

## THE "NEGRO SECTION" OF BLANDFORD CEMETERY

### Extant Environment and Current Condition

Blandford Cemetery today consists of about 189 acres situated on the east side of South Crater Road, wedged between the City of Petersburg to the northwest and the Petersburg National Battlefield Park to the southeast and east. To the south are the outlying historic cemeteries of exclusion for Catholics, Jews, and African-Americans. The westernmost portion of Blandford, adjacent to Crater Road, follows a high ridge. Most of the cemetery is situated on more steeply sloping ground (Figure 40).

As discussed in the **Historical Overview** below, the cemetery originally surrounded the Anglican church at Blandford and it gradually grew into the acreage it holds today. Like other cemeteries of the times, it originally allowed only the burials of white Protestants and in 1837 a city ordinance specifically forbade the burial of African Americans at Blandford. The gradual enlargement of Blandford to its present size is clearly revealed by a map of the tract (Figure 41). The original church graveyard surrounding the Blandford Church is, in turn, surrounded by regularly laid out drives representing the influence of cemetery reform which apparently accompanied the graveyard's purchase by the City in 1819.

Too early to participate fully in the rural cemetery movement, Blandford caught the tail end of the beautification and civic improvement movement that began in New England about 20 years earlier. Cities such as New Haven struck out, creating burial grounds that were organized along gridded streets, eclectic plantings, and most importantly, large family lots. Sloane comments that, "the extensive family lots were centered around a monument proclaiming, often in large letters, the family name" (Sloane 1991:32).

Even as the rural cemetery movement began to sweep the country, Blandford appears to participated only marginally, probably because it was already well

established and any changes would have been difficult. As a result, there are no winding drives, no botanical tours. You always realize that you are in a cemetery, albeit one that has been softened by the early reform spawned by New Haven. Of course the most recent portions of Blandford reflect the lawn-park movement, with their flush mounted lawn markers and planned uniformity, designed to reduce maintenance costs and further isolate death.

In other words, Blandford reflects several of the issues, and resulting movements, of cemetery thought. It is into this equation that African American burials were added in 1851, when the City designated a section of the cemetery as "a burying ground for persons of color" by the City (Neville 1992; Anonymous 1993:18).

The "Negro," or "Colored" Section as it has been known, is situated in Wards Y, Z, and YY on a low tract of land adjacent to a small drainage and heavy second growth woods (Figures 42 and 43). Because of the lower elevation of the "Negro Section," the soils here are somewhat more sandy, although clay dominates here as elsewhere in Petersburg. The nearby woods consist largely of bottomland species, which appear to be no older than perhaps 40 or 50 years, perhaps reflecting the changing face of the countryside outside of the downtown core.

This land was likely given over to African American burials since its low elevation made it one of the less attractive sections of the cemetery. In addition, it was far removed from the graves of Petersburg's white citizens. In fact, the adjacent ward was left open until 1868 when Memorial Hill was created, allowing the Confederate "Soldiers Monument" to tower over the African American section of Blandford.

The "Negro Section" of Blandford is found primarily in Ward Y, although it extends to the north

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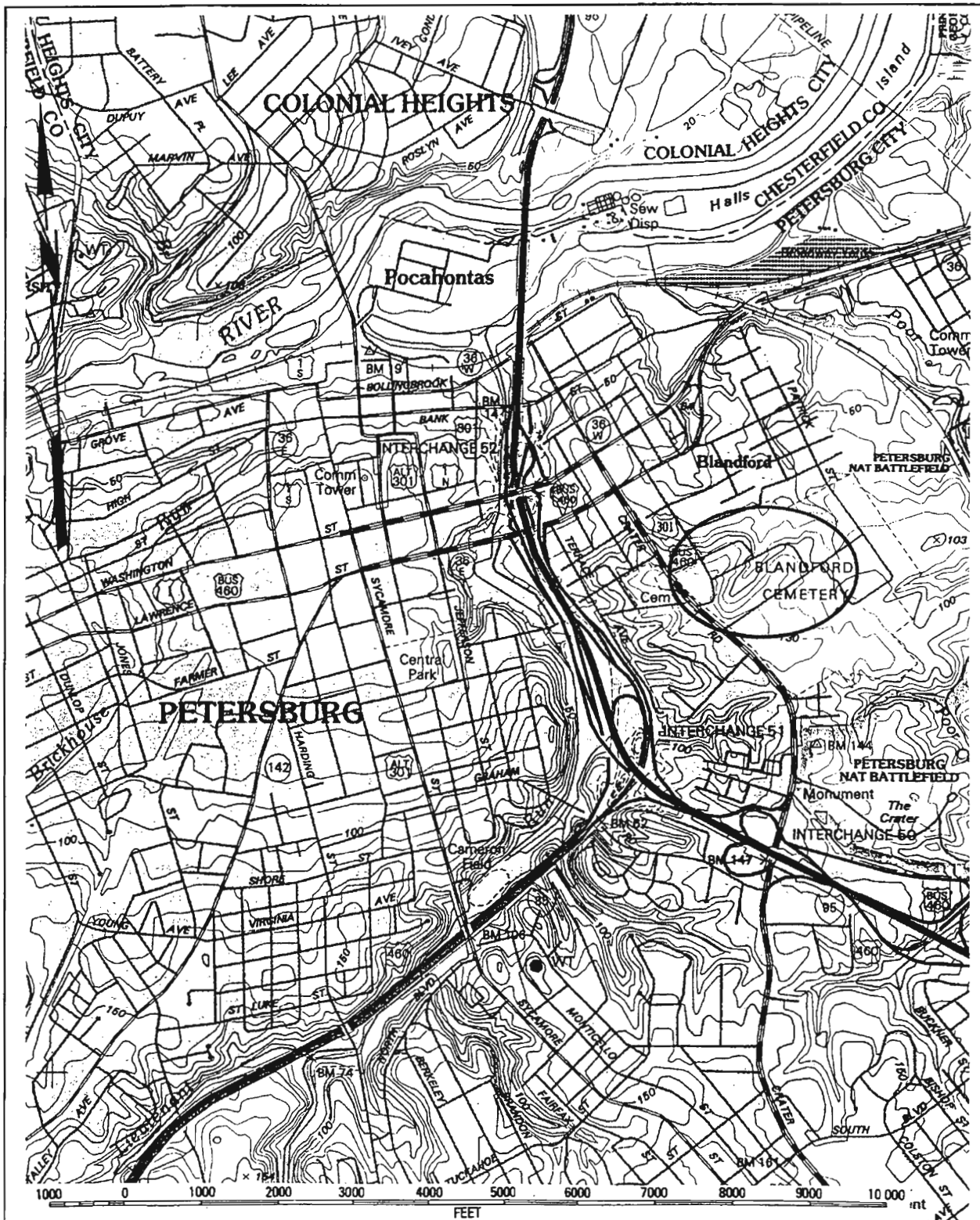


Figure 40. Portion of the USGS Petersburg topographic map showing the location of Blandford Cemetery.

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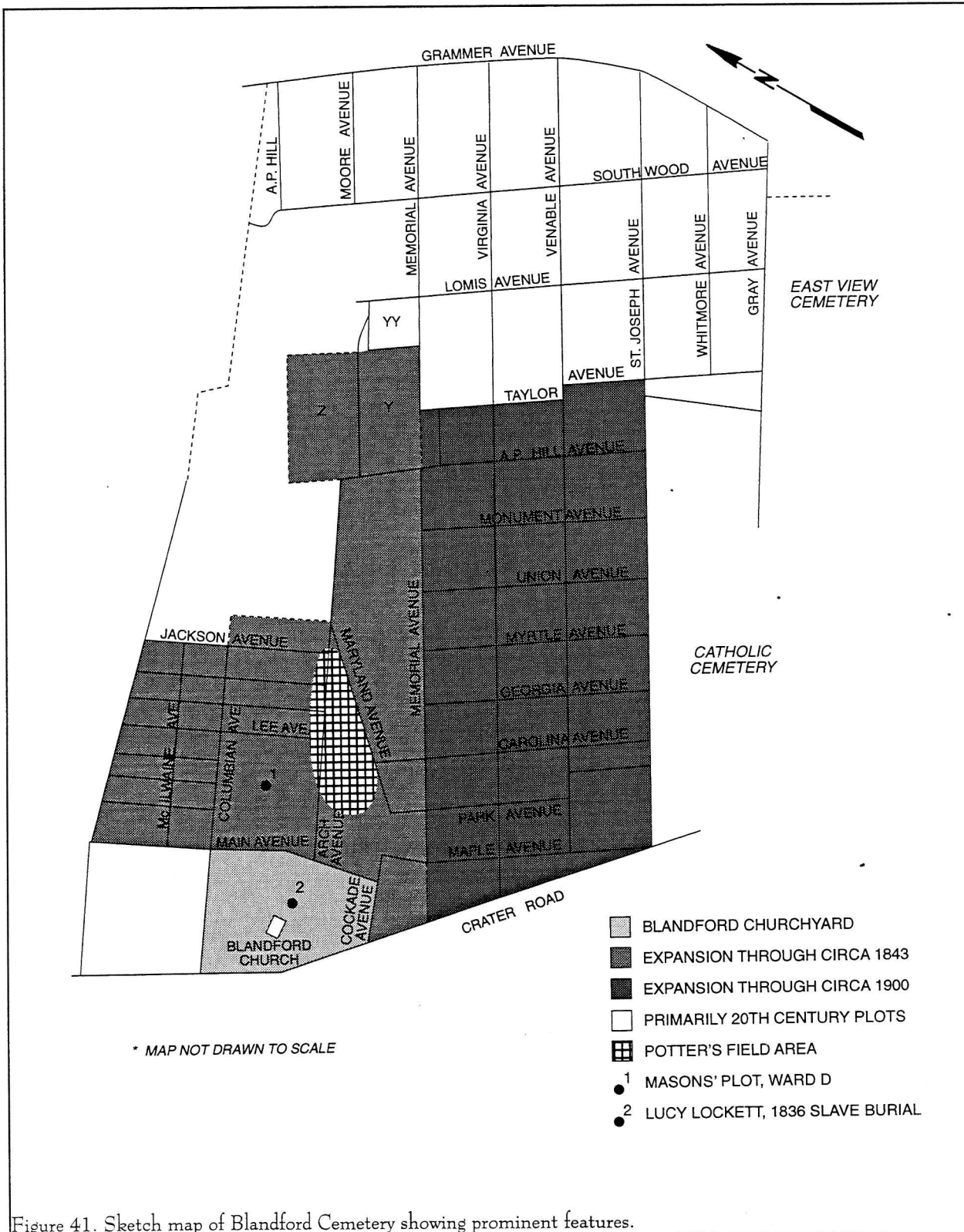


Figure 41. Sketch map of Blandford Cemetery showing prominent features.

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into Ward Z and east into Ward YY. Ward Y, measuring about 350 by 150 feet (1.2 acres), is bordered to the north by Arch Avenue (named after "The Arch," which marks the entrance to "Memorial Hill," dedicated to the Confederate dead) and by A.P. Hill Drive to the west (named for a Confederate General).

As is typical for this type of cemetery, Ward Y is further divided into a series of 33-foot square plots, which in turn are divided into discrete family plots, each about 16 to 17 feet square (300 square feet being a fairly common family lot size). These, in turn, are dominated by monuments, fences, and curbing (Figure 44). Recently a portion of one plot (at the southeast corner of Arch Avenue and A.P. Hill Drive) has been converted into a "baby land."

In the midst of the graves in the African American section there are relatively few plantings, largely limited to native oaks and cedars. Individual lot landscaping is relatively uncommon. The cemetery is maintained as a grassed area, further reducing the variety of plant life present.<sup>1</sup> This starkness, however, is found throughout much of Blandford Cemetery and cannot be readily ascribed to racial or ethnic preferences.

Likewise, there is very little indication of grave goods or offerings. The one exception is a sun-bleached

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<sup>1</sup> The only planting identified during this survey is a yucca at Stone 59, a whitewashed concrete headstone. Although plantings are uncommon, the yucca does tend to be common in African American graveyards.



Figure 42. View of Blandford's Ward Y from Memorial Hill looking northeast.

shell placed on top of a relatively large, and relatively recent, granite die on base monument. This shell has remained untouched over the course of several visits spanning nearly four months. Whether it represents a uniquely African American theme, however, is questionable. Little, for example, observes that there are both English and African precedents and that seashells are found in both white and African American graveyards in North Carolina (Little 1998:239).

Maintenance in this section appears to be as thorough as elsewhere in Blandford. The oaks generate leaves which require raking and also serve to shade out the grass in some areas. Where the sun is adequate, the grass requires constant mowing, which in turn endangers the stones. A recent winter ice storm caused heavy damage among the trees, although surprisingly few stones were directly damaged by the downed limbs. There seem to be relatively few recent burials in Ward Y, with newer stones becoming more common in Wards YY and Z.



Figure 43. Sketch map of the "Negro Section" at Blandford Cemetery.

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### Historical Overview of Blandford

Blandford Cemetery is the most celebrated of Petersburg's historic burial grounds. This status is assured by its great age (in use since 1702), its association with prominent citizens and soldiers, and the art-historical interest of gravestones and ironwork within the cemetery. While other early cemeteries inside the city have been lost and their sites built over, Blandford's suburban location allowed its survival, and encouraged its 1819 purchase by the town of Petersburg as a public burying ground. The intent was for Blandford to be used by white citizens, but the burial of some people of color may have taken place during the early years. The only identified gravestone of a slave marks the 1836 burial of Lucy Lockett, who was interred near Blandford Church with the white family who owned her (Christine Joyce, personal communication 1999).

Blandford Cemetery has been enlarged several times since its establishment as a municipal cemetery. A purchase in 1843 added a thirty-acre tract east of the original churchyard. Land acquisitions in 1854 and 1866 extended the grounds further east, and to generally the present south and north lines. From 1866 until the twentieth century, the cemetery's size remained about 75 acres. In 1920 the city added a new 35-acre tract, then another 79 acres in 1927. The latest enlargements were in the northwest corner beside South Crater Road. In the 1950s and 1960s the city bought two small parcels with several houses, which were demolished for the construction of the cemetery office and reception center (Neville 1992). The large pieces of land sold to Blandford were typically former farmland which may have contained unofficial burial grounds. For instance, Wards Y and Z, the "Negro section" of Blandford, were part of the 1843 purchase but retain gravestones from years before, as early as 1821.

Blandford Cemetery was available to the white public, but it was not a free cemetery. Plots were purchased, which effectively excluded most slaves and the indigent of both races. Impoverished white Masons were the exception. Blandford Lodge #3 and Petersburg Lodge #15 bought a lot in 1827, where they could bury members without family plots or funds for single-lot purchase. Most paupers had to be buried

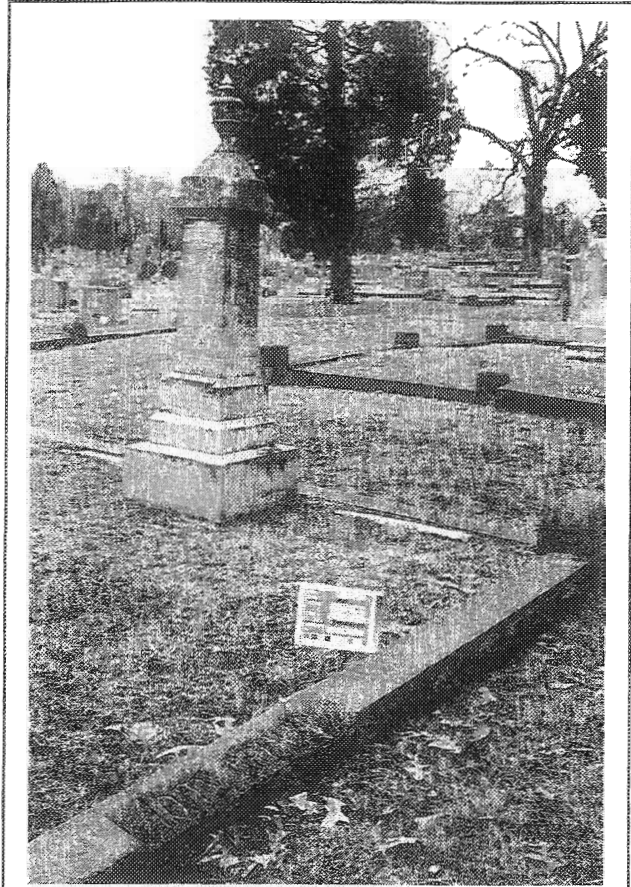


Figure 44. Examples of curbing and monuments in Ward Y at Blandford Cemetery

at public expense, in areas known as potter's fields. There was at least one such plot within Petersburg proper, and another just outside the original core of Blandford Cemetery (Neville 1992), today found in the eastern triangle of Ward C, northwest of the section that later became Lee Ward/Memorial Hill. Burials in a potter's field were usually unmarked, their locations unrecorded. Because individual graves were forgotten, disturbed or even reused after a few years, there is no estimate of how many might be buried in the potter's field at the edge of Blandford, or even how early it began to be used. However, it is believed that blacks as well as whites were buried here during the early years (Christine Joyce, personal communication 1999).

In 1837, Petersburg town council passed an ordinance disallowing any burial of blacks in Blandford

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Cemetery (Neville 1992). Blacks were probably also excluded from the potter's field by this new law (Christine Joyce, personal communication 1999). This was one of a series of laws Virginia and other slave states passed during the 1830s to restrict the rights and activities of free blacks as well as slaves. As local laws echoed state regulations, cities throughout the south excluded blacks from public burial grounds (Goldfield 1991.150-151).

To set cemeteries apart as white-only was not necessarily followed by organizing an area for non-whites. Arranging a resting place for slaves was left to their owners; providing burial plots for free persons of color was left to their own community or sympathetic whites. Well before being formally excluded from Blandford's potter's field, the free black community of Petersburg had established at least two independent cemeteries (Pocahontas and Benevolent Society), which they supported with private funds. These provided working-class free blacks with alternatives to the potter's field.

In 1840 the Beneficial Society of Free Men of Color established a new cemetery at the opposite side of Main Street (South Crater Road) from Blandford Church. A decade later, a town councilman declared that it would be proper for the city to provide "a burying ground for persons of color" within Blandford Cemetery. This call was met in 1851, when the eastern extremity (Ward Y) of the land purchased in 1843 was set aside for black burials (Neville 1992).

During the 1870s and 1880s, Petersburg's black community was relatively prosperous, its standing frequently acknowledged by news articles covering club and cultural activities. The acceptance of blacks as participants in civic affairs may have been responsible for an amendment to Blandford Cemetery's regulations in the late 1880s. This provided for another piece of land ("the size and extent to be determined by committee") to be set aside for black burials, adjacent to the existing black-only section (City Council 1888).

There are no longer regulations designating certain areas of Blandford for certain classes of people. Nevertheless, because of family plots and connections, most African-Americans are still interred in the

historically black wards, Y, Z, and YY (a relatively recent ward). This area of the cemetery is often called the St. Stephen's Episcopal section, for the church organized in 1868, as many of its members are buried there. It is also known as the Virginia State section of Blandford, because of the graves of prominent educators and writers associated with the university. These unofficial terms for the black wards reflect the historic interconnections among Petersburg's African-Americans and their cemeteries. Despite the affiliation with St. Stephen's Church, rector Emmet E. Miller (d. 1936) was buried at Peoples Memorial Cemetery. Many old families have some members buried in Blandford, some in the nearby historic cemeteries, some in modern memorial parks, and some relatives whose resting place has been forgotten or destroyed.

### Stones and Other Features

With only a quick glance as you drive through Blandford it is probably difficult, perhaps impossible, to identify the "Negro Section" — it seems identical to the other sections, dominated by curbing, obelisks, and other marble monuments. Closer inspection, however, reveals that there are clear threads of African American tradition running through the section and evidenced in both the styles and treatment of the markers.

Perhaps most noticeable is that the stones are smaller and less densely packed in this section than they are in the predominately white section of the cemetery. Stones are likely smaller because the income of the blacks was less than whites. Likewise, there are fewer stones, suggesting a somewhat greater tendency in the "Negro Section" than in the white sections for burials to be made without any permanent marker.

Although coping is nearly ubiquitous in the cemetery, there remains evidence for only three fenced plots, all of which have been stripped, leaving only their corner posts. Elsewhere in Blandford iron fences are relatively common, with a range of manufacturers being present. Nevertheless, in the "Negro Section" today there is almost no evidence for the frequency of fenced plots.

Stones in Wards Y and Z date from as early as

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Table 7  
Stones and Features at Blandford's "Negro Section"

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Granite plaque monument (1937)                                     | 33. Fields (1864)   |
| 2. Granite Royal Lodge No. 77, I.B.P O.E. of W                        | 34. 1916 stone surrounded by 1960s era plots                              |
| 3. Marble headstone with weeping willow motif (1871)                  | 35. Concrete lawn-type monument with copper paint and whitewashing (1976) |
| 4. Holeman (1859)   | 36. King ledger   |
| 5. Royal Lodge No. 77, I.B.P.O.E. of W (lawn-type marble)             | 37. Granite die carved with man playing golf                              |
| 6. Majestic Temple 109 I.B.P O.E. of W (marble headstone)             | 38. Granite die carved with "gene" lamp                                   |
| 7. Majestic Temple 109 I.B.P O.E. of W (marble headstone)             | 39. Granite die with Masonic symbol                                       |
| 8. Small metal "Perpetual Care" marker                                | 40. Marble with clasped hands motif                                       |
| 9. Iron fence posts   | 41. 1861 monument   |
| 10. Blooming Zion No. 275 N.I.B.S. (1955)                             | 42. Thomas Boyd marble headstone, erected by Robert Leslie, Esq. (1872)   |
| 11. Evans Giasper Tent 601 - J.R. Giddings & Jolifree Union (1960)    | 43. Marble headstone with boxwood planting (1960)                         |
| 12. Concrete stones (including picket-shaped varieties) and coping    | 44. Rosetta Tent No. 433 (1973)   |
| 13. Williams Lodge No. 11, I.B.P O.E.W (1933)                         | 45. Monuments and coping similar to examples in People's                  |
| 14. Stone similar to People's with concrete coping                    | 46. Royal Lodge No. 77 I.B.P O.E.W and E.S & L.C. (1948)                  |
| 15. Hollaway (Clasped hands 1863)                                     | 47. Alfred W Harris granite die on base (1920)                            |
| 16. Granite die on base, MR stone (1894?)                             | 48. Mason stone for black physician                                       |
| 17. Granite die on base, MR stone (1911)                              | 49. Concrete stone and coping around grave                                |
| 18. Concrete plaque marker with coping around grave (1935)            | 50. Double coping, no headstones  |
| 19. Harnet (1860)   | 51. Royal Lodge No. 77 I.B.P O.E.W  |
| 20. Marble corner posts for family plot                               | 52. Concrete coping and marble pedestal tomb with small marble footstones |
| 21. Mahood (marble on sandstone base, 1860)                           | 53. Pride of Petersburg Lodge No. 487 N.I.B.S. (1957)                     |
| 22. Barham (1859)   | 54. Marble coping and pillow-shaped footstone                             |
| 23. Parker (1861)   | 55. Three-dimensional lamb on headstone                                   |
| 24. Turrett (1880)  | 56. Obelisks  |
| 25. Slate monument (1821)   | 57. Supreme Prince 33°, Royal Secret 32° Mason                            |
| 26. Eroded, probably similar date as No. 25                           | 58. Very thin marble headstones, but not dresser fragments (1903, 1916)   |
| 27. Davis (1868)  | 59. Whitewashed concrete with yucca planting                              |
| 28. Whelk shell on granite monument (1910/1991)                       | 60. Whitewashed concrete cross  |
| 29. Granite coping and central marble pedestaled tomb family monument | 61. Ella Scott, "Our Mammy"   |
| 30. 1855 monument   | 62. Marble obelisk (1910)   |
| 31. 1855 monument   | 63. Royal Lodge No. 77 I.B.P O.E. of W (1951)                             |
| 32. Cook (1859)   | 64. Blooming Zion Lodge 275 N.I.B.S. (1950)                               |
|   | 65. Granite die on base, Royal Lodge No. 77 I.B.P O.E. of W (1950)        |



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1821, indicating that people were using this portion of the cemetery prior to its official designation. Most of the stones, however, post-date 1855, with a small cluster from 1860 through 1880. In spite of this probably no more than 10 to 20% predate 1900, suggesting that it was only with the turn of the century that African Americans began using Blandford heavily.<sup>2</sup>

The lodges represented in the cemetery are listed in Table 8 and include a range of those found at Petersburg's other African American graveyards. The most common organization is the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World, followed by a few Masons, and individual stones for a range of other groups. There doesn't seem to be any clearly defined social distinctions, based on lodge membership, between those buried in Blandford as compared to other African-American cemeteries in Petersburg. Perhaps this suggests that whatever else in life, the African American community was most clearly defined by color and ethnicity.

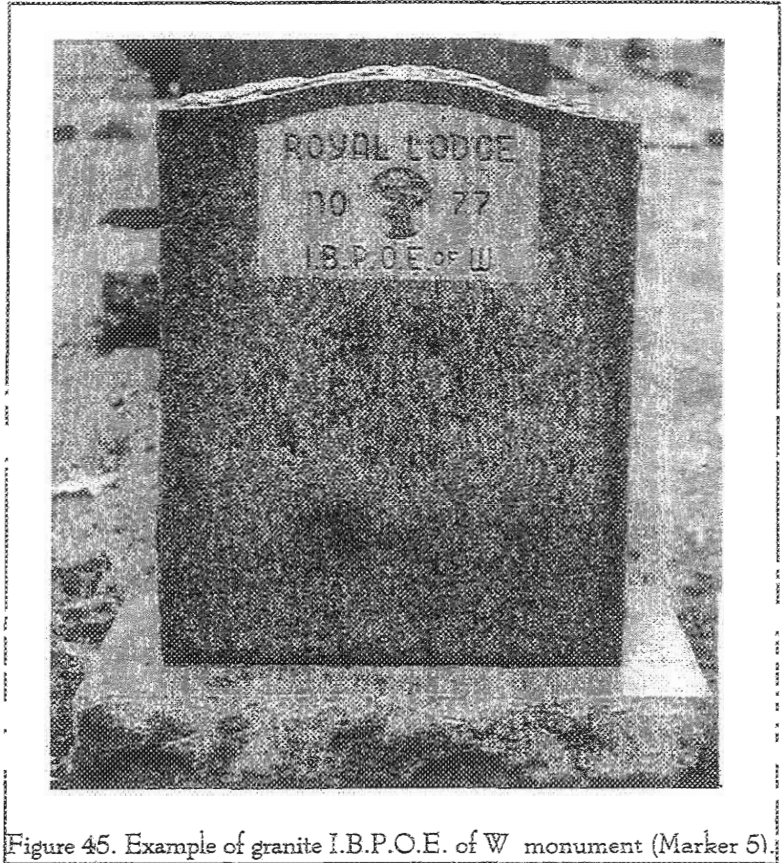


Figure 45. Example of granite I.B.P.O.E. of W monument (Marker 5).

