baptist Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, March 9, 2012.

Additionally, deed restrictions on some land parcels like those previously discussed may have contributed to this, leading some congregations to establish offsite cemeteries on other parcels of land. However, the use of offsite burial grounds by some of these churches may have been more coincidental and based on where they could acquire land for such purposes from economic and practical perspectives.<sup>42</sup>

One example of an actively used church burial ground that is located far away from the church is the Swords Community Cemetery. Although this cemetery functions as and is referred to as the Swords Community Cemetery, it is actually associated with the Swords Methodist Church. Additionally, unlike the previous two examples, this burial ground is over a mile from the church building and is situated on a slope, the top of which contains the burials for the Swords family, which the site and surrounding community are named after.<sup>43</sup>

Like the other examples discussed, burials exist at the site that predate the church and even the Swords Community. One of these burials is located in an old oak tree stand, located on the face of the hill that makes up the largest section of the cemetery; it includes the burial for a Revolutionary War Dragoon named Johannes Dingler who died in 1816. Due to the fact that the marker for this grave is a twentieth century veteran issue marker and his burial is significantly older, other graves that are not marked (possibly for his family) may be present. Therefore, the site likely began as one or more domestic burial grounds that later evolved into the church/community cemetery of today. The Swords Cemetery is significant for this and

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<sup>42</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*.

<sup>43</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Swords Cemetery." Swords Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, March 30, 2012; Digital Library of Georgia, "Swords Marker," Georgia Info, <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/gahistmarkers/swordshistmarker.htm> (Accessed May 17, 2012).

demonstrates the sort of hybrid character possessed by many church burial grounds within the county and the fact that they are often mixtures of family, church, and community burials.<sup>44</sup>



Figure 27. The Swords Community/Swords Methodist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 28. A Revolutionary War veteran grave on the middle portion of the slope in the opposite photograph (Riley)

Although many churches within Morgan County have burial grounds that are detached from their churchyards, a number of examples exist with traditional attached cemeteries. One of earliest examples is the Prospect Methodist Church located in the Prospect Community. Although this church is rumored to have begun at the site in the 1830s, according to the deed for the land it occupies it actually became associated with its present site in 1856. A likely explanation for the 1830s misconception is the presence of a recording error in the deed, which uses the year 1834.<sup>45</sup>

As far as burials within the cemetery, they began to occur during the Civil War in the early 1860s. Despite inaccuracies concerning its establishment date and its close proximity to the church building, the Prospect Cemetery has acted much like a community burial ground for

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<sup>44</sup> Swords Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>45</sup> Deed agreement between Absalom Awtrey and the Officers of the Prospect Methodist Church, September 8, 1856, Morgan County Deeds, Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Prospect Cemetery."

Fairplay as does the Swords Cemetery for its community. This is evident from obituaries that ran in local newspapers, discussing burials and funerals at the site for members of prominent families who were not Methodists. Two good examples are those for Hardy Philip Adair who died in 1947 and George C. Adair who died in 1989. Although both of these men were members of the Rock Springs Primitive Baptist Church, they still had funerals at the Prospect Methodist Church and were buried in its burial ground.<sup>46</sup>

The general layout of the site was influenced by the fact that it existed on an important crossroads. Therefore, the church occupies the corner of the lot near the crossroad intersection and the burial ground is located behind it. The present building is a frame structure and appears to date from the mid- to late-nineteenth century and is located next to a mature oak tree that may be older. Additionally, some unmarked grave depressions and burials marked with fieldstones surround this tree that appear older than any other graves within the burial ground and the church building itself. Therefore, it is likely that these may represent an early domestic burial ground, which the cemetery developed around as well. However, the earliest definitive grave that the author encountered in the field was for a Confederate soldier named William J. Norris who died in 1862.<sup>47</sup>

The burial ground itself is large and situated on land that slopes downward from the crossroads. Along the face of the slope, there are numerous family burial plots that form terraces on the face of the slope. However, on top of the hill (where most of the older burials are located) the graves are organized in a more linear pattern and form several well-organized rows.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.; Prospect Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, September 2010; *The Madisonian*. Undated. "Obituary for Hardy Philips Adair;" *The Madisonian*. Undated. "Obituary for George C. Adair;" Find A Grave, Inc., "Find a Grave Search Results," Find a Grave Website, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gsr&GSmpid=46952751&> (Accessed May 18, 2012).

<sup>47</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Prospect Cemetery"; Prospect Cemetery Site Visit.

Additionally, the presence of granite alphabetical characters at the ends of the rows indicates that the church used an alphabetical system (at least in the past) to keep track of burials by family names.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 29. Prospect Methodist Church and its attached cemetery (Riley)



Figure 30. An alphabetical marker in the Prospect Methodist Church Cemetery (Riley)

Another factor that influenced the evolution of church burial grounds within Morgan County was racial relations. The earliest churches in Morgan County, such as the Sugar Creek Baptist Church and others, had integrated congregations prior to the late 1860s. However, things changed during the Reconstruction era following the Civil War. Georgia, like other states in the Deep South, became marked by racial tensions, which led to segregation laws and social customs that were designed to limit interaction between whites and African Americans. Religion was no exception to this, and even Christian worship became something that both races no longer did jointly. Therefore, many congregations broke up during this period and African American members began to establish their own churches, while in some cases white members left existing churches and established new ones of their own.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Prospect Cemetery"; Prospect Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>49</sup> Denis C. Dickerson, "Our History," The African Methodist Episcopal Church Website, <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php> (Accessed May 22, 2012); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished*

For the most part, early African American churches came in the form of various independent Baptist churches and those belonging to the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination. To African Americans, these churches represented deep-rooted social ties and were embodiments of their community. Additionally, they were something that they had control of independent from white interference for the most part, giving them a sense of pride and ownership over such institutions.<sup>50</sup>

Despite their significance to the African American community, as these churches grew their members also succumbed to old age, disease, accidents, and war related deaths. Although this necessitated burial grounds for their members, the segregation laws in effect and restrictive covenants in many burial grounds of the time prohibited African Americans from burying their dead in many of Morgan County's cemeteries. This combined with the fact that many African Americans simply wanted their own places of burial to identify with made their churches natural locations for burial grounds. Such burial grounds enabled family members to see their loved ones off in a Christian-like manner and come together as a community in the event of death. As for the church, it stood as a symbol of comfort and acted as an ever-watchful eye over the dead while it promised eternal life to those who mourned them.<sup>51</sup>

The African American church burial grounds that exist in Morgan County are highly significant and vary considerably in their evolution, their present state of use, and general condition. Additionally, they are often challenging to date due to the lack of durable materials that many families used to mark graves with and the fact that written and oral information often

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Revolution, New York: Harper Collins, 1988., 342; Lynn Robinson Camp, *Black America Series: Morgan County*, Georgia, Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2004., 63.

<sup>50</sup> Sandra L. Barnes, "Black Church and Community Action," *Social Forces* 84, no. 2 (December, 2005): 968-970.

<sup>51</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*; Sandra L. Barnes, "Black Church and Community Action," *Social Forces* 84, no. 2 (December, 2005): 968-970.

became lost as members moved away from the county or died. However, the earliest African American church burial grounds appear to have begun after the Civil War when slavery officially ended in Georgia.<sup>52</sup>

One early African American church burial ground in the county is the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery. Although a deed suggests that a church by this name was organized in 1806, the cornerstone of the current church building at the site states that it was organized in 1914. However, it is possible that those who organized it were descendants of members who belonged to a church by the same name, which had an integrated congregation prior to the Civil War. Additionally, though the present building at the site dates to the 1980s, graves in the burial ground associated with it indicate that an earlier building may have existed in the past.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike the examples of this cemetery type discussed up to this point, the cemetery is situated in a forested area that began as a cleared area and remained so for some time. This is evident by the growth pattern of the vegetation, which suggests that it fell into succession approximately forty years ago. The cemetery consists of three distinct sections, all of which are in disrepair. The first and oldest section is a domestic burial ground for the Adair family, which the site grew around. This section contains an inscribed fieldstone marker from 1837 (the only one of its kind encountered during this project) and carved marble markers from the early-mid nineteenth century. Directly adjacent to this section is a larger area with numerous grave depressions and one marked grave that is situated next to an overgrown boxwood shrub. Although it is not clear, many of these burials likely represent some of the earliest associated

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<sup>52</sup> Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, May 14, 2012; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery."

<sup>53</sup> Deed agreement between Sumner Holland and the Holland Springs Baptist Church, July 19, 1806, Morgan County Deeds (Book A, Page 28) Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA; Holland Springs Site Visit; M.W.G.P.H. Masons, Holland Springs Baptist Church Cornerstone, 1986.



with the church. Beyond this section is another, which contains a number of marked African American burials associated with the church. The markers at this site date from the early to late twentieth century.<sup>54</sup>



Figure 31. Marked fieldstone marker in section one of the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery from 1837 (Riley)



Figure 32. The only remaining marker in section two of the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 33. Section three of the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery with African American burials (Riley)

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<sup>54</sup> Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, May 14, 2012; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery;" Conie P. Gray, R. Alfred Vick, Stephen A. Sanchez, Greg Levine, 2003, *Green Space: Evaluating, Restoring, and Managing Natural Areas in the Atlanta Vicinity*, Atlanta: Trees Atlanta, Georgia Forestry Commission, 13.



Although Holland Springs Baptist Church still maintains an active congregation, the most recent burial in the cemetery dates to 1976. Currently, members of the church do not appear to use the site for burials. Additionally, the cemetery is in bad repair and the church no longer takes responsibility for its maintenance. However, members within the area monitor it regularly and a well-worn footpath to the site suggests that people still visit it regularly.<sup>55</sup>

Another African American church burial ground within Morgan County is the Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery in Rutledge. Although the present building dates to the mid to late twentieth century, the earliest known burial at the site occurred in 1912; however, some unmarked fieldstone examples could be earlier. According to the 2007 Morgan County Cemetery Survey and information gathered by the author in the field, the site appears to exist on land that was once an old cotton field. This is evident by the presence of terraces that resemble those formed by cotton cultivation in other areas within the county. Therefore, it is likely that the church purchased the land for the cemetery when it was no longer agriculturally productive in the early twentieth century and began using it for burials shortly thereafter.<sup>56</sup>

The older portion of the burial ground is located in and at the edge of a forested area that surrounds the site, while the more recent burials exist on the terraces that slope downward to the church. A grassy area that the church uses for recreational purposes separates the burial ground from the present church building. Although many of the earlier graves are in disrepair, the church actively mows the lawn in the burial ground and families appear to keep up the newer

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<sup>55</sup> Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery."

<sup>56</sup> Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, October, 2010; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery."

graves within it. Additionally, the church actively uses the site for burials with the most recent grave the author encountered dated 2008.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 34. The oldest found marked grave in the Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 35. Looking down the possible cotton terraces in to the new section of the Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)

This burial ground is one of the two large cemeteries in Rutledge that fall within the period of significance for this project, the other being the Rutledge Cemetery. Due to the fact that the Rutledge Cemetery began as a private cemetery that was made up of land sold by several neighboring landowners for burial plots, it likely had formal racial restrictive covenants that prohibited African American burials. Additionally, even if such restrictions were not formally present, they would have existed on a de facto basis, making the cemetery a burial ground reserved for white burials. Therefore, African American church burial grounds like the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.; Macedonia Cemetery Site Visit.

Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery often served as alternatives to community burial grounds for many African Americans in Morgan County.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the separations that existed between white and African American church burial grounds, they contain some similarities in their designs and general layouts. As for white church burial grounds, they often closely resemble those of white domestic burial grounds within the county. To these ends, they typically contain a collection of unmarked fieldstone markers (many of which represent the earliest burials) and a number of high style marble markers. These can range from simple tablet type markers to elaborate family plot sculptures. Additionally by the 1920s and 1930s, markers of both types began to appear in granite and molded concrete, which became common at these sites for reasons similar to those associated with domestic burial grounds during the same period. Furthermore, poorer families continued to construct folk form monuments at the sites well into the mid-twentieth century, most of which were hand-formed and inscribed concrete.<sup>59</sup>

Due to the fact that a number of church cemeteries in Morgan County had their start during and just after the Civil War, many of them contain veteran issue markers. Although these can be found in many domestic and community burial grounds, those that mark graves during the war often represent some of the earliest marked graves in white church burial grounds.

However, later Civil War veteran markers occurred in larger numbers and are significant because

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<sup>58</sup> Morgan County. "Areas Requiring Special Attention: City of Rutledge Map," Morgan County, GA Website, <http://www.morganga.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=FmkmNBCOxMw%3D&tabid=266&mid=925> (Accessed May 30, 2012); Rutledge City Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, October, 2010; Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery," "Rutledge City Cemetery;" Brenda Thompson, Rutledge City Council, telephone conversation with the author, June 16, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Prospect Cemetery Site Visit; Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.

they represent Morgan County residents who survived the war, remained in the county, and contributed to its redevelopment in the years that followed.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to veteran markers, a number of other funerary motifs exist in church cemeteries that represent fraternal organizations and other membership societies. Although these are also present in some domestic cemeteries and many community cemeteries, their presence in church cemeteries is significant. This is because such markers fell into their height of popularity during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century when many church burial grounds were at their peak. Additionally, such markers have the importance of representing the social associations that existed in the county during this time. The organizations represented in Morgan County include a number of Masonic bodies, such as the Free and Accepted Masons, York Rite, Scottish Rite, Odd Fellows, and Eastern Star.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to Masonic motifs, burial markers associated with insurance and burial societies are present in many of these cemeteries. By far the most ubiquitous of these are the treestones that the Woodmen of the World provided their members. In Morgan County, these markers are exclusive to white burials, as the society was only opened to white males, making them absent in traditional African American burial grounds. Additionally, due to the fact that membership was only available to individuals who did not have high-risk employment and lived in one of the nine healthiest states at the time lend clues about the general health of Morgan County's population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the most

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<sup>60</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Prospect Cemetery;" Prospect Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>61</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, 22; Keister, *Stories in Stone*, 191, 193-194; Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Prospect Cemetery Site Visit.

curious aspect of Woodmen treestones is the fulfillment of the early society pledge that "no Woodman shall rest in an unmarked grave."<sup>62</sup>



Figure 36. Early Masonic marker in the Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 37. Typical Woodmen of the World marker in the High Shoals Methodist Church Cemetery (Riley)

Another common category of markers that are present at most church burial grounds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are child grave markers. Although these appear in domestic burial grounds, they occur in larger numbers at church cemeteries, which can be attributed to the larger numbers of burials that often exist at such sites. However, because these sites often serve as the main burial ground within a community, the markers and the graves associated with them are significant and have the potential to offer important information to

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<sup>62</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, 5, 10; Keister, *Stories in Stone*, 188.

researchers. One of the main ways they do this is by acting as tools that record child mortality rates and disease epidemics during specific time periods in the communities where they exist.<sup>63</sup>

Within Morgan County, child grave markers at church burial grounds range from adult size markers to small examples designed specifically for children. Some of the most common child-specific markers are of lambs resting on stones. These represent the innocence of childhood that loved ones of deceased children (particularly infants) applied to the burials of their offspring. In fact, the motif was so popular in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that it can be found throughout the United States even in many remote burial grounds in the west. Another design element that occurs on child graves in less frequency is grave edging. These elements make child graves visible from a long distance and have the power to strike emotion in those who view them.<sup>64</sup>



Figure 38. Infant grave with the lamb motif at the Prospect Methodist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 39. Small infant grave marker at the same site (Riley)

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<sup>63</sup> Prospect Cemetery Site Visit; Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Sugar Creek Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Coffin, *Death in Early America*, 16-17.

<sup>64</sup> Keister, *Stories in Stone*, 74; Prospect Cemetery Site Visit; Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Grafton, Utah Site Visit by the Author, July, 2011; Stephen L. Carr, *The Historical Guide to Utah Ghost Towns*, Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1972; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, 3, 8; Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, *Your Guide to Cemetery Research*, Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 2002, 140-141.





Figure 40. Child tablet marker with the lamb motif (Riley)



Figure 41. Child's grave marker with edging at the Prospect Methodist Church Cemetery (Riley)

Although child grave motifs like those previously discussed, as well as high-style marble, granite, and concrete markers are also present in African American church burial grounds, these sites contain unique design elements that set them apart. One such element is the relatively high use of homemade concrete folk art markers. This art form resulted mainly from its affordability, which made it favorable to many African Americans who had limited financial resources during the segregation era. However, it also served as a way for African Americans to leave a unique mark on the funerary landscapes they were part of and honor their loved ones with art forms that they created themselves, or were at least created by members of their local community.<sup>65</sup>

For the reasons discussed above, a significant number of historic markers located within African American church burial grounds in the county are concrete. These range from simple

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<sup>65</sup> Folkways Notebook, "Afro-American Folk Grave Markers," The Folkways Notebook Blog, entry posted May 15, 2012, <http://folkwaysnotebook.blogspot.com/2012/05/afro-american-folk-grave-markers.html> (Accessed June 14, 2012); Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, 24-27.

slabs and blocks, crudely molded and inscribed with initials and names, to finer examples with molded or incised detailing. In many cases these markers were primarily headstone configurations that were flush with the ground, slightly raised, or vertical tablets; however, other configurations exist within the county. One of these are full slabs of concrete that cover entire graves in a similar fashion to the marble wolf-stone like slabs present in many of the county's burial grounds, which contain mid to late nineteenth century burials. These large slab markers began to gain popularity in the 1950s and in cases where family groupings of graves existed (particularly for a husband and wife) they were extended to cover both graves. Additionally, in some cases, families chose to design these slabs to resemble coffin lids, making them important pieces of folk art.<sup>66</sup>

Concrete as a marker material began to appear in the early 1900s in African American church burial grounds as it did within other county burial grounds. Additionally, its use peaked during the Great Depression years of the 1930s and 1940s, as it did in other burial grounds. However, one of the things that made the material significant in African American church burial grounds is how late it was used to mark graves. To these ends, examples from the twenty-first century are present in some burial grounds of this type, the most recent dating to 2007 in the Pleasant Grove Church Cemetery.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 24-27; Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Coffin, *Death in Early America*, 151.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, 25.





