Buried History

October 30, 2018

Allison Creek Presbyterian Church
Founded in 1854

A guide to the history of the original Graveyard near Allison Creek
Presbyterian Church

George M. Meyer

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Foreword

Early on I was advised to "go public" by someone who had done a similar project in North Carolina. My hope was twofold. One of my hopes was that I would get help with the physical work of clearing debris from the graveyard and constructing a walking trail around the perimeter. My other hope was that I would learn the names of many of the people who were buried there.

My success with getting help with the physical work has been limited to the volunteers from Allison Creek Presbyterian Church congregation and the Boy Scout Troop which meets at the church. One thing that I have learned is that an awful lot of limbs fall off of trees during the course of a year. In 2008 one of the scouts, Brian Elgort undertook the task as his Eagle Scout project. To all of those people I am grateful.

I should also mention an anonymous donor who donated funds to be spent on the project. These funds allowed me to replace my original surveyors flags with more permanent markers on those graves without inscribed headstones as well as have the headstones professionally repaired.

My success with learning the names of the occupants has been more limited. A great deal of what I have learned has come from several newspaper articles about the project. I encourage you to read the published articles which are included in the back of this booklet.

I did receive a lot of calls as a result of the newspaper articles, but the great majority of the callers wanted me to know about "their" graveyards near their homes or churches. Only one or two of the callers gave me any useful information about "my" graveyard. None of them, incidentally, volunteered to help with the physical work. This booklet contains all that I have been able to learn about the occupants from my research, the callers, and the newspaper reporters who wrote about my project. The reporters themselves, who did a lot of research for their articles, proved to be my best source of information. Again, I urge you to read their published articles. I think you will find them interesting. Michael Scoggins, the York Historian was able to get a better reading of the inscription on the oldest stone in the graveyard. The name is Aggie (not Agie) Steele. She died in 1859 (not 1850). Consequently the information that I gave the newspaper reporters quoted here in was in error.

George M. Meyer

The Cemetery at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church

The Cemetery which is still in use dates back to the founding of the church. The oldest part of the Cemetery is visible to the rear of the photograph above.

The Graveyard at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church

There is an old "slave graveyard" located in the wooded area just east of the newer cemetery adjacent to the church. Beginning in 2003, I undertook the task of locating the graves, identifying the occupants where possible, and locating the perimeter of the graveyard more precisely. A few of the graves were marked with inscribed head stones, others were simply marked with field stones placed at the head of the graves, and many were unmarked but could be located by depressions in the ground. Initially the visible headstones were identified with small red flags. After that the unmarked depressions were marked, in 2009 the flags were replaced with more permanent aluminum rods with white Fleur-De-Lis finials. In 2008, Brian Elgort undertook the task of clearing debris from the graveyard and constructing a path around the perimeter. Baird Engineering volunteered to help by preparing a plat of the graveyard.

By the end of 2006, more than 200 graves had been located. The graves appeared to lie within five separate groups. Fourteen graves with legible inscribed headstones were found within the five groups. Additional gravesites were found when the graves were re-marked in 2009. The total number is now more than 300.

Location of
African-American Grave Sites
ON PROPERTY OF
Allison Creek Presbyterian Church
EBENEZER TOWNSHIP
YORK COUNTY   SOUTH CAROLINA
2 DECEMBER 2000

ALLISON CREEK ROAD

CEMETERY

Based on information found on the inscribed headstones, in the "History of Allison Creek Presbyterian Church" and in the "History of Liberty Hill AME Zion Church"; As well as the research done by Michael Scoggins, an approximate timeline can be established for the period in which the graveyard was in use.

1854.   Allison Creek Presbyterian Church was founded by members of Ebeneezer and Bethel Presbyterian churches. The charter members from Ebeneezer Presbyterian Church were: Augustine David Choate and his wife, Nancy; William Choate and his wife, Rachel; James Simril and his wife, Violet; Joseph Douglass and his wife, Narcissa; Ezekiel Fewell and his wife, Jane; Hugh Herron Simril and his wife, Nancy Partlow. Charter members from Bethel Presbyterian Church were: William Barry Allison, his wife, Mary Susan Currence Allison, and James L. Wright. Allison Creek Presbyterian Church is known to have had African American members.

Many of these family names appear on the inscribed stones in the graveyard.   The dates listed here are the dates of death taken from   t h e inscriptions.

