

**Notes to Records Search**  
**by Dee Williams**  
**Project Director**

The South Asheville Colored Cemetery Project was conducted over a three-month period during the summer of 1989.

The Death Register of Buncombe County was the primary tool used to find many of the names on the tombstones in the South Asheville Colored Cemetery. The term of the project was too short (three months) to allow for an exhaustive search of all names. The information we were able to find about the personal histories, gathered from written sources and from oral interviews, told us some things of interest about the buried individuals.

Note that in the Registry, some last names were spelled in a variety of ways. Also, over the years, some of the spellings have been changed by descendants, i.e. "Payne", "Pain" or "Paine."

It would appear that many persons, particularly those who settled the South Asheville Community were related. There is evidence that there were large family clans who were buried in the cemetery. The descendants who live nearby, today, say that they are related thusly: the Pattons to the Millers, the Millers to the Hemphills, the Hemphills to the Averys, the Averys to the Williams, the Williams to the Harpers, and the Harpers to the Paynes.

Illegitimacy appeared to be widespread, or, perhaps, information about black deaths was recorded haphazardly, or many blacks who were born into slavery did not know who their fathers were.

The writer saw only one instance supported by written documentation, of a burial in the South Asheville Colored Cemetery. That was the funeral program of David B. Shields, the father of Mrs. Saint Ola Mapp of Asheville.

Mr. Bowditch, a member of the St. John A. Baptist Church, and a lifelong resident of the Haw Creek community told the writer that he had a church Bible which recorded the deaths of members and that there was some reference to burials in the cemetery.

Another source of gathering information or personal histories about some of the persons interred there would be the Marriage Bonds in the Registry. One notable thing which I picked up is that many women were buried under their **maiden names**. One

instance is Delia Miller. Delia was married to Moses Lord, but never used his name. We did find that she had several infants to die, as recorded in the Buncombe County Registry.

I also searched the 1870 *[Asheville] City Directory*. I found many instances of whites and blacks living in the same households, which led me to think that even though manumission occurred in 1863, the relationship of servant and master perpetuated itself in Asheville for an extended period.

We did a preliminary search of the **Register of Deeds Office of Buncombe County**, and many persons whose names came up in the oral history, or appeared on the tombstones were among the largest landowners.

In the 1938 compilation of the names of persons buried in the [Newton Academy Cemetery](#), which is the white companion cemetery to South Asheville, many similar last names occur. The Newton Academy Cemetery list was obtained from the NC Department of Archives and History in Raleigh.

Most of the black mortuaries which exist today were successors of earlier ones that performed many of the burials in South Asheville, but most have no records of these burials.