

**REPORT ON THE
BARBEE – HARGRAVE CEMETERY**

BY DAVID SOUTHERN

MARCH 2011

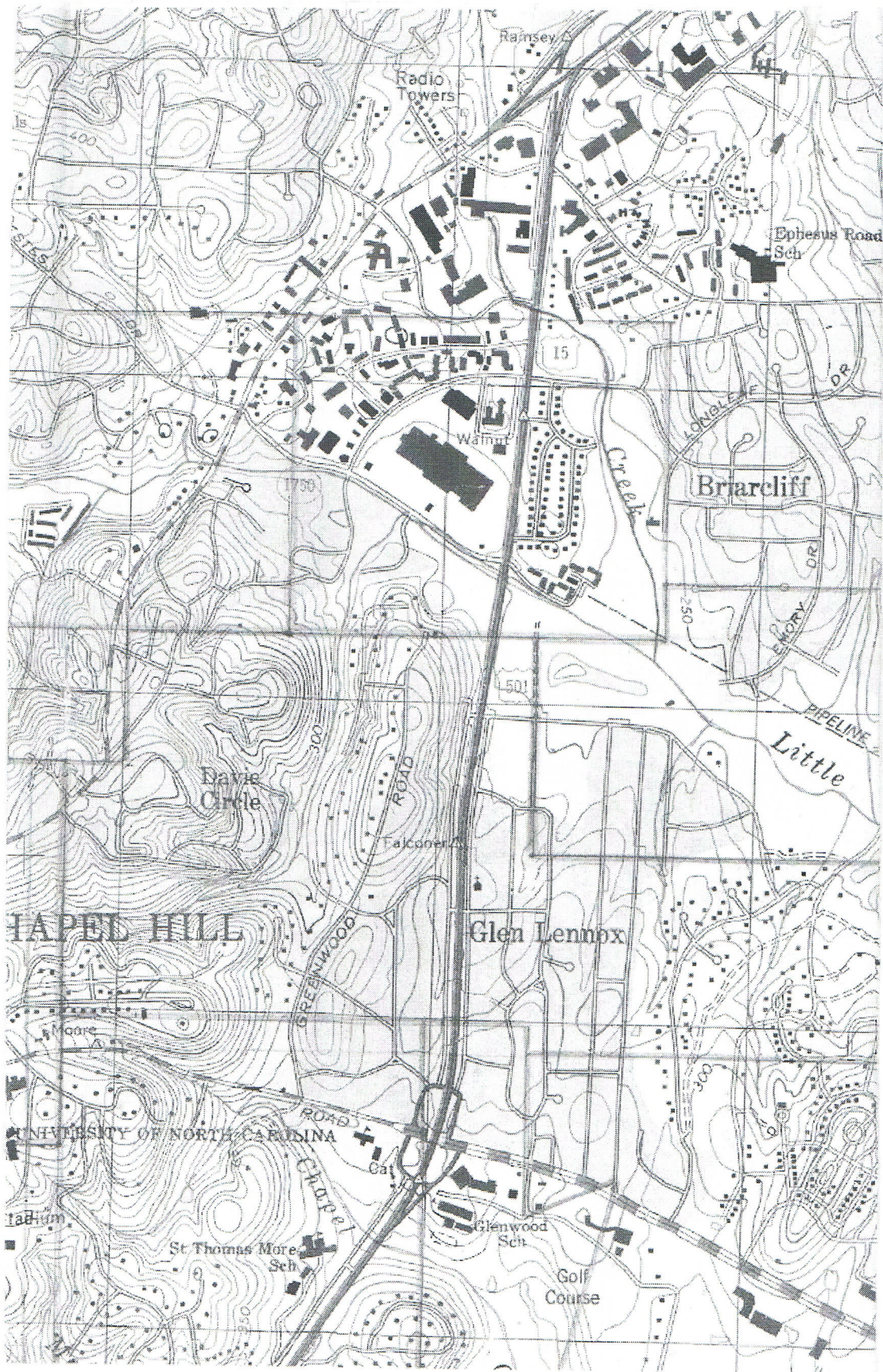
SUBMITTED TO THE
PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF
CHAPEL HILL