1859   Aggie Steele. (Group 5) This appears to be the oldest inscribed headstone. The inscription is chiseled into a rough field stone.   Th

1868.   Mary A. Tate. (Group 1)

1869. Monroe Hill (Group 1)

1870. Dorcas Hill (Group 1)

1870   Rachel Knox (Group 1)

1880 Infant Hemphill (Group1)

1887 Samuel Meek (Group 3)

1889 Nannie Meek (Group 3)

1890   Jordan J. Tate (Group 4)

1895 Martha Hagins (Group 4)

1895 Scynthia Tate (Group 4)

1895 --Iler Williams (Group 5)

1896 (Approximately, the exact date is unknown,) The Clay Hill congregation became part of a newly founded Liberty Hill A.M.E Zion Church. The Liberty Hill church did not have a

cemetery initially. Members of the congregation were buried at the Allison Creek Presbyterian Church graveyard for some period of time after the church was founded. Members of the older Clay Hill congregation had also been buried at the Allison Creek graveyard prior to the time the two congregations joined forces.

 1896 Fannie Douglass (Group 2)

1898 Alice Chote (Group 4)

All of the inscriptions but two are on similar sandstone or marble tabular shaped monuments. The two exceptions are the 1850 Aggie Steele rough fieldstone monument and the 1890 Jordan J. Tate monument. The Tate monument which was broken but repaired by Gaulden Monuments in 2009 , is in the shape of a small obelisk.

A story in the 1933 Yorkville Enquirer had some interesting information about the graveyard which was told to A. M. Grist, the reporter, by a man named Tom Simpson.

The monuments were the work of a man named Frank Happerfield. They were ordered by Mr. Madison Hill who erected them in the graveyard.

There is also some interesting biographical information about Dorcas Hill, who is buried in the graveyard, and her son Elias. Dorcas was a house girl in the home of one of the sons of Billy Hill who owned the nearby ironworks. Dorcas raised Billy Hill's grandson who later became confederate General D. H. Hill. Dorcas may have served with General Hill as a nurse during the Civil War.

Dorcas' son, Elias, and D. H. Hill were lifelong friends. Elias was well educated and fluent in English and Greek. Even though crippled from an early age, he was a much sought-after preacher. After the war he became a civil rights activist and was active in the founding of the African nation of Liberia. Prior to that, he had testified before Congress about the activities of the KKK in York County. Elias died in Liberia in 1872.

In March of 2005, Tim Hicks, a reporter with Carolina Newspapers wrote a three part series of articles about the graveyard. Mr. Hicks' articles were published in The Clover Herald, The Yorkville Enquirer, and The Rock Hill Herald.

Mr. Hicks' managed to uncover even more historical information about the occupants of the graveyard. Alice Chote's husband's name was Abram (her tombstone refers to him only as "A.B. Chote"). It is not known if they had any children. The 1870 census notes that an 18 year old farmhand named Washington Coulter lived with them at that time.

Another occupant of the graveyard, Jordan Tate was listed as a blacksmith in the 1870 census and a farmer in the 1880 census. The census reveals that Jordan was married to Claudia Tate and that they had four sons: Johnson (or Johnston), George, James, and Andrew (or Andy).

One mystery that Mr. Hicks managed to shed some light on was the large number of graves in the graveyard (over 300 in 37 years of recorded use) compared to the Allison Creek Presbyterian

Church Cemetery (a little over 200 in 150 years of use). He learned that Colonel William Hill, owner of a nearby ironworks, used large numbers of slaves. The British destroyed the ironworks in 1780. It was reported that there were 90 slaves there at that time.

The 1933 Yorkville Enquirer articles and Mr. Hicks' articles are reproduced on the last pages of this document after the photographs of the inscribed stones.

The Inscribed Stones

The stones are shown in here as they appeared in 2003 before they were repaired and restored to there original positions by Gaulden Monument in 2009.

The inscribed headstones are listed below in groups as they are arranged in the graveyard:

Group 1 (Near south west limit of the graveyard)

Last Name	First Name	Born	Died
Hill	Monroe	Nov.5, 1852	Jul.23,1869
Knox	Rachel	Feb. 8, 1844	Apr.9, 1870
Hill	Dorcas	May 15, 1780	Jul 16, 1870
Tate	Mary A.	Aug. 2, 1862	Jun. 10, 1868
Hemphill	Infant	May 28, 1880	May 28, 1880

There appear to be approximately 126 graves in this general area.

In
Memory of
Monroe Hill
Born Nov 5 1852
Died July 23 1869

In
Memory of
Rachel Knox
Born Feb 8 1844
Died April 9 1870

In
Memory of
Dorcas Hill
Born May 15 1780
Died July 16 1870

In
Memory of
Mary A. Tate
Born Aug 2 1862
Died Jun 10 1868

Infant Dau (ghter) of
C H & J E
Hemphill
Born & Died
May 28 1880

Group 2 (Near south east limit of the graveyard)

There appear to be approximately 15 graves in this general area. Only one grave has an inscribed stone.

This is the only inscribed stone in the group.

Fannie Dau(ghter) of
John & Jamie
Douglass
Born Feb 15 1895
Died
Jan 28 1896

Group 3 (Near eastern limit of the graveyard)

Last Name	First Name	Born	Died
Meek	Samuel	Apr. 9, 1887	Oct., 1887
Meek	Nannie	1869	Dec.2, 1889

There appear to be approximately 42 graves in this general area.

