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Ancestral Landscapes: a Study of Historical Black Cemeteries and Contemporary Practices of Commemoration Among African Americans in Duval County, Jacksonville, Fl.

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Ancestral Landscapes: A Study of Historical Black Cemeteries and Contemporary Practices of Commemoration among African Americans in Duval County, Jacksonville, FL

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Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The end of slavery in North America presented an opportunity for African Americans in Jacksonville, Florida to reinvent themselves. The reconstruction era brought about new social, political, and economic opportunities for African Americans living in Jacksonville. Despite the failure of Reconstruction and the implementation of Jim Crow, Jacksonville gave birth to a vibrant African American aristocracy. Jacksonville’s Black elite comprised of doctors, lawyers, morticians, religious leaders, business people and other professionals. Jacksonville’s Black elite thrived in the early half of the twentieth century, many of them used their knowledge and skills to contribute to the social and economic development of Jacksonville’s African American community. During this period, Jacksonville’s African American aristocracy provided their community with legal protection, healthcare, vocational training, employment opportunities, goods, and other critical services such as life insurance and burial. This study centers on a historical African American cemetery cluster that was established during the early twentieth century by Jacksonville’s Black aristocrats. This cemetery cluster consists of four cemeteries which include: Pinehurst, Mount Olive, Sunset Memorial, and Memorial. This cluster is located on the Northside of Jacksonville city, along the intersecting roads of 45th street and Moncrief road, and contains an estimated 70,000 African American burials. I argue that this cemetery is reflective of the social, political, and economic changes undergone by Jacksonville’s African American community.
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This Ph.D. is dedicated to my parents Deborah and Steven who instilled in me a love of African American history and a profound respect for the ancestors. They have always encouraged me to live in a way that honors their legacy. It is because of their strength, love, and many sacrifices that I have been able to pursue my Ph.D.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“…for blacks, there are no hiding places down here, neither in the country or city. They are an American people who are geared to what is and who yet are driven by a sense of what it is possible for human life to be in this society. The nation could not survive being deprived of their presence because, by the irony implicit in the dynamics of American democracy, they symbolize both its most stringent testing and the possibility of its greatest human freedom.”

Ralph Ellison, “What America Would Be Like Without Blacks”

In 2013, I presented a paper at the 98th Annual Association for the Study of African American Life and History conference in my hometown, Jacksonville, Florida. During the panel discussion a member of the community asked, “Why aren’t you studying Jacksonville?” This question was a pointed reminder that Jacksonville’s African American history, is rich and largely unexplored by anthropologists. Particularly the city’s post emancipation history. It was this question that initially sparked my interest in Jacksonville’s early twentieth century African American history. Conversations with community members following this conference revealed community interests in knowing more
about the historical experiences of African Americans in Jacksonville after slavery.

Although there has been a push in African Diaspora Archaeology to move the field beyond plantation studies (Singleton 1999:15); for the last fifty years, African Diaspora archaeology in Jacksonville has centered on Kingsley Plantation and focused on cultural retention among captive Africans. Meanwhile, historians have been at the forefront of expanding the scope of the city’s African American past beyond slavery. Historians have covered topics including Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights era (Bartley 2000; Cassanello 2013; Ortiz 2005). However, few anthropological studies have endeavored to investigate the African American experience in Jacksonville beyond slavery; despite the call to push the field beyond the antebellum era (Singleton 1999:15). Anthropologists have paid very little attention to Jacksonville’s post emancipation era African American history, and even fewer anthropological studies have investigated cultural production among African Americans in the post-Civil-Rights era.

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1 Within this dissertation the term African American refers to people of African descent living in America. Secondly, the term describes people of African descent who were born in America and or share a familial legacy of American national identity that spans generations. While this study acknowledges the presence of other African Diaspora groups within the City of Jacksonville and America more broadly, this dissertation centers on those who have descended from Africans held captive on American soil. The term Black also refers to African Americans.
Interviews with community members revealed the community’s high regard for the city’s historically significant African American figures. Moreover, they revealed residents’ desire to recognize the contributions and economic strides made by African Americans after emancipation. The imposition of legal segregation during the Jim Crow era forced the support and growth of Jacksonville’s African American economy. The Black funeral industry that emerged in the decades following Reconstruction in particular, was a central part of wealth building for Jacksonville’s Black elite, and the African American economy more broadly. It was during this time that African American aristocrats established Pinehurst, Mount Olive, Sunset Memorial, and Memorial cemeteries on the intersecting roads of 45th and Moncrief; in a residential area currently known to locals as the bottom. At the height of their existence, these four cemeteries served as the premier burial places for Jacksonville’s early twentieth century African American community.

Thus, these four historic African American cemeteries became my topic of interest. Together, Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive contain an estimated 70,000 African American burials (Barker-Benfield 2001). As archaeological sites, these cemeteries encapsulate nearly one hundred years of the African American experience in Jacksonville, Florida.

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In this dissertation, the term African American aristocrat, refers to wealthy, elite people of African descent. Although wealthy early 20th century African Americans in Jacksonville considered themselves upper class or elite, they did refer to themselves as aristocrats.
The founding of these cemeteries in the early twentieth century and their continued use by African Americans today, provides an opportunity to investigate how African Americans in Jacksonville have participated in commemoration and utilized these cemeteries in the past. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to examine the varied ways in which African Americans currently commemorate their dead and make meaning from these spaces. Lastly, the sites’ attachment to the city’s Black Aristocracy makes these spaces important sites of African American memory and heritage.

Almost a century after the creation of these burial spaces, these cemeteries have come under heavy scrutiny by local government officials, media sources, and some residents. Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive are often noted as having been abandoned and neglected by local city officials and news reports a like. In recent decades, various Jacksonville news reports have claimed that these four sites have been particularly challenging for the city to maintain. According numerous news reports (De Bruce 1997; Maraghy 1997; Dare 2010; Baker-Benfield 2001; Davis 2009; Ross 2012), the city has been struggling with the cluster’s upkeep for decades. Criticizing the state of African American cemeteries has been a common theme in the discourse surrounding this cluster, other African American cemeteries in the city, and historic African American cemeteries across the nation.
This trend is not a new one. It is situated on a continuum of news reports and journal articles surrounding working class African American cemeteries stretching back to the early twentieth century. For example, nearly a century ago in 1928, sociologist Kelly Miller wrote an article in the New York Amsterdam News titled “Negro Graveyards” in which he asserts, “the Negro race spends the maximum amount of money on funerals and the minimum amount on graveyards. Love for the dear departed extends to the time of burial but seems to cease after sepulture…The thing that most amazes me is that the Negro citizens, who themselves must lie here, seem wholly unconcerned or unconscious about the lack of care and the upkeep of their final resting place” (Miller 1928:16).

Here, Miller both highlights and criticizes the practice of emphasizing the funeral itself rather than the long-term care of an individual’s grave site. He notes that this is a widespread cultural practice among working class African Americans. However, he does not attempt to explain the logic of this practice for participants. Instead he uses it to emphasize the poor impression the condition of these cemeteries makes on community outsiders.

In the past, scholarship within the social sciences and American media has treated working class African American social life and culture as pathological (Frazier 1939; Myrdal et al. 1944). According to local news sources the decline in maintenance for the Moncrief cluster began sometime during the 1970’s (De Bruce 1997). News outlets, scholars, and government officials in Jacksonville began echoing sentiments similar to that of Miller (1928) about their historic African American cemeteries. For example, in
1997, Mary Maraghy a reporter at the Times-Union describes the Northside cemeteries as filthy and abandoned by their community. Ms. Maraghy writes, “A potato chip bag, beer cans, an old sneaker and crumpled newspaper were the only company for one leaning, cracked headstone covered with mold” (Maraghy 1997). She goes on to quote Joel McEachin, the city’s historic preservation planner who remarked that the "vast majority of cemeteries are abandoned. No one is taking care of them" (Maraghy 1997).

The same year, news reporter Orlando De Bruce wrote that “some of the headstones were vandalized and there was frequent illegal dumping” within these spaces. According to De Bruce, Mount Olive cemetery in particular had become “a health hazard” to the surrounding community due to “the many of the graves caved in” (De Bruce, 1997). Similarly, in a 2012 blog post, a local college professor at Florida State College at Jacksonville commented on the condition of these cemeteries; he remarked “No one owns this land, no one pays property taxes, and no one takes care of the dead here. No one protects the dead here from the living” (Gilmore 2012). Local officials, scholars, and news outlets have continued to recapitulate these sentiments well into the present.

Contrary to these sentiments, in their interviews, African American residents commonly asserted that historic African American cemetery spaces are still meaningful sites to the community. Furthermore, oral histories reveal that African Americans have continued to commemorate their dead despite
the many criticisms that the community has faced over the cemeteries’
physical condition. Several residents expressed the historic value these
cemeteries have to the African American community and have voiced their
concern for the preservation of these sites. Moreover, many participants
reflected on wider community perceptions of contemporary African Americans
living in the area, and the ways in which views held by outsiders have shaped
the treatment of both the community and their cemetery spaces overtime.

One statement, made by Participant 1, a lifelong resident, illustrates the
complexed ways in which these cemeteries have come to reflect on-going
strife within the community. In his interview Participant 1 explained that
“…residential segregation, gentrification, neglect, racism, [and] discrimination”
are institutionalized and operate at the expense of African American
communities “all over America…and it’s in those dark areas of the Black
community [the ghettos] where the most darkness exists and…it’s in those
cemeteries” (Interview of Participant 1, African American adult man, 2013).

Participant 1’s remark illustrates an acute awareness among community
members of the complex relationship between the physical condition of these
cemetery sites and the legacy of the community’s civic-estrangement³.
Additionally, his remark points to the condition of African American cemetery

³ Civic-estrangement is a term set forth by historian Dr. Salamisha Tillet in her
book Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil
Rights Imagination (2012). The term’s use within this project is further
discussed in Chapter 2.
spaces as tangible evidence of the community’s marginalization, on-going racism, discrimination and gentrification in Jacksonville. The most disparaging effects being most visible in the ghettos, or heavily impoverished neighborhoods, like much of Jacksonville’s Northside community.

A more critical investigation of the four historic cemeteries on Moncrief could produce a better understanding of the socio-cultural processes and policies that led to the decline of their condition. While news and scholarly reports have often outlined the ways in which the surrounding African American community has contributed to the current state of these cemeteries, few have looked beyond the African American community to understand the external social and economic mechanisms that have impacted these cemeteries. This research project addresses modes of commemoration among African Americans in Jacksonville and explores the meaning of these spaces to the contemporary African American community. In order to address these topics, I turned to the voices of the community and have centered my analysis and interpretation of these spaces on their perspectives. Oral history is an essential component of this investigation. Interviews with Participant 1, and sixteen other African American residents help to carve out shared perspectives among community members, and aid in charting the communities continued engagement in various commemorative practices throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.
The persisting pattern of measuring the commemorative capacity, and civic responsibility of African Americans based on the state of their cemeteries demonstrate how historic African American cemeteries such as Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive have become sites of contention for African American citizenship. Moreover, it reveals how these cemeteries have aided in the civic exclusion of African Americans in Jacksonville City. The current study challenges the notion that these historic cemeteries are abandoned sites and that African Americans do not care for their dead. Furthermore, this dissertation research provides opposing evidence to the notion that working class African Americans lack “civic responsibility” as suggested by Miller (1928) and Jacksonville’s media, scholars, and local government officials. Additionally, I demonstrate how civic and economic relationships among African American residents, the wider Jacksonville community, and the city’s government have impacted the condition and shaped perceptions of these African American cemetery spaces.

More broadly, this research project investigates the growth and development of Jacksonville’s Black funeral industry and examines the historical social and economic circumstances of African Americans both past and present. I examine the interconnection between the African American funeral industry and the maintenance of these historic African American cemeteries. I explore how African Americans in Jacksonville construct their
sense of obligation to the deceased and to cemetery spaces. Coinciding with community perspectives, I posit that the relationship between the Moncrief cluster and the surrounding African American community is far more intricate than has previously been assumed.

I argue that the condition of these historic cemeteries is contingent upon the social and cultural circumstances of the people that create and surround them (Gundaker 2001:25-26). Thus, an examination of the state of the cemetery requires looking beyond the correlation between its maintenance and the community’s “sense of civic responsibility” (Miller 1928:16). It is also necessary to consider the complexities from which this articulation is created. The changing role of cemeteries in American communities more broadly, migration in and out of the city, alternative modes of commemoration that do not involve cemetery spaces, and the specific social historical factors that have led to their condition should also be considered.

Although some historic archaeologists and anthropologists have questioned “the degree to which we are obligated to include the public in the research process” the relevance of this project to the field is in part determined by its usefulness to the contemporary community (Franklin 1997:40). Members of Jacksonville’s African American community have been involved in shaping this study from the start (Gwaltney 1980; LaRoach and Blakey 1997; Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009). The initial focus of this research project was to understand the social processes that have shaped the lives
and commemorative practices of African Americans in Jacksonville. My initial research questions were as follows:

1. How are African American residents in Jacksonville commemorating their dead?
2. How do these cemeteries relate to the neighborhoods that surround them today?
3. In what ways is the maintenance of this cemetery cluster intertwined with the African American community’s legacy of civic estrangement (Tillet 2012)?

As this research project has progressed, and with the influx of interviewee participation, several secondary research questions were raised and included. African American residents who have chosen to participate in the interview process have also had the opportunity to suggest lines of inquiry that they perceived to be the most useful. Therefore, a number of community members have had a hand in directing the focus of this research project. From their interviews, I synthesized their inquiries. Their research questions have been included in this dissertation research and are as follows:

4. What challenges did the African American businesses within the funeral industry face after Civil Rights?
5. How did urban renewal impact African American wealth in Jacksonville?
6. What historic African American figures are buried in these cemeteries?

Consulting a variety of sources allows for a more fruitful investigation of these research questions. These various lines of evidence revealed shared perspectives among participating community members, and commemorative practices both past and present. Although my analysis and interpretation of Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive are rooted in community perspectives; scholars and theorists whose work has largely centered on the concept of civic-estrangement and multivalent commemorative practices provide a framework for this discussion.

The archaeology component of this project is limited to surface archaeology. Several factors have contributed to the decision not to pursue excavation. First, these early twentieth century cemeteries remain generationally close to the contemporary community and are still in use. Additionally, commemorative items are readily found at surface level which allows for non-invasive examination. Moreover, evaluating the maintenance condition of these sites does not require excavation. For these reasons, it is not necessary to excavate the cemeteries in order to know more about the sites or the individuals interred in these spaces.

Today, the neighborhoods surrounding the Moncrief cemetery cluster are some of the most impoverished residential areas within the city (APD
The community’s lack of access to the necessary financial resources to care for the cemetery, beyond what is provided for the community through taxes, adds to maintenance difficulty. Oral histories suggest that the community’s commemoration practices are not restricted to cemetery sites and do not always include grave maintenance. The regard African American residents have for their dead can be evidenced through their acts of commemoration. This dissertation finds a wide variety of commemorative practices among Northside Africans. This includes commemorative practices that do not involve cemetery spaces such as: family gatherings and reunions, clothing items, and photo albums.

Oral histories suggest that a substantial portion of the contemporary Northside African American population comes from families who recently migrated to Jacksonville sometime after 1950. Therefore, it was necessary for this dissertation to investigate whether or not these residents continue to engage in memorial practices in their homeplaces. This line of inquiry has revealed that residents do not disregard their deceased, as the current state of the cluster would suggest, instead it demonstrates that African American residents are operating within a socio-cultural network wherein commemoration and sense of obligation occurs more diversely and across a wider geographic area.

African American cemeteries such as those located along Moncrief road have the potential to bolster anthropological understandings of the
growth, development, and eventual decline of the African American economy and community since the Civil Rights era. Secondly this line of inquiry demonstrates the interconnectedness of the happenings within the African American community and cemetery maintenance. The resulting research stands to contribute to the critique of working class African American behavior as pathological. It also explicates the ways in which African American cemeteries function within their respective communities. This project stands to add to the discipline’s understanding of cultural knowledge production among African Diasporic peoples in the post-Civil Rights era. Lastly, these inquiries push anthropological understandings of Jacksonville’s African American history beyond the antebellum period and into the twenty-first century while illuminating the longstanding significance of these sites to the community as African American heritage landscapes.

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the goals and aims of this project. It demonstrates the need for anthropological studies that focus on Jacksonville’s African American life, history, and culture to reach beyond the antebellum period. In some ways, this study serves as a response to this need. Chapter 2 is a review and discussion of prominent theoretical approaches to the study of African American cemeteries, and African American history and culture more broadly. Additionally, this chapter includes an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and offers an alternative theoretical
approach to studying African American cemeteries. Chapter 3 outlines the particular methodologies utilized in this study and the ways in which these methods are employed.

Chapter 4 provides a historical overview of Jacksonville, Florida. It recounts the historical presence of Africans and their descendants in this area; beginning with colonial settlement and ending with the Civil Rights movement in Jacksonville, Florida. Moreover, this chapter offers a social and political background of Jacksonville City and focuses on the emergence of Jacksonville’s African American Aristocracy. Chapter 5, reviews previous archaeological studies of the cemeteries and examines the methodologies used to conduct those studies. Additionally, this chapter lays out the methodologies utilized within this project and juxtaposes them with those of previous archaeological studies.

It includes a brief outline of the evolutionary process of the American cemetery and discusses how the conceptualization of the American cemetery has changed overtime. Furthermore, chapter 5 charts the development of Jacksonville’s African American Funeral industry. It explores death and dying as a central part of the African American experience in Jacksonville, Florida throughout the twentieth century and foregrounds its twenty-first century importance. Finally, this chapter investigates how desegregation and urban renewal in Jacksonville has impacted the Black funeral industry, the four
historic African American cemeteries on Moncrief Road, and wealth building in the African American community.

Chapter 6 provides a brief description of each of the four cemetery sites and situates their creation and development within a broader American narrative. In Chapter 7, I summarize my research questions and present this project’s findings. Here, I offer an analysis and interpretation for my data. While the voices of the community have been incorporated throughout this dissertation, chapter 7 relies heavily upon them to interpret contemporary modes of commemoration. Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter. The conclusion of dissertation illustrates what African Americans in Jacksonville made of their exploitative and oppressive situation, documents the significance of these historic cemetery sites for Jacksonville’s African American community and highlights their desire to preserve this part of their history.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Approach

“Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals”

- William Gladstone

“Show me your cemeteries and I will tell you what kind of people you have.”

- Benjamin Franklin

The regular employment of these quotes suggests that the opinions expressed by Franklin and British Prime Minister Gladstone are a widespread American sentiment. They also foreground the ongoing role that cemeteries play in shaping mainstream American perspectives of the African American working class. Both Gladstone and Franklin’s statements speak to a central issue within this research project. This is not Fig 3. Cover page of the Final Report of the Blue-Ribbon Commission on Abandoned and Neglected Cemeteries submitted in Dec 2007 courtesy of the City of Jacksonville.
because their assertions are accurate but because they are routinely treated as so. This dissertation challenges the notion that the ascribed “abandoned” and “neglected” status of Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries have a singular correlation to African American attitudes, civic responsibility, and commemoration in Jacksonville.

Although they are currently regarded as “abandoned” and “neglected” spaces by local media sources and city officials, Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive, once played a major role in African American life in Jacksonville, and arguably still sit at the heart of the community. However, the opinions expressed by Jacksonville city officials and local media about these cemeteries and Jacksonville’s African American burial spaces more broadly, often coincide with Gladstone and Franklin’s perspectives; as is demonstrated by the cover page of The Blue-Ribbon Cemeteries Commission’s Final Report to the Jacksonville City Council shown in figure 3. Gladstone and Franklin rightly suggest that cemetery spaces are reflective of the communities that surround them (Sloane 1991:6). However, the particular connection they draw between the physical state of a community’s cemetery...
space and the social and cultural state of the community oversimplifies the complex and varied ways in which African Americans in Jacksonville commemorate their dead and utilize cemetery spaces. Moreover, it overlooks the social-historical factors that have contributed to the condition of these spaces.

To understand how these cemeteries are connected to their community, and why the current state of these cemeteries remains “in disrepair” despite numerous maintenance initiatives; we must first consider the cultural and historical background of the people that have created and inhabited these spaces. I begin this process by deconstructing the notion that the four historic cemeteries on Moncrief are “abandoned” and “neglected” spaces. Thus, I combine multiple theoretical lenses to explore the physical state of the cemeteries, twenty-first century African American commemorative practices, and the community’s regard for their cemetery spaces. Additionally, I employ vocabulary set forth by Toni Morison (1995) and Salamisha Tillet (2012) which centers on the social and political experiences of African Americans in the United States.

**The Anthropology of African American Life and Cemetery Space**

The body of scholarly work that charts the theoretical development of African Diaspora archaeology and anthropology is extensive. These theories range from early twentieth century, conceptualizations of African American cultural practice to more recent approaches like Critical Race Theory and
Black Feminist Archaeology. Instead of recounting this massive body of literature by producing a review of the theoretical growth and development of African American studies within anthropology, I focus on a few prominent theoretical perspectives within the field that have limited anthropological interpretations of African American cemeteries. Therefore, they are my points of departure. These theoretical perspectives span from the early twentieth century to the late 1970s and includes the Boasian concept of acculturation, Herskovits’ survival-acculturation model, and the creolization model. Creolization and Herskovits’ African survival-acculturation model in particular have been very influential in shaping archaeological studies of historic African American cemeteries in Jacksonville.

These approaches have been continually employed by anthropologists to explore African American cemeteries in Jacksonville, and the Diaspora more broadly. The influence of these theories have been so far reaching within African American studies and adapted by various practitioners within anthropology. Therefore, it is important to establish a foundational understanding of these approaches as they were originally set forth. This section begins with a brief history and explanation of each of these three theoretical perspectives. Moreover, I explore the ways in which these perspectives are limited in producing accurate interpretations of the four historic African American cemeteries on 45th Street and Moncrief Road. This critical examination provides justification for the project’s alternative
approaches to the study of Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst and Mount Olive.

**Early Explorations of African American Cemeteries**

Most early studies of African American life adhered to dominant theoretical trends within anthropology. Early scholars of African American life largely aimed to investigate the effects of slavery on African Diaspora communities. Studies such as these often measured the impact of slavery through loss of African cultural beliefs and practices among African Americans. Early social scientists often employed the concept of acculturation to explain the cultural state of African Americans after emancipation.

Acculturation emerged as a scholarly concept during the early twentieth century. Originally, the concept was employed as a way for practitioners such as Franz Boas and his students to describe the process by which European immigrants integrated into American society. The concept of acculturation regarded European American phenotype, language patterns, and culture as normative (Boas 1911; 1912). The concept’s emphasis on language and culture made the acculturation model a more appealing theoretical approach for cultural anthropologists who opposed frameworks that emphasized biological adaption. But even the Boasian acculturation model was problematic, especially when applied to African Americans or other non-European groups, because it was impossible for most people of
color to blend seamlessly into or fully assimilate within an American context. In 1923, Afro-Caribbean Intellectual Marcus Garvey describes this problem.

Garvey asserted that Euro-dominated American societies like the United States “illegitimately carries on a system of assimilation; but such assimilation, as practiced, is one that it is not prepared to support” (Garvey 1923:26). Here, Garvey asserts that a Black racial identity did not allow the African American masses to acculturate or assimilate into Euro-dominated societies in the same way that immigrant groups of European descent could, regardless of how closely African American linguistic and cultural patterns resembled those of middle and upper class European Americans. While this study has taken advantage of Garvey’s insight, many of his contemporaries opposed his viewpoint. Scholars such as E. Franklin Frazier (1939) argued that a Black racial identity in no way precluded the acculturation of African American people into American society, instead he suggested that the pathological vestiges of slavery embedded within African American working-class culture were responsible for impeding African American upward mobility (Reed 2008).

It is important to note here, that what was underlying Frazier’s perspective was racial uplift. Like Kelly Miller (1928), Frazier and numerous others shared the desire to end the Jim Crow era and move African Americans towards attaining American citizenship both civically and legally. For Frazier, a connection to Africa was detrimental to the cause. During the
early twentieth century, Africa was virtually synonymous with backwardness. This view was shared by American scholars and the public alike (Baker 1998). Overly perpetuated stereotypes about Africanness were certainly one of the reasons why African American intellectuals like Frazier advocated for African Americans to disassociate themselves from their African roots. In one of his most infamous works, "The Negro Family in the United States" (1939), Frazier claimed that "never before in history has a people been so nearly stripped of its social heritage as were the Negroes who were brought to America" (Frazier 1939:625).

Here, Frazier argued that there were no existing cultural differences between African Americans and their European American counterparts. For African American intellectuals like Franklin Frazier (1939), Kelly Miller (1928), and Booker T. Washington (1898), any perceived cultural differences between African and European Americans only stood to strengthen justifications for Jim Crow and validate arguments for African American inferiority. Instead they advocated for African American emulation of upper class European Americans. These contributions were followed by European American scholarship which blamed the condition of African American’s on African American culture or the lack there of, rather than oppression; ultimately choosing not to see the unjust treatment of African American citizens legally, socially, economically, educationally, and politically (Moynihan 1965). Frazier (1939) argued that subcultures like African
American culture and other minority groups were simply poor imitations of European American culture. According to Frazier, the United States had only one variety of life and culture, American. Those who could not adequately participate in American social life and culture, like African American working-class people, were diagnosed as pathological or culturally deprived (Szwed 1969:161; Herskovits 1941:1). For Frazier (1939), Miller (1928), and Washington (1898), these sentiments extended to every aspect of African American life and culture; including commemorative practices, burial customs, and cemetery maintenance. For centuries, African American cemeteries and commemorative practices have been catalysts for debates on the progress of African Americans after emancipation and the persistence of African customs within African American culture.

![Fig 5. Photograph from the 1920s, captioned “graves in disarray” courtesy of the Alabama State Historical Archives. Note that the mounds have been carefully maintained and the space between them kept clean of grass.](image)
emerged in South Carolina as early as the nineteenth century. These studies have been ongoing and span from the late nineteenth century to more recent studies (Bolton 1891; Ingersoll 1892; Waring 1894; Woofter 1930; Combes 1972; Vlach 1977; Jones-Jackson 1987; Creel 1988; Connor 1989; Burton 1985). Many of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century studies of African American cemeteries viewed African American burial and commemorative practices through an acculturative lens.

The work of American scholars Carrington Bolton (1891) and Ernest Ingersoll (1892) are prime examples of how early American scholars utilized the concept of acculturation to conceptualize working class African Americans...
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and their cemetery spaces. In 1891, Bolton wrote an article titled *Decoration of Graves of Negroes in South Carolina*. In it, he outlines the burial customs of Colombia’s African American community. He writes,

“...in Columbia, S.C., my attention was directed to the cemetery for the poorer negroes...the numerous graves are decorated with a variety of objects, sometimes arranged with careful symmetry, but more often placed around the margins without regard to order. These objects include oyster-shells, white pebbles, fragments of crockery of every description, glass bottles, and nondescript bric-a-brac of a cheap sort, ---all more or less broken and useless. The large number of bottles once held the medicines that killed the patients...Inquiry of residents as to the origin and significance of this custom elicited no satisfactory explanation...The negroes of South Carolina are simply following the customs of their savage ancestors, and are unwittingly perpetuating the fetishism so deeply impressed...in decorating the graves of the departed they afford an illustration of the long survival of customs the meaning of which has been quite forgotten by those practicing them” (Bolton 1891: 214).

