

ZION HILL CEMETERY: PRESERVING A VANISHING CULTURAL HERITAGE  
THROUGH DOCUMENTATION, RESTORATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

by

LYNN ELIZABETH JONES

(Under the Direction of Clark Scott Nesbit, Jr.)

ABSTRACT

Cemeteries are nonrenewable cultural resources as defined by the Georgia State Code. The importance of acknowledgement to the recovery of Black American sites is vital, as many Black American cemeteries contain unmarked, unacknowledged graves. This thesis presents Zion Hill Cemetery as a case study in preserving abandoned Black cemeteries in Georgia, particularly cemeteries that are sites of memorial contest and community trauma. It argues that acknowledgement is necessary for proper preservation of cemeteries like this one. Acknowledgement is defined as the documentation and restoration of the Black American cemetery, as well as developing a public engagement of a community. Through the acknowledgement of Black American heritage, the author demonstrates how a cemetery may be recovered through documentation, restoration, and the engagement of people to tell stories. This thesis discusses the importance of contacting descendants and educating the public about the history of those buried within the cemetery. Additionally, this thesis discusses the need for a long-term sustainable plan.

INDEX WORDS: Zion Hill Cemetery, Acknowledgment, African American Cemeteries, Black American Cemeteries, Cemetery Preservation, Colored Cemeteries, Cultural Resources, Ethnographic Landscapes, Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery, Heritage Sites, Historic Cemeteries, Grants, Moore's Ford Lynching, Monroe, Georgia.

ZION HILL CEMETERY: PRESERVING A VANISHING CULTURAL HERITAGE  
THROUGH DOCUMENTATION, RESTORATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

by

LYNN ELIZABETH JONES

BA, Shorter University, 2014

MBA, Shorter University, 2016

MMH SNP, Shorter University, 2017

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2024

© 2024

Lynn Elizabeth Jones

All Rights Reserved

ZION HILL CEMETERY: PRESERVING A VANISHING CULTURAL HERITAGE  
THROUGH DOCUMENTATION, RESTORATION, AND ENGAGEMENT

by

LYNN ELIZABETH JONES

Major Professor:	Clark Scott Nesbit Jr.
Committee:	Robert Alfred Vick
	Ervan Garrison
	Charles Ridley Newsom

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott  
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2024

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the descendants of the Zion Hill Baptist Church of Monroe, Georgia. It is also dedicated to Black American church families across the nation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very appreciative to my committee for sharing their knowledge, time, and suggestions. Thank you to the Tabernacle Baptist Church and First African Baptist Church families. Thank you to Bill Owens for helping me with deed research and field study efforts. Thank you to Randy Brennen for surveying the cemetery with Ground Penetrating Radar. Thank you to W&A Engineering for MLK Day of Service volunteer days, which included a pro bono survey. Thank you to Julia Harrington Conrad for designing the cemetery logo. Thank you to Blue Hound Printing and Alcovy Signs. Thank you to Stephanie Calabrese for including our work in her film, UNSPOKEN. Thank you to the Walton Tribune, The Oconee Enterprise, and Monroe Local News. Thank you to the Garden Club of Georgia, the National Council for Preservation Education, the Willson Center for Arts and Humanities, Charlayne Hunter- Gault, the Walker Foundation, the Watson Brown Foundation, Elizabeth Lyon, and the Georgia Trust. Thank you to the Monroe Museum for grant partnerships. Thank you to the City of Monroe and Walton County. Thank you to all the Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery. Thank you to people I have failed to name here. Without each of you, this paper and the Zion Hill Cemetery preservation effort would not be possible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	1
Inspiration .....	1
Literature Review.....	2
Thesis Statement .....	4
Organization.....	5
2 BLACK AMERICAN CEMETERIES .....	7
National Context .....	11
Case Studies from Across the State of Georgia .....	13
3 THE HISTORY OF ZION HILL CHURCH .....	24
4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	31
Georgia’s Abandoned Cemetery Code .....	32
Mitigation.....	35
Survey .....	37
Notifying the Descendants .....	47
5 Community Engagement .....	54
Community Stories .....	58
Educational Workshops .....	67
Furthering Community Engagement.....	71
6 CONCLUSIONS: A PROPOSAL FOR MITIGATION .....	76

Funding .....	77
Resources for a Long-Term Plan .....	79
Conclusion .....	84
REFERENCES .....	86
APPENDICES	
A) GA Code § 36-72-1 - GA Code § 36-72-14 .....	93
B)Walton County Clerk’s Court Deed Book 98, page 628 .....	130
C) Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) .....	136
D) “Walton County’s Forgotten Cemeteries: A Special Report” “Preserving History” .....	139

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1: A tablet from Oak Ridge Cemetery, discovered on September 28, 2022. It is approximately five feet tall. It was used as a sliding door, lowered at the head of the vault and then sealed. Photo by Joey Fernandez .....	21
Figure 2.2: Figure 2.2: The tablet discovered on September 28, 2022, in Oak Ridge Cemetery is restored by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries. Photo by Joey Fernandez.....	22
Figure 2.3: A photo of Oak Ridge Cemetery, with obscured gravesites. Photo by Jessi Dominy, Oak Ridge Project. 2023.....	23
Figure 3.1: “Before & After” photos of the historic Zion Hill Cemetery. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....	24
Figure 3.2: Zion Hill Cemetery logo, designed pro bono by Julia Harrington. Photo courtesy of Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery.....	26
Figure 3.3: Volunteers of <i>Friends of Zion Hill</i> tackle invasive growth at Zion Hill Cemetery, Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....	31
Figure 4.1: Church Deacon and Friends of Zion Hill volunteer Johnny Smith holds a Friends of Zion Hill T-Shirt. The shirts were funded by a grant from the National Council for Preservation Education. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....	35
Figure 4.2: Friends of Zion Hill Volunteers battle the invasive vegetation at the historic cemetery. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....	37
Figure 4.3: Walton County Clerk’s Office, Plat Book 10, Page 47.....	38
Figure 4.4: Walton County Clerk’s Office, “Survey for Kenneth Murray”, 1969.....	39
Figure 4.5: W&A Engineering, Survey of Zion Hill Cemetery, 2022.....	40
Figure 4.6: Signature Scapes, Signature Mapping, Ground Penetrating Radar of Zion Hill Cemetery, 2023.....	42
Figure 4.7: A rock gravestone inscribed “H. Hillyer” at Zion Hill Cemetery, Monroe, Georgia. Flags marks anomalies located with GPR are in the background. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....	43
Figure 4.8: Bill Owens discovers a rock gravestone inscribed “H. Hillyer” at Zion Hill Cemetery, Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....	44
Figure 4.9: Etched rock stating “Our Baby”. Photo Credit: Elizabeth Jones.....	46

Figure 4.10: Walton Tribune, *Ma Sug Jones Marks 102 Years In Walton*. (May, 21, 1969.) The birthday celebration of Ma Sug Jones. (Photo courtesy of the Monroe Museum).....48

Figure 4.11: Coleman Landers kneels near the grave of his relative, Charlie Landers at the Zion Hill Cemetery in 2023. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....50

Figure 4.12: Earnest Camp. The Walton Tribune. *Sweet Chariot Summons Home Beloved Queen of Mammies*. (1935) Photo courtesy of the Monroe Museum.....51

Figure 4.13: Flora Brown & her son, Randy Tyrone Brown, descendants of Charlie Landers.....53

Figure 5.1: Daffodils bloom in a bed grave at the Zion Hill Cemetery. Bulbs were provided by a grant from the Garden Club of Georgia and planted by Friends of Zion Hill. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....56

Figure 5.2: Church member and Friends of Zion Hill volunteer helps with the placement of gravestones on unmarked graves in the spring of 2023. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....57

Figure 5.3: “Three Ring” configurations on a homemade gravestone at Zion Hill Cemetery. “A.J. Hawkins.” Photo by Elizabeth Jones .....60

Figure 5.4: An interpretive sign about Esther Crew, Buddy Conyers, and the Brownsville Raid at the Zion Hill Cemetery. The sign was placed by Elizabeth Jones and *Friends of Zion Hill*, enabled by an award from the Willson Center for Arts and Humanities through the University of Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....62

Figure 5.5: Friends of Zion Hill volunteer Charles Morrow installs one of several handmade birdhouses. The birdhouses were created and donated by volunteer Darlene Sumlar Brine. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....66

Figure 5.6: Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery volunteer Paige Sullivan uses D/2 biological solution to clean Mae Murray Dorsey’s memorial marker. Photo by Stephanie Calabrese.....67

Figures 5.7 & 5.8: The marker was cleaned with D/2 biological solution three weeks ago. The markers continued to lighten over the next few months. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

Creasie Hill  
 Born Jan. 30, 1841.  
 Died March 9, 1900.  
 God in His wisdom recalled  
 The boon His love has given  
 And though the body moulders here  
 The soul is safe in heaven.

.....68

Figure 5.9: Markers are repaired by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries specialist Joey Fernandez. Photo by Stephanie Calabrese.....69

Figure 5.10: Gravestones repaired by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries preservationist, Joey Fernandez. Funds were provided by a grant from the Walker Foundation to Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery in partnership with the Monroe Museum. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....70

Figure 5.11: Randy Brennan of Signature Scapes demonstrates Ground Penetrating Radar at the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe Georgia at the Georgia Trust’s Monroe Expedition in 2022. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....72

Figure 5.12: A footstone (partially painted blue) wedged behind the former B&B Engine building at the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....75

Figure 6:1: Storm water collects in a drain and floods the burials discovered with GPR at Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....82

Figure 6:2: Storm Water Drains at the Zion Hill Cemetery (Photo Courtesy City of Monroe) ..83

Figure 6:3: A flue ushers storm water from the shopping center entranceway into the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.....83

Figure 6.4: Friends of Zion Hill Volunteers gather fallen limbs and debris... and frolic in the cemetery. Photo by Stephanie Calabrese.....85

Figure D1: Parabolas designate anomalies with Ground Penetrating Radar with a GSSI SIR 4000 control unit and a 400 MHz antenna on a tricycle survey cart. Covington Historic City Cemetery, Covington, Georgia. Photo credit: Randy Brennan of Signature Mapping..... 138

Figure D2: Parabolas designate anomalies with Ground Penetrating Radar with a GSSI SIR 4000 control unit and a 400 MHz antenna on a tricycle survey cart. Covington Historic City Cemetery, Covington, Georgia. Photo credit: Randy Brennan of Signature Mapping.....138

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Inspiration**

In 2017, the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.<sup>1</sup> The launch pushed the preservation needs of the Black American community into the public eye. I think about the value of preservation for my community, and I urge each of us to do the same. I discovered the Zion Hill Cemetery when a friend drove me through the circular shopping center parking lot, down the street from my house. Beside the parking lot was a wooded lot of dense undergrowth. Scuppernong vines grew thick through the trees, obscuring the view. Before long, a scramble of discovery ensued through the vines.

When first approaching the Zion Hill Cemetery project, I was told by a professor that the restoration of a Black American cemetery was not my story because I was white. Perhaps what he meant to say was that it is important to engage the Black community and ask for input before beginning such a restoration. I met with the Mayor, a First African Baptist Church Deacon, and the Fire Chief to discuss the project. I attended both the Tabernacle and First African Baptist Churches to speak with the congregations. I asked the church members if I could help to preserve their history by preserving the cemetery. They said “yes” and gathered around me in prayer. As of this writing, I have been attending the First African Baptist Church for seven years. I envision the cemetery project as ongoing, a heritage concept involving the community, the churches, and the City of Monroe.

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Esther Crew is buried at Zion Hill Cemetery. I feel like the verse on her marker is a voice for the illumination and acknowledgement of Black American history. Esther Crew's marker bears a Bible verse which references the city of Zion: "Ye are the light of the world. A city built upon on a hill cannot be hid." (Matthew 5:14). She was born in 1861, and she died April 16, 1935.<sup>2</sup> (Note: The name on the gravestone is Easter Crew, but associated deeds seem to be signed "Esther Crew.") The Bible verse became an inspiration, as the Zion Hill Cemetery was hidden from view. I want to illuminate the history of Zion Hill, as a beacon for other communities to do the same.

Community engagement is also an inspiration for a continuation of the Zion Hill Cemetery preservation effort. Church members have told me about segregation, and why it can be difficult for the older Black citizens to walk into the downtown stores. Some people were reared with sadness about the downtown area. Hearing the sadness from a friend, the despair resonates. I would like to think an ongoing community engagement will help to facilitate empathy.

### **Literature Review**

The following Literature Review examines the topics of acknowledgement and community and identifies sources used prior to seeking community engagement. For this case study, my research synthesizes my own fieldwork from the Zion Hill Cemetery case study.

*Grave Intentions: A Guide to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia* is written by Christine Van Voorhies and distributed by the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with the Historic Chattahoochee Commission.<sup>3</sup> I highly recommend this book as a starting point for any cemetery restoration project within the

---

<sup>2</sup> Zion Hill Cemetery, Burial Marker, "Easter Crew", Monroe, Georgia.

<sup>3</sup> Christine Van Voorhies, *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

State of Georgia. I found the 98 page guide to contain a wealth of information about identifying, recording, commemorating, restoring, and protecting cemeteries in Georgia.<sup>4</sup> The book suggests the formation of non-profits or collaboration with local governments to obtain grants.<sup>5</sup> My work at Zion Hill Cemetery demonstrates underprivileged communities may not have the resources to write grants or form non-profits, and municipalities may be hesitant to collaborate with trauma-infused spaces for restoration efforts. I did find some grants may be obtained in partnerships with existing non-profits in the community. Although municipalities have the authority to allocate funds for the upkeep of abandoned cemeteries, as defined by the Georgia Code, this authority is seldom utilized.

A trauma-infused burial ground may hold a wealth of information about the community associated with it. Church records, deeds, newspapers, and maps proved helpful as I researched the history of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church. The book *Lay Down Body: Living History in African American Cemeteries*, published in 1996 by Roberta Hughs Wright and Wilbur Hughs III, details a diverse array of cemetery sites, and it provides a large overview of cemetery preservation. The book brings together the lives of the living with those of the deceased, showing the importance of community involvement and the relevance of oral histories. This relevance of oral history is true at Zion Hill Cemetery. As the descendants recount the stories of family history, both the joys and sorrows of the Zion Hill community are reflected in present day faces.

Lynn Rainville is the author of *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. She emphasizes the magnitude of celebration felt in reaching descendants and connecting communities through burial grounds, and I can agree with her enthusiasm. Her book

---

<sup>4</sup>Christine Van Voorhies, *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

has a chapter aptly entitled “Connecting Communities Through Their Burial Grounds”, and she uses her research within historic slave cemeteries to trace a Black American community to present times. From her research and from my own experience, I have an inkling of how horribly slavery stays with the families of those who were enslaved. As I speak with descendants about the people buried at the Zion Hill Cemetery, I am becoming more cognizant of the reality.

I have rallied the volunteers to clear the site of Zion Hill Cemetery, researched the deeds, commissioned the Ground Penetrating Radar (which noted burials under paved locations), installed the interpretive signs, commissioned the reconstruction of broken headstones, and written numerous grants. The Zion Hill site is a work in progress, an ever-evolving community project. The Zion Hill Cemetery case study offers tools to promote and provide acknowledgement for the preservation of Black American community heritage.

## **Research Question/Thesis Statement**

### **Thesis Statement**

This thesis presents Zion Hill Cemetery as a case study in preserving abandoned Black cemeteries in Georgia, particularly cemeteries which are sites of memorial contest and community trauma. Is the acknowledgement of a trauma-infused burial ground through community engagement necessary for the proper preservation of cemeteries like the Zion Hill Cemetery? Acknowledgement asks a community to understand the whole of its heritage. Openly accepting historical facts is an act of validation. Acknowledgement must be part of a long-term sustainable plan for project’s success to withstand a duration of time. It is the objective of this thesis to demonstrate, through the case study of Zion Hill Cemetery, that Black American cemeteries are a community asset and to discover the importance of community engagement as a

tool of acknowledgement. This thesis will show the importance of identifying the lost burials of Zion Hill Cemetery. It will discuss contacting descendants and educating the public about the history of those buried within the cemetery. Additionally, this thesis will discuss preservation activities which are currently occurring and stress the importance of a long-term sustainable plan for future mitigating activities.

### **Organization**

Chapter One consists of the introduction and research methodology. The research methodology consists of a case study of the history and preservation of a Black American church cemetery, Zion Hill Cemetery, established in Monroe, Georgia between 1868 and 1869. The case study references the organization Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery Monroe, Georgia, which I am currently managing as the founder of *Preserve & Serve Georgia, Inc.* (501c3). The research of the thesis examines the field work utilized to acknowledge and thereby preserve the cemetery, utilizing community engagement.

Chapter Two outlines the preservation or neglect of Black cemeteries both nationally and in the State of Georgia. Elements of acknowledgement are discussed as they pertain to the recovery of Black American cemeteries. The chapter notes how the concept of surveys may relate to each of these cemeteries, emphasizing nonrenewable cultural heritage.<sup>6</sup>

Chapter Three discusses the history of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church and the Zion Hill Cemetery. It focuses on the question of the cemetery's abandonment, noting the church did not believe the property was deeded to their Trustees. Chapter Four discusses the importance of "Acknowledgement", vital for the recovery of Black American cemeteries and the protection and the preservation of nonrenewable cultural heritage in the State of Georgia.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1 (2022)

<sup>7</sup> Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1 (2022)

Chapter Five further examines the case study of the Zion Hill Church and Cemetery, focusing on the importance of community engagement as a tool of acknowledgement of nonrenewable cultural heritage. Chapter Five defines the importance of “Community Engagement” to the preservation of Zion Hill Cemetery, highlighting the importance of advocacy to promote the site as an educational vessel, promoting conversations of reconciliation and change.

Chapter Six examines the results of the mitigation used to recover the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe Georgia from a state of abandonment, as described by the Georgia State Code. It outlines the next steps of the stewardship effort, noting a long-term sustainable plan is vital for the recovery and maintenance of Black American cemeteries. The elements of acknowledgement are documentation, restoration, and community engagement. The elements may be used to create a sustainable plan, supported by a cornerstone of funding.

## CHAPTER 2

### BLACK AMERICAN CEMETERIES

This chapter demonstrates the preservation or neglect of Black cemeteries both nationally and in the State of Georgia, specifically noting the need for documentation and survey to identify burials. Elements of acknowledgement and community involvement are discussed as they pertain to the recovery of Black American cemeteries. Burial markers are discussed because markers are the acknowledgement of an existence. The existence of Black American burials are often unacknowledged, and the history associated with the people is disappearing.<sup>8</sup>

The Black American cemetery is a rich piece of Black American nonrenewable cultural heritage.<sup>9</sup> The Black American cemetery commemorates the burial grounds of the Black American people. Cemeteries consist of slave cemeteries, often both segregated and in adjacent plots near the white plantation owner's cemetery, free Black cemeteries, and late nineteenth and twentieth century family cemeteries. (Cemeteries may blend as combination of these types as land exchanged hands over time.) Grave markers may be hidden, stolen, vandalized, or moved. Proof of burial grounds often lies in genealogical information, archeological information, deeds, tax records, or oral histories. Some gravestones are homemade, either of concrete or of etched sandstone rocks, as I will later discuss as a finding of the Zion Hill Cemetery. In her book, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*, Lynn Rainville notes the creation of gravestones was linked to literacy.<sup>10</sup> The slave laws of Georgia mandated that it was against the law for a white person to write or employ a slave as a scribe. Teaching slaves to read

---

<sup>8</sup> Audra D.S. Burch, "Nearly 'Erased By History' African Americans Search for Lost Graves". *New York Times*.

<sup>9</sup> Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1 (2022)

<sup>10</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. p.2

was outlawed in 1770, but it was reenacted in 1829 (to include free persons of color.)<sup>11</sup> Before emancipation, an inscription of a name or date on a marker might denote literacy, revealing a Georgia law had been broken.

The burials of the Zion Hill Cemetery were once adjacent to the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church, denoting the religious association of the people. Prior to Emancipation, true religious freedom was not known to Black American people. While many of the people of buried in Zion Hill died after Emancipation, they were born under the slave laws of Georgia. In Georgia, a law enacted in 1792 dictated, “No congregation or company of negros shall under any pretense of Divine worship, assemble themselves, contrary to the act, for regulating patrols.”<sup>12</sup> A Georgia law enacted in 1833 noted “no person of color, free or slave, shall be allowed to preach or join in any religious exercise with any person of color, free or slave, where more than 7 persons of color are present.”<sup>13</sup> The law further stated a person of color must have a written certificate from 3 ordained ministers of a particular denomination, must have written permission of county justices of the Interior Court, and must have permission by the Mayor or Chief Officer.<sup>14</sup> To reiterate, 189 years ago, a Black person would need the permission of government for any religious exercise where more than 7 Black people were gathered in the state of Georgia.<sup>15</sup>

Lynn Rainville notes that “slave cemeteries are rarely indicated on modern maps.”<sup>16</sup> She

---

<sup>11</sup> Board of Regents, University of Georgia System, *Slave Laws of Georgia, 1755-1860*. “Creating a More Educated Georgia”. Georgia Archives. p.12

<sup>12</sup> Board of Regents, University of Georgia System, *Slave Laws of Georgia, 1755-1860*. “Creating a More Educated Georgia”. Georgia Archives. p.15

<sup>13</sup> Board of Regents, University of Georgia System, *Slave Laws of Georgia, 1755-1860*. “Creating a More Educated Georgia”. Georgia Archives. p.16

<sup>14</sup> Board of Regents, University of Georgia System, *Slave Laws of Georgia, 1755-1860*. “Creating a More Educated Georgia”. Georgia Archives. p.16

<sup>15</sup> Board of Regents, University of Georgia System, *Slave Laws of Georgia, 1755-1860*. “Creating a More Educated Georgia”. Georgia Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. p.13

designates three primary interment types, namely plantation burials, burials just outside of a white cemetery, or burial in a separate, Black American cemetery. Plantation cemeteries may be in subdivisions of urbanized areas. In rural areas they may be part of a large homestead. Nineteenth century maps are likely to display the names of wealthy landowners. If enslaved individuals are not buried in or adjacent to a white cemetery, they may be buried in a separate, designated location.<sup>17</sup>

In a Chicora Foundation publication entitled "Grave Matters: The Preservation of African American Cemeteries", the writings of Elsie Clews Parsons are discussed. Elsie is noted for identifying "African American cemeteries did not typically preserve family groupings. Although generations of related kin would be buried at the same graveyard, the tie was to the location, not to a particular 3 by 6 foot piece of ground."<sup>18</sup> I wonder, if a tie is to a location, what happens when the tie to the location is broken? I will demonstrate how the Zion Hill Church members did not realize they owned the cemetery property.

After emancipation, three types of Black cemeteries are seen: church graveyards, neighborhood cemeteries, and small family plots. Public cemeteries became available for African Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century, although Black Americans were banned in segregated sections until the 1960s.<sup>19</sup> For urban areas, the churchyard plots are sometimes seen on Sanborn fire maps. Black churches of the south were kindled after emancipation, along with their cemeteries. Some churches relocated, moving away from the cemeteries. As roads expanded and cities grew, Black cemeteries began to disappear.<sup>20</sup> Rocks and headstones were discarded for the construction of new buildings. The thirty-six slave cemeteries located in

---

<sup>17</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. p.14

<sup>18</sup> The Chicora Foundation. *Grave Matters: The Preservation of African American Cemeteries*

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Audra D.S. Burch, "Nearly 'Erased By History' African Americans Search for Lost Graves". *New York Times*.

Virginia researcher Lynn Rainville's study were found with a combination of "human resources, topographic maps, aerial photography, and occasionally, archival documents"<sup>21</sup>

Black American communities began to establish churches after Emancipation which often served as schools. Atlases, Sanborn fire maps, and ariel photos may provide clues to the locations of the cemeteries found on these properties. My research has shown me that the deeds of Black American churches are sometimes listed in the names of trustees instead of the names of the church itself. (The church can seem to disappear from the deed search because of this.)<sup>22</sup> Fraternal organizations and burial organizations also established and cared for many burial grounds. Organizations might be religious or secular. It became infrequent to see burials in a backyard setting.<sup>23</sup>

Oral histories help the Black community members remember where their dead are buried. In later generations, it may become increasingly difficult to locate people with the knowledge of these oral histories.<sup>24</sup> Headstones, footstones, plot markers, and family memorials are all used within Black cemeteries. Headstones are markers usually designating the "head" of where the deceased rests. Headstones may be stone, metal, cement, brick, or wood. A footstone is used less frequently, but it often resembles a headstone. The footstone is sometimes marked with initials of the deceased.