Blandford also reveals that lodges continued to be important to families, even as monument styles and materials were changing. For example, while lodge stones are typically small marble slabs at People's and Little Church, they are also found in granite at Blandford (Figure 45).

What is perhaps far more interesting is that a rather careful survey of Blandford failed to reveal many lodge stones in other (i.e., white) sections, excepting occasional Woodmen of the World, Masons, Odd Fellows, and Bible Class stones.<sup>3</sup> At least based on the

observations in this one cemetery, lodges were of far less importance in death to the white community than they were to the African American.

Although four funeral homes were identified on the markers of new graves — including J.M. Wilkerson, Morris & Son, William Bland & Son, and Shirley R. Johnson — only one church was recognized in the monuments. That stone identified the buried individual as a "parish aide" in the "Guild of St. Phillips Church" (which is no longer present in Petersburg).

Nine different stonecutters are identified in the "Negro Section," dominated by Pembroke Granite Works (representing a quarter of those identified),

present was one stone for the Mount Vernon Council No. 20, D. of L. See also the Historic Section for the Masonic Plot at Blandford.

<sup>2</sup> The loss of stones over time (and currently we don't know how prevalent this loss may have been) may skew these observations.

<sup>3</sup> The two identified Bible Class stones are one for Radcliffe Bible Class, Memorial M.E. Church and Phoenix Bible Class, High Street Methodist Episcopal Church. Also

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Table 8.  
Lodges Identified from Blandford's "Negro Section"

E.S. & L.G.  
Evans Gasper Tent No. 601 / J.R. Gidding & Jolifee Union  
I.B.P.O.E. of W., Royal Lodge No. 77  
I.B.P.O.E. of W., Majestic Temple No. 109  
I.B.P.O.E. of W., Williams Lodge No. 11  
Masons  
Masons, Supreme Prince 33°  
Masons, Royal Secret 32°  
N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion No. 275  
N.I.B.S., Pride of Petersburg Lodge No. 487  
Rosetta Tent No. 433

Blandford's "Negro Section." It may be that there was a preference for white carvers — or more likely their work.

What is perhaps most obvious is that with 52 marked stones, far more of the monuments in Blandford were signed than in either Peoples or Little Church. For example, this is the only place where we found stones signed by Poppa. Although some authors, such as Little (1998) provide interesting and compelling discussions of stonecutters and their trade, and while it is often suggested that the signature was "advertising," there seems to be no discussion of why stones were signed. Consequently, without having some idea of why stonecutters chose to sign some stones and leave others anonymous, it is impossible to speculate on why there are more signed stones (per capita) in Blandford than at other African American cemeteries in Petersburg.<sup>4</sup>

closely followed by Crowder Memorials (accounting for an additional 23% of the collection). Hess-Trigard is next in frequency (15%), although its original company, V.H. Poppa Stone Manufacturing, is found as the stonecutter for only 6% of the marked stones. Together, however, they account for 21% and represent the third most common supplier of monuments. Burns and Campbell provided 13% of the marked stones, followed by 8% from C.M. Walsh. Both are well known stonecutters from the white section of Blandford. Relatively minor manufacturers include Metalstone Corporation, A.G. Andrews Monuments, and Shaw and Facu.



Figure 46. Examples of concrete markers in Ward Y (Plot 12) at Blandford Cemetery

Although not identified as such (and thus not included in the tabulation), there was at least one "M.R." (Milton Rivers) stone in Blandford. It is perhaps surprising that being a black carver his work is so uncommon at

<sup>4</sup> We can speculate that more stones were signed at Blandford than elsewhere since those choosing Blandford seem to have had more disposable income. Yet, if this is the case, why sign stones for the other cemeteries at all?

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When the stones at the "Negro Section" are examined by type, it is clear that nearly the same range occurs there that is found at other African American cemeteries in Petersburg. For example, a range of concrete monuments is found, including both plaque markers and raised-top inscription markers. Also present are a number of steeply peaked or pointed concrete tabletstones, usually whitewashed (Figure 46).

It is immediately obvious, however, that these concrete markers are far less common at Blandford than they are at other cemeteries, most especially People's and Little Church. Conspicuously absent are examples of marble dresser tops that have been pressed into service. What we did find, however, were very thin marble tabletstones. Likely more affordable than traditional, thicker slabs, these may reflect a slightly less affluent family, that under different circumstances might have used a marble fragment in People's or Little Church.

In fact, the African American section of Blandford is dominated by modest granite dies on bases, typically set in the center of a family plot and often bearing only the family name. These, of course, are typical of the rural cemetery movement and are characteristic of the white section as well as the black. Marble obelisks are also relatively common. The 13 examples in the cemetery date from 1884 through 1920, with a mean date of 1902. This closely parallels Little Church and suggests that some aspects of funerary design and art are more controlled by fashion than by one's skin color. It also seems to clearly indicate that when able to afford it, Petersburg's African Americans sought to participate in the trends affecting white burial customs.

There are several stones which remind us of the complex interaction between blacks and whites. One stone was set by a white family in memory of "Our Mammy," while another (dating from 1872) reports that the interred was "a dutiful son: a good scholar, and was faithful and devoted to his benefactor" (who the stone announces was Robert Leslie, Esq.).

In sum, the area historically set aside for blacks in Blandford stands apart — but only a very little — from the other African American cemeteries in

Petersburg. During a superficial inspection the differences seem dramatic and the "Negro Section" appears to blend-in with the white plots. However, upon closer inspection there are traits or practices found at other African American cemeteries evident at Blandford. While there may have been a greater acceptance of standard or traditional white habits, burial marking practices still retain some essential elements found elsewhere in Petersburg, helping to form a continuum of practices that, overall, becomes quite distinct.

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## EAST VIEW CEMETERY

What is commonly known as East View includes a series of several different parcels or discrete cemetery areas. Although one might imagine that these different sections of East View would have some consistently applied names, that does not seem to be the case. In fact there are even portions of East View which have been lost from the memory of most individuals we spoke to during this research. The USGS topographic map combines Blandford, the Catholic, the Jewish, and the African American cemeteries as one entity (Figure 47). As a result, we divide the cemetery into two sections — East View (to the west) and Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery (to the east).

Between these two “sections” there is a large grassed field which informants have told us has been used for the burial of victims of Petersburg’s 1918 influenza or typhoid epidemic. Although we have not been able to verify this information, it has come from several sources, including the owners of the property. And while we see no undulations in the ground, or other evidence of burial, the fact that this section has not been resold does suggest that it contains burials. Clearly, a penetrometer survey of this portion of the cemetery could answer this question.

### Historical Overview

East View/Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery is in an area that was annexed into the City of Petersburg in 1945. Before that time, the land was in unincorporated Prince George County.

The present cemetery occupies three entire lots, #5, 7, and 8, and parts of two more, #2 and 6, that are shown on a survey made in 1855 of a tract owned by the Estate of Elizabeth Taylor (Figure 48). Henry Bowman had acquired Lot #7, the northeast section of the cemetery, by the time the survey plat was recorded, and before his death also acquired Lot #8, south of #7 (the two tracts are separated by a no longer used dirt or gravel road, shown on the plat as Taylors

Street). Lots #7 and 8 passed to Bowman's heirs as 17.75 acres. In 1902 Henry's son John C. Bowman acquired title from the other four heirs, and in 1904 he added Parcel #5 (9 acres), at the west side of #8.<sup>1</sup>

Lots #5, 7 and 8 were conveyed (\$3,343.75) by John C. Bowman to James M. Wilkerson in 1911, and have remained in the Wilkerson family and their business, J. M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment, since that time. By his will, written and proved in 1932, Wilkerson devised several buildings to sisters, nieces and nephews, and the rest and residue to his wife Fannie Crawley Wilkerson. The next year, after a substantial legacy to Gillfield Baptist Church, and gifts of cash or real estate to relatives, Mrs. Wilkerson in turn devised the rest of her estate, including the cemetery property, to Virgie Brown Sparks of Norfolk, daughter of Wilkerson's sister Elizabeth and wife of Charles F. Sparks.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Sparks was the manager of the Wilkerson business and its cemeteries for a number of years, and in 1966, Virgie and Charles Sparks conveyed these two tracts and other property she had inherited back to the company.<sup>3</sup> (After his retirement, Sparks is thought to have continued to mold and carve concrete grave markers, which he had often provided during his active career.<sup>4</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> Clerk of Court's Office, Prince George County, Deed Book 24, p. 257, Deed Book 54, p. 428 (which refers to Book 46, p. 58, for John's acquisition from the other heirs).

<sup>2</sup> Clerk of Court's Office, Deed Book 54, p. 428. Hustings Court, City of Petersburg, Will Book 14, pp. 65, 316.

<sup>3</sup> Hustings Court, Deed Book 283, p. 435.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, Pernel Simms, manager of Wilkerson Funeral Home, 12/16/98.

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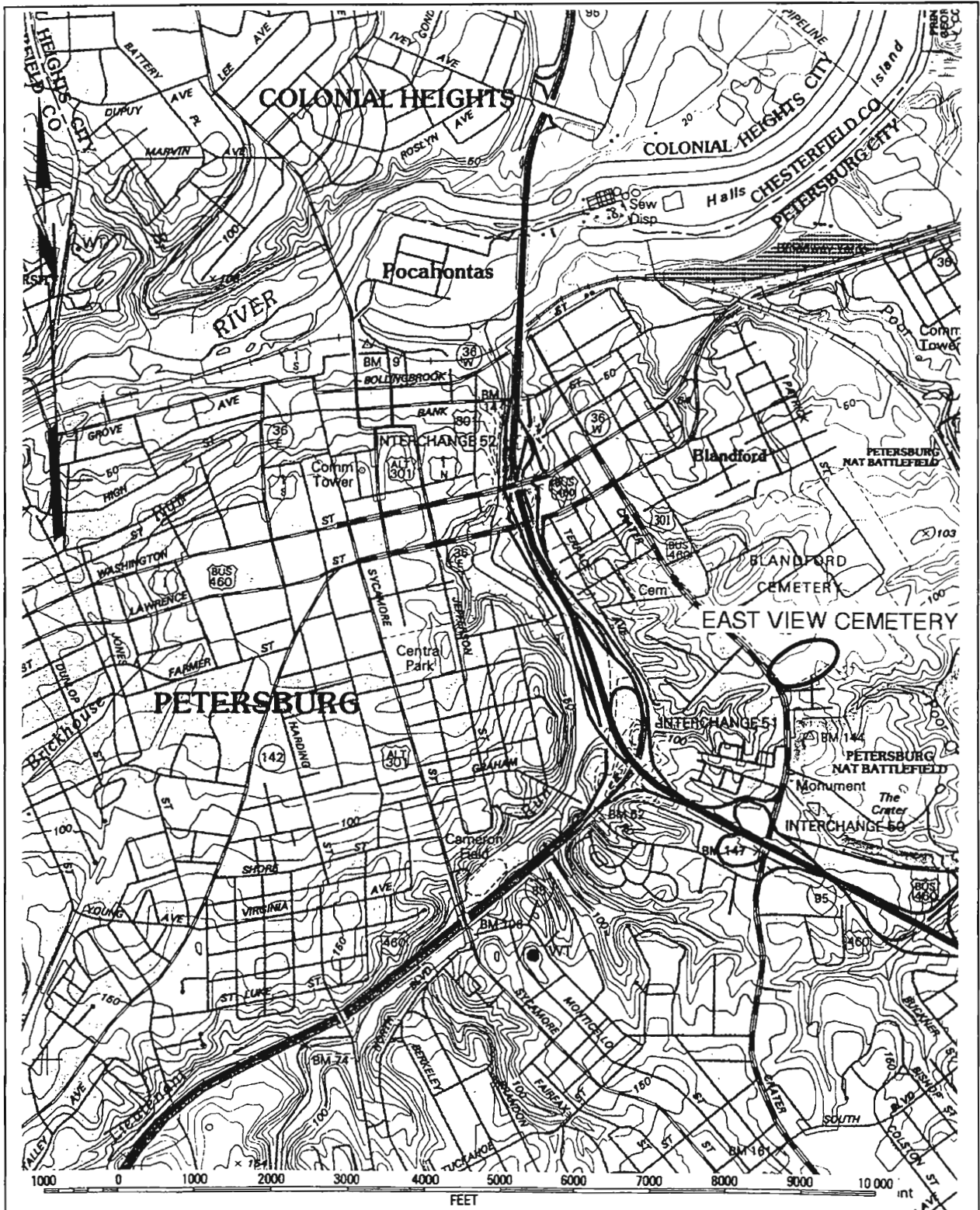


Figure 47. Portion of the USGS Petersburg topographic map showing East View Cemetery.

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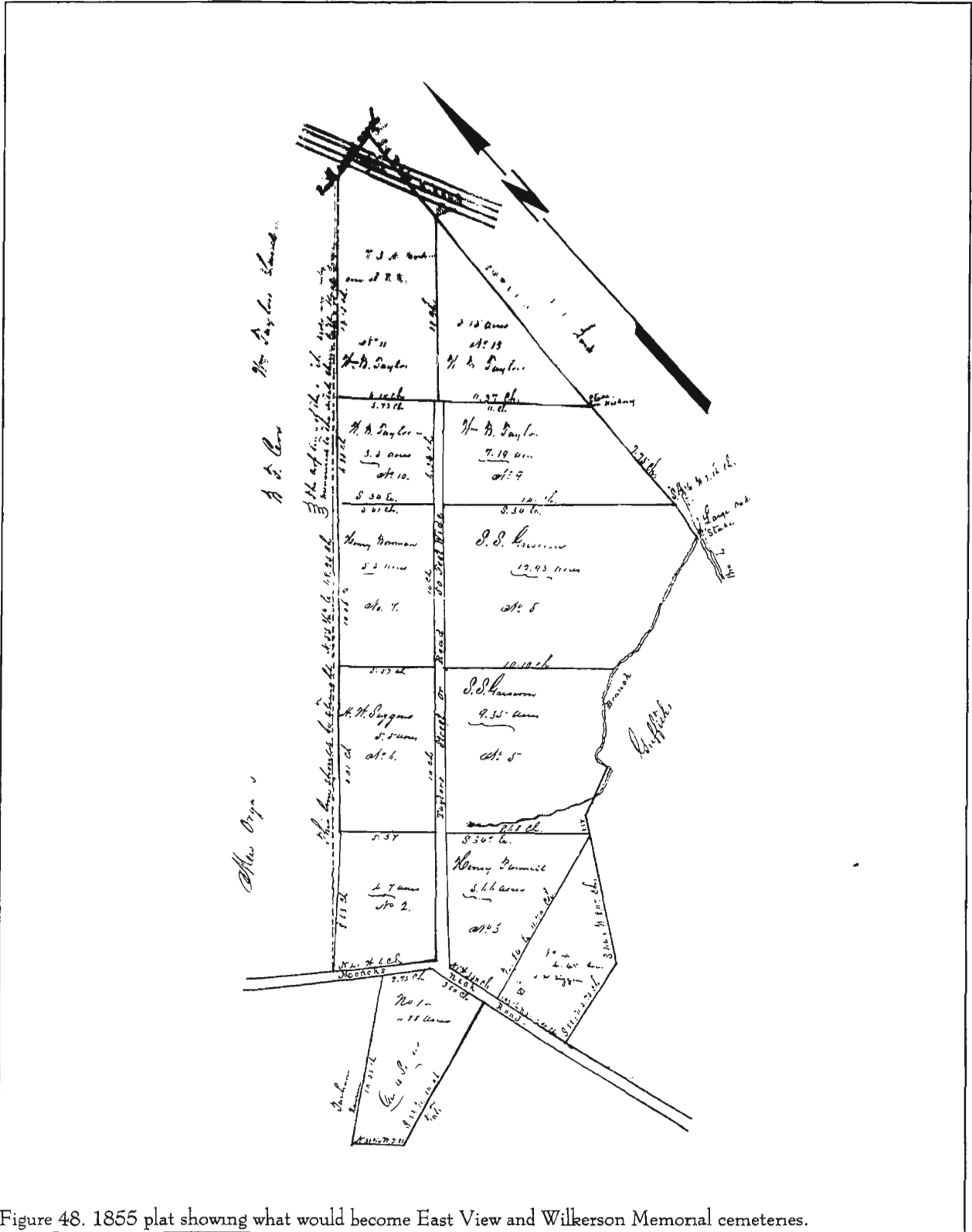


Figure 48. 1855 plat showing what would become East View and Wilkerson Memorial cemeteries.

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The earliest markers identified in the cemetery, dating from 1866 through the 1880s, are found in the easternmost (Wilkerson Memorial) section, Lots #7 and 8. The section of East View nearest South Crater Road occupies the south halves of Lots #2 and #6. It has not been determined when this land was added to East View Cemetery; Lots #2 and #6 are not recited in the 1911 and the 1966 conveyance to Wilkerson. Like the Bowman parcels, this land may have been used as a burial ground well before Wilkerson's formal acquisition. B'rith Achim Cemetery, established in the late nineteenth century, takes up the north halves of Lots #2 and 6.

During the nineteenth century, several tracts of land were acquired by benevolent organizations to provide burial plots for Petersburg's black community. Deeds from 1818, 1840, and 1865 list the men who acquired these parcels, some of whom became undertakers. There are no Wilkersons among the purchasers. The first appearance of a Wilkerson among the professional undertakers of Petersburg comes in the 1873 city directory, which lists two businesses, Hill, Parker & Wilkinson [sic], and Philip Robinson. By 1880 the former firm had become Parker & Wilkinson, and in 1888 J. M. Wilkerson was listed as an independent funeral director. By this point, James M. Wilkerson, Jr., had come into the firm and eventually took it over. Directories and advertising are seamless, so that it not known when the changeover from father to son occurred. A 1903 ad for James M. Wilkerson, undertaker, stressed "fine caskets; embalming neatly done."<sup>5</sup>

The Wilkerson firm found that management or ownership of cemeteries was an important business asset. In 1883 James M. Wilkerson acquired Little Church Cemetery, just north of today's People's Memorial Cemetery. By 1899 he was the superintendent of Providence (part of People's) and his own Church Street (Little Church) cemeteries, as well as being the "keeper" of Rod of Shalom (B'rith Achim) cemetery. The city directory for 1905 lists East View Cemetery, c/o James M. Wilkerson, for the first time.

In 1909 Wilkerson appears as superintendent of East View, Church Street, Providence, and Old Beneficial (also part of People's).

Wilkerson's city directory listing for 1911, the year he acquired title to about 26 acres in East View, indicates the comprehensive nature of his business, citing him as funeral director, embalmer, livery man, and Superintendent Providence-Church St. and East View cemeteries.

Before 1920, Wilkerson's chief competitor, Thomas H. Brown, took over management of the People's complex. Ownership of East View and Little Church cemeteries combined with family management to enable Wilkerson's Funeral Establishment to survive the death of its founder and his son, and outlast their contemporaries. Today Wilkerson's is the oldest African-American undertaking business in Petersburg. A great loss to the historic record came when a fire destroyed many of the business records. Too much information about the cemetery exists only in the memory of older citizens.

For example, a large section of the cemetery is open and without markers, but believed to be the resting place of a large number of people who died of epidemic, either typhoid or influenza, around 1918. No explanation is given for the absence of gravestones, and there are no estimates of how many burials may have occurred; it is agreed, however, that the victims were buried individually rather than in a mass grave.<sup>6</sup>

When South Crater Road was first widened in 1942-43, most of the disinterred bodies were reburied in the new section of People's Memorial Cemetery. A number were also moved to a section of Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery that had not been used before that time. South Crater Road was widened again in 1968, to a full four-lane road with median. This project required a right-of-way through the southeastern edge of People's Memorial Cemetery, from which graves and markers had to be removed. Sixty squares in Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery, "northeast of East View

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<sup>5</sup> *The Recorder* 1903, (clipping in W. H. Johnson Scrapbook, Special Collections, VSU library.

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<sup>6</sup> Interviews, Pernell Simms, December 16, 1998; Mrs. Mary Lee Berry, January 28, 1999.



Cemetery," were purchased from Wilkerson Memorial Funeral Association. The funeral directors contracted to move the bodies (Newcomb Funeral Home of Chase City for the disinterments, Wilkerson for the reinterments) were to relocate all head and foot stones, monuments, and vaults, and place standard curbing at the replacement squares for any squares that already had curbing. As with the earlier move, any square that had to be removed in part would be completely removed, and an equivalent new square assigned.<sup>7</sup>

Up to the present, East View/Wilkerson Cemetery has continued to expand into other new sections, without adding any more land to that which has been held by the family and firm for decades.

### East View Cemetery Section

#### **Extant Environment and Current Conditions**

These discussions will be limited to the former portion of the cemetery, situated immediately south of B'rith Achim cemetery, east of South Crater Road, and north of Stratford Avenue and Page Street (Figure 49).

The cemetery consists of a linear strip of land measuring about 210 feet by 860 feet (about 4.2 acres) separated from B'rith Achim by a brick and concrete block wall. Beyond the wall, until recently, were only woods. Today these woods have been cleared and grubbed for an additional 300 feet, in preparation for an expansion of B'rith Achim. This work has left only a thin woods line separating the existing African American burials from the newly opened Jewish parcel. In this woods line, which varies from perhaps 10 to 20 feet in width, are numerous marked graves, essentially abandoned by those caring for East View.

East View is bisected east-west by a two-rut gravel road which runs off South Crater for about 600 feet before turning and exiting onto Page Street (Figure 50). There is a chain gate between the two entry columns at South Crater, but it doesn't appear that it has been closed in a number of years. There is no gate or chain at the opposite end of this drive. Nor is there any fence along the south side of the cemetery. Access, therefore, is uncontrolled, as evidenced by bottles and other trash in the cemetery (and in one of the graves).

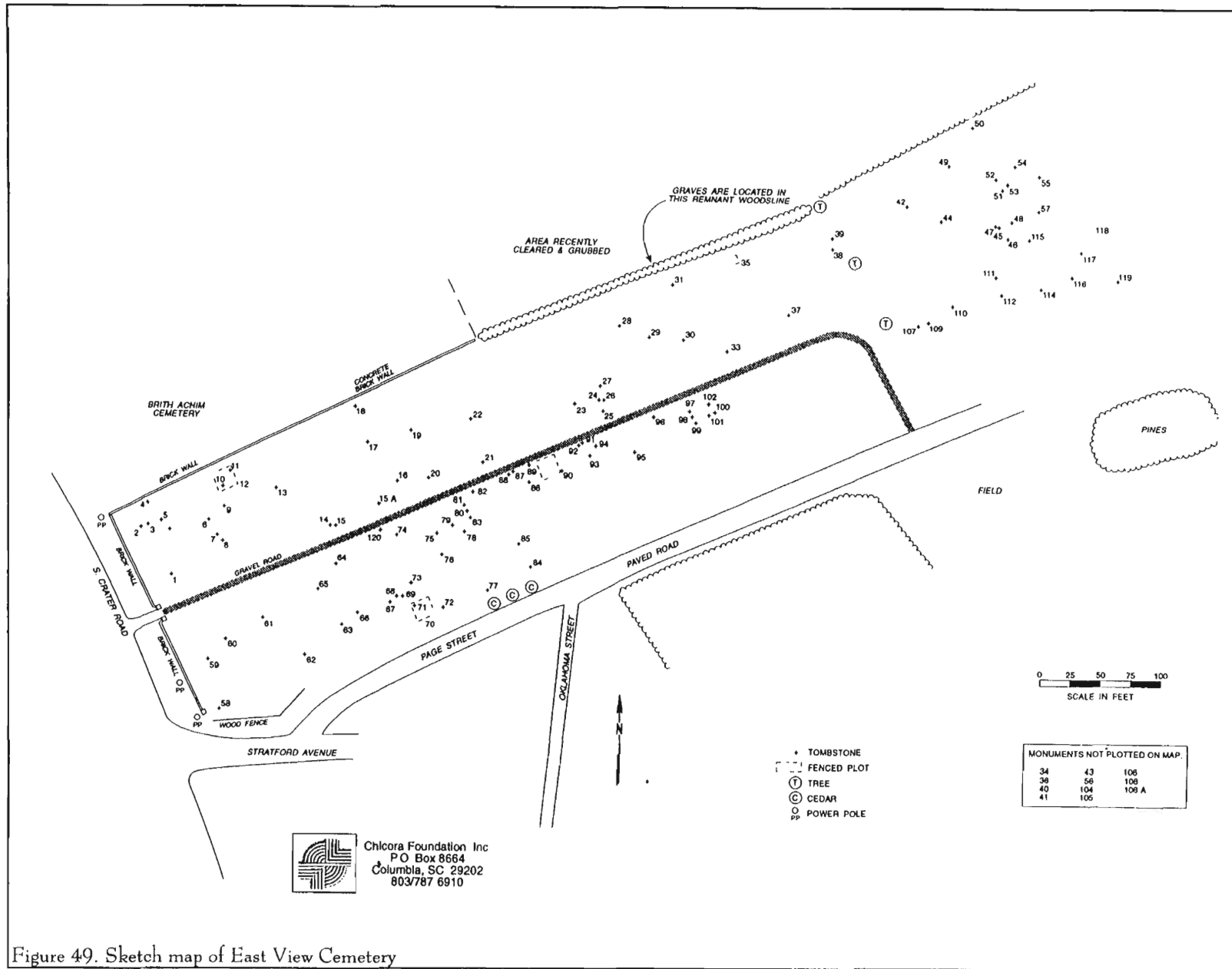
The topography in this area is quite level, with a very gradual slope from elevations of about 130 feet AMSL in the north to about 120 feet in the south. Further to the south is a neighborhood of small and generally well maintained houses, still on level, almost pasture-like lands. Across Crater Road are a range of commercial lots before the terrain drops off toward a small drainage (which runs into Wilcox Lake, the backdrop for Lee Park and Lee Golf Course). To the east the topography remains relatively level, although beyond East View there is another drainage, this one running into Poor Creek which cuts through neighboring Petersburg National Battlefield.

East View offers a somewhat forlorn appearance. Although well grassed, there are only a very few oaks and cedars breaking the monotony of the landscape. It is clear that historically this cemetery was set out in uniform lots — about 16 to 17 feet square. Many have vestiges of coping, although there is much damage. In fact at the Wilkerson Memorial section of East View we found several "dumps" of coping debris, at least some of which may have come from this portion of East View. There are only four fenced plots in this cemetery and stones, while common, are typically modest, so there really is no central focus or dominating view.