THROUGHOUT THE AMERICAS, and especially on the east coast of North America, there are thousands of abandoned private cemeteries not attached to churchyards—ancient resting places that hold distinct nineteenth century populations, and eighteenth century populations, and even earlier populations, whose descendants are now geographically dispersed or whose lineages have become extinct. Occasionally these cemeteries stand in the way of modern projects, and disassociated and sometimes anonymous remains are reinterred elsewhere. More often these old stones and bones remain in a state of quiet neglect in subdivisions, in apartment complexes, in shopping center parking lots, in the middle of farm fields, and in wooded areas that were once farmsteads. In Orange and Durham counties, some of these private burial grounds are very well maintained, as is the Barbee–Hargrave cemetery on Greenwood Road in Chapel Hill. Many more are now thoroughly abandoned and are subject to vandalism and desecration. Several hundred private burial grounds are listed and documented on the website Cemetery Census that is kept by Allen Dew of Creedmoor, North Carolina, and surfing his excellent website <<http://cemeterycensus.com>> will immediately reveal the extent and history of many family plots in the Chapel Hill area.

THE CEMETERY SITE ON GREENWOOD ROAD

The Barbee–Hargrave cemetery, shaded by some thirty oaks, hickories, and an occasional cedar, is situated on a rocky hilltop and enclosed in a circular drive at the northern end of Greenwood Road. Only one of its graves can be positively determined by the rocks that outline it, but rows of parallel depressions signify at least forty burials and likely more. A stone reported to have been engraved with the name “Thomas” and the year “1805” cannot now be located. Other stones that appear to have been “planted” are irregular in shape and without names or dates applied. Late in 2010 a Town of Chapel Hill maintenance crew vigorously cleaned the cemetery, removing fallen branches and leaves and also pulling up almost all of the abundant groundcover of periwinkle (*Vinca minor*, or myrtle), a planting perhaps centuries old that was meant to beautify the plot in honor of those buried there. It is possible that the periwinkle was misidentified as an invasive creeper such as honeysuckle, and that the intention of the crew was respectfully. As a much-recorded blues lyric instructs, “see that my grave is kept clean.” Periwinkle, a traditional graveyard cover, is a tough and persistent perennial that spreads by sending out runners. Those who attempt to pull it up seldom manage to remove all of the little roots. Consequently, it is likely that the eradicated periwinkle in this cemetery will recover in time, if allowed to do so.

If the Barbee–Hargrave cemetery ever suffered from neglect over its considerable lineage, in recent decades it certainly has been treated respectfully by its neighbors in Greenwood, a subdivision developed in the 1940s and 1950s by playwright and UNC drama professor Paul Green (1894–1981) and his wife Elizabeth Lay Green. With a keen ear for oral history and local lore, Paul Green collected anecdotes concerning the origin and constituents of this cemetery. The Cemetery Census site mentions that he was



informed by one James Blacknell, aged 104, that a Mrs. Flagler was once buried there, that her grave was surrounded with an iron fence, and that her remains were removed and reburied elsewhere—a statement that Green doubted. The prominent Flaglers of Florida *are* related by marriage to the equally prominent Kenans, who are in turn related by marriage to the Hargrave and Barbee families, but if ever there were any burials of whites in this cemetery it would have happened long before the Flagler association. The conservationist and historian Margaret Nygard (1925–95)—principal organizer of the Eno River Association that spurred the creation of the Eno River State Park in Durham and Orange counties—surveyed this cemetery in November 1973. Local historian Roger Foushee, originally from Burlington, North Carolina, and with ancestral roots in Orange and Chatham counties, gathered testimony in the 1970s from Hargrave[s] descendants Bessie Hargraves and Louise Hargraves Durham, both living in Durham at that time. The present assumption is that this is a cemetery for perhaps forty or fifty African Americans, mostly now unknown. The dates on the plaque affixed to a massive boulder on the eastern boundary gives the span 1790–1915, meaning that there were burials there long before and long after Emancipation. It is further presumed that the majority of those buried there were slaves of the Barbee and Hargrave families and that there were later burials of descendants of those slaves. Traditions of present-day descendants who visit the Barbee–Hargrave cemetery from time to time attest to these family names, histories, and associations. Through them we learn that George Hargrove [sic], who died in 1910, lies there, as does his wife Charlotte. However, long before there were any Hargraves and Barbees on this land, the site of this cemetery was on the northern edge of a large land grant to Hardy Morgan, whose family and property we will discuss in detail.