In 1892, a year after Bolton’s study, Ingersoll published the following account of an African American cemetery also located in Columbia, South Carolina. He wrote,

“I saw at Columbia S.C. a practice in vogue among the blacks which exists nowhere else so far as I can learn and is savage or childlike in its simplicity of idea. When a negro dies, some article or utensil, or, more than one is thrown upon his grave; moreover, it is broken. If you go through a dilapidated weed-grown graveyard which straggles in and...
out of the hollows on a side hill covering the high bluffs along the river, you will see some very strange examples of this mortuary custom. Nearly every grave has bordering or thrown upon it a few bleached sea shells of a dozen different kinds, such as are found along the south Atlantic coast. Mingled with these is...broken crockery and glassware. On large graves are laid broken pitchers, soap-dishes, lamp chimneys, teapots, coffee-cups, syrup jugs, all sorts of ornamental vases, cigar boxes, gun-locks, tomato cans, teapots, flower-pots, bits of stucco, plaster images, pieces of carved stone work from one of the public buildings destroyed during the war, glass lamps and tumbler in great number, and forty other kitchen articles. Chief of all these, however, are large water pitchers very few graves lack them. The children’s graves were really pathetic. There you could see doll’s heads, little china wash bowls and pitchers, toy images of animals, china vases, and pewter dishes, indeed everything of that sort that would interest a child. The negroes themselves hardly know how to account for this custom. They say it is an ‘old fashion’” (Ingersoll 1892:68-69).

Here Ingersoll offers an interpretation that is in tandem Bolton’s 1891 study. The South Carolinian African American cemetery that Ingersoll is describing probably looked similar to the African American cemetery in Alabama pictured in figure 5. In figure 6, we can see a variety of broken ceramics placed atop graves.

The language used to describe African American cemeteries within acculturationist case studies such as these speak to broader nineteenth century American notions of African American life and culture. Terms such as “savage” and “childlike” embody caricatured blackness and reveal the ways in which early American scholars subscribed to the subhuman status of African descended peoples, while the words “dilapidated”, “junk”, and “weed-grown” connote scholarly understandings of African American life ways as backwards and at the same time suggest that African Americans have a distorted sense
of “civic responsibility” (Miller 1928:16) when it comes to maintaining their cemetery spaces. Despite its’ inability to produce accurate interpretations of African American cultural practices, acculturation continued to endure as a prominent theoretical perspective within anthropology (Parrington and Wideman 1986: 60-61; Szwed 1999:161; Herskovits 1941:1) and other disciplines such as sociology and history well into the 1980s and late 90s (Moynihan 1965; Morgan 1998). Additionally, the ideological influence of the acculturation concept extends well beyond the academy. The commentary surrounding the four historic African American cemeteries on Moncrief further illustrates this point.

Nevertheless, there are some fairly early studies that did not view these differences as inferior, instead they unapologetically pointed to African cultures rather than pathology to explain the visible differences between African Diaspora and European American cemeteries. For example, in 1926, folklorist Newbell Niles Puckett observed broken lamps, and other grave goods throughout the South. Rather than pointing to pathology he attributed the origins of this practice to the Angola region (Puckett 1926:104-106). For
Puckett, and even more so for the famed anthropologist Melville Herskovits, African origins created a context that made sense.

**Herskovits’ Survival-Acculturation Model**

In 1941, Herskovits asserted that “The myth of the Negro past is one of the principle supports of race prejudice…it rationalizes discrimination in everyday contact between Negroes and whites…and affects the trends of research by scholars whose theoretical approach, methods, and systems of thought…are in harmony with it” (Herskovits 1941:1). In reaction to these dominant early trends, Herskovits produced a book titled *The Myth of the Negro Past (1941)*, to challenge acculturative research models. This contribution was revolutionary to the field of anthropology. However, it is important to note that although Herskovits' book is often credited with introducing the idea that African American culture is rooted in African cultural practice, he was not the first intellectual who made the connection between Africa and African American life and culture. In addition to Newbell Niles Puckett (1926), there are several other scholars that have made this connection decades prior to the publication of Herskovits book in 1941.

Among them are Ernest Ingersoll (1892), and W.E.B. Dubois (1903). They too, argued that African culture had survived the constraints of New World captivity and oppression. Moreover, there were also other scholars, namely William Leo Hansberry, who possessed an extensive knowledge of African history and culture. Nevertheless, within the field of anthropology,
Herskovits' work continues to be credited with having made the revolutionary argument that “survivals” of African culture could be observed through the study of African American material culture in secular life, language, arts, and religion. He called these survivals “Africanisms” and postulated that some geographical areas yielded higher concentrations of “Africanisms” than others.

By situating these manifestations of African culture along a linear continuum, Herskovits (a student of Boas) subscribed to the acculturation model and provided a point of divergence for investigating and tracing African antecedents (Herskovits 1941:52). In providing the concept of “Africanisms” as an alternative to pathology Herskovits did in some way discredit pathologization. Yet Herskovits also chose to view these “Africanisms” unilinearly, and in this sense his work remains saturated with acculturation’s ideological influence. Nonetheless, this theoretical perspective has deeply influenced a vast number of subsequent studies of African American life and culture within anthropology.

As Singleton pointed out in 1999, Herskovits' “survival-acculturation” approach has become “embedded” within historical archaeology and anthropology more broadly (Singleton 1999:4). Indeed, “Africanisms”, as Herskovits described them, have confirmed for anthropologists the existence of a cultural connection between Africa and African American communities. However, the discipline’s obsession with finding objects that demonstrate
African-ness has, at times, obstructed practitioners’ interpretations of African American heritage sites and material culture. Within historical archaeology specifically, Herskovits’ survival-acculturation model serves as the foundation for the practice of attempting to make one-to-one correlations between material culture found within African American cemeteries and a supposed single African antecedent. In 1968, University of Florida historical archaeologist Charles Fairbanks became the first to apply Herskovits’ survival-acculturation model to an African Diaspora archaeological site when he broke ground at Kingsley Plantation in Jacksonville, Florida in search of “Africanisms” (Fairbanks 1974;1984).

**The Concept of Creolization**

Herskovits’ survival-acculturation model seemingly became the center of a vast majority of historical archaeological projects that focused on African American life. In 1976, anthropologists Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, sought to counter Herskovits’ widely adopted survival-acculturation model by introducing the concept of creolization as an alternative approach. Mintz and Price’s concept of creolization, like Herskovits’ survival-acculturation model, was not without an ideological predecessor. In fact, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz articulated a similar concept just a few years after Herskovits (1941), called “transculturation” in his book Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar (1947). In it, Ortiz asserts that the various ethnic groups that have come to populate the island of Cuba, including Europeans, Africans, Natives,
and Asians, were “all in a state of transition” (Ortiz 1947:103). Adding that each of these “human groups” all possessed their own culture (Ortiz 1947:98-99). He goes on to argue that these various cultures meshed together in a New World context to create a “new” culture; he calls this end result “neoculturation” or “transculturation” (Ortiz 1947:103). Still, the concept of creolization as American scholars Mintz and Price has set forth gained immense popularity during the late 1970s, inevitably surpassing the use of transculturation within the discipline of anthropology.

Together Mintz and Price produced a book titled *The Birth of African American Culture*, which was originally published in 1976 and reprinted in 1992. By stressing the importance of investigating “cognitive orientation” rather than specific cultural traits or “Africanisms” (Mintz and Price 1992:10), they argued that most of the “allegedly wide-spread or universal West African cultural “elements”, “traits”, or “complexes” were “not at all as wide spread as Herskovits supposed” (Mintz and Price 1992:9). They also pointed out that European colonists “often originated in a specific province or region, lending a particular provincial character to the settlement” (Mintz and Price 1992:2). Unlike captive Africans whom “were drawn from different parts of the African continent…numerous ethnic and linguistic groups, … different societies” and regions (Mintz and Price 1992:2).

In addition to this critique, the authors stressed the impact of the plantation regime on African American life ways (Mintz and Price 1992:24).
Stating “that the slaves were confronted with the need to create new institutions to serve their everyday purposes” and the “monopoly of power wielded by the Europeans in slave colonies strongly influenced the ways in which cultural and social continuities from Africa would be maintained” (Mintz and Price 1992:23-24). They conclude that no African cultural institutions could have survived the trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery, asserting that “direct formal continuities from Africa are more the exception than the rule in any African-American culture, even in those such as Saramaka, which have been most isolated” (Mintz and Price 1992:60). Here, Mintz and Price’s concept of creolization incorporates parts of the acculturation argument, but instead of describing African American culture as an imitation of European American culture, the authors change the destination to the creation of a new culture. Nevertheless, they ultimately suggest that captive Africans lost or abandoned their African-ness in order to forge a new African-American identity in the Americas.

Mintz and Price assert that because Europeans maintained a considerable amount of control over captive Africans, their contributions to the American cultural landscape was different from that of captive Africans and their descendants (Mintz and Price 1992:24). While, Africans contributed to American social life and culture, European settlers were in a position to “structure” the ways in which African Americans could “engage” in and “shape” America socially, politically, and culturally (Atkins-Spivey 2017:60).
Consequently, African customs and practices were marginalized within a colonial context. Mintz and Price do not scrutinize the transformation of European cultures in the same way. In fact, Mintz and Price fail to explore or explicate how European cultures changed within a New World context as a result of contact. They write that,

“[w]hile immense quantities of knowledge, information, and belief must have been transported in the minds of the enslaved, they were not able to transfer the human complement of their traditional institutions to the New World…Priests and priestesses, yes; but priesthoods and temples, no. Prince and princesses, yes; but courts and monarchies, no…the personnel responsible for the orderly perpetuation of the specific institutions of African societies were not (in any instance known to us) transferred intact to the new settings…Thus the organizational task of enslaved Africans in the New World was that of creating institutions----institutions that would prove responsive to the needs of everyday life under the limiting conditions that slavery imposed upon them” (Mintz and Price 1992:18-19).

This statement in some ways conflicts with their earlier claims that “beliefs and values” (Mintz and Price 1992:1) cannot be transferred intact from one locale to another. Here, the authors seem to suggest that “knowledge, information, and belief” are not so closely bound to social institutions that they cannot survive without them. Instead, here the authors seem to argue that these knowledges in fact did survive “in the minds of the enslaved”; which is a more agreeable stance. This dissertation stands firmly on the notion that African descended people drew on African cultural knowledges to create “institutions that would prove responsive to the needs of everyday life under the limiting conditions that slavery [and later Jim Crow] imposed upon them” (Mintz and Price 1992:18-19).
The ways in which social scientists have employed the concept of creolization in subsequent years varies: “some have employed creolization to stand for the "birth" of "new" languages or societies; …others for generational changes; others for negotiation of identity; and still others for sustained conditions of intercultural complexity and instability” (Gundaker 2000:124). Some adapted versions of Mintz and Price’s creolization concept has been well suited to the studies that framed. Others that have chosen to employ the concept of creolization as Mintz and Price have set it forth have continued to struggle with pinpointing the exact moment when displaced Africans were no longer African, but African Americans (Davidson 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 a, 2010 b).

A narrow focus on cultural loss and retention prompts anthropologists, especially those within the field of African Diaspora archaeology, to overlook other ways in which the communities they are studying make meaning from their spaces and material culture (Jamieson 1995:39). Through oral history, this project aims to explore “the use and meaning” of cemetery spaces among African Americans in Jacksonville (Battle-Baptiste 2011:71). Rarely have historical archaeologists privileged descendant community understandings of African American history and cultural practice. I have chosen to adopt a theoretical approach that surrenders to a sense of obligation to the surviving community (LaRoach and Blakey 1997; Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009).

*Approaching African American Cemetery Spaces: W.E.B. Du Bois and Lee Drummond*
African Diaspora archaeology continues to favor acculturative theoretical approaches like creolization and Herskovit’s survival acculturation model. This has prompted scholars in the field to continue couching their understandings of African American cultural change in terms of cultural loss. Additionally, these studies tend to lack community engagement (Blakey 2009; Gwaltney 1980; Franklin 1997; Atkins-Spivey 2017; Mahoney 2013). Placing community voices at the center of this discourse on cemetery maintenance and commemoration is critical to this dissertation project. To understand the connection that African Americans in Jacksonville have to their historic African American cemetery spaces, I have chosen an alternative theoretical approach that is broad enough to examine commemorative practices, the community’s sense of obligation to historic cemetery spaces in Jacksonville and investigate the ways in which these facets intersect with cemetery maintenance. Together, Du Bois’ notion of double consciousness and anthropologists Lee Drummond’s concept of intersystem creates a unique framework that also considers the social histories in which the community is embedded.

When combined, Du Bois’ double consciousness and Lee Drummond’s intersystems approach to cultural processes allows me to analyze these dynamics more holistically and present a more nuanced observation of the Moncrief cluster than would be possible using the theoretical frameworks discussed previously. Together DuBois and Drummond provide a framework
that prompts this study to not only privilege community perspectives but to root my analysis and interpretation in them. Secondly, it operates on the assumption that Africans and their descendants maintained an African identity throughout their existence in the Americas. Lastly, this approach calls for the placement of African American cemetery trends within the context of broader national trends, of cemetery maintenance and perceptions. Moreover, it calls for the examination of the social historical factors that have contributed to the physical state of these sites.

Sociologist and historian W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois was one of the earliest scholars to make connections between African and African American cultural practices. He did so in several of his early works (Du Bois 1903; 1939; 1940). Although Du Bois wrote extensively on racism in America and is best known for those contributions; he also continually pursued an understanding of African American life and culture from an emic perspective (Monterio 2008:600). Within Du Bois’ works are some of the earliest rejections of Eurocentric, acculturationist interpretations of African Diaspora social life and culture (Monterio 2008:600).

Du Bois’ work in 1903, 1924, 1939, and 1940 explicated the dialectical relationship between the cultural distinction Herskovits pursues in 1941, and cultural synthesis that Mintz and Price explored in their creolization model in 1976 and then again in 1992. Comparable to Herskovits’ argument in 1941, in 1920, Du Bois argued that “…the social history of the Negro did not start in
Within the first three decades of the early twentieth century, Du Bois articulated the African underpinnings of African American culture which, he argued, could be observed in African American language, arts, and religion.

In opposition to the many assimilationist and acculturationist arguments made by his contemporaries, he wrote, “At first sight it would seem that slavery completely destroyed every vestige of spontaneous social movement among the Negroes…and indeed, it is usually assumed by historians and sociologists that every vestige of internal development disappeared, leaving the slaves no means of expression for their common life, thought, and striving. This is not strictly so…” (Du Bois 1924:119-120).

According to Du Bois, African American folk songs could “be traced direct[ly] to Africa” (Du Bois 1924:101). African languages had survived “in occasional words and phrases…” (Du Bois 1939:142), and Black churches were “the most characteristic expression of African character” (Du Bois 1903:92).

Du Bois points out that “The Methodists and Baptists of America owe much of their condition to the silent but potent influence of their millions of Negro converts” (Du Bois 1903: 92). Particularly in the South “the religion of the poor whites is a plain copy of Negro thought and methods” (Du Bois 1903: 92). These influential thoughts and methods, he added were in fact “African” (Du Bois 1924:120). In 1924, Du Bois argued in a similar vein. He writes, “…perhaps least tangible but just as true, is the peculiar spiritual quality which
the Negro has injected into American life and civilization...a slow and
dreamful conception of the universe, a drawling and slurring of speech, an
intense sensitiveness to spiritual values—all these things and others like
them, tell of the imprint of Africa on Europe in America.” (Du Bois 1924:117).
Here, Du Bois’ work makes Mintz and Price’s “conflation of political and
economic domination with cultural domination” (Gundaker 2000:125)
particularly evident. To the contrary, Du Bois argues that cultural changes
also took place among European Americans, and that African epistemologies
and cultural practices were in fact preserved within mainstream America
rather than totally engulfed by it, as Mintz and Price’s work would suggest.
This idea was reiterated by anthropologist Fernado Ortiz in 1947 (Ortiz
1947:97).

Though much of Du Bois’ argument for this connection with Africa
centered on the Black church, he makes several important points that reach
far beyond this context. As early as 1903, Du Bois inserts himself into the
discourse on cultural retention and acculturation, arguing that there was
something distinctly African embedded in African American epistemologies
and cultural practices. Although Du Bois’ work hinted that African American
culture has African antecedents, unlike Herskovits (1941), his work did not
seek to establish formal connections to specific peoples or regions.
Nevertheless, Du Bois did leave open the possibility for distinct connections.
Though he notes their existence within African American communities, Du Bois does not explicate the process of cultural synthesis, the dialectical relationship between cultural synthesis and distinction, or set forth a particular method for charting antecedents. For me, none of African America’s cultural practices or material culture can be considered “altogether new;” neither are they “reducible” to “antecedents” (Gundaker 2000:130). Therefore, the cultural processes of African Americans “resist neat, clearly bounded claims about origins, content, or scope” (Gundaker 2000:130).

In one of his most famous works, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois suggests that both distinction and synthesis coexist dialectically within African American identity and cultural practice. He illustrates this through his multilayered notion of double consciousness. In 1903, he asserts,

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world…One ever feels his twoness, --- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals on one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois 1903:3).

For Du Bois, the veil connotes “…a world composed of people with colored skins who remembered slavery…and who [have] to a degree their own habits, customs, and ideals…” (Du Bois 1940:69). This “colored world” (Du Bois 1940:69) illuminated in Du Bois’ multidimensional approach is illustrated by a plethora of authors from within and outside of the African Diaspora including
but not limited to Zora Hurston (1928, 1935), Ralph Ellison (1964), Grace Turner (Turner 2013: 54-56), Salamisha Tillet (2012) and Monterio (2008).

For me, double consciousness refers to “modalities of knowing” within the African American community which is informed by African cultural heritages, as well as “physical [and] social barriers” of African American exclusion (Monterio 2008:607), what Toni Morrison calls sites of memory (Morrison 1995). It is at this intersection that many African American people, their cultural practices, and heritages sites exist. Not only are the four historic

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4 Zora Hurston (1928) “I am colored …I remember the very day that I became colored. Up to my thirteenth year I lived in the little Negro town of Eatonville, Florida. It is exclusively a colored town… I left Eatonville, the town of the oleanders, a Zora. When I disembarked from the river-boat at Jacksonville, she was no more. It seemed that I had suffered a sea change. I was not Zora of Orange County anymore, I was now a little colored girl. I found it out in certain ways. In my heart as well as in the mirror”

Zora Hurston (1935)”The theory behind our tactics: “The white man is always trying to know into somebody else’s business. All right, I’ll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho’ can’t read my mind…”

Ellison (1964) “Being a Negro American… imposes the burden and occasional joy of a complex double vision, a fluid ambivalent response to men and events which represents, at its finest, a profoundly civilized adjustment to the cost of being human in this modern world.”

Gundaker (2001) “…commemorative sites begin to assert their own messages, providing subtle instruction in double vision, a form of perceptiveness that, in vernacular African American par lance, involves seeing both “white” and “black” histories and signification systems at work in a given object, utterance, or event and, on a deeper level, seeing across the boundaries of physical and spiritual worlds”
cemeteries on Moncrief socio-cultural landscapes, they are also physical manifestations of African American exclusion. These cemeteries have become catalysts for the community’s civic-estrangement (Du Bois 1903; Hurston 1928, 1935; Ellison 1964).

As social-cultural landscapes, sites of memory connote events that resonate with the African American collective consciousness. As physical sites, sites of memory are defined as permanently anchored places where highly publicized, diversely asserted Black humanity is displayed through social-cultural interaction and or material arrangements. The historic African American cemeteries on Moncrief Road are permanently anchored sites of memory that exhibit diverse material arrangements as a result of the dynamic social and cultural circumstances in which they are situated. Furthermore, they are products of the dialectical relationship between cultural synthesis and cultural distinction which is complicated by “color-prejudice and social condition” (Du Bois 1903:92).

Combining Du Bois’ work with Lee Drummond’s concept of intersystems to address the cultural dimensions of commemoration within Jacksonville’s African American community, goes further in explaining complex processes and relationships than either Herskovits’ or Mintz and Price’s models, because it operates on the assumption that Africans and their descendants maintained their cultural practices throughout their existence in
the New World and takes in to account the community’s legacy of civic-\nestrangement in America.

Over the past four decades, African Americans across the nation have\nstruggled to reconcile “what has been one of the fundamental paradoxes of\npost-civil rights” [America]: African American’s formal possession of full legal\ncitizenship and their inherited burden of “civic estrangement” (Tillet 2012:3).\nSalamishah Tillet’s use of the term “civic estrangement” echoes Du Bois’\nnotion of double consciousness and illustrates the experience of African\nAmericans as “simultaneous citizens and “non-citizens” (Tillet 2012:3).\nExploring the ways in which “civic estrangement” has impacted the Moncrief\ncluster overtime is as important as exploring the cultural influences that shape\nthese spaces.

The cultural continuum or the intersystems approach argues that\n“cultures are neither structures nor plural amalgams, but a continuum or set of\nintersystems” (Drummond 1980:352). As a concept, “intersystemic\ncreolization is less concerned with the cultural origins of commemorative\npractices than with configurations and functions; or the ways in which those\npractice manifest. Within this framework activities and objects combine\ncontinual innovation with highly patterned behavior in ways that vary from one\ncontext and one moment to another” (Gundaker 2000:125). Focusing solely\non one to one connections is not very pragmatic. An intersystemic approach
to African American culture is flexible enough to address the varied ways in which African Americans in Jacksonville participate in commemoration.

Investigating “…African-ness and ethnicity [does] not tell us enough about how human beings struggled to remake their worlds” (Brown 2008:8). Within this study the concept of intersystems allows for this project to investigate the cultural aspects of commemorative practices in Jacksonville, within the context of social and economic marginalization. By highlighting “color-prejudice and social condition” (Du Bois 1903:92), this alternative theoretical perspective moves the focal point of this study a step beyond purely acculturative explanations and explores the ways in which contemporary African Americans in Jacksonville perceive and interact with their cemetery spaces. This framework tempers cultural change in commemoration with economic disenfranchisement and civic-estrangement.

The theory employed within this dissertation foregrounds African American understandings of the social circumstances and cultural complexities in which their lives and histories are couched. Moreover, this approach that illuminates the multivalent ways in which African Americans, commemorate their dead and inhabit cemeteries. Together DuBois (1903), Morrison (1995), Drummond (1980), and Tillet (2012) provide a theoretical approach that foregrounds African American understandings of their relationship to the Moncrief cluster, and is flexible enough to encompass epistemological divergence and distinction, cultural synthesis, and civic
estrangement. Figures 5-8, help bring into focus the ways in which older frameworks and my own theoretical position would approach acts of commemoration. Acculturationists like Frazier would argue that none of these images represent African cultural retentions. Objects placed on top of graves would not be seen as grave goods, instead these additional objects would be viewed as junk or trash. Within this framework subcultures do not exist. Therefore, these patterns would be unrecognizable as cultural patterns.

In contrast, proponents of Herskovits’ model would argue that the burials pictured in figures 5-8 clearly display African cultural retentions. They would draw on African cultural practices to explain these visible patterns, most likely pointing to Yoruba or Bakongo cultural origins. However, this model would probably prompt anthropologists either to disregard unadorned graves, or to explain them as examples of cultural loss. Asserting distinctively African identity by displaying ornate material arrangements atop graves demonstrates the community’s forceful resistance to subjugation, dehumanization, and acculturation. However, graves displaying no additional material culture are also part of this assertion because the grave itself expresses that the deceased was and is valued by the community—an outlook as characteristic of Africans as it is of Europeans.

Proponents Mintz and Price’s creolization model would argue that these practices draw on European American traditions as well as broad African cognitive orientations and do not represent any specific African
cultural ties. Instead, these graves are distinctly African American. Furthermore, advocates of creolization would probably use figure 54 (see page 174) to support the argument that many captive African people lost much of their African knowledge and culture during slavery. This model is flexible enough to consider variation in commemorative practices within the African American community. Nevertheless, it would point to acculturative processes to explain the vast lack of traditional African American grave goods present in this cluster.

None of these previously mentioned frameworks would consider commemorative practices outside of the cemetery where other evidence of memory and meaning can be found. Nor would these frameworks factor into their interpretations the social and historical contextual complexities of the Moncrief cluster. These require consideration of national trends related to American community involvement with cemeteries, migration patterns, variation of commemorative practices within the community, and the multivalency of African American material culture in the burial context. Moreover, traditional anthropological frameworks do not foreground African American understandings of material culture. Therefore, employment of these theories may guide studies of these cemeteries away from community voices, because these frameworks do not require the community’s explanation for visible material culture or lack thereof.
Unfortunately for those who might choose one of the two most likely approaches to this cluster (i.e. Herskovits’ model and the creolization model) many of these graves do not have visible artifacts. Instead a clear majority more closely resemble figure 54 (see page 174). This dissertation assumes that African American culture is an ongoing, flexible process which participants make as they calibrate the possibilities and constraints of their immediate context and those of their times. This perspective takes note of various material arrangements, but it does not rely solely or as heavily on the visibility of these arrangements in the cemetery; nor does it treat these assemblages as evidence of the presence or absence of African cultural retention.

“Studies of culture too far removed from studies of social structure leave us with inadequate explanations for understanding racism” (Lipsitz 1995:371). Thus, the current dissertation is not as concerned with the cultural origins of these practices as the previously mentioned theories. It also has a more flexible perception of what can be considered African or African American cultural practice. Rather, this approach focuses on how the African American community is commemorating the dead. Because this approach operates on the assumption that African American practices are inherently informed by African cultural knowledges; commemorative arrangements typically associated with European American residents, such as flowers,
crosses, and balloons, can be examined as multivalent objects of commemoration.

The criticism of Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive is preceded by nearly a century of scholarly criticisms of African American cemeteries and commemorative practices. The connection that these critics commonly draw between cemetery maintenance and the civic capacity of the respective community taps into a legacy of employing the concept of pathology to describe working class African American communities. For anthropological projects that endeavor to investigate the lives and material culture of African Diaspora communities, it is imperative that practitioners use an “African Diaspora frame of reference” (Blakey 2009:41) by incorporating the perspectives of the descendant community. This project uses an African Diaspora frame of reference.