Although there were no open or recent graves, the adjacent cleared land reveals a thin A horizon of brown sandy clay loam overlying the red clays of what appear to be Cecil soils. These soils seem to be far more similar to those in the People's and Little Church cemeteries than in the nearby, low, "Negro Section" of

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<sup>7</sup> Interview, John Donley, Virginia DOT Right-of-Way Division, December 30, 1998. Correspondence between C. W. Mangum, District Property Manager, and Henry C. F. Burke, Corliss A. Batts, Moses White, et. al., Trustees for the People's Memorial Cemetery, October 1967 - July 1968 (in Peoples Cemetery Records).



EAST VIEW CEMETERY

Figure 49. Sketch map of East View Cemetery

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG



Figure 50. East View Cemetery looking down gravel entrance road.

Blandford.

At first glance care seems more consistent in East View than in Little Church or People's, but this is

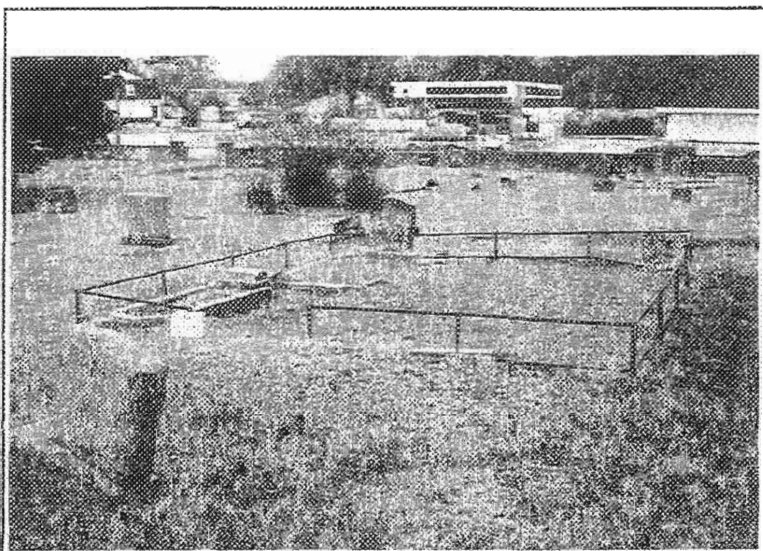


Figure 51. Pipe railing fence at Plot 12 in East View Cemetery.

likely a false impression generated by the relatively sparse landscaping. It is clear that grass is only mowed when it become "high," and as previously mentioned, the

nearby woods have taken over a number of graves. The fences are poorly maintained, as are the stones themselves. One below ground vault is open and inspection reveals that the coffin has been broken into and bones are scattered in the pit along with modern plastic bags, soft drink containers, and other trash. During a recent visit there were a number of trees and limbs still down after a winter ice storm several weeks previous (although this condition also prevailed in Blandford to an alarming degree). Coping, although once widely used, is in variable condition with many sections displaced, missing, or poorly maintained.

### Stones and Other Features

Unlike People's and Little Church, which were developed by benevolent organizations to provide burial services to the black community excluded from other Petersburg cemeteries, or Blandford, which was operated by the city and allowed African American burials in only a segregated section, there is evidence that East View (both sections) was entrepreneurial, seeking to sell lots at a profit or as part of a total service package.<sup>8</sup> While most entrepreneurial cemeteries were, at this time, operated as lawn park cemeteries, the East View section retained many of the elements of earlier styles that, at least in theory, had passed out of vogue — such as coping and other forms of lot enclosures, and individual monuments.

Yet, the cemetery is laid out not on an east-west arrangement, but rather in relation to the strip of land that it occupies — very characteristic of rural and lawn park cemeteries which sought to use the natural lay of the land for situating family and individual plots, and not be tied to strict east-west grave orientations. This, of

<sup>8</sup> This is at least the case after Wilkerson acquired the cemetery in the early twentieth century.

## EAST VIEW CEMETERY

course, was based on the sound principal of maximizing land use and/or profit. Mixed with this pragmatism, however, the cemetery retains the very formal organization typical of such early town cemeteries as the New Haven Burying Ground, dominated by its gridded design and focus on lot ownership (which extended into the following rural cemetery movement).

In other words, the East View section, like all of the other African American cemeteries in Petersburg, seems to include a mix of different elements and prevailing attitudes. It cannot be easily characterized as integrating — or being controlled by — one design focus. At least some of these competing landscapes are likely the result of the cemeteries gradual development under changing ownerships.

There are four fenced areas in East View — two are low pipe railing fences and two are "traditional" ironwork fences. Plot 12, in the northwestern corner of the cemetery is one of the pipe railing fences (Figure 51). It is about 2-feet in height, constructed of plumbing pipe with the vertical supports set in concrete. There are two horizontal rails — one today just above the ground surface and the other at the top of the fence. Each side consists of four sections of equal length. The opening for the plot is on the east side and consists of a missing section. The second pipe railing fence, Plot 35, is also situated at the north edge of the cemetery, but in the northeastern quadrant. This fence encloses a much smaller plot and consists of pipe railing specifically designed for fence construction. It is low, about 18 inches in height, and each vertical post is decorated with a ball finial. There is a narrow gate on the east side of this fence as well. A portion of the plot

has been overtaken by snrubbery.

The first of the two iron fences is Plot 70, situated adjacent to the paved road along the southern side of East View and enclosing a full plot about 17 feet square. It is a bow and picket design with a very ornate name plate for "J.F. JARRATT."<sup>9</sup> Although there is no manufacturer's shield, the construction and design is nearly identical to fences produced by Stewart Iron Works (see below). The fence is in generally good condition, being recently repainted. At the base of the fence, situated between the support and corner posts, is a low (ca. 6-inch high) concrete infill, whose purpose is uncertain.

The second fence, enclosing Plot 90, is situated just south of the gravel road running through East View (Figure 52). This fence is in much worse condition than that at Plot 70, being rusted, partially displaced in several areas, and entirely missing its north side. In addition the gate is heavily damaged. Still

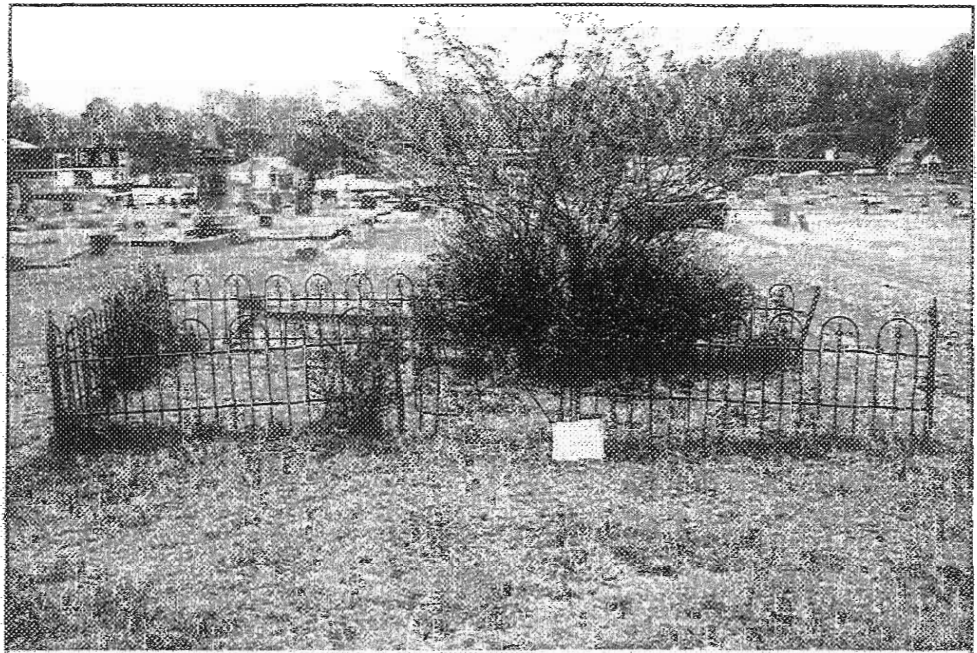


Figure 52. Stewart Iron Works fence at Plot 70 in East View Cemetery.

<sup>9</sup>The Jarratts comprised a well-known Pocahontas family. They were boatmen, hauliers, and property owners, both before and after 1865.

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

intact, however is a relatively simple name plate, "BATES" and below it, a shield for Stewart Iron Works, Cincinnati, Ohio. Although the corner and gate post finials are different, the bow and picket design, as well as the picket finials, are identical to those seen in the fence for Plot 70.

A survey of the stones in this portion of East View reveals that the earliest, a marble tabletstone, dates to 1890, with only a small handful dating to the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. Based on the surviving monuments, it doesn't appear that this cemetery became heavily used until the early 1920s.<sup>10</sup> The most recent graves, dominated by metal funeral home plaques from J.M. Wilkerson, date into the 1990s. Almost as common were plaques from William N. Bland & Son.

Monuments and markers were manufactured by Burns and Campbell, C.M. Walsh (with a Petersburg, Va. identification), Crowder Memorials (also with a Petersburg, Va. identification), and Pembroke Granite Works. Although not marked, there is at least one stone (Stone 4) produced by "M.R." or Milton Rivers. Toppled, it reads "INMEMORYOF / MY HUSBAND / SANDIE E. / BARLOWBORN / DEC.09,1869. / DIED DEC.17,1910 / AGE 44YERS. / ATREST" The carving style is unmistakably that of Rivers (Figure 53).

There is a wide range of monuments, including traditional (nineteenth century) marble tabletstones, small marble lodge stones, and marble dies on bases. Also present are military stones, including both those from the Spanish-American War with a central shield and those known as general issue stones, without the shield. There are also a range of granite stones, including dies on bases, and at least one lawn-type marker for a lodge. There are five marble obelisks at the cemetery dating between 1913 and 1931.

One of the more unusual, and expensive, memorials is Plot 73 — laid out with coping. In the near center is a large granite die on base inscribed



Figure 53. Example of stone carving by Milton Rivers.

"HER SON LUTHER / IN MEMORIAM / ELLEN HARRISON / DIED NOV 2, 1922 / AGE 54 YRS." which also include a raised bronze casting of his face. Directly behind this monument is what at first appears to be a marble ledger stone, badly worn with a central break and worn or eroded area. Upon further inspection, however, this ledger stone is seen to cover a below ground brick lined vault, in which are the desecrated remains of a coffin and skeleton. This vault arrangement is somewhat atypical, but is commented on as appropriate when an individual objects to below ground, earth burial:

the objections that many persons have to [earth burial] can be overcome by the construction of brick graves, the bottom of which can be made of concrete or bluestone flags, the sides of 8-inch hard brick walls, and covered with strong bluestone flags [or in this case a marble ledger stone] all laid in cement mortar, making an air-tight compartment for the coffin (Wells 1898:100).

<sup>10</sup> This is probably related to Wilkerson's 1911 acquisition of what was an already extant cemetery.

EAST VIEW CEMETERY

Table 9 Stones and Features Identified at East View Cemetery

1. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1936)
2. Concrete obelisk with cross (1910-1929)
3. N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion Lodge No. 275
4. Probable MR stone with mistake in spelling (1910)
5. Very thin marble, poorly carved (1909)
6. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1924)
7. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1933)
8. Marble, poorly carved, with later granite stone added (1908)
9. Pink granite, similar to People's, MR stonemason
10. Elaborate marble monument (1909-1916)
11. Burns and Campbell stone (1926)
12. Iron pipe fence, 16 x 17 feet
13. Rustic granite with "CARTER" engraved with headstones
14. Marble tablet (1890)
15. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1948)
- 15a. Concrete obelisk without inscription
16. "F.T. Hill/From Employees/1898 C.S.H. 1945"
17. Wood marker
18. Burial vault slab with plaque marker at head
19. E.S. & L.C. (1940)
20. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1950)
21. Masonic symbol (1919)
22. Granite modified bedstead (1939-1943)
23. I.B.P.O.E.W., Majestic Temple No. 109 (1929)
24. B.I.B.C. (1929)
25. E.S. & L.C. (1949)
26. B.I.B.C. (1927)
27. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1950)
28. Concrete obelisk with African head (1900)
29. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1947)
30. A.F. & A.M. Pocahontas Lodge No. 7 (1919)
31. Marble cross with wreath (1912)
32. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1932)
33. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1935)
34. B.I.B.C. (1925)
35. Iron pipe fence and gate (1928-1985), 7½ x 7½ feet
36. Granite obelisk with Masonic symbol (1915)
37. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1946)
38. Y.M.I.B.A. (1923)
39. Concrete block coping (1923)
40. Three stones in brush at cemetery edge (1916)
41. Concrete plaque marker, "FAITHFUL FRIEND OF THE SEABURY FAMILY" (1943)
42. Marble tabletstone, unusual shape
43. Y.M.I.B.A. (1926)
44. A.F. & A.M., Pocahontas Lodge No. 7 (1919)
45. I.N.B.S. (sic), Magnolia Lodge 118 (1951)
46. N.I.B.S., Magnolia Lodge 116 (1955)
47. N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion Lodge No. 275, Master (1910)
48. Y.M.B.I.A. (sic) (1922)
49. N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion Lodge No. 275, (1958)
50. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1952)
51. I.B.P.O.E.W., Majestic Temple 109 (1951)
52. Whitewashed concrete stone, same as # 50 and 51
53. Whitewashed concrete plaque marker (1922)
54. Marble tabletstone, "REV" (1921)
55. Y.W.I. + B.A. (1922)
56. N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion Lodge No. 275, (1947)
57. Marble tabletstone, Star Chamber 5352, Petersburg, VA (1923)
- 57a. NAT IDEAL BEN. SOC., Bd. of Directors, Supreme Lodge (1965)
58. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1942)
59. Royal Lodge
60. Whitewashed concrete tabletstone, Mason
61. Spanish American War military marker
62. Concrete plaque marker with coping (1917)
63. Series of three marble headstones set in concrete, snapped off and missing
64. E.S. & L.C. (1920)
65. I.B.P.O.E.W., Majestic Temple 109 (1957)
66. E.S. & L.C. (1928)
67. Y.M.I.B.A.
68. Concrete markers
69. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1943)
70. J.F. Jarratt plot with iron fence, 16 x 16½ feet
71. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1956)
72. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1933)
73. Granite die on base with bronze cast, Luther Hamson
74. Concrete markers (1910, 1921, 1931)
75. Marble obelisk, Mason symbol (1905, 1910, 1914)
76. Depression, no stone
77. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1938)
78. Handwritten concrete
79. Concrete with cast triangular void
80. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77, Y.M.I.B.A. (1929)
81. E.S. & L.C. (1927)
82. Marble tablet set into concrete with concrete coping, "President of the Ladies Friendly Club 30 years"
83. Marble with willow motif (1898)
84. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1930)
85. Rev. (1942)
86. Spanish American War military marker
87. Marble monument with marble coping
88. Granite markers, new and probably replacement markers (1894 and 1917)
89. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77, I.F.L. INC., M.I.B.A. (1921)
90. Bates plot with iron fence, 8 x 16 feet
91. I.F.L. INC. Of Petrg., Va (1931)
92. Concrete obelisk without inscription
93. Y.W.I.B.A. (1922)
94. Concrete scrolls with coping (1934)
95. MR stonemason
96. Concrete cast in form of granite markers with flowers and scrolls (1922, 1959)
97. B.P.O.E.W. (sic), Royal Lodge No. 77 (1929)
98. Y.M.I.B.A.
99. Whitewashed concrete die on base
100. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1939)
101. S.L.I.C. (1935)
102. Concrete with clasped hands on top (1915)
103. Concrete, Masonic
104. Marble cross sculpture
105. Whitewashed concrete (1923)
106. Y.M.I.B.A. (1932)
107. Y.M.I.B.A.
108. Marble base, die, and cap
109. "Founder of the Silver Leaf Club" (1937)
110. Marble tabletstone set into edge of concrete coping
111. St. Francis statue in plot of modern stones
112. Thin marble, top of dresser
113. Majestic Temple 109
114. Granite tabletstone, Masonic symbol, "ABRAM No 10 A.F. + A.M. 32" (1944)
115. Marble obelisk (1922)
116. Marble scroll, coping, with "MIZPAH"
117. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1962)
118. Whitewashed concrete tabletstone, letters filled in with gold paint (1951)
119. I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77 (1923)

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Another common type of monument, for lawn-park cemeteries is seen at Plot 13. This is a plot surrounded by rough-hewn granite coping with corner posts. In the center is a large rough-hewn granite rock, about 4 feet high and 3 feet in diameter, carved with the family name "CARTER" on both the east and wide sides. There is then a series of small granite raised-top inscription markers bearing bas-relief initials at the heads of graves. This plot seems to take the advice of several advocates of the lawn-park cemetery. Simonds, for example, notes that:

the use of boulders for monuments is especially to be recommended. The lines of a boulder are never weak in effect and they harmonize well with the trees, shrubs and lawns which are the main features that make a cemetery beautiful (Simonds 1898:100-101).

And Lovering suggested that in family plots the monuments of individual graves should be no larger than was adequate for the individual's initials (Lovering 1898:96).

As at Little Church, there is at least one monument in East View which is very thin marble, likely a fragment of marble from a piece of furniture. There is no visible carving on it.

There is also at least one wood marker at East View — consisting of a round 4-inch upright post notched to accept a 2x10 crosspiece or name board. Put together using wire nails and painted white, this marker (number 17) bears no name or date. More traditional are a series of modified bedstead monuments, in both granite and marble. Some are modified to the point that they are really nothing more than coping surrounding the grave, or in some cases surrounding two graves (usually a husband and wife).

In addition, East View reveals an exceptional range of concrete markers. Some, although not all, are typical of other Petersburg cemeteries, such as the plaque markers which are typically whitewashed or the concrete tabletstones, also whitewashed (Figure 54). Some of these are quite thick, almost representing

short, and flattened, pulpit markers. There is even a concrete obelisk in a cross form, again bearing evidence of being previously whitewashed. Also present are sharp or steeply pointed-arch concrete monuments, almost seeming to represent arrows pointing heavenward. This form is not unusual, being identified in Dorchester County, South Carolina, graveyards as well as in North Carolina African American cemeteries, where Little describes them as "slender, picket-shaped" (Little 1998:262). Also bearing an uncanny resemblance to a North Carolina concrete stone is one at East View in the shape of a double shield or tablet. In the center is a cast triangular recess. The North Carolina example, although a traditional tabletstone with a rounded or segmental arch, has cast into it "set panels of translucent-blue stained glass in lead muntins" (Little 1998:264). The East View example appears to simply be missing whatever was originally cast into it.

Table 10. Lodges Identified from East View Stones	
A.F. & A.M. 32, Abram No. 10	
A.F. & A.M., Pocahontas Lodge No. 7	
B.I.B.C.	
E.S. & L.C.	
I.B.P.O.E.W., Majestic Temple No. 109	
I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge 77	
I.F.L. Inc. of Petersburg	
I.N.B.S. [N.I.B.S.?], Magnolia Lodge 118	
[116?]	
Ladies Friendly Club	
Masons	
N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion Lodge 275	
N.I.B.S., Magnolia Lodge 116	
Royal Ace Club	
Silver Leaf Club	
S.L.I.C.	
Star Chamber 5352, Petersburg, Va.	
Y.M.I.B.A.	

Perhaps most interesting are several cast concrete monuments which are shaped something like barbed spears (see Figure 8). One is a low marker, about 2-feet in height, with a three dimensional roof or pointed projection. Another is about twice that height,

## EAST VIEW CEMETERY

with two "roofs." Although superficially resembling an obelisk, it seems clear that there is a different mental template being reflected. Of greatest interest is a slender column, again about four feet in height, on top of which is a cast head with clearly identifiable Negroid features. The head (in fact all of these unusual monuments) is in excellent condition, especially considering damage to the other stones.

None of these are marked, except for the "head" monument, where scratched (not cast) into the concrete at the base on the south side is: "B. P. [or perhaps R.] MARCH / [BORN] 1859 - DIED / OCT 22 19[00]." On the west face, again at the base, is "MARY P. HAGRY / WIFE OF J. ESYTT / AT REST."

Although concrete monuments occur in all of the African American cemeteries in Petersburg, those at East View are among the more unusual and, we venture, traditional. They deserve far more research than could be allocated during the current project.

Like the other African American cemeteries, there are a variety of lodge stones. They are far more common than at Blandford's "Negro Section," but not as common as at either People's or Little Church, perhaps helping to establish the relative status of those who used the various cemeteries. A listing of the various lodges is provided in Table 10.

### Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery Section

#### Extant Environment and Current Conditions

This portion of East View is situated at the end of Page Street, east of the East View section and

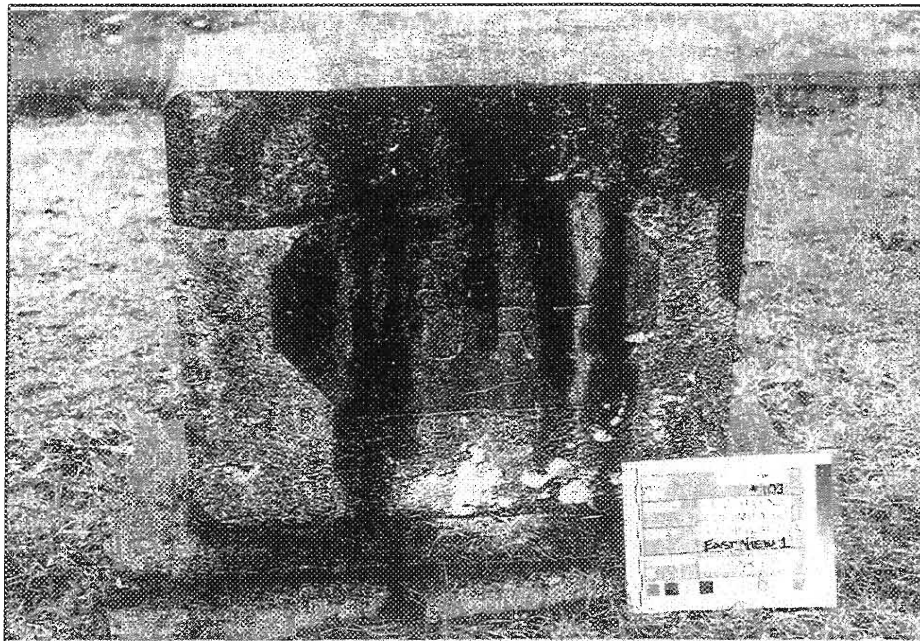


Figure 54. Monument 103 at East View Cemetery, example of whitewashed concrete.

the grassed field thought to contain the victims of one of Petersburg's epidemics. It is a rather non-descript piece of property consisting largely of a grassed field (Figures 55 and 56).

To the north the property abuts Blandford Cemetery, although the two are separated by about 120 feet of woods. These woods, however, must be considered part of Wilkerson Memorial since they contain an exceptional number of graves (discussed below). To the south the tract is bounded by a steep slope into Poor Creek and this adjacent parcel is owned by the National Park Service, as part of the Petersburg National Battlefield. To the east the property enters woods, which seem to contain only a very few graves, although no intensive search was undertaken.

The total acreage of the open portion of the cemetery is 6.4 acres, although at least an additional 1.6 acres are found between Blandford and Wilkerson Memorial, now wooded and abandoned. Likewise, the cemetery property appears to incorporate an additional 0.5 acre to the east, although this area does not seem to have been used for much more than trash disposal.

This roughly "L" shaped parcel fits the



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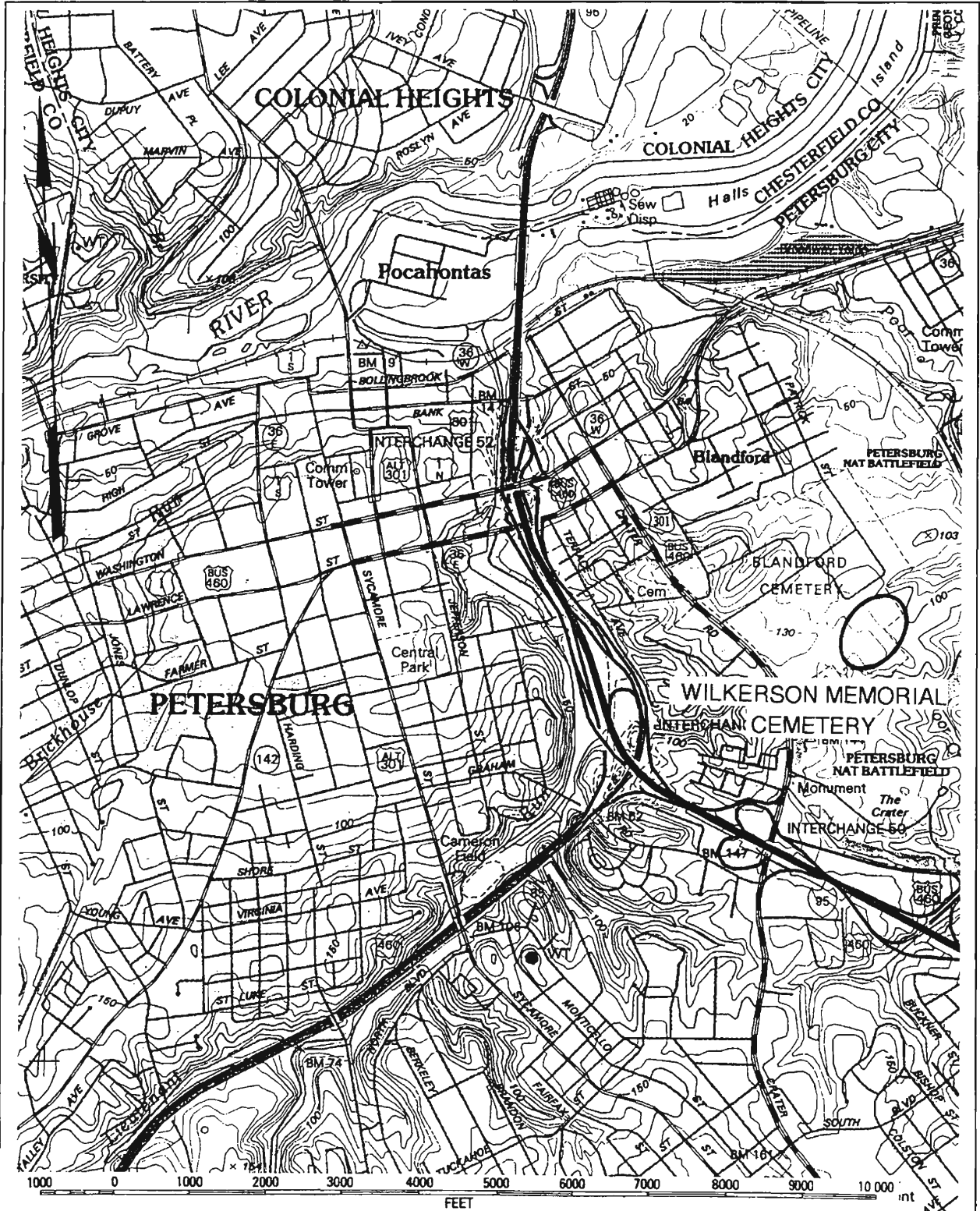


Figure 55. Portion of the USGS Petersburg topographic map showing the location of Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery.