THE MORGAN FAMILY

This part of North Carolina first opened to European-American settlement in the 1740s during the administration of colonial governor Gabriel Johnston. By 1752, the population of settlers hereabout had reached a sufficient density to require that a new county, named Orange, be created from the western portions of the older Granville, Johnston, and Bladen counties. From secondary evidence, it appears that the earliest of white settlers in the area of this study was Mark Morgan, who acquired many grants of land along the upper New Hope Creek watershed and along its principal tributary that bears his name to this day. In 1744 his already established cabin and mill seat were used as locators for a royal grant to James Mulkey, whose oddly shaped 100-acre tract was situated on a once rich plain near the “shoreline” of the Triassic Basin—that is, on the east side of Chapel Hill and partly on the sites of present-day Finley Golf Course and Glenwood Elementary School. It is traditional lore that this pioneer Mark Morgan, said to have been a Welsh Baptist from Pennsylvania, at first lived *with his large family* in a hollow sycamore tree while he built a permanent dwelling. This mythology may already have been old when Cornelia Phillips Spencer first recounted it in print, and it is a wonderful example of how fanciful nonsense can grow wings, entering the permanent record and becoming inextricably entrenched. In John Terres’s *From Laurel Hill to Siler’s Bog* [Knopf, 1969; UNC Press, 1993], a much-beloved natural history of the Mason Farm preserve, this dubious story is repeated without question, though a

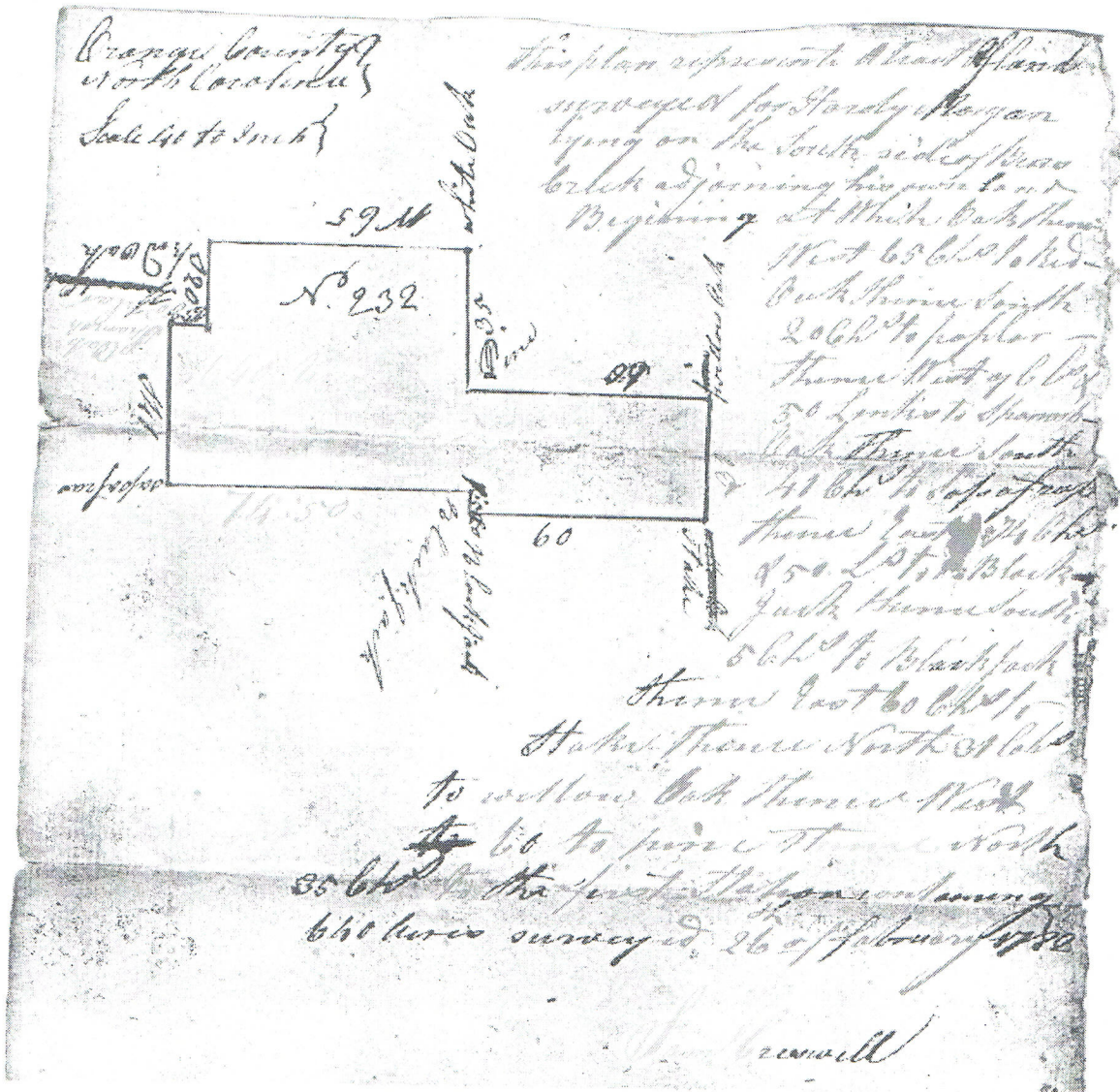
comparison of the number of individuals in the Morgan family and the girth of the largest of sycamores begs for further consideration.