Burials may exist without noticeable markers, or without markers at all. A marker may have never existed, a wood marker may have decayed, or the original marker may have been buried or moved. Finding proof of where a cemetery exists lies in "archeological information,

---

<sup>21</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. p.16

<sup>22</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, Deed Book U. p. 141; Walton County Clerk of Courts, Deed Book G, Page 182

<sup>23</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*.

<sup>24</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. p.3

historical and genealogical information, deeds, county tax records, or tax maps, the word of a local mortician, ... or an oral tradition.”<sup>25</sup>

Plot markers may be made of stone, brick, cement, or fencing. Many plot markers were designed as bed graves. A bed grave resembles a flower bed, and traditional plants such as the mahonia and yucca served as organic grave markers. Family memorials are used to mark burial plots as the area used by a family. They may contain a single-family name or be marked on several sides with the names of individual family members. It is common to see newer headstones on older burials, and this can be seen at the Zion Hill Cemetery. Younger generations often upgraded headstones for family members years after the death.<sup>26</sup>

### **National Context**

The following case studies were selected to demonstrate the impact of a trauma-infused history upon the preservation of a historic cemetery and the involved community. There seems to be a theme of denial, or a lack of recognition of painful history. Perhaps the shame of a painful past causes people to try to eliminate the past as if it never existed.

#### ***1. New York City, New York: The African Burial Ground***

The African Burial Ground project began in 1991. The project, coordinated by the US General Services Administration (GSA), began after the discovery of the remains of more than 400 free and enslaved African men, women, and children.<sup>27</sup> The discovery was made during the pre-construction phase of a new federal office building in lower Manhattan. The unmarked burial ground was 6.6 acres in size and was thought to have been used during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Christine Van Voorhies, *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

<sup>26</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. p. 3

<sup>27</sup> GSA. *The African Burial Ground*.

centuries.<sup>28</sup> The GSA reported the unmarked cemetery was marred by development and landfill.<sup>29</sup> The development and the treatment of the cemetery as a landfill were reminiscent of my own research, as the edges of the Zion Hill Cemetery were developed, and the cemetery was treated as a landfill by a local engine repair shop.

A tribute to community stewardship, the African Burial Ground was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993 and a National Monument in 2006. (The National Park Service operates The African Burial Ground National Monument.)<sup>30</sup> “The finding of the burial ground deeply impacted the descendant and broader community, and at the same time, renewed awareness in cultural significance and historic preservation.”<sup>31</sup>

## ***2. Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oak Lawn Cemetery***

Black American cemeteries are often sites of memorial contest and community trauma. In 1921, a mob had attacked around 300 Black citizens throughout the entire district of Greenwood. The event was called the Tulsa Race Massacre. No one was ever held accountable. In 2020, the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma began excavations in the corner of Oaklawn Cemetery. Evidence of a mass burial in Oaklawn Cemetery had been discovered. The state archeologist led investigations in 2021 and 2022, analyzing 22 sets of remains. Records are important, because the county had paid for a known quantity of 18 “riot dead” to be buried in the cemetery.<sup>32</sup>

The Tulsa Race Massacre began, like many episodes of racial violence, with a false accusation. On May 31, 1921, a white mob gathered outside a courthouse where a young Black man was being held over allegations that he had attacked a young white woman who operated an elevator in a department store. The man was

---

<sup>28</sup> GSA. *The African Burial Ground*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> GSA. *The African Burial Ground*.

<sup>31</sup> GSA. *The African Burial Ground*.

<sup>32</sup> McCarthy, Lauren. (April 15, 2023; Updated April 17, 2023). “Tulsa Reaches Breakthroughs In Search For Massacre Victims”. *New York Times*.

cleared, but when the group of white men converged with a group of Black men at a police station, shots were fired and a fight broke out.<sup>33</sup>

Six sets of remains found in the investigation area yielded genealogy profiles. These remains may not be victims of the massacre, but officials hope genetic profiles will lead to living descendants.<sup>34</sup> As a trauma-infused burial site, the preservation surrounding the Oak Lawn Cemetery has powerfully impacted and educated the community.

### **Case Studies from Across the State of Georgia**

After the Civil War, many formerly enslaved couples were married legally after living together for years. Southern cemeteries help to document the social context of the community after Emancipation. Some cemeteries show an amassing of wealth in fancy headstones while others are marked by common stones. Some cemeteries show a continued burial in the same cemetery after Emancipation for many decades.

The existence of monuments on the grave of a slave or a formerly enslaved person provides a tangible memorial to the deceased individual's existence. The record of a life might be a plant, a piece of wood, a carved rock, or an engraved monument. Many who stumble upon a Black cemetery might not understand it even exists. Rocks may have been moved, or markers may be long covered by dirt and debris. Further examination reveals a continuously unfolding and revealing history, which leads to a nonrenewable cultural heritage of the State of Georgia.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> McCarthy, Lauren. (April 15, 2023; Updated April 17, 2023). "Tulsa Reaches Breakthroughs In Search For Massacre Victims". *New York Times*.

<sup>34</sup> McCarthy, Lauren. (April 15, 2023; Updated April 17, 2023). "Tulsa Reaches Breakthroughs In Search For Massacre Victims". *New York Times*.

<sup>35</sup> Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1 (2022)

In her book, *Hidden History*, Lynn Rainville states, “By the beginning of the twentieth century, public cemeteries became available for African Americans, although blacks were buried in segregated sections until the 1960’s.”<sup>36</sup> Because many of the Black American graves were often unmarked, these sections are sometimes dismissed as nonexistent. Today, one may see both integrated and historically segregated Black sections in municipal cemeteries.

### ***1. Old Athens Cemetery***

The Old Athens Cemetery rests on the campus of the University of Georgia. This case study provided a case study from which I learned the importance of communicating with descendants. It also provided an excellent study on the importance of deed research and survey prior to the breaking of ground. According to the *Archaeological Exhumation of Burials in the Baldwin Hall Portion of the Old Athens Cemetery, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, Final Report*, the following facts are relevant to the Athens case: “In October 2015 the University broke ground on a major addition to Baldwin Hall, which lies immediately south of the Old Athens Cemetery.”<sup>37</sup> The document continues, “On November 17, 2015, workers in the construction pit, using a small excavator to complete a final footer trench for a wall, dislodged what appeared to be a human skull. Excavation immediately ceased.”<sup>38</sup> The Georgia Bureau of Investigation was notified, per Georgia Code GA Code §31-21-6(a). The GBI took the skull to their lab in Atlanta.<sup>39</sup> “Eventually, what are thought to be the remains of 105 people were discovered, nearly all of African-American decent. Thirty remains had material for DNA tests.”<sup>40</sup>

The Archaeological Exhumation of Burials in the Baldwin Hall Portion of the Old Athens

---

<sup>36</sup> Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*. p. 16

<sup>37</sup> Gresham et al. p. 41-44

<sup>38</sup> Gresham et al. p. 4

<sup>39</sup> Gresham et al. *Archaeological Exhumation of Burials in the Baldwin Hall Portion of the Old Athens Cemetery, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, Final Report*. p. 4

<sup>40</sup> George, *Unearthed Remains Create Controversy in Athens*.

Cemetery, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, Final Report states the cemetery size was between 6 and 7.625 acres according to most documents, although an 1852 purchase map shows its size at 5.1 acres.<sup>41</sup>

Due diligence and the need to preserve nonrenewable cultural heritage, as discussed in Georgia Code Section 36-72-4 G and Georgia Code Section 36-72-5 G, should have mandated survey be required prior to the breaking of ground on such an old cemetery location, where boundaries may have shifted. It was determined that a permit (as described by both the Georgia Code and the Georgia Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Investigations) was not obtained by the Board of Regents prior to the breaking of ground adjacent to the borders of the “known” cemetery. (University research may have been conducted with deeds and maps prior to the construction, but research parties were not communicating information with one another prior to the breaking of ground.) Conversations with University of Georgia staff denote a reticence to acknowledge the cemetery, stating the nonrenewable cultural heritage within it was known prior to the activity in 2015. Southeastern Archaeological Services created a thoroughly researched document about the Old Athens Cemetery, entitled *Archaeological Exhumation of Burials in the Baldwin Hall Portion of the Old Athens Cemetery, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, Final Report*.<sup>42</sup> A 1937/1938 date of removal is mentioned, acknowledging the existence of slave burials, in a story published in the Red and Black newspaper in 1978.<sup>43</sup> The article reads, during the construction of Baldwin Hall, under the direction of Dean William Tate,

---

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Gresham et al.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Gresham et al. *Archaeological Exhumation of Burials in the Baldwin Hall Portion of the Old Athens Cemetery, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, Final Report*.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Gresham et al. *Archaeological Exhumation of Burials in the Baldwin Hall Portion of the Old Athens Cemetery, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, Final Report*.

unmarked graves of formerly enslaved people were found and relocated with a “large monument”.

The discovered remains were reburied quickly. The campus administration received much criticism for the hasty burial.<sup>44</sup> In Georgia, the disinterment and disposition of human remains or burial objects is permitted under the Georgia Code Title 36- Local Government Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations; Cemeteries and Burial Grounds GA Code § 36-72-15 (2022) Disinterment and disposition of human remains or burial objects. GA Code § 36-72-15 (2022) states,

Any disinterment and disposition of human remains, or burial objects permitted under this chapter shall be supervised, monitored, or carried out by the applicant's archeologist and shall be done at the expense of the person or entity to whom the permit is issued.<sup>45</sup>

GA Code § 36-72-6 (2022) assumes the cemetery was known prior to the construction of a building, which it was not; however, the notification to descendants once remains are discovered bears relevance. The code states,

The applicant shall implement its plan for identifying and locating descendants no later than the date the application is submitted to the governing authority. The governing authority shall review the applicant's plan for identifying and notifying the descendants of the deceased persons and may require as a condition for issuing a permit that the applicant implement additional reasonable attempts to identify and locate descendants. Notice to possible descendants shall include information on how to contact the governing authority and a summary of the rights of descendants under this chapter. The governing authority shall promptly inform any descendant who indicates an interest in the disposition of the human remains and burial objects regarding any proposals for mitigation, the terms of any permit issued, the time and place of any scheduled public hearings, and appeal procedures and events.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Parry, “New Tensions Erupt Over Georgia’s Handling of Presumed Slave Remains.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

<sup>45</sup> GA Code § 36-72-15 (2022)

<sup>46</sup> GA Code § 36-72-6 (2022)

## 2. *Laurel Grove Cemetery, Savannah, Georgia*

Laurel Grove Cemetery is not a trauma-infused cemetery in the way one might understand Zion Hill Cemetery to be. I include it because many traumas are unacknowledged. Because one cannot see a slight does not diminish its impact upon the community. Laurel Grove Cemetery was established in Savannah in 1852, and it is split into two sections.<sup>47</sup> (The cemetery is now divided by the I-16 37th Street Connector.) Survey work, if performed prior to the creation or expansion of roads, may preserve the integrity of a burial. Prior to 1853, the cemetery for the Black American community was located near what is now Whitfield Square in the Historic District. Many of the Black American graves above Lincoln Street and Gaston Street disappeared as the city began to grow in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The graves would have been marked with plants, rocks, or wooden crosses (which decayed over the years).<sup>48</sup> The disappearance of these graves demonstrates a need for the documentation of Black American burial sites.

The sections of Laurel Grove Cemetery are known as North and South. Laurel Grove North is the white section. In the early twentieth century it was filled with around 30,000 people.<sup>49</sup> The Black section, or Laurel Grove South, contains burials of both free and enslaved African Americans. It is believed that Laurel Grove South contains twice the number of burials as Laurel Grove North, or about 60,000 burials.<sup>50</sup>

While Laurel Grove North is quite picturesque, containing many prominent markers, Laurel Grove South provides a stark contrast. A stretch of interstate highway divides the North

---

<sup>47</sup> Greg Melville. *Over My Dead Body*. p.89

<sup>48</sup> Stewart. The Georgia Historical Society. *Laurel Grove South*.

<sup>49</sup> Greg Melville. *Over My Dead Body*. p.89

<sup>50</sup> Greg Melville. *Over My Dead Body*

and the South sides. While the South side is beautiful in a simpler way, it should be noted the cemetery occupies “the lowest lying, swampiest few acres.”<sup>51</sup>

Savannah paved the boundary between the two sides with an extension of Interstate 16 in the mid-1960’s, an era when American city developers intentionally used highway construction to place asphalt moats around urban communities of color. Laurel Grove North looks like a different cemetery altogether – starting at its entryway. While the southern half’s front entrance consists of two simple swinging metal gates attached to brick posts, the northern one is decorated by a tall iron archway bearing the words LAUREL GROVE CEMETERY painted in white and held aloft by two thick Victorian-style posts. It looks like the entrance to a London park.<sup>52</sup>

The creative construction of the gravestones of Laurel Grove South is notable. Bed graves of brick are seen, as are homemade concrete headstones. Burials of Laurel Grove South include Reverend Andrew Bryan, who was born in 1737 and died in 1812 (as a free man.) Laurel Grove South is still an active cemetery, and more recent burials include W.W. Law, a civil rights activist, and rapper Jason Johnson.<sup>53</sup>

### **3. *Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta, Georgia***

“Shortly after Oakland Cemetery’s establishment in 1850, the Atlanta City Council ordered the interment of slaves and free blacks in the ‘Slave Square’ a segregated and less desirable parcel of ground at the far end of the six-acre graveyard.”<sup>54</sup> The burial of Black people on undesirable land is not a new concept. As the Oakland expanded, Slave Square became located towards the center of the cemetery, making it a more desirable location. In 1877, the city council issued a statement authorizing the City Sexton to remove the bodies from the square. The remains were reinterred into colored pauper graves, with no distinction between the graves, except for a few accompanied by headboards. The square was leveled and divided into new

---

<sup>51</sup> Greg Melville. *Over My Dead Body*. p.89

<sup>52</sup> Greg Melville. *Over My Dead Body*. p.89-91

<sup>53</sup> Stewart. The Georgia Historical Society. *Laurel Grove South*.

<sup>54</sup> Davis, Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery. p.150

plots.<sup>55</sup> The reclaimed graves of Oakland remind me of Zion Hill Cemetery case study. Portions of the burial property diminished from sight, covered by pavement and bordered by buildings.

African American burial grounds in Oakland may seem to be vastly unused. “Few could afford inscribed grave markers, choosing instead to use ‘natural markers’ such as stones, trees, plants, or household objects”<sup>56</sup> It is thought that over twelve thousand burials rest within the Black American section of Oakland Cemetery.<sup>57</sup> Oakland staff have developed a cell phone tour of the Black American Grounds to better educate the community about local Black American history and advocate for its preservation.

Prominent Black African burials of Oakland Cemetery include the city’s first Black dentist, Roderick Badger (d. 1890). Roderick’s father was his white master, and he had taught him the craft of dentistry. Carrie Steele Logan (d.1900) was an emancipated slave who founded an orphanage for the care of Black children. Bishop Wesley John Gaines (d.1912) was the second pastor of the Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. He founded Morris Brown College.<sup>58</sup> Ironically, Catherine Holmes was interred in the former old Slave Square, which had become a coveted white burial section. With the permission of the Mayor and the approval of other lot owners, she was buried with her former enslavers, the Boylston family, in 1896. In 1920, the Boyd family buried their family slave in the white section with approval. The inscription on the headstone read, “Georgia Harris, Who – though born a slave died the child of a King.”<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Davis, Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery. p.24

<sup>56</sup> Davis, Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery. p.150

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Davis, Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery. p.27

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

Surveys are vital to the preservation of Black American history. The Historic Oakland Foundation partnered with Daniel Bigman of Bigman Geophysical “for a technologically advanced survey of the three acres six months before the restoration project began. The result of the survey found some 872 probable unmarked burials in the African-American Grounds.”<sup>60</sup> Flagged locations were cross referenced with data from burial records of the cemetery. Many headstones were found beneath the surface with the use of probes, and I have replicated this technique with the research of Zion Hill. <sup>61</sup>

#### **4. Oak Ridge Cemetery, Macon, Georgia**

In an article entitled, *Slave burial site to be recognized at Rose Hill Cemetery* by David Johnson, WGXA News tells us the following:

“MACON, Ga -- A piece of Macon history will soon be brought to life at Rose Hill Cemetery. Tuesday, the Macon-Bibb County committee approved an ordinance for the Historic Macon Foundation to install three interpretive panels in the Oak Ridge section of the cemetery. ‘And in addition to that, they also approved at the committee level, installation of a state historic marker,’ said Ethiel Garlington, executive director of Historic Macon Foundation. The Oak Ridge section of the cemetery was designated a slave burial ground in 1851.”<sup>62</sup>

The article was published in September of 2016. It goes on to state the number of Black American burials are unknown. A commitment to survey the cemetery is acknowledged.<sup>63</sup>

“ ‘So a lot of these people are unknown. We actually do not know exactly how many people. But we think that over 1000 people buried in this section,’ Garlington said. ‘We do know that many slaves were buried in Oak Ridge. And we do know that there are some families who still have descendants living in Macon, some of those folks chose to be buried in Oak Ridge because it is historic,’ said District 3 Commissioner Elaine Lucas. Ground penetration software will be used to determine where people are and are not buried. ‘Fortunately we will be able to work with an archaeologist who’s going to do some ground

---

<sup>60</sup> Historic Oakland Foundation.

<sup>61</sup> Historic Oakland Foundation

<sup>62</sup>David Johnson, *Slave burial site to be recognized at Rose Hill Cemetery* WGXA News

<sup>63</sup>David Johnson, *Slave burial site to be recognized at Rose Hill Cemetery* WGXA News

penetrating radar so we can at least scout out the sites before we put in the plaques. Before we put in the panels,' Garlington said.”<sup>64</sup>

Commissioner Lucas comments further, “...the markers can also serve as a tool not only to teach use about our history but help us moving forward.”<sup>65</sup> Perhaps she is saying that the markers may serve as a tool to unite the community by providing education. It is unclear if a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey of Oak Ridge Cemetery was ever finalized, or if results were mapped for posterity.<sup>66</sup>



Figure 2.1: A tablet from Oak Ridge Cemetery, discovered on September 28, 2022. It is approximately five feet tall. It was used as a sliding door, lowered at the head of the vault and then sealed. Photo by Joey Fernandez

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Ibid



Figure 2.2: The tablet discovered on September 28, 2022, in Oak Ridge Cemetery, is restored by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries. Photo by Joey Fernandez



Figure 2.3: A photo of Oak Ridge Cemetery, with some obscured gravesites. Photo by Jessi Dominy, Oak Ridge Project. 2023.

Because much of the research efforts are orchestrated by volunteers, consistent and timely outcomes are seldom guaranteed. Recent research has yielded more information. The Oak Ridge Project notes that many burials were marked with wooden fixtures such as crosses, which were lost to time.<sup>67</sup> The need for a survey to identify unmarked burials is evident. Markers may have never existed, they may no longer exist, or they may have shifted below the earth. The community work within this cemetery denotes a movement toward the acknowledgement of its Black American burials. I believe this may be supported with a long-term sustainable plan

---

<sup>67</sup> Dominy, *The Oak Ridge Project*.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE HISTORY OF ZION HILL CHURCH



Figure 3.1: “Before & After” photos of the historic Zion Hill Cemetery. Photo by Elizabeth Jones

Churches may find a lost history in the resurrection of a forgotten or abandoned cemetery. A trauma-infused cemetery may hold a history which may be painful to address. Conversations with church members reveal early Black American Walton County churches, such as Smith’s AME Zion Church and the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church were started by newly Emancipated people. The Smith’s AME Chapel was established in 1869 “...After the late war between the states and after Emancipation of the Slaves of the Southern States, by themselves and other benevolent persons both white and colored to be used for educational and religious purposes by

the colored people resident in and about Monroe and vicinity.”<sup>68</sup> Gravestones denote people who were born into slavery and died after the Emancipation Proclamation was enacted.

The racial tensions after the 1946 Moore’s Ford lynching on the border of Walton and Oconee Counties was felt for many years. Black Americans were afraid to visit gravesites. Zion Hill Cemetery grew hidden from view. Today, many people in the congregation of the Tabernacle Baptist Church or the First African Baptist Church (the descendant churches) have never heard of Zion Hill Colored Church or the Zion Hill Cemetery.

This chapter will outline the history of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church and the Zion Hill Cemetery. It focuses on the question of the cemetery’s abandonment. In 1871, property was deeded to the Church of Zion Hills by Waters Briscoe. The Monroe First Baptist Church was organized as a Primitive Baptist body in 1829. In 1866, the church records reported 82 whites, 65 blacks. (Courtesy First Baptist Church of Monroe Records, obtained via First African Baptist Church Records) My research shows that the Zion Hill Church was deeded to the Trustees of the Church, a fact previously unknown.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, *Book X*, p. 533

<sup>69</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, Deed Book U. p. 141; Walton County Clerk of Courts, Deed Book G. Page 140



*"Ye are the light of the world.  
A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."*

Figure 3.2: Zion Hill Cemetery logo, designed pro bono by Julia Harrington. Photo courtesy of Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery.

The Moore's Ford Lynching is often called the "Last Mass Lynching in the United States." The lynching of two young African American couples spurred President Harry S. Truman to push for a civil rights investigation, call for anti-lynching legislation, and create the President's Commission on Civil Rights. Many people residing with the City of Monroe prefer to say the Moore's Ford Lynching happened between Walton and Oconee counties, instead of the City of Monroe. I would say the action affected the City of Monroe and still does. It is difficult for a community to acknowledge a trauma-infused history. To heal, it must do so. The Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church split and moved in 1953, following a series of pastors that left soon after arriving. The Moore's Ford lynching between Oconee and Walton County on July 25th, 1946 may have influenced the move. Mae Murray Dorsey, one of four victims killed in the lynching,

is buried in the Zion Hill Cemetery, along with relatives who were founding members of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church.

On Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, days prior to the lynching, the *Walton Tribune* published the stabbing of Barnette Hester, Jr by Roger Malcolm. The article states, “The negro is said to have been drunk and beating his wife when Mr. Hester walked up and remonstrated with him, whereupon the negro pulled out his knife and stabbed him.”<sup>70</sup> The *Walton Tribune* recounts the following passage on September 13, 1946, “Fifty or more cars of negros passed through Monroe last Saturday afternoon, and upon arrival here a brief stop was made, when one of them asked Officer Jones direction to Moore’s Ford.” The article recounted that the group stated they wished to visit the site to hold a prayer session. The article continues, “One reputable white citizen who visited the Tribune Tuesday had been told by a negro that the colored visitors had guns in their cars, but there is no truth whatsoever in this report, according to our information.”<sup>71</sup> While searching through the microfilm at the University of Georgia library, I was struck by the fact that there were very few news articles about the Black community.

In 2018, the cemetery was completely hidden from view. I wondered why the property owners had not cleared it. I soon had an answer. Before beginning the restoration, both churches that came from the 1953 church split were consulted: the First African Baptist Church, and the Tabernacle Baptist Church. Church Deacon Johnny Smith recounted that the cemetery land was never actually owned by the church, but deed records showed a different account.

---

<sup>70</sup> The Walton Tribune, July 19, 1946 (University of Georgia Microfilm)

<sup>71</sup> The Walton Tribune, September 13, 1946 (University of Georgia Microfilm)

Members of the Tabernacle Baptist Church and First African Baptist Church were unaware the church property had been deeded to the church. The church members thought that their use of the property ceased after the church moved, perhaps because of the “guarantee” recorded in the church records by Junius Smith in 1953 and published by the Walton Tribune. A Tribune supplement magazine, entitled the Sesquicentennial, published 1968, tells the church land went back to the plantation owners, and a book published by Lynn Camp and Jennifer Cheeks-Collins reiterates a similar story.<sup>72</sup> The article, written by Junius M. Smith, references states, “In March of 1868 a log house was built on one-half acre of land on Alcovy St., in Monroe. In 1870 a guarantee was made by Mr. George Selman that a piece of land south of the church would be used for divine worship. It was stipulated as long as it was used for religion purposes, it would stay under this guarantee. When it ceased to be used by the church, it was to go back to the Selman estate.”<sup>73</sup>

Recorded on February 4, 1871, a deed located in Deed Book U, Page 141, states the following, “This indenture, made this twenty second day of April in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy, between Waters Briscoe of said state and country of one part and Syrus Briscoe, colored, as Trustee for or of the church called by the name of Zion Hills.” The property was purchased for the sum of \$10.<sup>74</sup>

Early church members who lived near the church include Cyrus (or Syrus) Briscoe, Etta Hawkins, Emma Murray, and Violet and Duncan McCoy.<sup>75</sup> Henry Haygood, Blake Locklin, Columbus Allcorn, and the trustees of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church deeded a parcel of

---

<sup>72</sup> Camp & Cheeks, *Black America Series: Walton County Georgia*.