## EAST VIEW CEMETERY

topography, occupying the high, flat level plain above Poor Creek. Elevations are about 100 feet AMSL with only local variation. The cemetery is broken into at least seven different sections by a network of roughly gridded roads forming rectangles of different sizes (Figure 57). This road network includes both paved and dirt roads. A single brick column at the northern corner of the entrance suggests that at some point an effort was made to beautify and demarcate this cemetery — although those efforts do not appear to have borne much fruit.

Just as other African American cemeteries in Petersburg have drawn on a variety of paradigms, either intentionally or unintentionally, so too does Wilkerson Memorial. The name itself implies an effort to create a memorial park cemetery. This style, originating in the first quarter of the twentieth century, sought to create a cemetery without gloom — a place that would draw people back into the cemetery. Usually built on farmland, the topography is typically like that of Wilkerson Memorial. Without rolling hills or other vistas, the designers were not able to use such features to accentuate the picturesque. Instead, the memorial park designers sought to create different thematic sections, enlivened with sculpture — a feature noticeably absent at Wilkerson Memorial.

The exclusive use of lawn type monuments ensured easy maintenance, allowing for perpetual care. At Wilkerson this, too, breaks down since there are a variety of monument types present, even including a small number of family plots with curbing.

One of the most historically famous African

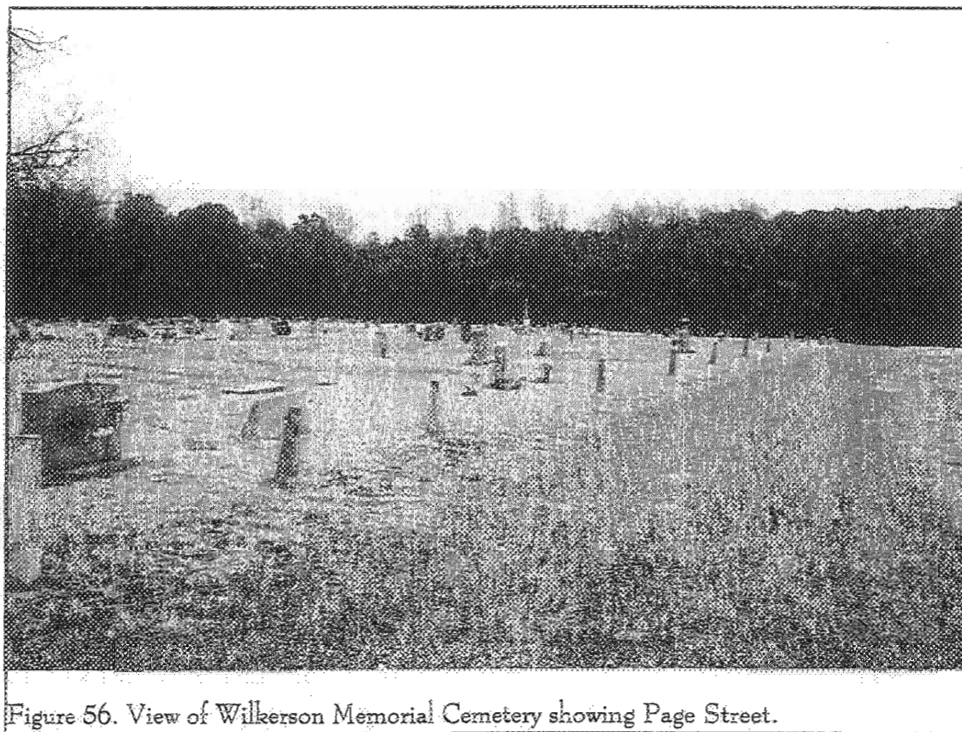


Figure 56. View of Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery showing Page Street.

American memorial parks is the Detroit Memorial Park Cemetery, organized in 1925 by black businessmen to provide funeral services to Detroit's growing black community (Wright 1993). This cemetery, however, was designed and operated as a memorial park. It seems likely that Wilkerson, like East View, began as a rural cemetery with an admixture of a somewhat more formal or organized layout, and then gradually evolved into a memorial park, perhaps spurred on by both popular interest and ease of maintenance. As such, it represents the culmination or final phase of indigenous African American cemetery development in Petersburg.

Maintenance at this cemetery is perhaps slightly better than elsewhere, although during our surveys we found toppled monuments (one which had been set within the year), soil sunken in around vaults, and in one case, kitchen trash that had been buried on top of a recently covered vault, later to be dug up by animals.

More disturbing is the abandonment of a large section of graves along its northern boundary, touching on Blandford. There, a strip measuring at least 120 feet in width and 520 feet in length has been

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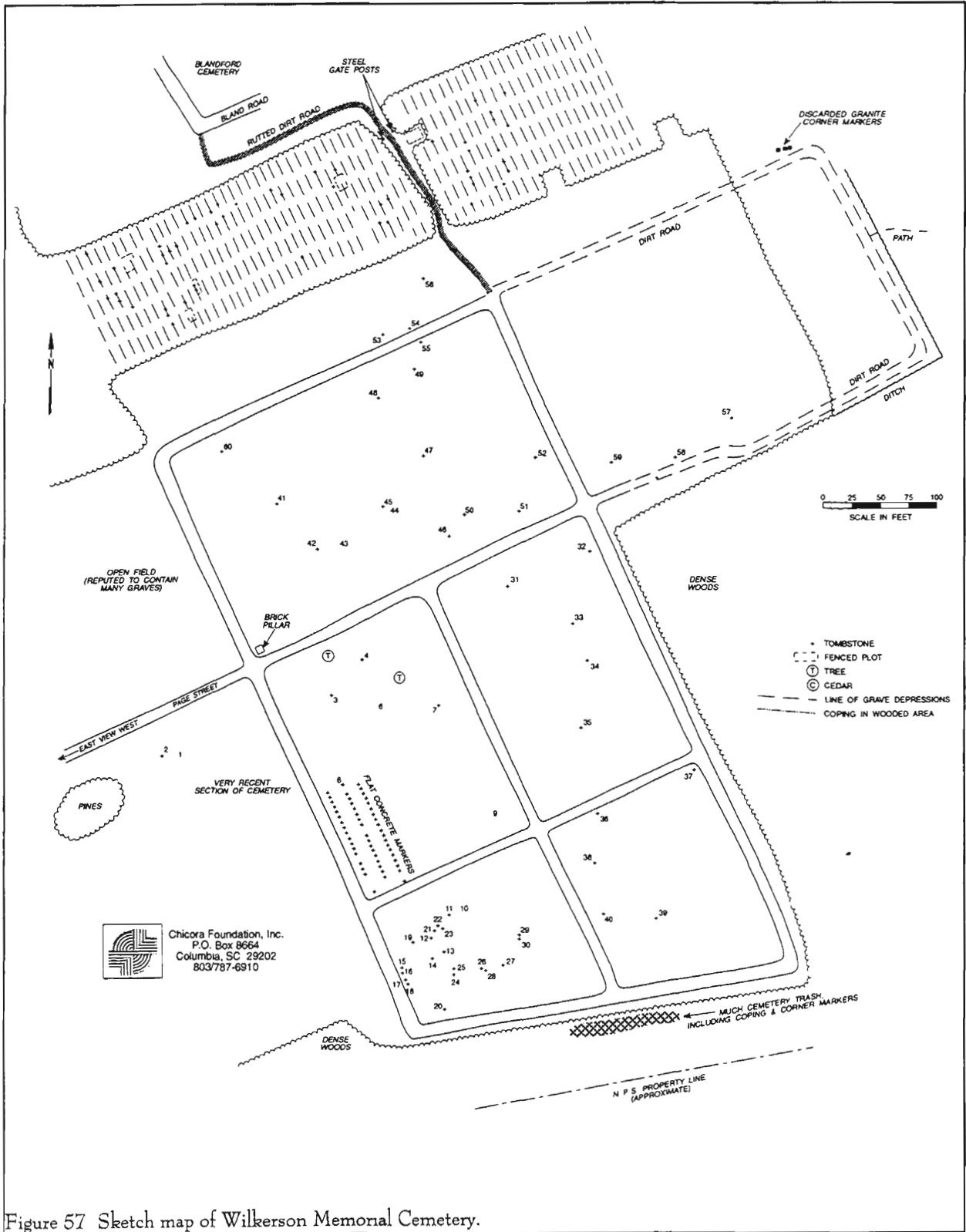


Figure 57 Sketch map of Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery.

## EAST VIEW CEMETERY

filled with upwards of 750 burials, and allowed to revert to woods (Figure 58). Several plots on the edge of this wooded section have been reclaimed and are being maintained. Likewise, one plot well in the center of the abandoned area has been reclaimed and extensively repaired, apparently by the family (Figure 59). But, for the most part these graves are uncared for. Markers have fallen down, grave depressions are unfilled, curbing is damaged, and the area is used for trash disposal.



Figure 58. Portion of Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery now taken over by woods.

The inclusion of both family plots and individual graves, as well as the range of marker styles present, makes this portion of the cemetery most like East View. We have been unable to obtain information on why this section was abandoned, but it appears that at least a few families are still in the area and are attempting to maintain their individual grave plots.

Table 11 provides a list of the marked graves identified in this section. This table suggests that this portion of the cemetery was used during the first third of the twentieth century, with the space being filled from the east to the west. Today the ground is very undulating and virtually all of the graves have sunk down two to three feet. Only aisles at the head and feet remain compact. The City reports having gone into this area at least once before to remove trash and dumped appliances. This remains a very serious concern.

Another feature of Wilkerson is that several areas have been used for the disposal of coping. Most is found at the south edge of the site, on the slope leading to Poor Creek, although additional materials (some of very finely crafted granite) are found in the woods on the east edge of the site. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century there was a push by

superintendents to remove much of these materials from cemeteries as distracting from the picturesque beauty of the cemetery. Matthew Brazill explained in 1898:

Lot enclosures are unsightly in appearance and contrary to good taste, besides requiring a good deal of labor and expense to keep them in repair and they destroy the general good appearance of the cemetery . . . . In all the most important and best managed cemeteries, the work of getting rid of stone and iron fences has been going on for some time; and with very gratifying success (Brazill 1898:130).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Even tombstones were not immune from attack by cemetery superintendents. O.C. Simonds (1898:100) commented that, "A headstone or marker exists merely to preserve the location of the grave. . . . It is not a work of art or thing of beauty. Why should it be allowed to mar a beautiful lawn?"

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Table 11.

Marked Graves Identified in the Abandoned Portion of Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Reclaimed plot, Australia Wilson (1948)                                  | 33. Concrete tabletstone, Bertha Goodmen (1937)                                      |
| 2. Marble tabletstone, Willie Thompson (1948)                               | 34. Marble tabletstone   |
| 3. Marble die on base, William Valentine (1948)                             | 35. Concrete plaque marker with individual coping,<br>Patty Jackson (1936)           |
| 4. Marble tabletstone, Emma Turner (1949)                                   | 36. Concrete headstone, handwritten, Fanie<br>Flowers (1935)                         |
| 5. General military stone, Charles Lawson (1949)                            | 37. Concrete plaque marker with individual coping,<br>Loyed Griffin (1933)           |
| 6. General military stone   | 38. Concrete plaque marker with individual coping,<br>A. Edwards (1933)              |
| 7. Marble tabletstone, Vernell Ridley (1950)                                | 39. Concrete plaque marker, Roy Blackman<br>(1933)                                   |
| 8. Marble tabletstone, Roy Miller (1950)                                    | 40. Concrete plaque marker   |
| 9. Lawn type, Holly Hunter (1949) "from her co-<br>workers"                 | 41. Reverse painted glass set in concrete  |
| 10. Lawn type, Booker Jones (1950)  | 42. Cast iron, Jessie J. Hill (1932)   |
| 11. General military stone, William Day (1952)                              | 43. Concrete plaque marker with individual coping,<br>Bessie Griffin Copeland (1932) |
| 12. Individual concrete coping for grave                                    | 44. Granite  |
| 13. Whitewashed concrete tabletstone, handwritten,<br>Nathaniel Ross (1951) | 45. Concrete plaque marker, Lester Spruel<br>(1931)                                  |
| 14. General military stone, Heyward Owens<br>(1951)                         | 46. Concrete plaque marker, Lucy Spruel (1931)                                       |
| 15. Lawn type, S.B. Keizer (1953)   | 47. Concrete plaque marker, Bettie Harrison Reed<br>(1931)                           |
| 16. General military stone, John L. Walton (1952)                           | 48. Marble tabletstone, Mary E. Wood   |
| 17. General military stone, Luther Rose (1949)                              | 49. Marble tabletstone, Louise Evans (1927)  |
| 18. Lawn type, Nettie Jones (1955) "from Vincent<br>and Alice"              | 50. Marble tabletstone   |
| 19. General military stone, Earnest Grant (1955)                            | 51. Concrete tabletstone, Sally L. Davis (1927)                                      |
| 20. Granite, Harry Thomas (1958) and Annie<br>Jackson (1955)                | 52. Concrete plaque marker with individual coping,<br>Mary Gregory (1928)            |
| 21. General military stone, Joseph Wyatt (1955)                             | 53. Marble tabletstone, Sissa Ryels (1931)   |
| 22. Elk, Elijah Smith (1957)  | 54. Concrete tabletstone, Mary Burns (1940)  |
| 23. Lawn type concrete, James B. Reid (1956)                                | 55. Marble tabletstone, Katie Ponkey Dickers<br>(1940)                               |
| 24. Marble tabletstone, Eva Gee (1960)                                      | 56. Concrete plaque marker with individual coping                                    |
| 25. Concrete plaque marker, Marcellus Harris<br>(1949)                      | 57. Marble tabletstone, James Brach (1931)   |
| 26. Whitewashed concrete tabletstone,<br>handwritten, Annie Woodson (1949)  | 58. Concrete tabletstone, Virgie F Epps (1923)                                       |
| 27. Marble tabletstone, Washington Hinton<br>(1944)                         | 59. Marble tabletstone   |
| 28. Whitewashed concrete tabletstone, Louise<br>Merritt (1944)              | 60. Concrete tabletstone   |
| 29. Granite with individual copings, Joshua Brown<br>(1942)                 | 61. Marble tabletstone   |
| 30. Marble tabletstone, Joseph E. Blunt (1942)                              | 62. Marble tabletstone, David Ray (1925)   |
| 31. Concrete plaque marker, Andrew Harris<br>(1942)                         | 63. Concrete tabletstone, J. Oliver Bailey (1935)                                    |
| 32. Lawn type marble, "Blooming Zion"                                       |  |

## EAST VIEW CEMETERY

It is likely, therefore, that through time the cemetery operators have been "cleaning up" portions of the cemetery, primarily removing curbing, making it easier to dig new graves and to maintain the lawn. Given what appears to be sporadic maintenance efforts, we imagine that coping has been primarily removed when it was found to be in the way. There doesn't appear to be any uniform or organized "make-over" effort at Wilkerson Memorial.

Several new graves were being opened during our visit, allowing us to determine that the soil in this area is dominated by a heavy red clay overlain by about a foot of brown loamy clay, probably representing an old plowzone or A horizon. These soils are nearly identical to the Cecil Series found in People's, Little Church, and East View cemeteries.

### Stones and Other Features

In the most general manner, as you scan Wilkerson, you get the impression that the cemetery has evolved from north to south, or more precisely from north to southwest. But, in fact, the cemetery developed simultaneously from at least two distinct areas.

One core area is that previously discussed and today taken over by woods along the north edge. In this area graves date primarily from the 1920s through the 1950s. The second core is on the opposite side of the cemetery, on its southern edge, where markers are found from as early as 1866, although the majority begin in the 1910s. This section may represent relocations from People's, or it may represent the earliest use of the East View complex thus far identified.

From these two separate points the cemetery appears to grow together, with most graves today being placed in the southwest quadrant of the cemetery, as it expands to the west. The central sections appear to have been used as these two core areas were filled. The large section south of the wooded fringe on the north edge began use in the 1920s. It was probably not abandoned

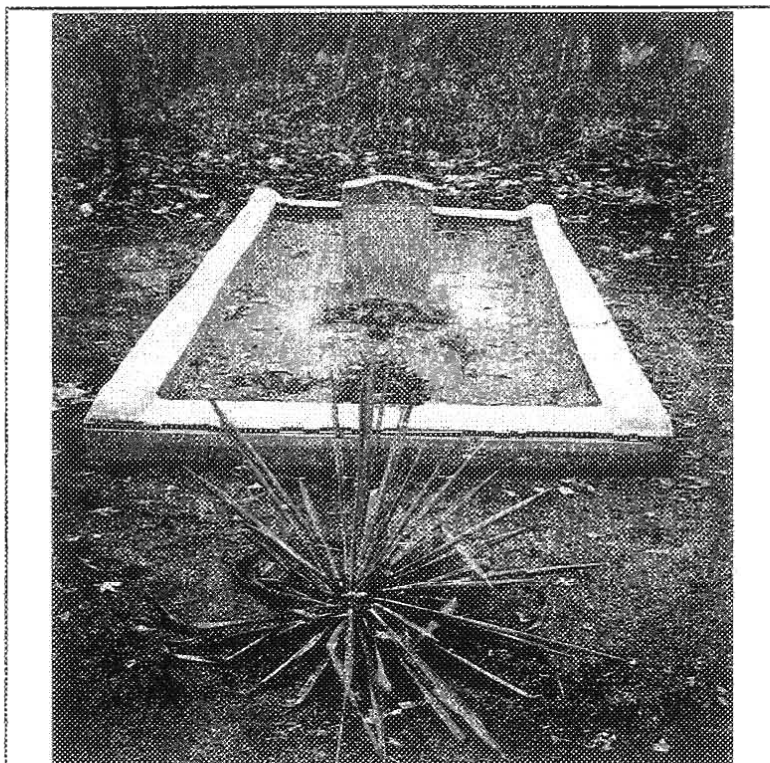


Figure 59. Reclaimed plot in the woods at Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery.

along with the rest of the area to the north because it still contained sellable plots — and as a result it has continued to be used into the 1990s. This section also represents one of the more formally laid out sections of the cemetery, with well defined aiseways and family plots of uniform size.

The next oldest section is that block south of Page Street and bordered by woods to the east. There burials began in the 1930s, continuing through today. The section north of Page Street and bordered by woods to the east was apparently opened in the 1950s, while the section south of Page Street and bordered by the very newest section to the west, wasn't opened until the 1960s. The small section in the southeast corner of Wilkerson Memorial appears to have a relatively short span of use, primarily in the 1980s and 1990s.

It doesn't appear that a great deal of planning went into the opening of different sections. Instead it seems like sections were opened based on perceived

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Table 12. Stones and Features Identified at the Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wilkerson metal plate and round concrete marker (1998)</li> <li>2. Granite plaque marker with ankhs and Africa (1998)</li> <li>3. Granite bench at family plot (1996)</li> <li>4. Concrete tabletstone, facing S, moved when new granite marker installed (1962)</li> <li>5. Whitewashed concrete (1963)</li> <li>6. Possible well, 4x4' brick feature covered by concrete cap with central hole</li> <li>7 Concrete lawn type for "Infant"</li> <li>8. Four rows of concrete lawn type markers, probably from most recent road relocation at People's</li> <li>9 Wood stake (once a cross), painted white, "GRANDMOTHER LOVE" in Sharpie on back</li> <li>10 Marble obelisk similar to examples at People's (1877)</li> <li>11. Concrete corner posts to plot</li> <li>12. Marble obelisk similar to examples at People's (1911, 1912)</li> <li>13. Concrete tabletstone, handwritten, similar to examples at People's (1912)</li> <li>14. Granite obelisk, MR carver (1913, 1921)</li> <li>15. Spanish American military marker</li> <li>16. Marble tabletstones, unusual shape</li> <li>17 Granite obelisk (1916)</li> <li>18. Marble tabletstone similar to style at People's (1878)</li> <li>19 Marble tabletstone similar to style at People's (1875)</li> <li>20. Marble tabletstone similar to style at People's (1886)</li> <li>21. Granite die on base, MR stonecutter (1876, 1906)</li> <li>22. Marble tabletstone similar to examples at People's (1880)</li> <li>23. Granite obelisk similar to examples at People's, probably MR stonecutter (1906)</li> <li>24. Marble tabletstone similar to style at People's (1879)</li> <li>25. Marble tabletstone similar to style at People's (1882)</li> <li>26. Wood stake with attached metal sign, surrounded by picket fence garden border (1996)</li> <li>27 Granite die on base, probably MR stonecutter (1891)</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. Concrete tabletstone with name cast backwards (1961)</li> <li>29. Marble tabletstone similar to People's (1868)</li> <li>30. Marble tabletstone similar to People's (1866)</li> <li>31. Wood stake with plywood nameplate painted black, white letters (1994)</li> <li>32. Marble tabletstone set in concrete (1981)</li> <li>33. Bunal vault slab (1975)</li> <li>34. Painted concrete block (1981)</li> <li>35. Marble obelisk and Spanish-American War military marker (1986, 1952)</li> <li>36. Bronze government flat marker (1975)</li> <li>37. Bunal vault slab (1997)</li> <li>38. Metal funeral home marker with scalloped concrete garden edging at head of graves (1944, 1996)</li> <li>39 White painted wood cross (1995)</li> <li>40. Cast concrete which once had nameplate attached (now missing)</li> <li>41. Small marble tabletstone similar to People's</li> <li>42. Concrete plaque marker, letters infilled with white paint</li> <li>43. Plot marked with iron pipe fence</li> <li>44. Plumbing pipes wrapped in alum. foil with hanging street signs as markers (1962, 1963)</li> <li>45. General military marker toppled (1980)</li> <li>46. Marble die and base</li> <li>47 Concrete family tomb, Murray</li> <li>48. Plot marked by white brick (1935, 1938, 1956, 1964, 1994)</li> <li>49. Concrete plaque marker (1959)</li> <li>50. Bunal vault slab</li> <li>51. Painted concrete tabletstone with scratched and painted letters (1932)</li> <li>52. Concrete cast as rounded triangle with matching footstone</li> <li>53. Rustic stone with brass plaque</li> <li>54. Marble obelisk (1943, 1946)</li> <li>55. Concrete plaque marker with oval concrete coping</li> <li>56. Fragment of industrial porcelain with hand carving (1946)</li> <li>57 General military marker (1998)</li> <li>58. Marble tabletstone with oval porcelain photograph (1976)</li> <li>59 Concrete tabletstone, hand scratched lettering</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

EAST VIEW CEMETERY

Table 13.  
Lodges Identified from Wilkerson Stones

Pre-1950 Stones

H.I.B.S. [sic], Blooming Zion Lodge 233 [275?]  
I.B.P.O.E.W., Majestic Temple No. 109  
I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77  
N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion Lodge 275  
N.I.B.S., Magnolia Lodge No. 116  
Masons  
Pastor's Aid Club, Mt. Olive Baptist Church  
Royal Social Club, Boys No. 44 Girls No. 43  
PS Club

Post-1950 Stones

Eureka Lodge No. 15  
I.B.P.O.E.W., Majestic Temple No. 109  
I.B.P.O.E.W., Royal Lodge No. 77  
N.I.B.S., Blooming Zion Lodge 275  
N.I.B.S., Magnolia Lodge No. 116  
N.I.B.S., Pnide of Petersburg Lodge No. 487  
Rosetta Tent No. 433, Petersburg, Va.  
Royal Ace Social Club  
Y.W.I. Club  
ZØB

market (ability to sell plots in a timely fashion) and effort that it would take to make the plots accessible (need for capital outlay). Of course, we have no oral history to support this — in fact, there seems to be virtually no corporate memory concerning the decisions to open, or close, any part of Wilkerson Memorial.

Just as Wilkerson Memorial exhibits a broad temporal range, it also exhibits a considerable range in types of monuments present (see Table 12 for selected monuments). There are number of styles seen in other African American cemeteries, such as dies on bases, government stones, concrete headstones, and concrete plaque markers. At least two marble headstones appear to be adapted from marble furniture tops. Some portions of the cemetery contain marble tabletstones virtually indistinguishable from what are seen at People's or Little Church. In many sections there are also well laid out family plots — at times outlined in granite or concrete curbing or at times using

commercial building products. As might be expected there are, especially in the newer sections, a great many lawn-type markers, placed flush with the surface. But there are also types that are rare elsewhere.

Wilkerson Memorial has the greatest concentration of burial vault slabs, often painted silver or blue (Figure 60). As is typical of this style, they usually contain not only a plaque with the individual's name and dates, but also a secondary plaque advertising the funeral home. Individual examples have been found in People's and East View, but neither cemetery has the number seen in Wilkerson. This cemetery also exhibits a larger than anticipated number of home-made markers, ranging from wood crosses made from 2x4s, to concrete with hand lettering, often painted or filled in.

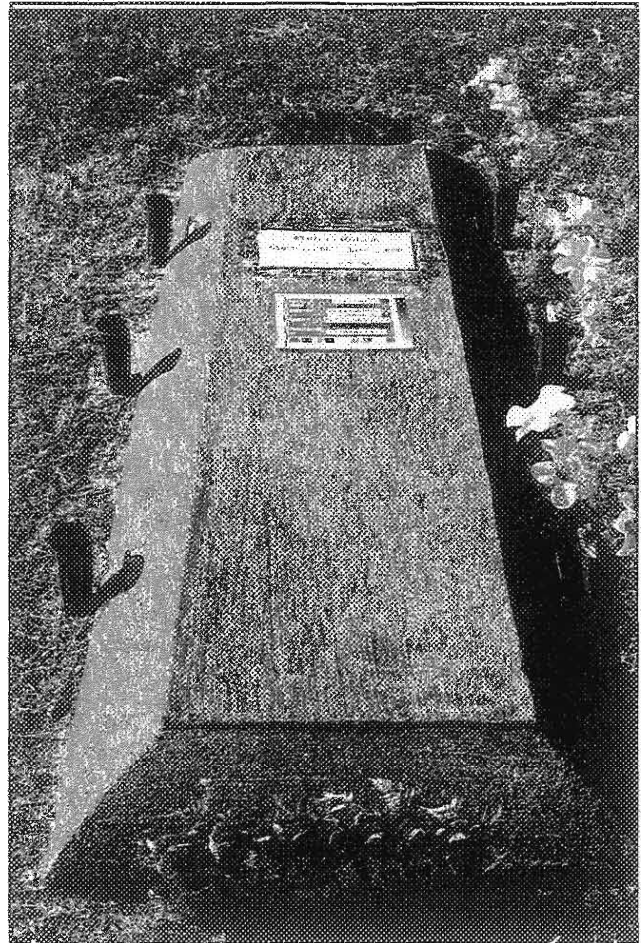


Figure 60. Burial vault (Monument 37) at Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery



There are also pipes, wrapped in aluminum foil, as well as two markers which appear to be made from street signs (with reflective green and white materials). Also present are a variety of markers using concrete blocks, lawn edging, and other commercially available products. Although many of these markers appear impoverished, they also appear to represent the importance of the grave having some sort of marker.

