

THE TIMES *Apalachicola & Carrabelle*

Eternity in Apalachicola: Cold ground in Snow Hill

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Snow Hill, newest and smallest of the four Apalachicola cemeteries, is the only one located outside of the city limits.

While originally purchased by the city on Sept. 11, 1928 as part of a 15-acre parcel for a "colored" cemetery, the county took possession of the land in 1951, possibly as part of a land swap. The city, however, maintains Snow Hill, the only exclusively African-American cemetery in Apalachicola.

Exactly why the county established Snow Hill is unclear but perhaps the quarter of Old Magnolia cemetery reserved for the African-American community had begun to fill, although many gravesites

there appear unused.

In 1927 and 1928, county commissioners discussed and rejected several other sites before settling on land across Bluff Road from the Snow Hill Baptist Church. Likely the proximity of the house of worship made the site attractive.

Three acres of the 15-acre purchase were platted for sale as the 500 cemetery lots that became Snow Hill cemetery. The rest of the land eventually became Donnie Wilson Sports Complex. The Snow Hill church later moved to Twelfth Street.

The cemetery was established March 12, 1929. No ceremony was reported in the Apalachicola Times.

Many of the lots in Snow Hill were-purchased by funeral homes. Henry Fedd, V.G. Sangaree and Morris Funeral Home all owned sections of the cemetery.

An interesting piece of oral history claims that, during the 1930s or 40s one funeral director residing in Apalachicola embalmed his deceased wife and but refused to entomb her. He reportedly lived with her in his home until compelled by authorities to bury her.

A number of African-American veterans are among those buried here. James Nelson, Columbus Bennett, Marvin Polk and Quillie Stephens all served in the Army. Arthur Clark, Alonzo Clay and Ruffin Mitchell fought in World War I. Johnny Culver, Ben Turrell, Albert Hawkins, William Durden, Willie Byrd and Johnnie Oliver all served in World War II. Vernon Gallon fought in Korea and George Cumming and Albert Salter were veterans of the Vietnam War.

A mystery surrounds one stone honoring a veteran. According to his inscription, Cpl. James Henry Clay was a veteran of the Korean War. But in fact, Clay was killed in Vietnam during a rocket attack on his unit's command bunker. Clay, born in 1946, was only 9 years old when the Korean conflict ended. Clay, who grew up in Apalachicola, died at age 21, just weeks after deploying in Vietnam.

Many of the markers at Snow Hill show a personal touch not always found in memorial statuary. Several bear nicknames; such as "Lil' Janice" and "Nam," or a phrase of endearment. One tombstone designates a child as "the second twin." Some show affiliations with a lodge or fraternal organization. One fine crypt is

adorned with a mortar and pestle, symbolic of a pharmacist. Another has a Volkswagen bug.

The small cemetery is well-kept and shaded and like all of the local cemeteries, frequently visited by loved ones of those resting there.

There don't seem to be many stories about this dignified resting place, but local historian Mark Curenton found the following account of a ghostly presence on the Hill published in the Apalachicola Times during Jan. 1939. It is not unlike the story of "Resurrection Mary," perhaps one of America's most famous haunts, is said to have hitched rides in the 1930s from hapless young men to Chicago's Resurrection Cemetery.

This Times story, reprinted below, describes Apalachicola's similar hitchhiking ghost.

'Ghost woman' puzzles many on the Hill

Weird reports of a "ghost woman" said to be the reincarnation of an Apalachicola Negress who left town two years ago to die in New York City, have puzzled the Negro population on the Hill this week.

Her hobby is to invite young men and children to take long walks with her to remote sections in Apalachicola after which she disappears into thin air.

Three Negro children were reported missing last week, and when found at the foot of the five-mile span of Gorrie Bridge they claimed that a woman asked them to walk over with her and disappeared on the spot.

A Negro cab driver claimed that he took the "ghost woman" to a cemetery only to have her vanish without paying her fare.

The report that a "ghost woman" was running rife in Apalachicola last week led only to argumentative denials and bitter denunciations at the inference that human intelligence could accept "such things."

"I don't believe in ghosts," was the reply given to a reporter this week who made extensive inquiries into the rumor.

The report that the "ghost woman" had walked out of McClay's grocery store without paying for a quantity of merchandise was discredited by Mr. McClay. "If she did, my records don't show it," he said, "and I've been here a long time."

Three Negro men were armed with ice picks and knives last Tuesday night in search for the seductress. A commotion in the bushes near a dark alley caused them to flee in terror. Half a block away they stopped and heard the tinkle of a cow bell in the bushes. "It wasn't her," they said.

One suggested that she might have turned herself into a cow.

A nightly ghost who visits the Royal Café on the Hill to count the money in the cash drawer and handle silverware was said to be a deceased Negro, James Parker, former owner of the restaurant and not the ghost woman. Mayl McBride, Negro woman and present owner of the café, hears the money being counted each night and the footsteps. "But this has been going on a long time before the ghost woman ever came here," she said.

Next week this series winds up with a tour of Chestnut Cemetery, the oldest of the four Apalachicola cemeteries and one of the most beautiful in the state. Do the residents of Chestnut walk on Halloween Night?

That's another story.

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