

a square known as No. 204, located near the Greenville Railroad on the Western boundary of Elmwood Cemetery — an open field susceptible of high improvement (S.C. Department of Archives and History, September 5, 1856 Minutes of the Board of Regents [Mental Health Commission]).

The Board realized that they would need at least an acre of land, but they also found that the price was prohibitive. As an alternative, it appears that they established an agreement with Elmwood which would allow use of the lot on a per-patient basis, with \$10 paid for each paying patient buried there and \$5 for each charity patient.<sup>3</sup>

The location of this lot was at first a mystery. Elmwood has no Square 204 — nor has there ever been one. Careful inspection of the minutes, however, reveals that elsewhere the lot is referenced as "80-204." There is a Square 80, situated at the western edge of Elmwood, in the position originally described by the Regents. Where "204" comes from we don't know, but most of Square 80, it turns out, was eventually sold to Randolph Cemetery in 1899. The importance of this will become clear.

By December 1856 there were objections to Square 80-204, it being described as "too far away." As a result, a similar agreement was made with Elmwood for the use of Square 41, closer to the main entrance. By all accounts, this Square was used throughout the remainder of the antebellum and into the postbellum.

<sup>3</sup> It isn't clear if these prices were accepted. For example, Helen Kohn Hennig reports in a March 21, 1936 article in *The State* newspaper that between 1860 and 1866 Elmwood was billing the Asylum \$50 per lot, as well as \$12 for coffins and graves.

Table 2.  
Death Rates Between 1870 and 1897  
(from *Report of the Superintendent*)

	Total Deaths	Rate %	White	Black	Undertaker's Bill
1870	31	9.6			
1871	32	10.8			320.00
1874-75	44	10.2			
1875-76	52	11.6			
1876-77	45	10.2			
1878-79	61	12.4			
1879-80	55	13.1			
1880-81	79	16.1			
1881-82	78	14.2			
1882-83	82	13.6			
1883-84	143	22.2			
1884-85	75	12.4			
1885-86	87	10.2			
1893	158		74	84	703.90*
1897	142				615.00

\* These figures may include other minor expenses.

While we have been unable to find any clear statement, we believe that Square 41 was used only for white patients. We believe that African American patients continued to be buried in Square 80, as discussed below.

### Postbellum

The numbers of patients in the late nineteenth century dramatically increased. In 1899, for example, the daily average was 946 patients, with 60.4% being white and 40.4% being black (Hellams 1985:119). Disease, especially tuberculosis, increased at an alarming rate. A 13-year review revealed that 290 deaths were directly attributable to tuberculosis and McCandless (1996:283) notes that between 1890 and 1900, over 14% of the patients died. Black mortality was higher than that of whites. While the death rate in 1890 was 14%, only 9% of the white patients died, while 21% of the African American patients died. In 1900 the combined death rate was 13%, while the African American rate was an astonishing 23%.

Table 2 provides an overview of the years we briefly examined. The results reveal a steadily growing

