

ALLISON CHAPEL SCHOOL AND CEMETERY SITE

Nestled within College Grove, sits a significant African American community, whose history tied to the Allison Chapel School and Cemetery are deeply connected to African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Following the end of the Civil War, newly freed African Americans quickly establishing schools, cemeteries, and churches. Churches were the cornerstone – the nucleus – that symbolized community. Churches became anchor institutions of African American communities because the buildings also served as schools. As vital as education and religion were to African Americans so to were places of memorialization. Cemeteries were vital gathering places to properly remember and bring dignity to the dead. Enslaved, commoditized, and deprioritized by their former enslavers, who did not provide nor prioritize their enslaved even in death, African Americans saw cemeteries as crucial tools for individuals to commemorate and remember their loved ones in a humane way.

For the African American community of College Grove within the Allisona and Arno region in the 21st District off Owen Hill Road, families created a sense of place and purpose agriculturally, religiously, and educationally. Constructed in the late 1860s, the one room Allison Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church also became the site of the Allison Chapel School. The building received exterior architectural changes in the early 20th century, including white framing placed over its original log structure. The school operated until 1952, consolidating with the Kirkland Elementary School until desegregation occurred in the mid-1960s. Today, the ruins of the original church and school building are visible; a storied testament to resiliency and a lifelong legacy of community.

Connected to the original church grounds remains its extensive, historic cemetery, with many local descendants tracing their ancestors directly to

this sacred burial space. This cemetery is one of the few preserved Black cemeteries in Williamson County. Though the Williamson County Commission, in November 2025, denied a proposed development that included a large subdivision and septic tank being placed within the cemetery boundaries, the community rallied behind descendants, noting a historic preservation win for this Black cemetery. However, there remains a continued reality of ongoing development and need for continued documentation of historic and cultural resources in this area.