<sup>73</sup> Smith, “The First African Baptist Church”, *Sesquicentennial. The Walton Tribune*. p. 230.

<sup>74</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, Deed Book U. p. 141.

<sup>75</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts

land to the heirs of Violet and Duncan McCoy in 1902 for the sum of \$1. The lot was approximately one fourth of an acre.

Deed Book G, Page 182, references the church,

“when Waters Briscoe made a deed to Cyrus Briscoe a trustee of said church, this lot being a part of said lot belonging to said Cyrus Briscoe in 1870, and deed records in Book U, page 141, and the said Cyrus Briscoe having paid all the purchase money for said land individual, the said Cyrus Briscoe only gave the northern portion of the land purchased from said Waters Briscoe, and for reserved for himself the Southern portion which includes the lot said Cyrus Briscoe deeded Emma Murray and the lot deeded to Duncan and Violet McCoy in 1887....”<sup>76</sup>

Henry Haygood, Blake Locklin, Columbus Allcorn, and the trustees of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church deeded a parcel of land adjacent to the church to Etta Hawkins in 1902 for the sum of \$1. The property rested to the south side of the McCoy lot. “This tract being also the same land said Hawkins col by Emma Murray col in 1901 and containing one fourth of an acre more or less.”<sup>77</sup>

The First African Baptist Church records were updated in 1953 by Junius M. Smith, who also wrote the *Walton Tribune* article. The records document that the early First Baptist Church had a balcony across a rear wall providing seats for slaves. In 1868 George Selman (the son-in-law of the grantor) helped to build the “Colored Baptist Church” as a log house on Alcovy Street. In 1870, another structure was built south of the log cabin. George Selman helped the slaves to frame this structure. Reverend Jesse Gilbert was the first pastor of the new church, in 1870. In a

---

<sup>76</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, Deed Book G, Page 182

<sup>77</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, Deed Book G. Page 140

few months, about 18 to 20 people left the church to start a sister church, “The Tabernacle Baptist Church”.<sup>78</sup>

Reverend S.M. Davie served the church from 1943 to 1947. First African Baptist Church records state the following, “Reverend Davie, the thirteenth pastor of Zion Hill, succeeded Rev. M. J. Jackson. It during was Davie’s pastorate that the idea of a new church surfaced and the struggle began. Rev. Davie left after 4 years of leadership....”<sup>79</sup>

The last known recorded burials in the Zion Hill Cemetery are Pauline Johnson, 1872-1964 and Eula Malone, 1881-1973. By all appearances, the cemetery fell out of use after the move. Some church members recount because they thought the property went back into a plantation name, they were afraid to visit the site.

1989 deeds show a quick deed purchase mentioning the First African Baptist Church and City Council minutes reflect an approval to pave an entrance way to the shopping center. (Ground Penetrating Radar later revealed anomalies in this location.) Storm water drains were installed on each side of the cemetery. While it may be argued the City Council had no knowledge of the existing burials in the area which was paved, the Georgia Code states the erosion caused by the current storm water drainage is the liability of the municipality.

---

<sup>78</sup> First African Baptist Church Records, First African Baptist Church, Monroe, Georgia

<sup>79</sup> First African Baptist Church Records, First African Baptist Church, Monroe, Georgia



Figure 3.3: Volunteers of *Friends of Zion Hill* tackle invasive growth at Zion Hill Cemetery, Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

## CHAPTER 4

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is the objective of this thesis to demonstrate the importance of acknowledgement. Survey is vital for the recovery of Black American cemeteries because the act acknowledges the existence of a burial. (“Survey” is described in sections 2 and 3 of O.C.G.A. § 36-72-5 it references abandoned cemeteries).<sup>80</sup> A survey leading to acknowledgement is comprised of the following elements: an understanding of relevant state law; an investigation of the abandoned cemetery; documentation; and notification of descendants. If one can demonstrate the existence of a burial ground, one is better able to preserve and protect a nonrenewable cultural heritage.

---

<sup>80</sup> Georgia Code § 36-72-5 (2022)

## **Georgia's Abandoned Cemetery Code**

The cemetery steward is often piecing together a puzzle of information. An abandoned cemetery shows signs of neglect, vandalism, or a loss of notable boundaries. The Georgia Law regarding abandoned cemetery code offers the following statement:

(a) The care accorded the remains of deceased persons reflects respect and regard for human dignity as well as cultural, spiritual, and religious values. The General Assembly declares that human remains and burial objects are not property to be owned by the person or entity which owns the land or water where the human remains and burial objects are interred or discovered, but human remains and burial objects are a part of the finite, irreplaceable, and nonrenewable cultural heritage of the people of Georgia which should be protected.<sup>81</sup>

The wording of the Georgia Code demands respect and protection for the nonrenewable cultural heritage of Georgia. Inspired, many preservationists are using this law to build inclusivity.

1. Definition: For clarity, Georgia Code, Chapter 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (GA Code §§ 36-72-1 - 36-72-16 ) is listed in an appendix. It is advised that the reader look at the code in its entirety to better understand this paper. It is important to note human remains and burial objects are considered nonrenewable cultural heritage. The care accorded to the remains of deceased persons reflects respect and regard for human dignity as well as cultural, spiritual, and religious values. The General Assembly declares that human remains and burial objects are not property to be owned by the person or entity which owns the land or water where the human remains and burial objects are interred or discovered, but human

---

<sup>81</sup> Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1 (2022)

remains and burial objects are a part of the finite, irreplaceable, and nonrenewable cultural heritage of the people of Georgia which should be protected.<sup>82</sup>

## 2 . Abandoned Cemeteries:

Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (1991); 36-72-1 et seq. Strengthens cemetery protection laws by authorizing local governments to preserve and protect abandoned cemeteries, and to issue permits prior to any disturbance of burials. Abandoned cemeteries encountered during archaeological investigations should be defined and recorded as archaeological sites. A developer or landowner must get a permit from the local governing authority if the use of cemetery land is to be changed for purposes of development. Extensive permit requirements are stipulated, among which include hiring an archaeologist to delineate graves and cemetery boundary, a land surveyor to map the cemetery, and a genealogist to prepare a plan for contacting descendants before any disinterment occurs. If permitted, an archaeologist must carry out any exhumation of human remains. Grave Protection and Repatriation (1992); 44-12-260/264; 12-3-620 et seq.; 31-21-6; 31-21-44 et seq. Establishes policies for burials, skeletal material, and funerary objects regarding archaeological research, public display, buying/selling artifacts, and repatriation.<sup>83</sup>

Many African American cemeteries may be considered abandoned because uninscribed stones are often overlooked as significant markers. Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds Law is addressed in official Georgia Code to protect the upkeep and provide a definition for abandoned cemeteries.<sup>84</sup> Those seeking to break ground in the vicinity of a cemetery should file for a permit. According to the Georgia Code for Abandoned cemeteries, any permit applicant must seek to identify the descendants of the people interred in the cemetery.<sup>85</sup>

While the Georgia Code mentions the need for a permit before construction activities where abandoned cemeteries are located, some municipalities are unaware a Georgia Code for

---

<sup>82</sup> Georgia Code § 36-72-1 (2022)

<sup>83</sup> Georgia Council of Professional Archaeologists. *Georgia Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Investigations*. p.5

<sup>84</sup> Christine Van Voorhies, *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

<sup>85</sup> Georgia Code §§ 36-72-1 - 36-72-16 (2022)

abandoned cemeteries exists. The Board of Regents did not obtain a permit as described in the Code (or perform a survey) prior to the construction activities associated with the Old Athens Cemetery. The Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources distributes a wonderful guide on cemetery preservation, written by Christine Van Voorhies and entitled, *Grave Intentions: A Comprehensive Guide to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. This guide notes “if a developer was unaware a cemetery existed on his property, it will be difficult under this law to hold him responsible for disturbing it.”<sup>86</sup> The need to document and to report the existence of cemeteries on public records is urgent. For county tax maps, one must contact the tax commissioner’s office at the county courthouse. A notation on a land deed may require an attorney’s services to file an affidavit of title and cross-reference the deed.<sup>87</sup> Cemeteries may be added to Georgia high maps by contacting the Georgia Department of Transportation. Additionally, copies map data may be donated to local archives and the Georgia Department of Archives and History.<sup>88</sup>

Grants may be used to effectively acknowledge and recover Black American sites through survey. Zion Hill Cemetery has recovered anomalies through grants from the Garden Club of Georgia and the National Council of Preservation Education. The anomaly designations have led to the continuing recovery of burial artifacts.

---

<sup>86</sup> Christine Van Voorhies, *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources. p.18

<sup>87</sup> Christine Van Voorhies, *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources. pp. 19-20

<sup>88</sup> Christine Van Voorhies, *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources.



Figure 4.1: Church Deacon and Friends of Zion Hill volunteer Johnny Smith holds a Friends of Zion Hill T-Shirt. The shirts were funded by a grant from the National Council for Preservation Education. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

### **Mitigation**

A respected preservation group, the Chicora Foundation, notes the following: “Many law enforcement agencies and coroners don't seem to have the manpower or enthusiasm to aggressively protect cemeteries. Further, the expense of legal action is often great and may be too late to save fragile resources.”<sup>89</sup> A long term, sustainable plan is critical to saving the cultural heritage of the space. It is important to involve the voices of the community, especially those who are directly connected to the project. It is recommended that when changes must be considered to prevent further harm to the site, one must consider the spirit of the site’s history, consult with descendants,

---

<sup>89</sup> Chicora Foundation Inc, *Grave Matters: The Preservation of African American Cemeteries*.

and it is appropriate to consult with historic preservation professionals. The requirements outlined by the Georgia Code for permits before breaking ground are also excellent guidelines for preservationists before beginning a restoration project.<sup>90</sup>

The following guidelines are developed in adherence with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Property.

1. Continued or new use of cemetery property should attempt to minimize changes to materials, features, or spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of the property should be retained. Historic materials should not be removed.
3. Historic materials should not be added that create a false sense of historical development. If new materials are added, the new materials should be distinctive from the old. The material should be compatible, however.
4. Historic changes to the property should be retained, including changes over 50 years, as well as more recent changes in the cemetery's development.
5. Deteriorated historic features should be repaired rather than replaced. If the severity of deterioration requires replacement, the new feature should match the historic feature in design, color, texture, and/or material.
6. Chemical or physical treatment, if appropriate, should be undertaken using the gentlest means possible, and damaging treatment will be avoided.
7. Archeological resources associated with the property should be preserved in place, and if they must be disturbed, mitigating measures should be utilized.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Georgia Code § § 36-72-1 - 36-72-16 (2022)

<sup>91</sup> The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. 36 CFR Part 68.

## **Survey**

The documentation of history enables stories to be shared with current and future generations. Cemeteries hold a wealth of information, and the documentation of such information allows it to be shared as a community asset. Grant funding may provide resources and tools to underprivileged communities, allowing all to benefit from the knowledge of these assets. Location and boundaries should be identified. One should not assume the fences, bed graves, rocks, monuments, or other markers designate each grave. Maps and photos may aid in identifying boundaries. One may compare Sanborn (fire) maps, ariel maps, photos, and other archival data. In the case of Zion Hill, the church split into two churches, and many members may have also gone to other local churches over the years.



Figure 4.2: Friends of Zion Hill Volunteers battle the invasive vegetation at the historic cemetery. Photo by Elizabeth Jones

It was previously mentioned that Junius Smith had updated the First African Baptist Church history to show the church property had gone back to Selman estate because of a guarantee.<sup>92</sup> The deeds, however, state that the property had been sold to the church trustees. Below are 1962 and 1969 surveys, showing the cemetery. Additionally, 1989 deeds were located which mention The First African Baptist Church. (The deeds are between William Malcom and Jerry Rosenberry and were removed from Walton County Clerk's Court Deed Book 98, page 628. I located them online, and they are located in Appendix B.)



Figure 4.3: Walton County Clerk's Office, Plat Book 10, Page 47

<sup>92</sup> Smith, "The First African Baptist Church", *Sesquicentennial. The Walton Tribune*. p. 230.



Figure 4.4: Walton County Clerk’s Office, “Survey for Kenneth Murray”, 1969.

A survey of 200-250 graves was visually conducted on November 1, 2000, and was recorded in *Walton County Cemeteries (West)*.<sup>93</sup> In 2020, John Brewer of W&A Engineering conducted a survey of the property boundaries for the Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery, pro bono, as a part of a MLK Day of Service project. The cemetery showed an acreage of 1.103.

<sup>93</sup> East Georgia Genealogical Society. *Walton County Cemeteries (West)*. Winder, Georgia. p. 479-480.

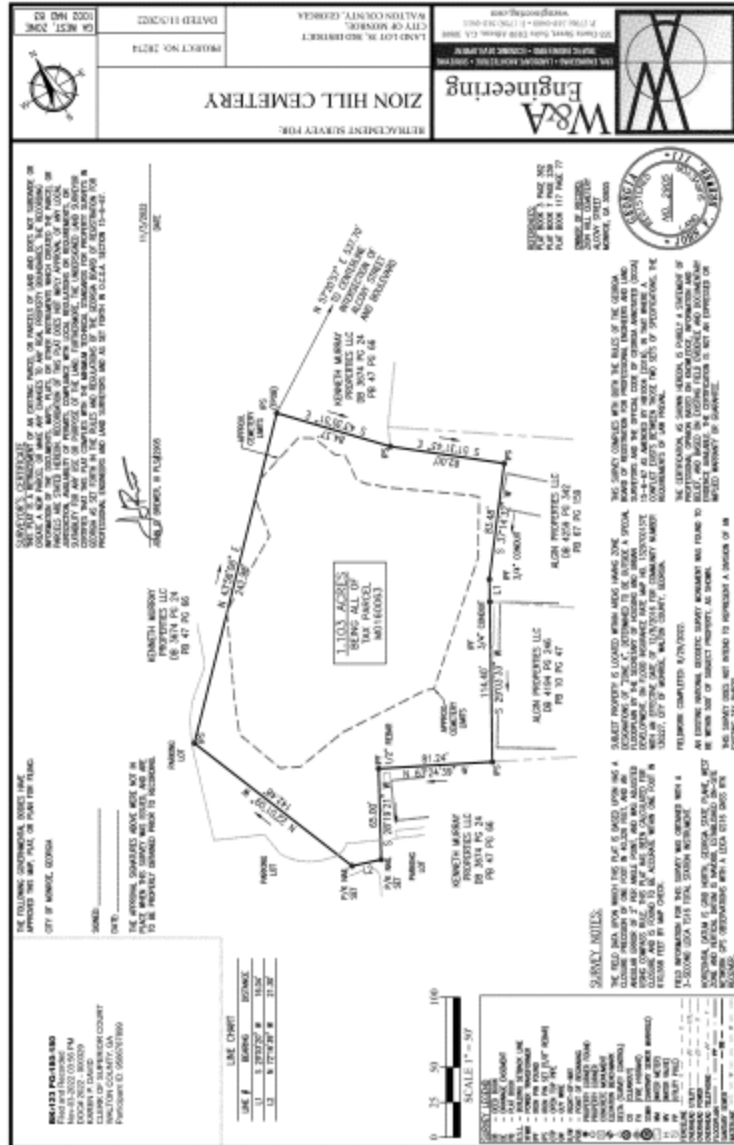


Figure 4.5: W&A Engineering, Survey of Zion Hill Cemetery, 2022.

**The Ground Penetrating Radar of Zion Hill Cemetery**

In 2021 and 2022, Ground Penetrating Radar was conducted with a GSSI SIR 4000 control unit and a 400 MHz antenna on a tricycle survey cart, by Randy Brennan of Signature Mapping in Conyers, Georgia. The Ground Penetrating Radar of the Zion Hill Cemetery site in Monroe, Georgia revealed 619 anomalies.

Ground Penetrating Radar has aided the research of finding broken markers and buried rocks, because once one knows where an anomaly is located, one may know where to probe the ground. Remember that the church moved in 1953. Stones were broken by fallen limbs and buried, and rock markers became covered with dirt and decay. The GPR patterns of depth also reveal that many graves may have been graded away. The construction and grading could account for missing markers on graves closest to the encroaching buildings...and graves discovered under the paved areas. Funding for the Ground Penetrating Radar survey was provided by the Garden Club of Georgia and the National Council for Preservation Education.

As previously stated, 619 anomalies were located with the Ground Penetrating Radar survey. There are a total of 165 anomalies on the map as Marked Graves discovered by Signature Mapping. These include 1 Knights of Pythias marker, 2 Masonic markers, 1 FLT Odd Fellows marker, and 3 Possible Odd Fellows markers, which are homemade. 4 Metal Rod Markers were noted. There are a total of 454 anomalies on the map as Unmarked Graves discovered by Signature Mapping.

Very shallow anomalies discovered towards the edge of the parking areas suggest the rows of burials may have once continued in the patterns seen in the Ground Penetrating Radar. Three anomalies were found beneath the driveway that was approved by the Monroe City Council in 1989. Several more anomalies were found in rows beneath the parking area beside 218 Alcovy Street and behind the building on 219 Alcovy Street.

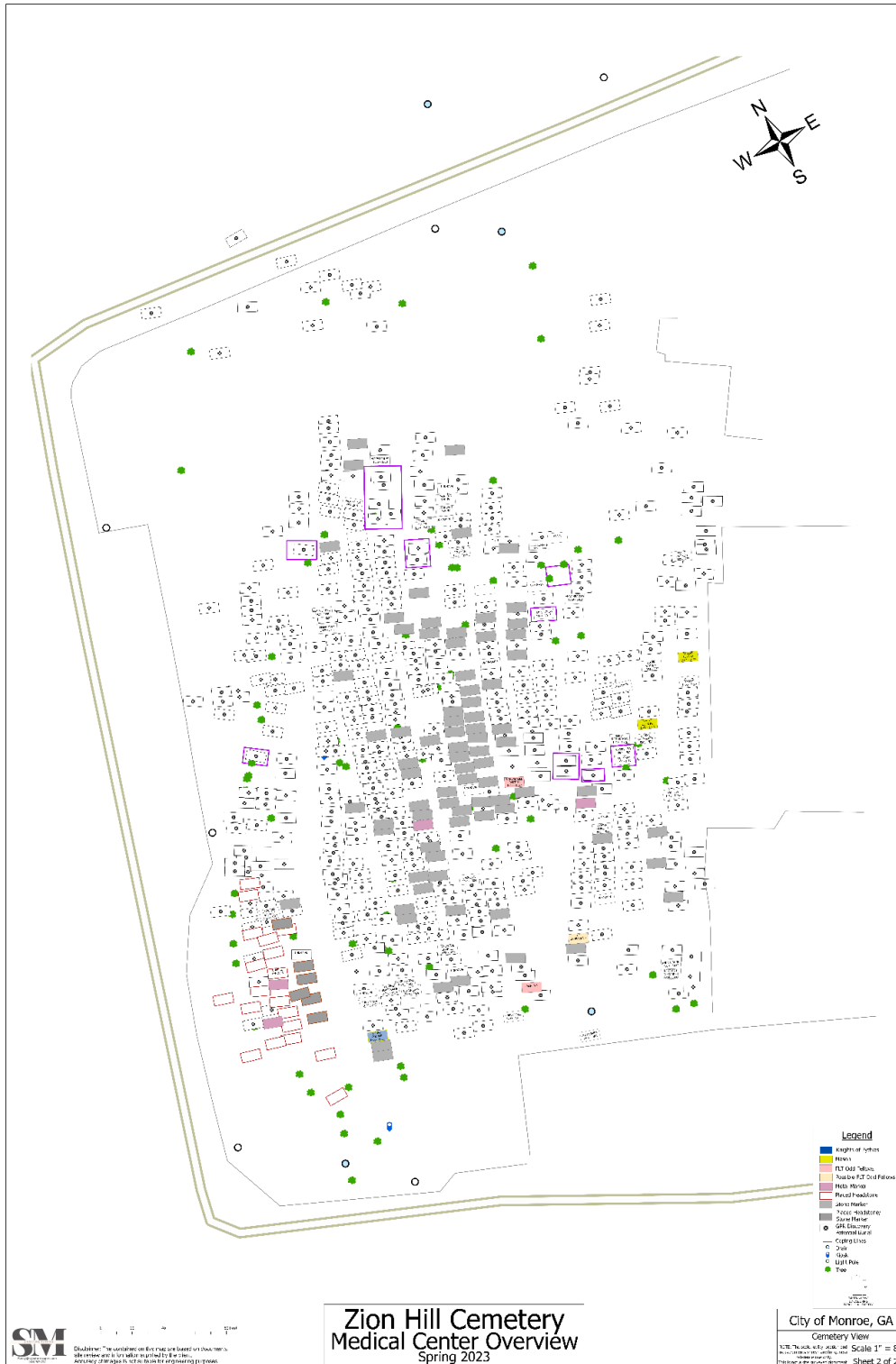


Figure 4.6: Signature Scapes, Signature Mapping Ground Penetrating Radar of Zion Hill Cemetery, 2023.



Figure 4.7: A rock gravestone inscribed “H. Hillyer” at Zion Hill Cemetery, Monroe, Georgia. Flags marks anomalies located with GPR are in the background. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.



Figure 4.8: Bill Owens discovers a rock gravestone inscribed “H. Hillyer” at Zion Hill Cemetery, Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

### *Clues of a Heritage: Hillyer*

After locating anomalies, the Friends of Zion Hill are better able to locate lost grave markers. In many cases, stones and bed graves lie hidden from view, under the soil. After Ground Penetrating Radar, the discovery of a “Hillyer” stone led to the identification associated letters in a special collection. Another stone, recognizing the life of “Our Baby” was recovered following the Ground Penetrating Radar Survey.

Burial rocks, some initially hidden, and some originally thought to be uninscribed, are continuously being discovered as gravestones. Judge *Junius Hillyer* lived from April 23, 1807 to June 21, 1886. He was a resident of Cowpens, which was next to Monroe. He served two terms in the United States Congress. A “Hillyer” inscribed rock may be related to the slaves Judge Junius Hillyer purchased from his father’s estate. The rock marker was discovered just under the surface of the earth by Friends of Zion Hill volunteer, Bill Owens, in 2022. Letters found in the University of Georgia’s special collection library note the slaves were originally owned by Shaler Hillyer. Some had been previously owned by Junius Hillyer’s grandfather. Others came from his wife Rebecca Freeman’s estate. According to his letters, many of these slaves were acquired in the Savannah port, and they hailed from Africa. Junius Hillyer recounts the names of the slaves he remembers his father owned, “My father got Ned and Stephney, of Peggy’s children, Peter, Richmond, Hannah, Lucy, William, Anna, Randal, and Daniel.”<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Hillyer. *Junius Hillyer, The Life and Times of Judge Junius Hillyer (From His Memoirs)*.

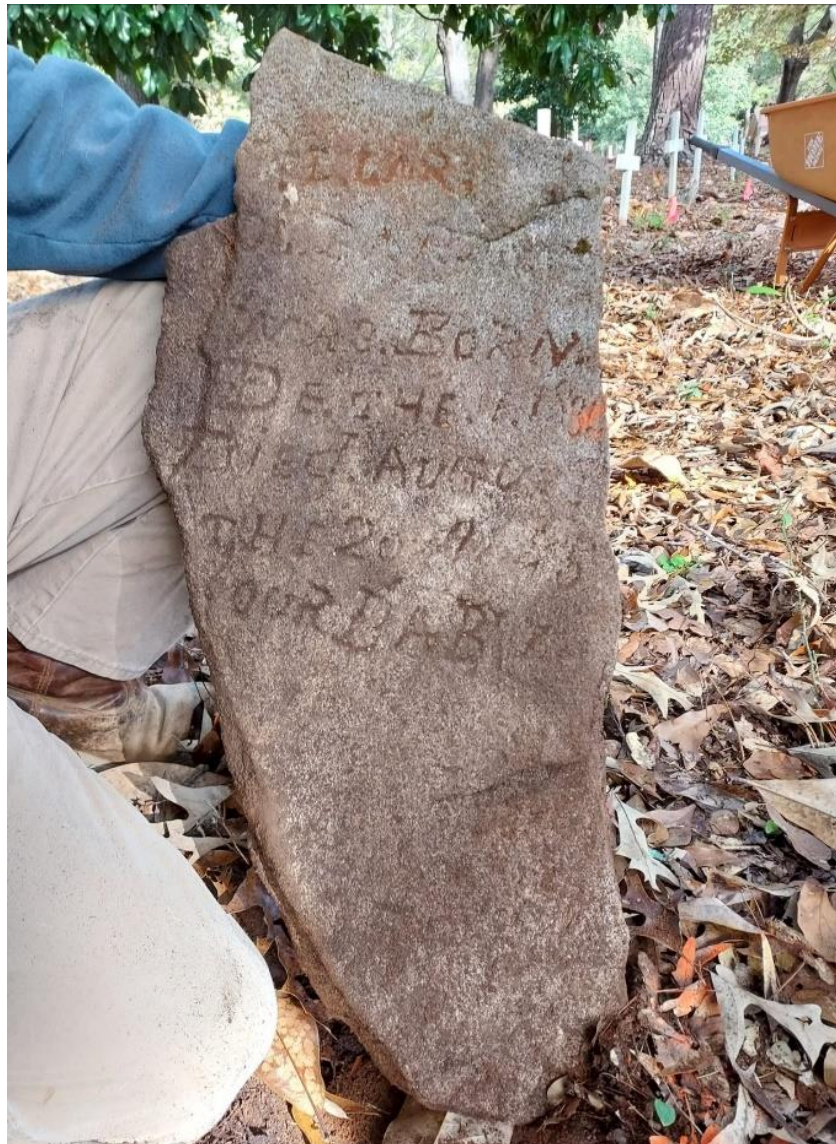


Figure 4.9: Etched rock stating “Our Baby”. Photo Credit: Elizabeth Jones

Zion Hill has many etched rock markers. The etched marker for “Our Baby” denotes a child’s birth and death in 1884. While we know nothing else, the marker serves to acknowledge the child’s existence.