A member of the New Home AME Zion Church has reported that a Reverend H.C. Meek is buried in the cemetery there.

Samuel
Son of H. C. &
Nannie Meek
Born
Apr 9 1887
Died
Oct   1887
At Rest

Nannie Wife of
H.C. Meek
Born
1869 –
Died
Dec 2 1889

In God we trust

Group 4 (Near center of the graveyard)

Last Name	First Name	Born	Died
Hagins	Martha	Dec. 24, 1884	May 16, 1895
Chote	Alice	(1834)	Feb. , 1893
Tate	Scynthia	Oct. 17, 1870	Dec. 5, 1895
Tate	Jordan J.	1822	Nov. 5, 1890

There appear to be approximately 31 graves in this general area.

Martha Dau(ghter) of
W H & Mary
Hagins
Born
Dec 24 1884
Died
May 16 1895

Scynthia
Wife of
G. W. Tate
Born
Oct 17 1870
Died
Dec 5 1895

____ ____

At Rest

Alice
Wife of
A B Chote
Died
Feb 1898
Age 64 Years
___ ___

At Rest

Jordan J. Tate
Born
1822

__

Died
Nov 5 1890
Sleeping in Jesus

Group 5 (Near north west limit of the graveyard)

There appear to be approximately 58 graves in this general area plus another 8, slightly to the east of the larger group. There are also 2 fieldstones closer to the walled cemetery currently in operation, but they do not appear to mark grave sites.

This is the only inscribed stone in the group. The surface of the stone is extremely rough which makes the inscription very difficult to read. We believe the translation of the inscription shown below is accurate.

Sacred
To The Memory
Of Mrs.
Aggie Steele
Departed
This Life May 21st
1859 Age 64 years

A 14th marked headstone was discovered in 2006 in the smaller group to the east of the larger group 5 by the Allison Creek Presbyterian Church Boy Scout troop led by Scoutmaster Brian Thomas. The Scouts were engaged in removing fallen limbs and debris from the graveyard at the time. The stone was overturned when found but re-set in 2009.

 There may have been one or two illegible letters before "iler" in the inscription.

Iler

Dau(ghter) Of Charlie

And Josephine

Williams

Born

Aug 20 1893

Died July 10 1895

Newspaper Articles

GRIST VISITS ALLISON CREEK AREA

(In the column, "Just A-Rolling Along the Way— In My Green Chevrolet," A. M. Grist, editor of *the Yorkville Enquirer*, visited the Allison Creek area, October 27, 1933.)

. . . . we presently arrived at Allison Creek Presbyterian church. I like that church and its beautiful grounds, the prettiest country church grounds in the county, I think, and I never pass that way that I do not stop to look it over for a few minutes. I wanted Dr.[W. W.] Harrison to see the place. He had heard of it many times, but this was his first visit to the place. He too, was impressed with its beauty.

In my jauntings over the county the past two years and more I have written stories about many of the cemeteries of the county, and in due course I "covered" the Allison Creek graveyard. When I visited that city of the dead a year and more ago Mr. [Ladd] Lumpkin was with me, and told me that on the lower side of the cemetery there was a large space where negroes of slavery days had been buried, but he didn't know and neither did I, that a number of those graves of the slaves had markers. Tom Simpson told me about them the other afternoon and I went out into that jungle of undergrowth to see what I could find. I didn't find but three or four, and these we had to pull up out of the soft earth so the inscriptions could be read. Tom said the markers were the work of the late Frank Happerfield. One of the markers read:

"In Memory of Dorcas Hill. Born May 15, 1780. Died July 16, 1870." Now here was something interesting. Dorcas Hill was a house girl in the home of "Old Man Billy" Hill of Ironworks fame. She was the mother of Elias Hill, who figured somewhat in the days of Reconstruction and about whom I told something in my Ku Klux sketches. She was also the great-grandmother of Tom Simpson. Dorcas Hill was the nurse of General D. H. Hill of Confederate Army fame. . . .

Another marker found reads thus: "In memory of Rachel Knox. Born Feb. 18, 1844; died April 9, 1870." These markers, says Tom, were all erected by Madison Hill. He also says that there is a large area below the cemetery there filled with graves of slaves and others buried there after the war.

We passed on from Allison Creek church and went on out by the Hill Iron Works site and on to old Concord church and even down to the old Partlow place, in sight of what was once Thorn's ferry. . . .

On October 31, Grist continued his "jaunting . . ."

. . . . While Tom [Simpson] and I were on the outside of the cemetery looking for the markers at the graves of the several slaves buried there in that jungle, he informed me that the stone wall built around the church cemetery was built in 1876, the people interesting doing the work and hauling the stone from nearby farms.