Within this chapter, the intellectual contributions of Toni Morrison, Lee Drummond, Salamishah Tillet, and W.E.B. DuBois are combined to produce vocabulary and a theoretical perspective that orientates this project towards understanding the relationship between the cemetery cluster and Jacksonville’s African American community from an emic perspective. This theoretical perspective highlights the varied ways in which Jacksonville’s African American community participates in commemorative practices, perceives their cemetery spaces and obligation to those spaces. Such an
approach repositions the critique of historic African American cemeteries on 45th and Moncrief.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

“The discipline only stands to lose by ignoring how the oppressed analyze their own situation”

- Rosaldo 1993:189.

This research design draws on the community engagement client-based model set forth by Bio-cultural anthropologist Dr. Michael Blakey and the team of experts involved in the New York Burial Ground Project. This model relies on the ethical principal of the American Anthropological Association to do no harm to descendant communities. The method used to collect ethnographic data for this project is modeled after the Remembering Slavery, Resistance, and Freedom Project which was undertaken in 2011 and completed in 2015. The Remembering project was spearheaded by Dr. Michael Blakey and Dr. Autumn Rain of The College of William and Mary and conducted in partnership with a team of expert advisors, the Virginia General Assembly's Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, The College of William and Mary, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Additionally, the use of photography for documenting material culture assemblages and their changes over time were largely modeled after Dr. Grey Gundaker’s 2001 study.

This project is designed to address the research questions discussed previously in chapter one. By bringing to the forefront the specific social, political, and economic processes that have contributed to the current state of
Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries, this project moves towards a deeper understanding of the phenomena of “abandoned and neglected” historic African American cemeteries in Jacksonville. I begin by outlining previous scholarship and archaeological projects that have influenced the direction and methodology of this dissertation research. The following discussion points out the ways in which these works have contributed to the development of this project. Additionally, this section explains in detail the specific methods I have employed within this study to collect and analyze data.

*Previous Archaeology and Compliance Field Work*

It is important to contextualize this research project with other anthropological studies that have endeavored to unveil the histories of African Diasporic burial spaces (Mahoney 2013:49). This type of contextual approach gives practitioners a clearer understanding of the complex ways in which displaced Africans and their descendants continued their ways of life. At the same time, it offers a more holistic view of African American heritage that acknowledges implicit “variation” within African American culture and “archaeological sites” (Mahoney 2013:49). The temporal range of archaeological excavations of African Diaspora heritage sites in Jacksonville, Florida spans from 1968 to 2014 and focused on Kingsley Plantation. Beyond
Kingsley Plantation, archaeology for African Diaspora sites in Jacksonville have included very little community insight.  

I begin this chapter with a critical assessment of the studies conducted at Kingsley Plantation. The following section reveals an organic relationship between the ethical principles of such investigations and the epistemic processes leading to particular research results.

**Kingsley Plantation: The First African American Archaeological Site**

Kingsley Plantation is the oldest known burial place for Africans and their descendants in the city of Jacksonville. In 1968, historical archaeologist Charles Fairbanks of the University of Florida began excavation at Kingsley Plantation. This effort was the result of a partnership between the University of Florida and the Florida State Park Service (Fairbanks 1984:2). The primary goal of the project was to gather enough information about the infrastructure of the captive African dwellings to pursue their reconstruction (Fairbanks 5)

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5 Here I am referring to the 1997 Archaeological investigation of 45th and Moncrief by ESI Archaeologists. This is further discussed in Chapter 6.
1984:2). However, Fairbanks used this opportunity to pursue a deeper understanding of the lifeways of captive Africans and the “cultural processes” they were involved in (Fairbanks 1974:62; Fairbanks 1984:2), making this endeavor the first of its kind in historical archaeology.

Fairbanks and his team were the first to employ Melville Herskovits’ concept of ‘Africanisms’ as a theoretical framework for an archaeological project. Shortly after arriving on Fort Gorge Island, Zephaniah Kingsley and his wife Anna Kingsley⁶, had captives erect 32 tabby cabins to house his labor force. These cabins were arranged in a semi-circle with 16 cabins placed evenly on both sides of Palmetto Avenue. Fairbanks’ excavations, primarily focused on two cabins E-1 and W-1, originally believed to be occupied by “slave drivers or foremen” (Fairbanks 1984:2). These cabins were typically comprised of two rooms and made up of a concrete like substance consisting of oyster shell, sand, and lime mortar known as “tabby”.

⁶ Anna Kingsley was of Senegalese heritage. Upon her husband’s death she inherited Zephaniah’s land. In the 20th century, Afro-American Life Insurance Company co-founder, Abraham Lincoln Lewis marries one of Anna and Zephaniah’s descendants.
Because this site centered on a captive community with a high population of African born people, Fairbanks and his team expected the site to yield an abundance of ‘Africanisms’, such as African style ceramics “ornaments, game pieces, or ritual objects” (Fairbanks 1974:90). According to Fairbanks, he and his colleagues were surprised to find that this was seemingly not the case for Kingsley Plantation’s captive African community. He asserts,

“I had done what appeared to be an adequate amount of research to establish a number of things that I had hoped to demonstrate. Among these were the search for Africanisms among the material artifacts of those newly arrived slaves, evidence of adaption in housing dress, behavior to the new situation, and data on lifestyle. At Kingsley we studied much of two slave houses, both probably of slave drivers or foremen, identified a well, and found that most of our assumptions were false. No evidence of Africanisms was found, even though we were digging in the structures of an unusually permissive slave owner, dealing with newly imported Africans (Fairbanks 1984:2).”

Here, Fairbanks struggles to reconcile the perceived absence of African material culture among a captive African community whose “unusually permissive slave owner”, in theory, should have created the idealistic environment for producing such materials. He goes on to further illustrate this point. He states, “Belatedly realizing that the slaves came naked and in chains, I still could not understand why they did not recreate some African artifacts” (Fairbanks 1984:2). However, Fairbanks does note that these excavations did yield a considerable amount of information related to other aspects of life. Some of the findings that he and his team uncovered included
a well and a variety of food remains, which were consistent with the Spanish Task system in place during the Kingsley period (Fairbanks 1984:2). Additionally, Fairbanks uncovered “musket flints, and evidence of bullet manufacture” (Fairbanks 1984:2).

Fairbanks asserted that the majority of the dwellings yielded some evidence of firearm possession. Under both Spanish and British rule, possession of firearms by captive people were strictly prohibited, making this discovery an unexpected finding. For Fairbanks evidence of captives possessing firearms so readily on Kingsley Plantation that it spoke to the “conditions existing between the races and classes” (Fairbanks 1984:2). In his concluding remarks, Fairbanks recommended that practitioners expand on his work at Kingsley and formulate strategies that would “show when and how” African American cultural traditions came to be. Furthermore, he postulated that his conclusions would likely be “refuted when a better sample became available” (Fairbanks 1984:2). Since Fairbanks’ landmark study, there have been several subsequent excavations of Kingsley Plantation.

In partnership with the National Park Service, historical archaeologist James Davidson of the University of Florida began excavating Kingsley Plantation in 2006, building upon the pioneering work of Charles Fairbanks’ 1968, study. Davidson’s 2006 field school was the first archaeological excavation at Kingsley Plantation since 1981 (Davidson 2008:5). Davidson continued excavation in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. Originally, these projects
sought to investigate the cabin dwellings and yard spaces of the African
community enslaved at Kingsley Plantation using creolization as a theoretical
lens. These excavations yielded vast amounts of material culture. The 2006
project yielded evidence of cabin dwelling modifications in W-13 and a
chicken burial under the floor of W-15 (Davidson 2010 b:11). In 2007,
Davidson uncovered the tibia of a deer in the doorway of W-12, an oddly
shaped clay object beneath the floor of W-15, and remnant base structures in
both W-12 and W-15 (Davidson 2010 b:12). The 2008 endeavor also exposed
post hole features. Additionally, an iron object was found buried within the
wall trench of cabin W-12.

In 2009, Davidson expanded these areas of investigation to include the
“Live Oak Tree Area” in pursuit of uncovering the captive African cemetery.
The documentary evidence related to the Kingsley Plantation’s captive
African cemetery is scarce. There are a couple of known references to it. The
first comes from an 1878 Harper’s New Monthly Magazine article. The
second account was allegedly written by Hannah Rollins in the early twentieth
century. Hannah Rollins was the wife of John Rollins who acquired the
Kingsley estate in 1869 and continued to own a large portion of the estate
until the 1920s. Her letter offers a succinct description of the cemetery’s
location. Davidson and his 2009 field school began “extensive auger testing”
and opened various “1X2 meter test units” near the Live Oak Tree
(westward). However, these efforts yielded no evidence of human remains”
(Davidson 2010 b:78). Nevertheless 2009, excavations produced material culture including, various architectural features and a pig burial (associated with the sugar mill).

The following summer in 2010, Davidson reopened the site and continued to pursue the location of the captive African cemetery. Davidson’s students placed an additional 1X2 meter test unit adjacent to the Live Oak Tree Area. While excavating this unit, with a fellow undergraduate student Ayanna Flewellen, I uncovered the remains of a captive African man who was between the ages 35 to 45 at the time of his death, he later became known as Burial 1. In total, six graves were rediscovered. Burial number 2 was also a man between the ages of 35-45 at the time of death. Burial 3 was an elderly woman, believed to be over the age of 50. Burials number 4 and 5 were both children under the age of 10. Burial 4 was a child believed to be around 4 or 5 at the time of death, and burial number 5 was around 2 or 3 years old at the time of death (Davidson 2010 b: 104).

In the 2010 field school report, prepared for the National Park Service, Davidson asserts that

“While each of the five burials documented in 2010 were excavated so that the outline of their skeletal elements were sufficiently exposed -- to derive body positioning, to estimate age at death and sex, and to measure long bones for stature, etc. -- none of the bodies were actually exhumed (i.e., lifted out of the grave as a whole)” (Davidson 2010 b:105).
However, this rediscovery led to the extraction of several captive Africans from their graves by Davidson and his graduate students. Davidson chose not to involve or consult the African American descendant community prior to or during the exhumation of ancestral remains at Kingsley. Witnessing this lack of community engagement as an undergraduate prompted me to look for alternative methods that would not only engage the community but also accommodate their interests. Community members were made aware of the cemetery sometime after Davidson and his graduate students completed the excavations of several burials. In 2016, an affiliate of the Ritz and American Beach museum, Participant 17 responded to this event. He remarked “…there was no mention of the burial grounds or site and had there been a community meeting in downtown Jacksonville the Ritz along with other community leaders and activist would have been front and center” (Interview of Participant 17, African American elder man, 2016).

Still, Davidson’s study of Kingsley serves as the single most comprehensive anthropological study of an African Diaspora heritage site in Jacksonville. When I selected this dissertation topic I intended to produce a

7 The American Beach Museum is located at 1600 Julia Street American Beach, Florida 32034; (904) 510-7036; americanbeach4us@gmail.com; Friday - Saturday: 10 am - 2pm; Sunday: 1-5 pm

The Ritz Theatre Museum is located at 829 N Davis St, Jacksonville, FL 32202; (904) 632-5555
study that would stand to contrast the methods employed within Davidson’s study. Ultimately, Kingsley’s 2010 field school helped move this dissertation project towards community engagement. As a part of the community’s involvement in the current dissertation research, Participant 17, a community leader, and myself led a group of community members to the captive African cemetery on April 17, 2016. Here, Participant 17 conducted a libation ceremony on behalf of the ancestors buried in Kingsley Plantation’s cemetery. Many of the attendees wore African garments and or all white attire. The group encompassed African American residents of all ages.

**The Moncrief Cemetery Evaluation Project**

For decades, the historic cemeteries on 45th street and Moncrief Road have had issues with upkeep. During the late 90s local council woman Denise Lee spearheaded efforts to move the historic African American cemeteries on Moncrief towards restoration. As a result, the Moncrief Cemetery Evaluation Project was under taken in 1997, by the Environmental Services, Inc., Jacksonville Florida, in partnership with The Center for Historic Cemeteries Preservation. I gained access to this study in July of 2013, through the Historic Preservation Section of the Planning and Development Department. The primary objectives of this study are to investigate the issue of maintenance and to produce viable preservation strategies to remedy these problems (Thompson 1997: 2). Secondly, the project sought to produce a comprehensive social history of the cemeteries. To achieve these aims, The
Moncrief Evaluation Project took an interdisciplinary approach, which included archaeological survey, oral history, and archival research.

Through archaeological survey conducted by the Environmental Services Inc., this project documents tombstone locations and inscriptions. Ms. Sharyn Thompson and Ms. Althemese Barnes of The Center for Historic Cemetery Preservation, conducted the oral history component of this project, interviewing several African American community members. Some of these histories give in-depth accounts of burial practices and early twentieth century uses of the cluster. Others illustrate participants' lived experiences in Jacksonville and their knowledge of the cemetery. One of these interviews has revealed dates of establishment for some of these cemeteries as well as land transfers. It is important to note that I have obtained the transcripts from these 1997 interviews and have incorporated them into the current dissertation project.

Expanding the discipline’s knowledge of the African American experience in Jacksonville beyond slavery has been a key goal for this project. One of the primary objectives of this research project is to provide an alternate understanding of these historic African American cemeteries and how they function within Jacksonville’s African American communities. Providing an alternative understanding of the state of this cemetery cluster stands to strengthen the disciplines understanding of contemporary African American cultural production.
The Current Dissertation Research

Cultural change in any given population is viewed as normative within this project. Rather than assuming African Americans are continuously losing parts of their identity (evidenced by a lack of traditional grave goods), this dissertation posits that, innovations are continuously added to already firmly established ways of thinking and behaving. However, these additions do not diminish underlying epistemologies. Such knowledge manifests through commemorative practices in but also beyond the spatial boundaries of the cemetery. Social gatherings on behalf of the deceased, photo albums, and R.I.P T-shirts are examples of commemorative practices that do not involve cemetery spaces.

Historical documents pertaining to the Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries were obtained primarily from local libraries and historical societies. This includes Jacksonville Public Library, the Jacksonville Historical Society, and The Southern Genealogist’s Exchange Society, Inc. These organizations possess an extensive archival collection related to these and other African American cemeteries in the city of Jacksonville. The National Park Service and Jacksonville City’s Planning and Development Department provided previous archaeological reports for Kingsley Plantation’s Captive African Cemetery and the historic African American cemeteries on Moncrief. Preliminary interviews with residents
provided invaluable information about the role African American cemeteries in both past and contemporary communities.

Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries have been recognized by Jacksonville City as important to the city’s history. Nevertheless, over the past few decades, local newspapers, community leaders and organizations have brought a substantial amount of attention to the preservation issues that threaten many of Jacksonville’s predominately African American cemeteries. Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries were selected as sites to study partly because much of the community’s conversation and preservation efforts surrounding the state of African American cemeteries in this city have centered primarily on these sites. Furthermore, these sites are among the oldest burial places for this community and possess a historical trajectory that spans from the early twentieth century and continues into the present. This history allows for a more comprehensive study of the ways in which maintenance, the modes of commemoration, and the cemeteries themselves have changed over time.

My project stands firmly on the notion that “African descendant communities” are “entitled to an authorial role in the narration, representation, and memorialization of their heritage and history” (Barrett and Blakey et. Al 2015: 3). Therefore, engagement with Jacksonville’s African American community is imperative to understanding how cemetery maintenance relates to modes of commemoration; as well as the ways in which the African
American community organizes and constructs obligation to the deceased, which is complicated by the communities historic and contemporary condition of civic estrangement.

To adequately investigate my questions about commemoration, African American civic estrangement, and cemetery maintenance, my methodology encompasses archival research, oral history, genealogy, and surface archaeology. Interviews with residents provide information about the cemetery cluster's previous condition as well as the ways in which these cemeteries were utilized in the past. Information obtained in interviews was triangulated among community members as well as cross-referenced with historical documentation and archaeological reports to construct both an accurate historical timeline and an account of the meanings of the cemeteries and commemorative practices for residents.

Through archival research, I pieced together the history of these cemeteries, recovered financial reports and any other records related to rectifying the condition of the cemeteries after they became municipal responsibilities of the city and fell into disrepair. Additionally, genealogy allowed me to begin the process of reconstructing the community that surrounded the cemetery during the early twentieth century. The resulting research makes some genealogical data more accessible to the community. These methods are combined with surface archeology to give insight into
contemporary commemorative practices and current residents use these cemeteries.

**Oral History**

Incorporating community perspectives into anthropological scholarship enabled me to create interpretations of past events, historical sites, and collective memories that resonate with contemporary communities. Within this study conversations with community members guide my understanding of the historic cemeteries on Moncrief and African American cemeteries in Jacksonville more broadly. I conducted eleven one-on-one interviews. Most of the interviews I conducted were in person, although some one-on-one interviews were done over the phone. Additionally, I have conducted two interviews in group settings which consisted of fifteen or more participants each. An auditory recording device was used to tape these interviews. I have conducted interviews at the participant’s homes, places of business, at various public libraries and over the phone. I requested 15-30 minutes of participation. However, some interviews exceeded this time frame.

In fall of 2013, I submitted a protocol to the Protection of Human Subjects Committee. Protocol PHSC-201-09-24-8955-fhsmit was approved shortly thereafter, which allowed me to conduct the interviews included in this study. The overall date range of the interviews included within this study is 1997 to 2017. In addition to my own work, I collected five oral histories from
previous studies By way of my collaboration with Joel McEachin, the city’s historic preservation planner I have recovered four interviews housed in his department. Additionally, I obtained one interview from 2002 held in the Southern Oral History Program Collection of A.L. Lewis’s great granddaughter, interviewed by Kieran Taylor. I have collected seventeen interviews in total.

Table 1

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Table showing the dates of each participant’s interview

Key: AA (African American); M (Male); F (Female).

*Interviews conducted in 1997, were obtained from the City of Jacksonville and are not a part of the IRB approved from this study.
Oral histories of the surrounding African American community give insight into community perceptions of the current state of the cemetery and illuminate contemporary practices of commemoration. These interviews have primarily focused on the interviewee’s relationship to the cemetery, the ways in which they and or their families commemorate the dead, how they view the Northside community, and their experience of coming of age in Jacksonville, which for elders included their experiences of growing up in Jacksonville during segregation.

In March of 2016, Dr. TaKeia Anthony, a history professor at Edward Waters College, helped me put together community meetings with Edward Waters College students. Dr. Anthony has shown a great interest in this project and commands a unique platform for advertising and mobilizing African American youth in the city, which she has extended to this project. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce my project to the community and have open discussions about the community’s specific interest in these cemeteries (i.e. what they would like to know about the cemeteries, what they would like me to include as a part of my research) they also served as recruiting mechanism for one-on-one interviews. Additionally, attendees were asked to talk openly about their lived experiences as African Americans in this city and express their opinions of the social and economic conditions of the Northside community.
These meetings were held periodically throughout the dissertation process. Their locations included public libraries, community centers, churches, and Edward Waters College. These meetings were treated as group interviews with an extended time block of 1-2 hours, had roughly 40 participants total. I solicited additional community an additional community meeting to be held at American Beach museum upon completion of this dissertation research so that I may present my tentative findings and receive feedback from community members. Interviews with African American residents explained specific practices and material arrangements observed in these cemeteries. A coding system was used to analyze the data gathered from individual interviews and the two community meetings. Coding allowed for this study to establish specific relationships between cemetery maintenance and commemoration. It also highlighted how cemetery maintenance articulates with community attitudes towards cemeteries and death, and commemoration.

**Documentary Evidence**

Research for this project began in 2013 and has been ongoing throughout this dissertation process. Preliminary research was conducted at local libraries and archives which were viable sources for obtaining historic documents such as maps, newspapers, and early twentieth century scholarship related to Jacksonville’s historic African American cemeteries. The Jacksonville Public Library was most useful in obtaining these documents
and has several locations across the city. The Main Branch, located downtown, houses an enormous collection of materials on Jacksonville’s African American history.

This collection is comprised primarily of books and magazines covering diverse topics that are authored by and or center on African Americans. Additionally, this branch houses a map collection, which is comprised of both contemporary and historical maps of Jacksonville and other areas within the state of Florida. It also houses a large newspaper collection, which spans from the nineteenth century to more recent decades. The library also has an extensive genealogy collection which contains city directories and other local documents which helped to piece together the lives of some notable African Americans in Jacksonville. Several local institutions and organizations including the Ritz Theatre Museum, The Jacksonville Historical Society, The Southern Geneologist’s Exchange Society, University of North Florida Archives, Durkeville Historical Society, the Historic Preservation and Development department in Jacksonville, were instrumental in retrieving primary sources related to the cemeteries.

The documents in these collections revealed the ways in which African Americans utilized and maintained their cemeteries during the early and mid-twentieth century and help to further explicate how African American businesses impacted the African American community and shaped the city’s landscape, including the cemetery cluster’s upkeep. These documents helped
to reveal the city’s relationship to the cemetery, and better understand the city’s relationship to the Northside community. These archives are open to the public and contain a wealth of knowledge related to African American life in Jacksonville from the nineteenth century to the present. I encourage anyone who is interested in cemeteries, African American history, or genealogy to consider using these resources.

**Archaeology**

The archaeology of this dissertation builds the Moncrief Evaluation Project (1997); and reviews previous archaeological surveys, excavations, and ethnographic studies of African Diasporic burial spaces in Jacksonville more broadly. Additionally, the current study adds to an exploration of the ways in which these cemeteries are inhabited by African Americans in Jacksonville today. In some ways this project stands in contrast to the methods employed in previous archaeological studies. I have chosen survey archaeology or surface archaeology as a method of archaeological investigation.

Typically, archaeologists have employed surface archaeology as a means to establish where to begin excavation. Within this dissertation, surface archaeology is employed as a means to observe material assemblages placed atop grave sites. This data is collected by photographing graves. I do not remove items from these burials. These cemeteries have
been photographed from 2013 to 2018. Collecting data from and other historic African American cemeteries in Jacksonville was a collaborative effort between myself and African American residents. Community members acted as guides within these spaces and assisted me in gathering archaeological evidence. This data is analyzed by cross referencing material culture found at other African Diaspora heritage sites.

The urban context of the Moncrief cluster presents an opportunity for anthropologists to expand understandings of Jacksonville’s African American cemetery spaces beyond the antebellum period and further explore the ways in which African Americans have continued to inhabit cemetery spaces and commemorate their dead in the twenty first century. However, the sites’ temporal proximity to the surrounding community and it’s continued use throughout the twenty-first century makes excavation unfavorable. Producing an adequate methodology to address the research questions outlined in the previous chapter involved merging data collection, interpretation, and community engagement. The sites represent the versatility inherent within Jacksonville’s twentieth century African American community. The lives of the individuals buried within this cluster vary in time and class. Furthermore, they exemplify the diversity of African American identities.

Genealogy
While all my participants have expressed concern for the maintenance of the Moncrief cluster and want to see improvements in its maintenance, several of them have expressed interest in learning who is buried in the cemeteries for genealogical purposes. Mr. Jon Ferguson and Mr. Michael Lawson of The Southern Genealogist’s Exchange Society\(^8\) have done extensive research on Jacksonville’s historically African American and European American cemeteries. Their work includes but is not limited to descriptions of these cemeteries, pictures, and cataloging individual burials, site location and condition, as well as tombstone information which they have granted me access to. They have vast knowledge of most if not all of Jacksonville's cemeteries. In collaboration with them I have been able to gather more information on Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, Mount Olive, and other historically African American cemeteries in Jacksonville. It is also important to note they were involved with and are well-informed of Jacksonville city’s relationship to this cemetery cluster. Their work is of immense importance to this dissertation. Their research questions are as follows,

4. What challenges did the African American businesses within the funeral industry face after Civil Rights?

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\(^8\) The Southern Genealogist’s Exchange Society is located at 6215 Sauterne Dr, Jacksonville, FL 32210; (904) 778-1000
5. How did urban renewal impact African American wealth in Jacksonville?

6. What historic African American figures are buried in these cemeteries?

“The story of transplanting millions of Africans to the new world, and of their bondage for four centuries, is a fascinating one. Particularly interesting for students of human culture is the sudden freeing of these black folk in the Nineteenth Century and the attempt, through them, to reconstruct the basis of American democracy from 1860-1880” (W.E.B DuBois 1934)

Over the course of three centuries, Florida endured the occupation of several different settler nations, including France, Spain, England, and the United States (Rivers 2000: 65, 66-69). Americans did not come to control Florida until as late as 1821. For most of Florida’s history, the territory existed under Spanish rule. Today, Spain remains the longest ruling settler nation in Florida’s history. Prior to Spain’s expansion into the Americas, African customs and beliefs had played a key role in establishing Spain as a European empire. This extensive historical interaction with Africans laid the foundation for Spain’s colonial settlements in the New World.

North African Muslims entered Spain as early as 711 C.E., conquering and ruling the nation until 1492 C.E. (Landers 1999: 7). For nearly eight centuries, Africans built and developed Spain socially, culturally, economically, and politically. North African sovereigns “promoted schools of translation and intellectual exchange” (Landers 1999: 7). Additionally, they developed legal infrastructure and cultivated social customs that encouraged diversity within the Empire (Landers 1999: 7). Spanish laws and customary practices, such as “enslavement, manumission, miscegenation, congregation,
limited political autonomy, and religious incorporation” were transplanted from Spain to North East Florida and other parts of Latin America during the age of exploration (Landers 1999: 8).

Fig 11. Map of Spain. This image is a derivative work of the Europe byzantine empires” map. Map courtesy of the map collection of the Perry-Castañeda Library at the University of Texas at Austin. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/shepherd/europe_byzantine_empires.jpg (Accessed February 22, 2015).
The Arrival of Africans in Florida

The first known African to disembark on the shores of Florida, was a West African born man named Juan Garrido. He arrived alongside Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leόn in 1513 (Rivers 2004: 2). Juan Garrido participated in a plethora of Spanish conquests across the Americas during the sixteenth century. Here, Garrido encountered Natives, and other Africans; including Black conquistadors⁹ and maroons (Landers 1999:10).

Most of Florida’s early African population were living in Spanish port cities like Seville, prior to their arrival in the New World. While some may have been brought as African captives, many of them came as free settlers and armed auxiliaries in search of economic gain (Landers 1999: 9). The African men and women that made up Florida’s early sixteenth century Black population were few. Nevertheless, the presence and contributions of African subjects were essential to Spain’s expansion throughout the American Southeast and West. They were also instrumental in securing Spain’s first successful New World colony; St. Augustine, Florida (Rivers 2000: 3).

St. Augustine was established in 1565 and is located roughly 40 miles South of Jacksonville. Here, Africans participated equally in establishing and defending the colony. African women commonly married Spanish men, and

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⁹ Estebanico el Negro was another notable conquistador of African descent who explored Florida and other Spanish New World Territories in the 16th century. Some notable expeditions include: The Coronado Expedition of 1540; The Panfilo de Narvaez Expedition of 1528; The Juan Guerra de Resa Expedition of 1600.
free Black inhabitants readily achieved status within the community (Rivers 2000: 3). By 1683, Spain was openly granting freedom to runaways fleeing nearby British settlements, provided they were willing to convert to Catholicism (Rivers 2000:4). By the early eighteenth century, Florida had become a well-known sanctuary for African people (Rivers 2000:4). In 1738, the Spanish government agreed to grant land and freedom to a runaway captive named Menéndez and his militia, comprising of both Africans and Natives, if they would defend Spanish Florida from the British. They established a settlement just two miles north of St. Augustine. This town became known as Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, commonly known today as Fort Mose, North America’s first free Black town (Rivers 2000: 4). By 1821, Spain relinquished control of Florida to the United States of America.

