

# **Blue Jay Point County Park**

Historic Resource Survey

2017



**F I R E F L Y**  
PRESERVATION CONSULTING

# **Blue Jay Point County Park**

## **Historic Resource Survey**

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# Introduction

Blue Jay Point County Park is a 236-acre park on the southwest banks of Falls Lake. It is bounded generally by Upper Barton's Creek to the north, the Neuse River to the east, Lower Barton's Creek to the south (all three now part of Falls Lake), and Six Forks Road to the west.



*Blue Jay Point is located on a peninsula in Falls Lake*



*The park features five miles of hiking trails*

Originally made up of several farmsteads, the park was established after the 12,400-acre Falls Lake Reservoir was completed in 1981. The park provides environmental education and recreational opportunities through special events, the center for environmental education, an overnight lodge, education programs and camps, playgrounds, and picnic areas. Hiking trails connect to

portions of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and the park also leases land to Go Ape Treetop Adventure courses.

The scope of this project is to research the two historic cemeteries located within the parks boundaries, document each cemetery's location and condition, and make recommendations for their ongoing maintenance. Both cemeteries are marked with concrete boundary markers, but neither has been documented in the North Carolina State Archaeology Office's statewide cemetery survey or included in Army Corps of Engineers cemetery records collected during the construction of Falls Lake. In addition, the project includes a land use history from the original 1700s land grants through the present day.

Research for this report was conducted at the North Carolina State Archives and State Library, Wake County Register of Deeds, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the National Archives, in various genealogy records, and Pleasant Union Christian Church records. Field assistance was provided by Ben Wittenberg, Park Manager at Blue Jay Point County Park, and Matt Fryar, Assistant Park Manager of Operations at Lake Crabtree County Park, both from the Wake County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space. Additional assistance was provided by John Mintz, Deputy State Archaeologist for the North Carolina Department of Cultural and Natural Resources.

# Historical Narrative

## The Tate Family (1788-1848)

Much of the land that now makes up Blue Jay Point County Park was given as a series of land grants in the 1780s and 1790s. John Humphries received a 200-acre land grant between Upper and Lower Barton's Creek, south of the Neuse River, in 1782.<sup>1</sup> He then purchased sixty acres south of Lower Barton's Creek that had been granted to William Tommason.<sup>2</sup> William Tate purchased this 260-acre tract in 1788, and he added to his holdings with a sixteen-acre land grant on both sides of Neuse River in 1790 and a fifty-acre land grant between Upper and Lower Barton's creeks in 1792.<sup>3</sup> Tate was the first to actually occupy this land, which includes the portion of the park containing the Tate Cemetery.

William Tate was the son of James and Elizabeth Tate. He was orphaned at the age of eight and was apprenticed to Mark Sugg to learn farming. He had two older brothers, James and Samuel, and they too were apprenticed to farmers in their community.<sup>4</sup> William Tate served in the Revolutionary War for two

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<sup>1</sup> "State of North Carolina to John Humphries," May 17, 1781, Deed Book K, Page 20, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, North Carolina. (hereafter noted as WCRD).

<sup>2</sup> "John Humphries to William Short," July 10, 1786, Deed Book G, Page 184, WCRD.

<sup>3</sup> "William Short to William Tate," April 23, 1787, Deed Book 11, Page 200, WCRD; Land Grants, "William Tate," Book 76, Page 51, November 16, 1790, NC State Archives, Raleigh, NC, from <http://nclandgrants.com> (accessed October 2016); "State of North Carolina to William Tate," November 28, 1792, Deed Book K, Page 115, WCRD.

<sup>4</sup> Frances Holloway Wayne, *Wake County, North Carolina, abstract of record of wills, inventories, settlements of estates, 1771-1802* (Self-Published. Printed Chelsea, MI: BookCrafters, Inc., 1984), 11.

and a half years as a cavalryman.<sup>5</sup> William Tate and his wife Amy had four sons, John, Mark, Turner, and William H., and four daughters, Tempy, Haskey, Rachel, and Cary.<sup>6</sup>

The Tate's 326-acre farm was well-watered by the Neuse River and Upper and Lower Barton's creeks. At that time, Wake County consisted of scattered subsistence farms that produced nearly all the food, clothing, and other goods required for the family.<sup>7</sup> By 1830, Tate owned sixteen slaves, so it is possible that he also grew the tobacco or cotton cash crops common to antebellum Wake County.<sup>8</sup> Tate also ran a gristmill near the mouth of Upper Barton's Creek at the Neuse River. A mill along with a one-room school, a church, and a store would make up the essentials for a community in the late 1700s.<sup>9</sup>

William Tate died in 1832, and in his will "loaned" land, slaves, and other personal property to his wife for the duration of her life or until she remarried, as was typical of the time. His remaining estate was divided among his children and grandchildren.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ancestry.com, *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, 1800-1900* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010), www.ancestry.com (accessed January 2017); Ancestry.com, *The Pension Roll of 1835* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014), www.ancestry.com (accessed January 2017).

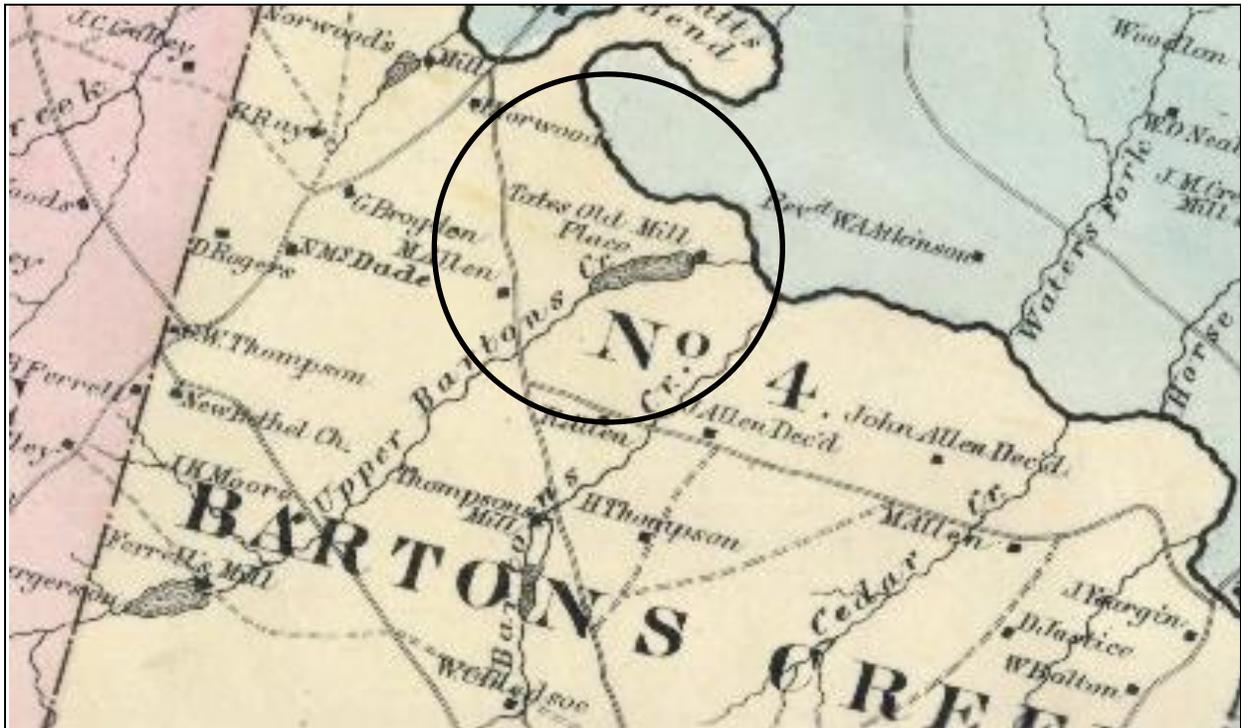
<sup>6</sup> Census records from the 1700s included details about the male head of house, so birth and death dates for the children are unknown, as well as additional biographical information about Amy Tate. Their names are listed in William Tate's Last Will and Testament, November 1832. "Last Will and Testament of William Tate," November 1832, Ancestry.com, *North Carolina Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Kelly Lally, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (ca. 1770-1941)," Multiple Property Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Section E, Page 8. (Hereafter referred to as Lally, MPN)

<sup>8</sup> Ancestry.com, *1830 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016); Lally, MPN, Section E, Page 7.