While out there after I copied the inscriptions of the several markers, I asked Tom about some information about himself. Among other things he told me that he was born within 100 yards of the Laurens county courthouse on December 31, 1856. His owner, or rather the owner of his mother, was Mrs. John D. Simpson, wife of Dr. John D. Simpson. Her name was Miss Jane Beatty, a native of Yorkville, a sister of the late Colonel William C. Beatty, a lawyer of Yorkville.

She first married a Mr. Clowney of Union. Mrs. Clowney already well-to-do, inherited considerable property from her husband's estate.

A few years later she married the second time, her second mate being Dr. Simpson, and went to Laurens to reside. Tom's mother was taken along to Mrs. Simpson's new home at Laurens and there Tom was born. Dr. Simpson had been previously married and had several children. His second wife had no children. Simpson was quite well-to-do. Mrs. Clowney married Dr. Simpson as a "free dealer," according to Tom. I had to get him to explain just what being a "free dealer" meant. He said that it meant that the property of Mrs. Simpson when she married the doctor was still hers to do with as she pleased. He had nothing to do with her holdings. Likewise she had no say so in his properties.

Dr. Simpson's daughters had married and moved away from the home. In due time some of them came home for visits, occasionally. On one occasion a daughter from Georgia and possibly others came for a visit, and Tom, aged about five years at that time, as was ordinary in those days, played with the white children of about his age. They got along nicely. Along about dinner time the white children were called in to dinner. Tom didn't join the dinner party and some one, thinking Tom was a white child, inquired where the other little boy was. It was explained that Tom was a son of one of the slaves. Then that started things—in short, a commotion, and as the upshot of this family fuss over the little negro slave having been playing with the visiting quality white folks, Mrs. Simpson then and there set Tom free and sent him over to York county to her brother, Colonel Beatty to look after and made him Tom's guardian to see that he got proper treatment, clothing, etc.

Thus it came that Tom spent his first night in York county at the home of the late Col. George W. Williams. In a day or two Colonel Beatty sent him out to the country and he was placed in charge of the mother of Elias Hill, Dorcas, for his rearing, and that is how Tom came to know so much about Elias, who played such a big part in reconstruction times and who was whipped by the Ku Klux on one occasion. Colonel Beatty visited Tom at least twice each year to see that he was being given proper care.

I asked Tom if the Ku Klux ever got after him. He would have been about 16 in the days of the Ku Klux period. "Oh, yes, sir," Tom replied with a laugh, "but I kept out of the way of them; but I never stayed more than one or two nights in the same place. Just kept changing from place to place and they never caught me.

As I have recounted several times before, Elias Hill was born the same year as was General D. H. Hill, and Dorcas Hill, mother of Elias, was the nursemaid for the baby that was later to become a Confederate general. Up to the age of about seven years, Elias was a normal child. About that time disease seized him, something like rheumatism, and from that time on he was a cripple in body, helpless, so far as helping himself physically was concerned. He had to be carried wherever he went and had to have constant attention. But his mind was all right and quite evidently he had a mind that was far above the average of his race.

He grew up with D. H. Hill and there was real affection between the two that never died as long as they lived. Of course D. H. Hill had the very best of educational advantages. He was a brilliant scholar himself and he took much delight in teaching the slave boy, Elias, and he did a good job of it. He taught him everything that he possibly could, and in time, according to Tom, Elias Hill became so apt in reading the original Greek that he could read it with the facility that English was read by the average scholar of his day.

After the war General Hill went to Charlotte to live, and there was on the editorial staff of the Charlotte Observer. In the meantime, Elias, handicapped as he was physically, gave his time to the work of teaching school and preaching. He went and preached all around over North Carolina—just anywhere that his people could and would take him to. Tom says Elias had such a powerful voice he could be heard a long distance when preaching.

In the meantime he was teaching school in Mecklenburg county, and according to Tom, General Hill every two or three weeks, would send his carriage out to where Elias was teaching and bring him to his Charlotte home to spend the week-ends and the two of them would greatly enjoy such occasions, Elias being treated with the utmost kindness on such occasions.

Elias Hill, as many of my readers know, was anathema to the Ku Kluxers of Bethel township. He was considered a leader and adviser among his race and because of his education and other qualifications he was considered a bad egg. On one occasion a half dozen Ku Kluxers went to the house of Dorcas Hill, where Elias lived with his mother, took him after doing some damage to the furnishings of the home, among other things destroyed being a clock.

Elias, according to the common story, was given several lashes with a hickory withe, and some of the legends say he was threatened by the Ku Klux with being thrown into a nearby pond to drown. One common story is to the effect that one of the Kluxers unintentionally spoke a word or two and the voice was recognized as that of a well known man of the community. Recognizing the voice, it is said that Dorcas threw her arms around the legs of this man and piteously begged that her son be not drowned. The Kluxers, realizing the fact that they were thus made known, abandoned the idea of drowning Elias and so departed.

