

Historical Significance of the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery:

The following text is excerpted from the Town of Chapel Hill's application for inclusion of the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places and encapsulates the historical significance of the cemetery.

Because of the University's preeminent position as the first public university opened in the United States and the major public institution of higher learning in North Carolina, the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery has one of the most distinguished groups of individuals of the statewide and local significance of any cemetery in North Carolina. Among those buried there are eminent educators, mathematicians, physicians, engineers, geologists, philosophers, literary figures, and dramatists. Burials of much-beloved Chapel Hill townspeople, men and women, white and black, who operated popular hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, served in town government, and were public policy crusaders, are present there also, and have local significance...

The Old Chapel Hill Cemetery, now almost filled, is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its distinctive collection of nineteenth-century monuments that reflect the craftsmanship of both known and anonymous stonecutters of North Carolina and other states, including George Lauder and Maunder & Campbell of Raleigh. The cemetery contains examples of ornate headstones, tomb-tables, and obelisks favored by affluent whites, as well as uninscribed fieldstones and modestly stylish headstones of local brownstone erected for slaves and possibly free blacks who were part of the university community. In addition, the low stone or brick borders and ornate cast-iron fences that enclose a number of the family plots and the plots of the Dialectic Society and the Philanthropic Society are characteristic of elite antebellum cemeteries in North Carolina.

Some important events in the history of the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery:

- **1776:** Hardy Morgan sells a 125-acre tract of land to trustees of the State of North Carolina for five shillings.
- **1795:** The University of North Carolina (now UNC-Chapel Hill) opens. Dialectic and Philosophical Societies are formed.
- **1798:** George Clarke, a nineteen-year-old University student and member of the Philosophical Society, dies unexpectedly and becomes the first interment in the cemetery. Burial site probably selected on short notice; no recorded action designates cemetery.
- **1814:** Earliest monument in cemetery installed for Margarita Chapman, aged sixteen. (Marble ledger for George Clarke appears to have been installed a number of years after his death.)
- **1835:** Trustees allot \$64.41 to build a stone wall around the cemetery. President Caldwell dies and is interred this same year.
- **1844:** Judge William Gaston, a long-time Trustee of the University, passes away. Several members of the faculty propose the establishment of another burying ground, a "Fames Acre" for eminent men associated with the University's development. The Trustees allow the petition to lapse without action, choosing instead to rename the cemetery.
- **1845:** Cemetery designated the "College Graveyard," but continues to be called the "Village Cemetery" by most town residents.
- **1846:** Joseph Caldwell's remains are exhumed and re-interred on the main UNC campus.
- **1853:** Date of the earliest identifiable gravestone, for Ellington Burnett, in African-American sections of the cemetery. (There were no black church cemeteries in Chapel Hill in the 18th and early 19th centuries, so the slaves of the village were buried in a segregated section of the Cemetery (Sections A and B), separated from the other sections (I, II, III and IV) by a low rock

wall, which still stands. Many of the field stones in Section A and B mark the graves of unknown African-Americans.)