<sup>9</sup> Lally, MPN, Section E, Page 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> "Last Will and Testament of William Tate."



Portion of 1871 Fendol Bevers Map showing "Tates Old Mill Place"  
and the associated mill pond on Upper Barton's Creek  
(Map Courtesy of North Carolina Maps, Digital Collection, University of North Carolina)

Among Tate's "property" bequeathed in his will were fifteen slaves: Allen (whom Tate had purchased in 1806 for \$440), Dorrity, Poll, Mingo, Aggy, Dick, Eliza, Mary Jane, Alek, Squire, Candace, Bets, Martha, Harriot, and Caswell.<sup>11</sup>

It is apparent that families of the enslaved were split up upon William Tate's death, an unfortunately common occurrence. Mary Jane is specifically noted as Eliza's oldest child, suggesting that she had other children as well. In addition, Alek, Squire, and Caswell are specifically noted as boys and Martha and Harriet specifically as girls, suggesting that they were younger children. They were each bequeathed without an adult, meaning they were

<sup>11</sup> "Last Will and Testament of William Tate"; "Dempsey Powell to William Tate," June 10, 1806, Deed Book T, Page 238, WCRD.

separated from their families and divided among Tate's many heirs. Family structure among the enslaved was disregarded; the other women listed in Tate's will are given either with "their increase" or with no mention of current or future children, there is no mention of who the children's fathers might have been, and no acknowledgement of marriage among the enslaved adults.<sup>12</sup>

William Tate appointed his sons, Mark and William H., as executors of his estate. He divided his land among his four sons, with Turner and John each inheriting half the land south of Upper Barton's Creek while Mark and William H. shared the land north of Upper Barton's Creek and east of the Neuse River.<sup>13</sup>

Turner Tate was bequeathed "one half of all the land that I hold on the south side of Barton's Creek, where he formerly lived, to be laid off at the lower end next to the River" adjacent to the mill pond.<sup>14</sup> About twenty years prior, he had married Susanna Ship and purchased 85 acres on the south side of "great" Barton's Creek from her family.<sup>15</sup> This was where they made their home, so Turner Tate never occupied the land he inherited from his father. In 1833, Turner Tate sold his inheritance to James Allen, followed by his homeplace to Reynold Allen in 1838.<sup>16</sup> Census records are not available for Turner Tate to explain where he may have gone after 1838.

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<sup>12</sup> "Last Will and Testament of William Tate."

<sup>13</sup> "Last Will and Testament of William Tate."

<sup>14</sup> "Last Will and Testament of William Tate."

<sup>15</sup> Ancestry.com, *North Carolina Marriage Records, 1741-2011* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016); "William Ship to Turner Tate," September 1, 1818, Deed Book 2, Page 218, WCRD.

<sup>16</sup> "William Ship [agent of Turner Tate] to James Allen," January 10, 1834, Deed Book 11, Page 205, WCRD; "Turner Tate to Reynold Allen," January 25, 1839, Deed Book 13, Page 207, WCRD.

John inherited the other half of his father's land on the south side of Upper Barton's Creek.<sup>17</sup> No deed or census records could be found for John in Wake County, suggesting that he may have moved to another part of North Carolina or out of the state altogether. It's probable that his portion of the inheritance was sold with Turner Tate's in 1833. Whatever his fate, he probably never occupied his family's land.

William H. Tate's inheritance included his father's land on the north side of Upper Barton's Creek and on the east side of the Neuse River, with the exception of the forty acres granted to his mother to live on during her lifetime.<sup>18</sup> He had his own homestead by the time of his father's death, so like his brothers, he too never actually occupied his inheritance. He owned land on the east side of the Neuse River, which he farmed with the help of three slaves.<sup>19</sup>

In 1834, two years after his father's death, William H. Tate sold the ten-acre mill tract to Jesse Gill, buying another nine acres "on the mill path" and adjacent to his other property from Gill at the same time.<sup>20</sup> By 1840, he was living in Fishdam, which at that time was located in New Light Township, although the post office was later moved to the area of Oak Grove Township that became Durham County. The census lists four other whites and four enslaved African Americans in his household. It is

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<sup>17</sup> "Last Will and Testament of William Tate."

<sup>18</sup> "Last Will and Testament of William Tate."

<sup>19</sup> Ancestry.com, *1830 United States Federal Census*; "William H. Tate to William Crenshaw," May 22, 1830, Deed Book 9, Page 253, WCRD; "William Allen to William H. Tate," March 1, 1831, Deed Book 9, Page 455, WCRD.

<sup>20</sup> "William H. Tate to Jesse Gill," July 8, 1834, Book 11, Page 341, WCRD; "Jesse Gill to William H. Tate," July 11, 1834, Deed Book 11, Page 351, WCRD.

possible he was married and had children, although the documentary record is not clear.<sup>21</sup>

In 1848, William H. Tate sold the remaining 119 acres “between the two Bartons creeks” to Reynold Allen, who already owned adjacent land.<sup>22</sup> His mother, Amy Tate, died sometime before 1848, allowing him to sell the remaining family estate. By 1850, he had moved to nearby Forestville with his sister Cary. In 1858 he married Mary Terrell, and based on their ages it was perhaps a second marriage for both of them. He died just five years later.<sup>23</sup>

Although Mark Tate inherited a significant portion of his father’s estate, sharing the same land inheritance as his brother William, it appears that he also never actually lived on that land.<sup>24</sup> Mark Tate married Rebecca Allen in 1829, and they had two children: Tabitha, born in 1837, and William, born in 1840. Like William H., they lived in Fishdam.<sup>25</sup> Tate served as the Postmaster in Fishdam in the 1830s, was on the school board for the Morning Sun Academy college preparatory school in the 1850s, and owned thirteen slaves.<sup>26</sup> He remained there until his death around 1864.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The 1840 census lists only the name of the male head of household, and lists only race and ages of all other household members. Therefore, it is unclear the relationship of the four white people recorded in William H. Tate’s household in the 1840 census. Ancestry.com, *1840 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016).

<sup>22</sup> “William H. Tate to Reynold Allen,” January 4, 1849, Deed Book 18, Page 66, WCRD.

<sup>23</sup> Ancestry.com, *North Carolina Index to Marriage Bonds, 1741-1868*; Ancestry.com, *1860 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016).

<sup>24</sup> “Last Will and Testament of William Tate.”

<sup>25</sup> Ancestry.com, *North Carolina Index to Marriage Bonds, 1741-1868*; Ancestry.com, *1840 United States Federal Census*.

<sup>26</sup> Ancestry.com, *US Appointments of Postmasters, 1832-1971* (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016); Elizabeth Reid Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, Volume I: Prehistory through Centennial* (Raleigh, NC: Capital County

## The Allen Family (1838-1894)

Amy and William Tate were neighbors to Phebe Pullen (b.1760, d.1835) and Young Allen (b.1755, d.1835), who owned over 500 acres along the Neuse River from Lower Barton's Creek to Fall Creek.<sup>28</sup> Young Allen managed his land with the help of his sons and enslaved laborers. In 1820, he owned at least 20 slaves. After gifting several to his children, he reported 13 enslaved workers in the 1830 census.<sup>29</sup> Although his will could not be found, it is probable these 13 African Americans were transferred to his children upon his death in 1835.