Figure 42. Hand inscribed concrete folk form marker at the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 43. Folk form marker with an incised cross at the same site (Riley)

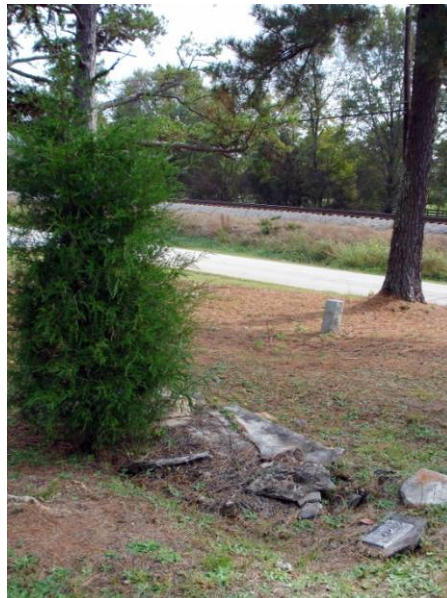


Figure 44. Deteriorated concrete slab marker and make do marker at Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)

In addition to concrete folk art markers, African American Church burial grounds contain other significant design features that set them apart from their white counterparts. One of these are the presence of mid-twentieth century funeral home tags from African American funeral homes like the Jones and Taylor Funeral home, which existed in the county. Although these are often provided by funeral homes to temporarily mark graves before families have permanent

markers installed, in some cases such markers serve as the only marker for a grave. This is significant, as the earliest example the author encountered in the field was from 1951, making surviving examples like this relatively rare. Additionally, temporary markers of this age and type are mysterious and offer the quest to the viewer of why family members or the community did not or could not properly upgrade them. It should be noted that possible white burials in other burial grounds may contain historic examples such as these, but the author did not encounter them in any of the site visits or his research.<sup>68</sup>



Figure 45. Funeral home markers at the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)

Other unique design elements in some African American church burial grounds are grave goods (like those discussed under domestic burial grounds) and improvised items for grave decoration. Although some items exist at the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery that could be grave goods, the presence of a drinking site at the burial ground may be the source for the debris at the area. However, clear evidence of the latter element exists at this site and the Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery, including planters constructed out of recycled items such as coffee cans and edging made out of repurposed brick.

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<sup>68</sup> Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.



Figure 46. Repurposed brick edging at the Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)

In addition to crafted design features, these sites contain landscape features that add to their character. Like white church burial grounds and many other cemeteries in Morgan County, African American church burial grounds contain a variety of native and non-native plantings that set them apart from their surrounding landscape. However, at least one African American example (the Flat Rock Baptist Church Cemetery) contains evidence of a swept lawn, a feature well-documented for its association with African Americans. Essentially, these are landscapes that are void of grass and swept down to hard earth. Although they are typically associated with domestic buildings, they provide a way to keep a landscape clear of unwanted vegetation and relatively free from loose dirt. Due to the fact that many African Americans used this design approach at home, it is no surprise that they would have emulated it in some of their churchyards and burial grounds. Therefore, it is likely that many early African American church burial grounds had swept yards rather than planted grass at one time.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Flat Rock Baptist Church Cemetery."

## Community Burial Grounds

The final category of burial grounds in Morgan County addressed in this project is community burial grounds. Typically, these are privately or publically owned burial grounds that receive some level of maintenance and other resources from the communities of which they are part. Additionally, they usually are not affiliated with a specific church or family in their fully evolved state, though in some cases they may have begun with such affiliations. Furthermore, the larger, later examples usually contain some type of a perpetual care mechanism that is generated by funeral plot sales and fees assessed to plot owners.<sup>70</sup>

The need for community burial grounds presented itself early in Morgan County's history with the establishment of some of its first settlements. Important governmental centers and supply hubs like Madison required merchants, craftsmen, professionals, and laborers in order to serve their purposes to Morgan County. Additionally, unlike their rural counterparts, these individuals lived in village and town settings, making domestic burial grounds impractical and unsanitary burial options. Therefore, early landowners often donated or sold land to communities to serve as burial grounds. Although it appears that plot-selling mechanisms did not exist in these cemeteries early on, as communities grew, the need for additional land for burials created opportunities for landowners to make money from plot sales. This caused some of these burial grounds to expand into economic enterprises.<sup>71</sup>

Either by intention or chance, these sites often evolved to resemble miniature versions of the communities that they served. To these ends, family plots and other burial groupings formed neighborhood-like layouts with visible social stratification. The better and more expensive

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<sup>70</sup> John F. Llewellyn, *A Cemetery Should be Forever: The Challenge to Managers and Directors*, Glendale: Tropico Press, 1998., 35; Brenda Thompson, Telephone Conversation with the Author, August 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Ed Prior, Interview by the Morgan County Oral History Project; Brenda Thompson, Telephone Conversation with the Author, August 2012; "Madison's History and Development," 1-3.

locations were home to the family plots of the community's elite, which they marked with elaborate and costly funerary art, fencing, edging, and other landscape details that displayed their wealth and influence. Adjacent to this section, was usually another that contained the graves of the town's middle classes. In many ways this section often resembled the wealthy section; however, it was usually home to smaller-scaled lots and funerary art with less elaborate landscape details. Beyond this section, there usually existed another where the working classes and poor buried their dead. This area occupied the least desirable land in the burial ground that was dominated by simpler grave markers and folk form monuments.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the sections associated with these socioeconomic groups, at least one community burial ground (the Old Madison Cemetery) contained a segregated section reserved for African American slaves and freedmen. However, clear social stratification also existed in this section of the burial ground. Therefore, the better to do burials of local African American leaders and businessmen took place close to the white section and were marked with high-style funerary art. Beyond this section was the home of the burials for poorer African Americans whose graves were generally marked with folk form funerary art.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Brenda Thompson, Telephone Conversation with the Author; Coffin, *Death in Early America*, 126; Author, Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 129; Ed Prior, Interview by the Morgan County Oral History Project.

<sup>73</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Madison Cemetery (Old Section);" James J. Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980., 110.





Figure 47. The Old Madison Cemetery (left) and the Buckhead Cemetery (right) are the earliest community burial grounds in Morgan County (Riley)

Of all of the community burial grounds in Morgan County, the Old Madison Cemetery has the longest history with the earliest known burial belonging to a local fifteen-year-old named Thomas Wyatt who died in 1811. However, older burials (particularly in the African American section) may exist at this site for which records do not exist. In its early years, the burial ground was located just outside of Madison and its residential districts for convenience and sanitary concerns. Despite this, residential development eventually began to border it by late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, giving the area the feel of a city park.<sup>74</sup>

The initial site, set aside by Madison's early planners, began on the top of a small hill and spread outward with a segregated section for African Americans occupying one of the slopes. As the site progressed three other cemeteries developed around it, one of which is a Victorian garden cemetery that falls under the period of significance for this project. Today, the City of Madison maintains all four burial grounds and treats them as one cemetery.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Bank of Madison, "Old Madison Cemetery Grave List," Unpublished Document, December 1990; City of Madison, Madison Historic Cemeteries Historical Marker, Madison Bicentennial Commission, 2009; Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Buckhead African American Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, December, 2011.

<sup>75</sup> City of Madison, Old Madison Cemetery Historical Marker, Madison Bicentennial Commission, 2009; Old Madison Cemetery Site Visit.

One curious aspect of this site is the fact that it is bisected by a railroad line that appears to have existed in the area since the mid 1800s. Additionally, the basic layout of this cemetery closely resembles other larger community burial grounds in the southeast that began in the early nineteenth century. Therefore, the oldest section contains some singular burials with “head and shoulder” type markers and some other older marker types that are surrounded by family plots. Additionally, this portion of the cemetery contains a wide variety of high style, Victorian funerary motifs that range from Gothic to classically inspired examples. This variety comes as no surprise considering Madison’s economic importance before and after the Civil War and the fact that it was home to many of the most prosperous families in Morgan County.<sup>76</sup>



Figure 48. The older section of the Old Madison Cemetery (Riley)

Another community cemetery within Morgan County that had an early beginning is the Buckhead Cemetery. However, unlike the Old Madison Cemetery, it did not start out as a community burial ground, but began as a domestic burial ground instead. This was likely due to

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<sup>76</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Madison Cemetery (Old Section)."

the fact that Buckhead was a smaller community at the time and surrounding domestic burial grounds were adequate enough to accommodate its dead. The earliest burials of what would later become the Buckhead Cemetery were associated with the Gunn and Mayes families and date to the 1820s.<sup>77</sup>

Evidence exists that the role of this cemetery began to change from that of a domestic burial ground to a community burial ground sometime from the mid to late nineteenth century. Additionally, the site itself consists of two burial grounds that border one another, one associated with the white population of Buckhead and the other with the African American population. Although what makes up the white portion of the cemetery likely contained some pre-Civil War African American burials, it eventually became exclusively used for white burials in the early 1900s when the McWhorter family who owned it sold it to the town of Buckhead. Within the deed for this purchase, the McWhorter's included a racial covenant that mandated that the land be used for "the burying of white people only."<sup>78</sup>

Although the site contained racial covenants, in the "separate but equal" custom of the day, the McWhorter's previously sold an adjacent piece of land to two burial societies associated with a local African American church (the New Bethel Society #7 and the Buckhead Society #22). Organizations like these societies were highly significant to southern African Americans and similar ones existed throughout the region; such organizations acted in the stead of the burial insurance organizations, whose membership was only available to the white population.

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<sup>77</sup> Marshal W. Williams, "The Buckhead Cemetery, March 13, 2000," Papers of the Morgan County Archives on Buckhead, GA;

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.; Buckhead Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, October, 2010; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Buckhead Cemetery;" Deed agreement between P.M. McWhorter and the Town Council of Buckhead, February 27, 1906, Morgan County Deeds, Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA.



Although these societies have since vanished in Buckhead they hearken to an era when members of the local African American Community had to rely on themselves for such needs.<sup>79</sup>



Figure 49. The older section of the Buckhead African American Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 50. The newer section of the Buckhead African American Cemetery (Riley)

The presence of these two adjoining cemeteries and their evolutionary histories makes the Buckhead Cemetery one of Morgan County's most unique hybrid burial grounds. It is an important surviving example of a segregated rural community burial ground. Additionally, unlike the Old Madison Cemetery and New Cemetery (the other segregated community burial grounds in Morgan County) ownership issues exist at the site, which have resulted in different levels of care for the two burial grounds within it. The town of Buckhead owns the white section, which the town maintains; while two burial societies, which no longer exist, were responsible for caring for the African American section. Over the years the African American section has not been maintained due to the loss of its original burial societies and lack of designated stewards.

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<sup>79</sup> Williams, "The Buckhead Cemetery;" Deed agreement between P.M. McWhorter and the New Bethel Society No 7 and Buckhead Society No 22, April 26, 1904, Morgan County Deeds, Morgan County Archives, Madison, GA; Wright and Hughes, *Lay Down Body*, 268; Tara Cooner, Email Message to the Author, November 11, 2011.

Today the latter burial ground is heavily overgrown with a forest that is at least fifty years old. In fact, it has become so obscured by growth that it could not be documented in the 2007 cemetery survey conducted by Morgan County. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, segregation has not been a factor regarding Morgan County's burial grounds. However, clear racial associations still exist to this day in many of the older burial grounds within the county.<sup>80</sup>



Figure 51. The fence separating the Buckhead African American Cemetery from the Buckhead Cemetery (Riley)

Due to the fact that the Buckhead Cemetery and its adjoining African American cemetery are smaller scaled than the Old Madison Cemetery and New Cemetery, their layout and design is different. Additionally, though evidence of social stratification exists, it is less pronounced in the built environment than it is in the Old Madison Cemetery. Therefore, the white cemetery resembles that of a domestic burial ground while the adjacent cemetery resembles that of an African American church burial ground. This comes as no surprise due to the former beginning

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<sup>80</sup> Buckhead Cemetery Site Visit; Buckhead African American Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, December, 2011; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Buckhead Cemetery," "Madison Cemetery (Old Section).

as a domestic burial ground and the association of the latter with a local African American Church.

In addition to these design characteristics, the oldest burials within both cemeteries exist in the center and close to a fence that divides them with more recent burials radiating outward from that point. Although both burial grounds contain high style markers, the white cemetery contains the oldest examples due to its age. However, the African American cemetery contains an abundance of folk form markers that date to the early twentieth century as well as some early field stone markers, which could represent slave burials associated with the Gunn and Mayes families. Perhaps the greatest significance of the site is the fact that it alludes to the racial relationship of two separate ethnic communities that depended on one another, but existed side-by-side with racial tension in the past.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to community burial grounds that involved municipal governments and burial societies, some actually were more capitalistic and began as for-profit enterprises. One example is the Rutledge Cemetery located in the town of Rutledge west of Madison. Historically, this cemetery served as the main white burial ground in a small town that rose and fell with the post-Civil War cotton economy. The burial ground itself began during the Civil War with its first internment in 1862. At that time, the site likely served as a domestic burial ground since Rutledge did not become an incorporated town until 1871. Not long after Rutledge's incorporation, the town may have begun to use the cemetery as a community burial ground. However, this is not clear because the site's record was destroyed in a fire that claimed the old city hall building in the 1980s. Despite this, documentation exists of land owners adjacent to the

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<sup>81</sup> Old Madison Cemetery Site Visit; Buckhead Cemetery Site Visit; Buckhead African American Site Visit; Etta S. Few, *The Story of Apalachee: One of Best Towns in Best State in Best Nation on Earth*, Apalachee: City of Apalachee, GA, 1926.

burial ground that sold plots as space filled up in its oldest sections. As this occurred, the burial ground eventually developed a perpetual care mechanism that hinged on plot sales and fees assessed to plot owners.<sup>82</sup>

Because this cemetery was in its prime during the Victorian garden cemetery movement, the site adopted many of the design characteristics found in garden cemeteries. One way it did this was through funerary art and another was through built landscape details. Family plots, some with elaborate funerary art, dominated the best locations in the oldest section. Often families surrounded these with walls and cast iron fencing. Even Colonial Revival walls constructed of concrete block became popular in the early years of the twentieth century. This was likely the result of a salesman who is rumored in local legend to have peddled the product for residential use in the area around the turn of the century. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of what ended up in peoples' gardens ended up in their funeral plots as well.<sup>83</sup>

As with other burial grounds from the same period in Morgan County, marble was the preferred material for high style markers. However, by the late teens and the early 1920s, concrete and granite became increasingly popular for similar reasons to those associated with other burial ground types. Additionally, one marker type that became increasingly popular during this time was husband and wife markers. This was likely the result of power stonecutting tools, which made it easier for stone cutters to carve death date information on site more easily

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<sup>82</sup> Rutledge Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, September 2010; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Rutledge City Cemetery;" Brenda Thompson, Rutledge City Council, telephone conversation with the author, June 16, 2012; Georgia's Treasures Along I-20, "Rutledge," Georgia's Treasures Along I-20 Website, <http://www.treasuresalongi20.org/rutledge.html> (Accessed June 28, 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Conversation Between the Author and B.B Sams, August, 2009; Rutledge Cemetery Site Visit by the Author; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Rutledge City Cemetery;" Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity*, 4, 6; Windham Connecticut Cemeteries, "The Rural Cemetery Movement and the Victorian Years (1820-1910)," Windham Connecticut Cemeteries Homepage, <http://windhamctcemeteries.wordpress.com/cemetery-history-in-connecticut/the-rural-cemetery-movement-and-the-victorian-years/> (Accessed June 29, 2012).

after the second burial. Although husband and wife markers were meant to express the togetherness and love of a couple parted by death, they did not always work out when surviving widows or widowers remarried and chose to be buried by their new spouses instead.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to built features and funerary art that resemble Victorian garden cemeteries, the Rutledge cemetery also contains a layout and evidence of a landscaping plan that also resembles the Victorian tradition. To these ends, the site contains native and non-native trees and other plantings that give it a planned, picturesque feel. Additionally, the single road at the site winds through it in a path-like manner, which causes the landscape to gradually unfold when visitors traverse it.<sup>85</sup>



Figure 52. Husband and wife marker missing the burial of the wife in the Rutledge Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 53. Colonial Revival style concrete block plot wall in the Rutledge Cemetery (Riley)

Another community cemetery that developed in Morgan County around the time of the Rutledge Cemetery was New Cemetery (adjacent to the Old Madison Cemetery) known formerly as Westview Cemetery. New Cemetery was Madison's answer for the increasing unavailability of space in the old cemetery and was the result of two separate land purchases by the city in the

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<sup>84</sup> Rutledge Cemetery Site Visit by the Author; Russ Cartwright, Power Tools History, Ezine Articles, <http://ezinearticles.com/?Power-Tools-History&id=976405> (Accessed June 28, 2012).