- **1891:** Wilson Swain Caldwell, who was born into slavery but became a Justice of the Peace, school principal and Member of the Chapel Hill Board of Commissioners, dies and is interred in Section B.
- **1902:** The Trustees passed a resolution to enlarge the cemetery.
- **1903:** A plat is presented to the Board of Aldermen of the Town of Chapel Hill outlining an addition of two-thirds of an acre on the west and one and one-third acres on the east.
- **1907:** The original obelisk intended for Joseph Caldwell's grave site is moved to the grave site of Wilson Swain Caldwell and rededicated to honor Wilson Swain Caldwell, November Caldwell (Wilson's father), David Barnham, and Henry Smith, all African-Americans who at one time served Joseph Caldwell or the University.
- **Early 20th century:** Cemetery becomes the primary place for the internment of men and women associated with the University; regular interments begin in Section 2.
- **1922:** The Board of Alderman recognizes the need to enlarge the cemetery and appoint a committee to confer with University officials about the matter.
- **1923:** A resolution is passed instructing the town manager to survey the cemetery, institute a system of burial permits, and obtain a deed from the University to establish "that the town of Chapel Hill really owns the cemetery." No reported actions follow.
- **1928:** The aldermen submit a written petition to the trustees describing crowded conditions in the cemetery and asking for additional land. The trustees grant three acres, two on the east side (apparently Sections III and IV), and one on the south side (apparently a southern expansion of Sections A & B). Income from the sale of lots is earmarked for ongoing maintenance, and oversight of the entire project is assigned to a committee of five members, appointed by the aldermen and the university buildings and grounds committee.
- **1930s and 40s:** Prominent educators and townspeople continue to be buried in the cemetery.
- **Late 1940s:** The town record reflects concerns about the appearance of the cemetery (weeds, sunken graves, and overturned monuments). The town takes the position that burial sites are private property and that the rights of owners would be infringed upon if it assumed responsibility for the maintenance of individual graves.
- **1949:** University attorney J.A. Williams, especially concerned about conditions in Sections A and B, appears before the aldermen to "remind them of their commitment to maintaining the cemetery". The aldermen decided to purchase a tract of land for a new African-American burial ground, now the West Chapel Hill Cemetery.
- **1960:** Williams discusses ownership of the cemetery land with the University business office, and finds "no indication that the Board of Trustees took any affirmative action to convey fee simple title to the cemetery property to the town."
- **1961-1973:** Many prominent citizens interred in Sections III and IV.
- **1974:** Extreme vandalism mars the cemetery, including damage to or defacement of 40+ monuments. A patrol is set for the following week, but nothing out of the ordinary is seen and surveillance is discontinued. Shirley Marshall, the chairperson of the cemetery committee, sends

a heated memorandum to the town administration, chiding them for their lack of action in determining ownership and planning for the care of the cemetery.

- **1982:** The University proposes to expand the cemetery into the wooded grove adjacent to the eastern border, creating 185 new burial sites. However, unexpected opposition in residential neighborhoods east of the University results in abandonment of the proposed expansion. By this time, the Town has responsibility for maintaining the cemetery, but scant resources only allow for minimal work, and the Town expresses an interest in transferring control of the cemetery to the University.
- **1985:** During a Clemson football game, several fans park their cars in the cemetery, damaging the markers and grounds. Rebecca Clark, a concerned community member, petitions the Town Council to improve the condition of the western sections (A and B) of the cemetery.
- **1986:** The first Cemetery Task Force is formed, with the goals of clarifying ownership and developing a master plan for improvements, including grave marker repair, lighting, walls, fencing, public education, and landscape maintenance.
- **1987:** The Town seeks written quotes for development of a Master Plan, enters into an agreement with Hunter Reynolds Jewell, PA from Raleigh, and accepts the resultant "Manual for the Renovation of and Improvements to the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery". In accordance with the Master Plan, the Town Council allocates \$290,000 for monument repair; repair and construction of walls, fences and paths; compilation of a cemetery directory; installation of new light fixtures; and improved landscaping.
- **1988:** The Town hires David Swanson to survey the cemetery and determine future improvements, and his wife Terri works to update a 1976 survey of interments.
- **1988 to 1991:** New gazebo built.
- **1989:** State of North Carolina grants quitclaim deed to Town of Chapel Hill. David Swanson proposes landscape architectural services, including a construction schedule and specifications for drainage improvements, stone wall repairs/replacement, grave marker repair, walkway improvements, and signage for the cemetery; his proposal is accepted that same year.
- **1989 to 1992:** Cemetery directory is compiled.
- **1991:** Fiberglass informational exhibit is installed in the cemetery. Improvements to the cemetery merit award from the North Carolina chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Swanson begins a fundraising campaign. Vandalism rears its ugly head again, with 33 stones damaged at a cost of more than \$2000.
- **1992:** Chapel Hill Preservation Society earmarks \$10,000 for grave marker repair in the old cemetery.
- **1993:** The Old Chapel Hill Cemetery is recognized as "potentially" eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The Town submits an application for grant funds, to be used for the national register application, professional marker evaluation, and cemetery restoration, to the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. The Town receives and matches \$4500. Ruth Little of Longleaf Historic Resources is retained to prepare the national register application, and Lynette Strangstad of Stone Faces is hired to complete the accompanying "Comprehensive Conditions Assessment of Selected Markers". An informational brochure is produced in connection with the town's bicentennial, and a cemetery workshop entitled "Grave Affairs" is held at UNC Institute of Government.