### *Survey Assistance*

Reliable survey fieldwork can be costly. The National Park Service program, African American Cultural Action Fund, awarded \$3 million in grants in 2022. A grantee of the program, Preservation Pennsylvania, is creating a statewide program to preserve and protect Pennsylvania's cemeteries and burial grounds. The program will offer mini-grants, technical assistance, and a toolkit for cemetery stewards.<sup>95</sup> (I would recommend each state's historic preservation office develop a similar program.) I previously mentioned Georgia's State Code considers burials and burial artifacts to be nonrenewable cultural heritage. I would argue that costly fieldwork is worth saving "the finite, irreplaceable, and nonrenewable cultural heritage of the people of Georgia".<sup>96</sup>

### **Descendants**

Georgia Code 36-72-6 *Identification and notification of descendants of person in cemetery sought to be developed* specifies, as part of the permitting process, descendants should be notified regarding the disturbance of burials and burial objects.<sup>97</sup> Descendants, where at all possible, should be notified regarding preservation or efforts.

How does one recover the history of those resting in unmarked burials? Newspaper clippings and family stories are of aid. Before I launch into the stories of those buried at Zion Hill, it is important for the reader to understand these lost voices are just as important as the voices recognized through the directness of a publicized trauma. These people are seldom memorialized in newspapers by society or occasion. Fading oral histories must be recorded before they are overshadowed and forgotten.

---

<sup>95</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation.

<sup>96</sup> Georgia Code O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1 (2022)

<sup>97</sup> § 36-72-6 (2022)

Ma Sug McCoy Jones is buried in the Zion Hill Cemetery, but research has not yet revealed a marker bearing her name. Billy Murray, whose father was a member of Zion Hill, and who also attended Tabernacle, remembers some of the church history. Billy Murray's great grandfather (on his dad's side) was Walker McCoy. Walker McCoy and his wife Nettie McCoy were formerly enslaved people.

Mr. Murray tells an interesting story of Walker's daughter's name. On the night she was born, her father met a white man, who had a newly born daughter the same day. The white man, Jim Tanner, had named his daughter "Sugar". Hearing this, Nettie and Walker named their daughter Sugar, and she was later known as "Ma Sug." She was educated at Zion Hill, and later attended Tabernacle Baptist Church. Ma Sug used to sterilize the sacrament dishes in boiling water, every first Sunday. Ma Sug McCoy Jones passed in 1976, at the age of 109.<sup>98</sup>

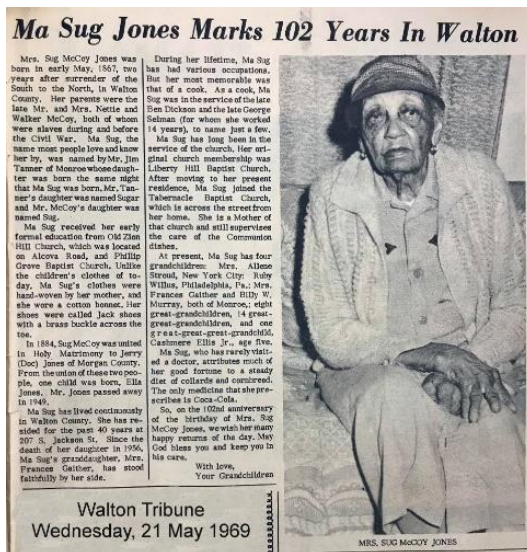


Figure 4.10: Walton Tribune, *Ma Sug Jones Marks 102 Years In Walton*. (May, 21, 1969.) The birthday celebration of Ma Sug Jones. (Photo courtesy of the Monroe Museum)

<sup>98</sup> Interview, Billy Murray.

### *From Slavery to Sharecropping*

I am delighted to know Mrs. Flora Brown and her family. As a side note about community engagement, I had never been to a real family reunion until Mrs. Brown invited me to join her family. I praise God for feeling so loved and included.

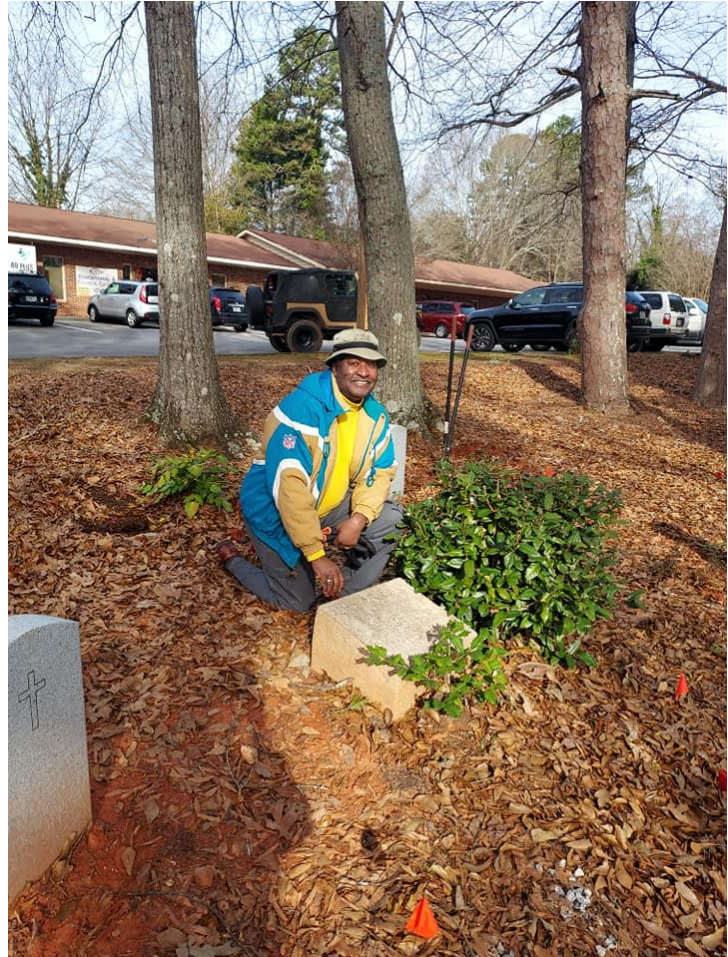
Sometimes the younger generations do not realize how recently slavery occurred. In 2019, before Covid-19, Mrs. Flora Brown and her kind family were interviewed. Flora is the granddaughter of Charlie Landers, who is buried in Zion Hill Cemetery. The Landers name originated from Mr. Tom Landers, a farmer from Sandersville, Georgia. Mr. Landers travelled to Virginia in the 1800's, where he purchased Edmund. Edmund worked as a slave sharecropper in Sandersville, Georgia. He met and married Argie, and they had nine children. Edmund's son, Charlie, moved to Walton County in 1919, where he married Flora Bell Mills from Sandersville, Georgia. Flora Bell was a housewife, and her parents were Andrew and Sallie Mills.<sup>99</sup>

When I hear the word "purchase" in reference to my friend's family, it gives me great pause. I believe the acknowledgement of historic facts will give a previously silenced community a voice.

---

<sup>99</sup> Flora Brown, Interview.

Figure 4.11: Coleman Landers kneels near the grave of his relative, Charlie Landers at the Zion Hill Cemetery in 2023. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.



In an article by Angelika Kruger Kahloula, *Homage and Hegemony: African American Grave Inscription and Decoration*, various types of gravestones found in African American cemeteries are discussed. The article notes, “A number of slaveholders took the opportunity of a slave’s demise to

project possessive paternalism into eternity.”<sup>100</sup> The terms employed to describe proprietorship were “African servant”, “Negro “servant” or merely “Servant of.” Harriet Harris was buried in the Zion Hill Cemetery in 1935. Harriet’s burial site is unknown because her grave is unmarked. However, a street sign bearing her name was erected after her death. A *Walton Tribune* obituary, “Sweet Chariot Summons Home Beloved ‘Queen of Mammies,’” describes Harriet as “one of the typical ‘Old South’ darkies, former slaves, who after liberation neither knew nor wanted anything better than to keep on ‘helpin the white folks’”.<sup>101</sup> The obituary states, “She would come in fair weather and foul, any hour of day or night, whenever her ‘white folks’ needed

<sup>100</sup> Kahloula. Slavery in the Americas. *Homage and Hegemony: African American Grave Inscription and Decoration*. p.319

<sup>101</sup> Camp. The Walton Tribune. *Sweet Chariot Summons Home Beloved Queen of Mammies*.

her.”<sup>102</sup> The characterization of Harriet as a faithful servant creates a picture of an ideal master – slave relationship.

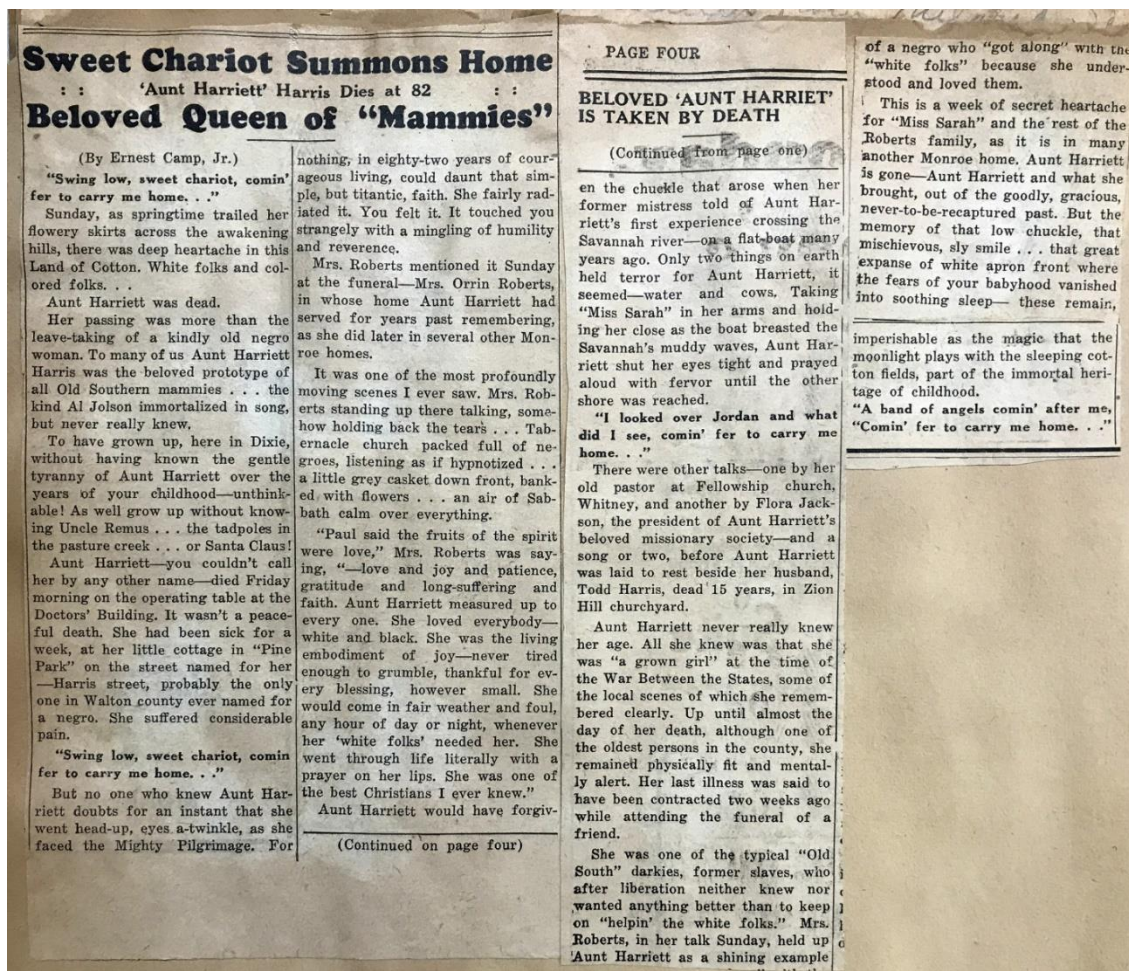


Figure 4.12: Earnest Camp. *The Walton Tribune*. “Sweet Chariot Summons Home Beloved Queen of Mammies” (1935) Photo courtesy of the Monroe Museum

Throughout the restoration efforts of Zion Hill Cemetery, an ongoing effort is always made to locate relatives. Before beginning any type of activity on cemetery grounds, one should try to contact the descendants of the deceased. Social media will attract attention, and family members may still attend local churches. Church records, genealogical sites, and paid

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

advertisements are all ways to locate heirs. County record rooms are often useful in determining the ownership of property. In November of 2020, I assembled 4 newspaper pages of information about people associated with the church and cemetery for the *Walton Tribune* in Monroe, Georgia. Much of the information was accessed from notes in land deeds, old newspaper articles, or conversations with church members.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> Appendix D; Jones, “Walton County’s Forgotten Cemeteries: A Special Report” “Preserving History”. *The Walton Tribune*. (C1-4).



Figure 4.13: Flora Brown & her son, Randy Tyrone Brown, descendants of Charlie Landers

## CHAPTER 5

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It is the objective of this thesis to demonstrate, through the case study of Zion Hill Cemetery, that Black American cemeteries are a community asset and to discover the importance of community engagement as a tool of acknowledgement. Black American cemeteries are recovered and validated through a full acknowledgement of historical facts. The elements of acknowledgement discussed within this thesis include documentation, restoration, the engagement of a community to recall and tell stories. In Chapter Two, I provided a background about the preservation or neglect of Black cemeteries both nationally and in the State of Georgia. In Chapter Three, I discussed the history of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church and the Zion Hill Cemetery. In Chapter Four, I demonstrated that 619 anomalies were located with a grant funded Ground Penetrating Radar survey, protecting and preserving a nonrenewable cultural heritage. In this chapter, I will demonstrate the importance of community engagement to recover the historical voices of the site. Community advocacy allows Zion Hill Cemetery to act as an educational site for present and future generations, provoking thoughtful conversations as a catalyst for change. I will also discuss the successes and obstacles encountered while working in a service learning capacity to create community partnerships and involvement.

Engaging with community members around shared cultural heritage is time consuming and expensive work, and it can require outside funding. One should assess needs and determine possible funding sources of foundations, charitable trusts, descendants, corporate donors, the city budget, and the state and federal government. Projects may begin as funding becomes available, working with “friends” volunteer groups, youth groups, and local business groups. Occasionally, professional services may be required for certain aspects of a restoration, such as a detailed

monument repair. Restorations can serve as educational opportunities on the topic of historic preservation for the community if the person performing the service is willing to provide a demonstration and explanation of work.

I have found the following ideas to be useful for community engagement:

1. Offer historic cemetery tours involving descendants, if possible. The Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery have hosted several tours, to include participation in the Georgia Trust's Monroe Expedition.
2. Advertise clean-up days. The Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery typically advertise our clean-up days on Facebook. I also print flyers and leave them in local shopping areas.
3. Host workshops, such as D-2 clean up demonstrations. In this chapter, I will elaborate on the use of D/2 biological solution.
4. Create a website. The Friends of Zion hill Cemetery website can be found at <https://www.zionhillcemetery.com>.
5. Create a social media page. The Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery Facebook page can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/zionhillmonroegeorgia>.



Figure 5.1: Daffodils bloom in a bed grave at the Zion Hill Cemetery. Bulbs were provided by a grant from the Garden Club of Georgia and planted by Friends of Zion Hill. Photo by Elizabeth Jones



Figure 5.2: Church member and Friends of Zion Hill volunteer Virginia Crawford helps with the placement of gravestones on unmarked graves in the spring of 2023. Photo by Elizabeth Jones

## Community Stories

This section looks at stories that have been recovered by my research about the historic Zion Hill site. Community engagement is vital as we give a voice to the voiceless. Before we began clearing the cemetery, I established a Facebook page for the volunteer group, “Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery Monroe, Georgia”. Photographs of the cemetery were taken before, during, and after the removal of invasive vines and shrubs, documenting progress.

*The Walton Tribune* and *The Monroe Local News* play an important role in connecting the stewardship efforts of the cemetery to the community. The Monroe Local News publishes many articles about the progress of the preservation efforts in Zion Hill Cemetery, reaching a large online audience. Alanna King wrote an article entitled “Gone But Not Forgotten” about the stewardship efforts of Friends of Zion Hill in the 2019 Fall/Winter edition of *Walton Living Magazine*.<sup>104</sup> I compiled a series of articles documenting the historic African American heritage of Zion Hill Baptist Church and the Zion Hill Cemetery. To create the articles, family members were interviewed, and early county records were researched. The insert was published in the 2020 Thanksgiving edition of *The Walton Tribune*.<sup>105</sup> Stewardship efforts increased following the publication of research and stewardship activities within the cemetery, despite Covid-19. (Distancing precautions are followed.) By partnering with the Walton Tribune, a larger local audience is reached. The insert provides tangible documentation of Monroe history. Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery Monroe, Georgia was created to promote historic preservation, as well as unite and educate the community is an excellent example of a preservation of a preservation

---

<sup>104</sup> King, “Gone But Not Forgotten”, *The Walton Living Magazine*. pp. 60-63.

<sup>105</sup> Appendix D; Jones, “Walton County’s Forgotten Cemeteries: A Special Report” “Preserving History”. *The Walton Tribune*. (C1-4).

activity to engage the community. Partnerships with municipalities, schools, and 501c3s have aided advocacy and education.

I received a grant from Charlayne Hunter Gault, entitled, “Giving a Voice to the Voiceless”. Each story is important, and each voice has a place within this thesis and in our community conversations. We will be using the Hunter-Gault grant to help fund a historic marker for the Zion Hill Cemetery, as many people have said they have had trouble locating the site.

Advocacy is the public support of a particular cause. Community advocacy of a cemetery’s history may glean knowledge for current and future generations. By clearing the cemetery site of invasive vegetation, Friends of Zion Hill has allowed the site to become more visible. The group hopes interpretive signs will open the gateway for more inclusive discussion within the community.

## *Fraternal Orders*



Figure 5.3: “Three Ring” configurations on a homemade gravestone at Zion Hill Cemetery. “A.J. Hawkins.” The rings may reference a very early local association of a Black fraternal organization such as the Oddfellows, often associated with three links, which may be likely, because slave owners were Oddfellows, a “negro” fraternal lodge was recorded as being nearby, and a more modern Oddfellows gravestone rests in the cemetery. It has also been suggested the circles may represent the Trinity. Photo by Elizabeth Jones

Gravestones in Zion Hill reveal orders... including Oddfellows, Masonic, and Knights of Pythagoras. A success of this project, grants funded our first interpretive sign to educate the public about the importance of these orders to the Black American community after Emancipation. On a side note, I am very intrigued by the homemade gravestones with groups of three circles, as I believe they may denote an Oddfellows fraternity.

In 1843, the Odd Fellows became a separate organization under the name Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows was formed to include African Americans. American black fraternal orders like Odd Fellows were popular during the 19th century as places where black people could further their business and economic skills, as well as socialize. After the Civil War,

membership, as restrictions on gatherings of African Americans ceased. Orders were often entrepreneurial, and many provided financial assistance to members who wanted to buy homes. Gravestones in a neighboring African American cemetery display similar orders, and a Sandborn map reveals a Negro lodge was nearby.

### ***Esther Crew and the Brownsville Raid***

A second interpretive sign was placed to tell the story of Esther Crew, Buddy Conyers, and the Brownsville Raid. Esther Crew was buried at Zion Hill Cemetery and was a member of Zion Hill Church. To acknowledge Esther Crew, we placed an interpretive sign at the side of the cemetery. The sign was funded by the Willson Center for Arts and Humanities, through the University of Georgia. She purchased multiple tracts of land in Monroe. In the year 1892 she borrowed \$400.00 from the Southern Home Building and Loan Association. She received an advance on her two shares of stock held by said corporation in the amount of \$200.00. Esther Crew initially made payments of \$1.20 a month, increasing to \$2.00 a month to the Association.

<sup>106</sup> The lot was a “house lot ...situated in Walton County ...on the public road leading from Monroe to Good Hope...” The property was bounded to the north and east by the property of Joseph H. Felker. The public road was on the west of the property, the south side was bordered by the property of Miss Sallie Hattie Kimble. The lot contained about 1.4 acres and was formerly known as the Wayne place.<sup>107</sup> Esther’s name was associated with the Colored Baptist Tabernacle (Book E, Page 295.) In 1897, she purchased the lot for \$300 from Lucy A. Smith. The property was bounded to the “east by a road running north and south; North by a road leading from Monroe to Walnut Grove; West by School lot; South by lot of Thomas Giles, and containing one half acre more or less, where on is situated the Colored Baptist Tabernacle; owning 50 or 75 feet

---

<sup>106</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, Book C 3, p. 64

<sup>107</sup> *ibid*

of said lot.”<sup>108</sup> (The school mentioned is the Johnston Institute, founded by Nehemiah Johnston, which burned on the last day of school in the year 1900.) Esther Crew donated her parcel of land to the Tabernacle Church, and today an addition of the church exists on the property.

The Brownsville Raid occurred in 1906 in Brownsville Texas. Following the death of a white bartender and the injury of a white police officer, townspeople accused the members of the Black American 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. President Theodore Roosevelt ordered the discharge without honor of 167 soldiers. Soldiers were denied their pensions and prevented from serving in federal civil service jobs.<sup>109</sup> Esther owned the boarding house where the appointed detective, Will Lawson, stayed during the initial investigation of the Brownsville Raid. In the 1970’s, a renewed military investigation exonerated the discharged Black troops. The men were pardoned in 1972.<sup>110</sup> Buddy Conyers, a Buffalo soldier, is buried in the old city cemetery (also known as Memorial Cemetery) at the end of West Marable Street.<sup>111</sup> Stories like the Brownsville Raid are within many of Georgia’s Black American cemeteries.



Figure 5.4: An interpretive sign about Esther Crew, Buddy Conyers, and the Brownsville Raid at the Zion Hill Cemetery. The sign was placed by Elizabeth Jones and *Friends of Zion Hill*, enabled by an award from the Willson Center for Arts and Humanities through the University of Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones

<sup>108</sup> Walton County Clerk of Courts, Book E, p. 295

<sup>109</sup> John Weaver. *The Brownsville Raid*.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> East Georgia Genealogical Society. *Walton County Cemeteries (West)*, p.240.

### *The Moore's Ford Lynching: Mae Murry Dorsey*

As funding allows, two more interpretive signs will be created to show the map of the Ground Penetrating Radar and to tell the story of Mae Murray Dorsey. It is my hope the next interpretive sign may be one for Mae Murray Dorsey, providing additional opportunities for education, remembrance, and discussion. Uncomfortable topics may be a part of historic backgrounds. As I mentioned earlier, the Moore's Ford Lynching is often called the "Last Mass Lynching in the United States." The lynching of two young African American couples spurred President Harry S. Truman to push for a civil rights investigation, call for anti-lynching legislation, and create the President's Commission on Civil Rights. The Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church moved in 1953, following a series of pastors that left soon after arriving. The Moore's Ford lynching between Oconee and Walton County in 1946 may have had much influence on the move, and it is significant to the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>112</sup>

Former Vice President of the Confederacy Alexander H. Stephens stated in his Cornerstone Address, "...the negro is not equal to the white man" and slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and moral condition."<sup>113</sup> A thought that whites were the superior race seems to have been an underpinning of the Confederacy.