Mark Morgan was definitely of Welsh descent on his father's side. His paternal grandfather, John Dorian Morgan, is known to have emigrated from southern Wales to Middlesex County, Virginia, in the seventeenth century. Mark Morgan's parents, John and Hannah Morgan, were married in that middle peninsula Virginia county, and his mother was born a Barbee, a name likely not Welsh (the suffix -bee or -by, as in Rigsbee, Rigsby, Lazenbee, Kilby &c., indicating a Saxon origin, i.e. English). The elder Morgans removed from Virginia to Onslow County, North Carolina, and their son Mark, third or fourth in succession to his father's land, sought his own fortune by striking out toward the western Carolina frontier—a process repeated often in successive Morgan generations. There are in fact Welsh Baptists with connections to the early history of Pennsylvania and to the early history of North Carolina—notably in Onslow County in a so-called “Welsh Tract.” However, Mark Morgan was a member of the established Anglican church that regarded Baptists as dissenters. On 11 January 1763, Morgan received from agents of Earl Granville a grant for 600 acres called “the Chapell tract” on the ridge between “Morgans and Bolins Creek” whereupon most of the physical plant of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is now situated. The Anglican chapel of ease from which Chapel Hill got its name was located on the present site of the earliest of several annexes to the Carolina Inn, where, in colonial days, there also was an intersection of two great roads. Whether or not Mark Morgan had the chapel built on his speculation, or if it were already constructed when he entered a claim for the land, this New Hope chapel is depicted on the plat that was drafted for him by William Churton, or by one of his assistants, on 21 August 1762. Fifteen years later, the first item entered in the inventory of Morgan's significantly expanded estate was £2=12=0, paid on 27 July 1777 to the Reverend George Micklejohn of Saint Matthew's Parish for officiating at his funeral. It would seem that Mark Morgan was *not* a Baptist, finally.