<sup>85</sup> Rutledge Cemetery Site Visit.

early 1880s. The first purchase took place in 1880 for the land that makes up most of New Cemetery, which consisted of a private African American burial ground. The second purchase took place in 1882 for land between the first New Cemetery purchase and the old cemetery, which contained a Confederate re-internment site, dating to 1881. This purchase likely took place for patriotic and practical reasons, as it caused the old and new cemeteries to abut at the railroad right of way and eliminate any care issues that would result from a non-continuous burial ground. This re-internment site is highly significant and contains some of the earliest burials in New Cemetery, which were for soldiers who died in the military hospitals that surrounded Madison from 1862-1865.<sup>86</sup>

Like the Old Madison Cemetery, New Cemetery was segregated with the old private African American burial ground serving as a large portion of the non-white section. However, at least one African American burial for a Confederate hospital attendant occurred in the re-internment site in the white section of the cemetery. This section was closest to the old cemetery, while the former existed in a large open area west of this section.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> City of Madison, Madison Historic Cemeteries Historical Marker; Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (New Cemetery) by the Author, September, 2010; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Madison City Cemetery (New Section)."

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.; Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (New Cemetery).





Figure 54. The Confederate re-internment site at New Cemetery with a burial for an African American hospital attendant (Riley)

The general layout of this burial ground consists of a winding road that connects to the main road in the old cemetery. The site itself is picturesque and contains more plantings than the old section or the other two neighboring cemeteries. These plantings consist of native shade trees such as oaks as well as ornamental trees like magnolias and junipers. Additionally, a number of individual and family plots contain bulb and shrub plantings. Of all of the burial grounds in Morgan County, this is the best intact example of a garden cemetery.<sup>88</sup>

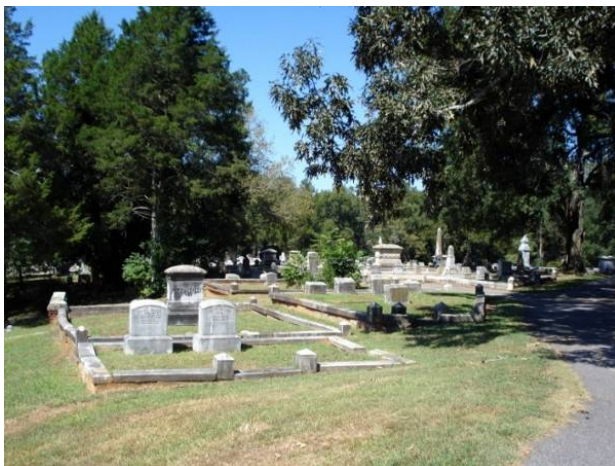


Figure 55. The white section of the New Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 56. The African American section of the New Cemetery (Riley)

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<sup>88</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (New Cemetery).

In addition to the natural features of this site, the built features follow the garden cemetery tradition. The central portion of the cemetery contains many fine examples of late Victorian funerary art and statuary. Additionally, a number of family plots are surrounded with elaborate edging, constructed of marble and concrete, which dominate the landscape. Beyond the central section, there is a mixture of high style marble markers and folk form markers that transition into the African American section. Although most of the markers have not survived in this section, it does contain a number of fine, folk-form markers and a few high style markers that have withstood the test of time.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the favorable layout and its operation by the City of Madison, it was not the last cemetery to serve as a community burial ground for Madison. Two other cemeteries would follow in 1904 and 1957 and act as expansions to the Old Madison Cemetery, similar to New Cemetery. However, these began as for-profit enterprises, which resulted from adjacent landowners selling plots with perpetual care services similar to what occurred in the Rutledge Cemetery. Despite this, the city assumed care of the 1904 cemetery in 1926 and the later one in 1979. This effectively turned the four cemeteries, all of which represented different phases of burial customs in the southeast, into a single community burial ground.<sup>90</sup>

In conclusion, community burial grounds and those from the other four categories previously discussed are highly significant. This significance is partially due to the beauty that they add to the human environment in the form of cultural landscapes that evoke honest images of past. However, for rural areas like Morgan County, the individual sites and their general

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Madison City Cemetery (New Section);" Windham Connecticut Cemeteries, "The Rural Cemetery Movement and the Victorian Years (1820-1910)," Windham Connecticut Cemeteries Homepage, <http://windhamctcemeteries.wordpress.com/cemetery-history-in-connecticut/the-rural-cemetery-movement-and-the-victorian-years/> (Accessed June 29, 2012)

<sup>90</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (New Cemetery); City of Madison, Madison Historic Cemeteries Historical Marker.



evolution have added significance in the form of information concerning a vanishing way of life and the people associated with it. To these ends, they stand as witnesses to everyday people from rural America whose lives and the stories they tell are relayed through the landscapes that they used to memorialize their loved-ones.



Figure 57. Elaborate marble edging with a castle motif in the New Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 58. Folk form marker in the African American Section of the New Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 59. Elaborate statuary in the New Cemetery (Riley)

## CHAPTER 3

### THREATS AND CHALLENGES THAT HISTORIC BURIAL GROUNDS FACE IN MORGAN COUNTY

Although historic burial grounds of Morgan County are significant historic resources, their survival is uncertain. Direct and indirect threats exist within the county that could lead to their loss if they remain unchecked. Many of these threats are similar to those faced by other historic burial grounds throughout the United States; however, some are more applicable to Morgan County for environmental, cultural, and economic reasons. These threats fall under the following categories:

- Lack of stewardship
- Natural forest succession and other environmental challenges
- Economic threats
- Development
- Social threats
- Negligent destruction
- Vandalism/Looting
- Legal threats

#### Lack of Stewardship

Of all of the threat categories facing Morgan County's historic burial grounds, lack of stewardship is the most serious because its absence can lead to more direct threats, which can destroy the fabric and integrity of a burial ground. Within the county a number of burial grounds

experience this, especially those that were associated with individuals and entities that are no longer present. Changes caused by major events such as the Civil War, Reconstruction, and transitions from agricultural based economies have caused the descendents of many pioneers to move on. As people moved out, farms split up, and many of the burial grounds associated with them fell out of care, into decay, and eventually became forgotten. Additionally, social and economic changes sometimes resulted in entire groups migrating out of communities for opportunities in the city. Eventually, this caused some church congregations to die out and communities to dwindle, while the burial grounds associated with them fell into disuse and disrepair.<sup>91</sup>

A good example of a burial ground that faced this is the Buckhead African American Cemetery. Although some members of the local African American community in Buckhead still use it for burials, most graves at the site date to before the mid 1960s (when segregation ended). This is significant because the end of racial segregation made opportunities in cities and elsewhere in the south available to African Americans for the first time. Therefore, many younger African Americans migrated out of small rural towns like Buckhead in order to take advantage of the opportunities. Additionally, those who did remain had other burial options available once racial integration took hold. Ultimately, as the old died out and the young moved on, the burial societies who were the stewards of the Buckhead African American Cemetery became extinct.<sup>92</sup>

Today, the burials within this site that receive care are maintained by family members who know of and visit the site. However, many descendents of individuals buried there have

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<sup>91</sup> Christine Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions: A Comprehensive Guide to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*, Atlanta: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, 2003., 45; Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Buckhead African American Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>92</sup> Buckhead African American Site Visit; Tara Cooner, email message to the author, November 30, 2011).

severed ties with the Buckhead area, causing many graves to remain deserted and uncared for. This phenomenon is not unique to the Buckhead African American Cemetery and exists at other burial grounds in the county, leading to "spotty" care at these sites. Burial grounds that suffer from this lack of stewardship are still typically used for burials; however, because of the lack of stewardship their landscapes have fallen into succession and contain a disproportionate mixture of cared for and neglected graves.<sup>93</sup>



Figure 60. A maintained family plot in the Buckhead African American Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 61. A neglected husband and wife plot at the same site (Riley)

Another example of lack of stewardship is site-wide neglect. Such burial grounds maintain an association with a home place, church, community, or group but receive no or very little care from the entities associated with them. Additionally, the landscapes at these sites usually contain clear evidence of succession and are no longer used for burials. In other words, these are sites that have potential stewards who (either through unawareness, lack of information on historic burial ground care, or intentional neglect) have allowed them to fall into disrepair.<sup>94</sup>

A good example of a site that suffers from site-wide neglect is the William Ruark Cemetery located near the town of Bostwick in Morgan County. The site itself is a small

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<sup>93</sup> Buckhead African American Site Visit.

<sup>94</sup> William Ruark Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, April, 2011; Holland Springs Cemetery Site Visit.

domestic burial ground that is situated on the edge of farm field near a highway. Although the site is posted as private property, it does not appear that any entity takes responsibility for the site's care on a regular basis. Additionally, the fact that the site is situated in a forested area with shrubs, trees, and other than intentional plantings, suggests that it fell into succession at one time. However, it does appear that something (whether grazing animals or humans) cleared the undergrowth at some point in recent history. Furthermore, the neglect appears to have resulted more out of unawareness and lack of preservation knowledge on the part of the owner rather than intentional neglect.<sup>95</sup>

Despite the unintentional nature of neglect for this burial ground, it has taken its toll. Forces from vegetation and erosion have caused some stones to topple and break. However, one of the greatest threats is the fact it is not fenced and is located at the edge of a field that is known to contain livestock at certain times of the year. Burial grounds that are located in such areas and lack fences often become popular resting areas for cattle and horses due to the presence of shade trees and other vegetation. As these animals use these areas, they can damage important features through movement and manure deposition, as well as trample and damage the landscape itself.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> William Ruark Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "William Ruark Cemetery."



Figure 62. The William Ruark Cemetery near Bostwick in Morgan County (Riley)

Another burial ground that faces site-wide neglect is the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery. As previously discussed, this burial ground is associated with the adjacent Holland Springs Baptist Church, but has no defined entity charged with its care. Like the Buckhead African American Cemetery, the landscape of the entire site has fallen into succession, but none of the graves within it appear to undergo regular care. Additionally, it is unclear whether or not the lack of care is intentional. According to some scholars, certain African American traditions allow burial landscapes to decay so as to not disturb the dead. However, this likely is not the case at Holland Springs because there is clear evidence that regular care took place in the past, at least until the last burials occurred in the 1970s. A likely explanation for the lack of stewardship is that many descendants of those buried there have moved out of the congregation. Another possibility is that the church itself currently lacks the funds to stabilize the site due to its advanced state of deterioration.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery;" Lynette Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds*, Washington D.C.: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2003., 3.



Despite the possible reasons for the burial ground's condition, prolonged lack of maintenance has allowed extensive damage to take place from natural forces. This includes damage to monuments from falling trees and erosion, as well as organic material such as leaves burying monuments and other important features. It is likely that these forces will continue to degrade the site until an entity or individual assumes care for it<sup>98</sup>



Figure 63. Fallen trees over graves in Section 3 of the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 64. A damaged marker in Section 3 of the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)

The final form of lack of stewardship that threatens historic burial grounds in the county is abandonment. By far abandoned burial grounds are the most vulnerable because potential stewards are least likely to be aware of them. Additionally, this is augmented by a lack of clear associations with present groups or individuals who are legally responsible for their care. Furthermore, these burial grounds are often the most remote, overgrown, and damaged, making stabilization more difficult and expensive. Typically, abandoned burial grounds are sites with landscapes that have fallen into succession, which lack clear associations with any group, existing home place, family, or individuals despite the fact that they may have clear ownership.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>99</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 10-11.



The Cox-Reynolds Cemetery located near the town of Rutledge is an example of an abandoned burial ground that currently lacks stewardship. This site is a domestic burial ground that is located on an abandoned portion of the Harris-Hollis Road. This stretch of road and the burial ground itself have fallen into succession and are heavily overgrown. As of 2007, the site consisted of a well preserved concrete block wall and a number of high-style, folk form, and fieldstone markers. However, lack of care at the site and the fact that it is remote and difficult to find have caused the forces of nature to begin to take a toll. Vegetation at the site has become so overgrown that it is beginning to encroach on many of the graves located within it. Additionally, excessive organic debris from leaves has already obscured grave depressions associated with fieldstone markers, making them less discernible as burial sites.<sup>100</sup>

#### Natural Forest Succession and other Environmental Challenges

Burial grounds that lack stewardship as well as those that have stewards are all vulnerable to nature-induced threats; however, the former are the most susceptible. Nature-induced threats include forest succession and other environmental threats. Although other historic resources in the county are susceptible to such threats, they are especially relevant to historic burial grounds because they are a combination of landscapes, which act on natural functions and built resources; therefore, they are particularly vulnerable to the forces of nature.<sup>101</sup>

Of all of the environmental threats that historic burial grounds face, natural forest succession is the greatest concern in Morgan County because most of the landscape within the county was originally forested, so it is always prone to returning to that state if left to its own devices. Historically, natural events such as fire cleared old forests, and new growth took hold in

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<sup>100</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Cox-Reynolds Cemetery;" Madison-Morgan Conservancy, *Greenprint Resource Guide*, Morgan County, GA, Madison: Madison-Morgan Conservancy, 2010., 28.

<sup>101</sup> Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds.*, 17.

a very predictable pattern of vegetative cycles that typically resulted in a hardwood forest after fifty-to-sixty years following the event. However, when settlers and agriculture moved into the area, their actions of clearing fields mimicked natural events and regular maintenance ensured that they remained clear. Therefore, when they established burial grounds, they usually did so on cleared land. When cotton lost its prominence after World War II and agricultural patterns changed in the latter half of the twentieth century, farmers abandoned thousands of acres of fields, which eventually returned to forest. This meant that the burial grounds they contained returned to forest as well if they lacked adequate stewardship and maintenance cycles.<sup>102</sup>

Other forms of damage can result from natural forest succession. Trees and other vegetation that begin to grow on graves can collapse them and compromise underground resources. Additionally, growing trees can topple markers and fencing; in some cases trees grow around and absorb these features. Furthermore, seeds scattered by wind, birds, and other animals can begin to grow in cracks on stone, which can cause features to crumble as the plants mature. Also, as forests consume a site, it becomes less visible and reduces the chances that the public will know it exists.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 17; Gray, Vick, Sanchez, and Levine, *Green Space.*, 13, 16-17.

<sup>103</sup> Lynette Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1995., 43, 47; Buckhead African American Cemetery Site Visit; Suddard Cemetery Site Visit; Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.



Figure 65. Overgrown vegetation threatening a marker in the Buckhead African American Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 66. Vegetation growing out of a stone cairn at the Studdard Cemetery (Riley)

In addition to natural forest succession, other environmental threats exist that deteriorate and destroy historic burial grounds. One of the most common of these is moisture related erosion. Due to the hilly nature of the Georgia Piedmont, which makes up Morgan County, many historic burial grounds contain sloping areas. As precipitation occurs at these locations and it leaches into the water table, it flows downhill. This water flow can deteriorate underground resources and even cause environmental and health concerns at some burial grounds that contain recent burials. However, most noticeably, it can damage above ground resources such as grave markers, edging, and other forms of funerary art. Additionally highly saturated soils can cause such features to gradually move downhill from graves, sink into the ground, and even topple.<sup>104</sup> Another environmental threat present in Morgan County is weather. Although the climate of the county is mild for the most part, it is still prone to short-term weather extremes. Heat waves and minor freeze-thaw cycles can compromise building materials, causing them to expand and contract, as well as experience significant changes in moisture content. Additionally, precipitation (particularly acid rain) can weather stone materials,

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<sup>104</sup> Studdard Cemetery Site Visit; Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.

contribute to rot in wood, oxidize decorative metal features, and cause iron jacking on support pins in grave markers. Furthermore, strong winds and even tornados occur in the area and can topple significant vegetation and destroy built features.<sup>105</sup>



Figure 67. Water erosion from runoff with vehicular damage at the Old Madison Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 68. A grave marker with water erosion related shifting at the Studdard Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 69. Precipitation and possible freeze-thaw damage on a marker at the Ponder Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 70. Damage from iron jacking on a grave marker in the Prospect Methodist Church Cemetery (Riley)

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<sup>105</sup> Martin E. Weaver, *Conserving Buildings: A Manual of Techniques and Materials*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997., 81, 90, 145-146, 182; Ponder Cemetery Site Visit; Prospect Methodist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.