...The Reconstruction era was a violent period in which tens of thousands of people were killed in racially- and politically-motivated massacres, murders, and lynchings. White mobs regularly targeted African Americans with deadly violence but rarely aimed lethal attacks at white individuals accused of identical violations of law or custom.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Pitch, *The Last Lynching: How A Gruesome Mass Murder Rocked A Small Georgia Town*

<sup>113</sup> Alexander H. Stephens, Cornerstone Address. March 21, 1861.

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/cornerstone-speech/>.

<sup>114</sup> Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*.

Racial division and social separation did not allow an accused Black person justice during the lynching era. The Equal Justice Initiative has documented 4084 African American lynchings. Of those, almost 25 percent were accused of sexual assault and almost 30 percent were accused of murder<sup>115</sup>.

My conversation with Billy Murray revealed several details about Mae Murray's young life. Mae Murray Dorsey was known as Murray, but she was born with the last name Lee. Hester Murray married Willie Lee, and their daughter was Willie "Mae" Lee. Mae Murray's father died in an electrical accident. Stricken with grief, her mother had a "stomach aneurysm", and she died too. The grandparents and aunts reared the children, and Mae became known as a "Murray".<sup>116</sup>

A memorial stone for Mae Murray Dorsey rests in a corner of the property, placed by the Moore's Ford Committee. No one really recalled where Mae Murray Dorsey was buried, so they placed the marker near Emma Murray, who was a founding member of the church. The GPR conducted at the site reveals there is an anomaly at the location where Mae's memorial rests, but there is also another anomaly in between the memorial stone and Mae's marker. It is doubtful one can ever really know where Mae was buried. In 1953, the church split into the First African Baptist Church and Tabernacle Baptist, and the cemetery became overgrown.

When I first decided to uncover the hidden site and clear away the vines, I asked John Howard, the Mayor of Monroe, his opinion. He mentioned he was apprehensive because there might be marches at the cemetery. He spoke to his father about his concern. He told me that his father told him people liked to visit cemeteries, and that he often did so himself. Mayor Howard told me his father told him that I should start the restoration effort. The acknowledgement of

---

<sup>115</sup> Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*.

<sup>116</sup> Murray, Phone Interviews.

Mae Murray Dorsey is not about one person. Acknowledgement includes her story with the many voices of Zion Hill Cemetery... and many similar voices in our state and nation.



Figure 5.5: Friends of Zion Hill volunteer Charles Morrow installs one of several handmade birdhouses. The birdhouses were created and donated by volunteer Darlene Sumlar Brine. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

## Educational Workshops

### *Community Cleaning with D/2 Biological Solution*

Educational activities provide a way for the community to learn about a subject while learning about one another. To further communicate the value of preservation, the City of Monroe Fire Department provided water for a “hands on” educational workday to clean the headstones with D/2 biological solution. D/2 biological solution is a remarkable biological cleaner, recommended by the Cemetery Conservators for United Standards. On a scale of 0- 14 D/2 has a pH of 9.5.<sup>117</sup> (The pH values are very important in determining risks to the grave marker, the preservationist, and the environment.) The application of D/2, followed by scrubbing with a soft nylon brush, yields astonishing results. D/2 continues to work over a period of months, so patience is important. Monuments were scrubbed by community volunteers, while fire fighters filled buckets of waters from the fire trucks.<sup>118</sup> T-shirts were given to volunteers, courtesy of a grant from the National Council for Preservation Education.



Figure 5.6: Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery volunteer Paige Sullivan uses D/2 biological solution to clean Mae Murray Dorsey’s memorial marker. Photo by Stephanie Calabrese

---

<sup>117</sup> Cemetery Conservators for United Standards.

<sup>118</sup> Cemetery Conservators for United Standards.



Figures 5.7 & 5.8: The marker was cleaned with D/2 biological solution three weeks prior. The markers continued to lighten over the next few months. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

Creasie Hill  
 Born Jan. 30, 1841.  
 Died March 9, 1900.  
 God in His wisdom recalled  
 The boon His love has given  
 And though the body moulders here  
 The soul is safe in heaven.

### ***Marker Repairs***

A restoration project is a commitment. It is a choice. Many cemeteries go without restoration efforts, because of the lack of invested effort. In Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Riverview Cemetery has fallen into “extreme neglect”.<sup>119</sup> “Jagged holes in the earth reveal vaults at two sites. High mounds of untidy red sand hide some graves from view. Some markers slant at strange

---

<sup>119</sup> Wright et al, *Lay Down Body*. p. 153

angles, following the sunken contour of the ground. ‘’ The slanted gravestones described sound like the broken and sunken gravestones of Zion Hill Cemetery.

As of this writing, five broken markers were repaired by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries, with funding from the Walker Foundation. The repairs were part of a public workshop hosted by Friends of Zion Hill. An additional marker repair demonstration was donated by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries during the Georgia Trust’s *Monroe Expedition* 2022 event and tour of Zion Hill Cemetery. Fifty-five simple granite markers were designed with input from descendant church volunteers. Markers were paid for by grants from the Garden Club of Georgia and the Watson Brown Foundation to Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery in a partnership with the Monroe Museum. Repair demonstrations as educational tools for the public provide far-reaching benefits, as the educational spark of one day may carry into many other locations.



Figure 5.9: Markers are repaired by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries specialist Joey Fernandez. Photo by Stephanie Calabrese.



Figure 5.10: Gravestones repaired by Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries preservationist, Joey Fernandez. Funds were provided by a grant from the Walker Foundation to Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery in partnership with the Monroe Museum. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

## **Furthering Community Engagement**

Communicating with the public has drawn attention to Zion Hill Cemetery. Additionally, the filming of restoration activities for Stephanie Calabrese's film *Unspoken* has drawn attention to work in the cemetery, with much talk about the Moore's Ford Lynching at times.

The Georgia Trust's *Monroe Expedition* enabled me to expand my preservation efforts to the Upper Mill Cemetery in Darien, Georgia. The idea has continued to grow, and I am now working on a project through the Georgia Trust to host clean-up days in 5 Georgia cemeteries throughout the State of Georgia.

The cemetery was mentioned in yearly 2021 and 2022 meetings with Preservation Action, 2021 and 2022 presentations at the Southeast Conference of Architectural Historians and was featured in the Georgia Trust's 2022 *Monroe Expedition*. I was awarded the "Giving A Voice to the Voiceless" Grant by Charlayne Hunter-Gault and The Georgia Trust's *Elizabeth Lyons Fellowship* in 2023.

### ***The Georgia Trust Monroe Expedition 2022***

In 2022, Friends of Zion Hill and the members of the First African Baptist Church hosted a tour of the Zion Hill Cemetery with the Georgia Trust's *Monroe Expedition*. Guests visited all day, from Georgia and from surrounding states. Events like the *Monroe Expedition* are excellent ways to promote and share the importance of Black heritage.

### ***Grant Partnerships***

As mentioned earlier grants awarded to the Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery project include the 2019 and 2020 National Council for Preservation Education's Communicating the Value of Preservation Grant, as well as the 2020 and 2021 Historic Landscape Preservation grant from the Garden Club of Georgia. The 2020 grants funded the Ground Penetrating Radar. Many of the

grants that were awarded for the Zion Hill Cemetery project were submitted in partnership with a 501c3 (like the Monroe Museum or the University of Georgia.) These types of partnerships are important in building a sense of place for African American cultural heritage because they generate a sense of connectivity.



Figure 5.11: Randy Brennan of Signature Scapes demonstrates Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) at the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe Georgia at the Georgia Trust’s Monroe Expedition in 2022. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

The Federal programs noted earlier for African American heritage may be difficult to obtain for entities or community groups who are not incorporated as a 501c3. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs African American Programs Coordinator suggests partnering

with the local municipality to obtain such grants.<sup>120</sup> The Georgia Code authorizes counties and municipalities to protect cemeteries.

36-72-3. Authority of counties and municipalities to preserve abandoned cemeteries. Counties, anywhere within the county boundaries, and municipalities, anywhere within the municipal boundaries, are authorized, jointly and severally, to preserve and protect any abandoned cemetery or any burial ground which the county or municipality determines has been abandoned or is not being maintained by the person who is legally responsible for its upkeep, whether or not that person is financially capable of doing so, to expend public money in connection therewith, to provide for reimbursement of such funds by billing any legally responsible person or levying upon any of his property as authorized by local ordinance, and to exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire any interest in land necessary for that purpose.<sup>121</sup>

In 2021, I wrote an extensive federal grant to repair all the broken headstones in the Zion Hill Cemetery. It should be noted the University of Georgia and the City of Monroe were asked partner with the grant, entitled Telling the Full Story, and both declined to participate. I was told by prominent city leaders that it was not “the time” to draw attention to the cemetery site, specifically because of the attention the Moore’s Ford lynching might draw. How can one tell the full history without mentioning the trauma of a trauma-infused cemetery?

The efforts at Zion Hill Cemetery have been entirely volunteer, apart from grant funded marker repairs, the GPR survey, and mapping. Larger federal grants were unobtainable in the past, because municipalities and other entities would not partner, and Friends of Zion Hill was not an incorporated entity. Going forward, the Friends of Zion Hill project will be operating under the incorporated 501c3, *Preserve & Serve Georgia Inc.* The group plans to submit for federal grants in the future.

---

<sup>120</sup> Jest. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs. African American Programs Coordinator. Phone Interview.

<sup>121</sup> Georgia Code §36-72-3(2022)

Black American grant programs often urge “Friends” groups to partner with municipalities to gain federal funding. In addition, the Georgia Code urges municipalities to use federal funds to care for abandoned cemeteries. In the case of Zion Hill Cemetery, the overshadowing of the Moore’s Ford lynching may have created an obstacle to such a partnership. The Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery had hoped to use Georgia’s code to place the abandoned cemetery into the name of the certified local entity of the City of Monroe after the restoration work is completed, and I met with the City Council on August 11, 2020 to discuss the Zion Hill Cemetery. (The session closed with the idea that the topic will be revisited after the restoration is complete.)



Figure 5.12: A footstone (partially painted blue) wedged behind the former B&B Engine building at the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS: A PROPOSAL FOR MITIGATION

Acknowledgement is necessary for proper preservation of cemeteries like Zion Hill Cemetery. However, one must understand a long-term sustainable plan is vital for the recovery and maintenance of Black American cemeteries. This thesis has previously examined the history of the Zion Hill site, the importance of surveys as a form of acknowledgement, and the successes and obstacles of community engagement. This chapter looks at the results of the mitigation used to recover the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe Georgia from a state of abandonment, as described by the Georgia State Code. It outlines the next steps of the stewardship effort. Zion Hill Cemetery has been recovered from a state of abandonment, demonstrating Black American cemeteries may be more effectively preserved through acknowledgement. A nonrenewable cultural resource has been identified through surveys and documentation. Cemeteries are a community asset. The community's attachment to a church cemetery begins by resurrecting the attachment to the history associated with the people. However, a Black American cemetery must be preserved and protected by a long-term sustainable plan.

Documentation, restoration, and the engagement of people to tell stories about Black American cemeteries help to keep the sites and the stories preserved for future generations. Community workshops, Facebook pages, and interviews all are effective ways of gathering and sharing information about church history and preservation methods. The guidelines outlined in Georgia's code for protecting abandoned cemeteries list deed research, survey, and notifying descendants as methods of protection. Each of these steps is critical to a successful restoration effort.

## **Funding**

Before the Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery began to clear the cemetery of debris, other groups had hosted clean-up days at the Zion Hill Cemetery. Because the cemetery was not maintained, it repeatedly fell into disrepair. Stewardship efforts to preserve Zion Hill Cemetery (in Monroe, Georgia) have always had a larger goal... to provide a preservation template for other underserved communities in the state of Georgia. *Preserve and Serve Georgia, Inc.* was founded in 2023. To effectively sustain the ongoing efforts of a cemetery's restoration, funding must be secured. It is my hope, that through the incorporated nonprofit, Preserve & Serve Georgia, Inc., we will be able to secure funding to sustain the work at Zion Hill Cemetery.

The African American Burial Grounds Study Act passed the Senate on December 20, 2020. "This bill directs the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a study of ways to identify, interpret, preserve, and record previously abandoned, underserved, or other burial grounds related to the historic African American experience."<sup>122</sup> The NPS considers the following items within the context of the study:

- ways to engage with descendant, local, and other communities historically associate with identified burial grounds by geography, genealogy, or culture;
- appropriate processes to identify locations of unmarked and unrecorded African American burial grounds with appropriate consideration for the privacy and safety of the burial grounds;
- alternatives for providing in a public database the locations of, and information on, recorded and unrecorded African American burial grounds;
- alternatives for commemorating and interpreting African American burial grounds; and
- best practices for preserving burial ground landscapes and caring for artifacts.<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Congress.Gov. The African American Burial Grounds Study Act. (20, Dec. 2020)

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

The National Park Service program, African American Cultural Action Fund, awarded \$3 million in grants in 2022.

“On July 19, 2022, the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded \$3 million in grants to 33 sites and organizations through its African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. Since its inception in 2017, the Action Fund has supported 160 places through its National Grant Program for a total investment of \$12.4 million.”<sup>124</sup>

Brent Leggs, Executive Director, African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and Senior Vice President, National Trust for Historic Preservation, made the following statement, ““At the National Trust, we aim to broaden the public's understanding of the Black experience in America, while also underscoring the very urgent need to identify and protect these sites for the benefit of the communities they have long served....”<sup>125</sup>

Advocacy groups such as Preservation Action help to communicate the importance of Federal grants and ensure that funds continue to be available through the endorsement of our Nation’s leaders. (I became an advocate for Preservation Action in 2021.)

Georgia’s Historic Preservation Division (Ga DNR HPD) operates under the Department of Community Affairs. Georgia was the first state to offer educational programs about African American sites. The Ga DNR HPD’s African American Program Coordinator and the Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network’s Steering Committee manage historic preservation projects to create community revitalization and economic development. GAAHPN includes more than 3,000 people from across the state who have an interest in preservation.<sup>126</sup>

Partners of the HPD include The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, The National Trust for

---

<sup>124</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation. Press Release. Washington D.C. (July 19, 2022)

<sup>125</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation. Press Release. Washington D.C. (July 19, 2022)

<sup>126</sup> The Georgia Department of Community Affairs. (2023)

Historic Preservation, and Saint Simon’s African American Heritage Coalition.<sup>127</sup> The Georgia Trust has compiled a list of grants and resources for Black American sites, to include the Georgia Heritage Grant Program.

Municipal cemeteries are usually funded through tax revenue, and this may lead to competition for funding. The staff may be small or resourced from other departments, such as Parks and Recreation. Specialized expertise may be lacking in cemetery management or historic preservation.<sup>128</sup> It has been suggested that municipal cemeteries should “be able to charge a rate for goods and services comparable to those in the private sector; likewise, they should provide the same well cared for and attractive grounds as private cemeteries.”<sup>129</sup>

Roberta Hughs Wright and Wilbur Hughs III’s book, *Lay Down Body: Living History in African American Cemeteries* notes the strain municipal budgets may feel from cemetery maintenance.<sup>130</sup> Marker sales, flower sales, and marker cleaning may aid in developing a perpetual care fund. If the City of Monroe, Georgia was to take ownership of the abandoned Zion Hill Cemetery, the incorporation of a scatter garden or columbarium (in a vacant space determined by GPR) could be incorporated to provide a service for those wishing to place ashes.

### **Resources for a Long-Term Plan**

One may struggle to justify the effort of recovering hidden or abandoned cemeteries. Do the dead really care? The sanctity of a burial ground is undeniable. The legal protection of “the finite, irreplaceable, and nonrenewable cultural heritage of the people of Georgia” extends to all people of Georgia, of all ethnicities.<sup>131</sup> The continued documentation of Zion Hill

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

<sup>128</sup> Roberta Hughs Wright et al, *Lay Down Body*. (1996)

<sup>129</sup> Wright et al, *Lay Down Body*.

<sup>130</sup> Wright et al, *Lay Down Body*.

<sup>131</sup> Ga Code § 36-72-1 (2022)

Cemetery provides factual evidence of Black American history within the City of Monroe. Historic preservationists must make an ethical commitment to preserve cultural values with objectivity. Underprivileged groups may struggle to preserve cemeteries if tools or resources are unavailable. Federal grants could be obtained through a municipality to preserve abandoned Black cemeteries; these grants are unobtainable if a municipality is short staffed or needs clarity on the ownership of an abandoned cemetery. Often, historic artifacts are left to decay as cultural identities are suppressed and buried.<sup>132</sup> The continued education of municipalities is necessary to protect Black American burial grounds like Zion Hill Cemetery.

It has been demonstrated that slave cemeteries are seldom indicated on maps. It is also known that Black American burial sites are marked with items such as plants, wood markers (which may rot), or rocks (which may shift and become buried over time.) While a permit is not necessary for restoration activity, I believe all abandoned cemeteries should utilize the guidelines required for permitting when building on grounds that contain a cemetery. Boundaries are often thought to be known, and often boundaries have long been misinterpreted. Many municipalities are unaware of Georgia's abandoned cemetery code and the permit requirements it dictates pertaining to the identification of burials.<sup>133</sup>

The ongoing preservation and protection of nonrenewable cultural heritage requires a long-term plan. Many people wonder if the descendant churches would want to take care of the Zion Hill Cemetery again. After the Georgia Trust program in 2022, some members of the First African Baptist Church community did express an interest in renewed ownership. However, because of the cost of maintenance and cemetery upkeep, the thought would take more discussion. As church congregations age, the younger members are not as interested in history as

---

<sup>132</sup> Matthes, *The Ethics of Historic Preservation*.

<sup>133</sup> Appendix A. Georgia Code. 36-72-5 *Application for permit*.

their elders. The elders are not physically able to work in the cemetery as much as they would wish.

Another option for care might be ownership by a municipality. On August 11, 2020, I presented the Zion Hill Cemetery restoration project to the City of Monroe City Council. My hope is that once all the repairs are complete and a sustainable plan is in place, the City of Monroe may be interested in maintaining the space as a place to promote education and diversity within the community. The Mayor has recently asked I meet with the City Council to discuss the Zion Hill Cemetery again.

Although Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery did not hire an arborist, an arborist from the University of Georgia Walton County Cooperative Extension Office visited the site and visually assessed the health of the trees. We will need to remove two dead and decaying trees. After the clearing of invasive plants from the property, the reason for many eroded and sunken graves was discovered. In 1989, the Monroe City Council unanimously approved the addition of more buildings and the paving of the second entrance to the shopping center near Zion Hill Cemetery. A storm drain flue was added to the side of the entrance, and a drain was added under the new entranceway. Another drain was added at the other side of the cemetery, behind a building. Today, the drains are clogged with dirt and debris. The water funnels from the flue through the cemetery, across the graves, to the drain on the opposite side. This creates a wash-way on rainy days. It was pointed out to me that the washing away of the graves was a powerful metaphor for the washing away of Black American history.



Figure 6.1: Storm water collects in a drain and floods the burials discovered with GPR at Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe, Georgia. Photo by Elizabeth Jones

I am hopeful that if I find several bids from qualified engineers, I may be able to find grant funding to aid the flow of the storm water, while saving the burial sites from further erosion. The map of the drains was provided by the City of Monroe. The water flows through the back of the cemetery, to a drain within the cemetery. The outlet under the red arrow flows onto a private property, so I have been told the drain can not be flushed by the City of Monroe.



Figure:6.2 Stormwater drains at Zion Hill Cemetery (City of Monroe)



Figure 6.3: A flue ushers storm water from the shopping center entranceway into the Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe, Georgia. The storm water drain beneath the pavement is clogged with dirt and debris. Photo by Elizabeth Jones.

## **Conclusion**

It is my hope that the guidelines presented in this paper may aid other communities with their own preservation efforts. Stewardship may act as an example for other communities. According to The Chicora Foundation, “Perhaps the single most important step you can take to preserve and protect African-American graveyards is to keep their history alive.”<sup>134</sup> It is vital to resurrect the history of cemeteries and the cemeteries themselves, because these sites may be some of the last remaining places associated with a particular community’s Black American ancestry. Through documentation, restoration, and engagement activities, the history of Zion Hill Cemetery is openly acknowledged, or validated. As members of the community who recall history grew fewer, the sharing and recording of stories are vital tools in the survival and understanding of Black records.

The acknowledgement of a trauma-infused burial ground through community engagement is necessary for the proper preservation of cemeteries like the Zion Hill Cemetery. In the case of Zion Hill, the church split into two churches, and members may have also gone to other local churches over the years. The boundaries of the cemetery were unclear, and many graves were violated because no tangible record of burial existed. Community engagement has helped to recover the history of several individuals buried at the Zion Hill Cemetery. It has recognized both the accomplishments and the trauma-infused history of the Black American community.

The nonrenewable cultural resource of Black American burials may be preserved through acknowledgement. The history of the people within Zion Hill Cemetery is publicly acknowledged and validated as a community asset of nonrenewable cultural heritage. Examples

---

<sup>134</sup> The Chicora Foundation. *Grave Matters: The Preservation of African American Cemeteries*

of this history include Black fraternal orders, the Brownsville Raid, and the Moore's Ford Lynching. The history found within Black American cemeteries may act as a tool for education and understanding.



Figure 6.4: Friends of Zion Hill Volunteers gather fallen limbs and debris... and frolic in the cemetery. Photo by Stephanie Calabrese.

## REFERENCES

- Ball, Edward. *Slaves in the Family*. Ballantine Books, New York, 1999.
- Bigman, Danel. *GPR Basics: A Handbook for Ground Penetrating Radar Users*. Bigman Geophysical, LLC., 2018.
- Blakey, Michael “Forward”. (April 16, 1995). *Lay Down Body: Living History in African American Cemeteries*. Visible Ink Press, 1996.
- Board of Regents, University of Georgia System, *Slave Laws of Georgia, 1755-1860*. “Creating a More Educated Georgia”. Georgia Archives.
- Brown, Flora. Interview, Monroe, Georgia. 2019.
- Burch, Audra D.S. “Nearly ‘Erased By History’ African Americans Search for Lost Graves”. *New York Times*, October 15, 2022; Updated October 17, 2022.
- Camp, Earnest. The Walton Tribune. *Sweet Chariot Summons Home Beloved Queen of Mammies*. 1935 (Article courtesy of the Monroe Museum.)
- Camp, Lynn Robinson and Cheeks – Collins, Jennifer. *Black America Series: Walton County Georgia*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina, 2003.
- Cemetery Conservators For United Standards. “Cleaning.” 2021.  
<https://cemeteryconservatorsunitedstandards.org/cleaning/>
- The Chicora Foundation. *Grave Matters: The Preservation of African-American Cemeteries*. 1996.  
<https://www.chicora.org/pdfs/Grave%20Matters%20-%20The%20Preservation%20of%20African%20American%20Cemeteries.pdf>
- Congress.Gov., The African American Burial Grounds Study Act. December 20, 2022.  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2827>
- Davis, Ren and Helen. *Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery*. The University of Georgia Press. 2012.
- Dominy, Jessi. *The Oak Ridge Project*. 2023.  
<https://www.orcproject.org/>.
- East Georgia Genealogical Society. *Walton County Cemeteries (West)*. Winder, Georgia. 2002.
- Equal Justice Initiative. *Community Remembrance Project*.

- <https://simplebooklet.com/crpcatalog#page=1>
- Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, 3d Ed., 2017.  
<https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/>
- First African Baptist Church Records, First African Baptist Church, Monroe, Georgia.
- Frederek, Jack. "Reclaiming and Restoring A Black Burial Ground In Durham". *Working@Duke, Academics, Research*. Nov. 10, 2021.
- GA Code § 36-72-1 (2022). Accessed January 23, 2023.
- GA Code §36-72-2 (2022). Accessed January 23, 2023.
- GA Code § 36-72-4 (2022). Accessed January 23, 2023.
- GA Code § 36-72-5 (2022). Accessed January 23, 2023.
- GA Code § 36-72-6 (2022). Accessed January 23, 2023.
- George, Bradley. *Unearthed Remains Create Controversy in Athens*. March 19, 2017. Updated August 14, 2020.  
<https://www.gpb.org/news/2017/03/20/unearthed-remains-create-controversy-in-athens>
- The Georgia Department of Community Affairs. 2023.  
[https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/african\\_american\\_heritage\\_programs.pdf](https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/african_american_heritage_programs.pdf)
- Gresham, Thomas., et al. *Archaeological Exhumation of Burials in the Baldwin Hall Portion of the Old Athens Cemetery, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, Final Report*. Southeastern Archaeological Services Inc. July 25, 2019.
- GSA. *The African Burial Ground*. Last Revised: 11/08/2021.  
<https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/regions/region-2northeast-and-caribbean/about-region-2/the-african-burial-ground>
- Hillyer, Junius. *The Life and Times of Judge Junius Hillyer (From His Memoirs)*. Boyd Publishing Co. Published 1989.
- Historic Oakland Foundation. 2023.  
<https://oaklandcemetery.com/african-american-grounds-project/>
- Historic Macon. 2023.  
<http://www.historicmacon.org/rose-hill-cemetery>
- Huey, Louis Milner, and hoopla digital. 2015. *Forgotten Bones: Uncovering a Slave Cemetery*.