**Slavery in North East Florida**

Historically, much of Florida State’s captive population existed outside of the Eastern region (Rivers 2000: 65). During the eighteenth century, Jacksonville was a sparsely populated town (Rivers 2000: 73). The town’s plantations were both small and large scale. Larger plantations produced sizeable amounts of sugarcane and Sea Island cotton. However, small farms and estates were more commonplace and captive communities were often smaller than twenty people. Diversified farming was characteristic of the area and Florida planters typically grew a range of crops from citrus fruit to cotton.
Nevertheless, indigo emerged as Jacksonville’s primary cash crop (Rivers 2000: 73-75).

Spain’s unique history and influence produced “diverse” and “complexed” labor organization methods in North East Florida (Rivers 2000: 69). Among contemporary scholars, Florida is often noted for its use of “alternative” labor organization methods and “relaxed racial attitudes” (Rivers 2000: 65-66). Unlike the gang system, that has come to characterize the enslavement of Africans in America; Jacksonville’s plantocracy typically utilized the Spanish task system to organize captive African labor (Rivers 2000: 16, 65-66). Under the task system, captive African people were required to complete a task or tasks by the end of each day. Upon completion of their assignments, captives were allotted time to work plots, fish, hunt, and tend to other activities (Rivers 2000: 68). However, if tasks were not completed, per the

Fig 12. Twentieth century photo of former captive woman at Kingsley Plantation - Fort George Island, Florida, image courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. [Accessed February 16 2016].
enslaver’s demands, captive people would be punished accordingly, mostly through whipping (Rivers 2000: 63).

Spanish law allowed captive Africans to more readily achieve their freedom, own property, sue their owners in court, participate in court proceedings, and marry Europeans (Rivers 2000: 66). Additionally, enslavers often left Africans in charge of running their plantations. The territory transition from Spanish rule to American occupation brought on social and cultural changes to the region, which further subjugated the Black population both free and captive; eroding away many of their freedoms and much of their legal protection (Rivers 2000: 67). Perhaps the most notable vestige of Spain’s influence after the empire lost control of the territory to the United States was the continued use of the task system as the primary means of organizing captive African labor (Rivers 2000: 68).

**Emancipation and the Civil War**

The Civil War dismantled the institution of slavery in Jacksonville, Florida. At the start of the War in 1861, Jacksonville held roughly two thousand captive women, men, and children. During the War, Jacksonville lost nearly half of these captives to Union refuge (Rivers 2000: 230). African American troops “played a vital role in the Union policy of holding Jacksonville and controlling the St. Johns River” (Bartley 2000: 2). Moreover, the presence of Black troops along the St. Johns River compelled many captive people enslaved nearby to escape into Union territory (Bartley 2000:
2). Many of these runaways joined the Union and acted as “informants, guides, and river pilots” for the Federal government (Rivers 2000: 233; Bartley 2000: 2). In 1862, when African Americans were afforded the opportunity to fight in combat, hundreds of Florida’s African American men enlisted in Colored Infantries (Rivers 2000: 232). At the end of the Civil War in 1865, newly freed captives joined the small population of free Blacks and Black Civil War veterans; together they sought to quickly establish themselves in this new Southern economy (Bartley 2000: 2). Gaining access to education, land, voting, and employment had become paramount objectives for Jacksonville’s African American community (Ortiz 2005: 9; Bartley 2000: 2).

Reconstruction

Reconstruction lasted from about 1865 to 1877. It was a moment that gave Americans an opportunity to “rebuild” the nation and “redefine what it
meant to be an American citizen” (Rosen 2009: 11). African Americans across Jacksonville worked tenaciously to secure the freedoms that they were promised. During the Reconstruction era, African Americans migrated from surrounding Florida counties, as well as south from neighboring states, to Jacksonville to “take advantage of cheap land and economic opportunities” (Bartley 2000: 2). Newly freed, African Americans quickly “grasped the connection between economic justice and electoral politics” (Ortiz 2005: 9). African Americans in Jacksonville utilized American politics as both sword and shield in hopes that they might transform their Southern state into a fully integrated society; one in which African Americans could attain both legal and civic citizenship. However, in the century following the Civil War, their experience would be to the contrary.

In pursuit of their objectives, African American communities across the state mobilized and aligned themselves with the National Union Party, known today as the Republican Party, led by President Abraham Lincoln (Ortiz 2005: 10). After President Lincoln’s assassination in April of 1865, a national delegation of African Americans spearheaded by Frederick Douglass petitioned Lincoln’s successor “President Andrew Johnson for the right of suffrage” (Ortiz 2005: 10). African Americans in Jacksonville and Florida more broadly, understood that if they and their descendants were to secure “true freedom” in America, they must first secure the right to vote (Ortiz 2005: 10).
Although Black people in Jacksonville maintained a majority advantage in their city, and despite African American occupation of various political offices across the state; Florida, like many other Southern states was determined to keep its African American population from voting. Suppressing the African American vote was intended to prohibit African Americans from gaining full citizenship and adequate living wages rendering them “powerless” and as “poorly paid as possible” (Ortiz 2005: 11). African Americans who chose to fight for their right to living wages, voting, and land, were made targets for violence and further subjugation (Ortiz 2005: 11). For the next few decades following emancipation, African Americans and their White counterparts would struggle for control over “the meaning of freedom and the shape of Florida’s new economy” (Ortiz 2005: 11). Overtime, and with the influx of White northerner’s migrating into the South, the Republican party which had once empathized with the African American suffrage, was becoming a “white-controlled organization that excluded black citizens” from substantial political representation (Ortiz 2005: 11).

In 1868, Republican Harrison Reed, a migrant from Wisconsin was elected to serve as Florida’s governor. As such, Reed actively worked against African American suffrage and pushed to replace African American workers with European American laborers from Northwestern states (Ortiz 2005: 11). White residents and Florida Boosters like Governor Reed met recently emancipated African American communities with physical violence
and carefully orchestrated political attacks aimed at silencing African
Americans, obstructing their vote, and ultimately crushing the African
American suffrage movement in Florida (Jackson 2012: 456).

By 1870, Jacksonville’s African American population had become the
majority. The Black population totaled 3,989 while their White counter parts
totaled 2,923 (Bartley 2000: 2). Regardless of this numeric advantage “an
all-white government was elected” in 1876, this was the first time in eight
years, that Jacksonville’s African American community was completely
excluded from holding elected political positions within the city. Whites had
successfully regained political control of the local and state government
(Bartley 2000:1; Akin:124).

Political autonomy and employment opportunity were inseparable
facets of the African American pursuit of American citizenship. Florida
boosters such as governor Reed “associated equal citizenship with
insurgency, high taxes, and “wasteful” methods of small farming that
interfered with an imagined future of tourism, large farms, and extractive
industries (especially timber, turpentine, and phosphate mining)” (Ortiz 2005:
12). By the late nineteenth century, Florida had become a mecca for
American tourism and commercial interests. Known for its rail roads,
seaports, and citrus fruit, Jacksonville continued to gain prominence at the
expense of the Black masses who helped build this city.
Political and economic devastation coupled with social subjugation provided an opportunity for enterprising African Americans to profit from these circumstances. Rapidly growing in political and economic power among newly emerging African American aristocrats made their European American counterparts egger to suppress their influence, before African Americans achieved an absolute “supremacy” in the city’s “municipal affairs” (Akins 1974:138). In 1887, John Quincy Burbridge was elected mayor of Jacksonville (Akins 1974:127). In his victory speech, Burbridge expressed his empathy for African American suffrage (Akins 1974:127). He remarks, “I shall know no one on account of his color and I shall make no distinctions...The colored man can get justice from me as well as the white. Whenever he deserves it I shall do him justice. Why? Because they have rallied around us in this fight and have saved us from a government not of the people but of a clique...Had it not been thus, the opposition would have overridden us and driven us from the field (New York evening Post April 12, 1887) (Akins 1974:128).

On May 31st of that year, Mayor Burbridge adopted a new charter for Jacksonville City (Akins:128). The charter “extended the city limits to include LaVilla, Fairfield, most of Springfield and other predominately African American areas around Jacksonville” (Akins:128). This charter worked to secure and maintain white political dominance over the city’s African American residents. With the implementation of this charter, for the “first time in the community’s history, wards were adopted as units for the election of councilmen rather than the at-large system of representation” (Akins 1974: 129). Although African American voters made up a majority of Jacksonville’s
voting population, comprising of seventy percent of eligible voters within the city, this new voting law made it “impossible” for African Americans to gain political control of Jacksonville.

By 1895, Jacksonville had become the largest city in the state of Florida, and by the turn of the twentieth century, “more than 28,000 people lived within the city limits and thousands more occupied adjoining suburbs” and roughly half of them were Black (Jackson 2012: 460). Plessy v. Ferguson was a detrimental blow to African Americans in Jacksonville, and across the nation. The case brought the struggle to attain “interracial democracy” to a screeching halt. Legally, White and recently emancipated Black communities were no longer able to share legal protection, and public spaces equally (Baker 1994).

In many ways, Plessy v. Ferguson codified in law the exclusion of Black people from full American citizenship. Although the Federal government called for “separate but equal,” treatment of African Americans under the law, the African American experience under the constraint Jim Crow was by no means equal to that of their European American counterparts (Baker 1994). Roughly 85 percent of the city’s African American working force were unskilled laborers, while just 16 percent of the city’s European American population worked manual labor jobs (Jackson 2012: 457; Bartley 2000: 9).
In 1900, the City of Jacksonville spent $12.08 per head to educate White children and only $5.47 on the education of each Black child (Jackson 2012: 457). Additionally, African Americans could not patron the same hotels and hospitals as White residents and could not occupy public spaces in the same capacity. In his autobiography, James Weldon Johnson wrote that early twentieth century Jacksonville had become a “one hundred percent Cracker town” (Johnson 1933:45). However, despite the failure of reconstruction and the implementation of Jim Crow, early twentieth century Jacksonville, Florida gave birth to a bustling African American aristocracy filled with doctors, politicians, lawyers, and businesswomen and men. (Jackson 2012: 454).

**Jim Crow and the Rise of Jacksonville’s African American Aristocracy**

“The negro in Jacksonville has made wonderful progress in his efforts to adjust himself to the many demands of present day civilization. He is industrious, thrifty, and ambitious and striving in every way to reach the highest degree of development, commercially, religiously, socially, and educationally. He has made a wonderful beginning and no doubt the future will bring much greater accomplishments.” J. A. Thomas, 1926

How far is the Negro American today economically able to maintain a system of charitable relief for his own people? We can perhaps best realize these conditions by picturing a single community: Jacksonville, Florida


Self-sufficiency, entrepreneurship, and education were the hallmarks of Jacksonville’s African American community; and their social and economic achievements were acknowledged across the nation. Between 1900 and 1910, Jacksonville’s African American population almost doubled. Most
African American people in Jacksonville lived in one of eight neighborhoods: La Villa, Hansontown, Grand Boulevard, Durkeeville, Sugar Hill, Hogan Creek, Springfield, and Mixontown (Bartley 2000: 2).

LaVilla, and Sugar Hill were some of Jacksonville’s most famous and influential African American neighborhoods. LaVilla was established shortly after the Civil War by newly freed African Americans (Thomas 1997:4). While LaVilla had only a portion of Jacksonville’s early nineteenth century, African American population, it was the epicenter of African American businesses (Thomas 1997: 3).

Sugar Hill was established sometime during the late nineteenth century (Davis 2009), it was home to Jacksonville’s Black elite. Its residents comprised bricklayers, morticians, doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and many other professional people. Jacksonville’s African American aristocracy, “made remarkable economic strides” that strongly impacted the growth and development of Jacksonville’s
African American masses (Jackson 2012: 454). Many of them were followers of Booker T. Washington, formally educated, and self-made (Jackson 2012: 454). They accumulated vast amounts of wealth and conformed to the culture and customs, widely accepted by America’s White upper class. They enjoyed some the same types of luxuries as their white counter parts and lived in large lavish homes. “Well, I mean we were it. It's hard for you to conceive…how completely self-contained that world was. We could go weeks and never see another white person. We lived in an area called Sugar Hill…On the other side was Springfield. You'd see some white folks through there, but …our world was completely self-contained” (Interview of Participant 16, African American elder woman, 2002). Segregation provided “enterprising African Americans opportunities to engage in commercial endeavors that provided Blacks with the services and amenities denied to them by Whites” (Bartley 2000: 9).

One such example is the Afro-American Life Insurance Company (established in 1901). The company’s co-founders included entrepreneurs and community leaders such as, Edward W. Watson, Reverends Elias
Gregg, J. Milton Walden, Arthur W. Smith, Alfred W. Price, and James F. Valentine, and was spearheaded by Abraham Lincoln Lewis (Bartley 2000: 10). A.L. Lewis is perhaps the most well-known and celebrated African American mogul in Jacksonville, Florida. During his lifetime, Lewis maintained a significant amount of social influence in the community and acquired a substantial amount of wealth. He was undoubtedly the wealthiest African American man in the city. Participant 16 remarked, “the memories of this man are so important to me. I can still hear his voice. We'd go to, there was this ritual. You ate; you went to church; you went to the cemetery. You should go to the cemetery. It's out there on Moncrief in Jacksonville. I have a marker there. From there we'd go to the beach. This was from Easter to Labor Day. It was that ritual. As children we looked forward to this, seeing him” (Interview of Participant 16, African American elder woman, 2002).

A.L. Lewis was affiliated with social and political leaders such as Booker T. Washington and


### Fig 17. Event at the Clara White Mission courtesy of Crisis Magazine, 1942.

The Lewis family epitomized Jacksonville’s African American aristocracy.

Born March 29th in 1865, in Madison County, Florida, Abraham Lewis migrated from Madison to Duval “and immediately began investing in business ventures” (Bartley 2000: 10). A.L. Lewis’ business ventures were extremely profitable. Some of his most famous ventures included The Lincoln Golf and Country Club and American Beach. The Lincoln Golf and Country Club serviced North East Florida’s Black elite until it’s closing upon Lewis’ death in 1947. American Beach was another famous tourist attraction for African Americans (Bartley 2000: 10). In a 2002 interview, A.L. Lewis’ great grand-daughter remarked, “I was born in Jacksonville, 1935... That’s the same year the Afro got American Beach. I like to think they did it for me” (Interview of Participant 16, African American elder woman, 2002). American Beach was a “200-acre resort on the Atlantic coast near Jacksonville” it was the only beach available to African Americans living in Jacksonville (Bartley 2000: 10). By the 1920’s, Lewis had become a millionaire, earning roughly

Fig 18. American Beach Resort owned by the Afro-American Life Insurance Company courtesy of Crisis Magazine, 1942.
$1,000 a month and no African American in the state of Florida owned more property than he did.

The rapid growth of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company during the twentieth century spoke to the need among African American people to provide proper burial for their loved ones. Even “Mary McLeod Bethune realized the significance of black insurance and became a stockholder and a director of Lewis’s company” (Jackson 2012: 473). By 1902, the Afro-American Life Insurance Company had become “the cornerstone” of Black life in Jacksonville (Bartley 2000: 10). The Crisis magazine deemed it the “largest and financially strongest business institutions of the race” (Powell 1942: 9). Black aristocrats saw both the obligation and economic opportunity in meeting the needs of Jacksonville’s Black masses. Participant recalls remembers that the Afro-American Life Insurance company was heavily invested in the Black community. She
recalls that “the Afro sponsored clinics for the children whenever they got their premiums with the insurance company” and the company also “sponsored the big dance at Christmas time” (Interview of Participant 16, African American elder woman, 2002).

In 1901, African Americans were heavily affected by the Great fire. After the Great Fire of 1901, Jacksonville’s African American aristocracy came together to establish the Colored Relief Association. A relief effort that was spearheaded by Joseph Blodgett. Through the Colored Relief Association, African American aristocrats in Jacksonville provided the greater African American community with" food and clothing, transportation, jobs, temporary housing," and other necessities (Jackson 2012: 483). Other African American entrepreneurs such as Joseph H. Blodgett, Charles and Charlotte Anderson, Eartha M. M. White, James Craddock, Sylvanus H. Hart and Lawton Pratt achieved similar successes. Eartha M. M. White was perhaps the most well-known African American businesswoman in Jacksonville.

"The Clara White Mission was and still is the heart of the LaVilla area, and Ms. Eartha White, who was at that time one of the most prominent community leaders in the city ... she was a business owner...keep in mind she started the Eartha white nursing home and a lot of

other businesses” (Interview of Participant 8, African American elder man, 2015).

Not only was Ms. White a brilliant business woman, she was also a widely celebrated philanthropist. She used her fortune to financially support numerous civic service organizations meant to ameliorate the social and economic circumstances of Jacksonville’s African American masses (Jackson 2012: 482). In 1902, Eartha, along with her mother Clara White opened an Old Folks home for elderly Black folks. Eartha “served as the Home’s president and principal fundraiser” (Jackson 2012: 483). After her mother’s death, Eartha purchased the old Globe Theater and renamed it the Clara White Mission in honor of her late mother. The Clara White Mission provided room and board, food, as well as assistance for African Americans in need during the Great Depression and is still in operation today (Jackson 2012: 482). Additionally, White founded the Milnor Street Nursery, “a tuberculosis rest home for blacks (Jackson 2012: 483) and organized “a City Federation of Women’s Club, an affiliate of the National Association of Colored Women” (Jackson 2012: 483). It was quite common for African American business owners to own several enterprises. Another example is businessman, James Craddock. Like Ms. White, Mr. Craddock also owned various businesses.

Born in Alabama, businessman James Craddock, was known to his community as “Charlie Edd” the “numbers man” (Jacksonville 2012: 481). Craddock moved to Jacksonville, Florida in the early 1900’s, eventually
opening a business in 1921 (Jackson 2012: 481). James Craddock was a notorious entrepreneur in Jacksonville, in addition to his successful businesses on Broad Street he also owned a plethora of other successful enterprises including “the Charlie Edd Hotel on West Ashley Street, a Young Men’s Smoke Shop, and Uncle Charlie Edd’s Barbershop” (Jacksonville 2012: 481).

James Craddock was famous for providing Jacksonville’s African American community “with some of the best entertainment the city had to offer” (Jackson 2012: 481). Craddock’s Little Blue-Chip night club, which was located on 426 Broad Street in downtown Jacksonville. He later moved the club to 518 Broad Street and renamed it the New Blue Chip (Jackson 2012: 481). In addition to the New Blue Chip, he “operated a billiard parlor and cabaret at 520 Broad Street” (Jackson 2012: 481). Craddock’s entrepreneurial talents created multiple sources of income from which he was able to build a small fortune. His many businesses provided “hope of an independent and self-sufficient economy within the African
American community” (Jackson 2012: 481). However, his most famous business venture was Two Spot nightclub which he opened on Christmas Day in 1940.

Two Spot was located on 45th Street and Moncrief Road (Jackson 2012: 481). Two Spot night club was known as “the finest dance palace in the country” owned by an African American, and “the mecca of all in the vicinity seeking entertainment and relaxation (Powell 1942: 14; Smith 2010: 97) Two Spot night club was a two-story dance hall with hardwood floors “that could accommodate up to 2,000 dancers at a time. Another 1,000 people could be seated on the main floor and additional seating was provided on the mezzanine level which ran around three sides of the vast hall” (Jacksonville 2012: 482). Craddock also had ornate dining rooms and included “six tourist rooms”. Two Spot night club was “equipped with every modern convenience” (Powell 1942: 14).

 Even after achieving the success of Two Spot, Craddock continued to open businesses including a loan office and general store “which sold “luggage,
jewelry, musical instruments, clothing and shoes, among other things” (Jackson 2012: 482). Like other prominent and wealthy African American business people in Jacksonville, Craddock was heavily involved in investing in Black Jacksonville. During the Great Depression, Craddock used his money to provide food for African Americans who could not afford to feed themselves or their families until the federal government stepped in to provide those services (Jackson 2012: 482).

Several distinguished African American lawyers lived in Jacksonville, including Judson Douglas Wetmore, Joseph E. Lee, John Wallace, F. Cornelius Thomas, John Mitchell, George E. Ross, T. G. Ewing and Samuel McGill, and author of the Black National anthem ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing’ James Weldon Johnson. These attorneys provided legal protection for Jacksonville’s African American community. Like Black Lawyers, African American doctors also found themselves working hard to improve their community, “while simultaneously trying to make a comfortable living” (Jackson 2012). Although their small number had grown, it was not enough
to match the growth of Jacksonville’s Black population. By the 1940’s there were an estimated 10 physicians serving roughly 67,000 African Americans (Bartley 2000: 15). Nevertheless, Jacksonville’s Black elite flourished.

Crisis Magazine highlighted the great economic successes of Jacksonville’s African American business women and men, stating that for almost 75 years the city of Jacksonville has been “the gateway to business and commerce for Florida Negroes” (Powell 1942: 9). The expansion in Jacksonville’s trade and industry was pioneered by the city’s African Americans residents. Crisis magazine noted that since the emancipation,

“Negroes in Jacksonville have set the pace for other parts of the state in their courageous venturing into various types of business. The earliest experiments were largely confined to retail merchandising. Later on, more daring individuals lunged ahead, step after step, to organize and operate investment companies, insurance companies and backs” (Powell 1942: 9)

The aftermath of the depression during the early 1920s was detrimental to Jacksonville’s African American community (Powell 1942: 9). By then nearly 6,000 African Americans evacuated the city, moving north in search of employment opportunities. The Black economy was suffocating and numerous African Americans

Fig 24. Mrs. Anna Reed’s Tailor Shop located on 519 Broad Street courtesy of Crisis Magazine, 1942.
American businesses “were forced to close shop” due to the gross loss of “patronage and the failure to secure a financial brace-up from banking institutions” (Powell 1942: 9).

Although many African American businesses were forced out of business, the crippled state of Jacksonville’s African American economy was not a permanent one. African American businesswomen and men quickly began working on restoring their economic stability (Powell 1942: 9). By the early 1940s, Jacksonville’s African American community owned and operated 590 businesses in the city (Bartley 2000: 10). Which included:

“Two bakeries, eight barbecue stands, sixteen barbershops, fifty-five amusement places, twenty-seven beauty parlors, twenty-four confectioneries and sundries, nine smoke shops, three tailoring establishments, one upholstery, one employment agency, four department stores, eight hotels, three drug stores, two shoe stores, sixteen shoe-repairing and shoe-shine parlors, one book store, four sewing shops, one poultry and farm produce store, fifteen building contractors, one produce store, fifteen building contractors, one radio shop, forty-nine cafes and restaurants, three printing establishments, seven real estate brokers and salesmen, one business college, one photograph studio, two newspapers, three school transportation busses, eight funeral homes, one fruit stand, one florist, three fish markets, eleven garages and service stations, thirty-five grocery stores, one hosiery store, two hat cleaning establishments, twenty-seven wood-ice and coal dealers, one jewelry store, one music store” and one “unique establishment” called “Florida Fresh Water Bar” which supplied fresh water to all ships entering and leaving Jacksonville’s harbor (Powell 1942: 9-10)
These businesses employed thousands of African American people. However, these economic strides did not exist without its challenges. By the 1940s, Jacksonville City had become a white majority, with European American residents making up nearly sixty percent of the total population, while African Americans made up about forty percent. Black owned businesses relied almost entirely on African American patronage, and as their numbers dwindled, African American businesses suffered. Black consumerism was vital to the sustainability of Jacksonville’s African American economy.

Not only did African Americans endure exclusion from various institutions, critical services, educational, and employment opportunities; they were also denied participation in recreational activities. Thus, in addition to providing African Americans with necessities and essential services, Jacksonville’s Black aristocrats also “created a number of venues for black recreation during the period of Jim Crow segregation” (Jackson 2012: 483).
Many of the same African American aristocrats that provided the Black masses with necessities also brought entertainment and recreation.

“Ashley and Broad was the cultural center for all the Black people in town, that’s where the Black theatres were, the night clubs, and then from Ashley and Broad on the way up to Posise[sic] street that’s where a lot of the commercial activities for Blacks were. You had a hotel and you had tailor shops, you had restaurants, and it was just the center of life. Where all black folks it was there cultural center and that’s where their entertainment was matter of fact my grandfather had a, was a fisher man and he had a wharf which is where the Main street bridge is now, to the left of the Main street bridge he had a wharf there and he use to supply all of the fish for all of the hotels down there matter of fact I use to ride with him sometimes when he would deliver the fish” (Interview of Participant 2, African American adult man, 2014).

Rather than becoming disillusioned by the façade of freedom and equality, Jacksonville’s African American aristocracy became the antithesis of the caricatured Blackness that was so often produced and reproduced by White America. African Americans who obtained social and economic advancement “utilized both in order to improve the lives” of the African American masses. In fact, Jacksonville’s African American business women and men played a key role in the growth and development of Jacksonville’s African American communities, socially, politically, and economically. Much of the “vocational training received by African Americans was provided by and utilized in Black owned businesses” (Bartley 2000: 9). The influence these women and men had in Jacksonville stretched well beyond their lifetimes.
Here, African American business endeavors provided African Americans with “private spaces” (Jackson 2012: 455) wherein African Americans could negate “battered dignity, nurture positive self-images, sharpen skills, and demonstrate expertise” (Jackson 2012: 455). Ultimately, the social and economic advancements that these aristocrats attained “helped to place African Americans in a better position to pursue civil rights in the subsequent decades” (Jackson 2012: 487).

**Desegregation and The Civil Rights Movement**

By the 1950s, there were roughly 84,000 African Americans living in Jacksonville Florida (Crooks 2004: 18). By this time, African Americans were the largest minority group in the city, comprising nearly 42% of the city’s total population (Crooks 2004: 18). As stated previously, most African Americans living in Jacksonville, Florida were low income families (Crooks 2004: 18). Many of them “lived in substandard housing, attended overcrowded schools, [and] worked in poorly paid jobs” (Crooks 2004: 18). The final ruling in Brown v. Board of Education Topeka (1954) was a monumental step towards civil rights for African Americans across the nation. Despite the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn segregation in America’s schools, the Duval County school board as well as the local city government continued to keep African Americans from attending predominately White schools in the county (Crooks 2004: 18).
Fully aware of the Supreme Court ruling, African Americans quickly mobilized to address this infringement. In the winter of 1959, African Americans responded with organized marches, protests, and sit-ins (Crooks 2004: 18). African Americans “began picketing downtown stores” and demanding service at businesses such as “F.W. Woolworth, J.C. Penney, W.T. Grant, and S.H. Kress” from which they had previously been excluded (Crooks 2004: 18) Jacksonville’s African American youth played a huge role in bringing attention to social injustice in the city.