Wildlife related damage is another environmental threat that historic burial grounds face within the county. Such damage includes holes from burrowing mammals, which can compromise below ground resources and make grave markers and other built features unstable; additionally animals can damage the landscape. Deer, insects, and other creatures can damage significant plantings, resulting in their loss. Resources are also threatened when large specimens die and fall on them or uproot the ground they are situated on. Furthermore, bird droppings and other materials deposited by animals can obscure detailing on features and hasten weathering.<sup>106</sup>



Figure 71. Landscape damage from a burrowing mammal at the Studdard Cemetery (Riley)

### Economic Threats

In addition to natural threats, many historic burial grounds face economic threats. Most of the historic burial grounds in the county are situated on private property. Therefore, as pieces of real estate, they are subject to the same market fluctuations as other forms of land. During prosperous times landowners and developers may view them as obstacles to profit because of the

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<sup>106</sup> Studdard Cemetery Site Visit; Susan H. McGahee and Mary W. Edmonds, *South Carolina's Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook*, n.p.: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 2007., 20.

land that they occupy. Alternately, in bad cycles they can fall under foreclosure with the rest of the landholding that they are part of, leading to their loss of stewardship and eventual neglect.<sup>107</sup>

Real estate cycles are not the only economic threat. Most historic burial grounds contain no perpetual care mechanisms and residents within the county have yet to develop an effective profit generating mechanism for them. Additionally, the matching grants available in Georgia for other historic resources are not available to church and domestic burial grounds within the state. Therefore, funding (when it is available) most often comes from site owners or private donations. In upward economic cycles it is much easier for historic burial grounds to obtain funds from charitable donors and for owners to fund preservation projects. However, in downward cycles many sites begin to lack the financial resources for even the most basic upkeep procedures.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to financial resources that are dependent on economic cycles, historic burial grounds require human resources that are just as dependent. Although volunteers can perform a bulk of the preservation and maintenance work at a historic burial ground, such individuals still require outside incomes. Therefore, poor economic conditions can force retirees back into the workplace and give working age individuals less free time. This translates into fewer individuals at historic burial grounds to assist in basic stewardship responsibilities. Ultimately, a lack of human power can prove disastrous for a site and cause it to fall into disrepair or become an excessive burden to those who remain to care for the site.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to volunteer work, some important tasks at historic burial grounds require paid professionals. Extensive conservation projects require monument repair experts, and any

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<sup>107</sup> David C. Ling and Wayne R. Archer, *Real Estate Principles: A Value Approach*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010, 153-154.

<sup>108</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 43; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 20-22.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 14-15; Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds.*, 10.

necessary archeological work requires trained professionals in those fields. Additionally, management plans, maps, and site interpretation will often require the help of historic preservationists and landscape architects. However, when budgets shrink it is difficult and many times impossible for the entities responsible for a historic burial ground to pay for this type of work. Therefore, economics can have a cyclic impact on preservation efforts.<sup>110</sup>

### Development

Another threat, closely related to economic threats, is development. Historic cemeteries have long been vulnerable to human actions in the built environments because some developers and landowners have viewed them as "wasted" space and a hindrance to profit. Additionally, in rural environments like Morgan County, historic burial grounds that have become lost through time often do not show up on deeds and other documents, making it difficult for developers to plan projects around them in a sensitive manner. Construction crews can uncover cemeteries during their work and expose them to potential damage from forest clearing and construction, as well other human related threats.<sup>111</sup>

The potential for an unknown burial ground to become exposed during a development project in Morgan County is a concern because a site must be a "known" cemetery in order for state or county laws to protect it from destruction. Some developers could, therefore, defend damage or destruction that they cause to a historic burial ground on the basis that they did not know it was a cemetery, particularly if it was heavily obscured and not publicly recorded.

Although most historic burial grounds within the county are known and publicly recorded,

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<sup>110</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 36; Texas Historical Commission, *Preserving Historic Cemeteries: Texas Preservation Guidelines*, Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 2001, 14; Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds.*, 11; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 72.

<sup>111</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 47; The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, "A Grave Reality: Cemeteries Under Threat," *The Rambler* 31, no. 44 (July/August, 2004):1, 14.



individuals discover new sites all of the time, many of which have not yet received documentation. Therefore, many historic burial grounds are susceptible to human induced destruction with little legal recourse.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to the fact that historic burial grounds may be known to exist, there are loopholes in state legislation concerning their protection, so development trends even threaten cemeteries that are known to exist. This holds particularly true for the twenty first century, as steady population growth, outward development from the Atlanta Metro area, and development projects along the I-20 corridor continue to take place. Although development has slowed during the current recession, Morgan County has consistently issued more building permits than the Georgia average for just under a decade, and this pace will likely pick up as the economy improves in the future. Furthermore, the development that has occurred to this point has already pushed into the rural countryside and consumed thousands of acres of open spaces and farmland, which has transformed the rural nature of such areas. Although this has not always resulted in direct damage to historic burial grounds, it has seriously harmed many of them by disrupting their rural context and destroying their association with their surroundings. This loss of context is one of the most serious impacts that development can have on a historic burial ground since it reduces their overall integrity and the likelihood that individuals will claim stewardship for their care.<sup>113</sup>

A good example of a historic burial ground that has suffered from a loss of context is the Newton Jones Cemetery, which is located in a residential development between Rutledge and Madison. The site itself is rumored to have been associated with a nearby homestead that is no

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 47; Tara Cooner, email message to the author, 10/06/2011.

<sup>113</sup> Advameg Inc., Onboard Informatics, "Morgan County, Georgia," Citydata.com, [http://www.citydata.com/county/Morgan\\_County-GA.html](http://www.citydata.com/county/Morgan_County-GA.html) (Accessed July, 30, 2012).

longer present. As for the development, it is an upscale, low density neighborhood that exists in a wooded area with cleared areas around the homes. Additionally, the developers who constructed the neighborhood spared the burial ground during their work, but the site is in bad repair. Furthermore, the site is difficult to access as it is surrounded on three sides by the yards of the houses that abut it.<sup>114</sup>

In addition to its current state of disrepair, the lack of association with its surroundings makes it less likely that individuals outside of the housing development will identify with it and become its stewards. And to make matters worse, its isolated state has rendered it more of an intrusion in a contemporary development than an important cultural resource, making it unlikely that any residents will assume care for it. Therefore, unchecked natural forces are taking their toll on the burial ground, and it is now exposed to nearby human activity, making it vulnerable to damage.<sup>115</sup>



Figure 72. The Newton Jones Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 73. The proximity of development to the burial ground and one of the lost historic trees within it (Riley)

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<sup>114</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Newton Jones Cemetery;" Newton Jones Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, August 3, 2012.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid; Newton Jones Cemetery Site Visit.



Figure 74. The entrance to the Newton Jones Cemetery from Wynebrooke Place (Riley)

In addition to destroying the context of historic burial grounds, both small and large scale development can damage the fabric of these fragile sites. A good example of a burial ground within the county that has suffered from this is the Peeples Cemetery located on Bethany Road near Buckhead. Although this site only contains three burials, it is one of the oldest in Morgan County and dates to 1821.<sup>116</sup>

The development that occurred around this cemetery is low density, and the area still retains most of its rural character. However, the burial ground is situated on the lot of a residence, and the owner or a previous builder installed a concrete driveway only a few feet from the three remaining grave markers. Not only has this put the markers at risk of damage from moving vehicles, the pavement likely covers the burials associated with them, as families of deceased during the time in which these occurred often placed grave markers at the foot rather than the head of a grave. Additionally, like many burial grounds of its age, the site likely contains more burials that have lost their markers, some of which might be directly under the

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<sup>116</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Peeples Cemetery."

driveway. In cases like these, home owners can avoid disturbing sites by performing minimal research and contacting an individual knowledgeable about historic burial grounds.<sup>117</sup>



Figure 75. An encroaching driveway in the Peeples Cemetery (Courtesy of the 2007 Morgan County Cemetery Survey)

### Social Threats

In addition to development, social threats challenge many historic burial grounds in Morgan County. Social threats are human attitudes that hinder the survival, appropriate management, and recognition of these sites as resources worthy of preservation. Among the most relevant of these are the changes in attitudes towards death and how such attitudes influence the degree to which a site plays an active role in society and receives adequate stewardship.<sup>118</sup>

In the past, attitudes towards death were much different than they are today, and burial grounds within the county and the United States in general played much more active roles in the lives of the living. Therefore, those that planned and designed them did so in such a way that

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Aries, *Western Attitudes Towards Death*, 92, 94-95.

made them appeal to the tastes of the living and serve as places of reflection and social interaction. Additionally, death itself was far less removed from society and its natural occurrence, and the treatments of illness associated with it usually took place at home rather than in hospitals. Furthermore, in the years prior to funeral homes, mortuary tasks also occurred at home and involved family members. All of this meant that children became exposed to the reality of death at an early age, making burial grounds and other physical reminders of it less discomforting.<sup>119</sup>

Despite past attitudes towards death, technological progress and changes in social attitudes have led to a shift in the American outlook on death. Medical advances and specialized care in hospitals have largely removed death from the home and reduced the direct involvement of family members. Additionally, professionalization in the death care industry has had a similar impact by placing the care of the dead into the hands of paid individuals, which no longer necessitates the direct involvement of family members in performing mortuary tasks. Furthermore, changes in religious views and other factors have contributed by reducing the level of comfort that people have with the uncertainty of death, which encourages them to remove reminders of it from their lives. All of this has resulted in a sort of out-of-sight out-of-mind mentality concerning death.<sup>120</sup>

In addition to distancing themselves from death, many view interests and involvement in its physical reminders as morbid behavior. This has contributed to the unequal treatment of historic burial grounds as cultural resources. Additionally, modern views on death have reduced and in many cases eliminated the intended roles of burial grounds as environments where the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 87-89; 92-93; Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death.*, 204, 206; Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death.*, 147-148; Coffin, *Death in Early America.*, 16, 80-81.

<sup>120</sup> Aries, *Western Attitudes Towards Death*, 87-89, 90; Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death.*, 146-147; Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death.*, 206-207.

living remember and honor their dead. In the end, these sites are less likely to receive the resources, care, and recognition they need to survive.<sup>121</sup>

Racial tension is another social attitude that can influence the level of attention and preservation that a historic burial ground receives. This is particularly relevant to areas in the South like Morgan County, which experienced slavery and racial segregation. Although the tensions associated with these experiences have lessened over the years, their past existence has set into motion physical divisions in some areas that have resulted in some sites receiving adequate care, while others have fallen into neglect. Unfortunately, the sites that are often the greatest risk to falling into neglect are those that are associated with minorities, due to unequal divisions of resources in the past, demographic changes, and other factors. As neglect continues, it can result in the ultimate loss of these resources, which fragments the physical history of communities and causes some groups within them to become inadequately represented.<sup>122</sup>

A good example of a community burial ground that has experienced this is the Buckhead Cemetery and its adjoining African American Cemetery. As previously discussed, the Buckhead Cemetery was founded with racial covenants that prohibited African American burials; therefore, these took place on an adjacent piece of land with separate ownership. In the beginning, this site had a common context and together the two burial grounds more accurately represented the demographics and social nature of the community than the present site does today. However, over the years the African American burial ground fell into disrepair and now is concealed in forest and separated from the context of the Buckhead Cemetery. The case of the Buckhead

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<sup>121</sup> Aries, *Western Attitudes Towards Death*, 85, 92-94; Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death*., 146-147; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 1.

<sup>122</sup> The Century of Lynching 1865-1965, "The Lynching Calendar: African Americans who died in Racial Violence in the United States during 1865-1965," <http://www.autopsis.org/foot/lynchdates1.html> (Accessed August 14, 2012); Buckhead African American Cemetery Site Visit; Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.

Cemetery demonstrates how racial tension (even in the past) can create situations that lead the non-uniform care of associated sites, which can disrupt their context in the process.<sup>123</sup>



Figure 76. The border of the Buckhead Cemetery and the forested Buckhead African American Cemetery (Riley)

Although the context of the Buckhead Cemetery remains divided, some burial grounds that have suffered from racial tensions in the past have been united as common sites with equal management and interpretation plans. The best example of such a site in Morgan County is the Madison Cemetery, which contains two historic segregated burial grounds. Although irreversible damage (likely in part due to unequal care and racial divisions) is evident, the site now possesses a common management plan and interpretation, in which the African American portions of the site play an important role. Additionally, portions of the burial grounds contain commemorative monuments and nearby interpretation plaques educate the public on the role that they played in the local African American community. As a result of these efforts, the Madison Cemetery possesses an intact context that makes it a more effective site from a social and

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<sup>123</sup> Buckhead Cemetery Site Visit; Deed agreement between P.M. McWhorter and the Town Council of Buckhead; Deed agreement between P.M. McWhorter and the New Bethel Society No 7 and Buckhead Society No 22.



educational perspective. Furthermore, the site is more relevant to its community and a possible source of racial reconciliation for the individuals that live within it.<sup>124</sup>



Figure 77. The border between the African American section and white section of the Old Madison Cemetery from the former (Riley)

### Negligent Destruction

Although many threats facing historic burial grounds are a result of human inaction, some result from direct human actions such as negligent destruction. Negligent destruction is unintentional damage inflicted to the fabric of a historic burial ground by human actions. Although this can be the result of careless use of sites and disregard for the resources within them, it often results from well-intended activities that are poorly carried out.

A good example of a well-intended, but poorly carried out activity is improper landscape maintenance, which commonly results from conflicts between the layouts and designs of historic burial grounds and contemporary maintenance techniques. One of the main reasons for such conflicts is the fact that many historic burial grounds had their beginnings before the advent of powered landscaping tools, and they contained grave markers and other funerary art, which was

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<sup>124</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (Westview).

designed to be worked around by hand. Additionally, the materials used to construct these elements are often in fragile condition, making them more susceptible to damage from tools and chemicals commonly used in landscape maintenance today.<sup>125</sup>

Because this damage results from activities that are a central part of site stewardship, the burial grounds that are most susceptible are often those that are best cared for and most valued. Such sites usually have regular maintenance schedules, which expose the resources within them to possible damage on a regular basis. A good example of a burial ground that has suffered this over the years is the Madison Cemetery. Although the Cemetery Stewardship Commission (CSC) ensures that proper maintenance efforts are carried out in the four burial grounds that make up the Madison Cemetery today, prior to 2002 it did not exist. Therefore, direct guidance for sensitive care did not take place on a regular basis before this time, making the site vulnerable to damage associated with improper landscape maintenance.<sup>126</sup>

In addition to the absence of the CSC in the past, the burial grounds that make up the present Madison Cemetery vary in age and condition, which means that they come with unique challenges and require different maintenance schedules. Riding mowers and other power tools can be used with ease in some areas like the memorial garden area (the Madison Memorial Cemetery), while they have to be used with caution in other areas. Therefore, damage incidents have occurred to some historic markers and other forms of funerary art from edgers and riding lawn mowers. Additionally, though it is not entirely clear, repetitive damage incidents from

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<sup>125</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 36; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 49-50; Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds.*, 19-20.

<sup>126</sup> City of Madison, GA, *Cemetery Stewardship Commission Handbook*, Madison: Cemetery Stewardship Commission, 2004. 1-2; Old Madison Cemetery Site Visit; Fairview Cemetery Site Visit.

riding mowers have likely weakened the bases of some markers, which make them susceptible to collapsing.<sup>127</sup>



Figure 78. Damage to a marker in the New Cemetery from a riding mower (Riley)



Figure 79. Damage to a marker in the Old Madison Cemetery from a riding mower and an edger (Riley)

Another well intended activity that can cause negligent damage is improper repair. At well cared for sites, repair on damaged markers and other forms of funerary art are often necessary parts of stabilization and restoration efforts. However, these elements are also vulnerable and highly susceptible to damage from natural and human induced forces. When individuals who value a site perform tasks themselves, such as resetting stones or repairing cracks and fractures without proper training, or they hire unqualified individuals to make such repairs, they can often cause more damage to significant elements. This is because funerary art conservation is complex and contemporary repair techniques and materials can harm historic elements.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.; Old Madison Cemetery Site Visit; City of Madison, GA, *Cemetery Stewardship Commission Handbook*, 2.

<sup>128</sup> Texas Historic Commission, *Preserving Historic Cemeteries: Texas Preservation Guidelines*, Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 2001, 14; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 56-57; Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 35.

A factor that makes funerary art repair complicated is the material compositions of many of these elements combined with their fragility. This is particularly true for those constructed of soft stones such as marble (the most prevalent material in the county's historic burial grounds). Such material is highly susceptible to fracturing in other areas when repairs take place with stronger bonding substances like Portland cement. Additionally, cleaning chemicals that are low in pH (acidic) can corrode marble, limestone, and some early cement compounds, while those that are high in pH (alkaline) can corrode granite. Furthermore, metal supports even in elements constructed of hard materials like the latter can result in iron jacking, which can shatter them.<sup>129</sup>

In addition to activities that involve site upkeep and restoration, some activities that pose threats involve the continued use of sites. One of the main groups of individuals that are interested in historic burial grounds and have the potential to aid preservation efforts within them are genealogists. As people search out their ancestors they often find that their journey leads them to a burial ground where they gather information and perform an emerging popular activity: grave marker rubbings. Although this enables individuals to preserve genealogical information on paper and provides a way for them to connect with a site, it can lead to damage if it is not carried out properly. This damage can come in the form of permanent staining on stone substances, scratching, and even fracturing when markers are unsound.<sup>130</sup>

Due to the threat of damage from grave marker rubbings, some states like Massachusetts have banned the activity altogether. However, this approach is not recommendable in most cases, as it reduces the ability of people to interact with sites, which can reduce their public value. Although this practice is not banned in any publicly accessible historic burial grounds

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 57, 59; Texas Historic Commission, *Preserving Historic Cemeteries*, 14-15; Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, 90, 145-146, 182.