Young Allen's son Reynold Allen (b.1791, d.1882) owned most of the land that has become Blue Jay Point County Park following William Tate. Reynold's brother, James "John" Allen (b.1785, d.1862), also owned a portion of the former Tate property, closest to the old millpond and the Neuse River.

In 1824, Reynold Allen married Betsey Ann Harrison (b.1802, d.1828), and they had a son, William (b.1825, d.1884). A second son, Harrison, was born in 1826 but died the same year. After his wife's death in 1828, Allen married Jane Cannon

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Publishing Company, 1983), 307, 661, 665; Ancestry.com, *1840 United States Federal Census*; Ancestry.com, *1850 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016).

<sup>27</sup> "Last Will and Testament of Mark A. Tate," February 6, 1864, Ancestry.com, *North Carolina Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998* (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015), www.ancestry.com (accessed November 2016).

<sup>28</sup> "Young Allen to John Allen," July 19, 1823, Deed Book 5, Page 471, WCRD; "Young W. Allen to Henry Allen," January 21, 1825, Deed Book 6, Page 97, WCRD; "Young Allen to Solomon Allen," July 11, 1834, Deed Book 11, Page 350, WCRD.

<sup>29</sup> Ancestry.com, *1830 United States Federal Census*; "Young Allen to James Allen," July 18, 1823, Deed Book 5, Page 464, WCRD; "Young Allen to Isaac Winston, Jr.," September 21, 1825, Deed Book 6, Page 282, WCRD; "Young Allen to John Allen and sons," July 11, 1834, Deed Book 11, Page 350, WCRD.

(b.1813, d.1893). They had two children, Charles (b.1837, d.1914) and James (b.1851, death date unknown).

Over his lifetime, Reynold Allen established a farm that covered nearly 500 acres. Through the 1830s and 1840s, Allen purchased 205 acres on the Barton's Creeks from the Tates, including the property that became his homeplace near the current location of the Allen Slave Cemetery and the Blue Jay Point County Park maintenance building.<sup>30</sup> He sold some of the land, but most was given to his sons.<sup>31</sup> In 1854, he gave William 100 acres on Barton's Creek, followed by 119 acres between the Barton's Creeks to Charles in 1866.<sup>32</sup> He also gave his son James a parcel of land on Barton's Creek, although the deed gift does not specify the acreage. The gift could be claimed following Allen's death, and James claimed the inheritance in 1875.<sup>33</sup>

Article X of the North Carolina Constitution outlines exemptions for Homesteads, ensuring that a property owner's home and land cannot be sold to collect debts.<sup>34</sup> In 1868, Allen applied for exemption under this provision, and that December, he was allotted 106.5 acres on Lower Barton's Creek, which included his homeplace, 85 acres south of Lower Barton's Creek, and one additional acre in front of his house.<sup>35</sup> In 1875, he and his wife sold an unknown number of acres to E.A. Allen.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "William Tate to Reynold Allen," October 8, 1833, Deed Book 11, Page 259, WCRD; "Turner Tate to Reynold Allen," January 25, 1839, Deed Book 13, Page 207, WCRD; "William H. Tate to Reynold Allen," January 4, 1849, Deed Book 18, Page 66, WCRD.

<sup>31</sup> "Reynold Allen to Marion Jackson," December 19, 1855, Deed Book 20, Page 754, WCRD.

<sup>32</sup> "Reynold Allen to William A. Allen," January 6, 1869, Deed Book 26, Page 454, WCRD; "Reynold Allen to Charles N. Allen," January 6, 1869, Deed Book 26, Page 453, WCRD.

<sup>33</sup> "Reynold Allen & wife to James B. Allen," January 12, 1876, Deed Book 43, Page 24, WCRD.

<sup>34</sup> "Constitution of North Carolina, Article X Homesteads and Exemptions," [www.nctreasurer.com/2012Lawbook/nccartx/nccartx-2.htm](http://www.nctreasurer.com/2012Lawbook/nccartx/nccartx-2.htm) (accessed January 2017).

<sup>35</sup> "James H. Hutchinson to Reynold Allen," January 9, 1869, Deed Book 26, Page 471, WCRD.

<sup>36</sup> "Reynold Allen & wife to E.A. Allen," December 9, 1875, Deed Book 42, Page 212, WCRD.

Reynold Allen worked his farm with slave labor. In the 1860 census, Allen reported 14 slaves (2 men, 4 women, and 8 children).<sup>37</sup> Allen died in 1882, leaving his land and personal property to his wife for the duration of her widowhood and then to be divided among his sons.<sup>38</sup> Jane Cannon Allen died in 1893.<sup>39</sup>

Reynold Allen's son Charles served as the executor for his father's estate, and in 1894, he sold one acre of land to the trustees of the Pleasant Union Christian Church.<sup>40</sup> The church had formed on Reynold Allen's farm, and is likely to have predated the Civil War. Many of the emancipated slaves from the Allen, Thompson, Bledsoe, and Tadlock farms became tenant farmers on their former masters' land. They continued to worship at the church, so the Allen Slave Cemetery likely became the churchyard cemetery and may have been used after emancipation.<sup>41</sup>

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Blue Jay Point (1894-present)

The story of Blue Jay Point becomes difficult to uncover after the 1890s and the Allen farm because the documentary record is unclear or absent altogether. Still, it is possible to understand the history of Blue Jay Point by examining historical trends throughout the county during the twentieth century.

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<sup>37</sup> Ancestry.com, *1860 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules* [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010), [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (accessed January 2017).

<sup>38</sup> "Last Will and Testament of Reynold Allen," September 20, 1879, Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015), [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (accessed December 2016).

<sup>39</sup> Cheri Szcodronski, "Allen Family Tree," [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (accessed December 2016).

<sup>40</sup> "Last Will and Testament of Reynold Allen"; "Reynold Allen Est to Gideon Allen Tr," October 17, 1895, Deed Book 135, Page 271, WCRD.

<sup>41</sup> "Church History," *Pleasant Union Christian Church of North Raleigh*, [www.pleasantunioncc.com](http://www.pleasantunioncc.com) (accessed January 2017).

The northern portion of Wake County, including Blue Jay Point, was still predominantly agricultural at the turn of the twentieth century. Farms dotted the landscape, served by small crossroads communities with general stores, post offices, and automobile service stations.<sup>42</sup> Tobacco remained the primary crop, especially as the tobacco wilt in Granville County drove farmers into northern Wake County. From 1880 to 1920, larger farms were subdivided into smaller farms more suitable to growing labor-intensive tobacco crops.<sup>43</sup> It is likely that Reynold and Jane Allen's heirs subdivided and sold the farm at this time, although deed records could not be located.

In the 1920s, agriculture began to decline as tobacco prices dropped and farmers abandoned agriculture for other work. Tobacco farming was further decreased in the 1930s when the federal government began a crop reduction program to combat the low prices. Farm tenancy increased during these years, and remained common until the 1970s.<sup>44</sup> Since land records could not be located for the farms formerly at Blue Jay Point, it is unclear whether they were farmed by their owners or by tenants, but it is likely that they were farming tobacco and subsistence crops, as was typical of the area during the early 1900s.

Following World War II, corn and tobacco were the primary crops in the northern part of Wake County, and chickens and dairy cows were the primary livestock. Soybeans also became a popular crop by the 1960s. Farm tenancy continued to be common during the middle of the century as well.<sup>45</sup> It is likely the

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<sup>42</sup> Heather Slane and Cheri Szcodronski, "Wake County Architectural Survey Update, Phase III," 2017, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Lally, MPN, Section E, pages 46, 50-52, 65.

<sup>44</sup> Lally, MPN, Section E, pages 65, 68-70, 76-77.

<sup>45</sup> Edwards-Pittman Environmental, "Wake County MPDF Draft Addendum, 1942-1960," 2-6.

farms at Blue Jay Point diversified to include corn, cows, and chickens during this time. The church remained at the corner of Six Forks Road and Pleasant Union Church Road as well, and although the Allen Slave Cemetery continued to be maintained through the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the absence of modern commercial headstones suggests there were no new burials during that time. By the 1950s, the area had become overgrown and forested.