Young African Americans “assembled” at local churches to prepare for demonstrations (Crooks 2004: 19). They were led, in large part, by a man named Rutledge H. Pearson, a local high school teacher, native of Jacksonville, and adviser to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s Youth Council (NAACP Youth Council) (Crooks 2004: 18-19). Many youths within the NAACP Youth Council were also students and former students of Pearson (Crooks 2004: 18-19). Among Jacksonville’s African American youth, Mr. Rutledge became affectionately known as “the Pied Piper of integration” (Crooks 2004: 19). Young demonstrators were persistent. They pursued their cause daily and dedicated their time to protest after school during the week and on the weekends (Crooks 2004: 20).
As time passed, “downtown merchants began to complain about losing business because of the demonstrations” (Crooks 2004: 20). To remedy the situation Jacksonville’s citizens began to propose ways to desegregate stores and restaurants in downtown Jacksonville (Crooks 2004: 20). However, this effort “required the support of Mayor Burns” who also served as both the “police and fire commissioner” (Crooks 2004: 20). His positions gave him a significant amount of power and control over enforcing desegregation in Jacksonville. However, Mayor Burns refused to lend his support to African Americans who endeavored to achieve fair treatment and equal protection under the law. He opted to stand idly by and withhold police enforcement as African American demonstrators were violently attacked by Klansmen and “white rabble-rousers” (Crooks 2004: 20). Still, African Americans pressed on with their demonstrations. Black activists and clergy men pleaded with local government officials for the protection of African American demonstrators, many of whom were children (Crooks 2004: 21).
Their requests continued to be denied by law enforcement (Crooks 2004: 20-21).

On August 27, 1960, young African American demonstrators congregated at the Presbyterian Church located on Laura Street in downtown Jacksonville to prepare for a demonstration (Crooks 2004: 20). These young protesters were met with violence. Klansmen and “axe-wielding segregationists” confronted the unarmed African American protesters, with the intent of causing physical harm and silencing the movement. This day became known as “Axe-Handle Saturday” (Crooks 2004: 20-21). Some African Americans took it upon themselves to protect their children from violent segregationists. From there, racial tensions magnified (Crooks 2004: 20-21). Eventually, African Americans in Jacksonville were able to achieve both Federal recognition of their civil liberties and the dissolution of legal segregation in Duval’s public schools. Today, African Americans are still the city’s largest minority group and Jacksonville retains “the largest concentration” of African Americans “in Florida” (Bartley 2000: XV). Although African Americans gained civil rights back in 1964, for many African American residents Jacksonville remains a deeply racist city. One elder commented that,

“...there has not been much genuine change. Appearance has changed, you don’t see the signs anymore...colored only...white only, you don’t see those anymore, but the vestiges and the attitudes are just as strong today if not stronger”
This sentiment is echoed by several other residents interviewed within this study.
Chapter 5. The Evolution of African American Cemeteries and the Black Funeral Industry in Jacksonville, Florida

“No Negro…can live content unless he is assured a fine funeral when he dies”

-Hortense Powdermaker 1969

There is a growing body of literature on the evolution of American cemetery spaces. However, few scholars have addressed the peculiar evolutionary process of African American cemeteries, despite the widely accepted notion that burial practices, death, dying, and cemeteries spaces have played an integral role in shaping African American life and culture. This chapter explores the evolution of African American cemeteries in Jacksonville, Florida. The temporal range of this chapter spans from slavery to the Civil Rights era. Here, I address the specific histories of these African Diaspora burial spaces and situate their development within a broader American context.

The origins of African American cemeteries in Jacksonville, begins with the community’s captivity in North East Florida. Since slavery, death and burial has been at the center of the Black experience for African Americans living in this city and the United States more broadly. Because of this centrality, African Americans in Jacksonville have maintained an intimate relationship with their cemetery spaces throughout the twentieth century and into the present day. Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil
Rights era that followed it, were pivotal moments for Jacksonville’s African American community. Consequently, these moments were also critical turning points for the community’s various cemetery spaces.

Historic African American cemetery spaces like Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive are reflective of the social and economic changes that have occurred within the African American communities that surround them. This chapter explores the interconnectedness of these spaces and their respective communities. Despite several waves of African American migration in and out of the city, these spaces have continued to remain in use. The perpetual use of these spaces well into the twenty-first century is evidence that these sites have not been abandoned by the community. It also speaks to the unwavering relevance of these spaces to Jacksonville’s African American community from the early twentieth century to the present.

_Cemeteries and Burial in Jacksonville, Florida 1600-1821_

During the antebellum era, the state of Florida played a key role in the buying and selling of African captives. The peninsula’s proximity to the Caribbean Sea, made it a catalyst for the illegal importation of African captives into the United States. Because the Spanish Empire initially controlled Florida, ‘slave’ trading remained intact within this territory, while being abolished in neighboring states. By the time, Florida became a territory of the United States in 1821, it had already become a well-established port
for illegal ‘slave’ trading. In 1896, W.E.B Du Bois became the first scholar to outline this important connection in his work *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1683-1870*. However, few scholars since then have explored this connection (Landers 2008: 343).

Thousands of Africans arrived on the Florida coasts as captives and many were sold illegally to planters in neighboring states. Still others remained in bondage in Florida until their death. Although the first Africans to reach Florida came to the peninsula as conquistadors not as captives, most colonial period African burials in North East Florida were indeed those of captive Africans. Captive Africans in Jacksonville, and the African Diaspora more broadly, commonly buried their dead on the plantations that they worked or in segregated communal burial grounds designated specifically for Africans and their descendants.

Hundreds of thousands, of African descended people perished during their journey to Florida, and many of those that survived the Middle passage died in captivity on the peninsula. Some labored as domestics, still many others were forced to labor on plantations and estates both large and small. Here, they produced indigo, sea-island cotton, sugar, citrus fruit, and other goods. The harsh conditions of captivity often cut short the life spans of captive Africans. During the antebellum period, African communities were often responsible for the burial of their fellow bondsmen (Slone 1991).
Surviving community members prepared the bodies, constructed the coffins, dug graves, and performed ceremonies for their dead.

Plantation and small estate type burial grounds dominated the antebellum period, and most captive African communities buried their dead within these types of spaces (Slone 1991). Many of Jacksonville’s antebellum period African Diasporic cemeteries were confined to the plantations or estates upon which captive Africans worked. Additionally, these plantation cemetery spaces were often created and utilized in isolation by their respective communities. Burial sites such as these were often marked by landscape features rather than tombstones and fencing. Each plantation in Jacksonville likely included this type of cemetery space. However, archaeologists have yet to uncover many of these sites.

Planter families, like the Kingsley's, often had burial plots of their own, which were also located on the plantation or estate. These cemeteries were created and utilized separately from those of captive Africans. Unlike the burial grounds of captive Africans, which were communal in nature, the planter elite usually buried only family members in their cemeteries. These small plots were often surrounded by fences and contained stone or wooden grave markers and in some cases, vaults (Slone 1991). At Kingsley Plantation, Gertrude Rollins, a former resident of the estate, noted the presence of such a cemetery. Rollins was born on Fort George Island in
1872, during the 1950s she recorded her childhood memory of the planter's cemetery during her time on the island. In her memoirs, she writes,

Note on Ft. George:

“During the early days of the Hotel Co., a man named MacIntosh, and his daughter arrived. They claimed to be related to the former Captain Mcintosh, and they had with them two marble tablets with the names of two women who they claimed had died on the Island. My father pointed out the site of the former white cemetery to the west of our house and told them that he had asked all descendants of these people to remove their relations and that when none of them came forward to do so, he had leveled the plot and buried the stakes of whatever marked the graves. He had planted his orange grove all about this spot but never actually over the former cemetery. The Mcintosh’s were not at all satisfied with this” (Wilson 1952)

Coincidently, Gertrude’s mother, Hannah Rollins offers one of the only two existing historical descriptions of the captive African cemetery. In an early twentieth century account, Ms. Hannah Rollins describes the captive African cemetery. She writes,

“Tabby quarter houses. 36 in half circle beginning to decay. 9 families remained … open sandy road to house from quarters except large oak – under it a still visible darky graveyard.” (Rollins n.d.)

The second known description of the captive African cemetery comes from an 1878 Harper’s New Monthly Magazine article; it states:

“The grave-yard where several hundred slaves were buried in the old plantation days, was between the house and the Negro quarters, and is now ploughed over, and yields heavy crops. It was a short shrift and a hurried burial the poor slave received. The graveyard was placed there by Captain Kingsley, as tradition states, in order to prevent the slaves, who were exceedingly superstitious, from leaving their cabins at night to steal corn from the barn.” (Benjamin 1878)
The captive African cemetery at Kingsley Plantation is the earliest known cemetery for Africans and their descendants in the city of Jacksonville. Harper’s 1878, article is perhaps the earliest commentary on how African Americans in Jacksonville cared for their dead and utilized their cemetery space. However, contrary to the magazine’s claims, archaeological excavation has revealed that the captive African community at Kingsley Plantation took a considerable amount of care in burying their dead.

The memoirs of Gertrude Rollins suggest that the planter’s plot had been both established and utilized prior to the Kingsley’s arrival on the island by the McIntosh’s who owned and operated the plantation from 1804 to 1814. Furthermore, there is no evidence that suggests that the Kingsley family ever buried within the planter’s plot. Due to the estate’s expansive history of slavery prior to the Kingsley’s occupation, it is possible that the captive African cemetery was established and utilized by captive African people long before the Kingsley family arrived on the island.

Although there was some archaeological excavation of Kingsley Plantation’s captive African cemetery back in 2010, little is known about the cemetery’s inception, use, and discontinuance. Furthermore, the boundaries of the cemetery and how many burials it contains also remains unknown. However, the individuals that were exhumed did reveal some information about this cemetery. First, the clothing items and coffin hardware associated with these individuals suggests that these captive Africans were probably
interred sometime during the Kingsley's occupation of the site (1814-1834). Secondly, the age range among these individuals suggests that various generations of Kingsley's captive community were buried in this cemetery. Indeed, the captive African cemetery at Kingsley Plantation was created under the conditions of slavery. However, unlike the more extensively studied antebellum period cemeteries in the North America and the Caribbean, captive Africans at Kingsley Plantation were not restricted and surveilled in the same ways as would be common on other plantations throughout British North America.

Like many other plantations throughout Spanish America, Kingsley Plantation operated according to a task system. This meant that the Kingsley's permitted their captives to cultivate plots of land and hunt game for supplemental sustenance if they completed their tasks for the day. If these tasks were not completed, then captives were punished accordingly. While restrictions and harsh punishments certainly did exist as reality for this captive community, captive Africans at Kingsley are often noted for speaking African languages, practicing their indigenous customs, and carrying guns.

During the nineteenth century, Zephaniah Kingsley was an avid merchant. He traveled back and forth from Africa to the Americas and was often absent from this plantation as well as his other estates. Thus, he frequently left his African born wife Anna in charge of managing his estates. Kingsley Plantation encompassed the entire island and was manned by a
labor force of roughly, 60 captive Africans. The captive African community at Kingsley Plantation worked to produce citrus fruit, corn, sugar cane, and sea island cotton. Most of these captives were African born or one generation removed Africa. Anna also employed African born drivers to assist her in managing this labor force. This arrangement was not uncommon throughout North East Florida, and Spanish territories more broadly.

While Anna certainly viewed the African community that she held captive at Kingsley Plantation as property and exploited them for the Kingsley family’s profit; she also demonstrated a considerable toleration for the community’s various languages, beliefs, and cultural practices, which were often openly expressed on this plantation. Considering that Anna herself was African, and her own children were only one generation removed from Africa, it is likely that she better understood the cultural expressions of the Africans she held captive and did not view these cultural expressions as disruptive or threatening to the stability of the plantation’s regime.

Collectively, both Anna and Zephaniah allowed (and in some cases encouraged) the captive community to form bonds, marry, live as families, and maintain their African identities. In one instance, Zephaniah purchased an African man from the coast, who later became known as Gullah Jack10.

10 In 1812, Gullah Jack was listed as one of the Africans missing or dead as a result of the Native attacks on Kinglsey’s Locust Grove Plantation. It is not clear as to whether Jack escaped during these attacks or Kingsley actually sold him prior to the warfare, however, Jack later reappears in the historical record as a captive on a plantation in South Carolina, still practicing African
Upon his initial purchase, Kingsley immediately noticed that Gullah Jack adorned himself with various objects and carried a pouch. Kingsley concluded that in his homeland Jack was a medicine man. Nevertheless, he and Anna allowed Jack to keep his charms and wear them openly on their estate. Additionally, he notes that Jack continued to practice his indigenous customs once he arrived at Kingsley’s Locust Grove estate\(^\text{11}\). In Jacksonville, Gullah Jack became a skilled carpenter and Kingsley came to view him as one of his most valuable commodities (Stowell 2010). After the Seminoles attacked Kingsley’s estate in 1812\(^\text{12}\), Gullah Jack disappears from Florida. Zephaniah lists Jack as killed or stolen property because of the attacks. Gullah Jack later reemerges in the historical record as an African conjurer in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1822, he is tried and hanged as a co-conspirator in the orchestration of a revolt along with Denmark Vesey.

The notion that Africans and their descendants developed their cemetery spaces to resist strong attempts made by their captors to “strip” them of their African culture and delegitimize their “familial and community root work. In 1822, he became an integral part of the Denmark Vessey insurrection; playing a large role in recruiting African born captives to join; and crafting a plethora of protection charms and amulets for battle. The insurrection was suppressed and Gullah Jack along with Denmark Vessey and numerous others were charged and hung for their plot.

\(^{11}\) Shortly after the Seminole attacks, Kingsley brought the remaining captives from his Locust Grove estate to Kingsley Plantation in 1814.

\(^{12}\) The Seminole Tribe in Florida frequently incorporated Africans into their community
relationships” has been a long standing among scholars (Slone 1991: 15).
However, the social environment at Kingsley Plantation, like many other
plantation sites in Jacksonville and throughout Spanish Florida, stand in
stark contrast to the British and American plantation regimes that have come
to characterize the legacy of American slavery.

There is no doubt that African languages and cultures were very
much alive on Kingsley Plantation. Members of the captive African
community certainly buried their fellow bondsmen according to African
traditions. Although captive Africans at Kingsley may have openly expressed
themselves culturally, the materiality of these cultural expressions was
undesirably limited by their condition of captivity. On all the Kingsley’s
estates, the lives of captive Africans and their children were solely
predicated upon the will of the captors that owned them. The protection for
captive Africans under Spanish law was limited. Moreover, no labor regime
could ever mitigate the harsh realities of the condition of captivity for Africans
and their descendants in the Americas. Among captives at Kingsley
Plantation, burial of the dead was presumably one of the most meaningful
rituals. Within captive communities, “mortuary rituals” were “social
recognitions” of the deceased’s humanity and the “important role” that the
individual played in the lives of the family and community members that
survived them (Holl 1994: 168).
Long after the Kingsley family evacuated their Fort George Island estate, African Americans continued to inhabit this plantation. Historical documentation reveals that well into the 1880s, African American tenant farmers continued to occupy the dwellings and preform the labor tasks which had once belonged to the African community held captive by the Kingsley’s. Although African Americans continued to inhabit Kingsley Plantation, given the historic descriptions of the captive African cemetery in the 1870s, it is not likely that this post-emancipation community continued to use the captive African cemetery to bury their dead. However, archaeology has yet to confirm the extent to which this cemetery was utilized. To date, Kingsley Plantation remains the only antebellum period cemetery in Jacksonville City that has been excavated. Furthermore, there has been no other additional archaeological excavation of any other historic African American cemetery spaces in the city.

“There are literally hundreds of areas like Yukon throughout Florida, former African American communities, and whether through renewal, displacement, or violent rampage, such as Rosewood, these communities have been erased...Now it’s time to resurrect them...”

Herman Skip Mason (longtime Jacksonville resident)

In addition to Kingsley Plantation’s captive African cemetery, ethnographic evidence suggests that the Yukon Cemetery located at the Naval Air Station at Jacksonville (NAS JAX) may contain captive African burials that are contemporaneous with the graves uncovered at Kingsley Plantation in 2010. However, the date range for Yukon Cemetery’s establishment and discontinuation also remains unknown. Unlike the burials at Kingsley Plantation, there has been no excavation of the burials at Yukon Cemetery (McEachin 2001:12). After the Civil War, African Americans remained in the area surrounding Mulberry Plantation and established the Yukon community. Much of the recently emancipated community remained in the area and continued to work for their former captor. According to a historic preservation report prepared by Joel McEachin, Yukon Cemetery is the only visible remains of Mulberry Grove plantation and the historic African American community that once surrounded it.

There are few surviving historical records for Mulberry Plantation. However, it is well known that this plantation estate was in operation during the Kingsley period. In 1939, Duval County donated most of Mulberry’s estate to the United States Armed forces for the purpose of building a naval
facility (McEachin 2001:9). Many of the community’s original buildings have been demolished, and a substantial portion of Yukon’s African American community have been displaced and or relocated to other parts of the city (McEachin 2001:10). Today, burial within this historic African American cemetery has been discontinued. However, descendants of the Yukon community continue to visit this graveyard on occasion.

**American Cemeteries 1830s-1850s**

In 1821, Florida began its immediate cultural and political shift away from Spain. By the 1830s, American communities across the nation were rapidly expanding their populations, and by default, looking for new ways to bury their dead. This marked a turning point for American cemetery spaces. American towns began to move away from domestic and churchyard burials and towards rural cemetery spaces. Unlike domestic and churchyard cemeteries, rural cemeteries were far removed from the heart of the city and existed on the outskirts of the community (Sloane 1991: 44).

Rural cemeteries were large opulent spaces that incorporated French and English gardening into the American industrial landscape. More than providing aesthetics, rural cemeteries provided a solution to the often 

Fig 28. Sculpture on tomb, Mount Olive Cemetery, picture taken by author.
overcrowded domestic and church cemeteries that preceded them (Sloane 1991: 44). The commercialization of cemeteries also began gaining prominence during this century. Americans could begin purchasing individual and family lots for themselves as well as for their posterity.

In contrast, to these American trends, and apart from small pockets of free Black communities, most early nineteenth century African Diasporic communities were still in bondage. Thus, their burial spaces continued to be largely confined to plantations and private estates. Free African Americans living in Duval County likely buried their dead in centrally located communal or church yard cemeteries. These types of historic cemeteries were commonly utilized by various enclaves of free African American populations throughout the city. Examples of these types of cemeteries in Duval County include the Lee-Kirkland Cemetery, Gravely Hill Cemetery, Cosmos, Clifton Cemetery, and Old St. Joseph’s Cemetery.

By 1845, Florida had been American territory for over two decades and Floridian cemeteries had arguably become more reflective of American cultural sensibilities. During the 1850s, American communities across the nation “began to organize associations” and families decorated the graves of their loved ones with “bigger, more artistic monuments” (Sloane 1991: 64). In 1852, nearly twenty years after the Kingsley’s fled Florida for Haiti, Old City Cemetery began gaining prominence as a communal burial ground for African Americans in Jacksonville.
Old City Cemetery (1852)

By the 1850’s American communities in general “began to retreat from their close relationship with death” (Sloane 1991: 95). Old City cemetery, previously known as Willey Cemetery, Protestant Burying Ground, Oakland Cemetery, and Duval Cemetery, is one of the oldest existing communal burial places for African Americans in Jacksonville. In 1949, local historian Philip May reported that burials in Old City cemetery may have occurred as early as 1827 (Thompson 1997). While it is unclear if these burials included people of African descent, it suggests that Old City cemetery was utilized as a burial ground prior to 1852.

The land for Old City cemetery was gifted to the city of Jacksonville by a man named Captain Charles Willey with the purpose of providing municipal burial space for Jacksonville’s citizens. Historical records reveal that in 1869, Mr. Willey sold the lands surrounding cemetery to a Mr. Jesse Cole. Soon thereafter, Mr. Cole “filed a plat for a town he called Oakland” (Thompson 1997: 3). Oakland eventually became one of eight predominately African American...
neighborhoods in Jacksonville. Its boundaries included two acres of land located near Willey’s cemetery and a 132’ by 420’ piece of land called Freedman’s Cemetery, known today as Old City Cemetery. In 1928, the city listed two Duval Cemeteries, one on East Union Street and the other on Washington Street, with the latter labeled (c), presumably for colored.

According to, Mr. May “the main body of the cemetery” contained “walled areas assigned for use by special groups—Jews, Masons, Odd Fellows, and other fraternal and religious groups” (May 1949: 4). He notes that there is a segment dedicated to African Americans he writes “marked by a fence…lies the area formerly designated as a Freedmen’s Cemetery” in this area, he writes, the bodies of the towns “colored citizens” lie buried (May 1949:4). Additionally, he states that this “northeast corner of the main plot” which was used to bury “members of Negro families who have lived in Jacksonville since its founding” made up roughly one-eighth of the Old City cemetery (May 1949: 4). Because this cemetery was a communal burial ground and was opened to African descended people prior to emancipation it is likely that captives are buried alongside free African Americans here as well.

According to ethnographic evidence collected by local resident Phillip May during the 1940s, African American residents buried within this cemetery were segregated from European American residents as was custom in most Florida towns (Thompson 1997: 3; Jackson 2012: 457). It is
important to reiterate that during this time most African Americans in Jacksonville were continuing to bury their dead on the plantations and estates where they were forced to labor (Thompson 1997: 3). However, coinciding with the emancipation of captive communities and the development of Jacksonville into a metropolis, African American burials began to occur more frequently in church yard and communal cemeteries, rather than on plantations and private estates (Thompson 1997: 3).

After the Civil War, a portion of the segregated African American plot within Old City Cemetery was given to Confederate soldiers. Mr. May writes that “the final democratic touch to the cemetery was given in the selection of this area for the burying of the Confederate dead from an unused section of the cemetery that had been assigned to the Negroes. On three sides, those closest to the Confederate soldiers are their slaves and the children of their slaves” (May 1949: 9). Following emancipation, African American communities throughout the city bought and developed other lands for burying their dead. However, Old City cemetery remained a prominent burial place for African Americans well into the 1940s (May 1949: 4).

Towards Modern Cemeteries

During the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, American perceptions and treatment of death began to evolve. This evolution was informed by industrialization, economic, and population growth. Large populations meant a larger number of deaths and a greater
need to prepare for and manage burials. This was especially true for American growing metropolis areas, the increase in the number of burials and decrease spatial availability quickly became a sanitation issue. The professional management of death and burial within American society coincided within these growing demands of the populations which warranted the legal regulation of American burial (Sloane 1991: 2).

In addition to prompting the evolution of cemeteries, it sparked the growth and development of public institutions like hospitals and funeral homes. During the twentieth century, hospitals were introduced to the American public as an appropriate place to die. Additionally, funerals increasingly began taking place at funeral homes rather than at private residences (Sloane 1991: 2). This incited Americans to become increasingly disconnected from death and dying within their communities, and thus cemetery spaces. The act of burying the body of a loved one no longer required family members to be involved in burial preparation or labor to dig a grave shaft and purchasing a cemetery lot became a “simple business transaction” (Sloane 1991: 2).

Memorial parks were extremely popular throughout the twentieth century. Memorial park cemeteries were made more accessible to the public and reflected the aesthetics of American suburban landscapes (Sloane 1991: 6). Cemeteries established during the early twentieth century, such as those within the Moncrief cluster are not only bound to the communities that
surround them, they are inseparable from the businesses and business people that govern or once governed them. Within Jacksonville, cemeteries reflect racial attitudes as well as class distinctions. During the early 1900s, African Americans in Jacksonville were severely limited in where they could bury their dead. Today, African Americans in Jacksonville bury their dead in all kinds of cemeteries, although many of the community's members continue to patron African American owned funeral parlors.

**The Development of the African American Funeral Industry in Jacksonville, FL.**

The American funeral industry began in the 1880s (Smith 2010: 39). For African Americans in Jacksonville, the funeral industry was "a promising avenue for economic independence and social uplift in a racially divided world" (Smith 2010: 18). From slavery to emancipation, European Americans were largely unconcerned with commemorating the lives of captive Africans and their descendants. The twentieth century proved to be no different. From the nineteenth century to the first few decades of the twentieth century, African American death occurred mostly in private, often domestic spaces. Consequently, African American burials remained largely private affairs (Smith 2010: 32).

Faced with more than 60,000 Civil War casualties, Americans on both sides of the war were tasked with finding a way to accommodate such an overwhelming amount of burials (Smith 2010: 32). In response to the death
toll amassed during the war “embalming gained sudden and widespread popularity as an effective means to preserve the corpse for shipment home” (Smith 2010: 32). The implementation of these preservation methods marked the beginning of modern mortuary science and altered the ways in which African Americans participated in burial (Smith 2010: 18). The development of the African American funeral industry ran parallel to its European American counterpart, however the two industries differed in terms of “economic stability” and the cultural backgrounds from which they drew upon (Holloway 2003: 16-19).

For recently emancipated African American communities, “death and funerals have been inextricably intertwined with life and freedom” (Smith 2010: 17). The social and economic advancement opportunities that Jacksonville’s Black funeral industry provided highlights how funerary practices among African Americans perpetuated ideals of “hope and freedom within black communities” (Smith 2010: 39). Ultimately, Jacksonville’s African American funeral industry was born out of the need to provide proper burial for African Americans in the segregated South.
Heavily impoverished, newly emancipated African Americans were largely excluded and financially forced out of healthcare and burial services. Additionally, the high mortality rate for African Americans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century not only made this industry an absolute necessity, it also made it a very lucrative market. During Jim Crow African Americans were, excluded from burying within European American cemeteries. Longtime funeral director Participant 9 asserted that Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries were “developed because of segregation, we [African Americans] couldn’t bury people in Evergreen and if you did you paid dearly and also you were treated differently because of the color of your skin…” (Interview of Participant 9, African American elder man, 2015). Capitalism ultimately fueled the African American funeral industry. However, when Black aristocrats took on the task of meeting these needs, “they were responding not only to a business opportunity” but also to cultural obligation (Holloway 2003:2; Smith 2010: 18).

Fig 30. Mr. and Ms. Lawton Pratt’s house located on 582 West 8th Street, courtesy of Crisis Magazine, 1942.
By the 1880s, Jacksonville’s Black funeral industry was on the rise (Smith 2010:18). The African American funeral industry encompassed Black owned and operated funeral homes, cemeteries, and life insurance, companies. Since its beginning, Jacksonville’s African Americans funeral industry has been deeply embedded in “issues of class and social status” (Holloway 2003:23). It was born out of racial violence, “competition”, “maltreatment” and “segregation”, and this “racially defined sociocultural environment” supported its growth and development (Holloway 2003: 21; Ebony Magazine 1953). During the twentieth century, African Americans in the funeral industry were some of the wealthiest African Americans in the country (Holloway 2003: 24; Ebony Magazine 1953).