[United States]: Millbrook.  
Press//search.ebscost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&livedb=nlebk&AN=1051411&site=eds-live.

Jackson, Alvin D. "If This Cemetery Could Talk: The Hodges Family Burial Grounds 1872-2007." *Journal of the Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society* 35 (January): 32–36. 2018.  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=31h&AN=136080814&site=eds-live.>]

Jest, Melissa. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs. African American Programs Coordinator.  
Phone Interview. June 1, 2020.

Johnson, David . *Slave burial site to be recognized at Rose Hill Cemetery*. WGXA News, 2016.  
<https://wgxa.tv/news/local/a-piece-of-macon-history-will-soon-be-brought-to-life-at-rose-hill-cemetery>

Jones, Diane. "The City of the Dead: The Place of Cultural Identity and Environmental Sustainability in the African American Cemetery." *Landscape Journal* 30, no 2 (September 2011): 226-40. doi 0.3368/lj.30.2.226.

Jones, Elizabeth. "Walton County's Forgotten Cemeteries: A Special Report"; "Preserving History". *The Walton Tribune*. (C1-4). November 25, 2020.

Khiatani, Paul Vinod., et al. "Service-learning under COVID-19: A scoping review of the challenges and opportunities for practicing service-learning in the 'New Normal'", *International Journal of Educational Development*, Volume 100, 102813, ISSN 0738-0593, 2023.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102813>.  
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0738059323000895>)

King, Alanna. "Gone But Not Forgotten". *Walton Living Magazine*. 2019.

King, Savannah. The Times. "Georgia Group Aims to Restore Forgotten Cemeteries." *AP Regional State Report – Georgia*. Associated Press DBA Press Association. 2014.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db+n5h&AN=APeeooa35b49b49ab6211d3c609e11&site=edes-live> (Georgia Cemetery Restoration)

Kruger - Kahloula, Angelika. Slavery in the Americas. *Homage and Hegemony: African American Grave Inscription and Decoration*. Konigshausen & Neumann, 1993.

Lower Altamaha Historical Society Book Committee, *Cemeteries of McIntosh County Georgia*. 2000.

- Lutz, Meris. "History Speaks from Beyond the Grave". *The Covington News*. January 3, 2013.
- Matthes, Hatala Erich. *The Ethics of Historic Preservation*. 2016.  
*Philosophy Compass*, 11: 786–794. doi: 10.1111/phc3.12379.
- Mack, E. Mark and Blakey, L. Michael. "The New York African Burial Ground Project".  
*Historical Archeology*. 2004
- McCarthy, Lauren. "Tulsa Reaches Breakthroughs In Search For Massacre Victims". *New York Times*. (April 15, 2023; Updated April 17, 2023).  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/15/us/tulsa-race-massacre-murders-dna.html>
- Mellville, Greg. *Over My Dead Body*. Abrams Press, 2022.
- Milsom, John and Erikson, Asger. *Field Geophysics*. John Wiley and Sons, 2011.
- Murray, Billy. Phone Interviews. 2021.
- The Monroe Museum, Facebook Page, Monroe, Georgia. 2023.  
<https://www.facebook.com/MonroeMuseum>
- The National Trust for Historic Preservation. "National Trust Awards \$3 Million in grants to 33 Sites to Help Preserve Black History." July 19, 2022.  
<https://savingplaces.org/stories/2022-action-fund-grant-recipients>
- Neal, Christine. *Guide to Cemetery Surveying*. *The Georgia Department of Natural Resources*. December 2008.  
[https://gadnr.org/sites/default/files/hpd/pdf/Cemetery\\_Survey\\_Guideline.pdf](https://gadnr.org/sites/default/files/hpd/pdf/Cemetery_Survey_Guideline.pdf)
- Parry, Marc. "New Tensions Erupt Over Georgia's Handling of Presumed Slave Remains." *Chronicle of Higher Education*. April 13, 2018.  
<http://prxy-remote.galib.uga.edu./login?URL=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=13131501748&site=eds-live>
- Pitch, S. Anthony. *The Last Lynching: How A Gruesome Mass Murder Rocked A Small Georgia Town*. Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2016.
- Rainville, Lynn. *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Northern Virginia*. University of Virginia Press. 2014.
- Rinaldi, John. *Options for Handling Cemeteries on Private Property*. Walsh, Collucci, Lubeley, & Walsh. March 1, 2018.  
<http://thelandlawyers.com/cemeteries-private-property/>
- Records – Park and Tree Commission*. 5600PC. Dates: 1789, 1850-1977, 1995. "Organizational

History”. <https://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/576/Park-and-Tree-Commission-Department>

Robinson, Lynn & Camp & Cheeks-Collins, Jennifer. *Black America Series: Walton County Georgia*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina, 2003.

Signature Scapes. Signature Mapping. *Zion Hill Cemetery, Monroe, Georgia GPR*. 2023.

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. 36 CFR Part 68. 2023

Smith, Junius M. “The First African Baptist Church” *Sesquicentennial. The Walton Tribune*. Walton County, Georgia, Dec. 11, 1968.

Spracher, L. *City of Savannah, Georgia*. July 2008; revised June 14, 2013; August 2013.

Stanford, L. *Jackson dedicates plaque to unknown Blacks in city cemetery for Juneteenth Celebration*. Jackson Progress – Argus. June 20, 2022.  
[https://www.jacksonprogress-argus.com/news/jackson-dedicates-plaque-to-unknown-blacks-buried-in-city-cemetery-as-part-of-juneteenth-celebration/article\\_69afe0b2-f0d8-11ec-b1d4-1f8e26e82084.html](https://www.jacksonprogress-argus.com/news/jackson-dedicates-plaque-to-unknown-blacks-buried-in-city-cemetery-as-part-of-juneteenth-celebration/article_69afe0b2-f0d8-11ec-b1d4-1f8e26e82084.html)

Stephens, Alexander H. *Cornerstone Address*. March 21, 1861.  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/cornerstone-speech/>.

Stewart, Parker. The Georgia Historical Society. *Laurel Grove South*. 2015.  
<https://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/historical-markers/hidden-histories/laurel-grove-south-cemetery/>

Stimmel, Stimmel, & Smith, P.C. *The Basic Laws Pertaining to Cemeteries*. 2018.  
<https://www.stimmel-law.com/en/articles/basic-laws-pertaining-cemeteries>. “The remains of 105 unknown people, nearly all African-American slaves or former slaves....” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 31, 2017, A3. Academic OneFile (accessed October 27, 2018). <http://link.galegroup.com/proxyremote.galib.uga.edu/apps/doc/A491611576/aone?u=uga&sid=6722c95a>

Voorhies, Christine Van. *A Comprehensive Plan to Preserving Historic Cemeteries in Georgia*. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Historic Preservation Division, Atlanta, Georgia. 2003 (GA Abandoned Cemetery Law

W&A Engineering, Survey of Zion Hill Cemetery, 2022

Walton County Clerk of Courts, 1892. *Book C*, p. 64

Walton County Clerk of Courts, 1897. *Book E*. p. 295

- Walton County Clerk of Courts, 1902. *Book G*. p. 182
- Walton County Clerk of Courts, 1871. *Book U*. p. 141
- Walton County Clerk of Courts, *Book X*, p. 533
- Walton County Clerk of Courts, *Book 10*, p. 47
- The Walton Tribune. University of Georgia Microfilm. July 19, 1946.
- The Walton Tribune. University of Georgia Microfilm. September 13, 1946.
- Weaver, John. *The Brownsville Raid*. Texas A&M University. 1992.
- Williams, Mark & Crass, David. *Frequently Asked Questions: Cemeteries*. Georgia Department of Natural Resources.  
<https://georgiashpo.org/sites/default/files/hpd/pdf/Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%2C%20Cemeteries.pdf>
- White, Timothy J. *Service Learning and Participant Observation: Undergraduate Field Research*. Metropolitan Universities. Summer 2000.
- Wright, Roberta Hughes and Hughes III, Wilber B. *Lay Down Body: Living History in African American Cemeteries*. Visible Ink Press, 1996.
- Zion Hill Cemetery, Burial Marker, “Easter Crew”, Monroe, Georgia.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GA Code § 36-72-1 - GA Code § 36-72-14

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-1

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated   TITLE 36 Local Government   Provisions Applicable to  
Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)   CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries  
and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-1. Legislative findings and intent.

---

**(a)** The care accorded the remains of deceased persons reflects respect and regard for human dignity as well as cultural, spiritual, and religious values. The General Assembly declares that human remains and burial objects are not property to be owned by the person or entity which owns the land or water where the human remains and burial objects are interred or discovered, but human remains and burial objects are a part of the finite, irreplaceable, and nonrenewable cultural heritage of the people of Georgia which should be protected.

**(b)** It is the intent of the General Assembly that the provisions of this chapter be construed to require respectful treatment of human remains in accord with the equal and innate dignity of every human being and consistent with the identifiable ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliation of the deceased individual as indicated by the method of burial or other historical evidence or reliable information.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-1, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 274, § 3.

▼ Annotations

## Opinion Notes

---

### **OPINIONS OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

#### **For an update of crimes and offenses**

for which the Georgia Crime Information Center is authorized to collect and file identifying data, see 1991 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 91-35.

## Research References & Practice Aids

---

### **Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

### **Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:03:13 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-2

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-2

Copy Citation

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated    TITLE 36 Local Government    Provisions Applicable to  
Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)    CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries  
and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-2. Definitions.

---

As used in this chapter, the term:

**(1)** "Abandoned cemetery" means a cemetery which shows signs of neglect including, without limitation, the unchecked growth of vegetation, repeated and unchecked acts of vandalism, or the disintegration of grave markers or boundaries and for which no person can be found who is legally responsible and financially capable of the upkeep of such cemetery.

**(2)** "Archeologist" means any person who is:

**(A)** A member of or meets the criteria for membership in the Society of Professional Archaeologists and can demonstrate experience in the excavation and interpretation of human graves; or

**(B)** Employed on July 1, 1991, by the state or by any county or municipal governing authority as an archeologist.

**(3)** "Burial ground" means an area dedicated to and used for interment of human remains. The term shall include privately owned burial plots, individually and collectively, once human remains have been buried therein. The fact that the area was used for burial purposes shall be evidence that it was set aside for burial purposes.

**(4)** "Burial object" means any item reasonably believed to have been intentionally placed with the human remains at the time of burial or interment or any memorial, tombstone, grave marker, or shrine which may have been added subsequent to interment. Such term also means any inscribed or uninscribed marker, coping, curbing, enclosure, fencing, pavement, shelter, wall, stoneware, pottery, or other grave object erected or deposited incident to or subsequent to interment.

(5) "Cemetery" or "cemeteries" means any land or structure in this state dedicated to and used for interment of human remains. It may be either a burial park for earth interments or a mausoleum for vault or crypt interments or a combination of one or more thereof.

(6) "Descendant" means a person or group of persons related to a deceased human by blood or adoption in accordance with Title 19.

(7) "Genealogist" means a person who traces or studies the descent of persons or families and prepares a probative record of such descent.

(8) "Human remains" means the bodies of deceased human beings in any stage of decomposition, including cremated remains.

(9) "Preserve and protect" means to keep safe from destruction, peril, or other adversity and may include the placement of signs, markers, fencing, or other such appropriate features so as to identify the site as a cemetery or burial ground and may also include the cleaning, maintenance, and upkeep of the site so as to aid in its preservation and protection.

## History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-2, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3; Ga. L. 1992, p. 2508, § 1; Ga. L. 2006, p. 1087, § 7/HB 910.

### ▼ Annotations

#### JUDICIAL DECISIONS

---

##### **Abandonment was a jury question. —**

Descendants of the grantor of a burial ground were not entitled to summary judgment on a buyer's claim that the cemetery was abandoned, O.C.G.A. § 36-72-2(1), because there was evidence that no one had been buried there since 1971, that the descendants had not paid taxes on the lot, and that the descendants had not maintained the cemetery. *City of Sandy Springs v. Mills*, 331 Ga. App. 709, 771 S.E.2d 405, 2015 Ga. App. LEXIS 220 (2015).

#### Research References & Practice Aids

---

##### **Cross references.**

Georgia Cemeterians Board Act, § 43-8B-1 et seq.

**Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:13:22 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-3

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-3

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated    TITLE 36 Local Government    Provisions Applicable to  
Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)    CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries  
and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-3. Authority of counties and municipalities to preserve abandoned cemeteries.

---

Counties, anywhere within the county boundaries, and municipalities, anywhere within the municipal boundaries, are authorized, jointly and severally, to preserve and protect any abandoned cemetery or any burial ground which the county or municipality determines has been abandoned or is not being maintained by the person who is legally responsible for its upkeep, whether or not that person is financially capable of doing so, to expend public money in connection therewith, to provide for reimbursement of such funds by billing any legally responsible person or levying upon any of his property as authorized by local ordinance, and to exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire any interest in land necessary for that purpose.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-3, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3; Ga. L. 1992, p. 2508, § 2.

▼ Annotations

## JUDICIAL DECISIONS

---

### **Duty of county. —**

O.C.G.A. § 36-72-3 authorizes but does not compel a county to preserve and protect abandoned cemeteries. *Smith v. Pulaski County*, 269 Ga. 688, 501 S.E.2d 213, 1998 Ga. LEXIS 625 (1998).

## Opinion Notes

---

### **OPINIONS OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

#### **Persons sentenced to community service**

may be utilized to assist counties or municipalities in the care of abandoned cemeteries or burial grounds. 1999 Op. Att'y Gen. No. U99-5.

## Research References & Practice Aids

---

### **Law reviews.**

For annual survey article discussing local government law, see 51 Mercer L. Rev. 397 (1999).

### **Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:15:04 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-4

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-4

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated**    **TITLE 36 Local Government**    **Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)**    **CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-4. Permit required for developing land on which cemetery located.

No known cemetery, burial ground, human remains, or burial object shall be knowingly disturbed by the owner or occupier of the land on which the cemetery or burial ground is located for the purposes of developing or changing the use of any part of such land unless a permit is first obtained from the governing authority of the municipal corporation or county wherein the cemetery or burial ground is located, which shall have authority to permit such activity except as provided in Code Section 36-72-14.

#### History

Code 1981, § 36-72-4, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

Research References & Practice Aids

**Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:16:13 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-5

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-5

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated    TITLE 36 Local Government    Provisions Applicable to  
Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)    CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries  
and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-5. Application for permit.

---

Application for a permit shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

- (1)** Evidence of ownership of the land on which the cemetery or burial ground is located in the form of a legal opinion based upon a title search;
- (2)** A report prepared by an archeologist stating the number of graves believed to be present and their locations as can be determined from the use of minimally invasive investigation techniques, including remote sensing methods and the use of metal probes, which activities shall not require a permit;
- (3)** A survey prepared by or under the direction of a registered surveyor showing the location and boundaries of the cemetery or burial ground based on an archeologist's report;
- (4)** A plan prepared by a genealogist for identifying and notifying the descendants of those buried or believed to be buried in such cemetery. If those buried or believed to be buried are of aboriginal or American Indian descent, the genealogist, in preparing the notification plan, shall consult with the Council on American Indian Concerns created pursuant to Code Section 44-12-280 and shall include in the notification plan not only any known descendants of those presumed buried but also any American Indian tribes as defined in paragraph (2) of Code Section 44-12-260 that are culturally affiliated; and
- (5)** A proposal for mitigation or avoidance of the effects of the planned activity on the cemetery or burial ground. If the proposal includes relocation of any human remains or burial objects, the proposal shall specify the method of disinterment, the location and method of disposition of the remains, the approximate cost of the process, and the approximate number of graves affected.

## History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-5, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3; Ga. L. 1992, p. 1790, § 5.

### ▼ Annotations

#### JUDICIAL DECISIONS

---

##### **Relocation allowed. —**

Court properly found that the evidence showed no specific dedication of this property by any of the property's owners for use as a public cemetery and that the evidence did not suggest that the cemetery was used by the public at large as a burial place which supported the granting of the application for relocation. *Hughes v. Cobb County*, 264 Ga. 128, 441 S.E.2d 406, 1994 Ga. LEXIS 278 (1994).

#### Research References & Practice Aids

---

##### **Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:18:11 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-6

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-6

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated**    **TITLE 36 Local Government**    **Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)**    **CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

36-72-6. Identification and notification of descendants of person in cemetery sought to be developed.

---

The applicant shall implement its plan for identifying and locating descendants no later than the date the application is submitted to the governing authority. The governing authority shall review the applicant's plan for identifying and notifying the descendants of the deceased persons and may require as a condition for issuing a permit that the applicant implement additional reasonable attempts to identify and locate descendants. Notice to possible descendants shall include information on how to contact the governing authority and a summary of the rights of descendants under this chapter. The governing authority shall promptly inform any descendant who indicates an interest in the disposition of the human remains and burial objects regarding any proposals for mitigation, the terms of any permit issued, the time and place of any scheduled public hearings, and appeal procedures and events.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-6, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

## Research References & Practice Aids

---

### Hierarchy Notes:

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:18:46 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-7

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-7

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated    TITLE 36 Local Government    Provisions Applicable to  
Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)    CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries  
and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

36-72-7. Public hearing on development of abandoned cemetery; time for decision on application for permit.

---

**(a)** Within 15 days after it is satisfied that all reasonable effort has been made to notify descendants, as provided in Code Section 36-72-6, and following receipt of the recommendations of a board or commission created pursuant to Code Section 36-72-9, the governing authority shall schedule a public hearing at which any interested party or citizen may appear and be given an opportunity to be heard. In addition to the notice required in Code Section 36-72-6, notice of the public hearing shall be advertised in the legal organ of the jurisdiction once a week for the two consecutive weeks immediately preceding the week in which any such hearing is held.

**(b)** Within 30 days after the conclusion of the public hearing, the governing authority shall notify the applicant in writing of its decision. The governing authority shall have the authority to deny the application with written reasons therefor, to issue a permit adopting the application in whole or in part, or to issue a permit which may include additional requirements to mitigate the proposed activity's adverse effects on the cemetery or burial ground, including but not limited to relocation of the proposed project, reservation of the cemetery or burial ground as an undeveloped area within the proposed development or use of land, and respectful disinterment and proper disposition of the human remains. The governing authority may adopt the applicant's proposal for mitigation.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-7, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

## ▼ Annotations

### JUDICIAL DECISIONS

---

#### **Consideration of alternatives. —**

Given that O.C.G.A. § 36-72-7 gives the governing authority the power to adopt the application in whole or in part, or to issue a permit which may include additional requirements, the board of commissioners had the authority to consider alternatives and to issue a permit for disinterment and relocation to the alternate site. *Hughes v. Cobb County*, 264 Ga. 128, 441 S.E.2d 406, 1994 Ga. LEXIS 278 (1994).

### Research References & Practice Aids

---

#### **Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:19:55 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-8

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-8

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated   TITLE 36 Local Government   Provisions Applicable to  
Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)   CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries  
and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-8. Issues considered in decision on application for permit.

---

The governing authority shall consider the following in making its determination:

- (1) The presumption in favor of leaving the cemetery or burial ground undisturbed;
- (2) The concerns and comments of any descendants of those buried in the burial ground or cemetery and any other interested parties;
- (3) The economic and other costs of mitigation;
- (4) The adequacy of the applicant's plans for disinterment and proper disposition of any human remains or burial objects;
- (5) The balancing of the applicant's interest in disinterment with the public's and any descendant's interest in the value of the undisturbed cultural and natural environment; and
- (6) Any other compelling factors which the governing authority deems relevant.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-8, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

## JUDICIAL DECISIONS

---

### **Evidence supported relocation. —**

There was evidence in the record which supported the trial court's conclusion of fact that, due to lack of maintenance and inappropriate surroundings, relocation would preserve rather than destroy the cultural heritage of the county and the cemetery. *Hughes v. Cobb County*, 264 Ga. 128, 441 S.E.2d 406, 1994 Ga. LEXIS 278 (1994).

## Research References & Practice Aids

---

### **Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:21:01 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-9

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-9

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated**    **TITLE 36 Local Government**    **Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)**    **CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

36-72-9. Establishment of board or commission to review applications in counties exceeding certain population size.

---

The governing authority of any county whose population is in excess of 290,000 as established by the United States decennial census of 1980 or any such future census shall be authorized to establish or empower a new or existing commission or board to hear and review any application filed pursuant to Code Section 36-72-5. The board or commission shall conduct a public hearing within 60 days of the filing of an application and shall make a written recommendation to the governing authority no later than 15 days following the public hearing with respect to the sufficiency of the notice to descendants, the plan for mitigation, the disturbance and adverse effects on the cemetery or burial ground, the survey of the cemetery, and plans for disinterment and reinterment.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-9, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

## Research References & Practice Aids

---

### Hierarchy Notes:

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

### Content Type:

Terms:

Narrow By: -None-

Date and Time: Jan 23, 2023 02:21:41 p.m. EST



Print

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-10

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-10

Copy Citation

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated TITLE 36 Local Government Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77) CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-10. Application fee.

The governing authority shall be authorized to impose an application fee which shall reflect the cost to the governing authority for processing and reviewing the application including, but not limited to, the cost of hiring an attorney, independent archeologist, and independent surveyor to assist in making recommendations regarding the applicant’s plan. Such fee, if imposed, shall not exceed \$2,500.00.

#### History

Code 1981, § 36-72-10, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

Research References & Practice Aids

**Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:22:24 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-11

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-11

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated TITLE 36 Local Government Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77) CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-11. Appeal of decision on application for permit.

---

Should any applicant or descendant be dissatisfied with a decision of the governing authority, he or she, within 30 days of such decision, may file an appeal in the superior court of the county in which the cemetery or burial ground is located in addition to the superior courts enumerated in Code Section 50-13-19.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-11, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

Research References & Practice Aids

---

**Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:23:04 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-12

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-12

Copy Citation

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated TITLE 36 Local Government Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77) CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-12. Development activities pending appeal.

Until the expiration of the time for appeal as set forth in Code Section 36-72-11, the applicant shall not begin or resume activities which comply with the permit issued by the governing authority. If an appeal is filed, the applicant may begin or resume activities which comply with the permit only upon consent of the governing authority and the party seeking judicial review or upon order of the reviewing court for good cause shown.

#### History

Code 1981, § 36-72-12, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

Research References & Practice Aids

Hierarchy Notes:

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:23:52 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-13

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-13

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated**    **TITLE 36 Local Government**    **Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)**    **CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-13. Inspection to ensure applicant's compliance.

---

The governing authority or local law enforcement agency shall inspect as necessary to determine whether the applicant has complied with the provisions of this chapter requiring cessation or limitation of activity and with the terms of the permit as issued by the governing authority or as modified by the superior court or reviewing court.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-13, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

Research References & Practice Aids

---

**Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:24:23 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-14

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-14

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated    TITLE 36 Local Government    Provisions Applicable to  
Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)    CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries  
and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

36-72-14. Jurisdiction of superior court; expending private or public funds to mitigate harm to cemetery.

---

**(a)** Notwithstanding any provisions of this chapter to the contrary, when any agency, authority, or political subdivision of the state seeks to file an application for a permit under this chapter, the superior court having jurisdiction over the real property wherein the cemetery or burial ground is located shall have exclusive jurisdiction over the permit application. The superior court shall conduct its investigation and determination of the permit in accordance with Code Sections 36-72-6 through 36-72-8.

**(b)** When activities of an agency, authority, or political subdivision of the state adversely affect an abandoned cemetery or a burial ground, such agency, authority, or political subdivision shall bear the cost of mitigating the harm to the abandoned cemetery or burial ground or reintering the human remains as a part of the cost of the project and is authorized to expend public funds for such purpose. When activities of a private person, corporation, or other private entity adversely affect an abandoned cemetery or a burial ground, such person, corporation, or other entity shall bear the cost of mitigating the harm to the cemetery or burial ground or reintering the human remains. The cost of mitigating the harm to an abandoned cemetery or to a burial ground or reintering the human remains exposed through vandalism by an unidentified vandal or through erosion may be borne by the governing authority in whose jurisdiction the abandoned cemetery or burial ground is located.

**(c)** The provisions of this chapter notwithstanding, the Department of Transportation shall not be required to obtain a permit under this chapter unless human remains are to be relocated; provided, however, that the department shall be required to obtain an archaeologist's report, pursuant to

paragraph (2) of Code Section 36-72-5, confirming the absence of human remains on the affected property.