*Portion of 1959 USDA Aerial Photograph showing the Blue Jay Point area  
(Map Courtesy of GIS Services, USDA Historical Aerial Photos, University of North Carolina)*

During the last decades of the twentieth century, the population of Wake County exploded, causing significant changes to the landscape of the northern portion of the county and

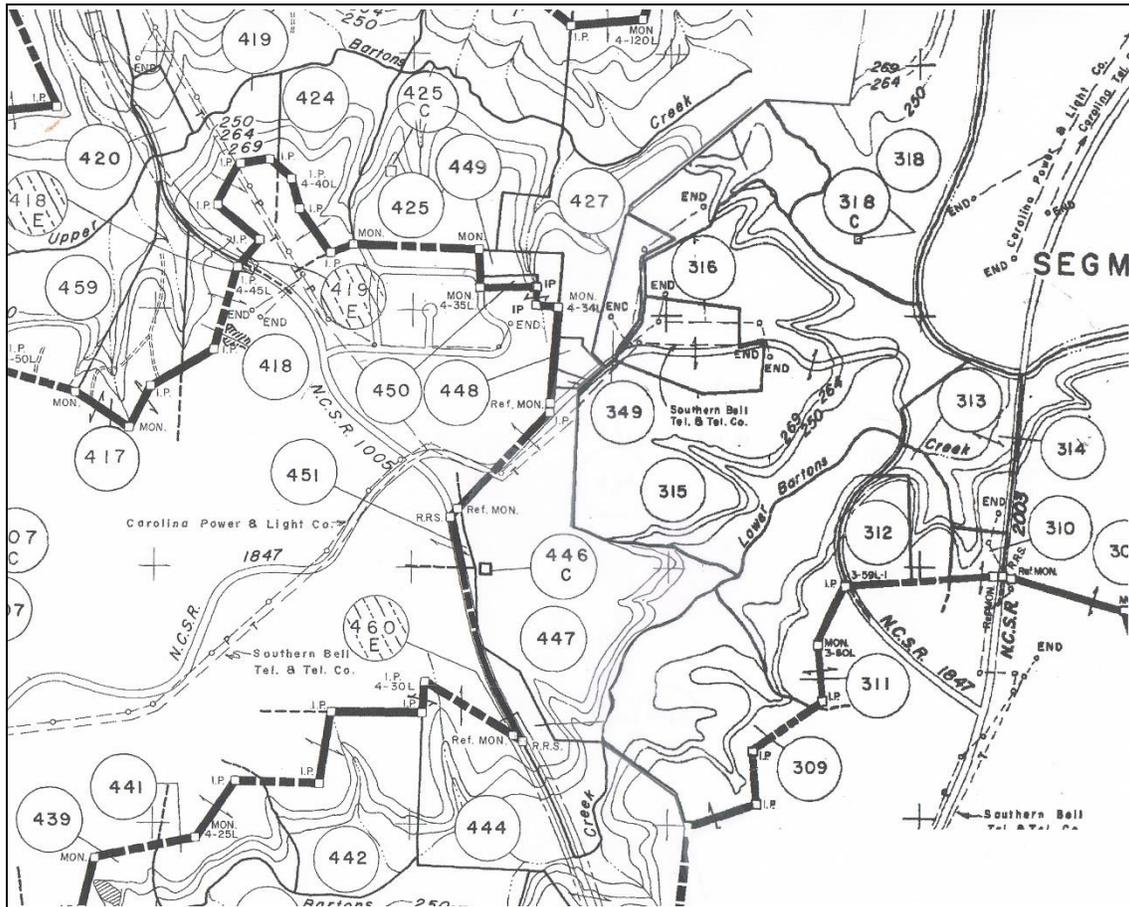
shifting everyday life away from the farm.<sup>46</sup> The Neuse River, Upper Barton's Creek, and Lower Barton's Creek were important waterways that contributed to the suitability of the Blue Jay Point area for farming. However, in 1978, the Army Corps of Engineers dammed the Neuse River, eventually flooding all three waterways as part of the Falls Lake reservoir to provide a reliable water supply for Raleigh and surrounding areas. Throughout the 1970s, to prepare for the creation of the reservoir, the Army Corps of Engineers acquired the 12,410 acres that would become the lake, as well as another 5,000 acres of shoreline that became federal, state, and local recreation areas. This included sixteen parcels and at least three farmsteads within the current boundaries of Blue Jay Point County Park.

The land acquired by the Army Corps of Engineers was cleared of historic buildings, leaving only archaeological remains of the farmsteads that once stood at Blue Jay Point. The church adjacent to the Allen Slave Cemetery was also likely demolished at that time, and the congregation relocated about a mile west on Pleasant Union Church Road in 1974.<sup>47</sup> Cemeteries located within the acreage to be flooded were removed to other burial grounds, but the two cemeteries at Blue Jay Point were above the floodplain and remained in place.

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<sup>46</sup> Edwards-Pittman Environmental, "Wake County MPDF Draft Addendum, 1942-1960," 2-6.

<sup>47</sup> "Church History," *Pleasant Union Christian Church of North Raleigh*, [www.pleasantunioncc.com](http://www.pleasantunioncc.com) (accessed January 2017).



Portion of US Army Corps of Engineers land acquisition map showing the Blue Jay Point area  
 (Map Courtesy of the US Army Corps of Engineers)

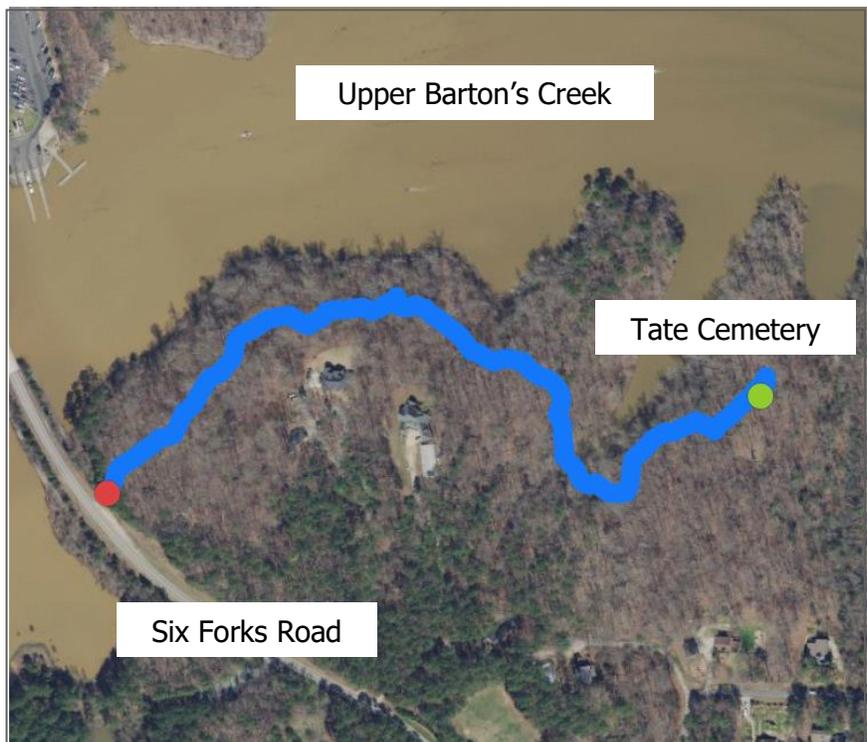
Blue Jay Point County Park is located on the peninsula that formed when the Neuse River and the Upper and Lower Barton's Creeks flooded to form Falls Lake. The park opened in 1992 on land leased from the Army Corps of Engineers, who manages Falls Lake, and it provides outdoor recreation and environmental education for the residents of Wake County and the surrounding areas.