Jacksonville’s African American funeral industry was largely inhabited by middle and upper class African Americans afforded by private businesses. Under Jim Crow laws African American undertakers were undoubtedly met with the “aggressive challenges of racism in arranging for the burial of black folk” (Holloway 2003: 17). Jacksonville’s African American funeral industry “was a significant dimension of a newly emerging black middle
class” (Holloway 2003: 23). In 1953, Ebony Magazine’s article “Death is Big Business” noted that African Americans in the funeral industry were not only wealthy, they were also some of the “most influential men in Negro Society.” (Ebony Magazine 1953).

**African American Burial Leagues**

Benevolent and Fraternal societies preceded Black owned insurance companies like Afro-American Life Insurance. In fact, the Afro-American Life Insurance company began as a burial society. Participant 16, a descendant of A.L. Lewis remembers, “There was no way to bury black folks in those days. They'd pass around a hat, several of them got together at Bethel Baptist Church, that beautiful church downtown Jacksonville. Each man put up a hundred dollars and they started the burial society” (Interview of Participant 16, African American elder woman, 2002). Many of these organizations were established immediately following emancipation. Societies such as the Masons, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Jacksonville Negro Welfare League and St. Joseph Aid Society served as auxiliaries for the
city’s African American residents. For a premium, these societies would provide healthcare for the sick and injured, and proper burials (Jackson 2012: 485).

Through benevolent societies African Americans were able to “capitalize” on the “business potential” of the Black funeral industry (Smith 2010: 40). The services these organizations provided were not only critical to the growth of the funeral industry, but they also provided economic support for Black owned banks (Smith 2010: 40). In fact, in 1914, Charles Anderson opened and operated a bank on the first floor of the Masonic Temple called Anderson and Company (Jackson 2012: 477-475). In addition to assisting with burial “these early organizations promised to provide dignified funeral rites and a cemetery plot” (Smith 2010: 40). Obtaining land in which to inter Black bodies proved to be an arduous task for these organization and frequently required “significant” amounts of “capital” (Smith 2010: 40). Other large expenses that were related to these events such as “embalming” and “funeral services” were also often covered (Smith 2010: 40). The African Americans who founded and operated these early organizations, were usually financially established prior to engaging in these endeavors (Smith 2010: 40).

The decade bridging the 1880s and the 1890s was the height of benevolent societies and burial leagues (Smith 2010: 41). Because funerals were such a central part of African American life, this aspect had a
“particular appeal” within African American communities especially for those who were living in poverty and would probably not be able to afford a proper burial for themselves or their loved ones otherwise (Smith 2010: 41). In the 1920s, African Americans in Jacksonville frequently died from diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, and heart disease (Bartley 2000: 14). By 1945, African Americans were notorious for “having the worst health care in the city”, averaging a mortality rate roughly 50 percent higher than that of their European American counterparts (Bartley 2000:14). Additionally, there were not enough physicians in the city available and or willing to treat African Americans (Bartley 2000: 15).

Securing a proper burial was a paramount objective for many twentieth century African Americans. However, many prominent African American intellectuals, including Jacksonville Florida’s own native son James Weldon Johnson criticized this widespread African American practice. In 1938, James Weldon Johnson wrote that in African American communities “burying the dead has called for a financial outlay so far out of proportion to that used in caring for the living as to make the ‘high cost of dying’ a live question” (Johnson 1938:33). Similarly, in his speech at the Tuskegee institute in the 1890s, Johnson’s contemporary Booker T. Washington stated that “The trouble with us [African Americans] is that we are always preparing to die. You meet a white man early Monday morning and ask him what he is preparing to do, and he will tell you that he is
preparing to start a business. You ask a colored man at the same time, and he will tell you that he is preparing to die” (Washington 1898:41). This arrangement eventually made way for the Afro-American Life Insurance company in 1901.

**African American Funeral Directors**

African American funeral homes were an important part of burying African Americans. The institutionalization of death and dying in American society created a niche market for Black owned funeral homes in Jacksonville. In 1880, Wyatt Geter, “a local Blacksmith” founded Totson Funeral Home, Jacksonville’s first African American undertaking establishment (Bartley 2000: 10). Founded over a century ago, Geter was in operation well into the twenty-first century (Bartley 2000: 10). Almost twenty-five years after Geter established his funeral home, Rosa Glover and her husband J.C. Holmes founded the Holmes and Glover Funeral Home in 1904, which was originally located on Broad Street (Bartley 2000: 10). After Holmes’ death in 1918, Rosa remarried Thomas Walker, a local Reverend. Walker expanded the business “by purchasing a two-story building at 621 West State Street” (Bartley 2000:10). The company has since relocated to Brentwood avenue and remains in operation today.
Jacksonville’s Black funeral industry was enmeshed in race politics (Smith 2010:47). For example, on November 12, 1918, in Jacksonville Florida, a local African American paper reported that a group of African American chauffeurs “who owned and operated their own cars, held up” the funeral procession of one of their own “when a prominent Colored family uncompromisingly employed a white undertaker, overlooking the race men in the same business”. The Black chauffeurs argued that because the affluent African American family had chosen to employ a white undertaker they should go ahead and have “all whites handle the affair” (Race Chauffeurs Block a Funeral Procession, Cleveland Advocate, November 16, 1918). Shortly thereafter the story gained national attention, running in “black newspapers across the country” (Smith 2010: 46). These Black chauffeurs were protesting the burial in the name of race loyalty. This incident illustrated the paradoxical predicament facing Jacksonville’s African American funeral industry (Smith 2010: 47).

In her book To Serve The Living, author Suzanne Smith highlights this paradox, she writes that negotiating “both the costs and the benefits of the
strict Jim Crow segregation that divided most of America into clearly marked worlds of “white” and “colored” were central to the stability of the Black funeral industry (Smith 2010: 47). According to Smith, on the one hand “the racism that fueled the pervasive segregation led to all types of discrimination that limited African Americans’ ability to succeed socially, politically, and economically” and on the other hand “the strict boundaries of the racially divided world of early twentieth-century America meant that African funeral directors and other black entrepreneurs had clearly defined consumer market that was, supposedly, all theirs” (Smith 2010: 47). The financial prosperity of Blacks who built their fortunes on the funeral industry was “complicated” by “the reality that their business success” was so intricately interwoven with the social, political, and economic limitations brought on by Jim Crow (Smith 2010: 45).

Ultimately, the nature of segregation was, “in the best interests of the black business people”, because it secured a stable customer base for African American entrepreneurs (Smith 2010: 47). Race politics weighed heavily on Jacksonville’s African American funeral industry, and in “reality, the loyalty of the African American consumer was not a given for the black entrepreneur” (Smith 2010: 47). African American business women and men in the funeral industry had to earn their customer loyalty through quality service and actively advocating for “economic cooperation of all people of color” (Smith 2010: 47). Their efforts were a vivid illustration of “both the
possibilities and limitations” of Black entrepreneurship during Jim Crow (Smith 2010: 39).

African American intellectuals were perhaps the largest proponents of this crusade for Black self-sufficiency. Not only did African American intellectuals lend their voices to guiding the development of an independent and self-sufficient Black economy, especially within lucrative economic sectors like the Black funeral industry. Black intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, began to “champion the idea of group economy as a key platform for racial uplift” (Smith 2010: 44).

In Jacksonville, like many other southern communities, “White violence, including the vicious practice of lynching, was often complicit in too many black deaths, and whites where often as disrespectful to black bodies in death as they were in life” (Holloway 2003: 16). White owned business that did provide services to African Americans usually limited their scope to just embalming and “frequently subjected their black consumers to
disparaging and demeaning treatment” (Holloway 2003: 21-22). African Americans who were patrons at white owned undertaking businesses were forced to endure “[b]ack doors, basement entries, casual and careless nighttime and after-hours services” (Holloway 2003: 21).

The “cultural importance” of viewing the deceased within the African American community “required” morticians to pay close attention to and be skilled in reconstructing “the appearance of the deceased” (Holloway 2003: 26). Because of this cultural preference among African Americans embalming remained an important facet of the Black funeral industry (Holloway 2003: 26-27). From the early twentieth century to the present, African American violent deaths have been rapid within Black communities across the nation. The “embalming of black bodies often requires a repair job that masks the residue of violent death” (Holloway 2003: 27). Black Funeral directors were often charged with cleaning up the evidence of violent death and suffrage. Racial violence and terrorism towards African Americans in Jacksonville was at its peak in the early twentieth century. In 1920, the state of Florida led the nation in the lynching of African Americans with 80 lynchings per 100,000 (Tolnay and Beck 1995: 37-38; Rogers and Denham 2001: 162).

Generally, White undertakers did not participate in burying or holding funeral services for African Americans. This was also the case in Jacksonville, Florida; White undertakers, like much of the White community,
was largely uninterested in commemorating the lives of African Americans that lived in their community. Systemic discrimination limited the opportunity of social and economic upward mobility for many African Americans in Jacksonville. Furthermore, few interventions were made to ameliorate the circumstances of Jacksonville’s African American masses. Overwhelmingly, African Americans occupied “the bottom of the socio-economic ladder” in Jacksonville (Bartley 2000: 14). Not only were the achievements of Jacksonville’s African American aristocracy atypical for people of color during that time, they created avenues of opportunity and committed themselves to uplifting Jacksonville’s African American communities.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century African American intellectuals dedicated their efforts to illustrating the struggles of Black folk in the South who were endeavoring to rebuild their communities and uplift themselves socially and economically. During the twentieth century, these scholars focused heavily on the concept of racial uplift. Racial uplift was a notion that penetrated all aspects of African American life and culture. African Americans wrote extensively on the ways in which African Americans could improve their plight. This commentary even extended to African American funerals and cemetery spaces.

*What historic African American figures are buried in these cemeteries?*
The following section was prompted by community participants. Nearly all the participants expressed an interest in knowing more about who is buried in the historic African American cemeteries located off 45th street and Moncrief Road. Some community participants expressed that they would want to know more about cemetery records for genealogical purposes, others showed an interest in knowing the names and biographies of some of the important and elite African Americans that shaped this city. Participants in this study have expressed an interest in knowing exactly who is buried within Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, Mount Olive, and the city’s other historic African American cemeteries more broadly. In addition to presenting some information gathered in previous archaeological field studies, below I have highlighted ten notable African Americans who were prominent figures in Jacksonville city, some of which have been previously discussed. This section offers a brief summation of their contributions and gives the name of the cemetery where they are interred.

**Old City Cemetery: Charlotte Anderson**

Charlotte Anderson was a local business woman and matriarch of one of Jacksonville’s most powerful aristocratic families. Ms. Anderson was born into slavery on Sessions Plantation near Savannah Georgia in 1844 (Jackson 2012: 476). After the Civil War, she traveled South to Jacksonville, Florida. In 1870, she married her husband John Anderson; a man who was also former enslaved on Sessions Plantation. Charlotte gave birth to the
couples seven children, among them six boys and one girl. After the death of her husband John Anderson, Charlotte started a laundry business, which she operated from her home. She used her earnings to support her family and invest in real-estate. Ms. Anderson went on to open a general store as well as a warehouse. Her holdings expanded to include roughly forty properties. The empire that she and her children built was nationally renowned. Charlotte Anderson eventually married A.L. Lewis’s father Robert Lewis.

**Old City Cemetery: Mother Kofi**

*Ms. Laura Adorkor Kofi, affectionately known to the community as “Mother Kofi” was a famed minister in Jacksonville, and Florida more broadly. Mother Kofi was an alleged Ghanaian princess, who while living in Ghana had been told that she would one day “be a messenger in a distant land” (Patterson 2013). This prophecy prompted Kofi to migrate to the United States and join the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) spearheaded by Marcus Garvey. Ultimately settling in Jacksonville, Florida, Kofi quickly gained notoriety in the UNIA rising to the title of*

Fig 35. Photograph of Mother Kofi (1990s) courtesy of The Florida Times Union.
field director within the organization. As a member of the UNIA Kofi traveled across the state of Florida delivering speeches.

Thousands of people attended her speeches and in just three years she had amassed a following of roughly 25,000 people. She soon started her own organization the African Universal Church and Commercial League (AUCCL). Kofi’s newly founded organization aimed to teach the gospel and rehabilitate Jacksonville’s African American community in preparation for their return to Africa. She based her organization in Jacksonville, Florida a bustling city with a strong African American economy and port well suited for African trade relations. Located off Soutel Drive and New Kings Road she established a small village like community, Adorkaville. In 1928, Kofi and Garvey had a very public separation. In his widely circulated Negro World paper, Garvey issued a damning notice, he writes,

“There is a woman traveling in Florida and Alabama claiming to be one Princess Coffey of Laura Coffey of Africa. This woman is a fake and has no authority from me to speak to the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Should she attempt to raise funds from any members or division in the name of the organization or with the pretense of my authority, have her arrested. She has no connection with the organization”

Marcus Garvey
President-General
Ultimately, Garvey denounced the charter of Jacksonville’s UNIA division (Division No. 286) largely run by Kofi and banished any existing UNIA members that still supported her efforts. (Hill et al. 1990: 124). In 2013, Piko Horne whose family has been affiliated with the AUCCCL church for decades remarked “That day when she was assassinated is a very sacred day to us”. (Patterson 2013). In March of 1928, Kofi was fatally shot in the head while preaching in a Miami pulpit. Kofi’s body was brought back to Jacksonville. Nearly 10,000 people came to pay their respects to Mother Kofi. Her body was wrapped in green, black, and red silk and entombed in Old City Cemetery.

*Old City Cemetery: Dr. Alexander Darnes*
Florida’s first African American medical doctor, Dr. Alexander Darnes. Dr. Darnes was born into slavery in St. Augustine Florida, after his emancipation he pursued his education at Lincoln University, he went on to graduate from Howard Medical School in 1880. Upon graduation Dr. Darnes returned to Florida, he set up practice in Jacksonville. During this time Jacksonville’s African American community was plagued by high rates of mortality, infant mortality, and disease and very limited access to health care. Dr. Darnes took on the task of improving the vital statistics of his community until his death in 1894. Darnes’ successful career in Jacksonville “paved the way” (Jackson 2012: 468) for other African American physicians in Jacksonville such as James Seth Hills, Arthur Walls Smith, John Darius Crum Jr., and William Commodore Smalls.
James W.C. Pennington was born into slavery around 1807. At the age of 19 he escaped his captivity in Maryland as a teenager and began pursuing his education. He became Yale’s first African American student and attended classes at Yale Divinity School during the 1830s (Pennington 1849; Webber 2011). In 1834, he became a member of the American Anti-slavery Society. In 1841, Pennington published one of the earliest history books on African Americans titled *A Textbook of the Origin and History of the Colored People* (Pennington 1849; Webber 2011). During the antebellum period, Pennington became an abolitionist, and he was among the American delegates to the Second World Conference on Slavery in London in 1843 (Webber 2011). In 1849, he published his memoir “Fugitive Blacksmith,” in London, that same year Heidelberg University in Germany
awarded Pennington an honorary doctorate (Pennington 1849; Webber 2011). Pennington settled in Jacksonville, Florida where he lived until his death. He is buried in Old City Cemetery.

**Memorial Cemetery: MaVynsee Betsch**

MaVynsee “Oshun” Betsch, affectionately known to her community as “The Beach Lady”. She was born to John Thomas Betsch Sr. and Mary Frances Lewis Betsch on January 13, 1935. She is the sister of famed anthropologist Johnnetta Betsch Cole and musician John Betsch. She is also the great-grand daughter of Abraham Lincoln Lewis, and her maternal ancestors include both Anna and Zephaniah Kingsley. She was a prominent community leader and activist who dedicated her life and fortune to American Beach’s environmental conservation. On September 5, 2005, MaVynsee Betsch passed away in her American Beach home. She is buried in Memorial Cemetery along with her kinsmen.

**Cosmos Cemetery: William “Roscoe” Bartley**

William Bartley was a descendent of Ester Bartley, a former captive African on Kingsley Plantation and friend of George Washington Carver. Bartley was born in Jacksonville, Florida. In 1935, Mr. Bartley graduated from Old Stanton High school in Jacksonville, Florida. By 1939, Mr. Bartley was enrolled in the School of Business Administration at Tuskegee Institute. Promptly after graduating, he was hired as an executive in A.L. Lewis’
company as the head of the social security department. In 1942, Bartley left the Afro-American Life Insurance Company for the United States Armed forces, he returned to his alma mater to pursue flight training at the Tuskegee Army Airfield in Alabama. After Bartley completed his training, “he was placed in the 332nd Fighter Group that later merged with the 99th Fighter Squadron where he served for four years, three of them in Italy” (Kerr 2011). After receiving an honorable discharge in 1946, Bartley became a captain in the Air Force Reserve. By the late 1960s Bartley had ended his career as a United States Airman and began working as a business manager at Edward Waters College in Jacksonville. Nearly twenty years later, Mr. William Bartley began a life of retirement. In 2011, he passed away in sleep at the age of 94. He was buried in his family plot out at Mill Creek.

**Old City Cemetery: Clara & Eartha MM White**

Eartha Mary Magdalene White was another very successful business woman. She was a founding member of the National Negro Business League and was heavily involved in the Jacksonville branch the Florida State Negro Business League. Her mother Clara White was formerly enslaved in Jacksonville still, Eartha went on to pursue her education at several
institutions including Stanton High School, the National Conservatory of Music, Cookman Institute, and the Florida Baptist Academy. Ms. Eartha was the first woman to work for the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. Like Charlotte Anderson, Eartha White also Invested in real-estate around the city of Jacksonville. She also owned various businesses across the city, including a taxi company, a department store, a laundry, and employment agency, and a janitorial service, collectively her businesses were worth an estimated one million dollars. Eartha sold her businesses and spent the rest of her life serving the community. She passed away in 1971 and was buried in Old City Cemetery.

Memorial Cemetery: Ervin

Louis Dargan Ervin was born in Darlington, South Carolina, in 1873. He moved to Jacksonville, Florida, where he made his living as a skilled mason. In 1901, Ervin became an agent for the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. During his 63 years with the Afro-American Life Insurance Company he eventually rose to the vice-president. In 1938, Ervin became the
second home owner to build a house on American Beach. Ervin was entombed in his family's mausoleum, located in Memorial Cemetery.
Chapter 6: Archaeological Site Descriptions of Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive.

“There were developed because of segregation, we [African Americans] couldn't bury people in Evergreen and if you did you paid dearly and also you were treated differently because of the color of your skin....”

- Participant 9, Funeral Home Director at A.B. Coleman

This chapter provides a brief description for each of the following archaeological sites: Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive Cemeteries. This chapter explores the how African Americans came to inhabit the Moncrief area, charts the history of each cemetery site, and evaluates the status of their perpetual care. While there are several research projects that have influenced this study, this chapter will center on a review of The Moncrief Cemetery Evaluation Project, which has directly preceded this dissertation project. In 1996, the city of Jacksonville commissioned Environmental Service Incorporated (ESI) archaeologists to evaluate Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst and Mount Olive cemeteries.

This study was the result of a joint effort between ESI archaeologists, The Center for Historic Cemeteries Preservation, Florida, and the Historic Preservation Section of Jacksonville’s Planning and Development Department. The archaeological component of this project was conducted by ESI archaeologists Vicki Rolland and Adam Hoyles, under the supervision of

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13 The Center for Historic Cemeteries Preservation is based in Tallahassee Florida.
senior project manager Marsha A. Chance. The project consisted of
surveying each of the cemetery sites, mapping burials, creating keys for the
location of graves, determining the sites eligibility forth the National Register
of Historic Places, and providing recommendations for future preservation
efforts. A history of these cemetery spaces was compiled by Historians
Sharyn Thompson and Althemese Barnes of The Center for Historic
Cemeteries Preservation. I have utilized this report to highlight prominent
architectural structures in these spaces, illustrate the changes in the physical
state of these cemeteries, and examine commemorative practices within the
African American community across time.

The ESI project is the first scholarly attempt to address the decline in
the maintenance of the Moncrief cluster. It highlights specific preservation
issues and threats to the integrity of these cemetery sites and explores the
cultural continuity of burial practices among African Americans in
Jacksonville from slavery to the late twentieth century; through surface
archaeology, oral history, and documentary evidence. The details of this
fieldwork can be found in the Moncrief Cemetery Evaluation Project report.
The current study aims to: 1.) provide a brief overview of the Moncrief
Cemetery Evaluation Project’s initial findings and 2.) expand on the findings
of this research.

**General Environment**
Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries are estimated to have been established nearly a century ago. Evidence from historical documentation and oral histories suggests that these cemeteries were established prior to the African American residential areas that now surrounds these sites. There are two neighborhoods that are associated with these cemeteries: Royal Terrace and 45th & Moncrief. Today these two neighborhoods are occupied by a predominately African American community. For the purposes of this study, these areas will be referred to collectively as the Moncrief area (APD 2004).

Fig 43. Map showing the location of the cemeteries along Moncrief, printed in (Thompson 1997), courtesy of the City of Jacksonville.
The origins of the Moncrief area can be traced to the development of an early twentieth century resort. During the 1870's, Mayor of Jacksonville, Peter Jones acquired vast amounts of property around Moncrief. Decades later, Jones developed this land for tourism. Within the first decade of the twentieth century, he constructed a park which included a baseball field, bathhouses, a restaurant, bowling alley, dancing pavilion, and a racetrack which catered to a European American constituency. Mayor Jones also expanded the roadways in this area which resulted in the establishment of Moncrief Shell Road; Jacksonville City's third paved road (after Plank Road and Talleyrand Avenue). Ultimately, this stimulated economic growth and the expansion of residential neighborhoods around Moncrief Road.

Nevertheless, Jones' venture was short lived, and all his properties were defunct by 1911 (APD 2004: 3).

The remnants of Jones's resort at Moncrief was later transformed into a swimming pool for Jacksonville's African American community. Life-long resident Participant 2 remembers the changing developments to the land. He recalls,

"It was nothing but woods out there when I was a little… when I was small matter of fact that place didn’t start building up till around the 50’s and 60’s and it was a rural area and the buses actually stopped at Moncrief an 45th street the city bus only run that far and it turned around and went back to town because that was the end of the city limits so all of that area on Moncrief and 45th, that area was woods and Tulane road and it was on the right hand side of Moncrief road from Moncrief and Edgewood avenue on the right hand side from
there all the way to...all the way up to Lem turner all of that was White. And on the Left-hand side of Moncrief road all the way up to US1 that area was black, so it was sort of like the dividing line between Black and White.” (Interview of Participant 2, African American elder man, 2014).

In its early days, the Moncrief area of Jacksonville was well known for the role it played in the city’s entertainment industry; and at its height, Moncrief was a source of wealth for prominent African Americans in the city.

“Yes the cemeteries where there because what happened was when we’d ride the bus all the way out there to the end to 45th and Moncrief then there was a place called Eartha White down on Moncrief Road where they had a pool ...you had to pass the cemeteries to get to this pool where people would go swimming and a block from there, there was another place called the Two-spot, which was a big night club auditorium where Black entertainers use to come from all over the world and entertain there like Cab Callaway, Louis Jordan, Ella Fitzgerald and all of those big Black entertainers use to come back there so yes I am very familiar with it cause I had to walk from the bus stop all the way down there.” (Interview of Participant 2, African American elder man, 2014).

By the early 1960s, much of these recreational attractions were shut down and the last of the old bathhouses were demolished. In addition to the disappearing recreation and entertainment city officials, local news outlets, and residents began to report that the cemeteries on Moncrief were in decline. Since then, the Moncrief area has become notorious for its numerous abandoned buildings, lots, and homes, “disinvestments in infrastructure and commercial services”, high crime rates, homicide, unemployment, and low rates of homeownership (APD 2004). It is now
considered one of the most impoverished areas in the City. The residential areas that surround the historic African American cemeteries at Moncrief play an integral role in shaping these spaces both in the past and present. In turn, these historic cemeteries encapsulate the social and cultural history of the community that surrounds them. Moreover, community perceptions of these cemeteries are linked to the ways in which residents have and continue to make meaning from these spaces.

**Archaeological Site Descriptions**

“I did a lot of burying in Sunset, Pinehurst. In Mt. Olive Cemetery …1,500 graves” (Interview of Participant 16, African American elder woman, 2002).

Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mt. Olive are located on what use to be a private estate owned by James Seymour Pickett (Thompson1997: 7). The original boundaries of Pickett’s estate (often referred to as “Pickett’s subdivision” in historical documents) was expansive.
and located near Jones’ late nineteenth century resort (Thompson 1997: 7). In 1884, control of Pickett’s property had passed to his son James A. Pickett. Pickett’s son divided the estate into lots and began selling off the parcels of land. Several of these parcels were collectively developed into Memorial Cemetery. After successfully establishing Memorial Cemetery, Memorial Cemetery Association began to develop nearby parcels of land into what is now Pinehurst and Sunset Memorial cemetery. Each of these cemetery sites possess diverse, wide-ranging artifact assemblages and yet undeniably share similar social and cultural histories.

**Memorial Cemetery Established in 1909**

Memorial cemetery is located at the intersection of Moncrief Road and Edgewood. It is estimated to be about 14.26 acres and contains approximately 25,000 African American burials. Sometime between the late 1800s and the early 1900s, a local man named Leo Benedict (a treasurer at Benedict and Pollack Co., a dry goods store that was once located on West Bay Street) acquired a portion of the Pickett’s estate. In October of 1909, Mr. Benedict had Duval County survey and plat the land, which appeared on record as Memorial Cemetery. Early twentieth century city directories state that Memorial Cemetery was roughly 4 ½ miles Northwest of the city (1910; 1918:31). Memorial Cemetery’s headquarters was located within A.S. Castellano’s office, a real-estate company (Thompson 1997: 5). These
directories also listed Mr. “Abram Lewis” (presumably Abraham Lincoln Lewis) as the Memorial’s secretary and manager (Thompson1997: 5).

In 1911, Mr. Benedict relinquished possession of Memorial Cemetery and transferred ownership to the Memorial Cemetery Association. The Memorial Cemetery Association enlisted the Afro-American Life Insurance company to operate and maintain the cemetery. The association then divided the cemetery into 302 plots, 283 of these plots were subdivided into 8 grave spaces, the remaining 19 spaces were subdivided into four grave spaces. Shortly thereafter, the association’s headquarters were relocated to the Afro-American Life Insurance Company building, 402 Broad Street in downtown Jacksonville (Duval County Plat Books 13:91 and 8:19). By this time, Abraham Lincoln Lewis had become president of both organizations.