But, enough of Welsh Baptists and hollow sycamores—a study of the extended Morgan family reveals an interrelated network of colonial wealth and power that does not fit well with living in trees. Mark Morgan married Sarah Hinton of the powerful North Carolina family who developed plantations and built mills along the Neuse River in eastern Wake County. Through the Hinton and Barbee lines, extended kin included the Alston, Hardy (or Hardee), Hunter, Johnston, Jones, Kimbrough, Lane, and Patterson families, among others—a network of well-connected patricians and landed gentry with surplus capital to invest in gristmills and sawmills and to purchase numerous slaves to work their plantations and mills. In early Orange County records, Mark Morgan sat on grand juries and was a justice of the peace. Additionally, he was a vestryman of Saint Matthew's parish, a commissioner of roads, and a captain in the colonial militia. Several competing genealogies exist for this family, from which we may distill with certainty that Mark and Sarah Morgan had at least four and possibly as many as six children, sons John and Hardy and daughters Anne, who married Benjamin Hart, and Sarah, who married first John Tapley Patterson (who died of smallpox in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1781 while serving the patriot cause) and then Benjamin Yeargan or Yeargain. It is possible that one of the several Solomon Morgans was a son of Mark and Sarah Morgan and that there was a Mark Morgan the younger, perhaps their *oldest* son.

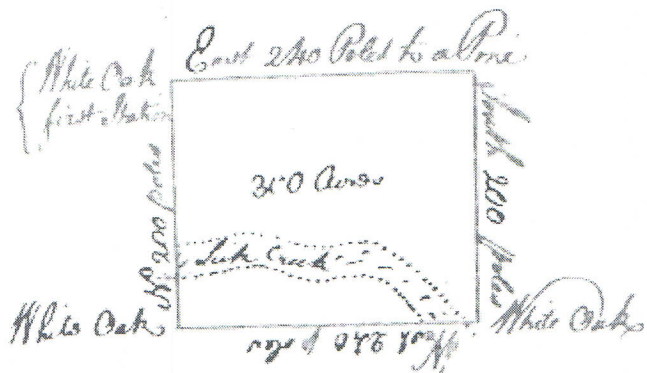
It is also likely that John Daniel, land speculator and surveyor, was a Morgan in-law or cousin or was otherwise related to the Morgan family. Of those donations of land that formed the central campus of the new University of North Carolina in the 1790s, all but the smallest (five acres donated by John Craig) were from the Morgans and their immediate connections.

In the 1755 tax records for Orange county, Mark Morgan is shown to have owned six slaves: Rafe, James, Nell, Cate, Jude, and Cloe. In the 1777 inventory of his estate, the number of slaves had increased to twenty two, though they are not further identified. The map above shows the southernmost of two Morgan homeplaces, the other being on the present site of the Finley golf course clubhouse. From the State of North Carolina, Hardy Morgan received adjacent grants in 1779 and 1788 north of earlier Morgan acquisitions and east of Mark Morgan's "Chappel tract" that is the site of the University campus. The old Raleigh Road, predecessor of NC 54, ran through and below Hardy Morgan's grants from the area of Gimghoul Castle eastward down the long hill to, and including, present-day Glen Lennox. The Greenwood subdivision including the Barbee-Hargrave cemetery was once part of Hardy Morgan's extensive holdings.



On the 1782 plat shown above, the Barbee-Hargrave cemetery would fall on the east-west line at the top of the drawing, above and to the right of the inscription "No 232."

This shape conforms to the uppermost red outline that is geo-referenced and superimposed on the USGS topo section that accompanies this report. On that map, the green-outlined shapes immediately north and east of Hardy Morgan's land represent colonial land grants from Earl Granville's agents to Benjamin Bolin (1755) and to James Bowie (1759), respectively. Bolin's grant, now dominated with the footprint of University Mall and US 15-501 Bypass, was once a rich alluvial plain where Bolin and Booker creeks conjoin.



North Carolina

This Plan Represents a
 Plantation containing 300 Hundred Acres of Land
 begun on Johnston Cobles On both sides Lick Creek
 Beginning at a White Oak on the North side of
 Lick Creek and runs East 240 Poles to a Pine
 Thence South 200 poles to a White Oak Thence West 240
 poles to a White Oak Thence North 200 poles to the
 first Station

Surveyed for Benjamin Bolling
 and laid down by a scale of one hundred poles to
 one Inch this 19th day of February 1755