# Tate Cemetery

## Introduction

The Tate Cemetery is the smaller of the two cemeteries within the park's boundaries. It is located approximately one-half mile east of Six Forks Road on the Mountains-to-Sea Trail south of the Upper Barton's Creek boat access area.

The cemetery is sited on the eastern crest of a small hill overlooking the now flooded Upper Barton's Creek. It contains just two graves. Both graves are deeply depressed and are marked with similarly carved headstones and



*Map of Tate Cemetery Location*  
*Latitude: 35.9725 Longitude: -78.6483*

field stone footstones. One grave also has a carved footstone, now broken. No other stones, grave depressions, or other obvious signs of additional burials are present. Although the inscriptions have weathered beyond legibility, it is possible to date the cemetery based on historic burial traditions.

## Dating the Tate Cemetery

In the Piedmont region of North Carolina, the earliest stone grave markers were typically carved by local stone cutters from native stone types. Slate or schists were most often used. Soapstone, a type of schist, was common because it was soft enough to carve with simple tools, although that also made these stones highly susceptible to weathering. Granite became more common once the quarry opened near Raleigh in the early 1800s, and sandstone was also used. The Tate Cemetery headstones are made of schist.<sup>48</sup>



*Both graves are marked with carved headstones. The south grave headstone is slightly smaller than the north grave headstone.*

<sup>48</sup> Ruth Little, *Sticks and Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Gravemarkers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 3-4, 19-20, 72

Piedmont headstones can be dated further by examining the size of the stone. The Tate Cemetery headstones are approximately 12-13 inches wide by 15-20 inches high by 2 inches thick. Headstones were smaller in earlier eras and have grown taller and wider over time. Therefore, the size of these stones suggests they are quite early, and likely were made in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>49</sup>

The shape of the stone also offers clues to its date of creation, and although sometimes stones were installed well after the death of the interred in early North Carolina, backdating was uncommon in the Piedmont.<sup>50</sup> Head and footstones became common in cemeteries in the mid-1700s, and although the coastal plains had no stone for cutting and the mountains had no transportation for stone import, materials and skilled cutters were readily available in the Piedmont.<sup>51</sup> Both graves are marked with field stone footstones, and the curved tympanum shape of the headstones was a common design through the 1840s.<sup>52</sup>



*Both graves are marked with field stone footstones*

It is even possible to deduce the ethnic heritage of the interred based on immigration patterns in North Carolina. Migration into Wake County typically followed the river valleys connecting the Piedmont to the eastern region of the state.

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<sup>49</sup> Little, 14

<sup>50</sup> Little, 18-19.

<sup>51</sup> Little, 13.

<sup>52</sup> Little, 12-15.

Lowland Scots, English, Irish, and Welsh travelled these routes, and Wake County was predominantly British (English, Scottish, and Welsh). Each of these groups included distinct symbols on their headstones.<sup>53</sup> Although any mortuary art on the Tate Cemetery headstones has been lost, genealogical research has confirmed the Tates were of English origin.<sup>54</sup>

In addition, the presence of just two graves suggests a first-generation burial ground. Small family cemeteries were most common to first generation family members, while later generations were more often buried in churchyards or community cemeteries. The earliest carved headstones appear in the Piedmont in the 1760s.<sup>55</sup>



*The Tate Cemetery includes two graves with headstones and footstones overlooking Upper Barton's Creek*

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<sup>53</sup> Little, 22-24, 71-73.

<sup>54</sup> See historical narrative below.

<sup>55</sup> Little, 72-73.

The material, size, and shape of the headstones, in the context of the location and number of burials of the Tate Cemetery, suggest that the internments occurred between the 1760s when carved stones became common in the Piedmont and the 1840s when tympanum shapes shifted from curved to angled designs. Considering this physical evidence within the historical narrative of the surrounding land will identify who is buried in the Tate Cemetery.

## Conclusions

The Tate Cemetery's physical clues and history reveal who is buried there. It is clear the cemetery internments are those of white family members, rather than enslaved workers, because of the prominent hillside location and presence of well-made stone markers. The material, size, and shape of the stones suggest they are pre-1840s.

Therefore, these are likely the graves of Amy and William Tate. They acquired the land in the 1780s and 1790s, and the graves overlook the location of their grist mill pond. Since Amy and William both died in the early 1800s, it is reasonable that their headstones would reflect late 18<sup>th</sup>- and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century stone cutting designs.

## Recommendations for Ongoing Care

The cemetery is in a secluded area on public land, making it both vulnerable to damage and difficult to monitor. The stones show some damage: one of the carved footstones has been broken and part is missing, and both headstones show damage from graffiti carvings. The cemetery is not visible from the path or

marked on trail maps. To protect from additional vandalism, the cemetery location should remain inconspicuous.

Due to its wooded hilltop location, the cemetery is also susceptible to damage from natural forces. There are several large fallen trees in the cemetery that should be removed. The area should be inspected following storms or high winds and any additional fallen trees or branches cleared. Rain may cause weathering of the soft headstones, but the surrounding trees provide some protection. The leaf litter may also trap moisture against the stones, facilitating the growth of algae or moss that damage soft stones with their root systems. During especially wet times of year, keeping the base of the stones clear of leaf litter will protect them from excess moisture.



*The carved footstone marking the north grave has been broken and the tympanum is missing. The field stone marker remains undisturbed.*

Some vegetation has begun to grow on both headstones. Cleaning is an option, but a professional stone cleaner should be consulted before cleaning. The stones have suffered significant weathering over time, and they are susceptible to further damage because schist is a relatively soft stone type. Improper cleaning could result in more damage than repair, and ultimately may not be worth attempting.



*Due to the cemetery's wooded location, moisture results in vegetative growth on the headstones*