Tom has it another way. He says he was close by while all this was going on. He says there were six men in the party and that he recognized all of them, and in fact gave me the names of them; but that doesn't matter here. He says that they broke the clock, carried Elias out of the house, and hit him a few licks with the withes, but did not threaten to drown him. At any rate Elias was not drowned.

It was in 1871, that there was a movement over the south, probably originating in the North, for a migration of former slaves to the republic of Liberia on the west coast of Africa. The movement finally materialized and quite a party of York county negroes went on the expedition. The ones from this county were under the leadership of Elias Hill. Simpson told me the other day that when Elias Hill left York county starting for Liberia he had $5,000 in cash.

The emigrants reached Liberia all right and in due time. Tom Simpson was in the party. He stayed just a little over ten months and then came back and has been in York county ever since. Elias Hill died in Liberia in February, 1872. Tom Simpson was not the only one of the part of immigrants who returned to York county. I quite well remember several of them who came back. Among others were two men named Simrill—John and Green—John then migrated to Arkansas and so far as I know died out there. . . .

In the files of The Enquirer are a number of letters written from Liberia by Elias Hill, my father having made arrangements with him to write the letters and tell of the experiences of the party in the African republic—Free Liberia. These letters are very interesting and bear all the marks of an educated man as he told of the voyage out and some of the conditions existing when the party arrived and what they did and were doing at the time.

The going of the party to Liberia was the basis of much newspaper notoriety North and South, and the experiment was watched with much interest all over this country.

Uncovering Buried History

By Tim Hicks Carolina Newspapers

George Meyer stands near one of the few graves with an inscribed headstone in the old slave graveyard near Allison Creek Presbyterian Church. Most of the graves are designated only with large fieldstones, leaving the identity of the inhabitants a mystery. It's a mystery Meyer and others want answered. Above, Sunset, Meyer's Labrador, wanders among some of the few graves in the slave graveyard that have inscribed tombstones.

(Published March 31, 2005) - There's history in the woods beyond the fieldstone fence of the Allison Creek Presbyterian graveyard.

It is history George Meyer wants to learn, for his sake, and for those buried there.

In the woods bordering the 151-year-old church's cemetery lies another graveyard, one where slaves and descendants of former slaves are buried. Along this stretch of S.C. 274 the trees shelter these graves.

Meyer, a retired civil engineer, became interested in the hidden graveyard in 2003. The Rock Hill resident first heard of it when he joined the church in 1999. His interest peaked after reading a Charlotte newspaper article about a slave graveyard in North Carolina. He called some of the people named in the article who advised him in his search. Their advice -- go to the public.

"I'm interested in who's buried there. If people see names, then someone, somewhere has an old family Bible with names in it," Meyer said.

Meyer has called a few local black churches and Allison Creek's pastor, the Rev. Sam McGregor, has mailed inquiries in the past, but without any response. Both want more details of this graveyard's inhabitants.

Most of the graves are marked with a simple, large fieldstone without any inscriptions, a common practice for slave graves.

However, 13 graves have engraved, named markers. Some of the full names on the markers include Monroe Hill, Rachel Knox, Mary A. Tate and Jordan J. Tate. Hagins, Chote, Meek and Hemphill are other family names appearing on headstones.

Some of the slaves buried here were owned by Col. William Hill. Hill was an industrialist in the area who became a legendary Revolutionary War hero and South Carolina statesman. Hill's Ironworks was located on Allison Creek where the bridge is now on S.C. 274. The foundry processed iron mined from nearby Nanny's Mountain.

The earliest named marker is from 1850, the grave of Aigie Steele, who died at age 64. Steele's tombstone is an irregularly shaped fieldstone, and predates Allison Creek Presbyterian Church, founded in 1854.

"Allison Creek did have blacks as members during slavery days," Meyer said.

Liberty Hill AME Zion Church, an African-American church in rural Clover, buried some of its members at Allison Creek's now wooded graveyard in that church's early years. Liberty Hill AME Zion was founded circa 1896. It was originally called Clay Hill Church.

Early in the project Meyer walked the site, planting small red surveying flags at each fieldstone, marker and oblong depression in the woods.

The depressions are signs of sunken graves. Once done, he was surprised the number of flags fluttering in the underbrush. At the end of 2004, more than 200 graves were found. The graves appear in five groups in the woods.

"I'm guessing there's 300 graves in there. There's not that many in the church's cemetery," Meyer said. "Look at the acreage -- it's over two acres."

Several years ago Joe Baird, a local land surveyor, surveyed the site and drew a map of the slave graveyard.

Both Meyer and another church member, Rick Nash, went to a two-day seminar on historically preserving old cemeteries. The seminar was conducted by the Chicora Foundation, a Columbia-based, private cemetery reclamation organization.