Flush mounted lawn-type concrete markers are found scattered throughout the cemetery, although there is a concentration of them in the southwest quadrant. These probably reflect burials moved from People's during the most recent highway widening.

One of the more unusual monuments (and the only one of its type in any of the cemeteries) is a whitewashed concrete enclosure (#47) for S.M. Murray (Figure 61). Partially above grade, it may extend below grade. It is also somewhat larger than an individual vault, but not as large as what is normally thought of as a family vault. Although this tomb has clear antecedents from along the Georgia and Carolina coastal plain, it seems an unusual feature in Petersburg.

It is also in Wilkerson Memorial where the only examples of photographs of the deceased are found mounted on the stones.<sup>12</sup> In one case the photograph is on a lawn-type marker protected by a brass plate which lifts up to reveal the image. In two other cases, oval

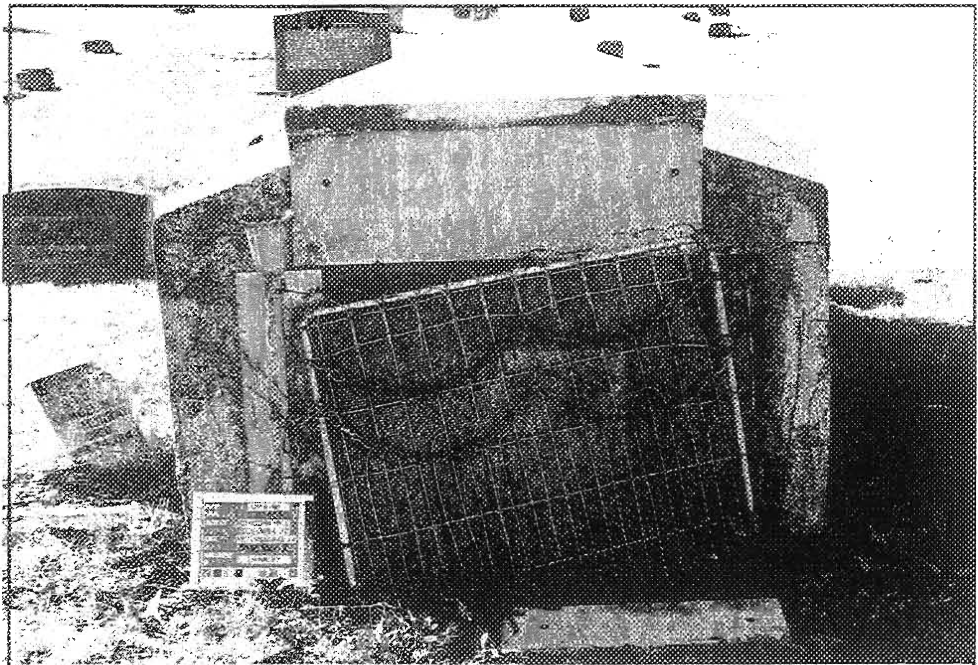


Figure 61. Family tomb (Monument 47) at Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery.

photographs are directly mounted on granite dies. It is likely that this is a more expensive option and probably reflects a greater expenditure. Their use may reflect an intense dedication to remembering the deceased as they were in life. But does the use of such photographs reflect an acceptance of non-traditional funerary decoration or might the photographs be a continuation of the cast heads — a representation of the deceased?

Although many of the monuments in Wilkerson Memorial are "modern," we were surprised that at the head of one stone there were a number of golf clubs, driven shaft first into the ground. This may be a modern example of grave goods — items to which the deceased was particularly attached being placed at the grave. More common are a variety of granite markers with more elaborate images intended to "personalize" the stone. One, for example, includes the continent of Africa with ankhs on either side. Another shows a golfer. These, being modern, are similar to examples in the more recent section of Blandford.

<sup>12</sup> Examples are also found in the more recent sections of Blandford, although these were not included in our survey.

Wilkerson Memorial appears to contain a somewhat diminished number of lodge and association stones as compared to the other studied cemeteries,

suggesting that through time their influence in the black community declined. Alternatively, grave sites in the East View cemeteries may have been more expensive, resulting in less use by lodges. Although the number of lodge stones remains relatively stable throughout the twentieth century, there seems to be some change in the types of organizations present, particularly with the introduction of a black fraternity after 1950. Table 13 provides a listing of lodges and associated groups by broad time periods.

Another difference between the Wilkerson cemetery and others in Petersburg is that there seems to be a somewhat weaker association with churches. Although there are at least five stones indicating the deceased was a "reverend," only four stones mention the names of specific churches — Mount Olive Baptist Church, Zion Apostolic, Metropolitan Baptist Church, and Gillfield Baptist Church (with this last example dating to 1886). One explanation may be the weakening of the church's influence in the black community. Or perhaps, through time, there was less need to announce one's church affiliation. It also may suggest greater variety in church affiliation. The truth is, at this point we simply don't know enough to appropriately interpret the meaning (if there is one) of this observation.

The range of stone cutters remains fairly high, with stones marked by Arlie G. Andrews, Burns and Campbell, Crowder, Hess-Trgard, Metalstone Corporation, Milton Rivers (MR), Pembroke, Ramkey & Murray, and C.M. Walsh. Unmarked are many concrete markers, at least some of which were apparently made by a Wilkerson employee.

Indicative of its name and ownership, of the 76 graves marked by funeral home plaques, 57% were Wilkerson burials, followed by William N. Bland & Son (with 20% of the burials) and Tucker's (or A.A. Tucker) with 19% of the interments. The remainder were isolated burials by Elliot Service, Jones Service, Turner-Bland, Jackson Memorial Funeral Home, and Shirley P. Johnson Funeral Home.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Petersburg's African American Cemeteries

This study has covered a tremendous amount of ground — Petersburg's early burial grounds, the city's African American funeral directors, the historical development of several benevolent organizations, the importance of lodges and benevolent societies in the black community, the interconnections between the funeral directors and the ownership of cemeteries, the variety of mortuary art and styles found at black cemeteries, and more.

It is essential that we once again emphasize that this study should be considered preliminary. As will be discussed below, there is much more to be explored in Petersburg and throughout Virginia concerning African American cemeteries and their use. Moreover, we must emphasize to our readers that our focus was only on African American cemeteries — our investigations did not extend to the Catholic or Jewish cemeteries in Petersburg. Perhaps most importantly, our basis of comparison with other African American cemeteries is very limited and we have therefore often confined ourselves to statements concerning what we have seen in Petersburg, without attempting to detect broader implications.

It was not our goal to explore — or explain — the African American attitude toward death and burial (assuming that such a task is even possible). Certainly there are recurring themes in the research of others that are worth noting. For example, Mechal Sobel observes that, "Formal funerals were marks of respect for the dead and status for the living; accordingly, they were elaborate and expensive affairs" (Sobel 1979:200). Morris J. McDonald notes that there are clear ethnic differences between black and white funerals, observing that, "The rewards to the living black relatives for having put a loved one 'away nice' usually supersede the rationality" of economic choices (McDonald 1973:145). And we have noted that there is a strong thread of "being forgotten is worse than dying," that

requires elaborate commemorative actions. We have found that many of these threads are intricately, albeit imprecisely, woven into the tapestry of Petersburg's African American history.

While this study has documented tremendous variation among Petersburg's five African American cemeteries, it also reveals broad trends and similarities. What is perhaps most significant is that none of the cemeteries are what you might call "overtly" African American. That is to say, at a distance, perhaps at the entrance, none of them could immediately be recognized as having some ethnic or cultural affiliation or peculiarities that would set them apart from the dominant white paradigm. From a distance they all appear more white than what some scholars have led us to believe black cemeteries should look like.

They all show evidence of one or more of the broad traditions of cemetery development; they all reveal styles of monuments that form what might be considered the main stream of American mortuary art; and they all have a strong adherence to the family plot as a central theme.

Evidence of seashells was found at only one cemetery on one tomb — and the use of shells is tied as clearly to white graves as it is to African American graves. Evidence of grave goods — excluding flowers and similar commercial motifs — is also almost non-existent. Use of pipes and other types of posts or unusual devices for headstones is equally limited.

Yet, when the cemeteries are carefully explored certain features become clearer and may help us to better understand the ethnicity of these burial places. For example, the use of concrete monuments and burial vault slabs appears more frequent at African American cemeteries than it does at white cemeteries. Although this *may* be tied to poverty, it may also be evidence of a different cultural norm. Perhaps most importantly, there are styles of concrete monuments — such as the

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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slender pickets, the barbed shafts, the upside-down arrows, the African head, and the stones with odd-shaped insets — that appear unique to the African American cemeteries.

We have also found that “Mizpah,” whatever its surface and deep meanings may be, appears to be used much more frequently in Petersburg’s African American cemeteries. As Sobel (1979) recognizes, black preachers synthesized the African and Christian world views, creating a faith that spoke to the black person at several different levels. Mizpah may be an outward manifestation of this, combining the concept of God watching over us while we are parted with the concept of eventual freedom from tyranny (see also Masamba and Kalish 1976).

Perhaps most readers will be drawn to the prevalence of lodge stones — which we have suggested as being worthy of being considered a distinctive type of marker — in the studied African American cemeteries. Our historical research helps to draw together a great deal of varied research on benevolent societies — often pointing out the very mixed quality of previous studies (see, for example, Basye 1919; Browing 1937, Drake 1940; Drake and Cayton 1958; DuBois 1907, Ferguson 1937, Palmer 1944; Walker 1985; Weare 1973). We believe, nevertheless, that these organizations, often devoted to ensuring the care of the sick and the burial of the dead, were integral to African American urban society

Yet Petersburg seems to stand out as especially active. We would, of course, have greater confidence in this conclusion if our sample were larger, or our understanding of the roots of the phenomenon better grounded. What we do know, however, is that the prevalence of lodge stones in Petersburg’s African American cemeteries is far greater than we have found in other African American cemeteries in the lower southeastern states.

Returning to the issues of status and ethnicity for a moment, we have found that status has been very difficult to determine. We initially thought that the different cemeteries in Petersburg, which seem to overlap in use, might reflect different status. This does not seem, however, to be the case. We have found the

same families burying in all five. We also see the same lodges using all of the cemeteries (suggesting that certain lodges were not tied specifically to certain cemeteries). It seems more likely that the choice of which cemetery to use was tied to which burial place was “in vogue” or was being best maintained at that particular time, or perhaps even to which undertaker you used. In other words, each cemetery appears to have had its “ups and down” throughout its period of active use and specific cemeteries seem more closely tied to particular undertaking firms over different periods of time.

This question of status is raised by Sobel, who observes that, “class differentiation in black church organizations was a very significant factor” (Sobel 1979:191). Yet he also realizes that in Petersburg the situation may have been different since, “Many free blacks remained in Gillfield [after the 1810 split with the formation of Elam Baptist Church in Charles City by free blacks], and the positions of leadership were formally divided between slaves and free men” (Sobel 1979:190). Whether this blurring of social status and class differences is unique to Petersburg can’t be addressed at this juncture.

Our ability to compare ethnic differences that we believe to occur in Petersburg is also limited. The only other Virginia study we have identified that provides comparative data is the 1981 thesis by Conrad Goodwin where six (three black and three white) Lancaster County<sup>1</sup>, Virginia church graveyards were compared. All of the churches were established about the same time period and all evidenced approximately the same range of use (based on extant stones).

Goodwin found a number of differences between the black and white cemeteries. For example, far more cement burial vaults are found in black cemeteries than in white graveyards; black cemeteries exhibit more cement, marble, aluminum, iron, and wood grave markers than do white cemeteries; and real flowers are more common at black graveyards, while plastic flowers are more often found in white cemeteries.

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<sup>1</sup> Lancaster County is on the Chesapeake about 70 miles northeast of Petersburg

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

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Although we don't have the benefit of a good examination of any white cemeteries in Petersburg, Goodwin's observation, although focusing on rural cemeteries, appear consistent with our findings in the various African American cemeteries of Petersburg

Goodwin may be on less solid ground, however, when he attempts to explain some of these differences. For example, he takes a cultural materialist approach, observing that economics plays a deterministic role and concluding, "high status individuals within both ethnic groups have more expensive grave markers" and "affluent blacks are more like affluent whites than they are like other blacks" (Goodwin 1981:120). This, of course, assumes that grave markers indicate economic status and that the amount of money spent on the marker reflects the family's economic condition and status in the community. It also assumes that one is able to distinguish "high status individuals" independently of their markers.

We are far less ready to accept this approach than many other colleagues. There is, for example, ample evidence in the documentary and oral histories to suggest that, for whatever reason, blacks would deprive themselves in order to provide "appropriately" for funerals, coffins, and monuments. While an elaborate monument might indicate greater wealth than other families, it might also indicate greater success (or effort) in demonstrating adherence to this cultural practice. We are also beginning to wonder if the monument might not have been secondary to the funeral itself. In other words, if there were limited financial resources, the family tended to spend their money on the funeral itself, forgoing an expensive marker, or perhaps any marker at all.

Moreover, we doubt that status in the black community can be equated only with financial condition. Status can be ascribed or acquired and it need not be associated with financial wealth.

In addition, the seeming adoption of white practices does not necessarily mean that some blacks are "more like whites" than their fellow blacks. The adoption of cultural values and norms is complex and can have multiple explanations. In fact, might it not be as much a case of convergence as adoption?

Although we are sensitive to the efforts to further the study of ethnicity, we are also very cautious in our concern that the available data will be stretched too far — and in the process that any conclusions will be misleading, if not incorrect. Perhaps the major benefit of this study is that it allows us to identify and develop avenues worthy of additional research. These are briefly outlined in a concluding section.

### The Future of People's Cemetery

With the acquisition of People's Memorial Cemetery, the city assumed a variety of obligations. Two of the most significant involve future use of the cemetery and the cemetery's maintenance. These are clearly important issues to the African American community in Petersburg and as a result we have spent considerable effort to lay out appropriate plans of action.

It is clear that whatever mapping there may have been for People's, what is extant today is inadequate to determine who is buried where. We have prepared a detailed map incorporating all of the available data and have also prepared a detailed name index for those individuals who we have reason to believe are, or were, buried at Peoples.

With so much uncertainty, the number of deeds for People's lots (Figure 62), and the general failure of families to record their own plots, it is prudent for the city to officially close People's and make plans for alternative burial locations.

Allowing continued burials at People's is courting disaster. Sooner or later an interment will disturb an earlier (probably unknown) burial. Although this is currently happening at adjacent Little Church Cemetery, the city should not allow it to occur at People's.

Just as significant are the issues of long-term maintenance. People's Cemetery requires considerable attention, including emergency conservation and stabilization, as well as dedicated maintenance. Both of these are obligations by the city to ensure the preservation of the site. They go far beyond occasional beautification projects (such as a new fence along Crater

# Deed

No \_\_\_\_\_

This deed made this 11th day of May 19 49 by and between the Colored Cemetery Association, party of the first part, and ~~John & Mrs. May Thomas~~ party of the second part

Witnesseth:

That in consideration of \$ 50.00, receipts of which is hereby acknowledged, the Colored Cemetery Association, party of the first part, doth grant unto the said ~~John May Thomas~~ this deed to lot number 18 in section number N. A of the People's Memorial Cemetery, situated on the west side of Petersburg, Virginia. The said lot is in what was formerly known as City Property. It is further agreed that the party of the second part doth hereby agree to pay annually for the upkeep of the said lot the sum of \$ 3.00.

By Deed from City of Petersburg, Va

Colored Cemetery Association

Party of the Second Part

Thos H. Brown President

By ~~#####~~ Secretary

Thos H. Brown Keeper

*John May Thomas*

Signed and delivered in the presence of \_\_\_\_\_

*of People's Memorial Cemetery*

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Figure 62 Example of twentieth century deed for a family plot in People's Memorial Cemetery from the Colored Cemetery Association, Thomas H. Brown, President and Keeper.

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

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Road) or short-term preservation projects (such as nominating the site to the National Register) and will require a line-item, yearly budget. In other words, the city has assumed a large responsibility and must now begin planning, budgeting, and implementing.

It may be that discretionary funds will need to be used, or that funds will need to be moved from other departments. Regardless of the approach, the requirements of People's Cemetery cannot be overlooked and steps focusing on stone conservation and increased maintenance must be undertaken immediately.

### Recommendations for Future Research

#### **Toward a Better Understanding of Petersburg's Cemeteries**

Information should be developed about the disposition of burial grounds known to have been destroyed: why did it happen? Under whose ownership? What became of the bodies? Investigation of this topic, for example, might reveal the definite location of the plot purchased by the Benevolent Society of Free Men of Color in 1818. It would certainly help us better understand the historical attitudes toward burial grounds and society's obligations to care for them.

Little Church, East View, and the historically black section of Blandford all contain graves that predate the first deeds that refer to cemetery use. Additional research might reveal how early these burial grounds were actually used, and under what arrangement. Were these properties being used as cemeteries with or without the owner's permission and knowledge? Were deeds prepared only when the cemetery use precluded any other use?

Research should continue with studies of St. Joseph's and B'rith Achim, then a consolidated report can be written about landscape patterns, gravemarkers, fences and artisans in all the city's historic cemeteries. At present it is impossible to truly understand the historic — or ethnic — trends since we haven't been able to explore all of the variation which is certainly present.

#### **Toward a Better Understanding of the City's African-American Community**

In general, too little has been published about late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Petersburg. While the focus on the city's antebellum history is understandable, it leaves unfinished the rich history of the city's African American population.

Any surviving records and minutes of the local chapters of fraternal orders (Masons, Elks, Odd Fellows), benefit societies (NIBS, YMSLIC, etc.), and other clubs would be extremely valuable. Women's benevolent organizations are especially obscure.

Nineteenth century census returns should be consulted to supplement oral history and city directory information about undertakers. Records of the 1894 Hustings Court case by which Thomas Brown gained control of the Peoples Memorial Association would also illuminate the rivalries and cooperations among competing funeral directors and provide valuable information on the business practices of the area's black entrepreneurs.

Moreover, beyond the black self-help or insurance organizations, what roles did predominantly white businesses play? For example, did any businesses other than Seidenburg/American Suppliers foster the sort of mutual support that is demonstrated by inscriptions on several gravestones?

Thomas Brown's records from the 1920s and 1930s (on microfilm, Petersburg Museums) show that many of the people he buried were born in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. Bright-leaf tobacco agriculture first entered the Pee Dee in the 1880s, and still dominates its economy. Had the South Carolina natives who died in Petersburg learned tobacco operations at home, then moved to Virginia for better opportunities? Were they the children of Petersburg natives who had moved south with the industry in the nineteenth century and then returned home? Why were there so many Pee Dee-born laborers in Petersburg? The answers would shed light on economic migration and on Petersburg's early twentieth century labor forces.

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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### Research Specific to People's Cemetery

We have not located a photograph or detailed drawing of the iron fence placed along South Crater Road in 1906. Additional efforts to discover one (likely a long-term project) should be undertaken. This may involve scanning newspapers, making additional appeals to the public, and beginning the arduous task of scanning business records of firms known to have been selling fences in Virginia. Why was this fence not replaced in 1943? We have not, for example, pulled all of the highway department correspondence. Nor have we scanned all of the newspapers of the period. What became of the remnants?

It is also likely that considerably more detail could be obtained on Petersburg's monument suppliers — both those who worked in stone and those who prepared concrete monuments. We have not, for example, attempted any stylistic study of the various monuments. Nor have we researched the stone cutters that provided markers to the black community. Also of interest is any additional information on the concrete artisan(s) responsible for the unusual barbed spears, slender pickets, and the African head monument found in East View Cemetery.

### Moving the Research into a Wider Framework

Although our observations here are focused on additional research in Petersburg, it is difficult to distinguish between local and regional work. In other words, to truly understand Petersburg, it will be necessary to explore what is also happening in Charles City, Portsmouth, Newport News, Richmond, and other areas of Virginia. Only through a regional (or at least much broader) perspective will many of the questions raised during this research be addressed.

A study of cemeteries, particularly African-American, near Petersburg in Dinwiddie and Prince George counties would provide perspectives on those inside the city. Historic relationships among families, undertakers, beneficial associations, landowners, cemeteries and gravemarkers were never controlled by municipal boundaries. Such an approach would help determine the degree to which urban vs. rural practices account for observed differences.

This study should also be expanded to incorporate other areas. Are lodge stones as common in these other cities as they are in Petersburg? If so, why are they as prevalent in Virginia as they are, but seemingly rare from the Carolinas? If they are not as common in other Virginia cities, why are they so prevalent in Petersburg — what made that city different? This will, of necessity, include much research in the roles of lodges and beneficial societies in these other areas, which will likely require not only the compilation of oral histories, but also extensive scanning of local newspapers, branching off into research concerning local African American undertakers and the broader themes of business and society

To understand the meaning and significance of African American cemeteries in all of their complexity is a daunting undertaking and it will require far more effort than simply looking for Africanisms or embarking on the trail of ethnicity and status. This is a topic which is overdue and deserves far more scholarly attention.

Mizpah



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# APPENDIX 1: INVENTORY OF PEOPLE'S CEMETERY

## INDEX

- \* names from previous forms not assigned a grave number
- @ 1943 Crater Road burial removal from People's Cemetery
- + reported owners in 1942 condemnation proceedings
- ¶ 1967 Crater Road burial removal from People's Cemetery
- § Thomas H. Brown map of People's Cemetery

<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
A.W	138	Banks, Mary E.	186
Adams, Maria	287	Barber, James Jr.	247-1, 247-2
Agraves	¶	Barber, James S. Sr.	538
Alexander, Alise	72A	Barber, Luluemia	541
Allen, James	354	Barber, Mattie C.	246
Allen, Katy	262	Barber, Willie	246
Anderson	¶	Barham, Mary	+
Anderson, Caroline	132	Baskerville	§
Anderson, Elizabeth	340	Bass	¶, §
Anderson, J.	¶	Bass, Rebecca A.	32C, +
Anderson, J.H.	+	Bass, Shadrach	32C
Anderson, John Edward	218	Bates, Daisy A.	248
Archer, Sophia	30G	Baugh, Robert	24A
Armstead, Thomas	143	Baugh, Roger N.	51B
Armstead, William Gustavus	395	Beasley, Mary A.	343-2
Artis, Leah	462	Beasley, Delia	84A1, 84A2
Atkins, William	195	Bell	71, ¶, §
Austin, Josephine	+	Bell, Ida K.	+
Avery	§	Benn, Mark	382
Avery, Edward D	332	Bennett, Albert	15A
Avery, Emma	220	Bennett, Mary E.	15A
Avery, John D	334	Bernard, Hill	162
Avery, Leoma Williams	230	Berry, Benjamin L.	13F
Avery, Mattie L.	219	Berry, Bessie A.	13C, 13I
Avery, Robert Alexander	333	Berry, David L.	13H
B.D	517	Berry, Helena Ruth	13C, 13D
Bailey, Connie E.	53A	Berry, J.K.	+
Bailey, James Albert Jr.	296	Berry, John	13C, 13E
Baker, Robert A.	¶	Berry, Thomas B.	92
Baker, Wm.	136	Bevard	8
Balthrope, Annie B.	305	Black, Elizabeth	227

APPENDIX 1. INVENTORY OF PEOPLE'S CEMETERY INDEX

<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
Black, Rev. L.A.	40A, 40B	Butcher, Charles Thomas	19A
Blackwell, Annie	30D2	Butcher, Samuel	224
Blackwell, Annie E.	30D1	Byers, Walter E.	530
Blackwell, Margaret	276	Byrd	§
Blakes, Lorraine	245	Byrd, Anthony	360A
Blakes, Louise Celestine	518	Byrd, Anthony D	360B
Bland	§	Byrd, Harriet	360A
Blow, Clara	+	Byrd, James H.	452B
Bolling	¶	Byrd, Lester C. Jr.	¶
Bolling, Capt. R. Charor	260	Byrd, Sarah	452A1, 452A2,
Bolling, Martha A.	216		+
Booker, James M.	371	Byrd, Virginia C.	¶
Bough	§	Campbell, Robert	+
Bowling, James R.	¶	C.L.	480
Boyce, Virginia H.	39C	Care	45D
Bovd	45C	Carroll, Mary J.	13C, 13G, +
Boyd, George E.	45A	Carroll, William F	364
Bradd, Richard, Jr.	50B	Carter	@
Bragg, Richard	50A1, 50A2	Castelle, John T	204
Branch, Ella J.	422	Castelle, John Thomas Jr.	101
Brewer, Julian	*	Chambliss, Indiana	83C
Brewer, Mabel	*	Chambliss, Thomas C.	83C
Briggs, A.	137	Chavers	+
Briggs, Calvin	113	Cheaves, William H.	107
Briggs, Robert H.	48A	Chissell	¶, §
Briggs, Sarah	137	Clark, Delsey	213
Broadnax, Christine V	146	Clarke, W.F	+
Brooks	¶	Clary, [Ma]thew	405
Brooks, J.H.	+	Clifford Freeman	11A
Brooks, Nellie	431A	Cogbill, Mary	50A2
Brown	¶, §	Cogbill, Pattie	28A
Brown, Alice S.	176	Coleman	¶
Brown, Betty	*	Coleman, N.B.	+
Brown, Mrs. J.B.	+	Coleman, Nellie	232, 375
Brown, Josephine	32B	Coleman, Sarah Jane	311
Brown, Mary	+	Coleman, Thomas	375
Brown, Mother	65A	Collins, Emma Harrison	39D
Brown, Nannie	275	Cook	¶
Brown, Rev. S.A.	+	Cook, Hadassah L.	13A, 13C
Brown, Ruby M. Pollard	353	Cook, John G.	240
Brown, Thomas H.	232, +	Cook, Margaret A.	527
Brown, Virginia Lee	172	Cooke, Maude	376
Brown, William	133	Copeland, James A.	83A
Brown, Willie	449	Cornish, Ella Braxton	49A
Bruke, H.C.P., Sr.	+	Cornish, Maj. David B.	49A
Burrell, Maynard	159	Cornish, Richard Jr.	49B
Burton, Annie L.	¶	Cotton, James Allen Jr.	299