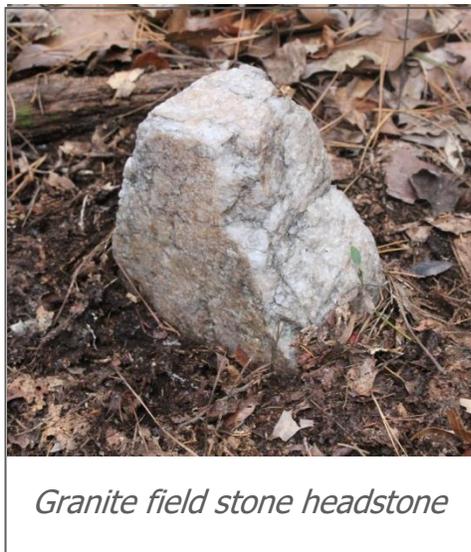
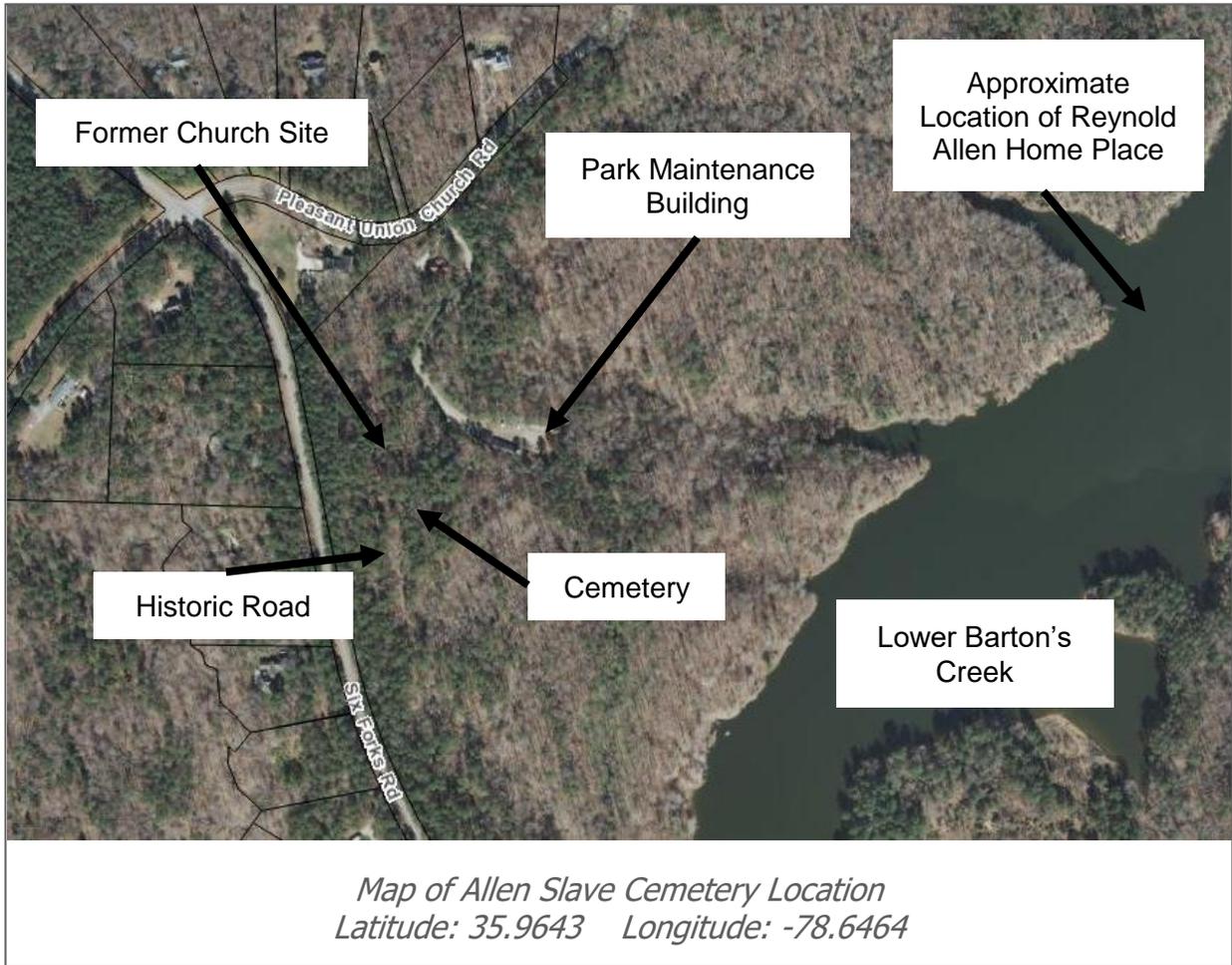
# Allen Slave Cemetery

## Introduction

The Allen Slave Cemetery is the larger of the two cemeteries located within the Blue Jay Point County Park Boundaries. It is currently inaccessible to the public and can only be reached by hiking south from the park maintenance building. The cemetery is located on the southeast corner of Pleasant Union Church Road and Six Forks Road in a secondary growth wooded area. A historic road east of the cemetery travelled southeast from Six Forks Road through the Neuse River basin and provided access to the Reynold Allen farm and home place, now submerged under Falls Lake. A small side road west of the cemetery provided access to the cemetery and later church, and the remains of this road bed remain visible today between the cemetery's western boundary and Six Forks Road. The church site is identifiable north of the cemetery by the presence of three large, old growth oak trees.



*View of the Allen Slave Cemetery.  
Orange flags indicate probable grave locations.*



The graves in the Allen Slave Cemetery are marked with granite field stones, most with both a headstone and a footstone. One carved soapstone headstone is present, although no inscription is visible. The graves are deeply depressed and arranged in a grid pattern. Based on visual examination of field stones, burial pattern, and grave depressions, there are approximately 37 graves in the cemetery.

It is possible more graves are present that are not detectable through surface examination.

## Dating the Allen Slave Cemetery

While information is readily available for early white cemeteries through published studies, church records, and even the headstones themselves, much less is known about North Carolina's earliest African American burial grounds. Slave cemeteries are often entirely lost to time, their graves unmarked and locations forgotten. However, it is possible to date the Allen Slave Cemetery based on oral history and the documentary record.

The land on which the cemetery is located was first owned by Amy and William Tate, however, it appears that they did not occupy this part of their property and instead used it for farming or timber.<sup>56</sup> The first occupancy was by Reynold Allen, who purchased the land from the Tates' estate in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>57</sup> An 1871 map shows Allen's home place was located east of the cemetery, near Lower Barton's Creek and accessed by a road long since abandoned.<sup>58</sup> By the time Reynold Allen had established his farm, the graves of white middle class families were marked with carved and inscribed headstones.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, the cemetery is not the Allen family cemetery.

Reynold Allen owned at least twenty slaves in the 1850s, and he reported fourteen slaves in the 1860 census.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the cemetery was likely the Allen farm's slave cemetery.

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<sup>56</sup> See pages 6-7 above.

<sup>57</sup> See page 13 above.

<sup>58</sup> Fendol Bevers, "Map of Wake County," 1871, University of North Carolina, North Carolina Maps Digital Collection, <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/dc/ncmaps>.

<sup>59</sup> Little, 12-14, 72-73.

<sup>60</sup> See page 14 above.

However, the Allen farm's population of enslaved African Americans is too small for a cemetery of more than 35 people.

Deed records and oral history information from the Pleasant Union Christian Church indicate that the church was founded in 1875 by emancipated slaves from the Allen, Thompson, Bledsoe, and Tadlock farms, which met at the corner of Pleasant Union Church Road and Six Forks Road.<sup>61</sup> It is likely that the cemetery began as a slave cemetery for these six farms, and perhaps the enslaved were even permitted to meet for religious services prior to the Civil War.



*1938 USDA aerial image of Pleasant Union Christian Church and Allen Slave Cemetery location (courtesy of UNC Digital Maps Collection)*

Reynold Allen died in 1882, and in 1894, the congregation purchased one acre of land to build their church, which then likely became associated with the cemetery.<sup>62</sup> Aerial photos from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century show the cemetery was maintained during that time, however it appears there were no new burials.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See pages 14-15 above.

<sup>62</sup> See page 14 above.

<sup>63</sup> USDA, "Historical Aerial Photos," 1938, 1959, and 1971, University of North Carolina Geographic Information Systems Services, <http://library.unc.edu/services/data/gis-usda/wake>.

Engraved headstones were common in African American cemeteries in the early 1900s, and the absence of these in the Allen Slave Cemetery suggests the community utilized another cemetery.

## Conclusions

The Allen Slave Cemetery's physical clues and history reveal who is buried there. It is clear that the cemetery internments are those of African Americans, rather than white family members, because of the absence of well-made stone markers.

Therefore, the cemetery likely began in the 1830s when Allen purchased the land, containing the graves of enslaved laborers on the Allen, Thompson, Bledsoe, and Tadlock farms. It then became the churchyard cemetery for the original Pleasant Union Christian Church, whose membership included emancipated slaves in the area. It was likely maintained as late as the 1960s, when the church was relocated to make way for Falls Lake and the cemetery was abandoned, but no burials appear to date from that time.

## Recommendations for Ongoing Care

The cemetery is in a secluded area on public land, making it both vulnerable to damage and difficult to monitor, although the lack of obvious headstones and the absence of hiking trails in the vicinity does provide some protection. The cemetery is not visible from any park trails or Six Forks Road, and it is not marked on trail maps. To protect from potential vandalism, the cemetery location should remain inconspicuous.

Due to its wooded location, the cemetery is susceptible to damage from natural forces. There are several large fallen trees in the cemetery that should be removed. The area should be inspected following storms or high winds and any additional fallen trees or branches cleared. Rain may cause weathering of the soft headstones, but the surrounding trees provide some protection. The leaf litter may also trap moisture against the stones, facilitating the growth of algae or moss that damage soft stones with their root systems. During especially wet times of year, keeping the base of the stones clear of leaf litter will protect them from excess moisture.