- **1994:** The Town submits its application for inclusion of the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery in the National Register of Historic Places; it is approved.
- **1995:** The State Historic Preservation Office awards the Town of Chapel Hill a \$5000 Certified Local Government grant, to be used for gravestone restoration.
- **1996:** Hurricane Fran uproots five trees, damages four others; four monuments are damaged/overturned.
- **1997:** Charles Kuralt is interred in Section 2. Four markers are vandalized at a cost of \$3000.
- **2004:** The Town establishes a new Cemetery Task Force to analyze possible improvements using an available \$150,000 in funding. The task force is interested in three areas: archives and public outreach, lighting and pedestrian flow, and ornamental fence restoration. The task force also reviews the town's responsibility and budget for perpetual maintenance of the cemetery and individual plot maintenance.
- **2006:** The Town retains a graduate student from the University's library school to create an archival collection of cemetery documents, digital copies of important documents, and informational pages for the Town website.

Some historically significant people interred in the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery:

- Abernathy, Eric. University physician.
- Barbee, Algernon - Mayor of Chapel Hill.
- Berry, Harriet Morehead - Dedicated advocate of North Carolina road improvements.
- Braune, Gustave - First Dean of the School of Engineering.
- Caldwell, Edwin - African-American physician, developed a cure for pellagra.
- Caldwell, Wilson Swain - Born into slavery, became Justice of the Peace, opened a free school for African-American children and was appointed to the Board of Commissioners.
- Coates, Albert - Founder of the Institute of Government.
- Cobb, Collier Sr.- Professor of Geology.
- Coker, William Chamber - Head of the Botany Department for 36 years, creator of campus arboretum.
- Conner, Robert - Kenan Professor of History and first United States Archivist.
- Danziger, Edward "Papa D" - Chapel Hill restaurateur.
- Davis, Walter - Major benefactor to University (Davis Library namesake)
- Eaton, Charles Edward - Noted poet
- Fordham, Christopher III - Former Chancellor at University
- Friday, William "Bill" - UNC President 1956-1986
- Graham, Edward Kidder - UNC President
- Graham, Frank Porter - First president of the Consolidated Universities of North Carolina, later a U.S. Senator.
- Graves, Louis - Founder, publisher, and editor of Chapel Hill Weekly.
- Graves, Ralph Henry - Colorful literary figure, biographer of Henry Ford.
- Green, Paul Green - Dramatist, author of The Lost Colony.
- Greenlaw, Edwin - Professor of English.
- Hamilton J. G. de Roulhac - Eminent historian, established the Southern Historical Collection.
- Harris, Thomas West - First dean of the medical school.
- Hilliard, Nancy - Ran the Eagle Hotel, impoverished herself by extending too much credit to boys unable to pay their bills.
- Hogan, Francis - Noted tennis player, First female Athletic Director at UNC
- Hutchins, James Jr. - Major benefactor to University (Hutchins Forum)
- Kirkland, George - Chapel Hill's first African-American dentist.
- Koch, Frederick Henry - Founder of Carolina Playmakers.
- Kuralt, Charles - noted Journalist

- Kyser, James Kern "Kay" - World-famous bandleader.
- Kyser, Georgia Carroll - Singer, fashion model, and actress
- MacNider, Sophia - Ran boarding house and prep school on Franklin Street.
- Mallett, William - Physician, ran first student infirmary.
- Manning, Isaac Hall Manning - Physician administrator, began Hospital Savings of North Carolina, the first medical insurance provider for the state.
- McDade, Fanny - African-American laundress to students for many years, died at 103, believed to be the oldest person in the cemetery.
- Phillips, James - Renowned mathematician.
- Pratt, Joseph Hyde - Professor of Geology and first Chairman of Chapel Hill Planning Board.
- Prince, Lillian Hughes - First to play the part of Queen Elizabeth in The Lost Colony.
- Pritchard, William - Postmaster, mayor, and state senator.
- Roberson, William - Attorney and three-time Chapel Hill mayor.
- Shaffer, Charles Jr. - First head of Development for University
- Smith, Dean Edwards - UNC-CH Men's basketball coach 1961-1997
- Spencer, Cornelia Phillips - Teacher, writer, known as "woman who rang the bell" announcing the reopening of UNC after reconstruction).
- Stacy, Inez Koonce Stacy - Dean of Women.
- Stacy, Marvin Hendrix - UNC president.
- Stipe, Robert - Noted Architect, Preservationist
- Tatum, Jim - Coach of the University's champion football team in the 1950s.
- Trice, George - Ran oyster restaurant and shoe repair shop on Franklin Street.
- Trimble, Ralph - Professor of Engineering, surveyed much of the town of Chapel Hill.
- Venable, Francis Preston - UNC president.
- Williams, Horace - Professor of Philosophy.
- Wilson, Henry Van Peters - First UNC Professor of Biology.