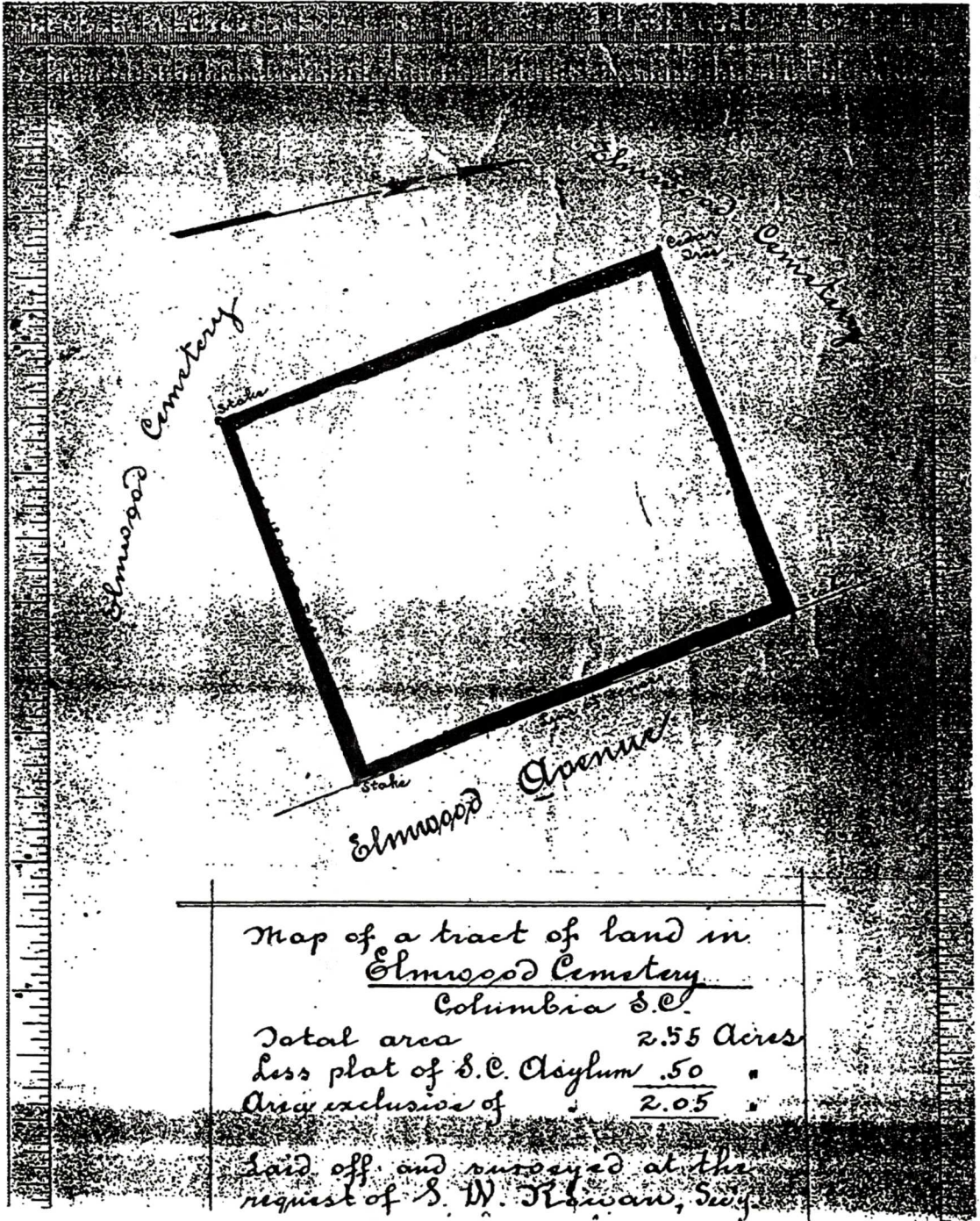


Figure 6. Portion of the Elmwood Cemetery plat of Square 41, dated 1891.

death rate; coupled with other studies it seems clear that most of those dying were African Americans. The *Reports of the Superintendent* provide other information, such as the Chaplin's Reports. While never very detailed, they do try to put the best possible face on the harsh statistics. The 1876-1877 report notes that, "special religious services are given to this important duty [burial services] of my pastoral work for white and colored persons alike" (*Report of the Superintendent of the Lunatic Asylum of South Carolina, 1877*, page 67).

The only mention of burial locations is Elmwood. The Chaplin in the 1879-1880 report specifies, for the first time, "it gives me great pleasure to report that we have at last been able to purchase a half acre lot in Elmwood Cemetery, where our dead may be buried in a manner more acceptable to their friends" (*Report of the Superintendent of the Lunatic Asylum of South Carolina, 1880*, page 9). Three years later the Chaplin reported, "it should be comforting to those persons who had friends to die at the Asylum during the past year in knowing that the remains of their loved ones were reverently cared for and decently interred in Elmwood Cemetery" (*Report of the Superintendent of the Lunatic Asylum of South Carolina, 1883*, page 32).

Literal reading of these accounts would force us to ask where burials had been taking place prior to 1879. We believe that Elmwood was being used, as previously suggested, since about 1856. The accounts are also entirely unhelpful in discriminating the location of black versus white burials. Nevertheless, we believe that two separate locations were being used.

In October of 1891 the State Hospital received a letter from Samuel W. Rowan, the Secretary and "Measurer" (i.e., surveyor?) for Elmwood Cemetery. It stated:

I herewith hand you plat of ground at Cemetery. I could not get it to you earlier. The amount of land after deducting graves will be about 2 acres — of course a less amount could be purchased but it seems to me wise to take the block as shown by plat.

In regard to place for burial of

colored patients. Why there would be no trouble to measure it off as the ground lays all right and square (S.C. Department of Archives and History, S 190085).

The accompanying plat is of special interest since it reveals a parcel measuring 370 by 300 feet (or 2.55 acres). The plat, entitled, "Map of a tract of land in Elmwood Cemetery," notes that the total area is 2.55 acres, although apparently 0.5 acre of this already had been filled with graves attributed to the "S.C. Asylum," leaving 2.05 acres in the lot (Figure 6).

We believe that this documents the actual purchase (perhaps in 1879, as implied by the Chaplin's report) of a lot in Elmwood. The "used" 0.5 acre portion of this plot reflects the previous agreement with Elmwood to purchase individual burial spaces on an as needed basis.

We do not, however, believe that African Americans were buried in this 2.55 acre parcel. Instead, we believe that they continued to be buried in Square 80 — thought to be "too far away" for whites. Eventually the State Hospital made other arrangements (discussed below) for the black dead. This gradual decline in African American burials placed, we believe, Elmwood in a difficult situation. With blacks buried in Square 80, it was unlikely that they would be able to sell plots to others. Moreover, there is some reason to believe that the burials were not particularly well organized or orderly. This also would have caused Elmwood to view Square 80 as having lost considerable value — and it may help explain why, in 1899, all of Squares 79 and 80 west of an existing road, were sold to Randolph Cemetery. Selling the area used by the State Hospital for black burials to a black cemetery organization would have been a perfect solution, at least as far as Elmwood was considered.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Some support for this theory is offered by an observation by Coroner Frank Barron that most of the disturbed graves in Randolph Cemetery are found at its eastern edge, adjacent to the Elmwood Cemetery ("Cemetery Desecration Accidental, Coroner Says," *The State*, February 12, 2000, page B1). This area also contains the fewest