*The Allen Slave Cemetery is located in secondary growth forest*



*A soapstone headstone has been partially engulfed by recent tree growth*

The cemetery is also vulnerable to new tree growth. Several graves already show significant alteration from new trees, with trees growing out of graves, headstones engulfed or shifted, and changes in topography from tree bases or roots. The area should be inspected regularly and new saplings removed to prevent further alteration of the graves.

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# Summary of Blue Jay Point History

The land that makes up Blue Jay Point County Park was originally given as a series of land grants in the 1780s and 1790s. William Tate, his wife, Amy, and their eight children were the first to occupy the land. They operated a grist mill on Upper Barton's Creek and farmed subsistence and cash crops with the assistance of enslaved laborers.

After their deaths, Amy and William Tate were buried on their property in a small family cemetery, as was typical of the time. The Tate Cemetery is located about one half-mile east of Six Forks Road on a small hill overlooking Upper Barton's Creek, now part of Falls Lake. The schist headstones are carved in a curved tympanum shape, and they were originally inscribed, although they are weathered beyond legibility.

Amy and William Tate's sons, Mark, William H., Turner, and John, sold their ancestral acreage to Reynold Allen. Allen established a large farm where he too grew the subsistence and cash crops common to Wake County farms at the time. Allen was married twice, having two sons with his first wife, Betsey, and two sons with his second wife, Jane. Three of his four sons survived to adulthood, William, Charles, and James.

Allen was a slaveholder, and in 1860, he reported fourteen enslaved African Americans on his farm. Based on burial traditions, it is likely that the large cemetery near the corner of

Pleasant Union Church Road and Six Forks Road was established as a slave cemetery. The cemetery contains only field stone grave markers, suggesting it was not the family cemetery but rather an African American burial ground. It may date as early as the 1830s, and oral history suggests it may have served farms adjacent to the Allen Farm as well.

After Allen's death in 1884, his son sold one acre of land to emancipated slaves from the Allen, Thompson, Bledsoe, and Tadlock farms for a church, which was built adjacent to the slave cemetery. The cemetery continued to be maintained through the mid-1900s, although the absence of early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial headstones indicates there were no new burials. By the 1970s, the cemetery was abandoned and the church razed for the creation of Falls Lake.

The documentary record is unavailable for much of the twentieth century, but it is likely the Allens' heirs subdivided the land around the turn of the century. Tobacco was the most common cash crop in northern Wake County, and smaller farms were more conducive to growing labor-intensive tobacco. By the 1930s, many farmers diversified operations due to dramatically decreasing tobacco prices and government crop reduction programs. Chickens, dairy cows, corn, and soybeans became common farm products. Farm tenancy increased during this time, so the land at Blue Jay Point may have farmed by either owners or by tenants.

The population of Wake County exploded at the end of the twentieth century. To provide an adequate water supply, the Neuse River was dammed in 1978 to create Falls Lake, which flooded over 12,000 acres and resulted in the removal of historic buildings, cemeteries, and farms throughout the floodplain.



# Recommendations for Future Projects

## Introduction

The scope of this report is focused on the history and documentation of the two cemeteries at Blue Jay Point County Park and a history of land use within the park boundaries. During the course of this project, many questions have been answered, but still more remain. The research completed so far leads to three additional future projects: a complete land use history of the park property, an oral history project with the African American community, and historical interpretation.

## Complete Land Use History

A documentary record for the twentieth century could not be found during this project. The US Army Corps of Engineers (US ACE) was not required to file deeds with the Wake County Register of Deeds when property was acquired for Falls Lake, and the National Archives recently destroyed court records for contested eminent domain cases during that process. Deed research is further complicated by changes in PIN numbers when the land was acquired for Falls Lake, and by frequent division and recombination of property as farms were inherited, divided, and sold over time. In addition, US ACE records housed at the North Carolina State Archives do not include information about the homesteads or cemeteries at Blue Jay Point, and the US ACE real

estate office could not provide any information about, photos of, or appraisals for the buildings removed from within the park's boundaries.<sup>64</sup>

Other primary sources for identifying those who lived at Blue Jay Point prior the 1970s were equally unavailable. City directories from that time period are not available for rural areas of Wake County. The 1871 Fendol Bevers map of Wake County includes a number of prominent residents, but later maps are more narrowly focused on soils, transportation, schools, churches, or mail delivery routes.

Although the land acquisition map provided by the Army Corps of Engineers provides a starting point for completing chain of title on each of the acquired properties, the property owners were typically heirs to the property so there were multiple owners. Also, many owners also owned as many as 75 additional properties in Wake County in the middle decades of the twentieth century. It is possible that the Wake County Register of Deeds may have records of PIN number changes that also includes ownership information, but hundreds of properties received new PIN numbers when acquired to build the Falls Lake.

There are two possible methods to uncover more information about who was living at Blue Jay Point between the 1890s and the 1970s. It is possible that intensive deed research to uncover chain of title might be successful. However, it is unclear if the time required for this method would yield satisfying results. The best method would be a community oral history project including a diverse group of people in the broader Falls

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<sup>64</sup> Personal communication with Francis Ferrell, Chief Ranger, Falls Lake, with the US Army Corps of Engineers by Cheri Szcodronski via email, March 2017; Personal communication with Nathan Jordan, Archives Specialist with the National Archives at Atlanta by Cheri Szcodronski via email, May 2017.

Lake watershed area. The most efficient method to recruit interview participants is to work with local schools, churches, and community organizations. Group interviews with 5-10 people in a space familiar to them yields the best results, often with the group working together to recall memories as the conversation progresses. Since the land was acquired about forty years ago, oral history projects should be considered in the short-term.

## African American Community Oral History Project

The history of the African American Community at the park is a difficult and controversial one. Although it may be intimidating to openly discuss a difficult past, it is also remarkably healing.

The African American community's ancestral origins lie in slavery at the Reynold Allen farm and several adjacent farms. The enslaved were forbidden from education, seldom permitted to formally practice religion, and although sometimes allowed to marry, marriages were not considered binding and family members could be sold and separated forever.

Following emancipation, many former slaves became tenant farmers or sharecroppers on their former masters' farms, including those in the Blue Jay Point area. This arrangement was not much better than slavery, as the tenants still relied on the farm owner for all their supplies and remained deeply in debt. Although they were able to marry, attend school, and practice religion, even having received land on which to build their own church, disenfranchisement kept the African American population marginalized.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, segregation became common practice and then law. African Americans received substandard medical care, education, and other public services. Although the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s has made these disparities illegal, race relations remain strained even now, fifty years later. In addition, those living near Blue Jay Point were forced to abandon their church and ancestral cemetery in the 1970s when the Falls Lake reservoir was constructed.

Blue Jay Point County Park is uniquely positioned to bring healing to a community that has travelled a difficult path for two centuries. By collecting the stories of the African American community, the park can share a complete story of its history and recognize its own difficult past. This project could provide a place where park staff and visitors, long-time and recent local residents, and African Americans whose ancestors were enslaved on nearby farms can openly discuss their connection to this place, bringing an opportunity for healing and community among many different groups of people.

A similar project has been successful at Historic Oak View County Park, and it could serve as a model for Blue Jay Point. Park staff conducted extensive research on the history of slavery at the Oak View plantation, then partnered with a local African American church to present their findings to the community. Attendees were encouraged to bring stories, photos, and artifacts to share as well.

The research contained in this report includes only one of the four farms known to have utilized the Allen Slave Cemetery. The first phase in an oral history project would be to complete research on the history of slavery at the Thompson, Bledsoe, and Tadlock farms. The history of the four farms would provide

appropriate material for a community presentation on the slave history at Blue Jay Point.