During the early twentieth century, Memorial cemetery served as the premier final resting place for Jacksonville’s African American community. In 1997, Participant 13, who had worked in Jacksonville’s African American funeral industry for over 65 years at the time of his interview in 1997, recalled that during the 30s and 40s “Memorial was considered the best cemetery” for burying African Americans (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). In 1916, Memorial cemetery had expanded to include an additional 9 acres. A year later in 1936, the Memorial Cemetery Association’s property holdings had grown to included Sunset Memorial and
Pinehurst Cemeteries. By December of that year Athe Memorial Association (which the Lewis family had a controlling interest in) was disbanded. However, the Lewis family continued to own the property privately until 1986 (Thompson1997: 5-6). In that year the Lewis family transferred ownership of the Memorial, Sunset Memorial and Pinehurst to Memorial Cemetery Incorporation, a local non-profit corporation headquartered at 24 East Sixth Street. After Memorial Cemetery Inc, ran out of the funds required for perpetual care of the cemeteries, the City of Jacksonville agreed to take over the upkeep of Memorial (as well as the Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive). Today, Memorial Cemetery’s ownership status is partially municipal. However, all the burial plots that have been sold to residents over the decades are considered privately owned lands. Although these plots are privately owned, residents assert that portions of the cemetery were encroached upon by commercial development. One resident remarked, “If you look on the Moncrief side of the cemetery, some land has been stolen from the cemetery. Because there were three houses along there, up until about the 40s” (Interview of Participant 14, African American elder woman, Fig 45. Ervin Family Mausoleum, picture taken by the author.)
Memorial Cemetery is considered one of the City’s earliest burial grounds for twentieth century African Americans. Today, this cemetery continues to be utilized primarily by African Americans. As stated previously, the Lewis and Ervin families have mausoleums here.

“My grandfather, Louis Dargan Ervin, was the first agent for the Afro. He was a brick mason by trade but became the first agent and he went on up to be Vice President. He built the house that I’m living in in Jacksonville, 1470 Evergreen Avenue. And he also built an ocean front house in American Beach. So far, it’s been determined and verified by Mr. Drumming, who is the oldest living resident down there, that it was the first house built on American Beach… so, all the Ervins, that will be three generations, that are buried in there… On the outside of the mausoleum I think there are still nine spaces. Buried outside is a baby of mine born premature, called her Sandy. I have a son-in-law, Craig Gordon, who is buried to the front of the mausoleum. There isn’t a marker, but he’s out there…” (Interview of Participant 15, African American elder woman, 1997).
In the 1997, ESI report, both archaeologists and historians noted that this cemetery had fallen into disrepair and was poorly maintained.

**Sunset Memorial Cemetery Established in 1917**

Sunset Memorial Cemetery is located on the corner of Moncrief Road and Edgewood Avenue directly across the street from Memorial Cemetery. It encompasses 5.35 acres and contains approximately 3,500 burials. This property originates from Sunset Park in addition to part of Pickett's Subdivision. According to Participant 14 “Sunset did not really start until [the] late 30s and 40s” (Interview of Participant 14, African American elder woman, 1997). Participant 13 shares a similar sentiment in his interview, stating that “Sunset wasn’t even thought of then [when graves were $15 in Pinehurst and $20 in Memorial] It grew up in weeds. In later years, I was on Beaver Street at Carter’s. I would have up to fourteen and fifteen funerals on Saturdays” (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). According to the ESI archaeological report, Sunset

![Fig 48. Langley Mausoleum, picture taken by the author.](image)
Memorial Cemetery also appears on the 1917 USGS quadrangle map, suggesting that this cemetery existed at least a decade prior to the 1930s.

However, the narratives of Participant 13 and Participant 14, suggests that although Sunset Memorial cemetery began appearing on maps as early as 1917, it did not gain significance as a burial space until the 30s. The Langley and Craddock families are buried there in large Mausoleums. In later years, then owner James Lewis’ permit was suspended, due to problems properly maintaining the cemetery.

**Pinehurst Cemetery Established in 1928**

Pinehurst Cemetery is located on the Northside of Moncrief Road. This cemetery is estimated to be about 8.09 acres and contains an estimated 3,000 burials. The Moncrief Cemetery Association originally plated Pinehurst in 1928. Participant 13 recalls that Pinehurst was an “ordinary”, “less expensive” cemetery that catered to working class and low income African American residents (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). Participant 14 remarked that “…Pinehurst and Memorial stated about the same time. But Pinehurst was for people who didn’t have much money” (Interview of Participant 14, African American elder woman, 1997). Subsequently the ownership of Pinehurst was transferred to the Lewis Family in 1936, then again on May 20th, 1986, to the Memorial Cemetery Incorporation, when Abraham Lewis’ son, James Lewis signed a quit claim deed relinquishing ownership of cemetery. Along with Memorial and Sunset
Memorial, Pinehurst also fell into disrepair upon the dissolution of its governing entities.

**Mount Olive (Memorial Park) Cemetery**

Mount Olive Cemetery is located just north of Moncrief Road, near the intersection of Castellano Avenue and West 45th Street. The cemetery is roughly 11.07 acres and contained roughly 5,000 graves. Mount Olive Cemetery was originally owned by Nell A. Stewart. Stewart transferred the ownership to James Craddock in December of 1946. Affectionately known by the community as Charlie Edd, Mr. Craddock was a prominent business and philanthropic figure in the community. As Participant 13 remembered, “Charlie Edd was a racketeer” who “lived on Ashley Street” downtown (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). According to Participant 13, prior to being used as a cemetery, Mount Olive was used for farming, he remarked “Now Mt. Olive Cemetery, that used to be a hog pen” (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). Mr. Craddock maintained ownership until 1954. In 1954, James Craddock transferred ownership to George D.
Wood who remained the owner until 1984. The cemetery is currently owned by the Mount Olive Cemetery Association which is located at 531 Osceola Street Jacksonville, Florida 32204 (presumably now defunct).

Additionally, during the 1990s the Mount Olive Cemetery Association hired a permanent maintenance staff to clean the cemetery and do maintenance upkeep. Regardless of the Cemetery Associations efforts to maintain Mount Olive, ESI archaeologists noted that this cemetery was also being poorly maintained and in a state of disrepair. The graves within Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries include both marked and unmarked burials. These cemeteries include early twentieth century architectural features. Within these cemeteries, the gravesites of African Americans provide a tangible record of African American history that is sometimes unaccounted for in the historical record. This is especially true for African Americans who lived through slavery, pursued liberty in the early years following emancipation, and endured Jim Crow during the early twentieth century. While many of the older graves lack

Fig 50. Lord’s Prayer Sculpture in Mount Olive cemetery, picture taken by the author.
headstones or markers, graves dating to the late nineteenth century, provide archaeologists with a written record for African American communities of the past. Specifically, chronological data and kinship ties that may be missing from historical documentation. This includes birth and death dates, ages, names, and in some cases, professions and kinship relations. For centuries, African Americans across the United States could not obtain official documents such as marriage licenses, birth certificates, and death certificates. For many African American communities nationwide, cemeteries serve as the last existing historical records for those past communities (Mortice 2017).

For Jacksonville’s African American communities this includes infant births and deaths, which often when unrecorded in this historical record if the baby did not make it past its first year of life. The cemeteries for free and recently emancipated African Americans often include headstones, many of which were handmade. The cemeteries on Moncrief display a variety of handmade and hand pained headstones. As American cemeteries began to grow into larger commercialized enterprises and burial regulations became more restricted headstones and markers also became more uniformed among the American public, including African American communities. Although African American cemeteries have in many ways conformed to broader American trends, they continue to display some of the community’s oldest burial traditions. The 1997 ESI report maintains that Memorial, Sunset
Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive have fallen into a state of disrepair due to community neglect and the dissolution of the entities that once governed these spaces. Of these four historic sites, Memorial Cemetery is the only one to have received recognition as a historic landmark. Although the ESI research team has pursued applications to get these sites listed on the National Register for Historic Places, none of these applications have been successful. However, a “Designation Application and Report regarding to Proposed Designation of the Memorial Cemetery was completed in August of 1992, to declare the cemetery as a city of Jacksonville Landmark.
Chapter 7: Analysis and Interpretation

“Where is the cemetery within the context of the Black community?”

(Interview of Participant 4, African American man, 2013)

This chapter formally responds to the research questions outlined in Chapter 2 and contextualizes Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive by comparing the material culture of these spaces to other historic African American cemeteries in Jacksonville. I situate these historic cemeteries within a broader American context and explore the ways in which African American cemeteries in Jacksonville, Florida reflect the maintenance struggles of historic African American cemeteries more broadly.

The research questions addressed within this chapter were created in collaboration with community participants. Using the oral histories of African American residents, the archaeological record, and documentary evidence, this chapter provides an interpretation and analysis of the state of Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries. I analyze both the presence and absence of material culture within these spaces. Despite the diverse material lives of Jacksonville’s African American residents, these sites share proximity and similar circumstances under which they were created and developed. These sites, like so many other historic African American cemeteries, connect the lived experiences of the city’s past communities to those of the present (Tillet 2012: 5). Whether living on the North, South, East, or Westside of Jacksonville, African Americans in this
city experienced slavery, segregation, oppression, disenfranchisement, displacement, racism, violence, and the relentless threat of death collectively (Holloway 2003: 6). The four cemetery sites foregrounded by this project reflect those collective experiences.

**How are African American residents in Jacksonville commemorating their dead?**

I have observed the matriculation of material culture within these cemeteries from 2013 to 2018. During this time, I was able to observe a plethora of practices and maintenance habits. I found a wide range of material culture in Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, Mount Olive, and other historic African American cemeteries in Jacksonville. In addition to shells, hand-made headstones, painted tombs, pottery, and biblical iconography; American flags, and wreaths are also frequently found atop graves. African Americans in Jacksonville also utilized plants and landscape features like yucca and oak trees to mark burial sites.

*The Origins of African American Grave Goods in Duval County*
Captive Africans were imported into Florida from regions in West and Central Africa continually throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. African American communities in Jacksonville and throughout North East, Florida appear to have drawn from a diversity of those cultures targeted by the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Eltis and Halbert 2008). Burial practices within Jacksonville’s African American community are reflective of these rich African cultures. African Americans in this city and the United States more broadly, brought with them diverse African cultural practices which they maintained, in varied ways, throughout their existence in the Americas (Gundaker 2001: 26; Smith 2010: 18). The diversity of the cultural heritages which African Americans drew on is evidenced by the lack of uniformity among the graves at these cemetery sites.

According to Africanist Robert Farris Thompson, African American cemeteries harbor the “oldest and most persistent values” of their communities (Thompson 1989: 5). African Americans in Jacksonville have both “consciously and unconsciously continued to preserve” African funerary traditions in their cemeteries (Nichols 1989: 10-16). Within anthropology, African American burial practices have come to be associated with things including but not limited to the color white, shells, reflective objects, pipes, water, and items last touched by the dead. African American graves containing or displaying such items have been observed throughout North America, South America, and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, captivity and
generational poverty serves as a reminder of how economically restricted African American burial spaces have been for centuries.

The Multivalency of African American Grave Goods

African Diaspora archaeologists rarely recognize European manufactured objects as African cultural items in scholarship. I posit that the numerous European manufactured objects found in association with post emancipation African American burials on Moncrief are also embedded in African cultural traditions. More textured understandings of Jacksonville’s past community require exploring the potentially multivalent character of their material culture, including items of European manufacture (Gundaker and McWillie 2005; Perry and Paynter 1999). The term multivalent refers to the “many or varied meanings of an artifact” (Mahoney 2013: 68-69). Much of the material culture that archaeologists can expect to recover from African Diaspora burial sites, especially those that date to the post emancipation era, will consist of European and or other mass-produced items. Rather than indicating the loss of African cultural knowledge, this dissertation finds that the use of mass-produced items by African Diaspora communities reflects both African cultural traditions and the limited mixtures of resources available to newly emancipated communities and their descendants (Gundaker 2001; Mahoney 2013).
Understanding the multivalency of mass-produced objects within an African Diaspora burial context makes adaptations of African cultural knowledge more visible in the archaeological record. Several researchers have emphasized the importance of understanding the multivalency of African Diaspora material culture (Fennell 2003; Gundaker and McWillie 2005; Mahoney 2013; Perry and Paynter 1999). The use of massed-produced items as grave goods in Jacksonville highlights the multivalent ways in which African American residents utilized and made meaning from the material culture available to them. Employing the concept of multivalency requires scholars to think about the African Diaspora past within the context of the complex settings in which those histories played out (Brown 2008). When contextualizing the burial practices of captive Africans and their descendants, analysts should also consider the fluidity of past social identities. This type of research should be aided by comparing archaeological findings and interpretations with evidence from relevant and analogous ethnographic sources. Such archaeological analyses of African American cemetery sites stand to benefit from comparing and contrasting findings at other relevant cemetery sites in North America, South America, West Africa, Central Africa, and the Caribbean (Gijanto and Horlings 2012: 135; Jamieson 1995: 39).

*Observed Commemorative Practices, Grave Goods, and Burial Markers*
In their interviews residents have described various modes of commemoration which they employ to honor the dead. This wide range of commemorative practices among community members have contributed to both the presence and absence of material assemblages in the historic cemeteries on Moncrief. Voices of the city’s African American residents help to explicate the presence and absence of African American material culture within these cemetery spaces. As a part of the ESI project Ms. Althemese Barnes and Ms. Sharyn Thomas interviewed several African American elders who were involved with or connected to the four historic cemeteries located off 45th Street and Moncrief Road. Among them was Participant 13, an African American man, born November 29, 1916. He began working in Jacksonville’s Funeral industry in 1932. Participant 13 attended Mortuary College in Chicago, Illinois and graduated in 1944. Upon graduation, he returned to Jacksonville and continued to work in the funeral industry until 1997. During his life time, Participant 13 worked at Carter’s Funeral Home,
which was located at 925-929 West Beaver Street, A.B. Coleman, located on 5650 Moncrief Road, and James Graham Mortuary located at 3631 Moncrief Road.

In his interview, he recalled observing African American residents interacting with their cemetery spaces vividly. He remarked, “Now there were some old citizens who were Catholic. They have a section they called St. Mary’s Cemetery. They buried a lot of Catholics over there, black and white. And so, a black bishop died. And we carried the window out and she said she wanted something up front. She told Mr. Ginwright, I think that was his name. She said, “I don’t want to go back there.” He said, “well that’s all we have…Now, listen you are taking up my time. If you don’t want what we have, go to them humps out Moncrief Road.” He called the humps the dirt graves.” (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997).

Participate 13 also remembered some of the burial customs of Jacksonville’s African American community. He states “They’d put the medicine; the medicine people use to have. The wash basin. Sometimes the bed pan. I’ve seen them put the whole bedstead around the grave if the person had been sick a long time. Not the mattress or spring, just the frame. That was a dirt grave” (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). Displays such as those described by Participate

![Fig 53. Mounded grave Memorial Cemetery, picture taken by author.](image-url)
13 have most likely been discarded during city clean-up efforts and, for the most part, are no longer visible in these cemeteries. However, as recently as 2013, I observed one bed frame display in Memorial cemetery. I have also observed small garden fences which trace around graves, found in Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst and Mount Olive; this seems to be reminiscent of the bedframe practice though it is not identical.

Participate 13 goes on to describe other ways in which African American residents participated in commemorating their dead. He asserts that African Americans would “hang a wreath on the door when you died” typically made of artificial flowers. He states, “Everybody had to have a wreath on the door…If it was a young person the flowers would be pink. An older person, black or gray or white. They had to have that wreath on the door…They don’t do that anymore unless you got a business or something” (Interview of Participant 13, African American).
American elder man, 1997). Similar practices have been observed in among African Americans in Louisiana.

Historian Dr. Karla Holloway illustrates this parallel. She asserts that during the early twentieth century African American undertakers would “place a decorative funeral emblem ---a bandage or ribbon---on front doors as a signal to the neighborhood not just that someone had died but also that certain rites were being performed in the house. The funeral wreaths that still appear on the homes of the deceased Southerners---black and white alike---echo this history” (Holloway 2003: 19).

Some elders in the community, have kept up this tradition in Jacksonville. In a 2016 interview, Participant 11 a longtime city resident remarked “I hang wreaths personally…Lucille Brading my grandmother hung wreaths to let people know [that someone passed] she hung purple and black wreaths”. In Jacksonville, wreaths were commonly hung on doors, although today wreaths can also be observed on top of graves. African Americans in Jacksonville not only placed items atop graves to distinguish and decorate the burials of their loved ones but the grave type its self also played a role in African American burial practices. Mound shaped vaults were also common among African American burials within the cluster. Participant 13 remarked that “before vaults became so famous, a contractor would lay bricks. My sister is in one in Pinehurst. It was homemade” (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). Mounded graves have been a well-documented practice across the American South. African descended groups are well affiliated with mounded type graves. African Americans across the Southeast and in Africa
have been observed using dirt and other materials to create mound type graves.

Overtime mounded burials were discontinued within these cemeteries, Participant 13 asserted that this was due to a change in cemetery regulation and maintenance policy in Jacksonville (Interview of Participant 13, African American elder man, 1997). Today, mounded concrete vaults are occasionally painted by surviving family members. The material culture observed within these cemetery spaces give insight into the cultural sensibilities and living conditions of the communities that left them behind. However, even more frequent within these cemetery spaces is the absence of artifacts (see figures 5-7).

_Lack of Materiality in Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive_

This project turns to several explanations that are alternative to cultural loss to explain the lack of material culture in these spaces. In addition to previously discussed factors that affect the visibility of material are the following: changes in American perceptions of cemetery spaces; changes in modes of commemoration among African Americans in Jacksonville that do not involve cemetery spaces; and changes in burial practices. In lieu of movie theaters and art museums many early nineteenth century Americans frequented cemeteries. During the early twentieth century, the cemeteries on
Moncrief were very much a part of resident’s daily lives. Americans frequently visited cemeteries, to bury the dead, but also for entertainment and recreation. Participant 16 recalls,

“…there was this ritual. You ate; you went to church; you went to the cemetery. You should go to the cemetery. It's out there on Moncrief in Jacksonville. I have a marker there. From there we'd go to the beach. This was from Easter to Labor Day. It was that ritual. As children we looked forward to this…” (Interview of Participant 16, African American elder woman, 2002).

Over the course of two centuries, Americans all over the nation began slowly relegating cemetery spaces to the periphery of daily life. African Americans are not alone in their increasing “disconnect” with their cemeteries. As American avenues for entertainment and recreation evolved, American communities in general began moving away from regarding their cemeteries as recreational spaces.

This cultural shift began creating distance between cemetery spaces and their communities. Interviewees within this study highlight these changes in American culture. Participant 1 remarked,

“In terms of bringing artifacts, or tools as I like to say, to the burial site I don't see a lot of that because obviously …we are pretty much of the belief that once you're dead that's it there is no communing with the spirits…although…there are ways to preform rituals even after a person has been deceased that strengthens the connection with the people amongst the living” (Interview of Participant 1, African American man, 2013).
While some residents have expressed that they regularly visit these spaces to commemorate the dead, many interviewees have shared that they rarely visit cemeteries.

“Well normally most of our relatives go and visit you know on special occasions like birthdays and holidays and I would say two or three times a year someone would go around and make sure that the graves are alright but you know, things have changed today…” (Interview of Participant 2, African American elder man, 2014).

“… generally, there’s no group effort to go back and visit the dead…my family tend[s] to let the dead pass. Outside of maybe visiting and leaving some flowers or something of that nature, very minimal other than family memories, it’s more of an oral commemoration if you will” (Interview of Participant 1, African American man, 2013).

Upon arrival in North America, African captives continued to practice indigenous African customs. The racial uplift movement in the early 20th century, worked to remove many African customs from African American secular and religious life, such as the ring shout, spirit possession, grave adornment, and other cultural practices (Fairley 2003: 547-548). Nevertheless, ancestor veneration remained central to African American culture but was reconfigured. In this study, ancestor veneration is defined as “practices and beliefs that honor the deceased” (Fairley 2003: 552). For some participants,
ancestral spirits maintain an active presence in the community and are often associated with land such as homesteads and cemeteries (Fairley 2003: 552). In her interview one resident commented that “the spiritual world is the same as the living…the same world you living in now” (Interview of Participant 11, African American elder woman, 2016). She then described the active role that her mother continues to play in her life despite her passing, she stated,

“On the day my mother died I asked her “are you gonna be my mom for the rest of my life” she said “Yes, I miss you already”…my mother is still in my life, she hasn’t forgotten me…I believe that the spirits are out there, they are in that cemetery [referring to her family plot]…they are at Kingsley [referring to Kingsley Plantation’s cemetery]…I go out there [to the cemetery] cause I wanna see what they saying” (Interview of Participant 11, African American elder woman, 2016)

Here, participant 11 highlights the connection of ancestor veneration to physical landscapes namely cemetery spaces. In the past, some of the ways in which African Americans in Jacksonville have practiced ancestor veneration have included placing items atop burials as well as frequently visiting and maintaining graves. As contemporary communities become further removed from the places where their ancestors are buried, their ancestral landscapes become less frequented by surviving kin and more heavily surrounded by communities that lack familial connections to these historic spaces. One participant noted this change among African Americans in Jacksonville. He commented,

“Around the 70s and 80s it was different…we [African Americans] became transit, the cemetery is a fixed landscape and so today we
have trouble getting people to visit...families use to take pride in cleaning up the graves of family members...now people don’t go to the cemetery...” (Interview of Participant 9, African American elder man, 2016)

Although ancestor veneration has undergone change on both sides of the Atlantic, there has been little change in how American anthropologists account for “the persistence of this expression of reverence for ancestors among African Americans” (Fairley 2003: 547-548). Participants have expressed that they commemorate their loved ones in ways that do not involve the cemetery. For example, younger residents often wear items of commemoration. This includes but is not limited to: T-shirts, pants, hats, and necklaces. One resident explains that,

“You might not be able to go to the cemetery, you can’t go to the cemetery everyday so on the days you wake up and that person is on your mind you grab your memory” (Interview of Participant 10, African American man, 2016).

Transit items such as these are prevalent among the African American community, particularly its youth. However, it is important to note that the city’s historic African American cemeteries that are privately owned and operated spaces tend to display much more African American material culture.

Moreover, some African American residents have opted not to bury at all. Today, newer generations of African Americans are beginning to cremate, this has become a popular choice in Jacksonville, and in America more
broadly. In the twenty first century, cremation gained popularity as “a more efficient and less expensive alternative to burial” (Sloane 1991: 140). Still, Participant 9, a Funeral Director at A.B. Coleman refers to African Americans as the “saving grace” burial, we still have issues with cremation he remarked (Interview of Participant 9, African American elder man, 2015). Noting that although he makes the option of cremation available to his customers, African Americans tend to prefer burial.

How do these cemeteries relate to the neighborhoods that surround them today?

These cemeteries reflect the communities that surround them. The physical state of the historic cemeteries on Moncrief reflects changes in the contemporary community’s ability to provide perpetual care as well as the community’s displacement and disconnection from their ancestral landscapes. Jacksonville’s older residents recall that in their early days, the cemeteries on Moncrief were well kept spaces. Participant 12 an African American woman born in Jacksonville in 1915 remembers spending part of her childhood living across from Memorial Cemetery on Moncrief road with her father, who use to
dig graves in Memorial cemetery. Participant 12 remarked that Memorial cemetery,

“...had all kinds of flowers, statues, and angels. We were children. We weren’t frightened. They had the pink oleanders and white oleanders. People called them grave yard flowers, beautiful flowers, bushy. We used to sit...we weren’t frightened of ghost...We would look at the angels and the flowers and just play in the cemetery. Right across the street, my father was digging graves and we played. As I remember, it didn’t have a lot of bushes. I guess it was the caretaker. It was well kept at that time ...” (Interview of Participant 12, African American elder woman, 1997).

On the contrary, many interviewees born in the 80s and 90s, have no recollection of these cemeteries as manicured gardens spaces. The struggle to maintain historic cemeteries has become a wide-spread issue for most American communities; still for many African American residents interviewed within this study, the current state of their historic cemeteries is symptomatic of the ongoing inequality that the community has endured since slavery. For centuries, African Americans in Jacksonville have been marginalized, discriminated against, and displaced. Today, African Americans communities nationwide are experiencing a tremendous wealth gap between their communities and their European American counter parts.

Because of discriminatory practices and policies aimed at crippling wealth building and land ownership among African Americans; historic African American cemeteries like Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst and Mount Olive tend to be surrounded by low-income African American communities that do not have the resources for providing perpetual care.
Additionally, African Americans in this area have had several major waves of migration into and out of Jacksonville City. These migrations were largely in response to displacement or other social issues and policies that often negatively affected the community.

**What challenges did the African American businesses within the funeral industry face after Civil Rights? How did urban renewal impact African American wealth in Jacksonville?**

Desegregation in Jacksonville brought opportunities to African Americans community that were not previously available. However, in some ways, desegregation has also been disruptive to what were once thriving African American enclaves. Not all of Jacksonville’s African American residents supported desegregation. Participant 7, a former employee of the Afro-American Life Insurance company, expressed that “desegregation was necessarily good for Blacks” (Interview of Participant 7, African American elder man, 2015). Similarly, another resident commented,

“Well, one thing about Jacksonville is…the Black community lost its economic independence with integration. There were things that Black folk had that were invaluable and that provided those relationships that people just don’t have today. Including the educational experience because when these schools was segregated, I feel that in the elementary and secondary high schools in this town Black children got more of a quality education then they do now…the instructors knew your family, teachers knew your family and they knew your brothers, cousins and people that came before them…there was more personal interest in children on the part of the teachers (Interview of Participant 2, African American elder man, 2014).
Prior to desegregation Black owned cemeteries were very profitable, a paramount reason being the reliable African American customer base. Albeit in part by force, Black people fully supported Black owned businesses. With desegregation came a reduction in African American patronage of Black owned businesses including the funeral industry. According to residents, desegregation added to the decline of Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, Mount Olive and other historic African American cemeteries in the city. The collapse of Jacksonville’s Black economy led to a drastic depletion of wealth within Jacksonville’s African American community. Participant 9 remarks,

“Take into consideration…50s and 60s, segregation, now there is no segregation. As we prospered as a people, education wise, financially, we said this is an insult that I make good money so I can take my money to these perpetual care basically white cemeteries so a lot of our Black businesses we had to go there because that was the only place we could spend our money, when we didn’t have to go there we didn’t …black businesses suffered they closed up…Davis Street, Ashley Street…all our shops were down there, now we go to Town center, Avenues, Regency…we shop online…the mom’s and pop’s couldn’t compete…so apply that to the cemetery, no maps the grass has grown up, just look how it looks. Back in the day it was fine it was acceptable now it’s totally unacceptable when you have something to compare that’s nicer…” (Interview of Participant 9, African American elder man, 2015).