Collection Overview:

Manuscript materials pertaining to the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery, collected from David Swanson, landscape architect and longtime project supervisor for cemetery improvements, and the Public Works and Engineering departments of the Town of Chapel Hill. Materials include correspondence; memoranda; meeting notes; project specifications, proposals, and agreements; financial records; legal documents; news clippings; photographs; and maps, dating from 1939-2005 (bulk 1970s to 2000s). These materials provide records of interments, changing plot ownership, ongoing concerns about the ownership and maintenance of the cemetery, and more recently, the work done by the Town of Chapel Hill to have the cemetery listed on the National Register of Historic Places and to fund and oversee specific improvements to the cemetery landscape, repair damaged gravestones and to increase public awareness of the cemetery.

Collection Inventory:

(large files may take time to load)

Folder 1. ASLA Award (1991)

The NC chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects presented a Merit Award to the Town of Chapel Hill's Public Works Department and David Swanson, for their work on the old cemetery. This folder includes copies of the awards program, correspondence relating to the award, and submission documents.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery ASLA Award 1991](#)

Folder 2. Brochure/Pamphlet (1993)

Copy of the brochure produced jointly by the Chapel Hill Preservation Society and the Town of Chapel Hill Bicentennial Committee. Electronic copy also available.

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Brochure Pamphlet 1993

Folder 3. CIP/Status Reports (1988-1994)

Capital Improvement Project financial/scheduling data and accompanying invoices, purchase orders, notes, and memoranda. Projects covered include marker survey and cemetery directory; landscape design/beautification; irrigation system; gazebo replacement and shed roof replacement. Arranged by date.

* All of the correspondence in folders #4-8 (below) is inventoried, by plot location and surnames mentioned, in an accompanying Excel Spreadsheet (Appendix 1). The papers themselves are organized by plot location, not a surname. This correspondence usually pertains to transfers in ownership of specific lots in the cemetery.

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery CIP Status Reports 1988-1994

Folder 4. Correspondence, Section A&B (1986, 1995)

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Correspondence Sections A and B 1986, 1995

Folder 5. Correspondence, Section 1 (1983-2000 and n.d.)

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Correspondence Section 1 1983-2000

Folder 6. Correspondence, Section 2 (1974-2005 and n.d.)

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Correspondence Section 2 1974-2005

Folder 7. Correspondence, Section 3 (1973-2005 and n.d.)

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Correspondence Section 3 1973-2005

Folder 8. Correspondence, Section 4 (1939-2005 and n.d.)

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Correspondence Section 4 1939-2005

Folder 9. Correspondence, Other (2001-2002)

Mostly correspondence with Steve Moore, a concerned citizen who proposed the formation of a Friends of the Cemetery group in 2001; also a copy of one email from Curtis Brooks to Bruce Runberg regarding the possible establishment of a "scattering garden" in the old cemetery. Arranged by date.

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Correspondence Other 2001-2002

Folder 10. Deed (1989)

Copy of Quitclaim Deed by State of North Carolina to the Town of Chapel Hill, dated February 22, 1989.

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Deed 1989

Folder 11. Directory Documents (1989-1992, 1996)

Correspondence, memoranda, agreements, and invoices, arranged by date, pertaining to the compilation of the cemetery directory; also a copy of the printed directory indexed by the last name. A searchable computerized database of interments is also available on the Town's Web site.

Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Directory Documents (1989-1992, 1996)

Folder 12. Exhibit (1991)

Fax correspondence and invoice pertaining to exhibit in the cemetery.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Exhibit 1991](#)

Folder 13. Fundraising (1987-1994, n.d.)

Correspondence, memoranda, notes, purchase orders, invoices, proposals, agreements, sorted by date. Documentation of grant applications can also be found in the "National Register Documents" folder.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Fundraising 1987-1994](#)

Folder 14. Gazebo (1988-1989)

Two memoranda and one sketch pertaining to work on the gazebo.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Gazebo 1988-1989](#)

Folder 15. Gravemaker Restoration (1990-1996 and n.d)

Correspondence, memoranda, project specifications, state government forms, bids, "Contract Documents and Specifications for Grave Marker Restoration for the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery" by Swanson & Associates, notes on specific markers, diagrams and copies of photographs. Arranged, as much as possible, by date.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Gravemaker Restoration 1990-1996](#)

Folder 16. Hurricane Fran (1996)

Memorandum from George Brigham, Cemetery Administrator, to W. Calvin Horton, Town Manager, Subject: Damages to Town of Chapel Hill Cemeteries from Hurricane Fran.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Hurricane Fran 1996](#)

Folder 17. Map

Map of the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Map n.d](#)

Folder 18. Master Plan (1987)

Town's Request for Proposals; Proposal for Master Planning to the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery; Agreement for Consultant Services; "A Manual for the Renovation of and Improvements to the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery"; By HunterReynoldsJewell, PA, in Raleigh; Appendix – Renovations of and Improvements to the OCHC; Memorandum to Mayor and Council from Task Force submitting master plan; Notes from Town meeting where plan was discussed and accepted.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Master Plan 1987](#)

Folder 19. National Register Documents (1992-1994)

State government forms, correspondence, memoranda, and certificate re Department of Cultural Resources Historic Preservation Fund Grant. Request for Proposals, proposals, correspondence, and agreement (from Longleaf Historic Resources) for compiling the application for National Register. Various documents pertaining to Swanson and Associate's oversight of register project. Invoice for completed registration application, and town resolution to submit the application.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery National Register Documents 1992-1994](#)

Folder 20. National Register Forms and Comprehensive Conditions Assessment (1994)

NRHP Registration Form/Continuation Sheets and Comprehensive Conditions Assessment of Selected Markers.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery National Register Forms and Comprehensive Conditions Assessment 1994](#)

Folder 21. News Clippings (1970s to 1990s)

A list of news clippings, in order by title, is included as Appendix 2.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery News Clippings](#)

Folder 22. Presentations to Groups (1991-1994)

Copies of documents pertaining to the NC Chapter of American Public Works Association Buildings & Grounds Workshop, Orange County Historic Preservation Commission, Grave Affairs: Cemetery Preservation and Restoration workshop, and Rotary meeting.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Presentations to Groups 1991-1994](#)

Folder 23. Stonewalls/Gutters (1989-1990)

“Contract Documents and Specifications for Stone Wall and Gutter Improvements for the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery” by Swanson and Associates; advertisements for bids/notices to bidders; memoranda; notes; estimated expenses.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Stone Wall Gutters 1989-1990](#)

Folder 24. Swanson and Associates - General Landscape Architect Services (1989-1991)

Proposal, agreement, timeline, insurance documents, invoices. (Other Swanson and Associates documents can be found in project-specific folders.)

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Swanson and Associates General Landscape Architects 1989-1991 pdf](#)

Folder 25. Task Force (1986-1987)

Mostly meeting notes and minutes, some correspondence with the mayor/council and outside vendors. In order by date.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Task Force 1986-1987](#)

Folder 26. Task Force (2004)

Notes and memoranda, ordered by date.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Task Force 2004](#)

Folder 27. Trees, (1986-1987, 1997)

Maps, bill, correspondence.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Trees](#)

Folder 28. Vandalism (1991, 1997, undated)

Correspondence and memoranda.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Vandalism 1991-1997](#)

Oversize Box: Maps

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Maps](#)

Binder: Photographs, Negatives, and Slides

All photographic materials are enclosed in the green binder labeled as such.

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Photographs](#)

[Old Chapel Hill Cemetery Slides](#)