For a fee, the group will do records research and gravesite plotting or refurbishing and repairing monuments.

Both graveyards at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church intrigue Nash.

"We've all taken an interest in the cemetery. I thought about not only the slave graveyard, but looking at the overall picture of things there. George has pretty much focused on the slave graveyard," Nash said. "I'm doing a little research. There's not a lot on the slave graveyard."

Want to help?

Anyone with information can call Meyer at (803) 328-2654 or by e-mail him at sunsetg@ comporium.net.

Tim Hicks

Carolina Newspapers

Researchers compiling history of buried slaves

Records spotty for African-Americans

By Tim Hicks Carolina Newspapers

(Published April 6, 2005)

African-American genealogy in the South can be viewed as a ragged patchwork quilt of relations and families shaped, or rather torn, by slavery.

More often than not, it's a blanket with many holes in it. Tracing African-American families can be a real challenge for genealogists.

It's a challenge George Meyer shouldered as he delved into the old slave graveyard hidden in the woods bordering the maintained cemetery at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church. Since 2003, Meyer has studied the overgrown graveyard, where he estimates 300 graves of slaves and their descendants are buried. Most of the nearly 200 graves he has catalogued are designated by unmarked fieldstones or there is a oblong recess of a sunken grave.

Only 13 of the graves have a traditional inscribed headstone.

Records on African-American families before the Civil War are scarce as slavery was still in force. Pre-Civil War census documents recorded African-Americans as property of slaveholding families, and only then listed them by sex and age, not their names, said Heather South, a curator with the Historical Center of York County.

"Genealogy is very frustrating but with African-American genealogy, it's very difficult," South said.

African-Americans were not listed as named residents of an area until the 1870 U.S. Census. However, after 1870, if a descendant is shown in the census, it will often list other members of the family or people living in that household. Census records from that time also told which family members were literate or not, she said.

To have even a few marked tombstones in the black cemetery at Allison Creek that soon after the Civil War is unique, considering some white graves from then don't have headstones, South said.

Researching family histories often begins with information gleaned from cemeteries and public records. It involves a bit of dead reckoning and detective work as well as records research, she said.

Unfortunately for many counties, York County included, there aren't many comprehensive lists of graveyards within their borders, South said.

"It's a difficult research project -- it's very labor intensive," she said.

Old church records are another possible resource for family histories, even for African-American genealogies since the older churches like Allison Creek Presbyterian included slaves on their rolls, South said.

After the emancipation, many slaves took a surname, often the last name of their former owner or one they picked themselves, she said.

Such was the case with some of the people buried in the Allison Creek slave cemetery. There are several Hills buried there, who are the slaves or their descendants of Col. William Hill, who ran an iron foundry on Allison Creek during colonial times.

Research by retired Winthrop University history professor Louise Pettus shows Hill used slaves extensively in the foundry. At one time, Hill sent for 100 slaves from North Carolina to help with his ironworks. During the American Revolution, British forces destroyed the ironworks in 1780 and mentioned 90 slaves at the work site at the time, according to Pettus' research. Hill at the time was providing iron cannonballs to the American forces.

Can you help?

Anyone with information on the graveyard can call Meyer at (803) 328-2654 or e-mail him at sunsetg@comporium.net.

Want more?

Next week: Researchers hit some walls while looking for help with cemetery.

Uncovering Buried History

By Tim Hicks Carolina Newspapers

(Published April 6, 2005) - Information about who inhabits the slave graveyard at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church is scant. But some details have surfaced.

There are 13 graves in the slave cemetery with inscribed headstones.

The resting places of the about 200 other graves are shown only by plain fieldstones.

• Her headstone reads: "Alice, Wife of A.B. Chote, Died Feb. 1898, Age 64 Years."

Alice Choat, then age 37, is mentioned as part of the 1870 U.S. Census for the York area. The record shows she was a housewife married to Abram Choat, 25, who was a farm laborer. The census records doesn't reveal if they had any children, although an 18-year-old farm hand, Washington Coulter, lived with them at the time. The census records also shows Alice and Abram could read and write. The different spelling between the record and the headstone is because the name was probably spelled phonetically.

It's not known if Abram Choat or Coulter are buried in the Allison Creek cemetery.

• His tombstone reads: "Jordan J. Tate, Born 1822, Died Nov. 5, 1890, Sleeping in Jesus."

Jordan Tate who lived in the Bethel Township as a farmer is in the 1880 U.S. Census database. The 1870 census listed the same Jordan Tate as a blacksmith in the area.

The census records further reveal Tate in 1880 was age 60 and married to a Claudia Tate, 47. They had four sons: Johnson or Johnston, 20; George, 18; Jas. later found to be James, 14; and Andrew, 16. Andrew was listed in another census as Andy.

The census showed Claudia and Jordan were both illiterate. Claudia was born in North Carolina while Jordan was born in South Carolina. All their children were born in South Carolina.