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
Couretton, Thaddeus	26A	Davis, Margaret	501
Cousin	@	Davis, Nannie	336
Cox	¶	Davis, Nelson	54F
Cox, Anna	62B	Davis, Nelson B.	189
Cox, Bertha	62C	Davis, Parthenia E.	54C
Cox, David	281	Davis, Pathermia	+
Cox, Father	62E	Davis, Sarah Scott	188
Cox, Henry	62F	Davis, Susan	42A
Cox, James T	62A	Davis, William N.	42B,54B
Cox, Mother	62G	Dennis, Beatrice C.	279
Cox, Sarah	62D	Diamond, Estelle	+
Cov, Austin	223	Dickerson, Althea H.	74C
Crawley, J.C.	+	Dickerson, Paul	74D
Crawley, Marie	18A2	Diggs, Matilda	27G
Crawley, Marie G. Grant	18A1	Dilworth, Lilly	5A
Crenshaw, Fannie P	446	Dodson, Callie	428
Crocker, Thomas H.	212	Dozier, Rosa	331
Crossingham, Richard	¶	Drake, Cassie	475
Crown	@	Dugger, John R.	94
Crowder, Addressia	29C	Duglis, Jane	199
Crump, McH.	263	Duncan, Helen Jones	19B
Crump, William H.	263	Duncan, Samuel Garfield	19C
Crumpler	§	Dunn, Genevieve Cloyd	83B
Crumpler, Corne	27F	Durffey, Mary E.	345
Crumpler, George S.	27E	E.L.S.	7
Crumpler, Gracie V	27A	Eason, Edward	284
Crumpler, Infant	27F	Edwards, Bessie Q	35C
Crumpler, John R.	528A	Elam, Joe Jr.	98
Crumpler, Pattie E.	27D	Elder, Patsy	241
Cryer	51	Ellis	¶
Curtist, Rebecca F	478	Ellis, Inex Roxlin Mabry	315A
Dabnev	¶	Ellis, James Thomas	315A
Dabney, Benj.	37A	Ellis, Thomas	222, 315A
Dabney, Emma L.	37A	Ells, Phil	154
Dabney, Nelson W	271	Epps, William	363
Dabnev, Robert	+	Evans, Leonidas	467
Dabnev, Rose	+	Faison, Eva B.	¶
Dammond, Harriet	492A	Ferguson, Joanna	174
Danials	¶	Ferguson, Thomas E.	370
Dameffield, Carrie	+	Fields	@
Davis	8,54D,169	Fields, Charlotte	494
Davis, B.	§	Fields, Maria	419
Davis, Bernice	198	Fields, Charlotte	494
Davis, Elwood	472	Fields, Rebecca	32D
Davis, George C.	54E	Fields, Martha J.	493
Davis, Henry J.	161	Fisher, Clarence Wilcox	153
Davis, Irvin	¶	Fisher, Willis	105

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
Flavs, Julia	6	Griffin	@, ¶, §
Flutz, Wm. McKenlv	89A	Griffin, Ann	¶
Folks, Worthier	228	Griffin, Elizabeth D	78A
Foster, Walter C.	¶	Griffin, Henry W	78B, +
Foulkes, Emma L.	108	Griffin, Willie	+
Foulkes, Jennie	109	Grgg	@
Fox, Lucille P	21B	Grgg, William A.	¶
Fox, Lucille Eleanor Penister	21A	Hall, Katie Wilson	*
Franklin, Thomas B.	+	Hall, Mattie E. Wilson	44A
Freeman	¶, §	Halliday, Rufus	298
Freeman, Lucy A.	11A	Hamlin, Edna Barber	540
Freeman, Othia	273	Hammie	§
Fuller	¶	Hammie, Carrington	23A2
Fuller, Geo. Barbee O	140	Hammie, Carrington P	23A1
Fuller, Marie	+	Hammie, M.A.	23C
Gaines, Nelson	197	Hammie, Penn	23B
Gallee, Eliza	342	Hampton, Frankie	79B
Garrison, Lucy	510	Harcum, Clara E.	184
Garrison, Robert	258	Hargrave, Peggy	130
Garv, John	¶	Hargraves, Alice V	507A
Garv, Math[xxx]	207	Hargraves, Mary Ann Elizabeth	131
Gee, James Henry	201	Harmon	323
Gholson, Percy W	308	Harmon, Rebecca	253
Gibbons, Robert F	14A	Harper	@,74G
Gibbs, Mattie	+	Harper, Alice P	74A, +
Giles, Willie	129	Harper, Fred Jr.	74H
Givens, Mary	¶	Harper, Fred Sr.	74I
Glover, Father and Mother	17A	Harper, Grace	74B
Goffiny, Benj.	269	Harper, Samuel	74E
Goffiny, Susie	489	Harper, Wyatt J.	58A
Gooding, Green	483	Harns, Adasher	451
Goodwyn, Laura	482	Harns, Alice	514
Gordon, Alex.	67	Harns, Doola	
Gordon, Esther Rose	¶	Harns, H.L.	226
Graham, Wm.	116	Harns, John H.	304
Grant, Isaiah	18C2	Harns, V.A.	59
Grant, Isaiah Jr.	18B	Harnson	@
Grant, Isaiah Sr.	18C1	Harnson, Birdie	79A
Graves	@, §	Harnson, Cornelius P	39B
Graves, J. Franceno	225	Harnson, George	¶
Graves, Willie	166	Harnson, Henry O	+
Green	@	Harnson, Nancy	¶
Green, Amanda	436	Harnson, O.H.	+
Green, Bettie	76A	Harnson, Robert	*
Green, Nancv	167B	Harnson, Sarah Royall	39B
Green, Peter	167A	Harnson, Virginia	*
Greene, Lewis T	80B	Hatch	*

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

<u>Name</u>	<u>Bunal #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Bunal #</u>
Hatch, Mary	112	Johnson, Annie C.	+
Hawkes	@	Johnson, Bernard A.	63E
Hawkins, Allen L.	214	Johnson, Cornelius (News)	497A
Hawkins, Esther C.	¶	Johnson, Eddie	355
Henderson, Julia	35B	Johnson, Gertrude	38C
Henderson, William O	295	Johnson, L.A.	+
Hennicks, Elizabeth E.	+	Johnson, Lucrehus	263
Henry, Ella	104	Johnson, Major W.H.	232
Hill, Capt. J.E.	232	Johnson, Maria F	268
Hill, James E.	38A	Johnson, Mary F	55A
Hill, Rose Zella	38D	Johnson, S.	404
Hines, James	¶	Johnson, Thomas C.	374
Hite, Marie	+	Johnson, Virginia	63D, 63E
Homens, Sara	291	Johnson, Wilma C.	497A
Horsley, Tom	180-1, 180-2	Johnson, Wm.	@
Hoston, Link	302	Jon.s [sic], Nathan	254
Ho[ ]s, Mary	44C	Jones	@
I.M.	293	Jones, Ada	*
J., N.A.	30F	Jones, Alberta	75A
Jackson	@, §	Jones, Archer Ellis	506
Jackson Camp Memorial	*	Jones, Caldonia	+
Jackson, Charles A.	393	Jones, Cpl. Nathan.	*
Jackson, Charlie M.	325	Jones, Edward	178,22G
Jackson, Dollie	181	Jones, Edward L.	221
Jackson, E. Iona O.	33C	Jones, Elizabeth	¶
Jackson, Ella	106	Jones, Emmett	445
Jackson, Emanuel	33A	Jones, Fredric	285
Jackson, Emma	¶	Jones, George O	217
Jackson, Lucy Parker	+, ¶	Jones, Hallie Mae	22H
Jackson, Maj. W.F	33B	Jones, James	282
Jackson, Mary W	306	Jones, John	127,151
Jackson, Nancy A.	30G, +	Jones, John H.	41E
Jackson, Richard Henry	194	Jones, Julia A.	285
Jackson, Robert	¶	Jones, Lucinda K.	16A
Jackson, Thomas H.	¶	Jones, Margaret	270
Jackson, Wm. T	324	Jones, Margaret V	2G
James	+	Jones, Mary J.	+
James, Alice Hargrave	+	Jones, Moses	16A,75B, +
James, Sarah Jane	257	Jones, Rose	259
Jarrett, Joe	319	Jones, Roland A.	38E
Jefferson, Mary T	125	Jones, Susan A.	41C
Jennings, Nora	+	Jones, W W	+
Jenkins	477	Jones, William A.	252
Johns, Emma J.	261	Jones, William	359
Johns, John W	515	Jones, [ ] Mae	42C
Johns, Willie Ben	¶	Jons, Pearl Halsey	77D
Johnson	@, ¶, 458	Jordan, Armstead	30B

APPENDIX 1. INVENTORY OF PEOPLE'S CEMETERY INDEX

<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
Jordan, Harriet	30A	Martin	63A
Jordan, James	¶	Martin, Alease H. ("Doll")	74F
Jordan, James Jr.	¶	Mason	¶
Jovner, Elvee	¶	Mason, Alice Dabnev	35D
Joyner, T	§	Mason, Edward	152
Kennard	¶,71	Mason, Edward S	155
Kerr, Henry H.	335	Mason, Fanny	432
Kerr, Melvin	221	Mason, Mrs. Melvin	+
King	§	Mason, Rebecca	330
King, Frances Warrington	200B	Mason, Rebecca A.	203
King, William Henry	200A	Mason, Willie	529
Lamax	¶	May, William E.	¶
Lancaster	@	Matthews, Lewis L.	79C
Lancaster, Lucy	82B	McCoy, Elmira F	77B
Lane, F.E.	+	McCoy, Sylvia Halsey	77E
Lanier, Martha Ann	149	McCoy, Ulysses S. Jr.	77C
Law, C.W	¶	McCoy, Ulysses S. (M.D.)	77A
Lee, D T Rosa E.	171	McCray, Frank	267
Lewis, Charlie	464	McCray, Harriet	67
Lewis, Dallas	341B	Mchrump, Robert	*
Lewis, Earl	309	McLaughlin, R.V	381
Lewis, Emily	464	McQuillon, Moses	128
Lewis, Ethel	+	Merritt, John	123
Lewis, Louise	465	Miller	*
Lewis, Luther	280	Miller, Rev. Emmett E. (B.D.)	37B
Lewis, Susie	+	Miller, Terry Wayne	103
Lewis, William H.	144	Miller, Thomas	249
Liggins, Eliza	¶	Mitchell	¶
Lives, Richard	210	Monroe, Aron	179
Lund, S.	470	Moody, Father	244
LW	409	Moody, Levy	126
M.A.E.	402	Moody, Martha	244
M.A.L.	392	Moody, Mother	244
Mabry, Carne Elizabeth Bell	315A	Moore, Ed	272
Mabry, Joe	139	Moore, Eunice E.	511
Mabry, Joseph Edward Jr.	315A	Moore, Rev. J. Leo	368
Mabry, Joseph Edward Sr.	315A	Morgan	§
Mabry, Joshua	142-1	Morgan, John W	25C
Mabry, Joshua H.	142-2	Morgan, Julia A.	25B
Mabry, Leroy Alexander	315A	Morgan, Minnie W	303
Mabry, Sandy	141	Morgan, Peter G.	25A
Macklin, Carrie	+	Morgan, Sarah	25D
Macky	@	Morris, Rev. A.M.	429
Maclin	§	Morris, Ruth	429
Magnum	¶	Morse, Chastine	¶
Manuel, Lizzie	160	Morse, John R.	208
Manson	§	Moss, Mary A.	¶

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
Moss, Nathaniel P	170	Perkins, Viola E.	76B
Muchison, Rev G.L.	457	Perry, Rosa	448
Murry	¶	Plumber, Lucinda	+
Murry, Ellis	§	Plummer	@
Myers, Marv B.	+	Plummer, Henry Otis	460
Mvrick, Alexander	54A	Plummer, Percy	461
N.B.	27C	Pollard	72B, §
Nelson, Marv P	147	Powell, Hattie	+
Nichols	@	Powell, Henry W Sr.	423
Nichols, William	66A	Preston, Mattie	+
Nichols, Wm.	63C	Price, Erma	+
Nickols, W.S	+	Price, Hartwill	479
Norman	¶	Price, Keziah	243
Norris	¶	Quives, Mary Ann	120
Omens, Sarah	291	Raines, Leroy Edward	¶
Owens, Phillips	¶	Randolph, Montgomery	¶
Pace, Rosa Brooks	175	Randolph, Rebecca	¶
Page, Willie	292	Reaves, Pinkey Green	68A
Palmer, George B.	+	Reynolds, Jammie A.	484
Palmer, Red	¶	Rhodes, Lillie B.	121
Parham, Charles	327	Richardson, Charlie	202
Parham, Lvdia	328	Ricks	§
Parham, Martha	148	Ricks, Clifford L.	29A
Parham, Sercie	406	Ricks, Ella V	29B
Parker, A.	80D	Roberson, Sarah Ann	361
Parker, Marv E.	232	Robertson, Elizabeth	183
Patterson	§	Robinson	§
Patterson, Adam D	9A	Robinson, Daughter	34D
Patterson, James Bosy	115	Robinson, David Scott	34A
Patterson, Lena	+	Robinson, Eliza Scott	34B
Patterson, Lula E.	69B	Robinson, Elnora	301
Patterson, Rebecca Penister	356C	Robinson, Father	34E
Pecram, Violet	341A	Robinson, Iris Lewis	34F
Pegram, Celia	376	Robinson, James	283
Pegram, Charles A. Sr.	376	Robinson, Leslie H.	237
Pegram, Lucy	376	Robinson, Martha	242
Pegram, Richard	376	Robinson, Mother	34C
Penister	§	Robinson, Rebecca	238
Penister, Eleanor P	21A	Ross, Susie T	297-1, 297-2
Penister, George	356B	Roudett, William	¶
Penister, George A.	21A	Roundtree	¶
Penister, Lillian Louisa	21A	Rowlings, Elizabeth	413
Penister, Thomas A.	356A	Royall, Thomas C.	290
Peniston, Thos. E.	165	Ryan	@
Penn, Marv A.	250	Scott	@, ¶
Perkins, Nannie D	76B	Scott, Georgia	+
Perkins, Susie	233	Scott, John Peter	35A

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
Scott, Maggie	503	Stokes, B.A.	*
Scott, Robert	187	Stokes, G.A.	41B
Scott, Thomas	490	Stokes, Hattie	41A
Scott, William Thomas	*	Stokes, Lucy	*
Seabrook	¶	Stokes, S.A.J.	*
Sewart, W.M.	114	Stward, Williame [sic]	329
Shelton, Marie Baskerville	85A	Sydnor, Jennie	21C
Skidmore, Anthonv	52A	Sydnor, Junus	21C
Skidmore, H.U	52B	Sykes, Alex	93
Skidmore, Lillie	52A	Sykes, Fannie	387
Skidmore, Mary	52A	T., Eliza	30C
Smith	§	Taliaferro, Charlie	122
Smith, Agnes M.	12B	Tate, Mrs. Augustua L.	+
Smith, Blanche B.	316	Tate, R.L.	1
Smith, Ed	215	Taylor	@
Smith, H.V	369	Taylor, Ed	82A
Smith, Helen D	+	Taylor, Marv	+
Smith, James	99	Tazewell, Bennie	124
Smith, John	415	Terry, George Arthur	158
Smith, Joseph	¶	Thomas	¶, §
Smith, Reuben	274	Thomas, E.T	+
Smith, William Robert	64B	Thomas, Emma	*
Smith, William T	12A	Thomas, John	211
Smith, W.J.	56	Thomas, Mary	*
Snead, Emanuel	443	Thompson, Herbert L.	229
Spencer, Alice Watson	234	Thompson, John Willis	206
Spencer, Willie	307	Thornton, Mary S.	51A
Square, A.	53B	Thompson, Sara J.	+
Stainback, James	52A	Thorp, Peter	91-1
Stallings, Alberta	191	Thorpe, Peter	91-2
Starke, John W	111	Thrift, Octavus	492B
Starke, Joseph W	96	Thurman	¶
Stephens, William	398	Thurman, Annie	4A
Stevens, Capt. J.A.C.	232, 417	Thurman, Richard	4B
Stevens, C.B.	117	Todd, Laura A.	192
Stevens, Mary A.	118	Tompkins, Albenia	266
Stevens, William N.	119	Tompkins, Lucretia	266
Stevenson, Peter P	134, 135	Tompkins, Mary J.	491
Steward, Susie	435	Tompkins, Rebecca	265
Stewart, Edward A.	38B	Tompkins, Robert J.	266
Stewart, Jas.	168	Tompkins, Ruth	266
Stewart, Mary A.	196	Tucker	@, +
Stewart, Wm. E.	196	Tucker-Miles	§
Stith, Ernest H.	83E1, 83E2	Tucker, Cherry J.	205
Stith, Helen M.	83E2	Tucker, William H.	¶
Stith, William Lee	83D	Turner, Bessie	¶
Stokes	*	Turner, George	¶



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<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Burial #</u>
Turner, Thomas	¶	Williams, Caroline	341C
Valentine	@	Williams, J.	95
Valentine, D C.	+	Williams, Maria	145
Valentine, Margaret B.	173	Wilson, Christine	+
Vaughan	¶	Wilson, Emma	44B
Vaughn, Albert	386	Wilson, Francis G.	+
Vaughn, Eathell	505	Wilson, John	28B
Vaughn, Gertrude L.M.	10	Wilson, Percy W T	44E
Vaughn, Martha	185	Wimbush, Pansy Patnce	64A
V[x]king, Effie	285	Wimbush, Rudolph	64A
W C.	471	Winfield, James	157
W G.J.	357	Wood, Adlena	+
Wagoner, Samuel Holmes	300	Wooded, Caroline	110
Walker	§	Word, Adelaide P	9C
Walker, Ann	193	Word	9B
Walker, B.	22C	Word, Fletcher H.	9A
Walker, Charles M.	264	Wvnn, Anna W	455
Walker, Emmett	¶	Wvnn, Charles H. Jr.	454
Walker, Freeman	182	Wynn, Charles H. Sr.	456
Walker, Irving	*	Young	¶
Walker, Jane	22D,90		
Walker, L.C.	22A		
Walker, Martha M.	513A		
Walker, Queen V	102-1, -2,-3		
Walker, S	22E		
Walker, Simon	22F		
Walker, William	44I		
Warsham, Rosa	¶		
Watkins, Annie	251		
Watkins, Ollie	¶		
Watkins, D.	*		
Webb, Capt. Pleasant	232, +		
Wells	§		
Wells, Mary Ella	48A, +		
Wells, Napoleon B.	48A		
Wells, Lottie W.B. Young	48A		
Wells, Theresa F	48A		
West	¶		
West, Mrs. C.	+		
White, Herbert Lee	294		
White, Mary	235		
White, Sarah Boyd	45B		
Wiggins, A.	22B		
Wiggins, John	499		
Wiggins, Mariah	498		
Wilkerson, J.M.	232		
Wilkins, Elizabeth	*		

APPENDIX 1. INVENTORY OF PEOPLE'S CEMETERY INDEX

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# APPENDIX 2 MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORMS AND NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900-b  
(June 1991)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission  Amended Submission

### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia

### B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Development and Use of African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, ca 1820-1942

### C. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah Fick

organization Historic Preservation Consultants date June 1999

street & number Post Office Box 1112 telephone 843-723-1746

city or town Charleston state SC zip code 29402

### D. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 2: MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia

Section E Page 1

county and state

=====  
E Statement of Historic Context

Development and Use of African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, ca. 1820-1942

The historic African-American cemeteries in Petersburg reflect the long history of the city and its environs. From its earliest colonial settlement, Petersburg was home to free whites, enslaved blacks, and a separate class, "free persons of color." After the Civil War until some time in the mid-twentieth century, former slaves, antebellum free blacks, and their children continued to comprise a community separate in many ways from white-dominated society. African-Americans typically lived in their own neighborhoods, worked in segregated occupations, went to school and church separately from whites, and were buried in all-black cemeteries.

Much of the above-ground evidence of Petersburg's early black history has been lost with the destruction of buildings. The extant cemeteries help to illustrate the growth and development of a distinctive African-American community from ca. 1820 to ca. 1942. They are proof of the mutual assistance that was possible only in a group whose members, despite rigid segregation, participated in the economic life of the surrounding city.

Additional Information

DRAFT

A number of cemeteries in Petersburg, white and black, have been destroyed over time. Those that remain are in two contiguous complexes at either side of South Crater Road. On the east side, from north to south are Blandford, St. Joseph's, B'rith Achim, and East View. On the west are Little Church and People's Memorial (itself made up of several separate cemeteries). All these properties retain their essential physical integrity and associations with nineteenth and twentieth century Petersburg. East View, Little Church, and People's are significantly associated with the city's African-American community.

Very few surviving buildings are associated with Petersburg's large antebellum free black and slave population. There are slave quarters in the Poplar Lawn Historic District (National Register), at Battersea (National Register), and in less well-documented locations scattered throughout the city. The pre-Civil War Watson-McGill Tobacco Factory is significant as the employer of many blacks, both slave and free. Only a handful of buildings, such as the Jarratt House and the Esther Gilliam House, are known to have been owned by or independently constructed by blacks.

In addition, there are several African-American churches, including Gillfield Baptist and First (Harrison Street) Baptist, first established before the Civil War whose congregations built new edifices in the late nineteenth century. Other important

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buildings, such as Oak Street AME2 and St Stephens Episcopal, were constructed for churches that organized after the Civil War There are also several late-nineteenth century residences in various states of repair These post-Civil War buildings, of various types and styles, provide evidence that African-Americans in Petersburg participated in the same architectural fashions that affected white society

The same trend is clear in the city's cemeteries. The influence of the nineteenth century rural cemetery and lawn-park design aesthetics, as well as the twentieth century memorial park movement, can be seen in the improvements and additions made by African-Americans to their privately held or community-owned burial grounds The selection of styles, material and ornamentation of many gravemarkers also show tastes consistent with the American mainstream.

Just as many of the historic gravemarkers in Petersburg's black cemeteries show strong relationships with the contemporary mainstream, there are also a substantial number that are unlike any that have been identified in white cemeteries The style of several concrete markers, probably locally made, is a unique adaptation of the classic obelisk or pedestal design. Other markers, referred to as "lodge stones", commemorate individual participation in the wide array of benevolent and fraternal orders active during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Historical Background

From at least the early nineteenth century, Petersburg's relatively open labor and entrepreneurial opportunities drew many free blacks to the city The census of 1810 found 310 free persons of color By 1830, alongside 3,440 whites and 2,850 slaves there were 2,032 free blacks. Many of them found employment side-by-side with slaves in Petersburg's rapidly-growing tobacco factories Other free people established themselves as craftsmen, tradespeople, entrepreneurs, and property owners By 1860 about one-third of Petersburg's 811 free Negro families (composed of 3,225 individuals) owned property <sup>1</sup>

Regardless of wealth or education, however, blacks could not enter white circles of influence, and were further tied to their own community by the unwillingness of white-managed associations to serve colored people. To participate in civic and community improvement, blacks had no choice but to organize independently of whites Therefore, the free black community created its own societies to care for the sick or impoverished, and to manage burials

<sup>1</sup> Bushey, Mary Ellen, Ann Creighton-Zollar, Lucious Edwards, Jr , L. Daniel Mouer and Robin L. Ryder, "African Americans in Petersburg: Historic Contexts and Resources for Preservation Planning, Research and Interpretation" (Petersburg: Department of Planning and Community Development, 1994), pp. 22-24 Luther Porter Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860* (NY: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1942), *passim*.

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Private fraternal organizations, including secret ritual societies and mutual benefit associations, have traditionally had memberships based on ethnic and cultural affinity. Working classes, white and black, were particularly interested in providing themselves a respectable funeral or gravemarker. This became a primary role of benevolent organizations.

Particularly among slaves, a group granted little dignity by the surrounding society, the funeral had developed into a prominent religious ritual and social event, providing a rare opportunity to acknowledge an individual's life.<sup>2</sup> Yet many urban slaves and free blacks, even churchgoers, were laid in a potter's field, disposed of at the least cost to the public. In cities such as Petersburg the benevolent societies and strong churches that helped create an African-American community made it a priority to acquire a suitable burial ground for its members.<sup>3</sup> No other region of the county had such a concentration of lodges and other mutual aid organizations as the Middle Atlantic South, notably the cities of southeastern Virginia.<sup>4</sup> Before the Civil War nearly all the large towns in Virginia had benevolent financial societies, many of them the owners of cemeteries.<sup>5</sup>

**DRAFT**

Most lodges paid burial funds raised by assessments on members at the time of a death or illness. For example, the 1852 constitution of Petersburg's Beneficial Society of Free Men of Color defined benefits that would be drawn from the Treasurer's Account: lump sums of \$5 to \$15 to survivors; weekly payments of \$1.50 to sick members or \$1 monthly to members' widows. Each member was entitled to "a square in the place of interment," and each member was expected to attend every members' funeral.<sup>6</sup> The cash structure of such an organization could only be supported by a steady membership of healthy, employed individuals such as the free black community in antebellum Petersburg.

After the Civil War, tobacco factories continued to provide important employment for Petersburg's African-Americans, whose wages were a substantial support for other black craftsmen and businesspeople. Undertaking was an especially attractive field, in part because a successful African-American undertaker or funeral director could earn a comfortable living in a trade mostly free from white interference.

<sup>2</sup> David R. Roediger, "And Die in Dixie," in *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 22, 1981.  
<sup>3</sup> David R. Goldfield, "Black Life in Old South Cities" (pp. 146-147 in Edward D. C. Campbell, Jr., ed., *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), pp. 146-147.  
<sup>4</sup> Joel Walker, *The Social Welfare Policies, Strategies and Programs of Black Fraternal Organizations in the Northeast United States 1896-1920* (Ph.D. dissertation, NY Columbia University, 1985), p. 103.  
<sup>5</sup> James B. Browning, "The Beginnings of Insurance Enterprise among Negroes" in Carter G. Woodson, ed., *The Journal of Negro History* XXII, October 1937.  
<sup>6</sup> *Constitution, Rules and Regulations of the Beneficial Society of Free Men of Color, of the City of Petersburg and State of Virginia, as revised on the 2nd day of August A.D. 1852* (Special Collections, Virginia State University Archives)

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Before the rise of the career funeral director, some professions were associated with funerals and burial. At least by 1858 Richard Kennard, a free man of color, was operating a hack (horse and carriage for hire) business in Petersburg.<sup>7</sup> Involvement in funerals was probably one reason he joined nine other men in the purchase of cemetery land in 1865. Another of the purchasers, Thomas Scott, also established a funeral home which became one of the most successful in the city. Under his successor Thomas H. Brown, the business lasted into the late 1940s. Its longevity is exceeded only by Wilkerson Memorial Funeral Home, still a prominent enterprise in Petersburg.

