



November 7, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

I teach Appalachian music and dance as well as Appalachian studies at Warren Wilson College, and I would like to comment on an exceptional project that one of my colleagues, Jeff Keith, undertook two years ago with his students. It involved the restoration and historical documentation of an African-American cemetery in Asheville, North Carolina. The South Asheville Cemetery is a two-acre burial ground that serves as the final resting place for approximately two thousand African Americans. It started out as a slave burial ground – the oldest public African American cemetery in western North Carolina – and during in the early twentieth century, it was one of only a few cemeteries for African Americans in the region. During the mid-twentieth century, however, it fell into disrepair.

During the spring semester of 2014, Jeff Keith and a group of his students at Warren Wilson worked to restore the cemetery, cleaning it up and building a fence around the cemetery's perimeter. More important, however, using data collected by the college's archeology crew and comprehensive mapping of the graves by the college's GIS crew, they created a website for the South Asheville Cemetery. In addition to displaying information about the cemetery, this website interfaces with Google Earth providing an interactive mapping of the graves.

See: <http://www.southashevillecemetery.net>

I believe that this ground-breaking project was particularly innovative in its pairing of historical documentation with cutting edge GIS technology. Not only did it preserve this cultural site and nurture the living memory of this community, but it promotes a greater public awareness of the legacy of African Americans in western North Carolina, a place where African-American history and culture have often been overlooked or unknown.

Sincerely,

Phil Jamison

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