The census also showed their son Johnson could read and write and George could read.

Black leaders may join in slave cemetery project
UNCOVERING BURIED HISTORY

By Tim Hicks Carolina Newspapers

(Published April 14, 2005)

The black community needs to reclaim and record its history, some African-American leaders say.

News of an old slave graveyard near Allison Creek Presbyterian Church on S.C. 274 doesn't surprise many black community members. The graves are in the woods beyond the rock wall enclosure that borders the another cemetery containing mostly white former members of the 151-year-old church. Most of the graves of slaves and their descendants are marked by simple fieldstones but 13 graves have inscribed headstones. Marking African-American graves with rocks was common in the past.

During slavery, blacks were members of Allison Creek Presbyterian Church, sitting in the balcony during services while their owners attended worship in the sanctuary below them. Later, the black members broke off and formed Liberty Hill AME Zion Church. The church now numbers 400 members. Liberty Hill buried some of its members at the Allison Creek cemetery early in its history.

The challenge is discovering who is buried in the slave graveyard. Some have expressed an interest in helping.

"Yes, we would be interested in doing all we can. Some of the people who could help have passed on, but those of us left we would do all we can," said the Rev. Eldren Morrison, Liberty Hill's pastor.

"There's not many record from that time that have survived. Our church would really be interested in it since we are in the process of updating our records," Morrison said.

There are few written histories on black churches. One reason is as blacks were emancipated, there wasn't the level of education there to preserve these histories. At the time there also wasn't an understanding of its importance, said the Rev. Charles Darden, the pastor of New Home Community Church in Clover.

Darden said he would ask his church about helping with the Allison Creek slave graveyard.

"There might be some resources to help out. I'd have to lift that up," he said.

Isaac Wright, the owner and funeral director for Wright Funeral Home, hadn't heard of the abandoned graveyard, but wants to explore it, he said.

Beside being in the mortuary business, Wright has experience with reclaiming old cemeteries himself. Wright and other family members formed the Wright Family Foundation, a family philanthropy devoted to preserving African-American history in York County. One undertaking for the group is restoring the abandoned Union cemetery, a black graveyard in York. There are Wright ancestors buried there.
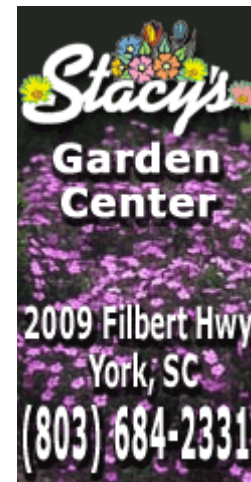
Wright said he would mention the Allison Creek graveyard at the next board meeting for the Wright Foundation.

Likewise, the graveyard might be a project the local NAACP chapter would consider, especially for its youth group, said Steve Love, the president of the Western Branch of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People.

Find the stories of those buried in slave cemetery

Carolina Newspapers

(Published April 14, 2005)

There can be few tasks as monumental as trying to reconstruct what happened in the past after the records are gone.

That's why what George Meyer is attempting at the Allison Creek Presbyterian Church cemetery is also so monumental.

Meyer wants to find out who is buried in a cemetery in the woods next to the church. He knows most of the people there were slaves or descendants of former slaves.

Of about 200 marked graves, just 13 have some sort of headstone that includes names and dates. The rest are simple fieldstones. Another 100 or so graves are marked solely by an oblong depression in the ground.

Meyer may never be successful in his attempts to reconstruct who is buried in the slave cemetery. But he is to be commended for trying.

And any help he receives would be appreciated. The entire project may be too much for one man to tackle alone.

It is the duty of anyone who knows anything about the history of the slave cemetery to step up to the plate and join Meyer. It would be wrong to let the history of the those buried in the cemetery remain unknown, no matter how distasteful the past may be.

We can't pretend that slavery didn't happen. It is a long, black mark on our history, but that doesn't mean the story of the people who lived through it deserve to be ignored or forgotten.

And as they say, those who forget history are doomed to repeat it.

So, good luck George. We hope you are successful.

Graveyard preservation gains steam

By Adam O'Daniel Enquirer-Herald Lake Wylie Pilot

(Published January 2, 2007) - YORK -- The daughter of Charlie and Josephine Williams died in 1895. But nobody in the area knew where she was buried until last week when George Meyer stumbled upon her headstone.

Meyer of Lake Wylie has been uncovering buried history for three years at what he calls a "slave graveyard" at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church. Recently, while traipsing across the broken limbs and fallen leaves that have concealed the graves for almost 100 years, he found the child's headstone. It was the 14th grave he has been able to identify out of nearly 250. Meyer says it was probably uncovered when a group of Boy Scouts helped him clear fallen debris from the area.

