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Violet Park Cemetery correspondence

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Item previously catalogued as part of Small Manuscripts Collection with various processors.
Small Manuscripts Collection finding aid updated by Amy McDonald, 2012.

North Carolina Collection Archives

300 N. Roxboro Street

Durham, NC 27701

ncc@dconc.gov

URL: <https://durhamcountylibrary.org/ncc>

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Summary Information

Repository:	North Carolina Collection Archives
Source:	Bryant, R. Kelly
Creator:	McNair, Carrie
Title:	Violet Park Cemetery correspondence
ID:	NCC.0250
Date [bulk]:	1913-1995
Physical Description:	.15 Linear Feet (1 folder)
Language of the Material:	English

Preferred Citation

[Item, folder, and box information], Violet Park Cemetery correspondence (NCC.0250), North Carolina Collection, Durham County Library, NC.

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Biographical / Historical

Violet Park Cemetery was a cemetery for African Americans in Durham named after the mother of John Merrick, one of the three N.C. Mutual Life Insurance Company founders, who along with partners Aaron McDuffie Moore and Charles Clinton Spaulding were the cemetery's initial owners. African Americans were prohibited from being buried in the same cemetery as white people and most African American cemeteries were not able to be supported with the same resources as cemeteries for white people due to structural racism. The cemetery was later nicknamed Wolf Den Cemetery due to a homeless person living there with a group of dogs.

Death certificates were first issued in Durham County in 1908 and death certificates were required by North Carolina state law only since 1913. Violet Park Cemetery had approximately 1,948 burials recorded between 1913 and 1943. Beechwood Cemetery was opened in 1926 in response to Durham cemeteries for African Americans being overfull and in need of resources for upkeep, including: Violet Park Cemetery, Geer Cemetery, Fitzgerald Cemetery, and Hickstown Cemetery. Merrick died in 1919 and his grave was one of those moved from Violet Park to Beechwood Cemetery. Durham County acquired the land on which Violet Park Cemetery remained in 1965 when the former owner could not

pay assessments for street improvements. In 1994 St. Titus Episcopal Church owned the acreage and, due to plans for a parking lot, planned to move the 200 to 1,000 remaining graves, many of which were unidentified.

R. Kelly Bryant, who was a Durham historian, community leader, and N.C. Mutual Life Insurance Company Assistant Secretary in charge of the Conservation Department, collected and preserved numerous African American funeral and cemetery records. Carrie McNair also worked to compile African American cemetery records and catalogued Violet Cemetery records in September 1994 from the vital statistic books of Durham County, as well as records in 1997 for Grove Hill Cemetery, and records in 2003 for Geer Cemetery.

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Scope and Contents

The collection includes correspondence from historian R. Kelly Bryant to the Durham County Library and North Carolina State Archives, listings of more than 1,900 burials recorded at Violet Park Cemetery compiled by Carrie McNair, and two related newspaper clippings.

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Arrangement

The collection is arranged as a bound packet of 64 pages including 1992, 1994, and 1995 correspondence from or to R. Kelly Bryant, a 1969 Morning Herald article, and a 1994 Herald Sun article, 56 pages of checksheets of people buried in Violet Park Cemetery compiled by Carrie McNair in 1994 listing up to 35 names per page, including birth and death dates for each name.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

There are no restrictions on the use of this material except where previously copyrighted material is concerned. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain all permissions.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

R. Kelly Bryant

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Controlled Access Headings

- African Americans -- Segregation
- African American cemeteries
- Bryant, R. Kelly
- Bryant, R. Kelly
- McNair, Carrie
- Merrick, John, 1859-1919

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances
Violet Park Cemetery correspondence, (1913-1995)	box 10 folder 11 - Small Collections