<sup>130</sup> Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 11-13; Carmack, *Your Guide to Cemetery Research*, 111.

within the county, some sites like the Madison Cemetery have taken pragmatic approaches to regulate it. This burial ground and a number of others around the country require individuals who are interested in performing rubbings to fill out an authorization form, which acts like a permit. Basically this document outlines a set of regulations that restrict rubbings to sound stones and specify appropriate materials for conducting them. By signing the form, the intending individual agrees to adhere to the regulations and be held responsible for any damage that he or she causes. Once an individual signs this form, a member of the CSC authorizes it with their own signature. In most cases, those interested in such activities do not find the permit requirement a hindrance, and it has proven itself an effective solution for many sites around the country.<sup>131</sup>

Another form of negligent damage that is related to the continued use of a site comes from vehicles. Although some historic burial grounds in the county, such as the Madison Cemetery, restrict vehicles, many in the county have no restrictions or are too remote to visit without motorized transportation. However, many of the roadways within these sites were either never designed to accommodate automobiles or were designed to accommodate historic examples that were much smaller. Additionally, due to the dense nature of many of these sites, roadways are often close to graves. This not only puts markers and other design elements at risk of vehicles hitting them, it can lead to vehicles driving over unmarked graves.<sup>132</sup>

In addition to damaging design elements, destruction to the landscape can result from vehicles in historic burial grounds. The most common form of damage caused by vehicles is erosion, which can occur on dirt roads or in areas where vehicles turn around at dead ends.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 118-122; City of Madison, GA, *Cemetery Stewardship Commission Handbook*, 16-17, 27-28; Old Madison Cemetery Site Visit; Fairview Cemetery Site Visit; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 12, 95;

<sup>132</sup> Swords Cemetery Site Visit; Old Madison Cemetery Site Visit; Fairview Cemetery Site Visit; Rutledge Cemetery Site Visit; City of Madison, GA, *Cemetery Stewardship Commission Handbook*, 21.

Additionally, heavy rain events and runoff management issues can compound these problems and make erosion much more severe. Such damage exists in a number of Morgan County's historic burial grounds with one of the most severe cases having occurred in the Madison Cemetery in 2010. While visiting the site that year, the author documented damage that appeared to come from a service vehicle that turned around on the upper slope of the African American portion of the Old Madison Cemetery. Although runoff issues contributed to erosion in this area, vehicle damage appeared to cause further instability. Furthermore, it actually exposed the evidence of burial goods previously discussed and has likely reduced the archeological integrity of this portion of the site.<sup>133</sup>



Figure 80. The close proximity of the roadway in the Swords Community Cemetery to graves (Riley)



Figure 81. Damage to the landscape from vehicles turning around and runoff in the Old Madison Cemetery (Riley)

Another burial ground where vehicle related erosion has caused a problem is the Swords Community Cemetery. Unlike the Madison Cemetery, the Swords Cemetery does not have parking restrictions. Additionally, the fact that the site occupies the slope of a large hill means that many individuals (particularly the elderly and disabled) cannot access it without cars. Because much of the roadway itself acts as a runoff channel after heavy rains, vehicle related

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<sup>133</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery).



erosion has become severe in certain areas within the site. Additionally, a shortcut straight up the slope of the burial ground has worsened the overall erosion problems that the site currently experiences, which has put some above ground resources at risk. Although the caretakers of the site have placed a sign in front of this shortcut in the past that prohibits vehicles, it is not visible and is heavily damaged. Furthermore, clear evidence exists that individuals still use the shortcut and that the restriction is not strictly enforced. In cases like the Swords Community Cemetery and the Madison Cemetery, active oversight of vehicle use, better signage and runoff management can do much to mitigate erosion related damage from vehicles.<sup>134</sup>



Figure 82. Runoff and vehicle erosion on the roadway in the Swords Community Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 83. Vehicle erosion on a shortcut in the Swords Community Cemetery (Riley)

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<sup>134</sup> Swords Cemetery Site Visit.





Figure 84. A damaged sign, prohibiting vehicles from the shortcut (Riley)

In addition to damage that results from negligent activities within historic burial grounds, careless activities on surrounding land can threaten these sites. One of the most common activities is logging. Due to the fact that much of the farmland in Morgan County has returned to forest and tree harvesting is an important economic enterprise in the area, many historic burial grounds are at risk of being exposed to logging related damage, including: loggers felling trees on obscured burial grounds, carelessly operated heavy equipment, reckless log skidding, and other general damage associated with logging crews.<sup>135</sup>

A good example of a historic burial ground that suffered significant damage from logging activities is the Hester Family Cemetery located near Fairplay in Morgan County. This site is a small domestic burial ground that contains a number of marble markers, dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, most of these became heavily damaged by a log skidder in 2009. The incident was so severe that a number of monuments were completely shattered, while others were knocked off their bases and moved from the graves that they were

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<sup>135</sup> Tara Cooner, Email Message to the Author Regarding the Hester Family Cemetery, August 27, 2012; Tara Cooner, Conversation with the Author During a Meeting on September 16, 2010.

associated with. Additionally, the skidder caused serious damage to the landscape when this occurred.<sup>136</sup>

Despite the destruction the site faced, the supervisor of the logging crew claimed that he did not know of the burial ground and that the damage was unintentional. However, the incident could have easily been avoided with minimal effort. By simply requiring someone to walk through the landscape, identify, and flag off any at risk areas, the company could have prevented their skidder from moving through the burial ground. Additionally, doing so would have actually financially profited the company by enabling them to avoid hiring a professional to conserve the site, which is what the county required in order to avoid placing criminal charges.<sup>137</sup>



Figure 85. Damage to the Hester Family Cemetery caused by the careless use of a log skidder (Courtesy of Tara Cooner)



Figure 86. A grave marker destroyed by the skidder during the incident (Courtesy of Tara Cooner)

### Vandalism/Looting

Poorly carried out work, negligent use of historic burial grounds, and damage from logging are not the only activities that threaten historic fabric at burial grounds. Criminal actions such as vandalism and looting can lead to even greater loss of significant resources and overall

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., Tara Cooner, Email Message to the Author Regarding the Hester Family Cemetery, August 27, 2012.

destruction of sites. Vandalism is defined as intentional damage inflicted to features and objects within a site by human actions, while looting is intentional and unauthorized removal of artifacts and features by an individual or entity. Although both are serious threats to historic burial grounds, the latter is of particular concern, considering it is economically driven.<sup>138</sup>

Within Morgan County, both acts of vandalism and looting remain serious threats to historic burial grounds because of the large number of sites within the area that lack stewardship, go unnoticed, are in remote settings, and are concealed by thick forests. When criminals target a site, grave markers often become their main focus because they are the most prominent features in many burial grounds and are valuable works of art. Vandals are attracted to them because of the impact that destroying them will have on a site, while looters are attracted to them because of their potential economic value. Additionally, due to the fact that many markers are in fragile states, it is easy to damage or remove them in a short amount of time with minimal effort. When such damage occurs it is expensive and time-consuming to reverse and in many cases impossible.<sup>139</sup>

A number of factors influence the level of vulnerability a site has to vandalism and looting. Burial grounds that lack stewardship and public attention are the most susceptible. However, even well-cared for burial grounds with enclosures and lighting are susceptible to some degree. Therefore, many historic burial grounds in the county have suffered from past incidents and many are currently at risk.<sup>140</sup>

A good example of a site that is susceptible to vandals and looters is the Buckhead African American Cemetery. Although no incidents have been reported in recent history and the

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<sup>138</sup> Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 46-47; Texas Historic Commission, *Preserving Historic Cemeteries*, 9.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 3, 10; Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 46; Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds.*, 7.

<sup>140</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 46; Texas Historic Commission, *Preserving Historic Cemeteries*, 10.

general poor condition of the site makes it difficult to determine how much criminal-related damage has occurred over the years, it likely has occurred at this site. This is evident by the way in which some grave markers are damaged. Some have snapped from their bases and fallen from them in ways that suggest human force, rather than nature, may have been responsible.<sup>141</sup>

Not only may vandalism have been a problem in the past, the site is presently vulnerable because it is situated in a thick forest that is easily accessible from a nearby farm field, which makes it possible to access the site unnoticed. Additionally, the field is close to a rail bed, which makes it easily accessible to ill intended individuals. However, the factor that contributes most is the lack of public value for the site, which is necessary before such acts become noticed, stopped, and prevented.<sup>142</sup>



Figure 87. Possible damage from vandalism in the Buckhead African American Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 88. Access to the Buckhead African American Cemetery from a nearby field (Riley)

Just because a site has suffered vandalism in the past does not mean that it cannot move forward and regain its integrity. Evidence indicates that even the most valued burial ground in the county (the Madison Cemetery) has done this. Although this burial ground contains evidence of past acts of vandalism, it now possesses a level of public value and stewardship that

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<sup>141</sup> Buckhead African American Cemetery Site Visit

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.



significantly reduces the chances that they will reoccur. Since the city created the CSC, the Madison Police Department regularly patrols the site and is in charge of securing its gate at its posted closing times, which makes the site more unattractive to criminals. Additionally, the fact the area is connected to a nearby park by a running trail means that it is regularly frequented by the public, which is one of the best deterrents to criminal activity in a burial ground.<sup>143</sup>

Despite the level of care and security the Madison Cemetery currently experiences, past acts of vandalism may have resulted in some of the irreversible damage that certain elements of the site possess. This include some markers that are shattered in ways that suggest human force and damage to box tombs that may have resulted from individuals attempting to remove their lids. Additionally, the fact that many markers are missing from the burials with which they are associated means some may have been completely destroyed by vandals or removed by looters.<sup>144</sup>



Figure 89. A tablet marker (left) and chest tomb (right) that show evidence of possible past vandalism damage in the Old Madison Cemetery (Riley)

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<sup>143</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); City of Madison, GA, Ibid.; City of Madison, Georgia, Madison Historic Cemeteries: *Cemetery Stewardship Commission Policy Handbook.*, 4; Cemetery Stewardship Commission, "Madison Historic Cemeteries: Self-Guided Walking Tour, Madison, GA: City of Madison, 2005.,1; Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Madison City Cemetery (Old Section);" Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds.*, 18.

<sup>144</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (New Cemetery).

### Legal Threats

Although laws exist that make acts of looting and vandalism illegal in historic burial grounds, their level of protection is inconsistent when it comes to historic preservation law. Therefore, the final category of threats is legal in nature. This is partially due to the limitation of federal laws, which result in inadequate and non-uniform protection on a national level. The federal laws that do exist include the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA), and Section 4(f).<sup>145</sup>

The basic purpose of the first of these laws (NEPA) is requiring environmental surveys to take place on land which a federally funded project impacts. Although it does not directly address historic resources, it can lead to surveys that fall under section 106 of the NHPA that do. These surveys serve the purpose of documenting historic resources that a federally funded project will impact and take into account the effect of the project on them. However, as a law the NHPA does not provide any direct protection for any resource and only applies to properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). For many historic burial grounds this can be problematic because they must meet certain criteria considerations in the NRHP, be nominated in conjunction with a historic district or landmark, or have demonstrated information potential.<sup>146</sup>

Because most historic burial grounds within Morgan County are not located in historic districts or are no longer associated with significant historic landmarks, they must meet one or

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<sup>145</sup> Ryan M. Seidemann and Rachel L. Moss. "Places Worth Saving: A Legal Guide to the Protection of Historic Cemeteries in Louisiana and Recommendations for Additional Protection." *Loyola Law Review*, 55 Loy. L. Rev. 449 (Fall, 2009), 1-3.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 2-3; Robert E. Stipe, *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003., 45; U.S. National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1997., 35.

more of the NRHP criteria considerations, such as greatly aged in relation to their context, which in the case of Morgan County requires many to date to the early nineteenth century.

Additionally, it includes possessing "distinctive" design significance with the retention of an undisturbed historic appearance, making many sites that contain high levels of contemporary burials or site modifications ineligible. Furthermore, the qualifications include an association with historic events or individuals of transcendental importance, which many historic burial grounds in the county also lack. This means that historic burial grounds are more complicated and inconsistent resources when it comes to National Register eligibility, putting many at risk of being overlooked when surveys do take place.<sup>147</sup>

The next federal law that has some applicability to historic cemeteries is ARPA. However, the main goal of ARPA was never cemetery protection, but for preventing looting at Native American sites. Additionally, it applies only to federal lands, which are few in number in the county and to tribal lands of which none exist at all. Furthermore, it only applies to sites that are over 100 years old or the sections of historic burial grounds that are of this age, which means that many would not be fully covered under the law anyway. Also, the law calls only for a rigorous permitting process and provides no outright protection for the resources it addresses.<sup>148</sup>

The final federal law that is most applicable is Section 4(f). However, this law's main aim was to provide protection for parks from federal projects and only applies to publically owned resources. For historic burial grounds in the county this presents another problem since most are not publically owned, but are owned instead by church congregations and private individuals. Ultimately, in the case of an area like Morgan County, which is characterized by

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 34-36; U.S. Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin Number 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1992., 15-17, 19.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 414-414; Seidemann and Moss. "Places Worth Saving" *Loyola Law Review*, 4.



private land and an agricultural context that has resulted in numerous privately owned burial grounds, there is little legal protection on the federal level for them.<sup>149</sup>

On a state level, the degree of legal protection for historic burial grounds is only slightly better; the laws that do exist are limited by loopholes that individuals frequently take advantage of. Additionally, most existing laws are designed to leave the matter of historic burial ground preservation up to individual counties and communities. Furthermore, no laws exist that require an owner of a historic burial ground to care for or preserve it.<sup>150</sup>

The main state law that addresses historic burial ground protection is located in Title 36 of the Georgia Code and is commonly referred to as the "Abandoned Cemetery Law." Essentially this law makes it illegal for an owner to disturb or destroy a burial ground for the purposes of development without first going through a rigorous permitting process. Due to the fact that this requires a filing fee that can be as high as \$2500.00, hiring archeologists and other professionals, as well as public hearings, it can influence many developers to work around a historic burial ground. However, as previously noted, the law only applies to known cemeteries, which can provide a loophole for some developers.<sup>151</sup>

Another state law that addresses some historic burial grounds in Morgan County can be found in 50-3-1 of the Georgia Code. Although this portion of the code deals with matters concerning the state flag and the preservation of the Confederate Memorial at Stone Mountain, it also makes it a criminal offence for unauthorized entities to remove or damage privately owned monuments pertaining to veterans. Because this law includes veterans of the Confederate States of America and the United States of America and applies to grave memorials such as markers it

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>150</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 48-49.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 48-49; *Local Government Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations Chapters 72. Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds*. Georgia Code 1981, § 36-72-1 (1991).

can act as an added layer of protection for some burials and burial grounds. However, due to the fact that it only applies to grave markers for veterans that commemorate their service, it does little to protect the unmarked graves of such individuals and does not apply to the markers that surround them. Additionally, it is limited in its ability to protect entire sites since it only protects specific graves. Although this could influence a developer or property owner to leave such a burial ground alone, veteran graves and the sites that contain them still remain vulnerable to the same loopholes in the Abandoned Cemetery Law that affect other burial grounds..<sup>152</sup>

The remaining state laws that address historic burial grounds mainly apply to below ground resources, particularly human remains, and can be found in 31-21-6 and 31-21-44 of the Georgia Code. The first of these require individuals to "immediately notify" local law enforcement officials if they accidentally discover or expose human remains. Additionally, this law requires individuals to report those who remove human remains without a permit. As for the latter of these laws, it makes it an offence to "wantonly or maliciously remove dead bodies from any grave or place of internment." Furthermore, it makes it an offence to disturb artifacts associated with graves. In short, the major aim of these laws is to prevent looting and the desecration of human remains, not the outright protection of historic burial grounds as sites.<sup>153</sup>

Due to the fact that state law places the burden of cemetery protection on local entities, some county laws and ordinances exist that address historic burial grounds. However, most of these carry out the aims of state laws, and no laws exist that require owners of historic burial grounds to maintain them. Additionally, none provide any entity with the power and task to

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<sup>152</sup> Georgia Code, Title 50, O.C.G.A. § 50-3-1 (2012); Georgia Code 1981, § 36-72-1 (1991).

