



Cemetery Analysis Using Temporal and Cultural Context

By: Bria Lindsay

Abstract

The Riverside Cemetery, established in 1885 in Asheville, NC by Nicholas Woodfin encompasses 87 acres and houses the remains of over 9,000 individuals, 76 being notables including such noted individuals as Thomas Wolfe, Tempie Avery, Solomon Lipinsky, and Gilbert Sleigh Sr. The cemetery consists of five burial tiers designated by cultural group rather than lineage. Of the five tiers, we chose to examine the pauper portion of the cemetery for this project. In general, this poster will provide information on patterns of interment noted across the overall cemetery and then focus on the pauper portion of the cemetery highlighting the highly informative nature of cemetery research through an understanding of temporal and cultural contexts at the time of interment.

Lindsay, B. (2019, April). *Cemetery analysis using temporal and cultural context*. Poster session presented at the Research and Scholarship Celebration, Western Carolina University.

Archived version from NC DOCKS available at: <https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/wcu/listing.aspx?styp=ti&id=25490>.



Cemetery Analysis Using Temporal and Cultural Context

Bria Lindsay (Western Carolina University)
Anthropology

Introduction



Overview of Cemetery

- ❖ Designed as a garden style cemetery typical of the time
- ❖ Uses original roadways made for horse and carriage
- ❖ Approximately having 14,000 graves



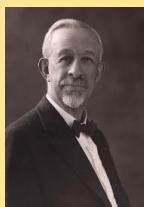
Arial View of cemetery

- ❖ Located in Asheville, North Carolina
- ❖ Incorporated August of 1885 and owned by Nicholas Woodfin
- ❖ Currently owned by the city of Asheville
- ❖ 87 acres on a hilly landscape

Notable interments



Thomas Wolfe was considered one of North Carolina most famous authors during the early 1900s and still is today.



Solomon Lipinsky owned one of the largest department stores in North Carolina: Bon Marche, which stood as an Asheville landmark for over 90 years.



Gilbert Sleigh Sr. was the first African American to join the city of Asheville's Police Department in the 1940s.



Tempie Avery was a former slave for the Woodfin Family, this includes the founder of the cemetery Nicholas Woodfin. She was also a prominent midwife of the Montford community, and because of this, a recreation center was named after her in 2017

Methods and Materials

- ❖ Visited the cemetery 5 times
- ❖ Collected information on demographics and burial patterns
- ❖ Counted the number of headstone in each section and made note of the various markers used during burial
- ❖ Interviewed Josh Darty, the current director of the cemetery
- ❖ Focused my research on two areas
 - ❖ Pauper section
 - ❖ Section Y

Patterns

- ❖ Males were on the left and females were on the right
- ❖ Multiple family plot containing one main headstone with individual footstones
- ❖ Most faced south except for section that required a different direction
- ❖ No pattern of markers, each were unique to their belief, hobbies or occupation
- ❖ Throughout most of the cemetery I noticed three common headstone markers lambs, crosses and flowers on headstones.
- ❖ The lamb is used to symbolize infant burials
- ❖ Variations of crosses representing different of Christianity
- ❖ The main flowers that we came across were the Poppy, which symbolizes eternal sleep and the Morning Glory, which means the beginning of life



Poppies flowers engraved on a family plot



Infant burial



Family headstone with individual footstones

Pauper Section

- ❖ Located near the rear of the cemetery on tier 1, the oldest tier
- ❖ Paid by the public from the families being unable to afford the burial
- ❖ 175 are on file
- ❖ 15 headstones were counted
 - ❖ The unmarked graves could consist of people that were cremated
 - ❖ Some headstone could have deteriorated over time due to factors such as weather or the material that they made of
- ❖ There are currently 157 unmarked



Map of different sections



One section of the Pauper graves

Section Y

- ❖ Located near the front of the cemetery on tier 5, which is the youngest tier
- ❖ Section was purchased by Dr. Karl Von Ruck for his patients that had succumb to tuberculosis.
- ❖ There are approximately 400 graves but could possible be some unmarked graves
- ❖ Unmarked graves could be a possibility because divots observed throughout the section
- ❖ Those buried died by 1940 or earlier
- ❖ Age ranged from a two day old infant to a 76 year old elder



Infant burial within the section



Dr. Karl Von Ruck Mausoleum



Unique burial within the section

Interview

- ❖ Josh Darty was the main communicator for the research.
- ❖ He answered questions regarding both sections giving in-depth insight about individuals buried and possible reasons for their deaths.
- ❖ What information was recorded depended on who was in charge of the cemetery, it was based on what they deemed important enough to document
- ❖ He also provided his book that he published about cemetery

Josh: A lot of people came into Asheville for Tuberculosis treatment.

Me: Are you saying some of the notable people could have died from the tuberculosis ?

Josh: Yes, except for a few from old age.



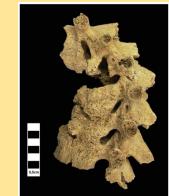
Josh Darty

Conclusions

- ❖ Paupers- From infinite possibilities that could have occurred during their lifetime, I would expect to see Cribra Orbitalia, hypoplasia, and porotic hyperostosis. These can be an indication of a lack of an adequate diet, which would lead to possible signs of diseases of their remains.



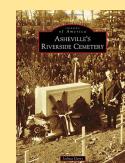
Cribra Orbitalia



Deformed Vertebrae

- ❖ Section Y- Depending on if treatment of available and effect we would notice new bone formation, a deformation in the vertebrae and periosteal pitting on the remains

References



"Image of America: Asheville Riverside Cemetery" by Josh Darty

Acknowledgements

- ❖ Josh Darty
- ❖ Anthropology and Sociology Department