## History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-14, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3; Ga. L. 2011, p. 583, § 11/HB 137.

### ▼ Annotations

#### Research References & Practice Aids

---

##### **Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

#### Content Type:

Terms:

Narrow By: -None-

Date and Time: Jan 23, 2023 02:25:06 p.m. EST



Print

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-15

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-15

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated**    **TITLE 36 Local Government**    **Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77)**    **CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-15. Disinterment and disposition of human remains or burial objects.

Any disinterment and disposition of human remains or burial objects permitted under this chapter shall be supervised, monitored, or carried out by the applicant's archeologist and shall be done at the expense of the person or entity to whom the permit is issued.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-15, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

#### Research References & Practice Aids

**Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:30:08 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

## Document: O.C.G.A. § 36-72-16

---

### O.C.G.A. § 36-72-16

**Copy Citation**

Current through the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

**Official Code of Georgia Annotated TITLE 36 Local Government Provisions Applicable to Counties and Municipal Corporations (Chs. 60 – 77) CHAPTER 72 Abandoned Cemeteries and Burial Grounds (§§ 36-72-1 – 36-72-16)**

#### 36-72-16. Penalties.

---

Any person who knowingly fails to comply with the provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature and, upon conviction, shall pay a fine of not more than \$5,000.00 for each grave site disturbed; provided, however, that any person who knowingly violates the provisions of Code Section 36-72-4 shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature and, upon conviction, shall be incarcerated for not more than six months and shall pay a fine not less than \$5,000.00 for each grave site disturbed.

#### History

---

Code 1981, § 36-72-16, enacted by Ga. L. 1991, p. 924, § 3.

▼ Annotations

Research References & Practice Aids

---

**Hierarchy Notes:**

O.C.G.A. Title 36

O.C.G.A. Title 36, Ch. 72

Official Code of Georgia Annotated

Copyright © 2023 No copyright claimed in original government works. Matthew Bender and Company, Inc. retains copyright in case annotations and research references independently created by publisher. All rights reserved.

**Content Type:**

**Terms:**

**Narrow By:** -None-

**Date and Time:** Jan 23, 2023 02:30:52 p.m. EST



[Print](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

APPENDIX B: Walton County Clerk's Court Deed Book 98, page 628

State of Georgia, WALTON County

THIS INDENTURE, Made this first (1) day of July in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and eighty-nine between WILLIAM C. MALCOM, INDIVIDUALLY

of the County of Walton and State of Georgia of the first part  
JERRY D. ROSEBERRY

of the County of Dekalb and State of Georgia of the second part  
WITNESSETH, That the said part y of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of other valuable consideration & Ten & no/100--- Dollars, in hand paid at and before the and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, ha s granted, bargained, sold and conveyed, and by these presents do es grant, bargain, sell and convey unto the said part y of the second part his heirs and assigns, all the following described property, to wit:

All that tract or parcel of land lying and being in the County of Walton, City of Monroe, State of Georgia and being located on the Westerly side of Alcova Street, also known as Alcovy Street, and being that tract of land entitled "Malcom Bros. Retained" shown on a survey dated April 21, 1961 made by H.L. Dunahoo, recorded in Plat Book 10, Page 47, Clerk's Office, Walton Superior Court Records. Reference is hereby made to said plat of survey and the same is incorporated herein for a more complete description of the within described property.

WALTON COUNTY, GEORGIA  
REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX  
PAID \$ 150.00  
DATE JUL - 3 1989  
Kathy K. Reeves  
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT

RECORDED JUL - 5 1989  
BOOK 206 13  
89 JUL - 3 PM 2:15  
KATHY K. REEVES  
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
WALTON COUNTY, GA.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD, The said bargained premises, together with all and singular the rights, members and appurtenances thereof, to the same being, belonging or in anywise appertaining, to the only proper use, benefit and behoof of Grantee herein the said part y of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever in Fee Simple.

And the said part y of the first part, for his heirs, executors and administrators, will warrant and forever defend the right and title to the above described property unto the said part y of the second part y hia heirs and assigns, against the claims of all persons whomsoever.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the said part y of the first part ha s hereunto set his hand his and affixed his seal his the day and year first above written.

Signed, sealed and delivered in presence of:

William C Malcom (Seal)  
(William C. Malcom) (Seal)

NOTARY PUBLIC, WALTON COUNTY, GEORGIA  
[Signature]  
1989

Before me, a Notary Public in and for said State and County, came

IRA DAVID

addressed as 104 IRVING STREET, WALTON, GA whose age is 55 and whose  
deposes and says on oath that this Deponent has been familiar over a period  
of 47 years with a tract of land now owned by WILLIAM C. MALCOM  
as follows:

SEE EXHIBIT 'A'

FOR COMPLETE PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

This Deponent has been familiar with the history of the possession of said  
property over a period of 47 years and knows that throughout said period  
said property has been continuously used and occupied, personally or through  
agents and tenants, by said owner(s) and the predecessors in title of said  
owner(s) namely:

- First AB Church
- Wahlon Edwards
- William Addison Malcom, Jr.
- Brandt L. Malcom
- William C. Malcom

To Deponent's knowledge, no other person or persons during said period  
have occupied or claimed any part of said property adversely to said owner(s)  
and said predecessors in title.

Deponent further says that said possession has been open, notorious,  
continuous, exclusive and uninterrupted throughout said period of time, and has  
been evidenced by the following specific acts or uses:  
Church, Body Shop, and Small Engine Repair Shop

This affidavit is made with the understanding that it will be relied upon  
by the purchaser or lender in dealing with said owner(s).

Ira David  
Deponent

Sworn to and subscribed before me  
this 30 day of June, 1989.

[Signature]  
Notary Public Walton County Georgia  
My Commission Expires Jan. 19 1993

[Signature]  
Witness

FILED IN OFFICE  
RECORDED JUL - 5 1989  
BOOK 296 pg. 55  
89 JUL - 3 PM 2: 15  
KATHY K. REED  
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
WALTON COUNTY, GA.

In consideration of State of Georgia WALTON County  
the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, One Hundred Fifty Thousand and no/100 DOLLARS,  
of DeKalb County, Georgia JERRY D. ROSEBERRY  
sold and does hereby transfer and convey unto WILLIAM C. MALCOM, INDIVIDUALLY of the first part, haS this day bargained and  
successors, heirs, executors and assigns, of the second part, the following described tract of land, to wit:

All that tract or parcel of land lying and being in the County of Walton, City of Monroe, State of Georgia and being located on the Westerly side of Alcovia Street, also known as Alcovy Street, and being that tract of land entitled "Malcom Bros. Retained" shown on a survey dated April 21, 1961 made by H.L. Dunahoo, recorded in Plat Book 10, Page 47, Clerk's Office, Walton Superior Court Records. Reference is hereby made to said plat of survey and the same is incorporated herein for a more complete description of the within described property.

450/00  
7/3 89  
Marian Brown  
Tax Collector  
Walton County, Georgia

FILED RE OFFICE  
RECORDED JUL - 5 1989  
BOCK 0916 JG  
89 JUL - 3 PM 2:16  
KATHY K. KEESEE  
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
WALTON COUNTY, GA.

SEE BK 12189 PG 409 FOR AUTHORITY TO CANCEL

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same in fee simple; and said first party warrants the title to the same unto said second party and assigns.

This conveyance is made to secure a debt of \$ 150,000.00 under Title 44 (conveyances to secure debt), of the Code of Georgia, and any other present or future indebtedness or liability of mine to second party, and upon payment of the debt hereby secured this security deed shall be cancelled and surrendered pursuant thereto. The debt hereby secured being evidenced by One (1) note(s) of even date, or any notes given in renewal thereof, for \$150,000.00 due in 180 payments, final payment due 7/1/2004 bearing interest at eight (8%) per cent. per annum from 7/1/89, and made a part of this security deed

In case this debt or any part thereof is not paid promptly when due, time being of the essence of this contract, the grantee shall have the right to accelerate the maturity of the debt hereby secured, by declaring the entire debt to be in default and immediately due and payable and I authorize said second party, its successors or assigns, at option to sell said described property at public outcry before the court house door in Walton County, Georgia, to the highest bidder for cash to pay said debt, with interest thereon and the expenses of the proceedings, including fifteen percent attorney's fees, if the claim be placed in the hands of an attorney for collection, after advertising the time, place and terms of sale in a newspaper of general circulation in said county once a week for four weeks immediately preceding such sale (but without regard to the number of days) all other notice being hereby waived by grantor. And said second party, its successors or assigns, may make to the purchaser title in fee simple to the same; and said second party or assigns are hereby authorized to bid and to buy at said public sale. The proceeds of said sale are to be applied first to payment of said debt and interest, and expenses of this proceeding; the remainder, if any, paid to said first party; said first party agreeing to surrender possession of said property without let or hindrance of any kind. The foregoing powers and agency hereby given for realizing on this security are cumulative only, and coupled with an interest, and are irrevocable by death or otherwise. I agree to maintain \$ 150,000.00 fire insurance on building on this property with loss payable to second party.

Said grantor hereby covenants that the fee simple title to said property is vested in grantor, and that there are no liens of any nature against grantor

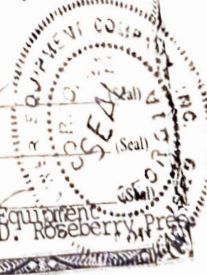
Witness my hand and seal this 20th day of July, 1989.

Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of:  
Margie S. Turner

Jerry D. Roseberry  
(Jerry D. Roseberry)

John D. ...  
Notary Public, Walton County, Ga.

Jerry D. Roseberry  
Guarantor: Monroe Power Equipment  
Company, Inc. By: Jerry D. Roseberry



THE DEBT WHICH THIS INSTRUMENT WAS GIVEN TO SECURE HAVING BEEN PAID IN FULL,  
THIS INSTRUMENT IS HEREBY CANCELLED AND THE CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF  
Walton COUNTY, GEORGIA, IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED AND DIRECTED TO MARK  
IT SATISFIED OF RECORD.

THIS 29th DAY OF June 19 89

Georgia Central Bank

BY: Ray J. Malcom  
Burde L. Kitchin  
V. Pres.

V. Pres.



HE PRESTON LAW FIRM, P.C.

# Deed to Secure Debt

FROM

TO

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
GEORGIA, \_\_\_\_\_ County,

Clerk's Office, Superior Court.

Filed for Record \_\_\_\_\_ day,

of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_,

at \_\_\_\_\_ M., and Recorded in Deed

Book \_\_\_\_\_ Folio \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, Clerk

KATHY K. KEESLEE  
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
WALTON COUNTY, GA.

89 JUL -3 PM 3:18

BOOK 26 PG 1

RECORDED JUL - 5 1989

FILED IN OFFICE

STATE OF GEORGIA,  
COUNTY OF Walton

AFFIDAVIT OF POSSESSION

IN RE: Property of \_\_\_\_\_  
WILLIAM C. MALCOM  
Deed Book 98, Page 628, Walton  
County, Georgia

Before me, a notary public in and for said State and County, came  
Harold L. David, whose age is 63, and whose  
address is 229 Alcova Street, Monroe, GA, who being duly sworn,  
deposes and says on oath that this deponent has been familiar over a period  
of 42 years with a tract of land now owned by William C. Malcom  
\_\_\_\_\_, as follows: SEE EXHIBIT "A"

FOR COMPLETE DESCRIPTION

This deponent has been familiar with the history of the possession of said  
property over a period of 42 years and knows that throughout said period  
said property has been continuously used and occupied, personally or through  
agents and tenants, by said owner(s) and the predecessors in title of said  
owner(s) namely:  
First AB Church  
Mahlon Edwards  
William Addison Malcom, Jr.  
Brandt L. Malcom  
William C. Malcom

To deponent's knowledge, no other person or persons during said period  
have occupied or claimed any part of said property adversely to said owner(s)  
and said predecessors in title.

Deponent further says that said possession has been open, notorious,  
continuous, exclusive and uninterrupted throughout said period of time, and has  
been evidenced by the following specific acts or uses:

Church, Body Shop, and Small Engine Repair Shop

This affidavit is made with the understanding that it will be relied upon  
by the purchaser or lender in dealing with said owner(s).

Harold L. David  
Deponent

Sworn to and subscribed before me  
this 30 day of June, 1989.

Annabelle Spence  
Notary Public  
Notary Public, Walton County, Georgia  
My Commission Expires Jan. 19, 1993  
John W. Spence  
Witness

FILED IN OFFICE  
RECORDED JUL - 5 1989  
BOOK 296 pg  
89 JUL - 3 PM 2: 15  
KATHY R. KEESSEE  
CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT  
WALTON COUNTY, GA.

## APPENDIX C: Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)

## Ground Penetrating Radar

Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) uses electromagnetic waves to determine changes in electrical properties. (Changes are caused by conductivity and relative permittivity.)<sup>135</sup> Because of coupling, it is important for GPR antenna to remain in contact with the ground. A GPR signal may decay prematurely if the signal does not make adequate contact with the ground. The amount of energy that is reflected depends on the calculations of the reflection coefficient. The greater the difference in wave speeds produced between two materials, the greater the reflected energy.<sup>136</sup>

Zion Hill Cemetery was surveyed by pushing a tricycle survey cart with a GSSI SIR 4000 control unit and a 400 MHz antenna over the desired area. This was difficult in some areas because of uneven ground and remaining leaf debris. Different antenna frequencies are used for different tasks. Mid-range antenna frequencies fall between 200MHz and 1000MHz and are used archeology, forensic investigations, and the location of utilities. A lower frequency antenna possesses a longer wavelength and can travel further into the ground. A higher frequency antenna possesses a shorter wavelength and will yield a more distinct resolution, making it appropriate for finding shallow objects.<sup>137</sup> To complete the Ground Penetrating Survey of Zion Hill Cemetery, Randy Brennen chose a mid-range antenna of 400MHz, a size frequently used to detect possible burial anomalies.

---

<sup>135</sup> Milson and Eriksen, *Field Geophysics*.

<sup>136</sup> Bigman, *GPR Basics: A Handbook For Ground Penetrating Radar Users*.

<sup>137</sup> Bigman, *GPR Basics: A Handbook For Ground Penetrating Radar Users*.

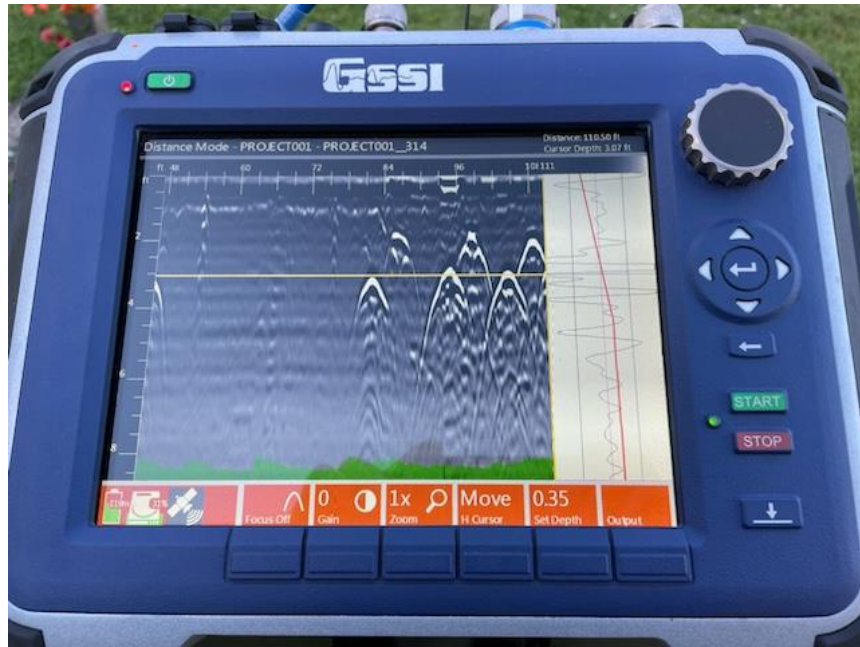


Figure D1: Parabolas designate anomalies with Ground Penetrating Radar with a GSSI SIR 4000 control unit and a 400 MHz antenna on a tricycle survey cart. Covington Historic City Cemetery, Covington, Georgia. Photo credit: Randy Brennan of Signature Mapping in Conyers, Georgia.

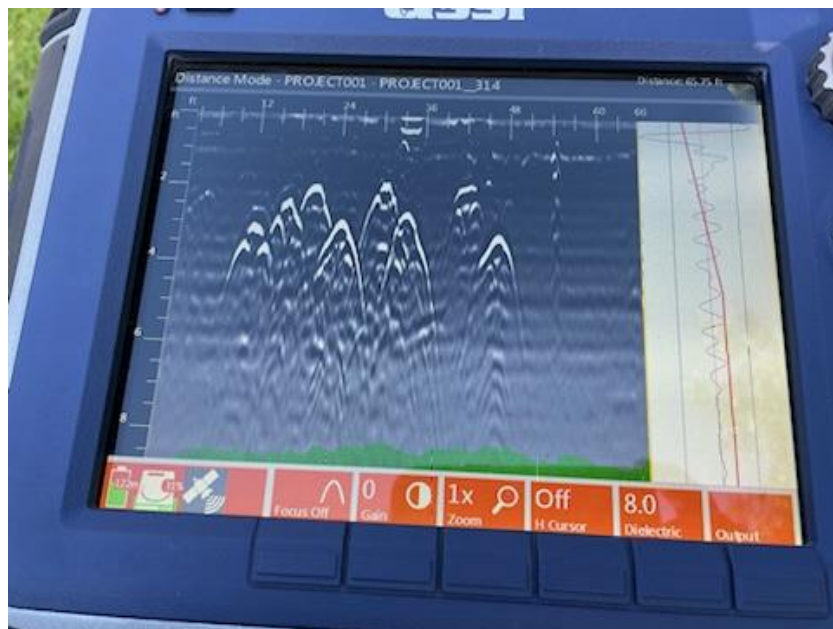


Figure D2: Parabolas designate anomalies with Ground Penetrating Radar with a GSSI SIR 4000 control unit and a 400 MHz antenna on a tricycle survey cart. Covington Historic City Cemetery, Covington, Georgia. Photo credit: Randy Brennan of Signature Mapping in Conyers, Georgia.

APPENDIX D:

**“Walton County’s Forgotten Cemeteries: A Special Report”**

**“Preserving History”**

Elizabeth Jones

*The Walton Tribune*

November 25, 2020

## Burials of Smith's Chapel

The Smith AME Zion Cemetery contains over 119 surveyed markers within two acres, though it is likely there are many more unmarked graves. The site was surveyed in October of 2000 by the East Georgia Genealogical Society for Walton County Georgia Cemeteries (West). The historic survey data is listed below:

Name	Other info	Marker	Born	Died
Landers, Eunice McCoy	Mother	Row 1	27 Jan 1922	25 April 1984
Landers, Eunice	Young FH	-	1922	1984
McCoy, Arthur	-	-	30 May 1898	13 Feb 1966
Allen, Hattie. B.	-	FH	22 Mar 1892	17 Nov 1977
White, L. s. a	Jackson FH	-	27 June 1920	7 May 1988
White, Charles	Jackson FH	-	20 Nov 1907	24 Mar 1990
Smith, Louella	Mother	D	13 Apr 1899	17 Jul 1987
Smith, James E.	-	D	24 Apr 1926	10 Apr 1998
Smith, James E.	Brother Young FH	-	1926	1998
Hudson, Linda Harie	Young FH	-	1912	1994
Hudson, Linda Marie	-	-	18 Feb 1912	16 Feb 1995
Ingle, Willie M.	-	-	1920	1996
Anderson, Minnie Ruth	Jackson FH	-	1942	1992
Blackwell, James Anthony	Only Son	Row 2	2 Nov 1964	20 July 1980
Blackwell, James Anthony	Young FH	-	1964	1980
Gaither, Annie M.	-	-	28 Oct. 1888	17 Jan 1982
Gaither, Annie M.	Jackson FH	-	1888	1982
Smith, John	Footstone (Broken): JS	Row 3	1877	1945
George, Tasha L.	Young FH	-	1985	1985
Scott, Ruby	Wife of V.S. Scott	Row 4	12 Mar 1907	6 Jun 1938
Reynolds, Bertha	-	-	15 ___ 1897	19 May 1958
Reynolds, Jim	-	-	-	-
Reynolds, Arthur	-	-	-	Jun 1947
Reynolds, Ruby Nell	-	-	21 March 1931	Jul 1948
Gordon, Francis C.	-	D	1 April 1886	22 Mar 1955
Gordon, B.M. Rev	-	D	12 Jan 1884	-
Dobbs, Maggie B.	-	Row 5	1 Jul 1901	4 Jul 1937
Broadnax, Isabella	-	-	1865	1957
Smith, Johnnie C.	-	L	1902	1943
McDonald, Cora Porter	d/o Abe & Rena Porter	-	12 Jan 1871	27 Jun 1943
Kelly, Geraldine	-	-	1941	17 Apr 1957
Lockett, Arthur	-	-	-	17 Dec 1939
Braswell, Hattie	-	FH	1899	1993
Braswell, Allie	Young FH	-	1905	1993
Wood, Charley	-	Row 6	19 Jan 1879	25 Mar 1914
Adams, T.L.	Mason	L	15 Feb 1860	11 Sep 1917
Buggs, Mary J.	(Two graves) U	-	28 Dec 1864	10 Feb 1905
Haywood, Allene	Daughter	-	20 Jul 1886	25 Oct 1915
Butler, Ossie, Mrs	-	FH	1890	1966
N___, S.J.	-	-	-	-
Sullivan, Maggie	-	Row 7	1892	1971
Hillyer, Anna	-	-	1865	1963
Hudson, Lutitia	-	-	1888	1976
Hillyer, Edith Bell	-	-	1894	1992
Barnett, Anna "Ann" Lene	-	-	3 Mar 1918	27 May 1998
Hillyer, St. Elmo, Sr.	-	D	22 Jul 1903	18 Apr 1981
Hillyer, Dora Long	-	D	1 Jun 1906	-
Settles, Jephrael Hillyer	-	D	15 Dec 1926	31 Aug 1948
Broadnax, Henry	-	-	-	1918
Wood, Emma	(Two graves) U	-	1 Apr 1857	14 Dec 1913
Hunter, Lillie Mrs.	Hanley	Row 8	-	9 Aug 1949
Hill, B.R. ?	(Five graves) U	-	14 Dec 1852	15 Nov 1892
Early, William	-	-	19 Oct 1873	6 Nov 1900
Martin, Minnie L.	Aged 48 yrs. w/o Rev. A Martin	Row 9	-	12 March 1920
B___, L.S.	(Etched into a rock)	-	-	1918
Billups, Daniel	-	-	1834	29 May 1904
Thompson, Judge T.	(Three graves) U	-	-	11 Jul 1901
Thompson, Sarah	Aged 76 yrs.	-	25 Jun 1897	-
	(Four graves) U	Row 10	-	-
	(Two graves) U	Row 11	-	-
	(Five graves) U	Row 12	-	-
Barnett, Mattie	-	-	15 Oct 1873	12 Jun 1912
Barnett, Henry	-	L	3 Jan 1862	31 Jan 1942
McKinley, C.H.	Wife	-	12 Oct 1851	19 Mar 1883
Neal, Alice	-	-	June 1850	Mar 1915
Clark, Bob (?)	(Etched into a rock)	Row 13	-	3 May 1892
Hudson, Willie	-	-	1891	1926
(The East Georgia Genealogical Society notes that the markers appear to be randomly arranged at this point.)	-	-	-	-
Mwo, A. Mrs.	-	-	191(0?)	-
Banes, Jessie	-	-	2 Dec 1879	7 Sep 1911
Mitcham, Sallie M.	Daughter of R.H. & S.J. Mitcham	-	21 Jul 1888	11 May 1912
Thompson, L.W.	-	-	1872	1944
Thompson, Caldonia	Wife of Lois Thompson	-	Dec 1877	30 May 1912
Thompson, Era	-	-	24 Jul 1901	20 Apr 1915
Thompson, Marsh	Jackson FH	-	10 Jul 1901	10 Nov 1990
Smith, Joe Henry	-	-	22 Mar 1916	29 May 1935
Smith, (Old)jen	B	-	1 Mar 1911	3 Dec 1960
Wall, Jame	-	-	1923	1936
Jones, Sam	-	-	1854	1939
Tyus, James, Rev.	-	-	1875	1940
Tyus, James Rev.	Young FH	-	6 Mar 1877	17 May 1953
Thompson, Florence	Mother	-	-	8 Dec 1918
Thompson, J. M(arsh)Thompson Chamber 3228, Monroe, Ga	-	-	21 Mar 1855	8 Dec 1918
Thompson, J. Marsh	-	-	8 Aug 1896	10 May 1954
Bloodsaw, Anna	-	-	8 May 1898	8 May 1928
Holley, A.S.	P.H.H.M.S.	-	10 Sep 1870	28 Nov 1907
Carter, Lucille	-	-	-	21 May 1929
Bell, Berry	Age about 70 years	-	-	-
(Erected by the family of W.H. Nunnally whom he faithfully served for 42 years)	-	-	-	-
Williams, Zepora	-	-	1 May 1846	17 Apr 1905
Hall, Claudie T.	Son of J.H. Hall	-	4 May 1892	3 May 1917
Morrow, Jerry	-	-	1841	1911
Hull, Minnie	-	-	24 Mar 1880	6 May 1918
Braswell, Lucy M.	-	-	22 Mar 1902	4 Apr 1951
Clemmons, James C.	-	-	23 Nov 1894	22 Dec 1917
Sullivan, Burkett	-	-	1894	1962

\*Marker Codes: B = Broken, D = Double, F = Foot, FH = Funeral Home, U=Uninscribed

The above entries were documented by a November 1, 2000 survey noted in Walton County Georgia Cemeteries, (West).