<sup>153</sup> Georgia Code, Title 31, O.C.G.A. § 31-21-6 (2012); Georgia Code, Title 31, O.C.G.A. § 31-21-6 (2012); Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 48.

promote historic burial ground preservation or incentives for property owners to do so themselves.<sup>154</sup>

On a county-wide basis, the main ordinances that applies to historic burial ground preservation can be found in Articles 3 and 4 of the Development Regulations of Morgan County. The provisions in Article 3 require a one hundred foot barrier around burial grounds, while Article 4 mandates that burial grounds "be protected under the requirements of State law," in accordance with 36-72-1 of the Georgia Code (the Abandoned Cemetery Law). Additionally, it follows the state definition of cemetery which is "any land or structure in this state dedicated to and used, or intended to be used, for internment of human remains." Furthermore, it states that the use of an area for burial purposes is evidence that it was set aside for such purposes and is under state law a cemetery. Although this law only reiterates state law, it does recognize historic burial grounds as open spaces and conservation areas, as well as requires them to be indicated on preliminary property plats as undisturbed buffers and unbuildable areas. Therefore, by sparing a historic burial ground in a construction project, a developer could fully or partially meet some open space requirements that come with certain types of development.<sup>155</sup>

Though existing county laws offer limited protection for historic burial grounds, municipal laws are more capable of doing so. However, this presents a problem for most historic burial grounds in the county because they are located in unincorporated areas and are, therefore, only protected under state and county laws. Of those communities that do have local laws that protect historic burial grounds, Madison possesses the strongest. This comes as no surprise, considering the city has its own law enforcement and more resources at its disposal than any

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<sup>154</sup> Morgan County, GA, *Development Regulations of Morgan County, Georgia*, Atlanta: Robert and Company, 2005., 3-1, 4-1-4-2.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 4-1-4-2; Georgia Code 1981, § 36-72-1 (1991);

other community in the county. To these ends, the city has a cemetery ordinance that provides CSC who is charged with the responsibility of conducting management and preservation tasks for historic burial grounds within city limits. The CSC itself is part of the planning department for Madison, administered by city clerk staff, and functions similar to a historic preservation commission.<sup>156</sup>

The four burial grounds that the CSC manages are those that make up the present-day Madison Cemetery. Over the years, the work of the CSC is observable within the cemetery and has involved regular upkeep and planning for continued use. Additionally, it has involved projects such as a monument dedication in the African American section of the cemetery, linking the site to a nearby park with a running trail, and a leash policy for dogs, which have encouraged public use of the site.<sup>157</sup>



Figure 90. The park adjacent to the Madison Cemetery and the trail that links the two sites (Riley)



Figure 91. The monument in the African American Section of the Old Madison Cemetery (Riley)

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<sup>156</sup> Madison, Georgia Code of Ordinances, § 24-46; Madison, Georgia Code of Ordinances, § 24-48.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.; City of Madison, Georgia, *Cemetery Stewardship Commission Policy Handbook*, 2004., 2, 5, 18.

In addition to providing for a CSC, Madison's Cemetery Ordinance gives the mayor and the city council the power to "exercise police control and to care for" historic burial grounds within city limits. Although this ordinance has proven itself effective for resources of these types in Madison, it is not something that other communities within the county could adopt at its present scale due to the resources it requires. This makes Madison a good example of how historic burial grounds within affluent incorporated areas are more likely to receive effective legal protection than sites located in the unincorporated areas within rural counties.<sup>158</sup>

To conclude, many of the threats that Morgan County's historic burial grounds face are similar to those that sites in other rural areas throughout the United States face. However, some are more applicable to Morgan County for environmental, cultural, and economic reasons. Lack of stewardship remains the most serious, as it can lead to more direct threats. These threats (both natural and human induced) have the potential to cause irreversible damage and lead to the loss of valuable historic information. Additionally, other indirect threats such as social attitudes, economics, and inadequate laws create challenges for effective preservation. However, all of these forces are addressable with the preservation strategies discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>158</sup> Madison, Georgia Code of Ordinances, § 24-26.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESERVATION STRATEGIES FOR HISTORIC BURIAL GROUNDS IN MORGAN COUNTY

Although many historic burial grounds within Morgan County are vulnerable to the threats previously discussed, preservation strategies exist that can make it possible for them to survive. These begin with strategies that can be employed on an individual level such as fostering stewardship for neglected sites. Additionally, they include broader-based strategies for stewardship generation such as private sector support in the form of historic burial ground preservation non-profits. Furthermore, they consist of strategies that can be employed to sites once they receive stewardship such as effective master preservation plans. Once these plans are in place, these strategies take a physical presence by addressing the problems a site faces through one of two preservation treatments: stabilization and conservation.

#### Fostering Stewardship

The first of these strategies is fostering stewardship for historic burial grounds for historic burial grounds in the county. At the very least this consists of a designated individual or entity that is charged with the care of a historic burial ground. Such stewardship does not necessarily require aggressive preservation efforts such as site conservation; however, it does call for basic landscape maintenance measures. Such efforts include cutting vegetation back as needed, as well as removing dead trees and limbs that threaten site features. Additionally, it requires some level of site monitoring, which should involve routine visitation and at least minimal coordination with nearby residents and law enforcement officials. However, most importantly,

stewardship should enable the public to identify with the sites and make them active parts of the communities with which they are associated. Such identification is paramount, as it can lead to the ongoing preservation and management efforts that are essential to the survival of these resources.<sup>159</sup>

Despite the importance of generating stewardship for historic burial grounds, challenges exist since most sites in the county are located on private or church property and no laws exist that require their owners to preserve them. Therefore, many times the fate of a site depends upon the actions of a few concerned individuals who carry out preservation efforts themselves. However, such efforts must take place with the consent of the legal owners of a site, which makes public advocacy an important first step. Essentially, this is the process in which concerned individuals come together to promote the value of a burial ground through public outreach and become involved in the governing process that affects it. When such individuals do succeed, they gain the support of a community, which leads to public value and effective stewardship.<sup>160</sup>

Public advocacy is something that is far from new in historic preservation and has proven to be an effective vehicle for channeling support. However, it must involve groups who relate to a resource on a personal level and have social ties with it. Therefore, because family ties are some of the strongest that exist in historic burial grounds, the descendants of those buried within them are important potential advocates for preservation. Additionally, when involved, such individuals may be able to assist beyond advocacy efforts by providing important information on a particular burial ground that otherwise could not be obtained. Furthermore, they may help

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<sup>159</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*., 45.

<sup>160</sup> Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds*., 15-16; Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 1, 48.



provide some of the resources for effective site stewardship, such as funding and volunteer labor.<sup>161</sup>

In addition to the descendants of those buried within historic burial grounds, other groups of interest can be just as effective in generating advocacy and organizing preservation efforts that lead to stewardship. Ethnic ties and shared heritage, for instance, are very implacable to Morgan County and have the potential to link individuals to sites. Additionally, religious connections can link individuals to a site through spirituality and common shared beliefs. Both of these are especially useful for enabling individuals who lack family ties to a particular site to relate to it on a similar level with those who have family ties.<sup>162</sup>

A good example of a historic burial ground in the county that has experienced shared heritage and religious ties is the Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery located near Bostwick. The church congregation associated with the burial ground is African American, dates to 1870, and over the years has worshiped in several buildings adjacent to the site. The current building dates to the early 1920s and has been present during one of the greatest periods of social change in Morgan County, portions of which were marked by racial tension. This is evident by the presence of the graves of George and Dorothy Malcom Dorsey who were killed in the infamous Moore's Ford Lynching in 1946.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Carmack, *Your Guide to Cemetery Research*, 48; William E. Schmickle, *The Politics of Historic Districts: A Primer for Grassroots Preservation*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007., 12-13, 16, 75; Gregory B. Paxton, "The Origins and Future of Georgia Preservation," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 83, No. 1 (Spring 1999): 130, 132.

<sup>162</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery;" Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit by the Author, August 30, 2012); Lynn Robinson Camp, *Black America Series: Morgan County, Georgia*, 120.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 68, 120; Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; National Public Radio, "FBI Re-Examines 1946 Lynching Case," National Public Radio Website, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5579862> (Accessed August 30, 2012).

Despite the fact the burial ground was the final resting place for the victims of a lynching that gained national attention, it fell into neglect as families moved out of the area and died out. However, the Moore's Ford Memorial Committee enabled the site to regain stewardship in 1998 through public advocacy efforts based on shared heritage. This group assisted with clearing the site and locating unmarked graves, including those of the Dorsey's. Additionally, they marked the graves of the latter and obtained the help of a Boy Scout troop from Athens to place white crosses on the other unmarked graves. These efforts were highly significant because they enabled the site to become a valuable symbol for the African American community in the area and a memorial for two of the victims of the Moore's Ford lynching. All of this has increased the public value of the Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery and given the church associated with it the assistance needed to reassume effective stewardship.<sup>164</sup>

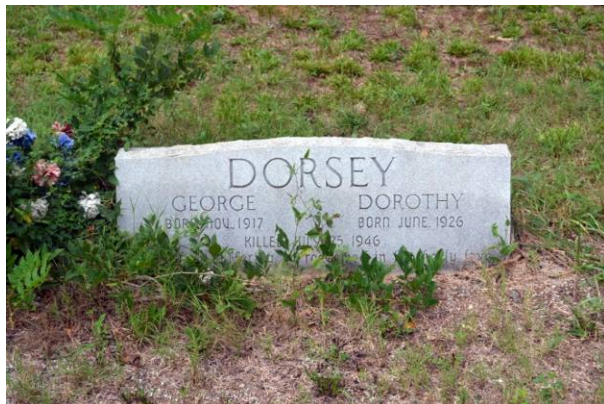


Figure 92. The graves of lynching victims, George and Dorothy Malcom Dorsey marked by the Moore's Ford Memorial Committee (Riley)



Figure 93. The military service record plaque for George Dorsey placed by the Moore's Ford Memorial Committee (Riley)

<sup>164</sup> Lynn Robinson Camp, *Black America Series: Morgan County, Georgia*, 120; Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit by the Author; One America, "Moore's Ford Memorial Committee," Clinton White House Website, [http://clinton4.nara.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/Practices/pp\\_19980804.3384.html](http://clinton4.nara.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/Practices/pp_19980804.3384.html) (Accessed August 30, 2012).



Figure 94. Mt. Perry Missionary Baptist Church, its adjacent burial ground, and the graves within it marked with replacement cross markers (Riley)

In addition to common heritage, other social ties can be effective avenues for generating public advocacy. Fraternal organizations such as the Freemasons, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and Sons/Daughters of the American Revolution have social ties with sites that contain burials of their members or those that their organizations honor. Additionally, social ties exist outside of group settings that reach people on an individual level through their personal interests such as history, genealogy, horticulture, and other aspects of historic burial grounds.<sup>165</sup>

Ultimately, all of these potential social ties provide ways in which to harness public support. Therefore, in order to be most effective, those advocating the preservation of a site should reach out to as many people as possible. As they do, it will not only lead to more support, but result in a level of stewardship that provides proper attention for all of the facets of a historic burial ground. This will not only lead to better stewardship of a site, but a more inclusive approach to the preservation efforts carried out within it.

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<sup>165</sup> Carmack, *Your Guide to Cemetery Research*, 2, 206-207, 211.

### Private Sector Support

Although public advocacy is a useful tool for historic burial ground preservation, in some cases (such as with abandoned and obscure sites) it is not enough, making the actions of a centralized body necessary. To some degree the Morgan County Planning and Development office has done this through surveys and other efforts that are designed to document historic burial grounds and increase public support for their preservation. However, as a government office it is limited when it comes to providing financial support for preservation efforts and is unable to assume stewardship over many threatened sites for legal reasons.<sup>166</sup>

Due to these limitations, preservation efforts fall into the hands of the private sector in the form of a non-profit organization. Such an entity is capable of providing common coordination for burial ground preservation. Additionally, if it is set up correctly, it could hold preservation easements, which can ensure that sites will remain preserved. Furthermore, in extreme cases it could assume the legal ownership and stewardship of threatened sites through purchase or donation. Also, it could generate funding to carry these efforts out through tax free donations, grants, government contracts, publications, and events. However, no such organization exists within Morgan County that is solely dedicated to wide-spread historic burial ground preservation.

In areas where historic burial ground preservation organizations do exist, they have proven themselves successful tools for promoting public awareness for threatened burial grounds and even acting as stewards for them. Additionally, they contribute to the preservation activities at well cared for sites by providing technical assistance, education, and other forms of support.

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<sup>166</sup> Tara Cooner, Conversation with the Author During a Meeting on September 16, 2010

This, in turn, results in effective, sensitive, and consistent stewardship and preservation, which respects the context that common sites share in a particular area.<sup>167</sup>

A good example of an organization that has done this is Save Our Cemeteries (SOC) in the City of New Orleans. This organization resulted from concerned citizens who came together to form a non-profit to promote the preservation of the city's burial grounds when one of them was threatened by a proposal put forward by the Archdiocese of New Orleans to demolish a historic wall that surrounded it. Not only did the formation of this non-profit lead to the archdiocese scrapping their proposal, it actually led to a change of heart that resulted in them becoming one of the non-profit's greatest supporters.<sup>168</sup>

Today, the SOC has expanded its efforts and oversees preservation efforts for thirty of the city's most significant historic burial grounds, which represent a wide range of groups that make up the fabric of New Orleans' history. These include sites associated with religious groups such as Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and other faiths. Additionally, they include those associated with fraternal organizations and events, as well as sites that serve as general community burial grounds. At all of these sites, the SOC focuses efforts on physical preservation, education, and outreach efforts, the latter of which includes cemetery tours and other events that are designed to generate funding and increase public involvement with the sites. The story of the SOC is significant and highly applicable even to a rural area like Morgan

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<sup>167</sup> Save Our Cemeteries, "Bringing New Orleans' Cities of the Dead Back to Life," Save our Cemeteries Website, <http://www.saveourcemeteries.org/> (Accessed September, 6, 2012).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid; New Orleans Museum of Art, "Save our Cemeteries: NOLA Cemeteries: A History and Status Report, NOMA Events, <http://noma.org/events/detail/301/Save-Our-Cemeteries-NOLA-Cemeteries-A-History-and-Status-Report> (Accessed September 7, 2012).

County. This is because it addresses a wide range of sites that relate to different groups, which face similar threats and are woven together in a common context.<sup>169</sup>

Although the SOC oversees preservation efforts at multiple sites, it is not a steward in and of any of the sites itself. Due to the limited resources within Morgan County, the remoteness of some sites, and other factors, an effective preservation non-profit dedicated to historic burial ground preservation would need to have the ability to assume stewardship at some sites.

Although this model has proven itself successful for singular historic burial grounds in Georgia, such as for the Riverside Cemetery in Macon, it has not been applied to multiple sites to an extensive degree. However, such a stewardship approach could easily be expanded to multiple sites under a single non-profit entity.<sup>170</sup>

A good example of a preservation non-profit with stewardship of multiple, threatened historic resources is the Archeological Conservancy, which owns and protects over 325 endangered sites in 39 states. The Conservancy acquires sites through donation and purchase with donated funds to protect them from development, looting, and other threats. Once acquired, the Conservancy holds tours of the sites, and other events that involve them, which help fund their upkeep. Although this example is dedicated to archeological resources, an entity that focuses on historic burial ground preservation in a rural context could adopt the Conservancy's acquisition and interpretation model. Doing so, would enable it to assume stewardship over multiple sites effectively and address their needs through consistent preservation practices.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid; Save Our Cemeteries, <http://www.saveourcemeteries.org/> (Accessed September, 6, 2012).

<sup>170</sup> Historic Riverside Cemetery Conservancy, "Preserving the Past for the Future, the Historic Riverside Cemetery Conservancy Homepage, <http://www.riversidecemeteryconservancy.org/> (Accessed September 6, 2012);

<sup>171</sup> The Archeological Conservancy, "New Acquisitions," The Archeological Conservancy Homepage, <http://www.americanarchaeology.com/aaaquis.html> (Accessed September 6, 2012).



## Master Preservation Plan

Although generating stewardship is essential to preserving threatened historic burial grounds, the actions of stewards must be efficient and address specific goals for the site. Therefore, an effective master preservation plan is necessary to address the unique needs of a historic burial ground and outline steps for appropriate preservation, maintenance, security, and interpretation. However, when created, such a plan should not only involve the stewards of the site, but others interested in its care. Doing so will ensure that input from as many concerned individuals as possible is included in the planning process and will serve as a good avenue for securing commitments from such individuals to assist in the preservation and management of a particular site.<sup>172</sup>

Master plans of this type vary considerably, depending on the size of a site and available resources. However, they all must include some basic elements in order to be successful. According to the Texas Historical Commission, such plans include the following: research, record, goal setting, developing a scope of work, and a maintenance plan. Although these steps were designed specifically for historic burial grounds in Texas, they are general enough and relevant to those located in Morgan County and other areas, making them important master plan elements in this context.<sup>173</sup>

Research about a historic burial ground is the foundation for an effective preservation master plan. This includes locating and analyzing primary sources such as legal documents, historic maps, photographs, newspaper sources, and other materials. Additionally, it includes oral histories from relatives, owners, and other members of a particular community that may

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<sup>172</sup> Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds*, 11; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 7-9; Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 25-27.