The cemeteries within the Moncrief cluster depended on African American consumer support. Desegregation provided African Americans with a greater selection of cemeteries in which to bury their dead, similarly, African Americans could now buy life insurance from white owned companies. These
facts made it difficult for the Black owned businesses responsible for
cemetery upkeep to stay afloat. When the businesses began to go under the
maintenance of the Moncrief cluster reflected that. However, Participant 9
points out that Black people became more likely to bury in new or
predominately white cemeteries that exemplified perpetual care after
desegregation; African American residents continued to remain loyal to
African American owned funeral homes. He remarked, “African Americans
[still] generally go to African Americans” for funeral services (Interview of
Participant 9, African American elder man, 2015).

Ultimately the Civil Rights movement sought to rectify injustice and
accomplish both legal and civic citizenship for people of color. However, the
urban renewal projects and consolidation efforts that followed hit
Jacksonville’s African American community the hardest. Prominent African
American communities that had amassed wealth and land, such as Sugar
Hill were at the heart of Jacksonville’s urban renewal projects.

“That’s where all of the Black millionaires and Black rich people stayed,
right off of Jefferson Street, you’re talking about… I was around when
that area was destroyed the YWCA use to be there, but this was black
now and all your Black doctors and lawyers use to live on Sugar Hill.
Dr. Shell, Dr. Childs and Dr. Washington and it was located right at the
dividing line between the Black community and the white community
which was Jefferson Street. It had some of the finest homes you could
ever see and the turn of the century houses, two story, three story and
that’s where the Black money was and that’s why it was called Sugar
Hill and the ironic part of that is the neighborhood, all the neighborhood
that encircled Sugar Hill was Black and the place where I grew up
Blodgett Homes was only two blocks away from Sugar Hill and a lot of
friends that I went to school with, their fathers and mothers were prominent Black folk so we played together so I’m well aware of Sugar Hill I used to got to many soirees over there when I was invited. It was a place that Black folks used as an example as to what could be and you want to know what happened to Sugar Hill the city implemented an urban renewal plan and when they implemented the urban renewal plan guess what was in the middle of it?” (Interview of Participant 2, African American elder man, 2014).

The city of built Interstate 95 straight through Sugar Hill, and other African American neighborhoods in Jacksonville, and the city continued to expand Jacksonville at the expense of its African American residents.

“…one of the reasons why the powers of the city of Jacksonville was motivated to consolidate Jacksonville is cause’ prior to consolidation the area around LaVilla and other pockets around the city they were counties of themselves…majority of the residents were Black, it didn’t start out that way it started out with majority of the land owners, or what have you were white, but when whites began to move across the river to Arlington and into Mandarin that left mostly the Black folks there, and that’s when LaVilla was really going strong, and keep in mind the majority of the city’s assets and valuable real estate was in the downtown area so the white power brokers recognized that if they weren’t going to do something to dilute the voting base…the Blacks of Jacksonville could easily become another Black Atlanta because they would have had the majority of the vote….These were some very significant individuals at the time and they was gaining influence, so the white power brokers initiated the process of consolidation for the sole purpose of diluting the votes…it had a significant effect [for black enterprises]…Their influence was diluted; their hope was discouraged …you cannot have a strong economic base without having some kind of substantial influence over the local government” (Interview of Participant 8, African American elder man, 2015).

Through policy and urban renewal, the city dismantled the epicenter of the African American economy; and by default, dissolved much of the governing
bodies that once governed these spaces (Sloane 1991: 7). The local
government annexed a number of valuable homes and estates owned by
affluent African Americans. Some families were able to relocate within the
city, an even smaller number of families were able to obtain compensation
for their properties and estates. Still, some African Americans made the
decision to migrate out of Jacksonville. One resident recalls,

“there were a couple of Black families that fought it out and ended up
getting big sums of money because when they did that they didn’t even
let folks know that there was a federal law that would require them to
be duly compensated for that house and receive replacement housing
cost. Not necessarily what the value of their house was but what it
would take to build that house somewhere else cause Dr. Washington
was one of the…he was one that I knew he was the first Black person
in this town that was in the bluebook which was called the book of
millionaires back during those days and he was the only Black person I
knew that was in the bluebook and what he did was he held out and
they had to give him, pay him enough money to build a comparable
house somewhere else and this was in the early 50’s and they had to
give him $350,000 and in the early 50’s $350,000 was like a million
and a half today and he built another house” (Interview of Participant 2,
African American elder man, 2014).

An estimated “75 percent” of African American families in Sugar Hill were
displaced from their homes (Davis 2009). Urban renewal and migration in
and out of the African American community significantly contributed to the
changes in maintenance and use of the Moncrief cluster. Desegregation in
Jacksonville, Florida affected low income, middle, and upper class African
Americans alike.
Migration has caused families to be disconnected from kinsmen buried in these ancestral spaces. Furthermore, the contemporary community that surrounds these spaces today are not necessarily direct descendants of the past African American community that once inhabited the area and the burials in many of these historic cemeteries have significantly declined. Although some residents still own plots in these cemeteries being buried within these spaces today may be challenging. Many of the plat records and maps for these spaces have either been lost or destroyed.

“The people that owned them were very smart at the time…very smart business people and they utilize what they had for that era, they didn’t know anything about perpetual care…basically you had a gentleman whose job was to maintain the cemetery, they didn’t have maps, the map was in his head…he knew where every grave was, he knew where every family plot was, he knew which one was filled and which one was vacant …everything was in his head. If he lost his mind or when he died…knowledge died with him unless he trained someone else. As those people died off there was no records” (Interview of Participant 9, African American elder man, 2015).

In 1990, the Afro-American Life Insurance Company went out of business and the Moncrief cemetery cluster was left without an owner. By 1994, The Cemetery Trust Fund was created to maintain the cemetery cluster. The trust fund originally held $330,000 to pay for the upkeep of the four historic cemeteries on Moncrief (De Bruce 1997). Because of Council woman Denise Lee’s efforts, the city of Jacksonville formally agreed to maintain all four cemeteries in 1997 (Rakin 2007; Spinks 2007 Ross 2012). However, despite the creation of the Cemetery Trust Fund, in an Abandoned and
Neglected Cemeteries Commission Meeting on October 24, 2007, the Jacksonville Parks and Recreation Department’s superintendent R.C. Nasworthy stated that Pinehurst, Sunset Memorial, Memorial, and Mount Olive were declared “public nuisances” by the city (Spinks 2007; Rakin 2007:2).

According to a news report in 2012, the Cemetery Trust Fund account had been reduced to $136,301 dollars and according to the City Council Auditor, the last time the city did routine maintenance on the cemetery cluster was in 2004 (Ross 2012). Prior to 2004, the city spent about $40,000 dollars to maintain Sunset, Memorial, Pinehurst and Mount Olive Cemeteries (Ross 2012; De Bruce 1997). Thus far, the measures the city of Jacksonville has taken to maintain these spaces since the city has claimed responsibility for the cluster have proven to be unsustainable.

According to one interviewee “The cemeteries are only cleaned as scheduled and I believe scheduling of the cemeteries comes from complaint issues…I think that it shows effort, but I also think it demonstrates the city’s lack of commitment to preserving these cemeteries” (Interview of Participant 3, African American elder man, 2017). Although the city has divulged numerous clean-up methods, without the perpetual care these cemeteries require the results these efforts yield will be short lived. One way in which Jacksonville has dealt with cemetery upkeep is to utilize inmates.

“In 2004 the responsibilities for cleaning up the cemeteries on Moncrief and other locations were held simultaneously with the public

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works department and the parks department... inmates were used which often both departments used to clean up those areas.... But do to the actual support and apparatus to clean up and maintain the cemeteries were a little less than adequate, I would say more than less adequate, those areas didn't get cleaned up as well as they probably should have...and it's over a long period of time before 2004, they had the same problem... after the parks department cleaned it up as much as they could clean it up it was given to contactors...it depends on the area and what needs to be done as to whether or not park personnel or contractors will be used there and that's supplemented with inmates now..." (Interview of Participant 3, African American elder man, 2017).

Moreover,

“...maintenance includes Mainly that’s mowing and trimming trees, they have had problems where they've had cave-ins of some of the cemetery grave sites and some of those where from workers and some of those where from contractors and some of those people were from visiting and I don't recall any of those being repaired by city personnel...as far as I know cave-ins are not dealt with directly by the public works or the parks department for the contractors ...they are referred to by the descendants or the relatives and I believe they have to submit a claim in order to get the grave site repaired...there have been damaged gravesites out there for years so maybe some of those descendants weren’t able to put in a claim and if they weren’t I guess it’s nobody’s responsibility” (Interview of Participant 3, African American elder man, 2017).

Cemetery care goes beyond lawn maintenance. Neither prisoners nor city workers are formally trained in cemetery preservation and cannot perform the tasks required to resurrect fallen headstones or other tasks necessary to preserve these sites. Perpetual care is and has been an issue for African American cemetery spaces across America and perhaps historic American cemeteries more broadly.
In the past, Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive have been nominated to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997, by ESI archaeologists; however, none of these applications have been successful. Memorial Cemetery did however, receive recognition as one of Jacksonville’s heritage sites. Since this project began, there has been a renewed interest in these sites and this cluster has recently gained a considerable amount of attention from the city. Additionally, some of Jacksonville’s other historic African American cemeteries have also been receiving recognition for their historical contributions to the city. However, none of this “increase in social awareness has translated in to sustained resources or stable funding”, One resident remarked “our ancestors …their blood is what soaks the soil. What we see is from their existence we should do everything we can, I believe to protect and preserve it. I do feel a little bit powerless when it comes to what I personally can do” (Interview of Participant 1, African American adult man, 2013).

The legacy of slavery, impedance of African American wealth building and land ownership as well as suppressing the Black vote and African American representation in local, state, and national government has in some ways helped create this phenomenon of “abandoned and neglected” African American cemeteries (Sloane 1991: 7). Participant 3 commented that,

“Because of segregation we had always lived in a confined area…so the people who could afford to then move out…just burst out and left
…so when you have all of those people leaving the community it makes it right for businesses to come in and be able to takeover, because there’s going to be no resistance...because the only people that you have unfortunately is the downtrodden...people that can’t claim any ownership of particular land or space...so Shands [Hospital] came in, and up rooted that whole community” (Interview of Participant 4, African American adult man, 2013).

Although there was a fund set in place to care for the cemetery; there was nothing in place to replenish those funds additionally the city refuses to take responsibility for more costly tasks required for maintaining these spaces.

“The cemetery sites in that Moncrief cluster are all historical sites…and I think that it should be federally funded…mapping, reconstruction as well as it can be done …because there are areas of those cemeteries that have graves that go way back in years, but you can’t tell anything because there’s a stone but there’s like 100 trees up around it…Restructuring all of the damage should be federally funded …grants should be given to maintain and control it that would make a lot more sense than just having the city maintain it” (Interview of Participant 3, African American elder man, 2017).

Interviewees expressed that the current state of these cemeteries demonstrates the city’s lack of regard for Black people as well as their cemetery spaces.

“...long before 2004 those cemeteries were getting in a dilapidated condition which should have been maintained from the time that they [the city] had those cemeteries …they [the city] should have maintained those properties” (Interview of Participant 3, African American elder man, 2017).

Another participant comment remarked,

“When you talk about revitalizing it comes down to money…who has the money who is willing to donate the money….if they ever get anything done in my lifetime I’ll be glad to see it, but I don’t think it’s
going to happen” (Interview of Participant 6, African American woman, 2015).

On behalf of the community members affiliated with this project, I advocate federal and state sponsored programs that would take on the responsibility of ensuring perpetual care for these historic sites. As scholar Zach Mortice notes, there have been thousands of government funded programs that have worked to preserve African American heritage. The Works Progress Administration, which employed more than eight million people and was responsible for collecting thousands of African American oral histories; The Federal Music Project funded the transcription and recording of folk music of all types including African American spirituals; The Federal Art Project started more than 100 community art centers, including the first African American art center in the country, on the South Side of Chicago (Mortice 2017). However, as some residents have pointed out, the rehabilitation of these spaces also requires community healing. Participant 1 asserts that something must be done to the “…cemetery as well as to the community itself” (Interview of Participant 1, African American adult man, 2013).

“…I believe it’s inherently the same project I don’t think it could be done “separately” we are talking about public property, so it has to be a public effort and so yea it’s the same project. So that’s what made me say that I don’t see anything potentially done in the next 5 to 10 years I believe the Northside is shrinking more and more as people get older, the younger generations are the ones that are struggling to survive the majority of them are moving out of the community and those who move back are disassociated with the community from a
social and cultural perspective so I don’t see much that can be done unless it was a state or national mandate” (Interview of Participant 1, African American adult man, 2013).

In what ways is the maintenance of this cemetery cluster intertwined with the African American community’s legacy of civic estrangement (Tillet 2012)?

The recent publicity given to the untimely deaths of African American women, men, and children in the post-civil rights era, has refocused American consciousness on the legacy of “civic estrangement” inherited by African Americans living in the United States today (Tillet 2012). The frequency and circumstances in which “Black death” often occurred (Holloway 2003), renders a vivid illustration of how the ongoing status of African Americans as “categorical non-citizens” has been articulated and reinvented in slavery, during Reconstruction, Civil Rights, and the post-civil rights era (Tillet 2012: 7).

In a 2013 interview, Participant 4 a longtime resident and local historian commented on the overt unequal treatment of African Americans in the post-Civil Rights era. He remarked that “With all the gains we have made…we still have to remember this country is set-up for White people…African Americans are tolerated, …rights, yeah you got them, but
we are still in Jacksonville, which has a great history of denying African Americans basic rights” (Interview of Participant 4, African American adult man, 2013).

Historically, African Americans have died “in riots and rebellions, as victims of lynching, from executions, murders, police violence, suicides, and untreated or undertreated diseases” (Holloway 2003: 57). Memorial Cemetery, and later Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive cemeteries, offered Jacksonville’s African American community a final resting place. Today, African Americans in Jacksonville are experiencing many of the same disadvantages now as they did in the early twentieth century. The tendency of African Americans to experience “maternal death in child bearing, cardiac-related death of elders, suicide” and “death at the hands of police” at higher rates than “other racial or ethnic groups in the United States, even when differences in economic class and sex” are controlled for is well documented (Holloway 2003: 6).

African American children have been especially susceptible to sudden, violent, and senseless death; often falling victim to poor prenatal care, malnutrition, infection, disease, and violence (Holloway 2003: 27). Black children in the Northern cities like New York and Chicago have been just as vulnerable to these fatalities as Black children living in Southern cities like Jacksonville (Holloway 2003: 27). The prevalence of excess death among Jacksonville’s African American youth in addition to the community’s
economic disenfranchisement has come to shape the community’s cultural practices and reconfigure the ways in which they memorialize and commemorate death (Holloway 2003: 4). Participant 5 notes that

“Jacksonville is still a divided racist city, the appearance may have changed, but the practices and attitudes haven’t” (Interview of Participant 5, African American elder man, 2014).

The emphatic resurgence of the imagery of young African American people being brutalized and killed in the twenty-first century, is in tandem with and contextualized by the legacy of slavery and the Jim Crow era. The deaths of Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley, Denise McNair, and Emmett Till are in concert with the twenty-first century slayings of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis.

“It reaffirms to me that young African Americans are still not considered as equal with other segments of the population because it’s very easy for a young Black man, for that to happen to a young Black man not because he’s doing anything wrong but because he is considered to be threatening…” (Interview of Participant 2, African American elder man, 2014).

The treatment of Black life from slavery to the post-civil rights era has not only repeatedly called African American citizenship into question; these
traumatic experiences of death and dying have translated into what Toni Morrison calls cultural “sites of memory” (Morrison 1995; Tillet 2012:5). The historic African American cemeteries that have collected these bodies serve as both memorials to those that have passed on and as the tangible evidence of the community’s suffering and hardship. Participants have stated blatantly that these sites represent the same kind of racism that African Americans faced in life. They have specifically pointed to the City’s allocation of resources for the upkeep of these spaces and the excess number of African American bodies that fill these cemeteries. Historic African American cemeteries like Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive in and of themselves are sites of memory, reminders of the past that continue to inform the community’s present.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

*Historic cemeteries are the resting place of “Our ancestors...their blood is what soaks the soil...we should do everything we can to protect and preserve it.” (Interview of Participant 1, African American adult man, 2013).*

For contemporary residents, cemeteries like Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive, represent a historical trajectory of African American exclusion and speak to the unwavering social, political, and economic disenfranchisement of the community.

“I believe that we as African Americans have lived for a very longtime as second-class citizens...if you look at the health rate or the problems with politics and government, government stolen votes, the dysfunctional education, even at the schools and at the churches that we brag and boast about its just a high level of despair in Jacksonville and I believe the majority of it is based on how the government has ran the local city government has been ran when we look at the history based on consolidation in the 60’s and how it divided the community overall...It’s a practice that takes place all across America but it’s an obvious historical norm in Jacksonville, racial segregation that is, and I believe that’s really why the cemetery suffers...” (Interview of Participant 1, African American adult man, 2013).

These cemetery sites bridge together the present circumstances and lived experiences of Jacksonville’s Black community to those of their ancestral pasts (Morrison 1995). The sites’ continued use, from their founding in the early twentieth century into the present, makes evident the importance of these spaces to African American residents and demonstrates that they have not been “abandoned” by their respective communities as news outlets, local scholars, and reports have suggested; despite their current condition (ADP
In fact, the archaeological record shows that not only are African American residents continuing to bury their dead within these spaces in the twenty-first century; they have also carried on preforming African funerary customs within these spaces.

Today, African American funerary practices remain visible among the graves within Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive. This study includes the voices of roughly forty African American residents. Many of them are my kinfolk, friends, and associates. Some participants had very strong opinions about what their historic burial spaces represent and the kind of work I should be doing in my community as an anthropologist (Gwaltney 1980; Atkins-Spivey 2017). Ultimately, it is their perspectives that have guided my research and interpretation of these sites. Contrary to many of the sites’ critiques, my analyses of the archaeological record and oral histories reveal that the maintenance of historic African American cemeteries like Memorial, Sunset Memorial, Pinehurst, and Mount Olive remain at the heart of Jacksonville’s African American community. Because for residents the maintenance of such spaces encompasses issues of racism and gentrification.

Foregrounding African American understandings of African American material culture and commemorative practices is a necessity for this dissertation. Previous theoretical perspectives such as Herskovits’ survival-acculturation model and creolization do not factor in the contextual
complexities of the cemeteries on Moncrief. These theoretical approaches do not consider national trends related to American community involvement with cemeteries, African American migration patterns, variation of commemorative practices within the African American community, or the multivalency of African American material culture in a burial context. In many ways, Herskovits’ survival acculturation model and creolization have worked to support the argument that captive African people lost much of their African knowledge and culture during slavery. An idea that has been strongly contested throughout this dissertation.

Rather than adopting either of these traditional anthropological theories, which would explain the lack of material culture as cultural loss, this project turns to a multifaceted theoretical framework which combines DuBois notion of double-consciousness with Lee Drummonds concept of intersystem. This unique framework explores the complex ways in which the physical state of these cemeteries intersects with the social history of the African American community. Moreover, this project articulates its findings using terms and phrases coined by Toni Morrison (1995) and Salamisha Tillet (2012): “civic-estrangement” and “sites of memory”. Morrison and Tillet provide a vocabulary that is explicitly consistent with the social and political experiences of African Americans living in Jacksonville, Florida.

By employing a methodology that combines surface archaeology, oral history, and historical documentation this project revealed social and cultural
patterns among African Americans that were in many ways community responses to the criticisms of their historic cemetery spaces. Rather than assuming African Americans are continuously losing parts of their identity; evidenced by a lack of traditional African American grave goods in their cemeteries. This dissertation posits that innovations prompted by policy changes and cultural shifts are continuously added to already firmly established ways of thinking and behaving. However, these additives do not diminish the African epistemologies that underly twenty-first century African American commemorative practices (Gundaker 2001). This project assumes that African Americans in Jacksonville have continued to draw on African cultural knowledges to commemorate their dead. Even if that knowledge is not represented by material culture in the cemetery space itself. In fact, many of these grave sites do not have visible artifacts. An overwhelming absence of grave goods in historic African American cemeteries such as these provokes practitioners to think more critically about the social history of these sites. Secondly, it prompts practitioners to look beyond material expressions of commemoration in the cemetery when exploring African American commemorative practices in the twenty-first century.

This research demonstrates that commemorative practices within this community largely do not involve cemetery spaces. Furthermore, interviews with residents revealed that younger generations of African Americans rarely visit cemeteries after burial. Some twenty-first century African American
commemorative practices involve transit materials including photo albums, t-shirts, necklaces, and other memorabilia. Migration in and out of the community has also affected community involvement. Few African American families that inhabit Jacksonville today have legacies in Duval County that reach back into the early twentieth century or beyond. Many contemporary residents that have connections to the early twentieth century African American community are elderly, and most of their relatives have passed. Many of their children have migrated out of the city and gone on to start families in other states or countries.

Recent migrant families of African descent rarely have connections to historic African American cemeteries. Many plots within this cluster were pre-purchased land parcels, some of which were purchased in clusters rather than individually as Jacksonville’s early twentieth century African Americans anticipated their subsequent generations eventually inhabiting these cemetery spaces. However, this didn’t quite come to fruition. Recent migrant families often choose to inter their loved ones in newer cemeteries that are more financially suited for perpetual care; or opt to cremate. Although this cluster remains in use by African Americans, recent burials within these spaces seem to occur more frequently among families who have ties to Jacksonville’s early twentieth century communities. My own family’s history in this city provides just one example of how many African American families have come
to be disconnected from their ancestral landscapes. During this project I discovered my maternal roots in Jacksonville, Florida. My great grandmother Sophia Myatt was born in Jacksonville in the late 1800s, over a century before my mother’s arrival in the city in 2000. My mother’s people originated in North Carolina. Josiah Myatt and his wife Lindsay were among the many African Americans to migrate South from neighboring states, to Jacksonville in the first few decades following emancipation. The Myatt family lived on Beaver street and later moved to Union Street both located in downtown Jacksonville. Together they had three daughters, Margaret, Katie, and my great grandmother Sophia. The Myatt sisters grew up on Union Street, down town. Josiah Myatt worked as a laborer as well as an upholsterer, an occupation that was characteristic for working class men of color in Jacksonville during the late nineteenth century, and their mother Lindsay Myatt was a laundress.

Josiah disappeared from Jacksonville census records around 1900. His fate is unclear, although it is possible that Josiah passed away and left behind his wife and three daughters Margaret, Katie, and my great

Fig 60. My grandmother Sophia Myatt, Daughter of Sophia Myatt born in Jacksonville, Florida in the late 1890s.
grandmother Sophia. It was at this point that my great grandmother, Sophia moved back to North Carolina, meanwhile, Katie and Margaret stayed behind and continued to live in Jacksonville. My great aunt, Margaret Myatt married a business mogul Charles H. Anderson. Together the couple had several children, my cousins.

As noted previously during his lifetime, Charles Anderson became a prominent businessman in Jacksonville. He built an empire out of his many businesses and became the patriarch of one of Jacksonville’s most powerful African American aristocratic families. During the early twentieth century, the Anderson family built a strong entrepreneurial legacy in Jacksonville. Through Charlotte Lewis’ marriage to Charles Anderson’s father the Anderson and Lewis families were united. Charles Anderson and A.L. Lewis were stepbrothers. Both African American aristocratic families are resting in historic African American cemeteries. The Anderson’s have a plot in Old City Cemetery, and the Lewis’ have a plot in Memorial cemetery on Moncrief road.

For most of my life I have been unaware of this family history. It was not until I began this dissertation that I started to discover my maternal roots in Jacksonville, Florida. I was surprised to discover the presence of my maternal ancestors resting within one of Jacksonville’s oldest African American cemeteries. I have dedicated majority of my professional life to protecting and commemorating hollowed grounds such as these. My immediate ancestors vacated the city in the early twentieth century.
Furthermore, my great aunt’s descendants began migrating out decades later. This created distance between not only these familial branches, but also from the legacy that my ancestors forged in Jacksonville, Florida. There are descendants of the Andersons still living today’s, however some have moved further north. I am honored to be writing about their legacy.

This study finds that the disconnect between contemporary African Americans in Jacksonville, Jacksonville’s early twentieth century African American community has greatly impacted the maintenance of the cemeteries on Moncrief and other historic African American cemeteries within the city. Contemporary, African American residents tend to maintain the burial plots of their blood relatives, and many do not see themselves as obligated to care for the space in general. Furthermore, the communities that surround these spaces today are often impoverished and lack the means to care for these heritage sites. The residents interviewed for this dissertation project have strongly suggested that the perpetual care of these and other historically significant African American cemetery spaces should be reserved for the local, state, and federal government.

There are several ways in which this study contributes to the discipline. First, this project adds to the expansion and diversity of theoretical approaches within the discipline. Many anthropological studies of African Diaspora cemeteries have focused on antebellum period sites. This study expands this scope to include post-emancipation African Diaspora sites and
African American cultural production in the twenty-first century. Additionally, this study’s methodological approach contributes to the movement of the discipline towards community engagement and collaboration (Blakey 2009; Gwaltney 1980; Franklin 1997; Atkins-Spivey 2017; Mahoney 2013).

The African American community has a vested interest in reclaiming authority over their historical sites and narratives.

“I really think that we as African Americans…would be doing ourselves a better service if we reinterpreted the rules of engagement…” (Interview of Participant 4, African American adult man, 2013).

Due to limited knowledge and documentation, residents tend to experience difficulties finding the burial place of relatives. One resident commented that “…when you go looking for your roots ideally you want it to be available to you” (Interview of Participant 6, African American woman, 2015). Within this study community elders have expressed concerns about their history being forgotten. Many of the participants have a desire to ensure the preservation of these sites and their history for future generations. Anthropological research should serve the communities they focus on. This is what makes our studies meaningful scholarly contributions. To execute such endeavors practitioners must employ broader methodologies that include community interests.

The Ritz Museum has expressed interest in housing copies of these oral histories, in their African American Digital Collection. I have presented an opportunity for those that wish to have their interviews made public to have copies of their interviews housed at the Ritz. Additionally, I will donate a copy
of this dissertation to the Jacksonville library’s African American collection. Lastly, individual community members and organizations have expressed interest in knowing more about the history of these cemeteries and the outcome of this study. Therefore, I have committed to providing a copy of this dissertation project to several local community organizations. It is imperative that residents of Jacksonville have access to this research project.

The influence of Africans and their descendants in Jacksonville stretch well beyond their lifetimes. The legacy and experiences of African descended people in Jacksonville, Florida include civil and political activism, wealth building, entrepreneurship and philanthropy. The contributions of early Africans and their descendants have undeniably shaped culture and social life in Jacksonville, Florida. Moreover, these women and men have sculpted the city’s physical landscape. Much of what they have created is still standing today. This includes widely recognized historic sites such as Kingsley Plantation, the Ritz theatre, and the Clara White mission. It also includes the unmarked brick laid buildings, abandoned shanty houses, vacant lots, and old cemeteries. My hope is that this dissertation sheds light on Jacksonville’s wealth of post-emancipation African American history which has been largely misremembered and buried by time.


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**Oral History Interviews**