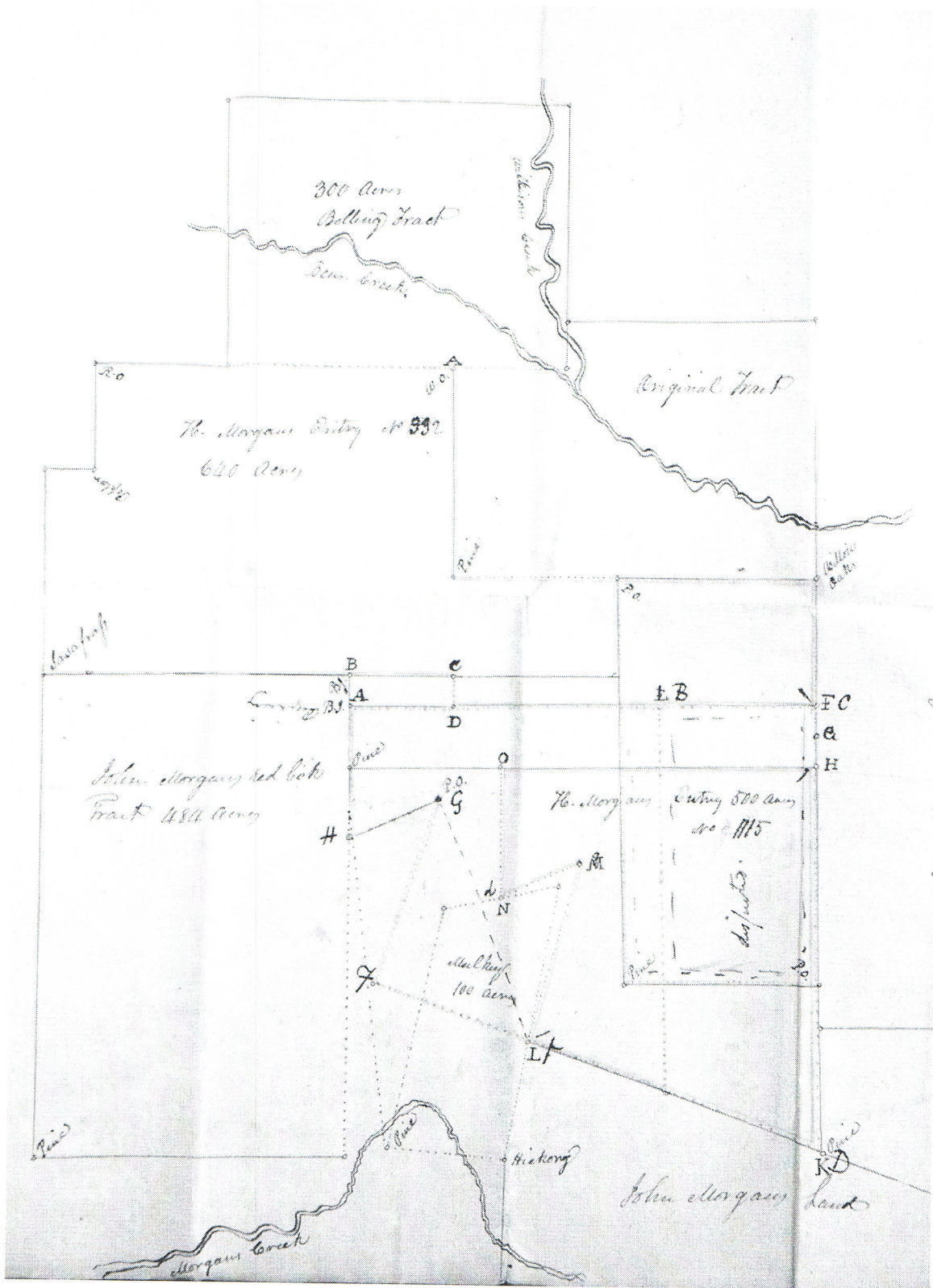
J. R. Carrall's Surv.
 Philip Mulkey
 John Voge
 John Beason

Before its accumulation of topsoil was lost to erosion, Bolin's grant—for which the survey and plat is shown above—must have been prime farmland for raising marketable crops. In general, during the colonial period the first lands to be granted were those that lay in the fertile floodplains. By the time of American Independence and the first state land grants, most of the remaining unclaimed land was on the high ground, much of it rocky and impossible to clear or plow. For this reason, considerable property surrounding Chapel Hill remained wooded and “unimproved” well into the twentieth century, as was certainly the case for subdivisions such as Laurel Hill, Greenwood, and Davie Circle on the hilly, rocky perimeters surrounding the University campus.