<sup>173</sup> Texas Historical Commission, *Developing a Master Preservation Plan for a Historic Cemetery* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 2003), 1-2.

possess unwritten knowledge of a site. Once acquired, this information should be compiled in a well-organized written format and placed within the plan itself. This will not only enable those who develop the plan to learn about a burial ground and make their decisions in a way that respects its unique needs, it will serve as a way of educating future individuals involved in its preservation. This is important because effective plans must be perpetual and outlast the involvement of their creators.<sup>174</sup>

After research on the historic background and general significance of a site takes place, the next step to developing a plan involves performing surveys of the site and documenting its contents and their condition. This will ensure that plans and the goals that are part of them will properly address the significant elements that make up the fabric of a site. During this process, those performing the work should develop detailed maps, document it photographically, and utilize standard practices, such as customized survey forms, to ensure uniform documentation. Additionally, these efforts should record elements like grave markers and other forms of funerary art, as well as significant landscape and natural features that contribute to the site. This inventory will not only assist with goal formation, but enable those planning for a site to understand the elements that make it up and contribute to its character. For sites that are still actively used, this is important because it is then easier to develop guidelines for the design elements of new burials so they do not destroy the appropriate appearance of a site.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 1; Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 27; Prince George's County, Cemetery Preservation (Marlboro: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, n.d.), 2; ; Frank G. Matero and Judy Peters, "Survey Methodology for the Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries," *APT Bulletin* 34, No. 2/3 (2003): 39; McGahee and Edmonds, *South Carolina Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook*, 13.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 14-18; Texas Historical Commission, *Developing a Master Preservation Plan for a Historic Cemetery* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 2003), 1; Cemetery Stewardship Commission, *Madison Historic Cemeteries*, 9-11; Chicora Foundation, Inc., *Cicora Foundation, Inc., Cemetery Preservation* (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, Inc., n.d.), 2; Cemetery Stewardship Commission, *Madison Historic Cemeteries*, 9-11; Chicora Foundation, Inc., *Cicora Foundation, Inc., Cemetery Preservation* (Columbia: Chicora Foundation, Inc., n.d.), 2; Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds*, 11-13; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 36-38; Dawn E.

Once both the research and recording phases are concluded, site stewards and other stakeholders can develop goals for its preservation. Essentially, this is the phase in which individuals identify where they want the site to be at a specific time in the future. This includes identifying the preservation treatment for the site. Additionally, it includes the future use of a site and how it will accommodate new burials and other elements if applicable. Furthermore, it will set targets for funding and other resources necessary for preservation work and site upkeep. Regardless of the level of preservation intended and the amount of resources needed to carry them out, each goal should contain realistic milestones to keep them on target.<sup>176</sup>

After the goal setting phase, those involved in the preservation of a burial ground are in the position to develop a scope of work. This portion of the plan identifies what needs to take place in order for those carrying out the preservation at a site to reach their goals. Additionally, it includes cost estimates, tasks, and the identification of individuals to assist in preservation efforts (volunteers, professionals, etc.). All work identified in this process should take place in phases that coincide with goal milestones. Furthermore, this portion of the plan should identify the projected results of each phase.<sup>177</sup>

After a preservation master plan identifies the goals of the stewards and how they will utilize available resources, it must contain an element to address the ongoing upkeep of a site. This portion of the plan (known as a maintenance plan) outlines specific tasks that must take place to ensure that a burial ground remains preserved and that damage to the site or its elements is addressed before it becomes too severe. Among these are landscape maintenance schedules

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Cobb, Hal Hassen, and John C. Heider, *Cemetery Preservation Training: Part I Basic Workshop*, Springfield: Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and Illinois Department of Natural Resources, 2012., 3.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 3; McGahee and Edmonds, *South Carolina Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook*, 20-21; Texas Historical Commission, *Developing a Master Preservation Plan for a Historic Cemetery* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 2003), 1-2.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 2; McGahee and Edmonds, *South Carolina Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook*, 20-21, 21; Cobb, Hassen, and Heider, *Part I Basic Workshop: Cemetery Preservation Training.*, 3.

and guidelines, wildlife activity monitoring, inspection schedules, and repair procedures for significant elements such as grave markers. Additionally, this section should contain a security plan for the site and identify those involved in carrying it out (site stewards, law enforcement, etc.).<sup>178</sup>

Once all of these steps are completed, those involved in the planning process can draft a plan that will guide the conservation efforts and continued upkeep of the site. However, no matter the level of detail a plan contains, those formulating it must realize that it must be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseeable events and challenges that may set back their work along the way. By doing this, those charged with the stewardship of a historic burial ground can ensure that the plan for their site is adaptable, realistic, and something that will accomplish what it aims to.<sup>179</sup>

### Preservation Treatments

Following the development of an effective master preservation plan, a historic burial ground is in the position to receive a preservation treatment. For the purpose of those within Morgan County, two general treatments options exist: stabilization and conservation. Of these treatments, stabilization is the most basic and often precedes conservation; therefore, its primary goal is arresting the major threats that a site faces to slow down its rate of deterioration. This makes stabilization an effective option for heavily neglected sites with limited resources.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 3,20; Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 43-44, 46-47; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 7; McGahee and Edmonds, *South Carolina Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook*, 21.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>180</sup> Gregg G. King, Susan Kosky, Kathleen Glynn, and Gladys Saborio, *Michigan Historic Cemetery Preservation Manual*, Canton: Charter Township of Canton, 2004., 8-10, 61; Cecelia Paine, "Landscape Management of Abandoned Cemeteries in Ontario," *APT Bulletin* 24, no. 3/4 (1992): 61; Chicora Foundation, "Conservation," Chicora Foundation Website, <http://www.chicora.org/conservation.html> (Accessed September 17, 2012).

## Stabilization

Due to the large number of neglected burial grounds within the county, many require stabilization. This is particularly true for sites that have suffered prolonged lack of stewardship, but have the potential to regain it. Among these are sites that are in advanced stages of decay, which are still used for burials, such as the Buckhead African American Cemetery. Others are heavily deteriorated sites with historical connections to existing groups of people within the county, such as the Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery. Included in this category are sites like the William Ruark Cemetery, which owe much of their condition issues to owner apathy. For these burial grounds and others in similar situations, stabilization would not only prevent their ultimate loss, but likely lead to other preservation measures that would restore their integrity and public value.<sup>181</sup>

When stabilization efforts begin in a historic burial ground, the first task is cleaning it and removing threats from within it. In the case of naturally forested environments such as Morgan County, unchecked vegetation is often the most serious. However, vegetation removal must take place with care in order to prevent damage and destruction to culturally significant plant specimens and built features within the site. Therefore, site stabilizers must conduct a thorough review of the information collected during the planning process and conduct separate surveys as necessary before they begin any work. Additionally, during these efforts, such individuals should document any conflicts that exist between significant plant specimens and built resources.

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<sup>181</sup> William Ruark Cemetery Site Visit; Buckhead African American Site Visit; Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit.

In many cases, the best option may be no action at all if a vegetation specimen is more significant than a built resource it threatens, or if removing it puts other resources at risk.<sup>182</sup>



Figure 95. This significant oak tree at the Old Madison Cemetery is a good example of a vegetation threat that is better left alone (Riley)



Figure 96. A significant planting of iris in an overgrown section in the Buckhead African American Cemetery (Riley)

When actual vegetation removal begins, site stabilizers should target trees and shrubs that have seeded at the base of or within cracks of built features first, because they pose the greatest threat and are often the easiest to address. Following this, they should turn their attention to vegetation that is rubbing on, enveloping, or obscuring built features, as well as those that contribute to moisture related problems. If desirable vegetation is the culprit, simply pruning it or moving it to other locations within the site can often prevent its loss and improve the overall condition of the burial ground.<sup>183</sup>

Although small forms of vegetation such as brush and shrubs can be removed completely from the site, large specimens like trees often cannot. Therefore, they should be cut as close to the soil level as possible and the stump and its root system left to decompose naturally. Stump

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<sup>182</sup> Paine, "Landscape Management of Abandoned Cemeteries in Ontario," 64-65; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 47-48; Walker-Kluesing Design Group, *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries, Third Edition*, Boston: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2009, 22.

<sup>183</sup> Paine, "Landscape Management of Abandoned Cemeteries in Ontario," 65.

grinders and other pieces of equipment can damage above and below ground resources and chemicals used to speed up stump composition can corrode markers and other features.<sup>184</sup>



Figure 97. An appropriately removed tree in the Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 98. An inappropriately removed tree in the Buckhead Cemetery (Riley)

Following the removal of threatening vegetation, the next stabilization priority is addressing problems with drainage. Although it is not always possible to fix every drainage problem, many problems can be addressed. Site stabilizers can often accomplish by simply redirecting the flow of water away from important resources. Additionally, water management strategies that allow water to infiltrate the landscape as naturally as possible can be very effective. Furthermore, simply prohibiting vehicles from sloping sites can improve conditions by reducing erosion potential, which often contributes to these problems.<sup>185</sup>

After addressing major drainage problems in a sensitive manner, the next priority is the built resources within the site. Although stabilization is not as intensive when it comes to the repair of the resources as is conservation, it does involve some minor efforts to prevent further damage to markers and other features. These include resetting unstable stones that are at risk of

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<sup>184</sup> Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care: General Recommendations Pertaining to Municipal Historic Burial Grounds and Cemetery Components*, Boston: Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation, n.d., 27.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 65; Old Madison Cemetery Site Visit; Swords Cemetery Site Visit; Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery Site Visit; Chris Emery, "Rain Gardens Harvest Pollution," *Frontiers on Ecology and the Environment* 4, No.2 (March, 2006): 64.



falling over and breaking, as well as those that have inscriptions or other detailing unintentionally exposed to the elements. For simple repair tasks such as straightening or resetting stones, site stabilizers should refer to one of the many preservation manuals that exist, some of which are listed in the bibliography of this document. Additionally, when individuals reset markers, they should place them in their original locations and avoid lining markers up to make landscape management easier.<sup>186</sup>

The final task in site stabilization is physically providing security for the burial ground. Although these efforts vary from site to site, depending on its remoteness and accessibility, they should at least include regular monitoring and coordination with law enforcement. In many cases law enforcement officials can put road accessible sites on their patrols and neighboring land owners and residents can monitor suspicious activity. Although fences and lighting may be beneficial at less remote sites, they should be used judiciously. The latter can make a site more visible to ill intended individuals and the former can discourage responsible site visitation if it renders a site inaccessible during the day. Therefore, often the wisest security strategy may be leaving a burial ground open and inconspicuous, especially if it is a small remote site in the county.<sup>187</sup>

### Conservation

Once effective stabilization occurs at a site, conservation may take place if enough resources are available. However, due to the level of commitment involved in this treatment, it should only take place at sites with solid maintenance plans and adequate human and financial

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<sup>186</sup>Cobb, Hassen, and Hieder, *Cemetery Preservation Training: Part I Basic Workshop*, 9; Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 35-36; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 72; Paine, "Landscape Management of Abandoned Cemeteries in Ontario," 60.

<sup>187</sup> Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 45-46; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 18; Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 35-36.

resources since the primary goal of this treatment is repairing the existing fabric of the site.

Although this may involve bringing some new elements into a site such as vegetation specimens and some minor replacement materials, it still respects the age and patina of the site.

Additionally, unlike restoration (a term often misapplied to burial ground preservation) it does not aim at bringing a site back to the way that it was in the past, but rather to what it would have looked like had it received adequate care.<sup>188</sup>

Due to potential damage caused to the landscape while addressing the built resources within a site, they are the first priority. These resources include grave markers, historic fencing, edging, and other forms of funerary art. This task begins with site conservators cataloging all resources that need repair and photographing them and all of their fragments. Additionally, it includes using simple probing techniques to locate lost markers and fragments that have been buried over time. One of the most effective of these involves inserting a metal rod into the ground at an angle until it comes in contact with a buried object. Stone will produce a unique sound that individuals will quickly recognize as they do this. However, probing must be done with care and only with blunt rods to avoid damaging buried stone.<sup>189</sup>

After all resources and their fragments are accounted for and documented within the site, actual repair can begin. Often the resources in greatest need of repair are markers. Additionally, because they are usually the most prominent built features within a historic burial ground, it

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<sup>188</sup> Chicora Foundation, "Conservation," Chicora Foundation Website, <http://www.chicora.org/conservation.html> (Accessed September 17, 2012); Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 27, 31, 39.

<sup>189</sup> Cobb, Hassen, and Heider, *Part I Basic Workshop: Cemetery Preservation Training.*, 5; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 51, 71-73.

makes sense to address them first. However, the first priority should be fragmented markers, as broken stone pieces can easily become lost during the conservation process.<sup>190</sup>

One of the most common conservation tasks for grave markers is mending broken stone. This is particularly true for stones constructed of marble, which are quite fragile and susceptible to weathering. Of all the stones of this type, upright tablet markers are the most susceptible to damage, and nearly every historic burial ground within the county contains examples that have suffered damage at some point. However, stone mending should only take place on sound stones and should involve a historic stone conservator when possible. Additionally, all repairs should take place with appropriate materials that do not harm the resource. This includes utilizing non-corroding support pins constructed of Teflon, nylon, stainless steel, titanium, or other materials. Furthermore, all epoxies and other bonding substances should be appropriate to the stone type and should be of lesser strength so that they fail before the stone. Also, those performing such work should use only lime-based mortar and avoid cements that are Portland-based because they can damage historic stone and destroy its appearance.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Strangstad, *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds.*, 7; Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, 89.

<sup>191</sup> Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 74-78; Van Voorhies, *Grave Intentions*, 35; Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 40; Texas Historical Commission, *Preserving Historic Cemeteries*, 14.



Figure 99. An example of an appropriate marker repair in the Prospect Methodist Church Cemetery (Riley)

Another common conservation task that can improve the appearance and general health of grave markers is cleaning. This is particularly true for those located in sites that have suffered from vegetation overgrowth, which has exposed them to the buildup of leaves, soil, moisture related problems, and the growth of moss and lichen. Additionally, it includes buildup associated with airborne particles and pollution. The soiling caused by these forces can often conceal important detailing and inscriptions on markers; therefore, individuals conserving a site should remove it. However, they should do so with the gentlest means possible and if using chemicals, only use ones that are appropriate for the material they are applying it to. Additionally, they should avoid aggressive abrasive techniques, power washing, and only use soft brushes because historic stone is highly susceptible to damage from these methods.

Furthermore, all cleaning should leave the patina of the stone intact, as its aim is not to remove the age from the resource, but improve its appearance as an artifact.<sup>192</sup>



Figure 100. Wolf stone type grave markers with lichen build up in the Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 101. A grave marker in the Swords Community Cemetery with moss buildup and general soiling (Riley)

Following conservation work on grave markers, site conservators may turn their attention to other built features within the site. However, as with markers, this should take place with care and careful documentation. For stone resources such as curbing, conservators should only utilize repair materials that are appropriate for the stone type, as was the case with grave markers. Additionally, any repair involving resources constructed of masonry or concrete should take place with appropriate lime-based mortars and cements. Furthermore, individuals who carry this out should use historically correct and sensitive pointing techniques and other repair methods. As with grave markers, such repairs should involve the guidance of professionals who are

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 8; Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 45; Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, 90; Cobb, Hassen, and Heider, *Part I Basic Workshop: Cemetery Preservation Training*., 6; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 60-62.

experienced with repairing historic building materials and working with historic burial grounds.<sup>193</sup>

In addition to masonry and concrete resources, sites may contain metal resources that require special care. These include fencing, decorative objects, and even in some cases grave markers. All repairs of historic metal resources should respect the existing material present and any necessary replacements should match originals through recasting and other recreation methods. Additionally, when any repair takes place that involves fusing metal members together, individuals doing so should match welding techniques to the metal type and age. Welding techniques today differ from those in the past and can destroy certain metallic substances that have low melting points, such as cast iron. In these situations, brazing techniques (which use metal fillers with a lower melting point) are best. Furthermore, in the case of metals that were originally intended to be painted, such as cast iron, site conservators should remove rust with non-aggressive rust removers and other techniques and then repaint them.<sup>194</sup>

Due to the fact that historic burial grounds are collections of natural and built resources within a historic landscape, the land itself is the next priority in conservation. Although much of this work takes place during stabilization, more intensive efforts may be necessary, including soil repair and ground cover rehabilitation. In neglected sites, drainage issues, erosion, uprooted trees, and other factors can disrupt soil stability. Additionally, overgrown vegetation and lack of maintenance can lead to the loss of ground cover. All of this not only makes the site less

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<sup>193</sup> Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 52.

<sup>194</sup> Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 58; Weaver, *Conserving Buildings*, 186-187.

attractive and fertile, it actually makes the landscape less stable, which puts built resources at risk especially in sloping areas (something that many burial grounds in the county contain).<sup>195</sup>



Figure 102. Unstable soil at the Studdard Cemetery (Riley)

Work that addresses issues with soil and ground cover problems should begin with a soil test, after which site personnel should add appropriate fertilizers, mulch, and lime if necessary. However, before doing this, they should consult a historic stone specialist to ensure that any soil amendments required do not harm markers and other resources. Additionally, any soil decompaction should take place by hand or with a power rake to avoid damage to above and below ground resources. Once the site personnel address soil issues, they should plant ground cover that is historically appropriate to the site, as low maintenance as possible, and effective enough to prevent erosion.<sup>196</sup>

Following the establishment of stable soils and adequate ground cover, the site may be replanted with appropriate trees, shrubs, and other decorative plants. However, such replacements should consist of species and varieties that are not only historically appropriate, but also will not harm the existing fabric of the site. Therefore, site conservators should carefully

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 31, 39.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 31-33; McGahee and Edmonds, *South Carolina Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook*, 33; Strangstad, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, 54-55.



research any available documents such as historic photographs, maps, and other forms of archival evidence before replanting vegetation. Additionally, in cases where such information is unavailable, they should consult with professionals such as historic landscape architects who are knowledgeable about historic gardens and plants.<sup>197</sup>

In addition to plant species that are historically correct and non-harmful to the site, those selected should be drought tolerant, easily maintained, and noninvasive. Although those who perform this work may re-plant replacement plants in the original locations, they should avoid doing so when original specimens threatened nearby resources. In any case, the main goal of replanting vegetation is not to recreate a landscape, but to enable it to become a historically appropriate and healthy one.<sup>198</sup>

Following these efforts, conservation will result in a well-preserved landscape that still contains the type of imperfections that come with natural age. However, the ongoing success of conservation efforts at a historic burial ground depends on the dedication of its stewards and the effectiveness of its plan. Therefore, conservation is a treatment that never fully ends and for historic burial grounds, is the truest sense of perpetual care.<sup>199</sup>

Although conservation is something that many historic burial grounds within the county have yet to experience, excellent examples of successful conservation efforts exist within it, namely the Old Madison Cemetery and the adjacent New Cemetery. Through the help of the CSC and other concerned individuals, conservation efforts at these sites have mitigated much of the damage that occurred in the past via neglect and acts of vandalism. These efforts include the

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 55; Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 28-29; Charles A. Birnbaum, "Educated Decisions on the Treatment of Historic Landscapes," *APT Bulletin* 24, No. 3/4 (1991), 45.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 45; Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recommendation, *Perpetual Care*, 28.