Tobacco manufacturing boomed in the late nineteenth century, and in 1908 five large tobacco factories employed 5,000 people making plug tobacco for export.<sup>8</sup> Most occupations were racially segregated, and there was a color line within the tobacco industry. White labor was chosen for machine-driven work, and African-Americans for manual tasks such as stemming and twisting that predominated in the plants devoted to dark tobacco in smoking, plug, twist and leaf form. After World War I, although American and European markets abandoned dark tobacco in favor of lighter tobacco and cigarettes, plug makers developed new export markets in Asia. Petersburg's stemmeries continued to provide jobs to African-Americans until after World War II.<sup>9</sup> Because mutual-benefit groups could not withstand substantial unemployment among their members, the persistence of these jobs was largely responsible for the survival of Petersburg's African-American lodges long after they had faded in importance in other cities.

The mid-1870s saw a peak of fraternalism in America. In an era without government benefits or even health insurance, lodges offered aid to all members and death benefits to their survivors, small sums that prevented starvation or homelessness. Between 1880 and 1900 hundreds of beneficial societies offering fellowship, cheap insurance and initiatory ritual were established. For many of these, the secret rituals were the glue that kept their members together.<sup>10</sup> For others, membership was an aspect of social networking. Officers were selected from the leaders of church and community, and ambitious people found lodge membership an aid to advancement in business and public life.<sup>11</sup> Fraternal-beneficial societies and burial associations also helped to create the first major black financial institutions, the most rapidly successful being those that combined mystic fraternalism with finance. The best-known was the

<sup>7</sup> Jackson, *Free Negro Labor*, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> William D. Henderson, *The Unredeemed City: Reconstruction in Petersburg, Virginia, 1865-1874* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1977), pp. 95, 115, 147. Petersburg, Virginia, "The Cockade City," *Its Industries, Commerce and Finance* (Seaboard Air Line Railway, nd, ca. 1909).

<sup>9</sup> Charles L. Perdue, Jr., ed. *The Negro in Virginia*, compiled by workers of the Writers Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Virginia. Winston-Salem NC. John F. Blair, Publisher, 1994), p. 339.

<sup>10</sup> Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 9-11.

<sup>11</sup> Alrutheus A. Taylor, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington DC: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), p. 65.

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International Order of St. Luke and its Penny Savings Bank, which achieved tremendous success under Maggie Walker of Richmond.<sup>12</sup>

The 1880s, a decade of expanding industrial employment and wages, are considered to have been the high point in black cultural life in Petersburg, but the interest in benevolent and fraternal organizations lasted several more decades. In 1898 there were at least twenty-two mutual benefit societies, alongside numerous secret and fraternal lodges <sup>13</sup>

Most if not all of these organizations are inactive today, their buildings demolished or converted to other uses. The most tangible reminders of the clubs are the individual memorials they placed on the graves of their members. An important reason for supporting large funerals was to ensure that friends would not be forgotten, the individual lodgestones have become significant memorials to the clubs themselves

As early as 1873 and as late as 1948, grave markers in Petersburg's African-American cemeteries bear masonic emblems. Although fraternal and beneficial organizations were as active in the 1870s and 1880s as in the 1920s and 1930s, the greatest number of lodgestones bear twentieth century dates. While many stones from the earlier period may have been lost over time, it seems that the custom of providing membership markers was more popular in the latter era. Besides Masons, other groups prolific in placing markers were Elks lodges, the Order of St. Luke, National Ideal Benefit Society, Young Men's Industrial Benefit Association, and Blandford Industrial Benefit Club.

The African-American Cemeteries

Petersburg's earliest African-American cemeteries have been destroyed. As early as 1794 a "colored burying ground" was designated on Walnut Street, and from an early date some blacks were buried within Blandford Cemetery or the adjacent potter's field. In 1818, at the same time that the City of Petersburg was purchasing the old Blandford Churchyard as a public burying ground for whites, trustees of the Benevolent Society of Free Men of Color paid \$100 for a small parcel of land to become a burial ground,<sup>14</sup> doing for their own community what the government did for its citizens. The exact location of the Benevolent Society's Blandford-area plot, like that of a separate cemetery in the Pocahontas section of Petersburg, has been forgotten. No above-ground traces of the sites remain. Two later graveyards in the West End, near the poorhouse and hospital, were obliterated in the 1970s, with the known Confederate soldiers being relocated to Blandford.

<sup>12</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 244-245.

<sup>13</sup> Walter B. Weare, *Black Business in the New South. A Social History of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company* (Urbana. University of Illinois Press 1973), p. 11

<sup>14</sup> City of Petersburg Bustings Court, Deed Book 5, p. 306 (in Jackson, *Free Negro Labor*, p. 162)



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Although intended for whites, Blandford initially permitted the burial of a slave in the plot of the rare white family who wished it, and there was a potter's field section on the fringe of the cemetery. Then in 1837, reflecting a wave of repressive state laws, a city ordinance forbade the burial of blacks in Blandford Cemetery. Shortly afterward, in 1840 a group of 28 men bought a one-acre tract, the first deeded parcel of today's Peoples Memorial Cemetery. In 1865 the cemetery was enlarged, again by the purchase of land by a group of African-American men, and eventually expanded to the south to include land owned by undertaker Thomas Scott. By about 1915 his successor Thomas Brown was generally recognized as the manager of Peoples Memorial Cemetery, a consolidation of the several separate tracts.

Ownership of city's other two extant historically African-American cemeteries became vested in Wilkerson's Funeral Home. James M. Wilkerson purchased Little Church in 1883, from about 1899, he was the superintendent of Providence (part of Peoples); by 1905 he was also managing East View Cemetery, which he acquired in 1911. In Petersburg at least, an undertaker's ownership or management of a cemetery was key to the survival of both the business and the site.

Preliminary Statement of Significance

African-American cemeteries outside the core city of Petersburg provide important illustrations of the activities carried out by individuals and groups of like-minded people in order to provide for the decent burial of members of their community. They are significant under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning, Ethnic History-Black, and Social History. They may also be significant under Criterion C in the area of Art. Those that are proposed for listing retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feelings and association.

The end of the period of significance, ca. 1942, marks the first substantial alteration to the boundaries of People's Memorial Cemetery and Little Church Cemetery. This involved widening South Crater Road to encroach on the east side of both cemeteries, and the addition of a reinterment tract to the west side of People's Memorial. East View Cemetery was also affected by the project, as some of the disinterred bodies were relocated to East View. A second widening of the road ca. 1968 also encroached on People's Memorial and Little Church, and resulted in reburials both at East View and People's Memorial. These changes were not so dramatic as to have destroyed the essential integrity of any of the properties. The affected area was only a small fraction of the total cemetery area, and the relationship of the properties to each other and to the road was not noticeably changed.

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Proposed African-American Cemeteries Multiple Properties Submission

People's Memorial Cemetery, Petersburg  
Little Church Cemetery, Petersburg  
East View Cemetery, Petersburg

Properties Already Listed in the National Register and Contributing in Whole or In Part  
to the Proposed Historic African-American Cemeteries Multiple Properties Submission

-- Blandford Cemetery, Petersburg

DER File 123-110, Listed 1992

F Associated Property Types

Property type: Historic African-American Cemeteries

Subtype: Churchyard cemeteries  
~~None are documented in Petersburg~~

Subtype: Plantation slave cemeteries  
~~None are documented in Petersburg~~

Subtype: Private family burying grounds  
~~None are documented in Petersburg~~

Subtype: Mass graves related to historical events  
~~None are documented in Petersburg~~

Subtype: African-American community cemeteries situated outside the core city  
Three are documented in Petersburg

Justification of Criteria

Properties in Petersburg that conform to the property type "Historic African-American Cemeteries" all represent the subtype "African-American Community Cemeteries Situated outside the Core City " They are eligible under Criteria A and/or C, and under Criteria Consideration D, in that they derive their primary significance from their association with historic events or distinctive design features

The period of significance begins ca. 1820, the era of the earliest gravestone (1821, in Blandford's "Negro section") found in any of Petersburg's extant African-American cemeteries. Other burial grounds are known to have been used before 1820, but none are extant. The end of the period of significance is 1942, the date that marks the city's acquisition of a one-acre tract of land in anticipation of a road-widening project that would impact the east side of People's Cemetery and Little Church Cemetery

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Description

Cemeteries originally situated outside a core city typically comprised at least one acre. The terrain may include areas of level ground, slopes or hills, and there may be wetlands or intermittent streams. The land was acquired for the purpose of establishing a cemetery, which was then laid out as plots or squares, commonly planned for eight graves, each square assigned to a family and filled gradually. Some individual plots were also used, which would have been spaced and aligned in a similar fashion to those in squares. A few burials may have pre-existed the designation of the larger area that included them, but their number is small compared to the numbers of grave plots that were laid out to surround them.

The land acquired for a suburban cemetery may have been farmland, pasture, or cutover woods lot, and was not heavily forested. The general appearance of the cemetery is grassy, with scattered trees and some smaller ornamental shrubs in family plots. To make maximum use of the land, new areas were not set aside for tree planting. Some existing specimen or shade trees may have been retained; others that have grown up are typically encroaching on a deeded square. The historic layout may or may not have included sufficient walkways or drives, and those that were planned may have been abandoned. It can be expected that some burials have occurred in areas intended as paths, and some paths or even drives established over burials.

Which plots would be deeded first depended upon the rate of demand, and the pattern of planning. Where a complete grid was imposed early on, families could select sites scattered about the property. In those cemeteries, the earliest burials are not in adjacent squares. Other cemeteries were treated in sections, each laid out when all the squares in an earlier section had been assigned. In those cemeteries, plots can be seen to be grouped according to the date of their earliest burial. In either case, however, the time period represented by each square may be long, and some nineteenth century plots still await twenty-first century burials.

Families had the option of enclosing their square with fencing or coping, but this was not always done. Over time, deeds and memories have been lost, so that plot boundaries have not been physically maintained. Squares may be indistinguishable from individual burials or unused areas.

Landscaping, fencing, and markers bearing the name of the deceased are conventional grave care customs that vary according to time, place, economics, and spiritual values. Some of the characteristic features of cemeteries outside the core city of Petersburg - grid organization and family members grouped together - are common to Blandford, the historic municipal cemetery, and to the African-American cemeteries, which were historically privately owned. Other characteristic elements of the African-American cemeteries - irregular transportation networks, abandoned maintenance of plots, fences or coping, loss of information about burial locations - have resulted from the lack of a stable repository of records.

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As with the general layout of the land, the extant historic gravemarkers reflect the cultural values of the community over time. Their typical placement at the head of the grave, and also limited penetrometer testing, seem to indicate that most burials were oriented west to east. This pattern is common throughout Western European and American Christian tradition, and may also be compatible with some West African cultures. Their designs, materials, and inscriptions generally reflect the attitudes of contemporary society toward marking burials, with some demonstrating the strong emotional attachment of family or church members to the deceased. There are also some concrete markers unlike any that have been documented in the city's white cemeteries. These indicate some divergence by African-American consumers from the mainstream of marker design. One very notable way in which Petersburg's black community traditionally demonstrated remembrance was by placing small "lodge stones" to commemorate membership in a fraternal or mutual-assistance organization. These markers testify to the importance that fraternal and benevolent societies placed on mutual reliance, community, and remembrance.

The significant character-defining elements of African-American cemeteries situated outside the core city of Petersburg are the grid organization into regularly-sized family plots, many with concrete coping; the casual drives and walkways, the few specimen trees in a grassy landscape; the predominance of middle-cost gravestones with standardized iconography and text; the numerous examples of "lodge stones," small markers placed to commemorate membership in beneficial or fraternal organization, and the juxtaposition of two opposite types of grander markers, mainstream-America marble obelisks and uniquely crafted concrete pedestals.

These elements are closely associated with the history of the African-American community in Petersburg. They are related to the early acquisition and layout of the properties by mutual benefit societies or successful undertakers; the importance of economy over substantial landscaping; the artistic and cultural values the community shared with white Petersburg and the American mainstream; and the high premium placed on mutual self-help and remembrance in an ethnically separate working-class community.

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Significance

Cemeteries that qualify for registration with this nomination are important resources that provide information about the African-American community in Petersburg, ca 1820 - 1942 Under Criteria Consideration D, a cemetery is eligible if it derives its primary significance from its association with historic events or distinctive design features. Those that qualify with this nomination reflect various aspects of black ethnic history in Petersburg, and through their location, grave markers, and landscape plans they illuminate the commonalties between Petersburg's two separate cultures. They represent broad patterns of attitudes or behavior in an ethnic group whose impact on the larger community was significant but is not well documented in other resources They qualify under Criterion A, and should be listed under the areas of ETHNIC HERITAGE BLACK, and SOCIAL HISTORY Some may also qualify for listing in the area of COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Those that retain a collection of well-made commercial markers of granite or marble, or distinctively crafted concrete markers of less-common designs, also qualify under Criterion C for listing in the area of ART.

Registration Requirements

**DRAFT**

To qualify for registration, properties must have been used for burial of African-Americans during the period of significance, ca. 1820 - ca. 1942 The key registration requirements are a grid organization into regularly-sized family plots; casual drives and walkways; a few trees in a grassy landscape; the predominance of middle-cost gravestones with standardized iconography and text, and the juxtaposition of other types of markers: well-carved marble obelisks, uniquely crafted concrete pedestals and pulpit stones, and the small "lodge stones" that reflect identification with a membership group that crossed family and church lines

To be listed, properties must retain their essential integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feelings and association. The boundaries may have shifted over time, but the area presently recognized as the cemetery will be a generally open ground, with grassy cover, scattered trees or shrubs, and uncurbed walks or driveways. Individual or family plots may feature a variety of fencing or curbing Burials and above-ground markers may continue to be added up to the present, but earlier gravestones or unmarked graves will predominate. The proportional number, size and scale of the new features must not be so imposing as to overwhelm the overall historic appearance. Some of the historic gravestones may be broken or show evidence of repairs, and as a group they will show a range of effects from aging They will not have been subjected to a wholesale cleaning and repair effort (which besides giving a fresh new appearance may well damage stones drastically)

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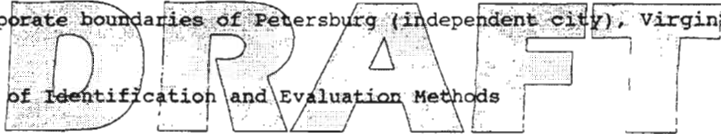
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Maintenance of cemeteries varies For them to retain integrity, any modern buildings or service structures must be small-scale and simply designed Obviously modern fencing should not be present along the principal street frontage. There may be overgrowth, but brush will be periodically cut to avoid forestation Rubbish produced during lot-clearing activities, and fragments of historic material, should be confined to the edges of the site.

Ongoing maintenance and new burials may have some negative effect on historic cemeteries, but these factors are very important to their persistence. Continuity of use promotes identification with the property as a meaningful part of the community, and encourages the preservation of the burial ground as the resting place of individuals who are personally remembered.

G. Geographical Data

The corporate boundaries of Petersburg (independent city), Virginia



E. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property listing of African-American cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia, is based upon a 1998-99 survey of African-American cemeteries in the City of Petersburg conducted by Chicora Foundation, Inc., and Historic Preservation Consultants, under the auspices of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the City of Petersburg The research goals were to collect historical information concerning the extant African-American cemeteries in Petersburg, to conduct a reconnaissance of the historically black section of the National Register-listed Blandford Cemetery, to generally survey two that are privately-owned (Little Church and East View), and to thoroughly map and survey People's Memorial Cemetery, which has been owned by the City of Petersburg since 1984 Associated goals were the preparation of a preliminary preservation plan for People's Memorial, recommendations as to National Register eligibility, and preparation of a draft Multiple Property Nomination cover sheet for those considered eligible for listing The survey report written by Michael Trinkley, Debi Hacker, and Sarah Fick, *The African-American Cemeteries of Petersburg, Virginia Continuity and Change* (Chicora Foundation Research Series 55, Columbia SC, 1999) provided information for the National Register documentation

A second goal was to explore the feasibility of using the information developed in Petersburg to develop a context for evaluating historically African-American cemeteries throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Background research into plats, deeds and newspaper records, supplemented by "African Americans in Petersburg: Historic Contexts and Resources for Preservation Planning, Research and Interpretation" (a 1994 report prepared by Mary Ellen Bushey et al for

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the City of Petersburg under an earlier cost-share grant from the Department of Historic Resources) provided a preliminary context for evaluating properties in light of Petersburg's rich African-American history. The properties to be surveyed - People's Memorial, Little Church, and East View - were identified for the consultants by the City of Petersburg's Museums Manager and Director of Planning, so that a general reconnaissance survey was not necessary. Instead, at the same time that research began, fieldworkers began site surveys of the cemeteries. Their findings as to the layouts of the grounds, marker types and dates, and plot organization directed the intensive research into the historic contexts most closely related to the visible features of the cemeteries. These were determined to be employment and associational patterns within Petersburg's African-American community, cemetery ownership and management, and contemporary trends in other American cemeteries. Based on their significance within the context of Petersburg's African-American history, and their retention of sufficient integrity to express their associations with the context, all three of the surveyed properties were recommended as eligible by the consultants.

Upon review of the completed survey and research, the properties in Petersburg related to the property type "Historically African-American Cemeteries" were found all to be one subtype, "Cemeteries situated outside the core city." Other subtypes known to exist in Virginia, including plantation cemeteries, private family cemeteries, churchyard cemeteries, and mass graves related to historical events, are not represented in Petersburg. Therefore the properties nominated under this cover sheet are limited to the single subtype.

I Bibliography

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APPENDIX 2: MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia  
county and state

Section I Page 13

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THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

NPS Form 10-900  
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "n/a" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name People's Memorial Cemetery

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number South Crater Road  not for publication

city or town Petersburg

state Virginia code VA county Petersburg code 730 zip code 23803

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 2: MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS**

People's Memorial Cemetery Petersburg, Virginia  
 Name of Property County and State

**5. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property</b> (Check as many boxes as apply)	<b>Category of Property</b> (Check only one box)	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b> (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building	Contributing <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Noncontributing</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u> _____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u> _____ objects
		_____ Total

<b>Name of related multiple property listing</b> (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)	<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register</b>
<u>African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia</u>	<u>0</u>

**6. Function or Use**

<b>Historic Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	<b>Current Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>Funerary/Cemetery</u>	<u>Funerary/Cemetery</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

<b>Architectural Classification</b> (Enter categories from instructions)	<b>Materials</b> (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>n/a</u>	foundations _____
	walls _____
	roof _____
	other: <u>Stone: Marble</u>
	<u>Granite</u>
	<u>Concrete</u>

**Narrative Description**  
 (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)  
 See Continuation Sheets

**THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG**

People's Memorial Cemetery

Petersburg, Virginia

Name of Property

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development

Ethnic Heritage Black

Social History

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1840 - ca 1942

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Dates**

1840, 1866, 1880

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

Architect/Builder



**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets

**9 Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 2: MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS**

People's Memorial Cemetery Petersburg, Virginia  
 Name of Property County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 8.17 acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	--	_____	_____	3	--	_____	_____
2	--	_____	_____	4	--	_____	_____

\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sarah Fick  
 organization Historic Preservation Consultants date June 1999  
 street & number Post Office Box 1112 telephone 843-723-1746  
 city or town Charleston state SC zip code 29402

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title City of Petersburg  
 street & number 134 North Union Street telephone 804-733-2308  
 city or town Petersburg state VA zip code 23803

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127 and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

People's Memorial Cemetery  
name of property

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia  
county and state

Section 7 Page 2

is surely higher, but how high is unknowable. One early-twentieth century observer claimed that there were 8,852 burials between 1892 and 1943<sup>1</sup> an apparently high figure that is in fact consistent with a reasonable death rate among Petersburg's African-American population, which averaged 12,280 from 1890 to 1940.

The original plan of the cemetery has not been documented, but surviving records indicate that plots were sold to members of beneficial societies on the basis of family squares. Based on remnant portions of coping and fencing, family plots were probably around 17' X 17', following the general scheme of the rural cemetery movement of the early nineteenth century. Many of the family plots are surrounded by low concrete coping or retain some remnants of former coping. There are also a few plots with remnant iron fencing. Only two markers have been found that represent permanent recordkeeping: an urn-shaped column on concrete base marked "A SQUARE", and a tablet noting "Henry H. Kerr's Square."

An improvement program of 1926 called for the establishment of a grid plan of drives and walkways, but little of the general landscaping was carried out. Remnants of a horseshoe-curved driveway entering and exiting to South Crater Road can still be seen, but the principal drive through the center of the cemetery appears to be a twentieth century connection from South Crater to St. Andrews Road.

The cemetery remained in active use for generations, so there is a broad range of marker types and styles. Some grave markers include a lodge or church affiliation along with the names and dates of the deceased. There are only a few obelisks or pedestal tombs, but those that remain are of good quality and were obviously costly. Over half the monuments are headstones or dies-in-socket, in traditional marble or granite styles with square, rounded, or segmented tops. These range in date from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Some are finely carved, with lengthy inscriptions, and more than twenty were identified as having been made by C. M. Walsh or Burns and Campbell, two well-known white Petersburg firms. Others are concrete, probably locally crafted. Although the makers have not been identified, several of the stones are clearly from the same hand.

Among the headstones are "lodge stones," small (12" high, 8-12" across) tablet stones, with flat or rounded-arched tops. Lodge stones typically supplement a more customary grave marker. Lettering is simple, with the lodge affiliation usually above the name or initials of the deceased, dates may be full or merely the year of death. Many are cut in marble, some of them with Burns and Campbell's mark. Lodge stones from the 1930s and later also include lawn-type markers of similar size.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas H. Brown, letter to members of People's Memorial Cemetery Committee, 10 October 1931 (People's Cemetery files, City of Petersburg Museums)

APPENDIX 2: MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

People s Memorial Cemetery  
name of property

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia  
county and state

Section 7.8 Page 3

People's Memorial Cemetery has been enlarged several times. The original 1840 parcel was one acre; two acres to its south were added in 1865, and another five acres added by 1880 completed the nineteenth century grounds. A one-acre parcel was added to the west side of the cemetery in 1942 in preparation for relocating a number of graves from South Crater Road's expanded right-of-way. This reinterment section of People s Cemetery is part of the nominated acreage.

Alterations to the cemetery include the loss of about 0.6 acre from the east side, along South Crater Road. In 1943 and again in 1968 the road was widened. Each time, the right-of-way acquisitions required the removal of vaults, curbing, headstones, and unmarked remains. Reinterments took place in the west section of People s and also at East View Cemetery at the opposite side of South Crater Road. The relocation of graves, even as it involved a number of new headstones, did not impair the essential historic integrity of the property. A more significant loss, which probably occurred in 1943, was the removal of an iron fence and gate that had been placed along the east side of the cemetery, with an arched sign panel above the gate reading "Providence Cemetery." Although the gate was an important historic feature, it had been placed there only in 1906, several decades after the cemetery's beginnings. It was not a key character-defining element of People s Memorial Cemetery.

Other changes that have occurred over time are very typical of African-American cemeteries. Maintenance and recordkeeping have been erratic, so that the drives have been rerouted, and may well traverse burials. The existing gravel drive bisecting the cemetery is rutted and eroded. Some gravestones are out of place; many have been lost, others are broken or toppled. Fencing and curbing at many plots have not been maintained. The grounds are unplanned, with a mix of informal plantings and untended mature trees. The continuing use of family plots over decades has resulted in modern headstones and occasional lawn-cemetery type markers being scattered among earlier grave markers. Because there has not been any wholesale redesign of the landscape, the modern elements of the cemetery do not overwhelm its sense of time and place as a nineteenth century suburban burial ground.

Summary Statement of Significance

People's Memorial Cemetery reflects the long history of Petersburg's African-American community from ca. 1840 to ca. 1942. The economic status and community interest of the antebellum free black population led to the initial development of a burial ground, separated under ordinance from Blandford, the municipal cemetery for whites. The cemetery was enlarged during the nineteenth century through the efforts of benevolent mutual-assistance societies and also through the entrepreneurial drive of black funeral directors. From its beginnings to the present day, it has been used for burials of members of all of Petersburg's historically black churches and many of the city's long-established families. The variety of gravemarker types within the informally organized grounds reflect the broad range of people who were buried there during years of unofficial ownership by a succession of semi-organized entities, which lasted until the property was acquired by the City of Petersburg in 1986.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

People's Memorial Cemetery  
name of property

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia  
county and state

Section 8 Page 4

Justification of Criteria

People's Memorial Cemetery is eligible under Criterion A in the areas of COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, ETHNIC HISTORY BLACK, and SOCIAL HISTORY. It represents a significant achievement by Petersburg's antebellum free blacks in purchasing land for a community-managed cemetery, and by the African-American community from Reconstruction through the twentieth century in managing the funerals and burials of its own members. The property retains physical reminders of Petersburg's black lodges and fraternal orders, churches, families, and African-American businesspeople such as undertakers and craftsmen.

People's Memorial Cemetery is eligible under Criteria Consideration D because it derives its primary significance from its association from historic events, in that it reflects important aspects of Petersburg's community history.

Historical Background

People's Memorial Cemetery was begun in 1840 as a one-acre tract of farmland purchased for use "as a burying ground" by a group of twenty-eight free men of color. They were acting on behalf of a mutual-benefit society that provided essential welfare and social services to its dues-paying members.

The burial ground was enlarged in 1865 when another group of men purchased a two-acre tract for cemetery use. This section became known as Scott Cemetery for funeral director Thomas Scott, one of its original purchasers. In 1880 he acquired a larger site to the south, a small-farm estate of just over five acres where three family grave plots had been laid out. Over the years until the late 1920s, the three pieces of land were visually inseparable as one burial ground, but sections bore various names that reflected their management or ownership by several benevolent societies and undertakers: Old Beneficial, Beneficial Board, Providence Beneficial, Scott, and Jackson Memorial. By the 1930s the whole parcel was considered to be one, the People's Memorial Cemetery. For a time, Little Church Cemetery was also considered part of People's Memorial, and the northernmost section of People's today is within the original Little Church plot.

The land had been titled in the nineteenth century not to chartered nonprofit organizations, but to individuals acting in trust for the groups. When these associations became inactive, new deeds were not filed. The land was left in the ownership of the first purchasers' heirs, a situation that was repeated when the City of Petersburg recognized the trustees of a new group, the People's Memorial Cemetery Association, to be the owners of the cemetery. It was from their heirs that the city finally acquired the land in 1986.