Bolin Creek was called Ben's Creek, Lick Creek, and Closs Creek over time. Similarly, Morgan Creek was once called Mark's Creek. The name Lick Creek refers to the presence of one or more salt licks, crystalline saline deposits embedded in clay alongside creek beds that supplied a necessary dietary supplement for great game animals such as deer, elk, and buffalo. Native Americans frequently located their villages near salt licks, fish dams, and fords, and all of these were convenient spots for collecting fresh protein in the form of game and fish. On the USGS topo, the land immediately south of Hardy Morgan's claim was granted to his older brother John Morgan. To identify that land among John Morgan's other claims, it was called the “Red Lick” tract, and this red salt lick was probably beside Chapel Branch not far from the present-day campus of Saint Thomas More church and school.

BARBEES, HARGRAVES, AND STROWDS

Hardy and Sarah Morgan had two sons, Lemuel M. Morgan and James Allen Morgan, and Lemuel ultimately inherited the two tracts on the Raleigh Road. In the records of the Federal Direct Tax of 1816, he is listed as owning 935 acres on Boling's Creek, and those acres would have included the present Greenwood subdivision. The final map that accompanies this report shows a composite of various Morgan holdings and their conflicting boundaries, and this drawing was presented as evidence in a title dispute between Lemuel M. Morgan and his Barbee cousins. At the top of the plat is shown the 300 acre Granville grant to Benjamin Bolling (or Bolin) that includes the confluence of Bens (Bolin) and Wilkerson (Booker) creeks. The “original tract” to the east was the Granville grant to James Bowie that was later acquired by John Barbee. Further to the east but not shown are the extensive holdings of pioneer William Barbee that were inherited by his son Christopher “Old Kit” Barbee, and the old Barbee homeplace <<http://cemeterycensus.com/nc/durh/cem264.htm>> stood atop a prominence called The Mountain <. Much of this plantation forms the present-day planned community called Meadowmont. “H. Morgans Entry No 332 / 640 acres” is the grant that contains Greenwood Road, and the Barbee-Hargrave cemetery is situated on the border shared by that grant and the Bolin tract. On 25 August 1845, Orange County sheriff Ilai Nunn sold at auction Lemuel Morgan's 935 acres to satisfy a debt that Morgan owed William Barbee, son of Old Kit Barbee. The high bidder at \$4,300 was Jesse Hargrave, who married had William Barbee's daughter Margaret two years earlier. The Hargraves held



the property for about thirty years before selling it to Robert Strowd of Chatham county. Strowd's house, called "Plum Nellie" still stands on Davie Circle on land that was originally part of Hardy Morgan's 640 acre grant from the state, and the long hill descending Franklin Street to the Bolin Creek bridge is still known as Strowd's Hill. The Strowd Farm was broken up and sold for development in 1928 (for which see Orange County plat book 2 and pages 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 38). Given that the Barbee-Hargrave cemetery was part of the Morgan holdings for 66 years and Hargrave holdings for 30 years or less, it seems probable that it includes more than a few burials of Morgans, perhaps slaves and slaves owners together. Though two Morgan graves recently were moved from Army Corps lands to the Mason cemetery at the Mason Farm preserve, there are no other known cemeteries for any of Mark Morgan's many descendants who were Orange county citizens for more than a century.

IN CONCLUSION

If a forensic study with ground penetrating radar is affordable, it should be possible to learn exactly the number of graves, or at least those within the bounds of the present circle. Apart from interviewing the occasional visitor to the cemetery, it is unlikely that further identification of those buried at Barbee-Hargrave will come to be known. It might be good to develop a protocol for collecting information from visitors in such a way that would be welcoming and never intimidating or disrespectful. Perhaps forms—with a heading something like "Can You Help Us Identify Your Ancestors?"—could be placed, with pencils, in a water-proof container near the large boulder with the name plate.

David Southern
9 March 2011