<sup>199</sup> Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (New Cemetery).

physical conservation of many markers at the site as well as the conservation of the landscape itself.<sup>200</sup>

In addition to physical conservation efforts, some of the destruction of the past should remain intact since this imbues the site with a transcendental quality it otherwise would not have. One of the main ways the CSC accomplished this was by leaving unmarked graves in the African American section of the burial ground unmarked, rather than attempting to recreate grave markers. This enabled the site to not only remain preserved as a historic landscape, but to remain truthful about its past. Such efforts combined with the ongoing care and interpretation of the site has enabled it to heal from not only past neglect, but past social tensions as well.<sup>201</sup>



Figure 103. Area left open in the African American section of New Cemetery (Riley)

Within the county conservation efforts are not just limited to large sites, such as the Madison Cemetery; they exist at some small sites as well that have adequate resources. Although these efforts have been at a smaller scale, they reflect the value that the families and

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.; Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Madison Cemetery: Old Section."

<sup>201</sup> City of Madison, GA, Cemetery Stewardship Commission Handbook, 4, 19, 21; Madison Cemetery Site Visit I (Old Madison Cemetery); Madison Cemetery Site Visit II (New Cemetery).

associated communities place upon them. A good example of such a site is the Ponder Cemetery. Despite the fact that this site contains two of the most impressive grave markers in the county, many graves within it are unmarked and some existing markers show evidence of past damage. However, past conservation efforts have resulted in appropriate repair for many damaged markers.<sup>202</sup>

In addition to marker repair, the site contains other evidence of sensitive conservation efforts in the form of appropriately marked, unmarked graves where small granite markers have been placed at the head and foot of such graves. In the end, while the graves are defined they are not marked in a way that takes away from the historic appropriateness of the site. Therefore, this site demonstrates that conservation can be scaled down to accommodate small sites and enable them to remain intact as well.<sup>203</sup>

In conclusion, as the strategies discussed above are applied to burial grounds on a site by site basis, more of these important resources will survive. Additionally, as this takes place, the public value of the sites and their place in contemporary society will become more relevant. As this occurs, this will enable these landscapes to function as memorials to the individuals who made Morgan County what it is today and ensure that the information they contain will be available for the study and enjoyment of future generations.

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<sup>202</sup> Morgan County Planning and Development, *Morgan County Cemetery Survey*, "Ponder Cemetery;" Ponder Cemetery Site Visit.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.



Figure 104. An appropriately repaired marker at the Ponder Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 105. Small granite stones used to mark an unmarked grave in the Ponder Cemetery (Riley)



Figure 106. The granite stones in the landscape of the Ponder Cemetery (Riley)

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Conclusions

The historic burial grounds within the rural countryside of Morgan County and its small towns are significant cultural resources. From small domestic burial grounds, which embody frontier life and represent its earliest funerary landscapes to community burial grounds that convey stories of the past, these resources have stood witness to the lives of many who would otherwise be forgotten. However, as funerary landscapes they are not only sources of information, but monuments to fellow humans who loved, lived, died, and contributed the present through the past.

Despite their importance, many of these resources are threatened. Lack of stewardship, resulting from demographic shifts and other forces, has left many exposed to more direct threats from unchecked natural environments and human induced actions. Additionally, economic factors, social attitudes, and inadequate legal protection have further added to their demise. Many sites that are cared for are also vulnerable to damage from improper maintenance and restoration work.

Despite the seriousness of these threats, solutions exist that would enable more historic burial grounds to remain intact for the education and enjoyment of future generations. Strategies for generating stewardship through advocacy could bring the human and financial resources together that are necessary for their care. Additionally, effective planning could lead to appropriate preservation treatments and management efforts that would ensure their survival.

### Recommendations and Future Research

The strategies outlined in this document will take time and resources to accomplish; however, several stewardship, research, and preservation measures should be pursued. Although these range from statewide, countywide, and site-specific efforts to individual ones, many of those applicable to Morgan County are general enough that they can be applied to other similar areas throughout the United States. The table below lists these efforts and the text that follows describes the efforts in greater detail.

Table 1. Summary table of recommended preservation efforts for historic burial grounds in Morgan County and other areas

Statewide	Countywide	Site-Specific	Individual
1. Historic burial ground stewardship non-profit	5. Additional tax incentives for cemetery preservation on a countywide level	10. Develop master preservation plans that are specific to the needs of a site	13. Contact the owners of a threatened site and work with them to save a site
2. Generate a historic burial ground preservation master plan/guideline handbook for rural burial grounds within the state	6. Generate a historic burial ground preservation master plan/guideline handbook applicable to the county that is easily accessible online	11. Obtain stewardship for and stabilize neglected burial grounds on a site by site basis	14. Advocate the preservation of a threatened site to other concerned individuals
3. Expanded study of historic African American burial grounds on a statewide level	7. Expanded study on domestic burial grounds in the county and the role that they play in its history	12. Apply conservation to sites with adequate resources	15. Volunteer time and money for local burial ground preservation
4. Income tax credits for historic burial ground preservation on a state level	8. Expanded study of historic African American burial grounds on a countywide level		16. Express concern for burial ground preservation to elected officials on the state, county, and local levels
	9. Generate a preservation priority list for threatened sites within the county		

### Statewide Efforts

On a statewide level there is clear need for a nonprofit entity to assume widespread stewardship of many neglected sites within Morgan County and other rural areas. By operating on a statewide level, such an entity could assist with burial ground preservation efforts in multiple counties, but still be subject to the same state laws, thereby facilitating uniform site treatment. An organization of this type is beneficial because it could receive threatened sites through donation or purchase them with funds, generated through grants, government contracts, and private fund raising. Additionally, as an entity, it could lead the way for effective preservation guidelines for sites with stewardship and those that have the potential to regain it.

Another effort that should take place on a statewide level is the development of master plan/burial ground preservation guideline handbook that is applicable to rural sites on a statewide level. Such a resource could serve as a starting point for counties to develop similar handbooks that are suited to their individual needs. Furthermore, an expanded study on the role of historic African American burial grounds could take place with special attention directed to their role in a statewide context.

In addition to these resources, opportunity exists for tax incentives on a statewide level. Something as simple as a preservation income tax credit or a similar incentive with an environmental emphasis could make it easier for burial ground owners to preserve sites. All of these efforts could take place with the involvement of the non-profit entity previously discussed.

### Countywide Efforts

In addition to statewide efforts, countywide efforts can aid historic burial ground preservation in Morgan County and other areas. Although cemeteries are currently not taxed as property in the county, additional opportunities for tax incentives exist. One of these could be



through a property tax credit that would reduce the overall tax owned on the entire land parcel the site is associated with. This credit could be based on specific preservation measures that an owner carries out in behalf of a specific site. Additionally, preservation grants that are designed to provide burial ground stewards with financial resources for preservation efforts would be of further assistance.

The second countywide effort that should take place is the generation of a uniform approach for developing master preservation plans for historic burial grounds and guidelines for their appropriate treatment. Although a general preservation plan handbook does exist, a detailed version that addresses sites by their type, condition, and ethnic association would aid stewards in developing effective and consistent plans. Also, having this publication accessible for download via the county website would make it more accessible to individuals.

In addition to a detailed and accessible preservation plan handbook, there is need for a preservation priority list for threatened sites within the county. This list could be based on surveys, cultural landscape reports, and other information. The existence of a resource like this would appropriately direct private and public sector support to the sites that need it the most.

Another countywide effort that should take place is an expanded study that focuses on domestic burial grounds. Such a study would be beneficial because this burial ground type is the most prominent within the county and also the most threatened.

The final countywide effort that should take place is a study that is dedicated to Morgan County's African American burial grounds. Such a study is important because many of the sites that fall into this category lack present-day associations with living individuals. Therefore, understanding the lost social connections is necessary in order for the county's African American community at-large to understand how they fit into their history. Furthermore, such a study is

important because these sites are unique ethnic landscapes, which have the potential to yield information about Americans who were underrepresented in written history.

### Site-Specific Efforts

In addition to countywide efforts, some site specific efforts need to take place. The first of these is developing master preservation plans that are suited to specific burial grounds on a site by site basis. This is important because sites vary in their levels of need and the amount of resources available to address them.

In addition to plans on a site by site basis, physically addressing the problems within them through effective stabilization should take place. For many burial grounds within the county that are well maintained this is not an issue. These include the Madison, Buckhead, Rutledge, Prospect Methodist Church, Ponder, Davis, and other cemeteries with similar levels of stewardship.

By contrast, sites such as the Buckhead African American Cemetery, Holland Springs Baptist Church Cemetery, and William Ruark Cemetery are in great danger of becoming lost if no action takes place. Therefore, these sites and others in similar states in the county require site-specific efforts to restore full stewardship and stabilize their historic fabric.

In addition to stabilization, potential exists for sites with resources to receive conservation as a treatment. Such efforts would enable more sites move a step further as resources become available. As the fabric, condition, and historic appearance of these sites improves, they will inadvertently become more relevant to the public. This in turn will increase the public value of historic burial grounds on general sense, which will make them a higher preservation priority and lead to the loss of less of them.

### Individual Efforts

Volunteers and other individuals are necessary for historic burial ground preservation to take place. The first step in this process is to find out who owns a burial ground if the person interested in preserving it does not. This step is important, as owner consent must take place before any preservation begins. Additionally, it is a useful step for demonstrating the importance of preserving a site to an owner and obtaining his or her support for its long-term care.

Another important effort that should take place on an individual level is advocating the value of a site to other concerned individuals who may value it for personal connections. Family ties, cultural ties, and personal interests are all ways for a concerned individual to gain the support of others in preserving a threatened site.

In addition to advocating the value of a site to others, concerned individuals can lead preservation efforts by contributing their own time and financial resources to preserving a threatened site. Although the level of this contribution will vary on an individual basis, it is an important step in demonstrating dedication to the cause of preserving a site and an effective way to lead by example.

The final effort that should take place on an individual level is expressing concern for burial ground preservation to elected individuals. By working with these individuals, they are more likely to benefit threatened sites through legislation and through public resources that aid the survival and preservation of historic burial grounds. Additionally, such efforts demonstrate the public value of these resources and importance of making their welfare a priority.

Although this list does not cover every possible effort that can take place on these various levels, these are the basic steps. As these efforts take place, the positive outcome for many threatened sites will be more certain. Additionally, and equally important, these monuments to

the early pioneers of Morgan County and others will become more relevant to contemporary society. As such, they will continue to teach generations yet to come and continue to inspire others.

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## APPENDICES

### A Cemetery Survey Form for Morgan County Cemeteries

Conducted by Joshua Jack Riley

Date:

#### 1. Location

A: Cemetery Name(s)

B: County

C: City/Town/Community

D: Cemetery Coordinates: Latitude Longitude

#### 2. Classification

A: Public: Municipal County State Federal

B: Private: Family Name(s) if known

C: Church Church name/denomination

D: Other (explain)

#### 3. Public Accessibility

A: Unrestricted

B: Restricted (explain)

#### 4. Condition

A: Well maintained and preserved

B: Poorly maintained

C: Overgrown (easily identifiable)

D: Overgrown (not easily identifiable)

E: Not identifiable, but known to exist by other means

#### 5. Cemetery Enclosure

A: Is the cemetery enclosed by a wall, fence, hedge, or other feature? If so, describe it.

B: Condition of the enclosure (if present)

#### 6. Tombstones, markers, mausoleums, or tombs

A: Are stone markers present

B: Average condition of markers (if present)

C: Types of marker stones present: granite    marble    slate    field stone  
other (explain)

D: Date of most recent burial found

E: Date of earliest burial found

F: Marker styles present: die on base    column    tablet    box tomb    bedstead  
other (describe)

G: Are mausoleums or tombs present

H: Average condition of mausoleums or tombs (if present)

I: Types of building material present    marble    slate    field stone    other  
(explain)

J: Date of most recent tomb/mausoleum burial found

K: Date of earliest mausoleum/burial found

#### 7. Hazards imperiling the cemetery's existence

8. Has the cemetery been listed in an existing published or unpublished survey? If yes, explain/identify the publication.
9. Historic or other significance of the cemetery.
10. Any other information pertinent to the cemetery
11. Preservation plan observed
  - A: Does a preservation plan appear to be present
  - B: What is that plan (if observable)
12. Photo Log
- 13: General notes

B Sample Completed Cemetery Survey Form for Morgan County Cemeteries

Conducted by Joshua Jack Riley

Date: September 24, 2010

1. Location

A: Cemetery Name(s) Ponder Family Cemetery

B: County Morgan

C: City/Town/Community Fairplay

D: Cemetery Coordinates: Longitude 33° 41.217' N Latitude 83° 35.228' W

2. Classification

A: Public: Municipal County State Federal

B: Private: Family Name(s) if known: Ponder

C: Church: Church name/denomination

D: Other (explain)

3. Public Accessibility

A: Unrestricted

B: Restricted (explain)

4. Condition

A: Well maintained and preserved

B: Poorly maintained

C: Overgrown (easily identifiable)

D: Overgrown (not easily identifiable)

E: Not identifiable, but known to exist by other means

5. Cemetery Enclosure

A: Is the cemetery enclosed by a wall, fence, hedge, or other feature? If so, describe it. Yes. The enclosure is hog wire set in concrete with a latching gate with no lock.

B: Condition of the enclosure (if present) Good

6. Tombstones, markers, mausoleums, or tombs

A: Are stone markers present: Yes

B: Average condition of markers (if present)

C: Types of marker stones present: granite concrete marble slate field stone  
other (explain)

D: Date of most recent burial found: 1901

Date of earliest burial found: 1852

E: Marker styles present: die on base column tablet box tomb bedstead  
other (describe)

G: Are mausoleums or tombs present: No

H: Average condition of mausoleums or tombs (if present)

I: Types of building material present marble granite concrete other (explain)

J: Date of most recent tomb/mausoleum burial found

Date of earliest mausoleum/burial found

7. Hazards imperiling the cemetery's existence

General marker decay and the close proximity of a highway.

8. Has the cemetery been listed in an existing published or unpublished survey? If yes, explain/identify the publication. Yes. Morgan County 2007.

9. Historic or other significance of the cemetery.



The cemetery is associated with the Ponder family and likely with a Greek Revival mansion approximately 200 yards from it. The cemetery contains two very large marble, Gothic inspired, bell tower markers. These are over 15 feet tall with bases greater than five feet. Many markers made of less durable materials are missing in the burial ground. The Cemetery is a good gauge of the economic history of this rural area from antebellum times to the early 20th century.

10. Any other information pertinent to the cemetery

11. Preservation plan observed

A: Does a preservation plan appear to be present Yes

B: What is that plan (if observable) Regular maintenance and stone repair (likely by the family with professional assistance). Also, the used of small granite stones to mark graves that have lost their markers.

12. Photo Log

1. Burial ground (view 1)

2. Burial ground (View 2)

3. Bell tower marker (view 1)

4. Bell tower (view 2)

5. C.F. Ponder box tomb

6. C.F. Ponder box tomb (close up of inscription)

7. C.F. Ponder box tomb (view 2)

8. C.F. Ponder box tomb with shear damage from tension

9. Damaged concrete vernacular marker

10. The most recent marker (1901)

11. Looking southwest across the cemetery
12. Area with missing markers
13. Marked graves that are missing their original markers
14. Broken tablet stone (likely c. 1850s)
15. Intact stone of the same size and type (1852)
16. Repaired stone
17. Close up of repair in photo 16
18. Fine obelisk
19. Another fine obelisk
20. Front of photo 19
21. Front of Photo 18
22. Back of the bell tower markers
23. Sarah Ponder's grave
24. Inscription 1 on bell tower marker
25. Inscription 2 on bell tower marker
26. Vegetation that could threaten these markers
27. Back view of bell tower 1
28. Back view of bell tower 2
29. Surrounding countryside
30. Bell tower with scale
- 13: General Notes

The cemetery appears to be associated with a family that lived near the site before, during, and after the Civil War. Although the latest known burial is from 1901

and the site is no longer used for burials, it is regularly maintained. This care is likely takes place by family members or nearby property owners that are aware of its significance.