APPENDIX 2. MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

People's Memorial Cemetery  
name of property

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia  
county and state

Section 8, 9, 10 Page 5

Decades of legal limbo as heirs' property had several effects. First, although many families retained a connection with the plots that were deeded to them by one or another of the societies that claimed ownership of the land, others did not. With no continuity of organizational recordkeeping, knowledge of many burials has been lost. Second, from time to time various funeral directors operated all or parts of the cemetery as if they owned it, an essential factor in the long-term success of businessmen such as Thomas Scott and his successor Thomas E. Brown, and also the Wilkerson family of funeral directors. Most important, however, the unofficial ownership of its grounds facilitated the identification of many families, beneficial associations, and fraternal lodges with the cemetery. Improvements were made to the grounds by mutual benefit societies, the "Colored Chamber of Commerce" of Petersburg, Masonic lodges, women's groups, and church organizations - in short, by every interested party except city government. Since the nineteenth century, People's Memorial Cemetery has been considered to be the mutual property of Petersburg's African-American community. Lodge funerals, church funerals, and private funerals all found their way to People's. Inscriptions on stones from the 1850s through the 1950s are reminders of the city's historic churches, lodges, families, and craftsmen.

DRAFT

Bibliography

Brown, Thomas E. *History of the People's Memorial Cemetery and 51 Years Struggle of the Writer of this History*. MS in the possession of Miss Thomasine Burke, Petersburg

*People's Cemetery Records*. City of Petersburg Museums, Petersburg

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for People's Memorial Cemetery are the same as Tax Parcel 21-17

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the nominated property are the same as the boundaries for People's Memorial Cemetery. It includes all the land designated as People's Memorial Cemetery by the owner, the City of Petersburg



THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

NPS Form 10-900  
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

historic name Little Church Cemetery

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Mingea Street  not for publication

city or town Petersburg

state Virginia code VA county Petersburg code 730 zip code 23803

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____



THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

Little Church Cemetery
Name of Property

Petersburg, Virginia
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Ethnic Heritage Black
Social History
Art

Period of Significance
ca. 1883 - ca 1942

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Significant Dates

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
X D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation
Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets

9 Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
X Local government
University
Other
Name of repository



**APPENDIX 2. MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS**

Little Church Cemetery Petersburg, Virginia  
 Name of Property County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of Property 2.5

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	---	---	---	3	---	---	---
2	---	---	---	4	---	---	---

--- See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundanes were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sarah Fick

organization Historic Preservation Consultants date June 1999

street & number Post Office Box 1112 telephone 843-723-1746

city or town Charleston state SC zip code 29402

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title James M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment, Inc.

street & number 102 South Avenue telephone 804-732-8911

city or town Petersburg state VA zip code 23803

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127 and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Little Church Cemetery  
name of property

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia  
county and state

Section 7 Page 1

Summary Description

Little Church Cemetery conforms to the property type "Historic African-American Cemeteries," subtype "African-American Community Cemeteries Situated outside the Core City." Established by the early 1880s on two of the southernmost parcels of a tract of farmland being subdivided as the "Village of New Blandford," it was later enlarged eastward to South Crater Road. Because of its establishment on platted lots, the boundary lines are straight, resulting in a trapezoidal form with a rectangular extension, a total area of about 2.5 acres

The slightly elevated site is entered from Mingea Street, its north boundary. There are three sets of concrete steps up from the road to the unenclosed cemetery. Cover is low grass dotted with a few oak and cedar trees but no ornamental shrubs. Most burials seem to be organized roughly on a northeast-southwest axis, and the majority are grouped in 16-foot square plots.

The earliest extant stone marks a burial in 1883. Most monuments are headstones of marble, granite, or concrete with some very good examples of traditional Victorian and early-twentieth century designs. The pedestal tomb of the Reverend Henry Williams (d. 1900) dominates the cemetery. There are also locally-made concrete headstones, some marked "MR" by the maker, Milton Rivers, some by unknown artisans, and a number of small marble "lodge stones" from at least ten different fraternal orders or lodges. Stones and other monuments show variations in condition, with some toppled or leaning as a result of graves settling.

General Description

At the south side of Mingea Street, bounded by People's Memorial Cemetery to its south, Talliaferro Road to its west, and South Crater Road and a row of commercial properties to its east, Little Church Cemetery occupies about 2.5 acres of the western portion of the ridge along which Crater Road runs south from Petersburg. It was established on a suburban farm lot that was occupied in the late nineteenth century by a house and outbuildings owned by the heirs of John W. Mingea, a prominent white citizen.

The fairly level ground drops off at the west and south sides, toward Talliaferro Street and People's Memorial Cemetery, and provides a gentle climb up from the entrances on Mingea Street. A double-leaf iron gate in a common bow-and-picket style, with the shield of Cincinnati Iron Gate Company, is set at the head of one set of steps. Within the unenclosed site, the ground undulates considerably, suggesting many unmarked graves. Cover is low grass dotted with a few oak and cedar trees, and no ornamental shrubs. Although there is a section where concrete markers and unmarked depressions indicate single graves, the majority of burials are grouped in 16-foot square plots. Four of these are surrounded by iron fences dating from the late-nineteenth or early twentieth century. Three of these are designs of the Stewart Iron Works Company, and one has the shield of "C. Hanika & Sons." Other plots have been enclosed by low coping walls of concrete. A few are marked to indicate full- or half-plot.

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Stones and other monuments show variations in condition, with some toppled or leaning as a result of graves settling. The earliest extant stone marks a burial in 1883. Most monuments are headstones or dies-in-socket of marble or granite, with some very good examples of traditional Victorian and early-twentieth century designs. Eleven extant obelisks range in date from 1889 through 1921, and the pedestal tomb of the Reverend Henry Williams (d. 1900) dominating the center of the cemetery. Some of these are from the Petersburg workshop of Burns and Campbell. Much smaller marble "lodge stones" from at least ten different fraternal orders or lodges have been identified, many of them supplementing other gravestones. There are also several locally-made concrete headstones, some marked "MR" by Milton Rivers (active 1890s-1917).

The number of concrete markers that remain in place at Little Church Cemetery is unusual, and the makers of most of them have not been identified. Some of them are clearly by the same craftsman, whose molds were formed to resemble the designs of commercially-available stone markers. Their styles range from headstones and pulpit markers to lawn-type markers, with a variety of lettering patterns - hand-scratched, molded, or even mass-produced thin metal letters set into the wet concrete - expressing either consumer preference or the artisan's choice. Nearly all the concrete markers were whitewashed at one time, although most of the coating has eroded away. Despite the loss of the whitewashed surfaces, these concrete markers are a distinctive example of a vernacular style that persisted in a community that had access to, and could afford, gravemarkers of granite or even marble that were commonly used in white and black cemeteries.

Alterations to the cemetery are very typical of African-American cemeteries. Maintenance and recordkeeping have been erratic. Some gravestones are out of place; many have been lost; others are broken or toppled. Some fences and curbing are very deteriorated, and at least one plot fence (surrounding the Williams monument) has been lost completely. The continuing use of family plots over decades has resulted in modern headstones and occasional lawn-cemetery type markers being scattered among earlier grave markers. Because there has not been any wholesale redesign of the landscape, the modern elements of the cemetery do not overwhelm its sense of time and place as a nineteenth century suburban burial ground. Despite the deterioration or losses of some elements, and the addition of some clearly modern markers, the general appearance retains integrity as a privately-owned burial ground in which maintenance of separately-deeded plots is the responsibility of individual lot holders.

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Summary Statement of Significance

Little Church Cemetery reflects important aspects of the history of Petersburg's African-American community from ca. 1883 to ca. 1942. The land was acquired (with at least some burials already having occurred) in 1883 by James M. Wilkerson, who operated the cemetery as part of his undertaking establishment for years. Ownership of a burial ground was a key component of his successful business, which also operated a funeral home with a rental hall that became an important meeting place for African-American lodges and more purely social activities. The Wilkerson family were closely associated with Gillfield Baptist Church, whose first black minister, the Reverend Henry Williams, Jr., was buried here in 1900. Despite their elite status and close ties with that church, the cemetery has been used for burials of members of most of Petersburg's historically black churches, many of its long-established families, and nearly a dozen different fraternal organizations.

Little Church Cemetery is also significant for its collection of concrete gravemarkers, which were probably locally produced, dating from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century.

Justification of Criteria

Little Church Cemetery is eligible under Criterion A in the areas of ETHNIC HISTORY BLACK, and SOCIAL HISTORY. It represents a significant achievement by an entrepreneurial family in purchasing land for their company and using it to secure business while providing for the needs of the African-American community. The property retains physical reminders of Petersburg's black lodges and fraternal orders, churches, families, and African-American businesspeople such as undertakers and craftsmen.

Little Church Cemetery is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of ART because of the significant collection of concrete gravestones, a vernacular adaptation of traditional headstones.

Little Church Cemetery is eligible under Criteria Consideration D because it derives its primary significance from its association from historic events or distinctive design features.

Historical Background

Little Church Cemetery (the name refers not to a church, but to a nearby road, Little Church Street) was established on a suburban farm lot that was occupied in the late nineteenth century by a house and outbuildings owned by the heirs of John W. Mingea, a prominent white citizen. When the Mingea heirs sold the plot in 1882, at least some burials had already taken place, although their identity or location within the tract is unknown. The first African-American purchasers, John C. and Eloise Drake, were connected to the Jackson family, who had owned part of the land that became People's Memorial Cemetery. They sold it very shortly to James Wilkerson, Jr.

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Wilkerson became one of Petersburg's most prominent funeral directors, and James M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment is still an active concern. Having started in the business as a partner in the firm Parker & Wilkerson, he became an independent undertaker during the 1880s. His financial success is indicated by his family's well-built house at 1205 Rome Street, constructed during the 1890s.<sup>1</sup> Cemetery ownership was an important component of Wilkerson's business operation (he bought East View Cemetery in 1911). Lot sales produced revenue, and families preparing to bury there would be inclined to arrange the funeral through his firm.

Lots may have sold quickly, but the organization of the grounds into family squares meant that burials in each took place over several generations. Markers in the cemetery show a range of dates almost to the present. Although the cemetery is considered to be "full," and the sections dedicated to single graves have closely spaced and even overlapping burials, there are still spaces in some family plots.

Wilkerson's business periodically extended into coach and hack rentals, and he had a hall built near his funeral home, for rental to lodges and other organizations. Despite these ventures into related services, there is no evidence that he marketed fencing or gravestones. The iron fences that survive were all made outside Petersburg, and probably sold through one or more local dealers. Gravemarkers, too, were made by a number of artisans. Historic monuments that can be attributed were provided by Burns and Campbell (a white firm) and Milton Rivers (an African-American maker who worked mostly in concrete). Few of the marble lodge stones or concrete markers are signed. Several similar lodge stones at People's Memorial Cemetery were made by Burns and Campbell, which may have been responsible for some of those at Little Church as well.

The concrete markers and low coping walls were probably made locally. They were cast in a variety of forms, indicating that Milton Rivers had more than one competitor. The selection of concrete markers for a cemetery whose customers counted themselves among the upper ranks of their community is intriguing. They may have been supporting businesses run by their peers, or they may have been consciously choosing gravemarkers atypical of those in white cemeteries. Regardless of the reasons for the use of concrete, the large collection that remains will provide a valuable sample for further study. Little Church Cemetery embodies distinctive characteristics of a type and method of construction, and represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

<sup>1</sup> Bushey et. al., p. 40 (photo), p. 50.



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Bibliography

Little, M. Ruth. *Sticks and Stones Three Centuries of North Carolina Gravemarkers*  
Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press, 1998

*Plan of New Blandford* in Richard L. Jones, "People's Memorial Cemetery" N.d., City of  
Petersburg Museums, Petersburg

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for Little Church Cemetery are the same as Tax Parcel 21-17

Boundary Justification

The area of Little Church Cemetery has been reduced at least twice during the twentieth century. A small portion of the eastern rectangular section along South Crater Road was lost during the highway widening of 1948, and probably again in 1968. A larger section, a strip 80' deep, lies within the present boundaries of People's Memorial Cemetery (deeds have not been located to account for the shifting property line). The boundaries for the nominated property are the boundaries indicated on the tax map, which includes all the land designated as Little Church Cemetery.

APPENDIX 2: MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS

NPS Form 10-900  
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name East View Cemetery

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number South Crater Road  not for publication

city or town Petersburg

state Virginia code VA county Petersburg code 730 zip code 23803

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility  meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

- entered in the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX 2: MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS**

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Ethnic Heritage Black  
Social History  
Art

**Period of Significance**  
ca. 1866 - ca 1942

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

**Significant Dates**  
1911

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**  
Architect/Builder

**DRAFT**

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)  
See Continuation Sheets

**9 Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
  - previously listed in the National Register
  - previously determined eligible by the National Register
  - designated a National Historic Landmark
  - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
  - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG**

East View Cemetery Petersburg, Virginia  
 Name of Property County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 26.75 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	---	---	---	3	---	---	---
2	---	---	---	4	---	---	---
					_ See continuation sheet		

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**II. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sarah Fick  
 organization Historic Preservation Consultants date June 1999  
 street & number Post Office Box 1112 telephone 843-723-1746  
 city or town Charleston state SC zip code 29402

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title James M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment, Inc.  
 street & number 102 South Avenue telephone 804-732-8911  
 city or town Petersburg state VA zip code 23803

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127 Washington, DC 20013-7127 and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Summary Description

East View Cemetery conforms to the property type "Historic African-American Cemeteries," subtype "African-American Community Cemeteries Situated outside the Core City" Established as early as 1866 on several parcels of a tract of farmland laid out as regular lots at either side of a straight road, the 26 75-acre property is generally rectangular with its south line following the uneven course of a branch that separates it from today's Petersburg National Battlefield.

The level site is entered from Page Street, its south boundary. There is a low brick wall with entry posts along South Crater Road, but the drive that they access is unused today. The property is unenclosed except the front wall and a brick-and-concrete wall that demarcates the east half of the boundary with B'rith Achim Cemetery to the north. Cover is low grass dotted with a few oak and cedar trees, with woods lines at the east and southeast boundaries of the property. Forestation has heavily encroached on the rear north sections of the cemetery.

The earliest extant stones are marble tabletstones dating to the 1860s. Most monuments are headstones of marble, granite, or concrete with some good examples of traditional Victorian and early-twentieth century designs, and a number of small marble "lodge stones" commemorating membership in beneficial or fraternal associations. The historic markers that can be attributed came from the Petersburg shops of C. M. Walsh, Burns and Campbell, and Milton Rivers. There is also an exceptional range of concrete markers, all of which appear to have originally been whitewashed. They include plaque markers and tabletstones, thicker tabletstones that resemble pulpit markers, pointed-arched monuments that seem to represent upward-pointing arrows, and even a concrete obelisk. Most unusual are several concrete markers cast as obelisks, but with barbs or roofs raking out from the shaft. These are the work of a very skilled craftsman, as is the March monument (B P March, 1859-1900). This slender concrete column is topped by a concrete head of an African-American man, the only such example found in any of Petersburg's cemeteries. The makers of these notable gravemarkers have not been identified.

General Description

At the east side of South Crater Road, bounded by Page Street and a residential neighborhood to the south, Blandford Cemetery to the west, and B'rith Achim Cemetery to the north, East View Cemetery occupies about 26 75 acres of a level plain above Poor Creek. Only at the southern edge, where the property slopes down to the creek, do the elevations show more than local variation.

The cemetery can be viewed as several sections. The west portion, about 4.2 acres, is bisected by a two-rut gravel road perpendicular to South Crater Road that eventually turns south to connect with Page Street. A brick wall with entry columns but no gate faces the highway, but the cemetery is otherwise unenclosed except by the common wall that divides it

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from B'rith Achim. Beyond the east end of the wall, trees have grown up to virtually overtake a strip of graves, many of which are marked. The layout of their plots cannot be determined. Except that overgrown area, the grassy aspect of this section of the cemetery is interrupted only by a few oak and cedar trees. It can be seen to have been organized into uniform lots of about 16' square, in keeping with the rural cemetery movement which emphasized lot enclosures and individual monuments. Many of the squares have remnants of coping walls, but much of the coping material has been removed. Only four plots are fenced. Two fences are of modern pipe-rails, and two are late-nineteenth or early twentieth century iron fences probably produced by Stewart Iron Works for retailing by a local firm.

Extant stones in this portion of East View indicate that it began to be heavily used only in the early 1920s, but one marble tabletstone with a date of 1890 was identified. The early gravestones includes traditional marble and granite headstones, marble obelisks, and small marble lodge stones that supplement a headstone, commemorating the lodge affiliation of the deceased. The historic markers that can be attributed came from the Petersburg shops of C. M. Walsh (marble), Burns and Campbell (marble), and Milton Rivers (concrete). One notable monument is a granite die-on-base headstone with a raised bronze casting of a face, a portrait of the deceased (Luther Harrison, d. 1922). There is also an exceptional range of concrete markers, all of which appear to have originally been whitewashed. They include plaque markers and tabletstones, thicker tabletstones that resemble pulpit markers, pointed-arched monuments that seem to represent upward-pointing arrows, and even a concrete obelisk. Most unusual are several concrete markers cast as obelisks, but with barbs or roofs raking out from the shaft. These are the work of a very skilled craftsman, as is the March monument (B. P. March, 1859-1900). This slender concrete column is topped by a concrete head of an African-American man, the only such example found in any of Petersburg's cemeteries.

Beyond the western "front" section of East View Cemetery is an open grassed field where the victims of an early-twentieth century epidemic are said to be buried. No markers of any sort break this expanse, and there are no signs of the settling graves that may be expected in a hastily-used area of many individual burials.

The public road, Page Street, terminates just beyond the open field. A brick pillar, perhaps originally one of a pair, marks the entry to an unpaved continuation of Page Street that extends to a woods line marking the approximate east boundary of the cemetery. The rear or eastern section of East View Cemetery extends north and south of this unpaved lane. At the north side, adjacent to Blandford Cemetery, is a woods line at least 100' across, in which are hundreds of graves, marked and unmarked, dating to the 1920s. South of the Page Street extension, the cemetery is further subdivided by several drives. In the southeast quadrant are the earliest headstones found at East View Cemetery, marble tabletstones dating the 1866 and 1868. The early sections at far south and north blend into the center-rear section where markers typically date from the 1930s to the present, indicating continuing use of family plots that were first conveyed ca 1930.

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The eastern portion of East View Cemetery, also called Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery, has been opened in sections over time. A major expansion came in 1942-43, when a number of graves were relocated from the edge of People's Memorial Cemetery that was to be affected by a highway widening project. This was repeated in 1968.

The Wilkerson interests may have envisioned the rear section of East View as a memorial park, a cemetery landscape that became dominant in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Their goal of easy maintenance was thwarted by the families who used the site, who continued to place curbing of granite, concrete or brick and above-ground monuments on their plots. Ownership of some family plots must predate the Wilkerson's acquisition of the entire cemetery in 1911, and may have been claimed since the time Henry Bowman acquired Lots 7 and 8 of the Taylor Estate in the 1850s.

The Wilkerson Memorial Cemetery section of East View exhibits a considerable range of marker dates and types. There are marble tabletstones and obelisks from the 1860s through 1940s; granite obelisks made by Milton Rivers (whose identified work elsewhere was only in concrete), many locally-made concrete headstones; and a much smaller proportion of lodge stones than are found at People's Memorial or Little Church Cemetery. There are also many lawn-type markers, flush with the grass cover, and burial vault slabs, two types that most commonly date from after World War II.

The gravemarkers that were made after the end of the period of significance ca. 1942 (including some placed during the reinterment work) do not overwhelm the sense of the site as a historic cemetery. Surrounded by earlier gravestones, they dominate only part of its rear sections. Although they are clearly modern, they are additions, not substantial alterations, and the property retains its overall integrity and sense of time and place.

Most alterations to East View Cemetery are very typical of African-American cemeteries. Maintenance and recordkeeping have been erratic. Some gravestones are out of place; many have been lost, others are broken or toppled. Coping and fence elements are deteriorated or missing. The lack of maintenance is most apparent and severe in the "fringe" sections along the north boundary of the cemetery. In these overgrown areas, abandoned by the cemetery's management, only a few graves are tended. The overgrown section near Blandford, the woods line at the east boundary, and the slope leading to Poor Creek, are all used as disposal areas for coping material and even some markers. Some may have been displaced at an early date, in pursuit of the goal of a low-maintenance lawn park memorial cemetery, but dumping has continued as elements seem incapable of repair or merely inconveniences to mowing or gravedigging activities. These unfortunate alterations do not outweigh the general integrity of the property or its ability to convey its significant historic associations as a cemetery where commercial ownership of the land coexists with separately-deeded plots whose markers and maintenance are the responsibility of individual lot holders.



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Summary Statement of Significance

East View Cemetery reflects important aspects of the history of Petersburg's African-American community from ca. 1866 to ca. 1942. It was laid out on several lots of a farm that was surveyed and subdivided for sale in 1855. The earliest burials took place while the land was owned by Henry Bowman and his heirs from the 1850s until 1911. At least by 1905 the burial ground was known as East View Cemetery. After having managed the cemetery for some years as part of his undertaking establishment, in 1911 James M. Wilkerson, Jr., purchased the property from John C. Bowman. For decades Wilkerson Funeral Home/James M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment has sold lots to families and individuals, opening new sections as previous areas are completely sold. This gradual expansion has not resulted in clearly defined "old" and "new" sections, because the use as family plots assures a range of burial dates even in the oldest squares. The cemetery has been used for burials of members of most of Petersburg's historically black churches and many of its long-established families, but features proportionately fewer lodge stones commemorating membership in a fraternal organization than do People's Memorial Cemetery and Little Church Cemetery.

East View Cemetery is also significant for its collection of concrete gravemarkers, which were probably locally produced, dating from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century.

Justification of Criteria

East View Cemetery is eligible under Criterion A in the areas of ETHNIC HISTORY BLACK, and SOCIAL HISTORY. It represents a significant achievement by an entrepreneurial family in purchasing land for their company and using it to secure business while providing for the needs of the African-American community. The property retains physical reminders of Petersburg's black lodges and fraternal orders, churches, families, and African-American businesspeople such as undertakers and craftsmen.

East View Cemetery is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of ART because of the significant collection of concrete gravestones, some of them vernacular adaptations of traditional headstones and some of them in styles that are previously unrecorded.

East View Cemetery is eligible under Criteria Consideration D because it derives its primary significance from its association from historic events or distinctive design features.

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Historical Background

East View Cemetery was established on a suburban farm lot that was surveyed for the Estate of Elizabeth Taylor in 1855. By the time the plat was recorded, Henry Bowman had acquired Lot #7 (five acres), before his death he also acquired Lot #8 (about 12 acres). Henry Bowman's identity is unknown. Apparently an African-American, he also owned land at the opposite side of South Crater Road (below today's People's Memorial Cemetery), and may have resided on the Taylor tract, which was outside the corporate boundaries of Petersburg until 1945. For that reason, Bowman has not been traced through the Petersburg census records that can provide much information about antebellum free blacks within the city.

Bowman's son John gained title from the other heirs in 1902, and in 1904 added Parcel #5 (nine acres) of the Taylor farm to his property. It is unlikely that the entire Bowman holdings were originally dedicated to use as a cemetery, but at least by 1866 some burials, marked by marble headstones, had occurred near the south edge of the property, where the land slopes steeply down to Poor Creek. In 1905, the year after Bowman added nine acres, the city directory lists "East View Cemetery, c/o James M. Wilkerson," for the first time. A few years later, in 1911, Wilkerson purchased the property. East View Cemetery today also includes parts of Taylor Lots #2 and #6, the north halves of which became B rith Achim Cemetery (which was "kept" by James Wilkerson before 1900).

Wilkerson was one of Petersburg's most prominent funeral directors, and his business is still an active concern. Having started as a partner in the firm Parker & Wilkerson, he became an independent undertaker during the 1880s and purchased Little Church Cemetery in 1883. His financial success is indicated by his family's well-built house at 1205 Rome Street, constructed during the 1890s.<sup>1</sup> Management and ownership of a cemetery was an important component of the business. Lot sales produced revenue, and families preparing to bury on his grounds would be inclined to arrange the funeral through Wilkerson.

Wilkerson or his predecessor organized much of the cemetery into family squares, so that burials in each took place over several generations. Markers in the cemetery show a range of dates up to the present. Obviously, sections that were laid out for lot sales in the twentieth century do not hold early gravestones, but plots with very early stones may also have recent burials.

Wilkerson's business periodically extended into coach and hack rentals, and he had a hall built near his funeral home for rental to lodges and other organizations. Despite these ventures into related services, there is no evidence that he marketed fencing or gravestones. The iron fences that survive were made outside Petersburg, and probably sold through one or more local dealers. Gravemarkers, too, were made by a number of artisans. The historic monuments that can be attributed were locally made, by two white firms, C. M. Walsh and Burns & Campbell, and Milton Rivers, an African-American who worked mostly in

<sup>1</sup> Bushey et. al., p. 40 (photo), p. 50

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERIES OF PETERSBURG

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

East View Cemetery  
name of property

African-American Cemeteries in Petersburg, Virginia  
name of multiple property listing

Petersburg (Independent City), Virginia  
county and state

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concrete but who carved several of the granite obelisks at East View Charles Sparks, a Wilkerson relative who managed the cemetery for years, is also thought to have made some concrete markers and coping walls, but which ones he made have not been identified.<sup>2</sup>

All the concrete markers and low coping walls were probably made locally They were cast in a variety of forms, and all appear to have originally been whitewashed Many are in traditional styles that resemble commercially-made granite or marble markers Others are less common, and indicate great skill on the part of the artisan(s) who prepared the molds There is an obelisk in a cross form, and several headstones with steeply gabled arches that may represent upward-pointing arrows These markers may all be seen as unusual or local expressions of traditional Western Christian thought, but there are others which cannot. The cultural values behind the markers cast as obelisks with barbs or roofs raking out from the shaft are obscure, but the objects themselves demonstrate high levels of creativity and technical ability. The unique cast concrete bust that tops the March monument is likewise the work of a master artisan.

The selection of concrete by such skilled craftsmen and their customers, who clearly valued and could afford fine work, is intriguing. The buyers may have been supporting businesses run by their peers; they may have been consciously choosing gravemarkers atypical of those in white cemeteries; or they may have been continuing a tradition whose other examples have been lost. Regardless of the reasons for the use of concrete, the collection that remains at East View Cemetery embodies distinctive characteristics of a type and method of construction, and represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Bibliography

- Deed Books, Clerk of Court's Office, Prince George County, Virginia
- Little, M. Ruth. *Sticks and Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Gravemarkers* Chapel Hill. University of North Carolina Press, 1998
- Simms, Pernel A. Manager, James M. Wilkerson Funeral Establishment, interview 16 December 1998

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for East View Cemetery are the same as Tax Parcels 20-1-4 and 20-5-5

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the nominated property are the boundaries indicated on the tax map, which includes all the land designated as East View Cemetery

<sup>2</sup> Interview, Pernel A. Simms, 12/16/1998.

APPENDIX 2. MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM AND NOMINATIONS

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**Cemetery Preservation Plans**

**Historical Research**

**Identification of Grave Locations  
and Mapping**

**Condition Assessments**

**Treatment of Stone and Ironwork**



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