The Pleasant Union Christian Church is a natural partner for community engagement, so the next phase would be to reach out to the church leaders and develop a relationship with the congregation. Sharing information openly and proactively with the church will build trust and credibility between the park and the community.

The third phase is presenting the information to the public and inviting them to bring their own stories to share with the park. The presentation should conclude with an opportunity for attendees to share their memories and to volunteer to be formally interviewed.

Conducting oral histories with the community is the fourth phase. This phase is the most time consuming, and plenty of time should be allocated to build relationships with the individuals who participate.

The final phase is to continue the work above through continual sharing of research with the community, additional interviews, and expanded park interpretation.

An oral history project with the community is an ongoing project, with a flurry of activity in the early stages followed by constant communication and engagement afterward. It demonstrates a true commitment to the community, provides an opportunity for a lasting connection through a shared place, and fosters healing through confronting a difficult past together. This project should be considered one of utmost importance.

# Interpretation

The Tate mill site and cemetery, Allen farm and slave cemetery, and original Mt. Pleasant Church site are all engaging aspects of the Blue Jay Point history and for which interpretation should be considered. Since visitors to the park are already interacting with the physical landscape on their own, self-guided map-based interpretation of the historic resources merges well with the existing recreational uses of the park. However, the protection of these resources, in particular the cemeteries, must be a high priority due to their secluded locations.

One option is adding interpretive signage to the existing trails. Signs could be added to the Mountains to Sea Trail overlooking the Tate mill site and include information about the Tates' land grant, mill, and cemetery without disclosing the exact location of the cemetery itself. The Reynold Allen farm could be interpreted along the historic road now serving as the Blue Jay Point Trail. And the Allen Slave Cemetery and original Mt. Pleasant Church could be interpreted on the Azalea Loop Trail.

Digital interpretation options are also suitable to Blue Jay Point, if developed with protecting the cemetery locations in mind. StoryMaps is an online platform for creating interactive maps using ArcGIS developed by ESRI, Inc. Creators build maps around GIS points allowing users to view photos, videos, and narrative text, enriching the in-person experience and allowing virtual visitation. This option would require adding GIS for the cemeteries in strategic locations to ensure their protection.

OnCell is another digital experience, but is telephone based. Frequently used by parks, including the National Park Service and several other Wake County parks, users utilize their phones to

access pre-recorded narratives. Users may also access a corresponding website that includes the narrative text, as well as photos, videos, and maps. Like StoryMaps, OnCell offers an opportunity to expand the visitor experience both in-person and virtually.

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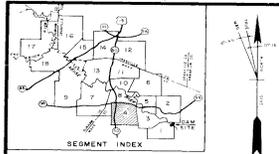
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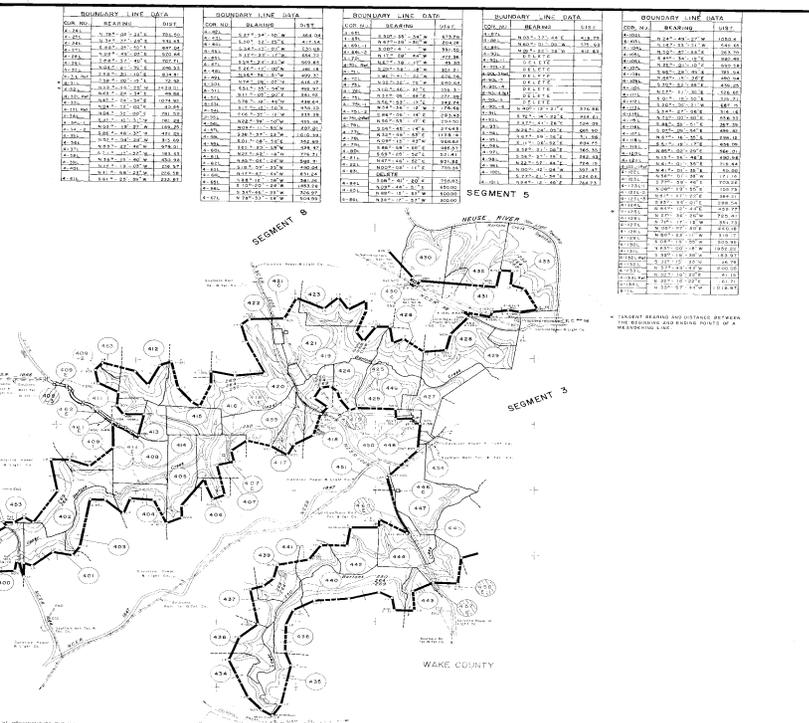


# Appendix A: US Army Corps of Engineers Land Acquisition Maps





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1.3 ACRES ARE CONVEYED TO GOVT BY DEED BY DEED 4-28-67 TR. 409-16, 16-17, 16-18, 16-19, 16-20, 16-21, 16-22, 16-23, 16-24, 16-25, 16-26, 16-27, 16-28, 16-29, 16-30, 16-31, 16-32, 16-33, 16-34, 16-35, 16-36, 16-37, 16-38, 16-39, 16-40, 16-41, 16-42, 16-43, 16-44, 16-45, 16-46, 16-47, 16-48, 16-49, 16-50, 16-51, 16-52, 16-53, 16-54, 16-55, 16-56, 16-57, 16-58, 16-59, 16-60, 16-61, 16-62, 16-63, 16-64, 16-65, 16-66, 16-67, 16-68, 16-69, 16-70, 16-71, 16-72, 16-73, 16-74, 16-75, 16-76, 16-77, 16-78, 16-79, 16-80, 16-81, 16-82, 16-83, 16-84, 16-85, 16-86, 16-87, 16-88, 16-89, 16-90, 16-91, 16-92, 16-93, 16-94, 16-95, 16-96, 16-97, 16-98, 16-99, 16-100.

PHOTO 7-182 PHOTO 8-182 PHOTO 9-203

INTENTIVE FINAL  
**PROJECT MAP**  
 DEPT OF THE ARMY  
 ENGINEERING SERVICE CORPS OF ENGINEERS

LOCATION OF PROJECT  
 STATE: NORTH CAROLINA  
 COUNTY: WAKE  
 DISTRICT: TRIANGLE  
 TOWNSHIP: FALLS LAKE  
 10 MILES S. OF RAILTON  
 4 1/2 MILES S.E. OF DORHAM

TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES  
 RAILROADS: SEABOARD AIR LINE  
 STATE HIGHWAY: 100, 101, 102  
 FEDERAL HIGHWAY: 100, 101, 102

ACQUISITION AUTHORIZATION  
 TITLE: 16-17, 16-18, 16-19, 16-20, 16-21, 16-22, 16-23, 16-24, 16-25, 16-26, 16-27, 16-28, 16-29, 16-30, 16-31, 16-32, 16-33, 16-34, 16-35, 16-36, 16-37, 16-38, 16-39, 16-40, 16-41, 16-42, 16-43, 16-44, 16-45, 16-46, 16-47, 16-48, 16-49, 16-50, 16-51, 16-52, 16-53, 16-54, 16-55, 16-56, 16-57, 16-58, 16-59, 16-60, 16-61, 16-62, 16-63, 16-64, 16-65, 16-66, 16-67, 16-68, 16-69, 16-70, 16-71, 16-72, 16-73, 16-74, 16-75, 16-76, 16-77, 16-78, 16-79, 16-80, 16-81, 16-82, 16-83, 16-84, 16-85, 16-86, 16-87, 16-88, 16-89, 16-90, 16-91, 16-92, 16-93, 16-94, 16-95, 16-96, 16-97, 16-98, 16-99, 16-100.

SEGMENT "4"  
 OFFICE OF THE ARMY  
 OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF  
 SOUTH ATLANTIC DIVISION

REAL ESTATE  
**FALLS LAKE PROJECT**  
 NORTH CAROLINA

DATE: 8 MARCH 1974

AUDITED

SCHEDULE "B"

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# Appendix B: Map of the Allen Slave Cemetery