The graveyard, a few yards past the east wall of the church's cemetery, is accessible only by climbing the 2-foot rock barrier and exploring the nearby forest. Most graves are visible only by an oblong depression in the ground or unmarked fieldstone. The retired civil engineer has been a member of the church since 1999, but started investigating slave graves in 2003. Since then, he has mapped the area and learned the history of which churches buried their dead in the 2-acre plot.

However, except for the few tombstones he has uncovered, identifying the remains has been largely impossible.

"It's kinda come to a slow down," Meyer said last week. "I gave it a shot, but I couldn't find anybody."

Because most of the people buried near the church were slaves or children of slaves, there are few written records to research. But that hasn't stopped Meyer from spending countless hours looking for clues. He talked to nearby churches, reviewed census data and researched numerous newspaper clippings and genealogical journals.

Preserving mysteries

If the remains can't be identified, Meyer wants to ensure they are preserved. Unable to spend the thousands of dollars needed for professional cemetery restoration, Meyer is working with Boy Scouts to clear the area.

The Rev. Sam McGregor, pastor at Allison Creek, said the Scouts -- a group of boys in his congregation -- are trying to establish a perimeter around the graveyard.

McGregor wants to erect a monument or historical marker.

"We want to give it the respect it hasn't always had," McGregor said. "The early days of this church are indebted to African-Americans, because, whether they wanted to or not, they played a large role in building this church."

The preservation efforts also are gaining ground outside the congregation, as well.

Kathy Cantrell of Lake Wylie, director of the Greater Clover Chamber of Commerce, is looking for more sources for Meyer. Her brother is a professor at West Virginia University and has suggested possible funding sources and historical experts at University of South Carolina and the state Historic Preservation Office that may be able to lend a hand. While she's still waiting for responses, Cantrell said she recently toured the graveyard and is hopeful progress will continue.

"It is such a heart-wrenching experience to go out there," Cantrell said.

Eventually, Meyer said he wants to build a pathway leading into the graveyard.

YORKVILLE ENQUIRER, 2 NOVEMBER 1871

GONE TO LIBERIA

On Tuesday last, a colony of 136 negroes left the vicinity of Clay Hill, in this county , for Liberia under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. They took their cars[1] at Rock Hill, yesterday, whence they shall go to Baltimore, and from that city, will sail directly to the point of their destination in the *Golconda,* a vessel belonging to the Colonization Society.   Purchased, Among the number are the following heads of families: Rev. E. Hill, June Moore, Andy Cathcart, Minor Cathcart, Solomon Hill, Peter Watson, John Moore, Madison Simril and George Simril.   The entire number is made up of the most industrious negroes in that section of the county, many of whom, since their emancipation, have shown themselves to be thrifty and energetic, and not a few of them had accumulated money.

NOTE: The records of the American Colonization Society, which sponsored the migration to Liberia, indicate that the migration from Clay Hill in York County numbered 166 persons, not 136 as the above article states. Also, the names "Madion Simril and George Simril do not appear in the official ACS immigration roster as printed in *the African repository* magazine for December 1871. The biography of Rev. Elias Hill, which appears on page 354 of the *Repository* article, states that his father, a native of Africa, "purchased himself and his wife when their son was young."   The family does not appear by name in the US census until1860, at which time The father of Elias Hill was apparently dead. The 1860 census lists Dorcas Hill, mulatto, age 80, bornin North Carolina, and Elias Hill, black, age 41, deformed, born in York District, SC. Dorcas waslisted as a domestic, with %520 of real property and $200 of personal property. According to the *TestimonyTaken by the Joint Senate Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, South*

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[1] Railroad cars

Carolina (Vol. 3, 1872), Elias "was in early life a slave, whose freedom was purchased, his father buying his mother and getting Elias along with her, as a burden which his master was glad to be rid."

There was a subsequent migration of blacks from York County to Liberia in 1878, but I do not have a list of their names at this time.

--Michael C. Scoggins, Culture ans Heritage Museums.

THE 1871 YORK COUNTY EMIGRANTS

Michael Scoggins shared the full list of 1871 Emigrants with me. It appears in an article by Basque Edith Rose from Hampton Roads, Vurginia, November 7, 1871. In the *African Repository* Magazine

I have summarized the list by Family names as follows:

Number on the list	Family name	Number of emigrants
73-86	Hill	14
87- 106	Moore	20
107 – 119	Cathcart	13
120 – 126	Hill	7
127 -133	Tate	7
134- 145	Garrison	12
146	Bigger	1
147 -149	Garrison	3
150 – 152	Tate	3
153 – 166	Watson	14
167 – 174	Walkup	8

175 – 178	Watson	4
178 – 183	Thomason	6
184 -186	Partlow	3
187-202	Bryant	17
203-208	Wright	5
209 -210	Smith	2
211 – 218	Watson	8
219 – 228	Currance	10
229 - 234	Barnet	6
235 – 238	Knox	4
	Total	166