## Smith's AME Zion Church Cemetery (Smith's Chapel)

Other African American cemeteries in the community would benefit from restoration efforts. Recently, for a week in the summer, members of the First Baptist Church met to clean the invasive brush from the Smith Memorial AME Zion Church Cemetery.

The Smith Memorial AME Zion Church was established around the same time as Zion Hill. Deed Book X, Page 533, references "Smith's Chapel." The property was originally misdeeded to Greene Howard in 1869. It was rightfully deeded to the church trustees in 1882. The AME Zion Church, "to wit, A.H. McKinly, G.W. Delamatter, Hibbard Richmond, John Still, Elisha Broadnax, Amos Revell, Alex Haywood, Phillip Haywood, and Abram P. Brown" witnessed that Greene Howard and others active as trustees of Smith's Chapel completed the purchase of the lot for the sum of \$20 from Waters Briscoe, "... after the late war between the states and after the Emancipation of the Slaves of the Southern States, by themselves and other benevolent persons both white and colored to be used for educational and religious purposes by the colored people resident in and about Monroe and vicinity."

## John Patterson

John Patterson lives in the city of Monroe, and he recalls digging graves in the Zion Hill Cemetery, as well as many other local graveyards. Graves were dug by hand in those days. John says that if he hit something while digging, he would move over a little, and start again.



Charles Morrow installs a birdhouse donated by Darlene Sumlar Brine.

## For more ...

For questions about Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery, contact Elizabeth Jones at landom648@gmail.com or 706-621-3580. Community members are urged to share historic details they may know about families of Zion Hill Baptist Church and people buried in the cemetery. Individuals or community groups are welcome to participate on site. (Example: a local chapter of a national youth group called "DoSomething" has helped to uncover and plant bed graves.) Volunteers will be meeting from 9 a.m. until noon on Saturday, Dec. 5 and 19, and Jan. 2, 16 and 30. In case of rain, meetings will be held on the next scheduled date. Please see the Facebook page "Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery Monroe, Georgia" for updates and additional dates. Ground-penetrating radar dates will be posted soon.

This special section was made possible by a grant from the University of Georgia.

## Walton County's Forgotten Cemeteries: A Special Report



A view of the Historic Zion Hill Cemetery.

# Preserving history

## Monroe » Cemetery holding many of county's African American forefathers dates to 1868

The last remaining evidence of the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church is its historic cemetery. ¶ Though often denied property rights, the cultural relationship developed with the land allow African Americans to retain a unique identity, a heritage. ¶ The Georgia Code § 36-72-1 protects such a heritage in a determined, fixed manner. The assurance is of a final, finite resting place, and this is the Peace that is granted to all in Georgia.

In 1868, research suggests a church was promised to the African American community by George Selman. While Selman helped to establish the church, the land itself was in his father-in-law's name. Deeds indicate Waters Briscoe sold a larger tract of land to a trustee of Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church in 1870. The land was sold to a "colored" man, and his name is noted on several deeds as Cyrus Briscoe. Cyrus in turn sold one-fourth of an acre to the Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church, as well as tracts to Violet and Duncan McCoy, Emma Murray and Etta Hawkins. (Emma Murray sold her tract to Etta Hawkins before she passed.) In 1870, a wooden structure was built next to the log cabin. The church changed its name to Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church. Church records indicate after a few months about 20 people pulled away and formed the Tabernacle Baptist Church.

Church records indicate that in 1949, Zion Hill Church reunited with the Tabernacle Baptist Church under the name the First African Baptist Church. The church divided in 1953, and the First African Baptist Church and Tabernacle Baptist Church moved to new locations. (The Moore's Ford lynching between

Oconee and Walton counties in 1946 may have had much influence on the move, and it is significant to the Civil Rights Movement. Mae Murray Dorsey, a victim of the lynching, is buried in the cemetery.) The cemetery has remained virtually untouched since the move. The cemetery is located at a short walk to downtown Monroe. Boundary demarcations are indicated by an asphalt parking lot for the surrounding offices, as well as the structure of the old B&B Engine building. The cemetery is landlocked. Zion Hill Cemetery remains distinguished because of a mix of traditional gravestones and rock markers. Etched markers include an Odd Fellows (three links stone), an acorns-and-oak-leaves stone, many ivy leaves stones, and others.

The cultural landscape type is a combination of a vernacular site, a historic site and an ethnographic site. The site demonstrates burial practices of African American people. The site is of local historic value because the land once belonged to Briscoe and Selman, both significant contributors to Walton County's growth. Selman's interest in the religious care of the Black citizens of Monroe, Geor-

gia, is noted in his efforts to build the church. It is also significant to note the following: African American women are buried in the cemetery who owned several tracts of land. Emma Murray was born in 1862. She purchased land adjacent to the church, and she purchased multiple tracts of land in Monroe, including several tracts on the street now known as Alcovy Street. Easter Crew was born in 1861. She also purchased multiple tracts of land. In 1892 she borrowed \$200 from a Southern Home Building and Loan Association, initially making payments of \$1.20 a month, and increasing to \$2 a month. A memorial stone placed recently for Mae Murray Dorsey, a victim of the 1946 lynching, rests in a corner of the property. Mae Murray Dorsey is a significant presence, and a secondary period of significance is established because of the event's impact on the Civil Rights Movement.

Historic preservationist Elizabeth Jones organized a stewardship group and created a Facebook page, "Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery Monroe, Georgia," in the spring of 2019. The Friends of Zion Hill Cemetery project protects African American cultural heritage, acting as an example for other communities. In the past year, tasks included the removal of invasive plants from the site and the cleaning of gravestones with D/2 biological solution.

The group's actions create a sustainable plan for the preservation of African American cultural history. The project is the winner of the 2019 National Council for Preservation's Communicating the Value of Preservation Grant, as well as the recipient of the University of

Georgia's 2020 Communication of Research Grant. The project recently received the 2020 National Council for Preservation's Communicating the Value of Preservation Grant and the Historic Landscape Preservation Grant from the Garden Club of Georgia. Recently received funds will assist in a Ground Penetrating Radar survey to determine the location and number of graves in the cemetery.

The project acts as a springboard to build the background information needed for a National Register nomination. The long-term goal is to see the abandoned cemetery in the name of the certified entity of Monroe, under the Georgia Abandoned Cemetery Law. The project unites the community of Monroe through preservation and stewardship.

### What is D/2 Biological Solution?

D/2 biological solution is a biodegradable bioicidal cleaner used to remove environmental soils from monuments. A near-neutral pH is recommended when cleaning historic markers. Neutral is 7. On a scale of 0-14, D/2 biological solution has a pH of 9.5. The application of D/2, followed by scrubbing with a soft nylon brush, yields astonishing results. D/2 continues to work over a period of months, so patience is important. (D/2 biological solution is available through Atlas Preservation at <https://atlaspreservation.com>.)

### What is ground-penetrating radar?

Ground-penetrating radar uses radar pulses to map ground disturbances or differences beneath the earth's surface. GPR is an excellent tool for determining the probable location of burials.

## Recovering the History: Zion Hill Baptist Church

Early records are sometimes difficult to find. Names are often misspelled, and church deeds filed in the names of individuals (trustees) may be difficult to recover. To preserve African American church and cemetery history, active engagement by community members is needed. In the past two years, Elizabeth Jones and Bill Owens have discovered a rich history of names in the Walton County Clerk of Courts record room. Ongoing deed research, though slowed by COVID-19, continues.

Early church members who lived near the church include Cyrus (or Syrus) Briscoe, Etta Hawkins, Emma Murray, and Violet and Duncan McCoy.

Recorded on Feb. 4, 1871, a deed located in Deed Book U, Page 141, states the following: "This indenture, made this twenty second day of April in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy, between Waters Briscoe of said state and county of one part and Syrus Briscoe, colored, as Trustee for or of the church called by the name of Zion Hills." The property was described as a tract of 1 1/2 acres, "on which said Church building is situated, near the village of Monroe in Walton County." The property was purchased for the sum of \$10.

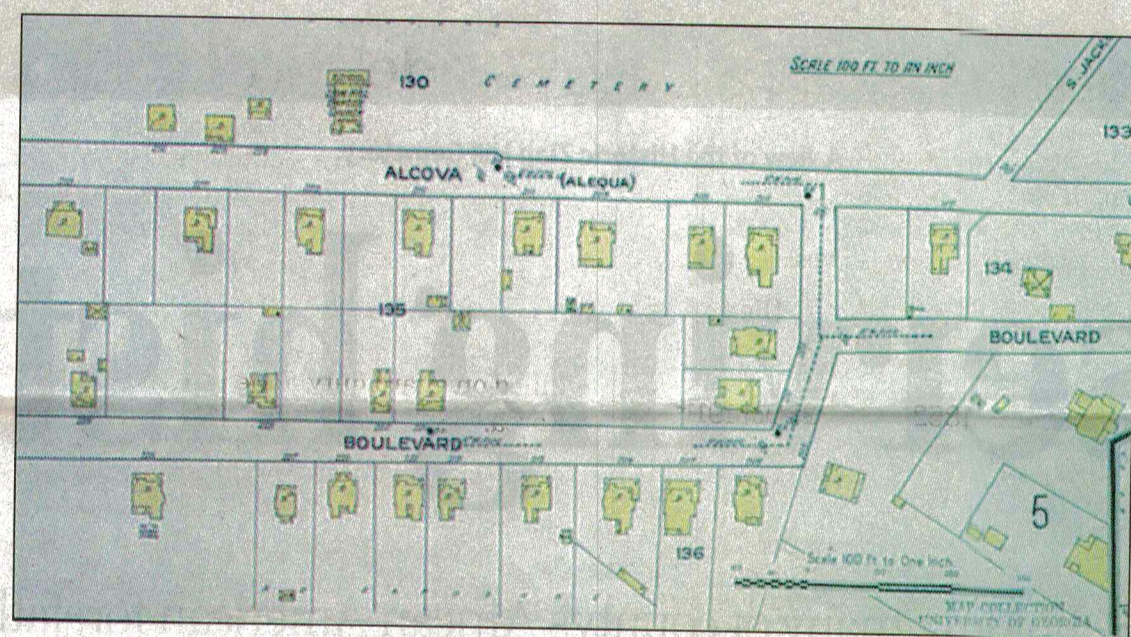
Henry Haygood, Blake Locklin, Columbus Allcorn and the trustees of The Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church deeded a parcel of land adjacent to the church to the heirs of Violet and Duncan McCoy in 1902, for the sum of \$1. (The lot was approximately 1/4 acre. Deed Book G, Page 182, references the church, "...when Waters Briscoe made a deed to Cyrus Briscoe as trustee for said church, this lot being a part of said lot belonging to said Cyrus Briscoe in 1870, and deed records in Book U, Page 141 and the said Cyrus Briscoe having paid all the purchase money for said land individual, the said Cyrus Briscoe only gave to the said church the northern portion of said land purchased from said Waters Briscoe, and for reserved for himself the southern portion which includes the lot said Cyrus Briscoe deeded Emma Murray and the lot deeded to Duncan and Violet McCoy in 1887....")

Henry Haygood, Blake Locklin, Columbus Allcorn and the trustees of The Zion Hill Colored Baptist Church deeded a parcel of land adjacent to the church to Etta Hawkins in 1902, for the sum of \$1. The property rested to the south side of the McCoy lot. "...This tract being also the same land said Hawkins col by Emma Murray col in 1901 and containing one fourth of an acre more or less." (Deed Book G, Page 140, Walton County Clerk of Courts)



Joey Fernandez, owner of Preserving Our Georgia Cemeteries, donates plants to Zion Hill Cemetery in Monroe

In 1909, Deed Book 2, Page 129, reveals an indenture (later paid) made in 1908, listing "...Zion Hill Baptist Church (col) and By the Deacons and Trustees, to wit: Abe Briggery, Alex Johnson, Job Braswell Sr., Harry Haygood, Columbus Allcorn, and B.J. Locklin...." Lands listed to the south of the property were then owned by Julia McCoy and Aaron Hawkins.



The Sandborne Fire Map (1916) shows the Zion Hill Baptist Church and cemetery in Monroe.

## Easter Crew and the City on a Hill

Easter Crew is buried in Zion Hill Cemetery, and her marker bears a Bible verse which references the city of Zion: "Ye are the light of the world. A city built upon on a hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14).

She was born in 1861, and she died April 16, 1935. (Note: The name on the gravestone is Easter Crew, but the deeds seem to be signed "Esther Crew.") She purchased multiple tracts of land in Monroe.

In 1892, she borrowed \$200 from a Southern Home Building and Loan Association (Book C-3, Page 64). She also received an advance on her two shares of stock held by said corporation in an amount of \$200, for a total of \$400. Easter initially made payments of \$1.20 a month, increasing to \$2 a month to the Association. Easter purchased a "... house lot ... situated in Walton County ... on the public road leading from Monroe to Good Hope ... ." The property was bounded to the north and east by the property of Joseph H. Felker. The public road was on the west of the property, the south side was bordered by the property of Miss Sallie Hattie Kimble. The lot contained about 1.4 acres and was formerly known as the Wayne Place.

Easter Crew's name was on a parcel associated with the Colored Baptist Tabernacle (Book E, Page 295.) In 1897, she purchased the lot for \$300.00 from Lucy A. Smith. The property was bounded to the "east by a road running north and south; North by a road leading from Mon-



A volunteer cleans the grave of Easter Crew (1861-1935), photo by Stephanie Calabrese

roe to Walnut Grove; west by School lot; South by a lot of Thomas Giles, and containing one half acre more or less, where on is situated the Colored Baptist Tabernacle: owning 50 by 75 feet of said

lot." (The school mentioned in the deed was the Johnston Institute, founded by Nehemiah Johnson, which burned on the last day of school in the year 1900.)

## Known Burials of Zion Hill

Known burials at the historic Zion Hill Cemetery include the following, recorded in "Walton County Cemeteries (West)." A survey of 200-250 graves was conducted on Nov. 1, 2000. At the time of the survey, it was thought there could be in excess of 150 unmarked graves.

Name	Marker	Born	Died
Landers, Charlie		1865	
Lockett, Sterling	B	15 Jan 1833	27 Jun 1893
Murray Emma		1862	21 Oct 1911
Dorsey, Mae Murray	B	20 Sept 1922	25 Jul 1946
McCoy, Leila (Aged 65 years)	B		23 Mar 1914
	FH		
Conyers, James (772 Pvt. Army)		1892	3 Dec 1933
Hightower, Marmie		11 Oct 1925	15 Jun 1940
Barnes, Alice		10 Sept 1869	28 Jul 1950
Ann Dotson	B	1839	24 Mar 1914
Blasingame, Eugenia d/o Jennie & Gus Blasingame			
	B	4 Mar 1876	10 Jan 1894
	FH		
Blasingame, Essie	B	20 Jun 1874	30 Aug 1895
Mathis, Alfred Cary [Married (B.L.E.)]		10 Nov 1890	
	B	26 Jul 1860	21 Aug 1940
Mathis, Betty Lou Early		5 Dec 1871	
	FH		
Sorrels, Goldware	B	3 Sept 1878	21 Feb 1897
	FH		
Johnson, Pauline	B	1872	1964
Kelly, Naoma Young		1889	1947
Malone, Eula	FH	1881	1973
Hill, Allen W. (s/o G.G. & Sarah Lou Hill)			
	B	20 Oct 1880	3 Jun 1881
	B		1926
	FH		
	FH		
Hicks, Jonnie F. (s/o J.F. & Cora Hicks)			
	B	15 Aug 1894	24 Jun 1904
	FH		
Hawkins, A.J.		27 April 1859	18 Jul 1905
Barton, Calvin		1855	18 Dec 1902
Hill, Creasie		30 Jan 1841	9 Mar 1900
	FH		
Johnson, S.M.		9 July 1855	14 Aug 1924
	FH		
Sorrels, Jursha	B	27 Mar 1855	3 Jun 1927
Gay, Lucy (Aged 71 yrs.)	B		14 Sep 1917
Few, Cassie		1887	1939
Richardson, Leroy		1910	1946
Culbreath, Louisa		16 Feb 1869	9 Nov 1919
Locklin, B.J. Rev.		16 Dec 1853	13 Aug 1913
Towler, Nellie	D	1905	1933
Towler, Robert	D	1902	1933
Wright, Queen (Aged 54 years)	B		25 Jun 1928
Harris, John		July 1864	1923
Malcom, Bessie Mae	B	1924	1935
Bradley, Anna		30 Oct 1859	14 Jul 1917
Crew, Easter	B	1861	16 Apr 1935
Hendrix, Hal (Infant of B.H. & F.M. Harris)			
	B	10 Jun 1907	10 Dec 1908
Conner, Henry (K of P)	B	4 Jul 1868	23 Jan 1932

\*Marker Codes: B = Broken, D = Double, F = Foot, FH = Funeral Home

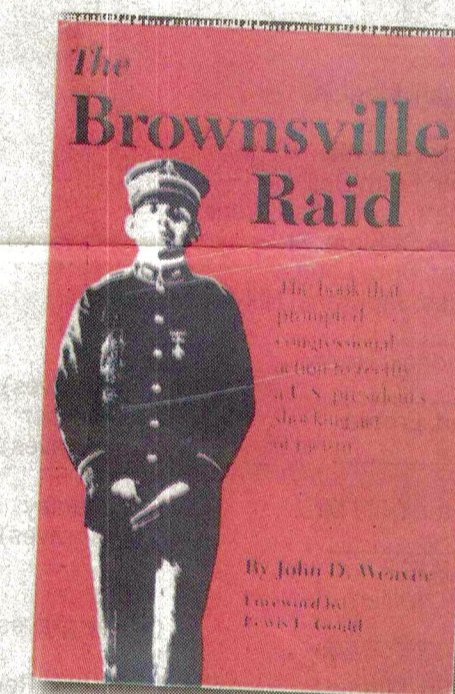
The above entries were documented by a Nov. 1, 2000, survey noted in 'Walton County Georgia Cemeteries (West)'. Work by Friends of Zion Hill within the cemetery in 2019 and 2020 has confirmed this data.

## Wendell 'Little Buddy' Conyers

The Walton Tribune noted that on Aug. 10, 1948, "Flags were flown at half-mast in Monroe to honor Negro youth, Wendell 'Little Buddy' Conyers, whose body was sent home for burial after he was killed on guard duty, June 23rd in Korea."

Steve Brown, Monroe Museum historian, tells us that Wendell was the son of Boyd "Buddy" and Louelle Conyers, and he joined the Army Engineers in 1946 after completing one year of college. Buddy owned a shoe business, working both from his home on North Broad Street and in J. C. Ash's Barber Shop, and his wife Louelle was a sought-after caterer.

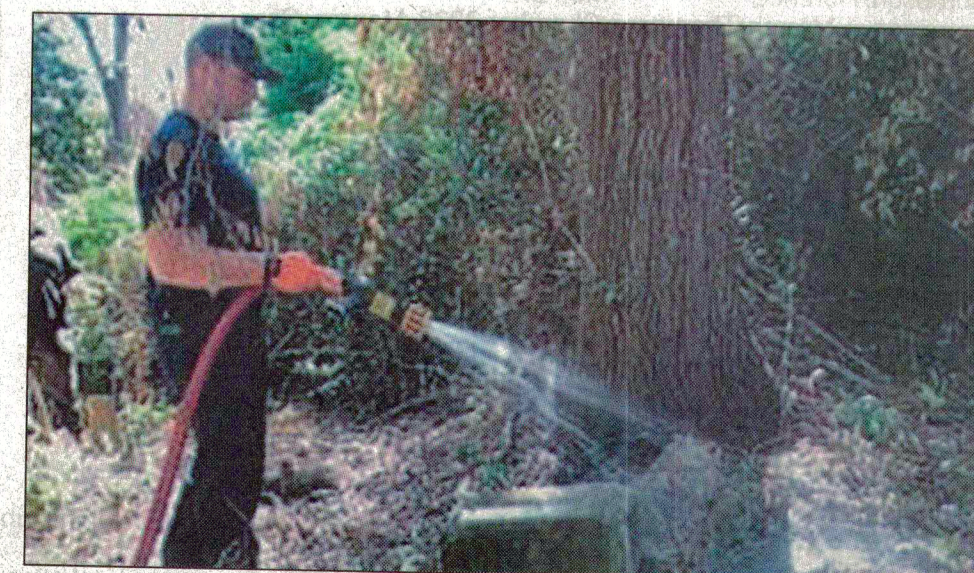
(Buddy himself was a young soldier when he was pulled into the controversy surrounding the "Brownsville Raid." Buddy's picture is on the cover of a 1970 book



discussing the Brownsville Raid, and more information is available in a Monroe Museum exhibit.)



Zion Hill Cemetery volunteers photo by Stephanie Calabrese



Monroe firefighters provide water to clean markers. photo by Stephanie Calabrese

## Billy Murray

Billy Murray, whose father was a member of Zion Hill, and who also attended Tabernacle, remembers some of the church history Billy's great grandfather (on his dad's side) was Walker McCoy.

Billy tells an interesting story of Walker's daughter's (Nettie McCoy) nickname. On the night she was born, her father met a white man who had a newly born daughter too. He had named his daughter Sugar. Nettie McCoy was nicknamed "Sug," and she was later known as "Ma Sug." Ma Sug used to sterilize the sacrament dishes in boiling water, every first Sunday. A 1969 Walton Tribune article, written by Billy Murray, notes that her medicine was Coca-Cola. Ella Murray worked at the hotel in Monroe, and she was the daughter of Ma Sug.

Many visitors of the cemetery ask about the relationship of Emma Murray to Mae Murray Dorsey. Robert Murray married Amanda Murray. They lived on the Briscoe farm and had eight children. Robert was Billy Murray's great-grandfather. Billy relates information he discovered from census data: It is recorded that Robert's brother John Murray had a wife named Columbus. After Columbus died, John remarried. His second wife was Emma Murray.

Mae Murray Dorsey was known as a Murray, but she was born with the last name of Lee. Hester Murray married Willie Lee, and their daughter was Willie "Mae" Lee. Mae's sister was Mattie Francis Lee. Willie Lee died in an electrical accident. Stricken with grief, Hester had a stomach aneurysm, and she died too. The grandparents and aunts reared the children, and Mae became known as a Murray.

To elaborate on the family tree, John Murray and Francis Blasingame Murray were Hester's parents. Robert Murray's son was John Murray.



The Missionary Gospel Singers, pictured in the 1960s, include from left Emma Rome Jackson, Isabell Spearman, Margaret Manuel, Zelma Biggs, Idell Locklin, Myrtice Perkins, Jennie Landers, Gertrude Witcher and Sharon Phillips.



An engraved rock headstone is pictured.

## Flora Brown

Last year, before COVID-19, Mrs. Flora Brown and her kind family were interviewed. Flora is the granddaughter of Charlie Landers, who is buried in Zion Hill Cemetery.

The Landers name originated from Mr. Tom Landers, a farmer from Sandersville, Georgia. Mr. Landers traveled to Virginia in the 1800s, where he purchased Edmund. Edmund worked as a slave sharecropper in Sandersville. He met and married Argie, and they had nine children. Edmund's son, Charlie, moved to Walton County in 1919. He married Flora Bell Mills from Sandersville. Flora Bell was a housewife, and her parents were Andrew and Sallie Mills. Flora Brown remembers her grandfather as a very loving and hard-working man.

Flora remembers her family living on the Monroe-Jersey Road (Alcovia Street). She remembers farming. She remembers her Grandma's biscuit ... and a smell of sausage and red-eye gravy that would make your mouth water. Grandpa Charlie died at 60, and Grandma Flora died at 53. Flora misses them very much.