

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



CLAY
COUNTY
FLORIDA

Honoring a Legacy.

FPAN CONDUCTS GROUND RADAR at PLEASANT POINT CEMETERY

MIDDLEBURG, FLORIDA

*Unearthing Our Past.
Honoring Our Ancestors.*



The Florida Public Archaeology Network
conducted ground radar at
Pleasant Point Cemetery on Feb. 6.
STAFF PHOTO BY KYLA WOODARD



The team collected five days' worth of data
within their seven hours at the cemetery.

STAFF PHOTO BY KYLA WOODARD



The ground penetrating radar machine sends
electromagnetic waves into the ground,
picking up signals of subsurface objects.
Here, Megan Coppage, left, and Public
Archaeology Coordinator Emily Murray
look at some results.

STAFF PHOTO BY KYLA WOODARD

PLEASANT POINT CEMETERY



A Place of Rest. A Legacy of Pride.

Pleasant Point Cemetery is one of the oldest
African American burial grounds in Clay
County and the final resting place for
many of our community's pioneers.

We honor their lives by preserving
where their stories began.

PRESERVING HISTORY, HONORING LEGACY

The Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) spent five days collecting ground radar data at Pleasant Point Cemetery, gathering valuable information that may help uncover the stories of those who rest there.

Ground penetrating radar uses electromagnetic waves to detect objects below the surface without disturbing the ground. This technology helps researchers identify gravesites, structures, and other historical features that are not visible to the eye.

The data collected will be carefully analyzed to better understand and preserve this important African American burial ground.

Their legacy. Our history. Our future.

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS



Ground radar helps locate unmarked
graves and structures, protecting our
heritage for future generations.



It provides answers, honors ancestors,
and ensures their stories are never
forgotten.



It strengthens community connection
and preserves African American history
in Clay County.



COMMUNITY. HISTORY. LEGACY.

Let's Keep Their Story Alive.

To learn more or share your memories about
Pleasant Point Cemetery or FPAN's work, contact
the African American Historical Society of
Clay County, Florida.

★ HONORING THE PAST. INSPIRING THE FUTURE. ★
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CLAY COUNTY, FLORIDA

CLAYTODAY

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FPAN conducts ground radar at Pleasant Point Cemetery



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The Florida Public Archaeology Network conducted ground radar at Pleasant Point Cemetery on Feb. 6.
STAFF PHOTO BY KYLA WOODARD

By Kyla Woodard
kyla@claytodayonline.com (mailto:kyla@claytodayonline.com)

GREEN COVE SPRINGS—It's been more than a year since a group of volunteers meticulously restored Pleasant Point Cemetery back to its former glory.

What was once a woody area filled with vines and shrub, now hosts a clear footpath. Headstones have been replaced, while some others have been dug up. And a freshly plastered sign now hangs proudly.

But inside, unmarked graves, depressions and a possible crypt still await discovery. And with the help of the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN), questions are a step closer to getting answered.

With ground penetrating radar (GPR), the organization looked to find disturbances in the soil where possible unmarked graves could be located on Friday, Feb. 6.

Steve Griffith originally began extensive research on Pleasant Point Cemetery in 2024, unearthing the quiet, overgrown space that had been abandoned for quite some time. But it wasn't until the navigational archaeologist and former U.S. History teacher got the community involved that the project really took off.

The cemetery was once a burial ground for some of the county's most significant Black figures. U.S. Navy Veteran George Elias Forrester, along with some of his family members, is buried at Pleasant Point. He served with the Union in the Civil War. The son of Cyrus and Dorcas Forrester, his family was the first free Black family in the county.

Not too far from them also lies Pizel and Mary Ambrose Robinson, the great-great grandparents of R&B singer Patti LaBelle and local educator Thomas Hogans.

"We know we have about 41 named individuals in the cemetery. We think there's many more," said volunteer Megan Coppage, who's been involved with the restoration process since the very beginning.

That's where FPAN comes in. They arrived at the cemetery early that morning. The team of three featured Public Archaeology coordinator Emily Murray and her Flagler College interns.

After sectioning off most of the transparent area, they used the GPR device to scan around. According to U.S. Radar Inc. (<https://usradar.com/blog/how-does-ground-penetrating-radar-gpr-work/>), the machine sends electromagnetic waves into the ground, which move until they hit a subsurface. The antenna picks up a signal, tracks the time and strength of its return, and uses it to build an image of an object.

Various disturbances were found, including the official confirmation of burials for some names already in the cemetery. The team also found what could be remnants of a pathway near the front. Supposedly, Griffith said, there was a loop that allowed visitors to drive through the cemetery.

Within their seven hours of exploring the sacred ground, the team acquired about five days' worth of data. Results will need to be processed in a lab before there are definitive answers to what was found.

"We've already found some areas that are disturbed where there are probably graves," Coppage said.

After the data is processed, the next step, Griffith said, will be officially mapping out the site. That includes marking unknown graves with official names.

Next month, Griffith and Coppage will be headed to a cemetery restoration and training conference. There, they will network with professionals to further guide the process, which includes obtaining a Board of Trustees to oversee the continued maintenance of the property. Another goal: obtaining a historical marker.

"We'd love to get a historical marker out here. So, when people pass this place, they know why it was worth it for us to come out here and do all this work in restoring it," Coppage said.